



Government should back ECD programs

Submitted by Maria Barboza

In my work with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) for the past 20 years, I have seen how we can make an impact in the lives of children around the world. In 2006, I visited Afghanistan and saw our work with small children in the recently formed village school. Kids were in a classroom next to where their mothers, women in their 20s and 30s were just learning to read and write. The young children sang and recited poems. A little dark-haired girl stood out from the rest; she recited her poem with great confidence. I thought how different her life would be from her mother's, and how different the village would look if all children were given this stimulation early on.

Since 1990, U.S. international aid has saved nearly 100 million children. In that same time frame, we've seen maternal mortality rates drop 44 percent worldwide. But we can't stop there. Children need to do more than survive; they need to thrive. That's why investing in Early Childhood Development, or ECD, is so important. We need to ensure that programs overseas are equipping caregivers with age-appropriate techniques — singing, reading, playing with colorful objects to stimulate the young minds and ensure a better future. CRS integrates ECD into programs that reach children during their first 1,000 days of life up through the age of 8 years old. We have implemented that programming in 20 countries around the world, serving 1.36 million children and their families. It only costs 50 cents per child per year and the benefits of ECD programming are worth six times their cost. But the U.S. government doesn't integrate



ECD into international programs for children. We urge our members of Congress to join Reps. Castro (D-TX) and Fitzpatrick (R-PA) as co-sponsors of the forthcoming Early Childhood Development legislation.

Link: https://poststar.com/opinion/letters/letter-to-the-editor-government-should-back-eed-programs/article_229ae06f-a60a-598d-b1ea-9b9e58610695.html