

Foundations for a Better Future





A compass
where all
reach their

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A Message from our Patron



THE DALAI LAMA

MESSAGE

I congratulate Children in Crossfire as it celebrates its landmark 25th anniversary. I commend everyone who is a part of this admirable organization for the outstanding work they have done for so many years to ensure vulnerable children have access to vital healthcare and education. This new plan will deliver continued success in the years ahead.

As our world becomes ever more interdependent, our responsibilities to each other grow accordingly. We must show kindness, compassion and love to fulfil ourselves as human beings - and ensure others around us can do so too. That is Children in Crossfire's core message and mission, and I am proud to be their Patron.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be the signature of the Dalai Lama. It is written in a fluid, cursive style.

11 April 2022

A Message from our Chief Executive

As we mark Children in Crossfire's 25th anniversary, I am delighted to present our Strategic Plan 2022-2026: 'Foundations for a Better Future'.

Fundamental to Children in Crossfire's mission is our founding value of compassion. We define compassion as the ability to empathise with a negative situation followed by an action to resolve it. At the core of compassion is a solidarity with others. Our work is driven by this sense of solidarity and a desire to make the world a better place, particularly for the people in those communities where we work. Compassion for self, balanced with compassion for others, is essential to achieving long term and sustained social consciousness and action.

We will fulfil our mission to tackle the injustices facing children, through education, so that learners, especially young children, can shape a better future for themselves and their societies in the decades to come. The early years provide a critical window of opportunity for young children to build the foundations of learning and develop skills that can help them not only to stay in school and succeed in school but also to gain the tools they need for life, work and citizenship. We will work harder to engage people

across the island of Ireland in sharing our value of compassion through Global Citizenship Education. Through these efforts we will contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 4 of inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all.

With diversified funding and stronger partnerships, we know we can accelerate efforts to strengthen education systems. Our new strategy - Foundations for a Better Future - has emerged from extensive consultation with colleagues and partners in Ireland, Tanzania and Ethiopia during a period of extraordinary global change and when the COVID-19 pandemic has created the worst crisis in education and learning in over a century. Building on our achievements to date and lessons from the previous strategy, it is evident to us that investing in Early Childhood Education is the key to long-term development and our common future.

I believe there is no greater cause - and I hope you will join us in achieving our vision. Together we can ensure that, in crisis or calm, the world is a more compassionate place where all children can reach their potential.

Richard Moore, Founder and Chief Executive Officer

Children in Crossfire was founded in 1996 in Derry, Northern Ireland by Richard Moore. In 1972, at the age of 10 years, Richard was blinded by a rubber bullet fired by a British soldier at point blank range. Amazingly, from childhood to the present day, he has accepted his sight loss without any feelings of resentment. "I learned to see life in a different way...I may have lost my sight, but I have vision", is how he describes his remarkable acceptance of what, for most, would be a debilitating trauma.

Richard set up Children in Crossfire in 1996 with the goal of responding to the rights and needs of young children caught in the crossfire of global poverty, inequality and injustice. The organisation's 'spirit of compassion' is one of its key strengths as it works in partnership with others to help all children experience the learning opportunities and future they deserve and the chance to access quality education from a young age so that they can reach their full potential and continue to learn and develop throughout school, work and life.

Who We Are

- We are an Ireland-based International Non-Government Organisation, with a focus on education.
- We aim to reflect the value of compassion on which we were founded.
- We work towards the ambition of SDG4 to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, specifically Early Childhood Education (SDG target 4.2) and Global Citizenship Education (SDG target 4.7).
- Above all, through our international programme, we will help children reach their potential through access to quality Early Childhood Education (ECE) and foundational learning outcomes.

Our VISION:

A compassionate world where all children can reach their potential

Our MISSION:

To tackle the injustices facing children, through education

Our VALUES:

Compassion, Equity,
Accountability and Partnership

Progress and Lessons

Our strategy was developed through an in-depth process of research, consultation and evolution of a plan based on contextual and stakeholder analysis and a series of strategic planning workshops and forums. We consulted with staff, board, government authorities, civil society partners, Irish Aid, teachers, principals and communities across Ireland, Tanzania and Ethiopia. It is built on 25 years of organisational experience including 15 years' programmatic experience in Tanzania and Ethiopia. Key findings and learnings from an external evaluation and donor reports of our current programme of work were also used to inform the strategic planning process.

Over the past five years, we made significant progress in ensuring that young children access at least one year of quality Early Childhood Education in Tanzania to give them the foundations they need in life – contributing to SDG 4.2.

At the same time, we cultivated Global Citizenship Education within the formal, non-formal and informal education sectors across the island of Ireland. We equipped learners of all ages with the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development and advance our international work – contributing to SDG 4.7.

We learned:

- The critical role that education for sustainable development and GCE plays in achieving all of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- The importance of partnerships based on locally led development and the effectiveness of ECE systems strengthening, in our focus countries.
- That, in times of crisis or calm, we can better utilise technology to increase our effectiveness and efficiency.

Our Results from 2016-2021

Tanzania

- Over **150,000 children (5-6 years, 50% female)** annually accessing one year of quality pre-primary-education (PPE).
- **6,400 ECE teachers** trained by the end of 2021.
- **Significantly increased coverage and quality of ECE** in Tanzania, including changes in national policies – culminating in the launch of a National Early Childhood Development (ECD) Policy in December 2021.
- **Proven model of scalable quality ECE** led by local context; including child-centred curriculum, teacher development and improved pedagogy.



Ethiopia

- **24,000 children (5-6 years, 45% female)** accessing one-year quality pre-primary education in 97 classes across 29 schools in Oromia region (Wolisso) and Addis Ababa (Nefas Silk).
- **1,500 severely malnourished children** have accessed lifesaving therapeutic feeding in Wolisso.
- Over **60,000 home visits** to vulnerable families conducted by **150 trained Health Extension Workers** in Wolisso.
- **12 vulnerable communities** given access to safe water, serving over **2,000 families**.
- **180 people in 60 highly vulnerable families** became homeowners and secured reliable income.

Global Citizenship Education

- **108,100 students** reached across the island of Ireland. Of these, 66% were in primary schools and 34% in post-primary schools.
- **244 schools across the island of Ireland** participated in the Compassionate Schools Award Programme.
- **1,393 student teachers** and **540 teachers** trained in our Educating the Heart compassionate GCE programme.
- **180 Youth, Adult and Community Education groups** reached through our Vision 2030 multiplier programme.
- **131,800 members of the public** across Ireland indirectly reached with positive messages in support of the SDGs and Overseas Development Assistance.
- **2,555 members** of public reached directly.

Why Early Childhood Education?



Every child has the right to an education and quality learning opportunities from early childhood to adolescence. In 2016, governments

around the world signed up to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including **SDG4: *Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.***

Although the world has made tremendous progress in education over the past few decades, with a reported 87% of children aged 6-11 years regularly attending school in 2019², progress in *pre-primary education (PPE)* has been slow and uneven. In 2019, only half of the world's children experienced Early Childhood Education. This means that globally, a staggering 50% of children under 5 years are at risk of not fulfilling their developmental potential - including in our focus countries of Tanzania and Ethiopia.

The focus of Early Childhood Development and Education (ECD/E) is to develop children's school-readiness (e.g. early literacy, numeracy, socio-emotional skills, physical development) and provide opportunities to interact with peers and educators. There is compelling evidence presented by the World Bank, UNICEF and The Lancet that investment in early childhood development (ECD) is one of the smartest investments a country can make in its future, giving an estimated £7-9 in return for every £1 invested.

By the time a child enters primary school, the foundations for learning should already be in place. Failure to provide quality Early Childhood Education not only limits children's potential to develop and succeed, but also impacts on a country's ability to achieve their development ambitions for school completion and lifelong learning.

Education is a critical foundation for the achievement of human potential and thus emerges as the pre-requisite for making Agenda 2030³ a reality. Within education, the importance of Early Childhood Education is reflected within SDG target 4.2, which promises equal access to quality pre-primary education. Despite this, donor support for the education sector is lagging behind. Public financing of pre-primary education receives a significantly smaller share of the education budget, which according to UNICEF averages 2% in low-income countries. This is far below the 10% international benchmark recommended. Yet, ECD/ECE is affordable, costing an estimated additional cost of \$0.50 per capita per year, and essential for improving long-term learning outcomes and building the workforce for the future.

In our target country of Tanzania, in 2020 net⁴ enrolment rate for pre-primary was 36%, after steadily dropping over the past five years. In Ethiopia, the rate was 45%. Aside from shortages in the provision of Early Childhood Education opportunities, some factors preventing children from accessing quality learning are geographic location, gender, disability, violence and abuse. The barriers to access are further compounded by increasing and protracted crises of climate change, humanitarian emergencies and conflict. We will make an effort to understand the nuances of these barriers in the local contexts where we work, and partner with schools and local government to address them.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic and school closures, persistent inequities resulted in a range of barriers to learning, such as the lack of qualified pre-primary teachers, adequate classrooms, curricula and learning materials. This means that even when children are able to access schools, the poor quality of provision means that they are failing to meet the desired learning outcomes and, in the case of ECE, are not ready for school. In our approach to ECE we address the barriers to learning mentioned above, and have so far measured progress as improvements made in the quality of *ECE provision*. In this Strategic Plan, we commit to measuring not just the *quality of provision*, but also the resulting *learning outcomes* of children. This is an important step forward as it will help us to build evidence to advocate for effective models of quality at scale.

³ Transforming Our World – the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

Tanzania and Ethiopia have already introduced ECE policy initiatives that will place millions of young children on the path to fulfilling their potential. Children in Crossfire will support them in strengthening Early Childhood Education systems. We believe that by supporting the transition of national policies into locally led planning and implementation, we will strengthen Early Childhood Education systems at national, regional and district levels. In this way, we can make a direct contribution to SDG target 4.2 and increase the numbers of children accessing at least one year of quality pre-primary education before entry to primary school.

This strategic plan presents a once in a lifetime opportunity for children in Tanzania and Ethiopia to experience the learning opportunities they deserve. This is essential if SDG4 is to be met.



⁴ Net Enrolment Rate refers to the percent of right-age children enrolled in a given stage of education

Why Global Citizenship Education?

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) is the other prong of our Strategic Plan. It reflects our vision of an appropriate response to address current global challenges including climate change, hunger, migration, conflict, gender inequality, poverty and injustice. It complements our work in Tanzania and Ethiopia and engages people across the island of Ireland to have a greater understanding of their own role as global citizens and to appreciate our work and the work of others, such that they feel empowered to take actions in support of social change.

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) is a lifelong learning process, which aims to increase public awareness and understanding of the rapidly changing, inter-dependent and unequal world in which we live. Given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education, the United Nations General Assembly recently adopted a resolution entitled *Education for Sustainable Development in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. This demonstrates a renewed emphasis on SDG target 4.7, which is to prioritise education for sustainable development and global citizenship.



The General Assembly reaffirms Education for Sustainable Development as an integral element of the sustainable development goal on quality education and a key enabler of all the other Sustainable Development Goals.

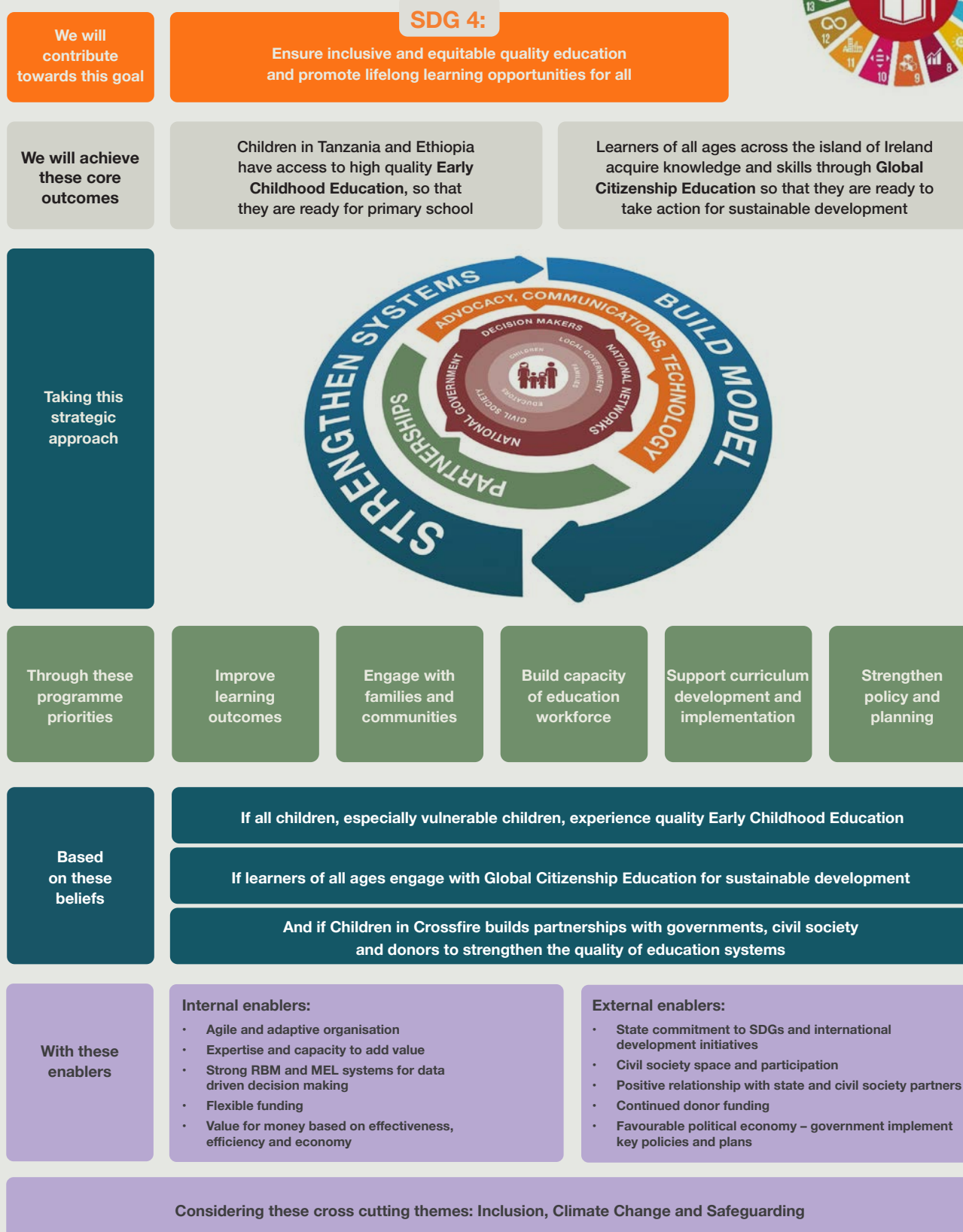
UN General Assembly Resolution 2021

This is coherent with the development of the Republic of Ireland's new *National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) to 2030* including curriculum development and embedding these principles into teacher education. Our approach to GCE is also aligned to Northern Ireland's *Children and Young People's Strategy 2020-2030*.

GCE has the potential to bring about a shift in the way learners of all ages think, act and address the global challenges the world faces. We believe that the foundations of all social action should lie in compassion and solidarity. Our GCE programme provides a model for this across formal and non-formal education and learning systems, and is designed to inculcate learning outcomes that will enable learners to respond to pressing global needs.

How Change Happens - Our Theory of Change

This diagram of our Theory of Change shows how Children in Crossfire will work in partnership with others to achieve impact. Its logic can be understood by moving from top (our goal) to bottom (our enablers).





This organisational Theory of Change has three purposes:

- **Logic:** to describe a set of causal pathways linking our organisational abilities with our goal.
- **Learning:** to provide a conceptual framework against which we might review progress, risks and assumptions and learn from the plan's implementation.
- **Structure:** to provide a set of strategic priorities which can form the basis of programme specific theories of change and programming.

In our Theory of Change for the next 5 years, we commit that we will contribute towards achieving **Sustainable Development Goal 4**, to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

We will do this through our two core outcomes in the areas of:

1. **Early Childhood Education**, aligned with SDG Target 4.2, "To ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education."
2. **Global Citizenship Education** aligned with SDG Target 4.7, "To ensure that learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development."

Our approach to delivering these outcomes is a set of three interlinked strategies for change across all our programmes:

1. Building models led by the local context and strengthening systems to scale our programme learnings.
2. Partnerships with a range of stakeholders from donors to governments, education authorities, schools, civil society organisations and communities with a focus on locally led solutions.
3. Advocacy, communication and technology to support our programme objectives and maximise the benefit of our work.

These strategies enable us to achieve our **five programme priorities**. We have chosen to align them with the five core functions of system strengthening as outlined in UNICEF's (2020) Build to Last⁵ framework.

While these programme priorities are aligned with international good practice and evidence, they just as much arise from our organisational beliefs:

- If children, especially vulnerable children, experience quality ECE; and
- If learners of all ages, including marginalised groups, engage with compassionate GCE; and
- If Children in Crossfire builds partnerships and engagement with government institutions, civil society structures, the general public and donors to support collaborative action and strengthen the quality of education systems;
- Then all children can reach their potential.

Within our beliefs is the assumption that we will continue to build partnerships and engage with stakeholders to strengthen education systems. This assumption is predicated on a set of **five organisational enablers and five external enablers** that are essential for this Theory of Change to work. If any one of these enablers was to change significantly, it would impact our ability to function optimally and deliver the planned results.

⁵ UNICEF. 2020. Build to Last: A framework in support of universal quality pre-primary education. New York City: UNICEF. <https://www.unicef.org/reports/build-to-last-2020>.

Our Strategic Ambition

In delivering our strategy, we identified two core outcomes. These are further broken down into five programme outcomes that will underpin our work and contribution to Agenda 2030 for the next five years.

Children in Crossfire Core Outcome

Children in Tanzania and Ethiopia have access to high quality Early Childhood Education, so that they are ready for primary school

#1



We take a systems-strengthening approach to advancing access to high quality Early Childhood Education as the backbone of our strategy. Our approach aligns with UNICEF's Build to Last (2020) framework. This provides the necessary resources and tools to influence national discussions, policy and decision-making forums, implementation and sustainability of universal quality pre-primary education at a country level.

In line with this, our system-strengthening approach seeks to shape the five core functions of the ECE subsector as a whole: 1) Planning and budgeting; (2) Curriculum development and implementation; (3) Workforce development; (4) Family and community engagement; and (5) Quality assurance.

All of these functions are interconnected and necessary if children are to learn and grow to their full potential. This includes support to strengthening national, regional, district government structures, and technical capacity, including the capacity of our civil society partners.

Where appropriate, we also address the barriers that prevent the furthest behind from accessing these services. We support upgrading education facilities (classrooms, outdoor play areas and water/sanitation services) that are child, disability and gender sensitive and help provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all (SDG Target 4.A).

We do this by engaging in a range of **partnerships** at global, regional, national, district and community levels. This involves working closely with government and education structures, civil society (including partner organisations and media), local communities, as well as international agencies and donor partners. Through these partnerships, we work towards the achievement of a shared vision and tangible results for young children. Given potential further reductions in development aid and financing for the SDGs, the organisation has already begun to take innovative approaches to our partnerships as part of finding the right blend of collaborative financing strategies with governments, bilateral agencies, private sector, foundations and the public. This is necessary if we are to achieve our expected outcomes and impact.



⁶ <https://www.unicef.org/reports/build-to-last-2020>

We will continue to drive change through influencing policy, planning, budgeting and practice. This will be based on a costed PPE model and evidence-based research for scaling-up high quality ECE at ward, council and regional levels and a new model for high quality urban ECE private provision. Our key advocacy message is to highlight the critical importance of *'all children accessing at least one year of quality pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary school'* as part of SDG4 2030 ambition.

As part of our systems strengthening approach, we also advocate for strong Early Childhood Development outcomes, recognising that an enabling environment for Early Childhood Education includes families and systems that are able to support the holistic development of children up until the point in time when they arrive at pre-school. We will ensure that Early Childhood Development and education is a regular topic covered by local media and communication channels including radio, TV, newspapers and social media at national and sub-national level.

Where we work:

We have chosen to continue to work in Tanzania and Ethiopia given our long-term engagement with local partners in both countries since 2008, and as a response to the intensity of deprivations and the extent of the population experiencing multi-dimensional poverty (SDG1.2). As of 2021, this stood at 57.1% in Tanzania and 68.7% in Ethiopia. In addition, 49.4% of the population in Tanzania and 30% of the population in Ethiopia experience monetary poverty (SDG1.1).⁷ Furthermore, half of all children in both countries are estimated to be both monetarily and multi-dimensionally poor and lacking access to essential services such as pre-primary education. Tanzania became a lower-middle income country in July 2020, achieving one of the key milestones of the Tanzania Development Vision 2025. According to the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Index 2021, Tanzania ranked 132 out of 165 countries and Ethiopia (low-income country) ranked 136. Quality education (SDG4) is reported as a significant challenge for both countries in the recent SDG index.

Taking this model into measurable results, we have 3 programme outcomes:

Programme Outcome 1:

Children in Tanzania and Ethiopia have access to inclusive and equitable Early Childhood Education opportunities.

Programme Outcome 2:

Children in Tanzania and Ethiopia experience high quality play-based Early Childhood Education and are ready for school.

Programme Outcome 3:

An enabling environment exists in Tanzania and Ethiopia to deliver Early Childhood Education at scale.

We will target children who are furthest behind, who have least opportunity and who are the most excluded, vulnerable and marginalised due to multiple factors including geography, poverty, gender, ethnicity, conflict, disability and migration.



⁷ <https://hdr.undp.org/en/2021-MPI> - Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) measures deprivations by ten indicators across three dimensions of health, education and standard of living. Monetary poverty is defined as people living on less than \$1.90 a day

In Tanzania

Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in pre-primary education increased substantially in 2016 to 102.6% when universal pre-primary education was introduced.

⁸ However, GER can distract from important insights. More recent data shows net enrolment has been dropping, from 39.9% in 2018 to 35.9% in 2020, and that high GER includes significant age-mix with over half of the children enrolled being either under, or over the 5 to 6 years of age eligibility.

There was a slight increase in net enrolment ratio (NER) in 2019 due to concerted efforts by government and non-government education stakeholders to ensure school readiness for children. This increase was also reflected in the proportion of Standard 1 pupils (primary level) with at least one year of pre-primary education, up from 75.6% in 2018 to 82% in 2019. Data also shows that total enrolment for girls was 49.44% and boys was 50.56%, which represents a Gender Parity Index of 97.8%. It is important to note that this gender parity continues into lower primary.

Furthermore, an estimated current NER of 35.9% highlights the trend that more than half of children aged 5 in Tanzania still miss out on any pre-primary education. When disaggregated by region, there is considerable variation across the country, with six regions having a low uptake of pre-primary schooling, especially Dar es Salaam (38.1%). In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, all schools in Tanzania were closed for over three months, a much shorter period than in the rest of the East Africa region. This meant that the negative impact of COVID-19 on education has been more limited in Tanzania.



Our response is to continue to strengthen ECE systems and scale up quality ECE over the next five years, so that young children can have the early learning opportunities that they deserve. Our goal is to reach one million children by expanding our pre-primary education (PPE) model to over 1,500 schools across Dodoma, Dar es Salaam, Mwanza and Morogoro regions. This includes initiating programming in high-density urban settings where millions of children still do not access ECE.

In Tanzania, the launch of the first *National Multisectoral Early Childhood Development Programme (NMECDP 2021-2026)* pro-poor policy represents a serious government commitment to support and invest in ECD, promoting its vision of 'All children in Tanzania are developmentally on track to develop to their full potential'. 'Opportunities for early learning' and the expansion of pre-primary education are among the main priorities. We will build on our active role in the National ECD Taskforce and Secretariat to support mainstreaming of this new ECD policy into education sector planning processes. We will share learning from our evidence-based research and costed models as part of advocacy for scaling up of high quality ECE at ward, council and regional levels.

⁸ Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MOEST) and Basic Education Statistics Tanzania (BEST)

Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, according to recent data from UNICEF, there is a decline in pre-primary Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) from 49.9% in 2015-16 to 40.7% in 2018-19. More than a third of children are not completing primary education. It is estimated that to achieve the SDG4 targets, an improvement of 38% in completion and 59% in GER for pre-primary education is required.

Before COVID-19, Ethiopia had 8 million children out of school (4 million primary and 3.9 million pre-primary). During COVID, 26 million children were affected by school closures. UNICEF data also shows that child marriage and female genital mutilation remain a challenge. Regional variations and the prospect of meeting the SDGs has been further undermined by COVID-19. Furthermore, 19.2 million people in Ethiopia are in need of humanitarian assistance.

While the status of education outcomes remains weak in Ethiopia, recent policy developments indicate that Early Childhood Development and Education are priority areas for this government. A revised and updated *Early Childhood Care and Development Policy* is due to be completed in 2022, presenting an opportunity to work with government, civil society actors and other stakeholders.



Over the next five years, we will continue to develop specialist capacity within our current team of Ethiopian nationals. Our priority is to work closely with the government to support locally led systems, strengthening and forging alliances with relevant policy and operational sections of Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Women and Social Affairs, UNICEF and Save the Children, including participation in the Education Cluster at national and regional levels. Here, we will share learning from the success of the PPE model piloted in the Tanzania Country Programme during 2016-2022. We plan to expand the number of schools we target to reach 250,000 children accessing quality pre-primary education across 150 schools in Oromia region and Addis Ababa by the end of 2026.

Through our partnership with civil society organisations, we will seek collaboration with government colleges and institutes of teacher education, with a view to exploring how we can contribute towards teacher professional development for Early Childhood Education and support for development of associated curricula and materials.



Our Strategic Ambition



Children in Crossfire Core Outcome

#2

Learners of all ages across the island of Ireland access Compassionate Global Citizenship Education so that they are ready to take action for sustainable development.

Programme Outcome 4:

Learners in formal, non-formal and informal education settings access equitable and quality Compassionate Global Citizenship Education so that they are ready to take action for sustainable development.

Programme Outcome 5:

Compassionate GCE is better recognised in education systems across the island of Ireland.

Complementary to our international work in Early Childhood Education (SDG Target 4.2) is our work in Global Citizenship Education (GCE) across the island of Ireland as part of our contribution to SDG4 Target 4.7. The programme will support Global Citizenship Education across the formal and non-formal education sector through youth, adult and community education settings and engagement with the wider Irish public.

As a Derry/Londonderry based organisation, we have chosen to take an all-Ireland approach to GCE by targeting all six counties in Northern Ireland and the five counties of the border region of the Republic of Ireland. This geographic region represents some of the most deprived communities across the UK and the Republic of Ireland⁹. By selecting these counties, we will bring high quality GCE to education systems that are often at the lower end of quality in their own countries, and more importantly, we will build global citizenship knowledge and skills among children who will have the potential to influence cross-border initiatives.

Our GCE programme is based on our founding value of compassion. We believe that compassion is closely interlinked with solidarity, and that understanding of and actions towards global citizenship should be built upon these values. In our GCE programme, we balance emotional literacy with critical literacy to help people understand the emotional basis of their reactions to injustice, leading them to a critical understanding of the causes and possible solutions to the injustice. Over the next five years, we will work with decision makers and the wider GCE sector on the island to advocate for mainstreaming of compassion based GCE across all schools.

Educating the Heart puts the learner at the centre of local and global development and brings them on a reflective journey to increase their sense of global citizenship through an interactive, learner-centred and action-oriented approach.

⁹ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/prsdgi/regionaldsdgsireland2017/ph/#d.en.177804>

Operationally, in our target counties we will continue to take a whole school approach to integrating GCE into the entire school learning environment using our *Educating the Heart* model to increase the capacity of teachers to deliver quality GCE and equip students with GCE transformative competencies (understanding, skills, attitude). We will tailor our approach to move beyond our 'in-person' workshop model, towards blended learning and high quality online and app-based content to reflect the new norms in a post-COVID society. At the same time, we will ensure we retain the essence and uniqueness of our approach that places compassion at the heart of GCE.

We will expand the groups we engage with, developing an Educating the Heart approach for children in early years of education – we believe this is where compassion can be embedded in learning and growing – especially in cross border counties and communities. Our *Vision 2030* programme will also expand beyond the youth sector, bringing in a wider set of Adult and Community Education (ACE) organisations in our target counties. Across these efforts, we will bring the voices of our ECE Champions and the lived experiences of children from Tanzania and Ethiopia to our advocacy work across Ireland.

We will expand and deepen our engagement with the wider public and members of civil society through a mix of formal and informal learning. These will include online campaigns, events and awareness raising as part of increasing public support for international development agencies, the SDGs and the public's understanding of how global issues of justice, inequality and poverty intertwine with all of our daily lives. Our collaboration with the Dóchas Worldview Project will help us understand different audience segments in respect of the general public and enable data-driven, insight-informed targeting of the public with communication strategies and messages.

Again, a system-strengthening approach will be used to contribute towards GCE policy/sector plans, curricula, teacher training, and learner assessment. We will collaborate with sector institutions, universities, primary and post primary schools and civil society networks including the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA), youth, adult and community education groups to advocate for GCE policy and planning.

We will contribute towards change by mobilising our network of supporters, campaigners, youth and the general public across the island of Ireland to take action for sustainable development.



Our Expected Results

Children in Crossfire has always been focused on results – results that help us achieve our vision of ‘a compassionate world where every child can reach their potential’, and this strategy is no different.

Through our programme of work, we expect the following results by 2026.

In Tanzania

- Improve School Readiness for 1.8m children across 1,500 schools in Dodoma, Morogoro and Mwanza regions through access to at least one year of quality pre-primary education (PPE).
- Address barriers that prevent up to 25,000 of the most vulnerable children accessing Early Childhood Education.
- Pilot an early learning programme for children in high-density urban settings.
- Engage and contribute to national ECD/ECE policy dialogue by using evidence-based research on the PPE model to advocate and influence the Government of Tanzania to implement the National ECD Plan and scale up access to ECE for all Tanzanian young children.
- Build partnerships across civil society, local governments and media to enable transition from policy to practice.

In Ethiopia

- Improve School Readiness for 250,000 children across 150 schools in Oromia Region and Addis Ababa through access to at least one year of quality pre-primary education.
- Address barriers that prevent up to 5,000 of the most vulnerable children accessing Early Childhood Education.
- Engage and contribute to national ECD/ECE policy dialogue through civil society networks.

Across the Island of Ireland

- Reach 150,000 students through 1,500 primary and post primary teachers, with compassionate GCE through our Educating the Heart Programme and support them to take SDG related actions.
- Reach 30,000 learners in over 250 youth, Adult and Community Education organisations/ groups, including marginalised groups such as out of school youth, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers and people with a disability.
- Contribute to national GCE policy dialogue with respective education authorities through our civil society networks.
- Engage with the wider Irish public to increase their support for international development, overseas aid and the SDGs - especially SDG4.





Cross-Cutting Priorities

In delivering our strategy, we are committed to three cross cutting priorities

Priority #1: Inclusion

Children in Crossfire believes that a vision of holistic and sustainable development is properly achieved when all the human resources, talents and skills available throughout the communities where we work are presented with opportunities to grow and succeed. Inclusion applies to focus areas of gender, disability and the most vulnerable.

Across our internal operations and external programmes, Children in Crossfire apply a range of policies and approaches to ensure all children have the chance to benefit from quality Early Childhood Education in Tanzania and Ethiopia, and compassionate global citizenship on the island of Ireland.

As mentioned in our approach to targeting and in discussing the barriers to accessing education, our thinking on inclusion is based on our understanding of equity and prioritising the furthest behind first. We recognise that inequity arises from a multitude of dimensions such as poverty, geographic location, gender, disability, violence and abuse. These dimensions are further compounded by increasing

and protracted crises of climate change, humanitarian emergencies and conflict. Furthermore, each of these dimensions interact with each other to create intersectional complexities, unique to the local cultures and contexts in which they exist.

Children in Crossfire understands that inclusion goes beyond disaggregating data in terms of access to education services but requires identifying inequalities in the education systems and incorporating responsive strategies into our programming. For example, we incorporate gender and disability empowerment into our teacher training, as well as building professional identity and peer support groups for ECE teachers, the majority of whom are women on the periphery of the education workforce. We integrate inclusion into curricular design and delivery as well as addressing safeguarding and gender-based violence in schools, and gender-responsive parenting in homes. All of this is part of promoting transformative change that empowers all children and promotes positive norms from early childhood to adolescence and adulthood.



Priority #2: Safeguarding

Safeguarding takes the highest priority within Children in Crossfire. A comprehensive set of policies combine to protect the most vulnerable, our staff, the organisation and our partners. A Survivor-Centred Approach principle underpins the Safeguarding Policy. Our policy spans child protection, bullying and harassment, protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and gender equality. A Whistleblowing Policy sets out procedures for reporting concerns internally, externally, and across our partners, with clear procedures for handling disclosures. We are committed to a zero-tolerance approach to misconduct breaching our policies, codes and procedures, with clear mechanisms in place for handling disclosures (as detailed in our policy 'Dealing with Safeguarding Violations').

At the programme level and through our partners we are committed to changing social norms around violence against women and children, educating stakeholders, strengthening systems and supporting local referral mechanisms to protect everyone, especially women and children.



Priority #3: Climate Change

The issue of our time is the impact of human activity on planet earth. The countries where Children in Crossfire work will be impacted first by changes to their climate. This change will have a negative affect on food security and livelihoods. These countries need resilient communities; informed by the realities they are facing and able to adjust their lives accordingly.

Today's children are the future leaders of these communities. Children in Crossfire believe that good education is the basis for building strong and capable communities that can adapt to the impact of climate change in the coming decades.

Organisationally, we will lead by example – publishing an annual carbon footprint with an ambition of being carbon neutral by the end of this strategic plan. We will use renewable energy wherever possible, manage how we travel to minimise carbon footprint and reduce use of plastic across all our work.

Organisational Enablers

Underpinning this strategy are a set of working principles and ambitions that combine to give us the resources, structures, expertise and reach that we need to deliver results for children.

Our **five internal enablers** are:

1. Agile and adaptive organisation

We will continue to leverage our flat management structure and strong central management framework to ensure we respond quickly to changes in context and to meet the needs of our target groups across Tanzania, Ethiopia and the island of Ireland. This is underpinned by strong programme management systems and donor relationships for transparency and accountability.

2. Expertise and capacity to add value

In alignment with the organisations resources, we will continue to recruit technical expertise across core areas of ECE, GCE, programme management, fundraising and finance. We will offer flexibility and competitive packages to attract people that will enable us to grow and improve our impact.

3. Strong Results Based Management (RBM) and Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEL) systems for data driven decision making

Underpinning our work, we will continue to evolve our information and decision-making systems at all levels of the organisation and across all country programmes. We will deliver a comprehensive programme information platform founded in a strong MEL framework and Learning Strategy, a fit for purpose fundraising CRM platform and Quickbooks for financial management across multiple legal entities.

4. Flexible funding

We will continue to ensure long-term sustainability of the organisation's finances through building on our balanced mix of unrestricted funds and donor funded restricted income. We will continue to dedicate specific resources to deliver income from trusts and foundations, strategic donors and private and corporate giving.

5. Value for money based on effectiveness, efficiency and economy

Our programme approach and financial management is driven by value for money. Our focus on Early Childhood Education delivers the best return on investment for development funding and our programme approach ensures we focus our funds to deliver the biggest impact. Management systems within the organisation, especially within finance, also have clear procedures to ensure value for money in relation to procurement, HR and fundraising.





We need supportive governments, a civil society that is able to advocate for change in their communities and donors to prioritise and invest in Early Childhood Education. Our five external enablers are:

1. State commitment to SDGs and international development initiatives

Our strategies, theories of change and programmes of work are all designed to align to international development priorities as defined in the SDG's, specifically SDG 4. In our target countries, we balance the development of models for quality ECD and compassionate GCE with government partnerships and advocacy that aim to take these models to scale.

2. Civil society space and participation

An active and open civil society space that allows for the flow of international funds, and enables networks and partnerships to collaborate and advocate for change is essential to our strategic approach. National civil society presence and capacity are pre-cursors to agile, locally led programmes that allow for effective initiatives across the humanitarian, development, and peace nexus.

3. Positive relationship with state and civil society partners

We believe that lasting impact can only be achieved through strong local partnerships in our target countries, with governments, from the local to the national, and with active local civil society partnerships. We work to build capacity of key stakeholders across government and civil society for informed decision-making, balanced with increasing public knowledge of the key issues and accountability for policy commitments.

4. Continued donor funding

Our programmes are designed to align to global development initiatives and to donor priorities. We balance the evidence from our programmes with the priorities of donors to ensure we can attract investment in results for children in our target countries.

5. Favourable political economy – government implement key policies and plans

Awareness of the political economy informs our advocacy approach and engagement with decision makers in our target countries. We monitor the context relating to our work in the places we implement to ensure our interventions are relevant and impactful. Underpinning this is a clear approach to adaptive programme management for flexible decision-making and continued effectiveness of our impact in the contexts where we work.

With these enablers in place, Children in Crossfire believe that we can deliver sustainable outcomes for children and society in our target overseas programmes and across the island of Ireland.

Contact Us

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