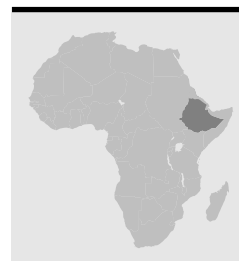


ETHIOPIA

“Early Childhood Care and Development Interventions in Ethiopia” and “Child Labor in Ethiopia: Its Conditions and Link with Early Childhood Education”

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Ethiopia is one of the poorest countries in the world. It is plagued by extremely low income levels and poor social indicators (high rates of infant, under age five, and maternal mortality; poor nutritional status; low rates of school enrollment and retention). Given that more than 50 percent of the population is estimated to live in poverty, it is difficult for households and communities to provide children with adequate nutrition and care. This fact underscores the importance of providing ECCD services to assist them in doing so. However, information on ECCD activities in the country is fragmentary and not readily available. ECCD seems not to have received the necessary attention, and its linkages with overall human resources development efforts in Ethiopia have not been well established. These efforts include the 1994 Education and Training Policy, which emphasizes the need to enhance young children’s physical and mental development through early education, and the National Health Policy, which emphasizes the importance of improving nutrition for preschool children and supporting other programs that enhance the health of mothers and young children. There is also a Social Security Development Policy that declares the need to expand health, education, and social services targeted to preschool-age children and other programs designed to support families in child management and care.

The purpose of this study is to review the experiences and impact of ECCD programs run by NGOs and traditional providers (church, public, Koranic sites) in Ethiopia to assist the government and project planners in formulating an effective ECCD pilot project to be carried out under the existing Ethiopia Social Rehabilitation and Development Fund (ESRDF). The study covers three principal NGOs: namely Redd Barna (Save the Children Norway), Rädä Barnen (Save the Children Sweden), and CCF (Christian Children’s Fund), which support ECCD programs in different parts of the country. A total of nine ECCD centers were selected from the major regions (Oromia, Amhara, and the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region), representing different ethnic groups and agro-economic and social settings. As an assessment tool, a longitudinal comparative tracer (retrospective cohort) method covering the previous 10-year period (1989/90–1998/99) was used.

Intervention groups (children participating in ECCD programs) and their parents and comparable control groups (children not participating in ECCD programs) and their parents were identified from each of the nine ECCD centers. Children were selected on the basis of school grades classified into three levels: lower (grades 1 and 2), middle (grades 3, 4, and 5), and upper (grades 6, 7, and 8). Quantitative (interview, rapid assessment) and qualitative (focus group discussion, recall, and case study) methods were employed, and documents of NGOs and school rosters of the selected study subjects were consulted. A rapid assessment study of the educational performance of children in grade 2 with various early childhood educational backgrounds (church/Koran, community, NGO-based) as well as those without any early childhood educational experiences was conducted in eight schools in Addis Ababa.

The study *Early Childhood Care and Development Interventions in Ethiopia* was extended into a second phase and followed by a study focusing on child labor issues. Child labor presents a serious challenge in Ethiopia today, even though several conventions were ratified by the government to stop the exploitation of young children in the labor market. According to Ethiopian labor law, child labor is indicated when children under the age of 14 are engaged in full-time economic activities. Data on the prevalence and the nature of child labor in the country have been generally fragmentary and inadequate. Experience and data from secondary sources show that the urban informal sector employs between 1.4 and 1.7 million people, representing 78 percent of the population of economically active people in the urban areas. As an important source of income for a large proportion of the labor force in Ethiopia, the urban informal sector is also a major employer of children.

The factors that promote child labor are multifaceted and range from social, economic, and organizational to political and cultural. Some of the variables influencing child labor are family structure, child-related predispositions, access to early childhood programs and school, and labor market conditions. But socioeconomic characteristics and particularly the high level of poverty have been identified as the main reasons for the persistence and fluctuating presence of children in the labor market in Ethiopia. Development planners have predicted that access to early childhood services would reduce the incidence of child labor, and several NGOs were encouraged by the government to provide child-focused intervention programs in the 1980s and 1990s.

The study on child labor in Ethiopia investigates the reasons children engage in child labor, their socioeconomic background, and their persistence in the child labor market. By examining the family structures, the community context, and the services provided by NGOs, the study hopes to unravel the complex influences that promote child labor and to explain why some children participate only temporarily in the labor market and others turn it into a “career.”

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Examine the types, nature, settings, causes, and consequences of child labor in the Ethiopian context.
2. Analyze the working environment and the psychosocial and health conditions of working children.
3. Explain to what extent child-related factors such as family background, child-related predispositions, and level of poverty influence children's participation in the labor market.
4. Explore the relationships between parents' background (socioeconomic background, level of education) and child labor.
5. Examine the relationship between the participation of children in early childhood programs and their participation in child labor, particularly in comparison with children who do not participate in ECCD programs.
6. Suggest possible strategies and provide concrete operational recommendations for addressing and reducing the adverse effects of child labor in Ethiopia.

The primary study sample consisted of 180 children 6 to 14 years old engaged in child labor to meet their livelihood or to support their families or dependents. From the total number of 180 children, 82 participated in early childhood programs provided by NGOs and traditional or public service providers, and 98 did not attend any type of early stimulation program. The children attending ECCD programs were selected by using purposive sampling procedures to overcome the difficulties of getting an adequate number of children who passed through early childhood programs, particularly the ones provided by NGOs. The nonprogram children were selected randomly because the number of children in this group, as expected, was adequate. The parents and guardians of the children attending programs and not attending programs were identified and interviewed.

Sources: World Bank, February 2000. *Analysis of Early Childhood Development and Care Interventions in Ethiopia*. World Bank, March 2001. *Child Labor in Ethiopia: Its Conditions and Link with Early Childhood Education*.

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