

# Nia Foundation/Joy Center for Autism



## 2024 Annual Report

January, 2025

Addis Ababa

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## 1. Introduction

Founded by late Zemi Yenus Nia Foundation, established in May 2002, is a nonpolitical, non-religious, and nonprofit organization based in Ethiopia. The Foundation attained legal recognition from the Authority for Civil Society Organization. Re-registered under the Ethiopian Civil Society Proclamation No. 1113/2019 with registration no 0854 as a recognized Ethiopian Local Civil Society Organization. The first Executive Director late Zemi Yenus has dedicated her life to humanitarian and developmental service, earning multiple international and national awards for her efforts. Joy Center for Autism a significant achievement of the Foundation a pioneering initiative has been providing support and services to individuals with Autism and Related Developmental Disorders and their families for the last 23 years.

Nia Foundation came to existence with the vision to see a concerned society whereby less privileged community groups enjoy the quality of life to the best of their potential despite their different abilities. Its mission is to inspire, empower and improve the holistic well-being of less privileged children, women, and youth through education, rehabilitation, training, awareness-raising, dialogue, discussion forums, advocacy, entrepreneurship, and leadership development programs. With Highly inclusion sensitive and had been promoting equal rights, opportunity, and access regardless of disability, gender, ethnicity, religion, culture, or any other identities, taking humanity as its first and last criterion.

Center-based holistic autism rehabilitation services provision for persons with ASD, is one of the key programs, through which, children have been released from the chain and confinement, having various services and growing towards change, parents had the knowledge to handle and support them, reduced marginalization and many forms of violations, etc. Many women have also been empowered economically, psychosocially, leadership-wise, and more. In recent years, the hard work of Nia Foundation. One of the bold achievements of all-times, Nia has graduated 1<sup>st</sup> round students (12), 2<sup>nd</sup> round (17) rehabilitated children and youth from the center which marks historic in Autism rehabilitation service in Ethiopia.

In 2024 the foundation has planned number of strategic initiatives aligned with the Three-year strategic document. In the program year accomplished wide range of results and outcomes. This report therefore, portray key performances and achievements, Challenges and the way forward.

## 2. Partnerships

In 2024 Nia has actively engaged with the existing partners and stakeholders, different international and local civil society organizations and government agencies which sought immense support in the overall performance and operation of our organization. Materials through financial contribution, monitoring and evaluation and developing our capacity building to mention our key partners. New partnership window of opportunities also exhibited and explored.

Actively engaged in partnership initiatives with government agencies including Ministry of Women and Social Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of National Defense Force. Subsequent Finland Embassy Addis Ababa, Ipas Ethiopia. We also have been working with partners including the Ethiopian Federation for persons with disability, Ethiopian Center for Disability and Development, The Packard Foundation, UNICEF, GIDABO Policy

Center, Share-Net International, Autism Society of Ethiopia, Network of Ethiopian women Associations, CORHA, and Orbit Technology Solutions, others on different project and initiatives.

To strengthen the partnership between Autism Society of Ethiopia, Network of Intellectual and Developmental Disability Ethiopia we have extended the support of Bonda clothes to additional 13 organizations working on Autism, Down Syndrome and Intellectual Disability and related developmental disorders.



### 3. Key Performance Summary

No	Initiatives	Annual targets	Description Key achievements during the reporting period	Performance %
1	<b>Teachers and Therapist</b>	Continuing Holistic rehabilitation service through 44 trained personnel	We continued Community and Home-Based Service hired teachers and therapists full term employees and 10 additionally hired assistants.	High 80%
2	<b>Holistic Rehabilitation for Children with Autism</b> (100 Children with Autism received HARP, 100 Children with Autism received skill training and therapy Rehabilitation service, (100 %))			
	2.1. Sensory Skill	We have planned to give sensory skill training for 100 children	100 children with Autism received sensory skill training,	100 %
	2.2. Self Help Skill	We have planned to give self-help skill training for 100 children	100 children with Autism received Self-help skill training,	100 %
	2.3. Social Skill	We have planned to give social skill	100 children with Autism received social skill training	100 %

		training for 100 children		
	2.4. Academic skills	We have planned to give Academic skill for 100 children	100 children with Autism received academic skill training sessions	100 %
	2.5. Behavior Modification Therapy	We have planned to give BMT for 100 children	100 children with Autism got Behavioral Modification therapy Sessions	100 %
	2.6. Nutritional Support	We have planned to give Nutritional support for 100 children	100 children received Nutritional support	100 %
3	<b>Family Empowerment</b> (100 family supported through psychosocial and 10 financial (IGA).			
	3.1. IGA Financial Support to Mothers	10 low-income mothers selected and started IGA scheme	10 low-income parents have been selected through initial assessment, trained and 50 ETB startup seed money disbursed and supportive supervision on the performance of the implementation have been conducted.	100%
	3.2. Conduct Monthly Parents Meeting refreshments	Conduct monthly meeting for family every first Saturday of the month	We conduct monthly meeting every first Saturday of the months expect the day was the national holyday	100%
4	<b>Service Expansion of CBHS</b>			
	4.1. Joy Center of Excellence for Autism Constructing Construction Project	Construction Project: - Completion of 1 <sup>st</sup> Phase of the project.	Constructing First and Second Phase of the Autism Center of Excellence	Very high
	4.2. Second Branch Expansion	Second Branch Expansion	- Not Accomplished	
5	<b>Community and Home-Based Autism Care Program-</b> (project prepared)			
	5.1. Launching workshop		- Under program Preparation	-
	5.2. Training for on Home Based Manual for Teachers and families	Train 50 teacher and families	- Not Accomplished	-

6	<b>Autism Spectrum Disorder Awareness Raising and Community Mobilization (WAAD).</b>			
6.1	Annual WAAD Celebration	1	WAAD Celebration was conducted on April 6 <sup>th</sup> at Center of Excellence Site, 600 participants took part on the celebration.	100 %
6.2	National Symposium on Autism Spectrum Disorder	1	National Symposium Conducted on April 2 <sup>nd</sup> at EPHI 300 participants were part of the workshop.	(100%)
6.3	Conduct Autism Awareness Campaign in Selected Regional Cities	4 Regions	Regional Autism Awareness campaigns were conducted in 4 regions including at Tigray Mekelle, Dire Dawa, South Ethiopia- Wolayta Sodo, and Central Ethiopia Butajira)	(100%)
7	<b>Procurement of Safety Transportation for children with Autism</b>			
7.1	Purchase of Transport vehicle,	Procurement of 1 Minibus Vehicle	We have finalized the procurement process and the vehicle put into service.	100 %
8	Quarterly Review Meetings & Experience Sharing	4 Quarterly review meeting	We have conducted 4 quarterly review meetings	100 %

## 4. Performance Report

### 4.1. Institutional Leadership and Management

**A. BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S:** The relationship with the Board of Directors and the engagement of members of board of directors is significant in decision making roles. In this fiscal year the Board held 4 regular meetings out of the expected four in every quarter. As we are facing more challenges facing in the construction project and overall operations are widening at Nia Foundation, it is evident that the engagement and support of board of directors should be more strengthened and improved.

**B. THE SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM:** (SMT)- Nia Foundation embarked several leadership and management initiatives continued in 2024 to improve the overall executions of plans and operations of the organization. Institutionalization, team work and leadership and setting the priority at senior management level has brought several improvements in the organizational capacity. SMT meets in regular sessions every 15 days and based on the priorities put efforts in follow ups on the implementation of initiatives in the annual plan. The strong team spirit helped the organization in enhancing the execution capacity of projects and performance of the organization.

**C. THE ADVISORY TEAMS:** Four Advisory teams were established and engaged in supporting management team on program implementation, Joy Center of Excellence Construction Project and overall operations of the organization. The role of these advisory teams has wide range of positive impact that helped the improvement of the overall performance of Nia last year and 4 advisory meetings have been held.

The Dream team (advisory on program and organizational operations) played significant role in the overall operations and engaged with different resource mobilization and financial mobilization mechanism. The Construction Advisory team on the other hand put significant effort in support, consultation, engaged in problem solving on the construction project implementation. Nia Foundation is grateful for the support and the role they played. The clinical Advisory team in under establishment will have strong engagement on the improvement of Education Wing- Holistic Rehabilitation program of which the organization Nia Foundation believes needs major redesigning and restructuring.

**D. THE STAFF:** The relationship with the Nia staff also improving immensely, we have conducted four staff meetings in 2024 on quarterly basis. The overall performance of the organization was evaluated on the sessions and the participation & engagement of the staff solidified.

### 4.2. Holistic Autism Rehabilitation and Care

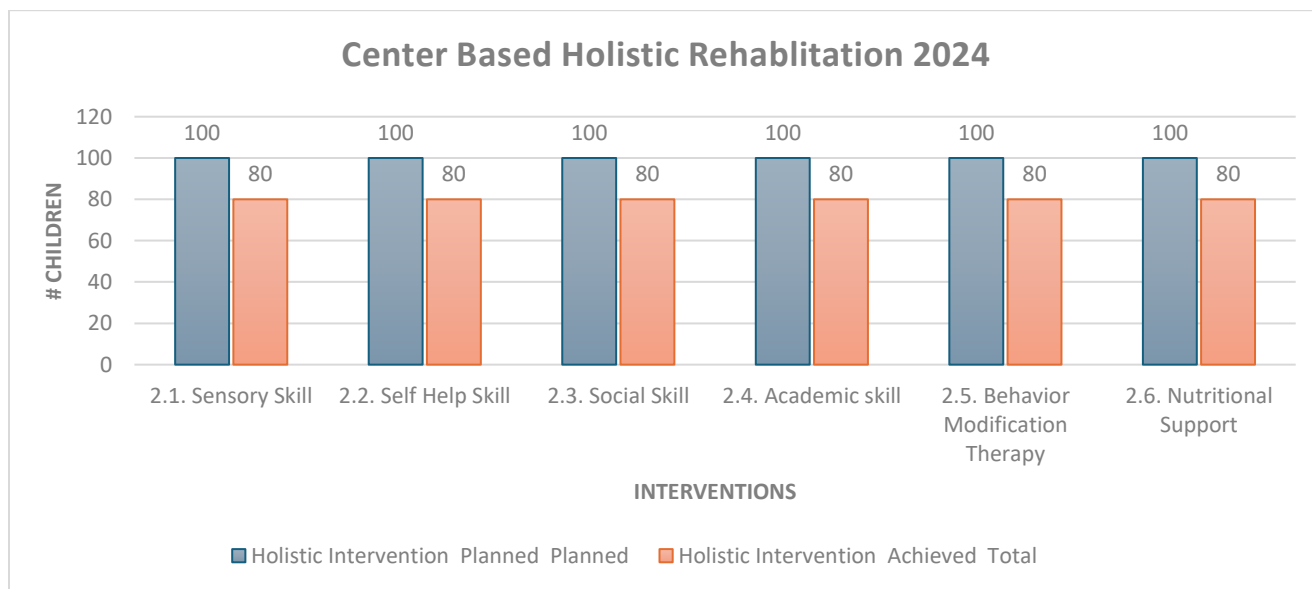
As it is known, Autism is a lifelong neuro-developmental disorder, affecting social interaction, behavior, nervous system, and other aspects of an individual. As its degree or level varies, an intervention requirement to be made for someone varies and depends on the individual with Autism. To meet with these conditions and provide the service that works best to each individual is found to be vital when we discuss improving service provision. By this, we mean that there is a probability of varying nature/character of the case from person to person, which desires respective intervention approaches, as it is just a spectrum disorder. The following comprehensive procedures are part of our program.

**Assessment:** - As children are received, they will be taken to the assessment room to identify their unique characteristics. They start by calling the child’s name. They make materials/bell sounds and they will check whether they can look towards the direction or not. They will also check children’s eye contact. Here, or in this room, more than this detail is done. Then, the child is taken to the parent, and Executive director and a common discussion will be made. This time, families are asked different questions including Nutrition, behavior, concerning the child’s self-help issues, the way they are handling their child, and much more. This is when the child is Autistic, unless they will be referred to the concerned center in 2024, we have made assessment of 187 children at the Joy Center.

**Bringing children into Holistic Rehabilitation:** After the above processes, children are waiting at home until the time they are called to start center-based rehabilitation. Their parents or siblings can take training in different topics and can have counseling services coming to the office or through the telephone to help their children at home. Children with double special needs are received in less time or given priority when they have more special cases like they are twins, or single parents/Mamas, or if the parents have special needs cases and related issues. If the case is normal, the child will wait until we get accommodation and will start.

**When Children start rehabilitation:** the child’s full information (taken during the assessment process) will be provided to the teacher. The teacher will make a lesson plan to address those points found in the diagnosis and continue to provide services (holistic rehabilitation services and care which include Sensory Skill, Self Help Skill, Social Skills, Academic Skills, Behavioral Modification Skills and Nutritional Support).

This will be evaluated every quarter, in order to monitor whether the intervention strategy is working or not. Based on the results of the evaluation, the second quarter plan of intervention is revised.



*Graph: Center Based Rehabilitation and Care Support*

The ways in which people with autism learn, think and problem-solve can range from highly skilled to severely challenged. Some people with ASD may require significant support in their daily lives, while others may need less support and, in some cases, live entirely independently. That is why at Joy center

the intervention is custom-made to address each child or adult specific needs. Students' treatment and intervention plan include behavioral interventions, occupational therapies, sensory integration therapy, and speech therapy. In 2024 the center is mainly engaged in delivering key therapies and additional training for its students given to 100 out of planned 100. In the fiscal year 70 male and 30 female children and youth with Autism were benefited from these trainings and therapy support. The Therapies includes,

### **Behavioral Therapy**

It is well known that children/ youth with in the spectrum have behavior/interest that seems unusual. Teachers focus on why the behavior happens (the purpose) by carefully evaluating what happens before and after a certain behavior occurs. Then help the student develop a desired behavior that replaces the undesired behaviors that restricts them from developing and learning essential skills. The progress of each student is tracked through a specific, measurable short-term and yearly goal. Some of the behaviors the center has been working on include repetitive behaviors such as flapping hands, rocking body, or spinning self in circles but priorities are given to problematic behaviors like aggression, self-injury, running away and or screaming/crying.

### **Speech Therapy**

With the use of the ABOGEDA Phonetics the center strives to help children/youth in the center improve their verbal, non-verbal and social communications skills. Here they are trained to develop both expressive and receptive languages. Speech therapy need of students may vary from non-verbal, echolalia or being able to talk but not maintain a full conversation, understanding facial expression and body language. Students are given different exercises to strengthen muscles in the mouth Jaw and neck like playing with balloon and Whistle blowing. Students are guided by teachers to make clear sounds, to responding to questions, to modulating/ regulating tone of their voice, to slow down their speech when stuttering and so on.

### **Occupational therapy**

With this type of therapy center works with students with a goal to improve their everyday skills which allows them to become more independent. For our students with autism, together with parents/caregivers the programs focus on identification of any impediments that prevent them from partaking in any typical day-to-day activities like independent dressing, eating, grooming, using the potty/ bathroom and self-care. After identification each students OT goal is set to track progress.

Another integral part of OT is fine motor skills and gross motor skills (coordination, strengthening and control). Fine motor skills are needed for everyday tasks like cutting with scissors, tying shoes, fastening buttons and zippers, coloring, and holding a pencil. Motor skills have different sub areas below are pictures of students working on them:

### **Sensory integration therapy**

Sensory integration therapy is used to help our children and youth at the center to learn to use all their senses together (touch, smell, taste, sight and hearing). The hyper/hypo reactivity to sensory input can interfere with ordinary daily activities thus coupled with occupational therapies this therapy plays another essential role in the rehabilitation service provided at Joy center. The center uses Sensory bin of different

grain (Teff, black seed, Fenugreek, soy beans etc), sensory toys (Fiddle Fidget toys), stress balls of different sizes and textures, playdoh, physical massage therapy for students etc.

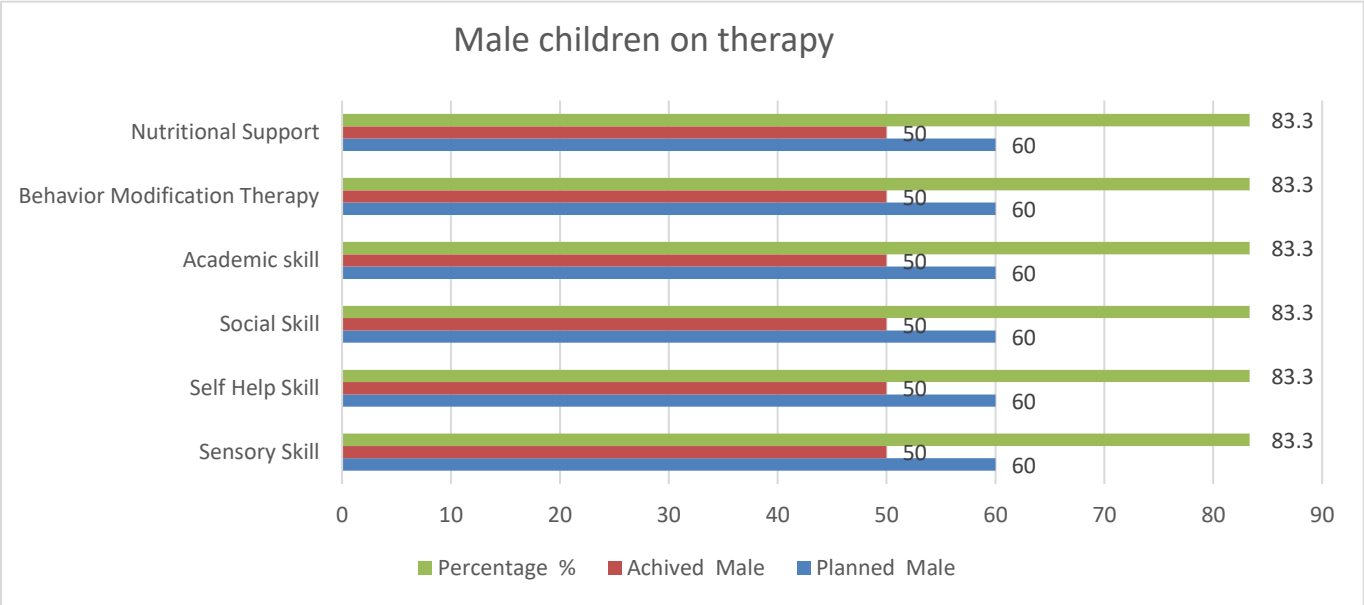
**Music Therapy**

Through Music therapy students are given musical activities such as singing, playing instruments and listening to music. These activities encourage communication and social skills like making eye contact, sharing attention and taking turns. The therapy is delivered as a group

Each class mentioned below has therapy schedules that change every 1/2 hour that allows students to receive the different types of therapy sessions with different activity throughout the day.

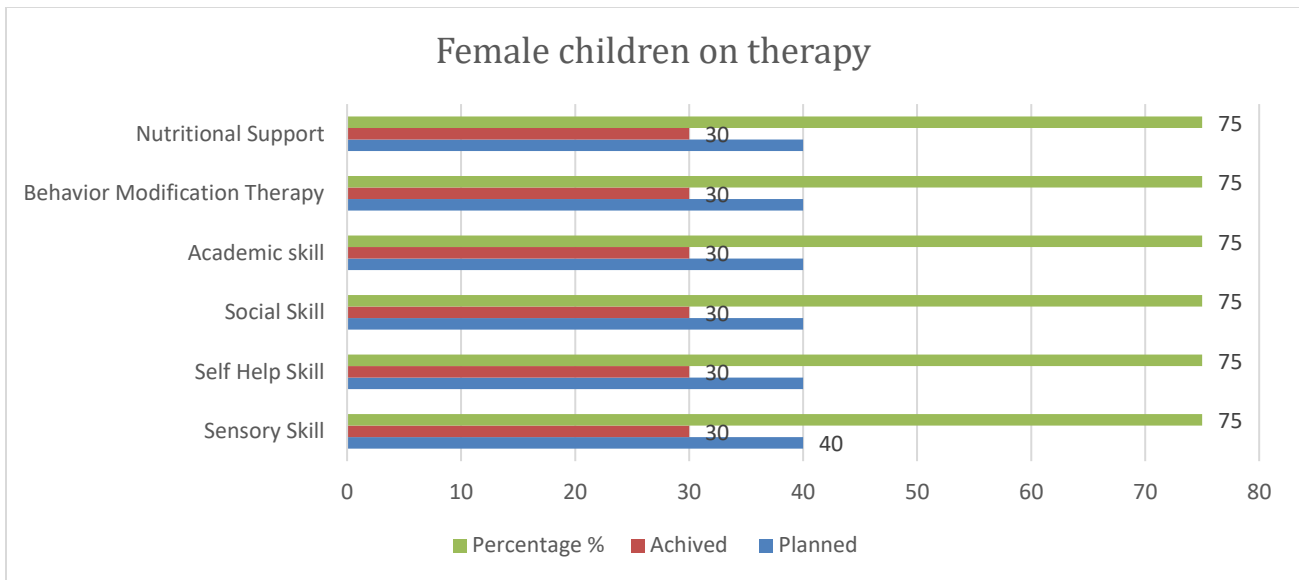


Currently total of 100 children, 60 male and 40 are female enrolled in our center.



Over all Achievements of holistic rehabilitation program,

- Assessment of children with developmental disorders or special needs as per the developed assessment tools promoted and in the last realized.
- Children with autism who are enrolled at the Joy center rehabilitated to be able to take part in day-to-day engagements within their community.
- Children at the center developed the necessary fine and gross motor skills to coordinate and use their sensory organs
- Children at the center developed and improve their physical, social and communication skills,
- Children at the center developed the necessary skills to help and take care of themselves,
- The health and nutritional status of children at the center improved and maintained,
- The psychosocial status and their engagement in the community of parents of children with autism who are enrolled at the Joy center improved.



### 4.3. Family Group Support and Economic Empowerment

#### 4.3.1. IGA Financial Support to low-income Mothers

Nia Foundation has launched a project titled "Economic and Psychological Enhancement for Marginalized Women with Children and Youth with Autism and Related Developmental Disabilities," which received a generous donation from the Finland Embassy in Ethiopia in July 2023. Since its inception in July 2023, the foundation has been working on this initiative in Addis Ababa, in partnership with the Finland Embassy Addis Ababa, the



*Beneficiary Mother with her young child with Autism on Shop Business,*



Ethiopian government, and various local and regional agencies, including the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs, Ministry of Education, Addis Ababa City Administration Bureau of Education, and Lideta sub-city Woreda 04 Industry and Entrepreneur Office.

The project, aligns with our ongoing efforts to enhance the quality of rehabilitation services for our target groups, which includes the quality and ongoing support and empowerment of mothers of children, adolescents, and youth with autism. The objective of this project, generously funded by the Finland Embassy Addis Ababa Ethiopia, is to create job opportunities and empower the mothers of youth who have graduated from the Joy Center

for Autism, to continue their journey with their children. Additionally, the project aimed to expand the center's capacity to serve those on the waiting list for our Center Based Holistic Service (CBHS).

To accomplish the project goal and objectives, we utilized the following strategies: -The Woman capacity Building: - we did women capacity building to support Mothers of children and Youth with autism and related developmental disabilities, parents and siblings to generate their family incomes and the importance of the family collaboration on the effectiveness of the business. Through these strategies, we were supported marginalized Women with Children and Youth with Autism and Related Developmental Disabilities, children with Autism and their siblings and support the economic improvement of the family. The others strategy was working in coloration with Lideta sub-City Woreda 04 industry and Entrepreneur Office to train and work with us during Monitoring and Evaluation activities. This strategy was helped in bringing the stakeholders and right based organizations as well as the woreda office into a common platform convenes forums that bring together diverse stakeholders to project accomplishments.



*Beneficiary mother engaged on Homemade Food and delivery*

During the reporting period, our major accomplishments included launching of the projects with the partners and stakeholders, provided management and entrepreneurship training for mothers of children with autism and developmental disorders, conducted market studies and developed business plans, building capacity among project beneficiaries, and engaging in discussions about their interests and the conditions for receiving IGA disbursements.



*MOU signed between Nia, the Beneficiary and Woreda 5 office*

We have screened and selected target groups and project beneficiaries, established Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with selected beneficiaries, transferred seed money (initial capital for starting income-generating activities) to beneficiaries, mothers through Nia, and continued monitoring and evaluation of project progress. As a result of our efforts, we trained and provided 10 more vulnerable mothers of children and youth with autism with the start-up capital needed for their income-generating activities. These activities were completed before the end of the last July, coinciding with the

conclusion of the project. However, we recognize that monitoring and evaluation of project progress are crucial for assessing the project's success and for extracting valuable lessons. Therefore, we have committed to ongoing monitoring and evaluation.



*Onsite supervision on Bussiness Performance*

#### **4.3.2. Family Support and Training**

We have also worked closely with the mothers and sibling of children with autism to support them in psychological to create good parenting and for betterment of children with autism. During every Monthly discussion through coaching and group discussions, group leaders teach a curriculum of common communication and behavioral challenges and work with you to model effective parenting strategies.



Parents attending Monthly Family Support Sessions

Several issues and agendas concerning autism and family support were selected and put to dialogue and discussion. In each monthly joint session including best experience sharing of parents, sexual and reproductive health challenges, nutrition support for children with Autism, first aid medical care and support to children with Autism etc.

Professionals and resource persons from different organizations trained parents on Sexual and reproductive health challenges and dealing with adolescent and youth with Autism and First Aid help for children with Autism.

#### 4.3.3. Support and Visitation of Organizations to Nia Foundation

**A. Visit from the Ministry of National Defense:** On the occasion of Mother's Day our battlefield heroes, senior officers and members of the Armed Forces of the Armed Forces, attended the Joy Center for Autism "and the deep joy we all felt today is unparalleled." They thanked Nia Foundation. Her Excellency Mrs. Martha Luigi, Minister of State for Finance and Management Sector of the Ministry of Defense of the Federal Ministry of Defense, senior officers and members of the army attended the Nia Foundation Joy Autism Centre on the occasion of Mother's Day and Easter and enjoyed a bright day with Nia Foundation staff and autistic children to express their solidarity with autistic children and families. The Minister of State for Defense Finance Management, Mrs. Martha Luigi, who handed over the support, recalled that our army dedicates its life to safeguarding the peace and sovereignty of the country and is also heroic defense forces are honored to participate in social and humanitarian support activities, apart from the sacrifices their makes for their motherland and the people of Ethiopia to his precious life, an army at the forefront of social activism. Mrs. Martha Luigi assured that the army will also play its part in helping the center in the future.





**B. Enat Bank Officials Visit and Support:** Enat Bank Corporate Services Vice President Mrs. Genet Hagos, Director and employees of Enat Bank Department held a vibrant holiday program with autistic children and their parents at the Nia Foundation Joy Center for Autism on the occasion of the Easter celebration on the motto of the day "**Who Beyond Mother**", "**Mothers of Autistic Children: Our Heroes of All Time**" at the Nia Foundation, Joy center for Autism and in kind and Cash donations to Mothers of children with Autism.

On behalf of the Nia Foundation and families the Executive Director of Nia Foundation Mrs. Elleni Damtew expressed at most gratitude to Enat bank for the support of the band and point out the struggles of the mothers of the children with ASD. In her speech she mentioned “many children, mothers and families who are still facing many challenges, crying while locked up at home in challenging situations, to bring them out of the darkness so that they can see the light we are still working on the same vision started and initiated by Zemi” She called for the continued support of the Enat Bank in the same initiative in the future. She extended her appreciation and thanks to all Enat Bank Management and Staff. The food items and other materials were distributed to parents of the center in need.



Fig: during Enat Bank donations to parents of the Children with Autism

## 5. Autism Awareness and Community Mobilization (World Autism Awareness and Acceptance Month) WAAD 2025.

### 5.1. The press Release:

A successful joint press release with members organizations of Network of Intellectual and Developmental Disability Ethiopia was made on March 28, 2024, at Skylight Hotel. Over 50 participants from Board members, staff, teachers/ therapists were participated on the national press release event and various media representatives took part and did media coverage the press release. Sister organizations including Dibora Foundation, Nehemiah Autism Center, Fikir Ethiopia National Intellectual Disability Association, and others like minded organizations come together in one sprit and make a commitment to the work for the betterment and wellbeing of children with Autism, Down Syndrome and other related intellectual Disabilities.

The key message on the joint press release was stressed on strengthening systems to collaborate efforts of the organizations, schools, and governmental bodies that work on autism, Down syndrome and other

intellectual disabilities in Ethiopia. The session brought spring board of wide range of experiences, capacity, and accessibility frameworks of organizations engaged in disabilities to bring a high impact and contribute for creating a favorable environment to fetch about changes. In addition, since last year we are also working in Ethiopia to establish one strong association “**Ethiopian Autism Society**” that can represent all the stakeholders in the sector and bring organizations working on Autism and related developmental disabilities together, to influence policy/advocacy, increase community Awareness towards Autism, and brighten the future of youth and children with Autism.

It is also intended to create a collaborative network to advocate, promote, and claim demands, services in a right-based way, protection, and more that are expected from the government. The holistic rehabilitation services we have at a national level are so low. In order to meet this need, multiplying/extending organizations, strengthening newly coming, and duplicating best experiences and findings towards remote communities are really imperative and what Nia Foundation is working on.

## 5.2. National Level Policy Dialogue

Over 200 participants participated in half day of national level policy dialogue on Autism and Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) held on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024 at Ethiopia Public Health Institute (EPHI) conference hall, Addis Ababa Ethiopia. Board members, staff and teachers from Nia Foundation/Joy Center for Autism, caregivers, and families of children with Autism, a caregiver of a child enrolled in Joy Center for Autism, Representatives from stakeholder government agencies Sub City and Woreda Offices working on Health, Education and Women & Social affairs, civil society organizations(CSO) ,Organizations working on social and community development including experts and leadership of Exodus Nation Community Organization were part of the policy dialogues session. IPA Ethiopia also was part of the policy dialogue session and discussions was made on theme of Abortion Law and practice in Ethiopia, challenges and prospects. Partners including the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Women and Social Affairs and Ministry of Education as well as David and Lucile Packard Foundation also have taken part in the policy dialogue workshop. Strong policy level recommendations were identified on the proceeding of the policy dialogue workshop and communicated to relevant government agencies.

## 5.3. World Autism Awareness Day Celebration Event (WAAD)

WAAD was colorfully celebrated at Joy Center of Excellence Project Site, CMC on April 6<sup>th</sup> 2024. One of the main purposes of celebrating this day is to raise awareness on ASD through different initiatives and reach out to the general public through different strategies including media engagement, public events, community mobilizations, and others. It is also evident that resource mobilization is another objective embedded in WAAD initiatives. Accordingly, over 600 people participated in the celebration event. Members of the Board of Directors, Staff, Families and their children, volunteers, teachers, and therapists from Fikir Ethiopian, Bethe Mihret have participated.

Representatives from key government agencies and stakeholder also took part in celebrating the event. Partners supporting Nia Foundation with Center of Excellence project including JJcon Construction, Bamacon Construction, Atcon Architectural Engineering, Zemi’s Friends Group, and Ethio Telecom, also have taken part in the celebrations.

Key message was delivered by different speakers on the event about Autism Spectrum Disorder, On therapies and family support group, targeted awareness creation activities, such as raising some myths about Autism among the community, the rights to education, and the need enhancing health and wellbeing of Autistic children in Ethiopia was stressed.

As part of showcasing the ability and empowerment of children and youth with Autism, Performance and talent shows performed by youth and children with Autism and multiple entertaining and fundraising activities were also included in the events. The events aimed to create awareness of Autism among the society and fundraising for Joy Center of Excellence Construction.

#### **5.4. Media Engagement and Involvement**

As the technology is growing using media for an autism center can be beneficial for communication, skill development, social interaction and sharing experience. Consider incorporating visual aids, social stories, videos, and interactive apps to create engaging and personalized learning experiences for individuals with autism. We have done a various activity to boost social media engagements to address the needs of the community and to explore our service. The main action that has been on progress for the since last year are that opening different social media plat forms and updating the organizations appearance on the social medias. The Activities done so far shows that we need more ways to address about the center and autism though social medias.

In order to reach the community more than before, we are working with highly professional teams of Volunteers (Tech-Teka Solution). It's important to tailor the media to each person's needs and preferences, while also ensuring a balanced approach that includes in-person interactions and sensory-friendly environments. In addition to our social media platforms, we have been engaged with main conventional medias in Ethiopia covering our main events including FBC, EBC, EBS, Ahadu and Regional level Mainstream medias. Apart from the news coverage one to one interview sessions were also conducted in the radio and television programs.

#### **5.5. Regional Level Engagements and Awareness Creation**

One of the key achievements at Nia Foundation in 2024 was the plan to extend Autism awareness creation and community involvement initiatives to the regions. Accordingly, regional level Autism awareness creation and community involvement was in four regional states of Ethiopia namely Tigray, Dire Dawa City Administration, Central Ethiopia Regional State, and South Ethiopia Regional State.

The major goal of this program was to organize national World Autism Awareness Months event to raise awareness towards Autism and related developmental disabilities among the public and policy-makers regarding issues related to the children/youth with Autism. The key activities performed in this national campaign include, encourage emerging Autism Center in regional levels, counselling of families of children with Autism and related developmental disabilities, assessment and diagnosis of children with Autism to support and known burdens of the Autism and related disabilities at the areas, open and link satellite office and branch at regional level if the possible ground is prepared, to mobilize funds and additional resource for ongoing operations at Nia Foundation Joy Center for Autism. In addition, the campaign created an opportunity to increase the number of subscriptions for short code 9616 and Tele Birr to support of Joy Center of Excellence project.

Visits also made to the emerging Autism Care and Rehabilitation centers at *Butajira, Wolayta Soddo, Mekele and Dire Dawa* and encouraged all working on this noble cause to support people in need and their families at the regional level with several challenges they are facing. Experience sharing sessions were conducted in each campaign with the centers.

**The regional level Autism awareness workshops:** - Autism awareness raising workshops were conducted in all four regions included in the campaign to support, advocacy and awareness raising for families of children with autism and related developmental disabilities, their siblings, implementers, policy makers, key stakeholders (health, education, women, children and social affairs, city administration bureau and others) and the youth to uncover the necessary advocacy issues around Autism and related developmental Disabilities, and birth defect.

This strategy helped in bringing the stakeholders, individual and organizations that working with Autism and Related developmental disorders as well as the parents and siblings' children in this umbrella into a common platform and created an opportunity to establish a family support forum that brought together diverse stakeholders representing senior levels of government, civil society organizations, academia, the religious community and the media. The workshops also were served as a spring board to broaden experience sharing and discussion of challenges on numerous scenarios, different issues in autism and related developmental disorders access and service in regions.

Over 200 partakers were participated in half day of workshop held April 13<sup>th</sup> at Sabriya Hotel and Resort Dire Dawa Administration. Participants from regional government agencies and NGOs were also participated. Bureaus' education, Health, Women, children and Social Affairs Bureau, Autism Centers, CSO working with Autisms and other developmental Disabilities i.e Dire Dawa le Tarik autism Center and CSF Dire Dawa branch and Parents of Children with Autism and related developmental disorders were also participated. In similar manner workshop was conducted on May 2024 at Wolayta Sodo Southern Ethiopia, in collaboration with Lebam Autism Center and over 100 participants from different offices were attended benefited from the Awareness creation and raising initiative.

**Awareness creation and Advocacy Foot Walk:** Over 200 participants were participated in half day awareness creation and advocacy foot walk at Dire Dawa city Administration which was started from Legehar Old railway station to Legare. In this foot walk protest family of children with Autism and developmental disorders, their siblings, Residences of Dire Dawa Administration, Governmental bodies from administration, Representatives of Federal Ministry of Health, Nia Foundation Joy Center for Autism Center Management members and professionals, Dire Dawa Letarik Autism Center and CSF Dire Dawa Branch Managers and staffs were participated. Next to this we have also did Awareness raising and advocacy grand foot walk in Collaboration with Libam Autism center and Federal Ministry of Health at Wolaita Sodo Avenue and different governmental officials take part in the program and express their commitment to work with Autism.

**Assessments, Diagnosis and Parents Counseling:** One of the key challenges in regions on identifying the condition of children with neuro developmental disorders was also address as part of this regional campaign initiative. Following the Memorandum of understating signed between Butajira City Administration Mayor Office, Nia Foundation, multiple engagements with different stakeholders, individuals, city administration, Central regional state health Bureau, East Gurage Zonal Health

department and with others to create safe learning and rehabilitation environment to children with Autism and related developmental disorders.



During the assessment, we were able to identify that at town of *Butajira* having over 90,000 residents and with clear burden of the prevalence of huge number of children and youth Autism and related developmental disability as well as the existence of numbers of private and public schools, the town has no Autism Rehabilitation and Care Center or comprehensive inclusive schools to enroll children with Autism and other related developmental disorders. As it was the case in most scenarios' majority of families with children with developmental disabilities are economical vulnerable and have limited capacity to cover medical, schooling fee, and other basic needs of the children. The assessment and comprehensive diagnosis were conducted to all 70 children and counselling sessions were conducted with their parents. Similarly, assessment to 25 children at Wolayta Soddo and 67 children at Dire Dawa was conducted by Nia Foundation professionals.

**Out Reach and Community involvement on Autism Awareness:** Community involvement and engagement was also one of the key objectives in the regional Autism Awareness campaign initiative. Hundreds of people from different spectrum of the community were participated on the “Walk for Autism Children” organized in collaborated with the mayor office CSF and Letaric Autism Center. Which covered major roads of Dire Dawa accompanied by March Band, and joined by Nia Foundation Board

Members and Staff Regional Office Heads, Families of children with Autism, students, religious leaders and community leaders.



Figure Community Awareness Creation and workshop with stakeholders at Dire Dawa Administration

Similarly, “Walk for Autism Children” was also held at Wolayta, people every corner of life joined the marching accompanied by Regional March Band. Covered major roads at Wolayta Soddo, Awareness raising messages were aired to the public with speakers, joined by Nia Foundation Board Members and Staff Regional Office Heads, Families of children with Autism, students, religious leaders and community leaders.



Figure during Grand Foot Walk and awareness creation on Autism and Inclusion of Person with disabilities in Workforce at Wolayta Soddo, Southern Ethiopia.

**National Rehabilitation Conference and Exhibition at Mekele:** After successful partners plan alignment with Ministry of health, Nia Foundation take part at National AT Conference and exhibition Mekele. Autism Awareness was made one of the agendas on the National AT Conference presentation was made on the conference by Mengistu Wolde, Program Director of Nia Foundation. Nia Foundation extended support of clothes to families in need at Mekele and Mrs. Elleni Dامتew delivered donation of Bonda cloths to State Minister of Health Dr. Dereje Douguma to Tigray Regional Health Office on the Conference. The engagement at Mekele also extended to visit to Egbet Intellectual Disability Association Tigray discussions and experience sharing were with the families and executives of the association. Nia was also represented and participated on National Exhibition on rehabilitation organized at Hawelty,

Mekele which created an opportunity showcase the journey of Nia Foundation, its achievements and program areas and alike to audiences represented from the health sector all over the nation.



Figure during Panel Discussion with Stakeholders in Disabilities and Our Executive Directors' Interview regional with regional Medas.

## 5.6. Outcomes of the regional engagements and Autism Awareness Campaign

- Knowledge on impacts of Autism and other related developmental disabilities in Family were presented well.
- Hundreds of children with Autism and related developmental disabilities were assessed identified the neurodevelopmental disorder conditions they are with. Similarly, counseling sessions were conducted to the parents which instigated hope, and availed basic information on the support of the child in special need.
- Empowerments and psychological support of families and siblings of children with Autism and related developmental disabilities were held according with our plan.
- Technical support and experience sharing sessions created an important opportunity to learn from the strength and challenges,
- Material support to all families in need played an important role in encouraging struggling families and mothers with Autistic child.
- Discussion with stake holders and regional government agencies ignited partnership and paved a way to collaboration and future cooperation accompanied by MOU signed with Nia and all regional counter parts.

## 5.7. Volunteer engagement and Internship Service

The volunteer and internship In this year, different organizations, individuals, and graduating classes of different governmental and non-governmental Universities and colleges students (for example, graduating class students from Addis Ababa University, Saint Mary University College, and primary and

secondary schools) came for internship, volunteering, and for research in the reporting time. In addition to these college and Nia Foundation/Joy Center for Autism, Annual Report 2024, 36 University students governmental and private school students visited our center and made their day with our precious children. As they took time in our center, they visited and got explanations with reference to the general goal and achievements of our organization, they got back with the image and burden to their community. They are also encouraged to share what they have with their friends and others. This has its own importance in increasing awareness, promotion and advocacy.



Figure

during Grateful for the generosity of Sanford School student and their parents celebrated Christmas and donated towards our Autism center

## 5. Service Expansion

### 5.1. Joy Center of Excellence for Autism Constructing Construction Project

The ongoing Project Joy Center of Excellence for Autism construction is one of the projects, to which, huge focus is placed. Fund raising activities, monitoring the ongoing construction activities, creating various events, meeting, networking, approaching different partners along with proposal, and related activities have continued to be working in the reporting time. In the reporting period we have been working with different governmental and non-governmental organizations and individuals, Major activities were: preformed agreement with a construction company, and the consulting company to pursue the first phase construction.

Despite the robust capital hunting through communicating with different stakeholders like Addis Ababa city Administration mayor office, finance and economy bureau, contact with diasporas community, communication with individuals and partners organizations, with the obtained money, the purchase of steel that works up to the sixth floor has been made, etc. the return on securing additional capital for the remaining construction works is still remain a challenge.

**Construction Consultant:** - Giving free service within their professional, employee worker in their own payments, materials support. In 2024 Ethio Telecom short code generated close to 1, million birr to support the construction costs. Different individuals and companies also engaged on the process supporting few construction materials and sands.

Currently the overall structural works finalized. The roofing and finishing works are the priority next tasks on the track.





## 6. Program Related Activities

### 6.1. Projects and applied Projects

In this fiscal year the project call proposals were prepared and applied to different organizations. So far, we have secured Finland Embassy local project fund for 2023-2024, Ipas Ethiopia, GIDABO Policy Center and secured Unicef project fund and the implementation period will be started from January 2025. In addition to these, we contact in person with different individual, organizations and Commercial Banks in Ethiopia for grant hunting's for Center of excellence and one child- one sponsorship projects.

**calls are under review.**

1. UN Women Ethiopia
2. One-child-one Sponsor project to different government institutions, private companies and individuals
3. Jobs Africa,
4. Christian Child Relief and Development Association
5. Bethany Christian Services

## 6.2. Discussion with Rotary Club of Addis Ababa West

During this program year Nia Foundation work with different organization and associations in collaboration. One of these associations and our long time partner Rotary Club of Addis Ababa West. we exposed them that although they were unable to assist with building infrastructure they generously offered to support us by providing necessary materials. Based on the feedback our team meticulously compiled a detailed list of essential materials that would greatly benefit our ongoing projects. This list was formulated through an in-depth assessment of our current requirements, taking into account both immediate needs and long-term objectives. We prioritized materials that would have a direct impact on our ability to fulfill our mission and enhance our service delivery. Following the development of the materials list, we organized several meetings with the Rotary Clubs. These discussions were crucial in ensuring that our needs were aligned with their willingness to assist. We presented our list comprehensively explaining the importance of each item and how it would contribute to the Foundation's goals. After fruitful conversations and incorporating their valuable insights we officially submitted the finalized materials list to the Rotary Clubs. This submission was accompanied by a thoroughly documented proposal that outlined the anticipated impact of the material support on our initiatives. The proposal was designed to be comprehensive, clearly demonstrating the benefits and strategic importance of each requested item

This collaboration underscores Nia Foundation's flexibility and proactive approach in securing support through alternative means. While building infrastructure remains a vital requirement, the provision of related materials will significantly enhance our operational capabilities and further our mission. We are deeply grateful for the Rotary Clubs' willingness to contribute in meaningful ways, and we look forward to the positive outcomes this partnership will bring.



Figure Ratory club event at Joy Center for Autism Excellence construction site

**6.3. Short Term project on titled “Promote & Enhance rights- based advocacy approach on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and Safe Abortion and GBV”**

This is project we implemented Since March 2024, Promote & Enhance rights- based advocacy approach on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and Safe Abortion and GBV project in Addis Ababa in collaboration with the Ipas Ethiopia and government partners, including the Ministry of Health, Ministry of women and social affairs, Ministry of education and with Addis Ababa City administration Bureau of Education, the Bureau of Health, and the Bureau of Women and Children, social Affairs. The

goal of this project, funded by Ipas Ethiopia, is to ensure that advocate for a rights-based advocacy approach for enhancing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), Safe Abortion and Gender Based Violence in connection with March 08 of International Women Day’. Supporting the project goal are two project objectives: To promote right based Advocacy approach through, National level policy dialogues to influence local policymakers and implementers, and key stakeholders, and public awareness through IEC brochure and radio program,

The policy dialogue: - we conducted to support policy makers, implementers, key stakeholders and the youth to uncover the necessary advocacy issues around SRHR, GBV and Safe abortion and to clearly stipulate the role clarity on the burning issues as a community at national level. Through these strategies, we were supported young women and men to become as “rights holders” with the power to demand their SRHR while simultaneously working with service providers and educators as key “duty bearers” responsible for creating an enabling environment for young people to exercise these rights. This strategy was helped in bringing the stakeholders and right based organizations as well as the youth and adolescents into a common platform convenes forums that bring together diverse stakeholders representing senior levels of government, civil society organizations, academia, think tanks, the religious community and the media.

This policy dialogue will serve as a spring board to broaden scenarios of SRHR, Abortion and GBV practices and scenarios in Ethiopia. It will also unpack gesture of role clarity and policy debate to bring the paradigm shift in the practices of SRHR in general and safe abortion and GBV in particular. we have used Informative Social media contents, printing and Infographics methods to targeted based advocacy to achieve our objective to Created and reached out to the public.

#### **6.4. Participation of Nia Foundation Various Exhibitions and Events**

During this reporting year our Organization has been actively participating in various exhibitions and events organized by different umbrella organizations and associations to raise awareness about autism, showcase our services and build partnerships. Engaging with the community we continue to work towards our mission of empowering individuals and creating a more inclusive society. Through our interactive exhibits and informative presentations we educate the public about the challenges faced by individuals with autism and the support they need and increasing awareness we aim to create a more inclusive society that understands and respects the rights of persons with autism.

Exhibitions provide platform for us to showcase the wide range of services we offer such as educational programs, vocational training to rehabilitation and therapeutic interventions and also we demonstrate how our services positively impact the lives of our beneficiaries. We were sharing success stories and real-life examples we inspire others to support our cause and get involved in our initiatives. Participation in these events also helps us forge valuable partnerships with other organizations and stakeholders. Also networking with like-minded entities we can collaborate on projects, share resources and enhance our capacity to serve our target groups.



Figure when Nia Participate at ACSO week exhibition at Ghion Grove Graden



Figure: participation at British Council events at British embassy Addis Ababa

### 6.5. Review Meetings & Experience Sharing:

Nia Foundation hosted Bi-annual review meeting to assess the implementation of III-year plan of the foundation which was signed with the relevant government agencies including the ACSO. Full day review meeting was held with signatories of the project to evaluate the performance of the organization. Experts and Officials from Addis Ababa City Administration Finance Office, Addis Ababa City Administration Health Office, Addis Ababa City Administration Women and Social Affairs Office, Addis Ababa City Administration Education Office participated in performance review session the team of experts conducted activity audit, supportive supervision and interview with the beneficiaries and document inspection to support the quality of their review. Based on the feedback get from the team areas of both the strong sides and shortcomings were identified and over all Nia Foundation praised for its HIGH performance.

## 7. Zemi Has been Awarded from 2022-2024

For the past twenty-two years, she has been at the forefront of autism awareness development in Ethiopia, founding and directing the first Autism Center. As a nation, she is celebrated as a peacemaker for mothers of children with autism, helping them navigate the challenges of raising these children within large families and driving societal change in Ethiopia.

For us knew since May 2002, when there was no of information and services on autism, Zemi has been a trusted source of information, working tirelessly to raise awareness among Ethiopians. She has hosted and presented a community-wide and generational social movement radio and TV programs on health, education, disability, inclusivity, inclusive education, rationalism, and her involvement in various organizations, including the Ethiopian Mental Health National Policy Advisory Task Force, the Ethiopian

Red Cross, and the National Association for the people! she has been a proud of people in an unforgettable account!

She has been rewarded for the last three consecutive years/2022-2024 after she passed. Some of the rewards were national, some were continental in the level of Africa like “African Women of the year 2023”, still some of them were International. She is recognized for her lifeless services she delivered for Persons with Autism and related developmental disorders and their families as well. It has been exemplary that, pure humanity transcends death!

**Zemi Yenus Awarded ( 2023 &2024)**

**“Founder and First ED”**

**“Ethiopian heroine of Autism”**

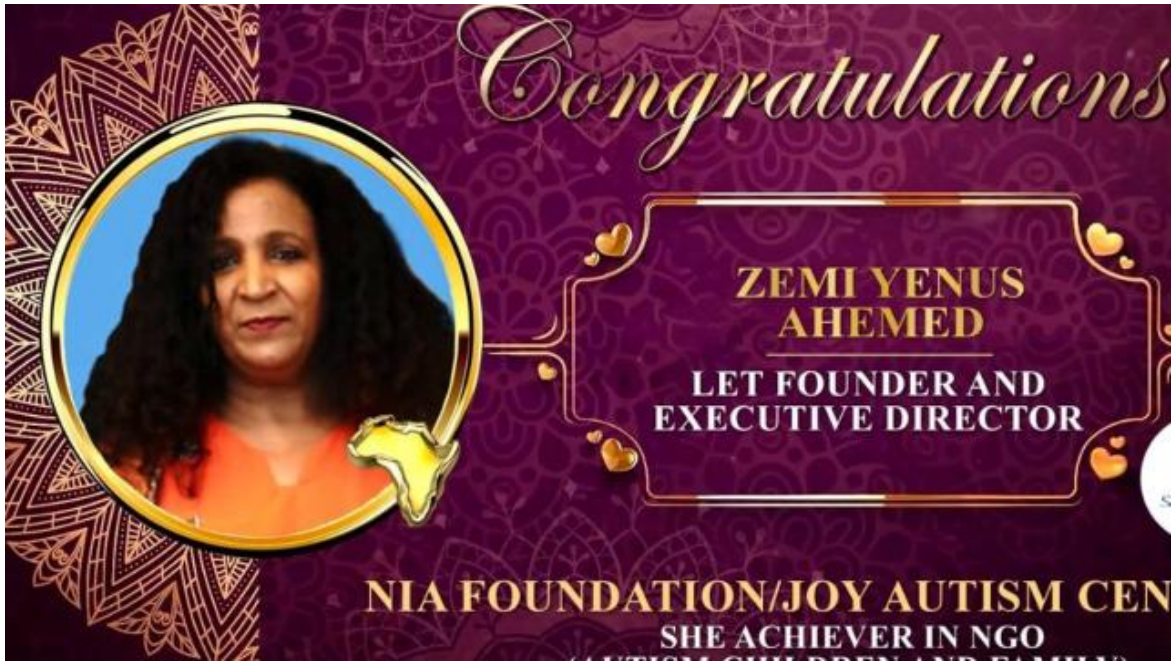
**“African WOMEN OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNER 2023”**

**“Global Best CEO in Philanthropy 2023”**

**“Best women advocator in Health Care and AWC”**

**“THE GLOBAL SHE ASHIEVERS AWARD 2024”**

**“ Areaya new, 2024”**





## Proud Nia and Joy Family



Nia Foundation also recogniside from Addis Ababa Women children and social affairs Bureau in this year for its' people led humanitary activities and support





Figure Addis Ababa MoWSA’s Workshop and Recognition to Nia Foundation

**8. Finance Department**

Overall, the department key tasks in order to support the operation of Nia Foundation program implementation smooth and effective the regular works continued in the reporting period

- Maintaining financial records that are accurate and complete,
- Regularly reviewing revenue and expenses, budgeted vs actual amounts, cash flows,
- Preparing internal and external financial reports were complete,
- Developing internal controls and policies such as ensuring internal controls for financial transactions are documented, followed, reviewed, and updated and conducting risk assessments to help prevent fraud and preserve financial data integrity has been made,
- Preparing for and overseeing the auditing and follow-up process of the audit by external auditor
- Prepare official Bid for Bonda cloth whole sales

Source of income follow up, registration and posting has been made according to the required procedures,

- Different Donation,
- Family Contribution
- From project Remaining amount like MOH
- Finland Embassy Local grant and Ipas Ethiopia
- Bond Clothes whole sale in the permission and close supervision of ACSO

Regular Common expenditure follow up was made continuously made including

- Income Tax, Pension, Withholding Tax, Salary Program Expenditure, Therapy Materials procurement follow up, Center of Excellency Building Project Expenditure are under priority and focused implementation in the last 6 months.
- As per the direction of the last board meeting the remaining “**bonda**” clothes were put into bid and have been sold based on the financial regulation and procedures and materialized revenue

under the procedural permission and close supervision of ACSO. We are able to generate 1,999,680.00.



Figure during Bonda Clothes whole sale Bid for winner

## 9. Financial Performance

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## 10. Challenges, the way forward and Lessons

### 10.1. Challenges and the Way Forward

- Due- to double related inflation the seed money disbursed is still low and it is supposed to cover the intended business plans, continues discussions were made to support the beneficiaries to selected desirable business activities,
- Shifting of project calls were focused on recovery and war affected areas due to that most of the call and project proposals were rejected due to our project focus areas.

- Limited networking and collaboration with various like-minded organizations was the other challenge we have learnt. Thus, Nia Foundation has been working to create and strengthen networking with various likeminded organizations and government structures through review meeting, joint event organizations, referral linkage, etc.
- Expectations of beneficiaries beyond the capacity of project were another challenge. In order to minimize this confusion, the beneficiaries themselves to understand real nature of project and what it is expected to achieve in frequent formal and non-formal communications and align interventions with government priorities and maintain collaboration throughout the implementation period with woreda Office during our monitoring and Evaluation.

## 10.2. Lessons Learned

- We have learnt that just a little assistance could be what it takes for the mothers migrant to exploit their potentials and change their lives as we have witnessed on the comprehensive progresses made after the graduation and enthusiasm,
- We have also learned that building economic capacity is serving a great deal of use to the targeted beneficiaries as most of them were living in strict conditions in relation to their economic, health and social vulnerability.
- In personal approach to fund raising activities were more productive than hunting of the calls recent days , however the results we are also keeping the project hunting by managing our time
- Alignment of the project plan with key partners' plans, close collaboration with partners, and involvement of partners as decision-makers fostered ownership and enhanced project implementation
- The importance of Projects structure and strengthen partnerships with likeminded organizations to maximize impact and leverage
- We learnt that it requires a multifaceted interventions and strong partnership and collaboration among various stakeholders to implement the project,
- We have also learnt that comprehensive rehabilitation program (life skill training, reproductive health training, health education, experience sharing, business and vocational skills training, etc...) resulted in progressive skill and behavioral change on beneficiaries,
- Advanced communication and collaboration with the relevant stakeholders is the other major lesson we have learnt from the so far project execution, as we have seen how crucial it would be in the process of bringing the woreda and sub city structures to the project implementation.

