

# THE CRISIS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT DEEPENS

## ECD programmes struggle to re-open without support

### How has COVID-19 affected the providers of ECD services?

On the 18th March, all Early Childhood Development (ECD) operators were instructed by the Department of Social Development to close in order to prevent the spread and acceleration of Coronavirus infections. On the 6th of July, the High Court ruled that ECD programmes could re-open, if operators followed COVID-19 guidelines.

ECD operators are largely NPOs and micro-social enterprises – mostly owned and run by black women. They operate in a quasi-informal manner, providing a service that is needs-based in poor communities with limited cash flows, which places them way below the minimum wage.



A survey of ECD providers was conducted in August to understand the effects that the Coronavirus has continued to have on the sector, six months in. The survey sample was not representative. This was a follow-up to the survey of 8 500 ECD providers conducted in April.

Responses received - 21 Aug - 8 Sept:

**Over 4 500**

Caregivers of children attending these ECD programmes, have been unable or unwilling to pay fees during the lockdown period.

<15%

**LESS THAN 15%**

of the centres received income from fees; all of whom reported that this income was insufficient to meet the requirements to run the ECD facility.

22%

**ONLY 22%**

of those surveyed received a subsidy from the Department of Social Development during lockdown.

This has left most ECD operators unable to pay salaries and operating costs.



Operators unable to pay full salaries while they were closed.



Operators who have reopened and still unable to pay salaries.



Respondents' income was not sufficient to cover operating costs while they were closed.



Who have re-opened indicated that they are still not able to cover their operating costs.

Consequences of having to close and lack of support to the surveyed programmes:

#### SURVEY FINDINGS:



**13 277 ↓**

Reduction in ECD jobs  
(42,5% Jobs lost)



#### PROJECTIONS:

**100 000+ ↓**

Estimated ECD jobs lost

Impact of closure on child attendance:



**166 105 ↓**

children unable to attend ECD programmes that were closed



**1.8 million+ ↓**

Children at risk of losing their ECD place if programmes unable to reopen

*Without support, these numbers will be likely to continue to rise*

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# Committed to children against all odds

In the face of these challenges, ECD operators displayed remarkable tenacity and commitment to children while they were closed.

**SUPPORTED PARENTS**  
to continue early learning activities at home

53%

OF SURVEYED PROGRAMMES

17%

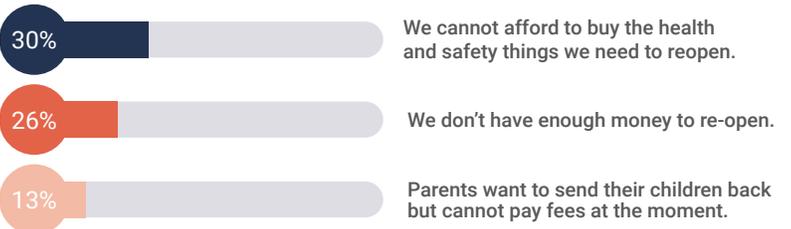
**PROVIDED FOOD** to children and community members.



**68%**  
in the April survey were worried that they would not be able to reopen after lockdown

**32%**  
ECD programmes were able to reopen at the time of the 2nd survey (3 out of 10)

Main reasons for remaining closed:



**80%**  
Of closed programmes were optimistic that they would reopen in the next month



**16%**  
Of closed programmes hoped to be able to reopen in January 2021<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> It is worth noting that responses may have been biased toward programmes that were more likely to be planning to reopen

This survey was conducted in partnership with



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Suggested citation: BRIDGE, Ilifa Labantwana, National ECD Alliance, SmartStart, SA Congress for ECD. 2020. "Second Survey Assessing the Impact of COVID on ECD." August 2020.