



UNICEF Launches Play Initiative with \$1 Million Grant from Disney

Unique pilot program helps foster creativity and healthy development for children affected by disaster and emergencies

NEW YORK (January 30, 2013) – UNICEF, with a \$1 million founding grant from Disney, announced today the launch of a pilot program that utilizes playgrounds and recreation to promote play, a critical part of child development. The unique new initiative P.L.A.Y., Play & Learning Activities for Youth, features portable playground units that children can assemble into any structure, helping them to tap into their imagination, curiosity, and self-expression, as well as promoting collaboration with their peers.

UNICEF's P.L.A.Y. explores the power of play as a tool for learning and emotional development in countries where safe recreation opportunities are limited. P.L.A.Y. is currently being piloted in Haiti and Bangladesh for children living in disaster recovery conditions and in extreme poverty.

The initiative is part of UNICEF's broader education and child protection work. Additionally, UNICEF is training educators, service providers, and families to integrate play and recreation in ways that can build children's self-esteem and better prepare them to learn.

"[Play] is essential to all children's healthy, emotional, psychological and general well-being. But it is particularly critical for children undergoing difficult circumstances," said Cassie Landers, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University, who is also the trainer and independent evaluator for the project. "Through play children actually have a chance to reenact what is going on around them. It helps them to work through problems, to try to find solutions, to understand what's happening to them. These materials give them a chance to create, to dream, and to hope."

Building upon a relationship with UNICEF that first began with the "It's a Small World" attraction at the 1964 World's Fair, Disney has contributed \$1 million to UNICEF to support the launch of P.L.A.Y.

"Disney is delighted to be working with UNICEF to bring the magic of play to kids around the world. Promoting the happiness and well-being of kids and families is at the heart of what we do every day," said Leslie Goodman, Senior Vice President, Corporate Citizenship at The Walt Disney Company. "It is inspiring to see the smiles, laughter, and impact these playgrounds are having."

"UNICEF is continuously developing new tools and programs that enrich children's lives through play and learning," said Caryl Stern, President and CEO of the U.S. Fund for UNICEF. "P.L.A.Y. would not be possible without the leadership and generosity of Disney. Thanks to that support, children in Haiti and Bangladesh are getting the opportunity to play again – to regain a sense of childhood. We care deeply about their ability to have the childhood they deserve."

In Haiti, approximately 5,000 children will utilize the playgrounds in five schools in earthquake-affected areas, in and around Port-au-Prince and five schools in remote, rural parts of the country. In Bangladesh, more than 6,000 children will have access to the playgrounds in 20 child-friendly spaces and child development centers.

In addition to P.L.A.Y., Disney also supports UNICEF's S.M.I.L.E. Project. In partnership with China's Ministry of Education, the program is benefitting children in China's remote rural regions by nurturing creative thinking and interactive learning using innovative teaching methods and materials.

UNICEF's P.L.A.Y. initiative utilizes Imagination Playground™, a breakthrough concept to encourage child-directed, unstructured free play created and designed by renowned architect David Rockwell.

To learn more about UNICEF and the P.L.A.Y. initiative, visit <http://www.unicefusa.org/partners/corporate/disney.html>.

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About UNICEF

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) works in 190 countries and territories to save and improve children's lives, providing health care and immunizations, clean water and sanitation, nutrition, education, emergency relief and more. The U.S. Fund for UNICEF supports UNICEF's work through fundraising, advocacy, and education in the United States. Together, we are working toward the day when zero children die from preventable causes and every child has a safe and healthy childhood.

For additional information, please contact:

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