



**Medicus Mundi Schweiz**

Netzwerk Gesundheit für alle  
Réseau Santé pour tous  
Network Health for All

## **MMS 3-Part Webinar Series**

### **Are we on the pathway to ensuring our youngest generation receives nurturing care?**

#### **REPORT**

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Date: 22 March, 29 March, 5 April 2022

Time: 11 am

Venue: Via zoom

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#### **Background**

Although global attention to early childhood development has been established through its inclusion in the UN Sustainable Development Goals, 250 million children (43%) younger than 5 years in low-income and middle-income countries are at risk of not achieving their developmental potential due to poverty and nutritional deficit. A poor start in life because of maternal distress, depression or mental disorders, malnutrition or lack of social safety net to name a few limits a child's ability to benefit from education leading to lower productivity, prosperity and social inclusion. If children are unable to fulfil their social and developmental potential, this not only harms their futures, but also the societies in which they live. Nurturing care is necessary for the physical and psychological development of a child. The evidence now strongly suggests that parents, caregivers, and families need to be supported in providing nurturing care and protection in order for young children to achieve their developmental potential. However, a crucial question remains: Although the evidence base for the importance of early childhood development has grown, what interventions can be integrated into the existing health systems and how so that they become an integral part of sexual and reproductive health services?

The aim of these Webinar Series is:

- To provide you with clear guidance of what nurturing care is
- To give you the current evidence of what works in nurturing care and what not
- To share with you how to strengthen nurturing care through health and nutrition services
- How NGOs can ensure to work with government and health systems to ensure all children receive nurturing care

## Webinar 1: What is nurturing care?

- Bernadette Daelmans, Unit Head, Child Health and Development Unit, World Health Organization
- Sheila Manji, ECD Specialist, Child Health and Development Unit, World Health Organization

### Youtube:

<https://youtu.be/J3UAPc2JRWY>

### What is nurturing care?

Children need the five inter-related and indivisible components of nurturing care to reach their full potential: good health, adequate nutrition, safety and security, responsive caregiving and opportunities for learning. In the first years of life, parents, intimate family members and caregivers are the closest to the young child and thus the best providers of Nurturing Care. This is why secure family environments are important for young children. In order to provide caregivers with time and resources to provide nurturing care, policies, services and community supports need to be in place.

The webinar demonstrated that the period from pregnancy to age 3 is the most critical, when the brain grows faster than at any other time; 80% of a baby's brain is formed by this age.

We also learnt that investing in Early Childhood Development (ECD) is cost effective: For every \$1 spent on early childhood development interventions, the return on investment can be as high as \$13.

Current estimates are that nearly 250 million children aged under five years in low- and middle-income countries risk missing critical development milestones due to poverty or stunting.



### Opportunities for early learning

Early learning includes providing children with opportunities to :

- Use their bodies
- Interact with objects and people
- Explore their surroundings
- Activate their senses
- Hear and use language

### Responsive caregiving

- Responsive caregiving includes observing and responding to children's movements, sounds, gestures and verbal requests

- Reading the child's cues
- Interpreting what the child needs or wants
- Responding appropriately, consistently, affectionately and predictably

#### Opportunities to support nurturing care

- Neonatal intensive care
- Postnatal consultation
- Maternity care
- Antenatal consultation
- Well-baby clinic immunisation
- Paediatric inpatient care
- Sick child consultation
- Care for chronic illness
- Nutrition rehabilitation
- Waiting rooms: audio, visual materials, health talks, toys
- Mother groups, home visits in the community

#### **Definition of nurturing care**

“We define nurturing care as a stable environment that is sensitive to children's health and nutritional needs, with protection from threats, opportunities for early learning, and interactions that are responsive, emotionally supportive, and developmentally stimulating. As an overarching concept, nurturing care is supported by a large array of social contexts—from home to parental work, child care, schooling, the wider community, and policy influences. Nurturing care consists of a core set of inter-related components, including: behaviours, attitudes, and knowledge regarding caregiving (eg, health, hygiene care, and feeding care); stimulation (eg, talking, singing, and playing); responsiveness (eg, early bonding, secure attachment, trust, and sensitive communication); and safety (eg, routines and protection from harm). The single most powerful context for nurturing care is the immediate home and care settings of young children often provided by mothers, but also by fathers and other family members, as well as by child-care services.” Ref: Pia R Britto, Stephen J Lye, Kerrie Proulx, Aisha K Yousafzai, Stephen G Matthews, Tyler Vaivada, Rafael Perez-Escamilla, Nirmala Rao, Patrick Ip, Lia C H Fernald, Harriet MacMillan, Mark Hanson, Theodore D Wachs, Haogen Yao, Hirokazu Yoshikawa, Adrian Cerezo et al. (2017). Nurturing care: promoting early childhood development. Lancet

#### **Additional Literature**

- Nurturing care website <https://nurturing-care.org/>
- Nurturing Care Framework <https://nurturing-care.org/nurturing-care-framework-toolkit/>
- What is nurturing care? <https://nurturing-care.org/what-is-nurturing-care/>
- Nurturing care handbook - <https://nurturing-care.org/handbook/>
- Practice Guide - forthcoming (This is what Anne will present next week) <https://nurturing-care.org/practiceguide/>
- Country experiences - might want to point out the Ethiopia and Mozambique case studies <https://nurturing-care.org/countries/>
- Thematic briefs <https://nurturing-care.org/thematic-briefs/>
- Advocacy toolkit <https://nurturing-care.org/advocacy-toolkit/>
- ECDAN website: <https://ecdan.org/>
- Do encourage people to join the mailing list so they can receive the [ECDAN and Nurturing Care newsletters](#).

## **Webinar 2: How can we strengthen nurturing care through health and nutrition services?**

- Anne Detjen, Child Health Specialist, Child and Community Health Unit, UNICEF
- Rafael Pérez-Escamilla, PhD, Professor and Global Health Director, Yale School of Public Health
- Amber Hromi-Fiedler, Yale School of Public Health

### **Youtube:**

<https://youtu.be/I8wYz7HnGhY>

### **Strengthen nurturing care in health and nutrition services**

Parents and other caregivers are primarily responsible for their children's care and support. However, some caregivers might have limited or disrupted capacity (e.g. teenage mums; disability, mental health conditions).

There are various opportunities to provide additional support. Health and nutrition services already include interventions that are essential for nurturing care. Therefore they can be strengthened, ensuring universal access and quality delivery.

A **practice guide on strengthening nurturing care through health and nutrition services** will be published in the coming month. It targets providers and managers of health and nutrition services and is relevant for humanitarian and emergency settings

What managers can do:

- Build the capacity of providers by enhancing effective, interpersonal communication skills and skills to support caregiver practices
- Strengthen services to support caregiving by integrating case management protocols, supervision/facility surveys, policies to enable caregiver participation (e.g. rooming in), finding opportunities for caregiver education (e.g. in waiting areas) and identifying the need and advocate for special services
- Make facilities more accessible and welcoming for families (e.g. wheel chairs)

### **How can we strengthen nurturing care through health and nutrition services?**

*PART 1 - Review of nurturing care content in UNICEF's community based infant and young child feeding (IYCF) counselling package: Gaps, best practices and lessons learned*

The purpose of this study was to review UNICEF's C-IYCF CP to:

- a) Identify and map existing nurturing care elements

- b) Identify gaps within the generic UNICEF C IYCF CP
- c) Identify country level adaptations to the generic C IYCF CP to integrate nurturing care (incl. Identify best practices and lessons learned from country adaptations)
- d) Develop recommendations on revisions to be made to the generic UNICEF C-IYCF CP to incorporate additional nurturing care elements

**Gap 1:** Within the generic package the author find a lack of content related to responsive feeding in the context of responsive parenting (e.g. sleep, soothing, food texture)

**Gap 2:** The author found a lack of integration of the family life course perspective in generic package

**Gap 3:** Child protection was hardly addressed

**Gap 4:** Outdated HIV mixed feeding recommendations were detected

**Finding:** The UNICEF Community-based Infant and Young Child Feeding Counseling Package (C-IYCFCP) currently has limited responsive feeding (RF) content, thus limiting dissemination of RF messages within infant and young child feeding (IYCF) counseling.

*Part 2: Community co-design of a program to apply nurturing care principles to nutrition counseling in Ghana*

The author then tested in another research a project to 1) developed counselling cards based on existing evidence-based RF guidelines and 2) tested their feasibility in Ghana. The conclusion was that the counselling cards have a strong potential to add key RF dimensions to IYCF training and counselling in Ghana.

Responsive feeding messages and cards were feasible for caregivers to practice. But training is required when integrating responsive feeding into existing infant and young child feeding

(Ref. Amber J Hromi-Fiedler, Grace J Carroll, Madelynn R Tice, Adam Sandow, Richmond Aryeetey, Rafael Pérez-Escamilla, Development and Testing of Responsive Feeding Counseling Cards to Strengthen the UNICEF Infant and Young Child Feeding Counseling Package, Current Developments in Nutrition, Volume 4, Issue 9, September 2020).

#### **Recourses:**

- Development and Testing of Responsive Feeding Counseling Cards to Strengthen the UNICEF Infant and Young Child Feeding Counseling Package ([Link](#))
- Facilitators of Responsive Feeding/Parenting Knowledge and Practices Among Parents in the Central Region of Ghana ([Link](#))

### Webinar 3: How can NGOs work with government and health systems to ensure all children receive nurturing care?

- Maria Marelli, ECD Specialist, Global Health and Prevention Technical Division, Handicap International
- Maram Shahin, Senior ECD Manager, International Rescue Committee – Syria CP

#### Youtube:

<https://youtu.be/jNZ3vVFcO1I>

### Inclusive Early Childhood Development

All interventions and policies on ECD including all materials, workbooks and handouts need to be viewed and implemented with the lens of inclusion.

**The Blue Box:** Promoting the development of all children through routines and play

In which settings can the blue box be used?



- Parenting groups and Mother groups
- Individual stimulation sessions at home
- Complementary To Rehabilitation Interventions

Link: [https://hi.org/sn\\_uploads/document/BLue-Box-leaflet--new-.pdf](https://hi.org/sn_uploads/document/BLue-Box-leaflet--new-.pdf)

Inclusive Early Child Development needs a multi-disciplinary team.

### Early Childhood Development Program Ahlan Simsim Northwest Syria

More than 5 million children have been impacted by the Syrian crisis, along with another 1 million child IDPs and many other vulnerable children in the country emerging from the conflict. These children are at high risk for failing to reach their full developmental potentials!

High quality early childhood interventions can have powerful impacts in reducing the negative effects of such early adversity.

**Ahlan Simsim** aims to reach 1.5 children and caregivers through direct ECD services and millions more via mass media through the **Ahlan Simsim show** created by Sesame Workshop.

Ahlan Simsim is setting a new standard for the provision of high quality, inclusive early childhood programs and support for refugee children and their families in four countries: Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan.



Youtube: [الجدید للبرنامج المقدمة أغنية](#)  
[سمسم أهلاً من - YouTube](#)

Ahlan Simsim is comprised of 3 core elements: Direct Services, Multimedia, and Influencing Policy & Practice. Ahlan Simsim Interventions focus on:

- Social Emotional Learning (SEL).
- Inclusive interventions: equal opportunities for all.
- Integration with other sectors.

In the Resource section you can find all the presentations and on our youtube Channel you can find the recordings!

In case you want to get in contact with one of the speakers, you can contact Carine Weiss [cweiss@medicusmundi.ch](mailto:cweiss@medicusmundi.ch)