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

Solomon Islands

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

programmes

Compiled by:
UNESCO International Bureau of Education (IBE)
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SOLOMON ISLANDS

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECCE) programs

A. GENERAL INFORMATION, STATISTICS AND INDICATORS

Starting age of compulsory education (if applicable):

Children enter primary education at age 6. [*The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) has no information regarding compulsory education.*]

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

(ISCED = International Standard Classification of Education)

1.1. National definition of ISCED 0 programs:

Early Childhood or Preschool Education

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

5 years of age

1.3. ISCED 0 programs: statistics and indicators (*source: UIS*)

1.3.1. Enrolment:

	Percentage	Year
Gross enrolment ratio	40.8	2002/03
Net enrolment ratio	<i>Not available</i>	
Percentage of children entering primary education with previous preschool experience	<i>Not available</i>	

1.3.2. Enrolment ratio by age group (percentage, also including the first years of primary education when applicable): Not available

Less than 3 years of age	Age 3	Age 4	Age 5	Age 6	Age 7

1.3.3. Teachers: Not available

Total number of teachers	Of whom female (%)	Percentage of trained teachers (all)	Percentage of trained teachers (males)	Percentage of trained teachers (females)

1.3.4. Funding: Not available

	Percentage
Public current expenditure per pupil as percentage of the Gross National Product per capita	...

1.3.5. Main source(s) of financing: Not available

2. OTHER ECCE PROGRAMS

(Generally preceding ISCED 0 programs)

2.1. National definition of other ECCE programs:

Not available

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

Not available

2.3. Estimate number of children covered by other ECCE programs:

Not available

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

3.1. Legislation concerning ECCE:

Not available

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

The Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD) through the Primary and ECE Division and Provincial ECE Co-coordinators

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.):

There are formal preparatory classes, supported by government, and informal ECE programmes, run by the community or private initiatives. The Mother's Union and Honiara Pre-school Association (HOPA) were two key agencies that assisted in the establishment of community-based and privately run kindergartens in the 1990s.

3.4. Type of personnel involved:

Not available

3.5. Type of staff training (requirements):

Not available

3.6. Recent national policies and reforms:

Early Childhood Education (ECE) was first introduced in the education system during the late 1980s. The concept of early childhood education was based on 'good sound beginnings'. There was a lot of concern about how pupils who attended Grade 1 performed in class. It was significant that pupils entering primary school at Grade 1 could not cope or were not good enough to start at that level. The government then made the decision to add another year to the primary school course, to bring it up to a total of seven years, with an extra year at the beginning. The first year of schooling before attending grade one is called preparatory class.

In early 1990 a decision was made to develop a curriculum for ECE, with focus on the preparatory class. The focus was to develop curriculum through play while another concept was to develop the curriculum by extending it down from Grade 1. Later, a preparatory curriculum was developed and a team of provincial trainers in ECE was engaged. It was found that the curriculum for preparatory class was too rigid and did not allow for play, so the idea of a one year preparatory class prior to grade one was further amended. Instead, a full ECE programme catering for children of 3 to 5/6 years old was recommended.

It is worth noting that the national government supported preparatory classes, but not kindergartens and other forms of ECE in operation from 1990. The National Coalition Partnership (NCP) government in 1993 encouraged organizations and communities that run kindergartens to develop them into complete primary schools.

It was the national government's target in 1993 that ECE be seriously considered. The government, through the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD) then strengthened the co-ordination support mechanism from both national and provincial levels to provide effective assistance to ECE programmes.

This was achieved by restructuring and expanding the current preparatory programme to include both formal and non-formal ECE programmes and activities. The government immediately established Provincial ECE Co-coordinator's posts to activate newly developed programmes and initiatives. Preparatory trainers were utilized to continue their in-service training scheme and broaden their role of providing support to both preparatory classes and community based kindergartens.

The Primary and ECE Division of the MEHRD was further strengthened with financial and technical support from UNICEF, and subsequently ECE initiatives were implemented during the early 1990s. Whilst the preparatory programme was implemented during this period (1990-1995) throughout the Solomon Islands, a number of ECE activities were undertaken, both in urban centres and in rural areas. The establishment of the Field Based Training (FBT) programme and development of a Certificate in Teaching in ECE occurred between 1996 and 1998. In 1996, ECE at the Solomon Island College of Higher Education (SICHE) saw two major developments, which the New Zealand Overseas Development assistance (NZODA) project funded through the MEHRD. To start, a national coordinator was appointed, followed by the appointment of provincial coordinators. Modules for teaching in the area of ECE were designed and trialed in kindergartens and in preparatory classes.

Several innovative and child-oriented programmes came into existence, but classes were formal in structure and programmes were believed to be less than effective in meeting the learning and development needs of children. Furthermore, although some provinces have started to establish them in large numbers, communities could not sustain them properly. They were definitely lacking in quality and the following issues seem to be contributing factors:

- Lack of government funding and other support.
- Teachers were only trained for primary school teaching and not early childhood educational programmes, which is quite special in content.
- Some teachers viewed kindergartens as an extension of a preparatory class while some saw them as preparation for church, reading, prayers, singing hymns, etc
- There were insufficient education opportunities to meet the growing of ECE training.

- Provision for early childhood education (ECE) was not well co-coordinated and did not meet demands.
- Teachers were not paid.

Despite these problems and difficulties, research was conducted to find solutions and evidence, and therefore attract support for the future development of ECE. Subsequently, planning, designing and implementing quality ECE programmes continue to be a priority of the Solomon Islands government through the MEHRD.

3.7. Efforts targeted at vulnerable or disadvantaged children:

Work done in North Malaita for internally displaced children (after the conflict)

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

Not available

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

3.9.1. Objectives and aims:

Not available

3.9.2. Learning areas and teaching-learning methods:

Not available

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

Not available

3.10. Any other relevant and pertinent information

Not available

[Main Source: UNESCO PROAP Website, August 2005.]

4.1. Parenting programmes are usually addressed to parents and families of children less than 6 years of age. Please provide information about any parenting programmes in your country according to the table below:

Type of programme	Yes or No (note for each programme)	Please estimate the number of beneficiaries (if possible)
Parenting education through early learning centres and child care centres	Yes, but limited	
As component of health and nutrition programmes, such as information about child development included in health and nutrition visits	Yes	
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	Yes	
Media broadcast, such as <i>Sesame Street</i> , with media for and with children		
Other (please specify)	Honiara Preschool Association also does work in this area.	

The major parenting module that has been made available in the Solomon Islands is the Pacific Child's Program.

Booklets, posters and clip charts for training the trainers on parenting skills and also knowledge on child development phases etc. These materials are currently being used in a number of Pacific Islands notably Samoa, Fiji and Vanuatu.

UNICEF – Pacific have trialed its parenting modules within the life skills program. The module has now been revised and produced separately and is being prepared for in 2006. CFS project will also use this information.

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).

Not available

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

No but this is under development. New Zealand Aid has expressed interest in supporting such an initiative.

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

No, but this is under development.

[Some additional information provided by UNICEF, December 2005.]