Creating Tools for Early Childhood Advocates

Showcasing the Knowledge Fellows' Final Products

November 19, 2025

Knowledge Fellows Program Overview

- Began in 2021 with support from the Bainum Family Foundation
- Aim: To create opportunities for early-career ECD professionals to receive mentorship, professional development, and networking connections while working on a project that advances ECDAN's goals
- 30 Knowledge Fellows from 20 countries to date have completed the program, in five annual cohorts
- Oversight provided by a Steering Committee

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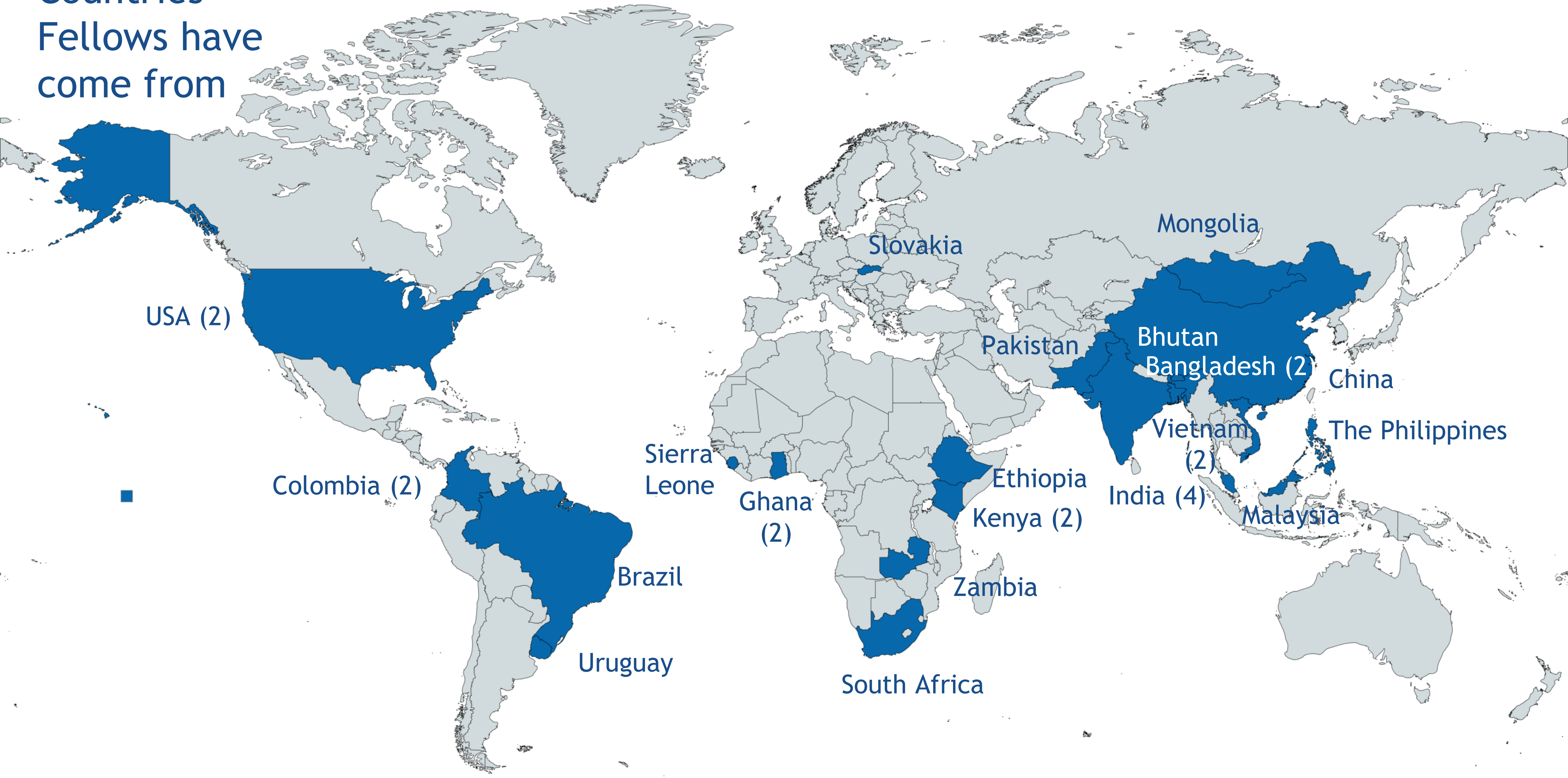
Countries Fellows have come from



Knowledge Fellows Steering Committee

Elizabeth Lule
Executive Director, ECDAN

Emily Garin
Child Policy Expert

Frances E. Aboud (Chair)
Professor Emerita at McGill University

Kim Foulds
Vice President, Content Research & Evaluation at Sesame Workshop

Kimberly Boller
Senior Director for Science Affairs at the American Psychological Association

Nirmala Rao
Serena H.C. Yang Professor in Early Childhood Development and Education at the The University of Hong Kong

Sarah Beardmore
Strategic Partnerships and Capabilities Team Lead at GPE

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Responsibilities:

- Guides design of the program
- Assists with recruitment and selection of Fellows
- Provides feedback to Fellows
- Fills gaps as needed
- Promotes the program

Knowledge Fellows Program Structure

- 4-8 Knowledge Fellows per year, from diverse locations around the world
- Each Fellow is paired with a seasoned ECD professional to act as a mentor and is supported by the Secretariat
- Fellows and mentors meet 1-2x per month to review work and plan next steps
- Fellowship takes 6 months, ~6 hours per week
- Cohort meets 2x per month to share progress and build skills
- Outputs are shared on ECDAN's website

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New in 2025: Advocacy Focus

- Constrained fiscal space and recent funding cuts make advocacy for domestic financing more important than ever
- Translation of global momentum into policy and investment changes at the country level is a key gap
- ECDAN members request capacity strengthening related to advocacy
- Short, action-oriented resources have a greater chance of being read and used
- Distilling information into key messages and tangible recommendations is a valuable professional skill
- Upcoming events offer clear dissemination opportunities for the resources

Parenting Fellow: Aishwarya Iyer

Knowledge Fellows

Project

An advocacy brief that explains the why and how of parenting support, provides promising examples from different country contexts, and recommends policy and investments choices to increase support for parents

Mentored by
Eleanor Sykes
Lively Minds

Aishwarya was most recently a Research Assistant at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. She holds a master's degree in human development and education from Harvard Graduate School of Education.

PARENTING SUPPORT: AN INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE

Aishwarya Iyer

Mentor: Eleanor Sykes

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A child's primary caregivers have the greatest influence on a child's care and development.

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Yet only 26% of governments report their parenting support as sufficient to reach all families who need it.

Source: WHO, 2020

ABOUT THE ADVOCACY BRIEF

- **Purpose:** An advocacy brief to advance parenting support
- **Target Audience:** National policymakers and parenting advocates
- **Dissemination:** Global Initiative to Support Parents (GISP) partners and invitees to the Global Caregiver Forum in Spain in January 2026

WHAT IS PARENTING SUPPORT?

UNDERSTANDING PARENTING SUPPORT

Programs, services, and resources for caregivers that support children's development from birth through adolescence

Targets mothers, fathers, grandparents, foster parents, and other caregivers

Focuses on strengthening caregiver-child relationships and improving the quality of responsive care that children receive

Builds skills in play and learning, non-violent discipline, health and nutrition, gender-equitable parenting, self-care, and emotion regulation

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

THE CASE FOR PARENTING SUPPORT

Parenting support..

- Promotes child development and family well-being
- Prevents violence against children and women
- Drives gender equality
- Generates high economic and social returns for countries

WHAT HAS WORKED IN OTHER COUNTRIES?

APPROACHES TO PARENTING SUPPORT

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Examples of parenting support delivery models…

Building parenting support into **existing systems and services** that families already use regularly

Using **mass media and digital platforms** to reach caregivers with parenting messages

Providing **targeted parenting support** for families facing greater challenges or risks

EXAMPLES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Ghana: Parenting education workshops and group play activities for mothers delivered through Ghana Education Services (GES) run kindergartens, and a national radio program

Bhutan: Playful parenting education embedded into routine health services and pre-service training for health assistants

Philippines: Parenting education sessions integrated into Family Development Sessions (e-FDS) of a national cash transfer program

Chile: Parenting education sessions focused on child development delivered through primary health centers

South Africa: Parenting support built into national policies and systems, scaling evidence-based programs through health and education

WHAT CAN POLICYMAKERS DO ABOUT IT?

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

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- Assess the context and select appropriate interventions
- Integrate parenting support into existing services and provide targeted support for families that need it
- Establish cross-sector coordination mechanisms
- Build sustainable workforce capacity
- Use digital platforms and mass media to extend reach

USING THIS RESOURCE

Use **key messages** for advocacy

Seek inspiration from **innovative models** from other country contexts

Draw from a range of **recommended actions** to strengthen parenting support


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Parenting Support Advocacy Brief

PARENTING SUPPORT: AN INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Parenting support is one of the best investments governments can make. It drives progress across multiple policy priorities simultaneously—improving children's health, education, and early childhood development outcomes; reducing violence within families; advancing gender equality; and strengthening national economies.

Governments are starting to recognize this value. In November 2024, 52 countries pledged to strengthen parenting support as part of the Bogotá Call to Action. Looking ahead to the Global Caregiver Forum in 2026, this brief provides policymakers with evidence and practical options for turning commitments into action.

KEY MESSAGES:

- **Caregivers need support** through all stages of their child's growth, from **pregnancy through adolescence**. Parenting support interventions help them **develop skills to improve the quality of nurturing care they provide.**
- **Parenting support delivers proven returns not just for children but for families and societies as a whole**—helping caregivers provide safer, healthier, and more nurturing environments that promote learning, economic security, and equity.
- A variety of approaches are needed to reach all families. Countries can **adopt evidence-based programs, integrate support into existing services, provide targeted support** to families at risk, **coordinate across sectors, use digital platforms and media,** and **build frontline worker capacity.**

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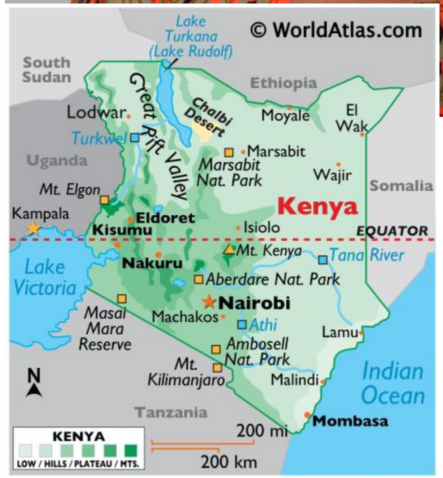
Childcare Fellow: **Wamweru Muthara**



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Project

An advocacy brief to support national efforts to strengthen childcare systems, with key evidence of the benefits, policy recommendations, and potential financing mechanisms drawn from promising practices in countries

Mentored by
Fiana Arbab
Oxfam International

Wamweru is the Founding Director of Nawirisha, an organization dedicated to expanding access to childcare services in low-income, urban settings of Kenya. She holds a master's degree in education and development from the University of Haifa in Isreal.

ACTION FOR CHILDCARE: THE TIME IS NOW

Wamweru Muthara, Gladys
Mentored by Fiana Arbab

Rationale for the Brief

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- ➢ **Childcare gap** affects **40%** of all young children globally (World Bank, 2021).
- ➢ **Affordable and accessible** high-quality childcare offers multiple benefits:
  - ✓ Optimal development
  - ✓ Economic growth
  - ✓ Gender equality
  - ✓ Poverty reduction
  - ✓ Returns on health
- ➢ **Global momentum** for childcare policy action
- ➢ Yet, childcare not often treated as **a national public good**

What are The Returns on Investment?

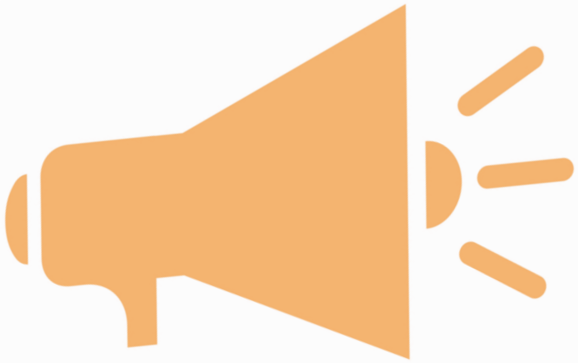
High-quality childcare (0-5 years) is one of the **most effective public investments**, providing a triple dividend to children, women and the society.

- **Improved child developmental outcomes** through access to safe and stimulating environments.
- **Increased educational attainment** through improved school readiness and life-long learning.
- **1 USD = 13%** annual RoI

- **Increased access to decent work** through increased labour participation and reduced wage penalties for mothers - potentially generating **299 million** jobs by **2035**.
- **Closing the economic gender gap** as women spend **3.2** times more on unpaid care work than men, preventing **42%** working age women from paid work.

- **Poverty reduction** through secure, stable and decent jobs, especially for women who channel the resources directly to their children's health and education.
- **High return on investments** through improved long-term outcomes for children, especially in disadvantaged families - public expenditure savings and increased revenues.

A Call to Action!



Make Childcare a National Public Good!

- Policy Changes
- Large-Scale Investments

What Can Policymakers Do?

There are **4** key recommendations that policymakers can take to make childcare a **national public good:**

Establish structured national frameworks.

Define mandatory national standards for **quality, accessibility, and affordability.**

Formalize and professionalize childcare workforce.

Create training, certification, and **career progression pathways.**

Invest in integrated infrastructure and social protection.

Establish 'one-stop-shop' centers (integrating care, health, education) and expand social protection (like universal child benefits and parental leave).

Mobilize adequate public investment.

Allocate funds across different sector budgets and incentivize or mandate **private sector contribution.**

What Has Worked in Other Countries?

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The path is **not one-size-fits-all**, but the principles of quality, affordability, and accessibility remain universal.

Financial support to families

- ➢ Childcare subsidy
- ➢ Direct financial aid

Brazil's Bolsa program

Public childcare infrastructure

- ➢ Public childcare centres
- ➢ Integrated child services
- ➢ Integrated infrastructure

India's Anganwadi centres

Childcare labor standards

- ➢ Workforce professionalization and protection
- ➢ Parental leave and care supporting workplace provisions

Ecuador's govt. programs

The Way Forward

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Utilize this Brief

- ➢ Bring these **key messages** into policy conversations with policymakers
- ➢ Assess your **local context, fiscal realities, and varied needs of families** in the informal economy
- ➢ Select **feasible policy and financing** strategies
- ➢ Integrate the **various sectors** relevant to childcare

Commit to Action

- ➢ Enact **comprehensive** national policies
- ➢ Fund the policies through **national budgets**
- ➢ Complement this funding with **additional sources**

By doing this, we will together take the strategic steps necessary to establish **childcare as a national public good**, thereby transforming our shared vision into a tangible reality for millions of families.

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Childcare
Advocacy Brief

Action for Childcare: The Time is Now


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Making childcare affordable and accessible can help support optimal development in young children, drive economic growth and job creation, promote gender equality, reduce poverty, as well as secure long-lasting returns on child health and well-being. This evidence underscores a huge opportunity that governments have to secure significant gains for their citizens and economies through strategic investment in childcare. Bridging the current childcare gap, which impacts over 40% of all young children globally, is a **foundational investment** that promises multisectoral returns in human capital development, labor market productivity, and long-term poverty alleviation (World Bank, 2021). By committing to ensuring widespread access to high-quality childcare, governments can unlock the full economic and social potential currently unrealized by millions.

This knowledge, coupled with a greater understanding of the childcare gap, has ignited significant global momentum for childcare policy dialogue and action. Now is the time for governments to translate this awareness into action through policy changes and new investments at the national level that guarantee widespread access to childcare, thereby equitably delivering associated benefits to all.

Some countries have already positioned childcare as a public good through strong policies, investments, and systems. This brief showcases some of these practical policy and financing recommendations to help policymakers take decisive action and establish childcare as a **national public good** in their context.

Key Messages:

- **Providing childcare is a transformative economic investment for achieving gender parity** because it helps reduce the unpaid care burden and unlocks the potential to boost national and family revenues.
- **Investing in childcare is a high-yield economic strategy** offering dividends for multiple ministries, including education, health, finance, labor, and social protection.
- **Adopting and implementing policies focused on affordability, availability, and inclusivity of childcare** can be done through strategies such as direct support to families, increased infrastructure, professionalization of the workforce, and parental leave.

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Climate Fellow: Sadaf Qayyum

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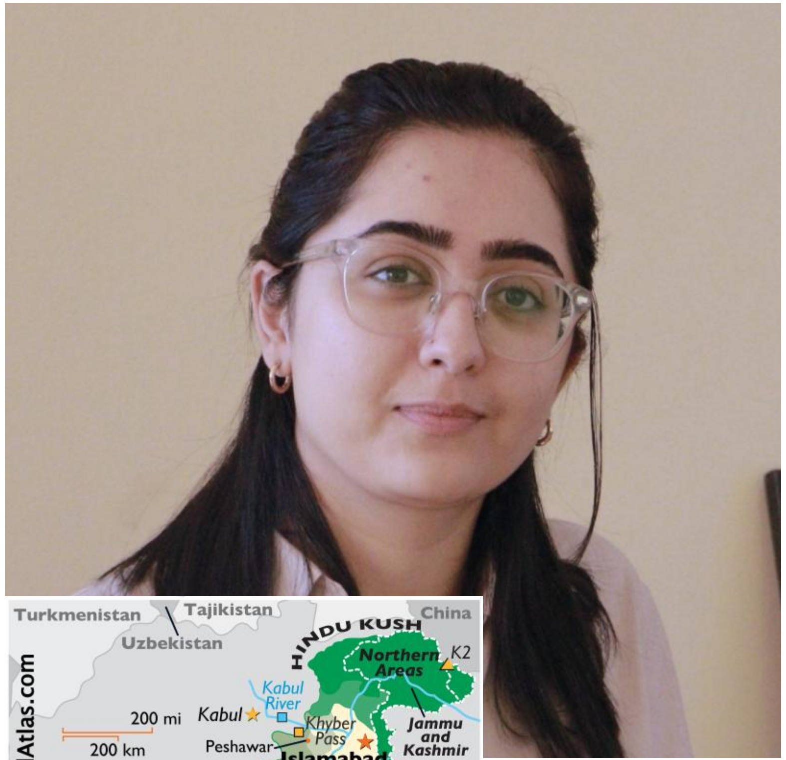

Project

An advocacy brief that includes key messages and specific recommendations that link early childhood to the climate agenda to inspire countries to prioritize young children in their national climate action policies, plans, and financing decisions

Mentored by
Adrián Cerezo
University of Maine

Sadaf currently serves as an Inclusion and Resource Mobilization Officer with the Global Advisory team at Street Child UK. She holds a master's degree in education policy for global development from the University of Glasgow.

The Hidden Key to Climate Resilience: Investing in Young Children

Fellow: Sadaf Qayyum, MS
Mentor: Adrián Cerezo, PhD

19 November 2025

Global Climate Change Agenda

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- Climate change poses profound risks to early childhood development (ECD)
- **UN COP28 acknowledged** the climate crisis' disproportionate impacts on children and recommended to include relevant policy solutions across UNFCC
- Yet, attention to **early childhood is a key gap in existing climate policies, plans, and investments**

"Climate Crisis is a Child Rights Crisis"

UN Climate Change Conference 2025

- Put young children at the heart of COP30 outcomes, recognizing their unique vulnerabilities, needs, and rights

- Adopt concrete, child-focused climate measures and commitments within national climate mitigation, adaptation, and Loss and Damage financing plans

Purpose of the Brief


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Climate Change
Advocacy Brief

The Hidden Key to Climate Resilience: Investing in Young Children

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Climate change is a defining challenge of this moment and planning actions that will mitigate its impact presents an opportunity to make investments that will build the health and potential of young children as a climate resilience solution. There is already clear evidence that investing in high-quality nurturing care and essential early childhood services is a powerful tool for achieving sustainable development, and this approach should also be leveraged to address the multifaceted challenges of climate change. This brief provides countries with the rationale, examples, and recommended actions they can take to use climate change planning processes and financing mechanisms to adopt and implement policies and plans that guarantee universal access to all components of nurturing care—health, nutrition, safety, responsive caregiving, and early learning—for young children.

What is at Stake

In 2023, the 28th UN Climate Change Conference (COP28) acknowledged the disproportionate and intersecting impacts of the climate crisis on children and recommended including children distinctly in all levels of climate action across the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) agenda items.

development. Risks include malnutrition due to reduced food supply, disrupted access to early education, unstable living environments, interrupted caregiver attention, and an increased likelihood of physical, cognitive, and mental health challenges resulting from stress, pollution, and displacement (UNICEF, 2021).

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1. **Target Audience**: Country-level climate policymakers
2. **Goals**:
   - Understand investing in young children as a climate resilience strategy
   - Learn recommended actions to include in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), and climate financing
   - Highlight successful examples from other countries
   - Advocate for stronger commitments on global platforms

3. **Dissemination**: Leverage COP30 and national planning process

Connecting ECD to Climate Goals

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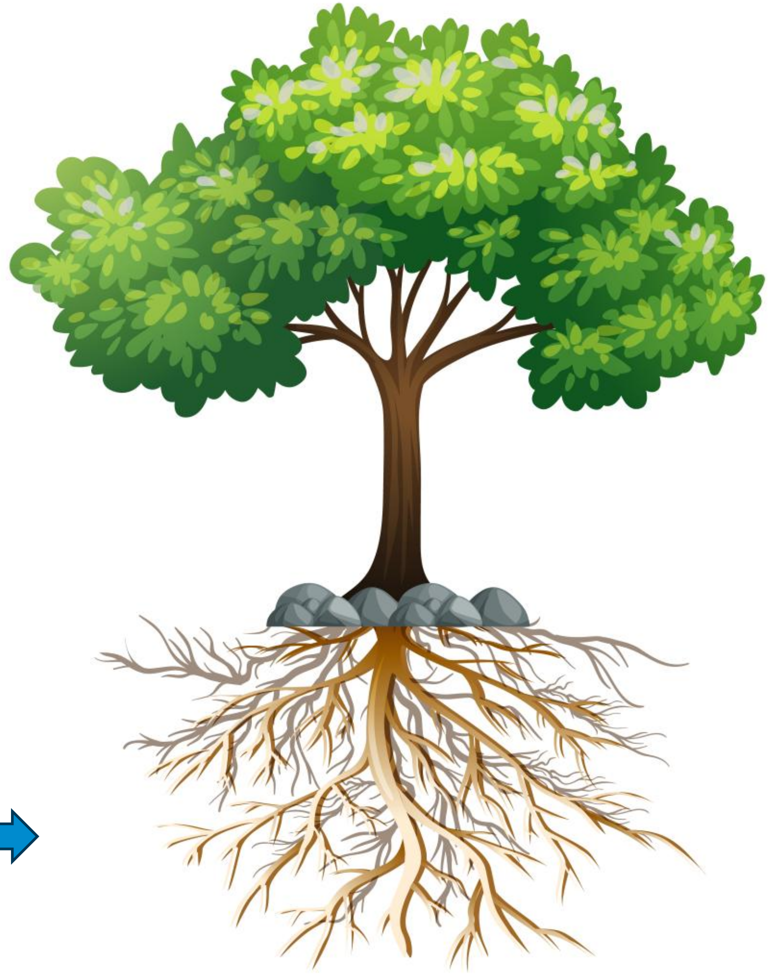
Climate Change Agenda

1. Improved community climate resilience
2. Adaptation
3. Mitigation
4. Disaster response



Benefits of Investing in Young Children

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- Builds human capital and supports the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Delivers a high return on investment
- Fosters cross-sector collaboration through an integrated approach and coordinated service delivery
- Boosts climate-friendly habits
- Reduces the risk of lifelong non-communicable diseases and lowers associated healthcare costs
- Offers an efficient way to reach families with messages and services through community centers

Learning from other Countries


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The Republic of the Marshall Islands

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- Recognizes the fundamental role ECD plays in the context of socio-economic development and climate change policies in its latest NDC 3.0
- NDC goes on to specify that the government *"plans to…integrate ECD and climate change both at the agency and program levels."*
- Prioritizes climate-smart infrastructures


The Republic of the Marshall Islands
Nationally Determined Contribution 2031-35

February 2025

Dominican Republic

- Integrated early childhood considerations into its NDC
- Held a landmark First Forum on Climate Change and its Impact on Early Childhood (2023)
- Are advancing child-sensitive solutions within national climate policies
- Are advocating for stronger integration of early childhood considerations in climate response plans ahead of COP30 and updating NDCs

Action Countries Can Take


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At National Level

- Name young children (0-8 years) specifically as a distinct group
- Integrate comprehensive nurturing care services into climate change policies, plans, and financing
- Include nurturing care services in budgets
- Construct and upgrade early childhood facilities to be climate resilient
- Expand access to economic and social resources for families impacted by climate change
- Involve key ECD stakeholders in climate action planning

At Global Level

- Showcase successful countries as models
- Endorse climate finance reforms
- Advocate for the allocation of grants to vulnerable countries
- Promote the inclusion of age-responsive indicators in the global adaptation goals
- Support continuation of the expert dialogue on early childhood and climate change

"They (children) have their whole life ahead of them - any deprivation as a result of climate and environmental degradation at a young age can result in a lifetime of lost opportunity"

Unicef, 2021

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Financing Fellow: **Karin Nosková**

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Project

1) A database of literature that presents an analysis of investments in young children made in one or more country contexts
2) An accompanying advocacy brief that summarizes lessons learned from the available literature and draws recommendations for strengthening early years financing at the country level

Mentored by
Joanna Juzon
Genesis Analytics

Karin currently serves as Programme Manager for Inclusive Education and Women's Empowerment at the Volkswagen Slovakia Foundation. She holds a master's degree in education, globalization, and international development from the University of Cambridge.

Strengthening Systems, Securing Futures: Financing Early Childhood Development

Knowledge Fellow 2025 – Karin Nosková

Mentor – Joanna Juzon

Purpose of the Project

1. **Understand what has been known and tried related to** early years financing, **with a focus on system infrastructure.**

2. **Provide insights and examples** ahead of the 2026 **Global Technical Financing Forum** and the 2027 **International Finance Summit for Early Childhood.**

Audience:

Policy-makers shaping national funding systems.

Donor agencies and foundations seeking evidence-based investment strategies.

Civil society and research actors advocating for inclusive and sustainable early years financing.

Main Message

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Governments must move beyond fragmented efforts and commit to **long-term, inclusive, and accountable financing systems.**

Lessons Learned

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- Comprehensive **data systems** are lacking.
- **Multisectoral coordination** is weak.
- Innovative financing requires a **base of public funding** and strong **governance**.
- Service **quality is inconsistent**, and delivery is **not equitable**.

A review of **49 publications (2015-2025)** describing financing approaches for early learning, childcare, and related ECD services **across 50+ countries** showed that **financing challenges persist globally across all income levels.**

Leading Country Examples

Peru

Institutionalizing ECD Through Legal and Multisectoral Reforms

Strengths: Solid legal mandate ensuring stability, integrated education-health-social protection model, and strong multisector coordination.

Limitations: Persistent regional disparities, workforce shortages and uneven capacities, and fiscal constraints affecting sustainability.

South Africa

Expanding Access Through Targeted Subsidies

Strengths: Expanded access for disadvantaged groups through targeted subsidies, integrated education-health-nutrition support, and social protection mechanisms.

Limitations: Uneven service quality, workforce shortages and limited training, and fragmented institutional coordination.

To learn more about the leading country examples, explore the full brief here.

What Should Governments Do?

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- **Secure public funding.**
- **Balance expansion with quality.**
- **Institutionalize coordination and governance.**
- **Strengthen data and accountability systems.**

ECDAN Early Childhood Financing Advocacy Brief

Strengthening Systems, Securing Futures: Financing Early Childhood Development

There is clear evidence that investments in young children yield the greatest returns in human capital. Ensuring every child receives nurturing care—being well nourished, healthy, learning, and safe—in the first years of life drives better outcomes for children, families, and society as a whole in both the short and long term. Planning, securing, and equitably allocating adequate resources for early childhood development (ECD) is therefore a political and financial imperative for governments.

Yet, interventions supporting the youngest children and their caregivers remain chronically underfunded, fragmented, and dependent on short-term funding initiatives (Zubairi & Rose, 2017; UNICEF, 2019). The multisectoral nature of ECD and constrained national budgets present technical challenges, but the upcoming Global Technical Financing Forum in 2026 and International Finance Summit for Early Childhood in 2027 are opportunities for governments to learn, share, and make commitments.

Generating actionable knowledge of effective mechanisms and enabling conditions for early years investment is crucial to building fair, predictable, and resilient systems that benefit all young children and drive long-term progress. This brief provides policymakers with a snapshot of financing pathways being tried in different countries, with promising examples, as well as lessons learned to guide decision making when planning, implementing, and monitoring investments in the early years.

Key Messages:

- **Early investments pay off.** Investing in children's health, nutrition, protection, and learning in the first years of life yields lasting social and economic returns.
- **Coordination drives impact.** Sustainable progress depends on aligned, multisectoral investments within a coherent national framework for young children.
- **Robust public finance is required.** While innovative and complementary financing can be leveraged, the base must be stable, long-term financing from governments that is well monitored and inclusive.
- **Evidence of utilization is key.** Governments need data systems to track spending and ensure that it is fair, predictable, efficient, and meets the needs of every child.

You can access the full brief here.

Call to Action

All commitments require **sustained financing** in early years – this remains the central challenge. **This database and brief** provide **actionable, evidence-based guidance** to identify promising models and **drive transformative investment decisions.**

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Question & Answer

What have these presentations made you curious about?

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Congratulations, Knowledge Fellows!

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Thank you, Mentors!

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