



ECDAN

Early Childhood Development Action Network

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



Message From the Executive Leadership Council

Dear Partners,

On behalf of the Executive Leadership Council (ELC) of the Early Childhood Development Action Network (ECDAN), we express our deep appreciation for your considerable contributions to promoting the well-being of young children and their caregivers worldwide. We also commend the Secretariat team for their dedication and hard work. We are excited to present our 2024 annual report, showcasing the network's key achievements and collaborative efforts.

The official launch and implementation of our 2024-2028 strategic plan marked a pivotal moment for ECDAN. We engaged with many of you when disseminating our collective strategy at key events in Tanzania, Malaysia, Thailand, and Bulgaria over the year. This plan outlines actionable steps to support vulnerable communities, emphasizing increased investment in early childhood development (ECD). We can achieve our shared goals only by continuing to unite, share our knowledge, and advocate collectively, particularly for increased investment in ECD.

We are equally aware of the increasing challenges children and caregivers face due to the growing polycrisis. These challenges are further exacerbated by cuts to foreign aid, which threaten already limited resources amid rising needs. Addressing these issues requires not only more funding but also innovative and collaborative approaches. We rely on you—our dedicated partners and members—to join forces, continue engaging to protect children and families, persevere toward shared goals, and create a brighter future for generations to come.

With sincere appreciation,

ELC Co-chairs



Borhene Chakroun

Director, Division for Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization



Lynette Okengo

Executive Director, Africa Early Childhood Network

Message From the Executive Director

Dear Partners and Colleagues,

As we reflect on the past year, the global challenges faced by children are undeniable and increasing. Conflict, war, poverty, inequality, and hunger are pushing millions of children to the brink of survival and away from opportunities to reach their full potential. Yet, the relentless efforts of our partners in emergency contexts continue to save lives and advocate for those most vulnerable to these hardships, bringing hope in difficult times.

Our network has steadfastly championed the rights of young children, with a focus on those most disadvantaged and marginalized. In this annual report, we highlight notable moments when the needs of the youngest children were prominent in global discussions. This includes the expert dialogue in Bonn, Germany, on the disproportionate impacts of climate change on children, during which ECDAN partners presented recommendations to prioritize children in climate adaptation and mitigation strategies. Other significant events include the G20 Education Working Group Meeting and the 2024 Global Education Meeting in Brazil, both of which emphasized the critical importance of early childhood interventions in breaking cycles of inequality—as highlighted in the Fortaleza Declaration and by the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, of which ECDAN is a proud member.

Additionally, the inaugural Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children saw 102 countries pledge to implement strategies such as parent and caregiver support to protect children from violence.

Recognizing the transformative potential of a systems approach in advancing child development across various sectors, ECDAN organized its inaugural *Masterclass Series in Systems Thinking* for ECD. We hosted the launch of the highly anticipated *Lancet* series *Early Childhood Development and the Next 1000 Days* and disseminated key resources such as UNESCO's and UNICEF's first-ever global report on early childhood care and education (ECCE). Throughout the year, ECDAN played a pivotal role in fiercely advocating for young children and their caregivers by convening experts, sharing knowledge and peer learning, and creating opportunities for members to deepen their understanding of how to use tools, data, and information to plan, implement, and scale interventions benefiting young children.

It was arguably the busiest and most impactful year in ECDAN's history with the official launch of our [new strategy](#) and with 362 partner organizations worldwide—up from 308—as well as 6,715 individual members and over 25,000 followers across social media platforms. Our learning events in 2024 attracted more than 19,000 registrants globally. As we move forward, we will focus on unlocking equitable financing, strengthening advocacy for childcare, and addressing climate impacts. Preparing for renewal of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we will keep young children and caregivers at the heart of global agendas, reinforcing ECDAN's commitment to partnerships and collective impact.

I sincerely thank each of you for your valuable contributions. I deeply appreciate the collaboration and coordination efforts to ensure every child is well nourished, healthy, happy, leaning, and safe.

With gratitude,



Elizabeth Lule
Executive Director

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ACRONYMS

AfECN	Africa Early Childhood Network
ANECD	Arab Network for Early Childhood Development
ARNEC	Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood
COP	Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
ECD	Early childhood development
ECDAN	Early Childhood Development Action Network
ECCE	Early childhood care and education
ECE	Early childhood education
ELC	Executive Leadership Council
G20	International group of 20
GISP	Global Initiative to Support Parents
GPAAG	Global Policy and Advocacy Advisory Group
HBCC	Home-based childcare
ISSA	International Step by Step Association
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
NORC	National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago
OMEP	World Organization for Early Childhood Education
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEL	Social-emotional learning
TAG	Technical Advisory Group
UNCRC	United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

ABOUT ECDAN



WHO WE ARE

ECDAN was established in 2016 by leaders within the World Bank Group and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), along with 80 partners, to catalyze collective action for and alignment with better outcomes for young children, from conception to eight years old. It was launched out of a desire to make early childhood development (ECD) a priority for global policy, programming, and public spending and to ensure accountability. It also was set up to catalyze collaboration and connection between key actors. We are the only global network focused exclusively on the holistic needs of young children and their caregivers. Our network of 362 partners includes multilateral agencies, United Nations (UN) agencies, regional ECD networks, global partnerships focused on different themes, foundations, academic institutions, nongovernmental organizations, government agencies, and private-sector businesses. In 2024, we launched an ambitious [five-year strategic plan \(2024–2028\)](#), highlighting our renewed commitment to advancing child development in vulnerable communities worldwide.

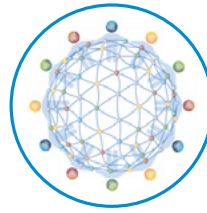
MISSION

Our mission is to catalyze collective action with and for young children and their caregivers by connecting and aligning partners, sharing knowledge and good practice, and advocating for better policies, more resources, and accountability for results.

VISION

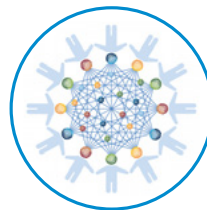
We envision a world where every young child is well nourished, healthy, happy, learning, and safe.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES 2024–2028



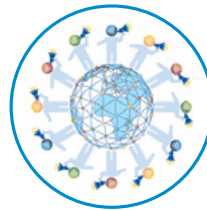
BUILD A MOVEMENT

Catalyze collective action with diverse partners for shared ECD goals.



EXCHANGE KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING

Connect partners to generate and use knowledge and evidence to improve policies and practice.



ADVOCATE FOR ACTION

Build political will and public demand for better policies, more and efficient investments, quality implementation and greater accountability for results.

INTENDED IMPACT

We aim to accelerate the scale-up of equitable and high-quality multisectoral ECD policies, programs, and services to ensure that young children reach their full potential. Through these efforts, ECDAN aims to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by promoting nurturing care for children. This includes ending poverty (Target 1.1), ending malnutrition (Target 2.2), ending preventable deaths of newborns and children under five (Target 3.2), ensuring all girls and boys have access to quality pre-primary education (Target 4.2), and ending all forms of violence against children (Target 16.2).

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

ECDAN is guided by a set of principles in two domains: social justice and ways of working.



NETWORK ACHIEVEMENTS



ECDAN'S REACH IN 2024



362 partner organizations,
6,715 individual members



29 learning webinars,
19,179 total registrations



25,000+ followers
on social media



8 Knowledge Fellows from
452 applicants



10 global and regional
convenings



48,042 unique visitors
to ECDAN's website

Figure 1. Network partner organization growth over time

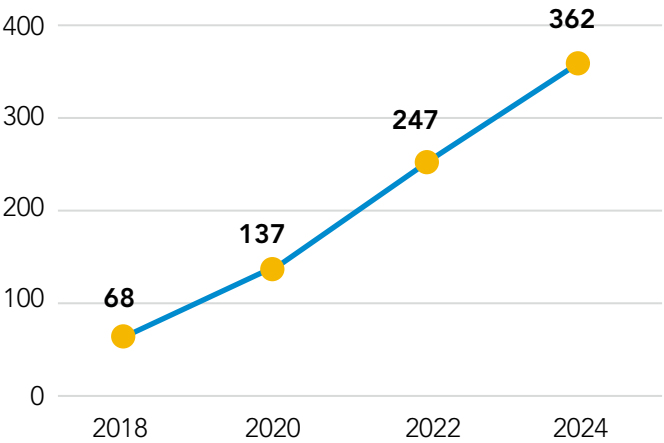


Figure 2. ECDAN member growth over time

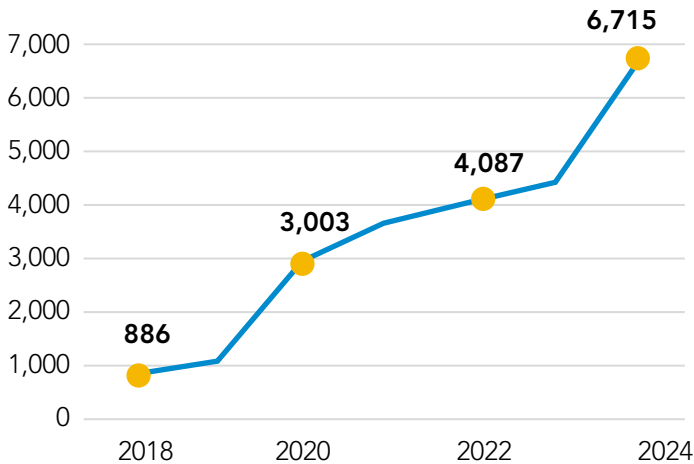
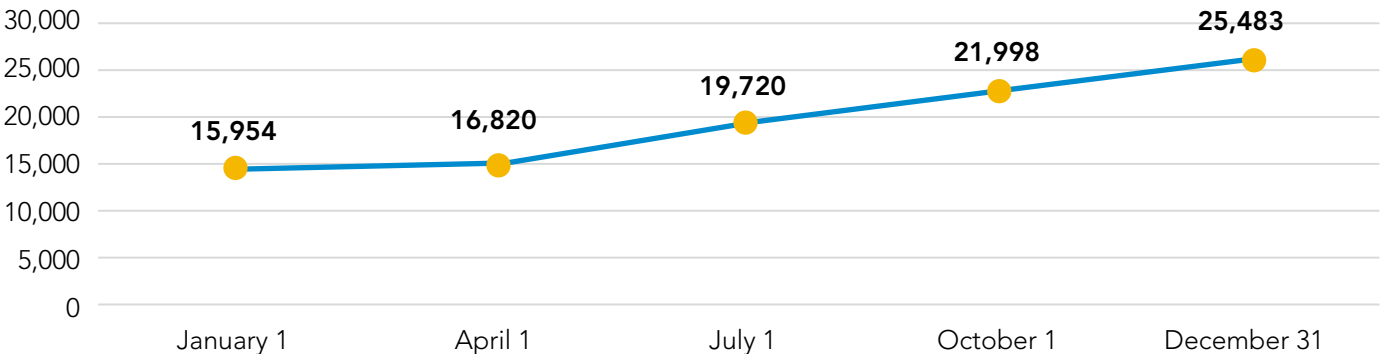


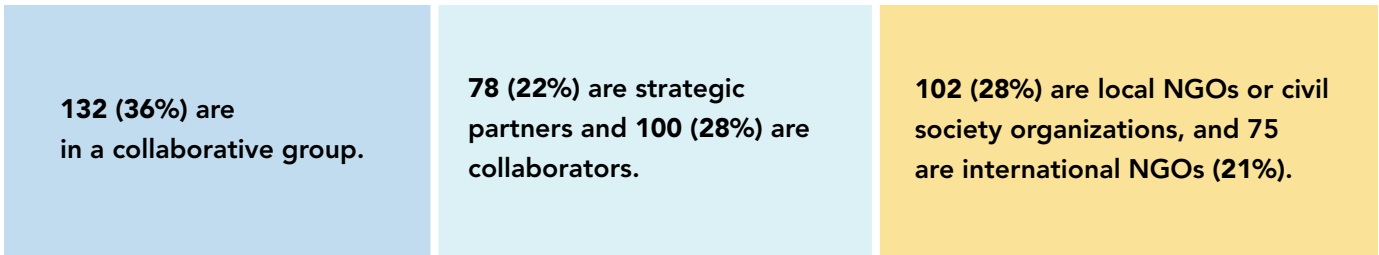
Figure 3. Composite social media followers - growth by quarter in 2024



SNAPSHOT OF NETWORK PARTNERS

We formally welcomed 35 new organizational partners who had applied and were accepted in 2024. The network grew to include 362 organizations, which are now listed and linked on our website. These organizations work around the world and are headquartered in 60 countries. The top locations are the United States (28%), Kenya (10%), the UK (8%), South Africa (6%), and India (5%).

The partner organizations comprise the following characteristics (with some overlap):



More details are available in our [2024 Partner Report](#).

Figure 4. Network partners by level of engagement (n=362)

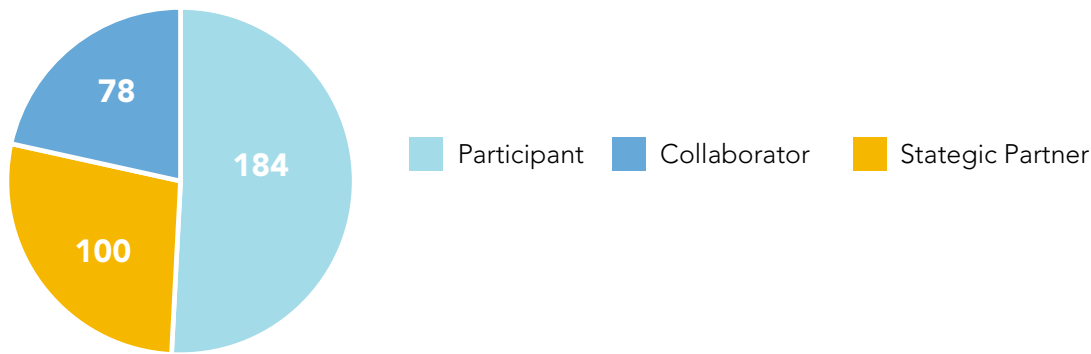
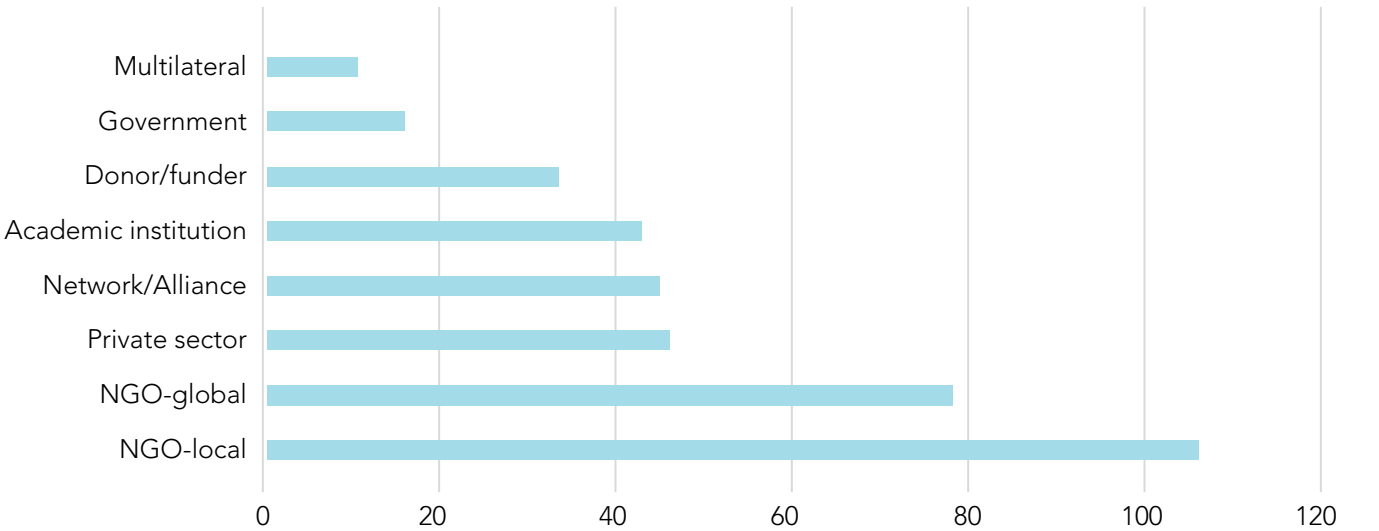


Figure 5. Network partner by organization type (n=362)



THE LAUNCH OF ECDAN'S FIVE-YEAR STRATEGY

A key achievement of 2024 was the official launch and implementation of ECDAN's ambitious [strategy 2024-2028](#), highlighting the network's renewed commitment to advancing child development in vulnerable communities worldwide. This strategy, unveiled at key events across Tanzania, Malaysia, Thailand, and Bulgaria, reflects a collective effort by ECDAN's Executive Leadership Council and diverse partners across regions and issue areas.

In developing our strategy, we embraced a consultative, participatory, and inclusive approach, reflecting on both our achievements and areas for growth. We reassessed the evolving landscape, identified the most pressing needs, and explored how the network can effectively drive the global agenda for young children. This new strategy marks a significant step forward in ECDAN's evolution. While maintaining our flexibility and responsiveness, we also are committed to being more proactive and forward-thinking.

While building on the foundation of our previous strategy, we have introduced key intentional shifts, including:



With this strategy, ECDAN is poised to deepen its impact, strengthen partnerships, and advance the well-being of young children worldwide. The implementation of its work plan has kicked into high gear with clearly defined priorities, outputs, and key indicators to advance ECDAN's new strategic objectives.

Above photo: Members of ECDAN's Executive Leadership Council at the strategy launch event in Tanzania.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

BUILD A MOVEMENT

In 2024, ECDAN took significant strides to build a vibrant movement by connecting with more partners across sectors to prioritize the needs of young children and their caregivers. By participating in major global events and collaborative efforts, we increased the visibility of young children and the commitment of stakeholders to addressing the multifaceted challenges affecting young children and their families.

2024 highlights include the following:

- **ECDAN participated in ten global and regional events** to convene partners, elevate key issues, and advocate together: the regional conferences hosted by the Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN) in Tanzania, Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC) in Malaysia, and the International Step by Step Association (ISSA) in Bulgaria; the World Forum on Early Care and Education in Canada; the World Bank spring meetings in the United States; the World Organization for Early Childhood Education's World Assembly and Conference in Thailand; the Bratislava Summit in Slovakia; the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in the United States; the G20 Ministers of Education Meeting and Global Education Meeting in Brazil; and the Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children in Colombia.
- At these convenings, **ECDAN partners co-hosted or presented at 23 sessions**, focusing on applying systems thinking, expanding access to quality childcare, unlocking financing, increasing support for parents, understanding the brain science on the impact of trauma, and more.
- To elevate ECD at UNGA, ECDAN co-organized events on parenting support with the Global Initiative to Support Parents (GISP) and Theirworld as part of the Act for Early Years Campaign. **ECDAN also hosted a global partner roundtable to discuss how to unlock financing for young children and lay the groundwork for a technical financing forum.** At the Global Education Meeting in Brazil, **we worked to ensure early childhood care and education (ECCE) was prioritized within the Fortaleza Declaration.**
- **We facilitated and/or participated in nine collaborative groups** that brought 132 partner organizations together to collectively plan for and act on various thematic priorities: GISP, NurtureFirst, Systems Thinking for ECD Initiative, Harnessing Global Data Collaborative, Childcare Systems Working Group, Climate Change-ECD Working Group, Playful Parenting Community of Practice, Nurturing Care Framework core group, and a new steering committee for an initiative to support grassroots advocacy for childcare.
- ECDAN forged new partnerships with the United Cities and Local Governments, the Global Alliance for Care, UN Habitat, and other key partners to **explore how to build better cities for children**, which was the main focus of the Bratislava Summit.



The main session at the Start with Children Summit in Slovakia.
Photo courtesy of Bloomberg Philanthropies.

Climate Change

Partners

ARNEC, AfECN, Children's Environmental Rights Initiative (CERI), Bainum Family Foundation, and 40 organizations that participate in the climate working group

Focus

To champion the inclusion and prioritization of the specific needs of young children and their caregivers in climate action plans, policies, and international treaties addressing climate change and position investment in ECD as a climate resilience strategy.

2024 Highlights

ECDAN elevated its climate advocacy in 2024 through formalization of the climate working group and close collaboration with AfECN and ARNEC. Together, we highlighted the impact of climate change on young children and positioned ECD as a means for building climate resilience by informing agendas, promoting champions, and developing and disseminating key messages. Additional partners were identified to join ECDAN's climate working group, which met regularly to discuss the latest developments and opportunities for collaboration. We engaged with the Children's Environmental Rights Initiative and others to elevate unique and specific needs of young children at the Expert Dialogue in Bonn, Germany, and submitted formal recommendations to inform the discussion.

ECDAN also mobilized partners through a call to action, urging government delegations to prioritize the needs and rights of young children and their caregivers in climate policies and financing mechanisms during the Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP29) held in Azerbaijan in November. In response to the outcomes of COP29, ECDAN issued a statement highlighting the inadequacy of the financing that had been committed.

To strengthen the advocacy capacity of grassroots organizations, ECDAN developed key messages and advocacy tools, launched a [thematic web page on climate change](#), hosted webinars, and developed an advocacy guide to promote strategies that advance ECD in the context of climate change. In 2025, ECDAN will launch the Climate Advocacy Guide and collaborate with AfECN and ARNEC's focus country partners to conduct capacity-strengthening workshops, equipping local advocates with the tools needed to drive meaningful change.



Flooding in Indonesia. Photo courtesy of ARNEC.



Partners

International Rescue Committee, LEGO Foundation, Parenting for Lifelong Health at the University of Oxford, UNICEF, and WHO

Focus

To provide a global platform for governments, civil society partners, researchers, and donors to offer parent and caregiver support so that every child can receive the support he or she needs during the first two decades of life and across the life course.

2024 Highlights

[GISP](#) had an action-packed year advancing parent and caregiver support worldwide. In January, coordinating partners met in Geneva for strategic and annual planning. This was followed by an in-person gathering in Rwanda with playful parenting implementing partners to share best practices. GISP hosted workshops at the regional ECD networks' conferences in Africa, Latin America, and Asia to share knowledge and engage advocates and practitioners. Throughout 2024, GISP continued its Global Parenting Townhall virtual events, hosting seven webinars that featured country partners, civil society, and local organizations.

During the 79th session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA79) in September, GISP partners hosted an event focused on how businesses can support parents and caregivers. In November, at the inaugural Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children in Bogota, Colombia, GISP led dynamic discussions emphasizing the necessity of supporting parents and caregivers as a pillar of child protection. By the end of the conference, 52 countries had pledged to prioritize parent and caregiver support, and 102 countries had committed to implementing strategies to protect children globally.

Throughout the year, GISP developed several key documents, including the following:

- Publication of its first magazine, [*Country Visions for Parenting and Caregiving Support: Stories From Around the World*](#), which was shared at the UNGA event and featured stories and perspectives from 11 countries.
- A collaboration with in-country partners to create four pilot [country profile pages](#), offering snapshots of the policy context, key actors, and resources available for parenting support in those countries.
- Various resources to support parenting advocates, including fact sheets, graphics, infographics, postcards, and toolkits, which were distributed in June in recognition of Parenting Month 2024 and continued to be shared afterward to reach a broad audience.
- Publication of a [progress report](#) on GISP achievements from 2022 to 2024.



GISP partners at the Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children. Photo courtesy of GISP.



Partners

Echidna Giving, ELMA Foundation, Global Development Incubator, Imaginable Futures, Jubilee Foundation, Spring Impact, and UBS Optimus Foundation

Focus

To build responsive, coherent, and financially sustainable systems that support home-based childcare (HBCC) in delivering high-quality childcare.

2024 Highlights

[NutureFirst](#) continued its work in Kenya by implementing eight pilot projects across three counties, in partnership with local government and civil society partners that were designed to test specific levers of change. HBCC providers and families were included in the design process to ensure the voices of those most affected were heard and prioritized. Detailed work plans and budgets were co-created for each intervention. The projects focused on quality improvement, provider support networks, provider recognition, government capacity-building, nutrition, financing, family strengthening, and improved provider wages. After the pilot projects were designed, baseline data were collected from approximately 6,000 HBCC providers across the three counties.

NutureFirst contributed to global learning and advocacy activities with other leading childcare organizations convened by ECDAN, including:

- At the global level, NutureFirst contributed to the World Bank's new guidance note on supporting high-quality childcare, with a particular focus on disaggregating HBCC, the most prevalent form of childcare in low- and middle-income countries.
- At the national level in Kenya, NutureFirst collaborated with the National Council for Children's Services and Council of Governors on four key policy prescriptions and on incorporation of HBCC into national policies on children.

At the end of June, after a successful incubation period, ECDAN transferred leadership and hosting responsibilities for NutureFirst to the Global Development Incubator.



The NutureFirst launch event in Nairobi. Photo courtesy of NutureFirst.



Partners

Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago

Focus

To explore the potential application of systems thinking in accelerating progress in equitable and sustainable promotion and implementation of ECD programs at scale.

2024 Highlights

One of the most notable achievements of the year was the completion of a childcare systems map. Seven leading childcare organizations in Africa and Asia that had been meeting regularly throughout 2023 convened in February for a four-day in-person workshop in Bangladesh to further develop and refine the map. The map was later shared in special sessions during regional ECD conferences in Africa and Asia. In September, the map was finalized, and a [guide and introductory video](#) were developed to support partners who wish to contextualize the map in specific country contexts. Additionally, the map and related materials were disseminated to a global audience during a webinar in October.

Between April and May, ECDAN's work in systems thinking for ECD drew considerable global attention through its [masterclass series](#), which featured 14 interactive virtual sessions led by a distinguished group of over 20 systems and ECD experts. The sessions focused on systems measurement and evaluation and were designed in collaboration with the National Opinion Research Center. Interest and participation in the series were remarkable:

- 12,479 total registrations and 1,210 unique live attendees.
- 318 participants were awarded certificates for attending seven or more sessions.
- The recordings of the sessions have had more than 5,000 views.

Throughout the year, the initiative developed and disseminated several key resources to increase interest in applying systems thinking:

- A Systems Thinking for ECD [thematic web page](#) to share resources.
- A [case study](#) on humanitarian systems from Bangladesh.
- [Repository on Systems Thinking Tools and Approaches in ECD](#).



Participants at a childcare systems mapping workshop.
Photo courtesy of BRAC.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

EXCHANGE KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING

In 2024, ECDAN leveraged its strengths in knowledge dissemination and cross-regional learning that connects the global, regional, and national levels. Through virtual learning events, knowledge hubs, newsletters, our online community, and our Knowledge Fellows program, we have contributed to building the field and increasing understanding of evidence-based practices.

2024 highlights include the following:

- **ECDAN partners collaborated to host 29 insightful learning webinars** covering a range of topics, which had a combined total of over 19,000 registrations, with nearly 6,800 joining live. This included the 14-session *Masterclass Series in Systems Thinking* for ECD, as well as 15 regular webinars on topics such as childcare, humanitarian contexts, climate change, parenting, and children with disabilities.
- **We disseminated two groundbreaking reports with calls to action**, emphasizing the critical need for early-year investment: UNESCO's and UNICEF's first-ever joint [global ECCE report](#), published in June, and *The Lancet* series [Early Childhood Development and the Next 1000 Days](#), published in November.
- Throughout the year, **ECDAN compiled and shared 77 partner resources in three newsletters**. These included reports, guidelines, events, webinar recordings, program features, blog posts, and more, reaching our mailing list of 6,715 individual members. Additional newsletters were shared with over 2,501 GISP partners that specifically highlighted parenting resources and developments.
- In February **we partnered with BRAC International to host a systems thinking workshop in Bangladesh** to facilitate the co-creation of a childcare systems map as a global public good by seven leading childcare organizations from Asia and Africa.
- To align with the new strategy and make resources and information easier to find, **we redesigned ECDAN's website**. Two new thematic pages were added, and four others were updated with partners' collaboration. These pages share information and resources on humanitarian settings, disability inclusion, ECE, systems thinking, climate change, and remote ECD services. More than 48,000 unique visitors came to ECDAN's website and engaged in over 80,000 sessions.
- To foster greater connection and sharing among ECD advocates and practitioners, **we revamped our online community, ECD Connect**. This resulted in 736 new members joining the community and the number of total posts increasing by 420 percent compared to 2023.



© BRAC University/Rafiz Imtiaz

ECDAN partners at the childcare consultation workshop.



ECDAN's flagship [Knowledge Fellows program](#) aims to build the next generation of ECD leaders and elevate fresh perspectives and voices. In 2024, the third cohort completed their projects, which were published to ECDAN's website, and their learnings were disseminated in a webinar to a global audience in May. Following that, we recruited a fourth cohort of eight new Fellows, selected from a competitive pool of 452 applicants from 70 countries. The 2024 Fellows are supported by mentors and the ECDAN Secretariat and receive professional development, networking connections, and guidance as they complete specific projects.

Their projects include:

- An analysis of climate action plans of the 12 most populated cities for their consideration of young children.
- An analysis of climate action plans of the ten most populated countries for their consideration of young children.
- A review of seven Indian states most vulnerable to climate change to evaluate whether their plans include considerations of young children, along with recommendations.
- An examination of how young children are impacted by climate mobility, with recommendations for policymakers and practitioners.
- A report that details elements of climate services, showcasing examples of organizations in this field and providing recommendations for integrating a focus on young children into the organizations' work.
- An analysis of the impact of informal work on parenting practices, including effective strategies for reaching parents within this sector.
- An exploration of childcare systems in Mongolia and opportunities for impact investing.
- A review of ECD programs that integrate nutrition and psychosocial stimulation to determine common elements and success factors.

2024 Cohort:



Bashiru Turay
(Sierra Leone)



Dulguun Batmunkh
(Mongolia)



Hernán Marisquirena
(Uruguay)



Liezel Engelbrecht
(South Africa)



Omkar Balel
(India)



Rosa Taylor
(United States)



Ruoyu Li
(China)



Suhany Zaimah
(Bangladesh)

Meet Noellie Amon-Kotey

The fellowship provided me with an incredible opportunity to deepen my expertise in ECD while engaging with global professionals committed to advancing early learning and care.



Noellie grew up in Accra, Ghana. From an early age, she was drawn to understanding how children learn, grow, and thrive. She pursued this interest at university, where she studied child development and family sciences.

Through both her academic and professional journey, Noellie has seen firsthand how high-quality early learning experiences shape children's futures, particularly in underserved communities. She is driven to make a difference by impacting those early experiences and has done so through research, advocacy, nonprofit initiatives, and educational programming.

In 2023, Noellie applied to be part of the Knowledge Fellows program and was thrilled to be selected. She was paired with a mentor and supported in completing a review of eight evaluated parenting programs implemented in Africa to assess their responsiveness to the unique needs of adolescent parents. The opportunity to connect with her mentor and learn from her peers in the cohort left a lasting impact on Noellie. "The fellowship provided me with an incredible opportunity to deepen my expertise in ECD while engaging with global professionals committed to advancing early learning and care," she said.

As a Fellow, Noellie had a meaningful experience and wanted to stay involved in the program. When ECDAN invited alumni to serve as peer mentors for the 2024 cohort, she eagerly said "yes." Noellie was paired with Rosa and has enjoyed mutual learning through their exchanges. "Serving as a peer mentor allowed me to give back by supporting new Fellows, reinforcing my commitment to mentorship and capacity-building in the field," Noellie reflected.

After completing her fellowship, Noellie was accepted into a PhD program in public policy at Southern University and A&M College in the United States. Even as she takes on this new challenge, she continues to work in meaningful ways that benefit young children and families. Looking ahead, Noellie hopes to contribute to policies and programs that enhance ECE and family support systems, particularly in the Africa region.

Meet Sabine Rakotomalala

I was interested in being a mentor because there is nothing that I like more than the energy and intelligence of young people coming into the workforce. They are often not jaded by failures, bureaucracy, or institutional baggage and are eager to create change.



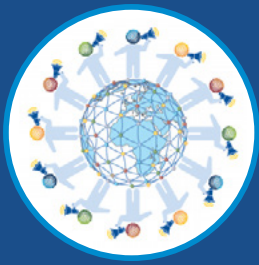
Sabine works in WHO's Violence Prevention Unit within the Department for the Social Determinants of Health in Geneva, Switzerland. Her responsibilities include bringing together key partners from different sectors around the prevention of violence against children, providing technical support to countries in their efforts to scale up violence-prevention initiatives, and conducting advocacy for the field of violence prevention.

Sabine is a passionate advocate for children and caregivers. She first became connected with ECDAN during the COVID-19 pandemic when ECDAN, WHO, UNICEF, Parenting for Lifelong Health, and End Violence Against Children came together to share resources and accelerate support for parents and caregivers worldwide by establishing the GISP.

In 2022, Sabine was asked to be a mentor for Durgesh, a Knowledge Fellow from Malaysia who helped to contribute information explaining GISP's theory of change for the initiative's website. "I was interested in being a mentor because there is nothing that I like more than the energy and intelligence of young people coming into the workforce. They are often not jaded by failures, bureaucracy, or institutional baggage and are eager to create change," shared Sabine.

Sabine had such a positive experience that she agreed to mentor another Fellow from the 2023 cohort, Tanvi, who completed a resource brief comparing different examples of parenting programs from varying contexts. Sabine enjoys mentoring because of the relationships she can build. She feels that she learns a lot through the experience, as well. "I learned humility, by the sharp questions that they posed, and gained insights from their project deliverables," she reflected.

Sabine recognizes that it is not easy to find time and resources for mentorship programs. But for her, it is worth the investment. She is proud to have been part of the Knowledge Fellows program and hopes that other new mentors will step up to take advantage of this great opportunity.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

ADVOCATE FOR ACTION

In 2024, ECDAN deepened its advocacy work specifically relating to climate change and childcare. As part of our efforts to bring more attention to the early years, we have taken a multisectoral approach to building and mobilizing global, regional, and national advocacy movements; influenced key stakeholders; activated advocates at the grassroots level; and uplifted powerful stories from the field through ECDAN's various communication channels. We continued to elevate ECD in global agendas such as the G20, UNGA, COP29, and other major influencing moments, while also supporting national-level advocates through strengthening their capacity and developing advocacy tools and resources.

2024 highlights include the following:

- Building on the childcare campaign, **ECDAN organized a series of in-person and virtual consultations with more than 130 multisectoral stakeholders working across the care agenda in Africa and Asia.** The aim was to better understand how we might strengthen the capacity of grassroots advocates and build bridges between the early childhood, gender equality, and women's economic empowerment movements to develop shared, coordinated goals and strategies to generate global and national political will to increase investments in childcare systems. This work led to the development of a proposal for a multi-donor initiative that will provide capacity-strengthening support to civil society advocacy consortia in selected countries.
- **We partnered with gender equality organizations to highlight childcare within the broader care agenda,** including contributing to the development of the Roadmap for Action on Care that was released in September and co-authoring a policy brief for the G20 on strengthening care systems. We also teamed up with the Global Alliance for Care to promote the International Day of Care and Support in October, sharing compelling multimedia stories of childcare providers and advocates.
- To elevate young children within the climate change negotiations, **ECDAN Climate Change-ECD Working Group partners influenced the expert dialogue on the disproportionate impacts of climate change on children** that took place in Bonn, Germany, in June. We submitted a formal statement with policy recommendations, coordinated partners to influence the agenda, built consensus on messaging for that dialogue, and then contributed to an advocacy brief and key messages in preparation for COP29 in Azerbaijan.



Elizabeth Lule, ECDAN's Executive Director, at an Act for Early Years campaign event. Photo by Theirworld/Ilya Savenok.

- Timed with global events, **ECDAN partners drafted and promoted two critical calls to action.** The first called for investment in ECD through the Pact for the Future, an international agreement focused on advancing implementation of the SDGs. The second called for prioritization of the needs of young children, their parents, and caregivers in climate action and financing at COP29. Combined, the two calls were signed by over 100 organizations and 165 individuals.
- To influence G20 commitments, ECDAN co-authored a policy brief highlighting the need to build comprehensive care and support systems and **supported partners to lead events on ECCE at G20 meetings in Brazil.** ECDAN was also accepted by the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, a G20 initiative launched in Brazil, by committing to taking concrete action in support of the Alliance’s objectives around the early years. Maternal and early childhood health was highlighted as part of the Alliance’s “2030 Sprints” priorities, which will mobilize collective action by governments, civil society and NGOs, financial institutions, and philanthropic donors, along with new financing.
- **We mobilized champions to speak on behalf of young children at global meetings** and developed guiding documents to clarify the role and opportunities for ongoing engagement with select ECD champions. Three champions were officially recruited to serve in this ongoing capacity.
- Throughout the year, **ECDAN co-created 20 blog posts and an op-ed** in the *Nation* newspaper featuring the promising practices of implementing partners, timed with international days and shared on social media. These stories raised awareness about various issues impacting young children and highlighted the impact of partners’ work.



Meet Grace Mathape

The ECDAN partnership has really helped us to take our systems thinking work to the next level, and this has fed into SmartStart's wider and ongoing repositioning as an ecosystem enabler.



Grace is the Chief Executive Officer of [SmartStart](#), a social franchise in South Africa with a mission to ensure every young child has access to a high-quality learning program, especially in underserved communities. SmartStart does this by recruiting, training, and supporting women from local communities to set up microenterprises that deliver high-quality early learning from their homes.

SmartStart staff knew about ECDAN for some time and have joined webinars and other activities. Grace became more deeply involved in 2022 through ECDAN's global Childcare for All campaign. She started participating in regular meetings of the Global Policy and Advocacy Advisory Group, which provided guidance and thought leadership to shape and drive ECDAN's efforts. These meetings gave Grace an opportunity to share about SmartStart and led to opportunities to showcase its work and collaborate with other childcare organizations around the world.

SmartStart was invited to join six other organizations to form the Childcare Systems Working Group, which met regularly in 2023 and 2024 to explore how using a systems approach may help identify and address barriers to improved childcare access. The working group collaboratively developed a childcare systems map and presented it at various conferences and webinars in 2024.

"The ECDAN partnership has really helped us to take our systems thinking work to the next level, and this has fed into SmartStart's wider and ongoing repositioning as an ecosystem enabler," reflected Grace. She is proud of the way SmartStart has contributed its expertise and is working with ECDAN to convert global enthusiasm for childcare into concrete national action. Grace is looking forward to ECDAN's plans to provide catalytic funding designed to bolster local and national advocacy efforts around childcare in 2025. SmartStart is part of a steering committee that is advising ECDAN on this initiative.

Grace enjoys the mutual learning that takes place in ECDAN's collaborative groups. "By applying wider learnings and insights to the South African context, we can refine our national strategies and better serve children and caregivers in our communities," Grace said.

Regional ECD Networks' Impact

The regional ECD networks are vital partners of ECDAN. We work closely with them to educate, engage, and mobilize key audiences and stakeholders in advancing early childhood development and supporting parents and caregivers.



Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN)

In 2024, [AfECN](#) launched a continental campaign to raise awareness, drive momentum, and catalyze policy action for childcare across Africa. Multilevel stakeholder engagement is at the center of the campaign's strategy. AfECN supported national dialogues in five countries (Zambia, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya), which engaged governments, civil society organizations, and local actors and mobilized collective action to achieve increased evidence and stronger policies for childcare. Each dialogue culminated in a call for action to address key challenges, including policy gaps, limited government commitment, funding constraints, inequality in access and quality, and stakeholder fragmentation. In 2025, AfECN will continue childcare advocacy in these and other countries, which will culminate in a Regional Childcare Convening.

Through a collaborative process with Oxford Human Rights Hub and Right to Education, AfECN partnered with national ECD networks in Uganda and Ghana to develop early childhood care and education (ECCE) thematic reports for the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The reports assessed each country's progress in meeting ECCE rights under the Convention. Over 200 in-country stakeholders were trained to support monitoring and reporting to UN treaty bodies, and a technical team drafted the reports. The final reports were validated and submitted in November 2024, and representatives from Ghana attended a CRC meeting in Geneva in February 2025 to present their findings.



Arab Network for Early Childhood (ANECD)

For [ANECD](#), 2024 was marked by profound challenges and difficulties amid the Israeli war in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip in Palestine. While numerous plans and projects were disrupted and the network's team and partners faced considerable strain, ANECD mobilized collective action and provided critical support to children and their families, as highlighted in the examples below:

- ANECD established an emergency committee for crisis response coordination to support the children in Gaza, comprising national networks across several Arab countries, with Palestine at the forefront. The committee held multiple meetings and issued urgent calls to action to end the violence.
- ANECD published three strategic research models: [The Situation of Parents and Caregivers in Six Arab Countries](#), [Working Conditions of Early Childhood Educators in Nurseries and Kindergartens in Seven Arab Countries](#), and [Review of Child Rights Laws and Legislations in the Arab Countries](#). Three additional models are being developed to address the professional development of early childhood education (ECE) teachers, climate change, and the alignment of national ECD strategies in Arab countries with the SDGs.
- To support advocacy and action at the country level, ANECD established and supported national networks in six Arab countries: Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco. It worked with local partners on campaigns focused on early childhood rights in Egypt, the first 1,000 days in Palestine, and the psychological effects of climate change on parents in Tunisia.



Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC)

In 2024, [ARNEC](#) supported ECD stakeholders in the Asia-Pacific region in driving inclusive and holistic ECD transformations at both the country and regional levels. Below are four highlights from the year that illustrate ARNEC's focus on climate change and social-emotional learning (SEL):

- ARNEC strengthened the capacity of stakeholders in Bhutan and Indonesia to understand the impact of climate change on young children and assisted them in developing comprehensive action plans for achieving climate resilience while integrating ECD. ARNEC also will help implement those action plans.
- UNICEF Sri Lanka, ARNEC, and UNESCO Bangkok hosted a four-day training of trainers in Colombo to advance the implementation of ECE and SEL programs across provinces in Sri Lanka. The training content was based on a handbook co-developed by UNESCO and ARNEC and was attended by government representatives, educators, administrators, and health officials.
- ARNEC and the UBS Optimus Foundation launched the MORECare4YoungChildren Project to enhance national parenting and responsive caregiving programs in Indonesia and the Philippines. Lessons learned from this change process will be shared across the region.
- ARNEC signed a memorandum of understanding with Philippine Normal University to integrate SEL into their ECE teacher training curriculum. Every year, over 250 preservice and in-service ECE teachers train at the university and will gain strategies for effectively supporting children's mental health and well-being.



International Step by Step Association (ISSA)

In 2024 [ISSA](#), a regional early childhood network for Europe and Central Asia, sustained its commitment to building a strong ecosystem that supports all young children and their families. Below are two examples of activities from the year that illustrate ISSA's efforts to create system-level impact and change at scale:

- Under the Early Childhood Workforce Initiative, a collaboration funded by the Early Childhood Regional Networks Fund, ISSA addressed the growing concern for the mental health and well-being of children and their caregivers. ISSA's member organizations in many countries embedded mental health themes in both preservice and in-service training curricula. With over 17 member organizations across 15 countries, ISSA has built a network of trainers skilled in trauma-informed and inclusive practices, reaching thousands of professionals. In 2024, education institutions in Kazakhstan, Montenegro, and Bulgaria have started accredited programs built around the resources developed by ISSA.

- To strengthen the capacity of local governments to design and implement responsive and cross-sectoral early childhood strategies, ISSA developed the [Early Childhood Development Toolbox](#) with UNICEF's support. It provides practical tools for local governments that are seeking to improve the coordination, accessibility, quality, and effectiveness of early childhood systems in their municipalities. Similarly, building on the successful use of the Jacobs Foundation's [Primokiz](#) approach across over 50 European cities in four countries, ISSA supported its member organizations and local governments in the Czech Republic in developing comprehensive and well-coordinated ECD strategies.



AfECN's stakeholder engagement in Uganda.



ANECD's early childhood coordinator among displaced children in a shelter in Lebanon.



Participants of a panel discussion at the ARNEC conference.



ISSA's members at a mental health training session in Budapest.

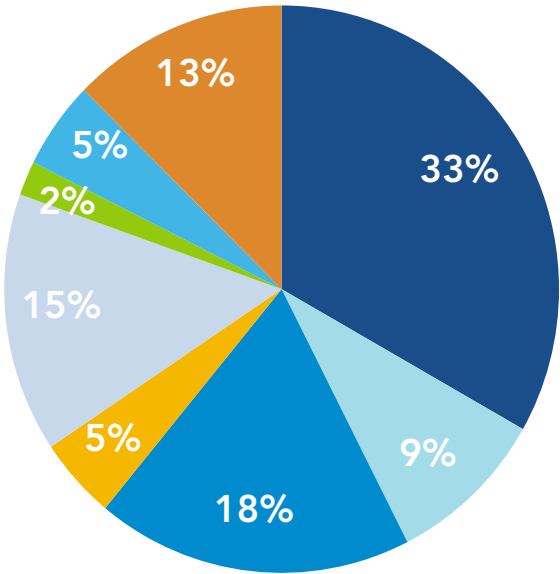
FINANCIAL REPORT



EXPENDITURE REPORT

The information below shows the actual expenditure (USD), by category, for January 1 through December 31, 2024.

Personnel	989,784
Fringe Benefits	277,140
Consultants	550,070
Travel	138,799
Subagreements	440,943
Workshops & Training	58,327
Other Project Costs	149,013
Administrative Costs	376,245
Total	2,980,321



FUNDERS

Our work would not be possible without the generous support of organizations that provided sustaining financial support. They enabled us to maintain and expand our core functions and efforts, advancing our collective impact for young children. In 2024, we received grant funding from the following 12 entities:

Bainum Family Foundation	Porticus
Conrad N. Hilton Foundation	This Day
Early Opportunities	UNICEF
Echidna Giving	University of Oxford
Imaginable Futures	William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
LEGO Foundation	W.K. Kellogg Foundation

ECDAN also benefited from significant in-kind contributions, as partners voluntarily committed their resources, time, and expertise to support ECDAN's goals.

WAY FORWARD



PLAN FOR 2025

In the year ahead, ECDAN will prioritize building momentum to unlock greater investments in the early years. We will establish a technical financing working group to analyze diverse models and best practices for increasing and improving both domestic and international financing, with a strong focus on advocating for increased government investment and exploring innovative financing approaches. This group will also examine ways to improve efficiency, equity, and inclusion in funding, and will collaborate with partners working to track multisectoral ECD investments.

Our financing work also will focus on integrating early childhood as a priority within climate financing mechanisms. The Climate Change-ECD Working Group's partners will create materials and plan activities leading up to and following COP30 to influence delegates and highlight young children within the negotiations. We will work with the child rights groups and climate justice partners globally and in Brazil to make COP30 a children's COP.

Another top priority is to continue to share new evidence and promising practices through our online platforms, as well as recommend actions partners can take to advance shared goals. The topics will reflect the multifaceted and multisectoral nature of ECD and include sessions on early learning, parent and caregiver support, childcare, systems thinking, climate change, and more.

Given the demand for capacity-strengthening from partners, ECDAN will further develop its platforms and capabilities to deliver learning courses on priority themes, including financing, early trauma, and child-centered urban planning. In addition, ECDAN will continue to collaborate with ARNEC and AfECN on strengthening the capacity of local partners to engage in climate change advocacy.

To complement our ongoing advocacy to elevate early childhood on global agendas, we will strengthen grassroots advocacy efforts by facilitating collaboration between the childcare, women's economic empowerment, and



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workers' rights movements, while also providing capacity-strengthening opportunities. We will launch the Childcare Advocacy, Research, and Engagement (CARE) Initiative, a donor collaborative that aims to increase political will and public demand in countries to increase government investments in high-quality and affordable childcare. The initiative was co-designed with partners through a series of participatory consultations. We expect to start implementation in 2025 in three countries while continuing to fundraise for expansion to additional countries.

As a network, all our efforts depend on the contributions of partners and members like you. We invite you to join the movement.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ECDAN is governed by the Executive Leadership Council (ELC), established in 2020, which oversees management, fundraising, risk, and strategy. It includes key partner agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and elected members who volunteer their time and expertise. Supporting the ELC, the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) works with the Secretariat to set technical priorities and provide expert guidance. ECDAN also convenes specialized working groups, including the Global Policy and Advocacy Advisory Group (GPAAG), which drives advocacy efforts like the Childcare for All campaign; the Childcare Systems Working Group, which develops strategies to expand access to high-quality, affordable childcare; and the Climate Change-ECD Working Group, which integrates early childhood needs into climate adaptation and mitigation strategies.

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Won Jung Byun, UNESCO

Knowledge Fellows Program Contributors

The Knowledge Fellows program is guided by a Steering Committee responsible for selecting fellows and upholding the program's overall quality and integrity. Mentors are carefully selected and matched with a Fellow to guide him or her in carrying out a specific knowledge project and support the Fellow's professional development generally. All mentors and Steering Committee members volunteer their time and generously offer their expertise to empower early-career ECD professionals.

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Secretariat

ECDAN's Secretariat comprises dedicated professionals who carry out the strategic vision, make programmatic decisions, and manage the funds raised. It is the day-to-day contributions of these team members that bring ECDAN's mission to life.

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