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Country profile prepared for the
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Strong Foundations: Early Childhood Care and Education

Bangladesh

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

programmes

Compiled by:
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BANGLADESH

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECCE) programs

A. GENERAL INFORMATION, STATISTICS AND INDICATORS

Starting age of compulsory education (if applicable):

According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics the compulsory education age range is 6-10 years.

1. ISCED 0 PROGRAMS (USUALLY, PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION)

(ISCED = International Standard Classification of Education)

1.1. National definition of ISCED 0 programs:

Pre-school education (baby class, playgroup, KG-1, KG-2)

1.2. Normative age group(s) covered by ISCED 0 programs:

3-5 years of age

1.3. ISCED 0 programs: statistics and indicators (Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics–UIS)

1.3.1. Enrolment:

	Percentage	Year
Gross enrolment ratio	11.6	2002/03
Net enrolment ratio	10.5	2002/03
Percentage of children entering primary education with previous preschool experience	23.3	2001/02

1.3.2. Enrolment ratio by age group (percentage, also including the first years of primary education when applicable): Not available

Less than 3 years of age	Age 3	Age 4	Age 5	Age 6	Age 7

1.3.3. Teachers, 2002/03:

Total number of teachers	Of whom female (%)	Percentage of trained teachers (all)	Percentage of trained teachers (males)	Percentage of trained teachers (females)
32,064	88	58

(...) Not available.

1.3.4. Funding:

	Percentage
Public current expenditure per pupil as percentage of the Gross National Product per capita	5.40 (1999)

1.3.5. Main source(s) of financing: Not available

2. OTHER ECCE PROGRAMS

(Generally preceding ISCED 0 programs)

2.1. National definition of other ECCE programs:

Early Childhood Development, as indicated in the National Plan of Action (NPA) III for children approved by the Government in June 2005. Early Childhood Education is identified as one of the major intervention in the same policy document.

2.2. Normative age group(s) covered by other ECCE programs:

Not available

2.3. Estimate number of children covered by other ECCE programs:

Not available

B. BACKGROUND INFORMATION CONCERNING ECCE PROGRAMS (INCLUDING ISCED 0)

3.1. Legislation concerning ECCE:

Not available

3.2. Official body/bodies in charge of supervision or coordination:

There are four ministries that provide early childhood services:

- Ministry of Primary and Mass Education: *Baby class in primary schools and playgroups.*
- Ministry of Women and Children Affairs: *Day care centers and pre-primary education.*
- Ministry of Health and Family Welfare: *Immunization and nutrition.*
- Ministry of Social Welfare: *Orphanage and children's home.*

There is no national mechanism set up specifically to coordinate the different sectors for early childhood. No major initiatives have yet been taken to promote sectoral coordination. Recently, however, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs has made an effort to mobilize actors across different sectors in the government as well as actors in the field to implement the Shishu Academy, which runs integrated pre-primary education for 4-5-year-old children.

UNICEF, SC-USA, PLAN Bangladesh and Bangladesh Shishu Academy have been instrumental in creating a national ECD network. The network so far has enrolled more than 110 potential partners and organizations (Government and NGOs) to promote collaborative initiatives in the area of early learning and education. A website, (<http://www.ecd-bangladesh.net>) has also been developed to promote ECD. UNESCO has been a member of ECD network since 2004.

3.3. Other entities involved in the provision (e.g. municipalities, local governments) and main types of providers (e.g. public, private, mixed, community-based, etc.):

City corporations, Chittagong Hill Tract Development Board, Islamic Foundation (public/government with support from donors), Kindergarten Associations (private)

3.4. Type of personnel involved:

Not available

3.5. Type of staff training (requirements):

According to the study UNESCO Dhaka conducted, pre-primary teachers are younger than primary teachers. The teacher who had any kind of ECCE training is below 20%.

Only about 13-4% of teachers have clear concept and objectives of ECCE though more than 62% of them are having positive attitude towards ECCE.

3.6. Recent national policies and reforms:

The National Plan of Action (NPA) I proposed an Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) program, covering the 4-5 years old children. No structured ECED activities existed earlier for pre-school age (< 6 years) children except 'baby classes' in a good number of primary schools for 4-5 year old children who accompanied their older siblings to school. An assigned teacher managed the class and tried to initiate the children to primary education, without a formal structure. The number of such children attending playgroup and nursery classes in kindergartens was very limited.

In context of prevailing vacuum and pending further experience, NPA I proposed to limit initial ECED programs to (a) restructuring and redirecting the existing pre-school educational facilities, (b) formalizing the 'baby classes' in primary schools by phases, (c) promoting and supporting wider non formal, family and community-based initiatives, and (d) developing the concept and suitable curriculum, educational toys and learning materials; special teacher training arrangements, advocacy, parental education on physical and nutritional needs of children and undertaking research and pilot projects.

The "bulk of the work of childhood care and development" was expected to "take place in the families and within the communities, through private initiatives" with "government support to nongovernmental and community initiatives and material supports where feasible". The NPA I proposed to formalize the 'baby classes' in two phases, covering 30 percent of the primary schools by 1995 and 50 percent, by 2000. This would have covered 2.34 million of 4-5 age group children by 1995 and 4.20 million by 2000 (of a total of 8.40 million). The government was also to have provided substantial support for classroom construction, teachers, implements, research, etc to feeder school programs at community level.

The Integrated Non-formal Education Program (1991-97) of the government had the only ECED program component with a target of 75,000 4-5 year old children. The project covered 63,000 children by 1997. The Primary Education Development Program (PEDP I, FY1997-2003) proposed to establish 'baby classes' in 60,000 schools (government and registered non-government primary schools, GPS and RNGPS) and allocated funds for one million books, display and play equipments per year. Though no target figure was given, it would have covered 2.4 million children, counting at 40 per school. The 'baby class' was, however, treated more as an "activity for familiarizing children with schooling" but "not oriented toward 'child development'". The 'baby classes' in primary schools were not formalized, no structured curriculum was prepared or introduced and no separate teachers appointed or trained; and no clear record has been maintained about the number of children attending.

The other proposed goals were not pursued either; private community initiative was negligible. The National Committee on Primary Education (NCPE) recognized the importance of pre-school education but felt that in view of the shortage of teachers and physical facilities in schools and severe resource constraints such a program was not feasible; it proposed instead to treat the first six months of Grade I of primary schools as preparatory education, thereby obviating the need for separate

preschool program or baby class. However, the 'baby classes' continue to run as before and, therefore, need proper organization and formalization.

PEDP I (1997-2003) made allocation for books and toys for 'baby classes' in primary schools, so has the draft PEDP II (2003-2008). The challenge is to give 'baby classes' a formal structure, develop an appropriate curriculum, appoint a trained teacher for the ECCE class, develop and include a module in the Certificate in Education (C-in-Ed) one-year course and sub-cluster training, provide adequate and properly designed physical facilities in school, involve the community in the organization and operation of the program (the School Management Committee, SMC, is already involved), and implement the program in phases to gain experience and overcome the resource constraints.

In view of their experience the primary schools should be able to take the 5-year old children and manage a formalized baby class. To take in the 3-4 year old children will over-extend their capacity and purpose. The ECCE program will, therefore, be implemented in two tracks: in the form of the 'baby' or pre-school class in primary schools for 5-year old children and the 'family and community'-based program under the non-formal sub-stream for 3-5 year olds of marginal families.

The ECCE program will cover all 3-5 year old children under both the formal and non-formal education sub-streams in phases. In the formal education sub-sector it will run as an integral part of all government, community, satellite and non-government primary schools. It will also encourage and promote expansion of programs of Shishu Academy pre-schools, schools for ethnic minorities and disabled children, government children homes and Mosque-based Maktab and Forkania madrasahs to bring them under the cover of ECCE. In the non-formal sub-sector the families living below the poverty line will be empowered through training of parents and caregivers and programs organized at community level such as Daycare centers for children of working mothers and others in cooperation with the owners of employing enterprises, relevant ministries and civil society organizations and NGOs. The programs in both the formal and non-formal sub-sectors will have to link up with health, nutrition, water and sanitation and poverty reduction programs of the government and NGOs, as well as engage in socialization and initiation to education.

The Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) will implement the pre-school program and the Directorate of non-Formal Education (DNFE), with the experience of working with NGOs, will implement the 'family and community-based' part through NGOs and Community-Based Organizations (CBOS), dealing basically with the vulnerable and the disadvantaged children. Thus, both DPE and DNFE will each establish an ECCE unit and maintain liaison with Children units in other Ministries/Departments, particularly those of Women and Children Affairs, Social Welfare and Local Government and Rural Development and NGOs and carry out all relevant activities from conceptualization, planning, implementation, monitoring, supervision, coordination and evaluation. DPE and DNFE will coordinate the transfer and enrollment of the 5-year olds from non-formal education (NFE) stream in primary schools. The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MPME) will facilitate coordination with other ministries for nutrition, health and other aspects of the program. (*Source: Ministry of Primary and Mass Education. Education for All: National Plan of Action II, 2003–2015. Fourth Draft, May 2003.*)

Situation Analysis (section 5.2 of NPA-III)

It is now recognised that early childhood development is critical to later development, including school performance. The needs of the child for food, nutrition, health care, psychosocial, and emotional nurturing must all be provided to ensure development. Traditionally, in Bangladesh, the extended family and their community have provided early childhood care. However, the changing nature of the family and increasing involvement of women in work outside the home have reduced the effectiveness of this traditional system.

Bangladesh has made significant progress in the area of survival and physical growth of young children. The caregivers' knowledge on early childhood development and learning need to be enhanced. The National Plan of Action for Education for All (EFA) has highlighted early childhood care, education and development. The plan emphasizes advocacy on early childhood care and development (ECCD) and early childhood needs and benefits, making the parents aware about both the physical and nutritional requirements of children and developing pre-school learning opportunities in order to ensure school readiness.

Current Activities (section 5.3 of NPA-III)

Sectoral Policies and Programmes

Early Childhood Development

Even though ECD is a new concept, there have been several initiatives taken by the Government, NGOs and development partners. These initiatives include “baby classes” within and outside primary schools, need-based school preparedness skills programmes, pre-school programmes for the disadvantaged, “baby classes” in satellite schools, pre-reading, pre-writing and pre-numeracy skills programmes, introduction of play groups and kindergarten classes in English medium schools, pre-primary religious education in maktabs, and literacy skills training in day care centres.

ECD appears to have a strong positive influence on preparedness for school and the later performance and achievement of children in school. Awareness of the benefits of ECD has resulted in an increased number of community initiating pre-schools attached to primary schools.

The Ministry of Women and Children affairs (MOWCA) started an ECD project in 2001, implemented by BSA. Major project activities are (1) advocacy, mobilisation and communication, (2) caregivers' education, (3) school readiness, and (4) networking and capacity building of partner agencies.

BSA has started model pre-school activities in all 64 districts. Several NGOs have initiated their own pre-primary classes. Government secondary schools also provide pre-school learning activities.

Programme Objectives and Strategies (section 5.4 of NPA-III)

Within the framework of the above policies and programmes, the overall goals of this NPA are to provide education for all children and to empower the girl child. The specific objectives are to:

Education Policy:

- Decentralize management of the system, including resources to the local level.
- Ensure enrolment and retention of disabled children in educational institutions.

- Ensure remaining non-enrolled children of urban and other remote areas.
- Enforce laws against noise pollution to create a noiseless schooling environment.

ECD:

- Increase *enrolment* in early childhood development programs from current 10% to 30% at the end of the NPA III;
- Undertake a study on the provision of pre-schools in the primary education institutions;

Major Interventions (section 5.5 of NPA-III)

Early childhood education

The strategy for early childhood development will include awareness raising programmes for parents to make them aware of ECD's benefits, promote community-based childcare centres for clusters of families where literate mothers are trained to become caregivers, develop the appropriate learning materials, and design facilities for early learners, which are attractive and properly equipped.

Success of the strategy will be judged by the rate of enrolment in early learning centres, and transition to and retention by formal primary schools. Regular monitoring and supervision will be necessary.

3.7. Efforts targeted at vulnerable or disadvantaged children:

UNICEF as part of the Country Programme assisting ECD project of Bangladesh Shishu Academy under MOWCA for implementation of center based early learning (play group & pre-school) through (a) 2480 community based learning centers in urban slums inhabited by poor segments of population and three CHT districts inhabited primarily by tribal population and (b) 140 community based learning centers in the working areas of BRAC and Grameen Shikka (sister concern of Grameen Bank) for children of poor segments of the population. 25-30 children are enrolled in each center with completion rate of more than 97% every year.

Routine monitoring report shows more than 92% of these children enrolled in primary schools after completion of one year pre-school education. PLAN Bangladesh along with UNICEF is also providing technical and partial financial support since 2003. UNICEF will continue to support expansion of community-based early learning centers in these areas and other disadvantaged areas/population groups as part of the next Country Programme (2006-2010). A good number (data not available) of other NGOs also run early learning centers for disadvantaged children.

3.8. Special projects/programmes aiming at expanding or improving ECCE:

Bangladesh Shishu Academy with financial support from UNICEF and in collaboration with the Institute of Child and Mother Health (ICMH) in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Chittagong Hill Tract Development Board, BRAC and Grameen Shikka of Grameen Bank implementing the ECD project. Its objective is to empower caregivers to create a safe, secure, stimulating and enabling environment, which promotes the cognitive, emotional and social development of the child from conception to 5 years. In this project, family members are trained on ECD. 404 (as of

Dec 2005) playgroup centers for age 4-5 and 1,380 (as of Dec 2005) pre-primary schools are in operation under their project. UNICEF as part their next Country Programme (2006-2010) with focus on center based early learning will continue to support this initiative under another Project named “Early Learning for Development Project”

BRAC has initiated its own pre-primary class of one year. Currently 15,000 (16,025 as of Dec 2005) pre-primary centers are in operation with about 90,000 (400,625 at 25 children per class) children. The number of the center will be increased to 25,000. So far, 95% of children who finish this one-year pre-primary programme proceed to primary education. Ministry of Primary and Mass Education cooperate with BRAC in this pre-primary education programme.

3.9. Information concerning the curriculum (if applicable) or the contents of ECCE programs

3.9.1. Objectives and aims:

As follow up of Dakar Conference in 2001, the Government of Bangladesh has recognized age group 3-5 as its target group for launching an early childhood education and development programme with the objective of ensuring children’s physical and mental development and preparing them for entering school with right academic prerequisites, attitudes and habits.

3.9.2. Learning areas and teaching-learning methods:

The existing ECCE programs are focused basically on pre-school education or literacy. The ‘care’ element in such programs is negligible. According to the study UNESCO Dhaka conducted, only 16% of teachers are regularly using proper teaching aids and materials. It was found that the use of textbooks is widely practiced. It shows that instead of child centered and joyful activities, text books are used to teach only literacy and numeracy. Although majority of teachers stated that they use child-centered approach, their statements show that they are not adequately familiar with the ideas and methods in the approach.

100% teachers of UNICEF supported 2480 pre-schools under ECD project of Bangladesh Shishu Academy in three Chittagong Hill Tract (CHT) districts and urban slums received basic and receiving refresher training every six months focusing on interactive teaching learning methods in a child friendly environment. A recently done formative evaluation ‘Formative Evaluation of School Readiness Programme in CHT districts’ shows that 96.7% of trained teachers is continuing their work and practicing Multiple Ways of Teaching and Learning (MWTL) methods.

3.9.3. Average number of hours per week and average amount of weeks per year:

Six days per week, 12 hours per week

3.10. Any other relevant and pertinent information

A sample survey estimated the 3-5 year age group children at 11.52 million (BBS-UNICEF, 1999), with a gross enrolment of 2.6 million children in pre-school education and a gender parity index of 1.1. The net estimated figure was 9.356 million children in 2000. Information gathered in 2001 shows a total of 1.864 million 4-5 year old children benefited from different ECED programs: 1.05 million in 'baby class' in 42,000 GPS and RNGPS, 484,000 in kindergartens, 242,000 in madrasahs, 46,875 in 'Para' (neighborhood) centers for ethnic minorities in Chittagong Hill Tracts and Rajshahi, 33,800 in non-government institutions, and 7,500 in orphanages, Day Care Centers and pre-school centers run under the Ministries of Social Welfare and Women and Children Affairs. Of the 4.54 million new entrants in primary Grade I in 1999 52 percent had attended pre-school program. It is claimed that ECED/'baby class' children do better in primary schools. A Primary and Mass Education Division (PMED) circular in 1999 encouraged GPSs to organize and continue the 'baby classes' but made no provision for appointment of teachers, or a structured curriculum. However, the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) has recently developed a new Primer for 'baby classes' in primary schools (to replace the 1981 version). (Source: Ministry of Primary and Mass Education. *Education for All: National Plan of Action II, 2003–2015*. Fourth Draft, May 2003.)

Information from Multiple Information Cluster Survey 2003: Early Childhood Development

Pre-school preparation for children (Both sexes: 25-59 months; multiple responses from parents)

- Teach how to read & write: 52.4 %
- Promote interest for learning; 31.3%
- Teach how to speak: 31.2%
- Follow rules & regulations; 11.2%
- Send school at proper age: 6.3%
- Prepare mentally: 4.6%
- Encourage mixing with others: 3.8%
- Create opportunity for sports/games: 3.3%
- Nothing: 20.3%

C. SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION REGARDING ECCE (TO BE COMPILED IN COLLABORATION WITH UNICEF OFFICES WHERE POSSIBLE)

4.1. Parenting programmes are usually addressed to parents and families of children less than 6 years of age. Please provide information about any parenting programmes in your country according to the table below:

Type of programme	Yes or No (note for each programme)	Please estimate the number of beneficiaries (if possible)
Parenting education through early learning centres and child care centres	Yes	Data not available
As component of health and nutrition programmes, such as information about child development included in health and nutrition visits	Yes	Data not available
Parent groups that meet to discuss issues of their young children, including health, nutritional status, and development	Yes	Data not available
As component of adolescent, livelihood or literacy programmes	Yes	Data not available
Media broadcast, such as <i>Sesame Street</i> , with media for and with children	Yes. ECD national . communication campaign by MOWCA supported by UNICEF, Sesimpur adapted version of Sesame street supported by US-AID	Data not available
Other (please specify)		

Are any of these programmes targeted specifically toward the vulnerable, poor, disadvantaged or excluded? If so, which ones? (Please provide/attach any additional and relevant information if available).

Yes. Separate communication strategy developed for Chittagong Hill Tracts and Urban slums as part of national ECD communication campaign under the ECD project of Bangladesh Shishu Academy, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs.

4.2. Is there a national-level system for monitoring children's development or school readiness prior to entering primary school?

No. However this is one of the agreed main area of work in 2006 by the ECD network, Bangladesh.

4.3. Is there a policy on early childhood (ECCE, ECD, etc.) that has been accepted? If not, is there one under development?

No, but reflected in policy documents, e.g. PRSP and NPA-III for children. In addition, the ECD network will pursue on this issue in 2006 and beyond.

[Information revised and additional data provided by UNICEF, December 2005.]