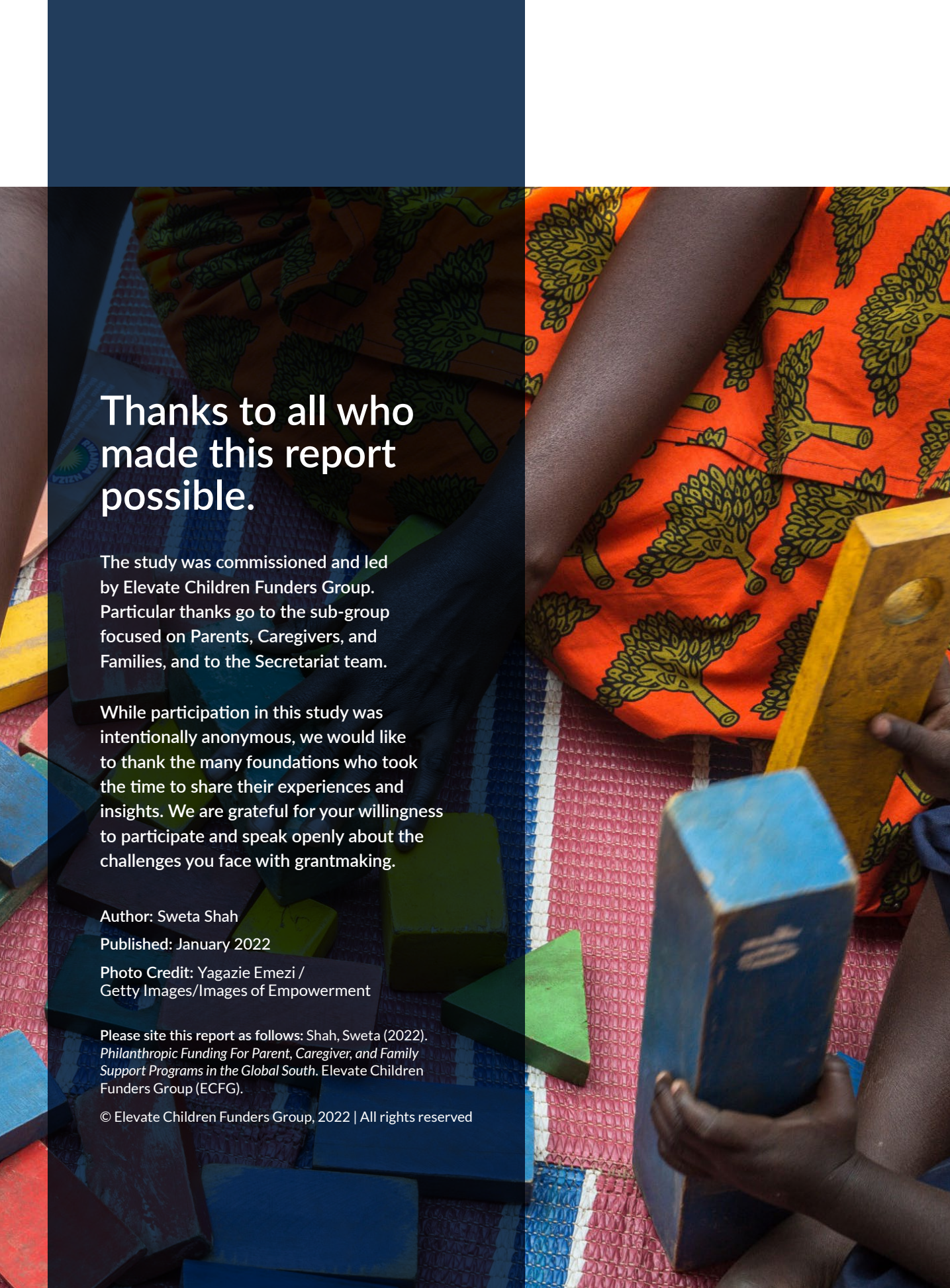




Philanthropic Funding

For Parent, Caregiver, and Family
Support Programs in the Global South

Authored by Sweta Shah for Elevate Children Funders Group
January 2022



Thanks to all who made this report possible.

The study was commissioned and led by Elevate Children Funders Group. Particular thanks go to the sub-group focused on Parents, Caregivers, and Families, and to the Secretariat team.

While participation in this study was intentionally anonymous, we would like to thank the many foundations who took the time to share their experiences and insights. We are grateful for your willingness to participate and speak openly about the challenges you face with grantmaking.

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Executive Summary

“Every child needs at last one adult who is irrationally crazy about him or her.”

-American Psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner¹

The evidence is clear that from the moment a child is conceived, he or she needs their parents, caregivers, and/or families to survive, thrive, and meet their developmental potential.² This has only been made more clear with the COVID-19 pandemic highlighting the critical role of parents, caregivers, and families in children’s lives.³ As a global network of philanthropic organizations seeking to serve the world’s most marginalized children, Elevate Children Funders Group (ECFG) recognizes this critical role.

Elevate Children Funders Group (ECFG), a global network of philanthropic organizations, envisions a world where all children and youth can thrive, exercise their rights, and live a life free from adversity. ECFG believes that for children to soar, they need to be in safe, protective, and nurturing families, communities, and societies.

ECFG identified the need to understand philanthropic investments that support the adults whose behaviors, skills, and well-being impact children’s growth and well-being.

ECFG commissioned this exercise to map foundation investments in parenting and caregiving across the Global South. This mapping explored the who, what, when, where, and how of these investments.

Conducted between September to December 2021, the mapping used a mixed methods approach that included a survey, key informant interviews (KIIs), and a review of open source organizational documents. Overall, the study included 23 surveys, 15 KIIs, and over 20 open sourced documents and information on websites.

ECFG established parameters and a framing for this study, focusing on 1. Investments in the Global South in stable development and humanitarian/crises contexts; 2. Support to parents, caregivers, and families that focuses on child outcomes; 3. A definition of parents, caregivers, and families that includes those adults that are biological or non-biological, but provide care and support daily to children; and 4. A life cycle approach that considers supports to adults who have children from early childhood through adolescence. These parameters also posed limitations that could be further explored in future mapping studies.

Eighteen foundations reported their approximate investments into parent, caregiver and family support programs in the Global South. The total investments from these foundations is approximately \$268 million. Of this \$268 million, a single foundation invests approximately \$138 million, with the balance provided by the remaining foundations combined. While the investments spanned all regions of

the world, this mapping found geographic clusters of investment, and regions with funding gaps. This overall figure is only a snapshot in time, so this report highlights survey and interview data regarding key activities and outcomes supported by foundations, trends in grantmaking, and fluctuations in investments overtime.

Furthermore, while the COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging for all, many funders invested more during the last two years in parent, caregiver, and family support programs as they saw how parents across the globe were supporting their children. Many surveyed foundations recognized the potential for this 2-year period to increase understanding, interest, and investment for funding parent, caregiver, and family support programs.

This study also found that most respondents investing in this area are seeking to influence early childhood development, learning, and violence prevention outcomes. KIIs further revealed that, even among those foundations that invest in parent, caregiver, and family support programs, it was difficult for many of them to distinguish between support to these adults and direct support to children.

Some foundations mentioned that their full investment might be higher than reported.

ECFG identified two important sub-areas for investigation in this study: gender and disability. Through the survey, KIIs, and document reviews, there was greater prioritization and investment in gender focused programs, and less in disability focused programs. However, both areas have limited investment when compared to overall funds for parent, caregiver, and family support programs.

Investments in gender transformative programs, including fatherhood programs, are on the rise, while the investment in disability has remained low, with little prospect among the surveyed foundations to increase.

However, despite these investments in parent, caregiver, and family support programs in the Global South, key organizational and external barriers to investment were uncovered. Included in this report are the insights shared by participants regarding how to tackle these barriers and create more champions for this work, ultimately increasing investments.

Parent, caregiver, and family support programs have huge potential to place every child on a positive life trajectory, while also helping foundations achieve their priorities. Through collaborative efforts, ECFG hopes to increase understanding and investment in this area so all children and youth can thrive, exercise their rights, and live a life free from adversity.

Introduction



Science makes the critical role that parents, caregivers, and families play in children's development and lives clear.⁴ Children, especially the youngest, often spend most of their time with these adults and depend on them for most of their early needs.⁵ As children grow and become more independent, they still need their parents, caregivers, and families, who can provide the safety, security, love, and constant support they need to explore, take risks, learn, and thrive. These critically important adults can be biological parents, grandparents, aunts/uncles, older siblings, or non-biological stepparents, and relatives.

In this study, respondents indicated that a better understanding of existing and emerging science has increased their overall interest and investment in parent, caregiver, and family programs, both in their own organizations and others over the last few years. Results highlighted in this report show that the increase in interest and investment has been most pronounced in the early childhood development and protection from violence sectors. Respondents also highlighted that they are seeing parent and caregiver investments contributing to the goals they want to achieve for children more broadly. According to KIIs, COVID-19 illuminated

to funders and the world the critical role of parents and caregivers in young children's lives. When the Covid-19 pandemic began, and many children were unable to go to school and day care, parents and caregivers took on a whole range of new and unexpected roles in children's lives: teachers, tutors, day care workers, and more - often while juggling jobs, uncertain finances, and caring for other family members.

Elevate Children Funders Group

Elevate Children Funders Group (ECFG), established in 2011, is a global network of 20 philanthropic organizations exclusively focused on the well-being and rights of children and youth. ECFG focuses on the most marginalized and vulnerable to abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence, from birth to 18 years. They envision a world where children and youth can thrive, exercise their rights, and live a life free from adversity. ECFG looks at the whole child in the context of families, communities, and other political and social systems and works on the premise that "we are better together" and that, by working together, they can drive greater sustainable change than individual foundations working alone.

ECFG supports children and youth by building a community of funders and creating spaces for:

- Greater learning and effectiveness how we use our individual resources.
- More collaboration and alignment across our philanthropic strategies.
- Collective action for more and better funding, and support for our wider field.

Between 2011 and 2020, ECFG members contributed more than \$1.2 billion to children and youth facing adversity globally.

Purpose and Audience of Mapping Exercise

As ECFG seeks to support the whole child in the context of families and communities, a group of members started a sub-group focused on parents, caregivers, and families in order to learn from each other and help increase funding to this area. The initial idea was to understand members' funding priorities and encourage greater collaboration and alignment among members.

The mapping exercise conducted for this report builds on ECFG's sub-group discussions. The group sought to understand philanthropic investments in parenting,

caregiver, family support programs, before they could consider what could be done to increase and align investment in this area. Therefore, the primary audience for this report includes ECFG members and other non-member funders (foundations or other donors) with an interest in parent, caregiver, and family support. Funders that already fund parent and caregiver support programs and those that do not but have an interest in learning more, can all benefit from this study. Additionally, government officials and organizations that implement or conduct advocacy in support of parents, caregivers, and families in the Global South can also benefit from the patterns uncovered in this study.

FROM THE FIELD

Nurturing Care Framework

The Nurturing Care Framework for Early Childhood Development, launched in 2018 by the World Health Organization, UNICEF, and the World Bank, in collaboration with the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health and the Early Childhood Development Action Network, highlights the critical role and connection between health, nutrition, learning, protection and responsive caregiving.⁶ It highlights the critical role of parents, caregivers, and families in children's development and well-being.

Parameters of the Mapping Exercise

Since parent, caregiver, and family support programs include myriad types of investments, ECFG established a set of parameters. While there could be a range of funding for parent, caregiver, and family support programs in all these different types of funders, including foundations to bilateral organizations, this mapping exercise focused on private philanthropic organizations, consistent with ECFG's focus on the role of philanthropy in generating more and better money for children.

Support for parents, caregivers, and families can be broad and inclusive of various types of programming. Any support given to them can be important for children's development and well-being. The ECFG Secretariat and sub-group therefore decided that there needed to be parameters for the mapping conducted for this report. The parameters included the types of programming for parents, caregivers, and families that had strong associations with children's development and well-being.

The four broad parameters for this mapping thus included:

Definition of parents/caregivers and families

In each cultural context, care and protection of children will be different. Therefore, parent/family support programs can be those for any type of parent/caregiver that are in children's daily lives. This includes biological parents, grandparents, stepparents, adoptive parents, foster parents, aunts/uncles, and/or siblings. These parents/ caregivers could be biological or may not be biological.

Contexts for programming

The mapping covered all types of contexts (including lower- and middle-income countries) in the Global South, both those that are considered a stable development context and those in humanitarian/crisis context.

Life course approach

The mapping will consider a life course approach to parent/caregiver/ family support programs that enable these individuals to support their children from early childhood through adolescence.

Programming for parenting/caregiving and family support included the following:

- Services to increase parents/families' knowledge and skills about parenting (young children or older children, including adolescents).
- Supports for parents'/caregivers' mental health and psychosocial well-being. (This can include individual or peer group support.)
- Supports for pregnant women (ie. antenatal care that includes learning about support for child development, and early child stimulation).
- Support for mother and newborn childcare that includes learning about/support for child development, breastfeeding, early stimulation, etc.
- Supports for adolescent parents or adolescent parents-to-be.
- Supports for older siblings that care for young siblings that enable them to be better caregivers for their younger siblings.
- Support for parent advocacy or support groups/networks.
- Child welfare/alternative care peer caregiver support programming.
- Support for caregivers of children with disabilities.
- Fatherhood programs that enable fathers to better care for and support their children's development and well-being.

Programming that is associated with children's well-being and could include support to parents, caregivers and families that were not part of the mapping included: 1. economic supports for parents, caregivers, and families such as women's economic development, job training and literacy/numeracy support; 2. sexual, reproductive health rights education for adults and adolescents; 3. other support for parents/caregivers/

families where the ultimate goal is not focused on children's well-being and development; 4. general health programming for adults; and 5. housing, food, water/sanitation/hygiene programs. While these types of supports are important and can impact the environment a child is born and raised in, the ECFG Secretariat and core group decided that it would be outside the parameters of this mapping exercise.



Methodology and Limitations

The mapping exercise used mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative) to obtain a snapshot of funding for parent, caregiver, and family support programs in the Global South among philanthropic organizations. Few philanthropic organizations clearly state their priority for parent, caregiver, and family support programs. So, ECFG made an initial list of foundations to include within this study. The initial list included ECFG and Early Childhood Development (ECD) Funders Group members, as many in these funders groups prioritize parent, caregiver, and family support programs. Additionally, the initial list included foundations that have recently participated in events focused on parenting such as the parenting donor forum organized in summer 2021 by UNICEF, WHO, ECDAN, End Violence & Parenting for Lifelong Health as part of the Global Initiative to Support Parents (GISP). This process resulted in a list of 71 contacts, all of whom were invited to participate in this exercise. The International Education Funders Group (IEFG) also shared the invitation with its members (many of whom overlapped with the list of 71 ECFG identified, but some of which were new). The IEFG's membership is not open to the public, so it is unclear how many additional invitations may have been sent out for this mapping exercise. The study occurred between September to December 2021.

The mapping exercise used tools including a 28-question survey (and an additional 17 questions focused on COVID-19 funding), Key Informant Interviews (KII) that lasted between 30 minutes to 1 hour, and a review of externally available organizational documents and websites. Out of the 71 requests for surveys sent out, we received 23 survey entries. The overall response rate for the survey was 32%. Out of these 23 surveys, 2 of them did not fund parents, caregivers, and family support programs, but still participated in the survey, and some did not fund in the Global South. Out of the 23 surveys, 15 KII were conducted

to learn more about foundations' funding decisions. The foundations that participated in the KIIs were available during the period of this study, fund parent, caregiver, and family support programs in the Global South, and could go deeper into their survey responses. This low response rate of 32% could be because this exercise was conducted during the last quarter of the year when many foundations were busy completing their outstanding work for the year or preparing critical information for their boards. Some of the participants on the list also moved on to other jobs and we did not have the contact information of their successor. For some foundations, they may invest in parents, caregivers, and families, but the work is deeply integrated with other types of programming where they could not easily separate out investments into various components. A few foundations responded to the request to participate saying they did not have sufficient information to share. Lastly, some foundations may not have responded because this is not a priority area for their organization or their work specifically, even if their foundation gives some funds to parenting programs. Some foundations on the list of 71 previously funded, but no longer fund, parenting programs or programs for children; they may therefore have felt this exercise was not relevant for them. Considering the low response rate on the survey and high rate of participation in forums focused on parent, caregiver and family support programs, this could indicate some foundations' interest in learning more about this area.

Research Findings: Philanthropic Funding Patterns

Overall, the surveys and KIIs indicated that a small set of philanthropic organizations prioritize investments into parent, caregiver, and family support programs. Many of these foundations that invest in this area had it highlighted as a specific priority in their external documents and websites. For some, investments in parent, caregiver and family support programs stemmed from their interest in supporting young children (early childhood development) where they realized that, to improve outcomes for children, they need to support their environments. Other foundations indicated they first started their investments for parents, caregivers, and families through investing in HIV/AIDS, adoption, and alternative care. Some of the foundations indicated that they have been investing in parent, caregiver, and family support programs for 10 years or more, but in most cases, this investment has increased or become more of an organizational priority over the last 3 to 4 years. A few respondents stated that they invest in parents, caregivers, and families if their grantees or partners request it, but it is not a specific priority. Most of the foundations that participated in the Key Informant Interviews mentioned that the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the critically important role that parents, caregivers, and families play in children's lives. These foundations saw and still see the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to convince more donors to invest in this area.

Range of Funding

The collective total of investments toward parent, caregiver, and family support in the Global South from the foundations who participated in this study is approximately \$268 million. This figure is a snapshot of funding now and does not clearly indicate whether the investments were greater than or less than in the past and what this figure may be in the future. This snapshot included what was reported by 18 foundations that fund in the Global South. It should be noted that \$138 million of the total \$268 million is from one foundation whereas the rest is from all the other foundations combined. Multiple foundations mentioned that some of their parenting support is not labeled as such because it is part of larger grants with many types of activities. These funders were not easily able to separate out the parent, caregiver, and family support components. So, they said their investments are likely greater than reported.

Among the philanthropic organizations that reported they fund parent, caregiver, and family support programs, a majority invest between \$1 million - \$5 million total. The second largest range of investment among study participants was less than \$100 thousand. Four foundations are currently investing more than \$10 million, with some that know they will increase their investments in the coming years. A few other foundations who currently have smaller investments indicated that they plan to increase their investments. This shows that grants for many foundations that invest in this area are sizable, and have the potential to increase.



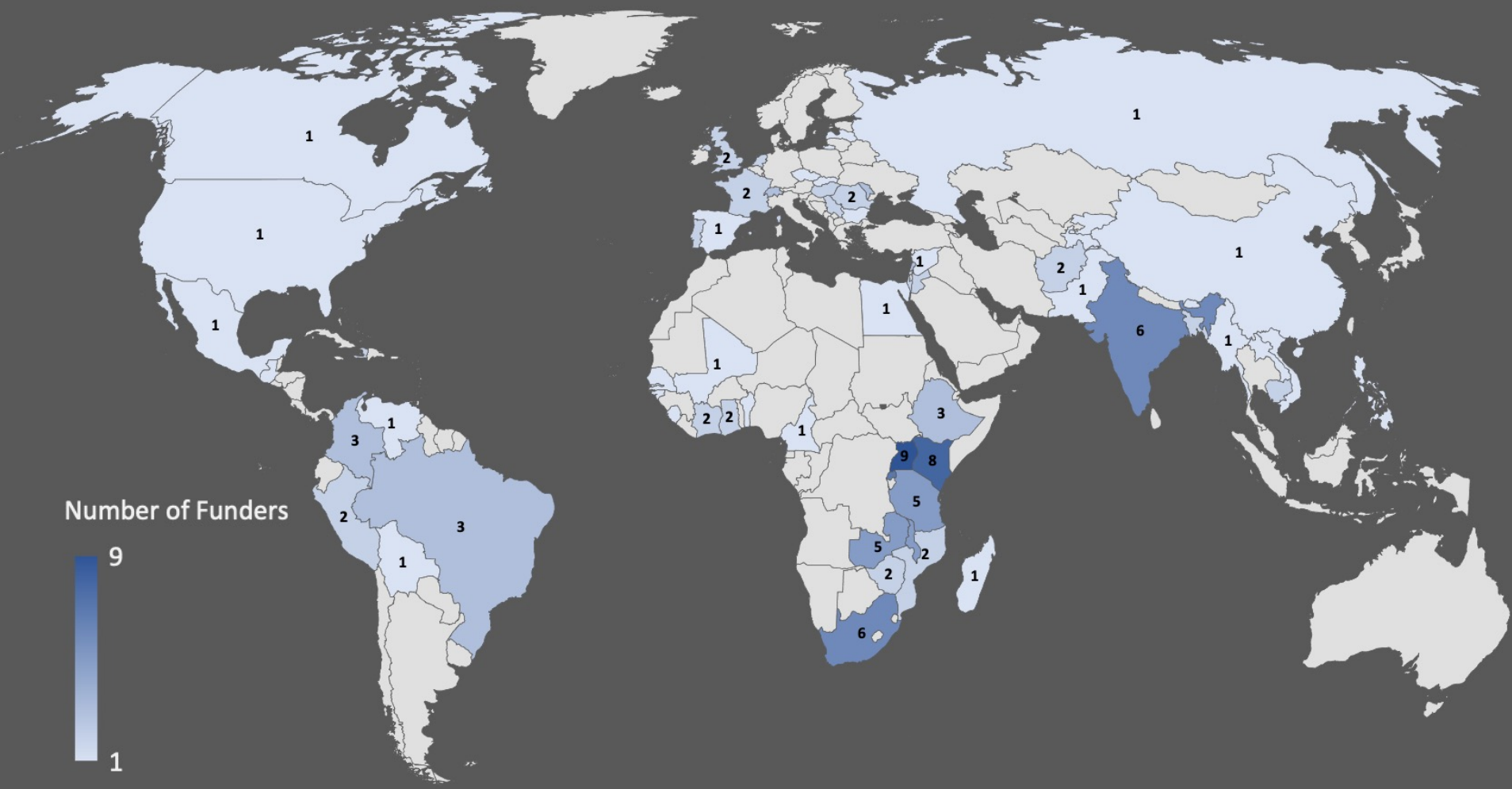
Interviews indicated that many foundations would like to invest more in parent, caregiver, and family support programs, but they were unsure whether an increase would be possible because of the overall funds they have and their multiple priorities and/or because of their current limited grant making capacity. For some of the foundations included in the survey and KIIs, investment into parent, caregiver, and family support programs is still in its infancy. These foundations said that the evidence coming out over the last few years about the critical role of parent, caregiver, and family support programs in children’s lives has nudged their organizations to increase their investments.

When asked in KIIs whether pooled or joint funding opportunities would increase their likelihood of investing in parent, caregiver, and family support programs, most respondents stated that it would not necessarily influence their grantmaking. However, a few smaller foundations did state that these opportunities would nudge them towards investing in parenting programs more. Most foundations surveyed indicated that in any joint funding opportunities, they would need to ensure the investments fit within their mission and priorities. Some foundations specifically stated that being independent allowed them to make investments that were more aligned with their mission, priorities, and interests of their boards. While investment of other donors would not necessarily sway them, all foundations that participated in the KIIs were open to collaboration and ways to have a greater impact together.

Range of Philanthropic Funding for Parent, Caregiver and Family support programs



Funders for Parent, Caregiver, and Family Support by Country



Location of the Funding

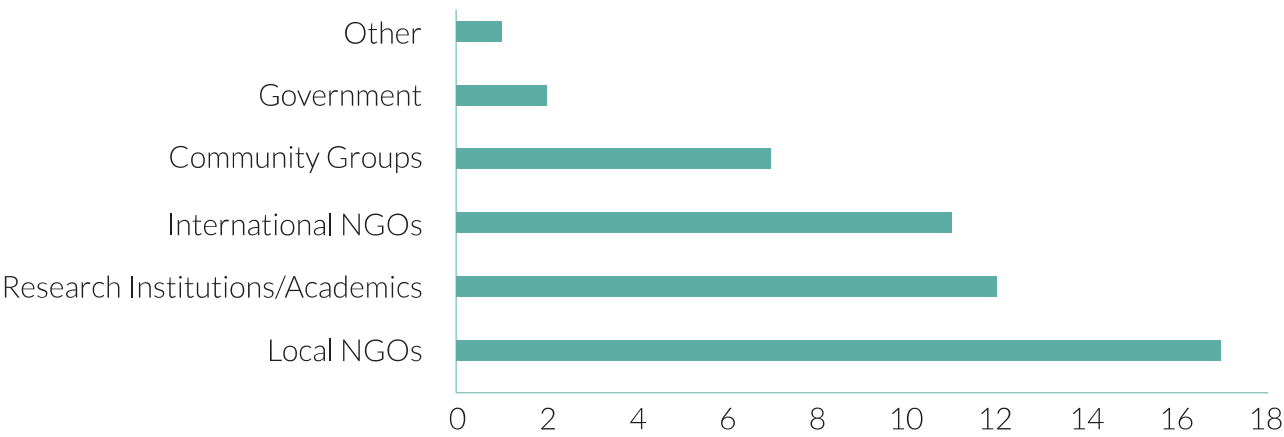
The map illustrates the countries in which parent, caregiver, and family support programs are currently being funded among the foundations that participated in the study. The darker the shade of blue, the greater the number of funders in the country. This map shows that all regions of the world have some investment into parent and caregiver support, but the African region has the greatest number of investors. Additionally, the map highlights that some countries such as South Africa, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Malawi, India, Brazil, Colombia, and Lebanon have a concentration of funding. These countries have at least 3 funders investing in parent, caregiver, and family support programs.

KIIs revealed that some of the concentration of funding is due to humanitarian crises affecting the country, such as Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Colombia, and Lebanon. Additionally, KIIs also revealed that other countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, South Africa, India, and Brazil have concentrated funding because they have been prioritized by foundations based on myriad factors including where there is a level of stability, government interest, interest from the foundation’s board, and the presence of strong implementing partners.

What is unclear from the data is how much money is going into each of these countries. Rwanda, for example, is a country with myriad foundations investing, but many of them are partnering to invest in the same project. Other countries may only have one or two donors, but the actual investment is large, such as Bangladesh. Implementing partners in Bangladesh, Jordan, and Lebanon have some of the largest funding due to large investments from the LEGO Foundation and Mac Arthur Foundation for the Syria and Rohingya refugee crises.

Types of Funding Partners

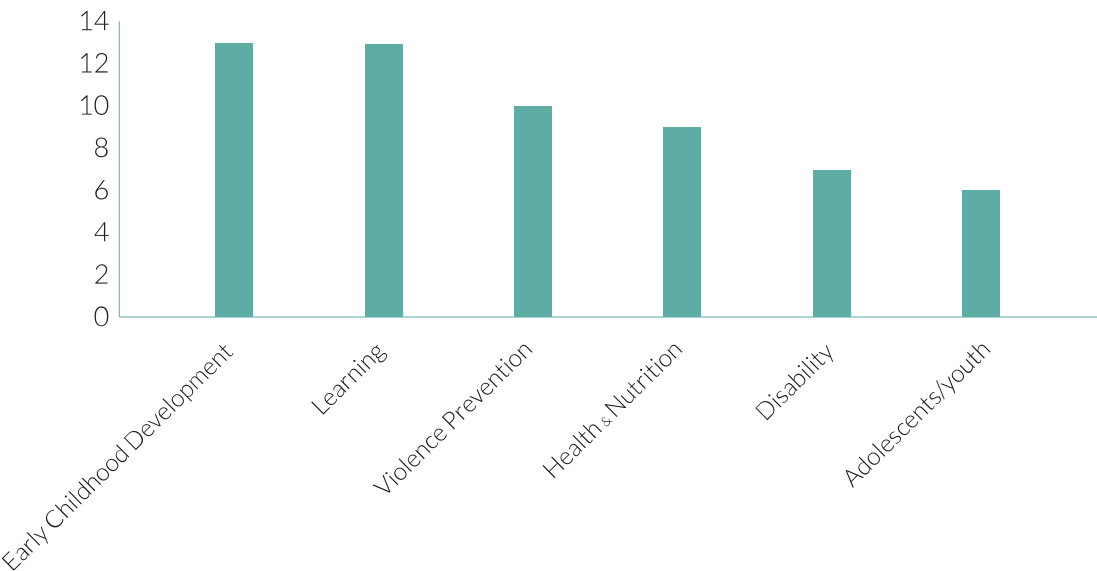
Among survey respondents the most common funding partners were identified as local non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The KIIs revealed that some foundations only fund local NGOs while others will fund all types of partners, including international NGOs (INGOs), research institutions, the United Nations, and more. KIIs indicated that while the majority of the funders surveyed in this study invest in local organizations, the majority of funding is still channeled into INGOs and the United Nations. Respondents stated that those foundations which fund INGOs and the United Nations at higher levels do so because it is easier for their grant making mechanisms, as they can more easily reach their beneficiary targets with larger organizations that have greater financial absorption and operational capacity. However, these same foundations are thinking about how they can increase support to local NGOs. A few foundations mentioned that recent funder conversations and webinars are making them think about this more.



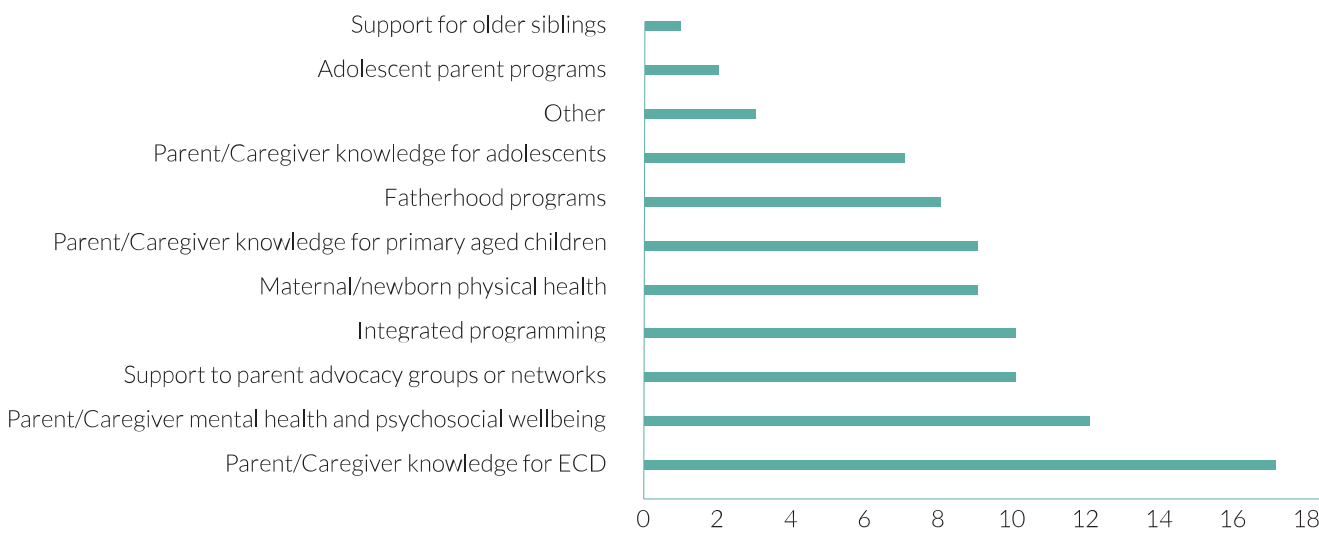
General Outcomes for Funding Parent, Caregiver, Family Support Programs

The mapping survey asked foundations to select the outcomes they hoped to achieve through their funding of parent, caregiver, and family support programs. Based on the survey, 13 foundations selected early childhood development and learning as their main outcomes. Ten of the foundations selected violence prevention as a main outcome. According to a review of foundation respondents' public websites, more of them had a mission focused on early childhood development, education, and child protection/violence prevention while fewer had a focus on health and nutrition.

General Outcomes for Funding Parent, Caregiver, Family support Programs



Types of Parent/Family Activities Supported



As previously discussed in the parameters of the mapping exercise section, many activities can and do fall within the definition of parent, caregiver, and family supports. This study identified 10 specific types of parent and family support activities, varying from light-touch approaches to deep engagement models, and asked participants to select all types of activities they support. Building parent and caregiver knowledge for early childhood development was the most commonly supported activity, as selected by 17 foundations, followed by 12 selecting support for parent and caregiver mental health and psychosocial well-being activities.

Interview respondents echoed these results, also indicating their perception that

most parent, caregiver, and family support funding goes towards knowledge and capacity building for early childhood development.

Interview data highlights that this funding strategy is the traditional form of “parenting” programs in the sector. Additionally, interview respondents stated they see investments for parent and caregiver mental health and psychosocial well-being on the rise. Increased and emerging child development science and a deeper understanding of the challenges parents and caregivers face as a result of COVID-19, were identified as potential reasons for a greater focus in these areas.

When asked whether funders had a particular focus on lighter touch approaches or deeper implementation strategies, all said they invest in the whole range. Often the whole range was included in individual grants as requests from their partners. Many foundations mentioned that the COVID-19 pandemic pushed them to invest more in light touch approaches using technology (ie. mass media, WhatsApp, SMS, TV, radio). Respondents noted that they see positive early results from these approaches from yet-to-be published evaluations and research that was financed for light touch approaches. This early data was highlighted as a key influencing factor for funders resulting in the consideration of continued investment in the use of technology for child and family programs.⁷ While evaluations and research are showing promising results

of light touch approaches, particularly with the use of technology, the evaluations and experiences saw limitations when trying to reach the most marginalized and vulnerable in areas where wifi, cellular phone network and technology were not available.⁸ All foundations stated they would therefore continue investing in deeper approaches to support parents such as peer-to-peer small group sessions and 1:1 home visits, as many of them aim to reach the most marginalized and vulnerable. Survey data indicates that

the least supported activities were those for older siblings, which was selected by only one respondent, and adolescent programs, selected by only two respondents.

This includes adolescent parent programs, parent and caregiver knowledge to support adolescents, and support for older siblings to be caregivers for younger siblings.

Some interviewees mentioned that interventions for adolescent and youth parents are categorized under adolescence rather than as parenting programs. This could explain why the response for foundations that support “adolescent parenting programs” as was stated in the survey was low. Further, during KIs, some respondents mentioned that their programming and investment does include adolescent parents, but adolescents and adults are not separated out in their investments. As a result, adolescent programs that carry components of parenting and caregiver support are not captured by this study.



The inclusion of older children as part of parenting programs was specifically identified as an emerging area. New research and initiatives are strategizing about this.⁹ However, while the evidence is emerging, some foundations mentioned that it was not yet clear what they should be funding in

adolescent parent programs and support for older siblings. Some foundations mentioned that they are considering a lifecycle approach to funding, which would include support for adolescent parents and parents to be, and supporting parents and caregivers of adolescents.

FROM THE FIELD Parenting for Lifelong Health (PLH)

PLH, a collaborative initiative between Oxford, Bangor and Reading Universities in the United Kingdom, Stellenbosch University, and the University of Cape Town in South Africa, WHO and UNICEF, is testing, building evidence for and providing a suite of open access, non-commercialized resources for different types of parenting programs along the life course in low-resource settings.¹⁰ It includes a set of models and emerging evidence for parents and caregivers of adolescents.¹¹ A number of foundations surveyed have contributed to this initiative. It provides promise for more evidence-based models that foundations can feel confident to invest in.

Maternal and newborn physical health is another area the survey revealed low investment. Within the parameters of this study, the question posed was around activities that integrate family strengthening such as knowledge and skills for parents, caregivers and families about child development, play and responsive care into routine maternal and newborn health check ups. There are some explanations for this study data. Firstly, most survey respondents do not focus on maternal and newborn health overall so they would not invest as much in this area. Secondly, many maternal and newborn health programs do not integrate a focus on strengthening knowledge and skills of caregivers and families, despite evidence that this can produce positive results for children.¹²

Key Informant Interviews and a review of public websites and documents indicate that while this study revealed low investment, progress has been made with more foundations funding maternal and newborn physical health that has a family strengthening element. There are also more health-focused implementing organizations integrating parenting and caregiving with traditional health and nutrition supports. KII participants recognized that more could be done as the health and nutrition sectors hold tremendous potential to reach children, parents, caregivers, and families.

Gender (including fatherhood) and disability were other areas where investment among philanthropic organizations was relatively low. The next section goes deeper into the trends and data.

FROM THE FIELD

Family Strengthening in Health and Nutrition: Care for Child Development

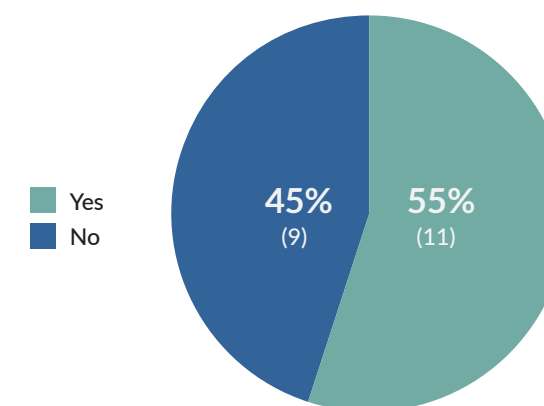
In the late 1990s UNICEF and the World Health Organization originally developed a package targeting health workers and parents called Care for Child Development (CCD).¹³ This package was updated in 2012. It is an evidence-based approach designed to promote responsive caregiving and early learning by integrating them with various services for children and families, including health and nutrition. CCD promotes young children's cognitive stimulation, development, and well-being by equipping parents and caregivers on how to play, communicate, and care for them. CCD is often implemented through health workers who encounter parents and young children at health clinics and early year check-ups.¹⁴ The Nurturing Care Framework and recent evidence from implementing CCD and other similar approaches point to how integrating responsive caregiving for children from their parents and caregivers, along with critical health and nutrition inputs, can have important impacts that strengthen the foundation of a child's ability to survive, thrive and meet their developmental potential.¹⁵

Investment in Gender and Disability

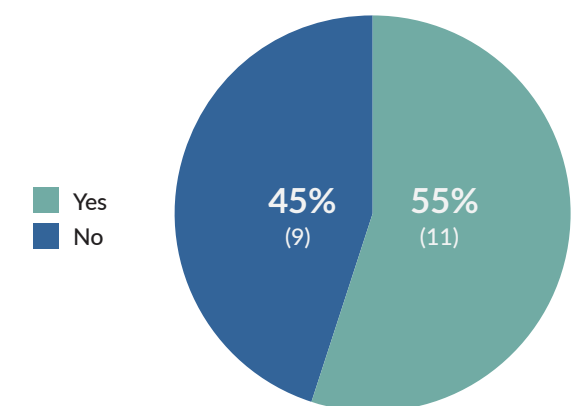
Two specific areas that ECFG sub-group members wanted to investigate in this study were gender and disability. In many places around the world, fathers are still expected to be the breadwinners while mothers are expected to care for their children. Yet, evidence indicates that fathers' role is critical to their children's development, learning and well-being.¹⁶ When referring to gender, this study considers programs focused on shifting these traditional roles of mothers and fathers. It includes supporting mothers and fathers to increase their knowledge and skills, so they more actively engage, play with, and care for their children and support their development and well-being. Additionally, some parenting programs that have a gender lens support the relationship between fathers and mothers to have better communication and stronger relationships to decrease the likelihood of violence in the home and keep families stable and together.¹⁷ This study also refers to ways parents, caregivers, families, and other adults in children's lives promote toys, play and other activities.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) defines persons with disabilities as people with "long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments, which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."¹⁸ A disability is neither purely biological nor social, but an interaction between health conditions, as well as environmental and personal factors. Some children are born with disabilities, while others may experience disability due to illness, injury, or poor nutrition. The complex interaction between a health condition or impairment and environmental and personal factors means that each child's experience of disability is different.¹⁹ Investments supporting children with disabilities could include equipping parents, caregivers and families with the knowledge, skills, and resources to help their child, to get outside support for their child (such as navigating a school system or social services or activities they could do with their children to promote their learning and development).

Funding Programs with a Gender Lens



Funding Programs that Include Disability



Over half of survey respondents identified that they invest in programs that included a gender lens, with the same number of foundations stating that they funded programs for children with disabilities. While the count data from the survey are the same for both areas, they are not the same makeup of foundations. Key informant interviews revealed that, while respondents stated they fund programs that include a disabilities lens, it is not a priority for their work. Most foundations indicated that they fund programs for children with disabilities only if their partners request it. According to the survey, when foundations fund disability-focused programming, it is a very small percentage of their overall funding (5% or less). Two foundations allocated between 10-14% of their investments into disability-focused programming, but these foundations only invest approximately \$100,000 annually so 10-14% is still a small amount of money overall. Interviews elucidated why investment into programs focused on disabilities are such a small percentage of their overall funding. Some reasons included a lack of technical capacity with early childhood development and disability models, a necessity to prioritize other focus areas, leaving little room to do more on disability. All interviewed foundations shared that they were open to investing in more programs focused on children with disabilities if it were requested from their partners and if it were integrated with other priorities they had.

Key informant interviews also revealed a fuller understanding of current trends in grantmaking with a gender lens. While 11 foundations indicated they specifically fund programs with a gender lens, their

investments were a significantly larger portion of their overall portfolio when compared to disability. KII respondents stated that gender focused programming of parent, caregiver, and family supports are between 10 – 75% of their overall grantmaking portfolio. Three foundations stated that they allocate 70% or more of all of their investments into gender-focused interventions, and one foundation stated that gender-focused programming was their top priority within parent, caregiver, and family support programs.

Throughout KIIs, fatherhood programs were identified as an emerging area of focus within gender-focused programming. Some interviewees mentioned that as evidence showcasing the importance of supporting fathers is increasing, they are able to use it to convince their own organizations to increase their funding in this area.²⁰ Some foundations also stated that current world trends that focus on gender equality, are keeping this subtopic top of mind for their teams and board members. While there is increased interest among funders to invest in fatherhood programs, it is still relatively uncommon when compared to gender-blind programs. However many foundations shared that there is potential for increased investment in this space.

The study finds that while there is recognition of the importance of both gender and disabilities, foundations could not always prioritize both or even one of these areas. Among respondents, gender was prioritized and funded more than disabilities overall. There was openness among all foundations to learn more and consider greater investment in both of these areas, especially if they fit within existing priorities.

Systems Strengthening and Scale

All interviewees mentioned an interest in systems strengthening and scale. Most of the foundations see systems change, including working with and influencing governments, to be an important area of focus and therefore prioritize this explicitly in their grantmaking. The funders engage various governmental departments based on country context and where they see opportunities for systems influence and change. Some foundations stated they do not specifically focus on systems change, but would like to contribute to it through their partners when they have the opportunity.

When discussing what specific sectors required a systems change priority, education, child protection/social services /welfare, and health systems were mentioned most commonly, but all funders believed that multiple systems would need to be engaged since the needs of children and their families are multi-sectoral. A few funders indicated that they prioritize systems change from the bottom up – from communities themselves.

Taking programs to scale is another priority for many funders, however most agree that there is not one way to do so. Some funders mentioned the untapped potential of partnering with the private sector to both influence government systems and scale initiatives. Many foundations also mentioned that current discussions in various collective groups and meetings has helped their own thinking around scaling of programs.

Possible Areas of Collaboration

Within the survey, respondents indicated areas where they felt were ripe for collaboration between funders. Many areas were mentioned, but the ideas that came up multiple times by two or more funders included:



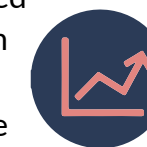
Gender transformative approaches and father engagement.

Supporting conditions for scale



Mental health of caregivers and children

Community Driven Systems Change



Measurement, Data Collection and Evidence Building

Disability



Two-generation programs



Other areas identified as of interest for collaboration among respondents included supporting grandparents as caregivers, exploring the impact of parenting programs for labor outcomes (particularly for women), collective advocacy, forced migration, prevention of violence, abuse, and exploitation.



Challenges for Investment

Key Informant Interviews identified seven key challenges that pose barriers for greater investment into parent, caregiver, and family support programs. Some of these barriers were internal to their own foundations while others were general barriers for those currently not investing or investing very little in parent, caregiver, and family support programs. The patterns included here are areas where multiple foundations mentioned the same or similar insights.

1. Differing definitions for parent, caregiver, and family

The definition of a parent, caregiver, and family varies, as does what constitutes programming in this area. Support programs could be vastly different across cultural contexts, and foundations may have very different views and perspectives on the matter. ECFG established its definition and parameters for this study which could be different from some foundations and could have affected the results presented.

2. Sector Siloes

Most study respondents felt that the siloed nature of development work in the Global South causes challenges to solving problems that do not neatly fall within a particular area. Parent, caregiver, and family support programs do not clearly fall within one sector as it could be viewed from the lens of education, protection, social services, health, nutrition, economic development and more.

3. Limited Understanding of the Existing Science

The majority of study participants felt that a lot of evidence has come out in recent years about the critical importance of supporting parents, caregivers, and families for children's development and well-being. Where respondents felt there was a gap was in the translation of that evidence into ways that appeal to multiple audiences, including donors, government, experts in health, nutrition, economic development and other sector areas, and the general public. Respondents felt that when evidence is used for advocacy, it should include non-technical terms and more infographics and images.

4. Gaps in the Existing Science

While many foundations that participated in this mapping exercise felt that a lot of evidence exists to make the case, some funders felt that gaps for making the case for greater investment in this area remain. Particular gaps mentioned were cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit studies that could support advocacy with governments, gaps in understanding the effectiveness of certain models, such as child care credits, child care supports, conditional and unconditional cash transfers, and gaps in understanding what to and how to scale parent, caregiver, and family support programs.

5. Competing Priorities

Most of the funders that participated in this study focus on children first. If a donor needs to support children and their board expects that, they may need to put their investments directly towards children to achieve those goals rather than on children's environment which would include parents, caregivers, and families, as identified by a few foundations.

6. Privacy for Families

In some societies, people believe that family life is private, and outsiders should not be involved in private family affairs. Some interviewees raised this point and questioned whether it was even appropriate to have any interventions at all in certain contexts if this is a prevailing view.

7. Separation between Private and Professional Life

A few participating foundations noted that many decision makers in philanthropy and government are parents themselves, and yet do not always consider funding decisions based on this life experience. They felt that if those in charge of funds could remember that they are parents themselves and see the challenge of supporting children's outcomes from their place as parents, they might be more open to financing parent, caregiver, and family support.

Potential Next Steps

Parent, caregiver, and family support programs have huge potential to impact the lives of children and help foundations fulfill their priorities and meet their outcomes. This study showed that there are many barriers to increased investment, and that more can be done to increase and embolden parent, caregiver, and family support champions.

To begin, ECFG could engage donor collectives that engage health, nutrition and economic development focused foundations. As discussed, the majority of the foundations in this study invest most commonly in education, early childhood development and child protection. Parent and family support and strengthening is central to many of these foundations' approaches to help children achieve the best development and well-being outcomes. What was missing in this study were foundations that support children, but whose main aims are health, nutrition, and economic development. During the process, these types of funders were contacted, but they did not respond, so further relationship-building may be key. **Additionally, this study did not include bi-lateral donors or national government donors. Future mapping studies on family strengthening could include these groups.**

ECFG could also serve as a champion for marginalized groups. The parameters set for this study looked at children and families in the Global South, but did not specify specific marginalized groups beyond those with disabilities. A 2018 study commissioned by ECFG and the Global Philanthropy Project aimed to document grantmaking, programming, advocacy, and rights work in support of LGBTI²¹ children and youth.²² The study found that out of the limited funding that focuses on LGBTI children and youth, less than 1% goes to support family strengthening and only 5% goes to children and youth themselves. Most of the funding goes to broader societal measures.²³ **The report suggests that more could be done for LGBTI children and youth if the percentages shifted to more support for families of LGBTI children and youth and to direct services for children and youth. This could be an area of future investigation.**

KII participants also had views on possible next steps for ECFG, based on barriers to investment mentioned. The ideas mentioned below were ones that emerged from multiple funders:

- **Develop a strategy and way forward with diverse donor groups in an effort to break down silos:** ECFG could develop a joint strategy for families with donor groups focused on health, nutrition and economic development, as well as the ECD Funders Group and the International Education Funders Group.
- **Increase understanding of parent, caregiver, and family support programs and evidence:** ECFG could support the translation of existing evidence into ways that are more accessible and easy for wider audiences to understand. Additionally, ECFG could support in the communication of evidence in ways that funders see how family strengthening helps achieve many other outcomes (ie. health, nutrition, protection, economic development).
- **Build more evidence in gap areas:** ECFG could commission and/or support research in needed areas, such as cost effectiveness analyses or impact analysis of strategies like cash transfers and child care support.
- **Share learnings, insights, and opportunities within ECFG:** ECFG could organize regular learning sessions for members engaging practitioners from different views, such as those focused on health, nutrition, education, protection, in addition to the viewpoint of academics and government.
- **Share learnings, insights, and opportunities with external funders:** ECFG could organize public events, podcasts, etc., with the aim of bringing diverse speakers and presenters to talk about how parents and family strengthening can help meet multiple outcomes (including health, nutrition and economic development). funders see how family strengthening helps achieve many other outcomes (ie. health, nutrition, protection, economic development).
- **Help adults who are parents connect their personal lives to parenting / caregiver programs.**

As American Psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner said, **“Every child needs at least one adult who is irrationally crazy about him or her.”**²⁴ Elevate Children Funder's Group (ECFG) fundamentally believes that children and youth can soar if they are in safe, protective, and nurturing families. Therefore, family strengthening is core to ECFG's vision. Through collaborative efforts, ECFG hopes to increase understanding and investment in this area in the future so all children and youth can thrive, exercise their rights, and live a life free from adversity.

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