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UCT part of global parenting initiative awarded more than R200 million by LEGO Foundation

The LEGO Foundation is awarding a £11 million (~R218 million) five-year grant to international research aimed at developing and providing free, evidence-based, playful parenting support to every parent all over the world.

The grant is to the Global Parenting Initiative (GPI), led by the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom (UK) in partnership with the University of Cape Town (UCT) and other universities, organisations and implementers around the world including in South Africa, Canada, Malaysia, Philippines, Tanzania, Thailand, Uganda and the UK.

Leading the UCT contribution is Professor Cathy Ward, co-founder of the Parenting for Lifelong Health programmes, a suite of open-access, evidence-based parenting programmes aimed at reducing violence in low-resource settings which have shown remarkable positive results in extensive trials.

Ward shared: "We are delighted to be embarking on this playful learning journey with the LEGO Foundation and our partners. This ambitious research initiative aims to have a fundamental impact on child learning and violence prevention through the scale-up of evidence-based playful parenting programmes in the Global South.

"As we have learned during the COVID-19 pandemic, parents and caregivers across the world urgently need effective parenting support that is relevant to their lives and responsive to the challenges they experience. The GPI will provide this."

Speaking on how the collaboration aligns to UCT's mission, UCT Vice-Chancellor, Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng, said: "We are very proud that South Africa is continuing to participate in the ongoing development of the Parenting for Lifelong Health programmes, to serve families across the Global South. UCT's mission is to develop African creativity and innovation to benefit the whole continent and the world. We are delighted by this next step for this vigorous research programme, and we look forward to continuing to develop our strong ties to the University of Oxford."

With the support of the LEGO Foundation, the GPI aims rapidly to develop and evaluate playful parenting programmes to improve at-scale child learning outcomes and reduce

violence against children. These will be delivered through in-person, remote, digital, multimedia and hybrid platforms and have been co-developed by Parenting for Lifelong Health with children and families in the Global South. The project includes nine state-of-the-art research-within-implementation studies focused on increasing the evidence of effectiveness and scalability of these programmes.

Sarah Bouchie, Chief Impact Officer at the LEGO Foundation, said: "We are thrilled to support the GPI to reach 250 million children by 2030 with evidence-based playful parenting programmes. With this partnership, we are supporting playful learning to become a priority for every child – sustained through local centres that promote research, learning, and practice. Most important to this work is the opportunity for children all over the world to engage in playful experiences that support a lifelong love of learning."

The aim is to embed parenting within existing government and non-governmental organisation services to improve child development and learning and prevent sexual, physical, and emotional child abuse globally.

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Note to editors

The GPI is a partnership of academic partners, implementing partners, and foundations in Europe, the UK, Africa, and Asia. Partners include the University of Oxford, UCT, Makerere University, McMaster University, the National Institute for Medical Research, Stellenbosch University, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Ateneo de Manila University, Peace Culture Foundation, IDEMS, and Clowns Without Borders South Africa.

The Principal Investigators are Dr Lachman and Professor Cluver (University of Oxford), Professor Cathy Ward (UCT), Dr Godfrey Siu (Makerere University), and Dr David Stern (IDEMS).

The [LEGO Foundation](#) aims to inspire and develop the builders of tomorrow. The Foundation, which owns 25% of the LEGO Group, is dedicated to building a future in which learning through play empowers children to become creative, engaged, lifelong learners.

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Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department

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