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for every child

UNICEF Ethiopia

“Prior to this training, I taught my class very similar as I would for children in Grade 1. The curriculum is an integrated and play-based education approach that suits 6-year-old children ... They are so eager to learn, especially now since I am applying new play methods. They have become a lot more active.” – Selamawit Zeray, ‘O’ Class Instructor who attended UNICEF’s ECE training in Tigray Region

Overview and Background

Ethiopia has made remarkable progress towards pre-primary education with enrolment rates rising from just 9 per cent in 2010 to a current 44.2 per cent. However, with the rapid expansion of access comes the concern of corresponding *quality*. Many young children are now attending pre-school, which is a great achievement, but they are in classes that are poorly equipped and where teachers are inadequately trained. At the national level, there are challenges in providing adequate resources for quality teaching and materials and a lack of satisfactory quality standards for pre-primary facilities. At the local level, Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a new concept for many rural families and the poor quality of classes can deter parents from supporting their children’s enrolment.

There are also considerable inequities in access to ECE, as evidenced by regional variations, which span from 4.5 per cent attendance in Somali region to 93.6 per cent in Addis Ababa; and by poverty levels, where in 2012 only 2.6 per cent of children were accessing ECE in the poorest quintile, compared to 20 per cent of children in the highest quintile.*

The Case for Investing in ECE

Research consistently shows that investing in ECE is one of the most effective ways to improve a child’s success in school, increase learning incomes and reduce the likelihood of future health costs. There is a positive correlation between ECE and cognitive outcomes for children, with primary and secondary school completion and entry into higher education all impacted by participation in ECE. According to the Young Lives’ 2016 study, *Scaling Up Access to Quality Early*

Education in Ethiopia, urban children who attend ECE have a 25.7 per cent higher likelihood of completing secondary education at the appropriate age than their counterparts who have not attended pre-primary education. This type of powerful, longitudinal study has strengthened advocacy efforts in Ethiopia, ultimately resulting in a significant shift in the Government’s budget allocation to support early learning.

Children under 7 comprise the largest age bracket in Ethiopia with 7.8 million children at pre-primary age (4 to 6). Given that these children will soon become Ethiopia’s students, workforce, and leaders, ECE is critical for the short- and long-term prosperity of the country.

UNICEF’s ECE Strategy

With a national target of 80 per cent attendance rate in ECE by 2020, UNICEF has built an ambitious approach to support the Government in achieving this goal:

1. Demonstrate improved pre-primary classes and alternative ECE programmes for vulnerable and hard-to-reach communities.
2. Improve parental and community engagement to mobilize parents/caregivers to access and demand pre-primary services and improve their child rearing practices.
3. Support the revision and implementation of pre-primary curriculum to ensure age-appropriate teaching for young children.
4. Develop and apply improved minimum quality service standards for the education system.
5. Invest in government capacity building, by building a roadmap and policy framework and leveraging sector funding for ECE.

Situation

7,837,600

Pre-primary aged children in Ethiopia

3,460,878

Pre-primary aged children enrolled in ECE

19%

of children drop out of school during Grade 1, partly due to the lack of quality ECE opportunities

Response (2018)

130,036

Children attended UNICEF supported ECE programmes

18,000

Parents gained knowledge on child rearing practices through the parenting education initiative

2,004

ECE teachers and facilitators have been trained in quality ECE approaches

Interventions

At the Local Level

1. Demonstrate improved ECE programmes for rural and disadvantaged children and support the Government for national scale-up of these programmes. This includes two UNICEF-developed alternative initiatives that offer flexibility for harder-to-reach areas (for refugees, IDPs, pastoralists), as well as quality demonstration of the Government's standard pre-primary class.

- *Accelerated School Readiness (ASR)* is a school preparedness initiative where young children receive quality pre-primary classes over the summer to prepare for primary school. ASR is set in a classroom with 40-50 children and one qualified and trained facilitator.
- *Child-to-Child (CtC)* delivers developmentally-appropriate early learning activities for pre-primary aged children, facilitated by older children in Grades 5, 6 or 7 who volunteer their free time to support young children in their neighbourhoods.
- *The 'O' Class* is the Government's standard pre-primary class that takes place during the school year, and UNICEF supports it by demonstrating the quality "Model 'O' Class" in disadvantaged areas and supporting its national scale-up.

2. Strengthen parental and community engagement for ECE via innovative Communications-for-Development (C4D) community mobilization activities. In addition, UNICEF introduces and improves *Parenting Education* into Integrated Functional Adult Education, the Government's standard education programme for adults across the country.

At the National Level

1. Support the Government to revise the formal pre-primary curriculum and related teaching/learning materials to ensure age-appropriate quality teaching for young children, so that learning is fun, engaging and educational.

2. Establish, implement and monitor quality service standards. Given that the poor quality of ECE stems from a lack of clear standards on what the pre-primary classes should look like, UNICEF invests in working with the Government to design quality service standards.

3. Develop ECE policies and strategies by working with the Government to build a roadmap and policy framework for quality implementation of ECE.

4. Leverage funds to improve, expand and sustain quality ECE. UNICEF has been at the forefront in advocating for government financing for ECE that has led to the massive expansion of access and quality over the past decade.

Impact and Results

With UNICEF's support, considerable progress has been made for children, including:

- The development of children's pre-math and early literacy skills have been supported and enhanced through UNICEF's ECE interventions. These skills give children the foundation to start primary school and decreases the chances for dropout in the future.
- The development of children's confidence and social-emotional and communications skills have been supported and enhanced through UNICEF's ECE interventions.
- Learning environments at home have been improved due to community and parental engagement activities.
- Adolescent 'Young Facilitators' of CtC have learned useful teaching/learning, planning, and organizational skills to help them prepare for future careers.

UNICEF's tremendous advocacy efforts have helped lead to significant achievements at the national level. There has been an increase of ECE access from 9 to 44 per cent in just eight years. When looking at government financing, only 0.06 per cent of the total sector budget was allocated to ECE in the previous development plan and this has now been raised to 4 per cent, with plans to increase it to 11 per cent by 2020. In addition, the sector's pooled programme, the General Education Quality Improvement Project for Equity (GEQIP-E) has recently included ECE investments of ETB 50 million (\$US 1.79 million) over five years, where previously ECE was not included in the GEQIP.

With these significant achievements, the Ministry of Education now regards UNICEF as a critical partner for the country for ECE. UNICEF has been asked to play a strategic role in supporting the Government in increasing quality ECE to all young children in the country.

The chart below displays the amount and type of beneficiaries reached in 2018.

Beneficiary Type	Result (2018)
Young IDP Children directly supported through ECE interventions	11,135 boys and girls
Young Refugee Children directly supported through ECE interventions	43,836 boys and girls
Young Children (non refugee/IDP) directly supported through ECE interventions	75,065 boys and girls
Adult Facilitators trained in ASR, CtC and/or 'O' class quality approaches	2,004 adult facilitators
Parents reached through parenting education	18,000 parents
Regional education bureaus (REB) directly supported by UNICEF on ECE supervision.	9 out of 9 regions
Young children indirectly supported by UNICEF's improvements to ECE at the national level	All 3.46 million children enrolled in ECE in Ethiopia

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