

Perspectives on the Impact of COVID-19 on Young Children and Early Childhood Development in the Asia-Pacific Region

Views of the ECD community

June 2020



ARNEC
Asia-Pacific Regional Network
for Early Childhood

Objectives

To gain insights and share experiences on the situation of children and the status of ECD as a result of COVID-19 and on the resulting containment and risk mitigation measures being implemented in countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

To develop context-specific advocacy messages, strategies and interventions for young children and their families and caregivers at the sub-regional and regional levels.



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Target Respondents



Respondents included ECD practitioners and experts from the ECD community (e.g. governments, civil society organizations/non-governmental organizations, foundations, donors, the academe, practitioners, and advocates, among others)

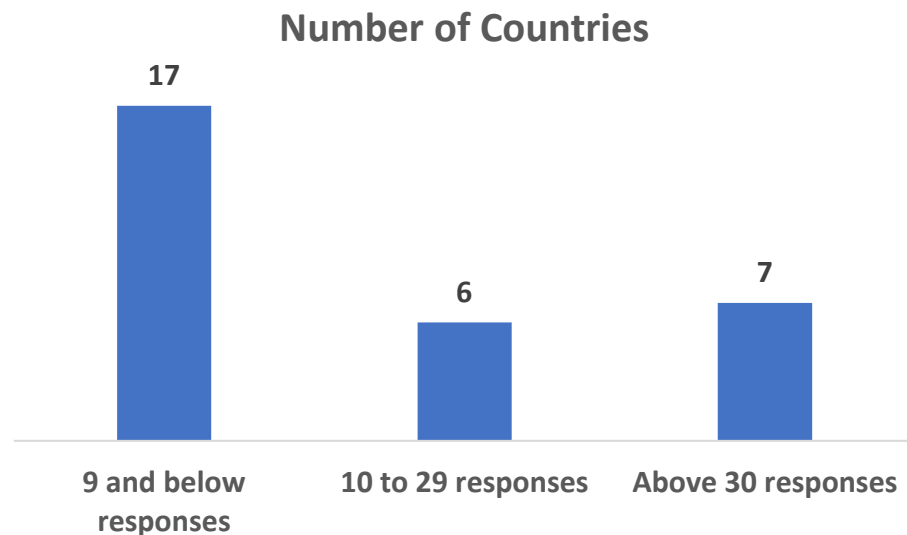


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Responses Collected

684 completed responses from 30 countries. Seven countries with more than 30 responses each. The countries with the most responses were Bhutan, the Philippines and India.



Sub-regions' count:

South Asia - 414 responses

Southeast Asia - 246 responses

Other parts of Asia-Pacific - 24 responses

Due to the low count of responses in other sub-regions, only the South Asia and Southeast Asia subregions are highlighted in the analysis.

Countries' count:

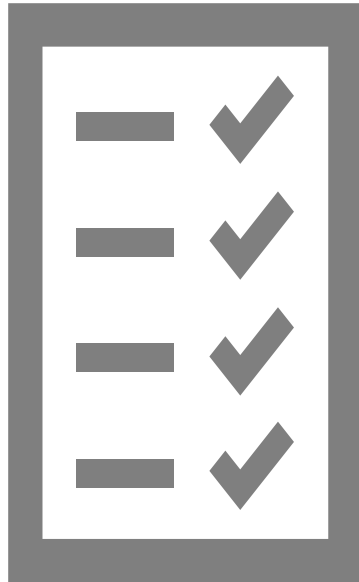
17 countries with less than 10 responses each.

Only countries with at least 10 responses are used to draw insights specific to countries.

Only countries with at least 30 responses will have their own country report.

This survey research...

...gives voice and visibility to the ECD community in the region



...but does not claim to be 'representative' because of the following realities/limitations during the pandemic

1. Participation to the survey was on voluntary basis.
2. English language was used and translation to other national languages was not done.
3. An online survey was a method of convenience in view of the pandemic.
4. The survey was open only for 3 weeks.



Profiles of Respondents

Type of organizations represented
by respondents



32%

Representatives from the
government



28%

Representatives from Early
Childhood Education
institutions

Respondents' role in their
organizations



37%

Educators



15%

Top managers or
directors in their
organisations



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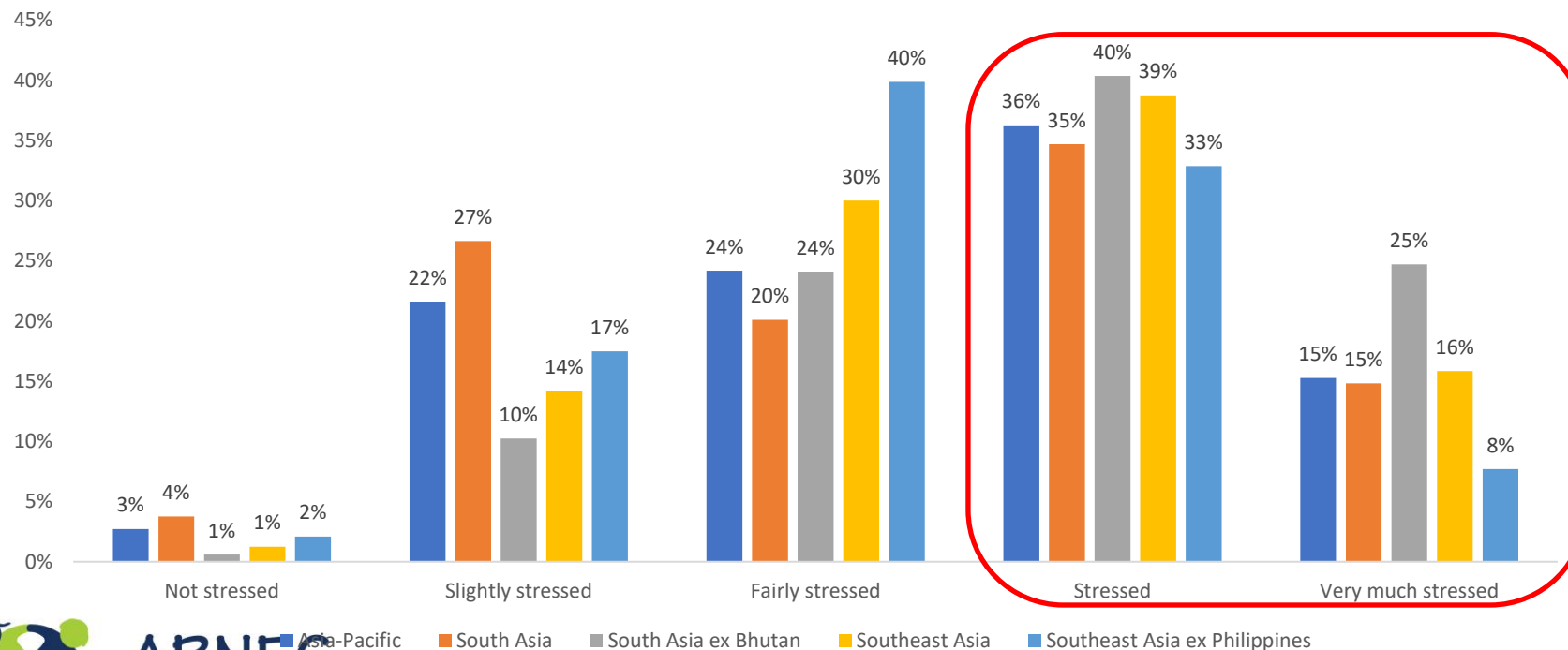


N.B.: The other types of organisation are
disaggregated in slide 13

Stress Level Experienced by Families

Finding 1: More than 50% of ECD respondents in the Asia-Pacific region assess families as under pandemic induced stress - stressed and very much stressed. Respondents from Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and the Philippines assess families as the worst off, with over 70% of respondents assessing families to be under significant stress.

ECD Respondents' Assessment of Families' Stress Levels



Percentage of ECD respondents assessing families at the various stress levels

Country	Stressed & very much stressed
Bangladesh	79%
Bhutan	39%
Brunei Darussalam	10%
Cambodia	57%
India	73%
Indonesia	38%
Malaysia	67%
Nepal	45%
Pakistan	80%
Philippines	75%
Singapore	34%
Sri Lanka	33%
Viet Nam	18%
Region	Stressed & very much stressed
Asia Pacific	52%
South Asia	49%
South Asia ex Bhutan	65%
Southeast Asia	55%
Southeast Asia ex Philippines	41%

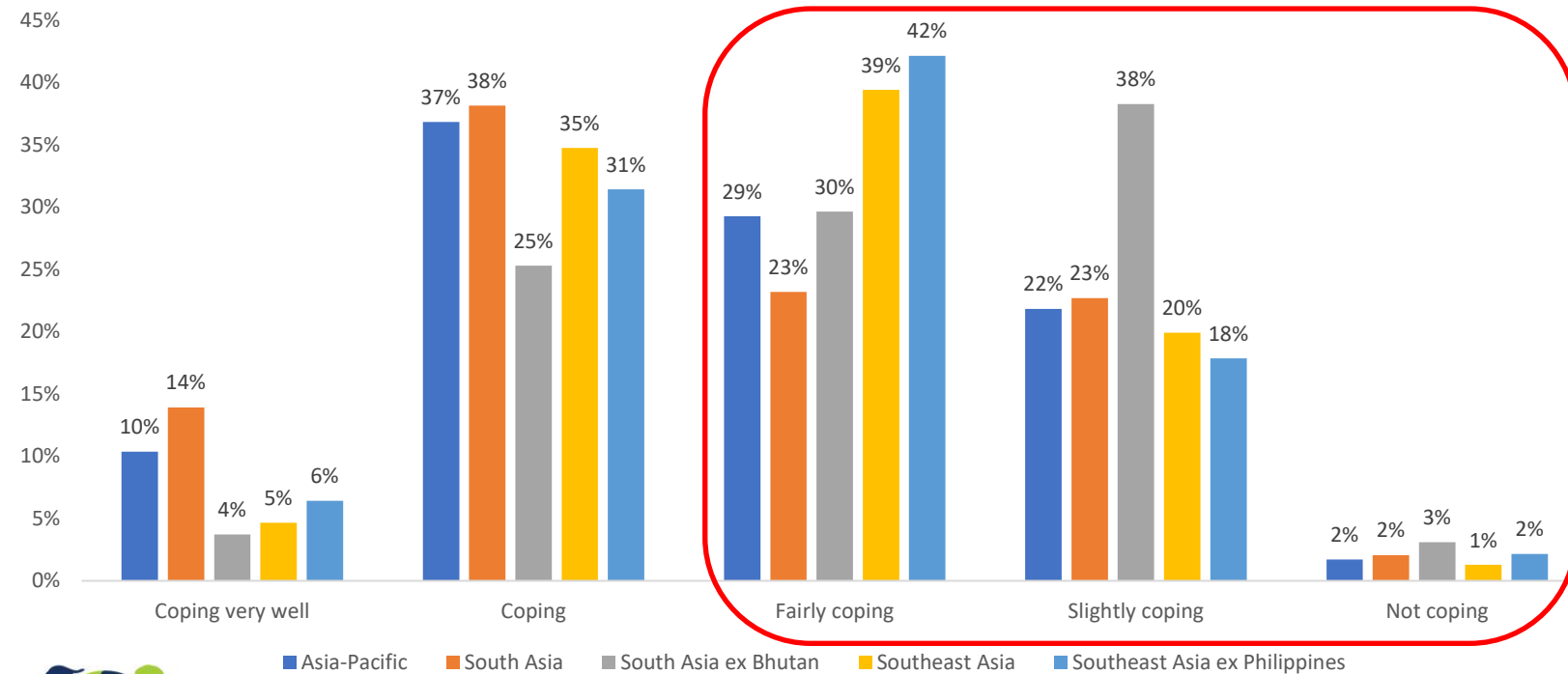


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Coping Ability of Families

Finding 2: Over 50% of respondents in Asia-Pacific region assess families to be facing challenges in coping under the heightened stress. Respondents from Pakistan, India and Bangladesh assess families to have difficulty coping while those from Bhutan and Brunei assess families to be coping relatively well.

ECD Respondents' Assessment of Coping Abilities of Families



Percentage of ECD respondents assessing families' coping abilities

Country	Coping very well	Fairly, Slightly or Not Coping
Bangladesh	0%	48%
Bhutan	21%	13%
Brunei	20%	10%
Darussalam	0%	21%
Cambodia	2%	47%
India	3%	37%
Indonesia	4%	24%
Malaysia	8%	27%
Nepal	6%	50%
Pakistan	2%	23%
Philippines	3%	6%
Singapore	8%	25%
Sri Lanka	13%	6%
Viet Nam		

Region	Coping very well	Fairly, Slightly or Not Coping
Asia-Pacific	10%	53%
South Asia	14%	48%
South Asia ex Bhutan	4%	71%
Southeast Asia	5%	61%
Southeast Asia ex Philippines	6%	62%

Factors Contributing to Family Stress

Finding 3: Income losses, school/ECD center closures, and prolonged home stay are top reasons for family stress in the Asia-Pacific region. Food insecurity is also significantly contributing to stress for families in India, the Philippines, and Bangladesh.

Country*	BG	BT	BN	KH	IN	ID	MY	NP	PK	PH	SG	LK	VN
Inadequate relief/response from social protection/welfare services	41%	15%	0%	43%	40%	10%	11%	38%	10%	46%	3%	23%	12%
More difficulty in guaranteeing sanitation	2%	18%	10%	7%	7%	3%	7%	0%	5%	2%	0%	8%	6%
Inadequate food/looming hunger	59%	10%	10%	29%	84%	26%	22%	38%	30%	65%	9%	38%	6%
Higher childcare burden at home	12%	38%	60%	50%	29%	52%	63%	22%	25%	9%	54%	38%	47%
Poor government handling of COVID-19 prevention/containment	34%	4%	0%	7%	9%	32%	0%	35%	20%	26%	3%	0%	0%
Limited knowledge or awareness of COVID-19 pandemic	41%	27%	10%	43%	27%	16%	7%	24%	25%	18%	9%	23%	0%
More difficulty in accessing safe water	2%	11%	0%	0%	2%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
More difficult or limited access to healthcare	59%	16%	10%	29%	40%	35%	19%	54%	45%	40%	6%	23%	24%
School/ECD centre closures	56%	78%	100%	86%	42%	52%	93%	76%	55%	45%	74%	77%	94%
Work stoppage/loss of income/limited savings	90%	66%	50%	71%	96%	77%	96%	65%	85%	91%	77%	92%	100%
Prolonged home stay/limited mobility	56%	56%	60%	21%	49%	58%	63%	68%	55%	53%	89%	54%	82%
Disrupted family routine	20%	28%	60%	36%	27%	58%	59%	32%	40%	34%	86%	46%	59%

*Isocode of the countries are Bangladesh (BG), Bhutan (BT), Brunei Darussalam (BN), Cambodia (KH), India (IN), Indonesia (ID), Malaysia (MY), Nepal (NP), Pakistan (PK), Philippines (PH), Singapore (SG), Sri Lanka (LK) and Viet Nam (VN).



Colours approximating orange and red hues mean high responses for factors contributing to family stress, based on the views of the ECD community in the region

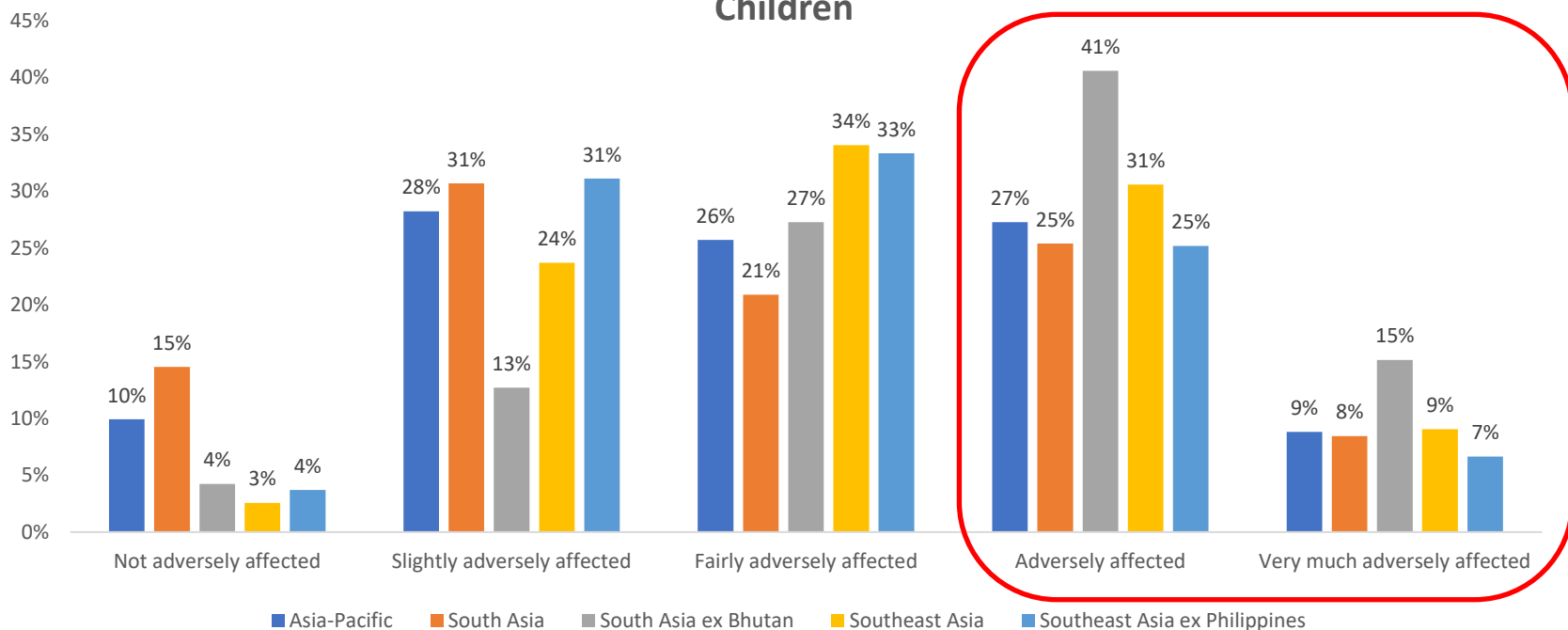


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Affected Level of Young Children

Finding 4: Young children are not shielded from COVID-induced family stresses

ECD Respondents' Assessment of Adversely Affected Levels of Young Children



Percentage of ECD respondents assessing how young children are adversely affected by the family stress caused by the pandemic

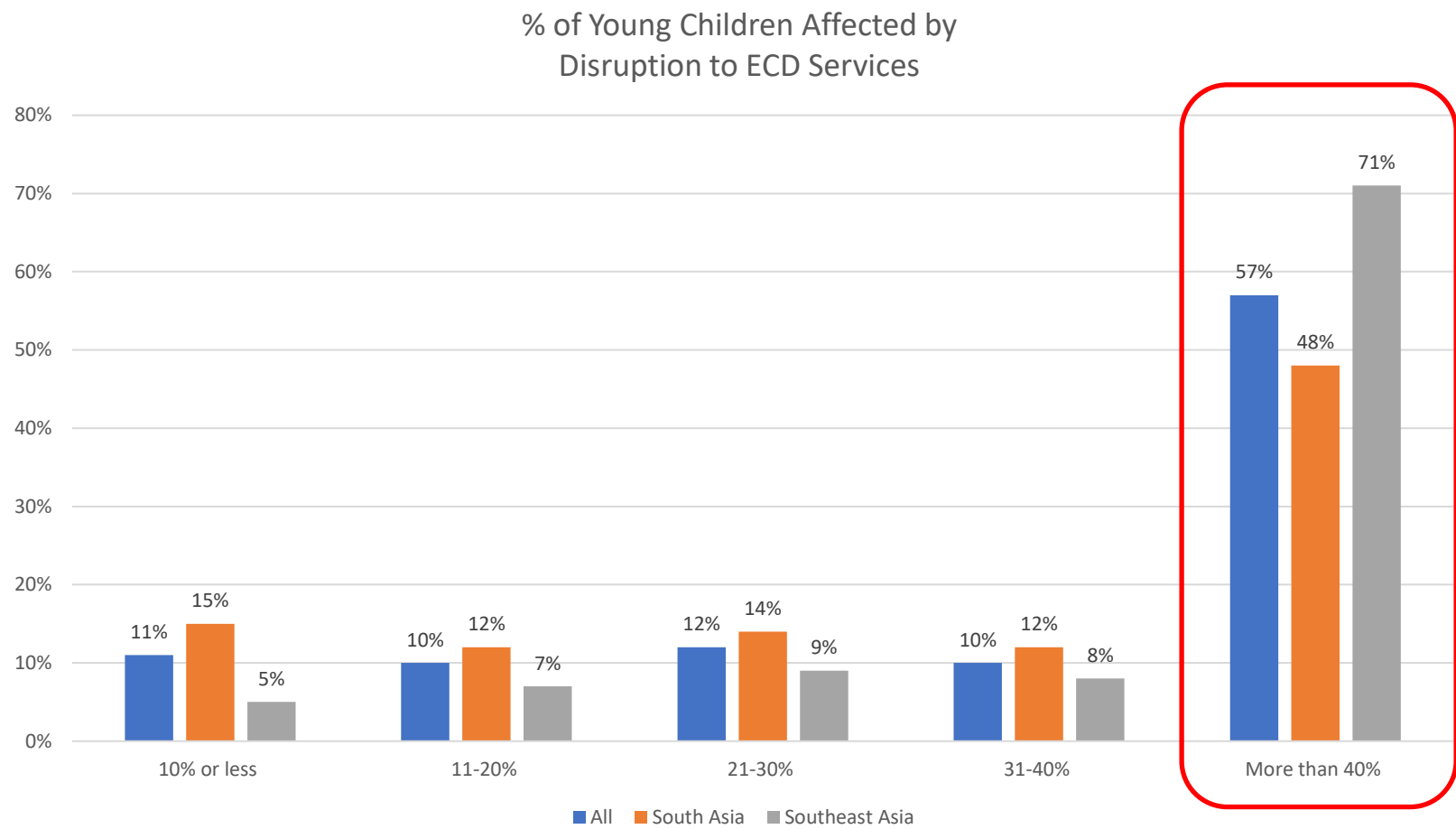
Country	Adversely & very much adversely affected
Bangladesh	66%
Bhutan	17%
Brunei Darussalam	25%
Cambodia	58%
India	63%
Indonesia	44%
Malaysia	36%
Nepal	50%
Pakistan	42%
Philippines	50%
Singapore	16%
Sri Lanka	25%
Viet Nam	6%
Region	Adversely & very much adversely affected
Asia Pacific	36%
South Asia	34%
South Asia ex Bhutan	56%
Southeast Asia	40%
Southeast Asia ex Philippines	32%



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Percentage of Young Children Affected by Disruption to ECD Services

Finding 5: More than 40% of children are assessed to be affected by disrupted ECD services across the Asia-Pacific region.



ECD Services Disrupted (1)

Finding 6: Day care and early learning services for children from 0 to 8 years old are the most disrupted services for children in the Asia-Pacific region.

Region	All	South Asia	South Asia Ex Bhutan	Southeast Asia	Southeast Asia ex Philippines
Care and special assistance for children with developmental difficulties and disabilities	38%	34%	44%	44%	45%
Care-seeking for sick children	18%	20%	33%	16%	13%
Centre-based health and nutrition services	27%	29%	43%	24%	18%
Day-care/ECD services for children 0-3	53%	52%	49%	57%	64%
Early learning in primary school for children aged 6-8	48%	43%	59%	54%	61%
Micronutrient supplementation	9%	8%	11%	10%	5%
Play, reading and story-telling groups for caregivers and children (including toy making and community playgroups)	27%	28%	18%	25%	25%
Pre-primary education for children 4-6	56%	50%	63%	65%	73%
Programmes to diminish or mitigate the effects of domestic violence (e.g. among intimate partners and towards children)	8%	7%	14%	8%	7%
Programmes to ensure food security	17%	17%	28%	17%	10%
Provision of safe water and sanitation	7%	8%	3%	4%	5%
Responsive feeding and caregiving (including home visits)	16%	17%	14%	14%	11%
Social care services	12%	14%	9%	9%	7%
Social support from other families and the community	26%	29%	28%	21%	18%
Support for caregivers' mental health	16%	15%	19%	20%	22%
Training programs for ECD teachers/facilitators	34%	30%	19%	37%	39%



Colours approximating orange and red hues mean high responses for factors contributing to family stress, based on the views of the ECD community in the region



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ECD Services Disrupted (2) - By Type of Organizations

Finding 6: Day care and early learning services for children from 0 to 8 years old are the most disrupted services for children in the Asia-Pacific region.

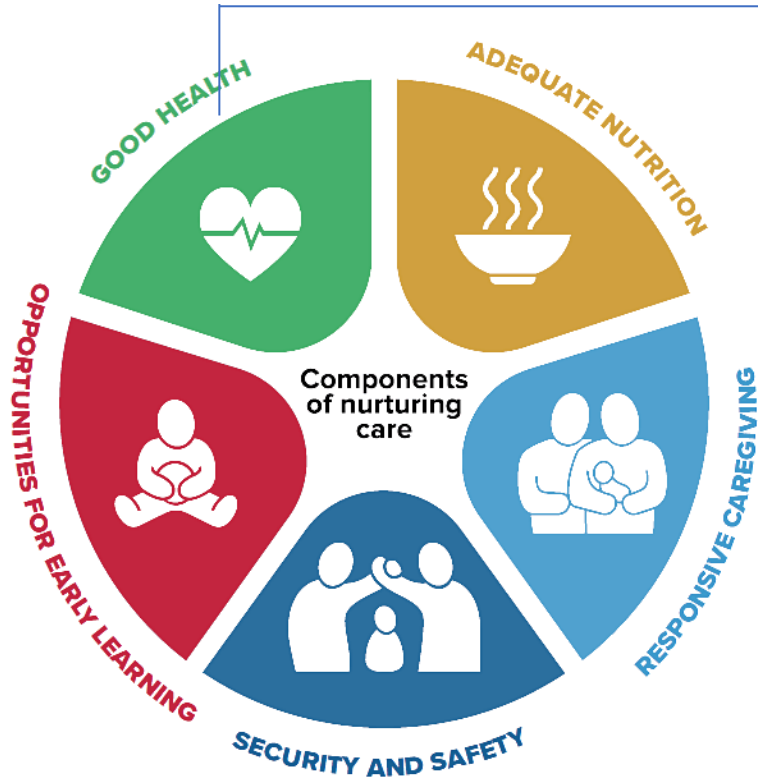
Note: Differentiated by types of organisations that respondents came from

Type of Org	All	Early Childhood Education Institution	Foundation	Government	International agencies	International NGO	Local NGO	Research Institution	Others
Care and special assistance for children with developmental difficulties and disabilities	38%	41%	30%	33%	62%	38%	41%	32%	45%
Care-seeking for sick children	18%	12%	10%	17%	19%	26%	25%	24%	24%
Centre-based health and nutrition services	27%	21%	40%	21%	52%	35%	46%	24%	25%
Day-care/ECD services for children 0-3	53%	56%	65%	50%	62%	55%	43%	64%	53%
Early learning in primary school for children aged 6-8	48%	43%	65%	38%	62%	62%	58%	48%	58%
Micronutrient supplementation	9%	4%	15%	11%	14%	7%	16%	4%	7%
Play, reading and story-telling groups for caregivers and children	27%	34%	15%	30%	14%	18%	20%	24%	25%
Pre-primary education for children 4-6	56%	50%	80%	48%	62%	67%	62%	60%	76%
Programmes to diminish or mitigate the effects of domestic violence	8%	6%	15%	5%	19%	13%	14%	8%	2%
Programmes to ensure food security	17%	12%	10%	15%	14%	26%	29%	16%	15%
Provision of safe water and sanitation	7%	6%	0%	10%	10%	6%	4%	0%	4%
Responsive feeding and caregiving (including home visits)	16%	15%	45%	17%	10%	17%	22%	20%	4%
Social care services	12%	15%	10%	11%	10%	12%	4%	12%	13%
Social support from other families and the community	26%	27%	15%	27%	19%	27%	23%	12%	29%
Support for caregivers' mental health	16%	18%	10%	10%	14%	26%	25%	20%	13%
Training programs for ECD teachers/facilitator	34%	37%	30%	34%	38%	31%	23%	40%	33%
Total Count	684	194	20	216	21	84	69	25	55



Impacts on Young Children (1)

Finding 7: COVID-19 is having a significant impact on the nurturing care of young children.



- Reduced access to healthcare services/facilities
- Reduced access to childhood immunisation
- Fear/risk of COVID-19 infection

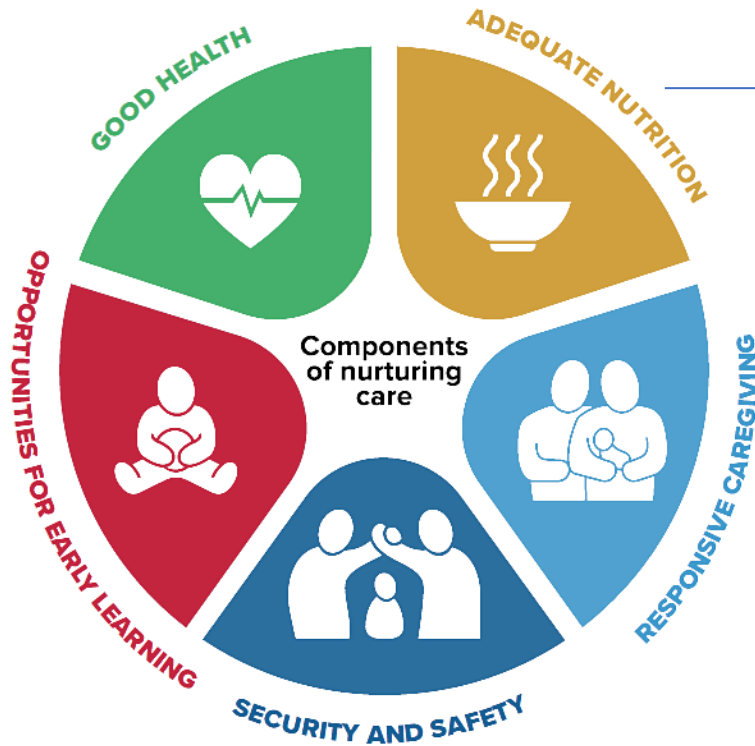


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Impacts on Young Children (1)

Finding 7: COVID-19 is having a significant impact on the nurturing care of young children.



- Reduced access to nutritious food
- Disrupted school/centre meal programmes
- Increased food insecurity, especially for the poor



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Impacts on Young Children (1)

Finding 7: COVID-19 is having a significant impact on the nurturing care of young children.



- Caregiving stress borne by parents/caregivers
- Challenge in accessing caregivers
- Lack of caregiving at home, especially for working parents



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Impacts on Young Children (1)

Finding 7: COVID-19 is having a significant impact on the nurturing care of young children.



- Increased vulnerability to domestic violence, child abuse and toxic stress
- Lack of parental supervision for children with working parents
- Increased vulnerability of children to online sexual exploitation

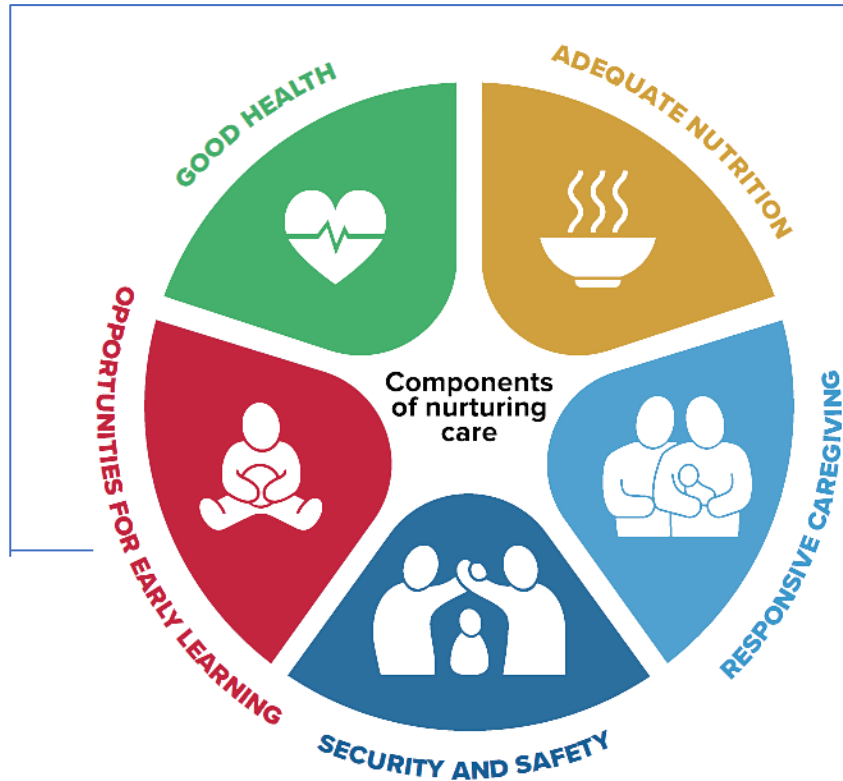


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Impacts on Young Children (1)

Finding 7: COVID-19 is having a significant impact on the nurturing care of young children.



- Disrupted learning routines
- Lack of quality cognitive stimulations and early learning, especially for children with uneducated caregivers
- Inability to access online learning



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Impact on Young Children and their Families Living in Poverty and/or with Disability

Finding 8: Young children from marginalised families and communities bear a heavy 'pandemic burden'.



**Families living in
poverty**



Respondents say young children experience...

- Increased food insecurity
- Reduced access to healthy food
- No access to learning facilities
- Worsened state
- Unmet basic needs



**Children with
disability/special needs**



Respondents say young children experience...

- No/reduced access to therapy/facilities
- Lack of attention/support on their special needs
- Neglect
- Regression of skills

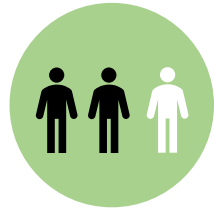


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Impact on Young Children and their Families

Excluded based on Gender, Language, Religion and/or Ethnicity

Finding 8: Young children from marginalised families and communities bear a heavy 'pandemic burden'.



Families excluded on the basis of language, religion and/or ethnicity

Respondents say young children experience...

- Increased isolation/exclusion
- Discrimination
- No/reduced access to government/social and welfare support
- Increased food insecurity
- Reduced access to healthcare facilities
- No/limited access to COVID-19 information



Children excluded on the basis of gender

Respondents say young children experience...

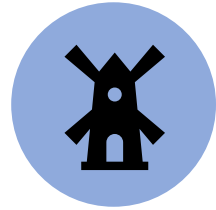
- Increased isolation/exclusion
- Increased vulnerability to domestic violence/abuse
- Food insecurity
- Discrimination
- Worsened state



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Impact on Young Children and their Families Living in Informal Settlements and/or Rural Areas

Finding 8: Young children from marginalised families and communities bear a heavy 'pandemic burden'.



**Children and families
living in informal
settlements**

Respondents say young children experience...

- Higher risk of infection
- Increased food insecurity
- Inability to practice social distancing
- Lack of sanitation
- Limited access to basic services/facilities



**Children and families
living in rural and
remote areas**

Respondents say young children experience...

- No/reduced access to learning facilities
- Increased food insecurity
- No/reduced access to information
- No/reduced access to healthcare facilities
- No/reduced access to basic facilities



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Return of unemployed migrant workers

Finding 8: Young children from marginalised families and communities bear a heavy 'pandemic burden'.



Children living with migrant workers in the family

Respondents say young children experience...

- Unsafe travel to home
- Difficulty adapting to A new environment at home
- Increased vulnerability to domestic violence/abuse
- Increased food insecurity



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Channels/Platforms to Reach Out

Finding 9: Across the Asia-Pacific region, television and social media are the two top channels to reach out to young children and their families and caregivers. Social media and online platforms are two top channels for reaching out to policymakers. Radio is an important channel in Nepal and Pakistan, while print is an important channel in Sri Lanka and Viet Nam.

	Household (e.g. young children, caregivers)		Non-household (e.g. policymakers)	
	1st	2nd	1st	2 nd
All	Television	Social media	Social media	Online platforms
South Asia	Television	Social media	Social media	Online platforms
Southeast Asia	Television	Social media	Social media	Online platforms
Bangladesh	Television	Social media	Online platforms	Social media
Bhutan	Television	Social media	Social media	Television
Brunei Darussalam	Online platforms	Online platforms	Social media	Mobile apps
Cambodia	Social media	Television	Social media	Online platforms
East Asia	Television	Online platforms	Online platforms	Online platforms
India	Television	Mobile apps	Online platforms	Social media
Indonesia	Television	Social media	Online platforms	Social media
Malaysia	Online platforms	Social media	Online platforms	Social media
Nepal	Radio	Television	Online platforms	Social media
Pakistan	Television	Radio	Social media	Online platforms
Philippines	Television	Social media	Social media	Online platforms
Singapore	Television	Social media	Online platforms	Social media
Sri Lanka	Television	Print	Online platforms	Print
Viet Nam	Television	Social media	Online platforms	Print



Recommendations

Priority action 1: Support adequate cognitive stimulation and early learning by developing resources for home- based learning, particularly for rural communities and those that have limited or no connectivity.

Priority action 2: Provide support for healthcare services including access to emergency health services, nutrition services and childhood immunization as well as education on COVID-19.

Priority action 3: Ensure that young children are safe and protected at home, particularly for those staying with abusive parents and in toxic environments.

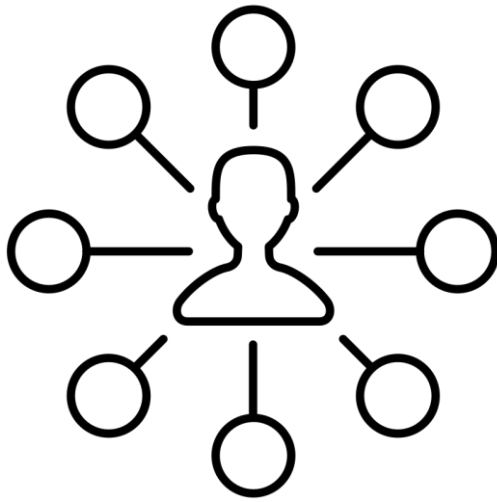
Priority action 4: Address food insecurity and nutrition support with programmes such as cash transfers, food, and supplements distribution, especially those living in poverty.

Priority action 5: Make childcare services available to support parents and caregivers; support caregivers' wellbeing and mental health.

Priority action 6: Have stronger focus on the most vulnerable groups including children with disabilities and special needs; families and children excluded on the basis of language, religion, gender and/or ethnicity; families of migrant workers; and those living in informal settlements as well as those in rural and remote areas.



Recommendation for ARNEC



Continue to provide a network/platform for sharing of information such as innovations, case studies, success stories and learning resources on COVID-19 response and recovery.



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This survey highlights new areas of inquiry
and pathways to post-pandemic ECD
advocacy for policy and program
transformations



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Post-Pandemic ECD advocacy

Continue supporting holistic and inclusive ECD

Protect the gains of the SDGs and reverse losses due to COVID-19

Focus on family support, parenting and caregiving, particularly recognising the critical role of responsive caregiving and that parental stress and anxiety affect children's well-being, learning, safety and security.

Address equity issues in post-pandemic ECD, particularly the impacts on young children living with poor and migrant families and those who might have been excluded on the basis of location, gender, ethnicity and language, faith, disability.

Support intersectoral policy reviews and reforms informed by evidence and lessons from the impacts of the pandemic on the ECD sector and its inter-linkages with other sectors and make the ECD sector and systems resilient.

Affirm the primacy of investing in young children and protect ECD budgets to preserve child development gains and reverse losses from the pandemic, and to forestall costs of inaction for the well-being of the youngest citizens of society



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