**Sustainable Development Goal 16: Promote peaceful societies**

**Early Childhood Development (ECD) interventions have been shown to lead to lower rates of violence in the home and greater social cohesion in communities**

Both tracks of work referenced in the call for inputs need to make significant evidence-based “*doctrinal shifts*” that underline prevention over response; as described in the Call, short-sighted reactive responses are often controversial. Early Childhood Development (ECD) services that realise their human rights, promote trust between authorities and constituents (vertical cohesion) and promote human development in the long-term. As a result, Early Childhood Development (ECD) can viably offer long-term vision sustainable peace as a solution for nations ([ECPC, 2018](https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fecdpeace.org%2Fcontributions-early-childhood-development-programming-sustainable-peace-and-development&data=05%7C01%7Cshemrah.fallon%40yale.edu%7C2fcdb61375b74364035908da59790ab9%7Cdd8cbebb21394df8b4114e3e87abeb5c%7C0%7C0%7C637920674614877139%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=%2BRoOUpQ7nFgn7suWNgu1tke7PbclwPaP6L%2Br6YiB6CQ%3D&reserved=0)).

A growing body of scientific evidence points to the connection between Early Childhood Development (ECD) and the prevention of violence at community and nation levels, and not only at individual and family levels [(Bronfenbrenner ecological systems theory; also ecology of peace article attached)](https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.scu.edu%2Foml%2Fabout-us%2Ftheoretical-framework%2F&data=05%7C01%7Cshemrah.fallon%40yale.edu%7C2fcdb61375b74364035908da59790ab9%7Cdd8cbebb21394df8b4114e3e87abeb5c%7C0%7C0%7C637920674614877139%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=FmRG8qrhHWlM%2BAHAbqkbWPRczu41Ut2ZbcPosbZSP2k%3D&reserved=0). Conflict and terrorism prevention cannot be conceived without comprehensive early childhood strategies that increase empathy, and address gender inequalities and issues around sense of identity and belonging. This approach not only provides preventative measures, but it also promotes and protects children’s fundamental human rights. Early Childhood Development interventions erode at the base the factors that perpetuate violence in society, such as violent behaviours, challenges around identity and the sense of belonging, and social and gender inequities.

Terrorism is commonly understood to refer to acts of violence that target civilians in the pursuit of political or ideological aims [(OHCHR)](https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ohchr.org%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2FDocuments%2FPublications%2FFactsheet32EN.pdf&data=05%7C01%7Cshemrah.fallon%40yale.edu%7C2fcdb61375b74364035908da59790ab9%7Cdd8cbebb21394df8b4114e3e87abeb5c%7C0%7C0%7C637920674614877139%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=ukG7CYPk%2BpSJBvdj8AedrKDQT53qebvZVtLtUJ4Ns6E%3D&reserved=0) pointing at lack of social cohesion and acceptance of violent means. Preventing such acts require a long-term vision to address root causes of injustice and instability. It is important that the Special Rapporteur’s report recognises Early Childhood Development (ECD) as a key prevention methodology against conflict and terrorism, highlighting the need for environments conducive to optimal development and early childhood services. Investing in Early Childhood Development (ECD) is widely recognized as a cost-effective strategy for fair and sustainable development and peace. Evidence such as Nobel Prize winner James [Heckman’s Curve](https://heckmanequation.org/resource/the-heckman-curve/) shows that investments in early childhood yield the highest rate of returns when compared with investments made later in life.

Investing in Early Childhood Development (ECD) has a positive impact on women’s economic empowerment, as presented by the *G20 Development Working Group: Investing in Early Childhood Development 2018* report. “In turn, increasing women’s economic empowerment is key to reducing child poverty, and that strengthens the early childhood experience in a host of ways. (…) Deep gender inequalities persist around the world. Cultural attitudes often define child-rearing and housekeeping as a woman’s responsibility, and indeed the time spent on unpaid domestic work is more than three times higher for women than men. Access to quality childcare and family-friendly ECD policies are key to reducing this gender imbalance and to promoting greater co-responsibility between mothers and fathers. By offering women more opportunities to complete their education and have access to stable, formal paid employment, this aspect of Early Childhood Development (ECD) investment uplifts women as well as the chances for their children to thrive. Finally, by supporting women’s economic empowerment, ECD programs contribute to world economic growth. It is estimated that the world economy could gain up to US$12 trillion in annual GDP by 2025 by narrowing the global gap between men and women.”

Interventions with youth are necessary, but it is likely that focusing on programmes targeting youth alone is a more expensive and less effective investment that earlier interventions in Early Childhood Development (ECD). On the other hand, youth are essential in providing Early Childhood Development (ECD) services and benefit from Early Childhood Development (ECD) interventions. There are many examples on how adolescents and young adults can help provide Early Childhood Development (ECD) to their communities. For example, youth (15- to 24-year-old) constitute the majority of parents in conflict and fragile context and they bear the brunt of parenting responsibilities. Scientifically Adolescence constitute a second window of opportunity for brain development ([The Second Decade](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/64320/WHO_FRH_ADH_98.18_Rev.1.pdf;jsessionid=84C34AEDA88413BEC93E884755EA1440?sequence=1)).

Responding to some of the framing themes provided for the call for inputs, let us share with you some other thoughts:

1. Observations or examples of any “negative impacts when counter-terrorism legislation and other measures are applied contrary to international law, which may harm collective counter-terrorism efforts and infringe upon human rights, including by impeding the work and endangering development, peacebuilding and impartial humanitarian action and civil society.”
2. Observations of the relationship, positive or negative, between the UN counter-terrorism architecture and normative regulatory frameworks with the anticipated goals and objectives of “*Our Common Agenda*” and in particular regarding the “promoting peace and preventing conflict” elements of the Agenda.

The UN counter-terrorism and peacebuilding architectures require the introduction of evidence-based investments in prevention. The cost of inaction and the lack of Early Childhood Development (ECD) services availability can be dramatic for individuals and families, but more over for communities and nations. The introduction of Early Childhood Development (ECD) as a key preventive strategy would mean a needed bold doctrinal change in such architecture with benefits for generations to come. Investing in the early years generates exceptionally high economic and social returns. Therefore, this investment generates a more cohesive society with a reduced risk of violence and conflict. Research has also uncovered widespread [resilience](https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Flink.springer.com%2Farticle%2F10.1007%2Fs11920-021-01283-3&data=05%7C01%7Cshemrah.fallon%40yale.edu%7C2fcdb61375b74364035908da59790ab9%7Cdd8cbebb21394df8b4114e3e87abeb5c%7C0%7C0%7C637920674614877139%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=dD8LTgn0UAqlfq%2BT6KHmc3xiUPUxzEVoNyCndCTjQ68%3D&reserved=0) and even increased [prosocial behavior among children exposed to war and violence](https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Flink.springer.com%2Farticle%2F10.1007%2Fs00787-020-01649-7&data=05%7C01%7Cshemrah.fallon%40yale.edu%7C2fcdb61375b74364035908da59790ab9%7Cdd8cbebb21394df8b4114e3e87abeb5c%7C0%7C0%7C637920674614877139%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=jpMRpuRUt2sNx7zzuq%2BjaV0LtTN0gSpoIjIUERYKeWQ%3D&reserved=0);

1. Inputs related to the impact of normative legal standards related to counter-terrorism on the protection of human rights and humanitarian law in situations of conflict, conflict prevention or resolution, negotiated settlement of conflicts, or peacebuilding.

Creating a normative framework that provides children with environments conducive to development for the youngest to reach their full potential could be transformational for societies. Laws and regulations such as family friendly policies, support of caregivers and multisectoral evidence-based interventions within the [Nurturing Care Framework](https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fnurturing-care.org%2F&data=05%7C01%7Cshemrah.fallon%40yale.edu%7C2fcdb61375b74364035908da59790ab9%7Cdd8cbebb21394df8b4114e3e87abeb5c%7C0%7C0%7C637920674614877139%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=cCVJN%2BXQTIUJ7a2MQFd6xwNKYwuR2posxmTGmkWaFLA%3D&reserved=0) bears the potential of violence reduction at scale around the world. The introduction of Early Childhood Development (ECD) as a key preventive strategy would mean a needed bold doctrinal change in such architecture with benefits for generations to come.

1. Assessment of the manner in which counter-terrorism technical assistance and capacity building may impact on the advancement of peacebuilding, sustaining peace, conflict prevention or resolution in complex conflict contexts, this may include observations on peacekeeping where relevant.

Sustainability of peace and social cohesion can be more predictable if anchored in evidence-based programmes, such as Early Childhood Development (ECD) as a key preventive strategy against violence, conflict, and terrorism.

1. Assessment of counter-terrorism frameworks on the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda, in particular the protection of youth under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the role of youth in fragile and conflicted societies.

Interventions with youth are essential but might not be the most efficient investment. The youngest children and their brain plasticity provide a unique window of opportunity to increase empathy, to improve gender equality, to strengthen cognitive, social, and physical outcomes so children have more opportunities to achieve their potential as healthier happier more peaceful citizens in more cohesive and peaceful societies.

1. Assessment of counter-terrorism frameworks on the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, in particular the work of women peacebuilders, peacemakers and the rights of women and girls under the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against women and the UN Security Council WPS Agenda.

Women bear the biggest burdens of child rearing and home upkeeping. Family friendly policies and Early Childhood Development (ECD) services benefit not only children and their development with positive long-life impacts, but also positive outcomes for women, spouses, families, and communities. In the long-term, Early Childhood Development (ECD) has also a significant impact to improve social cohesion, and therefore conflict and terrorism prevention.

**For more information and evidence on this topic:**

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3. Donaldson C, Affolter F, Salah R, Britto PR, Leckman JF, Connolly P, Fitzpatrick S, & Walmsley P. (2018). [Contributions of early childhood development programming to sustainable peace and development](https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fecdpeace.org%2Fcontributions-early-childhood-development-programming-sustainable-peace-and-development&data=05%7C01%7Cshemrah.fallon%40yale.edu%7C2fcdb61375b74364035908da59790ab9%7Cdd8cbebb21394df8b4114e3e87abeb5c%7C0%7C0%7C637920674614877139%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=%2BRoOUpQ7nFgn7suWNgu1tke7PbclwPaP6L%2Br6YiB6CQ%3D&reserved=0). New York: Early Childhood Peace Consortium.
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