Review of the Research Evidence on Early Childhood Education and Care in Refugee Contexts in Low- and Middle-Income Countries

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Abstract

Refugee children are some of the most vulnerable populations in the world, the majority of them living in low resource context, and burdened with experiences of past traumatic events, and post-migration deprivation and stressors. Adding to those risk factors, past trauma and experiences of deprivation and stress also affect their family members and caregivers, who can in response struggle to provide their children with nurturing and supportive care needed for their healthy development, including responsive stimulation and opportunities for learning. Vulnerability in the first years of life is particularly high. Importantly, we know today that those interventions with a focus on early childhood development can address threats to young children's development and enable families and communities to better provide what young children need for their development and wellbeing. Attention to early learning and responsive caregiving is essential to early childhood development, and early childhood education and care (ECEC) is a therefore a key element to early childhood development programming.

High quality ECEC has been shown to bring substantial economic, social, educational, and developmental benefits. For refugee children, early childhood education and care can offer physiological, psychological, and cognitive protection. The delivery of ECEC to vulnerable refugee and migrant populations has recently been identified as a research priority. Yet, until today almost everything that we know about providing early education for refugee children is based on research studies in the resettlement context, carried out in high income countries, which are united by the fact that they have common cultural and historical ties to Western Europe. Yet, 80% of refugees live in countries neighbouring their countries of origin, which are mostly low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). This report presents a focused and systematic literature search, carried out with the aim to collect evidence about ECEC programmes for refugee children in LMICs. The aim was to evaluate what we know about accessibility and quality of ECEC programmes for refugee children in LMICs and how they support young children in refugee contexts.

Results of our review show that the research evidence base in this field is still very young, and studies can face significant challenges which affect their methodological rigour. Our review also confirmed that resources for providing ECEC can be extremely limited, and that providing good quality ECEC to refugee families in low-resource contexts can be highly challenging. Nevertheless, findings of those studies that were identified for this review all point in the direction of benefits of ECEC for children's wellbeing and their developmental outcomes. In addition, studies also identified promising approaches and describe how successful strategies can be implemented in ECEC to support refugee children and families in lower resource contexts.

Abbreviations

COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease 2019
CRC	Convention in the Rights of the Child
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
GCR	Global Compact on Refugees
GMR	Global Monitoring Report
GNI	Gross National Income
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
GPD	Gross Domestic Product
LMICs	Low- and Middle-Income Countries
MOE	Ministry of Education (in Malaysia)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OAD	Official Development Assistance
PMNCH	Partnership for Maternal, New-born & Child Health
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
PICUM	Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants
RCT	Randomised Control Trial
RTI	Research Triangle Institute
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Education Fund
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WHO	World Health Organisation

Table of contents

List of figures and tables

1 Introduction

Refugee children are some of the most vulnerable populations in the world, many deprived of the ingredients needed for healthy development – nutritious food, health care, responsive stimulation from a caregiving adult, opportunities for learning, and protection from violence, extreme stress, pollution, and conflict (Britto, 2017a). The UN reports that currently, levels of displacement are higher than ever before. In 2018, a total of 70.8 million people were recorded as having been forced to leave their homes (UNHCR, 2019a). More than 25 million displaced people were refugees, forced to leave their home because their states failed to protect their rights and exposed them to serious threats. 80% of refugees lived in countries neighbouring their countries of origin, which are mostly low- and middle-income countries with limited resources to respond to the needs of often huge numbers of people arriving.

This leaves a vast majority of refugees living in challenging conditions. Young children are particularly dependent on parental and caregiver support. When caregivers, family members and community systems are unable to protect children from violence and harm, and when they struggle to provide young children with nurturing and supportive care, children can experience severe stress, psychosocial deprivation, and lack of stimulation, which can have long-term effects on their health, learning and behaviour (Bouchane et al., 2018; UNESCO, 2018).

Calls for a comprehensive response that focuses on support for refugee children in the early years are supported by rapidly expanding body of scientific research in different disciplines that demonstrates that the early years of a child offer an irreplaceable window of opportunity for children to learn and grow (Black et al., 2017; Britto et al., 2017; Darmstadt et al., 2018; Richter et al., 2017). Interventions that focus on early childhood development can address threats to young children's development and enable able families and communities to better provide what young children need for their development and wellbeing. Early childhood education and care (ECEC) is a key element of early childhood development (ECD), and attention to early learning and responsive caregiving is an essential element to (ECD) programming. High quality education and care at preschool age has been shown to bring substantial economic, social, educational and developmental benefits (Vandenbroeck et al., 2018). Skills that develop in the early years are seen to set a foundation for life-long learning in supporting school readiness, self-regulated behaviour and academic learning (Blair & Raver, 2015).

In response to what we now know about child development and what can support it, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in 2015. It defines a set of goals and targets to achieve a future that leaves no one behind, through ensuring sustainable development in three dimensions – economic, social, and environmental. Sustainable development goal (SDG) 4 addresses the importance of quality education to sustain development and includes the aim to provide all children with at least one year of quality pre-primary education by 2030 (UNESCO, 2016). This is a challenge – today 50% of pre-primary aged children are not enrolled in early childhood education programmes, and in low-income countries only 1 of 5 children attend pre-primary education. It has been concluded that those who might benefit most from early education are most likely to miss out on the opportunity to participate (Abdelbasit et al., 2019).

Robust research has demonstrated that to sustain development, countries need to invest in early education programs and services. Yet, in refugee and humanitarian crisis, young children and plans for their learning are often neglected. A recent background paper prepared for the 2019 UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report included an analysis of 26 refugee- and humanitarian response

plans and demonstrated, that the commitment to support early childhood development and early learning for children in crisis and conflict was generally very low (Bouchane et al., 2018).

The current report presents the evidence for good quality ECED in refugee contexts. With a focus on young children, the report starts with a summary of some key issues for refugees, including the rights of refugees and how they are protected, the development and wellbeing of refugee children, educational needs of refugee children, and the potential of early interventions. This is followed by an overview of the barriers and challenges that have been identified to ECEC access and participation for refugee children, and those ECEC strategies that have been found to support development and wellbeing of refugee children. However, almost everything that is known about providing early education for refugee children is based on research studies in the resettlement context, carried out in high income countries in the North. Carrying out research on refugee ECEC in other contexts can be extremely challenging (Iqbal et al., 2022).This report presents a focused and systematic literature search, carried out with the aim to collect evidence about ECEC programmes for refugee children in low- and middle- income countries (LMICs). The aim is to evaluate what is known about accessibility and quality of ECEC programmes for refugee children in LMICs and how they support young children in refugee contexts.

1.1 Development and wellbeing of refugee children

1.1.1 Protection for refugees through international rights
International law states that for refugees, another country has responsibilities to act to ensure that refugees' basic rights are respected. The core of the international protection system is the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, complemented by regional treaties and declarations (Nicholson & Kumin, 2017). The New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants (2016) is the most recent affirmation of the importance of the 1951 Convention and stresses global responsibilities to act to ensure the rights of refugees. International refugee law works jointly with other interconnected international law and protocols that protect refugees – most importantly the international human rights law (starting with the *1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights*), and the international humanitarian law (*Geneva Conventions of 1949 and two Additional Protocols agreed in 1977*). In addition, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is of particular relevance to refugee children. The convention is signed by most countries in the world and outlines a number of fundamental rights, including protection from abuse, exploitation and neglect, separation from parents, the right to physical and intellectual development, access to education and health care services, the right to recovery and reintegration, and an environment which fosters health, self-respect and dignity of a child (Nicholson & Kumin, 2017).

Within the frameworks of international law, refugee children have the right to basic education. The 1951 *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* obliges host countries to grant refugee children and their own citizens equal access to primary education. Importantly, the 1989 *Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)* (United Nations, 1989) requires states to provide obligatory primary education for free. Of particular relevance for refugee children is that the CRC emphasizes gender equity, inclusion of the disabled, and the linguistic and cultural rights of minority children. While the CRC from 1989 does not define children's rights to ECEC, the *United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child* in 2005 highlighted the importance of children's rights for young children, and argues that governments should adopt a positive agenda for early childhood education (United Nations, 2005).

To ensure the rights of refugee children, international legal instruments relating to education and protection have to be incorporated into national laws and regional commitments. However, most countries of crisis and first asylum are low- and middle- income countries, where governments

struggle to ensure rights for and protection of their own citizens (Cheng et al., 2018; UNHCR, 2020). As a result, in many countries national human rights institutions have important responsibilities to contribute to protecting and monitoring respect for the rights of refugees (Triplehorn, 2001). Most importantly, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has the mandate to lead and co-ordinate international action to protect refugees worldwide[1]. The work of the UNHCR is underpinned by the broader international laws and encourages participating states to develop national plans of action which should include refugee children (Williams, 2012). While the UNHCR has set out general guidelines for the reception of people seeking international protection, the extent to which states' governmental and non-governmental agencies provide assistance and offer safe and dignified living arrangements vary. In States that are not party to the 1951 Convention/1967 Protocol, and in countries where refugee status determination procedures have not yet been established or are inadequate, the UNHCR undertakes refugee status determination under its mandate or is otherwise involved in the asylum procedure (Nicholson & Kumin, 2017).

The UNHRC and other agencies aim to support finding durable solutions which enable refugees to enjoy a secure legal status that assures them access to their rights on a lasting basis. However, the UNHCR reports that in 2018 less than three percent of refugees returned to their home countries. Yearly, only around one percent of refugees are resettled. Despite the efforts of national states, the UNHCR and the international community more broadly, the majority of the world's refugees live in countries bordering their country of origin. In 2018, more than a third lived in the least developed countries, and nine of the top ten refugee hosting countries were in developing regions. 78% of all refugees lived in protracted situations (UNHCR, 2019b) – unstable and insecure locations, most commonly dense urban areas, but also often overcrowded refugee camps, which have poor living conditions but which can house families for generations. For more than a third, this situation had lasted 20 years or more, and for many it can last their entire life (Nicholson & Kumin, 2017; Park & Katsiaficas, 2019; Silove et al., 2017; UNHCR, 2019b).

1.1.2 Risks to the development and wellbeing of refugee children

Over 50% of refugees are under the age of 18. While children of refugees have varying backgrounds, pre-migration histories, and stories of flight or journey to their host countries, they are commonly vulnerable; often they or their close family members have had traumatic experiences. Pre-migration and during their journeys to their host countries, refugee families often experience poverty, physical and emotional stress, and disruption to their education (Park et al., 2018). They may have been exposed to food insecurity, poor health (including infectious diseases and injuries), violence, and exploitation (WHO, 2018a). They may have lost close family members and may have been exposed to social and emotional neglect (Chehab, 2016). Their journeys are often tumultuous. They have lost their home environment, and had their daily routines, and opportunities for socialising and play disrupted. Their learning – crucially their language and literacy learning – will have suffered (Bond et al., 2007; Chehab, 2016; Park et al., 2018; Park & Katsiaficas, 2019).

As a result of their experiences, many refugees have to cope with separation, trauma and loss. Refugees have been found to have higher levels of depression, anxiety, and symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (Fazel & Stein, 2002; Hollifield et al., 2013; Montgomery, 2011). Research has shown that pre-migration trauma links to mental health in resettlement thus affecting the chances of the lives of refugees and their children, and their chances of integrating into the host society (Cerna, 2019; Lewing et al., 2018; Murray et al., 2008; Smith et al., 2001; Terheggen et al., 2001; Zachary et al., 2002).

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[1] except for Palestinian refugees, who are supported by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)

The detrimental effects of trauma can be transmitted across generations. While some children of refugees have experienced trauma directly, others may be affected second-hand, through the hardships their parents and other close family members have endured (Park & Katsiaficas, 2019). Caregivers' mental health plays an important role in their capacity to provide responsive and stimulating care to their children. Traumatic experiences, a sense of hopelessness and insecurity, and depression and anxiety potentially affect parenting practices and thus child development and wellbeing (Betancourt, McBain, et al., 2015; Bouchane et al., 2018; Sheidow et al., 2014).

In addition, the development and wellbeing of children of refugees is further affected by the social and economic conditions they experience post-migration. Post-migration refugees often live for extended periods in challenging conditions characterised by lack of safety and security (Silove et al., 2017; Tyrer & Fazel, 2014). Many refugees live in unstable and insecure locations, and may experience threat of deportation; they might be exposed to further violence and abuse (Crisp, 2000; Tyrer & Fazel, 2014; WHO, 2018b, 2018a). Children with undocumented or unregistered refugee status are particularly vulnerable. Their circumstances leave them to live in particularly precarious situations 'with no or limited access to social rights and exposed to poverty, exploitations, social exclusion and violence' (PICUM, 2011; WHO, 2018a). Refugee children can suffer from poor physical health, risks to malnourishment and nutrition deficiencies are common, access to water and sanitation can be limited, and many refugees face lack of access to health care, including immunisations (Cerna, 2019; Cheng et al., 2018).

Adapting to life in the host country can be challenging, and further affect refugee families' wellbeing. In adjusting to a different culture and daily life, all family members need to reconstruct themselves, find new roles and take on new responsibilities (Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003; Puig, 2008; Weine, 2008). Navigating between home- and host culture and finding a balance that suits expectations and roles of all family members can be difficult and cause tensions and conflict (Murray et al., 2008; Nakeyar et al., 2017; Pan et al., 2006). Due to differences in their cultural identity and the lack of a solid common language base for communication, refugees can feel alienated and struggle to develop a strong sense of belonging (Nakeyar et al., 2017). Refugee children can face difficulties in developing friendships, and this can be a significant barrier to their social integration (Correa-Velez et al., 2015; McMichael et al., 2011). Ongoing experiences of discrimination and exclusion are common for refugees; many refugee children report some form of bullying, and they do not always feel welcome or safe (Cerna, 2019; Hart, 2009).

Forced migration can have devastating effects on the education of children who are at higher risk of falling behind or dropping out of school (Moinolnolki & Han, 2017b). Pre-migration, refugee children may not be able to access education; during flight and after arriving in the host country, schooling is often interrupted for significant periods of time. Refugee children have been reported to be five times more likely to be out of school compared to their non-refugee peers (Global Education Monitoring Report Team, 2016). In low-income countries, less than 50% of refugees are reported to have access to primary education (UNHCR, 2019c). Even those children of refugees born in their host country often face barriers in accessing education due to their immigration and citizen status, and the fact that many educations systems struggle to cope with issues related to increased migration (Commission of the European Communities, 2008; Moinolnolki & Han, 2017b). To add to these risks, during resettlement refugee children often face many stressors that put them at greater risk for school dropout. These factors include challenging processes of acculturation, life in poverty, poor housing, or dangerous neighbourhoods (Betancourt, Frounfelker, et al., 2015; Coll & Magnuson, 2014; Reed et al., 2012).

To summarise, post-migration stressors can interact with past traumatic events in shaping the mental health, resilience and leaning of refugee children (Bean et al., 2007; Fazel & Betancourt, 2018; Montgomery, 2011). Exposure to pre-migration traumatic events *and* post-migration deprivation and stressors can lead to prolonged negative effects for both child and adult refugees (Beiser, 2009; Bogic et al., 2012; Tam et al., 2017).

1.1.3 An ecological model for refugee children's development

Models that integrate culture and psychological development have been found to be helpful to explain the experience of refugee children and those factors that help or hinder their wellbeing and development. The bioecological model of human development (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) is often quoted as a useful theoretical background to understand the needs of refugee children. The model proposes that, as children develop, direct and indirect experiences in their different environments all contribute to their development. All contexts (the entire ecological system) must be considered, and to fully address questions related to children's development, proximal processes in the child's immediate environments as well as broader issues such as ideologies of the social agents in each system, as well as the support of the wider family and community, must be taken into account.

In Bronfenbrenner's model these different systems are visualised as one nested inside the other and interacting. Two important implications for understanding and researching child development are that the specific environment of interest (e.g., the school, the parent-child relationship) is linked and can only be understood in association with other systems, and that each individual responds and adapts to the environment, and also influences his or her environment at the same time. With its focus on dynamic, interrelated, reciprocal, diverse, and multilevel influences the framework has been found to be useful to guide interventions that take account of the broader context of risk and protective factors operating across the different social ecological systems.

Time is a critical element in Bronfenbrenner's model of human development because the theory describes development as the interactive life-long process of adaptation by an individual to the changing environment (Anderson et al., 2004). Environmental changes are often gradual and only affect some aspects of people's lives. Refugee children and their families however need to adapt to more abrupt changes that can affect nearly all areas of their lives. Bronfenbrenner's model has been used to help researchers understand the connections among different contexts and how they relate to these families as they move through the different stages of their migration journeys (Hayes, 2021). Emphasis is given to the fact that interactions and relationships between an individual child and the various layers of environment change over time, as a result of their premigration, transmigration, and postmigration experiences (Anderson et al., 2004).

Over time, refugee families experience upheaval and chaos, threats to safety and disrupted education during pre-flight, followed by uncertainty about the future and struggle to meet basic needs during migration. While acknowledging the well-documented importance of traumatic events in the past for child development, the ecological model helps to consider how refugee children have to adjust to new ecosystem demands and relationships which occur as they move from context to context. Managing these transitions across very different countries and contexts has been described a major task that refugee children and their families face, together with schools and services in host countries (Anderson et al., 2004).

Importantly, the ecological model has helped to highlight the role of the individual in responding to environmental challenges. How children interact with the environments plays an important role in shaping positive and negative developmental outcomes (Wells et al., 2018). Individual factors play a role in shaping the child's ability to make use of resources in their environment, and in the refugee

context, factors like age, gender, ethnicity, coping and acculturation styles, and mental health factors have been found to affect child response to challenges (Arakelyan & Ager, 2021; Moinolnolki & Han, 2017a). These factors are important to consider, because the way in which people interact with resources is seen as key component in adaption. Importantly, traumatic experiences might affect people's ability to take advantage of recourses, and in addition, resources can be lost as children move through processes of migration (Wells et al., 2018). Due to pre- and trans-migration experiences, the personal resources of children and their families can be low when arriving in their host country, thus impacting on their ability to manage the transition to the new country.

For young children, resources within their first and most immediate environment – the family – have been found to be most important in strengthening their wellbeing and development. This includes positive and warm interactions in the family, involvement in stimulating activities, space that is safe, and physical resources that promote learning. Past traumatic experiences, in combinations with the stressors that refugee parents can experience after migration, have been found to negatively affect parenting skills and emotional availability, and thus impact on children's mental health and psychosocial adjustment (Arakelyan & Ager, 2021; Moinolnolki & Han, 2017a; Scharpf et al., 2020).

Processes within the child's most proximal system (the family) are embedded within wider systems and factors, including community factors (e.g., the quality of the neighbourhood, social network), and institution- and policy factors (access to services, housing issues, application processing) and direct and indirect interactions of the child and immediate family members with agents in the wider environments. Communities, supportive systems, and policies have a role to play in providing those conditions families need to ensure their children's health and development.

1.2 Supporting refugee children's development in the early years

1.2.1 Providing nurturing care and early learning
Targets on child development and wellbeing are an important element of the Sustainable development Goals (SDGs), firstly because protecting and supporting young children's development is an important human rights principle, and secondly because they are seen as key to achieving those changes needed to address the world's biggest problems.

Scientific evidence clearly shows the importance of early childhood as a critical period for children's development and their later wellbeing, with implications well into their adult lives. Neuroscientific findings on the development of the brain were particularly important in demonstrating the importance of early experiences and supportive environments (Britto, 2017b; Shonkoff et al., 2012). Neural connections in the brain, which are established very early on, were found to be instrumental in building the foundations which are essential for children's ability to learn, to perform tasks, to adapt to change, and to their resilience (Britto, 2017b; Centre on the Developing Child, 2017a). Researchers and early childhood experts have used new knowledge mapped out by neuroscientific advances to better understand factors that facilitate and those that risk optimal development. There is now increasing evidence that early in life, positive experiences help young children to build those foundations needed for healthy development. Adequate nutrition, protection from harm, positive experiences with caregivers, responsive stimulation (including early learning opportunities) are essential in this process, while negative experiences and deprivation can harm children's brain development, with direct implications for their life chances in the future (Britto, 2017b; Britto et al., 2017; Gertler et al., 2014; Shonkoff et al., 2012).

In response to what we now know about early child development, the SDGs embedded targets on malnutrition, child mortality, early learning and violence in its goals, and related its targets to the environments that children need in order to thrive, and those services that support those children at

risk (WHO, 2018b). In 2016, the Lancet Series 'Advancing Early Childhood Development: From Science to Scale' disseminated new scientific findings linked with possibilities for implementation of Early Childhood Development (ECD) interventions. With its emphasis on the importance of nurturing care for young children's development, this publication was particularly influential in shaping international guidance and frameworks on the developing child. In 2018, the World Health Organisation (WHO) launched the Nurturing Care Framework in collaboration with UNICEF, The Partnership for Maternal, New-born & Child Health (PMNCH), the ECD Action Network, and many other partners (WHO, 2018b). The framework aims to guide interventions which support families and young children exposed to risk, and has been used in low-resources settings and emergencies, including the refugee context (Bouchane et al., 2018).

The construct of responsive care is of particular importance to the Nurturing Care framework. Parents who provide responsive care, attend to children's signals (their movements, sounds, and gestures), comfort them when they are in distress, and respond sensitively in communicating through their own gestures, facial expression, eye contact and language. These experiences help establish positive attachment relationships between parents and children. Psychosocial stimulation thus helps to buffer children form the negative effects of otherwise harmful environments, and in addition, provides the stimulation important for children's cognitive-, language-, and socio-emotional learning (Centre on the Developing Child, 2017b, 2017c; Milteer et al., 2012). Caregiving activities that have been found to of particular importance for children's learning are engaging children in play, singing, telling stories, counting, drawing, or shared book reading (Britto, 2017b). Importantly, not only parents and close family members can be sources of responsive care and stimulation for young children, but other adults who provide care and stimulation, for example those offering early childhood development (ECD) or early childhood education and care (ECEC) programmes, can add significantly to children's early learning experiences.

Early childhood education and development initiatives aim to promote child development, prevent the occurrence of risks, and reduce negative effects of risks in the early years. Both, ECD and ECEC interventions focus on promoting early cognitive, social-emotional, physical, and mental development. The term Early Childhood Development programmes refers to a variety of interventions with young children from birth until age eight and their families, including health, nutrition, childcare, education, and parent support (Penn, 2004). While services focusing on nutrition, health, social protection and parent support can all be integrated with ECEC services, the main aim of ECEC programmes is to offer environments for young children to promote learning. There is a general consensus that ECEC services need to be holistic and address child learning in all areas – socially, emotionally, physically and cognitively (European Commission, 2014).

International research on the impact of ECEC provision over the last decades drew attention to the benefits of high quality ECEC for children's development, with some of the strongest effects found for the most disadvantaged children. While results of research studies have to be interpreted in, and depend on the context and the different ECEC systems in place in different countries, sufficient commonality in findings support international calls to invest into early childhood education and care. Rigorous research has been carried out in the field, and evidence suggests that early childhood education programmes and interventions can help to provide better foundations for success at school (and subsequently in the workplace) by boosting children's early socio-emotional and self-regulation skills, and by improving early cognitive, language and academic skills. Longitudinal studies that have been carried out into adulthood indicate that these benefits are followed by increased success in employment, social integration, and can lead to reduced criminality (Melhuish et al., 2014).

Based on a human rights perspective and research evidence, the debate on the importance of investing in ECEC for vulnerable children in particular related to benefits to child development and wellbeing, the tackling of inequality, and improvements in social cohesion and integration. Increasingly, the debate about investments into the early years also relates to the reduction of social costs and economic growth for society. Heckman's and colleagues' work was particularly influential in making a financial case for investing in children's early development. They demonstrated early intervention is the key to mitigate the effects of disadvantaged background (Heckman & Masterov, 2007), and that comprehensive early childhood programmes can produce economic returns, which can be higher than investments targeted at young people or adults (Garcia et al., 2016). Benefits were shown to go beyond those children participating in early childhood programmes, but also for their siblings, and even the children of the original participants decades later (Heckman & Karapakula, 2019a, 2019b), and lastly, benefits were also demonstrated to go beyond individual families and children, expending to society at large.

1.2.2 The potential of ECEC in supporting refugee children's development
Much of the research on ECEC benefits has been carried out in high income countries. Nevertheless, positive impacts of early learning programmes on early language, cognition, numeracy, and socio-emotional outcomes have also been found across a range of low and middle impact contexts (Rao et al., 2017), with benefits identified for school readiness and school achievement in primary school (Aboud & Akhter, 2011; Yoshikawa & Kabay, 2015b). Recognising the importance of the family as the most important driver of early child development and wellbeing, interventions to promote development for young children increasingly also support families in providing care and stimulation to their young children. While effectiveness of many intervention approaches still needs to be evaluated in different contexts, there is some evidence that interventions to support parenting can be successful in middle- to low-income countries (Bouchane et al., 2018; Cadima et al., 2017; Yousafzai et al., 2014).

Importantly, benefits do not occur solely based on the provision and access to early childhood education. The quality of ECEC needs to be ensured as well to achieve positive benefits for children's wellbeing and development. Research evidence in non-conflict contexts points to a number of quality characteristics of early years provision as important for enhancing children development and wellbeing, including for example: adult-child interaction that is responsive, affectionate and readily available, well-trained staff who are committed to their work with children, a developmentally appropriate curriculum with educational content, ratios and group sizes that allow staff to interact appropriately with children, supervision that maintains consistency in the quality of care, staff development that ensures continuity, stability and improving quality, and facilities that are safe and sanitarily and accessible to parents. (Melhuish et al., 2014).

In low resource contexts, providing good quality ECEC can be highly challenging, and additional challenges can arise in contexts of conflict, instability, or trauma. Existing childcare and development initiatives that exist in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) are difficult to categories and compare. They vary in their target groups, range of interventions, processes and outcomes, and costs. There are huge variations between local context in regions, countries and target groups, and thus expectations of childhood, caring for children, and support for learning vary, making it more difficult to provide programming guides (Penn, 2004). While there are requirements to meet the minimum standards for quality set out in the International Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE, 2010), there are a number of concerns related to the issue of conceptualising and measuring quality in middle- and low-income countries. How quality is defined, and what constitutes good quality needs to take culture and context into account. On the one hand, and reviewing studies conducted in developing countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, it has been concluded that ECEC interventions which are holistic, intensive, long-lasting, and high quality are effective in promoting

child development (Engle et al., 2007). On the other hand, research carried out in South East Asia has found that that even in programmes which would be considered as low to mediocre quality when using Western quality measurements, quality was found to be positively associated with child development outcomes (Aboud, 2006b; Aboud et al., 2008; M S Swaminathan Research Foundation, 2000; Rao & Sun, 2010). Thus, in low-resource contexts, those quality aspects in ECEC that are effective in promoting child development, might differ to those in higher-resource contexts; tools to evaluate quality will need to be sensitive to such differences (Rao & Sun, 2010).

In refugee contexts, and in response to the needs of young refugee children and their families, definitions of good quality early years provision need to consider the potential protective factors ECEC can have for refugee children in particular: physical protection, psychosocial protection, and cognitive protection. ECEC can provide physical protection, by ensuring broad access to safe, structured places, where children can learn basic knowledge about health and hygiene, where they can receive extra nutrition, and where care and supervision can be provided by staff who can identify special needs and work with parents and caregivers (UNESCO, 2010). ECEC can offer psychosocial protection by providing opportunities for young children to play, to take part in cultural activities, and by supporting social networks in the community. Educational settings can promote a sense of safety and normality in children, whose lives have been disrupted. They can help to re-establish familiar routines, centred around child-rearing activities and care needed for healthy development. For refugee children who have experienced trauma and loss, this psycho-social dimension can be particularly important to help their development and wellbeing (UNESCO, 2010; WHO, 2018a). ECEC can provide cognitive protection, by helping children develop academic skills, and by encouraging them to problem solve, listen, express their opinions, and make their own choices. ECEC should aim to enhance school readiness for children, and by working in partnership with parents, ECEC can also enhance and parents' readiness for the important transition from home to school (UNESCO, 2010).

The most important psychological support for young children is their parents (WHO, 2018a). Refugee Trauma Initiatives put emphasis on supporting mental health of parents and children. Importantly education institutions can play a role in supporting parent wellbeing and parent/caregiver – child relationships. This is particularly relevant, since in times of crisis parents lack resources and can be challenged to respond to all needs of their children. As a result, they may dedicate their energy to focus on the physical needs of their young children, and miss out on opportunities to also provide adequately for their children's social-, emotional- and cognitive development (Triplehorn, 2001; WHO, 2018a). Staff in early education can support parents by attending to their children's needs and development. Importantly, alongside ECEC key emotional support for families, and support for parenting skills can be provided (see for example the Baytna Early Childhood Care programme[2]). The integration of ECEC with parenting support can help to reduce risk factors and enhance protective factors for vulnerable children, especially in emergency contexts, and in complex post-migration environments (Williams, 2012).

With all of those factors relevant to the lives of many refugee families and their children, issues related to access and quality of ECEC need particular attention for this target group. Importantly, decisions on improving access can be related to issues of quality. Rapid expansion in ECEC services in some parts low- and middle- income countries over the last decades have led to concerns that fast expansion of quantity can in turn create a decrease in quality (Rao & Sun, 2010). Most research evidence on barriers to ECEC and quality of ECEC for refugee families comes from higher resource contexts, with research studies predominantly carried out in resettlement countries. Nevertheless, the findings from these studies can be relevant in providing some guidance into those factors which may be important to address by studies in low-resource context too, and they can provide some of

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[2] https://www.refugeetrauma.org/baytna-early-childhood-care

the context in which findings from LMICs can be interpreted and understood. Based on studies carried out mostly in higher resource contexts, this report will therefore provide a short overview of what we know about accessibility and quality of ECEC for refugee children.

1.2.3 Access to ECEC for refugee children

The existing research evidence shows that the well-known barriers to ECEC apply in the refugee context too. However, for refugee families these barriers can be exacerbated, due to the combination of factors that apply for many refugee families. Even where refugee families' right of access to care and education is agreed on (e.g. in resettlement countries), it is often difficult for refugee families to access services in practice; as a result, enrolment rates of refugee children in ECEC programmes are commonly significantly lower than those of non-refugee children (Bove & Sharmahd, 2020; Capps et al., 2004; Firgens & Matthews, 2012; Gross & Ntagengwa, 2016).

Sufficient supply is an issue, and families may have to wait for lengthy periods before places become available (Gross & Ntagengwa, 2016; Lazzari & Vandenbroeck, 2012; Vandekerckhove & Aarssen, 2019). Places offered to families can be too far away (Morantz et al., 2012; Poureslami et al., 2013). Parents might be unaware of existing subsidised childcare options, and the process of applying for subsidies may be too complex or require too much paperwork. Many refugee families face financial hardship, and if ECEC participation relates to additional costs, including fees, and costs for transport, food, or clothes, it can easily become unaffordable. Services may not offer the hours needed, especially for refugee families who may rely on work with irregular hours (Poulter et al., 2018). Families may have little access to information about ECEC services in the area, and application processes can be difficult to navigate, especially for newly arrived families with other language backgrounds (Gross & Ntagengwa, 2016; Lazzari & Vandenbroeck, 2012; Vandekerckhove & Aarssen, 2019). In addition, enrolment processes may require identity papers and birth certificates, a requirement which may turn away families without legal status and who face threats of deportation (Gross & Ntagengwa, 2016; UNESCO, 2010).

Previous experiences and the current life situation of refugee families can add additional barriers to ECEC participation. Families may be highly unsettled and life for them highly stressful. Parents may not always be in the best mental state to plan for their children's ECEC participation (Busch et al., 2018; Mitchel & Ouko, 2012; Poulter et al., 2018). For parents and children who faced traumatic experiences in their home countries or during transit, separation anxieties may be acute (Poulter et al., 2018; Riedel & Lüders, 2016). Concerns around security are often an issue. Parents may have concerns that provisions are not secure (especially for girls), and may worry about how their children will be treated or how they will be integrated (UNESCO, 2010). Parents may also worry about making their own way to the provision, and about having to interact with other people (Poulter et al., 2018). To add to these factors, it may not be custom in refugee families' home countries to place young children in the care of strangers; thus refugee families may opt for family and informal care arrangements instead (Busch et al., 2018; Gross & Ntagengwa, 2016).

For those accessing ECEC, routines in centres and child activities can be unfamiliar and confusing (Hurley et al., 2013; Kirova & Hennig, 2013; Lunneblad, 2017). Families may have differing views towards childcare and childrearing (Poulter et al., 2018), and this can hinder the development of relationships of trust and full participation. Concepts such as the value of physical activities or messy play may not be appreciated, and activities may not seem valuable to parents (Hurley et al., 2013; Tadesse, 2014; Vandenbroeck et al., 2009; Whitmarsh, 2011). Language barriers can add to the cultural dissonance between educators and families (Busch et al., 2018; Szente et al., 2006).

Sufficiency of ECEC provision for refugee children is a major issue in low-resource contexts. The vast majority of refugee families live in lower-resourced countries and regions that can face huge

difficulties in providing early childhood services for the most vulnerable children (Abdelbasit et al., 2019; Reed et al., 2012; Tyrer & Fazel, 2014; UNHCR, 2019b) and do not have the resources to consider equitable access to ECEC (Penn, 2004). Rates of pre-primary aged children enrolled in early/pre-primary education are substantially lower in lower-resourced contexts of the world, with enrolment rates of 23% reported for South Asia, and 30% and 31% for West- and Central Africa, and in Middle East and Southern Africa (Jalbout & Bullard, 2021). An analysis of financing early childhood development and education programmes in LMICs concluded that there is an enormous financing gap between what is currently spent on early years interventions, and what is needed (International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity, 2016). In 2015 it was found that providing a single year of universal quality pre-primary education alone by 2030 would require an annual average investment nearly seven times the current cost estimates (UNESCO, 2015).

Despite the SDGs clearly targeting early child development, and despite the fact that the international debate widely recognises education and schooling as priority needs even during severe crisis, there is criticism that a commitment to support education and learning in early childhood is too often overlooked in humanitarian response plans (Bouchane et al., 2018; Commission of the European Communities, 2008). It has been reported that for many years, less than three per cent of humanitarian funds available for refugees have gone to education (UNESCO, 2017), resulting in a need to prioritise. Usually primary education is put first, followed by secondary education, with early years education commonly neglected. Too often, there is a total lack of ECEC provision for refugees (UNESCO, 2018). Even prior to displacement, many refugee families will have lived in regions and countries without ECEC and pre-primary education systems. Too often, access barriers are experienced by the most marginalised populations (Neuman et al., 2015).

Those childcare and education facilities set up specifically for refugee families in LMICs can face challenges regarding structural features: settings can be improvised and under-resourced, and while serving a group of children with a very mixed age-range they can face a high fluctuation of families (Busch et al., 2018). Limited resources force providers to compromise on offering those conditions that are enablers of good quality interactions and learning experiences – teacher qualifications, adult-child ratios, space and groups sizes, and working conditions for staff (including salaries) (Jalbout & Bullard, 2021). It has been noted that a focus on access to ECEC in low-resource contexts can come at the expense of quality that does not only consider structural features, but also important process elements such as adults facilitating language- and cognitive learning through rich, reciprocal and responsive interactions and content-based teaching (Yoshikawa & Kabay, 2015a).

1.2.4 Quality of ECEC for refugee children

It has been argued that providing good quality ECEC to refugee and migrants can be difficult, even in services considered to be good quality in general (Park et al., 2018). To ensure quality in ECEC for children of refugees, it is important to respond to the specific needs of refugee families and their children, including their need for specific emotional support, and the challenges of providing ECEC to culturally and linguistically diverse groups (Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011; Buchmüller et al., 2018; Waniganayake, 2001). Staff need to address many issues, including emotional difficulties, acculturation problems, language- literacy and basic skill levels, and cultural differences (Lamb, 2020; Murray et al., 2008; Park et al., 2018).

It has been reported that staff in preschools and centres providing early learning programmes often lack knowledge and experience in how to best support the development of refugee children, and work with migrant families, who are often new to the early education system (Clark-Kasimu, 2015; Thomas, 2016), have sometimes unfamiliar cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Hurley et al., 2014; Tadesse et al., 2009), and previously experienced trauma and loss. There is a lack of research and evidence-based knowledge on best practices (especially in early years), leaving teachers not

sufficiently prepared and supported in their work with this target group (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008; Hurley et al., 2011; Moinolnolki & Han, 2017b; Park & Katsiaficas, 2019; Riedel & Lüders, 2016; Rousseau & Guzder, 2008). A recent report, mapping ECEC programmes or serving refugees in low-resource education contexts highlighted widespread interest in play-based learning and noted implementation issues where the idea of learning through play is not fully accepted or well understood (Jalbout & Bullard, 2021). A safe learning environment is a starting point for many of the programmes, and generally multiple domains of learning are targeted, with difference in emphasis across different developmental areas (Jalbout & Bullard, 2021). The last years have seen increased efforts in putting together recommendations and guidelines for ECEC practice with this target group, often emphasising several issues as important to consider when providing refugee ECEC.

Culturally responsive environments and practices
An issue often highlighted is that ECEC services need to acknowledge and respond to the culturally diverse backgrounds of the families they are serving, in providing resources that are culturally relevant, and a curriculum with activities and instructions that are culturally appropriate and responsive. Acknowledging cultural backgrounds and personal histories of families is seen as an essential step in creating inclusive and respectful learning environments that create a sense of community and belonging (Buell et al., 2020) and help educators to address the diversity and heterogeneity of the groups of children and families they are working with (Tyrer & Fazel, 2014), but also to restore refugee families' dignity and value (Foundation House, 2011).

For children's leaning experiences, the 'funds of knowledge' concept is of relevance here. Funds of knowledge practices are about connecting the curriculum and cultural context of the education setting with the child's world at home, in building on the practices, and the knowledge and dispositions children have acquired in their home environments and their cultural communities (González et al., 2005; Moinolnolki & Han, 2017b; Moll et al., 1992). The concept recognises that the funds of knowledge and expertise children bring with them are culturally, socially and cognitively complex, and can be used as valuable resources to create better-scaffolded, rich and relevant learning experiences that recognise prior learning and support concept and skill development. The importance of adults who stimulate children's learning in playful ways that are culturally relevant, and incorporate traditional forms of play has been highlighted, with a focus on free play, guided play and symbolic play (Maulana & Wridt, 2019).

Community and family engagement
In emergency situations in particular, the involvement of all community members is seen as essential (Triplehorn, 2001). Efforts to strengthen links to the community are seen as important mechanisms to ensure trust building between staff in ECEC centres and refugee populations (Nazzal et al., 2014) and for creating culturally responsive environments and practices. Educators may not have the linguistic and cultural expertise needed to best support the diverse families they are serving, or to respond to their physical and psychosocial needs. In liaising with the community, educators can utilize community resources that can support their practices, and learn about the specific experiences, practices and needs of families (Foundation House, 2016; Hurley et al., 2013; Krakouer et al., 2017; Nazzal et al., 2014; Weine, 2011). Community collaborations and engagement can also help to provide opportunities for refuge children and their families to learn about the ECEC setting. Community representatives and multi-cultural education aids can help to share information with families in their community (Foundation House, 2016), and informal information sharing channels within communities can be utilised (Nazzal et al., 2014; Weine, 2011).

Acknowledging and responding to diverse language backgrounds
An important element of families' cultural backgrounds and their home practices is their heritage language. Culturally responsive ECEC approaches have to acknowledge and respond to the

linguistically diverse backgrounds of the families they serve. The concept of bilingual integration (Cerna, 2019) is of particular relevance for working with refugee families. The concept stresses that young children with other language backgrounds should be given maximum attention in their first language. The school language should not replace, but supplement their first language (Moinolnolki & Han, 2017b; Riggs et al., 2014). For young children in particular it has been stressed that recognising and building on the first language linguistic skills of learners is important in supporting children's second language learning. In classrooms, second language learners should not be separated from their native peers, but the integration and the learning of children who are new to the school language need to be planned carefully. Practices that have been identified as helpful are induction and welcome programmes, practices that ensure supportive interactions between refugee children and their native peers, and supplementary programmes that ensure learning in the first language (especially for preschool aged children) as well as the second language. To provide the right level of language input to children, and to facilitate opportunities for children to produce talk at an appropriate level, educators have to have a good understanding of each child's language levels, and therefore language assessment plays an essential role (Loewen, 2004). Language instruction needs to be adapted to multi-lingual classrooms (Poulter et al., 2018; Sugarman & Park, 2017), and educators have to find ways to effectively communicate with children with other language backgrounds (Busch et al., 2018; Hurley et al., 2013), and their parents (Krakouer et al., 2017; Thomas, 2016).

Providing psychosocial and emotional support
ECEC should support children's psychosocial wellbeing, and refugee children may have distinctive needs relating to their experiences of migration, trauma and conflict. It has been stressed that a safe, predictable learning environment with a reliable structure, stable and clear routines and rules can be of particular importance for refugee children in creating a sense of normality and restoring a sense of safety and control (Bouchane et al., 2018; Foundation House, 2011; Hurley et al., 2013; Krakouer et al., 2017; Lunneblad, 2017). To reduce psychological stress in young refugee children, the importance of providing children with opportunities to express and process their emotions through play and art has been highlighted (Foundation House, 2011; Kalkman & Clark, 2017; Lacroix et al., 2007; Rousseau et al., 2009; Szente et al., 2006), together with strategies that need to be employed to teach children about emotions (Hurley et al., 2013; Krakouer et al., 2017; Szente et al., 2006) and develop social-emotional skills such as empathy, impulse-control and anger management (Foundation House, 2011; Szente et al., 2006). Maulana and Wridt (Maulana & Wridt, 2019) use the term of 'restorative play' to describe how caregivers can support play opportunities that can help children to return to normalcy, express their emotions, and find a sense of security. In addition, and to respond to the needs of children who have experienced trauma and conflict, psychosocial support should be integrated in education by offering children interventions which are trauma-informed (Betancourt et al., 2013) and focus on building self-confidence, resilience, emotion-regulation skills, and relationship-building based on trust (Krakouer et al., 2017).

Providing family support
Refugee parents can face multiple stressors which can restrict their caregiving and potentially affect parenting practices and thus child development and wellbeing (Betancourt, McBain, et al., 2015; Bouchane et al., 2018; Sheidow et al., 2014). Services or activities that are designed to help parents in developing or maintaining parenting capacities, and those services that offer additional early learning opportunities and supportive environments to young children are therefore of much relevance in refugee crisis to strengthen refugee children's wellbeing and development. It has been reported that ECEC can be a good context for two-generation approaches which offer childcare and education to preschool-aged children, as well as services that support caregivers' wellbeing, learning and development (Bouchane et al., 2018; Park et al., 2018; Poulter et al., 2018).

Training and support for professionals and services
ECEC centres need to ensure efforts are put in place to build professional knowledge, skills and attitudes of those educators working in refugee contexts by offering training and professional development specific to working with this target group, and by organising coaching, and sufficient opportunities for reflection, team and peer support (Foundation House, 2011; Krakouer et al., 2017; Lunneblad, 2017; Save the Children, 2018; Szente et al., 2006; Vandekerckhove & Aarssen, 2019). The importance of ongoing, school-based support has been highlighted, as well as the establishment of communities of practice (Jalbout & Bullard, 2021). To sufficiently support educators and the refugee families they are working with, specialist and outside support (e.g. interpreters, multi-cultural aids, professionals from the local mental health centre) may be needed (Hurley et al., 2011; Krakouer et al., 2017). Research studies have highlighted the importance of transdisciplinary collaboration to offer comprehensive services to refugee children and their families (UNESCO, 2010). Close collaboration between ECEC centres and with other service providers need to be introduced to help families access additional support (e.g. health care, mental health, adult education). These collaborations can provide a system for system for detecting additional needs and referring families through partnerships, or though integrating additional services directly with ECEC services (e.g. provision of nutrition programmes, integrated healthcare, two-generation programmes, mental health interventions) (Park et al., 2018; Park & Katsiaficas, 2019).

To summarise, the following efforts and structural elements will be of particular importance for ECEC services serving refugee families:

- Efforts to address participation barriers related to transport, costs, literacy- and language skills, unfamiliarity, and the legal status of refugees
- Efforts to respond appropriately and adapt pedagogical practices to the cultural and linguistic diversity of the target groups
- Efforts to offer play-based opportunities for learning
- Efforts to offer psychosocial and emotional support to refugee children
- Efforts to provide support not only to children, but also their caregivers
- Efforts to provide safe, child-friendly spaces and a positive climate of tolerance and respect
- Structures that support strong family school partnerships and close links with the community
- Comprehensive service structure that addresses education as well as nutrition, health and mental health needs
- Structures that ensure sufficient and appropriate training and support for staff

2 Review of the research evidence on impacts and benefits, access, and quality of ECEC for refugee children in LMICs

2.1 Aims

Almost everything that we know about providing ECEC for refugee children is based on research studies in the resettlement context, carried out in high income countries, which are united by the fact that they have common cultural and historical ties to Western Europe; English is the primary language in most of them.

This review sets out to provide an overview of evidence on the benefits and impact of ECEC interventions for refugee children at preschool age in LMICs, and to evaluate what we know about accessibility and quality of ECEC programmes for refugee children in LMICs and what strategies are used to support young children's development and wellbeing in those contexts. Research questions are: What do we know (what research evidence exists) about
- associations between ECEC participation and child outcomes, and the benefits of ECEC for young refugee children in LMICs?
- facilitators and barriers to participation in ECEC for young refugee children in LMICs?
- the quality of ECEC for young refugee children in LMICs and the strategies that are put into place to support their development and wellbeing?

2.2 Methodology

The literature search followed three routes.

Academic literature search: Child Development & Adolescent Studies (EBSCO), ProQuest Education Collection (including ERIC and Education Database), ProQuest Social Science Database, ProQuest Dissertation and Thesis Global, PsychNET (PsychINFO), Web of Science searches for publications from 1995 onwards. Use of keywords refugee, forcibly displaced, forced migration, forced migrant, asylum-seeker, and transient, to constrain the search to the population of interest. Use of keywords early child/childhood-education/care/centre/provision/programme/intervention/development/learning/pre-primary, preschool, childcare, day care, to constrain the search to the interventions of interest. A series of trial searchers was completed using a string of search terms.

Grey literature search: Hand searches on websites of the most relevant organisations funding or providing ECEC in refugee contexts, and research institutions with a focus on education and refugee contexts were used to identify relevant grey literature. These searches were carried out on 46 different websites. Searching of bibliographies of identified grey literature (snowballing).

Identification through key experts and organisations: Identification of experts working for those organisations that provide or fund ECEC in refugee contexts, and those in research institutions with a focus on education and refugee contexts. Experts in 19 organisations were contacted with a request to help identify further relevant publications in the academic- and grey literature.

Identified documents were added to an electronic data base (Mendeley), and duplicates were removed. A screening strategy was followed, including screening by title, screening by abstract, first

screening by inclusion criteria (intervention-, age-, country-, data-, and language criteria); second screening by inclusion criteria (study characteristics).

Inclusion criteria were defined. Documents were included if they addressed early childhood education and care programmes for preschool aged refugee children from the age of three until the start of primary school, if ECEC was delivered in LMICs currently included on the OECDs' Development Assistance Committee (DAC) list of countries eligible to receive official development assistance (ODA), if the study was carried out in or after 1995, if the document was published in English, and if the study met defined characteristics (primary study, stating research questions and/or aims related to the aims of the review, specification of research design/data collection tools and other methods, presentation of sample and selection/recruitment).

To respond to research question on associations between ECEC participation and child outcomes, and the benefits of ECEC, studies had to meet the following criteria to be included:

> Quantitative research studies which specifically addressed *research questions related to the benefits of ECEC participation*, and therefore collected and analysed empirical data to test for associations between measures of ECEC participation and measures of child outcomes, and to test for differences in outcomes between children attending ECEC and those not/not yet attending. This includes quasi-experimental/causal-comparative designs, and experimental research/RCTs. Rigorous research studies in the research area identified for this review are very rarer however, and with the aim in mind to report on the best evidence available, it was decided to also report on studies that do not include a comparison group; e.g. correlational studies and studies that assessed children's pre- and post-intervention outcomes. Child outcomes across all developmental domains will be included (numeracy and problem-solving skills, early language and literacy skills, physical development and motor skills, socio-emotional skills, executive functioning).

> Qualitative research studies which specifically addressed *research questions/aims related to the benefits of ECEC participation for child wellbeing and development*, that collected evidence from children, parents, ECEC staff or other key informants through direct observations, focus group discussions, participatory feedback sessions, in-depth interviews, semi-structured and structured interviews, surveys or questionnaires.

> It was also decided to include studies on interventions that evaluate impacts of interventions which aim to improve the quality of ECEC programmes (professional development programmes for ECEC staff).

To respond to research questions 2 and 3 on facilitators and barriers to participation in ECEC, and ECEC quality, studies had to meet the following criteria to be included:

> Research studies which specifically addressed *research questions related to ECEC accessibility and quality of ECEC for refugee children*, and therefore collected and analysed empirical data to describe facilitators or barriers to ECEC participation, quality aspects of ECEC programmes and the strategies used to support young children's development and wellbeing. This includes descriptive qualitative and quantitative studies collecting evidence from children, parents, ECEC staff or other key informants through direct observations, focus group discussions, participatory feedback sessions, in-depth interviews, semi-structured and structured interviews, surveys or questionnaires. Included are also studies which aim to monitor the implementation of an ECEC programme/process evaluations and identify challenges of successful implementation.

Excluded were case study designs where children, parents or ECEC staff are examined only at the individual level, and no findings are presented for a group as a whole, and studies of classroom quality based on single classrooms.

For search protocol example, the full list of websites searched for grey literature, the list of organisations that were contacted, and the full definition of inclusion criteria, see Appendix.
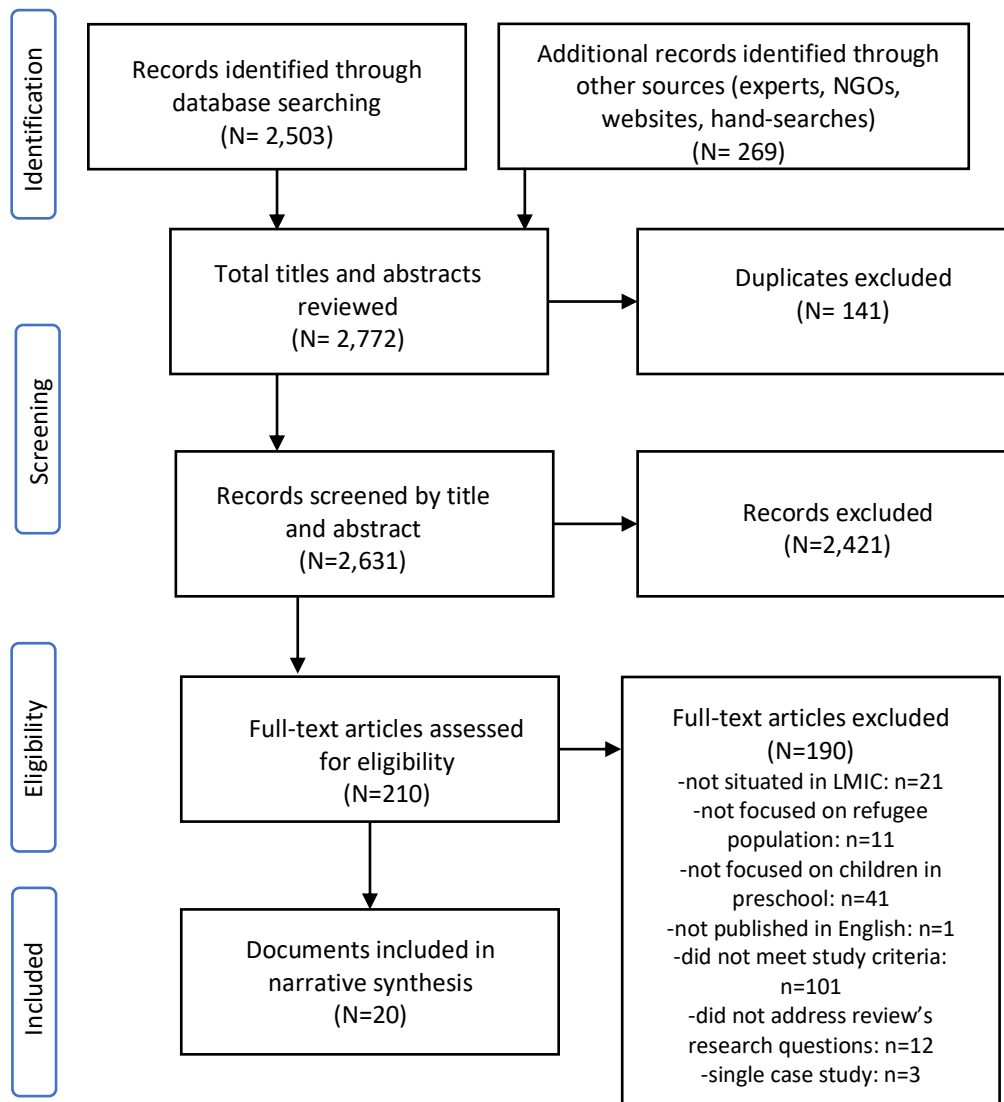

Figure 1: Flowchart of study selection.

2.3 Results

Study selection process
To search for scientific research papers, electronic databases were searched on 13 July 2020. 2,474 documents were identified and added to a Mendeley database. Until January 2021, all electronic databases were checked for new publications. During 2021, and following some ad-hoc searches, 29 publications were added for review (n=2,503). From 22-31 July 2020, websites of relevant NGOs (including online databases) were searched, and titles and abstracts were screened

for relevant content. During this first website search and the reviewing of documents, names of further organisations and programmes of interests were noted. Further ad hoc searches followed (taking place between 10-21 August). 222 documents were added for review. During spring and summer 2021, through the support from experts and key organisations 47 additional documents were identified to be reviewed. Following the removal of duplicates, and the screening of abstracts and titles (and keyword searches for documents without abstracts), 210 full-text documents were identified to be screened for eligibility.

Screening of 210 full-text documents excluded 190 documents for the following reasons: not situated in LMIC (n=21), not focused on refugee population (n=11), not focused on preschool aged children/the provision of ECEC (n=41), not published in English (n=1), study criteria not met (n=101), not addressing research questions related to the review's aims (n=12), single case studies (n=3). 20 documents were identified for inclusion.

2.3.1 Research evidence on associations between ECEC participation and child outcomes, and the benefits of ECEC for children's development and wellbeing

16 documents were identified to meet inclusion criteria and address research aims related to investigating the benefits of ECEC on child outcomes. Identified studies were published between 2013-2021. Except for five studies which included a focus on resettlement communities in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, and Uganda (Akar et al., 2017; Erdemir, 2021b, 2021a, 2021c; Smith, 2015), all studies were carried out in refugee camps. Refugee camps were located in Thailand, Chad, Uganda, Lebanon, Jordan, Tanzania and Bangladesh, and refugee families were originally from Myanmar, Sudan, the Republic of Burundi, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Syria. Children in the studies were all at preschool age. ECEC programmes in the studies were either centre-based (Akar et al., 2017; Dalrymple, 2019; Erdemir, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c; Shah, 2016, 2020; Smith, 2015; Tanaka, 2013; Tobin et al., 2015; UNICEF, 2018) or home-based (iAct, 2015; Jesuit Refugee Service/iAct, 2019a, 2019b; Laxton et al., 2021; VSO Bangladesh, 2019).

Three studies compared differences in outcomes between children in two groups: children attending and not attending an ECEC programme (Shah, 2016, 2020); children who attended an ECEC programme for longer versus those who had attended for a year or less (Tanaka, 2013), and children experiencing different ECEC curricula (Tobin et al., 2015). Only one of those studies collected information on child outcomes at baseline and follow-up. Three studies compared outcomes between baseline and follow-up time-points within one group of children attending ECEC (iAct, 2015; Jesuit Refugee Service/iAct, 2019a, 2019b; UNICEF, 2018). For the evaluation of Little Ripples, a comparison group had been planned at first, but for ethical reasons the design had to be changed with the planned comparison group also being offered the intervention. In the UNICEF study, data was collected at three time-points, however the majority of participants was only interviewed at one of these time-points, and results therefore only reflect group-level changes, rather than individual-level changes. One study stood out in that it included a larger sample size, compared outcomes between children in four groups – refugee and local children attending and not attending an ECEC (summer) programme, collected data from children, and compared child outcomes pre- and post-intervention (Erdemir, 2021a).

Overall, quantitative studies faced significant challenges which affected their methodological rigour. Studies reported high attrition (iAct, 2015; Jesuit Refugee Service/iAct, 2019a, 2019b; UNICEF, 2018), difficulties with collecting data from the same research participants over several timepoints (Jesuit Refugee Service/iAct, 2019a), and relatively small sample sizes with limited statistical power to detect differences (Tobin et al., 2015). Studies on the benefits of ECEC attendance commonly relied on data collection at one time-point only or had to go ahead without a comparison or control group. Adding up these challenges, longitudinal research in this field – while much needed – is extremely

difficult to carry out. Results on the benefits of ECEC attendance therefore mainly reflect the short-term effects of interventions, and not whether gains can be maintained longer-term (Erdemir, 2021a).

While data for child/family demographic variables was collected for some studies, differences in those variables were not controlled for during statistical analysis. There was uncertainty about the age of the participating children in one study (Tobin et al., 2015). The majority of instruments used were developed for the purpose of each particular study. Evaluation outcomes drew heavily from reported data provided by educators and parents, some studies however assessed children directly (Erdemir, 2021a; iAct, 2015; Jesuit Refugee Service/iAct, 2019a, 2019b; Shah, 2020); two of those reported on difficulties in assessing children quantitatively. Experiences with child assessments showed that children were unused to 'testing' situations and did not respond well to unfamiliar researchers assessing them. More time than estimated was needed to carry out child assessments, and much flexibility to accommodate the daily schedule and activities critical to families and children living in low-resource contexts (Jesuit Refugee Service/iAct, 2019a; Mbidde & Oguniyi, 2019).

Nevertheless, most studies in this review included measures which focused on a range of different areas of children's learning and development to provide a holistic picture. All studies captured aspects of children's socio-emotional development, and many also included language/literacy and numeracy outcomes (Erdemir, 2021a), as well as measures on health (iAct, 2015; Jesuit Refugee Service/iAct, 2019a, 2019b; UNICEF, 2018) or physical/motor development (Laxton et al., 2021; Shah, 2020; VSO Bangladesh, 2019). Yet, the lack of appropriate assessment tools was commented on (VSO Bangladesh, 2019), and struggles to develop indicators to measure children's development that are clearly rooted on the cultural context (Shah, 2020), in particular in relation to children's social and emotional development, and their self-regulation (Akar et al., 2017; Shah, 2020). Many of the studies stated that more work remains to be done to develop robust and culturally appropriate assessments procedures. Importantly. the IDELA assessment tool (Pisani et al., 2018) had been used by one of the studies identified for this review (Mbidde & Oguniyi, 2019), and was perceived as a reliable, valued and accessible instrument, suitable to monitoring refugee children's changes in development. The IDELA tool has been developed specifically to be a holistic, rigorous, open sources instrument to create evidence to promote best practice, inclusion and equity in ECEC. It was developed to be adapted and implemented in different income-, national-, and cultural contexts, and has been used for programme evaluations 76 countries to date – many of those LMICs. It has the promise to be extremely valuable as a research tool in lower-resource refugee contexts, and it will be interesting to see its adaptations and use for evaluations in these contexts in the future. A study is currently underway to investigate the impact of ECEC on the development of refugee children in Malaysia and first experiences in using this tool are promising[3].

Importantly, approximately 50% of the studies identified for this review employed qualitative methods to address questions related to the benefits of ECEC participation (Akar et al., 2017; Erdemir, 2021b, 2021c; Smith, 2015; UNICEF, 2018) and some of them did so in addition to employing quantitative measures and analysis (Dalrymple, 2019; Laxton et al., 2021; Shah, 2020; VSO Bangladesh, 2019). These studies demonstrated how information could be collected longitudinally over several time points (e.g. UNICEF, 2018), and how the use of focus group discussions, interviews and observations can lead to very rich information (documented for example through photographs and videos). This included direct accounts of young children themselves, used to explore the subjective experiences of those participating in ECEC (Akar et al., 2017; Dalrymple, 2019; Erdemir, 2021b). It also included rich information of practitioners in ECEC and parents and

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[3] See, https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/projects/early-childhood-education-building-inclusive-equitable-refugee-children-framework-action/

caregivers, used to elicit complex associations driving and enforcing changes in children, practitioners and parents (e.g. Erdemir, 2021c).

Findings of these studies helped to elicit teacher training needs (Erdemir, 2021b; Laxton et al., 2021; UNICEF, 2018; VSO Bangladesh, 2019), demonstrated the importance of the involvement of the community as drivers and supporters of change (Laxton et al., 2021; UNICEF, 2018; VSO Bangladesh, 2019), and showed that models developed for early childhood development can be adapted for a humanitarian context (Shah, 2020). Across several qualitative studies (implemented in very different contexts) an important finding that emerged was that children take their newly learned skills out into their home environment and into the community, and that changes in children's skills and development can also benefit their interactions outside school, and also lead to changes in parental beliefs and behaviour (Akar et al., 2017; Dalrymple, 2019; Erdemir, 2021b, 2021c; Smith, 2015).

While limitations to the rigour of the existing research need to be acknowledged, findings of those studies that were identified for this review all point in the direction of benefits of ECEC for children's wellbeing and their developmental outcomes. In line with the broad curriculum offered by implemented ECEC programmes, most studies reported on positive changes on a broad range of child outcomes. Importantly, the most rigorous study by Erdemir demonstrated the effectiveness of a programme for vulnerable populations that is highly structured, and has a holistic and skill-based curriculum, that includes culturally and linguistically responsive practices and a learning through play approach (Erdemir, 2021a).

2.3.2 Research evidence on facilitators and barriers to participation in ECEC

Three documents were identified to meet inclusion criteria and address research aims related to investigating facilitators and barriers to ECEC participation. Identified studies were published between 2019-2020 and were carried out in refugee camps and resettlement communities in Jordan (RTI International, 2020), Turkey (Yalçın & Simsar, 2020) and Bangladesh (VSO Bangladesh, 2019) with Syrian families and Rohingya families from Myanmar. Families had children at preschool age. ECEC programmes in the studies were either centre-based (RTI International, 2020; Yalçın & Simsar, 2020) or home-based (VSO Bangladesh, 2019). The three studies were qualitative, and information was collected through interviews and focus group discussions with stakeholders, as well as field visits. While the main research aims focused on successful programme implementation (RTI International, 2020; VSO Bangladesh, 2019) or transition to ECEC (Yalçın & Simsar, 2020), all three studies also asked questions about participation and access.

Those three studies identified to address questions related to access and participation confirmed some of the barriers mentioned in the introductory broad literature review. One study on argued that the characteristics of home-based provision supported participation in removing many of the common barriers: accessibility, availability of space, cultural- and language barriers, security concerns, and issues around staffing (VSO Bangladesh, 2019). Sufficiency of supply and bureaucracy were identified (RTI International, 2020), and so were cultural and language-barriers, and negative beliefs about refugee populations (Yalçın & Simsar, 2020). Barriers that were identified by the broad literature review but were not mentioned by those studies in LMICs, included costs for parents and fit with parent needs (Poulter et al., 2018), knowledge on availability and access to ECEC programmes (Gross & Ntagengwa, 2016; Lazzari & Vandenbroeck, 2012; Vandekerckhove & Aarssen, 2019), or how parents previous experiences and current life situation (Busch et al., 2018; Mitchel & Ouko, 2012; Poulter et al., 2018) and their emotional and mental state could prevent parents from enrolling their children in ECEC programmes (Poulter et al., 2018; Riedel & Lüders, 2016). To conclude, research evidence on barriers and facilitators to refugee ECEC in LMICs is extremely limited. Unless barriers are identified and systematically addressed, there is a risk that they will remain in the future (RTI International, 2020)

2.3.3 Research evidence on the quality of ECEC

Our systematic search for literature from LMICs identified six documents that addressed research aims related to investigating the quality of ECEC. Identified studies were published between 2017-2019 and were carried out in refugee camps and resettlement communities in Bangladesh, Tanzania, Uganda, Jordan and Lebanon, with refugee families from Myanmar, Burundi, Sudan and Syria. Families had children at preschool age. ECEC programmes in the studies were mostly centre-based (Akar, 2019; Akar et al., 2017; Dalrymple, 2019; Mbidde & Oguniyi, 2019; UNICEF, 2018); one programme was home-based (VSO Bangladesh, 2019). Studies often used mixed methods, but the main emphasis was on qualitative data collection. Information was collected through survey questions, interviews and focus group discussions with ECEC staff and parents (and sometimes children); importantly most studies also included observation field notes to gather information on quality (Akar, 2019; Akar et al., 2017; Mbidde & Oguniyi, 2019; UNICEF, 2018; VSO Bangladesh, 2019). Survey questions, and guides for interviews, focus groups and observations were developed for the context and purpose of each study.

The main research aims focused on exploring implementation, perceived quality, and resources and approaches to support ECEC classroom quality (including educator training). Data collection and analysis commonly focused on the physical and social environment, and how safe, supportive and stimulating it was (Akar et al., 2017; Dalrymple, 2019; Mbidde & Oguniyi, 2019; UNICEF, 2018), approaches to learning and teaching (child-centred approaches, the participation of children in learning activities, and the balancing between instruction, guided play and recreation) (Akar, 2019; Akar et al., 2017; Mbidde & Oguniyi, 2019; UNICEF, 2018; VSO Bangladesh, 2019). Attention was also given to collecting information on parent participation and involvement (Akar, 2019; Akar et al., 2017; UNICEF, 2018) and staff training experiences (Dalrymple, 2019; UNICEF, 2018; VSO Bangladesh, 2019). An explicit focus on culturally responsive environments was rare (UNICEF, 2018).

Our review of studies on the quality of refugee ECEC in LMICs confirmed that providing good quality ECEC in refugee contexts can be highly challenging. Except for those studies carried out in Jordan and Lebanon (Akar, 2019; Akar et al., 2017), lack of spaces and resources was an important theme throughout, including lack of spaces for early learning, lack of caregivers and sufficient training and incentives, lack of toys and resources for teaching and learning (Akar et al., 2017; Dalrymple, 2019; UNICEF, 2018; VSO Bangladesh, 2019), and lack of access to clean water, food and nutrition (UNICEF, 2018). Studies commented on the fact that teaching was focusing on preparation for school, and teacher instruction (Akar et al., 2017; UNICEF, 2018) and identified a need for training on play-based approaches to learning (Mbidde & Oguniyi, 2019; UNICEF, 2018). This confirms challenges described in reports on the provision of education specifically for refugee families in LMICs (Jalbout & Bullard, 2021; Yoshikawa & Kabay, 2015a), but extends such findings to early education.

Those approaches and strategies that were identified as successful by those studies included in our review matched well with many of the indictors that were listed in the broader literature on refugee ECEC – mostly studies carried out in higher income and resettlement contexts. Play-based opportunities for learning were identified as strengths of provision in many of the studies (Akar, 2019; Akar et al., 2017; Mbidde & Oguniyi, 2019; UNICEF, 2018), and a wider focus on basic needs (Akar, 2019), as well as a focus on learning of literacy and numeracy skills were identified as characteristics of good practice (Akar et al., 2017; Mbidde & Oguniyi, 2019). The importance of providing stability, safety, normality and support for social and emotional learning were emphasised (Akar, 2019; Akar et al., 2017; Dalrymple, 2019). The importance of community and family engagement was highlighted (Akar, 2019; VSO Bangladesh, 2019), and a focus on parent attitudes towards learning and parent-school partnerships were identified to facilitate the success of an ECEC programme (Akar et al., 2017; Dalrymple, 2019; UNICEF, 2018). The issue of culturally responsive

environment and practices was picked up in one study that described the local adaptation and production of toys and training that on how to use toys and learning materials to support learning (UNICEF, 2018). Finally studies highlighted the importance of staff preparation, and training on play-based approaches (Mbidde & Oguniyi, 2019; UNICEF, 2018) and described the success of educator training efforts (Dalrymple, 2019; VSO Bangladesh, 2019).

These results are hugely valuable to support our learning about the characteristics of ECEC provision that are important to support refugee children and families in lower-resource contexts. The issue of quality measurements however deserves some further consideration. Two of the studies included in the review explicitly refer to attempts to make data collection and report on observations as uniform as possible across sites to allow comparisons. The UNICEF study (UNICEF, 2018) reports on an observation tool that aligns items intentionally with observation tools designed by the American Institutes for Research to rate and describe the quality and safety of the learning environment, caregiver approaches to teaching and their interactions with children, and children's use of learning materials (here ECD kit materials), types of play experiences, and play behaviour. In addition to interview and focus group guides for qualitative data collection, observation forms were developed that asked researchers to rate 37 items on a 4-point rating scale, and programme manager questionnaires were developed that asked programme managers to rate the quality of physical settings, access to learning resources, access to WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene), caregiver capacity, and parent engagement on a score from 1-10. The study by Mbidde and Oguniyi (Mbidde & Oguniyi, 2019) uses a 'school learning environment assessment tool' to assess the physical environment of ECD centres. Other studies report on questions and guides that were developed for the purpose of the study, but do not explain if they were developed in reference to previous research and research instruments on the quality of ECEC.

It has been argued that a focus on offering access to ECEC in such low-resource contexts can come at the expense of quality, not only in terms of structural features, but important process elements (Yoshikawa & Kabay, 2015a). Results from our review suggest that the need for the use of quality (observation) tools, which focus on process quality of ECEC in refugee low-resource contexts, and research that assesses the validity and need for adaption of those rigorous quality assessment tools that exist in the field of ECEC. Some tools have been developed for use in LMICs, including for example the IDELA classroom environment tool (Save the Children, 2021), or the Teacher Instructional Practices and Process System (TIPPS) (Wolf et al., 2018). Acknowledging the importance of high-quality interactions that support children's thinking and emotional wellbeing, the Sustained Shared Thinking and Emotional Wellbeing (SSTEW) scale was developed in 2015 to assess quality in ECEC (Siraj et al., 2015). Its potential to capture environmental aspects relevant for fostering children's development in low-resource refugee contexts needs to be assessed. Importantly, some other rigorous quality assessment tools that have been developed in high income countries have been adapted to assess programme quality in low-resources context – for example the adaptation of the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) for use in Bangladesh (Aboud, 2006a; Moore et al., 2008), Cambodia (Rao & Pearson, 2007), and India (Isley, 2000). Further research needs to assess the validity and need for adaptation of such instruments for refugee contexts in particular.

2.4 Conclusions

In low-resource contexts and in situations of crisis, many circumstances can prevent young children from experiencing the nurturing environment they need to thrive and develop. There is no question that additional support for their development and wellbeing is needed in those contexts. All children, but vulnerable children at young age in particular need responsive care and opportunities for learning. The ECEC sector has an important role to play in providing young children with essential

early learning and caregiving experiences. For refugee children, ECEC can offer physiological, psychological, and cognitive protection (UNESCO, 2010).

Yet the provision of ECEC in humanitarian contexts is often extremely limited, and the regions with the vast majority of refugee families can face huge difficulties in providing ECEC services for the most vulnerable children. Those childcare and education facilities set up specifically for refugee families in LMICs can face challenges regarding structural features, and a focus on access to ECEC on low-resource contexts can come at the expense of quality that does not only consider structural features, but also important process elements. Almost everything that we know about providing early education for refugee children is based on research studies in the resettlement context, carried out in high income countries, which are united by the fact that they have common cultural and historical ties to Western Europe; English is the primary language in most of them.

Here, we systematically reviewed the literature to collect evidence about ECEC programmes for refugee children in low- and middle- income countries (LMICs), by focusing on barriers and challenges to participation, ECEC quality and strategies that respond to refugee contexts and populations, and the benefits of ECEC for refugee children's development and wellbeing. Results of our systematic search clearly showed how scarce the research evidence in this field is. Despite the many challenges research in this context faces, and (relatedly) limitations in the strength of the research evidence obtained, findings of those studies that were identified for this review all point in the direction of benefits of ECEC for children's wellbeing and their developmental outcomes.

Findings indicated that ECEC can provide safe and engaging spaces that provide children with opportunities for recovery and learning. Training programmes can increase educators' and caregivers' understanding of pedagogy and teaching and learning, and thus improve their practice. In line with the broad curriculum offered by implemented ECEC programmes, most studies reported positive changes on a broad range of child outcomes. Across the different studies, improvements were reported for children's early cognitive, literacy and numeracy skills, their language and communication, their physical/motor skills, their hygiene practices, and their behaviour with improvement in their social competence and emotional development. An important finding that emerges from qualitative studies is that children can take their newly learned skills out into their home environment and into the community, and that changes in children's skills and development can also benefit their interactions outside school, for example leading to changes in parental beliefs and behaviour.

Our review confirmed that resources for providing ECEC can be extremely limited, and that providing good quality ECEC to refugee families in low-resource contexts can be highly challenging. Lack of spaces and resources was a theme throughout. Studies on ECEC provision in refugee camps described lack of spaces for early learning, lack of caregivers, training and incentives, lack of toys and resources for learning, and lack of access to clean water and nutrition. An important finding was that the characteristics of home-based provision were found to support participation in removing many of the common barriers: accessibility, availability of space, cultural- and language barriers, security concerns, and issues around staffing.

Studies in our review also identified and described successful approaches and strategies that were found to support the development and wellbeing of refugee children. Play-based opportunities for learning were identified as strengths of provision in many of the studies, and a wider focus on basic needs, as well as a focus on learning of literacy and numeracy skills were identified as characteristics of good practice. The importance of providing stability, safety, normality and support for social and emotional learning were emphasised. Studies described the implementation of practices to support community and family engagement and culturally practices. Finally, studies highlighted the importance of staff preparation, and training on play-based approaches and described the success of

educator training efforts. Many of those promising approaches matched well with indicators that are mostly derived from work in higher income and resettlement contexts and describe what is important to the provision of good quality ECEC for refugee children.

Many of those promising approaches matched well with indicators that are mostly derived from work in higher income and resettlement contexts. They are of immense value in identifying what can be effective, and in describing how successful strategies can be implemented in ECEC to support refugee children and families in lower resource contexts.

To conclude, the findings of this review add to what we know about the benefits of ECEC, barriers to participation and ECEC quality for young refugee children. Importantly the focus here is on evidence which stems from lower resource contexts and refugee families living LMICs that border families' countries of origin rather than resettlement contexts in high income countries. Research in this field clearly faces significant challenges that impact on the depth and breadth of information that can be collected. Nevertheless, available studies show that these challenges can be addressed: assessing children over time and collecting detailed and meaningful information from many stakeholders can be achieved; the research field is developing, and design and implementation improving. Importantly, however it has to be acknowledged that high quality research in low-resource- and unstable contexts requires additional time and funding, and researchers emphasise the need for time to establish relationships of trust with children, families and communities, which allows trustful relationships, and also enables refugee community members to support data collection – for example ongoing monitoring of child development and learning (Akar, 2019; Akar et al., 2017; Jesuit Refugee Service/iAct, 2019a). These are important thoughts for further development which will help to extend the current evidence-base on the potential of ECEC for facilitating the wellbeing and development of young refugee children living in LMICs.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Summary tables of identified studies

Table 1: Summary table of identified studies

Item No	Author/s and Year	Study site, Population	Targeted age group Sample (including selection criteria) Participants	Type of ECEC provision	Research Aims Study design and details (including measurement points and groups)
1	Akar. B. (2019)	Jordan and Lebanon Syrian refugee children	Provision of ECEC to preschool-aged children Purposeful and opportunistic sampling 4 formal schools in Jordan, 7 formal schools in Lebanon and 7 non-formal centres in Lebanon	Regional Holistic Education Programme (RHEP), designed and launched by Caritas Austria in 2015 in Lebanon and Jordan. Half-day programmes provided either in schools (mostly during afternoons) or in NGO-supported ECEC centres.	(ECEC quality) To explore the approaches and experiences of caregivers in providing vulnerable preschool-age children an environment for healthy development and growth at home and school. Qualitative study (including document analysis, interviews and observations).
2	Akar, B., Amr, M., & Chen, A. (2017)	Jordan and Lebanon Syrian refugee children	Preschool aged children attending schools and ECEC centres 3 schools and 3 NGO centres, representatives from 8 NGOs and the Jordan government, 2 academics in the field of ECD	ECEC programmes provided by NGOs for Syrian refugee children and vulnerable children from host communities, either in schools during afternoons, or in NGO-supported ECEC centres. Aims: preparation to primary school with academic content (literacy, numeracy, science) and focus on behaviour, including health and hygiene and positive social behaviour.	(ECEC benefits) To measure programme outcomes and indicators of successful ECEC for Syrian refugee children. (ECEC quality) To highlight the key variables that have either hindered or helped in achieving the program outcomes. Qualitative study (including document analysis, observations, and interviews)
3	Dalrymple, K. (2019)	Refugee camps in Tanzania (Nduta and Mtendeli) Burundian refugee children	Preschool aged children attending an ECEC programme Children participating in the programme, teachers who completed training, & random selection of parents 5-year old children participating in the programme (n=70) 36 teachers who had received training	Plan International Tanzania's Child Friendly Schools (CFS) programme; delivered by educators trained by iACT in Little Ripples teacher training. Focusing on play-based learning, positive behaviour management, emotional literacy, creating daily routines, and mindfulness exercises), and provided with iACT kits/boxes with teaching and learning materials.	(ECEC benefits) To evaluate progress and effects of the programme on children and teachers. (ECEC Quality) To evaluate perceived quality. Quantitative and qualitative data and analysis (including structured survey questionnaires with parents and educators, and focus group discussions with educators, parents, and children).

			38 parents of children participating in programme		
4	Erdemir. E. (2021a)	Vulnerable communities in Turkey, south-eastern Anatolia region Syrian refugee and local children	5–6-year-old-children participating in a summer preschool intervention programme (no previous preschool enrolment to ECEC, mother tongue different to school language) All children participating in the programme (n=711) n/intervention = 358 (190 refugee children, 168 local children) n/control group=353 (183 refugee children, 170 local children)	Summer Preschool Programme, developed as a contextually sensitive early intervention model to promote developmental wellbeing and school readiness of children from refugee and poverty-backgrounds by supporting cognitive-, language, and socio-emotional development. The PEP curriculum (see above), a holistic skill-based preschool education curriculum, implemented with 2620 children for 10 weeks at 140 classrooms.	(ECEC benefits) To evaluate the effects of the Summer Preschool Programme on Syrian refugee and local children's development in seven areas, to evaluate progress of refugee and local children in the in the intervention and comparison group. Pre-test/post-test quasi-experimental design with intervention and comparison group, each including refugee and local children.	
5	Erdemir, E. (2021b)	Resettlement community in Istanbul/Turkey Syrian refugee children	5-6-year-old children participating in a summer preschool programme All children who completed the programme (n=36)	see above	(ECEC benefits) To explore the subjective perspectives of children's experiences – including those of attending the preschool intervention program. One of the research aims was to explore how children perceived their participation experiences in the ECEC intervention program regarding its effects and meanings in their lives. Qualitative interview study with children Analysis: inductive approach, followed up by deductive coding to identify themes	
6	Erdemir, E. (2021c)	Resettlement community in Istanbul/Turkey Syrian refugee children and their mothers	5-6-year-old children participating in a summer preschool programme Mothers of 128 children who completed the programme, if they agreed to participate and fulfilled criteria to ensure variation in the data (n=32)	Preschool Education Program (PEP): school-based accelerated summer preschool education intervention for 5-to-6-year-old Syrian refugee children who have not attended ECEC before, and came from impoverished households, to facilitate transition to school. 9-week programme (5 days per week/6 hours per day). Aims to help children acquire essential skills in areas of cognitive- and language, socio-emotional- and motor-development, and self-care; and thus increase school readiness.	(ECEC benefits) To generate an explanatory theory of how refugee children's participation in early interventions may lead to changes in children which elicit changes in parental child-rearing practices and child concepts. Qualitative interview study with mothers Grounded theory	

7	iAct (2015)	Refugee camps in Eastern Chad (Goz Amer and Djabal) refugee children from Dafur, Sudan	3–5-year-old children participating in a home-based ECEC programme Children registered in the programme (n=134) and their caregivers	Little Ripples (LR) is iACT's comprehensive early childhood education program for 3–5-year-olds. Addressing social-emotional, cognitive, and physical development. In this study implemented in home-based settings (Little Ripples Ponds).	(ECEC benefits) To identify improvements in children's cognitive-, social-emotional development, and physical health. Longitudinal study, assessing change from baseline assessment to follow-up one year later within one group of children with ECEC attendance.
8-9	Jesuit Refugee Service & iACT (2019a/b).	Refugee camps Kounoungou and Mile in eastern Chad Refugee children from Dafur, Sudan	3–5-year-old children participating in a home-based ECEC programme Convenience sample of those children attending six newly built Little Ripples Ponds Children attending the programme (n=117) and their caregivers	See above	(ECEC benefits) To identify improvements in children's cognitive-, social-emotional development, and physical health. Longitudinal study assessing change from baseline assessment to follow-up one year later within one group of children with ECEC attendance.
10	Mbidde, E. & Oguniyoi , A. (2019)	Settlements and communities in Adjumani district, Northern Uganda Refugees and host communities in Agojo, Pagirinya, Mungula, Maaji and Adjumani town council	Children at preschool age attending 6 ECD centres targeted by the project 60 children per centre randomly selected (n=337) 5 educators per centre, purposefully selected (n=30) district education officials, purposefully selected (n=3)	Right to Play implemented the 'Childs Play-Strengthening Early Childhood Development in Education in Northern Uganda' project with the aim of improving access and quality of early childhood education for 3,000 refugee and host community children by supporting ECD centers.	(ECEC quality) To assess the physical and socio-emotional learning environment at the ECD centres, to measure differences in children's learning by ECEC centre, to explore caregivers' knowledge of integration of play-based learning into teaching practices. Mixed method (quantitative measures of child development and the quality of provision; qualitative interviews) Cross-sectional evaluation design (used to measure quality of provision and the status of the school readiness skills among children in six selected ECEC centres)
11	RTI International (2020)	Resettlement context in Amman/Jordan and refugee camps Azraq and Zaatari Syrian refugee children and their families	Key informants on the provision of ECEC to preschool-aged children Representatives of the Jordanian government, NGOs and service providers (n=22) Parents or guardians (n=3)	ECEC delivery for refugee children living outside camps in Jordan, as part of the services for families offered by the Jordanian government. There are ongoing national efforts to expand the second year of preschool (KG2) for Jordanians and refugees. In addition, NGOs and private nurseries provide ECEC. For families in camps, a separate humanitarian response system provides services apart from the mainstream public services.	(ECEC access) To investigate how early childhood services for young refugee children are planned and delivered in Jordan, and how this relates to the accessibility of services and the experiences of refugee children and families accessing services. Qualitative case study about the refugee experience of early childhood services, based on interviews, focus group discussions, site visits and policy document review.

12 13	Shah, S. (2016, 2020)	Refugee camps in Uganda refugee children from South Sudan (Dinka ethnic group)	3–6-year-old children who have or have not participated in an ECEC programme Multi-stage cluster sampling: Children in the intervention group (n=126) Children in the comparison group (n=74) Purposeful selection: 30 educators, 30 parents 3 key informants, 2 NGO staff members, 2 community leaders	Plan international's Community-Led Action for Children (CLAC) model for early learning or preschool education. Centre-based ECEC for 3–6-year-old children. Focused on children learning pre-literacy, pre-numeracy and other school readiness skills.	(ECEC benefits) To evaluate differences in child (and parenting) outcomes between two groups – intervention and a wait list control group (in two different refugee camps). Cross-sectional quasi-experimental design comparing outcomes in children in ECEC on a waiting list. Qualitative data to triangulate findings based on quantitative data
14	Smith, G. (2015)	Rwamwanja refugee settlement, Western Uganda refugees (mainly) from Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo	3-8-year-old children attending ECEC Cross-section of private and community based ECEC centres (n=22) 3 government offices Parents and members of the ECD Centre Management Committees, government officials, focal persons, and partners (n=145)	Private and community-based preschools, linked to Child Friendly Centres (CFC), and supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Education. ECEC centres offer morning sessions, led by two caregivers; afternoon sessions offered in CFC. Aim to provide protection, sense of normality, continuity, preparation for primary education. UNICEF delivers training that emphasises life skills, group play, language acquisition (mother tongue and English); focus on providing rules of behaviour and skills for interacting to support peacebuilding.	(ECEC benefits) To examine the role of pre-primary education, in building peaceful and resilient communities in contexts of ongoing conflict and in refugee settlements in the centre of the Western Region of Uganda. Qualitative data analysis (case study, including field visits, interviews and focus group discussions)
15	Tanaka, A. (2013)	Refugee camps on the border to Myanmar, Tak province of Thailand (Mae La, Umpiem Mai, Nu Po) Karen refugee children from Myanmar	2–5-year-old children attending ECEC Children randomly selected from 35 classrooms (n=331) Two groups – those who attended for more than one year (n=191); and those who attended up to one year (n=140)	Community-led nursery schools, with the support of an international NGO. Providing a safe and sanitary space, meals, and a child-centred curriculum to address the physical, cognitive and psychosocial development of preschool-aged children.	(ECEC benefits) To evaluate differences in child outcomes between two groups – children attending nursery since more than one year versus those who attended for less than and up to one year. Cross sectional, quasi-experimental design
16	Tobin, T., Boulmier, P., Zhu, W., Hancock, P., & Muennig, P. (2015)	Refugee community at the Thai-Myanmar border Migrants and refugee children with Karen, Burmese, and Shan	Approximately 3–6-year-olds attending ECEC Convenience sampling of children (n=66) Children attending the two types of classrooms	Montessori classroom focusing on child-directed learning and the use of specifically designed Montessori materials, versus ECEC classrooms following the Thai ECEC curriculum.	(ECEC benefits) To measure improvements from baseline assessment to follow-up. Longitudinal study Difference in difference model, which estimates improvements within the Montessori classrooms and between types of classrooms (Montessori versus Thai curriculum classrooms).

		language backgrounds			
17	UNICEF (2018)	Bidibid refugee settlement in the Yumbe district of northern Uganda Refugee children from South Sudan	3–6-year-old children attending ECEC Children attending 20 ECEC classrooms (n=7975) and representative sub-sample of educators (n=104), parents (n=252) and management committee members (n=42) 6 ECEC providers	ECD Kits integrated into existing early childhood programmes in ECEC centres and child friendly spaces. Participating centres following training on two different training approaches (foundational or enhanced ECD Kit intervention training). Integrated with enhanced ECD Kit intervention - toymaking innovation designed to increase the number of play materials in the centres and to engage parents in supporting play and development.	(ECEC benefits) Exploring improvement to evaluate the effectiveness of the ECD interventions on child outcomes, and implementation. (ECEC quality) To evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of different approaches for improving educator interactions with children and the u16se of the ECD kits for learning and development. Formative and longitudinal evaluation (including field observations, focus groups, interviews and a survey), with data collection at 3 time points.
18 19	VSO Bangladesh (2019) & Laxton, D., Cooper, L., Shrestha, P., & Younie, S. (2020)	Refugee camp in Cox Bazar, Bangladesh (Jamolti) Rohingya refugee children	Preschool-aged children attending ECEC 50 home-based ECEC and 12 learning centres 7 parents per home-based ECEC selected for survey (n=350) Subsample of 10 home-based ECEs purposefully selected for FGs with parents (n=10) and students (n=6) Observations in 10 home-based ECE Semi-structured interviews with community leaders, implementers and project staff members (n=6), and teachers from 10 home-based ECEC and 3 learning centres (n=13)	The VSO Bangladesh team developed an initiative to promote learning for 3-5-year-old children. To ensure well planned, naturalistic play-based education through a sustainable home-based learning programme, led by community volunteers within their own tented homes (Mothers and big sisters): MESH (Mapping Educational Specialist Knowhow). International volunteers are working as advisors on the project, national volunteers build the capacity of community volunteers, and monitor and evaluate work done. Guidance documents were used to create content to support training with the aim to inform professional practice.	(ECEC benefits) To describe how the ECEC in Emergencies MESH resources and training was used to improve childcare and education practices; to evaluate the effectiveness of the relational volunteering model in supporting early childhood education. (ECEC access) To describe how home-based ECE/the relational volunteering model is effective for ECEC in the camp situation, including questions on accessibility. (ECEC Quality) To describe how the ECEC in Emergencies MESH resources and training was used to improve childcare and education practices. Explorative case study Qualitative and quantitative data (interviews, focus groups, observations, document analysis, survey) Thematic analysis (both inductive and deductive)
20	Yalçın, V. & Simsar, A. (2020)	Resettlement community in Kilis/Turkey Syrian refugee children, their parents and teachers	Provision of ECEC to preschool-aged children Purposeful sampling 10 parents, 5 teachers, 1 principal (n=16)	Centre-based ECEC in urban resettlement community in Turkey, serving host country children as well as Turkish refugee children.	(ECEC access) To investigate Syrian refugee children's adjustment (transition) to ECEC, including barriers and facilitators to participation. Phenomenological research design Qualitative semi-structured interview study Content analysis

Table 2 (continued): Summary table of identified studies

Item No	Author/s and Year	Measures Informants and administrators	Results
1	Akar. B. (2019)	Information gathered from education staff, principals/directors, school counsellors and psychologists, parents, children. Field visits to schools to carry out interviews, and observations of interactions between children, educators and peers in classrooms and on the playground.	**ECEC Quality** Physical environment: Jordan/Lebanon schools generally appear clean and safe. Classrooms are furnished specifically for children, are decorated, and can be heated. There are outside play areas, and some use of technology. Curriculum and activities: Curriculum focus on literacy and numeracy, teaching integrates different activities or tools like storytelling, games and drawing to learn numbers and letters. Other activities (creative, physical) are seen as recreative. Strategies to support development and wellbeing: Learning directed towards the transmission of content knowledge, rather than exploration and active learning. In terms of psychosocial support and behaviour management, focus on polite and respectful behaviour, modelling children how to communicate, children feeling that they are listened to and loved, explaining behaviours, developing empathy, and staying calm. Partnerships with parents: Educators tend to describe parents as uninvolved in their children's learning, and generally rather disengaged or harsh in their parenting. This is true particularly for those from the host community, and less so for those educators who have refugee background. Relationships with children: Teachers with refugee backgrounds show more empathy and understanding towards children. However, working with refugee children takes an emotional toll on teachers, especially those who are refugees themselves. Training and support for teachers: Educators are trained and get professional support – more likely in Jordan, less so in Lebanon (requirements: University degree, some experience with young children, demonstrating a sense of care towards young children). Developmental support from a psychologist in a classroom is common.
2	Akar, B., Amr, M., & Chen, A. (2017)	Information gathered from programme directors, principals, teachers, social workers, when possible, children. Desk research. Field visits to schools and education centres to carry out observations and (semi-structured) interviews. PIs developed observation and interview guides, and an instrument to record and present collected information.	**ECEC benefits** Reports on progress of children who attend ECEC programmes in their literacy and numeracy skills, their attitude towards school, in communicating and in overcoming emotional and behavioural problems, and in developing positive social skills (respecting others and rules in school, building friendships, taking turns and sharing). Reports on increased engagement with preschools from the side of the parents, as they notice progress in their children. **ECEC Quality** Formal education settings: friendly, safe learning environment, provision of basic academic materials, and sometimes meals; however, focus on preparation for school, timetable organised according to subjects, close-ended tasks in books, seating in rows, restricted access to play equipment. Educators rely on their experiences in mainstream teaching, without training focusing on refugee context and vulnerable children. Nonformal education settings: more involvement in activities that required self-initiative and choice, more opportunities for exploration, but programmes run for an average of three months only and are vulnerable to change in funding and relationships with communities. Educators have various backgrounds, often not in education.

3	Dalrymple, K. (2019)	Information gathered from educators, parents, and children. Parents and educators: Survey questionnaires and focus group discussions (focus on perceived improvements in child development and learning, and in educator skills and confidence) Instruments developed by PLAN education and evaluation staff. Children: Focus group discussions Instrument developed by PLAN child psychologist (focus on child experiences and perceived learning). All instruments administered by PLAN education and evaluation staff.	**ECEC benefits** Children reported feeling safe, enjoying singing, playing games, learning new things, making friends. Parent and educators perceived positive changes in student learning outcomes and behavioural development (including better retention of academic content, happier dispositions, and increased confidence and comfort when participating in lessons and interacting with others). Parent, child and teacher reports suggest increased benefits due to the focus on mindfulness-strategies. Parents reported that they increasingly value education and early learning for their children. **ECEC quality** Reported challenges with provision of nutrition, lack of educators and spaces, difficult working conditions for staff, insufficient resources for educators to plan and deliver lessons. Educators reported that the training increased their understanding of teaching strategies and strengthened their behaviour management skills and confidence, and that this helped their teaching (bringing 'more energy and enthusiasm to their students'). 93% of educators integrated mindfulness exercises they learned during their training into their teaching practice and reported on the value of mindfulness in: i) making children feel comfortable and creating a safe and enjoyable learning environment; ii) in helping their behaviour management (feeling more connected to children's moods, using mindfulness exercises to help refocus children).
4	Erdemir. E. (2021a)	Information gathered through child assessments. Seven subscale domains measured: pre-literacy-, pre-numeracy skills, receptive-, expressive language skills (Turkish), emotion regulation, social competence, behaviour problems. Measures: Preliteracy and Prenumeracy Skill Scales; Turkish Early Language Development-TEDIL-3, Emotion Regulation Checklist, Social Competence and Behavioral Assessment Scale. Assessors: graduated or graduate students with bilingual language skills, recruited from local Universities, NGOs, community centres.	**ECEC benefits** ANCOVA models on outcomes, adjusting for corresponding pre-test scores as covariates. Significant impact on preliteracy and pre-numeracy skills, receptive and expressive Turkish language skills, emotion regulation, and social competence skills and behaviour problems. With the intervention group showing greater progress (or fewer problems in emotion regulation and behaviour problems) than the comparison group. Analysis per target group: Local children attaining more progress in pre-literacy and in pre-numeracy in the intervention (and not comparison) group. Refugee children attaining more progress on receptive and expressive Turkish language skills in the intervention (and not control) group.
5	Erdemir, E. (2021b)	Information gathered from children.	**ECEC benefits**

		Individual face-to-face interviews (pictorial interviews with open-ended and emergent questions). Focus on the child's immediate environments and interaction with different actors in present and past.	Themes that were identified reflected multiple forms of cultural wealth capital present in children's lives. In relation to their experiences and learning in the preschool intervention programme, children addressed three themes in particular: - Navigational capital: navigating new school routines, activities and relationships with teachers; active and positive engagement, and commitment to learning and enjoyment. - Social capital: building new friendships, engaging with peers, feelings of connectedness. - Linguistic capital: language identities, -skills and -learning through the programme. - Familial capital: parents' efforts to ensure children's continuity in education; children's sharing of learning experiences with family members. Importantly, children's accounts also revealed how they used their new/increased skills also outside the school, in their home environment and communities – in particular to assist family members and peers.
6	Erdemir, E. (2021c)	Information gathered from mothers. Semi-structured individual interviews. Focus on parent observations and experiences about their children's developmental progress before and after intervention, child-rearing approaches, home routines, and resettlement experiences.	**ECEC benefits** Interview data with mother suggested that children's participation in the program resulted in improvements across domains of cognitive, language, socio-emotional, and self-care development; that children carried their new/improved skills over to their home environment and employed them in their interactions with mothers; that this led to a range of positive changes in mothers' concept of their children (e.g. needed to be listened to, spent time with, and approached with respect); and that this led to concrete behavioural changes in parental practices (more supportive, sensitive, and adaptive). Mothers' observation of teachers' kind, respectful, and trust-based interactional skills further contributed to their change.
7	iAct (2015)	Information gathered from children and parents. Little Ripples child assessment instruments (adapted from UNICEF multiple Indicator Cluster Survey – MICS). Testing basic cognitive milestones (colours, animals, counting, and alphabet; and assess gross and fine motor skills), recording child height and weight, parents reporting on socio-emotional outcomes. Researcher administered.	**ECEC benefits** - % of children with higher scores on cognitive assessment tasks increased (naming colours, counting, identifying animals, reciting alphabet). - % of children with higher scores on health questions increased (hygiene practices, fewer rashes, serious injuries, diarrhea, less vomiting). - % of children with higher scores on questions on socio-emotional development increased (less violence, less unhappiness, less restlessness).
8 9	Jesuit Refugee Service & iACT (2019a/b).	Information gathered from children and parents. Little Ripples child assessment instruments (adapted from UNICEF multiple Indicator Cluster Survey – MICS). [see above]	**ECEC benefits** - % of children with higher scores on cognitive assessment tasks increased (naming colours, counting, identifying animals, reciting alphabet). - % of children with higher scores on questions on socio-emotional development increased (sharing, independence). - % of parents reporting more food security, and better health and hygiene routines increased. - 100% of caregivers reported that they perceived Little Ripples Ponds as safe places for children (while camps are lesser so). no significance testing

10	Mbidde, E. & Oguniyoi, A. (2019)	Information gathered from educators and district education officials. Semi-structured interviews with focus on knowledge and perception of school readiness and play based learning approaches (educators), perception of using play-based learning approaches in line with the ECD curriculum (district officials). Observations using a school learning environment assessment tool to assess the physical environment of the ECD centres.	**ECEC Quality** Observations documented that all ECD centres had safe outdoor play spaces with age-appropriate play equipment. Classroom floors had no defects to cause injury or harm to children and (all but one of the classrooms) were safe against poor weather conditions. There were relatively proper waste management systems, and latrines were accessible to children with disability. During interviews, educators reported on strategies they use to make the school learning environment safe and supportive for children (space and classroom arrangement) and those that encourage positive behaviour and engagement in age-appropriate games. Caregivers had some understanding of play-based learning, but integration into practice was not sufficiently facilitated by specific training or curriculum plans. **Note:** In this study, the IDELA tool was used to assess children's school readiness skills in four domains (motor development, emergent language and literacy, emergent maths/numeracy, social- emotional development), however since only baseline data is reported (to report on children's school readiness skills), and information on ECEC quality was not correlated with child outcomes, findings on the IDELA assessments are not summarised here.
11	RTI International (2020)	Information gathered from representatives of the Jordanian government and NGOs and service providers, and parents or guardians. Key informant interviews (government and NGO representatives, ECEC providers), focus group discussions (parents/guardians). Administered by the RTI international team.	**ECEC access** • Refugees living outside camps in host communities are allowed access to mainstream early childhood services provided by the Jordanian Ministry; however, they often face barriers in accessing services, including bureaucracy, lack of transportation, and inability to pay fees. • Private providers (for children under 4) charge fees, which most Syrian families cannot afford. • For families in camps, a separate humanitarian response system provides services apart from the mainstream public services. Services are free, but time of enrolment very limited (three-month rotation), and often double shifted (serving children in two shifts – morning and afternoon) which allows centres with limited space to serve more children. Student to teacher ratios can be high. • ECEC centres in camps are mostly close to where participants live, but perceived safety issues mean parents walk their children there and back. In addition, roads can be inaccessible in winter due to floods and rain.
12 13	Shah, S. (2016, 2020)	Information gathered from children. Adapted ASQ-3 (Schonhaut et al., 2013; Tsai et al 2006), administered by educators (paired with PLAN staff member); assessing child development in five key areas (communication skills, gross motor skills, fine motor skills, cognitive skills, personal social skills)	**ECEC benefits** - significant differences in developmental scores in favour of the intervention group for the total score as well as in the following areas: communication, gross motor and fine motor skills, cognitive skills and personal social skills - similar age and gender distribution across the two groups no statistical control for co-variates **Note:** Information was also gathered from key informants (government, local leaders, NGO partners, Plan international staff), parents, but used to answer different research questions, and results are therefore not summarised here.
14	Smith, G. (2015)	Information gathered from parents and members of the ECD Centre Management Committees, government officials, focal persons and partners.	**ECEC benefits** Based on parent and teacher reports, centres provide children well for transition to primary school: - Strengthening of early cognitive development, literacy and numeracy skills, language and communication skills.

| | | Fieldwork visits with observations in government offices and preschools.

Focus group discussions (parents and members of the ECD Centre Management Committees).

Semi-structured individual interviews (government officials, focal persons and partners). | - Observed changes in social behaviour (mastering behaviour, interacting respectfully/more considerate with adults and children, supporting their friendships).

Parents cite safety as one of the most important services provided by ECD centres.

Observed impacts on child recovery from trauma through play and art.

Impact on children as well as communities: i) Knowledge of ECEC caregivers on risks and safe behaviours, nutrition and hygiene are transferred back to the households and community. ii) Through changes in their children's behaviour, parents adopt some behaviour they might not have had the opportunity to learn in their youth. Iii) Parents went on to work convincing other members of the local community to send their children as well. iv) Programme led to communities coming together, strengthening of group bonds. |
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| 15 | Tanaka, A. (2013) | Information gathered from educators.

Psychosocial checklists developed for the project. 17 items asking about behaviours reflecting positive psychosocial development (interactions with other children and staff, attention, emotion-regulation and -expression). | **ECEC benefits**

Children in group attending nursery for longer than one year had significantly higher scores on the psychosocial development scale (total score) compared to those attending for a year or less (controlling for age).

Some significant differences on individual checklist items: i) Children (in some age groups) with longer ECEC attendance were more likely to be rated higher on cooperative play with other children and awareness of their own and others' feelings. ii) Children (in some age groups) with shorter ECEC attendance were more likely to be rated higher in skills to follow rules, controlling frustration and being polite. |
| 16 | Tobin, T., Boulmier, P., Zhu, W., Hancock, P., & Muennig, P. (2015) | Information gathered from educators

54-month ASQ (Ages and Stages Questionnaire; Squires, Bricker, & Potter, 1997); educators reporting on child gross motor-, fine motor-, communication-, problem solving-, and personal-social development. | **ECEC benefits**

- Baseline assessment: students at the Montessori school all scored lower than those at the comparison school.
- Follow-up assessment: students at the Montessori school lessened or closed the gap across all five domains.
- Differences in improvement from baseline to follow-up significant for one outcome area only: personal-social development. |
| 17 | UNICEF (2018) | Information gathered from kit users (educators, parents), implementing partners, and national ECEC programme managers.

Field visits for observations. on rating and describing the quality and safety of the learning environment; educators' approaches for using the kits, teaching, and their interactions with children; and children's use of the ECD kit materials, types of play experiences, and play behaviours. | **ECEC benefits**

Parent and educators report changes in child outcomes for children in both intervention groups:

- Themes that emerged during interviews were improvements in language/literacy and numeracy areas (counting, writing, responding in English, knowing the alphabet), socio-emotional development (relating to others, building confidence, basic social skills), and hygiene practices (handwashing, teeth brushing).
- Less focus on recovery from trauma or stress during later interviews.
- Recognition of how play supports children's learning.

ECEC quality

Physical environment:
- Limited child safety measures in place (lack of first aid kits, cleaning supplies, fences), but some improvements from T1-T3. |

		Semi-structured focus groups and key informant interviews (Kit users and implementing partners). Participatory survey (national ECD programme managers).	- Lack of access to water, food and nutrition with some improvements from T1-T3 (introduction of parent-organised breakfast programme/morning snack). - Overcrowded classrooms, with estimated caregiver-child ratio of 1:5-1:250. Number of caregivers improved slightly at T3. - Number of adequate play spaces also improved, as did the quality of classroom construction (fewer temporary constructions). - Access to toys and learning materials limited, with 90-400 children per ECD Kit. Increase in toys through toymaking initiative + toys stored more accessibly. Caregiver capacities to use toys and learning materials: - At T1, teaching relying on singing, toys used as teaching-props mainly. - T1-T3 – after received training, increase in educators, and increase in toys: children were given more opportunities to choose toys to engage with, educators were more likely to instruct children on the use of toys, and to guide play-based learning. - Observed changes in educator interactions (at time 3, when toymaking was fully implemented), from rote learning and memorization to more child-centred approaches based on learning through guided play. - Enhanced ECD kit intervention led to more changes than the foundational ECD kit intervention (where caregivers received no direct training on how to use toys and materials in the classroom).
18 19	VSO Bangladesh (2019) & Laxton, D., Cooper, L., Shrestha, P., & Younie, S. (2020)	Data gathered from parents and educators (big sisters/mothers). Results reported here refer to: Parent Opinion Survey on the effectiveness of home-based ECEC (n=350); parent focus group discussions (n=10) and big sisters/mothers focus interviews (n=10); all administered by VSO Bangladesh team. Other data collection methods: Observations, questionnaires, interviews, document analysis of VSO reports and focus groups.	**ECEC benefits** Parents reported on learning and behavioural changes they have observed in their children, including recover from trauma, children being more manageable to parents, improvements in early academic skills (e.g. counting, rhyming, pre-reading), language, socio-emotional development (e.g. collaborative play), and physical and motor development. Big sisters/mothers reported that children participate well in activities, and that the approaches on this programme (play-based learning) are increasing social-, physical/motor- and cognitive development. Big sisters/mothers reported that training helps them to understand pedagogy, how to make teaching- and learning materials and how to prepare according to the lesson plan. **ECEC access** Identified benefits of this home-based ECEC model in terms of accessibility/participation: Learning centres provided in camps be NGOS for Rohingya children exist but are related to barriers to access are safety and security concerns, insufficient number of centres, lack of teachers and resources. Offering home-based ECEC removes some of the safety and security concerns and promotes children's participation in ECEC, as well as providing opportunities for learning and work for Rohingya community volunteers (Mothers and Big Sisters). Home-based ECEC also offers additional space for delivering ECEC, smaller group sizes (preferred by parents), and low-cost resources for learning (produced by community volunteers. Education offered to children by volunteers from their own community is well accepted by Rohingya parents and is a solution to otherwise often present language- or cultural barriers; main language of instruction is children's mother tongue. Identified challenges in terms of accessibility/participation: - Physical accessibility: roads and walk-ways to the home-based centres not safe, particularly during the rainy season. - Resources and space: shortage of materials; space offered to children in home-based centre can be limited. - Staffing: retention of volunteers who move on once they are married.

			- Expectations and needs from stakeholders that can be difficult to meet: provision of food and drinking water, provision of books or clothing for children) – the lack of provision of a nutritious meal in particular seems to be a main barrier mentioned by parents. **ECEC quality/strategies** Roles and relationships between volunteers contributed towards positive changes among the volunteers which related to the quality of interaction/teaching. Observations showed that educators seemed fairly confident and prepared for teaching the children: They prepared materials to support their teaching. Lesson plans that had been provided were followed with educators making use of strategies such as such as conducting pre-discussions on topics that were introduced or demonstrating real examples. Educators were highly engaged with the children in verbal interactions. 70% of children were engaged in group-activities. Facilitators reported that the training helped them to understand pedagogy, to make teaching and learning materials, to make preparation according to the lesson plans, and generally helped them to be more skilled. Parents overwhelmingly reported that they were very satisfied/satisfied with the teaching and relationship skills of the educators, their qualification and time-management, and the content and use of materials in classroom.
20	Yalçın, V. & Simsar, A. (2020)	Information gathered from parents, teachers and the school principal. Semi-structured interviews, focusing on perceptions of children's transition to ECEC, their adjustment and participation, barriers and facilitators to children's participation and parent involvement. Researcher administered.	**ECEC access and participation** Identified a number of issues with children's settling in and participation in ECEC related to following themes: - Language and communication barriers that impact on ECEC quality (teacher-child communication, classroom organisation, peer interactions, parent-teacher communication). - Financial means for school supplies, parental education level and relatedly their expectation about education and their involvement in learning. Prejudices against refugee children (from the side of peers, other parents and to some extent also the teachers).

Search strategy protocol

Databases, academic literature search
To search for scientific research papers, the following electronic databases were searched:
- Child Development & Adolescent Studies (EBSCO)[4]
- ProQuest Education Collection (including ERIC and the Education Database)[5]
- ProQuest Social Science Database[6]
- ProQuest Dissertations and Thesis Global[7]
- PsychInfo (OVID)[8]
- Scopus[9]
- Web of Science Core Collection[10]

The following keywords were used to constrain the search to the population of interest:
- Refugee
- Forcibly displaced, forced migration, forced migrant
- Asylum-seeker
- Transient

- Early child/childhood education/care/centre/provision/programme/intervention/development/leanring
- Pre-primary
- Preschool
- Childcare
- Daycare

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[4] Child Development & Adolescent Studies (EBSCO) indexes current and historical literature related to growth and development of children up to the age of 21. This includes all of the issues of Child Development Abstracts & Bibliography from 1927-2001 previously published by the Society for Research in Child Development, plus new coverage on child rights and welfare issues.

[5] The ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center) database is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education to provide extensive access to educational-related literature. The ERIC database corresponds to two printed journals: Resources in Education (RIE) and Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE). Both journals provide access to some 14,000 documents and over 20,000 journal articles per year. Education Database is a database provided by ProQuest covering all levels of education, including early childhood education, primary and secondary education, higher education and adult education. Special needs education and teacher education also feature in this collection. The database includes thousands of full-text journals, dissertations and other relevant sources.

[6] Social Science Database offers indexing and full text for hundreds of academic journals, providing extensive coverage across a wide range of social science disciplines including anthropology, communication, criminology, economics, education, political science, psychology, social work, and sociology.

[7] ProQuest Dissertations and Theses: Global (PQDTGlobal) is the world's most comprehensive collection of full-text dissertations and theses.

[8] PsycINFO provides citations with abstracts to the scholarly literature in the psychological, social, behavioural, and health sciences. The database includes material of relevance to psychologists, students, and professionals in related fields such as psychiatry, management, business, and education, social science, neuroscience, law, medicine, and social work. PsycINFO contains more than 2 million records spanning 1806 to the present. Journal coverage includes material selected from approximately 2,000 periodicals. Chapter and book coverage includes worldwide English-language material published from 1987 to the present; however, there is a substantial number of records covering books published earlier. Dissertations constitute approximately 12% of the database. APA is currently adding approximately 8,100,000 references annually through weekly updates.

[9] SCOPUS is the largest abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed literature, which covers research outputs in the fields of science, technology, medicine, social sciences and art and humanities.

[10] Web of Science provides access to and cross-searching of databases in the science, technology, engineering, mathematics, medicine, social sciences and humanities. It includes Science Citation Index, Social Sciences Citation Index, Arts and Humanities Citation Index. Also provides access to Journal Citation Reports for sciences and social sciences.

Website search, grey literature
Step 1:
Websites of relevant NGOs (including online databases) were searched for documents that report on investigations into
- facilitators and barriers to participation in ECEC for young refugee children in LMICs,
- the quality of ECEC for young refugee children in LMICs,
- the impact of ECEC for young refugee children in LMICs.

Where online databases allowed, the following keywords were used to constrain the search to the population of interest:
- Refugee
- Forcibly displaced, forced migration, forced migrant
- Asylum-seeker
- Transient

- Early child/childhood education/care/centre/provision/programme/intervention/development/leanring
- Pre-primary
- Preschool
- Childcare
- Daycare

Appendix 2: Literature search

Database search protocol example for PROQUEST Education Collection and Social Science database

Command Line 1
(early N/4 education*) OR (early N/4 care*) OR (early N/4 centre*) OR (early N/4 provision*) OR (early N/4 program*) OR (early N/4 intervention*) OR (early N/4 development*) OR (early N/4 learning*) OR pre-primary OR pre-primary OR preschool OR pre-school OR childcare OR child-care OR daycare OR day-care OR (learning N/4 centre*) OR (parent* N/4 intervention*) OR (parent* N/4 support) OR (parent* N/4 education*) OR (parent* N/4 training) OR (parent* N/4 program*) OR (caregiv* N/4 intervention*) OR (caregiv* N/4 support) OR (caregiv* N/4 education*) OR (caregiv* N/4 training) OR (caregiv* N/4 program*)

Command line 2
refugee* OR (forc* N/4 displace*) OR (forc* N/4 migrat*) OR (forc* N/4 migrant*) OR (asylum N/4 seek*) OR (asylum-seek*) OR transient*

Location constraint:
Anywhere except full text

Year constraint:
Date range 1995-2020

- Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP): https://www.alnap.org/help-library
- African Development Bank: https://www.afdb.org/en/all-documents
- Asian Development Bank: https://www.adb.org/publications
- Andrew Forbes Refugee Resource Collection: https://crs.info.yorku.ca/research/resource-centre
- Bernard van Leer Foundation: https://bernardvanleer.org
- Bridging Refugee Youth & Children's Services: https://brycs.org
- Caritas: https://www.caritas.org
- Centre for Research on Migration, Refugees and Belonging, University of East London: https://www.uel.ac.uk/research/centre-for-research-on-migration-refugees-and-belonging
- Children on the Edge: https://www.childrenontheedge.org
- Early Childhood Peace Consortium: https://ecdpeace.org
- Education cannot wait: https://www.educationcannotwait.org
- Eldis Education (Database): https://www.eldis.org/search?theme=C252
- EPPI-Centre: https://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/
- Evidence Aid: https://evidenceaid.org/resource/
- Foundation House: https://foundationhouse.org.au/specialised-programs/advocacy-and-research/publications-and-resources/
- Forced migration research network: https://www.arts.unsw.edu.au/our-research/research-centres-institutes/research-networks/forced-migration-research-network/resources/publications
- Forced Migration depository: http://roar.eprints.org (service currently interrupted)
- Harvard Kennedy School Think Tank Search (Database): https://guides.library.harvard.edu/hks/think_tank_search
- Health and Human Rights Info (Database): https://www.hhri.org/
- iAct: https://www.iact.ngo
- Inter-agency Network on Education in Emergencies: https://inee.org/collections/learning-peace/early-childhood-development
- International Centre for Migration Health and Development: https://icmhd.ch/publications/
- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies: http://www.ifrc.org/en/publications-and-reports/evaluations/
- International Rescue Committee: https://www.rescue-uk.org/reports-resources
- International Organizations for Migration (IOM): http://publications.iom.int
- Adult Latif Jameel Poverty Action LAb: https://www.povertyactionlab.org/evaluations
- Mercy Corps: https://europe.mercycorps.org/en-gb/research-resources
- Migration for Development: http://www.migration4development.org/en/resources/library
- Moving Minds Alliance: https://movingmindsalliance.org
- Norwegian Refugee Council: https://www.nrc.no/search/
- Oxfam: http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/
- Refugee Research Network: https://refugeeresearch.net/search-engine/
- Refugee Studies Centre, Oxford University: https://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/publications
- Refugee Trauma Initiative: https://www.refugeetrauma.org
- Right to Play: https://www.righttoplay.org.uk/en-uk/
- RTI International: https://www.rti.org
- Save the Children: https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net
- Sesame Workshop: https://www.sesameworkshop.org
- Their World: https://theirworld.org/
- UNESCO: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/home

- UNICEF: https://www.unicef.org/publications/
- UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency, Policy Development and Evaluation: http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4a1d28526.html
- USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse: https://www.usaid.gov/reports-and-data
- War Child: https://www.warchild.org.uk/home
- World Bank: https://www.worldbank.org/en/research
- World Vision: https://www.wvi.org

Key experts and organisations contacted

Experts at the following organisations were contacted

- Bernhard van Leer Foundation
- Children on the Edge
- Early Childhood Peace Consortium
- Erlah
- iAct
- Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS) Malaysia
- Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
- International Centre for the Study of the Mixed Economy of Childcare
- International Rescue Committee
- Moving Minds Alliance
- Open Society Foundations
- Plan International
- Refugee Trauma Initiative
- Right to Play
- Save the Children
- Sesame Workshop
- UNHCR (Evaluation Service)
- UNICEF (International Development Research Centre)

- Academics at NYU Steinhardt, Yale University, Sussex University, University of East London, Harvard University, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (Singapore)

Inclusion criteria

Intervention criteria

The focus is on research addressing early childhood education programmes for preschool age refugee children (or those providing access to refugee children) which aim to increase outcomes for children's learning and wellbeing *by focusing on* early learning/the provision of education opportunities. For an intervention to be characterised as an ECEC programme, it has to have a broad focus on child development and wellbeing (addressing child learning in all areas – socially, emotionally, physically and cognitively) and provide care and education. It has to be a group provision, delivered by teachers, educators, community workers, social assistants, volunteers, or any trained personnel (excluding informal care provided by relatives, friends, neighbours). Sessional as well as full-day programmes will be included. Research on whole school interventions will be included, as well as targeted interventions that are integrated within an ECEC programme to address specific educational needs of refugee children.

Population criteria

Included are studies that focus on ECEC for refugee children per se OR those that disaggregate findings by refugee status, and those studies that report on ECEC programmes in contexts with a high percentage of refugee populations (population with more than 50% classified as refugees).

Age criteria

Because of a lack of ECEC for the younger preschool children, and the needs and challenges to provide all children in LMICs with only one or two years of pre-primary education, this review will focus on the older ECEC age group (children between the age of three and the start of primary school).

Geography criteria

We review studies that are carried out in LMICs as currently included on the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) list[11] of countries eligible to receive official development assistance (ODA).

Date-criteria

We review studies which were carried out in 1995 or later. Thus, we focus on a period of intensification of international focus on human rights arising from the success of the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights. In 1995, 169 countries had signed the Conventions on the Right of the Child (with only seven countries following since then), most countries had signed the Conventions related to the Status of Refugees (and its Protocol), and several countries in Asia had established national human rights institutions.

Language-criteria

We review studies published in English.

Study characteristics

To establish inclusion or exclusion for the review, studies had to be primary studies, not research reviews; they had to state research questions and/or aims related to one of our three review aims; research design, data collection tools and other methods had to be specified; and basic information on sample and selection/recruitment had to be presented (EPPI-centre, 2003; Lloyd & Penn, 2010).

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[11] https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/DAC-List-of-ODA-Recipients-for-reporting-2020-flows.pdf

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Glossary on migration and refugees

Refugee: 'A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so. War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries'.[12] The international legal definition of the term is contained in the 1951 Refugee Convention.

Internally displaced person: An internally displaced person (IDP) is someone who has been forced to flee their home because of internal strive and natural disaster but did not cross an international border. IDPs are not protected by international law or eligible to receive many types of aid because they are legally under the protection of their own government.[30]

Asylum seeker: People who seek international protection in another country and apply for the right to be recognized as a refugee and to receive legal protection and material assistance.[30]

Migrant: The term migrant is usually understood to cover all cases where the decision to migrate is taken freely by an individual or family who move to another country or region to better their material or social conditions and improve the prospect for themselves or their family.[13]

Irregular migrant: A migrant who lacks legal status in a country of transit or host country, due to entering illegally, or visa expiry (also called clandestine/ illegal/undocumented migrant or migrant in an irregular situation) (Cheng et al., 2018).

Country of origin: The country that a is a source of migratory flows (legal or illegal) (Cheng et al., 2018).

Country of transit: The country through which migratory flows (legal or illegal) move (Cheng et al., 2018).

Pre-flight: The pre-flight phase refers to the time prior to a refugee's escape from their country of origin, occurring at the onset of political violence and/or war (Lustig et al., 2004).

Flight: The flight phase refers to the time of a refugee's escape from their country, transition to the asylum country, and any transitional placement (e.g. refugee camp) (Lustig et al., 2004).

Resettlement: Resettlement is the transfer of refugees from an asylum country to another State that has agreed to admit them and ultimately grant them permanent settlement.[14]

Acculturation: The process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between cultural groups and their individual members. The process of change takes place over time, and can be associated with multiple stressors.[15]

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[12] https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/what-is-a-refugee/
[13] https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms
[14] https://www.unhcr.org/uk/resettlement.html
[15] https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/neuroscience/acculturation

Early child development and early childhood education and care glossary

This report uses three different terms, all related to initiatives which aim to promote child development, prevent the occurrence of risks, and reduce negative effects of risks in the early years: Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), Early Child Development (ECD) initiatives, and pre-primary education. All three focus on promoting early cognitive, social-emotional, physical and mental development. ECD is a larger field than ECEC. The term Early Childhood Development programmes refers to a variety of interventions with young children from birth until age eight and their families, including health, nutrition, childcare, education, and parent support (Penn, 2004), implemented across a number of different sectors – Health, Nutrition, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, Education, and Child Protection. Both, ECD and ECEC programmes can address child development in many ways by integrating different services.

Nutrition, health and social protection and parent support can all be part of ECEC services, however, the main aim of ECEC programmes is to offer environments for young children to promote learning. There is a general consensus that ECEC services need to be holistic and address child learning in all areas – socially, emotionally, physically and cognitively (European Commission, 2014). ECEC programmes ensure development through meeting children's needs (Britto et al., 2011). Since learning for young children is embedded in care and relationships, both care and a focus on enabling relationships are part of ECEC services. Supporting the development of school readiness is an important element of ECEC, especially as children approach primary school age. ECEC programmes focus on promoting children's developing self-regulation and learning-related skills (e.g. to express thoughts, show curiosity and explore, solve problems, adapt behaviour to situational demands, maintain concentration) (Melhuish, 2012), and the acquisition of knowledge (e.g. maths, literacy). With these aims in mind, ECEC programmes organise and plan the physical environment, interactions, and activities to support learning. Depending on the age group, activities can be more or less structured. There is a general consensus that learning through play is an important element of ECEC. Most research in the area has been carried out in high income countries, and whether they yield the same benefits across cultures and contexts needs to be explored further (Zosh et al., 2017). The care element of ECEC is usually collective in nature, and ECEC thus provides environments for groups of children. Different types of centre-based ECEC service that vary by location, age group, or funding arrangements often exist alongside each other in a country, in addition to home-based ECEC. ECEC services can offer sessional (e.g., three hours per day) or full-day programmes for children from birth until the start of primary school.

Pre-primary education programmes are part of a countries ECEC system. They are typically designed for children above the age of three until the start of primary school, and centre-based. Some countries define pre-primary education more broadly than others, but commonly there is a stronger emphasis on the introduction of young children to more organised instruction, to ensure children are ready for the transition to primary school. Pre-primary education programmes can have higher staff qualification requirements than other types of ECEC providers, are more likely to receive state funding, and enrolment for one or two years before entry to primary school can be compulsory.