

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

Paraguay

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programmes

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PARAGUAY

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programmes

GENERAL INFORMATION, STATISTICS AND INDICATORS

Starting age of compulsory education (if applicable):

Age six, under Resolution No. 2034 of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

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

1.1. National definition of ISCED 0 programmes (pre-primary):

Preschool and Early Education Improvement Programme (2004-2008). Under the General Education Act (1998), the term used is early education.

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

The Preschool and Early Education Improvement Programme seeks to improve integrated education for children under the age of six.

Under the General Education Act (1998), early education comprises two stages. The first covers children up to the age of three, inclusive, and the second children up to the age of four.

At the age of five, the preschooler automatically belongs to the basic school education system and, by executive decree of the Ministry of Education and Culture, counts as a beneficiary of compulsory education when Congress approves the corresponding item in the national budget.

1.3. ISCED 0 programmes: statistics and indicators: (Source: General Department of Educational and Cultural Planning – Statistical Office – System of Continuous Statistical Data, SIEC 2003).

1.3.1. Enrolment:

	Percentage	Year
Gross enrolment ratio	36 (girls=36)	2003
Net enrolment ratio	30.8 (girls =31)	2003
Percentage of children entering primary education with previous preschool experience	76	2003

N.B.: Calculation of enrolment rates is based on ages 3 to five.

Source: Ministry of Education, December 2005.

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	2	18	83	13	1
			4 (*)	85 (**)	104 (**)

(*) Enrolled in primary education. (**) Primary education enrolment ratio.

1.3.3. Teachers:

Total number of teachers	Of whom female (%)	Percentage of trained teachers (all)	Percentage of trained teachers (male)	Percentage of trained teachers (female)
5,637	88	1,924	68	1,856

1.3.4. Funding:

	Percentage
Public current expenditure per pupil as percentage of the Gross National Product per capita	13.41 (2004)

Source: UIS.

1.3.5 Main source(s) of financing (in current guaraníes):

Government sources: G. 12.697 billion (includes treasury sources [financing source No. 10] from the budget allocated to the Ministry of Education and Culture, other ministries and the education secretariats of Governor's Offices. Covers 100% of enrolment in public institutions and approximately 60% of enrolment in subsidized private establishments).

External sources: G. 6.175 billion (financing source No. 20, repayable loans)

Households or parents: G. 29.766 billion (figure obtained from household survey conducted in 2003, refers to expenditure on enrolment, monthly fees and other school expenses of students in public, private and subsidized private establishments).

Preschool and Early Education Improvement Program

Borrower and Guarantor: Republic of Paraguay

Executing Agency: Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC)

Amount and source: IDB: US\$ 23.4 million

Local: US\$ 2.58 million

Total: US\$ 25.98 million

1. OTHER ECCE PROGRAMMES

Preschool and Early Education Improvement Programme now being implemented.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON ECCE PROGRAMMES (INCLUDING ISCED 0)

3.1. Legislation concerning ECCE:

The National Constitution of 1992 establishes the general policy framework for childhood as regards recognition and importance of the Rights of the Child and guarantees of child protection, access to health and education.

In this regard, the family, society and the State are obliged to guarantee children's harmonious and integrated development and the full exercise of their rights, protecting them from neglect, malnourishment, violence, abuse, trafficking and exploitation.

General Education Act:

This legislation places early education within the first level of formal education, together with basic education, and makes it part of the general education regime.

The new Child and Adolescent Code:

This instrument establishes and governs the rights, guarantees and duties of children and adolescents, from conception to the age of 18, under the integral protection doctrine. To this end, the National Childhood and Adolescence Secretariat was established to govern and promote the new system for the advancement and protection of children and adolescents, a decentralized regime with a new framework and institutional structure at all levels of the State machinery.

Executive decree No. 19651/1998 and the organic structure of the Ministry of Education and Culture:

This decree determines the structure of the cabinet responsibilities of the Ministry, the Under-Ministry for Education and the Under-Ministry for Culture. Accordingly, the Early Education Department is the executive body responsible for early education, as part of the General Early and Basic Education Department which, in turn, is one of seven main departments of the Under-Ministry of Education.

Ministerial Resolution No. 3041/1999:

Establishes the main objectives, functions and departmental divisions of the Early Education Department, as well as the profile of its Director, and lays out the Early Education Regulations.

Early Education Regulations:

These are the most specific provisions on early education, since they set out its conceptual framework, objectives, structure and organization, manner and form and stages, as well as the obligations of the respective personnel and the children's entry requirements. They also set forth requirements as regards the physical structure, furnishings and fittings and official registration of early education facilities, teaching materials, technical documentation and the teacher-institution relationship. The Regulations are currently being adjusted and validated.

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

Early and preschool education institutions and organizations are either specifically educational establishments or other types of institutions that carry out educational activities in addition to their main function.

Ministry of Education and Culture:

The Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) is the governing body within the organizational structure of the early education sector and it administers the largest sector of early education, that is, the public sector.

Early and preschool education services in public schools are administered by the General Early and Basic Education Department. The Early Education Department is basically a technical body.

The Education Supervision service oversees the educational services delivered by public institutions administered by MEC, by one other ministry and by the private sector. This is an area and departmental service that now operates in a differentiated manner through the National Network of Technical Experts in Early Education.

National Educational and Cultural Council (CONEC)

This Council proposes cultural policies and reforms as regards the national educational system, and monitors their implementation. It is chaired by MEC and has 12 members with tertiary level expertise in educational sciences and culture.

Other central government agencies:

- The Social Welfare Institute of the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare administers the National Child and Family Welfare Centre Programme (CEBINFA).
- The Social Action Secretariat, which reports to the Office of the President of the Republic, acts as an institutional mechanism for coordinating joint action undertaken by the State, political parties and civil society under the social policy aimed at reducing poverty and promoting social equity.
- The Secretariat for Women's Affairs reports to the Office of the President of the Republic and promotes the participation and involvement of women in all spheres of life in Paraguay.
- The Ministry of Justice and Labour administers "Arapyahu", a temporary home for children aged zero to seven who have become the responsibility of the justice system. The Ministry also administers the civil registry service, which is concerned with the recognition and official registration of newborns and early childhood in general.
- The Public Ministry is involved in provision for early childhood through the Childhood and Adolescence Inspection Service and the Adoption Centre. Since these areas of responsibility touch on early education, the Ministry is involved in coordinating activities at this level.

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.):

Decentralized State agencies: within the early education organizational structure, governors' offices, municipalities and local communities have assumed a new role in managing educational services, including early and preschool education, as well as all educational problems in their respective jurisdictions.

Although the wholly private and subsidized private sectors do not account for a large portion of preschool and primary education, they nonetheless account for a much larger proportion of infant and kindergarten establishments. Within the private sector, a number of non-profit NGOs and church-based social works provide early childhood care. Nowadays various public sector levels (central, departmental and local) tend to be involved in the management of private programmes and projects and vice versa, in other words, privately run establishments also co-manage public sector programmes and projects.

Teacher Training Institute: it is necessary to establish a network of support for teachers who are training and working, and for trainers themselves, in order to generate a greater impact on early childhood education.

International Cooperation: prominent in this are the agencies of the United Nations system, particularly UNICEF and UNESCO; the OAS, financial agencies such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, Plan International, and so forth.

Coordination Offices: There is a National office for the Coordination of Early Childhood Development Programmes (CONADIPI).

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

Early education teachers.

Primary school teachers (EEB).

Professionalized EEB teachers.

Holders of the secondary school leaving certificate.
Central level technical staff.
National Early Education Network (teachers, directors, technical staff, supervisors, departmental coordinators).
Care mothers and volunteers

3.5. Type of staff training (requirements)

Teacher training is provided at the non-university tertiary level, following completion of the *bachiller* secondary-level qualification. Teacher training for early education is carried out basically in teacher training colleges. Preschool teachers receive a tertiary non-university level of training which is dispensed in tertiary pedagogic institutes.

Generally speaking, early and preschool education is not provided by specialized teachers and few teacher training colleges offer the speciality. This is because there is little interest in studying early education, owing to the limitations of the certification which does not qualify the holder to teach in general education (EEB). Entry profiles show that candidates often opt to enter preschool teacher training because it is the easiest option or because they were not accepted into other disciplines, and not necessarily because they have a vocation for early childhood education and teaching.

The syllabus and curricular matrix for teaching training, as well the complementary professionalization plan and early education teaching specialization are currently being redesigned.

3.6. Recent national policies and reforms.

National Early Education Plan 2002-2012:

Sets out in general terms the policies, programmes and projects that fall within the mandate of the Ministry of Education and Culture, with the mission of consolidating early education as a State policy in order to break the cycle of poverty and guarantee the right to education, equality of opportunities, intersectoral coordination, the participation of the family and the community and the implementation of innovative strategies for the development of fundamental competences and cultural values in children under the age of six, articulating commitments, resources and actions by means of decentralized, participatory, effective and sustainable management.

Preschool and Early Education Improvement Program

The Programme seeks to improve comprehensive education for boys and girls under six years of age by expanding its coverage based on criteria of quality and equity, strengthening its institutional management, and promoting household and community involvement. In order to achieve this objective, the programme will incorporate the gender perspective, sociolinguistic and cultural diversity, and special educational needs into its various lines of action and particularly into the design of its curricular guidelines within a cross-cutting framework.

The Programme's specific objectives are: (i) to achieve universal preschool educational coverage, as measured by the gross enrolment ratio, for five-year-old boys and girls; (ii) to improve human resources development at the early education and preschool levels; (iii) to increase the quality of care for boys and girls from zero to four years of age; (iv) to update and adjust standards and curricula for preschool and early education; and (v) to enhance the educational role played by the family and the community in the all-round development of boys and girls under the age of six.

Description:

Component 1: Policy-making and institution-building in the Ministry of Education and Culture. This component's objective is to backstop the design of policies for preschool and early education and to develop a social information and communications scheme using the system for the advancement and protection of children and adolescents as a frame of reference.

Component 2: Human resources development and training. One of the basic conditions required in order to expand high-quality coverage is to develop suitable human resources, and this component's objective is therefore to enhance the quality of teacher training at the preschool and early education levels.

Component 3: Improvement of preschool educational resources. This component's objectives are to achieve universal preschool educational coverage and ensure an equitable distribution of quality educational services.

Component 4: Non-formal early childhood care. This component's objective is to promote the implementation of a public policy for early childhood development based on the diversification and validation of comprehensive, non-formal models for the provision of care to boys and girls under five.

3.7. Efforts targeted at vulnerable or disadvantaged children.

Non-formal care and education in early childhood: technical capacity-building of the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents (SNNA), which will be responsible for promoting a set of initiatives aimed at improving the existing range of projects in the area of non-formal early education and/or fostering the development of new proposals for non-formal early childhood care and education arrangements. Two measures will be pursued to that end: (i) promotion of an early childhood development policy, aimed at supporting the consolidation of the SNNA and building up its institutional capacity to implement the National Early Childhood Care and Education Plan, promoting relevant and integrated services for children and their families and setting up an information, follow-up and service evaluation system; (ii) implementation of model non-formal integrated early childhood care and education projects through a grant. The purpose of this is to validate socioculturally relevant models of intersectoral integrated care and education for vulnerable children under the age of five residing in marginal urban, rural or indigenous areas.

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

Such programmes will be developed and assessed through some 75 projects, which will be financed from a grant fund to be established. Funding will also be provided for: (i) the preparation of guides to project preparation; (ii) training workshops for candidate organizations; (iii) technical assistance in order to ensure the quality of services during project implementation; (iv) training for project monitors; (v) workshops for the exchange of experience among participating organizations; and (vi) concluding evaluations of each project.

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

3.9.1. Objectives and aims:

Early education is set within a broad, innovative approach to the integrated and harmonious development of children under the age of six, taking into account their bio-psychomotor, cognitive, social, emotional and affective needs, and the prevention and detection of growth and development problems.

Early education seeks to:

- ✓ promote self-knowledge and self-evaluation in children, enhancing the development of autonomy and identity and strengthening emotional links with adults and their peers so that they can live together with others in the best manner possible;
- ✓ contribute to children's welfare in healthy, secure and welcoming environments that are conducive to integrated development, consistently with their needs and characteristics;
- ✓ enhance quality learning experiences in an active, creative, pleasant and participatory manner, using play as a basic methodology to achieve spontaneous and meaningful actions;
- ✓ facilitate the use of the mother tongue in oral language, symbolic graphic representation and other forms of expression that help to express thoughts, emotions, desires and experiences of play in everyday situations, gradually incorporating the second language;
- ✓ stimulate interest in science and technology by facilitating observation, exploration, inquiry and learning in relation to the surroundings;
- ✓ stimulate the capacity to observe, perceive, explore and experience the natural, social and cultural world, in a caring and respectful manner;
- ✓ promote experiences that encourage the practice, together with the family, school and community, of such values as truth, justice, respect, solidarity, responsibility, freedom and beauty, while strengthening regional and national identity;
- ✓ facilitate children's progress into the basic education system, articulating joint measures between the two levels of the education process;
- ✓ coordinate joint action in the education process by family, school and community, creating the conditions to safeguard the rights of the child in order to ensure their integrated development;
- ✓ develop mathematical thinking skills, establishing relations of causality, time, space and quantification that can help to respond to children's concerns and experiences and solve problems that arise in their everyday lives.

3.9.2. Learning areas and teaching-learning methods

Curricular organization: the curricular framework is organized into areas of experience for learning, dimensions, general objectives and specific objectives.

The areas of experience are defined as domains or fields of action in which teaching practice is organized, creating multiple opportunities to promote children's harmonious

and integrated development. Areas of experience for learning are dynamic and interrelated.

There are three areas of experience for learning:

This is my personal and social development

This is how I think, express myself and communicate

This is how I relate to the natural, social and cultural world

The area “*This is my personal and social development*” encompasses universal human personal and social development. In this area security and basic confidence are built up and consolidated from birth, depending to a great extent on the type and quality of emotional links that the child establishes with its father, mother and family and other significant adults. Within this area a number of dimensions are organized: identity, living together, autonomy and healthy living.

The area “*This is how I think, express myself and communicate*” includes capacities particularly associated with the process of developing thought and creativity. This process involves oral, written and artistic language and mathematical logical thought, all of which help to develop different types of expressive abilities. This area includes the following dimensions: oral and written language, artistic expression and mathematics.

The area “*This is how I relate to the natural, social and cultural world*” proposes to encourage children’s capacity to question, in order to channel their curiosity and interests through scientific methods. It also includes basic capacities of value-ascription such as amazement, sensitivity, interest in conservation and care for the environment, and respect for cultural diversity. The dimensions encompassed in this area are the natural, social and cultural environments.

The stages of early education:

Two stages are distinguished: the first, from birth to 3 years and the second, from age three to age six. This reflects different theories of development and learning, which suggest that a series of processes, that are by nature individuated, culminate at the age of three, when human development begins to be affected by interpersonal relationships and experiences of socialization with people, cultures and other environments.

Hence, the areas and dimensions propose objectives by stages. Graduated activities and recommendations on how to work to attain the objectives are used to progress towards the study programme’s objectives for the second stage (ages three to six). There are also recommendations on the preparation of general guidelines for the first stage (ages zero to three).

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

3 hours per day, five days per week = 15 hours per week; 38 weeks per year x 15 hours per week = 570 hours per year.

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 six 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	No data	No data
As component of health and nutrition programmes, such as information about child development included in health and nutrition visits	No data	No data
Parent groups that meet to discuss issues of their young children, including health, nutritional status, and development	Yes, in the framework of the Preschool and Early Education Improvement Programme	200 public schools in the Alto Paraná, Central, Itapúa, San Pedro and Paraguari departments. Approximately 600 people together with teachers from the schools' early education level (about 200 teachers)
As component of adolescent, livelihood or literacy programmes	No data	No data
Media broadcast, such as <i>Sesame Street</i> , with media for and with children	Yes (educational short radio shows and television slots, advertisements, monthly magazine "From the classroom".	Unlimited (nationwide coverage)
Other (please specify)	Preparation of educational materials (Modules I, II, III and IV) Teachers' handbook (1)	These materials are used in training families and teachers

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 Preschool and Early Education Improvement Programme targets poverty reduction through its focus on improving early and preschool education and it enhances social equity by targeting children and adolescents in lower-income sectors at high social risk, who therefore have more limited access to traditional social programmes. This scheme is also consistent with the targets of social equity and poverty reduction mandated in each case.

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

A national study is now being conducted to measure the quality of educational environments (preschool and family) and their impact on child development. The aim is to estimate the impact and effectiveness of preschool education in Paraguay. This study includes two data samples taken at the beginning and at the end of the school period (2005). It is also planned to measure those same children's school performance once they are in the first stage of basic education (EEB).

This measurement is based on a set of tests that have been constructed and used in other countries (as well as interviews and observation). The instruments employed were revised and adapted to the local situation.

The team responsible for this measurement conducted an *experimental trial* in May and June 2004, in which all the tests (the children's assessments, class observation and home interviews and observation) were administered in two preschools in Asunción. The experimental study revealed the scope and limitations of the instruments, the difficulties in administering them and a number of aspects that need to be altered. The trial was effectively a qualitative assessment of the instruments.

After this, a *pilot study* was conducted (August and September 2004) in 15 preschools, with the participation of 60 children and their families. The data from the study were used to carry out a psychometric assessment of the instruments, which formed the basis for the final adjustments in preparation for the nationwide study in 2005.

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

Yes, the Preschool and Early Education Improvement Programme. This will contribute to the design of comprehensive reforms in preschool and early education through the implementation of policies and strategies that primarily target young children who are at social and educational risk; over time, these actions will also help to reduce poverty in the country. The various activities included in the programme will stimulate the development of new mechanisms for encouraging teachers, families and other members of the community to become involved in the various projects that are to be conducted, thereby helping to shape a new type of relationship between the Ministry of Education and Culture and the SNNA. This course of action is aligned with the educational reform programme now being implemented in Paraguay and will therefore help to consolidate that process by contributing to an awareness of the importance of early education, lowering repeater rates in the first cycle of basic education, and heightening the internal efficiency of primary education. In so doing it will contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and thus help to lower the education system's costs.

The programme will also focus on providing a type of universal preschool education that will foster quality learning for girls and boys, will be relevant to them and will take ethnic, linguistic and gender diversity into consideration, together with special education needs and other cultural factors that are meaningful to them, their families and their communities. The provision of quality education on a universal scale will facilitate these children's transition to the basic education system by helping them to develop the necessary skills and attitudes and by implementing the teaching and learning processes required to link the two levels. The active involvement of parents through the Cooperative School Associations (ACEs) will help to enhance ongoing family involvement in the schools based on a joint, complementary and coherent educational effort that will optimize these boys' and girls' growth, development and learning processes.

From an institutional standpoint, the programme will help to stimulate and consolidate participation by other public and private organizations (NGOs) in the generation, implementation and evaluation of new non-formal channels for the provision of early education. Since the Ministry of Education and Culture does not have sufficient operational capacity to furnish this type of instruction entirely on its own, these institutions play a vital role in providing non-formal education at this level under the technical and operational supervision of the SNNA, the government agency responsible for implementing the system's policies for the advancement and protection of children and adolescents.

D. SOURCES CONSULTED

- ✓ Inter-American Development Bank document on the Preschool and Early Education Improvement Programme, Operation No. 1467/OC-PR, approved in July 2, 2003, Paraguay.
- ✓ MEC-IDB, Early Education Curricular Framework, 2004, Paraguay.
- ✓ MEC-IDB, Second Six-monthly Report, January to July 2005, Paraguay.
- ✓ MEC-IDB, National Analysis of Early and Preschool Education, December 2002, Paraguay.
- ✓ General Department of Educational and Cultural Planning – Statistical Office.
- ✓ General Early and Basic Education Department, Continuous Statistics Unit.
- ✓ Early Education Department, working groups 2005.

[Information revised by the Ministry of Education, December 2005.]