



Solomon Islands

National
Early Childhood Development (ECD)
Policy

Final August 2022

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Foreword

It is my duty to present this national policy statement on Early Childhood Development (ECD). It is an important statement as the early years lay the foundations for the health and well-being of children across the life-course.

Solomon Islands has not previously developed a policy focusing on children during earliest years of their lives. However, as evidence has accumulated showing how important these years are for lifelong development, we need to take steps to ensure that their experiences during this time are as positive, nurturing and healthy as possible. We also need to ensure that the families of very young children are provided with the conditions they need to be able to promote their children's development effectively. Meeting the needs of children and families is not the responsibility of any single government department or service sector, but requires the coordinated efforts of many different departments and services.

The National Early Childhood Development Policy sets out how our nation, through a National ECD Committee, will work collaboratively to achieve these crucially important goals. The Policy will be accompanied by an ECD Action Plan that sets out what steps are being taken to implement the Plan, and a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework that shows what progress is being made to implementing the Action Plan and in improving outcomes for young children and families.

The support of UNICEF Pacific in developing this policy is gratefully acknowledged. They have provided the initial encouragement for Solomon Islands and other Pacific Island Nations to make provision for the needs of our youngest citizens. UNICEF Pacific has also provided ongoing funding for consultancy support and for the intersectoral meetings and community consultations that have been a vital part of the development of this Policy. The work of MEHRD staff and of all other government and non-government staff who have contributed must also be acknowledged.

It is my hope that the commitment given to the development of this Policy will be extended further through a concerted national effort to achieve better health and wellbeing for young children and their families, and for our nation.



Hon. Lanelle Olandrea Tanangada

Honourable Minister

Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development

Abbreviations

ECD	Early Childhood Development
COESI	Coalition for Education
ECE	Early Childhood Education
MEHRD	Ministry of Human Resources and Development
MHMS	Ministry of Health and Medical Services
MAL	Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock
MNPDC	Ministry of National Planning and Development Coordination
MWYCFA	Ministry of Women Youth Children and Family Affairs
MPGIS	Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening
MoFT	Ministry of Finance and Trade
NC	National Committee
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NAACC	National Advisory and Action Committee on Children
TWG	Technical Working Group
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Funds

Glossary

Cross-sectoral Coordination	The process of coordinating activities across different sectors (e.g. education, health, welfare, agriculture) as well as between government and non-government services and stakeholders
Early Childhood Development	The early childhood period and the broad range of developmental and integrated services for young children and families.
Early Childhood Education	Programmes (e.g. nursery, playschool, kindergarten, day care and preparatory class.) that provide educational, social, emotional, moral and physical support for children between birth and 8 years of age.
Early Childhood Intervention	Specialist ECD services for children with developmental disabilities and their families
ECD Paraprofessionals	ECD service providers who lack formal professional qualifications and who work under the supervision of ECD professionals
ECD Professionals	ECD service providers who have formal qualifications to work with young children, including teachers, speech pathologists, physiotherapists, psychologists, social workers and pediatricians
ECD Services	Services for children and the families of children from conception to age 8 years
ECD Workforce	The professionals and paraprofessionals who provide services to young children and their families
First 1000 days	The period from conception to the end of the second year. This is the period when the developing child is most easily affected by experiences and exposures, with potential consequences across the life-span
Inclusive services and communities	Services and communities that welcome and support the active involvement of all children and families, regardless of abilities, ethnicity or religion
National ECD Committee	Comprised of all ministries and agencies that provide direct services to young children and families. In Solomon Islands' context, the committee is expected to guide coordinated whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches to provide a comprehensive package of support for young children and their families.

Pasifika Call to Action on ECD	The nine-point action on ECD endorsed by 15 Pacific island countries in 2017 which outlines the key actions to guide national multisectoral efforts for ECD. It provides a means to track progress towards the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda key target 4.22 on ECD
Pre-Conception	The time in the lives of those of child-bearing age before they have conceived a child. Their health and well-being during this time can affect the subsequent development of the foetus during pregnancy.
Prenatal	The period from conception to birth
Primary Preparation Year	School level for 5-year-old children in Solomon Islands that is part of basic education.
Registration at Birth	It is the process of recording a child's birth. It is a permanent and official record of a child's existence, and provides legal recognition of that child's identity.
Screening Processes	Processes used by qualified medical and other professionals during pregnancy and infancy to detect children with (or at risk of) health problems and disabilities

Introduction

According to the Solomon Islands Situation Analysis of Early Childhood Development report (2022), Solomon Islands has continued to make improvements in some key ECD indicators. Infant mortality has decreased steadily over the last decade, although maternal mortality is still unacceptably high. Preconception care services need to be expanded, particularly contraceptive counselling to reduce the high rates of adolescent pregnancies. Access to antenatal care and birth care is reasonably high, although there are inequities in availability. Post-natal care is variable. Immunization rates are moderate for almost all recommended vaccines, although these vary from province to province. Solomon Islands has paid maternity leave and a breastfeeding in the workplace policy, but no paternity leave or family care leave.

While Solomon Islands is committed to improving the lives of young children and their families, there is much still to be done. Family violence and physical disciplining of children are commonplace and is generally not spoken about openly. There appears to be little understanding of the adverse impact of these practices on children's development, or of the negative intergenerational effects. The poor nutrition status of Solomon Islands children is another continuing challenge, with high rates of stunting, micronutrient deficiencies and malnutrition. Lack of access to a range of fresh foods contributes to micronutrient deficiencies in both children and adults.

Living conditions also need to be addressed. The conditions under which families raise young children are a major determinant of their children's health and developmental outcomes. One of the conditions that is most problematic for young children and their families is the lack of sanitation facilities and access to fresh water. Many early childhood services also lack these facilities. Even the quality of roads, and the availability of transport, can make life more difficult for families, making it harder for them to access ECD and health services.

Many of these problems are exacerbated by climate emergencies and pandemics. Solomon Islands is highly prone to natural disasters and climate risks, including tropical cyclones, tsunamis, floods, earthquakes and droughts. These weaken the economy overall, and therefore reduce household spending on necessities, including food. Ways to protect young children and their families from such effects need to be developed.

Beyond the risk that climate change poses to young children, it is also understood that policies, programs, and practices that support young children and their parents, when appropriately financed, of high quality, distributed equitably and at the right time, and aligned with the principles of sustainable development, provide a powerful pathway to immediately increase the resilience and adaptive capacity of young children to the effects of climate change and other emergencies. Furthermore, the same policies and programs, in the long term, boost the attainment of sustainable development at all levels. All elements contained in this policy are supportive of the climate resilience and sustainable development policies of the Solomon Islands, and therefore this policy calls for direct and close collaboration between the ECD community and environmental/sustainable development community.

Some inequities are evident. Those living in rural and remote areas have poorer access to services and support, as well as to sanitary living conditions. Better approaches to reach these communities need to be developed. Another group whose needs are neglected are young children with developmental disabilities, for whom there are few dedicated services.

The rights of children and parents, particularly mothers, also need to be addressed. Government policies and legislation need to be reviewed to ensure that all young children and their caregivers are adequately protected and supported. One of the key rights for children is birth registration, but this is still not consistently provided to all children, although the government is reviewing the laws and systems to address this issue. Another key right is the right to education, which is not always available to children with disabilities.

1. Definition

This document is called National Early Childhood Development (ECD) Policy Statement, herein referred to as the National Early Childhood Development Policy (National ECD Policy). The document shall be the governing instrument for the provision, regulation and implementation of ECD program and services in the Solomon Islands.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy statement is to:

- 2.1 Guide the development of strategic and implementation planning at the ECD supports and services to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for children during the early years.
- 2.2 Define and link the responsibilities of key stakeholders in the ECD sector in improving and maximising ECD outcomes.
- 2.3 Identify gaps and opportunities and prioritise the main issues that help to realise the effective and efficient planning, development and implementation of ECD services in the Solomon Islands.

3. Legislative and policy framework

The National ECD Policy is based on the following legislative and policy framework:

At the international level, Solomon Islands is a signatory to several important international conventions, although not all have been enacted. At the regional level, Solomon Islands was an active participant in the Pasifika Call to Action on ECD in 2017, and in the establishment of the Pacific Regional Council for Early Childhood Development in 2019. At the national

level, Solomon Islands has a number of laws, policies and plans that include or have implications for ECD. These include:

- the National Development Strategy 2016-2035
- National Food Security, Food Safety and Nutrition Policy 2019-2023
- Child and Family Welfare Act, National Nutrition Policy, National Disaster Management Plan 2018
- National Children's Policy, National Education Action Plan, Child Protection Policy and National Disability Policy.
- The national ECD policy and action plan will take these instruments into account, and sharpen the focus on the early years. One of the factors to be considered is whether the rights of children with developmental disabilities are adequately protected by current legislation and policies.

4. Vision and Mission Statement

4.1 Vision

All children from conception to 8 years of age will achieve their full potential and be healthy, well nourished, well cared for, educated, and safe and secure.

4.2 Mission

- Provide all children from conception to 8 years old with safe and violence-free home and community environments
- Provide expectant mothers and fathers with prenatal, antenatal and family planning education and health care services
- Ensure quality screening processes are provided by qualified and competent professionals for mothers during pregnancy and children during infancy to detect children with disabilities and those at risk
- Ensure all children are registered at birth
- Strengthen parenting and community support by fostering safe and proper nutrition at home, in ECE centres and schools, hygiene and sanitation, and care for young children 0 – 8 years of age using evidence-based research adapted to local context
- Provide universal, access to affordable, quality and inclusive early childhood, d primary preparation year, and primary education including children with disabilities through improved learning facilities and quality learning resources and continuous teacher's professional development

5. Objectives

The specific objectives are as follows:

- 5.1 To provide parents with support from pre-conception onwards
- 5.2 To protect children's rights and to protect children from harm
- 5.3 To identify and support children with developmental and acquired disabilities and their families
- 5.4 To raise parental and community awareness of the developmental and care needs of young children, and the importance of ECD and ECD services
- 5.5 To ensure that all children and families live in conditions that enable them to meet their children's developmental and care needs
- 5.6 To provide high quality early childhood education and care services for children
- 5.7 To improve the quality of ECD services through ECD workforce development, service registration and improved cross-sectoral coordination of services
- 5.8 To build a strong national commitment to ECD and a strong organisational framework to coordinate all ECD activities at national, provincial and community levels
- 5.9 To develop a multisectoral ECD monitoring and evaluation framework

6. Objectives and Associated Activities

The activities associated with each of specific objectives are as follows:

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES AND ASSOCIATED ACTIVITIES
<p>Objective 1: Support parents from pre-conception onwards</p> <p>Provide all mothers and fathers with easy access to prenatal, antenatal and family planning and health care services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Provide all mothers and fathers with easy access to prenatal, antenatal and family planning and health care services</i>• <i>Improve data collection to ensure all parents are receiving the prenatal, antenatal and family planning services they need</i>
<p>Objective 2: Protection of children's rights and safety</p> <p>Ensure that children's rights are protected and that they are provided with safe and violence-free home and community environments from conception onwards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Ensure all children are registered at birth</i>• <i>Ensure that all children are protected from harm and all forms of abuse and violence</i>• <i>Ensure that rights of children with disabilities are protected</i>

- *Provide all children and parents from conception onwards with safe and violence-free home and community environments*

Objective 3: Support children with developmental and acquired disabilities and their families

Ensure quality screening processes are provided during pregnancy and infancy to detect children with disabilities and those at risk, and provide early childhood intervention services to families of children with identified developmental and acquired disabilities

- *Ensure quality screening processes are provided by qualified and competent professionals for mothers during pregnancy and children during infancy to detect children with disabilities and those at risk*
- *Provide early childhood intervention services to families of children with identified developmental and acquired disabilities*

Objective 4: Training and awareness raising for parents

Provide information and training to raise the awareness of parents and children about key child care issues, including hygiene, nutrition, child protection, early education services, health care needs

- *Raise parental and community awareness about key child care issues – eg. hygiene, nutrition, health care needs, child protection, nurturing care, early stimulation and play, and ECE services*
- *Conduct a public awareness campaign to promote a better national understanding of the nature and importance of the early years.*

Objective 5: Healthy and safe conditions for families

Ensure that all families are provided with the safe and healthy conditions they need to be able to raise their children, including access to nutritious foods, fresh water, good sanitation, and safe community environments.

- *Ensure all children, caregivers and communities have access to affordable and nutritious food*
- *Ensure all children, caregivers, communities and schools have easy access to clean water*
- *Ensure all home, community and ECD / school settings have access to sanitary toileting facilities*
- *Ensure all families and caregivers have access to affordable transport to enable them to access the services they need*
- *Ensure all families and caregivers have positive social support networks*

Objective 6: Quality education and care for young children

Ensure that all children have access to universal, affordable, quality and inclusive early childhood and pre-primary education programmes, and that these programmes can cater for the needs of children with developmental disabilities.

- *Ensure that all children have access to universal, affordable, quality and inclusive early childhood and pre-primary education programmes*
- *Ensure that all early childhood and pre-primary education programmes are able to provide appropriate support for children with developmental disabilities and health needs*
- *Improve data collection to ensure that all children early childhood and pre-primary education programmes, wherever they live and regardless of their circumstances*

Objective 7: Improve ECD services and the ECD workforce

Ensure that ECD services are registered and connected with other services, and the ECD workforce is sufficient to meet the needs and is appropriately trained and supervised.

- *Ensure that all ECD workforce have access to supportive work conditions*
- *Ensure that there is an adequate supply of ECD properly trained professionals and para-professionals*
- *Ensure that all ECD workforce have access to ongoing professional development training*
- *Ensure registration of all ECD services and develop quality standards under each sector*
- *Ensure better coordination of services across sectors*

Objective 8: Strong commitment to ECD and a strong organisational ECD coordination framework

Ensure that the National ECD Committee and its Secretariat are appropriately supported, and that there are corresponding ECD coordination structures at provincial and community levels

- *Establish a permanent national office and secretariat responsible for the National ECD Policy and Action Plan*
- *Ensure that the National ECD Committee and its Secretariat are appropriately supported*
- *Ensure that there are corresponding ECD coordination structures at provincial and community levels*
- *Obtain an accurate picture of the total government ECD expenditure and ensure that it is sufficient to provide all the services needed*
- *Ensure there is active participation and collaboration between government and stakeholders*
- *Ensure sufficient funding is available to implement all Strategic Priorities.*

Objective 9: All young children and their families are protected

Make plans to ensure that young children and their families are protected from disasters (cyclones, earthquakes, rising seas), health crises (pandemics), and the effects of climate change

- *Ensure protection from climate disasters (cyclones, earthquakes, rising seas) and health crises (pandemics) - need to plan ahead on how to deal with each type of emergency*
- *Prepare action plans to mitigate the effects of climate change (e.g., floods and natural disasters)*

Objective 10: Multisectoral ECD monitoring and evaluation framework

Introduce a phased monitoring and evaluation framework and system, with key indicators, measures and targets.

- *Implement our ECD Policy and achieve full accountability through the establishment of a phased monitoring and evaluation framework and system, with key indicators, measures and targets for young children and their families.*

7. Policy Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

7.1 Policy implementation

7.1.1 The National ECD Policy is an integrated document prepared by Seven Government Ministries; MEHRD, MHMS, MAL, MWYCFA, MPGIS, MNPDC and MoFT. With its multi-sectoral focus, a multi-sectoral implementation plan has to be developed through which the policy will be implemented over the next six years. The plan details the key strategic areas and actions of these five ministries, including its monitoring and evaluation with specific focus to improving delivery of integrated and coordinate ECD programs and services in Solomon Islands.

7.1.2 The National ECD Committee will also have ongoing responsibility for coordinating the implementation of the Action Plan and the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, and reporting on progress to Cabinet through NAACC.

7.1.3 The National ECD Committee should be comprised of all Ministries and agencies that provide direct services to young children and families or that can support ECD services and shape the conditions under which families are raising young children. Although major inputs are expected from both Health and Education sectors, the contribution of other ministries is equally important. Social welfare grants, protective services, birth registration, access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene, mobility and functional infrastructure are all critical and should be linked with each other.

7.1.4 Multi-sectoral coordination of ECD has had active participation of Permanent Secretaries from the following ministries via their membership in an interim ECD Task Force:

- Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD) (*chair*),
- Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs (MWYCFA) (*co-chair*)

- Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) (*co-chair*),
- Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening (MPGIS),
- Ministry of National Planning and Development Coordination (MNDPC)
- Ministry of Finance and Trade (MOFT), and
- Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL)

7.1.5 These Ministries will form the core members of the National ECD Committee, with other members being drawn from the existing membership of NAACC as required. These potential additional members include

- The Ministry responsible for Home Affairs
- The Ministry responsible for Justice
- The Ministry responsible for Police
- The Ministry responsible for Corrections
- The Ministry responsible for Labor
- The Ministry responsible for Finance, including the National Statistics Office
- The Ministry responsible for Foreign Affairs
- The Ombudsman's Office

7.1.6 The new National ECD Committee will be co-chaired by Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs (MWYCFA) and the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS).

7.1.7 The National ECD Committee will meet quarterly, with additional special meetings to be called to review ad-hoc issues, including the completion of ECD policy-related papers.

7.1.8 The principal functions of the ECD Committee are:

- To ensure that the needs of children from conception to age 8 and of their families are fully understood by Cabinet, relevant ministries, and civil society, including NGOs and faith-based organizations and development partners.
- To ensure the commitment of all the above stakeholders to supporting families of children from conception to age 8 in caring for and raising their children optimally.
- To ensure the coordination, at national, provincial and community levels, of all policies, resources, initiatives and services for supporting young children and their families.
- To ensure that all families of children from conception to age 8 are provided with the basic environmental and social conditions they need to be able to care for and raise their children optimally.

- To ensure that all children from conception to age 8 and their families have ready access to the high quality health, welfare and educational services they need to promote children's development and wellbeing.
- To closely monitor the health and wellbeing of young children and their families, and to provide regular reports on their progress to the NAACC and Cabinet.
- To oversee the preparation and implementation of a national ECD Policy and Action Plan, and to monitor and evaluate its outcomes over time.
- To influence government spending to ensure that children from conception to age 8 and their families have the resources they need.

7.1.9 The Committee will be supported by the *National ECD Secretariat* which will be housed at the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs (MWYCFA). The Secretariat will be comprised of three positions: a Chief National ECD Coordinator and two Principal ECD Officers.

7.1.10 The Secretariat will report to the ECD Committee and in turn to NAACC. The Chair of the NAACC reports in turn on ECD progress and challenges to the Council of Ministers for Children annually, including annual work plan of ECD Secretariat reviewed and approved by the same Council. The Secretariat will also prepare quarterly or bi-annual reports for the benefit to the Cabinet and Office of the Prime Minister.

8.1.11 Reporting lines to NAACC, the Council of Ministers for Children, and Cabinet

The National ECD Committee will prepare reports for all quarterly NAACC Executive meetings on:

- Oversight of the National ECD Policy
- Development and implementation of the ECD Action Plan
- Development of ECD Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
- Progress in meeting national ECD goals and targets

7.1.12 The Coordinator of the National ECD Secretariat will liaise with the NAACC Secretariat Coordinator to coordinate the activities of the National Steering Committee and the NAACC working Groups. The NAACC has three working groups: Child Survival (Health), Child Development (Education) and Child Protection (Welfare). These groups are meant to meet monthly, and report to the NAACC Executive Board, via the NAACC Secretariat on a quarterly basis. The National ECD Committee will work alongside these working groups. As appropriate, issues dealt with by the ECD Committee will be brought to their attention.

8. Financing

8.1 Recognizing that ECD is an integral part of national development priorities, budgetary guidelines and requirements must be directed for all relevant ECD sector ministries, to

allocate a certain percentage of their regular budget for supporting ECD programmes and must be reflected in the annual work plan.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

- 9.1. The monitoring of this policy will be done by the ECD National Committee, with support from the National ECD Secretariat. The evaluation of the policy and its implementation plan will be conducted at the third quarter of every 3 years.

Annex

SOLOMON ISLANDS

Early Childhood Development (ECD) Coordination Mechanism:

Discussion paper

August 2022

1. INTRODUCTION

Acting on resolutions made by government representatives at the 2018 National Early Childhood Development (ECD) Forum, an ECD inter-ministerial Team was tasked to oversee the setup of a national ECD coordination mechanism. Three models of coordination identified at the 2018 National Forum were explored and presented in a paper submitted to Cabinet in July 2020.

Cabinet endorsed one of the options presented and instructed the following:

- Approved the establishment of a national, multisectoral body for coordination on ECD based on the specific terms of reference and work plan for the coordinating body that will be developed or established
- Approved
Use of the current National Advisory and Action Committee on Children (NAACC) that would be strengthened to be able to provide the needed coordination of ECD services, and would report directly to Cabinet as the suitable model to establish the coordination of ECD in Solomon Islands:
- Agreed to support of three (3) professional positions and budget required to operationalise the coordination of ECD
- Mandated the MEHRD to implement Option 3 on the development of ECD in the country.

Following this decision, an inter-ministerial meeting was held on 12 November where it was requested that a discussion paper be prepared outlining the following:

- Functions of ECD Committee with clear ToRs with overall framework and structure of ECD Coordination within NAACC
- ToRs of 3 personnel and how they link up to support multi-sectoral coordination through inclusion of focal points from each ministry
- Prepare work plan and timeline for the Committee which will include the development of a National ECD Policy and Implementation Plan

- Ensure Alignment of ECD Thematic activities from ECD relevant ministries to the work plan

This discussion paper has been prepared to provide the Inter-ministerial Committee with advice on these issues.

2. FUNCTIONS AND TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE NATIONAL ECD COMMITTEE

2.1 Functions

The National ECD committee is expected to guide coordinated whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches to provide a comprehensive package of support for young children and their families.

In concrete terms, the National ECD Committee is expected to oversee the preparation and implementation of a ***national multi-sectoral ECD Policy and Action Plan***. This policy and action plan will establish the foundation for the country's ECD strategies and will work to ensure the protection and inclusion of all infants and young children in society, improve child and family development, reduce family poverty, and expand and improve services for early childhood development, early childhood care, parenting, early childhood intervention, health, nutrition, protection, water, sanitation and hygiene and child safety.

The ECD Policy will:

- Establish a national Vision, Mission and Goal for ECD, with concrete objectives and strategies for sectoral, multisectoral, integrated and well-coordinated child development services,
- Identify the country's most important strategic priorities for ECD
- Under each strategic priority, it will identify programmes and services at national, provincial and community levels
- Ensure that adequate resources are available to implement Annual Action Plan based on the AWP

The National ECD Committee will also have ongoing responsibility for coordinating the implementation of the Action Plan and the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, and reporting on progress to Cabinet.

UNICEF is supporting the design of a formal Terms of Reference for this National ECD Committee, which would align with NAACC's ToR, and delineate even more specific functions for the Committee. (Draft Terms of Reference for the National ECD Committee can be found in Annex 1.) Once the new national ECD structure has been approved, the National ECD Coordinator, with support from UNICEF and International ECD Consultants, will prepare revised ToR for the NAACC, incorporating ToR for the National ECD Committee.

2.2 Membership and roles

The National ECD Committee should be comprised of all Ministries and agencies that provide direct services to young children and families or that can support ECD services and shape the conditions under which families are raising young children. Although major inputs are expected from both Health and Education sectors, the contribution of other ministries is equally important. Social welfare grants, protective services, birth registration, access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene, mobility and functional infrastructure are all critical and should be linked with each other.

Membership of the National ECD Committee can draw from existing membership of NAACC, which is stated in the NAACC ToR as being comprised of the following:

- The Ministry responsible for Women, Youth and Children
- The Ministry responsible for Home Affairs
- The Ministry responsible for Education
- The Ministry responsible for Health
- The Ministry responsible for Justice
- The Ministry responsible for Police
- The Ministry responsible for Corrections
- The Ministry responsible for Labor
- The Ministry responsible for Provincial Government
- The Ministry responsible for Development Planning and Aid Coordination
- The Ministry responsible for Agriculture and Livestock
- The Ministry responsible for Finance, including the National Statistics Office
- The Ministry responsible for Foreign Affairs
- The Ombudsman's Office

As it currently stands, multi-sectoral coordination of ECD has had active participation of Permanent Secretaries from the following ministries via their membership in an interim ECD Task Force:

- Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs (MWYCFA),
- Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD)(*co-chair*),
- Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) (*co-chair*),
- Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening (MPGIS),
- Ministry of National Planning and Development Coordination (MNDPC)
- Ministry of Finance and Trade (MOFT), and
- Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL)

It is recommended that this group continue to provide oversight of ECD as members of the new National ECD Committee. It is further recommended that the Ministry of Justice and the Social Sector Unit of Prime Minister's Office be added to this list, given their contributions to ECD services and their existing engagement with NAACC.

In line with NAACC membership, the ECD Committee may also allocate seats to specialist children's agencies (e.g. UNICEF and Save the Children) and two representatives from

relevant civil society organisations. Where relevant, other agencies may be invited to specific meetings as observers or to provide technical advice.

The National ECD Committee will be chaired by Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development.

The National ECD Committee will meet quarterly, with additional special meetings to be called to review ad-hoc issues, including the completion of ECD policy-related papers. The first meeting should be convened as soon as the membership and Terms of Reference have been approved.

The National ECD Committee will be supported by the *National ECD Secretariat* which will be housed at the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children, and Family Affairs. The Secretariat will be comprised of three positions: a Chief National ECD Coordinator and two Principal ECD Officers.

The Secretariat will report to the National ECD Committee and will prepare quarterly or bi-annual reports for the benefit to the Cabinet and Office of the Prime Minister. The Chair of the National ECD Committee will submit an annual work plan for the ECD Secretariat for approval by Cabinet.

2.3 Reporting lines to NAACC, the Council of Ministers for Children, and Cabinet

The National ECD Committee will report directly to Cabinet, and will prepare quarterly or bi-annual reports on:

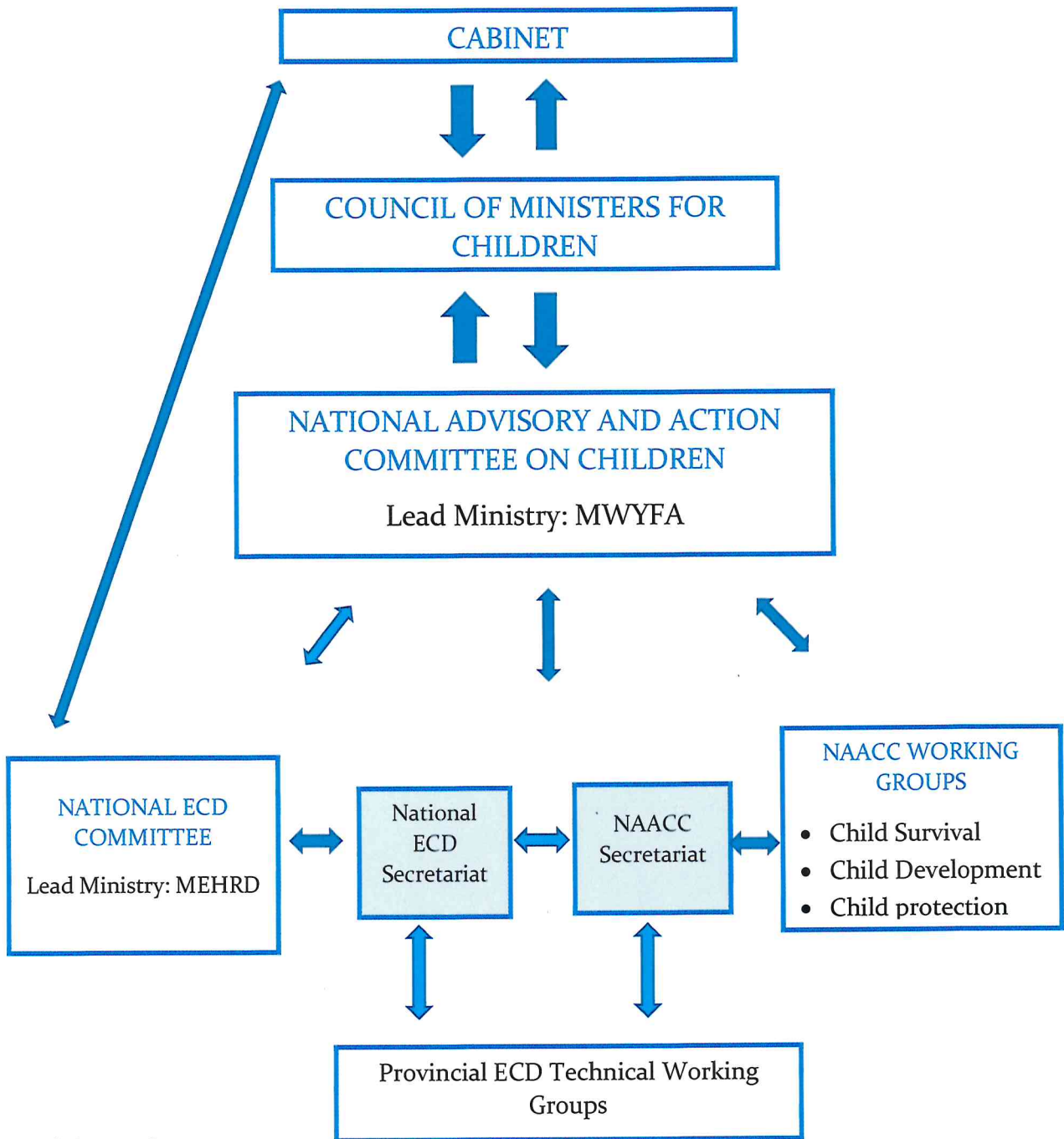
- Development of the National ECD Policy and Action Plan
- Implementation of the ECD Policy and Action Plan
- Development of ECD Monitoring Framework
- Progress in meeting national ECD goals and targets

Within NAACC, the chair of the National ECD Committee will liaise with the chair of the NAACC on a quarterly basis (and more frequently as required.).

The Coordinator of the National ECD Secretariat will liaise with the NAACC Secretariat Coordinator to coordinate the activities of the ECD Unit and the NAACC working Groups. The NAACC has three working groups: Child Survival (Health), Child Development (Education) and Child Protection (Welfare). These groups are meant to meet monthly, and report to the NAACC Executive Board, via the NAACC Secretariat on a quarterly basis. As appropriate, issues dealt with by the ECD Committee will be brought to the attention of these NAACC working groups.

The reporting lines are as shown in the following diagram (next page):

National and Provincial ECD Organisational Structure



Colour code:



Direct reporting line of accountability



Liaison and information sharing

2.4 Functions of National ECD Committee

The principal functions of the ECD Committee are:

1. To ensure that the needs of children from conception to age 8 and of their families are fully understood by Cabinet, relevant ministries, and civil society, including NGOs and faith-based organizations and development partners.
2. To ensure the commitment of all the above stakeholders to supporting families of children from conception to age 8 in caring for and raising their children optimally.
3. To ensure the coordination, at national, provincial and community levels, of all policies, resources, initiatives and services for supporting young children and their families.
4. To ensure that all families of children from conception to age 8 are provided with the basic environmental and social conditions they need to be able to care for and raise their children optimally.
5. To ensure that all children from conception to age 8 and their families have ready access to the high quality health, welfare and educational services they need to promote children's development and wellbeing.
6. To closely monitor the health and wellbeing of young children and their families, and to provide regular reports on their progress to the NAACC and Cabinet.
7. To oversee the preparation and implementation of a national ECD Policy and Action Plan, and to monitor and evaluate its outcomes over time.
8. To influence government spending to ensure that children from conception to age 8 and their families have the resources they need.

2.5 Focal points in each Ministry

Each Ministry represented on the ECD Committee will nominate a focal point and backup within their Ministry who will act as the key contact for the ECD Committee and ECD Unit. This person will be at Undersecretary level, and will lead a small ECD Working Group with responsibility for implementing relevant ECD plans and initiatives within the Ministry and for collaborating with other ministries in meeting joint ECD goals.

3. ECD SECRETARIAT

3.1. Terms of Reference

Cabinet has approved the appointment of three staff members to operationalize the coordination of ECD activities. These will form the National ECD Secretariat for the ECD Committee and will be housed at the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development.

The Secretariat is tasked to coordinate the planning, policy implementation, supervision, communications, monitoring, evaluation and reporting on the ECD Policy and Action Plan,

ensuring close collaboration for implementing ECD activities across Ministries and participating NGOs, Associations and Networks.

The Secretariat reports to the ECD Committee and in turn to NAACC. The Chair of the NAACC reports in turn on ECD progress and challenges to the Council of Ministers for Children annually, including annual work plan of ECD Secretariat reviewed and approved by the same Council. The Secretariat also prepares quarterly or bi-annual reports for the benefit to the Cabinet and Office of the Prime Minister.

Members of the Committee shall continue to report to their respective Ministers through the Permanent Secretary.

3.2. Personnel: The Secretariat will be comprised of three positions:

National ECD Coordinator. This is the senior position within the ECD Secretariat with responsibility for overseeing the work of the Secretariat and the other two staff members. This position will be at the same level as the current NAACC Coordinator (Level 12/13). It is essential that the person has experience in working in government, in coordinating services, and in managing staff. It is expected that this person will have professional training in educational planning. (*Role description based on NAACC Coordinator Role Description – in preparation*).

ECD Officers. There are two positions for ECD Ministry Officers. (These will be Principal Administration Officers, level 8/9). They will have designated areas of responsibility for coordinating services. It would be desirable that these officers had specific technical expertise in one of the key service areas involved (eg. health, protection). One would have professional training in maternal-child health, nutrition and a knowledge of sanitation. The other would have professional training in child rights, protection and safety.

Recommendation: These positions should be advertised as soon as the Role Descriptions are finalised and the budget allocated. The positions should be new appointments rather than secondments.

3.3. Functions of National ECD Secretariat

The principal functions of the National ECD Secretariat are:

1. To provide administrative and technical support to the NAACC Executive Board and the Council of Ministers for Children
2. To provide outreach administrative and technical support to provincial mechanisms established to coordinate services for children at local level, and ensure that these are responsive to the priority issues of children throughout Solomon Islands.
3. To coordinate preparation of quarterly and annual reports, action plans, and briefing notes as required

4. To coordinate research on the needs of children in specific areas as identified by provincial mechanisms, the National ECD Committee and the Council of Ministers for Children
5. To identify the professional development needs of ECD service providers and coordinate capacity-building activities to improve the overall effectiveness and efficiency of ECD services
6. To liaise with national and international organisations working on ECD initiatives and ensure coordination of efforts to the greatest extent possible
7. To develop an annual ECD Secretariat action plan that outlines planning, advising, coordinating, advocacy, research and capacity building objectives and performance measures
8. To support the ECD Committee Chairperson in sourcing adequate resources to enable implementation of the ECD Action Plan

4. BUDGET

To implement the National ECD Action Plan, each ministry will need to identify funds for ECD programs/services.

Any funds and contributions from any ministry and any private organisations will be monitored by the National ECD Committee.

A Government budget category for ECD should be added to the budgets of the Ministry of Finance and all ministries that support ECD activities and services. To ensure this, one key activity to be undertaken by the ECD Committee under the action planning is to help codify related investments and streamline expenditures.

5. WORKPLAN

The first task of the ECD Committee is to oversee the development of the national multisectoral ECD Policy and Action Plan. This Policy and Action Plan will establish the foundation for the country's ECD strategies and will work towards the following goals:

- ensure the protection and inclusion of all infants and young children in society;
- improve child and family development;
- ensure all families have access to the minimum requirements to sustain their livelihood to meet their child and family's needs;
- expand and improve services for early childhood development, early childhood care, parenting, early childhood intervention, health, nutrition, protection, water, sanitation and hygiene and child safety; and
- develop, expand and coordinate multisectoral and integrated services for ECD.

The ECD Policy will:

- Establish a national Vision, Mission and Goal for ECD, with concrete objectives and strategies for sectoral, multisectoral, integrated and well-coordinated child development services,
- Identify the country's most important strategic priorities for ECD
- Under each strategic priority, it will identify programmes and services at national, provincial and community levels
- Ensure that adequate resources are available to implement Annual Action Plan
- Develop monitoring and evaluation strategies to ensure that

The development of the ECD Policy and Action Plan will be informed by a series of reports that are currently being prepared by the current National ECD Coordinator with support from UNICEF. The reports include:

- Report on national mapping survey of ECD services
- Report on community consultations and validation workshops
- Report on high-level interviews
- Situation Analysis report, including analysis of current policies and summarising the findings from the other three reports and linkages with existing policies (eg. National Children's Policy)

6. OTHER ACTIONS

Revision of Terms of Reference for NAACC

To accommodate the addition of the ECD Committee, the Terms of Reference of the NAACC will need to be modified. This will include changes to the scope and responsibilities of its three Working Groups.

The NAACC's ToR also needs updating to take into account the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (replacing the Millennium Development Goals), and other international agreements that have been endorsed by Solomon Islands.

Appendices

1. ToR of National ECD Committee and ECD Secretariat
2. Job Description of National ECD Coordinator
3. Job Description of Principal ECD Officer

Appendix 1

NATIONAL EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

TERMS OF REFERENCE

A. PREAMBLE

In regional gatherings for ECD in 2017 and 2019, Solomon Islands was one of 15 Pacific Island nations that endorsed the *Pasifika Call to Action on ECD* – an action agenda that promotes increased investments in early childhood development (ECD) and effective multi-sectoral coordination. Achieving the full development of our children is also fundamental to fulfilling Solomon Island's commitments to the United Nations' *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs), the global development agenda for 2015-2030. The SDGs explicitly identify key ECD targets in education (4.2.), health (3.2), nutrition (2.2), and protection (16.2).

In response to the Call to Action, Solomon Islands was one of four countries that expressed a strong commitment to being the first to develop their national ECD systems and a national ECD Policy and Action Plan. In September 2020, Cabinet approved arrangements for the establishment of a national, multisectoral body with responsibility for coordinating ECD services. This body was to come under the auspices of the National Advisory and Action Committee on Children (NAACC) which was to be strengthened to be able to provide the needed coordination of ECD services, and would report directly to Cabinet.

The present Terms of Reference describe the functions, membership, lines of accountability and staffing of the National ECD Committee and its Secretariat.

B. FUNCTIONS

The main task of the National ECD Committee is to prepare and implement a national multi-sectoral ECD Policy and Action Plan. This action plan will establish the foundation for the country's ECD strategies and will work to ensure the protection and inclusion of all infants and young children in society, improve child and family development, reduce family poverty, and expand and improve services for early childhood development, early childhood care, parenting, early childhood intervention, health, nutrition, protection, water, sanitation and hygiene and child safety.

The ECD Policy will:

- Establish a national Vision, Mission and Goal for ECD, with concrete objectives and strategies for sectoral, multisectoral, integrated and well-coordinated child development services,
- Identify the country's most important strategic priorities for ECD
- Under each strategic priority, identify programmes and services at national, provincial and community levels
- Ensure that adequate resources are available to implement Annual Action Plan based on the AWP

The National ECD Committee will also have ongoing responsibility for coordinating the implementation of the Action Plan and the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, and reporting on progress to the NAACC and Cabinet.

C. MEMBERSHIP

The National ECD Committee will include representatives from Ministries as well as relevant non-government agencies. The Ministries will be represented by the Permanent Secretaries from the following Ministries:

- Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs (MWYCFA)
- Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD),
- Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS),
- Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening (MPGIS),
- Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL)
- Ministry of National Planning and Development Coordination
- Ministry of Finance and Treasury
- Ministry of Justice
- Ministry for Home Affairs
- Prime Minister and Cabinet

The National ECD Committee will also include two senior representatives from Specialist Children's Agencies (UNICEF and Save the Children) to provide technical advice and support.

The Committee may co-opt members to support the performance of its duties where specialist technical expertise is required. Membership shall be reviewed on a yearly basis; the objective is to maintain an active participation from all the Ministries represented.

Meetings

The National ECD Committee shall hold quarterly meetings, with additional meetings held to approve key ECD documents as required.

The National ECD Committee will be chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, and co-chaired by the Permanent Secretaries of the Ministry of Health and Medical Services, and Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs.

A meeting quorum shall be one-half of members of the Committee plus one. All matters discussed at the meeting shall be deemed to be agreed upon when there is a consensus among members.

D. MANDATE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Functions of the National ECD Committee

The principal functions of the ECD Committee are:

1. To ensure that the needs of children from conception to age 8 and of their families are fully understood by Cabinet, relevant ministries, and civil society, including NGOs and faith-based organisations and development partners.
2. To ensure the commitment of all the above stakeholders to supporting families of children from conception to age 8 in caring for and raising their children optimally.
3. To ensure the coordination, at national, provincial and community levels, of all policies, resources, initiatives and services for supporting young children and their families.
4. To ensure that all families of children from conception to age 8 are provided with the basic environmental and social conditions they need to be able to care for and raise their children optimally.
5. To ensure that all children from conception to age 8 and their families have ready access to the high quality health, welfare and educational services they need to promote children's development and wellbeing.
6. To closely monitor the health and wellbeing of young children and their families, and to provide regular reports on their progress to the NAACC and Cabinet.
7. To oversee the preparation and implementation of a national ECD Policy and Action Plan, and to monitor and evaluate its outcomes over time.
8. To influence government spending to ensure that children from conception to age 8 and their families have the resources they need.

The role of the individual members includes:

- Attending regular meetings as required and engaging actively in the ECD Committee functions.
- Representing the interests of young children and families within their own Departments and organisations
- Remain committed to, actively involved and an advocate for the initiatives and the outcomes of the ECD

Accountability and liaison

Within NAACC, the chair of the ECD Committee will liaise with the chair of the NAACC on a monthly basis (and more frequently as required.).

The Coordinator of the National ECD Unit (see below) will liaise with the NAACC Secretariat Coordinator to coordinate the activities of the National ECD Unit and the NAACC working groups. The NAACC currently has three working groups: Child Survival (Health), Child Development (Education) and Child Protection (Welfare). These groups are meant to meet monthly, and report to the NAACC Executive Board, via the NAACC Secretariat on a quarterly basis.

Members of the Committee shall continue to report to their respective Ministers through the Permanent Secretary. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Committee may make a report to the Prime's Minister Office where it found necessary for such report to be so made.

E. NATIONAL ECD COMMITTEE SECRETARIAT

Cabinet has approved the appointment of three staff members to operationalize the coordination of ECD activities. These will form the National ECD Secretariat which will support the work of the ECD Committee. The Secretariat will be housed at the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children, and Family Affairs and managed by the Permanent Secretary of the MEHRD. The Coordinator of the National ECD Secretariat reports to the National ECD Committee and in turn to the NAACC.

The general functions of the National ECD Secretariat are:

1. to coordinate the planning, policy implementation, supervision, communications, monitoring, evaluation and reporting on the ECD Policy and Action Plan, and
2. to ensure close collaboration in implementing ECD activities across Ministries and participating NGOs, Associations and Networks.

Specific functions of the National ECD Secretariat:

1. To provide administrative and technical support to the NAACC Executive Board and the Council of Ministers for Children
2. To provide outreach administrative and technical support to provincial mechanisms established to coordinate services for children at local level, and ensure that these are responsive to the priority issues of children throughout Solomon Islands.
3. To coordinate preparation of quarterly and annual reports, action plans, and briefing notes as required
4. To coordinate research on the needs of children in specific areas as identified by provincial mechanisms, the National ECD Committee and the Council of Ministers for Children
5. To identify the professional development needs of ECD service providers and coordinate capacity-building activities to improve the overall effectiveness and efficiency of ECD services
6. To liaise with national and international organisations working on ECD initiatives and ensure coordination of efforts to the greatest extent possible
7. To develop an annual ECD Secretariat action plan that outlines planning, advising, coordinating, advocacy, research and capacity building objectives and performance measures
8. To support the ECD Committee Chairperson in sourcing adequate resources to enable implementation of the ECD Action Plan

F. REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL ECD COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Terms of Reference of the National ECD Committee will be reviewed periodically, as and when required. Any substantive change to the Terms of Reference will be tabled at the meeting of the NAACC for endorsement.

Appendix 2

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Title: Chief National ECD Coordinator

Purpose: The Chief National ECD Coordinator leads the National ECD Secretariat that supports the work of the National ECD Committee. This Committee sits under the National Advisory and Action Committee on Children (NAACC) and has been established to implement the Pasifika Call to Action on ECD and honour Solomon Islands' commitment to other international agreements. The Committee's function is to ensure a coordinated whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to providing a comprehensive package of support for young children and their families.

Goals:

1. To provide administrative and technical support to the National ECD Committee in preparing and implementing a national multi-sectoral ECD Policy and Action Plan that will ensure the protection and inclusion of all infants and young children in society, improve child and family development, reduce family poverty, and expand and improve services for early childhood development, early childhood care, parenting, early childhood intervention, health, nutrition, protection, water, sanitation and hygiene and child safety.
2. To develop and improve the coordination of ECD policies, programs and practices across government, non-government and community sectors

Functions:

1. Lead the work of the National ECD Secretariat in providing administrative and technical support to the National ECD Committee
2. Supervise, coordinate and support the work of other Secretariat staff
3. Develop and implement a work plan to strengthen ECD coordination in Solomon Islands
4. Provide linkages and coordination amongst sectors, both government and non-government, on ECD policies, programs and services.
5. Provide outreach administrative and technical support to provincial mechanisms established to coordinate services for children at local level, and ensure that these are responsive to the priority issues of children throughout Solomon Islands
6. Prepare quarterly and annual reports, action plans, and briefing notes as required by the National ECD Committee
7. Coordinate research on the needs of children in specific areas as identified by provincial mechanisms, the National ECD Committee and the Council of Ministers for Children
8. Identify the professional development needs of ECD service providers and coordinate capacity-building activities to improve the overall effectiveness and efficiency of ECD services

9. Liaise regularly with Coordinator of the NAACC Secretariat to ensure constant exchange of information and coordination of activities
10. Liaise with national and international organisations working on ECD initiatives and ensure coordination of efforts to the greatest extent possible
11. Develop an annual ECD Secretariat action plan that outlines planning, advising, coordinating, advocacy, research and capacity building objectives and performance measures
12. Support the ECD Committee Chairperson in sourcing adequate resources to enable implementation of the ECD Action Plan
13. Advocate for ECD and produce advocacy materials, as necessary and with support the National ECD Committee and relevant stakeholders.
14. Contribute and assist in programme developments, new project proposals and adjustments on current initiatives on ECD, as directed by the National ECD Committee.

Reporting

The Chief ECD Coordinator reports to the Director Schools Services, Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development.

Appendix 3

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT [ECD] OFFICER

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Title: Principal Early Childhood Development (ECD) Officer

Purpose: The ECD Officer supports the Chief ECD Coordinator of the National ECD Secretariat. The Secretariat supports the work of the National ECD Committee in ensuring a coordinated whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to providing a comprehensive package of support for young children and their families.

Goals

1. To support the Chief ECD Coordinator in providing administrative and technical support to the National ECD Committee in preparing and implementing a national multi-sectoral ECD Policy and Action Plan that will ensure the protection and inclusion of all infants and young children in society, improve child and family development, reduce family poverty, and expand and improve services for early childhood development, early childhood care, parenting, early childhood intervention, health, nutrition, protection, water, sanitation and hygiene and child safety.
2. To support the Chief ECD Coordinator in developing and improving the coordination of ECD policies, programs and practices across government, non-government and community sectors

Functions:

1. Support the Chief ECD Coordinator in developing and implementing a work plan to strengthen ECD coordination in Solomon Islands
2. As directed by the Chief ECD Coordinator, provide linkages and coordination amongst designated sectors, both government and non-government, on ECD policies, programs and services.
3. As directed by the Chief ECD Coordinator, provide outreach administrative and technical support to designated provincial mechanisms established to coordinate services for children at local level, and ensure that these are responsive to the priority issues of children in the designated areas
4. Support the Chief ECD Coordinator in preparing quarterly and annual reports, action plans, and briefing notes as required by the National ECD Committee
5. Support the Chief ECD Coordinator in coordinating research on the needs of children in specific areas as identified by provincial mechanisms, the National ECD Committee and the Council of Ministers for Children
6. Support the Chief ECD Coordinator in identifying the professional development needs of ECD service providers and coordinate capacity-building activities to improve the overall effectiveness and efficiency of ECD services

7. As directed by the Chief ECD Coordinator, liaise with designated provincial, national and international organisations working on ECD initiatives and ensure coordination of efforts to the greatest extent possible
8. Support the Chief ECD Coordinator in developing an annual ECD Secretariat action plan that outlines planning, advising, coordinating, advocacy, research and capacity building objectives and performance measures
9. Under the direction of the Chief ECD Coordinator, advocate for ECD and produce advocacy materials
10. Contribute and assist in programme developments, new project proposals and adjustments on current initiatives on ECD, as directed by the National ECD Committee.

Reports to: Chief Early Childhood Development (ECD) Coordinator, National ECD Secretariat