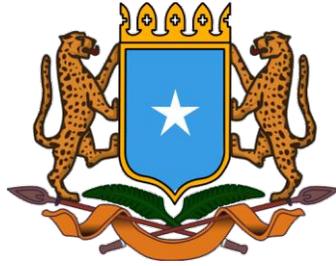


FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF SOMALIA



SOMALI NATIONAL EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION POLICY FRAMEWORK



Figure 1: Xanaano Al-Waddan

January 2022

Table of Contents

<i>ACRONYMS and ABBREVIATIONS</i>	6
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	7
<i>Foreward</i>	8
<i>Technical Note</i>	9
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	10
SECTION ONE: Introduction, Background, Status, and Context	13
1.1 Introduction	13
1.2 Background of Enabling Policies for Early Childhood Education	14
1.3 Current Status of Early Childhood Education	15
1.4 Rationale of ECE Policy Framework	16
1.5 Importance of Early Years Development	16
1.6 Statement of the Problem	18
1.7 Challenges of the Sub-sector	19
SECTION TWO: Vision, Mission and Policy Direction	21
2.1 Vision of Early Childhood Education	21
2.2 Mission of Early Childhood Education	21
2.3 Principles of the Early Childhood Education Policy Framework	21
2.4 Priorities, Objectives and Strategies	22
2.4.1 Priority 1: Build strong systems and institutions to deliver quality ECE services and outcomes	22
2.4.2 Priority 2: Increase participation rates in organized ECE programs, especially for children at risk.....	24
2.4.3 Priority 3: Increase proportion of children who are developmentally on track by age 5.....	25

2.5 Target Groups	25
<i>SECTION THREE: ECE Policy Implementation</i>	27
3.1 Stakeholders: Roles and Responsibilities	27
3.2 ECE National Working Group.....	27
3.3 ECE Working Group- State Level	29
3.4 Ministry of Education at Federal Level.....	30
3.5 Ministry of Education at state level.....	31
3.6 Other Federal Ministries.....	32
3.7 ECE Providers	34
3.8 Parents and Other Community Members	34
3.9 Community Mobilization.....	35
3.10 ECE Financing.....	36
3.11 Monitoring and Evaluation	37

ACRONYMS and ABBREVIATIONS

ECE:	Early Childhood Education
EMIS:	Education Management Information System
ESA:	Education Sector Analysis
ESSP:	Education Sector Strategic Plan
FGS:	Federal Government of Somalia
FMS:	Federal Member State
GDP:	Gross Domestic Product
GPE:	Global Partnership for Education
MICS:	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MoE:	Ministry of Education at State Level
MoECHE:	Ministry of Education Culture and Higher Education (Federal Level)
NGOs:	Non-Governmental Organizations
OECD:	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA:	Program of International Student Assessment
UN:	United Nations
UNICEF:	United Nations Children’s Fund

Acknowledgements

The Ministry of Education Culture and Higher Education (MoECHE) appreciates all the technical and financial contributions of the staff and partners who enabled the development of this Early Childhood Education Policy Framework. In particular, the MoECHE would like to acknowledge and thank UNICEF for its generous contributions, time and energy dedicated to ensure its completion.

The Ministry acknowledges all the members of the Early Childhood Education Taskforce for their participation and contributions for the development of this policy and the way forward for this important sub-sector of the education system.

MoECHE would also like to appreciate the contributions of the Line Ministries (MoRA, MoWHR, and MoH), ECE providers, FMS, Banadir Regional Administration, all other stakeholders and consultation participants. The contributions of all working together will enhance the implementation of this policy to improve the status and education of young children of Somalia.

Foreword

Early Childhood Education has the potential to transform the foundations of Somali education system. Early investments in high quality programs can give our children strong foundations for life and build a stronger nation. This policy lays out the Government's vision and priorities to build the ECE sub-sector guided by the science that demonstrates the critical importance of this stage in life and the potential benefits to improve outcomes in later cycles of education.

The Ministry had demonstrated commitment to improve the learning and development of younger children in the last Education Sector Strategic Plan. Now, with the strategic direction provided by this policy, stronger building blocks for Early Childhood Education are laid for the next Education Sector Strategic plan (ESSP) to progressively build systems and institutions while working with communities and ECE providers to increase participation rates in quality programs, especially for vulnerable children.

This ECE Policy further demonstrates MoECHE's commitment to equip future generations with skills and knowledge to positively contribute to the social, political and economic development of their country. We also recognize the important contributions and cooperative efforts of the Government, donor community, civil society, and private sector in reaching our vision and goals for young children. The benefits of our combined efforts to build a strong ECE sub-sector and services may be felt for generations to come.

[Signed]

[Name]

Minister, MoECHE

Technical Note

The completion of this Early Childhood Education Policy Framework marks an important moment in the development of the education system. Although ECE has been included in the past Education Sector Strategic Plan, the growth of the sub-sector has been limited without policy guidance to move forward collectively to improve results for children.

Now, we have the opportunity to create a legacy that builds stronger foundations for our students. We recognize the potential of ECE to also improve attendance and learning of primary school students. This potential can be realized through good quality ECE services, especially those that will reach young children who are vulnerable or marginalized.

MoECHE is already laying the bricks to build a solid foundation to grow and expand quality ECE services for Somali children. We are committed to building a strong sub-sector and playing our role in setting up structures, administration and coordination as one of the three priority pillars of this policy framework that can help realize our mission; working together we can ensure that Somali children aged 3 to 6 years access high-quality services in early childhood education that ensure their success, growth, protection and development leading to active participation in national development.

We recognize and invite our technical and financial partners across Somalia to join us in this mission and invest in the education of young children.

[Signed]

Name

Director General, MoECHE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a proven investment to ensure that children have a strong start in life and strong early learning foundations. ECE aims to foster the holistic development of children in an environment in which girls and boys feel secure, stimulated and have opportunities to play, explore and develop. The first six years are very pivotal for one's life because the rate of development is faster than at any other stage of life, with 90% of brain development taking place before a child reaches six years old.

The development of effective ECE policies is as crucial as other sub-sectors in Somalia's education system in line with National Education Policy. This sub-sector of education, delivered through kindergartens and traditional or integrated Quranic schools, has been under-developed and under-resourced with the majority of young children aged 3 to 6 years excluded from ECE services because such facilities do not exist in most locations, especially in rural nomadic communities. Communities may also lack understanding of the nature and importance of ECE resulting in low demand. More than 40 percent of children under age 5 in Somalia are at risk of poor development; this risk doubles for children in rural areas.

Institutionally, the ECE-sub sector has lacked the financial and human resource capacity to grow and deliver improved results. The Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) 2018-2020 highlighted a key priority to strengthen the capacity of ministries to deliver and manage ECE services. The consultations organized to develop this policy also highlighted that coordination amongst actors and service providers needs strengthening to bring together tools and resources that translate into improved results for young children.

This policy, along with the subsequent ECE Curriculum Framework, lay out ways to address these issues and reach the national vision and goals for young children, namely that Somali children aged 3 to 6 years access high-quality services in early childhood education that ensure their success, growth, protection and development leading to active participation in national development. Three priorities contribute to these goals:

Priority 1: Build strong systems and institutions to deliver quality ECE services and outcomes

This includes developing the structure and administration to mainstream ECE in education plans and policies while establishing regulations and accreditation mechanisms and a cadre of ECE professionals. Coordination mechanisms and guidelines will enhance quality services across partners and support the integration of ECE and Quranic schools. Data and monitoring systems will be established and guide quality and evidence-based decision making on ECE programs.

Priority 2: Increase participation rates in organized ECE programs, especially for children at risk

Multiple strategies support the expansion of good quality early childhood education services with equity for Somali children. Targeted Programming aims to leverage the power of ECE to close educational gaps for rural areas, children with disabilities, girls and other marginalized children. Community partnerships and family engagement will enable the creation or improvement of ECE centers that can be offered through different providers, such as mother's groups, mosques, NGOs, private providers, etc. Additionally, linkages with primary education will expand ECE access through the school system.

Priority 3: Increase proportion of children who are developmentally on track by age 5

Improving ECE quality and learning outcomes necessitates the development of high-quality age-appropriate early childhood education opportunities to meet the holistic needs of Somali children. This includes a focus on improved teaching and learning localized early childhood curriculum that improves early literacy and through numeracy levels, along with positive cultural practices and Islamic values as well as ensuring a protective environment free from all forms of violence.

The target group for Early Childhood Education includes the age group 3 to 6 years, with a focus on the vulnerable and marginalized, including rural and nomadic communities, poor households, girls, children with disabilities and minorities. The policy will be responsibly implemented by all stakeholders involved in ECE under the auspices and leadership of the ministries of education at both federal and state level and also involve other federal and state Ministries, development partners, donors, private sector, NGOs, United Nations agencies, Community and family members.

Strategic expansion of ECE services depends on community mobilization to increase demand and engagement and mechanisms to register and accredit ECE providers. Guidelines shall be established to define specific roles expected from partners and communities themselves in the establishment of ECE services. Working groups at Federal and State levels will synergize the efforts of the MoECHE in coordinating stakeholders, policy dialogue, monitoring implementation, disseminating information, resource mapping & mobilization, as well as providing technical support in strengthening the implementation of ECE interventions.

Creating viable and affordable models to expand ECE services, especially for the most vulnerable children, remains a strategic objective to guide the implementation of this framework. A variety of ECE models will be evaluated in different contexts to see what types of programs work best in which contexts with harmonized evaluation tools used across different ECE providers. Community-based financing mechanisms and state resource allocation will be detailed in state-level plans; education sector budgets will remain the primary funding channel for ECE financing, with specific budget allocations to be included in Education and other line ministry budgets for ECE programming. The financing goal is at least 10% of education budgets allocated for ECE to reach the policy vision of holistically nurtured, well stimulated, healthy, protected and morally upright children equipped with Islamic values so that they may excel in life.

SECTION ONE: Introduction, Background, Status, and Context

1.1 Introduction



Figure 2: Xanaano Al-Waddan

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a proven investment to ensure that children have strong start in life and strong early learning foundations. It promotes the cognitive, emotional, social and psycho-motor growth and development of the young child. ECE aims to foster the holistic development of children in an environment in which girls and boys feel secure, stimulated and have opportunities to play, explore and develop.

The earliest years of a child's life are key to predicting success in school and life. Recent research findings¹ point to the importance of the first five years in brain development and the serious, lifelong implications of these early foundations for education. These early learning experiences are crucial determining factors for emotional, social, cognitive and intellectual development and will ultimately affect how well a child will perform in school.

The focus of ECE is on stimulating and developing the cognitive, affective and psycho-motor skills of the young child and his/her holistic development, including religion and positive culture. ECE should be fun and also prepare children for formal schooling and ease the

¹ ¹ Lancet Journal series: *Advancing Early Childhood Development: from Science to Scale*
<https://www.thelancet.com/series/ECD2016>

transition from home to primary school or Quranic school. With readily accessible, high-quality early education, our children start life on the right foot.

Early Childhood Education refers to organized learning for girls and boys before they enter primary school, also called pre-primary education. Sustainable Development Goal 4.2 aims at increasing the proportion of girls and boys under 5 years of age who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being and the participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age). Access to quality ECE helps ensure that boys and girls are ready for primary education.

1.2 Background of Enabling Policies for Early Childhood Education

Reestablishing, expanding and strengthening Early Childhood Education requires an established political will to serve as building blocks. In 2016, the issue was raised in the Education Sector Analysis (ESA) 2016-2019, and later proposed in the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) 2018-2020. The recommendations stemmed from MoECHE-led policy dialogue with MoE's, practitioners and public interviews in different states in Somalia. Subsequently, MoECHE revised the education structure to include ECE as the foundation level of the education system. ECE is a noted priority in the ESA 2020-21 and the ESSP 2021-2025.

The Government of Somalia has committed to providing building blocks for increased access to quality early-learning and care for all Somali children aged 3 to 6 years, including through the following:

- National Development Plan 2020-2024
- National Education Sector Policy
- National Education Act / Article 10

1.3 Current Status of Early Childhood Education

According to the ESSP 2018-2020, ECE remains an under-resourced sub-sector of education.

There are three different ways in which ECE services are provided in Somalia, namely:

- i. Traditional Quranic Schools
- ii. Integrated Quranic Schools
- iii. Kindergarten

While data is either limited or non-existent on enrollments, it is assumed that the majority of young children in the ECE age bracket are excluded from ECE services because such facilities do not exist in most locations, especially in rural nomadic communities. Communities may lack understanding of the nature and importance of ECE resulting in low demand. The only services available may be found in Traditional Quranic schools found all over Somalia, including in rural areas, which are typically owned and managed by private individuals and community-level organizations.

While 2012 MICS survey data from Puntland and Somaliland estimated 42% of boys and 28% of girls enroll in Traditional Quranic Schools, no information is available for the ECE specific age bracket of 3 to 5 years. These kinds of schools focus on teaching Quranic memorization, and are accessible to all due to low overhead and financial support from communities. Most of Quranic schools are continuously supported by parents and communities. Facility locations and building materials are among the lowest quality compared to other kindergartens or learning centers such as the integrated Quranic schools.

Integrated Quranic Schools and Kindergartens, on the other hand, are found only in major cities. They are relatively expensive and access is limited to those children whose parents can afford it. In Central and Southern regions, some existing early childhood education facilities are run by local NGOs and private foundations in larger urban centres, although no formal mechanisms exist to capture data on their programs.

Quality of ECE service provision is also assumed to vary greatly, including inadequate use of

age-appropriate materials and methods. Traditional Quranic Schools have a strong focus on Quranic memorization and basic Islamic principles. However, teachers are not equipped to teach important competencies needed for the holistic development of young children.

Currently, institutions operate without guiding principles, policies and regulations hence, no qualification or training systems exist for ECE teachers, nor teaching-learning materials oriented towards small children. No mechanisms have been in place to ensure continued financial, technical or material support to ensure quality ECE services.

1.4 Rationale of ECE Policy Framework

The first six years are very pivotal for one's life because the rate of development is faster than at any other stage of life, with 90% of brain development taking place before a child reaches six years old. Research indicates that the development of the brain is influenced not only by health, nutrition and quality of care but also the quality of psycho-social environmental factors the child is exposed to in their early years. Thus, the development of effective ECE policies is as crucial as other sub-sectors in Somalia's education system in line with National Education Policy.

The goals of the ECE policy are to:

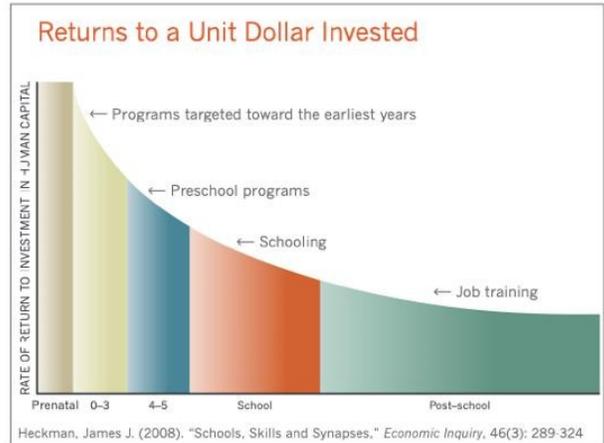
- Establish the foundation for future individual lifelong learning and success,
- Provide a solid base for achieving high-level progress in social contexts and economic development by virtue of peace, harmony, integration and unity,
- Guide planning and programming to ensure access, equity, quality, governance and efficiency.

1.5 Importance of Early Years Development

Children's early development is a strong predictor of a variety of later outcomes, including education, earnings, health and wellness, early motherhood and even crime. The early years of a child's life before the age of 6 are critical to his/her future wellbeing. This time period is

widely considered the most crucial stage of a person's life with 80% of brain development taking place by the age of 3 years.

In early childhood, girls and boys are able to learn and acquire certain knowledge, skills and attitudes very quickly with minimal effort. Therefore, parents, other caregivers and teachers can leverage this period in order to maximize children's holistic development and, therefore, their potential in life. Additionally, this is a crucial period in social and emotional development when it is very easy to mould the character of children by inculcating social norms, values and habits as well as regulation and control of emotions. In addition, quality early childhood education programs have a higher return on investment than other levels of education sector².

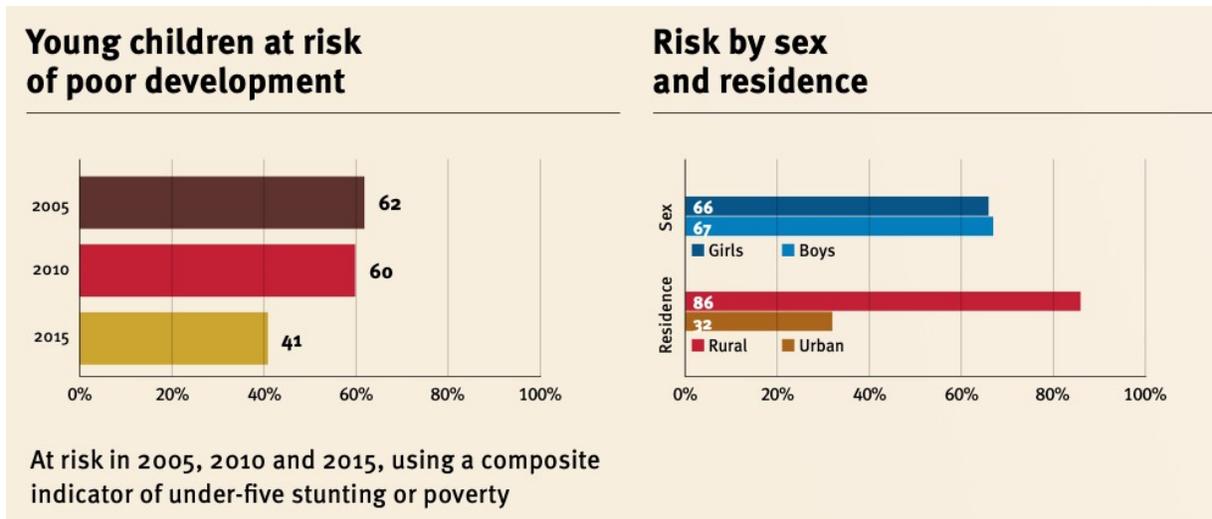


Early childhood education is an efficient and effective investment for economic and workforce development. The earlier the investment, the greater the return on investment.

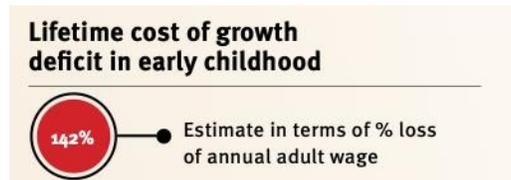
A simulation model of the potential long-term economic effects of increasing preschool enrollment to 25 percent or 50 percent in every low-income and middle-income country showed a benefit-to-cost ratio ranging from 6.4 to 17.6, depending on the preschool enrollment rate and the discount rate used (Lancet 2016).

² The Heckman Equation at heckmanequation.org

According to the Country Profiles for Early Childhood Development under the World Health Organization³, more than 40 percent of children under age 5 in Somalia are at risk of poor development. This risk doubles for children in rural areas.



The Nurturing Care Somalia Country Profile also estimates the high cost of inaction and loss of income over an adult lifetime for children who suffer from poor development in their early childhood years.



ECE is considered as the most crucial investment to improve learning. Analysis of results from OECD’s 2009 Program of International Student Assessment (PISA) reveals that school systems that have a 10 percentage-point advantage in the proportion of students who have attended preprimary school score an average of 12 points higher in the PISA reading assessment.

1.6 Statement of the Problem

Early Childhood Education is under-developed in Somalia. Organized ECE provision remains a key challenge due to lack of adequate and reliable resources and other factors such as the lack of economic ability and awareness among communities and parents regarding its importance.

³ Nurturing Care Somalia Country Profile at <https://nurturing-care.org/profiles/somalia/>

Institutionally, the ECE sub-sector lacked the financial and human resource capacity to grow and deliver improved results, similar to the challenges of other levels of education. ESSP 2018-2020 highlighted a key priority to strengthen the capacity of the ministry to deliver and manage ECE services. The plan aimed to increase access to ECE services and to deliver on targets of implementing 75% of organizational strengthening initiatives planned and increase the participation in organized learning one year before official primary school entry age from 3.4% to 25% by 2020, which was not met.

Most expenditures for the children who do have access to ECE reside with parents through private providers or Quranic schools. In terms of public expenditure, ECE is currently the lowest funded sub-sector in ESSP:

ESSP 2018-2020, Costing by subsector

Subsectors	2018	2019	2020	TOTAL	%
Resilience/EiE	\$3,765,000	\$7,310,000	\$8,090,000	\$19,165,000	12%
ECCE	\$735,000	\$1,770,000	\$1,945,000	\$4,450,000	3%
Primary Education	\$13,115,000	\$16,405,000	\$19,970,000	\$49,490,000	31%
Secondary Education	\$6,145,000	\$11,455,000	\$12,070,000	\$29,670,000	19%
ABE	\$2,385,000	\$3,525,000	\$3,560,000	\$9,470,000	6%
TVET	\$2,900,000	\$6,590,000	\$5,090,000	\$14,580,000	9%
Cross-cutting issues	\$4,855,000	\$6,860,000	\$6,330,000	\$18,045,000	11%
Higher Education	\$2,260,000	\$5,710,000	\$4,320,000	\$12,290,000	8%
Sub-total	\$36,160,000	\$59,625,000	\$61,375,000	\$157,160,000	

³ Federal Republic of Somalia. 2016. Appropriation Act 2016. FGS

1.7 Challenges of the Sub-sector

In Somalia, about 3 million children are not in school due to an underfunded education system with high school fees, as well as the distance between homes and schools, particularly among the rural and nomadic population. Most children and their parents face barriers to access modern education services, particularly ECE programs. Without the availability of reliable data, it is assumed that the vast majority of children do not access any kind of ECE program, leaving this age group traditionally excluded from education services, because, Quranic School teachers are not equipped to serve this age group of children.

Rural, nomadic and pastoralist populations are consistently the most educationally disadvantaged, particularly girls. Barriers to ECE include lack of educational infrastructure, insufficient numbers of teachers in rural areas, lack of learning materials and supplies, as well as a curriculum that is properly aligned to the cultural and economic needs of most nomadic and pastoral communities. Disadvantages for young children are compounded by unpredictable security, internal conflict and periodic natural disasters such floods and droughts, that may result in internally displaced people. Low levels of parental education are also critical barriers to early childhood development indicating the need to reach children and families through ECE programs.

For the few who do currently access ECE services, learning environments may be inappropriate and suitable and relevant learning materials are not available. Some private ECE providers may use the Somali primary school materials teaching down in a way that is not age appropriate and can have negative consequences for young children's learning foundations. For young children attending Quranic schools, communities often give priority to the memorization of Qur'an without opportunities for learning that supports their holistic development.

There is a lack of public and parental understanding of the benefits and the importance of ECE and cultural barriers that hinder ECE. In addition, there is no system to train or accredit teachers and caregivers nor to ensure their quality or qualification. Due to a lack of quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation, there is no comprehensive data on ECE. Coordination amongst actors and service providers also needs strengthening to bring together tools and resources that translate into improved results for young children. Addressing these issues requires national ECE policy and curriculum frameworks.

SECTION TWO: Vision, Mission and Policy Direction

2.1 Vision of Early Childhood Education

Holistically nurtured, well stimulated, healthy, protected and morally upright children equipped with Islamic values so that they may excel in life.

2.2 Mission of Early Childhood Education

Somali children aged 3 to 6 years access high-quality services in early childhood education that ensure their success, growth, protection and development leading to active participation in national development.

As stated in the National Education Curriculum Framework for the Federal Republic of Somalia, the following are the intended outcomes of ECE in Somalia. Children will:

- Learn age-appropriate Islamic Principles, Quranic knowledge and love of Islamic religion,
- Develop good character and behavior,
- Strengthen their love of parents, teachers, neighborhoods, communities and country,
- Enhance relationship with their community,
- Develop both physically and mentally,
- Enhance their sense of nationalism and patriotism.

2.3 Principles of the Early Childhood Education Policy Framework

The ECE Policy Framework is created on principles recognized as the basis of quality early childhood services and programs:

- a) Ensure that the holistic needs of Somali children are met in order to maximize

achievement to their full potential.

- b) Safeguard the rights and welfare of the child as per the Islamic religion, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child or approved Somali version of parliament.
- c) Be a partnership of government ministries progressively offering services and programs for children 3 to 6 years old.
- d) Be child-centered, recognizing that children are voiceless but also active participants and learners in shaping the procedures which influence their lives.
- e) Recognize and appreciate parents and families as the primary caregivers and health providers of their children who need to be empowered and supported to ensure they are effective in their roles.
- f) Support and strengthen the community-based management of early childhood services and integration of ECE learning and Quranic schools for sustainable development.
- g) Address the issues of vulnerable and marginalized children, especially children with special needs.
- h) Ensure non-discrimination of children and families on the basis of gender, race, color, religion, economic status, disability and health status.
- i) Recognize that life begins at conception and mental development, just like physical growth starts before birth and continues throughout life.

2.4 Priorities, Objectives and Strategies

2.4.1 Priority 1: Build strong systems and institutions to deliver quality ECE services and outcomes

Objective 1 Systems Strengthening:

Strengthen the organizational capacity, governance and structure of the MoECHE to coordinate and regulate ECE services, building progressively to three years of pre-primary education.

Systems Strengthening Strategies:

Structure and Administration

- Develop governance and institutional structures with clear roles, responsibilities and relationships within the MoECHE to manage and regulate the ECE sub-sector,
- Mainstream ECE in strategic education plans and policies,
- Establish regulations and accreditation mechanism for public and private education schools and institutions,
- Establish a qualified cadre of ECE teaching staff, caregivers and leaders based on quality standards,

Coordination

- Create coordination mechanisms with line ministries and implementing institutions,
- Ensure federal/state harmonization of ECE policies, regulations and procedures,
- Harmonize guidelines to facilitate the coordinated implementation and supervision of ECE services amongst various partners,
- Establish collaboration mechanisms between Quranic schools and ECE schools,

Data and Evidence

- Integrate ECE into existing data and monitoring systems,
- Develop monitoring and evaluation formats and systems for ECE services,
- Conduct internal and external monitoring and evaluation of ECE services and programs,
- Explore impact of various ECE models on children's learning, development and school readiness.

2.4.2 Priority 2: Increase participation rates in organized ECE programs, especially for children at risk

Objective 2 Access and equity:

Expand access to good quality early childhood education services for Somali children

Access and Equity Strategies:

Targeted Programming

- Progressively expand early childhood services, starting with one-year of quality pre-primary for children aged 5 to 6 years old,
- Develop adapted programs for rural ECE services,
- Prioritize inclusion of children with disabilities and those who are marginalized,
- Target services to improve gender parity in areas with educational gaps between boys and girls,

Community Partnerships

- Develop formalized partnerships to increase access and progressive expansion of ECE services,
- Establish affordable, accessible models for development and expansion of quality ECE services for disadvantaged populations and communities,

Family Engagement and Education

- Establish strong partnership structures between parents and ECE centers,
- Integrate parent education as part of ECE to facilitate wellbeing of the child,

Linkage with Primary Education

- Build system of organized learning and public ECE centres through primary

- schools to facilitate easy access to primary education and parental awareness,
- Explore and support early childhood education programs that increase enrollment and support an easy shift to primary schooling.

2.4.3 Priority 3: Increase proportion of children who are developmentally on track by age 3-6

Objective 3 Quality and Learning Outcomes:

Develop high quality age-appropriate early childhood education opportunities to meet the holistic needs of Somali children

Quality and Learning Outcome Strategies:

Teaching and Learning

- Develop and support the implementation of clearly defined age-appropriate, localized early childhood education curriculum and learning materials,
- Improve early literacy and numeracy levels built on positive Somali cultural practices,
- Provide training for teachers, caregivers and the community on positive child development practices and pedagogical skills,
- Enhance the quality of the Quranic schools and the capacity of the teachers,

Protective Environment

- Provide guidelines to promote consistent routines of good nutrition, health, hygiene, social-emotional skills and positive cultural practices,
- Develop and implement interventions to ensure children are free from all forms of violence in ECE services and at home.

2.5 Target Groups

The target group for early childhood education includes the age group 3 to 6 years, with a

focus on the vulnerable and marginalized, including rural and nomadic communities, poor households, girls, children with disabilities and minorities.

Somalia's education system is organized into four distinct sub-sectors:

1. Early Childhood Education
2. Primary Education
3. Secondary Education
4. Post-secondary Education

The General Education Law 2017 recognizes that 'Kindergarten Schools' are for children 3 to 6 years old. The National Education Policy 2020 states that the Early Childhood Education emphasizes the preparation and provision of equal access to early learning for Somali children aged 3 to 6 before the official entry into primary school. The policy also lays out the priority objective to ensure the initiation of a Zero classroom to prepare access to basic education in the year before entry into primary school.

With roughly 60% of children out-of-school and less than 10% starting school by the recommended age of 6 years, marginalized populations in Somalia experience the lowest levels of access to education. ECE is proven to act as a leveling ground to close equity gaps in education. Therefore, ECE will prioritize equitable access for disadvantaged groups who are far below the national averages, including IDPs, rural communities, urban poor children and girls.

SECTION THREE: ECE Policy Implementation

3.1 Stakeholders: Roles and Responsibilities

Raising children from a Muslim perspective consists of a holistic approach to preparation for life both in this world and the hereafter, meaning the development of effective ECE programs must consider a culturally specific focus regarding Islamic moral, physical, psychological and social values. Therefore, ECE is not solely in the purview of a single ministry such as the one responsible for education, rather there are a multitude of stakeholders all bearing both vested interest and responsibility.

In this context, stakeholders refer to people, organizations or government bodies who have an interest in the ECE age group; they may invest money, goods, or time in the ECE sub-sector. These entities can network among themselves to derive the long-term benefits of robust ECE according to mandates at the international, continental, regional, national, and local levels. In Somalia these would be national, state and local school levels respectively.

The ECE policy will be responsibly implemented by all stakeholders involved in ECE. However, this implementation will be under the auspices and leadership of the ministries of education at both federal and state level. Similarly, the implementation of the ECE policy will also involve other federal and state Ministries, development partners, donors, private sector, NGOs, United Nations agencies, Community and family members.

3.2 ECE National Working Group

Governments have important policy decisions to make in terms of leveraging program models and providers to ensure that all children have quality early education opportunities. This requires coordinating a range of providers, while ensuring that government maintains a central role in quality assurance and standard-setting across the sub-sector.

The responsibility of Ministry of Education, Culture & Higher Education to strengthen coordination and collaboration among key stakeholders is critically important to mobilize

technical, material and financial resources that will be used to ensure the comprehensive implementation of ECE. Therefore, the Federal ECE Working Group will synergize the efforts of the MoECHE in coordinating stakeholders, policy dialogue, monitoring implementation, disseminating information, resource mapping & mobilization as well as providing technical support in strengthening the implementation of ECE interventions.

Specific tasks of the National ECE Working Group include:

- Strengthen coordination and collaboration among Government and non-Government key stakeholders and ECE service providers,
- Develop, monitor and evaluate the national implementation of ECE programs,
- Formulate, harmonize and disseminate technical and managerial guidelines for quality ECE service provision,
- Provide and mobilize technical support to strengthen evidence-based decision-making and implementation of ECE,
- Prioritize action points and provide guidance on strategic issues to enhance the sub-sector and increase access for disadvantaged communities,
- Integrate ECE into other national development plans and initiatives,
- Advocate for and map and mobilize more resources for ECE.

Membership of ECE TWG:

Chair: MoECHE

Members: MoECHE, ECE implementing partners, representatives of public and private ECE centers, representatives of FMS, line ministries (i.e., Ministry of Religious affairs, Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development), ECE experts and others as needed. All members of this technical working group will be technical experts or focal persons.

The Working Group is expected to conduct monthly meetings or may convene extraordinarily if an urgent matter arises. An agenda shall be communicated to all members in advance. Meeting notes will be recorded by ECE Focal person and communicated to all

attendees in e-mail within five days following the actual meeting with endorsement by attendees.

3.3 ECE Working Group- State Level

The ECE Policy Framework will be implemented by all ECE Stakeholders at the State Level in one way or the other, under the leadership of the Ministries of Education, in compliment to the Federal Level leadership of MoECHE. The purpose of the Federal and State level working groups is to engage directly in dialogue on ECE-related issues that are important to them and to the community. These localized ECE Working Groups will complement the roles of the National ECE Working Group. These state-level groups will report progress, raise pertinent issues and make recommendations to improve results for children. They can also advocate within their State on ECE policies, input in curricula, discuss challenges and issues affecting ECE stakeholders in their area and suggest solutions. The State Level groups can directly advice and discuss pertinent issues related to ECE with their respective communities, and in turn share their priorities with the Federal level ECE Working Group.

The state level working group is effective at the state and the district level, with primary responsibility to make policy decisions around these issues residing at the national level. Yet, they can share information, recommendations and reports, which will assist the Federal and State governments to work together to regulate and review ECE policy in accordance to their mandates. The working group can also engage in the development of ECE-related plans, such as the ESA and ESSP to reach effective decisions to develop, improve and implement ECE sub-sector of Somalia. Specific tasks for this group include: coordination among key stakeholders, mobilizing resources and partnerships for ECE implementation, address gaps and synergies efforts of the MoE.

Chair: State level MoE, ECE unit focal person

Members: MoE Early Childhood Unit, Education Department, Planning Department, Private ECE centers, representatives from FMS line ministries representatives from active NGOs and others as needed.

3.4 Ministry of Education at Federal Level

The Ministry of Education of the Federal Republic of Somalia is the central authority responsible for policy making, public planning, provision of educational resources, and the monitoring and evaluation of national education achievements. The Ministry is also responsible for leading the development of curriculum and learning materials, teacher training standards and quality assurance in accordance with the departments assigned for such services. As the Ministry is responsible for the overall guidance and coordination of education in Somalia, the ECE sub-sector is at the foundation of its mandate.

For the implementation of this policy, the Ministry Shall be Responsible to:

- Promote the establishment of ECE services, including targeted services for children with special needs, rural areas and equity for girls and boys,
- Develop strategies, legislation, policy statements, and plans for implementation,
- Monitor and evaluate ECE activities,
- Create minimum standards and quality control measures that apply to public, private and Quranic ECE classes,
- Develop and roll out of the early childhood education curriculum in line with Islamic values,
- Develop initial and continuous teacher training modules and roll out training,
- Establish centers or colleges for ECE teacher training,
- Integrate ECE section into higher education programs of study,
- Create minimum pedagogical and quality standards for the ECE centers and schools,
- Create and make available age and culturally appropriate teaching and learning equipment and materials for teachers and students,
- Create a cadre of ECE professionals and teachers according to quality standards,
- Provide guidance on the regulation, accreditation and registration of ECE providers, according to quality standards including health, hygiene and

nutrition,

- Plan, budget and allocate resources for ECE programs as part of ESSP and ESA and yearly planning exercises,
- Integrate ECE into Education Management Information Systems (EMIS),
- Collaborate with line ministries and other stakeholders for Somali child development, Coordinate the National ECE Working Group.

3.5 Ministry of Education at state level

At the Federal Member State (FMS) level, the education sector is managed under their respective state ministries of education. In 2016, the FGS MoECHE signed a Cooperation Framework and Memorandum of Understanding with the FMS MOEs to provide a collaboration platform between the FGS and FMS.

In regards to ECE, the state Ministry of Education shall:

- Collaborate with the federal ministries for their respective roles and responsibilities.
- Develop with FGS plans, implementing and monitoring activities to promote quality, equitable and accessible ECE programs.
- Plan and budget for ECE activities for every region and district in the state for provision of ECE services through Government or community ECE providers.
- Ensure the inclusion of ECE plans in each district.
- Develop clear linkages and ECE provision models through primary schools.
- Encourage the private sector to provide ECE services to vulnerable children.
- Provide periodical reports to stakeholders and ECE working group.
- Enhance coordination, internal supervision, and internal monitoring of ECE activities at, state, region, district, village, and school levels.
- Facilitate the establishment of functioning technical working groups and sub-committees in the state for overseeing the ECE sub-sector, providing input to enhance implementation, monitoring, and supervision.

3.6 Other Federal Ministries

Ministry of Religious Endowment shall be responsible for:

- promotion of spiritual and moral development of all children without discrimination,
- participating in the development of Islamic religion-based curriculum in liaison with the ministry of education,
- raising awareness on the appropriate childcare, protection, stimulation and development programs based on Islamic teachings,
- oversight of religious aspects in ECE and Quranic /ECE integrated Schools,
- input into integrated ECE Islamic religion-based curriculum, appointment and support training of ECE trainers and Quranic teachers training and professional accreditation standards,
- inclusion of ECE in the development plan and budgets,
- seeking financial support for quality ECE provisions in Quranic schools.

Ministry of Health shall promote the health-related issues for ECE schools located in Somalia. Specifically, the Ministry will be responsible for:

- screening of minor illnesses for both children and caregivers,
- monitoring health trends in ECE Centers and schools,
- provision of First Aid and other essential health services in ECE Centers,
- training of ECE teachers on emergency-related health interventions,
- establishment of community-based health programs,
- provision of information on appropriate nutrition and nutrient levels,
- undertaking vigorous child and maternal immunization campaigns,
- overseeing general hygiene, vaccination, public education/information on nutrition, and healthy lifestyle and norms geared to ECE,

- early intervention of learning disabilities and support for kids with Special Needs in ECE programs,
- inclusion of ECE and services for children aged 3 to 6 years in the plan and budget and service guidelines,
- seeking financial support for quality health provision to ECE sub-sector.

Ministry of Women shall extend its normal mandate to the coverage of new ECE services to ensure:

- child protection, gender balance, equitable access and gender equity,
- development of ways to observe and protect children's rights,
- inclusion of ECE in the development plans and budgets,
- public education and community awareness raising on human rights and child protection,
- advocacy for legal support,
- seeking financial support for quality ECE provision, especially for vulnerable populations,
- inclusion of ECE in the development plan and budgets,
- provision of technical advice,
- development of child protection guidelines and standards in ECE centers and in the community.

Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation shall extend its normal mandate to the coverage of new ECE services to ensure:

- facilitation of transport systems for public ECE centers in the form of school buses,
- support importation of ECE learning materials from outside of the country if required.

3.7 ECE Providers

ECE Providers include different types of structures and organizations, such as NGOs, private entities, religious institutions, community-based organizations, etc. As outlined in the strategic objectives, non-state providers have the responsibility to establish and manage ECE centers with the support of government, along with community-led provision through public institutions such as primary schools. This policy framework aims to enhance partners with current and potential providers to:

- Establish and manage an increased number of ECE centers,
- Implement policies and ensure compliance to government set standards,
- Establish partnership with the government and other ECE stakeholders to deliver quality and affordable ECE services,
- Report on programs, progress and challenges to coordinate and inform quality services across ECE services.

3.8 Parents and Other Community Members

Parents and family members remain the pillar of support for children aged 3 to 6 years, providing for their basic necessities but also acting as the first teachers. As such, the engagement of parents and community in ECE centers is part of the strategic objectives to ensure change for children. To ensure the expansion and quality of ECE programming, parents and community members are expected to:

- Teach children outside the classroom,
- Enroll children in ECE programs in the community,
- Provide financial or in-kind support to ECE programs,
- Provide traditional learning materials,
- Help with outreach, advocacy, awareness raising and mobilization,
- Serve as agents of change for young children,

- Provide advice on community expectation and norms,
- Facilitate community dialogue on ECE,
- Do outreach and advocacy through social media,
- Support ECE providers to establish community-based ECE services.

3.9 Community Mobilization

Community participation and involvement are critically important in planning for an effective Early Childhood Education policy. ECE service providers should form positive partnerships with the community on an ongoing basis. ECE teachers/caregivers should actively seek parental support and provide support showing fathers and mothers how they can work with their children at home to reinforce the learning experiences that take place in ECE centers and schools.

Strategic expansion of ECE services depends on community mobilization to increase demand and engagement. Community ownership of ECE centers ensures that parents and other stakeholders engage in development and improvement plans and activities.

Guidelines shall be established to define specific roles expected from partners and communities themselves in the establishment of ECE services. Some of the distinct roles communities have are the following:

- Ensure a nurturing, conducive and supportive environment for children,
- Encourage exploration and experimentation at home and use learning opportunities in daily activities and routines,
- Establish a relationship of trust and mutual respect with teachers,
- Participate in the open days and other events for parents and community,
- Not force formal learning and competition at this early age but rather respect children's abilities and personalities,
- Participate in awareness programs,

- Create a protective environment for young children.

3.10 ECE Financing

Investing in ECE services can yield greater economic returns than interventions provided later in life. Current ECE funding sources are mostly private. Public funding may come from federal government, Federal Member States and local agencies for education, social protection and health agencies, integrated programs, or a combination of these. Private funding may come from households; from donations by independent entities, NGOs and private companies.

Given their positive externalities on the economy and society, ECE programs and services may be seen as public goods. Evidence from OECD research suggests a public investment of 1% of GDP as the minimum required to ensure provision of quality early childhood services. Investments in an ECE program can be either publicly or privately sourced. The more public resources are relayed, the more equity in access to services is seen as with private investments, otherwise only high-income families have access. As ECE benefits not only one group but the whole of the country's society, public investment is worthwhile. With specific targets to reach vulnerable and marginalized, ECE Financing aims at reducing disparities with pro-poor investments.

Globally, there is a great variety of provision and financing models for ECE, based on both public and private sources. The private sector has dominated over public investment in ECE in developing countries, meaning the burden for funding education at this level falls heavier on parents compared to older age groups. Domestic budgets and international aid have not leveraged the potential returns on investment in early learning. In 2017, an average of 6.6 per cent of domestic education budgets globally were allocated to pre-primary education, with Eastern and Southern Africa allocating 2.1 percent; *A World Ready to Learn: Prioritizing Quality Early Childhood Education Global Report*⁴ recommends an allocation of at least 10% of education

⁴ <https://www.unicef.org/reports/a-world-ready-to-learn-2019>

budgets for pre-primary education. From 3% of national education budget planned for the ECE subsector in ESSP 2018-2020, an additional 7% increase could be done progressively to cover the gap and improve access for additional years of ECE until no child between 3 to 6 years is left behind.

Creating viable and affordable models to expand ECE services, especially for the most vulnerable children, remains a strategic objective to guide the implementation of this framework. Community-based financing mechanisms and state resource allocation will be detailed in state-level plans. Systems strengthening and quality improvement priorities fall into education sector budgets that will remain the primary funding channel for ECE financing. Education and other line ministry budgets should include specific budget allocations for ECE programming.

As the ECE sub-sector aims to expand access through registration and accreditation of existing structures and the opening of new ECE classrooms or centers in primary schools or other community-based structures such as mosques, funding sources should take into account different streams such as for school improvement, teacher motivation, new constructions and school feeding.

3.11 Monitoring and Evaluation

The policy will be monitored and evaluated as presented in five-year's time. The ministry of education at federal and state level will take a key leading role in monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the policy. However, all key stakeholders will be responsible for contributing input on the ECE activities they support. The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework will be developed in line with this policy framework, and implementation plans will guide the monitoring process.

Monitoring and evaluation reports will be developed through the ECE Technical Working

Group and also be shared more widely through education sector coordination meetings.

As monitoring and evaluation are a key part of systems strengthening, the following achievements are expected to build the sub-sector:

- Results and monitoring frameworks and tools developed and disseminated;
- ECE data included in annual EMIS;
- Comprehensive studies are carried out and disseminated to address critical areas in ECE;
- National ECE database or website is created;
- ECE monitoring and evaluation system is strengthened and integrated into education sector;
- Adequate funds are allocated for research monitoring and evaluation activities.

Issues around ECE have evolved and need further understanding through research. However, Somalia lacks research studies on the ECE sub-sector, which are required to inform effective programming. In addition, dissemination of available results for research studies remains limited to inform policy and practice in the field. It is against this background that the policy intends to enhance research activities in the coming years and eventually establish a research center for early learning education.

A variety of ECE models should be evaluated in different contexts to see what types of programs work best in which contexts. Harmonized evaluation tools should be used across different ECE providers. ECE research shall be encouraged in the national research agenda to enable comprehensive studies that address critical gaps.

Monitoring and evaluation systems for ECE activities will be built at national and federal state level. ECE data shall be integrated into existing and future education sector database or information management systems. The Monitoring and Evaluation Section of the Planning Department in the ministry of education at both the federal and state level shall take

responsibility for leading the monitoring and evaluation of the policy in collaboration with relevant stakeholders at all levels. Joint Sector Reviews will be conducted to evaluate annual performance and results will be made public. After 5 years of implementing the policy, an evaluation will be carried out to assess its impact.