ECDAN
Early Childhood Development Action Network
Progress Report 2020-2021
Letter from the Executive Leadership Council Co-chairs

As we look back at 2020 and 2021, we are inspired and energized by the commitment each of you brings to the Early Childhood Development Action Network (ECDAN). We appreciate your passion for achieving equity and justice for children, scaling up evidence-based policies and programs, and working together to ensure all young children are safe, well nourished, happy, healthy, and learning.

But the world is still an uncertain place for children. Multiple childhood vulnerabilities mean children are increasingly left behind, and many are displaced by war and conflict, climate change, and food insecurity. Insufficient political will and investments in strengthening weak service delivery systems mean that the COVID-19 pandemic has further decreased access to high-quality and affordable health care, childcare, and early learning services for families and their children. Although ECDAN and its partners have had many achievements that are celebrated here in this report, we can only look forward to working harder and achieving more together in the years ahead.

In 2020 and 2021, ECDAN connected and aligned with the global Early Childhood Development (ECD) community through many webinars, calls to action, joint statements, and communities of practice. Major accomplishments include the launch of the global childcare campaign and founding of the Global Policy and Advocacy Advisory Group to guide the campaign, as well as creation of the Global Initiative to Support Parents (GISP). In 2022, we are excited to see these important initiatives move forward.

In addition to our continued work at the global level, we look forward to working together toward building a cohesive global ECD movement at the regional, national, and local levels that improves our collaboration and connectedness and helps us break out of our silos, amplifying our impact. We are excited about ECDAN’s role in catalyzing this movement. We are profoundly optimistic that our shared vision, our collective commitment, and our deep sense of purpose will steer us in the right direction. Failing young children is not an option.

Thank you all for all that you do, and special thanks to our Executive Leadership Council, Technical Advisory Group, partners, and funders.

Lynette Okengo and Joan Lombardi
Executive Leadership Council Co-chairs
Letter from the Executive Director

In 2020 and 2021, ECDAN achieved stronger partnerships, closer collaboration, and deeper impact than ever before. This is the beneficial result of your commitment and unwavering support, and it enabled ECDAN’s partners to respond quickly together to the COVID-19 pandemic. In these most challenging of circumstances, we demonstrated that partnerships produce better outcomes for young children and their caregivers.

The pandemic affected us all in many ways. It’s extraordinary to think of how much you accomplished while navigating extreme challenges of your own. ECDAN partners rapidly mobilized themselves, issuing a call-to-action. We developed COVID-19 resources for young children and their caregivers and launched our strategic plan for 2020-2023. Our partners established several key collaborative initiatives, including the Global Initiative to Support Parents and a 20-partner global childcare campaign whose goal is to ensure that attaining equity, accessibility, affordability, and quality ECD services is an investment and policy priority as we build back better from COVID-19.

The pandemic, which UNICEF declared to be the worst crisis for children in the organization’s 75-year history, tragically added to a series of interconnected crises with long-term impacts on children and their families. Increasing incidences of poverty, food insecurity, conflict, war, natural disaster, climate change and disease have reversed progress and threaten our vision of every child being safe, well-nourished, healthy, happy, and learning. We should take the opportunity in the coming years to review our ambitions and priorities and consider new ways of working together. We need to emphasize innovation, adaptation, better coordination, and collaboration to build more resilient, equitable, and more inclusive ECD systems.

This progress report documents the ways in which ECDAN pursued its goal of building a global movement through advocacy, knowledge sharing, learning, convening, partnership building, and network strengthening. You will read about how our partners are using collective action to influence the global ECD agenda and unite the global community through collaborative initiatives.

You will also see that, despite huge challenges, we ended 2021 in a stronger financial position, with more donors, a growing diverse partnership, and an expanded membership base. We additionally improved our governance structures, including by establishing an Executive Leadership Council and Technical Advisory Group. These achievements are only possible through the involvement of our partners, members, funders, and the whole ECD community.

I want to sincerely thank all of you. We can be proud of the way we responded to the intense needs of 2020 and 2021, and how we are approaching the years ahead with an uncompromising belief that together we will rise to the challenges before us to support ALL young children and their caregivers.

Elizabeth Lule
ECDAN Executive Director
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## Acronyms

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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARNEC</td>
<td>Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood</td>
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<tr>
<td>COI</td>
<td>Cost of Inaction (tool)</td>
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<tr>
<td>COP</td>
<td>Community of Practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>COVID-19</td>
<td>Coronavirus Disease 2019</td>
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<td>ECD</td>
<td>Early Childhood Development</td>
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<td>ECDAN</td>
<td>Early Childhood Development Action Network</td>
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<td>ELC</td>
<td>Executive Leadership Council</td>
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<td>GISP</td>
<td>Global Initiative to Support Parents</td>
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<td>GPAAG</td>
<td>Global Policy and Advocacy Advisory Group</td>
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<td>GPE</td>
<td>Global Partnership for Education</td>
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<td>GPS</td>
<td>Global Partnership Strategy</td>
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<td>LMIC</td>
<td>Low- and Middle-Income countries</td>
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<tr>
<td>LSE</td>
<td>London School of Economics and Political Science</td>
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<td>IRC</td>
<td>International Rescue Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCF</td>
<td>Nurturing Care Framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>OMEP</td>
<td>Organización Mundial para la Educación Preescolar (World Organization for Early Childhood Education)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAG</td>
<td>Technical Advisory Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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<td>USAID</td>
<td>US Agency for International Development</td>
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<td>WBG</td>
<td>World Bank Group</td>
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Key Achievements from 2020 and 2021

- Launched a COVID-19 Call for Coordinated Action in April 2020, which was signed by over 100 organizations and 118 individual signatories.
- Developed a resource page specifically related to COVID-19 resources for various stakeholders.
- Launched the Global Initiative to Support Parents.
- Launched the Global Partnership Strategy for Early Childhood in partnership with UNESCO.
- Launched Our Climate is Our Children’s Future: A Global Call to Action.
- Launched ECD Connect, an online early childhood development community of practice, which has over 5,900 members.
- Launched the ECDAN Knowledge Fellows Program, selecting six fellows from nearly 300 applicants for the first round of the program in 2021.
- Established the Executive Leadership Council as ECDAN’s governance body.
- Established the Technical Advisory Group in November 2020 with 23 members.
- Recruited and launched the Global Policy and Advocacy Advisory Group to provide strategic input, facilitate new collaborative partnerships, share resources and joint learning, and mobilize civil society working on the ground.
- Developed the global childcare campaign strategy to increase awareness of and political commitment to childcare, improve cross-regional knowledge exchange, and connect and align a diverse set of stakeholders behind common goals.
- Nearly doubled ECDAN members/subscribers from 2,979 in January 2020 to 5,900 by the end of 2021.
- Hosted 13 webinars with 13,679 registrants in 2020 and 15 webinars with 8,960 registrants in 2021, amplified our global reach to more diverse audiences using interpretative services during webinars and sharing webinar recordings through social media and newsletters.
- Finalized ECDAN’s hosting arrangement with PATH.
- Increased ECDAN’s budget from 2020 to 2021 by almost 45 per cent.
During 2020 and 2021, children and families faced even greater challenges due to overlapping crises—the pandemic, war and conflict, climate change, and food insecurity—that will have lifelong impact on their lives. In 2020, COVID-19 spread across the globe and put children’s survival, physical and mental health, access to learning, and long-term well-being at risk. While many children have lost their lives and fallen ill due to COVID-19, many more have been orphaned and faced threats to their health, education, and well-being because of disrupted services across the world.

With closures of schools and child care centres, parents had to take on a heavier load than before, often juggling work with the care of small children. This and other strains from the pandemic have had a heavy toll on people’s mental health. Some parents lost their jobs, while others have had to leave the workforce to care for children or other relatives. In December 2021, UNICEF declared COVID-19 to be the worst emergency for children in the organization’s 75-year history, explaining that “the widespread impact of COVID-19 continues to deepen, increasing poverty, entrenching inequality and threatening the rights of children at previously unseen levels.”

In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, children have been affected by humanitarian and multidimensional crises in Ukraine, Afghanistan, Haiti, Madagascar, Lebanon, Palestine, Venezuela, Ethiopia, Syria, Yemen, and other parts of the world. UNICEF estimates that one in five babies is born into and start their lives in situations of conflict and crisis.

Funding that is focused on Early Childhood Development (ECD) – particularly child protection and education – has been insufficient, especially in crisis-affected countries. Only an estimated three per cent of total development assistance goes to crisis-affected countries, and two per cent of humanitarian funding goes toward providing high-quality early year services to newborns, young children, and their caregivers. ECDAN has worked with other partners and Moving Minds Alliance to call on the global community to act now to increase this critical ECD funding and support the health, nutritional, educational, and developmental needs of children living in complex humanitarian emergencies.

Introduction
About ECDAN

ECDAN was launched in 2016 by the leaders of UNICEF and the World Bank Group following a meeting of more than 80 partners. It is a global network of multilateral agencies, international financial institutions, regional ECD networks, faith-based organizations, non-governmental organizations, foundations, universities, think tanks, practitioners, and advocates, working both together and independently to support ECD for ALL young children, as well as support their parents and caregivers.

ECDAN was established to serve as a multi-stakeholder and multisectoral platform that would serve to bridge silos, stimulate collective action, innovate through collaboration, and produce benefits at scale beyond what individual partners and sectors can do on their own. ECDAN’s added value was, therefore, to build a global movement to achieve economies of scale through collaborative action and continuous learning, reducing duplication of effort and leveraging complementary assets, as well as harmonizing and aligning approaches. ECDAN, as a network of networks, would advance and promote an ECD agenda that diverse stakeholders and partners can support, advocate fiercely for, and work collaboratively toward, using consistent messaging across multiple sectors.

In 2020, ECDAN moved out of its 2016–2019 incubation period. Its Strategic Plan for 2020–2023: A Global Movement to Catalyze Collective Action at Scale for ALL Young Children was developed through an extensive consultative process over several months to determine ECDAN’s core added value and strategic priorities. Despite being a challenging period because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which shook the world to its core and reversed decades of progress in ECD, 2020 and 2021 were years of inspiration that energized the ECD community to work together, coordinate, and collaborate in response to the needs of children and caregivers everywhere. This great collaboration among the different ECD sectors is noticeable in all the work that was implemented by partners and the changes they affected?

This progress report presents a snapshot of ECDAN’s collaborative initiatives in 2020 and 2021, delineating activities accomplished under each of its four strategic goals (Figure 1).

ECDAN's Vision, Mission & Impact

OUR VISION
A world where every young child is safe, healthy, well-nourished, happy, and able to learn.

OUR MISSION
Recognizing that the early years of life are critical to long-term development, ECDAN, through its partners, advocates for higher prioritization of and investment in essential, high-quality ECD services; facilitates knowledge exchange and learning; and connects and aligns with global and regional partners across sectors to drive collective action at scale for all young children to help them realize their full potential.

INTENDED IMPACT
Accelerated scale-up of equitable and high-quality multisectoral ECD policies, programs, and services to ensure all young children’s optimal brain development and productive potential.
2020 - 2023 Strategic Framework

Goal 1: Advocate and communicate
Through collective advocacy action:
- Funding increased for ECD authorized and appropriated.
- ECD policies and programs adopted and implemented.

Goal 2: Learn and share
Through knowledge sharing platforms:
- Stakeholder access, use and value ECD knowledge resources to advance their work.
- Young ECD professionals active within the sector.

Goal 3: Coordinate, connect, and align
Through deliberate network weaving and collective impact planning:
- Collaboration and coordination between ECDAN, regional networks, global thematic and sectoral partnerships improved to advance ECD globally.

Goal 4: Strengthen the network
Through secretariat and board collaboration:
- Improved governance of ECDAN
- Improved systems and digital platforms to support network, communications and collaboration.
In 2020 and 2021, ECDAN scaled up advocacy and communications to increase awareness and build political commitment for the need to sustain and increase ECD funding. These activities contribute to our goals of increased funding for ECD at the global, regional, and national levels and the advancement of key policies and programs that ensure young children are safe, healthy, well nourished, happy, and able to learn. Our work also focused on building bridges between movements and breaking down silos between sectors to ensure a better coordinated, more integrated, and holistic multisectoral response to ECD.

**Mobilizing partners through shared advocacy goals**

We accelerated advocacy efforts to respond to the overlapping health and humanitarian crises affecting young children and their families. Three calls to action were released to mobilize partners, build coalitions, and raise awareness.

**Joint statement on ECD and children in conflict and crisis settings**

With Moving Minds Alliance, we released a call to action in support of children in conflict and humanitarian settings in Afghanistan, Haiti, Ethiopia, Lebanon, and among other countries. This call to action served to elevate the idea that holistic ECD strategies and services are critical to mitigate the current and long-term impact of the adversities facing children and families in humanitarian settings. Current ECD services are neglected and underfunded in humanitarian responses. We continue to support our partners in calling upon donors, humanitarian agencies, and government leaders to provide immediate and lifesaving aid to young children and families in need and upon the international community to further its commitment to providing increased and sustained funding, diplomatic engagement, and support for long-lasting solutions that protect the rights of children and foster their holistic development.

**Our Climate is our Children’s Future**

We supported our regional partner, the Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC), as well as UNICEF and Save the Children, in increasing awareness of the impacts of climate change on young children. This call to action emphasizes that ECD must be part of climate policy discussions, countries most responsible for greenhouse gas emissions need to be held accountable, and global leaders must focus on supporting marginalized children and families because they are the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. This effort to identify parties interested in collective action on this issue builds on ARNEC’s leadership and ongoing work to gather evidence on climate change impacts, build a Community of Practice (COP), and influence the agenda of future global climate change conferences and negotiations.
Global Childcare Campaign

The childcare crisis was identified as a priority by the ECD community in early 2020. Partners engaged and aligned with each other to develop a global campaign strategy. We established a broad, multistakeholder Global Policy and Advocacy Advisory Group (GPAAG), which held its inaugural meeting in August 2021. The GPAAG consists of representatives from 20 partners organizations (see list of partners in Appendix B) who support and guide ECDAN’s policy and advocacy work, including a global childcare campaign that will launch in 2022. The GPAAG is co-developing a strategy and plan for the global campaign and is connected with other movements working on gender equality and women’s economic empowerment. GPAAG members, in 2022, will continue to co-develop messaging, communication materials, and coordinate advocacy events to support the global call to increase investment in affordable, high-quality childcare for all families.

Additionally, the GPAAG built bridges with the women’s movement and engaged with the UN women-led Generation Equality Forum and submitted a “Commitment on Childcare” that was featured in Paris as part of the Forum. We also participated in and presented at several convenings to increase awareness about the childcare crisis as both a child rights and women’s empowerment and gender equality issue. These included a global convening on childcare and women’s work in collaboration with Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing, the Nelson Mandela Foundation, Public Services International, International Domestic Workers Federation, and UN Women. It also included collaboration with the Better Care Network on its Global Collaborative Platform on Transforming Children’s Care.

Cost of Inaction (COI) tool

In 2021, ECDAN finalized three country pilots to test the COI methodology with UNICEF in Bulgaria and Madagascar, as well as with the University of Sao Paulo in Brazil. The COI tool contributes to the debate on the need and rationality for ECD investment by providing a simple, flexible, and accessible program for ex ante economic evaluations of such interventions. The estimates on the COI are informative for policy makers, funding agencies, and others concerned with ECD investments. The online COI tool will be modified based on these country pilots to allow different countries to calculate their own COI. The results from the pilots are currently being used for advocacy purposes (e.g. to develop a national ECD strategy in Madagascar and refocus Brazil’s national and state ECD strategies on growing inequalities). UNICEF is planning to take this work forward in other countries through their public financing workstream.

Finally, we connected with the Global Alliance for Care and positioned ECDAN’s childcare campaign as a highly relevant initiative for the ambitions of the Global Alliance for Care.
Advocating for increased financing for ECD

For countries to accurately budget for and finance national ECD plans, the actual costs need to be better understood. Recognizing the importance of costing national ECD plans, ECDAN is collaborating with the Brookings Institute, jointly establishing an ECD Costing COP that includes UNICEF, USAID, and several academic institutions. The COP developed a theory of change and further identified global goods and products to develop. The COP Secretariat is working with several academics on a global financing monitoring tool for pre-primary education. The COP also is leveraging the advocacy work of regional networks and other partners who are developing scorecards and building alliances for inclusive ECD to foster greater accountability and equity.

Several of ECDAN’s Executive Leadership Council (ELC) members championed and spoke at high-level meetings advocating for increased financing in ECD.
Learning and Knowledge Exchange

Facilitating learning and sharing
ECDAN is committed to facilitating ECD knowledge sharing and learning exchanges through its platforms. Our activities focused on increasing access to and use of evidence-based knowledge to drive the scaling up of multisectoral, holistic, and equitable ECD policies and services. We are also supporting early career professionals and researchers to grow their careers in and impact on the global ECD sector through ECDAN’s flagship Knowledge Fellows Program.

COVID-19 research roundup and knowledge hub
ECDAN partnered with Saving Brains to publish a research roundup of studies that have been conducted related to ECD in the context of COVID-19. The researchers identified 411 relevant peer-reviewed, publicly available scientific research studies. The researchers analyzed the studies to identify the most common themes and to look for gaps in the research. The studies are available to the public in the COVID-19 & ECD Knowledge Hub, housed on the ECDAN website.

Knowledge Fellows Program
In July 2021, ECDAN welcomed our first cohort of Knowledge Fellows. This program creates opportunities for learning, professionals development, networking, and service for young professional to increase their interest and engagement in the field of global ECD and, in so doing, to further the aims and goals of ECDAN’s knowledge sharing and learning efforts. The five fellows were selected from nearly 300 applications - from Colombia, the Philippines, Spain, the United States, and Zambia - and worked with a mentor to design and complete a knowledge product. These products covered topics such as global interventions to reduce corporal punishment, home-visiting workforce, radio-based ECD programs and multisectoral approaches to nurturing care programs and policies. ECDAN supported the Knowledge Fellows in disseminating their products through webinars, conference presentations, in-country presentations, ECDAN website, newsletter, and social media.
Survey on COVID-19’s effects on ECD

The researchers also conducted a survey to hear from the ECD community on what should be the priorities for future research to continue to better understand the effects of COVID-19 on ECD. The survey results were published, including the top five research priorities identified, as well as priority research questions suggested by survey respondents. This effort serves to align researchers, funders, and practitioners on the existing data, research gaps, and key research priorities for the immediate future, as related to COVID-19, and for future emergencies.

Facilitating sharing of best practices and learning across countries and regions

ECDAN’s approach to knowledge exchange is to bring together diverse individuals representing different countries, organizations, and professional titles to help identify synergies and best practices that can be adapted across regions and sectors. Our webinar platform has brought incredible value to the ECD community: we hosted 13 webinars with 13,679 registrants in 2020 and 15 webinars with 8,960 registrants in 2021, drawing participants from 168 countries. Topics covered in these 28 webinars included scaling pre-primary education, playful parenting, and ECD budgeting and costing. We also brought together the ECD community on vital topics related to the COVID-19 pandemic, including protecting and elevating early years programming during and after the pandemic and nurturing care during COVID-19. Our webinars often are offered in multi-lingual formats with simultaneous translation, such as English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Arabic, and American Sign Language.

Developing knowledge exchange platforms and resource hubs

ECDAN developed a new website that includes a knowledge exchange platform, the ECD Knowledge Gateway. Partners supported the development of six blog posts and ten thematic pages that provide a general overview of resources and include links to key initiatives, partner pages, and curated resources on a variety of topics including parenting, childcare, child health, nutrition, and humanitarian ECD. The website also serves as a repository of recent ECD publications.

ECDAN launched the ECD Community Platform in 2020, a global online community engagement platform which aims to provide the space for all those interested and engaged in ECD to connect and interact with each other; learn and exchange knowledge; share and access resources and information; and engage in COPs. It has gained traction and had about 4,612 members by the end of 2021. The open forum is used by ECDAN and subscribers to share ECD resources and opportunities. Popular features on the platform include an events calendar that lists upcoming ECD events and an ECD job board.

The Global Forum for Childcare resource page was launched in July 2020 with the aim of helping expand and improve the quality of care for all young children and families, particularly those in low-middle income countries (LMIC). The Global Forum for Childcare is dedicated to highlighting policies, research, and innovative strategies to address the childcare needs of working families around the world.

ECDAN also worked with partners and members to co-develop a COVID-19 online resource hub, which includes resources for early childhood educators, pregnant women, policymakers, and parents to help children continue with education, cope with stress, and maintain proper health and nutrition. This online resource hub has had over 16,000 unique visitors.
Supporting Communities of Practice (COPs)

ECDAN has been instrumental in increasing collaboration and knowledge sharing within the ECD community through organizing and supporting COPs. One example is the Global Childcare Practitioner COP. This COP provides a platform for childcare practitioners to learn from one another, discuss shared needs, challenges, brainstorm solutions and build partnerships. The Childcare COP began meeting in 2021 and plans to meet approximately every two months, with a different member creating the agenda for and facilitating each meeting.

Other COPs supported by ECDAN include the Playful Parenting COP, supported by the LEGO Foundation, and the Scaling Pre-Primary Education, which is managed in partnership with UNICEF and is supporting five countries—South Sudan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Sierra Leone, and Lesotho—in sharing learnings to accelerate early childhood education access.
CONNECT AND ALIGN PARTNERS
Connect and Align Partners

ECDAN works to connect and align ECD stakeholders behind common goals across regions and sectors to break down silos and reduce competition. Collaborative efforts are the foundation of all our advocacy, knowledge and learning exchange initiatives outlined above.

Collaborating with regional ECD networks

In 2020 and 2021 we significantly strengthened collaborative action with four regional ECD networks: the International Step by Step Association (ISSA), Arab Network for ECD (ANECD), Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN), and ARNEC. We developed a consensus agenda for what we collectively aim to achieve at the regional and country levels through joint activities informed by country priorities.

ECDAN provided subawards to the four regional networks to improve our collaboration through learning-by-doing on joint activities, resolve core support funding issues, harmonize funder interests, facilitate greater integration of regional networks in ECDAN governance structures, and ensure better integration of ECDAN into regional networks’ work and initiatives. And while there is no regional network in Latin America, ECDAN also supported efforts with the Inter-American Dialogue to co-host knowledge exchange activities across Latin America.

Strengthening collaboration between global and regional networks—and ultimately, the countries they serve—has the potential to have a greater impact on families and young children, encourages development of global public goods, and facilitates learning across the globe.

Examples of ongoing joint activities include:

- Involving regional networks in designing and planning the global childcare campaign as partners in the GPAAG.
- Collaborating on the ECD workforce initiative led by the International Step by Step Association and Results for Development.
- Supporting ARNEC’s campaign on elevating discussion about the effects of climate change on young children’s health and development and the need to integrate the needs of young children into climate negotiations and country adaptation plans.
- Encouraging uptake of the Nurturing Care Framework (NCF) for ECD in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East and coordinating regional meetings, together with the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF.
- Coordinating the response to children in crisis, in collaboration with other partners.
- Conducting learning activities with Inter-American Dialogue on ECD measurement.
Convening the Global Partnership Strategy (GPS) for Early Childhood

ECDAN worked closely with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to convene, on December 16, 2020, an innovative dialogue to reflect on common actions, reinforce collaboration, and work together on a GPS for Early Childhood. The technical session resulted in partner organizations developing the GPS framework, which aims to support the obligations of all national and subnational governments at all income levels, civil society organizations, and regional and global agencies and networks to help them overcome barriers to providing effective services for early childhood care and education, as well as to flexibly address new challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the GPS for Early Childhood launched in December 2021, organizations have been signing on through a Call to Act Together.

Scaling pre-primary education

ECDAN kicked off its participation in a consortium with UNICEF and WBG for the project, integrating Early Childhood Education in Sectoral Planning as part of the International Development Research Centre’s / Global Partnership for Education’s joint Knowledge and Innovation Exchange initiative. A lack of investment in high-quality early childhood education compromises children’s learning and increases inequality. To respond to this challenge, this consortium aims to support the effective and strategic integration of pre-primary education within education-sector planning processes in five low- to middle-income countries (Lesotho, South Sudan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Sierra Leone).

Global Initiative to Support Parents (GISP)

ECDAN collaborated with the highest levels of leadership of the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, UNICEF, WHO, Parenting for Lifelong Health, LEGO Foundation, and Oak Foundation to launch the GISP, develop a global parenting collective action to scale parenting initiatives in LMIC.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, parents and caregivers have experienced unprecedented challenges, with children at great risk of not reaching their full potential. Now, more than ever, parents and caregivers have a pivotal role to play at the front lines of protecting their children from stress and promoting their development, health, and well-being. The pandemic, and other crises, have brought to the forefront the critical role of parenting, as well as the tremendous influence the home environment has on children’s lives.

We must work collectively to innovate, scale up, generate evidence for, and advocate for initiatives that support parents and caregivers. We called on organizations to help grow the global movement in support of parents to secure a more resilient and promising future for children.

More than 50 organizations have signed the Call to Action. In 2022, we plan to coordinate these signees through thematic working groups and organize webinars to share knowledge.
Harnessing global data to advance young children’s learning and development

The Harnessing Global Data for Young Children project, funded by the UK Research and Innovations’ Global Grand Challenges Research Fund and led by Professors Linda Richter (University of Witwatersrand) and Alan Stein (University of Oxford), brings together researchers, policymakers, and implementers from around the world to work with available data on young children in LMIC. The aim of the project is to leverage these data to improve child development, early learning, and pre-primary education through better understanding of determinants of and risks to children’s development; the economic consequences of inaction; and policy and legal frameworks to address challenges.

ECDAN, WBG, WHO, UNICEF, Inter-American Development Bank, and regional ECD networks are collaborators in the project and will drive the dissemination and implementation of the findings. The project has already produced key research findings, such as the estimated long-run economic costs of COVID-19-related preschool closures in 134 countries and the proportion of young children in 42 LMIC living in homes that are not prepared for the pandemic.

Nurturing Care for ECD

ECDAN participates in the NCF Core Group to operationalize the NCF for ECD, collaborate on advocacy activities related to the NCF for ECD, and share knowledge and lessons learned. NCF for ECD partners jointly published thematic briefs on Nurturing Care for Every Newborn and Tobacco Control to improve child health and development. In 2020, NCF partners organized a webinar on ensuring safe breastfeeding and newborn care during the COVID-19 pandemic and assisted in the planning and execution of high-level and technical workshops in Madagascar and Burundi, both of which inspired finalization of a national multisectoral ECD strategy in each country. In preparation for the workshops, ECDAN and Nurturing Care for ECD jointly developed a set of recorder presentations (in French) that make the case for investments in nurturing care and explore how to leverage existing services to strengthen opportunities for early learning and responsive caregiving.
Building global partnerships

Figure 2 summarizes ECDAN’s global initiatives and the partnerships that help drive them.

**Snapshot of Multi-sectoral Collaboration & Coordination**

Figure 2. Snapshot of multisectoral collaboration and coordination.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Global Initiative</th>
<th>Coordinating Partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Global Parenting Initiative</td>
<td><img src="image1" alt="End Violence Against Children" />, <img src="image2" alt="UNICEF" />, <img src="image3" alt="World Health Organization" />, <img src="image4" alt="University of Oxford" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Partnership Strategy for Early Learning</td>
<td><img src="image5" alt="UNESCO" />, <img src="image6" alt="OMEP" />, With partners and 21 member states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harnessing Global Data to Advance Young Children’s Learning &amp; Development</td>
<td><img src="image7" alt="University of Oxford" />, <img src="image8" alt="University of the Witwatersrand Johannesburg" />, With regional ECD networks, UN Agencies, WBG, and universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems for Early Childhood Development</td>
<td><img src="image9" alt="Harvard University" />, <img src="image10" alt="Murdoch Children's Research Institute" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurturing Care Framework</td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="UNICEF" />, <img src="image3" alt="World Health Organization" />, <img src="image11" alt="The World Bank" />, <img src="image12" alt="The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn &amp; Child Health" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Initiatives and the partnerships that help drive them
EXPANSION OF THE NETWORK AND BUILDING A GLOBAL MOVEMENT
Expansion of the Network and building a global movement

ECDAN has grown significantly as a generative global network. With this growth, we are building a global and united ECD movement for young children and their caregivers.

Growing ECDAN and strengthening a global network

To make this happen, ECDAN:

- Finalized and launched its "A Global Movement to Catalyze Collective Action at Scale for ALL Young Children Strategic Plan (2020–2023)" in April 2020. The plan was developed through an extensive consultative process that lasted over several months to determine ECDAN's core added value and strategic priorities.

- Issued its first progress report for the 2017–2019 period to provide insight into the collaborative and cooperative efforts, activities, and achievements of ECDAN's partners and acknowledge the time, resources, and efforts of the many stakeholders in the global ECD community who united around a common vision and goals.

- Finalized its hosting arrangement with PATH in 2020 after successfully moving from ChildFund International, which was the network’s fiscal sponsor from 2016 to 2020. PATH currently hosts ECDAN and supports the Secretariat’s day-to-day activities. ECDAN continues to pursue long-term funding and refine its resource mobilization plan to ensure financial sustainability, expand and diversify its donors and funding sources.

- Has now a functioning and well-equipped Secretariat, comprising four full-time employees—Executive Director, Global Technical Lead (Consultant), Policy and Advocacy Lead, and Communications and Knowledge Management Lead—as well as a part-time Program Assistant and part-time Partnership Engagement Manager. PATH supports ECDAN through providing the Project Administration Director. ECDAN hires short-term consultants when in-house skills are lacking for a particular area, such as economics.

Creating the ELC

In 2020, ECDAN transitioned from its interim Executive Group, which comprised 19 representatives from different ECDAN constituencies and guided the incubation of ECDAN, to the Executive Leadership Council. The ELC is the highest governance body overseeing ECDAN’s strategic decision-making. It includes representatives from organizations across constituencies that make significant technical, financial, strategic, or in-kind contributions to ECDAN and is composed of global experts in ECD. The ELC guides ECDAN’s overall strategy and structure, oversees key management decisions, supports fundraising and partnership building, manages risk, and monitors performance. The ELC has 17 members and meets biannually. A list of ELC members can be found in the “Acknowledgments” section.

The ELC supports ECDAN in its focus on key ECD issues and determines the roles ECDAN can play in coordination, knowledge sharing,
and advocacy. Past ELC meetings have focused on these roles for topic areas such as climate change and the challenges facing young children and their families as a result of COVID-19.

**Establishing the Technical Advisory Group**

In 2021, ECDAN established the Technical Advisory Group (TAG), a governing board that provides expert technical advice and direction to the substantive work of ECDAN by ensuring cross-sectoral, cross-disciplinary, and cross-regional representation, as well as high-quality standards and advancement in the field of ECD. The TAG comprises 25 members, including two co-chairs who are selected from diverse organizations, as well as representatives from regional networks, thematic networks, international and local nongovernmental organizations, donors, academia, think tanks, and the private sector, plus independent experts. The TAG provides technical ECD input to inform the ELC’s decision-making on strategy, programs, and other key decision areas. To ensure representation of ECD technical expertise on the ELC, the TAG co-chairs are also members of the ELC.
During 2020/21, ECDAN focused on fundraising to support partners’ collaborative initiatives, expand its reach and impact. Figure 4 shows our growth in revenues. We are very grateful to the funders listed below.

**ECDAN portfolio**

Figure 3. ECDAN financial portfolio

![Pie chart showing the breakdown of ECDAN's financial portfolio by funders.]

**Figure 4.** Early Childhood Development Action Network revenues (USD), by year.

![Bar chart showing the annual revenues from 2018 to 2021.]

- **2018**: US$0
- **2019**: US$1,200,000
- **2020**: US$800,000
- **2021**: US$1,600,000

**Key**

- Open Society Foundations
- Echidna Giving
- Global Partnership for Education
- Conrad N, Hilton Foundation
- Individual Donors
- Porticus
- Oxford University/Global Challenges Research Fund
- Bainum Family Foundation
- UNICEF/LEGO Foundation
- In-Kind Donations
APPENDIX A

WHO WE ARE

The Early Childhood Development Action Network Secretariat is a global team of technical, communications, and advocacy experts. We are committed to building strong, diverse, and respectful partnerships to achieve the Network’s mission and vision.

**Members of the Secretariat are as follows:**
- Elizabeth Lule, Executive Director
- Shekufeh Zonji, Global Technical Lead
- Jacqueline Deelstra, Communication & Knowledge Management Lead
- Brett Weisel, Global Policy & Advocacy Lead
- Debjeet Sen, Global Partnerships Engagement Manager
- Nina Garcia Wright, Program Assistant

**Additional consultants and service providers are as follows:**
- Adrian Cerezo
- Wairimu Macharia
- Kerrie Proulx
- Kristy Hackett
- Amanda Germanio
- Marissa Rattee
- Sweta Shah
- Selam Geremew
- Delphine Valette
- Sarah Smith
- Octopus Translations
- Higher Logic
- Suventure
- Claudia Vazquez
- Jere Berhman
The Early Childhood Development Action Network (ECDAN) is incredibly grateful for the support it has received during 2020/21 from its partners; its host, PATH; and the broader global early childhood development community.

## Financial support

ECDAN thanks its funders who have provided direct and in-kind financial support in 2020/21. They committed resources to help ECDAN grow and lead partners in ensuring the challenges facing caregivers and young children during the COVID-19 pandemic were not ignored.

### Our funders

Bainum Family Foundation  
Conrad N. Hilton Foundation  
Echidna Giving  
University of Oxford / Global Challenges Research Fund  
Global Partnership for Education / Knowledge and Innovation Exchange  
LEGO Foundation  
Open Society Foundations  
The Lilies Foundation  
Porticus  
UNICEF  
WHO

### Our host

Additionally, we thank our host institution, PATH, for its operations support.

### In-kind support

As a network of networks, ECDAN is reliant upon its partners to provide invaluable in-kind support to move its mission forward. Once again, and always, we thank them for their effort and support.
Partner membership in ECDAN groups

Executive Leadership Council

The following members make up the Executive Leadership Council:

**Borhene Chakroun** - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

**Eduardo Queiroz** - United Way

**Gerda Verburg** - Scale up Nutrition Movement

**George Werner** - World Health Organization (WHO)

**Ghassan Issa** - Arab Network for Early Childhood Development

**Hana Brixi** - World Bank Group (WBG)

**Iffath Sharif** - WBG

**Joan Lombardi** - International expert in child and family policy and Director of Early Opportunities

**Liana Ghent** - International Step by Step Association

**Lynette Okengo** - Africa Early Childhood Network

**Dr. Muhammad Musa** - Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE)

**Nikolaj Gilbert** - PATH

**Omar Abdi** - UNICEF

**Peter Laugharn** - Conrad N. Hilton Foundation

**Rukmini Banerji** - Pratham Education Foundation

**Her Royal Highness Princess Sarah Zeid of Jordan** - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Patron for Maternal & Newborn Health

**Dr. Sheldon Shaeffer** - Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC)

**Sherrie Westin** - Sesame Workshop

**Sneha Sheth** - Dost Education

**Youssef Hajjar** - Arab Network for Early Childhood Development

**Dr. Zsuzsanna Jakab** - WHO
**Steering Committee**
The following members make up the Steering Committee:

- **Amina Abubakar** – Aga Khan University Institute of Human Development
- **Eduardo Queiroz**
- **Erinna Dia** – UNICEF
- **Ghassan Issa** – Arab Network for ECD
- **Joan Lombardi** – International expert in child and family policy and Director of Early Opportunities
- **Liana Ghent** – International Step by Step Association
- **Lynette Okengo** – Africa Early Childhood Network
- **Mark Tomlinson** – Stellenbosch University

**Nominations Committee**
The following members make up the Nominations Committee:

- **Boniface Kakhobwe** – UNICEF
- **George Werner** – WHO
- **Lisa Bohmer** – Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
- **Muhammad Musa** – Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE)
- **Yousseff Hajjar** – Arab Network for ECD
The following members make up the Technical Advisory Group:

- **Aisha Yousfzai** - Harvard University
- **Amina Abubaker** - Aga Khan University Institute for Human Development
- **Bernadette Daelmans** - WHO
- **Boniface Kakhobwe** - UNICEF
- **Cassandra Scarpino** - ChildFund International
- **Claudia Cappa** - Countdown to 2030 ECD Technical Working Group
- **Erum Mariam** - BRAC Institute of Educational Development
- **George Evans Owino** - Africa Early Childhood Network
- **Jill Pop** - LEGO Foundation
- **Katie Murphy** - International Rescue Committee
- **Laura Aoudeh** - Arab Network for ECD
- **Lisa Bohmer** - Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
- **Mahmuda Akter** - Institute of Child and Human Development and ARNEC
- **Mark Tomlinson** - Stellenbosch University and Queens University
- **Maureen E. Samms-Vaughan** - University of West Indies, Jamaica
- **Melanie Swan** - Plan International
- **Melissa Diane Kelly** - WBG
- **Mihaela Ionescu** - WBG
- **Muideen Bakare** - Childhood Neuropsychiatric Disorders Initiatives & Federal Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Enugu, Nigeria
- **Romilla Karnati** - Save the Children USA
- **Stephen Lye** - Lunenfeld-Tanenbaum Research Institute, Sinai Health System
- **Vidya Putcha** - Results for Development
- **Wanjiku Kuria** - World Vision
- **Zorica Trikic** - International Step by Step Association
Global Policy and Advocacy Advisory Group

The following partner organizations make up the Global Policy and Advocacy Advisory Group:

- ARNEC
- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- Global Alliance for Care
- Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
- Hewlett
- International Finance Corporation
- Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres (National Women’s Institute)
- International Step by Step Association
- Mobile Creches
- Promundo
- Palladium
- SmartStart
- Theirworld
- Open Society Foundations
- Oxfam
- UNICEF
- WHO
- Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing
- WBG
- World Vision
Regional networks

Our regional partners provide important regional perspectives and leadership on regional events and initiatives. Our partners are the Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN), Arab Network for Early Childhood Development (ANECD), Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC), and International Step by Step Association (ISSA).

Knowledge Fellows Steering Group

The Knowledge Fellows Steering Group consists of Nirmala Rao (Co-chair), Frances Aboud (Co-chair), Lucy Bassett, Joan Lombardi, Stephen Lye, Beatrice Matafwali, and Aisha Yousafzai. These ECD experts provide strategic oversight to the program and support the recruitment and selection of ECDAN Knowledge Fellows.

Nurturing Care Framework Coordination Group

This group includes ECDAN; Partnership for Maternal, Newborn, Infant, and Child Health; World Bank Group; World Health Organization; and UNICEF.

Global Childcare Practitioner Community of Practice (COP)

This COP includes practitioners from Kenya, Brazil, India, Bangladesh, South Africa, Vietnam, and China and is funded by the Open Societies Foundation.

Global Parenting COP

This COP is coordinated by FHI 360, the LEGO Foundation, and ECDAN and includes five countries (Bhutan, Guatemala, Zambia, Serbia, and Rwanda).

Systems Thinking COP

This is a technical working group that includes the Murdoch Children’s Research Institute and the Harvard T.H. School of Public Health, with financial support from Porticus. This COP is examining how systems thinking might offer new insights into long-standing challenges in promotion of ECD at scale, including sustainability and equity. It has undertaken an evidence review and will use the lessons learned from failures and successes in applying systems thinking across sectors to suggest a number of potential ways forward for an accelerated ECD equity ecosystem.
Costing Community of Practice

This group, launched by ECDAN and Brookings Institution, focuses on issues related to costing of ECD interventions. Participants include the US Agency for International Development, the Global Partnership for Education, Save the Children, International Rescue Committee, UNICEF, UNESCO, the World Bank, the London School of Economics, Evidence Action, and the University of Pennsylvania. This working group is funded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation.

Scaling Pre-primary Education COP

ECDAN and UNICEF collaborate through this COP to support five countries (Sierra Leone, Lesotho, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and South Sudan) to accelerate progress in early childhood education. This work is funded by the International Development Research Centre’s / Global Partnership for Education’s joint Knowledge and Innovation Exchange initiative.
References


Join the movement

Early Childhood Action Development Network

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