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Strong Foundations: Early Childhood Care and Education

Venezuela

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programmes

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VENEZUELA

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programmes

A. GENERAL INFORMATION, STATISTICS AND INDICATORS

Starting age of compulsory education (if applicable):

According to the new legal framework established under the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (1999), “education is compulsory at all levels, from nursery school up to the diversified secondary level.”

Before 1999, education was compulsory only for children at the preschool level (ages four to six); under the new constitution, the Ministry of Education and Sport began to build educational capacity for the nursery level (ages zero to three).

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

(ISCED = International Standard Classification of Education)

1.1. National definition of ISCED 0 programmes:

Comprehensive early childhood care and education is defined as early education as an ongoing process of development and learning in children that begins in early infancy and continues until the age of six or until entry into primary education, with the aim of facilitating the optimal development of socio-emotional, cognitive, linguistic, motor and physical potential, taking into account the socio-educational experiences, interests and needs of the child.

Nursery education, conceived as a level of education, consists of childcare from early infancy to the age of three; it does not involve formal schooling or compulsory attendance at early education centres, but rather is an extension of the educational process and of comprehensive childcare for children and assistance for expectant mothers, aimed at enhancing development and learning in young children.

Nursery care rooms set up at the so-called “Simoncito” early education centres are part of a childcare programme for children between six months and two years eleven months of age whose mothers are of limited means and need to enter the labour market but have no-one to care for their young children during the working day. Children who are at risk or socially and educationally vulnerable also receive such care.

Early education is provided through two forms of care.

(a) Early education centres providing conventional care are educational establishments devoted exclusively to providing comprehensive care for children up to the age of six. Their purpose is to provide educational activities and social services or to implement programmes relating, *inter alia*, to health, nutrition, legal assistance and recreation, which ensure comprehensive and quality education in which the family and the community participate.

(b) Early education centres providing non-conventional care are establishments that offer educational activities for children aged up to three years of age and children between the ages of three and six who do not have access to conventional care, with the participation of teachers and parents, guardians or adult relatives or community

representatives in a variety of settings, including community or family environments, play centres and community care centres or under informal childcare arrangements. This type of care targets the most vulnerable sectors of the population and those in rural, indigenous and border areas.

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

See 1.1

(Two levels of care: nursery (for children in the age range of six months to two years eleven months) and preschool (for children between the ages of three years and five years eleven months or until entry into primary education.)

1.3. ISCED 0 programmes: statistics and indicators *(Please include the most recent data if available)*

ENROLMENT IN PRESCHOOL EDUCATION, BY AGE ACADEMIC YEARS 1995-96 TO 2004-05							
ACADEMIC YEAR	TOTAL	AGE (YEARS)					
		UNDER 3	3	4	5	6	OVER 6
1999-00	800,885	11,078	102,377	275,704	350,012	58,463	3,251
2000-01	835,074	12,324	106,005	267,603	357,071	87,160	4,911
2001-02	863,364	14,047	115,931	289,868	362,678	76,236	4,604
2002-03	882,095	20,876	130,053	295,660	361,788	70,423	3,295
2003-04	914,920	22,022	147,156	311,222	361,894	68,931	3,695
<u>2004-05</u>	<u>974,958</u>	<u>27,187</u>	<u>151,401</u>	<u>322,407</u>	<u>386,282</u>	<u>82,787</u>	<u>4,894</u>

**CHILDREN IN PRESCHOOL EDUCATION RECEIVING NON-CONVENTIONAL CARE, BY AGE
ACADEMIC YEARS 1995-96 TO 2004-05**

ACADEMIC YEAR	TOTAL	AGE (YEARS)						
		UNDER 1	1	2	3	4	5	6
1998-99	144,501	48,405	19,028	16,091	18,333	17,951	13,959	10,734
1999-00	86,079	29,141	9,815	8,394	11,296	11,672	9,478	6,283
2000-01	79,275	20184	9,128	9,713	11,484	13,037	9,463	6,266
2001-02	85,190	23,039	12,244	12,494	12,484	11,179	8,981	4,769
2002-03	64,666	13,344	9,966	11,255	11,314	9,217	6,741	2,829
2003-04	69,304	12,921	12,564	13,745	13,418	9,059	5,695	1,902
2004-05	78,832	13,663	16,709	17,498	14,796	9,519	5,307	1,340

1.3.3. Teachers:

<i>Total number of teachers</i>	<i>Percentage of female teachers</i>	<i>Percentage of trained teachers</i>
59,178	99	86

1.3.4. Funding: Data not available

	Percentage
Current public expenditure per pupil as percentage of per capita Gross National Product (GNP)	...

1.3.5. Main source(s) of financing:

The financial resources allocated to official early education programmes (national, state and municipal establishments) come chiefly from the national budget; the

institutional distribution of expenditure by the Ministry of Education and Sport accounts for 9% of all budgetary resources allocated to the sector.

The cost of care per child at State-run early education centres is calculated on the basis of the type of institution, according to a study conducted by Darwin Caraballo (2005), consultant for a study that is being carried out to assess the ECCE programme.

The cost per child at Simoncito full-day comprehensive early education centres is 2,013,830 bolivares (Bs) per year (US\$ 1,048.87).

At full-day State-run preschools, the estimated per capita cost is Bs 1,825,169.92 per year (US\$ 950.61).

At half-day early education centres (traditional preschools), the cost per child is calculated at Bs 844,008 per year (US\$ 439.55).

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

2.1. National definition of other ECCE programmes:

See above. A care centre programme is also operated by the National Autonomous Service for the Comprehensive Care of Children and the Family (SENIFA), for children up to six years of age. At present, this service provides for 281,000 children under the following programmes:

Family-based comprehensive care centres (HOGAIN) operate in family accommodations that have been selected and specially fitted out, in which a “care mother” looks after eight children from her own community, under the supervision and with the support of an officially appointed supervisor.

Community based HOGAIN operate in a community building that has been prepared and fitted out as necessary, in which three integrated care mothers look after 30 children under the supervision and with the support of an official supervisor. Some community care centres are attended by 60, 90 or even 100 children, but the ratio of one care mother for every 10 children is always maintained.

SENIFA, which is attached to the Ministry of Education and Sport and which implements the HOGAIN programme, allocates financial resources to maintain the community-based HOGAIN, which are operated by NGOs in the regions. The resources are assigned as follows:

Meals: Each care mother is allocated a monthly sum of Bs 1,350 per child for those days on which the community HOGAIN is operational. For example, if in July 2004 a care mother provided for an average of 10 children, the sum allocated for meals would be: 10 children x Bs 1,350 x 20 working days = Bs 270,000. The maximum sum allocated to any one community HOGAIN for the provision of meals is Bs 810,000 per month (based on an average month in which there are 20 working days), or Bs 2,430,000 per quarter, in accordance with the latest increase approved in July 2004.

Care bonus: Each care mother is allocated Bs 180,000 per month for care. Thus, the overall amount assigned to the care mother for July would be as follows:

Meals (Bs 1,350) x 10 children x 20 working days = Bs 270,000

Care x 10 children = Bs 180,000

Total receivable for July = Bs 450,000.

This amount is multiplied by the number of care mothers at the community HOGAIN. SENIFA also assigns Bs 180,000 for administrative work to the supervisor assigned to each community HOGAIN. It should be clarified, in that regard, that there are a number of ways in which the programme is implemented:

Single community HOGAIN: an unoccupied building or residence that can accommodate 20 to 30 children, two or three care mothers and a supervisor.

Duplex community HOGAIN: a building that can accommodate 60 children, six care mothers and a supervisor.

Children's Foundation: Comprehensive care and education for children between three and six years of age, under the responsibility of the first lady of each federal district.

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

See above.

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

See above.

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

3.1. Legal framework for ECCE programmes

In Venezuela, care and education programmes for children under the age of six are governed by the provisions set out in the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (1999), which defines education as a human right and a social duty required for the development of the individual, viewed from the perspective of socio-humanistic transformation and aimed towards the development of the citizen in accordance with the principles of diversity and participation. Issues relating to comprehensive protection and care (health, nutrition, recreation, hygiene, protection of the legal integrity of individuals as subjects of law and prevention of physical, natural and social risks) are governed by the provisions of the Constitution and Organic Law for the Protection of Children and Adolescents, which establish the obligation of the State to provide and maintain institutions and services that ensure proper care and education for children and the duty of the family to participate in the child's development and learning.

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

In order to ensure the universal and equitable exercise of social rights in the education sector, the Ministry of Education and Sport guides the procedure for defining and formulating policies relating to care and education for children and adolescents. For that purpose, the Ministry has a nationwide organizational and operational structure to ensure that there is an institutional presence almost throughout Venezuela.

Within the Ministry of Education and Sport, the Department for Educational Affairs, the General Directorate for Education Levels and Sectors and the Directorate for Early Education are responsible for implementing curricular, administrative and technical policies and guidelines relating to early education, and for the ongoing assessment of, and guidance on, programme development and implementation.

Within each federal district there are two official departments responsible for developing and implementing policies, plans, programmes and projects for early childhood care and education in each region. Firstly, Education Directorates, which are decentralized agencies of the Ministry of Education and Sport, are responsible for coordinating, assisting and overseeing State-run early education establishments through coordination offices for early education in so-called “education zones”. Secondly, local government authorities in each state, through their respective education departments, are responsible for directing, managing and administering early education centres set up by regional governments, in accordance with the policy defined by the Ministry of Education and Sport.

At the level of the municipalities, the Municipal Regime Act assigns local governments educational responsibilities in the creation and maintenance of establishments and services for early childhood.

Other public and private organizations are involved in the implementation of early childhood care and education programmes, such as the Children’s Foundation, SENIFA and private establishments founded by individuals under the guidance and supervision of the Ministry of Education and Sport.

3.3. Other entities involved in the provision (e.g. municipalities, local governments) and main types of providers (e.g. public, private, mixed, community-based, etc.):

See above.

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

The human resources attached to early education centres for programme development and implementation consists of management staff, classroom teachers, preschool assistants and administrative and domestic staff.

In addition, the staff payroll at Simoncito early education centres and integrated provision and full-day State-run preschools includes teaching coordinators and non-conventional education teachers. These teaching specialists operate in family and community environments catering to children up to the age of six who live in the establishment’s catchment area but cannot be accommodated there owing to lack of space. The personnel at such establishments also includes kitchen staff who provide meals services on a mobile basis and teaching staff specializing in recreation, sociocultural activities, physical education and music.

The programme’s health component is delivered by medical staff who visit centres on a regular basis. Alternatively, children are referred by the centres to the nationwide network of outpatient services and hospitals, popular clinics and modules of the “Into the Neighbourhood” scheme.

3.5. Type of staff training (requirements):

There are three categories of trained preschool teachers: (a) teachers who graduate from teacher training institutions; (b) holders of university degrees; and (c) holders of diplomas obtained after three years of study from colleges and university institutes. All are graduates of higher education institutions specializing in teacher training. However, the system still includes teachers who graduated from non-tertiary teacher training and technical colleges before 1980, when the Education Act established that teaching professionals must be graduates from tertiary teacher

training university institutes, university schools offering teacher training plans and programmes or other tertiary institutions.

The training given to candidates studying for a teaching qualification is consistent with the preschool education curriculum (1986). Teacher training institutes associated with the Universidad Pedagógica Libertador have a certified study plan. Other institutes, colleges and universities design their own study plans.

In addition, the Teacher Training Commission of the Ministry of Education and Sport in drawing up the national basic curriculum for early education (which is in force in accordance with Resolution No. 38237 of 27 July 2005), defined the preschool teacher profile contained in the report given to universities and higher education institutes that train teachers of children up to the age of six. The concept is based on a critical, self-analytical and flexible model.

3.6. Recent national policies and reforms:

The legal framework for the formulation and development of social and educational policies on provision for the child population is the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the general guidelines set forth in the National Economic and Social Development plan for 2001-2007. This Plan establishes the strategic objective “*Achieve social justice*”, which aims to ensure for all Venezuelan men and women the universal and equitable exercise of their social rights. For the education sector, the Plan establishes a line of action entitled “*Quality education for all*”.

Accordingly, the National Executive has mapped out a set of policy measures aimed at prioritizing comprehensive care and education for childhood and guaranteeing food security and developing a sound social infrastructure.

The Ministry of Education and Sport has formulated and implemented a set of policies targeting provision for children up to six years of age. These policies include:

- universal provision of preschool education for girls and boys aged four to six and expansion of coverage for children aged up to three years of age;
- expansion of early education coverage (nursery and preschool) by building new classrooms and educational establishments and strengthening non-conventional provision in family and community environments;
- improvement of the quality of early education services through training, retraining and monitoring of teaching staff, procurement and provision of resources and classroom furniture and the gradual transformation of traditional preschools into full-day, all-round early education centres, as well as the promotion and coordination of networks of services in the various spheres of early education management;
- strengthening of the family and the community as children’s first educational environments through information, training and dissemination aimed at enhancing the family’s capacity to aid child development and learning and engaging the community as the context for the sociocultural development of the child.

3.7. Efforts targeted at vulnerable or disadvantaged children:

Expansion of early education coverage through strategies of conventional and non-conventional provision.

The Ministry of Education and Sport is working on expanding physical capacity to provide for children at the nursery and preschool stages (ages zero to six), priority being given to those geographical areas with the largest shortfalls in provision and the highest indices of social vulnerability. Given the short time frame set to achieve universal provision, several strategies must be undertaken simultaneously to increase provision. One such strategy entails adding preschool classrooms to primary schools and early education centres that have land available. Another entails developing non-conventional provision to improve the integrated development of the child and promote family and community involvement. In order to ensure quality at this level of education, equipment must include not only furniture suitable for preschool children, but also educational games and materials and toy libraries in accordance with the provisions of the early education curriculum.

In addition, three important lines of research are being conducted in early education, in response to current education needs:

Firstly, “Emotional and Educational Continuity”, aims to provide inputs to avoid a break between the preschool level and first grade of primary. This is possible only if strategies at both levels are compatible and admit emotional continuity and consistent educational coordination.

Secondly, efforts are under way to draw up a *methodology* of care for children from birth to the age of six under a non-conventional family-based strategy. Duly trained, the families then undertake educational activities with their children in their natural environment, the community, organizing themselves on an intersectoral and inter-agency basis.

Thirdly, an analytical study of conventional and non-conventional comprehensive care for children up to the age of six is being undertaken to identify strengths and weaknesses in order to make recommendations on the enhancement of early education in Venezuela.

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

Under the flagship programme known as “Simoncito” early education centres, care and education are provided for children up to the age of six at the nursery level (zero to three years) and the preschool level (four to six years). The centres operate a full eight-hour day and meet children’s food, health and recreational needs, prevent social, physical and natural risks and protect children’s legal integrity as subjects of law. They conduct an educational strategy aimed at strengthening the family as an education provider and at organizing community participation in the management of early education centres, while articulating conventional and non-conventional provision. At present, there are 231 Simoncito centres in Venezuela providing for 37,653 children, especially those from low-income families.

Preschool early education centres for children aged three to six provide comprehensive care and education on a full-day schedule and their approach is similar to that of the Simoncito centres. There are 1,570 State-run preschools throughout the country, in which 155,364 preschoolers are enrolled.

Non-formal educational provision. Education is provided by preschool teachers outside school establishments, to children up to the age of six who have not been enrolled in conventional schools, owing to the lack of space (in terms of capacity), the insufficient number of centres in the family's place of residence or distance from educational establishments. This approach aims to build the family's capacity to promote the development and learning of their young children. It involves the community and establishes governmental and non-governmental networks to carry out the activities necessary to ensure comprehensive care for children. At present, 2,500 preschool teachers are assigned to non-formal education provision, covering 78,832 children nationwide.

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

The early education curriculum is based on the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which defines education as a human right and a social duty required for the development of the individual, from a socio-humanistic perspective, with a view to the development of citizens in accordance with the principles of diversity and participation.

Education is regarded as fundamental to the development of the social being; hence, the curriculum offered is participatory, flexible, contextualized and reflects social and cultural diversity in a democratic, participatory, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society. In this framework, the curriculum is defined from a perspective of cultural construction, which emphasizes the human experience as a basis for organizing educational practice and embodies the act of teaching as social praxis. By the same token, as a factor of social change, the curriculum is viewed as part of an educational paradigm that values the involvement of individuals at the levels of the community, the locality, the federal state and the nation, attaching importance to the social production of cultural meaning.

In this regard, the early education curriculum is directed towards integrated development from early infancy up to the age of six or until entry into the first grade of basic education. It promotes the interaction of children with their peers, families, teachers and other important adults in the community. The curriculum thus takes into account the social and cultural diversity of the families and communities in which children grow and develop.

3.9.1. Objectives and aims:

- To foster learning experiences that help children to strengthen their potential for full and harmonious development in order to become autonomous, creative, well-rounded persons who can build knowledge and communicate, participate in the world around them freely and creatively, cooperate and coexist with others while showing tolerance and respect for them.
- To help children to develop their identities, and to respect their own worth and their individual, social, economic, cultural, linguistic and religious differences.
- To extend integrated provision to a larger number of children, thus helping to improve their quality of life and that of their families.
- To contribute to the learning and integrated development of the child from early infancy to the age of six or until they begin primary education, as subjects of

law entitled to certain guarantees, depending on their interests, potential and social and cultural context.

- To bring up healthy, participative, creative and spontaneous children capable of thinking for themselves, making decisions, solving problems and performing in harmony with each other in different contexts, with the values of personal, cultural, local and national identity, respect and care for the environment and love of work, freedom, justice, honesty, understanding, tolerance and harmonious coexistence.

3.9.2. Learning areas and teaching-learning methods:

Early education forms part of an approach that views education and human development as a continuum, from a global, comprehensive perspective in which early education is coordinated with the primary level in order to ensure continuity and the emotional ties that form the basis for socialization and the construction of knowledge.

Hence, early education is construed as a stage of comprehensive care and education for children, from early infancy up to the age of six, or until they enter primary school.

The theoretical basis of the early education curriculum is social constructivism, according to which children build their own knowledge through social interaction.

The curriculum is organized into learning areas, components and expected learning outcomes for children in nursery and preschool education. The cross-cutting curriculum issues are emotional development, intelligence and play. These are related to the basic learning outcomes of learning to live together, learning to know and learning to do.

In teaching practice, the teacher, mediator and other adults involved must consider essential theoretical aspects, assess, plan and guide the methodology, bearing in mind the child's interests, potential and social and cultural characteristics.

As part of teaching practice, it is suggested that the learning environment be organized into spaces or areas. There should also be a daily routine for part or all of the day.

This curriculum is set out in nine brochures to guide teachers' work in the classroom and within the family and community. These deal with curriculum background, oral and written language, mathematical processes, musical expression, the preschool learning environment, the nursery school learning environment, the formation of eating habits and healthy lifestyles, education on sexuality, reproductive health and gender equity and assessment and planning.

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

The Venezuelan school calendar has 192 days of lessons. School activities begin on 15 September and end on 15 July the following year.

In early education, the number of hours depends on the type of institution and the form of education provided.

Traditional half-day early education establishments have a daily routine of five hours, as provided in the early education curriculum, amounting to a total of 25 hours per week for around 38-39 weeks per year (an average of 960 hours per year).

In early education establishments that provide full-day integrated care (Simoncito centres and Bolivarian Preschools), children receive eight hours of care and education daily, and their routine of activities includes education, hygiene, meals, recreation, sociocultural development, rest and motor development. In such centres, children attend between 37 and 40 hours per week for the 192 days of the school year (an average of 1,536 hours per year).

In non-formal education provided in family and community settings children spend an average of 10 to 12 hours per week with the assigned teacher, who uses the remaining time to carry out training and advisory activities and modelling with the family and the community, covering aspects of child development and the learning process.

3.10. Any other relevant and pertinent information

As the first stage of the human development continuum in the Bolivarian education system, the early education system steadily increased its coverage of children up to the age of six during the period from 1999 to 2005, incorporating over 157,947 children into early education. This figure represents a growth rate of 20% in the six-year period.

Total enrolment in preschool education in 1999 was 867,952 nationwide; in 2005 the number of children enrolled rose to 1,025,899. However, the national education system covered only 24% of children under seven (which the National Statistical Institute estimates at 4,215,014), revealing weaknesses in provision for the zero to three age group (nursery level). At this level, only 236,089 children (8.8%), out of an estimated total of 2,843,098 nationwide were enrolled in early childhood care and education.

Three main reasons account for the low level of nursery coverage provided by The Ministry of Education and Sport.

Firstly, nursery education provision, as a level in the school system, came under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Sport when the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela was promulgated in 1999. Before that date, responsibility for this age group lay with the Ministry of Health and the (now abolished) Ministry of the Family and a range of public and private organizations, which carried out targeted remedial care and prevention programmes for children at risk.

Secondly, the existing physical infrastructure and school facilities lack the conditions and characteristics needed to provide an integrated education service for children under three.

Thirdly, owing to sociocultural factors relating to Venezuelan families, especially in rural and indigenous areas, they do not feel the need for their children under three to attend education establishments and receive educational provision there.

As regards preschool coverage for children aged between four and six, of the total estimated nationwide population of 4,215,014 in this age group in 2005, the education system covered 1,025,899 (85.6%), of whom 496,370 were in preschool and 490,421, aged five and six, were in primary education.

This expansion has been possible thanks to the momentum created by building and refurbishing programmes and by the assignment of more teachers in order to strengthen non-formal facilities provided in areas where the number of preschool

places and educational establishments fall short of the demand for provision for children under six.

In developing early education, it was also important to take steps to improve the quality of the education provided for children under six; with this in mind, the early education curriculum became official in 2005. This was an unprecedented development in Latin America, since the curriculum was the outcome of a process of analysis and discussion involving 17,063 teachers who took part in collective curriculum-building workshops. In addition, the Simoncito project transformed 225 traditional preschools into early education centres with nursery and preschool sections, open for full eight-hour days, providing for 36,717 boys and girls. Similarly, nationwide, 155,364 children aged three to six attended full-day Bolivarian early education centres.

In 2005, the effort to provide universal preschool education for children aged four to six was a core concern of educational policies aimed at guaranteeing conditions and opportunities for the exercise of children's educational rights. In this regard, in 2005 early education for children aged five and six reached a coverage rate of 92%, while coverage for children aged four stood at 80%, according to estimates issued by the National Statistical Institute (INE).

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:

(See 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		
As component of health and nutrition programmes, such as information about child development included in health and nutrition visits		
Parent groups that meet to discuss issues of their young children, including health, nutritional status, and development		
As component of adolescent, livelihood or literacy programmes		
Media broadcast, such as <i>Sesame Street</i> , with		

media for and with children		
Other (please specify)		

The early education curriculum that has been in place since July 2005 is the outcome of a systematic process of collective curriculum-building conducted in all Venezuelan states. This process prompted teachers, parents, community representatives and other prime movers to participate actively in the discussion and analysis of issues and content that affect development and learning processes among children under seven, as well as the family's highly significant role in this regard.

One of the objectives of the curriculum is therefore to strengthen the family as a structure and as a means of measuring child development. This is approached through:

- education for parents and other adults involved, provided directly by preschool teachers in school establishments and family and community settings. This covers matters referring to aspects of the provision of childhood care and education;
- dissemination of issues and content relating to early education and the family, by issuing pamphlets in national newspapers (a series of 10 pamphlets for 10 consecutive weeks, with a weekly print run of 250,000 copies);
- dissemination of short audio-visual materials on the early education and family-related issues and content contained in each pamphlet;
- gradual expansion of non-formal education, by recruiting teachers to coach and assist families.

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)

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

In the national education system, preschool teachers monitor children's development in order to verify their readiness for entry into primary education. Teachers assess and ascertain expected learning outcomes and competences during the school year and prepare records and quarterly and annual reports on children's development and performance.

With regard to the children's nutritional status, the National Nutrition Institute conducts an annual anthropometric survey of height and weight to establish children's nutritional and growth profiles, taking samples from educational establishments in the various states.

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

See previous sections.

[Information revised and additional data provided by the Ministry of Education and UNICEF, December 2005.]