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REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI)

Activity Title:	USAID/Djibouti Early Childhood Education Activity
Reference Number:	RFI-603-21-00001
Release Date:	November 3, 2021
Response Due Date:	November 26, 2021

I. ABOUT THE RFI

This Request for Information (RFI) is issued solely for planning purposes. USAID seeks public comment/feedback in order to enhance its project design process.

This is not a Request for Proposals (RFP) or a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) and is not to be construed as a commitment by the U.S. Government to issue any solicitation or Notice of Funding Opportunity, or ultimately award a contract or assistance agreement on the basis of this RFI, or to pay for any information voluntarily submitted as a result of this request. USAID is not obligated to procure any of the services described herein, nor in no way be committed to utilize submitted information or issue a solicitation as a result of this request. The issuance of this request will not restrict the Government's ultimate approach, if any.

Responders are solely responsible for all expenses associated with responding to this RFI. It should be noted that responding to or providing comment on this RFI will not give any advantage to any organization in any subsequent procurement (if any).

USAID posts its competitive business opportunities on beta.SAM.gov or www.grants.gov. It is the potential offeror's/applicant's responsibility to monitor these sites for announcements of new opportunities.

II. ACTIVITY BACKGROUND

The U.S. Agency for International Development's Mission to Djibouti (USAID/Djibouti) is in the process of designing a new Early Childhood Education (ECE) activity, henceforth referred to as "the activity", to support Djibouti's efforts to improve inclusive, equitable access to quality ECE. The Mission anticipates that the activity will be implemented over a period of up to five years.

Djibouti is a lower-middle-income economy with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) equivalent to US$1.85 billion in 2017 and a population estimated at approximately one million, mainly

concentrated in and around Djiboutiville where an estimated 75 percent of the population lives. Despite a relatively high per capita income of US$1,862 in 2015, 30 percent of the population lives in poverty and 21 percent lives in extreme poverty according to the fourth (2018) round of household survey (EDAM4). The same survey also found that 36 percent of Djibouti's population is under 14 years old and 51 percent under 24 years old[1].

Over the past two decades, the government of Djibouti (GoDj) has placed education at the center of its development policies, with education reforms focusing on improving quality, access and relevance. While preschool enrollment in Djibouti has witnessed slight growth in recent years, the pre-primary sub-sector remains nascent, with a Gross Enrollment Ratio of 11.9% in 2019-2020. Promisingly, the GoDj has made early childhood development (ECD) and the ECE sub-sector priority focus areas[2]. In 2019, the GoDj, with technical support from UNICEF and in collaboration with other development partners, released a National Preschool Strategy for Djibouti that promotes preschool development in the country[3]. The country has also developed a National Policy for Children and an associated Strategic Plan (2022 - 2026) which includes a focus on creation of learning opportunities in pre-primary settings[4]. The new ECE activity will support these and other important GoDj policies, strategies, and initiatives that are emerging in real time. UNICEF and the World Bank are key strategic partners, as both institutions are playing an important role in providing a range of technical and financial support for ECD and ECE policy development and services.

USAID's ECE activity will support the USAID Education Policy, particularly the principle that "children and youth, particularly the most marginalized and vulnerable, have increased access to quality education that is safe, relevant, and promotes social well-being". It will promote holistic development in pre-primary, to include a broad set of early skills across physical, social-emotional, cognitive, and other domains[5]. It will support the recently-released U.S. National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality, which prioritizes promoting equitable access to education from early childhood through employment. Building on longstanding USAID collaboration with Djibouti in the education sector, the activity will complement the mission's current Djibouti Early Grade Reading Activity (DEGRA - 2019-2024). DEGRA targets all primary schools throughout Djibouti, aiming to improve the reading outcomes of more than 55,000 children in grades one through five. The new activity will seek to cultivate cross-sectoral linkages, which are particularly

[1] World Bank. Project Appraisal Document: Expanding Opportunities for Learning Project Djibouti. September 2019.
[2] This RFI uses the term "Early Childhood Development" (ECD) to refer to the full range of human development between conception and eight years of age, to include social, emotional, cognitive, physical, and motor development. "Early Childhood Education" (ECE) (or pre-primary education) refers to the one to three years of organized schooling immediately prior to primary school, typically targeting children in the 3-6 year old age group.
[3] MENFOP et UNICEF, Document de la Stratégie Nationale du Préscolaire à Djibouti, Février 2019
[4] Government of Djibouti,, Politique Nationale de l'enfance à Djibouti: Plan Stratégique National pour l'Enfance 2022-2026
[5] A useful reference is USAID. Examining What Works in Pre-Primary: a Review of the Evidence. August 2021.

important given the need for a holistic ECE approach. Areas of interest include mobilizing civil society organizations and the private sector to support ECE; and catalyzing training, employment, and leadership in the ECE sub-sector, with a particular emphasis on increasing opportunities for women.

III. PRELIMINARY ACTIVITY GOAL, OBJECTIVE, AND INTERMEDIATE RESULTS

The top level ECE activity goal is "Increased number of Djiboutian children benefiting from high-quality, equitable, and inclusive ECE services". The activity objective is to improve access, quality, capacity & effectiveness of Early Childhood Education services in Djibouti. USAID will accomplish the activity objective through three interdependent Intermediate Results(IRs):

IR1: Improve access to equitable and inclusive ECE services

IR2: Improve quality of ECE services

IR3: Improve enabling environment for Djibouti's ECD system of services

Under IRs 1 and 2, the target beneficiary group for services will be children in the ECE/pre-primary 3-6 years-old age range. Under IR3, USAID will work with the GoDj and other development partners and stakeholders to strengthen the enabling environment not only for ECE, but also for the broader ECD system in Djibouti. USAID made this decision due to the fact that there are working groups and coordinating mechanisms already in place for ECD in Djibouti, and USAID is a valuable member of this community. Thus, while the ECE activity's work on access and quality it will focus on the ECE/pre-primary years, USAID will continue to support efforts to strengthen the broader ECD enabling environment - to include policy and strategy development and system monitoring, for example - of which ECE is a sub-sector.

Under this activity, USAID/Djibouti will partner with the GoDj; other donors; the private sector; civil society organizations and community actors; and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The activity will engage at all levels (national, regional, and community), and will contribute to achieving GoDj and USAID objectives. The activity is the result of extensive internal and external stakeholder consultations, evaluations, and assessments. It builds upon the work that USAID, the GoDj, and its partners have achieved, and seeks to contribute to the current momentum for improving access to and quality of ECE and pre-primary education in Djibouti.

The total estimated funding for the activity is USD $12 million. Questions of interest to USAID are presented in Attachment I below.

Not-for profit organizations and for-profit organizations are encouraged to reply.

IV. PROGRAMMATIC PRINCIPLES

The following programmatic principles will be applied to all USAID/Djibouti activities:

1) ***Focused:*** As a small mission, USAID/Djibouti will invest deeply in a few areas which offer the best return on investment.
2) ***Cross-sectoral:*** Activities will use flexible strategic approaches guided by designing and integrating solutions to development challenges rather than single-sector tools.
3) ***Sustainable:*** Activities will seek to create robust enabling environments that increase private sector engagement and support GoDj leadership and accountability.
4) ***Transformative:*** USAID/Djibouti will mobilize and influence partners, seeking to catalyze investments that will increase overall development impact in a resource-limited environment.

V. SUBMISSION PROCESS

Comments must be submitted by email to the following email addresses: caddis@usaid.gov with a copy to Yordanos Abraham, yabraham@usaid.gov no later than 16:00 Addis Ababa time by the Response Due Date shown on the cover page of this RFI. The subject line of the email must read **"RFI-603-21-000001".** USAID is under no obligation to acknowledge receipt of the information, answer questions or provide feedback to respondents with respect to any information submitted.

VI. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

All information provided will become the property of USAID and will not be returned. USAID reserves the right to use information provided by respondents for its purposes. Responses may be used by USAID without restriction or limitation. Proprietary information must not be submitted.

Sincerely,

Alula Abera

Digitally signed by Alula Abera
DN: cn=Alula Abera, o=USAID, ou=Ethiopia, email=aabera@usaid.gov, c=US
Date: 2021.11.03 20:39:42 +03'00'

Alula Abera
Contracting/Agreement Officer

Attachments:

I. Request for Information - Public Questions

ATTACHMENT 1

USAID/Djibouti Early Childhood Education (ECE) Activity
Request for Information – Public Questions

Respondents to this RFI are asked to provide input on some or all of the questions below.

1. What strategies or approaches have been successful for lower- and middle-income countries attempting to greatly increase equitable and inclusive access to ECE services? How can USAID promote gender equity in ECE access?
2. What evidence-based approaches should USAID consider to improve the quality of ECE services in Djibouti?
3. What factors or criteria should USAID consider in determining how to best allocate its resources among public, private, and community-based ECE services given the need for large-scale system expansion?
4. What best practices or models exist for catalyzing multi-sectoral collaboration to support ECE services?
5. What approaches could USAID use to (a) measure demand for ECE services around the country and (b) gauge potential opportunities for private sector provision of ECE services?
6. What approaches or models have proven successful for cultivating private sector engagement (both national and international) in supporting ECE?
7. What approaches or models have proven successful to increase training and employment opportunities for ECE caregivers and educators? How might USAID increase educational opportunities and earning potential for women in the ECE sector?
8. What approaches have proven successful for increasing family awareness of the importance of ECE? What best practices or models exist for increasing family and community engagement in ECE teaching and learning?
9. What best practices or models exist for promoting sustainability of ECE services in resource-constrained environments? How can USAID practice adaptive management to be responsive to both challenges and opportunities that might emerge during activity implementation?
10. How can USAID foster close linkages between its new ECE activity and primary level education in Djibouti to support a continuum of learning?
11. What key learning questions should USAID prioritize to advance knowledge of ECE system development?
12. Are there other factors, recommendations, or considerations regarding ECE in Djibouti that USAID should be aware of?

Finally, please provide brief information that describes your organization's capability and interest in implementing activities to achieve the objectives of USAID/Djibouti's ECE Activity.