Getting Ready for School
An innovative Child to Child programme to promote School Readiness and Success
Children have the right to thrive beyond survival and to contribute to the development of their communities and economies. Sustainable development does not have a chance if children do not have a chance.

There can be no sustainable development, prosperity or peace without equity – a fair chance for every child. If the most disadvantaged children do not share in progress, it will not be sustained. A basic education is the foundation from which the most disadvantaged children can hope to improve their lifetime prospects.

Completing primary school has a significant impact on later life-chances including enhanced academic performance and improved social behaviour outcomes. It leads to significant benefits for girls including delayed marriage, delayed childrearing leading to smaller families and better support for children in the next generation.

But it is estimated that 59 million children are not receiving a basic education. Why? There is overwhelming evidence that participation in early childhood education (ECE) programmes is linked to higher levels of primary school enrolment, retention and performance. Children unable to access ECE are typically less prepared for school, hold no basic foundations in literacy and numeracy and enter school without the socio-emotional skills required for learning. ECE is of particular importance for children with disabilities if they are to benefit from primary education.

To ensure children obtain these benefits, it is therefore crucial that they are adequately prepared for primary school, enrol on time and receive comprehensive, high-quality education. But nearly half the world’s children, particularly girls and marginalised populations, are unable to access good quality ECE programmes.

Recognising the lack of formal preschools and other learning opportunities for most children in developing countries, the innovative Getting Ready for School model provides cost-effective and efficient ECE to children in communities without access to formal pre-schools or other early learning opportunities.

Getting Ready for School & the Sustainable Development Goals

The Getting Ready for School programme supports progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals – in particular:

**SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.**
- 4.2: ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.
- 4.5: eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all including children in vulnerable situations.
- 4.7: ... provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.

**SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.**
- 5.1: End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.
- 5.3: Contribute to the elimination of violence in the classroom.
Getting Ready for School builds on the Child to Child concept of older children teaching/coaching younger children which in turn, improves their health, knowledge and general well-being. The concept is based on the premise that, in addition to being influenced by their parents and other adults, pre-school children are often cared for and learn from their older siblings and peers.

Older children already in primary school (Young Facilitators) are trained to actively engage with pre-school children (Young Learners) in their community. They meet regularly with the Young Learners at a school or in the community and take them through a series of fun, interactive learning games and educational activities. The programme comprises 35 sessions which can be delivered at a higher dosage (2/3 times per week) to promote accelerated learning or over a longer period, for example during the course of a school year.

Classroom teachers are trained to provide guidance and supervision to the Young Facilitators (students, typically in Grades 4–8). These teachers – often untrained and unqualified – are also equipped with a range of skills to enable them to creatively engage children in classroom learning and use alternative, non-violent approaches to discipline.

Parents and caregivers can also be engaged to promote awareness of - and increase support for - their children’s education.
Getting Ready for School can provide a low-cost method of improving school readiness in communities where early childhood educational programming is absent or unaffordable. It is a valuable resource for countries and communities seeking to increase opportunities for their young children to have better educational outcomes.

**Getting Ready for School. Program Evaluation Report
American Institutes for Research 2013**
Getting Ready for School fosters a rhythm of schooling by preparing preschool children and their families for on-time school enrolment and academic success. It was originally piloted with UNICEF in six countries (Bangladesh, China, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Tajikistan and Yemen).

It was evaluated by the American Institutes for Research using a randomised control trial methodology. The evaluation** found that Getting Ready for School promoted significant and positive outcomes for children, parents, families, teachers and schools:

- **A higher number of on-time primary enrolment for both girls and boys.** In Yemen, children involved in the programme showed significantly higher rates of on time enrolment (83% vs 34%), better social and emotional development, and higher academic performance in literacy than their peers not involved in the programme.

- **A high degree of interest, enthusiasm and very high attendance in the programme in all six countries.** In Bangladesh for example, the programme also gained a high level of family involvement. Many families contributed materials and snacks.

- **Positive impacts on children’s school readiness in all six countries.** In Yemen, these positive effects were sustained throughout the first grade.

- **Significant programme impacts**
  - is low cost
  - supports ECE for hard to reach and extremely vulnerable children – leaving no child behind
  - supports on-time enrolment which is a predictor of primary school enrolment
  - develops leadership skills in older children
  - benefits older children, parents, families, teachers, schools and communities
  - provides another model of service delivery for ECE
  - is adaptable and context-specific
  - supports the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

How can the benefits of Getting Ready for School be sustained?

Getting Ready for School is completely adaptable to the context. It comprises a core package which can be easily contextualised and built upon to address those issues facing children in particular settings.

For example, with the support of UKAID, an adapted version has been delivered in disaster-prone Sindh Province, Pakistan, incorporating additional resources on disaster risk reduction.

Between 2012-2014, Child to Child implemented Getting Ready for School in the Eastern part of Sierra Leone but was forced to stop activities when Ebola broke out. In this programme, an additional focus on life-skills education was incorporated to respond to the range of child protection issues identified through the initial needs assessment - high prevalence of FGM, early marriage, teenage pregnancy, child abuse and trafficking. This project was selected by the UN Girls Education Initiative to be showcased as a model of good practice for its impact on girls’ education.

Recently, Getting Ready for School has been shortlisted (from over 90 programmes) as one of the most innovative education programmes in West Africa working in child health, education, and violence prevention by the Center for Education Innovations (CEI) and Center for Health Market Innovations (CHMI), in collaboration with the UBS Optimus Foundation.

The evidence demonstrates that it is particularly impactful for children in especially challenging or marginalised circumstances. It could be easily adapted to provide early learning to migrant and displaced children living in camps where it would have the additional benefit of engaging adolescents who might otherwise have limited opportunities for education or other productive activities. Getting Ready for School would also be an effective model for supporting child-headed households and/or children with significant responsibility for caring for young children. Again, the model could provide significant benefits to both cohorts of children. Getting Ready for School could also be adapted to incorporate an additional focus to promote inclusion of children with disabilities.

Getting Ready for School is successful partly because it involves the direct and active participation of children as agents of change and not just communicators of health and education messages. The realities and capacity of children should be taken into account at the design stage of the project so that they can play their role effectively.

Getting Ready for School is not intended to replace comprehensive Early Childhood Development (ECD) programmes, such as kindergartens and pre-schools, in fact, it can be useful within these programmes. In line with the commitment to SDGs, Getting Ready for School can help meet the growing demand for ECE to children in poor communities who would otherwise have no access.

Providing ECE opportunities for young children is the responsibility of governments. To work well, Ministries of Education (especially at the district level) need to be involved in discussions about design and throughout implementation. This will support understanding of the critical need for quality, accessible and equitable ECE services.
What does Child to Child do?

Child to Child trains local partner organisations and assists in the contextualisation of the core Getting Ready for School toolkit and if required, the development of complementary materials.

For example, following the global pilot, Child to Child was commissioned by UNICEF Ethiopia to develop new materials on health, hygiene and nutrition to integrate into the Ethiopian Getting Ready for School project.

For further information and to discuss working with/implementing Getting Ready for School contact Tricia Young: t.young@ioe.ac.uk

To see programmes in action visit: www.childtochild.org.uk/impact/getting-ready-school-successful-programme/

To see a short film about the Getting Ready for School: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8SW4kyrLUM&feature=youtu.be

My daughter has learned a lot during this project. She has become more confident. She knows the days of the week. She counts and writes her own name. I like the songs too, and we sing them together sometimes. I will enrol my daughter in primary school next year, and I hope she will complete her Masters one day. I studied only up to class six.

Mother of a young girl participating in GRS in Bangladesh
If children do not enrol in school on time, they are much less likely to acquire a basic education with negative consequences across their lifetime.

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Child to Child is a child rights organisation that champions children’s right to be listened to and taken seriously. We believe that children should be involved in all matters which affect them. Our award-winning approach inspires them to work together to change their world, leading to healthier, safer lives and better access to education.

Based at the UCL Institute of Education, we have been equipping the world’s leading agencies (Save the Children, Unicef) to work with children in this transformative way for over 30 years.