



SITUATIONAL LANDSCAPE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT IN CONNECT NETWORK, 2016

ABSTRACT

Early Childhood Development has become a prominent international policy concern. The climate has become more complex, more valuable, and more relevant. Governments, societies, and communities are realizing the importance of investing in children at the earliest stage. Increasingly, ECD practitioners face a daunting yet groundbreaking opportunity to positively impact South African economic growth and social development through early education investments. These opportunities, challenges, and recommendations are the key findings of this report.

FOREWARD



There is substantial evidence that points to the need for providing coordinated, structured, and quality Early Childhood Development (ECD) services. Extensive research demonstrates that children who have access to quality ECD services tend to enroll and perform well in school, are less inclined to quit school or engage in criminal activity, and are unlikely to need remedial assistance. As adults, they are more likely to be socially and economically productive. According to a report by the United Nations, "Early childhood development will not only benefit the children of today, but will have a direct impact on the stability and prosperity of nations in the future," and "consequences of inaction impact not only present but future generations."¹

Affiliates of CN have a deep commitment to a joint vision for families to thrive and for communities to be transformed in South Africa. Our organizations' leaders are fully engaged in their individual endeavours. This situational mapping of ECD focused organizations in the Network is intended to inform affiliates and broader stakeholders on what peers in the Network are doing. By highlighting the collective assets, existing gaps, and current and future trends it informs both affiliates and the donor community of the scope and potential of Connect's ECD crèches. Our goal is that the findings will help affiliates draw on each other's best practices, synergies and efficiencies. This in turn should accelerate the interest of donors to invest in ECD collaborative initiatives to ensure communities are thriving.

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¹"Investing in Early Childhood Development Helps Communities Thrive – UN-backed Report." *UN News Center*. UN, 05 Oct. 2016. Web. 13 Oct. 2016. <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=55212#.V_362ZN96Rt>.

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- The strategic direction of the project was guided by Dee Moskoff, Connect Network Director.
- This 2016 ECD Situational Landscape was developed by a research team comprising of Yolanda Nxesi (project coordinator), Jessica Moskoff (PGCE², University of Cape Town) and Paolo Osato (field researchers), and Emily Essi (report composer, from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, NY, USA).
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Children's Campaign Trust and *Viva* supported Connect Network to build a strategy for Early Childhood Development.
 - All Connect Network Affiliates in greater Cape Town participated in the survey. As a result, it gives an accurate account of the situation of the majority of ECD centres within the Network. Affiliates in Pretoria, North West Province and partner network in Kwa-Zulu Natal and Isivulo in Port Elizabeth were not included in this survey. Our goal is to broaden the participants in the Network for future surveys and provide insights and learnings that are useful regardless of their geographic location.
- Research Funding was provided by *The Barney II Foundation*, a legacy project in memory of Sabra T. Reichardt of New York, USA. Sabra was passionate about investing in girls' education and early childhood development. This report is dedicated to both Bill and Sabra Reichardt for making this initiative possible.

² Postgraduate Certificate in Education

INTRODUCTION

Connect Network

Connect Network (CN) is a collaborative network of 103 organizations located predominantly in the Western Cape, South Africa. Each organisation works individually and collectively with the primary aim of improving the lives of women and children at risk by implementing sustainable solutions.

The overarching goal of the Network is to 'promote the safety and well-being of children' and 'help families thrive' through collaboration and capacity building in at least ten communities by 2019. The strategic framework required to achieve this goal is designed on 4 pillars; Family economic empowerment, Education, Health, and Psychosocial support (figure 1). In order to reach this strategic goal, it is imperative to identify collaboration opportunities around these pillars. This report assesses the extent and the reach of the affiliates' work in ECD and the extent to which the pillars are leveraged.



Figure 1: Strategic Framework

Access to ECD programmes in the Western Cape appears to be linked with family resource levels. There are approximately 532 097 children under the age of five currently living in the Western Cape, and more than 40% of these children do not have access to an ECD facility.³ Figure II represents the percentage breakdown of children's access to ECD centres.

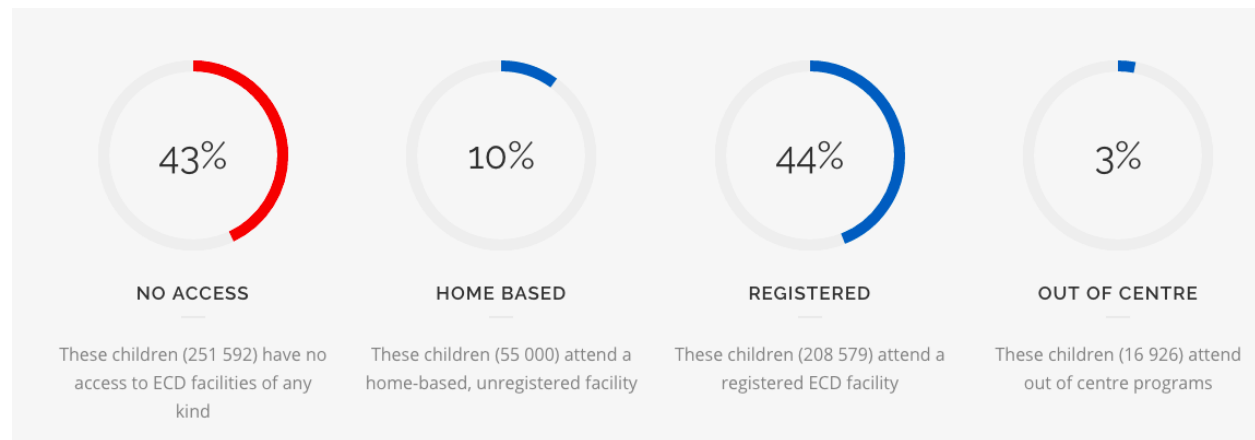


Figure II – percentage of families in the Western Cape with access to ECD services

By leveraging existing programs and organizations, CN aims to alter these numbers by 2019. Nearly one-third of CN affiliated organisations have a focus on Early Childhood Development, providing services to over twenty thousand children between the age of three and six years old across the Western Cape. The range of services offered include:

- Informal playgroups
- ECD classroom curriculum training
- Capacity building for registration with the Department of Social Development (DSD)
- Parenting training
- Child protection training
- Sexual health training for preschool children

³ True North ECD hub, Vrygrond, ***year?

SCOPE

According to the South African Early Childhood Review and International ECD reviews, a critical developmental period in a child's life occurs between birth and 6 years.⁴ During this crucial time, the brain is most able to develop and absorb concepts, skills, and behaviours that contribute to long-term success. In South Africa, researchers agree that investing in ECD must be a national priority to increase learner performance at school and strengthen poverty eradication over the long-term. CN strongly supports investment in ECD for each child to reach their full potential in order to contribute to a healthy and sustainable society.

The approach of this study is focused on the existing ECD strengths *and* challenges facing Network affiliates. It provides a base for a joint ECD strategy where stakeholders and donors can build efficiencies and design quality services for the target population.

The Connect coordination team will make recommendations by taking a summary of all findings into consideration and present them within the strategic framework so as to uphold the vision and mission of CN as set out by its affiliates. Participants of the study will have the opportunity to endorse the recommendations.

METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this study affiliates who focus on ECD were grouped into two categories: 1) Equipping Organisations (EOs), and 2) Crèches.

EOs differ from Crèches in that they typically provide capacity building courses rather than directly administer childcare programmes. EOs provide training and mentoring programmes in order to assist crèches to deliver quality services and adhere to best practices.

There are two types of EOs: hubs and training organisations. Hubs are network affiliates of CN and are their own geographically focused and centralised network of crèches. The individual crèches in the hub network are not CN affiliates. Six CN affiliates are ECD 'hubs' who serve several crèches. On the other hand, training organizations are not geographically bound but focus on specific training topics for crèche practitioners such as child protection, healthy sexuality, parenting, ECD registration, spiritual programmes, HIV training and classroom curriculum. There are on average 50 children per represented crèche. Figure II represents a map of ECD focused affiliates.

⁴Hall, K., Sambu, W., Berry L., Giese, S., Almeleh, C. and Rosa, S. (2016). South African Early Childhood Review 2016. Cape Town: Children's Institute, University of Cape Town and Ilifa Labantwana



Figure II: Area map of all Western Cape ECD organisations in Connect Network

Survey questions were designed to reveal in which areas ECD organisations are struggling or succeeding the most. The questions were based on the benchmark set out by the Department of Social Development (DSD) and tailored specifically for either crèches or EOs.

Using the Network's strategic 'Safe Communities Framework', research topics centered on the four pillars. On-site and telephonic one-on-one interviews with crèche practitioners and organisation leaders were carried out. The research team focused on the issues of funding, curriculum, nutrition, and emotional support. Interviews were captured using SurveyCTO, an online tool that allows survey design, data collection, and information management in one comprehensive platform. The research team collated the data and validated all aspects of the findings.

Survey questions and responses provided the following overview of the ECD landscape in the Network. The existing strengths, as well as the challenges and barriers encountered by ECD practitioners are highlighted to give an accurate picture of the findings. This will inform stakeholders and assist affiliates to incorporate practical lessons in their collaborative initiatives.

STRENGTHS IN THE NETWORK

One of the biggest assets found within the Network is the affiliates' ability to work collaboratively as evidenced in the following Connect Network initiatives:

Quality Improvement System (QIS)

The six-module training areas of Financial Accountability, Governance, People Care, Project Planning and Design, Child Protection, and Child Well Being empower organisations by providing the tools necessary for organisational sustainability. All affiliates of CN are encouraged to do QIS in order to remain viable organizations providing quality services to children.

In both categories of Crèches and Equipping Organizations, several affiliates have either enrolled in or become verified in CN's QIS programme. Information and knowledge received through QIS was transferred from trainers to practitioners. Organizations that stayed committed to QIS have yielded positive results in their work in terms of improved management and accountability.

Sikhula Sonke, an ECD hub in Khayelitsha, recently reached the foundations level in all six programme modules and is a key example of the value the two year programme contributed towards ECD. Executive director Mdebuka Mtwazi describes details such as refined project planning and improved access to funding as a result of the programme.

"What has QIS done for us? Through QIS, we have recently managed to pass the due diligence assessment of our organization's legal, governance and financial compliance. We can now submit our proposals together with the compliance certificate as a strong supporting document, to increase our chances of getting funding. Also, our programs are better planned and have a more attractive layout due to critical feedback from the internal verification process. It has, as well, contributed to the entire human resource department through people care modules, we have managed to put most of our labour related matters together after attending the QIS module. All in all, Sikhula Sonke was encouraged to share and ask for support resources each time they finish a module, which has been very instrumental in the development of the entire organization."

Mdebuka

Mthwazi

Safe Communities Strategy

CN reviews its strategy for achieving its vision every three years so that its objectives remain current, relevant, and contextual. Strategic goals are developed through a consultative process by lead affiliates to ensure widespread ownership across the leadership of the Network.

This research project was designed around a review in order to achieve the objective of promoting safe communities for children and thriving families in ten Western Cape Communities by the end of 2019. Progress of this objective will be measured through carefully designed indicators in the areas of health, education, economic empowerment and psycho-social well-being.

This strategic objective was developed by lead affiliates at the start of 2016, so ECD practitioners had not begun operating under this objective yet. Thus, the research fulfilled a vital role to inform affiliates and allow them to gain a deeper ownership of the Network's aims. However, some

community-driven area-based ECD forums do exist, which provide a space for ECD practitioners to gain insight, information, and resources from their ECD-focused peers. As these forums already exist as important outreach centres within their communities, affiliates have the opportunity to engage to promote child protection as a priority to extend the reach of the Network's vision.

Faith Based approach

Affiliates are Christian value-based organisations and while many are independent, notable support exists through local churches in the form of resources like finances, equipment, mentoring, and volunteer support. This adds significantly to the sustainability component of our network.

Due to this faith-based approach, it was important to assess the extent to which a spiritual environment adds support to involvement with children. Research confirmed that *all* ECD focused affiliates involved in the survey incorporate spiritual values and teachings in their programmes in the form of stories, songs, prayers and bible readings.

In recent years, UNICEF released a statement acknowledging the benefits of spirituality: "The profound influence that spirituality and religion can have on children's development and socialization offers the potential to reinforce protective influences and promote resilience. The beliefs, practices, social networks and resources of religion can strengthen children by instilling hope, by giving meaning to difficult experiences and by providing emotional, physical and spiritual support. When child rights efforts are grounded in the protective aspects of religious beliefs and practices and a community that encourages and enriches the spiritual and religious life of each child, the impact can be far-reaching and sustained."⁵

Strength through Collaboration

Connect Network has successfully championed ECD collaborative initiatives in the past. One example is *Child Protection Empowerment for ECDs*, which was initiated through Connect's national partnership with World Vision South Africa as part of their succession plan for the Western Cape. The collaboration team included affiliates who were ECD-equipping Service Providers: EZRAH, Valcare and Think Twice. The aim of the project was to empower ECD practitioners with the necessary child protection knowledge to be advocates in their communities - Mbekweni and Atlantis. In 2016 a total of 32 ECD delegates from these two areas were trained on child protection and protective behaviour. The delegates represented a total of 19 crèches, reaching 923 children.

ECD delegates reported learning many new ideas, and some called for the project to be extended to other areas. In one example, a particular crèche was dispensing medication to children in their care, but through the training programme they were taught about the dangers associated with medicating children. As a result the crèche revisited their programme so as to follow the correct protocol for dispensing any medication.

⁵ Wessells, Michael and Alison Strang, published UNICEF 2011

This project gave World Vision the chance to 'step back' in the two communities while raising the profile of local NGOs, and it strengthened relationships amongst ECD practitioners by providing a platform for peer accountability at community level. Refer to *Appendix 3* to see the theory of change for this collaboration.

CHALLENGES FACED BY ECD IMPLEMENTERS

By examining the existing situational landscape researchers were able to identify the struggles faced by affiliates in their work with ECD, and reveal gaps in services within the network. Determining the issues in the ECD environment allows stronger and better informed collaborative efforts among the faith-based community. Doing so across the four pillars allows resources to be streamlined efficiently. CN recognizes collaboration as a key factor in effective child protection mechanisms, allowing children to thrive within a wide network of nurture, care, and support.

Economic challenges

With a 26.6% unemployment rate in South Africa, economic empowerment of affiliate organizations is essential for Network growth and future developments.⁶ CN recognizes the importance of entrepreneurship and social enterprise in the context of ECD crèche owners and job creation, but our research revealed a lack of financial resources to be the leading barrier of success.

Funding challenges faced by ECD service providers directly affects the organisations' viability in terms of staff retention, DSD compliance, teaching resources, and ultimately service delivery to the children.



Figure 3 summarises the *income streams* of crèches while Figure 4 summarises the average cost of *running* an ECD centre that is compliant with the DSD as derived from the survey. Donations are the largest income source at 59% (47% local and 12% international), while government subsidies (DSD and Western Cape Education Department) make up the second largest at 35%. Unremarkably, school fees only account for 6% of total income. It is evident that crèches represented by the Network are deeply dependent on donations and government subsidies for their daily operations.

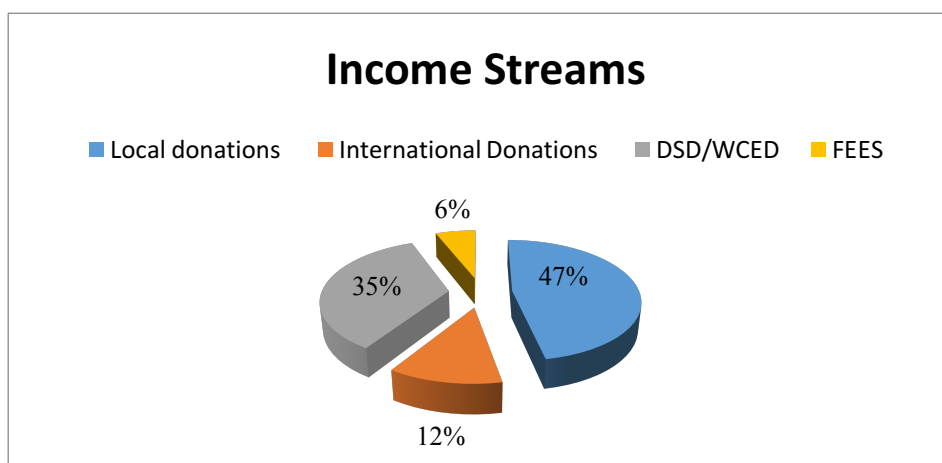


Figure 3: Income splits of crèches

⁶ Kazemi, Mojdeh. "South Africa Unemployment Rate | 2000-2016 | Data | Chart | Calendar." *Trading Economics*. Statistics South Africa, 28 July 2016. Web. 25 Oct. 2016. <<http://www.tradingeconomics.com/south-africa/unemployment-rate>>.

The following issues affecting income streams were prevalent throughout the survey findings:

Issue 1: Our research shows organisations rely heavily on Department of Social Development (DSD) subsidies and local donations. However, many recognized they could benefit from access to training and knowledge sharing regarding funding proposal writing. This expertise would increase donor opportunities and subsequently provide diversified income and improved service.

Issue 2: Figure 5 indicates that salaries make up 45% of crèche monthly expenditure. Salaries of ECD teachers in the network range from R1500 and R7400. According to NGO norms and standards⁷, salaries should be approximated at R5500 per month. Crèches paying teachers under the salary norm are challenged with retaining qualified employees.

Issue 3: Within the crèches that are DSD registered and receiving subsidies, a significant number stated that they do not always receive funds on time, delaying their salary schedules and other financial obligations. It was reported that centres do not receive subsidies during the time of reapplication, and must wait until their re-registration process is complete.

Issue 4: Crèches and ECD hubs reported that the process of becoming registered with the DSD is complicated in terms of paperwork and standard procedure, and some indicated they had limited support to understand the registration process. Although these concerns were raised it is important to note that just over 50% of our ECD centres are registered with the Department of Social Development. It must also be noted that the areas of Khayelitsha, Stellenbosch, Paarl, Grabouw, Philippi and Vrygrond do have ECD hubs that offer services to assist with DSD registration processes and resourcing. While these hubs also struggle to raise funds in order to offer these much needed services to crèches, improving the synergy between the organizations will be crucial for improving effective operation. Other communities do not have these services available to them.

Issue 5: Lack of finances creates a major gap in resources at the centres such as stationary, educational equipment (i.e. toys), food, transportation and physical infrastructure. These resources are necessary to provide a stimulating environment for the children at ECD centres, and these components are necessary for crèches to retain their DSD registration status. Furthermore, of the 21 crèches surveyed only 14 charge school fees, ranging between R100-R500 per month. These fees are minimal and are not a substantial revenue source for centres. ECD practitioners reported that parents struggle to pay on time, if at all.

Issue 6: All crèches in the Network are working with children who come from low-income communities that are prone to major social challenges such as violence and crime. Salvation Army crèche in Mannenburg reported that *“due to security reasons, volunteers and donors are less inclined to provide long-term help and work in these communities.”*

⁷ Connect Network/Cebano Salary Scale adapted from the Patterson scale and Averile Ryder Remuneration and Rewards research for NGOs

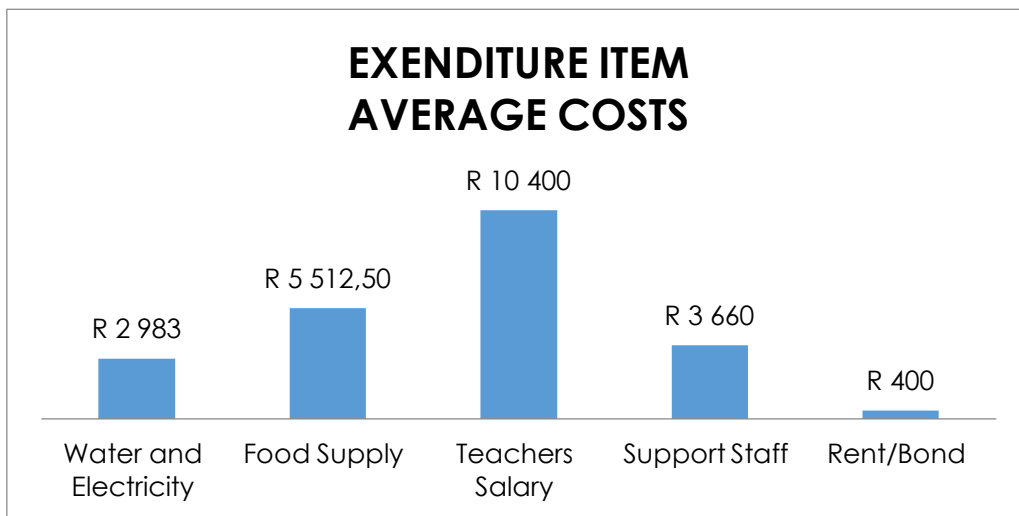


Figure 4: Average monthly costs of running an ECD centre

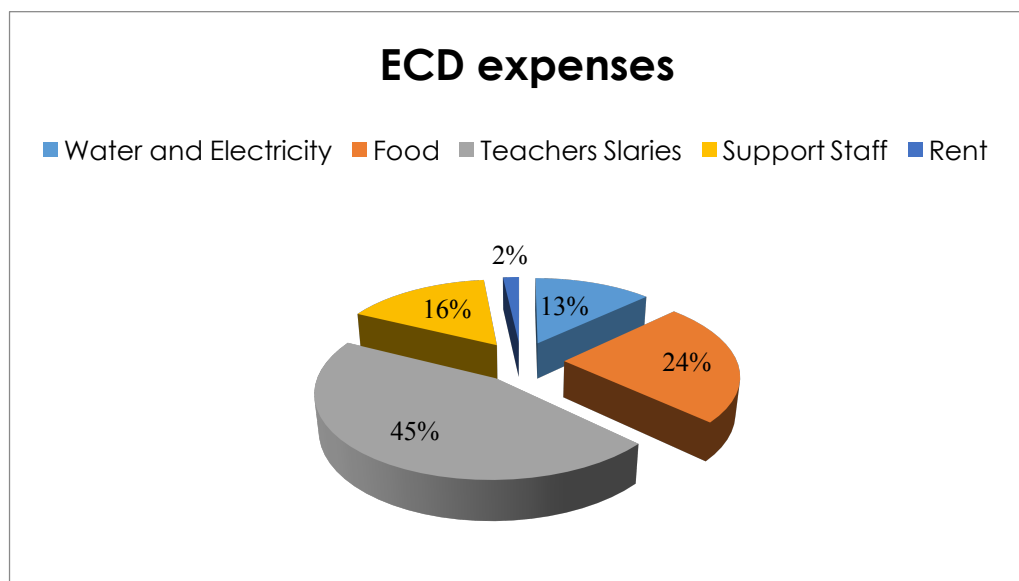


Figure 5: Expense splits of Crèches

Philippi Children's Centre

The Philippi Children's Centre has been established for 25 years and has grown to serve 260 children between the ages of three months and six years old. Unfortunately, parents who are unable or unwilling to pay continue with 'business as usual' and at times the financial struggles of the centre almost forced it to close. So what is the solution? Relationship building. It is evident that constant communication between staff and parents allow an increased sense of appreciation toward the centre. It is imperative for parents to understand reports, engage in meetings regarding their child's progress, and attend special events such as concerts, talent shows and "Grade R graduation ceremonies". This approach has successfully increased parents' willingness to pay as they have a better understanding of how their children are being served.

Education challenges

Early Childhood Practitioners play a vital role in shaping young minds by creating a foundation for long term learning. According to the South African National Curriculum Framework, ECD practitioners should be facilitating learning so that the plans and activities support their developmental needs and interests.

There are a number of accredited qualifications for ECD practitioners who work directly with children. The minimum qualification of ECD practitioners is the Basic Certificate in ECD at The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Level 1 of the South African Qualifications Authority. This qualification requires basic knowledge and skills about child development from birth to nine years. The practitioner must at this level demonstrate how to facilitate growth and skills development in early childhood development programmes.

The following issues affecting the quality of education service delivery were prevalent throughout the survey findings:

Issue 1: Teacher training: In order for effective early development to occur, there must be quality teaching regardless of the environment or situation. Quality ECD teaching is made possible through various qualifications and trainings. The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) has established a set of standard qualifications according to the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA). While these qualification trainings are offered by various facilities, the research revealed that a quarter of ECD crèches in the network do not have NQF qualified staff, and three crèches had no formally trained staff at all. Formal training in ECD is critical in transitioning from a daycare facility to a developmental facility whereas early childhood educators are equipped with the tools to encourage academic learning in order to advance a child's maturity. Thus, ECD staff must prioritize on gaining ECD training and NQF qualifications in order to best serve the needs of the children.



Table 1: Highest Level of Formal Training across Crèches

No Formally Trained staff	Matric	NQF Level 4 - National Certificate	NQF Level 5 - Higher Certificate
3 Crèches	2 Crèches	3 Crèches	12 Crèches

Issue 2: Curriculum: The research shows that amongst the 33 ECD-focused organizations, there is a variety of curricula being used, as opposed to one standard curriculum. These curricula are Montessori, Grassroots, TEEC, Unlimited Child, Preschool Themes and Practical Training in ECD. Being registered with DSD means that these curricula meet the standards of the national curriculum framework for children from birth to four years old (previously The National Early Learning Development Standards [NELDS] document). Only two-thirds of network affiliates are using a DSD registered curriculum, leaving one-third needing to change what they are currently using.

From a Network perspective, a lack of unified curriculum standards makes it difficult to assess whether or not it addresses all of the developmental milestones a child should reach. From an equipping standpoint this makes it difficult to create a standard training module for curriculum implementation.

The remaining third of the organisations are using various curricula programs such as The Early Education Centre (TEEC), Unlimited Child, and Preschool Themes etc. Moreover, 50% of the ECD crèches have their curriculum registered with the department of social development, while 50% do not. Of the equipping organisations (EOs) that provide services on curriculum training, 80% train based on a curriculum that is registered and recognised by DSD, while 20% of them do not. Figure 6 depicts the percentage of our ECD centres that have their curriculum registered and recognised by the Department of Social development (DSD) and by the Network EOs that do training on curriculum.

Table 2: Curricula usage in the Network

	Montessori	Grassroots	TEEC	Unlimited Child	Preschool Themes	Practical Training in ECD
DSD registered	In progress	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	In progress
ECD users	Life Child & Philippi Children's Centre	Thembalitsha	Valcare	Sikhula Sonke	True North	Prochorus
Area	Philippi	Grabouw	Paarl	Khayelitsha	Vrygrond	Kayaman di and Cloeteville
Nr of Crèches	16	5	67	101	30	40
Nr of Children	974	200	3350	7070	1200	1800

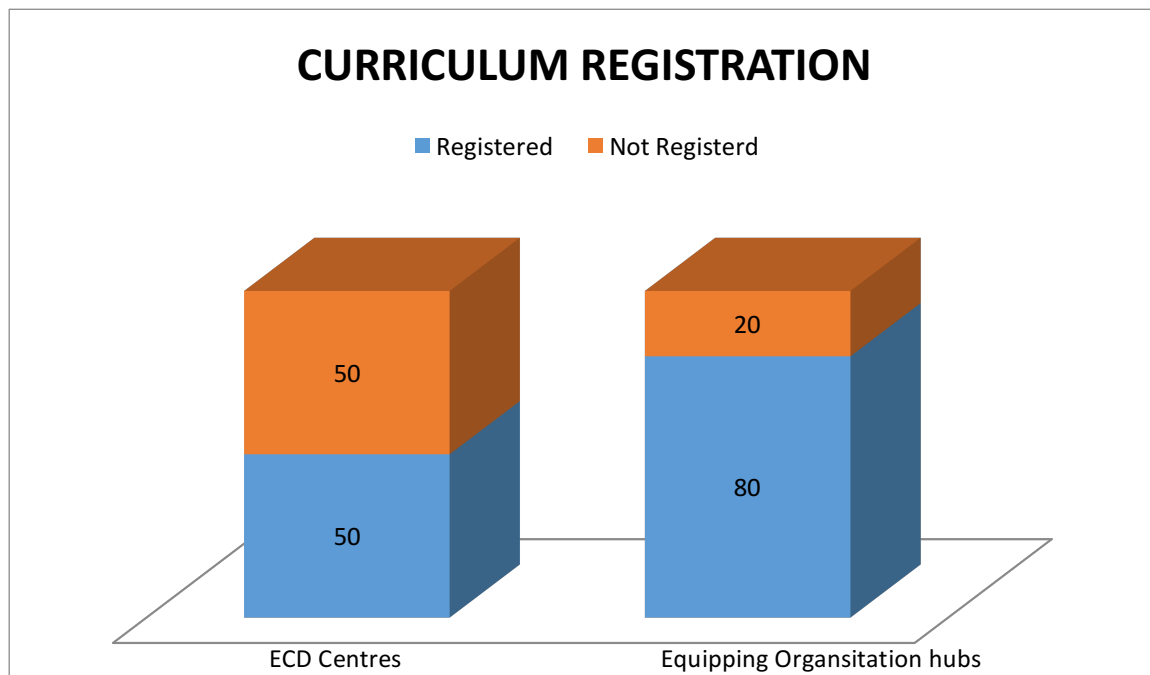


Figure 6: Curriculum DSD registration

Issue 3: Peer support ECD Forums: Of the 21 ECD crèches surveyed, only 5 reported being part of an ECD forum. Having access to a forum allows practitioners to share knowledge and resources through workshops, training, and dialogue. Although the majority of the crèches are not part of any ECD or Child Forum, it is evident that they can benefit from having a space to discuss issues, collaborate, and share advice on various topics.

Health challenges

According to the South African National Curriculum Framework for Children, there are a variety of barriers that prevent a child from reaching their potential, meaning “anything that stops a child from learning and developing.”⁸ Adults must practice early intervention by identifying and destroying these barriers to a child’s well being. Children with disabilities or special educational needs are no exception. Government health services focus on rehabilitating health and developmental problems, but it is evident that children with developmental problems or disabilities are often identified too late. In addition, there are numerous difficulties in ensuring that they receive the required intervention and support. By addressing problems early in life, and intervening as soon as possible, the negative effects of risk factors, for example low birth weight, illness or developmental delay,



⁸The South African national curriculum framework for children from birth to four: Abridged Version february 2015

are likely to be reduced. ECD health interventions (such as nutrition, health promotion and child development) are currently provided in separate maternal, reproductive, child health, HIV/AIDS, nutrition and health promotion programmes. A more ambitious and comprehensive approach would be to integrate all of these services under a mother and child (or family) umbrella⁹.

Issue 1: Nutrition: According to the South African Journal of Science, “malnutrition and hunger account for nearly half of the death rate of preschool children worldwide, with approximately 26% of undernourished children residing in Africa.”¹⁰ Proper nutrition, whereas children have a nutrient rich, protein-energy diet, aids in cognitive development, physical abilities, and metabolic functions. Furthermore, it is evident that schools can play a vital role in promoting healthy eating behaviours. While serving balanced and nutritional meals in school is a worldwide priority, it remains a challenge among ECD crèches in the network. Balanced, nutritional meals require a vegetable, a starch, and significant protein portions but these food items are more expensive than other options and healthy meals are not always served. Crèche staff reported that they do not follow a standard menu and do not always offer proper nutritional value in their daily meals.

Issue 2: Disabilities: ECD practitioners in the Network encounter many challenges and issues associated with running ECD centres in high risk communities. Working in impoverished areas with limited resources is exceptionally difficult, and the ability to accommodate disabilities is an added responsibility for over-stretched organisations. Nearly all of the ECD centres cannot accommodate children with disabilities because they lack the proper infrastructure such as wheelchair accessibility, braille writing, and teachers specifically trained to work with disabled children. Formal training to work with disabled children is vital in order for teachers to be able to properly engage the children and allow them to develop the same potential as their non-disabled peers.

Issue 3: HIV: While the survey did not include specific questions regarding HIV, the Network recognizes that all geographical areas in South Africa are affected by HIV and consequently ECD crèches. According to the national guidelines for ECD, teaching about HIV and AIDs should include information on contraction of the disease, measures in handling blood, and caring for ill family members. The issues discussed should be appropriate for young children. The Network does offer training directed at ECD practitioners working with HIV positive children through the “Let Your Light Shine” (LYLS) programme and four ECD sites have trained LYLS trainers.

Issue 4: Sexual abuse: While sexuality education is taught at the secondary school level, issues of abuse are not uncommon among the ECD landscape. At this stage in a child’s life, it is valuable to teach about the prevention of sexual abuse through body ownership, communication skills and decision-making.

Think Twice, an equipping organization in Rondebosch offers a programme that teaches young children important concepts around family, self worth, making choices, expressing feelings, and safety skills. The lessons are age appropriate and designed to offer tools and techniques for engaging and effective learning. Programmes such as this are invaluable in the Connect Network ECD landscape and with the right resources and collaborative efforts it can be integrated across all crèche curricula.

⁹ Beyond survival: The role of health care in promoting ECD Wiedaard Slemming and Haroon Saloojee (Division of Community Pediatrics, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand)

¹⁰ Nhlapo N, Lues RJF, Kativu E, Groenewald WH. Assessing the quality of food served under a South African school feeding scheme: A nutritional analysis. S Afr J Sci. 2015;111(1/2), Art. #2014-0044, 9 pages. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/sajs.2015/20140044>

Of the ECD practitioners surveyed, all responded positively to reporting abuse when it comes to their attention, however action is not always taken immediately. Due to a shortage in psychosocial professionals, social workers and psychologists often do not respond in a timely manner and the case can remain inactive for a long period of time. In one case, a staff member at a Valcare crèche in Paarl reported an incident of abuse and requested a social worker to handle the case properly. It wasn't until years later that the case received attention and the child was no longer a student at the crèche but had progressed to primary school.

Psychosocial support challenges

Emotional and mental health is critical for a child's development. The home and family setting directly impacts children and set the tone for a child's psychosocial development. According to the government gazette on ECD 2015 "young children are at high risk of abuse and neglect, including physical and mental abuse often in their own homes."¹¹ These issues lead to psychosocial challenges that have a spillover effect on early learning centres. Below are the challenges our crèches are facing in dealing with issues of this nature.



Issue 1: Support programs: Crèche teachers expressed their need to have individual and personal access to counseling and therapy to better serve their children. Care for the caregiver is conducive to effective, quality teaching. While there are support programmes in place, most centres still suffer from insufficient counselling efforts for both children and adults.

Issue 2: Social workers: There is a shortage of social workers focusing on ECDs and most centres cannot afford to have their own specialist on-site. Due to a high demand for social worker services within the system, they often do not respond timely.

Issue 3: Parenting: Although the survey did not focus on the children's home life, one crèche stated that they struggle with parental commitment and involvement. It is evident that crèche staff are concerned about the level of early learning development and educational stimulation taking place in the home.

Mannenberg Crèche trauma:

The phone rang and on one end a distraught ECD practitioner, Connect Network community coordinator on the other. It was a call to inform the network of a gang related shooting, a concept that is not unique in the Western Cape. As is usually the case, this situation had an involuntary audience observing the scene. The first shot fired rendered the victim immobile, where he laid in front of the entrance gate of Mannenberg ECD crèche. In an attempt at dragging himself to refuge inside the school gates, the assailant caught up and took the boy's life with one close-range shot. The children, secondary victims in an all-too-familiar event, were left severely traumatized and inconsolable.

¹¹"DRAFT NATIONAL EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT POLICY FOR THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA. "Government Gazette ser. 597 (n.d.): 1-168, 13 Mar. 2015. Web. 6 Oct. 2016. <http://www.dsd.gov.za/index2.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&gid=586&Itemid=39>.

"I immediately contacted counsellors I knew, but they were all involved in workshops and trainings at the time. I then contacted Trauma Counselling NGO's, also to no avail. Sadly, the children had to face the weekend without receiving assistance" describes Linda Walters, the Connect Network Community Coordinator. In a frustrated state Linda called the DSD and the City of CT Disaster relief, receiving affirmation that counselors would arrive at the crèche first thing Monday morning.

When Monday arrived, the Department head of DSD called to proclaim that indeed counselors had been to the school and all was well. After taking a sigh of relief the phone rang again and the Mannenberg Principal revealed there was no counselor at all as the DSD department head deemed the area too dangerous and too risky to send her staff into. This infuriated Linda, "I immediately contacted the Mayor's Office, and from that moment my phone did not stop ringing. Tuesday morning a motorcade arrived at the Crèche, probably about 5 or 6 cars with body guards and staff who quickly made their way into the school and proceeded to council the traumatised children and staff."

Although action was eventually taken to help the children at the Mannenberg crèche, this event is unfortunately just one among many across the network in which emergency response to psychosocial trauma is unobtainable. Linda won't always be available to ring the mayor, so there must be a solution to increase access to counseling and therapy for not only children at the ECD level, but teachers and staff as well.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Research shows that children who have access to quality developmental programmes at an early age are better equipped to enter the formal education system. Connect Network believes that investing in Early Childhood Development is a critical step toward building safe communities, in the Western Cape and the country. Moving forward, capacity building and sustainability should be at the forefront in order to empower ECD crèche owners to be successful. We recognise a multitude of opportunities based on our existing infrastructure and resources within the network as follows.

The network encourages organisations to work together in designing a solutions based strategy to address their needs. CN recommends the following three approaches for collaborating: connectivity and value sharing, Quality improving, and collaborating on joint services.

The first step in this process was a consultative meeting at which all ECD stakeholders in the network discussed the findings of the report and made recommendations and contributions on the topics. The decisions and suggestions that resulted from this meeting will inform the focus of an ECD conference. The mandate of what these future interventions should cover will be decided by the ECD stakeholders.

1. Strengthen connectivity and value-sharing among ECD affiliates in the Network:

- a. Working group: Set up an ECD group made up of Network affiliates dedicated to providing guidance and oversight on the agreed strategy. The group will focus on discussion and activity in order to create an ECD standard in the Network and improve organizational connectivity through communication.
- b. Conference: The ECD Practitioners have requested an annual ECD conference at which affiliated crèche practitioners and stakeholders can participate in training seminars, workshops, panel discussions and presentations. This would be a space for practitioners to share resources, success stories, knowledge, advice, and support with each other regarding the topics discussed at the stakeholder meeting. The aim of the annual conference is to promote networking and relationship building between crèche practitioners.
- c. Online Forums: Affiliates have access to a variety of resources on the CN website, the Connect coordination team should update it frequently with relevant tools and new information. Crèches and EOs can access these resources at their own leisure but CN should increase awareness of this digital space and allow feedback from affiliates in terms of content.
- d. Peer to Peer Support Programme: It is evident through past initiatives in the network that ECD practitioners respond well to peer advice, as it allows an informal and relaxed environment for knowledge sharing. Research revealed that some crèches are operating successfully in areas where others are struggling. It would be beneficial for ECD affiliates to participate in a peer mentoring program in which skills and gaps are

matched between organizations, allowing practitioners to collaborate and work together on a more personal level.

2. Quality Improve ECDs:

- a. Improving governance and accountability of NGOs through QIS: A main priority moving forward will be to ensure that all equipping hubs begin their QIS journey. This is imperative for future developments as QIS will “train the trainers” for the most effective and efficient trickle-down effect of knowledge. EOs can be seen as mentors to ECD crèches, but there remains a gap where some hubs are enrolled and successful with QIS while others are not. The research showed that the organizations who are verified on QIS have been able to translate the skills learned into the context of their crèches. As an incentive, CN will only include QIS committed affiliates in joint fund proposals. It is a vision of the Network that all affiliates will eventually be participants of QIS, but it is recognized that many practitioners may struggle with the application of concepts and information within the QIS programme. This requires the creation of specialized QIS programs based on the Viva modules to be user friendly to crèches and may include simplified or translated content.
- b. Quality ECD capacity building: CN wishes to see network and community wide collaboration and programme sharing among ECD focused affiliates. Based on a Network asset map it is evident that organizations can build capacity and improve service delivery through collaborating with each other's programmes. It is recommended that services such as Jerry Giraffe, Moms and Tots, Let Your Light Shine, and Proud2Be should be coordinated and implemented by and within all relevant affiliate organizations.
- c. ECD practitioner wellness: CN proposes a spiritual retreat to focus on ECD staff. It is necessary to focus on wellness in the area of emotional and psychosocial support. Our research reveals that many practitioners struggle to receive their own psychosocial support and in order for them to carry out their services in an effective way they too must have support.

3. Collaborate for joint services:

- a. **Employ a Child Protection Officer (CPO):** Connect Network currently invites voluntary professionals as part of a child protection advisory group for specific complex cases. There are numerous issues within the network that are resolved depending on the skills and expertise required and they may not be able to help everyone. Thus, Connect Network ECD practitioners recommends hiring a full-time CPO to respond to specific cases in the network on behalf of affiliates.
- b. **Implement a Bulk Purchasing Process:** In order to improve efficiency and apply sound principals to financial spending, services for bulk buying to meet the needs of all ECD organizations should be provided. This process can be applied to educational resources, food stock, and first aid supplies, in order to ensure all ECD crèches are operating at the standard determined by the working group.

CONCLUSION

Connect Network's ECD affiliates have the potential to strengthen their services in existing crèches and to expand their reach to areas where children do not have access to a crèche. Some of these findings could be suggested on a broader level than CN affiliates. ECD equipping organisations can work strategically through the 10 identified safe community sites, and ECD hubs can standardise their approach to monitoring and evaluating children throughout 'their' crèches. Collaboration and joint impact measuring will enhance services through a collective voice representing the needs of the children.

There is ample opportunity through collective advocacy to improve government engagement with crèches, particularly on their gazette statement: "Fund NGO service providers which are eligible in terms of, and to the extent permitted by, this policy; Regulate and ensure the adequate training, qualifications and remuneration of ECD practitioners to realise national ECD goals and objectives" (6.2 page 92 gov gazette of RSA Nr 38558 ECD Policy).

On the basis of stakeholder consensus on working together, there is potential for centralised fundraising, resource mobilisation, capacity enhancement through volunteers, and bulk buying. These opportunities can contribute significantly to efficient and sustainable programmes among ECD organizations affiliated to Connect Network. Ultimately, increased collaboration in the Network will ensure the safety and wellbeing of at least 16 000 children across the Western Cape.

The analysis of the ECD landscape in the Network revealed not only the challenges faced by practitioners, but the existing opportunities as well. CN affiliates share the potential to improve their services both deep, with their current beneficiaries, and wide, by sharing their service offerings through an agreed collaborative strategy. Through a common faith-based approach, the Network can serve as a platform for change, providing every child with the opportunity to reach their potential, and thus building toward South Africa's future.

APPENDIX 1

ECD MAPPING IN THE NETWORK (3-6 years old)			
10 Safe Community Areas	Organisation	Number of ECD Centres	Number of children reached, average
Heideveld: ARISE lead affiliate			
Athlone	Carehaven(Women's Shelter)	1	9
Heideveld (Lead affiliate)	Arise Children's Ministries& Common Good(First 1000 days)	N/A	N/A
Heideveld (new)	Straatwerk (Zoe Life)	2	20
Manenberg	Salvation Army Crèche	1	118
Nyanga	Lerato's Hope (Mamma Beauty)	1	36
Helderberg			
Delft	The Ark City of Refuge	1	26
Faure	The pearl Project	1	28
Gordon's Bay	Immanuel's Haven	1	16
Grabouw (Hub)	Thembalitsha Grabouw	5	200
Lwandle	Umnqophiso	1	210
Nomzamo	Emyezweni	1	102
Sir Lowry's Pass	Sir Lowry's Pass Empowerment Project	1	20
Zola (Strand)	Joya Homes and Educare Company	1	8
Khayelitsha: Sikhula Sonke lead affiliate			
Khayelitsha	Fikelela Aids Project	1	12
Khayelitsha (Hub)	Sikhula Sonke	101	7070
Mitchells Plain	Trinity Childrens Childrens Centre	1	60
Kommetjie: Living Hope lead affiliate			
Ocean View	Living Hope	1	15
Red Hill	Living Hope	2	45
Paarl: Valcare lead affiliate			
Paarl (Hub)	Valcare Trust	120	9000
Lower Cross Roads : Beautiful Gate lead affiliate			
Kosovo & Samora (Hub)	Life Child(new)	14	700
Philippi	Bridges of Hope	1	18
Philippi	Philippi Children's Village	1	250
Philippi – The Leagues	Life Child	1	24
Stellenbosch: Kuyasa/Prochrus lead affiliate			
Devon Valley	Thembalitsha (Graceland)	1	58
Heldervalley	Op die Plaas (new)	1	60
Kayamandi	Kuyasa Horison Empowerment	1	25
Kayamandi	Vision Afrika	1	67
Kayamandi (hub)	Prochorus	40	1800
Wallacedene	Lilitha Educare centre	1	39

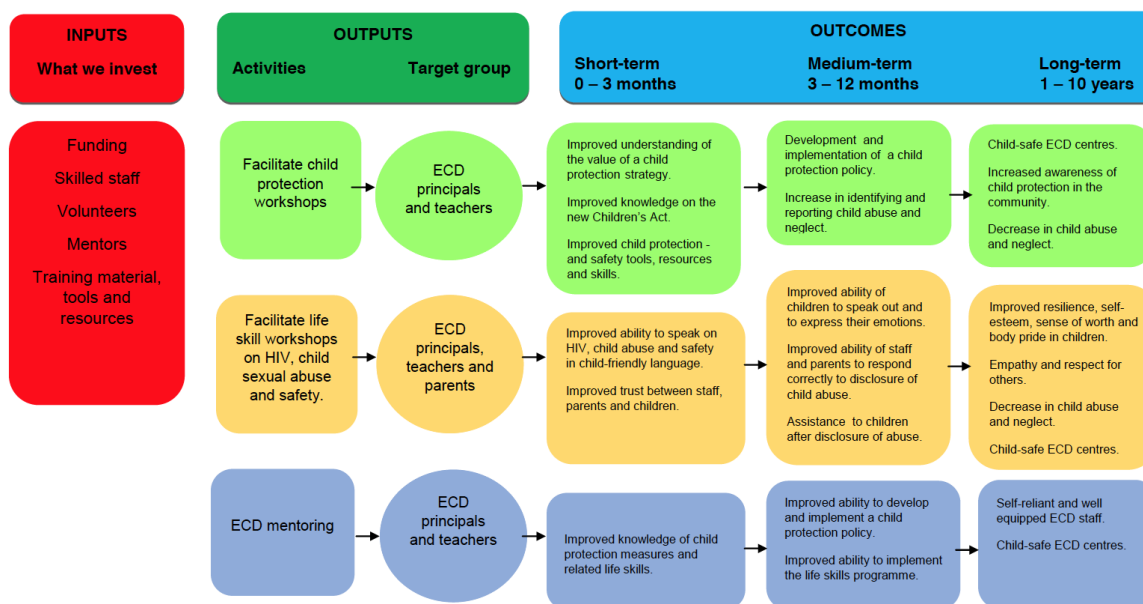
Vrygrond: SOZO lead affiliate			
Vrygrond (hub)	True North	30	1200
Other			
Kenilworth	Siters Incorporated (women's shelter)	1	2
Woodstock	St Anne's Home (Women's Shelter)	1	20
Atlantis	World Vision Atlantis	20	600
Training organisations(Equipping)			
Observatory	Proud 2Be Me Foundation (Parenting and ECD registering)	N/A	N/A
Rondebosch	Common Good (First 1000 days)	N/A	N/A
Rondebosch	Think Twice (Sexual abuse prevention)	N/A	N/A
Somerset West	Ezrah (ECD registering and child protection)	N/A	N/A
Total: 35		366	21 814

N=35 n=33

APPENDIX 2

CHILD PROTECTION EMPOWERMENT PROJECT FOR ECD CENTRES

GOAL: TO EQUIP ECD CENTRES WITH SKILLS, TOOLS AND RESOURCES TO IMPLEMENT A CHILD PROTECTION STRATEGY WITHIN THEIR COMMUNITY.



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**External factors: Participation and co-operation from ECD centres.
Prompt follow-up from Child Protection Organisations after reporting of abuse.**