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Strong Foundations: Early Childhood Care and Education

Viet Nam

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programmes

Compiled by:
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VIET NAM

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.

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

(ISCED = International Standard Classification of Education)

1.1. National definition of ISCED 0 programs:

Early Childhood Education

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

Three months to 6 years of age

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

1.3.1. Enrolment:

	Percentage	Year
Gross enrolment ratio	46.7	2003/04
Net enrolment ratio	43.0	2001/02
Percentage of children entering primary education with previous preschool experience	<i>Not available</i>	

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
16	62.6		92	93.4(*)	

Source: Ministry of Education and Training, 2004.

Note: Data refer to the year 2004. (*) Primary education enrolment ratio.

1.3.3. Teachers:

Total number of teachers	Of whom female (%)	Percentage of trained teachers (all)	Percentage of trained teachers (males)	Percentage of trained teachers (females)
123,517	100	75	...	75

Source: Ministry of Education and Training, 2004.

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:

In 1999, budget for early childhood education was only 5.4% of the national budget for education. From 2002, the Government regulates that budget for early childhood education must be at least 10% of the national budget for education, however, only 18/64 provinces and cities have been able to invest this much, there are still 17 provinces that provide only 5 to 7%, many other provinces don't invest their budget for early childhood education as planned.

2. OTHER ECCE PROGRAMS

(Generally preceding ISCED 0 programs)

2.1. National definition of other ECCE programs:

Not available

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:

The Education Law 2005 defines early childhood education as a part of the national educational system. The objectives of early childhood education are to help children develop physically, emotionally, intellectually and aesthetically, in order to shape the initial elements of personality as well as to prepare children for the first grade (of primary education). However, early childhood education is not compulsory nor a pre-requisite for entry into primary school. Rather, the government tries to create demand among parents and promotes children's participation in early childhood education through the parent education programmes and the use of various media for raising awareness.

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

In principle, the Ministry of Health is responsible for monitoring the quality of health care in childcare centres, but there is no apparent co-ordination between the district level education office and their colleagues in the health ministry. At the village level, it is clear that the public health system is well utilized, and families assume responsibility for bringing their children to health centres.

The Early Childhood Education Department of the MoET was established in 1991 and is now responsible for day-care centres and kindergarten schools. The ECE Unit at the national level is responsible for overall supervision of these childcare and education programmes (ECCE), and there is also an ECE Unit at the provincial and district levels under the provincial service and district department for education and training.

MOET is responsible for the development of programming strategies, guidelines and standards for ECE. The Early Childhood Education Department at the Ministry is the leading agency at the central level. The ECE Department shares responsibility for national coordination of ECCE with the Ministry of Health, the Committee for Population, Family and Children and the Viet Nam Women's Union. They are responsible for both state and non-state ECE programmes. The four central level agencies divided responsibilities for the management of ECCE as follows: 1) the

MoET is responsible for developing programmes and standards, supervision, monitoring of the implementation of Early Childhood Care and Education programmes and for promoting parent education on ECCE; 2) the Ministry of Health attends to the health and nutrition components including immunization for all children under five, disease prevention, nutrition education, food supplementation and other interventions to reduce malnutrition; 3) the Committee for Population, Family and Children is responsible for overall child-focused policy which, of course, includes national early childhood development policy; and 4) the Viet Nam Women's Union is responsible for parent education to enhance their knowledge of parenting practices. Together with the MoET, they active advocate for promoting the importance of children's participation in ECCE programmes among parents. They also have a special focus on children under 3 years who are presently underserved or in programmes of poor quality compared to 3 to 5-year-olds.

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.):

According to official Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) documents, there are basically three kinds of ECCE programmes through which children under six years of age are provided with the appropriate early learning experiences, or through which parents are supported as caregivers. These are: 1) childcare or day-care centres, crèches and nurseries for infants up to three years; 2) kindergartens; 3) parent education programmes. Kindergartens have always been defined in terms of both education and childcare while the day-care programme is also expected to provide early learning experiences. This direction has been sustained by the Ministry of Education and Training's Early Childhood Education Department and other lead agencies since they assumed responsibility for coordinating both types of ECCE services. Thus there are some programme aspects that are common to both in terms of programming guidelines or standards prescribed by the MoET.

The rapid expansion of non-state service provision for childcare is a significant development. MoET statistical data reveals that within a four-year period (from 1994 to 1998) coverage by non-state childcare centres almost doubled from 33 per cent to 62.5 per cent. There are two main types of non-state ECCE programmes: 1) community-owned and operated crèches and kindergartens usually in rural villages; and 2) privately-owned crèches and kindergartens, often in urban and advantaged areas. Some of these community-owned centres may receive subsidies from the government and the communes, but the vast majority is now entirely community-owned and supported mainly by parental contributions.

The first type of non-state ECCE programme is the community-owned crèches or kindergarten, established by village residents and local leaders, in rural villages where there were no state-run programmes. The MoET defines these community-owned centres as those established, invested for infrastructure, covered financially for operating costs by local community. Parents and communes provide all financial and material resources needed to establish the crèches or kindergarten schools; they do not receive funding from central government. The MoET ECE Department provides guidelines while the Provincial and District Education Departments monitor the implementation of their programmes.

The second type of childcare is provided by entrepreneurial individuals or organizations from the private sector who set up home-based centres as well as pre-schools in big cities or in urban areas. These private centres are established, invested for infrastructure, covered financially for operating costs by social organizations, social-professional organizations, economic organizations, or individuals with non-state budget funding. They cater to the children of more affluent families and rely mainly on the fees paid by parents for their operations. They account for only 7.9 per cent of service provision, which is understandable given the economic situation of many Vietnamese families. Private service providers are required by the MoET to register, apply for their licence and comply with the prescribed guidelines, and their compliance is monitored by the local authorities. As provided by Education Law, Chairman of the District People's Committee has the authority of giving permission for establishment of community-owned and private centres.

State-run kindergartens account for the largest percentage of children's ECCE participation rates, specifically for the four- and five-year-old age groups, and are quite sufficiently established in most parts of the country, with the exception of several rural areas, mostly in the south and central areas, as well as in the remote mountain villages of the north. There are also more non-state ECCE programmes run by local communities or private individuals in the Northern provinces compared to the central and southern areas.

3.4. Type of personnel involved:

Not available

3.5. Type of staff training (requirements):

Basically, the number and structure of ECE teachers and management staff can meet the current requirements of ECE network. In 2004, the country has 146,517 staff of which 36,522 are crèches teachers and 109,995 are kindergarten teachers and about 23,000 management staff at all levels. Non-formal teachers and staff represent 63.33 per cent, who mainly based in rural areas.

Over two third of ECE teacher and management staff is working in non-public ECE establishments. Specifically, non-public crèches teachers occupy 73 per cent and non-public kindergarten teachers 60 per cent. In the mountainous and ethnic minority areas, there are 7,500 ethnic minority teachers. ECE sector is trying to increase the number of ethnic minority teachers via organising various forms of short term teacher-training.

At present, 69.5 per cent of ECE teachers and management staff obtaining professional standard, meaning that they have attended at least two-year of formal pre-service ECE programmes or equivalent. 6.2 per cent of them are graduates from three or four years of ECE formal training programmes. 24.2 per cent of teachers and management staff are under-standardised or untrained, they are mainly in rural areas. The majority of teacher and management staff in difficult areas got primary level and short-term training. They attended nine-month training, even only three to six months, or have had no pre-service training at all, and are literally learning on the job.

Four national ECE Teacher Training Colleges in three of the major cities, namely Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City and Nha Trang, have Early Childhood Care and

Education Faculties where teachers can enroll in the two- to three-year programmes. In addition, there are intermediate pre-school teacher training schools in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City that offer short courses as well as the two- to three-year programmes. All provincial teacher training schools offer ECCE training programmes as well, but at this stage there are evidently very few teachers who are able to enroll in these training programmes. The rate of expansion due to the increased demand for ECCE programmes has far outpaced the supply of teachers.

3.6. Recent national policies and reforms:

The seventh national delegation congress of the Party assigned the task: “To develop the ECE, increasing the rate of children receiving care in kindergartens, or children group, improving knowledge for persons giving childcare service at home”.

Resolution adopted in the second session of the eighth Plenum of Central Committee of the Party continued to affirm the ECE development objectives up to 2005: “To develop learning at ECE level suitable to specific conditions and requirements at each individual area. To ensure admission to the upper pre-school education for almost under 5 year-old children, helping them get ready for primary school enrolment.

Resolution No. 40/2000/QH and No. 37/2004/QH respectively adopted by the Tenth and Eleventh National Assembly on education and training did affirm the objective of programme renovation for improving the comprehensive education quality of the youth and the task for reformation of ECE programme.

The Government Decision regarding Education Development Strategy (2001) introduced ECE development objective up to 2010: “To improve the under 6 year old child care and education quality, creating basis for the child comprehensive development in term of physicality, sentimentality, intellectuality and aesthetic aspects; to extend kindergarten and pre-school system in all inhabited areas, especially in rural and difficult areas; to strengthen the dissemination of knowledge and advice of care and education to the family”.

The following basic directions in early childhood care and education (ECCE) were clearly articulated in the National EFA Plan of Action (2003-2015): (i) to provide access to ECCE provision for 0-5 year old children, prioritizing ethnic minority and disadvantaged children; (ii) to ensure that all children will complete one year of quality preschool education as preparation for primary school; (iii) to continuously improve activities and services aimed at fostering mental, emotional, physical and social development of young children aged 0-5; (iv) to formulate and adopt a national policy for affordable and quality ECCE; and (v) to strengthen ECCE management capacity at local level.

Government Resolution No. 05/2005/NQ-CP dated 18 April 2005 on the socialization promotion for education, culture and sport did build up new requirements and objectives related to ECE development by 2015 complying with market economy’s principles, and at the same time ensuring equality in education.

The Education Law 2005 (Articles 4, 21, 22, 23, 24, 69, 84), Law on Child Protection, Care & Education (Articles 6, 10, 11, 18, 19) state: “The children have their right to access to a basic education system from the early education for their personality comprehensive development and readiness for the first grade in primary education through suitable education contents and methods” and “Early childhood education establishments have to secure all necessary conditions for ensuring the

quality child care and education; the State allocates appropriate proportion of the annual budget for protection, care and education of the child”.

The Party and the Government policies, as mentioned above, have created basic legal foundation for the direction of ECE development in all over the country. Together with these, the socio-economic development achievements during the past 20 years have also had overall effect onto ECE development.

After the Prime Minister Decision No. 161/2002, local authorities have actively formulated their plans to develop ECE network within their districts and communes. Until the end of June 2005, 61 of 64 provinces/cities having their ECE development plan up to 2010 approved by the Provincial Peoples’ Committee for implementation. Their efforts have not only erased 218 ECE *white* communes (i.e. Commune does not have any early childhood education class), but also opened 5,625 new classes, providing 166,755 children living in especially difficult areas with opportunity to access to ECE services.

School year 2000-2001 saw the number of children in ECE units being 2,480,272, the figure was 2,754,094 in year 2004-2005; achieving an annual averaged increase of 2.3%, among which pre-school increase rate was 2.8%. The number of 5 year-old children going to preschool (including short term classes in difficult areas) were in drastic increase, with 1,163,784 children in 2004, making up 91.9% of the children of the age range. The number of children attending non-public establishments have been increasing very fast and making up high percentage: 74.9% of children in crèches and 55.2% of children in kindergartens.

The fact that percentages of children entering the services are diverse and not equally allocated between the areas is an important character current ECE.

The national percentage of children of ECE age entering the service is 41%, in which 16% are in crèches and 62.6% in kindergartens. The highest percentages are seen in the Red river delta provinces (36.8% for crèches and 82.5% for kindergartens) and the lowest are seen in Mekong river delta (5.3% for crèches and 49.5% for kindergartens) and Highland provinces (5.47% for crèches and 52.9% for kindergartens).

The Decision 161 of the Prime Minister (2002) which was issued to increase investment in preschool education, expand the system of crèches and kindergartens, give priority to socio-economically disadvantaged and geographically isolated areas, disseminate child care knowledge to families, and to create better conditions for children to develop emotionally, cognitively, socially and physically. In other words, early childhood development was for the first time being earnestly promoted by the government. The policies and mechanism of recruitment, deployment, salary and other benefits have been increasingly improved, creating favourable conditions develop ECE teachers and management staff. The Prime Minister Decision No. 161 provides beneficial conditions for non-formal teachers in different regions. Their income and living standard have been ameliorated in many provinces and cities: more than 9,930 teachers have their contracts with average salary being more than 290,000 VND/month (about US\$18). More than 70 per cent of non-formal teachers (62,396/81,557) have social welfare and health insurances.

3.7. Efforts targeted at vulnerable or disadvantaged children:

For the first time, a national project on early childhood education development (2006-2015) has been approved by the Government states the priority to invest into

construction of kindergarten schools and classes in the especially difficult areas, ethnic minority areas to ensure each commune would have an early childhood education establishment that meet requirements of infrastructures and equipment.

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

The National Project on early childhood education development aims at improving quality of care and education for children; expanding early childhood education establishment in all population areas, especially rural and difficult areas; strengthening activities to provide information to parents and counselling on child care practices to families. Specific objectives of this national project include:

- Expand the coverage of early childhood education to meet parents childcare needs and close the gaps between different regions. Increase enrolment rate of children under 3 years of age from 15 per cent in 2005 to 20 per cent by end 2010 and 30 per cent in 2015. For 3 to 4 year old children, increase from 58 per cent by end 2005 to 67 per cent in 2010 and 75 per cent in 2015. Increase enrolment rate of 5 year old children for their school readiness in primary education from 92% by end 2005 to 95% by end 2010 and 99% by end 2015.
- Children enrolled in early childhood education establishments are nurtured, cared and educated with good quality. Reduce malnutrition in ECE centres to 12 per cent in 2010 and below 10 per cent by end 2015. 80 per cent of children enrolled meet development standards by end 2010 and 95 per cent by end 2015. ECE establishments will be regularly assessed their quality of care and education, by 2010, 50 per cent of these establishments will meet quality standards and 70 per cent by end 2015.
- Early childhood education in ethnic minority, remote, frontier and island areas border will be enhanced and step by step meeting Government standards for quality of care and education. By end 2010, there will be enough classes for ethnic minority children to complete at least one year of 5 year preschool education programme before they enter primary schools.
- Increase number of parents with children under six years of age provided with information and basic skills on nurturing, caring and educating young children to 70 per cent by end 2010 and 90 per cent by end 2015.

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

3.9.1. Objectives and aims:

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is the first learning stage within the national education system. ECE implements the caring, bringing up, educating tasks for the child as from three month to six year of age. The national early childhood care and education curriculum objective is to promote the child physical, sentimental, intellectual and aesthetic development and to form the initial personality factor which creates their readiness for school at grade One (see also point 3.9.2 below).

3.9.2. Learning areas and teaching-learning methods:

The National Early Childhood Education and Care Curriculum consists of the Programme for Education and Care of crèches (3-36 months children) and the Programme for Education and Care of kindergartens (3-6 year old children) which are developed in line with the spirit of synchronized renovation in their objectives, contents, methods and form of organising the educational activities, in conditions for implementation and assessment. The Programme inherits and absorbs the quintessence in ECE in Vietnam as well as other advanced countries within the region and in the world. At the same time, the programmes meet the demand of the parents and society in the industrialization and modernisation stage of the country.

Childcare centres generally provide full- or half-day childcare services, with established routines for personal care, health and hygiene such as feeding (with two meals within the day), bathing, dressing, toilet routines, and naps or periods of rest. Most of the day-care centres are basically child minding programmes providing mainly custodial care (feeding, hygiene, rest, supervision). In some rare instances, there are childcare givers with limited formal training but who have experience and sufficient knowledge and skills. In principle, childcare centres are expected to provide things to play with and learning materials that are appropriate for infants from three months to 3 years of age. They are also expected to organize group activities for music, movement and storytelling in order to support young children's physical, psychosocial, cognitive and language development. The programme pays much attention to ensuring the safety, fostering and physical and psychological health care as well as ensuring a reasonable living routine for the child. Concurrently, the programme provide integrated educational activities with due attention paid to the adult communication and attachment to the child which creates opportunities for children to explore and discover in order to stimulate the child sensor and physical development, psychological functions and form abilities for the child development in later stages.

While kindergarten classes provide children with learning experiences that aim to support their overall development and facilitate their adjustment to primary school, they also offer a full-day childcare programme that provides attention to children's physical and health needs (meals, exercise, afternoon nap, toileting and hygiene). Additional health services, e.g. immunization and growth monitoring, are supposed to be co-ordinated by the Ministry of Health. Support for children's social and emotional development is provided through the experiences gained from group life and the relationships developed with teachers and other children in the school.

The government has prioritized curriculum reform efforts in the past decade. Instead of simply focusing on expanding access, the commitment to improving the quality of care and education is evident. Since 1998, MOET focused on renovation of types and organization of care and education activities in early childhood education establishments. Child-centred and activity-based approach has been applied widely in the country. Pilot implementation of the new curriculum began in 2003, initially among five-year-olds in kindergartens. The revised curriculum applies the thematic approach to organizing content so that children are able to explore their everyday world more meaningfully and in greater depth. The themes included in the national curriculum of Viet Nam are: My self, My family, Our kindergarten, Our village. With each theme, there are activities and materials in the classroom that give an indication of how concepts related to the specific theme, e.g. village workers and community activities, are taught. An environment combined of traditional and contemporary values has positively influenced care and education activities in early childhood

education establishments. There are posters, matching cards and storybooks to support the content and introduce information about the theme. Children engage in small-group discussions on the topic at hand, and they also work on arts and crafts and visit places that are related to the particular theme.

The commitment to a child-centred approach that emphasizes play as an integral part of the ECCE curriculum is visible in the classrooms where the revised national pre-school curriculum is being implemented. The daily schedule is structured to provide opportunities for whole/large group activities, small-group interaction, as well as individual activities. An increasing number of classrooms in Viet Nam now feature distinct learning corners that contain learning materials for a particular curriculum content area e.g. language, arts, mathematics and science. Classroom furniture is child-sized and conducive to flexible group sizes.

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

Childcare centres and home-based childcare services are clearly designed to provide childcare support. There are various options available to parents depending upon their work schedules as well as resources. Centres are open five to six days a week, and children can spend either full or half days in childcare centres. Children can be fetched later in the afternoon instead of a rigid schedule that would compel parents to cut their working hours short. Children are brought to the centres between 7 a.m. and 8 a.m., depending on the situation of their parents, and are fetched between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. Day-care centres offer various options aside from the full-day programmes; there are also children who spend only half days in the centre (morning or afternoon) depending on the family's needs, and children may or may not eat their lunch in the centre.

State-run kindergartens generally operate as full-day classes which begin anywhere from 6.30 a.m. in the rural areas to 7.30 a.m. in big cities like Hanoi and Hochiminh, to 4 p.m. In rural areas, younger children aged around four years old usually do not return for an afternoon session when they go home for lunch. Private kindergartens may start at 8 a.m. or 9 a.m. and do not necessarily implement full-day schedules so the children spend about three to four hours in the kindergarten

3.10. Any other relevant and pertinent information

Not available

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	
As component of health and nutrition programmes, such as information about child development included in health and nutrition visits	Yes	
Parent groups that meet to discuss issues of their young children, including health, nutritional status, and development	Yes	
As component of adolescent, livelihood or literacy programmes	No	
Media broadcast, such as <i>Sesame Street</i> , with media for and with children	Yes	
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).

In Vietnam, the above-mentioned parental programmes have been implemented through the network of Ministries of Health, Education and Training, Vietnam Women's Union or Committee for Population, Family and Training. However, those programmes that are targeted specifically toward the vulnerable, poor and disadvantaged groups are mainly supported by international and non-governmental organizations including UNICEF, UNESCO, Save Children Alliance (UK, US, Sweden, Australia, Japan, Plan International, Enfants et Developpement, Oxfam Hong Kong, World Vision, Catholic Relief Services. Below is a summary of activities of different programmes and projects assisted by these organizations.

1. Parenting education through early learning centres and child care centres:

- Establishment of Parent Corner and small libraries for parents in crèches and kindergarten
- Parents participation in crèches and kindergarten activities, especially creating toys and attending play activities.

2. As component of health and nutrition programmes, the activities included:

- Improved facilities and infrastructure of the commune health clinics
- Improved nutrition status of children under five years old
- Practiced growth monitoring in crèches and kindergartens
- Improved knowledge and practices of mothers in children nutrition and care
- Improved availability of nutritious food at home for children and mothers
- Health officers at district, communes and hamlet level demonstrating improved care of pregnant women through pre-natal, delivery and post-natal care
- Improved health seeking behavior of pregnant women and increased awareness related to pregnancy among women aged 15-49 within target communes
- Improved local capacity to manage a sustain improved health services at commune and hamlet level
- Home visits by commune and village health workers to communicate with parents on health and nutrition practices and behaviour
- Transfer of child nutrition knowledge to pregnant women and those with children under five years of age through a network of health volunteers monitoring the growth of these children.
- Rehabilitate seriously malnourished children
- Capacity building of commune health clinic through training
- Awareness raising through information campaigns

3. Parent groups that meet to discuss issues of their young children, including health, nutrition status and development:

- Awareness raising workshops for parents
- Parenting education for mothers, fathers and other child caregivers at home
- Monthly training for fathers, mothers and child caregivers
- Parents make a play corner for children at home.
- Quiz competition for parents
- Campaign on hygiene and environment in the communities.
- Establish demonstration latrines.
- Create an area for play/recreation and organize festivals

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

At the moment, only growth monitoring is carried out regularly. Early Learning and Development Standards for Vietnamese children are under development and expected to be validated in 2007.

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 Strategy on Early Childhood Development is under development and expected to be approved shortly
- The Education Law 2005 will come into effect from 1st January 2006 clearly states the importance of care and education for child's holistic development
- The National Project on Early Childhood Education 2006-2015 has been approved by the Government.

[Information revised and additional data provided by UNICEF, January 2006.]