

Components of nurturing care: Responsive caregiving

Note: no comparable country data available. Represented on the country pages by examples of indicators

Currently no comparable country data on policies and programmes that support responsive caregiving are being collected through Demographic and Health Surveys, nationally representative household surveys or UNICEF's Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys. In some countries, information on child day care is collected. However, to initiate discussions on the collection of data to indicate progress in responsive caregiving, we suggest that the following four indicators be considered:

National information and communication about ECD and services

Awareness by parents of their important role in young children's development; what parents, caregivers and families can do to support and promote the development of young children; and services available to assist parents of young children should they or their young child experience difficulties.

Maternal/paternal mental health

Both maternal and paternal mental health, and the mental health of caregivers, is critical to responsive caregiving. Lack of energy, preoccupation, anxiety, depression and other symptoms of mental distress make it very difficult for caregivers to be sensitive and responsive to the needs of a young child.

Parent support through groups and home visits

Support, either through parent groups or home visits, is of assistance to parents in receiving reassurance, the companionship of others with shared challenges, information about their baby's development and parent and family behaviours and responses that support infant development, demonstrations of how they can approach and resolve difficulties, and referral to additional services should they need them.

Good quality affordable child day care

In many countries, as many women as men are economically active, either in the formal or the informal sector. These families, and families with other challenges that require additional assistance, benefit from good quality, free or affordable child day care.

Components of nurturing care: Early learning

Indicator	Rationale	Definition	Data source
Children's books in the home	Exposure to written material and pictures, accompanied by caregiver narratives about words and pictures, are the foundation of early language and literacy development	Percentage of children aged 0-59 months who have 3 or more children's books at home (2005-2024)	UNICEF global databases, based on DHS, MICS and other nationally representative surveys
Playthings at home	Play is natural to children, and the practice and pleasure they enjoy when playing is important to their cognitive exploration and expansion. Young children will learn from play with any safe, clean objects, most importantly when an adult engages and encourages the child and uses play opportunities to label objects and experiences for the child	Percentage of children aged 0-59 months who play with 2 or more of the following playthings at home: household objects or objects found outside (sticks, rocks, animals, shells, leaves, etc.), homemade toys or toys that came from a store (2005-2024)	UNICEF global databases, based on DHS, MICS and other nationally representative surveys
Early stimulation at home	Children learn through their own exploration, but they learn more in interaction with others, especially adults who mediate a child's experience with written material, stories, excursions and other opportunities to teach young children words, numbers, colours and shapes, and to help young children to understand ideas not immediately present	Percentage of children aged 24-59 months with whom an adult has engaged in 4 or more of the following activities to promote learning and school readiness in the past 3 days: a) reading books to the child, b) telling stories to the child, c) singing songs to the child, d) taking the child outside the home, e) playing with the child, and f) spending time with the child naming, counting or drawing things (2005-2024)	UNICEF global databases, based on DHS, MICS and other nationally representative surveys
Attendance in early childhood education	From about the age of 3 years, young children benefit from interacting and learning with other young children, and preparing for the environment of formal learning in school	Percentage of children aged 36-59 months who are attending an early childhood education programme (2006-2024)	UNICEF global databases, based on DHS, MICS and other nationally representative surveys