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# **Benin**

## **Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programmes**

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**BENIN**

**Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programmes**

**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 to 11 years.

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

(ISCED = International Standard Classification of Education)

**1.1. National definition of ISCED 0 programmes:**

*Enseignement maternel* [Nursery education]

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

2½ years-5 years

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

*1.3.1. Enrolment:*

	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Year</b>
Gross enrolment ratio	4.4	2003/2004
Net enrolment ratio	2.8	2003/2004
Percentage of children entering primary education with previous preschool experience	...	

1.3.2. *Enrolment ratio by age group, 2002/03 (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
0.1	2.7	4.3	2.5	0.5	0.0

UIS estimate.

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)
809	69.71	74.90	25.21	49.69

1.3.4. *Funding:*

	Percentage
Public current expenditure per pupil as percentage of the Gross National Product per capita	12.98 (2004)

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

Not available

## **2. OTHER ECCE PROGRAMMES (Generally preceding ISCED 0 programmes)**

**.1. National definition of other ECCE programmes:**

Not available

**.2. Normative age group(s) covered by other ECCE programmes:**

Not available

**.3. Estimated number of children covered by other ECCE programmes:**

Not available

## **B. BACKGROUND INFORMATION CONCERNING ECCE PROGRAMMES (INCLUDING ISCED 0)**

### **3.1. Legislation concerning ECCE:**

Nursery education in Benin was first officially provided for in 1975. It involves two years' school attendance and, until September 2003, generally covered children from 3 to 5 years old. Under the new General Education Act passed in November 2003, children not less than 2½ years old may attend as well.

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

There are two Divisions [*Directions*] within the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education: the Teaching Inspectorate (DIP) whose tasks are to see to the quality of education and supervise the educational aspects of the management of public and private nursery, primary and secondary schools, and the Nursery Education Division.

### **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.):**

Stakeholders such as the EDUCOM project and NGOs such as ActionAid, Bornefonden, Plan Benin and CAEB carry out activities in some villages only and aim to satisfy growing demands for care and educational activities during early childhood in rural areas where women are more involved in income-generating activities.

These few activities, carried out in some 20 villages out of Benin's total of 3,384 villages and urban neighbourhoods, fall far short of meeting the great demand in rural areas, and the numbers catered for are very small by comparison with real needs.

Between 2002 and 2005 the EDUCOM project set up local childcare schemes in twelve local authority areas: Bembèrèkè, Djougou, Sinendé, Djidja, Kétou, Klouékanmè, Adjohoun, Dangbo, Kalale, Za-Kpota and Zogbodomey. In 2004-2005 the project catered for a total of 2,202 children, 1,087 of them girls. In the same period the NGO ActionAid provided places for 2,747 children in "Early Childhood Centres" in the Atlantic administrative district, while another NGO (Bornefonden) accommodated 1,780 children in 2004-2005 in the Mono, Zou-Collines and Donga districts.

### **3.4. Type of personnel involved:**

The supervisory staff consists of play leaders and teaching assistants.

### **3.5. Type of staff training (requirements):**

Play leaders receive teacher training after competitive recruitment from among candidates who already have a Junior High School Certificate (BEPC). Play leaders teach children in accordance with the official curriculum for early childhood care and education.

On the other hand, for teaching assistants, of whom there are generally very few, no basic qualifications are required. They are recruited locally and trained on the job; they help look after the children under the supervision of the play leaders.

Since the closure in 1987 of the National School for CESE Play Leaders (ENA-CESE) at Porto-Novo, which used to train teachers for this age group, no teachers have had any initial or in-service training. As a result, many people are now teaching this age group who have no appropriate training, especially in the private sector. Those who have received some initial training in the past have not received any in-service training, although many requests have been made for such training.

### **3.6. Recent national policies and reforms:**

Not available (currently in preparation)

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

Not available

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

Not available

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

#### *3.9.1. Objectives and aims:*

Nursery education is provided as formal education and aims:

- to stimulate the child's interest in his/her social and cultural environment;
- to give the child good habits of cleanliness and orderly behaviour;
- to socialize the child gradually and harmoniously;
- to prepare the child for writing, reading and mathematics;
- to give the child a sound education involving the senses, physical action and movement(sensorimotor exercises, manual tasks, rhythmic).

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

At the pre-primary level, consisting primarily of nursery schools, the curriculum includes educational activities relating to:

- practical life (cleanliness, cleaning, watering, etc.);
- health education;
- movement education or education in rhythmic;
- language;
- singing;

- poetry;
- observation;
- sensory education;
- pre-mathematics;
- authority and responsibility;
- stories and rhymes;
- the afternoon nap and tea-time;
- personal hygiene and adornment;
- washing hands/using the toilet.

There are activities described as “manual” (weaving, winding, etc.) and “free” activities (play kitchen, dolls, library, and painting corner, for instance). All these activities are compulsory in nursery schools which have two sections, one for the smaller children and one for the older children, but not all activities are on the curriculum for the smaller children’s section. Decisions on all the activities are taken at the national level, though their content can be adapted to suit local circumstances.

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

32 hours 45 minutes per week; 33 weeks per year

**3.10. Any other relevant and pertinent information**

Enrolment numbers in nursery schools rose from 13,164 in 1990 to 20,022 in 2004. The proportion in private schools rose from 9.6% in 1990 to 29.49% in 2004.

It should be pointed out that the State had practically withdrawn from education for this age group, so that very little infrastructure has been built for this kind of education. The deficiency has however been partly made good in some places by private initiatives; but these are few and fall short of meeting the high demand in rural areas. (*National Report on the Development of Education, 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	Not available
As a component of health and nutrition programmes, such as information about child development included in health and nutrition visits	Yes	Not available
Parent groups that meet to discuss issues concerning their young children, including health, nutritional status, and development	No	
As a component of adolescent, livelihood or literacy programmes	Yes	Not available
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).**

The programmes supported by UNICEF (EDUCOM project), ActionAid and Bornefondon specifically target rural population groups, most of which are very poor.

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

No, but this is being achieved through pilot trials designed to promote girls' enrolment.

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

No, but action has been taken to formulate a policy in that regard: the terms of reference have already been drawn up and policy formulation should be under way early in 2006. Furthermore, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education is conducting a study of the experiments carried out by various bodies involved in nursery education.

*[Data revised and additional details supplied by UNICEF, January 2006.]*