NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL (NERDC)

NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARD FOR EARLY CHILD CARE CENTRES IN NIGERIA

Supported by UNICEF Nigeria
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of acronyms</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreword</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescribed Minimum Standards</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirements in water and Environmental Sanitation</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirements in Psycho-Social Care &amp; Early Learning</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirements in Health</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirements in Nutrition</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirements in Child Protection</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders and Roles</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACRONYM/ABBREVIATION</td>
<td>FULL FORM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIDS</td>
<td>Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBos</td>
<td>Community Based Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRC</td>
<td>Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECC</td>
<td>Early Child Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECCD</td>
<td>Early Child Care and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESA</td>
<td>Education Sector Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EYDCC</td>
<td>Early Years Development Consultative Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV</td>
<td>Human Immune-Deficiency Virus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IECD</td>
<td>Integrated Early Childhood Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEC</td>
<td>Information, Education and Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGAs</td>
<td>Local Government Areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCCE</td>
<td>National Commission for Colleges of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCE</td>
<td>National Certificate of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NERDC</td>
<td>Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIEPA</td>
<td>National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPC</td>
<td>National Planning Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPE</td>
<td>National Policy on Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTI</td>
<td>National Teachers’ Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORS</td>
<td>Oral Re-hydration Salts (Solutions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTA</td>
<td>Parents-Teachers’ Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAME</td>
<td>State Agency for Mass Literacy and Adult Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBMC</td>
<td>School Based Management Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOH</td>
<td>State Ministry of Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMWA</td>
<td>State Ministry of Women Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPEB</td>
<td>State Primary Education Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UBE</td>
<td>Universal Basic Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nation Development Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nation Children’s Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WATSAN</td>
<td>Water and Environmental Sanitation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The contributions of the following which made the production of this document possible are hereby acknowledged: Executive Secretary, NERDC, Professor Ebele Maduewesi for her commitment and interest in the pursuance of a policy for integrated early childhood development in Nigeria; UNICEF, Nigeria for her support and funding; the Education Sector Analysis unit of Federal Ministry of Education, the Federal Ministry of Health, UNICEF Field Offices, particularly A, B, C, and D Field Offices, and UNESCO for sharing their experiences in the development of standards; the Director of the Special Programmes Centre, NERDC, Mr. O.A. Adara for his committed efforts in quality assurance; Prof. F.N. Onyezili and Mrs. V.T. Solarin both of UNICEF, Abuja, for their technical backstopping.

The commitment and untiring efforts of the ECCDE departmental staff, the participants at the meetings where this minimum standard was drafted, and those who in one way or the other contributed to the realization of this document are equally commended.
FOREWORD

According to the National Policy on Education (NPE), the responsibilities of the government for pre-primary education include “to regulate and control the operations of pre-primary education…” Within the last twenty years, the NPE has been in operation, considerable shifts have occurred both in the perception, role and scope of pre school care. From early childhood education a broader perspective of early childhood, survival, growth and development has emerged, encapsulating health, nutrition, sanitation and stimulation. Younger children 0-3 years are now also included in of home care based programmes.

Though early child care in Nigeria is still largely in the hands of private operators, a disturbing gap is the absence of adequate guidance for operators. It is therefore a welcome development that this minimum standard prescription has now been produced.

The contents of this document reflect international and local recommendations concerning the effective delivery of IECD. The prescriptions represent the minimum contents, materials and practices that would be expected in ECC centres in Nigeria. This notwithstanding, operators are encouraged to draw from their local environment according to their cultural peculiarities to enrich the standards.

Finally, I must acknowledge the efforts of the Special Programmes Centre of the NERDEC for bringing this document to fruition, and UNICEF Nigeria for making funds available for this project. I also acknowledge and thank all the participants and members of the EYDCC who articulated this document.

Professor Godswill Obioma
Executive Secretary
NERDC
PREFACE

In pursuit of its mandate in Early Childhood Development and Education, the NERDC in 2002 inaugurated the national EYDCC to serve in formulating Early Child Development policy items, planning and ratifying the way forward for an integrated early childhood development (IECD) in Nigeria. The resolution of the EYDCC meeting was for a situation analysis to be carried out on ECC facilities and practices and key household practices nationwide in the march from practice to policy of IECD in Nigeria. Furthermore, it was resolved that the findings on the various researches on the nation’s ECC situation should guide the specification of a conducive policy environment for IECD implementation in Nigeria. It became imperative therefore to establish the minimum standards to guide and regulate IECD in the country.

In August 2004, NERDC, with support from UNICEF convened a meeting of experts and stakeholders in early child care to agree on the minimum standard for operating ECC centres in an integrated way in Nigeria. This document is the product of that meeting.

It is hoped that this will serve as the lead way to the inclusion of the education and care of the Nigerian citizens aged 0-6 years in the National Policy on Education.

O.A. Adara
Director, Special Programmes Centre
NERDC
MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR EARLY CHILD CARE CENTRES IN NIGERIA

INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Care evolved in Nigeria about two decades ago as a special field of focus for development intervention. It is based on Government's resolve to create an enabling environment for the Nigerian child to thrive and develop to the fullest potential in line with the national goal and aspiration of building a “land full of bright opportunities for all citizens”. The backup for the resolution, also derives from the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the World Summit for children and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to which Nigeria is signatory.

Research evidence abounds from many fields of study that the care and support received by a child in terms of good health, nutrition and psycho-social care and protection are crucial in the formation and development of intelligence, personality and social behaviour. Over the years, Early Child Care in Nigeria has metamorphosed from a single sectoral approach to a multi-sectoral pursuit, converging interventions in health, nutrition, care, stimulation, protection and participation of the child.

Although ECC has been in operation for many years, Integrated Early Childhood Development is a novel idea to the country.

While the National Policy on Education (1998) specifies the guidelines for operating Pre-Primary Education in Nigeria, it did not specify the care and support requirements for children aged 0-3 years. This is a major gap that has left the operation of ECC and Pre-Primary Education more in the hands of private operators without adequate guidelines or standards. The Comprehensive Education Analysis jointly undertaken by the Federal Government, UNESCO, UNICEF and UNDP in 1997 revealed the enormity of this problem and underscored the urgent need for government action in terms of adequate policy provisions. A recent Pilot Study of ECC facilities and practices by NERDC and UNICEF as well as the Education Sector Analysis by the Federal Ministry of Education, UNESCO and other development partners further paint a grim picture of the situation on ground.
To address these gaps, there is a need to develop a National Policy Guideline for operators and stakeholders so that both the practice and operation of ECC and Pre-Primary Education will become standardized across Nigeria.

PHILOSOPHY

Nigeria’s intervention in Early Years Learning and Development is firmly rooted in the national philosophy on Education which is premised on the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and the need for equality of educational opportunities to all Nigeria children irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities.

The Integrated Early Childhood Development Approach views the survival, growth and development of young children as mutually inter-dependent. It utilizes multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral intervention in promoting good outcomes in early childhood, and fully incorporates support to early learning and psycho-social development. The IECD approach is also centered on support to the families and caregivers who provide the primary care to young children aged 0-3 years which are considered very crucial to a child’s subsequent physical, mental, and social development. Most importantly it is believed that learning starts at birth or even conception.
OBJECTIVES

Since IECD aims to integrate interventions from the various sectors of health, nutrition, education protection and participation to ensure positive outcomes for the child in terms of cognitive achievement, care and development, it should incorporate the objectives of the relevant sectors. In this regard, elements of the National Policies on Education, Food and Nutrition, Health and the Child Rights Act should constitute the Objectives of IECD in Nigeria as follows:

a) Provide care and support to the child in form of:
   • Good nutrition and health for children
   • A healthy and safe environment.
   • Psycho-social stimulation.
   • Protection and security.

b) Inculcate in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toys etc.

c) Effect a smooth transition from the home to the school.

d) Prepare the child to adapt successfully when their current context changes.

e) Provide adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work (on the farms, in the markets, offices, industry etc.)

f) Inculcate social norms – that is, culturally relevant skills and behaviours which allow them to function effectively in their current context.
STRATEGIES

The variety and forms of IECD provision in the country should focus on the realization of the above set objectives through the following strategies:

- Empowerment of household/Caregivers to provide appropriate care for children 0-5 years at the household level.
- Establishment of community base centres for 0-3 years and community/school linked centre for 3-5 years.
- Institutionalisation of appropriate training for professional caregivers to manage ECC.
- Creation of a network of Stakeholders for regulating and ensuring quality in different aspects of ECC.
- Monitoring and Evaluation.

THE PRESCRIBED MINIMUM STANDARDS

The prescribed minimum standards for IECD implementation in Nigeria are as follows:

TYPES OF ECC CENTRES:

- Day Care/crèche (for ages 0-2 years).
- Pre-nursery/Play group; (ages 3-4 years).
- Nursery/Kindergarten (ages 3-5 years).

Note: These may exist together or independently. They may also be home based, centre based, or mobile.

LOCATION:

- A place that is acceptable to the community (a home, community buildings such as civic centres, churches, mosques and existing schools or a purpose built structure etc.)
- Within walking distance from home (max. of 2 kilometers).
- Safe and secure environment (free from chemical and other hazards).
- Free from excessive noise.
OWNERSHIP:
Private, community or Government.

STEPS IN STARTING A CENTRE:
- Familiarization with requirements of establishing standard ECC Centres from the relevant department (Education/Women Affairs/Health).
- Filing of Application.
- Screening by designated authority (site, personnel, infrastructure, funding/management arrangements etc.)
- Licensing.

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE CENTRE

Playground:
- Enough space for children to plan (enough to take 20-25 children and two adults at a given time.
- Safe and secured.
- May have grass or sand but not bushy or dirty.
- Not waterlogged.
- Free from dangerous objects.

Fencing:
- Facility should be fenced in a manner that prevents outside interference such as rampaging animals, and prevent children from straying outside.
- Fence done with concrete, mud, bamboo, raffia, corn stalk, wood, flowers hedge, plants.

Office Accommodation:
- Safe secured space to be provided for safety of school records and materials.

CAVIES FOR CLOSURE OF A CENTRE:
- Persistent failure to meet core standards – particularly relating to issues such as safety, health, and child abuse.
CLASSROOM:
There should be solid structures that will not collapse. Generally the building should not pose danger to children.

Size: Enough Space. The classroom (16 square meters) for 20-25 children. To be well ventilated with at least two doors. Design should allow for free movement. Sitting arrangements should not be rigid like in formal school setting but flexible and allow for plan and interaction with other children.

Flooring of the classroom – Smooth but not slippery (has to be plastered with cement or with local material excluding cow dung and such harmful materials).

Roof: Corrugated iron sheet. Thatch, raffia etc. (not leaking).

Ceiling: Modern ceiling boards, raffia, bamboo, wood, mats, thick cartons etc. (not asbestos ceiling boards).

Walls: Cement blocks, bricks, mud, raffia, bamboo etc.

Illumination: Well illuminated (children able to see clearly in every part of the room).

Door: Wooden or iron that can be locked.

Corners: for science, health and nutrition, drama, shopping, sleeping.

RECORDS:
- Admission and withdrawal register.
- Child folder containing biodata, health records, etc.
- Attendance register.
- Log Book (incidences/occurrences).
- Teachers’ record book.
- Visitors’ book
- Time book (sign in and out note)
- Movement books for both teachers and children
- Continuous assessment/tests records
• Personnel records
• PTA minutes book
• Ledger
• Inventory of school/property
• Staff meeting minutes book
• School diary

FURNITURE:
• Child-sized chair (one per child) and one round table per 4 children.
• Mats, locally made beds, mattresses covered with Macintosh and Bedsheets.
• Chalkboard/classroom (movable or fixed).
• Gender-neutral IEC charts/posters/pictures. Children’s work should be on the wall.
• Cupboards, shelves, for children items (enough to hold 25 children’s items e.g. water bottles, food, bags).
• Caregiver table and chair.
• Display table or shelf.
• Wall clock.

PARENTAL/COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
• Regular interactive visits by parents to the centre
• Follow up on children’s performance
• Provision of meals while at the centre
• Participation at PTA
• Material/monetary resource contributions
• Provision of special services
• ECD should be part of school development plan articulated by the School Based Management Committee (SBMC).

GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT
• Licensing
• Supervision/monitoring (quality control)
• Training of suitably qualified personnel
• Provision of infrastructure, personnel, and gender-fair instructional materials for government/community owned centres etc.
ASSESSMENT:

Assessment of growth and overall development of the child using:
- Growth monitoring equipment/Child Assessment Instrument
- Developmental milestones

SPECIAL CHILDREN:

- Screen children at intake and periodically to detect any special needs
- Provide requisite facilities to assist children with special needs
- Motivate and ensure full participation of physically challenged children in learning activities
- Appropriate referral when necessary

SUPERVISION:

Internal Supervision: Caregiver and Head Caregiver, PTA, and community Committee

External Supervision: National desk officers (biannual), State desk officers/focal persons (quarterly), LGA focal officers (monthly)
Organogram of Supervision

Zonal Coordinating Committee
↓
State Coordinating Committee (focal person)
↓
LGA Committee
↓
Community Committee
↓
PTA/SBMC
↓
Centre Management Committee
↓
Head Caregiver
↓
Caregivers
↓
Helpers

DAILY PROGRAMME:

- Four-six hours daily
- Age appropriate activities that promote intellectual, physical, emotional and social development
- Flexible child friendly schedule to be produced and posted.

THE REQUIREMENTS IN WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION

(i) Surroundings:

- Clean
- Not bushy.
- Devoid of human, animal, organic waste and any other litter.
- Devoid of hazardous objects.
• Dry, not waterlogged.
• All wells properly covered, locked and secured.
• Beautiful and stimulating with flowers and plants.
• Safe Water

(ii) **Toilets:**
• Toilets should be available for caregivers/helpers and children with separate toilets for girls and boys.
• Provision of sanitary facilities (each center to have potties, and ventilated improved pit latrines).
• Proper refuse disposal at the centres.
• Provision of wash hand basin with soap and water.

THE REQUIREMENTS IN PSYCHO-SOCIAL CARE AND EARLY LEARNING (EDUCATION)

• Promote the child’s mental and social development by being responsive to the child’s needs and care and stimulating the child through talking, playing and other interactions.
• Ensure the registration, of the birth of children
• Establish ECC Parents Clubs in the Community.

(i) **INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS:**

• Curriculum (Government approved).
• Caregivers Manual.
• Teachers guides (one set).
• Toy Making Manual.
• Time table (one per class).
• Chalk and Blackboard, slates, cardboard.
• Teachers note book (lesson note).
• Radio (one per class).
• Charts and colourful posters (variety).
• Flash cards (as many as possible).
• Lego building blocks (1 dozen per 5 children).
• Counters/Abacus 5 per class.
• Pencils, crayons, Coloring, paints, brushes and drawing book (one set per child).
• Pupils reading and writing materials (one per child).
• Musical instruments such as flutes, drum, whistles and other local musical instruments (one set per class).
• Gender-neutral IEC charts/posters/pictures, children’s works on the wall.

(ii) HUMAN RESOURCES/PERSONNEL

• There should be one caregiver and one helper per 20-25 children of 0-3 year olds.
• There should be one caregiver and one helper for 30-35 children of 3-5 year olds.
• Caregivers and helpers should be medically fit and committed and trustworthy whether volunteer or otherwise
• Update and refresher courses for caregivers and helpers should be organised from time to time.

Basic qualification:
  a) **Caregivers for 0-3 year olds**: Anyone with basic literacy and aged not less than 21 years.
  b) **Caregivers for 3-5 year olds**: Preferably NCE holders, Retired Nurse, Teacher, other educated retirees, or anyone with at least senior secondary school certificate, proficiency certificate and not less than 21 years old.
  c) **Helper**: Not less than 21 years, preferably having primary six or basic literacy certificate.
  d) **Security**: Able bodied and responsible member of the community with minimum of Primary School Certificate or basic literacy certificate.

THE REQUIREMENTS IN HEALTH

• Weekly health inspection of the children e.g. oral hygiene and physical inspection etc.
• Facilities for storing Expressed Breast Milk and complementary feeding for 0-2
• Monthly growth monitoring and promotion (with records)
• Standard First Aid Box (splint, bandages, cotton wool, antiseptic, scissors, methylated spirit, adhesives, liniment, analgesics, thermometer, powder, and petroleum jelly) and staff trained on their use
- Treatment of common ailments and appropriate referral.
- Provision of health and nutrition corner with education materials (poster, charts, models etc.)
- Evidence of monthly visit from the Health Worker (school health service units) for routine immunization, supplementation and other health services (and availability of such records in the Centre)
- Adoption of appropriate behaviour regarding prevention and care of HIV/AIDS affected children
- Daily physical exercise regime/periods
- Linkage with nearby health facility
- Regular de-worming (4-6 months)
- Establishment of ECCD parents clubs in the community
- Provision of fire extinguishers/buckets of sand, etc.

HEALTH MATERIALS

- Weighing scales
- Growth charts
- Heightometres
- Roller metre/infanto metre
- Shakir arm strip/Tape measure
- Road to health cards
- Measuring cups/jugs/bottles
- Measuring spoon (tea spoons)
- Salt and sugar (for regular use and ORS)
- Clean water
- Provision of spare clothes
- IEC charts/posters/pictures
- Hand towels and soap

THE REQUIREMENTS IN NUTRITION

- Approved feeding arrangements (nutritionally adequate and hygienic)
- Exclusive breast feeding for 0-6 months old children.
- Provision of food complements in addition to breast milk for 6 months – 2 years old children.
- Provide good amount of micronutrients (especially Vitamin A and Iron) in children’s diet.
NUTRITION MATERIALS

- Clean water
- Facilities for storing breast milk and complementary food for 0-2 year olds.
- Stove and cooking pots/bowls with covers.

THE REQUIREMENTS IN CHILD PROTECTION

Fencing:

- Facility should be fenced in a manner that prevents outside interference such as rampaging animals, and prevent children from straying outside.
- Fence done with concrete, mud, bamboo, raffia, corn stalk, wood, flowers hedge, plants.

Office Accommodation:

- Safe secured space to be provided for safety of school records and materials.
- Prevent child abuse and neglect
- Protect children against mosquitoes
- Protect children against harm and danger.
- Ensure inoculations against childhood diseases.
- Ensure safety at playground.
- Ensure security in the centre.

CHILD PROTECTION MATERIALS

- Blankets
- Key/padlocks for gate
- Nets on windows and doors.
- Mosquitoe net

Playground:

- Enough space for children to play (enough to take 20-25 children and two adults at a given time;
- Safe and secure
- May have grass or sand but not bushy or dirty
- Not waterlogged and
- Free from dangerous objects
**Fencing:** Facility should be fenced in a manner that prevents outside interference such as rampaging animals and prevents children from straying outside. Fencing should be done with concrete, mud, bamboo, raffia, corn stalk, wood or flowers and ornamental plants.

**Security:** Day/night security where necessary; and should be an able bodied and responsible member of the community

### STAKEHOLDERS’ ROLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>Functions</th>
<th>Responsible Stakeholders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Policy Formulation</td>
<td>FME/NERDC-EYDCC, FMH, FMWAYD, NPC, FMI, FMANR, FML, FMIA, FME, FMWR, FMJ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Supervision, Research, Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
<td>FME/NERDC, FMH, FMWAYD, SMOH, SAME, SAME/AANFE, Federal Ministry of Water Resources, Inspectorate, NCCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Setting Standards</td>
<td>NERDC, Development Partners, Inspectorate, NCCE, Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Advocacy, Sensitisation/Social Mobilization</td>
<td>NERDC, Development Partners, NGOs, SMOH, SMWA, WATSAN, SAME, AANFE, SPEB, Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Capacity Building</td>
<td>NERDC, NCCE, Development Partners, SAME, SMOH, NGO, WATSAN, AANFE, SPEB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Supplies</td>
<td>NERDC, SME, SMOH, SPEB, SAME, AANFE, LGA, UBE, SMWA, Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Personnel/Staff</td>
<td>LGAs, SPEB, UBE, SMWA, SAME, State Community Development Units, LGAs NGOs, Community Based Organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Establishment of Centres</td>
<td>(CBOs) Same as Personnel/Staffing, AANFE, SOME, Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Development of Training Programme</td>
<td>NERDC, NCCE, NTI, NIEPA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>