

Concept of next 1000 days

Mrudula Phadke¹, Rajalakshmi Nair², Pramila Menon³, Uday Bodhankar⁴, Purushottam Giri⁵,

¹Former HOD of Department of Pediatrics, B J Medical College Pune, Maharashtra

²Nutrition Specialist, UNICEF, Mumbai, India

³Department of Pediatrics & Medical Education, Dr D Y Patil Medical College Hospital & Research Centre Pune, Maharashtra

⁴Executive Director of Comhad, Former National President Of Indian Academy of Paediatrics, Nagpur

⁵ Department of Community Medicine, Indian Institute of Medical Science & Research Medical College, Badnapur, Jalna, Maharashtra

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR

Dr Mrudula Phadke, Former Head of Department, Pediatrics, B J Medical College Pune Maharashtra India Pin 411001.

Email: drmapaa@yahoo.com

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ABSTRACT

The importance of first 1000 days in the growth and development of children has been known for many years. Global research has shown that first 1000 days, from conception to 2 years of life of a child are crucial for the growth and brain development of the baby. These 24 months can have lasting effect on the health, wellbeing and earning potential of the child. This is the first window of opportunity as the foundation for optimum health, growth across life span is established through early childhood development (ECD) of which 1000 days is a part

KEYWORDS

Next 1000 days, first window of opportunity, early childhood development

INTRODUCTION

The importance of first 1000 days in the growth and development of children has been known for many years. Global research has shown that first 1000 days, from conception to 2 years of life of a child are crucial for the growth and brain development of the baby. These 24 months can have lasting effect on the health, wellbeing and earning potential of the child. This is the first window of opportunity as the foundation for optimum health, growth across life span is established through early childhood development (ECD) of which 1000 days is a part. During this period, right nutrition, health, immunization, responsive care, safety security and early learning are important components of nurturing care framework. Nutrition and health include pre-pregnancy and pregnancy care, delivery, early initiation and exclusive breast feeding for 6 months, optimum complementary feeding-dietary diversity and minimal meal frequency with continued breast feeding and stimulation. The approach is the continuum of care, lifecycle approach including adolescence.

Having gathered adequate scientific evidence, UNICEF in 2010 propagated and advocated the concept of 1000 days for all policy planners, health care professionals and care givers.(1,2) Govt. of India continued the advocacy, issued guidelines in 2018 (3) and Indian Academy of Pediatrics published the consensus statement on 1000 days in 2020 (4). Lancet (5) brought out a special volume on ECD including 1000 days. It stated that 43% of the world's children did not meet their fullest development

potential needing urgent attention. Thus, it helped children of the world not just "to survive but to thrive."

UNICEF Maharashtra, with Maharashtra University of Health Sciences and Director of Medical Education introduced the concept of 1000 days in undergraduate and postgraduate medical education, nursing and allied health sciences disciplines.

Now, a large number of countries have accepted and are practicing ECD with concept of 1000 days at all levels. 197 countries have adapted the nurturing care framework and have reaped rich dividends.

What are next 1000 days?(6,7,8)

Lancet in the issue of Nov. 2024 has brought out a series of papers highlighting the significance of Early Childhood Development and Next 1000 Days. The criticality and goals of nutrition and development in first 1000 days of the child's life are extended to the next 1000 days i.e. the period between 2 to 5 years of life of a child. This is the preschool and pre-primary period, wherein the sphere of his environment widens from home environment to community and preschool or nursery. The importance of this phase i.e. the next 1000 days is realised through a series of scientific evidences. It is the 2nd window of opportunity.

Following are the salient distinctive action points of next 1000days –

1. To build on the gains achieved in first 1000 days in matter of growth, development of the child and improve the trajectories. The achievements are augmented further.

2. To give an opportunity to cover those children who lost on first 1000 days, so that the missed chance can be covered to the maximum possible.
3. This is the period in the life which highlights the criticality of ECCE-early childhood care and education involving multi sectoral approach with health and education departments.
4. This period involves protection of child from environmental risk factors in the house or outside and mitigating these risks is vital. Thus, not only parents and household members, the interaction widens with community, nursery and preschool care givers as also peers. Safety and security at this period is vital.
5. Childhood disabilities, especially related to vision, hearing loss, neurocognitive dysfunction may be missed in the first 1000 days. These will get detected during the next 1000 days.
6. Growing inequality, crises, humanitarian emergencies, conflict affect this group of children and can result in consequences related to nutrition and development. Nutrition provision and counselling to prevent and treat stunting, severe acute malnutrition need to be continued. Effects of climate change, pollution are noteworthy and may exaggerate malnutrition especially double burden i.e. under nutrition and over nutrition or obesity.

It is estimated that, 25.4% children receive adequate nurturing care during 2 to 5 years in LMICs (low to middle income countries). Less than 1 in 3 children have access to developmental stimulation. 38.8% have access to early childhood education. Thus, approach should not be fragmented but a joint responsibility of health and education. Many countries like U.S.A., Argentina, Chile, Germany, Denmark, Peru, Uruguay, Colombia, Mauritius, Philippines and others have programs related to ECCE. Nutrition programs are being implemented in Australia, Kenya, Brazil, Philippines, Zanzibar, Ethiopia, Indonesia and others (8,9). The cost of not investing in next 1000 days is 8 to 19 times more than the cost of investing. Actually the cost for investing is 0.15% or less of GDP in LMICs.(9)

Policy planners, health professionals, preschool education programmers need to take suitable actions and evolve strategies for their countries.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

All authors have contributed equally.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interest.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS :

The authors haven't used any generative AI/AI assisted technologies in the writing process.

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