ECDAN

Early Childhood Development Action Network

2025 ANNUAL REPORT



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Message from the Executive Leadership Council

Dear Partners and Colleagues,

On behalf of the Executive Leadership Council of the Early Childhood Development Action Network (ECDAN), thank you for the solidarity, commitment, and resilience you have demonstrated throughout 2025. As crises continued to threaten the well-being of young children and caregivers worldwide, you remained steadfast in building relationships, learning together, and advocating collectively.

Despite the hardship, transitions, and losses experienced across our network this year, your commitment and dedication to our shared mission never wavered. We are deeply grateful for your generosity, collaboration, and determination that define this movement. We also recognize the exceptional commitment of the Secretariat team whose leadership and coordination helped convene the network, strengthen connections, and advance our collective work.

We are pleased to share our 2025 annual report, which highlights the achievements, partnerships, and collaborative efforts that have shaped the year. As the second year of our five-year strategy period, 2025 saw notable gains in all three strategic objectives: building a movement, exchanging knowledge and learning, and advocating for action. Across these objectives, we prioritized the themes of unlocking sustainable financing for young children and preventing and responding to early trauma. In today's changing global context, we believe these priorities are fundamental to achieving lasting progress across all aspects of early childhood development (ECD).

The challenges before us are great, but our shared commitment is greater. Across regions, countries, sectors, and disciplines, we are proving that collaboration is not only possible but essential to building sustainable systems and creating lasting change for young children and their caregivers. Let this report serve as a reminder that progress happens when people and partners come together with a shared purpose, courage, and determination. Thank you for being part of this extraordinary movement. Together, we are shaping a future where every young child can thrive and that future begins now.

With sincere appreciation,
ELC Co-chairs



Borhene Chakroun
Director, Division for Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems, UNESCO



Lynette Okengo
Executive Director, Africa Early Childhood Network

Message From the Executive Director

Dear Partners and Colleagues,

As we reflect on 2025, what stays with me most is not the scale of the challenges we faced, but the strength and resilience of this movement in responding to them.We saw organizations close or merge; talented colleagues and advocates lose their jobs; and, most critically, lifesaving health, nutrition, and social protection support for families disappear almost overnight. These disruptions occurred against a backdrop of ongoing conflict and war, climate emergencies, natural disasters, economic uncertainty, and displacement. In times like these, it can be tempting to step back. Instead, this network stepped forward.

Throughout the year, I saw members, partners, and champions continue to share knowledge, generate evidence, support one another, learn together, build new connections, and advocate tirelessly for young children. At a time when resources were shrinking and uncertainty was growing, our collective commitment to the early years remained steadfast. That commitment gives me hope.

As highlighted throughout the report, together, we leveraged the global Act for Early Years campaign and South Africa's G20 presidency to elevate investments in the early years as foundational to inclusive and sustainable development and to promote a systems approach to integrated services for young children. At the Fourth Financing for Development Conference, we collectively advocated for comprehensive early childhood services to be integrated into national development plans and domestic budgets. This collective advocacy helped strengthen global recognition of the importance of the early years culminating in the G20 Leaders' Declaration's acknowledgement of early childhood care and education (ECCE) as a "vital investment for a country's social and economic future."

Additionally, our shared advocacy through the global Childcare4All campaign continued to gain momentum and deliver results. The landmark Africa Childcare Conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, co-hosted by the African Union and the Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN) brought together representatives from 23 countries to explore pathways for expanding access to quality childcare and culminated in a call to action. Building on this momentum, ECDAN launched the Childcare Advocacy, Research, and Engagement (CARE) Initiative in three countries to support local, multisectoral advocacy coalitions to strengthen political will and public demand for childcare. We also launched the childcare systems map as a global public good, providing policymakers and partners with a tool to better understand childcare ecosystems and identify opportunities for reform.

Despite a challenging funding and operating environment, our network continued to grow. By the end of 2025, ECDAN comprised 349 partner organizations worldwide, 9,204 individual members, and more than 46,000 followers across social media platforms. Our 13 virtual learning events attracted nearly 9,700 registrants globally demonstrating continued demand for connections, learning, and collaboration.

Looking ahead, our priorities remain clear. We will continue to advance our work to unlock more equitable and efficient financing, strengthen childcare systems and advocacy, and champion approaches that help children and caregivers navigate the impact of interconnected and overlapping crises. We will also continue leveraging the strength of this network to ensure that young children remain at the center of global, regional, and national development agendas.

The work reflected in this report offers reason for hope and confidence in what we can achieve together.
Thank you for being part of ECDAN.



Elizabeth Lule
Executive Director

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ACRONYMS

AfECN	Africa Early Childhood Network
AfECN	Africa Early Childhood Network
ANECD	Arab Network for Early Childhood Development
ARNEC	Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood
CARE	Childcare Advocacy, Research, and Engagement
CHODAWU	Conservation, Hotels, Domestic and Allied Workers' Union
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
ELC	Executive Leadership Council
G20	International group of 20
GISP	Global Initiative to Support Parents
GPAAG	Global Policy and Advocacy Advisory Group
ISSA	International Step by Step Association
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
OMEP	World Organization for Early Childhood Education
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TAG	Technical Advisory Group
TECDEN	Tanzania Early Childhood Development Network
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

ABOUT ECDAN



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WHO WE ARE

ECDAN was established in 2016 by leaders of the World Bank Group and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), along with 80 partners, to catalyze collective action and alignment to achieve better outcomes for young children, from conception to eight years old. It was launched out of a desire to make 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 349 partners includes multilateral agencies, United Nations (UN) agencies, regional ECD networks, global partnerships focused on different themes, foundations, academic institutions, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), government agencies, and private-sector businesses. We are midway through implementing our current five-year strategic plan (2024–2028) that highlights our renewed commitment to advancing equitable and inclusive ECD in vulnerable communities worldwide.

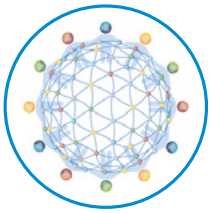
MISSION

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



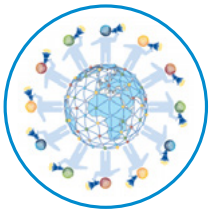
BUILD A MOVEMENT

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 the well-being of all young children. 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 hunger and malnutrition (Targets 2.1 and 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.



Photo Credit: GPE/Feruzi

NETWORK ACHIEVEMENTS



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ECDAN'S REACH IN 2025

349 partner organizations,
9,204 individual members

13 learning webinars,
9,690 total registrations

46,000+ followers
on social media

4 Knowledge Fellows from
128 applicants

11 global and regional
convenings

44,000+ unique visitors
to ECDAN websites

700+ partner resources
promoted

29 new knowledge
products published

Figure 1. Network partner growth over time

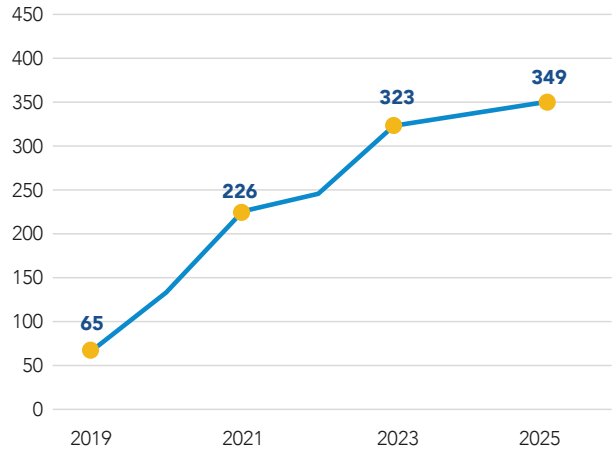


Figure 2. ECDAN member growth over time

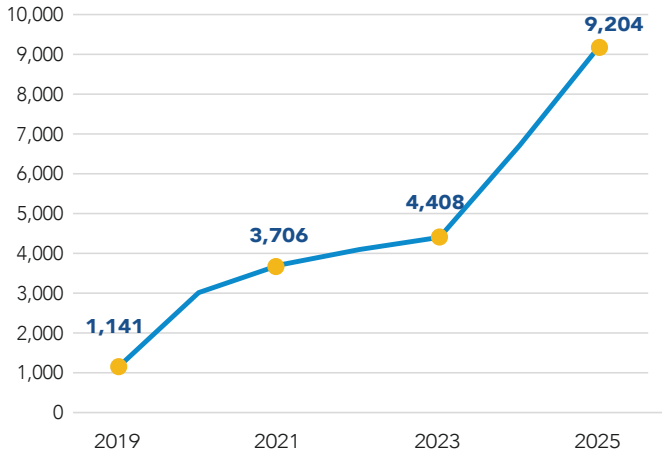
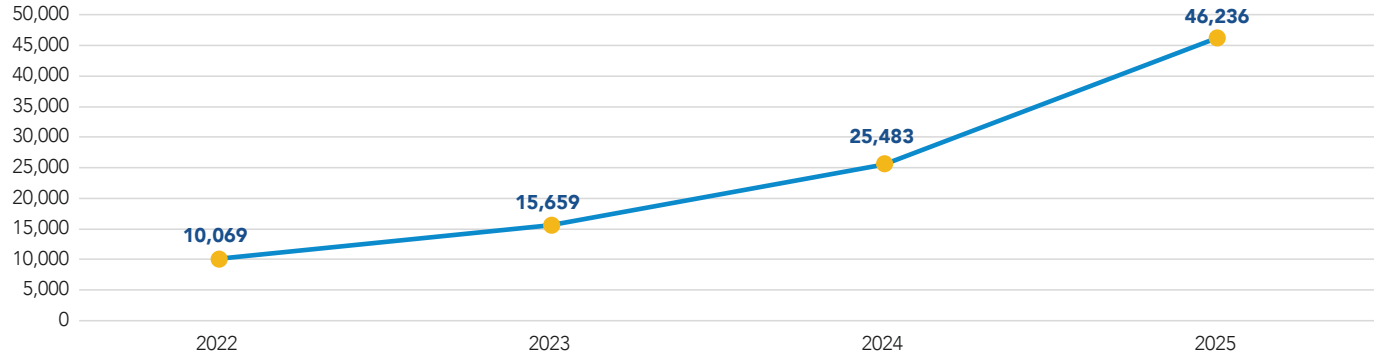


Figure 3. Growth in social media followers over time



NETWORK PARTNER SNAPSHOT

We formally welcomed 19 new partners who applied and were accepted in 2025. At the end of the year, the network included 349 organizations, after removing 37 that closed, merged, or we lost contact with. Our partners work around the world and are headquartered in 61 countries. The top locations are the United States (26%), Kenya (10%), the United Kingdom (7%), South Africa (7%), and India (5%). More details are available in our 2025 Partner Report.

86 (25%) actively participated in a **collaborative group** in 2025.

33 (9%) served on one of **ECDAN's governance committees**.

30 partners (9%) collaborated on a **virtual learning event** in 2025.

Figure 4. Network partners by level of engagement (n=349)

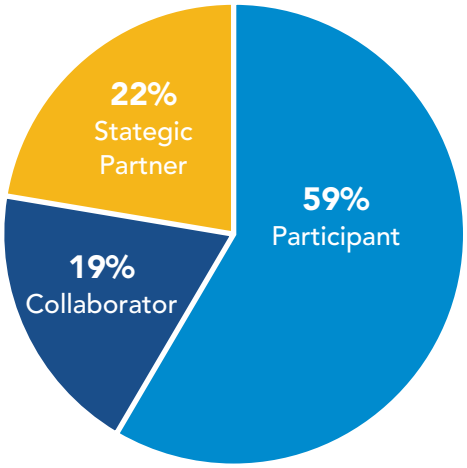


Figure 5. Network partner by organization type (n=349)

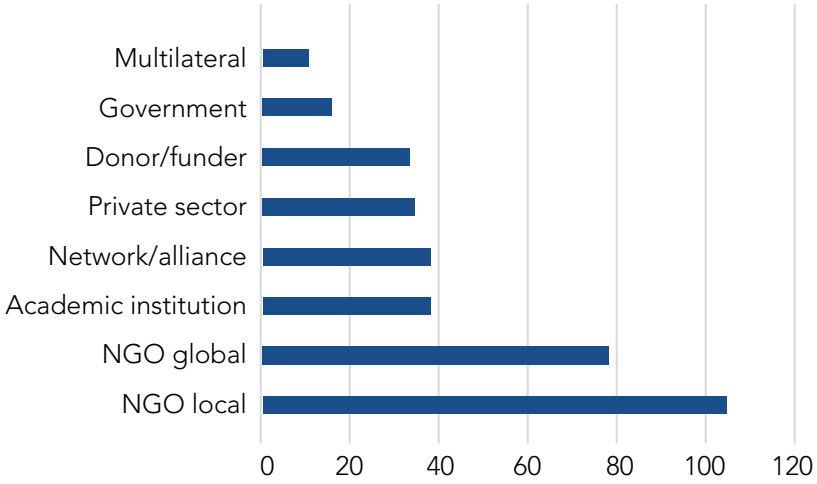
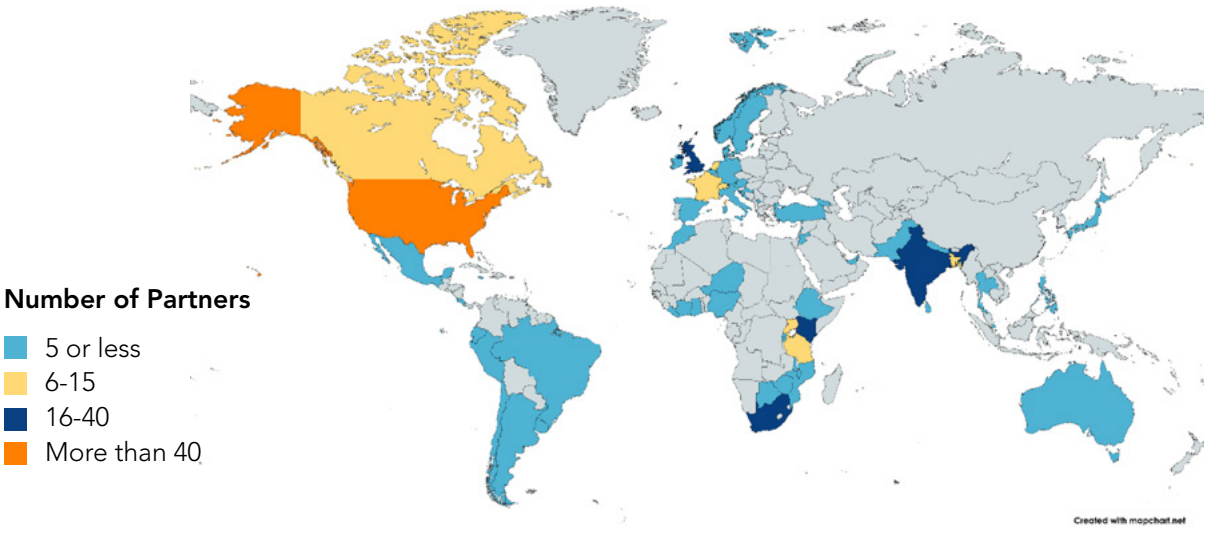


Figure 6. Map of partner organizations' headquarters location



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

BUILD A MOVEMENT

In 2025, ECDAN leveraged the power of partnerships to influence major global events and bring attention to the needs of young children and their caregivers. We focused on building momentum for increased investments in the early years, access to affordable and high-quality childcare, and application of a systems approach to ECD service delivery.

2025 highlights include the following:

- **ECDAN participated in 11 global and regional events** to elevate key issues, facilitate cross-regional collaboration, and advocate together: the Conference for International Education Society in the US; the International Monetary Fund/World Bank spring meetings in the US; the World Organization for Early Childhood Education's (OMEP) Care Network meeting in Switzerland; the International Trauma Conference in the US; the G20 ECCE meeting in South Africa; the Africa Conference on Childcare in Ethiopia; the Home-based Childcare Global Learning Convening in the US; the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in the US; the Systems Mapping Workshop in South Africa; the G20 Leaders' Meeting in South Africa; and UNICEF's meeting on a parenting digital framework in Switzerland.
- To elevate ECD at UNGA, ECDAN organized its annual **global partner roundtable** to share the work of ECDAN's Early Years Financing Technical Working Group and align with other financing initiatives such as the Act for Early Years campaign. The new technical working group was initiated in January 2025 and includes **18 individuals** from a range of academic institutions and partner organizations.
- **We facilitated or supported nine collaborative groups** that engage 86 ECDAN partner organizations in co-creating and collaborating on various thematic priorities. These include the Global Initiative to Support Parents (GISP), NurtureFirst, Systems Thinking for ECD Collaborative, CARE Initiative Steering Committee, Childcare Working Group, Climate Change-ECD Working Group, Nurturing Care Framework core group, and two new groups on financing. The Innovative Financing Learning Group coordinated by the Education Financing Network and the aforementioned technical working group formed in 2025.



G20 ECCE meeting. Credit: ECDAN



UNGA Roundtable. Credit: ECDAN

CARE Initiative

Partners

AfECN, African Women's Development and Communications Network (FEMNET), Akina Mama Wa Africa, BRAC Institute of Educational Development (BRAC IED), Center for Global Development, Echidna Giving, SmartStart, Sonke Gender Justice, William + Flora Hewlett Foundation, Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO)

Focus

To strengthen advocacy coalitions that break down silos between movements and sectors and catalyze coordinated campaigns to increase access to high-quality childcare by addressing barriers in the childcare ecosystem.

2025 Highlights

To launch the initiative, ECDAN's Secretariat and the CARE Steering Committee developed a detailed request for proposals with application instructions that was published online and circulated in the first quarter of the year.

Applicants were given three months to prepare their proposals so that they could begin breaking down silos and building alliances across sectors. The CARE Steering Committee evaluated proposals based on how they would build upon existing work on childcare in their countries, along with a set of criteria that assessed alignment with objectives, country readiness, technical capacity, feasibility, and approach.

The following country consortia were selected and contracted:

- **Bangladesh:** BRAC IED; Bangladesh ECD Network; BRAC Institute of Governance and Development
- **South Africa:** Equality Collective; SmartStart; Ilifa Labantwana
- **Tanzania:** Tanzania Early Childhood Development Network (TECDEN); Oxford Policy Management; Conservation, Hotels, Domestic and Allied Workers' Union (CHODAWU)



CARE Partners. Credit: BRAC IED

In October, all CARE Initiative partners gathered in Bangladesh for a three-day workshop to lay the foundation for a systems approach, strengthen advocacy skills, build relationships, share and learn from one another, and begin planning their in-country advocacy strategies. The consortia worked in their country teams to plan strategies for using systems mapping, charting policy development pathways, influencing policymakers, forging partnerships and coalitions, and monitoring progress.



CARE Workshop. Credit: BRAC IED

After the workshop, the implementing teams began mobilizing stakeholders in their countries. They gathered together as a community of practice in December to share insights and gain support as they planned systems-informed advocacy efforts.

Climate Change

Partners

Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC), AfECN, Bainum Family Foundation, Children's Environmental Rights Initiative, 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.

2025 Highlights

ECDAN elevated its climate advocacy in 2025 in collaboration with its climate working group partners, over 100 stakeholders working at the nexus of ECD and climate change, who meet quarterly to coordinate activities, share learnings, and co-create advocacy tools. Our climate working group members helped to craft key messages, articulate policy recommendations, and identify potential financing mechanisms to move the agenda forward. ECDAN partners coordinated representation at key global convenings like the annual UN Climate Change Conference (COP30) and Experts' Dialogue in Bonn to ensure young children were prioritized in discussions and decisions.

To equip advocates with practical tools and resources to use in their individual and collective work, ECDAN developed three tools that provide key messages, entry points for practitioners to engage in the climate discourse, tangible ideas for local advocacy actions, links to partner resources, and recommendations for policy and investment. These include an overall ECD and climate change advocacy guide, a guide on climate financing mechanisms, and an advocacy brief to inspire countries to champion young children within their climate action plans. We disseminated each tool to a global audience through virtual learning events in April and October 2025.

To build skills, forge connections, and learn from peers, ECDAN convened representatives from six countries supported by ARNEC and AfECN (Bhutan, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Malawi, and The Gambia) for a series of capacity-strengthening sessions from February to July 2025. Five sessions took place in total and involved participants from the six countries.

The topics included developing a climate change advocacy objective, undertaking political mapping, cultivating and influencing decision-makers, and crafting key messages. Each session included a practical assignment that encouraged participants to apply their skills. This cohort experience offered rich cross-country learning to advance advocacy in each country's context.



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In support of Global Initiative to Support Parents

Partners

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

Focus

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

2025 Highlights

GISP partners focused on tracking the parenting support commitments made during the First Ministerial Conference to End Violence Against Children that took place in Bogotá at the end of 2024. At the conference, 52 countries had pledged to prioritize parent and caregiver support, and 102 countries had committed to implementing strategies to protect children globally. GISP built on this momentum with webinars in February, April, and August that highlighted real-world experiences and explored strategies to expand evidence-based parenting programs.

GISP amplified the launch of several landmark resources in 2025, including:

- Designing, Implementing, Evaluating, and Scaling Up Parenting Interventions: A handbook for decision makers and implementers by WHO
- Global Parenting Support Framework by UNICEF
- Policy Analysis and Benchmarking Tool for Universal Parenting Support by UNICEF

On behalf of GISP, ECDAN disseminated these and other resources and examples through newsletters to more than 4,500 global partners in May and November.

A top priority for GISP partners throughout 2025 was preparing for the first Global Caregiver Forum to take place in Spain in January 2026. This event took significant mobilization and preparation to bring dozens of countries to the table, including high-level champions, ministers, thought leaders, civil society, and private-sector partners, to drive policy and investment decisions that enshrine universal parenting support as foundational social infrastructure.



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Partners

BRAC IED, Foundations for Communities of Learning, Mobile Creches, NurtureFirst, OneSky, SmartStart, Spark Health Africa

Focus

To strengthen the capacity of local partners and governments to apply systems thinking for ECD, facilitate learning and exchange, convene technical experts, and support research and advocacy to inform policy and practice.

2025 Highlights

The members of the Systems Thinking for ECD Collaborative, made up of executive leaders and technical experts from leading child development and systems thinking organizations in Africa and Asia, furthered the work they started in 2023 to develop a childcare systems map. In October, ECDAN hosted a virtual event that launched phase two of the Childcare4All campaign to a global audience. During this event, we showcased the childcare systems map, recognized the work of the Systems Thinking for ECD Collaborative, and had a panel discussion with the CARE Initiative partners.

Members of the Systems Thinking for ECD Collaborative played a leadership role in the kickoff workshop for CARE Initiative partners. The workshop helped partners apply a systems-thinking lens to childcare as they shaped strategic advocacy plans. Through this approach, partners explored the childcare ecosystem, identified leverage points and advocacy objectives, and planned activities to address priority gaps. This systems-based approach is helping country coalitions move beyond isolated interventions toward more coordinated strategies for lasting change.

Another milestone that the Systems Thinking for ECD Collaborative supported in 2025 was a two-day ECCE Systems Mapping Workshop organized by South Africa's Department of Basic Education, SmartStart, Ilifa Labantwana, Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator, and other partners. Early childhood practitioners, parents, government officials, NGOs, funders, academics, and international partners–all key players in children's welfare— came together to examine how South Africa's ECCE system functions in practice, and to identify the shifts necessary to reach every child, especially the most excluded. This took place in the context of significant strides towards the goal of universal ECCE access in recent years.



Participants at the ECCE systems mapping workshop in South Africa. Credit: SmartStart

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

EXCHANGE KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING

In 2025, ECDAN leveraged its strengths in knowledge dissemination and cross-country learning to promote promising practices in policy and practice. Through virtual learning events, knowledge hubs, newsletters, our online community, and our Knowledge Fellows program, we contributed to building the field and harmonizing approaches worldwide.

2025 highlights include the following:

- **ECDAN partners collaborated to host 13 insightful learning webinars** covering a range of topics, which had a combined total of over 9,600 registrations. Webinar topics included innovative ECCE approaches, climate change, parenting, and childcare.
- We disseminated our seminal Young Children and the Polycrisis landscape report that was commissioned by ECDAN and Grand Challenges Canada to support strategy development. The report contains adaptive strategies and policy recommendations for forging a more secure and just future for children everywhere.
- Throughout the year, **ECDAN added 177 partner resources** to the ECD Knowledge Gateway and **updated six thematic pages** on the Gateway. The updated pages feature the latest data and research, provide related resources, and clearly explain why the issue matters for young children.
- To support our focus on financing, we created a new thematic page on ECD financing and updated the Cost of Inaction tool with the latest cost data.
- In May, we facilitated two sessions on early trauma at the International Trauma Conference in Boston that **reached over 300 practitioners, researchers, and experts**. ECDAN followed this engagement with a blog co-written with the Trauma Research Foundation on why addressing trauma in early childhood is so critical and what promising practices exist.
- To engage ECD advocates and practitioners in two-way conversation, we continued to facilitate discussion within our online community, ECD Connect. **253 new members from 60 different countries joined the community and 599 actively participated** on the platform. Nearly 300 posts were made and 74% of new threads were posted by community members, reflecting dynamic engagement.



Participants at the Trauma Conference. Credit: Trauma Research Foundation

ECDAN's flagship Knowledge Fellows program aims to build the next generation of ECD leaders and elevate fresh perspectives and voices. In 2025, the fourth cohort completed their projects, which were published on ECDAN's website, and their learnings were disseminated in a webinar to a global audience in April. Following that, we recruited a fifth cohort of four new Fellows, selected from a competitive pool of 128 applicants from 42 countries. ECDAN is committed to strengthening capacity, particularly among local advocates, and to connecting global, regional, and national efforts that catalyze change at the country level. For this reason, the 2025 Fellows focused on creating advocacy materials aligned with the network's strategic priorities and influencing opportunities.

Their projects included:

- An advocacy brief that explains the why and how of parenting support, provides promising examples from different country contexts, and recommends policy and investment choices to increase support for parents.
- A database of literature that presents an analysis of investments in young children made in one or more country contexts AND an accompanying advocacy brief that summarizes lessons learned from the available literature and draws recommendations for strengthening financing for young children at the country level.
- An advocacy brief that includes key messages and specific recommendations that link early childhood to the climate agenda to inspire countries to become champions for young children by taking action in their national climate action policies, plans, and financing decisions.
- An advocacy brief that can be used by advocates in different countries in the global majority to support their national efforts to strengthen childcare systems, with key evidence of the benefits, policy recommendations, and potential financing mechanisms drawn from promising practices in countries.

2025 Cohort



Aishwarya Iyer
(India)



Karin Noskova
(Slovakia)



Sadaf Qayyum
(Pakistan)



Wamweru Muthara
(Kenya)

Meet **Hernán Marisquirena**

> Talking to experts in climate services helped me better understand these overlaps and see the excitement from both sides about the opportunities for collaboration.



Hernán grew up in Belvedere, a working-class neighborhood in Montevideo, Uruguay, surrounded by cousins, friends, and the everyday adventures of childhood. But his time in school was equally formative. His mother was an ECD teacher, so early learning was paramount in his home, and Hernán had the opportunity to be in school surrounded by teachers with exceptional human values at an early age.

Hernán completed a master's degree in international development and found himself naturally drawn to education. He was particularly captivated by how innovative financing models could be applied to ECD programs. It felt like a convergence of everything he had learned in school, and a way to ensure other children receive the same opportunities he did in his early years.

When Hernán learned about the Knowledge Fellows opportunity with ECDAN, it felt like exactly the right moment to double down on and expand his growing passion for ECD. "The fellowship was transformative," Hernán reflected. "It connected me with brilliant colleagues who share the same passion for ECD, each coming from different angles but with a clear intention to find new, creative ways to solve many of the challenges ECD faces, especially amid the climate crisis."

Most of the fellows in Hernán's cohort tackled projects at the intersection of climate change and ECD. His project dug into the elements of climate services, spotlighting organizations working in this field and offering recommendations for weaving a focus on young children into their work. "Talking to experts in climate services helped me better understand these overlaps and see the excitement from both sides about the opportunities for collaboration."

Since the fellowship ended, Hernán has kept supporting innovative financing pilots for ECD through his role at Education Outcomes Fund. He remains interested in projects working on the intersection of climate and early childhood. In 2026 he submitted his project to the Moving Minds Alliance in response to a call for contributors, and it was published in their Alliance Post.

Hernán stays in regular touch with the Secretariat and enjoys networking with other alumni. Being a part of the ECDAN community has given Hernán the opportunity to be in a space where genuine dialogue and collaboration exist across countries, sectors, and partner organizations. It has emboldened him to keep striving to break down silos and create solutions that wouldn't exist otherwise.

Meet **Frances Aboud**

> The Knowledge Fellows program fills a gap in the careers of young people, especially from low-resource countries, who are eager to contribute to ECD but lack opportunities.



Frances Aboud is Professor Emerita at McGill University and has been Co-Chair of the Knowledge Fellows Steering Committee since the program's founding in 2021. In fact, Frances has been involved since the founding of ECDAN as a member of one of the initial task forces. As a professor, Frances was very familiar with the potential of young professionals and was committed to supporting their ambitions to get a foothold in the field. She was enthusiastic about the concept of the Knowledge Fellows program from the start.

"The Knowledge Fellows program fills a gap in the careers of young people, especially from low-resource countries, who are eager to contribute to ECD but lack opportunities. Without the program, we would lose the energy and expertise of the next generation," Frances reflected.

In the first years of the program, Frances and fellow Co-Chair Nirmala Rao were heavily involved in reviewing applications to select the Knowledge Fellows. It was very time-consuming but critical to ensure the program was successful. Over time, the process was streamlined and the Committee has expanded. For each cohort of Fellows, the Steering Committee not only supports the selection process but offers a sounding board for Fellows as they refine their projects and practice presenting to a professional audience.

In addition to skillfully leading the Steering Committee, Frances has twice stepped in to directly mentor a Fellow to fill a gap when her expertise aligned with the Fellow's project. She worked directly with Liezel Engelbrecht in the fourth cohort on a review of ECD programs that integrate nutrition and psychosocial stimulation elements and Rahul Pethe in the third cohort on a review of scaled and transition-to-scale parenting programs targeting the early years.

"Being a mentor was even more fun!" said Frances. "It was a joy to watch how eager my Fellows were to produce an original product that they were proud of. Years later, I saw how the experience has catapulted them into positions of responsibility and respect."

Over time, Frances has seen how the Knowledge Fellows program has continued to respond to the needs of the field. Advocacy is one of those current needs. She appreciates the way that ECDAN brings in individuals who are able to address emerging needs so that the network can continue to be a central contributor to build the evolving field of ECD.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

ADVOCATE FOR ACTION

In 2025, ECDAN intentionally tailored its advocacy work to focus on country-led advocacy to complement the network's efforts to prioritize young children within global, regional, and national agendas. We continued building bridges with other movements such as gender equality, child rights, and climate justice to align our interests. We jointly influenced key stakeholders, mobilized partners around calls to action, produced practical advocacy tools, and told powerful stories from the field through ECDAN's various communication channels.

2025 highlights include the following:

- **ECDAN launched the second phase of its global childcare campaign** through the Childcare Advocacy, Research, and Engagement (CARE) Initiative and dissemination of the childcare systems map. By supporting country coalitions to use a systems-thinking approach to understand the childcare ecosystem and develop comprehensive advocacy strategies, we expect to strengthen childcare systems, uncover important lessons from advocates, and create more global goods to benefit childcare advocates worldwide.

- The systems approach gained traction and interest with multiple countries around the world when **we presented at the G20 Education Seminar in May in South Africa**. With the South African government as a champion and pioneering application of the systems map in a national workshop in October, considerable momentum and interest is building. We also contributed to a **G20 policy brief on the care economy and supported a learning brief** and side event with ECDAN partners at the G20 Social Summit in November.

- To elevate young children within the climate change negotiations, ECDAN contributed inputs to the UN Environmental Programme's publication with guiding principles for just transition, joined the Climate Action Network and the Children's Environmental Health Collaborative, contributed to UNICEF's policy brief on how children can be prioritized in climate actions, facilitated discussions on climate financing, and **published three climate advocacy tools** all in advance of COP30 in Brazil.

- Timed with global events, **ECDAN partners drafted and promoted three critical calls to action**. The first called for attention to the youngest children in response to the California wildfires. The second pledged to increase access to early interventions for children with disabilities. The third recommended concrete actions to prioritize financing systems that support young children to influence the Financing for Development Summit. The financing call was signed by 225 organizations and individuals.

- As a member of the Act for Early Years advisory group, **we supported the launch of the minifesto and announcement of plans for Global Early Years Finance Summit in 2027**. ECDAN's annual partner roundtable event at UNGA likewise focused on financing and preparation for the Global Technical Financing Forum that we will co-host in Rwanda in 2026, as a milestone on the way to the Summit.

- Throughout the year, **ECDAN co-created 17 blog posts and three videos** featuring the voices of implementing partners. By elevating their work, we are making the case for investment in the early years and promoting alignment.



Act for Early Years UNGA event. Credit Theirworld

Meet **Mwajuma Kibwana**

> Through opportunities for learning, knowledge exchange, and engagement with international ECD and childcare practitioners, ECDAN has helped strengthen our thinking, expand our networks, and reinforce the importance of systems-level approaches to childcare reform.



Mwajuma Kibwana is the Executive Director of the Tanzania Early Childhood Development Network (TECDEN). Her connection with ECDAN has been forged through a shared commitment to advancing ECD at national, regional, and global levels. As an ECDAN and AfECN partner, TECDEN submitted an article about the launch of Tanzania's National Multisectoral Early Childhood Development Programme that was published in an ECDAN newsletter in 2022. This recognition marked one of the first opportunities for TECDEN's work to gain visibility within the global ECD community.

Building upon this foundation, in 2024 during the East Africa Regional ECD Conference held in Dar es Salaam, TECDEN further strengthened its engagement by participating in the launch of ECDAN's strategy alongside a select group of strategic ECDAN partners. The event provided an opportunity for Mwajuma to connect with global ECD leaders, exchange experiences, and influence discussions on how to elevate young children within sustainable development agendas.

Later in 2025, TECDEN was selected through a competitive process to lead the Tanzania consortium implementing the CARE Initiative, together with CHODAWU and Oxford Policy Management. The initiative seeks to enhance nurturing care for young children while promoting women's participation in the workforce and addressing gender inequalities associated with unpaid care responsibilities. This partnership marked a new phase of collaboration, and Mwajuma is thrilled by the opportunity this provides TECDEN to contribute to generating and sharing evidence and learning with teams from other countries around the world.

"Through opportunities for learning, knowledge exchange, and engagement with international ECD and childcare practitioners, ECDAN has helped strengthen our thinking, expand our networks, and reinforce the importance of systems-level approaches to childcare reform," Mwajuma reflected. "These connections have contributed to our ability to advance lasting institutional change and elevate childcare as a national development priority in Tanzania."

As she reflects upon TECDEN's achievements in 2025, Mwajuma is particularly proud of their contribution to the establishment of a National Childcare Community of Practice, the first platform of its kind in Tanzania dedicated to childcare advocacy. She is also proud of TECDEN's contribution, through the CARE Initiative, to integrate ECD into Tanzania's national vocational training curriculum for domestic workers by working closely with the International Labour Organization, the country's Vocational Educational Training Authority, and other stakeholders. For the first time, Tanzania is committed to adopting a curriculum that recognizes domestic workers as childcare professionals, with ECD, child health and nutrition, safeguarding, and responsive caregiving embedded as core competencies that will be assessed across all training levels.

To Mwajuma, these two milestones reflect what becomes possible when a locally rooted organization like TECDEN is connected to regional and global networks such as AfECN and ECDAN.

The regional ECD networks were founding members of ECDAN and remain critical constituents within ECDAN's governance structure. By coordinating activities and taking joint action, ECDAN and the regional ECD networks connect the global, regional, and national levels to build a strong and coordinated movement for young children.

Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN)

In 2025, AfECN expanded to include 25 national ECD networks. The year's focus was on generating evidence and equipping national networks to use that evidence to influence policy and investment decisions. Five countries—Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia— completed landscape analyses of childcare provision in their context. The findings informed childcare advocacy that culminated in the Africa Childcare Conference, which AfECN co-hosted with the African Union, during which representatives from 23 African Union Member States endorsed a Continental Call to Action on Childcare and made commitments related to financing, policy reform, and workforce development.

AfECN also broadened its advocacy through international child rights mechanisms. In partnership with the Ghana Early Childhood Network, Oxford Human Rights Hub, and the Right to Education Initiative, AfECN supported the submission of evidence to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child during Ghana's review process. The Committee's concluding observations reflected key recommendations related to ECD services, reflecting the influence of evidence-based advocacy on international accountability measures and national policy dialogues.

The year concluded with development and adoption of a refreshed strategy for 2026–2030. This guiding document positions AfECN to deepen its evidence-informed advocacy, expand ECD research, strengthen leadership, and build partnerships to improve outcomes for young children across Africa.

Arab Network for Early Childhood (ANECD)

Facing an unprecedented regional polycrisis, ANECD actively collaborated with national network members across Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco in 2025. Together, ANECD partners confronted interlocking emergencies, including devastating wars, economic instability, and the escalating climate crisis through unified, resilient actions.

2025 was a transformative year for ANECD. A defining milestone was developing a 2026–2030 strategy through a participatory process. The strategy was validated by the national networks in a gathering in Amman, Jordan, in October 2025. This collaborative process unified the diverse national networks around a shared vision of national contextualization, professionalism, and integrated programming. This strategy marks ANECD's evolution from a regional coordinating platform into an implementation-oriented network built to drive meaningful policy and programmatic changes.

Equally pivotal was ANECD's first regional research symposium, Scientific Evidence for ECD Programs and Policies, organized in Amman in partnership with the Moving Minds Alliance. This landmark event highlighted the maturity of their Arab Working Group for ECD Research and introduced their strategic research model that directly bridges the gap between research and practice by generating contextually relevant evidence across national networks. By linking local research findings directly to strategic policy frameworks, ANECD is laying a robust foundation for scalable impact that protects and supports young children and families across the Arab region.

Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC)

In 2025, concluding its five-year strategy (2021-2025), ARNEC continued to advance its key advocacy priorities while focusing on bringing certain efforts to successful conclusions.

ARNEC's regional leadership and collaboration with country-level partners helped embed ECD within national and subnational climate frameworks across South and Southeast Asia. In Bhutan, for example, for the first time, its Nationally Determined Contribution 3.0 now includes an explicit mention of children and other vulnerable groups, with a focus on integrating climate-responsive ECD measures.

In Indonesia and the Philippines, ARNEC's MORECare4YoungChildren project helped strengthen delivery of two national early childhood programs. Reaching 924 parents and 765 children under age three at pilot sites, the project's evidence-based, system-level behavior change interventions led to measurable improvements in children's social-emotional, cognitive, and physical development, and increased parental awareness and responsive caregiving behaviors. The project's interventions are now being institutionalized in both countries.

Using a handbook on social-emotional learning jointly developed by ARNEC and UNESCO Bangkok, ARNEC helped train more than 350 stakeholders across Cambodia, Fiji, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and Vietnam, including master trainers, teacher educators, and institutional leaders. These efforts have strengthened partners' capacity to integrate social-emotional learning into ECE including teacher quality frameworks in all five countries.

International Step by Step Association (ISSA)

In 2025, ISSA demonstrated the value of regional networks in strengthening professional capacity and moving practical solutions across borders. Its nearly 100 member organizations across 40 countries reached hundreds of thousands of early childhood professionals with training, mentoring, peer learning, digital community platforms, conferences, and knowledge dissemination.

This work gained momentum with initiatives addressing some of the field's most pressing challenges. CHAVORE, spanning five countries, reached young Roma children, families, and practitioners with inclusive, culturally responsive, and mental health-informed services. The ECD in Emergencies Compendium consolidated ISSA members' learning from emergency response situations across Europe and Central Asia, with a focus on preparedness, workforce well-being, psychosocial support, and coordination strategies. The TOY for Participation consortium worked across eight countries to strengthen meaningful child inclusion in early childhood settings, especially through inclusive, community-based play hubs.

A defining achievement was the launch of the ECOS Institute: Early Childhood, One System, co-created by ISSA's members, sister regional networks, partners, and funders. Focused on offering capacity building for the early childhood workforce, ECOS offers quality-assured multilingual learning, practical resources, and professional exchange. The vision is to accelerate the transfer of knowledge and expertise across contexts in an easily accessible format. This online platform will be complemented by an in-person gathering at ISSA's conference in Portugal in 2026.



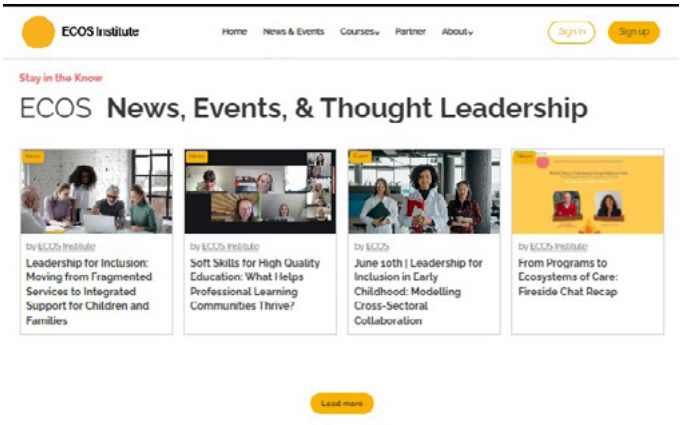
The Africa Childcare Conference involved over 300 participants and 23 member states. Credit: AfECN



ANECD's general assembly gathered for validation of its new 2026-2030 strategy. Credit: ANECD



Local leaders, parents, caregivers, and children interact at this ECD center in Depok, Indonesia, where ARNEC helped implement the MORECare4YoungChildren project. Credit: ARNEC



ISSA launched ECOS Institute which features courses created by its partners and members for the global ECD community.

FINANCIAL REPORT

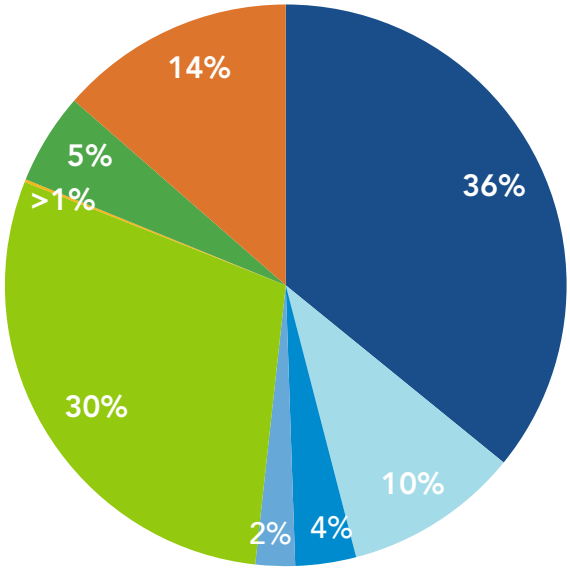


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EXPENDITURE REPORT

The charts below show the actual expenditure (USD), by category, for January 1 through December 31, 2025.

Personnel	832,759
Fringe Benefits	234,444
Consultants	81,207
Travel	52,808
Subagreements	679,432
Workshops & Printing	3,671
Other Project Costs	122,127
Administrative Costs	315,326
Total	**2,321,774**



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 2025, we received grant funding from the following six entities:

Bainum Family Foundation

CONRAD N. Hilton FOUNDATION

echidna giving

WILLIAM + FLORA Hewlett Foundation

Grand Challenges Canada® Grands Défis Canada

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



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PLAN FOR 2026

In the year ahead, ECDAN will prioritize the **Global Technical Financing Forum** in May 2026 and development of the **Financing Toolbox for the Early Years** as opportunities to generate practical recommendations and strategies for how public financial management systems and innovative financing instruments can support comprehensive, whole-child services. This, along with input into UNESCO's forthcoming global monitoring report, will help prepare countries to craft meaningful, costed commitments in advance of the International Finance Summit for Early Childhood in 2027.

Another top priority will be supporting and documenting learning from the **CARE Initiative** partners as they develop and implement their joint advocacy plans in Bangladesh, South Africa, and Tanzania. We are eager to capture insights from their experiences that can inform others looking to build coalitions across movements and apply a systems approach to advocacy.

In response to demand from network partners, ECDAN will increase attention to **vulnerable children including children with disabilities** in 2026. By collaborating with organizations that specialize in early intervention strategies that can be implemented within household, community, and primary health care settings, we aim to increase access to practical and tangible approaches that practitioners around the world can use to meet the needs of all children. Similarly, we will continue to build partnerships and increase visibility around the need to prevent and respond to **early trauma**. With increasing geopolitical tensions, conflict, climate disasters, and economic instability threatening family well-being, the need for trauma-informed care is growing. These topics will be featured in virtual learning events, resource publications, and stories, along with other priority topics such as parent and caregiver support, childcare, climate change, primary health care, and more.

We will continue the **Knowledge Fellows program** with an advocacy focus, building upon the success of this shift in 2025. To reach other cohorts of practitioners and advocates around the world, ECDAN plans to pilot a **new online learning platform** with a short course on the childcare systems map.

In 2026, ECDAN will celebrate ten years since its founding. This milestone offers an opportunity to reflect on how far the network has come and to set a shared vision for the decade ahead. Everything we accomplish is made possible through collective action and contributions from our partners. We are deeply grateful for your partnership and invite you to renew your commitment to the work ahead so that, together, we can improve outcomes for young children and families everywhere.



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, NGOs, 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. The Global Policy and Advocacy Advisory Group (GPAAG) is also part of ECDAN's governance structure and serves to help ECDAN set its policy and advocacy agenda, access and leverage influencing opportunities, and build new alliances and coalitions to achieve shared advocacy objectives.

Feeding into the advisory groups are working groups that develop coordinated action plans, share resources, and co-create global goods that respond to emerging needs.

Executive Leadership Council

Anshu Banerjee, WHO

Borhene Chakroun, UNESCO (Co-chair)

Eduardo Queiroz, Bracell Foundation

Elizabeth Lule, ECDAN (Ex-officio)

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Monika Banerjee, Mobile Creches

Rebecca Hickman, SmartStart

Richard Chivaka, Spark Health Africa

Shreya Prakash, Independent

Sumitra Mishra, Mobile Creches

Vo Thi Hien, OneSky

Knowledge Fellows Program Contributors

The Knowledge Fellows program is guided by a Steering Committee responsible for supporting selection of Fellows and upholding the program's overall quality and integrity. Mentors are carefully selected and matched with a Fellow to guide them in carrying out a specific advocacy 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.

Knowledge Fellows Steering Committee

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Kimberly Boller, American Psychological Association
Nirmala Rao, University of Hong Kong
Sarah Beardsmore, Global Partnership for Education

Fifth-Cohort Knowledge Fellows Mentors

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Eleanor Sykes, Lively Minds
Fiana Arbab, Oxfam International
Joanna Juzon, Genesis Analytics

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:

Staff

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Hannah Frohm, Senior Program Assistant (former)
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Consultants and Contractors

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Higher Logic
Leith Davis
Matthew Townshend
Suventure

Hosting Entity

ECDAN is hosted by PATH, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization (EIN number 91-1157127). PATH provides ECDAN with financial, administrative, information technology, human resources, and travel services assistance. We are grateful for PATH's support.



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