



Early Childhood Development

Global Program Guidelines

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Acronyms

CHW	Community Health Worker
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECDC	Early Childhood Development Centre
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
(MH)PSS	(Mental Health) Psycho Social Support
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PIPPA	Participatory Integrated (farm)Planning & Peace in the house Approach
PMEAL	Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
SEL	Social Emotional Learning
SHG	Self-Help Group
UNICEF	United Nations Childrens Fund
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WHO	World Health Organization

Introduction

As a Christian non-profit organization Help a Child wants every child – regardless of their social, political, religious, ethnic or economic background – to have a life in dignity, with love and with a promising future.



The early years, particularly the first 1000 days of a child's life, are crucial to its brain development and provide the basis for social-emotional development, attachment, educational achievement, lifelong health and economic productivity (Trude & Richter et al., 2020; Devercelli & Beaton-Day, 2020; Bengtsson & Barakat, n.d.). To provide this good start for children, Help a Child has set Early Childhood Development (ECD) as one of its thematic focus areas. Strengthened by HaC's global Theory of Change, the ECD component is a critical way in which we directly impact the lives of children by providing a supportive, safe and healthy environment for all young children through working with the children themselves, their parents, siblings, teachers and communities.

Definition of ECD

Generally, early childhood is defined as a time that “spans the prenatal period to eight years of age and it is the most intensive period of brain development throughout the lifespan” (WHO & UNICEF, 2012). Help a Child defines ECD as ‘an integrated approach for children in the age of conception up to primary school entry to develop to their full potential’. Early Childhood Development includes physical-, cognitive-, social-emotional and moral development and is therefore linked to health, nutrition, WASH, education and child protection.

Objectives of the ECD Global Program Guidelines

These ECD Global Program Guidelines are developed for country offices and partner organizations. It has four core objectives:

- It explains the focus-areas of Help a Child within ECD.
- It aims to standardize the type and scope, and ensure the quality of ECD activities, yet leaving enough space for the context of the programs.
- It serves as minimum requirements and standards for quality ECD projects.
- It is a reference and training guide for partners in how to implement ECD programming.

Every country has its specific context, curriculum, and in most cases a National Policy on ECD. Contextualization of these global guidelines on country-level is therefore necessary. But choices should always be made within the framework of these global guidelines.

It is expected that by implementing these guidelines, the quality and impact of the ECD program will increase. Because ECD covers multiple domains and sub-sectors, including early education, child protection, health, nutrition and WASH, a cross-sectoral approach and collaboration with all sectors is needed to implement these guidelines.

Content of the guidelines

The guidelines will start with a general overview of Early Childhood Development: what are global trends and why is it important to focus on ECD? The internationally accepted Nurturing Care framework will also be explained. In the second chapter, the approach of Help a Child will be described. You can read about our goal, the main objectives, our socio-ecological model and how we adhere to the Nurturing Care framework. The third chapter outlines our two focus areas: Response caregiving (Parenting) and Early learning. In chapter four more information will be provided on HaC's main ECD interventions and the monitoring of these interventions. Chapter five describes the minimum requirements for our ECD Centers and our Parenting program. Help a Child aims to ensure that all children from an early age receive the care and support they need to develop, and to cope with the growing global challenges and inequality. The last chapter, chapter six, therefore gives information on disability inclusion, and gives tips on climate sensitive ECD programming and the integration of Disaster Risk Reduction interventions.

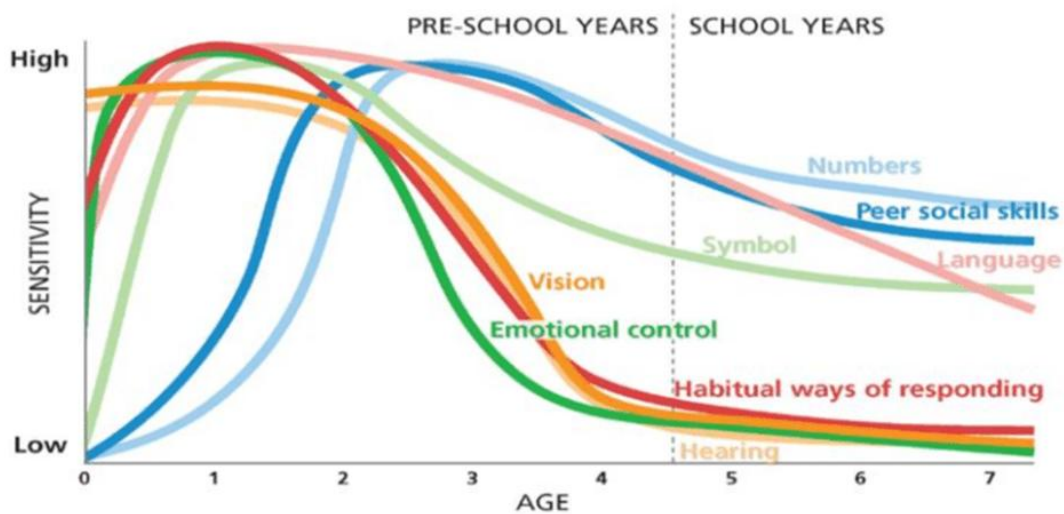
Chapter 1 General Overview of ECD

The first years of a child's life are a period of enhanced susceptibility to environmental influences, laying the foundation for health, wellbeing, learning, and productivity throughout life and into the next generation.

1.1 Why early childhood development is important

Brain research has shown that what happens in the first years of a child's life is crucial for their future health, education, and economic outcomes. It states that 80% of a person's brain is formed before the age of three years. Next to the first 1000 days, the biggest part of the further brain development happens before the age of 7.

Interventions that focus on responsive caregiving and the promotion of learning opportunities can buffer against individual, family, and community threats and promote child development (Trude & Richter et al., 2020; Jeong et al., 2021; WHO, 2020). Therefore, to ensure children receive the stimulation and care they need to reach their full potential, it is important to intervene in these early years. This is what we call 'the good start'.



1.2 What threatens early childhood development

There is growing evidence that poverty and early childhood adversities can disrupt brain development and undermine children's cognitive, psychosocial, and physical development (World Bank, 2018; Black et al., 2017). From pregnancy through the newborn period, infancy and toddlerhood, extreme poverty, insecurity, violence, environmental toxins, and parental ignorance or poor mental health detract from the capacity of families and caregivers to protect, support, and promote the development of young children.

When asking people if the first few years of a child are important, everybody will say: Yes of course! Yet only very small parts of government budgets are used for this Early Childhood Development. Here are some shocking facts.

- In low- and middle-income countries across the world, 250 million children under the age of five are at risk of not reaching their developmental potential because of poverty and stunting (or low height for age).¹
- Worldwide, only 60 % of all three to six-year-olds have access to pre-primary education. In low-income countries, just one-in-five children has access to preschool.
- Around the world, over 40 percent of children below primary-school-entry age – or nearly 350 million children – need childcare, but do not have access to it.
- Only 55% of children aged 36 to 59 months growing up in the poorest households are developmentally on track, compared to 78% of children in the richest households.²
- Children living in the richest households (71%) are much more likely to receive early stimulation and responsive care than children in the poorest households (43%).
- The prevalence of stunting among children under age 5 is still high in the countries where we work (Burundi 56,5%, DRC 40,3%, India 36%, Malawi 34%, Rwanda 29,8%, South Sudan 27,9%, Uganda 23,4%, Kenya 18,4%)³
- Nearly half of all deaths in children under 5 are attributable to undernutrition; undernutrition puts children at greater risk of dying from common infections, increases the frequency and severity of such infections, and delays recovery.⁴
- Nearly 400 million children under 5 – or 6 in 10 children within that age group globally – regularly endure psychological aggression or physical punishment at home, according to new UNICEF estimates. Of them, around 330 million are punished by physical means.⁵
- Around 1 in 5 children aged 2-4 years do not play with their caregivers at home, while roughly 1 in 8 under age 5 do not have toys or playthings at home.

‘When you pay attention to the beginning of the story, you can change the whole story.

- Raffi Cavoukian, singer and founder of Canada's Centre for Child Honouring

¹ Bullet point 1-3: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/earlychildhooddevelopment>. Derived Sept 2024

² Bullet point 4-5: UNICEF (2024) Global report on Early Childhood Care and Education

³ <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/dca947e8-08ca-47df-a686-48499811a2e5/content/sofi-statistics-africa-2023/stunting-among-children.html>. Derived Sept 2024

⁴ [Malnutrition in Children - UNICEF DATA](#). Derived Sept 2024

⁵ [Nearly 400 million young children worldwide regularly experience violent discipline at home - UNICEF](#). Derived Sept 2024

1.3 What do children need to develop to their potential

Nurturing care comprises conditions that promote health, nutrition, safety and security, responsive caregiving, and opportunities for early learning. Nurturing care and early learning opportunities are even more important for children who already lag behind due to poverty, disability or marginalization while at the same time being faced with growing challenges because of global inequality, climate change and crises. Scaling up children's access to quality ECD services presents a window of opportunity to address this inequality, break the cycle of poverty and improve outcomes later in life, all of which are cornerstones of both a child's as well as societal growth and health (Devercelli & Beaton-Day, 2020; Bengtsson & Barakat, n.d.).

1.4 The International Nurturing Care Framework

Help a Child subscribes to the International Nurturing Care framework, developed by WHO and UNICEF (2018)⁶, as it fits well with the holistic approach of Help a Child. According to the Nurturing Care Framework, five interrelated elements are important to ensure children reach their full potential: Responsive Caregiving, Opportunities for early learning, Good Health, Adequate Nutrition and Security & Safety (see figure 2). For more info on the International Nurturing Care Framework:

<https://nurturing-care.org/>.



Figure 2 The International Nurturing Care Framework (WHO/UNICEF)

⁶ https://www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/child/nurturing-care-framework-rationale/en.

Chapter 2 Help a Child's ECD Approach

Since 2016, Early Childhood Development is one of the focus areas in our CCCD projects. More recently we have started integrating ECD activities in our disaster response programming in South Sudan and DRC. Within Help a Child we use a socio-ecological approach⁷ to ECD programming. This means that we see children and their peers as active participants in their development, we see parents/families as the first supportive layer around the child, then the community which in turn is influenced by the wider society. Our ECD interventions therefore are directed at both the child, family, community and more indirectly at society.

2.1 Goal and Objectives

The main goal of the ECD Program is that all children receive the stimulation and care they need in the early years, from conception to primary school age (0-7) to develop to their full potential.

As mentioned before, Help a Child sees child wellbeing as encompassing four domains: physical, socio-emotional, spiritual and cognitive. The domains are interlinked and influence each other. As HaC we implement ECD as a comprehensive service incorporating all five essential elements of the Nurturing Care Framework.



2.2 Integrated ECD Services

As made visible in the five domains of the Nurturing Care Framework, Early Childhood Development is a broad theme (and does not only include the educational element as often is thought). It implies the holistic development of the young child and the involvement of many different services and stakeholders. Recent studies for example show promising outcomes on growth and cognitive development when integrating nutrition and learning interventions (WHO, 2020; Black et al., 2015). Also, integrating child protection elements such as Psycho Social Support (PSS) or Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) into education programming provide opportunities to prevent and respond to the negative impacts of a crisis on a child's psychosocial well-being and help improve learning outcomes (ECHO 2019).

Based on the strengths of our programs and partner organizations our primary focus is on Responsive Care (Parenting) and Early Learning (Early Childhood Education). This doesn't mean that the other elements of the nurturing care framework (Nutrition, Health and Protection) are not included in our approach. The five elements are mutually connected.

⁷ [Global multisectoral operational framework.pdf](#)

Results of the parenting program for example show a reduction of abuse and domestic violence, pointing out the linkage between response care and child protection. Other examples of integrated activities are: Pippa (integrating parenting with nutrition interventions), the establishment of kitchen gardens at ECD centers, visit of health workers to the parenting groups and ECD centers etc.

Summarized, HaC's Parenting Groups and ECD Centers form the foundation of our ECD programs, with a primary focus on Responsive Care and Early Learning, as well as entry points for integrating nutrition, child protection and health interventions.

This means that:

- A. Topics of all the 5 domains of the nurturing care framework are incorporated in the parenting interventions and in ECD centers.
- B. Linkages with other service providers are created and connected to the Parenting interventions and ECD centers.
- C. Our ECD approach is guided by our child protection framework as outlined in our CP Guidelines, see [HaC Child Protection Guidelines](#)

In the table below possible activities for integration of ECD services are mentioned.

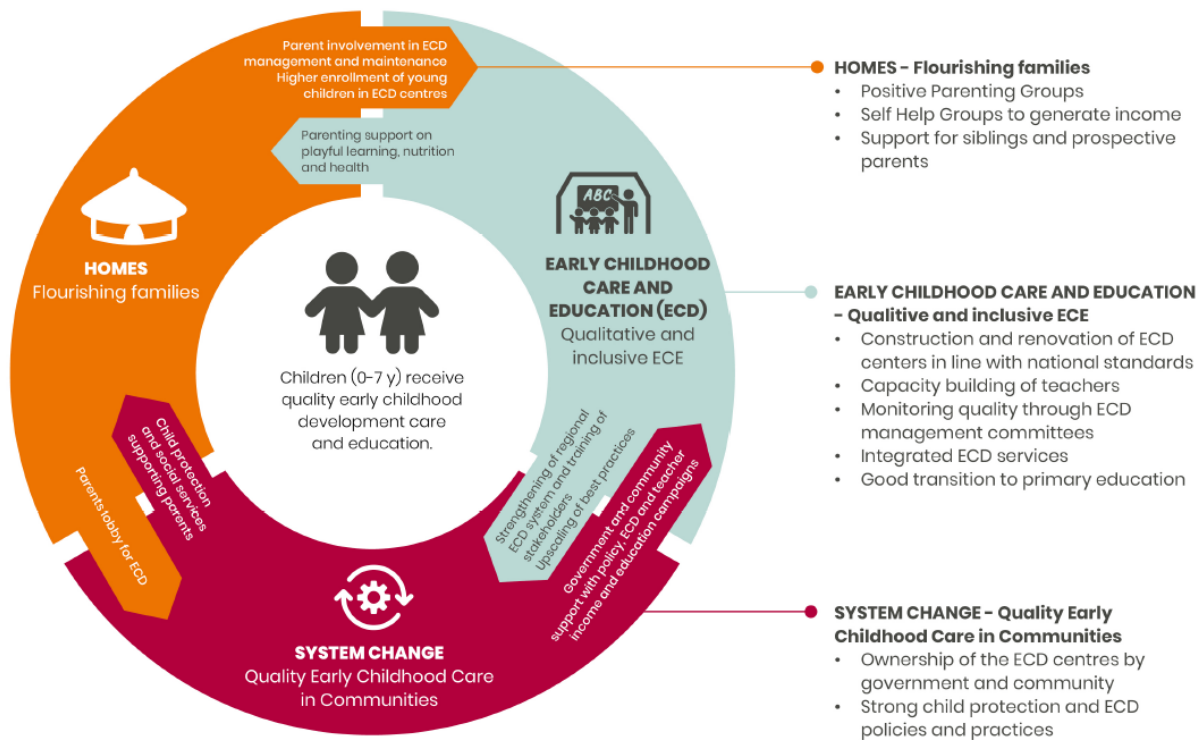
Domain	In the community	At ECD Center
Health	• Link with community health workers to ensure that pregnant and lactating mothers are visited for monitoring and counseling about their own and their baby's health. • Follow up with at-risk children to ensure they get supplemental feeding as offered by the government. • Promote the vaccination schedule in (young) parenting groups, SHGs and other forums. • Sensitize parents to purchase health insurance for their families if applicable. • Health promotional messages for risk preparedness.	• Have nurses from health centers come to the centre to measure the height and weight of children. • Organize learning events for parents at the centre where they come and get information on health issues (can have CHW or nurse as guest speaker). This is also part of the Parenting Challenge. • Have WASH materials on site and promote healthy habits like hand-washing. • Remove any health or safety hazards from the compound.
Nutrition	• Implementation of the PIP combined with parenting approach. • Follow up with at-risk children to ensure they get supplemental feeding as offered by the government.	• Organize the community to provide a meal at school. • Maintain a kitchen garden at the school for demonstration. • Offer cooking demonstrations as learning events for parents, to teach them how to prepare a balanced diet.

	• Promote breastfeeding in parenting groups, SHGs and other forums. • Educate community members on the importance of micro-nutrients (especially iron) for pregnant women. • Encourage families to have a kitchen garden at home. • Teach about balanced diet in parenting classes, SHGs and other forums.	
Security and safety	• Birth registration • Educate community members on the negative effects of violence and harsh treatment in the home. This is also part of the Parenting Challenge. • Set up child-protection committees. • Stimulate parents to join SHGs to gain social and economic support. • Ensure physical safety in and around the house (open fire, sharp objects, rubbish etc).	• Ensuring that ECE teachers sign a Code of Conduct. • Training of ECE teachers on how to identify and respond to child protection issues. • Center and playground are safe and in line with national standards • Supervise children at all times. • Train teachers in positive discipline and strictly ban corporal punishment. • Organize learning events for parents where they can learn about positive discipline and child rights. This is also part of the Parenting Challenge.
Psycho-social support (PSS)	• Implementation of the My Friend program • Referral system, training of health workers and/or the Child Protection Committee on MHPSS (Mental Health and Psycho Social Support) • Including information on mental health topics in the parenting program. • Community information meetings to break the stigma around mental health problems. • Home visits	• Implementation of the My Friend program • Training of ECE teachers in trauma sensitive teaching • Offering structured play activities that help children learn, recover from distressing experiences and develop positive coping strategies • SEL (Social Emotional Learning) activities to support the social and emotional competencies of children to strengthen academic performance and improve children's ability to navigate adversity.



2.3 A socio-ecological approach

For a sustainable system change our interventions focus on 3 circles around the young child; the home, the community (including the ECD center) and the institutional circle (governments and local stakeholders).



Chapter 3 Parenting and Early Learning

Recent studies show that interventions that focus on responsive caregiving and the promotion of learning opportunities can buffer against individual, family, and community threats, and promote child development (Trude & Richter et al., 2020; Jeong et al., 2021; WHO, 2020). Therefore, HaC's Parenting intervention and Early Learning approach form the foundation of our ECD programs.

3.1 Focus areas of Help a Child's ECD approach

Help a Child's focus areas and entry points for other ECD interventions are Responsive Care and Early Learning with the following objectives:

1. Responsive Care: Parents/caretakers are equipped with positive parenting skills and provide a safe, nourishing, and stimulating home environment.
Help a Child in its programs will help parents to raise their children the best they can, while at the same time also paying attention to the support the parents need for themselves.
2. (Play based) Early Learning: children are supported to go to ECD Centres whereby communities take action to ensure children are able to access quality ECE and thus stimulated in their early learning.

3.2 Responsive care: Parenting

Parents (everybody who takes care of a child, so biological or non-biological caregivers, grandparents or aunts/uncles, etc.) are the most essential key players in improving the wellbeing of children. Parenting approaches have differed over time and still differ between individuals and cultures. This is not only dependent on cultural and historical differences, such as traditional role divisions, but social factors, like poverty also intensify differences. This can increase violence and neglect, which can have life-long consequences for the child's development (Yildirim, E.D., Roopnarine, J.L. and Abolhassani, A., 2020). This in turn enhances another issue related to parenting, teenage pregnancies, which again leads to a cycle of more poverty and less education.

Many scientists, psychologists and pedagogues have been studying parenting over the last decades. One of the most important theories is the Attachment Theory of Bowlby. This theory explains the importance of early relationships in shaping children's social, emotional, and cognitive development. It proposes that the quality of early attachment/bonds between child and caregiver significantly influences a child's emotional and social development. Parents are their children's first and best teachers. They must be empowered with information and skills so that they can not only keep their child healthy but are also sensitive to the child's needs, providing support and comfort when their child is upset and stimulating their child's development through loving and playful interactions.



In this way a good and secure attachment will take place, providing the young kids with a good start in life. Secure attachments foster confidence and resilience, while insecure attachments may lead to difficulties in relationships and emotional regulation. Parents thus have a huge responsibility towards their children. Yet sometimes their own circumstances are not secure at all!

In these difficult circumstances, it is helpful for parents to meet other parents. In several cultures, parents learn how to raise children from their parents or extended family. However, this form of intergenerational learning about parenting is no longer always available or sufficient. Therefore, Help a Child developed The Parenting Challenge. Here, they can discuss their struggles, whilst also learning about the development of children and their own attitudes and practices, which contributes to a healthy environment for their children.

This stimulates positive parenting approaches and leads to improved relations between parents and their children (Barlow & Coren, 2018). These effects are intergenerational, as the children's eventual own parenting approach is also more positive and positive parenting enhances the broader community development. This shows that parenting interventions have a big impact on individuals and communities, ultimately leading to more development (Jeong et al., 2021).



Parents are children's first and best teachers

3.3 (Play based) Early Learning

To be able to deal with the challenges of the future like global inequality, climate change and crises, young children do not only need knowledge but they should also be encouraged in their adaptability and inventiveness.

What is a better way of learning this than through play and teachers that promote inquisitive, curious and creative behavior from an early age. These skills and this early development is even more important for children who already lag behind due to poverty, disability or marginalization.

Early learning is important for children. Children attending a pre-school program seem to show increased educational attainment and outcomes further in life (Devercelli & Beaton-Day, 2020, Kraft, 2015). Early Childhood Education allows children to build the skills needed to establish and maintain essential relationships and perspectives that can be the building blocks of individual and collective resilience, and social cohesion.

It is though very important that the education is age appropriate, otherwise there will be no effect (and even harm might be done). It is not helpful to teach children of 3 years to write, since their brain is not yet developed to comprehend that complicated task.

The importance of **play** in cognitive development cannot be overlooked. Children's way of learning is through play. While playing they discover many new aspects, they practice new skills and learn social- and interpersonal skills. Encouraging children to play and explore helps them learn and develop socially, emotionally, physically and intellectually. More information on the importance of learning through play can be found here: [Playful learning](#)

To ensure access to Early Childhood Education in the more remote and poorest rural communities we build or support ECD centers following national standards and global standards.

Teachers in the ECD centers, or caregivers, are key to ensuring the quality of the early childhood education. HaC therefore aims to build the capacity of ECD teachers through training, linkages to model ECD centers and knowledge exchange visits.

HaC Rwanda carried out a three-years evaluation study into school-readiness funded by Ready 4 School Rwanda. The study shows a positive influence of (HaC's) Early Childhood Education programs on the age of primary school enrolment (75% of children in target group started PI at 6-7s compared to 44% of children in control group), on primary school performance (66% of children in target group performed at over 50/100, compared to 36% of children in control group) and on retention (54% of children in the target group versus 34% of children in the control group were promoted). Furthermore, ECD attendance has a positive impact on school attendance (88% of children in target group have a good attendance compared to 79% in the control group).

Chapter 4 Help a Child's ECD Interventions

Help a Child uses proven interventions to build a strong foundation for young children in poor rural communities. We do this through our parenting interventions, community-based (model) ECD centers and our My Friend program.

4.1 Parenting Education

Together with improving the livelihoods of families and family resources for ECD we provide parents with skills and knowledge about responsive care, nutrition, health and playful parenting.

4.1.1 The Parenting Challenge

Since 2017, Help a Child identified parenting education as gap that needed to be addressed hence the birth of the 'Parenting Challenge' Program. This has become a niche in the early childhood development work of Help a Child and has also been adopted by other NGO's. Results of the program show a clear reduction in parents who discipline their children in a negative way and a strong increase of better cooperation with their husband/wife. The program addresses social and cultural norms barriers, gender preconceptions, domestic violence and conflicts in the households that are often the main barriers for a conducive home for young children. This has proven very effective.

The goal of the Parenting Challenge is to improve the parenting skills of mothers, fathers and other caretakers, so that they can provide adequate and relevant support to their children. It is a group-based method, whereby the parents are actively involved in discussions, exercises and group-work and are sharing their thoughts and ideas. The role of the facilitator is to lead the discussion, instead of teaching. The Parenting Challenge is involving mothers and fathers, which makes the sessions more effective. Fathers do have an important role in raising children, maybe a bit different than mothers, but it is important to involve them. The group-based approach helps parents to strengthen their social network. Besides this method is participatory, which promotes internalization, and the bottom-up structure increases the sustainability of its effects

The Parenting Challenges includes several modules. You can find the Parenting Challenge modules at <https://howto.helpachild.org/themes-and-tools/parenting>. Note that through the modules, attention is given to all elements of the Nurturing Care Framework: Responsive Care, Early Learning, Health, Nutrition and Security & Safety.

In the table below you find an overview of the different modules and topics. The Basics is mandatory for all groups. The other modules are optional choices depending on needs of the group identified during the Basics sessions.



Module	Topics
The Basics	Roles and responsibilities, Child Development, Culture, Parental Balance (Strengths & Problems)
Feeding our children	Good nutrition, Malnutrition, Food Security, How to prepare healthy food
Keeping children healthy	Prevention, Home Care, Community Health Worker, Health Services
Protecting children	What is Child Protection, Types and signs of abuse, How to protect your child, Community mapping, Where to go
Social Emotional Support	Importance of social-emotional development, Emotions of your child, Own emotions, Social development, Social circle, Supporting your child's social-emotional development
Supporting Children in Education	Timeline of education, Importance of education, How to support your child
Importance of Play	Importance of play, Age groups, Play materials, Interaction during play
Handling critical family issues	Separation and Divorce causing Single Parenting, Single parenting due to absence of spouse, Polygamy
Sexual education	Sexual Development, Talking about sexuality with children, Risky behaviour and consequences, Resilience/Boundaries
Positive Disciplining	What is positive discipline, effects of disciplining, using positive discipline, communication with children

More information about the parenting challenge can be found via the following links:

[Parenting brochure](#)

[Documentary Parenting: harmony in the house](#)

4.1.2 PIPPA (Participatory Integrated (farm)Planning & Peace in the house Approach)

PIPPA is a combination of two successful HaC interventions: the PIP (Participatory Integrated Farmer) approach and The Parenting Challenge.

The PIP approach is a family- and community led approach, focusing on improved agricultural practices in order to produce food and a decent income in a sustainable way.

Central to the PIP approach is the PIP plan, which the family makes together. The Goal of PIP is:

- Nutritious food for the whole family
- Setting a goal as family for economic sustainable growth and resilience
- Improving and restoring the soil for future generations
- Improving the gender balance



For a successful implementation of PIP you need families who live in peace. Husband and wife and children should be able to communicate and do things together. So there needs to be harmony in the house. From research on the effects of the Parenting Challenge, we know it does reduce violence in the homes, which includes Intimate Partner Violence, and contributes to better communication between husband, wife and children.

Or said in a one-liner: Parenting + PIP = Peace.

Within our CCCD programs we therefore aim to implement both approaches to strengthen each other. In our disaster response programs we identified a need for a more short term intervention with elements of The Parenting Challenge and PIP, hence the PIPPA approach was initiated. PIPPA includes elements of parenting, child protection, GBV prevention, food security and climate change awareness.

More information about PIP can be found via the following link:

[PIP CCCD manual](#)

[PIP manual](#)

4.2 Community based (model) ECD Centers

4.2.1 Community based ECD Centers

HaC uses a community based approach ensuring integration with community structures (SHG, CLA, CHWs) and linkages to the public education system to ensure economic and social sustainability.

What are community-based ECD centers?

Early Learning and Development Centres that are set up or renovated, sustained and monitored in close collaboration with communities and that are linked to existing community structures. An ECD center can also be a part of another building (like a church or a school).

Goal of community based ECD centers:

The aim of community based ECD centers is to:

- Ensure that all children in the community have access to quality Early Childhood Care and Education.
- Mobilize local resources.
- Connect to local needs.
- Work multi-sectoral to ensure holistic ECD care in line with national standards.

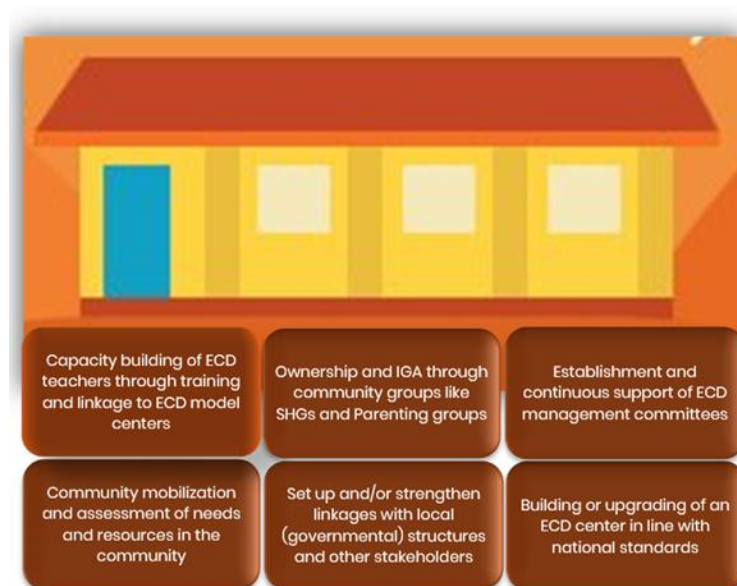
Through the community-centered projects of Help a Child, we have the unique opportunity to work with a community for a longer period of time. This allows sustained monitoring and capacity building of teachers and the ECD management committee which contributes to better quality and sustainability. It also makes it possible to link the ECD centers to other elements of community development and to work multi-sectoral to ensure holistic childcare and child development, and also provides us with a good testing ground for new ECD concepts.

How does it work?

To ensure access to Early Childhood Education in the more remote and poorest rural communities we build or support ECD centers following national standards and global standards.

In the initial phase, community mobilization and collaboration with local leaders are key interventions to ensure that inputs and outcomes are clear to all involved stakeholders. Selection of the area for the ECD centers and collection of building materials takes place together with the community to increase ownership and to connect to local needs. To support the process of community mobilization, HaC uses participatory group-based methods like The Parenting Challenge and The Community Challenge. The core element of the community-based ECD centers is parenting education, which serves as both the starting point and an ongoing program throughout the operation of the ECD centers. This ensures that parents fully understand the importance of ECD, commit to supporting the functioning of the community-based centers, and actively participate in the management and sustainability of the ECD programs.

When building or renovating an ECD center attention is given to provide ECD-structures that are inclusive to all children and multi-functional, integrating education, nutrition and health. **ECD management committees** (with representatives of parents, early childhood education, primary education and government) are key to ensure sustainability and quality of the center. The committees are trained and coached in their process to mobilize the community, lobby for resources and to monitor the quality of ECD's infrastructure and services. By connecting the ECD center to existing community structures like SHG's or parenting groups, communities can generate revenue that is spent on improving ECD services. To improve quality of ECD services, capacity building of ECD teachers is essential. Help a Child always tries to collaborate closely with the **government and local and national stakeholders** in training ECD teachers and developing an ECD curriculum to realize a system change.



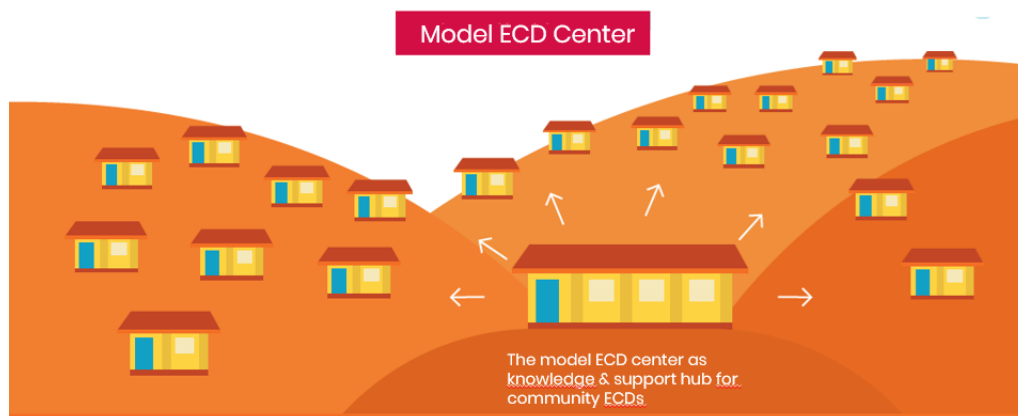
Building blocks for the establishment of a community-based ECD center

In Annex 1 you find more information on the different 'building blocks' to establish community based ECD centers. It is important to take into account that this is no 'one fits all' strategy but that the different steps will be different per context. Central however should be the involvement of the community, the linkages with other community structures, governmental structures and other stakeholders, and the integrated approach, including all elements of the nurturing care framework.

4.2.2 Model ECD Centers

Additional to our community based ECD Centers, Help a Child works with ECD model centers as 'centers of excellence' in some of our projects. An ECD model center is a high-quality and sustainable center that offers integrated services to young children and their parents and serving as inspiration for surrounding centers. In addition, the center is a knowledge and training 'hub' for surrounding local ECD centers, increasing their quality too.

We have seen that this leads to ECD centers that are self-sustaining, providing the latest standards of care and have motivated staff who are supported by parents and community groups.



4.3 The My Friend program

Ample research shows the detrimental effects of chronic stress on the (neuro)development and well-being of children. Children growing up with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE), a lot of stress or living under violent, war or refugee conditions, stand a high risk of mental and behavioral problems, lower school achievements, and risk behavior such as substance abuse and delinquency. Children however, and especially the young ones, are often overlooked in mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) programmes. People believe they are 'too young to understand', meanwhile facing challenges such as witnessing and/or experiencing violence, exposure to harsh conditions, unsafety, and sometimes lack of secure attachment, ongoing abuse and neglect and exposure to domestic violence.

Specifically children aged 5 to 7 years are often not well reached because they do not attend school (if available) yet. This, however, is a group that has also seen and experienced a lot. They hear the stories from adults and have strong imagination at this age, while not yet comprehending everything that is happening around them. Early interventions, focusing on the social and emotional well-being can help pre-primary schoolchildren and their parents to cope with the consequences of stress and adverse experiences and can prevent developmental problems.

HaC therefore developed the My Friend program: a mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) group program for pre-primary school children, with a parallel program for parents, providing ways to cope with emotions and stress. The My Friend program has elements of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Emotion Focused Therapy (EFT), making use of storytelling, (body oriented) exercises, metaphors and a 'buddy' the hare as protagonist/role model.

In 12 sessions children learn to: recognize emotions, communicate about emotions and to apply positive strategies that help to regulate/calm down and comfort. In parallel sessions parents also learn to recognize emotions in their child and in themselves, communicate about the child's emotions with their child and learn skills and strategies to help their child regulate/calm down.

COMMUNICATE ABOUT THE FEELING

Point: at the volcano

Tell: volcano, bodily feelings

To: a parent, a friend, a teacher, or your doll friend



WHAT CAN I DO WHEN I FEEL UPSET?

6 STRATEGIES
to go down the volcano

- go to a friend
- stand strong
- think positive
- go to a safe place
- do the butterfly hug
- dance or sing

VOLCANO: The volcano is about the intensity of negative feelings (anger, fear, sadness). The more intense the feeling, the more heat, the higher you are on the volcano.

RECOGNITION: In the sessions, children learn to recognize these feelings "Where are you on the volcano right now?"

HOW TO CALM DOWN: Children practise with pathways down the volcano. They learn six strategies to handle negative feelings and to calm down.



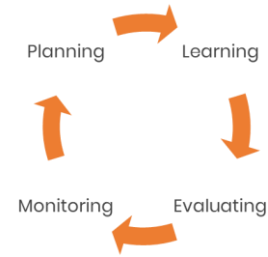
Strategies of the My Friend program

4.4 Monitoring of our ECD interventions

PMEAL stands for Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning. All these aspects are important for Help a Child. In terms of planning, the PMEAL results are used to keep track of the progress and to plan for the following year. Based on the results choices can be made about certain aspects of the interventions that need more attention or adjustment.

Monitoring data can also be used to be accountable to our donors, to learn and to build an evidence base for our interventions.

Data should be used to make annual analyses at a programmatic and project level and improve policy making and programming. In our CCCD projects, minimum output requirements are collected on an annual basis. Some monitoring tools are administered every year and others every other year.



Help a Child uses several different data collection tools to measure the results and impact of our Child Centered Community Development (CCCD) program. These tools are part of the reporting framework. Monitoring tools related to HaC's ECD interventions are:

- The Child Status Index
- The Parenting practices in the community tool
- The ECDC Scorecard

The main principle is that Help a Child wants communities to be in the driver's seat of their development. Monitoring and evaluation therefore should not be extractive, but participatory by nature, meaning that we want community members and ECD management committees to participate in the data collection and data analysis.

The implementing partners are encouraged to organize reflection sessions to discuss the monitoring data in the community and among the project staff. During these sessions, lessons learned (both positive and negative) are being identified.

More information on our CCCD monitoring framework can be found on HaC's How To Portal: [CCCD PMEAL Framework](#)

4.4.1 The Child Status Index

The Child Status Index is closely related to Help a Child's overall goal: improved wellbeing for all children. The Child Status Index measures the wellbeing of children on the physical, social-emotional and cognitive domains. Within our CCCD projects, the Child Status Index is used as a group-based tool, meaning that groups of children and groups of/or adults sit together to discuss and score the different themes. The themes are:

Domain	Category
Physical	Food Security
	Health Care Service
Cognitive	Education and Work
Social/ emotional	Care
	Abuse and Exploitation
	Emotional Health
	Social Behaviour

More information on the Child Status Index can be found on HaC's How To Portal: [Child Status Index](#)

4.4.2 The Parenting practices in the community tool

This tool evaluates the functioning of the parents in the community and what they need. The tool can be done with any existing groups/ structures that include parents, like parenting groups, SHGs or farmer groups. The tool assesses the ability of parents to provide nurturing and responsive care to their children in the following developmental areas: physical (nutrition, safety, health), socio-emotional, cognitive (access to- and support with education) and spiritual/moral. More information on the parenting practices in the community tool can be found on HaC's How To Portal: [Manual parenting practices in the community tool](#)

4.4.3 The ECDC Scorecard

The ECDC Scorecard measures the quality of the ECD centers. Topics addressed through the ECDC Scorecard are: Access to education, Teaching and Learning Quality, Learning and play materials, Infrastructure, Hygiene & Sanitation, Child Protection, Management, Sustainability, (Parental and Community) Ownership and Holistic Service Provision. The first time this tool is being used as a baseline, it should be done with the Help a Child and partner staff, together with the ECD Committees (if already formed). Help a Child and partner staff score the categories and simultaneously guide the new ECD Committee in evaluating the categories. From the second time onwards, the ECDC Scorecard will be conducted by the ECD Committee (with support of Help a Child and/or partner staff). The ECDC scorecard is done every other year and should be done for every ECD center. Results of the scorecard should be evaluated and used to identify needs for improvement and inform annual programming. More information on the ECDC Scorecard can be found on HaC's How To Portal: [Manual ECDC Scorecard](#).

Chapter 5 Minimum Requirements

With many interventions it matters what you do, but also how you do it. The method matters and the intensity. A onetime off meeting with all parents from the community whereby the facilitator explains to parents what is good and wrong, will have less impact than a weekly program for groups of parents whereby the parents participate through exercises. In the last example the chance is higher you will reach sustainable change in parents. In order to ensure quality and lasting results, Help a Child developed minimum requirements for the two key interventions in the ECD program.

5.1 Minimum requirements for the parenting programs

Help a Child has set minimum requirements for parenting. These are summarized below:

- Working in groups.
- Preferably Mothers and Fathers in the same group. This encourages understanding and respecting each other's roles in the household. Within the sessions group-work can be done in unisex groups if required.
- Method should be based on sharing, thinking and doing by the parents, with only where needed information sharing from the facilitators. So lot of exercises, group-work, none or limited lectures.
- Method should take the specific context and culture into account.
- Facilitators need to facilitate, not teach.
- Facilitators need to be trained well in the use of the method.
- Minimum of 10 hours, so at least 5 sessions of around 2 hours.
- Needs to reach out to all parents, so inclusive programming.

To consider: In some communities the young parents like to have their own group. On the other hand, young parents can learn from the experience from the older parents. And older parents or even grandparents taking care of their grandchildren, can feel supported by the young ones. Bringing generations together is very important in communities.

5.2 Minimum requirements for Early Childhood Development Centers

Early Childhood Development is important, as was explained in the first chapters. But also here it is important to take some standards into account in order to make an ECD Center a safe and stimulating place for children. To ensure the access to, and the safety, quality and sustainability of our ECD centers HaC developed an ECDC Quality Scorecard.

Through this scorecard the following topics can be assessed:

1. ECD infrastructure (WASH facilities, learning space, outdoor (play) space, kitchen)
2. Access to ECD (Enrollment, Attendance rate, Inclusion)
3. Teaching and learning quality (teacher qualification and skills, use of pre-primary curriculum, playful learning, positive discipline, child protection)



4. Learning and Play materials (play corners, locally made toys, availability of books, toys for different developmental areas)
5. ECD management (ECD management committee, community mobilization, involvement parents, collaboration primary school, sustainability)
6. Holistic ECD services (school feeding, collaboration with health workers, parenting education, linkages, integrated nutrition and ECE interventions)

All these topics should contribute to the following four key pillars: child safety, holistic care, stimulation of children's development and learning and ownership/sustainability of the ECD centers.

Help a Child considers the following points as minimum requirements for good quality ECD centres:

Minimum output requirement for quality ECE centers:	
Safety	Children should be physically safe, this includes: - The route to the ECE center is safe. - Fencing. - No weak structures, no sharp items, no nails sticking out etc. - Removal of hazards like glass, electrical wire, sharp metals or potential sources of infection like animal droppings. - There is clean drinking water available. - Easy supervision of (latrine) facilities. - Children can wash their hands with soap after using the latrine. - No corporal punishment. - Children are not forced to sit in sun heat (appropriate shelter). - Fire prevention and emergency evacuation plans are in place. - Teachers/caretakers understand the Child Safeguarding Policy and signed the aligned Code of Conduct. - Teachers/caretakers are trained on how to identify and respond to CP issues.
	Children should be emotionally safe, this includes: - Responsive teaching (no corporal punishment, positive, playful and interactive teaching methods). - Child-friendly communication. - No discrimination. - Teachers/caretakers understand the Child Safeguarding Policy and signed the aligned Code of Conduct. - Teachers/caretakers are trained on how to identify and respond to CP issues.
Quality	ECD centers provide holistic care (attention for all elements of the nurturing care framework)
	ECD teachers/caregivers possess a minimum qualification of diploma in ECD and/or received more than two weeks training plus continuous coaching on playful learning, child development, positive disciplining (no caning), child-friendly communication and the use of the curriculum (when available).
	Activities in the ECDC are age and developmental appropriate, with lots of play activities.

	The ECD teacher/caregiver uses mixed methodology to stimulate active learning, like: playful methodology for teaching, participatory exercises and the use of play corners.
	The ECD center has enough teaching and learning materials available for different age groups and different developmental areas.
	Learning activities comprise the following four developmental areas: - Cognitive development (language activities, mathematical activities, science/environmental activities). - Socio-emotional development (creativity, life skills, group activities). - Physical development (movement and motoric activities, health and nutrition related activities). - Moral/spiritual development.
	The ECD center has the full prescribed curriculum (when available) and actively uses it.
	Monitoring and assessment of children's development and learning takes place.
Inclusivity	Is accessible and affordable for all, and promotes equal opportunities for children to attend, learn, develop and participate in learning and social activities.
	Diversity and differences are respected and valued; all children are valued equally – no exclusion, stereotyping, stigmatization or discrimination against any children takes place but diversity is seen as an opportunity for learning and promoting understanding.
	Sensitization on equal access to ECD for boys and girls takes place.
	Children can communicate and learn in their mother tongue.
	There is attention for incorporation of cultural practices and values (that are not harmful) in the ECD activities.
	ECD centers are accessible for children with a disability.
	ECD teachers received training on inclusivity.
Sustainability	ECD structures and activities should be in line with the government regulations and ECD policy (if any).
	Local authorities need to be involved and where possible should actively support the ECD activities financially or in-kind (like providing the land or materials for construction).
	The ECD center is requested and owned by the community: • Community mobilization and awareness raising on the importance of ECD takes place (via parenting training). • The ECD center is designed and built in a way that it can be maintained by the local community themselves. • Community maintenance plans are organized. • An ECD committee is formed and strengthened, with representatives from parents, ECD teachers, primary school and governmental (health) workers.
	The ECD center is linked to existing community structures like SHG's, Child Protection Committees etc.
	Parents participate through volunteering and/or in-kind or financial contributions.

Chapter 6 Mainstreaming inclusion, climate sensitivity and DRR in ECD services

Help a Child aims to ensure that all children from an early age receive the care and support they need to develop, and to cope with the growing global challenges and inequalities. In this chapter we offer tips and information on how to ensure (disability) inclusion, and how to integrate climate mitigation, adaptation and disaster risk reduction in our ECD approach.

6.1 Disability Inclusion

Children with a disability belong to one of the most vulnerable groups in a community. The impact of discrimination against children with a disability can deny them access to education and health care, opportunities for play and family life, an adequate standard of living and the right to be heard. Besides this, children with a disability encounter a higher vulnerability to physical and sexual abuse and neglect.

We can distinguish different types of impairments: Physical impairments, Hearing impairments, Vision impairments, Speech impairments, Psychosocial impairments, Intellectual impairments and Learning impairments.

Disability inclusion can be best achieved by combining two approaches – disability mainstreaming and disability-specific interventions. This is called the twin-track approach. These approaches need to be addressed at the same time. The adage is: inclusion where possible, specific when needed.

Disability mainstreaming

Help a Child is fully involved in the disability mainstreaming. ECD policies, parenting interventions, ECD trainings, ECD community awareness raising and on-boarding of staff and volunteers will always contain a component of inclusion **awareness, identification and knowledge on referral**.

Community mobilization and awareness

The ECD management committee members should be trained to lead this initiative, targeting parents and the broader community. The aim of these community meetings is to prevent stigma, to address the importance of early detection of disabilities and enrolling children with disabilities in ECD, and to give information on referral processes.

Training of ECD teachers/caregivers: Training of ECD teachers on the importance and possibilities of inclusion of children with disabilities, identification of disabilities, differentiated teaching methodologies and referral is key to ensure disability inclusion in ECDC.

Play is inherently inclusive in that it is not depending on cognitive skills or talents, but appeals to the full child. It is also not performance-driven. Training should aim to equip ECD teachers with the skills to effectively support children with disabilities in the classroom, such as **differentiated instruction** tailored to each child's individual needs, promoting participation and play. Training should also include teacher reflections and experience-sharing on supporting children with disabilities, learning difficulties, and developmental delays.

The following links can be used to train ECD teachers on disability inclusion:

- [inclusive early childhood education training videos](#)
- [all play learn inclusion](#)

Accessible infrastructure:

School facilities frequently lack ramps, handrails, and other necessary adaptations, making it difficult for these children to navigate the spaces independently. Additionally, narrow doorways and squat toilets further hinder their access to essential areas. Interventions should focus on creating an inclusive environment that addresses these obstacles. This includes installing ramps and landscaping playgrounds to enhance accessibility.

Parenting education:

Parenting sessions (see chapter 2) can be used to pay attention to disability awareness and inclusion. The following topics are/could be included: child developmental stages, early detection of disability, and the referral pathways for disability. When inviting parents for the parenting sessions, it is important to give extra attention to including parents of children with a disability.

Identification and assessing of children with a disability:

Children with disabilities are often undercounted or overlooked in data collection efforts. The Washington Group/UNICEF Child Functioning Module (CFM) is a helpful tool for tracking and assessing children with disabilities to ensure that 'now one leaves behind'. The CFM has two versions: one for children age 2-4 years old and one for children age 5-17 years old. Both are designed for administration to mothers (or primary caregivers). See: [CFM](#)

Disability-specific interventions

For the disability-specific interventions, referral happens to specialized organizations and/or service providers as much as possible. Help a Child does not promote directly giving medical services or devices. Programs will refer as much as possible to other organizations (regional or global level) that provide such services.

Be assured of a good mapping of different service providers (NGO's, government) to be aware of the different stakeholders and their services in the area. The possibilities to cover costs might differ per country. Be assured you have the right knowledge about the different regulations, schemes and funds for people with disabilities from the government that apply in your situation.

To cover any costs, it can be considered that through SHG's or in collaboration with the CLA, the community could create funds to support in the costs for the children that need further devices, diagnosis, treatment, or surgery. The program can promote registration of children and persons living with disabilities to enhance their access to health services.

There are often high expectations of the project from the parents and the community when it comes to children with a disability. This is understandable and the expectations should be well managed. Be clear and honest about the content of the program. Inform the parents and the community at the forehand exactly how the program will look like in order not to create false expectations. Explain what you do, and what you don't, and involve them in the decision making. It is also important to show the good results, although it might take some time to deliver them.

6.2 Climate-Sensitive Early Childhood Care and Education⁸

Climate change severely impacts young children and their caregivers, especially if they live in crisis or emergency contexts. UNICEF's 2021 landmark Children's Climate Risk Index (CCRI) report found that 1 billion children are at extremely high risk of the impacts of the climate crisis through water scarcity, malnutrition, displacement because of natural disasters, pollution etc.

Climate-sensitive ECCE programming considers climate-related risks and opportunities for design and delivery. There are two pathways that can contribute to climate resilience: climate mitigation and climate adaptation.

Climate mitigation includes *awareness creation of environmental impact* and making the impacts of climate change less severe by *preventing or reducing the emission of greenhouse gases* into the atmosphere.

Climate mitigation focuses on teaching young children to appreciate and be aware of the natural environment so they can understand how their actions affect the natural world. Children learn how nature works from a very young age. If a curiosity for and involvement with nature can be established with children, they will be more likely to care for nature later. Teaching complex subjects like climate change to very young children is achievable through play and a positive, solutions-focused approach. This approach enables children to learn about these issues without experiencing anxiety or fear.

At this age, the emphasis should be on fostering a love for nature, promoting individual responsibility, and encouraging sustainable behaviours. Integrating nature-based experiences, such as outdoor play and hands-on activities with natural elements, lays the foundation for an early understanding of the environment.⁹

Climate mitigation is also about ensuring ECD systems engage in activities that promote biodiversity and natural ecosystems and do not contribute to further emissions.

⁸ Promoting Climate-sensitive Early Childhood Care and Education in Emergencies, Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), 2023

⁹ Greening curriculum guidance: teaching and learning for climate action, UNCESCO, 2024

Possible interventions are:

- Integrate climate-related topics into the ECD curriculum.
Integrating respect for living things and care for the natural environment are important curriculum issues for early childhood programs that can lay a foundation for future generations to make climate-sensitive choices.
- Make ECD centres environmental friendly. Some examples are:
 - Greening the play yard and environment around constructed ECDs: It is very essential to create a conducive environment for the children enrolled in ECD centers by planting fruit trees or establishing a kitchen garden.
 - Work on a clean environment by minimizing waste and good waste management. (recycling of plastic bottles, from trash to cash project).
 - See what can be done on renewable energy sources, like solar panels, energy saving cooking stoves. Use energy-saving stoves (mudbrick cookstove) and/or environment friendly charcoal (briquettes) to reduce the rate at which trees are being cut down for firewood at the community level.
 - Reforestation: This is the process of replanting trees in areas affected by natural disturbances like wildfires and drought. We cut trees during the ECD construction. So, it makes sense to replace them by planting new trees.
- Start environmental child clubs.
- Incorporate analyses of the environmental and climate related effects of proposed ECD interventions in ECD proposals and programming.
- Awareness raising and capacity building of community members and parents about climate change concerns and related effects on mankind.
- Encourage environmentally friendly actions among families and communities.
Enlisting the whole family and communities in environmentally friendly practices conducted at the ECD centers, can stimulate families and communities.

Climate adaptation focuses on *reducing the effects that climate change has* on young children by improving children's, caregivers' and education stakeholders' understanding of the consequences of climate change, taking action to *build resilience* to the effects of climate change and *learning how to adapt* in response to climate change events.

Possible climate adaptation interventions related to ECD programming are:

- High-quality ECE programs can help young children develop skills and self-esteem to become agents of change. It can encourage curiosity, inquisitiveness, and understanding of cause and effect. Especially when the lessons include localized solutions and actions. For example by inviting or visiting local farmers or community members with innovative solutions to adapt to the climate change or through learning about vegetable gardening and composting.
- Tree planting at/near ECD centers. The fruits that these trees will produce can be an addition to the lunch meals of the children and help achieving better study results. Next to that it provides protection against the sun and heavy winds. After some time, the forests need to be thinned out so the strongest trees have more space to grow. This wood can be sold so the ECD center can invest on learning materials. It is also possible to grow a combination of permanent and commercial trees. That way the ECD center will have a regular income if the project is managed well.



- Tree nursery beds and/or the establishment of a kitchen garden, using sacks to plant vegetables for the households and selling the surplus as income are also examples of interventions to teach children about climate adaptation.
- Rainwater harvesting: Most ECDs go with iron sheet roofing, which provokes high water runoff during the rainy season. These waters can be harvested to minimize runoff effects, but can also be used for kitchen garden irrigation at ECD centers.

6.3 ECD and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

Prioritizing Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) programming for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is critical to ensure young children have access to safe and uninterrupted learning during crises.

Through the implementation of the Nurturing Care Framework and the focus of HaC on Responsive Caregiving and Early Learning, we already contribute to disaster risk reduction (see the table below).

Component	Link to Disaster Risk Reduction
Good health Refers to health and well-being of children and caregivers, mentally and physically	• Healthy caregivers are better suited to care for children in time of crises • Healthy caregivers can better take prevention and preparedness measures for the protection of children • Children's health is directly linked to the caregiver's monitoring of their physical, mental, and emotional condition • Children's health is directly linked to protecting them from environmental dangers
Good nutrition Refers to maternal and child nutrition	• A mother's nutritional status affects her ability to provide adequate care and safety • Well-nourished children are more resilient against illnesses such as diarrhea • Well-nourished children and caregivers can better cope with hazard impact, emotionally, physically, and psychologically • Well-nourished children have a better chance of survival during disasters
Safety and security Refer to safe and secure environments for children and their families	• In a safe environment, children are protected from negative hazard impacts • A safe environment puts child protection as a priority in times of danger and crises (provides information on potential dangers and how to react) • A safe environment offers access to clean water and sanitation, good hygiene facilities and nutrition pre- and post-disaster • A safe environment minimizes children's exposure to environmental hazards
Responsive caregiving Refers to the ability of the parent/caregiver to notice, understand, and respond to their child's signals in a timely and appropriate manner	• Responsive caregivers are better able to provide stability and support in the other areas • Responsive caregivers can anticipate children's needs and act to be prepared to take care of the children in times of crises • Responsive caregivers can recognize and care for children's need in times of crises • Responsive caregivers talk with and prepare children as much as suitable for hazards • Responsive caregivers are aware of possible hazard impacts on themselves, family, and children

	• Responsive caregivers know suitable approaches to lower disaster risk for their children • Responsive caregivers provide a safe environment and protect children to the best of their ability • Responsive caregivers protect children against negative effects of hazards
Early Learning Refers to any opportunity for the child to interact with a person, place, or object in their environment	• Early learning provides children with the opportunity to be socially aware and connect with its environment, building the foundations of social capital • Early learning through play stimulates social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development, all crucial for individual capacity • Through playful learning kids can learn about hazards and ways to prepare and respond

Young children's vulnerability to environmental disasters increases their susceptibility to injury and makes them even more dependent on adults for support. Caring for the caregiver is a vital part of building resilience in ECD because parents usually stay with young children even when ECD programs are forced to close or relocate. Supporting caregivers to offer responsive caregiving to their children is therefore a critical part of DRR.

Both the Parenting Challenge as the PIPPA approach can be used to strengthen parents to protect their children from hazard impact and provide a stable future despite the occurrence of hazards, through increased resilience and capacity on all levels. Through the parenting groups and PIPPA extra awareness and knowledge can be provided on:

- Possible hazards for their children and themselves and their impact and characteristics.
- Suitable protection and preparedness measures.
- Family- and community strengths and weaknesses.

DRR interventions at Early Childhood Development centers should focus on:

- Applying a DRR lens when selecting the site for building the ECD center.
- Solid and safe construction of facilities. Guidance and regulations are in place from appropriate authorities for safe construction of ECD facilities.
- Annual hazard and risk assessments at ECD centers.
- Identification of safe and unsafe places together with the children.
- Teaching children about risk identification, risk reduction and safety routines on a playful way through stories, songs, pictures, role plays, community walks, drawing etc.
- Storage of food, materials, equipment and medicine appropriate for young children at the ECD centers.
- Ensuring that the needs of young children are included in emergency preparedness training, drills and simulations for community members and emergency services.

For more information on the DRR policy of HaC see: [DRR Policy HaC](#)

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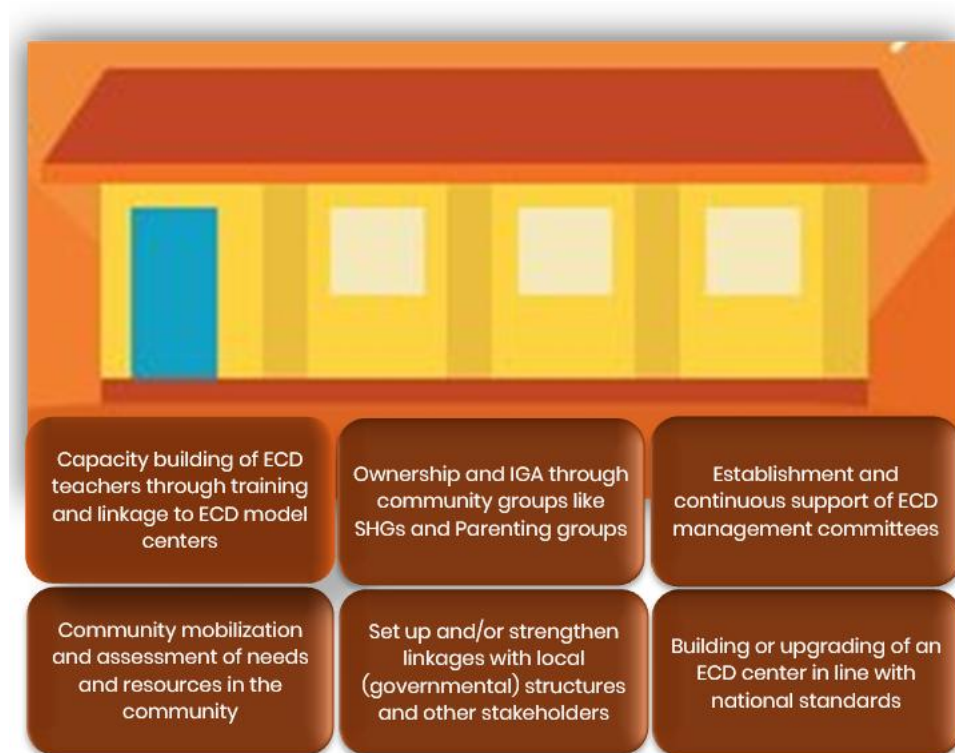
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In this annex you will find a description of the different 'building blocks' to establish a community based ECD center. As mentioned earlier, it is important to take into account that this is no 'one fits all' strategy but that the different steps and order of the steps will be different per context. Central however should be the involvement of the community, the linkages with other community structures, governmental structures and other stakeholders, and the integrated approach, including all elements of the nurturing care framework.

Community mobilization and assessment of needs and resources in the community

In the initial phase, community mobilization and collaboration with local leaders are key interventions to ensure that inputs and outcomes are clear to all involved stakeholders. The core element of the community-based ECD centers is parenting education, which serves as both the starting point and an ongoing program throughout the operation of the ECD centers. This ensures that parents fully understand the importance of ECD, commit to supporting the functioning of the community-based centers, and actively participate in the management and sustainability of the ECD programs.

Possible actions:

- » Raising awareness through sensitization meetings with local leaders (Sector and Cell level).
- » Sensitization of community and parents on the importance of ECD services for themselves and for their children.
- » Involvement of beneficiary communities in needs assessment, risk analysis program design, implementation, management and evaluation of interventions.

Annex 1: How to establish a community-based ECD center

- » Selection of the area for the ECD centers and collection of building materials takes place together with the community to increase ownership and to connect to local needs.
- » Start of Parenting groups and SHGs as entry point to address the importance of ECD and to mobilize the community. To support this process HaC uses participatory group-based methods like The Parenting Challenge and The Community Challenge.

Set up and/or strengthen linkages with local (governmental) structures and other stakeholders in the area of education, child protection, nutrition and health

Help a Child has extensive experience in Lobby & Advocacy and always tries to work in close collaboration with the government and local and national stakeholders to realize a system change.

Possible actions:

- » Mapping of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders (key community structures/ services) that could be involved in ECD programming.
- » Capacity building of stakeholders through training and workshops.
- » Establish a referral and coordination system and establish partnerships.
- » Collaboration with community health workers and health centers to organize nutrition education sessions, cooking demonstrations, screening of malnourished children, growth monitoring and early detection of health problems.
- » Community mobilization and training of ECD teachers and caregivers on child protection and reporting pathways to prevent and address child abuse.
- » Support relevant government ministries to include ECD in child protection policies.
- » Participation in ECD networks.

Building or upgrading of an ECD center in line with national standards

Building or upgrading of an ECD center.

Possible actions:

- » Identification of facilities that could be used in providing ECD services.
- » Needs assessment (in case of renovation)
(see appendix 2)
- » Organize a meeting with different stakeholders to discuss the contribution of each party (renovation of existing facilities or construction on new ones)
- » Stockpile or make arrangements with local vendors for the rapid availability of temporary safe structures and materials
- » Signature of an MoU between parties for clarifying who owns the ECD facility and sustainability of ECD services
- » Implementing party to start construction/renovation works under supervision of local administration
- » Attention to ECD-structures that are inclusive and multi-functional (possibility to integrate education, parenting, nutrition and health interventions)

Capacitybuilding of ECD teachers/caretakers through training and linkage to model ECD centers

Help a Child always tries to collaborate closely with the government and local and national stakeholders in training ECE teachers and developing an ECD curriculum to realize a system change. When no national standards and trainings are available, HaC can provide the training. This could form the basis of the program and advocacy.

Possible actions:

- » Participating in local and global ECD networks
- » Needs assessment on training needs
- » Linking with knowledge institutions on Early Childhood Education
- » Collecting good practices/training materials from other HaC countries or other NGO's
- » Work with ECD or education actors to adapt and prepare developmentally appropriate play materials

Through parenting and SHGs communities generate revenue to enhance ECD services

Income generation for ECD centers through SHGs and Parenting Groups

Possible actions:

- » Training/workshops for SHGs on the importance of ECD
- » Linking of SHGs and Parenting Groups to ECD management committee
- » Training/workshop for SHGs, Parenting Groups and ECD management committee on: IGAs (linked to the ECD centers) and on L&A towards the government

Establishment and continuous support of ECD management committees responsible for community mobilization and monitoring of the quality

ECD management committees (with representatives of parents, early childhood education, primary education and government) are trained and coached in their process to mobilize and lobby for resources and to monitor the quality of the ECE

Possible actions:

- » Mobilization for membership of ECD management team.
- » Introduction of ECD management team to the community.
- » Training of ECD management team in the use of the HaC ECDC Quality Scorecard. Topics addressed through the ECDC Scorecard are: Access to education, Teaching and Learning Quality, Learning and play materials, Infrastructure, Hygiene & Sanitation, Child Protection, Management, Sustainability, (Parental and Community) Ownership and Holistic Service Provision.