

Country profile prepared for the
Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2007
Strong Foundations: Early Childhood Care and Education

Lesotho

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programmes

Compiled by:
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LESOTHO

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 (UIS) the compulsory education age range is 6-12 years.

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

(ISCED = International Standard Classification of Education)

1.1. National definition of ISCED 0 programs:

Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) refers to a period spanning from birth to 8 years of age of a child's development. It is a time when the child receives utmost attention, care, stimulation and guidance to learn, to ensure that s/he grows and develops holistically into a healthy human being. The nutritional and health status of a child is critical during this period and proper care is needed to provide for all of the child's needs.

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

Coverage/access for the 3-5 year age group is 33% (2004).

1.3. ISCED 0 programs: statistics and indicators (source: UIS)

1.3.1. Enrolment:

	Percentage	Year
Gross enrolment ratio	30.6	2003/04
Net enrolment ratio	<i>Not available</i>	
Percentage of children entering primary education with previous preschool experience	<i>Not available</i>	

1.3.2. Enrolment by age group:

Less than 3 years of age	Age 3	Age 4	Age 5	Age 6	Age 7
2,818	4,494	6,464	161	7,684	

Source: UNICEF.

1.3.3. Teachers, 2003/04:

Total number of teachers	Of whom female (%)	Percentage of trained teachers (all)	Percentage of trained teachers (males)	Percentage of trained teachers (females)
2,023

1.3.4. Funding: Not available

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

1.3.5. Main source(s) of financing:

Government-Recurrent 0.54% (U\$792,308) for 2006/07; Capital-External Sources (UNICEF & World Bank (U\$196,615) for 2006/07.

2. OTHER ECCE PROGRAMS

(Generally preceding ISCED 0 programs)

2.1. National definition of other ECCE programs:

Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD)

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

3-5 years

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

See previous sections

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

3.1. Legislation concerning ECCE:

Children's Protection and Welfare Bill and the Sexual Offences Act

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

The role of the Ministry of Education, through the ECD Unit, is mainly to regulate and monitor ECCD services in the country.

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.):

ECCD centres are mainly operated by local communities, private individuals, NGOs and some church groups.

3.4. Type of personnel involved:

Teachers, caregivers and parents

3.5. Type of staff training (requirements):

Workshops, meetings training offered by agencies e.g. Institute of Development Management, Lesotho Institute of Public Administration.

3.6. Recent national policies and reforms:

The idea of day care centres—now called early childhood care and development programmes—came into being in the early 1970s under the initiative of the Lesotho National Council for Women (LNCW). Day Care Centres grew rapidly and in 1979, the Lesotho Pre-School and Day Care Association (LPDCA) was formed under the sponsorship of the Danish Volunteer Service. The LPDCA acted as the umbrella body for all early childhood matters. In 1985, the Government, through the Ministry of Education, established the Early Childhood Development Unit as a project funded both by UNICEF and the Bernard van Leer Foundation and due to the advocacy of the LPDCA. Its purpose was to coordinate, on behalf of government, all ECCD provision activities – through training ECCD teachers, mobilizing communities for awareness

creation of ECCD and eventually creating policy to guide and standardize provision of ECCD in the country. One of the main objectives of the ECCD Unit is to increase the accessibility of ECCD services.

A draft policy that will guide provision of this level of education has been developed and is under consideration for adoption by the government. The MOET is piloting a home-based approach to early childhood care which seeks to empower parents with parenting skills providing care for children within their homes and in neighborhood groups at minimal costs. The home-based approach is intended for families that are jobless and cannot afford heavy fees paid in the ECCD centres. Each village has identified a caregiver, who is in turn provided with training by the ECCD Unit through workshops. The caregivers work as volunteers, because there are no fees paid by parents; they work from Monday to Friday. Each day of the week the caregivers take about 3 hours (9 to 12) with children in the presence of parents, who take turns on different days of the week. Parents attend these sessions so that they can have an insight into what takes place and have a better understanding of child development and what kind of activities can be done with young children. This helps in that some of the activities can even be continued at home with the help of parents.

The process of developing a draft National Policy Document on ECE started in 1998 while the Directory of ECE centres in Lesotho was completed in July 1999, with financial assistance from UNICEF.

3.7. Efforts targeted at vulnerable or disadvantaged children:

The Home-based approach was introduced to address, specifically, the orphaned and vulnerable children who could not afford to be enrolled in ECCD centres where fees are paid.

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

Introducing a pre-primary class (5-year-olds) in Government primary schools nationwide. Increasing ECCD recurrent budget allocation, advanced preparations to introduce an ECCD teacher training programme at the Lesotho College of Education and efforts to expand the school feeding programme into ECCD centres and Home-bases.

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

3.9.1. Objectives and aims:

The curriculum covers widely the five areas of child development and ways to stimulate children positively so they can realize healthy development. As they reach 5 years of age, they are engaged in a school readiness programme that will enable them to get prepared for formal learning.

3.9.2. Learning areas and teaching-learning methods:

Perceptual development, Fantasy area, Arts area, Discovery area, Construction area, Outdoor play (sand and water play) and others. Teaching-learning methods used are predominantly play, games, music/songs, imitation, manipulation, etc.

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

25 hours per week – 26 weeks per year (180 days).

3.10. Any other relevant and pertinent information

The number of ECE centres increased from 1,530 in 1997 to 1,578 in 1998, while children's enrolments increased from 35,124 in 1997 to 36,079 in 1998. In a majority of cases, there was one teacher in each centre. Since 2003, Ministry of Education and Training started to capture statistical data on ECCD. Due to the high mobility of many ECCD centres and the fact that many are inaccessible, current data on ECCD seems to portray less ECCD centres (only those that were reached during data collection. Efforts are in place to continue data capturing of all ECCD centres, including the most inaccessible ones.)

According to the 2004 statistics on ECCD, there are 1,225 ECCD centres and Home-Bases with a total enrolment of 34,552 children (2-5 year olds) and 1,452 teachers.

[Main Source:

P. Ntsonyane & E.M. Sebatane. *Baseline information on ECCD issues. Lesotho country report*. ND, presumably end of the 90s. Available at: <http://www.ecdvu.org/> (August 2005). Updated on 8 December, 2005.]

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.	Mostly, all children enrolled in ECD centres/Home-Bases.(34,533).
As component of health and nutrition programmes, such as information about child development included in health and nutrition visits	Yes.	Health and Nutrition departments use ECCD as an entry point to reach and provide service to the 2+ to 5+ year old children. During their routine visits, the Depts. Access all services to the children in the ECCD programmes.
Parent groups that meet to discuss issues of their young children, including health, nutritional status, and development	Not aware of any formalized group that does this.	
As component of adolescent, livelihood or literacy programmes	Yes.	ECCD programme is working very closely with a programme run by the Catholic Nuns for Teenage Mothers. Here, mothers are educated about everything concerning parenthood and needs of children. At the same time, there is an adjacent ECCD centre where their babies/children

		are enrolled to attend ECCD program.
Media broadcast, such as <i>Sesame Street</i> , with media for and with children	No	
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. In 2001, Ministry of Education and Training supported selected communities to introduce the Home-Based approach. This targeted the needy communities/families of orphans and other vulnerable children. The Home-based approach started in 4 villages in 2 districts. To date, 2005, there is a total of 36 Home Bases in the 10 districts of Lesotho and, covering about 1,800 children.

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

Currently, there is no formalized national system for monitoring children’s development/readiness, but the ECCD Programme is being guided by the national ECCD curriculum which requires teachers to produce children’s individual reports on each of the five areas of development (cognitive, social, physical, moral & emotional) and their health and nutritional status. However, the Health Department and the Nutrition Department also under take their own monitoring activities which ECCD teachers are always able to access through checking the children’s Health Record Books at specified periods.

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

There is a draft policy on ECCD and it is awaiting approval. The draft has been revised to incorporate the concept of “integrated approach” to ECCD provision. Various stakeholders who work on children’s matters participated in the review, hence that enabled them to incorporate information relevant to their sectors.

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