



Landscape Analysis of Early Childhood Development and Education in Emergencies

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# LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES

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## ABSTRACT

*Despite the vast amount of research that supports investing in early childhood development and education in emergencies (ECDEiE), this area of programming continues to be underprioritized and underfunded. We applied a strategic problem-solving framework to systematically address the challenge of low access to ECDEiE in the global context. Specifically, we addressed three root causes of this problem: low prioritization of ECDEiE across sectors; the lack of a systematic characterization of the ECDEiE institutional and programmatic landscapes; and limited consensus on strategic advocacy for ECDEiE. To address these issues, we applied a mixed methods approach. We administered an online global stocktaking survey to 118 respondents, including those working in humanitarian aid, ECDEiE, government, and academia. We also reviewed the gray literature (N=218 documents). We discuss our six main findings in order to inform strategic initiatives that could be used to increase access to ECDEiE globewide.*

## INTRODUCTION

Education in emergencies (EiE) can foster inclusion, promote tolerance, enhance awareness of human rights, and provide strategies for conflict resolution (UNESCO 2017). However, despite education being positioned as a basic right, the global community still fails to meet the education needs of children living in crises (World Humanitarian Summit Secretariat 2015; UNHCR 2020; Zubairi and Rose

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2020). Although humanitarian aid allocations to education doubled between 2015 and 2018, only approximately 2.6 percent of the total humanitarian relief spent in 2019 was allocated to education. This is well under the global target of 4 percent (Dupuy, Palik, and Østby 2020; Zubairi and Rose 2020).

Humanitarian aid allocations for early childhood development are particularly underprioritized. Early childhood development, which refers to the multidimensional (e.g., physical, cognitive, linguistic, and socioemotional) development of a child from the prenatal stage through primary schooling (UNICEF 2017), typically involves a wide range of services, programs, and activities in the child-care, protection, health, nutrition, and education sectors. Early childhood development and education, or ECDE, refers to the link between child development and education (e.g., early childhood parenting, preschool, early learning). An analysis found that more than half of humanitarian response plans, flash appeals, and refugee response plans did not include comprehensive early childhood development services, early childhood development in emergencies, or early childhood education in education-sector responses (Bouchane, Curtiss, and Ellis 2016). Furthermore, a recent study reported that early learning and education for children ages 0-5 received less than 1 percent of the funds allocated to crisis-affected countries; financial data were not available for child protection and responsive caregiving interventions (Moving Minds Alliance 2020). The lack of funding for early childhood development and education in emergencies (ECDEiE) has resulted in limited access to and poor-quality educational opportunities for young children living in crises.

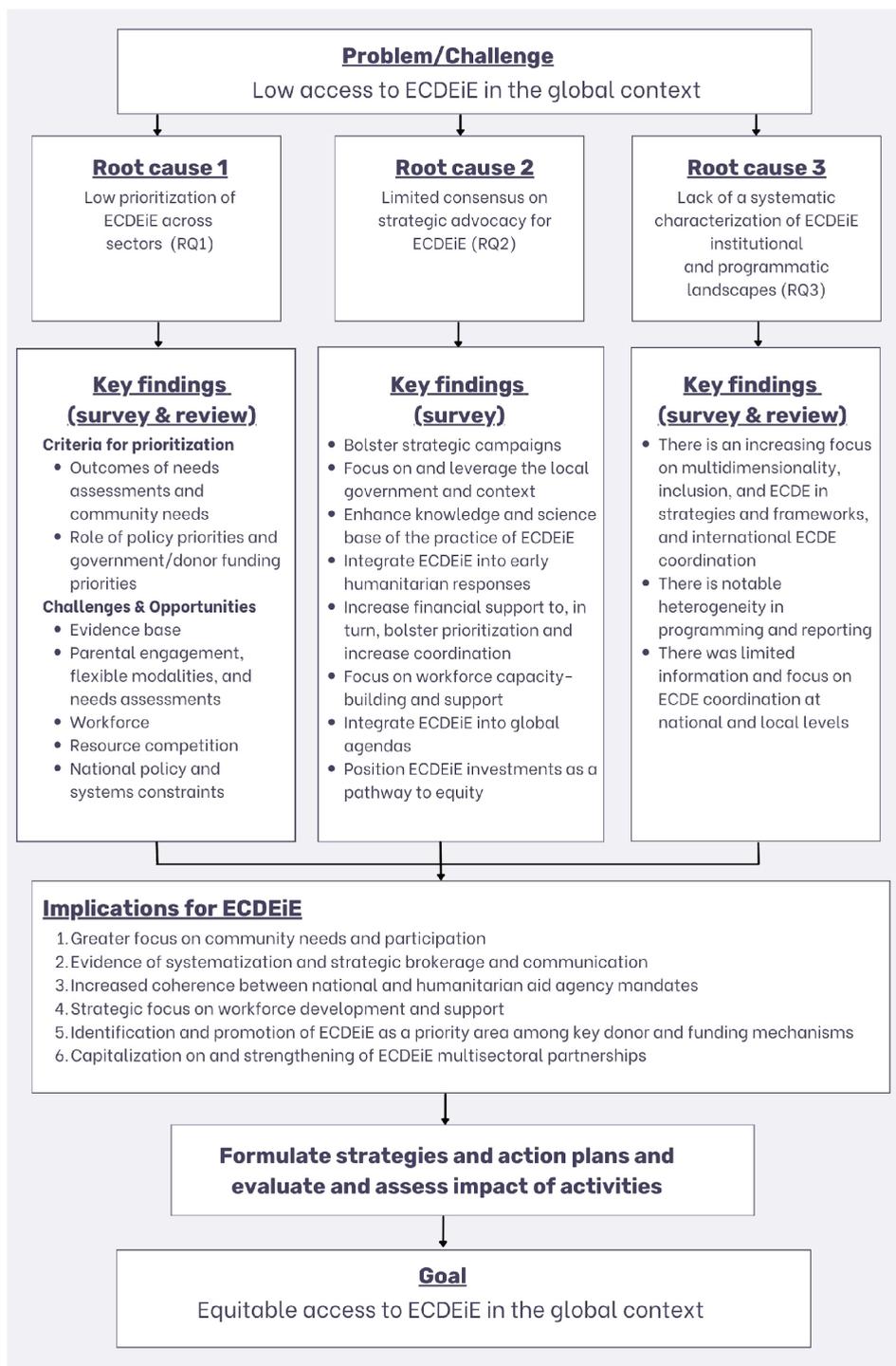
The objective of our study was to provide evidence to inform strategic initiatives that could be used to address this challenge by applying a stepwise problem-solving framework (Rakich and Krigline 1996). We identified three root causes of limited access to ECDEiE in the global context. First, priority-setting processes across multiple stakeholders, which play a role in development, education, and humanitarian emergencies, are at times misaligned (Bennett 2015; Minear and Smillie 2003; UNESCO 2015). We argue that a systematic analysis of stakeholders' perceptions of the role ECDE plays in humanitarian response could inform effective strategies to strengthen ECDEiE investments. Second, a systematic characterization of the institutional and programmatic landscape for ECDEiE is lacking. Education in emergencies research has focused predominately on primary- and secondary-level school-age children. There is limited research on the efficacy of ECDE in humanitarian contexts, which is related to low prioritization, limited funding, and few practical actions focused on the urgent needs of younger

children (Murphy, Yoshikawa, and Wuermli 2018). Global efforts to systematize the ECDEiE organizational landscape could allow the sector to use the existing data more effectively. Third, although the early childhood development field continues to grow, there is a lack of consensus on the most effective global and local levers for ECDEiE advocacy (Ponguta et al. 2020). Exploring stakeholder perspectives on advocacy may lead to more effective strategies at the local and global levels. In this study, we addressed three key research questions:

1. *Research Question 1:* What are stakeholders' perceptions of the challenges to and opportunities for prioritizing ECDEiE in their organizations?
2. *Research Question 2:* What do key stakeholders view as effective global and local strategies for effective advocacy to increase access to ECDEiE?
3. *Research Question 3:* What is the typology of organizations operating in the ECDEiE space and what are the trends in the geographic focus, program models, and evidence of the implementation and impact of programs represented across the gray literature?

To address these questions, we applied a mixed methods approach that combined an online survey and a scoping review of the gray, nonacademic, and nonpeer-reviewed literature (e.g., organization reports, strategic documents, briefs, guidelines, and toolkits). In this article, we present our key findings and discuss the implications for global humanitarian, government, and academic actors in ECDE.

Figure 1: Conceptual and Methodological Framework



## METHODOLOGY<sup>1</sup>

### THE ONLINE SURVEY

#### DESIGN AND DISSEMINATION

We designed an online survey to assess the experiences and perspectives of five types of respondents: (1) academic researchers; (2) government organizations; (3) organizations working in the context of ECDE policies and programs, though not necessarily humanitarian emergencies; (4) organizations working in ECDEiE specifically; and (5) humanitarian response actors operating in the emergency relief field, though not necessarily in the ECDE space. The opening survey prompt included operational definitions of humanitarian emergencies and early childhood education.<sup>2</sup> The survey was designed in English and translated into Arabic, French, and Spanish by the research team members. The survey was shared with members of networks that have global and multistakeholder reach in the ECDE and ECDEiE sectors. In addition to using relevant listserves, we approached specific individuals in senior programming, leadership, and humanitarian roles, and in advocacy, academia, knowledge management, and the ECDE and ECDEiE fields. Because we released the survey during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic (March 2020), we added one open-ended question to identify early general and ECDEiE-specific pandemic needs and responses.

#### DATA ANALYSIS

We analyzed the survey data in three steps. First, we characterized the respondents according to the region in which their organization worked, how long they have been working with the organization in their current role, and their organization's category. Second, we analyzed descriptive statistics of answers, including priority areas across organizations, and what they perceived to be barriers (or bottlenecks) and enablers (or opportunities) to prioritizing ECDEiE in their respective sectors or organizations. We excluded academic researchers from the aggregated analyses because they answered questions specific to research activities and processes. Third, we asked open-ended questions about barriers and opportunities to prioritizing ECDEiE and about effective strategies to strengthen ECDEiE advocacy in the global

1 The complementary tables and materials—referred to as Complement Table 1, Complement Table 2, etc.—can be found on the Early Childhood Peace Consortium (ECPC) website: <https://ecdpeace.org/complement-landscape-analysis-of-early-childhood-development-and-education-in-emergencies>.

2 For purposes of conceptual clarity and consistency of terms used throughout this article, research outputs are referred to as ECDEiE, but it should be noted that the survey was released to assess early childhood education in emergencies more specifically.

context. Two research analysts coded and summarized the entries into emergent and common themes.

#### SAMPLE

Excluding the academic researchers ( $n=9$ ), 118 respondents completed the online stocktaking survey. The largest group of respondents indicated that they worked in ECDEiE specifically ( $n=85$ , 72%), followed by respondents from government organizations ( $n=15$ , 12.7%), organizations working in the context of early childhood development/ECDE policies and programs ( $n=14$ , 11.9%), and a small number of humanitarian response actors ( $n=4$ , 3.4%). [Complement Table 1](#) shows the summary of the sector, geography, and time working with the organization in the current role as reported by respondents. The analysis of the regions the organizations worked in showed significant geographic diversity. For instance, 33.3 percent of government respondents worked in Latin America and the Caribbean, 26.7 percent in sub-Saharan Africa, and 20 percent in Southeast Asia. Among the ECDEiE respondents, the majority (64.7%) reported that their organization worked in sub-Saharan Africa, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (40%) and other Asian regions (35.3%). In contrast, relatively few respondents indicated that their organization was active in Australia or New Zealand (ECDEiE  $n=9$ , 10.6%; ECDE  $n=1$ , 7.1%), Melanesia (ECDEiE  $n=12$ , 14.1%), Micronesia (ECDEiE  $n=11$ , 12.9%; ECDE  $n=1$ , 7.1%), and Polynesia (ECDEiE  $n=10$ , 11.8%; ECDE  $n=1$ , 7.1%). The majority of respondents across all categories indicated that they had worked in their current role between one and five years. National and international nongovernmental organizations and UN organizations were the most frequent types of organizations the respondents worked for, particularly the ECDEiE respondents.

### A SCOPING REVIEW OF THE GRAY LITERATURE

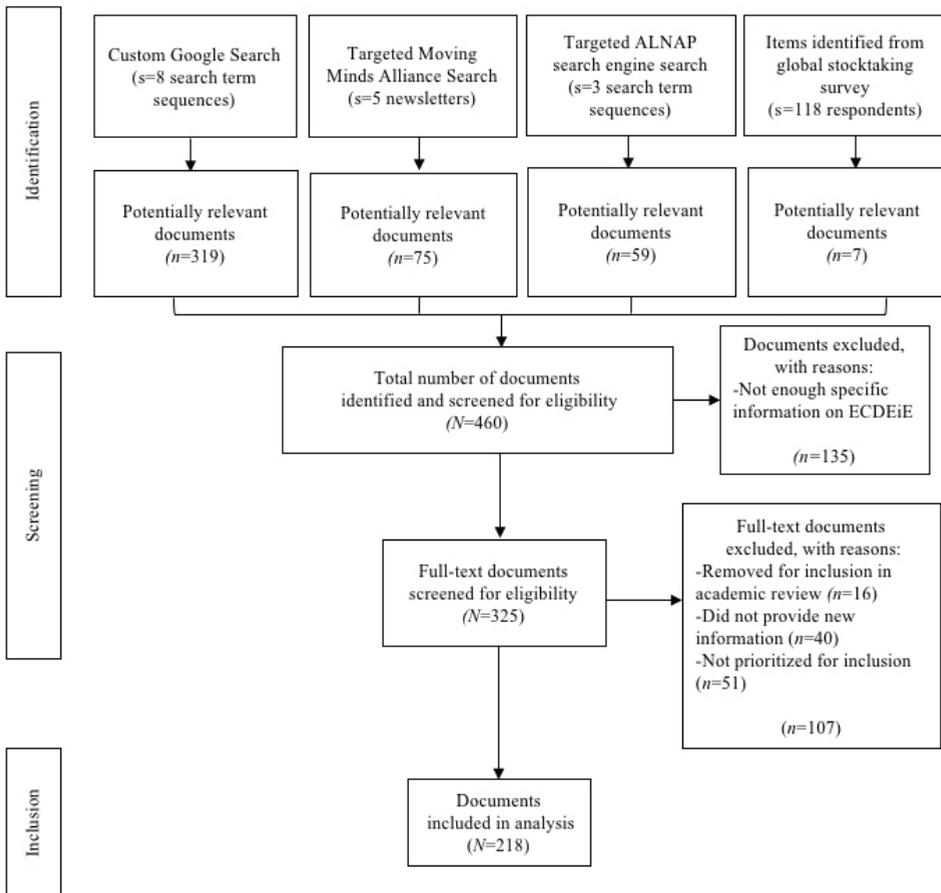
To review the gray literature, we followed a five-stage approach laid out by Arksey and O'Malley (2005), which is outlined below.

#### IDENTIFY RELEVANT STUDIES/DOCUMENTS

In order to collect a broad range of the available literature, we adopted wide definitions for the key words in our search. We also developed key concepts and search terms to capture literature, documents, and resources related to humanitarian emergencies and ECDE. The terms we developed to guide the search are specified in [Complement Table 2](#). The team collected the documents between

January 2019 and July 2020 through a series of searches across relevant search engines and repositories (e.g., Google, ALNAP, the Moving Minds Alliance). We also employed a snowball search approach to locate additional web pages, hyperlinks to specific documents, and advanced search functions using additional sequenced search terms. The online global stocktaking survey included a request for relevant documents. We cross-checked documents, itemized them, and compiled them into a database. We selected literature from the last 20 years in order to identify trends in, and the volume and types of, ECDEiE literature. We fully screened a total of 460 documents for eligibility (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Document Identification, Screening, and Inclusion



## DOCUMENT SELECTION AND CATEGORIZATION

The purpose of our review was to generate a taxonomy of the gray literature, identify approaches to ECDEiE programming, and identify entry points for strategic ECDEiE advocacy. We excluded documents during the initial and full-text screening if (1) they did not contain key search terms, (2) they were part of the academic literature review, and (3) they offered complementary information about an organization or program already included.<sup>3</sup> We identified 218 documents for full data extraction and categorization. These were categorized by document types into organization reports and papers ( $n=75$ ); communication materials ( $n=51$ ); plans, policies, and strategies ( $n=46$ ); tools, guidelines, and methodology ( $n=39$ ); and conference, training, and meeting documents ( $n=7$ ) (see [Complement Table 3](#) for a tally of documents per organization and document type).

## DATA CHARTING AND COLLATION

A data extraction guide was generated by the study authors (see [Complement Table 4](#)); the categories and subcategories were partially based on the harmonized domains from the internationally recognized humanitarian program cycle and from early childhood development governance (Britto et al. 2014; IASC 2015; Ponguta et al. 2019; Ponguta et al. 2020). To identify trends in the literature on ECDEiE program approaches, we selected 124 documents from 62 organizations working in the ECDEiE space. We framed the results by showcasing the frequency of the categories and subcategories we extracted and consolidated from documents from 62 organizations (see [Complement Table 5](#) for a list of documents analyzed). The frequencies are reported in organizational type “clusters,” such as ECDEiE implementing organization, other ECDEiE implementing organizations, multilateral organizations, funders, networks and think tanks, and humanitarian coordination organizations. The data were clustered by organization type, rather than by the frequency of data extracted from individual organizations. [Complement Table 6](#) specifies the classification of organizations operating in the ECDEiE space and which were included in the scoping review.

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<sup>3</sup> The scope of the academic review was narrowed to include only items published in peer-reviewed academic journals. This review is registered under PROPERSO ID CRD42020170435. The scoping review included nonpeer-reviewed published and unpublished literature available via online searches of the public domain, and/or provided by respondents to the stocktaking survey or members of the study’s Global Reference Group.

## ETHICAL REVIEW AND APPROVAL

All protocols were reviewed by the study's Global Reference Group; namely, representatives from the Aga Khan Foundation, ChildFund International, the Global Education Cluster, the International Rescue Committee, Open Society Foundations, Plan International, and Save the Children. Online survey respondents were given an informed consent form that outlined procedures for confidentiality, risks, and benefits of the study. All protocol, recruitment, and data-collection and management procedures were approved by Yale University's Institutional Review Board (Protocol no. 2000024970).

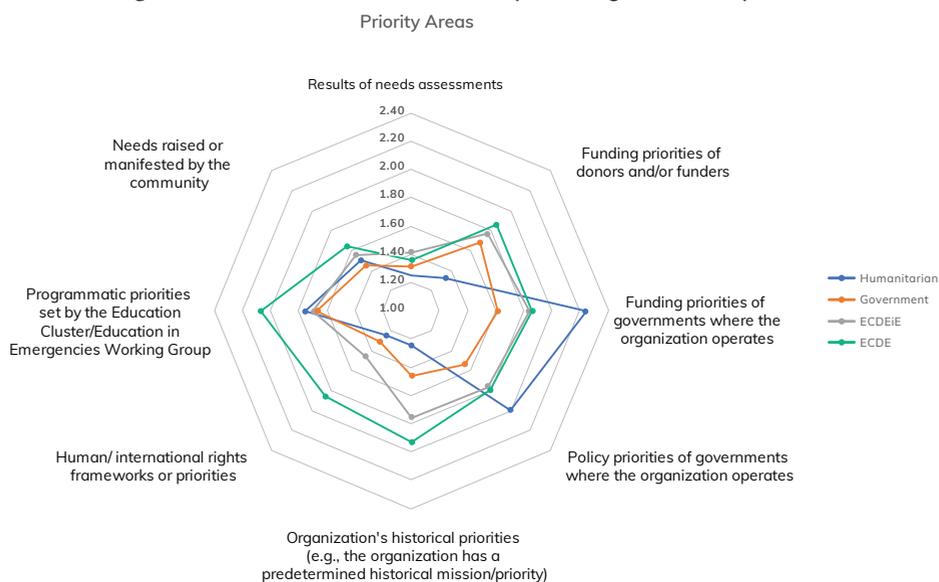
## RESULTS

Below we present the results according to our research questions, and per the stocktaking survey (questions 1 and 2) and scoping review (questions 1 and 3), respectively.

**Research Questions 1 and 2:** What are stakeholders' perceptions of the challenges to and opportunities for prioritizing ECDEiE in their organization? What do key stakeholders view as effective global and local strategies for effective advocacy to increase access to ECDEiE?

**Criteria for prioritization.** Respondents to the stocktaking survey agreed on the following criteria and processes for prioritization: outcomes of needs assessments, and the needs raised or manifested by the community (Figure 3). There was less agreement on the role of policy priorities and government funding priorities, which were rated as the most important by government-sector respondents and least important by humanitarian-sector respondents.

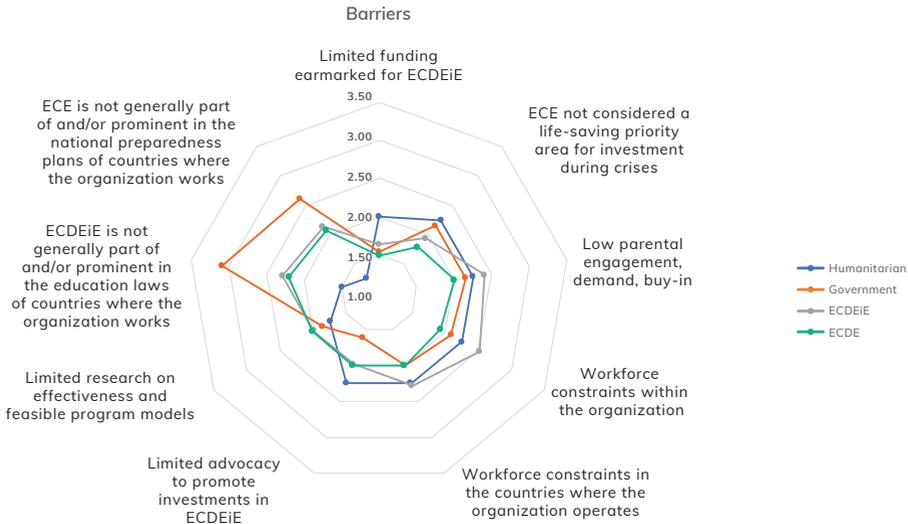
Figure 3: Radar Plot of the Priority-Setting Process by Sector



Note: The guiding question was, “Please state if you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree that the criteria listed are key to setting the priorities for programming and/or investing in your agency.”

**Opportunities/enablers for prioritizing ECDEiE.** As for perceptions of the enablers/opportunities to ECDEiE across organizations, the response options generally received a high number of endorsements with mean scores below 2 for all types of respondents. The perceived enablers or opportunities that were similarly rated as important were (1) prioritizing conducting, funding, and/or raising awareness about ECDEiE-specific research; (2) linking ECDEiE to sustainable development; (3) the use of ECDEiE measures in needs assessments; (4) increased investment in workforce capacity; and (5) increased in-country ECDEiE advocacy (see Figure 4). We next coded the open-ended questions on perceived enablers or opportunities to prioritizing ECDEiE across organizations. Three overarching themes emerged: (1) positioning ECDEiE in the context of continuity of learning and as a component of parental support; (2) clearly positioning and integrating ECDE into programmatic responses in other sectors; and (3) generating and brokering the evidence base for ECDE in low-resource and humanitarian settings.

Figure 4: Radar Plot of the Priority-Setting Enablers by Sector



Note: The guiding question was, “Please state if you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree that the criteria listed below are possible barriers to prioritizing ECDEiE in your agency.”

To explore enablers and opportunities for prioritizing ECDEiE, we analyzed the contents of 124 documents from 62 organizations that were part of the scoping review. This analysis revealed that a large proportion of and types of organizations cited five key enablers to prioritizing ECDEiE:

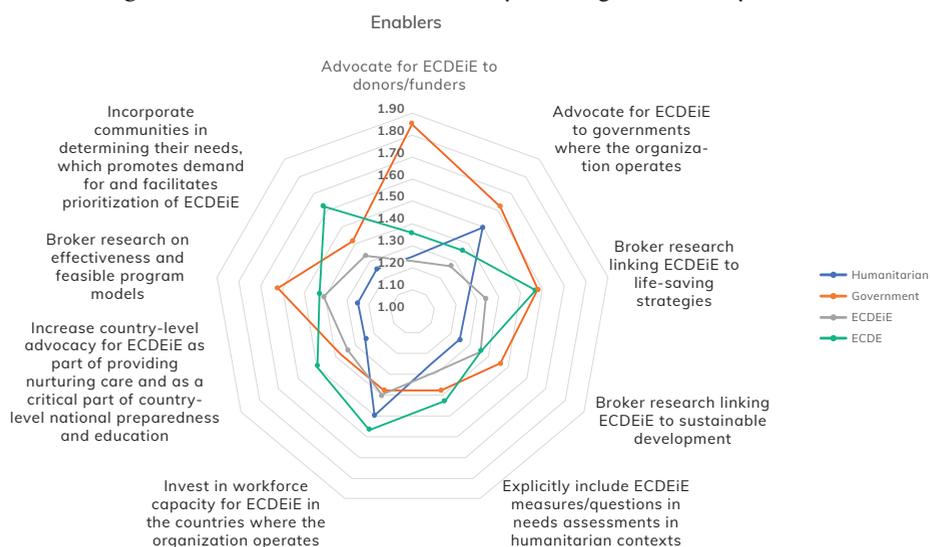
1. The endorsement and framing of responses around global development and rights conventions, goals, and frameworks
2. The presence of ECDE in donor priorities
3. Organization-specific equity and inclusion mandates, rationales, approaches, and/or interventions
4. A growing evidence base on early childhood development as a foundation for lifelong learning and positive development
5. Research agendas and the establishment of academic partnerships to build the evidence base (e.g., to demonstrate impact or programmatic objectives, inform implementation, and/or identify strategies for scale-up)<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> This could include the organization’s mandate or targets to identify and provide services and responses for the most marginalized populations (e.g., including but not limited to refugees, ethnic and linguistic minorities, girls and women, persons with disabilities); the organization aims or broad approaches to reach the most marginalized populations; a rationale for targeting the most marginalized populations and/or specific interventions for the most marginalized populations, according to organization definitions and targets of the most marginalized.

We identified multilateral organizations that prioritized early childhood development primarily to complement government priorities. In contrast, networks and think tanks emphasized documenting, promoting, and disseminating unbranded and lesser-known programmatic efforts in order to leverage ECDE prioritization in humanitarian contexts.

**Challenges/barriers to prioritizing ECDEiE.** Three stocktaking survey responses were rated as key barriers to prioritizing ECDEiE: (1) low parental engagement; (2) ECDE not being a priority in normative (or nonemergency) contexts; (3) and workforce constraints within organizations and in a country (see Figure 5).<sup>5</sup> In contrast, ECDE not being part of the preparedness plan or the education laws was not perceived as a barrier. This particular view was reported by government respondents more than by other types of respondents, such as humanitarian aid organizations.

Figure 5: Radar Plot of the Priority-Setting Barriers by Sector



Note: The guiding question was, “Please state if you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree that the criteria listed are key to setting the priorities for programming and/or investing in your agency.”

5 The respondents were asked to provide their appraisal in their responses to the questions on the stocktaking survey. Their answers could be reflective of several factors, including their overall professional experience. There was no way to ensure that they answered on behalf of the organization for which they worked at the time they answered the survey questions.

Three overarching themes emerged from the open-ended items in the stocktaking survey in regard to challenges to prioritizing ECDEiE: (1) persistent underprioritization of early childhood programs and services on many donor agendas; (2) resources thinning after the sudden onset of COVID-19; and (3) challenges in documenting, monitoring, and evaluating the results of ECDEiE implementation processes in education responses. Limitations emerged in terms of understanding community-specific ECDEiE responses and inclusive ECDEiE (e.g., localized, culture-specific approaches to ECDEiE, or ECDEiE approaches for non-neurotypical children). Specifically, respondents from the academic sector noted a lack of expertise in cross-cultural research, a lack of departmental focus on education at some of the sampled institutions, and a scarcity of approaches to addressing the needs of non-neurotypical children in global contexts.

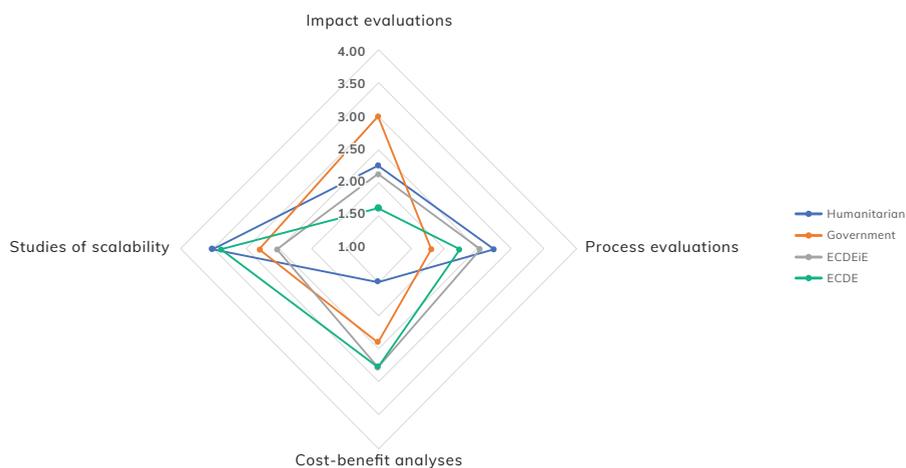
We identified the following challenges to prioritizing ECDEiE in documents from the scoping review: (1) government capacity (human and financial) to provide access to ECDE social services (e.g., preschool, birth registration) before and during crises; (2) families' unmet needs and poverty, which threaten their livelihoods, and barriers to accessing ECDE services for themselves and their young children (e.g., a need for flexible arrangements and child care); (3) the overall underprioritization of ECDE across organizations and actors, including public financing; (4) a limited evidence base on the 0-3 and 0-5 age groups and their families/caregivers during crises, including how best to promote learning for young children and the need for measurement frameworks. A few documents noted political barriers (e.g., political instability, hostility toward refugees), which were identified as risks to the prioritization and funding of ECDEiE and other services at the national level. An additional ECDEiE challenge reported was the exclusion of ECDE from humanitarian appeals and assessments, and from organizations' funding proposals.

***Challenges to implementation, coordination, and finance.*** Survey respondents expressed concerns about sustainability of ECDEiE programs/services. They also noted structural/environmental challenges (e.g., environments unfit for play, risk of communicable diseases). Limited training and professional development opportunities for ECDE service providers (e.g., teachers) were also mentioned as key barriers to implementation. Commonly cited challenges from the scoping review included structural barriers (e.g., limited school placements available for refugee children; service sites such as schools damaged or occupied; limited viable spaces in camps for ECDE services; great distance required to travel to receive/provide ECDE services; and limited internet accessibility for affected populations; to access the detailed coded information, see [Complement Table 7](#)). A few organizations noted barriers stemming from a lack of a formal national early childhood education

curriculum and learning objectives specific to ECDE and/or ECDEiE. General administrative challenges were also cited, such as staff turnover. Other findings highlighted the need to integrate ECDE into existing humanitarian coordination mechanisms in a meaningful way. Several documents mentioned having limited financing for scaling ECDEiE programs and services. One specific scalability limitation was a reliance on variable and unpredictable external support and investments.

We asked survey respondents to identify factor(s) that strengthen ECDEiE advocacy globally. A total of 9 emergent codes were identified from 87 statements (see Table A1 in the Appendix for their operational definition and illustrative quotes). In descending frequency, the emergent codes were (1) bolster strategic campaigns, including marketing and evidence brokering; (2) focus on and leverage local government and context; (3) enhance the knowledge and evidence base of the practice of ECDEiE; (4) integrate ECDEiE into early humanitarian response; (5) increase financial support for ECDEiE in order to bolster prioritization; (6) increase coordination of programs and services; (7) focus on capacity-building and workforce support; (8) integrate ECDEiE into global agendas; and (9) position ECDEiE as a conduit to equity. Ranking research priorities showed that, across the four types of respondents, impact evaluations were seen as the highest priority ( $M=2.25$ ), followed by process evaluations ( $M=2.33$ ) and cost-benefit analyses ( $M=2.37$ ). Studies of scalability were ranked lowest in terms of perceived priority ( $M=3.05$ ; see Figure 6). The descriptive statistics of all surveys by respondent type are included in Table A2 (see Appendix).

Figure 6: Radar Plot of the Ranking of Research Priorities



**Research Question 3:** What is the typology of organizations operating in the ECDEiE space and what are the trends in the geographic focus, program models, and evidence of the implementation and impact of programs in the gray literature?

We identified a total of 62 organizations operating in the ECDEiE space (Table 1; also see [Complement Table 6](#)). Of the 218 documents charted, the majority were from multilateral organizations ( $n=58$ ), followed by networks and think tanks ( $n=53$ ), ECDEiE implementing organizations ( $n=44$ ), funders and donors ( $n=26$ ), other implementing organizations ( $n=26$ ), humanitarian coordinating organizations ( $n=3$ ), and news outlets ( $n=8$ ).<sup>6</sup> We applied six categories that were based on our assessment of their role in ECDE, humanitarian aid approaches, and institutional missions (Table 1; also see [Complement Table 6](#)).

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<sup>6</sup> Note that news outlets are not considered ECDEiE operating organizations; however, news outlets did report on ECDEiE programs and initiatives.

Table 1: Trends in ECDEiE Information Available in Open-Source Literature or Literature Shared by Agencies

ECDEiE Information in the Open-Source Literature or Literature Shared by Agencies	Agency Types						Total Frequency
	17 ECDEiE Implementing Agencies	16 Other ECDEiE Implementing Agencies	3 Multilateral Agencies Imple- menting ECDEiE	10 Funders	3 Humanitarian Coordination Agencies	13 Networks/ Think Tanks	
<b>ECDEiE Definition</b>							
General ECD definition	2	1	1	1	1	5	11
Specific ECDEiE definition	3	1	2	6		5	17
Not identified	12	14		3	2	3	34
<b>ECDEiE Target Population<sup>7</sup></b>							
Children ages 0-3	1	3		1			5
Children ages 3-6	1	4		1			6
Children ages 0-8	2		1	2	1	2	8
Children—other <sup>8</sup>	13	11	3	7	2	10	46
Parents	7	4	2	5		8	26
Mothers only	3	2				2	7
Fathers only	1						1
Teachers and Service Providers	8	2	3	3		4	20
Other <sup>9</sup>	2	1	1	1		3	8
Not identified					1	1	2

7 Some agencies' information was classified in multiple categories according to how it was represented in the various documents synthesized.

8 "Other" refers to agencies that classified their target population with terms such as "young children," "preschoolers," or "preschool age" children in ECD centers, kindergartens, and/or other age ranges.

9 "Other" refers to caregivers generally, community leaders or members, and/or women generally.

ECDEiE Information in the Open-Source Literature or Literature Shared by Agencies	Agency Types						Total Frequency
	17 ECDEiE Implementing Agencies	16 Other ECDEiE Implementing Agencies	3 Multilateral Agencies Implementing ECDEiE	10 Funders	3 Humanitarian Coordination Agencies	13 Networks/Think Tanks	
<b>ECDEiE Approaches and/or Services Provided or Reported by the Agency</b>							
Holistic development	10	4	2	5		9	30
Child protection and safety, includes safe spaces and temporary learning shelters	13	6	2	2	1	11	35
Psychosocial support and/or social-emotional learning	9	4	3	5		9	30
Early learning and school readiness (includes access to early childhood education and development services provided at ECD centers and formal or nonformal preschool provision)	14	8	3	8	1	12	46
Center-based or community-based parental support and wellbeing	5	4	2	4		7	22
Home visiting parental support and wellbeing	1	1		3		4	9
Teacher or service provider training	10	6	3	6	1	6	32

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ECDEiE Information in the Open-Source Literature or Literature Shared by Agencies	Agency Types						Total Frequency
	17 ECDEiE Implementing Agencies	16 Other ECDEiE Implementing Agencies	3 Multilateral Agencies Implementing ECDEiE	10 Funders	3 Humanitarian Coordination Agencies	13 Networks/Think Tanks	
Media campaign	1			3		3	7
Teaching, learning, and/or play material distribution	5	1	3	3		6	18
ECD services geared toward the inclusion of marginalized groups, such as children or persons with disabilities, marginalized ethnic and linguistic minority groups, refugees, etc.	6	4	3	3	2	7	25
Agency strategy and/or framework specific to ECDEiE	9		1	1			11
General agency strategy and/or framework not specific to ECDEiE but inclusive of ECD and crisis, fragility, emergencies, etc.	4	3	3	4	3	4	21
Other <sup>10</sup>	1	5	1	5		5	17
Not identified				1			1

<sup>10</sup> “Other” is inclusive of interventions such as adult education, child care, conflict resolution, promotion of comprehensive family services, interventions focused solely on learning through play, national systems’ strengthening initiatives, nutrition referrals, and kindergarten construction.

ECDEiE Information in the Open-Source Literature or Literature Shared by Agencies	Agency Types						Total Frequency
	17 ECDEiE Implementing Agencies	16 Other ECDEiE Implementing Agencies	3 Multilateral Agencies Implementing ECDEiE	10 Funders	3 Humanitarian Coordination Agencies	13 Networks/Think Tanks	
<b>ECDEiE Program Implementation Characteristics</b>							
Implementation process information (e.g., who are implementers, how is the program implemented, frequency/dosage of implementation)	11	12	3	6		7	39
Curriculum description/information	11	3	1	1		6	22
Workforce development and support information	10	7	3	3	1	7	31
Needs and additions to enhance ECDEiE programming	9	1	3	3	1	11	28
Equity and inclusion considerations	8	8	3	5	2	10	36
Tools and resources specific to ECDEiE	5	3	3	2	3	8	24
Other		1					1
Not identified	4	1		4			9
<b>ECDEiE Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation</b>							
Anecdotal data reported	12	1	2	1		6	22

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS OF ECD AND EiE

ECDEiE Information in the Open-Source Literature or Literature Shared by Agencies	Agency Types						Total Frequency
	17 ECDEiE Implementing Agencies	16 Other ECDEiE Implementing Agencies	3 Multilateral Agencies Implementing ECDEiE	10 Funders	3 Humanitarian Coordination Agencies	13 Networks/Think Tanks	
Monitoring information reported	5	3	1	3	1		13
Evaluation outcome data reported	8	5	2	2		3	20
Number of affected population reached	9	3	3	2		5	22
ECDEiE research agenda	4	1		5		4	14
Other		3					3
Needs assessments	5		1	1	1	4	12
Not identified	4	6		1	2	3	16
<b>ECDEiE Financing</b>							
Foundation funding	5	1	1	4		5	16
Global fund	2					3	5
Bilateral donors	1	2	1	1		3	8
National government budget						2	2
Humanitarian financing mechanism (e.g., pooled funding, sector-specific humanitarian funds)	1	1					2
Agency-specific programmatic funds	3		1			1	5
Other	1	4	1	5	1	1	13

ECDEiE Information in the Open-Source Literature or Literature Shared by Agencies	Agency Types						Total Frequency
	17 ECDEiE Implementing Agencies	16 Other ECDEiE Implementing Agencies	3 Multilateral Agencies Implementing ECDEiE	10 Funders	3 Humanitarian Coordination Agencies	13 Networks/ Think Tanks	
Not identified	8	10	1		2	4	25
<b>ECDEiE Coordination</b>							
National coordination mechanisms	9	2	3	4	1	7	26
Community-based, local coordination mechanisms, local civil society	8	3	2	3		2	18
International interagency coordination	9		3	8	2	11	33
Other (e.g., academia)				2		3	5
Not identified	6	3		1	1	1	12
<b>ECDEiE Challenges Documented/Reported</b>							
Yes	11	7	3	8	1	13	43
No	6	9		2	2		19
<b>Geographic Areas Targeted and/or For Which ECDEiE Information Was Reported</b>							
Multiple/Global		1	2	5	2	9	19
Central and Eastern Europe	7	1	3	6			17
East Asia and the Pacific	11	9	5	1		1	27

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS OF ECD AND EiE

ECDEiE Information in the Open-Source Literature or Literature Shared by Agencies	Agency Types						Total Frequency
	17 ECDEiE Implementing Agencies	16 Other ECDEiE Implementing Agencies	3 Multilateral Agencies Implementing ECDEiE	10 Funders	3 Humanitarian Coordination Agencies	13 Networks/ Think Tanks	
Latin America and the Caribbean	8	7	3	8		1	27
Europe	3	1		1		1	6
Middle East and North Africa	32	14	19	15		12	92
North America	1	3		1			5
South Asia	9	6	3	3		1	22
Eastern and Southern Africa	13	8	10	8		1	40
West and Central Africa	15	9	13	8	1	2	48

### DIVERSITY IN IMPLEMENTING SECTORS AND ORGANIZATION TYPES

ECDEiE implementing organizations ( $n=17$ , 27%) corresponded to organizations that directly provided ECDEiE programmatic responses or interventions in one or more fragile and crisis-affected context. These organizations characterize themselves as humanitarian, development, relief, and/or faith based. In our exploration of their online platforms, nine of these organizations offered a framework or strategy specific to ECDEiE. Four organizations included ECDEiE exclusively in their organization-wide or sectoral frameworks and strategies.

Other ECDEiE implementing organizations ( $n=16$ , 26%) were those that directly provided ECDEiE programmatic responses as stand-alone responses, interventions, or part of broader sector responses (e.g., EiE responses where early childhood was specified as a programmatic area). These organizations variously characterized themselves as humanitarian, development, relief, nonprofit, faith-based, and knowledge organizations, associations, and government institutions. In some cases, the organizations mentioned ECDE as part of their organization strategy or approach. Other documents contained ECDEiE programmatic response information for at least one program in one or more categories from the charted data. Documents from three organizations suggested that ECDEiE is categorically part of a broader organization, sectoral framework, or strategy. Significantly, only three organizations represented government ECDEiE efforts, two of which were in high-income countries. Information that was less specific to ECDEiE was available from other ECDEiE implementing organizations within and across the data-extraction categories and subcategories. The data extracted suggested that these organizations do implement ECDEiE interventions to some extent, but more research is needed to comprehensively understand their ECDEiE operations.

Networks and think tanks ( $n=13$ , 21%) referred to either international or regional networks, think tanks, or research institutes. These institutions have included ECDEiE in their strategies and/or frameworks, or have disseminated research or communication pieces focused on ECDEiE (e.g., blogs, articles). We identified five organizations that are focused solely on ECDE and/or ECDEiE; the remainder included ECDEiE as part of their broader education, protection, emergencies, research, and advocacy portfolios.

Funders and donors ( $n=10$ , 16%) were either bilateral donors, foundations, or global funders that contributed funds to ECDEiE programs, networks, and/or research. According to the documents reviewed, one had a strategy or framework specific to ECDEiE and four included ECDEiE in their broad sector or emergency portfolios. Multilateral organizations ( $n=3$ , 5%) provided ECDEiE responses and interventions. All of them included ECDEiE in their broad organizational frameworks and strategies. One organization also reported a regional early childhood development strategy that included ECDEiE as a priority area. Humanitarian coordination organizations ( $n=3$ , 5%) are part of the global humanitarian architecture representing the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's cluster approach (UN OCHA 2020). These organizations included children within the early childhood development age range in their broad organizational strategies and/or frameworks.

### HETEROGENEITY IN RESEARCH APPROACHES AND REPORTING

#### FIT-FOR-PURPOSE AND FIT-FOR-AUDIENCE PUBLICATIONS YIELD LIMITED TECHNICAL REPORTING<sup>11</sup>

Documents from multiple organizations provided snapshots of ECDEiE programs. However, the number of technical and implementation details yielded was relatively low and was inconsistent within and between organizations. Descriptions of ECDEiE approaches and interventions were available in documents from funders, networks and think tanks, multilateral organizations, and other ECDEiE implementing organizations. The documents included annual appeals, white papers, additional documents, and organization reports on specific thematic programs, such as Catholic Relief Services' Community-Led Disaster Risk Management. Some entire organization reports or documents on operational standards were sourced from the EiE and child protection in emergencies sectors. The sectoral documents included only one or two references to ECDE. As expected, more detailed ECDEiE information on framing (e.g., definitions of and rationales for providing ECDEiE) and programmatic implementation characteristics were featured in the ECDEiE reports and tools. However, the type of implementation information and detail level varied. Reports, standards or tools, and resources specific to ECDEiE (e.g., an evaluation of an ECDEiE intervention) contained substantially more ECDEiE programmatic information than other document types. Implementing and multilateral organizations' broader

<sup>11</sup> We refer to fit-for-purpose and fit-for-audience publications as those that are geared toward a specific sector; thematic area, such as disaster risk reduction or gender equity; audience, such as a donor; or purpose, such as training, planning, and coordination; or to detail a case study.

frameworks, standards, or tools that were not ECDEiE specific did mention early childhood development, but they had limited ECDEiE framing and programmatic information (e.g., a case study or white paper on a thematic topic, such as child-friendly spaces or psychosocial support).

#### DETAILS ON IMPLEMENTATION, INCLUSION, AND FINANCING ARE LESS READILY ACCESSIBLE

Although more than half of the organizations ( $n=39$  of 62, 63%) reported some type of implementation data, the information varied considerably in scope and depth. Many organizations included information on who the implementers were (e.g., teachers or staff members of organizations that train caregivers), but less information was provided for other subcategories, such as program dosage (duration, frequency, and/or attendance), capacity development, quality and accountability standards and mechanisms, and the extent to which the implementation process was monitored and evaluated. Over half of the documents mentioned strategies to address equity and inclusion ( $n=36$ , 58%) and offered information about ECDEiE service-provider workforce development and support opportunities ( $n=31$ , 50%). Very limited information on ECDEiE financing was available in the documents, as nearly half of the organizations ( $n=24$ , 38%) did not report how ECDEiE programs or interventions were financed. Foundations emerged as an important funder of ECDEiE initiatives across organizations ( $n=16$ , 26%); other mechanisms (e.g., public-private partnerships, joint procurement efforts;  $n=13$  organizations, 21%) and bilateral donors ( $n=8$ , 13%) were mentioned in some instances.

#### A GROWING EVIDENCE BASE, WITH VARIATIONS IN SCOPE AND RESEARCH METHODS

A limited number of organizations reported needs assessments ( $n=12$ , 19%) or other forms of evidence, such as anecdotal data ( $n=22$ , 35%), monitoring ( $n=13$ , 21%), and evaluation outcomes ( $n=20$ , 32%). Several organizations reported evaluations of pilot programs, which did not include details on process indicators or outcome-level data. Available information, primarily from the last four years, suggests that some organizations have made a concerted effort to establish ECDEiE research agendas. In some cases, goals also included integrating ECDEiE into sector-specific needs assessments. For instance, some organizations reported including questions geared specifically toward early childhood as part of their needs assessments. In these assessments, data were disaggregated by sex and age to differentiate between the youngest children and the needs of preprimary-age children and service providers.

## INCREASED DISSEMINATION AND SHARING OF INFORMATION ON ECDEiE OVER THE LAST TWO DECADES

In terms of when the ECDEiE documents were dated, reviewed, and published, 10 of 123 documents that were dated were published between 2000 and 2010, 28 between 2011 and 2015, and 85 between 2016 and 2020. The data suggest that there was an increase in the dissemination and sharing of ECDEiE approaches and programmatic interventions across organization type. This was particularly evidenced over the last five years (ECDEiE implementing organizations=26 documents; networks and think tanks=22 documents; funders=14 documents; other implementing organizations=13 documents; multilateral organizations=9 documents; and news outlets=5 documents).

### PROGRAM DIVERSITY AND THE SCOPE OF ECDEiE PROGRAMMING

#### DIVERSITY IN TARGETED COMPETENCIES AND PROGRAMS

Many of the 62 organizations' programmatic approaches identified in the documents were geared toward promoting "soft" competencies, skills, tailored services, and broad sectoral services. These included young children, parents/caregivers, and service providers. A nearly equal number of organizations used ECDEiE approaches geared toward supporting parents/caregivers ( $n=31$ , 50% reported community- and home-based parental support and wellbeing programs) and training for teachers and ECDEiE service providers ( $n=32$ , 52%). This suggests that, where ECDEiE programs and interventions are offered, funded, and reported, the adults in young children's lives are engaged with and/or receive services. These services are provided in the home and the community. Information from 52 specific programs provided by 17 ECDEiE implementing organizations and one additional organization were identified in the review.<sup>12</sup> Information on these programs was extracted from 34 of the 124 documents. Of these 52 programs, 18 (35%) focused on a single intervention (e.g., early learning and school readiness programs,  $n=11$ , 21%; child protection and safety programs,  $n=4$ , 8%; psychosocial support and social emotional learning programs,  $n=2$ , 4%; community-based caregiver support and wellbeing programs,  $n=1$ , 2%),

<sup>12</sup> While other ECDEiE services, interventions, and efforts were identified in documents from "other" ECDEiE implementing organizations and multilateral organizations, the information was not comprehensive enough across data extraction categories to fully classify these efforts. The list of "other" ECDEiE implementing organizations' efforts shown in [Complement Table 8](#) identifies an additional noteworthy ECDEiE effort for future exploration. In the case of multilateral organizations, ECDEiE interventions in approximately 50 geographic contexts were noted from the documents reviewed. The evidence suggests that important, lesser known ECDEiE interventions may be conducted, or those on a smaller scale and/or without comprehensive documentation available externally, beyond what is reported in detail in publicly available documents.

while 28 programs (54%) reported a combination of multiple interventions or services. Common combinations were teacher training and early learning and/or school readiness, child protection and safety, and/or psychosocial support and social emotional learning. Also identified were early learning and community-based caregiver support and wellbeing interventions, as well as early learning and psychosocial support initiatives. Approaches and interventions reported less commonly and classified as “other” ( $n=6$ , 12%) included, but were not limited to, media campaigns, disaster risk interventions, infrastructure rehabilitation efforts, early childhood care and development mapping exercises, and enrichment programs.

#### INCREASED ATTENTION TO ECDEiE AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

Among the institutional ECDEiE approaches reported were the distribution of materials or single-activity interventions, which included early childhood development kits or one-off infrastructure/access-related activities; rehabilitating early childhood development centers; promoting the child-friendly spaces approach; and providing teaching and learning materials. ECDEiE has become a more prominent target of institutional responses in the last five years, and it is explicitly addressed in several organizational strategies, plans, and monitoring frameworks. These include a focus on ECDEiE, such as the Early Childhood Development Framework for Action of the UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (2019), which conducted a rapid ECDEiE assessment in the region (UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office 2020). Furthermore, programmatic shifts from the content analysis appeared in some documents. For example, UNHCR reports featured a marked increase in attention to ECDEiE, including providing comprehensive services for young children’s caregivers (e.g., UNHCR 2005, 2012, 2016). Our analysis also noted a shift in the technical tools, guidance, and communication materials published. Earlier technical guidance included ECDE as a “footnote” or mentioned it briefly as part of general thematic areas. There was limited mention of ECDE in crises, and no distinction between children of different ages (e.g., Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development 2008; Save the Children 2002, 2009; UNICEF 2009; World Vision 2006; Rowena Einloth 2010). However, there was an increase in the number of ECDEiE-focused thematic and integrated programmatic guidance and communication materials published over the last ten years (e.g., ACEV 2012; Anera 2018; HundrED 2019; Wilton et al. 2017; Moving Minds Alliance 2018; NAEYC 2019; No Lost Generation 2017; Plan International 2013; Zubairi and Rose 2019; Ullmann 2019; UNICEF 2011, 2014).

Another trend included providing multiple integrated ECDEiE services, rather than one-time efforts. The information we analyzed also yielded evidence of a broader shift in ECDEiE programming, from material distribution and access-related efforts to integrate programming-sector interventions (e.g., health, protection, disaster, and nutrition) and enhance quality (e.g., developing, implementing, and upholding learning standards; emphasizing the learning process and learning outcomes rather than only increasing access; and recognizing the importance of integrating mental health and psychosocial support into programs and services). For example, child protection interventions were reported to be a more prominent part of ECDEiE programs and interventions, including psychosocial support tailored to young children, inclusive ECDEiE interventions, media interventions, play-based interventions, and accelerated school-readiness programming. Nutrition programs, disaster preparedness, and birth registration were also integrated into ECDE efforts.

#### ECDEiE IS DEFINED AND TARGETED DIFFERENTIALLY WITHIN AND ACROSS ORGANIZATIONS

General early childhood development and specific ECDE definitions were not often featured in documents across organization types, funders being the one exception. Fewer than half of the organizations ( $n=28$ , 45%) documents synthesized included a general or specific definition for ECDE and/or ECDEiE. Our analysis of definitions suggests that organizations featuring a definition of ECDEiE positioned it as one or more of the following: a life-saving priority, a rights-based necessity, foundational to lifelong holistic development and to mitigating adverse childhood experiences, essential to ensuring sustainable development, and contributing to social justice, cohesion, resilience, and/or peace. Furthermore, age targets and types of stakeholders, which included beneficiaries of and populations reached by ECDEiE services and approaches, varied within and across organizations. The majority of organizations' ( $n=46$ , 74%) publicly available documents lacked disaggregated data on children's specific age range. The terms used were "young children," "preschoolers," and attending "kindergarten" or "early childhood development centers." In other documents, young children's ages were included as part of a broad general target, with phrases such as "children 3-18 years old." Parents, mothers, fathers, and "others" (i.e., caregivers, community members, and faith-based leaders;  $n=42$  organizations, 68%) were commonly mentioned as participants in ECDEiE approaches and interventions. Less prominent actors across organizations were

teachers and other ECDEiE service providers ( $n=20$  organizations, 32%). However, 32 organizations (52%) specified that training for teachers and service providers was part of their ECDEiE approach or services.

### INCREASING THE FOCUS ON MULTIDIMENSIONALITY AND COORDINATION

#### APPROACHES TO ECDEiE TEND TO BE MULTIDIMENSIONAL AND CUT ACROSS SECTORS

Organizations implementing ECDEiE, along with networks and think tanks, reported the most information on their approaches and services. This was done either directly by an organization and its partners, or by the organization featured in the documentation. This suggests that implementers play a prominent role in making information publicly available, and that networks and think tanks are supporting ECDEiE knowledge management and dissemination efforts. Promoting early learning and school readiness, including access to ECDE services at early childhood development centers and the provision of preschool, was the most prevalent ECDEiE approach and the service offered most frequently across organizations ( $n=46$ , 74%). Other interventions the organizations frequently reported were child protection and safety interventions ( $n=35$ , 56%). This included the provision of temporary learning spaces or safe spaces dedicated explicitly to or inclusive of young children. The provision of psychosocial support and/or social-emotional learning programming specifically for or inclusive of young children and their caregivers were also prevalent ( $n=30$ , 48%). Interventions to promote holistic development ( $n=30$ , 48%) that were reported frequently included health, nutrition, education and early learning, protection and safety, and responsive caregiving. Training for teachers and ECDEiE service providers was also cited by 32 organizations (52%). It is worth noting that 54 (87%) organizations reported on two or more types of ECDE interventions or services that were funded or implemented by the reporting organization. Less commonly reported approaches and interventions were media campaigns ( $n=7$ , 11%); distribution of teaching, learning, and play materials ( $n=18$ , 29%); and inclusive ECDEiE approaches and services for marginalized groups ( $n=25$ , 40%).

#### MENTION OF COORDINATION ACROSS ACTORS IS PREVALENT

More than half of the organizations ( $n=33$  of 62, 53%) asserted international coordination with multilateral organizations, funders, and ECDEiE-implementing organizations. Nearly half of the documents ( $n=26$ , 42%) indicated that there was coordination with national actors. Less prevalent were coordination with local

actors, such as nongovernmental organizations, faith-based partners, civil society, and local leaders ( $n=18$ , 29%). Further exploration is needed to understand the extent to which multilevel, vertical, and horizontal coordination efforts within and across organizations and sectors may influence organizational strategies and frameworks.

#### IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON PROGRAMMATIC AND ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSES

Humanitarian aid organizations released COVID-19 emergency response plans to combat the crisis by adapting and leveraging local networks. Many of the organizations that featured in-person developmental and learning curricula have been affected by the pandemic. Early in the crisis, most ECDEiE organizations relied on technology, messaging applications, TV, radio, and other forms of video conferencing to maintain communication and coordination. Another concern among government agencies was coordinating precautionary health interventions, such as safe water, sanitation, and hygiene measures. Open-source platforms and online webinars provided psychosocial supports that facilitated home learning for young children.

## DISCUSSION

### IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SECTOR

The global community has failed to guarantee access to equitable ECDEiE (Bouchane et al. 2016; Moving Minds Alliance 2020). We sought to address three root causes of this failure by applying a strategic problem-solving framework. Based on this broad mixed method analysis, we identify six main findings in order to inform strategic initiatives that could be used to increase access to ECDEiE worldwide.

#### GREATER FOCUS ON COMMUNITY NEEDS AND PARTICIPATION

Particularly relevant to ECDE and ECDEiE practitioners and humanitarian organization stakeholders is the importance of identifying and leveraging community needs and assets. This is linked to making ECDEiE more visible. Survey respondents identified the need to prioritize the results of needs assessments and the needs raised or manifested by the community, regardless of the type of organization. Although these findings are consistent with a large body of literature that positions them as the core of humanitarian response (IASC 2015; Darcy and

Hofmann 2003), capturing the needs, values, and priorities of affected communities is complex. The extent to which this is systematically done for families and young children in the education context remains largely undocumented, with more relative documentation on psychosocial support and trauma responses (Bennett 2015; Cobham and Newnham 2018; Jones 2008; Nicolai and Hine 2015). Our scoping review yielded only 12 organizations that explicitly mentioned ECDE in their needs assessments, out of the 62 included in our analysis. This also suggests that the humanitarian needs of young children, caregivers, and service providers should be addressed more efficiently. Our survey results and the scoping review indicated that low parental/caregiver engagement was identified as a common challenge in ECDEiE across organizations. Although family and community involvement with planning, decisionmaking, and improving early childhood care and education is critical to driving the provision of services (Fantuzzo et al. 2004), the scoping review revealed scant documentation suggesting that the needs of ECDEiE are assessed and integrated into emergency responses. The review also yielded limited mention of ECDE in documents from humanitarian organizations, which suggests that the extent to which ECDE is explicitly addressed in humanitarian response protocols and procedures likely varies and requires further exploration. This is crucial, as families identify education as their top priority, even in critical emergencies (Nicolai and Hine 2015). The evidence clearly points to the need for increased integration of ECDE into early response strategies, based on needs assessments.

#### EVIDENCE SYSTEMATIZATION AND STRATEGIC BROKERAGE AND COMMUNICATION

The scoping review revealed that research, monitoring, and evaluating ECDEiE initiatives need improvement; only about half of the organizations reported monitoring and evaluation information. However, robust multipartner ECDEiE research agendas that have emerged in recent years could, if funded alongside systems-level and at-scale initiatives, continue supporting national, regional, and international interagency ECDEiE efforts. This has gained attention from stakeholders, but we recognize the importance of designing transparent, open-access ECDEiE databases, and their related search and knowledge management functions, in a manner that offers equitable geographic representation. This is consistent with recent calls to recognize a more diverse representation of crises and to decolonize humanitarian governance and aid (Zubairi and Rose 2020; Saez, Lagaida, and Worden 2021). Furthermore, our content analysis revealed diverse conceptualizations of ECDEiE. We argue that the lack of a common ECDEiE language in the open-source literature may result in shortcomings in the identification and brokerage of emerging evidence.

## INCREASED COHERENCE BETWEEN NATIONAL AND HUMANITARIAN AID AGENCY MANDATES

There is a need to harmonize humanitarian and national systems for education and relief, which includes how these systems enable or challenge equitable ECDEiE in multiple contexts (Ponguta et al. 2020). The scoping review yielded limited information on the extent to which ECDEiE efforts and trends are reflected in national systems. Information on local ECDEiE programmatic and coordination efforts was also scarce. Fewer respondents working for government and for humanitarian aid organizations without a specific ECDE mandate took part in the global stocktaking survey than other respondent groups (e.g., ECDE practitioners). This lack of diversity in respondent type therefore limits the conclusions that can be drawn from the intergroup comparison of survey responses. Documents from humanitarian coordination organizations and governments yielded less information specific to ECDEiE, yet our results highlight the need to better understand the drivers of funders'/donors' and governments' prioritization of responses. One of the more notable discrepancies between respondent type perceptions in our sample was the extent to which government respondents and humanitarian aid sector respondents perceived the position of ECDE in national education policy as a barrier to ECDEiE. This is consistent with research that illustrates the importance and complexity of alignment between government and humanitarian aid stakeholders (Bennett 2015).

## STRATEGIC FOCUS ON WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

Workforce constraints and potential opportunities were prevalent in ECDEiE prioritization, programming, and advocacy. At-scale investment in the ECDE workforce remain crucial to the sector's growth and unmet needs, which is relevant to all stakeholders. The survey respondents highlighted other barriers to the sector, such as workforce constraints within organizations and in some countries that pose systemic barriers to ECDE in normative and non-normative contexts (Neuman, Josephson, and Chua 2015). The scoping review identified teachers and service providers who are poorly trained, paid, and qualified as another common challenge. For example, only about half of the 62 organizations that reported providing teacher and service provider training, workforce development, and support were part of ECDEiE interventions. A multistrategy response to strengthening the ECDE workforce is needed to address training and support needs before and during crises. This will be dependent on the recognition of service providers as critical players in humanitarian relief and development, which includes recognizing ECDE workforce development as crucial to national policy

and as a priority by national and humanitarian actors. This challenge is consistent with evidence highlighting the parallel need to strengthen the EiE and the early childhood development sectors' workforce capacity (ODI 2016; Neuman 2019). Although other challenges are critical in prioritizing ECDEiE, areas identified as crucial to strengthening within the EiE and ECDEiE workforce may inform critical areas of short-, mid-, and long-term advocacy, policy, and preparedness efforts.

#### IDENTIFYING AND PROMOTING ECDEiE AS A PRIORITY AREA OF KEY DONOR AND FUNDING MECHANISMS

In the scoping literature review, we did not find sufficient documentation on how organizations position and broker ECDEiE on donor agendas and in humanitarian funding processes, with the exception of foundations. This is despite ECDE emerging as a donor priority, which was noted as an opportunity/enabler in the review. It is important for organizations, governments, and humanitarian stakeholders that implement ECDEiE and ECDE to consider this finding as they develop and refine resource mobilization strategies that position ECDEiE as a critical programmatic area, in particular when communicating with a variety of donors before and during crises. It is also important that organizations already operating in and funding the ECDE and ECDEiE spaces promote the flexibility and sustainability of ECDEiE interventions during crises. There was common opinion across stakeholder types for the need to bolster strategic ECDEiE campaigns, including marketing and evidence brokering. The scoping review reveals that, in recent years, ECDEiE has been able to reach a diverse audience and stakeholder population through news outlets. These opportunities are critical to the ECDEiE sector.

#### CAPITALIZING ON AND STRENGTHENING MULTISECTORAL PARTNERSHIPS AND EQUITY IN ECDEiE

The multisectoral nature of ECDE requires integrated or coordinated efforts, which is a crucial characteristic for providing effective ECDEiE services in emergencies. Future strategic approaches that embrace successful frameworks for ECDEiE coordination have considerable potential to influence ECDEiE globally. There is a need to more fully understand the existing EiE evidence, identify and address key knowledge gaps, and employ more effective mechanisms to achieve sustained and significant EiE investments (Cambridge Education 2017). The lack of financial data on ECDEiE, including from our scoping review, confirms that ECDEiE interventions remain significantly underfunded. They also could be

underreported if under the umbrella of another sector or general early childhood development interventions (Moving Minds Alliance 2020). The shift to integrated ECDEiE interventions that was highlighted in our scoping review suggests that more research is needed to determine whether the funded sector-specific or multisectoral ECD interventions include pivoting to respond to or address ECDE needs in crises. Importantly, the scoping review yielded information on how organizational mandates consider equity and inclusion, including, in some cases, as part of ECDEiE programs or interventions. However, inclusive ECDEiE emerged in the survey as an area that is little understood. This discrepancy between the scoping review and the survey suggests a need for further examination in order to understand the extent to which equity and inclusion mandates are operationalized in ECDEiE programs and approaches.

### **LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

Our methodological approach has several limitations. Although online surveys are important tools for capturing a wide range of perspectives, their dissemination may contain bias toward agents and stakeholders who have internet access and access to the global networks we purposefully recruited respondents from. Our respondents were primarily actors in the ECDE sector, but there is a need to explore challenges to and opportunities for the prioritization of ECDEiE by actors in other sectors, such as humanitarian aid and government, who do not traditionally operate in the early childhood realm or who have limited access to information, communication, and technology, due to a variety of geographic and socioeconomic factors. Additionally, scoping reviews include mapping literature on a topic area, which creates a potentially large and diverse overview without a critical appraisal of individual studies (Arksey and O'Malley 2005). Our aim was to present an overview of the landscape and identify critical areas for further exploration. We expect that complementary systematic reviews will emerge in answer to specific questions. We also acknowledge that our review includes a subsample of organizations that is not exhaustive and is based on the search terms and categorization processes we employed. The release of our survey and scoping review data coincided with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which enabled us to capture an early snapshot of how the pandemic impacted organizational responses. At the time the scoping review data were charted, many of the ECDEiE organizations identified were actively collecting and consolidating COVID-related early learning and development tools. This included the resources of actors not considered in the scoping review. Our survey analysis indicated greater use of media and digital technology for early learning. This finding highlights the importance of digital equity and the need to consider early learning systems

that are more resistant to shocks. It also highlights the need to prioritize pre- and in-service training of early childhood development service providers and teachers in early onset response efforts. Furthermore, it is important to understand the extent to which media campaigns and digital platforms effectively meet the needs of children, caregivers, and communities living in crises. It is also important to recognize the extent to which these campaigns reach the majority of the global population, including marginalized individuals. Other areas to explore include the extent to which these services are offered by state and nonstate actors, such as humanitarian organizations and private companies, as part of systemic, equitable ECDEiE efforts.

The aim of our study was to inform future strategic initiatives of practitioners, advocates, researchers, policymakers, and other relevant stakeholders, with the overarching goal of increasing access to ECDEiE globally. Data from the extant literature and key actors point to six areas that drive strategic initiatives in national and global contexts: a greater focus on community needs and participation; systematization of evidence and strategic brokerage and communication; coherence between national and humanitarian aid agency mandates; a focus on workforce development and support; identification and promotion of ECDEiE as a priority area among key donors and funders; and capitalizing on and strengthening ECDEiE multisectoral partnerships. More research is needed in these areas, including further and more robust consensus and specific actions on global advocacy in order to drive the prioritization and financing of ECDEiE most effectively.

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## APPENDIX

Table A1: Factors to Promote Effective Advocacy, According to Respondents

Emergent Theme	Operational Definition	Illustrative Quotes
<p><b>Strategic campaigns, marketing, and evidence brokering</b></p> <p>(Relative frequency=27)</p>	<p>Improve and increase marketing strategies to raise awareness and attention given to ECDEiE, including using cost-benefit analyses for high-level advocacy; highlight the high economic and social returns on investment; increase presence of the sector in media and among wider audiences, including academic institutions.</p>	<p>“Campaigns should spread facts about the real situation in numbers, about the extent of the repercussions of emergency situations and disasters on the future and fate of future generations, and ensure that information reaches all means of communication, especially to institutions of higher education.”</p> <p>(Organization type: academic; Role: associate professor)</p> <p>“The most significant factor to effectively promote or advocate for prioritization of ECDEiE is continuous demonstration/presentation of cost and benefit analysis of investing in ECE.”</p> <p>(Organization type: ECDEiE; Role: education officer)</p>
<p><b>Leverage and focus on local context and local government responses</b></p> <p>(Relative frequency=23)</p>	<p>Shift attention to the local contexts, communities, and governments by working on more context-sensitive effective practices and local sustainable development within countries; ensure that family/social dynamics, local resources, and potential local partners in every community are leveraged, and that communication with parents across communities is enhanced; focus on local politics and political advocacy to engage governments and formulate/establish policies.</p>	<p>“ECDEiE, together [with] child protection, should be a priority in any emergency setting, despite other pressing needs, and an advocacy strategy needs to be stepped up among the host local government.”</p> <p>(Organization type: ECDEiE; Role: child protection and education program officer)</p>

Emergent Theme	Operational Definition	Illustrative Quotes
<p><b>Enhance knowledge and science base of the practice of ECDEiE</b></p> <p>(Relative frequency=19)</p>	<p>Improve knowledge of effective interventions in ECDEiE and evaluate their impact and benefits for families, children, and communities, thus establishing compelling data and strong evidence from practical research.</p>	<p>“We need more research and impact evaluations, showing how ECE stimulates learning and brain development, and reinforces transition from ECE to primary, strengthens retention, and reinforces children starting primary at the appropriate age.” (Organization type: ECDEiE; Role: country lead)</p>
<p><b>Integrate ECDEiE into early humanitarian responses</b></p> <p>(Relative frequency=11)</p>	<p>Integrate ECDEiE into early response programs; build strong ECDEiE early response programs; standardized materials used in the standard humanitarian response.</p>	<p>“Right now, ECDEiE is not well positioned in the humanitarian architecture in terms of early stage response. Education in general has struggled to gain a foothold [in] getting priority early on in responses, but ECE often takes twice as long to come to the table. Education professionals who are deployed in the early stages of an emergency often know very little about ECE, and ECE professionals who want to operate in EiE more generally (like myself) often struggle to get hired into the early deployment roles because (in a true catch-22) they don’t have enough EiE experience. Progress is being made, but progress will be made faster if ECE professionals are able to get into responses earlier and are supported by organizations to establish ECDEiE programs” (Organization type: ECDEiE; Role: education in emergencies specialist)</p>

Emergent Theme	Operational Definition	Illustrative Quotes
<p><b>Increase financial support to bolster prioritization</b></p> <p>(Relative frequency=10)</p>	<p>Increase funding to strengthen prioritization and the design and implementation of ECDEiE programs.</p>	<p>“Prioritization will only happen with funding success. There are a lot of critical steps to getting funding, including building a body of research, showing the positive effects on displaced populations over long periods of time, [and] integrating it into more traditionally life-saving interventions (similar to how GBV is cross-cutting).”</p> <p>(Organization type: ECDEiE; Role: senior director)</p>
<p><b>Increase coordination</b></p> <p>(Relative frequency=9)</p>	<p>Increase communication, coordination, collaboration, and collective action among all actors; draw in key sectors that affect the field of ECDE directly and indirectly in the process of designing and implementing ECDEiE programs.</p>	<p>“Collective action, rather than individual organizations having similar agendas but not coming together, is essential.”</p> <p>(Organization type: ECDEiE; Role: education advisor)</p>
<p><b>Focus on capacity-building and support</b></p> <p>(Relative frequency=5)</p>	<p>Increase support and capacity-building for the actors in all sectors related to ECDiE; provide better training for teachers.</p>	<p>“A significant factor to promote the prioritization of ECDEiE is to promote teaching at the right level.”</p> <p>(Organization type: humanitarian; Role: program officer)</p>
<p><b>Integrate ECDEiE into global agendas</b></p> <p>(Relative frequency=3)</p>	<p>Integrate into global agendas; provide clearly defined frameworks and guidelines to complement plans.</p>	<p>“Include ECE on [the] global agenda for all development frameworks.”</p> <p>(Organization type: ECDEiE; Role: education specialist)</p>
<p><b>Position ECDEiE as a conduit to equity</b></p> <p>(Relative frequency=2)</p>	<p>Ensure equal rights for everyone and end or reduce poverty, especially in rural areas.</p>	<p>“Promote equality, since we must raise the need to care for everyone equally and [ensure] that they have the same possibilities of receiving health, education, and protection, regardless of the circumstances.”</p> <p>(Organization type: ECDEiE; Role: national education advisor)</p>

Table A2: Descriptive Statistics of Survey Questions in Four Domains

	Humanitarian (N=4)			Government (N=15)			ECDEiE (N=85)			ECDE (N=14)		
	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	n	M	SD
<b>Priority Areas</b>												
Results of needs assessments	4	1.25	0.5	13	1.31	0.63	83	1.41	0.54	14	1.36	0.50
Funding priorities of donors and/or funders	3	1.33	0.58	13	1.69	0.75	82	1.77	0.67	14	1.86	0.86
Funding priorities of governments where the organization operates	4	2.25	0.96	13	1.62	0.87	82	1.84	0.66	14	1.86	0.77
Policy priorities of governments where the organization operates	4	2.00	0.82	13	1.54	0.66	82	1.77	0.67	14	1.79	0.58
Organization's historic priorities (e.g., a predetermined historic mission/priority)	4	1.25	0.5	13	1.46	0.66	83	1.76	0.77	14	1.93	0.48
Human/international rights frameworks or priorities	4	1.25	0.5	13	1.31	0.48	83	1.46	0.57	14	1.86	0.66
Programmatic priorities set by the Education Cluster/ Education in Emergencies Working Group	4	1.75	0.5	12	1.67	0.88	83	1.7	0.69	14	2.07	0.83
Needs raised or manifested by the community	4	1.50	0.578	11	1.45	0.52	78	1.56	0.66	14	1.64	0.63
<b>Barriers</b>												
Limited funding earmarked for ECDEiE	4	2.00	0.82	13	1.54	0.52	83	1.65	0.74	14	1.5	0.65

	Humanitarian (N=4)			Government (N=15)			ECDEiE (N=85)			ECDE (N=14)		
ECE not considered a life-saving, priority area for investment during crises	4	2.25	1.26	13	2.15	0.90	83	1.95	0.90	14	1.79	0.80
Low parental engagement, demand, buy-in	4	2.25	1.26	13	2.15	0.80	83	2.4	0.81	14	1.93	1.00
Workforce constraints within the organization	4	2.25	1.26	13	2.08	0.49	82	2.52	0.74	13	2	0.71
Workforce constraints in the countries where the organization operates	4	2.25	1.26	13	2	0.41	82	2.28	0.78	13	2	0.71
Limited advocacy to promote investments in ECDEiE	4	2.25	1.26	13	1.62	0.65	83	1.98	0.78	14	2	0.78
Limited research on effectiveness and feasible program models	4	1.75	0.96	13	1.85	0.69	83	1.98	0.80	14	2.21	0.80
ECDEiE not generally part of and/or prominent in the education laws of countries where the organization works	4	1.50	0.58	12	3.08	0.67	83	2.29	0.86	14	2.07	0.73
ECE is not generally part of and/or prominent in the national preparedness plans of countries where the organization works	4	1.25	0.5	13	2.62	0.77	83	2.13	0.84	14	2.07	0.83
<b>Enablers</b>												
Advocate for ECDEiE to donors/funders	4	1.25	0.5	13	1.85	0.89	83	1.23	0.42	14	1.36	0.63

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	Humanitarian (N=4)			Government (N=15)			ECDEiE (N=85)			ECDE (N=14)		
Advocate for ECDEiE to governments where the organization operates	4	1.50	0.58	13	1.62	0.65	83	1.27	0.44	14	1.36	0.50
Broker research linking ECDEiE to life-saving strategies	4	1.25	0.5	13	1.58	0.52	83	1.34	0.48	14	1.57	0.51
Broker research linking ECDEiE to sustainable development (e.g., peace, social cohesion, economic return)	4	1.25	0.5	13	1.46	0.52	83	1.36	0.53	14	1.36	0.50
Explicitly include ECDEiE measures/questions in needs assessments in humanitarian contexts	4	1.25	0.5	13	1.38	0.51	83	1.29	0.48	14	1.43	0.51
Invest in workforce capacity for ECDEiE in the countries where the organization operates	4	1.50	0.58	13	1.38	0.65	83	1.4	0.54	14	1.57	0.51
Increase country-level advocacy for ECDEiE as part of providing nurturing care and as a critical part of country-level national preparedness and education	4	1.25	0.5	13	1.38	0.51	83	1.34	0.48	14	1.5	0.52
Broker research on effectiveness and feasible program models	4	1.25	0.5	13	1.62	0.51	81	1.41	0.49	14	1.43	0.51

	Humanitarian (N=4)			Government (N=15)			ECDEiE (N=85)			ECDE (N=14)		
Incorporate communities in determining their needs, which promotes demand and facilitates prioritization of ECDEiE	4	1.25	0.5	12	1.42	0.52	78	1.33	0.50	13	1.62	0.65
<b>Ranking of research priorities</b>												
Impact evaluations (e.g., what works in ECDEiE, what outcomes are most often impacted, and in what contexts?)	4	2.25	1.258	10	3	1.25	78	2.14	1.05	13	1.62	1.04
Process evaluations (e.g., how do ECDEiE interventions/ programs work?)	4	2.75	0.957	10	1.8	0.79	78	2.54	1.18	13	2.23	0.73
Cost-benefit analyses	4	1.50	1	10	2.4	1.08	78	2.79	1.07	13	2.77	1.01
Studies of scalability (e.g., how is ECDEiE effectively brought to scale in humanitarian relief contexts?)	4	3.50	0.577	10	2.8	1.14	78	2.53	1.09	13	3.38	0.96