IKEA Foundation presents

#Letsplay insights
Play is a right

Play is a fundamental right for all children. Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that every child should have the right to play—but millions of children across the world are denied this opportunity.

Play is a crucial part of children’s development. Children who are able to play in a safe environment develop communication, teamwork and negotiation skills. They are healthier and more resilient to life’s challenges. Play makes the world bigger. For children and for grown-ups.

However, war, disasters, poverty and prejudice mean that many children don’t have safe spaces in which to play. That’s why the IKEA Foundation is putting play at the heart of its new Good Cause campaign: Let’s Play for Change.

But first, why play?

The benefits of play are seemingly endless. It makes children more creative, stronger and more active. It teaches them how to work together and care about each other. Play sparks curiosity, as children find out about the world and how things work. They learn what they are capable of and gain self-esteem. Playing with others teaches empathy.

While there are as many theories about play as there are types of play, experts agree that it has two main purposes, which are not mutually exclusive:

- Immediate benefits: children learn skills that are immediately useful, such as motor skills, social skills and how to communicate.

- Long-term benefits: children develop strengths and skills now that will be beneficial in later childhood and adulthood. For example, it is argued that friendship centres on play, which includes sharing and co-operation. [1]

More children are fleeing war and conflict than before, missing out on education and play. With millions of children on the move, they are vulnerable to discrimination, violence, abuse and exploitation.

Poverty stops thousands of children accessing safe spaces to play and develop, while poor families often can’t afford to buy toys and play materials. This can lead to discrimination against those from poor backgrounds.

In many countries, children are forced to work to help their families survive. This denies children their rights to education, leisure and play.

In some countries, girls are kept indoors because of fears for their safety—particularly the fear of sexual harassment. Traditional gender norms in some countries also mean that girls are discouraged from playing outdoor games.

Discrimination against children with intellectual disabilities means they are often the most likely to be excluded from play and learning activities.

Public schools in some countries often employ a teaching method that emphasises rote learning. This leaves little time for interactive, exploratory or play-driven learning, where students use their creativity and imagination.
The IKEA Foundation is the philanthropic arm of INGKA Foundation, the owner of the IKEA Group of companies. It aims to improve opportunities for children and youth in some of the world’s poorest communities by funding holistic, long-term programmes that can create substantial, lasting change.

The Foundation works in four fundamental areas of a child’s life: a place to call home; a healthy start in life; a quality education; and a sustainable family income, while helping these communities fight and cope with climate change.

The Foundation has granted €45 million to six participating partners to support the fundamental right of every child to play and to develop. These programmes will support children’s development and learning, equal participation, sports and sports activities and, of course, play.

According to Play England, health problems such as attention deficit disorder, obesity and rickets have been linked to a lack of certain types of play. [3]

And children who don’t have the chance to play are also more likely to drop out of school and have a lower educational performance.

Children who don’t get to play spend less time learning how to interact with their peers and developing the social skills they need to build personal relationships.

If children have not developed their play skills by the time they are seven or eight, they can find the transition from childhood to adolescence more difficult. This can lead to isolation and loneliness.

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Who are the best people to help children play?

For this campaign, the IKEA Foundation has partnered with six leading child rights organisations: UNICEF, Save the Children, War Child, Handicap International, Room to Read and Special Olympics. Together, we will address the challenges that prevent children from playing and draw attention to the importance of play in children’s lives.

The campaign will support programmes run by these organisations in Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

Handicap International will provide early childhood development opportunities to children with disabilities who are displaced from their homes, and other vulnerable children in the communities where they now live. It will help more than 13,000 boys and girls, and their parents, in Thailand, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

War Child will address the most urgent needs of nearly 18,000 children in Jordan and Lebanon who have been affected by the Syrian conflict, by creating a safe environment in which to play, learn and develop.

Room to Read will improve the quality of education by improving the literacy of more than 93,000 children. It will do this by training teachers, providing learning materials and improving the learning environment in Bangladesh and Indonesia.

UNICEF will provide education, nutrition and health support to 59,000 children by promoting early childhood development and child protection in resource-poor communities. It will also support 76,000 caregivers and frontline childcare workers.

Special Olympics will promote the inclusion and development of children with intellectual disabilities, through sports and play. It will reach 350,000 children and 475,000 family members over three years in Pakistan, India, Thailand and Bangladesh.

Save the Children will prevent unsafe migration of children by promoting protection, education and play. It will directly help more than 60,000 children aged six to 14 in Bangladesh and Ethiopia.
How will the money be spent?

Handicap International
Handicap International’s ‘Growing Together!’ programme will create opportunities for children with disabilities and other vulnerable children (aged 0–12 years). In particular children at risk of developmental delays and psychological distress in displacement contexts, helping them learn and develop safely while having fun.

The programme will co-ordinate implementation of country-based projects by Handicap International and its partners to support communities in raising socially and emotionally healthy kids in refugee/internally displaced people (IDP) camps, and in host communities in Thailand, Bangladesh and Pakistan. It will empower families to set up playgroups and parenting crèches for children in early childhood with support from the community.

It will engage children of primary school age to participate in clubs, where they learn and socialise through inclusive games, arts and sports, and where they champion the rights and needs of vulnerable children in their communities. Simultaneously, the programme will engage local child-development service providers to be more responsive to the needs of boys and girls with disabilities, and other vulnerable children, and will assist the organisations in implementing measures to facilitate their inclusion.

Learn more at: www.handicap-international.org

War Child
War Child will address the need to protect Syrian and vulnerable Jordanian and Lebanese children from abuse, exploitation and violence, and provide them with skills and resources to foster their resilience and healthy development. The project will work with the community in prioritising participation of all community members, especially children, to ensure future recovery and social stability.

War Child will help children by working with them individually to boost their capacity to cope and resources, while supporting parents and caregivers in their protective role. It will also strengthen communities and institutions to ensure children grow up in a nurturing environment, which supports their healthy development and emotional well-being.

Eighteen thousand children in both Jordan and Lebanon will participate in project activities, which will focus—amongst other things—on the provision of safe spaces where children can play, receive psychosocial support and get involved in early childhood activities. Psychosocial support will also be offered to parents. War Child will also conduct awareness-raising and community events and strengthen child protection services within the communities.

Learn more at: www.warchild.org

Room to Read
Room to Read is well-known internationally for its simple and effective Literacy Programme that is based on three key areas that are essential to children's literacy development: teacher training and support, quality reading materials, and learning spaces. With resources from this campaign, Room to Read will expand this successful model across primary schools in Indonesia and Bangladesh to increase literacy levels, create lifelong learners and shift the way communities view education for girls and boys.

Learn more at: www.roomtoread.org
UNICEF

UNICEF will work with government counterparts and local partners to make sure the rights of children to healthy growth, development, play and protection are fulfilled. This investment will have a multiplier effect, as evidence shows such initiatives benefit communities and—through further scale-up—countries as well. While each country will deliver early childhood and development programmes adapted to their context, common themes are the use of innovative, cost-effective and sustainable approaches to deliver them. Each will deliver results in terms of improved national early childhood development programmes; more capable frontline staff to deliver services; and increased access of children, especially the most marginalised, to these programmes; to ensure their homes and communities are ‘spaces for kids to be kids’.

Learn more at: www.unicef.org

Special Olympics

Through its Young Athletes programmes in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Thailand, Special Olympics will help develop the motor, social and cognitive development and inclusion for children with intellectual disabilities. Young Athletes offers an opportunity to learn about every child’s abilities and to readjust expectations through inclusive play. It includes a series of structured physical activities, songs and games to teach basic motor skills. Through these play activities children grow and develop valuable motor skills, like walking and running, while also enhancing social and cognitive skills through interaction with their peers, with and without intellectual disabilities.

Learn more at: www.specialolympics.org

Save The Children

Through their programme, ‘I play, I learn and I’m safe’, Save the Children will promote protection, education and play for children on the move, directly benefiting more than 60,000 children aged six to 14 in Bangladesh and Ethiopia.

Learn more at: www.savethechildren.net
Play is both educational and fundamental to children’s development. Every child should have a safe space to play and be a child. #letsplay

Join our campaign!

Play is essential for children’s wellbeing. That’s why IKEA Foundation has granted €45 million to its six participating partners to support the fundamental right of every child to play and to develop.

Say yes to play!

For questions, photos and additional information, please contact:

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