The Impact of Homelessness on Child and Human Development
An Urgent Call to Action

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58th Session of the UN Commission on Social Development
Single Mother’s Vulnerability to Homelessness and its Impact on Children

New York, USA • February 2020
What is Early Childhood Development:
Multidimensional, Interconnected, and Multi-stage
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What is Early Childhood Development:
Multidimensional, Interconnected
The life-course perspective and the multi-stage concept
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What is Early Childhood Development:
Multidimensional, Interconnected, and Multi-stage
Nurturing Care:
Security and safety
Nurturing Care:
Opportunities for early learning
Nurturing Care:
Good health
Nurturing Care:
Adequate nutrition
Nurturing Care:
Responsive care
Why ECD Matters: A Tale of Two Lives
Scenario 1: A Life of Risk

Poverty

Toxic Stress
Poverty:
Restricted access to health

Poverty: Restricted access to health, education and other services

Vulnerable to weather events

Exposure to environmental toxins

Toxic Stress
Toxic stress: prolonged adversity

Poverty
- Restricted access to health, education and other services
- Vulnerable to weather events
- Exposure to environmental toxins

Toxic Stress
- Emotional abuse
- Severe deprivation
- Violence

Restricted access to health, education and other services

Vulnerable to weather events

Exposure to environmental toxins

Poverty

Toxic Stress
Impacts of cumulative risks

Poverty
- Restricted access to health, education and other services
- Vulnerable to weather events
- Exposure to environmental toxins

Toxic Stress
- Emotional abuse
- Severe deprivation
- Violence

- e.g. Depression
- e.g. Other mental and physical health problems
- e.g. Unemployment

References:
- Strandh, et al., 2014
- Dube, et al., 2004
- Schilling, et al., 2007
- Kim-Cohen et al., 2003
- Bardone et al., 1996
Impacts of limited access to antenatal, prenatal and maternal health

No preventative health

Higher risk of prematurity and complications at birth
The prenatal and transgenerational impacts of toxic stress

Alterations in maternal stress response: impacts on the unborn child (e.g. prematurity, low birth weight)

- Interpersonal Violence
- Environmental
- Structural

- Shonkoff et al., 2012
- McEwen & McEwen, 2017
- Glynn et al., 2011
Neuronal connections are formed at the fastest speed during the early years.

Two of the elements **needed** for **efficient connections** to form:

- Responsive interactions
- Nutrients/food
“Serve and return” and responsive interactions
“Serve and return” and responsive interactions
“Serve and return” and responsive interactions
The indirect and long-lasting impacts of poor maternal well-being
The indirect and long-lasting impacts of poor maternal well-being

Children living in poverty have heard 30 million fewer words than their more affluent peers by the time they turn age 3
Adverse Childhood Experience

**ABUSE**
- Physical
- Emotional
- Sexual

**NEGLECT**
- Physical
- Emotional

**HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION**
- Mental Illness
- Incarcerated Relative
- Mother treated violently
- Substance Abuse
- Divorce

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Dube et al., 2001; Burke et al., 2001
How can this happen? Epigenetic mechanisms

Lack of nutrition, stimulation & attachment

“Toxic” Stress

Abuse and neglect

Environmental risk factors (toxins, smoke)

Methylation

Affect gene expression (areas of the brain important for cognitive development, stress regulation, among others)

Meaney, 2010
No access to quality early childhood education or a nurturing/stimulating environment
Impacts of no access to quality early childhood education or a nurturing/stimulating environment

- Higher chance of either repeating or dropping out of school
- **Lower school achievement** and commitment in early adolescence
- Higher chance of engaging in **risky behaviors** that can lead to incarceration
- Greater chance of dependence on welfare assistance as an adult
- Likely to have less future **earnings**

The societal cost of maternal homelessness is immense and transgenerational.
Why ECD Matters: A Tale of Two Lives
Poverty

Toxic Stress

WHO.ORG Ponguta, et al., 2018
Target 4.2: Ensure that by 2030 all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.
16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS
Paper | Early childhood development services promote sustainable peace & development

Read the new ECPC background paper that exemplifies the role of early childhood development in supporting the achievement of the SDGs, in particular, Goal 16.

www.ecdpeace.org
Acknowledgements

• Pia Britto, PhD (UNICEF)
• James Leckman, PhD (Yale University Child Study Center)
• Adrian Cerezo, PhD (Visual Analytics)