
NORTH-WEST SYRIA

WORKSHOP PROCEEDINGS¹

Date: 3 to 4 November 2021

Time: 12h30 - 15h30 Amman time (virtual)

Co-hosted by the International Rescue Committee, Save the Children and UNICEF.

Participants

- The workshop held in North-West Syria was unique in that it was held virtually and was only attended by non-government actors in the area providing ECD programming. Most attendees represented local NGOs working in the space. The 43 participants represented the following organizations:

National organizations: Independent Doctors Association (IDA), Bonyan, Watan, Syrian Expatriate Medical Association (SEMA), Ihsan Relief and Development, Hurras Network, Violet, Union of Medical Care and Relief Organizations (UOSSM), Ata'a Humanitarian Relief Association, Shafak, Bousla, Saed Charity, Social Development International (SDI), Syria Relief and Development

Regional and International organizations: International Rescue Committee, Save the Children, UNICEF, World Health Organization (WHO), Arab Network for Early Childhood

Context

- The workshop discussions were framed around ECD needs from a primarily humanitarian/ response perspective (as opposed to addressing from an institutional/developmental perspective). Additionally, the discussions aimed to situate needs in relation to the local organizations' capacities and abilities to implement programming each within their own contexts/sectors (as ECD NWS Syrian Network).
- The ECD NWS Syrian Network aims to serve as an advocacy, coordination, and knowledge-sharing platform for all matters ECD-related in the area by these local actors.
- As such, and in addition to the global regional presentations prepared by WHO and ANECD on the state of ECD, a representative from the ECD network presented on the overarching goals and theory of change that these organizations broadly follow.
- The impact that these organizations wish to achieve is that "Children are able to deal with the problems they face in light of the Syrian crisis". To be able to achieve this, several things need to change; i) Caregivers and service providers have the ability to deal with children's problems, and ii) Humanitarian systems respond in a comprehensive and effective manner according to the local context.
- The broad initiatives that the organizations laid out aim to enable this change include:
 - » Building partnerships and influencing stakeholders with direct impact on these communities.
 - » Integrate ECD across the different sectors (education, health, protection, etc.).
 - » Create safe spaces for integrated ECD service promotion and delivery.

¹ For information on other workshops in the series visit: <https://nurturing-care.org/events/nurturing-care-for-children-living-in-humanitarian-settings/>.

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- » Develop comprehensive and scalable programs and interventions for caregivers and children, building on a review of existing programming and services provided.
 - » Develop unified, specialized educational curricula linked to the local context, and train care- and service-providers on them.
 - » Provide the necessary professional development for caregivers.
- In light of the absence of a unified vision for ECD, or a reference point for how ECD is expected to develop in the area (as was the case in other countries in the region), the priorities generated tackled ECD at the operational/programmatic level rather than the strategic/overarching direction.

Workshop Outputs and Priorities

The breakout sessions in the first day grouped participants under three strategic actions listed in the NCF: i) Creating political will and investment for ECD in NW Syria, ii) Strengthening programs to ensure all children receive nurturing care, and iii) Nurturing care for ECD data management. The following themes arose throughout the discussions on priority activities:

Creating political will and investment for ECD in North-West Syria

Priorities identified:

- Sustain and expand ECD programming.
- Establish a clear and actionable emergency response plan/strategy for ECD that aligns humanitarian and local actors.

Proposed activities:

- Capacity building for local organizations' staff in the areas of community mobilization, advocacy, and strategic partnerships.
- Increase collaboration with other NGOs and INGOs to enhance the integration of ECD services.
- Boost ECD representation and presence in the different relevant clusters.
- Develop ECD content for promotion on social media and other channels - with the aim of boosting overall media coverage on the topic.
- Develop ECD advocacy content that is catered to different stakeholders (e.g. donors, humanitarian organizations, caregivers).

Strengthening programs to ensure all children receive nurturing care

Priorities identified:

- Integrated and holistic ECD services are provided in humanitarian settings within and across sectors.
- Raise awareness and dissemination of information across local authorities and decision-makers on the importance of ECD.

Proposed activities

- Advocating for integrated response across sectors for provision of holistic ECD.
- Development of capacity and knowledge on ECD for “frontline” workers.
- Development and dissemination of an SOP (standard operating procedure) for the inclusion and integration of ECD across and within sectors.
- Identify and implement an action plan to integrate ECD across existing services currently being provided.

Group 3: Nurturing care for ECD data management

Priorities objectives identified:

- Regular multi-sectoral needs assessments for children and caregivers (ECD, more broadly) are conducted.
- Development of data collection tools specifically designed to capture information on ECD.
- Development/Identification of a consolidated list of indicators that can measure ECD progress, impact, and gaps in provision.
- Develop data-driven advocacy messaging for ECD that is used by organizations across sectors.

Activities proposed:

- Leverage data collection tools used in ECD globally and regionally to develop tools suitable for the context of NW-Syria.
- Establish a regular cadence for the collection, analysis, and reporting of ECD data across programs implemented in NW-Syria.
- Develop advocacy messaging based on the evidence/data collected and analyzed.
- Conduct a mapping of ECD services and programming currently being implemented in NW-Syria.

Participants recommended that international organizations working in the ECD space in NW-Syria continue identifying opportunities for cross-learning and collaboration across local organizations working in NW Syria.

Additionally, there were several other proposals for further support to local organizations by participants:

- Establish a library that includes ECD information and resources for use/access by all.
- Raise awareness about the importance of ECD interventions, mobilization, and advocacy across the different clusters/humanitarian systems.
- Engage donors to align priorities on ECD interventions, mobilization, and advocacy so that ECD interventions are part of the funding and intervention strategies in North-West Syria.
- Preparation of a guide for ECD interventions for use across all relevant sectors and sharing it with member organizations within each cluster.

Priority Actions

GOAL 1: TO CREATE A POLITICAL WILL AND INCREASE INVESTMENT IN ECD IN NORTHWEST SYRIA

Brief description of relevant activities	Responsible entity	Target date for completion	Source of funding and technical support needed	Partners
1.1 Developing a clear integrated strategy for ECD consistent with the global strategy	ECD Network with community members, service providers, schoolteachers and the education directorate	2022	IRC UNICEF Save the Children ANECD	IRC UNICEF Save the Children ANECD
1.2 Building staff capacity in different sectors, conducting advocacy campaigns, and ensuring media (and social media) coverage.	Network with UN agencies and INGOs	2022 – 2023	UN agencies INGOs Private sector External bodies Individual donations	Local NGOs INGOs Local authorities UN agencies Community leaders & networks including all minorities

GOAL 2: TO STRENGTHEN PROGRAMS ENSURING ALL CHILDREN RECEIVE NURTURING CARE

Brief description of relevant activities	Responsible entity	Target date for completion	Source of funding and technical support needed	Partners
2.1 Conducting a “Training of trainers” for first line workers in all sectors related to ECD	ECD Network and its partners	2022	UNICEF Save the children IRC Specialized trainers	UNICEF Save the children IRC War Child
2.2 Developing a procedural manual on integrating ECD services within different sectors.	ECD Network IRC Save the Children War Child	2022	UNICEF Save the children IRC LEAD Organization	International partners Local clusters

GOAL 3: TO ENHANCE EARLY CHILDHOOD DATA MANAGEMENT

Brief description of relevant activities	Responsible entity	Target date for completion	Source of funding and technical support needed	Partners
3.1 Asking for ECD data collection tools from relevant interested international organizations and developing tools suiting NWS	Data management task force	2022	UN Agencies Privatedonors INGOs	All relevant sectors active in NWS
3.2 Selecting and training teams to collect data	Data management task force	2022	UN Agencies Privatedonors INGOs Experts	All relevant sectors active in NWS
3.3 Establishing a library including all ECD information and resources		2022 and beyond	Save the Children IRC UNICEF	Relevant EC actors in NWS