



Northern Cape Provincial Treasury

# Accessing Early Childhood Development: The Northern Cape Analysis

Directorate: Economic Analysis  
Issue No: 43/2019

December 2019

We serve with passion. We deliver on time.

## **Table of Contents**

<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>2. Background</b> .....	1
<b>3. Legislative and Policy Framework</b> .....	2
<b>4. Analysis of Progress Made in Accessing ECD</b> .....	5
<b>4.1. Northern Cape Context</b> .....	5
<b>5. Challenges Experienced in the ECD Sector</b> .....	7
<b>6. Conclusion and Recommendations</b> .....	8
<b>References</b> .....	9

## **1. Introduction**

Early childhood development (ECD) refers to a comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for children from birth to nine years of age with the active participation of their parents and caregivers. Its purpose is to protect the child's rights to develop his or her full cognitive, emotional, social and physical potential (DoE, 2001). Research has shown that early years of children's life are crucial for development. The 2001 White Paper on Early Childhood Education envisaged ECD to be including:

- Family planning, healthy pregnancies and postnatal care to give children an optimal start in life;
- Nutrition support for pregnant and breastfeeding women and young children;
- Birth registration, social security and other state provisions for the poorest families;
- Support for parenting;
- Quality learning by young children at home and in groups, programmes and centres; and
- Preparation for formal schooling.

The aim of this Policy Brief is to provide an updated analysis of ECD in the Northern Cape Province. Section 2 provides a background on what ECD involves. The next section includes the legislative and policy framework. After that an analysis is done on the progress that was made in ECD in terms of the number of children who have access to ECD services and it shows the budget allocated to the Northern Cape Departments of Education and Social Development and what was spent on this programme. Section 5 contains the challenges experienced in this area. Lastly, a conclusion and recommendations are made based on the analysis.

## **2. Background**

Although South Africa celebrates 25 years of democracy, many young children are still born and growing up in an extremely unequal society and poverty-stricken environment. These unfortunate circumstances bring various threats to the development of these children including propensity for illness, mortality (including perinatal deaths), poor nutrition, low birth-weight, poor adjustment to school, increased grades' repetition and school dropout. One initiative which overcomes the effects of poverty is the provision of good quality ECD programmes for young children, together with support for their families (Ashley-Cooper and Atmore, 2013).

Government showed its commitment to enhancing ECD through President Ramaphosa's announcement that the ECD function will be transferred from the Department of Social Development (DSD) to the Department of Basic Education (DBE). It is believed that this will ultimately improve ECD services in general. This is based on various reasons including the small percentage that ECD has been getting from the fiscus. It is now expected that the ECD budget will increase as everything will be housed under the DBE, and that the ECD programmes will improve. The main purpose of the relocation is to expand access and improve the quality of ECD programmes in support of 2 years of compulsory ECD for all children before they enter Grade 1. The DBE has started to develop work plans in the first 3 months of the Sixth Administration to drive the work streams in ECD migration. These work streams include detailing legislation and policy, funding, human resource (HR), infrastructure, health and nutrition, governance and programmes, as well as planning monitoring and communication. The DBE will develop a comprehensive plan for the different work streams involved in the ECD function shift (Grade R, Grade RR, and birth to 4 years), in collaboration with the relevant partners in government. A costed plan for the ECD function shift will be finalised by March 2020. The DBE also developed the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) from birth to 4 year-olds, to ensure that children in different settings receive quality ECD programmes (DBE, 2019).

### **3. Legislative and Policy Framework**

#### **➤ South African Constitution**

The South African Constitution is the highest law of the country. ECD finds its basis in Chapter 2 (Bill of Rights). According to Section 29 (1), everyone has the right: (a) to a basic education, including adult basic education; and (b) to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible.

#### **➤ Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Development**

The White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Education builds on White Paper 1 on Education and Training (1995) and the Interim Policy for Early Childhood Development (1996). The Paper defines ECD as an umbrella term that applies to the processes by which children from birth to at least 9 years grow and thrive, physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually,

morally and socially. The policy priority of this White Paper has been on the implementation of the pre-school reception year (Grade R) for five year olds.

➤ **South African National Curriculum Framework for Children from Birth to Four**

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) is one of the curriculum initiatives that provides guidance for developing programmes and working with babies, toddlers and young children from birth to the age of 4 years. It is aimed at people working with these children and they include parents and caregivers, Early Childhood Practitioners (in centres, family and community support services and child minders), practitioner/educator and support staff, as well as monitoring personnel (government and civil society) who visit the ECD programmes. The vision of the NCF is defined as working with and for all children in the early years in a respectful way to provide them with quality experiences and equality opportunities to achieve their full potential. The purpose of this framework is defined by a number of points which include to affirm young children as competent people who are actively involved in their learning as well as to actively honour the diversity of young children, their capabilities, languages and heritage. There are a number of critical outcomes that the NCF set out, which are designed for all educational programmes in South Africa. These include that young children should learn to identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking, work effectively as individuals and with others as members of a team.

➤ **The National Development Plan (NDP)**

This is South Africa's long-term plan that has been designed to respond to major socio-economic challenges by 2030. This includes eliminating poverty and reducing inequality. The NDP has identified the extension of ECD services for children under 5 as one of the measures to reducing poverty in the short-term. The NDP requires that focus be put on areas like social assistance and household food and nutrition security for its vision to be attained. Furthermore, the NDP asserts that the ECD definition should be broadened, so as to take into account children's needs and that this expanded definition should form the basis of all strategies.

➤ **National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015**

Approved by cabinet in 2015, the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy emphasises 6 essential components to promote optimal child development from conception

to 9 years. These are nutritional support, maternal health, child health, social services, support for primary care-givers and stimulation for early learning. The mission of this policy has been defined as to provide a comprehensive quality ECD programme that would be universally available in sufficient quantities and proximity so that all children enjoy an equal opportunity to access them. The policy has set 3 goals distinguished by the period during which they are planned to be achieved: short-term, medium-term and long-term goals. The short-term goal had been set to be met by 2017 and involved the establishment of necessary legal framework(s), organisational structures and institutional arrangements, as well as financing processes to ensure availability and equitable access to ECD services. The medium-term goal is planned to be achieved by 2024 and is the one defined on the 2014-2019 Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF). The long-term goal is planned to be achieved by 2030, and concerns a full comprehensive age and developmental stage appropriate quality ECD programme available and accessible to all infants and young children and their caregivers.

➤ **The Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF)**

The previous MTSF (2014-2019) has been the first implementation plan of the NDP. Government's commitment to enhancing ECD in the country is also shown in the MTSF. One of the key targets for the 2014-2019 MTSF included: "An essential age- and developmentally stage-appropriate of ECD services is available and accessible to all young children and their caregivers by 2024".

The next MTSF (2019-2024), as the second phase of the NDP implementation, will be building on the progress made during the 2014-2019 cycle to ensure that the NDP goals are achieved. Unlike the previous MTSF, the 2019-2024 MTSF will not be outcomes-based but will focus on the 7 priorities announced by President Ramaphosa in his State of the Nation Address (SONA) speech. These are:

- Economic transformation and job creation;
- Education, skills and health;
- Consolidating the social wage through reliable and quality basic services;
- Spatial integration, human settlements and local government;
- Social cohesion and safe communities;
- A capable, ethical and developmental state; and

- A better Africa and World.

## 4. Analysis of Progress Made in Accessing ECD

### 4.1. Northern Cape Context

The following is a summary of the achievements made by the Northern Cape Provincial Department of Education. Four Pre-Grade R, ECD practitioners across the province were trained on the NCF in order to ensure effective implementation. 22 provincial staff and officials from Frances Baard and Namakwa districts were also trained on NCF. Regarding expansion, 12 schools opened additional Grade R classes in 2019. Furthermore, the contracts of practitioners were renewed in January 2019, with 12.4 per cent of practitioners in public schools having a qualification of REQV 12 and above. With regard to Grade R, the Basic Concept Programme was introduced in John Taolo Gaetsewe and Pixley ka Seme districts in February 2019 (NCDoe, 2019). This is an indication of the commitment that the provincial government is serious about improving the ECD programme in the province.

Table 1 below provides the percentage of children aged 0 to 4 years using different child care services in the province.

**Table 1: Percentage of children aged 0-4 years using different child care arrangements, 2014-2018**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Grade R, pre-school, nursery school, crèche, edu-care centre	25.8	26.5	32.7	25.3	22.4
Day mother	16.3	7.3	6.8	11.0	14.3
At home with parent or guardian	53.6	59.5	52.4	59.0	57.8
At home with another adult	3.2	4.8	5.7	2.9	4.3
At home with someone younger than 18 years	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3
At somebody else's dwelling	1.2	1.2	2.3	0.9	1.0
Other	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.9	0.0

*Source: Statistics South Africa, General Household Survey, 2015-2019*

According to Statistics South Africa, the majority of children aged 0 to 4 years in the Northern Cape stay at home with either parents or guardians, which in 2018 was estimated at 57.8 per cent, which is an increase of 4.2 percentage points when compared to the 53.6 per cent recorded in 2014. Only 22.4 per cent were in educational institutions (Grade R, pre-school, crèche, etc.). This is a decline in comparison to the previous years. The proportion of kids that were staying at home with day mothers was observed at 14.3 per cent in 2019.

In Table 2 below the provincial DoE's payments and medium term estimates towards the ECD programme is provided as per the items in the programme for the 2015/16 to 2021/22 financial years.

**Table 2: Summary of payments and estimates by subprogramme, 2015/16-2021/22**

R'000	Outcome			Main appropriation	Adjusted appropriation	Revised estimate	Medium-term estimates		
	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18				2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
1. Grade R in public schools	77 676	75 988	86 616	95 319	95 319	93 215	102 586	108 195	114 147
2. Grade R in Early Childhood Development Centres	2 527	5 908	6 076	5 332	5 332	7 034	5 630	5 944	6 271
3. Pre-Grade R Training	2 749	1 649	1 505	2 791	2 791	204	1 676	1 839	1 939
4. Human Resource Development	403	128	76	200	200	7	206	218	230
<b>Total</b>	<b>83 355</b>	<b>83 673</b>	<b>94 273</b>	<b>103 642</b>	<b>103 642</b>	<b>100 460</b>	<b>110 098</b>	<b>116 196</b>	<b>122 587</b>

Source: Northern Cape Provincial Treasury, EPRE, 2019

The largest percentage of the department's ECD budget goes to Grade R in public schools. During the 2015/16 financial year, the budget spent under this sub programme was R77.7 million and it had grown to R86.6 million by the end of 2017/18. It is expected that the allocation for this sub programme will grow over the MTEF, reaching R114.1 million in 2021/22. The Grade R in ECD centres sub-programme is the second largest in terms of the budget allocation. The department, and more specifically the ECD programme, spends the smallest share of its budget on human resource development.

It is expected that the that the allocations that have been directed to the DSD will ultimately be transferred to the DoE for it to run the ECD services in the province. However, the following table briefly provides how the allocation has been for the DSD including what was spent in the 2017/18 financial year as stated in the Estimates of Provincial Revenue and Expenditure (EPRE, 2019).

**Table 3: Summary of payments and estimates for the ECD grant, 2017/18-2021/22**

R'000	Outcome	Main appropriation	Adjusted appropriation	Revised estimate	Medium-term estimates		
					2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Early Childhood Development Grant	11 710	18 472	18 472	18 472	14 199	15 152	15 985

Source: Northern Cape Provincial Treasury, EPRE, 2019

The province received an ECD grant amounting to R11.7 million in 2017/18. In 2018/19, this grant grew to R18.5 million in accordance with the revised estimate. For the current financial year (2019/20), it is estimated at R14.2 million, and this represents a decrease of about R4.3 million from the 2018/19 revised estimate. Although this allocation is expected to increase to R15.2 million in 2020/21 and to R16.0 million in 2021/22, it is still lower than the previous allocations.



## **5. Challenges Experienced in the ECD Sector**

There are a number of challenges affecting the ECD sector. A study by Atmore *et al.* (2012) grouped these challenges into 6 areas: infrastructure, nutrition, ECD programmes, teacher training, institutional capacity and funding. This section will thus provide a brief discussion on some of these challenges, with more attention paid to the Northern Cape.

- **Infrastructure**

Proper infrastructure in ECD centres is crucial as it contributes to high quality care and services, and also provides a safe environment conducive for learning. Infrastructure in ECD can be looked at across three distinct facility types; in public schools, in registered community-based ECD facilities, and in unregistered community based ECD facilities. In public schools ECD provisioning is limited to Grade R provisioning, whereas registered and unregistered community-based facilities generally provide ECD services to children from birth through to, and including, Grade R (Atmore *et al.*, 2012). However, this situation is expected to change as the ECD responsibility has been transferred to the DoE.

- **Nutrition**

The socio-economic challenges such as poverty facing the country are some of the factors that are contributing to hunger and malnutrition in South African citizens, more especially young children. According to Statistics South Africa (2018), malnutrition was among the leading natural causes of death for children aged 1 to 14 years in 2016. This is concerning and something that needs urgent attention.

- **Funding**

The largest share of the South African budget goes to the Departments of Education and Health and the same applies to provinces. However, only a small percentage has been allocated to ECD. The NDP acknowledges that the current funding processes are not enough for the expansive ECD programme it reflects, thus it highlighted the development and testing of funding models as crucial for covering a comprehensive package of services.

Some of the challenges that the NDP identified for ECD include:

- Learner support materials and equipment;
- Strengthening of support agencies;

- Reaching the most vulnerable children and families; and
- Ensuring that departments responsible for different aspects of early childhood development work together.

## **6. Conclusion and Recommendations**

Despite the general improvement made in the provision of ECD, there are still daunting challenges, hence government's decision to transfer the ECD function to the DoE. It is expected that the results of this shift will bear results as time goes on. Although the DoE has prioritised ECD with various initiatives achieved, the following is recommended (for ECD) based on the conclusion from the analysis:

- An increase in funding
  - An increase in the ECD funding will ensure that most of the challenges are dealt with and ultimately will increase children's access to ECD, more especially those who are coming from poor households.
  - Proper costing of the shifting of the ECD programme from DSD should be done so as to better plan and allocate the limited resources.
- Strong collaboration between the three spheres of government as well as community based centres/facilities.
- Improved training and teacher/practitioner qualifications for the programme as well as increased allocation for human resource development.
- Government also needs to address the high percentage of children not attending ECD. A comprehensive strategy to deal with this challenge is needed urgently.
- Infrastructure status quo and requirements for ECD facilities in the province should be researched and planning should be done to ensure that the infrastructure is up to standard and conducive for ECD.
- DSD can still play a role in ensuring that the children at the ECD facilities and their families have access to social services if there is a need. Improved social well-being together with a good ECD programme can assist in breaking the cycle of poverty.

## References

- Ashley-Cooper, M. and Atmore, E. 2013. *Early Childhood Development as a Strategy to Eradicate Poverty and Reduce Inequality*. Education and Social Development, Vol. 53.
- Atmore, E., Van Niekerk, L-J. and Ashley-Cooper, M. 2012. *Challenges Facing the Early Childhood Development Sector in South Africa*. South African Journal of Childhood Education, Vol. 2, No. 1.
- Department of Basic Education (DBE). 2015. *The South African National Curriculum Framework for Children from Birth to Four*. Pretoria: Department of Basic Education
- Department of Basic Education (DBE). 2019. *Budget Vote Speech 2019/20*. Pretoria: South Africa.
- Department of Education (DoE). 2001. *Education White Paper 5 on Childhood Education: Meeting the Challenge of Early Childhood Development in South Africa*. Pretoria: South Africa.
- Northern Cape Department of Education (NCDoE). 2019. *Annual Report 2018/19*. Northern Cape: Kimberley.
- Northern Cape Provincial Treasury (NCPT). 2019. *Estimates of Provincial Revenue and Expenditure (EPRE)*. Northern Cape: Kimberley.
- Republic of South Africa. 2015. *National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy*. Pretoria: Government Printers
- South African Government. 1996. *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa: Act No. 108 of 1996*. Pretoria: South Africa.
- South African Government. 2012. *National Development Plan 2030: Our future – make it work*. Pretoria: South Africa.
- South African Government. 2014. *Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) 2014-2019*. Pretoria: South Africa.
- South African Government. 2019. *State of the Nation Address 2019*. Pretoria: South Africa.
- Statistics South Africa. 2015-2019. *General Household Survey*. Statistical Release P0318. Pretoria: South Africa.
- Statistics South Africa. 2018. *Mortality and causes of death in South Africa, 2018: Findings from death notification*. Statistical Release P0309.3. Pretoria: South Africa.