



Engaging Policymakers in Early Childhood

Governments across the globe recognize that quality early childhood interventions are critical to help young children reach their potential and are the foundation for human capital. Quality Early Childhood Education (ECE), specifically, can improve cognitive skills, reduce repetition and drop-out rates, increase school retention, and help children develop the breadth of cognitive and socioemotional skills they need to succeed in school and in life. [Worldwide, the enrollment rate in ECE is just 52% and in low-income countries it is 24%](#). High quality ECE can help children develop early skills that are predictive of later skills, including literacy, and will be important interventions to [tackle learning poverty and build human capital](#).

In every region of the world, enrollment is increasing steadily due to demand from parents and the strong evidence that quality ECE is a critical foundation for any successful education system. As countries expand access to ECE, it is imperative that quality remains paramount to ensure children reap the full potential benefits of early learning efforts. The COVID-19 pandemic is bringing new challenges to countries as they try to expand access to quality early learning opportunities for young children in schools and at home, and to engage parents in supporting young children's learning. The World Bank is committed to working with governments to strengthen policymakers' existing expertise to ensure investments in ECE and other early childhood interventions are effective, efficient, and impactful.

This program launched in 2021 and is a multi-year effort to engage, repeatedly, with a group of countries globally to build policymaker capacity, promote South-South learning, and generate positive peer pressure to yield more and better ECE investments at country level.¹

Goals of the program include:

1. Identifying needs and generating options to address country constraints
2. Learning from leading experts on how to apply strategies to improve ECE quality and access
3. Sharing and problem-solving with peers dealing with similar challenges across the globe
4. Expanding the personal and professional network of policymakers committed to early childhood

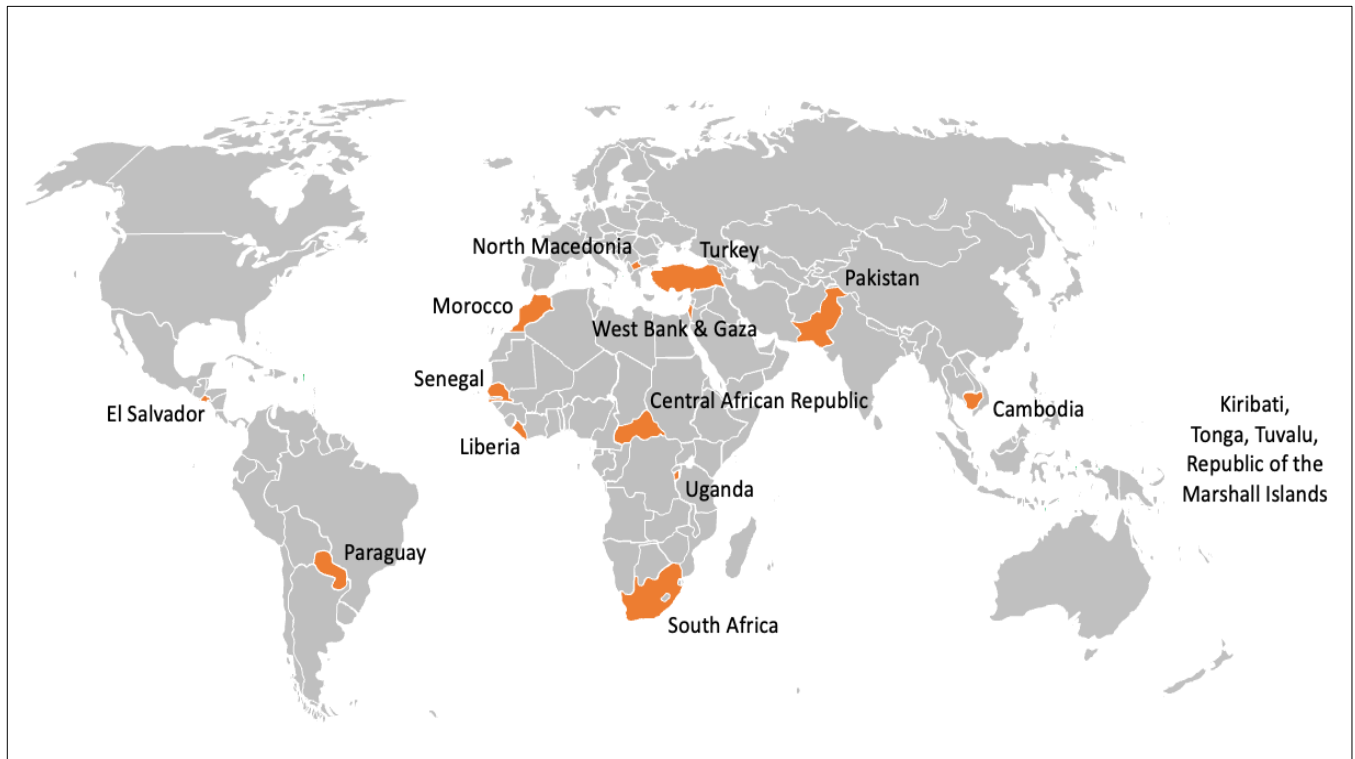
¹ The Engaging Policymakers in Early Childhood Program is managed by the World Bank's Early Learning Partnership (ELP), a multi-donor trust fund (MDTF) that provides resources and technical assistance to support early childhood development (ECD) and early learning around the world.

Core topics include:

1. Measuring outcomes for early learning
2. Quality early learning
3. Strengthening early learning systems
4. Parental and community engagement
5. Learning through play
6. Non-state sector

Where do the Policymakers come from?

Over 100 policymakers, representing 15 countries and five regions, are participating in the first cohort of the Engaging Policymakers in Early Childhood Program. See the map below for countries.



Blogs

See blogs from the coordination team and policymakers who engaged in the *Measuring Early Childhood Education Quality* course:

[Engaging policymakers in early childhood development: Promoting joint learning to improve quality](#)

[Measurement: The missing puzzle piece in early childhood education in North Macedonia](#)

[Through the magnifying glass: understanding the quality of ECE in South Africa](#)

[The challenges of repetition and dropout in primary school: quality early childhood education \(ECE\) in Senegal](#)

[Morocco's experience in ensuring quality preschool education](#)

[Investing in Liberia's human capital through early childhood education](#)

Complementary Resources

1. **Building Effective Early Learning Systems**

- a. 7 actions to fight extreme poverty by improving education in the developing world [ENG FR](#)
 - i. Seven direct, effective, and simple solutions for donor organizations and policymakers to tackle extreme poverty in the education sector. These approaches can operate independently or in parallel to one another and are rooted in contextual examples of successful implementation.

2. **Measuring Quality Early Learning**

- a. Teach ECE: Helping Countries Track and Improve Teaching Quality in Early Childhood Education [ENG](#)
 - i. **Teach ECE** is a free classroom observation tool that provides a window into one of the less explored and more important aspects of a child's education: what goes on in the classroom. The tool is intended to be used in early childhood education (ECE) for children ages 3–6 and was designed to help countries, in particular low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), monitor and improve teaching quality following the **Teach Primary** framework.
- b. Effective teaching practices in early childhood education (ECE) [ENG](#)
 - i. This literature review synthesizes the existing evidence on effective ECE teaching practices, predominately from low- and middle- income

- countries (LMICs), and provides a framework for stakeholders to identify and discuss quality teaching practices.
- c. Measuring early learning quality and outcomes: MELQO [ENG](#)
 - i. Designed in 2014 by the World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF and the Center for Universal Education at the Brookings Institution, this initiative focuses on a common set of scalable items measuring early childhood development (ECD) and learning and the quality of pre-primary learning environments.
 - d. Engaging policymakers in early childhood development: Promoting joint learning to improve quality [ENG](#)
 - i. In 2021, the World Bank launched the Engaging Policymakers in Early Childhood program to help countries identify needs and generate options to address constraints, learning with leading experts to apply strategies to improve early childhood education (ECE) access and quality, and share and problem solve with peers.
 - e. Measurement: The missing puzzle piece in early childhood education in North Macedonia [ENG](#)
 - i. As part of the Engaging Policymakers in Early Childhood program, countries participated in the Measuring Early Childhood Education Quality course to explore strategies for why and how measuring quality early childhood education (ECE) can lead to improved outcomes. In North Macedonia, policymakers discuss the lack of and challenges to monitoring ECE over the past several years while access has increased dramatically. To ensure quality is scaling too, the country has begun a national rollout of the tool MELQO and has shared initial lessons learned from the process.
 - f. Through the magnifying glass: understanding the quality of ECE in South Africa [ENG](#)
 - i. As part of the Engaging Policymakers in Early Childhood program, countries participated in the Measuring Early Childhood Education Quality course to explore strategies for why and how measuring quality early childhood education (ECE) can lead to improved outcomes. In South Africa, policymakers share how the country can support the government's twin goals of increasing access and quality simultaneously.
 - g. The challenges of repetition and dropout in primary school [ENG](#)
 - i. As part of the Engaging Policymakers in Early Childhood program, countries participated in the Measuring Early Childhood Education Quality course to explore strategies for why and how measuring quality early childhood education (ECE) can lead to improved outcomes. In Senegal, policymakers examine the critical role of quality measurement to combat high rates of repetition and dropout in the primary level.

3. Learning Through Play

- a. Learning Through Play: Increasing impact, reducing inequality [ENG](#)
 - i. This document evaluates 26 early learning programs across 18 countries to identify the opportunity gaps, why learning through play works and recommendations to developing a more fair and equitable system for all learners.
- b. What we mean by: Learning through play [ENG](#)
 - i. In this brief, the authors share an overview of play and the importance of play in classroom settings to support children in developing life-long skills.
- c. The role of play in children's development: A review of the evidence [ENG](#)
 - i. In this white paper, the authors provide evidence on the developmental psychology on play to enhance children's learning outcomes.

- d. Play Facilitation: The science behind the art of engaging young children [ENG](#)
 - i. This paper provides an overview of play facilitation for professionals, researchers, and policymakers working with children aged 3-6 and recommendations for future work.
- e. Learning through Play: Strengthening learning through play in early childhood education programmes [ENG](#)
 - i. This brief highlights the variety of early childhood programs for early learners. It also shares critical definitions of the meaning behind learning through play, the obstacles policymakers face when implementing play-based learning, and strategies to overcome said obstacles.

4. Quality Early Learning

- a. Quality Early Learning: Nurturing Children's Potential [ENG](#)
 - i. In this volume, leading researchers and implementation experts from an array of disciplines provide evidence-based, cost-effective, and actionable strategies for delivering quality early childhood education (ECE) at scale in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).
- b. Promising approaches in early childhood development: ECE interventions from around the world [ENG](#)
 - i. This guide is a resource for policymakers invested in improving access to high quality early childhood education (ECE). It presents examples of promising results from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) of successful programs or interventions.
- c. Better jobs and brighter futures: Investing in childcare to build human capital [ENG](#)
 - i. This white paper presents evidence on the importance of childcare to building human capital, examines the current status on childcare provision, and layouts specific actions to expand access to affordable, quality childcare, especially to those most in need.
- d. Brief: Nurturing care framework for early childhood development [ENG](#) [FR](#) [SP](#) [AR](#)
 - i. In 2018, global organizations came together to develop the Nurturing Care Framework to provide an evidence-based road map for policymakers, families, caregivers and communities to support young children. It identifies best practices driven by sustained political commitment and determination to tackle poverty and inequity.

5. Measuring Early Childhood Development: Why, What and How?

- a. Guiding Questions for Choosing the Right Tools to Measure Early Childhood Outcomes: Why, What, Who, and How [ENG](#) [FR](#) [SP](#) [AR](#)
 - i. This document guides the user through the why , who , what , and how questions that must be considered prior to selecting tools for measuring early childhood development (ECD) outcomes. Users should document their responses at each step to collate the information needed to identify and select an appropriate ECD measurement tool.
- b. Measuring Early Childhood Development Among 4-6 Year Olds: The Identification of Psychometrically Robust Items Across Diverse Contexts [ENG](#)
 - i. Data from twelve low- and middle-income countries (LMIC) were gathered, harmonized, and analyzed in order to identify a core set of measurement items which present robust psychometric properties across contexts to support global scaling efforts to measure early childhood outcomes. The analyses targeted the 4-6 age range (48-83 months), in order to complement existing global measurement initiatives to identify sets of items that demonstrate adequate psychometric properties across contexts for children aged 24-59 months in the context of the SDG 4.2.1 and for children aged 0-36 months - the Early Childhood

Development Index (ECDI 2030) and the Global Scale for Early Development (GSED), respectively.

- c. A Toolkit for Measuring Early Childhood Development in Low- and Middle-Income Countries [ENG](#)
 - i. ECD Measurement Inventory. A book for practitioners in the field of early child development which offers a detailed review of the newest tools and how to apply them to successfully measure child development for children from 0 to 8 years.