

ANNUAL
REPORT
2024



Thirty years
of play!

For All Children,
Everywhere





International Child
Development Initiatives

**ICDI (2024) Annual Report:
Thirty Years of Play. Leiden.**

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Executive Summary

“Thirty years of play: for all children, everywhere” is the theme of this year’s Annual Report, as well as the message we chose to celebrate ICDI’s 30th anniversary.

In 2024, ICDI turned 30. Since its founding in 1994, ICDI has been dedicated to promoting the well-being of children and young people growing up in difficult circumstances. This year, we took time to celebrate our journey and the difference we’ve made over the past three decades.

Alongside the celebrations, ICDI and its partners continued their efforts in early childhood education and development, as well as child protection and well-being. This Annual Report shows how our projects continue to promote play and well-being—reaching not only young children but also older people in different communities around the world.

This year’s report highlights two major efforts: the Foundations for the Future project in Uganda and ten child-led mini-projects focused on climate action. You’ll also find links to descriptions of all our other projects. Foundations for the Future builds on our experience in Ethiopia and brings our home visiting and Play Hub approach to a new country. In 2024, we opened Uganda’s first two Play Hubs—an exciting milestone!

From Uganda, we’ll take you around the world, where children and young people created ten small projects focused on climate action. These were part of our open call for proposals, which

gave children the chance to design projects that support both their communities and the planet. It was our way of celebrating our 30th anniversary with the children we work for.

In 2024, we focused on key themes including: play, inclusive early childhood education and care, child protection and children’s rights, youth participation, inclusive education, resilience, and responsive parenting. These themes guided our initiatives and reinforced our commitment to building a better future for children worldwide.

The report also includes updates on our consultancies, publications, and advocacy work, as well as a special tribute to ICDI co-founder Nico van Oudenhoven and his lasting legacy.

For 30 years, ICDI has followed a clear path—not one of growth for growth’s sake, but one rooted in justice and equity. We’ve always stood with the marginalized child—the one often overlooked by quick fixes and one-size-fits-all solutions. And we will continue to do so—because that’s who we are.

When you read this report, you’ll see once again that ICDI may be a small organisation, but we achieve big things!



Introduction

As you know by now, this year we celebrate ICDI’s 30th anniversary. That’s older than most tech startups, younger than the internet, and the same age as some of our youngest colleagues—those who claim they “don’t know what a fax machine is.”

ICDI started small, and—well, let’s be honest—we stayed small. We’re like that indie band no one’s ever heard of but, once people do hear us, they say, “Wow, you guys are really good!” But what makes us so good? I believe it’s our values: **loyalty, curiosity, playfulness, and passion.** That’s the ICDI secret sauce. Though let’s admit it—playfulness at 30 feels a little different. These days, it’s less about jumping into puddles and more about trying not to pull a muscle when dancing at the office party. When ICDI was born, from the brave minds of **Nico and Rekha, we had this wild dream: to help create a world so safe, just, and joyful for children that our job would eventually become... unnecessary. A world where we’d close shop, and say, “Mission accomplished!”**

But here we are, 30 years later, still here, still necessary. The world had other ideas. Instead of retiring, we’ve grown up—though, ironically, the slogan our former director, **Mathijs** created, says: “Never grow up!”. It turns out ICDI did grow up. We’re 30 now, and we even do responsible adult things, like running webinars and making budgets.

Of course, **there’s a reason we’re still here. It’s because children are still caught in the crossfire of terrible conflicts—in Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan, Syria, and far too many other places. Climate change looms large, civic spaces are shrinking, and the political landscape feels, frankly, quite dark. But even in these dark times, there are sparks of light.**

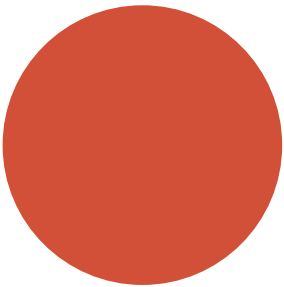
In the beginning of November, Asia and I had the honour of traveling to Helsinki for the **HundrED Innovation Summit**. Our **TOY for Inclusion Play Hubs** were selected as one of the 100 best global innovations in education! Anyway, modesty aside, going back to the spark of light, in Helsinki, we saw amazing ideas that made us think, “Okay, maybe the world isn’t entirely doomed.” And of course, children themselves are a constant source of hope.

Take the training on play we delivered to Ukrainian professionals in October—it was delivered during air raids, no less. Poignant play, indeed, as one participant said. Play is how children process the unthinkable, how they imagine new possibilities, and how they fight for their right to be kids.

And this year, we celebrate the future by spotlighting **ten mini-projects led by children and young people tackling climate action** in their communities. These projects are **proof that children and youth aren’t just passive victims of global challenges—they’re agents of change, full of ideas and solutions. They are proof that, no matter how heavy the world feels, hope is alive.**

Giulia Cortellesi
Co-director ICDI

Excerpt from speech at ICDI’s anniversary party (Friday, November 15, 2024)





What we do?

As a knowledge organisation we develop meaningful, effective solutions so that all children can grow up in safe, loving and nurturing environments and lead happy lives. We care for their social and emotional well-being and rights. We support children, families and communities to strengthen their relationships, and help them to jointly explore, learn and develop.

As we focus on a wide spectrum of ages and on various issues, we are able to build bridges between new science and practical implementation, making connections across different developmental stages in childhood, from infancy to adolescence, and thus improve the quality and impact of programmes addressing the problems children and young people face.

Our Vision and mission

At ICDI, our **vision** is a world where all children grow up in loving, safe and supportive environments. A world where every child has the opportunity to be and become the best version of themselves, with ample opportunities to learn and develop, surrounded by people who care.

Our **mission** is to promote the psychosocial well-being of children growing up in difficult circumstances by working in the field of early childhood education and development, child protection, and special initiatives.

Social inclusion

We strive to improve the inclusion of marginalized groups by facilitating access and the ability for everyone to participate in society and by providing them with the opportunities and skills required to succeed.

Equity

We strive to ensure equity among everyone regardless of their identity, by considering how structural inequality, discrimination and social norms shape an individual or group's experience.

Participation

We strive to involve communities and other stakeholders in our work, by fostering an environment in which everyone involved feels encouraged and comfortable to participate.

Climate action

We strive to incorporate climate action into our work by giving a voice to children who are and will be affected by climate change, and by advocating for their involvement in decisions being made about their future.

Our overarching thematic focus is on **building strong relationships**, among children, families, communities, the environment, and society as a whole. We approach child development holistically by considering how a child is influenced by their immediate surrounding as well as their indirect environment. By doing so, we address the relationships among different levels of a child's environment to make deep and long-lasting differences. This includes strengthening the capacity of staff from local services, teachers, parents, community members, NGO staff, and policymakers.

ICDI and our partners continue to execute our mission by developing and providing training, tools, and effective strategies that promote healthy child development and improve the lives of children at risk.

OUR IMPACT

All children and young people grow up healthy, strong and happy in communities that care



OUTCOMES



OUTPUTS



THEMES



KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGIES



APPROACHES



ICDI developmental milestones

ICDI is founded.
It is an initiative of Dutch child psychologist Nico van Oudenhoven and Indian sociologist Rekha Wazir to support knowledge exchange on child development around the world.

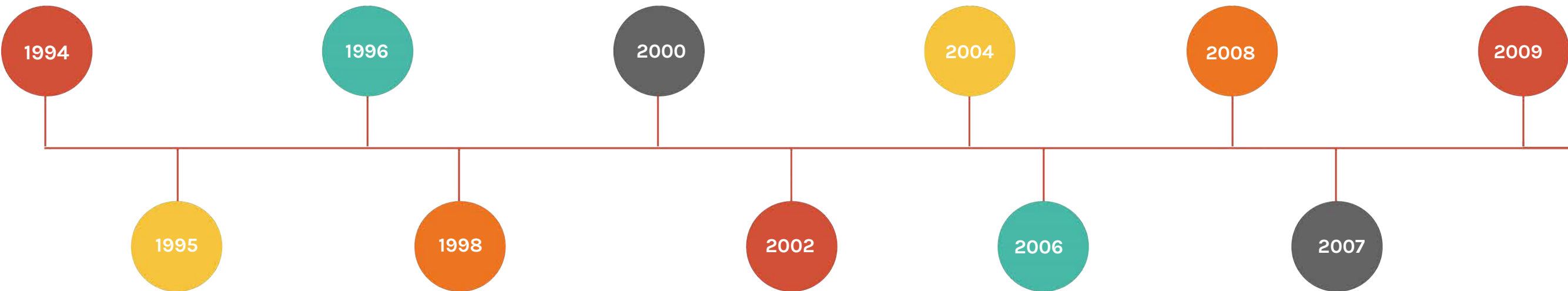
ICDI starts to do consultancies.
Many of them are in the field of Early Childhood Development, reaching all continents and building up an international grid of supportive and quality networks.

ICDI starts long-term programmes on De-Institutionalization.
They are in Bulgaria, Romania, Belarus, Slovakia, Latvia, Croatia, and Ukraine and contribute to systems change in Child Care and Child Protection.

First edition of the Child & Youth Development Diploma Course.
Together with the Institute of Social Studies (ISS), ICDI implements an annual 6-week course for hundreds of child rights professionals from around the globe. The last edition was in 2012.

The Nest Model.
Together with Stichting Kinderpostzegels and IN Foundation, ICDI develops this resilience building programme for children from multi-problem families, first tested in Bosnia and Herzegovina and later replicated in Palestine, Nepal, Ukraine and in The Netherlands.

Child & Youth Led Research.
ICDI develops a training course, which stimulates participation of young people in research and decision-making processes. This training is still very central to ICDI work and has been implemented in the Netherlands, Nicaragua, Ethiopia, Nepal, Pakistan.



ICDI moves to a former orphanage.
Leiden Municipality gives ICDI permission to occupy one room in the 16th century building Heilige Gheest Wezen en Armen Weeshuis.

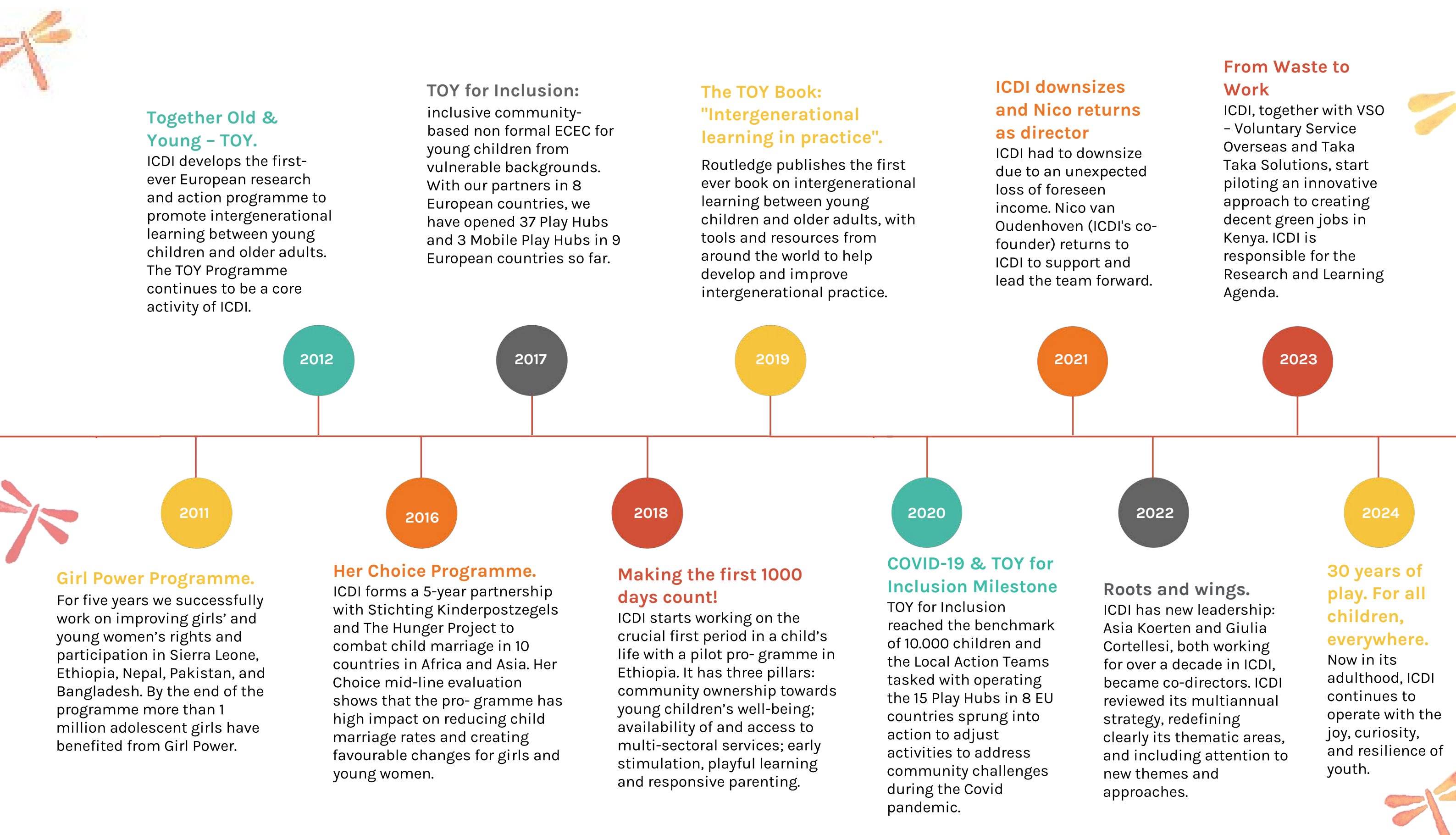
Publication: "Child Sexual Abuse: What Can Governments Do?".
A comparative review of policies with recommendations to deal with this widespread problem.

Publication: "Stakeholders in Foster Care".
Main recommendation: be reluctant to remove children from their families, focus on supporting families, and in case of removal, stay in close contact with biological families.

'Publication 'Newly Emerging Needs of Children'
Ground-breaking participatory research with children and young people in all continents, to gain insights into new challenges that they face.

UPSI-5 (Universal Psychosocial Indicator for Five-Year-Old Children).
ICDI develops a tool to measure social and emotional well-being for young children. The UPSI-5 has been used in South Africa, Ethiopia, Hungary, Croatia, Latvia, the Netherlands, and Norway.

ICDI developmental milestones



ICDI's year at a glance

TOY for Inclusion:

Community Based Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC).

The Netherlands - Slovenia - Slovakia - Croatia
Latvia - Italy - Hungary

TOY for Inclusion: Access for all

Community Based Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) for children with special educational needs.

Slovakia

TOY for Inclusion: Mobile Play Hubs for Ukrainian Refugee Children

Bringing play-based activities to smaller and remote communities with Ukrainian refugee families.

Slovakia - Hungary

A Play Hub for internally displaced children in Ukraine

Establish a Play Hub in Kyiv

Ukraine

Their World Education Innovation Award

Strengthening Sustainability and Scaling of TOY for Inclusion

Slovakia - the Netherlands

C.L.A.P.

Children's rights, Awareness, and Participation. Addressing emerging needs in COVID-19 pandemic.

Italy - Spain - Romania

Places to Grow

Drive advocacy for policy support for non-formal ECEC and to ensure quality of non-formal ECEC.

Europe - Central Asia

Her Choice: building child marriage free communities in Nepal

Supporting the creation of child marriage-free communities.

Nepal

From Waste to Work

Strengthening green youth-led startups and creating decent jobs through waste recovery and value addition.

Kenya

OUTSTEAM

Outdoor learning in Early Childhood Education and Care and primary schools using age-appropriate technology and the STE(A)M Approach

Ireland - Netherlands - Spain - Belgium

Charter for Non-formal Early Childhood Education and Care

A collaborative effort to develop, validate and pilot a Charter for Non-formal Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe and Central Asia

Europe - Central Asia

Foundations for the Future

A strong start for every child from birth to school-age.

Uganda

Soothing Gardens

Gardens designed to promote healing, relaxation, and joy for children in need of psychological and emotional support.

Nepal

Making the first 1000 days count in Ethiopia!

Sustaining the established Play Hubs and antenatal and postnatal care for young mothers in Ethiopia.

Ethiopia

Child-led mini projects: 30 years of play for all

Ten mini-projects about climate action, developed and implemented by children and young people.

Europe - Central America - Africa - Asia

Our year in numbers



+/- 31.000
children reached



+/- 11.000
families reached



+/- 6.000
professionals reached

Themes in 2024

- Play
- Community-based inclusive early childhood education and care
- Child protection and children's rights
- Youth participation
- Inclusive education
- Resilience
- Responsive parenting and caregiving.



Highlights

HIGHLIGHT

Foundations for the Future: A strong start for every child from birth to school-age

The first 8 years of a child's life are a critical period for cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. These years present a unique opportunity to establish lifetime foundations for adequate development and growth. The best possible foundation in these early years can make a difference throughout adulthood.

From birth to school age, children experience crucial stages of development that shape their future well-being. Early interventions during pregnancy and the first years of life are key to ensuring healthy cognitive, physical, and emotional development, especially in impoverished environments.

It all started in Ethiopia...

In 2018, ICDI, together with an Ethiopian partner organisation Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), started to implement the project 'Making the first 1000 days count in Ethiopia', piloting an approach that supports playful learning and responsive parenting activities for children under 4 and their caregivers in 7 communities in the Amhara region, combining home visiting and centre-based programmes.

In 2021, a new phase of the project started: scaling up the approach to 8 new communities, through the involvement of a new Ethiopian partner, Wabe Children's Aid and Training (WCAT), and actively lobbying and advocating for promoting change in local and national policy.

From Ethiopia to Uganda

During the piloting and the scale-up phase in Ethiopia, we learned that the combination of modalities, encompassing home visiting, Play Hubs, access to existing services, local ownership, financial support to vulnerable families, and holistic attention to all areas of child health and

development, has proven effective. In 2024, with our partner in Uganda, Nascent-RDO, we started to transfer, implement, and adapt the model to the Busoga region in Uganda.

Main components

Play Hubs

In 2024, two Play Hubs were established:

- The Play Hubs were launched in October at Kinawanswa and Bubaka Primary Schools. The events attracted thousands of people from Bulamagi sub-county, Iganga District, and nearby villages.
- Representatives from the Iganga District Education Office, the LC5 Chairperson, and other local leaders attended the events.

During the first year, several activities took place, including stay-and-play sessions for children and parents, playgroups for children only, and workshops for parents and caregivers on play, learning, child development, health, and nutrition. Additionally, there were meetings with professionals from other services, as well as intergenerational activities involving older adults.

Home Visiting Programme

- Twelve home visitors were trained in early childhood development, parent-child interaction, the home visiting approach, and other key topics.
- The home visiting programme places play and responsive parenting at its core, offering caregivers access to important information and practical tools they can use in everyday interactions with their young children.
- The programme focuses on families with young children, including those with children with disabilities.

The combination of Home Visits and Play Hubs provides essential support for families and young children to thrive and prosper.

Interaction between modalities

Community facilitators and home visitors interact and collaborate with each other and with other services through meetings, joint activities, and training sessions. Community health outreach camps and training sessions on health, nutrition, and playful learning are a few examples of the outcomes of these interactions.

South-to-South cooperation

In this project, we are adopting a South-to-South learning approach, involving our Ethiopian partners as a trainers and mentors. This approach helps ensure that partners share their experiences and knowledge, and that the five years of piloting in Ethiopia—and the lessons learned during that time—serve as the foundation for implementation in Uganda. The Learning Spaces have provided valuable insights, leading to recommendations aimed at strengthening trust-building efforts, enhancing communication within the Consortium, and fostering inclusivity, especially regarding the participation of older individuals and women.

Results

- Children 0-8: over 1500
- Families: over 800
- Communities directly benefiting from the activities: 6
- Community members: over 3000
- Pre-teen girls reached: 140

Partners:

Nascent RDO – U Donors: [Stichting Dioraphte](#), [Weeshuis der Doopsgezinden in Haarlem](#) and other donors



HIGHLIGHT

Ten children-led projects to celebrate ICDI’s 30th anniversary!

To mark ICDI’s 30th anniversary, ten youth-led mini-projects on climate action were supported and implemented across Europe, Central America, Africa, and Asia. Through a call for proposals shared via our partner organisations, children and young people (aged 7–18) submitted 1-minute pitch videos. Selected projects met key criteria, including group size and gender balance. Each project received a €500 grant and was advised by local partner organisations. The initiative reflects ICDI’s commitment to climate education and ensuring that children—especially girls—have a voice in addressing the climate crisis.

Asia

Country: Kazakhstan
The **Future of the Planet is Ours!** Project was led by the newly created youth-led group GOGREEN that organised events for local authorities to draw attention to complex environmental issues and disseminate information about the sources of and measures to reduce greenhouse gasses.

Results: The project leaders intend to continue their initiative and are planning to organise new events, such as a recycled fashion event for college students.

Advisor organisation: Community Educational Foundation “School for All”

Country: Pakistan
The **Air Pollution Project** aimed to raise awareness and promote understanding of air pollution among students in schools, as well as to empower students to become advocates for positive change in their communities.

Results: The project was able to reduce waste and create awareness through cleanliness drives on hiking trails and educational sessions. These activities made participants feel more motivated to work towards a cleaner environment, which had a significant positive impact on the environment. Currently, the project leaders wish to organise more activities to engage the community in environmental sustainability efforts.

Advisor organisation: Bedari

Africa

Country: Ethiopia
The **Child Led Advocacy Project** aimed to empower children as agents of change by involving them in government decision-making processes related to climate change and promoting awareness of its impact on children’s rights. For this an advocacy workshop was held with children, community members, and government and non-government officials to raise awareness and encourage action.

Results: The project succeeded in showing the importance of considering children’s rights issues in climate change actions and convinced children, their caregivers, and the broader community to reduce their environmental impact. Government officials pledged to prioritise children’s issues in national plans to address climate-related challenges.

Advisor organisation: Hiwot

Country: Uganda
The **Fruit Tree Planting Project** aimed to contribute to environmental conservation by planting fruit trees in school yards, as well as distributing them to households with vulnerable children and pregnant women. A retired forestry officer educated the children on the fruit trees and planting techniques.

Results: The project successfully promoted environmental conservation efforts among the children and kickstarted a broader community effort. Their efforts now form a solid foundation for future environmental awareness campaigns and actions. The project leaders will continue to ensure the growth of the fruit trees and monitor the trees given to households.

Advisor organisation: Nascent RDO

Central America

Country: Nicaragua
The **Cuenta Cuentos Sostenibles Project** (Sustainable Storytelling) aimed to motivate children to practice sustainable habits at home and in the community, and to understand the environmental issues in their area and how human actions impact the environment. Consultation sessions were organised where children could share their thoughts and identify and find solutions to local environmental issues.

Results: The project successfully raised environmental awareness among the children and had a transformative impact on the community. The project leaders now wish to expand their knowledge by giving open access to their expertise in a creative way.

Advisor organisation: Asociación La Amistad

The **Rescue of Our Traditional and Medicinal Plants in the Educational Community of Eduardo Contreras School Project** created a botanical garden in a primary school where children, teaching staff, and families were able to learn about medicinal plants and how to plant them. The plants were then purchased by the children’s families.

Results: The project successfully promoted knowledge of medicinal plants among the community and taught children about plant properties and planting.

Advisor organisation: Puntos de Encuentro

The **Let’s Expand Our Organic School Garden to Ensure Healthy Food for the Children of Eduardo Contreras Project** aimed to improve the nutrition of about 600 children by expanding their school gardens. It also taught children how to grow nutritious crops to be used in school lunches and at home.

Results: The project succeeded in teaching children about organic farming and promoting healthier eating habits by growing food at home and at school. The project leaders wish to continue their activities by planting additional crops for future harvests.

Advisor organisation: Puntos de Encuentro



HIGHLIGHT

Ten children-led projects to celebrate ICDI’s 30th anniversary!

Europe

Country: Italy

The **Creative Labs Project** created several creative labs where children could learn about the environment and flora and fauna of their villages. **Results:** The project was a great success, as children were able to enjoy their surroundings, connect to the flora and fauna of their villages, and understand the importance of the environment and humanity’s impact on it. Currently, project leaders are planning to open a youth centre where more labs can take place.

Advisor organisation: International Child Development Initiatives

Country: Latvia

The **Pure Planet Will Have a Future! Project** aimed to tackle issues brought on by fast fashion by educating the youth about the environment and how to give second-hand items a second life. The project leaders wished to find unique solutions to the challenges of fast fashion, encourage children to talk about current topics, and to change their attitudes towards the environment.

Results: The project was able to reduce wasteful fast fashion practices and children and teenagers were happy to engage in the activities of sewing and candle-making.

Advisor organisation: Latvian Red Cross South Latgale Committee Dagdas Youth Department

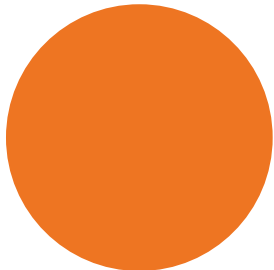
Country: Slovenia

The **‘Keep Water Clean’ Project** aimed to raise awareness about the importance of clean water to schoolchildren. This was done by organising workshops in which children made water filters and were encouraged to develop solutions for improving water quality. The project also organised biology and science classes for the children, in which they could try various experiments for creating clean water supplies.

Results: The project is not finished yet, as they also want to implement activities in Rižana.

Advisor organisation: OŠ Elvire Vatovec Prade

Total reach:
937 children and
young people,
561 adults.



Honouring Nico van Oudenhoven¹



Throughout the year, we took the opportunity to reflect on the legacy of Nico van Oudenhoven, co-founder of ICDI. In this Annual Report—dedicated to celebrating thirty years of our work—we honour the profound impact Nico has had on ICDI and the world.

To do so, we reached out to valued representatives from organisations who have known Nico both professionally and personally. What follows is our tribute to the legacy he built over the past 30 years since co-founding ICDI.

...It was a privilege to partner with ICDI, the organisation you, Nico, founded, to implement crucial initiatives for the protection of children affected by conflict in Nepal. I was equally honoured to serve on the Board of ICDI as the first member from the Global South representing partner organizations... Sending you my warmest wishes and deep respect for the extraordinary work you have done in championing children's rights globally.

Sumnima Tuladhar (Ambassador of Nepal to Denmark)

My friendship with Nico goes back more than 40 years, to a time when I was a young director of a community center in Jerusalem. Our connection has remained strong ever since... Nico is a man deeply committed to justice and humanity. He always cared for the have not's mainly children...

Farid Abu-Gosh (Trust | Palestine)

I have known Nico as a pioneer, innovator, and a great friend. Nico's empathy knows no bounds and his leadership on children's issues is unrivaled. With great humility, he has pioneered new solutions to improve children's and adolescent wellbeing...

...He made children's and adolescents' wellbeing his life mission and ICDI is the engine that he wanted to power this mission. As ICDI celebrates 30 years, a lot remains to be done to achieve this mission, and I can't wait to see what the next 100 years of ICDI will look like and what it will mean for children's wellbeing.

Patrick Obonyo (IKEA Foundation | Kenya)

Do you know what it means for a young professional when an experienced and respected colleague supports all your initiatives? Nico and I met through a more content-driven approach to grantmaking—one that bridged academic data and practical implementation and showed genuine support for partner organisations. His impact has been significant, even for the experienced professional I am today. Just like he has been for many children around the world, Nico has also been incredibly important to me.

Marian van Teeffelen (Kinderpostzegels)

Whenever someone asks me who has had the biggest influence on my life, my work, and my way of thinking, I don't even have to think twice — it's always Nico. Throughout his career and in everything he does personally, he makes young children his top priority and puts them right at the heart of his work...

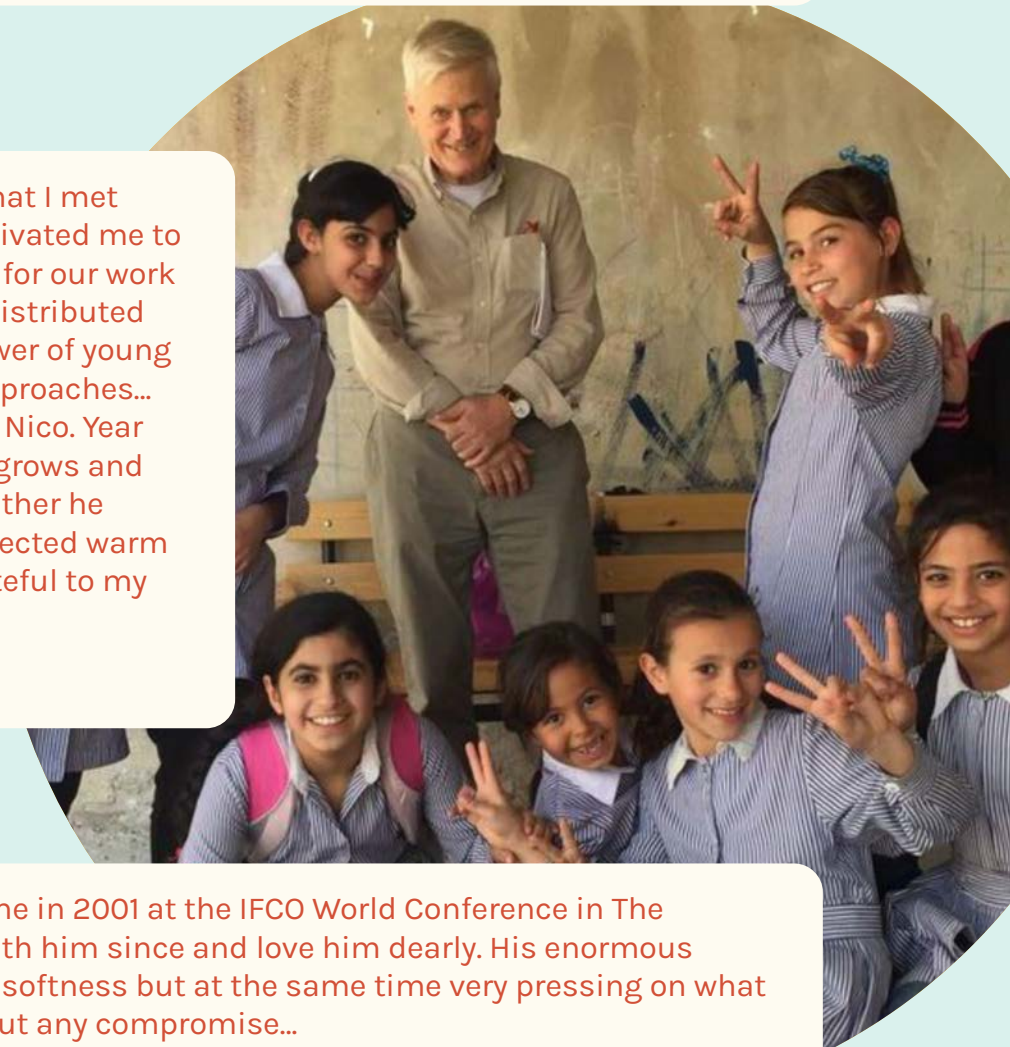
Jeroen Aarssen

From the first moment that I met Nico 46 years ago he motivated me to search for new pathways for our work in ECD. Nico believed in distributed leadership and in the power of young people to develop new approaches... I learned so much from Nico. Year after year our friendship grows and every time we met each other he surprised me with unexpected warm experiences. I am so grateful to my dear friend...

Jan Peeters (Belgium)

I met Nico for the first time in 2001 at the IFCO World Conference in The Netherlands... I worked with him since and love him dearly. His enormous wisdom, his honesty, his softness but at the same time very pressing on what is best for children without any compromise...

Bep van Sloten



Nico, my teacher, my refuge, spoke volumes without words—through a glance, a hug, that steady, knowing gaze. Thank you, Nico, for creating ICDI with heart and vision, for protecting honesty, wisdom and humanity with quiet grace, and for being my friend, my compass, my courage—and my companion in the lifelong search for collateral beauty...

Zorica Trikić (Serbia)

My dear Nico, we have so many memories at Asociación La Amistad from all these years of working together for the benefit of the children and adolescents of our country. The fruits of your legacy are evident in the men and women who have been guided by the principles of respect for Human Rights.

Rita Siqueira (La Amistad | Nicaragua)

Nico is a remarkable and sincere person, with a big, warm, yet humble heart. Both as a human being and as a professional, he is a continuous source of inspiration to me... I am deeply grateful to have Nico in my life and to share such genuine affection and connection with him.

Catelijne Sillevius



Meeting Nico transformed the way of looking at the world around me. Nico has always been an excellent source for me and other colleagues. With Nico and ICDI support we have saved hundreds of girls in rural areas of Pakistan from the menace of child marriage...

Saleem Malik (Bedari | Pakistan)

Meeting Nico around 15 years ago during his visit to Bedari was a turning point for me. Since then, he has been a constant source of inspiration in my life — always encouraging, always believing in the work I do.... ..his ability to appreciate even the smallest steps with such generous and heartfelt words has left a lasting impact on me. What moves me most is his deep cultural sensitivity, his unwavering principles, and the immense love and warmth he carries in his heart, especially for children...

Anbreen Ajaib (Bedari | Pakistan)

From our very first conversation, it was clear that he was a true visionary, someone who saw culture as fundamental to nurturing identity, joy, and self-worth in children.... He created a respectful and open space for dialogue, genuinely valuing our perspectives... Nico emphasized that culture is not just a background element but a life-giving force, central to fostering awareness, resilience, and connection especially in contexts like Ethiopia, where poverty often makes people feel invisible...

Amsale (ESD | Ethiopia)

I first met Nico in 1990 during a visit he was conducting to South Africa. His keen listening, astute questioning and gentle imparting of his knowledge... We reconnected in 2000 when he returned to South Africa, and it was during this time that we became friends too. Always generous with his time, skill and knowledge... There is an African proverb that says, “if you want to walk fast, walk alone but if you want to walk far, walk together”. Nico, as a mentor and guide and probably without knowing it, walked far with me...

Fioni Murray (South Africa)

¹ During the preparation of this report, we were saddened by the passing of Nico. His continued influence is felt in our work (Read [Eulogy](#) and [Commemorative Video](#)).



Research and advice

ICDI is a knowledge organisation in children’s psychosocial development and well-being. In most of our projects we embed a research and innovation development agenda. Every year, this results in several publications and presentations at international conferences. Many of them are open source and can be used by other organisations to be inspired and start initiatives based on methodologies and tools developed by ICDI. Our expertise is also contracted by other organisations who require our support in their programmes through short term assignments. Information about these activities is listed below.



Publications

Heusser-Ferrés, P. (2024). [Mia goes on an adventure with mom](#) (E. Oxenaar, Illus.). International Child Development Initiatives.

ICDI (2024) Climate Action: [Dalit children struggle to access basic rights in Bangladesh](#).

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[Meaningful Youth Participation Toolkit Part 1 and Part 2](#). Part 1 authored by ICDI and Defence for Children and Part 2 Activity Cards authored by ICDI. The Toolkit was commissioned by Kinderpostzegels (2024).

[Fostering Resilience in Young People in Times of Adversity Toolkit](#). Authored by ICDI and commissioned by Kinderpostzegels. 2024.



Conferences

Giulia Cortellesi presented [how the TOY and TOY for Inclusion approaches foster cooperation between refugees and migrants, emphasising their role in promoting social cohesion and inclusion through intergenerational learning](#), at the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). Paris 19-20 April 2024

Luisa Tesch presented insights and learnings on the challenges that young people, especially women, face in finding decent jobs during the Waste2Work webinar titled [‘Strengthening Youth Voices across the World of Work in the Waste Sector.’](#) This webinar focused on promoting eco-friendly solutions and job opportunities in the waste sector by empowering youth voices. Organised by the Challenge Fund for Youth Employment, INCLUDE Knowledge Platform, and VSO. Online. April 22, 2024

Margaret Kernan and Giulia Cortellesi conducted a peer learning event hosted during [‘The Global Intergenerational Week’](#), an annual worldwide campaign encouraging everyone to embrace intergenerational practice and relationships. The event introduced intergenerational learning



Consultancies/short assignments

(IGL) to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) practitioners and NGO staff. Online 24–30 April 2024

ICDI presented a workshop on Meaningful Youth Participation to the Better Care Network Netherlands Network (BCNN). This year’s theme, [“Empowerment of Youth,”](#) focused on equipping young people with the necessary tools and support as they transition into adulthood. ICDI’s workshop highlighted strategies to actively involve young individuals in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Utrecht, October 11, 2024.

ICDI co-presented with Ministry of Preschool and School Education, Uzbekistan: [‘Transforming Community-Based ECEC in Uzbekistan’ in the ISSA Conference ‘It Takes an Early Childhood Ecosystem for All Young Children to Thrive’](#). Bulgaria, 23 - 24 October 2024

ICDI co-presented with ISSA: [‘Towards a Charter for Non-Formal ECEC: An ISSA Joint Learning Lab’ in the ISSA Conference ‘It Takes an Early Childhood Ecosystem for All Young Children to Thrive’](#), Bulgaria, 23 - 24 October 2024

[Preschool play-based curriculum early literacy, early numeracy and socio-emotional skills](#). Ministry of Preschool and School Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan

[Compendium of African Initiatives to Support Parents](#). African Early Childhood Network and the Global Initiative to Support Parents

[Play Webinar](#). Labour and Health Social Initiatives - LHSI, Ukraine

[Meaningful Youth Participation Training](#), Kinderpostzegels, The Netherlands.

[Resilience Training](#), Kinderpostzegels, the Netherlands.

[Concept paper for a Multifunctional Integrated Complex for Early Childhood Development](#), Bulgaria for For Our Children Foundation, Bulgaria.

[Technical Capacity Building Trajectory](#) for Link to Progress, Uganda.

Meaningful Youth Participation Training for Save the Children, The Netherlands.

Lobby and advocacy

To ensure children’s right worldwide, one must address the underlying causes of the problems they face, which often are related to economic, social, and political conditions. In this context, the knowledge ICDI gained during years of working within the field of children’s psychosocial development and well-being is an important input to improve policies and laws. This year, we included some of the actions through which ICDI pursued lobbying and advocacy to urge politicians and government agencies to better address children and adolescents needs and desires. Information about all these activities is listed below.

The report “Immigration: One of the Answers to Europe’s Demographic Ageing” has been officially adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe! International Child Development Initiatives contributed to this report, highlighting TOY for Inclusion as one of the best integration practices.

TOY for Inclusion promotes social inclusion, intergenerational learning, the integration of services, and community-based early childhood education and care in 9 European countries.

Nederland stopt met (nieuwe) interlandelijke adopties

Breed gedragen oproep tot stop op alle adoptieprocedures en betere steun geadopteerden



ICDI continued advocating for a permanent ban on intercountry adoptions and for adoptee rights in the Netherlands in 2024.

Separating children from their families, countries and cultures through intercountry adoption represents one of the most far-reaching and definitive decisions that could be made about the future of any child. It is irreversible and the child, and often also the parents, do not have a say in it. Moreover, serious structural abuses have been observed since the decades, in all sending countries, and can, after many attempts to reform the adoption system, still not be prevented. The global intercountry adoption system is demand-driven, fails to address root-causes of family separation, and is disempowering to local child protection systems. Therefore, **ICDI actively advocates for a permanent ban on intercountry adoptions. ICDI does this together with other child rights’ organisations, experts, as well as with organisations led by adult adoptees. ICDI believes that the voices of people with lived experience need to be heard in the adoption debate.**

Supporters

We are really grateful for the inspiring and fruitful collaborations we had in 2024 with all our partner organisations around the globe and the donors that made our work possible.

Thank you to our partners!

AHEAD - Association of Human Rights Educators (Spain) • Associazione 21 luglio (Italy) • Bedari (Pakistan) • Better Care Network - BCNN (Netherlands) • Blum (Hungary) • Carpathian Foundation (Hungary) • Carpathian Foundation (Slovakia) • Centre for Education Initiatives (Latvia) • Cesta Von (Slovakia) • Child Workers in Nepal • CISS - International South South Cooperation (Italy) • CoMensHa (Netherlands) • Defence for Children-ECPAT (Netherlands) • Early Childhood Research Centre (ECRC) at Dublin City University (Ireland) • Education for Sustainable Development (Ethiopia) • Educational Research Institute (Slovenia) • EuroChild (EU) • Hiwot Ethiopia (Ethiopia) • Holis (operates internationally) • I Sicaliani (Italy) • Imago Mundi (Romania) • International Step-by-Step Association - ISSA (Netherlands) • Kinderpostzegels (Netherlands) • KROS - Coalitie kinderrechten in ontwikkelingssamenwerking (Netherlands) • Labour and Health Social Initiatives - LHSI (Ukraine) • Milan Simecka Foundation (Slovakia) • Oltalom Sportegyesület (Hungary) • Open Academy Step by Step (Croatia) • Open Society Fund Praha (Czech Republic) • Partners Hungary Foundation (Hungary) • Prevention and Early Intervention Network (Ireland) • Replika Centre for Educational Theatre (Romania) • Schola Empirica (Czech Republic) • Socia Foundation (Slovakia) • Taka Taka Solutions (Kenya) • University of Ljubljana (Slovenia) • University of Tartu (Estonia) • University of Tromso (Norway) • VSO Voluntary Services Overseas (Netherlands and Kenya) • Wide Open School (Slovakia)

Thank you to our donors!

Dioraphte Foundation • EC Erasmus+ KA3 • EPIM • Erasmus Plus programme • European Commission • European Commission, through its Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) Programme • IKEA Foundation • Kahane Foundation • Kinderpostzegels • Open Society Foundations • Porticus Foundation • Schonewolf • Stichting Zijn • Visegrad Fund • Weeshuis Haarlem • Community Educational Foundation 'School for All' • Trust for Social Achievement • Other foundations in The Netherlands who wish to remain anonymous

We also thank our **Committee of Recommendation** for their precious support to ICDI's vision and mission:

Prof. Dr. David Lancy, Emeritus Professor of Anthropology, University of Utah
Dr. H.J.J. (Henri) Lenferink, Former Mayor of Leiden



Financial statement

In 2024 ICDI's total income from project subsidies was € 842.768. Of this, 92% was directly spent on ICDI's mission and objectives. Total expenditures in 2024 were € 784.656, leaving a positive result of € 64.354. 8% of income was spent on overhead and fundraising costs. This latter figure falls well below the maximum of 25% for such costs as set by regular Dutch standards for Non-Governmental Organisations. For the full financial statement and independent auditor's report, please visit [our website](#).

Staff and Board

Staff (31 December 2024):

Asia Koerten, Co-Director
Giulia Cortellesi, Co-Director
Margaret Kernan, Head of Programmes and Learning
Sarah de Vos, Senior Programme Manager until September 2024
Ketevan Sulava, Senior Programme Manager until March 2024
Mariana Palazuelos, Programme Manager
Catarina Alves, Programme Manager
Luisa Tesch, Programme Manager
Nikos Koufos, Programme Manager since September 2024
Enid McLean, Programme Assistant until June 2024
Nico van Oudenhoven, Senior Associate
Rekha Wazir, Senior Associate

Board

Mathijs Euwema (chair)
Esha van der Hulst (treasurer)
Sumnima Tuladhar (board member) until November 2024
Rutger van Oudenhoven (board member)

Incident Report on Integrity Issues

For thirty years ICDI has stringent ethical guidelines and organisational policies in place that guide behaviour of its employees and partners. (We aim to be completely transparent about these and therefore all policies are available on our [website](#)). In the year 2024 (nor in any of the years previous, for that matter) there have been no incidence reports regarding possible breaches of ICDI's safeguarding and child protection policies, Code of Conduct or fraud.



International Child Development Initiatives (ICDI) is a knowledge organization in psychosocial development of children and young people growing up in difficult circumstances.

ICDI believes in the power of children and young people, supporting their rights and addressing the underlying causes for the problems they face.

We aim to improve policies and practices by building the skills of: children, mothers, fathers, families, communities, local organizations, and authorities. ICDI also works with and for bigger international child rights organizations, supporting knowledge transfer through training, research and advice.

From Nepal to Nicaragua, and from Kiev to Katwijk, our dream is 'a happy life for all children'. Serious and sincere, academic and practical, small and with major impact, ICDI has been promoting psychosocial well-being of children and young people for more than twenty years.

