

# Countrywide count of all ECD programmes kicks off

The ECD Census 2021, commissioned by the Department of Basic Education and funded by the Lego Foundation, has officially started its task of counting all early childhood development (ECD) programmes across South Africa. The data collected during nationwide census of ECD programmes will assist the partners to better understand the country's ECD landscape.



Source: Supplied

This information will then be used to build a data management information system for the ECD sector, and provide a basic assessment of the enabling environment for quality learning through play. Working with the Lego Foundation, Unicef and various stakeholders active in the ECD space, the South African government is developing policies to bring play-based learnings into classrooms and pre-school facilities nationwide.

## Unlocking the power of play

The ECD Census will help the Department of Basic Education, together with their partners, understand how best to unlock the power of play to learn and invest in the future during the earliest stages of children's development. The survey will also make observations on the facilities available at the sites to enable planning for greater inclusion of children with disabilities and the delivery of integrated health and safety programmes.

Lego Foundation director in South Africa, Kerry Kassen says, "The Lego Foundation is invested in supporting and building the systems that will enable quality learning through play to thrive in ECD settings. For more than a decade, we have partnered with organisations to build a brighter future for children in South Africa through a play-based approach."

## Call for participation

The ECD Census is the first project being undertaken by the Department of Basic Education as the responsibility of Early Childhood Development shifts from the Department of Social Development. A key barrier to effective planning in the ECD sector is the lack of data on ECD programmes and data systems. The information gathered through the census will be used

to integrate ECD into the Education Management Information System (EMIS) and expand education support and play-based learning programmes.

Minister of Basic Education Angie Motshekga has urged all ECD centres in South Africa to participate in the census, “The department, together with the Lego Foundation and all involved partners are excited to undertake the first national census, which will broaden access to quality learning for every South African child. We urge all registered and unregistered centres in all corners of the country to participate in the census which has commenced this week as this will enable planning for greater inclusion, especially of children with disabilities and the delivery of integrated health and safety programmes.”

## **Fieldwork process**

Using all lists currently available from campaigns initiated by the Department of Social Development, the fieldworkers employed by Ikapadata will contact each ECD programme to schedule a physical visit to conduct a short interview and record observations of the facility.

Kassen concludes, “With the assistance and support of all the players in the ECD space, we are hoping that we will be able to complete the data gathering process between now and December. This critical initiative will highlight the opportunities to broaden access to quality learning for every child in South Africa going forward.”

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