Happy young learners

Psychosocial well-being of young children in Ethiopia

Report of a research study

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International Child Development Initiatives

ESD

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This report presents findings from a study about young children's learning and development that was conducted in two regions in Ethiopia between 2016 and 2018. The main aim of the study was to find out more about the psychosocial well-being of five year-old children and the environments in which they are being educated in order to inform policies, practice and teacher education in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in Ethiopia. In this chapter, we explain the rationale and the aims of the study and the recent policy developments, which are influencing ECCE in Ethiopia.

1.1 Why psychosocial well-being is important for learning

International indicators for quality ECCE endorse the concern for young children's social and emotional well-being, also referred to as psychosocial well-being. This crucial component refers to the developing capacity of young children to form close and secure adult and peer relationships; experience, regulate, and express emotions in socially and culturally appropriate ways; and explore the environment and learning – all in the context of family, community and culture[1].

However, there is a global trend to treat children as 'academic learners' at younger ages, giving children, their teachers and parents the impression that mastery of academic skills is the only route to academic success and highly-paid employment. This trend is also evident in Ethiopia, where 'preparedness for school' is primarily associated with learning to read, write and count.

Children's long term success at school is influenced as much by social, emotional and self-regulation skills as by academic skills and knowledge. Social and emotional development is a main contributor to successful school transitions and a significant preventative factor of disruptive behaviour, and mental health problems. Not paying attention to social and emotional development is harmful to children's capacity to learn and to thrive. It is also expensive in terms of the socio-economic costs associated with bullying, violence and mental health problems[2].

Research demonstrates that frequent opportunities to engage in all types of play[3], outdoors and indoors, are positively associated with young children's psychosocial well-being. So too is the support and encouragement of adults

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[1] Center on the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning, 2008.

[2] Cefai, C.; Bartolo P. A.; Cavioni. V; Downes, P. 2018. *Strengthening Social and Emotional Education as a core curricular area across the EU. A review of the international evidence*, NESET II report, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2018. doi: 10.2766/664439

[3] Including physical locomotor play; exploratory play; constructive play; creative play; pretend, fantasy and socio-dramatic play; language or word play: See Appendix 2 for a definition of these types of play.

(parents and teachers) who are responsive to young children's need for nurturance and care and their drive to play and learn[4,5].

Both teachers and parents believe that social and emotional skills are important for young children to learn. However, research points to a lack of training and continuous professional development on this topic, and the need to design effective methods to provide ECCE educators with skills and competences to promote children's socio-emotional development [6]. Furthermore, there are few reliable and easy to use indicators for psychosocial development of young children, which link socio-emotional development to children's capacity to learn.

1.2 Aims of the research study

The study was a collaborative effort between *Education for Sustainable Development* (ESD)[7], in Ethiopia and *International Child Development Initiatives* (ICDI)[8], in the Netherlands. It was designed at a period of accelerated strategic planning and increase in provision of ECCE in Ethiopia. However, both organisations were concerned about the poor quality of ECCE, including the lack of attention being paid to psychosocial well-being in training and practice, and the negative impact this was having on young children's learning and development.

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[4] Ginsburg, K. R. (2007). The importance of play in promoting healthy child development and maintaining strong parent-child bonds. Pediatrics, 119 (1), 182–191.
[5] Kahn, P. H., & Weiss, T. (2017). The importance of children interacting with big nature. Children, Youth and Environments Natural Spaces and Development, 27 (2), 7–24.
[6] Hollingsworth, H. L. & Winter, M. K. (2013). Teacher beliefs and practices relating to development in preschool: importance places on social-emotional behaviours and skills. *Early Child Development and Care,* 1758-81.
[7] Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is an Ethiopian Residents Charity established in 2007. The mission of ESD is to 'create, a brighter future for children, youth and women through education, skills training and women livelihood promotion in partnership with communities and other stakeholders'. ESD works in all phases of education: from early childhood education and development to vocational training. See https://www.esdethio.org
[8] ICDI is a Netherlands-based internationally-working NGO, a knowledge organization in psychosocial development of children and young people growing up in difficult circumstances. See https://www.icdi.nl

The specific objectives of the study were as follows:

1. To **collect evidence about the psychosocial well-being of 1000 five-year-old children** living in urban, semi-urban and rural areas in two regions in Ethiopia, Amhara and Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (SNNPR), using the 'Universal Psychosocial Indicator for Five-Year-Old Boys and Girls (UPSI-5)[9]

2. To **explore the context in which young children are being educated** in these regions, based on interviews and focus group discussions with parents, teachers, school principals, teacher educators and education officials.

3. **Discuss and raise awareness about the importance of psychosocial well-being** for young children for their learning and capacity to thrive amongst parents, teachers, school principals, teacher educators and local education officials.

4. Based on insights gained from 1, 2 and 3 above, **make recommendations for practitioners, teacher trainers, policy makers and researchers**. It is hoped that these activities will lead to quality improvements in ECCE systems and services, and more specifically in the attention given to social and emotional development and psychosocial well-being of children in Amhara and SNNPR.

This study is part of a larger project titled '*UPSI-5 and its Global Relevance in Ethiopia*'. The project began with two seminars where the overall aims of the project and its main activities, including this study, were discussed. A further important goal of these seminars was to build a shared understanding of psychosocial well-being as it applies in the Ethiopian context. The seminars were attended by representatives from preschools and primary schools, zonal and woreda[10] education departments and offices, NGOs working on child care

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[9] ICDI developed the UPSI-5, an easy-to-use global screening tool that assesses the psychosocial well-being of large populations of 5 year-old children. The research in Ethiopia of an ongoing effort to build up the evidence base of the UPSI-5 that will help to promote the tool further on a global scale. Amhara and SNNPR are the two regions in Ethiopia where ESD focus their activities.

[10] The regions of Ethiopia are administratively divided into zones, which are further subdivided into woredas or districts.

and development, education managers, higher education institutes and journalists. The seminars took place prior to the research study.

Also, as part of the larger study four ECCE settings, two in North Shoa, Amhara and two in Sidama, SNNPR, received additional support over a period of 9 months between September 2017 and June 2018 to develop and implement an action plan to improve the quality of the ECCE. The action plans were informed by the research findings presented in this report and were devised by local ECCE committees with technical support from ESD. The results of the quality improvement actions have been documented in an illustrated summary report of this study.

A short documentary film about psychosocial well-being, **'Happy young learners in Ethiopia'** which was shot in the project sites has also been produced in collaboration with MaMedia[11], Amsterdam as part of this project.

To read the summary report and watch the film, visit this link.

1.3 Early Childhood Care and Education in Ethiopia: an overview of policy and practice

In Ethiopia, children under 5 make up the largest age cohort in the population. There are approximately 10 million children aged 0 to 3 years and 7.7 million aged 4 to 6 years. The Ethiopian government, in common with most governments worldwide, has recognised that investing in ECCE is critical for the well-being of young children and for the long term prosperity of the country. Since 2015, ECCE is one of the priorities for General Education in Ethiopia[12].

Primary school in Ethiopia has an official entry age of seven and a duration of eight grades. Preschool education is intended for ages 4 to 6 years and is characterized by a mix of state, NGO, community, faith-based and private provision.

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[11] http://www.mamedia.nl/

[12] The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. *Education Sector Development Programme V (ESDP V), 2015/16-2019/20 G.C.* Federal Ministry of Education: 2016.

Ethiopia's education policy, including its policy for pre-primary education, has been set out via successive national Education Sector Development Programmes (ESDPs). Over the last decades attention to pre-primary education has become more prominent. The Second Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP II 2002) acknowledged the importance of a pre-primary stage and the governments' role in policy development and standard setting. It encouraged the private sector, NGOs and the community to develop preschool programmes and facilities[13]. This meant that the number of children attending preschool increased only gradually, that preschool was mostly offered by private fee-paying kindergartens (as opposed to governmental schools that do not charge fees). Also there were great disparities between the number of children who attended preschool in rural and in urban areas. For example, Ministry of Education statistics for 2007 reported national gross enrolment ratio of 3.1 per cent, with 47.5 per cent in Addis Ababa.

2010 marked an important change with the launching of an inter-ministerial National Policy Framework for ECCE[14]. This framework was built around four pillars. The third and fourth pillars focused on children aged 4 to 6, promoting early learning through 'community based preschools, privately run preschools, preschools attached to primary schools and faith-based preschools'[15]. The National Policy Framework, Operational Guidelines and Implementation Strategy spurred rapid growth in government provision of ECCE and enrolment levels across all forms of preschool rose to 34 per cent by 2013/14. A quarter attended kindergartens and the remainder attended Child-to-Child instruction

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[13] Ministry of Education. 2002. *Education Sector Development Programme II 2002/3 – 2005/6.* Programme Action Plan, Addis Ababa: Government of Ethiopia.

[14] Ministry of Education. (2010). *National Policy Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education,* Addis Ababa: Government of Ethiopia.

[15] Pillar 1 focusses on Parental Education and Pillar 2 on Health and Early Stimulation, Birth to 3 years.

and the '0-Class' year in primary schools, a reception class for 6 year-olds, the year before a child enters Grade 1, at 7 years[16][17][18].

The fifth and most recent Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP V), proposes to increase the enrolment from 35 per cent of 4 to 6 year olds in 2015 to 80 per cent by 2020. This requires training and recruitment of approximately 100,000 teachers to work in the new 0-Classes. It also states that the government will engage in the 'full provision of pre-primary education, from teachers to classrooms to learning materials'[19]. ECCE expansion is supposed to first focus on disadvantaged children in areas with lower educational attainment. The ambitious growth set out in ESDP V comes with several challenges relating to how to ensure quality and equity in the scaling up of preschool facilities. Specific challenges are 1) shortage of qualified teachers and teacher educators, 2) the need for specialist modules for ECCE in training courses and 3) the need to equip classrooms with materials suitable for ECCE[20]. Noteworthy is the overall goal of the Priority Programme, which is "to provide all children with access to pre-primary education for **school preparedness...**" (our emphasis) "whereby a culture of learning will be established from an early age". The risk in this respect, is that "ECCE is conceptualised (and delivered) very narrowly, as a downward extension of the primary cycle to ever younger children with little regard to the age-appropriateness of learning and teaching, or the synergies between health, well-being and learning"[21].

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[16] 0-Classes attached to primary schools have emerged as the most widely available and highest priority for government, mostly due to the relatively low cost of provision within an established school site and the ease with which preschool classes attached to primary schools can be managed within existing federal and regional government structures.

[17] The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. *Education Sector Development Programme V (ESDP V), 2015/16-2019/20 G.C.* Federal Ministry of Education: 2016.

[18] It is important to mention that kindergartens remain an urban phenomena and are much more accessible for children living in urban areas.

[19] ESDP V, 2016.

[20] Woodhead, M., J. Rossiter, A. Dawes, and A. Pankhurst. (2017). Scaling-up Early Learning in Ethiopia: The Potential of 0-Class, Young Lives.; Teferra, T., and B. Hagos. 2016. *Assessment of the Status of 0-Class in Four Regional States of Ethiopia.* Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Institute of Education, Health, and Development and World Bank Ethiopia.

[21] Woodhead, M. et al. 2017, p.24

The Regional Education Bureaus (REBs) are the structures in the regions through which the policy targets set in ESDP V are being operationalised. Additional challenges identified by the REBS include not having an allocated budget for ECCE services, a shortage of qualified personnel and little guidance on ECCE implementation standards, monitoring and supervision approaches. 0-classes are often staffed by untrained teachers or teachers who were assigned from lower primary grades. While the 0-Class was designed as a single year for 6 year-olds, in practice the 0-Class is also accommodating children aged 3, 4 and 5 years old often with very large group sizes[22].

Observations of pedagogical practice in 0-Grade and primary classrooms in Ethiopia indicate that the schooling approach has historically been authoritarian and didactic, and class sizes are very large. Children are given very few opportunities to ask questions or to express opinions or ideas, except in response to direct and often closed teacher questions. On the other hand, much of children's play and social activity in Ethiopia takes place outside the home and away from teacher's organization and supervision in school. From a young age, many children take responsibility for chores, childcare, animal care, earn money for the family, independently getting to and from school and the markets[23]. Given children's drive to play wherever they are, it is likely that they forge opportunities to play with siblings and peers in between work tasks[24]. Research conducted in Ethiopia has also highlighted the belief in the importance of work and play in everyday life as informal learning and a means to acquire local knowledge and life skills[25].

There are three important considerations that further inform the present study. Firstly, there is the powerful parental pressure that the priorities for ECCE should be formal teaching of literacy and numeracy as 'readiness' for subsequent schooling. Secondly, previous research indicates there is a strong

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[22] Woodhead, M. et al. 2017 ibid.
[23] Huggins, V. (2017). Complexities in implementing Early Childhood Education for Sustainability in a Majority World Context, in V. Huggins & D. Evans (eds) Early Childhood Care and Education for Sustainability: International Perspectives; Routledge.
[24] Jirata, T.J. & Kjorholt, A.T. (2013) The place of children among the Guiji People in Southern Ethiopia. *Children's Geographies,* 13:2, 226-239.
[25] Jirata, T.J. & Kjorholt, A.T. (2013) The place of children among the Guiji People in Southern Ethiopia. *Children's Geographies,* 13:2, 226-239.

belief that schooling in Ethiopia is the teachers' responsibility. Therefore, structures for consulting and involving parents are minimal, not least because of the demands of very large classes especially in government schools[26]. Finally, the private kindergarten and private primary school sector is expanding in Ethiopia in response to the demands from a growing middle class. This is only increasing the gap between the life opportunities of the children of wealthier families and poorer ones. This is occurring despite government efforts to improve the quality of education offered in government preschool and school settings and so reduce the inequalities in access and outcomes.

It is in this political and practical context that the current study on the psychosocial well-being was conducted. It comes at an opportune time to influence the scope and focus of ECCE programmes in Ethiopia, including how teachers are being prepared to work with young children in colleges of teacher education.

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[26] Huggins, V. 2017 ibid.

SUMMARY POINTS – CHAPTER 1

- Children's long term success at school is influenced by social, emotional and self-regulation skills and by academic skills and knowledge.

- Lack of attention to social and emotional development (psychosocial well-being) is harmful to children's capacity to learn and to thrive.

- Psychosocial well-being refers to the developing capacity of young children to form close and secure adult and peer relationships; experience, regulate, and express emotions in socially and culturally appropriate ways; and explore the environment and learning – all in the context of family, community and culture.

- The aim of this study was to find out more about the psychosocial well-being of five year-old children in two regions in Ethiopia, Amhara and SNNPR and the environments in which they are being educated so as to inform policies, practice and teacher education.

- The study was conducted in an education policy context in which ECCE provision is being scaled up rapidly.

- Challenges associated with this rapid expansion are: 1) shortage of qualified teachers and teacher educators, 2) the need for specialist modules for ECCE in training courses 3) the need to equip classrooms with materials suitable for ECCE and 4) that risk that ECCE is delivered very narrowly, with little regard to the age-appropriateness of learning and teaching, or the links between health, psychosocial well-being and learning.

Chapter 2: Methodology

This chapter provides an overview of the sample of 5-year-old children at the centre of the study, and the preschools and schools they attended. It also outlines the questions posed to teachers, principals and other stakeholders about home and school life of young children in Ethiopia. The data collection and analysis processes are also described. First we provide background information about the two regions where the study was undertaken.

2.1 Regions where the study took place

The study was undertaken in two regional states: Amhara and SNNPR. Specifically, the sampled children and settings were located in two districts of North Shoa zone, including in Debre Birhan City Administration, in Amhara and in two districts in Sidama Zone, including Hawassa City Administration, in SNNPR.

North Shoa zone is one of ten zones in the Amhara Region. In 2014 the total population of the zone was 2,049,737. Amharic is the first language of nearly all inhabitants of Shoa zone while Oromiffa is the first language for a small percentage of its inhabitants. The majority of the population practice Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, and approximately 5 per cent are Muslim. According to the 2017 population projection 18 per cent of its population were urban dwellers. The majority of households in this zone are rural households. Non-farm related jobs are practised by a minority of inhabitants. Around 65 per cent of all eligible children are enrolled in primary school, and 20 per cent in secondary schools.

Sidama Zone is one of the 14 zones of SNNPR. In 2013, the total population size of the zone was 3,510,020. It is one of the most densely populated zones in SNNPR. Young people aged between 1 and 14 years make up nearly 50 per cent of Sidama zone's population. The different districts in Sidama zone grow quite a large amount of fruits and vegetables but also wheat, teff, maize and barley. In addition, because of its favourable climate, most farm households have converted to cash crop production, with coffee and khat (mild stimulant drug) production being favoured most due to their huge markets. Livestock rearing is also crucial for the Sidama zone inhabitants[27]. Around 90 per cent of all eligible children are enrolled in primary school in Sidama Zone, and 90 per cent in secondary schools.

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[27] Livestock provide transport, food (milk, meat, eggs) and are an important source of cash income for the farming households. Even though Sidama has a huge number of livestock, the yield obtained is very low which is blamed on poor genetics, poor feed and poor health services. Due to increasing number of human population in the zone, the size of grazing land is decreased which caused decline in livestock production.

2.2 The participating schools

A requirement of the study was that the participating schools were representative of the range of settings where 5-year-olds attend in the two regions. Schools were selected with the assistance of education officers in the districts. They included a mix of urban, semi-urban and rural schools, government schools with Grade 0 and preschool classes and private schools and kindergartens. Attention was also paid to include schools in areas with predominantly low socio-economic status (SES), areas with middle SES and areas with higher SES.

In total, 40 schools participated, 20 of which were located in North Shoa and 20 in Sidama Zone. The majority of schools (70 percent) were government primary schools up to grade eight, that had one or more preschool classes. The remainder were private kindergartens and schools.

Figure 1: Urban-Rural location of schools

Urban-Rural location of schools

37.5
47.5
15

■ Rural (15) ■ Semi-urban (6) ■ Urban (19)
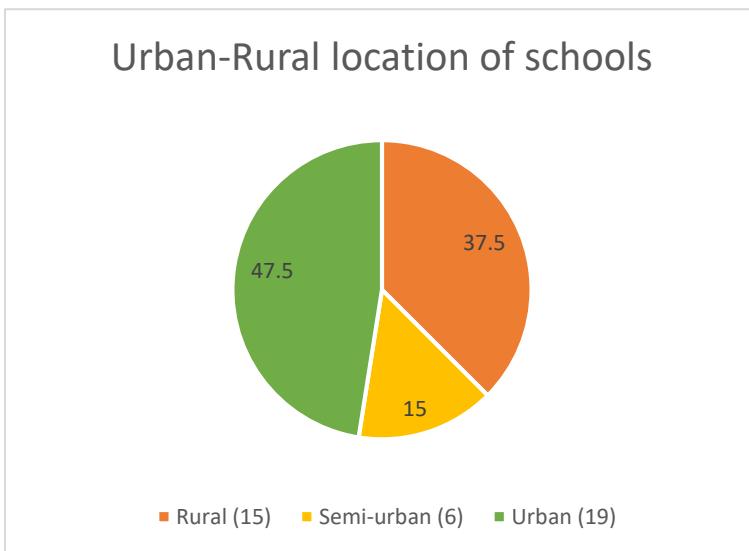
2.3 The children

The overall target sample was 1000 five-year-old children, split evenly between the two regions and ensuring as much as possible an equal number of girls and boys. Data was collected about 526 girls and 474 boys.

Regarding date of birth, Ethiopia does not yet have a legal and administrative structure to officially register births. In the sampled government schools, the majority of children did not have birth certificates. This meant that it was sometimes difficult to identify the age of children attending the preschool centres/0-grade classes and therefore be able to check their eligibility to be included in the study. However, by asking parents about major events around the birth of their child, it was often possible to confirm the child's age. Figure 2 summarizes the children whose psychosocial well-being was reported on.

Figure 2: Number of girls and boys

Number of girls and boys

47.4

52.6

■ Girls (526)   ■ Boys (474)
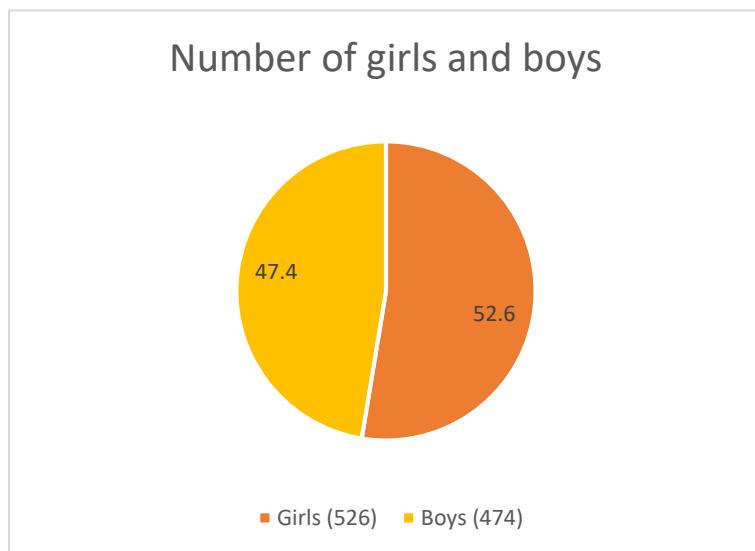
A committee was set up to assess the socio-economic status (SES) of the participating children consisting of the school principal, PTA representatives, teachers and parents. ESD oriented each committee on the factors that should

be considered when determining the SES status of a child[28]. Based on this assessment it is deduced that 50 percent of children in the sample were from low SES backgrounds, 40 percent from middle SES backgrounds, and 10 percent from high SES backgrounds. See also Figure 3.

Figure 3: Socio-economic background of children
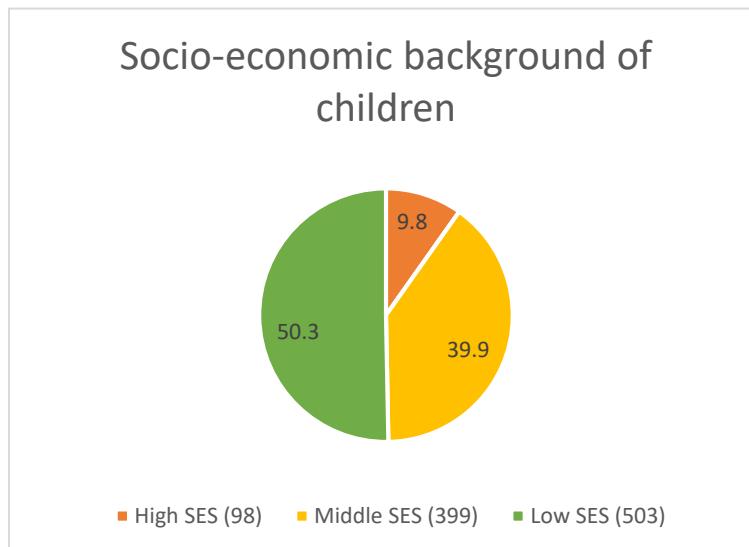
2.4 Study instruments and data collection

The first phase of the data collection consisted of interviewing teachers about the children's psychosocial status using the UPSI-5 tool, and interviewing school principals about the school and home context. These interviews took place between December 2016 and February 2017.

Once preliminary analysis of the collected data had been undertaken, workshops were held with groups of parents, teachers, teacher trainers and education officials in both study regions to discuss the findings and gain more

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[28] Factors included the living conditions of a family, possession of land and assets, the feeding and clothing of children, their sources of income (being employed at governmental or NGO offices, merchants, daily labourer or jobless).

in-depth understanding of the implications of the findings. Each of these processes are described below.

Interviewing class teachers about psychosocial well-being of young children using UPSI-5 tool

The UPSI-5 tool is a one-page list of 29 statements concerned with the social and emotional behaviours of five-year-old children. Example of statements are: 'S/he hurts other children more than most children do'; 'S/he can express his/her feelings'. The piloting of the UPSI-5 consisted of a rigorous piloting process in six countries[29].

The UPSI-5 is not an individual diagnostic instrument but designed to ascertain the psychosocial well-being of large populations of children at school, district, province or national level to make comparisons and note changes over time. The tool should be administered by those who know the children well e.g. their teachers. Each statement can easily be scored by ticking 'agree' or 'disagree' in either a grey or white box. When for instance, 10 per cent of a representative sample of young children score more than five (5) 'in the grey', then there is reason to be concerned about the psychosocial well-being of 10 per cent of the broader population of five-year-old children in the setting of which the sample was drawn. See Appendix 3 for the UPSI-5.

For the purpose of this study, the UPSI-5 forms were translated into Amharic and Sidamafa. A back translation process was undertaken to ensure accuracy of translation. Additionally, a picture was made by an illustrator to visualize each statement to support understanding during the interviews if needed.

In each school trained data collectors requested the class teacher/preschool facilitator[30] to complete one form per sample child. The teacher was asked to

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[29] van Oudenhoven, N., Miedema, E., Euwema, M., Kernan, M., Berkhof, H. and Knol, D. (2012). UPSI-5: The Universal Psychosocial Indicator for Five-Year-Old Boys and Girls. Garant Publishers.
[30] Adults working in preschool classes in Ethiopia may be qualified teachers or facilitators. For the purposes of this study we refer to all adults working in preschool classes as teachers. Some facilitators have followed formal training. Others have secondary education only, with additional very short training.

read each statement carefully, think about the child in question, and then tick the appropriate box[31].

Additional qualitative information was collected from each of the participating class teachers. Before completing the UPSI-5 scoring sheets, they were asked how they support the psychosocial well-being of children in their class. After completing the UPSI-5 scoring sheets class teachers were asked about any aspects of children's psychosocial well-being that they discovered by completing the scoring sheets and whether they feel they would do something different in their daily work as a consequence of completing the UPSI-5 forms.

In total, 40 teachers completed forms about the sampled children in their classes.

School principal interviews

Children's psychosocial well-being is influenced by the interaction between their innate capacities and their environment at home, at school and in their community. This includes the quality of their family relationships and the relationships with their peers and the nature of the physical environments they encounter every day. Qualitative and quantitative information about children's school and home life was collected from school principals via a structured interview with questions about: school size; class size and pupil/teacher ratio; teacher qualifications; available additional support services; daily challenges and positive opportunities faced by young children in their daily life at home.

Data collectors spent an average of 5 days in each school where data were collected.

Data collector training and supervision
Prior to data collection four university psychology and education graduates, two from Hawassa, two from North Shoa were recruited to be data collectors in the

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[31] Despite efforts to make the instrument as understandable as possible, ESD project officers who supervised the data collection reported that some of the questions used in the UPSI-5 tool sometimes led to confusion among teachers. This happened especially in Sidama, where the ESD staff supervising data collection needed to spend more time on orienting the preschool facilitators on the UPSI-5 tool.

study. ICDI staff facilitated a two-day training to prepare data collectors and the ESD staff who would supervise data collectors. Topics addressed included: an introduction to study; interview skills; exploring the UPSI-5 scoring form; exploring class teacher and principal interviews and first contacts with schools and interviewees. Role-play formed an integral part of the training. Additionally, considerable attention was paid to ensuring an accurate and meaningful translation of the concept of psychosocial well-being.

ESD project officers were responsible for introducing the data collectors to the teachers and school communities, checking whether the collected data was complete, and also for entering the data into Excel.

Ethical considerations

At each school the preschool facilitators (teachers) and principals were briefed about the UPSI-5 prior to data collection by ESD staff and data collectors and given the opportunity to clarify any concerns. No names of schools, teachers, school principals, and children were recorded on any interview or scoring form. To preserve anonymity, each child and school was assigned a unique ID number.

2.5 Data analysis and validation of findings

All quantitative and qualitative data collected was entered in Excel spreadsheets. With the support of a statistician, data were then analysed using SPSS statistical software, to identify trends and relationships between different variables. As well as assessing the psychosocial well-being of the children, we were also interested in whether there were significant differences in the preschool experience and psychosocial well-being of young children in North Shoa versus Sidama; and in rural compared to urban areas.

The research teams from ESD and ICDI worked together to compile the preliminary report and identify findings where interpretation was difficult and/or which needed more in-depth analysis. These were discussed in four validation workshops, which took place in November 2017. The topics took the form of focus group discussions. Two of these were with groups of parents and caregivers in each region, two were with education professionals: teachers, principals, education officers and teacher training college staff. Topics of

discussion included: introduction to psychosocial well-being, positive and challenging aspects of home situation, preschool and school attendance and teacher qualifications. See Appendix 4 for a full list of questions. In total there were 33 participants in the focus group discussions. Throughout all stages in the analysis and interpretation, there were frequent discussions between all members of the research teams. The findings from all phases of the research and analysis are presented and discussed in the remaining three chapters.

SUMMARY POINTS – CHAPTER 2

- Study sample consisted of 1000 five-year-old children, 526 girls and 474 boys, who were attending preschool classes in North Shoa Zone, Amhara and Sidama Zone in SNNPR.

- There were 40 settings in total, 19 (48 per cent) were in urban areas, 6 (15 per cent) in semi-urban areas and 38 per cent in rural areas.

- Data collection consisted of interviews with 40 teachers and 40 principals about the psychosocial well-being of children and home and school environments.

- Follow up focus group discussions were held with groups of parents and education professionals to gain more in-depth insight in the findings.

Chapter 3: Findings about home and school environments

The findings in this chapter are organized into two sections. We first discuss what we found out about the home situation and daily life of children in the study, as reported both by the school principals and the range of community members, parents and education professionals who participated in follow-up focus group discussions. Attention is paid to both challenges and opportunities in young children's lives outside school. The second part of the chapter focuses on what we found out about the (pre)school environment for 5 year-olds in the two study regions.

3.1   Children's home environment

Daily challenges

The two most prevalent challenges in the home environments of the children as identified by the school principals were 'poverty' and 'children growing up in a single parent family'. This was closely followed by 'no parents at home' and after that by 'lack of books and toys', 'drugs or alcohol addiction of a parent/ care giver' and 'domestic violence'. Table 1 shows a breakdown of the problems cited by the 40 principals.

Table 1: Problems faced by young children in their home lives in order of frequency identified by school principals

Problem	Number	Percentage
Poverty, no steady family income	37	92.5
Single parent family	37	92.5
No parent at home, child reared by other family member	33	82.5
Lack of books and toys	30	75
Drugs or alcohol addiction of a parent/ care giver	29	72.5
Domestic Violence	28	70
Child labour	22	55
Lack of electric power	22	55
Long walk on foot to school	20	50
Psychological problems of caregiver(s)	19	47.5
HIV/Aids of child or a close family member	15	37.5
Child abuse	14	35
Disability of caregiver(s)	8	20

Other additional challenges mentioned less often by school principals, which were not listed as options in the interview, were 'lack of proper care', 'lack of

parental follow-up', 'lack of strong parent school relationship', 'lack of balanced diet', and 'workload by their caregiver'.

Parents and professionals participating in the workshops where the findings were discussed, concurred with these findings, although they clarified that alcohol addiction was more of a problem than drug addiction. Parents of children growing up in the urban settings in North Shoa zone were particularly concerned about the lack of suitable places for children to play freely and safely. Other additional concerns highlighted in the focus group discussion in Sidama were about parents not being able to take care of their children properly, children in poorer families not being disciplined, behaving badly and not in line with the norms and values of the community[32].

Also mentioned was the fact that primary school children were forced to do work such as cutting khat leaves, picking coffee beans or selling plastic bags for survival. Lack of proper clothes, food, drinking water, and electric power were also highlighted as daily challenges for children in this region.

Positive opportunities

School principals were also interviewed about a range of positive aspects or opportunities of children's lives that could have a positive impact on young children's well-being. The most common positive opportunity identified was 'at least one adult in the life of the child who nurtures them and on whom they can rely'. This was followed by 'access to clean water'. The findings are presented in Table 2.

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[32] Much importance is given to inculcating good manners and behaviour and being polite from an early age in Ethiopia, where it is closely linked to religious beliefs. Religious education of children is considered to be the primary responsibility of mothers.

Table 2: Positive opportunities available to young children in their home lives in order of frequency identified by school principals

Positive opportunity	Number	Percentage
At least one adult in their lives who nurtures them and on whom they can rely	32	80
Access to clean water	19	47.5
Access to a free and safe place to play outdoors	12	30
Access to green environment (nature)	9	22.5
Access to books and toys	9	22.5
Access to latrine	8	20
Access to nutrition	5	12.5
Access to cultural activities such as stories, music making activities, dance, sports	5	12.5
Access to adequate health care	4	10

It is striking that except for 'At least one adult in their lives who nurtures them and on whom they can rely' the other positive opportunities were mentioned by (far) less than half of the school principals. There were also differences across the two regions. 'Access to clean water' was mentioned by 13 school principals in North Shoa against only six in Sidama. In addition, eight school principals in Sidama mentioned 'access to green environment/nature' against only one in North Shoa. It is also telling that two school principals in Sidama stated '(there is) no favourable situation in the school for the children' and '(there are) no positive opportunities and the children are living in bad situations'. The validation workshops in Sidama confirmed the problem of lack of 'access to clear water' in rural schools there. Further aspects of the school environment are discussed in the following section.

3.2 Children's school environment

It is important to also look at the school context, as the educational environment can also affect the psychosocial well-being of children. Some important features of the school environment are detailed below.

Size of schools and actual school attendance

The average school enrolment figure across all schools was 767 children. However, there was a huge range in school size, the smallest school had 66 pupils, the largest school had 2292 pupils. Both the largest and the smallest school were located in North Shoa.

The mean, minimum and maximum school size in the two regions are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: School populations in the two regions

Region	Mean no. children	Minimum	Maximum
Sidama	552	66	2292
North Shoa	982	145	1770

It is important to note that, especially in rural areas, there is a disparity between school enrolment and actual attendance. In other words, many more children are enrolled in school than actually attend regularly. This can be accounted for by a range of reasons. Children, including young children are often involved in work that contribute to the family income such as cattle rearing or picking coffee and cutting khat as mentioned in Section 3.1.

Some of the participants in the focus group discussions also expressed the view that some parents don't value (pre) school education. In terms of balancing costs of education versus benefits to child and family income, it was viewed more beneficial to involve children, even very young children in income generating activities away from (pre)school. The costs associated of sending children to school i.e. having to buy school uniforms and education materials or living at a long distance from the school were other reasons for parents not to send their children to school. Poor school facilities including poor sanitation and shortage of water and unattractive school compounds and classroom

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environments, untrained teachers and lack of follow up from school management were other factors that were identified in the course of this study to account for poor (pre) school attendance.

During the validation workshop in Sidama, participants talked about parents being forced to enrol their young children in the government preschool classes at the beginning of the academic year, only to withdraw them soon after. In addition to this, some parents believed that children picked up infections at school, due to the poor conditions of the classrooms.

Given a choice, and if they could afford it typically parents reported that they would prefer to send their children to private kindergartens and schools, where they believed the quality of the education was better.

The disparity between school enrolment and actual attendance needs to be considered when interpreting the data class size and pupil teacher ratio in the following section.

Class size

Ensuring an environment which is both healthy and conducive to learning and positive psychosocial well-being for children, especially for young children who learn with their whole bodies, is extremely difficult in group sizes larger than 25 or 30 children. The average class size in study settings was 51 children. In schools in Sidama Zone in particular the class size varied hugely, ranging from a class of 29 children to a class with 152 children. See Table 4.

Table 4: Class sizes across the two regions

Region	Mean	Min	Max
Sidama	61	29	152
North Shoa	41	30	52

As seen in Table 5, large classes were most common in rural schools. Schools located in urban areas had smaller class sizes on average.

Table 5: Class sizes across urban, semi-urban and rural areas

Locality	Mean	Min	Max
Rural	61	30	152
Semi-urban	50	37	80
Urban	42	29	65
Total	**51**	**29**	**152**

Pupil-teacher ratio

The average pupil-teacher ratio was 44. The average number of pupils per teacher was higher in Sidama (52) than in North Shoa (35). In both regions but particularly in Sidama the pupil-teacher ratio varied greatly.

Table 6: Pupil-Teacher ratio per region

Region	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
Sidama	52	29	106
North Shoa	35	22	50
Total	**44**	**22**	**106**

The findings show that the average number of children per teacher was highest in rural areas with 54 pupils per teacher. In semi-urban (35) and urban (37) areas the average number of children per teacher was almost similar.

Table 7: Pupil-Teacher ratio per locality

Locality	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
Rural	54	32	106
Semi-urban	35	25	45
Urban	37	22	65
Total	**44**	**22**	**106**

But what about teachers' experiences as educators in such an environment? In the following section we outline their backgrounds and their views of the curriculum intended for four to six year-olds.

Teacher qualifications, professional development and curriculum

The qualification level of teachers working with 5 year-olds varied across the two regions. In Sidama region more than half of the principals interviewed (55 percent) stated that all the teachers working with preschool classes in their schools were qualified (i.e. in possession of a college teaching diploma). In North Shoa only one quarter (25 percent) of the principals interviewed mentioned that their preschool class teachers were qualified. The highest percentage of teachers with no qualification was also found in North Shoa. See Table 8.

Table 8: Teacher qualifications

Region	All teachers are qualified	50% of teachers are qualified	Few teachers are qualified	Few teachers have a certificate	Most teachers not qualified
Sidama	55%	25%	0%	15%	5%
North Shoa	25%	5%	5%	45%	20%
Total	**40%**	**15%**	**2,5%**	**30%**	**12,5%**

It is important to mention that four out of the five schools where the majority of preschool teachers are not qualified, are located in rural areas.

The topic of teacher preparedness to work with young children was also discussed in the validation workshops in both regions. Participants spoke about teachers' lack of (empathic) understanding and their inability to manage children's behaviour. In their interviews, three school principals added 'shortage of learning materials', 'teachers not having adequate pedagogical knowledge and not knowing how to use active teaching methods' and 'inadequate and uncomfortable classrooms' being a concern.

For their part all 40 teachers participating in the study indicated that they needed extra training to effectively promote the psychosocial well-being of young children. Specific training needs mentioned included: child development and psychology, psychosocial development, child care, child-centred and active teaching methodology, how to prepare teaching materials, and participatory and active learning methods. As remarked by one teacher: "We teachers are trained on knowledge, but those with psychology expertise, they can support us. We do have teaching skills, but not skills about how to treat children." None of the education professionals interviewed mentioned the need for more attention to the role of children's outdoor play in learning and development.

Colleges for Teacher Education in Ethiopia have only recently begun to offer courses on ECCE. As noted in Section 1.2, most of these are privately owned and based in urban centres. Whilst all those present at the workshops agreed it was important that the preschool teachers receive training specifically focusing on the care and education of young children, most teachers could not avail of such training because it was too expensive. In the urban areas an alternative, short two-week orientation on pre-primary education facilitation was provided for preschool teachers.

A further point of concern raised in the focus group discussions was the fact that there was variation in the preschool curriculum being offered in different kinds of preschool settings: Government '0' classes versus private kindergartens versus preschool supported by NGOs and charities. Informants in the study who were education professionals, were of the view that the existing preschool curriculum being followed in the Government schools is not appropriate for young children, and that it does not pay sufficient attention to their psychosocial well-being. They were also strong in their view that the preschool curriculum should be harmonized for all kinds of schools and kindergartens where ECCE was being offered.

What about additional support for teachers and children's psychosocial well-being in (pre) schools? The findings from the study on these issues are now presented.

Additional support services available to teachers and children at preschool and school

School principals were shown a list with different kinds of support which may be offered to children by primary schools and asked to indicate which applied to their school. Similar to other aspects of school experience, the provision of additional support varied between individual schools, and also in general between the schools in North Shoa compared to Sidama.

The findings show that the most common additional support service available was a 'Red Cross club' (available at 60 percent of surveyed schools). Specifically, Red Cross clubs were available in 19 out of the 20 schools in North Shoa, against only five schools in Sidama. Usually, only children from Grade 4 and upwards are members of the Red Cross club. The Red Cross Association provides first aid training to members, who are then responsible for providing first aid to any child in the school who needs it. One quarter of the surveyed schools also offered 'guidance and counselling' and just under a quarter (23 percent) reported having access to 'a special needs teacher'. Guidance and counselling was available in ten schools in Sidama against none in North Shoa. On the other hand, three schools in North Shoa had a school psychologist available against none in Sidama. None of the schools offered children access to speech and language support services.

School principals of six of the surveyed schools (15 percent) mentioned kinds of support other than those on the list that they were provided with. The other kinds of support mentioned were 'support for children with diabetes', 'support for school materials', 'HIV/Aids club', 'Health Extension Workers providing counselling services', 'tutorial program' and 'children protection club'. Each of these support services was only mentioned once and therefore most likely not typical of preschool and primary schools in the regions this study took place.

See Figure 4 and 5.

Figure 4: Pupils and teachers access to additional support services in order of frequency

PUPILS AND TEACHERS ACCESS TO ADDITIONAL
SUPPORT SERVICES IN ORDER OF FREQUENCY

■ Red cross club (24)　　　　　　■ Guidance & counselling (10)
■ Special needs teacher (9)　　　■ Other (6)
■ Nutritional support (school meals) (3)　■ School psychologist (3)
■ Medical services (school nurse/doctor) (2)　■ Speech and language support/Therapist (0)

60%　25%　23%　15%　8%　8%　5%　0%
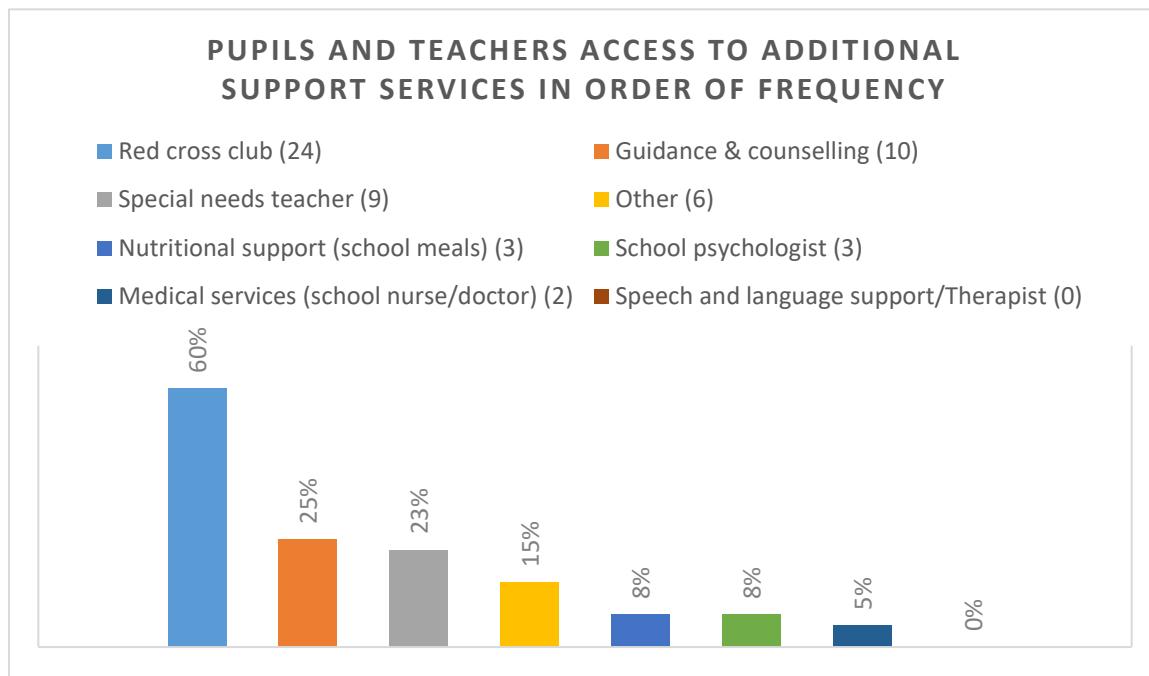
Figure 5: Access to additional support services according to Region

ACCESS TO ADDITIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES ACCORDING TO REGION

- ■ Red cross club
- ■ Guidance & counselling
- ■ Special needs teacher
- ■ Nutritional support
- ■ School psychologist
- ■ Therapist
- ■ Medical services
- ■ Other

SIDAMA
- Red cross club: 25%
- Guidance & counselling: 50%
- Special needs teacher: 20%
- Nutritional support: 5%
- School psychologist: 0%
- Therapist: 0%
- Medical services: 0%
- Other: 20%

NORTH SHOA
- Red cross club: 95%
- Guidance & counselling: 0%
- Special needs teacher: 25%
- Nutritional support: 10%
- School psychologist: 15%
- Therapist: 0%
- Medical services: 10%
- Other: 15%

SUMMARY POINTS – CHAPTER 3:

- 80 per cent of principals indicated that young children in their school had at least one adult in their lives who nurtured them and on whom they could rely. However, the frequency of challenges far outweighed the opportunities in young children's daily lives.
- Most common everyday challenges young children faced at home were poverty and growing up in a single parent family highlighted by 93 per cent of principals, followed by no parents at home (83 per cent), and lack of books and toys' (75 per cent).
- Children having no places to play freely and safely was a major concern for parents living in urban areas in North Shoa.
- In both study regions, there was a tension for parents on the one hand, to comply with the requirement to send their children to preschool, whilst on the other hand not being able to provide adequate clothes, food and school materials for their children to go to school.
- Parents also withdrew their children because of the poor material conditions of the (pre)school or because they felt the family would benefit economically if their young children were involved in income generating work.
- The average class size in study settings was 51 children and average pupil-teacher ratio was 44, the group size in rural areas was larger than either urban or semi-urban.
- Given the huge disparity between enrolment and actual attendance, it is likely that the actual numbers of children attending a preschool on any given day was lower.
- In North Shoa 25 per cent of principals reported that all teachers working with 5 – year-olds in their school were qualified – had a teaching diploma. 20 per cent stated that most teachers were not qualified.
- In Sidama, more preschool teachers were qualified – 55 per cent of principals there reported that all teachers working with 5 – year-olds in their school were qualified.
- There was general concern expressed by all informants about teachers' poor child development and pedagogical knowledge in relation to young children, as well as a lack of educational materials and resources and poor classroom conditions.

Chapter 4: Findings - psychosocial well-being of children

One of the main objectives of this study was to collect evidence about the psychosocial well-being of a large sample of 5-year-old children in Amhara and SNNSP Regions of Ethiopia. In this chapter we present the findings. The subsequent analysis allowed comparison of the psychosocial well-being of: girls compared to boys; of children living in Sidama versus North Shoa regions; of children living in rural compared to urban or semi-urban areas; of children from lower SES versus middle or high SES; of children in in above average class size or below average class size.

4.1 Psychosocial well-being children

The overall finding of the study was that there was 'reason for concern' about the psychosocial well-being in **37 percent** of the 1,000 five-year-old children: i.e. **more than one third**. See Figure 6.

Figure 6: Reason for concern about psychosocial well-being (in numbers and percentages)
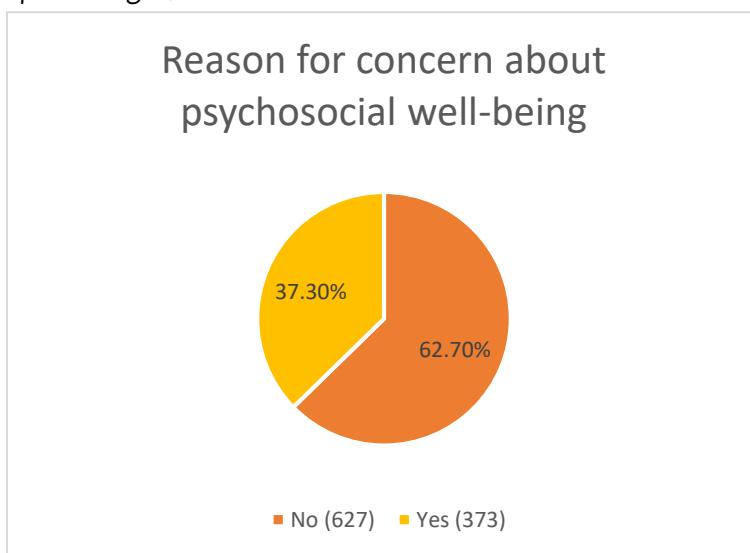
The variability in the percentages of children where there was reason for concern about psychosocial well-being was very high, ranging from 0% of children to 75%. Additional statistical tests confirm a strong relationship between the school attended and reason for concern about psychosocial well-being.

Both the average percentage of reason for concern and the large variability in findings was strikingly high and prompted the researchers to recheck raw data[33].

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[33] In 2015, when a similar study was conducted in four provinces in South Africa, also using the UPSI-5, the overall percentage where there was reason for concern was 25 percent. Per province the findings ranged from 11 per cent in the Western Cape to 37 per cent in the Eastern Cape.

4.2 Psychosocial well-being of boys compared to girls

The percentage of children with reasons for concern was higher for boys (45 percent) than for girls (31 percent). However, additional statistical tests showed a weak relationship between gender and reason for concern.

Figure 7: Psychosocial well-being and gender
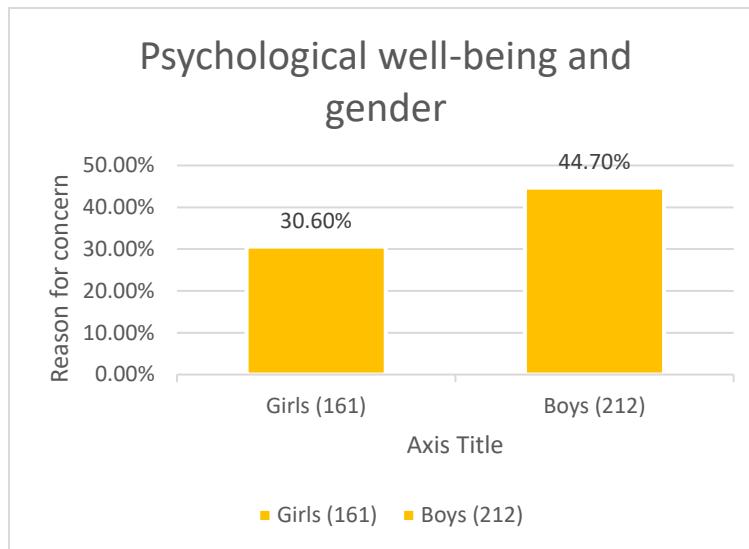
4.3 Psychosocial well-being of children according to region

The psychosocial well-being of children living in North Shoa and Sidama Zones shows quite a large difference. The percentage of children where there was reason for concern was higher in Sidama (41 percent) than in North Shoa (34 percent). Additional statistical tests showed a weak relationship between region and reason for concern.

Figure 8: Psychosocial well-being of children according to province/school
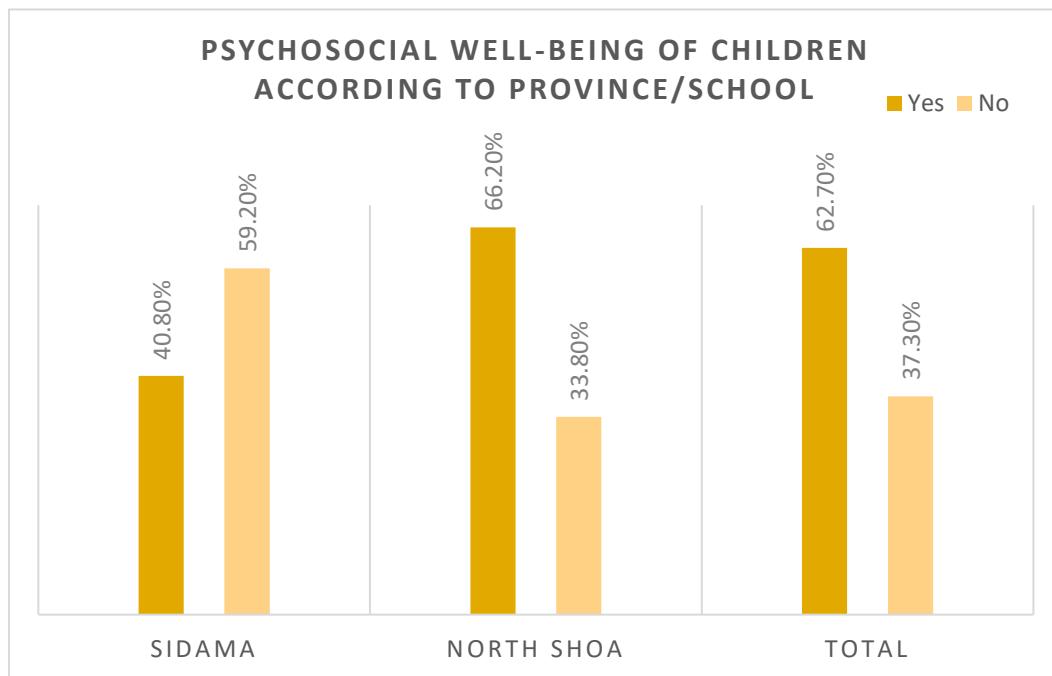
4.4. Psychosocial well-being: rural versus urban school setting

Living in and attending preschool in an urban compared to a semi-urban or rural area had a negative impact on psychosocial well-being of children. In both study regions, North Shoa and Sidama the percentage of children where there was reason for concern was higher in urban areas than in rural or semi-urban areas. Statistical tests found a moderate relationship between locality and reason for concern.

The differences are more pronounced in the case of North Shoa: the percentage of children where there was reason for concern for children living in urban settings was 46 percent. In semi-urban areas in North Shoa it was 29 percent, and in rural areas it was 22 percent. This high difference may be partly explained by the particularly disadvantaged position of many young children in some of the sampled urban settings, where many fathers are absent or unemployed, and where some mothers are sex workers in order to sustain the

family and there are no safe places for young children to play outdoors close to home.

Table 9: Reason for concern about psychosocial well-being, rural and urban settings compared

Setting	Reason for concern (in percentages)			
	Sidama		North Shoa	
	No	Yes	No	Yes
Rural	59,5	40,5	78,0	22,0
Semi-Urban	94,0	6,0	71,4	28,6
Urban	52,0	48,0	53,8	46,2
Total	**59,2**	**40,8**	**66,2**	**33,8**

4.5 Psychosocial well-being and SES background of families

As the SES of families was assessed by school committees the findings have to be examined with caution. The percentage of children where there was reason for concern was higher among those from a low SES background (39 percent) compared to the two other groups, middle SES, (37 percent), and high SES, (33 percent). It is noteworthy that the differences between the SES groups were not large and not statistically significant.

Figure 9: Psychosocial well-being and SES background
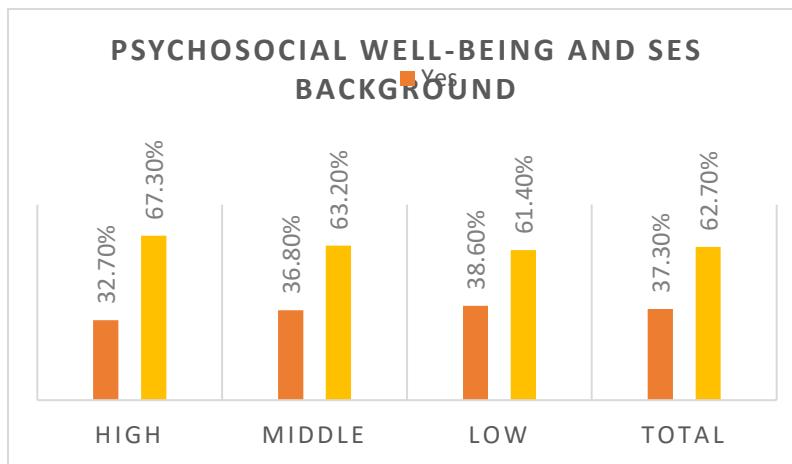
Upon closer inspection of the two regions the following differences were noted. In Sidama Region the percentage of children where there was a reason for concern was higher among those from a low SES background (43 percent), compared to those from a middle (41 percent) and from a high (27 percent) SES background.

In North Shoa region, on the other hand, reason for concern for children from high SES backgrounds was higher (38 per cent) compared to those of middle SES (34 per cent) or low SES (33 per cent). Additional statistical tests, again found no relationship between SES background and reason for concern within regions. Thirty per cent of the settings in the sample were private schools or kindergartens. There was no relationship between attendance at private setting and reason for concern in Sidama. In North Shoa, the percentage of children where there was reason for concern was marginally higher in government schools compared to private schools but this was not statistically significant.

Table 10: Psychosocial well-being and SES background across the regions

SES level	Reason for concern (in percentages)			
	Sidama		North Shoa	
	No	Yes	No	Yes
High	73,3	26,7	62,3	37,7
Middle	58,9	41,1	66,2	33,8
Low	57,1	42,9	67,1	32,9
Total	**59,2**	**40,8**	**66,2**	**33,8**

4.6   Psychosocial well-being and class size

In Chapter 3 we drew attention to the very high class sizes in preschools and primary schools. We were interested in finding out if there was a relationship between class size and psychosocial well-being. In particular for North Shoa, the findings show that in most schools with class sizes which were higher than the average class size, the percentage of children where there was reason

for concern was also higher than average. For Sidama region this relationship was less clear.

Table 11: Reason for concern on the basis of class size

Class size (above average/ below average)	Sidama Reason for concern			North Shoa Reason for concern		
	Above average	Below average	HW Total	Above average	Below average	NS Total
Above average	69,2	30,8	100,0	100,0	0,0	100,0
Below average	71,4	28,6	100,0	26,3	73,7	100,0
Total	**70,0**	**30,0**	**100,0**	**30,0**	**70,0**	**100,0**

4.7 Psychosocial well-being and additional support services in schools

The data shows no clear relationship between the number of support services available to children at a school and their psychosocial well-being. It is worthwhile mentioning that 20 percent of the sampled schools had no additional support services, 35 percent of sampled schools had just one additional service available, the most common one being Red Cross Club. The quantity of additional support in a school did not seem to play a significant role in psychosocial well-being of the 5-year-old children.

4.8 New insights for educators as a result of the study

The interviewed teachers mentioned gaining new insights into many aspects of children's psychosocial well-being as result of participating in the research. Some examples are: that different children behave in different ways and need different things; the importance of children being able to express emotions; the need to follow children attentively and to understand their different needs; the importance of a good teacher-child relationship.

During the focus group discussions teachers and principals identified ways in which school environment could be improved such as keeping the school compound and toilets clean, making teaching aids available, making sure that children are accompanied by adults when they go home.

Being involved in the study made school principals and teachers realize the need to foster relationships between home and the school, and many teachers indicated that they want to develop closer relationships with parents and care givers.

Another key finding is that both teachers and school principals showed increased understanding of the ways in which the home environment influences the well-being of children and felt a need to work (more) closely with parents and families in supporting children's psychosocial well-being. Many teachers expressed the need for regular and strong communication with parents or caregivers of the children. One teacher from Sidama suggested organising a discussion event with both teachers and parents. Several school principals suggested providing awareness raising or training to parents, for example on how to engage with children and on child development. One school principal suggested seeking assistance from psychologists when providing such training.

SUMMARY POINTS – CHAPTER 4:

- There was 'reason for concern' about the psychosocial well-being of children of **37 percent** of the 1,000 five-year-old children.
- In both North Shoa and Sidama the percentage of children where there was reason for concern was higher in urban areas compared to rural or semi-urban areas. This was particularly the case in North Shoa, where there was reason for concern about 46 per cent of 5-year-olds in urban settings.
- These findings may be explained by the particularly disadvantaged position of young children in some of sampled urban settings with high rates of poverty and unstable or no work of parent, lone parent families, no safe places for young children to play outdoors close to home.
- It was reported that compared to their urban counterparts (especially those most disadvantaged) young children living in rural settings typically have more freedom to play with siblings and peers outdoors, are often more independent and have more responsibility at an earlier age.
- In most (pre)schools in North Shoa in classes where group sizes were higher than average, the percentage of children where there was reason for concern was also higher – this pattern was less evident in the (pre)schools in Sidama.
- As a result of participating in the study, teachers and principals gained new insights into psychosocial well-being of children and the contributions the environment both at home and at school can contribute to young children's learning and well-being.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations

The purpose of this the final chapter of the Report is to summarise the main findings of this study and outline recommendations for all those who have an interest in (young) children's well-being in Amhara and SNNPR regions, and in Ethiopia in general.

Attention for the psychosocial well-being of children is integral to the quality of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and forms an important contributor to children's long term success at school. Other factors contributing to the psychosocial well-being of a young boy or a girl are the home environment and the cultural and socio-economic-political climate in which young girls and boys live. The main aim of the study was to find out more about the psychosocial well-being of five year-old children and the environments in which they are being educated, in order to inform policies, practice and teacher education in Ethiopia.

ECCE in Ethiopia is characterised by the challenge of rapidly scaling up of ECCE provision in a context where teachers' qualifications, knowledge about ECCE and the availability of ECCE-specific materials are lagging behind. By interviewing class teachers of 1000 five-year-old children using the UPSI-5 tool, as well as conducting focus group discussions with parents, principals, teacher educators and education officials, we were able to find out more about the psychosocial wellbeing and educational experiences of young children in two regions in Ethiopia.

Overall, a picture emerges of preschool teachers with adequate primary school **subject knowledge**, but **lacking in knowledge about child development and ECCE pedagogy including the role of play in young children's learning and development**. Preschool teachers are also overburdened due to very over crowded classes. For their part, parents and families are not convinced that government run preschool classes are supportive of their children's well-being and family's well-being and this is affecting preschool attendance. Other factors found to be influencing whether parents send their children to preschool included families not being able to provide adequate clothes, food and school materials. For some families the benefits to family income of young children working at home, outweighed the benefits of children attending preschool classes. The predominant challenges faced by the study children at home were poverty and growing up in a single parent family, reported by 93 per cent of principals overall; no parents at home (reported by 83 per cent of principals), and lack of books and toys', reported by 75 per cent of principals. Furthermore, children having no places to play freely and safely was a major concern for parents living in urban areas in North Shoa.

All of these interlinked factors pose risks to young children's ability to thrive. A central finding of this study, ascertained by applying the UPSI-5 tool, is that there is **reason for concern about the psychosocial well-being of 37 percent of the 1000 five-year-old children surveyed.** The percentage of children where there was reason for concern was higher in urban areas compared to rural or semi-urban areas in both study areas. This was particularly the case in North Shoa in Amhara, where there was reason for concern about 46 per cent of 5-year-olds in attending preschool classes in urban areas, whilst it was 22 per cent in rural areas.

On a more positive note, an important outcome of the study process, is that the participating preschool teachers and parents now have more awareness of the pedagogical work needed to support young children's well-being. As one project officer of ESD, who was closely involved in the data collection in North Shoa, said: 'This study opened their eyes'.

Consequently, concrete actions have already been taken to improve the preschool environments of some of the more disadvantaged children in the two study regions. These include: teachers paying more attention to facilitating play and active learning in the daily programmes and the provision of play materials, games and equipment indoors and outdoors.

However, clearly, a lot more needs to be done to improve both the quality of ECCE and the psychosocial wellbeing for more young children in Ethiopia. The following recommendations have been informed by the views, experiences and observations of all the informants in this study: parents, preschool facilitators and teachers, school principals, education officials, ESD staff and indirectly, young children themselves. They are organised in four themes: 1) Psychosocial well-being: from theory to practice; 2) Families and preschools working together to support psychosocial well-being; 3) Putting psychosocial well-being on the policy agenda and 4) Promoting a systemic approach to children's well-being in Ethiopia.

Recommendations

Psychosocial well-being: from theory to practice

Recommendation: for teachers and teacher trainers

It is recommended that greater attention is paid, in both pre-service training courses in Colleges of Teacher Education and in-service training in Ethiopia, to training teachers on psychosocial well-being of young children and how to promote it. The focus should be on understanding psychosocial well-being, why it is important and how to create supportive learning environments indoors and outdoors.

Families, communities and (pre)schools working together to support psychosocial well-being

Recommendation: for teachers and teacher trainers

It is recommended that teachers are provided with specific training to work positively and respectfully with families and communities. This way they can work together so that children can form close and secure adult and peer relationships. They can also ensure that there is a connection between children's daily life at home in the community with their experience at preschool.

Keeping psychosocial well-being on the policy agenda

Recommendation: for local and national policy makers

It is recommended that the UPSI-5 survey is repeated at 2 year intervals to measure change over time and to keep psychosocial well-being of high on the agenda of education policy makers' priorities. It is recommended that the UPSI-5 survey is extended to other regions in Ethiopia.

Regularly recurring surveys at (pre)school level will lead to an increase of attention to the psychosocial well-being of children, strengthen and create new

policies, encourage innovations, stimulate more research, inform training and of course serve the country's young children.

Promoting a systemic approach to children's well-being in Ethiopia

Recommendation: for local and national policy makers

It is recommended that a cross-sectoral approach is taken to improving the social and physical environments in which young children grow and develop, at community/village, zonal and regional levels.

A joined-up strategy and commitment to young children's well-being is needed, which involves health and education officials and leaders, as well as those responsible for rural and urban development. This would ensure that young children have regular health checks, safe places to play outdoors close to where they live, safe walking routes to preschool and stimulating preschool environments.

Appendix 1: Data collectors and researchers

Research team ICDI, the Netherlands: Margaret Kernan (Overall project coordinator) and Giulia Cortellesi with data processing and statistical analysis support from Anna Villa.

Research team ESD, Ethiopia: Aemiro Mussie (Project coordinator in Ethiopia); Data collector supervisors and data entry**:** Andinet Sehalu and Kidanu Gebre; with report writing and focus group design support from Rosalijn Both.

Data collectors: Bitul Abebe, Biniam Dereje, Wondimagegn Girma, Birukt Kifle.

Appendix 2: Key forms of play in early childhood

Exploratory play	Using physical skills and sensations to learn about materials and their properties, what they feel like and what can be done with them.
Constructive play	The manipulation of objects and materials to build or create something using natural or manufactured materials such as blocks, playdough, junk and collage materials, sand and water. Involves creating, recognizing and solving problems.
Creative play	Using open-ended materials such as art materials and natural materials in ways that encourage fluency, flexibility, originality imagination, embellishment and making novel connections.
Pretend, fantasy and socio-dramatic play	Includes: role-play, pretending with objects, pretend actions and situations, persistence with the imaginary play frame to create a play episode or event. When it involves interaction and verbal communication with one or more play partners regarding the play event it is termed socio-dramatic play (Monighan Nourot, 2006).
Physical locomotor play	Activities that involve all kinds of physical movement for their own sake and enjoyment. In this type of play a range of fine and gross motor skills are practised and mastered.

Language or word play	Unrehearsed and spontaneous manipulation of sounds, and words often with rhythmic and repetitive elements. As children get older, this kind of play often incorporates rhyme, word play and humour.

Table from Kernan, M. (2007). The Framework for Early Learning: A background paper – Play as a context for early learning and development. National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, Ireland.

Appendix 3: UPSI-5 Tool

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UPSI-5

UNIVERSAL PSYCHOSOCIAL INDICATOR FOR 5-YEAR OLDS

SCORING FORM

Child ID	Gender		Date of Birth	SES		School ID	Administrator	Reason for Concern	
	Boy	Girl		Low				Yes	No
				Middle		School location			
				High		rural/urban/semiurban			

Total Score (number of 'ticks' in the grey boxes below):	

Instructions: *Please read each question carefully and tick the box whether you agree or not agree with the statement. Only fill out this form when you think you know the child well. Please do not skip any questions. After you have finished answering the questions, count the number of 'ticks' in the GREY boxes and add the score in the space above. When the total number is 5 or more, tick the box marked 'YES' in the 'Reason for concern' section.*

Item/statement		Agree	Disagree
1.	S/he hurts other children more than most children do	▓	
2.	S/he is often aggressive for no apparent reason	▓	
3.	S/he is often stubborn	▓	
4.	S/he is easily upset or made angry	▓	
5.	S/he is a danger to others	▓	
6.	S/he is able to share and take turns		▓
7.	S/he often destroys things	▓	
8.	S/he often teases other children	▓	
9.	She gets along well with other children		▓
10.	S/he often seems to be in a power struggle with adults	▓	
11.	S/he has many mood swings	▓	
12.	S/he can make her/himself understood		▓
13.	S/he can express her/his feelings		▓
14.	S/he is invited by other children to play with them		▓
15.	S/he adequately makes use of nonverbal communication		▓
16.	S/he reacts responsively to instructions and directions		▓
17.	S/he can understand feelings of others		▓
18.	S/he is generally slower to understand things than other children are	▓	
19.	S/he knows when s/he has done something wrong		▓
20.	S/he plays like a regular 5-year old		▓
21.	S/he is interested in learning new skills		▓
22.	S/he wants to be on her/his own most of the time	▓	
23.	S/he regularly plays with other children		▓
24.	S/he is under active, slow moving and seems to lack energy	▓	
25.	S/he isolates her/himself from other children	▓	
26.	S/he has difficulty establishing contact and relating to other children	▓	
27.	S/he invites other children to play with her/him		▓
28.	S/he seeks contact with other people		▓
29.	S/he generally seems to enjoy her/himself		▓

Appendix 4: Validation workgroup questions

Validation workshop with parents of young children
Introduction
1) Who of you is familiar with the term 'children's psychosocial well-being' and would like to explain this? 2) What do you think your role is in promoting your children's psychosocial well-being?
Children's home situation: positive aspects
3) During the research we asked teachers about positive things in the lives of five-year-olds. They mentioned that most children have at least one adult in their lives who takes care of them and on whom they can rely. Teachers also mentioned having access to clean water and to a safe and free place to play as other positive things in the lives of most five-year-olds in this area. Think about the daily lives of children in <u>your</u> community. Do you agree with what the teachers said? If yes, why? 4) Do you think there are more positive things to be mentioned? Please explain.
Children's home situation: difficult aspects
5) As part of the research teachers were also asked about difficult things in the lives of five-year-old children in this area. They mentioned 'poverty' and that 'some children have to grow up in single-parent families or even with no parent at all' as most difficult issues in the daily lives of many five-year olds. Teachers also mentioned 'lack of books and toys' and 'drugs and alcohol addiction/domestic violence'. Do you agree with what the teachers said? If yes, why? 6) Do you think there are more difficult things that should be mentioned? Please explain.
Preschool and school attendance

7) What options are there available in your community for five-year-olds when it comes to preschool? Can you mention all the places where they can go?
8) Which kind of preschool do most children in your community attend and why?
9) The research found quite often young children are registered for preschool or school but they often are not able to come to the classes. Can you help us better understand why this is? What do you think the reasons are?
10) What do you think is your role in supporting your young children's development and learning at preschool and school?
11) Can you think of some ways in which parents and teachers could work together to support the development and learning of five-year-old children?

Recommendations and comments
12) Have you any comments or questions about the topics we have been discussing?

Validation workshop with professionals
Introduction

1) Who of you is familiar with the term 'children's psychosocial well-being' and would like to explain this?
2) What do you think your role is in promoting your children's psychosocial well-being?

Children's home situation: positive aspects

3) During the research we asked teachers about positive things in the lives of five-year-olds. They mentioned that most children have at least one adult in their lives who takes care of them and on whom they can rely. Teachers also mentioned having access to clean water and to a safe and free place to play as other positive things in the lives of most five-year-olds in this area. Think about the daily lives of children in your community. Do you agree with what the teachers said? If yes, why?

4) Do you think there are more positive things to be mentioned? Please explain.

5) As part of the research teachers were also asked about difficult things in the lives of five-year-old children in this area. They mentioned 'poverty' and that 'some children have to grow up in single-parent families or even with no parent at all' as most difficult issues in the daily lives of many five-year olds. Teachers also mentioned 'lack of books and toys' and 'drugs and alcohol addiction/domestic violence'. Do you agree with what the teachers said? If yes, why?
6) Do you think there are more difficult things that should be mentioned? Please explain.

Preschool and school attendance

7) What options are there available in this zone/region for five-year-olds when it comes to preschool? Can you mention all the places where they can go?
8) Which kind of preschool do most children in your zone/region attend and why?
9) The research found quite often young children are registered for preschool or school but they often are not able to come to the classes. Can you help us better understand why this is? What do you think the reasons are?
10) What do you think is your role in supporting your young children's development and learning at preschool and school?
11) Can you think of some ways in which parents and teachers could work together to support the development and learning of five-year-old children?

Teacher qualifications

12) Do teacher training institutes available in this zone/region offer course in preschool/ECCE?
13) If yes, when you think of preschools in your community, do you think that most teachers of five-year-old children received such training?
14) Do you think it's important that teachers of preschool classes received training in how to teach preschool children (ECCE)? Can you

explain why you find this important/why you don't find this important?
15) Can you give examples of how psychosocial well-being is included in teacher training?
Recommendations and comments
16) What, according to you and based on what you have learned from this research, can school principals/PTAs/teachers/parents/teacher training institutes do to improve the learning and development (including psychosocial well-being) of young children?
17) Have you any comments or questions about the topics we have been discussing?

More information

To find out more about this Project, please contact: Margaret Kernan, margaret@icdi.nl or Aemiro Mussie, aemirom@esdethio.org

If you wish to read the summary report including the results of the quality improvement programme in four preschools, visit this link.

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