



# WHIS MUN 2024

## **STUDY GUIDE**



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### United Nations Children's Fund

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Agenda : Improving Quality of Education through Early Childhood Development

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## **Letter from the Executive Board**

Esteemed Members of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), it is our honour to welcome you to WHIS MUN 2024. This guide has been curated to serve as a starting point for research and provides an overview of the agenda at hand. We hope that the Study Guide will help you throughout the course of your preparation for the conference from now on. However, the guide only provides a bird's eye perspective of the relevant topics of discussion. We strongly encourage you all to delve deeper into the complexities of the agenda, not letting the guide limit the scope of your research.

This guide will provide you with a background that will form the basis for your research. Apart from the topics covered, delegates must understand the perspective of the allotted country and weave their research based on both- the given agenda and foreign policy. We will firmly seek active participation from all of you in the debate and the committee work. Do not feel overwhelmed by the process of researching and feel free to contact us for anything you may need on our end.

We look forward to a fruitful discussion and a wholesome exchange of ideas during the proceedings in the upcoming meeting of this Board, with a strong emphasis on decorum and diplomatic etiquette. We are certain that these proceedings shall prove to be successful in determining the path to be taken to solve some issues that prove to be a great challenge to the education sector in the global status quo.

Best regards,

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## Committee Overview

Originally founded in 1946 by the UN General Assembly, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) became a permanent member of the UN in 1953. UNICEF works with governments on long-term initiatives made to strengthen children's quality of life. Primary education, medical safeguarding, nutrition and vaccinations, health, and "children in especially difficult circumstances (which include orphans, victims of armed conflicts and street kids) are all addressed by these programs. The UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) elects thirty-six members of its Executive Board, which meets once a year, to three-year terms based on a regional seat allocation. UNICEF submits its annual reports to both the General Assembly and the ECOSOC.

UNICEF, like all other UN bodies, cannot carry out operations in a particular state without first consulting the governing body and getting its permission. In times of emergency humanitarian crises, it offers effective programmes like education, health care, and even psychosocial rehabilitation to the governments of the concerned countries. Along with governments, it also collaborates with other pertinent UN Bodies. For instance, UNICEF is one of the lead members of the Inter-agency Standing Committee which is established by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). To facilitate better mapping of distress areas, UNICEF also conducts integrated research and evaluation activities and consequently strengthen the efficiency of its programs.<sup>1</sup>

The Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC),<sup>2</sup> which is an international legal instrument or more appropriately, a framework, was an establishment of the active partnership of UNICEF and the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Established in 1989, the Convention legally authorises the Committee to call upon UNICEF to make appropriate recommendations for the effective implementation of the Convention. After the Convention was adopted by UNICEF, it advocated in favour of child rights by pressuring governments into ratifying the Convention. Consequently, the Convention has been ratified by every country except for the United States and Somalia.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://guide-humanitarian-law.org/content/article/3/unicef-United-nations-childrens-fund/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/how-convention-works>

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## Agenda Overview

The agenda in discussion is “Improving quality of education through early childhood development.” There are two very important aspects of Early Childhood Development.<sup>3</sup>

1. Support to governments and partners- Coordinated support is vital in order to ensure that young children get the necessary nurturing care they need—including responsive care along with stimulating interactions that feed their growing minds as well as their bodies—and that their development is properly observed and supported.

Policies and action plans dedicated to promoting holistic early childhood development are currently established in more than 80 nations. However, because of the comprehensive nature of ECD services and their low budget priority, these assurances frequently fail to translate into the financial investments required to implement them.<sup>4</sup>

### *UNICEF's Response:-*

UNICEF plays a significant role of directing states to effectively improve the quality and coverage of their ECD programmes. It is important to take into account the partnerships and collaborations UNICEF is involved in. For instance, its collaborative effort with the World Bank Group to launch the Early Childhood Development Action Network (ECDAN) which is an active network of major stakeholders that prioritises the well-being of children through valid measures like increasing investments and funding, improving policy making and peer support.

Public finance is another way to improve and strengthen ECD programmes. UNICEF actively works with governments to address the public finance issue that proves to be a hurdle while successfully implementing ECD programmes. This needs sufficient, equitable and efficient allocation and spending of funds. UNICEF's key efforts to improve public finance include-

- Ensure that budgetary procedures appropriately reflect policy commitments concerning children.
- Help governments plan, finance, and cost-effectively provide services and life-saving supplies by identifying equitable and affordable delivery methods.
- Accelerate the distribution and utilisation of funds for service provision, especially at a local level.

2. ECD in emergencies- ECD in crises do not get the attention or resources they need. Only a small proportion of humanitarian programs include ECD interventions. Funding is scarce and often limited to short-term supplemental funding that does not take into account long-term sustainability of programming. For infants and young children living in humanitarian and precarious conditions, access to early childhood education (ECD) services is a matter of life and death. Supporting them and their carers is vital to ending preventable deaths in new-borns and



under-fives and promoting healthy brain development. It also plays an important role in helping communities and countries recover from crises, break the cycle of poverty and violence, and build peaceful and resilient societies.<sup>5</sup>

### *UNICEF's Response-*

In humanitarian contexts, UNICEF works with governments, donors, and other partners to make sure that the youngest children and their caregivers are visible. It also works to raise awareness of the vital importance of early childhood development (ECD) services, both in the long-term crises that are frequently overlooked by and in the acute emergencies that make headlines.

In order to deliver essential ECD services in fragile and humanitarian contexts, UNICEF has created, tested, and implemented packages of interventions. These strategies include setting up secure areas where infants and early children can play and learn, educating frontline staff members and caregivers on how to create loving environments, and offering counseling to caregivers to support their personal wellbeing.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/early-childhood-development>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/support-governments-and-partners-early-childhood-development>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/early-childhood-development-emergencies>



## **Problem Statement**

Early childhood represents a crucial period for influencing a child’s comprehensive development and establishing a foundation for their future. To fully realise their potential, which is a fundamental human right, children require access to healthcare and nutrition, protection from harm, a sense of security, opportunities for early learning, and responsive caregiving. However, many of the world’s most disadvantaged children—including those living in poverty, affected by conflict and crisis, displaced, from discriminated communities, or with disabilities—frequently miss this critical window of opportunity.

Approximately 250 million children lack access to education <sup>6</sup>, an issue exasperated by inadequate nutrition and healthcare, exposure to violence, polluted environments, and extreme stress. These conditions deprive them of learning opportunities and the necessary stimulation for their developing brains to flourish. In such challenging contexts, caregivers often struggle to provide nurturing care due to a lack of time, resources, and services.

Studies show that children exposed to high levels of violence and environmental toxins have significantly lower IQ scores and academic performance.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, in conflict-affected areas, nearly one in four children live in situations that undermine their basic needs for safety and stability. Furthermore, nearly 43% of children under five in low-income countries do not have access to early childhood education programs, depriving them of critical early learning experiences.<sup>8</sup>

As a result, these children face significant barriers to achieving their full developmental potential. The repercussions include poor educational outcomes, diminished physical and mental health, and reduced economic prospects, which collectively contribute to the perpetuation of cycles of poverty and social inequality. These barriers are further compounded by systemic issues such as lack of resources, inadequate policy frameworks, and insufficient support for parents and caregivers.

Addressing these deficiencies is essential not only for the individual well-being of these children but also for broader societal benefits. Failure to provide comprehensive early childhood development support undermines the quality of education systems and hinders socio-economic progress. Consequently, a comprehensive approach that integrates health, nutrition, protection, early learning opportunities, and responsive caregiving is imperative.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/09/1140882>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/media/73246/file/The-toxic-truth-children’s-exposure-to-lead-pollution-2020.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://inee.org/collections/early-childhood-development>

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## Case Studies

The following case studies speak of an integrated Care for Child Development (CCD) approach that consequently strengthens existing plans for early childhood development. This section of the study guide will contain only and only the basics of UNICEF's approach to implementing the same in favour of ECD in some specific countries. It is important to note that case studies are an extremely useful tool for delegates to understand any agenda and come up with logical, technical, legal, and economically feasible solutions to tackle the challenges underlined by the agenda. Thus, we recommend that delegates effectively and thoroughly study the links pertaining to these case studies to better understand the agenda as well as to better understand how UNICEF works.

CCD is an integrated and evidence-based approach that focuses on improving the existing services and ailments for young children and their caretakers. It focuses on strengthening the capacities of the decision-makers and service providers to guide families within the Nurturing Care Framework which was established by UNICEF, WHO, and the World Bank Group. In addition to providing young children with enough opportunities to learn in secure, nurturing, and stimulating environments, this kind of care also supports their health, nutrition, and safety.

(A) **Dominican Republic**- In the case of the Dominican Republic<sup>9</sup>, based on the relevant scientific evidence, to strengthen the existing provisions of early childhood care while emphasizing vulnerable and excluded children, the CCD approach primarily consists of two elements- conceptual and practical. Since 2008, UNICEF's cooperation programs in the Dominican Republic have built strategic alliances, delivered training programs, and supported advocacy and effective mobilisation of resources to promote sustainable ECD measures. The approach is still being implemented in the country but thus far, several results and recommendations as to how the process can be enhanced, have been produced-

### *Results-*

1. The effective execution and adoption of global action suggestions like the Nurturing Care Framework have been made possible by the CCD implementation.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/lac/en/media/32181/file>

2. The CCD training process has improved the quality of services of caregivers and families by promoting the empowerment of service providers and thus, facilitating the improvement of their work.

3. The implementation of CCD programs has been helpful in recognizing the importance of families in ECD programs and services that directly benefit children and their families.



4. The implementation of CCD programs has also contributed to improving the standard of current services by promoting an inclusive mindset and focusing on disability.

*Recommendations-*

1. Encourage the establishment of structural conditions like laws, budgetary restrictions, and public policies that would support the implementation of CCD and increase the scope of the existing programs that use the CCD approach.
2. Create institutional and political frameworks that promote intersectoral work in order to assist in the development of multisectoral and international ECD plans.
3. Continue using advocacy and awareness-raising tactics aimed at government officials to promote the implementation of CCD in all fields related to the development and welfare of children.

(B) **El Salvador-** Even though over the past two decades, El Salvador<sup>10</sup> has seen significant progress in important economic factors like life expectancy and poverty index, challenges pertaining to proper early childhood development still remain. A considerable amount of children still live in dangerous environments that prevent them from developing their full potential. El Salvador, like many other nations in the area, has been dealing with a public health emergency since 2016 as a result of the rise in neurological illnesses and birth defects linked to the Zika virus. Under this framework, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) supported the establishment of the Zika Response Plan 2017–2019 by the UNICEF El Salvador Country Office and UNICEF Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office.

The capacity-building approach of the Zika Response Plan was directed toward employees of the El Salvadoran government who work on different projects and provide services. It featured training through the fundamental CCD course and acted as a means to present the approach with the aim of enhancing the quality of programs and services for children with disabilities by offering direction and assistance to their families and caregivers. The results of the incorporation of CCD programs in the Zika Development Strategy have enabled:

1. The operationalization of global action frameworks like the Nurturing Care Framework
2. Support for effective partnerships between services and sectors to improve parenting to
3. consequently enhance childhood development
4. A prominent example was set as to how ECD can be carried through during emergencies.
5. It enabled the strengthening of existing services and programs that highlight the importance of
6. the caregiver's role in early childhood development.

### *Results-*

1. By supporting an inclusive approach, the CCD strategy in El Salvador has helped in raising the bar for already-existing programs and services, which in turn has raised the standard of care and rehabilitation facilities for people with disabilities. People from disadvantaged groups, such as children and adults with disabilities, have profited most from this.
2. Key sectors and several early childhood services stakeholders are encouraged to participate in the CCD training process. This has encouraged a rise in the enhancement of capacity and the change of practices among service providers, who are now seen as middlemen in the interactions between caregivers and children.
3. CCD implementation strategies are also helping in building the technical and political commitment to implement CCD in various government programs and services throughout multiple government sectors and levels.

### *Recommendations-*

1. Maintain the approach's integration into currently offered services and programs, giving special attention to the most marginalised and at-risk children and families. This can be done effectively by expanding the scope of programs and services that use CCD; encouraging front-line staff share appropriate knowledge about CCD strategies; and productively expanding the use of CCD strategies across other ECD-related sectors.
2. Conduct thorough assessments of the impact and quality of care that young children and their families receive from the many programs that are currently in effect.
3. Moreover, maintain and improve the information systems that let these programs and services run.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/lac/en/media/32181/file>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/lac/en/media/32191/file>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/lac/en/media/32201/file>

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## **Relevant Documentations**

Delegates are encouraged to analyse the past efforts of member nations and international organisations pertaining to access to education and early childhood development. Relevant documents include, but are not limited to-

1. Convention on the Rights of the Child- In 1989, world leaders made a historic commitment to the world's children by adopting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – an international agreement on childhood. It's become the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history and has helped transform children's lives around the world. Article 6 highlights the child's right to survival and development, implying support for early development initiatives. Article 18 stresses the role of parents and the need for state support in child-rearing responsibilities, including access to early childhood education and care services. Articles 28 and 29 specifically address education, mandating free and compulsory primary education for all children, the development of accessible secondary education, and measures to encourage school attendance and reduce drop-out rates. <sup>12</sup>
2. Dakar Framework for Action- The Dakar Framework for Action is based on the most extensive evaluation of education ever undertaken, the Education for All (EFA) 2000 Assessment. It was adopted by the World Education Forum in 2000 at Dakar, Senegal, so that the basic learning needs of every child are met within a generation and sustained thereafter by 2015. The document called for special technical support to be provided by the international community to those countries with significant challenges, such as complex crises or natural disasters. It also recognised that conflicts, instability and natural disasters take a toll on education and are a major barrier towards attaining Education for All.<sup>13</sup>
3. Incheon Declaration- The Education 2030 Framework for Action, adopted at Incheon in May 2015, recognises lifelong learning for all as one of the underpinning principles of this new vision, stating that "all age groups, including adults, should have opportunities to learn and continue learning." The framework, which reaffirmed the commitments outlined in the Education for All initiative, became part of the Sustainable Development Goals as SDG4 and was adopted by the United Nations in September of the same year. The Incheon Declaration is considered to be a logical continuation of the Dakar Framework for Action.<sup>14</sup>
4. General Comment No. 7- General Comment No. 7, issued by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2005, focuses on the rights of young children, specifically those from birth to age eight, as outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). It

emphasises a holistic approach to early childhood development, addressing the interconnected physical, cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions. The comment highlights the need for comprehensive, quality services in health, nutrition, education, and social protection, and stresses the importance of supporting families and training professionals who work with young children. To implement these principles, the General Comment urged States to adopt specific legislation and policies, integrate early childhood development into national plans, and ensure accessible early childhood education and care (ECCE). It also underscored the importance of collecting data and conducting research to inform policies and monitor the well-being of young children. <sup>15</sup>

5. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities- The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) emphasises the right of persons with disabilities, including children, to inclusive and quality education. Article 24 mandates that States ensure an inclusive education system at all levels, providing reasonable accommodation and individualised support to facilitate effective education for children with disabilities. This ensures they are not excluded from the general education system and can access education on an equal basis with others. This covers an intersectional aspect of early childhood development facilities that most children with disabilities lack. <sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>

<sup>13</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1681Dakar%20Framework%20for%20Action.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> [https://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/education-2030-incheon-framework-for-action-implementation-of-sdg4-2016-en\\_2.pdf](https://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/education-2030-incheon-framework-for-action-implementation-of-sdg4-2016-en_2.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.refworld.org/legal/general/crc/2006/en/40994>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities>

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## **Questions the Committee must Explore**

1. What are the existing gaps in national and international policies supporting early childhood development (ECD) and quality education, and how can policy changes prioritise ECD as a foundational element of the education system?
2. What are the current funding levels for ECD programs, and what cost-effective models and partnerships can be leveraged to deliver quality ECD services, especially in low-resource settings?
3. How can we ensure that the ECD curriculum is developmentally appropriate, inclusive, and culturally relevant to ensure the inclusion of children with disabilities, marginalised communities, and those in vulnerable situations?
4. What systems need to be implemented for robust monitoring and evaluation of ECD programs and ensure the collection and analysis of data on access, quality, and outcomes to inform policy and practice?
5. How can health, nutrition, and early stimulation be integrated into ECD programs to support the educational needs of children?
6. What strategies can foster effective multisectoral collaboration between governments, NGOs, private sector, and international organisations for a coordinated approach to ECD?