

## TOOL 4.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

### ENSURING STRONG ECE COMPONENTS IN THE OPERATIONAL PLAN

#### Recommendations: Ensuring Strong ECE Components in the Operational Plan

After you've developed the ECE strategies and activities for the Education Sector Plan,<sup>1</sup> the next step is to ensure that they are well-reflected and integrated in the operational plan.

Consider the following recommendations and illustrative examples when developing an operational plan for the ECE subsector or where ECE is integrated as part of a sector-wide operational plan.

Where applicable, recommendations relevant to developing annual operational plans are also provided. Examples of operational plans (ECE specific or where ECE is integrated) are provided in Annex 1 below with brief analyses and key take-aways.

#### Development process



##### Recommendation 1

Draw up the operational plan with a medium-term expenditure framework and **link it to the national budget process**, so that it can usefully feed into the national annual budget preparation and oversight processes.

**EXAMPLE** For example, the development of Ghana's Kindergarten Operational Plan (as a separate subsector action plan) is anchored in the country's national sector reviews and budget cycles. You may find it in "Ghana's Early Childhood Education Policy Framework" in the Additional Resources of [Tool 4.1](#).



##### Recommendation 2

Identify a **timeline and consultative process** (ex. workshops or small group meetings, etc.) for establishing and validating the operational plan, in the context of the overall timeline of the ESP preparation process. If needed, consider external technical support to guide/facilitate the consultative process.

**EXAMPLE** For example, in Ghana, the ECE TWG held workshops, followed by a series of small task team meetings to flesh out the Kindergarten Operational Plan through a consultative and iterative process. This consolidated draft was then submitted for validation at the regional levels with participation from a wide range of stakeholders (district education officials, NGOs, development partners, community representatives, teacher representatives, etc.).



##### Recommendation 3

Ensure that the **results of the consultative process** for developing the operational plan are shared with the broader ESP development group to ensure that ECE components are integrated and aligned with the sector-wide operational plan.

**EXAMPLE** For example, Sao Tome & Principe's ECE TWG held several meetings to develop an ECE specific action plan for the subsector. Their work was then shared with the broader team working on the overall ESP preparation. The ECE action plan was then integrated within the sector-wide operational plan.

<sup>1</sup> The ECE strategies and activities are developed during the programme design phase. For guidance on this, please see tool "[3.1 Guiding Questions and Tips: Refining, Selecting and Prioritizing ECE Strategies and Developing Corresponding Activities](#)".

## Overall content and format

### Recommendation 4

Ensure that the following **elements are identified**.

1. **ECE goals, strategies and their related activities;**<sup>2</sup>
2. **Time period (i.e., the timing of each activity);**
3. **Quantity of inputs for each activity;**
4. **Quantity of outputs and the unit costs;**
5. **Overall cost of the activity;**<sup>3</sup>
6. **Sources of funding for each activity (this could be the central government, local government, development partners, NGO, CBOs, grants, loans, etc.);**
7. **Entity responsible for implementation for each activity; and**
8. **Targets/output indicator for each activity.**<sup>4</sup>

### Recommendation 5

Follow the **operational plan template** that is provided (generally, the broader sector-wide Education Sector Plan development process will identify a template to use) to organize the information. This template should ideally be followed to develop annual action plans (if applicable).

- As mentioned, there is no prescribed format for the operational plan. However, the key elements should be reflected. Below is an example from Ghana’s Kindergarten Operational Plan. Additional examples of operational plans for ECE (excerpts) are provided in Annex 1 of this tool.
- [Annex 2 of MOOC Module 5](#) provides a template of an annual action plan.

#### Excerpt from Ghana’s Kindergarten Operational Plan

1. **Strategies** are derived from policy goal and objectives.

3. Each activity must have an **indicator** to check whether the activity is implemented.

5. Each activity comes with a **cost** (in total over the period, and by year).

  

Area 3: Pre-service and Inservice Teacher Education and Training															
Policy Goal: Improved skills and competencies of KG teachers and support staff on play-based pedagogy															
Objective 3.1: Ensure the training and certification of all KG teachers [has there been specification of core competencies for ECE teachers? I think so but if not, that is the foundation with which every teacher should be trained]															
3.1.1: Institutionalize the training and certification of all KG teachers															
SN	Activity and (quantity of Input)	Output Indicator	Targets					Unit Cost	Cost per Year					Responsible entity	
			Baseline 2019	2020	2021	2022	2023		2024	Baseline 2019	2020	2021	2022		2023
3.1.1.1	all KG teachers (public and private) to address their training needs (KG pedagogy, qualification and	No. of Personnel Designated													Lead: GES-HR, EMIS Unit, NTC, BED, Pre-tertiary
3.1.1.2	Group teachers in zones and develop schedules for training	An Information sharing system designed, documented and operationalised													Lead: NTC, National Nurses' Teacher Training Centres (NNTTC), Master and District Teachers' Association
3.1.1.3	Organise training for trainers (To	No. of persons reached with information quarterly													Lead: NTC, BED-GES, NTC

2. The **activities** must be clearly defined, time bound and realistic.

4. The indicator must have **baseline and targets** (timing).

6. Each activity must clearly indicate who will be **responsible** for implementation.

2 The ECE strategies and activities are developed during the programme design phase. For guidance on this, please see tool “3.1 Guiding Questions and Tips: Refining, Selecting and Prioritizing ECE Strategies and Developing Corresponding Activities”.

3 Please see the recommendations below for cost calculations.

4 Indicators are developed during the programme design phase (please see tool “3.2 Criteria, Recommendations and Checklists: Defining ECE Indicators and Target Setting”).



## Recommendation 6

If a separate ECE subsector action plan is developed (drawn from or to inform the sector-wide operational plan), it may be helpful to **link/reference each activity in the ECE action plan to its corresponding number/location** in the sector-wide operational plan.

## Activities



## Recommendation 7

**Prioritize activities<sup>5</sup>** across the subsector based on existing realities (funding, capacity, urgency, and time). Are there trade-offs that need to be considered?

**EXAMPLE** For example, an activity linked to a strategy around advocacy and community mobilization campaigns to engage communities in ECE (which may be time- and resource-intensive, depending on the scope of the campaigns) may need to be carried out at a later time so that the activity linked to a thorough review of ECE teacher competencies to ensure the quality of the ECE workforce can be prioritized.



## Recommendation 8

Pay careful attention to the sequencing of activities.<sup>6</sup> Are there activities that should precede others? Are there activities that are implemented simultaneously? It is also important to consider sequencing of activities within and across strategies.

**EXAMPLE** For example, should expanding ECE teacher training (pre- and/or in-service) and revising ECE-related quality assurance-related issues and indicators to be integrated in EMIS be carried out in parallel or only after a new ECE curriculum is developed or the existing ECE curricula is harmonized and/or revised?



## Recommendation 9

For the annual action plan, ensure that **activities are realistic** based on what was achieved the previous year. The previous year implementation should inform the number and type of activities to include in the current annual action plan. In some cases, activities from previous year will have to be brought into the current year.



## Recommendation 10

Ensure that each activity has a **SMART indicator and a realistic target.**<sup>7</sup> The target may need to be revised based on time, cost and capacity considerations as well as to reflect what may be reached in the time period of the operational plan (as opposed to the longer duration of the ESP).

**EXAMPLE** For example, a target for construction of X number of preschool classrooms might need to be adjusted if capital costs are too high.

<sup>5</sup> For guiding questions on sequencing and prioritizing activities, please see tool "3.1 Guiding Questions and Tips: Refining, Selecting and Prioritizing ECE Strategies and Developing Corresponding Activities".

<sup>6</sup> Same as footnote 5.

## Cost calculation and budget



### Recommendation 11

Consider the following questions when **calculating the unit cost** for each activity:

- What is the cost of each input? A cost matrix may be developed to facilitate this calculation. For an example of a cost matrix, see “[Ghana’s example \(unit cost matrix\) in the Additional Resources of Tool 2.3](#)”.
- Are there available market rates that can be referred to for costing? For example, there might be a market rate for printing of documents, or for meeting venues in a particular region/city.
- Are there recurrent costs? These refer to items that occur regularly and continuously every year, which are used (consumed) the same year, and which cannot be used again the following year (i.e., teachers’ salaries, ancillary services, teaching and learning materials used within a year).
- Are there capital costs? Include items which occur only once, or from time to time, but not regularly every year, and not continuously, such as infrastructure (i.e. construction or repairs, furniture, purchase of other heavy equipment) and expenditure the benefit of which lasts over a number of years (investments).
- Are there marginal costs?<sup>8</sup> Are there costs associated with activities that may lead to increase in access or demand of a particular service? For example, parenting support groups or community mobilization campaigns may lead to an increased demand for ECE in a given geographic area where there was historically limited demand, or no demand, for preschool from families and communities. It is important to factor in the cost related to including additional students based on the transformative shift that community mobilization campaigns may lead to. **EXAMPLE** For example:
  - Let’s say that there are 25,000 learners in ECE and that the unit cost for those learners has been budgeted for. Prior to the start of the school year, there are plans to conduct awareness and information campaigns to increase enrollment.
  - Based on the planned awareness and information campaign, the budget should consider a possible increase in the number of ECE learners. With the possible increase, the overall number of students should be increased and not be limited to 25,000. The marginal cost associated with this potential increase in the number of ECE learners should be considered in the cost calculation and budget.



### Recommendation 12

Ensure that the **cost of all activities** is within the overall envelope of resources identified in the education sector plan (using the ministry of finance budget ceilings and confirmed development partner inputs).

**EXAMPLE** For example, the government’s budget framework may operate an annual ceiling budget framework or a medium-term budget framework over three years. Within this budget framework, it is important to ensure that the cost for the activities that are identified for each year is within the limit of the government’s and partner’s allocations for the given year.

7 Indicators are developed during the programme design phase. For guidance on developing indicators and setting targets, please see tool “[3.2 Criteria, Recommendations and Checklists: Defining ECE Indicators and Target Setting](#)”.

8 Marginal cost is the cost of adding one additional unit of output or the cost of increasing an activity.

Annual Budgets/Contributions: Scenario 1		Cost of ECE activities for 2020
Government allocation to ECE in 2020: USD 4 million	Partners contribution to ECE in 2020: USD 2 million	Overall cost of all activities in the ECE action plan for 2020 is <b>USD 6 million</b> (this is within the annual budget of USD 6 million).
Annual Budgets/Contributions: Scenario 2		Cost of ECE activities for 2020
Government allocation to ECE in 2020: USD 4 million	Partners contribution to ECE in 2020: USD 2 million	Overall cost of all activities in the ECE action plan for 2020 is <b>USD 8 million</b> (this exceeds the annual budget of USD 6 million).

- It is important to keep an eye on the economy and national wealth, government revenue capacity and consistency, consistent/incremental allocation to the Education Sector and the ECE subsector as well as consistency in development partners' financial contributions based on commitments. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to global economic difficulties, which may lead to a decrease of partner funding to the Education Sector.



### Recommendation 13

For the annual action plan, consider **whether the ECE budget envelope and/or human resources for the subsector has changed** from year to year. Sometimes, personnel shifts can take place which might affect implementation. Additionally, some committed funding may elapse, and this might create implementation bottlenecks.

- EXAMPLE** For example, let's suppose that a country's ECE budget envelope over a three-year period decreases significantly (from \$10,000,000 in Year 1 to \$5,000,000 in Year 2 and to \$1,500,000 in Year 3). These changes will impact how activities are planned and implemented – such as earmarking funds for more costly activities across the three years – principally in the first two years – to the extent possible.
  - EXAMPLE** If you plan to revise the ECE curriculum or develop new quality standards emphasizing learning through play, inclusion, gender-responsiveness, and crisis-preparedness, this will require subsequent dissemination, teacher training, and implementation monitoring activities. The most expensive activities will likely be the printing, distribution costs, training-related, and implementation monitoring costs. Ideally, a consultative curriculum revision or development process and printing/distribution would happen in Year 1 with training in Year 2 and monitoring/follow-up on implementation of the revised curriculum in Year 3.
  - EXAMPLE** If you will expand equitable access to ECE through a one-year school readiness program, targeting the most marginalized and vulnerable groups may be more costly and require pre-positioning specific materials and expertise, such as supplies for temporary learning spaces in refugee camps; assessments, teaching and learning materials, and assistive devices for children with disabilities; and constructing additional annexed classrooms in primary schools or maintenance costs for alternative, community-based ECE locations to offer the program. The costs for procuring these materials and construction activities could be planned for Years 1 and 2 with distribution and the start of the program in Year 3.
  - EXAMPLE** If community-based ECE teachers not currently on the government payroll are planned to be absorbed by the system through the provision of incentive (not full government salary) based on a qualifications scale to expand the ECE workforce, these incentive costs will need to remain constant across the three years despite the decrease in budget.

## ANNEX 1

The below are country examples of operational plans with ECE components.

## GHANA EXAMPLE

Program Area/Policy Priority		Early Childhood Education																	
Strategy		Improving access to quality Early Childhood Education																	
Component	Activity	Objective	Indicator	Output	Cost	Responsible Unit/Person	Funding Source	Implementation Timelines					Estimated Cost					Budget Gap	Comment
								Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5		
ECE public awareness campaign and outreach to families and communities about the value of ECE and good parenting skills	Disseminate information on the benefits of at-age enrollment, in with other ECD programs on nutrition, health, and birth registration.	To re-enforce ECE public awareness and outreach strategy across the country	# of parents receiving messages, by location	CE public awareness campaign conducted	200,000	ECE Unit	UNICEF/MoE						50,000	50,000	30,000	30,000	40,000	20,000	There is a need for resource mobilization to fill the gap
	Conduct a parental perception study.	To inform program development for parenting skills	Parental perception study available	Parental perception study published	100,000	ECE & Parent Engagement Units	MoE/					100,000	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
							UNICEF/ World Bank												
	Develop programs to promote good parenting skills and continue on-going age-appropriate activities and stimulation suitable for the home setting.	To improve parental knowledge and age-appropriate enrollment	Parenting program developed	Parenting program conducted	150,000	ECE & Planning Units	GPE/MoE					50,000	100,000	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	

Note: This is from a working draft of the operational plan.



## Analysis

1. **For Ghana, the approach was to develop a separate ECE subsector operational plan.**
2. **This operational plan has components for each strategy, with associated activities.**
3. **Key take-aways:**
  - a. Countries can adapt the operational plan template to suit their needs and context.
  - b. There is no one perfect template but the major elements (strategies, activities, outputs, indicators, cost, responsibility, funding source and timelines) should be captured.
  - c. The operational plan is aligned with the recommendations.
    - The operational plan was developed via a consultative process through a series of workshops and small group meetings.
    - The strategies have corresponding activities which “break down” the strategies into manageable, action-oriented tasks.
    - Activities are sequenced. The parental perception study will take place first, which will help inform the activity on developing parenting programmes to strengthen parents’ knowledge and skills with supporting their children’s early learning at home and in the preschool setting.
    - There is a SMART indicator and target for each activity. For example, the indicator “# of parents receiving messages, by location” is:
      - **Specific** as it is not vague. If multiple dissemination channels (i.e. TV, radio, community mobilization and engagement in-person sessions, and SMS), the indicator could be disaggregated further by dissemination channel type. If multiple service providers (state, non-state, faith-based, etc.) will disseminate messages, the indicator may be disaggregated by service provider information source.
      - **Measurable.** This is measurable. Ghana is developing relevant measurement tools to track parental engagement programmes through radio, television and SMS. Existing protocol or other data collection methods will need to be agreed for indicators such as this that may not be part of existing data collection mechanisms.
      - **Attainable,** as this activity will be implemented in a continuous manner, time constraints will not likely impede achieving this activity. Ghana stakeholders will need to identify how this will be implemented at scale over five years. As financial resources have already been identified as a gap, resource limitations may require either modifying the activity and its corresponding indicator and target or working with strategic stakeholders/partners to develop investment cases for resource mobilization.
      - **Relevant.** The indicator is relevant - the activity is disseminating information and respond to the needs, and the indicator measures if information/needs have been received/met.
      - **Timebound.** The indicator’s timeframe is outlined within a specific timeframe (continuous over 5 years), in line with the ESP and Medium Term Development Strategic Plans. If multiple service providers will support this activity through various dissemination channels and service providers with centralized materials being developed and phased in over time to various geographic locations, this detail may be specified in program design or other documentation outlining implementation plans and details.
    - Those responsible for implementation are clearly stated.
    - The unit costs are stated.

## ETHIOPIA EXAMPLE

Strategy	Activity Name	Indicator	Unit	Number of units to be completed per year					Total number of units	Unit Cost	Cost per year					Total Cost	KPI Reference Number of the most relevant indicator this activity will affect	Key Performance Indicator (KPI) that the activity will contribute to achieving	Source of funds	Responsible Entity	Comment
				2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20			2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20						
Expand O-class and kindergarten provision so that all children have access to at least one year of classroom-based pre-primary education	Establish a country pre-primary expansion programme, linked to education performance, with priority to disadvantaged areas and amongst disadvantaged groups	GER for pre-primary will rise from 34% to 80%	Consultative workshop participant	60					60	4256	255,360	0	0	0	0	255,360	2.1	Pre-primary GER	UNICEF*	SIP	
Expand O-class and kindergarten provision so that all children have access to at least one year of classroom-based pre-primary education	Construct an O-Class in each primary school (supported by community development and resources), equipped with a minimum package of teaching and learning materials and accessible to children with special needs	Percentage of students that receive at least one year pre primary education will reach 100%	Constructed O-Class in each primary school	5035	3777	3777	3776	3776	20,141	23010	115,855,350	86,908,770	86,908,770	86,885,760	86,885,760	463,444,410	2.1	Pre-primary GER	Communities'	WEOs, Schools	
Expand O-class and kindergarten provision so that all children have access to at least one year of classroom-based pre-primary education	Develop strategies for private sector motivation and support and government provision of up to 50% of kindergarten enrolment	GER for pre-primary will rise from 34% to 80%	Workshop participant		70				70	4256	0	297,920	0	0	0	297,920	2.1	Pre-primary GER	GoE	SIP	



## ETHIOPIA EXAMPLE

Expand O-class and kindergarten provision so that all children have access to at least one year of classroom-based pre-primary education	Strengthen all CTEs to train pre-primary teachers for certificate and diploma courses so that they can deploy adequate qualified teachers	GER for pre-primary will rise from 34% to 80%	Workshop participant	60	60	60	60	60	300	4256	255,360	255,360	255,360	255,360	255,360	1,276,800	4.1	Pre-primary teachers holding the ECCE diploma	GoE	TELDD	
Expand O-class and kindergarten provision so that all children have access to at least one year of classroom-based pre-primary education	Develop a mechanism to promote inclusive pre-primary education and extend access to children with disabilities and other special educational needs	GER for pre-primary will rise from 34% to 80%	Workshop participant		50				50	4256	0	212,800	0	0	0	212,800	2.1	Pre-primary GER	GoE	SIP	
Expand O-class and kindergarten provision so that all children have access to at least one year of classroom-based pre-primary education	Develop and validate parental education manuals and expand through exercising indigenous knowledge	Awareness of parents will rise	Workshop participant		65				65	4256	0	276,640	0	0	0	276,640	3.1	Grade 1 dropout rate	UNICEF*	SIP	

## Analysis

1. **The strategies, activities, indicators and costs are responding to the priority programs which can be considered.**
2. **This operational plan includes the cost of activities.**
3. **Key take-aways:**
  - a. Some activities require a one-year cost, but others require recurrent or annual costs based on annual deliverables.
  - b. The operational plan is aligned with the recommendations
    - It was developed through a consultative process.
    - It includes ECE strategies with corresponding detailed activities.
    - Activities are sequenced.
    - There is a SMART indicator for each activity. Ethiopia stakeholders may reflect on the “attainable” criteria to ensure that there are the necessary human and financial resources to scale “O-classes” in the timeframe outlined in the plan. “Measurable” criteria may be reflected on to identify if data measuring the extent to which O-classes are established at scale is feasible to collect within existing systems (I.e. EMIS).
    - Those responsible for implementation are clearly stated.
    - The unit costs are stated.



## Analysis

1. **The operational plan uses “targets” as language in place of indicators.**
2. **The operational plan includes the key elements (policy goals, strategies, targets which are indicators in this case, indicative costs per year, and those responsible for implementation).**
3. **Key take-aways:**
  - a. The operational plan is aligned with the recommendations
    - It was developed through a consultative process.
    - It includes ECE strategies, with corresponding detailed activities.
    - Based on this excerpt, we see that the timeline for the activities is generally across the five years (2017 to 2021). Some activities are planned to start at a later time (for example, construction of ECE centres starts in 2018), and some activities will take longer than others (for example, the development and roll-out of the ECE curriculum framework and minimum standards is expected to take place from 2017 to 2019).
    - Indicators are not specified herein, though targets are included. SMART indicators added to correspond with each strategy (outcome indicators) and activity (output indicators) in addition to the targets included would strengthen this operational plan.
    - Those responsible for implementation are clearly stated.
    - The unit costs are stated.