

PEER REVIEW HISTORY

BMJ Paediatrics Open publishes all reviews undertaken for accepted manuscripts. Reviewers are asked to complete a checklist review form and are provided with free text boxes to elaborate on their assessment. These free text comments are reproduced below.

ARTICLE DETAILS

TITLE (PROVISIONAL)	Disability in children: a global problem needing a well-coordinated global action.
AUTHORS	Olusanya, Bolajoko Halpern, Ricardo Cheung, Vivian G. Nair, MKC Boo, Nem Hadders-Algra, Mijna

VERSION 1 – REVIEW

REVIEWER	Reviewer name: Dr. Abhishek Raut Institution and Country: Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences, Community Medicine Competing interests: None
REVIEW RETURNED	20-Jan-2022

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>Congratulate to the author group for identifying and advocating for a very important cause.</p> <p>It will be good if authors can cite a few references/models for what they are advocating i.e. - catalytic role of the health sector in facilitating early detection and intervention services.</p> <p>It will help the readers to gain a better understanding if the authors are able to elaborate on the concrete evidence based actions for integrated action to support children with special needs.</p> <p>For LMIC countries like India, that have a separate Ministry of Women and Child Development and a dedicated program like the Integrated Child Development Services scheme there could be value in defining specific roles for each sector for different categories of children as delineated in the Nurturing care framework e.g. - Interventions for all caregivers and children - in the domain of departments like Women and Child Development and Education sector Interventions for families and children at risk - in the domain of departments like Women and Child Development, Education sector and allied health professionals Interventions for families of children with additional needs - in the domain of Health sector where specialist services are needed.</p> <p>There could be additional such sectors/departments in respective countries and stakeholder mapping and task-sharing needs to be done, else, it may become over-whelming for the health sector particularly in the LMICs. Also another perceived threat is to ignore what needs to be done for all children and focus only on disability detection and action on that. This will also be a threat to inclusiveness.</p> <p>There is no doubting or undermining the role that health sector needs to play, however, role of Health sector should be diligently defined in the context of every country and blanket recommendation based on the HICs should be avoided.</p>
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REVIEWER	Reviewer name: Dr. Revan Mustafayev Institution and Country: Acibadem Maslak Hospital Competing interests: None
REVIEW RETURNED	23-Jan-2022

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>My sincere gratefulness to authors for a manuscript that reads very well and broadens our look at the ECD agenda. I have a few comments which I kindly request to accept as a request of a journal readership rather than an expert in the field . My sincere apologies if this is the result of my misunderstanding of the meaning of the sentence and context.</p> <p>p4. lines 14-24. As a result, a lacuna emerged that has been exploited by various ECD champions to promote discordant narratives that do not align with the extensive scientific evidence on the crucial role of the health sector in facilitating early detection and intervention services (EDIS) for all children at risk of poor development in early childhood.³ Is there an evidence beyond empirical acceptance that it is the health sector that has a crucial role in facilitating EDIS? The reference number 3 does not seem to reflect this statement that there is a vast scientific evidence on the crucial role of health system. Reference number 2 is in a better position to reflect the statement that there is a discordant narrative.</p> <p>P.4 lines 24-26: This action potentially impairs the chances of children under 5 years with disabilities for effective primary school enrolment as envisioned by SDGs. The word action here does not read well, and I stumbled upon it several times. In my opinion, the sentence talks about the situation that emerged rather than the action taken by someone, thus the word "action" might be changed to "situation" or an appropriate synonym.</p> <p>p.4 lines 44-54: The recommended core interventions are home-based psychosocial stimulation and responsive caregiving among children younger than 3 years. This ECD narrative was justified on the grounds that global estimates on children with disabilities, who are arguably at greater risk of poor development, especially in LMICs, were not available.⁵ My understanding of this piece of text in context is that a broader approach is required ("to increase the chances of children under 5 years with disabilities for effective primary school enrolment as envisioned by SDGs") rather than mere "home-based psychosocial stimulation and responsive caregiving". However this is not easily understood at first read and I would advise to make this more explicit.</p> <p>p5 lines 2-38. The paragraph can be amended by shortening because there is listing of statistics which basically tell the same thing. Too long listing may potentially disrupt the flow of thought.</p>
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REVIEWER	Reviewer name: Dr. Bahar Bingöler Institution and Country: Ankara University Faculty of Medicine, Pediatrics Competing interests: None
REVIEW RETURNED	20-Jan-2022

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>Dear Editors,</p> <p>Thank you very much for choosing me as a reviewer for this valuable editorial: "Disability in children: a global problem needing a well-coordinated global action."</p> <p>In this editorial, the authors stated that agencies such as WHO and UNICEF have an important role for reaching the determined goals and there is a necessity of working together in a synergistic manner. It is a very fact that children under 5 years and children</p>
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	<p>with special health care needs, need the greatest support. It was also stated how invaluable these supports were in LMICs.</p> <p>I have only a suggestion about a sentence in the text; “Internal rivalry and power-play among units and professionals within these agencies is also not uncommon.” In this sentence the authors indicated their personal opinions and there were no references; this sentence may need to be revised.</p> <p>Yours sincerely,</p> <p>Bahar Bingoler Pekcici, M.D.</p> <p>Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrician</p>
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VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Manuscript Reference No: bmjpo-2021-001397

Title: Disability in children: a global problem needing a well-coordinated global action.

Response to Reviewers' comments:

Reviewer #1:

1. *It will be good if authors can cite a few references/models for what they are advocating i.e. - catalytic role of the health sector in facilitating early detection and intervention services.*

Reply: We thank the reviewer for this suggestion. The significant role of the health sector is discussed in reference 4. It is equally evidenced by WHO's active engagement in the Nurturing Care Framework.

2. *It will help the readers to gain a better understanding if the authors are able to elaborate on the concrete evidence-based actions for integrated action to support children with special needs.*

Reply: This suggestion is appreciated and addressed in reference 9 which has just been published. As an editorial we are constrained by the level of details that can be provided from already published literature.

3. *For LMIC countries like India, that have a separate Ministry of Women and Child Development and a dedicated program like the Integrated Child Development Services scheme there could be value in defining specific*

roles for each sector for different categories of children as delineated in the Nurturing care framework e.g. -

Interventions for all caregivers and children - in the domain of departments like Women and Child Development and Education sector

Interventions for families and children at risk - in the domain of departments like Women and Child Development, Education sector and allied health professionals

Interventions for families of children with additional needs - in the domain of Health sector where specialist services are needed.

Reply: We thank the reviewer for this suggestion. The example in India is noted and would vary from country to country depending on how the government ministries are structured. In our view, each country should be able to determine the sectoral allocation of functions that is most practicable. The emphasis in our paper is on the need for a proper coordination among the various sectors under the leadership of the health sector to ensure effective delivery of early detection and intervention services.

- 4. There could be additional such sectors/departments in respective countries and stakeholder mapping and task-sharing needs to be done, else, it may become over-whelming for the health sector particularly in the LMICs. Also, another perceived threat is to ignore what needs to be done for all children and focus only on disability detection and action on that. This will also be a threat to inclusiveness.*

Reply: The reviewer is right in observing that the health sector alone cannot provide all the services required by children with disabilities and their families. However, the health sector needs to coordinate services assigned to other sectors to ensure that the children are well-served. We have no evidence presently to support the view that children without disabilities will be neglected as steps are being taken to address the needs of children with disabilities and their families.

- 5. There is no doubting or undermining the role that health sector needs to play, however, role of Health sector should be diligently defined in the context of every country and blanket recommendation based on the HICs should be avoided.*

Reply: Noted. We support the adaptation rather than wholesale adoption of best practices in HICs based on each country's capacity and context. LMICs can learn and modify what works in HICs rather than seek to reinvent the wheel.

Reviewer #2:

6. *I have only a suggestion about a sentence in the text: "Internal rivalry and power-play among units and professionals within these agencies is also not uncommon." In this sentence the authors indicated their personal opinions and there were no references; this sentence may need to be revised.*

Reply: This sentence has been revised as suggested (see page 5, para 1).

Reviewer #3:

7. *p4. lines 14-24. As a result, a lacuna emerged that has been exploited by various ECD champions to promote discordant narratives that do not align with the extensive scientific evidence on the crucial role of the health sector in facilitating early detection and intervention services (EDIS) for all children at risk of poor development in early childhood.³. Is there evidence beyond empirical acceptance that it is the health sector that has a crucial role in facilitating EDIS? The reference number 3 does not seem to reflect this statement that there is vast scientific evidence on the crucial role of health system. Reference number 2 is in a better position to reflect the statement that there is a discordant narrative.*

Reply: We thank the reviewer for spotting this error in referencing. Refs 2 and 3 were swapped in error and this has been corrected.

8. *P.4 lines 24-26: This action potentially impairs the chances of children under 5 years with disabilities for effective primary school enrolment as envisioned by SDGs. The word action here does not read well, and I stumbled upon it several times. In my opinion, the sentence talks about the situation that emerged rather than the action taken by someone, thus the word "action" might be changed to "situation" or an appropriate synonym.*

Reply: Revised as suggested (see page 3, para 2).

9. *p.4 lines 44-54: The recommended core interventions are home-based psychosocial stimulation and responsive caregiving among children younger than 3 years. This ECD narrative was justified on the grounds that global estimates on children with disabilities, who are arguably at greater risk of poor development, especially in LMICs, were not available.5 My understanding of this piece of text in context is that a broader approach is required ("to increase the chances of children under 5 years with disabilities for effective primary school enrolment as envisioned by SDGs") rather than mere "home-based psychosocial stimulation and responsive caregiving". However, this is not easily understood at first read and I would advise to make this more explicit.*

Reply: Done (see page 3, para 2).

10. *p5 lines 2-38. The paragraph can be amended by shortening because there is listing of statistics which basically tell the same thing. Too long listing may potentially disrupt the flow of thought.*

Reply: We thank the reviewer for this suggestion. We opted to provide as much data as possible to help the readers to appreciate the magnitude and impact of disabilities in children and need to take urgent and appropriate action. The absence of such data was used to justify the exclusion of children with disabilities in the Nurturing Care Framework at inception.