

Q: What are early childhood development services?



Maternal & Child health services

including antenatal care, PMTCT, screening and immunisation



Nutritional support

for mothers and children



Support for primary caregivers

including parenting skills and psychosocial support



Social services

including birth registration, access to grants, responsive child protection services and psychosocial support



Stimulation for early learning

including access to quality early learning programmes



A quick guide to **early childhood development** in South Africa

Q: Where has SA made progress with ECD services?

Improvements in the rate of birth registration: **79% of children** are registered within the 1st year of life.

Introduction of **access to free health care**: 94% of children complete the primary immunisation course by their 1st birthday.

Expanded **access to the Child Support Grant**: 65% of children under 6 years are receiving the CSG.

Q: What ECD services can SA improve on?

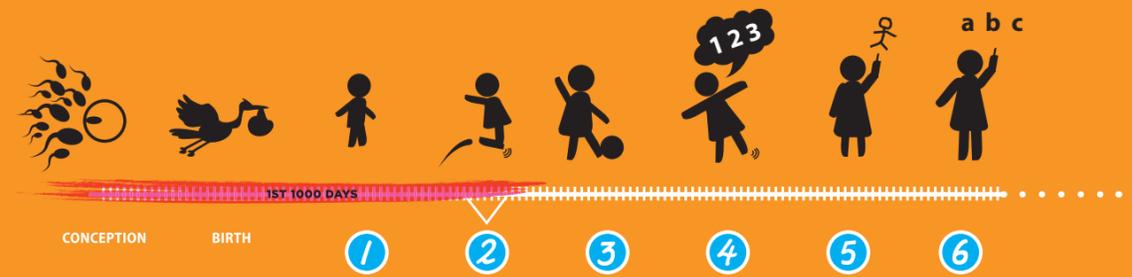
- **Greater food security, home based nutritional support and support for malnourished children.** Vitamin A deficiency exists in 44% of children < 5yrs. Stunting occurs in 25% of children <3years.
- Increase **support to pregnant and lactating women.**
- Increase access to and quality of **community and centre based early learning programmes.**
- **Expand early language and numeracy development.** Nationally only 57% of Grade 3's achieved the 50% benchmark in language and only 36% obtained the benchmark in maths.
- Increase **support for children with disability** and improve their access to early learning.
- Improve **public awareness of the importance of ECD** and increase the demand for ECD services.
- **Increase government investment** in ECD and improve use of existing resources

Q: What is ECD? The period of a **child's development from the moment of conception to the point the child enters formal schooling (Grade R).** ECD deals with the child's physical growth, language development, emotional awareness, self-control, social skills and identity.



Q: Who needs ECD services in SA?

- 1 million = pregnant women
- 3 million = children aged 0 – 2
- 3 million = children aged 3 – 5



First 1000 days (Conception – age 2)
Most rapid period of brain development, laying the foundation for all future health, behaviour and learning.

3-4 years of age
The first few years of childhood are crucial for brain development. By the age of two or three years, a child's brain has up to twice as many synapses as it will have in adulthood.

5-6 years of age
These surplus connections are gradually eliminated through childhood and adolescence. Early experiences, positive and negative, influence the extent to which various synapses are strengthened or lost.

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Sources
 General Household Survey 2012
 Children's Institute Analysis

Q: What is ECD in practice?

ECD TAKES PLACE, FIRST AND FOREMOST, WITHIN THE RESPONSIVE AND CARING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHILD AND THE PARENT/CAREGIVER



ECD services are also offered to the parent/caregiver and the child by the state and the private sector.

Q: Why is ECD important?

During the period from conception to formal schooling, a child's development is subject to the influence of nutrition, protection, language and emotion in his or her immediate environment. If the influence of these factors is positive, the child will thrive. If the influence is negative, the child's development is compromised.

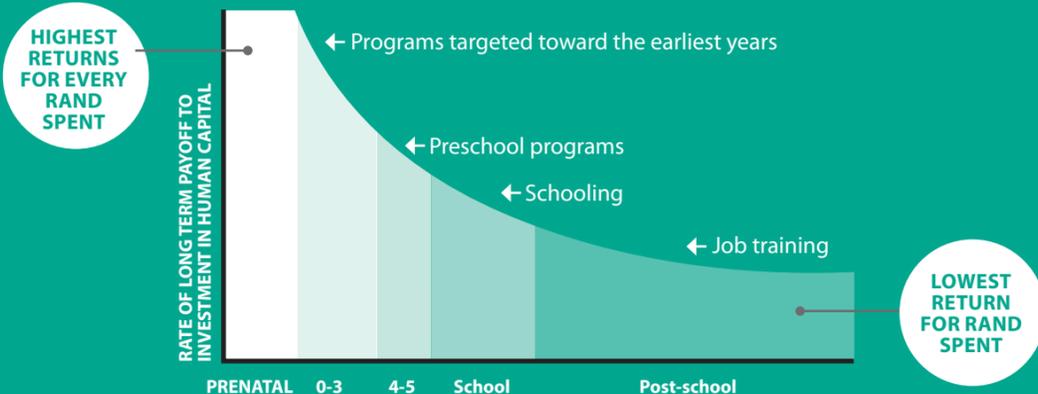
IN CONDITIONS OF POVERTY, ECD SERVICES ARE ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT.

MORE THAN 60% OF SA children UNDER 6yrs = LIVE IN THE POOREST 40% OF HOUSEHOLDS



Shortfalls in early childhood development are difficult to correct as times goes by. These children are always playing catch up and the education gap between them and their peers widens over time.

Long term benefits of investment in each age group



Adapted from Heckman, James J. (2008). "Schools, Skills and Synapses," Economic Inquiry, 46(3): 289-324

Q: Where does ECD in SA stand now?

Investment in ECD has increased but only 1 out of every 6 children gets a subsidy to attend an early learning programme.

Access is low - only 53% of women receive follow-up care 6 days after giving birth and a third of children aged 3-5yrs don't attend any early learning services.

Majority of ECD centres do not meet the minimum norms and standards for **quality**, as outlined by the Children's Act.

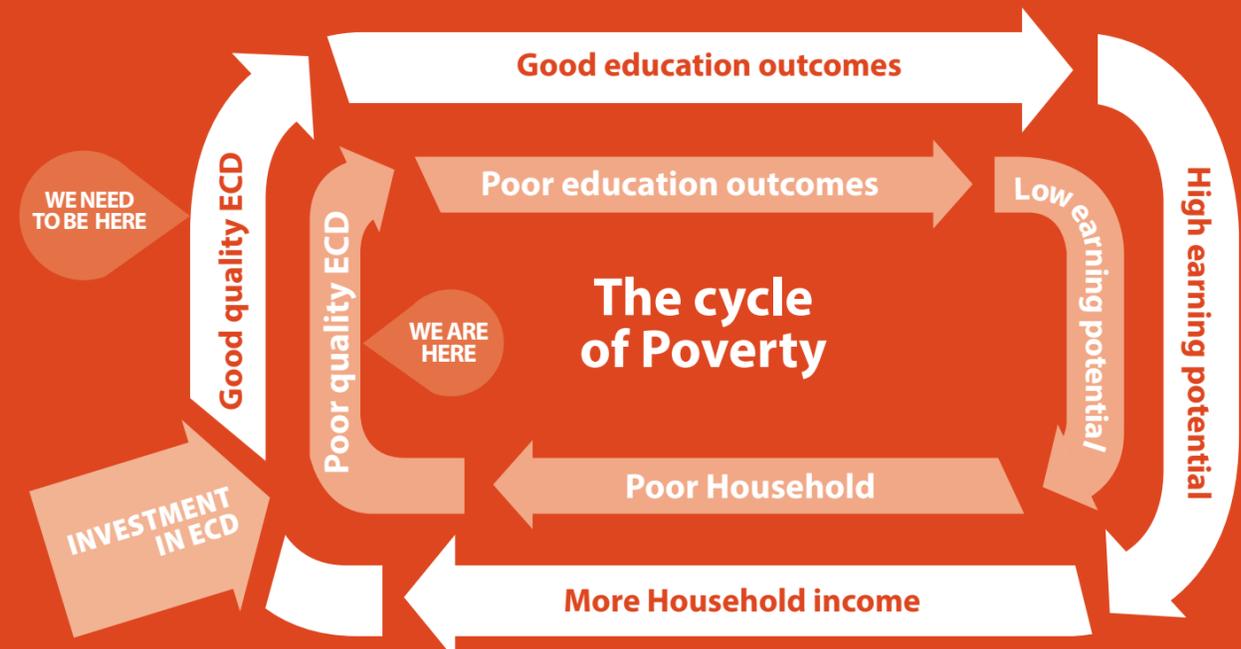
Government support intended for the poorest children (means tested ECD centre subsidies) are not reaching the children who need them most because of **systems** challenges in the way policy is translated into practice.



Q: How can SA benefit from better ECD?

Investment in ECD today has positive effects on national education, social, healthcare and economic goals down the line.

Breaking the cycle of poverty



- Education:** Children who receive quality ECD do better at school and are less likely to drop out.
- Healthcare:** Children who receive quality ECD services have a lower health risk into adulthood; and are less likely to engage in risky behaviour, drug or alcohol abuse.
- Workforce:** Children who receive quality ECD services earn more than peers in adulthood.
- Safety:** Quality ECD services reduce levels of crime in society.
- Redistribution:** Quality ECD services close the gap between rich and poor by improving health and education and increasing capacity for income creation.