

A photograph of a man with dark skin and short black hair, wearing a white polo shirt with blue and grey horizontal stripes. He is holding a young child with dark skin and short black hair, who is wearing a red and black striped shirt. The child is looking off to the side. To the right of the man is a young girl with dark skin and black hair, wearing a purple t-shirt. They are all sitting in front of a light-colored, textured wall. There are three orange diagonal lines in the upper left area of the image.

Overview and Mapping Early Childhood Development Programme and Projects (2020–2024), APAC

FOREWORD & ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Plan International Asia Pacific (APAC) region, in 2024, conducted the mapping of the country office Early Childhood Education (ECD) and Inclusive Quality Education (IQE) programmes and projects that were active from 2020 and continued beyond 2024.

Colleagues from each country office filled out the mapping document, which served as a compilation and synopsis of the projects carried out in their respective countries during this time.

ECD Project and Programme Brief (2020-2024)

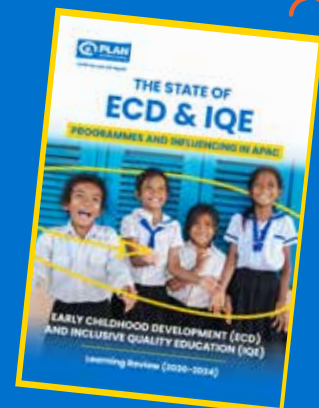
The Project brief included the following information per country project:

- Brief summary of the country's overall strategy and approach
- Key words highlighting core projects
- Target beneficiaries
- Project name, ID/Code, duration, donor
- Brief project description
- Key interventions/innovations
- Support required from APAC
- Project list table format) including gender transformative features and expected milestones
- Project evaluation information (table format).

The **Overview and Mapping of the ECD Program of APAC (2020-2024)** has been documented based on the list of projects of ECD Program Brief.

The Asia Pacific Regional office commissioned a Learning Review of the ECD and IQE Programs to determine how country programmes are contributing to the global strategy and identify promising practices that have been developed within each country office in the region that can be scaled, replicated, and promoted as a global programme model. One of the key resources of the Learning review drew from the mapping of the IQE and ECD projects.

ECD and IQE Learning Review



Special thanks to the members of the APAC Education Network. Through them, all APAC country offices were able to contribute data and information to complete the project mapping. This mapping and learning review are made possible by the time and active engagement of the following: Chen Xue (China), Lam Sony and Im Bee (Cambodia), Ngurah Ida (Indonesia), Soumen Ghosh and Anamika Sharma (India), Wanvira Yodwangjai (Thailand), Kyaw Zaw Aung Lin (Myanmar), Laxmi Pathak (Nepal), Dillyana Ximenes (Pacific), Dipa Das, Saydul Huq (Bangladesh), Ariel Frago (Philippines), Vilasack Viraphanh (Laos), Viet Dang Quoc (Vietnam) and Maria Sarmiento (Timor Leste). Nghia Trinh Trong from the DRM team also provided data and information from the Regional Safe School Project.

Plan International APAC acknowledges Ruxana Hossain Parvin, APAC Regional Education Adviser, for the overall management of the learning review and analysis and write-up of this document on Overview and Mapping of ECD Projects and Programmes (2020-2024).

Finally, special thanks to the APAC Hub Management Team, whose guidance and support made the work possible.

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[ECD and IQE Learning Review](#)



ABBREVIATIONS

ALS	Alternative Learning System
AOGD	Areas of Global Distinctiveness
BCC	Behavior Change Communication
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
CBLF	Community Based Learning Facilities
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
CEFM	Child Early and Forced Marriage
CCCD	Child Centered Community Development
CCDNs	Community Child Development Networks
CLC	Community Learning Centers
CSSF	Comprehensive School Safety Framework
CSSF	Child-Sensitive Social Protection Framework
CWD	Children with Disabilities
DePED	Department of Education
DLC	Digital Learning Centre
DORP	Drop Out Reduction Program
FDMN	Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals
FLN	Functional Literacy and Numeracy
GEMS	Gender Equity Movement in Schools
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GEI	Gender Equality and Inclusion
GRSCSI	Gender Responsive School and Community Safety Initiatives
HMGs	Home Mother Groups
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
IRWSCK	Improving Reading and Writing Skill Of Children In Kalikot
MAM	Moderate Acute Malnutrition
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
MRWinS	Minimum Requirements for WASH in Schools
MHM	Menstrual Hygiene Management
MUAC	Mid Upper Arm Circumference
MYRP	Multi-year Resilience Program
NRC	Nutrition Rehabilitation Centre

OSG	Out of School Girls
OS	Out of School
OOSC	Out-of-School Children
OOSC/Y	Out of School Children and Youth
PIE	Promoting Inclusive Education
PFA	Psychosocial First Aid
PSHEA	Protection from Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse
SAM	Severe Acute Malnutrition
SAP	Systems, Applications and Product
SARDO	Students at Risk of Dropping Out
SC	Students Cabinet
SEL	Socio-emotional Learning
SEM	Socio-Ecological Model
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SISTER	Safe & Inclusive School Towards Enhanced Resilience
SMCs	School Management Committees
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
STF	School Task Force
TESDA	Technical Education and Skills Development Authority
TOT	Training of Trainers
TLC	Temporary Learning Centre
TVL	Technical Vocational Livelihood
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
UHND	Urban Health & Nutrition Days
VAWC	Violence against Women and Children
WSUG	Water and Sanitation User Groups
YPE	Youth Peer Educators
ZOD	Zero Open Defecation



OVERVIEW OF ECD PROGRAMMES AND PROJECT IN APAC (2020–2024)

This section gives an overview of the mapping of projects and interventions on gender transformative Early Childhood Development (ECD) programs carried out by APAC country offices between 2020 and 2024.

It should be noted that not all 37 listed initiatives under the ECD Programme are not addressed here; nonetheless, descriptions of some projects are provided as examples in the explanation of ECD core components.

Introduction– Why Invest in Early Childhood Development ?

There is substantial scientific evidence that a child's first years are the most essential in his or her life. This is the period when 90 per cent of a child's brain is built and when the child learns social, emotional, cognitive and language skills that are the foundations for health, development, wellbeing, healthy relationships and productivity into adulthood.

Despite all the evidence demonstrating the importance of ECD, statistics shared that one-third of children between the ages of 3-6 years are developmentally not on track due to malnutrition, poor health, stress and trauma, and the lack of responsive caregiving.

40% of Asia-Pacific countries, 1 out of 2 children do not receive any type of Early Childhood

Care and Education (ECCE), and children living in high-income countries are almost four times more likely to be enrolled in pre-primary education than children living in low-income countries⁶.

Plan's programmes and influencing prioritize the youngest children who are most often denied their rights and have the most to gain from ECD programmes and services. These are children living in extreme poverty; children with a disability; children from minority ethno-linguistic groups; children affected by emergency, conflict and displacement; and children separated from parents/primary caregivers due to emergency, migration or institutionalization.

This section will explain how the APAC country offices' projects have approached the main interventions, actions, and innovations under the fundamental and complementary core components of ECD programming. ECD [core component](#)

- Gender Transformative Parenting and caregiving;
- Early Learning;
- Maternal, Newborn and Child Health and Nutrition (MNCHN);
- Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Target Age

It has been noted that country offices vary in their determination of the target age group based on the needs of the project. For example, Plan International Bangladesh (PIB) covers 0-8 years old children in Sponsorship Programme, Laos covers 3-5 years old marginalized children. In India the programme targets children under 5 who are stunted and also 0-2 years old for specific programme needs. Vietnam covers children 0-10 years old.

Each country has its own priority groups. However, there are similarities.

The targeted groups are: Children and youth; parents (including pregnant and lactating mothers) and caregivers including fathers, teachers, different women groups; community members, disadvantaged families, government education officials, such as Plan International Laos included district and provincial levels government partners.

3.1 WHY GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE ECD PROGRAMMES?

Gender Transformative Early Childhood Development (ECD) programming has fundamental importance for promoting the rights of girls and boys and for challenging gender inequality and discrimination. Gender transformative ECD programming and policy advocacy aim not only to ensure that girls and boys access the care, supports and services they need to survive, grow healthily and develop to their full potential – it also pays specific

6. ARNEC 2024, shared by ARNEC Board Chair Dr. Sheldon Shaeffer

attention to transforming unequal gendered power relations. This is the period when children learn the gendered norms, attitudes and expectations of their community and society, meaning that by the time they reach primary school, girls and boys may already have a clear idea of how they are expected to behave, how they are valued and what their future role will be. When ECD programmes are gender transformative, they engage parents, caregivers, community leaders and educators to change the way children are taught so that unjust gendered norms and attitudes are challenged from an early age; they work to ensure that girls and boys are provided with equal care and opportunities; they successfully promote men's support for care work and emotional engagement in the upbringing of their children; and they support women's rights to health, freedom from violence and empowerment.

Parenting and Caregiving: Why Parenting is Key in ECD Programme?

Parents and other family members are children's primary educators and caregivers. They are also important actors in the gender socialization process, as children are taught and learn their community's views about how they should be and behave, as well as their value, potential, and future roles. Family environments are a primary predictor of child development outcomes, and evidence demonstrate that poor home conditions have a significant impact on child development.

The likelihood of parents and caregivers being able to provide the responsive care, nutrition, stimulation and protection that they would like to – and that their children need to develop to their full potential - is reduced when families are poor; when there are high levels of family stress; when families face societal violence or conflict, or are displaced; and when the mother is suffering from maternal depression. Children's chances of surviving and thriving are also reduced when their mothers experience the health issues, have low levels of education and limited intra-household bargaining power.

Gender Transformative ECD Programmes in APAC COs

It was observed that the design and development of ECD programmes, as documented in ECD project mapping, are based on the context of the specific country offices and the assessment of how gender discrimination and inequality are barriers to the development of young girls and boys. The situation was reviewed to see whether there are differences in how children are cared for and treated and in their access to key services and programmes, depending on their gender.



Here are few cases presented from **Plan International China, Bangladesh, Nepal and Vietnam** for gender transformative ECD programming

Plan International China⁸ (Gender Responsive Quality ECCE) designed all project activities with gender perspective to ensure all 3-6 years old children receive gender responsive quality early childhood education. Training on gender equality for kindergarten teachers, gender sensitive practical guidelines, supporting kindergartens establish gender

8. Promoting Gender Equality in Kindergarten Education- Sponsorship Funding FY21-FY23

friendly school environment, development of technical toolkits on gender equality tailored to kindergartens teachers and parents all are key interventions of the project. Gender perspective integrated into educational management system and videos on gender equality for parents of kindergarten children.

Plan International Vietnam⁹ (Gender Responsive MNCHN) also promoted gender-responsive parenting practices to reduce child malnutrition and enhance comprehensive childhood health care and development. Parenting groups focus on caregivers with children aged 0 to 10 years old and aim to improve food resources, nutrition demonstrations, and caregiving practices. Parenting groups have been strengthened, and caregivers have become agents of change, promoting food resources, nutrition demonstrations, and gender-responsive practices.

Plan Bangladesh¹⁰ made significant strides in supporting parents and caregivers through parenting awareness education and early childhood care initiatives. These efforts led to increased knowledge about effective child rearing practices, gender norms, and shared decision-making within families. Under the Sponsorship Programme, Parents Groups received support through parenting awareness education. This intervention fosters non-discrimination between girls and boys, and encouraged males taking an active role in caring for pregnant women and participating in household chores.

The Gender Transformative Early Childhood Development (GeTECD)¹¹ project of Plan Bangladesh challenges gender norms and son-preference to provide equal opportunities for children aged 0-8 years. The GeTECD project was designed to address existing gender inequality and discrimination in communities. The project focuses on working with male caregivers to challenge their perceptions of gender and ensure equal care and support for the early development of girls and boys. The goal is to change how girls and boys are socialized to learn limiting expectations of their abilities, value, potential, and future roles. Policy and decision makers have improved understanding of why investing in gender transformative ECD policy, programmes and services is important, and what are effective, scalable gender-transformative interventions.

From Bangladesh: Fathers' Café

A Model to Promote Male Engagement in Gender Transformative ECD

Plan International Bangladesh developed a unique concept named “**Father Cafés**” where fathers are being engaged and sensitized for increasing their interactions with their children and foster support for their early-aged children's holistic development.



9. Gender Responsive Parenting to Promote ECD Project- Sponsorship Funding FY21-FY25

10. Implementing under the Sponsorship Program

11. Gender Transformative Early Childhood Development (GeTECD) (2022- 2024) (Donor-JNO)

Objectives of Fathers Café

To ensure equal participation of fathers or male members of the families in child rearing and caring; To ensure equal opportunities for growth and development of boys and girls as well; and to ensure a non-discriminatory social system by removing traditional child-rearing practices, and changing the social norms in a gender context.



What is Fathers Café?

- This group formed with 20-25 interested fathers in the community. Total 130 “**Father Café**” formed with 2580 fathers.
- Each member of the “**Fathers Café**” receives 1-hour long session each month where they learn about the growth and development of the child as well as their roles as a parent to play to support their early-aged children’s holistic development.
- Attending in “**Father Café**” session, the fathers share the learning with other fathers (at least one father who is not a father café member) in their community. They also encourage them to make necessary changes in their daily routine to support their children’s early childhood development

This concept has been using in other projects of PI Bangladesh CO and well appreciated and shared in Global Hub documents.

Parenting/ Caregiving in ECD Programs in APAC CO

Plan APAC Country offices carry out ECD programs and initiatives that improve caregivers' skills and confidence in adopting loving care techniques that are critical for young children's healthy growth, development, well-being, and resilience. Here are a few projects in which parents were encouraged to care well and equally for all of their children. Awareness sessions are held to help them realize the benefits of eliminating restricting and discriminatory gender stereotypes, as well as how encouraging men's positive involvement in the care of their children and partners is critical for child development.



Parenting and Caregiving

From Plan International Cambodia, Bangladesh, Nepal, Timor-Leste and Myanmar

Plan International Cambodia¹² (Healthy Start Program) supported monthly parenting sessions to leverage nutrition, ECCD, and WASH programming. These sessions focused on good practices of nutrition during pregnancy and lactating period, early and exclusive breastfeeding, complementary feeding, child growth monitoring, positive hygiene practices, gender equality, and positive masculinities.

Plan Bangladesh¹³ made significant strides in supporting parents and caregivers through parenting awareness education and early childhood care initiatives. These efforts led to increased knowledge about effective child rearing practices, gender norms, and shared decision-making within families. Under the Sponsorship Programme, Parents Groups received support through parenting awareness education. This intervention fosters non-discrimination between girls and boys, and encouraged males taking an active role in caring for pregnant women and participating in household chores.

Plan International Timor-Leste¹⁴ focused on implementing parenting education interventions in the community to enhance parents' knowledge and skills in providing gender-responsive nurturing, hygiene care, and positive discipline. Parenting is the core of ECD programs of Timor-Leste and implemented all programs in community through parenting. The project has successfully established 12 parenting groups in 8 communities and 5 father groups in 5 communities in Aileu and Ainaro municipalities. The project¹⁵ regularly monthly meeting using positive parenting module for the parenting groups and father groups in community level. The aim of the session is to enhance knowledge, attitudes and practices of parents and others caregivers on promote and practice gender-equal practices for nutrition, health, hygiene, and holistic early child development, decision-making and participation and equal distribution of household chores and childcare.



Plan International Nepal¹⁶ under the **Child DREAM** project engaged Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs) to establish Health Mother Groups (HMGs), reaching parents and promoting enhanced parenting practices. Specialized

12. Promoting Healthy Start Projects in 3 program units and one province

13. Implementing under the Sponsorship Program

14. Early Learning and Stimulation and parenting education- SPAD funding

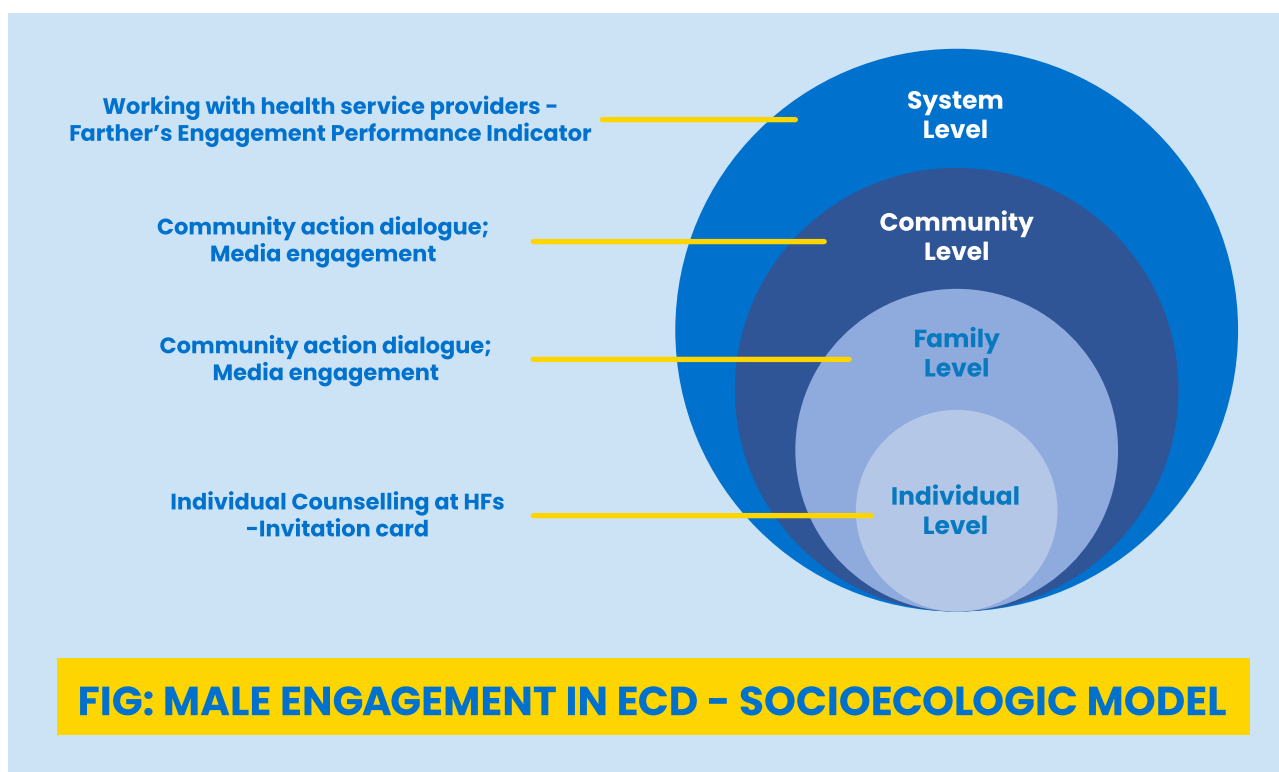
15. Parenting, Nutrition and Hygiene Education for Parents in Timor-Leste (PPN)- DFAT /Australian Government funding (July 2022 – June 2025)

16. The Child DREAM Project

training for fathers and male caregivers aimed to involve men in childcare. The project influenced local ECD policies, resulting in 9 local governments endorsing integrated ECD strategies and a draft ECD strategy at the province level. Community events and play-based learning initiatives were organized, benefitting parents and leading to the establishment of child play centers integrated with health and nutrition services

The Child DREAM project of Plan International Nepal conducted a study¹⁷ on Enhancing engagement of men parents/caregivers in maternal, newborn and child health through a multifaceted community approach in Nepal, with the objectives to.

Identify effective methods for engaging fathers in maternal, newborn & child health, and
Identify and overcome barriers hindering men's participation in MNCH



Findings of the research recommended:

- Importance of addressing multiple levels of influence to cultivate positive fathering behaviours, strengthen parent-child relationships, and contribute to healthy and non-violent family dynamics.
- Use of multiple strategies needed e.g. digital tools, establishing recording systems, distributing invitation cards to fathers, training health workers, men's group sessions.
- Gender norm change work as cross-cutting

Plan International Myanmar¹⁸ under the Woodside Funded Project, increased the knowledge, attitude and practical skills of parents/caregivers (including fathers) in the areas of child health, development, play, learning and protection. An innovative and well-received

17. Under Child Dream project

18. Woodside Funded ECD Project- (Jan 2020 to March 2023)

parenting program, Parenting Under Pressure, was developed in Myanmar and is included here, however a few additional programs in Education in Emergencies are discussed later in this section.

Parenting Under Pressure (PUP) Promoting Gender Responsive Parenting in Humanitarian Context

Plan International Myanmar¹⁹

Parenting Under Pressure is a flagship program of PI Myanmar and has been implemented in Let's keep playing project. In 2021, Plan Myanmar, Plan Denmark with the technical support of Plan Australia and LEGO foundation funding the PUP program aims to



empower parents and caregivers of children ages 0 – 8 in humanitarian emergencies to provide nurturing care that supports their children's healthy development and wellbeing. The program aims to strengthen relationships between mothers, fathers, and other female and male caregivers as co-parents in order to help increase male engagement in caregiving, as well as improve gender equality and social cohesion in communities affected by humanitarian crises. It has been implemented in at least five countries around the globe.

The PUP program implemented with two different delivery methods to parents/caregivers: face-to face, which has already been tested in other contexts, as well as a new hybrid model (Audio modality + face to face on 17 discussion points), with a mix of face-to-face and remote delivery modalities (Self-learning audio at home), which has been designed specifically for the project. The



hypothesis behind the hybrid model is that it could help increase flexibility and reach of the PUP program in future projects in contexts where humanitarian access is limited. Find more on the **PUP Page**.

19. Let's Keep Playing Project- Lego Foundation (01 Oct .2023 – 31 July 2023)

Major Interventions observed under Parenting (APAC COs)

The above description and project mapping indicate that the country offices have implemented a variety of interventions in accordance with the global AOGD parenting package.

- ✓ The following tasks have been focused as part of parenting programme.
- ✓ Integrate interventions to improve the condition, position and empowerment of mothers and caregivers in all work areas.
- ✓ Use the Gender Transformative Marker in project design, implementation, and evaluation to ensure gender-transformative outcomes.
- ✓ Promote men's positive engagement to care for their children and promote gender equality through parenting sessions and social & behavior change communication.
- ✓ Strengthen household resilience for ECD during conflict and emergencies, focus maintaining caregiver-child relationships and providing psychosocial support to children and their caregivers.
- ✓ Link health programs, strengthen families, nutrition, maternal wellbeing, social protection under the Parenting packages

3.2 EARLY LEARNING :

WHY IS EARLY LEARNING IMPORTANT?

Inclusive and quality early childhood care and education (ECCE) are vital for lifelong well-being. ECCE is the most transformative investment a country can make to give all children a fair start in life and combat inequalities early on. There is solid scientific evidence that access and exposure to quality learning opportunities early in life support the development of foundational skills needed not only for school readiness and success in primary school but also for flourishing throughout life. Quality early learning opportunities and pre-primary schooling represent one of the key services that children need to develop to their full potential in the early years, to be ready to enter primary school and to succeed in primary school and beyond. Starting primary school at the right age is important, children who start late are more likely to fall behind or drop out completely²⁰. Girls who receive pre-primary education stay enrolled in primary school, attend for longer and have an equal or better chance than boys of continuing to the upper grades and of making the transition to secondary school.

Early Learning Programmes (ELP) is a core component of the ECD AOGD (while formal pre-primary is included under Inclusive Quality Education). Despite the evidence of the importance of quality ELPs for children's school readiness, completion and success, less than half of children worldwide have access to pre-school²¹ (and the proportions are even lower in many countries in which we work).

20. UNESCO (2015) EFA Global Monitoring Report 2015. Gender and EFA 2000–2015: Achievements and challenges. Paris: UNESCO

21. UNICEF 2019: A world ready to learn. Global report on pre-primary education

Status of ECCE in the Asia Pacific Region

Despite rising global awareness and commitments towards quality early childhood care and education, significant gaps still remain, especially in access, quality, and equity in early childhood care and education. Children growing up in the poorest households and in rural areas are further behind.

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 (Global ECD Monitoring Report 2024-UNESCO). Millions of children in low and middle-income countries lack access to early childhood education and protection, and are exposed to conditions that pose a barrier to reaching their full potential.

In many low-income countries, enrolment rates for boys and girls in early childhood care and education (ECCE) services or pre-primary education are roughly equal but low overall for children of all genders. Increase in participation of children in pre-primary education was observed especially in Eastern Asia where the gross enrolment increased from 79 percent to 88 percent. (UNESCO & UNICEF, 2021). Despite this progress, the participation rates varied across countries in the region due to disparities, especially in terms of location and wealth.

Status of positive and stimulating learning environment at home for young children is concerning especially in terms of the availability of children's books and playthings for children at home (UNICEF & Countdown to 2030 Women's, Children's and Adolescent's Health, 2021)

Home based ECD and Playful Parenting

The home and family environment play a critical role in early stimulation for learning. Learning begins within the family, the primary circle of a child's life, and continues in pre-primary education, where early interactions and experiences lay the groundwork for foundational learning. In countries with data, more than 7 out of 10 children living in the richest households receive early stimulation and responsive care compared to less than half of children living in the poorest households. On average in countries with data, about 25% of children are left without adequate supervision and 77% of young children experience violent discipline at home. (UNESCO and UNICEF 2024).

Playful parenting and responsive caregiving lower the stress level for children (when confronted by the risk factors) and help them develop emotional,



social and cognitive coping mechanisms against adversities. It has life-long benefits. They improve health and also broader wellbeing, including the individual's ability to learn and earn. Responsive care is reinforced by positive parenting strategies and purposeful play. When children play, they are doing something they enjoy. Because they enjoy what they are doing, they engage in play for long periods. The longer they play, the more opportunities they have to practice the skills they are using and to learn more. The challenge for parents and adults is to help shape a context where the play children are enjoying, offers opportunities to learn and practice skills that adults have identified as important. That means that adults need to know enough to know what they enjoy, and then be creative enough to find way to build the learning and skill development they want into that play context



Early Learning (ECCE, Pre-Primary, Home-based Learning) projects in APAC

Not many projects were found that evaluate children's learning or determine if they are enrolling, staying from community learning centers to formal pre-primary school system, and performing in formal schools. Though some COs have made excellent interventions and are presented from **Plan Laos, Bangladesh, Timor-Leste and Myanmar, made** at home, CLCs and with the government.

Plan International Laos was found the most advanced in providing early learning and pre-primary education for the children. They implemented couple of projects for school readiness and improving learning. **The Basic Education for Ethnic Minority Students in Oudomxay Province, project²²** implemented ensuring appropriate student learning

outcomes are achieved through the additional focus on ECE. Risks remain that despite expanding in coverage, the quality of education at pre-primary levels will remain poor, limiting the impact of this new investment. The project made training investments in improving ECE quality and established methodology to assess

- (a) pre-literacy
- (b) pre-numeracy and
- (c) Lao language skills

The project seeks to improve the

quality of ECE outcomes and critical Lao language skills of pre-primary and early-grade primary students, to improve the overall development and school readiness of children in disadvantaged communities. In another ongoing project²³, Ready Set Go-Building



22. Basic Education for Ethnic Minority Students in Oudomxay Province (2019-2022)-Ministry of Education, (2019-2022)

23. Ready Set Go-Building Sustainable School Readiness (Duration: April 2022- March 2025),

Sustainable School Readiness project focus on improving primary student learning outcomes and on-time primary enrolment through enabling currently Pre-Primary Education excluded, a largely ethnic minority in 5-year-olds, to participate in high-quality Summer Pre-Primary (SPP) courses with appropriate parental support, and WASH promoting manner and supporting the progressive institutionalization of the SPP model within the national and provincial education system.

I am Ready (Accelerated intensive pre-primary education programme)

Program Model Adapted from Lao Educational Access, Research and Networking (LEARN)

I am Ready! is an accelerated, intensive pre-primary education Global Program Model²⁴ aims to develop the physical, linguistic, cognitive, and socio-emotional skills of children.

LEARN model was first implemented in Lao PDR under Lao Educational Access, Research and Networking (LEARN) in 2014-2018 and then expanded in Lao PDR (additional provinces). Initially the LEARN Project tested three program models, namely:

- (1) A 10-week school readiness program called “*Summer Pre-Primary*”
- (2) A 4-week Lao Language readiness course integrated into the first 4 weeks of grade 1 class
- (3) Literacy boost activities for grades 1 and 2.

Read more here.

The SPP concept was originally developed by the **Mother Child Education Foundation (ACEV)**, based in Turkey, to serve disadvantaged Turkish and Syrian refugee children who have no access to any form of ECE. It was then contextualized and pilot-tested by **Plan International in Lao PDR, Cambodia, and Tanzania**.

PI Cambodia: The program model was adapted to align with the Cambodian Early Learning Development Standards, ECE policies and programs and school year. Model implemented in 30 communities in Steung Treng province, with very positive response and support from parents, community members/leaders, school heads, teachers and district education officials.

In 2025, **PI Myanmar** is going to conduct a pilot program on 10 week school readiness using the LEARN Model.



Plan Bangladesh provided access to the children aged 4-5 years to attend **Early Learning Centers**, and **Community Learning Centers (CLCs)** operated by youth educators catered to the children aged 6-8 years, including girls. Children were provided with comprehensive support, including tutorials, educational materials, and need-based financial assistance. Plan International Bangladesh, operate home based **Shishu Bikash Kendro (SBK)** for 3-5 years children for their holistic development and preparing for pre-schooling, provide training for SBK Facilitator/caregiver and support stimulation material package in SBK

center for upholding the child development. As a result of these interventions, children are able to exercise their rights to learn and develop through play-based approaches, effectively preparing them for formal schooling. In **Day Care Centre of PI Bangladesh**, children of age 6 months to below 5 years attend Day Care Centre aiming children to grow healthy in a joyful learning environment. Here children listen to stories, recite rhymes with the caregiver, sing, play and have fun. Teachers of the pre-primary schools are in regular touch with these facilitators and assist them in their work.

Children attend pre-school after graduating from these centers. It has been proved to be a great initiative as school readiness as experienced.



The initiated integrated ECD Learning Centres of **Plan International Bangladesh²⁵** has made a **Sustainable Community Managed Integrated ECD** Learning Centre for the holistic development of their children. Parents and the community recognize the interventions that promoted children's cognitive and communicative skills development, as well as fathers' involvement in child care. Seeing the benefits of the intervention on the children, the community with their own initiative manages and monitors 263 SBK centers. The local government pays the honorarium for SBK facilitators by categorizing Vulnerable Group Development cards as social safety net support.

Plan Timor-Leste²⁶, initiated quality and sustainable Early Learning and Stimulation services to all girls and boys up to the age of 13 especially excluded girls and boys in program working areas. In collaboration with



25. Integrated Sponsorship Project-CNO, Rangpur

26. Early Learning and Stimulation and Parenting education-SPAD funding

the President's office, they facilitated early stimulation through mobile libraries, which contain gender transformative and inclusive toys, games, and materials for children in communities for the community and children, so that they can read books, play game, storytelling, Painting and watch TV show. The children in play groups also showed a significant change in their knowledge such as basic literacy, numeracy, writing, coloring and the children as well as lead a small team in the class room. The children's also have good confidence to express their talents and follow the instruction from teachers during the weekly community pre-school. Positive behaviors change also showed from children under six years old when they play with their friends in the play groups activity.

Plan International Myanmar under the Woodside Funded ECD Project provided Support learning through play and school readiness for children through playgroups for 3-8-year-old and early learning centre activities for 4-6-year-old, through inclusive community-managed ECCD services and the provision of age and culturally appropriate materials. Assist children to graduate successfully from ECCD centre activities and make connections between preschool and the early grades of primary school (Grade 1 and 2) including support for transition to primary school. The project successfully handed over to the Thabaung township level ECD network group. Under the Let's Keep Playing Project, ECD centres were constructed for providing early learning opportunities. The project made parenting program for enhancing play-based learning program at home.

Neev- A pre-primary education initiative of **Plan India**²⁷ a "Neev" project recognizes the need to intervene in the age group of 3-6 years, especially girls to receive pre-school education in an enabling environment in pre-school learning institutions and at home for timely enrolment and transition to formal schooling with adequate foundational skills. The key objective of the project is to ensure 100 per cent children in the age group of 3-6 years have access to inclusive and quality pre-school education, and successfully transition to primary school. The project increased awareness of parents on importance of ECCE and age appropriate transition to primary school.

Landscape review and design options assessment of childcare support services for rural and semi-rural youth Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) in Bangladesh (2024)

Plan International Bangladesh is working as a consultant for **World Bank** to provide analytical and advisory support to improve the understanding of the need for childcare services to enable Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) youth, in the age group of 15-35 years, access to education, skills and better jobs. Under a consortium with Brac and Sesame Workshop, Plan International as the lead, conducting the assessments of demand, supply and quality of available childcare services in Bangladesh followed by the analysis of existing child care model. The provision of quality childcare will create employment opportunities to enable NEET female youth's access to education, skills and better jobs as well as opportunities to enjoy leisure time and engage in community services. Key priorities of the model are to:

27. Neev- A pre-primary education initiative(July 2022- June 2023)

- i. Target female NEET to facilitate education, training and employment*
- ii. Create a new sector for employment for caregivers providing services*
- iii. Ensure children's (0-5 years) safety, nutrition and development including socio-emotional, language and physical development;*
- iv. Focus on community engagement and ownership, facilitated in partnership with local organizations.*

The Australian National Office and the Global Hub ECD team are considering this initiative as a potential possibility for future collaboration by demonstrating the plan ECD model to the World Bank and other external partners.

Early Learning Interventions in Community Learning Centers and Home-Based Learning Opportunities (APAC COs)

Under the Early Learning components, it has been noted that the country office projects have mostly concentrated on boosting Community Learning Centers and Home-Based Learning Opportunities. The Community based Learning Center interventions of various projects have been found mainly engaged in the following activities:



- Facilitate sessions to empower parents/caregivers (including fathers) to build a home environment that will improve and promote children's early learning through play and interactive activities at home.
- Support community-managed play-based, gender responsive early learning opportunities (e.g. for children aged over three years).
- Facilitate links between community-based programmes and formal pre-primary and primary services including resources, oversight and support to formal and community-based ECD.
- Support adapted non-formal early learning programmes in humanitarian settings, ensuring attention to social and emotional learning, psychosocial support and conflict sensitivity; and facilitate linkages to other essential supports for young children (health, nutrition, WASH etc.).

Early Learning Programmes in Emergency [The full package [ECDiE Planet page](#)]

- Organize play-based, group learning experience before entering primary school, with the aim of promoting children's psychosocial wellbeing, development and for children - age 3 to 6 years.
- Offer the program in existing pre-schools, ECCE centres, Temporary Learning Spaces, Child Friendly Spaces, or other community spaces. They may also be home-based, drop-in or mobile.
- Plan program with community representatives and caregivers
- Mobilise families to register young children for the ELPIE
- Plan and implement strategies for exit and sustainability.

3.3 MATERNAL, NEWBORN, CHILD HEALTH AND NUTRITION (MNCHN)

Why MNCHN in ECD?

The first 1,000 days – from the point of conception to the child's second birthday – are especially crucial. This is the period during which nutritional requirements are the highest, and when brain development is most sensitive to the nutrition and care the child receives. Inadequate nutrition during this period affects the structure and functions of the brain in ways that are difficult to compensate for later. These first years are also the years when young children need adequate amounts of nutritious foods for their optimum physical growth, to build immunity to infections, and protect against disease. Undernutrition puts children at greater risk of dying from common infections; increases the frequency and severity of such infections; and delays recovery. Nearly half of all deaths in children under 5 are associated with undernutrition: left untreated, children with severe acute malnutrition (SAM) are nearly 12 times more likely to die than a well-nourished child (UNICEF).²⁸

Young children who do not receive adequate nutritious food - in the first two years in particular - are also likely to become chronically malnourished (stunted). If a young child is stunted on their second birthday, then they are very likely to be stunted for the rest of their life. Stunting impacts on brain development. Stunted children are less likely to develop to their full cognitive potential and to be ready for school, perform well at school and to complete schooling. As adults, they are more likely to earn less and face barriers to participation in their communities.

Child nutrition starts with the mother's nutrition. When mothers are underweight or anemic they are more likely to die during pregnancy or while giving birth, give birth early (pre-term) and have children with low birth weight. A baby who is born at full term with low birthweight is already malnourished, and this baby is at increased risk of being malnourished throughout

28. GLO-ECD_Food_Security_Nutrition_Brief-IO-ENG-ver23Apr21.pdf

childhood. This creates a cycle between undernutrition in mothers and undernutrition in children.

Women's under-nutrition is related to gender inequality, further exacerbated by poverty and lack of access to resources. In many cultures, boys and men traditionally eat first, and girls and women eat the leftovers. They are also the first to make nutritional sacrifices in the face of economic shocks. In some cultures, mothers are subject to dietary restrictions during pregnancy, which in some cases mean that they are deprived of essential nutrients and which are linked to iron and protein deficiencies. Maternal under-nutrition and anemia are linked to higher rates of maternal death and morbidity.²⁹

Adolescent pregnancy and child marriage are linked to a higher risk of maternal death, under growth child birth and disability³⁰.

It is estimated that between 25 per cent and 50 per cent of all young women in low-income countries give birth before they turn 18. In every region of the world, girls with lower education levels and from rural, low-income families or ethnic minorities are more likely to become pregnant than their wealthier, urban, educated counterparts.

The risk of maternal death among teenagers – and in particular young teenagers is high. Complications during pregnancy and childbirth are the second cause of death for 15 to 19-year-old girls globally: about 70,000 adolescents in developing countries die annually of causes related to pregnancy and childbirth.

Pre-term birth and birth-related complications are responsible for the majority of deaths among new-borns. Among the under-fives, common childhood infections – including pneumonia, malaria and diarrhea – continue to be leading causes of death. Most of these new-born and child deaths could have been prevented or treated with simple, affordable interventions that are not reaching children in low-income countries

The MNCHN program has a critical need throughout APAC, as evidenced by the data from CSP documents presented below

Vietnam, 65% of ethnic minority women give birth at home. Stunting, an outcome of chronic undernutrition, is as high as 41% amongst ethnic minority children under five.

29. Report_GLO-gender_inequality_ecd_linkages-IO-Final-Eng-jun17

30. Safe Schools Model Province in Indonesia (Sep 2022 - 30 Aug 2025)

Philippines, the neonatal mortality rate was 14 deaths per 1,000 and live births, the infant mortality rate was 21 deaths per 1,000 live births, and the under-5 mortality rate was 27 deaths per 1,000 live births.

Timor-Leste, anemia is a 'severe' public health problem especially for young children, partly due to diarrhea. Nationally only 61.3% of households have a satisfactory Food Consumption Score – i.e. eat the correct balance of all right food groups every day. (This is 72.7% in Aileu and 66% in Ainaro). Strong anecdotal evidence suggests that around 50% of children do not receive Vitamin A and deworming tablets every six months. Only around 50% of mothers practise exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months; complementing the diet of the baby with e.g. formula milk and plain rice.

Myanmar, despite very high rates of literacy and near gender parity at all levels of education, Myanmar has some troubling gender indicators. It has the second-highest maternal mortality rate in the region.

Bangladesh, incidence of severe stunting and moderate stunting among children under-five is unacceptably high. According to the Early Child Development Index, 36.1% of children under five years in Bangladesh are underdeveloped, resulting in poor physical, socio-emotional, and cognitive abilities.

Laos also has the highest stunting rates at 36% of children under 5 (CU5).

Indonesia, child marriage is one of the leading causes of childhood stunting in Indonesia. Based on the Indonesian Toddler Nutritional Status Survey (SSGBI), the prevalence of stunting among children under five years old has been reduced to 24.4% in 2021, down from 27.67% in 2019, and 37.8% in 2013.

This figure, however, is still higher than the WHO's maximum stunting tolerance of 20%.

China-Stunting rate of children in rural area is 3 to 4 times higher than in urban areas and the prevalence of anemia is alarmingly high in poor rural areas, especially among ethnic minorities.

APAC Country office Projects on MNCHN

From 2020 to 2024, the country offices have undertaken projects to deliver quality essential MNCHN programme. The projects integrated with a strong community management in order to reach the most vulnerable households. The interventions focused identification and management of children under five years as well as pregnant and lactating women who are acutely malnourished. Provided training to health-workers to provide services that are respectful, and enable men's positive participation.



A few cases from Plan International **Timor-Leste, Cambodia, Myanmar and India**

Plan International India

During the mapping period, it was found that Plan India implemented couple of innovative projects for improving maternal health and nutrition of children. The country projects aim to ensure all infants, children, adolescents and mothers from disadvantaged families have access to age appropriate nutrition services, and nurturing child care practices for early childhood development. Four sub-impact areas are covered under this Country Programme:

- 1) *Prevention of malnutrition,*
- 2) *Management of Moderate and Severe Acute Malnutrition (MAM and SAM) children,*
- 3) *Safe drinking water and prevention from water borne diseases and*
- 4) *Early childhood development*



Reach Each Child³¹

Under this project, in two tribal districts in Maharashtra, two tribal districts in Gujarat and one district in Rajasthan, intervened in first 1000 days, utilizing digital and artificial intelligence based innovative modules, strengthening the health, hygiene and nutrition status of pregnant women and children and targeting towards 40 percent reduction in the number of children under-5 who are stunted, reduce and maintain childhood wasting to less than 5 percent. The initiative has supported pregnant women, malnourished children (sam and mam), and linked children with nutrition rehabilitation centre (NRC). The project used digital application to collect and track the health & nutritional status of the pregnant women, lactating mother and newborn babies and a token amount is transferred to the beneficiary bank account (parent of the SAM child).



Child Centered Community Development (CCCD)³²

Integrated community development project, major interventions under the area of nutrition. They promoted kitchen garden at household level to enhance intake of high nutrient foods to curb the mal-nutrition or under nutrition among the family members in the community especially of children and mothers since they are unable to afford green vegetables regularly in their daily intake. Provided financial support sponsored families for Nutrition, printing and dissemination of recipe books

31. Reach Each Child- Reckitt funding (2018-202)

32. Child Centered Community Development (CCCD)-Sponsorship funding (July 2020-June 2022)

and conducted recipe demonstrations with family members and conducted awareness activities on the occasion of world breastfeeding week, national Poshan Maah, National Girls Day & children's day etc.



Khushi³³

Plan International India implemented another project “to bring positive changes in the nutritional status of children under 2 years of age through strengthening Mothers Groups across 57 urban slums of two operational districts. Mass awareness programs were conducted (Community meetings, home visits, celebration of important days - world breast feeding week etc). The home visit and close monitoring of UHND helped in identification of malnourished children followed by referral.



MOM's Plate³⁴

To bolster maternal nutrition by providing hot cooked nutritious meals to malnourished pregnant women at the doorstep to meet the additional calorie requirements thereby improving maternal and newborn outcomes, supported pregnant women with nutritious meal packets and made them aware of healthy hygiene and sanitation practices. As a result of this initiative, none of the pregnant women under the intervention have lost weight during their pregnancy. All the 140 babies were born with adequate birth weight ranges from 2.5 kg to 3.5 kg (No low birthweight baby).

To develop entrepreneurship among women groups, 19 women from the communities were promoted as entrepreneurs. They cooked the food and served the same at the doorstep of the pregnant women and earned which contributed to increase their family income.

Plan International Myanmar under MNCHN, implemented Strengthening resilience of IDPs and returnees in Kachin state project³⁵ living in camps and return or resettled villages in Kachin state project integrated nutrition with YEE and Child Protection funded by BMZ. The project improved access to nutrition and parenting support services and they were able to make decisions that prevent stunting and wasting. **The Health and Nutrition** project

33. Khushi - Nutritional Status Improvement in Urban Slums-Sponsorship funding (July 2022-June 2023)

34. MOM's Plate- Sponsorship funding (July 2022-June 2023)

35. Strengthening resilience of IDPs and returnees in Kachin state project

funded by [sponsorship program](#) implemented through cluster-based clinics and community-based nutrition approach aiming at improving maternal, new born and child health and nutritional status.

Through the cluster-based clinics, the project's medical team provided antenatal services, treatment and cash to referred cases pregnant women and to <5 children. Additionally, the project provided clean delivery kits to pregnant women and antenatal drugs to pregnant women, implemented Nutrition activities through community-based approach. Measuring mid upper arm circumference (MUAC) screening sessions were conducted for children <5 to find out the malnutrition cases. Also, the project conducted Health and Nutrition education sessions for mothers, provided fortified rice to pregnant women, mothers of malnourished children, mothers of at risks of malnourished children. The project also conducted communal cooking and responsive feeding sessions.

Plan International Cambodia³⁶ under the “**Healthy Start project**” screened children for their nutritional status. Children with Moderate Acute Malnutrition were rehabilitated at home by receiving Ready to Use Supplementary Food (RUSF) food. Children with Severe Acute Malnutrition were sent to referral hospitals or health centers for treatment. Plan Cambodia conducted community-based cooking demonstrations in some target areas to promote uptake of nutrition services at the community level.

Plan International Timor-Leste³⁷ while implementing **Parenting, Nutrition and Hygiene Education for Parents in Timor-Leste (PPN)**, enhanced knowledge, attitudes and practices of parents and others caregivers on promoting and practicing gender-equal practices for nutrition, health, hygiene, and holistic early child development, decision-making and participation and equal distribution of household chores and childcare.

Overall interventions of APAC COs on MNCHN~

Considering the activities of all the projects described above or which may not be included here, the following tasks have been carried out and recommended for incorporated by the country offices

- ✓ Increase parental and caregiver knowledge about nutrition, hygiene, and gender equality.
- ✓ Empower parenting groups and caregivers to drive change through food resources, nutrition demonstrations, and gender-responsive practices.
- ✓ Provide health counseling and treatment to pregnant women, increasing their knowledge of nutrition and maternal health.
- ✓ Collaborate with partners, families, and communities to strengthen support for maternal health and provide quality MNCHN counseling and services.
- ✓ Improve health service resilience and readiness for disasters and pandemics, focusing on community health systems and primary healthcare. Ensure continuity of life-saving services and community engagement during crises.
- ✓ Encourage and support national and local health authorities to incorporate nurturing care interventions within MNCHN services



3.4 WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH) IN ECD

Why Invest in WASH?

Clean water, basic sanitation and good hygiene practices are essential for the survival and development of children. Roughly 2,200 children under five die every day because of diarrheal diseases, or over 800,000 per year. Unsafe drinking water, inadequate water for hygiene, and lack of sanitation are responsible for nearly 90 percent of these avoidable deaths. Many other diseases that affect children (and adults) are linked to WASH. Handwashing with soap and water can cut the risk of diarrhea by 35 percent and greatly lowers the risk of respiratory infections³⁸.

Consequently, the integration of comprehensive WASH interventions into ECD programming is critical for both child survival and for healthy development – especially during the first five years of life. For this reason, WASH is, appropriately, an explicit part of Plan's ECD programme.

WASH interventions directly support attainment of the ECD Complementary Component "*Sanitation and Hygiene*" – which measures the percent of households that are verified as using at least basic sanitation and hygiene facilities. WASH interventions also are an important component of the DRM programme's humanitarian response efforts wherever needed. Plan's IQE programme mentions investing in school water, sanitation, and menstrual hygiene facilities.

38. GLO-WASH_Gender_Plan_Global_Strategy_Briefing_Paper-FINAL-Oct20

Country office Projects on WASH

Plan is a pioneer in gender-transformative and child-centred WASH approaches. Plan has been a recognized global leader in WASH and pioneered and/or helped promote advancing girl- and child-focused WASH programming.



Some WASH programs and projects that were carried out between 2020 and 2024 from **Plan International Thailand, Laos and Timor-Leste**.

Plan International Thailand aims to enhance accessibility to clean water, proper sanitation, and hygiene for community members, especially children and adolescent girls in rural areas and implemented several projects for providing clean water to the children and communities.

The project³⁹ include providing clean water for vulnerable groups at the Thailand-Myanmar border, improving water for health and livelihoods in Chiang Mai. The project promoted community empowerment, repaired the damaged water pipes, conducted a major clean-up of the storage tank, repaired the filter to improve the usability of the water, and created capacity for long-term maintenance by community members in 4 Village, Mae Ramat district and Tak province successfully. As a result, the project has responded to increasing water accessibility for the targeted groups which means they have sufficient clean water consumption all year round, especially during the dry season. The Water Management Committee, which includes women in key roles, has been established with specific roles and responsibilities and is now capable of ensuring that women and girls have equal access to water usage and decision-making about the water system. The project conducted hygiene training activity for all community members. The training focused on good personal hygiene, habits, and handwashing

Plan Laos⁴⁰ focuses on **improving female-friendly WASH facilities and sanitary and hygiene practices** for the community and adolescents. Create a comfortable and safe school sanitation environment for all children, including menstruating girls, through improved access to water and sanitation facilities including gender-segregated toilets. In addition, **Plan Laos⁴¹** implemented community-led total sanitation (CLTS), CLTS plus, and Gender WASH Monitoring Tool (GWMT) activities while integrating some additional components to strengthen climate change resilience as it relates to community WASH and public health service provision. The project focuses on improving technical skills in

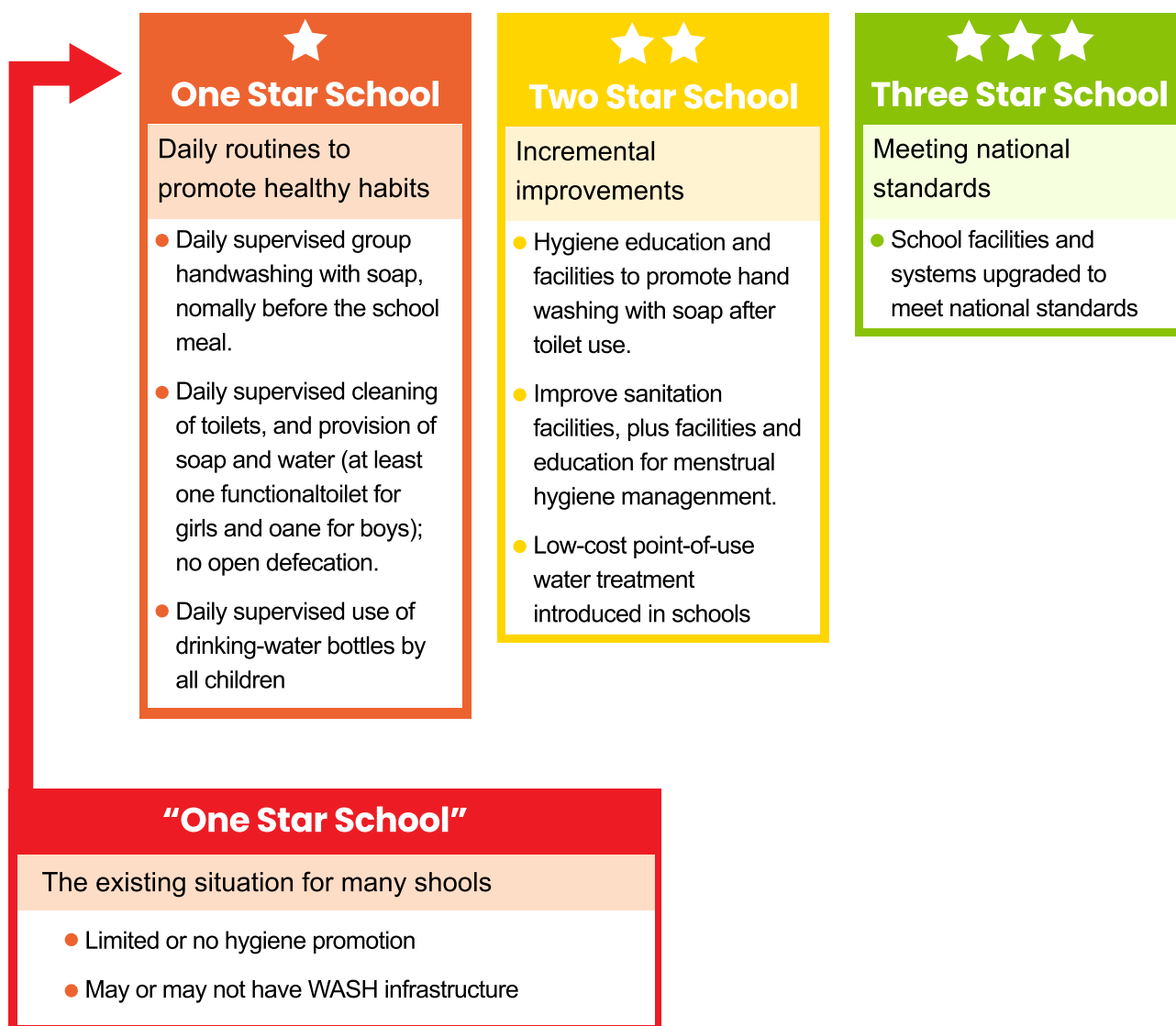
39. Clean water for vulnerable group at Thailand-Myanmar border project in Mae Sot; Project-Water for Improved Health and Livelihoods in Chiang Mai; Funding Target (March to November 2023)

40. Gender Responsive Hygiene Improvement at Primary and Lower Secondary Schools – Ministry of Education (2023- 2026)

41. WASH and Integrated Nutrition (WIN) Project III- funding DFAT-ANCP & ANO general donation (2022-2025)

antenatal care, postnatal care, assisted delivery, and WASH practices in healthcare facilities. Under the project, Improved access to health services for women, infants and young children, **Plan Laos**⁴² focuses on improve quality and access to maternal, infant and child health services and behaviors change on MNCH and WASH in target communities. Plan Laos implemented projects for improving school sanitary, hygiene environment and promoting health practices at school.

Plan International Timor-Leste implemented interventions for strengthening water management groups (GMF) and enhancing the role of young women and individuals with special needs in decision making within the management committee and Successful implementation of a water infrastructure project benefiting households. Monthly hygiene promotion sessions were conducted, fostering collaboration between students, teachers, and the School Association/Parent-Teacher Association. Under the WASH project, improved access to clean water, good sanitation and adoption of safe hygiene practices through community and school WASH initiatives, as well as improve hygiene behaviors change programs and provided. Sustainable access to water & sanitation status of girls, boys, and women in marginalized communities and include rural schools.



42. Improved access to health services for women, infants and young children- Funding BMZ (2022-2026)

Recommendation

The **Three Star approach for WASH** could be useful to improve sustainable and inclusive access to WASH services and facilities within schools, including pre-schools.

The Three Star WASH approach in School Guide⁴³

Initially developed in partnership with ANO and COs located in the Pacific Islands.

The Three Star Approach for WASH in Schools is designed to advance the effectiveness of hygiene behaviour change programmes, while ensuring that schools meet the essential criteria for providing a healthy environment for children. The approach was developed in response to bottleneck analyses of WASH in Schools programmes worldwide and is modelled on other successful school-based behaviour change programmes.

3.5 INTEGRATED ECD PROGRAM

Upon examining the country offices' projects, it is noted that the majority of them used an integrated approach to program design, offering children and the community a variety of supports in the areas of nutrition, health, early stimulation, and parenting, all of which have a greater positive impact on development and survival than single services. integrated programming is both cost-effective and satisfies the multi-sectoral requirements of young children.

There is strong evidence that programmes which have integrated parenting interventions promoting responsive, nurturing caregiving together with interventions to treat acute malnutrition, health and hygiene have positive impacts on children and improve children's growth and developmental outcomes in the long term.

Plan International Cambodia has made a good model of Integrated ECD program.

Plan International Cambodia⁴⁴ under the Healthy Start Program (Integrated Nutrition, ECCD and WASH) project focuses on improving child nutrition, maternal and child health, WASH, and early learning. It aims to improve practices among parents and caregivers, enhance the capacity and quality of local service providers, support targeted households to improve food accessibility and availability, and influence national policies and guidelines related to nurturing care, maternal and child health, nutrition, and WASH. As mentioned in the previous description, **Plan Bangladesh** also uses the Integrated ECD program approach under the Sponsorship Program.

43. ANO_WASH-in-schools-and-preschools-guide- (UNICEF, Plan International, Water Aid and Live & Life)

44. Healthy Start Program- Cambodia

3.6 ECD IN EMERGENCY (ECDiE)

Why ECDiE?

Children under eight years old are especially vulnerable to the negative impacts of emergencies. They are more likely to be injured, to become malnourished, and to die from preventable diseases than are older children and adults. When a child affected by a crisis doesn't receive the nurturing care and protection they need to develop and cope with stress and/or violence, this can affect their wellbeing, resilience, health and ability to learn and relate to others, right through to adulthood.

ECD in emergencies (ECDiE) programming provides immediate, life-saving support for children from conception to eight years. It is a cross-sector, thematic area that includes ensuring the provision of nutritious food, health care, protection and psychosocial support in a safe and nurturing environment, while protecting children's normal development through continued opportunities for play and learning.

ECD in Emergency Integrated ECD Program in Bangladesh and Myanmar

Plan International Bangladesh

Strengthening Integrated ECD Services for Holistic Child Development

Integrated ECD program of Bangladesh refers to a holistic child development approach that nurtures children aged 37 to 60 months in physical, cognitive, language, communication and socio-emotional skills by ensuring required health, nutrition, WASH and protection services through the referral pathway along with the inclusion and contextually appropriate child-friendly environment that leads to a potentially better life for children. The project works that girls, boys, and community members have knowledge, skills and capacity to meaningfully contribute to the wellbeing of their families and communities. Bangladesh successfully improved coordination, communication and capacities among ECD Working Group (ECDWG) members towards ensuring access to quality integrated ECCD services of Rohingya and affected host communities.

Plan International Myanmar

Integrated support with Early Learning, Comprehensive Teacher Training and Inclusion of Children with Disabilities

Plan Myanmar successfully implemented ECD projects integrated with other sectors including health, WASH, nutrition, child protection and early learning. The parenting program increased the knowledge, attitude and practical skills of parents/caregivers (including fathers) in the areas of child health, development, play, learning and protection.

The initiative for playgroups for 3-8-year-old and early learning center for 3-5-year-old children provide early learning support with play and school readiness through inclusive community-managed ECCD services and the provision of age and culturally appropriate materials. A comprehensive Teacher Training programs on Education in Emergencies is ongoing under the ECW project. Some other key interventions included support for township-level ECD network groups for implementing PUP and Play Matters at home programs; Toy making Social Enterprise initiative training fabric and wooden toy makers for fund-raising activities.

ECDiE Response Plan⁴⁵

Areas of Consideration on ECD Programmes

The ECD projects covered under this section, as well as those outlined in the Mapping document, provide a comprehensive overview of APAC CO ECD programmes. The Country Offices have adopted and implemented directed objectives, which can be presented as follows.

- Support for nurturing care and positive family relationships through parenting education and promotion of positive male engagement.
- Promote multi-sectoral community services and support for ECD – including early learning, maternal, newborn and child health and nutrition (MNCHN) and WASH
- Strengthen household resilience for ECD, in particular during conflict and emergencies including through access to life-saving essential services, social protection and strengthened coping strategies.

Focus on Early Learning Programmes

There is solid scientific evidence that access and exposure to quality learning opportunities early in life support the development of foundational skills needed not only for school readiness and success in primary school but also for flourishing throughout life.

A recommendation could be made to place greater emphasis on Early Childhood Care and Education and learning, so that children can enroll in the formal system, continue schooling successfully and develop holistically.

Child care facilities, preschools, and the ECCE ecosystem are critical because they provide children with high-quality early learning experiences that help them develop core abilities. To succeed in formal school, children need to play, be cared for, and have a strong foundation.

45. GLO-ER_Programme_Manual_ECDiE_Chapter_1



Early learning should receive significant attention as a programming and influencing priority. Some of the COs' interventions can be used to drive new business development.

Total Reach Count

When calculating a project's total reach, it is preferable to include data on pre-primary education completion rather than the total number of children or number of community-based Early Learning Programs. Data on the number or percentage of children receiving community-based ELP, transitioning to and completing pre-primary education, or enrolling in primary school would be important in analyzing the region's overall progress and accomplishment in early childhood education.

ECD in Climate Change

Climate change's impact on early childhood development has emerged as a pressing issue in the Asia Pacific area, with advocacy efforts underway. Young children, with their specific physiological, psychological, and social requirements, are especially vulnerable to and after climate change, and floods have been highlighted as a top environmental issue among early childhood advocates in the Asia-Pacific region by ARNEC's scoping study in 2022.

Climate change impacts children's good health, supply chains, and leads to food shortages (Lack of Adequate Nutrition), an increase in child abuse, exploitation, and trafficking during and after the events (Compromised Safety and Security), loss of homes and livelihoods cause immense stress to parents, reducing their ability to provide responsive care and damage, and closure of schools and play areas result in poorer educational and mental health outcomes (Reduced Opportunity).

MNCHN Programme

The discussion in this section revealed that the country offices are implementing strong MNCHN programmes; however, the analysis of country context in the CSP review shows that the demand for MNCHN programs in the Asia Pacific area is still high and the programme must be continued.

ECD in EiE

Finally, Myanmar and Bangladesh have developed strong ELP and integrated ECD program models in conflict-affected areas. These programs are designed based on need and topic, and include on-demand teacher training, learner assessment, community participation, and a variety of other innovations. This must be explored in order to scale up and improve learnings through additional study and sharing.

Importance of an Early Childhood Development Program in a child's whole development

Early childhood education is critical for a child's overall development, which is often overlooked and underfunded. Various Plan International studies and external research reveal that gender equality begins at home, and children acquire social norms from an early age. A girl's whole development must begin with an ECD programme. Projects have been observed executed with the goals of girls' education or the prevention of child marriage, and in this instance, the Parenting and ECD program should be the starting point for demonstrating a complete cycle of girls' development as individuals and leadership in life.

