

SCALING-UP PLAYFUL PARENTING

The LEGO Foundation and UNICEF in partnership with the Early Childhood Development Action Network (ECDAN), Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN), International Step by Step Association (ISSA) and Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN)

Parents and primary caregivers have an important role to play in their children's development. Their responsive caregiving sets a critical trajectory for brain growth in young children, which lays a solid foundation for healthy development and lifelong learning. Evidence from a range of countries shows that when caregivers engage in quality play and reading with their children, it can result in improved learning outcomes that persist throughout the life course.

On October 29th, 2019, the LEGO Foundation announced a new partnership with UNICEF to scale parenting interventions that promote playful interactions, increase global knowledge and buy-in for playful parenting programs, and bolster primary caregivers' demand for playful learning during the early years. This partnership aligns with the Foundation's 2019 commitment which pledged to bring to scale impactful programs that support parents and caregivers to strengthen their children's development through play. While ample evidence confirms the benefits of Playful Parenting programs, such efforts have rarely expanded beyond the local level. The LEGO Foundation, by way of its Playful Parenting initiative, is investing in bringing programs to scale and developing learning to help ensure sustainability and continued expansion.

"Stimulating experiences and interactions such as play, and early learning are critical to healthy brain development in babies and young children," said **Dr. Pia Rebello Britto, UNICEF Chief of Early Childhood Development.** *"We are excited to build on our partnership with the LEGO Foundation to help increase understanding of the benefits of playful and responsive parenting, and advocate for better policies to support healthy brain development in early childhood."*

Through this partnership with the LEGO Foundation (2019-2024), UNICEF will advance its work on Playful Parenting across three overarching areas: i) in-depth country-level work in Zambia and Serbia; ii) advocacy and communication, and iii) global and regional knowledge generation and exchange, dissemination and uptake of relevant information.

UNICEF will scale-up quality services for young children and families, including strengthening counseling/support for caregivers' and parents' so they can engage in playful parenting and provide nurturing care to their young children in Zambia and Serbia. Validated approaches such as Care for Child Development (CCD) will be used, building on existing delivery platforms, across relevant ministries, reaching over 100,000 families.

The LEGO Foundation



UNICEF will also increase awareness and visibility among the general public on the value of Learning through Play in early childhood through advocacy and communication channels, with a specific focus on equipping and empowering caregivers to promote children’s development through Playful Parenting, building on UNICEF’s [#EarlyMomentsMatter Campaign](#) at global and national levels.

This program will also help fill knowledge gaps about how effective parenting strategies incorporate play and increase access to, dissemination, and uptake of this information. This will be achieved by supporting ECD networks and producing seminal evidence and global goods for policy makers, implementing organizations and other key stakeholders.

UNICEF is partnering with three ECD networks - **the Early Childhood Development Action Network (ECDAN), the Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN), and the International Step by Step Association (ISSA)** to engage in collaborative knowledge exchange and learning on Playful Parenting programs. UNICEF is also partnering with **the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN)** to provide country-level technical support through the establishment of an ECD Professional Development Hub. These partnerships will help strengthen the ECD global and regional landscape, and will in turn increase the impact and reach of the UNICEF-LEGO Foundation Playful Parenting Program’s interventions.

This joint initiative will play an important role in ensuring that playful parenting interventions translate into significant and lasting benefits for the children, families and their communities.

About the *Scaling-Up Playful Parenting Partners*

The LEGO Foundation

The **LEGO Foundation** aims to inspire and develop the builders of tomorrow; a mission that it shares with the LEGO Group. The LEGO Foundation is dedicated to building a future where learning through play empowers children to become creative, engaged, lifelong learners. Its work is about re-defining play and re-imagining learning. In collaboration with thought leaders, influencers, educators and parents the LEGO Foundation aims to equip, inspire and activate champions for play. Learn more on www.LEGOfoundation.com.

UNICEF

UNICEF works in some of the world’s toughest places, to reach the world’s most disadvantaged children. Across more than 190 countries and territories, UNICEF works for every child, everywhere, to build a better world for everyone. Learn more on www.unicef.org or visit us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or [YouTube](#).

ECDAN

The Early Childhood Development Action Network (ECDAN) catalyzes collective action on behalf of young children and their families around the world by connecting and facilitating alignment with global and regional partners, facilitating knowledge exchange and learning and coordinating advocacy for increased investment for quality services. Learn more on www.ecdan.org

AfECN

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The Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN) is a registered non-profit, established in 2015 to serve as a platform to champion excellence and collaboration in protecting children's rights, influence policy and practice, strengthen partnerships, and share experiences and knowledge in ECD on the African continent. The network is comprised of organisations from civil society, academia, government, and the private sector at national and regional levels. Learn more on <https://africaecnetwork.org/about-us>

ISSA

Established more than 20 years ago, the **International Step by Step Association (ISSA)** is the network for early childhood development in Europe and Central Asia, uniting members and partners to deliver quality, equitable and integrated services for all young children and their families. ISSA serves as a platform for members' learning, cooperation and co-creation of knowledge. With extensive experience in capacity building, development of resources, mapping efforts, convening and advocacy, ISSA is strategically positioned as technical partner and source of expertise on issues related to Quality, Equity, Integrated Services and Workforce. Learn more on https://www.issa.nl/about_us

AKDN

Founded and guided by His Highness the Aga Khan, **the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN)** brings together a number of development agencies, institutions, and programmes that work primarily in the poorest parts of Asia and Africa. A central feature of the AKDN's approach to development is to design and implement strategies in which its different agencies participate in particular settings to help those in need achieve a level of self-reliance and improve the quality of life. Learn more on <https://www.akdn.org/about-us/akdns-approach-development>