



The 2030 Strategy for ECD Programmes

A summary for people working in the ECD sector

The early years of a child's life provide the foundations for their future flourishing and success. Equal access to early learning and development opportunities also supports a stronger society and economy. Because of this, the government wants to make sure that every child in South Africa has access to quality early childhood development (ECD) programmes.

This is a bold goal and the government will only be able to achieve it in partnership with others. The Department of Basic Education (DBE) has produced the **2030 Strategy for ECD Programmes** as a map for how this can be done. The strategy includes new solutions, as well as plans to ensure that solutions and resources that already exist in communities, become even more effective.

The government's vision and impact statement for 2030 is:

Universal access to quality ECD prioritising the most vulnerable children

Universal access means that every community has the right mix and availability of ECD programmes to meet the needs of the families and children in that community. This means there will be a mix of the different types of programmes shown in the box.



What is an ECD programme?

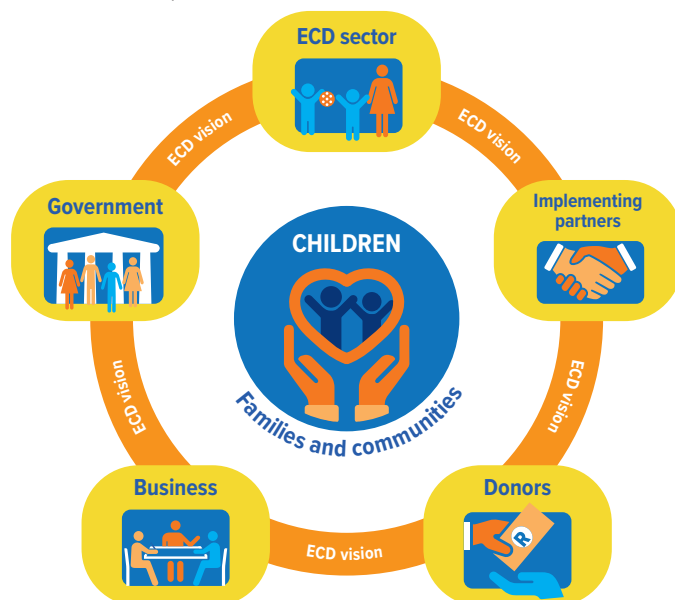
An 'ECD programme' is a programme that provides one or more forms of daily care, development, early learning and support to children before they start school. ECD programmes can include:

- Early learning programmes**, which are attended by children in a range of spaces away from their home, and include ECD centres, playgroups and day mothers.
- Parent support programmes**, which are provided to parents or caregivers to support their child's early development, and include home visiting and parent workshops.

Other areas of ECD – such as health care, nutrition and social protection – are just as important. The DBE will work closely with other departments to develop a plan for these services.

What is the Social Compact for ECD?

A social compact is a partnership between different groups and people with a shared vision. In ECD, this means government, social partners, business and donors, as well as the ECD workforce who are the backbone of the system. The proposed Social Compact for ECD will provide a way to agree what role each group will play towards achieving our goals. It will recognise the many forms of collaborative working that already exist in ECD, and build on these to create and resource new types of partnership. The vision and plan for the Social Compact for ECD will be developed by all role-players, with this Strategy marking the start of the process.



What is the current situation?

Most young children live in households with **low incomes**

Nearly half live in rural areas or areas with **poor infrastructure**

7 million 0-5 year-olds in South Africa

ECD



Nearly **3 million** 0-5 year-olds attend an early learning programme (ELP) or Grade R

About **1.3 million** 3-5 year-olds are not attending an ELP



There are many reasons why ECD programmes are not reaching so many children, including difficult regulations (government requirements), a shortage of venues, poor information for parents, and a lack of funding.

The problem this ECD strategy wants to address is that the **majority of children do not have access to quality ECD programmes, and the poorest children are most likely to miss out.**

Why does this matter?

A child's brain and body develop fastest between birth and the start of school. Good development depends on things like health, nutrition, nurture and stimulation, which provide the foundations for success in school and beyond. ECD programmes can help to provide these foundations, as well as providing crucial support to parents and caregivers, and linking them with other important services.

ECD programmes also support the economy and communities by creating jobs, providing childcare so that parents can work, and creating more local economic activity.



What is a quality early learning programme?

Quality ELPs include stable and loving relationships between children and adults, lots of talk and interaction, opportunities for play supported by adults, interactive storytelling, and plenty of physical activity.

Building from strength

While there are gaps and challenges in the ECD system, there are also strengths and resources, on which we can build. Some of our strengths in South Africa include:

- Thousands of ECD programmes and practitioners, already reaching children in all types of communities.
- Many people who are currently unemployed but have the potential to provide quality care, learning and development opportunities.
- Community and residential venues where millions of children are safely cared for every day.
- Non-government organisations (NGOs) and other social partners with deep experience of supporting and providing ECD programmes.



Service delivery model

In order to achieve universal access, the government is developing a new service delivery model which will ensure the right mix of

different types of ECD programmes in the system, as well as the methods and arrangements for organising and delivering these.

The DBE's new service delivery model is summarised as:
A publicly planned and publicly co-ordinated mixed provisioning model.

“Mixed provisioning” means providing a range of ECD programme types that reflect the needs of families and communities. These will broadly be based on the age of the child:

➤ **Parent support programmes:** The goal is to widen access to different parent support programmes (such as home visiting and outreach programmes), targeting 0-2 year-olds, and co-ordinated and supported with the Department of Health.

➤ **Early learning programmes:** The goal is to ensure that 3-5 year-old children in all communities have access to an ELP close to where they live; as well as to widen access for 0-2 year-olds, so that all parents who want to work, can access childcare.

Early learning programmes

Research shows that quality early learning and development can be provided in a wide range of settings. Under this strategy, therefore, the three main types of ELPs – ECD centres, playgroups and day mothers – will continue to be provided, alongside mobile ECD programmes and toy libraries.

In order to reach as many children as quickly as possible, to start with, there will be a greater need for community-based ELPs which make use of existing premises, like community centres and homes. Over time, as more resources are made available, more ELPs will be provided in larger purpose-built ECD centres.

“Publicly planned and publicly co-ordinated” means that under the new Social Compact for ECD, government leads and supports co-ordinated delivery of different ECD programmes, based on the needs of the population in an area.

Parent support programmes

The DBE will work with other departments and social partners, to develop a full picture of existing parent support programmes, in order to be able to build on these. A strategy will be developed which is likely to include:

- developing a package of support to strengthen the role of key professionals, such as Community Health Workers and family and community motivators
- taking effective parenting programmes to scale
- exploring the benefits of developing a new community-based family support programme



The important role of parents and caregivers

Government cannot replace parents and caregivers. The home is where every young child spends most of their time, and it is their experiences at home that will have the strongest influence on their development. Every day, parents and caregivers in South Africa show huge resourcefulness and care in how they raise their children, in even the most difficult circumstances. This strategy seeks to build on these efforts.



Government's ECD Priorities

In order to achieve the goal of universal access, the DBE has identified **five priorities** in the 2030 Strategy for ECD Programmes. These are:

1 Every child has **access** to a flexible package of age-appropriate, affordable ECD programmes



3 Sufficient **funding** and resourcing are targeted effectively

4 A capable ECD workforce is **well-supported** and equipped



2 Enabling **government systems**, leadership, capacity and co-ordination are in place

5 Programme quality is enhanced through appropriate **support** and monitoring

Workplan

Many different activities will be required to achieve these priorities. The DBE will set these out in a **detailed workplan with year on year milestones** to help government track progress. These activities will include:

- Rolling out a mass registration drive, to support all ECD programmes to become registered.
- Building a workforce strategy, which includes accessible training, and wider availability of mentoring and professional development opportunities.
- Supporting the provision of nutrition through ECD programmes.
- Rolling out effective parent support programmes.
- Rolling out support materials and tools for the National Curriculum Framework for 0-4.
- Supporting ECD programmes to meet the needs of children with disabilities and learning difficulties.
- Working with relevant government departments, as well as donors and business, to unlock new funding streams for all types of ECD programmes.
- Implementing new types of partnerships with social partners, which ensure new ECD programmes reach the most under-served areas.

More information will be provided before changes are introduced.



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