

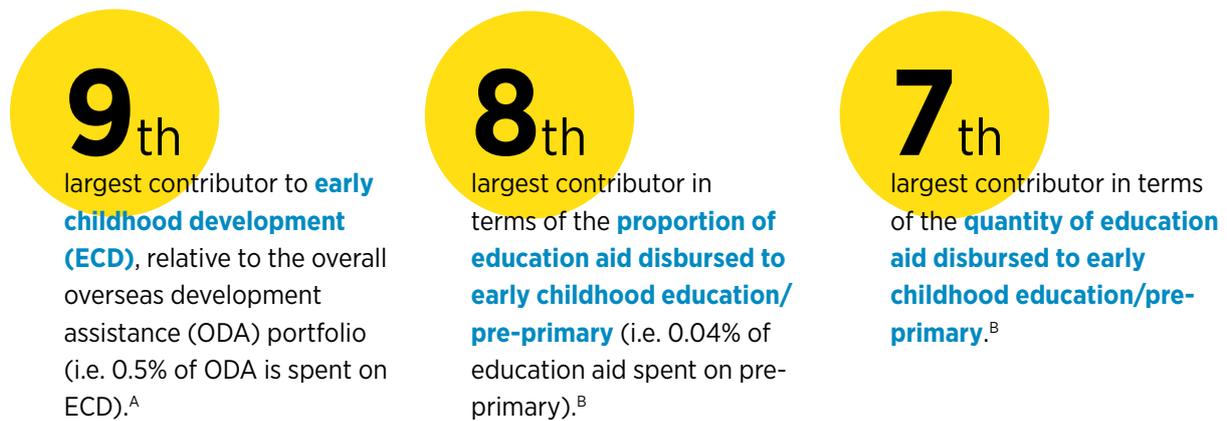


LEAVE NO CHILD BEHIND

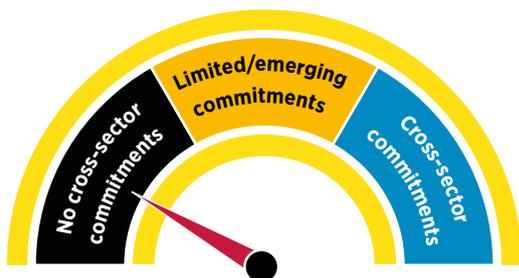
Invest in the early years

France is the **fifth-largest donor country** in the world, and the French President, Emmanuel Macron, has **committed to increasing overseas development assistance levels**.¹ France has five strategic priority areas: international stability, climate change, **education**, gender equality, and global health.

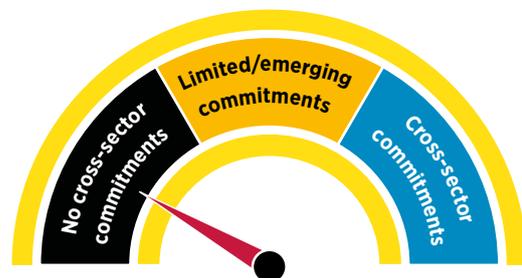
A review across 10 donors showed that in 2017 France was the:



Strategic commitment to early childhood development



Disability-inclusive early education investment commitments



^A The table looking at the comparative levels of spending on ECD for the donors in this report can be found in the corresponding global report.

^B In this report, two aspects were looked at in order to draw a comparison between the aid given to early education by various donors. Firstly, the total (quantitative amount) amount spent on aid to early education, and secondly, in an attempt to measure donor 'effort', the authors of this report compared the ratio of aid disbursed to the early education subsector to overall aid to the education sector. The comparative table can be found in the corresponding global report.

Integrated and inclusive early childhood development (ECD)

France had very low spending across the ECD domains of health, nutrition, education and sanitation analysed for this report. Furthermore, a smaller percentage of France's overall aid allocation is dedicated to ECD, relative to and compared with many other major donors. It is for this reason that France was ranked ninth out of nine donors reviewed. Furthermore, a search of the latest year's active aid projects within the main development agency, *Agence Française de Développement* (AFD), database found no projects with a specific ECD focus in the core project descriptions.²

Supporting early education and pre-primary

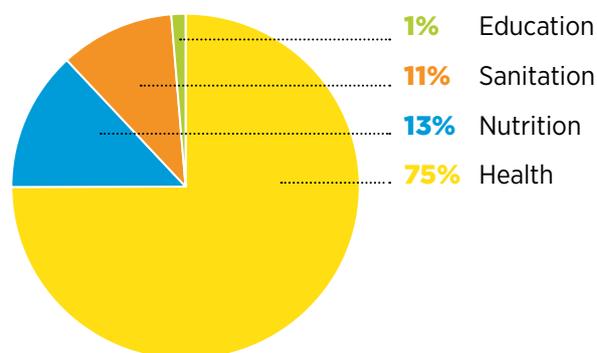
The French president, Emmanuel Macron, has made global education a strategic area of importance for his government. As part of this commitment, in early 2018, President Macron co-hosted the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) with the Senegalese president in Dakar, Senegal.

However, early education is currently a very low priority for the French government. Only 0.07% of all French aid disbursed between 2013 and 2016 within the education sector was allocated to early education. This percentage dropped to 0.04% of education sector aid in 2017.

Almost three-quarters of France's bilateral education ODA was spent on post-secondary education (Figure 1). Nearly the entire amount is used for costs associated with students from developing countries, who are studying in France. Basic education, which includes primary education funding, early education, and basic skills for young people receives very little at only 11% in 2017, when compared to post-secondary education. By category, Figure 2 shows that early education is receiving a very small percentage, of an already small amount of French aid given to education. However, France is the 4th largest donor to the GPE.

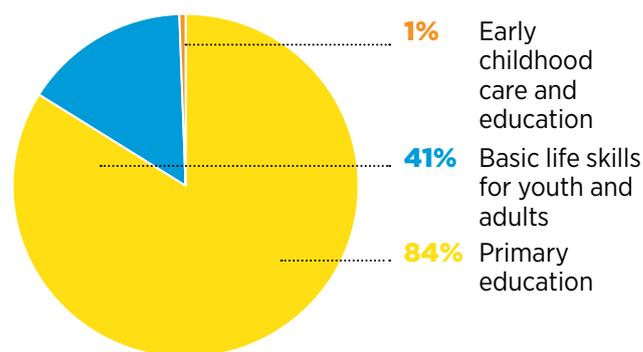
This also reflects a lack of strategic commitments to early education. The education work of AFD is led by the Strategy for Education, Training, and Employment for 2016–2020³. It contains no commitments to

FIGURE 1 France's aid contribution to education by subsector. Disbursements, US\$, 2017 constant



Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System. Accessed May 2019

FIGURE 2 'Basic education' category breakdown. Disbursements, US\$ 2017 constant, OECD DAC



Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System. Accessed May 2019

education in the early years, namely pre-primary or early learning, or early education.

More broadly, the document makes no commitments towards education – at any level – of children with a disability, nor to inclusive education approaches.

Within this document, disability is not specifically mentioned. Reference is made to the 'most vulnerable' as a target of achieving quality and equitable basic education, but there is no definition of which groups are referred to. Moreover, project-level data^c of the amount allocated to early education shows very little

^c This is based on an analysis of the early education purpose code in the OECD DAC CRS database. This shows that this spending is part of the decentralised government "local cooperation" model of supporting technical assistance from local authorities to regional/local recipient country projects. No further information could be retrieved as the project codes are not available to be analysed on the AFD open data portal.

information on their intended purpose. Given the lack of information, it was impossible to further analyse for disability-inclusive approaches in the funding.

Hope for the future: it should be noted that Macron's focus on education will likely lead to funding increases in this sector.

Moreover, in 2019, France hosted the Group of Seven (G7) presidency and committed to fighting inequality, and that included supporting the role of early education. As Jean-Michel Blanquer, Minister for Education and Youth, stated: "Fighting inequality in education starts with the very young. That is why, the challenges of early schooling, an issue faced by all countries, will be at the heart of our discussion".⁴

Health, nutrition and sanitation

Health is a major priority of French development policy. The French development assistance to health strategy, *La stratégie de la France en santé mondiale 2017-2021*, directs the overall investments in health.⁵ However, the strategy document includes no firm commitments to ECD programming, nor explicit outcomes related to improving ECD. The strategy does, however, contain clear commitments to maternal and child health as a target set of programmes and beneficiaries in the goal to support the most vulnerable. The promotion of health for the most vulnerable is one of four priority areas singled out in the strategy for health interventions.⁶

In the strategy document, France renews its commitment to "reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child and adolescent health (SRMNIA), in particular in West and Central African countries". But a note of caution is required. In comparison to other donors who

support maternal and child health as a core strategic priority, France has fewer maternal and child health interventions in the health and nutrition sectors.

Moreover, the analysis conducted for this report shows very little focus on areas which support ECD. A review of active projects on the AFD open aid data site showed that only 3% contained the terms "maternal" or "child health" within the project descriptor.⁷ Only three projects – of more than 800 identified as part of this review – supported early childhood as a primary beneficiary group.⁸ There was no mention of ECD as an outcome, or as a programming approach within any active projects. Within the same dataset a search was also carried out for disability-inclusive child programming (i.e. not only focused on the early years)⁹; only four countries or projects¹⁰ made any mention of addressing the health needs of people living with a disability, and only two targeted children (all age ranges). In other words, there was no overall early childhood outcomes identified in projects, nor spending more specifically aimed at supporting disability interventions.

Water and sanitation are also a focus for French development assistance, with 8% of aid allocated to it in 2017; within this, there is a very strong focus on supporting programmes that deliver basic water and sanitation services to the poorest people, especially women and children. An initial scoping of projects also demonstrated that there were strong crossovers to other sectors and outcomes, such as maternal and child health, an integral part of ECD.

⁴ The strategy for global health from 2017–2021 emphasises four priorities for health interventions: health systems strengthening, with a commitment to support universal health coverage; global health security; promotion of health for the most vulnerable; and, the development of expertise, innovation and research in global health.

⁵ A project database search for health initiatives deliberately focused on children, found only six projects. Of these only three projects, which were located in Cambodia, Sri Lanka and Haiti, explicitly referenced early childhood. The search terms "maternal" and "child health" were further used to review projects in Mali, Malawi, Madagascar, Senegal, Niger, Togo, Côte d'Ivoire, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Haiti, Afghanistan, and Benin. The search found that of the 883 projects listed, there were only 29, in total, where maternal or child aspects were mentioned, thus only 3%.

⁶ A word search across all projects was used for "early childhood development", "early childhood", and "ECD" – no results were returned.

⁷ The word search included "disability", "disabled", as well as programmes for early identification, such as "ECI", early childhood identification", and "assessment".

⁸ The four countries were Chad, Mali, Morocco and Palestine. There was also global support for cross-country work of Handicap International. The Chad and Morocco projects also targeted children.

Conclusions

Overall, France has little to no commitment to a multi-sector approach to ECD programming – with no spending or strategic commitments identified in this study. Even in the health or nutrition sectors, where there is a stated focus on child and/or maternal health, actual programming and aid disbursement are low. There is some evidence of a strong focus on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) as well as child and maternal health and programming, which should be encouraged further. As far as education aid goes, France appears to have no specific strategic approach to early education.

The AFD has a new motto that states: “A world in common that leaves no one behind”⁶, which seems to support the idea of including vulnerable populations as beneficiaries of their work. However, there are no policies or strategies that seem to support people with disabilities, especially in the early years, across the ECD domains. Moreover, within the main policies of AFD, the AFD Group 2018–2022 Strategy⁷ and The Corporate and Social Responsibility Policy⁸, disability is only mentioned once. In other words, France needs to work much harder to incorporate more disability-inclusive development approaches.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH REPORT AND DONOR PROFILES

Light for the World and their partners conducted a detailed analysis of the aid disbursements, which 10 donors have committed to support early childhood development. Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, UK and USA are the six bilateral donors reviewed for this report together with four multilateral donors namely, the European Union, World Bank, UNICEF and the Global Partnership for Education. Particular attention is paid in the research to donors’ commitments towards children who are vulnerable or at risk of being marginalised or delayed in learning due to a disability. For this reason, donors’ strategic frameworks were also analysed, in addition to their aid spend.

Light for the World and their partners have provided input to the donor profiles.

Recommendations

France should:

- Outline a strategy or plan for how investments in early childhood education and pre-primary school can help to tackle inequalities, and create a world that leaves no one behind.
- Set time-bound targets to make all ODA projects disability-inclusive and in doing so, potentially support early childhood development.
- Influence the GPE to increase their focus and investment in early childhood education.
- Increase early education and pre-primary funding, aiming towards comprising 10% of the total education aid sector budget in the longer term.
- Use pre-existing financing in health, WASH and nutrition to support pre-existing systems and platforms to embed a greater focus on the benefits of ECD.
- France should become more disability-inclusive in development programmes, including in early childhood domains.

COMPENDIUM OF ADVOCACY TOOLS

This Donor Profile is one of 10 advocacy briefs for ODA advocacy. There are also four recipient country profiles for national advocacy, as well as a Global Report and a user-friendly checklist to support the design of inclusive ECD programmes which seek to support the most marginalised children.



A Methodology Note providing more information on the process of analysis along with all the tools may be accessed at: www.light-for-the-world.org/inclusive-ecd-investment

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