Chapter 2

Method

Centre for
Evidence and
Implementation

Contents

List of tables

List of figures

1. Approach

A landscape study approach was selected for this examination of ECD policies, programmes and interventions. A landscape study provides an overview of what is currently provided (policies and programmes) and highlights areas in which gaps may exist. This includes identifying areas of ECD that could benefit from increased programme provision, as well as opportunities for increased coordination between sectors, or between policies and programmes. Finally, by identifying what is known about programme evaluations, this landscape study provides recommendations for ways in which evaluation and evidence can be strengthened.

2. Study design

The landscape study used a mixed-methods approach to data collection using a combination of desk-based research and expert interviews. The study design was developed to provide a current and comprehensive landscape of ECD policies and programmes in each country. For all countries in the study, national level programmes and policies were examined. However, given the geographic and population diversity of China, Indonesia, and the Philippines, a further study of programmes and policies in selected provinces or regions was conducted. The provincial review provided additional depth to the landscape study by providing insights about how national policies have been implemented at the provincial level, the reach of programmes within and between provinces, and the programme and policy gaps at the provincial level. The following factors were considered when selecting the provinces for further study:

- Most populous province,

- Province with the largest land area,

- Least accessible province, and

- Province with the lowest Gross Regional Product (GRP).

The detailed methods of the landscape study are detailed below. The specific activities conducted to address each research question is provided in Table 2-1, below.

Table 2-1. Study activities and research questions

Research Question	Study Activities
What parenting and ECD policies, programmes and services are currently being implemented across each country aimed at families with children between the ages of 0 to 6 years?	Expert interviews; Desktop research
(For China, Indonesia, and the Philippines only) What parenting and ECD policies, programmes and services are currently being implemented in each of the selected provinces aimed at families with children between the ages of 0 to 6 years?[1]	
What gaps currently exist in the ECD policy and programme provision in each country when mapped against international frameworks?	Expert interviews; Desktop research, mapping programmes and services against the NCF and 25 Key Interventions
What evaluations have been undertaken of ECD programmes and services?[2]	Desktop research

A sequential approach was used in this landscape study. The approach is adapted from a literature review methodology, setting a standard process for the identification of ECD programmes and policies, and the screening of identified programmes and policies for inclusion (i.e., does the programme target children aged between 0 and 6? Is it still operating?).

For the purposes of this study, 'programme' refers to any service, programme, intervention, or resource provided to, or made available for, children between birth to the age of 6 years and their families/caregivers.

Step 1: Initial identification of ECD programmes and policies
To conduct an initial identification of ECD programme and policies in each country, as well as to start building a list of experts to interview, the study team:

- Met with the study Advisory Group to request suggestions for experts to interview, and to outline the type of information that was required for the study. Where appropriate, this included the identification of experts in the selected provinces.

- Conducted interviews with donors and ECD experts from donor organisations

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[1] This includes universal population-wide approaches as well as targeted programmes (e.g., for children with suspected or identified special needs).

[2] Where possible, information will be included about the scope of the evaluations (e.g., process, impact, economic) and effectiveness of programmes and services.

- Reviewed documents from donors, ECD experts, and other background literature provided by donors to develop baseline information about each country and the ECD sector

- Identified experts (individuals and organisations) for interviews based on conversations with donors and document reviews

- Identified key websites/databases to be searched for further information

- Created a preliminary list of ECD programmes and policies

In addition to information gathered from donor interviews and document reviews, websites of the following organisations were reviewed for each country to identify relevant information about programmes and policies (Table 2-2). The organisations were selected due to the extensive nature of their work in the region.

Table 2-2. Key organisations and websites

Organisation Type	Detail
Government	Including ministries related to child protection, early learning, health and welfare
	Government websites (and those of specific ministries) were searched for information about both programmes and policies
International Organisations	Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), UNICEF, World Bank, World Health Organisation (WHO)
	These websites were searched for information about both programmes and policies
Non-governmental Organisations	CARE International, Plan International, Save the Children, SOS Children's Villages, World Vision International
	These websites were searched for information about programmes in each country

Step 2: Conduct online searches to identify ECD programmes and policies

Once a preliminary list of programmes and policies was established (Step 1), an online search was conducted using the search strategy outlined in Table 2-3, below. The search was conducted using the Google search engine. The same strategy was used in the search for provincial programmes; the country name was replaced with the province name.

Table 2-3. Programme search strategy

Search	Search string
1	"early childhood"; "preschool"; "childcare"; "kindergarten" AND "early childhood intervention"; "programme OR program" AND "[country name]"
2	"maternal child health"; "health" AND "early childhood intervention"; "programme OR program" AND "[country name]"
3	"nutrition"; "breastfeeding" AND "early childhood intervention"; "programme OR program" AND "[country name]"
4	"safety"; "security" AND "early childhood intervention"; "programme OR program" AND "[country name]"
5	"early learning"; "early education" AND "early childhood intervention"; "programme OR program" AND "[country name]"
6	"responsive caregiving AND "early childhood intervention"; "programme OR program" AND "[country name]"

The first 10 search result pages were reviewed for ECD programmes. Preliminary test searches indicated that relevant information was found in the first 10 pages and further pages provide repeated or irrelevant information. For the provincial searches, only the first five pages were reviewed as test searches indicated repeated or irrelevant information after these first five pages.

For policies, the search was conducted by examining the key government websites identified in Step 1. Using the laws and policies highlighted within the NCF to create enabling environments (see Table 2-4) as guidance, the search of key government websites was focused on the outlined laws, policies and services.

Table 2-4. Overview of laws, policies, and interventions

NCF Component	Laws and policies	Services and interventions
Adequate nutrition	• The International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes • Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative	• Maternal nutrition • Support for early initiation, exclusive breastfeeding and continued breastfeeding after 6 months • Support for appropriate complementary feeding and for transition to a healthy family diet • Micronutrient supplementation for mother and child, as needed

NCF Component	Laws and policies	Services and interventions
		• Fortification of staple foods
		• Growth monitoring and promotion, including intervention and referral when indicated
		• Deworming
		• Support for appropriate child feeding during illness
		• Management of moderate and severe malnutrition as well as being overweight or obese
Good health	• Universal health coverage	• Family planning
		• Immunization for mothers and children
		• Prevention and cessation of smoking, alcohol and substance use
		• Prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV
		• Support for caregivers' mental health
		• Antenatal and childbirth care
		• Prevention of preterm births
		• Essential care for new-born babies, with extra care for small and sick babies
		• Kangaroo care for low-birthweight babies
		• Support for timely and appropriate care seeking for sick children
		• Integrated management of childhood illness
		• Early detection of disabling conditions (such as problems with sight and hearing)
		• Care for children with developmental difficulties and disabilities
Opportunities for early learning	• Universal access to good quality day care for children, as well as pre-primary and primary education	• Information, support and counselling about opportunities for early learning, including the use of common household objects and home-made toys
		• Play, reading and story-telling groups for caregivers and children
		• Book sharing
		• Mobile toy and book libraries
		• Good-quality day care for children, and pre-primary education
		• Storytelling of elders with children
		• Using local language in children's daily care
Responsive caregiving	• Paid parental leave	• Skin-to-skin contact immediately after birth
	• Affordable childcare services	• Kangaroo care for low-birthweight babies

NCF Component	Laws and policies	Services and interventions
	• Urban design	• Rooming-in for mothers and young infants, and feeding on demand
		• Responsive feeding
		• Interventions that encourage play and communication activities of caregiver with the child
		• Interventions to promote caregiver sensitivity and responsiveness to children's cues
		• Support for caregivers' mental health
		• Involving fathers, extended family and other partners
		• Social support from families, community groups and faith communities
Security and safety	• Social protection and social services • Minimum wage	• Birth registration
		• Provision of safe water and sanitation
		• Good hygiene practices – at home, at work and in the community
		• Prevention and reduction of indoor and outdoor air pollution
		• Clean environments free of hazardous chemicals
		• Safe family and play spaces in urban and rural areas
		• Prevention of violence by intimate partners and in families, as well as services for addressing it
		• Social care services
		• Cash or in-kind transfers and social insurance
		• Supporting family care and foster care over institutional care

Step 3: Extract and collate programme information

Programme information found in Step 2 was collated in a data extraction spreadsheet that included:

- type of ECD programme

- type of provider (e.g., government, non-governmental organisation, other)

- funding source

- target group(s)

- target outcome(s)

Policy information found in Step 2 was collated in a data extraction spreadsheet that included:

- Year implemented

- Related government ministry/department

- Description of policy and any related laws

Step 4: Screening for inclusion

Programmes identified in the previous steps were screened for inclusion in the study using the decision tree illustrated in Figure 2-1. The decision tree incorporates the key inclusion criteria for both programmes and policies. In cases where identified programmes did not have an active 'intervention' component but were publicly available resources for parents/caregivers or families, these were listed as 'resources' rather than programmes.
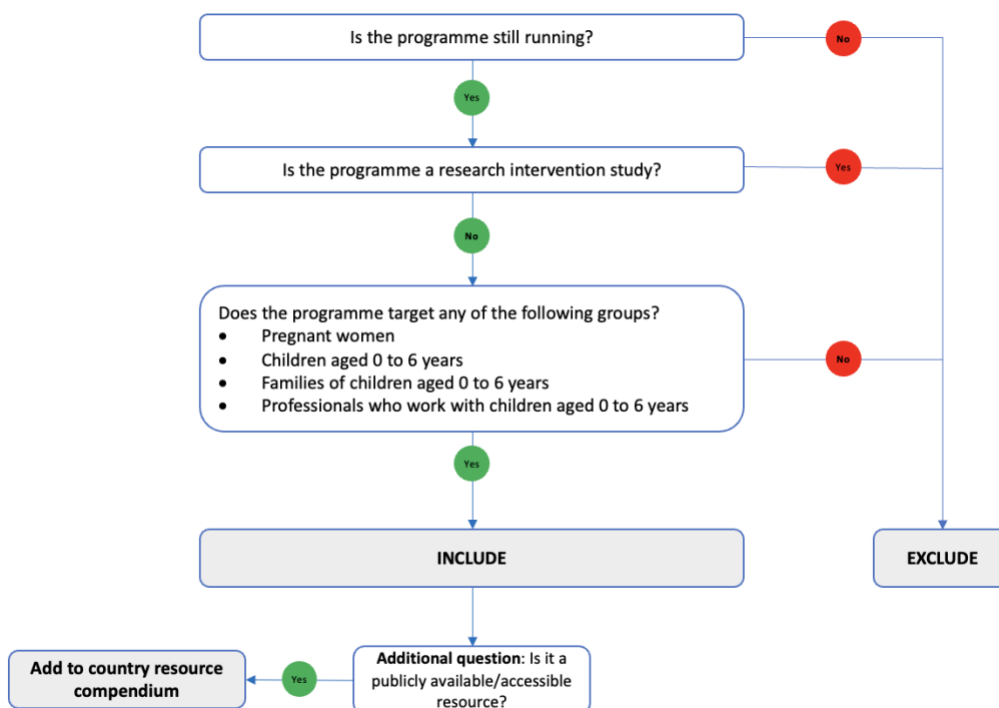

Figure 2-1. Inclusion decision tree

All programmes that met the inclusion criteria were shortlisted for further examination.

Step 5: Map programmes and policies

Once a shortlist of programmes and policies was established, each shortlisted programme and policy was mapped to the NCF and 25 Key Interventions frameworks. Mapping to frameworks provided an overview of which component(s) was/were represented by each programme and policy. In cases where programmes covered more than one component, detailed information was extracted about which element of the programme or policy mapped to which component of the framework.

The relationship between the NCF and the 25 Key Interventions frameworks is illustrated in Table 2-5, below. Not all interventions listed in the table were applicable to every country in the study; in these cases, adaptations were made to fit the context and were explained in the relevant country chapter.

Table 2-5. Mapping NCF components to 25 Key Interventions

NCF Components	World Bank Interventions
Adequate Nutrition	Counselling on adequate diet during pregnancy Iron-folic acid for pregnant mothers Exclusive breastfeeding Complementary feeding Adequate, nutritious, and safe diet Prevention and treatment for acute malnutrition Micronutrients
Good Health	Antenatal visits Attended delivery Immunisations Deworming Family planning Access to healthcare Prevention and treatment of parental depression Hygiene and handwashing
Opportunities for Early Learning	Maternal education Education about early stimulation, growth, and development Early childhood and pre-primary programmes Continuity to quality primary education
Responsive Caregiving[3]	Family planning Prevention and treatment of parental depression Maternal education Education about early stimulation, growth, and development
Security and Safety	Birth registration Parental leave and adequate childcare Child protection services Social assistance transfer programmes Access to safe water Adequate sanitation

Step 6: Expert interviews

Interviews with key experts involved in ECD programmes and policies were conducted to supplement information gathered in the desktop research. The intent of these interviews was to ensure that all relevant policies and programmes had been identified, and to gain insight into the ECD landscape from varying perspectives. Efforts were made to ensure balanced inclusion of experts with expertise in policy and programming. The aim was to interview up to five experts in the area of ECD programmes, and up to five in the area of ECD policy for each country. If an expert had insight into both programmes and policies, the interview covered both areas. In countries where provincial information was included, an additional two to three experts were invited for interviews for each province.

Experts were identified in Step 1, as well as through the desktop research in Step 3. Where needed, a snowball technique was used by asking identified experts during interviews to

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[3] Within this component, the related interventions are drawn from the other areas of key interventions and should also include quality childcare and parent support groups.

recommend other key individuals who could be included in the study, or who could provide insight into a specific programmatic or policy area.

Interview questions were developed using the NCF and 25 Key Interventions frameworks. Questions included, but were not be limited to, current programmes and interventions, ECD policies, evaluations of impact and effectiveness, and overall perceptions of the impact of ECD programmes and policies. Interviews were conducted online and lasted between 30 and 45 minutes.

Individuals included in the expert interviews were sent the shortlist of programmes and policies for the relevant country ahead of the interview. If any additional programmes or policies were identified during the interview, these were added to the shortlist. Further searches about the programme were conducted to ensure all relevant information, as outlined above, was included in the programme and policy spreadsheet.

Step 7a: Mapping to the UNICEF-Campbell Mega-map[1]

To provide an overview of the evidence for ECD interventions and outcomes in the region, the interactive Mega-map was examined in March 2023. The Mega-map of systematic reviews and evidence and gap maps (EGMs) published by UNICEF and the Campbell Collaboration (Mega-map) examines interventions to improve child well-being in low- and middle-income countries. The Mega-map includes 356 studies - 536 systematic reviews and 25 EGMs. Included studies in the initial had participants who were between 0 and 18 years and were conducted in low- or middle-income countries. The Mega-map is updated annually with new evidence.

When searching the interactive map, results were filtered to only include systematic reviews and EGMs that included the East Asia and Pacific region.

The intervention domains in the Mega-map are:

- Early childhood development

- Health and nutrition

- Education

- Social work and welfare

- Social protection

- Environmental health including WASH

- Governance

The outcomes in the Mega-map are:

- Health impacts

- Healthy development

- Learning and development

- Risk factor reduction

- Safety

- Equity

- Economic impact

Once the filter was applied, a summary of evidence was created, indicating the strength of the evidence in each intervention and outcome category. The data from this mapping exercise was triangulated with data collected for each country.

Step 7b: Identify evaluations

For each shortlisted programme in each country, a search was conducted for existing, publicly available evaluations. The search was conducted on programme websites (if available), and from key databases and repositories of peer-reviewed evaluations:

- Education: ERIC, Social Science Premium Collection

- Medicine/Nursing: The Cochrane Library, CINAHL Complete

- Psychology: PsycINFO, Academic Search Complete

- Public health: Global Health

Detailed information from available evaluations was added to the data extraction spreadsheet, including links to any original reports or articles. Extracted information included:

- source of evaluation

- summary of evaluation

- study design and methods

- study findings

Step 8: Data synthesis

Data was synthesised to provide an overall summary of the landscape of ECD programmes and policies in each country, and where relevant, each province. This information was synthesised to provide information that:

- uses the NCF and 25 Key Interventions to identify the strengths and gaps in current ECD programmes and policies.

- identifies which programmes have an evaluation or evidence of effectiveness.

- indicates where there is a lack of evidence for programmes or interventions and a need for further evaluations and programme and sector strengthening.

Step 9: Recommendations

Based on the data synthesis, in particular the examination of gaps in the ECD programme and policy landscape, recommendations were provided on ways to strengthen the ECD sector. The recommendations were focused on ways in which donors could be actively engaged in sector strengthening activities and based on both the current landscape and the best available evidence for ECD programmes.

3. Project scope and limitations

The key aims of the methods employed for this landscape study were to ensure rigour and comprehensiveness of findings. There are some limitations inherent in the study that are summarised below.

- Some ECD programmes may have been missed through our search strategies. This is particularly true of smaller, regional, or provincial programmes that do not have public websites, only operate in local languages, or are not known to experts interviewed in this study.

- It is possible that some of the programmes included in this study have been evaluated, but the findings of these evaluations are not publicly available. Only evaluations in the public domain were included in this report.

- The information about evaluations and the state of the evidence for ECD interventions based on the Mega-map provide a limited view into the value of ECD programmes across the region. Some interventions have yet to be studied extensively but may still be worth implementing or piloting.

4. Guide to the report

The report that follows first provides a summary of cross-cutting findings across the region based on data gathered in China, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Singapore. We first discuss common strengths, then opportunities for action across the region, followed by regional recommendations.

The following four chapters provide specific information on each country:

1   China

2   Indonesia

3   Philippines

4   Singapore

In each country chapter, recommendations are followed by detailed information pertaining to the three research questions that guided this study. Complete lists of policies and programmes for each country are included as Appendices at the end of the report.

References

1 Saran, A., White, H., Albright, K., & Adona, J. (2020). Mega-map of systematic reviews and evidence and gap maps on the interventions to improve child well-being in low- and middle-income countries. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, *16*(4). https://doi.org/10.1002/cl2.1116