

The Early Years, Life-Long Impact: The Transformative Power of Family-Centered Early Intervention for Children with Disabilities

Date: 10 June 2026

Time: 3.00-4.15 pm

Venue: Conference Room 12, UN Headquarters

Event Organizers: Republic of Türkiye, Permanent Mission of Republic of Türkiye to the United Nations, UNICEF, Canada, Italy, Moldova, Portugal, Spain

Background and Rationale

Early childhood represents a critical opportunity to shape a child's holistic developmental process and to lay a strong foundation for the future. In order for children to fully realize their full potential, one of their most fundamental rights, they require access to healthcare and adequate nutrition, protection, safe living environments, early learning opportunities, strong and nurturing relationships with their families and caregivers, as well as opportunities for social interaction. All of these elements are essential for supporting cognitive, physical, emotional, and social development. In this regard, the early identification of developmental risks or disabilities, along with the timely provision of appropriate support services, is of vital importance to maximizing children's developmental potential.

At the global level, it is estimated that approximately 240 million children live with disabilities. In addition, millions of children are experiencing developmental risks due to factors such as malnutrition, poverty, limited access to healthcare services, and inadequate early learning opportunities. The delayed provision of early intervention services may have long-term adverse effects on children's participation in education, health, and social life. Scientific evidence demonstrates that early intervention services provided during early childhood have a strong impact on children's cognitive development, learning capacity, and social adaptation skills. Early intervention also contributes to mitigating the potential impacts of disability on children's lives and enhances their active participation in society.

Investments in early childhood development are among the most cost-effective social policy interventions. Research indicates that every unit of investment in early childhood development programmes can yield returns ranging from 4 to 16 times over the life course. Therefore, strengthening early intervention services should also be considered as a strategic investment for sustainable development.

In recent years, family-based approaches in early intervention have gained increasing importance. These approaches emphasize that children's development can be effectively supported not only through professional services but also through the active involvement of parents and caregivers. Empowering families, enhancing parents' knowledge and skills in child

development, and ensuring the active participation of caregivers significantly increase the effectiveness of early intervention programmes.

Family-based early intervention approaches are also directly linked to the implementation of the rights enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The Convention, grounded in the principles of respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and the promotion of equal opportunities, establishes obligations to ensure access to early identification, early intervention, and support services, particularly under Article 7 (Children with disabilities), Article 24 (Education), and Article 26 (Habilitation and Rehabilitation), among others.

In this context, strengthening early intervention systems emerges as a critical policy area for supporting children's developmental potential, empowering families, and building inclusive societies.

This side event will highlight the importance of family-based early intervention systems for children with developmental risks or disabilities, and will contribute to the exchange of policy approaches and implementation experiences in this field. Additionally, it will address the impact of early intervention on child development, the role of families and caregivers in the process, and the need to strengthen the capacities of institutions and professionals in delivering early intervention services. It will also provide a platform for discussion on multi-sectoral cooperation, good practices, and scaling up of the implementation for strengthening early intervention systems.

In this regard, the discussion at the side event is expected to be guided by the following questions:

1. How can early intervention systems be strengthened for children with developmental risks or disabilities?
2. How can the active participation of families and caregivers in early intervention processes be effectively supported?
3. How can effective multi-sectoral coordination be ensured among health, education, and social services?
4. How can the multidisciplinary capacities of institutions and professionals delivering early intervention services be enhanced?
5. What policy instruments and financing mechanisms can be effective in ensuring the sustainability of early intervention services at the national level?
6. How can early intervention systems contribute to the implementation of the CRPD and to strengthening the rights of children with disabilities?

* The side event is planned to be with subtitles and international sign language interpretation. It also planned to be broadcast live.

**Draft Programme of Side Event on
The Early Years, Life-Long Impact: The Transformative Power of Family-Centered Early
Intervention for Children with Disabilities**

Date: 10 June 2026

Time: 15.00-16.15

Venue: Conference Room 12

15.00-15.05	Opening
	Programme Specialist- Disability Policy and Systems Global Programme Division, UNICEF Alexandre Cote
	Deputy Executive Director of IDA Mr. Jarrod Clyne
	General Director, Ministry of Family and Social Services of Republic of Türkiye Taha Kürşad SEZEN
15.05-15.55	Video “ Family-Based National Early Intervention System in Türkiye ”
	Permanent Representative of Moldova Gheorghe Leuca
	Head of the International Affairs Unit from Directorate General for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Veronica Balmaseda
	Vice Minister for Social Action and for Inclusion H.E Clara Marques Mendes
15.55-16.10	Q&A
16.10-16.15	Closing Remarks

*Approximately 6-7 minutes are envisaged for each panelist's intervention.