



DATA
DRIVE ²⁰³⁰

STRATEGY

2026 - 2030

WHO WE ARE & WHY WE EXIST.

DataDrive2030 is an independent, child-focused data hub and think tank. We generate and mobilise trusted evidence to improve early childhood outcomes in South Africa.



OUR AMBITION

By 2030, more young children in South Africa thrive through stronger, more equitable early learning systems enabled by trusted evidence and collective action.



FROM BUILD TO SCALE

We are entering a new phase of growth and impact.

Since 2022, DataDrive2030 has moved through a founder-led start-up phase characterised by rapid growth, experimentation, and learning. We now stand at an important inflection point: shifting from building and learning to scaling, focusing, and deepening long-term impact.

This next phase is unfolding within an ecosystem that is also beginning to shift in promising ways. Initiatives such as Bana Pele* reflect growing alignment, coordination, and commitment to shared goals and collective action. The sector is evolving: from using data to understand the story to using data to change it.

This is the moment to consolidate what we have built, strengthen our internal foundations, sharpen our strategic focus, and deepen our catalytic role within a changing ecosystem.

*Bana Pele is a national, multi-stakeholder initiative led by the Department of Basic Education to align efforts across government, civil society and the private sector towards achieving universal access to quality early learning by 2030.



THE CHALLENGES WE ADDRESS

1. Too many children are not thriving

- Large proportions of young children are not developmentally on track across key domains
- Deep and persistent inequalities exist between children from the richest and poorest households
- The quality of early learning experiences remains highly uneven across programme and home environments

2. We now have better data – but are not yet using it effectively

- Better data is now available across the early learning sector
- But turning data into meaningful action and sustained improvement remains a challenge
- The question is no longer whether we have data, but whether we can use it collectively to improve outcomes for all children



DataDrive2030 exists to help turn better data into better outcomes for children.

Improving outcomes requires not only better evidence, but also the relationships, incentives, and institutional conditions that enable evidence to shape action.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE BY 2030



Quality

Improved quality of early learning experiences in home and programme settings



Equity

Reduced inequalities in children's developmental outcomes at school entry



Outcomes

Increased proportion of young children developmentally on track, as measured by the Thrive by Five Index



OUR ROLE IN **THE** ECOSYSTEM

We are firmly anchored in an enabling role.

We enable the early learning ecosystem to act more effectively for young children by strengthening how data is generated, understood, and used. In doing so, we help stakeholders make better decisions, play their roles more effectively, and ultimately improve outcomes for children.

WE DO THIS BY:

- Generating and stewarding trusted, high-quality data and evidence for the early learning ecosystem
- Turning evidence into accessible and actionable insights, tools, and resources that support decision-making
- Building the conditions for evidence use by strengthening trust, capability, and data-informed practices across the system

WE WORK WITH:

- **Micro level:** Intermediaries and practitioners who directly support early learning in home and programme settings
- **Meso level:** Researchers and evaluators who generate evidence on programmes and intervention models
- **Macro level:** Government, funders and other system actors who shape policy, investment and system-level decision-making

DataDrive2030's distinctive role is to act as a trusted, independent intermediary between data generation, evidence translation, and system-wide action for young children.

OUR THEORY **OF** CHANGE

DataDrive2030's organisational Theory of Change is built on two distinct but mutually reinforcing theories:

01

Data-to-Action (technical pathway)

Describes how high-quality data is generated, translated, and used to drive change across the early learning ecosystem.

Partners move through the data value chain: They –

- Have access to fit-for-purpose measurement tools
- Generate credible data
- Translate findings into insights
- Use insights to inform decisions
- Implement targeted changes

02

Data Mindset Theory (behavioural foundation)

Explains the conditions required for data to be trusted, valued, and used meaningfully across the system.

Partners develop the beliefs, motivations, and habits that make it possible to engage in our data value chain:

- Attitude: "data is valuable"
- Subjective norms: "responsible data use is expected"
- Perceived behavioural control: "I can do this"

Why this matters for our work

Together, these two theories reinforce each other – building a trusted evidence base and enabling coordinated, data-driven action across the ecosystem. By strengthening both the data value chain and the data mindset, we help shift the system from:

TRUSTED DATA

MEANINGFUL USE

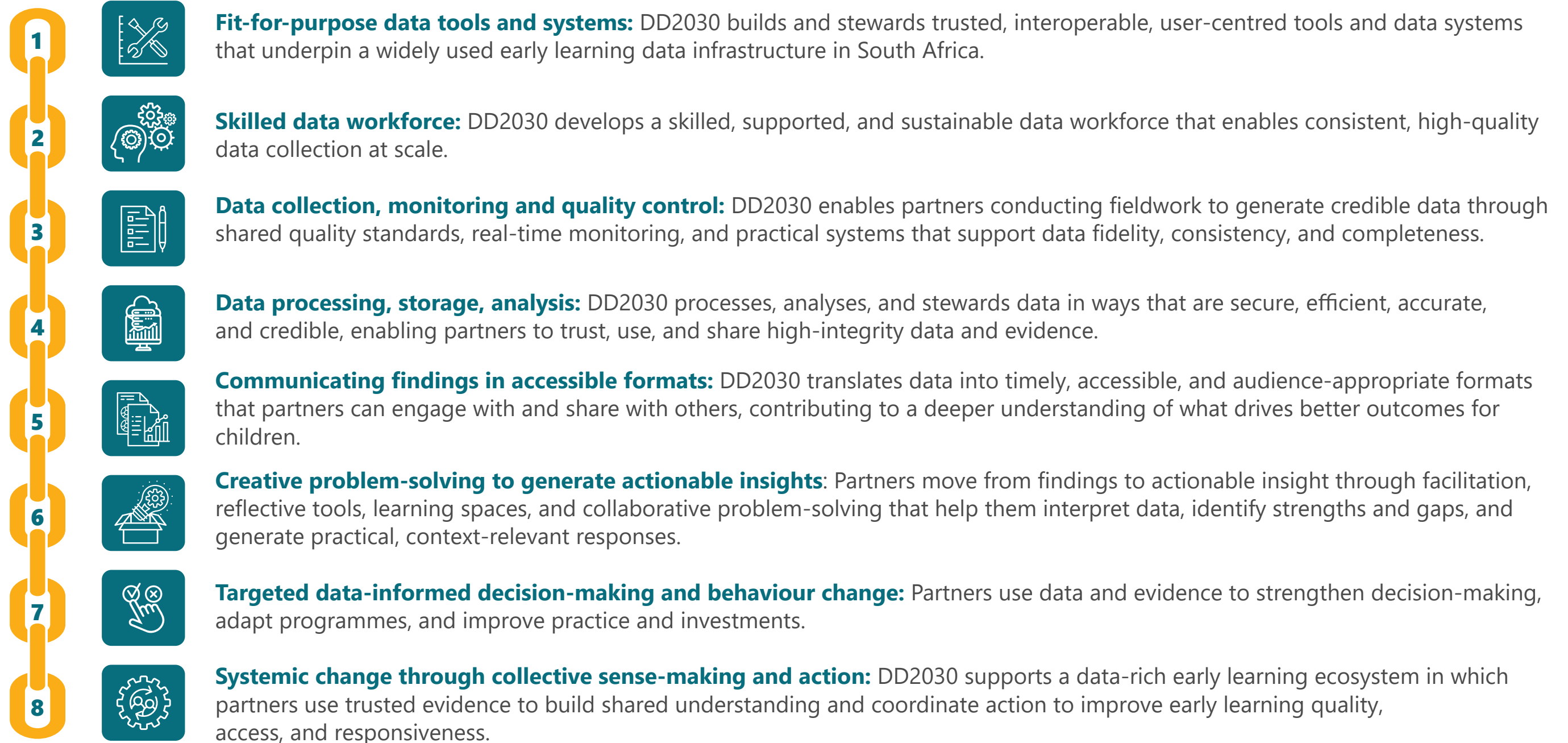
CONTINUOUS LEARNING

COORDINATED ACTION

IMPROVED OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN

OUR DATA VALUE CHAIN

How we generate, protect, translate, and mobilise data to support better decisions and action across the system.



HOW WE CREATE **IMPACT** THROUGH DATA

Building the foundations for change

1. When stakeholders trust data, value it, and feel confident engaging with it, they are more likely to use data to guide decisions and action.
2. As stakeholders experience the benefits of data – such as improved programme quality and better decision-making – their confidence and motivation to use data grows.
3. Over time, repeated engagement helps build a more data-rich ecosystem, where stakeholders share responsibility for data and work together to improve outcomes for children.
4. A stronger data-rich ecosystem, in turn, reinforces positive attitudes towards data and builds confidence and capability to collect, understand, and act on evidence.

Medium to long-term change

As the data ecosystem grows and reinforces itself, we expect the following long-term outcomes to emerge:

Micro level: Improved teaching and learning environments for young children.

Meso level: Evidence-based programme models implemented at scale.

Macro level: National stakeholders strengthen policy, regulatory standards, resource allocation, and accountability systems using data and evidence.

Impact

- Reduced inequality in children's developmental outcomes at the point of school entry.
- Increased proportion of preschool children who are developmentally on track, as measured by the Thrive by Five Index.

As evidence of impact grows, trust in and demand for data also grows, creating a virtuous cycle.

OUR STRATEGIC SCOPE: 2026 - 2030

We recognise that children need an essential package of services beyond early learning alone, including health, nutrition, responsive caregiving, safety, and social support. Within this broader picture, our work prioritises early learning programmes and the home learning environment, while partnering to amplify impact in adjacent areas.

Core focus: Quality early learning programmes

Using data to strengthen the quality of early learning programmes, building on our core work to date.

Expansion focus: Home learning through primary caregivers

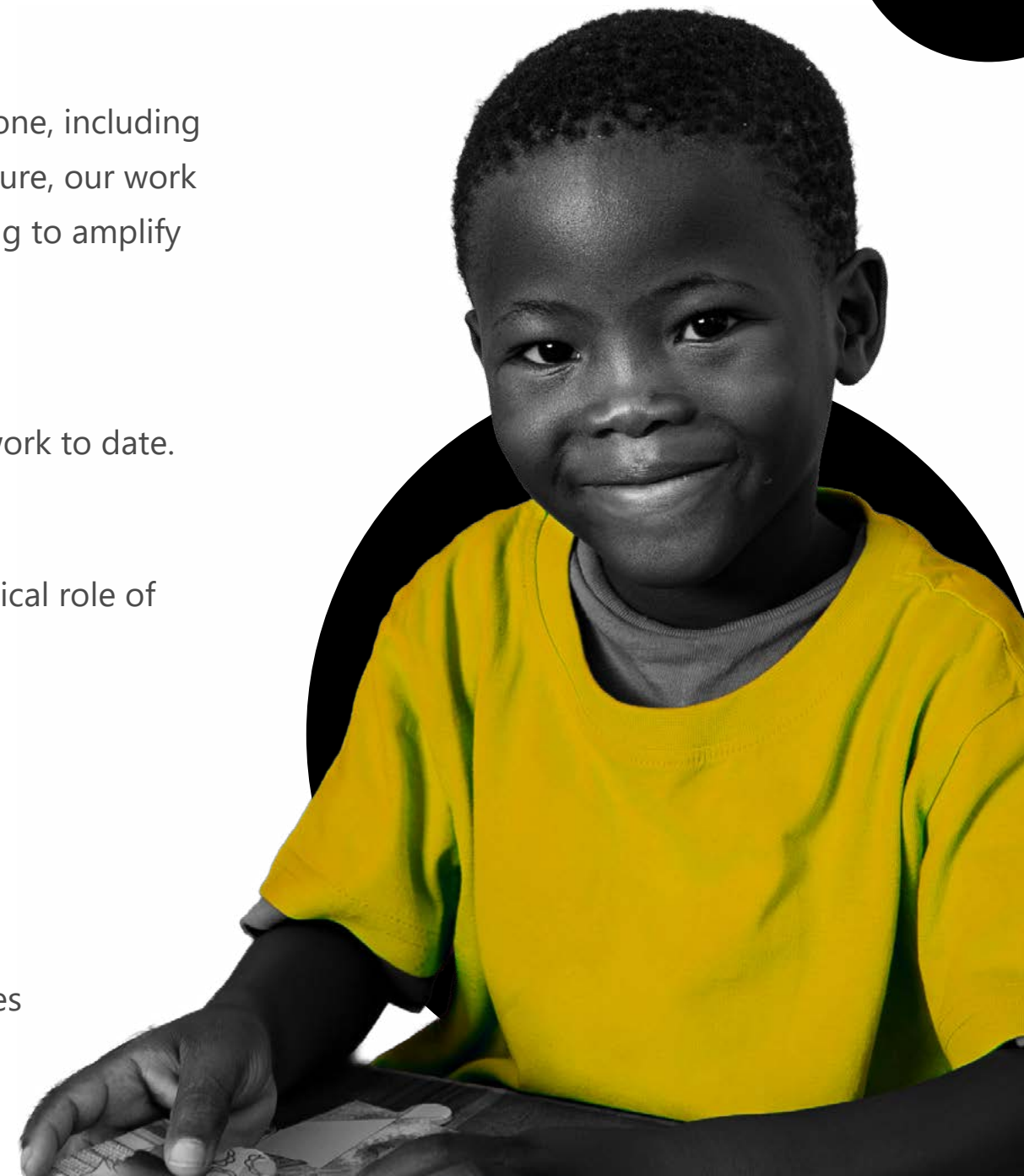
Expanding our evidence and partnerships to support home learning and recognise the critical role of primary caregivers.

Partnerships to amplify impact: Health and nutrition

Integrating selected health and nutrition measures into relevant studies and channelling evidence to those best placed to act.

Out of scope: Safety and protection

Not a strategic focus for this period, though we will continue to act responsibly when issues arise in the field.



OUR GUARDRAILS

Boundaries are essential to protect our focus, quality, team, and neutrality as we scale. These guardrails define what we deliberately choose not to do.

We do not:

1. Engage in direct programme implementation.
We are not a delivery organisation.
2. Conduct end-to-end fieldwork operations.
We strengthen standards and quality; we don't manage field teams.
3. Develop new tools beyond South Africa.
International work focuses on licensing, adaptation, and knowledge exchange.
4. Compromise data quality for scale.
We prioritise rigour, comparability, and credibility.
5. Overextend into once-off work that cannot be standardised or sustained.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1. Build and steward a world-class early learning data infrastructure

South Africa has a trusted, interoperable early learning data infrastructure used across government and key ecosystem partners.

2. Professionalise and sustain the data workforce

South Africa has a professional, reliable, and well-supported early learning data workforce that consistently delivers high-quality data at scale.

3. Expand equitable access to and responsible adoption of ELOM tools

ELOM tools are widely and equitably used across all provinces, with strong uptake in under-resourced contexts and responsible use across diverse partners.

4. Enable data-informed improvement in early learning programme quality

Data is routinely used by practitioners, intermediaries, and system actors to inform decisions, adapt programmes, and improve quality across the early learning ecosystem.

5. Shape national early learning systems through trusted evidence and shared data infrastructure

Trusted early learning data and evidence are embedded in national and provincial policy, planning, and accountability processes, informing investment and coordinated action.

6. Strengthen organisational focus, capability, and sustainability

DataDrive2030 is a high-performing, financially sustainable, and values-driven organisation with a diverse, high-quality team and the leadership, systems, and capabilities needed to deliver its strategy effectively.

2030 VISION

By 2030, we want to see...

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Trusted and interoperable early learning data infrastructure that is widely used across the early learning ecosystem.
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A sustainable, professional, and well-supported early learning data workforce that consistently delivers high-quality data at scale.
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ELOM tools widely adopted and responsibly used across all provinces, with equitable reach into under-resourced contexts and among diverse ecosystem partners.
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Practitioners, intermediaries, and system actors routinely use data to inform decisions, adapt programmes, and improve quality across the early learning ecosystem.
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Trusted early learning evidence is embedded in national and provincial policy, planning, and accountability processes, informing investment and coordinated action.
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A high-performing, financially sustainable, and values-driven organisation with inclusive, diverse, and representative leadership and teams, and the systems, culture, and capabilities needed to deliver lasting impact.

Together, these enablers help drive:



Quality

Improved quality of early learning experiences in home and programme settings



Equity

Reduced inequalities in children's developmental outcomes at school entry



Outcomes

Increased proportion of young children developmentally on track, as measured by the Thrive by Five Index

SYSTEM **GAME CHANGERS**

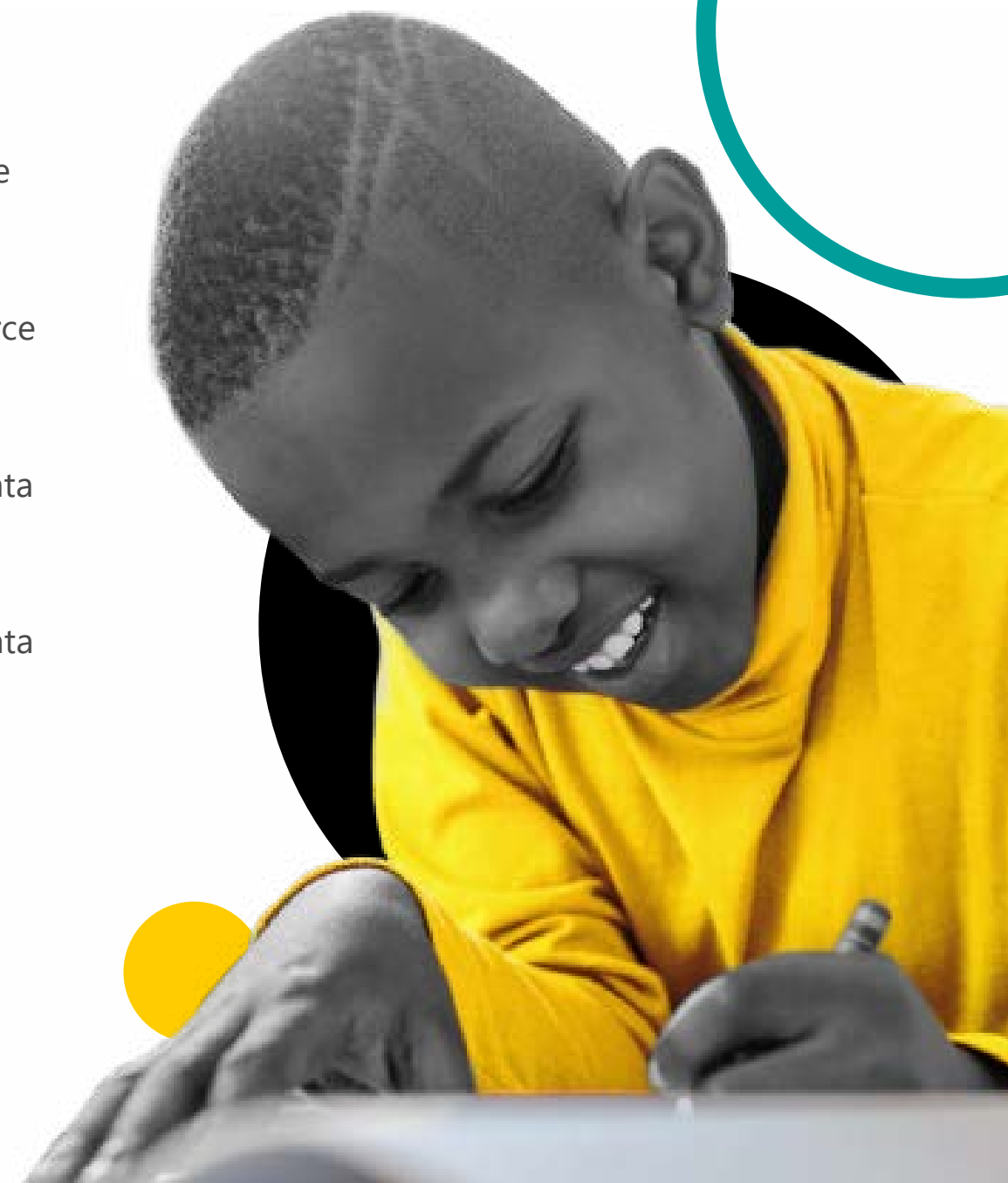
These gamechangers represent shifts in systems, incentives, and capabilities that could significantly accelerate progress across the early learning ecosystem.

What could unlock step-change impact across the ecosystem?

- **AI-enablement:** Responsible AI and advanced analytics that strengthen data quality, reduce administrative burden, and accelerate the translation of evidence into actionable insights.
- **Professionalised assessor workforce:** A skilled, fairly supported, and scalable data workforce that ensures consistent, high-quality measurement and long-term system resilience.
- **Integrated data systems:** Ethical linking of programme, administrative, and longitudinal data to generate deeper insight into what drives outcomes.
- **Flexible frontline funding:** Multi-year, flexible funding that enables programmes to use data for reflection, adaptation, and continuous improvement.

Mutual Reinforcement

- **AI-enabled systems** improve the speed, quality, and usability of data
- **A professional workforce** ensures the credibility and consistency of data
- **Integrated data systems** deepen understanding of what drives outcomes
- **Flexible funding** enables the system to act on insights and improve over time





Better data.
Better decisions.
Better outcomes for children.

Join us in making this a reality.

Learn more at DataDrive2030.co.za | thrivebyfive.co.za

Follow us on LinkedIn [@DataDrive2030](https://www.linkedin.com/company/DataDrive2030)