



Image: Baytna/Refugee Trauma Initiative

Philanthropy Shows Up for the Youngest Refugees

Lessons from OSF's Early Childhood Refugee & Migration Portfolio

17 November 2020

Presentation by Mari Ullmann of findings from a review commissioned by the Early Childhood Program of Open Society Foundation (OSF) London.

[Watch the webinar recording online](#)

MOVING MINDS
ALLIANCE

Webinar Agenda

Welcome	Joan Lombardi , Senior Scholar, Center for Child and Human Development, Georgetown University
Introduction	Tina Hyder , Deputy Director, Early Childhood Program, OSF
Presentation of Findings	Mari Ullmann , Independent Consultant
Reflections from Grantees and Other Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lara Aoudeh, Arab Resource Collective• Paola Seremetis, Major Development Agency Thessaloniki• Katie-Jay Scott, iACT• Zarlasht Halaimzai, Refugee Trauma Initiative• Elvira Thissen, Bernard van Leer Foundation
Discussion/Q&A	Led by moderator
Closing	Kamela Usmani , Program Officer, Early Childhood Program, Open Society Foundations

OSF's Early Childhood Refugee & Migration Team



Tina Hyder
Deputy Director



Almaz Ismayilova
Senior Program Specialist



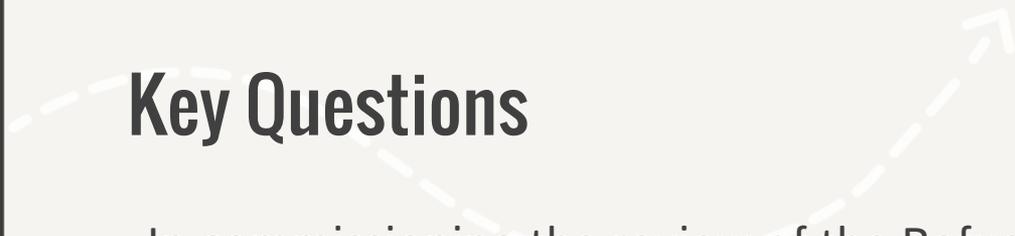
Kamela Usmani
Program Officer

Henry Lewis

Joe Wood

Program Administrative Assistants

Key Questions



In commissioning the review of the Refugee & Migration Portfolio, ECP sought answers to the following questions:

- What did the portfolio contribute to the field? What was achieved through the thematic focus on displacement and through partnerships?
- Were the right topics identified to achieve the goals set out in the strategy for the portfolio?
- What were the intended and unintended outcomes of the strategy, partnerships and project interventions?
- What were the lessons learned, key challenges and successes?
- What approaches, methodologies and partnerships worked well or not so well? How can these be translated into lessons learned in grantmaking practice?

Methodology for the Informal Review

- **Document review** of ECP's background and strategy documents, as well as grantee proposals and reports.
- **Remote, semi-structured interviews** with stakeholders:
 - Grantees (8)
 - Other partners (2)
 - OSF colleagues (3)
 - ECP staff (2)
- Original plan included site visits to select programs, however overseas travel became impossible due to the pandemic. Thus, the review and stakeholder interviews were conducted remotely.
- An analysis of stakeholder reflections revealed a number of **common themes**, which constitute the findings of the review.

About the Refugee & Migration Portfolio

Vision:	Refugee parents are empowered to support their young children to reach their full potential
Period:	First strategic period from 2017 through 2020
Four Strategic Priorities:	
1	Access to Quality Programs: Developing quality early childhood care and education models with improved access to quality services
2	Supporting Parents/Caregivers: Enabling parents to increase their ability to support young children in difficult circumstances
3	Integration: Addressing prejudice and discrimination in host communities to promote refugee integration
4	Global advocacy: Increasing the visibility of young children and the resources going to ECD in emergencies / humanitarian response mechanisms

Findings

Key Themes Emerging from Stakeholder Interviews

Based on stakeholder experience and perceptions of ECP's approach to grantmaking, these themes emerged as unique among donors, vital for the field, and highly appreciated, particularly among grantees and external partners:

1. Building a diverse portfolio designed to catalyze systemic change
2. Supporting different types of program models and organizations through trust-based philanthropy
3. Co-creating interventions based on locally identified needs
4. Leveraging partnerships across levels and contexts to strengthen the field

Building a diverse portfolio designed to catalyze systemic change

Characteristics of the ECP approach:

- Depth of thinking about the refugee issue
- Clarity of purpose focused on young children and caregivers
- Catalytic work toward systemic change and long-term sustainability

“Their board meetings were the most intellectually engaged on the refugee issue. ...the focus was not how to make an ECD program for refugees, but how to have systemic impact. They took seriously the idea of making the work relevant.”

– OSF colleague

“I always found them to be really goals-driven. They put a lot of time into thinking through the kind of work they wanted to support. All foundations intend to do that, but don’t always succeed. My sense is that they don’t have a huge budget [as compared to other programs at OSF], so they consider the initiative as a whole and look for ways to create opportunities across the portfolio.”

– Partner

Supporting different types of program models and organizations

Local cooperation: municipalities, community-based organizations, and academia:



DIA-drasis
Childcare
Center, MDAT



ECD Services on
the Greek Islands,
University of
Patras

Mobile



Wandering Library,
Greece, NGO
Network for
Children's Rights

Peer to peer



Getting Ready
for School,
Uganda,
Child to Child

Supporting smaller organizations and pilots

Supporting smaller, refugee-led orgs...



Little Ripples, iACT



Baytna, Refugee Trauma Initiative

Catalyzing innovation with larger INGOs...



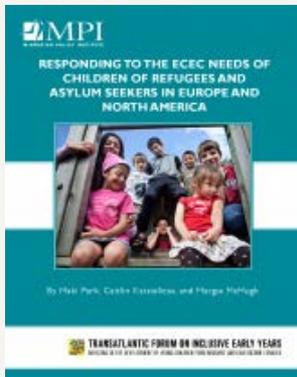
Sesame in Humanitarian Settings, Sesame/IRC



Humanitarian Play Labs, Cox's Bazar, BRAC

Strengthening the field by generating evidence

Research



ECEC Needs in 9 Host Countries in the EU/ N. America, Migration Policy Institute (with others)



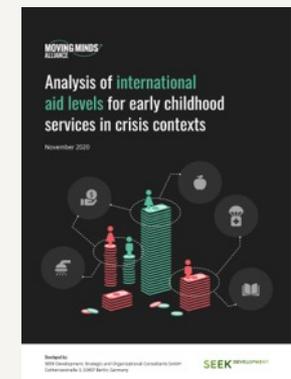
Case Studies on Policies and Practices in 3 Host Countries (Bangladesh, Jordan, Uganda, RTI via Moving Minds Alliance)



Caregiver Support Intervention, RCT in Lebanon, War Child Holland



And more forthcoming via Moving Minds Alliance...

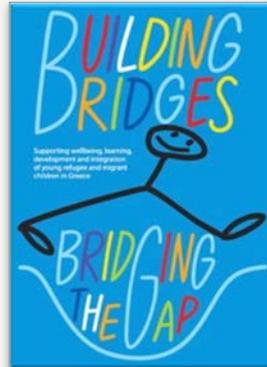


Strengthening the field by supporting and leveraging networks at all levels

Regional organizations and networks:



HEPPP, ARC



Building Bridges, ISSA

National coordination:



Coordination Mechanism, Plan Jordan with BvLF

Global networks and advocacy:



Moving Minds Alliance

Building relationships based on trust and mutual respect

Characteristics of the ECP approach:

- Responsive and available, listening and mentoring
- Trusting the expertise and perspective of grantees
- Flexibility, understanding challenges of delivery in crisis contexts
- Willingness to step up and cover unforeseen gaps

*“We do believe OSF has really trusted us. **We became one – the same project.** Other donors are more like a sponsor than a partner, with constant heavy reporting, rather than **allowing us to grow in the project together.**”*
– Grantee

*“The sense of distance between implementers and donors is usually very apparent. With OSF, **there’s more a sense of partnership and that the relationship is a priority.**”*
– Grantee

*“They have **a real-world approach to grantmaking,** and they’re very open when we encounter challenges. I always found them to have a very understanding ear. **They’re always looking for a solution.**”*
– Partner

Co-creating interventions based on locally identified needs

Characteristics of the ECP approach:

- Open to ideas, co-creation, collaboration, and participatory grantmaking
- Respect for local partners and prioritizing locally identified needs
- Supportive and patient, allowing organizations/models to grow and develop

*“Another thing **the ECP team is great at is using a participatory approach.** They included the grantee in the planning process and in developing the grants.”*
– OSF Colleague

*“OSF was one of the funding agencies that **believed in giving the program a chance to continue to grow itself,** to be updated, and to develop properly in order to reach where we are now. This was really empowering for the organization and for the program itself. **It felt like our mission was also their mission.**”*
– Grantee

*“They have sensitivity and respect for listening to the local needs. **They start by asking people on the ground how they see the situation and what they need.**”*
– Grantee

Leveraging partnerships across levels and contexts to strengthen the field

Characteristics of the ECP approach:

- Planting the seeds for 'big bet' investments
- Facilitating networks and networking
- Partnering with government to sustain progress
- Supporting awareness-raising and advocacy

"Being part of the Moving Minds Alliance has been really central for us as a young, small organization. It helped significantly by bringing a spotlight on our program and bringing it into a new community of people interested in early childhood education. From there, we met other donors. I think that was huge for us, having a seat at the table with much larger organizations.

– Grantee

*"I always found the work of the Moving Minds Alliance to be quite productive, particularly that other people were brought along in addition to the funders. My sense is that **this is something that has legs, with potential champions on board and people engaged who can take it forward.**"*

– OSF colleague



Areas for improvement

While the testimonies of colleagues, grantees, and partners were overwhelmingly positive, a few areas for improvement were noted:

- Funding limitations and gaps
- Internal foundation bureaucracy
- Online reporting portal could be more user-friendly

Reflections from the ECP team:

- Had hoped to continue building on the first set of grants during this strategic period
- If they had been able to continue the portfolio, would have liked to expand work to Latin America

Recommendations

“It’s crucially important that you get ECD right to come close to any semblance of an open society.” – OSF Colleague

To Open Society Foundations:

- Continue to lead the field by addressing the need for ECD in crisis through other ongoing initiatives, e.g., education, women’s empowerment, health, migration, and access to basic rights
- Continue to play a leadership role in the Moving Minds Alliance and other networks

To implementing agencies:

- Join the Moving Minds Alliance and other platforms for collective advocacy and knowledge exchange

To Moving Minds Alliance members and other donors:

- Consider funding organizations and projects formerly supported by OSF’s Early Childhood Program
- Support catalytic work through small, refugee-led and community-based organizations, emerging networks, and innovative models
- Partner with and engage majority communities, including local government, from the earliest stages, to build ownership and long-term sustainability into the plan and shape future policy and practice



Image: Baytna/Refugee Trauma Initiative

Thank you!

Follow Moving Minds Alliance for news and resources on ECDiE:

Twitter: [@MovingMindsECD](https://twitter.com/MovingMindsECD) #YoungestRefugees

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/moving-minds-alliance/>

By Mari Ullmann, Independent Consultant

Email: mari@unboundedassociates.com

Twitter: [@MariUllmann](https://twitter.com/MariUllmann)



Reflections



Lara Aoudeh, ECCD Programs Manager,
Arab Resource Collective (ARC)

Paola Seremetis, Program Manager, Major
Development Agency Thessaloniki (MDAT)

Katie-Jay Scott, Executive Director, iACT

Zarlasht Halaimzai, Director and Co-Founder,
Refugee Trauma Initiative

Elvira Thissen, Representative, Refugee
Response, Bernard van Leer Foundation;
Steering Group Chair, Moving Minds Alliance

Joan Lombardi, Senior Scholar, Center for
Child and Human Development, Georgetown
University



Discussion

