



# Nurturing care for early childhood development: an overview



**NURTURING CARE**  
FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT



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# The evidence for nurturing care

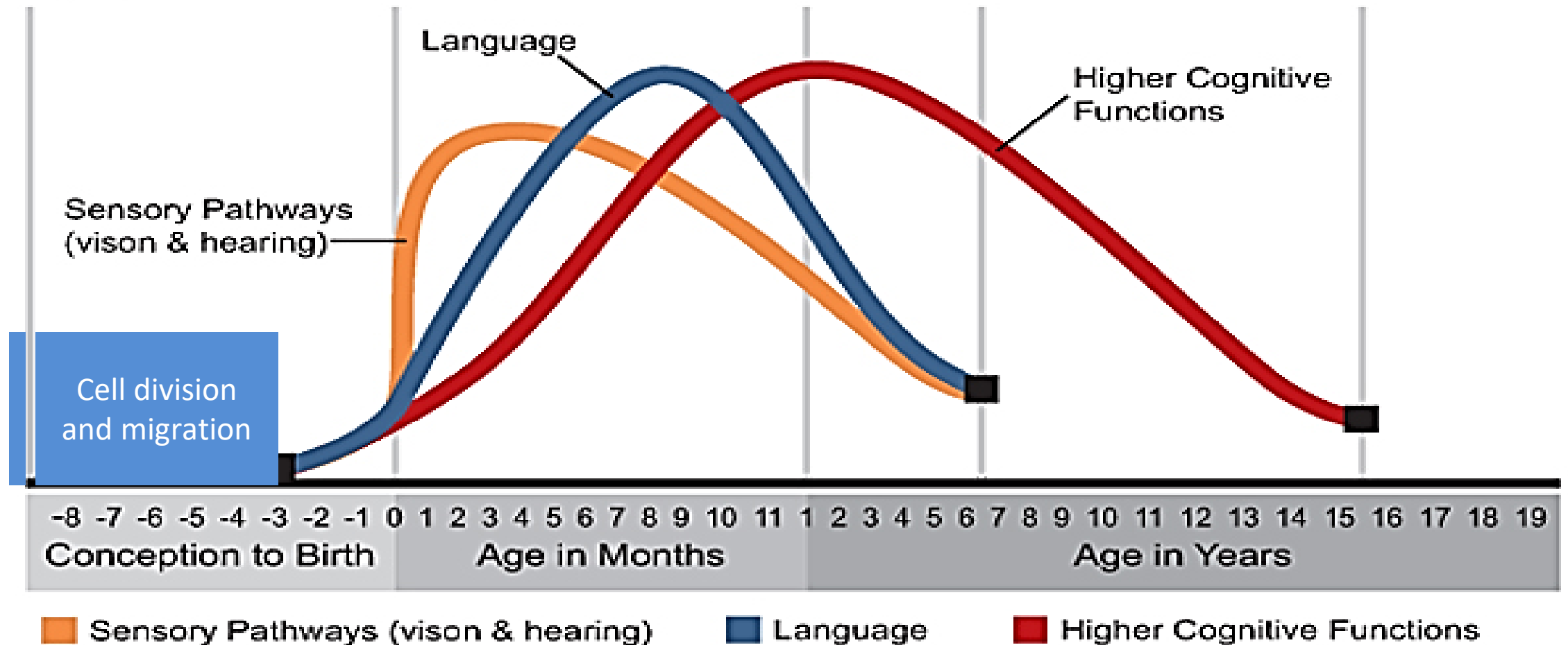
- The foundation for life-long health, productivity and wellbeing is being built in the early years, starting from pregnancy
- At least 250 million children < 5 years of age (43%) are at risk of not achieving their developmental potential
- Nurturing care is what young children need to develop physically, mentally and socially
- Investing in early childhood development reduces inequities
- The health sector has an important role to play



# The importance of the early years

## Human Brain Development

Synapse formation dependent on early experiences



# Nature and nurture

## Genetic endowment

Variations in  
Genetic  
Sequence

Epigenetic  
Modification

## Environment

## Adult Health and Wellbeing

Cardiovascular disease

Obesity/diabetes

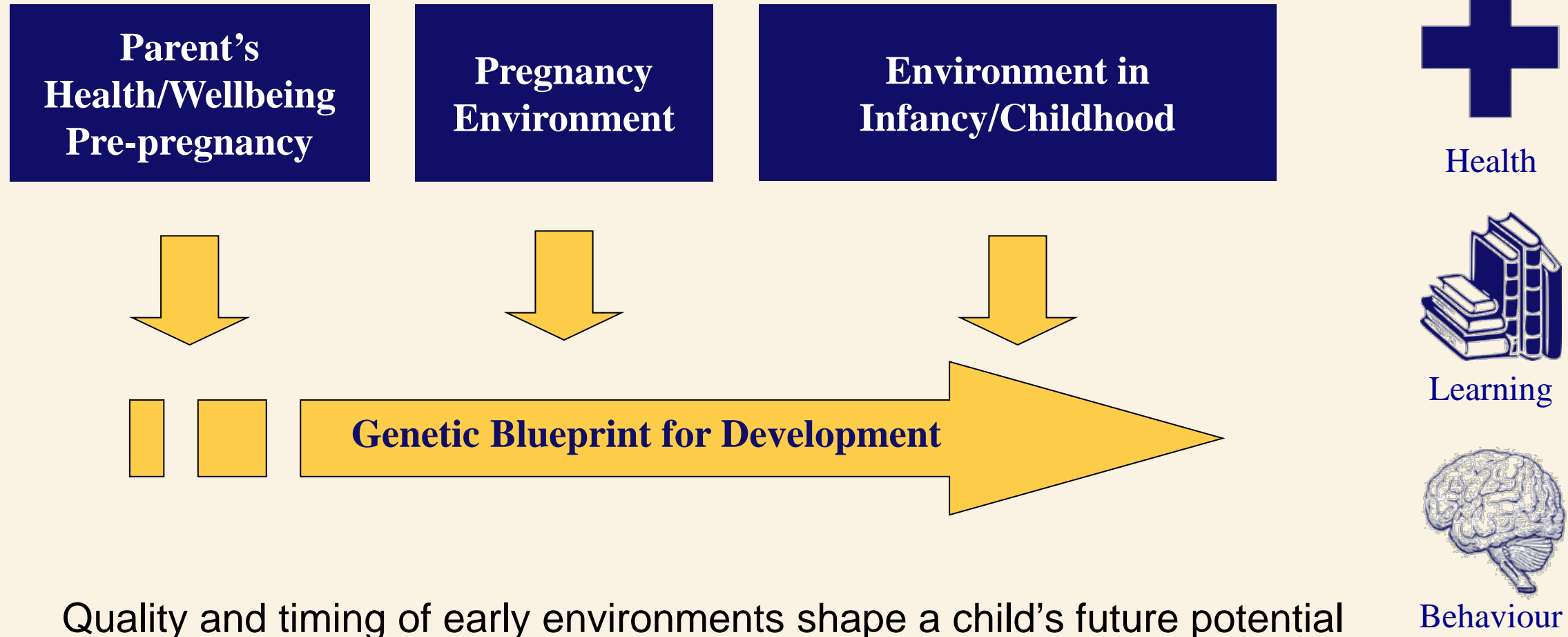
Mental health

Cognitive function

Behaviour/social functioning

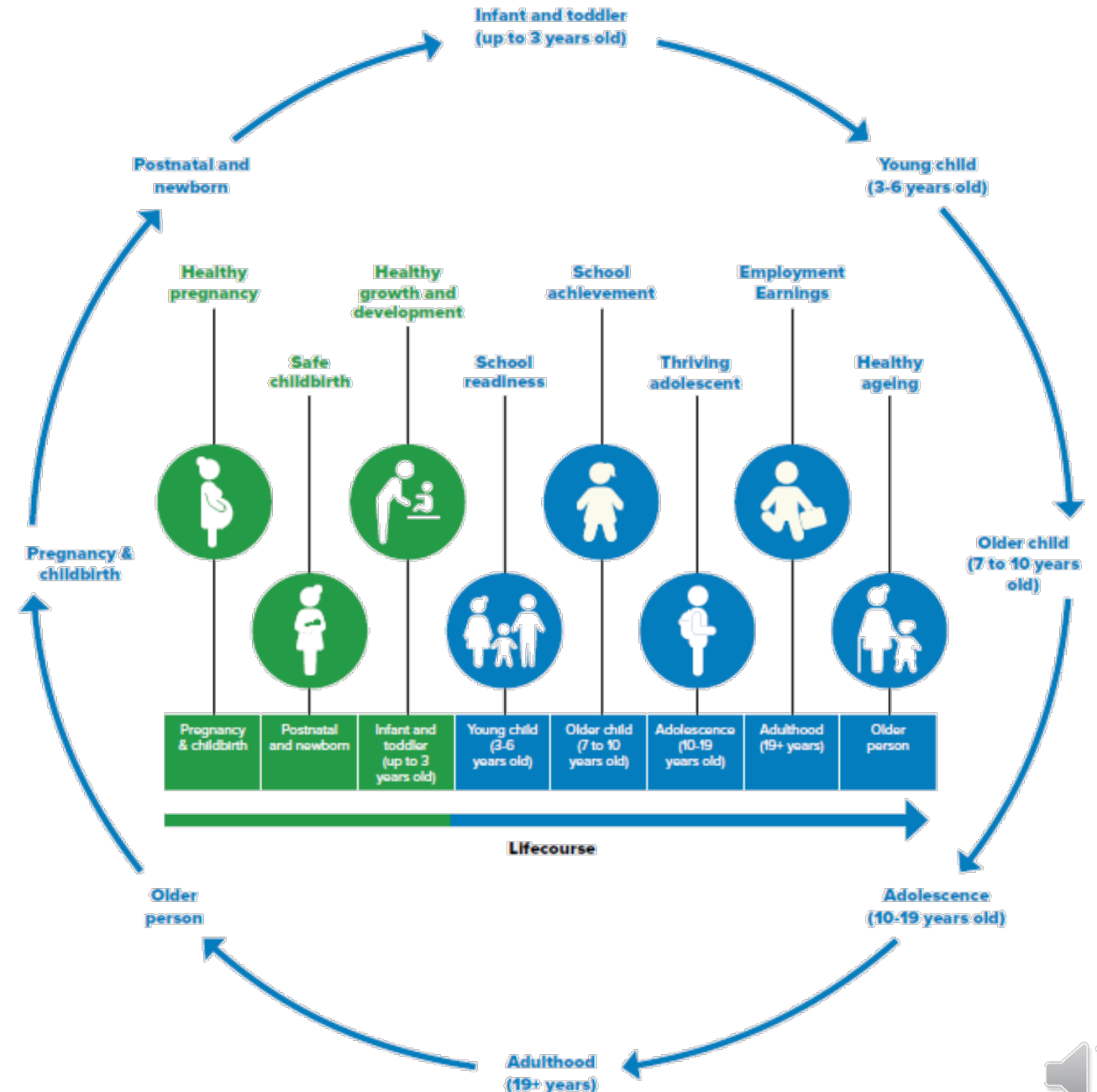


# Environments across the life-course



# A life course approach

- ✓ Improved health
- ✓ Improved nutritional status
- ✓ Higher education achievements
- ✓ Greater productivity in adulthood
- ✓ Protection from selected noncommunicable diseases
- ✓ Improved social cohesion
- ✓ Contribution to peace



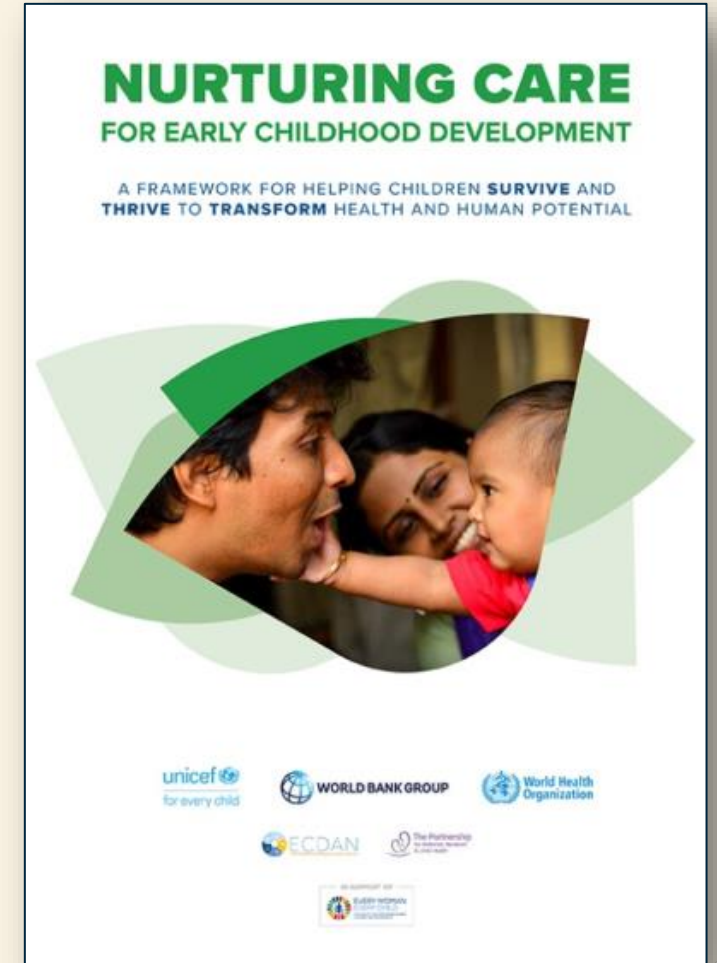


# The Nurturing Care Framework

launched at the time of the 71<sup>st</sup> World Health Assembly in 2018

## A road map that outlines:

- Why efforts must begin in the earliest years, from pregnancy to age 3
- How nurturing care protects children from the worst effects of adversity
- What caregivers need in order to provide nurturing care



# Two interrelated action areas

What the child's brain and body expects and needs



Enabling environments for nurturing care





# Existing interventions to support nurturing care

## Health and nutrition

- Maternal nutrition
- Family planning
- Prevention of substance abuse
- Antenatal care
- Childbirth care
- Essential newborn care
- Breastfeeding
- Complementary feeding
- Immunization
- Management of childhood illness
- Care for maternal mental health
- Care for children with developmental difficulties

## Security and safety

- Birth registration
- Safe water and sanitation
- Good hygiene
- Clean environments
- Clean air
- Safe places for recreation
- Prevention of violence
- Cash transfers
- Social care



## Responsive caregiving and early learning

- Skin-to-skin contact after birth
- Kangaroo mother care for small babies
- Responsive feeding
- Play and communication
- Home made toys
- Book sharing
- Father's involvement in childcare
- Quality childcare
- Using local language
- Indigenous practices





# Enabling policies

to provide caregivers with time and resources

- Maternity protection
- Parental leave
- Protection from marketing of breastmilk substitutes
- Breastfeeding breaks at work
- Clean air
- Smoke-free environments
- National minimum wage
- Health insurance
- Child and family social protection
- Affordable childcare
- Free pre-primary education
- Places for play and recreation
- Cash transfers



# The importance of attachment

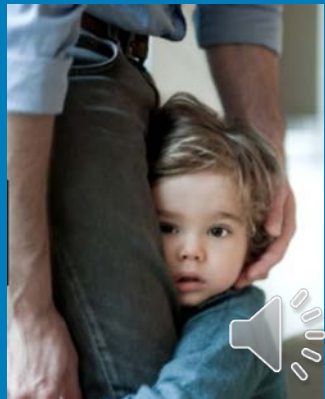


Children become attached to loving caregivers, who they emulate

They get distressed when separated



And turn to loved ones for reassurance when scared or unsure



**IMPROVING  
EARLY  
CHILDHOOD  
DEVELOPMENT:**  
WHO Guideline



## 1 RESPONSIVE CAREGIVING

All infants and children should receive responsive care during the first 3 years of life; parents and other caregivers should be supported to provide responsive care.

*Strength of recommendation: Strong*

*Quality of evidence: Moderate (for responsive care)*



## 2 PROMOTE EARLY LEARNING

All infants and children should have early learning activities with their parents and other caregivers during the first 3 years of life; parents and other caregivers should be supported to engage in early learning with their infants and children.

*Strength of recommendation: Strong*

*Quality of evidence: Moderate (for early learning)*



## 3 INTEGRATE CAREGIVING AND NUTRITION INTERVENTIONS

Support for responsive care and early learning should be included as part of interventions for optimal nutrition of infants and young children.

*Strength of recommendation: Strong*

*Quality of evidence: Moderate*



## 4 SUPPORT MATERNAL MENTAL HEALTH

Psychosocial interventions to support maternal mental health should be integrated into early childhood health and development services.

*Strength of recommendation: Strong*

*Quality of evidence: Moderate*





# Why this agenda now?

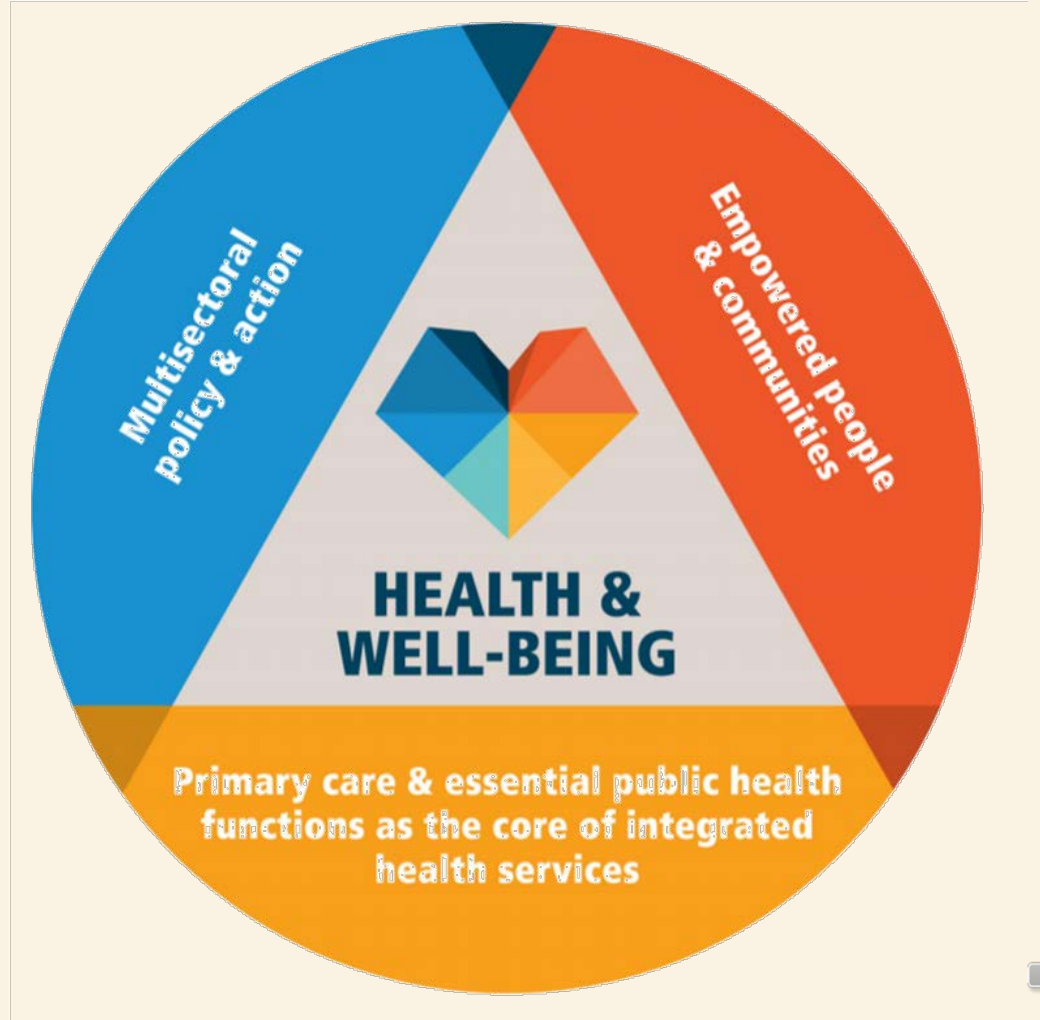




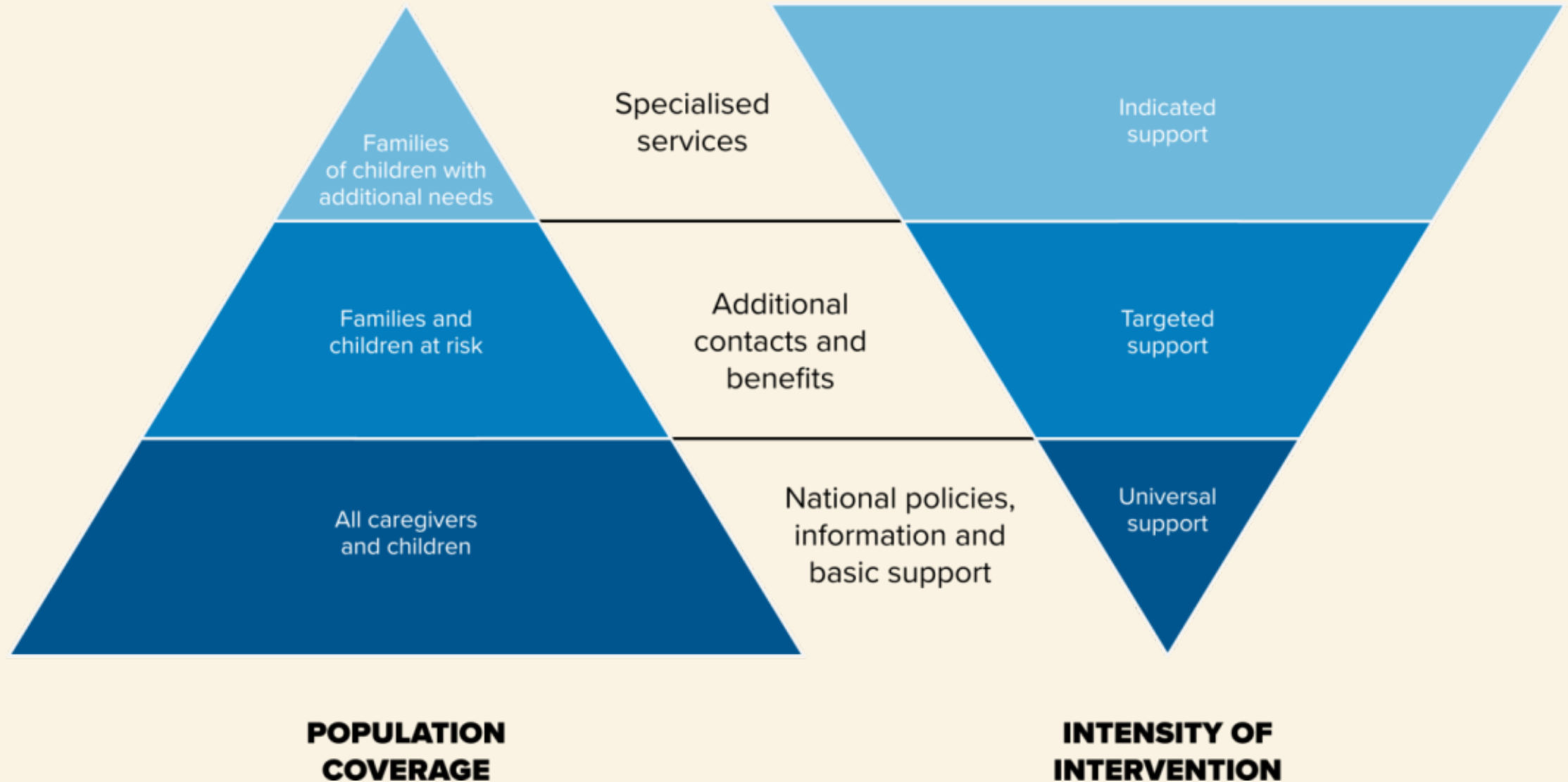
# Primary Health Care

## A key platform for implementation

- Essential interventions for nurturing care embedded in basic benefit packages for Universal Health Coverage
- Investment in health services addressing three levels of care
- Multisector engagement and coordinated actions
- Community empowerment and leadership



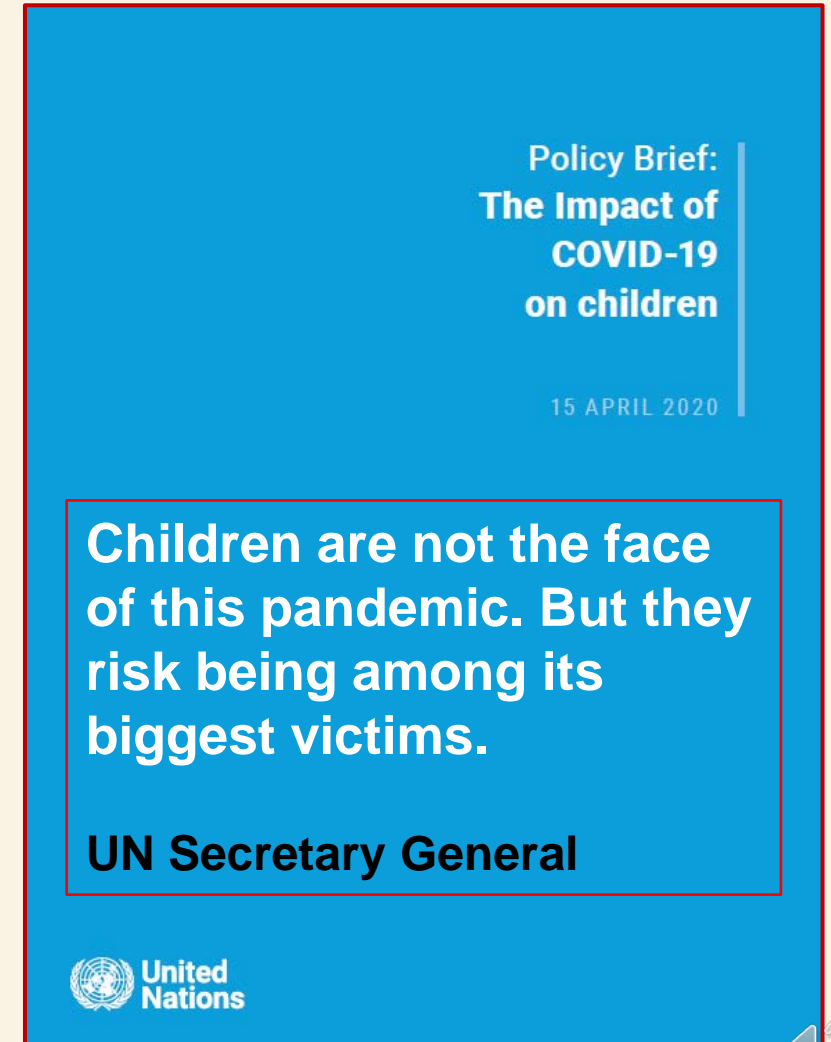
# A universal progressive approach for meeting all children's needs





# Covid-19 has caused a crisis

- Higher levels of caregiver stress and worsening mental health
- Economic and food insecurity in households
- Reduced physical activity and outdoor play and more sedentary behavior
- Curtailed opportunities for early childhood education
- Reductions in care-seeking and decline in referrals of potential child maltreatment




Policy Brief:  
**The Impact of  
COVID-19  
on children**

15 APRIL 2020

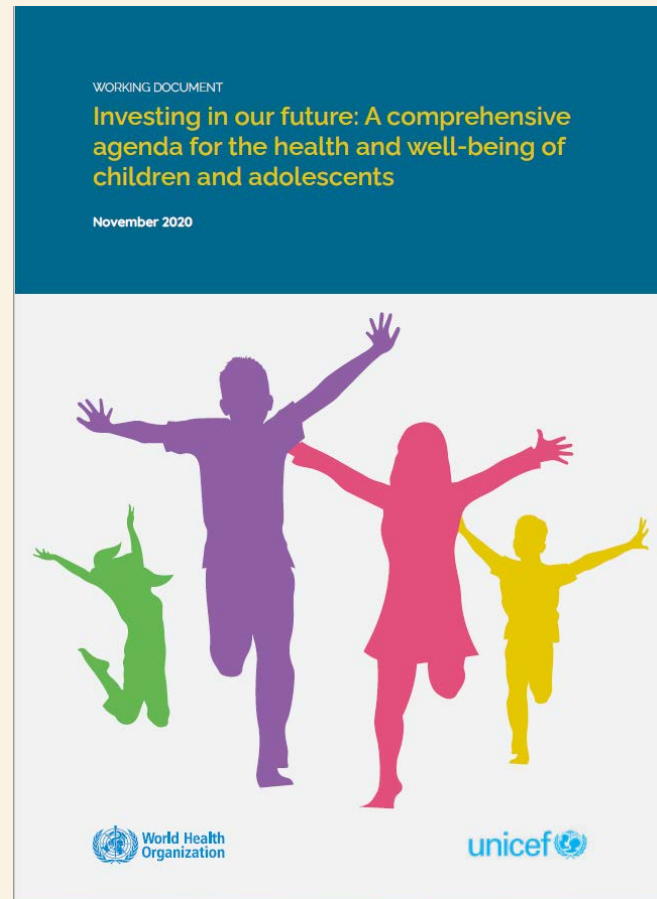
**Children are not the face  
of this pandemic. But they  
risk being among its  
biggest victims.**

**UN Secretary General**

 **United  
Nations**



# Nurturing care in the broader agenda for child health and wellbeing



To ensure that every child and adolescent 0-19-years old is optimally healthy;



is being raised in a safe and secure environment;



appropriately prepared physically, mentally, socially and emotionally;



to accomplish age-appropriate developmental tasks and contribute socially and economically to their society.





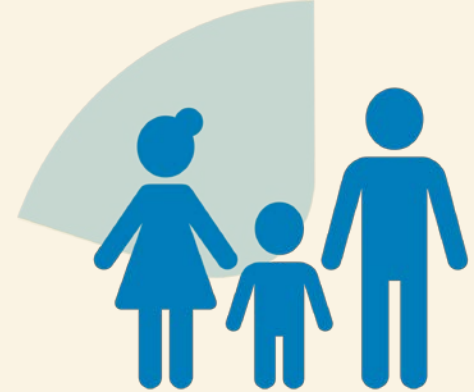
# The five strategic actions

1



**LEAD  
AND INVEST**

2



**FOCUS ON FAMILIES AND  
THEIR COMMUNITIES**

3



**STRENGTHEN  
SERVICES**

4



**MONITOR  
PROGRESS**

5



**USE DATA AND  
INNOVATE**



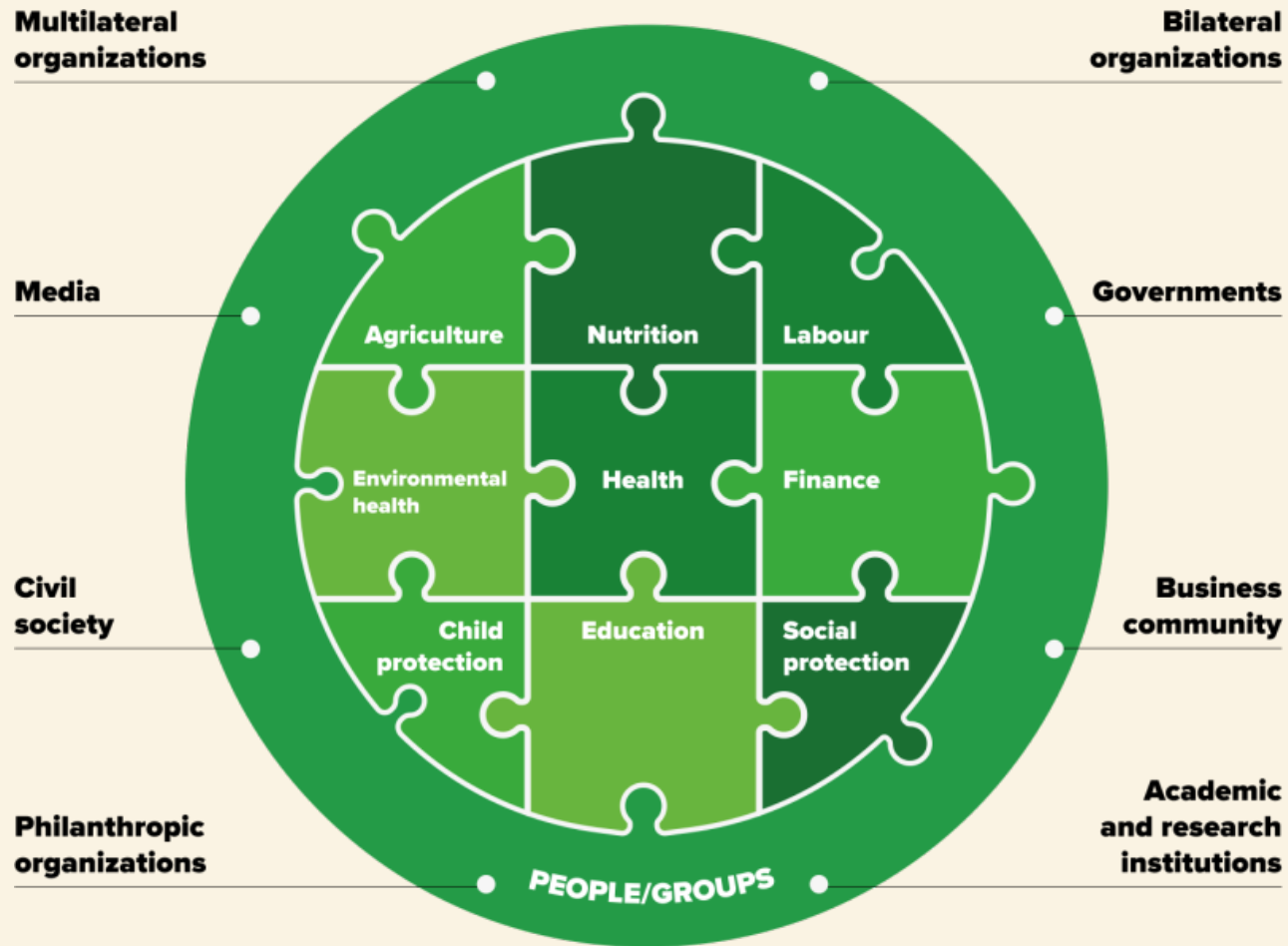


# Taking the agenda forward

<b>Lead and invest</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Governance and coordination</li> <li>– Planning</li> <li>– Financing</li> </ul>	
<b>Focus on families and their communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Community engagement</li> <li>– Social accountability</li> <li>– Use of mass media</li> </ul>	
<b>Strengthen services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– System strengthening</li> <li>– Building workforce capacities</li> <li>– Strengthening services</li> </ul>	
<b>Monitor progress</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Monitoring individual children</li> <li>– Monitoring programme implementation</li> <li>– Measuring coverage at population-level</li> </ul>	
<b>Use data and innovate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Towards scale</li> <li>– Private sector</li> <li>– Digital solutions</li> </ul>	



# Building on what exists



Remember



Strengthen



Add





# Thank you

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**For more information:**

[nurturing-care.org](http://nurturing-care.org)

[ecdan.org](http://ecdan.org)

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**Join the conversation:**

#NurturingCare

@NurturingCare

