Mapping of Early Childhood Development (ECD) Actors and Programs at national level in Ethiopia

Executive Summary
July 2022

This report presents a high-level summary of findings and recommendations from a recent mapping study of Early Childhood Development (ECD) Programs and Actors at the national level in Ethiopia. The study was undertaken from April to June 2022, following a participatory approach through actively involving key government actors, CSOs and academic and research institutions in the design, field data collection, reporting and validation of the findings and recommendations from the study. The study was initiated and supported by Civil Connections Community Foundation (CCCF) and Early Care International (ECI), with financing from CISU-*C*ivil Society in Development and implemented in collaboration with a local partner, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

Study Objectives and Methods

The government of Ethiopia has long acknowledged the importance and value of investing in ECD and showed increased commitment to designing and implementing multisectoral policy frameworks and programs across the various sectors in the country. However, Ethiopia's Early Childhood Development (ECD) programmes and actors lack coordination and a platform for effective collaboration.

Recognizing the need to strengthen existing efforts of the Ethiopian government to integrate ECD programs and strengthen multisectoral coordination efforts for enhanced ECD implementation in Ethiopia, CCCF and ECI, with financing from CISU-Civil Society in Development, initiated a mapping study to identify the various government and CSO actors engaged in ECD programming , the existing ECD coordination mechanisms at national level in Ethiopia and identify potential opportunities for effective collaboration.

The mapping study followed a participatory qualitative assessment design by establishing a mapping team involving representatives of key ECD actors from the government sector ministries, CSOs and academic and research

Institutions, which led the design, data collection, as well as review and validation of findings and recommendations drawn from the study. CCF and ECI followed such a participatory approach to empower the local system and

structure and ensure that the key ECD actors own the study procedure and the outcome of the mapping study so that they will take ownership of the implementation of the outcomes and recommendations of the study. Key Informant Interviews were undertaken with representatives of selected ECD actors.

Respondent Categories	Sampled Institutions
Government actors engaged in ECD	- Federal Ministry of Education (FMoE) - Federal Ministry of Health (FMoH) - Federal Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (FMoWSA)
International actors engaged in ECD	- UNICEF - The World Bank Group - Save the Children - Child Fund - PATH - Partnership for Change (PFC) - USAID Transform Primary Health Care (TPHC) - Imagine One Day
Local CSOs engaged in ECD	- WhizKids - Ethiopian School Readiness Initiative (ESRI)

Main Findings

ECD policy landscape and operationalization in Ethiopia.

Demonstrating its commitment to ECD, the Ethiopian government developed the first cross-sectoral national policy framework for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in 2010. Furthermore, additional policy measures, including the development of the national ECCE curriculum and endorsement of a civil service

proclamation (number 1064/2010 E.C.), which requires government institutions to establish a workplace nursery day care center where female civil servants could breast feed and care for their babies, was realized.

A guideline and a minimum standard of services for day care centers at the work place have also been developed following the passing of the proclamation. In 2021, Ethiopia revised the 2010 policy framework and developed the new "Early Child Development and Education Policy Framework". The National Health Sector Strategic Plan for Early Childhood Development (2021-2025) has also been developed recently following the revision of the national ECDE policy framework.

However, the mapping study revealed that ECD policy implementation has generally been low at all levels, despite better national implementation than sub-national levels. Weak multisectoral coordination, absence of solid implementation structure, budget and human resource constraints, lack of an effective system for performance monitoring and accountability and low policy adoption at sub-national levels are the critical barriers to ECD policy implementation.

On the other hand, increased government political will for ECD and the inclusion of ECD in social

sector plans, existence of other supportive policies, the interest and influence of international actors and existing grassroots structures that support ECD policy
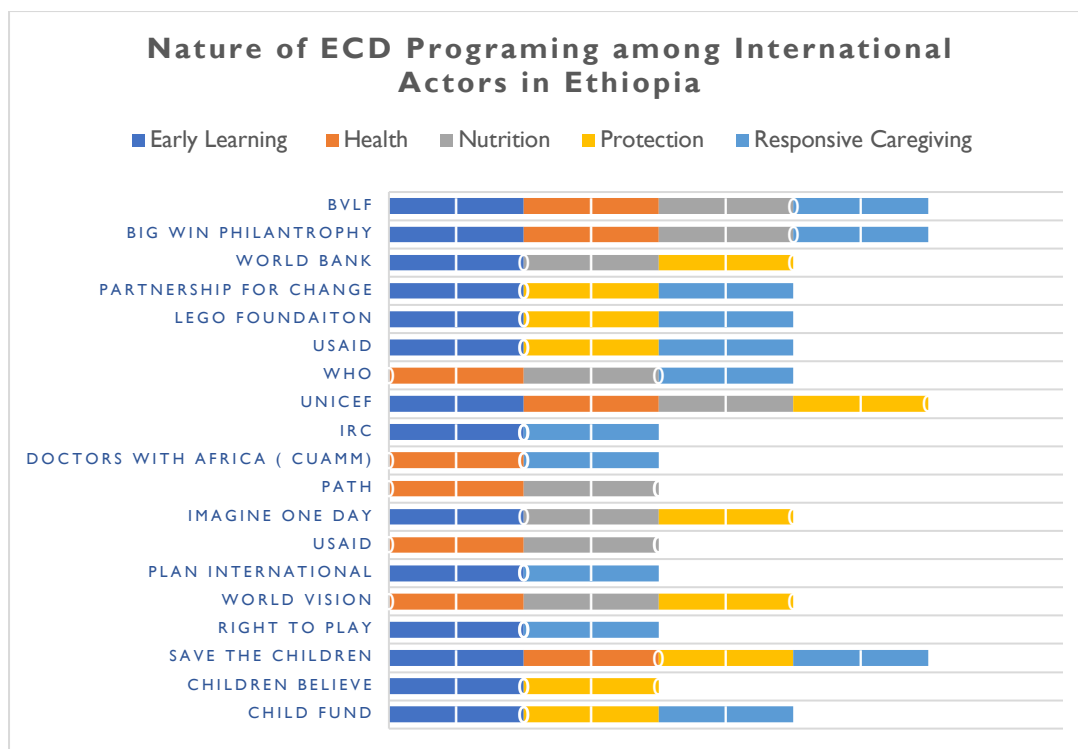
implementation are among the key opportunities to enhance implementation of the ECD policy framework at the national level.

Key ECD actors and programs in Ethiopia

The Federal Ministry of Education (FMoE), Federal Ministry of Health (FMoH) and Federal Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (FMoWSA) are the main government actors engaged in ECD policy and programming at the national level. UN agencies such as UNICEF and WHO; bi-lateral agencies such as USAID and DFID; donors and embassies such as the World Bank Group, Big Win Philanthropy, BvLF; Embassies such as the Embassy of Finland, Ireland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands; INGOs such as Save the Children, Partnership for Change (PFC), World Vision and Child fund were identified by key informants as among the key international actors influencing ECD policy and programming in Ethiopia.

While the priority area of interest in ECD programming among these actors varies, they have high interest and power to influence ECD policy and programming at the national level through financing ECD programs of government and partners, provision of technical support during ECD policy development and implementation as well as advocacy and lobbying for policy revision and improved ECD implementation.

The study showed that early learning programs, followed by responsive caregiving and health, were the major program focuses among international actors, while only nine of the 19 international actors identified implemented or supported nutrition programs or interventions.

Nature of ECD Programing among International Actors in Ethiopia

Legend: Early Learning, Health, Nutrition, Protection, Responsive Caregiving

Actors: BVLF, BIG WIN PHILANTROPHY, WORLD BANK, PARTNERSHIP FOR CHANGE, LEGO FOUNDAITON, USAID, WHO, UNICEF, IRC, DOCTORS WITH AFRICA (CUAMM), PATH, IMAGINE ONE DAY, USAID, PLAN INTERNATIONAL, WORLD VISION, RIGHT TO PLAY, SAVE THE CHILDREN, CHILDREN BELIEVE, CHILD FUND

Very few local CSO actors are engaged in implementing ECD programs at the national level. The main local CSO actors identified include the Ethiopian School Readiness Initiative (ESRI), WhizKids, Ratson, Addis Development Vision, Women Health Association of Ethiopia, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), etc. Most of these local CSOs are engaged in supporting play-based early learning programs, as indicated in the key informant interviews.

Existing ECD programme coordination mechanisms

Since the launch of the national ECCE policy framework in 2010, the three key ministries have established a few government-led mechanisms and platforms to coordinate the implementation of the policy framework, regularly review the policy framework, and discuss improvement areas for better implementation and achievement of outcomes. The mapping study identified coordination mechanisms for ECD programming in the government ministries.

The National ECCE/ECDE taskforce is one of the existing government-led coordination ECD mechanisms identified. Established to facilitate the development and implementation of the 2010 ECCE policy framework, the task force served as a robust coordination mechanism

under the leadership of the FMOE with technical support from UNICEF and other partners. Furthermore, the FMoH is currently leading a national TWG on ECD, which involves members from the key government ministries, international NGOs, UN agencies and local CSOs engaged in ECD programming at the national level. These coordination platforms involve a diverse group of relevant actors where representatives actively participate during coordination meetings, and decisions of the TWG are mostly implemented. However, these coordination platforms have limitations concerning inconsistent participation of members and lack of regularity of meetings. The existing government-led coordination platforms also lack a shared vision and a transparent system for accountability of members involved and demonstrate limited efforts to ensure harmonization and alignment of resources and funds for better ECD outcomes among members, ECD partners and stakeholders.

The national ECD policy framework stipulates that government actors should play a leading role in enhancing coordination among key government, international and local CSOs engaged in ECD programming. However, the efforts and initiatives carried out so far in ensuring functional and sustainable multisectoral coordination among key actors

have generally been ineffective. The coordination and collaboration effort on ECD between the national government actors , international NGOs and local CSO actors has generally been need based, irregular, intermittent and weak.

The study also showed that level of representation of local CSOs in government-led coordination mechanisms has generally been low. The government has given limited attention to establishing common coordination mechanisms or forums that ensure meaningful involvement of a representative number of local CSOs and that their voices are heard in such forums. The role of CSOs in using government coordination platforms for advocacy and influencing government actors on ECD policy and programming has generally been insignificant. Limited representation of CSOs in government-led coordination platforms and gaps in government sector offices concerning mapping ECD program partners were some of the reasons for the limited CSO advocacy role.

There are several approaches through which INGOs are partnering with local CSOs to advance ECD programming and implementation at the national level. Advocacy, sub-granting, provision of technical assistance and piloting of new ECD models are some of the main mechanisms through which INGOs collaborate with local CSO actors engaged in ECD programming. However, none of the key informants interviewed were aware of any existing and currently functional ECD coordination mechanism led by INGOs or local CSO actors . Key informants also stated that most local CSOs engaged in ECD programming do not know what specific ECD programs or activities each INGO or local CSO is engaged in.

The study identified major weaknesses, existing opportunities and potential threats associated with existing ECD coordination mechanisms led by government actors. The figure below summarizes some of these findings.

Major weaknesses	Existing Opportunities	Potential Threats
• Absence of ECD structure and workforce in key government ECD sectors, particularly at sub national levels • Budget constraints; • Unavailability of functional and effective system for joint performance monitoring and accountability; • Irregularity of coordination meetings • Limited representation and role of local CSOs in government led coordination platforms • High staff turnover	• Availability of National policies and strategies that support multisectoral coordination for ECD • Growing interest and commitment of INGOs and local level civil society organizations • Availability of functional grassroot level structures such as HEWs,WASHCO, HDA, community based Child Protection Committees	• Weak institutional capacity and structure on the part of government sectors to effectively and sustainably lead a strong multi sectoral coordination platform for ECD; • Limited funding for ECD programming; • Lack of collective outcomes and lack of shared vision among the ECD actors; • Internal conflict and political instability • Decreased donor interest and funding due to the ongoing conflict and security situation in the country

Recommendations

In light of the main findings of the mapping study, the following recommendations are forwarded for consideration by ECI and its partners to enhance ECD programming and multisectoral coordination at the national level.

Establishing and strengthening multisectoral joint planning, monitoring, reporting and accountability systems and

frameworks: Existing ECD coordination mechanisms need to be strengthened through institutionalizing a standard system for multisectoral joint planning , performance monitoring, reporting , feedback and accountability. Selected indicators must be built into the multisectoral plans at all levels and monitored regularly. This action could address the lack of ownership and accountability challenges among ECD implementing sectors.

- **Enhancing CSO representation and role in ECD coordination mechanisms:** The representation and role of local CSOs in government-led ECD coordination platforms/ mechanisms need to be improved through high-level advocacy to influence government sectors and partner UN agencies to expand membership opportunities for local CSOs. Furthermore, CSOs' technical capacity to effectively engage in advocacy within the ECD coordination platforms need to be enhanced.

- **Supporting validation, familiarization, dissemination of Revised ECDE Policy framework (2021) at national, regional and sub regional levels:** The revised policy framework has not been finalized and validated yet. This is a potential entry point for ECI to support finalization, validation and dissemination (familiarization) at national, regional and sub-regional levels to enhance coordination and effective implementation.

- **Strengthening Addis Ababa University knowledge Hub on Early Childhood Development and Education**. The center was launched very recently and has done a good job collecting resources in one store that people in need can reach. The center requires major assistance and support to ensure that it plays its expected role. If the knowledge hub is strengthened, it can potentially play a key role in minimizing duplication of efforts in ECD programming, pooling resources, generating evidence for students and others stakeholders conducting studies on ECD and supporting standardized ECD implementation. There is also a need to expand the experience of the knowledge hub to other universities in the country as an area of improvement in the future.

- **Provision of technical assistance and advocacy efforts targeting key government ECD actors**: The government ECD actors, particularly at regional and sub-regional levels, have structural and human resource gaps to mainstream ECD effectively into their sector responsibilities and mandates. The unavailability of a clear ECD structure and adequate human resources designated for ECD activities hampered the effectiveness of coordination platforms. Thus, ECI and key international ECD actors must consider designing and implementing national advocacy efforts and provision of technical assistance to the government sectors to establish a clear and functional organizational structure and human resources dedicated to ECD responsibilities allocated to the respective sectors.

- **Budget Advocacy to influence key government sectors:** Achieving an adequate budget for implementation of ECD policy framework has been a real challenge to sustain ECD coordination platforms, as multisectoral responsibilities stipulated in the ECCE policy framework have not been supported by an adequate budget allocated by signatory sectors. Thus, ECI and other key ECD actors operating at the national level need to collaborate to influence the key government actors (FMoE, FMoH and FMoWSA) to allocate adequate budgets to implement their sector responsibilities stipulated in the national policy frameworks.