

# URBAN95

*A Bernard van Leer Foundation initiative*

## **AN URBAN95 STARTER KIT** **IDEAS FOR ACTION**



# STARTER KIT: *A starting point*

## WHAT IS THE STARTER KIT?

The Starter Kit is designed to help municipal governments and their partners understand the value of investing in their youngest inhabitants and the people who care for them, and to provide actionable ideas and guidance on how to do so. The Starter Kit includes:

- **An introduction to early childhood development and why it matters for cities**
- **An introduction to Urban95**
- **Ideas for action**
- **Implementation guidance**

## HOW DID WE DEVELOP IT?

The Starter Kit is based on learnings gathered from Urban95 initiatives across eight countries, including insights from country staff, surveys and reports, desk research, site visits and from partnerships with academia and multinational or local technical organisations. The Starter Kit's content was tested and refined in 15 different countries in 2018, with the input of 23 experts from government, NGOs and urban planning and design.

## WHO IS IT FOR?

Taking into account their unique needs, perspectives, and opportunities for impact, we developed the Starter Kit for **leaders and teams working in or with municipal governments**, including technical staff, managers, urban planners and designers, and community conveners.

We kept in mind that many Starter Kit users are neither early childhood specialists nor do they typically focus on families and children at all in their day-to-day work. Despite their overt focus on totally different fields and sectors, we see enormous opportunities for them to have a positive influence on child development.

Additionally, the Starter Kit will also be useful for anyone else involved in improving the lives of babies, toddlers and their caregivers, whether as a healthcare provider, social service professional, educator or otherwise. For these individuals and organisations already established in the early childhood field, we see an opportunity to connect and bundle dedicated services and approaches in creative ways.

## HOW SHOULD IT BE USED?

As its name implies, the Starter Kit offers a launchpad for discussion and planning. It illustrates what is possible, why it matters and how to make it happen. We invite you to browse through our Ideas for action and Implementation guide at your own pace and in the order that makes sense for you. We designed each section to stand alone so that users can pick and choose which elements they need, when they need them: stay with high-level overviews or dive into the details and examples.

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# WHY FOCUS ON THE EARLY YEARS





## **A GOOD START FOR ALL CHILDREN: IF YOU CHANGE THE BEGINNING OF THE STORY, YOU CAN CHANGE THE END OF THE STORY**

Scientists, public health specialists and economists alike are unequivocal: **babies and toddlers are the best learners on the planet**, growing and learning fastest before their fifth birthday.

During this window, **their brains develop more quickly than at any other time of life**, and their experiences carry a profound, lasting impact on their physical and mental health and their capacity to learn and relate to others. **What parents and other caregivers do during this time helps to build the brain architecture** that lays the foundation for good health and learning in later childhood and adulthood. That's why we believe that a good start for all children is one of the most important parts of a healthy, peaceful and creative society.

**< 1 MILLION** neural connections are formed every second in a young child's brain

**43%** of children under 5 outside high-income countries are at risk of poor development

**US \$4–\$9** estimated return for every \$1 spent on high-quality early years programmes

## **THE MOST POWERFUL INFLUENCERS ON CHILD DEVELOPMENT: PARENTS AND OTHER CAREGIVERS**

A baby or toddler's relationships with the adults in their life are the most important influences on their development. These relationships begin at home, with parents and other family members, such as grandparents and siblings. These caregivers are responsible for a child's safety and health, as well as what they eat and how they perceive the world. When parents and other caregivers talk, sing and play with their babies, they help to build a healthy brain wired

to learn and interact with others. Studies show that **warm, stimulating, responsive caregiving** is one of the best predictors that children will do well in school, and be happy and healthy adults.

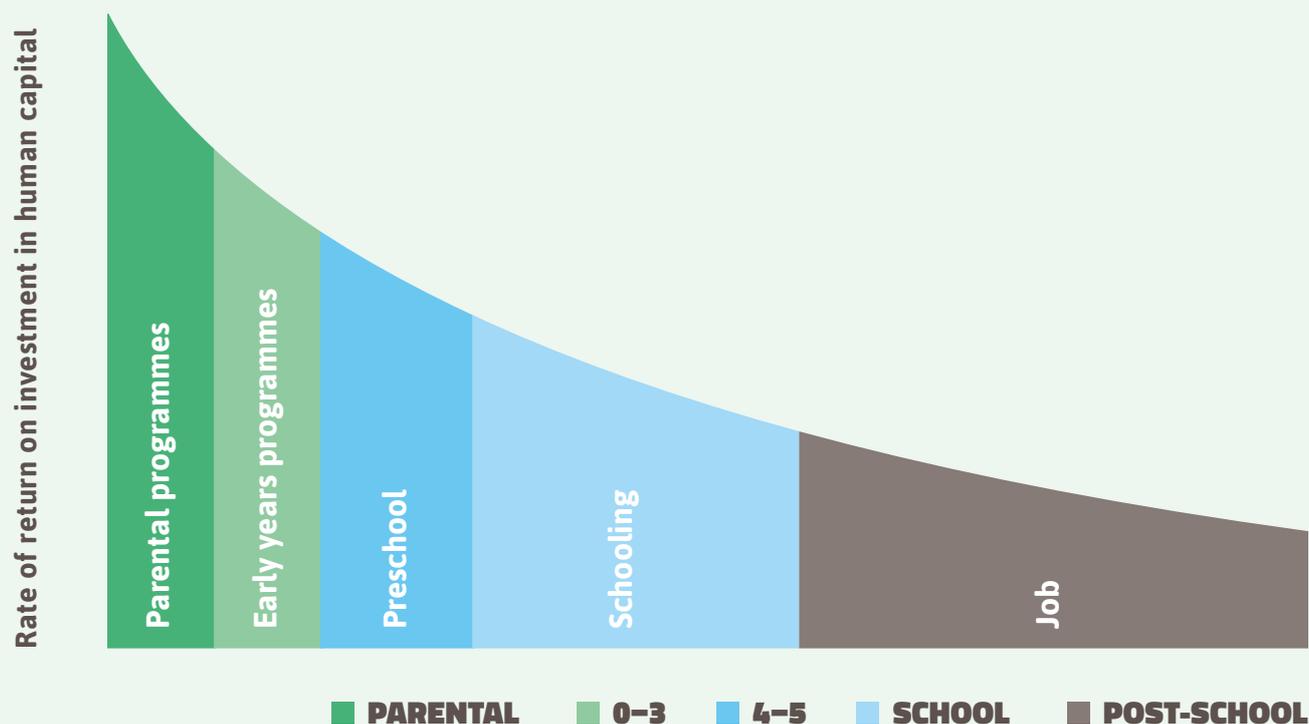
## WHAT IS AN EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTION?

For a child to thrive, they need **good nutrition and healthcare, protection from harm, opportunities to play and loving exchanges with adults**. This is the foundation of a good start in life, and it has been the mission of the Bernard van Leer Foundation for more than 50 years.

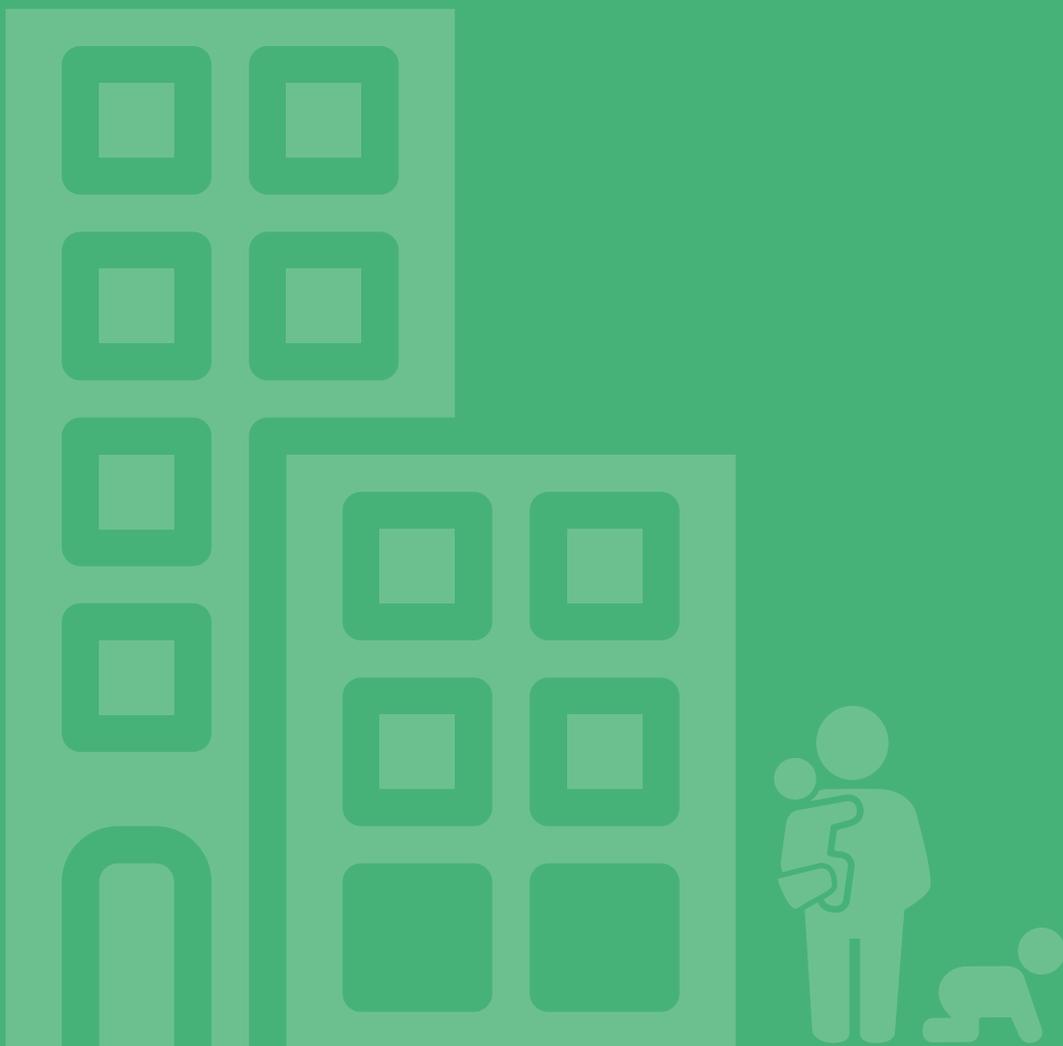
Early childhood interventions are a priority for us because hundreds of millions of young children across the world do not have access to a good start in life, which prevents them from reaching their full potential. It's also an increasing priority for governments and other stakeholders worldwide as they recognise the exponential return on investments in the early years.

Traditionally, early childhood interventions can take many forms, from nutrition, health, water and sanitation, to education and social protection. More recently, we and others have been working to include a focus on the early years in other sectors that affect millions of young children's early experiences, such as urban planning and humanitarian assistance.

### ESTIMATED RATE OF RETURN ON HUMAN CAPITAL INVESTMENT



# BABIES IN CITIES





**Today, more than a billion children live in cities. Cities can be wonderful places to grow up, but they can also pose serious challenges for the health and well-being of babies, toddlers and the people who care for them – from a lack of nature and safe spaces to play, to air pollution and traffic congestion, to social isolation.**

At the same time, urbanisation is happening so rapidly that cities represent a unique opportunity to help babies and their families to thrive. How can we ensure that cities scale the opportunities of safe, healthy and stimulating places – with opportunities to learn, create, imagine, play and grow – across all neighbourhoods to reach as many families as possible?

## **BABIES, TODDLERS AND CAREGIVERS EXPERIENCE THE CITY DIFFERENTLY**

**For optimal brain development, young children need healthy food, protection from harm, and – crucially – plenty of opportunities to play and be loved.**

This means babies and toddlers need cities with a **safe and healthy environment**, where crucial **services are easily accessible**; one that allows for **frequent, warm, responsive interactions** with loving adults and offers a **safe, stimulating physical environment** to play in and explore.

# THREE LESSONS ON MAKING CITIES FOR BABIES

## 01 DESIGN FOR CAREGIVING

Planning and designing for babies and toddlers means planning and designing for the people who care for them. Babies and toddlers do not wander through cities by themselves – it is those looking after them who decide where they go and how long they stay. These caregivers need to feel safe and comfortable – whether because their surroundings have good lighting, or buffers between sidewalk and road, well-placed amenities like benches, or easy-to-board, convenient buses.

## 02 PROXIMITY MATTERS

Anyone who has tried to go anywhere with a curious, energetic 2 year old, or a heavy baby in arms, can attest to this. Good public transport is very important, but if you are with a little child the best option is often to walk safely, comfortably and quickly to where you need to go. We have developed the concept of a 15-minute neighbourhood where families with young children can get to the services they need most within a 15-minute walk.

## 03 'THINK: BABIES' AS A UNIVERSAL DESIGN PRINCIPLE

Focusing on babies, toddlers and their caregivers makes a city better for everyone. Thinking about babies is an easy-to-grasp way to think about universal design principles. From a design perspective, their extreme vulnerability and dependency, and their strong drive to explore and play, mean that if a space is safe, clean and interesting enough for them, it's likely to work for everyone.



# HOW DO WE REACH ALL CHILDREN





## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Early childhood interventions have proven their worth, resulting in healthier, more resilient and prosperous families and communities across the globe. Today, our challenge is to scale up cost-effective models to reach all children, especially the most disadvantaged.

Two important lessons from 50 years of work — and the work of our partners — guide us:

**01: THE BEST WAY TO SUPPORT BABIES AND TODDLERS IS TO ENSURE THE PEOPLE WHO CARE FOR THEM HAVE WHAT THEY NEED TO CREATE A STABLE, HEALTHY AND STIMULATING ENVIRONMENT.**

Stable, responsive, nurturing relationships and rich learning experiences during a child's early years provide lifelong benefits for learning, behaviour and physical and mental health. But providing that care is not always easy or straightforward. For example, maternal depression, which affects 13% of new mothers worldwide and 20% in low-income countries, can hinder mother-child bonding, carrying lasting repercussions for the child's development. Additionally, parents and other caregivers who live in poverty and cannot access key services will face not only more difficulties providing food, shelter and sanitation, but may also have less time, energy and cognitive space to care for babies and toddlers the way they would like.

Investments in the well-being of parents and other people who care for babies and toddlers can take many forms, from reducing daily sources of stress and increasing access to key services, to raising awareness about how to encourage developmental milestones.



**02: REACHING EVERY CHILD MEANS INCORPORATING A GREATER FOCUS ON BABIES, TODDLERS AND THE PEOPLE WHO CARE FOR THEM IN ACTIVITIES ALREADY TAKING PLACE AT SCALE, IN ADDITION TO SETTING UP STAND-ALONE PROGRAMMES.**

Families need support from society, including from the government and the broader community. This requires policies and programmes to serve everyone, and to provide extra support for those most in need. Strategic expansion of what is already working saves money and delivers results quickly. The Bernard van Leer Foundation harnesses these lessons by focusing its efforts in two ways. We bundle support for parents and other primary caregivers with existing services, through our Parents+ initiative, and we support large-scale urban policy, planning and design activities to reach primary caregivers through our Urban95 initiative.

## HOW DO WE DEFINE AND MEASURE IMPACT?

Parents+ and Urban95 initiatives both work to improve **child and caregiver well-being** and change **caregiver behaviours** in ways that support **healthy child development**. We've identified six areas of particular importance for measuring the effectiveness of programmes and services.





## 1 UTILISATION OF SERVICES

**Are parents and other caregivers accessing basic services, such as primary healthcare, childcare and public spaces? Pregnant women, young children and caregivers need some services more frequently than other groups.**

### *Why focus on this?*

Families need support to provide nurturing and responsive care for young children. Whether and how caregivers use services tells us two things: if services are accessible, and if caregivers are integrated into formal city systems and reached by public policies. It is vital to assess the various barriers faced by different sub-groups of caregivers when accessing services. This then allows for further consideration of what additional interventions may be required to support the most vulnerable.

The ability to use and enjoy services related to the urban environment, such as public spaces and transport, is often affected by the way that different groups in society, such as men and women, are treated. Since caregivers with young children are among the most vulnerable groups, focusing on their utilisation of services is useful in ensuring that city policies actively promote fair access to urban resources in general.

### *Sample indicators*

#### **Number and percentage of:**

- Children under five years of age enrolled in informal childcare, formal childcare or preschool
- Children under five years of age and their caregivers making use of key public spaces (streets, plazas, parks and playgrounds)
- Households with children under five years of age who reside within 10-15 minutes walking, cycling or by public transit from key services such as healthcare, education, public space, public transportation and job opportunities.



## 2

## CAREGIVER MENTAL HEALTH

**Many caregivers of babies and toddlers experience depression, anxiety and other mental health issues. Many will have mild or short-term challenges and others more severe and enduring ones.**

### *Why focus on this?*

Babies and toddlers with a caregiver experiencing mental illness are at greater risk of developmental delays, as well as social and mental health challenges later in life themselves. Parents experiencing depression and stress may have more difficulty understanding and responding to their children's cues or initiating interactions with them. They may also be less likely to seek health services for their children. Between a third and a fifth of women in developing countries, and about a tenth in developed countries, experience a significant mental health problem during pregnancy or after childbirth.

In addition to the lack of societal support systems for caregiver mental health, the physical environment also plays a role in affecting mental health. Various environmental factors such as perceived safety, noise levels, heat, air quality, the presence of people, lighting, nature, diversity of activities, space and aesthetics have varied mental health impacts depending on their intensity, frequency and sequence.

While most research has focused on the role of mental health in mothers, there is strong evidence that underscores the inclusion of fathers and other primary caregivers. For example, research has shown that domestic violence is a major factor in influencing the effect of a father on his partner's mental health.

### *Sample indicators*

#### **Number and percentage of:**

- Women who receive post-natal care which includes counselling on stimulation and responsiveness
- Women who were screened for postpartum depression
- Caregivers who feel a sense of social support.



### 3

## CAREGIVER-INFANT PLAY (INDOOR AND OUTDOOR)

**Interactive play is essential to stimulate connections in babies and toddlers' brains, helping them develop motor, cognitive and social-emotional skills. Play is how they learn.**

### *Why focus on this?*

When caregivers play with children, they are teaching problem-solving and social interaction skills, but this kind of play doesn't come naturally to every caregiver, resulting in missed opportunities with lasting consequences. Interactions such as cuddling, eye contact, vocalisations and gestures are mutually enjoyable and build an emotional bond between caregiver and child, helping the child to understand the world around them. These interactions play a vital role in stimulating connections in the brain.

Moreover, in many urban settings unstructured outdoor play simply isn't possible, with safe and clean spaces out of reach for most families. Being outside can provide endless opportunities to use the large muscles, think creatively, and learn more about the environment. Physical exercise can help to improve the mood of both children and their caregivers.

### *Sample indicators*

#### **Number and percentage of:**

- Caregivers who interact positively (e.g. talk, sing, play, respond) with their child regularly
- Children under five years of age who engage in outdoor play with their caregivers at least two times a week.



## 4

### HEALTHY INFANT FEEDING PRACTICES

**Nutritious food and healthy eating habits lay the foundation for lifelong health. Breastfeeding is a major part of that, proven to reduce child mortality and deliver unparalleled health benefits.**

#### *Why focus on this?*

Breastfeeding has clear benefits for children's health, in both the short and long term. However, it can be challenging, and mothers need support to establish and sustain it.

Caregiver feeding practices can be even more important to young children's nutrition than the availability of healthy food in the household. Economists estimate that stunting reduces GDP in some countries by up to 10%. But not all caregivers understand the importance of (or how to access) a healthy mix of foods for a young child or how to respond sensitively to a child's hunger cues and encourage her to eat. Even when they do, economic and other challenges pose significant barriers to access.

#### *Sample indicators*

##### **Number and percentage of:**

- New-borns who are put to the breast within one hour of birth
- Children under five years of age who are stunted
- Children under five years of age who are overweight.



## 5

### STORYTELLING, SINGING AND READING

Verbal interactions with babies and toddlers profoundly benefit their language and social development and the caregiver–child bond.

#### *Why focus on this?*

Storytelling, singing and reading together create an important foundation for social-emotional development, as well as language development and later literacy, but many caregivers are not aware of the profound impact these simple interactions can have, or how to initiate and sustain them. Responding to young children’s sounds, expressions and movements through conversation has even been linked to IQ in adolescence. Such interactions can take many forms: caregiver literacy is not required! Caregivers can make up their own stories or tell stories from memory, and look at books together.

Talking and singing to infants and young children also supports the development of social-emotional skills: if parents name and discuss their emotions and ask children how they are feeling, children will learn to be aware of their emotions and better able to control them.

#### *Sample indicators*

##### **Number and percentage of:**

- Caregivers who told a story, read a book or sang songs to child under five years of age within the last day
- Caregivers who read or share stories with children under five years of age at least two or three times per week.



## 6

### USE OF NON-VIOLENT APPROACHES TO DISCIPLINE

Children can explore boundaries safely and develop self-control when caregivers provide positive, predictable guidance, space and routines. But many caregivers use violent methods of discipline, which can adversely affect child development.

#### *Why focus on this?*

Experiencing violent physical and psychological discipline can be particularly harmful for babies and toddlers, given the increased potential for physical injuries, their inability to understand the motivation behind the act, or the adoption of coping strategies to alleviate their distress. Caregivers often do not cause harm or injury intentionally but rather are acting from a place of anger and frustration, lack of understanding of the harm violent methods of discipline can cause, or limited familiarity with non-violent methods. In other cases, caregivers and young children need support in finding safe environments.

Positive discipline techniques, including reinforcing positive behaviour through praise, setting clear, simple rules and responding consistently to violations, allow children to learn that the world is a safe and predictable place. Establishing a routine – such as dinner, then bath, then brushing teeth, then reading stories, then sleep – can also help children to feel safe. In addition, research has shown that positive discipline practices predict increased self-control among young children.

#### *Sample indicator*

##### **Number and percentage of:**

- Caregivers who report that an adult residing in the household has utilised specific disciplinary methods on a child under five years of age in the last 30 days.



# WHAT IS URBAN95



# IF YOU COULD EXPERIENCE THE CITY FROM 95 CM — THE HEIGHT OF A 3-YEAR-OLD — WHAT WOULD YOU CHANGE?

This is the core question Urban95 seeks to answer on behalf of the babies, toddlers and caregivers who rarely have a voice in city policy, planning or design. We do this by helping city planners, urban designers, and other urbanists understand how their work can influence child development. Importantly, we also help them identify and scale cost-effective ways to improve the way families with small children live, play, interact and move through cities.



## WHAT IT MEANS FOR CITIES

Cities for babies, toddlers and caregivers are good for everyone

**“CHILDREN ARE A KIND OF INDICATOR SPECIES. IF WE CAN BUILD A SUCCESSFUL CITY FOR CHILDREN, WE WILL HAVE A SUCCESSFUL CITY FOR ALL PEOPLE.”**

Enrique Peñalosa, Mayor of Bogotá, Colombia

The presence of children and families is often a measure of a city’s vibrancy and dynamism. And their experience of living and growing in cities is unique. Designing cities with young children and caregivers in mind — for example, with outdoor spaces that encourage safe movement, play and social interaction — is an issue of growing concern everywhere.

Urban families around the world, especially those living in poverty or in informal settlements, benefit in transformational ways from more — and more accessible — services, transport, and safe, clean green spaces for small children to play and families to gather.

Better planning and design that incorporates the experience of babies, toddlers and their caregivers helps children thrive and become healthier and empowers caregivers; it also carries benefits for other members of a city's population characterised by limited range and unhurried pace, such as disabled and elderly people. Such family-centred urban planning and design is not only about building more playgrounds. Families are disproportionately challenged by poor public transport, as well as food, healthcare and childcare 'deserts'. Thoughtful urban planning and design can play a major role in addressing such challenges and in giving children a good start in life, by offering:

- **Walkable, mixed-use neighbourhoods that cater for the basics a young family needs within 15 minutes on foot**
- **Lively, green public spaces close to home that offer amenities for caregivers while allowing small children to explore safely**
- **Safe transport routes and transit systems that make it easy, reliable, affordable and enjoyable for families with young children to travel where they need to go**
- **Healthy environments with safe levels of air quality and low noise pollution**
- **Vibrant community life that supports family well-being**

Additionally, family-friendly urban planning and design can increase a city's climate resilience, carry enormous economic and other benefits, and offer a platform for investment that tends to unite political forces.

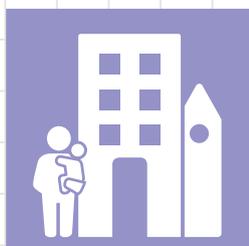
## **WHAT DOES THE CITY LOOK LIKE FROM A HEIGHT OF 95 CM?**

**Here are five key ways in which young children experience a city, and how urban planning and design can help or hinder development.**

- 01** The smallest features, such as a step or a pattern of tiles on the sidewalk, invite play and exploration.
- 02** Young children depend on their caregivers to move around the city. Making it easier and faster for families with strollers and on little legs to reach key destinations is one of the best things you can do to ease stress and make it more likely that those families will make use of services.
- 03** Travelling long distances between well-baby clinics, maternal health services, childcare, green spaces and places to buy healthy food can be especially difficult — and expensive.
- 04** Toddlers' shorter height places them consistently close to passing car exhaust fumes.
- 05** Waiting (for buses, appointments and in queues) is a challenge. Design features that allow for exploration and play make waiting easier and create valuable opportunities for learning and social interaction.

# WHAT URBAN95 FOCUSES ON

Urban95 interventions focus on helping cities increase positive interactions between caregivers, babies and toddlers; increase access to — and use of — the services and amenities families need; and reduce stresses on caregivers. They are organised into two categories of policies and services:



## FAMILY-FRIENDLY URBAN PLANNING AND DESIGN

Babies, toddlers and the people who care for them are often invisible to policymakers and planners as beneficiaries of urban policy, planning and design. That's why Urban95 works to ensure that their needs and well-being are addressed through a city's planning, design and regulation of space, land use, infrastructure and services.



## HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS FOR CHILDREN

Air, water and noise pollution, extreme heat and weather events, poor access to nature and to healthy food sources all affect the health and well-being of young children and their caregivers. Urban95 covers air quality and access to nature.

Urban95 interventions do not always cover all the aspects of urban life that are important to healthy child development, such as affordable, safe housing and access to water and sanitation (WASH) services. We have chosen to prioritise a set of issues where we believe the impacts on child development are important but not often directly addressed. We have developed a set of briefs on how other aspects of urban life influence child development, which are available on the website of the Bernard van Leer Foundation.



# Ideas FOR ACTION

The following section dives into two categories: **family-friendly urban planning and design** and **healthy environments for children**. In each, you will find a list of ideas for action. The aim is to provide inspiration for discussion around planning, designing and managing cities for babies, toddlers and caregivers.

You can think of this section as a menu and select one or two ideas you think would work best and try them out. You could also find starting points that connect with your interests and work from there.

## List of ideas

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <p>1 Family-friendly design of streets, sidewalks, parks, playgrounds, plazas</p> <p>Page 27</p>  | <p>2 Safe, playful walking routes for caregivers and young children</p> <p>Page 31</p>   | <p>3 Events and programmes for families with young children in public spaces</p> <p>Page 35</p>  |
| <p>4 Designing transport systems with family mobility in mind</p> <p>Page 39</p>                  | <p>5 Co-location of child and family services</p> <p>Page 43</p>                         | <p>6 Baby, toddler and caregiver neighbourhoods</p> <p>Page 47</p>                               |
| <p>1 Traffic controls</p> <p>Page 53</p>    | <p>2 Air quality monitoring where young children spend the most time</p> <p>Page 57</p>  | <p>3 Improving young children's access to nature near their home</p> <p>Page 60</p>              |

## Each idea includes:

- Description
- Implementation examples
- Type of government involvement
- Connection to caregiver well-being and caregiving behaviours.

# FAMILY-FRIENDLY URBAN PLANNING AND DESIGN

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**BABIES AND TODDLERS NEED CITIES WITH A SAFE AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT, WHERE CRUCIAL SERVICES ARE EASILY ACCESSIBLE; ONE THAT ALLOWS FOR FREQUENT, WARM, RESPONSIVE INTERACTIONS WITH LOVING ADULTS AND OFFERS A SAFE, STIMULATING PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT TO PLAY IN AND EXPLORE.**



Ideas in this category focus on maximising the frequency, intensity and length of positive interactions between babies, toddlers and their caregivers through strategic use of **public space**, accessible, safe **transportation** for families, and **neighbourhood planning**.



### **PUBLIC SPACE**

Places such as streets, parks, sidewalks, plazas and playgrounds which are safe, accessible, comfortable and stimulating for babies, toddlers and their caregivers, and whose use is actively promoted with the objective to maximise the frequency, quality and intensity of positive interactions between children and their caregivers.



### **TRANSPORTATION**

Safe, convenient, affordable and sustainable ways for caregivers with young children to reach their destinations including walking, cycling, public or informal transit or other modes. Initiatives to support frequent positive interactions between children and their caregivers are integrated throughout the journey.



### **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING**

A neighbourhood that provides easy access to, and promotes the utilisation of, key early years services located within a short (15 min) and affordable journey, a supportive and vibrant community and a safe, accessible, comfortable and stimulating environment for young children's development and caregiver wellbeing.

*Idea 1*

# FAMILY-FRIENDLY DESIGN OF STREETS, SIDEWALKS, PARKS, PLAYGROUNDS, PLAZAS

**CITY DEPARTMENTS INVOLVED:**

Culture

Education

Health

Parks

Planning

Social Services

Transportation

Transforming existing urban spaces throughout the city into safe, accessible, natural, playful spots can transform the city and the lives of all its residents. These spots can include small playgrounds, play streets and urban gardens, or simple resting spots along the way — where babies and toddlers can safely play and explore, caregivers can meet and rest, and people of all ages can gather. Typically, such places are found in wealthier, more privileged communities. The challenge is to spread design principles to better impact the most vulnerable areas.



Urban planners and designers can support healthy child development by locating and designing spaces to facilitate child and caregiver well-being and positive caregiving behaviours. Such planning means taking into consideration the **greater sensitivity of babies and toddlers to environmental factors** (for example, air pollution) and their **greater need for warm and responsive interactions**. Their sensitivity means that streets, sidewalks, parks, playgrounds and plazas planned for them will most likely be suitable for everyone else. **Family-friendly urban planning and design often require a shift in both political priorities and technical implementation systems across city agencies involved in the design, regulation and management of urban spaces.**

For detailed guidance on designing streets that benefit babies, toddlers and their caregivers, check out *Streets for Kids*, a supplement to the *Global Street Design Guide* by the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO). For more information on how the design of streets and public spaces can benefit children, check out the *City at Eye Level for Kids*, by STIPO. For playful design in urban spaces, adapted to the needs of children from birth to age 3, check out *Playground Ideas for 0–3 years*, by Superpool Architects.

### **KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILY-FRIENDLY URBAN SPACES:**

**SAFE:** A mother with a toddler and newborn should feel safe from crime and harassment, or simply safe to cross the road or linger in public spaces for quality time. This means streets with context-appropriate speeds, ideally below 30 km/h in dense urban environments; sidewalks in good condition; and frequent street crossings with adequate signal timings, minimal crossing distances and short waiting times. It also means designs that improve the visibility of pedestrians and reduce speeds of turning vehicles, with good lighting to help prevent accidents and crime.

**ACCESSIBLE:** Family-friendly public spaces and streets should be easy to reach, situated a short distance from where families live and connected to safe walking, cycling and transit infrastructure. Within the spaces, moving with children should be easy, whether they are curious toddlers running around or infants in strollers, with universal accessibility elements such as ramps, dropped kerbs and level surfaces for ease of movement.

**COMFORTABLE:** Public spaces should be comfortable places for babies, toddlers and their caregivers. This means benches with shade and shelter to rest along the way, playgrounds inclusive of the very young, and facilities for intergenerational outings in parks. The provision of toilets, drinking water and food options increases the amount of time families spend outdoors. Women breastfeeding in a public space is generally a good indicator that this space is comfortable for families.

**STIMULATING:** Spaces that allow exploration and play in various forms support children's healthy development, especially when they are integrated into everyday urban infrastructure. This includes playgrounds and parks with natural play elements with loose parts and varying textures, green spaces and murals on streets.

**PUBLICISED:** Spaces that allow exploration and play in various forms support children's healthy development, especially when they are integrated into everyday urban infrastructure. This includes playgrounds and parks with natural play elements with loose parts and varying textures, green spaces and murals on streets.



## RELATION TO CAREGIVER WELL-BEING AND CAREGIVING BEHAVIOURS

### UTILISATION OF SERVICES:

Public spaces such as parks are amenities that support early childhood development. The design of these spaces is key in increasing their use by families and providing the right conditions for, or reducing barriers to, the adoption of positive caregiving behaviours. Locating these spaces near or around other services such as health clinics or sources of healthy food might increase their accessibility and utilisation.

### CAREGIVER MENTAL HEALTH:

Public spaces and streets can be designed to minimise sources of stress for caregivers, including stress related to traffic, crime, crowds, loneliness, noise, pollution or the unpredictability of urban mobility.

### CAREGIVER-INFANT PLAY:

Small, unstructured play interventions frequently encountered along the way, or integrated into parks or plazas, can have more impact than large destination playgrounds, because they encourage more frequent play between caregivers and their children.

### STORYTELLING, SINGING, READING:

Storytelling murals and other prompts for caregivers to tell stories, sing or read to their children can be integrated throughout the urban environment.

## Examples



### STORYTELLING MURALS

In **Ciudad Bolívar, Bogotá, Colombia**, *Crezco con mi barrio*, a local neighbourhood improvement project led by a community organisation in partnership with the municipal government, has installed a mural that is 95 cm tall. Painted by local residents, the mural depicts local stories and reminds people of children's height and vulnerability to traffic.

In **Accra, Ghana**, the Mmofra Foundation's Playtime in Africa team created a 'toddler exploration' journey in a local public park. Relying on natural structures, play elements include local musical instruments, games or design patterns. These features encourage the kind of play that helps babies and toddlers develop social skills and provides a unique opportunity for children from different socioeconomic backgrounds to interact.



## Examples



### SAFE PUBLIC BREASTFEEDING

Breastfeeding in public spaces can be encouraged by creating environments where women feel more secure (for example, through warm lighting, accessible sidewalk design and comfortable furniture) and through supportive infrastructure, policies and campaigns.

The Health Department of **New York City, USA**, is providing the most deprived neighbourhoods with ‘lactation pods’ in health facilities, where women can access free private spaces to breastfeed safely.

Across **New Zealand**, the Health Ministry-led *Breastfeeding Friendly Spaces Accreditation* initiative creates and sustains breastfeeding-friendly environments. Government public health unit *Toi Te Ora Public Health’s* breastfeeding-friendly team engages workplaces, early childhood education services, cafes and health service providers. It supports spaces with breastfeeding policy development, staff training, breastfeeding signage, and education on how to create comfortable spaces for mothers.



### DESIGN FOR PLAY EVERYWHERE

Think of the whole city as a playground: undesignated play spaces such as the bus stop, plazas and waiting areas can offer a more diverse learning environment and play opportunities for young children. Include benches and other areas where people can stop and rest, as young children and caregivers are especially likely to need breaks. Making all these spaces safe and accessible for families will increase play opportunities throughout the city and reduce caregivers’ stress levels.

In **Copenhagen, Denmark**, trampolines on sidewalks along walking routes encourage play and physical activity for all ages, whereas community centres, such as *Ku.Be*, provide cultural activities and community events in a building designed for endless physical but playful exercise – slides between levels, climbing walls and nets, or colourful shapes for adventurous play.

In **Nashville** and **San Francisco, USA**, movable wall instruments such as xylophones, or colourful game instructions on the walls encourage children to engage in physical and creative exercise in public spaces.

Idea 2

# SAFE, PLAYFUL WALKING ROUTES FOR CAREGIVERS AND YOUNG CHILDREN

**CITY DEPARTMENTS INVOLVED:**

✓ Culture

✓ Education

✓ Health

✓ Parks

✓ Planning

✓ Social Services

✓ Transportation

Walking can be an equaliser, requiring neither car ownership nor access to public transport. In many cities across the world it is the only reliable and affordable travel mode. Walking is also important for healthy child development, enabling exploration, play, stimulation and social contact, and contributes to the physical and mental well-being of parents and other caregivers.



## CITY PLANNERS AND DESIGNERS CAN ENCOURAGE WALKING BY ENSURING THAT:

**DESTINATIONS ARE WITHIN A 15-MINUTE WALK:** Childcare, healthcare, parks, healthy food sources, schools and jobs should ideally lie within a 15-minute walk of one another — and preferably of all residential neighbourhoods. This means prioritising smaller and more widely distributed services, as well as the co-location of services.

**CAREGIVERS FEEL SAFE TO WALK:** This means consistent lighting during evenings, a connected grid of footpaths, frequent crossings with minimal waiting times and traffic protection buffers. It means streets with low speed limits and intersections designed to minimise the speed of turning vehicles and the crossing distance for pedestrians. Sidewalks should have dropped kerbs and be wide enough to allow for two-way pedestrian traffic, including strollers. Sidewalks should also feature areas separated from pedestrian flow where caregivers can stop to attend the needs of a baby or toddler. Greenery should be prominent, providing shade from the sun. Caregivers should feel safe from crime and harassment. Ideally, air quality would be monitored and maintained at acceptable levels along busy routes.

**ROUTES ARE DESTINATIONS TOO:** Sidewalks offering opportunities to play and explore, and places to rest, support caregiver well-being and behaviours conducive to improved child development.



## RELATION TO CAREGIVER WELL-BEING AND CAREGIVING BEHAVIOURS

**UTILISATION OF SERVICES:** Improving walkability for caregivers and young children may support the utilisation of services close to home by providing a reliable travel mode. Walking is also more conducive to visiting several destinations in one trip, which is a characteristic of caregiver mobility.

**CAREGIVER MENTAL HEALTH:** Promoting walking and turning it into a safe and pleasant experience may reduce stress related to the uncertainty of travel and increases opportunities for social interaction and exposure to nature.

**CAREGIVER-INFANT PLAY:** Improving walking routes can provide more opportunities for short and frequent playful interactions.

**STORYTELLING, SINGING, READING:** Walking routes can provide opportunities for interactions between caregivers and children, and with others. By being slower, walking also allows caregivers with babies and toddlers to notice more details of the streetscape along the way, therefore providing opportunities for storytelling and imagination.



## Examples



### DESIGNING FOR PLAY ALONG THE WAY

In **Odense, Denmark**, the city installed play spots throughout the city centre. Play spots are small areas—a few square metres—with simple, engaging water features or climbing sculptures. They facilitate short but frequent playful moments for families passing by.

In **Philadelphia, USA**, Urban Thinkscape integrates early learning into the design of a public space near a bus stop, to encourage families with young children to engage in play while passing by or waiting for the bus. It has improved linguistic skills in children and increased caregiver–child interactions.



### CHILDREN'S ROUTES

Children's routes typically connect residential areas with schools, playgrounds and parks through colourful and playable signage and design elements on the sidewalk. These design elements also alert drivers to the presence of children in the area and reinforce parents' sense of safety, which in turn reduces their stress levels.

The *Kindlint* or 'child-route' in **Eindhoven, Netherlands**, is designed to provide a safe, walkable route for children, increasing parents' perceptions of safety and lowering the age at which children can walk on their own. Marked by signage, it is a distinctive coloured and textured path.

In **Boa Vista, Brazil**, the city government supported children to draw murals and bright colours on sidewalks to encourage play and storytelling along key routes to early years services. The city has also improved some bus stops with breastfeeding amenities, and decorated them with scenes from daily life, such as a hair salon, prompting imaginative play while waiting for transit.

In **São Paulo**, the *Territorios Educadores* initiative improves walking routes near educational and cultural early childhood services, making them safer and introducing features that encourage playful interactions, with early learning in mind.

**Medellín, Colombia**, introduced safe routes for preschoolers who live in neighbourhoods with high levels of violence. Children walk to school together with a group of adults, playing games and accompanied by music.



## **PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS FOR FAMILIES**

Increasing sidewalk width, walkability and ‘strollability’ — walking while pushing a stroller — increases opportunities for interaction and play and reduces the likelihood of collisions and injuries. It provides more time to catch a toddler who runs off towards the street and makes caregivers and kids less stressed. Ensuring that sidewalks remain comfortable (shade, benches), and free from obstructions (cars, stalls) is crucial and requires maintenance and enforcement of regulations in addition to good design. Interventions can easily be tested temporarily first through tactical urbanism.

In **Barcelona, Spain**, the *Superblocks* project, led by the public consortium BCNecologia and implemented by the municipal government, is turning parts of the city into low-traffic areas designated mainly for pedestrians and community events. The result: improved walkability and more opportunities for residents to interact. Pilots have shown an increase in public life in general, as well as more children playing outdoors, for longer periods of time.

In **Santiago, Chile**, a beautification project on the *Paseo Bandera* turned this busy street in the city centre into a pedestrianised thoroughfare, including facilities to rest, meet and enjoy colourful art by local artists. It also includes more green spaces. Temporary at first, this tactical urbanism intervention has been paid for by local business owners and made permanent by the city government.



## **DESIGN MAKES STREET CROSSINGS SAFER**

Simple design features, such as adding colours to street signs, can increase drivers’ awareness of the presence of children and encourage caregivers and children to use crossings. Design interventions that increase safety include traffic islands, shrubs and other shielding elements, and speed-reduction devices such as speed bumps. Design interventions may also influence perceived safety for parents, reducing their stress levels.

In **La Paz, Bolivia**, the *Traffic Zebras* are a fleet of urban educators from the municipal government dressed in zebra outfits, dedicated to creative awareness-raising about safe crossing behaviours for pedestrians and drivers. They are particularly popular with young children and parents.

In **Mexico City, Mexico**, the civil organisation Liga Peatonal uses data on road accidents to inform road safety recommendations for the city government, focusing on specific walking routes taken by children. They do so through pilot projects, advocacy, and a public information campaign.

Idea 3

# EVENTS AND PROGRAMMES FOR FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN IN PUBLIC SPACES

## CITY DEPARTMENTS INVOLVED:



Culture



Education



Health



Parks



Planning



Social Services



Transportation

Designing public spaces that can serve as venues for regular, frequent family-focused events builds community, strengthens social support networks for caregivers, and allows health, education, social services and culture agencies to reach out directly to parents with parent coaching activities.



Including communities in the design and management of these events draws in more participants and increases the likelihood of local ownership and long-term sustainability.

Pop-up play can easily be combined with street closures or other gatherings that are not specifically family oriented. Mobile containers of books, toys and games for small children, along with movable benches and chairs, can be towed by a bicycle or car. Pop-up interventions are an efficient way to test ideas for permanent infrastructure and assess their behavioural impact.



## RELATION TO CAREGIVER WELL-BEING AND CAREGIVING BEHAVIOURS

**UTILISATION OF SERVICES:** Events in public spaces can provide an opportunity to directly influence how families use those spaces, as well as attract them to come and stay longer.

**CAREGIVER MENTAL HEALTH:** Regular events for which the community feels a sense of ownership can help support caregiver mental health by strengthening social networks.

**CAREGIVER-INFANT PLAY:** Public events for families are very likely to include play activities and provide inspiration for new forms of play geared towards broader social interaction than in the home.

**HEALTHY FEEDING PRACTICES:** Programmes for families can include parent coaching on feeding practices and provide opportunities for caregivers to discuss these and other issues.

**STORYTELLING, SINGING, READING:** Family-friendly events in public spaces can include group storytelling, which can build on local culture and help build a sense of community.



## Examples



### **PUBLIC FAMILY GATHERINGS FOR PLAY AND PARENT COACHING**

Events that bring families with babies together in public spaces can foster community and family bonding, as well as serve as parent coaching opportunities. If they take place in highly visible and symbolic spaces, they can serve as powerful demonstrations that early childhood is a priority for the local government.

In **Istanbul, Turkey**, Urban95 partner municipalities Beyoglu, Maltepe, Sariyer and Sultanbeyli organised family picnics for Mother’s Day, combined with games and concerts for children and families, alongside workshops for parents on topics related to child development, reading, nutrition and play. This proved to be an effective way to communicate the importance of parent–child interaction. Organising the picnics also strengthened collaboration among various municipal departments on the topic of early childhood.

**Israel’s Tel Aviv-Yafo** municipality organised a three-day play event on the city’s main square to encourage imaginative interactions between parents and children. The event proved highly popular, attracting around two thousand people each day, including the mayor. The event introduced to Tel Aviv the concept of playworkers – a trained play expert supporting parents and children on playgrounds. It also introduced new play elements such as new sandbox designs with benches to support interactions, mobile

play elements and toy storage sheds. The materials and initiative were taken to similar events in more vulnerable areas of the city, and then made available permanently in parks.

The *Crezco con mi barrio* project in **Bogotá, Columbia** held regular community events in a disadvantaged neighbourhood on the city's periphery, focused on intergenerational interaction and increasing families' use of public spaces for gardening, cultural events and exercising.

In **Tucumán, Argentina**, the project *Filling Urban Voids* has introduced parenting-friendly pop-up urban furniture in 1200 small abandoned spaces in the city. Self-managed by local communities and spread throughout the city, these spaces provide opportunities for safe and stimulating family interactions close to home.



### **TEMPORARY PLAY STREETS**

Closing streets at regular intervals gives people of all ages a safe public space to play, meet, be active and breathe clean air. Temporary closures are usually led by the transportation department, with collaboration from education, health, parks and gardens, social services or culture departments, and can be a first step towards permanent solutions, which can be difficult to implement without first building citizen support.

In **Mexico City, Mexico** under an initiative from the former urban innovation lab LabCDMX, the government regularly closes streets in front of schools in deprived neighbourhoods to provide outdoor play opportunities.

In **Libreville, Gabon**, *Closing Streets for Children to Play* creates safe spaces for children to play where outdoor play space is lacking, in line with a broader tradition of reclaiming the streets for social events, such as weddings.

**Bristol, UK**, has a strong tradition of play streets. Studies have shown they increase interaction among neighbours, contributing to increased caregiver well-being.

Starting in **Bogotá, Colombia** more than 40 years ago and now spreading across Latin America, *Ciclovías* are regular temporary street closures led by city governments to encourage walking, cycling and gatherings in the public space. They are widely popular with families and have become key moments of outdoor play and social cohesion.



### **STAFFED PLAYGROUNDS**

**Copenhagen, Denmark**, has 26 staffed playgrounds, each with a different character and size. Park staff are employed by the parks department, highly trained, usually with a masters' degree, and can provide counselling to parents and referrals to municipal services. Staff members help children when needed, organise events, ensure safety while allowing for risk-taking, and mediate potential conflicts between users.

Idea 4

# DESIGNING TRANSPORT SYSTEMS WITH FAMILY MOBILITY IN MIND

**CITY DEPARTMENTS INVOLVED:**



Culture



Education



Health



Parks



Planning



Social Services



Transportation

Transport systems tend to be planned for long-distance two-way commuting adults. Yet caregivers with babies and toddlers move through cities differently: they require daily support from multiple services and people, typically located close to home. The price of public transport is also a common barrier to mobility for the most vulnerable families.



Lowering cost and broadening transport options can improve the well-being of both caregiver and child, and reduce stress levels.

City governments have critical roles to play in ensuring that public transit systems support rather than hinder caregiving activities. This means placing transit stops in places caregivers frequent and along the routes they take, as part of a network that reduces travel times to destinations. It means making system navigation easy and transferring between services as seamless as possible. It also means reducing cost barriers through free transfers and fare integration across services, improving the transit service (frequency and predictability) and designing the transit experience to be safe, reliable and comfortable for families with babies and toddlers.



## RELATION TO CAREGIVER WELL-BEING AND CAREGIVING BEHAVIOURS

**UTILISATION OF SERVICES:** Improving public transport to support caregiver mobility can support families' access to services. Transportation in itself is also a service. Improving the transit experience supports caregiver well-being in general.

**CAREGIVER MENTAL HEALTH:** Moving through a city is a source of stress for most caregivers, which better transit design can alleviate.

**CAREGIVER-INFANT PLAY:** Public transport, and waiting times during trips, can be opportunities for play and interaction.

**HEALTHY FEEDING PRACTICES:** Targeted communications campaigns and behavioural nudges in public transport settings can influence feeding practices. In large transit hubs, cities can provide safe spaces to rest and breastfeed.

**STORYTELLING, SINGING, READING:** Public transport, and waiting times during trips, can be opportunities for play and interaction.



## Examples



### PLANNING TRANSIT AND LAND-USE TO INCREASE ACCESS TO KINDERGARTENS

In **Vilnius, Lithuania**, the municipal government has developed an app to pair parents with suitable kindergarten facilities. Data on the location of kindergarten facilities and their distance from parents' residence and workplace is gathered from the app, and is helping the city to understand where people work and commute, and make better-informed decisions about where to increase or decrease public transport provision and determine locations for the expansion of kindergarten slots.



### SUBSIDISED, CONVENIENT TRANSPORT FOR PREGNANT WOMEN AND YOUNG CHILDREN

In **São Paulo, Brazil**, the *Programa Mãe Paulistana* aims to ensure access to healthcare throughout pregnancy by providing a free travel card to pregnant women. Further incentives include the gift of a bag of baby clothes for completing the full six antenatal visits.

In **Japan**, pregnant women in the Tohoku region can register with some of the city's taxi companies to receive priority when travelling to antenatal check-ups or going into labour. Some taxi companies are also educating their drivers on how to look after expectant mothers on their way to the hospital.

In **Paris, France**, public transport is free of charge for all children under 11 years old. This is meant to facilitate mobility for families and reduce cost barriers on caregivers.



### SAFE, ACCESSIBLE AND PLAYFUL TRANSIT FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Public transport can create valuable, unique opportunities for learning and play. A bus stop can be turned into a learning experience through messages and stories, or games relying on colours or shapes. Messages and games can also be placed inside buses or trains. Enhancing safety and comfort at stations — for example, by reducing gaps underfoot and allowing for stroller access, or providing shade in sunlight and lighting at night — can greatly improve caregivers' experience and enhance their mobility.

The *Urban Thinkscape* project in **Philadelphia, USA**, transformed a bus stop and the plot adjacent using puzzles and street lighting by projecting animated stories on the sidewalks. The project has shown increased usage of numerical, spatial and colour language in children, more caregiver–child conversations and more focus from caregivers on what their child is doing.

The Institute for Transportation and Development Policy's global technical standard for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) requires stroller accessibility for all buses and stations, defined as a gap of no more than 1.5 cm (vertical) and 10 cm (horizontal) between the bus and the platform. There are gold-standard BRT systems in **Yichang, China; Belo Horizonte, Brazil;** and **Bogotá, Colombia.**

In **Washington DC**, the Circulator bus service adopted a policy in 2010 to allow unfolded strollers onto buses, to enable caregivers travelling with children easy access.

**Dublin, Ireland**, has instituted a public transport fare cap, which allows smartcard users to pay for trips on a per-trip basis but caps payments when they reach the equivalent of a daily or weekly pass. Many caregivers may not be able to predict how many trips they will need to take in a given period of time when calculating whether a pass will save them money. Many low-income caregivers may not have sufficient funds to pay for longer-term passes up front and end up paying more for transport than they would with an unlimited use pass. Fare capping reduces the decision stress and cost of transport.

Idea 5

# CO-LOCATION OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

## CITY DEPARTMENTS INVOLVED:

✓ Culture

✓ Education

✓ Health

✓ Parks

✓ Planning

✓ Social Services

✓ Transportation

The location of services influences their use by caregivers with babies and toddlers. While it may be complex to place key services such as healthcare, childcare, healthy food options, parks, schools and employment opportunities all within close reach of where families live, a solution is to cluster them to reduce the number of trips caregivers have to make.





Co-location of services helps to reduce caregiver stress. It also helps cities streamline management costs, by allowing for sharing of space and some staff. Finally, it for better integration of different early childhood services and simplifies uptake of referrals, which improves early childhood development outcomes.

City governments can use data on where families with young children live, and on utilisation of services, to best inform the location and expansion of future services. They can also design infrastructure and regulations to attract services that are provided by private organisations in specific areas and encourage regular coordination at the level of frontline worker and managers between different service providers.



## RELATION TO CAREGIVER WELL-BEING AND CAREGIVING BEHAVIOURS

**UTILISATION OF SERVICES:** Co-locating services can increase their use by providing a ‘one-stop shop’ and improving uptake of referrals.

**CAREGIVER MENTAL HEALTH:** Co-location of services can reduce the stress involved in reaching services and make it easier to direct targeted behavioural interventions to large numbers of caregivers in one place, with a view to improving their mental health.

**CAREGIVER-INFANT PLAY:** Co-located services for families can easily include play facilities.

**HEALTHY FEEDING PRACTICES:** Co-located services for families can easily include spaces for breastfeeding and allow for existing services to be bundled with nutrition advice.



## Examples



### SHARING FACILITIES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

In **Tel Aviv**, community centres and well-baby clinics, managed respectively by the city's community department and the health department, have been brought together in selected locations across the city, which has increased the points of access to parenting services provided by both departments. For example, parents who live far away from a well-baby clinic can now access some of the clinic's services much closer to their home as they are offered at a community centre nearby.



### OPENING PUBLIC FACILITIES OUT OF HOURS

Placing play spaces within existing public facilities, such as schools or healthcare centres, supports access to a diverse range of services. Opening these spaces out of hours can increase access for young children and their caregivers.

**New York, USA**, created a programme to transform school car parks into playgrounds, with the community and children helping with design and construction. They remain open for the community to use after school hours.

**Paris, France**, is greening every schoolyard and opening them to families at weekends as public parks.

In **Copenhagen, Denmark**, most schoolyards have no fences and are usable at all times by schoolchildren and anyone else. This increases the availability of quality public space for families.



### USING PRIVATE SPACES FOR EARLY YEARS SERVICES

In urban areas where new construction is not easy or appropriate, municipalities can increase density and coverage of children's service provision by using existing private spaces.

In the state of **Maranhão, Brazil**, 17 cities are using private homes as meeting points for pregnant women and health workers. Locations are chosen to be close enough for the parents-to-be to get there on foot. This results in fewer missed antenatal visits and more time spent helping mothers and fathers think through what steps they can take to help children thrive.

For decades, **Colombia** has had childcare programmes set up in local homes but financed and regulated by the government. This strategy has increased the proximity of childcare to where parents live, even in high-density neighbourhoods.

The Kidogo project in **Kibera**, one of the largest informal settlements in **Nairobi, Kenya**, builds capacity for mothers to provide higher-quality, sustainable childcare micro-businesses, based in their homes.



### EARLY YEARS SERVICES DIRECTORIES

Cities and communities may not be aware of all the formal and informal resources available to support child development. The creation of neighbourhood directories for early years services — listing available services and their location, and recording residents' skills and experience in areas such as child health, nutrition, childcare, and early learning parenting — allows caregivers in need of counsel to reach out to someone nearby, whether a formal service provider or a neighbour.

In **Chicago, USA**, the *Neighborhood Parents Network* is an online platform that connects parents across the city to enable sharing of resources, tips, skills and events and ease the experience of being a parent in the city.

In **Tel Aviv, Israel**, the city's digital platform for parents of young children, *Digitaf*, provides support and parenting tips, informs caregivers of programming suitable for young children, and lists the location of early childhood services.

Idea 6

# BABY, TODDLER AND CAREGIVER NEIGHBOURHOODS

## CITY DEPARTMENTS INVOLVED:

✓ Culture

✓ Education

✓ Health

✓ Parks

✓ Planning

✓ Social Services

✓ Transportation

Creating dedicated areas that facilitate the integration of tailored interventions for babies, toddlers and the people who care for them can multiply the impact of those interventions exponentially.



The chosen area should be in a neighbourhood populated by (or accessible to) a large number of vulnerable families with young children, and with well-identified challenges to address, such as lack of safe public spaces for families, poor road safety or limited access to healthcare or childcare. Community engagement, associated with a robust data monitoring of key early childhood indicators, greatly helps with prioritising, designing and implementing interventions, and allows their impact to be evaluated and communicated.



## RELATION TO CAREGIVER WELL-BEING AND CAREGIVING BEHAVIOURS

**UTILISATION OF SERVICES:** Access to services can be improved through neighbourhood planning and design of routes to key services.

**CAREGIVER MENTAL HEALTH:** The place-based intervention can reduce environmental sources of stress for caregivers, supports community interaction and improves access to nature.

**CAREGIVER-INFANT PLAY:** The place-based intervention includes play spaces and integrates elements conducive to play throughout the urban environment.

**HEALTHY FEEDING PRACTICES:** The baby, toddler and caregiver neighbourhood can include the creation of places that are suitable for breastfeeding and regular events that can promote nutrition.

**STORYTELLING, SINGING AND READING:** The baby, toddler and caregiver neighbourhood can integrate storytelling elements in the urban environment and include regular family events with storytelling and other interactive play.

**NON-VIOLENT APPROACHES TO DISCIPLINE:** Regular events could include parent coaching activities addressing topics on discipline. Reduced caregiver stress may also contribute to softer discipline approaches.



## Examples



### COMMUNITY-LED PLACE-BASED INTERVENTIONS

In **Bogotá, Columbia**, *Crezco con mi barrio* is a place-based approach led by a local community organisation in partnership with the local government in a disadvantaged area of the city. It began with a series of pop-up play events, engaging the community in the renovation of abandoned plots for play, then moved to creating safe routes connecting childcare centres with play areas, health services and homes.



### CHILD PRIORITY ZONES TO REDUCE VIOLENCE

The municipal government in **Recife, Brazil**, is experimenting with children's priority zones around local community centres. Zoning efforts feature a pop-up play and parenting campaign to reclaim public space for families; safer routes between destinations such as preschools, grocery stores and playgrounds; and investments in playgrounds, parks and pedestrian areas to develop safe public spaces that can host vibrant family life as a way to prevent crime and violence.



## **INFANT, TODDLER AND CAREGIVER NEIGHBOURHOODS**

**India's** Smart Cities Mission, an initiative from the national government, helps cities implement ambitious urban reforms. To help integrate the needs of babies, toddlers and caregivers, the Bernard van Leer Foundation supported the creation of a set of guidelines for planners, designers and decision makers. In member cities of the Smart Cities Mission such as **Udaipur** and **Pune**, these guidelines are used to train municipal staff and inform urban planning interventions focusing on families.

The same concept of an infant, toddler and caregiver neighbourhood has been adapted in **Tirana, Albania**, to support the city's ambitious and holistic child-focused strategy. The policy framework supports coordination between the city agencies by providing a common, clear vision and action plan, and the design guidelines support the technical staff in making it happen.

## HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS FOR CHILDREN

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**BABIES AND TODDLERS NEED CITIES WITH A SAFE AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT, WHERE CRUCIAL SERVICES ARE EASILY ACCESSIBLE; ONE THAT ALLOWS FOR FREQUENT, WARM, RESPONSIVE INTERACTIONS WITH LOVING ADULTS AND OFFERS A SAFE, STIMULATING PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT TO PLAY IN AND EXPLORE.**



Urban95 Ideas for action in this area focus on air quality and access to nature. Why? First, the consequences of air pollution are disproportionately felt by the poorest and youngest. Air quality can vary greatly between neighbourhoods, with low-income areas typically experiencing higher levels of pollution given that they tend to have fewer green spaces and higher population density. Second, child and caregivers alike need regular exposure to nature for play, exercise and rest.

Governments have a critical role to play in placing and maintaining natural spaces in urban environments. Numerous, accessible and well-located natural spaces in a city mitigate the impact of extreme temperatures, air pollution or adverse weather conditions on children and their caregivers' well-being. Policies and systems around emissions and waste reduction, as well as integrating natural space requirements in building and zoning laws can also make a difference.



### **AIR QUALITY**

Ensuring air quality that meets World Health Organization recommendations in and around areas where children spend the most time, such as childcare, healthcare, preschool, streets, parks or playgrounds. Babies and toddlers are more vulnerable to air pollution than older children and adults as they breathe in more air per kilogram of body weight. Regular exposure to air pollution adversely affects cognitive and mental development. During pregnancy, too, the threat is real: globally, 18–23% of total preterm births (around 3 million) were associated with maternal exposure to PM 2.5 fine particulate matter.



### **EXPOSURE TO NATURE**

Regular exposure to nature for play, exercise and rest, both for the child and the caregiver. Natural play areas contribute to the better development of motor skills (e.g. playing with sand and water), while green areas encourage exploration and gradual risk-taking. For caregivers, natural environments contribute to better mental health. They are quieter and more attractive to linger in, and better suited for interactions such as storytelling, reading or singing.

All these benefits depend on the presence of nature in the urban environment and the maintenance of natural spaces, to reduce threats such as disease-bearing insects and stray animals. Numerous, accessible and well-located natural spaces in a city mitigate the impact of extreme temperatures, air pollution or adverse weather conditions on children and their caregivers' well-being.

*Idea 1*

# TRAFFIC CONTROLS

## CITY DEPARTMENTS INVOLVED:

✓ Culture

✓ Education

✓ Health

✓ Parks

✓ Planning

✓ Social Services

✓ Transportation

Traffic is a leading contributor to air pollution, and toddlers' shorter height places them consistently close to passing car exhausts. Traffic also increases the likelihood of collisions, parking and other challenges.





Cities can tackle these problems by establishing vehicular control mechanisms in areas where families with young children spend the most time, such as in front of childcare centres or near parks and playgrounds. Interventions include lower speed limits, street design that reduces space for cars and encourages drivers to go more slowly, pedestrianisation, and temporary events such as street closures to make the case for fewer cars in our cities. Additionally, multimodal streets (with reduced space for cars and more space for other modes) have demonstrated many benefits for all city residents.



## RELATION TO CAREGIVER WELL-BEING AND CAREGIVING BEHAVIOURS

**UTILISATION OF SERVICES:** Reducing the prevalence of traffic near services can help improve air quality and makes it less risky for caregivers and young children to walk to them.

**CAREGIVER MENTAL HEALTH:** Restricting traffic reduces stressors such as noise, air pollution and risk of collisions, frees up space for more natural elements, and may contribute to social interaction by providing more spaces to rest and linger.

**CAREGIVER-INFANT PLAY:** Freeing up space from cars can free space for more outdoor play close to where families live.



## Examples



### TRAFFIC CALMING AND REPURPOSING STREETS FOR FAMILY GATHERINGS

Traffic calming measures to reduce car speed (including regulation, speed bumps, or modified street patterns) increase safety, while temporary interruptions of traffic reduce the impact of air pollution on babies, toddlers and caregivers. Increased pedestrianisation can also improve business for local shops and lower crime through more 'eyes on the street'.

**Kigali, Rwanda**, has banned cars from its city centre and has monthly car-free days on which the city supports sports.

Car-free mornings every Sunday in the two main central thoroughfares in **Jakarta, Indonesia**, have become a hugely popular tradition. Families walk, cycle or simply gather to make use of this newly available public space.

**Paris, France**, has launched car-free Sundays once a month, resulting in increased use of public space and lower air pollution.



**Barcelona, Spain**, is rethinking its urban layout through the *Superblocks* project: cars are now allowed only on main arteries, making inner streets available for other activities such as play, family-friendly community events, greening, cycling and walking.



## IMPROVING CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE AND GETTING FAMILIES ON BIKES

Segregated cycle lanes encourage caregivers to ride with babies and toddlers, or toddlers to ride next to their parents. They reduce stress levels for caregivers by increasing safety. By encouraging children to cycle from an early age, they have a positive impact on healthy development. They help shift cities away from dependency on cars.

In the **Netherlands** and **Denmark**, most bike lanes are wide enough to accommodate a range of speeds and are widened at junctions whenever possible for increased safety. Cycling education is integrated from a very young age in formal curriculums from preschool onwards, and facilities such as traffic playgrounds offer support for parents to teach their children.

In **Tirana, Albania**, the city government is building a grid of connected bike lanes from scratch and teaching kindergarten children to cycle. By combining infrastructural improvements with lessons for the youngest citizens, the city leadership is hoping to encourage more families to shift towards cycling.

Idea 2

# AIR QUALITY MONITORING WHERE YOUNG CHILDREN SPEND THE MOST TIME

## CITY DEPARTMENTS INVOLVED:

✓ Culture

✓ Education

✓ Health

✓ Parks

✓ Planning

✓ Social Services

✓ Transportation

Air quality is a global problem, but also a hyper-local one; it can differ markedly from street to street.





Targeted interventions around the places where pregnant women, young children and caregivers spend the most time, such as childcare facilities or preschools, can reduce exposure to air pollution. These include traffic calming, greening streets, proposing alternative walking routes that avoid heavy traffic and street and building design solutions that increase air flow.

Cities need data about where babies, toddlers and caregivers spend the most time, and about air quality in these locations. Engaging families in community-based air monitoring, and sampling air quality at children's head height in the right places, can help design interventions for short-term localised impact while waiting for larger-scale air quality strategies to kick in.

## RELATION TO CAREGIVER WELL-BEING AND CAREGIVING BEHAVIOURS



**UTILISATION OF SERVICES:** Improved air quality can increase the use of amenities such as public space, streets and parks, and improve the experience of travelling to other services.

**CAREGIVER MENTAL HEALTH:** Air pollution has been linked to depression, anxiety and other forms of mental ill health, which is thought to be related to brain inflammation caused by toxic particles. In addition, when caregivers worry less about the harm associated with going outside with their children, they have more exposure to nature and opportunities for social contact, boosting their well-being.

**CAREGIVER-INFANT PLAY:** Reducing air pollution makes outdoor play less harmful for families with young children, and increases the likelihood of caregivers taking their children outside to play.



## Examples



### COMMUNITY-BASED AIR MONITORING

In **Turin, Italy**, the citizen organisation *Che Aria Respiro* is developing ways to measure pollution in areas that children use daily, such as routes to kindergartens, through sensors distributed to individuals. The aim is to use the data to influence municipal policy to improve air quality.



### SIGNALLING WALKING ROUTES THAT AVOID HEAVY TRAFFIC ROADS

In **London, UK**, the municipal government provides signage for pedestrians that guides them away from the busiest thoroughfares with the highest levels of air pollution. The suggested walking routes also provide more opportunities for families to rest and play.



### REROUTING TRAFFIC AWAY FROM SCHOOLS AND KINDERGARTENS

**Paris, France**, announced a strategy to reroute vehicles away from schools and kindergartens after a study showed that those located next to roads with heavy traffic have levels of air pollution way above the recommended limit.



### NO IDLING VEHICLES NEAR BABIES AND TODDLERS

Idling vehicles pollute the air. The state of **Arizona** is working with schools to test a 'no idling' policy that includes having school buses park at least 100 feet away and shut off the engine when they arrive. **North Richmond, California**, is fining diesel trucks that ignore signs directing them away from elementary schools and residential areas.

Idea 3

# IMPROVING YOUNG CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO NATURE NEAR THEIR HOME

## CITY DEPARTMENTS INVOLVED:

Culture

Education

Health

Parks

Planning

Social Services

Transportation

Exposure to nature supports the healthy development of babies and toddlers and the well-being of their caregivers. Natural elements in play areas, or playable elements in parks, encourage children to explore and interact with nature.



Green spaces with enough space for toddlers to run around and caregivers to relax in help reduce caregivers' stress. The presence of nature in cities also improves air quality and mitigates the effects of extreme weather by reducing heat and providing shade in summer.

Governments can help by promoting natural elements in streets along routes taken by families, 'pocket-parks' to rest, play and explore, and larger destination parks that allow for unstructured play and community gatherings. Free or low-cost entry to natural spaces, or subsidised transport, can facilitate families' access. Community organisations and education facilities can support urban farms and organise local gatherings to sensitise families to the benefits of being exposed to nature. City governments also have a major role to play in maintaining natural areas to ensure safety and minimise risks, such as stray animals or disease-carrying insects.



## RELATION TO CAREGIVER WELL-BEING AND CAREGIVING BEHAVIOURS

**UTILISATION OF SERVICES:** More well-maintained green spaces are likely to improve access to nature, as does greening routes to other destinations.

**CAREGIVER MENTAL HEALTH:** Greater exposure to nature has been linked to improved mental health.

**CAREGIVER-INFANT PLAY:** Integrating natural play elements in playgrounds and parks can support play, creativity and development of motor skills, and boosts children's physical and mental health.

**HEALTHY FEEDING PRACTICES:** Encouraging local farming increases access to fresh food and can be an opportunity to sensitise families to healthy eating.



## Examples



### PLAY WITH NATURAL ELEMENTS

The Tumbling Bay playground in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, **London, UK**, has been designed almost entirely using natural elements. It includes climbing nets and swings, flowing water, sand, tall ferns, hills and shrubs. Rolling hills in a park can provide multiple play opportunities, while one-metre-tall ferns in a playground encourage hide-and-seek fun.

The Valby Nature Playground in **Copenhagen, Denmark**, provides playable landscaping, tricycles, a fire pit and sports facilities. It is a popular gathering spot for families from the region and is used by all age ranges. The two staff members ensure that all users are mindful of each other, provide advice and support, and organise events for children.

**Bhubaneshwar, India**, has child-friendly 'smart parks' located near schools, with play areas, community gardens, butterfly gardens, seating areas for parents, social spaces for individuals and groups, pop-up theatres, and splash parks.

The Simón Bolívar Park in **Bogotá, Colombia**, features an area with small hills designed for families with young children to gather, explore and play. Small hills are simple design elements with great benefits for motor skills and social play. Without the hills, the area would very likely be taken over by soccer players and therefore be unavailable to babies and toddlers.



### **A TREE FOR EVERY BABY**

Planting a tree for each newborn, preferably in the neighbourhood where the child lives, contributes to greening the environment in which the child will grow up, and can provide an opportunity to communicate about air quality, nature and child development to new parents. It also strengthens tree canopies in cities, which has health and environmental benefits for all residents.

A tree is planted for each baby born or adopted in **Wales, UK** and the family is told the location. Trees are planted by children from local schools, teaching them about gardening.

In **Tirana, Albania**, parents can sponsor a tree and plant it themselves in the city's new orbital forest, a green belt being developed around the urban area.

In **Cambridge, UK**, parents can order a tree for free from the city for the birth of a child. Trees are local species and must be planted in a private space (garden, nursery, school, office grounds) within the city limits. This contributes to strengthening the city's tree canopy.



### **GREENING URBAN IN-BETWEEN SPACES**

Turning unused or dilapidated infrastructure into community gardens, small parks or natural playgrounds makes more space available for children to play and families to meet. It gives babies and toddlers access to nature, creates a stronger sense of community and improves air quality and environmental awareness.

In **Antwerp, Belgium**, *Kind en Samenleving* is turning small, empty plots of land in front of homes into green zones where young children can play and learn gardening activities.

In **Sydney, Australia**, Waverley council's Urban Interventions programme received an award for 'best planning idea' from the Planning Institute of Australia in 2014 for their 'parklet' project — turning car parking space into pop-up parks. Originating in **San Francisco, USA**, the idea is now common in Western countries.



# IMPLEMENTATION



# LESSONS LEARNED ON IMPLEMENTATION: TOOLS, RESEARCH AND EXAMPLES

In our work with partners in government and other organisations, we have learned many lessons about what works, what doesn't, how to scale successful interventions and the questions to consider at every part of the process.

In this section, we share key questions that have emerged — informed by our collective experience on the ground, research and documentation by ourselves and our partners, and last but not least, the lessons learned and generously shared by others around the world.

**Our goal:** to provide a starting point and reference guide for the journeys to implementation undertaken by project leads, managers, coordinators and funders of early years interventions and policies.

## IMPLEMENTATION – OF WHAT?

This section focuses on implementation of the full range of Urban95 Ideas for action, and may also apply to wider initiatives focusing on babies, toddlers and those who care for them. The learnings these materials reflect are just that: learnings — not rigid guidelines. We see value in sharing them with the wider community now even though the learning process continues, to inspire thinking, iteration and action.

## WHO IS THIS SECTION FOR?

- Government decision-makers and leaders, from local to national government
- Project managers and technical staff, both within and outside government
- Implementation partners, such as NGOs and technical organisations

## HOW TO NAVIGATE?

This section includes recommendations based on lessons learned and case studies that “zoom in” on specific points in the implementation journey. We invite you to treat our guidance section as a menu — it can be read or used in many orders.

## SCALE: OUR END GOAL

Each implementation journey is unique, yet one core goal is universal: a positive influence on caregiver behaviours and well-being **at scale**, leading to improved child development outcomes in the longer term.



## PRINCIPLES

We have identified three themes that we think are especially promising opportunities for increasing the scale and sustainability of an early years initiative.



### **DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING**

We believe in the value of collecting data, extracting patterns and facts from that data, and utilising those facts to influence decision-making. When an initiative is data driven, quality information is available to the right people when they need it, and they are using the data to take action. Data is much more than just numbers; it sparks critical conversations and bolsters the effectiveness of decision-making. Getting the right data is key, but more effective if combined with strengthening of leaders' capacity and management systems.



### **THE USE OF BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE**

We have also found that understanding the science behind caregiving and other human behaviours can transform intervention design. Before attempting to change caregiver behaviours, it is critical to understand how behaviours developed in the first place. A solid understanding of universal cognitive biases as well as local cultural and social influences is essential for long-term behaviour change.



### **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

It is our experience that thoughtful focus on the training and well-being of supervisors, administrators, urban planners and designers, community conveners, and others at the programme frontlines such as community health workers, doctors and childcare professionals is key. These are the people who ultimately deliver, and in many cases, there are simply not enough people with the necessary training, expertise, recognition or fair working conditions needed to deliver at the scale required.

# IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE





## WHAT IS THE IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE?

**Our guide features a compilation of key considerations for implementation, informed by insights from years of experience.**

Our suggestions take into account on-the-ground logistics and project management details, as well as a set of questions to consider at the system-strengthening level. We also include a dedicated section on scale, **yet we recommend thinking about scale from the very beginning and all throughout the implementation journey.**

**In each section of our implementation guide, we list a curated selection of tools, templates, in-depth research, and real-world examples for those interested in a deeper dive. These references are accessible online on the Starter Kit website.**

**We appreciate that each project context is different and invite you to read our suggestions in any order that feels right.**

### ZOOM-INS — AVAILABLE ONLINE

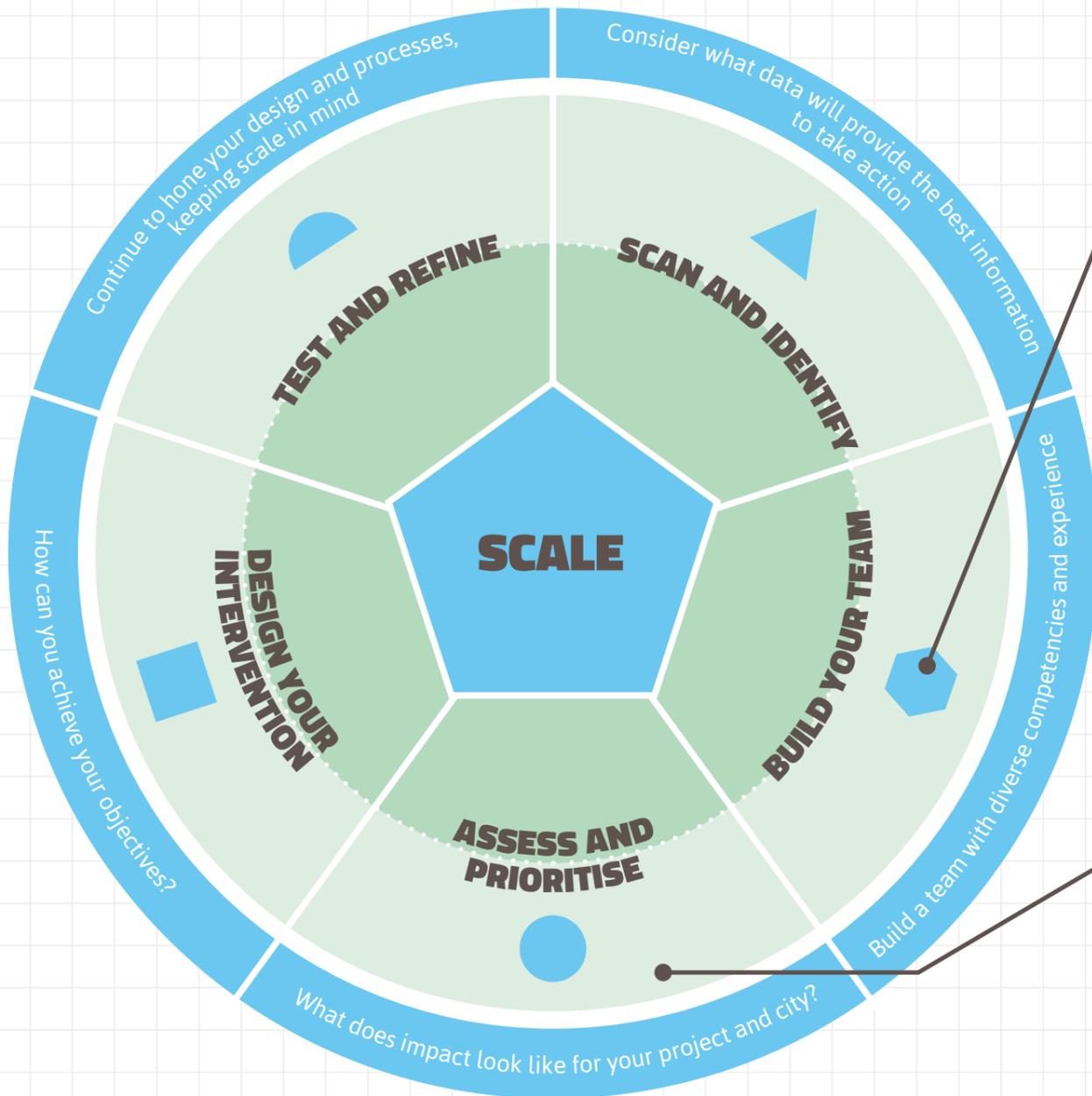
#### Putting implementation guidance into practice

Zoom-ins provide a close-up on projects that have been implemented or are under implementation, often at scale, in different contexts. Our goal in sharing these examples is to bring our implementation guidance to life, and to share experiences and lessons learned about what worked well in a variety of different settings and contexts.

Zoom-ins focus on the elements of each project that we felt were interesting to share here and that could be grasped in a couple of minutes. They also include links to resources where more information is available. You can browse through the zoom-ins and filter by programme, by location, and by implementation element in focus. **Zoom-ins are available online on the Starter Kit website.**

# IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

Built on **lessons learned** from Urban95, this guide is a tool to support your planning and thinking, it is not a set of rigid guidelines.



## WHAT ARE YOU IMPLEMENTING?

Urban95 programmes of all shapes, whether inspired by the *ideas for action* section of this Starter Kit or from other sources.

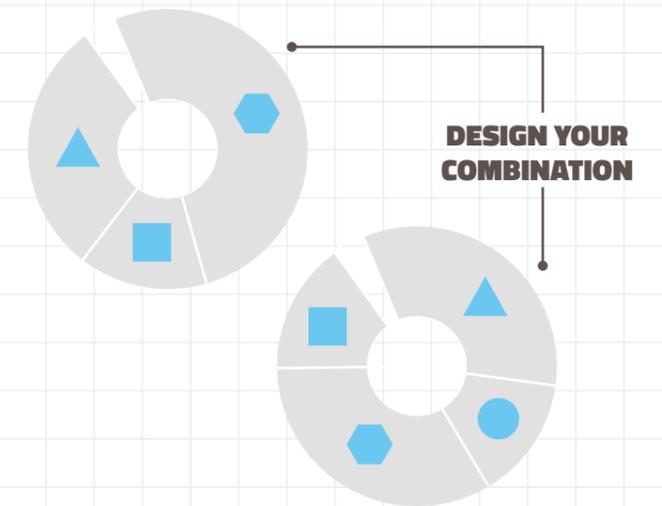
## CORE OBJECTIVE

The core objective is to have a positive **impact at scale** on caregiver well-being and caregiving behaviours, in turn promoting the healthy development of babies and toddlers.

## ACTIONS

The actions do not follow each other in sequence, as **implementation is not linear**. They may overlap, merge and have different weight depending on context.

Some projects may start with testing while scanning, for example, while others may go straight to scale. Intervention areas may vary greatly within a city or a country, and so will the implementation processes.

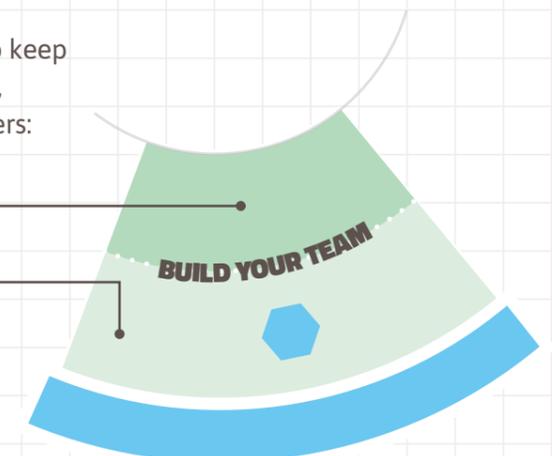


## CONSIDERATIONS

For each action, you will find detailed descriptions, principles to keep in mind, and management tips for the highest impact on babies, toddlers and caregivers. These insights are divided into two layers:

**ON THE GROUND**

**SYSTEMS-LEVEL SUPPORT**





# SCAN AND IDENTIFY

Consider what data will provide the best information to take action

## ON THE GROUND

### GATHER AND SYNTHESISE EXISTING DATA

- **What national and municipal data on early childhood development services and indicators already exists? What does it tell you?** The relevance of each dataset certainly varies, but identifying existing data on the availability and uptake of social services; on health, education, environment and socioeconomic indicators; and on family access and use of transportation and public space can illuminate key gaps and needs.
- **Where do the highest concentration of families in need live?** Consider mapping these areas, particularly for families with children under 5, against income levels and other context-specific vulnerability indicators, as well as the location of existing early childhood services and programmes. Keep in mind that many families live in informal settlements or other areas not always captured under formal governance systems. Understanding where these maps overlap and diverge can help inform how and where you could implement projects. For example, if the areas where the greatest number of vulnerable families live are the same as those without access to green spaces, you may consider working on improving access to nature.



[Zoom-in on Istanbul, Turkey](#)



[Urban network analysis toolbox](#)

- **What is the day-to-day experience of caregivers with babies and toddlers?** Consider conducting surveys or holding focus groups to understand caregivers' journeys through the city – their stress points and places of refuge. Consider also developing formative research to understand the rationale behind the adoption of certain caregiving behaviours that impact the development babies and toddlers.



[Urban95 journeys](#)



[880 Cities' report on engaging families](#)

## WHAT INFRASTRUCTURE ALREADY EXISTS?

- **What public spaces already exist for families?** i.e. parks and play spaces.
- **How do transport services already support families?** i.e. subsidised family fares for travel, walkability, etc.
- **What health, education and social services exist for young children and caregivers, and where are they located?** Think about quality, access, coverage, utilisation. Are there any gaps that you can identify? What initiatives already focus on the well-being of families, with a specific focus on their relation to the physical environment, or on women's and children's access to the city and services?

## SYSTEMS-LEVEL SUPPORT

### IDENTIFY ALLIES AND SUPPORTERS

- **Who is already advocating for babies, toddlers and caregivers?** Caregiver needs are often invisible to decision makers, and babies and toddlers are unable to speak up for themselves; we believe that advocacy on their behalf is especially important. Which political and civil society leaders, organisations and coalitions are already sensitised to the importance of and need for early childhood development programming? Could they actively support your implementation efforts through their advocacy, influence and budget resources?



#### Tel Aviv, Israel

- **Which leaders, agencies and organisations already work closely with caregivers and children?** These might include individuals and entities engaged in health, education or social services, but they could also be youth movements, environmental NGOs, national governments or community organisations. Does their work touch other areas where bundling of services might be appropriate?
- **Who are your local experts in early childhood development?** Can you connect them with other stakeholders who can influence the well-being of babies, toddlers and their caregivers, such as city leaders, city managers, politicians, people from the budget allocation ministry/unit, transport agencies, or women's health frontline workers?

### STRIVE TO UNDERSTAND URBAN OR NATIONAL PLANNING PROCESSES IN PLACE

- **What moments of opportunity exist in your city's planning process?** Consider how often municipal plans and regulations are updated, and who updates them. Exploring these processes and the people behind them can help you identify local timelines with which to align and leaders with whom to engage.

- **Is a large part of the population living in areas not easily reached by the planning system (informal neighbourhoods)?** Consider alternative ways to reach these population, such as partnering with community organisations and (non-spatial) government initiatives intervening in the area from other agencies such as social services or health.



**Arup's early childhood urban framework (to be published in 2020)**

- **What sources of potential funding exist?** Consider government budgets at various levels and funding from different institutions, international organisations, international development banks, foundations and the private sector. For example, if you're looking to organise a parent-coaching event in a park, funding could come from social services or health budgets, or from parks and gardens department budgets, or local business owners. Or from a mix of sources. We appreciate that information on funding for early childhood initiatives can feel opaque and inaccessible; we have considerable work ahead of us to try to understand them.





# BUILD YOUR TEAM

Build a team with diverse competencies and experience

## ON THE GROUND

### GETTING THE RIGHT SKILLSET AND PERSPECTIVES

- **Does your immediate team feature diverse perspectives and expertise?** Engaging staff from a variety of fields and sectors (for example, early childhood specialists together with urban planners and government staff) can streamline the implementation process. Consider how the very make-up of your team (and their respective influence and decision-making power) can support the integration of early childhood principles at all levels and across civic agencies. If this is not possible, consider ways to expose your team to different perspectives and to learn together.



**An Urban95 Study Tour can be a useful teambuilding exercise, in addition to strengthening capacity and providing inspiration on what's possible. This was the case for a team from Tel Aviv's municipal government who travelled to Copenhagen.**



**Empathy tools to sensitise leaders and designers**

- **Who is leading on implementation?** Which organisation, and who within this organisation, is responsible for which tasks – are they aware of their roles, and do they or their team have what they need to get the job done? Do they have the necessary skills and competencies? In some cases, it could be city government or a national ministry and in other cases an NGO.
- **Which community organisations and/or frontline workers within your areas of focus are important to engage and why?** It is important that some people in your team not only have an understanding of the focus area or population but are connected with relevant local networks. If possible, directly including representatives from families with young children in interventions will help with scanning, designing and implementing. Working with local representatives multiplies impact, as people often trust their peers more than government experts. When communities and families actively ask for better-quality social services, they also feel more engaged and committed to the process.



**Bogotá, Colombia**

## SYSTEMS-LEVEL SUPPORT

### ENGAGE ACROSS SECTORS

- **Do cooperation mechanisms exist between the different stakeholders?** Our partners have benefited from regular meetings between high-level stakeholders and/or the establishment of a municipal government position dedicated to cross-sectoral early childhood action. We have found that the project benefits greatly when government is accountable for cross-sectoral cooperation, with common goals, shared budgets, or written agreements with clear milestones that need to be reached in a cross-sectoral manner.



**Zoom-in on Tel Aviv, Israel**



**Recife, Brazil**

- **What high-level allies and supporters, across sectors, can you inform early on so that they feel engaged throughout the process?** The support of high-level leaders is almost always a crucial element of success, and getting them involved early is important. Consider sharing monthly updates that link them to impact on young children and creating opportunities for them to share their achievements. Also consider what are common interests and how you can connect your work with their vision and goals. What are the different communication modes in engaging high-level allies?



**Empathy tools to sensitise leaders and designers**

- **How can you assemble and engage with campaigns and coalitions to take action for the youngest children?** There are potential champions for young children in many parts of civil society, including parents, physicians, nurses, teachers and childcare professionals, researchers, cultural figures, businesspeople and other professionals from a wide range of disciplines and sectors. Bringing their voices together towards a common policy or behaviour change goal in a campaign or coalition can be an important mechanism for change.



**Israel Early Childhood Law**





# ASSESS AND PRIORITISE

What does impact look like for your project and city?

## ON THE GROUND

### DEFINING GOALS AND MEASURING IMPACT

- **Can you refine your vision and definition of success?** Clarifying the narrative around what you want to achieve can not only help your team stay aligned as implementation progresses, it can also serve as a backbone for public communications and for gathering buy-in.
- **Where in your city can you have the greatest impact on the well-being of families with young children?** The data you gathered while scanning and researching the context can help you prioritise locations to focus on. How can existing infrastructure, resources and investment already allocated to the neighbourhood be leveraged? Also consider opportunities for quick-win interventions. Quick wins are small interventions that require few resources but have visible positive impact in the short term. They help show what's possible and gather support for deeper, more resource-intensive interventions.



**Zoom-in on Istanbul, Turkey**



**Tirana, Albania**

- **What objectives and impact indicators are appropriate?** The very process of developing project objectives and indicators can provide a useful way to substantively engage stakeholders and the community at the start of the process. For example, objectives might mirror clear needs for different services and activities that the community has already identified. Consider which impact indicators – qualitative and quantitative – could be used in the short term (for monitoring) and over the long term to demonstrate overall impact.



**Zoom-in on India**



**Infant, toddler and caregiver neighbourhood (ITCN) framework and design guidelines**



**Tirana, Albania**



**Born thriving framework**



**Bernard van Leer Foundation's indicator framework**



### **Toolkit for measuring urban experiences of young children**

- **Consider both progress and impact.** We have defined impact indicators to focus on changes in caregiver well-being and caregiving behaviours resulting from our interventions. But tracking implementation's progress can require a different set of metrics. For example, our partners have found it useful to track progress by measuring outputs such as the number of changes completed in the built environment, the number of caregivers reached, or investment spent.



### **Bernard van Leer Foundation's indicator framework**



### **Toolkit for measuring urban experiences of young children**



### **Born thriving framework**

- **Is it possible to link data systems from various government departments to track progress across sectors?** Visualising diverse data in one place can help with prioritising interventions and tracking progress. It also allows for different agencies to better coordinate their activity in favour of babies, toddlers and their caregivers for better results. It can also help communicate progress externally and internally, giving feedback to frontline workers and reinforcing their sense of project ownership.



### **Zoom-in on Boa Vista, Brazil**

## **SYSTEMS-LEVEL SUPPORT**

### **LEVERAGE OVERLAPPING AGENDAS**

- **Where and how do your priorities overlap with those of local communities?** Consider integrating those areas of overlap into your choice of indicators, so that your data and results strengthen local ownership of the intervention. Ownership increases the sustainability of the intervention by maintaining demand from communities over time. Community ownership can also help anchor new behaviours within the beneficiary group.
- **Where and how do your priorities overlap with those of other organisations and leaders?** To sensitise leaders with overlapping agendas, think of stories and data that could contribute to those too. For example, some early childhood intervention can help reducing gender inequality or increasing climate resilience. Joining forces may even increase the amount of funding available for the project.

# DESIGN YOUR INTERVENTION

How can you achieve your objectives?

## ON THE GROUND

### WHAT ARE THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF YOUR PLAN?

- What interventions will help you meet your objectives?



Urban95 ideas for action *Pages 24–63*

- **Design for behaviour change and think through maintenance and upkeep of the programme or intervention.** How will your intervention contribute to a change in behaviour? We found that if they are to stick, new behaviours need to be repeated regularly over time. This is why the key to success lies in thinking through ongoing professional development for the frontline workforce, designing solid maintenance plans and budgeting for the upkeep of infrastructure.
- **Budget considerations.** Costs of early years interventions vary widely, often need to be paid by more than one sector, and often include a high proportion of people-related costs, which can make them challenging to cost and finance. What are your fixed costs versus variable costs? What elements of your project plan carry risks for cost overrun, and what would be the consequences of that overrun? Are there alternative design solutions that could be introduced if needed? Consider which activities could need a one-time budget and which others would need to look for a more sustainable source of funding. Look at your current budget and try to identify where you could improve the use of resources, to allow you to reallocate funds into interventions and programmes that reach young children. Invite other stakeholders to do the same.
- **How will you monitor and evaluate progress, impact, and project sustainability?**



Bernard van Leer Foundation's indicator framework

## SYSTEMS-LEVEL SUPPORT

### PROACTIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- **How can you build the early years knowledge and capacity of your designers and technical and management staff?** Consider formal training programmes, encouraging your team members to participate in conferences and events, and convening cross-sector – and cross-border – conversations to encourage the cross-pollination of ideas.

For example, technical staff are more likely to adopt new practices when they've identified their own contribution to child development outcomes. You can also leverage the expertise available within the stakeholders of the project.



**Urban playscapes conference, Istanbul, Turkey**



**Empathy tools to sensitise leaders and designers**

## **HOW CAN YOU SECURE SUSTAINABLE FINANCING AT CITY LEVEL?**

- **Can the city government identify appropriate financing instruments for delivering sustainable urban infrastructure and programmes?** We've learned that it is important to be mindful of sustainable and accessible funding and financing mechanisms and identify opportunities to be more effective. This should involve a detailed analysis of the funding and financing required to implement a plan, program or pilot. Integrated planning and implementation of urban early years interventions require good understanding of the city's fiscal powers. Those powers include the authority to level far-reaching taxes, beyond typical city-levied property taxes, and provide cities with the unique opportunity to rely on their own resources and revenues for ambitious projects. Improving property valuations, tax-forecasting, administration and collection could provide significant additional city revenues. Addressing such challenges can also provide additional land value capture financing opportunities.



# TEST AND REFINE

Continue to hone your design and processes, keeping scale in mind

## ON THE GROUND

### EMBRACE ITERATION, REFINE AS YOU GO

- **What are you learning as you go?** Building flexibility into the implementation plan can play an important role. For example, creating checkpoints along the way, at which to re-evaluate specific interventions before breaking ground, can save time and budget while reorienting the project along a more successful route towards impact.



#### Zoom-in on Lima, Peru

- **Can you engage the community and stakeholders in an ongoing evaluation and adaptation process?** They can play an important role in gathering data on what is working and where refinement may be needed, and in doing so increase ownership of the project. Some approaches include short, qualitative surveys or user interviews. This means including the population at the heart of the initiative as well as other users of the space. For example, in a public space intervention, 'other users' might be law enforcement officers or street vendors, whose support may be important to the project's implementation and success.



#### Zoom-in on Bogota, Colombia



#### Toolkit for measuring urban experiences of young children

- **Failure is a key step on the path towards success.** Consider documenting the testing process, for example by archiving meeting notes, recording community meetings and events, interviewing key implementers, and especially by tracking failures and subsequent changes.

## SYSTEMS-LEVEL SUPPORT

### DOCUMENT AND TELL YOUR STORY

- **What is the story of your journey?** Documenting the process – and progress – of implementation from the very first day supports communication and advocacy efforts over the long term, helping to maintain momentum and buy-in from stakeholders and decision makers. For example, consider gathering and sharing simple and illustrative data points such as recording the number of children participating, taking before-after photos for a public space redesign, or gathering

stories from participants or users after a pilot. We have found that sharing the stories of protagonists and implementers can help their peers learn, get inspired and replicate.

- **Has your project been newsworthy?** In some cases, engaging members of the media early on can help communicate the objectives of your project and draw public engagement. In cases where opposition may exist, proactive engagement with the media, sharing project results and motivations, can help balance the public debate.
- **Can you use data and stories to balance the voice of the opposition?** Listen to the arguments and bring up data that addresses them in a compelling way. Or go for temporary interventions first, show their impact and share stories of challengers who turned champion.



**Tirana, Albania**





# SCALE

## Plan and design for scale from the start

### SCALING SUCCESS AND MAKING IT SUSTAINABLE

**Do you have a scale-up strategy?** Considerations about how to scale and sustain impact over the long term can be transformative for programmatic success. But we recognise that bringing success to scale is not easy, and depends a great deal on the communities, personalities, political will and resources involved. This is an area where we, together with our partners, continue to explore and test. Nevertheless, a few key considerations are often useful, regardless of intervention and geography. We list these considerations on the next page.

**How can you strengthen your scale-up plan?** Building in strategies for growing the knowledge and capacity of both your technical team members and your political champions can be just as important as a clear timeline, budget, impact indicators, monitoring plan and communications strategy.

**Can you be even bolder?** Could your project be expanded to incorporate wider community needs or more locations? Is it possible to support the establishment or funding of a technical position in charge of early childhood training for municipal designers? Can your diverse team or your project's results to date support the inclusion of early childhood development considerations in policy recommendations, technical standards and/or design guidelines?

**How do you keep your team motivated?** As the programme expands and the workforce grows, how can you continue to support both the frontline workforce, and your team of designers and technical and management staff, such that they remain purposefully engaged toward the same vision and goals? How do you ensure that the individual commitment remains strong, and each individual is recognised for their efforts and work?

**How can you support peer learning and inform future projects?** Consider convening a workshop or event to share learning and show impact. Additionally, how can you support advocacy and communications about the benefits of the intervention for the city as a whole, and specifically for caregivers and their children? How can you partner with experts and local community to document, publish and disseminate findings so that your experience can inform future work?

# SCALE-UP STRATEGY CONSIDERATIONS

## HOW TO CREATE A SCALE-UP STRATEGY

- Together with your team, **create your own definition of scale**. Consider what reaching scale would look like in your own city context and in relation to the overall scale of the problem you are addressing. Here is a definition of scale and scalability:

**Scale or scalability** is moving a program, practice, or methodology use and application from a small scale – that is, a few regions, a few villages, or several districts, reaching a small portion of the population, to large scale – that is, national coverage, the majority of the districts or villages, reaching the majority of the population. Scaling also requires the ability to tailor approaches to the different needs of different population segments, including the most vulnerable.

- As you think through your scaling strategy, consider its sustainability. This is how we define sustainability:

**Sustainability** is the ability of a country, city or administrative unit, with minimal or no outside financial or technical assistance, to continue the work needed to (1) encourage and maintain early childhood development policies, programs and/or services, (2) increase and maintain the number of people being covered by the policy and using the program or service in place or practicing promoted caregiving behaviours, and (3) implement programmes needed to address new emerging factors that could affect children’s development.

- Once you have created your definition, our partners have found it instructive to:

- 01. Set clear goals (as specific as possible):** What is being scaled, for whom and by whom?
- 02. Develop a plan or strategy for reaching those goals:** What is your proposed scaling approach, are there different possible pathways?
- 03. Consider what (if any) changes you might need to make to your idea to deliver it at (larger) scale:** What elements are essential and which can be reduced for a more cost-effective approach? Are there economies of scale?
- 04. Consider any (new) key partnerships and resources required.**

- As you are implementing your scale-up strategy, these considerations can be very helpful in informing and tracking the journey towards scale:
- 01. Diversity of leadership:** Who are your key ‘allies’ from across different departments, sectors, organisations? With whom do you share the scaling-up key performance indicators?
  - 02. Robust workforce:** Is the workforce well trained in relation to the programme or intervention you are implementing, and ready for a scale-up?
  - 03. Anchoring in policy:** What legislation, policy frameworks, plans could anchor the various initiatives and ensure their sustainability?
  - 04. Strong diverse civic engagement:** Is there demand among civil society for the ideas you are scaling? How can you help foster this active engagement?
  - 05. Sustainable, predictable financing:** Are there dedicated budget lines to fund the intervention at scale, including longer-term maintenance and updates?
  - 06. Effective governance and management:** Is there a dedicated full-time position in charge of coordinating the scale-up across agencies and organisations? Are there regular, frequent meetings between all the decision makers involved?
  - 07. Actionable monitoring and evaluation systems:** Is there a shared and clear set of indicators to track the scale-up process, and evaluate impact? Is there a data dashboard on early childhood development available for the decision makers and for the general public?
  - 08. Cost-effective ideas and costing data:** Is data on costing being gathered and monitored during the scale-up?





# ABOUT THE BERNARD VAN LEER FOUNDATION



## WHO ARE WE?

**All babies and toddlers deserve a good start in life.**

We are an independent foundation working worldwide to inspire and inform large-scale action to improve the health and well-being of young children, especially the most disadvantaged, and the people who care for them.

A good start puts babies and toddlers on the path to realising their full potential and, collectively, lays the foundation for a healthy, creative and peaceful society.

For more than 50 years, we have worked to develop and share knowledge about how to improve young children's health, nutrition and education. We aim to bring together robust science, practical ideas and strong leadership. We have seen in practice how this combination can transform the lives of millions of children and families.

## HOW DO WE WORK?

**We are constantly gathering intelligence on the innovative approaches and emerging leaders that hold promise for advancing social change at scale.**

Building on the latest science, we adapt proven early childhood interventions for a set of socially, economically and culturally diverse countries and cities around the world. At the same time, we always search for opportunities to share what we learn and help accelerate large-scale change for babies, toddlers and the people who care for them. We offer our partners access to curated global knowledge and expertise, strategic funding, connections to an international network of peers, access to events and media platforms, advocacy, and technical assistance.

Defining and measuring impact is important to us, and we are careful to select reliable, meaningful performance indicators for our own initiatives as well as the programmes and services we encourage. Additionally, we work hard to build in considerations about scale from the early design stages of every project.





## WHY FOCUS ON SCALE?

**Going beyond pilot projects to address the challenges of implementation at scale.**

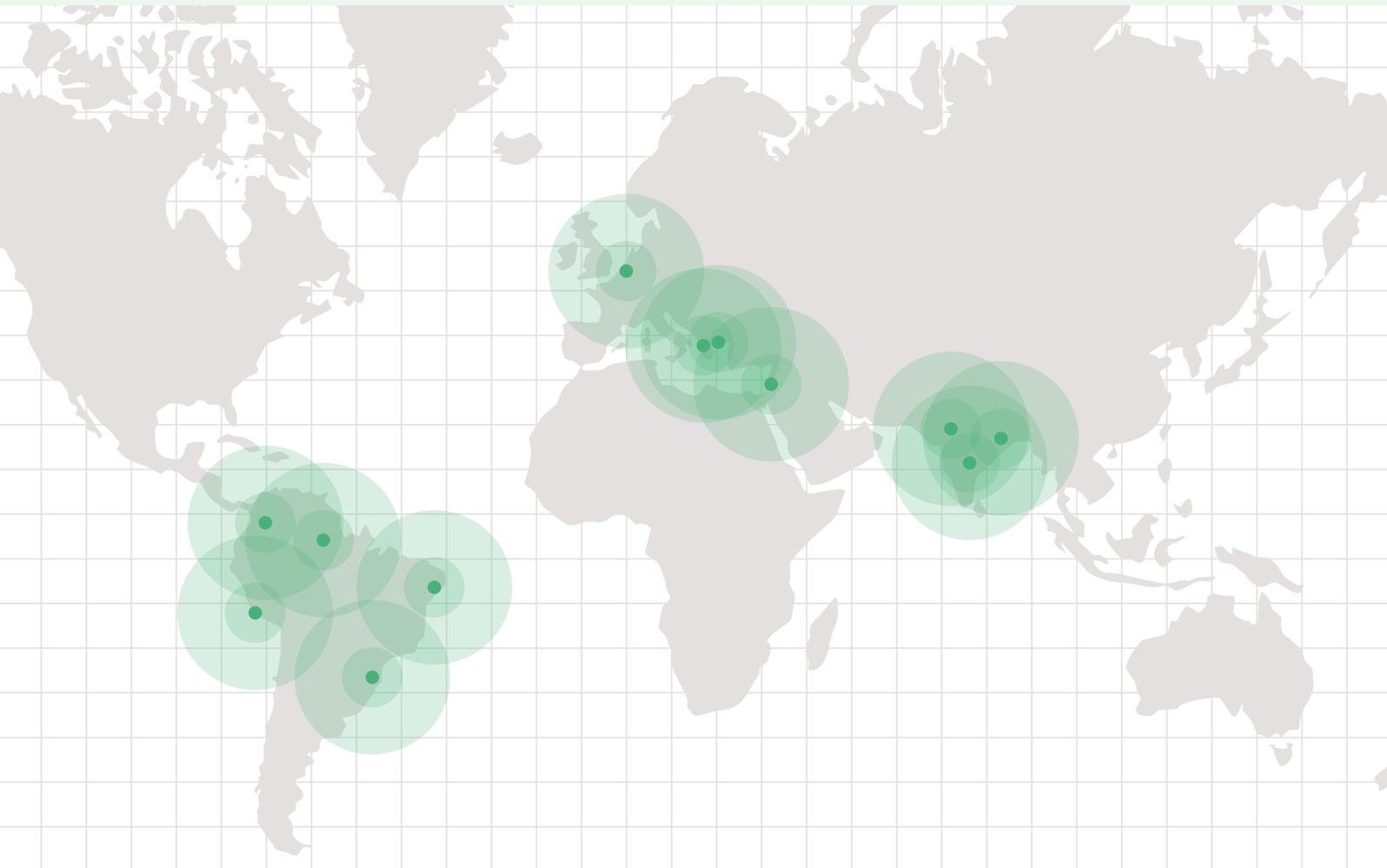
Plenty of interventions to improve the youngest children's health, nutrition, protection and learning have proven their worth at small scale. Harnessing growing political will worldwide, the challenge now is to effectively reach millions of children — to transition what has worked at the pilot level and expand it to large-scale policies and programmes that serve all children, especially those most in need.

Demonstrating that a project benefits young children is important. Expanding that model to benefit millions of children is a goal that presents different challenges. Often, the difference between success and failure on a larger scale is a matter of execution. It requires building a strong frontline workforce and supporting managers to drive an ongoing cycle of design, implementation, monitoring and adjustment.

## WHERE DO WE WORK?

We focus on a set of core countries selected to reflect global diversity in economic, geographic and cultural terms. These countries include Brazil, India, Israel, Côte d'Ivoire, the Netherlands, Peru and Turkey. In addition, we launched a regional initiative to support Syrian families forcibly displaced across the Middle East and Europe.

We also established a small number of partnerships outside of these core geographies, where we see opportunities to learn, to share knowledge and to have a transformative impact at scale.



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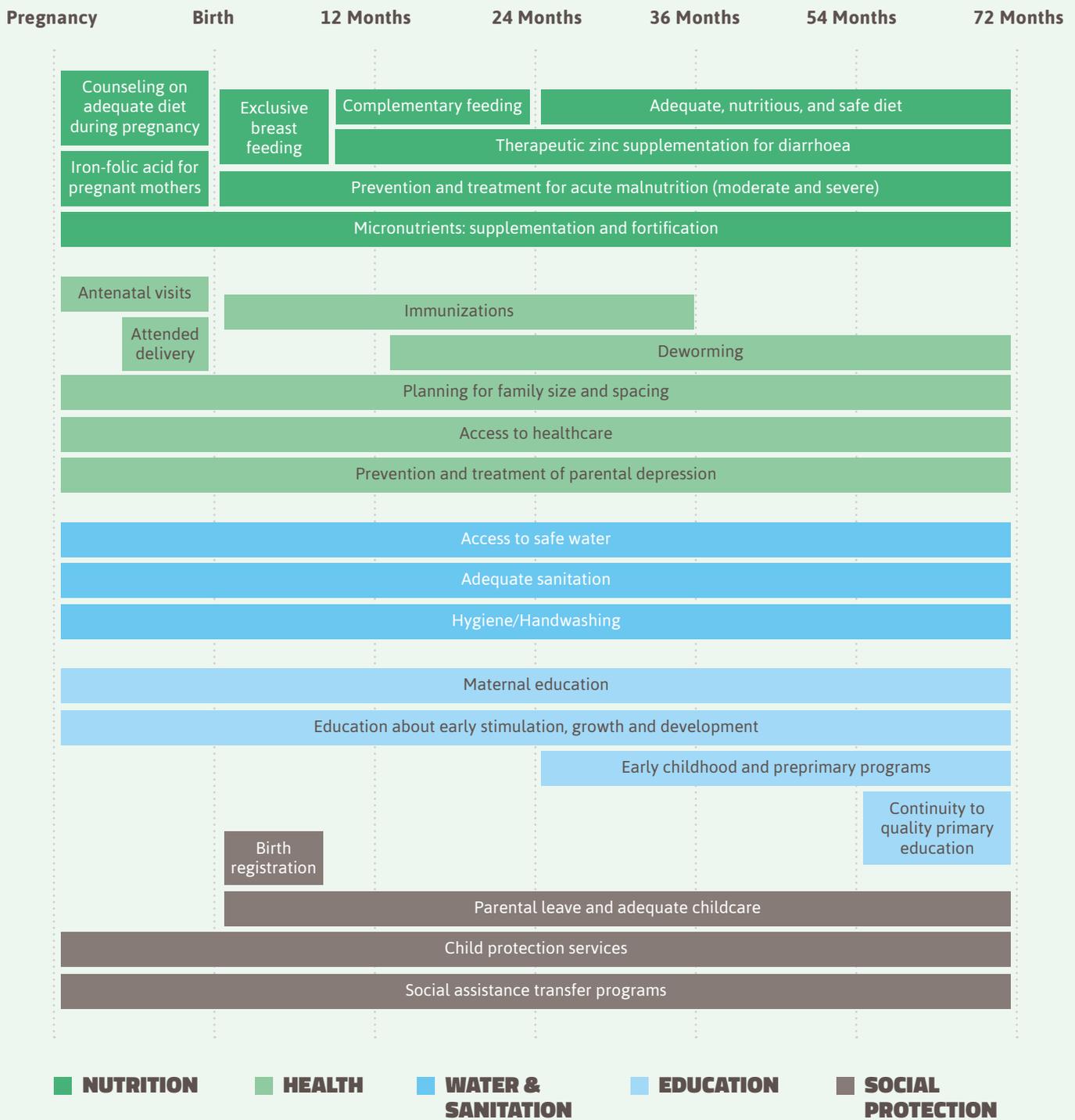
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**FIG 1: 25 KEY INTERVENTIONS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES**



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