



# Early Childhood Development

Our strategy for unleashing girls' potential from the start

## A girl's earliest years can change her life—and our world.

Children's first years represent a window of opportunity. Their brains are developing rapidly, building the cognitive and socio-emotional skills that set the stage for later success. Social and emotional learning that promotes more equal gender relationships during these critical years can empower both girls and boys to break the cycle of gender discrimination, opening up tremendous possibility for girls in particular.

*"Care is integral to child development and wellbeing...[but] too much of the responsibility for childcare falls on women."* —Overseas Development Institute, Women's Work report



## But those years are fraught with challenges for girls and their caregivers.

Few preschool programs offer the gender-responsive education children need to develop healthy perceptions of themselves and each other. At the same time, caregivers and role models for those children — most often women and older girls — face their own set of challenges. Because affordable, high-quality childcare can be hard to come by, mothers often give up paid work and older sisters must forgo their own education to care for their family.

## That's why Echidna funds efforts to support gender equality from the start.

In early childhood, we support girls and their caregivers so both can thrive. Our grantmaking focuses on enabling quality, gender-responsive early childhood programs and high quality childcare. This sets the stage for girls to persevere and perform better in school, for boys and men to take on a wider spectrum of roles, and for caretakers to maintain their own wellbeing.

## Change for preschoolers and caregivers means change for all.

### Girls

who receive high-quality, gender-responsive preschool and childcare are developmentally on track, prepared for brighter futures.



### Adolescents

are more likely to be in school if they are not in charge of caring for younger siblings, and when they receive quality early childcare themselves.



### Mothers

are able to pursue more and better work, earn more money, and are happier and less stressed as a result.



### Society

benefits from increased employee productivity and a decreased gap in employment between men and women. That could in turn increase global GDP.

## We have two primary goals in this area:

### 1 Promote gender equality in early education.

From preschool curriculum to gender-responsive parenting programs, we support gender equality in children's earliest education experiences.

#### Example:

##### **In places like Ghana, we're helping transform preschool curriculum.**

Though access to preschool in Ghana is relatively widespread – 75% of kids attend – the quality isn't consistent. Our grantee, Sabre Education, trains and supports preschool educators to improve their teaching, including breaking down gender barriers and stereotypes in the classroom. Teachers encourage mixed genders in play groups and read books featuring female protagonists.

### 2 Strengthen childcare programs to support girls and their caretakers.

We also fund work that advances the availability of high quality, affordable childcare options that serve children and their caretakers.

#### Example:

##### **Around the world, we're pushing for more research and action on childcare.**

We're funding studies on childcare that expand the body of rigorous research enough to drive life-changing policy for girls and their caregivers. We've also supported the Center for Global Development to bring together natural allies in the childcare space through a groundbreaking conference, where early childhood advocates and the women's economic empowerment community uncover opportunities for mutual advancement.

*Let's foster gender equality from the very beginning.*

Early childhood development is the newest part of Echidna Giving's strategy, so we want to learn from others—to be connected to organizations and research aligned with our vision.

If you would like to connect, reach out to Dana Schmidt at [dana@echidnagiving.org](mailto:dana@echidnagiving.org)



Learn more about us at [echidnagiving.org](https://echidnagiving.org)