

# THE GLOBAL CHILD THRIVE ACT

Ensuring children survive and thrive with nurturing care

## Introduction

When children don't receive the nurturing care they need at the beginning of their lives, they are put on a path for continued challenges: hindered physical and mental growth, emotional issues, lower educational attainment, and fewer economic opportunities. Children need healthy, loving, and safe conditions that encourage them to learn and grow. A solid foundation is the best way to help a child meet their full, God-given potential.

## Why it matters

The Global Child Thrive Act will help give children the best possible start by integrating early childhood development interventions in current and new U.S. foreign assistance programs that serve vulnerable children and their families. If this legislation is enacted, parents will be better equipped to provide essential nurturing care to their children. A UNICEF 2017 report characterizes nurturing care as a core set of interrelated components, including:

1. **Behaviors, attitudes, and knowledge** about caregiving, including health, hygiene care, and feeding;
2. **Stimulation**, such as talking, singing, and playing;
3. **Responsiveness**, such as early bonding, secure attachment, trust, and sensitive communication; and
4. **Safety**, including routines, protection from violence, abuse, neglect, harm, and environmental pollution.

These interventions help prevent the mental and physical harm caused by a lack of adequate nutrition, stimulation, education, and nurturing care, or by exposure to toxic stress through violence, conflict, and other adverse experiences.

## ASK

Co-sponsor the bipartisan  
Global Child Thrive  
Act (H.R.4864/S.2715)  
to provide a strong  
foundation for a healthy  
and productive life for  
vulnerable children globally.





Moms in Guatemala are trained by “Guide Mothers” on exercises that stimulate their children’s cognitive development.

## KEY STATISTICS

➤ **250 million children in low- and middle-income countries** are not reaching their full potential due to inadequate nutrition, exposure to stress, and lack of stimulation, learning, and nurturing care.<sup>1</sup>

➤ **250 million of the world’s 650 million primary-school-age children** do not master basic literacy and numeracy.<sup>2</sup>

➤ **Children who experience toxic stress through multiple adverse childhood experiences** are at greater risk of developing psychiatric disorders in adulthood,<sup>3</sup> and their life expectancy is shortened by an average of 20 years.<sup>4</sup>

## About the legislation

The Global Child Thrive Act (H.R.4864/S.2715) elevates and integrates early childhood development (ECD) interventions into current foreign assistance programs focused on children and their families. This approach is multisectoral, addressing many critical aspects of healthy child development such as protection, nutrition, clean water, and education. The result will be ECD-integrated programs with increased efficiency and effectiveness to help vulnerable children develop. In short, the Thrive Act will:

- **Direct USAID** to integrate ECD interventions into current foreign assistance programs and report annually on its integration;
- **Create a taskforce** for coordination among all U.S. government agencies that implement these programs in order to achieve best results;
- **Emphasize coordination** with local governments and organizations, nongovernmental organizations, faith-based organizations like World Vision, and other civil society partners to integrate best practices; and
- **Identify evidence-based priorities**, indicators, outcomes, and targets to support inclusive early childhood development and support pilot projects in partner countries with the goal of expanding them to serve more children and their families.





Mayamen's little brother, Mohammed, enjoys positive interaction with his mom, Mashier, at a Go Baby Go! playtime in South Darfur, Sudan.

### What does early childhood development look like? Examples include:

- **Programming that integrates critical healthy starts** through nutrition, clean water, and good hygiene and sanitation;
- **Programs that utilize age-appropriate cognitive stimulation** through play and interactions with parents and others;
- **Early learning, preschool, and basic education programs** that provide a firm foundation for future educational attainment and economic opportunities; and
- **Child protection programming** that limits exposure to adverse childhood experiences and emphasizes the need for permanent, safe, and nurturing family care.



### Programmatic examples

#### GO BABY GO!

World Vision's Go Baby Go! program model empowers parents to provide their babies with nurturing care and offers services that promote their holistic development. World Vision Sudan has implemented the model into its existing nutrition centers, like the one in Mershing locality where Mashier, 25, and her 8-month-old daughter, Mayamen, received care.

Mashier visited her local nutrition center to seek treatment for Mayamen, who had been so frequently sick that she was losing weight. Mashier was informed that her child was moderately malnourished and would be admitted to the therapeutic feeding program.

Unlike other programs in which parents get nutrition supplies, feed their children, and go home, Go Baby Go! invites parents to spend hours at the center playing with their children and listening to community mobilizers who inform parents about healthy feeding practices, hygiene, and more.

After three visits to the center, Mayamen had regained the lost weight and Mashier observed positive changes in her own parenting skills. "Now I create time to spend with the children, playing and communicating, listening to, and observing them as they move around the home," she says. "By paying more attention, I am more alert to my child's needs. I know when they are hungry, or if they want to nap, or need a change of clothes."

At least 200 mothers in Mershing have participated in the Go Baby Go! program, conducted during clinic visits by the trained community mobilizers and followed by weekly household visits to foster positive parenting at the household level.



Three-year-old Betty, a South Sudanese refugee, gets a high-energy biscuit and hug from Rahima, a World Vision staff member.

## WORLD VISION'S AID RESPONSE TO SOUTH SUDANESE REFUGEES IN UGANDA

Due to conflict in South Sudan, thousands have fled into Uganda seeking refuge. World Vision's response to this crisis has been multisectoral, implementing many aspects of early childhood development, including:

- **Child-Friendly Spaces** for kids to play and learn;
- **Nutrition centers** for breastfeeding mothers and children struggling with malnutrition;
- **Clean water** and sanitation services; and
- **Educational programs** that focus on cognitive development.

### References

<sup>1</sup> *The Lancet*, "Early childhood development coming of age: science through the life course," October 2016.

<sup>2</sup> *UNICEF*, "State of the World's Children Report," 2016.

<sup>3</sup> *The Lancet*, "The effect of multiple adverse childhood experiences on health: a systematic review and meta-analysis," 2017.

<sup>4</sup> *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*, "Adverse Childhood Experiences and the Risk of Premature Mortality," 2009.