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

Palestinian Authority

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

programmes

Compiled by:
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PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECCE) programs

A. GENERAL INFORMATION, STATISTICS AND INDICATORS

Starting age of compulsory education (if applicable):

The compulsory education age range is 6-16 years.

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

(ISCED = International Standard Classification of Education)

1.1. National definition of ISCED 0 programs:

Preschool education (kindergarten)

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

3.8–5.7 years

1.3. ISCED 0 programs: statistics and indicators *(If available, please kindly provide the most recent figures)*

1.3.1. Enrolment:

	Percentage	Year
Gross enrolment ratio	29.4	2004/05
Net enrolment ratio	22.9	2004/05
Percentage of children entering primary education with previous preschool experience	64.9	2004/05

(See point 3.10)

1.3.2. *Enrolment by age group, 2004/05 (number of children enrolled for years 4, 5, 6, and 7):*

Less than 3 years of age	Age 3	Age 4	Age 5	Age 6	Age 7
-	-	35,980	21,085	85,927 (**)	89,227 (**)

(**) Primary education enrolment ratio.

1.3.3. *Teachers (2004/2005):*

Total number of teachers	Of whom female (%)	Percentage of trained teachers (all)	Percentage of trained teachers (males)	Percentage of trained teachers (females)
	2,862	1,113	0	1,113
2,885	99.2%	38.9%	0%	38.9%

1.3.4. *Funding:*

Kindergartens are in the private sector and almost nothing is known about its input, funding resources and what is allocated for each child. It is worth noting that there are four model kindergartens in the governmental sector (Nablus, Beithlehem and Gaza), and running costs are on the account of the Ministry of Finance. Training, incentives, stationery, educational materials, stationery, etc., are funded from donors.

	Percentage
Public current expenditure per pupil as percentage of the Gross National Product per capita	...

(...) Not available.

1.3.5. *Main source(s) of financing:*

In the private sector, child's fees are the main source of funding. However, in some cases, private kindergartens receive funding from local and international organizations. For kindergartens that are supervised by Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE) as indicated above, funding is provided by the government and donors (see table below).

Funding	Item	Percentage
Governmental funding	Running costs (salaries)	40%
NGOs	Equipment, furnishing, stationery, educational materials, toys and games	10%
Parents	Covering a part of parties, children trips, fees.	20%
External sources (Donors)	Equipment, furnishing, stationery, educational materials, toys and games	30%

2. OTHER ECCE PROGRAMS

(Generally preceding ISCED 0 programs)

2.1. National definition of other ECCE programs:

Children under 4 years of age join nurseries. The Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) Early Childhood Department oversees nurseries, registers and licenses them. It also sets forth the health, environmental and public safety measures prior to granting licenses. Nonetheless, less than 1% of children of this age group are actually enrolled in such facilities because of cultural, social and economic reasons. The number of registered nurseries with MOSA reached 138 in 2001/02, including 102 in northern governorates (West Bank) and 36 in southern governorates (Gaza Strip). The number increased to 181 in 2003/04 hosting 2,978 children (1,546 males and 1,432 females). Only 128 of these nurseries are licensed. All nurseries are owned by the private sector (55%) and NGOs (45%). The ratio children/teacher is 6–7.

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

The early childhood stage starts with the formation of embryo and continues until the age of 8 years.

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

For the age group 4-8 years, the number of enrolled children based on government statistics equals 227,158 children in 2004/05.

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

3.1. Legislation concerning ECCE:

The EFA Plan aims to achieve the general goals that governments and the international community committed to in Dakar Global Forum in 2000. A number of

challenges were identified prior to the preparation of strategic and general goals in the implementation plan and measurement of education quality by 2015. These challenges guide the formulation of general and specific goals and the determination of priorities within the framework of the EFA Plan (2000) for early childhood.

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

After the Ministry of Education (currently the Ministry of Education and Higher Education—MOEHE) took over the responsibility for education in 1994, it started setting out norms and conditions to license kindergartens and imposed two levels of supervision on the activities thereof in an indirect manner. Preschool education has generally been managed by the private sector, while governmental institutions excluded this type of education from their school system except for two pilot model kindergartens.

A survey covering preschool education institutions in 1995 revealed the existence of 1,000 nurseries and kindergartens out of which 730 were located in the West Bank and 270 in Gaza. The profit-making private sector ran around half the early childhood centers while the non-profit private sector ran the rest.

The MOEHE is currently supervising the kindergartens indirectly, monitoring the staff, the quality of programs and premises. It is also issuing the relevant licenses according to precise specifications. Nurseries are supervised by Ministry of Social Affairs.

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.):

The Ministry of Interior is responsible for granting a certificate of good behaviours for teachers, personnel, kindergartens owners which are sent to us with other documents to grant the required licences.

3.4. Type of personnel involved:

Employees of kindergartens include administrative staff, teachers, clerks and a cleaning lady. Tasks of the administrative staff vary according to the size of kindergartens. In larger kindergartens with large number of children full-time administrative staff is employed. However, in smaller kindergartens, the administrative staff also fulfills teaching functions and it is very common that the director of the kindergartens works as a teacher as well.

Usually women work in this sector and men's jobs are limited to the technical and maintenance aspects in addition to bus drivers to transport kids, accounting for an employment percentage in this sector of 9.2% of total workers. The number of workers increased in the year 2004/05 in the average of 5.6%, while it decreased between the years 1999–2004.

3.5. Type of staff training (requirements):

Most teachers in kindergartens do not have the necessary academic, training or scientific qualification. Regulations of the MOEHE specify that any director or administrator of a kindergarten should hold at least an Intermediate Diploma, but some violations take place. In 2004/05, the total number of workers in kindergartens was 4,891, including: 847 administrative staff, 2,885 teachers, 447 employees, and 712 genitors.

Personnel involved in kindergartens are qualified from General Secondary Certificate till Master degree. A 2004/05 survey shows that 876 teachers hold a diploma, 472 have a B.A, and 70 a higher diploma.

Training offered at the central and district levels focuses on topics about early childhood, such as: life skills to accommodate the standards of society, cultural and social inclusion that serve teaching learning process, child psychology, learning via playing, communication with children and parents, awareness courses in difficult circumstances, as well as training courses how to deal with handicapped people.

3.6. Recent national policies and reforms:

In order to achieve the first goal of expanding and developing comprehensive education at the early childhood stage, especially for needy students, the following goals have been identified:

- Enhance coordination between governmental and non-governmental bodies working in early childhood sector in order to prepare strategic national goals
- Activate the Palestinian Child Law and draft legislations in different areas (health, education and civil rights) and make efforts to ensure the implementation thereof
- Foster and expand the role of MOEHE in overseeing the quality of education, training teachers, modernizing and standardizing curricula
- Include the needs and concerns of the early childhood stage in governmental strategies and developmental programs including poverty alleviation schemes, development projects, and media and parents awareness programs
- Activate the role of local community and children's parents in formulating educational programs for children
- Increase the gross enrollment rate in kindergartens from 29% in 2003/2004 to 100% by the end of the plan
- Increase MOEHE share in providing enrollment opportunities for children in the pre-school stage
- Unify the vision of different sectors of the concept of early childhood from a comprehensive perspective
- Identify national reference indicators to monitor the situation of childhood in different sectors from a comprehensive perspective (health, culture, media and legislation)
- Assess the content and procedural research to evaluate the situation and disseminate principles of comprehensive approach through different sectors working with the early childhood.

The National Plan for early childhood endeavors to achieve the declared Dakar principles. The National Strategic Goals are:

- Develop comprehensive and standardized policies in the areas of protective care and development of early childhood
- Provide equal educational opportunities to all children in early childhood stage including children with special needs under all circumstances including emergencies
- Achieve comprehensive education for children in all areas of development
- Improve the quality of education to enable children to acquire knowledge and skills

3.7. Efforts targeted at vulnerable or disadvantaged children:

591 children with special needs were integrated into kindergartens in 2003/04 (40.1% of them male and 59.9% female). These children suffered from different disabilities: mental retardation, hearing, speech and motor handicaps.

The MOSA adopts a policy of integration of illegitimate children and those without known parents in guardian families in accordance with specific terms and standards. The goal is to enable these children to grow in a sound family environment that provides them with their basic needs. The number of families who applied to this project attained 59 in 2003 (29 in West Bank and 30 in Gaza), and 15 were allowed to guard a child.

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

See point 3.10

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

Training manuals and reference materials have been prepared (six books).

The child's education in the past used to focus on teaching without educational means like games and various activities. It also lacked methodological programs and mostly educational activities that contribute in developing the child's personality and urging him to interact and discover the language. Consequently, the objective of building the child's capacities disappears, as well as teaching him the life's skills and developing them, adapting to the society's values and criteria, developing of the self-monitoring sense and understanding others. Integration with the socio-cultural environment also vanishes in addition to the objective of developing intellectual skills, knowledge and use of modern means. In fact, most of pre-school institutions operate like day care centers or they apply the curriculum of the first class to give a momentum for the entry in the formal educational system.

This methodology was applied before MOEHE took over the responsibility of education but now the situation is different because of supervision, monitoring and training by MOEHE. Most education in the preschool stage focuses nowadays on active learning and using educational games and activity corners in kindergartens.

3.9.1. Objectives and aims:

The goal of improving the quality of education to enable children to acquire knowledge and skills (see point 3.6) requires the development of standardized curricula (interactive activities and curricular plan) for kindergartens and nurseries in addition to providing and producing educational games. It also involves providing services for early detection of disabilities among children and for children with special skills. There also needs to be reinforcement in overseeing the programs offered in kindergartens, nurseries and social care centers.

3.9.2. Learning areas and teaching-learning methods:

Active learning, educational toys and games and other types of learning through activities

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

20 hours per week, 31 weeks per academic year

3.10. Any other relevant and pertinent information

The number of kindergartens in Palestine is affected by the prevailing economic and political situation. It increased from 436 in 1994/1995 to 843 in 1999/2000 representing a rise of 93.3%. However, this number fluctuated at a percentage of 11.8% for the years 2001/02–2004/05 because of lack of security and the collapse of the economy. Investment in this sector dropped, unemployment and poverty rates skyrocketed and the population's living-standards deteriorated. Overall, the number of kindergartens increased by 66.5% between 1994/95 and 2004/05.

Teachers with a high school diploma attained 44.0% in 1994/95, increased to 54.2% in 2002/03 and decreased to 29.1% in 2004/05. Teachers with a BA degree or higher degree represented 7.3% in 1994/95 and attained 16.4% in 2004/05. The number of teachers grew faster than the number of children causing a fall of the ratio children/teacher from 30 in 1994/95 to 26 in 2004/05.

The gross enrolment rate went from 23.2% in 1994/95 to 29.4% in 2004/05. The net enrolment rate increased from 19.2% in 1994/95 to 36.2% in 1999/2000 and decrease to 22.9% in 2004/05.

The percentage of children in grade one who had been enrolled in early childhood programs increased from 46.4% (male 46.9%, female 45.8%) in 1994/95 to 73.3% (male 77.6%, female 69.3%) in 1999/00 and then dropped to 64.9% (male 77.6%, female 69.3%) in 2004/05.

Most health services are provided to mothers and children in the health centers of the West Bank and public clinics (152 clinics in 1996 that increased to 163 clinics in 1999). The number of mother and child care centers increased to 408 in 2002 including 329 in the West Bank and 89 in the Gaza Strip. Services provided by these centers include: treatment, first-aid, specialized therapy for diabetes, children diseases, nutrition, care of healthy children (follow up of children's natural growth), vaccines, health education, preventive detection tests (clinical and in labs),

epidemiological monitoring of infectious diseases, rehabilitation, hospital care, mouth and dental care. Services are offered through specialized pediatricians (in 5 health directorates), dentists, GP's, mother and childcare specialists, mother and child care nurses, primary health care doctors, health educators, nurses of the primary health care centers.

The PCBS nutrition survey in 2002 showed that 36.4% of Palestinian households encountered difficulties in accessing health services for their children. Inability to pay fees was the major cause (76.5%) while 71.9% could not reach health centers because of the closure of the frontiers.

The Childhood Protection program aims to provide protection against all forms of harm, abuse and negligence of children, mainly for orphans and children with dysfunctional families. The Ministry has appointed specialized counselors (Child protection counselors) to follow up on these children providing one male and another female counselor for every directorate. MOEHE has also established two child protection centers to serve abused, harmed and neglected children. It also oversees the 25 orphanages (13 of which receive children below six years, who now attained 145 children). The Ministry endeavors to defend the rights of these children and provide them with care, protection and comprehensive development.

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	Awareness programs for parents through kindergartens administrations at early childhood stage.	About 400 fathers and mothers in north and south. governorates
As component of health and nutrition programmes, such as information about child development included in health and nutrition visits	Health and nutrition programs through training courses and producing training manuals and reference materials	Principals and kindergarten educators 360.
Parent groups that meet to discuss issues of their young children, including health, nutritional status, and development	Individual meetings and meetings through kindergartens courses.	360 participants during the year
As component of adolescent, livelihood or literacy programmes		
Media broadcast, such as <i>Sesame Street</i> , with media for and with children		
Other (please specify)	Programs for reinforcing health practices for kindergarten	964 kindergartens that include 3,331 educators,

	children	in addition to 18 children supervisors
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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).

The Parents Education Program aims to raise awareness of fathers and mothers of their joint roles and responsibilities in bringing up their children properly. It educates them on comprehensive care and development, protection and provision of a health and safe environment, especially at the early childhood stage. The program organizes a number of seminars and discussions for parents to talk about the most important topics related to childhood in cooperation with NGOs. In 2003:

- 100 counselors were trained to be trainers in community public awareness and facilitation of dialogue and discussion with families.
- 100 university graduates volunteers and workers in governmental and non-governmental organizations were trained to organize discussion groups with parents.
- Coordination was established with 140 NGOs in different locations to contribute in this campaign.
- 4,000 participants (mothers, fathers, young men and women) took part in 160 discussion groups in marginalized areas.
- 750 meeting with parents were organized; most parents attended five consecutive sessions that lasted for two hours each.
- Two educational leaflets (Messages to Parents and Security Certificate) have been handed out to all participants.
- Some NGOs (associations, clubs, mosques...) continued the campaign through their workers and volunteers.

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

Not yet available, but there is the intention to establish a national-level system through an association that care about early childhood.

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

Not yet available, but there is an idea to form a frame for early childhood to set up national policies and strategies for this sector.

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