Parenting
Key to Human and Social Development

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Global Initiative to Support Parents
African Regional Convening to Support Parents and Caregivers
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Parenting: What and Why?

What is parenting, who is a parent?

- Anyone who is committed to the long-term love and protection of a child
- Many people can be a parent to a child

What is caregiving, who is a caregiver?

- Provision of temporary care for a child
- For family reasons, assistance, pay

Parents ←→ children

- No young child can **survive** or **develop** without a parent

- **A child makes a parent**

    - E.g. babies elicit care by helplessness, crying

- Parent/s are critical **at all ages and stages** of a child's life (our lives!)

Why are parents so important?

- Development **starts at conception**

Foetus gets ready to respond to people eg, to touch (8w), smell & sound - (20w), 'learns' (recognizes) (26w)

- Parts of babies' brains needed for social life (e.g. emotional expressions, communication,) **develop in the early months after birth**

- Innate mechanisms develop **in interaction** with caring, responsive parents, e.g.:

  - Newborn preference for human face, voice, smell, taste

  - Infant obligatory gaze, imitation, emotional resonance

How does parenting develop?

- Parenting is 'intuitive', **inborn**

- And **part of culture in all societies**

- Every 'normal' person **can parent** (without severe mental illness, substance abuse, etc.)

- And experience physiological and emotional changes with the **love we feel** for a child

- Parent responses are activated by eg. **"cuteness"** of baby faces, their smell & sounds

'Cuteness' of babies - small button nose, small chin, large cheek size in relation to face, large forehead proportionally,
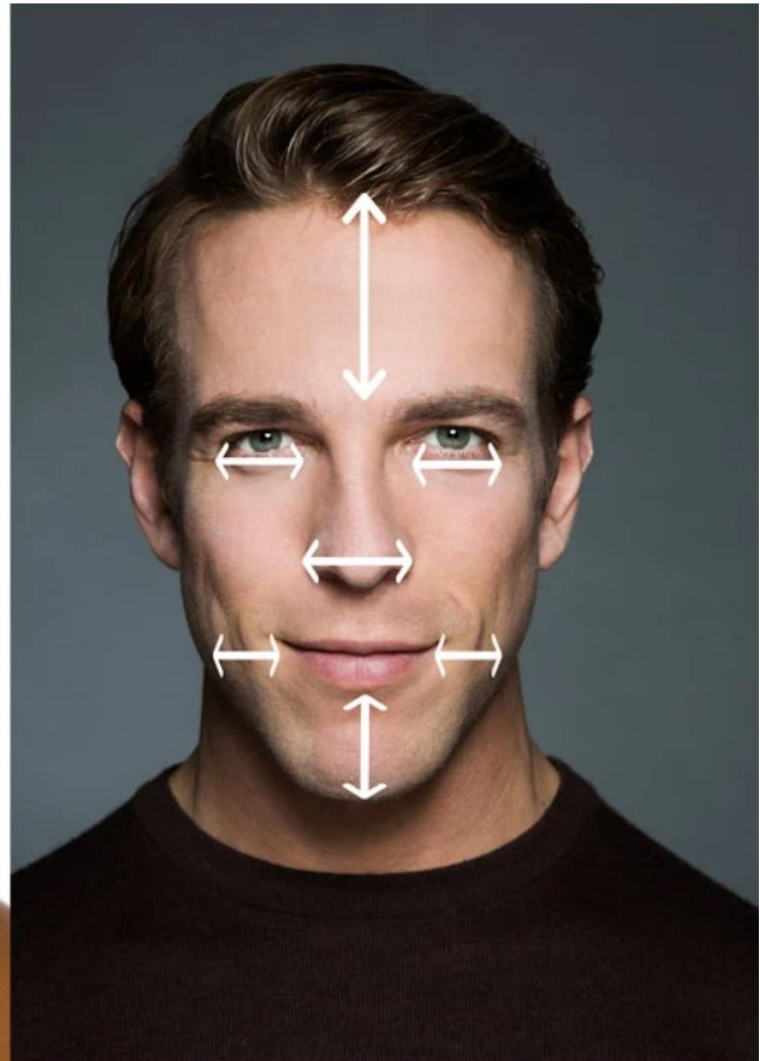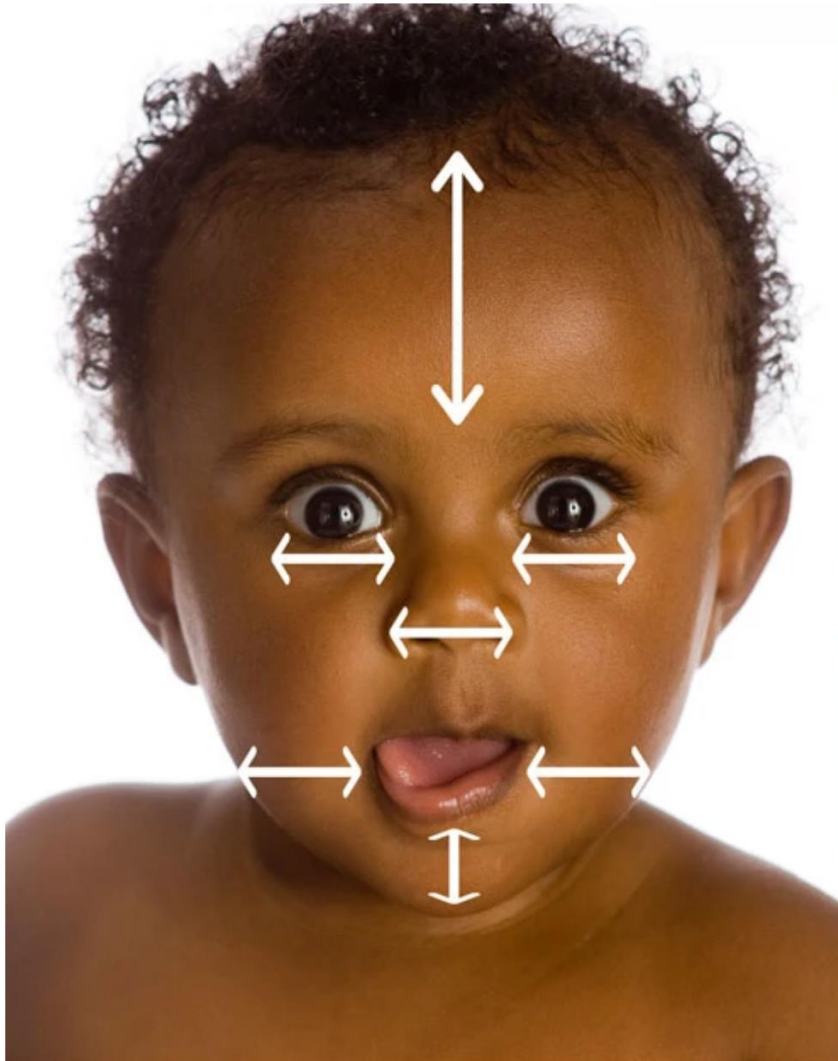
Cuteness of babies

- Seen in **spontaneous 'motherese' -** the way young/old, men/women, parents/non-parents talk to babies (lilting, musical, repetitive, questioning with looming, gestures & touch)

- Behavioural and neuroimaging **studies**

- Show that babies **activate adult neural activity** involved in play and empathy

- And **elicit caregiving** and protection

- Which **'Locks' in love & protection** for child

What can go wrong with parenting?

- 'Intuitive parenting' & responsiveness and driven **by emotional & motivational states** – not only knowledge

- **Responsiveness can break down** under competing pre-occupations, for example, due to:

  - Depression, substance abuse etc.

  - Stress related to poverty, hardship and insecurity, interpersonal and community violence, social exclusion, etc.
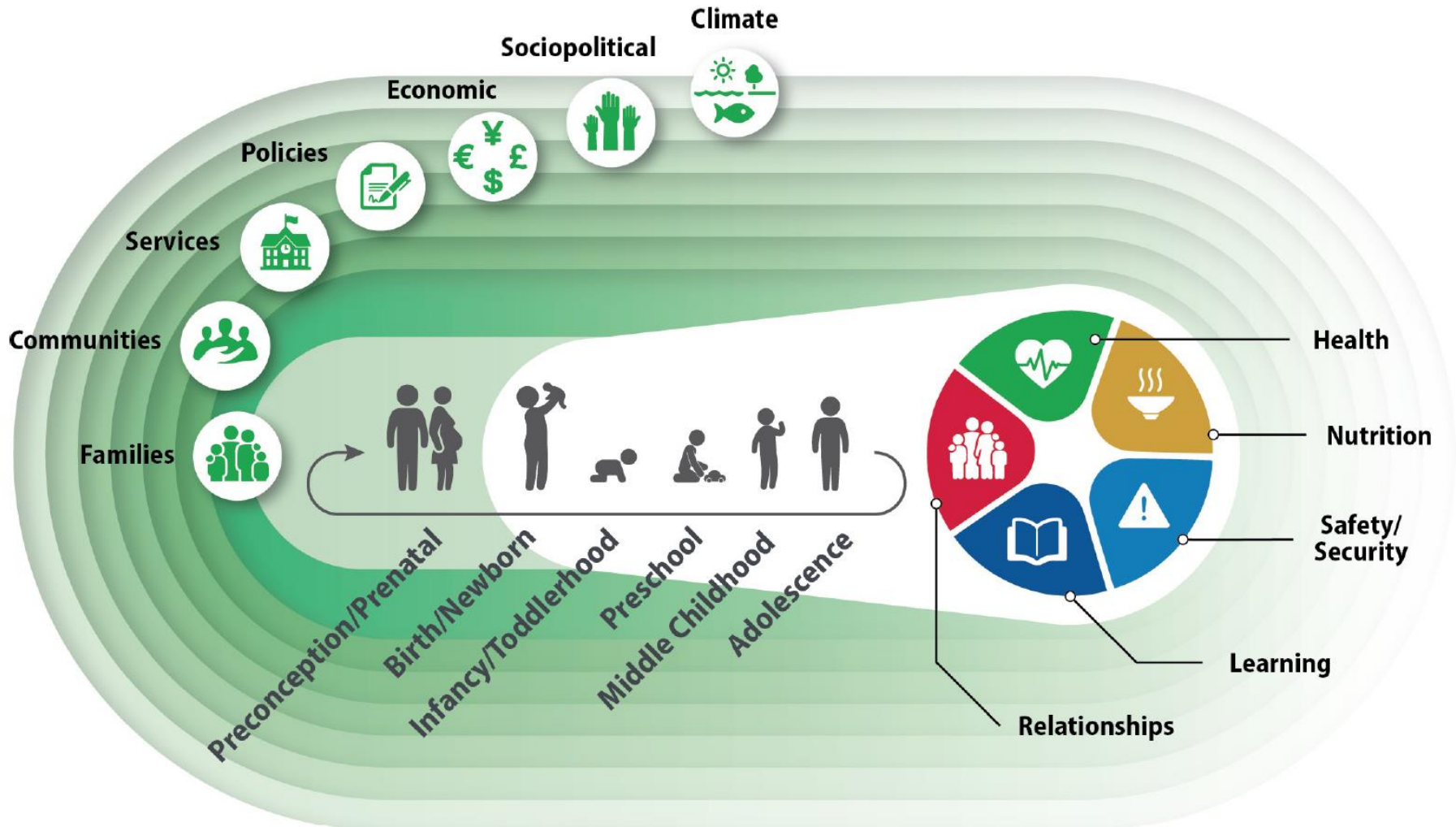
Parenting and Nurturing Care

Health
Nutrition
Safety/security
Opportunities to learn
Responsive caregiving

Provided by PARENTS
With support from enabling policies, services and communities

Parenting and Nurturing Care throughout childhood

Nurturing Care Framework from preconception through adolescence

All parents need support

Four inter-related approaches:

All parents need supportive state and sector policies ➡️

All parents need community supports ➡️

All parents parents need supportive systems (health, education, social services, child care etc. ➡️

Some parents need special parent services/programmes ➡️

Parents and families

Supportive policies

Resources for family conditions, e.g.:

- Access to housing, transport etc.

- Violence and crime prevention

- Decent work

- Social protection, income support, poverty relief

Time, e.g.:

- Paid parental leave for birth and care of young children

- Breastfeeding breaks at work

- Child care for working parents

Examples of parenting in AU policies

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990)

- Article 14: State parties to ensure that all sectors of the society including parents are informed and supported in the use of basic knowledge of child health and nutrition, and the prevention of domestic and other accidents.
- Article 19: Every child shall be entitled to the enjoyment of parental care and protection and shall, whenever possible, have the right to reside with his or her parents.
- Article 20: Parents or other persons responsible for the child shall have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development the child and shall have the duty.

Plan of Action on the Family in Africa (2003)

- Promote the participation of parents in the educational affairs of their children.

Africa Regional Nutrition Strategy (ARNS) 2015–2025

- Nutrition sensitive interventions targeting promotion of knowledge, understanding and practices of good nutrition among parents.
- For example, good feeding and caregiving practices, parenting, and stimulation

ECD policies, laws, Plans of Action

Early adopters　　　**2000-2010**　　　**2011-**

Namibia (1995)　　　　Angola　　　　　Djibouti
South Africa (1997)　　Benin　　　　　　Lesotho
Mauritious (1999)　　　Botswana　　　　Liberia
　　　　(3)　　　　　　Burkina Faso　　　Rwanda
　　　　　　　　　　　Mozambique　　　Seychelles
　　　　　　　　　　　Burundi　　　　　Tunisia　(6)

　　　　　　　　Cameroon, Central African
　　　　　　　　Republic, Eritrea, Ethiopia,
　　　　　　　　Gambia, Ghana, Guinea,
　　　　(22)　　Kenya, Malawi, Mali,
　　　　　　　　Mauritania, Mauritius, Niger,　　31/54
　　　　　　　　Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda　　　= 57%

Community support

- Family, kin and neighbourhood support

- Companionship

- Assistance and relief for child care

- Help with transport etc.

- Community support groups

- Information (work, child care, services etc.)

- Clean and safe spaces for children to play & socialize

Supportive systems & services

Health, e.g.:

- Free or subsidized preventive and promotive health care
  for young children
- Nutrition supplementation
- Information, guidance and counselling

Education:

- Child care
- Pre-primary schooling
- School meals
- After school care

Social Services
Agriculture
Etc.

Parenting programmes

Parent **support**, parent **education**, parent **training**

Usually in groups with 3 aims:
- Promote child development
- Help families deal with stress & improve family life
- Help parents manage difficult child behavior non-violently

Venue:
- Community
- Clinic or school

Form:
- 6+ sessions
- Curriculum
- Trained facilitator

Private sector initiatives

- **Business initiatives**
    - To improve productivity, talent recruitment & retention, better employee health & morale, gender equity

- **Social investment** – build facilities, equipment & materials, train staff
    - Corporate social investment
    - Civic organizations e.g. Rotary, Lions etc

- **Family-friendly policies** and practices important
    - About ¾ of men and ½ women employed or looking for work – i.e. busy and away from home
    - Many more women work in the uncounted informal sector

Nurturing Care for ECD & outcomes

- Data from DHS, MICS & representative national surveys
- 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021
- 2021 country profiles
    - 42 ECD indicators
    - 197 countries
    - Incl 60 high-income countries
    - Encompass 99·8% of the world's children <5 years
    - Include child disability & 'on-track' development
    - Arabic, French, Russian & Spanish.

Nurturing Care for ECD & outcomes
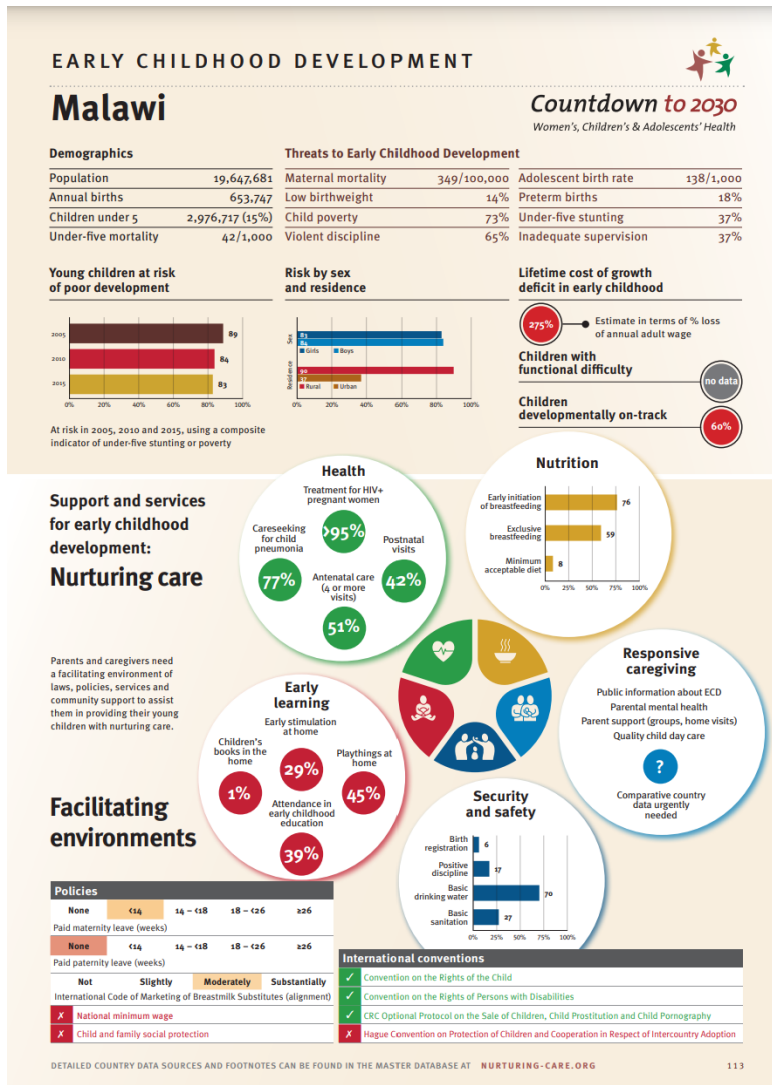
Threats to child development

Risks and costs

Disability

Developmentally on track

Coverage of services to support NC

Provided by parents & families

Community supports

Facilitating environment of laws
and policies

Parenting – How are we doing?

Indicator Averages	Africa	All Other Low- and Middle- Income Countries	High Income Countries
FAMILY WELLBEING			
Basic drinking water	71%	92%	99%
Basic sanitation	44%	83%	97%
Child/family social protection	11%	33%	67%

Maternal wellbeing

Indicator	Africa	All Other Low- and Middle-Income Countries	High Income Countries
Maternal mortality (per 100 000 births)	413	83	12
Antenatal care	59%	81%	89%
Postnatal care	60%	79%	95%
Adolescent birth (per 1 000 15-19y)	96	43	14
Low birthweight	14%	10%	7%
Preterm births	12%	10%	8%

Child care

Indicator Averages	Africa	All Other Low- and Middle- Income Countries	High Income Countries
Care of child <5y by 10+y child (>1hr/wk)	30%	10%	12%
Violent discipline	80%	68%	65%
Positive discipline	9%	22%	65%

Country Profiles, Data, Sources, Methods

Data updated annually by UNICEF

unicef for every child

https://data.unicef.org/resources/countdown-to-2030-ecd-country-profiles/

Countdown to 2030
Women's, Children's & Adolescents' Health

https://www.countdown2030.org/early-childhood-development-profiles%20

ECDAN
Early Childhood Development Action Network

https://www.ecdan.org/countries.html

NURTURING CARE
FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

https://nurturing-care.org/resources/country-profiles

ECD 2030
Countdown to 2030
Women's, Children's & Adolescents' Health

From Data to Action: Key insights into global early childhood development from country-comparable data

Thank you