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**The Bernard van Leer Foundation** was established in 1949 and is based in the Netherlands. Our income is derived from the sale of Royal Packaging Industries Van Leer N.V., bequeathed to the foundation by Dutch industrialist and philanthropist Bernard van Leer (1883 - 1958).

**Our mission** is to improve opportunities for children up to age 8 who are growing up in socially and economically difficult circumstances. We see this both as a valuable end in itself and as a long-term means to promoting more cohesive, considerate and creative societies with equal opportunities and rights for all.

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Our grantmaking works primarily through **supporting programmes** implemented by local partners in selected countries. Through our **publications and advocacy**, we aim to inform and influence policy and practice, globally and in the countries where we operate.

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#### **Strategic goals (2010- 2015)**

- Taking quality early learning to scale
  - Reducing violence in young children's lives
  - Improving young children's health by improving their physical environments
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**The countries where we operate** are Brazil, India, Israel, The Netherlands, Peru, Tanzania, Turkey, Uganda, and the European Union (regional approach).

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**Our strategy in Israel** is national in scope, relevant to 1.3 million children 0 to 8. The overarching theme is investing in disadvantaged young children, in order to improve their welfare today and the quality of Israel's workforce in the future. Goals currently under consideration are the following:

- 1.** Universal access to quality pre-school among 3 to 6 year old children
  - 2.** Reduced incidence of depression, anxiety and aggression among young Jewish and Arab children exposed to political violence
  - 3.** Reduced rates of malnutrition among young Bedouin children growing up in unhealthy physical environments in the Negev
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### Why these goals in Israel

1. Israel ranked 31 among 45 countries in the 2006 PIRLS, an international exam conducted amongst fourth graders to test reading literacy in a child's mother tongue. The Israeli pre-school sector has the greatest potential to have a large impact on learning achievement in early primary school (especially for the most disadvantaged) yet not all children have equal access to quality pre-school services. The focus of this work would be with Haredi and Arab children.
2. Exposure to trauma associated with the political conflict is one of the most pervasive violence problems facing Israeli children, both Jewish and Arab. There is an estimated 130,000 children from 0 to 8 suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and an even higher number experience symptoms that do not meet the full clinical diagnosis. Currently there is no national response to this problem which can result in life-long patterns of disruptive behaviour.
3. Malnutrition affects approximately 45,000 of the poorest children in Israel whom are from the Bedouin communities. According to the Ministry of Health, the infant mortality rate among Bedouins is 3 times the national average (11.5 per 1,000 births compared to 4.1 per 1,000 in the general population); the rate of anaemia among 6-month-old babies is 56% compared to 10% in Jewish infants; 13% of children in first and second grade suffer growth delays; 17% are underweight; and children in unrecognized villages were 2.4 times more likely to be underweight than in permanent communities.

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### Our History in Israel

The Bernard van Leer Foundation has supported Israeli children for a half-century. Soon after the inception of the Israeli state, Bernard van Leer provided charitable funds to address multiple needs across the society. In accord with the Foundation's statutes, 8% of the annual grant-making budget is invested in Israel. Over the past decade that has meant an average annual investment of € 1.5 million. The Foundation is one of the very few secular international funding agencies focused on young children operating in Israel today.

Consistently across the decades, a major challenge in working with young children at risk in Israel is inequality and corresponding social tensions in a diverse society. The guiding criteria for the Foundation's operational choices in Israel are the values and principles of the Van Leer Entity of which the Foundation is an integral part -- working towards a diverse and fair society in Israel, to be achieved through a non-partisan stance towards all young children.



**Lisa Jordan** - Executive Director

Lisa joined the foundation in July 2009, having previously worked with the Ford Foundation. She is a senior executive in the field of philanthropy with over twenty years of experience in NGOs, foundations and governments.