



Bernard
van Leer
FOUNDATION

About the Bernard van Leer Foundation



Who we are

At the Bernard van Leer Foundation, we believe that giving all children a good start in life is both the right thing to do and the best way to build healthy, prosperous and creative societies.

We are a private foundation focused on developing and sharing knowledge about what works in early childhood development. We provide financial support and expertise to partners in government, civil society and business to help test and scale effective services for young children and families.

Over the last 50 years, we have invested more than half a billion dollars and worked in all regions of the world. Our partnerships have informed public policies in more than 25 countries, led to innovations in service delivery and training that have been widely adopted by governments and non-profit organisations, and generated breakthrough ideas that have changed the way stakeholders from parents to policymakers think about the earliest years of a child's life.



Why invest in early childhood development?

Bernard's son Oscar decided to focus the Foundation on young children in the mid-1960s. He was inspired by the idea that making small changes early in someone's life could dramatically change their future. As a businessman, Oscar felt investing in young children was a compelling value proposition – one that could improve the state of the world.

Since that time, there has been increasing evidence from the fields of public health, neuroscience and economics that investing in early childhood development can translate to better health, greater ability to learn and work with others, and higher incomes in adulthood. Such investments lay a crucial foundation by:

- Ensuring that pregnant women, babies and toddlers have access to proper nutrition and healthcare
- Protecting young children from neglect, family and community violence
- Giving babies and toddlers ample opportunities for early stimulation, care and learning

Despite the compelling evidence and the availability of effective models of service delivery, *The Lancet* global public health journal estimates 250 million children under 5 do not receive the care they need to reach their full potential.

Our 2016-2020 strategy: transition to scale

After five decades of investing in early childhood development, the Bernard van Leer Foundation is entering a new phase where we believe the major challenge is the transition to scale. Plenty of ideas to improve the youngest children's health, nutrition, protection and learning have proven their worth in small-scale projects – but how do we effectively reach hundreds of thousands or millions of children?

Our strategy will help answer this question by building partnerships in three areas:

Parents+ Combining coaching for parents in early childhood development with services that meet families' basic needs.



Urban95 Incorporating a focus on early childhood development into the planning and management of cities.



Building Blocks Promoting the science of nurturing care and sharing best practices in transitioning successful early childhood programmes to scale.



Geographically, our investments during this period will 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 are launching a regional initiative to support Syrian families forcibly displaced across the Middle East and Europe.

We also plan to establish 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.

About the Bernard van Leer Foundation

Founded

1949

Focused on young children since

1965

Mission

To improve opportunities for children from birth to age 8 growing up in circumstances of social and economic disadvantage

Average annual operating budget

Euro 19 million

Income

Initially, our income came from the revenues of the Royal Packaging Industries Van Leer N.V. After the company was sold in 1999, the proceeds were used to establish an endowment, which is managed by the Van Leer Group Foundation and from which our income is derived.

Team

39 people

Citizenships represented

Brazil, Ecuador, France, India, Israel, The Netherlands, Peru, Singapore, Spain, Thailand, Turkey, UK, USA, Venezuela.

Languages spoken

English is our common working language, with Dutch and Spanish also used daily in our Hague office. Other languages used in our work include Hebrew, Hindi, French, Mandarin, Portuguese and Turkish.

Location

Headquartered in The Hague, The Netherlands with team members also located in core countries, London and Washington DC.

‘All children should
be able to achieve
the greatest possible
realisation of their
innate potential’

– Oscar van Leer

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