

# Introduction

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These profiles of 197 countries are an important step towards establishing a global monitoring and accountability system for early childhood development (ECD), affiliated with the Countdown to 2030 for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health ([www.countdown2030.org](http://www.countdown2030.org)).

The decision to assemble available data in country profiles was first taken by authors of the *Lancet* series 'Advancing Early Childhood Development: From Science to Scale', during its 2016 launch. The initiative was carried forward by a subgroup supporting the Nurturing Care Framework developed by the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF and partners.

The profiles are an attempt to compile, in one place, the available data for country and cross-country monitoring and to provide a baseline against which progress can be monitored. More comparable country data and analysis are needed to propel the early childhood development agenda, monitor impact, direct attention to areas requiring additional effort and resources, and measure progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Progress is being made, and opportunities exist for further analyses with currently available data. For example, with adequate resources, country micro-data could be disaggregated further. Nevertheless, the country profiles draw attention to significant gaps, especially in extracting data pertaining to the youngest children and measuring services to improve nurturing care. It is hoped that the country profiles will prompt advocacy and action to refine measurement parameters and to collect comparable country data.

## How the profiles were developed

Authors of the *Lancet* series collaborated on the initial selection of countries and indicators. Several authors contributed new or additional analyses. For example, the Composite Risk Index used to estimate the number of children under 5 years of age at risk for poor early childhood development was updated using the poverty line published by the World Bank, extending the trend from 2005 to 2010 to 2015.

Updates on progress on the selection and refinement of countries and indicators were presented at several meetings: one at an early childhood development guidance meeting in Geneva in June 2017, and another during the Countdown to 2030 Measurement Conference in Stellenbosch, South Africa, in February 2018. Following this, the Nurturing Care ECD Metric Joint Technical Working Group was formally established in September 2018. The working group provided input for the preparation of the updated profiles.

Following the release of the initial set of country profiles in May 2018, a decision was taken by the Steering Committee of Countdown to 2030 to have UNICEF serve as the institutional home of the Countdown to 2030 ECD country profiles and to take the lead in their preparation and subsequent updating.