



Global Measurements for Peace: Positive Childhood Environments Report & Index

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
ITOTHEN CONSULTING LLC

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Executive Summary

The current state of the world is one of exacerbated conflict. According to the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), as of 2020, global peace had deteriorated for the ninth time in 12 years. The Global Peace Index reveals that conflicts are growing in complexity and duration and the United Nations asserts that COVID 19 has further deepened fragility, conflict, and violence, especially against children.

Figure 1. 2019 Statistics on Violence Against Children



Within this complexity, however, the overlap between the fundamental factors of conflict and the sources of stress that impede child development are clear, suggesting the possibility that fundamental factors of peace may also overlap with experiences that promote optimal child development.

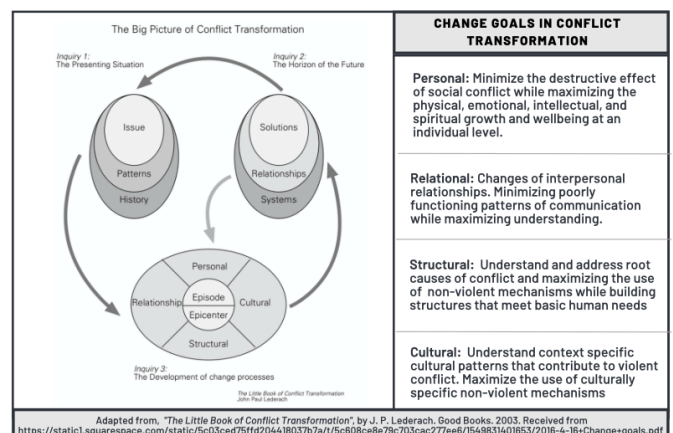
Figure 2. Fundamental Factors of Peace Overlap with Factors that Promote Child Development



Early Environments & Peace

Peacebuilding literature fundamentally supports the notion that societal harmony is centered on human well-being, behavior, and relationships. For example, when conflict occurs, family, friends, neighbors, or bystanders can be the “third side” of a conflict, as positive roles and relationships in the community can help bring about sustained peace. Beyond conflict resolution is conflict transformation, which requires the personal, relational, structural, and cultural change to end the sources of conflict and therefore build sustainable peace through prevention. The early formation of the human mind and heart is therefore analogous to the formation of peace in that creating the foundations for relational health and emotional well-being will also create the foundations for responsible citizenship and more positive interactions. This is further corroborated by substantial research in infant and child mental health which compellingly correlates early experiences and environments with brain architecture and positive future behavior, among other outcomes.

Figure 3. Conflict Transformation is Human and Relationships-Centered



The funding and implementation of peace efforts, however, prioritize the absence of violence, referred to as “negative peace”, over building the relationships, attitudes, structures, and institutions that create and sustain peaceful societies, referred to as “positive peace”. Similarly, in the field of infant and child mental health, efforts often prioritize combatting existing childhood adversity and healing the resulting trauma, over building the relationships, attitudes, structures, and institutions that prevent adversity and trauma and increase resilience.

Figure 4. Negative Peace, Positive Peace; Adverse Childhood Experiences, Positive Childhood Experiences

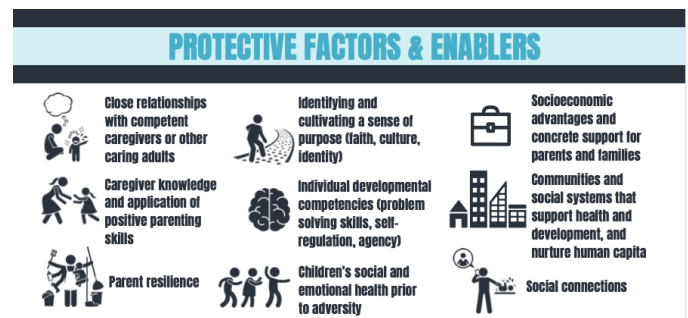


In the long term, early experiences impact our biology in a way that affects society’s long-term physical and mental health, productivity, citizenship, and the ability to be a parent to the next generation. In other words, positive childhood environments, which dictate the quality of children’s experiences, have the potential to protect children’s development, well-being, and rights, and promote long-term peace, while also advancing other global development goals.

The greater promotion of positive childhood experiences for human prosperity is critical. A study contrasting adults who had high and low numbers of positive childhood experiences concluded that positive childhood experiences resulted in 72% lower levels of adult depression and poor mental health, were 3.5 times more likely to seek social and emotional support, and a 1,200% greater chance to flourish in life.

Positive childhood experiences are most likely to occur in environments with protective and enabling factors including close relationships with competent and caring adults, social connection, parental mental health and socio-economic and community support among others.

Figure 6. Protective and Enabling Factors in Positive Childhood Environments

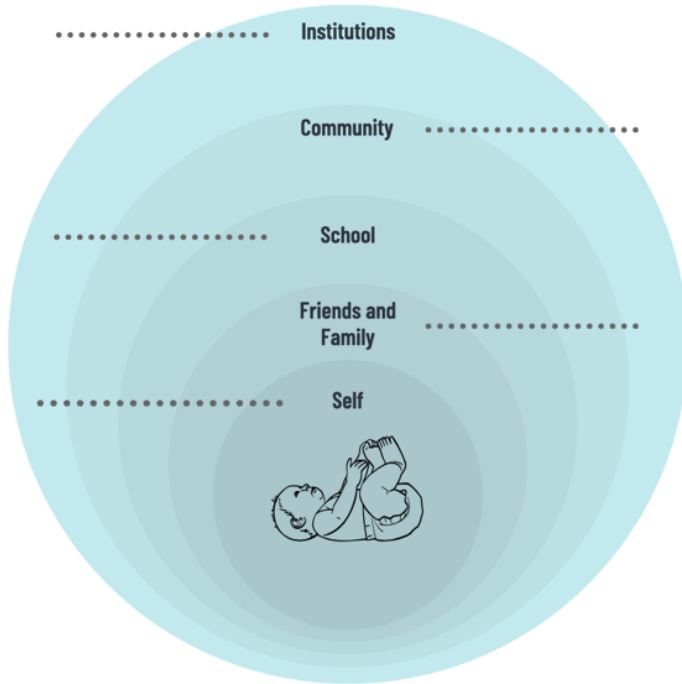


The Positive Childhood Environments for Peace Index

The Positive Childhood Environments (PCEN) for Peace Index is one of the first ever instruments measuring the quality of children’s environments exclusively for positive emotional development around the world. As such, it makes a significant contribution to the challenge of measuring emotional well-being of infants and children as engine of global peace and development. The PCEN Index is unique in that it:

- Focuses on factors that correlate with positive **emotional development** and excludes more frequently used measures of infant and child health that focus on the physical, such as nutrition, vaccination rates, disease prevalence, school enrollment and mortality rates.
- Utilizes, to the extent possible, **self-reported well-being measures**, capturing the real perceptions and emotions of children and their significant adults. The relevance of adult perceptions is that adults resort to these perceptions and emotions to guide behavior and make family and community decisions that shape a child’s environment.
- Applies **systems thinking**. The index’s framework aligns with the levels of a child’s environment using Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model. Instead of considering the most proximate causes of well-being in isolation, it conceives of a child’s environment as a composite of layers around the child and measures indicators in all of these layers.

Figure 7. Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model



The PCEN Index provides governments and development organizations an opportunity to assess progress towards a variety of international agreements and goals including but not limited to the MDG 4.2 for which UNICEF has recently released the ECD Index 2030. As such, the PCEN Index can be viewed as a complementary measurement tool that shines a light on the foundational factors that, in part, bring about the progress needed to

meet this specific goal. The framework should be viewed as an initial effort to measure countries' potential for children's well-being and intergenerational impact.

The index framework consists of six pillars or dimensions that enable environments which promote positive emotional child development and well-being.

- Positive Child-Parent Engagement and Family Environment
- High Levels of Social Connection for Parents and Children
- Child and Family-Centric Community Norms
- Good Family Mental Health and Well-Functioning Mental Health Services
- Sense of Safety for Parents and Children
- Comfortable Socioeconomic Level in the Household

These six pillars encompass 20 factors that are measured by 35 indicators from well-established global sources like UNICEF, the WHO, the OECD, the World Policy Analysis Center and Gallup. The index does not use in-country data. Since most data was in percentages, the data that was not in percentages was normalized to be between 0 and 100. The score for each pillar is the result of the simple unweighted average of the indicators, and the overall index score is calculated using the simple unweighted average of all pillars.

Figure 8. Positive Childhood Environments Index Framework



Data Challenges & Limitations of the PCEN Index

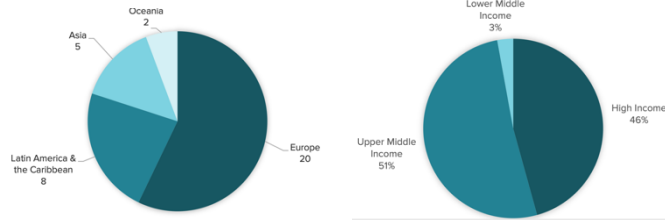
Of all 155 countries for which data was collected, only twelve countries have 70% of data or more available for each pillar and in total. Thirty-five countries have 60% or more and 55 have 50% or more. For this report, 60% data availability marks the threshold and therefore the 35

countries at 60% data availability within each pillar and in total form the basis for deeper analysis and discussion.

By 2021 World Bank classifications, the set of 35 countries has 16 high-income countries, 18 upper-middle income countries and one lower-middle income country. It has a broad geographic representation per United

Nations classifications with 20 countries in Europe, eight in Latin America & the Caribbean, five in Asia and two in Oceania. Notably, there is no representation of lower-middle and low-income countries nor countries from the Sub-Saharan, MENA, and South Asia regions.

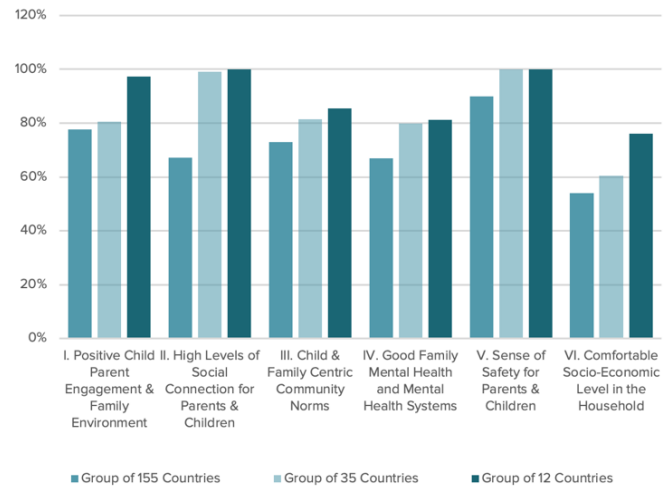
Figure 9: Number of Countries in Each World Region & Income Level, of 35 Countries



In addition, data availability varied by pillar. Across the board for all groups of countries, the two pillars with the lowest level of data availability are Good Family Mental Health & Mental Health Systems, and Comfortable Socio-Economic Level. In the Family Mental Health pillar, parent’s well-being measured as life satisfaction by satisfaction in work-life balance only had 17% of the data. The Comfortable Socio-Economic Level pillar was primarily affected by very limited data on Government Support for Families, which includes public expenditure on cash and services and on childcare and pre-primary

education (between 8% and 27% of data availability varying by group of countries).

Figure 10: Data Availability by Pillar

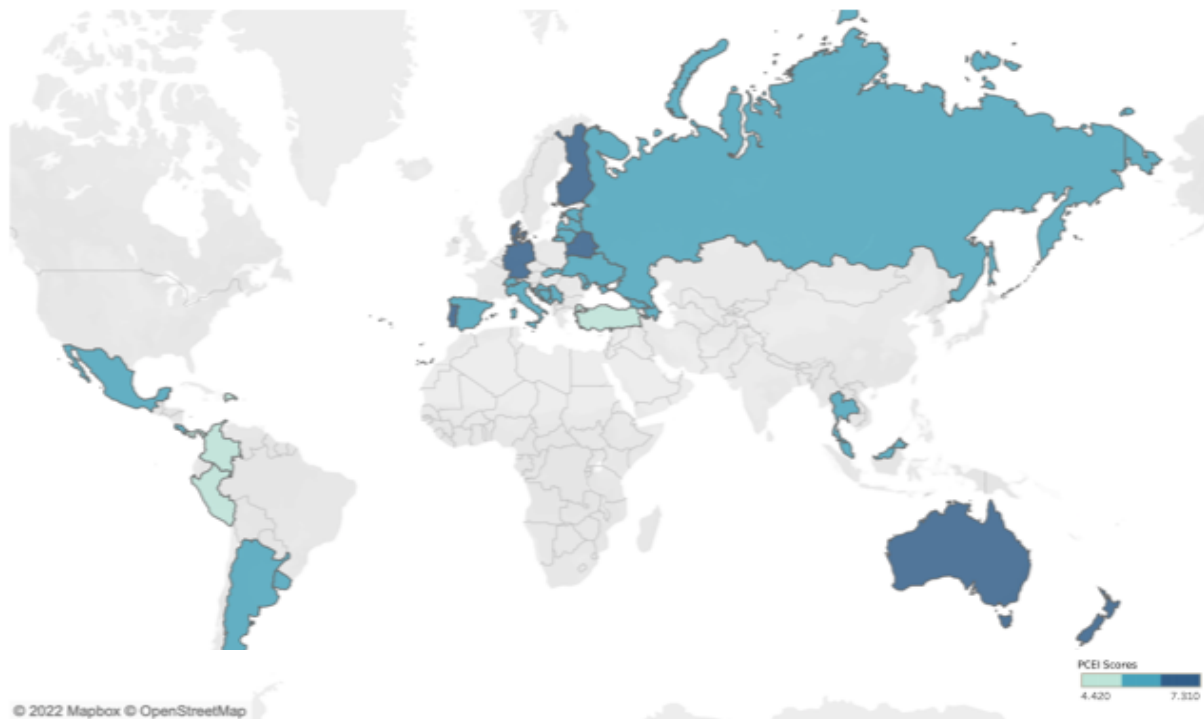


Given the limitations on data availability by region, income classification and pillar, the current scores should be viewed as an initial effort in measuring the current state of positive childhood environments around the world. The framework of the index serves as a solid structure for analysis and policy design when working on infant and children emotional well-being and mental health for a country’s long-term peace and development.

PCEN Index Results Summary

Figure 11 shows the geographical distribution of results and Table 1 shows the ranking of the 35 countries based on total PCEN Index scores.

Figure 11: Geographical Distribution of PCEN Index Results



It is no surprise that the top ten countries are high-income countries (with the exception of Belarus) and primarily European, plus New Zealand and Australia. Uruguay stands out for being the only Latin American country in the top 10 group. Among the bottom 10 countries, five are in Latin America, three in Asia (Turkey, Malaysia and Thailand) and two in Europe (Russia and

Ukraine). Ukraine, the only lower middle-income country among the bottom 10, ranks the highest in this group, which otherwise consists entirely of upper middle-income countries

Table 1 shows the country ranking by total Positive Childhood Environments Index Score.

Table 1: 2022 PCEN Index Results - Ranking

Rank	Country	TOTAL PCE INDEX SCORE	I. POSITIVE CHILD-PARENT ENGAGEMENT & FAMILY ENVIRONMENT	II. HIGH LEVELS OF SOCIAL CONNECTION	III. CHILD & FAMILY CENTRIC COMMUNITY NORMS	IV. GOOD FAMILY MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-FUNCTIONING MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEMS	V. SENSE OF SAFETY	VI. COMFORTABLE SOCIO-ECONOMIC LEVEL
1	Denmark	7.31	9.10	8.58	6.40	7.00	7.65	5.13
2	Finland	6.97	8.40	8.20	8.15	5.49	7.83	3.73
3	Germany	6.46	8.50	8.03	6.12	5.51	7.35	3.28
4	Portugal	6.45	7.65	8.42	7.70	6.00	5.93	2.98
5	Australia	6.43	7.18	8.23	8.17	5.05	6.38	3.57
6	New Zealand	6.40	7.18	8.28	7.10	5.07	6.60	4.15
7	Belarus	6.38	8.93	6.63	7.87	4.32	4.45	6.11
8	Switzerland	6.29	4.80	8.38	9.07	4.90	7.55	3.07
9	Uruguay	6.25	7.00	8.28	7.52	5.63	4.95	4.12
10	Malta	6.14	5.45	7.91	7.80	7.10	6.15	2.43
11	Estonia	6.03	8.90	7.05	6.53	4.42	5.90	3.37
12	Serbia	6.03	9.18	7.88	7.31	3.80	5.10	2.90
13	Argentina	6.02	6.32	7.97	7.36	6.50	3.93	4.07
14	Croatia	5.98	7.98	7.44	7.02	4.52	4.98	3.93
15	Bosnia and Herzegovina	5.97	8.06	7.63	7.28	5.04	4.68	3.14
16	Slovakia	5.88	8.43	7.43	6.68	5.74	4.93	2.08
17	Lithuania	5.87	8.05	6.36	6.37	5.71	5.50	3.21
18	Spain	5.85	6.29	8.67	6.03	5.62	6.25	2.23
19	Azerbaijan	5.83	9.03	7.38	7.80	3.64	6.50	0.63
20	Montenegro	5.80	9.00	7.21	7.13	3.97	5.15	2.36
21	Italy	5.78	7.48	7.82	7.10	4.51	5.30	2.49
22	Georgia	5.76	6.14	7.10	6.76	3.77	6.05	4.76
23	Latvia	5.76	8.70	7.11	7.19	4.12	4.95	2.46
24	Moldova	5.75	8.85	7.49	6.86	3.61	4.43	3.23
25	Costa Rica	5.72	5.75	8.13	6.90	5.56	4.60	3.39
26	Ukraine	5.66	8.92	7.10	5.86	4.15	3.33	4.60
27	Russia	5.61	8.93	6.83	6.82	4.62	4.33	2.18
28	Thailand	5.45	5.93	7.45	6.15	4.71	5.08	3.35
29	Mexico	5.41	5.83	7.88	6.40	4.44	3.48	4.47
30	Malaysia	5.39	4.97	7.98	6.67	3.70	6.18	2.86
31	Panama	5.35	6.08	7.95	6.56	4.60	3.90	2.98
32	Dominican Republic	5.16	6.17	7.82	7.09	4.00	3.73	2.15
33	Colombia	5.14	5.43	7.93	6.42	5.22	3.78	2.05
34	Turkey	4.87	4.71	7.40	5.17	5.54	5.50	0.90
35	Peru	4.42	5.18	7.64	3.85	3.44	2.93	3.47
35 Country Average		5.87	7.27	7.70	6.89	4.89	5.29	3.19

Denmark is the top performer, scoring 35% higher than the average. Along with Denmark, Finland and Germany occupy the top three spots. Denmark and Germany have

comparatively high scores in Pillar I: Positive Child-Parent Engagement & Family Environment and Pillar V: Sense of Safety. Denmark scores 67% higher than average in Pillar

I and 50% higher than average in Pillar V as a result of extensive paid parental leave, low parent stress, and trust in police, judicial systems, and in public safety. For the same reasons, Germany scores 45% higher than average in Pillar I and 44% higher than average in Pillar V. In addition to significantly above average scoring is Pillars I (41%) and V (54%), Finland also scores comparatively high in Pillar III: Child & Family Centric Community Norms, with a score 40% higher than the average. This is the result of their population's strong sense that children and women's rights are respected and a strong belief in the education system.

Peru is the poorest performer scoring 35% lower than the average. Along with Peru, Turkey and Colombia occupy the bottom three spots in the ranking. Peru scores 98% lower than average in Pillar III: Child & Family Centric Norms because only 30% of survey respondents believe that children are respected and that domestic violence against women is unjustified. All three countries score significantly lower than average in Pillar I: Positive Child-Parent Engagement & Family Environment with Turkey being the poorest performer in this pillar (98% lower than average) because of higher parental stress and lower levels of positive energy from family and friends. While

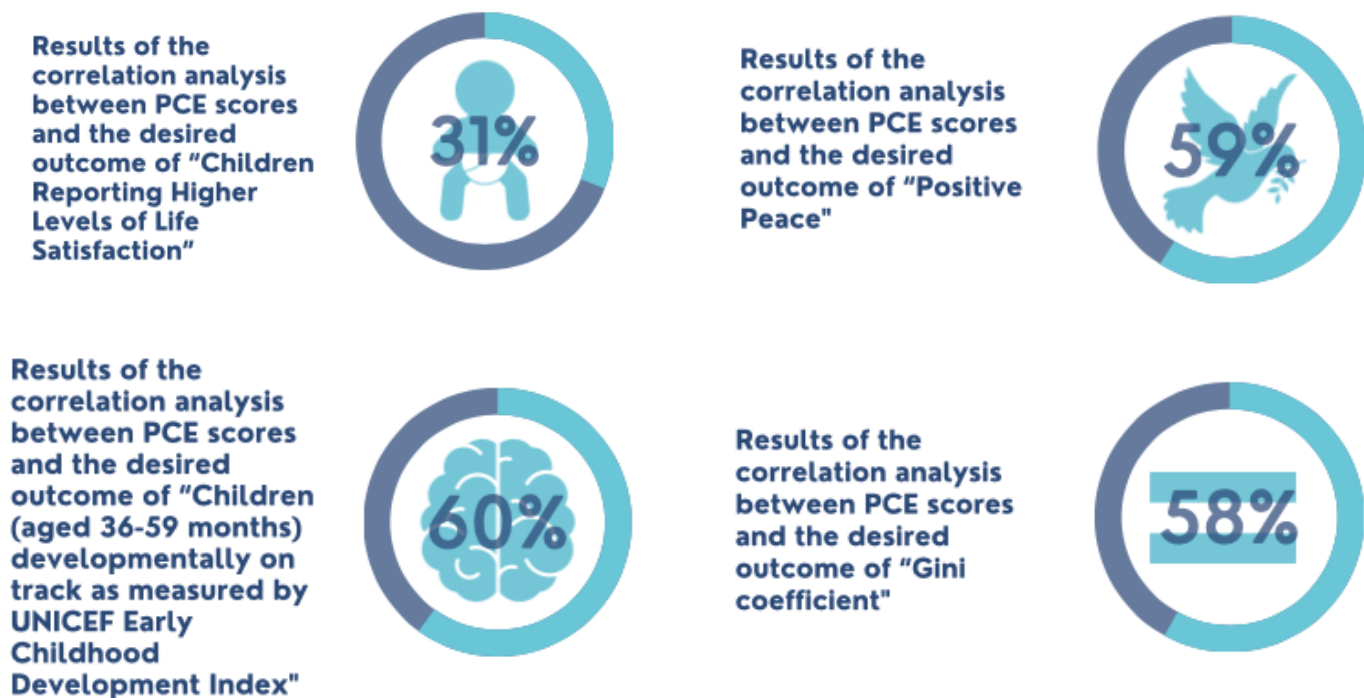
Turkey also scores comparatively low in Pillar VI: Comfortable Socio-Economic Level (34% lower than average), Peru scores comparatively even lower (50% lower than average) in Pillar V: Sense of Safety.

In addition to the country ranking, there are significant positive correlations between the PCEN Index scores and the following:

- The number of children reporting higher levels of life satisfaction, as measured by OECD country scores.
- The number of children developmentally on track, as measured by UNICEF's ECD 2030 Index.
- Positive peace scores, as measured by the Institute for Economics & Peace Index.
- Wealth distribution, as measured by country Gini coefficients.

This suggest that the index has a strong relevance to the promotion of not only child-wellbeing and development, but also economic equality and peace.

Figure 12: Correlations between PCEN Index Scores and Desired Outcomes



Conclusion

itotheN's Positive Childhood Environments Index is a powerful tool to measure the quality of environments for positive emotional development of infants and children

around the globe. Data availability currently limits its application in low and lower-middle income countries as well as countries in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia. For future iterations of the index, itotheN calls and would support efforts for greater global data collection

and dissemination from these groups of countries, particularly around **parental well-being, government spending on mental health** and **government spending on child and family services**. itotheN can partner with governments and donors to conduct more in-depth, country-specific research and measurement for context-relevant strategies and outcomes. Policy-makers can find

this framework useful in designing policies and programs that address children’s emotional well-being as a shared responsibility among families, communities and governments. It also serves to promote children’s emotional well-being as engine of long-term life satisfaction, greater economic equality and peace.

About itotheN

itotheN is a New York-based, international development consulting firm focused exclusively on the early formation of the human mind and heart as catalyst of global change. Understanding the strong, long-term impact of early experiences and environments on a highly-sensitive developing brain and biology, itotheN recognizes the potential of emotional well-being and mental health in infancy and childhood as a largely untapped engine for sustainable development.

To learn more about our mission and work, join our community, and to access the **full report**, please visit www.itotheN.dev

