

Steinhardt's Yoshikawa calls for new early childhood focus in sustainable development goals

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More than 200 million of the world's children under age 5 begin life at severe risk, which threatens global aims of poverty eradication, sustainable development, and social stability, according to a new report by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, a research initiative set up at the request of the United Nations secretary-general.

In response, the initiative's work group on [early childhood](#), education, and the transition to work, co-chaired by Hirokazu Yoshikawa, a professor at the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, and Madhav Chavan, head of the education nonprofit Pratham in India, calls for member nations of the UN to establish goals to address early childhood development in its 2015-2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

"Early childhood development, other than reducing infant mortality, was not part of the Millennium Development Goals," says Yoshikawa. "Yet beyond the critical issues of [infant mortality](#) and survival, children have a right to thrive and have a chance at contributing to [sustainable development](#)."

The report, "The Future of Our Children: Lifelong, Multi-Generational Learning for Sustainable Development," synthesizes the current global research on the benefits of early childhood development programs and policies. It notes that "benefit-cost evidence suggests that early

childhood development interventions of sufficient quality could ensure that hundreds of millions of children reach their developmental potential and thereby contribute substantially to the world's future workforce."

It points to three types of early childhood interventions with demonstrated cost effectiveness: integrating a parent responsiveness and stimulation emphasis in health and nutrition programs for newborns to 3-year-olds; quality pre-primary education; and direct poverty reduction through cash transfer, paid parental leave, and other policies for families with young children.

"Children's health, learning, and behavior during the early years are the foundation for later school success and completion, close nurturing relationships with peers and adults, and the capacity to contribute to community, workplace, and society," observes Yoshikawa, a professor in Steinhardt's Department of Applied Psychology. "Early childhood is thus a critical life stage for a country's sustainable [development](#)—it is a culmination of learning for one generation embodied in the beginning of a lifetime of learning for the next."

More information: Read the full report: "The Future of Our Children: Lifelong, Multi-Generational Learning for Sustainable Development," unsdsn.org/thematicgroups/tg4/tg4_resources/

Provided by New York University

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