Children: The Future Hope of Addis Ababa Early Childhood Development (ECD) Program

Program Brief

February 2022

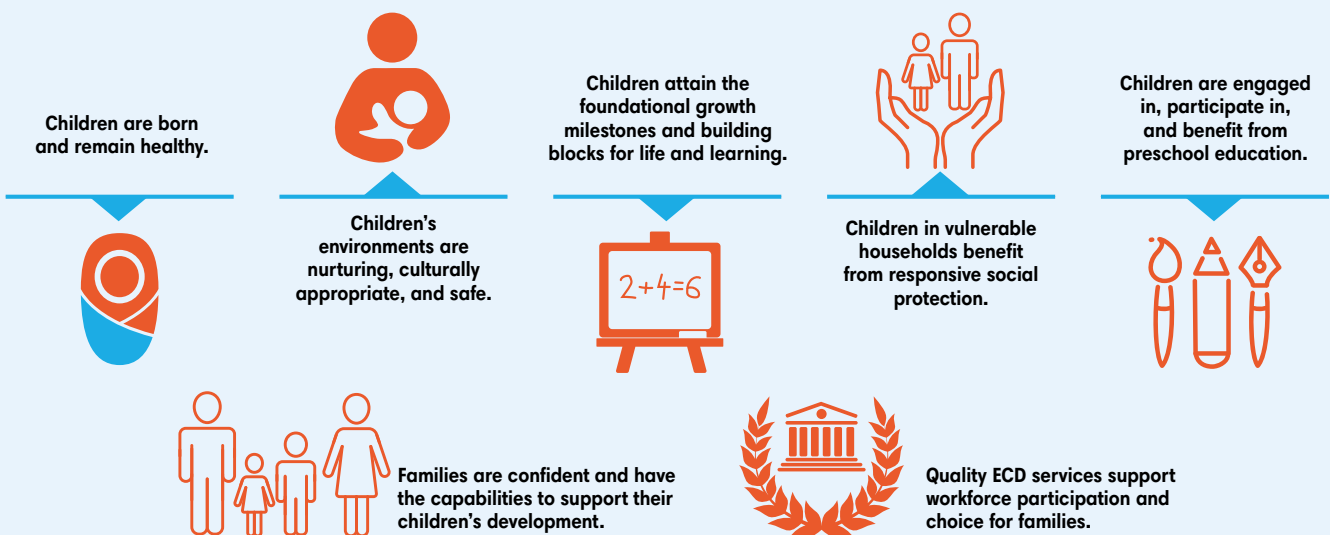# 1. Children: The Future Hope of Addis Ababa Early Childhood Development Program

1.1. Introduction

The city government of Addis Ababa has launched a holistic, multi-sectoral early childhood development (ECD) program which aims to ensure that by 2026, all children in the city have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and for Ethiopia. Investment in ECD is critical for the prospects of the next generation in Ethiopia—and to the economic trajectory of the entire country.

Based on the existing data and evidence, the Addis Ababa City Administration has committed to investing in ECD with the aim of creating an enabling environment that supports children's developmental outcomes. The goal is to transform Addis Ababa by improving access to high-quality early childhood services and improving its urban environment and services to create friendlier public spaces and experiences for infants, toddlers, young children, and their caregivers.

The *Children: The Future Hope of Addis Ababa Early Childhood Development Program (Future Hope of Addis)* seeks to provide universal access to comprehensive ECD services for all children in Addis Ababa and to reach vulnerable children in 330,000 low-income households with intensified ECD services. The program's desired outcomes are as follows:

The Future Hope of Addis desired program outcomes:

Children are born and remain healthy.

Children's environments are nurturing, culturally appropriate, and safe.

Children attain the foundational growth milestones and building blocks for life and learning.

Children in vulnerable households benefit from responsive social protection.

Children are engaged in, participate in, and benefit from preschool education.

Families are confident and have the capabilities to support their children's development.

Quality ECD services support workforce participation and choice for families.

1.2.   The Benefits of Investing in ECD

In Addis Ababa, the imperative to invest in ECD is clear. Research shows that investing in the early years is one of the smartest things a country can do to eliminate extreme poverty, boost shared prosperity, and create the human capital needed for economies to diversify and grow.

Healthy and happy children are more likely to become healthy and resilient adults who have greater capacity and resources to contribute to a cohesive and prosperous society. Children deserve the best start in life to help them develop to their fullest potential.

Investing in the early years has also been proven to be the single most effective method for poor and vulnerable societies to break out of poverty and vulnerability cycles.

However, millions of young children are not reaching their full potential due to a lack of early stimulation, learning, and nurturing care, inadequate nutrition, and exposure to stress, all of which adversely affect their development. Globally, 43% of children below primary-school-entry age (approximately 250 million children) need childcare but do not have access, demonstrating the critical need to invest in ECD.
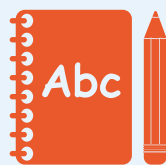
Early investment levels the playing field

| Better mother and child health | Better cognition | School readiness | More years in education | Better health and even higher incomes in adulthood |

SHORT TERM ———————————————→ **LONG TERM**

1.3.   Rationale

With a current population of 112 million people, Ethiopia is Africa's second-most populous country. It is rapidly urbanizing and aspires to become a middle-income country by 2025.

With intensive efforts and investment from the government, Ethiopia has made impressive progress towards achieving many national and global health indicators. Specifically, Ethiopia has made substantial progress in reducing infant, child, and maternal mortality and in expanding school enrollment in the past two decades.

Despite these achievements, the government of Ethiopia recognizes that more than half of children under five years of age are at risk of poor developmental outcomes. The under-5 mortality rate is still around 1.5 times higher than the global average; at least 21% of all Ethiopian children under the age of 5 are underweight, 36% suffer from stunting, and over two-thirds of students in grades 2 and 3 fail to exhibit relatively functional reading proficiency.[1] As with most countries in sub-Saharan Africa, there is room for the Ethiopian government to invest more into ECD services; previous investment in this area has been low, with just 0.01% of Ethiopian gross national product going towards preprimary education (WHO, 2019).

As Ethiopia continues to rapidly urbanize, the country's capital and largest city, Addis Ababa, is expected to exceed 6.5 million residents by 2026—of whom about 20% (~1.3 million) will be children under the age of six. Most children in Addis Ababa lack access to the good health, adequate nutrition, responsive care services, preprimary education, and safety needed for their growth and well-being.

[1] *https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/earlychildhooddevelopment*
[2] *https://www.borgenmagazine.com/increasing-access-to-early-childhood-education-in-africa/#:~:text=Africa%20has%20one%20of%20the,and%20Central%20Africa%20attending%20preschool.&text=In%20contrast%2C%2037%20percent%20of,and%20the%20Caribbean%20attend%20preschool.*

1.4. Program Design

The *Future Hope of Addis* takes a comprehensive, multi-sectoral approach to addressing the developmental needs of children.

The City Administration will achieve the aims of the *Future Hope of Addis* program by establishing an effective ECD system that:

➤ Recognizes the primary role of families in the development of young children,

➤ Has strong leadership with coordinated policy direction,

➤ Uses collaborative and inclusive approaches and forges strong links within and across sectors; and

➤ Has well-designed strategic initiatives that deliver comprehensive ECD services for children and their caregivers within the city.

The clear case for investment in ECD programs led the leadership of the Addis Ababa City Administration to pivot its existing systems on child and family health to support the *Future Hope of Addis* program. The program will build upon the solid ECD platforms that already exist in the city, such as the Urban Health Extension Program (HEP), the Family Health teams, and the Urban Safety Net Program. It will also expand school networks, including preschools, to deliver comprehensive ECD services for children and their families in Addis Ababa.

This document outlines the key components of the program and how it has been designed to deliver comprehensive ECD interventions across multiple sectors.

Target Outcomes

By 2026, the *Future Hope of Addis* ECD program aims to:

⊕ Provide universal coverage for key maternal and child health services, including social support services for all children in the priority 330,000 low-income households.

⊕ Improve child nutrition and reduce the stunting rate in Addis Ababa by two percentage points.

⊕ Increase by half the percentage of children aged 36-59 months with whom an adult practices nurturing care and early stimulation.

⊕ Increase by half the percentage of 4-6-year-old children who have access to play-based early learning services in Addis Ababa.

⊕ Increase the percentage of children under five assessed to be developmentally on track.

⊕ Increase by half the percentage of 4-6-year-old children who have access to quality preprimary education with demonstrable competencies in school readiness domains.

⊕ Make Addis Ababa a child-friendly city by improving the urban city design with accessible playgrounds, green sites, and open streets to facilitate children's interaction with the environment and learning through play.

Key Pillars

Strategic Initiatives

The program includes six (6) strategic initiatives:

➤ Provision of parental coaching, health, and social support services.

➤ Establishment of community-run ECD centers.

➤ Establishment of day care centers.

➤ Expansion of equitable access to quality preschools.

➤ Promotion of learning through play within a child-friendly environment.

➤ Establishment of a Center of Excellence to build and advance a sustaining ECD sector in Ethiopia.

Enablers

To ensure their successful implementation, the strategic initiatives leverage three cross-sectoral enablers:

➤ Policies, standards, and improved regulatory systems.

➤ Improved coordination and effective cross-sectoral governance.

➤ Monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems for tracking child developmental outcomes.

These enablers form the systemic base upon which the strategic initiatives are delivered and monitored. The section below highlights the program setup of each of the strategic initiatives and enablers.

1.4.1. Coaching, Health, and Social Support for Parents and Caregivers

Parents and caregivers play a critical role in facilitating early experiences for children and infants. The *Future Hope of Addis* program is designed to deliver parental coaching and house visits in order to improve the provision of nurturing care, child health, and nutrition, as well as reduce the stunting rate within the city.

Leveraging Addis Ababa's existing community programs, this strategic initiative is designed to enable health extension workers to coordinate with social workers and childcare officers to provide comprehensive support to address the needs of the vulnerable families they visit. House visits will involve family health teams to assess and provide care as needed to improve parents' physical and mental health, both of which are critical to meeting children's emotional and physical needs. Key components of this initiative are:

1. Health Services

The focus on the provision of health services is to ensure that children are born and remain healthy through facility-based health services and city-wide house-to-house visits. Adequate health services ensure that children attain foundational growth milestones, the building blocks for life and learning.

Under this initiative, the two strategic activities to provide access to quality maternal and child health are a) on-site facilities to feed and care for children between the ages of 0-6 years; and b) home visits to provide support, information, and assistance for vulnerable families.

On-site facilities will provide:

■ ECD job aids and tools to support health workers in delivering prenatal and postnatal care
■ ECD kits/play boxes
■ Play corners
■ Vaccinations
■ Screening for developmental milestones

2. Parental Coaching

A parental coaching program will be developed to provide responsive social support services for parents and caregivers. To improve child developmental outcomes and school readiness, parents and caregivers will receive training in responsive care, which ensures health, nutrition, safety and security, social and emotional well-being, and early learning.

Family health teams will assess and provide prenatal and postnatal advice for pregnant women and lactating mothers, including on early stimulation exercises and responsive caregiving. Adequate provision of the prescribed services will be ensured through training for health workers, family health teams, and social workers.

A training module has been developed to build the capacity of the health extension and social workers to deliver integrated ECD services for families within the city.

3. Supplementary Feeding for Vulnerable Children

To improve child nutrition and reduce the stunting rate, the City Administration will provide supplementary feeding for children in low-income households. This will involve distributing nutritious food items to vulnerable children and their families in their homes, via educational facilities, or in the community.

1.4.2. Community-Run ECD Centers

The Addis Ababa City Administration aspires to establish community-run ECD centers across the city where children will receive day care services. The centers will provide access to indoor and outdoor learn through play facilities for children and will afford parents and caregivers the opportunity to receive advice and support from social workers on the provision of nurturing care.

Condominiums in the city offer a unique opportunity to advance this initiative. The City Administration aims to work with residents' associations and other community platforms to identify spaces that could be repurposed and used as community-run ECD centers. Their primary function will be as play centers for children, but they will also be a place where parents and caregivers can receive coaching and mentoring on nurturing care. Implementing this strategic initiative will reinforce solidarity and community commitment as well as trigger a broader social movement to support the developmental outcomes of children within the city.

1.4.3. Publicly Financed Day Care Centers

This strategic initiative seeks to provide day care and support services for children between the ages of seven months and three years in a center-based facility. The Addis Ababa City Administration aims to open day care centers in offices at the city, sub-city, and woreda (district) levels. Sector-based day care centers will provide childcare for working families, which will enable parents and caregivers to focus on their work while providing a safe environment for children to play. The city government has also planned to establish standalone day care centers, which will serve young children coming from the wider residential areas. The government will recruit personnel and equip the centers with play and learning facilities to fully address the developmental needs of children from seven months to three years old.

1.4.4. Expanded Access to Preschools

The *Future Hope of Addis* aims to create and expand access to quality preprimary education targeting 4-6-year-old children. To promote quality ECE service delivery among all operators, the Addis Ababa Bureau of Education and the Federal Ministry of Education will collaborate with relevant stakeholders to:
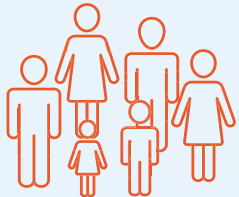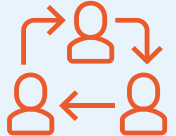
✓ Develop standardized operating guidelines for the delivery of quality preschool services in Addis Ababa.

✓ Develop appropriate materials, manuals, and resources to support the delivery of child-centered, play-based pedagogy in preprimary education facilities.

✓ Create model preschools based on the standards to showcase what quality preprimary education entails and facilitate peer learning among operators and the workforce.

✓ Train in-service preschool teachers and practitioners in the appropriate knowledge, competencies, and pedagogical skills to support children's school readiness and early learning.

1.4.5. Establishing a Center of Excellence for ECD in Addis Ababa

Under this strategic initiative, the City Administration aims to establish a thriving, world-class national and continental Center of Excellence to improve workforce capacities to provide developmentally appropriate pedagogies; advance research and improve scientific knowledge; and foster collaborations and networks to sustain a dynamic and holistic ECD ecosystem in Ethiopia. The vision is for the center to be a leadership hub for ECD in Africa, with core programs delivering the following:

1 **Training and Certification:** The center will be responsible for certification programs covering high-quality continuous professional development trainings and degree programs.

2 **Library and Repository of ECD Resources:** The center will lead research and advance knowledge on ECD, provide appropriate and contextually relevant ECD resources, and set standards for care and best practices.

3 **Advocacy and Policy Advisory:** The center will advance evidence-informed policies and programming for ECD interventions in Ethiopia through the provision of fact sheets and policy advisory services for governments and the private sector.

4 **Network and Professional Community:** The center will create a network of ECD professionals who can connect through virtual platforms and conferences, share experiences, and support workforce capacity development.

5 **Monitoring, Quality Assurance, and Field Support:** The center will carry out field support consultancy services related to monitoring and quality assurance for ECD programs and provide coaching and field support services to ECD practitioners.

The Center of Excellence is designed to drive innovation and improvement and will be positioned to:

1 **Be a national and international leader** in transforming ECD in Ethiopia and across the continent.

2 **Be a hub for advancing ECD** research, training, and best practices, guiding ECD policies and programs at the federal and regional levels.

3 **Collaborate with researchers,** policy-makers, and early childhood educators globally to leverage existing knowledge to promote innovative early childhood pedagogies.

4 **Strengthen communities' capacity** to improve the well-being of children.

5 **Facilitate international linkages** and partnerships with other model ECD centers globally to foster knowledge and promote ECD.

6 **Create a network** of stakeholders involving NGOs, academic institutions, and practitioners to share the most up-to-date knowledge on ECD.

1.4.6. Learn Through Play (Green Sites and Playgrounds)

Play is seen as an essential strategy for learning. Play opportunities make learning fun, active, and engaging, igniting a life-long love for learning in children. Children also need a safe and stimulating physical environment to explore. Having playgrounds that are available and accessible allows children to engage in healthy physical activites, build motor skills, and enhances their overall physical well-being.

With the vision of making Addis Ababa a child-friendly city, the city aspires to bridge the gap between early childhood development and urban development by incorporating a focus on the needs of young children and those who care for them into city design, planning, and management. With this, city leaders aim to deliver better experiences for children and families through the redesign of the city's public spaces, transport, infrastructure, and land use policies, and the fostering of cross-sectoral collaboration among relevant government agencies.

Under this strategic initiative, the city government aspires to change the way families with young children live, play, and interact with their environment by using public spaces to create experiences that contribute to the mental and social development of the participating children. Specific activities to make Addis Ababa a child-friendly city can include:

- Creating green sites and playgrounds.

- Designing streets to facilitate child play during closed-road sessions on Sundays.

- Increasing opportunities for mass sports and learn through play activities within the woredas.

Specific areas dedicated for play and sporting activities in selected woredas will be identified and equipped with play items for use by local children.

The Prime Minister's Green Legacy and Public Parks Initiative will create a climate-friendly and child-centric environment around Ethiopia. In Addis Ababa, this initiative will provide spaces for children from low-income households to use as playgrounds and an opportunity for parents and caregivers to further strengthen their commitment to ECD. This nationwide agenda can also be leveraged to scale up the ECD program over the years to come.

1.4.7. Effective Cross-Sectoral Governance

The implementation of such a cross-sectoral program requires effective coordination among the implementing bureaus to ensure complementarities, avoid duplication, and promote cross-sectoral work mechanisms. This requires both the leadership and staff of the various implementing bureaus and federal ministries to be aware of the new working culture, take ownership of the process, and proactively work together to achieve the common vision.

The program includes an innovative steering committee structure to promote program coordination among the implementing bureaus and provide oversight. Under the chairmanship of the Deputy Mayor, and with technical support from Big Win Philanthropy and the Bernard van Leer Foundation, the ECD Steering Committee is empowered to deliver on this ambitious initiative by guiding policy and program development, monitoring implementation, managing partner and stakeholder engagement, coordinating activities, seeking additional funding, and promoting effective communication.

This initiative will also have an embedded strategic communications approach with a Social Behavior Change Campaign (SBCC) that will enable the city to mobilize a social movement to encourage parents and caregivers to champion the nurturing care that children need to survive and thrive.

The successful implementation of this initiative has huge implications for how Ethiopia tackles children's early learning and development in an integrated, multidisciplinary manner.

1.4.8. Improved Regulatory System

For a sector in its infancy, the need to develop harmonized regulatory systems for setting, assessing, and monitoring quality standards is paramount.

The aim is to create an accessible, inclusive, culturally safe, and engaging service environment built on evidence-informed policies, a strong regulatory environment, and a robust monitoring system to ensure adherence to standards.

This initiative envisions the creation of strong relationships between professionals and children and their families, the use of the education reform roadmap for early years learning, and the promotion of healthy eating and physical activity consistent with national guidelines on nurturing care. The regulatory standards cover aspects of quality such as set up and operational guidelines, staff qualifications and competencies, safeguarding, and health and safety issues, among others. This initiative will ensure that service providers have the requisite standards to guide quality service provision and be held accountable for supporting children's developmental outcomes.

1.4.9. Measurement, Learning, Accountability, and Data for Decision-Making

Monitoring the progress of ECD interventions and measuring results are critical to driving continuous improvement, advancing accountabilities for delivering on commitments, attracting buy-in and commitment from partners, and most importantly, for spurring and sustaining country-level action.

Assessing child development can also provide insights into the biological, physiological, behavioral, and psychological growth occurring in the early years of life.

This program leverages three key activities to monitor progress: a) conducting a baseline study; b) developing a costed implementation plan for the ECD program; and c) developing an integrated monitoring framework and a child performance tracking system.

➤ The Baseline Study

At the outset of program implementation in 2021, the Ethiopian Public Health Association conducted a baseline study to assess the state of early childhood development in Addis Ababa; gain knowledge and insights to shape the Addis Ababa ECD policies, program design, and implementation strategies; and serve as a baseline against which progress can be measured.

The baseline study provided key data that can inform the development of an integrated monitoring framework and a child performance tracking system. This system will be used to monitor the implementation, progress, and outcomes of the ECD interventions, drive continuous improvement in ECD service delivery, advance accountabilities for delivering on commitments, attract partner commitment and buy-in, and spur country-level action for promoting quality ECD services in Ethiopia. Ultimately, the baseline survey will help broaden the data and evidence infrastructure for ECD in Ethiopia as well as strengthen the systems and tools to collect, track, and use data to inform decision-making on future ECD programs and innovations at scale.[3]

➤ A Costed Implementation Plan for the ECD Program

The successful implementation of the ECD program depends on an accurate costing model that ensures the provision of the resources needed to deliver on the strategic initiatives. The city, with the support of Big Win Philanthropy, worked with a technical partner to develop a costing model and a costed implementation plan for the *Future Hope of Addis* ECD program. Gathering cost data on specific strategic initiatives will allow for simulation and investment decisions and serve as a benchmark for measuring investment targets.

The cost data is expected to be used for budget planning, to ensure accountability, to inform cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analysis, and to support future investment in ECD services.[4]

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[3]*Both a full report of the study results and summary are available upon request.*
[4]*The costing model and final report are available upon request.*

➤ An Integrated Monitoring Framework and a Child Performance Tracking System

The final phase of the monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) work is the development of an integrated routine monitoring framework and a child performance tracking system that will enable the city to provide services based on the needs of the child.

The integrated routine monitoring framework will cover a landscape analysis, the development of a routine monitoring framework, and the development of a harmonized tool for routine monitoring. This process will feed into the development of a child performance tracking system (dashboard) which will:

- Leverage the existing data system for children in Addis Ababa;
- Create a unique identification (ID) for each child;
- Track the outcomes of the *Future Hope of Addis* program;
- Track the development of children using child-specific data and synthesized data to inform program design, policies, and child services;
- Promote the safe sharing of child data across multiple sectors in accordance with the city's data protection policies; and
- Create a unique forum at the community and regional levels to gather and disseminate child-focused data to inform action and decision-making.

Through this process, safeguarding and data protection policies will be developed to ensure the welfare and data on children and caregivers that participate and benefit from this program are protected and properly managed.

Once the system is developed, a robust training program will be rolled out to build the capacity of the implementing bureaus who will be leading the implementation of the integrated monitoring and child performance tracking system. The training will capacitate the key staff to take full ownership in the management of the newly-established monitoring system and utilize it for decision-making.

1.5. The Governance Structure

The *Future Hope of Addis* ECD program operates under the overall leadership of the Mayor and the City Cabinet.

Steering Committee

The strategic implementation is guided and monitored by a high-level steering committee chaired by the Deputy Mayor, with day-to-day implementation managed by a technical committee made up of implementing bureaus leading different strategic initiatives of the program. The committee holds quarterly meetings to review progress, provide strategic input, and make key decisions regarding the initiative.

Technical Committee

Led by the Head of the Bureau of Women's and Children's Affairs, the technical committee is comprised of representatives appointed by the Addis Ababa City Administration for each of the bureaus or institutions involved in the ECD initiative. The committee implements decisions made by the steering committee to which it reports on a quarterly basis. Representatives from federal ministries and institutions regularly participate in technical meetings on the ECD initiative.

Task Forces and Working Groups

Whenever required, dedicated task forces and working groups will provide focused, technical assistance to key areas of the initiative. Technical experts from the two foundations—Big Win Philanthropy and the Bernard van Leer Foundation—federal-level agencies, and external technical partners are members of the task forces as needed.

1.6. Program Partnership

The program benefits from strategic partnership, funding, and technical assistance support from Big Win Philanthropy and the Bernard van Leer Foundation. These two key partner foundations have supported the city government in envisioning the program and continue to provide guidance on strategic development and implementation. They are also supporting the city and federal governments as they explore the potential to replicate the program in other regions in Ethiopia and across the African continent.

1.7. Results-Based Financing Approach

Introducing a results-based finance (RBF) approach into the *Future Hope of Addis* program is a powerful way to ensure a collective focus on results across all partner organizations and all levels of government working on the six strategic initiatives, incentivizing collaboration and coordination. The RBF program will outline a set of concrete, measurable results based on children's achievement of milestones in cognitive development, social and emotional skills, speech and language development, and physical development.

The approach leverages the existing funding from the city government while encouraging continued national funding, ensuring the program's overall sustainability. It also addresses inequality by ensuring that all children have access to quality ECD services.

In partnership with the Addis Ababa City Administration, Big Win Philanthropy, and the Education Outcomes Fund, donors will actively participate in selecting the key indicators against which progress will be measured. This approach allows donors to be at the forefront of innovation, dramatically improving how outcomes are delivered, funded, and measured with an evidence-based approach. It will ensure a focus on achieving concrete results for children, enabling donor funding to reward the results achieved—and allowing the city to re-invest in the program to deliver services at scale for children in Addis and beyond.
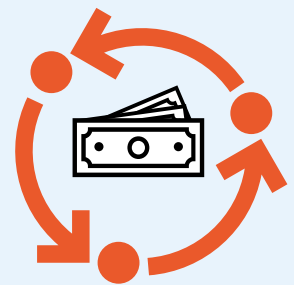
Donor funding will **reward the results achieved** by the City Administration and will be **re-invested** into a program to deliver services at scale for children.

The Future Hope of Addis is the first of its kind in Ethiopia; a comprehensive multisectoral ECD program developed by the Addis Ababa City Administration to fight inequality by ensuring that all children have access to quality ECD services. This will be essential for their later success in life and for the future growth and development of Ethiopia as a nation. This program initiative by the City Administration is a flagship that can be extended to other regions in Ethiopia by bringing better practical experience in the implementation of ECD. Incorporating results-based finance into the program will help ensure a focus on achieving concrete results for children. It will enable donor funding to reward the results achieved—and allow us to re-invest in the program to deliver services at scale for all children, in Addis and beyond.

Ato Jantrar Abay, Deputy Mayor, **Addis Ababa City Administration**

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