

## CONCEPT NOTE

### Forum on Investing in Young Children Globally

An activity of the Board on Children, Youth, and Families and Board on Global Health at Institute of Medicine and National Research Council of The National Academy of Sciences

Mission Statement: The *Forum on Investing in Children Globally* will create and sustain, over three years, an evidence-driven community of stakeholders across northern and southern countries who aim to explore existing, new, and innovative science and research from around the world and translate this evidence into sound and strategic investments in policies and practices that will make a difference in the lives of children and their caregivers. The community of Forum members will build bridges across sectors and partner with other organizations, including other science academies and coalitions working toward improving investments in young children globally. The Forum activities and products will be used to inform practices from local communities to government systems; policies at the country, state, and local levels; and research agendas. This will be a learning Forum whereby members will learn from activities taking place on the ground, share and receive information across multiple stakeholder groups, and use this information to inform ongoing Forum efforts. Inter-generational approaches to investing in young children globally will be an important lens for developing Forum activities, with a particular emphasis on empowering women and girls. Another lens that Forum members will use to view the science, implementation, and policies under consideration is the cultural contexts, including belief systems and visions of optimal child development from the familial and community perspectives.

Statement of Task: The Board on Children, Youth, and Families of the Institute of Medicine (IOM) and National Research Council (NRC), in collaboration with the IOM's Board on Global Health, will establish the *Forum on Investing in Young Children Globally* that will engage in dialogue and discussion to connect the best science on how to support children's growth and development, including two-generation approaches, with practices and policies on the ground around the world. Forum activities will highlight the science and economics of integrated investments in young children living in low resourced regions of the world across the areas of health, nutrition, education, and social protection. Moreover, since women and girls are generally the main caregivers of young children globally and are key to children's access to health, education, nutrition and social protection, Forum activities and topics will address issues related to empowerment of women, such as reproductive health, economic opportunity, and access to quality child care and education programs. All activities of the Forum will be conducted in accordance with institutional guidelines described in "Roundtables: Policy and Procedures."

Goals: A set of Forum goals includes identifying an integrated science on children's health, nutrition, education, and social protection and working with policymakers, practitioners, and researchers to raise awareness of integrated approaches to improve the lives of children and their caregivers. The Forum on Investing in Young Children Globally will take an integrated approach to its work. In particular, the Forum will strive to integrate evidence and knowledge from regions around the world, knowledge and action, and programs across health, nutrition, education, and social protection. As a result the Forum will promote a holistic view of children and caregivers by integrating analyses and disciplines—e.g., from the microbiome to culture.

Moreover, the Forum will support an integrative vision linking human capital of individuals with the economic sustainability of nations. Forum objectives to meet this set of goals include:

(1) To shape a global vision of healthy child development across cultures and contexts, extending from pre-conception through age 8, and across current “silo” areas of health, nutrition, education, and social protection. This vision of child development will include the health and well-being of the caregivers of young children (e.g., mothers and/or other familial caregivers, child care providers, and pre-primary and early primary school teachers), including their psychosocial and economic well-being.

(2) To identify opportunities for inter-sectoral coordination among researchers, policymakers, implementers/practitioners, and advocates to implement quality practices and bring these practices to scale, in the context of the economics of strategic, integrated investing in young children, spanning health, education, nutrition, social protection.

(3) To inform ongoing conversations and activities of groups working on issues related to young children globally (e.g., post-2015 Millennium Development Goals discussion; Children Living in Adversity effort of the US government; DFID’s Young Lives research project). As an organized group, the Forum can be nimble and proactive in responding to current events and take opportunities to weigh in on global events. Furthermore, the Forum affords an opportunity to provide a powerful, coordinated voice among its members on issues related to investing in young children globally.

(4) To identify current models of program and policy financing across health, education, nutrition, and social protection, within the framework of reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health that aim to improve children’s developmental potential. This information could be used to illuminate opportunities for new financing structures and forms of investments that may be more effective in improving child outcomes and potentially drive economic development.

Project Context & Issues: There is a growing body of research in low and middle income countries that focuses on the period from birth to eight years old as a critical time to shape children's developmental trajectories (see, SRCD's Child Development Jan/Feb 2012 special issue, Lancet Series on child development in developing countries). In particular, young children in the developing world are vulnerable to developmental and educational risk factors, such as stunting and undernutrition, maternal depression, lack of access to quality pre-primary and primary education, and societal and familial violence. The same is true for many children living in low-resourced communities in the US and other resource-rich countries. For example we know that poverty is a risk factor for poor health and access to health care services, maternal depression, neighborhood violence, and poor quality education. Moreover, children who immigrate to the US or children living in immigrant families may experience similar risks.

Focusing on young children in a global context is increasingly recognized as an approach to end the cycle of poverty and improve a nation’s well-being as indicated in Margaret Chan’s 2013 Lancet article on linking child survival to child health, equity and sustainability. Improving well-being necessarily begins with core elements such as health, education, nutrition, and social

protection. For example, in the final report of the World Health Organization's (WHO) Commission on Social Determinants of Health, early child development is recommended as key to achieving health equity (WHO, 2003). The Commission emphasizes improving conditions of early child development and education for all children from birth to eight years old in order to reduce inequities both within and between countries.

Many efforts to improve child development in the first decade of life focus on areas that address young children's basic needs to maximize their chances of living healthy and productive lives. These include health, nutrition, education, and social protection. While each of these areas is important for children's growth and development, there is a growing recognition of the potential benefit of integrated programs that address more than one of these areas, particularly for children living in low-resourced communities. There is also economic research weighing the costs and benefits of investing in various combinations of intervention and prevention efforts targeting young children. One argument for an integrated approach as opposed to a silo-oriented focus is that, at the very least, the optimally receptive child needs to have a degree of underlying health. Malnutrition due to factors such as protein/calorie and micronutrient deficiencies can reflect poor nutritional intake or losses due to metabolic conditions or infectious diarrhea and hookworm. The successful intellectual, emotional, and social achievement of children is likely dependent on these internal pathologic factors as well as extrinsic factors such as family violence and stress. We hypothesize these effects are synergistic, not merely additive. An integrated "all system" approach may well be the best way to guarantee that children will have the pre-requisites for healthy development. Given the growing body of research on economic investments in the early childhood years, the time may be ripe to explore practices and policies around the world that are grounded in science as well as good economic investments, and to do so in an ongoing, multidisciplinary, multi-sector manner.

Impact of IOM/NRC Forums: The Institute of Medicine and National Research Council have developed forums or roundtables to explore topics that deserve in-depth consideration and deliberation by the leadership of public and private organizations. A Forum activity is designed to expose its members to significant research and to allow them to formulate approaches that offer opportunities for future collaboration and partnerships that can provide remedies to complex challenges. In contrast to the traditional ad hoc consensus studies that produce consensus reports, Forums do not provide recommendations or comprehensive research reviews. They are designed instead to stimulate attention to opportunities for collaborative action, to build common understandings about the nature of multi-faceted issues, and to share knowledge about and experience with innovative approaches to the design of policy, practice, and services. Forums provide members with a venue for exchanging information and presenting individual views, and allow a structured opportunity for dialogue and discussion while scrutinizing critical and possibly contentious scientific, practice, and policy issues.

Forum Composition: The Forum membership will consist of representatives from private foundations, federal funding agencies, industry, professional societies, non-governmental organizations, and academia, both domestic and international. The forum membership will include a broad and balanced representation of individuals from organizations both within and outside the US, including expertise from the global south. Individuals will be selected for their

expertise in child health and development, women's economic empowerment and reproductive rights, and their capacity to represent major stakeholder interests in areas related to children's health, education, nutrition, and social protection. Forum members will serve as volunteers without stipends and will be appointed by the officers of the Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, based on nominations from participating organizations and expert advisors.

Work Plan: At least two meetings of the Forum will be planned and organized each year (six total, over three years) to enable dialogue and discussion of interest to the members. The members of the Forum will discuss and choose meeting topics through a collaborative process for these six Forum meetings. We will hold two additional workshops in West Africa in partnership with at least two African Science Academies (e.g., Nigeria, Cameroon, Senegal), which will bring the total to eight workshops over three years. In addition, the Vidigal Foundation has committed to supporting a workshop in Brazil in November, 2014, which brings the total number of workshops to nine over three years.

Most Forum meetings will have two parts--a public workshop, open to interested stakeholders around the globe; and a closed session meeting with only Forum members and staff to discuss the work of the Forum and plan future Forum activities. As part of the closed session meetings, Forum members will collaboratively identify topics and suggest speakers to present and engage in discussions in the public session workshops. Each workshop will be the subject of a separate prospectus that will be submitted for Academies' approval and will have a formally appointed planning committee to plan and conduct the event. At least one public workshop will be planned to take place outside of the US each year, with the location to be determined by the Forum members and based on the capacity of the location to hold a public workshop for at least 50 individuals. All public workshops will be webcast in accordance with institutional guidelines provided the locations have affordable webcasting capabilities. This will allow the content of the workshops to reach a broader global audience. In particular, early career researchers from around the globe will be invited to participate in workshop activities as attendees, speakers, and/or discussants. Communications products such as one-page fact sheets, e-blasts, and online resources will be developed, and background papers will be commissioned to inform the Forum activities and planning.

Potential Workshop topics: Workshop topics were derived from two previous planning meetings for the forum as well as from the specific areas of interest of the sponsors. The topics are categorized into seven broad areas of interest.

- Examination of developmental science issues that cut across health, education, nutrition and social protection of young children from conception through age 8—including sequencing of developmental benchmarks, to inform program development and implementation as well as resource allocation—and how this science can be used to inform a set of place-based services in context at each stage of development.
- Identification of reliable and valid measures and tools at each stage of development to track progress on how investments in young children globally are impacting child outcomes. In addition to child measures, identify a set of family, community, systems and

environmental measures that are reliable across cultures and implementable on a large scale.

- Implementation of quality programs and practices that cut across health, education, nutrition, and social protection including: staffing structures, training, skills, and knowledge of the workforce; and cost-effectiveness of different methods of implementation and financing of these programs. A specific focus on the child care, pre-primary, and primary school workforces may be addressed given a significant amount of women and mothers are engaged in this workforce, and they also depend on the availability of these services to engage in economic activities themselves.
- Identification of cultural and social norms and belief systems of children, families, and caregiving roles that impact children's development and interventions within and across regions and communities.
- Analyses of the economics of investing in young children globally, including existing platforms for implementation; cost-effectiveness of integrating services; partnerships for implementing across areas of health, education, nutrition, and social protection; use of technology; and financing systems to improve efficiency of resource allocation.
- Exploration of possibilities for capacity building at the local level and across systems and sectors, including building workforce capacity for research and implementation and evaluation/monitoring.
- Capitalizing on the data revolution to (a) underscore the importance of large-scale data sources and (b) identify available sources that can be used to inform practices and policies, including resource allocation to programs and practices to improve child and caregiver outcomes.

#### Timeline:

October, 2013:	Launch the Forum, create a web site, and begin a list of stakeholder groups
November, 2013:	Nominate the Forum members from the sponsor organizations, non-governmental organizations, and academic institutions
January, 2014:	Hold the first Forum meeting with only Forum members to identify the first two or three workshop topics for year one
April, 2014:	First workshop in DC with a closed session meeting with only Forum members to follow directly after the public workshop; potential topics for year two workshops to be selected by Forum members
August, 2014:	Second workshop outside of the US with a closed session meeting with only Forum members to follow directly after the public workshop—location to be determined; first workshop summary published and posted online
November, 2014:	Workshop to be held in Brazil and funded by the Maria Cecilia Souto Vidigal Foundation—topic to be determined in conjunction with the Forum

members and staff; second workshop summary published and posted online

- February, 2015: Third workshop with a closed session meeting with only Forum members to follow directly after the public workshop —location to be determined; Brazil workshop summary published and posted online
- May, 2015: Fourth workshop with a closed session meeting with only Forum members to follow directly after the public workshop —location to be determined; topics for year three workshops to be selected by Forum members; third workshop summary published and posted online
- August, 2015: Fifth workshop, with a closed session meeting with only Forum members to follow directly after the public workshop —location to be determined; fourth workshop summary published and posted online
- November, 2015: Sixth workshop with a closed session meeting with only Forum members to follow directly after the public workshop —location to be determined; fifth workshop summary published and posted online
- February, 2016: Seventh workshop with a closed session meeting with only Forum members to follow directly after the public workshop —location to be determined; sixth workshop summary published and posted online
- June 2016: Eighth workshop with a closed session meeting with only Forum members to follow directly after the public workshop —location to be determined; seventh workshop summary published and posted online
- September 2016: Final meeting of the Forum members; eighth workshop summary published and posted online (total of 9 workshops and summaries including the Brazil workshop)

Expected outputs: At the end of three years, the Forum will have produced 9 workshop reports, associated communications materials—both online and in print, archived webcasts of all public workshops and other, innovative web-based products. The IOM communications office also actively tweets and posts activities on the IOM Facebook page.