



IBE/2006/EFA/GMR/CP/20

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

# **Colombia**

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

**Compiled by:**  
UNESCO International Bureau of Education (IBE)  
Geneva, (Switzerland)

2006

*This profile was commissioned by the Education for All Global Monitoring Report as background information to assist in drafting the 2007 Report. It has not been edited by the team. Information included in the series of profiles has been compiled by the IBE. In several cases data have been revised and/or expanded thanks to the helpful support of Ministries of Education and UNICEF offices worldwide. The views and opinions expressed in the present document are not necessarily those of the EFA Global Monitoring Report or UNESCO. The profile can be cited as follows: "Country Profile commissioned for the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007, Strong foundations: early childhood care and education". For further information, please contact: [efareport@unesco.org](mailto:efareport@unesco.org)*

## COLOMBIA

### 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, education is compulsory for children aged five to 14 (including one year of preschool education).

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

(ISCED = International Standard Classification of Education)

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

Preschool education or early childhood education.

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

Children aged three to five for preschool education. However, provision for children under three is ensured mainly through the Colombian Family Welfare Institute, as explained below.

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

###### *1.3.1. Enrolment:*

	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Year</b>
Gross enrolment ratio	37.6	2003-04
Net enrolment ratio	33.9	2003-04
Percentage of children entering primary education with previous preschool experience	<i>Data not available</i>	

###### *1.3.2. Enrolment ratio by age group, 2002/03 (percentage, also including the first years of primary education when applicable):*

<b>Level</b>	<b>Less than 3 years of age</b>	<b>Age 3</b>	<b>Age 4</b>	<b>Age 5</b>	<b>Age 6</b>	<b>Age 7</b>
Preschool	0.0	13.8	28.3	58.3	8.8	1.4
Primary	-	-	-	13.4	77	90.6
Total	0.0	13.8	28.3	71.7	85.8	92

*Source:* Ministry of Education.

### 1.3.3. Teachers:

The teaching staff assigned to the transition level numbers 50,715, of whom 95% are women. The Ministry of Education does not currently have precise information on other data relating to teaching staff. In 2005, however, the Ministry issued Resolution 166, laying down data reporting requirements for the implementation of the Education Sector Information System.

Information is being compiled at this time and is to be consolidated in 2006. Detailed, continually updated information will thus be available on aspects of the teaching staff (level of schooling, staff grade, sex, and so on).

### 1.3.4. Funding:

	Percentage
Public current expenditure per pupil as percentage of the Gross National Product per capita	4.55 (2004)

Source: UIS.

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

Data not available

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

### 2.1. National definition of other ECCE programmes:

The Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF) provides support for early childhood by delivering various forms of public family welfare services. These include the full range of processes, resources, parameters and activities undertaken co-responsibly (agreed) with the family, the community and the State. All these are coordinated in order to guarantee families' right to receive support such that children under age six may develop in a harmonious and integrated manner and, in turn, fully exercise their own rights. The main components of services are:

1) *Education, care and provision for early childhood.* Conducted through food programmes, growth monitoring, educational and psychosocial development activities, care and affection for children during the hours of service; health care measures and coordination with agencies responsible for ensuring children's right to health; and measures to ensure safety and environmental health, conducted according to the requirements and parameters of the ICBF.

2) *Education, organization and participation of the family and other adults involved with childhood.* Conducted through regular family training and education carried out in schools, as well as organizational measures to encourage the involvement of families in the day-to-day life of the different provision modalities, in educational activities, in resource management and in the exercise of social control and inspection as a key element of the evaluation and qualification of care.

3) *Training educational workers.* Conducted through training and further study of aspects of teaching and personal development in order to ensure a satisfactory performance in the role of educational worker.

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

Children aged zero to five.

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

In 2005, non-formal ECCE programmes covered 2,782,602 children.

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

**3.1. Legislation concerning ECCE:**

According to the provisions of the General Education Act (1994), preschool education “is that provided to children to promote their integrated biological, cognitive, psychomotor, socio-emotional and spiritual development, through experiences of socialization in teaching and recreation” (Article 15). The last year of preschool education has been compulsory since 1994.

The Ministry of Education is responsible, among other things, for “formulating policies, setting targets and approving the sector’s development plans for the short, medium and long terms, consistently with the provisions of the Constitution; designing the basic components of curricular processes; conducting continuous evaluation of educational service delivery; and setting the criteria for assessment of pupils’ school performance and for their transition to subsequent levels” (Article 148, Law 115/94).

In addition, the Ministry of Education is responsible for “ensuring quality, the achievement of educational objectives and the best possible moral, intellectual and physical education of pupils”. To this end, the Ministry has to establish a national system of educational evaluation, leading to the “establishment of programmes to improve public education” (Article 80, Law 115/94). Decree No. 2247, issued in 1997, sets out specific rules regarding education delivery at the preschool level.

With regard to ICBF, pursuant to Law 75 of 1968 the primary purpose of the Institute is to “protect minors and, in general, improve the stability and welfare of Colombian families” (Article 53). This legislation also provides for the establishment of Pilot Family Welfare Centres and recommends linkages between community groups and family and child protection. Under Law 27 of 1974, Preschool Care Centres, to be funded with 2% of the value of the monthly payrolls of public and private organizations, were established. In 1979 the authorities passed Law 07 amending Law 27, extending resources hitherto used solely to provide for the children of working mothers to funding for other population groups.

In late 1986, after research into and assessment of innovative experiences aimed at democratizing childhood programmes, the National Council for Social and Economic Policy (CONPES) approved the Community Welfare Homes Project as a human development strategy and a new approach to integrated care covering the poorest children in urban areas and rural population centres.

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

Under Law 24 of 1981, the Ministry of Education is responsible for overseeing the education sector, under the guidance of the President of the Republic. The Ministry formulates education policies, plans and curricula, quantifies and assigns human and material resources, establishes guidelines for evaluating and inspecting the quality of the service; and sets out rules and standards for the proper operation of the sector. The Colombian Family Welfare Institute also has responsibilities and competences regarding early childhood care and services, as set out in 3.1 above.

### **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.):**

In Bogotá the Social Welfare Administration Department is responsible for the provision of integrated services (education, care, health and nutrition) to children under age five, under a number of arrangements. The ICBF also meets part of the demand in the capital. The District Education Secretariat is responsible in part for the provision for the reception classes or grade “zero” and the remainder is covered by the private sector and by non-profit organizations. In Medellín there is a programme known as the “Good Start”.

Most of the programmes are community-based, that is, they are managed and carried out by parents’ associations, “community mothers”, religious organizations and NGOs.

### **3.4. Type of personnel involved (teachers, assistants, other staff):**

Staff in the official education sector are mainly teachers and supervisors. The exact composition of staff in the private sector is not known.

Informal programmes are staffed by community mothers and other educational and social workers whose average level of schooling is secondary ninth grade. This information was obtained from the National Community Mothers Register compiled by ICBF in October 2004. The Register provides information on the number and characteristics of community mothers throughout the country and the conditions under which they work. It is used to update sample frameworks for subsequent research and to identify areas where improvement is needed.

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

Teachers in the State education service must hold a degree or postgraduate qualification in education or a diploma from a teacher training college, and they must be registered in the National Register of Teachers. The teacher training certificate qualifies its holder to teach only at the preschool or primary level. It is an intermediate-level qualification that is awarded by teacher training colleges under arrangements with universities that have faculties of education. To enter such courses, candidates must have completed the lower secondary level and two years of upper secondary education.

According to information from the National System of Information on Tertiary Education (SNIES), there are currently 33 preschool education diploma programmes in Colombia.

The Ministry is also developing standards for early childhood education as a reference for preschool teachers in their work. The Ministry expects to communicate and disseminate these standards in the first half of 2006.

In the case of non-formal programmes, community mothers and other educational and social workers receive multivariate training in teaching, integrated care, health, nutrition, cooperative work, and so forth.

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

Colombia is engaged in the formulation of a new early childhood policy to be published in May 2006. The policy-making process began in December 2004 and has involved various governmental and non-governmental bodies, universities, international cooperation agencies and social and community workers.

Within this general public policy framework for early childhood, the Ministry of Education is working on the formulation of education policy and on increasing the provision of quality early childhood education in different areas.

The early childhood education policy will be guided by the sectoral plan for education for 2002-2006, which defines its major policy lines and its strategies. The following outputs, among others, are expected for 2006:

- education policy guidelines which have been formulated and agreed in consultation with different territorial entities and actors in the education sector;
- guidelines for education secretariats, for the implementation of the policy in their territorial areas;
- teaching guidelines drafted and discussed in consultations. these will be consistent with children's stages of development and will be designed to help the transition to primary education and to refocus teaching practices in educational institutions;
- a strategy of initial and in-service training on early childhood competences and standards;
- the definition, consultation and approval of early childhood standards that can be used for a pilot test. This test will not under any circumstances be used for entry into the education system. On the contrary, it will be administered to children already admitted to the system and will serve to guide preschool teachers in the conduct of classroom projects;
- a strategy to strengthen coordination and consensus-building processes at the national and territorial levels, for the implementation of early childhood education policy and its coordination with policies on protection, care, health and nutrition and with the development plans of territorial entities.

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

In accordance with the provisions of Article 18 of the General Education Act (Law 115/94), the Ministry of Education supports gradual access to pre-nursery and nursery grades in territorial entities whose coverage is less than 80% at the transition and basic levels. This support is being provided by procuring services using supplementary budget resources. This strategy is applied to all compulsory grades, including the transition grade.

The Ministry of Education also supports Education Secretariats with resources for school meals programmes. These programmes target the most vulnerable children, including five-year-olds, in order to promote their physical and cognitive development.

In addition, in an effort to provide more relevant education for five-year-olds, especially in rural areas, a number of school-based, semi-school-based and non-school-based teaching strategies have been developed. These have been financed by the Rural Education Project.

ICBF support services for early childhood include schemes with expectant families, breast-feeding mothers and children up to the age of two and with groups of children under six. The different arrangements include a mother and child care programme, community welfare homes, children's homes, community nurseries, children's breakfasts and nutritional recovery. These programmes target the most vulnerable population groups as well as displaced and relocated populations. Early childhood care is also given through other special protection programmes for children who have suffered rights violations.

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

- Social Kindergartens Programme of the Social Welfare Department in Bogotá.
- “Good Start” Programme in Medellín and Antioquia.
- Atlantic Coast Project “Childhood and Quality of Life”, integrated preschool care.
- Radio programmes for children (ALHARACA).
- Family Education Programme for Childhood Development (PEFADI).
- Extension of coverage for the integrated development of children, families and communities.
- Family, Women and Childhood Programme (FAMI).
- Education, Health and Environmental Improvement Programme (PROMESA).
- Community Welfare Homes Programme, including subprogrammes on family homes, group homes, corporate homes and FAMI homes.
- Children's homes programme.

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

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

Preschool education aims to ensure the all-round development of children under six, encompassing biological, cognitive, psychomotor, socio-emotional and spiritual aspects and, in particular, the development of communication, autonomy and creativity. The specific objectives of preschool education are:

- knowledge of one's own body and its capabilities, and the development of identity and autonomy;
- harmonious and balanced growth to facilitate motor development, readiness and motivation for reading and writing and for solving problems that involve mathematical relations and operations;
- development of age-appropriate creativity, skills and abilities, and of learning capacity;
- a sense of space and time and the exercise of memory;
- development of the ability to learn forms of expression, relation and communication and to establish relations of reciprocity and participation, observing rules of respect, solidarity and coexistence;
- participation in play activities with other children and adults;
- stimulation of curiosity to observe and explore the natural, family and social environment;
- recognition of the spiritual dimension as a rationale for criteria of conduct;
- engagement of the family and community in the educational process in order to improve the quality of life of the children in them;
- formation of habits with regard to eating, personal hygiene, cleanliness and tidiness in order to create an awareness of the value and necessity of health.

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

As provided in Decree 2247 of September 1997, curricular guidelines for preschool education are based on the principles set out below:

*Integrity:* recognizes the integrated nature of teaching work and treats the pupil as a unique social being who has an interdependent and reciprocal relationship with his or her family and with the natural, social, ethnic and cultural environment.

*Participation:* recognizes group organization and work as being conducive to self-acceptance and acceptance of others, through the sharing of experiences, contributions, knowledge and ideals among pupils, teachers, the family and other members of the community, and to cohesion, team work, the building of values and social rules, a sense of belonging and personal and group commitment.

*Play:* recognizes play as a dynamic force in children's lives, through which they build knowledge, discover themselves and the physical and social worlds, develop their initiatives, share their interests, develop communications skills, and build and internalize rules. This principle also acknowledges that enjoyment, enthusiasm, the joy of creating, recreating and generating meanings, feelings, visions of the future and new ways of doing things and living alongside one another should be at

the heart of everything done by and for the pupil, in his or her family and in the natural, social, ethnic and cultural environment.

“Decree 2247 construes the preschool curriculum as constituting an ongoing effort of pedagogic construction and investigation, encompassing the objectives established in Article 16 of Law 115 of 1994, and as providing continuity and linkage with the pedagogic processes and strategies of basic education. Curricular processes are developed through play and through teaching projects and activities that integrate the different dimensions of human development (the physical, cognitive, affective, communicative, ethical and aesthetic, as well as attitudes and values); learning speeds; the needs of children with limitations or special abilities or talents; and the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and environmental traits of each region and community” (OEI web site, August 2005, <http://www.oei.es/>).

ICBF has a community education project which it implements through different types of early childhood provision, with an all-round perspective that encompasses training in health, nutrition, care-giving and socialization. It also has a child development scale which it uses in the different programmes it administers. Recently, the Institute has been creating quality standards for those programmes.

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

The education sector has a five-day week with 20 compulsory hours. Some institutions operate a 25-hour week.

ICBF programmes are run on a five-day week, with up to 40 hours per week.

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

No grades or activities can be failed at the preschool level. Preschoolers progress through the education process according to their individual abilities and aptitudes. To this end, institutions design qualitative assessment mechanisms, whose results are reported descriptively, enabling teachers and parents to form an appreciation of progress in terms of the child’s overall development.

In 1997, regulations were adopted concerning universal preschool education in State educational institutions and a deadline of February 1999 was set for municipalities to submit a plan to carry out this mandate. It is estimated that almost a quarter (23.6%) of all children aged zero to six are covered by different schemes of protection, nutrition and development.

Formal preschool education services are provided by both State and private bodies. School attendance data from the National Household Survey show 696,000 children enrolled in “level zero” in 1997, which corresponds to a gross coverage rate of 42%. In the 1990s progress was made, too, in terms of broadening preschool coverage for children aged three to five, as stipulated in the General Education Act, with the gross coverage rate rising from 14% in 1990 to 30% in 1997. There is a very large difference in coverage between urban and rural areas, with rates of 38% and 15%, respectively. The private sector provides coverage mainly in urban areas (56.5%), where the public sector’s coverage is also significant.

The table below shows the ICBF implementation report for 2005 in ECCE programmes:

**COLOMBIAN FAMILY WELFARE INSTITUTE  
NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION REPORT 2005 (September)**

Project/Modality	Item	Implementation in 2005 (Sept.)			Displaced population	Relocated population
		Service units	Places	Users		
<b>SUBPROJECT 2</b>	<b>EARLY CHILDHOOD SUPPORT (CHILDREN UNDER 6)</b>	<b>87,154</b>	<b>1,584,515</b>	<b>2,782,602</b>	<b>25,978</b>	<b>1,013</b>
Provision arrangements	<b>MOTHER AND CHILD CARE PROGRAMME</b>	5,202	366,374	365,635	10,006	314
	<b>FAMI COMMUNITY HOMES</b> (Expectant and breast-feeding mothers and children under 2 years of age)	15,660	199,019	374,170	3,634	248
	<b>COMMUNITY WELFARE HOMES – Children aged 0-7 years</b>	59,543	755,876	755,946	9,630	54
	<b>MULTIPLE WELFARE COMMUNITY HOMES</b>	170	2,285	2,285	11	-
	<b>GROUP COMMUNITY WELFARE HOMES</b>	3,047	39,298	39,323	731	367
	<b>CORPORATE COMMUNITY WELFARE HOMES</b>	449	6,111	6,111	6	-
	<b>CHILDREN'S HOMES</b>	1,017	124,799	124,949	317	-
	<b>INFANTS AND PRESCHOOL CHILDREN</b>	149	20,458	20,462	93	-
	<b>COMMUNITY KINDERGARTENS</b>	47	3,549	3,549	68	-

<b>SUPPORT FOR DEAF CHILD CARE</b>	5	71	71	-	-
<b>CHILDREN'S BREAKFASTS</b>	-	-	1,006,074	-	-
<b>NUTRITIONAL RECOVERY</b>	1,548	57,662	74,824	1,455	30
<b>NEW SERVICE MODALITIES</b>	317	9,013	9,203	27	-

**C. SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION ON ECCE (TO BE COLLECTED IF POSSIBLE IN COLLABORATION WITH UNICEF OFFICES)**

**4.1. Parenting programmes are usually addressed to parents and families of children less than six years of age. Please give information on any parental education programme in your country in 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	Yes	
Media broadcast, such as <i>Sesame Street</i> , with media for and with children	No	
Others		
FAMI programme for expectant families, breast-feeding mothers and children up to age 2	Yes	

**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 ICBF programmes mentioned above target mainly SISBEN (system of beneficiary selection) levels 1 and 2.

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

The Ministry is preparing and designing a test to measure the abilities, skills and knowledge with which children enter the preschool level. This is expected to provide

information on what children bring from very early childhood and to furnish preschool teachers with inputs for designing educational plans for five-year-olds. In a pilot scheme to be conducted in May 2006, the test will be administered to 3,750 children in 10 municipalities located in three of Colombia's administrative departments.

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

As noted earlier, Colombia is formulating a public policy on early childhood which aims to organize the sector and is based on a review of actions undertaken in the country in the last decade. A number of processes are now serving as inputs for policy formulation (mapping of research, systematization of experiences, construction of an early childhood quality-of-life index to improve local management, educational standards and guidelines, human talent-building, and a policy monitoring and assessment system). Efforts are also under way to broaden coverage and improve programme quality, work with families and innovation. Lastly, cross-sectoral and inter-agency roles and responsibilities are being defined.

The Ministry is now engaged in the construction of an early childhood education policy within the framework of public policy on early childhood and is working on different areas as set out above.

*[Information revised by the Ministry of Education, January 2006.]*