
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.

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.

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

- Brazil
 - India
 - Israel
 - The Netherlands
 - Peru
 - Tanzania
 - Turkey
 - Uganda
 - European Union
(regional approach)
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Our goals in India

1. Increased access to quality multilingual pre-school education services for 3-5 year old tribal children in Orissa
 2. Reduced rates of malnutrition and morbidity among young children growing up in urban slums
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Why these goals in India

1. Quality multilingual pre-school: Out of the 8 million tribal people in the state of Orissa, 1.4 million are children 0-6 years of age. Among the tribal population in Orissa, literacy rates are 37%, compared to 63% for the state and 65% for the country. Although 77% of tribal children attend a centre run by the government's Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), more centres are needed. Where centres do operate, there are problems of poorly trained teachers who are regularly absent, unsafe physical infrastructure, and discriminatory attitudes towards tribal children and their parents. Many do not speak the official state language, and the absence of tribal languages in ICDS centres is one of the main barriers to improve learning outcomes. Only 4 to 5 per cent of centres use the children's mother tongue as a language of instruction. The Foundation has been supporting the creation of multilingual pre-schools in Orissa since 2009.

2. Malnutrition and morbidity in slums: More than 150 million children in India are at risk of becoming malnourished due to the current global food crisis and corresponding escalations in prices. This is compounded by high levels of child morbidity stemming from lack of access to safe drinking water, poor sanitation and lack of awareness about appropriate health and hygiene practices. 46% of children under 3 are underweight, 38% are stunted, and 19% are wasted. A USAID study in 2002 found that infant mortality rates were twice as high in slums as the national rural average, and that slum children under 5 suffer and die more often from diarrhoea and acute respiratory infection than rural children. Our own research in 2010 in a sample of five major cities, found up to 65% of urban poor children were underweight, 77% were anaemic.

There is a major movement to change the conditions of the slums. Two of the most significant programmes are Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) and Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY) – nationally funded urban renewal and slum upgrading initiatives investing 3 billion Euros per year in cities where urbanization and urban poverty are most dramatic. The challenge is to make those Euros count for young children in urban slums.



Lisa Jordan - Executive Director

Lisa joined the Foundation in July 2009, having previously worked with the Ford Foundation.

Please visit our website for more information on the Foundation and our work in India

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