EARLY LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

How to promote early childhood development through skills training and employment programs

This note provides guidance on the integration of Early Childhood Development (ECD) into skills training and employment programs. We present general information on ECD and skills development programs, guidance for program design and implementation, and examples from Liberia, Rwanda, South Africa, Kenya, Pakistan, and India.

Rationale

ECD and skills development are both areas of increasing priority for countries around the world seeking to boost economic growth and stability. There is considerable demand for technical and financial support to expand and improve the quality of programs in these two areas, and both are central to achieving the World Bank's twin goals of boosting shared prosperity and ending poverty. The option of integrating ECD training into existing skills training and employment programs is an outstanding opportunity to maximize returns and address multiple critical country needs with one investment.

BOX 1 **Key concepts**

What is skills development? It's the process of developing cognitive, socio-emotional and technical skills so that individuals are prepared to succeed in high quality jobs. Skills training and employment programs can increase employment, improve workplace productivity, raise incomes and promote social mobility.

What is Early Childhood Development (ECD)? Between birth and entry to primary school, children's brains develop faster and are more malleable than at any other time in life. During this time it is critical that children receive nurturing care and stimulation, protection from stress, adequate healthcare and nutrition, and opportunities to play and learn. By the time they enter primary school, children should be healthy and well-nourished, securely attached to caregivers, able to interact positively with families, teachers, and peers, able to communicate in their native language, and ready to learn throughout primary school (Naudeau et al., 2011). There are a range of different service delivery channels to promote ECD that require a skilled workforce, including: preschools, childcare, home visits, parental education, health centers and various types of community-based programs.
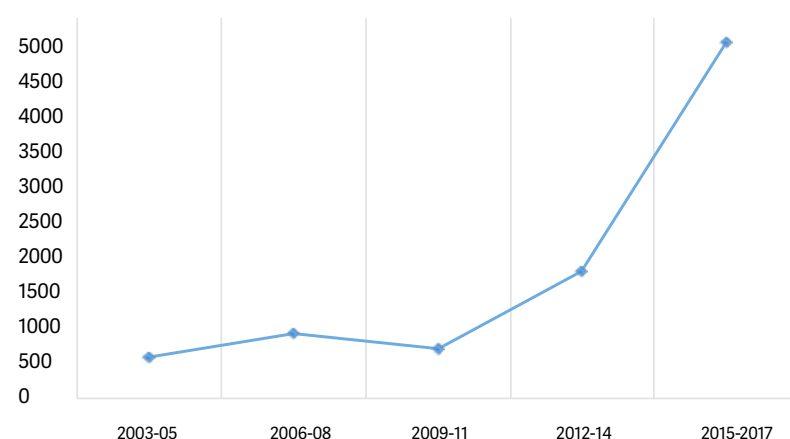
Increasing demand for ECD services and quality practitioners

Between 2003 and 2011, World Bank investments into ECD totaled just below $2 billion and were mostly flat. Since 2012, investments into ECD have significantly increased, with a large and rapid increase between 2015 and 2017 ($4.5 billion in three years). This rising demand has been driven by growing evidence of the diverse returns that arise from improved ECD, not only for individual children but for their families, their countries' overall workforce capacity, and economic development. Access to affordable childcare addresses a critical need for families with working parents. The limited availability of affordable childcare in many countries means parents (mostly women) are often forced to choose between leaving their children with poor or no care, working reduced hours, or forgoing work altogether (IFC 2017).
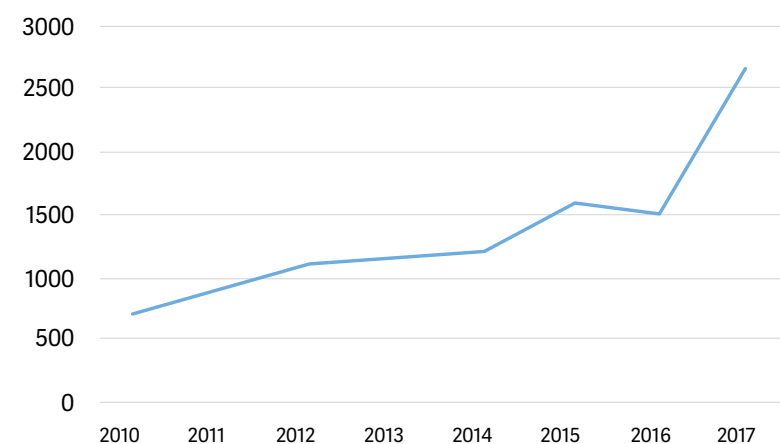

FIGURE 1 World Bank finance for ECD ($US millions)

Increasing demand for market-relevant skills and employment programs

Trends such as rapid urbanization, the youth bulge, and increasingly educated youth looking for opportunities that match their skills and expectations have all exacerbated the employment challenge in many countries. The rising demand for World Bank supported skills development projects reflects these trends. The World Bank skills portfolio currently includes 105 projects (92 active and 13 in the pipeline), with an average size of $117 million (2017 Skills Portfolio Review).

FIGURE 2 World Bank finance for skills development (US$ millions)

Tackling multiple challenges with quality investments

By combining ECD and skills development programs, countries can help address shortages of qualified ECD practitioners while providing employment opportunities. Investments in early childhood will yield high returns only if they are of good quality. One of the most important elements of quality is a capable, caring, and qualified workforce. Many countries, however, face a severe shortage of trained ECD caregivers, teachers, and center operators. The average ratio of students to trained preschool teachers is 40:1 in South Asia and 79:1 in Africa, far higher than the suggested international best practice of 15:1. According to data from 20 low- to middle-income countries, fewer than half of preschool teachers meet their own countries' national quality standards (Sun, Rao, and Pearson 2015).

Building job-relevant skills is essential for successful workforce development programs. Given many countries have a strong and growing demand for ECD practitioners, this may be a highly relevant option for a skills track. Integrating ECD into skills programs can address a common concern that training tracks may be too rigid or have too little market demand, or both. In addition, the broader curriculum often offered by skills development programs (including life skills, business skills, and work readiness skills) is useful for ECD practitioners. For example, socio-emotional skills can promote improved interactions with young children and executive functioning skills help with planning, classroom management and reflective practice. (Ponguta et al, 2018). Box 2 summarizes the potential returns from integrating ECD into skills programs.

BOX 2 Potential returns from integrated ECD skills investment

POTENTIAL RETURNS	EXPLANATION AND CONSIDERATIONS
Expanded access to affordable early learning, including through small business owners	The availability of trained practitioners should help existing service providers (government and non-state actors) to expand provision as well as create potential opportunities for the training graduates to establish their own centers. Supporting non-state actors to expand low-cost quality provision is particularly important given that many governments lack the resources to meet the increasing demand for ECD. The nonstate sector has already been playing an important role in the expansion of access to early learning. Studies from four cities in Africa show that parents living on less than US$3 a day are willing to pay for preschool services if they perceive the services to be of high quality, and small business owners can meet this demand through low-cost preschool services (Optimus Impact 2013).
Improved quality of ECD provision leading to better child-development outcomes	This is the likely impact of good quality ECD practitioners who can provide an effective learning environment, encourage positive interactions and use age-appropriate pedagogical practices across a range of domains.
Increased employment and income opportunities	ECD practitioners is an area of growing market demand. Many governments have committed to expand pre-primary education, and increasingly recognize the value of trained ECD practitioners, which creates meaningful employment and career opportunities in ECD work. Information on diagnosing market demand is on page 5.
Increased self-esteem and empowerment	The self-esteem of trainees can be further enhanced by providing training on a range of work-readiness and life skills, including social-emotional skills

Three ways to promote and integrate child development through skills training and employment programs

Skills programs can be used to promote child development in at least three ways, including:
1. Offering ECD practitioner qualifications as a training track within a skills program (e.g., to qualify ECD caregivers for daycare centers or to train preschool teachers)
2. Establishing a program to support entrepreneurs to run ECD centers
3. Establishing on-site quality childcare provision for trainees attending skills programs

Country snapshots: Six programs that integrate ECD and skills training

Throughout this guidance note we will refer to six examples of programs that use one or more of these three approaches. Most of these programs have a double objective: tackling unemployment as well as improving access to quality ECD services. We provide brief descriptions below and further details on pages 11-13.

EXAMPLE PROGRAMS	1) Offer ECD practitioner qualifications as a training track within a skills program	2) Establish a program to support entrepreneurs to run ECD centers	3) Establish on-site quality childcare provision for trainees attending skills programs
Liberia - EPAG	✓	✓	✓
Rwanda - Caregiver	✓		
South Africa – SmartStart		✓	
Kenya – Kidogo Mamapreneurs		✓	
Pakistan - LEAPS program		✓	
India - Sudiksha		✓	

Liberia - EPAG

In Liberia's Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young Women (EPAG) program, two ECD training tracks were developed and incorporated into an established skills program targeting unemployed adolescent girls. A pilot was conducted in 2016–17, and a second round was conducted in 2017–18 with several improvements, including stronger alignment with the Ministry of Education. An additional package is being developed to support graduates in establishing their own centers.

Rwanda - Caregiver

This pilot project placed unemployed young women in a training program to create caregivers, with a training curriculum strongly focused on both ECD and broader work readiness skills. It is now being scaled up, in alignment with the government's professional education and training institutions and with a focus on strengthening the enabling environment (including accreditation and quality assurance of the training service providers).

South Africa - SmartStart

The SmartStart program helps unemployed men and women set up their own preschool centers / play groups. It operates as a two-part social franchise: (i) a network of SmartStart NGO franchises; and (ii) individual SmartStart centers. More than 1,000 centers have been established since 2015. The program is focusing on further scale-up and refining the model, considering aspects such as quality assurance for NGO franchisers, the role of the center, and the costs of ongoing monitoring and support.

Kenya - Kidogo Mamapreneurs

Kidogo aims to improve the quality of childcare across informal settlements in Kenya through a hub-and-spoke social franchise model that provides training, resources, and ongoing mentorship to support women to start or grow their own quality childcare centers. Going forward, areas of focus will include refining the franchise model and lowering costs for monitoring and quality assurance.

Pakistan – LEAPS

A pilot study trained and supported 10 female adolescents to establish community youth-led preschools in Sindh, Pakistan. The youth received training, mentorship and a stipend. A RCT was set up to determine the effectiveness on children's school readiness, on female youth development and the challenges and enablers to ECD youth-led programs.

India - Sudiksha Preschool

Sudiksha recruits, trains, and supports local women to run preschools in Hyderabad and Kolkata through two models: (i) women are recruited to serve as an "incharge" (center manager), with investment from Sudiksha, in a profit-sharing model; (ii) women can apply to set up their own centers as Sudiksha franchises.

Seven steps to consider when integrating ECD and skills programs

The following seven steps should be considered when designing and implementing an ECD skills program:

1. Diagnose the existing market demand for ECD services.
2. Align with government to ensure that there is recognition or certification for ECD workers; this will maximize graduates' employment potential.
3. Design the curriculum to include both ECD content knowledge and broader workplace competencies.
4. Include a well-structured and relevant internship.
5. Identify and mitigate any challenges trainees are likely to face while completing the program.
6. Support program graduates in finding employment; this could include entrepreneurial opportunities.
7. Build mechanisms to scale and sustain the program.

More detail on each of these steps is provided below.

1. Diagnose existing market demand for ECD

Before other steps are taken, carry out a feasibility study to assess both the demand from potential trainees and the market demand from future employers. This analysis should inform the design of your program, including the training tracks to be offered, the program's content and duration, and the target profile of trainees. Ideally, the analysis should be carried out at the regional rather than the national level, to take into account regional variation.

When conducting a feasibility study of this kind, two basic sources of information will prove especially useful:

- Existing administrative data: Relevant administrative data should be available either from the country's Education Management Information System (EMIS) or from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). The SABER-ECD policy instrument also has some helpful items which can be used.
- New survey data: By constructing an original sampling of current ECD providers and potential trainees, your effort can yield a customized, regional analysis of the market. Such a survey (or surveys) could include classroom observations, interviews, or focus group discussions with school managers, parents, ECD providers, and potential trainees.

See Box 3 for detailed suggestion on the types of information worth collecting in an original survey.

2. Align with government to ensure recognition/certification

Involving the right government counterparts early in the design of the program is essential. Several government agencies may need to be involved to reflect the various program objectives and components. For example, the ministries of Education, Labor, Social Protection, or Gender may all be key counterparts, and within ministries different departments working on quality, human resources, or other areas may all have a role to play. Teams should ensure that the resulting qualification(s) are officially recognized and integrated into the system. In some countries, professional development frameworks and system requirements may not yet exist; in such cases, the program should explicitly discuss each of these areas with the government, and even use the program as an opportunity to develop formalized requirements.

BOX 3 **Types of information worth collecting in a market-diagnostic survey**

KEY CONSIDERATIONS	POTENTIAL DATA TO COLLECT
Market demand for ECD	• Current enrollment rate and enrollment trends over last 10 years • Number of children not enrolled in early learning • Teacher: student ratios at existing centers • Percent of service provision that is public vs. private • Length of waiting lists for existing centers
Market demand for trained ECD practitioners (disaggregate by practitioner type)	• Profile of current training programs (type of providers / qualifications) • Percent of trained teachers both within the system and at the center level • Teacher vacancies and ease with which they are filled • Profile of teachers desired by current ECD centers • Quality of existing teaching and classroom environments • Policy environment (recent policies may stimulate additional demand)
Level of interest among candidates for ECD training (disaggregate by practitioner type)	• Profiles of interested trainees (including academic qualifications, current employment status, expected remuneration, time available for training, barriers to enrollment or completion of training) • Feedback from candidates on attractive elements of the profession and less attractive elements of the profession
Business case for ECD providers and trainees	• For trainees: What is the average monthly wage of ECD practitioners, and how many years does it take them to repay the cost of training? • For ECD providers: What are the associated costs and benefits of qualified practitioners? (E.g. increased enrolment due attractiveness to parents? potential to expand provision?) • For potential entrepreneurs: What is the business model?

Teams should identify the government requirements, particularly across the following four areas (for both public and private provision), and use this information to guide program design:

1. *Different types of qualifications and the requirements for the respective training programs:* This includes understanding the duration, training curriculum, mix of theory and practical components, and assessment structure for different qualifications.

2. *Accreditation requirements for providers of training:* Higher qualifications may have more stringent requirements for service providers of training.

3. *Profile of trainees:* There may be a tension in some training programs if the target beneficiaries have lower levels of academic achievement than government requirements for ECD practitioners. If so, there may still be scope to adjust the hiring processes and requirements. Otherwise, options could include aligning with (or creating) a lower level of qualification (such as caregiver qualification, rather than a teacher), or creating multiple training tracks to include lower levels of qualification, allowing the program to partially target some of the most vulnerable.

4. *Requirements for establishing ECD centers.* If establishing centers is a potential objective of the program, it will be necessary to identify whether the government has specific requirements for them, including a certain level of teacher qualification or academic achievement.

See Box 4 for a case study of an ECD skills program in India that illustrates steps 1 and 2.

3. Design the training curriculum to include both ECD and broader competencies

ECD content should align with existing government learning standards and certification levels, as well as core principles of quality early learning (e.g., developmentally appropriate, play-based pedagogy). Training should be highly practical and easy to digest, taking into account the level of education the trainees have. It is advisable to build on existing teacher trainings in the country to ensure local relevance and save time and money.

Evidence from evaluated skills programs suggests that successful interventions adopt integrated approaches targeting multiple skills. Employers value a multiplicity of skills beyond education

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BOX 4

India's approach to developing ECD qualifications

India offers an example of meeting demand and developing ECD qualifications through an existing Health Sector Skills Council. The World Bank is exploring work with this Council, which the government has designated to represent ECD, to develop a series of ECD practitioner qualifications, which will be developed within the context of the existing skills qualification frameworks in the country.

The demand to strengthen India's skilled ECD workforce is being driven by two initiatives. First, the Ministry of Labor's Maternity Benefits Amendment Act, launched in 2017, states that "every establishment having 50 or more employees shall have facility of a crèche" within a certain distance. This will create a large and immediate demand for services, including crèche/childcare centers and quality caregivers. The World Bank recently estimated that meeting the childcare demand in India requires 1-1.5 million caregivers, the vast majority of which do not exist. Second, the planned expansion of pre-primary sections in some Indian states, and the convergence of ECD centers (known as Anganwadis) with government schools in others, will create a demand for teachers specializing in early learning and the up-skilling of existing Anganwadi workers.

The following activities will be conducted to develop and implement these qualifications in India, with input from a range of government stakeholders and technical experts:

1. Identify ECD job roles, considering both existing qualifications and needs based on market demand. For example: caregivers (for crèches and daycare centers), Anganwadi workers with early stimulation and early learning competencies (ICDS centers), preschool teachers (pre-primary provision), and entrepreneurs (for ECD centers).
2. Define the National Occupational Standards, which will specify the knowledge and understanding required to carry out a job role.
3. Develop a Qualification Pack, in alignment with the National Skills Qualification Framework, containing the various National Occupational Standards relevant for a particular role (e.g. ECD caregiver). This Qualification Pack will drive the creation of curriculum and assessments.
4. Define regulation frameworks as well as roles and responsibilities.
5. Develop curriculum content for the qualifications and assessments.
6. Train master trainers.

It is hoped that in the following years this will lead to an increased number of good quality ECD practitioners as well as increased coverage of crèches and private childcare centers through an entrepreneur skills track.

World Bank paper forthcoming

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credentials or technical qualifications. Accordingly, trainees should be equipped with a broad set of skills to succeed, potentially including:

• *Business skills,* including financial literacy (this could also focus on setting up ECD centers)
• *Work readiness,* including setting expectations about the workplace and professional behaviors
• *Socio-emotional skills* such as empathy, perseverance, reliability, communication, working in teams, and honesty
• *Effective communication skills* to facilitate communication with parents
• *Executive functioning skills* such as planning, organization and reflective thinking. For young adults in particular, the period of youth is potentially a time of significant growth in executive functioning skills, which can be harnessed by training programs. (Ponguta et al, 2018).

4. Include a well-structured and relevant internship

A relevant and well-structured internship can help build the skills and confidence of the trainees and serve as a potential path to full-time employment. This should strongly be considered, even if it is not a specific requirement for the government qualification. In Liberia's EPAG-ECD

Rwanda example: leveraging the caregiver program curriculum to strengthen multiple other ECD occupations

The strong focus on work readiness distinguished this program from other ECD trainings and increased the attractiveness to, and engagement of, the government, due to the additional employment potential. Following the pilot program, Rwandan government authorities and EDC technical staff identified 19 occupations in alignment the TVET qualification framework where the training curriculum could be used for new occupations or to strengthen training for existing occupation. Examples included:

- Preschool teacher
- Qualified childcare worker
- Childcare center manager
- Nanny or domestic worker
- Counsellors / advisors for a variety of areas (e.g. pre-post-natal, maternity, family planning, etc.)

program, more than 50 percent of graduates working as ECD practitioners are employed at the place of their internship. Key considerations for an internship include:

- *Clarify expectations for the employer and trainee.* That is, clarify the responsibilities, compensation, and monitoring, among other things.
- Ensure trainees are placed in roles which provide opportunities to practice learned skills
- *Select ECD institutions that align with the program objectives.* For example, high-end private preschools may not be the best placement options if the program is designed to train people to work in programs with less resources.
- *Ensure effective monitoring is in place.* This is necessary to address challenges that may arise and to ensure learning is maximized.

5. Identify and mitigate any challenges trainees are likely to face

A number of constraints can limit participation in skills programs, particularly for women, who tend to be the most likely participants in ECD-skills programs. These include financial constraints, negative family attitudes, or the need for childcare for their own children during training hours. These constraints should be explicitly taken into account in the program design and can be mitigated through the following strategies:

- *Childcare provision during training and employment:* Providing affordable childcare for participants in skills training programs can increase trainees' participation rates and productivity, as well as enhance children's development outcomes (Buvinic, Furst-Nichols, and Koolwal 2014). Childcare services could be offered free of charge or as a low-cost fee-for-services model. In Sierra Leone and Tanzania, for example, BRAC responded to demand and added a childcare service for women participating in a mentorship program (Empowerment Livelihood for Adolescents). It runs as a fee-for-service model with low operating costs, as women in the community group take turns volunteering. A recent childcare portfolio review by the World Bank Gender Group has more information on some of the approaches, experiences and lessons learned on how to address childcare in WB Lending Operations.
- *Overcoming financial constraints:* There are several options, including to structure the training to allow trainees to participate in other income-generating activities (e.g. through a part time program) or to provide trainees with stipends. The Liberia EPAG-ECD program, for example, provided a stipend of US$2.00 for each day the trainees attended (this helped yield a 98 percent attendance rate). In addition, the program opened savings accounts for the trainees, with an initial deposit equal to US$20.00 and incentives to encourage savings.

6. Help graduates to find employment

To maximize the graduates' chances of finding employment, training programs should include explicit support to graduates. This could include developing partnerships with employers, identifying a pipeline of employment opportunities, and providing support with resume and interview skills. To facilitate the move into employment, training programs should consider the timing of the academic year and when staffing decisions are made.

An additional employment path could be entrepreneurship, with graduates setting up their own ECD centers. To encourage this, training programs could establish a training track specifically for entrepreneurs, incorporating business skills training, or else support a complementary initiative to support graduates in establishing their own centers. The latter approach is being considered in Liberia, where the World Bank is exploring options for creating a package of support for graduates interested in establishing their own centers, including initial start-up funding, mentoring, additional training, and a set of tools. This work is building on insights gained from existing entrepreneurship programs such as Kidogo in Kenya, SmartStart in South Africa, and Sudiksha in India.

Potential aspects to consider in an entrepreneur support package include:

- Supplementary ECD training (both initial training and ongoing follow-up) focused on improving the quality of the learning environment
- Targeted business skills training (both initially and ongoing) focused on establishing and sustaining centers
- School-based coaching: It is important to find a sustainable model for this; one option might be tapering the level of support based on the quality rating of the ECD center,
- Access to additional in-service training for teaching staff
- ECD technical tools: List of effective and easy-to-sustain teaching and learning materials; curriculum guidance; minimum standards; parental engagement strategies
- Business tools: e.g. Branding materials; financial templates; communication / marketing tools
- Financial support: This could be an initial start-up grant or access to credit through a partnership with a microfinance institution, and
- Establishing peer groups or Communities of Practice.

7. Build mechanisms to scale and sustain the program

To achieve scale and sustainability for ECD skills programs, there is a need to (i) determine institutional responsibility for the program long term, (ii) ensure that there are accredited service providers to deliver the training program, and (iii) put in place quality assurance. This may require the continued involvement of an external service provider to build capacity across the various stakeholders.

BOX 6 Overview of ECD skills programs, by country

		EPAG-ECD PROGRAM LIBERIA	CAREGIVER PROGRAM RWANDA		LEAPS - PAKISTAN	SMARTSMART SOUTH AFRICA	KIDOGO KENYA	SUDIKSHA INDIA
PROJECT OVERVIEW	No. of trainees	60 women in Greater Monrovia in 2016-17, another 60 in 2017-18	~200 women in four areas of Rwanda		10 female youth in Sindh provice, Pakistan	Over 1,000 across 10 regions in South Africa	~50 women currently involved in the program	22 women across preschools branches in Hyderabad and Kolkata
	Tracks	Caregiver or teacher assistant	Caregiver		Community Youth Leaders: Trained and supported to establish community youth led preschools	Preschool / play-groups center owner	ECD center owners - to improve quality and join Kidogo franchise. Adding new centers soon.	Preschool management with profit sharing (10%) Preschool franchise (full ownership)
	Selection criteria	Young unemployed women who can pass a basic literacy and numeracy test Lower secondary school diploma (caregiver) / senior secondary diploma (teacher aide)	Young unemployed women Lower secondary completion		Criteria developed and youth selected in association with community leaders. Evaluated ECE skills, creativity, problem solving, planning and leadership in workshop.	Poorest quintile Unemployed or in very menial work Grade 10 completion or 3 years of working with children Grit and resilience	Poorest quintile Women with existing centers Willingness to change, passion for children and entrepreneurial traits	Poorest quintile Higher secondary completion Love of children Mostly unemployed Spends 2-3 days working in the classroom as part of selection process
CURRICULUM	ECD training	Yes 3 months	Yes 3 months		Yes 6 months	Yes 5 days, then onsite support	Yes 18 days over several months	Yes 10 days per year
	Business skills	Yes ~20 days	No		No	Yes Included in the 5 days	Yes Included in the 18 days	Yes 3 day business training for franchise track
	Work readiness / life skills	Yes ~15 days	Yes 3-4 weeks		No	No	No	No
	Internship	Yes 3 months	Yes 3 months		No	No	No	No
ENABLING ASPECTS	Stipend	Yes During whole program, plus additional savings scheme	Yes Placement only		Yes	No But only 1 week training	No	No
	Childcare	Yes	No		No	No	No	No
POST-TRAINING EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT	Links to employment	Yes Support with finding ECD work	Yes Matched women-employers		Yes Help establish ECE centers	Yes Help establish centers	N/A Already own centers	Yes To manage new centers
	Entrepreneur set-up package	Yes Adding in 2018-19	No		Yes Mentorship, stipend, COP	Yes Onsite monitoring, small initial finance, ongoing training, tools, access to micro-loans	Yes Weekly monitoring, TLMs, center renovation, tools, branding	Yes Partly Cover set up costs in profit sharing track (~$1500) but in the franchise model the set up cost is mostly paid by franchisees
RESULTS	Completion rate	93% completion of pilot program	62% completion of pilot program		90% completion of training and setting up ECE center. (100% in ECD)	70% completion of training and first year running ECD center. (100% in ECD)	100% completion of program to date	100% completion of training and year 1 in profit sharing track. ~70% completion of training and year 1 in franchisee track
	Employment (of which in ECD)	92% (60% in paid ECD work)	40% (88% in ECD)				N/A Already own centers	
	Costs per trainee	US$1,700 Including childcare	US$300 Including US$100 stipend					
MORE INFORMATION		http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/brief/early-learning-partnership	http://idd.edc.org/resources/publications/junior-caregiver-program Innovation for Education / EDC Final Outcome Report, May 2015		Paper forthcoming. Implemented by Harvard School of Public Health, The Aga Khan University, Yale Child Study Center and National Commission for Human Development	http://www.smartstart.org.za/	https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/kidogo-mama-preneurs#/	http://www.sudiksha.in/

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ANNEX 1   More Information on The World Bank EPAG-ECD Training Program In Liberia

Program overview

To increase young women's participation in the workforce, in 2010 the Government of Liberia, with the support of the World Bank, launched the Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young Women program (EPAG). EPAG comprised three-to-six-months of classroom training followed by three-to-six-months of placement and support. In 2015, because access to quality ECD in Liberia was low and only 29 percent of preschool teachers had formal training, the EPAG team identified an opportunity to incorporate ECD practitioner training as a training track. In 2016, with funding from the World Bank's Early Learning Partnership, a pilot was launched to integrate ECD into EPAG. The EPAG-ECD pilot trained 60 young women in Montserrado County as either preschool teacher assistants or as caregivers/nannies.

This pilot was designed to tackle three issues with one investment. It aimed to improve women's employment opportunities, increase self-esteem and empowerment, and increase the workforce to deliver quality childcare and preschool services.

Areas for improvement integrated into a second round of EPAG-ECD in 2017-18

A second round of the training took place in for the academic year 2017–18 for an additional 60 women. As with the first round of the ECD EPAG training, there was a two- to three-month classroom training, followed by a three-month internship (until the end of the school year). A number of improvements were made based on the evaluation learnings:

- *Align the certificate with the Ministry for Education ECD pathways.* The EPAG ECD curriculum will be refined to ensure that it fully aligns with ECD practitioner qualifications and is officially recognized by the Ministry of Education.
- *Add a transition-to-work training module* to improve work-readiness, including professional behaviors
- *Align internship opportunities with ECD provision serving vulnerable children*
- *Further clarify internship expectations* through a detailed MOU with employers and improve monitoring, and
- *Support graduates to find employment opportunities.*

In addition, the ELP team is developing a second phase of the training program to allow graduates to apply for a package of funding and support, which is designed to enable women entrepreneurs to run quality ECD centers in Liberia, serving vulnerable children. This initiative will predominantly target graduates of the EPAG-ECD training program as a further professional development opportunity. The women will receive a package of support, which is likely to include training, coaching and mentorship, a small initial grant as well as access to further funding if required through partnership with a microfinance institution. The ECD centers will have common branding and be required to meet quality standards. The project is drawing inspiration and learnings from several existing initiatives: Kidogo in Kenya; SmartStart in South Africa; and Sudiksha in India.

SELECTION CRITERIA

To the greatest extent possible, the program tried to target vulnerable young women, those who were not employed and had limited schooling (although to satisfy government criteria, the trainees for the teacher aide track needed to have completed high school):

- **Age:** Caregivers: 18–24 years; preschool teacher's aides: 22–24 years
- **NEET**: To the greatest extent possible, those who fall within the "NEET" category: "Not in Education, Employment, or Training"
- A high score on a **recruitment exercise** testing basic literacy and numeracy
- **Literacy and schooling:** Caregivers should have completed lower secondary; teacher's aides needed high school completion as per government requirements

PROGRAM CURRICULUM: FOCUSED ON ECD BUT ALSO BUSINESS SKILLS IN PREPARATION FOR SELF-EMPLOYMENT

ECD	The program consisted of 11 weeks of classroom training, which was developed with input from Master Trainers from the Ministry for Education. The teacher's aide curriculum had a stronger focus on childcare center business management. The caregiver track had a stronger focus on child development and education, with an extended focus on safety, health, diet, first aid, and assisting a teacher with activities.
Business skills	Both ECD tracks received basic training in business skills and preparation for self-employment, with training materials drawn from the broader EPAG program for life and business skills and literacy/numeracy . **ECD Entrepreneurship:** The program ran a business plan competition for opening an ECD center, however, there was limited follow-up to support the graduates to open their own centers. In a study conducted 6 months after the program finished, almost all graduates (92%) expressed an interest in this, but the majority (65%) were not sure how to do it.
Internship	Classroom training was followed by a 3-month internship.

OTHER PROGRAM COMPONENTS TO CREATE AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR THE TRAINEES

Stipend	Trainees received a stipend of US$2.00 for each day that they attended the training session on time, as an instrument to alleviate potential income losses from attending the training, to cover transportation, and to allow for small-scale savings and capital investment. With 53 days of training, participants could earn a maximum of US$106.00 in stipends.
Childcare	All EPAG programs offered on-site childcare.
Savings	The program opened savings accounts for all EPAG ECD trainees, with an initial deposit equal to US$20.00 in each account. To encourage saving, trainees received a savings match (capped at 75% of their savings for that month) for each month that their attendance was over 75 percent. Trainees also received a completion bonus of US$20.00 if they reached over 75 percent for the whole period. Participants could earn a maximum amount of US$79.50 in matching funds; with the initial deposit and completion bonus, the total maximum was US$119.50.

COST

$1,700 per trainee, including childcare services during the training.

RESULTS FOR THE PILOT ROUND

Completion rate	56 out of 60 trainees (93%) originally placed in the program graduated (although the four that dropped out were replaced); 93 percent of training graduates were placed in internships (with 76 percent of these working as teaching assistants).
Training effectiveness	Improvements were noticed in both ECD and business skills knowledge; however, this needs to be tested more rigorously during the second round.
Employment	6 months after the program finished, a follow up study found that 92% of graduates were employed, which included 60% of graduates in paid ECD related employment.
Savings and control over resources	Significant increases were seen in savings (over 400% increase from an average of US$21 to US$107). This was mostly due to grants provided by the program; however, in roughly 50 percent of cases the grants provided had been at least partially depleted, and a few trainees reported no savings at the endline. Trainees also reported increased control over resources (a 35% increase for nonparents, 24% for parents) and an uptake in using banking services.
Self esteem	In focus groups, trainees reported increased self-esteem, emotional empowerment, self-discipline and drive, and optimism about the future.

ANNEX 2: Measuring combined ECD-Skills programs

Measuring combined ECD-skills development programs should reflect the wide range of objectives. The following table provides examples of indicators that may be relevant. These should be tailored according to the specific context and objectives of individual training programs.

CATEGORY	POTENTIAL INDICATORS
ECD indicators	• Good quality learning environment[1] • Positive child development outcomes[2] • Strong understanding of ECD (e.g. through an end of training test) • Increase in ECD enrolment rates (facilitated by increased availability of qualified practitioners, graduates establishing their own centers, etc) • Positive impact on parenting practices (including parents of the children enrolled in ECD services and the parenting practices of the ECD practitioners)
Skills development indicators*	• High rates of training completion • High employment rates, with majority in ECD employment (short term, within a year and longer term) • Increase in income • Good number of beneficiaries engaged in entrepreneurship, especially ECD entrepreneurship (e.g. starting a new ECD center) • Inclusion of beneficiaries from disadvantaged groups
Participant empowerment and wellbeing	• Improvement in confidence • Increase in control over resources (financial services, spending habits, independence) • Reduction in domestic violence
Contributions to enabling environment	• Regulatory changes (e.g. provision of alternative certification, lowering barriers to entry for ECD practitioners and / or providers) • Improved availability of finance • Strengthened capacity of implementing agencies (e.g. improvements to monitoring and quality assurance, improvements to the availability and quality of training institutions)

This list includes the most common indicators measured by skills-development programs across the World Bank portfolio

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[1] The ELP guidance note, *Measuring the quality of early learning programs* provides further information

[2] The ELP guidance note *Measuring child development and early learning* provides further information