A good start puts each individual child on the path to realising their full potential and sets the foundation for a healthy, fair and peaceful society.

Founded in 1949, the Bernard van Leer Foundation focuses on working worldwide to ensure that babies, toddlers and the people who care for them have a good start in life. Our mission is to improve opportunities for all young children, especially the millions of young children growing up in circumstances of socio-economic and environmental disadvantage around the world.

After nearly six decades of investing in early childhood development, we believe the major challenge is the transition to scale. By working together with governments, civil society, philanthropy, academia, international organisations and businesses, we find the best programmes and policies to improve children’s lives. We partner with them by providing funding, expertise and networks to scale these up for maximum impact.

**Why focus on the early years?**

The early years of life is a unique window of opportunity to improve lives.

Babies’ and toddlers’ brains develop rapidly, and small changes at this young age can have lifelong effects.

Research has increasingly shown that investing in babies’ and toddlers’ development translates into better health, a greater ability to learn and work with others, and higher incomes in adulthood.

**Early experiences shape the brain:**

- **1 million synapses** are created in a baby’s brain every second.
- **250 million children under 5** – across almost every country in the world – do not receive the care they need to reach their full potential.
- **US$ 6 – 17:** the estimated return for every $1 spent on high-quality early years programmes.
Job description

The Representative India is the main point of contact for all our partners in the country. Using the Foundation’s expertise, network and available financial resources, the Representative will have the mandate to: manage and monitor existing strategic partnerships and develop new partnerships in alignment with the Foundation’s strategic priorities in India.

Basic information

Position: Representative India  
Team: Programme Team India  
Based in: Mumbai, India  
Start Date: As soon as possible  
Salary range: Euro based benchmarked yearly salary range EUR 69,000 – EUR 95,000

Key responsibilities of the position:

► Serve as Foundation’s primary point of contact in India for partnership development and relationship-building by consistently strengthening our network

► Source new partnerships for providing financial and technical support as part of new strategic priorities of the Foundation

► Strengthen and maintain partnerships through strategic grants, technical assistance and knowledge sharing with government, business, academia, non-government organisations, philanthropy and civil society stakeholders in order to:

  ● Manage Parents+ programmes in India and bolster support for our parenting partnerships  
  ● Manage Urban95 cities in India and bolster support for our urban partnerships, including training programmes for urban professionals and other strategic investments  
  ● Continue to position Urban95 in the broader debate about the future of cities in India  
  ● Grow and strengthen the overall field of early childhood development in India  
  ● Actively monitor and manage grants and the facilitation of technical assistance

► Ensure all flagship projects have robust documentation, learning and monitoring and evaluation activities

► Represent the Foundation through speaking and writing in public fora

► Contribute to the knowledge base of the Foundation by regularly sharing insights and knowledge coming out of the work in the India with the global team

► Manage a small team and local consultants for activities in India with support from the Foundation global office in The Netherlands.

Professional contacts:

Inside the Foundation: 
Programme Team and all Foundation staff

Outside the Foundation: 
Government, technical partners, multilateral organisations, philanthropies and business
Expertise and experience

- Excellent leadership, strategic planning and management skills
- 10+ years’ experience funding/designing/implementing social policy programmes is an advantage, but we will also consider applicants with a private sector background who have a track record of building and managing high-impact partnerships and an interest in social change
- Specific expertise in early childhood development and/or urban development is an advantage
- Demonstrated capacity to build trusted relationships with a wide range of stakeholders including government, business, academia, non-government organisations, philanthropy and civil society institutions
- Demonstrated capacity to deliver results through collaboration, diplomacy and negotiation
- Experience organizing and managing multi-stakeholder partnerships
- Excellent planning, goal setting, prioritisation and organizational skills
- Experience in monitoring and evaluation
- Strong commitment to our mission that all children deserve a good start in life
- High degree of self-awareness, emotional intelligence and empathy
- Comfortable working under pressure and on a wide range of tasks
- Experience working in an international organization in which team members around the world collaborate remotely
- Ability to communicate effectively and persuasively verbally and in written English; fluency in Hindi and/or any other regional language a plus.

Organizational competencies:
- Teamwork
- Learning ability
- Result driven

Job specific competencies:
- Networking
- Leadership
- Negotiating
- Entrepreneurship
Focus Country: India

We have worked in India since 1992. Recently we have focused on parent coaching, urban design interventions, and generating knowledge related to the early years.

Number of children (0-5)
138 million

Number of children living in urban areas (0-5)
36.6 million

Number of children in urban slums (0-6)
8.1 million

Working with caregivers
Through our Parents+ programme, we are working with Odisha state’s Ministry of Women and Child Development to strengthen parenting and parent coaching in the state and scale across all 70,000 anganwadis. Our partnership with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare supports families during children’s first 1,000 days.

We also work with NITI Aayog on the Aspirational District Programme, which reaches children and caregivers in some of India’s most disadvantaged communities. We also work with the cities of Pune and Udaipur on parenting initiatives to support both caregivers and frontline workers, as part of a comprehensive partnership with both cities.

Working with cities
The Foundation’s Urban95 programme evolved from work in India starting with flagship initiatives in Pune, Udaipur and Bhubaneswar. In 2020, we partnered with the Smart Cities Mission at the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, on the Nurturing Neighbourhoods Challenge. Ten cities were selected to re-imagine parks and open spaces, improve access to early childhood facilities, adapt public spaces with early childhood-oriented amenities, and create accessible, safe, walkable streets for young children and families. Our partnership with the National Institute of Urban Affairs, a national think tank on urban planning and development, includes a capacity-building course for municipal staff and urban professionals on city planning from a young child’s perspective.

Working with Early Years champions
Under our Early Years Thought Leadership programme, we are launching two large studies in collaboration with multiple partners. The first focuses on understanding the potential impact of climate change on young children and the second on the use of urban spaces by young children and their caregivers.

We have also collaborated with a range of partners including NITI Aayog on primary surveys to assess the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic in the country.
How to apply

Please send a cover letter indicating why you are interested in the position and what expertise, experience and networks you would bring along with your CV. Application documents can be sent to vacancyrepinid@bvleerf.nl.

Early application is recommended as we will review applications on a rolling basis until the position is filled.

Bernard van Leer Foundation is an equal opportunity employer and attention is paid through the recruitment process to prevent any form of discrimination on the basis of age, gender, pregnancy, marital status, race, ethnicity, nationality, disability, sexual orientation or religion.
What is early childhood development?

For a child to thrive, they need good nutrition and healthcare, protection from harm, opportunities to play and loving exchanges with adults.

Early childhood interventions are a priority for the Foundation because hundreds of millions of young children across the world do not have access to a good start in life, which prevents them from reaching their full potential. It’s also an increasing priority for governments and other stakeholders worldwide as they recognise the exponential return on investment in the early years.

Traditionally, early childhood interventions can take many forms: from nutrition, health, water and sanitation, to education and social protection. More recently, we have been working to include a focus on the early years in other sectors that affect millions of young children’s early experiences, such as urban planning and humanitarian assistance.

Further information on the importance of the early years can be found in our Early Years Starter Kit or in this persuasive TED Talk by 7-year old Molly Wright!