



Statement on agenda item—12.3 Global Strategy for Women’s, Children’s and Adolescents’ Health (2016–2030): early childhood development

Delivered at the Seventy-First World Health Assembly

We applaud WHO’s commitment to early childhood development. The environments in which children grow and the conditions to which they are exposed affect the developing brain, which provides the foundation for all future learning, behavior, and health. A child can only reach his or her full potential under healthy, nurturing, and safe conditions that promote good growth, learning, and development.

The Nurturing Care Framework for early childhood development (ECD), led by WHO, UNICEF, the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health, the ECD Action Network, in collaboration with PATH and other partners, promises to provide guidance and principles for countries to strengthen their own responses and improve development outcomes for their children. Based on evidence, experience, and country need, the Nurturing Care Framework uses the health system as an entry point for supporting families to enable their children to thrive through a three-pronged approach:

- Integrating ECD into all elements of a health system, from training service providers, to providing support and supervision, to ensuring that information systems capture ECD-related data.
- Expanding the evidence base for health sector integration of ECD programming in low-resource settings and disseminating lessons learned.
- Strengthening the enabling environment by including ECD content in policies, guidelines, training curricula, and government work plans and budgets.

Many governments are poised to lead the introduction or expansion of ECD integration into the health system and are prepared to commit resources to the “thrive” agenda. We strongly urge WHO to support the launch of the Nurturing Care Framework and subsequent country-level implementation and scale-up. This must occur in both donor country programming as well as national government strategies. We encourage WHO to adequately pursue the development of guidelines and operational guidance for nurturing care in early childhood to ensure this vision becomes a reality.