

## Early Childhood Education Programme 2019

### List of Awards

**Reference:** ECE190099

**PI:** Dr Elisabetta Aurino, Imperial College London

**Co-Applicants:** Professor Sharon Wolf, University of Pennsylvania; Dr Pearl Kyei, University of Ghana; Professor Jere Behrman, University of Pennsylvania; Professor J. Lawrence Aber, New York University; Ms Madeleen Husselman, IPA Ghana

**Value:** £299,953.90

**Title:** *Examining Long-Term Impacts of the 'Quality Preschool for Ghana' Interventions on Academic and Non-Academic Outcomes in Middle-Childhood*

**Abstract:** Experimental evidence that investments in early childhood education (ECE) promote sustained gains for children's development into primary school is growing, yet no studies exist in sub-Saharan Africa. The Quality Preschool for Ghana programme is the first longitudinal trial of ECE-quality-improvement interventions in sub-Saharan Africa. This programme evaluated impacts of in-service training and coaching for kindergarten teachers implemented in 2015-16. It improved ECE quality, and children's cognitive and social-emotional skills. Sustained impacts at 6-7 and 7-8 years-of-age were shown by follow-up studies. By continuing long-standing collaborations with Ghanaian stakeholders, this project seeks to examine impacts in middle-childhood (grades 3-4), providing the first-ever experimental evidence of longer-term impacts of quality ECE on academic and non-academic outcomes in sub-Saharan Africa. The project also includes modules on household food security and child nutrition to investigate how those and primary school environments moderate sustained gains, and the cost-effectiveness of such an intervention.

**Reference:** ECE190115

**PI:** Dr Helen Elsey, University of York

**Co-Applicants:** Dr Margaret Nampijja, African Population and Health Research Center, Kenya; Dr Elizabeth Kimani-Murage, African Population and Health Research Centre, Kenya; Dr Patricia Kadzo Kitsao-Wekulo, African Population and Health Research Center, Kenya

**Value:** £299,796.00

**Title:** *Improving the Quality of Day-Care Centres in Nairobi Through 'Community of Practice' and Co-Designing the Operationalisation of the National Early Childhood Development Guidelines in Nairobi*

**Abstract:** Investing in caregivers and children during the critical period between birth and five years of a child's life can have long-lasting benefits in the life of the child. In Kenya's urban slums, children face significant challenges to healthy development, particularly when their families need to earn a daily wage and cannot care for them during the day. Informal, private day-care has developed in response but care-givers are untrained and quality is poor. The government has made progress in developing early childhood development (ECD) guidelines to improve day-care quality but struggles to operationalise these. The overall purpose of this project is to co-design a system to implement government ECD guidelines through skills building of care-givers and monitoring of day-care centres to improve the quality of care for children in poor urban settings. After mapping quality of day-care providers, this project will use quantitative, qualitative and cost-benefit methods to evaluate impact.

**Reference:** ECE190072

**PI:** Professor Paula Griffiths, Loughborough University

**Co-Applicants:** Dr Emma Haycraft, Loughborough University; Dr Elizabeth Kimani-Murage, African Population and Health Research Center, Kenya; Dr Maurice Mutisya, African Population and Health Research Center, Kenya; Professor Judith Kimiywe, Kenyatta University; Dr Teresa Mwoma, Kenyatta University

**Value:** £299,759.00

**Title:** *Caring Practices and Support for Early Childhood Development and Learning Among Nomadic Pastoralists – Informing the Development of a Support System to Foster Optimal Early Childhood Development in Kenya*

**Abstract:** Over 66% of children in sub-Saharan Africa are affected by poor development. This project aims to understand the caring practices/support for early childhood development/learning among the Maasai (nomadic farmers) in Kenya. It will use this information to support the development of a community-based programme to foster optimal early childhood development (up to 36 months).

Nomadic farmers (14% of Kenya's population) have very specific needs for programmes to support early learning because of their semi-nomadic lifestyles and the low status of women. Involving a team of Kenyan/UK developmental psychologists, social scientists, public health nutritionists, and early childhood development experts, this project is working closely with the Ministry of Health, County Health Department and community stakeholders to generate evidence on: 1) Maasai support practices for early childhood development and early learning, 2) how this support can be used in interventions; and 3) how existing Kenyan interventions to support early childhood development need to be adapted to support nomadic pastoralists.

**Reference:** ECE190134

**PI:** Professor Betty Kirkwood, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

**Co-Applicants:** Dr Patricia Kitsao-Wekulo, African Population and Health Research Center, Kenya; Dr Zelee Hill, University College London

**Value:** £293,977.00

**Title:** *A Sure Start in Slums? Nairobi Early Childcare in Slums Study*

**Abstract:** Paid, largely informal, childcare is becoming the 'new normal' for millions of pre-school children growing up in rapidly urbanising Africa. This study in Mukuru slum, Nairobi, aims to be one of the first to document, understand and link the demand and supply sides of this emerging childcare market. It seeks to quantify utilisation, provision and quality of paid childcare, and develop conceptual frameworks to understand childcare decision-making and provider behaviour and practices. The project team is looking to address critical policy relevant knowledge gaps to increase the attention paid to early care and education in slums, and inform intervention strategies which can be delivered at-scale to improve life chances for some of the youngest and most vulnerable children in Africa.

**Reference:** ECE190044

**PI:** Professor Eva Lloyd, University of East London

**Co-Applicants:** Dr Katharine Wright, University of East London; Dr Hiam Loutfi El Zein, Rafik Hariri University

**Value:** £203,390.68

**Title:** *Towards Early Childhood Education by 2030 for All Children in Lebanon - Exploring Strategies for Achieving Equitable ECE Access for both Lebanese Children and Syrian Child Refugees and Realising Sustainable Development Goal 4.2*

**Abstract:** Since 2011 Lebanon has been hosting approximately 1.5 million refugees from the Syrian conflict, about half of whom are children. As part of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education's 2015 Reaching All Children with Education Plan, children aged 3 to 18 are offered free education. This project explores the extent to which the early childhood education (ECE) system offers equal learning opportunities to 3 to 5-year-old Lebanese and Syrian refugee children of different ages, genders and abilities across three regions: Beqaa, Akkar and Tripoli in the north and Saida and Tyre in the south. The project is also looking to evaluate the role of governmental and non-governmental organisations in achieving an equitable ECE system and develop strategies and policy recommendations to enhance ECE access and maximise the chances of Lebanon achieving Sustainable Development Goal target 4.2 by 2030.

**Reference:** ECE190049

**PI:** Dr Paul Lynch, University of Birmingham

**Co-Applicants:** Dr Anita Soni, University of Birmingham; Dr Mike McLinden, University of Birmingham; Dr Emmie Wakupa Mbale, University of Malawi; Mrs Jenipher Mbukwa-Ngwira, Catholic University of Malawi; Dr Khama Chibwana, University of Malawi

**Value:** £236,592.00

**Title:** *Exploring the Historical and Cultural Contexts of Early Childhood Education for Children with Disabilities in Malawi*

**Abstract:** This project seeks to determine how, and why, early childhood education (ECE) works in community-based childcare and primary (special and mainstream) schools for children with disabilities in Malawi. Through reference to one district, it focuses on the outcomes of participation and inclusion for this vulnerable group of children, and examines how good practice can be scaled up in other districts in Malawi. Drawing on a bio-ecological systems theory, the project is seeking to develop a framework to explore how historical and cultural contexts have shaped the way ECE is organised for children with disabilities in a rural district. The research team is collaborating with academics in education, psychology, human ecology, child health and social welfare as well as policy-

makers and NGOs to gain a better understanding of the dynamic complexities that affect the inclusion and participation of children with disabilities in ECE.

**Reference:** ECE190048

**PI:** Dr Dianne Newbury, Oxford Brookes University

**Co-Applicants:** Professor Marina Puglisi, Universidade Federal de São Paulo; Professor Margaret Snowling, University of Oxford; Professor Charles Hulme, University of Oxford

**Value:** £293,879.00

**Title:** *Scaling Up Effective Language Interventions in Inner City Schools in Brazil*

**Abstract:** Language skills are the cornerstone of education: they underpin literacy and numeracy, promote social interaction and are associated with better self-regulation. It follows that, for children with poorly developed spoken language, poor educational outcomes are very likely. This is particularly true for those born into socially disadvantaged communities. Early education intervention programmes can help to support these children but there is little research regarding the social and cultural factors that promote the success of such interventions. This project aims to investigate how and why educational interventions work. It builds upon an existing intervention programme and is working with teachers and caregivers to better understand the factors that challenge effective implementation. The research team is seeking to generate practical solutions to overcome these barriers and test them in a proof-of-principle intervention study. This represents a first step in developing sustainable, effective educational intervention programmes that are suitable for children across the world.

**Reference:** ECE190079

**PI:** Professor Jane Oakhill, University of Sussex

**Co-Applicants:** Professor Kate Cain, Lancaster University; Dr Shelley Bonita O'Carroll, Wordworks; Dr Daleen Klop, Stellenbosch University

**Value:** £265,732.00

**Title:** *The Effects of Story-Based Activities on Early Language and Literacy in South African Pre-Schools*

**Abstract:** Literacy skills are associated with positive outcomes in terms of employment, health, productivity and wealth creation but in South Africa a high proportion of children struggle with literacy. The project aims to target the literacy and language skills of all pre-Grade-R (4- to 5-year-old) children, and is contributing towards Sustainable Development Goal 4 by better enabling children to reach their developmental potential once they start school. The project is designed to be (a) inclusive, cutting across structural inequalities such as gender, ethnicity, race, religion and geography; (b) contextually appropriate by including materials across languages and sites in different locations; and (c) sustainable, by drawing on and contributing to open-source materials and involving training of trainers and teacher training.

**Reference:** ECE190051

**PI:** Professor Gaia Scerif, University of Oxford

**Co-Applicants:** Dr Catherine Draper, University of the Witwatersrand; Dr Steven James Howard, University of Wollongong

**Value:** £298,896.57

**Title:** *Understanding Barriers and Potential of Early Childhood Education in Low-Income South Africa: Leveraging Children's Executive Functions*

**Abstract:** The preschool years present a critical window of opportunity to maximise early childhood development and set young children on their best educational trajectory for human capital outcomes later in childhood, adolescence and adulthood. A key preschool cognitive predictor of educational outcomes (e.g. foundational numerical skills) is executive function. Recent research has shown better than expected executive function in low-income South African preschoolers, an index of potential that is not yet harnessed. Numeracy is of concern in South Africa, because it provides the foundations to later employability, but is poorly understood. This project intends to address this research gap, by determining longitudinal associations between executive function and self-regulation at 3-4 years and numeracy skills at 4-5 years. It seeks to engage highly vulnerable very low-income children and families who do not currently access early childhood development centres, to understand barriers and potential, and maximise good educational outcomes.

**Reference:** ECE190026

**PI:** Dr Nadia Siddiqui, Durham University

**Co-Applicants:** Professor Pauline Dixon, Newcastle University; Professor Stephen Gorard, Durham University; Dr Smruti Bulsari, Auro University; Dr Beng Huat See, Durham University; Mrs Sehar Saeed, Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA-Centre of Education & Consciousness)

**Value:** £293,391.83

**Title:** *Examining the Role of Schooling in the Cognitive and Wider Development of Children in the Province of Punjab (Pakistan) and State of Gujarat (India): Establishing Routes for Sustainable Education*

**Abstract:** School enrolment of around 80% in India and Pakistan is lower than targets associated with Sustainable Development Goal 4, and functional levels of literacy and numeracy are inadequate even for many young children who are enrolled in school. This project, based on 1,500 young children from one province in Pakistan and one state in India, seeks to examine patterns of enrolment of children and school readiness by socio-economic group, family background, urban/rural locations and individual characteristics such as gender, disability and health. Attendance and progress at school will be analysed over one year, demonstrating how much of a difference school attendance can make to children's cognitive development and health outcomes. The project aims to collect in-depth information from families and communities on their views of schools, and any barriers to attendance, and conduct a systematic review of the evidence. The findings are expected to have policy implications on school enrolment, attendance and retention.

**Reference:** ECE190087

**PI:** Dr Victoria Simms, Ulster University

**Co-Applicants:** Dr Maria Ines Susperreguy, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile; Dr Carolina Jiménez Lira, Autonomous University of Chihuahua; Dr Nancy Estevez, Cuban Centre for Neuroscience; Dr Raymond Bond, Ulster University

**Value:** £251,976.00

**Title:** *Home Environments Supporting Learning Mathematics: Understanding the Impact of the Home Environment on Early Mathematical Development in a Global Context*

**Abstract:** Early mathematical learning is important for achievement in school and for future life chances. A great deal of research has focused on the influence of teaching and school systems on learning mathematics. However, there is also a growing interest in the influence of the home environment and parents' attitudes towards mathematics on their children's learning. This project seeks to understand the influence of the home environment across different countries. It also aims to generate information to support teachers and parents when interacting with children and produce accessible resources for parents to use with their children at home.

**Reference:** ECE190082

**PI:** Professor Iram Siraj, University of Oxford

**Co-Applicants:** Dr Kimberley Kong, Universiti Sains Malaysia

**Value:** £299,752.00

**Title:** *Building an Inclusive and Equitable Early Childhood Education for Refugee Children: Framework for Action*

**Abstract:** There is a policy imperative to support sustainable early childhood education (ECE) for refugee children in the Global South. This project investigates the impact of ECE on the development of refugee children aged 3-5 in Malaysia. It is a responsive call to reach a vulnerable population by addressing the issues of quality, equity and accessibility to ECE. The project aims to identify challenges and barriers to ECE so the development of refugee children, the well-being of their families and ECE centres can be supported. The findings will be used to inform policy and promote high quality ECE practice.

**Reference:** ECE190031

**PI:** Professor Ruth Swanwick, University of Leeds

**Co-Applicants:** Dr Alexander Mills Oppong, University of Education, Winneba, Ghana; Dr Yaw Nyadu Offei, University of Education, Winneba, Ghana

**Value:** £252,013.00

**Title:** *Early Education for Young Deaf Children and Their Caregivers in Ghana*

**Abstract:** Deafness affects 32 million children worldwide and is disproportionately prevalent in low and middle-income countries where the physical, economic, cultural, and social contexts of children's lives inhibit access to inclusive and equitable early education. This project aims to investigate these challenges in Ghana where early childhood development and inclusive education for all is a

development priority. The research team is working to co-produce case studies in rural and urban environments and survey extant practices and policies to inform a contextually situated and intersectoral approach to early education that builds on the proximal and external resources around the child. The development of research and practice in early language and communication as core foundations for learning supports SDG planning in Ghana and is relevant also to other low and middle income countries in sub-Saharan African and elsewhere.

**Reference:** ECE190059

**PI:** Professor Karen Wells, Birkbeck, University of London

**Co-Applicants:** Dr Peace Mamle Yoko Tetteh, University of Ghana; Professor Erdmute Alber, Bayreuth

**Value:** £281,055.00

**Title:** *Development and Education in the Vernacular for Infants and Children: Learning Cultures in Rural Villages in West Africa*

**Abstract:** Development and Education in the Vernacular for Infants and Children (DEVI), the Ewe word for child, is a research project in West Africa that aims to identify the local epistemologies and pedagogies that families in poor communities deploy to support their children's education in the early years. It seeks to ensure that early childhood development and education interventions made possible by policy and funding initiatives responding to Sustainable Development Goal 4.2 can supplement and strengthen rather than displace this support. The project aims to identify local theories about how children's cognitive development is accomplished and embedded in daily practice and interaction, and how this is inflected by a range of social inequalities and shaped by political economy. The research team is looking to design a model to engage communities in strategies for strengthening early years community-based education that scaffolds children's vernacular education between home and school.