

A window into parenting for early childhood in China

- UNICEF-MOE ECD parenting portal and mobile APP

Why is ECD of crucial importance?

Recent neuroscience research has shown that the brain is as influenced by its environment as it is by its genetic blueprint – and that there is an early window of opportunity to provide the nourishment, stimulation and security children need for their brain to develop fully – and to help fulfill their own potential. (<http://www.unicef.cn/en/publications/education/2189.html>)



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The Ministry of Education and UNICEF jointly created an ECD parenting portal (<http://yuer.cbem.com.cn>) in 2011, followed by an offline version (ECD parenting kiosk) and a mobile APP in 2012 and 2013 respectively. Through such platforms, parents and caregivers in China, especially those living in rural areas, can have easy and timely access to ECD parenting messages covering critical issues of child nutrition, health, protection and early education.

As of 2014, the parenting portal has attracted nearly 400,000 unique visitors; ECD parenting kiosks have been set up in 140 kindergartens and community child centers across 18 provinces; and the mobile APP has been downloaded nearly 100,000 times.



科学育儿APP



Among 16 million newborns in China each year, 61% of them live in rural areas. How to ensure healthy development of all children, especially those living in impoverished and remote areas, is one of the priorities for the government of China.

The early childhood development, or ECD, context in China still requires further efforts. The China National Program for Child Development (2011-2020) has targets to reduce the mortality rate of children under five, the prevalence of anemia, stunting and underweight among children.

A recent child nutrition report has shown that the prevalence of stunting in rural areas is as high as 23%¹, the second largest number in the world. Breast feeding, as an effective approach to reduce child mortality and promote children's cognitive development, is still relatively uncommon in China². Recent surveys carried out in 4 project counties in Shanxi and Guizhou province have discovered that only 4% of children have proper and sufficient access to supplementary feeding; 42.4% families have less than two toys; and 71.1% families have less than three picture books³. In many rural areas, child rearing is still focused on offering adequate food and clothing rather than children's psychological, social emotional and cognitive development; many grandparents in rural areas taking care of children left behind by parents working in cities require better access to knowledge of scientific parenting.

¹De Onis, M. et al., 'World Health Organization's global target for reducing childhood stunting by 2025: Rationale and proposed actions', *Maternal and Child Nutrition*, vol. 9, 2013, pp. 6-26.

²Center of Health Statistics and Information, *Report on National Health Service Survey and Research*, Ministry of Health, Beijing, 2008.

³UNICEF, China-UNICEF Integrated Early Childhood Development Project Baseline Survey, Beijing, 2013.

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Why develop a portal for ECD parenting?

The portal, kiosk and APP can offer ECD parenting messages through simple and clear texts, audios and videos. With just a click of the mouse or a tap on the screen, parents could explore and address their concerns at any time. What is more important, the portal is being updated regularly, and the audio and video formats are easier for parents and caregivers who are more comfortable with visual and auditory learning.



What can I get from the ECD parenting portal?

The portal offers 269 ECD messages and 200 micro-videos covering critical issues of early childhood development from birth to age 6 years, including child care, feeding, disease prevention and treatment, planned immunization, family education, safety and protection. The contents are illustrated with animations and expert commentaries for children of different developmental stages: newborn, 1-12 months, 1-2 years, 2-3 years and 3-6 years. You are welcome to download and share everything interesting or important with your family and friends.



How can I use the ECD parenting portal?

- Find out ECD parenting tips for you and your family;
- Recommend the portal and APP to family and friends to learn more about ECD parenting;
- Put entries on your organization's web or mobile platform for non-profit purposes – please contact UNICEF for free resources.



United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

UNICEF's mandate from the United Nations General Assembly is to help children around the world realize their rights to survival, development, protection and participation. UNICEF is the world's leading agency for children, active in over 190 countries, territories and areas through country programmes and National Committees. UNICEF works to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential.

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