

# The Science of Early Child Development

## Building Knowledge about the Importance of Early Child Development



*We need SECD to help us understand  
the “why” of early child development.  
Once we understand the “why”  
we will be able to do the “how” better.*

**Advisor, SECD Partner/Funder, 2014**

## THE CHALLENGE

New research in early human development shows that a person's physiological and psychological adaptations to the environment start from conception and affect development throughout life. This knowledge calls for an approach that provides caregivers and children with timely and relevant support, especially from conception through the first three years.

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*I took the course among the first cohort in 2010 I did not know what SECD and ECD was for and how it would help me in my work. Soon I longed to log into the course. I found everything exciting and educative – the module readings, research, links to practice and, even more, the participants' discussions. I loved the videos and scenarios. This was not my first course online but there was nothing like it!*

**Lucy Nyaga, Kenya (health)**  
SECD course participant, tutor, instructor

*Overall, my involvement with the AKDN SECD Online Course in any roles has had a lot of impact on my own capacity building. These experiences have supported me to develop some of the most practical and meaningful ECD programs in Afghanistan for the most deprived children and communities.*

**Najeebullah Musafirzada, Afghanistan (education)**  
SECD course participant, tutor, instructor

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## WHAT IS THE SCIENCE OF EARLY CHILD DEVELOPMENT?

The Science of Early Child Development (SECD) is a knowledge mobilization initiative designed to make current research engaging and accessible to anyone interested in learning more about the profound impact of the early years on lifelong health and well-being.

SECD began as a tool to help share the emerging science about early brain development. Since 2009, the **Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN)** has collaborated with **Red River College (RRC)** to grow SECD into a suite of versatile, engaging learning materials in varied formats and languages. SECD resources have a global perspective, are media-rich, interactive and highlight research and programs from around the world.



5

educational **resources**  
and accompanying  
**courses**

1000+

course **participants**  
from 43 countries

60+

former course participants  
trained and mentored as  
**tutors and instructors**

6000+

people reached globally  
from **parents and caregivers**  
to **leaders and policymakers**

## AKDN/RRC PARTNERSHIP 2009 TO 2016

AKDN and RRC worked closely and collaboratively, focusing on: contextualizing SECD for relevance to the majority world; developing flexible materials to meet the needs of different audiences; mentoring champions who could lead courses and workshops; and translating materials into multiple languages.

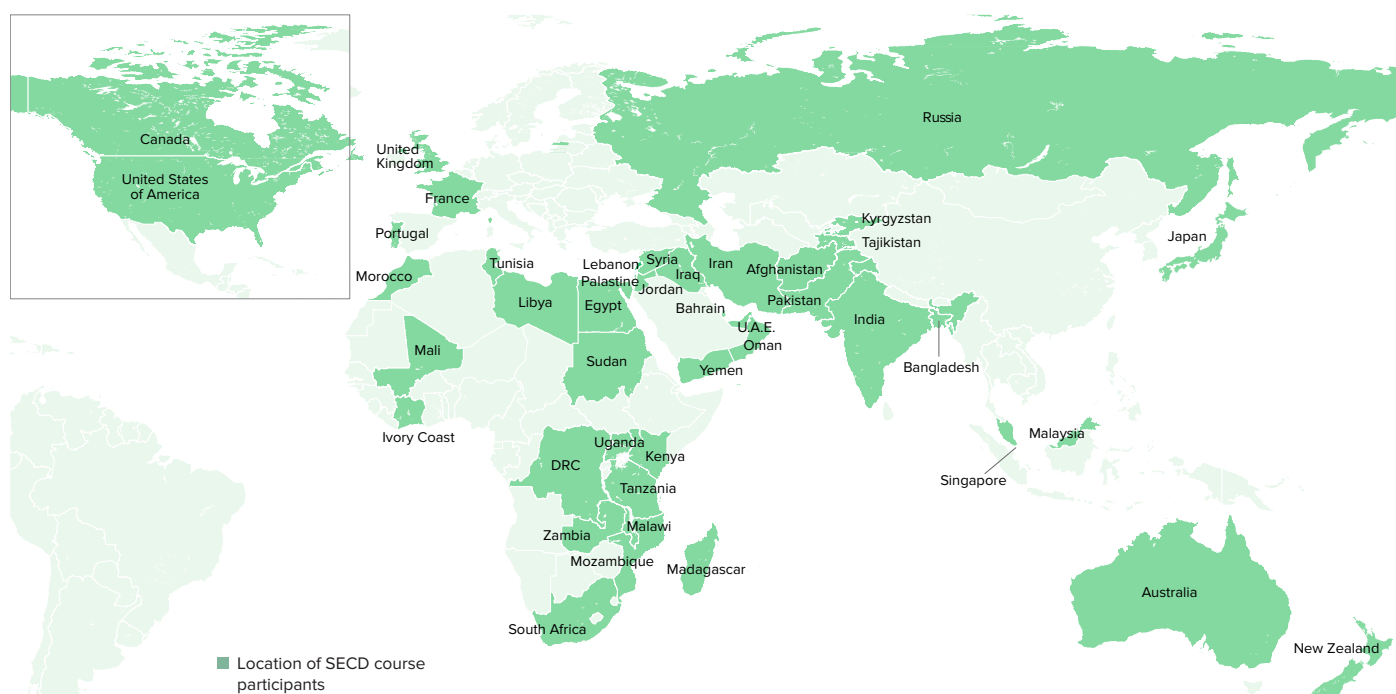
### We learned that:

- The compelling evidence from science about the importance of early development and nurturing environments for young children resonates for a wide range of audiences globally. The message sparks keen interest from participants, inspires people to spread the message further and changes in attitudes and practice.
- It is possible to develop a highly engaged learning community online. That community has a shared interest in improving children's lives and removing barriers that divide sectors and geographic regions. These communities continue after the course ends.
- A range of resources and courses translation-ready and tailored for different audiences, is necessary to reach people at all levels.
- SECD learning communities can nurture career pathways for a surprising number of people. Participation inspires further education, new responsibilities, and new confidence in advocacy at all levels.



*'Both the courses and the linked SECD products reflect the rich variety of majority world contexts and knowledge and have exceeded our expectations. It has also broken down geographic, sectoral, institutional and hierarchy barriers to an extraordinary degree opening up new avenues for collaboration in supporting a good start for young children.'*

Caroline Arnold, Director of Education, Aga Khan Foundation





## RESOURCES AND COURSES

SECD is a broad and far reaching initiative based at Red River College in Canada. AKDN has been a key partner in expanding SECD globally. SECD resources and courses developed in partnership with AKDN are tailored for majority world contexts.



### SECD International Edition

- An online 'living textbook' comprising of 5 interactive, media-rich modules
- Core curriculum for a 16-week online course
- Suitable for varied audiences including policymakers, NGOs, fundraisers, academics, trainers, researchers, students
- English only



### SECD Seminar Series

- An abridged, offline version of the SECD International Edition comprising of media-rich slide presentations seminars, activities, and facilitator's guide
- Foundation for seminars of varied length (1 to 6 days)
- Recommended for policymakers, leaders, professionals, academics, researchers, trainers, degree students
- Available in Arabic, Bangla, English, Kiswahili, Mandarin, Portuguese, Tajik, Russian and Mandarin



### SECD Introductory International Edition

- An abridged version of the online 'living textbook'
- Core curriculum for a 7-week online course
- Recommended for professionals working with families and children—educators, doctors, nurses, social workers, CBOs
- English, additional languages forthcoming



### The Long Reach of Early Childhood

- A 10 minute overview video featuring voices of researchers, programme leaders and community people illustrating key messages about the importance of early child development
- Available in Arabic, Bangla, English, Kiswahili, Mandarin, Portuguese, Tajik, Russian and Mandarin



### SECD Resource Kit

- A series of ready-made workshops with slide presentations, photos, child videos and facilitator's guide
- 5 topics: Brain Development, Play, Language and Literacy, Nurturing Care, and Positive Guidance
- Recommended for use with frontline professionals and caregivers
- English, additional languages

## Want to know more?

The Aga Khan University Institute for Human Development (AKU-IHD) is committed to advancing an understanding of the science of early child development and its implications for policy, research, and programs in majority world contexts. To learn more about the SECD resources and courses at AKU, please visit [www.aku.edu/ihd](http://www.aku.edu/ihd).

## PARTNERS



## FUNDERS

