



*Countdown to 2030*

*Women's, Children's & Adolescents' Health*

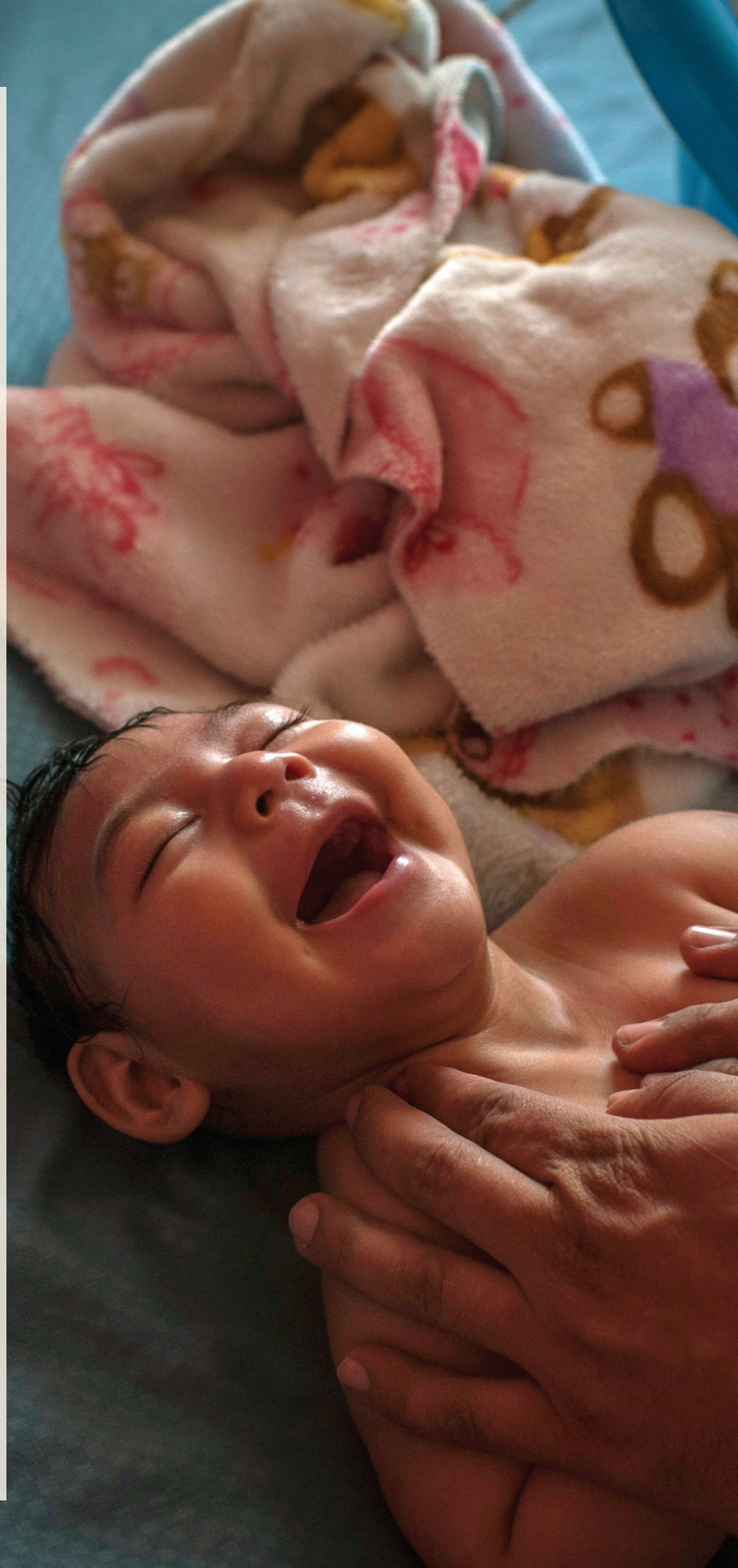
# **A Resource for Monitoring and Action: Country Profiles on Early Childhood Development**

## Investing in early childhood: A window of opportunity

Early development, starting from conception, is strongly influenced by the environment, both positively and negatively. The effects of these early experiences create benefits and constraints for health and well-being across the life course. Investment in early childhood development (ECD) during these formative years is increasingly recognized as a critical window for development of human capital and to reduce inequality. To help children achieve their full potential and to give them the best start in life, children require nurturing care. This encompasses policies to create an enabling environment for families, as well as services and family care that promote health, nutrition, safety and security, responsive caregiving and opportunities for learning for young children.<sup>1</sup>

The Countdown to 2030 country profiles on ECD are an important step in establishing a global monitoring and accountability system for early childhood development. The initiative is affiliated with the Countdown to 2030 for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health ([www.countdown2030.org/](http://www.countdown2030.org/)). The profiles draw attention to progress as well as significant gaps, especially in extracting data pertaining to the youngest children and in measuring services and practices to improve nurturing care. The profiles are intended to prompt further advocacy and action to advance early childhood development and to refine measurement and the collection of comparable country data in a number of areas critical to healthy development in the early years.

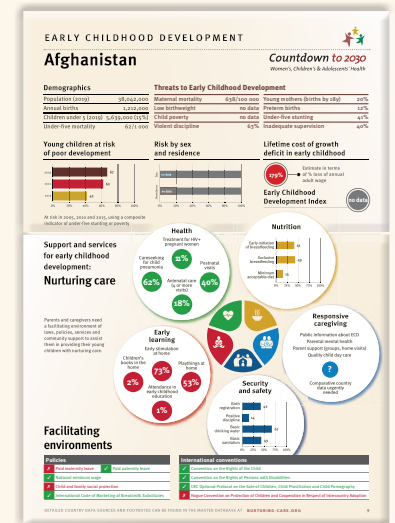
<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization, United Nations Children's Fund, World Bank Group, *Nurturing Care for Early Childhood Development: A framework for helping children survive and thrive to transform health and human potential*, WHO, Geneva, 2018.





# ECD country profiles: Evidence for change

The indicators selected for inclusion in the profiles relate to the conceptual framework for ECD published in the 2016 *Lancet* series, 'Advancing Early Childhood Development: From Science to Scale', and its derivative, the Nurturing Care Framework for Early Childhood Development. The framework lays out the following five components of nurturing care: health, nutrition, early learning, responsive caregiving, and security and safety, nested within an enabling policy framework to support families and caregivers. Other criteria for selection of indicators are the availability of comparable and publicly available data, compiled either by a UN agency or in a peer-reviewed publication that includes a technical appendix with country-level data. The country profiles contain data on a number of different indicators, including those derived from surveys and other sources, those based on estimation methods, and those relying on a compilation of information on a country's status in relation to several international conventions as well as policies that promote a facilitating environment.



Country profile example

Profiles for 138 low- and middle-income countries, including a database with underlying data, are available on the Nurturing Care ([www.nurturing-care.org](http://www.nurturing-care.org)) and Early Childhood Development Action Network ([www.ecdan.org](http://www.ecdan.org)) websites.

## ECD in the Sustainable Development Goals framework

The importance of early childhood development for social cohesion and economic growth has been recognized by the international community within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The importance of investing in ECD is evidenced by the inclusion of several targets across the SDG framework, including those related to eradicating poverty and hunger, ensuring healthy lives, promoting economic growth and productivity, and building peaceful and inclusive societies. In addition, a dedicated target 4.2 calls upon countries to ensure that "by 2030, all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education." The indicators selected to measure this target are the percentage of children under age 5 who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being (4.1.2) and participation rate in organized learning one year before the official primary entry age (4.2.2).



## Demographics



Total population, population of children under 5, annual births, under-five mortality

## Early childhood development outcomes



Early Childhood Development Index (ECDI)

## Threats to ECD



Maternal mortality, births under age 18, low birthweight, preterm births, inadequate supervision, violent discipline, under-five stunting, and children under 5 living in poverty

## Inequality among children at risk of poor development



Composite indicator of prevalence of children exposed to stunting or extreme poverty in 2005, 2010 and 2015 (disaggregated by sex and place of residence), lifetime cost of growth deficit in early childhood

# Key indicators for monitoring ECD at the global level

## Nurturing care: Health



Treatment for HIV+ pregnant women, antenatal care (four or more visits), postnatal visits, care-seeking for child pneumonia

## Nurturing care: Nutrition



Early initiation of breastfeeding, exclusive breastfeeding, minimum acceptable diet

## Nurturing care: Responsive caregiving



Public information about ECD, parental mental health, parent support, quality child day care

## Nurturing care: Security and safety



Birth registration, positive discipline, basic drinking water, basic sanitation

## Nurturing care: Early learning



Early stimulation at home, children's books in the home, playthings at home, attendance in early childhood education

## Facilitating environment: Policies



Child and family social protection, national minimum wage, paid maternity leave, paid paternity leave

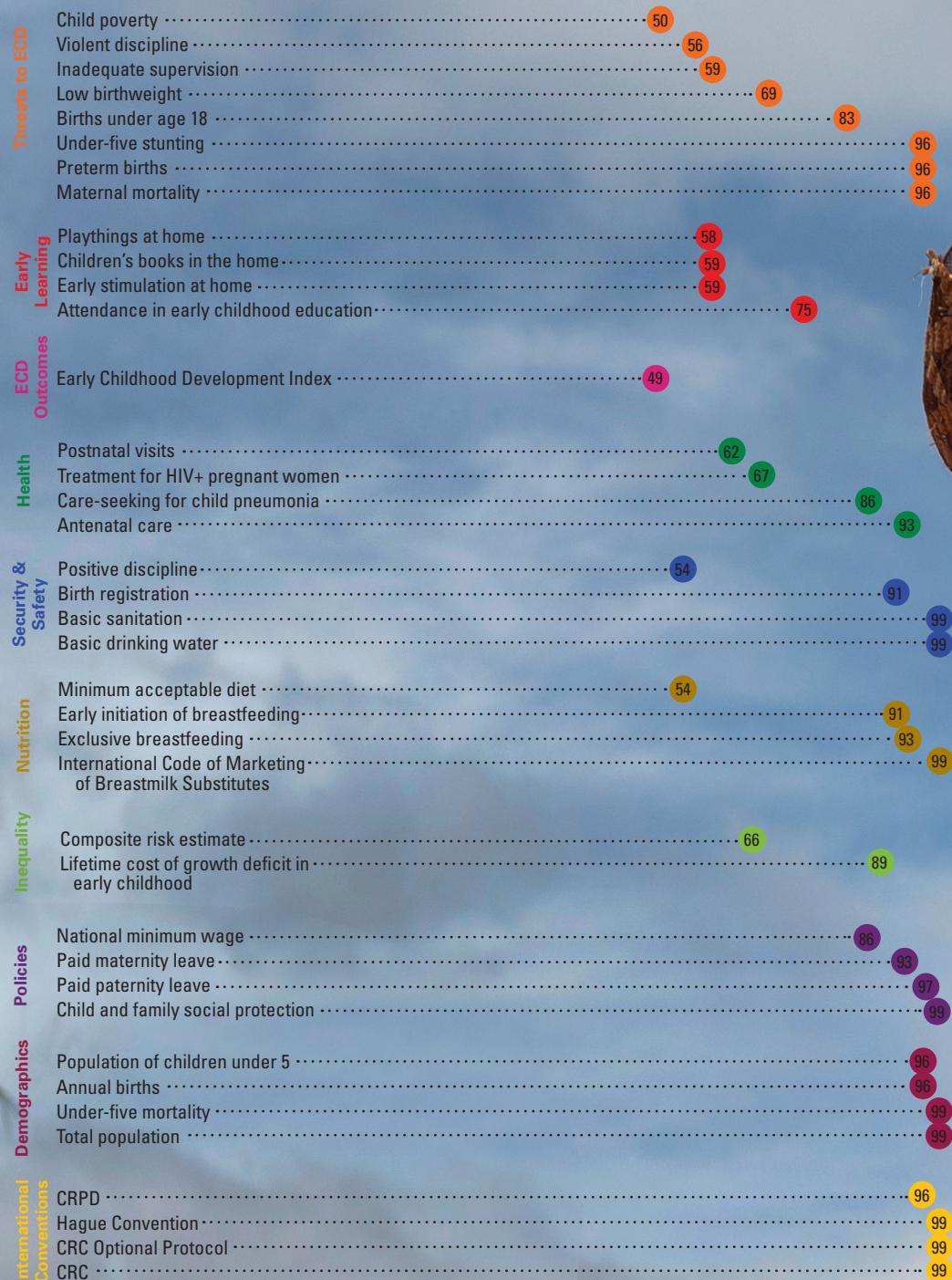
## Facilitating environment: International conventions



Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption

# Many countries still lack data on key indicators of early childhood development

Proportion of countries with available data



Note: The values in this chart have been calculated on the basis of the 138 profiled countries. More details on indicator definitions and data sources can be found in the technical appendix of the country profiles.

CRPD: Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; Hague Convention: Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Inter-country Adoption; CRC Optional Protocol: CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography; CRC: Convention on the Rights of the Child



In **almost half** of the countries with data, more than three quarters of children between the ages of 1 and 4 experience **violent discipline** by their caregivers.

In **1 out of every 6** countries with data, at least a third of children under age 5 have experienced **inadequate supervision** in the home within the past week.

In **practically all countries** with data, less than three quarters of children under age 5 have access to at least three books in the home; about one quarter of children are therefore missing out on this important foundation for **early language and literacy development**.

**Fewer than half** of young children in one third of countries with data receive the benefits of **early stimulation** by adults in the home.

**Fewer than half** of infants under 6 months of age are being **exclusively breastfed** in two thirds of countries with data; this means they are not receiving the full short- and long-term benefits of this early feeding practice.

In **nearly half** of countries with data, fewer than three quarters of **pregnant women living with HIV** are receiving effective regimens to safeguard their own health and to prevent transmission of the virus to their babies.



**13**  
KEY  
FACTS



**Nearly half** (43 per cent) of children younger than age 5 in low-income and middle-income countries are at risk of **not attaining** their developmental potential because of **extreme poverty and stunting**.

1

2

In half of countries with data, **less than three quarters** of children aged 36 to 59 months are developmentally on track in at least three key domains of development: literacy-numeracy, physical, social-emotional and learning.

3

In 2018, in **over a third** of countries with data, at least **4 out of 100 children died** before reaching their fifth birthday.

4

At least **25 per cent** of children under age 5 are **stunted** in nearly half the countries with data.

5

In **1 out of 6** countries with data, fewer than half of children under age 5 have official **proof of their identity** in the form of birth registration.

6

In about **half of countries** with available information, some form of **paid paternity leave is lacking** altogether, a key policy that allows fathers to be involved in the care of their young children.

7

Attendance in early childhood education is **below 50 per cent** in three quarters of countries with data.

How young children are faring today





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