

Submission to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

Combined sixth and seventh periodic review of Ghana

100 Pre-Sessional Working Group

The right to Early Childhood Care and Education in Ghana

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INTRODUCTION

This shadow report evaluates Ghana's combined sixth (6th) and seventh (7th) periodic reports submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The focus is on the progress and challenges the state is making towards the UNCRC Articles 28, 29, 30 and SDGs target 4.2¹ for children aged 0-8 years in Ghana. Drawing on both primary and secondary data sources (see appendix), the report aims to provide an accurate assessment of the current state of affairs, highlight key gaps, and make actionable recommendations to enhance Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) services. This report is framed within the context of both national and international legal frameworks that mandate state action to ensure the rights and well-being of children are upheld.

Response to State Report (Paragraph 130) regarding ECCE Oversight and Monitoring

In its Concluding Observations from the previous reporting period, the Committee recommended that Ghana “continue strengthening the efforts to efficiently implement the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy (2004).”²

The State report indicates the establishment of an Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Secretariat and a National ECCD Coordinating Committee to coordinate the implementation of ECCD programmes.³ The State also indicated that it is and is in the process of monitoring and documenting existing programmes, and evaluating its current policy.⁴ While these efforts are welcome, the following concerns remain:

Coordination and Oversight Responsibility

There is poor coordination and unclear roles among agencies tasked with ECCD which dilutes the effectiveness of administrative structures. Also, the existing administrative structure lacks the robustness required to effectively implement the existing ECCD policy, resulting in inefficiencies and unmet objectives. While adequate administrative oversight exists for children aged 4-8 in both private and public institutions, there is still a lack of detailed administrative oversight in the implementation of ECCE programs for children aged 0-3, who are mostly found in private institutions. This leads to inconsistencies in program delivery and quality across regions.

¹ Target 4.2 by 2030 ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready

² Concluding observations on the combined third to fifth periodic reports of Ghana (CRC/C/GHA/CO/3-5), para. 58(c)

³ Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports submitted by Ghana under article 44 of the Convention, due in 2020, para. 130

⁴ Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports submitted by Ghana under article 44 of the Convention, due in 2020, para 130(b)-(d)

Response to State Report (Paragraphs 131-140) regarding ECCE Availability, Access and Quality

In its Concluding Observations from the previous reporting period, the Committee recommended that Ghana “allocate sufficient financial resources for the development and expansion of early childhood education in rural areas.”⁵

The Committee also addressed the need to improve education quality,⁶ and recommended that the State focuses on the most marginalized children and on addressing existing inequalities in educational provision.⁷ Moreover, the Committee was particularly concerned with “the rapid development of private education in the State party and its impact on the full realization of children’s right to education” and recommended “the effective and efficient regulation and monitoring of private education providers.”⁸

The current State report has noted a significant increase in the number of pre-schools (both crèche and kindergarten)⁹ and the levels of enrolment in these schools.¹⁰ However, there is no comment on the quality, affordability, and accessibility of these pre-school services, nor on whether there are disparities or inequalities in their provision. There is also no comment on the current treatment of care workers. Furthermore, the State report does not specifically address the need to effectively regulate private education providers, as recommended by the Committee in its Concluding Observations from the previous reporting period. These issues are discussed below:

Disparities in ECCE Service Delivery

The State report lacks a comprehensive analysis on the disparities in ECCE service delivery, particularly affecting marginalized communities including those based on geographical location, gender, and disability. The insufficient focus on disparities in service delivery contributes to an uneven landscape of ECCE provision, with marginalized communities often underserved. According to UNICEF Ghana, “nearly 623,500 children of primary school age are still not enrolled in primary school and one out of four children in the kindergarten age range (from four to five years of age) are not in pre-school”¹¹. The majority of these children are from the rural and the northern regions of Ghana where poverty is

⁵ Concluding observations on the combined third to fifth periodic reports of Ghana (CRC/C/GHA/CO/3-5), para. 58(c)

⁶ Concluding observations on the combined third to fifth periodic reports of Ghana (CRC/C/GHA/CO/3-5), para. 58(b)

⁷ Concluding observations on the combined third to fifth periodic reports of Ghana (CRC/C/GHA/CO/3-5), para. 58(e)

⁸ Concluding observations on the combined third to fifth periodic reports of Ghana (CRC/C/GHA/CO/3-5), para. 58(h)

⁹ Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports submitted by Ghana under article 44 of the Convention, due in 2020, para. 131-133

¹⁰ Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports submitted by Ghana under article 44 of the Convention, due in 2020, paras. 134-135

¹¹<https://www.unicef.org/ghana/education#:~:text=Nearly%20623%2C500%20children%20of%20primary,disabilities%20are%20not%20attending%20school.>

widespread. This does not promote access to and quality for many children to start right in their education.

Lack of Effective Monitoring Mechanisms for Private ECCE Providers

The last report by the State fails to address the critical need for stringent regulations and consistent oversight of private ECCE providers, despite recommendations from previous committees. Currently, regulatory frameworks exist for private ECCE providers. These include those from the Department of Social Welfare (for ages 0-3), the National Schools Inspectorate Authority (NaSIA) and the National Teaching Council (NTC). Weaknesses however exist in the effective monitoring and enforcement of these frameworks, resulting in varied quality and potentially sub-standard care and education services by different providers.

Inadequate funding and budget for ECCE interventions

From the State report, it was mentioned that the government has made many efforts to increase the Capitation Grant by 100 percent from GH¢4.50 (USD\$ 0.296) to GH¢9 (USD\$ 0.572) per child for a term.¹² It also mentioned restructuring the disbursement of Capitation through the introduction of an equal amount to all public schools as Base Grant. However, neither the Capitation Grant nor the Government's feeding programme extend to children aged 0-3 years in crèches and nurseries, a particularly vulnerable group.

Furthermore, although there has been an increase in the amount by 100%, the inflation situation in Ghana makes this amount woefully inadequate. Moreover, the disbursement of the grant to schools by the government has not been regular and timely. This affects the smooth running of the schools since school administrators rely solely on the grant for school maintenance, minor repairs and supplies. In addition, the government is implementing the school feeding program in some selected deprived schools. An amount of GHS 1.50 (USD\$ 0.095) is paid per child by the government. However, this amount currently is unable to provide quality hot meals for the child to be able to stay in school.

Infrastructure Deficit

The government report mentioned that, to ensure all 4 and 5 year-olds have access to Kindergarten (KG) Education, the Ministry of Education commenced a programme to provide KG in 1,171 primary schools, of which only 90 KGs were completed in 2018.¹³ Moreover, the Government stated, it initiated a program to rehabilitate and rebuild an estimated 8,286 'collapsing' basic and second cycle school structures posing a threat to students and teachers. However, as at the closure of 2018, only the 52 collapsing

¹² Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports submitted by Ghana under article 44 of the Convention, due in 2020, para. 136

¹³ Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports submitted by Ghana under article 44 of the Convention, due in 2020, para. 139.

school structures have been rehabilitated.¹⁴ In addition, the Ministry of Education Sector Strategic Plan mentioned that about 5,491 KG classroom blocks are needed to promote quality early childhood education for children.¹⁵ There is a huge infrastructure gap between the urban and rural/ Northern and Southern regions when it comes to ECE.

Because the government is making little progress when it comes to infrastructure, many children study in dilapidated buildings, overcrowded classrooms and others. From the North East Regional Education Office, about 150 Kindergarten classrooms and over 5000 age appropriate furniture are needed to promote access and quality early childhood education.

Further, no data was shared by the state on facilities being used as crèches and nurseries by government and private sector ECCE service providers. No assessment is made about the sufficiency/adequacy of infrastructure to serve this category or long-term plans for expanding facilities to meet population growth. Lack of attention to this space has the potential of undermining the success of child outcomes, such as readiness for primary school etc.

Gap in the implementation of the Standard Based Curriculum

According to the Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey (MICS - Ghana Statistical Service, 2017), only 11 percent of children aged 7-14 have foundational numeracy skills and 21 percent foundational reading only. According to UNESCO and the World Bank, Ghana, like many other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, is facing the worst learning crisis. About 89% of children in basic schools still do not acquire basic skills in numeracy and literacy by the end of their primary education.¹⁶

As part of measures to improve the acquisition of basic literacy, numeracy skills and essential life skills at the early grade levels, the Ministry of Education revised the Kindergarten and Primary 1-6 Curriculum in 2019.¹⁷ The revised curriculum, which hinges on the Standard-Based Curriculum (SBC), specifies performance standards that learners are expected to meet. Despite the review, teachers have not been provided with regular opportunities to build their capacities to understand and effectively implement the standard curriculum. Moreover, the government has not been able to match this with the provision of adequate textbooks and other teaching and learning materials to schools. Since the rollout of the Standard Based Curriculum, there have not been any robust follow up and evaluation mechanisms to assess how teachers are implementing the policy.

Moreover, this curriculum does not cover the Crèche and nursery levels. Therefore, there is currently no standardized curriculum for children aged 0-3 years.

¹⁴ Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports submitted by Ghana under article 44 of the Convention, due in 2020, para. 140.

¹⁵ Education Strategic Plan (2018-2030)- Page 21-paragraph 2.

¹⁶ UNESCO, 'Ghana: Education Country Brief' (2024). Retrieved from <<https://www.iicba.unesco.org/en/ghana>>

¹⁷ Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports submitted by Ghana under article 44 of the Convention, due in 2020, para. 138.

Limited capacity and uneven deployment of teachers and support staff

The quality of every education system is determined by the quality of teachers. The capacities of teachers and support staff play a critical role in the provision of safe, conducive and quality education. Over the years, there have not been structured mechanisms to improve the capacities of teachers and caregivers, and the recruitment of support staff. Although the state report is silent about the capacity of teachers and support staff and their deployment, many kindergartens lack qualified/professional teachers. The few professional teachers are in urban settings while many rural KGs (especially in the Northern regions) lack qualified/professional KG teachers. Building of the capacities of teachers is mostly done through NGOs interventions. There is also no comprehensive plan to train pre-service teachers as they join the service. The same challenges persist in the few crèches and nurseries documented.

The State report also overlooks the administrative support needed for ECCE care workers, including adequate training, fair compensation, and professional development, which are essential for delivering high-quality care and education. The neglect of the administrative support for care workers undermines the overall quality and effectiveness of ECCE services.

Lack of effective implementation of the Inclusive Education Policy

The State has made some considerable progress in the adoption of the Inclusive Education policy in 2015¹⁸. However, effective implementation remains a major challenge due to inadequate funding and lack of political will. The Ghana News Agency report states that the Government of Ghana allocated only 0.02% of the education budget for the implementation of inclusive education in 2023.¹⁹ This was highlighted during the International Day of Education, underscoring the need for increased funding to support learners with special educational needs. There is little attention to inclusive practices at the ECCE level. As a result, many teachers do not have the knowledge and skills to identify special needs, including disabilities and provide learners with individualized learning and caregiving support. There is also a lack of regular screening and assessment, as well as inadequate teaching and learning resources to enhance learning and caregiving for learners with special needs.

CONCLUSIONS

Considering Ghana's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child to ensure the protection of the rights of children (0-8), especially the right to education which is directed to the full development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities (Articles 28 and 29), as well as the obligation to ensure the development of the child to the maximum extent possible (Article 6 (2)), and the duty to ensure Convention rights to each child without discrimination of any kind (Article 2), it is critical that the state takes urgent steps to address gaps in coordination and oversight of ECCE services, resource constraints in child protection agencies, inefficiencies in the management of ECCE programs, disparities in service delivery, regulation of private ECCE providers and the insufficient

¹⁸ <https://sapghana.com/data/documents/Inclusive-Education-Policy-official-document.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://gna.org.gh/2023/01/education-day-gnecc-calls-for-inclusive-education/>

administrative support for ECCE care workers. This will facilitate Ghana's compliance with its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child to respect, protect and promote the rights of children (0-8) in Ghana and ultimately contribute to the holistic development of all children.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings outlined in this report, the following recommendations are proposed:

Monitoring and Oversight

1. Strengthen administrative oversight and enhance the management capabilities of those overseeing ECCE programs for children aged 0-8. In addition, standardize management practices across all regions for children aged 0-8 to ensure uniformity in program quality and delivery.
2. Enhance monitoring and enforcement mechanisms of the existing regulatory frameworks to ensure compliance with national standards by both public and private ECCE providers. In analyzing ECCE data, it will be useful to segregate it (i.e. socio-economic backgrounds, rural/urban, formal/informal sectors, children with disabilities and other marginalized groups) in order to implement targeted strategies to reduce disparities in ECCE service delivery. In addition, develop and enforce stricter compliance guidelines for ECCE standards across all demographics.

Capacity Building and Fair Treatment of ECCE Workers

3. Formalize engagement of care workers in public and private ECCE facilities and define qualification, training, certification, compensation, continuous professional development and other support mechanisms.
4. Provide tailored support to teachers and care workers in underserved regions through the provision of developmentally appropriate teaching and learning resources, accommodation, training, and school supplies for learners. Empowered teachers will be better able to meet ECCE Standards, implementation, and follow-ups ensuring equitable care for all children.

Adequate Infrastructure and Resources

5. Adequate funding and resources, including teaching aids and assessment tools, should be provided to all ECCE learning spaces. Special attention should be given to underprivileged schools to ensure they have the means to track children's progress effectively.
6. The commitment by the State to address the infrastructural gaps must be backed with a clear roadmap, dedicated source of funding and a well-defined timeline for the construction of ECCE facilities. The State must show a dedicated and fenced funding source for ECCE infrastructure. The government needs to have a robust database on ECCE infrastructure for consistent reporting and effective tracking of infrastructural provision for public schools.

7. The State should support ECCE institutions (especially those in deprived regions) with age appropriate furniture and teaching and learning materials. Provision of basic WASH facilities must be prioritized (water and toilet facilities) especially in rural schools.

Regulation of Private ECCE Providers

8. The State needs to regulate and monitor the establishment and running of private crèches, nurseries and KGs with clear guidelines for ensuring quality, access, and equity.

Ensuring Inclusivity in ECCE

9. Teachers/caregivers must be provided with pre and in-service training on inclusive practices, such as the identification of special needs, and the application of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and differentiated learning. Parents and caregivers must also be sensitized on inclusive education and disability to enable them to support and advocate for the educational rights of their children.

10. Regular screening and assessment should be conducted for learners to ensure early identification of special needs and early interventions.

11. The government must increase funding for the implementation of inclusive education to ensure that schools are safe and accessible.

APPENDIX

Methodology

This shadow report employed a combination of data collection methods, drawing on both primary and secondary sources. The data gathering process involved:

1. **Desk Review:** A comprehensive review of national policies, Ghana's reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the UN's CRC Concluding Observations, and relevant international conventions was undertaken. The legal frameworks and state reports were critically analyzed to identify gaps and discrepancies in child protection and ECCE services.
2. **Interviews and Focus Group Discussions:** Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with key stakeholders, including practitioners from civil society organizations, academia, national non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and ECCE professionals. These discussions aimed to gather qualitative insights on the practical challenges in delivering ECCE and child protection services.
3. **Observation:** The team employed observational methods to assess on-the-ground realities in ECCE centers, particularly in underserved regions. This approach provided a real-time perspective on the conditions, challenges, and practices in early childhood care and education.
4. **Data Validation:** To ensure the accuracy of findings, data were validated through cross-referencing with official reports and insights from various ECCE stakeholders. Secondary data sources included national statistics and reports from the Ghana Education Service and other relevant agencies.
5. **Limitations:** The limitations faced included the lack of real-time data on child protection and ECCE (for children 0-3 years) issues, which impacted the scope of data gathering. Despite these, the report provides a robust evaluation of the current state of ECCE and child protection services in Ghana.

List of Institutions and Stakeholders Consulted

1. Department of Social Welfare (DSW)
2. Births and Deaths Registry official (I.T Department)
3. National Schools Inspectorate Authority (NaSIA)
4. National Teaching Council (NTC)
5. UNICEF Ghana
6. Ghana Education Service
7. North East Regional Education Office
8. Various local ECCE centers and schools

References

1. Ghana's Combined Sixth and Seventh Periodic Reports to the CRC:
 - o Source: State report submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, detailing ECCE oversight, monitoring, and existing policies.
2. UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Concluding Observations:
 - o Recommendations on enhancing ECCE oversight, availability, access, quality, and regulatory frameworks.
3. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child:
 - o Legal frameworks mandating state action for child rights and well-being.
4. UNICEF Ghana Reports:
 - o Data on primary school non-enrollment and pre-school access in rural and northern regions.
5. Ghana Statistical Service, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2017:
 - o Statistics on children's foundational numeracy and literacy skills.
 - o Citation: Ghana Statistical Service (2017).
6. World Bank and UNESCO Reports:
 - o Insights on global educational challenges and learning crises.
7. Ministry of Education Sector Strategic Plans:
 - o 1.4 Basic Education (page 21, paragraph 2)
8. Interviews and Observations from Local ECCE Stakeholders:
 - o Qualitative insights from on-the-ground practitioners and experts.