

World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education (WCECCE)

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PARALLEL SESSION: HEALTH, NUTRITION, AND WELL-BEING

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- 1. Globally, many families and young children live under conditions that can qualify as emergencies or humanitarian.**

**Can you share with us what the consequences are:**

Thank you, Joanna, and many thanks to the organisers for giving me this opportunity.

First, most parts of the world are now in crisis, which is our NEW NORMAL: a multi-dimensional crisis of poverty, political instability, wars, and refugees, and now we have climate degradation and COVID, which will make our aims for children to survive, thrive and transform to fulfil their full potential much more difficult.

Imagine the formula that we advise to adopt of health and nutrition, Early learning, stimulation, and protection; how will it be implemented in places like the camps of the Palestinian refugees or for the 500,000 starving children in Yemen or the children now facing cholera in Lebanon or Syria or Iraq!!! This is our everyday “normal life” in affected countries of the Arab region, same as many other places in the world such as Pakistan, Uganda, Haiti, and others.

What are the consequences?

1. Malnutrition and even starvation of children
2. Inadequate health care with no immunization and more diseases
3. And with the circumstances of wars, camps and floods, toxic stress and NO stimulation or play

We will end up losing our children to cachexia, illnesses, and underdeveloped brains.

- 2. and how response options can be adapted and applied in these settings, to facilitate that children and their caregivers can experience some normality in their lives, and early childhood development through care and education is not unduly compromised?**

Our best option for fighting these disastrous circumstances is to address these problems through multi-sectoral holistic-integrated, inclusive approaches and programs where we address the child as one unit, not divided among ministries. This is what the nurturing care framework in a Humanitarian setting and similar programs can achieve.

- 3. Parents and other primary caregivers are the foundation for early childhood development in the earliest years.**

**Could you elaborate on the importance of addressing caregivers' physical and mental health as a prerequisite for them to be able to support their children and provide nurturing care?**

The 4 pillars of the Nurturing care framework of health, nutrition, stimulation and protection are carried out under the umbrella of the 5<sup>th</sup> pillar: responsive caregiving.

Parents and caregivers are the closest circle of the childhood ecology to the child: You cannot work with the child without the parents; for instance, Imagine what breastfeeding can provide in nutrition and stimulation together

Here we emphasize the role of fathers in this process and talk and address parents, not mothers alone.

Again, with the stress and depression that may affect parents in crisis situations, all 4 pillars needed for the child will be impaired and caring for the caregivers themselves will be imperative.

So, what will be my recommendations for policymakers?

For the 1<sup>st</sup> 1000 days of life and the preschool period:

1. Revive the child's rights convention
2. Adopt the NCF
3. Integrate caring for the caregivers in all programming
4. Build on the capacities of the parents with the NCF issues, including home visits
5. Look into the necessity of Parents-Educators committees in preschools
6. At least 1 compulsory free quality preschool year for children
7. Work on preschool informal education systems in crisis
8. Bridge the gap between the 1<sup>st</sup> 1000 days and the preschool period
9. Develop a national ECCDE strategy that will get different concerned ministries together.