

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

### KIX EMAP Webinar 26: Advancing ECCE in Asia and the Pacific – A Call to Action

---

#### **Barriers to access ECCE**

**The climate crisis has been identified as an important challenge for ECCE. Are there any examples cited in the global report by UNESCO of successfully addressing this challenge?**

***Catherine Wilczek (UNESCO Bangkok):***

The global report highlighted examples demonstrating how building strong, equitable, and community-based ECCE systems is a fundamental strategy for enhancing overall resilience. Programs like One Village One Preschool (China) show that securing a child's right to a strong foundation, especially in vulnerable and often climate-affected communities, is itself a powerful adaptive measure.

While the regional factsheet does not provide a specific example, it does highlight a case study from the region that addresses access challenges in remote areas, which are often also highly vulnerable to climate impacts. In Uzbekistan, mobile kindergartens serve children living in remote rural areas with no access to preschool education facilities. This model is a form of climate-resilient and adaptive infrastructure that can help ensure educational continuity when fixed centres are inaccessible due to terrain or climate disruptions. The factsheet calls for more such "context-responsive ECCE interventions" to promote equity and inclusion.

**Do you think the rural parents who are daily wagers or farmers are able to give proper value for a child in the early ages, especially in health and education? Are they aware of the need for an early quality education? Do you think the terrain allows them to send their small child to a distant centre which is many times inactive?**

***Prak Kosal (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, Cambodia):***

Parents in rural areas who are farmers: Through cooperation between MoEYS and NGOs in developing parent education programs, we are actively working to educate them, well-performed and improving awareness of the importance of early childhood education and child health.

Parents in rural areas have shifted from traditional mindsets, which often assumed that young children should stay at home under the care of grandparents. Now, they understand the value of early childhood education and their children's health, and are seeking to enrol their children in nearby public preschools and community preschools.

Parents are spending time bringing their young children to preschool before they leave for their work and other daily activities. As rural parents gain more awareness of the importance of early childhood education, the need for preschools or preschool classes or childcare centres and preschool teachers and caregivers has also increased.

## **Implementation of ECCE**

**Even with limited access to preschool, how can we make sure pre-primary teachers' attitudes towards engaging children are positive? Are we making sure the language and culture of the child are included? Or still following an unknown language, which alienates the child from education?**

***Catherine Wilczek (UNESCO Bangkok):***

Ensuring positive teacher attitudes and inclusive learning environments is a cornerstone of quality ECCE, even with access challenges. Investing in the ECCE workforce is critical. This involves enhancing teachers' skills through comprehensive training that focuses on inclusive practices and innovative teaching methods. A key recommendation is to develop tailored programmes that emphasise multilingual education and incorporate the child's cultural background. This approach is essential to make learning relevant and supportive, preventing alienation and ensuring every child can thrive in an educational setting.

**Teacher mentoring in ECCE is very important. Can you share examples of how this is being done successfully in any country/region?**

***Prak Kosal (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, Cambodia):***

The ECE Department of MoEYS will support technical in-service training to two preschool teachers, one technical group leader, and one vice principal selected from public preschools, as well as Provincial Office of Education (POE) and District Office of Education (DOE) officials who are responsible for early childhood education (ECE) at the local level. The training will cover two main areas, including the implementation of the ECE curriculum and the parental education programme.

ECE Department of MoEYS will support a mentoring and coaching program between well-performing preschools and neighbouring preschools. Preschool teachers in target schools will receive on-site mentoring and coaching from teachers of well-performing preschools. Once the mentoring and coaching has taken place in one school, other schools nearby can also participate. In addition, technical support from the national level as well as provincial and district levels will be provided. The

ECE Department, together with POE and DOE officials, will provide on-site support to each target preschool at least once a year.

The parental education, trained preschool teachers will arrange sessions for parents and caregivers with the community once a month. The module to be covered in each session will be jointly determined by the preschool teachers and the communities before arranging the next session.

**Do we consider parents and caregivers as major stakeholders and thereby educate them?**

***Catherine Wilczek (UNESCO Bangkok):***

Parents and caregivers are recognised as major stakeholders in ECCE. The factsheet also underscores that parental involvement and support are significant factors in shaping children's learning and developmental outcomes, alongside formal early childhood education. This principle is reflected in various programmes across the region. For instance, initiatives like those in the Maldives to improve literacy and the Philippines' system for early identification of developmental delays are designed to actively involve and educate parents. A multisectoral approach to ECCE inherently positions parents and caregivers as central partners in delivering holistic early childhood services.

**In Uzbekistan, are there any challenges in resourcing ECE centres/learning groups with quality learning materials? For example, engaging and relevant children's books designed for ECE (e.g., appropriate languages, stories meant to capture the imagination during read-aloud).**

***Lola Berdieva (Ministry of Preschool and School Education, Uzbekistan):***

There are no shortages or difficulties in this regard. Every year, based on the demand formed by the Ministry of Preschool and School Education, state preschool education institutions are supplied with educational-methodological materials, didactic resources, toys, and children's literature within the funds allocated from the state budget.

In particular, 17 types of toys were supplied in the 2021–2022 academic year, 22 types in 2022–2023, 32 types of games and toys and 36 types of developmental didactic materials in 2023–2024, 49 types of modern educational-methodological packages and didactic materials in 2024–2025, and 41 types in the 2025–2026 academic year.

In addition, in cooperation with Singapore's Marshall Cavendish Education, the mathematics learning package "Fun Mathematics" aimed at children's development was localised and published. A total of 713,224 copies were published for older-group children, 12,622 copies for teachers, 903,292 copies for preparatory-group children, and 16,654 copies for preparatory-group teachers, and all were delivered to preschool organisations for use.

**Could you please provide more details about the activities of family daycare centres in Uzbekistan, particularly about their specific features?**

***Lola Berdieva (Ministry of Preschool and School Education, Uzbekistan):***

Family non-state preschool education centres are established at the address indicated in the registration certificate of the individual entrepreneur who founded the centre. These centres must provide the necessary conditions to ensure children's healthy development and upbringing, and they must operate in premises that meet fire safety requirements as well as sanitary and hygiene standards.

In addition, based on data regarding the number of children aged 3–7 in the area, the existing state and non-state preschool institutions, and the overall preschool enrolment level, a conclusion is made—taking into account the amount of funds allocated for subsidies in the State Budget for the relevant fiscal year—as to whether it is advisable or not to establish a family preschool centre. This conclusion is entered into the information system. Once a positive conclusion regarding the establishment of a family preschool centre is recorded in the NMTTBAT system, a public-private partnership agreement is automatically generated and electronically sent to the private partner for signing.

Family non-state preschool centres may operate with one group (up to 25 children) or two groups (up to 50 children). Employees working in family preschool centres are provided with salaries equivalent to those established for state preschool institutions with a 9-hour workday.

The state budget also covers the expenses for children's meals, soft equipment (mattresses, pillows, blankets, sheets, duvet covers, pillowcases, and other bedding), and necessary medicines. Full details can be found through the legal source available at [lex.uz/docs/6141472](http://lex.uz/docs/6141472).

**If ECE is not compulsory in Sri Lanka, then what are the expectations of the admission test for schools? What basic knowledge and skills does the school assess?**

***Udara Dikkumbura (Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka):***

In Sri Lanka, admission to Grade 1 in government schools is not contingent upon a competitive assessment or an admission test for the child. The selection process for Grade 1 placement is administrative rather than academic. It involves an interview or verification meeting with parents or guardians to review the necessary documentation, which typically includes the child's birth certificate, address, distance and other relevant qualifications to confirm eligibility.

**Financing of ECCE**

**The fiscal space may have impacted public investment in ECCE. Should we focus more on how to improve the fiscal space by addressing the debt burden, the illicit**

**financial flow, etc., rather than go for some abstract innovative financing approaches?**

***Catherine Wilczek (UNESCO Bangkok):***

Addressing broader fiscal space issues like debt burden is a fundamental part of creating a sustainable financing environment for all public services, including ECCE. The factsheet suggests that innovative financing mechanisms are a complementary strategy, not a replacement, for core government budgeting. The goal is to "improve resource mobilisation and ensure that financial resources are used efficiently and equitably." A comprehensive approach likely requires both: advocating for macro-level fiscal reforms to free up public resources and ensuring those resources are spent effectively through smart, innovative approaches within the ECCE sector.

**Poverty is one of the main barriers to ECCE in the South Pacific countries. The government budgets are too limited, which makes governments concentrate on priority areas. What are your thoughts?**

***Catherine Wilczek (UNESCO Bangkok):***

Poverty and limited budgets are key barriers. However, it makes a powerful case for why ECCE is a priority area for investment. Evidence shows that children who attend ECCE are less likely to repeat grades, with repetition rates 15% higher among those who did not attend preschool. This improves system efficiency and saves costs long-term. For governments with limited budgets, a recommendation of the factsheet is strategic focus on equity and reaching the most vulnerable. This includes targeting investments to expand public services in underserved areas and exploring partnerships to maximise the impact. The commitment to at least one year of free pre-primary, as endorsed in the Tashkent Declaration, is specifically designed to overcome the barrier of poverty.

**Please cite a country in the Asia Pacific region that is currently committed to investing 10% of the education budget in pre-primary education. What strategy made this possible?**

***Catherine Wilczek (UNESCO Bangkok):***

Kazakhstan (11.8%), Kyrgyzstan (13.2%), Maldives (12.1%), Mongolia (26.3%), and Uzbekistan (25.6%) currently meet the 10% benchmark (2023 or latest year available; Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics, Data Browser, available at <https://databrowser.uis.unesco.org>). While specific strategies each country uses are not available, their achievement demonstrates that this commitment is possible. It often requires high-level political commitment, integrated into national education sector plans and aligned with the goals of the Tashkent Declaration, to prioritise pre-primary financing even in the face of other competing demands.

***Lola Berdieva (Ministry of Preschool and School Education, Uzbekistan):***

A legal foundation was created for the development of the pre-primary education sector through the adoption of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Preschool Education and Upbringing” as well as several related regulatory documents.

Today, the pre-primary education sector—like other key sectors—has been elevated to the level of state policy. The main goals include shaping a well-rounded generation, preparing future specialists from preschool age who will contribute to the country’s development, and promoting public-private partnerships, attracting international donors, implementing regulatory reforms, modernising infrastructure, and developing the professional capacity of educators. Uzbekistan’s President Shavkat Mirziyoyev pays great attention to the education sector, including preschool education. He frequently emphasises that “The investment we make in our youth today is an investment in the future New Uzbekistan.”

## **Advocacy efforts**

### **What practical steps can be taken to pressure governments to fulfil their commitments to education?**

***Catherine Wilczek (UNESCO Bangkok):***

Practical steps can include:

- **Using Data:** The factsheet itself is a tool. Advocates can use the specific country progress data (e.g., 56% of countries making slow/no progress) and investment figures to hold governments accountable.
- **Promoting Benchmarks:** Advocate for the adoption of the concrete benchmarks from the Tashkent Declaration, such as at least one year of free and compulsory pre-primary and allocating 10% of the education budget to pre-primary.
- **Bridging the Data Gap:** Advocate for better data collection. Reliable data is essential for tracking progress and making a compelling case for investment.
- **Building Coalitions:** Work with relevant national and regional stakeholder networks to present a unified voice on the importance of ECCE for lifelong success and development.

### **In countries like Afghanistan, where many families live in poverty and struggle to meet their daily needs, how can we encourage and advocate for parents to send their children to preschool, especially when they may not be able to afford any fees?**

***Joy Nafungo (International Development Research Centre):***

KIX evidence shows that even in very low-income contexts, parents are more willing to send their children to preschool when services are close to home, low-cost or free, and supported by the community.

Across several KIX projects, demand for ECCE increased when programmes used local volunteers, simple play-based materials, and community-led mobilisation, reducing both cost and distance for families. The evidence also shows that when parents see small but visible improvements in their children's confidence, social skills, and readiness for Grade 1, they become strong advocates for participation, even when household resources are limited.

### **Existing data and evidence**

**Many children in remote areas do home schooling; unfortunately, the data is not captured in the formal system. Reliable and validated data will always be a challenge. What do you think?**

***Catherine Wilczek (UNESCO Bangkok):***

The challenge of capturing data from children in remote and home-based settings is a recognised barrier. Currently, 8% of countries in the region lack reliable ECCE data, which hinders tracking progress and designing effective policies.

Addressing this requires a concerted effort of countries to build robust data collection systems that can accurately monitor access and quality. Strengthening methods like household surveys is essential to make all children visible and ensure resources are allocated effectively.