UNICEF’s Gender and Early Childhood Development Sections collaborated to improve the inter-sectoral programming on achieving quality childcare while enhancing women’s empowerment.

The goal is to strengthen the evidence base linking women’s economic empowerment and early childhood care to achieve mutually benefitting outcomes for mothers and their children.

This Note was generated from a rigorous Desk Review based on literature from low and middle income countries (LMICs). The review examined the critical features of the social policy environment fostering two-generational outcomes.

The results are:

1. The identification of family friendly workplace policies and quality childcare programmes that yield positive outcomes for mothers and young children (Figure 1).
2. The presentation of child-focused social protection systems as a way to achieve affordable childcare (Figure 3).
3. The promotion of a model of co-responsibility for childcare that empowers women through the redistribution of childcare responsibilities, with clearly defined roles for the state, employers, childcare centers and parents (Figure 2).
4. The construction of a expanded definition of quality childcare that takes into account women’s empowerment in combination with holistic child development (Figure 4).

This Note provides a comprehensive and integrated framework for policy and programmatic interventions to benefit women and children.

Figure 4: Constructing an Expanded Definition of Quality Childcare

10. Incorporate parenting programmes into childcare services to enhance childcare quality by promoting co-parenting and sharing of childcare responsibilities in the home.
9. Create safe and secure care and learning environments.
8. Ensure comprehensive interventions across the physical, psychosocial, and cognitive domains of early childhood development.
7. Create satisfactory and supportive communications and interactions among providers, parents, caregivers, educators and children.
6. Ensure that attention is paid to quality-enhancement measures including hiring of professional staff, maintenance of optimal staff-to-child ratios, provision of enriching curricula and materials, staff training opportunities, and decent working conditions.
5. Realize features in childcare settings that are of special interest to working families, including access; affordability; proximity; and the possibility of flexible, adjusted and extended childcare hours to cater to women’s part-time or atypical work schedules.
4. Provide universal access to affordable childcare services—utilizing schemes such as cash transfers, child allowances awarded through social protection systems, and other financial supports—to promote equity, and the principle of social inclusion through concerted outreach efforts to the most marginalized and vulnerable groups of mothers and young children.
3. Allocate adequate resources for childcare.
2. Align ECCD programmes with the standards enshrined in national policies at the distal-systems level with regard to childcare provision and gender equality.
1. Prioritize societal co-responsibility for childcare and create an enabling environment to facilitate women’s economic empowerment, autonomy and self-efficacy.
Figure 1: Family Friendly Workplace Policies and Quality Childcare Programmes

Figure 2: Model of Co-responsibility

Figure 3: Making Childcare Affordable Through the Strengthening of Child-Focused Social Protection Systems