Country profile prepared for the

*Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2007*

*Strong Foundations: Early Childhood Care and Education*

**Israel**

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programmes

Compiled by:

UNESCO International Bureau of Education (IBE)

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Early Childhood Education and Care (ECCE) programs

A. GENERAL INFORMATION, STATISTICS AND INDICATORS

Starting age of compulsory education (if applicable):

The Compulsory Education Law covers the age group 3–15 years, for a total of 13 years. The Law will be gradually implemented for ages 3 and 4 in communities where the Ministry will implement it.

1. ISCED 0 PROGRAMS (USUALLY, PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION)
   (ISCED = International Standard Classification of Education)

1.1. National definition of ISCED 0 programs:

Pre-primary education (kindergarten)

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: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2005)

1.3.1. Enrolment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gross enrolment ratio</td>
<td>106.2</td>
<td>2003/04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net enrolment ratio</td>
<td>78.7</td>
<td>2003/04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of children entering primary education with previous preschool experience</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.3.2. Enrolment ratio by age group (percentage, also including the first years of primary education when applicable):

Note: In Israel, children from age 0 are under the supervision of the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor, and from age 3 are under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, considered educational frameworks. The lower the age, the greater the component of “care”, compared to the component of education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Less than 3 years of age</th>
<th>Age 3</th>
<th>Age 4</th>
<th>Age 5</th>
<th>Age 6</th>
<th>Age 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>73.7</td>
<td>83.7</td>
<td>93.4</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


1.3.3. Teachers, 2004/2005:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total number of teachers</th>
<th>Of whom female (%)</th>
<th>Percentage of trained teachers (all)</th>
<th>Percentage of trained teachers (males)</th>
<th>Percentage of trained teachers (females)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11,219</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>96.8</td>
<td>96.8</td>
<td>96.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


1.3.4. Funding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public current expenditure per pupil as percentage of the Gross National Product per capita</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

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:

Day care centers and pre-nursery play groups are under the supervision of the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor and operate under the Day Care Center Inspection Law, 1965.
The development of day care centers and pre-nursery play groups in the beginning of the 70s derived from a trend to encourage women to go to work, to find a suitable solution for children in an educational-care framework and to open day care centers and pre-nursery play groups for children whose parents' functioning could jeopardize their personal and emotional development.

The service began to operate at the initiative of the Na'amat, WIZO and Emunah women's organizations, and reached its peak at the end of the 90s, with the support of the Division of Day Care Centers and Pre-nursery Play Groups.

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

Day care centers and pre-nursery play groups are intended primarily for children under the age of 3, but they are also attended by children under the age of 5.

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

Today, within the Day Care Center System approximately 2,000 centers and approximately 2,000 pre-nursery play groups operate, distributed nationally in all population sectors. The demand for this service is continually increasing. The increase in the number of children fluctuates between 3-4% annually. There are approximately 80,000 children in the system.

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

3.1. Legislation concerning ECCE:

- The State Education Law, 1953, determines guidelines for the content of state education provided in a six day school week. The Law relates to parents of children from the age of 5.
- The Compulsory Education Law, 1949, requires compulsory studies for every child from the age of 3 until the age of 15. Education is free beginning with the age of 5. The Compulsory Education Law was amended and extended to parents of children of the ages of 3 and 4 where compulsory education was implemented by the Ministry.
- The Day Care Center Inspection Law, 1965, regulates the appointment of inspectors authorized to enter any licensed day care center.
- The School Inspection Law, 1968, determines that opening and operating a school requires a license. It applies to institutions where more than ten students study.
- The Long School Day and Enrichment Studies Law, 1997, adds hours and education to the hours existing in educational institutions, for a total of 41 study hours.
- Special Education Law, 1988: According to this Law, disabled children, from the age of 3 to 21, will be provided with special education, as defined according to their individual needs. The Law regulates the integration of special needs children in the regular school system and fixes it in the law.
- The Toddlers At Risk Law, 2000, defines conditions of risk to toddlers (up to age 3), and makes possible provision of a day care center near the child's place of residence according to the decision of the local authority's social services.
- The Free Education Law for Sick Children, 2001: implementation of the Law was postponed for economic reasons.

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

The Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor operates and supervises educational institutions for children up to the age of 3.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports operates and supervises educational frameworks for children from the age of 3 until the age of 6 and upwards.

Within its services, the Ministry of Health operates a framework of early childhood medical care, including baby well care centers, neonatal intensive care units and child development centers.

The Ministry of Social Affairs operates and budgets programs and frameworks for at-risk children and disabled children.

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.):

a) The Union of Local Authorities, the Division for Municipal Administration of the Ministry of the Interior is responsible for buildings, maintenance, employing aides and regulating registration of kindergarten students.

b) Fund involved in the provision of educational services provision: the Karev Fund for Involvement in Education is responsible for enrichment programs in kindergartens operating under the law with a long school day.

c) Non-profit organizations involved in the provision of educational services:

Sacta-Rashi: responsible for extending the school day in boarding schools (including meals and enrichment programs).

PAKET: operates educational programs for Ethiopian children in Be'er Sheba, Gedera, Hadera, Netanya, Afula, Kiryat Yam, Kiryat Malachi, Rehovot and Ramle.

Ashalim: deals with youth at-risk and their families; operates programs for families from the Jewish and Arab sectors in cooperation with various government ministries – education, health.

d) Approximately one-fourth of all kindergartens under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports and included in non-official recognized organizational bodies. Most of them provide independent religious education (17% of all the kindergartens for children aged 3 - 6); various corporations provide Arab education (4%); secular Jewish education (2%).

e) Private kindergartens constitute 3% of all the educational institutions for children aged 3 - 6, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education.

(Source of data for items d) and e): Ministry of Education Information Management System).
3.4. Type of personnel involved:

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports employs kindergarten teachers, guidance and supervisory staff for kindergarten teachers, and kindergarten inspectors. Local governments (the local authorities) employ aides, psychologists, paramedical workers.

3.5. Type of staff training (requirements):

Professional training of kindergarten teachers is carried out at Teacher Training Colleges as a four year track granting a B.Ed. degree. The fourth year is internship. In addition, the Ministry operates In-Service Training in pedagogical centers (PISGAH Centers) for kindergarten teachers, on subjects it wishes to promote. Aides are hired without professional training. The Ministry of Education, together with the local government center operates a certification course of 270 study hours for them, spread over two years.

3.6. Recent national policies and reforms:

Increasing concern with pre-primary education was prompted by strong interest in the developmental problems of early childhood, as well as the social dilemmas faced by Israeli society. In this regard, the education system has assumed that education must begin as early as possible in order to ensure that all children are provided with the necessary conditions and opportunities for effective functioning and personal achievement. The Ministry of Education is preparing to implement the Compulsory Education Law, which exempts parents from the need to pay tuition for children aged 3-4.

Pedagogical Reform

As part of the policy of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports to improve students' achievements and narrow gaps caused by economic, social and sectoral factors, it was decided to implement changes in planning kindergarten instruction. It was decided to develop a required core curriculum for the kindergartens in four clusters:

- Language – linguistic literary skills, cultivation of self-expression abilities, and reading and writing skills
- Mathematics, Science and Technology – logical thinking, primary mathematic concepts and familiarity with the technological environment
- Arts – cultivation of ability and experience in music, movement and the plastic arts
- Life Skills – health education, social skills, physical education, road safety

The Division for Curricula Planning and Developing appointed committees to develop core curricula in each area. The development process is scheduled for completion during the next two years. Integration of the core curricula will be completed by 2010.
The first study program, for the language cluster, was published this year (2005): *Foundation in preparation for reading and writing*. The purpose of the program is to promote the primary linguistic skills of kindergarten children, while stressing elements paving the way for the acquisition of reading and writing skills.

The program defines contents which each kindergarten teacher is required to integrate into the kindergarten's program of instruction. It includes goals set according to a developmental levels on an age scale. The goals constitute achievements expected of different age groups.

### 3.7. Efforts targeted at vulnerable or disadvantaged children:

In 2004, the state allocated resources to fund pre-school education for almost 100,000 children from disadvantaged population groups. These children constitute 36% of their age group.

The Ministry of Education and other educational bodies operate special programs for children with special needs. The programs are geared toward children, kindergarten teachers and parents.

The following is a partial list of programs, beginning with programs for children and continuing with programs for families:

**Programs for children:**

- **Harbor** – a multi-professional staff assists the day care center and kindergarten in identifying, evaluating and planning intervention for children with delayed development from birth to 5 years of age.
- **Light** – an intervention program intended to cultivate and enrich high-risk children in order to prevent developmental difficulties in the future. The program is for children from 1 to 4, having a normal developmental potential, who suffer from severe environmental deprivation and who study in educational frameworks.
- **Little Garden** – an educational framework for children from 2 to 3, who are not part of any other educational framework. The children attend the Little Garden three times a week, four hours.

**Programs for families:**

- **First** – an emotional-educational support program for families raising young high risk children. The program operates in eight communities and treats 80 families.
- **PARENTS** – an intervention program intended for children aged 1–5, of drug-affected parents. The program operates in the families' homes, and focuses on play with the children and on strengthening parenting (operated by the Department of Special Projects of the National Insurance Institute of Israel).
- **Ashalim** – operates programs for families from the Jewish and Arab sectors, in cooperation with various government ministries – education, health.

The NCJW Research Institute for Innovation in Education and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem has developed a series of early childhood programs:
HATAF – a home and group guidance program for parents of toddlers (birth – 3 years of age), intended to strengthen and cultivate the parents and the home environment, so that they can promote the development of their children.

HA'ETGAR – a home and group guidance program for parents of children from 3 - 6 (Hippy International), intended to strengthen and cultivate parents and the home environment, so that they can promote the development of their children.

My Child and Me – a home guidance program for parents after birth

Family Experience – a community group program for toddlers and parents. Through workshop activities, the program creates opportunities for experiential interaction for parents and toddlers.

From Home to School – a group program for parents and children which emphasizes subjects of guidance relating to starting school.

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

Educational programs operated by the Ministry that expand and improve early childhood education:

- Enrichment Centers – cultural centers specializing in the arts or sciences and in combining them, attended by the children from three to eight times a year. The activity is for the entire kindergarten class, for two hours each time. The centers' administrators are kindergarten teachers who have specialized in the arts or the sciences.

- Kindergarten Children – Museum Supporters – in the project framework, approximately 40,000 kindergartners visit museums, encounter authentic creations and exhibits and participate in observation, discussion and play activities. The museum guides are senior kindergarten teachers trained to guide children in museums.

- Ten Musical Project – academic bodies "adopt" ten communities for the purpose of cultivating and advancing musical education in kindergartens. The project includes in-service training of kindergarten teachers and music teachers, instruction in the kindergarten and a concert by the local orchestra.

- Segev, a program to encourage proper nutrition and to improve general health from early childhood. The children participate in experiential activities concerning eating and discussing food that helps the health of the body.

- Sesame Street, a program of activities around the Sesame Street television program about subjects such as tolerance, accepting the other, promoting peace. Arabs, Jews, new immigrants, etc. have participated in the program.

- Mabat Lagan, a science and technology program in kindergarten (developed by Tel Aviv University) – with activities to advance science and technology subjects from
early childhood, such as: astronomy, matter, animals and the environment, electricity, etc.

- **SAHLEV – Student Join the Kindergarten** – Students for academic Bachelors' degrees become integrated in a kindergarten program and work in the area of their specialization directly with the children, in coordination with the kindergarten teacher who runs the kindergarten.

- **Cooperation of Parents and Early Childhood Educators in Kindergarten** – Every kindergarten is required to implement the policy relating to parents' basic rights. Implementing this policy includes: a) celebrations for kindergarten children with their parents, which are held three times a year; b) during the year, holding experiential meetings, in which parents and children take part; c) at the beginning of the year and during its course, holding meetings of the educational staff with parents, where they discuss subjects pertaining to the age group or those arising from the needs of the kindergarten population; d) the kindergarten teachers holding meetings conducted by experts, according to the needs arising in the group; e) holding individual meetings between the educator and the parents.

The Ministry instructs kindergarten teachers to include parents in the subjects dealt with in the kindergartens and, for this purpose, has developed instructional materials, including suggestions as to how to involve parents.

- **Advisory Services for Kindergarten Teachers** – In 2002, the Ministry began to provide educational advisory service for kindergartens on early childhood subjects. The advisory service is given by educational advisors having special early childhood training. The advisory service is just beginning. Although it is distributed nationally, it covers in the most partial way only the needs of the kindergarten system, due to a shortage of resources.

The distribution of advisory consultation is planned in response to the following order of priority: a) regions of high security tension; b) regions of distress and the periphery; c) fair allocation of service resources, while considering different sectors of Israeli society.

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

#### 3.9.1. Objectives and aims:

**Early Childhood Education Goals:**

- Development of linguistic skills, thinking and the use of information and enrichment in different areas of knowledge, according to subjects suitable to the children's developmental level, their areas of interest and those of the communities in which they live.
- Acquisition of life skills conforming to experience and creating a foundation for future life skills, social skills, societal and national values and the cultivation of proper interpersonal relations.
- Cultivating an independent personality having viewpoints of respect, tolerance and acceptance of those who are the same and those who are different.
- The development of skills in literacy languages and symbols, linguistic skills—semantic and contextual, processes of authentic problem solving, implementation of ideas for using technology and mean(s) of communication, sensitivity to aesthetics and familiarity with the arts and ways of artistic expression.
- Creating a foundation and basic skills for self-learning, having a "craving to learn", interest and curiosity.

**Chosen objectives of pre-school education for the 2005 – 2006 school year:**

1. All kindergarten teachers will learn how to draw up work plans based on objectives, on evaluation of instructional and educational achievements, on description of the level of the children's functioning, time organization and learning environment. The plans will be built with the guidance of the supervisory authority.

2. Twenty percent of the kindergarten teachers will plan instruction in kindergartens based on continuous evaluation, adapted to development, with existing tools and adapted tools that will be developed.

3. Fifty percent of the kindergarten teachers will teach all kindergarten children according to the "Toward Reading and Writing in Kindergarten" program.

4. Thirty percent of the pupils (of the kindergartens (goal)) who complete kindergarten will have literacy skills, as defined in the "Toward Reading and Writing in Kindergarten" program, and will meet expected achievements as detailed in the program.

5. Preliminary drafts will be prepared for a pre-school education core curriculum, in cooperation with the Division for Planning and Development of Curricula and the Pedagogic Secretariat.

**3.9.2. Learning areas and teaching-learning methods:**

Educational activities in the kindergartens operate according to three framework programmes:

- The Framework Program for State and State-religious, Arab and Druze Kindergartens in Israel for Children Ages 3-6 (as of 1995)
- The Framework Program for Special Needs Children in Early Childhood Education, in Regular, Integrated and Special Education Kindergartens (as of 1996)

Activities are now following the core curriculum of the pre-primary education system (in use since March 2000). This curriculum is based on the above-mentioned framework programmes.

The kindergarten staff is autonomous in its ability to choose subject matter and determine appropriate teaching methods, while maintaining pluralistic expression and meeting specific and local needs. Nevertheless, in order to provide equal opportunity for all children and enable them to maximize their potential, the basic curriculum includes several required subjects:
(i) linguistic skills and general literacy (spoken and written language, symbolic language, the language of mathematics, artistic expression);
(ii) learning skills (cognitive skills, inquiry and problem-solving at developmentally appropriate levels of complexity);
(iii) social-emotional skills: self-awareness and assertiveness, cooperation and peer relationship, solving social conflicts, rules of discourse, recognizing and accepting differences between people (mutual respect, aid and tolerance), recognizing the importance and significance of laws and social rules, familiarity with different cultures, maintaining personal hygiene and health, protecting the environment, safety and security, cultural consumption and the media;
(iv) physical-movement skills (daily experience with movement and the use of outdoor play equipment, physical training and ball games); and
(v) educational contents for formulating a common cultural-social-civil foundation (the state, its institutions and symbols, Israeli heritage, cultural heritage and traditions as appropriate for each sector, folk literature and music).

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

Information about Official Education

Jewish education:
- the number of kindergarten study hours in Jewish education is 32 hours per week
- the average number of school days in Jewish education is 218 days per year (average of the last five years), six school days per week, for a total of 36 weeks per year

Arab education:
- the number of kindergarten study hours in Arab education is 27 hours per week
- the number of school days in Arab education is 184 days per year, five school days per week, for a total of 37 weeks per year

3.10. Any other relevant and pertinent information

In 2003/04 the network of pre-primary institutions encompassed 373,211 children, attending municipal, public, and private kindergartens and day care institutions. Of these, 358,861 children attended public kindergartens.
(Source: The Statistical Abstract of Israel 2005 No. 56)
### 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of programme</th>
<th>Yes or No (note for each programme)</th>
<th>Please estimate the number of beneficiaries (if possible)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parenting education through early learning centres and child care centres</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As component of health and nutrition programmes, such as information about child development included in health and nutrition visits</td>
<td>Ministry of Health operates Baby Well Care</td>
<td>In 2004, 83,592 babies up to one year of age and 365,828 toddlers aged 3 – 6 were treated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent groups that meet to discuss issues of their young children, including health, nutritional status, and development</td>
<td>School for parents operated by the Ministry of Education in conjunction with private bodies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As component of adolescent, livelihood or literacy programmes</td>
<td>Specialization trend &quot;Early Childhood Education&quot; in secondary school</td>
<td>Adolescents consolidate a humanistic and democratic educational outlook as a foundation for parenthood and continued development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media broadcast, such as <em>Sesame Street</em>, with media for and with children</td>
<td>Television channels for parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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).

See previous sections

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

See previous sections

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

See previous sections

[Information revised and additional data provided by the Ministry of Education, February 2006.]