

# CHILDREN: THE FUTURE HOPE OF ADDIS ABABA EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE



# Messages from Government Partners



## Message from Addis Ababa City Administration Deputy Mayor Wro. Adanech Abiebie

Early childhood development (ECD) is a top priority of the Addis Ababa City Administration and my goal is to transform Addis Ababa by improving its urban environment and services to create friendlier public spaces and experiences for infants, toddlers, young

children and their caregivers and improve their access to high-quality early childhood services. To this end, 'Children: The Future Hope of Addis Ababa Early Childhood Development Initiative' aims to ensure that by 2025, all children in Addis Ababa have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and for Ethiopia.

In collaboration with our various partners, 'Children: The Future Hope of Addis Ababa Early Childhood Development Initiative' is now implementing a model for intensified support to 330,000 vulnerable families and children while striving to provide universal access to comprehensive early childhood development services to all children by 2025 through the rollout of 9 strategic initiatives namely:

1. Parent coaching, health and social services.
2. Community-run ECD centers.
3. Day care centers.
4. Expanded access to pre-primary schools.
5. Center of Excellence for ECD.
6. Learn through play (closed roads, playgrounds, and green sites).
7. Cross-sectoral governance.
8. Improved regulatory standards.
9. Measurement, learning, accountability, and data for decision-making.

In support of these nine strategic initiatives, my administration is championing efforts to:

- Promote family/child/nature integration by stimulating the creation and revitalization of urban spaces turning them into green areas or squares with accessible play spaces, through partnerships between the city administration and the private sector or civil society, devising mechanisms to ensure their preservation.
- Expand the provision of accessible play spaces, in public and private facilities, considering the specificities of early childhood, the principle of free play, and intergenerational coexistence.
- Ensure the construction of play areas within new public housing complexes, considering the specificities of early childhood.

- Improve sidewalks and public transport to ensure safety and accessibility for children and their caregivers.

By so doing; we will ensure that our children are born and remain healthy; our children's environments are nurturing, culturally appropriate, and safe; our children have the knowledge and skills for life and learning; children in vulnerable households benefit from better social protection; our children are engaged in and benefit from educational opportunities; families are confident and have the capabilities to support their children's development; and most importantly quality early childhood development services are available to support the workforce participation choice of families.

I acknowledge and appreciate the invaluable contributions of all our partners and would like to use this opportunity to assure that the Addis Ababa City Administration remains committed to ensure its successful implementation. Thank you.

**Wro. Adanech Abiebie**  
Addis Ababa City Administration Deputy Mayor

## Message from Addis Ababa City Administration Deputy Mayor Ato Jantrar Abay:

### Let's join hands for the implementation of the Addis Ababa ECD Initiative



The Addis Ababa City Administration has developed a comprehensive integrated multisectoral ECD program dubbed 'Children: The Future Hope of Addis Ababa Early Childhood Development Initiative.' In close collaboration with federal ministries, the Ministry of Health in particular, and the Addis Ababa City Administration implementing Bureaus, this ECD initiative aims to deliver a package of evidence based ECD interventions to prioritized vulnerable families and children. Our goal is to ensure the total developmental needs of children's growth and their wellbeing are met for their effective functioning in school and the future world of work.

Although we are paying priority attention to the vulnerable children and those children who are deprived of access to outdoor playgrounds, our ultimate intention is to provide universal access to quality ECD services for all children in the Addis Ababa City by 2025. In order to achieve this goal in the coming years, we have developed different initiatives out of which parent coaching, health and social support, community-run ECD centers, publicly financed daycare centers, expanded access to preschools and establishing a center of excellence



for ECD in Addis Ababa are the most important ones requiring partnership with the community and other stakeholders.

It is clear that this initiative requires leveraging different resources and strong partnership among different actors. We cannot achieve the intended goals by the government commitment alone, without the active participation of parents, caregivers, the private sectors and civic society.

Therefore, I would like to use this opportunity to call upon all residents of Addis Ababa City, parents, guardians and child caregivers, civic society, teachers, health workers, social workers, community-based organizations and

professionals of different disciplines to join us and to thank them for their invaluable contributions till date.

I would like to thank Big Win Philanthropy, Bernard van Leer Foundation and other partners for their technical and generous financial support. Also, I would like to reiterate our firm commitment to work with partners to help our children achieve their full potential.

**Ato Jantrar Abay**  
**Portfolio Deputy Mayor, Public Service Rendering Institutions Head and Addis Ababa ECD Project Steering Committee Chairperson**

## Messages from Federal Ministers



*It is time to work beyond survival and ensure the holistic development of children through coaching families to provide responsive care and nurturing environment for the social and economic development we envision and the bright future of the generation to come.*

*Early Childhood Matters!*

**H.E. Dr. Lia Tadesse, Minister of Health**



*Access to quality pre-primary education for children 4 to 6 years leads to high cognitive gains when entering school; and this cognitive gain is significant for disadvantaged children.*

**H.E. Dr. Ing. Getahun Mekuria, Minister of Education**



*Ensuring social protection in early childhood years is vital for the holistic development of children and the prosperity of the nation!*

**H.E. Dr. Ergogie Tesfaye, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs**



*Ensuring early childhood development and protecting children from all forms of violence and abuse is the foundation for the country's future and sustainable development.*

**H.E. Filsan Abdullahi, Minister of Women, Children and Youth**



# Message from ECD Goodwill Ambassador



I read that nearly half of under five children living in low-income and middle-income countries are at risk of not reaching their developmental potential. For my dear country, Ethiopia, with an aspiration to reach lower-middle-income status by 2025, this has severe health, education, and long-term consequences. I believe that this issue merits our collective attention and commitment, and it can be tackled through providing a well-designed and all-inclusive early childhood

development (ECD) services.

I am so delighted to learn that Addis Ababa City Administration has taken substantial steps towards the provision of multi-sectoral, high quality ECD services. While this is important for all children aged 0-6 years, it is even more critical for children who are born to low-income households in this rapidly urbanized city. Children from low-income households should have the right start to life to attain comparable physical and cognitive development with their peers from high-income families.

As an Amharic saying “it takes a village to raise a child” sums it, I am so happy to join the city administration and relevant sector ministries to elevate the program to top-tier agenda of each household in Addis Ababa. I consider this as a privilege, and I join all the stakeholders with strong passion and firm commitment. My support will continue post-launch of this program.

We have to provide differentiated support to vulnerable families through delivering a comprehensive integrated, multisectoral package of evidence informed ECD interventions. Also, there should be a universal coverage with the services.

Using ‘Children: The Future Hope of Addis Ababa Early Childhood Development Initiative’ as a foundation, we should start thinking about a national scale up. We should ensure access to this important service across the nation and again, I am very happy to be part of this important family and child-centered program. Thank you!

**Athlete Meseret Defar,  
ECD Goodwill Ambassador**



# The need for Early Childhood Development (ECD) in Ethiopia

**Ethiopia is undergoing rapid population growth.** Its current population of 112 million people is expected to grow to 200 million by 2050. Addis Ababa is expected to exceed 6.5 million residents by 2028—20% of whom will be children under the age of six.

Most children in Addis Ababa currently lack access to adequate nurturing, health care and nutrition, responsive protective services, and pre-primary education. In order to improve the lives of its citizens, reduce poverty, and meet national development aspirations, Ethiopia is investing in early childhood development programming.

## Why ECD?

**Investing in early childhood development has been proven to be the single most effective method for poor and vulnerable societies to break out of poverty and vulnerability cycles.**<sup>1</sup> Decades of research show that children's early experiences in life have lasting effects on their odds of good health and success in school, work, and life. When these children enter the workforce, this in turn creates a knock-on effect for countries' economies. Reaching children with integrated, multisectoral ECD interventions is crucial to ensuring their ultimate success in school and the world of work.

**ECD is a smart investment for cities and countries to make.** Improving early childhood development acts as a social and economic engine for communities and societies. Cognitively healthier children are

more productive citizens, and quality early childhood development provides a competitive advantage for national populations. Every US\$1 invested in high-quality 0-to-5 education for disadvantaged children delivers a 13% annual return on investment, significantly higher than the 7-10% return delivered by preschool programs alone.<sup>2</sup>

Given the clear economic impact, the Addis Ababa City Administration, in partnership with the Federal Government, has developed the comprehensive integrated multisectoral ECD program: "Children: The Future Hope of Addis Ababa Early Childhood Development Initiative." The program is a commitment to reach all children under seven years old with an array of comprehensive programs including universal preschool, home visits to especially vulnerable families by a new cadre of social workers, the establishment of day care centers, and expansion of public play spaces. In the initial phase, it adopts a model of intensified support to vulnerable families and children and strives to provide universal access to comprehensive ECD services to all children in Addis Ababa by 2025.

In close collaboration with federal ministries and bureaus of health and nutrition, education, labor and social affairs, and urban development, the city administration aspires to deliver an integrated ECD initiative that caters for the wide-range growth needs of children.

**Through this initiative, the city administration aims to reach vulnerable children in 330,000 low-income households (19% of the total number of households) across the city of Addis Ababa.**

## 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

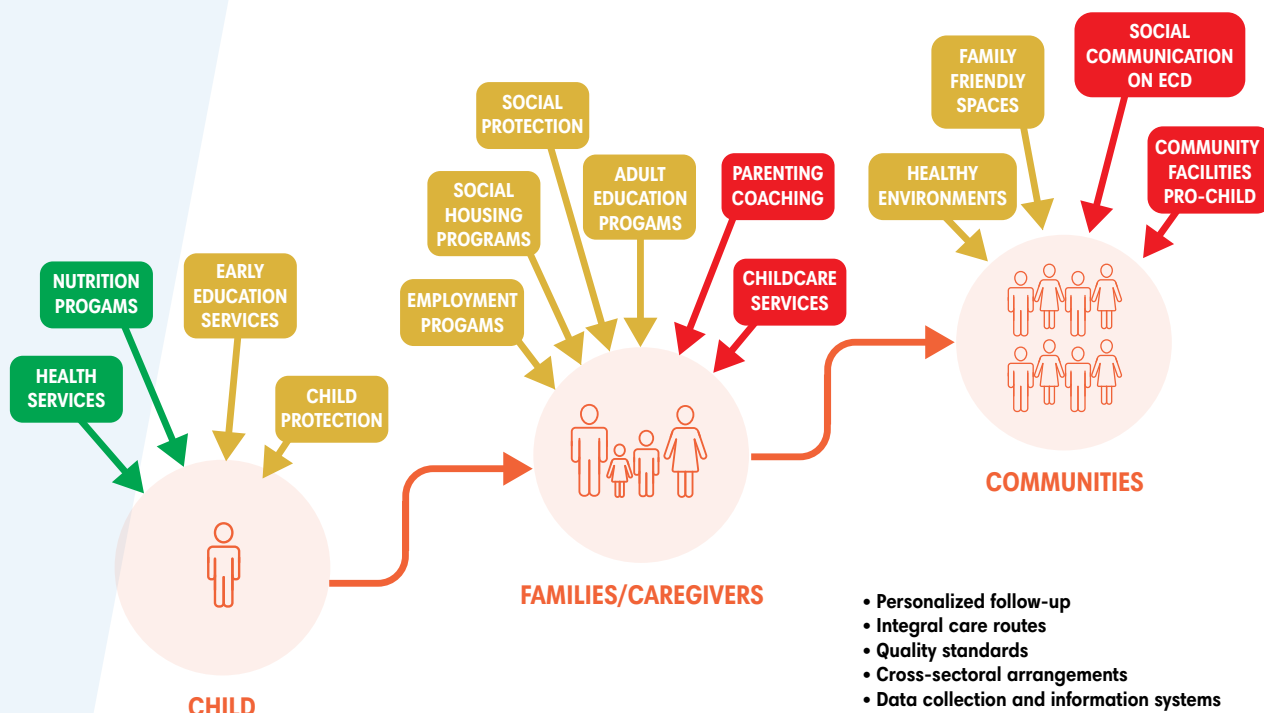
LONG TERM

<sup>1</sup> Denboba *et al.*, "Stepping up Early Childhood Development: Investing in Young Children for High Returns"; James J. Heckman, "The Heckman Equation. The Economics of Human Potential".

<sup>2</sup> James J. Heckman, "The Heckman Equation. The Economics of Human Potential" <https://heckmanequation.org/the-heckman-equation/>

# What is needed for comprehensive policies that matter to babies and toddlers?

Different supports for the same child, his or her caregivers and their community



Good Available and needs improvement Not available / poor

The red, amber, and green (RAG) color coding is based on an assessment of Addis Ababa's status/performance in comparison to each of the ECD domains identified in the continuum of services.

## Why we need to act

**While Ethiopia is still predominantly a rural country, this is set to change dramatically in the coming years.** The country's urban population is expected to triple to 42.3 million by 2037.<sup>3</sup> Ethiopia is also a youthful country, with 16% of its population under the age of five; by 2050, it will have 58 million people under the age of 18.<sup>4</sup>

**Cities can be wonderful places to grow up, but they can also pose serious challenges for healthy child development.** Lessons from the experiences of cities that have successfully taken promising ECD practices from pilot to scale highlight opportunities that shape the crucial first five years of children's lives including:

- A focus on the youngest children (from birth to age six) and their caregivers, a group often under-addressed even by child-friendly city or livable city policies.
- Working on a city-wide scale, through municipal planning mechanisms, data-driven management and visible areas of investment.
- Attention to the built environment through a focus on public space and mobility, two areas where impacts on child development are important but less well understood than they are in other areas.

<sup>3</sup> "Ethiopia Urbanization Review: Urban Institutions for a Middle-Income Ethiopia," Ethiopian Central Statistics Agency (2015).

<sup>4</sup> "Children in Ethiopia," UNICEF (2020).

# Key strategic initiatives

**Under the leadership of the Mayor of Addis Ababa and the City Cabinet, the Addis Ababa ECD initiative works in partnership with federal ministries and development partners** by using a new strategic, multisectoral approach focused on nine key strategic areas. The program builds on existing solid platforms including the Urban Health Extension Program and Family Health teams, the Urban Safety Net Program, and the expansion of public schools including pre-primary.

## 1. Implementation of parent coaching

Parents and caregivers play a critical role in facilitating early experiences for children and infants and providing **nurturing care, which is defined as care which ensures health, nutrition, responsive caregiving, safety and security, social and emotional well-being, and early learning.**<sup>5</sup> In order to improve the provision of nurturing, responsive, and stimulating interactions, parents and caregivers will receive coaching on the importance of responsive care and early childhood stimulation.

## 2. Community-run ECD centers 3. Publicly financed day care centers

The Addis Ababa City Administration aspires to establish ECD centers in urban slums and condominium sites. These centers will provide day care services and indoor and outdoor play facilities for children while also providing a space for parents to come together to discuss parental issues and receive advice and support from social workers. Community ECD centers and publicly financed day care centers will relieve the childcare burden on parents who are in need of income-earning opportunities.

Engaging the community, including faith-based organizations, women's organizations, idirs, and individuals, will increase the understanding of the importance of responsive care and early childhood stimulation. This will also help to build a sense of community in Addis Ababa.

## 4. Expanded access to preschools

Preschool care and education play a pivotal role in the development and maturation of a child's brain. Schools are an important channel for exposing children to new environments, developing healthy habits, and receiving foundational learning that will set them up for success later in their education.

This initiative aims to expand access to pre-primary education services targeting children between four and six years of age. Teachers and practitioners will receive training on new preschool education delivery standards developed by the Addis Ababa Bureau of Education and the Ministry of Education and ways to support children's school readiness and early learning.

## 5. Establishment of an ECD Center of Excellence

Under this initiative, the City Administration aims to establish a world-class Center of Excellence that will be a globally recognized leader and hub for ECD. It will provide the training and certification services, a library and repository of ECD resources, advocacy and policy advisory services, professional networking and community, and monitoring, quality assurance, and field support.

The ECD Center of Excellence will be a national and continental leader in transforming ECD in Ethiopia and across the African continent and will function as shown in the figure over the page.

## 6. Learn through play

Play is an essential strategy for learning. Play opportunities make learning fun, active, and engaging, igniting a life-long love for learning in children. Under this initiative, the City Administration aspires to use public spaces to create safe, physical experiences that contribute to children's mental and social development. The Bureau of Women and Children Affairs, Bureau of Youth and Humanitarian Activities, Sport Commission, Bureau of Transport, and the relevant communities will collaborate to implement and run this initiative, and the Green Development and Environmental Protection Commission will select 10 sites in the city for designated child play areas.

<sup>5</sup> "Building Better Brains," 2014; *Lancet ECD Series*, 2016.



# ECD Center of Excellence

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,

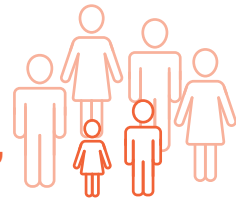
policy-makers, and early childhood educators globally to leverage existing knowledge to promote innovative early childhood pedagogies.



4

## Strengthen communities' capacity

to improve the well-being of children.



5

## Facilitate international linkages

and partnerships with other model ECD Centres 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.



## 7. Effective cross-sectoral governance

## 8. Improved regulatory system

## 9. Measurement, learning, accountability, and data for decision-making

The most effective way to address the complexity of ECD systems, which cover a large age range and address varying needs of diverse groups, is through the involvement of a wide range of actors. This initiative involves multiple federal and municipal government bureaus while operating under the leadership of the Mayor of Addis Ababa and the City Council. The ongoing success of the programming will be monitored

and evaluated through regular meetings between the program's Steering Committee, technical partners, task forces, and representatives of federal ministries.

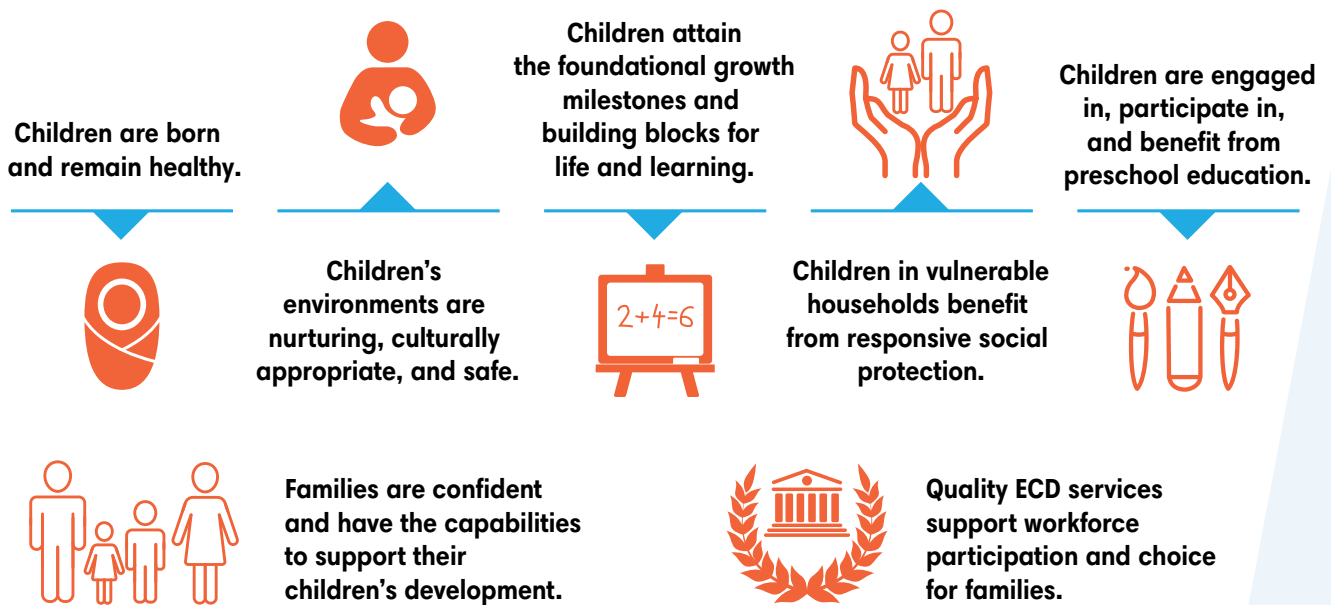
At the outset of implementing the initiative, a baseline study will be conducted to establish the status of ECD service provision in Addis Ababa and serve as a benchmark for measuring the success of the ECD initiative. Ultimately, the baseline study will help broaden the data and evidence infrastructure for the ECD subsector, inform the development of an integrated monitoring, evaluation, and learning system, and promote the use of data to inform ECD policies, program designs, and innovations at scale.

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



# The program

The vision is that by 2025, all children in Addis Ababa have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and for Ethiopia.



# How it works

This initiative is a collaboration between multiple federal and municipal government bureaus and partner organizations operating under the leadership of the Mayor of Addis Ababa and the City Council:

## City Administration & Technical Partners



### 1. The Mayor's Office



### 2. Steering Committee

led by the Deputy Mayor and comprised of deputy heads and senior members of partnership organizations



### 3. Technical Committees

comprising appointed representatives of the City Administration, representatives of federal ministries and representatives of the two partner foundations



### 4. Task Forces

established by the technical committee and comprising technical experts from the two foundations, relevant city and federal counterparts and any additional technical partners

## Federal Ministries

- Ministry of Health



- Ministry of Education



- Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs



- Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs



- Ministry of Transport



## Desired Outcomes

The “Children: The Future Hope of Addis Ababa Early Childhood Development Initiative” aims to reach 330,000 low-income households with the following services:

- Access to health and social support services at least twice a month for all children in the priority 330,000 low-income households through house-to-house visits or at health posts.
- Expand day care access by establishing 16 day care centers (six in public institutions and ten in the ten sub-cities).
- Expand access to preschool education by establishing 14 model preschools (six in public institutions and the remainder in the ten sub-cities), ensuring that 97% of all children between 5–6 years of age gain preschool education.
- Promote learn through play by facilitating the development of an outdoor playground in green sites in each of the ten sub-cities, organizing children's mass sports (after COVID-19) across the city targeting 25,000 children every quarter, and creating 30 Open Roads on Sundays for children to play in all the sub-cities in partnership with the local administrators and local communities.



# Messages from Technical Partners



**Big Win Philanthropy's** mission is to partner with driven and committed African leaders to deliver on their transformational visions for children and young people. We seek to improve lives directly and to build

demographic dividends for equitable economic growth, peace, and security.

With the launch of the "Children: The Future Hope of Addis Ababa Early Childhood Development Initiative," Big Win is proud to broaden its support of early childhood development in Ethiopia. By investing in early childhood programs, Addis Ababa will ensure that its young population will grow up healthy, strong, and capable in a welcoming urban environment. Based on data that proves Early Childhood Development is essential for future growth, this program will build a strong foundation for Ethiopia's continued development.

We're delighted to see the launch of this initiative, which is the result of multisectoral partnership and coordination. We're honored to be a partner in this program, working closely with the City of Addis Ababa, the federal government and the Bernard van Leer Foundation to benefit the lives of millions of children and families in the city.

**Dr. Kesete Admasu**  
CEO, Big Win Philanthropy



At the Bernard van Leer Foundation, we believe that all babies deserve a good start in life. This puts each individual child on the path to realizing their full potential and collectively sets a solid foundation for healthy, creative, and peaceful societies. There is robust evidence that rapid brain and physical

development, social relationships, and environments work together in the first years of life to create phenomenal advances in children's life-long abilities.

The "Children: The Future Hope of Addis Ababa Early Childhood Development Initiative" is designed to enhance Early Childhood Development outcomes for young children and parents city-wide. With a holistic approach, the initiative incorporates measurable outcomes related to children's health and development, the quality assessment of ECD services, along with coaching support for families. It also brings a new way of re-thinking the urban environment where children can thrive, facilitating the possibility of children as co-owners of public spaces and awakening a sense of community in a city like Addis that is rapidly urbanizing.

We are very honored to be partnering with the City of Addis Ababa and Big Win Philanthropy and look forward to achieving the desired outcomes for young children and their families through this pioneering initiative.

**Cecilia Vaca Jones**  
Executive Director, Bernard van Leer Foundation



