Measuring Contextual Influences on Early Child Development

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Investing in Young Child Children Globally
Contextual Influences on Early Development

KARIGER: Talking points for presentation: Measuring Contextual Influences on Early Child Development

Slide 1: Graphic of environmental influences on ECD. Child development results from interactions between the child, and the child's environments, over time. Environments refer to those which are immediate and proximal to the child (such as family and community environments, including schools, health providers, religious or spiritual centers, etc.) as well as those which are more distal, such as state and national policies and governance; regional unions (EU, African Union), and global doctrines agreed to by the country (such as UN Convention on the Rights of the Child).

Slide 2: Graphic of environmental influences on ECD by sector, across environments. Various evidence-based policies, programs and services are implemented across these levels of the environment to support early child development, although few, if any, are implemented at a global level. None are implemented consistently across countries, but some common sectors that include provisions to benefit early child development include: economic investments in strengthening household capacities to support families, especially in times of need; legal policies to ensure rights of the child and ensure protection to families and children; promotion of health and nutrition services for pregnant women, families and young children.

Slides 3-5: Brief summary graphic (table?) of ECD indicators widely used by agency, that map on to sectors presented in previous slides. Many existing indicators of early child development are collected at various levels, across countries, but not consistently. That is: not all are collected across countries, and not all use the same definition (for example, poverty is not well-defined). This can be used to point out gaps.

Slides 6-12: Gaps in measurement of ECD factors that may benefit promoting/investing in child development-related policies (recognizing these may vary across countries):

6. How to measure responsive parenting (including responsive feeding) in 0-8 years

Adapted from Bronfenbrenner, 1986
Contextual Influences on Early Development

- Family
- Community
- State
- Nation/Region
- World

- Economic Supports/Protections
- Judicial Protection
- Social and Child Protection
- Health and Nutrition Services
- Education and Care Services
- Social Welfare Services

Wednesday, April 16, 2014
• Development is influenced by both biological and environmental risk factors. Environmental risks include:
  • Socio-cultural factors: gender inequity, low levels of maternal education
  • Psychosocial risks: parenting factors, maternal health, household environment (from Walker et al 2007; 2011, *The Lancet*)
Cumulative Environmental Risk and Cognitive Development at Age 4

WPPSI

- Raw Scores
- Adjust for Covariate

Multiple Risk Score

Sameroff et al 1993
Early interventions can help children reach their potential by preventing risks, and by ameliorating the effects of risks.
Global Environmental Risks: What the Evidence Tells Us

• Studies reviewed in Walker et al (2007; 2011), *The Lancet*

• Key risk factors prioritized were those which:
  • Are widely prevalent in the lives of children 0-5 years in low- and middle-income countries
  • Affect child developmental outcomes (cognition, language, etc.)
  • Are modifiable with interventions

• Environmental, contextual or psychosocial risk factors include:
  • Lack of cognitive stimulation/support for learning
  • Maternal depression
  • Exposure to violence
  • Institutionalization
Why Develop Indicators to Assess Children, Family and Environment?

• Population-level measures of children and their environments will:
  • Help nations prioritize investment in various sectors
  • Help nations evaluate programs and services
  • Allow comparisons of families and environments across countries and regions
  • Help provide a more complete picture of young children’s lives

• Population-level measures of children and their environments are feasible:
  • Indices or items can be added to existing surveys administered to parents, teachers or government officials
Criteria for Indicators

• It’s imperative to use well-defined, evidence-based, reliable and valid indicators that are also:
  • Universally meaningful
  • Easy to measure and interpret
  • Malleable; capable of showing change
  • Able to be addressed by programs or services
  • Presented in a format easily understood by stakeholders who can effect change
Which Indicators Currently Exist?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>USAID</th>
<th>UNICEF</th>
<th>UNESCO</th>
<th>WHO</th>
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<tr>
<td>Poverty/Wealth Index</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child Protection</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maternal Depression</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education/Early Care</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institutionalized Children?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exposure to Violence?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Household Support for Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child Health/Nutrition</td>
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</table>
Measurement Across Indicators by Age

- **Distal**
  - Poverty Alleviation
  - Social Protection
  - Education and Care Services
  - Language/Cognitive/Social-emotional Development
  - Household Support for Learning
  - Maternal Caregiving Practices (Health & Nutrition)

- **Proximal**
  - Health and Nutrition
How Can Measurement be Improved?

• More comprehensive measurement of children across 0-8 years

• Measures on responsive parenting spanning age range, including responsive feeding and support for early primary students

• Understanding the quality of care provided by multiple caregivers or home-based care providers
How Can Measurement be Improved?

• Screening for specific disabilities
• Institutionalized children
• Maternal depression
• Monitoring exposure to domestic violence, abuse, community violence and war/unrest
• Efforts to link measures and indicators across sectors
Recent Advancements and Efforts to Improve Measurement of Early Indicators

- UNESCO’s Holistic Early Child Development Index
- USAID’s Center on Children in Adversity
Conclusions

- Great interest and energies directed at ECD indicators
- Cross-organizational efforts should be shared, coordinated
- Creation of single source for accessing indices and indicators?
- Agreement and support on core set of indicators, with optionals