



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SPORTS

**THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND
EDUCATION POLICY**

DECEMBER 2018

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Acronyms

ACRWC	African Convention on the Rights and Welfare of Children
CBOs	Community Based Organisations
CCTs	Coordinating Centre Tutors
CPTCs	Core Primary Teacher Colleges
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DES	Directorate of Education Standards
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ELDS	Early Learning and Development Standards
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESSAPR	Education and Sports Sector Annual Performance Review
ESSP	Education Sector Strategic Plan
FBOs	Faith Based Organisations
GWP	Government White Paper
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IECD	Integrated Early Childhood Development
MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NCDC	National Curriculum Development Centre
NDP II	Second National Development Plan
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NIECD	National Integrated Early Childhood Development
NPA	National Planning Authority
TIET	Teacher Instructor Education and Training
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child

Foreword

The Government of Uganda recognises the fact that Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) is a foundation for quality education as it encompasses a critical phase in children's physical, mental and psycho-social development. ECCE concentrates on children aged 0 to 8 years of age who need to be nurtured in a safe and caring environment that allows them to become healthy, secure, confident and empowered persons with life-long learning capabilities. Parents are key stakeholders in ensuring children access the best possible care, nurturing and stimulation within their homes and in communities and this reaffirms the role of the family as the first, and most important, service point for ECCE delivery.

Over the years, Government has put in place a number of policy and legal frameworks aimed at ensuring equitable access to quality education services for all Ugandans at the various levels of Uganda's education cycle. These frameworks; including the Education Act (2008) and the Government White Paper on Education (1992), have entrusted the delivery of pre-primary education to the private sector and charged Government with the mandate of regulating and developing standards in delivery of pre-primary education. This Policy, therefore, provides a framework to streamline current and future interventions by both Government and other non-state actors in the delivery of ECCE, given the magnitude of its importance on the life-long learning process of a child.

Children's rights to Education are articulated in global, regional and national frameworks like the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), and the Government White Paper on Education, among others. Consequently, this Policy will go a long way in ensuring that these rights, as stipulated in the various frameworks and conventions, are enjoyed by all children in Uganda in an effective and equitable manner.

I therefore call upon all Ugandans to embrace this ECCE Policy and play their respective roles and obligations in implementation of the said Policy for the good of our children, our society, and our future at large.

Hon. Janet K. Museveni
FIRST LADY and MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND SPORTS

1.0 Introduction

- 1) The realisation of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) goals is anchored on a broad vision to facilitate holistic and integrated approaches to reorganise the delivery, management, coordination and capacity of stakeholders to support attainment of quality ECCE outcomes for all.
- 2) One of the key prerequisites for holistic and lifelong learning is the availability of quality ECCE services. Evidence from research reveals that investing in ECCE creates the greatest returns for society, enabling children to acquire cognitive, linguistic, socio-emotional and executive function/self-regulation skills as well as creating the human capital basis for sustained economic development and improved health and nutritional status across society. Therefore, ECCE is the foundation for quality education.

2.0 Policy and Legal Framework

- 3) The Government White Paper on Education (1992) outlines the aims and objectives of pre-primary education and recognises the pre-primary level as the foundational level of education. To achieve these aims and objectives, Government provided for the delivery, management, establishment and coordination of pre-primary education in the Education (Pre-primary, Primary and Post Primary) Act of 2008. The Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP), 2017-2020, undertakes to develop and implement a comprehensive policy framework for ECD that among others provides for the institutionalisation of training of ECD Caregivers/Teachers. Provision of ECCE is also catered for under the National Integrated Early Childhood Development (NIECD) Policy – 2016, the Second National Development Plan (NDP II) 2016/17 – 2019/20, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - 2030, and Uganda Vision - 2040.
- 4) The rights of children are internationally recognised by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) – 1990, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) – 1990, and the Incheon Declaration – 2015. Uganda has

domesticated children's rights to education in the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (as amended), the Children's Act Cap 59 (as amended by Act 9/2016) and the Education Act (2008).

3.0 Problem Statement

- 5) ECCE is the most crucial and cost-effective investment to improve learning. Studies reveal that the brain grows to 90% of its adult weight by age five. Therefore, access to quality ECCE is critical for sound intellectual, psychological, emotional, linguistic, social and physical development and lifelong learning. It also has a significant impact on an individual's abilities, attitudes, values, skills and behaviour in later life.

- 6) The National population projections of 2018 indicate the number of children between the ages of 0 to 8 years as 11,575,100 representing 30% of Uganda's population. Of these children about 55% live in conditions of poverty (UBoS, 2016). There are 3,614,827 children aged 3 – 5 years, who are eligible for pre-primary education (EMIS, 2016). However, by 2016, there were 6,798 registered pre-primary schools with a recorded total enrolment of 563,913 learners, of which 279,089 (49.5%) were boys and 284,824 (50.5%) girls. This implies a net enrolment of 15.6% meaning that 3,050,913 eligible learners were not accessing pre-primary education in 2016. Comparatively, access to ECD delivery stood at; 9.5% in Uganda, 53.3% in Kenya and 35.5% in Tanzania during 2014 (ESSAPR, 2013/14).

- 7) The attainment of quality ECCE is constrained by a number of challenges including: (a) Limited access to ECCE services; (b) Ineffective regulation of ECCE delivery; (c) Limited awareness of the importance of ECCE; (d) Inconsistent levels of family and community engagement; (e) Uncoordinated efforts in ECCE delivery; (f) High poverty levels; (g) High cost of ECCE services; and (h) Limited access to quality ECCE data. Accordingly, the ECCE policy provides a framework for improving ECCE provision in the education sector.

4.0 Policy Rationale

- 8) The ECCE policy is intended to:
- (a) Provide for interventions aimed at scaling up access to affordable quality ECCE services throughout the country;
 - (b) Streamline and standardise the management and financing of quality ECCE delivery;
 - (c) Create stakeholder awareness and appreciation of the importance of ECCE;
 - (d) Provide a framework to strengthen partnerships and collaboration to support ECCE delivery in a decentralised context; and,
 - (e) Provide for interventions to expand and build capacity of ECCE providers.
- 9) The **benefits** of this policy include, but are not limited to:
- a. Progressive realisation of universal access to ECCE opportunities in an equitable and inclusive manner;
 - b. Improved quality, efficiency and effectiveness of ECCE provision including through training and support supervision, standardisation for providers and practitioners, and streamlined licensing and regulation of ECCE services;
 - c. Greater overall understanding of the importance for children to access quality ECCE and the development of parent and community engagement in these services;
 - d. Clear responsibility allocation among the various ECCE stakeholders including Government, private sector, non-state institutions, parents, communities, among others and
 - e. Streamlining of cross-cutting issues into all aspects of ECCE management and practice at all levels.

5.0 Policy Direction

10) The ECCE Policy is designed to develop standards and improve the development, management and utilisation of ECCE services in Uganda for the required improvements in the quality of learning.

11) The Policy **vision** is: "A country where all children have access to quality ECCE services".

12) The Policy **mission** is: "To support, guide, coordinate, regulate and promote quality and relevant ECCE services for increased access, timely enrolment and smooth transition to primary level for children in Uganda".

13) The **Goal** of the ECCE Policy is: "To provide a framework for standardising ECCE and enhancing the development and management of ECCE service delivery".

14) The specific **Policy Objectives** are to:

1. Improve equitable access to quality, inclusive and sustainable ECCE services for children in Uganda;
2. Strengthen the structures and systems for the standardisation and management of ECCE service delivery;
3. Raise public awareness on ECCE and promote appropriate partnerships with parents, communities and civil society for effective early learning;
4. Increase the capacity of MoES and Local Governments to support, regulate and oversee ECCE;
5. Mainstream cross-cutting issues into all aspects of ECCE delivery.

15) The policy **targets** three different categories of children: (a) birth to three (0-3) years; (b) three to six (3-6) years; and, (c) six to eight (6-8) years; and their parents/guardians.

16) The implementation of this policy will be guided by the following **principles**:

- a. **Effectiveness:** Effective ECCE services which achieve the goals set by the Government will be adhered to in the policy implementation process.
- b. **Efficiency:** Provision of quality ECCE services by optimising effort and resources will be promoted in all areas of ECCE Policy implementation.
- c. **Child welfare:** All aspects of ECCE delivery and management will be guided by age-appropriate programming and the best interests of the child.

- d. **Holistic approach:** ECCE delivery will be designed to ensure that all the developmental domains of a child (physical, mental, social, emotional, linguistic) are addressed.
- e. **Equitable access and non-discrimination:** ECCE programmes will be directed to all children regardless of gender, race, religion, ethnicity, ability, language, sex, socio-economic status, geographical location, and special needs, among others.
- f. **Appropriate Partnerships:** Shared roles and appropriate collaborations among all stakeholders will be enhanced at all levels of ECCE delivery for purposes of effectively delivering on the policy objectives stipulated herein.
- g. **Family-focus:** All ECCE interventions will be focused on family as the first service point for ECCE delivery.
- h. **Communication:** The principle of upholding the familiar language of the children in all teaching and learning processes will be adhered to in all aspects relating to ECCE service delivery.

6.0 Policy Actions and Strategies

17) To achieve the ECCE Policy Objectives, Government will:

6.1 Improve access to equitable, quality, inclusive and sustainable ECCE services for children.

18) To increase equitable access towards universal provision of ECCE, the Government will allocate targeted subsidies towards provision of ECCE in vulnerable communities. Government will also develop a strategy for developing ECCE Centre infrastructure, learning materials and other inputs in under-resourced communities.

19) Non-state provision of ECCE delivery will be enhanced through provision of incentives to the various ECCE stakeholders, promotion of collaboration with various stakeholders in ECCE delivery, and the development and implementation of policy guidelines aimed at closing the allocation gap between ECCE centres in urban and rural areas.

20) Government will streamline the provision of quality ECCE for children through customised and appropriate: (a) Day care programmes offered in either homes or an institutional setting (targeting birth to 3 years); (b) ECCE centre-based programmes (targeting 3 to 6 years); and, (c) Lower Primary Programmes (targeting 6 to 8 years in P.1 – P.3).

6.2 Strengthen the structures and systems for standardisation and management of ECCE service delivery.

21) Quality of ECCE provision is dependent on an effective regulation system, trained staff, and on-going support supervision. In line with this, Government will undertake the following:

22) ECCE services will be delivered in accordance with three levels, that is; day care; pre-primary and lower primary services. The licensing process of ECCE Centres will be streamlined and simplified. The license will be issued by City/District/Municipal Local Governments in line with the set criteria and standards for specific ECCE services. The licensing standards, with adjustments for services, will apply to all ECCE Centres and primary schools. ECCE centres and primary schools will be licensed to offer any of the following: (a) Day Care services; (b) Pre-primary education services (e.g Kindergarten, Nursery, Pre-school etc); and, (c) Lower primary services (P.1 to P.3 only). Licensing of categories (a), (b) and/or (c) will be independent of each other.

23) As a strategy to improve and maintain standards in provision of quality ECCE, there will be provisional licence for one year followed by registration upon satisfactory service delivery and meeting of Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards (BRMS). There will be periodic inspection of the licensed/registered centres and licensing or registration certificates can be revoked if it is established that the quality of service delivery has been compromised.

- 24) Professionalisation of ECCE personnel will be guided by an approved Qualification Framework and Accreditation Systems and on-going professional development will be implemented by the National Teacher Council or any other body approved by the Ministry of Education and Sports.
- 25) Teaching and training standards will be enhanced through progressive and deliberate enforcement of improvements in qualifications of ECCE teachers and Caregivers. In addition, ECCE providers will be encouraged to develop a retention strategy for their staff.
- 26) The management of ECCE Centres will be streamlined through deliberate design and implementation of guidelines on establishment of ECCE Centres, including provisions on constitution and mandate of Centre Management Committees.
- 27) Child safety and protection standards will be developed and implemented in all ECCE Centres.
- 28) MoES will develop and implement operational standards and regulations relating to all aspects of ECCE delivery. All ECCE service providers will be required to adhere to the approved operational standards as developed by the responsible structure of the MoES.

6.3 Raise public awareness on ECCE and promote appropriate partnerships for effective early learning.

- 29) MoES and City/District/Municipal Local Governments will work with all stakeholders to mobilise communities and parents through all types of awareness creation campaigns to enhance understanding of the value of appropriate ECCE programmes. In addition, there will be promotion of social dialogue around all aspects related to ECCE.
- 30) Parenting programmes will be designed, popularised and implemented in line with the provisions of this Policy. These parenting education programmes will be offered at ECCE Centres and primary schools.

- 31) Communities and parents will be mobilised, sensitised and supported to directly engage in the provision, establishment and management of ECCE centres.
- 32) The MoES will proactively seek partnerships and collaborations that enable increased funding, stakeholder involvement, capacity development as well as coordination for effective ECCE service delivery.

6.4 Increase the capacity of MoES and LGs to support, regulate and oversee ECCE service delivery

- 33) A comprehensive capacity building plan for MoES as well as other ECCE stakeholders at central and local Government levels will be developed and implemented.
- 34) The structure of each District/Municipal/City/Local Government will provide a position for an Officer responsible for ECCE who will be substantively appointed and deployed.
- 35) The human resource component for ECCE will be strengthened and streamlined through design and implementation of an elaborate career path for the various personnel engaged in ECCE delivery. A clear qualifications framework for ECCE personnel will also be developed and implemented to guide teaching and training of the various ECCE personnel.
- 36) A Transitional Implementation Unit will be established in the MoES, to work with the Pre-primary Division over a fixed period, during which it will: (a) coordinate initial policy implementation activities; (b) facilitate consequential legal and policy adjustments; (c) facilitate structural adjustment and realignment with the policy provisions; and, (d) support transfer of full scale policy implementation to the substantive structures at MoES and within City/District/Local Government structures.

6.5 Mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues into all aspects of ECCE delivery

- 37) ECCE stakeholders, Centres and Programmes will mainstream cross cutting issues (including; gender, ICT, sports, environment and HIV/AIDS, among others) in line with existing policies, laws, strategies and guidelines.
- 38) Government and relevant stakeholders will support ECCE Centres to make linkages and referrals to relevant services including, but not limited to, health, child protection, nutrition, and sanitation services.
- 39) MoES will align ECCE interventions with relevant core performance areas of the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (2016).

7.0 Policy Financing

- 40) Government will ensure that a national resource mobilisation plan is developed and implemented. Funding support will be leveraged from development partners, private sector and non-governmental organisations, and through the Medium and Long Term Expenditure Framework budgeting process. Private sector support and involvement will also be enhanced through promotion of partnerships and collaboration in provision of skills, resources, materials, infrastructure, and other related inputs for ECCE.

8.0 Implementation Framework

- 41) The MoES will be the lead agency in implementation of the ECCE Policy.
- 42) Implementing the ECCE Policy will involve a multi-sectoral approach. MoES will operationalise the NIECD Service Delivery Framework, through ECCE Policy guidelines which will define the networks to be created in line with the sector's mandate.
- 43) The establishment and management of the ECCE Centres shall be a responsibility of the private sector, FBOs, CSOs, communities and individual proprietors.

8.2 Roles of Government State Actors

44) Implementation of the ECCE Policy will be undertaken as per the following role allocation.

8.2.1 Ministry of Education and Sports

45) The MoES, working through its relevant departments and directorates, will be responsible for:

- a. Development and dissemination of routine Policy implementation guidelines for purposes of operationalising the ECCE Policy as well as review of appropriate policy and legal frameworks for effective policy implementation;
- b. Spearheading community mobilisation and sensitisation on ECCE delivery;
- c. Spearhead and coordinate effective training, assessment, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and other technical and professional support to the private and public sector stakeholders offering ECCE services;
- d. Streamline ECCE training programmes, licensing, registration of ECCE training institutions and different levels and undertake periodic review and update of ECCE training materials;
- e. Design and develop appropriate curricula for the age categories covered under the Policy including curricula for parenting education programmes;
- f. Develop guidelines for setting up and equipping appropriate learning environment for ECCE Centres as well as assessing learning competencies;
- g. Develop, disseminate and provide guidance on appropriate curricula, teaching methods and instructional materials for use in ECCE delivery;
- h. Develop teaching guides to support the interpretation of both existing and new curricula as well as undertaking of periodic review of the ECCE Learning Framework;
- i. Ensure availability of appropriate materials, facilities and programmes for learners with special educational needs;
- j. Set and define Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) and Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards (BRMS) for ECCE Centres;
- k. Ensure adherence to set standards for ELDS and ECCE programmes through monitoring inspection and support supervision;

- l. Provide guidance, counselling and psycho-social support to the various ECCE stakeholders within the decentralised framework of service delivery;
- m. Provide appropriate technical guidance on establishment, licensing, classification, registration and management of ECCE Centers;
- n. Develop an appropriate assessment framework for lower primary education;
- o. Conduct studies and research to ensure further development of ECCE; and,
- p. Monitor and evaluate ECCE programmes to ensure quality and relevancy and to enable effective planning.

8.2.2 Ministry of Local Government

46) The Ministry will:

- a. Ensure that Local Governments play their various roles in implementation of this Policy within their respective areas of jurisdiction;
- b. Participate in activities of ECCE management in Local Government in liaison with MoES; and,
- c. Mobilise and sensitise communities and other stakeholders at national and Local Government level on all aspects relating to the ECCE Policy.

8.2.3 Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development

47) MoGLSD will undertake the following in line with provisions of the Policy:

- a. Promotion and protection of children's rights at all levels;
- b. Promote community empowerment programmes to increase household income and reduce vulnerability;
- c. Inspect and certify occupational safety and health standards of ECCE structures;
- d. Undertake community mobilisation and sensitisation in early childhood development;
- e. Advocate for and train parents/communities on children's rights and responsibilities and protection against child abuse; and,
- f. Training of communities and families on parenting skills.

8.2.4 Ministry of Health

48) The Ministry will undertake the following:

- a. Ensure the provision of medical care services such as immunisation, de-worming, micro-nutrient supplements, among others, for promotion of growth and development of children;
- b. Encourage parents/caregivers to safely keep their immunisation and other health records for reference during other related ECCE activities;
- c. Sensitise parents and communities on safe motherhood and family planning; and,
- d. Provide guidance on health and nutrition for children and mothers.

8.2.5 Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development

49) The Ministry will:

- a. Mobilise the necessary resources for implementation of the ECCE Policy;
- b. Ensure that the planning and budgeting processes guarantee effective and efficient financial management practices at both Central and Local Government levels.

8.2.6 Local Governments

50) Cities/Districts/Municipalities will play the following roles in implementation of this Policy:

- a. Plan and budget for ECCE service delivery;
- b. Regulate, control, manage, administer, promote and license ECCE service delivery in their respective Local Governments;
- c. Undertake monitoring and inspection of the various activities relating to ECCE service delivery; and,
- d. Mobilise and sensitise communities on all aspects relating to the ECCE Policy.

8.3 Role of Non-State Actors

51) A range of non-state actors will be involved in the implementation and delivery of the ECCE Policy:

8.3.1 Civil Society

52) NGOs, CSOs, FBOs, the media and CBOs will play an important role in supporting the mobilisation of communities to establish ECCE services, including provision and financing of infrastructure, materials, training, advocacy, research and sensitisation, among others.

8.3.2 Development Partners

53) The partners will:

- a. Provide technical and financial support for ECCE programmes and services;
- b. Pilot ECCE innovations;
- c. Advocate and disseminate findings on good practice in ECCE service delivery;

8.3.3 Professional Networks & Associations

54) These will ensure that ECCE staff adhere to professional standards and lobby on behalf of their members, in addition to undertaking other activities, as may be decided by their structures.

8.3.4 Private sector

55) The private sector will be involved as a key and strategic stakeholder in the establishment, management and administration of ECCE service delivery in line with provisions of the ECCE Policy.

8.3.5 Foundation Bodies

56) Close collaboration and partnership will be promoted as a strategy to leverage synergies and team work towards achievement of the ECCE Policy objectives. FBOs, as critical foundation bodies will:

- a) Establish and manage ECCE Centres;
- b) Undertake community mobilisation and sensitisation on all aspects relating to ECCE;
- c) Undertake advocacy on aspects relating to ECCE;
- d) Provide financial support towards tasks related to ECCE service delivery such as infrastructure, instructional materials, and salary payment, among others.

8.3.6 Parents and guardians

57) Parents and guardians have the primary responsibility for caring for their children. Consequently, parents and guardians will provide their children with basic care requirements, food, clothes, moral and cultural guidance, and loving environments, among others, in line with different policy requirements to be issued from time to time.

9.0 Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

58) A monitoring and evaluation strategy will be put in place by the Ministry of Education and Sports to assess the implementation and impacts of the various policy strategies.

The purpose of the monitoring and evaluation will be to:

- a. Determine whether the Policy is working as intended (outcomes);
- b. Understand any constraints impacting on the implementation of the Policy (processes);
- c. Make recommendations on how to improve ECCE service delivery; and,
- d. Describe any unintended consequences from the implementation of the Policy, both positive and negative.

59) A longitudinal, mixed methods approach including both quantitative and qualitative approaches will be used in the periodic evaluation of ECCE Policy implementation.

60) The MoES will develop an M&E Framework with indicators for ECCE within EMIS. This will build on existing templates and develop new templates, procedures, and responsibilities for reporting by Districts and the MoES, where necessary.

61) The Government will commission research studies to measure the impact of ECCE programmes on child outcomes and to understand and improve ECCE service implementation.

10.0 Communication Strategy

62) A national ECCE Communications Strategy will be developed and disseminated. It will include annual advocacy events, awards and campaigns led by MoES and other line

Ministries to promote implementation of the ECCE Policy and Action Plan, as well as to raise awareness on ECCE and related ECD interventions.

