10 reasons to celebrate
IKEA Foundation 10th anniversary
Every year, I have the privilege of reflecting on what we and our partners have achieved together—but 2019 is particularly special. This year we are celebrating the tenth anniversary of expanding our charter so we could support projects that directly benefited children and families.

You see, our founder—Ingvar Kamprad—established the IKEA Foundation in 1982 with the idea of supporting innovative architecture and interior design. In 2000, the IKEA business began funding projects in India to fight the root causes of child labour. And in 2005, the IKEA business set up the IKEA Social Initiative to fund projects for children around the world.

But Ingvar was a visionary in both his business and philanthropy. He wanted far more families to enjoy a better everyday life, and he knew that a foundation was the best way to make that vision a reality. So in 2009 he applied to the Dutch government to expand the IKEA Foundation’s charter beyond design, and the IKEA Foundation as we know it today was born.

Since then, we have worked with many partners, who have all made an incredible contribution on the journey towards realising Ingvar’s vision. We would like to thank them all for their dedication to creating a better life for families.

After a decade of learning, growing and exploring, we are now embarking on a new strategic direction that will help us address the two biggest threats to children’s futures: poverty and climate change.

As you read through this selection of 10 reasons to celebrate, we hope you enjoy reflecting on how some of our partners’ achievements in the past decade have led us to make two new commitments to families.

Most of all, we hope you are as excited as we are about all the possibilities that lie ahead.

Per Heggenes
IKEA Foundation CEO
Children learning, parents earning

Improving the lives of vulnerable children has been at the heart of what we do since 2009. Our earliest programmes tackled the root causes of child labour because we wanted children to enjoy their rights to play, grow, develop and learn in safe environments. Our long-running partnerships with Save the Children and UNICEF focused not just on improving the quality of schools and making them more inclusive for all children, but also on maternal and child healthcare and child protection—so children would be well enough to attend school and, once there, ready to learn. Through our joint campaigns, millions of children in over 45 countries across sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Europe have enjoyed better educational opportunities.

At the same time, we saw how families need sustainable incomes for their children to stay in school—otherwise, children are forced to become earners, not learners.

Because agriculture is the biggest source of income in impoverished rural communities, we are now investing more in partners that help people improve their incomes through agriculture. One Acre Fund, for example, equips farmers in Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda with resources, such as improved seeds, training on how to adapt to climate change, and solar lights, which also illuminate homes so children can do their homework. These measures enable families to maintain a nutritious diet and sustainable incomes.

Since Angelique joined One Acre Fund, the 33-year-old farmer in Rwanda has learned more about planting and keeping the soil healthy and fertile, so her production has improved. Now she always has vegetables to feed her four children and sells surpluses at the market. Her earnings have allowed her to buy a cow and additional land. “As long we are acquiring more land, we have more harvests and then can pay for our children’s education,” says Angelique.

“My kids have no health problems now. They are healthy and well.”
—Angelique, farmer
The happy-rebel designers

Yasmine was pregnant when she, her husband and their two children were forced to flee their home in Iraq. They ended up at a camp in Baghdad where their daughter, Ritaj, was born two months prematurely—but right in time to live in a Better Shelter rather than a tent.

“The shelters are more private, more safe—especially for Ritaj,” says Yasmine. “She needs a warm space.”

All children should feel safe and secure, and innovative design can make that happen. One of our best-known projects created a more dignified, durable emergency shelter. Developed by our Swedish social enterprise partner Better Shelter—with crucial input from the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and from the people who now call it home—the shelter has been used to house displaced families, health centres and administrative offices for humanitarian organisations.

Democratic design and innovation hold the promise of changing lives. Since our early days as a foundation, when we helped establish the Ingvar Kamprad Design Centre at Lund University’s School of Industrial Design, we have supported projects that transcend the usual scope of industrial design to put people first and let them enjoy safe, secure living environments. We have also teamed up with What Design Can Do, a platform that works to advance design as a tool for social change. Our joint campaigns have called on creative thinkers to find new ways to support refugee families, to devise solutions to fight the impacts of climate change, and to rethink how we produce, distribute and use energy in our cities.

We have always taken on risky projects regardless of their guarantee for success, and will continue to do so because we believe this is the role philanthropy should play in working towards a better future for everyone.

“The shelters are more private, more safe.”
—Yasmine, mother of newborn Ritaj

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Nineteen-year-old Nikki, from a village in the Indian state of Haryana, recently passed grade 12 and now has her own tailoring and beauty businesses. She established them after DISHA supported her participation in a start-up training, followed by guidance from the organisation Humana People to People India. Nikki currently works out of a room in her parents’ house, where she also lives, but plans to have her very own shop in the main market. She already has tailoring orders from 40 customers.

The young entrepreneur is thankful to be able to “do something of my own. I can fulfill my dreams and support my family,” she says.

We know there is no quick fix for gender equality, but we have seen how investing in women’s earning potential helps improve entire communities. When women have their own incomes, they and their families enjoy better nutrition, healthcare and education.

Globally, we have supported more than 20 partners that increase women’s access to dignified work, education, skills training and healthcare. Through DISHA, a programme implemented by our partner UNDP and the India Development Fund, we support ongoing collaboration between India’s private sector, government and other organisations. Together, all parties are working towards ensuring that women across India can learn marketable skills, get jobs and set up their own enterprises.

Since 2011, our investment in the Lila Poonawalla Foundation has helped thousands of underprivileged young women in India pursue higher education and become economically independent.

And through another of our partners, PRADAN, we have helped women in some of India’s poorest rural areas form collectives. In joining their voices, they have a greater say in family and village decisions, and can advocate for better community services.
Companies protecting the planet

Corporations around the world are waking up to the leading role they can play in reversing the effects of climate change. Recognising that those who live in poverty are especially vulnerable to resource exploitation, pollution and extreme weather, we wholeheartedly support their efforts.

In 2014, we pledged to put businesses at the forefront of fighting climate change by launching We Mean Business, a coalition of organisations that advise companies on ways they can become more sustainable and responsible. Through the coalition’s Take Action campaign, over 870 leading companies are already committed to bold climate action. When companies choose low-carbon ways to manufacture, package and transport goods, their choices benefit people today and, crucially, increase the chances that children will have better lives tomorrow.

"The first step on the path to action is daring to believe that we can make a better world," says Nigel Topping, We Mean Business CEO. "Young people are right to demand more action. I’m inspired by the leadership of Greta Thunberg. She famously told the audience at this year’s World Economic Forum, ‘I want you to panic!’—a call to action, not to despair.”

In 2018, we announced the extension of our commitment to climate-related projects, planning to give €700 million in total until 2023. We support programmes that will not only reduce carbon emissions—ensuring future generations will still have a place to call home—but that will also make an immediate and tangible difference in our daily lives. This radical collaboration across corporations, governments and citizens’ groups is the togetherness needed to create a liveable planet.

“The first step on the path to action is daring to believe that we can make a better world.”
— Nigel, We Mean Business CEO
The problem of energy access is so urgent and influences so many of the factors necessary for a decent quality of life that the United Nations has urged countries to eliminate energy poverty by 2030.

Working through UNHCR, we funded the first solar plant ever built to serve a refugee camp. When the programme began in Azraq, Jordan in 2015, refugees did not have access to electricity. The plant opened in 2017, bringing renewable energy to Azraq shortly after it was connected to the national grid. Now, the camp’s 37,000 residents can refrigerate their food to stop it from spoiling in the desert heat and run fans to keep cool. They can start small businesses, in their shelters or in the camp’s market squares, study after dark, save time on chores, and stay connected to far-away family. The plant reduces CO2 emissions by over 2,000 tonnes per year and saves UNHCR US$1.5 million annually, which can be invested in other services.

Solar power is also a pillar in our partnership with the SELCO Foundation in India. SELCO provides clean, reliable and affordable energy to communities with little or no electricity in their homes, schools or health centres. SELCO also invests in local renewable-energy enterprises, which give families opportunities to earn a sustainable income, to live in healthier homes, and to enjoy better healthcare and education.

As one of the few remaining potters in the Indian village of Aloor, Raghu Kullal was struggling to meet the local market’s demands because his craft is so labour-intensive. That changed when he started using a solar-powered pottery wheel. The energy-efficient machine let Raghu triple his productivity rate and income, and his success has inspired fellow potters in his village to take up the craft again.

“Now I can work at any given time, irrespective of power cuts because my wheel is solar-powered,” he says. “I can employ four people. My income has improved by 150 per cent.”
Since 2012, we have worked with UNHCR and the Ethiopian authorities to help refugee and host families in Ethiopia’s remote Somali region become more independent after suffering from civil war and years of droughts.

We have funded a wide range of projects—from improving livelihoods and education to creating access to renewable energy—all of which are helping families move away from aid and toward self-reliance.

The programme has built irrigation canals to cultivate 1,000 hectares near Dollo Ado’s refugee camps. Now local families and families who fled Somalia are working the land together to grow their incomes through farming. The farmers’ products are sold in markets across the country.

Not only are families becoming self-reliant, but they are also supporting and understanding each other better, no matter whether they are a refugee or part of the host community. They have formed agricultural and energy co-ops together and are finding new ways to support their entire community.

Since their families are earning a better income, more children—especially girls—are staying in school and getting a better education while they’re there, thanks to the programme. Some, such as Iqra Bedel Hassan, are even going to university. “I am the first one who is going to join university from my family,” she says. “I want to learn management to solve the continuing problems in my country.

“My wish is to be the first female President of Somalia.”
—Iqra, student

We’re now investing more in the programme, so we can create a model for other governments and organisations to adopt. In turn, they can help their communities become more integrated, self-reliant and cohesive.
New opportunities for dignified work

Young people need an education that prepares them to succeed in their local job market. When matched with relevant work that responds to their communities’ actual needs, they are likelier to become steady income earners who can support themselves and their families.

In 2015, we invested in Kepler, an organisation working to innovate higher education in Africa by giving young people the skills they need to get a job in business. Together, we also piloted one of the first university degree programmes in a refugee camp. This gives ambitious young adults at Kiziba camp in Rwanda a high-quality university education and a US-accredited degree from Southern New Hampshire University.

By 2018, 115 students had enrolled at Kiziba, and another 435 at Kepler’s campus in Kigali. We are continuing to support the organisation to expand the programme across East Africa, so thousands of young people will get to pursue a higher education and to take their first steps towards a career.

We are also helping young people develop their skills and channel their talents through other partnerships, such as with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Nairobi-headquartered media and communications organisation Well Told Story. Both of their training and employment programmes lead refugees and young Kenyans living in Nairobi’s informal settlements to earn better incomes and look forward to brighter futures.

One of those trainees is Patience. As a baby, she experienced horrific violence in Congo’s brutal civil war. Now she has done vocational training in photography and videography through the IRC in Nairobi. When she first started her training, she was worried—she didn’t know how she was even going to hold the camera with only one hand. Nevertheless, she told herself to be confident in who she was—and she is now thriving.

“I dream of being a journalist,” she says, “someone who exposes ills and community problems.”
When areas of the Democratic Republic of the Congo were hit with an Ebola outbreak in 2018, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) quickly set up treatment centres. Their medical activities manager there, Dr Saschveen Singh, recalls the first patient who was cured. “As she had just found out that she no longer had Ebola in her bloodstream and was told she was safe to be discharged from the treatment centre, Mwamini broke into song and dance. Our hardworking team and two fellow patients joined in to celebrate this most joyous moment,” she says.

Mwamini then began working at the treatment centre herself, supporting families whose children are treated in the isolation zone.

In 2014, we gave our largest-ever emergency donation to help MSF provide medical care to people with the Ebola virus in West Africa. As that outbreak came under control, MSF asked us if they could redirect some of our funding to a crisis we were less aware of—a request that changed how we give emergency grants.

Around the world, MSF brings medical care to thousands of people suffering during emergencies that receive little or no public attention and are therefore very difficult to fund. We call them “unseen emergencies”.

Over several years of watching MSF operate in many emergency situations, we have developed a partnership of trust and respect. We realise they need immediate access to funding they can use in any situation, anywhere, without having to first explain to a funder why they need the money.

So in 2018, we granted MSF €21 million of unrestricted funding for their life-saving work, including trauma care, surgery, maternity and paediatric services, and primary healthcare. The faster they can set up hospitals and clinics, the more lives they will save.
When Chiara Buonvino, a co-worker from IKEA Italy, visited UNICEF projects in India in 2018, she witnessed first-hand how families have benefited from our Let’s Play for Change campaign. Talking and playing with children during their preschool activities made our vision real—“to create a better everyday life for the many people,” she says.

In the village of Kumbhephal, she met several mothers. “One of the most surprising things was not only the focus on the child, but also how the programme is contributing to creating long-lasting impact for the families of the children,” she says.

It was, she adds, “a life-changing experience that filled me with energy and beauty that I will bring in my daily work. The IWitness experience makes me feel even more proud to be an IKEA co-worker.”

In 2012, we launched IWitness with IKEA Germany visiting Save the Children projects in Bangladesh. Providing an opportunity to become an advocate for the work of the IKEA Foundation and its partners, the programme has since sent 671 co-workers from 37 IKEA countries to Angola, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, China, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Kosovo, Lithuania, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Romania, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Thailand and Vietnam.

In 2019, we are inviting IKEA co-workers to participate in our Better World Starts At Home campaign by interacting with some of our renewable-energy partners, including Going to School, DISHA, One Acre Fund, SELCO, UNHCR and the Rainforest Alliance. Once again, IKEA co-workers will have the opportunity to see how the IKEA Foundation supports amazing projects around the world.
Bright Futures. Liveable Planet.

All children deserve to look forward to a bright future full of opportunities. But for many children, there are two major threats to that future: poverty and climate change.

That is why we at the IKEA Foundation have made two commitments that guide our grantmaking:

1. We are committed to helping families living in poverty afford a better everyday life.
2. We are committed to protecting the planet.

Families need both financial stability and a healthy environment if they and their children are to thrive. When people have meaningful employment or can run their own business, they can send their children to school, enjoy better healthcare, and invest in assets such as a home. Communities also reap the rewards when families are able to spend more money, helping their local and national economies grow. We see the largest generation of young people as a vibrant force for driving economic growth in planet-positive ways.

Our path to a brighter future

We believe that planet-friendly agriculture and value chains will offer viable career options in small agricultural businesses where people are proud to work—not just because they feed the world but also because they can earn enough to afford a better life for themselves and their families.

Access to renewable energy for all is another powerful way to create new opportunities for people in impoverished communities to develop an income and assets in a green and inclusive way. That is why we support programmes that power communities with renewable energy resources.

This work is essential for our children and grandchildren to still have a place to call home. We support programmes that will encourage businesses, financial institutions and governments to drastically reduce carbon emissions so temperatures do not increase beyond 1.5 degrees. The scientific evidence is clear: we have only a small window of time in which to meet this target. We need to act now and work together to tackle climate change.

When people join together and unleash their creative power, they can create a brighter future. That’s why we support programmes that promote new and unprecedented collaboration between businesses, civil society, governments and the many people.

Our vision is to create a better everyday life for the many people. Much remains to be done if we are to make that vision a reality... and now is the time to do it.
Thank you to our partners!

Our achievements have been made possible thanks to our many partners. Over the last 10 years, we have worked together on programmes around the world to help millions of children and their families look forward to a brighter future. To support our partners directly, please visit: IKEAfoundation.org/partners

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Cover image: Angie, a farmer from Rwanda, has improved her harvest so she can afford a better life for herself and her children. © One Acre Fund

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