



ANNUAL REPORT 2024



EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION ETHIOPIA



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Greetings,

The year 2024 marked a transformative milestone for Early Childhood Education Ethiopia, a year that redefined what is possible when vision, innovation, and community-rooted leadership come together. ECEE made history as the first organization in Africa to register an infrastructure project in pursuit of Envision certification, a globally recognized standard for sustainable development. This unprecedented step affirms our commitment not only to excellence in early childhood education but also to environmental stewardship and long-term impact.

While we celebrate this progress, we remain grounded in the challenges that persist. Rural communities across Ethiopia continue to face systemic barriers to accessing quality education, barriers made worse by underinvestment, donor fatigue, and the continued marginalization of locally led solutions. Addressing these inequities requires community-centered approaches, like our Community Preschool Project, which offers a sustainable, scalable model to meet the urgent needs of children in under-served areas. The successful completion of our first preschool will not simply be a construction milestone; it represents a new way of thinking about rural development, one that begins with children and centers their right to learn, grow, and thrive.

As we look ahead to October 2025, ECEE will proudly celebrate its 5th anniversary, a moment to reflect on our journey, honor the individuals and organizations that have walked alongside us, and cast a vision for the future. This special occasion will also mark the launch of our new five-year strategic plan, reaffirming our commitment to expanding equitable, culturally relevant, and sustainable early learning opportunities across Ethiopia.

ECEE's story is still being written, with courage, care, and a deep belief in the power of education to transform lives. Thank you for being part of this journey. Together, we are building the future we all want to see, one child, one classroom, one community at a time.

In full gratitude
Dr. Hawani Negussie

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MISSION

To improve, advance, expand and prioritize early childhood care and education in rural Ethiopia by supporting existing schools, creating new programs, partnering with institutions and implementing a Pk-16 approach in the education system.

VISION

To provide children with comprehensive early childhood care and education programs that enable them to become welders of their own destiny.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

A HISTORICAL ACHIEVEMENT

A renowned community preschool project in Ethiopia pursues a vision for sustainability guided by Envision



The Gaffat Community Preschool Project represents the first application of the Envision framework in Africa

An early childhood education project in Northwestern Ethiopia is the first in Africa to register their project to pursue Envision verification. Envision is the sustainable infrastructure framework and rating system developed by the Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure (ISI). Use of the framework made it possible for the project team to better focus on broader community benefits, opening new opportunities for stakeholders to identify and pursue long-term sustainability goals.

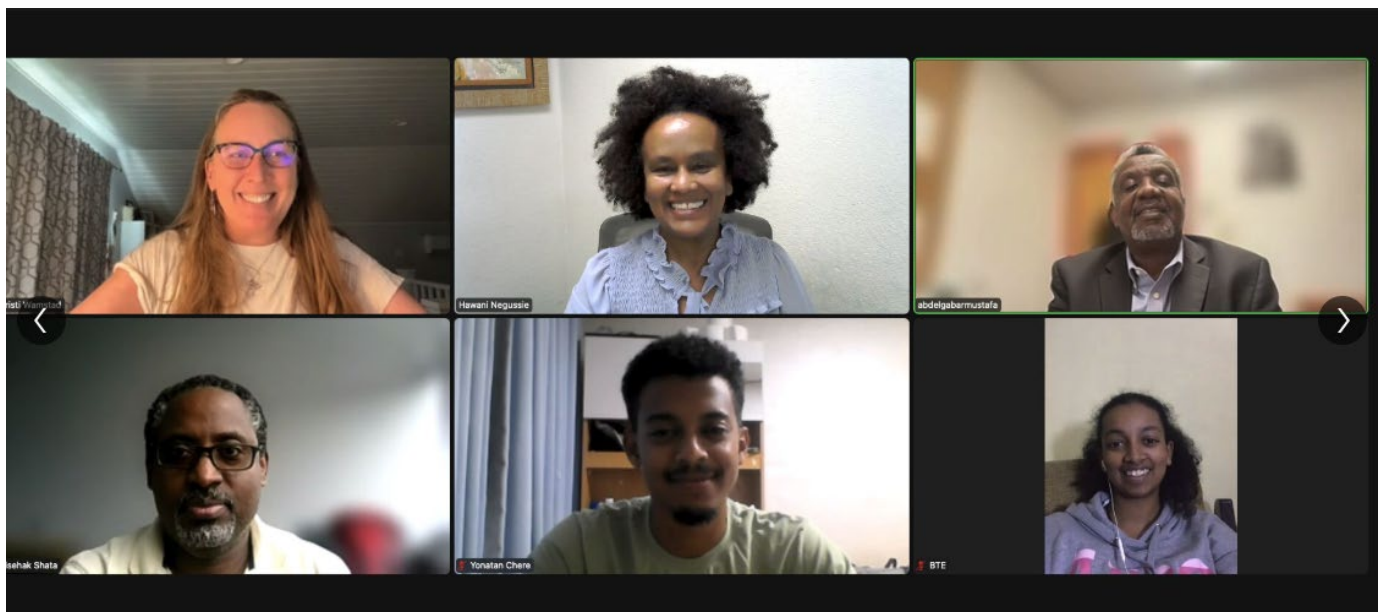
In 2024, Early Childhood Education Ethiopia (ECEE) registered the first infrastructure project in Africa pursuing Envision certification from the Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure (ISI). Envision is a comprehensive and globally recognized framework that assesses the sustainability of infrastructure projects based on rigorous criteria, including environmental responsibility, social equity, and economic resilience. Pursuing this certification reflects ECEE's commitment to addressing the urgent educational needs of rural communities and building sustainable learning environments in which children learn are healthy, sustainable, and future-focused.

This effort represents more than a technical achievement, it is a statement of values. By embedding sustainability into the very foundation of our early learning spaces, ECEE models how infrastructure can serve as a tool for both social progress and environmental stewardship. Our approach aligns with global development goals while responding directly to local realities, offering a replicable model for others committed to community-driven, climate-resilient development. Our leadership in this space is already catalyzing broader change. In November 2024, the Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure launched the Technical Assistance Program (TAP), an initiative designed to make Envision certification accessible to more organizations across Africa. ECEE's pioneering project was instrumental in informing the creation of TAP, serving as a key reference point in the program's design and implementation.

As we continue to expand our impact, we aim to build educational spaces that uplift communities and inspire a more equitable and sustainable future for all.

INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE

The most impactful support Early Childhood Education Ethiopia has received since its inception remains the comprehensive technical assistance, specialized training, and educational knowledge transfer from the Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure (ISI). For six months, representatives from ISI and ECEE's core team engaged in an intensive collaborative effort that has fundamentally transformed our approach to early childhood facility development across Ethiopia.



ISI team with ECEE core team members

Central to this partnership were bi-weekly discussions focused on the Envision framework, a leading sustainability assessment system for infrastructure projects. These structured sessions systematically addressed each component of the framework, contextualizing global best practices for Ethiopian realities. Over time, these deliberations evolved into a comprehensive knowledge transfer program covering sustainable building practices, resource-efficient design principles, and climate-responsive construction methodologies specifically tailored for early childhood facilities in diverse Ethiopian environments.

The methodical approach to learning and adaptation ensured that international sustainability standards were thoughtfully integrated with local building traditions, material availability, and climatic considerations. This synthesis of global expertise and local knowledge has positioned ECEE to develop early childhood facilities that are not only educationally effective but also environmentally responsible and culturally appropriate.

THE THREE-YEAR-OLD CLASSROOM

This year, we proudly completed our first set of early childhood classrooms, purpose-built to serve up to 120 children between the ages of three and four. These spaces represent more than infrastructure, they are vibrant learning environments designed to support the developmental needs of young children at one of the most critical stages in life. We eagerly anticipate filling these classrooms with curious, inquisitive learners whose voices, questions, and discoveries will breathe life into the spaces we've so carefully envisioned.

By engaging children during this foundational period, we foster essential neural development and introduce key conceptual frameworks that lay the groundwork for lifelong academic and social-emotional success. The classrooms are thoughtfully designed with flexible configurations, allowing educators to adapt learning environments, materials, and groupings based on developmental readiness, emerging interests, and pedagogical goals. This intentional design supports a responsive, inclusive, and dynamic approach to early learning, ensuring that every child feels seen, supported, and ready to thrive.



The 3-4 year old classroom from outside



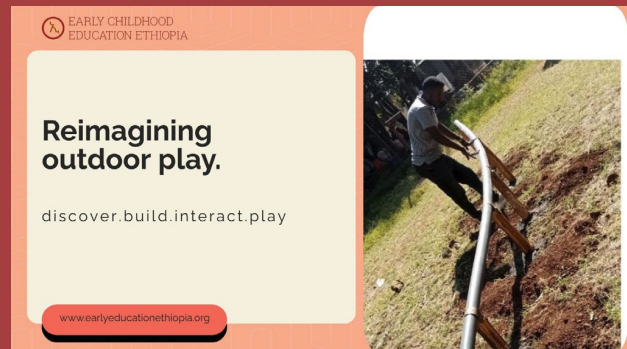
The 3-4 year old classroom from inside



PARTNERSHIPS AND INITIATIVES

STRENGTHENING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

March 2024 Early Childhood Education Ethiopia (ECEE) reached a pivotal milestone by formalizing a strategic partnership with the Ministry of Education of Ethiopia through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This collaboration marks a significant advancement in our mission to transform early childhood education across the country.



As part of this partnership, we have accelerated the development of our innovative outdoor learning initiatives, most notably through the creation of a pioneering STEAM-focused outdoor play area. This cutting-edge environment integrates traditional knowledge systems with contemporary educational approaches. Thoughtfully designed to blend natural elements with hands-on learning opportunities, the space invites children to explore science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics in ways that are both culturally grounded and developmentally enriching. Cultural authenticity is at the heart of our design philosophy, most prominently reflected in our musical learning space. Here, children engage with traditional Ethiopian instruments and rhythmic expression, nurturing not only physical coordination and creativity but also a deepened connection to their cultural identity. This space exemplifies how education can serve as both a site of innovation and a vessel for cultural preservation—where heritage and modern pedagogy exist in harmony to support whole-child development.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR ETHIOPIA

After more than three years of providing teacher training, professional development, and workforce support, Early Childhood Education Ethiopia launched its first 10-month teacher training program specifically designed for current early childhood practitioners who do not hold formal degrees. This initiative provides inclusive and equitable access to high-quality education, not only for children, but also for the educators who serve them.

We recognize that many individuals working in the early childhood field bring invaluable experience, dedication, and cultural insight, yet may have lacked the opportunity to pursue formal academic credentials. Through this specialized program, we will bridge that gap by equipping practitioners with foundational knowledge, evidence-based strategies, and culturally responsive approaches that strengthen their impact in the classroom. By investing in this workforce, we are elevating and affirming the dignity and potential of those who have long been at the heart of community-based education.



GEBETA MASTERS

One powerful way to empower local educators is by providing accessible, culturally relevant materials that strengthen foundational math skills such as number sense, counting, and sequencing. Sustainable strategies that are developmentally appropriate and locally grounded are essential to ensuring that children's education is both meaningful and uninterrupted. Gebeta, a traditional Ethiopian game with deep historical roots embodies this approach.

We have intentionally incorporated Gebeta into our early learning environments because of its wide-ranging developmental benefits. The game reinforces essential skills such as counting, turn-taking, listening, and following rules, all of which support children's cognitive, social, and emotional growth. By engaging with Gebeta, children participate in joyful, interactive learning while building a strong connection to Ethiopian culture and heritage.



THE COMMUNITY WE SERVE!



GETTING TO KNOW OUR FAMILIES

At the heart of Early Childhood Education Ethiopia's mission is a deep commitment to understanding and honoring the communities we serve. This commitment was affirmed in a conversation with Woizero Belaynesh, a mother whose story shows the resilience and hope of so many families in rural Ethiopia. Her words reminded us why this work matters, not in theory, but in lived experience. Like countless others in underserved areas, Woizero Belaynesh faces daily choices that no parent should have to make between immediate survival and long-term opportunity. She spoke of her dreams for her three-year-old son, Alehegn, who she hopes will one day become a doctor. Her belief in education's power to transform her son's future, despite the odds, is both humbling and galvanizing.

These stories do more than inspire us, they shape us. They teach us about perseverance, about the quiet strength of mothers, and about the critical role of compassionate, community-rooted interventions.

Our role is clear; to ensure that Alehegn, and every child like him, has access to a high-quality early education that honors his potential and builds the foundation for him to reach his dreams. We look forward to welcoming Alehegn to preschool.

CAMPAIGNS

As an organization deeply rooted in the communities we serve, Early Childhood Education Ethiopia (ECEE) understands the multifaceted challenges associated with early learning, at home, in schools, across communities, and within systems shaped by policy, practice, and advocacy. Our campaigns comprehensive vision for children's development, one that begins with care and continues through every stage of education.

Our most successful campaign titled, "Are We Ready for This Child?", emphasized the importance of preparing for a child's future by first supporting the mother and laying the groundwork for a PK-16 educational pathway. It underscored the need for a holistic approach, nurturing children from conception through adulthood and recognizes the powerful influence of early experiences on lifelong outcomes.

We launched a companion campaign focused on how children learn, challenging prevailing systems of instruction that often overlook the foundational needs of young learners. Our messaging drew attention to the disconnect between top-down pedagogy and the evidence-based practices that affirm children learn best through relationships, relevance, and connection. We highlighted the importance of aligning instruction with children's social, emotional, and cultural experiences to create learning environments that truly support their growth and development.

CAMPAIGNS

ARE WE READY FOR THIS CHILD?

BENEFITS OF BACK CARRYING AN INFANT

HOW WE TEACH AND HOW THEY LEARN

FOR EVERY CHILD



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EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION ETHIOPIA

Happy World Children's Day

For Every Child, the Joy of Friendship





The 3-4 year old classroom entrance

**“WHAT YOU ARE DOING IS A
GROUNDBREAKING WORK
WITH IMMENSE POTENTIAL
TO TRANSFORM AND
DECOLONIZE EDUCATION.
KEEP INNOVATING!”**

(SOCIAL MEDIA COMMENT)

CONFERENCE 2024

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION ETHIOPIA
Annual Conference 2024

**Prioritizing Systems of Practice:
A framework for Advancing, Centering, and Refocusing
Early Childhood Education**

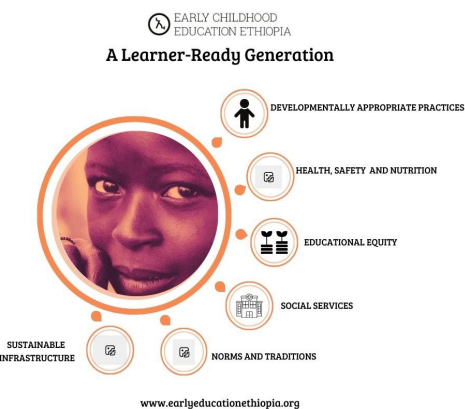
Yonas Assefa, Moderator
Dr. Nalaku V. Negash, Keynote Speaker
Dr. Ann Mbarika Schwaninger, Director of ECE, University College, Chair of the High Impact Research
Ernestine Tegen, Lecturer, Ethiopia, SAHLS Africa
Professor James O'Meara, School of the College of Education, Trinity A&M International University, Lynchburg, Texas
Dr. Sarah G. Gendreau, Director, Child Development, Denver School District
Yusuf Solovei, MD, Pediatrics and Infectious Diseases
Dr. Rosemary Bergquist, Assistant Professor, Medical School, Founder, Early Childhood Education Ethiopia
Yeshak Shale, School Project Manager, Branch Chair
Debrah Akshay, Project Manager, Early Childhood Education Ethiopia

JOIN US FOR PRESENTATIONS, DISCUSSION, AND DIALOGUE
DATE: SATURDAY JUNE 15, 2024
TIME: 8:00AM-10:30AM PST
REGISTER HERE: ZOOM
www.earlyeducationethiopia.org

PRIORITIZING SYSTEMS OF PRACTICE:

A FRAMEWORK FOR ADVANCING CENTERING AND REFOCUSING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The 2024 Annual Early Childhood Education Ethiopia Conference served as a powerful platform highlighting the importance of system-based practices that prioritize children's needs while advancing equity and community leadership in education. This year's conference brought together educators, policymakers, community leaders, and practitioners to explore the conditions necessary for all children to thrive. Presentations addressed a wide range of critical topics, including the long-term developmental impacts of malnutrition, the essential role of community engagement in driving innovation, the importance of sanitation and hygiene facilities in early learning environments, and the need for professional teaching standards to support developmentally appropriate instruction. The conference spotlighted ECEE's Learner-Ready Generation approach, and the organization's comprehensive community intervention model, which bridges health, education, and infrastructure to ensure holistic support for young children and their caregivers.



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION ETHIOPIA'S "LEARNER READY GENERATION" FRAMEWORK.

In May, 2024 Early Childhood Education Ethiopia unveiled its comprehensive Learner Ready Generation framework, an ambitious, systems-based model designed to address the full spectrum of needs required to bring formidable change in early childhood education to rural Ethiopia. The framework is built on six interconnected pillars: Developmentally Appropriate Practices, Health, Safety and Nutrition, Educational Equity, Social Services, Norms and Traditions, and Sustainable Infrastructure. Each pillar reflects ECEE's holistic vision for preparing children not only to enter school but to thrive throughout their educational journey. By weaving together proven educational strategies with a deep respect for Ethiopia's local traditions and community strengths, ECEE is working to expand and embed the Learner Ready Generation framework in schools, homes, and neighborhoods, ensuring that every child is equipped to learn, grow, and succeed.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY FY 2024

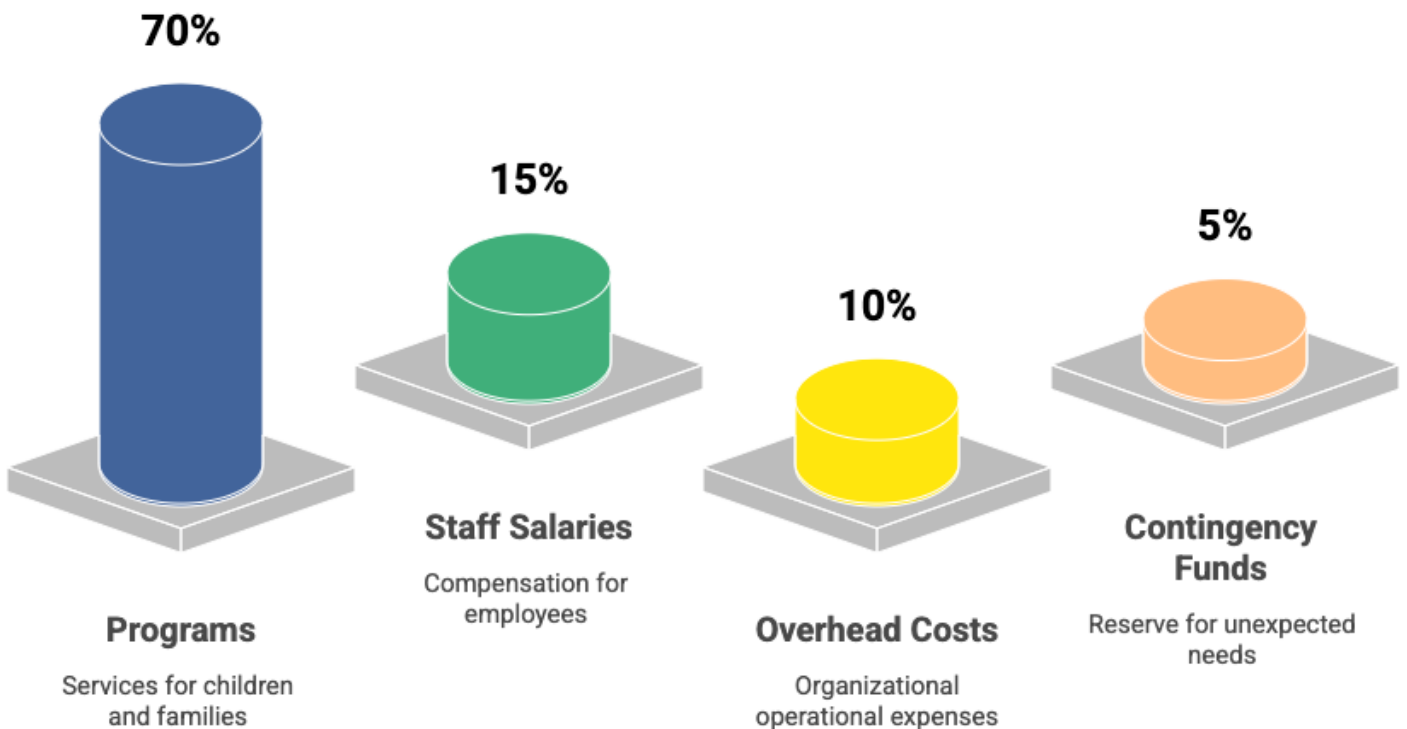
Throughout the 2024 fiscal year, Early Childhood Education Ethiopia maintained a strong and stable financial position, driven primarily by a diversified base of individual supporters and committed donors. With an operational budget of \$43,763.00, 85% of our total revenue was sustained through consistent contributions from long-term individual donors, while the remaining 15% came from strategic one-time donations.

Although ECEE did not secure large institutional grants or corporate partnerships during this period, the organization successfully maintained a positive cash flow. This financial resilience, despite limited external funding, reflects the strength of our internal financial management practices and the unwavering dedication of our core donor community.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the individuals and partners whose continued support ensured the continuity of our programs during a challenging funding landscape. Their dedication to our shared vision, that educational equity is a powerful catalyst for sustainable development, remains the financial foundation of our work.

Looking ahead to FY 2025, ECEE has implemented a targeted funding diversification strategy aimed at enhancing long-term financial resilience while expanding our programmatic reach and impact across Ethiopia.

Financial Allocation of Expenditures





EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION ETHIOPIA

www.earlyeducationethiopia.org

Leading with Children!

