

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

Thailand

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programmes

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THAILAND

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 6-14 years (6 years of primary + 3 years of lower secondary education).

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

(ISCED = International Standard Classification of Education)

1.1. National definition of ISCED 0 programs:

ECCD is concerned with children aged 0-5 years. Programs for early childhood care and development with organised learning activities and two or more hours per day include: nursery and day care (public/private, age 0-2) and for above 3 years old children, child development center (most are now transferred to the Sub-district Administration Organisations–SAO–under auspice of Department of Local Administration–DoLA–, Ministry of Interior), kindergartens (public– Office of Basic Education Council–OBEC, Ministry of Education, private–Office of Private Education Commission, MoE) and preschool classes (public–Ministry of Education, normally attached to public primary schools).

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

Under-3-year-old children:

Although most of the under-three children are cared by their parents and relatives, there are public and private childcare services available for mostly for employed parents. Various childcare providers operate the services; including Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Defence and other private sectors and foundations. National Institute for Child and Family Development (Ministry of Education) also operates day care for research and development.

3 to 5-year-old children:

Child care and development services for 3-5 children group are classified in three categories: (1) kindergarten (2 and 3 years); (2) preschool classes (in normal primary schools, just one year prior to Grade 1); and child development center (receiving children aged 2-5 years). The kindergarten and preschool children classes are mostly organized by the Ministry of Education, as well as some other public and private

sectors/foundations. The majority of child development centers are organized by SAOs throughout the country.

It should be noted that formerly most of these child development centers were under supervision of the Community Development Department, then under Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (the department has shifted under Ministry of Interior) and some with other ministries. Since 1999 when the Decentralization Act was promulgated, they were transferred to be in charge by SAOs, which are local people-elected government in all sub-districts throughout Thailand. And now the Department of Local Administration of Ministry of Interior is assigned to supervise these 19,000 child development centers.

Types of child care/development	Setting	Age served / Targeted	Opening hours	Main responsible agencies
Kindergarten / preschool classes	Rural/urban	3-5 yrs old	08:30 - 16:30	Office of Basic Education Council, MoE
Child Development Centers	Mostly in rural	2-5 yrs old	07:30 – 16:00	Department of Local Administration, MoI
Private sectors	Urban	3-5 yrs old	07:30 – 15:30	Private sectors under supervision by Office of Private Education Commission, MoE

1.3. ISCED 0 programs: statistics and indicators

1.3.1. Enrolment:

	Percentage	Year
Gross enrolment ratio	90.3	2004/05
Net enrolment ratio	84.6	2004/05
Percentage of children entering primary education with previous preschool experience	<i>Not available</i>	

Source: UIS.

1.3.2. *Enrolment ratio by age group (percentage, also including the first years of primary education when applicable):*

Less than 3 years of age	Age 3	Age 4	Age 5	Age 6	Age 7
0.0	21.8	88.8	100.0	35.9	0.0

(Data refer to the year 2000).

1.3.3. *Teachers:* Data not collected specifically for this category

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

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:*

Financing for ECCD include government, private sectors, NGOs, communities, parents and external sources, etc. In terms of Child Development Centres (under SAOs) and kindergartens/pre-school classes, the government is the major funding source.

In the public ECCD programs, the government funds provide for infrastructure and equipment, teacher and staff salaries, foods, utilities and basic operational expenses. Many Child Development Centres require monthly fees (varies by center) from parents to cover excess expenses (ie: meals, materials, and sometimes partial salaries for caregivers).

For kindergartens/pre-school classes within public school system, all services are provided free of charge.

2. OTHER ECCE PROGRAMS

(Generally preceding ISCED 0 programs)

Parenting programmes

2.1. National definition of other ECCE programs:

When concerning non-maternal, centre-based group care services that provides health, nutrition, but also some psychosocial or learning activities, there are nurseries and day care (age group 0-5 years) services available for infant and toddlers when family caregivers (ie: parents, relatives) are unavailable to take care of children during day time. The government support day care centres at parents' workplace (i.e. offices, factories). See also the sections above.

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

The terms childcare centres and nurseries are generally used to describe providers of childcare for any group of six or more children aged up to 3 years, although some childcare centres in rural villages may cater to 5- and even 6-year-olds.

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

Data not collected specifically for this category.

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

3.1. Legislation concerning ECCE:

The 1997 Thai Constitution gives importance to family stating that Thai government must provide basic services for children and family, especially in providing care and development of young children.

The 1999 National Education Act also emphasizes equal and quality education and development for all Thais. In Section 18, it stipulates that early childhood and basic education shall be provided in the following institutions:

- (1) Early childhood development institutions, namely: childcare centres; child development centres, preschool child development centres of religious institutions; initial care centres for disabled children or those with special needs, or early childhood development centres under other names
- (2) Schools, namely: state schools, private schools, and those under jurisdiction of Buddhist, or other religious institutions
- (3) Learning centres, namely :those or organized by non formal education agencies; individuals; families; communities; community organizations; local administration organizations; private organizations; professional bodies;

religious institutions; enter[roses; hospitals; medical institutions; welfare institutes, and other social institutions

The 9th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2002-2006) continues the essence of the 8th Plan to promote a holistic and balanced approach to development with human resources as a centre for mobilization and development. In March 2004, Child Protection Act has become effective and implemented to promote protection of children's rights with the establishment of government infrastructure to facilitate the well-being of all children.

In 2005, draft National Policy and Plans for Early Childhood Education (drafted in 2000 by then Office of National Education Commission) is being revisited/revised with inputs from all involved ministries (i.e. Ministries of Education, Social Development and Human Security, Interior, and Public Health). The roadmap was drafted in 2005 and the National Policy and Strategy for Early Childhood Development 2006-2008 will be submitted to the cabinet for approval.

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

In Thailand, several Ministries have been involved in ECD. In the draft National Policy and Strategy for ECD, 2006-2008 (under development), it will be proposed to set up the official body for overall coordination of ECD (i.e. National Committee for ECD) composed of representative from government sector, private sector, business sector and specialists.

The major ministries responsible for supervision and coordination of ECCD services are as follows:

1. The Ministry of Education, under current Education Reform, will most likely transfer the responsibility of pre-primary education into SAOs and communities. In the meantime, MoE will focus on provision of high quality basic education (primary + secondary level). The Office of Basic Education Commission (OBEC) has prepared the core early childhood curriculum and disseminated it to all Educational Service Area Offices to give to parents, guardians and teachers so as to ensure that they make common effort to quality development of preschool children. The Ministry of Education also organized training workshops for all educational supervisors who will support and promote educational institutes to be technical leaders on early childhood care and development. Moreover, numbers of universities and academia including National Institute for Child and Family and Family Development, Mahidol University have served as consultants and resources for research development and policy making. Office of Education Council plays the key role in a national policy and inter-agency coordination.
2. The Department of Health, Ministry of Public Health, is mandated to take care of the children's health since they are in mother's womb by focusing on checking and providing needed assistance to children and families including knowledge dissemination to all parents. The Department of Health has implemented a number of ECCD projects, e.g. Parenting Education Project, Safe Delivery Ward Project,

Nutrition Dental Development Corner, and Healthy Child Development Corner Project. DoH in co-operation with the Prime Minister's Office, each newborn infant, born between July 28,2005 and July 27,2006, will receive a gift box containing parenting guide for breast feeding, toys, story books and a colorful blanket. The expectation is for parents and caregivers to use these materials in providing more interesting learning environment for infants.

3. The Ministry of Social Development and Human Security has worked to promote and develop the life quality and security of the family institute especially through the legislation process. Recently, on 30 March 2004, the Child Protection Act of 2003 has been effective and reinforced for the best interest of children. More systems shall be developed to provide appropriate care, protection and enhance development of children.
4. The Ministry of Interior, through its Department of Local Administration (DOLA), provides support to the Sub-district Administrative Organizations (SAO) to extend opportunities for all preschool children, between the age of 3 to 5, to receive quality ECCD service both in rural and urban settings. It also mobilizes all parties to participate in promoting quality early childhood care and development. The major aims of DOLA are to extend early childhood to get quality ECD services and to promote participation of various parties (including people, family, community, private organization, professional organization and industry) in early childhood development. Its Community Development Department, on the other hand, contributes to enhance local community's capacities to organize quality ECD activities.

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.):

See the previous section.

3.4. Type of personnel involved:

Classroom teachers (kindergarten/pre-school classes) /caregivers (child development centres and other day care), administrators, and a cook are the most common staffing.

3.5. Type of staff training (requirements):

In case of child development centers (DoLA, MOI), the staff directly responsible for taking care of children are called caregivers while those working in kindergarten schools will be teachers. Due to the fact that the notion of teacher licensing has yet been in effective, they do not need to enter any kind of professional qualification examination.

Caregivers: Minimum requirement is that they are over 18 years old and have completed the nine years of compulsory education. National standards for childcare centres now require all caregivers to undergo a six-week training course, which is based on a standard core curriculum, either before staff are hired or within three months of their employment, provided by any institution approved by Ministry of Education. The quality control of staffing and performance assessment have been found only in government service providers when limited-term contracts have been adopted in order to preserve good children caregivers and awarded with in-service training (5 days/35 hours).

Kindergarten teachers: The minimum requirement is a four-year undergraduate course leading to a bachelor's degree in education or a related course.

3.6. Recent national policies and reforms:

The Roadmap and the National Policy and Strategy for Early Childhood Care and Development 2006-2008 is being drafted, which will be the first national plan that addresses early childhood care and development by establishing the national early childhood committee comprising every early childhood development agencies. The Plan defines national strategies for early childhood development in all aspects, involving every party including parents, caregivers, community, local and national enterprises. This draft will be submitted to the Cabinet for approval.

Now this new National Plan of Action for Children has been already drafted and it will be submitted to the Cabinet for approval in November 2005. It outlines the strategy for early childhood care and development three categories as follows.

1. Strategy for early childhood development

- 1.1 Under-three child development: The family is the core for under-three childcare and development. If necessary, parents may send under-three children to child care centers organized by public and private sectors as mentioned earlier. The child caregivers in these centers must receive proper training concerning childcare and development. Importantly, the parents and/or relatives must cooperate closely with the childcare and development centers.
- 1.2 3-5 children development: The family continues to be the core for childcare and development. The child development center, school and other forms of childcare and development, formal, non-formal and informal, are mandated to provide child development services. The child caregivers of these institutes shall be "professional". That is they must have correct knowledge, attitudes and skills for providing the best care for children, with close cooperation of parents.
- 1.3 Child development services for 0-5 years old shall be operated with quality standard, with regular health services, good referral system and keeping up with the rapid changing environment. This shall ensure linkages between home, child development center, school, and health services. When in need, the child must receive proper check-up, cure and/or rehabilitation.

2. Strategy for parents and child caregivers

- 2.1 Early childhood development (0-5) follows the principle that home and family with parents and guardians and members of the family are bases

for childcare and child development must be holistic.

- 2.2 Provide knowledge and skills for those concerned with preschool children concerning child development psychology since the child is in womb up to 5 years old. This includes basic knowledge and information for development of 6-8 children. All levels concerned must have correct understanding of early childhood care and development, from family to community and experts.

3. Strategy for promotion of early childhood concerned agencies

- 3.1 The State and society are responsible for organizing environment and services to ensure that the family and child caregivers can provide effective and holistic care for preschool children from planning, surveillance, examination and evaluation.
- 3.2 Prepare readiness for communities and local organizations to provide support for families with preschool children and to ensure that they can organize the best early childhood care and development for 0-5 children.
- 3.3 When the community is strong economically and technically, the State should give full responsibilities to local community (family, community, Sub-district Administrative Organization, municipality, private sectors, NGOs, and other business sectors) to operate early childhood care and development activities, with the State playing the roles in setting up national policies, standards, monitoring and evaluation as well as providing needed support for various disadvantaged groups.
- 3.4 Media has important roles in promotion of early childhood care and development through the dissemination of relevant knowledge/information and skills to parents as well as enhancing public awareness to see the importance of early childhood development.

3.7. Efforts targeted at vulnerable or disadvantaged children:

As long as the government is concerned, it does not operate ECCD services targeting at specific group of vulnerable children but operate in an inclusive manner.

As mentioned above (section 3.3), ECCD services are provided mostly by NGOs, specifically in the remote or difficult-to-reach areas where publicly funded services are not available.

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

The Ministry of Education through OBEC collaborates with the Ministry of Health in implementing a school health care programme which includes pre-school or kindergarten classes. This includes health care education for children and their parents, routine health check-ups, provision of first aid or basic medicines as needed, and attention to the sanitation and hygiene conditions of the school and its surroundings.

A school lunch programme is now a permanent feature of public kindergartens. This was the result of an OBEC-led campaign for subsidized school lunches for all primary schools which led to an 11-year period of government funding.

OBEC, under the Ministry of Education, concentrated its efforts on expanding access to kindergartens in rural areas where access and participation rates are lower

compared to urban centres. By 2001, OBEC had established a total of 67,200 pre-school classes in 29,410 rural primary schools. These classes serve almost 1.4 million children each year. The pre-primary classes are financed with a 37,675,000-baht annual budget. Public school kindergartens are much more affordable and accessible to most families because the kindergarten is supported through several financing sources led by the government. The provision of public funds has provided the centres with stability and fuels continuing progress for the kindergarten programme.

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

The curricula for ECCD programs are separately developed by each agency in accordance with the principles and guidelines stated in the National Scheme of Education, considered as a document of long-term educational strategies. Normally, the provision of learning experience mainly emphasizes on physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development through everyday activities. For example, Department of Curriculum and Instruction Development, Ministry of Education, has developed and issued a Curriculum and Guideline for Pre-Primary Education 1997 for the age groups 0-3 and 3-5 years to be beneficial to both executives and practitioners for experience and classroom setting, as reflected in Major Program 1 (Education for All) in the current Educational Development Plan.

3.9.1. Objectives and aims:

The goals, functions and standards for childcare centres are now clearly defined and disseminated in a generally systematic way. Childcare centres and nurseries are expected to provide the following services: 1) food and nutrition; 2) health (growth monitoring, first aid and immediate treatment for sick children in cases of emergency; monitoring and advice for parents regarding e.g. immunization); 3) physical care and attention to personal hygiene (hand-washing, bathing, dressing-up, ensuring adequate rest e.g. afternoon nap); and 4) support for holistic child development (love and care; space, toys and opportunities for physical movement; development of senses through exploration of their environment; a variety of learning experiences that allow for individual choices driven by their own interests; opportunities to observe, investigate, problem solve, invent, explore different media, express themselves, interact fully with peers and adults and learn social skills and acquire self-discipline).

All childcare centres are expected to maintain complete health, growth and child development records for individual children. Except for the Child Development Centre at the National Institute for Child and Family Development at Mahidol University, childcare centres do not provide services such as on-site therapy (physical, speech, play, or family counselling) for children with disabilities or other special needs. If there is a need for these kinds of services for children attending the centre, the child and family are referred to specialized institutions which are able to provide quality care.

All public and many private kindergartens implement the Curriculum for Pre-Primary Education for 3- to 5-year-olds developed by the Ministry of Education. The 2003 curriculum for pre-primary education organized for children aged 3-5 years focus on preparing them in terms of physical, intellectual, emotional/mental and social development domain.

The Ministry of Interior has also developed guidelines for childcare centres. There are some private sector childcare centres who position themselves as school readiness programmes, and they therefore adopt the kindergarten curriculum developed by the MOE which is designed to address school readiness objectives.

3.9.2. Learning areas and teaching-learning methods:

Curricula at the pre-primary level are organized into teaching units which are to orient children's daily activities, and to effectively achieve this the Office of Education Council and OBEC acknowledge the importance of adequate training for teachers, childcare givers and administrators. Implementation of the curriculum varies widely between urban and rural centres, largely as the former tend to have more highly-educated and better-trained staff, greater financial and material resources, and a higher level of active parental involvement and support, as they are often in a better position to contribute time and material resources.

3.9.3. Average number of hours per week and average amount of weeks per year: See section 1.2

3.10. Any other relevant and pertinent information

Public childcare centres are sponsored by the government, i.e. they operate with public funds. These funds generally cover salaries and running costs, while the facility is usually either constructed on public land or housed in a public building. In rural areas, the Sub-district Administrative Organization (SAO) is responsible for allocating funds for childcare centres and disbursing these crucial resources. Parents give a small monthly contribution (ranging from the equivalent of US\$0.20 to US\$1), with the amount varying depending on the resources of both the community and the individual parents. In rural villages and some urban poor communities where community participation in ECCE programmes is effectively mobilized, there are village committees who are actively involved in managing the childcare centre. Public childcare centres may also receive donations from private foundations, individuals or corporate donors.

In Bangkok and other large cities, where there are more private kindergartens that cater to middle- and upper-income families who can afford to pay the tuition and other fees, children are usually enrolled for three years (starting at age 3). These private kindergartens are supervised by the office of the Private Education Commission. Their statistics for the academic year 2000-2001 showed that children in private kindergartens account for 28 per cent (547,411 children) of the total enrolment figure for pre-primary classes. The average class size in private pre-schools is 30 children for each class of 3-year-olds and 31 in each class of 4- and 5-year-olds.

(Main sources:

Thailand Country Report, submitted at the 4th ASEAN Regional Seminar on Early Childhood Care and Development Phase II, 19-21 October 2005, Hanoi Vietnam.
UNESCO PROAP. *Early childhood care and education in South-East Asia: Working for access, quality and inclusion in Thailand, the Philippines and Viet Nam*. UNESCO PROAP, Bangkok, 2004.)

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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through parents/teacher meetings 	
As component of health and nutrition programmes, such as information about child development included in health and nutrition visits	Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parenting education classes provided as part of anti-natal care and vaccination/growth development checkup visits to community health clinics. Information and education provided at nutrition-dental-developmental corner in the health centers or community hospitals (including showcasing of the age specific toys, and books for story telling – family can borrow them). 	
Parent groups that meet to discuss issues of their young children, including health, nutritional status, and development	Yes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> through kindergartens/pr e-school and other forms (ie: village committee) 	
As component of adolescent, livelihood or literacy programmes	No <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-formal education Dept./ 	

	MoE is planning to incorporate parenting education in link with its literacy programme (esp. in disadvantaged communities)	
Media broadcast, such as <i>Sesame Street</i> , with media for and with children	<p>Yes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to the national media regulation, 30% of air time of TV/radio programs should be allocated for education and public services so ECCD should be also part of this. • Also, there are various parents workshops provided in link with private sectors (ie: parents/child magazines, products for baby/child) a lot through TV program/spots. 	
Other (please specify)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissemination of Birthday Gift Sets for newborns (with parents guide) – community health clinics introduce and educate parents on “how to use the materials in the Set (ie: toys, books, CDs) during their visits. 	All newborn babies born during the past 1 year

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).

Religious groups may have such programmes

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

Young child's growth and development are monitored on regular basis through community well-child clinics.

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

The national policy and strategy for ECD is being developed and to be submitted to the cabinet for approval in 2006. See also the previous sections.

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