A National Case Study of Services Provided for Children---

Early Childhood Care and Education in China

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1. **An Overview of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in China**

China’s children aged 0-6 number 130 million, constituting about one fifth of the world’s total in the same age group. The Chinese government has consistently attached great importance to early childhood care and education, regarding it as work of great significance for enhancing the quality of the nation’s compulsory schooling and the quality of the whole nation, and for promoting the stable, healthy and sustainable development of society. In China ECCE has been incorporated into the national system of basic education, constituting an important component of basic education and a task ensuring the “best start of life for every child” (Kofi Annan).

It can be justifiably said that with the coordination of the government and through the concerted efforts of various quarters concerned and effective mobilization of resources, ECCE in China has kept developing healthily and steadily, and that a system of ECCE has basically taken shape in China, being adapted to China’s national conditions and consisting of both public and non-state/private institutions and providing both formal and non-formal programs.

### 1.1 Various Forms of ECCE Services Provided in China

Since China is a country with a vast territory and a very large population, characterized by large regional disparities in economic development, it is quite natural that local authorities and communities have to develop their ECCE programs in the light of local conditions, giving rise to diverse forms of ECCE services. Generally speaking, formal ECCE programs are dominant in the economically developed large and medium-sized cities, such as those provided by the 3-year kindergartens providing services for children aged 3-6 and 3-year nurseries providing services for children aged 0-3. In contradistinction, non-formal and highly flexible ECCE programs are dominant in townships and towns in the countryside, in the mountainous or hilly areas, in forestry areas, in pastoral areas, and in the poorer and remote areas and in sparsely populated areas, such as the one-year primary classes attached to primary schools, play groups and activity stations enrolling children unable to enter formal kindergartens, weekend classes or seasonal classes providing services for parents and children in need of such services, and covered trucks providing ECCE services in pastoral areas for highly mobile herdsmen and their children. These covered trucks are highly welcomed by the clientele served as they provide information and consulting serves to parents and guidance to proper methods of ECCE and effectively serve as family counseling service stations.

### Table 1 Agencies Providing Early Childhood Education Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Institution</th>
<th>Nature of Institution</th>
<th>Children Served</th>
<th>Service Time</th>
<th>Total Enrollment</th>
<th>Sponsors or Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nursery</td>
<td>Educational Inst.</td>
<td>Aged 0-3</td>
<td>8 hrs.</td>
<td>20.2184 million</td>
<td>Enterprises, institutions, NGOs, Educational dept., Collectives, &amp; individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>Educational Inst.</td>
<td>Aged 3-6</td>
<td>8 hrs.</td>
<td>20.218 million</td>
<td>Educational dept., enterprises &amp; institutions, NGOs, collectives,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Center</td>
<td>Aged</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Applicable</td>
<td>Sponsors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preprimary Classes</td>
<td>Educa. Inst.</td>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>7 hrs.</td>
<td>9.921</td>
<td>Educational departments, Rural collectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s Activity Center</td>
<td>Service Center</td>
<td>0-6</td>
<td>Indef.</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td>Local governments, women’s federations, Collectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play groups</td>
<td>Service Center</td>
<td>0-3</td>
<td>Indef.</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td>Local governments, educational Departments, collectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent-Child Learning center</td>
<td>Service Center</td>
<td>0-6</td>
<td>Saturdays &amp; Sundays</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td>Educational departments, Women’s federations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekend Classes</td>
<td>Service Center</td>
<td>3-6</td>
<td>Saturdays &amp; Sundays</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td>Educational departments, NGOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal Classes</td>
<td>Servicing Educa. Inst.</td>
<td>Indef.</td>
<td>Rush Farming Seasons</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td>Educational departments, Rural collectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home-based Tutoring Station</td>
<td>Counseling</td>
<td>Indef.</td>
<td>Indef.</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td>Educational departments, NGOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covered truck or Mobile Counseling sta.</td>
<td>Educa. Inst.</td>
<td>Indef.</td>
<td>Indef.</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td>Educational departments, Local governments, NGOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s Welfare Center,</td>
<td>Welfare or Educa. Inst.</td>
<td>Orphans, Disabled Children, Abandoned Babies</td>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>45549 orphans, disabled children, &amp; abandoned babies; 900-odd healthy orphans</td>
<td>Civil Affairs Departments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s Villages, Division</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for Children of Social Welfare Center</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrusted to the care of selected families, care prov. with financial aid</td>
<td>Welfare</td>
<td>Orphans, Disabled Children, Abandoned Babies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Civil Affairs Departments, Individual families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entry age of Primary school</td>
<td></td>
<td>6-7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.2 Main Sectors Providing Early Childhood Care and Education Services

Age: 0---1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8

- Educational Sector
- Public Health Sector
- Women’s Federation
- Civil Affairs Sector
- Nongovernmental Organizations

1.3 Coordination of Services Provided by Various Sectors

ECCE services constitute a societal systemic program. Their effective provision requires the concerted efforts of various sectors concerned. In China, the coordinating efforts exerted by the State Council play a crucial role in ensuring the smooth provision of ECCE services.

1.3.1 Ensuring the formulation and implementation of consistent policies and regulations

According to the official letter entitled “A Circular Concerning the Division of Responsibilities Related to the Management of Early Childhood Education Undertakings Answering the Request for Instructions Submitted by Several Governmental Departments” (hereafter abbreviated as the Circular) approved and distributed by the General Office of the State Council in October 1987, the management of early childhood education in China would adhere to the principle of “placing the main responsibility on local authorities with suitable division of responsibilities among different levels of governmental agencies and proper division of labor among the sectors concerned.”

The Circular affirmed the responsibilities to be undertaken by various governmental departments concerning early childhood education as follows: The educational department would be mainly responsible for implementing relevant principles, policies and instructions, for formulating relevant administrative regulations and rules, for drawing up developmental plans, for providing professional guidance to the operation of kindergartens and for evaluating their performance, for providing training to kindergarten teachers and appraising their qualifications, etc. The public health department would be responsible for formulating and implementing relevant regulations and rules in the health care domain, providing professional guidance concerning sanitation and hygiene in kindergartens. The planning department would be responsible for incorporating the development of early childhood education into the socio-economic plan at the level concerned. The financial department would be responsible for formulating regulations and rules concerning expenditures in early childhood education undertakings through proper inquiries. The department of labor and personnel, in collaboration with other relevant governmental departments, would be responsible for formulating regulations and rules concerning staffing, remuneration, labor protection, and welfare (fringe benefits). The departments of urban and rural construction and environmental protection would be responsible for planning in a unified way the provision of kindergarten facilities to meet the needs of the members of certain communities and for urging relevant sectors and units to fulfill their construction tasks.

Meanwhile, because the providers of ECCE services are pluralistic, and the mobilization of resources from various quarters concerned is a must, it is difficult to realize the objectives envisaged without the coordination of the government. Accordingly, the Circular stipulated explicitly: All major policy issues with a bearing on early childhood education should be
addressed by the Ministry of Education with the collaboration of other departments concerned; important matters that are under the jurisdiction of a designated governmental department, but in need of the collaboration of other relevant departments in their handling, should be jointly addressed by all the departments concerned under the aegis of the designated department; The responsibility for the development of early childhood education undertakings mainly lies with local authorities, to be handled by governments at various levels through proper coordination and the adoption of an integrated approach. Specifically speaking, such coordination and integration of efforts by the government mainly includes: firstly, incorporating early childhood education into local plans for socio-economic development; secondly, formulating policies and regulations concerning early childhood education, including provisions on the charging of fees through the collaboration of all departments concerned; thirdly, coordinating the efforts of all departments and sectors concerned with proper division of labor; fourthly, pooling the resources from all quarters concerned and using them effectively.

The Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Protection of Minors was adopted at the 21st Session of the Standing Committee of the Seventh National People’s Congress on September 4, 1991. Article 33 of it explicitly stipulates: “Local people’s governments at all levels should take active steps to develop early childhood care and education and do a good job of operating nurseries and kindergartens, encourage and support state organs, social organizations, enterprises and institutions, and other social entities to set up breast-feeding rooms, nurseries, and kindergartens, and promote and support individuals to set up home-based nurseries.”

With these laws and regulations in place, the responsibilities and rights of various governmental departments and local governments at all levels are clarified, and their relations are streamlined, resulting in better guidance for early childhood education. The following facts attest to their effect. It is incumbent upon the local government to incorporate ECE into local plans for socio-economic development and plan ECE and related matters in a unified way. In a number of localities, local governments have listed the quality of ECE work as one item of the objectives in their management by objectives (MBO) efforts, and the performance of relevant officials is subject to assessment. Outstanding issues are addressed by coordinating meetings held by the government.

1.3.2 Committee for Women’s and Children’s Work under the State Council

The committee was founded in 1990, being a coordinating body responsible for coordinating the efforts of various governmental departments and non-governmental organizations in matters concerning women and children. It plays an important role in promoting the cause of children, in safeguarding children’s rights, and in monitoring the implementation of laws and regulations concerning the protection of children’s rights and interests, as well as the implementation of the Program for Children’s Development. The current chairperson of the committee is State Councilor Wu Yi, and members of the committee are drawn from the leadership of 24 governmental departments (including State Development and Planning Commission, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Foreign Trade and International Cooperation, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Public Health, etc.) and 5 non-governmental organizations (including All-China Federation of Trade Unions, the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League of China, All-China Women’s Federation, etc.).

As things stand now, in all the 31 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the Central Government, in all the 300-odd prefecture-level cities, and in all the 2000-odd
counties and county-level districts there are inter-departmental bodies for women’s and children’s work operating under the guidance of the government at the same level. These bodies responsible for children’s work established at the central and local levels constitute important agencies responsible for the management and coordination of matters related to ECCE services.

2 Information on Major Agencies Providing ECCE and their Work

2.1 Ministry of Education (MOE)

Ever since the State Council Circular issued in 1987 prescribed the responsibilities of the educational departments, they have exerted efforts along several lines, including planning for developing early childhood education, promoting ECE by law, instituting a proper management system, and training teachers, and significant advances have been made. Being the government’s functional department responsible for the educational sector, MOE carries the heaviest responsibilities in promoting ECCE.

2.1.1 Policies and Regulations concerning ECCE

2.1.1.1 Regulations on Kindergartens

The document was promulgated on June 5, 1989, being implemented on a trial basis on February 1, 1990, and the revised version became fully effective as of June 1, 1996.

In the light of the spirit of the Education Law of the People’s Republic of China, the regulations have systematically set specific norms and standards for all aspects of work in a kindergarten, and have delineated clear guidelines for the reform of kindergarten education and the conduct of ECE in the light of the characteristics of the physical and mental development of young children. The regulations constitute an important legal instrument that promotes the development of ECE on an institutionalized and scientific basis and helps deepen the reform of kindergartens.

2.1.1.2 Regulations on the Management of Kindergartens

The document was approved by the State Council on August 20, 1989 and promulgated by MOE on September 11, 1989 and became effective as of February 1, 1990.

This document sets forth comprehensively the norms and standards for the management of kindergartens, including the basic principles and normative practices in the ECCE services provided by kindergartens, the management system related to kindergartens, the establishment of a new kindergarten and the procedure of its examination and approval, and the normative practice of administrative affairs, etc., providing the basic principles and legal basis for the healthy development of ECE. This document and the Regulations on Kindergartens have immensely enhanced the level of ECE in China by providing the legal basis for their operation and management.

2.1.1.3 Guidelines for the Assessment of the Work of Pre-primary Classes (to be implemented on a trial basis)

This document was promulgated in June 1996 and became effective immediately. It provides the guidelines for the establishment and operation of pre-primary classes affiliated to rural primary schools, so that these classes are run in compliance with educational regularities and may effectively promote the harmonious physical and mental development of rural children. Besides, MOE issued a circular entitled “Suggestions on How to Strengthen the Work of Pre-primary Classes.” These documents have played a positive role in ensuring the healthy
development of ECE in the countryside.

2.1.1.3 Guidelines for Kindergarten Education (to be implemented on a trial basis)

This document was promulgated in June 2001 and its trial implementation was started from September 2001.

After the promulgation of the Regulations on Kindergartens and with the incessant deepening of educational reform conducted in kindergartens, there arose an urgent need for an official document providing more specific guidelines for kindergarten staff that may help them to convert educational ideas into educational behaviors. Accordingly, the Department of Basic Education of MOE organized a panel of experts to formulate the Guidelines for Kindergarten Education (to be implemented on a trial basis). These guidelines serve to improve the macro-level management of ECCE provided by all kinds of kindergartens in China, clarifying the objectives and content and requirements of ECCE provided, as well as the principles concerning the organization, implementation and evaluation of ECCE. Its promulgation and implementation has played a positive role in deepening educational reforms in kindergartens, in preventing and overcoming the tendency to operate a kindergarten just like a primary school, in promoting essential-qualities-oriented (EQO) education in kindergartens, in raising comprehensively the quality of kindergarten education, and guaranteeing the rights of young children to learn and to develop.

Local governments at all levels and their educational departments throughout the country have taken steps to formulate and implement more specific policies and regulations to complement those promulgated by MOE in the light of local conditions. Their efforts have enhanced the standards of the macro-level management of ECCE.

2.1.2 Main Forms of Providing ECCE Services

2.1.2.1 Services for the 3-6 Age Group

(1) Kindergartens: Providing formal 3-year programs.

(2) Pre-primary classes: Providing formal 1-year programs for young children preparing to enter the primary school one year later.

(3) Play groups, activity stations, weekend classes, seasonal classes, classes run during rush farming seasons, home-based tutoring stations, etc.—all of them are non-formal entities.

Table 2 provides information on total enrollments in kindergartens for the period 1995-2001, based on official statistics.

Table 2  Total Enrollments in Kindergartens, 1995-2001 (Unit: thousand)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Enrollment In Kindergartens</th>
<th>Total Enrollment in Pre-primary Classes</th>
<th>Number of Enrollment in Kindergartens of the year</th>
<th>Number of Enrollment in Primary School of the Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>27,112</td>
<td>16,066</td>
<td>1972.4</td>
<td>2531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>26,663</td>
<td>15,723</td>
<td>1951.6</td>
<td>2524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>25,190</td>
<td>14,360</td>
<td>1824.3</td>
<td>2462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>24,030</td>
<td>13,121</td>
<td>1720.0</td>
<td>2201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>23,263</td>
<td>11,912</td>
<td>1617.5</td>
<td>2029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>22,441</td>
<td>11,006</td>
<td>1531.1</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 Number of Kindergartens and Number of Kindergarten and Preprimary Classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Kindergartens</th>
<th>Number of Kindergarten &amp; Preprimary Classes</th>
<th>Of which, Number of Preprimary Classes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>180,438</td>
<td>806,070</td>
<td>467,838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>187,324</td>
<td>809,394</td>
<td>462,517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>182,485</td>
<td>801,233</td>
<td>454,218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>181,368</td>
<td>789,027</td>
<td>437,217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>181,136</td>
<td>781,450</td>
<td>403,426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>175,836</td>
<td>771,532</td>
<td>388,273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>111,706</td>
<td>748,394</td>
<td>324,113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data given by the Early Child Education Division of the Basic Education Department of MOE

2.1.2.2 Services for the 0-3 Age Group

(1) Formal services: Provided by urban nurseries and their extensions downwards in the form of nursery classes, enrolling young children aged 1-3.

(2) Non-formal services: Provided by home-based tutoring stations, weekend parent-child centers, etc.

2.1.2.3 Coordination of Work between MOE and Other Agencies

Complying with the provisions of the relevant documents promulgated by the State Council, the educational departments at all levels have enhanced their consciousness as the governmental agencies entrusted with the main responsibility for overseeing ECCE by changing their own role from operating kindergartens into agencies responsible for comprehensive management, coordination of efforts of various quarters, and provision of professional guidance to kindergartens of all descriptions varying in grade and category. With the close cooperation between the educational departments, other governmental bodies, and women’s federations and other NGOs, with the effective mobilization of resources from all sectors and multiple channels, with the development of ECE through diverse forms, and adhering to the principles of “active encouragement, energetic support, correct guidance, and strengthened management”, a framework of ECCE has taken shape in which most kindergartens are run by non-state entities, to be supplemented by kindergartens run by individuals, while state-run kindergartens play a model role, energetically pushing forward the development of ECCE.

2.2 Ministry of Public Health (MOPH)

2.2.1 Policies and Regulations Concerning Child Care

The document entitled the “Health Regime in Nurseries and Kindergartens” was promulgated by MOPH in December, 1985. It provides concrete and detailed prescriptions for all aspects of health work in nurseries and kindergartens, encompassing diet and nutrition of babies and young children, physical training, health inspection, sanitation and isolation, prevention of
diseases, safety, record of health conditions, and statistical regime, constituting the basic regime or rules that must be observed by all ECE institutions in China. Article 11 of the Regulations on Kindergartens provides: “Kindergartens must strictly implement the ‘Health Regime in Nurseries and Kindergartens’ and other relevant regulations and rules promulgated by MOPH.”

In December, 1994 MOPH and MOE jointly promulgated the “Regulations on Health Work in Nurseries and Kindergartens,” aiming to further strengthen the management of and oversight over health work in nurseries and kindergartens in a unified way.

2.2.2 Main Forms of Providing ECCE Services

Nurseries enrolling children aged 0-3 are provided (statistical data not available).

2.3 Ministry of Civil Affairs

2.3.1 Policies and Regulations Related to ECCE

In 1997 the Ministry of Civil Affairs together with five other central ministries and agencies (including the State Development and Planning Commission and the Ministry of Finance) jointly formulated and issued the “Circular on Further Developing Welfare Institutions for Orphans and Disabled Children.” The Circular makes detailed stipulations for matters related to the care, medical treatment, rehabilitation and education of orphans and disabled children. In compliance with the requirements set by the Circular, by 2010 in China the goal of at least establishing one well-equipped children’s welfare institute in each prefecture-level city will be basically met.

The implementation of the “Basic Normative Practices in Social Welfare Institutions for Children” was started in March 2001. Detailed normative practices concerning the diet, nursing, mental health, and education of children in the custody of social welfare institutions for children are prescribed; norms and standards for equipment and facilities and staff are also given.

In order to better protect the interests of children faced with especially difficult conditions, the Chinese government and its departments of civil affairs have developed a number of programs for them. Among these programs are: the “Planning Framework for the Project of Community-based Rehabilitation of Disabled Children,” the “2001-2005 Perspective Plan for the ‘Project of the Relief, Protection, and Development of Orphans and Disabled Children'”, etc.

2.3.2 Main Forms of Providing ECCE Services

The social welfare entities accommodating orphans, disabled children, and abandoned babies mainly include: children’s welfare institutes, children’s villages, the divisions for children within social welfare institutes, and the community-based rehabilitation centers for children, etc. By the end of November 2000, throughout the country, including both urban and rural areas, there were 110 children’s welfare institutes, there were children’s divisions in 400 social welfare institutes, accommodating altogether 45,549 orphans, disabled children, and abandoned babies, mostly under 14 years of age. There are nine SOS children’s villages, located in Tianjin, Chengdu, Kaifeng, Nanchang, Qiqihar, Yantai, Putian, Lhasa, Urumqi), accommodating altogether 900-odd physically fit orphans.

The civil affairs departments in China have provided a whole set of services encompassing care, rehabilitation, and education of orphans, disabled children and abandoned babies in the light of the characteristics of these children, thus safeguarding the fundamental rights and interests of these children. In their work, children’s welfare institutions adhere to the basic principles of “a proper combination of care, medical treatment, and education” and observe the “Basic Normative Practices in Social Welfare Institutions for Children”, and conduct the management of their daily
life, physical exercises, intellectual development in early childhood, and provide medical care and physical rehabilitation services for them. For babies and young children early childhood care is the main concern, and on this basis preschool education is provided, enabling these babies and young children to maintain good physical and mental health in their growth. For mentally retarded young children, efforts are made to teach them simple knowledge and life skills in the light of their degree of mental retardation. For intellectually normal but physically handicapped young children, preschool education is provided in the welfare institute with a curriculum similar to that adopted by ordinary kindergartens.

In recent years, the Ministry of Civil Affairs has actively tried to explore new ways for their care and education, such as entrusting their accommodation to various families separately with proper financial assistance. Practice has shown that these new ways are conducive to the healthy growth of children, enabling them to perceive the warmth of family life and facilitating their subsequent integration into society.

2.4 Non-governmental Organizations

2.4.1 All-China Women’s Federation

All-China Women’s Federation plays a leading role in promoting proper family education, conducts programs complementary to school education, and takes part in social education, with priorities placed on the education of preschool age children.

2.4.1.1 ECCE Programs Sponsored by ACWF

Spring Buds Program—The program was initiated in the early 1990s, being a public good program focusing on the care and aid provided to disadvantaged groups among girls (including babies and young girls). By the end of 2002, the program had received donations totaling RMB 450 million, providing aid to girls, helping out-of-school ones to attend school and school drop-outs to return to school, aggregating to 1.15 million person-times (no data are available for babies and young girls). The program intends to extend its coverage from girls only to the children of single parents, children in families with laid-off workers, and in families in dire poverty, as well as to such disadvantaged children as orphans and disabled children. Women’s federations in various localities have developed diverse forms of aid and relief, such as finding “substitute mothers” for orphans in destitute conditions, building “bridges for relieving difficulties” for laid-off workers and families in dire poverty, setting up “web-sites for assisting school drop-outs to return to school”, etc.

Bringing Well-being to West China Program—also initiated in the early 1990s, is a public good program aiming to help poverty-stricken children (including young ones) living in the western parts of China to keep away from misfortunes such as non-attendance of school, illness, injuries, and crimes. By the end of 2002, the program had received donations totaling nearly RMB one million. A number of activities aiming to assist the poverty-stricken have been conducted, beside an “investigative study of the living conditions of vagrant children.”

The National Family Education Program during the Tenth Five-Year Plan Period—a program jointly sponsored by ACWF and MOE, delineating the program and giving the suggestions for its implementation during the period 2001-2005, based on the achievement of the National Family Education Program for the Ninth FYP Period (1996-2000), aiming to continue to set up and improve various relevant institutions, including parents’ schools, parent-child learning centers, consulting stations providing information on home-based tutoring services, etc., and to develop a working network covering the whole country. By the end of 2001, according to
incomplete data, there had been set up 320,000 parents’ schools of various descriptions by women’s federations at all levels in collaboration with various quarters concerned throughout the country. In 16 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the Central Government, 5-year pilot programs for giving good birth, good care, and sound upbringing to the newly born have been initiated, and these pilot programs have played a great role in popularizing scientific knowledge of family education and in changing parents’ ideas and methods concerning the rearing of young children. Besides, 30-odd family education papers and periodicals have been published with a total circulation of five million copies, serving the needs of provincial or national readerships.

An Action Plan for Improving the Ethical Standards of China’s Minors—Initiated by ACWF and co-sponsored by the Propaganda Department of the CPC Central Committee, the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League, the Ministry of Education, the State Administration of Environmental Protection, and the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television, the work of drawing up An Action Plan for Improving the Ethical Standards of China’s Minors for the Period 2003-2007 was started in February 2002, aiming to provide operational suggestions for the moral education of children aged 3 and over.

2.4.1.2 Main Forms of Providing Services for Children

(1) Nurseries: Formal 3-year educational institutions, statistical data not available. According to an incomplete statistics made in September 2002, there were 4992 nurseries and established and operated by women’s federations, and 1202 children’s activity centers at the county-level and over sponsored by women’s federations.

(2) Non-formal educational institutions, such as parents’ schools, parent-child learning centers, children’s activity centers, health consultancy stations, etc., are usually community-based, serving the needs of children and parents.

2.4.2 UNICEF

From 1993 on, MOE and UNICEF have collaborated in sponsoring the Project for Developing Early Childhood Education in Poor Areas. By now the project has entered its third cycle. The first cycle covered the period 1993-1995 and initiated ECE work by combining formal and non-formal programs in 8 counties in Anhui Province and Guangxi Autonomous Region. The second cycle covered the period 1996-2000, and similar ECE programs were conducted in 32 poor counties distributed in 11 provinces and autonomous regions in the Northwest and Southwest of China, and very good results had been achieved. By 1999, in 11 provinces and autonomous regions of the Southwest, the average participation rates of preschool age children in 3-year preschool education programs reached 37.3%, and the participation rates of children in one-year pre-primary classes reached 67.9%, increasing by 5.6 and 6.6 percentage points compared with the figures of 1995. It is envisaged that during the current third cycle, efforts will be made to develop new models of ECE in 26 counties (districts) located in 6 western provinces and 4 cities in East China, aiming to develop community-based ECE in both urban and rural areas.

2.4.3 China Welfare Institute (CWI)

China Welfare Institute was founded by Madame Soong Chingling in Shanghai. It has made outstanding contributions to the cause of early childhood care and education in China. CWI now runs one nursery and two kindergartens in Shanghai, accommodating altogether about 1500 children. During their 50-odd years of existence, they have consistently adhered to Madame Soong’s proposition: “the best should be given to children”, and services of high quality have been
provided consistently over the years. Since 1993, CWI has taken active part in programs aiming to aid the poor in both educational and cultural fields. Thus, teachers of these institutions traveled to Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, and Qinghai to provide advice on and support to the work of kindergartens during summer vacations. Besides, in-service training programs conducted in Shanghai and catering to the needs of ECE workers employed in poverty-stricken areas are provided periodically by CWI with total cost borne by CWI. These activities conducted by CWI have contributed a great deal to the development of ECE in the western parts of China.

3. On the Quality of ECCE Services

3.1 On How to Understand the Quality of ECCE Services

Guided by the provisions of the Regulations on Kindergartens and the Guidelines on Kindergarten Education (for trial implementation), the quality of China’s ECCE lies in the all-round development of children, physically, intellectually, morally, and aesthetically, in their harmonious physical and mental growth, laying a sound basis for their development throughout their lifetime. Accordingly, China’s ECCE institutions must cooperate closely with the family and the community, endeavoring to effectively utilize all available educational resources and to create a good environment conducive to the development of children. It is incumbent upon all adults working in ECCE institutions to respect the personality and rights of children, to observe the laws governing the physical and mental development of children, to pay due consideration to features characteristic of children’s learning, and to satisfy their needs in multi-faceted development, so that they may acquire experiences conducive to physical and mental development in a happy childhood, and be able to fully develop their potentialities, and acquire a development rich in personal colors.

3.2 Monitoring the Quality of ECCE Services

To ensure the quality of ECCE services, MOE and other relevant departments are bound to fulfill their functions and to manage and oversee the operation of ECCE institutions, both formal and non-formal.

First, the quality of ECCE services has to be monitored in accordance with the requirements set by the state’s relevant laws, regulations and rules. For instance, in handling matters such as the examination of the conditions of a new kindergarten applying for formal approval of its establishment, inspection of the quality of education and of the conditions of sanitation and health care, accreditation of the qualification of the kindergarten head and teachers, setting standards and specifications concerning kindergarten buildings and facilities, etc., all the competent departments have to exercise their functions in strict compliance with legal provisions. This mode of monitoring and control applies to formal and non-formal ECCE institutions alike.

Second, monitoring work relies on national and local monitoring and assessment bodies and a system of indicators used for monitoring. To implement the Guidelines on the Development of Children and local plans for children’s development, the Committees for Women’s and Children’s Work under the State Council, all provincial-level governments, 96% of prefecture-level governments, and 93% of county-level governments have established their own monitoring and assessment bodies and produced their annual reports regularly, and to meet the requirement of monitoring and assessment, regular collection of statistical data concerning the development of children has been instituted and constantly improved. Thus, relying on the data provided by various local authorities, the competent departments under the State Council are enabled to exercise the quality control of ECCE services, discover problems and issues timely, and formulate
appropriate countermeasures, and provide guidance to ECCE in the localities.

3.3 Assessing the Quality of ECCE Services

3.3.1 Inspection and Assessment Conducted by Local Competent Departments

The nurseries and kindergartens located in various localities are subject to the inspection and assessment by local competent departments concerned. For instance, it is incumbent upon the local department of public health and epidemic prevention center to carry out regular inspection of the sanitation and hygiene conditions of local nurseries and kindergartens, while the nurseries and kindergartens in question are duty-bound to regularly report conditions concerning the health and illness of children in their custody to local department of public health. In the same vein, the local department of financial affairs should inspect the financial accounts of local nurseries and kindergartens, and the local department of environmental protection should inspect their environmental conditions, and so on.

3.3.2 Grading of nurseries and kindergartens by local educational departments based on the results of assessment

In compliance with the regulations and rules formulated by relevant governmental agencies and in compliance with the gist of the Guidelines on Children’s Development, and in the light of local conditions, local educational departments have developed local norms and standards for assessing the quality of local nurseries and kindergartens. As a rule, local nurseries and kindergartens are graded into several categories according to the results of assessment. Nurseries and kindergartens of different grades enjoy an honor and status accordingly, fulfill their functions differently, and charge fees differently. It is incumbent upon MOE to make ad hoc inspection and review of the assessment schemes adopted by the localities, and help local authorities to solve outstanding issues.

3.3.3 Formulating the Normative Standards for Assessing the Quality of Outstanding Kindergartens Qualified to Be Entered into MOE’s List of National Model Kindergartens during the Tenth Five-Year Plan Period.

To provide guidance to local authorities in their endeavor to assessing the ECCE services provided by local kindergartens so as to promote the healthy development of ECCE, within the Action Plan for Implementing the Guidelines on Kindergarten Education—a component of the 10th Five-Year Plan formulated by MOE—is a section on the normative standards used for assessing the performance of kindergartens qualified to be entered into MOE’s list of national model kindergartens conceived in the light of the Guidelines on Kindergarten Education, providing a reference for local authorities to formulate their own normative standards.

4. Qualification of Teachers

According to the data of 2000, there were 946,000 kindergarten teachers in the whole country (not including teachers employed in nurseries), of which 11.8% have qualifications equal to or higher than the completion of short-cycle higher education (2-3-year programs), 45% are graduates of normal schools (secondary teacher training institutions), 16.2% are graduates of vocational high schools specializing in kindergarten education, and the rest are graduates of general upper or lower secondary schools or people having undergone short-term training.

4.1 Teachers Employed in Institutions Providing ECCE Services for Children Aged 0-3

As a rule, the teachers employed in formal nurseries consist of graduates of normal schools or vocational high schools (specializing in early childhood education), or other personnel having undergone professional training and acquired certified qualifications. The teachers employed in
non-formal nurseries consist of teachers transferred from normal ECCE institutions, retired schoolteachers, and volunteers having undergone some professional training.

4.2 Teachers Employed in Institutions Providing ECCE Services for Children Aged 3-6

As a rule the teachers employed in formal kindergartens consist of graduates of 4-year colleges, 2-3-year short-cycle higher education institutions, normal schools, or vocational high schools (specializing in early childhood education), or other personnel having acquired certificates of kindergarten teachers. The teachers employed in non-normal kindergartens consist of teachers transferred from normal kindergartens, retired schoolteachers, and volunteers having undergone professional training.

4.3 Personnel Employed in Children’s Welfare Institutions

The Chinese government considers that to strengthen the training of personnel employed in Children’s welfare institutions and enhance their skills in professional care of children is an important means of improving the services provided by these institutions. Accordingly, children’s welfare institutions have taken steps to gradually improve the knowledge structure and professional qualifications of their employees by recruiting the graduates of professional institutions. By the end of 2001, the proportion of the staff of children’s welfare institutions graduated from professional institutions had reached over 40%. Meanwhile, the departments of civil affairs in the country have step up their efforts of the in-service training of personnel employed in the children’s welfare institutions. For instance, from 1998 on, the Ministry of Civil Affairs has entrusted the College of Civil Affairs Administrators to provide training programs capped with certificates of short-cycle higher education specializing in children’s welfare. So far 5 training courses have been conducted, providing training to several hundred of trainees. Besides the national-level training mentioned above, there are in addition 2nd and 3rd level training provided by provincial-level and lower-level institutions, catering to the needs of children’s welfare workers, parents, and community-based volunteers.

5. Early Childhood Education (ECE) Curriculum

5.1 Curriculum Provided by Institutions Providing Services for Children Aged 0-3

In non-formal ECE institutions, there is no unified curriculum formulated by the competent department. Since ECE provided for children of the 0-3 age group is largely based in the family and the community, therefore, a significant part of relevant services is directly provided to individual families, and the parent-oriented content usually consists of knowledge and skills concerning the health care and nutrition of babies and the methods of play; and the babies-oriented content usually consists of language development, large muscle movements, fine movements, cognitive ability, and playing skills and other activities. Such services aim to promote the simultaneous growth of children and parents under proper professional guidance.

5.2 Curriculum Provided by Institutions Providing Services for Children Aged 3-6

All kindergartens accommodating children aged 3-6, no matter if they are public or non-state/private, formal or non-formal, must comply with the provisions of the Guidelines on Kindergarten Education promulgated by MOE and observe the requirements delineated therein concerning the goals and objectives in the five areas of health care, language development, social studies, science, and arts, and thereupon design their own curriculum in the light of their specific conditions, and choose and organize the content of education. Play is the basic form of activity in kindergartens. As a rule, kindergartens try to help children to develop harmoniously physically, intellectually, morally and aesthetically through a rich assortment of learning activities, playing
activities, and living activities.

6. Sources of Funds for Financing ECE

Most ECCE institutions in China are sponsored by non-state/private entities, with only a small part run by governmental departments. Therefore, ECCE institutions of various categories vary in their sources of funding. Article 42 of the Regulations on Kindergartens stipulates: “The funds of kindergartens are to be raised by their sponsors according to law, so as to guarantee their adequate financing and maintain a stable source of revenues.” Article 10 of the Regulations on the Management of Kindergartens explicitly stipulates: “A unit or individual intending to establish a kindergarten must have sources of funds for providing ECCE services, for maintaining and renovating existing buildings and facilities, as well as for their expansion.”

6.1 Fundraising Channels for ECCE

6.1.1 Financing of Formal Educational Institutions

The expenses of public kindergartens run by the educational departments are mainly borne by budgetary appropriations. The expenditures of kindergartens run by enterprises, institutions, governmental bodies, social organizations, PLA units, and educational institutions, as a rule, are incorporated into the budgets of the respective sponsors. Besides, fees charged according to established rules and paid by parents constitute a part of the revenues of kindergartens.

The financing of kindergartens run by urban neighborhoods and/or collective units mainly depends on a reasonable collection of fees, and they should keep an independent account and be solely responsible for their own profit or loss. It is possible for them to obtain some subsidies or other support from local governments, such as expenses related to the purchase of large equipment or the repair of buildings.

The sources of funds for financing rural kindergartens and pre-primary classes are quite varied, including (1) funds raised by a township (town) government through multiple channels, such as public dues charged, (2) funds raised by an administrative village, (3) funds collected from donations by the people, (4) small amount of fees paid by parents. In some localities a certain proportion of public revenues of the township (town) government is allocated to the development of ECCE.

6.1.2 Financing of Non-formal Educational Institutions

The financing of non-formal ECCE institutions is quite different from the financing of formal institutions. Their main sources include donations from non-state sectors and NGOs, fees paid by parents for service charge, funds raised by kindergartens themselves, such as income earned from special services charged, etc.

6.1.3 Financing of Children’s Welfare Undertakings

The sources of funds financing the social welfare institutions accommodating orphans and abandoned babies mainly come from state organs and collectives, supplemented by donations. The Ministry of Civil Affairs of the PRC has successively sponsored or set up China Philanthropy Association, Office for Assisting the Poor to Attend School, Office for Assisting the Poor to Obtain Medical Care, and has raised a lot of funds. According to incomplete statistics, in the period 1996-1999, MOCA alone raised RMB 20 million through its project for raising funds to help the poor to obtain medical care, and used it to bear the cost for 2937 surgical operations and subsequent rehabilitation for 2689 disabled children.

In February, 2002 the State Council approved and distributed a Circular on Some Suggestions concerning the Acceleration of the Process of Socialization of Social Welfare jointly
formulated by 11 governmental agencies, including the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the State Development and Planning Commission, which reaffirms the necessity to support the undertakings of children’s welfare by increasing the level of financing. Besides budgetary appropriations, a number of ways are suggested for fund-raising, including the issue of China Welfare Lottery tickets

7. National Policies and Programs concerning ECCE

7.1 Program for the Development of Chinese Children for the Period 2001-2010

In 1992, in the light of the global goals and objectives raised at the World Summit of Children and the provisions of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, the State Council of the PRC formulated China’s first national plan for action safeguarding the rights of children and promoting the development of children—the Guidelines on Children’s Development during the 1990s. As the governments at all levels have placed high priority on the development of children and have taken steps to implement the guidelines in real earnest, so far the main objectives set by the guidelines have basically been attained, securing historic advances in the cause of the survival, protection, and development of Chinese children.

It is noteworthy that the Program for the Development of Chinese Children for the Period 2001-2010 was examined and approved by the State Council at the 37th session of its Standing Committee on April 20, 2001. This measure was taken by the Chinese government to push forward the development of Chinese children to meet the needs of socio-economic development and in step with the times, and its formulation was complete in line with the general requirements delineated in the Outline for the Tenth Five-Year Plan for the Development of the National Economy and Social Progress of the PRC, with the promotion of the development of children as its main theme, conceived in the light of Chinese realities. This program covers actions in the following four fields: children and health, children and education, children and legal protection, and children and environment, setting forth 18 main objectives and 53 supportive objectives for the period 2001-2010, as well as 59 strategic measures. The implementation of this program will not only provide the policy measures for the sustained development of children’s undertakings, but also create a much better environment and conditions for the healthy growth of Chinese children.

To implement the program is an important responsibility borne by governmental authorities at all levels, and at the same time the common responsibility of the entire society. Children constitute the main body of the beneficiaries of the program and also a main force participating in its implementation.

The Committee for Women’s and Children’s Work will be responsible for coordinating the efforts of all quarters concerned.

7.2 Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Protection of Minors

The law was adopted at the 21st session of the Standing Committee of the Seventh National People’s Congress on September 4, 1991, promulgated by Order No. 50 of the President of the People’s Republic of China on September 4, 1991 and effective as of January 1, 1992. This law safeguards the legitimate rights of all minors under 18 years of age and respects the integrity of their personality, provides for their protection and education in the light of the characteristics of their physical and mental development. It explicitly points out that the protection of minors constitutes the common responsibility of state organs, the armed forces, political parties, social organizations, enterprises and institutions, grassroots autonomous organizations of the masses in both urban and rural areas, the custodians of minors, and other adult citizens. It gives detailed
stipulations concerning the protection of minors in all aspects: protection provided by the family, by the school, by society at large, and by the judiciary.

7.3 Program for the Ethical Advancement of China’s Minors for the Period 2003-2007

The Program for the Ethical Advancement of China’s Minors for the Period 2003-2007 was jointly sponsored by the following six agencies—All-China Women’s Federation, the Department of Propaganda of the CPC Central Committee, the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League of China, the Ministry of Education, General Administration of Environmental Protection, and General Administration of Radio, Film and Television, with ACWF taking the initiative. This program is a very comprehensive systemic social engineering project and has been given great attention by the leadership of the CPC and the government, and has won the strong support of all quarters of society. President Jiang Zemin wrote the inscription in commemorating this occasion: “Strengthen the Ethical Advancement of Minors and Promote the Healthy Growth of Children.” This program is mainly oriented to the needs of minors aged 3-18, and its main theme is “Let me be a qualified minor citizen.” Five kinds of minor activities, practical in nature and colorful in taste, have been designed to realize the objectives contemplated. Be a small help to the parents at home; be a small partner to one’s classmate in school; be a small pacesetter in the community in helping others and disciplining oneself; be a small guardian of environmental protection in the community, be a small master in one’s own daily life—and let these mottos help children to learn to be a man and to learn to do things. The program is stratified by differentiated objectives into parts covering the age groups 3-5, 6-9, 10-12, 13-15, and 16-18 to coordinate with the objectives of moral education set by the educational department for respective stages of schooling.

7.4 Reformation and Development for Basic Education by the State Council

Reformation and Development for Basic Education by June 2003

8. Model of ECCE Management Envisioned for the Coming Years

It is contemplated that during the 10th FYP period (2001-2005) in the realm of ECCE, efforts will be made to develop diverse forms of community-based formal and non-formal ECCE institutions and community-based facilities serving the needs of family education of children aged 0-6, constituting a regional network of ECCE services.

Within a framework of community-based ECCE, the oversight of ECCE institutions accommodating children aged 0-3 and aged 3-6 will no longer be divided by sectors of public health and education. Efforts will be made to develop a new and rational model of management conducive to the development of children by taking an integrated approach to the entire domain of ECCE and its planning. Thus, a new framework of children’s work fully socialized may take shape, in which the government will exercise coordination of efforts, with each governmental department fulfilling its functions, and involving the participation of various quarters concerned.

The operating mechanisms of this new model of management lie in the following considerations: With the needs of discrete communities as the social context, the government is responsible for the overall planning of ECCE; the educational department will be in charge of such matters as the implementation of plans and coordination of actions, formulation of necessary regulations and rules, exercising the rule of law in the educational sector, evaluating the quality of education, teaching staff development, etc. The model nurseries and kindergartens run by non-state/private entities and the model nurseries and kindergartens run by the educational department constitute the mainstay of ECCE institutions, supplemented by and associated with ECCE institutions of various descriptions existing within a given community, enlisting the efforts
of the community and parents and personnel of the relevant departments, and fully utilizing available societal resources of various kinds, and thereby giving shape to an effective mode of social organization and promoting the socialization of ECCE.
Figure 2  A Schematic Diagram of the Management of Community-based ECCD

- Overall Planning by the Government
- Supervised by Educational Department
- Model Kindergartens run by the Educational Department
  - Demonstration, Training, Information
  - Consultancy, Exchange of Experiences
- Model Kindergartens run by Non-state/private entities
- Demonstration, Exchange of Experiences, Training, Information, Consultancy, Services
- ECCE Institutions Accommodating Children Aged 0-3
- Kindergartens run by Educational Departments
- Kindergartens run by Non-state/private entities
- Non-formal ECCE
9. Problems and Challenges Faced

Unprecedented drastic changes are underway in the Chinese society. The transformation of society and the transition from a planned economy to a market economy have posed new problems and challenges to ECCE in China. These new problems and challenges find their expression in the following ways:

The rate of enrollment of the kindergarten is going to reduction

According to the statistics data given by the Basic Education Department of MOE, comparative 2001 to 1995, kindergartens in urban was reduced 9000 and the number of children in the kindergarten reduced 1million; this situation is even worse in the countryside (see table 4).

Table 4: Number of the Kindergartens and Children in the Kindergartens

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Countryside</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of Kindergartens</td>
<td>Number of Children in Kindergartens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>536.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>520.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>503.4</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>503.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>464.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Resource: Basic Education Department of MOE

Quality control of non-formal ECCE

To energetically develop non-formal ECCE responds to the need of current Chinese society and to the needs of deepening social transformation now underway in China. With changes occurring in the model of management concerning ECCE, the quality control of non-formal ECCE is now placed on the agenda. The existing system of quality control was designed to meet the needs of formal ECCE institutions, and virtually no control has been exercised on the performance of non-formal ECCE institutions. Therefore, how to devise, institute a system of effective quality control over non-formal ECCE institutions and how to develop effective monitoring and assessment of performance have become important questions that must be addressed to comprehensively enhance the quality of ECCE in China.

Inadequate financing of ECCE

Current level of ECCE financing is obviously inadequate. In the period 1990-2000, expenditures on ECCE only accounted for 1.3% of total public expenditure on education. The educational budget of the Central Government provides no earmarked item on ECCE, and all public expenditures on ECCE have come from local governments, and public expenditures on ECCE accounted for about 55% of total expenditure. Therefore, ECCE in poverty-stricken areas is handicapped by stringent financial problems. An important policy issue to be addressed is how to support ECCE in poor areas, especially the county-level and township-level central kindergartens in these areas, as they play a demonstrative role in their respective areas.
Qualification and Remuneration of Teachers

With the incessant deepening of reforms in China’s ECCE, especially with the upcoming changes in the model of ECCE, the entire society has shown greater concern to ECCE, and parents tend to have increasingly higher aspirations for the education of their only child, and consequently higher demands are placed on the qualification of teachers. Yet the task of teacher training, both initial and in-service, has been seriously handicapped by inadequate financing and other resources, and the conditions are even more stringent in the rural and remote areas. Besides, inadequate financing also adversely affects the stability of the teaching staff. Since over 60% of teachers are community-supported, their fluctuating earnings give rise to their high mobility, exerting significant adverse affects on the development of ECCE and the improvement of its quality.

10. Sources of Material
1. “Adhering to the principle of ‘placing high priority on children’s development’ so as to promote the healthy growth of children”, speech made by Peng Peiyun, Chairperson of the Committee for Women’s and Children’s Work under the State Council and concurrently the President of ACWF, at the National Conference on Women’s and Children’s Work sponsored by ACWF on September 23, 2001.
2. “Advance with the times, and orient our work to the future in an endeavor to raise ACWF’s work to a new level”, speech made by Gu Xiulian, Vice Chairperson of the Committee for Women’s and Children’s Work under the State Council and concurrently the Vice President of ACWF, at the National Conference on Women’s and Children’s Work sponsored by ACWF on September 23, 2002.