

NAS/EAS FORUM ON INVESTING IN YOUNG CHILDREN GLOBALLY (iYCG), ADDIS ABABA, JULY 27-29, 2015  
INTRODUCTION OF SESSION 4--ETHIOPIAN MINISTRY POLICY PERSPECTIVES

by  
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It is my great honour and privilege to provide some introductory remarks as Chair of this Session. I like to thank the organizers most heartily for inviting me to chair this session.

The aim of this session is to discuss the Ethiopian National Perspectives that weigh the benefits and costs for financial and human capital investments in young children and their caregivers. Among the problems confronting Early Childhood Development (ECD) generally in African countries South of the Sahara, the following call for close attention:

- 1) Diseases such as Malaria, Measles, Tuberculosis, Tetanus, Ebola, Polio, Yellow fever, etc
- 2) Malnutrition, 3) Early childhood education (ECE) including suitable curriculum, adequately trained EDE teachers etc .4) Acute poverty, especially among the disadvantaged children

For effective solutions, it will have to be all hands on deck for parents, family, community, local government, State Governments, National Government and Global Community--in a rather intertwined order--- in order to prepare young children cognitively, physically, socially and emotionally for future success. This calls for a lot of investments with consequent returns of needless public spending in various unproductive directions including criminal justice systems for juveniles and adults while also lowering school drop-outs and ensuring skilled and responsible work force that contributes to the tax (revenue) base.

Even though we shall hear from our Ethiopian colleagues during this session about National policy perspectives in Ethiopia, it is noteworthy that quite a number of African countries, South of the Sahara do have policies based on some intersectorial collaboration between various sectors of the society--which among other advantages make for cutting costs through sharing of resources and avoiding duplication. Examples include Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa that have comprehensive integrated policies. However the most comprehensive is that of Kenya that has a policy based on collaboration between at least ten sectors--Parents and other care givers, Community, Ministries of Education, Health, Home affairs, Finance,, Local Government, Agriculture, Culture, Sports and Social Welfare, Faith based organizations, Bilateral and multilateral Development, etc. it is hoped that other African countries will emulate the example of Kenya in formulating policies that will spell out the various sectors involved.

At the end of this session, I propose that we make the following recommendations to the AU through the Ethiopian government:

- 1) that all African governments should have viable and comprehensive ECD policies
- 2) That all African Governments should create Science Centres, one in each province of their country where children could have hands-on experience with basic scientific facts (e.g how the telephone works, what causes rain and thunder) and perform their own experiments.