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from Commitments to Actions

2.6

**Early Childhood Care and Education Development:
Foundations for the Future**

Muscat,
Sultanate of Oman

2-3
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Executive Summary

The Islamic World Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) participated in a collaborative international research project led by the Korea Institute of Child Care and Education (KICCE). This project, conducted in partnership with the Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC) and the KDI School of Public Policy and Management, aimed to formulate a strategic plan for the Korean Government to extend its support for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in developing countries, particularly within the framework of official development assistance (ODA).

The research, titled *Developing a Plan for International Development and Cooperation in Early Childhood Care and Education Policy* (Moon et al., 2023), focused on ECCE services across 17 countries in Asia, Africa, Central Asia, and South America. ICESCO's role in this project involved distributing and collecting data from five African countries—Egypt, Senegal, Gabon, Niger, and Tanzania—and conducting interviews to identify the basic status of ECCE, key policies, and priority needs for development cooperation in each country.

The findings of this research highlight diverse and innovative practices in ECCE among nine ICESCO member countries included in the study: Egypt, Senegal, Niger, Gabon, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Uzbekistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and the Republic of Tajikistan. The study explored critical themes such as basic information and types of ECCE services, quality and inclusive ECCE services for all young children, ECCE teachers and practitioners, ECCE program innovation, policy, governance, and finance, as well as the strengths, limitations, and research priorities for ECCE development cooperation. This report presents the ECCE practices from the nine ICESCO member countries highlighted in the study and offers policy recommendations to inspire Member States in their strategic planning for the improvement of ECCE for the future.

Introduction

Early childhood is a crucial period for a child’s holistic development, encompassing cognitive, social, emotional, and physical growth. This phase lays the foundation for a child’s future well-being and success. Despite its importance, millions of children worldwide are denied the fundamental right to equal opportunities and access to quality early childhood education. According to the latest data, children in low-income countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, Northern Africa, and Western Asia—regions that include many of ICESCO’s Member States—experience the highest rates of exclusion from early childhood education opportunities (UNESCO and UNICEF, 2024).

Investing in ECCE is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic necessity for achieving broader global development goals. ECCE is central to Sustainable Development Goal 4, particularly target 4.2, which aims to “ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education” by 2030. Achieving this target is essential for breaking the cycle of poverty, promoting gender equality, and fostering inclusive economic growth. For ICESCO Member States, prioritizing ECCE is crucial for building a strong educational foundation that will drive future social and economic development.

ICESCO’s commitment to ECCE was reinforced during the UNESCO World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education (WCECCE), held on November 14-16, 2022, in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. At the conference, Dr. Salim AlMalik, Director General of ICESCO, emphasized the critical importance of investing in quality education and care for young children. He called for international communities to take decisive action, stating, “We should come up with innovative measures to facilitate international partnerships and commitment at all levels, including the availability of funds and mobilization of political awareness to achieve SDG 4.2.”

The Tashkent Declaration, adopted on the final day of the conference, set the international agenda for early childhood education through 2030. It outlined guiding principles across four priority areas: (1) equitable and inclusive quality ECCE services for all, (2) ECCE personnel, (3) innovation for advancing transformation, and (4) policy, governance, and finance (UNESCO, 2023). These principles are aligned with the broader goal of providing equal access to quality ECCE services as a means to achieve SDG 4.2.

Continuing its efforts to advance ECCE, ICESCO participated in international joint research on ECCE. The research, titled *Developing a Plan for International Development and Cooperation in Early Childhood Care and Education Policy* (Moon et al., 2023), included contributions from nine ICESCO member countries: Egypt, Senegal, Niger, Gabon, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. This report highlights practices in ECCE from these countries categorized thematically and offers policy recommendations aimed at inspiring Member States in their strategic planning to improve ECCE.

Research Overview and Methodology

ICESCO participated in an international research project of Korea Institute of Child Care and Education (KICCE), a governmental organization in the Republic of Korea dedicated to research and policy development in the field of early childhood education. The primary objective of this project was to formulate a strategic plan for the Korean Government to extend its support for early childhood care and education (ECCE) in developing countries, within the framework of official development assistance (ODA) (Moon et al., 2023). As the result of this project, the research *Developing a Plan for International Development and Cooperation in Early Childhood Care and Education Policy* (Moon et al., 2023) was published by the National Research Council for Economics, Humanities, and Social Sciences (NRC). The NRC is a Korean national public institution under the Prime Minister's Office, established to support government-funded research institutes.

The study selected 17 countries from various regions to conduct a demand survey on ECCE. These countries were chosen based on their prioritization of education in development cooperation, low participation rates in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), and the feasibility of data collection (Moon et al., 2023). The selected countries included Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs), including nine ICESCO member countries.

The study was carried out in collaboration with the Islamic World Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (ICESCO), the Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC) and the KDI School of Public Policy and Management (KDI). Each participating organization was responsible for collecting data related to ECCE services in 17 countries in 4 different regions, Asia, Africa, Central Asia, and South America. A team of 2-3 key stakeholders, including government officials from each country, was formed to respond to the questionnaire, and the accuracy of the responses was verified through in-depth interviews (Moon et al., 2023). The results of the policy questionnaire responses from each country were compiled, edited, and produced into a single report by KICCE to build a database for the research (Moon et al., 2023). In this study, ICESCO was responsible for distributing questionnaires to the ECCE departments of the ministries of education in five selected African countries, namely Egypt, Senegal, Gabon, Niger, and Tanzania, collecting responses, and conducting interviews.

Among the 17 selected countries in this study were nine ICESCO Member States—Egypt, Senegal, Niger, Gabon, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Uzbekistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and the Republic of Tajikistan. Although the findings do not represent the entirety of ICESCO Member States, this report aims to highlight practices in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) with a focus on the ICESCO Member States represented in the joint international research in ECCE, drawing primarily from the results of the study.



Analysis and Discussion of Research Findings

The following section presents an analysis of research findings, categorized thematically, with a focus on practices in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) as highlighted in the report across nine ICESCO Member States included in the study. The analysis covers key areas related to ECCE, such as emergency preparedness, budget allocation and transparency, access in rural areas, guidelines for digital device use, compulsory education, teacher capacity building, children's rights, and infrastructure expansion. These themes reflect the diverse and innovative approaches taken by the nine ICESCO Member States represented in the study to enhance ECCE, addressing challenges and leveraging opportunities to improve ECCE systems.

The following table summarizes the diverse approaches taken by nine ICESCO Member States highlighted in the study *Developing a Plan for International Development and Cooperation in Early Childhood Care and Education Policy* (Moon et al., 2023).

Thematic Area	Country	Key Practices and Achievements
Emergency Preparedness in ECCE	Egypt	Developed an ECCE-specific emergency manual for operating ECCE services and guiding teachers during emergencies.
	Bangladesh	Implemented the BRAC Humanitarian Play Lab (HPL) model in Rohingya refugee camps, combining play-based learning with psychosocial support and reaching 41,000 children by 2019.
Budget Allocation and Transparency	Senegal	Managed separate statistical data on national budgets allocated to ECCE, enabling better resource allocation and accountability.
Expanding ECCE Access in Rural Areas		Expanded educational opportunities in rural areas through the Cases des Tout-Petits (CTP) program, integrating education, health, and nutrition services.
Guidelines for Digital Device Use	Egypt	Integrated digital technology to support children with disabilities.
	Niger	Established guidelines for safe digital device use in ECCE settings.
Compulsory ECCE Education	Gabon	Institutionalized ECCE as compulsory education.
	Tajikistan	Implemented a phased plan to provide one year of universal pre-primary education for all 6-year-old children, with support from UNICEF.
Teacher Capacity Building in ECCE	Uzbekistan	Established the Uzbekistan Teaching and Learning Development Complex Center and implemented teacher retraining programs to enhance competencies.
	Indonesia	Improved the quality of ECCE services through the Early Learning Partnership program, leading to better cognitive and socio-emotional development for participating children.
ECCE as a Children's Right	Uzbekistan	Enacted the Law on Preschool Education and Care, guaranteeing children's rights to ECCE, with technical support from UNICEF.
Expanding ECCE Infrastructure	Kyrgyzstan	Significantly expanded the number of public and private kindergartens from 819 in 2012 to 1,712 in 2021, increasing the enrollment rate from 16.1% to 23.9%.

Emergency Preparedness in ECCE

Given that the youngest victims of crises are babies and young children who spend their earliest years in humanitarian settings, it is crucial to ensure their well-being and development during emergencies and crises (Calaycay, 2022). The study assessed whether countries have prepared emergency disaster response and management manuals for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) settings. In this regard, Egypt was noted for preparing an ECCE-specific emergency manual for operating ECCE services and guiding teachers during emergency situations such as COVID-19 (Moon et al., 2023).

Bangladesh also reported having an ECCE specific manual in emergency (Moon et al., 2023). In addition, Bangladesh's innovative practices in ECCE curriculum was highlighted in UNESCO's thematic report on Early Childhood Care and Education in Emergencies (Calaycay, 2022). The BRAC Humanitarian Play Lab (HPL) model in Bangladesh combines play-based learning with psychosocial support, incorporating physical play, songs, stories, dance, and art, while engaging caregivers in creating low-cost, culturally relevant play materials. Implemented in Rohingya refugee camps, the HPL model is a holistic, conflict-sensitive curriculum that includes traditional Rohingya activities and supports both children and caregivers. By December 2019, it had reached about 41,000 Rohingya children aged 0-6. Monitoring tools assess interaction quality, environmental quality, and program implementation (Calaycay, 2022).

Budget Allocation and Transparency in ECCE

Accurate and transparent budget allocation is crucial for assessing funding needs and improving the efficiency of resource distribution in ECCE. The study highlighted Senegal's management of separate statistical data on national budgets allocated to ECCE among the African countries surveyed (Moon et al., 2023). Statistical data on ECCE expenditure as a percentage of the overall education budget was also available for Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan (Moon et al., 2023). The data shows that the budget allocated to ECCE is limited, standing at 2%, 10%, 15%, and 7% for Senegal, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, respectively (Moon et al., 2023). Without detailed and transparent budget data, identifying gaps in ECCE and efficiently allocating resources to address the gaps is challenging. Clear financial data enables policymakers to track progress, ensure accountability, and make informed decisions to enhance ECCE quality and accessibility. Additionally, transparency facilitates international comparisons and collaborations, enabling countries to learn from best practices and optimize their investments in early childhood development.

Expanding ECCE Access in Rural Areas

Innovative community-based initiatives have proven effective in bridging the gap between rural and urban ECCE access. Senegal's Cases des Tout-Petits (CTP) program, managed by the National Agency of Cases des Tout-Petits (ANCTP), was highlighted in the study as an example of increasing ECCE enrollment and access (Moon et al., 2023). The CTP initiative, launched in 2006, aims to expand educational opportunities in rural areas through a comprehensive approach that integrates education, health, and nutrition services. The program has led to significant increases in enrollment in rural areas and aims to establish 28,000 community-based daycare centers and kindergartens (Taniguchi, 2014). The CTP's emphasis on holistic child development gained national interest, aiding Senegal in aligning with international child development and labor standards to protect children's rights (Diop, personal communication, 2020, as cited in Cisse et al., 2022). Active community involvement, including the participation of local members and even grandparents, has been instrumental in supporting trained teachers and fostering local ownership (Taniguchi, 2014; Cisse et al., 2022).



Guidelines for Digital Device Use in ECCE

The rapid advancement of digital technology presents opportunities to enhance ECCE, particularly in developing countries. Educational tools that utilize digital technology can improve educational quality by managing student data, providing effective teaching materials, and creating specialized learning environments for children with disabilities (Moon et al., 2023). However, there are valid concerns about the potential negative effects of digital device use on children's physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development (Byron, 2008; Stephen & Plowman, 2003). The study noted that Egypt has begun integrating digital technology to support children with disabilities, while Niger has established guidelines for safe digital device use in ECCE settings (Moon et al., 2023).

Compulsory ECCE Education

The Education 2030 Framework for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG Target 4.2) set a global goal for all children to receive at least one year of free and compulsory pre-primary education by 2030. However, as of 2020, only 25% of countries had legally adopted this standard (UNESCO, 2021). Among the ICESCO Member States surveyed in the study, Gabon was noted as a country that has made steps to institutionalize ECCE as compulsory education (Moon et al., 2023). Similarly, Tajikistan has demonstrated a strong commitment to compulsory pre-primary education, implementing a phased plan to provide one year of universal pre-primary education for all 6-year-old children, with support from UNICEF (Moon et al., 2023).

Teacher Capacity Building in ECCE

Investing in the professional development and well-being of ECCE teachers is crucial for improving the quality of ECCE. National governments and international organizations have supported efforts to enhance teacher competencies, provide retraining, and improve working conditions. One notable example highlighted in the study was Uzbekistan's "Project for Strengthening the Competence of Early Childhood Teachers through the Establishment of the Uzbekistan Teaching and Learning Development Complex Center," scheduled to be conducted for six years from 2021 to 2026. This project provides many implications and guidelines for promoting international development cooperation in early childhood development in the future, both in terms of scale and content (Moon et al., 2023). The project aims to establish a teaching and learning development complex center in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, which will include an early childhood education experience center and a research kindergarten, and to conduct retraining for the enhancement of early childhood teachers' competencies (Moon et al., 2023). Additionally, it plans to establish an "Early Childhood Education Experts Council" locally to promote it as a recipient country-led project, with the significance of spreading K-Edu by benchmarking and localizing South Korea's Nuri Curriculum (Moon et al., 2023).

In September 2017, the Ministry of Preschool Education in Uzbekistan established the "Institute for Retraining and Certification of Early Childhood Education Institution Managers and Specialists" (Moon et al., 2023). This institute provides retraining and certification programs for institution managers and teachers, equipping them with modern teaching methods in ECCE, and monitors the competencies of early childhood education staff. Meanwhile, a World Bank-supported project offers 10 days of training on various teaching methods, including child-centered approaches and early childhood development, to 2,000 teachers across Uzbekistan (Moon et al., 2023). Additionally, in 2018, the Uzbek government decided to increase early childhood teachers' salaries by 30% to attract more highly educated and qualified professionals to the field (UZ Daily, 2018). In 2019, the government further allocated funds in the national budget for raising these teachers' salaries (Moon et al., 2023).

The study also noted the ‘Early Learning Partnership program,’ conducted in Indonesia in 2016. This program aimed to improve the quality of early childhood education services through the education of teachers and the provision of educational materials (Moon et al., 2023). The impact evaluation results showed that children attending educational institutions participating in the program had better cognitive and socio-emotional development compared to those who did not participate (Denboba et al., 2015). In Indonesia, national foundations like the Tanoto Foundation are enhancing early development through improving the quality of ECCE (Early Childhood Care and Education) teachers, increasing parental involvement, and implementing integrated center-based approaches (Moon et al., 2023).

Five out of nine ICESCO Member States represented in the study responded to having a national-level development strategy for human resource in ECCE. There is a need for Human Resource Development (HRD) plans in the education sector, including ECCE. Regulations and policies for ECCE staff vary depending on the type of ECCE service provider, and private sector and civil society organization service providers are often not included in the existing HRD plans (Moon et al., 2023). National support for ECCE workforce mapping can lay the foundation for subsequent policy reforms and investments. Opportunities for capacity building and professional development through certification should be open to staff from various service providers, and ongoing support is necessary to ensure that this approach is effective.

ECCE as a Children’s Right

In the research *Recognizing Early Childhood Education as a Human Right in International Law*, Fredman et al. (2022) argue that early childhood education should be considered part of states’ legally binding obligations regarding the right to education. According to Fredman et al. (2022), international human rights law suggests that the right to education begins only when children reach the age for first grade. While primary and secondary education are specifically mentioned in all three treaties, early childhood education is not. However, Fredman et al. (2022) contend that all three treaties mandate that education must promote the full development of the child’s personality and enable their full participation in society. Given the strong evidence that early childhood education is essential for a child’s development and their ability to participate in society, it is important to advocate for ECCE as a fundamental children’s right.

In this regard, Uzbekistan was highlighted in the study by KICCE, for enacting the Law on Preschool Education and Care, guaranteeing children’s rights to ECCE (Moon et al., 2023). UNICEF provided technical expertise to the Ministry of Preschool Education (MOPSE) of Uzbekistan to develop a new Law on Preschool Education, which guarantees one year of preprimary education for children before they enter school (UNICEF, 2022). In December 2019, the “Law on Preschool Education and Care,” which stipulates the rights of children and the rights and duties of parents (legal guardians) and teachers regarding early childhood education, was enacted (Moon et al., 2023).

Expanding ECCE Infrastructure

Expanding the number of public and private kindergartens is crucial for increasing enrollment rates and access to early childhood education. The study highlighted the notable expansion of both public and private kindergartens in Kyrgyzstan. The number of public kindergartens increased from 761 in 2012 to 1,500 in 2021, while the number of private kindergartens rose from 58 in 2012 to 212 in 2021 (Moon et al., 2023). Overall, the total number of kindergartens increased by 109%, from 819 in 2012 to 1,712 in 2021, and the enrollment rate rose from 16.1% to 23.9%, an increase of 7.8 percentage points (Moon et al., 2023). This data reflects Kyrgyzstan’s efforts to improve accessibility to ECCE services by expanding the number of available ECCE centers.



Research Priorities in ECCE

In the study, the research priorities on ECCE were determined through the distributed surveys to understand the pressing needs and goals within ECCE in each country (Moon et al., 2023). The following chart summarizes the research priorities in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) as identified by government officials and experts from nine ICESCO Member States. These priorities highlight the unique challenges and focus areas each country considers critical for advancing ECCE. The data provided in the table comes from the research results of the study *Developing a Plan for International Development and Cooperation in Early Childhood Care and Education Policy* (Moon et al., 2023).

Country	Research Priorities in ECCE
Egypt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early childhood teacher training • In-service teacher training • Identifying and improving the latest ECCE trends • Improving the quality of educational environment • International exchange in the field of ECCE
Senegal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child development
Niger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play-based learning development • Psycho-social emotional care • Infant and child care in disaster situations • Quality control
Gabon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lessons using digital technology • Social inclusion, protection and education in rural areas • Health and nutrition related digital service
Bangladesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the quality of small ECCE institutions • Public finance for ECCE • Public-private cooperation for the lower-income families • Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)
Indonesia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost-benefit of supporting ECCE-Primary education transition • Impact of multi-sectoral approach (e.g. nutrition and developmental stimulation)
Uzbekistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for improving the quality of early childhood education tailored to the needs of parents of infants and young children
Kyrgyzstan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-evaluation of the quality of early childhood education and exploration of strategies for improving developmental outcomes for infants and young children
Tajikistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening access to ECCE considering the population imbalance in rural and fishing communities • Regional network frameworks related to early childhood development • Enhancing education through technology integration

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in 9 ICESCO Member States: Enrollment, Expenditure, and Inclusivity Overview

The following table presents a comparative overview of key indicators related to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) across nine ICESCO Member States represented in the study. The data highlights enrollment rates, financial investment in ECCE as a percentage of the overall education budget, and the inclusivity of ECCE systems in terms of compulsory education, emergency preparedness, and national-level Human Resource Development (HRD) plans for ECCE. The data provided in the table comes from the research results of the study *Developing a Plan for International Development and Cooperation in Early Childhood Care and Education Policy* (Moon et al., 2023).

Country	ECCE Enrollment Rate	ECCE expenditure as a percentage of overall education budget	Is ECCE Compulsory?	Is there an ECCE-Specific Emergency Manual?	Is there a national-level Human Resource Development (HRD) plan for ECCE?
Egypt	23.1% (Ages 4-6)	N/A	No	Yes	Yes
Senegal	16.4% (Ages 3-5)	2%	No (Plans to develop policy to implement compulsory and free education for children aged 5 years old)	No	No
Niger	11.1% (Ages 4-6)	N/A	No	No	Yes
Gabon	49.9% (Ages 0-5)	32.26% (Pre-school and elementary school combined)	Yes (compulsory starting at age 3)	No	No
Bangladesh	19% (Ages 3-5)	ECCE financial data partially accessible	No	Yes	No
Indonesia	17% (Ages 3-5)	N/A	No	No (General education manual exists)	No
Uzbekistan	69.4%	10%	No	No (General education manual exists)	Yes
Kyrgyzstan	23.9% (Ages 1-6)	15%	No	N/A	Yes
Tajikistan	15.3%	7%	No	N/A	Yes

*N/A signifies that no relevant data was provided to the questionnaire at the data collection stage.



Recommendations

Drawing on the practices of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) on nine ICESCO Member Countries represented in the international joint research on ECCE conducted by KICCE, the following recommendations are proposed:

Short-term Recommendations

- **Increase Access to ECCE through Community-Based Programs:** Implement community-based Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programs that integrate education, health, and nutrition services, tailored to meet local needs. Member States should develop and expand initiatives that actively involve community participation to address the urban-rural divide. Such programs enhance access in underserved areas and foster local ownership, ensuring sustainability and cultural relevance.
- **Prepare for ECCE in Emergencies:** Develop and disseminate ECCE-specific emergency response plans to ensure preparedness in times of crisis. ICESCO can facilitate knowledge-sharing and capacity-building initiatives among Member States to enhance resilience in ECCE institutions. Preparing for emergencies is crucial to protecting young children's well-being and ensuring the continuity of their education during crises.
- **Promote Responsible Integration of Digital Tools in ECCE:** Promote the responsible integration of digital tools in ECCE settings, with a focus on child safety and developmental appropriateness. Member States should establish guidelines that support the use of technology to enhance learning while addressing potential risks to children's health and development. Effective use of digital tools can improve the quality of ECCE but must be managed carefully to ensure positive outcomes.

Medium-term Recommendations

- **Strengthen Budget Allocation and Transparency:** Establish clear guidelines for tracking ECCE budget allocations at the national level. Developing transparent financial reporting systems and data management practices for effective budget tracking is essential for identifying funding gaps, ensuring accountability, and optimizing the allocation of resources for ECCE.
- **Invest in ECCE Teacher Capacity:** Implement comprehensive teacher training and continuous professional development programs to enhance the quality of ECCE services. Member states should prioritize the upskilling of ECCE personnel and improve working conditions to attract and retain qualified educators. A well-trained and supported workforce is key to delivering high-quality ECCE that positively impacts children's developmental outcomes. Additionally, there should be specific Human Resource Development (HRD) plans for the ECCE sector, including clear regulations and policies for all types of service providers. This includes ensuring that private sector and civil society organization service providers are integrated into these HRD plans, addressing any gaps that may exist.
- **Expand and Improve ECCE Infrastructure:** Support the expansion of ECCE infrastructure to meet growing demand, particularly in underserved areas. Member states should prioritize investments in the construction and renovation of ECCE centers to increase access and enrollment. Expanding infrastructure is essential for improving service delivery and ensuring that more children have access to early education opportunities.

Long-term Recommendations

- **Advance ECCE as a Human Right:** Advocate for the inclusion of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) as an integral part of national education policies and strategies, emphasizing its importance as a foundational right for every child. Strengthen legal and policy frameworks to guarantee equitable access to early childhood education. Recognizing ECCE as a critical component of the education system ensures that all children, regardless of background, benefit from early learning opportunities, which should be acknowledged as a fundamental human right.
- **Develop Sustainable Funding Mechanisms:** Ensure long-term, sustainable funding for ECCE through strategic efforts and partnerships. This recommendation focuses on creating financial models that guarantee consistent support for ECCE programs, ensuring their longevity and effectiveness over time.



Roadmap for Recommendations: Actions & Milestones

Roadmaps for the implementation of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) recommendations over short-term, medium-term, and long-term timeframes were created to offer a structured approach to implementing ECCE policies, ensuring that Member States can progressively reach their ECCE goals through clearly defined actions and measurable milestones. Each roadmap outlines specific actions, milestones, and corresponding timelines to guide Member States in achieving critical objectives for enhancing ECCE.

Short-Term Recommendations: Actions & Milestones (Annex A)

The short-term recommendations roadmap focuses on actionable steps within the first year, emphasizing immediate priorities such as increasing access to ECCE through community-based programs, preparing for ECCE in emergencies, and promoting the responsible integration of digital tools in ECCE settings. Key milestones include identifying target communities, launching pilot programs, and training educators to build a strong foundation for ECCE initiatives.

Medium-Term Recommendations: Actions & Milestones (Annex B)

The medium-term recommendations roadmap covers actions planned for years one through five, aiming to strengthen ECCE systems across Member States. This includes improving budget allocation and transparency, investing in teacher capacity, and expanding ECCE infrastructure. Milestones are designed to ensure sustainable progress, such as establishing continuous professional development programs for teachers, enhancing financial reporting systems, and increasing ECCE enrollment capacity.

Long-Term Recommendations: Actions & Milestones (Annex C)

The long-term recommendations roadmap extends from year six to year ten, focusing on the systemic and sustainable advancement of ECCE. It includes actions to establish ECCE as a recognized human right and to develop sustainable funding mechanisms. Milestones for this period aim to embed ECCE within national policies, secure long-term financial commitments, and create endowment funds to support ongoing ECCE programs.

Conclusion

The findings from ICESCO's joint research on ECCE highlight key practices among nine Member States concerning Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), including the increasing access to ECCE through a community-based approach, improvement of budget transparency, enhancement of teacher capacity, recognition of ECCE as a fundamental human right, preparation for emergencies, responsible integration of digital tools, and improvement of ECCE infrastructure. This joint research on ECCE provides a foundation for ICESCO Member States to further collaborate on ECCE initiatives and encourages broader participation in future research opportunities in the area of ECCE. The shared experiences and practices on ECCE among ICESCO Member States can provide valuable insights and frameworks that can guide Member States in improving their ECCE systems, ultimately ensuring that every child has the opportunity to thrive and succeed.

To translate commitment into action, ICESCO Member States must prioritize incorporating concrete, actionable steps for ECCE within their national education strategies. By doing so, they can ensure that all children, regardless of their background or location, receive the quality early education essential for their foundational learning and development. To ensure the recommendations lead to meaningful improvements in ECCE, ICESCO Member States may consider the following next steps:

- 1. Incorporate Recommendations into National Strategies:** Member states should integrate the ECCE recommendations into their national education strategies, ensuring alignment with broader educational goals and policies.
- 2. Set Up Working Groups:** Establish specialized working groups to focus on specific aspects of the recommendations, such as ECCE teacher training, infrastructure development, or digital integration, facilitating targeted action and collaboration.
- 3. Leverage Upcoming Conferences:** Utilize platforms like the Third Education Ministers Conference to discuss and refine recommendations, share best practices, and agree on collective actions on ECCE that can be implemented across Member States.
- 4. Develop Early Childhood Data Systems:** Establish comprehensive data collection systems to track ECCE access, quality, and outcomes across Member States. Reliable data will inform policy decisions and ensure that resources are effectively allocated to areas of greatest need.
- 5. Establish Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms:** Develop robust monitoring and evaluation systems to track the progress of ECCE initiatives, allowing for continuous improvement and accountability.

By taking these steps, ICESCO Member States can ensure that the recommendations lead to tangible improvements in ECCE, ultimately contributing to a more equitable and prosperous future for all children across the Islamic world. The Third Education Ministers Conference offers an ideal platform for Member States to reaffirm their commitment to ECCE and to begin collaborating on innovative solutions tailored to the specific needs of their young populations. This collective effort will not only advance the Sustainable Development Goals but also lay the groundwork for a more equitable and prosperous future across the Member States.



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Annex A. Roadmap for ECCE Policy Short-Term Recommendations: Actions & Milestones

Short-term Recommendations	Months 1-3	Months 4-6	Months 7-9	Months 10-12
	Actions & Milestones			
Increase Access to ECCE through Community-Based Programs	<p>Assess Needs and Identify Target Areas: Identify and map out at least 15 underserved communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage Community Stakeholders: Conduct at least 10 community engagement workshops, involving a minimum of 500 participants. • Design Integrated ECCE Programs: Develop and finalize ECCE programs for all 15 target communities. 	<p>Pilot Programs: Launch pilot programs in 5 communities, reaching at least 1,000 children.</p>	<p>Expand Programs Based on Pilot Feedback: Expand the programs to an additional 10 communities, reaching a total of 3,000 children.</p>
Prepare for ECCE in Emergencies	<p>Develop ECCE-Specific Emergency Response Plans: Develop and finalize emergency response plans for at least 10 member states.</p>	<p>Disseminate Plans and Train Educators: Train at least 500 educators across 10 member states.</p>	<p>Facilitate Knowledge-Sharing Initiatives: Organize 5 regional workshops, with participation from at least 200 ECCE professionals.</p>	<p>Conduct Emergency Drills: Implement emergency drills in 100 ECCE centers across the 10 member states.</p>
Promote Responsible Integration of Digital Tools in ECCE	<p>Develop Guidelines for Digital Tool Use: Finalize digital tool guidelines and distribute them to 1,000 ECCE centers.</p>	<p>Train Educators on Digital Integration: Train at least 500 educators on the responsible use of digital tools.</p>	<p>Pilot Digital Learning Initiatives: Launch pilot digital learning initiatives in 20 ECCE centers, reaching at least 1,000 children.</p>	<p>Monitor and Evaluate Pilot Programs: Conduct evaluations in all 20 pilot centers and refine the guidelines, with at least 90% of educators reporting satisfaction with the integration process.</p>
Integrated Quantitative Milestones Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECCE Access: Identify 15 underserved communities (Milestone: 15 communities identified). • Emergency Preparedness: Develop emergency response plans for 10 member states (Milestone: 10 plans finalized). • Digital Tools: Distribute guidelines to 1,000 ECCE centers (Milestone: 1,000 centers reached). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECCE Access: Conduct 10 workshops with 500 participants (Milestone: 500 participants engaged). • Emergency Preparedness: Train 500 educators (Milestone: 500 educators trained). • Digital Tools: Train 500 educators (Milestone: 500 educators trained). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECCE Access: Pilot programs in 5 communities (Milestone: 1,000 children reached). • Emergency Preparedness: Hold 5 workshops with 200 professionals (Milestone: 200 professionals trained). • Digital Tools: Pilot initiatives in 20 centers (Milestone: 1,000 children reached). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECCE Access: Expand to 10 additional communities (Milestone: 3,000 children reached). • Emergency Preparedness: Conduct drills in 100 centers (Milestone: 100 centers prepared). • Digital Tools: Evaluate pilots in 20 centers, with 90% satisfaction (Milestone: 90% satisfaction rate).

Annex B. Roadmap for ECCE Policy Medium-Term Recommendations: Actions & Milestones

Medium-term Recommendations	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
	Actions & Milestones				
Strengthen Budget Allocation and Transparency	<p>Develop National Guidelines for Budget Tracking: Establish clear budget tracking guidelines in at least 80% of member states.</p>	<p>Implement Transparent Financial Reporting Systems: Roll out financial reporting systems in 50% of member states, with annual reports published.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Transparent Financial Reporting Systems: Expand reporting systems to 80% of member states. • Conduct Financial Audits and Assess Resource Allocation: Complete financial audits in 60% of member states, identifying at least three major funding gaps or inefficiencies. 	<p>Foster International and Regional Comparisons: Facilitate at least three international workshops to compare budget allocations and share best practices among member states.</p>	<p>Conduct Financial Audits and Assess Resource Allocation: Ensure that at least 70% of identified funding gaps are addressed.</p>
Invest in ECCE Teacher Capacity		<p>Implement Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Initiatives: Establish CPD programs in 70% of member states, with at least 60% of teachers participating annually.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and Launch Comprehensive Training Programs: Develop training programs and begin training for at least 50% of ECCE teachers across member states. Ensure that 80% of ECCE teachers have undergone the training program. • Improve Working Conditions for ECCE Personnel: Increase teacher salaries by at least 20% in 50% of member states. 	<p>Implement Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Initiatives: Increase CPD participation to 80% of ECCE teachers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve Working Conditions for ECCE Personnel: Ensure that at least 70% of ECCE centers report improved working conditions (e.g., reduced student-teacher ratios, enhanced facilities). • Monitor and Evaluate Teacher Performance: Implement teacher performance evaluation systems in 60% of member states, with 75% of teachers meeting or exceeding standards.
Expand and Improve ECCE Infrastructure	<p>Conduct Infrastructure Needs Assessments: Complete infrastructure needs assessments in 100% of member states.</p>	<p>Prioritize and Secure Funding for Infrastructure Expansion: Secure funding and begin construction/renovation projects in 50% of underserved areas.</p>	<p>Increase ECCE Enrollment Capacity: Expand enrollment capacity by at least 30% in 60% of member states</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize and Secure Funding for Infrastructure Expansion: Ensure that at least 60% of these projects are completed. • Enhance Facilities and Resources in ECCE Centers: Upgrade facilities in 50% of existing ECCE centers (e.g., modern classrooms, safe play areas). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase ECCE Enrollment Capacity: Achieve a 50% increase in enrollment capacity in 80% of member states • Enhance Facilities and Resources in ECCE Centers: Ensure that 70% of all ECCE centers have access to adequate educational resources (e.g., books, learning materials).





<p>Integrated Quantitative Milestones Timeline</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget Allocation: Establish budget tracking guidelines in 80% of member states (Milestone: 80%). • Teacher Capacity: Launch training for 50% of ECCE teachers (Milestone: 50%). • Infrastructure: Complete needs assessments in 100% of member states (Milestone: 100%). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget Allocation: Implement financial reporting systems in 50% of member states (Milestone: 50%). • Teacher Capacity: Establish CPD programs with 60% participation (Milestone: 60%). • Infrastructure: Begin infrastructure projects in 50% of underserved areas (Milestone: 50%). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget Allocation: Expand financial reporting to 80% of member states and complete audits in 60% (Milestone: 80%, 60%). • Teacher Capacity: Train 80% of ECCE teachers and improve salaries by 20% in 50% of states (Milestone: 80%, 50%). • Infrastructure: Expand enrollment capacity by 30% in 60% of member states (Milestone: 30%, 60%). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget Allocation: Facilitate three international workshops (Milestone: 3 workshops). • Teacher Capacity: Increase CPD participation to 80% and upgrade working conditions in 70% of centers (Milestone: 80%, 70%). • Infrastructure: Complete 60% of infrastructure projects and upgrade facilities in 50% of centers (Milestone: 60%, 50%). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget Allocation: Address 70% of identified funding gaps (Milestone: 70%). • Teacher Capacity: Ensure 75% of teachers meet/exceed standards, with CPD programs in place (Milestone: 75%). • Infrastructure: Achieve 50% increase in enrollment capacity in 80% of states and enhance resources in 70% of centers (Milestone: 50%, 80%, 70%).
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Annex C. Roadmap for ECCE Policy Long-Term Recommendations: Actions & Milestones

Long-term Recommendations	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
	Actions & Milestones				
Advance ECCE as a Human Right	<p>Advocate for ECCE Inclusion in National Policies: Ensure that ECCE is included in the national education policies of at least 60% of member states.</p>	<p>Strengthen Legal and Policy Frameworks: Draft and propose legislation recognizing ECCE as a human right in 50% of member states.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for ECCE Inclusion in National Policies: Increase this inclusion to 80% of member states. • Promote Equity in ECCE Access: Implement policies that guarantee equitable access to ECCE in at least 70% of member states, with a focus on reaching marginalized communities. • Monitor and Report on ECCE as a Human Right: Establish national monitoring frameworks in 60% of member states to track ECCE access and rights. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen Legal and Policy Frameworks: Enact this legislation in at least 60% of member states. • Promote Equity in ECCE Access: Achieve a reduction in the ECCE enrollment gap between urban and rural areas by 50% in at least 50% of member states. • Monitor and Report on ECCE as a Human Right: Publish regular reports on ECCE access and rights in at least 70% of member states.
Develop Sustainable Funding Mechanisms	<p>Create and Implement Sustainable Funding Models: Develop sustainable funding models that include both public and private partnerships in 50% of member states.</p>	<p>Secure Long-term Commitments from Governments and Partners: Secure long-term funding commitments from national governments in 60% of member states.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and Implement Sustainable Funding Models: Implement these models in 70% of member states. • Establish ECCE Endowment Funds: Create ECCE endowment funds in at least 40% of member states, aiming to generate sustainable income for ECCE programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure Long-term Commitments from Governments and Partners: Establish partnerships with international organizations and private sectors to support ECCE in 70% of member states. • Monitor and Adjust Funding Strategies: Review and adjust funding strategies based on performance and needs in 60% of member states. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish ECCE Endowment Funds: Ensure that these endowment funds are contributing to at least 30% of ECCE program costs in 50% of member states. • Monitor and Adjust Funding Strategies: Ensure that 80% of member states have stable and sufficient ECCE funding.
Integrated Quantitative Milestones Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECCE as a Human Right: Include ECCE in national policies in 60% of member states (Milestone: 60%). • Sustainable Funding: Develop sustainable funding models in 50% of member states (Milestone: 50%). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECCE as a Human Right: Draft legislation recognizing ECCE as a human right in 50% of member states (Milestone: 50%). • Sustainable Funding: Secure long-term funding commitments from governments in 60% of member states (Milestone: 60%). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECCE as a Human Right: Implement policies guaranteeing equitable access in 70% of member states and include ECCE in national policies in 80% (Milestone: 70%, 80%). • Sustainable Funding: Implement sustainable funding models in 70% of member states and create endowment funds in 40% (Milestone: 70%, 40%). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECCE as a Human Right: Establish national monitoring frameworks in 60% of member states (Milestone: 60%). • Sustainable Funding: Secure partnerships with international organizations and private sectors in 70% of member states and review funding strategies in 60% (Milestone: 70%, 60%). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECCE as a Human Right: Enact legislation recognizing ECCE as a human right in 60% of member states and publish regular reports in 70% (Milestone: 60%, 70%). • Sustainable Funding: Ensure ECCE endowment funds cover 30% of program costs in 50% of member states and that 80% have stable funding (Milestone: 30%, 50%, 80%).



     
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