



Go Baby Go! Integrated ECD Framework: Building a Strong Foundation for Lifelong Health and Learning

Global Goal:

A well child – the ultimate outcome of World Vision’s (WV’s) mission and strategic programming – is one who fulfills her/his optimum potential, and *enjoys the fullness of life*. WV defines child well-being in holistic terms: healthy development (physical and mental health with social-emotional and spiritual dimensions), the nurturing of positive relationships, and within a safe setting where they can participate in civil society. The goal of **Go Baby Go! (GBG)** is to enable the youngest of children, *especially the most vulnerable*, to have the strongest possible start in life through family caregiving that protects and supports health, nutrition, holistic development and learning.



Scientific discoveries have confirmed that experiences in the earliest years of a child’s life are imperative to attain this full potential.

Longitudinal research has revealed that the physical, cognitive, emotional and social capacities of young children (ages 0-3) are inseparable – the development of each domain influences the development of the others – and that the brain’s foundational architecture is established during this period. Those young children who are in safe, stable, and responsive family and community environments that nurture their holistic

development have significantly better adult outcomes (improved life-long health, higher educational attainment, more gainful employment prospects, and less behavioral issues) than those who do not have such comprehensive and nurturing care during their earliest years.

The evidence suggests that positive intra-and inter-relationships among families and communities during the formative years of life could be the twin engines that most effectively promote resilience, social cohesion and peace (Early Childhood Peace Consortium 2013). Moreover, the highest impact on child well-being and developmental outcomes is born out of synergy between health, nutrition, education, protection, and psychosocial support. Although learning, behavior and both physical and mental health remain closely linked throughout life cycles, a strong early childhood is considered to be a valid predictor of strong later development for both an individual and the society in which she/he lives (Sustainable Development Foundation, 2012).

Effective Early Childhood Development (ECD) programs address the youngest children’s holistic development and well-being, and share the following elements*:

- i) integrate with existing family and community support, protection, health, nutrition, WASH, agricultural and/or educational systems;
- ii) combine home visits and group-based learning using contextualized, interactive, developmentally appropriate, and age group-specific activities including specific tools (e.g. mother-tongue);
- iii) start with mothers’ well-being during pregnancy;
- iv) allow infants/toddlers to initiate their own learning and experiences (e.g. ‘baby-led’);
- v) deliberately target high-risk children/families/groups at risk where impact is greatest; and
- vi) blend healthy, positive traditional child rearing practices and cultural norms with evidence-based approaches.

This knowledge has informed WV’s innovative approaches to child well-being, entering into the era of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) where there is an increased focus on children thriving, alongside surviving. Early childhood development is considered to be the “powerful equalizer” in human development – an open window during which a child’s experiences can either facilitate or inhibit her/his

* *Every Child’s Potential: Integrating Interventions for Early Childhood Development* NY Academy of Sciences, The Sackler Institute for Nutrition Science and Global Child Development Group 2013; Richter, Linda M, and Sara Naicker, 2012. *A Review of Published Literature on Supporting and Strengthening Child-Caregiver Relationships (Parenting)*, Arlington, VA: USAID’s AIDS Support and Technical Assistance Resources, AISTAR One, Task Order 1.

ability to attain full potential in life, and to positively contribute to society (WHO, 2007). WV seeks to make a very significant contribution to breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty, poor health, low productivity, criminality and other social ills by implementing evidence-driven, community-based, integrated ECD programming that works for the children and families we serve.

Core Focus:

The first 1,000+ days of life (pregnancy through age three) are formative for all future human development. Within this critical period the majority of children's brain growth occurs, during the time in life when they are also the most dependent upon the adults who care for them. It is therefore vital that parents and other caregivers possess the capabilities to consistently meet their babies and toddlers many needs, including not only physical care but also their equally imperative needs for affection, appreciation, play and communication. GBG has been constructed on evidence-based recommendations that the most effective ECD programmes target the youngest children within the most vulnerable families, to provide direct learning experiences through integration with existing community support, health, nutrition, education and/or protection structures and approaches.

Delivery Approaches:

The Go Baby Go Parenting Plus (GBG-PP) curriculum is a WV model which can be integrated into existing projects or as a stand-alone parenting program. GBG-PP is comprised of both group parenting sessions and home visits. The curriculum is organized into eleven group sessions (with additional modules that can be added depending on the context and parent's needs). GBG-PP is rooted in caregiver empowerment through behavior change communication, appreciative inquiry and positive deviance approaches. Within GBG-PP, parents and other caregivers of young children learn to build on existing knowledge about child-rearing, leveraging their strengths and assets as a community to enable their children to have the best possible start in life.



Examples of session topics include Sensitive and Responsive Parenting, Holistic Child Development, Play and Communication, and Wellbeing as a Family Affair. The curriculum utilizes pictorial reference cards, storytelling and dialogue with caregivers to explain concepts, explore the inter-related developmental domains (physical, cognitive, social and emotional), and encourage home-based activities for mothers, fathers and other family members to support young children's age-appropriate development.



Programme Integration:

Guidance and tools are also available for integrating GBG into ongoing home visitor and support group programmes through a variety of existing portals of entry (e.g., Community Health Workers, Timed and Targeted Counselling, Positive Deviance Hearth, Celebrating Families, Grandmother Approach, MenCare, Community Health Committees, etc.), or in emergency settings through platforms such as Infant and Young Child Feeding Centers, Women Adolescent and Young Child Spaces, etc.

For more information on GBG programming and resources, contact Ana Tenorio, ECD Senior Advisor for Education and Life Skills (ana_tenorio@wvi.org) and Erin Jones, ECD Advisor for Sustainable Health (erin_jones@wvi.org).

