

URBAN95

**AN URBAN95 STARTER KIT
IDEAS FOR ACTION**



WHAT'S IN THE URBAN95 STARTER KIT?

The Urban95 Starter Kit serves as a starting point to help cities understand the importance of investing in their youngest residents and the people who care for them, and to provide some promising ideas and implementation guidance for doing so, based on the experience of more than ten cities. The Starter Kit includes:

- **An introduction to early childhood development and Urban95**
- **Promising ideas for action in Urban95**
- **Implementation guidance for Urban95 initiatives**

HOW DID WE DEVELOP THE STARTER KIT?

The Urban95 Starter Kit is based on knowledge gathered from Urban95 initiatives across the world. Insights have been collected through country staff, surveys, reports, desk research, site visits, or from knowledge partnerships. The Starter Kit has been refined thanks to the input of 23 experts from government, NGOs, and urban planning and design, who tested it over four months in 2018, across 15 different countries.

WHO SHOULD USE THE STARTER KIT?

We've developed the Starter Kit primarily for city leaders and teams working in municipal or national government, including technical staff, managers, urban planners and designers, and community conveners. However, anyone involved in improving the lives of babies, toddlers and their caregivers may find the Starter Kit of interest.

HOW TO USE THE STARTER KIT?

The Starter Kit is just that: a starting point to spark discussion and planning. It is there to illustrate what is possible and how to make it happen. Feel free to browse through our *ideas for actions* and implementation framework as you wish: stay with high-level overviews or dive into the details and examples.

Contents

WHY

- 04** Why babies, toddlers and caregivers
- 09** Why cities
- 13** Measuring impact on babies in cities

WHAT

- 23** What is Urban95
- 27** Ideas for action
- 28** *Family-friendly urban planning and design*
- 54** *Healthy environments for children*

HOW

- 69** Implementation guidance for Urban95
- 87** About the Bernard van Leer Foundation

WHY BABIES, TODDLERS AND CAREGIVERS



**EVERY EXPERIENCE SHAPES
A CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT.**



**CAREGIVERS MEDIATE EVERYTHING
A BABY EXPERIENCES.**

**EVERY URBAN PLANNING AND
DESIGN DECISION INFLUENCES
THAT EXPERIENCE.**

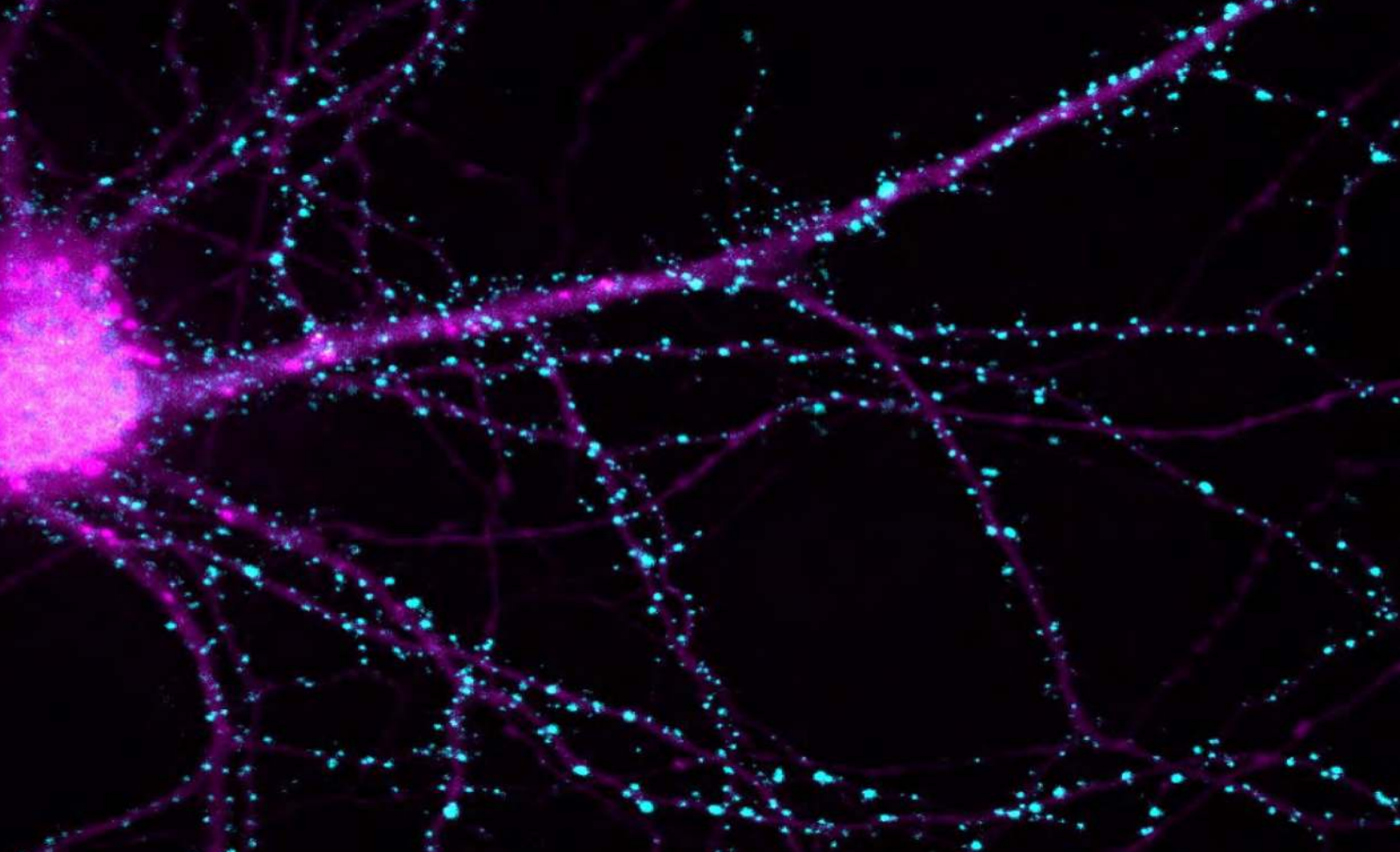
Babies are born with brains that are primed to be shaped by experiences – and experiences during the first years of life most powerfully influence the developing brain.

Every decision made in early childhood services and urban development has an influence on children's and caregivers' experiences and interactions. Those experiences shape a child's life and life potential.

Babies and toddlers are almost entirely dependent on their caregivers – usually a parent, sibling, grandparent, or health/childcare professional. That person's caregiving behaviours have a defining impact on the child. The caregiver's own wellbeing impacts his or her ability to provide care.

Cities, civil society, developers, healthcare professionals and urban planners and designers all have a role to play in providing the best life chances for children and adults.





WE GROW AND LEARN FASTEST DURING THE FIRST 1,000 DAYS OF LIFE



Research shows that in the first years of life, our brains make as many as **1 million new neural connections per second**. Connections between nerve cells in the brain are formed every time a child interacts with the environment. The most used of these connections are strengthened, and those that are not used are gradually pruned and disappear.

This means that the quality of experiences during the first **1,000 days** of life establishes either a strong or fragile foundation for everything that follows. Each stage of brain development sets the scene for the next. If the basic stages do not lay strong foundations, it will be harder for the complex stages to build on them.

“JUST AS IT IS IMPORTANT TO HAVE A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR A HOUSE, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE SIMPLE, FOUNDATIONAL CIRCUITS THAT WE FORM EARLY IN LIFE ARE STRONG AND EFFICIENT SO THAT THE CIRCUITS THAT COME LATER CAN ALSO BE STRONG AND EFFICIENT.”

A GOOD START IN LIFE SHAPES OUR WHOLE LIFE POTENTIAL

A good start in life, with an ecosystem and environment that supports the healthy formation of brain architecture, makes a child much more likely to reach their full potential.

Early action is, therefore, most effective to positively influence the physical and mental health of a child, their later life and the life of their community. After these early years, the brain architecture loses flexibility and behaviours become more difficult to influence and change.

The earlier the positive influence on a child, the greater the chances for a healthy life.

CAREGIVERS ARE THE LARGEST INFLUENCERS ON CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Practically speaking, in the earliest years of life, a child's environment consists primarily of their caregivers – within their homes, and at the places their caregivers bring them. When parents talk, sing and play with their babies, they help to build a healthy brain that is well wired to learn and interact with others. Caregivers' interactions with children also build foundational knowledge – such as vocabulary – on which later learning in school is built. Studies show that warm, stimulating, responsive parenting is one of the best predictors that children will do well in school.

What parents do during this time helps to build the brain architecture that will influence whether a child can eventually reach his or her potential. Supporting parenting is, therefore, one of the most cost-effective ways a government can invest in long-term productivity and reaching the Sustainable Development Goals.

Urban environments and how they are planned, designed, maintained and managed, have a direct impact on these caregivers' behaviours and can be channelled to support caregivers in building their babies' brains.



CAREGIVING SHAPES OUR COLLECTIVE FUTURE

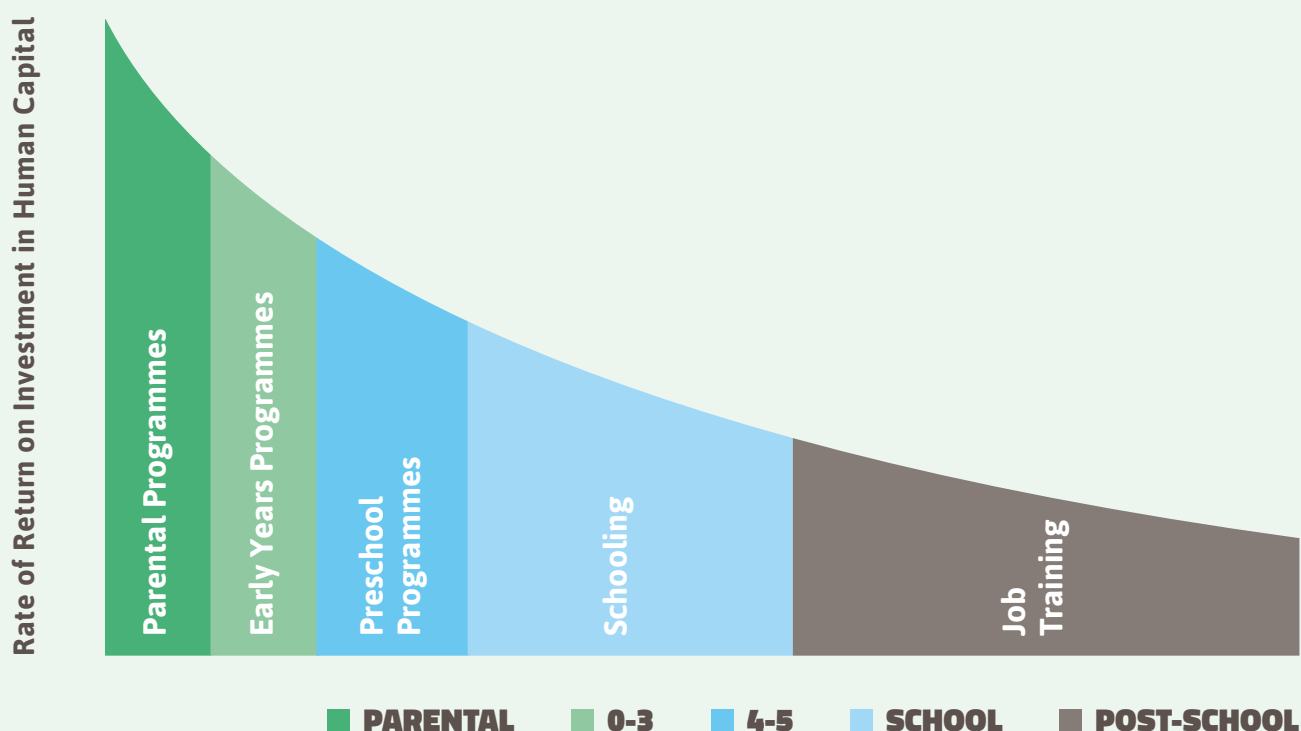
We do not know what the future holds, what jobs today's toddlers will have, or what challenges they will face when they grow up. We know only that the ability to learn, adapt and work with others will be essential.

HEALTH: A growing body of evidence links significant adversity in childhood to increased risk of a range of adult health problems, including diabetes, hypertension, stroke, obesity, and some forms of cancer. For example, having seven or eight serious adverse experiences in childhood translated to a three times higher probability of having cardiovascular disease as an adult.

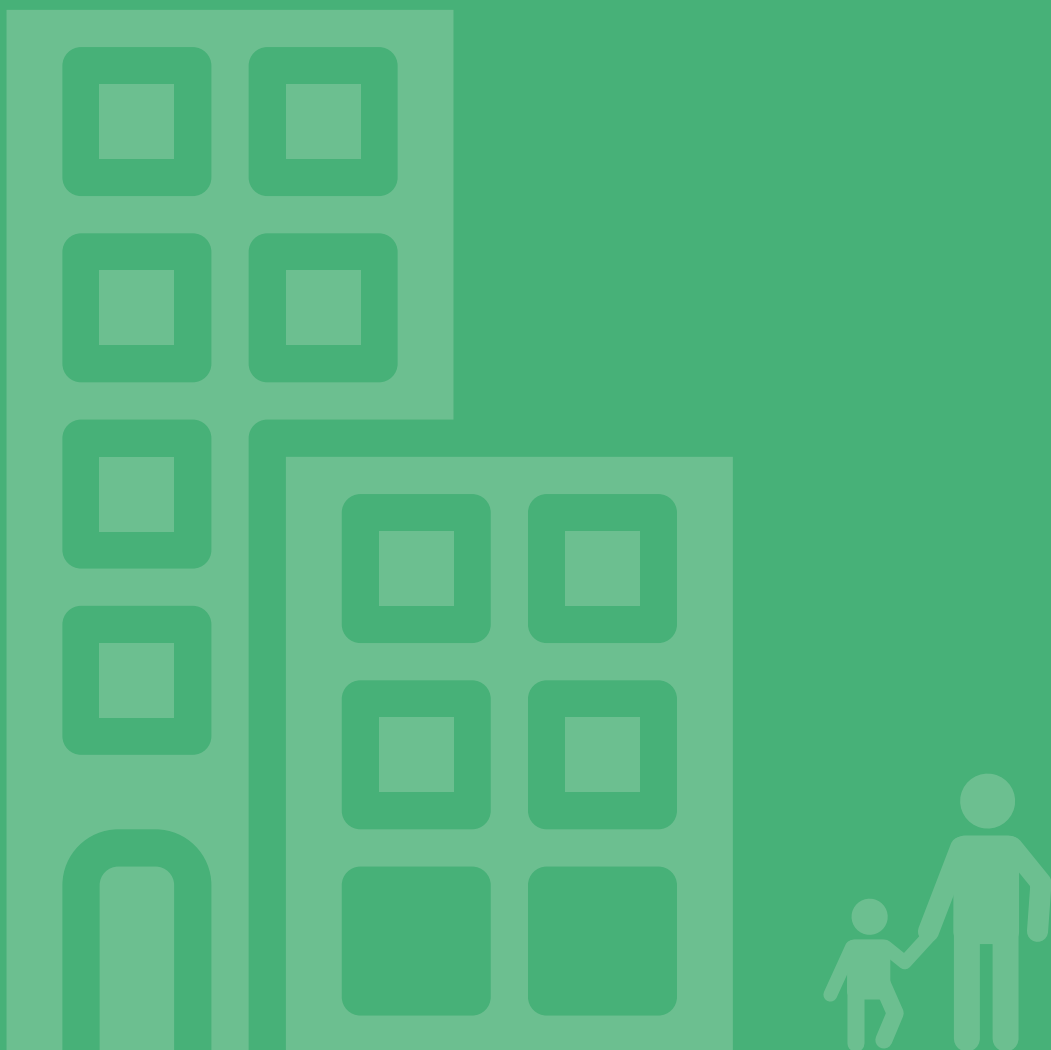
EDUCATION: In Jamaica, longitudinal studies have shown that stunted children who received home visits promoting caregiver-infant play and verbal interaction were five times more likely to stay in school, achieved 0.6 years more of schooling, and were three times more likely to have some college-level education. They also earned 25% more income than children who did not participate in the programme.

ECONOMICS: Research by Nobel Laureate James Heckman has shown that government investment in high-quality early childhood programmes for disadvantaged children can deliver up to 13% returns through savings in areas of spending, such as health, welfare and special education, and taxes on increased income. In wider cost-benefit terms, every \$1 spent on early childhood development programmes can lead to a return for society of \$4-9.

ESTIMATED RATE OF RETURN ON HUMAN CAPITAL INVESTMENT



WHY 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 healthy child development – with consequences for the next generation of adults.

URBAN ENVIRONMENTS INFLUENCE HOW WE CARE FOR AND NURTURE CHILDREN



Child development is a highly interactive process. While genes primarily shape brain development before birth, after birth, brains develop through constant interaction between genes and the environment. Genes contain the basic blueprint, while the actual construction based on this structural plan depends heavily on signals from the environment. The ‘nurturing care’ that parents, family and the community can provide is a decisive factor for healthy child development, as is an environment that enables and supports this nurturing care.

BABIES, TODDLERS AND CAREGIVERS EXPERIENCE THE CITY DIFFERENTLY

To develop to their full potential, young children need frequent, warm, responsive interactions with loving adults and a safe, stimulating physical environment to explore.

Both of these things are often in short supply in a city. Dense neighbourhoods; poor access to nature; long, unpredictable and even dangerous commutes; crowded housing; poor sanitation; isolation; stress; and lack of access to affordable healthcare and childcare make it harder for children to explore safely – and for caregivers to interact with their children in ways that promote healthy development.

The spatial needs of young children also differ from those of older children and adults. Babies and toddlers:

- experience the world at a **much smaller scale**, depend on others to move around, and have a far **shorter range of mobility** than the typical city dweller.
- are particularly vulnerable to **air and noise pollution**.
- need to **travel regularly** to early childhood services such as well-baby clinics and childcare.
- are always to be found with their **caregivers**.

To create environments that enable nurturing care, it is crucial for urban planners, designers, developers and cities to understand how children's and caregivers' surroundings influence their needs and experiences – physical, social and emotional, cognitive and spatial.

THE JOURNEY OF CHILDHOOD CHANGES RAPIDLY

Young children need responsive caregiving, good healthcare and nutrition, safety and security, and opportunities for early learning or stimulation.

The needs and interactions of children and caregivers change rapidly as children grow up. How we perceive, interact with, move in and respond to our surroundings all contribute to childhood experience and healthy child development, as do our interactions with family, culture, economic influences and the environment.

WHY CITIES BENEFIT FROM PLANNING FOR BABIES, TODDLERS AND CAREGIVERS

Focusing on babies, toddlers and their caregivers does not only make a city's young children more likely to develop to their full potential – it makes a city better for everyone.

The wellbeing of babies, toddlers and their caregivers is the best measure of a vibrant, prosperous and healthy city. When city leaders make decisions that work for the youngest residents, they also tend to have a wider positive impact:

- Walkable, **mixed-use neighbourhoods** that cater for the basics a young family needs within 15 minutes on foot are attractive for everyone.
- Lively, **green public spaces** close to home that offer amenities for caregivers while allowing small children to explore safely attract all generations and may create higher economic value for a city.
- 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 are also more likely to work for older people and those with disabilities.
- **Air quality** is most important for the health of young children, but important for everyone else's health as well – and becoming a major public and political concern in cities all over the world.

Young children can be a powerful, easy-to-understand cause for mobilising political and public will for a broad range of initiatives. As one mayor we spoke with said, 'There's a natural and broad constituency of support when it comes to children'.



MEASURING IMPACT ON BABIES IN CITIES





“WE FOCUS ON CAREGIVERS BECAUSE THE WAY MOTHERS, FATHERS AND OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS NURTURE AND SUPPORT CHILDREN IN THEIR EARLY YEARS IS AMONG THE MOST DECISIVE FACTORS FOR HEALTHY CHILD DEVELOPMENT.”

Investing in early childhood yields benefits in both the short and the long term.

In the short term, these may include reduced caregiver stress, decreased exposure to pollution, or increased physical exercise for both children and their families. In the long term, investments in early childhood can have a transformative impact, such as higher chances of completing primary and secondary education, and up to 25% higher incomes in adulthood.

Measuring the long-term impact can also be done in the short term. Elements of **caregiver wellbeing** and **caregiving behaviours** have been proven by research to predict better health, social and work-related outcomes in later life.

MEASURING IMPACT THROUGH CAREGIVER WELLBEING AND CAREGIVING BEHAVIOURS

Caregiving behaviours refers to the different strategies used by caregivers to cope with childrearing and the parenting process. Caregiver wellbeing encompasses their satisfaction with their role as caregivers, the perceived social support they receive from others, and their general emotional stability – in contrast to feeling stressed, depressed, and/or lonely. Factors such as depression, poor social support and a low sense of self-efficacy, among others, are associated with parenting problems and can have a negative impact on children’s development. Caregivers who are confident about their skills, abilities and resources for positive parenting can positively affect children’s behaviour and development.

While there are many elements of caregiver wellbeing and caregiving behaviour which impact child development, this Starter Kit focuses on those that are most indicative of changes to child development:

CAREGIVER WELLBEING	CAREGIVER BEHAVIOURS
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Utilisation of services2 Caregiver mental health	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Caregiver-infant (indoor and outdoor) play2 Healthy feeding practices3 Storytelling, singing and reading4 Use of non-violent approaches to discipline



CAREGIVER WELLBEING

/ UTILISATION OF SERVICES

Services can provide caregivers with a network of support for them and their children. As they use those services, we can understand more about their sense of self-efficacy and confidence in seeking out other relevant services.

Services include children's and women's healthcare, nutrition, childcare, preschool, parent coaching, social protection, employment opportunities, public spaces, transportation, affordable housing, neighbourhood planning, and amenities such as water, sanitation, food, noise, air and nature.

Why is this important?

- Families need support to provide nurturing and responsive care for young children. The provision and utilisation of services in a range of sectors are an indicator of success.
- Pregnant women, young children and their caregivers need to access some services, such as healthcare, more frequently than other population groups.
- Whether or not caregivers use services tells us if they are integrated into formal city systems and reached by public policies.
- Utilisation of services is a proxy for access and allows us to evaluate the efficiency of caregiver mobility, which more widely impacts how well they can make use of the advantages of urban living and is correlated with their wellbeing as urban dwellers.
- The ability to use and enjoy the urban environment and resources is often impacted by relations of power between different population groups, such as men and women. Focusing on caregivers and young children's utilisation of services is useful to ensure city policies actively promote fair access to urban resources, as they tend to have greater needs and vulnerabilities to their environment than adults without children. It is important to carry out a gendered analysis, as women and men can have a radically different experience of city life.

CAREGIVER WELLBEING

2 CAREGIVER MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health refers to our emotional, psychological and social wellbeing. It affects how we think, feel and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Within the context of caregiving, mental health impacts how a mother, father or immediate caregiver understands, responds to and interacts with the child.

Mental health is impacted by factors including emotional wellbeing and the functioning of support networks such as family, community, neighbourhood, healthcare staff or other formal or informal systems. Mental health is also directly impacted by the physical environment through various factors such as perceived safety, noise levels, air quality, presence of people, lighting, nature, diversity of activities, space, aesthetics and others. These factors may have a varied impact depending on their intensity, frequency and sequence.

Why is this important?

- Parents struggling with mental health or overwhelmed by 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. Worldwide, between a third and a fifth of women in developing countries, and about a tenth in developed countries, have a significant mental health problem during pregnancy or after childbirth.
- Mental health problems such as depression and anxiety are very common during pregnancy and after childbirth in all parts of the world. High rates of mental health problems in pregnant women and mothers have been reported in many African countries such as Ethiopia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe.¹
- Caregivers who show signs of mental health problems are significantly less likely to engage in interactive and positive parenting practices.² Research has shown that maternal depression often impairs the mother's sensitivity toward her child, depriving her of the energy, focus and patience necessary to have quality interactions and relationships.³
- While most research has focused on the role of mental health in mothers, we think it is important to also include fathers and other primary caregivers.

CAREGIVING BEHAVIOURS

/ CAREGIVER-INFANT (INDOOR & OUTDOOR) PLAY

Young children are curious by nature and want to explore their environment. Often, they do so through playful interactions. Before young children learn to speak, back-and-forth interactions with their caregivers are an opportunity to acquire skills and understand their surroundings.

In this sense, play occurs in both indoor and outdoor environments. Physical activity and an outdoor environment can additionally play a part in improving caregiver mood and wellbeing.

Why is this important?

- 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.
- Physical activity is an important part of children staying healthy and developing their muscles and coordination,⁴ including fine muscles in the hands that will later help with writing. Physical exercise can help to improve the mood of both children and their caregivers. Blood is better pumped to the brain following physical exercise, improving children's ability to focus their attention and learn. Being outside can provide endless opportunities to use big muscles, think creatively and learn more about the environment.
- As children get older, playing games together allows them to learn how to solve problems and interact socially, including taking turns, and deciding on and following rules.

CAREGIVING BEHAVIOURS

2 HEALTHY INFANT FEEDING PRACTICES

The extent to which caregivers know about and can act on the benefits of breastfeeding and healthy feeding of complementary foods plays a major role in child development.

Why is this important?

- Breastfeeding has clear benefits for children's health, including reducing mortality and morbidity from infectious diseases, encouraging healthy food preferences, reducing obesity, and boosting cognitive development. The World Health Organization recommends exclusive breastfeeding until 6 months and continued breastfeeding with appropriate complementary foods until at least age 2.
- Good nutrition is essential to growth and development. Inadequate nutrition leads to stunting, and stunted children are at greater risk of impaired brain development, lower IQ, weakened immune systems and serious health complications such as diabetes and cancer later in life. Economists estimate that stunting reduces some countries' GDP by up to **16%**. Being overweight in early childhood is also associated with later health complications, including heart disease and diabetes.



CAREGIVING BEHAVIOURS

3 STORYTELLING, SINGING & READING

A large part of responsive caregiving is in the 'serve and return' interactions between caregiver and infant/toddler. Storytelling, singing and reading are some behaviours that can encourage positive interactions and build a foundation for understanding the world, concentration, memory, and learning letters and sounds.

Why is this important?

- Reading to young children builds a strong foundation for learning letters and sounds, and helps to promote their understanding of the world, their social, communication and logical thinking skills, concentration, attention and ability to form memories. Even more importantly, it supports the parent-child relationship:⁵ children enjoy the time a parent spends cuddling them and telling them stories. Parents should not just read to children, but with them, by asking open-ended questions about the story: for example, what do you think will happen next, how do you think the character is feeling, what do you do when you feel that way.⁶
- Caregivers who cannot read can still make up their own stories or tell stories from memory – and even if parents are illiterate, their children can benefit from them looking at books together. The caregiver can improvise their own story around the pictures, or just talk about what is in the pictures. Children will become familiar with what a book looks like and how to hold it, and start to get the idea that the print on the page carries some meaning, even if they do not understand it yet.
- 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. The more words children are exposed to in their early years, the more skilled they tend to become at regulating their behaviour, empathising with others and establishing healthy relationships and fulfilling social lives.⁷ Studies show that by age 3, some children have heard up to 30 million more words than others.⁸ The type and tone of words also matter: children need to be spoken to warmly, hear rich language with complex ideas and have many opportunities to engage in back-and-forth communication.

CAREGIVING BEHAVIOURS

4 USE OF NON-VIOLENT APPROACHES TO DISCIPLINE

Children can explore boundaries safely when they have a caregiver who can provide relevant guidance and create a positive and predictable environment, including space and routines. This metric area includes an explicit focus on discouraging violence in and outside the home and against women and children.

Why is this important?

- Children learn from their families how to behave. If parents behave in a calm, controlled and consistent way, children will learn that the world is a safe and predictable place. If parents use harsh discipline, children will learn that physical force is an acceptable way to get others to do what they want. If children experience physical and emotional abuse or neglect, their brains produce excessive stress hormones that adversely affect their physical and emotional development.⁹
- Positive discipline techniques¹⁰ include reinforcing positive behaviour through praise and setting a few clear and simple rules and responding consistently to violations. Establishing a routine – such as dinner, then bath, then brushing teeth, then reading stories, then sleep – can help children to feel safe. Parents can learn to recognise when a child is becoming overstimulated and in need of rest and quiet, and to distinguish between situations when giving a child attention will prevent unwanted behaviour and situations when giving attention will prolong unwanted behaviour.





WHAT IS URBAN95



IF YOU COULD EXPERIENCE THE CITY FROM 95cm – THE HEIGHT OF A 3-YEAR-OLD – WHAT WOULD YOU CHANGE?

Our Urban95 initiative asks this bold but simple question to leaders, planners, designers and managers. We then work with cities and their partners to identify and scale ideas to change the way families with young children live, play, interact and move through the city.



TWO OF THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS FOR A YOUNG CHILD TO DEVELOP TO HIS OR HER FULL POTENTIAL ARE:

FREQUENT, WARM, RESPONSIVE INTERACTIONS WITH LOVING ADULTS AND A SAFE, STIMULATING PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT.

URBAN PLANNING AND DESIGN CAN CONTRIBUTE TO BOTH.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR CITIES

01: WORKING ACROSS SILOS IS KEY TO CHANGING URBAN EXPERIENCES

Cities are traditionally planned by and for able-bodied male adults commuting to work. Designing, planning and managing cities for the needs and activities of babies, toddlers and those who care for them means changing the way these agencies work within their silos and connect to each other.

CITIES ARE MANAGED IN SILOS...

Cities are complex systems of human interaction. Planning, designing and managing them is, by definition, cross-sectoral work. City governments are segmented in agencies or departments that each deal with a specific aspect of urban life. Each agency tends to work in a silo, with its own partners and set of expertise.

...BUT EXPERIENCED AS A WHOLE

Silos in city management are usually not perceptible to the daily user, yet they define his or her experience of the city. Take the simple act of picking up your daughter at the childcare centre five minutes' walk away. This routine trip may be affected by at least five city agencies: Transportation, as you cross the street and wait for the light to turn green; Parks and Gardens, as you pass planted areas and decide to rest on a bench; Land-Use Planning, as you decide to walk into a shop to get some groceries along the way; Health, as you breathe polluted air; and Social Services, which manages the childcare centre. Every day, you make use of different services and amenities provided by various agencies, switching from one to the next without noticing.

02: MAINTENANCE IS CENTRAL TO INTERVENTION SUCCESS

Impressions of a space defines how people interact with them. Whether a public space is safe, clean and comfortable has a greater impact on caregiver wellbeing and caregiving behaviours than whether this space is brand new. It may also be cheaper to modify a maintenance schedule or build the capacity of the workforce in a transportation system than engage in a costly re-design.

03: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ENSURES QUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Behaviours are context specific. Any Urban95 intervention should, therefore, take time to scan, understand and include the communities it is targeting in the design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and decision-making process. This means including families with young children but also the wider group of stakeholders from within governments (various city agencies) and outside (NGOs, expert organisations, academia).



WHAT URBAN95 FOCUSES ON

While many elements of urban life impact on children's healthy development, Urban95 focuses on:



FAMILY-FRIENDLY URBAN PLANNING AND DESIGN *Page 28*

Using the lens of families and their needs to influence the design and regulation of the uses of space, with a focus on the physical form, functions, health impacts and social support networks of an urban area and on the location of different activities within it.



PUBLIC SPACE

Places such as streets, parks, sidewalks, plazas and playgrounds, accessible to all, and which support positive interactions between babies and toddlers and their caregivers.



TRANSPORTATION

Safe, convenient, affordable and sustainable ways for caregivers with young children to reach their destinations, including walking, cycling, and formal or informal public transit.



NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

A neighbourhood that provides access to key early years services in a short and affordable trip, a supportive community and a quality environment for young children's development and caregiver wellbeing.



HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS FOR CHILDREN *Page 54*

Focusing on aspects of the natural and built environment affecting children's development.



AIR QUALITY

Air quality under WHO-recommended levels in and around areas where children spend the most time, such as childcare, healthcare, preschool, streets, parks and playgrounds.



EXPOSURE TO NATURE










Regular exposure to nature for play and rest, and better ways to protect from exposure to negative natural elements such as adverse weather conditions.

Ideas FOR ACTION

The following section dives into the two categories: **family-friendly 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 30</p> 	<p>2 Safe, playful walking routes for caregivers and young children</p> <p>Page 34</p> 	<p>3 Events and programmes for families with young children in public spaces</p> <p>Page 38</p> 
<p>4 Alignment of routing and fare structures to caregiver mobility patterns</p> <p>Page 42</p> 	<p>5 Co-location of child and family services</p> <p>Page 46</p> 	<p>6 Baby, toddler, caregiver zones</p> <p>Page 50</p> 
<p>1 Vehicular traffic controls in targeted geographies</p> <p>Page 56</p> 	<p>2 Air quality monitoring where young children spend the most time</p> <p>Page 60</p> 	<p>3 Strategies to improve young children's access to nature near their home</p> <p>Page 64</p> 

Each idea includes:

- Description
- Implementation examples
- City departments involved
- Connection to caregiver wellbeing and caregiving behaviours.

FAMILY-FRIENDLY URBAN PLANNING AND DESIGN

TWO OF THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS FOR A YOUNG CHILD TO DEVELOP TO HIS OR HER FULL POTENTIAL ARE:

FREQUENT, WARM, RESPONSIVE INTERACTIONS WITH LOVING ADULTS AND A SAFE, STIMULATING PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT.

URBAN PLANNING AND DESIGN CAN CONTRIBUTE TO BOTH.



Maximising positive interactions

Every Urban95 intervention aims at increasing the quantity, frequency and intensity of positive interactions between caregivers and their babies and toddlers in urban environments. This can be done by creating conditions, providing nudges or reducing barriers for these behaviours to happen. It can also be done by improving the wellbeing of caregivers, which affects their capacity to interact positively with their child. Here the Urban95 initiative focuses on:



PUBLIC SPACE

Places such as streets, parks, sidewalks, plazas and playgrounds, accessible to all, and which support positive interactions between babies and toddlers and their caregivers.



TRANSPORTATION

Safe, convenient, affordable and sustainable ways for caregivers with young children to reach their destinations including walking, cycling, and formal or informal public transit.



NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

A neighbourhood that provides access to key early years services in a short and affordable trip, a supportive community and a quality 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

Urban planners and designers can support healthy child development by designing urban spaces to support caregiver wellbeing and caregiving behaviours as much as possible. This requires a shift in who we are planning for, and for what activities. Typically, places that work well for families are now found in the most privileged areas. The challenge is to spread design principles to better impact the most vulnerable areas.

Planning for babies, toddlers and their caregivers – whether parents, siblings, grandparents or others – means taking into consideration the greater sensitivity of babies and toddlers to environmental factors (air, nature) 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. Planning for families means planning for people before traffic efficiency or economic functions – yet the benefits in quality of life are conducive to greater prosperity.

Family-friendly urban planning and design require a shift in both political priorities and technical implementation systems across city agencies involved in the design, regulation and management of urban spaces.

Urban spaces that work for families are:

SAFE: streets with less traffic, sidewalks in good condition, street crossings, spaces with greenery and other solutions to mitigate air pollution, and lighting and human activity to help prevent crime. A place where a mother with a toddler and newborn can feel safe to cross the road easily or linger for quality time.

ACCESSIBLE: quality family-friendly public spaces or streets should be easy to reach, being a short distance to where families live and connected to 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.

COMFORTABLE: public spaces should be suited to the needs of babies, toddlers and their caregivers. This means benches with shade to rest along the way, playgrounds inclusive of the very young, or facilities for inter-generational outings in parks. Providing toilets, fresh water and food options increases the amount of time families spend outdoors. Women breastfeeding in a public space is a good indicator that this space is comfortable for families.

STIMULATING: spaces that allow for exploration and play in various forms support the healthy development of children. This includes playgrounds and parks with natural play elements and loose parts, but also varying textures, green spaces, and murals on streets. In general, ideal places for families are integrated into their everyday mobility patterns, while being intriguing to children, intuitive to play in and supporting positive interactions.



RELATION TO CAREGIVER WELLBEING AND CAREGIVING BEHAVIOURS

UTILISATION OF SERVICES: Public spaces such as parks are amenities supporting 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 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 shorter but 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**, a local neighbourhood improvement project named *Crezco con mi barrio*, led by a local community organisation in partnership with the municipal government, has installed a 95cm-tall mural. Painted by local inhabitants, it depicts local stories and reminds people of children's height and vulnerability to traffic.

In **Accra, Ghana**, the *Playtime in Africa* team of the Mmofra Foundation has created a 'toddler exploration' journey in a park. Relying on natural structures, the play elements use features such as local instruments, games or design patterns. The journey develops social skills and provides a unique opportunity for children from different socio-economic backgrounds to interact.



SAFE PUBLIC BREASTFEEDING

Breastfeeding in public spaces can be encouraged by creating environments where women feel more secure (through e.g. lighting, pavements, urban furniture) and through supportive infrastructure, policies and campaigns.

New York is providing the most deprived neighbourhoods with 'lactation pods' in health facilities, where women can find a isolated space to breastfeed safely.

In **New Zealand**, the Breastfeeding Friendly Spaces Accreditation initiative creates and sustains breastfeeding-friendly environments. *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.



BEHAVIOURAL PROMPTS FOR CAREGIVERS

A set of key messages to promote caregiving behaviours can be identified and spread through behavioural prompts in the physical environment – on walls, in markets, on billboards, or on product packaging. These messages can be reinforced through mobile phone and online channels, or by engaging other people in parents' lives such as health professionals, teachers, employers, barbers, imams, and bus drivers.

In **Tulsa, USA**, small signs were placed in supermarkets encouraging caregivers to start conversations with kids. One prompt, for example, encouraged caregivers to ask children 'where does milk come from?' There were 33% more conversations as a result. Similar results were observed in a project in **Duncan Village, South Africa**.



DESIGN FOR PLAY EVERYWHERE

Think of the whole city as a playground: undesignated play spaces such as the street, the bus stop, plazas and waiting areas offer a more diverse learning environment and play opportunities for young children. Remember to include benches and other areas where people can stop and rest, as young children and caregivers are especially likely to need a break along the way. Improving perceptions of safety by parents will increase play opportunities throughout the city and reduce caregivers' levels of stress.

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.

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.

Idea 2

SAFE, PLAYFUL WALKING ROUTES FOR CAREGIVERS AND YOUNG CHILDREN

CITY DEPARTMENTS INVOLVED:

✓ Culture

✓ Education

✓ Health

✓ Parks

✓ Planning

✓ Social Services

✓ Transportation

Walking is the most reliable mode of transportation. It is easier for caregivers to know exactly how much time they will need to get from A to B when walking than when taking public transit or the car.



Walking also allows for exploration, play, stimulation and social contact. It is good for the physical and mental wellbeing of the caregiver.

To encourage walking for families with babies and toddlers, cities must ensure that:

DESTINATIONS ARE WITHIN A 15 MINUTES' WALK : services needed by families with young children, such as childcare, healthcare, parks, sources of healthy food, schools and jobs, should ideally lie within a 15-minute walk. This means prioritising smaller and more spread out services, as well as co-location of services.

CAREGIVERS FEEL SAFE TO WALK : routes to key destinations should meet minimum quality standards. This means having a connected grid of sidewalks, crossings and protection from traffic, such as enough time to cross the street. It also means sidewalks large enough to allow for two-way pedestrian traffic including strollers, and curb cuts. Sidewalks should include areas separated from the pedestrian flow where caregivers can stop when a toddler throws a tantrum or needs to rest. Greenery should be prominent, and air quality should be monitored and maintained at acceptable levels along busy routes. Caregivers should feel safe from crime and harassment.

ROUTES AS DESTINATIONS : sidewalks offering opportunities to play and explore, and amenities for caregivers, activities, social contact, and murals, will enhance the walking experience and support caregiver wellbeing and behaviours conducive to improved child development.



RELATION TO CAREGIVER WELLBEING AND CAREGIVING BEHAVIOURS

UTILISATION OF SERVICES: Improving walkability for caregivers and young children supports utilisation of services by providing a reliable mode of mobility. Walking is more conducive to visiting several destinations in one trip.

CAREGIVER MENTAL HEALTH: Encouraging walking and turning it into a pleasant experience reduces stress related to 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 play.

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 toddler to notice more details of the streetscape along the way, therefore providing opportunities for storytelling and imagination.



Examples



BEHAVIOURAL PROMPTS FOR COMMUTING CAREGIVERS

The city government of **São Paulo, Brazil**, developed messages about the importance of talking, singing and playing with babies and toddlers and is spreading them through advertising billboards throughout the city.



DESIGNING FOR PLAY ALONG THE WAY

In **Odense, Denmark**, play spots have been installed throughout the city centre to support play along the way for families. Play spots are small areas – a few square meters – with simple and engaging play elements such as water features or climbing sculptures. They are meant to allow for short but frequent playful moments to happen throughout the day for families going about their routines.

In **Philadelphia, USA**, *Urban Thinkscape* is a project that 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 also alert drivers to the presence of children in the area, and increase levels of perceived safety for parents, reducing their stress.

The *Kindlint* or 'child-route' in **Eindhoven, Netherlands**, is meant 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**, murals drawn by children and bright colours on sidewalks are encouraging play and storytelling along key routes to early years services. Some bus stops have also been decorated with scenes from daily life, such as a hair salon, prompting imaginative play while waiting for transit.

In **São Paulo**, the *Territorios Educadores* initiative is designed to improve walking routes near educational and cultural early childhood services, making them safer and introducing features that encourage playful interactions targeting early learning.



PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS FOR FAMILIES

Increasing pavement width, walkability and ‘strollability’ – walking while pushing a pushchair – 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 allows for a more comfortable walk during which caregivers and kids are less stressed and more likely to use the time for positive interactions. Ensuring that pavements remain free from obstructions (cars, stalls), and comfortable (shade, benches) is crucial, and requires maintenance and enforcement of regulations in addition to design. Interventions can easily be tested temporarily first.

In Barcelona, the project *Superblocks* is turning parts of the city into low-traffic areas designated mainly for pedestrians and community events. This is meant to improve walkability and opportunities for interactions among residents, and pilots have shown an increase in public life in general, as well as more children playing out.

In **Santiago, Chile**, the *Paseo Bandera* project turned a busy street in the 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.



SAFER STREET CROSSINGS

Simple interventions such as adding colours can increase awareness of the presence of children and encourage them to use crossings. More comprehensive design interventions to 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 dressed in zebra outfits, whose role is to raise awareness in a creative and memorable way about safe crossing behaviours for pedestrians and drivers. They are particularly popular with young children and parents.

In **Mexico City**, *Liga Peatonal* uses data on road accidents to inform road safety recommendations around schools through pilot projects, advocacy, and a public information campaign. They focus on specific walking routes taken by children.

Idea 3

EVENTS AND PROGRAMMES FOR FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN IN PUBLIC SPACE

CITY DEPARTMENTS INVOLVED:

✓ Culture

✓ Education

✓ Health

✓ Parks

✓ Planning

✓ Social Services

✓ Transportation

Focusing on caregiver wellbeing and caregiving behaviours means diving deeper into how spaces are designed and used. Planning events targeting families with young children is a way to strengthen the use of these spaces and their contribution to early childhood development.



Family-friendly events provide community gathering opportunities, supporting social support networks for caregivers, and allow for the city to reach out directly to parents with parent coaching activities.

The positive impact on caregiving behaviours is maximised when the events are regular and frequent – every two weeks to a month is usually considered optimal for neighbourhood-level activities that target behaviour change. Including communities in the design and management of these events draws in more participants and increases the likelihood of ownership and 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 bicycle or car. Pop-up interventions are an efficient way to test ideas for permanent infrastructure and assess their behavioural impact.



RELATION TO CAREGIVER WELLBEING AND CAREGIVING BEHAVIOURS

UTILISATION OF SERVICES: Events in public spaces provide an opportunity to directly impact how families use those spaces.

CAREGIVER MENTAL HEALTH: Regular events that the community feels ownership of help support caregiver mental health by strengthening community 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 allow for group storytelling, which can build on local culture and help build sense of community.



Examples



PUBLIC GATHERING OF FAMILIES FOR PLAY & PARENT COACHING

Events that bring families with babies together in large public spaces can serve as parent coaching opportunities. If taking place in highly visible and symbolic spaces, they can show that early childhood is a priority for the local government.

In **Istanbul**, Urban95 partner municipalities Beyoğlu, Maltepe, Sarıyer 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 allowed collaboration among various municipal departments.

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 on each day, including the mayor. The play elements piloted at the event included sand benches, mobile play elements, playworkers and toy storage sheds. They were taken to similar events in more vulnerable areas of the cities, then made available permanently in parks.

Bogotá's *Crezco con mi barrio* project held regular community events in a neighbourhood focused on intergenerational interaction and increasing people's 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, they make it easier to find family-friendly places throughout the city.



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 a step towards permanent solutions, which can be difficult to implement without first building citizen support.

In **Mexico City**, LabCDMX 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 wellbeing.

In **Brazil**, the city of **Manaus** has created a programme to close streets during certain hours and transform them into playground areas.



STORYTELLING IN THE PARK

Tel Aviv, Israel, recently adapted its 'storytelling in the park' programme to focus on young children, and combines it with information on how best to tell stories to children to encourage vibrant caregiver-child interactions at home. Storytelling activities for young kids can reinforce the idea that language development starts long before children are talking and simple techniques can have a positive impact on early brain development.



STAFFED PLAYGROUND

Copenhagen has 26 staffed playgrounds, each with a different character and size. The presence of trained pedagogues allows for the spaces to be used more efficiently to support families than the infrastructure would allow on its own. They help children when needed, organise events, ensure safety while allowing for risk-taking and mediate potential conflicts between users. Highly trained, usually with a masters' degree, the playground staff can also provide counselling to parents and referrals to municipal services.

Idea 4

ALIGNMENT OF ROUTING AND FARE STRUCTURES TO CAREGIVER MOBILITY PATTERNS

CITY DEPARTMENTS INVOLVED:

✓ Culture

✓ Education

✓ Health

✓ Parks

✓ Planning

✓ Social Services

✓ Transportation

Transportation systems tend to be planned for commuting adults, and caregivers with young children move through cities differently.





As they require support from various services and people, caregivers tend to have more destinations in their daily patterns, typically close to home – in other words, they tend to make more and shorter trips and chain destinations together in one outing, rather than the longer two-way commute of most working adults without caregiving duties.

While walking is preferable when possible, cities must ensure that public transit systems support rather than hinder caregiving activities. This means placing transit stops in places where caregivers go, and along the routes they take, minimising the need to switch vehicles and modes of transit. It also means reducing cost barriers, improving service (frequency, predictability) of transit, and designing the transit experience to be safe, reliable and comfortable for families with babies and toddlers.

RELATION TO CAREGIVER WELLBEING AND CAREGIVING BEHAVIOURS



UTILISATION OF SERVICES: Improving public transit to support caregiver mobility will support families' access to services. Transportation in itself is also a service. Improving the transit experience supports caregiver wellbeing 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 transit, and waiting moments during trips, can be opportunities for play and interaction.

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

STORYTELLING, SINGING, READING: Public transit, and waiting moments during trips, can be opportunities for play and interaction.



Examples



PLANNING TRANSIT AND LAND-USE TO INCREASE ACCESS TO KINDERGARTENS

Vilnius, Lithuania, has a city-managed app to pair parents with suitable kindergarten facilities. Data from the app is helping the city to understand where people work and commute, and to make better-informed decisions about where to increase or decrease public transit and determine locations for expansion of kindergarten slots.



SUBSIDISED AND CONVENIENT TRANSPORT FOR PREGNANT WOMEN

The price of public transport is a barrier to mobility for the most vulnerable families. One result is reduced access to healthcare, leading to fewer prenatal visits and a higher likelihood that a caregiver will wait until an emergency to seek help. Lowering cost and widening transit options can improve the health of both mother and child, and reduce caregiver stress.

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 prenatal visits.

In **Japan**, pregnant women in the **Tohoku** region can register with some of the city's taxi companies to receive priority when heading to prenatal 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.



SAFE, ACCESSIBLE AND PLAYFUL TRANSIT

Mobility also implies moments of immobility, which can be opportunities for learning and play. Bus stop can be turned into a learning experience through messages and stories, or games relying on colours or shapes. Messages to encourage interactions or games can also be placed inside buses or trains. Enhancing safety and comfort at stations – for example, by reducing gaps and allowing for pushchair 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 adjacent plot with puzzles and street lighting projecting animated stories on the pavements. 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.

ITDP’s Gold Standard for Bus Rapid Transit systems requires pushchair 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**.

Medellín, Colombia, introduced safe routes for pre-schoolers 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.

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.





This helps to reduce caregiver stress. It also provides cities with opportunities for simplified management, by allowing for sharing space and some staff. It allows for better integration of early childhood services and simplifies uptake of referrals, which improves early childhood development outcomes.



RELATION TO CAREGIVER WELLBEING AND CAREGIVING BEHAVIOURS

UTILISATION OF SERVICES: Co-locating services increases their use by providing a one-stop shop and improving uptake of referrals.

CAREGIVER MENTAL HEALTH: Co-location of services reduces stress related to reaching services, and makes it easier to reach large number of caregivers in one place with targeted behavioural interventions to improve 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 community department and the health department, have been brought together in selected locations across the city. Parents can more easily access well-baby clinic services when they are offered in local community centres.



OPENING PUBLIC FACILITIES OUT OF HOURS

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

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

Paris is greening every school yard and opening them to families on weekends as public parks.

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



USING PRIVATE SPACES FOR EARLY YEARS SERVICES

In already urbanised areas where building new facilities may be complex, one possibility for municipalities to increase density and coverage of children's service provision is to use 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 arrive on foot. This results in fewer missed prenatal 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 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 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, CAREGIVER ZONES

CITY DEPARTMENTS INVOLVED:

- Culture
- Education
- Health
- Parks
- Planning
- Social Services
- Transportation

Bringing different interventions together in a baby, toddler and caregiver zone can increase impact. The neighbourhood chosen should have a large number of vulnerable families with young children, and well-identified challenges to address. Gathering data on families is important to select the right area and design the types of interventions within the area.



The zone's function is to coordinate comprehensive investment in early childhood development interventions depending on local needs. Focusing on a bounded area of the city allows a deep engagement process to be developed and interventions tailored for better impact. When implementing area-based interventions, the city should be careful to limit the effects of gentrification, making sure to include communities and compensate for the rise in living costs that may result from large-scale infrastructural improvements.

The baby, toddler and caregiver zone is based on the principle that implementing several Urban95 interventions in an integrated way has more impact on caregiver wellbeing and caregiving behaviours than implementing them independently. For example, adding a bench is more impactful if combined with greenery, lighting and some play elements, rather than spending the same amount of money placing these various elements far from one another. This place-based approach is based on the principles of using data to select the location and prioritising designs for impact.

BABY, TODDLER AND CAREGIVER ZONES INCLUDE A FOCUS ON:

- **Location and access to early years services, to bring them within a 15-minute walk for most families.**
- **Design of routes and destinations most relevant to caregivers and their children.**
- **Events and programming targeted at families within the area.**



RELATION TO CAREGIVER WELLBEING AND CAREGIVING BEHAVIOURS

UTILISATION OF SERVICES: Access to services is improved through neighbourhood planning and design of routes.

CAREGIVER MENTAL HEALTH: The zone reduces environmental stressors for caregivers, supports community interaction and improves access to nature.

CAREGIVER-INFANT PLAY: The zone includes play spaces and integrates elements conducive to play throughout the urban environment.

HEALTHY FEEDING PRACTICES: The zone includes the creation of places that are suitable for breastfeeding and regular events that can promote nutrition.

STORYTELLING, SINGING AND READING: The zone integrates storytelling elements in the urban environment and plans events with storytelling and other interactive play.

NON-VIOLENT APPROACHES TO DISCIPLINE: Regular events could include topics on discipline; reduced caregiver stress may also contribute to softer discipline approaches.



Examples



COMMUNITY-LED FAMILY INTERVENTIONS

In **Bogotá**, *Crezco con mi barrio* (growing with my neighbourhood) is a place-based approach 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, and creating safe routes connecting childcare centres with play areas, health services and homes. The community-led process has brought together neighbourhood organisations with local institutions such as schools and the city government.



CHILD PRIORITY ZONES TO REDUCE VIOLENCE

Recife is experimenting with children's priority zones around local community centres. The intervention includes 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* is supporting cities to implement ambitious urban reforms. To help integrate the needs of babies, toddlers and caregivers, the Bernard van Leer Foundation supported the production of a set of guidelines aimed at planners, designers and decision makers. Focusing on neighbourhood planning, routes and destinations and indicators for the wellbeing of families, they are being applied in training sessions with technical staff initially in **Pune** and **Udaipur**.

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

TWO OF THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS FOR A YOUNG CHILD TO DEVELOP TO HIS OR HER FULL POTENTIAL ARE:

FREQUENT, WARM, RESPONSIVE INTERACTIONS WITH LOVING ADULTS AND A SAFE, STIMULATING PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT.

URBAN PLANNING AND DESIGN CAN CONTRIBUTE TO BOTH.



Improving the conditions for the child's healthy development

The physical environment – natural or built – impacts on the wellbeing of both child and caregiver, and the caregiver's ability to care. Environmental factors that influence child development include water quality, access to sanitation, access to healthy food sources, air quality, noise level, exposure to nature, and exposure to adverse weather conditions such as extreme heat.

Improving caregiver wellbeing for better interactions

Environments that make caregivers feel safe, comfortable and supported enable them to spend more quality time with their babies and toddlers. This means designing spaces for behaviors such as play, storytelling and family-friendly events, and thinking through the impact of urban environments on the physical and mental health of those taking care of the youngest ones.

Among the many environmental factors impacting child development, Urban95 focuses on **air quality** and **exposure to nature**.



AIR QUALITY

Insuring air quality that meets WHO 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' wellbeing.

Idea 1

VEHICULAR TRAFFIC CONTROLS IN TARGETED GEOGRAPHIES

CITY DEPARTMENTS INVOLVED:

Culture

Education

Health

Parks

Planning

Social Services

Transportation

Traffic has a strong impact on babies, toddlers and their caregivers' health and wellbeing. It generates air pollution at the height of toddlers. Caregivers worry about the real and perceived danger of collisions. And cars take up much available public space in our streets.





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 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.

RELATION TO CAREGIVER WELLBEING AND CAREGIVING BEHAVIOURS



UTILISATION OF SERVICES: Reducing the prevalence of traffic near services improves air quality and makes it more attractive 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 allows for more outdoor play spaces close to where families live.



Examples



TRAFFIC CALMING IN ALL SHAPES AND FORMS, ALLOWING 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 for 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 *Superblock* project: cars are now allowed only on main arteries, making inner streets available for other activities such as play, programming, greening, cycling and walking



CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE, ADVOCACY AND EDUCATION TO GET 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 for faster cyclists to overtake cyclists with young children and are widened at junctions whenever possible for increased safety. Cycling education is integrated from a very young age in formal curriculums, and facilities such as traffic playgrounds offer support for parents to teach their children.

Tirana, Albania, is building a grid of connected bike lanes from scratch and teaching kindergarten children to cycle.

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. Their lower height means children are 37% more exposed to air pollution than adults. It impacts on their physical and cognitive development.





Targeted interventions around the places where pregnant women, young children and caregivers spend the most time can reduce exposure to air pollution. These include traffic calming, greening streets, proposing alternative walking routes avoiding heavy traffic, or – currently being tested – street and building design solutions that increase air flows.

To maximise impact, cities need data about where babies, toddlers and caregivers spend most time. Engaging families in community-based air monitoring, and sampling air quality at children’s head height, can help gather the right data.



RELATION TO CAREGIVER WELLBEING 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: 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 wellbeing.

CAREGIVER-INFANT PLAY: Reducing air pollution encourages outdoor play for families with young children.



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

London 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 NEAR KINDERGARTENS

Paris is acting to reroute vehicles away from kindergartens after a study showed those located next to roads with heavy traffic have levels of air pollution 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

STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE 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 wellbeing of their caregivers. Natural elements in play areas, or playable elements in parks, encourage children to explore and interact with nature.



Green spaces that are large enough to be immersed in particularly help to 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.

Interventions include promoting natural elements in streets along routes taken by families, 'pocket-parks' to rest, play and explore, and larger destination parks with facilities allowing for 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.

Cities must ensure that systems to maintain natural areas are financed and functioning, to ensure safety and minimise risks of exposure to nature such as stray animals or disease-bearing insects.



RELATION TO CAREGIVER WELLBEING AND CAREGIVING BEHAVIOURS

UTILISATION OF SERVICES: More well-maintained green spaces increases access to nature, as will greening routes to other destinations.

CAREGIVER MENTAL HEALTH: Exposure to nature can help caregivers to control their stress.

CAREGIVER-INFANT PLAY: Integrating natural play elements in playgrounds and parks supports 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 produce and sensitizes families to healthy eating.



Examples



PLAY WITH NATURAL ELEMENTS

The Tumbling Bay playground in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, **London, UK**, has been designed entirely in 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 and provide advice, support and programming.

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**, has 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. They also serve in this case to avoid a conflict of uses. Without the hills, the area would very likely be taken over by soccer players and therefore be unavailable for 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.

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

In **Rotterdam, Netherlands**, new parents can pay to 'adopt' a tree. In **Tirana, Albania**, they can also sponsor a tree and plant it themselves in the city's new orbital forest, a green ring 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 from local species and must be planted in a private space (garden, nursery, school, office grounds) within the city limits.



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 environmental awareness.

In **Antwerp, Belgium**, *Kind en Samenleving* is turning small, sterile 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 GUIDANCE FOR URBAN95





WHAT IS THIS SECTION FOR?

This implementation guidance addresses the “How?” It focuses on how to change systems of service delivery and urban planning to have a positive impact on caregiver wellbeing and caregiving behaviours, ultimately promoting the healthy development of babies and toddlers.

WHO IS THIS SECTION FOR?

This document is designed for **1.** decision-makers in government, and **2.** implementers such as project managers, technical staff within and outside government, and anyone closely involved in implementation, such as NGOs or technical partners.

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT?

Feel free to navigate through the framework as you need and adapt to fit your situation. You may want to browse the elements from a high level or dive deep into a few case studies and zoom-ins. Case studies give examples of how interventions went through the implementation process in their own context. Zoom-ins focus on how an intervention did at one specific point of the process. Case studies and zoom-ins will be available soon, in the online version that is currently being developed.

THE AIM TO SCALE

Each Urban95 implementation journey is unique. Yet they all have one thing in common: **the aim to scale.** This framework **focuses on scale** – as an objective, an independent action in the process, and as a part of each of the other actions.



PRINCIPLES

Three principles – **data-driven decision making**, **behavioural science** and **workforce** – run through the entire implementation framework.



DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING

Data strengthens decision-making, enables learning and makes it easier to scale. Relevant data can help to convince leadership, simplify decision-making and accountability, allow you to learn from testing and share learning, and pinpoint the best pathways to scale. Carefully selecting the right data from the beginning greatly increases the impact. This includes gathering the right data for baseline and design and choosing the right indicators to track implementation and evaluate impact, both while testing and scaling.



BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE

Insights from behavioural science can multiply impact. Urban95 aims to change specific behaviours in the short term to support better child development in the long term. Behavioural science should be explicitly included in every programme to improve the effectiveness of behaviour change. Behavioural science is relevant to achieving intervention objectives and improving project management processes, advocacy and communication.

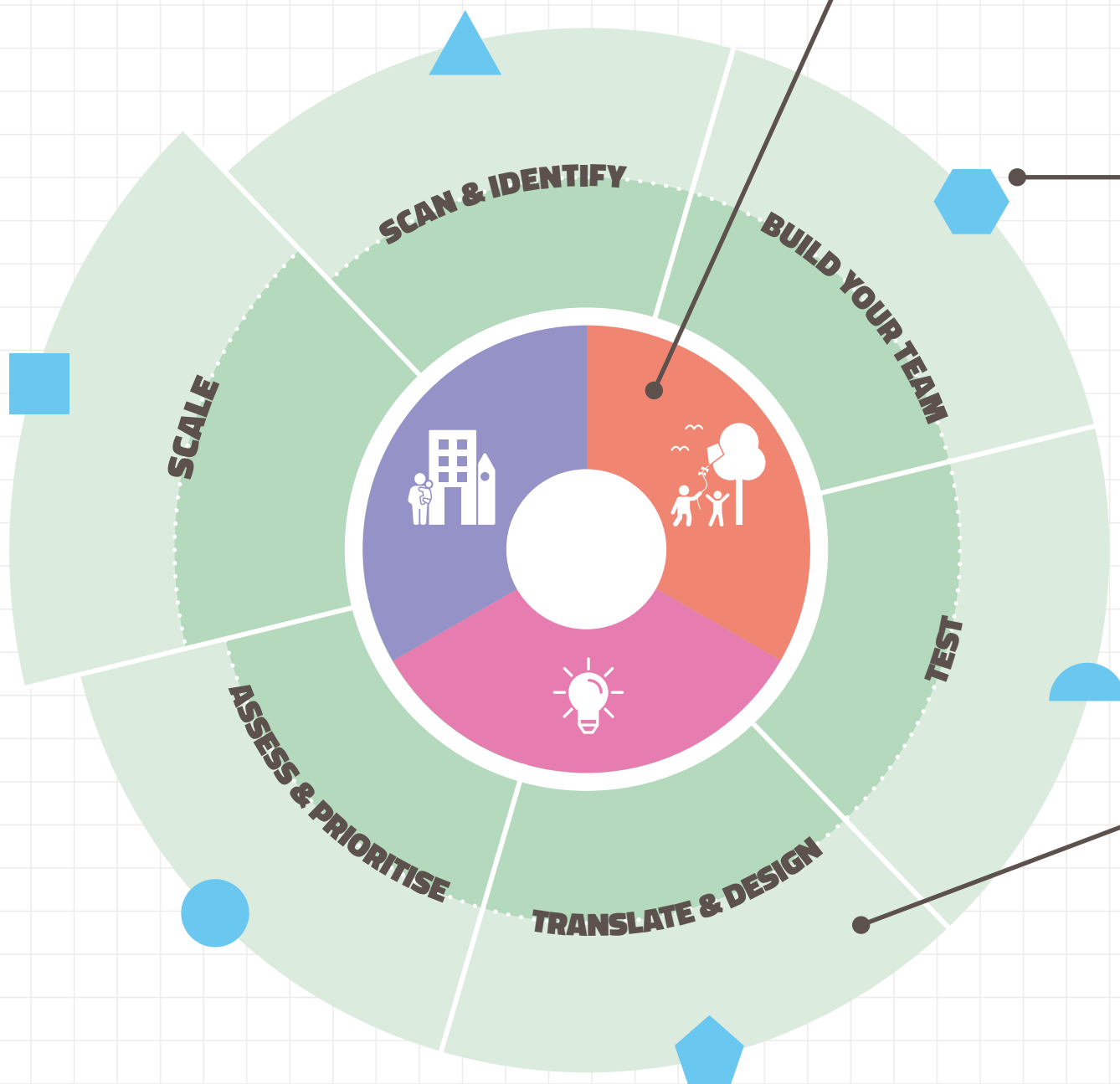


WORKFORCE

The workforce is core to programme success. Urban95 is trying to change the systems that influence caregiving behaviours and caregiver wellbeing. From service delivery to the built environment, these systems are designed, planned, managed and modified by early childhood and urban planning and design professionals. Training and supporting them, and influencing the way they think about babies, toddlers and their caregivers, is core to the success of any intervention. This should occur before they enter the workforce and throughout their careers. Focusing on the workforce's practices, wellbeing and skills helps to anchor change by increasing the ownership and sustainability of an initiative.

IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

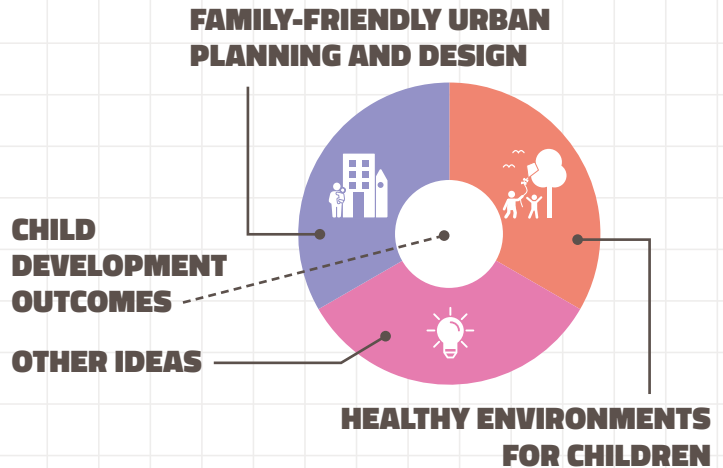
Built on **lessons learned** from Urban95, this framework is a tool to support your planning and thinking, it is not a set of rigid guidelines.



PROGRAMMES

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

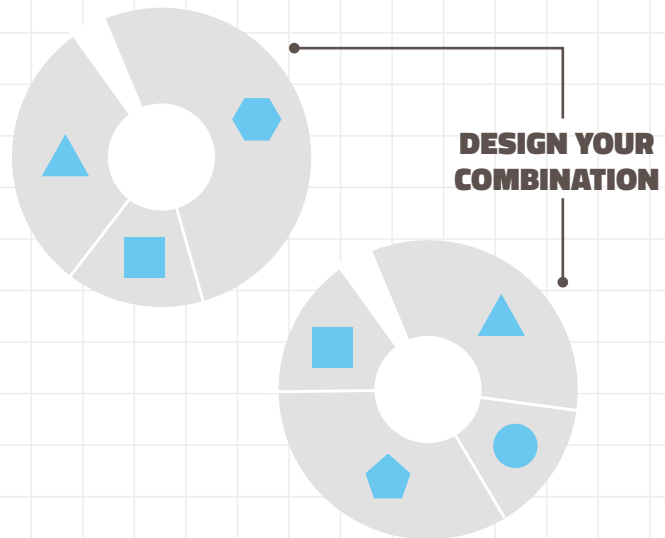
What are you implementing? Urban95 programmes of all shapes, whether inspired by the *Ideas for Action* section of this Starter Kit or from other sources.



ACTIONS

The actions in this framework do not follow each other in sequence, as **implementation is not linear**. They may overlap, merge and have differing weights depending on the project's 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.



ACTIVITIES

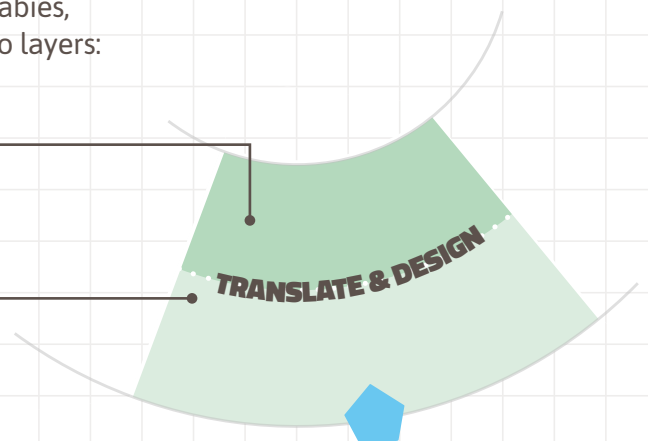
For each action, you will find detailed descriptions, principles to keep in mind, and management tips for the highest impact on babies, toddlers and caregivers. These insights are divided into two layers:

ON THE GROUND *Implementation*

Actions that directly relate to babies, toddlers and their caregivers.

OFF THE GROUND *Project Management*

Actions that support and sustain implementation, such as capacity building, strategising, communications and storytelling.





SCAN AND IDENTIFY

Understand the context and define the right frame for implementation. Consider what data sets you should focus on, and how to use them to identify objectives, areas and types of intervention most impactful on babies and toddlers.

ON THE GROUND

- **Assess the city's available data and identify what is most relevant to tracking early childhood development.** It is likely to include a mix of data on social services, health, education, environment, socio-economic indicators, transportation and public space usage, but the relevance of each set can vary by context. For example, in a city with clean air and high social inequality, it may be more relevant to focus on data from social services than air quality to identify room for improvement.
- **Scan the city's early childhood situation, both what works and what needs improvement.** Consider specifically public space, transportation and service delivery from the perspective of caregivers, babies and toddlers. Possible tool: Urban95 lens (Urban95 diagnostic tool available in summer 2019).
- **Analyse the experience of caregivers moving through the city with babies and toddlers.** Understand their journeys by holding workshops with caregivers, with a specific focus on stress points and factors influencing the journeys. Possible tool: User Journeys (available in summer 2019).
- **Identify areas of the city with the highest concentration of vulnerable families.** This includes mapping where babies, toddlers and caregivers live and comparing it to income levels and other vulnerability indicators.
- **Identify what types of intervention to consider.** Bringing together the data on the location of the most vulnerable families with the data on early childhood in relation to public space, transportation, service delivery and other relevant sectors will help you decide what type of interventions should be explored and where. For example, if the areas with most vulnerable families are also the areas with less access to green spaces, you may consider working on improving access to nature.

OFF THE GROUND

- **Identify local experts in early childhood and urban planning** that could work together. Preferably they have some familiarity with both sectors.
- **Identify outcomes for babies, toddlers and caregivers** that would be most impactful in your context and create a story to explain the benefits of focusing on these outcomes for the various agendas involved.

- **Identify potential scaling strategies.** Set scaling objectives and identify who and what resources you would need, how it could be done, and what would be the main challenges.
- **Review existing initiatives** and determine their potential to integrate Urban95. For example, it could be initiatives already focusing on families, or on health and the built environment, or on women and children's access to the city.
- **Identify what sectors and organisations you need to engage with outside of urban planning to better support early childhood development.** Typically, these would be sectors already in direct contact with caregivers and babies, such as health, education or social services, but could also be youth movements, environmental NGOs, national governments or community organisations. Understand their challenges, trends, stresses and funding streams. Identify which are the most influential on child development, either by impacting children directly or caregiver wellbeing and caregiving behaviours.
- **Sensitise leaders and secure their political support** and budget engagement for cross-sectoral early childhood policy.
- **Analyse the planning processes in your city and identify moments of opportunity for Urban95 to have the greatest impact.** How often are municipal plans and regulations updated? Who updates them? Is it a technical or participatory process? This will help you identify leaders to engage with and plan timelines, reports and publications.
- **Identify sources of funding** available to you and your identified stakeholders. Consider national government budgets, international organisations, foundations and the private sector.
- **Align stakeholders' visions and priorities,** mapping overlaps among their visions and with existing initiatives or projects. Develop 'co-benefits' discourses by identifying messages, interventions and data that could contribute to advancing both the child's agenda and someone else's agenda, for example, reducing gender inequality, or increasing climate resilience. Linking up agendas can also increase the amount of funding available.
- **Advocate for more visibility for babies, toddlers and caregivers,** for example, by using communications campaigns to generate public demand or build coalitions. Advocacy can also help with securing funds. Get in touch with the newspaper and other media who are interested in these topics and share your perspective and objectives with them.



BUILD YOUR TEAM

Build a solid team with diverse competencies and experiences, and make sure everyone is aligned. Design your team composition for cross-sectoral work.

ON THE GROUND

- **Identify and engage with community organisations and/or frontline workers within the identified areas.** It is important that some people in your team not only have an understanding of the area but are integrated into some local networks. If possible, directly including representation of families with young children will help with scanning, designing and implementing. Working with local representatives multiplies the impact on behaviours, as people tend to trust their peers more than government experts.

OFF THE GROUND

- **Establish cooperation mechanisms between the different stakeholders and implementers.** This can be regular meetings or ensuring a role within the municipality dedicated to cross-sectoral early childhood action. It is preferable if the local government manages and is held accountable for this cooperation mechanism.
- **Build a team with complementary expertise and diverse perspectives.** Include early childhood specialists, urban planners and designers, government staff, and people well versed in monitoring and evaluation, communications, behavioural science, complex systems management and data analysis. The composition of the team will depend on your context and what you are trying to achieve, but it will be cross-sectoral.
- **Make sure the team works well together** by providing opportunities for them to learn together about early childhood development. For example, an Urban95 Study Tour can be a team-building exercise that also gathers actionable new knowledge.
- **Clarify roles.** Which organisation is responsible for which tasks, and who leads implementation? In some cases, it could be city government, in other cases an NGO.
- **Turn leaders into champions by supporting their growing interest and knowledge.** For example, identify with them their impact on young children and provide them with opportunities to share their achievements or learn through executive education courses.

- **Support the integration of early childhood principles** at all levels of decision-making and across civic agencies when building your teams. How much influence do your team members have in their respective agencies and organisations?





ASSESS AND PRIORITISE

Define impact, choose what interventions to focus on, and how to monitor and evaluate them. Refine and prioritise your objectives.

ON THE GROUND

- **Select objectives and impact indicators through a community and/or stakeholder engagement process.** Make sure the impact indicators can be used in the short term (monitoring) and for long-term impact demonstration. For Urban95, impact indicators focus on changes in caregiver wellbeing (utilisation of services, mental health) and caregiving behaviours (such as play, interaction, healthy feeding practices or non-violent discipline).
- **Select indicators to track implementation progress,** such as the number of changes completed in the built environment, or the amount of investment spent.
- **Get more granular data.** In the selected areas, collect data on early childhood at the local level, in line with your objectives, impact indicators and implementation indicators. Use the data gathered in “Scan and Identify” and dive deeper through data gathering methods including surveys or observation tools such as the ‘Toolkit for measuring urban experiences of young children’ available on our website. When gathering data for spatial interventions, think both of routes and destinations.
- **Assess the community’s needs for different services and activities** now and into the future. This should be done by combining quantitative data and qualitative insights gathered through engagement processes.
- **Use the data to prioritise key intervention locations.** They, and the routes to and between them, should be chosen to have the greatest impact on the wellbeing of families with young children. Consider how existing assets, resources and investment already allocated to the neighbourhood could be leveraged for impact.
- **Establish a baseline.** Adapt the larger project objectives and indicators to each area location and collect the data you need.

OFF THE GROUND

- **Find overlaps with other agendas, identify co-benefits and integrate them in your planning.** Local communities or stakeholders will have their own objectives that may differ from yours. Identify the overlaps and develop ways to respond: for example, integrate them in the choice of indicators, so the data speaks to both your and their objectives. Develop ways to communicate publicly about the project using a broad agenda to widen support. For example, if you are partnering with

an organisation that improves public space design to reduce crime, connect their interventions, objectives and indicators with child development outcomes such as a greater presence of women with babies in public spaces.

- **Refine and share the vision, objectives and scale-up strategy with the stakeholders,** and clearly state the indicators chosen. Make sure to get buy-in and align everyone's visions. Ensuring alignment and identifying risks increases the chance of successful implementation, especially in projects with a large number of stakeholders.
- **Hold managers accountable and monitor impact and implementation indicators** through regular intersectoral meetings. Consider appointing someone within the municipality to organise, coordinate and follow-up on these meetings.
- **Develop an integrated data management system** to allow decision-makers to make smart decisions. This means linking up data systems from various departments and allowing for indicators to track progress across sectors. Visualising the data in one place – in a dashboard – can help prioritise interventions. It is also a useful tool to communicate progress back to frontline workers and develop their sense of ownership over the initiative. Some of the data can also be used for external communications.





TRANSLATE AND DESIGN

Apply the cross-sectoral expertise within your team to design interventions that best impact caregiver wellbeing and caregiving behaviours.

ON THE GROUND

- **Design each location's intervention with impact on child development in mind.** Build your design around caregiver wellbeing factors and caregiving behaviours you want to support.
- **Design for behavioural change.** What are the behaviours you are trying to support and what design, programme and management elements will support them? Your impact indicators should prioritise changes in behaviour rather than changes in the quality of the space.
- **Design routes, not only destinations.** Think of access and use for families with young children in addition to designing a space that works well for them.
- **Design for adaptation and scale.** Identify the core elements of the design that would be hard to modify and those that can be changed easily. Think of which elements would be easily scalable – that is, maintaining the same quality while minimising the increase in costs, complexity and capacity needed.
- **Grab low-hanging fruits.** Prioritise simple, cheap interventions that have a measurable impact. Even if they are small, they will contribute to showing change and build interest for longer, more complex interventions.
- **Design simultaneously for quick-wins and medium- and long-term impact.** Being able to show progress right from the start is key to keeping momentum and commitment. For example, choose impact indicators that can be tracked right from the beginning, or a variety of indicators spanning short term to long term. You can also choose indicators only meant to track implementation, which can quickly be used to show change – even without yet showing impact.

OFF THE GROUND

- **Draft the design brief,** setting the objectives and recruitment requirements. Consider cost-effectiveness and clearly identify fixed costs and variable costs. Identify risks of exceeding budgets and consider alternative design solutions if needed.

- **Draft a maintenance and events programming brief**, thinking through costs, sustainability, scale and impact on babies and toddlers. An intervention may look good but must be well maintained to impact caregiver wellbeing and caregiving behaviours.
- **Draft a monitoring and evaluation brief** that considers both impact indicators – tracking caregiver wellbeing and caregiving behaviours – and implementation indicators – tracking implementation progress.
- **Continuously build the capacity of designers, technical staff and management staff.** This can be done through formal training programmes, invitations to present or participate in events, and projects bringing organisations together across borders or sectors to encourage cross-pollination of ideas. One way to increase the efficiency of capacity training is to match it with the needs of the technical staff: they are more likely to use new knowledge that speaks to their individual interest and shows how it impacts on babies and toddlers.



TEST

Refine your design and processes. You will likely need several iterative rounds of designing and testing. Remember that you are testing to reach scale.

ON THE GROUND

- **Iterative testing:** implement and monitor the interventions, maintenance systems and events programming simultaneously. Use your impact indicators to review the impact of the intervention on caregiver wellbeing and caregiving behaviours. Redesign and re-test to improve the outcomes. Use your implementation indicators to review how well the intervention is working in terms of management and adapt to improve.
- **Engage stakeholders, municipal government, and the community in testing.** Sometimes data can be gathered by the community, increasing their ownership of a project. Make sure to integrate them in the adaptation. It may be useful to engage in short qualitative surveys or interviews with users. This means including the population targeted by the initiative but also the other users of the space. In a public space intervention, it could be the police or street vendors, for example. They have a role in how the space is used and their support is needed for the success of the test. They can also provide a different perspective helping to solve some of your challenges.
- **When pilots reach conclusive results, build permanent changes** in the areas of intervention. Plan for future adaptation if needed, ensure a continuous budget for maintenance, and plan for evaluations at a later stage.

OFF THE GROUND

- **Tell the story:** communicate from the very first day data, pictures and results from pilots to maintain momentum and buy-in from stakeholders and decision-makers.
- **Find the press before they find you:** communicating your objectives, results and motivations can help balance the public debate around your interventions, especially when the opposition is loud.
- **Document the testing process, preferably in a participatory manner.** This can be done by keeping track of meeting notes, recording community meetings and events, interviewing key implementers, and keeping track of failures and subsequent changes.

- **Draft management learnings and guidance for scale** – what are the scalable elements, what are the key practices to scale, how much did it cost? A good scalable element strongly contributes to impact, is essential to implementation, and maintains quality while minimising the increase in costs, complexity and capacity needed.





SCALE

Plan and design for scale from the start. Focus on ensuring quality while scaling. Anchor the intervention into systems to sustain it at scale.

ON THE GROUND

- **Revise the scale-up strategy and turn it into an operational scale-up plan**, with a clear timeline, budget, impact indicators, monitoring strategy and communications strategy.
- **Make sure that scaling does not lower quality.** Review the plans, providing content input when needed and taking on a monitoring role if you are not the implementer.
- **Monitor the scale-up process closely** and be ready to tweak it.
- **Support leaders in specific technical elements of scale-up.** For example, by establishing or funding a technical position in charge of early childhood training for municipal designers.
- **Draft or adapt policy recommendations, technical standards, and design guidelines to include specific learning for early childhood development.** This embeds early childhood principles into regular systems and enhances sustainability.
- **Expand the initiative to incorporate wider community needs if needed.** This sustains and increases political and public interest and may expand funding options for the scale-up.
- **Scan other cities for innovations** and opportunities for improvement.

OFF THE GROUND

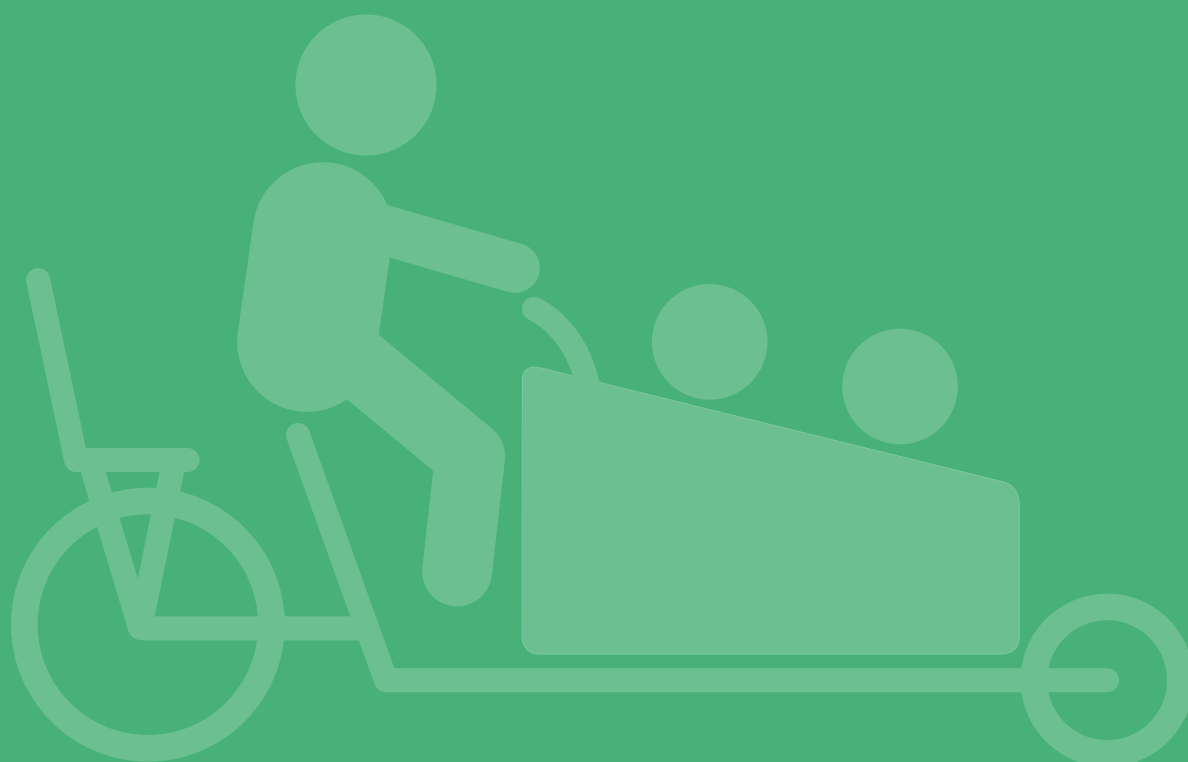
- **Support the set-up of an operational scaling team** and build their and their leaders' capacity.
- **Organise visits and trainings for leaders and technical staff from other locations or institutions targeted for scale-up.** Seeing the intervention and asking questions to their peers supports replication and establishes interpersonal relationships between implementers. This provides inspiration but also builds their technical networks.
- **Evaluate outcomes in the short, medium and long term.** Has the scale-up maintained quality?

- **Organise conferences, workshops and trainings to share learnings and show impact.** Identify the audience most likely to bring the idea to scale.
- **Engage in advocacy and communications** about the benefits of the intervention for the city as a whole, and specifically for caregivers and their children. Make sure to address the concerns of those who are more likely to oppose the project too.
- **Document, publish and disseminate.** Build or refine a story tailored for decision-makers from various sectors.
- **Contribute to peer-learning.** Spread the word to your peers and share resources and your story with them. Let them benefit from your experience.



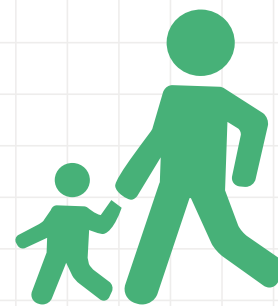


ABOUT THE BERNARD VAN LEER FOUNDATION





A GOOD START FOR ALL CHILDREN



All babies and toddlers, especially the most disadvantaged, deserve a good start in life.

A good start puts each individual child on the path to realising their full potential and, collectively, sets the foundation for a healthy, creative and peaceful society.

The best way to give children a good start in life is to support the people who care for them beginning in, or even before, pregnancy. Evidence from neuroscience, public health, education and economics shows that when babies and toddlers have stable, responsive caregivers, they can flourish even in the most difficult circumstances. This requires universal policies and programmes for all children, but also targeting the most disadvantaged for extra support.

WHO IS THE BERNARD VAN LEER FOUNDATION?

We are an independent foundation working worldwide to inspire and inform large-scale action to improve the health and wellbeing of babies, toddlers and the people who care for them.

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 change the lives of hundreds of thousands or millions of children and families.

HOW WE WORK

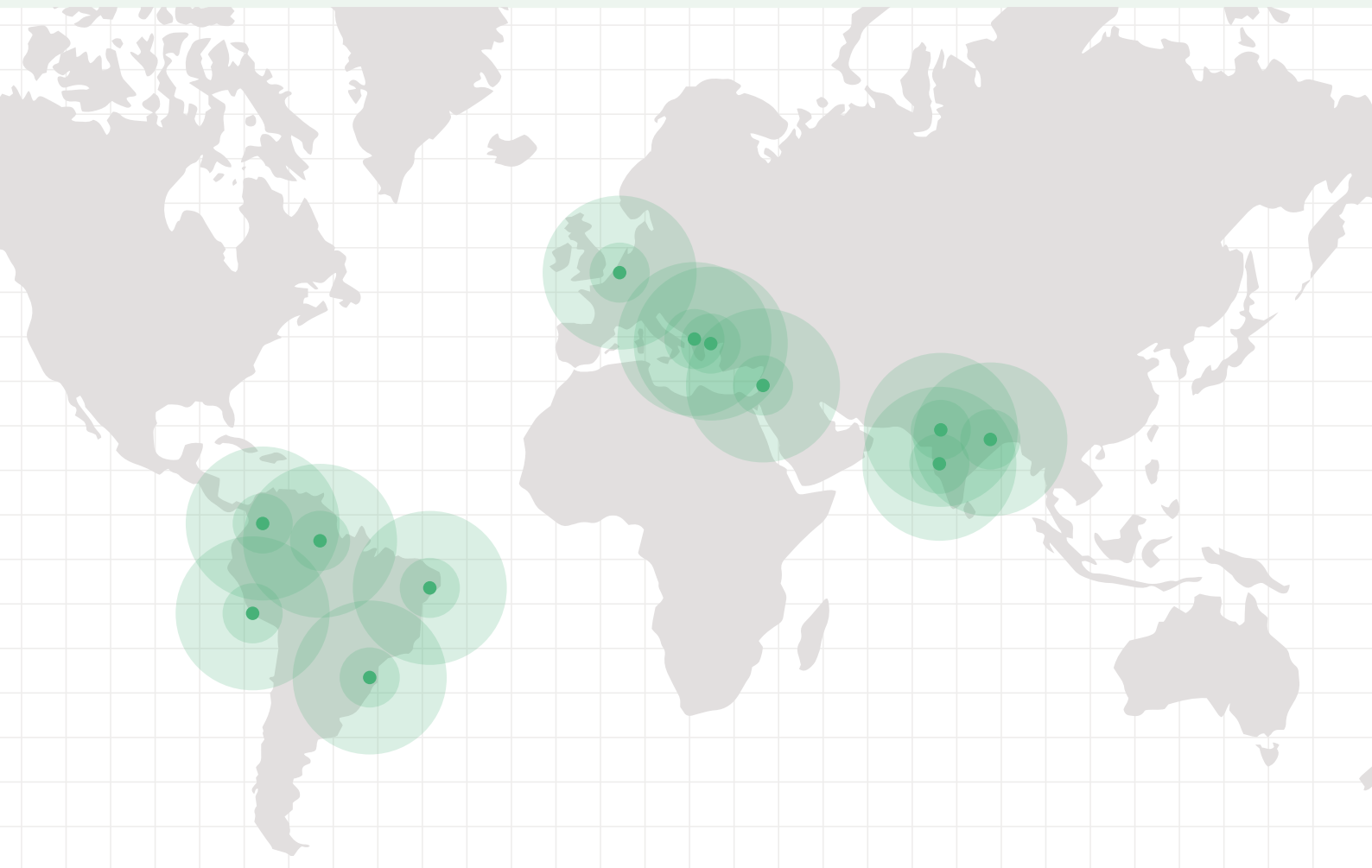
- **We are constantly scanning the world for innovations and emerging leaders that can achieve large-scale social change.** Building on the latest science, we adapt and test promising ideas in a set of socially, economically and culturally diverse countries and cities around the world. Outside these places, we are always searching for opportunities to share what we are learning to help accelerate large-scale change for babies, toddlers and the people who care for them.
- **We go beyond pilot projects and seek to address the complex challenges of large-scale social change.** We work with our partners to analyse and address the political, social, technical and financial obstacles to large-scale change. A central part of this process is building a strong frontline workforce and supporting managers to drive an ongoing cycle of design, implementation, monitoring and adjustment. The selection of reliable, meaningful performance indicators is critical.



WHERE WE WORK

Geographically 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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