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# Taking the Mystery Out of Advocacy and Policy: ***You can make a difference!***

*Preconference  
ISSA, 2008*



# Goals

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- 1) To share a sense that change is possible
- 2) To gain some additional insight into how to move the ECD policy agenda forward
- 3) To better prepare you to help others advocate for young children and families

# Now: ECD a global movement

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## **Education for all**

Jomtien- 1990

“Learning begins at birth. This calls for early childhood care and initial education. These can be provided through arrangements involving families, communities, or institutional programs as appropriate”  
article 5

Dakar 2000

“Expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children”

**Millennium Development Goals** (eradicate extreme poverty, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equity and empower women, reduce child mortality, improve maternal, health, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases, ensure environmental sustainability, and develop a global partnership for development)

# To be discussed...

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- Preconditions for effective advocacy
- 10 steps to make a difference

# 4 Preconditions

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- Taking the mystery out of advocacy
- Understanding the policy process
- Creating an overall vision for ECD
- Developing a toolbox to convince others of the importance of ECD

# 1-Taking the mystery out

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What do you think of when you hear the word advocacy?

*“advocacy always seemed like something distant, complicated....”*

# What is advocacy?

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## **Taking a position to influence an action**

- Advocating for an individual child or family
- Advocating for changes in program policies
- Advocating for changes in private policies
- **Advocating for changes in public policies**

# Approaches

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## **Rights based**

### **Activist approach**

Use or create an opportunity to move a policy  
Organize

## **Evidence based**

### **Analytic approach**

Research  
Policy Analysis  
Use or create an opportunity to move policy

**Combination--Each provides useful perspectives for  
the work of the other**

# Challenges when talking about advocacy and policy process across borders

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- ❑ Values (rights based, evidence based; family responsibility, collective responsibility, social justice)
- ❑ Structure of government
- ❑ Political environment
- ❑ Needs of children and families
- ❑ Current level of services

# Core values we share as an ECD field that allow us to talk about policy development

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- Universal aspects of child development (brain develops early, nature and nurture, domains of development are integrated-health, cognition, language, socio/emotional)
- Importance of relationships (family) and community
- Belief that we can affect the life trajectory of children
- Access, quality and coordination matter
- Dual focus: children and families
- Public investments are essential

# Advocacy attitude “dispositions”

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- ❑ **You must believe** that change is possible and you can make a difference
- ❑ **Confidence** is essential
- ❑ Advocacy has to be **intentional**, change does not just happen based on a set of recommendations or a report
- ❑ **Change takes time**, and does not go in a straight line
- ❑ You need to **meet people** where they are
- ❑ You must be **ready** to take advantage of opportunities

# A voice from Serbia

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“What I have learned is that we all think advocacy is something big and special and that we need to learn a lot and have experts...and that we are not able to do it...and while we are thinking about what we are not capable of doing, we think more and more about advocacy skills and less about what we want to advocate for”

# 2- Understanding policy

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**Policy:** a course of action

**Public policy:** a course of action taken by government

**Levels:** neighborhood/community, local, state/provincial, national

**Forms:** law, regulations, judicial decisions; and the implementation or interpretation.

**International public policy:** a course of action taken by an international or regional organization that in turn influences governments.

# What is Public Policy?

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- Action (or inaction) taken by some part of government (for example the Executive, Legislature or Judiciary)
- Action can be at the National, Provincial or Municipal level
- Policies are affected by the structure of government and by history, values and cultures of the country

Early childhood policies are those government actions that affect the development and overall well being of young children 0-8 and their families

# Conditions for policy development

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- ❑ The public must have a sense of the importance of an issue
- ❑ There must be pivotal leverage points in government or international institutions
- ❑ There should be a broad based group or at least a core group able to influence policy (have a position, be able to articulate/communicate it, and have access to decision makers)
- ❑ Timing must be right.

*Reality in many situations: one person or small group makes decisions*

# Policy Opportunities:

*International agreements or national or local trends that provide an opportunity to advocate for improved policies for young children and their families.*

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Policy opportunities vary depending on the history of the country and the region.

Examples of international agreements:

- Convention on the Rights of the Child
  
- Education for All
  
- Millennium Development Goals
  
- Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
  
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

# Other policy opportunities to promote early childhood development

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- Poverty reduction strategies
- Environmental issues
- Emerging research on the importance of the early years
- A new government or private sector leader interested and committed to young children
- A public event that draws attention to the needs of young children

# You use your advocacy skills throughout the policy process

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- When you want to encourage decisionmakers to develop a policy (ie address the needs of children below three)
- When the actual policies are being defined
- When you work to enact the policy
- After the policy is established and you monitor implementation

# 3) Creating a common vision or knowing where you want to go

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## **What are the goals?**

Healthy children

Strong families

Quality early learning experiences

## **4 Cornertones**

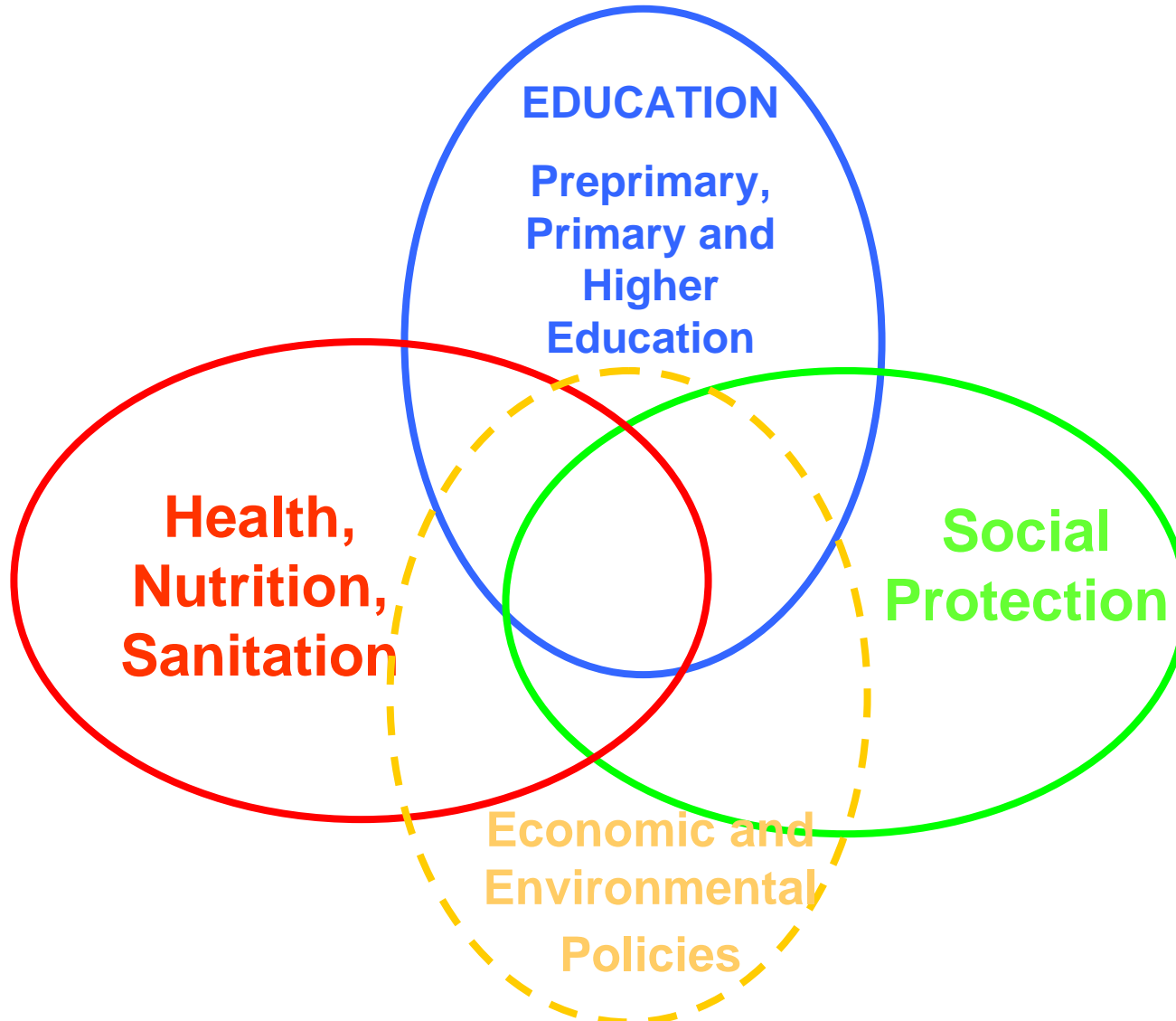
1. Start at the beginning
2. Get ready for success
3. Improve primary school quality
4. Include early childhood in policies

# Early Childhood Policy Framework

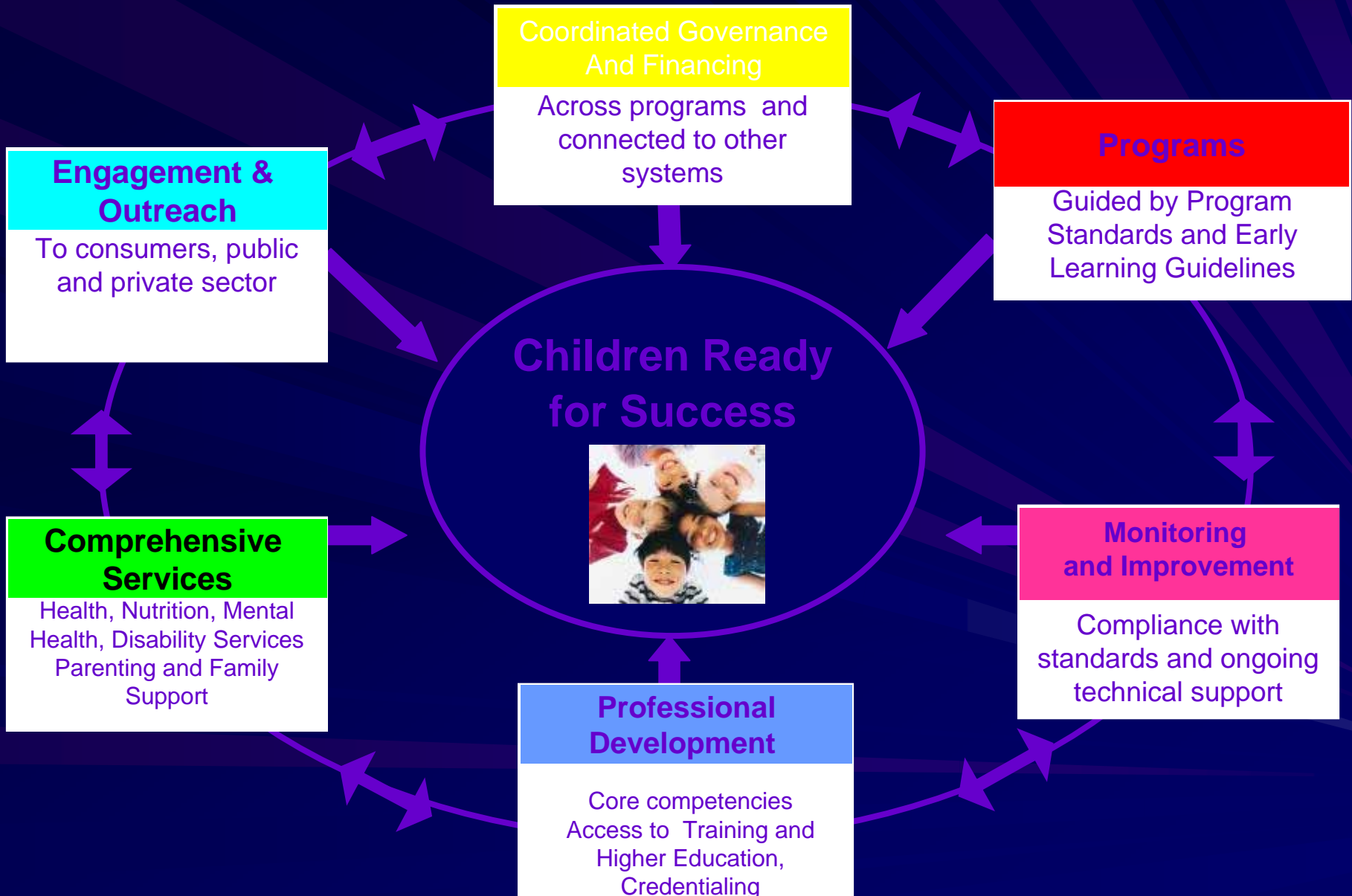
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- ❑ A statement which reflects the values, visions and goals for young children in the country
- ❑ Provides an organizing mechanism to look across related sectors (health, education, social protection, fiscal and other economic policies)
- ❑ Encourages the establishment of a coordinated governance structure
- ❑ Includes a focus across the age span (0-8- prenatal to three, preprimary, early primary)

# Sector Policies Effecting Early Childhood Development 0-5



# Early Childhood Development System



## 4. Creating a “toolbox” to help convince others of the importance of early childhood

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Research on child development

Evaluation

National data

Community data

Stories of children and families

Economic benefits

**National** data from surveys, administrative data from program reports/schools, region/country specific data from international reports

UNICEF State of the Worlds Children

UNESCO Monitoring Reports (06 literacy, 07 ECD)

Save the Children State of the World Mothers

Country Profiles: World Bank, UNESCO, new Education Data Center (Academy for Education Development)

## **Community data**

Snapshot of child development (eg EDI)

Conditions of family well being

Readiness of schools

## **Stories and pictures of children and families**

## **Economic benefits**

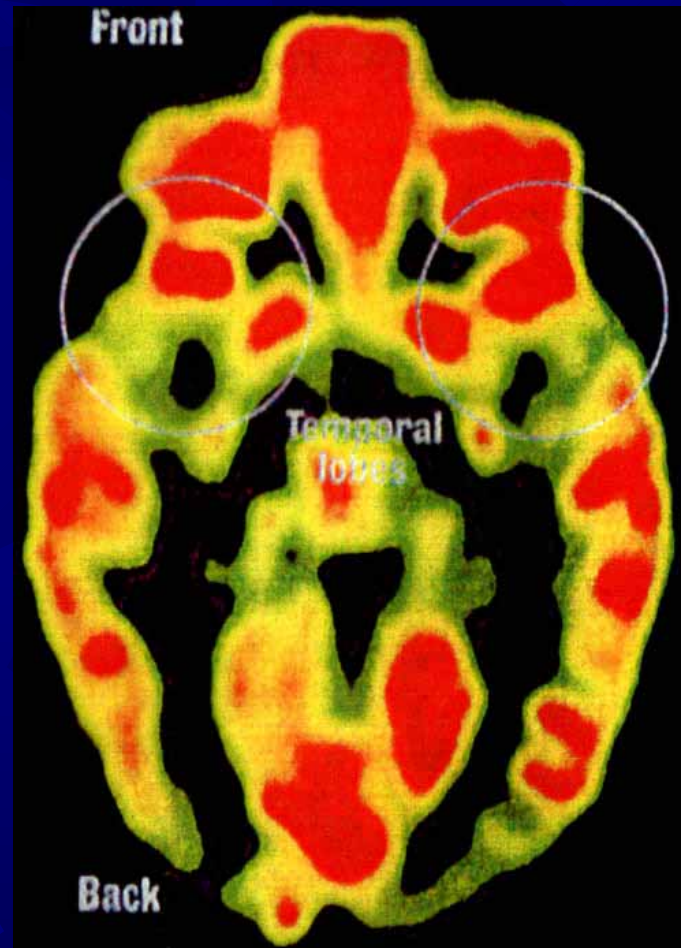
Cost benefits

Contribution to the community/economy

# Sample Items in a “toolkit” to Promote Early Childhood Development

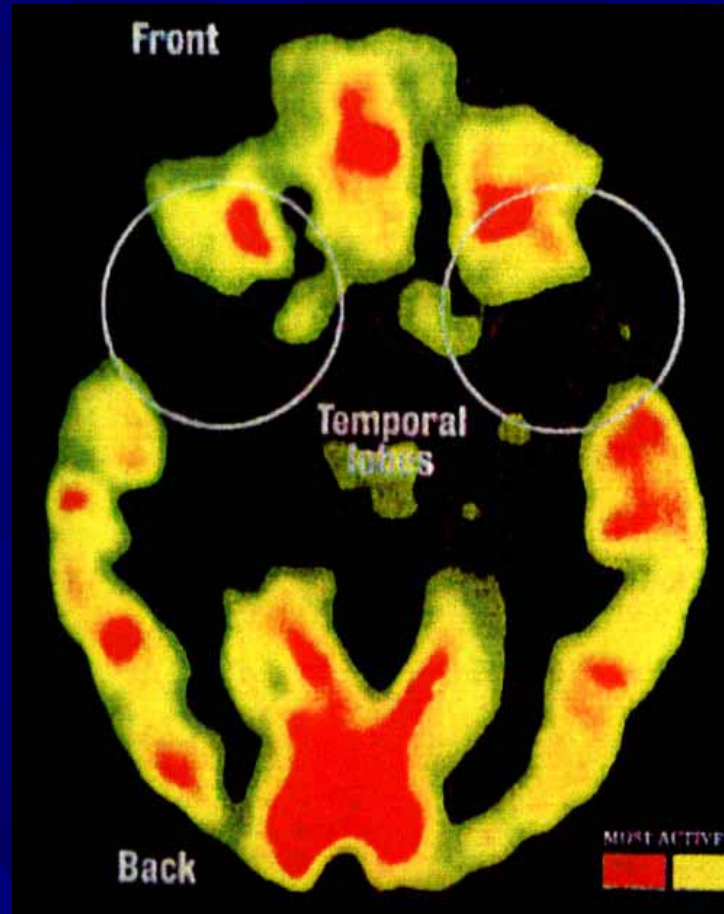


# Normal Brain Development



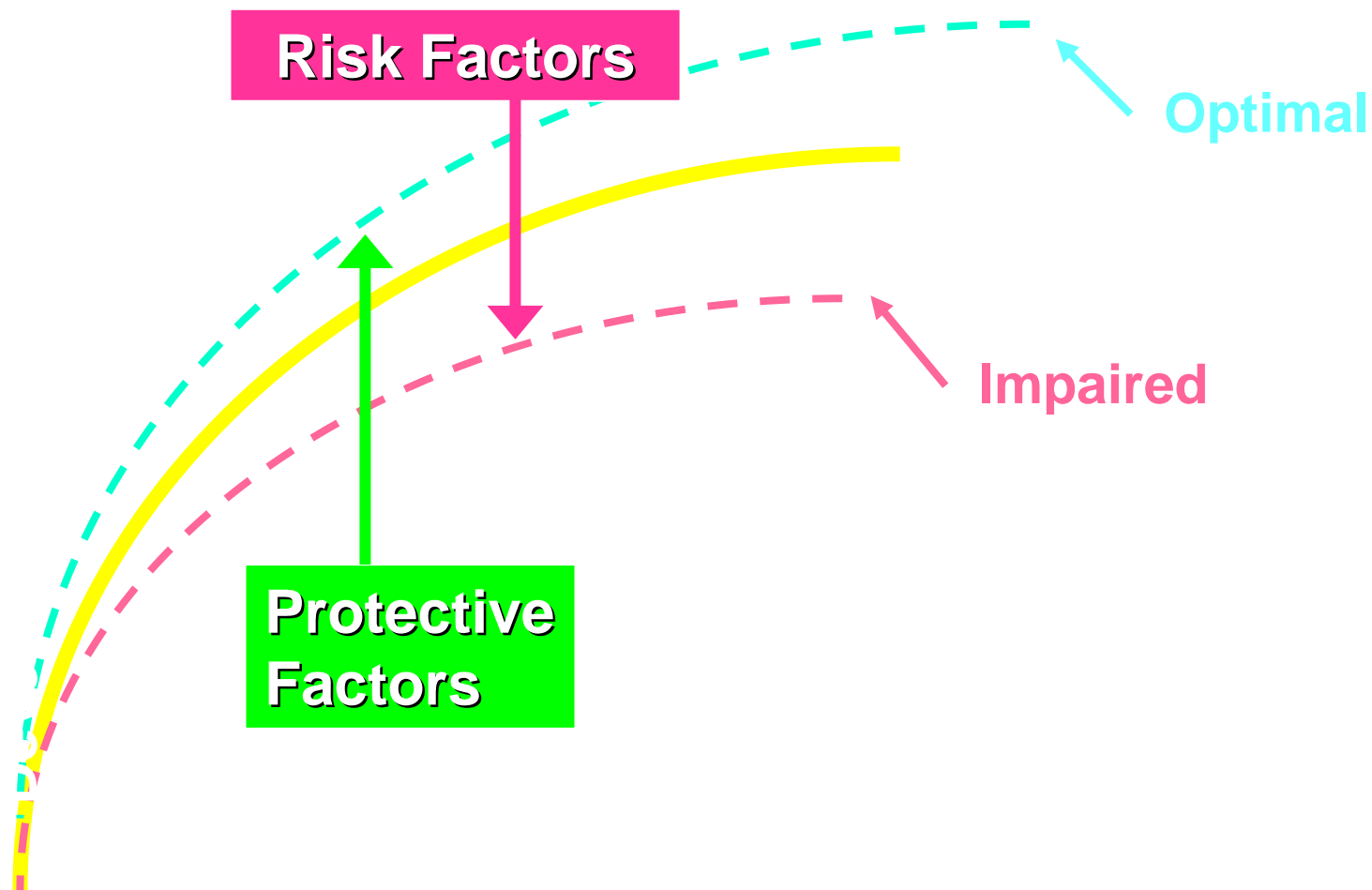
Source: *Newsweek* Special Edition, 1997

# At-Risk Brain Development



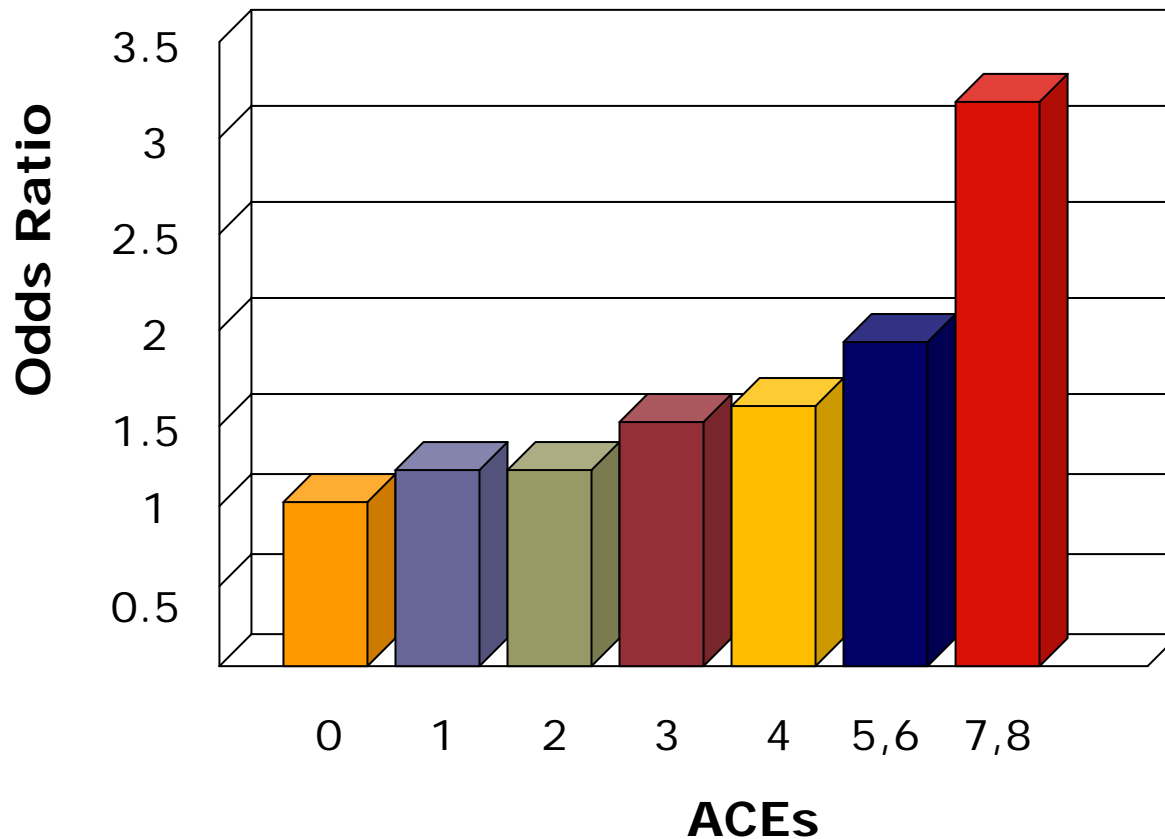
Source: *Newsweek* Special Edition, 1997

# A Child's Developmental Trajectory Can Be Modified With Appropriate Interventions



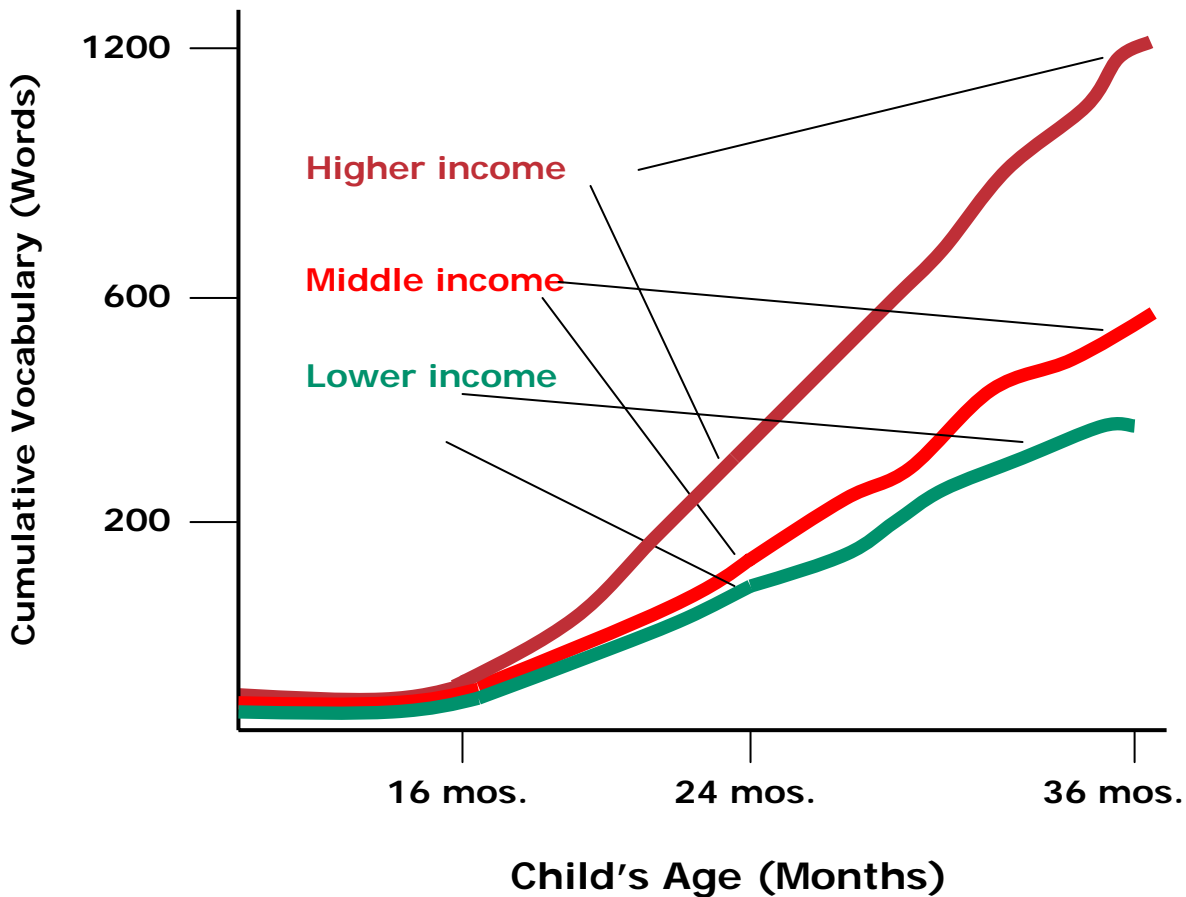
# Adverse Childhood Experiences and Adult Cardiovascular Disease

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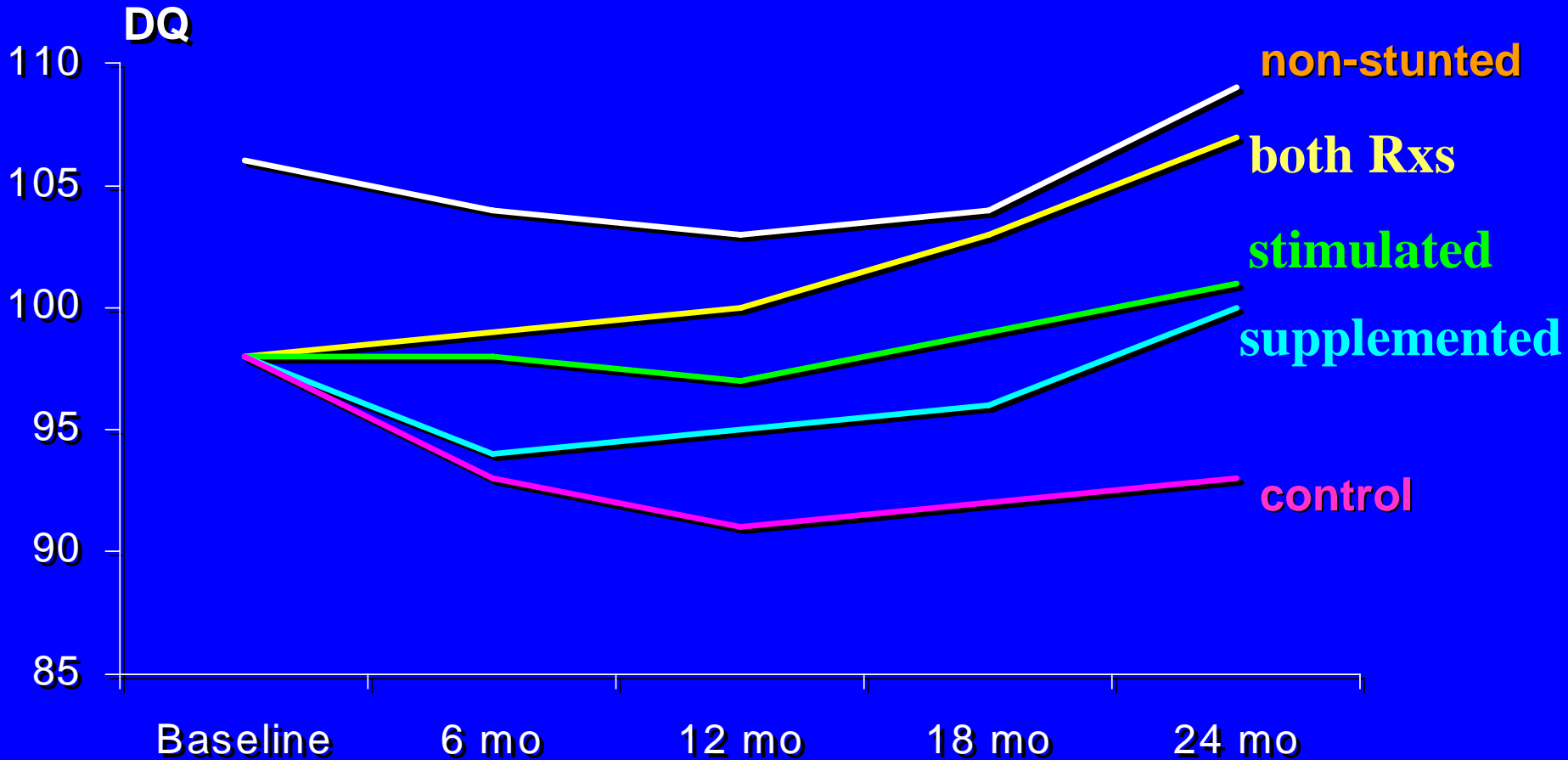
Source: Dong et al, 2004

# Disparities in Early Vocabulary Growth



Source: Hart & Risley (1995)

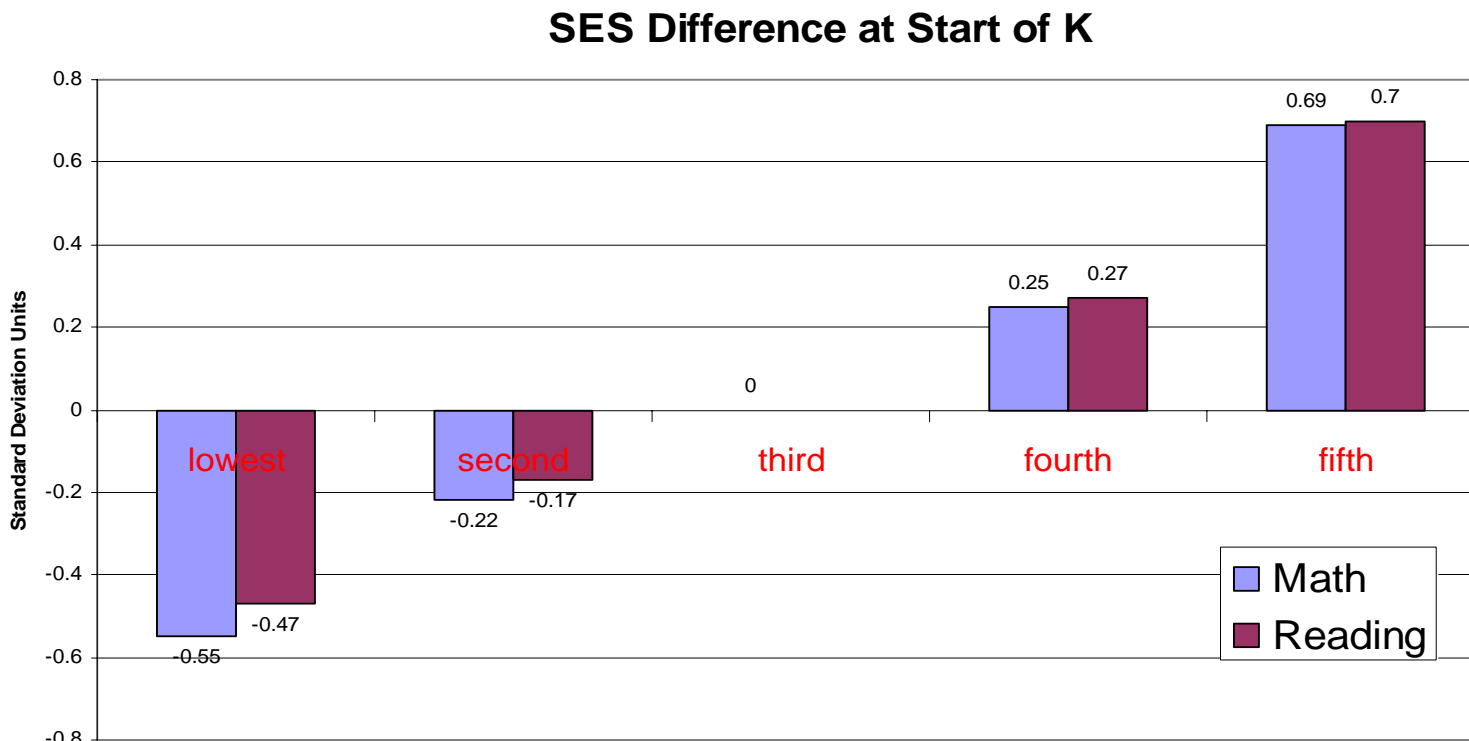
# Interventions with stunted children in Jamaica



UNICEF

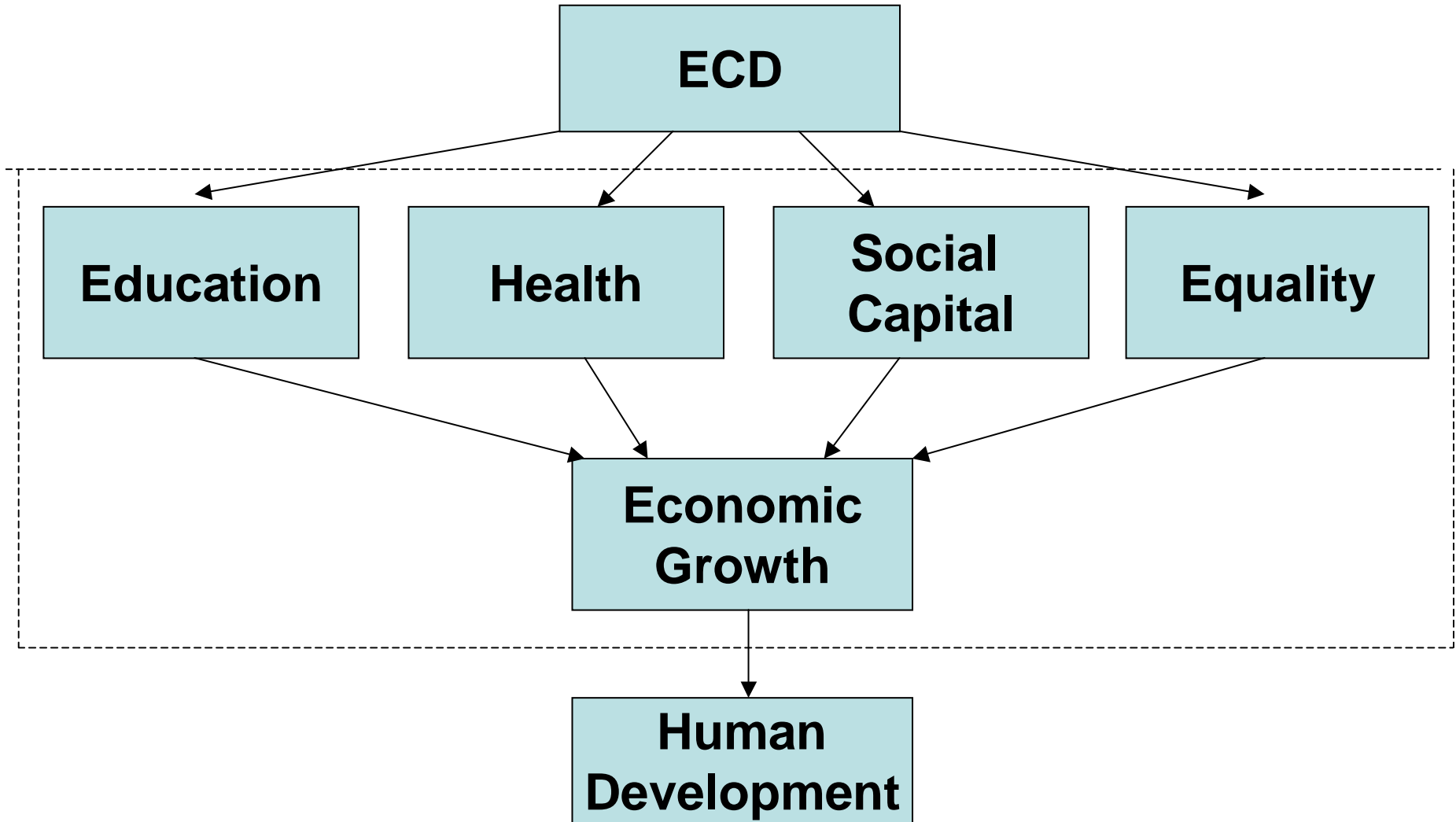
Grantham-McGregor et al, 1991

# An uneven start



SOURCE: Valerie Lee and David Burkam, *Inequality at the Starting Gate*, Economic Policy Institute, 2002, p.18.

# From Child Development to Human Development: A Comprehensive Framework



Source: Jacques van der Gaag "From Child Development to Human Development" in From Early Childhood Development to Human Development, Mary Eming Young, Ed. The World Bank, Washington, D.C.

# 10 Strategies for change

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- 1) Assessing the ECD Landscape: policy, programs, demographics, issues
- 2) Identifying stakeholders
- 3) Articulating the problem(s)
- 4) Proposing solutions - what do you want?
- 5) Making the case / Framing the issue
- 6) Making it happen
- 7) Reaching out to new messengers - creating new champions for children
- 8) Building public awareness
- 9) Monitoring progress
- 10) Sustaining the effort

# 1) Assessing the ECD Landscape

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- ❑ What is the status of young children and families in the country? (child and family indicators)
- ❑ What policies are in place in each of the main sectors that affect young children? (policy choices)  
(examples: health sector, education sector, social protection, fiscal and economic policies, environmental policies, coordination across sectors, by age group)
- ❑ What programs and services are available and how are they funded? (include government and non-government funded)
- ❑ What is missing?
- ❑ What action is needed to improve policies in the country?
- ❑ What are the priorities?

## 2) Identifying the ECD Stakeholders

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### □ **GOVERNMENT**

- Who are the “decision makers” on every level (National, Regional, and Local)?
- Who is responsible for ECD (Ministries of Education, Health, Women and Children, Youth, etc.)?
- Does the Ministry of Finance work with the ECD tasked ministries to coordinate funding? Does an external actor/group play this role? Who leads that effort?
- Does a special commission/group exist outside the government ministries to handle ECD or to coordinate amongst the relevant ministries? If so, who are the individuals leading such a group?

## 2) Identification of the ECD Stakeholders (cont.)

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- International/Regional Organizations
- National/Local NGOs
- Private Sector
- Other Civil Society
- Parents and Children

**How are parents and children represented? Who organizes them, communicates with them, and documents their concerns/requests/etc.?**

**Is there any coordinating mechanism across all stakeholder groups?**

# 3) Articulating the problem(s)

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- What is the problem with ECD – what changes need to happen for improvement and for which age group (zero-to-three, pre-primary, or primary)?
  - Quality?
  - Coverage?
  - Cost?
  - Other?

# 4. Proposing solutions- what do you want?

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- What is the process for finding a solution to the problem?
- How you can engage relevant stakeholders in the process of defining the solution?
- What is the range of possible solutions? What are the priorities?

# 5. Making the case/framing the issue

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- How will you frame the issue and present it to relevant stakeholders? (Examples of frames include education, health, poverty, and child rights)
- What arguments/rational (data, statistics, etc) will you use to make the case?
- How can you “sell” your solution (or ECD itself) to individual stakeholders (what is in it for them).
- How can ECD advocates represent the interests of children, while understanding the constraints/challenges of individual stakeholders?
- How can you address stakeholders who might rival each other (and coordinate them)?

# 6. Making it happen

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- ❑ What is the first step in moving toward a solution?
- ❑ Is a coordination meeting amongst all major stakeholders a good idea or is it better to organize small groups of individual stakeholder types (policymakers in one meeting, NGOs in another, etc)?
- ❑ If small groups are better, how can you identify leaders/champions within each group to coordinate with other group specific champions in future meetings/planning sessions/etc?
- ❑ What are effective mechanisms for networking/coalition building – example - electronic advocacy (list serves, web site forums, email updates)
- ❑ When faced with difficult local challenges, who can you reach out to for advice?

# 7) Reaching out to new messengers- creating new champions for children

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- ❑ Parents (support/respect, empowerment; decisions for children's programs, community services, larger issues)
- ❑ Teachers, school officials
- ❑ Elderly- Generations United
- ❑ Religious community
- ❑ Doctors/health community
- ❑ Law enforcement
- ❑ Economists
- ❑ Business



## Overview

- Founded in March 2003, Docs For Tots is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, multi-faceted, advocacy organization, specifically focused on very young children and their families. Docs For Tots was formed to encourage more doctors to fulfill their important role as active advocates for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers on the national, state and local levels.
- Currently there are **416** doctors in the Docs For Tots network, made up of children's doctors from multiple specialties in child health care including pediatricians, family practitioners, psychiatrists, surgeons, obstetricians, and more.

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# FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS



*Thousands of police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors  
and crime victims dedicated to preventing crime  
and violence*

[www. FightCrime.org](http://www.FightCrime.org)

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## Stages of corporate involvement

- ❑ A business invests in a program that may benefit children or their employees
- ❑ A company steps forward to invest in children in their community
- ❑ Businesses join together to invest in a program or programs on behalf of children and families
- ❑ Companies join together to use their “voice” and influence to improve policies for children and families



- Corporate Voices for Working Families is a non-partisan non-profit corporate membership organization created to bring the private sector voice into the public dialogue on issues affecting working families.
- Collectively our 50 partner companies employ more than 4 million individuals throughout all fifty states, with annual net revenues of \$800 billion. Over 70% of our partner companies are listed in the Fortune 500, and all share leadership positions in developing family support policies for their own workforces.
- This experience is the primary asset Corporate Voices brings to the ongoing dialogue with policy makers and other stakeholders.

# 8) Building public awareness

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## **Know your goal....**

Promote positive parenting

Raise overall awareness of the importance of early childhood

Gain support for a particular solution

## **How**

Print

Radio

Television

## **Tips**

- ❑ Keep it simple
- ❑ Tell a story
- ❑ Know your audience
- ❑ Brand it-have a look
- ❑ Repeat your message

## 9) Monitoring progress

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- What mechanism for monitoring the implementation of this plan is in place and who holds stakeholders accountable?
- As benchmarks are met, how is their progress communicated?
- As challenges arise, how can they be addressed – strategies/roles/processes changed?

# 10. Sustaining the effort

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When is your job done?

# And..... Taking care of yourself

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*Advocacy is for long distance runners*

- Assuring your own health
- Balancing work and family
- Being with friends
- Finding time for you....
  - Reflection
  - Relaxation
  - Renewing your spirit.....



*“Humanity owes the child  
the best it has  
to give”*

Eglantyne Jebb,  
Founder of Save the Children, 1919