

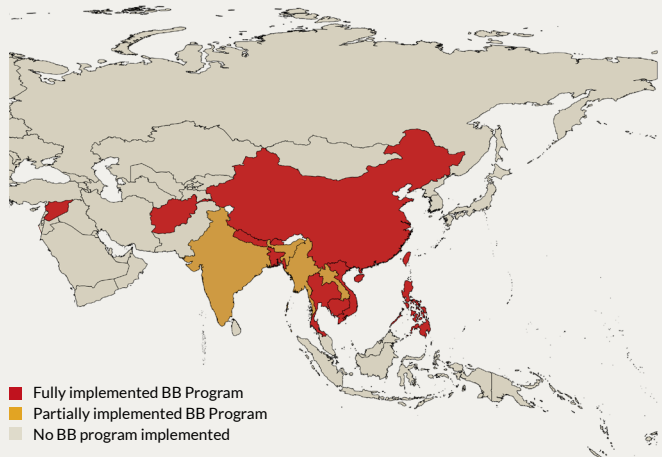


Save the Children.

# 10 YEARS OF BUILDING BRAINS

## UPTAKE AND IMPACT IN ASIA

**Building Brains** equips mothers, fathers and other caregivers with the skills and confidence to engage babies and young children from birth to three years of age, including those with disabilities and living in adversity, in the safe, playful and responsive interactions that are essential for healthy brains and holistic development. Building Brains acknowledges the complexity and challenges of delivering cross-sectoral programs in resource-constrained settings and offers an evidence-based, flexible model that can adapt to local circumstances, capacities and needs.



Source: Save the Children KPI Data Management System, 2019-2023; ECCD Online Survey and one-on-one consultations with program countries, 2023.

Note: There is 1 additional program for which the exact location is unavailable.

### GLOBAL UPTAKE



**49**  
countries



**231**  
awards

First conceived in 2013, Building Brains became a Save the Children Common Approach in 2018. Since then, the BB approach has been used in 49 countries, through over 230 individual awards.

### UPTAKE IN ASIA



**12**  
countries



**88**  
awards

Building Brains has been used in 12 of the 19 Asian countries in which Save the Children operates.

## BUILDING BRAINS IMPLEMENTATION IN ASIA

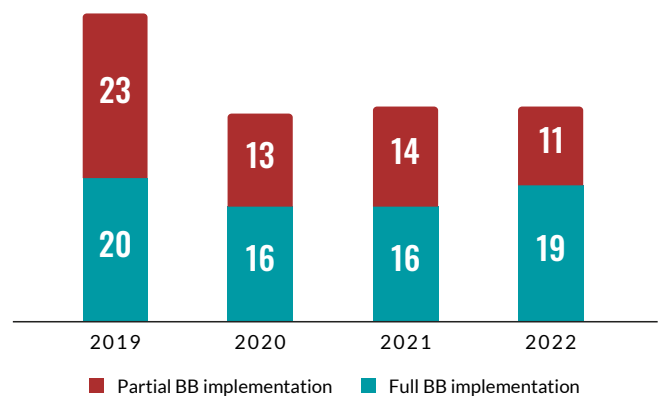
Building Brains has had a strong uptake in Asia, alongside high fidelity to the approach. In fact, country teams have implemented more full than partial Building Brains awards since 2020.

**22%** of awards have been delivered in humanitarian contexts



Photo Credit: Save the Children, Bhutan.

### AWARDS BY YEAR IN ASIA



Source: Save the Children KPI Data Management System.

Notes: Full and partial implementation refers to a program's fidelity to the BB approach, or the degree to which a program uses the core components outlined by the BB intervention package. A full implementation means that a program includes, at a minimum, the delivery of group or individual sessions on playing, early communication and responsive care, along program adaptation to the local context. Since the KPI Data Management System was launched in the fourth quarter of 2018, 2019 data includes records from previous years.

# IMPACT OF BUILDING BRAINS PROGRAMS IN ASIA

Guided by Building Brains Theory of Change, we carried out a meta-analysis of the program's impact on child- and caregiver-level outcomes in seven countries in Asia. We included 8 studies<sup>1</sup> and examined the improvements achieved for those outcomes.



Photo Credit: Save the Children, Bhutan.

## IMPACT ON PARENTING PRACTICES



Caregivers participating in BB in Asia improved their attitudes and knowledge<sup>2</sup>, early learning and responsive care practices<sup>3</sup>, and their use of positive discipline practices<sup>4</sup>. Building Brains significantly decreased the use of negative discipline practices<sup>5</sup>, and increased the availability of play and reading materials in the home.<sup>6</sup>

## IMPACT ON CHILDREN



By participating in BB, children achieved more advanced skills across all domains of development.<sup>7</sup> Globally, these gains translated into a developmental advantage of around 3 months compared to children not participating in BB.<sup>8</sup>



## CUSTOMIZED DESIGN FOR FAMILIES' NEEDS

All programs offered universal support to families through group or individual sessions. However, each program adapted and localized the approach to meet the specific needs of families. Many programs also integrated unique design components, such as father's engagement activities or support to children with disabilities, to best engage with caregivers and children.

## HOW HAS BUILDING BRAINS BEEN CUSTOMIZED IN ASIA?

### BANGLADESH

The first BB study was conducted in Bangladesh in 2013. The approach has been continually implemented in diverse populations since then.

### PHILIPPINES

In the Philippines, BB has been used in the health, social welfare, and education sectors—including a text campaign used during COVID-19.

### NEPAL

In Nepal, BB was integrated into an IYCF training as a part of Save the Children's 2015 earthquake response and has been used as a model for humanitarian adaptation.

### BHUTAN

In Bhutan, BB group and individual sessions, as well as child development screenings, are available at health centers and clinics nationwide as a part of national health services.

### AFGHANISTAN

The first version of BB group sessions was implemented in Faryab province in Afghanistan. Village elders and the parent-teacher association helped to identify the volunteers who would run these group sessions.

For each intervention, and for each outcome, we used intention-to-treat standardized effect sizes, to calculate the pooled impact for BB using random effects meta-analytic models. We report these results using standardized mean differences (SMD), which represent the differences for a given outcome, for children participating in BB compared to children not participating in BB.

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise specified, results refer to the pooled impact from studies in Bangladesh (2016), Bhutan (2019 and 2023), Cambodia (2022), China (2020), Nepal (2021), Philippines (2019) and Thailand (2021).

<sup>2</sup> SMD= 1.12 95% CI -0.88 to 3.12; (N=2)

<sup>3</sup> SMD= 0.48 95% CI -0.11 to 1.07; (N=5)

<sup>4</sup> SMD= 0.39 95% CI -0.11 to 0.89; (N=6)

<sup>5</sup> SMD= -0.14, 95% CI -0.27 to -0.01; (N=5)

<sup>6</sup> SMD= 0.22 95% CI 0.04 to 0.39; (N=4)

<sup>7</sup> SMD= 0.18 95% CI 0.03 to 0.34; (N=7)

<sup>8</sup> Using data from the 2019 study in Bhutan, we explored the developmental trajectories of children participating and not participating in BB to approximate the gains attributable to BB, in months rather than by a standard deviation unit. We found that children participating in BB benefited from a developmental advantage of around 2.7 months, compared to children that did not participate in the program.

For more details on the data shared in this brief, please see the Building Brains Evidence Synthesis Report and Technical Annex.

For more information on Save the Children's Building Brains Common Approach, please contact Sara Dang ([sdang@savechildren.org](mailto:sdang@savechildren.org)). For questions on the evidence synthesis results please contact Filipa de Castro ([fdcastro@savechildren.org](mailto:fdcastro@savechildren.org)).