

The 2026-2027 ECD in Crisis Research Fellowship Program

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR APPLICATIONS AND PROPOSALS

About the Fellowship

The ECD in Crisis Research Fellowship Program supports locally based, early career researchers in the Global South to carry out studies on issues related to young children (aged 0-8 years) and their caregivers in emergency contexts. It offers an opportunity to be part of a global community of researchers who are advancing knowledge and evidence in this field, while working with the Moving Minds Alliance (MMA) Research Forum team. It also offers the opportunity for Fellows' research to be disseminated widely through the MMA Network, and through the [Research Forum on Young Children in Emergencies](#).

We are now seeking applications for the 2026-27 Fellows cohort, with positions available to conduct research related to the theme: **Early Childhood Development in Crisis and Displacement**. This year, we are particularly interested in research that explores **policy and advocacy for ECD in crisis**; however, topics related to the overall theme may also be considered.

As a Fellow, you will be supported to carry out relevant (to your country or local context) studies with young children and families over a 12-month period by:

- Providing a one-time stipend of US \$5,000 to be used toward research activities
- Convening a community of practice of researchers around the world who are focusing on young children and families in climate emergency contexts
- Providing opportunities for knowledge sharing, mentoring, and dissemination of your research to a global audience (through learning events and webinars to which you will be invited to share your findings)

Research Requirements – ECD in Crisis and Displacement

The number of young children affected by crisis, conflict, and displacement is at an all-time high, with an estimated 520 million children living in conflict zones ([PRIO](#)). In 2025, an estimated 7.7 million children were born into humanitarian crises, situations in which access to ECD support is disrupted, unavailable, or inaccessible ([STC](#)). Combined with a global decline in humanitarian and development financing ([MMA](#)) for ECD, young children - now more than ever - are at risk of having no access to services that are critical for their long-term health, learning, development, and wellbeing. Despite the proven importance of early stimulation, responsive caregiving and safe learning spaces during crises, ECD services are rarely prioritized or sufficiently funded in humanitarian response plans, amplifying the risk that these youngest children will face lifelong disadvantages ([UNICEF](#), [WHO](#)).

Therefore, there exists a critical gap and thus limited, contextually-relevant knowledge and research related to:

- Policy research into ECD in emergencies, including solutions and support for systems change
- Child-friendly policies for climate-related disasters
- Programmatic interventions or approaches in ECD for young children, caregivers, and communities affected by crisis and displacement
- Post-reconstruction ECD efforts and approaches following disasters, emergencies, or other situations of crisis

To qualify for the Fellowship, your research should be:

- Original and creative, but may form part of an existing or ongoing project
- Rigorous and methodologically sound, which will be supported and reviewed with mentors
- Based on and conducted in countries within the Global South
- Thematically aligned or addressing issues identified as knowledge and research gaps above, as they relate to ECD in crisis and emergencies

Selection of research proposals that meet the above criteria will be prioritized.

To be successful, research fellows will need to work towards either or both:

- **Conducting primary research** (qualitative, quantitative or mixed method) to highlight important issues at the national/sub-national level related to the themes of the Nurturing Care Framework (NCF) **within the context of early childhood development in crisis and emergencies**. This can include:
 - Responsive caregiving
 - Security and safety
 - Opportunities for early learning
 - Good health and adequate nutrition
 - Mental health and well-being in the context of young children in or affected by crisis, displacement, emergency, or conflict
- **Using existing sources** of national/sub-national datasets on young children to bring a novel perspective to support the achievement of quality early childhood development for young children in emergencies and crises

The fellows are expected to share the methods and results of their research with the Research Forum members and, eventually, the public through a publication (terms to be agreed with Fellows; this may include publishing research briefs or full reports on MMA's Research Forum, sharing across networks, and use of research to inform future work).

Please note: Support will be provided through Mentors for Fellows that will be matched based on research interest, geography, and cultural relevance.

Research Fellow Profile

MMA is committed to recruiting Fellows who are:

- Born into, live in, or have worked in a country affected by crisis
- Have experience with conducting research and research analysis, but ideally suited to applicants who are in their early careers and/or have experience and knowledge gained through volunteer work, community projects, grassroots initiatives, or non-traditional research roles
- Have deep connections with communities and local organizations serving young children, particularly in ECD support or early learning
- Willing to regularly engage with research mentors and Research Forum mentors throughout the duration of the Fellowship, and participate in learning events intended to strengthen their skills.

The Fellowship is open to Fellows at any stage of their career (however we strongly encourage those in early stages of their work to apply), and can include students, researchers, or practitioners from non-governmental organizations, (NGO) and civil society backgrounds. The Fellowship aims to support individuals from diverse nationalities.

Selection Criteria

Key criteria for selection include:

- **Originality:** What gap does your research fill in the current research landscape on young children, caregivers, and their communities who have been affected by crisis or displacement? (refer to Research Requirements above)
- **Potential to inform programming and policy:** Are the issues relevant across contexts?
- **Alignment to thematic priorities** outlined above, within the context of crisis or displacement for young children (aged 0-8) and their caregivers and communities
- **Feasibility of research** within the 12-month time frame, with a final report to be completed and submitted by early May, 2027

- **Geographical relevance and requirement:** Applications from the Arab, Asia-Pacific, and South American regions will be prioritized for this cohort. However, this should not act as a deterrent for applicants from the African region.

Application & Research Proposal

During the application process, you will be asked for the following information:

- Information about your research plan:
 - Topic and title (if possible)
 - Location of study
 - Target population and sample size
 - 1-3 Key research questions
 - Methodological approach
 - How you plan to include voices of affected children, caregivers, or communities in your research
- A brief CV (**no more than two pages**)

To apply, please submit your application at this link no later than **March 31st, 2026:**

[2026-27 MMA & BRAC IED RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP APPLICATION & PROPOSAL FORM](#)

PLEASE NOTE: DUE TO THE HIGH VOLUME OF APPLICATIONS RECEIVED, WE RESERVE THE RIGHT TO CLOSE APPLICATIONS EARLIER THAN THE ADVERTISED DATE.

Applications WILL NOT be accepted via e-mail. Applications will only be accepted at the link above.

Should you have any questions about the application process or other queries, please contact the following e-mail: sarah.ulhaq@movingmindsalliance.org.

Please note that at this time, due to the reviewing team's limited resources, we are only able to accept applications in English (however, this should not act as a deterrent for you; **your research may be completed in the language of your choice, and MMA can support the official translation of the final report as needed**). Please also note that it is expected that the Fellowship will be facilitated in English when engaging with the Research Forum and associated MMA staff.

Applications will be reviewed and assessed by the Research Fellowship Team, based on the criteria outlined above and considerations related to quality, potential, and originality as well as the qualifications and track record of the applicant. Shortlisted applicants may be invited to discuss adjustments to their proposal in an interview.

The Research Fellowship Team will not be able to provide individual feedback on proposals not selected.