**Improving Coordination of Early Childhood Development in Crisis Contexts:**
**Real-Time Learning Cohort with Country-Level ECD Coordination Advisors**
UVA Humanitarian Collaborative & Sesame Workshop

**Objective:** Sesame Workshop and the Humanitarian Collaborative at the University of Virginia (UVA) are partnering to better understand success factors and challenges in the coordination of early childhood development (ECD) services in crisis contexts. Together, we have launched a real-time learning cohort comprised of individuals supporting ECD coordination in Bangladesh, Colombia, Jordan, and Lebanon to generate learnings from their work and to share these learnings with key stakeholders interested in ECD in humanitarian settings. Ultimately, we aim to leverage these learnings to inform broader policy objectives to promote the improvement of ECD coordination in humanitarian response globally.

**Background:** This work is intended to advance the advocacy objectives of the Play to Learn program (PTL), a collaboration between Sesame Workshop, the LEGO Foundation, BRAC, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), and NYU Global TIES for Children. The overarching advocacy goal of PTL is to see local, national, and international humanitarian stakeholders prioritize and invest in high-quality ECD programs that utilize learning through play approaches in crisis and conflict response. We know multi-sectoral coordination at the crisis- or country-level is essential to the provision of comprehensive ECD services, and it is a key prerequisite to promote increased prioritization of and investment in ECD in humanitarian response. As such, it is critical to the success of PTL's advocacy goal to promote improved ECD coordination in crisis settings.

Therefore, Sesame Workshop launched a partnership with UVA in January 2021 to gain a better understanding of how ECD coordination models operate in a variety of humanitarian contexts. We began this work with a series of informal pre-scoping interviews with key stakeholders in the ECD in emergencies (ECDiE[1]) community, during which we found that there were no existing ECDiE coordination models ready for formal evaluation, but there was tremendous appetite to learn more about where and what coordination efforts are happening and how these efforts are progressing in real-time. These pre-scoping findings informed the launch of our real-time learning cohort in October 2021.

**Introduction to the Real-Time Learning Cohort:**
This cohort is comprised of individuals supported by Play to Learn to contribute to the following ECD coordination efforts:
- **Bangladesh:** PTL is supporting the **ECD Working Group** (ECDWG) in Cox's Bazar, which is housed under the Education Sector and includes representatives from other sectors including Nutrition, Health, WASH, Child Protection, and the Communicating with Communities (CwC) Working Group. Launched in February 2020, the ECDWG works to strengthen coordination to ensure quality ECD services for children in the Rohingya refugee camps and surrounding host community in Cox's Bazar.
- **Colombia:** Sesame and UNICEF are co-leading a new, inter-sectoral **ECD Working Group** within the Education in Emergencies Cluster, which will serve both the humanitarian response platform for the Venezuelan migration crisis (GIFMM) as well as Colombia's humanitarian architecture at-large. This ECD Working Group launched in 2021 and engages representatives from the Colombian government as an implementation partner.

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[1] Please note we are using "ECDiE" in this document as shorthand for ECD in emergencies and contexts affected by conflict and crisis more broadly.

- **Jordan:** The IRC is engaging with the **National ECD Team** convened in 2018 by the National Council for Family Affairs (NCFA) in Jordan. This task team strengthens coordination between government ministries, local NGOs, and INGOs to advance implementation of the blueprint for ECD set by the *National Strategy for Human Resource Development (2016-2025).*
- **Lebanon:** The IRC engaged with the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) in Lebanon to establish an **ECD Task Force** to improve coordination between various ECD actors and set priorities and initiatives aligned with the MoPH ECD agenda, focusing on the health and nutrition components of the Nurturing Care Framework (NCF). The Task Force launched in 2021.

In the Phase I of this real-time learning cohort (through March 2023), Sesame and UVA will:

1. **Facilitate bi-monthly cohort meetings** to discuss challenges, successes, and learnings. Ad hoc meetings may be scheduled as needed. Questions this cohort may explore include:
   - What are the specific contextual factors that affect (support or impede) ECDiE coordination? What elements of the coordination structure itself impact (support or impede) progress on ECDiE coordination?
   - To what extent are your coordination efforts directly related to: needs assessments, norms and standards for programming, planning processes (HRPs, JRPs), funding appeals, advocacy and policy efforts? Which of these areas do you think such coordination models are best positioned to address, and why?
   - What are some success factors and challenges in engagement between humanitarian actors and host governments around ECDiE coordination?
2. **Liaise with the cohort to assess and facilitate the provision of support,** including providing the cohort members with tools, resources, and capacity support. These tools and resources will be compiled and shared through a public resource hub.
3. **Synthesize and share real-time learnings** with the broader ECDiE community, including the Moving Minds Alliance and the INEE ECD Task Team, on a quarterly basis. These learnings will also be compiled and made available on a public resource hub.

Starting in January 2023, Sesame and UVA will shift into Phase II of this work. While the results of Phase I will inform specific activities during Phase II, the high-level objectives for Phase II are to:

1. Provide **humanitarian actors** with actionable examples of approaches to ECDiE coordination that can be adapted/replicated in crisis contexts globally, including a bank of resources to support implementation of these approaches (ex. ECDWG TORs, Coordinator SOWs, etc.)
2. Demonstrate the benefits of ECDiE coordination and integration to **donors** seeking to invest in innovative practice approaches to ECDiE coordination.
3. Offer **host governments** primary examples of formal models of ECD coordination between the humanitarian sector and national actors that improve outcomes for young children and caregivers in crisis-affected and host communities.