

## SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE FOR ECD PROGRAMMES AND POLICIES IN THE ARAB REGION:

### RESEARCH, RIGHTS AND REGIONAL ACTION FOR YOUNG CHILDREN IN CRISIS

Amman, Jordan- August 16-17, 2025 – Movenpick Hotel

## Overview & Background: ECD in Crisis Research to Policy

In situations of protracted crisis and their effects on the youngest children and their caregivers, finding the balance between deeper understanding of salient issues, responding to immediate humanitarian needs, and safeguarding the future of affected communities through meaningful change is a challenge. This is because the pathways for research, its use in advocacy efforts, and effective policy change are difficult to establish, especially in rapidly evolving or volatile contexts. Particularly, Early Childhood Development (ECD) in crisis research struggles to reach a national, regional, or global audience – due to competing priorities, shrinking pools of funding, and lack of visibility.

The Arab Network for Early Childhood (ANECD) is an Arab multi-disciplinary, multi-sectoral non-governmental organization focused on early childhood care, development, and education, especially in poly-crisis situations. The Moving Minds Alliance (MMA) is a multi-stakeholder alliance advocating for better outcomes and equity for young children affected by crises everywhere, and leverages the strengths of diverse local and global actors to advocate for early childhood development to be prioritised in every crisis response. Together, we are working to innovate the ways in which ECD in crisis response, knowledge, advocacy, and change can be advanced to promote change.

## Purpose of Event

The Evidence for Action Symposium aims to strengthen ECD in crisis knowledge and practice in Arab countries by sharing research findings (with a specific focus on the strategic research model [SRM]), fostering collaboration and dialogue between researchers, policymakers, and regional representatives, advocating for evidence-based programs, policies, and strategies, and communicating results to other regions affected by poly-crisis.

## Event Objectives

Through this event, we aim to achieve the following:

- To elevate evidence from crisis-affected Arab countries, and strategically inform policies and programs within the Early Childhood Development in crisis field.
- To encourage empowerment of data-driven decision-making, reinforce best practices, and strengthen pathways to crisis response policies and strategies to maximise their impact.
- To actively facilitate dynamic knowledge exchange and champion interdisciplinary collaboration among leading academics, dedicated practitioners, influential policymakers, and other vital stakeholders across the national, regional, and international landscape.

## Event Details

Over two days, we will explore themes related to child rights, ECD advocacy, policy influence, and change. To do this, the symposium will serve as a platform for sharing research findings, discussing innovative approaches, and fostering collaborations to bridge the gap between research and actionable policies. The following highlights the key activities for each day of the event.

### Day 1– Elevating Child Rights & ECD in the Arab World: Evidence, Crises, and Contextualised Solutions

On the first day of the symposium, participants can expect a deep dive into the foundational aspects of child rights and early childhood development (ECD) in the Arab region. The morning will feature a keynote presentation on Child Rights and Laws in Arab Countries by Hatem Kotrane, followed by an insightful session from Ghassan Issa on the conceptual development of the strategic research model (SRM).

A significant portion of the day will be dedicated to presentations on the implementation of the SRM across various Arab countries, covering topics such as: parental awareness of climate crisis effects on children, the situation of parents and caregivers during crises, and the working conditions and professional development needs of the ECD workforce. Participants will also gain insights from program evaluation research, including the HEPPP and MHPSS for frontliners programs.

The afternoon will focus on a panel discussion exploring regional and global initiatives, innovations, and approaches to contextualise research and knowledge production, drawing on the experiences of Moving Minds Alliance (MMA), the Arab Network for Early Childhood Development (ANECD) and other international partners. The first day will end with a keynote speech on decolonising research in Arab countries by Anies Al Hroub.

### Day 2– Insights for ECD in Crisis: Data, Policy Action, and Future Directions

On day two, the symposium will broaden its perspective to global trends and the practical application of research into policy, with a focus on understanding key pathways for policy to translate into action. The day will commence with a keynote speech by Mark Tomlinson on ECD research in poly-crisis globally, setting the stage for discussions on pervasive challenges affecting the global landscape.

Shereen Al Abbadi will then delve into global and regional ECD data challenges, followed by a critical panel discussion will focus on transforming evidence to policy, the needs and challenges faced by policymakers, and bridging research into actionable policies with key regional stakeholders. Faten Skafi will then present ANECD's research mapping, highlighting ECD research priorities in Arab countries.

The day will conclude with a participatory workshop to map future research priorities based on identified research and policy gaps, and a closing remarks will be provided by Joan Lombardi to address contemporary issues in ECD, with a view of the next generation of research in this field.

For a full agenda of the event, please see the end of this document.

## Key Outcomes

This symposium is designed to equip you with valuable insights and practical knowledge to drive meaningful change for young children and their caregivers in crisis-affected contexts. By attending, you will benefit from:

- A **comprehensive understanding of the current landscape of ECD in crisis in Arab countries**, including the impact of climate crises, the challenges faced by caregivers, and the working conditions of the ECD workforce.
- Practical knowledge and strategies for **translating research evidence into actionable policies and programs**, fostering data-driven decision-making and strengthening crisis response mechanisms.
- Unique opportunities for **networking and collaboration** among academics, practitioners, policymakers, and regional and international stakeholders, creating a more cohesive ECD in crisis community.
- Engagement with **critical discussions on decolonising research methodologies** in Arab countries, ensuring that future research is culturally relevant and ethically sound.
- Directly contributing to **mapping future ECD research priorities**, addressing critical gaps, and shaping the global research agenda.

## Your Role as a Participant

Your active participation and unique perspectives will directly support the advancement of ECD work in several critical ways. Firstly, your insights will **directly inform the development of more effective and responsive policies and programs** for children and families in crisis. Your engagement will **contribute to building a stronger, more connected regional network** of ECD in crisis professionals and researchers. Particularly, this event **provides a critical platform to elevate research and experiences from Arab countries**, ensuring their unique challenges and innovative solutions are recognised on a global scale.

And finally, your contributions **will help lay the groundwork for long-term, sustainable improvements** in the lives of affected young children and their communities.

We believe that by working together, leveraging evidence, and fostering genuine collaboration, we can transform challenges into opportunities for profound and lasting positive change.

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