



## Transforming Education from the Start: A Call to Action for Investing in Early Childhood

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Early childhood is a critical window of development. Ninety percent of a child's brain develops by the age of 5, laying the foundation for lifelong learning and well-being. Yet at least [250 million children](#) around the world are not getting the early childhood development support they need to succeed in school and life. Increasingly, children affected by conflict and crisis are spending their entire childhoods without access to the necessary foundations for healthy development. Too often, young children miss out on funding and action because they are not in the room when decisions by world leaders are made. Their voices are not being heard. But early years experts and youth ambassadors are delivering a call to action on behalf of every young child that we hope world leaders will hear at the Transforming Education Summit: "Let me learn and thrive from the early years."

The Transforming Education Summit which addresses the learning crisis constitutes the moment to get things on track; this transformation cannot happen without prioritizing investment in early childhood development.

These early investments in promoting children's healthy, holistic development help pave a smooth road for the [entire trajectory of a child's learning](#). Access to early childhood education provides a strong foundation for future learning which ideally takes place in a learning environment that is [inclusive](#), [equitable](#), and [efficient](#) but access to early childhood education alone doesn't guarantee this. Investing in early childhood is also key to advancing gender equality, right from the start. That is why we – the coalitions and organizations supporting young children globally – are calling on Summit participants to commit to invest early, invest in quality, and invest in equity.

## **1. Invest Early.**

Increase investments in holistic early childhood development. This means investing in supporting children from birth to age 8 with the core components of [nurturing care](#): good health, adequate nutrition, safety and security, responsive caregiving, and opportunities for early learning. Specifically, in the education sector, every government and donor should aim for allocating a minimum of 10 percent of their education budget to early childhood education and commit to guaranteeing at least one year of high-quality pre-primary education for all children as committed by humanity in the SDGs. Progressively, countries should increase other provisions for learning opportunities for the youngest children beyond just one year of pre-primary education.

## **2. Invest in Quality.**

Follow the evidence. Research shows that quality support for young children and their caregivers can provide tremendous returns – up to [13 percent per year](#) – through improved education, health, and economic outcomes. We know early investments deliver outsized impact and return on investment, not only for individual children and families but for societies at-large and our shared goals of sustainable development. From reducing poverty and inequality to promoting gender equity and lifelong learning to fostering more peaceful and inclusive societies – it all starts with investing in high-quality early years services and an empowered workforce and system to deliver them.

### 3. Invest in Equity.

Direct investments should target those who are too often left behind, including girls, children with disabilities, and children affected by conflict and crisis. For the [one in five babies born into conflict-affected areas](#), early childhood interventions are essential to [mitigate the impacts of adversity](#) and build resilience. Yet globally, approximately [3 percent of development assistance to crisis-affected countries](#) and [only 2 percent of humanitarian assistance](#) is dedicated to early childhood development (ECD), and early education is one of the least funded components of ECD in humanitarian response. We must rapidly expand multi-sectoral investments in early childhood development as an essential part of development help and humanitarian action.

The Transforming Education Summit is a unique opportunity to galvanize commitment and action to invest in the futures of children and youth worldwide, and these efforts must include prioritizing and investing in early childhood development. An investment in early childhood is an investment in a brighter future for us all.

*The views expressed in this statement are those of the [Moving Minds Alliance](#), [ECDAN](#), [INEE](#), [ANECD](#), [ARNEC](#), [ISSA](#), and the other networks at-large and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of each individual member of the networks.*

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