



The Nurturing Care Framework – the Education and Health Nexus

EVENT SUMMARY

Online via Zoom

When: Tuesday, May 12, 2020 | 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM

Moderator

[Dr. Lara S. Ho, MHS, PhD, RN](#) | *Deputy Director, Health Unit, International Rescue Committee*

Speakers

[Matthew Frey](#) | *Director, Global Integrated ECD/Nurturing Care Program, PATH*

[Erin Milner](#) | *Senior Nutrition Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Advisor, USAID*

[Katie Murphy](#) | *Senior Technical Advisor, Early Childhood Development, International Rescue Committee*

Event Description

The Nurturing Care Framework draws on state-of-the-art evidence on how early childhood development can guide the most effective policies and services that will help parents and caregivers provide nurturing care for babies and very young children. The framework builds on the foundation of universal health coverage, with primary care at its core, as essential for all sustainable growth and development. It articulates the important role that all sectors, including the health sector, must play to support the healthy development of all children to develop optimally and reap maximum benefit from pre-school and formal education. In this event, panelists discussed their work with the Nurturing Care Framework, touching on how education and health intersect. They also highlighted some of the work being done during the COVID-19 pandemic.





Key Takeaways

1 Introduction

Dr. Joanie Cohen (Creative Associates International) set the stage for the event by giving a brief background and overview of what the Nurturing Care Framework entails. Dr. Cohen defined a nurturing care framework as a stable environment created by parents and caregivers to promote children's health and nutrition, provide safety, and give young children opportunities for early learning and interactions that are emotionally supportive, responsive, and proactive. Dr. Cohen further mentioned that the nurturing care framework was developed by the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Bank Group in collaboration with partnerships from Early Childhood Development Action Network to provide a roadmap for ensuring the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals. Dr. Cohen also highlighted that the framework provides policies and services that support parents, caregivers, and families in the community to provide a safe and secure environment for children to grow.

2 The Nurturing Care Framework and Humanitarian Setting

Katie Murphy (International Rescue Committee) shared that specific threats faced by young children in humanitarian settings include: compounding adversities, lack of prioritization and funding for early learning and responsive caregiving within humanitarian settings, limited access to services, fragmented systems, and lack of support needed for children to thrive. Ms. Murphy emphasized that early childhood is a critical time for brain development in children, and therefore, parents and caregivers need to support and create an environment that promotes early learning. Ms. Murphy also highlighted that research from the Harvard Center for Child Development found that the accumulation of persistent stress, especially in absence of safe, secure, and stable relationships with adult caregivers, can disrupt the synaptic connection and have long-term effects on a child's future health, academic achievements, and well-being. Therefore, responsive caregiving in early learning plays a critical role as it protects children from the negative effects of stress. Ms. Murphy explained how the International Rescue Committee (IRC) has partnerships with mass media workshops and is supporting the media groups with designing content on child education and television shows that are aimed to reflect the realities of children and families that have been affected by conflict crises in the Middle East.



3 Donor Perspective on Early Childhood Development and Nutrition

Erin Milner (USAID) shared that the nurturing care framework provides donors like USAID with the architecture for investing in early childhood development and evidence to make concrete connections between early childhood development and nutrition. USAID is collaborating within health, nutrition, education, and social protection spaces to implement integrated nurturing care programs and contribute to the evidence base. Ms. Milner mentioned that USAID implements the U.S Government Strategic Framework on advancing the protection and care for children in adversity. This framework focuses on building strong beginnings, putting family care first, and protecting children. Ms. Milner highlighted examples of activities that are important for nutrition and development outcomes: (1) Responsive feeding, (2) integrated nutrition and ECD Curriculum development and training, (3) supportive supervision and mentorship, and (4) growth monitoring and promotion as well as integrated management of acute malnutrition.

4 How Nurturing Care is Taking Root in the Health Sector

Matthew Frey (Global Integrated ECD) discussed that 66 percent of African children are at a high risk of poor development. This statistic is due to the absence of a focus on early childhood development in African countries' health systems. Mr. Frey shared that PATH began working with health ministries in Kenya, Mozambique, and Zambia to design and evaluate early interventions to promote child development in the health sector. Mr. Frey stressed that Early Childhood Development is failing in African countries due to lack of leadership in the health sector and therefore, it is important to reinforce healthy parental practices and promote a change in social norms. Mr. Frey concluded that it is also important to introduce health policies and guidelines that work towards fostering child development and this can be achieved by providing efficient training to health workers and laying out guidelines that are vital for promoting development and growth in the health sector.