

Rapid assessment of national preparedness for implementing nurturing care for early childhood development in South-East Asia

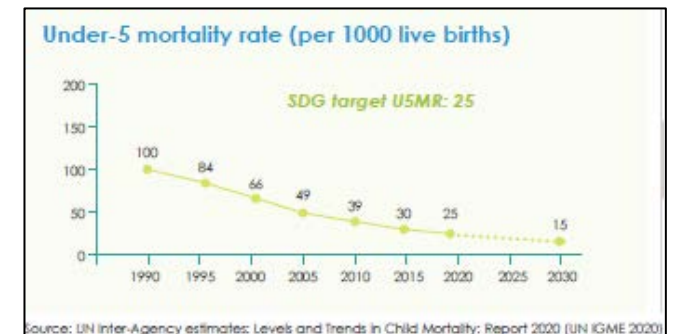
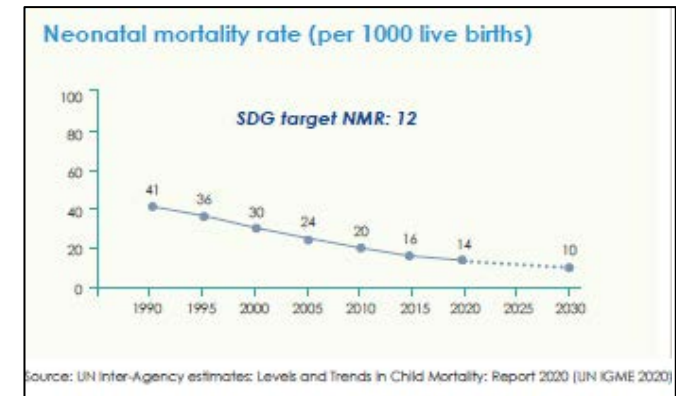
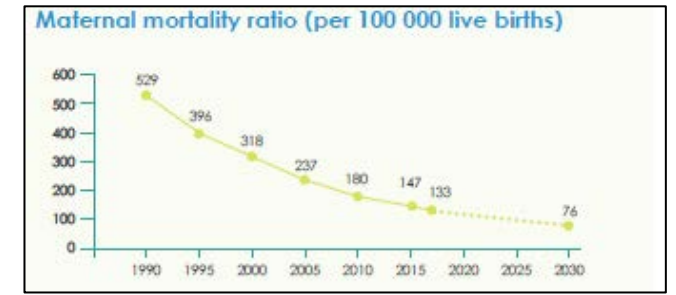


Summary report from seven countries

Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste

Regional Context

- **Significant reduction in mortality:** maternal, neonatal and child
- **Large proportion of children at risk of poor development**
- **Significant inequity amid economic growth**
- **Opportunities for investing in ECD:**
 - **Regional commitments:** SDGs; UHC; Global Strategy: Survive-Thrive-Transform
 - **Improving economic development in SEAR**
 - **H6 partnership** – UNICEF is strong partner in NC for ECD





**Role of Health Sector within
a Multi-sectoral approach**

Role of the Health Sector in Promoting
Early Childhood Development

A Strategic Framework



The Strategic Framework **outlines evidence-based, age-appropriate interventions that can be delivered at health facilities, communities and families** through the health system....integrated into primary health care

It describes the **steps each country could take** to develop a plan for promoting early childhood development....

focusing on what can be **implemented through the health sector working with other sectors and partners.....**

Rapid assessment of national preparedness for implementing NC for ECD

Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste

Objectives

- Map the national legislation, policies, programmes across different sectors
- Assess the range of interventions from conception to 3 years across various sectors and extent of implementation
- Assess intersectoral coordination and role of partners
- Propose recommendations for at-scale implementation of NC for ECD

Process:

- Assessment tool developed with UNICEF, piloted in Bangkok meeting - covers 5 domains
- WHO country Office coordinated with stakeholders
- **Desk review** of documents, reports and publications
- **Key people interviews**

Limitations:

- 7 out of 11 countries participated
- Fragmented information across multiple ministries
- Information gaps and inconsistencies



Rapid assessment of national preparedness for implementing Nurturing Care for Early Childhood Development

[Rapid assessment of national preparedness for implementing nurturing care for early childhood development \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/rapid-assessment-of-national-preparedness-for-implementing-nurturing-care-for-early-childhood-development)

Governance of ECD programs

- Ministries of Health, Nutrition and Education are responsible for different components of NC for ECD: **All 7** countries
- Have nodal persons appointed for ECD in different ministries at the national level: **6 of the 7** countries (*except Bangladesh*)
- Have officers at subnational levels in these ministries: *Bhutan, India, Sri Lanka, Timor Leste*

National ECD Steering Committee

- High level multisectoral Council, Steering or Coordinating Committee: **5** countries (*except Maldives, Timor Leste*)
- Ineffective in practice: *All 7 countries*
 - Infrequent meetings
 - Mostly, advisory capacity – no mandate
 - No monitoring of recommendations

Relevant policies for Nurturing Care for ECD

- **Approved national ECD policies:** *Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka*
- **Draft policies:** *Bhutan and Timor Leste*
- *One ministry publishes the policy that mentions linkage with other policies within and outside the ministry, but no operational mechanism*
- **No specific policy** in *Maldives* but various ECD activities implemented in their health programme

International conventions

- **International Code** of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes: *Except Bhutan and Timor Leste*
- **Convention on the Rights of the Child:** *All 7 countries*
- **Hague Convention** on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption: *India and Sri Lanka*

ECD implementation plans

- **Specific ECD programmes** with annual plans and budget: *India* (Health, WCD, Edu), *Sri Lanka* (Health, Social, Edu)
- **Interventions for ECD included in multiple programmes:**
 - In health, nutrition and education sectors in *all 7 countries*
 - In social welfare sector: *Nepal, Sri Lanka and Timor Leste*

Do policies cover diversity and living conditions?

- **Policies cover diversity** *in all 7 countries*
- **Inadequately translated** into implementation
- **Inequities and discriminations continue to exist**
 - Vulnerable parents and children are left out
 - Families and children with special needs are left out

Inadequate resources for ECD programmes

Budget:

- All countries report budget allocations in programmes across sectors
- Most reported that budgets are **inadequate**

Human resources: All countries report that staffing for ECD is **inadequate** in all involved sectors

- **Staff shortages** - Limitations in funding for recruitment
- **Vacancies and High turnover**
- **Overburdened staff** who cannot include interventions for ECD within their routine duties
- **Lack of training – not competent**
- **Poor remuneration and no incentives**

Services for NC for ECD across the 5 components

- **Good health and nutrition:** MCH programmes in *all 7 countries*
- health and nutrition ministries
- **Responsive care:** *Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives and Sri Lanka (Nep, TLS)*
- multiple ministries (health, nutrition, education and social welfare)
- **Early learning:** 4 countries (*Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Sri Lanka*)
- Mainly as Preschool Education; Opportunities for early learning at home /in formal/informal spaces before preschool are not at-scale
- **Security and safety:** *Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Timor Leste* - in Social welfare ministries
- **Interventions for wellbeing of caregivers:** *Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka* - Health; *Bangladesh, India, Nepal* - Social Welfare
- **Parenting program** for ECD: *Nepal, Timor Leste* - in Social Welfare sector; *India* - Health / Nutrition Sector

Coverage
and
Quality

Services for nurturing care

Counselling of caregivers during home visits

- **Child Health, Nutrition and Safety & Security:** 6 countries (*Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Timor Leste*)
- **Early learning:** 4 countries (*Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Sri Lanka*)
- **Responsive caregiving:** 5 countries (*Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Sri Lanka*)
- **Children with special needs:** *Bangladesh, Maldives for children >4 years old*

Counselling of caregivers at facilities

- **Health sector:** 5 countries (*Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Timor Leste*)
- **Nutrition sector:** 2 Countries (*India, Sri Lanka*)
- **Social welfare sector:** 1 country (*Sri Lanka*)

Community-based approaches for nurturing care

Community services, Community / social support groups: All 7

- District level advocacy program
- Orientation for local level government; Village committees
- Community celebrations and events
- Mother support groups, Parent groups
- Awareness programs on nutrition, good parenting

Media approaches for nurturing care: All 7

- **Mass media:** campaigns using electronic and print messages for creating awareness and publicity for behaviour change, Radio health programs
- **Mid-media:** art/folk media, videos on ECD produced by health sector for visioning by mothers in clinics, printed messages for parents

Provision of Crèche, play centres, day care centres

- **Health sector:** 2 countries (*Bangladesh, Nepal*)
- **Nutrition sector:** 4 countries (*Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka*)
- **Education sector:** 3 countries (*Bangladesh, India, Nepal*)
- **Woman & Child, Social welfare sector:** 4 countries (*Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka*)

Services for children with special needs: Partial

- **Early identification and referral** of children with developmental delays/disabilities: *In all countries* – **but inadequate**
- **Services for children with special needs:** *Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal:* **but inadequate**
- **Community-based supports for parents with children of special needs:** *Bangladesh, Bhutan, India*

Challenges in monitoring and evaluation

- **No functional monitoring and auditing system** for coverage of ECD programmes
- **No mechanism to review quality and impact** of the service delivery
- **No standard monitoring indicators and tools for ECD**
 - Health sector data on early child care and development is inadequate and fragmented
 - No structured data collection on ECE in education sector
 - No data on corporal punishment, violence against children
 - No data on children with working mothers
- **Lack of joint monitoring across sectors**

Summary:

Nurturing Care services across sectors

	Health							Nutrition						Education						Social Welfare								
	Bangladesh	Bhutan	India	Maldives	Nepal	Sri Lanka	Timor-Leste	Bangladesh	Bhutan	India	Maldives	Nepal	Sri Lanka	Timor Leste	Bangladesh	Bhutan	India	Maldives	Nepal	Sri Lanka	Timor Leste	Bangladesh	Bhutan	India	Maldives	Nepal	Sri Lanka	Timor Leste
Health & Nutrition																												
Pregnancy																												
0–3 years																												
3–6 years																												
Responsive caregiving																												
Early learning																												
Safety/ security																												

Yes

No

Summary: Strategic actions for NC

NCF Elements	BAN	BHU	IND	MAV	NEP	SRL	TLS
SA 1: Lead and Invest							
High-level mechanism for coordinating sectors							
Multi-sectoral Policy and Plan							
Sustainable financing strategy							
SA 2: Focus on families and their communities							
Strengthen and support community platforms							
Parents and families' involvement							
Involve community leaders							
Communication							
SA 3: Strengthen Services							
Service package defined							
Health and Nutrition							
Responsive caregiving							
Early learning							
Safety and security							
Creches / Daycare							
Wellbeing of caregivers							
Services for child with special needs							
Parenting programmes							
Monitor child development							
Workforce							
SA 4: Monitoring Evaluation							
SA 5: Understanding scale up and innovate							

Adequate

Inadequate

Not there

No Info

Challenges in Intra- and Inter-sectoral Coordination

- **Inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms intended, but difficult to realize in practice**
- **Lack of a common understanding** of NC for ECD within and across sectors
- **Poor leadership and overlapping mandates** within and across different ministries
- **Poor engagement and coordination with:**
 - **Parents, families and community leaders**
 - **NGOs, CSOs**
 - **Private sector**

**Overall recommendations
proposed by countries for advancing
nurturing care for early childhood development**

Recommendations for Leadership / Policy / Plan

- **Establish a high-power Council/Commission at national and province levels and improve its functions:**
 - Provide guidance to all sectors on coordinated work
 - Oversee implementation across sectors
 - Monitor across sectors
 - Ensure accountability across sectors
- **Develop a specific comprehensive national multisectoral ECD policy:**
 - **Covering all relevant sectors**
 - **Covering all domains of NCF**
 - **Clear mandate, roles and responsibilities, implementation plans and targets across sectors**
- **Necessary legislation** to strengthen the national ECD policies

Recommendations for Plan / Programme

- **Develop a multi-sectoral strategic plan** through involvement of all sectors/parties (Joint planning)
- **Increase budgetary allocations** in all involved sectors
- **Ensure competent human resources** in all involved sectors
- **Ensure engagement with parents and families for planning and implementation** in all involved sectors
- **Strengthen M & E mechanisms** across all involved sectors (Joint monitoring plans)
- **Strengthen evidence, research, innovation and documentation** in all involved sectors

Recommendations for service delivery in all sectors

- **Service Packages:** Identify and prioritize evidence-based interventions across the involved sectors
- **Mainstream responsive care component** and link aspects of child protection and early learning in all programs
- **Strengthen services for at-risk and affected children**
- **Service delivery channels:**
 - Use multiple service delivery channels in all sectors
 - Define standards of services that are child-centred and rights based
- **Service providers:**
 - Ensure adequate numbers
 - **Appropriate competencies: In-service and pre-service training**
 - **Upgrade status of ECD providers**, provide incentives in addition to salaries, and appraise and reward their performance