

Heads and Deputy Heads of State, education ministers, experts and representatives from civil society from around the world will meet in Moscow from 27-29 September to examine ways of accelerating access to Early Childhood Care and Education. They will be attending the [first World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education: Building the Wealth of Nations](#), which is being organized by UNESCO, the Government of the Russian Federation and the City of Moscow.

Early childhood is a critical period. Children are most vulnerable and most dependent then on relationships for survival, emotional security and cognitive development. Yet large proportions of the world's children are denied access to the benefits of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), which in turn limits the development potential of countries and regions.

Wealth should not be defined as material gain alone. It should also take account of whether countries are able to nurture their human capital with values important in a globalized world: tolerance, a sense of justice and cooperation, respect for diversity and for the environment. The first World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education addresses the importance of starting early.

Ten facts about Early Childhood Care and Education

- ECCE is a right, recognized in the Convention on the Rights of the Child ratified by 149 countries.
- ECCE is the bedrock of EFA and the first step in meeting all the other EFA goals.
- ECCE can improve the well-being of young children, especially in the developing world, where a child has a four in ten chance of living in extreme poverty and 10.5 million children a year under five die from preventable diseases.
- ECCE contributes to the Millennium Development Goal of reducing poverty, as well as to the education, health and other international goals and instruments.
- ECCE has a beneficial effect on later schooling and leads to higher school enrolment, particularly for girls.
- ECCE is cost-effective in that it's a preventive measure supporting children early on rather than compensating their disadvantage when older.
- ECCE in the form of reliable child care provides essential support for working parents, particularly mothers.
- ECCE investment yields high economic returns, offsetting disadvantage and inequality, especially for children from poor families. It benefits taxpayers and enhances economic vitality.
- ECCE has positive effects on female labour force participation and older siblings' schooling.
- ECCE levels the playing field by reducing inequalities between rich and poor and is thus a key component to breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

