



**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES  
DEVELOPMENT**

**NATIONAL EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION  
POLICY STATEMENT**

**21st of April 2008**

## Foreword

It is widely known and recognized that good quality<sup>1</sup> Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) - programmes have the potential to make a positive difference to children's development and learning. It encourages children to discover their *first "sense of self"* or to build a first identity. If well organised, ECCE can form a crucial part of children's make up-how they first see themselves, how they think they should function, how they expect others to function in relation to them. For this reason, early care must ensure that in addition to the employment of carefully selected, trained caretakers and teachers and the development of an ECCE-program and curriculum, the ECCE-policy must emphasize links with family, home culture, and home language. ECCE must therefore develop as a support of family, rather than a substitute of family affairs.

This policy statement mainly focuses on Early Childhood Education (ECE), meant for the children of 3 years till 5 years old as the first priority for the Ministry of Education. The care part of the policy and the specific programme for children from birth to 3 years old will be developed later on in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Women, Youth and Children and then integrated into this policy for ECE.

It is almost general knowledge that good quality ECE encourages children to enter into the education system early and also helps with successfully completing primary school. If well organized ECE certainly contributes to the interest and enjoyment of young children in playing together, listening to stories, in being creative and socializing with others. It encourages both children and parents to see the importance of education and the role of ECE in its preparation for the basic education period. Quality ECE offers opportunities that help all young children acquire the necessary skills, knowledge, values and attitudes for meaningful participation in the Solomon Islands' society.

The Solomon Islands Government (SIG) through the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development is therefore committed to the development of a quality Early Childhood Education sector. The support to ECE is reflected in the *National Education Action Plan, 2007-2009* and the *Education Strategic Framework, 2007-2015*. While the Government's commitment is strong, at the moment early childhood education faces many challenges in relation to quality practice, the payment and training of teachers, relevant curriculum, effective management, community awareness about the value of ECE and children's access and participation in ECE. While the SIG has continued to support the field based training of people in communities this is only available in some provinces.

The Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development acknowledges the importance of the development of the ECE-sector. The development of a national curriculum, recognition of officially registered ECE centres, well trained and paid ECE teachers would be certainly important strategies to develop and bring more attention to this sub sector. There is a current proposal to increase the number of students engaged in early childhood teacher education at SICHE. Also the Field Based Training should get more official recognition and result in a specific entry level for ECE-training at the SICHE, School of Education.

When the Solomon Islands Government, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, Education Authorities, parents, communities and

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<sup>1</sup> See Annex 3 for Quality ECE

Development Partners work in partnership, there is a great potential for achieving the goal of all Solomon Island children, including the very young, having access to quality, well managed early childhood education. The Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development together with other Ministries in the Pacific Region have recently endorsed several important recommendations emerging from the *Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Regional Workshop* held in Honiara from 26<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> of March 2007:

- ECCE must begin at birth and would include preschool, kindergarten and transition to classes 1 and 2
- All agencies dealing with the health, care, development and education of young children from birth to 8 years old must work collaboratively to ensure that children are well prepared to enter the formal school system
- ECE must ground in the children's own languages and cultures
- Data base management system for ECE must be developed
- A policy for ECE must be developed
- Adequate budgeting for the development and expansion of ECE is necessary

These recommendations were approved and reinforced by the *Regional Forum Education Ministers Meeting (FEMM)* in Auckland, 26<sup>th</sup> -28<sup>th</sup> of November 2007. The Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development is presenting this policy framework for ECE as a good follow up of the Regional ECCE Workshop in March 2007. With this policy for ECE, the Solomon Islands government also contributes to the global effort in achieving the Millennium Development goal of universal education in 2015 and gives the right response to the international Education For All agreement to *expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.*

To ensure high quality Early Childhood Education relevant to Solomon Islands, it is essential that more financial resources are allocated to this important sub sector for teacher salaries, teacher training, curriculum and infrastructure development. Also the ECE-division needs to be officially recognized as a division with a clear portfolio and longer term programme, contributing to the national goals of our *National Education Action Plan, 2007-2009*. And because Early Childhood Education was till to date seen and maintained mostly by the communities, we shall try to continue and improve the relationship with the communities in good partnership where all actors are clear on their different roles and responsibilities. It is therefore of utmost importance for the ECE-division to develop an *Early Childhood Education Action Plan 2008-2009* in which specific goals, roles of the different actors, expected outputs and finances are clearly set.

After some years of many discussions, consultations and hard work, we are happy and proud to present you this Policy Statement on Early Childhood Education. This policy can be seen as the first effort to guide, to regulate and to give the right attention to the important ECE-sub sector. The purpose of this policy is to promote and to ensure that also the youngest children in the Solomon Islands have equitable access to quality, well managed and sustainable programmes in the Early Childhood Education sub-sector which are developed in partnership between the Solomon Islands Government, the

Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, the community, the provinces and many other stakeholders as development partners and NGO's.

We are never too old to learn nor are we never too young to show increasing interest in environment, playing, communication and learning.

Honourable Job Tausinga  
Minister of Education and Human Resources Development

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## Abbreviations

BELS:	Basic Literacy Skills
CA:	Chief Accountant
CAO:	Chief Administration Officer
CDC:	Curriculum Development Centre
CEO-ECE:	Chief Education Officer - Early Childhood Education
EA:	Education Authority
ECE:	Early Childhood Education
ECEPC:	Early Childhood Education Policy Committee
EO-ECE:	Education Officer-Early Childhood Education
ESIRP:	Education Sector Investment and Reform Programme
FBTP:	Field Based Training Programme
HOPA:	Honiara Preschool Association
MEHRD:	Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development
NZAID:	New Zealand Agency for International Development
NECEPF:	National Early Childhood Education Policy Framework
NTU:	National Training Unit
PAF:	Performance Assessment Framework
PCRU:	Planning Coordination and Research Unit
PMT:	Planning Monitoring Team
SEO-ECE:	Senior Education Officer- Early Childhood Education
SICHE:	Solomon Islands College of Higher Education
SIEMIS	Solomon Islands Education, Management and Information System
SIG:	Solomon Islands Government
SOE:	School of Education
TSC:	Teaching Service Commission
TSD:	Teaching Service Division
TTDO:	Teacher Training Development Office
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF:	United Nations Children's Fund
UPNG	Open University Papua New Guinea
USP:	University of the South Pacific

## **Definition of terms**

### ***Early childhood education (ECE)***

The umbrella term that refers to a variety of programmes (eg. nursery, playschool, preschool, kindergarten, day care, and preparatory class etc.) that provide educational, social, emotional, moral, and physical support for children between birth and 8 years of age.

### ***ECE Centre***

The generic term encompassing all types of ECE facilities, including kindys, preschools, learning centres, preparatory classes etc.

### ***Education Authorities***

Any person or organization approved by the Minister of MEHRD to establish, manage and maintain a school or schools within the Solomon Islands.

### ***Kindergarten/Kindy***

The educational programme developed and provided to children aged 3-5 years. This term also refers to the ECE facility or classroom.

### ***Pre-school***

In Solomon Islands Preschool is used interchangeably with the term kindergarten or kindy.

### ***Preparatory (Prep)***

Before in the Solomon Islands, the first year of formal education within the primary school, provided to children aged 5-6. With the approval of this ECE-policy, the preparatory class will be replaced by the last year of Early Childhood Education for children of 5 years old.

### ***Qualified teachers***

Those ECE teachers who have completed the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE) – School of Education ECE teacher training programme. Currently, qualified ECE teachers are employed and paid by the SIG.

### ***Field Based or trained teachers***

Those teachers who have participated in an introductory Field-Based Training (FBTP), have an ECE-Introductory Certificate, Diploma, or Degree from a recognized institution or are currently enrolled in an ECE-education or training programme, but still have to be assessed and confirmed as official ECE-teachers within the establishment and put on the SIG-payroll.

### ***Field Based Training Programme***

The Early Childhood Education Field Based Training Programme (FBTP) is a one-year ECE teacher training programme conducted by Provincial Education Officers-ECE throughout the country. The FBTP caters for unqualified and untrained teachers who are working in ECE centres and have very little knowledge in working with children. Teachers doing Field- Based Training have to complete five modules that consists of 20 hours of class work and 20 hours of writing assignments. As part of the training, Provincial Education Officers-ECE (EO-ECE) monitor and assess teacher's fieldwork. An Introductory Certificate is awarded at the end of the training to those trainees who

have successfully completed the training. The SIG pays the salaries of the Provincial EO-ECEs and contributes to the cost of training administration and materials

***Unqualified teachers***

Those teachers who have not yet started or completed any recognized ECE-education or training.

# 1. Authority

The following legislation provides the underpinning authority for the Solomon Islands policy on Early Childhood Education:

- the Education Act (1978);
- the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education Act (1984, amended in 1987);
- Constitution (Amendment) Act (1982)
- Employment Act (1968)

Other important guiding policy documents and strategic links include the following:

- the Government's policy on education as outlined in the *Coalition for National Unity and Rural Advancement* (CNURA)
- the Government's *Policy Translation and Implementation Document (2006-2008)*;
- the *Education Strategic Framework 2007-2015*;
- the *National Education Action Plan 2007-2009*;
- The recommendations from the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Regional Workshop held in Honiara from 26<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> of March 2007
- The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), Basic Education Action Plan 2001
- The recommendations from the Education Ministers Meeting in Auckland, 26<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> of November on ECE
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
- Early Childhood Education National Co-ordinator, Ministry of Education and Resources Development *Annual Report 2003*
- *BELS Guide to Establishing ECE Centres*
- The *Teacher Service Hand Book 2006* from the Teaching Service Commission.
- Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, *Annual Report 2006 and 2007*
- Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, *Digest of Education Statistics 2005, 2006*
- *United Nations Millennium Declaration* adopted by the General Assembly 18<sup>th</sup> of September 2000
- *Education For All -2015 (EFA Goals)* , Jomtien (Thailand) 1990 and World Education Forum in Dakar (2000), which adopted the [Dakar Framework for Action](#) *Education for All: Meeting Our Collective Commitments*.

## 2. Application

- 2.1 This policy statement is endorsed by the Government of the Solomon Islands through the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, and by all Education Authorities (both Provincial, Church and Private Education Authorities). The policy applies to all employers of teachers in the Solomon Islands, to all Solomon Islands teacher education providers, and to ECE teachers and supporting education staff and in particular those working in the Early Childhood Education sub-sector.

### 3. Purpose

3.1 The purpose of this statement is;

- 3.1.1 To *guide* the general education policy development of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development with respect to Early Childhood Education. It provides guidance for the Early Childhood, Primary Education, Planning Division, the Teacher Training and Development Office (TTDO), the Teaching Service Division (TSD), the Inspectorate Division, the Curriculum Development Centre, the School of Education at the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SOE, SICHE), and other key stakeholders with an interest in Early Childhood Education.
- 3.1.2 To *inform* key stakeholders about the guiding principles underpinning the development of Early Childhood Education policy in the Solomon Islands.
- 3.1.3 To *promote* the principle that Early Childhood Education plays an important role in the education sector and in the lives of young children and their families. Quality ECE provides a strong foundation on which to build children's later learning and development.
- 3.1.4 To *provide strategic direction* in the area of ECE for the 10 Provincial Education Action Plans that are linked to the *National Education Action Plan (NEAP) 2007-2009* and the *Education Strategic Framework (ESF)-2007-2015*. The policy also provides the framework in which to develop and formulate a *National Early Childhood Education Action Plan, 2007-2009*.
- 3.1.5 To *reflect the participatory principle* that the *National Early Childhood Education Action Plan, 2008-2009* should be responsive to Provincial Work programmes and inputs and ideas from the schools or ECE-centres ('bottom up approach')
- 3.1.6 To *serve as a benchmark* that will guide and assist in monitoring the work plans, operations and strategic relationships of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development over the two-year period covered by the *National Early Childhood Education Action Plan 2008-2009*.

## 4. Principles

4.1 This policy statement for Early Childhood Education sets out the guiding principles and values upon which the Early Childhood Education is built. These guiding principles are the foundation on which the vision, the goals and policy objectives for Early Childhood Education have been developed. All the principles are based on scientific knowledge and insights in the area of child development and pedagogy<sup>2</sup> and global experience with ECE.

4.2 Early Childhood Education in the Solomon Islands is based on the following principles and values:

- All Early Childhood Education and Training
  - create equitable access for all, regardless of the trainee's gender, ethnicity, disability or provincial location.
  - is based on transparent and agreed selection criteria for entry or participation.
  - is based on sound child-centred pedagogical principles.
  - have a strong practical and social component, aiming at skills transfer, teamwork and socializing but incorporate both the theory and practice of teaching and learning of young children.
  - have pre-formulated learning outcomes and are cost-efficient and effective.
  - have a National Early Childhood Education Curriculum which reflects the language, values, culture and traditions of Solomon Island communities and which is inclusive of all children.
  - look for innovative ways of teaching, training and course delivery and utilise Distance Flexible Learning methodologies.
  - is evaluated and reviewed regularly in order to increase quality and relevance.
  - will be gradually benchmarked against international standards.
- All ECE-teachers in the Solomon Islands are
  - well qualified, trained and remunerated accordingly by Solomon Islands Government.
  - highly motivated and possess a professional attitude.
  - encouraged to create a child- friendly learning environment.
  - are encouraged or take an initiative to pursue professional development and learning throughout their career.
  - knowing and adhering to The *Teaching Service Handbook*, in particular Chapter 10 which provides guidelines on teaching in the Solomon Islands, including a Code of Professional Conduct and ethical principles (loyalty, honesty, impartiality, punctuality, neatness, resourcefulness, care, responsibility, trustworthiness.)

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<sup>2</sup> See Annex 3 for academical theories and insights

- All Early Childhood centre's will have
  - regulatory framework which provides standards against which to monitor and evaluate the relevance, feasibility, impact and sustainability of early childhood education.
  - a building, resources and an environment which is relevant to the cultural context of the community.
  - an official registration after meeting the standards and requirements of ECE centres.

4.3 The three main dimensions, in line with the *National Education Action Plan, 2007-2009* and Education Strategic Framework, 2007-2015 of Early Childhood Education Policy Statement deal with;

4.3.1 Providing equitable access by maintaining teacher supply in line with demand and by creating an adequate number of ECE-centres particularly in the rural area and create more facilities for students with disabilities.

4.3.2. Improving teacher quality and motivation by training, capacity building and a Human Resource Development programme for ECE-teachers.

4.3.3. Improved management, co-ordination, monitoring, evaluation of ECE-education and training.

4.4. This policy statement will be reviewed, and revised on a regular basis as the MEHRD Early Childhood Education policy is implemented, and as further policy directions and requirements emerge in the education sector. The first review of this policy statement is planned in 2010, when the next ESIRP, phase III, 2010-2012 is expected to have started.

## 5. Vision and Goals

### 5.1 Vision

To ensure that all young children of Solomon Islands including girls and children with disabilities have equitable access to quality Early Childhood Education led by trained staff and teachers who implement an appropriate play-based national curriculum which will enable children to be effective learners who live in harmony with others and the environment and become productive, reliable and responsible citizens when they grow up.

### 5.2 Main goals

1. In line with the *National Education Action Plan, 2007-2009, Education Strategic Framework- 2007-2015* the goals of this Policy statement on Early Childhood Education are to ensure that;
  - equitable access to quality early childhood education for all young children of Solomon Islands, including girls and students with disabilities is achieved.
  - quality of ECE-services is improved and enhanced.

- management of early childhood services is effective, efficient and transparent.

## 6. Policy Objectives

For each of the three policy goals, a series of policy objectives have been identified. These policy objectives set the direction to enable the achievement of the main goals

The main policy objectives and strategies are ordered by

### *I. Improved access*

- **Policy objective 1.** To develop adequate ECE-teacher supply and demand forecasts, using SIEMIS and other data sources like population data, so that ECE-teacher establishment and infrastructure plans can be produced to ensure that demand for teachers and buildings does not outstrip supply.
- **Policy objective 2:** To develop child friendly playing and learning environments for all children, including girls and children with disabilities.

### *II. Improved quality*

- **Policy Objective 3:** To ensure that all ECE-teachers (including ECE-teacher trainers) meet standards of the highest possible quality..
- **Policy Objective 4:** To encourage the development of quality providers of ECE-teacher education to assist in meeting national ECE-teacher education needs. (like SICHE, USP, UPNG etc.)
- **Policy Objective 5:** To ensure that access to continuing quality relevant professional development is available to all ECE-teachers, ECE-teacher trainers and teachers' supporting staff in response to identified needs..

### *III. Improved management*

- **Policy Objective 6:** To ensure that Management of Early Childhood Education and training is transparent, effective and efficient and is based on partnership with NGO's, Development Partners, communities, teachers, Education Authorities and MEHRD. The successful implementation of ECE Programme activities can only be carried out effectively and efficiently with the ECE sub sector becoming a separate division.
- **Policy Objective 7:** To formulate and develop a comprehensive human resource development and management programme for ECE-teachers and school leavers in order to keep recruitment and employment process in line with demand of schools, teachers and other actors and to create a happy, motivated, professional ECE-teaching work force.
- **Policy Objective 8:** To develop, plan, budget, co-ordinate, manage and monitor the *National Early Childhood Education Action Plan*, as a practical follow up of this Policy statement, including the responsibilities of the different actors like MEHRD, ECE-, PE-, TTDO-, TSD-, Inspectorate-, PCRU, CDC-divisions, the Education Authorities, communities and schools in the provinces and other stakeholders like SOE at SICHE, USP and other education and training providers..

## 7. Policy Framework: Solomon Islands Early Childhood Education

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Policy Objective 1</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Policy details</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Strategy</b></li> </ul>
	<p>To develop adequate ECE-teacher supply and infrastructure demand forecasts, so that it does not outstrip supply.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Government recognises the importance of informed based decision making and therefore the availability, development and utilisation of good quality data base systems, in particular in the area of teacher supply, education, training and infrastructure.</li> <li>▪ The Government will develop accurate forecasts of ECE-teacher supply and infrastructure needs over the period 2008 to 2015.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure that data in SIEMIS and other databases is accurate, up-to-date and available in a timely way.</li> <li>▪ Generally create internal training team in the Ministry to boost utilisation of and interest in database management.</li> <li>▪ Engage specialist technical assistance to develop teacher supply and infrastructure forecasts for the Solomon Islands.</li> <li>▪ To work in partnership with parents and communities to identify the need for the establishment of ECE-centres and ECE-teachers.</li> <li>▪ Monitor and report semi-annually on trends in ECE and in regards to teacher data base management.</li> <li>▪ Train all ECE-staff in teacher data base management.</li> <li>▪ Produce ECE Establishment &amp; Infrastructure plan.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Policy Objective 2</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Policy details</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Strategy</b></li> </ul>
	<p>To develop child friendly playing and learning environments for children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The government recognises the importance of a conducive playing and learning environment for children.</li> <li>▪ The government will gradually develop quality designs, standards and criteria for all school infrastructure, also for ECE-centres.</li> <li>▪ The government will promote the concept of inclusive education, and where needed develop specific facilities and include specific modules in the ECE-teacher training to include all children in ECE, also all girls and and children with disabilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To organize a national assessment of all school infrastructure and identify the needs for construction, repair, rehabilitation, and renovation of school infrastructure.</li> <li>▪ To develop a standardized architectural design and building for all ECE-centres based on local available materials and capacity.</li> <li>▪ To establish criteria to enhance quality ECE environments.</li> <li>▪ To set up ECE model-centres in each province.</li> <li>▪ To review ECE-pre service and develop ECE-in service training in particular in the areas of community mobilization, gender, inclusive and multi grade education.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Policy Objective 3</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Policy details</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Strategy</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪</li> </ul>	<p>All ECE-teachers (including ECE-teacher trainers) meet standards of the highest possible quality.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In principle the Government will endeavour to ensure that all ECE-teachers in the Solomon Islands are well-qualified, trained, committed and competent. Opportunities will be provided to all teachers who are unqualified or under-qualified to upgrade their qualifications.</li> <li>▪ The key needs are to provide training to upgrade the skills of the ECE-teachers who are unqualified and to develop a national Early Childhood Education Curriculum.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To encourage teachers to improve their qualifications through <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ field based training,</li> <li>▪ pre-service,</li> <li>▪ in-service training and</li> <li>▪ professional development opportunities</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Maintain the FBT-training programme in all provinces.</li> <li>▪ Increase in-service training and professional development opportunities.</li> <li>▪ To develop a national Early Childhood Education Curriculum and guidelines to support teachers in providing holistic, inclusive, culturally and age appropriate learning experiences.</li> <li>▪ To develop a programme operations manual to guide the management of ECE centres.</li> <li>▪ To ensure culturally appropriate learning resources are developed and disseminated to support the curriculum particularly literacy and numeracy.</li> <li>▪ To ensure development of curriculum resource material that focuses on use of the vernacular, community mobilization, gender, multi grade and inclusive education.</li> <li>▪ Strengthen the inspectorate to ensure that all ECE graduates are inspected and confirmed after one year of probation and develop a process for the local assessment of teachers and probationers.</li> <li>▪ Plan for delivery of training for unqualified teachers using a Field-Based Distance Education model (print-based resources using provincial mentors to support teachers employed in the field or other DFL-methodology).</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Policy Objective 4</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Policy details</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Strategy</b></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To encourage the development of quality providers of ECE-teacher education to assist in meeting national ECE-teacher education needs. (like SICHE, USP, UPNG etc.);</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The government will look at possibilities for increased co-operation, co-ordination and partnership between the different national and international teacher education, training and development providers.</li> <li>▪ The government will continue to support the existing pre-service teacher training institutions like SICHE - SOE and USP. SICHE- SOE will be the provider of choice for pre-service teacher education.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To develop a process for the recognition of qualifications other than FBT and SICHE.</li> <li>▪ Develop and support alternative strategies to improve teacher education training for ECE. (Distance and Flexible Learning, entry of alternative providers into the teacher education market)</li> <li>▪ Continue to collaborate with the University of Waikato to assist, SICHE through SOE in order to modernise, review the pre-service curriculum for ECE-certificate.</li> <li>▪ Strengthen SICHE through SOE so that increased numbers of ECE- teachers can be trained.</li> <li>▪ Encourage stronger collaboration and transition opportunities between the different teacher education and training providers in the country (SICHE, USP) and new potential providers in the region like Open University of PNG</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Policy Objective 5</b></li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To ensure that access to continuing professional development of good quality is available to all ECE-teachers, ECE-teacher trainers and teachers' supporting staff in response to identified needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Policy details</b></li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The government will initiate a comprehensive professional development programme that will attempt to provide selected teachers and supporting education staff over time with opportunities to upgrade their knowledge, skills and attitude. The first priority will be upgrading the skills of all unqualified ECE-teachers, the school managers, in particular of basic education. (class I till form III)</li> <li>▪ The next priority will be targeted teacher professional development programmes to support the promotion of ECE and the National ECE curriculum.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Strategy</b></li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Design and undertake a survey of professional and HRD-development needs.</li> <li>▪ Review the existing training programmes for ECE-teachers and school managers to assess whether additional professional development modules need to be developed.</li> <li>▪ To develop a comprehensive professional development programme to be delivered to ECE-teachers and school leaders and supporting education staff.</li> <li>▪ To provide pre-service and in-service professional development on appropriate curriculum implementation for ECE.</li> <li>▪ Develop a communications strategy and a recruitment campaign to highlight the attractiveness of the ECE-teaching profession and to attract quality and motivated students for ECE.</li> <li>▪ Recruit an Curriculum Development Officer with relevant early childhood education qualification at the Curriculum Development Centre to develop a National Curriculum for Early Childhood Education.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Policy Objective 6</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Policy details</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Strategy</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪</li> </ul>	<p>Management of ECE - education and training is transparent, effective and efficient and is based on partnership with Development Partners, communities, teachers, education authorities and MEHRD.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To establish within MEHRD an official Early Childhood division (still part of Primary Division)</li> <li>▪ ECE-division will be responsible for promoting, overseeing and monitoring the policy and organize a practical follow up by developing a National Early Childhood Education Action Plan, 2008-2009. (see below)</li> <li>▪ All qualified ECE-teachers in the Solomon Islands are paid by Solomon Islands Government.</li> <li>▪ ECE-division will establish provincial ECE-committees.</li> <li>▪ ECE-division has established a committee for the development of the national curriculum.</li> <li>▪ The government organises regular review of the implementation of this Policy statement .</li> <li>▪ All ECE Centres in the Solomon Islands are registered under the Education Authorities.</li> <li>▪ The National ECE Accreditation Board is to be established to monitor the standards and requirements of ECE centres.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To promote early childhood education for all young children regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, location, ability or disability.</li> <li>▪ To support the establishment of community-based ECE-centres through assistance with infrastructure planning and a subsidy for resources.</li> <li>▪ Increase parent and community awareness of the importance of early childhood.</li> <li>▪ To provide subsidies to facilitate the field based training, the distribution of curriculum materials and consumable resources to community owned and registered early childhood services.</li> <li>▪ To facilitate working partnerships with key stakeholders, parents, community groups and development partners to ensure a co-ordinated approach to the establishment, registration and sustainability of early childhood centres.</li> <li>▪ To develop and implement a monitoring mechanism (Performance Assessment Framework) that monitors/evaluates the overall implementation and progress of ECE.</li> <li>▪ To establish provincial and national ECE-co-ordination committees to monitor the quality of ECE and make recommendations.</li> <li>▪ To develop an early childhood regulatory framework to set standards of quality ECE administration and practice.</li> <li>▪ To adequately budget for effective administration, management, expansion of the ECE sector including payroll for qualified ECE-teachers.</li> <li>▪ To develop processes for the registration of qualified teachers and early childhood education centres.</li> <li>▪ To review the Teachers' Code of conduct.</li> <li>▪ Review progress on this policy framework by end of 2010.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Policy Objective 7</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Policy details</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>. Strategy</b></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To formulate and develop a comprehensive human resource development programme for ECE-teachers and school leavers in order to keep recruitment and employment process in line with demand of schools, teachers and other actors and to create a happy, motivated and professional ECE-teaching work force.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The government will design and deliver a comprehensive human resource development programme to improve the organisation and management by supporting education staff, management of schools and to upgrade the knowledge, skills and attitudes of teachers. Initially the focus of HR-development will be on the school managers and provincial supporting staff.</li> <li>▪ In close co-ordination with Admin, TSD, Inspectorate and TTDO-divisions and in line with general HRD-planning in MEHRD, the professional development will go beyond capacity building for teaching and also encourage measures for increased job satisfaction, motivation, performance and well-being.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Promote the concept of whole school development planning by mixing HRD and school development planning which includes ECE.</li> <li>▪ Encourage school-based development initiatives to develop capacity at the local school level.</li> <li>▪ Support the development of mentors (ECE-committees) located in provincial and education authorities who can assist schools with their school development and HRD – plans.</li> <li>▪ To encourage more cost-effective delivery of professional development programmes through a “training-the-trainers” approach. (to train local mentors/ECE-committees, and to use distance education approaches to promote self-learning and school development);</li> <li>▪ Recruit EO-ECE for Renbel, Temotu, Central, Choiseul and Malaita Province with additional 2 and Western with additional 1 EO-ECE.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Policy Objective 8</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Policy details</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>. Strategy</b></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To develop, plan, budget, co-ordinate, manage and monitor the National Early Childhood Education Action Plan, as a practical follow up of this Policy statement with the responsibilities included of the different actors like MEHRD, ECE-, PE-, TTDO-, TSD-, Inspectorate-, PCRU, CDC-divisions, the Education Authorities, communities and schools in the provinces and other stakeholders like SOE at SICHE, USP and other education and training providers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ECE-division will develop a National Early Childhood Education Action Plan 2008-2009.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop activities which are linked to the promotion, implementation of this Policy Statement, identify responsible human and financial resources, expected outputs and add the selected indicators (from PAF) to monitor the progress against the selected goals.</li> <li>▪ Consult with all relevant Provincial Education Authorities.</li> <li>▪ Develop a practical manual including standards, regulations for the management of ECE-centres.</li> <li>▪ Develop a communication strategy to promote this Policy Statement and increase the opportunity for adherence to the policy.</li> </ul>

## 8. Policy Priorities

Policy priorities for the development of the Early Childhood Education sub sector are:

### *I. Improved access*

#### **Infrastructure and teacher supply**

- Develop forecasts of ECE-infrastructure and teacher supply and demand over the two years 2008 and 2009, and out to 2015.
- Determine the policy interventions that MEHRD supports to meet future ECE-teacher demand.
- Determine standards and designs for ECE-school infrastructure.
- Ensure that all children, including all girls and children with disabilities will have access to ECE.

### *II Improved quality*

#### **Quality of teachers**

- Support and extend qualifications training for unqualified and under-qualified ECE-teachers.
- Agree on improved selection criteria and higher numbers for entry to ECE-education at SICHE /SOE.
- Develop high quality ECE-curriculum that supports the early child development according to global insights in pedagogy and fits in the Solomon Islands context and includes modules on community mobilization, gender, multi grade and inclusive education.
- Continue to support the 'twinning' of University of Waikato in the review of pre- and in-service (including ECE) education and training with SICHE/ SOE; so that teacher education programmes in the Solomon Islands are benchmarked against international standards.
- Develop Distance and Flexible Learning modalities to assist local and decentralised pre-service education and in-service training of teachers.

#### **Quality of learning**

- Develop a national ECE-curriculum that enhances all children's development and learning needs.

### *III Improved management*

#### **ECE-management and co-ordination**

- Develop a National Early Childhood Education Action Plan, 2008-2009.
- Develop a strong partnership with communities, teachers, provinces, Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development and Development Partners to share assistance, financial and human resources in the support to ECE-sub sector.

#### **Human resource development**

- Develop and deliver a comprehensive human resource development programme for ECE-teachers.

- All qualified ECE-teachers need to be paid by Solomon Islands Government according to the regulations in the Teacher Service Handbook, which will be reviewed for the ECE-sub sector.
- Recruit a Curriculum Development Officer with relevant early Childhood Education qualification at any recognized institution to assist in developing a National Curriculum for Early Childhood Education at the Curriculum Development Centre.
- Develop a National Curriculum for Early Childhood Education in consultation with relevant divisions in MEHRD and qualified and trained Early Childhood teachers and other stakeholders.

## **9. Roles and Responsibilities of stakeholders in Early Childhood Education**

### **I. NATIONAL MINISTRY (MEHRD)**

#### **1. Early Childhood Division**

Currently, the Solomon Islands Government (SIG) is supporting the Early Childhood Education through the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development. The Ministry has a combined Primary and Early Childhood Education division, but to promote the importance of ECE, to develop ECE and to improve the management of ECE an independent Early Childhood division is proposed. The budget for ECE is currently reflected in the recurrent budget of Administration and Supports Division. There is also support available within the development budget of different development partners (NZAID and UNICEF). The MEHRD is responsible for the administration and operational costs of the Early Childhood Education Division. The ECE-division itself within the framework of the new ECE-policy is responsible for the development and monitoring of the ECE-programme. SIG currently sponsors ECE-students at SICHE each year, as well as pays the salary of ECE-teachers who graduate from SICHE and teach in community-based and privately-owned ECE-centres. The ECE-division is responsible for the development, finalisation of a policy, a clear work programme including the pre- and in-service education and training, monitoring, review of the programme and a good working relationship with donors.

#### **2. Curriculum Development Centre**

The Curriculum Development Centre is responsible for developing a formal curriculum for all sub sectors including ECE. At the moment there is no official ECE-curriculum and ECE-Curriculum Development Officer. In order to facilitate and produce a National Curriculum for ECE and underline the importance of ECE, this is one of the first priorities in this policy statement. CDC in close collaboration with the ECE-division, SICHE/SOE will also be responsible for the development of in-service training curriculum materials

### **3. Teacher Training and Development Office (TTDO)**

The Teacher Training and Development office is responsible for the policy implementation, quality delivery, co-ordination of all education and pre-and in-service training, continuous professional development in the country. The office has just produced a National Teacher Education and Training Policy and Plan for 2007-2009. The policy includes all sub sectors in education, hence Early Childhood Education. The office is also responsible for the relations with USP, SICHE and other potential training providers in the country or from abroad.

### **4. National Training Unit**

This unit in collaboration with the National Teacher Education and Development Committee is responsible for the selection and advice to the National Training Committee on the scholarships in the tertiary sector and this includes scholarships for the School of Education, also for the teachers who plan to work in the ECE-sub sector.

### **5. Infrastructure Unit**

The Infrastructure Unit is responsible to develop standard designs for all school infrastructure that meets criteria of quality, safety, sustainability, community participation, child and environmental friendliness. It will assist the ECE-division to develop good quality infrastructure for ECE.

### **6. Teacher Service Division**

The Teacher Service Division is responsible for the registration, support and payment of the ECE-teachers. The revised Teaching Service Handbook (2006) incorporates regulations for teacher training, recruitment, assessment, remuneration, posting, transfer, travel, allowances etc. and includes a working code for teachers. The chapter on Early Childhood Education in the Teaching Service Handbook needs guiding from the Early Childhood Education Division in particular on the payment of qualified ECE-teachers.

### **7. Inspectorate Division**

The Inspectorate Division is responsible for quality control in all formal sector programme. At the moment the ECE sub sector carries out its own teacher assessment. The Inspectorate Division will integrate ECE Inspection so that the division can now be responsible for the Inspection of ECE Teachers, Inspection of ECE Infrastructure, Facilities, Equipment, ECE centres to ensure that the ECE programme provides quality education and learning environment for young children.

## **II. NATIONAL AND REGIONAL EDUCATION PROVIDERS FOR ECE**

### **8. Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE)**

SICHE organizes the ECE- training and also gives technical support to the in-service training (Field Based Training) of ECE-teachers.). Currently the intake for trainees is government-sponsored and self-sponsored students per year

### **9. University of the South Pacific**

The University of the South Pacific (USP) offers a Certificate, a Diploma, and a Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education (ECE).

## **III. PROVINCES**

### **10. Education Authorities**

The Education Authorities are responsible for

- Implementation of FBTP which includes FBTP- accommodation and venue in provincial centres, travel costs and food for EO-ECEs within province.
- Any in-service training which includes accommodation and venue in provincial centres, travel costs and food for teachers within province.
- Provide financial support such as a basic allowance for FBTP Teachers.
- Logistical support for training programme such as food, etc.
- Recommending students for training opportunities.
- ECE-Teacher Development Plan.
- The support to EO-ECE's and ECE-teachers.
- Assessment of (probationary) ECE-teachers.
- Support to implementation, monitoring and evaluation of ECE-programme which includes;
  - Community awareness about ECE
  - Financial management of ECE-programme and payment of majority of ECE-teachers
  - Support to Provincial ECE-development committee
  - Adequate accommodation, office space, and transport for EO-ECEs
  - Work in collaboration with the communities to secure land for the ECE-centre, monitor its location, quality, child friendliness, environment and

## **IV COMMUNITIES**

### **11.1 Communities**

In the partnership approach in the ECE-sub sector between National Government, Provincial Government, also schools and communities play an important role. Currently, there is no formal agreement between the MEHRD, the Provincial Education Authorities, and the communities about community responsibility towards ECE-teachers or the FBTP. The MEHRD however requests communities to be responsible for

- the financial assistance to additional ECE-teacher helpers
- accommodation of the teachers who have completed the FBTP (teacher assistants) and the qualified teachers (certificate and diploma)
- securing land for building ECE-facilities
- recommend participants to the Education Authorities for in-service training
- provision of support to provincial ECE-development committees
- provision of logistic support, maintenance of ECE-building facilities

Informal data indicate that only 1% of FBTP trained teachers receive any kind of financial support. Instead, communities often compensate the teachers in kind. In addition, some communities provide food and/or small allowances for teacher trainees during the FBTP, but this is not a formal responsibility. The same catering and support responsibilities are required during in-service training.

## **11.2 Parents**

The parents play a very vital role in the up-bringing of the child's development and learning through close working cooperation between families and ECE-teachers in providing the best possible programme for each child. The parent and caregivers are encouraged to share insights and knowledge of his or her own child and contribute to skills, information and expertise which enhance the programme. The ECE-teacher also shares his / her knowledge of their children's development and learning and discusses with parents the expectations of the ECE programme so that they are aware of the changes their children are going through. The ECE-programme requests parents to provide:

- Parental support for their children and teachers at the ECE-centres
- Nutritious diet and encourage health and safety for their children
- Nurture and moulding of children
- Supportive roles for teachers in literacy and numeracy skills
- Logistic and financial support to the ECE-centre

## **V. OTHER STAKEHOLDERS**

### **12. The Honiara Preschool Association (HOPA)**

The main objective of the Honiara Preschool Association (HOPA) is to work together with the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development and the Honiara City Council to improve the ECE-centres within Honiara. HOPA has no formal agreement yet with any other stakeholder.

### **13. Development Partners**

The European Union, NZAID, UNICEF, are the current main partners in the improvement of ECE-services throughout the country. Their role is to give technical support and advice and organize financial support to the National Early Childhood Education Action Plan, 2008-2009 and ECE-Annual Work Programmes

## 14. NGO's

Save the Children, World Vision and the ECE Local Consultancy Agency (Honiara) are among the current NGOs who support ECE-services and activities throughout the country

## 10. Approaches

- 10.1 The approach outlined in this policy statement is intended to provide a framework for efficient and effective development and implementation of a *National Early Childhood Education Action Plan* which includes the establishment of sufficient ECE-infrastructure and well-trained and motivated ECE-teachers to meet the needs of the Solomon Islands Education system in the medium term (3 to 5 years) and the longer term (5 to 10 years).
- 10.2 The planning, budgeting, management, implementation and monitoring of ECE is based on *partnership* in which the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development sets the guidelines and policies and develops the *National Early Childhood Education Action Plan* and a National Curriculum for ECE while all other stakeholders collaborate on the management and support to the ECE-programme. The community and the ECE- Centre staff are important stakeholders, therefore a community awareness programme needs to be conducted at the Provincial level by the Education Officer-ECE on the importance of ECE.
- 10.3 ECE-teacher education, training and continuing professional development providers are encouraged to explore and support a range of methods, models and approaches to the delivery of teacher training and development
- 10.4 Approaches employed shall seek to develop training and development capacity at the Provincial and community level, whether by way of qualifications training through the use of trained mentors and supervisors in a Field-Based Training delivery model, or through continuing professional development using the development of teams of locally-based trainers.
- 10.5 All approaches shall seek, where appropriate, to use Distance Flexible Learning methodologies to improve access and to enhance the quality of communication and training delivery. Where appropriate, the network of Distance Flexible Learning Centres will be used to support both trainers and trainees.
- 10.6 MEHRD will encourage innovation in effective delivery of ECE teacher education and training to meet the country's education priorities, and will identify, in conjunction with training providers, effective strategies for delivering qualifications training to teachers (including both pre-service and in-service training, and

training for unqualified teachers, under-qualified teachers, and teachers who wish to upgrade their qualifications and skills).

- 10.7 The approaches adopted will ensure that links are formalised between the Curriculum Development Centre and training providers, so that teachers are able to deliver teaching programmes that meet agreed ECE-curriculum objectives.
- 10.8 A National Accreditation Board shall be established to monitor and assess the standards and requirements as approved by MEHRD for the ECE Centres operating in the country.
- 10.9 MEHRD will develop systems for appropriate monitoring and evaluation of the ECE-programme. This will involve strengthening of the Inspectorate, increased utilization and follow up of SIEMIS at national and provincial level and may involve a review of the current system for ECE-teacher registration.
- 10.10 The capacity of the ECE-division with its Education Authority linkages and relations to the Provincial ECE-development committees will be developed. Staff will receive appropriate Human Resources and Financial Management training and advice.
- 10.11 The ECE-infrastructure will be based on standards and designs which fit in the local environment and culture of each communities.

## **11. Evaluation and Benchmarking**

- 11.1 All ECE-training and other activities of the ECE-programme shall undertake on-going monitoring based on a Performance Assessment Framework and regular reviews.
- 11.2 All ECE-teachers need to be assessed and confirmed within a year after their certification. Also unqualified or underqualified teachers (with FBT-experience) need to be assessed within one year in order to see if they could continue their training at a higher level.
- 11.3 An independent quality assurance system will be developed to monitor and audit the quality of ECE-teacher education programmes. Each tertiary education provider operating in the Solomon islands would be accredited by the independent authority to deliver teacher education programmes that meet appropriate internationally benchmarked standards of quality.
- 11.4 The Chief Education Officer-ECE and Teacher Training and Development Education Officers are responsible for the teacher training and development function in MEHRD, and Education Authorities will undertake evaluations of in-service training and continuing professional development activities in ECE to ensure that these meet learning objectives that are based on systematic training needs analysis.

- 11.5 This ECE-policy statement is meant for the initial phase of three years and therefore is not a blue print. It will be evaluated and reviewed in 2010, in the beginning of the *Education Reform and Investment Programme (ESIRP) 2010-2012*. Then also the development of a specific Care and Education Programme for the youngest children from the age of 0 to 3 will be included.

## 12. Financing

- 12.1 MEHRD will set guidelines for the budgeting and funding of the ECE-programme and allocate adequate resources for ECE-teacher remuneration, education, training, curriculum development, infrastructure etc. The budget will also include access to scholarships and support for teacher trainees and teachers who are upgrading their qualifications. A review of the Teaching Service Handbook 2006 for the ECE-sub sector is necessary.
- 12.2 Financing of the ECE-programme will be consistent with the principles of this policy statement, Community Standard Funding Report (which is based on partnership between community, province, national government and the disbursement of student, school and remote area allowance grants), the new National Grant Management system for the education sector and the Tertiary Education sub sector policy.
- 12.3 The majority of teacher training places offered in programmes at the School of Education at the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education shall be (partially) sponsored, consistent with existing tertiary education sponsorship regulations, by the Solomon Islands Government or its development partners.
- 12.4 The principle of sharing increasing levels of training costs amongst the users will be introduced and applied gradually and will be decided on by the Permanent Secretary. The Teacher Education and Development Committee will advise on the details of cost sharing for the different education and training courses
- 12.5 Qualifications training will gradually require a percentage contribution by the trainee to the cost of training as specified. The user contribution will eventually move towards an eventual student contribution of up to 50%.
- 12.6 While the priorities are the training of unqualified Early Childhood Education teachers, and achieving a basic level of training for all Early Childhood Education teachers to meet demand are being pursued by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development and Education Authorities, the bulk of costs of teacher training will be met through sponsorship.
- 12.7 The National Teacher Education and Development Committee may set a percentage contribution to be paid by interested Early Childhood Education applicants to be endorsed by the Permanent Secretary, but this percentage will not be more than specified or implied in the new National Grant Management system in the education sector.

- 12.8 The National Teacher Training and Development Committee, may, when an adequate number of teachers have been trained, decide to alter regulations 13.3 and 13.6 of this policy, which provides that the majority of teacher training places offered in programmes at the School of Education at the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education shall be (partially) sponsored, consistent with existing tertiary education sponsorship regulations, by the Solomon Islands Government or its development partners.
- 12.9 Externally-delivered training will be financed according to Development Partner and scholarship funding arrangements.
- 12.10 Continuing professional development financing will be shared among the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, its Development Partners, Education Authorities, Teacher Unions, Teachers Professional Associations, schools and their communities.

## **Annex 1: Regulations**

These regulations set out the minimum requirements that must be adhered to in the operation of any Early Childhood Education setting (kindergarten) in all provinces of the Solomon Islands.

### **1. 1 Age of attendance**

- 1.1.1 No child under the age of 3 or over 5 years of age is to be enrolled in ECE Centres (kindergarten)
- 1.1.2 The ideal entry age to ECE for children is 3 years and the ideal entry age for children to Primary Education is 6. However, in the initial phase of the development of the ECE-sub sector and the first three years after the launch of this ECE-policy statement and the Basic Education Policy will be considered as an awareness raising and transition phase to give communities and parents ample time to adapt to this policy. It means that all children must be given access to ECE or Primary Education even when not yet fitting in these prescribed age categories. 2010 however will be the year for the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development to be strict on access and age regulations
- 1.1.3 With the official introduction of the ECE, the MEHRD has abolished the preparatory classes. The last year of ECE for the 5 year old children is considered the replacement of the former 'preparatory class'

### **1.2 Preparation for primary (transition)**

- 1.2.1 There should be an automatic promotion from ECE to School as ECE is a preparation for Standard One. All children with the ages of 3, 4 and 5 should go through ECE\_programmes\_before entrance to Standard One. Children can't repeat classes in the ECE (Kindergarten).
- 1.2.2. When children show learning or other difficulties, reporting will be done to the Head teacher of the Primary School including a request for more individual teaching, mentoring and remedial teaching during Standard one.

### 1.3 Standards for Early Childhood Education Programme

- 1.3.1 The Early Childhood Education centres shall have a minimum teacher /child ratio of 1:15 and maximum teacher child and classroom ratio for children with the age 3-5 is 1:25. It means that to start an ECE-centre or class, there must be a minimum of 15 children between the age group of 3-5.
- 1.3.2. At least one teacher in an ECE-centre will hold a recognized ECE-teacher qualification (or must be in training when no certified teacher is available). The official recognized teacher qualifications are defined in regulation 1.4 below.
- 1.3.3 Only when an ECE-centre has more than 25 children, a teacher assistant preferably with an introductory certificate (from the FBT) can be appointed and a second class be opened. When the assistant(s) are not available, unqualified teacher(s) can be attracted to the centre who must enroll in the FBT after 2 years of practice. If an ECE-centre has more than 50 children, another teacher assistant or unqualified teacher can be attracted. When an ECE-centre has more than 100 children a second certified or diploma teacher can be appointed. It means that for every 100 children certified or diploma teachers can be appointed and for every 25 children teacher assistants or unqualified teachers can be appointed.
- 1.3.4. The hours of instruction for the ECE centres shall be 4 hours from 8.00am -12.00 noon. Official working hours for the ECE-teachers are from 8.00 – 4.30. Between 12.00 and 4.30 a full time teacher should be involved in lesson planning, resource development, administration, recruitment of children and community mobilization and awareness raising about ECE.
- 1.3.5 Trained teachers of Early Childhood Education are only allowed to teach in the Early Childhood Education (programme centres) and not in the primary level.
- 1.3.6 Assistant teachers at the ECE centres should meet the following criteria;
- Minimum education qualification of at least Form 3 Secondary education
  - Have a Field Based Training Introductory Certificate in Early Child Education.
- 1.3.7 The ECE trained teacher is fully responsible for the daily operation of the ECE centre. This involves
- planning and implementing a culturally and age appropriate programme/curriculum for all the children in the centre.
  - monitoring and evaluating the ECE programmes/curriculum
  - undertaking administrative duties as required (including grant management).

- 1.3.8 Early Childhood Education facilities, including buildings, equipment and learning resources must be child friendly, safe and healthy and must meet the standards and requirements as set up by the Ministry of Education. (Refer to Annex 4 -Requirements of ECE building facilities, equipment and learning resources)
- 1.3.9 All ECE Centres must meet all MEHRD standards and requirements of ECE facilities, equipment and learning resources and before they are registered to operate.
- 1.3.10 The Provincial Education Authority may recommend to the Permanent Secretary -Ministry of Education the closure of a centre;
- If the facilities do not conform to requirements relating to health and safety in ECE centres
  - If the ECE programme provided is detrimental to the child's development and learning.
  - If the centre is not recognized by an Education Authority.
  - If the teacher in charge of the centre is not adequately trained to manage it.

#### **1.4 Minimum qualifications of teachers**

- 1.4.1 The minimum educational qualification for a qualified ECE Teacher is the successful completion of the teacher education training programme for the Certificate in Teaching Early Childhood Education or Diploma in Teaching–ECE awarded by SICHE or another teacher education provider approved by the National Education Board, MEHRD.
- 1.4.2 The required qualification for a Supervisor/Manager of an ECE-centre is a diploma or certificate. A minimum of 50 children is needed to appoint a Supervisor/Manager.
- 1.4.2 The minimum professional qualification for an Assistant ECE Teacher is the successful completion of Field Based Training offered by the Provincial Education Authority.
- 1.4.3 Unqualified teachers working in Early Childhood settings are expected to have successfully completed at least Form Three in a secondary school. They all must enrol in FBT after 2 years of teaching and working at an ECE-centre

#### **1.5 Training duration, content, certification**

- 1.5.1 All ECE unqualified teachers who are currently working in an ECE-centre and have two years of centre experience are eligible to undertake the Field Based Training programme which is a one year training that comprises of five modules with follow -up assessments.

- 1.5.2 The ECE unqualified teachers will be eligible to be awarded the Introductory Certificate in Early Childhood Education after the successful completion of the Field Based Training (FBT) programme.
- 1.5.3 All teacher training qualifications for ECE at the Certificate or Diploma level will continue to be delivered in SICHE and through other accredited providers such as University of South Pacific (USP) and UPNG (refer to National Teacher Education & Training Policy 2007).

## **1.6 Accreditation**

- 1.6.1 The Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development recognizes the SICHE ECE Teacher Training Program to be sufficient and appropriate to prepare ECE teachers for Solomon Islands.
- 1.6.2 ECE qualifications from other institutions must get the approval and recognition of the National Accreditation Board. (National Education Board)
- 1.6.3 The USP Certificate in Early Childhood Education will be recognized as an accredited qualification for Assistant teachers following the satisfactory completion of a supervised practicum in an ECE centre delivering a Solomon Islands Early Childhood Curriculum.
- 1.6.4 The USP Diploma in Early Childhood Education will be recognized as an accredited qualification for certified early childhood education teachers following the satisfactory completion of a supervised practicum in an ECE centre delivering a Solomon Islands Early Childhood Curriculum.
- 1.6.5 Any qualification that does not meet conditions stated above will not be recognized by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development.
- 1.6.6 The ECE Field Based Training programme shall be regarded as a training to provide knowledge and skills to upgrade unqualified teachers in the field.

## **1.7 Linkages between different training for ECE-teachers**

- 1.7.1 The Ministry of Education and Human Resources and Development urges SICHE and USP to maintain links with overseas institutions delivering ECE teacher education programmes and increase the regional opportunities for students interested in ECE also through Distance Flexible Learning methodologies.
- 1.7.2 The Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development urges SICHE and USP to liaise, collaborate and to ensure that their courses in ECE teacher education are consistent and relevant and of good quality for students interested in ECE teachers in Solomon Islands.

## **1.8 Selection for Early Childhood Education training**

- 1.8.1. All students or candidates for the formal national ECE-training and education must be able to demonstrate motivation for and interest in care and education of children and personal qualities and skills necessary for ECE-teaching. Furthermore students applying for ECE teacher education should have completed one of the following;
- (a) a minimum of Form 3
  - (b) FBT with 3 years of teaching experience
  - (c) Be a graduate from a recognised institution
- 1.8.2 ECE trained Teachers who are wishing to upgrade their teaching qualifications from FBT to a Certificate or Diploma of Teaching shall have taught for 3 years in ECE, have satisfactorily demonstrated quality teaching performance and should be recommended by the relevant Education Authorities and endorsed by the Ministry of Education-ECE Division before their applications are considered.
- 1.8.3 All other pre-service and in-service training undertaken by ECE teachers shall be consistent with and abide by the National Teacher Education and Development Policy Statement 2008.
- 1.8.4 Teachers applying for the ECE Field Based Training programme should have a minimum Form 3 at a secondary school and two years teaching experience at an ECE-centre
- 1.8.5 Selection of ECE teachers for training and development will be based on identified needs in each of the provinces. The training of teachers will be equitable according to gender, Education Authorities and Provinces.

## **1.9 Salaries, allowances and contracts for ECE-teachers**

- 1.9.1 All teachers in ECE who have completed either a Certificate or Diploma of ECE teacher education training qualification at SICHE or at any recognized and approved institutions and who are teaching at the MEHRD approved centres will be employed by an Education Authority recognized by the MEHRD under the conditions of the Teacher Establishment and therefore will be entitled to be paid a salary according to their level of qualification.
- 1.9.2 All trained assistant teachers with FBT, an Introductory Certificate (and with 3 years of teaching experience in ECE) will be paid a basic allowance, by the Education Authorities but will not be employed under an Education Authority and the conditions of the Teacher Establishment. They work under supervision of the qualified ECE-teachers and the ECE-centre management committee.
- 1.9.3 The ECE-management committee is supposed to agree on the support details for those assistant teachers who have started FBT and with less than 1 year experience.

- 1.9.4 All trained assistant teachers with FBT and 3 years of ECE-experience should be encouraged by the ECE-centre committee, an Education Authorities to start upgrading towards Certificate or Diploma in Teaching-ECE at SICHE or any MEHRD recognized institution.
- 1.9.5 Owners of private ECE centres will pay salary costs of trained teachers and assistants, cost of purchasing, renting and maintaining buildings, and will fund the professional development costs for their staff such as food, petrol, paper, pens, the provision of teaching and learning materials, and the cost of monitoring any government mandated standard.
- 1.9.6 All qualified teachers and assistant teachers at recognized ECE-centres will work in the approved teacher establishment and be paid salaries. However, the number and composition of staff will be determined by the number of children (see 1.3.3) For every 100 children the centre is allowed to employ a Certified or Diploma teacher and for every 25 children an assistant teacher (preferably with introductory certificate) is allowed.
- 1.9.7 Salary payments of teachers can be (partly) withhold subject to unsatisfactory performance, assessment or attendance reports by Inspectorate, Education Authority, Head Teacher or ECE-centre Management Committee.
- 1.9.8 All ECE trained teachers under the approved Teacher Establishment by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development shall abide by the regulations as stated in the Teaching Service Handbook under the Early Childhood Education section.

## **1.10 Assessment**

- 1.10.1 The assessment of teachers during and after the Field Based Training will be conducted by the Provincial Education Officers-ECE or Inspectors at least once a year..
- 1.10.2 All qualified Early Childhood Education teachers or ECE probationers will be assessed by the Education Officers- ECE or Inspectors on the implementation of the National ECE-Curriculum and teacher performance in the centre. The teachers will be assessed with at least a minimum of two observations each year.

## **1.11. Support by parents and communities**

- 1.11.1 There needs to be a strong link between parents, teachers, Education Authorities and all communities that provide Early Childhood Education for young children from 3-5 years to ensure that teachers, Education Authorities, parents and communities work in partnership for the benefit of the children.
- 1.11.2 The ECE-centre Management Committee, chiefs, parents and the wider community should be involved in supporting the ECE Centre programme through actively participating in meetings, discussing improvements,

providing land, teacher house(s), logistical support, labour, local available materials for necessary construction, repair, maintenance of the centre, classroom(s), teacher house(s), storage and production of curriculum materials.

- 1.11.3 Local ECE-centre Management Committees will be responsible to recommend particular teachers to the Provincial Education Authority for further training in ECE either through Field Based Training, In-service or Pre-service Training.

## **1.12 Language of Instruction**

- 1.12.1. In line with the National Language Policy , the Language of Instruction used in the ECE centre shall be the local language or vernacular spoken by the community where the centre is situated or Pidgin in the case of a multilingual community.
- 1.12.2. In line with the National Policy for Basic Education, the English language should be gradually introduced to all children , in particular at the age of 5 in preparation for the transition to Primary Education.

## **1.13 Management of the ECE Centre**

- 1.13.1 The ECE centre is to operate under the management of a constituted body or committee that will be responsible in administering and managing the centre on behalf of the community.
- 1.13.2 The ECE centre Management Committee will be comprised of 5 community members (with a minimum of 2 women) fulfilling the following tasks;
- A Chairperson
  - Deputy Chairperson
  - Secretary
  - Treasurer
  - Assistant Secretary/Treasurer
- and maximum 2 teaching staff (if available).
- 1.13.3 The ECE-centre Management Committee is officially established and confirmed by the responsible Education Authority after its first initial meeting when it receives a report or minutes including the names and responsibilities of the committee members. A committee is installed for a period of 3 years, but must be re-elected every year.
- 1.13.4 The ECE-centre Management Committee should meet at least four times a year and write minutes which need to be reported to the responsible Education Authority.
- 1.13.5 The Management Committee will liaise with relevant stakeholders such as the parents, community members and Education Authority/ies, with

regards to matters pertaining to the establishment and operation of the centres.

#### 1.13.6

The general tasks of the ECE-centre Management Committee in collaboration with the centre teaching staff will include;

- To produce a three year ECE-centre Development Plan and budget in the MEHRD-format.
- To support the development, maintenance and daily management of the ECE-centre by the Supervisor/Head Teachers (if available) and teacher(s).
- To mobilize the community on the importance of ECE and attract an increased number of children to the centre and encourage community support for the ECE-centre and its activities.

The more specific tasks include:

- Identifying, locating the suitable site, and construction of ECE building(s).
- Liaising with the Ministry of Education through its Education Authorities on matters regarding registration of centres, staffing and provision for suitable learning and teacher's resources and training.
- Purchasing and developing suitable indoor and outdoor equipment with the assistance of the Education Officer-ECE.
- Manage the centre grants.
- Determine the amount or type of parental, community contribution to continue operating the centres.
- Support for those assistant teachers who have started the FBT and with less than a year experience.
- Support to the selection and recruitment of ECE Staff.
- To recommend teachers for FBT, in-service or other training.
- To monitor the achievements, needs, problems, the quality of the programme, curriculum implementation and development, teaching practice and environment.
- Assist in the repair, maintenance of building(s), grounds, furniture and equipment.
- Assist in fund raising.

### 1.14 Review in 2010

#### 1.14.1

These regulations will be evaluated and assessed on their effectiveness, suitability, feasibility for the changed context in 2010 and beyond.

## Annex 2: ECE-data

The source of these statistics for 2005 (Table 1-3) and 2006 (Table 4) is the SIEMIS, Solomon Islands Education Management Information System.

**Table 1: ECE Teaching Staff, Number of Centres, Enrolments by Gender, by Province, 2005**

Province	Teaching Staff	No. of Centres	Males	Females	Total enrolment
Central	22	8	193	181	374
Choiseul	55	27	405	340	745
Guadalcanal	90	41	630	590	1220
Honiara	114	26	764	764	1528
Isabel	107	45	654	640	1294
Makira & Ulawa	88	40	570	532	1102
Malaita	112	57	1046	1100	2146
Rennell & Bellona	20	12	133	120	253
Temotu	33	23	407	363	770
Western	98	51	904	858	1762
<b>Total</b>	<b>739</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>5706</b>	<b>5488</b>	<b>11194</b>

**Table 2: ECE Enrolments by Age and Gender, 2005**

Age	Female	Male	Total
3	1148	1074	2222
4	1317	1367	2684
5	1462	1519	2981
6	1111	1211	2322
7	348	389	737
8	94	128	222
9	43	40	83
<b>Total</b>	<b>5523</b>	<b>5728</b>	<b>11251</b>

**Table 3: Total ECE Teachers, By Gender and Percentage Qualified, 2005**

Province	Female	Male	Total	% Qualified
Central	16	6	22	13.6%
Choiseul	54	1	55	16.4%
Guadalcanal	81	9	90	6.7%
Honiara	104	10	114	51.8%
Isabel	98	9	107	6.5%
Makira & Ulawa	76	12	88	13.6%
Malaita	86	26	112	11.6%
Rennell & Bellona	18	2	20	0%
Temotu	26	7	33	30.3%
Western	93	5	98	16.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>652</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>739</b>	<b>18.3%</b>

**Table 4: Total ECE Teachers and Children, by Gender, 2006**

**ECE-Teachers/Students 2006 Data by Provinces**

Province	No. of ECEs	Teaching staff			Children		Total enrolment
		F	M	Total	F	M	
Central	9	13	7	20	187	194	381
Choiseul	28	51	2	53	344	365	709
Guadalcanal	51	91	15	106	187	194	1446
Honiara	25	91	7	98	769	762	1531
Isabel	57	123	8	131	751	783	1534
Makira/Ulawa	65	104	27	131	823	866	1689
Malaita	123	184	53	237	2147	2184	4331
RenBel	13	20	2	22	109	133	242
Temotu	25	29	5	34	392	436	828
Western	59	116	8	124	974	1003	1977
<b>Totals</b>	<b>455</b>	<b>822</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>956</b>	<b>6683</b>	<b>6920</b>	<b>14668</b>

## Annex 3: Quality ECE in Solomon Islands

Quality ECE and curriculum is based on theories of child development and pedagogy.

### Child Development

The literature refers to different developmental domains of children which all relate to each other. A child grows and develops both gross and fine motor control. The child also shows:

**Perception and sensory development** - How a child functions using the senses and the ability to process the information gained.

**Communication and language development** - Using visual and sound stimuli, especially in the acquisition of language, also in the exchange of thoughts and feelings.

**Cognitive development** - Concerning how the individual thinks and reacts.

**Emotional Development** - Concerning children's increasing awareness and control of their feelings and how does he react to these feelings in a given situation.

**Social Development** - Concerning the child's identity, their relationship with others, and understanding their place within a social environment.

Recent studies on infant brain development show most of a person's neurons are formed from ages 0-8. If a young child doesn't receive sufficient nurturing, nutrition, parental/caregiver interaction, and stimulus during this crucial period, the child may be left with a developmental deficit that hampers his or her success in preschool, kindergarten, and beyond. Worst-case scenarios are found everywhere in the world of how the lack of proper social interaction and development of attachment affect the developing child. Children must receive attention and affection from their caregivers to develop in a healthy manner.

### Pedagogy

The philosophy of Early Childhood Education is largely child-centered education. Therefore, there is a focus on the importance of play. Play provides children with the opportunity to actively explore, manipulate, and interact with their environment.

It encourages children to investigate, create, discover and motivate them to take risks and add to their understanding of the world. It challenges children to achieve new levels of understanding of events, people and the environment by interacting with concrete materials.

Hands-on activities create authentic experiences in which children begin to feel a sense of mastery over their world and a sense of belonging and understanding of what is going on in their environment. This philosophy follows with Piaget's<sup>3</sup> ideals that children should actively participate in their world and various environments so as to ensure they are not 'passive' learners but 'little scientists' who are actively engaged.

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<sup>3</sup> **Jean Piaget** (August 9, 1896 – September 16, 1980) was a Swiss philosopher, natural scientist and developmental psychologist, well known for his work studying children and his theory of cognitive development

Play is a very important and special part of childhood. It allows a child to experiment with the world around him and the emotional world inside him. To many it might seem like mere child's play but there is a lot of work going on behind the scene like skill building, problem solving, overcoming physical and mental challenges etc. Playing with products made especially for the preschool children helps a child in building self confidence, encourages independent learning and clears his concepts. For the development of their fine and large or gross motor movements, for the growth of the child's eye-hand coordination, it is extremely important for the child to 'play' with the natural things around him. Sand/mud/clay and water play a very important part here.

Giving the child time and playing with him or her make him or her a confident human being. We as adults can enter their world of imagination and fantasy and let them control us. This generally helps in building their self confidence and safe feelings and security with us. We tend to build self esteem and morale when we give time and attention to children. When children realize that their things of interest are important to us and that we appreciate their method of play and fun, they tend to get confident. It also allows children to explore new friendships with those they interact with.

### **Quality ECE in Solomon Islands**

The aim of ECE in Solomon Islands is therefore to provide children with equitable access to quality play-based programmes which will

- enhance their skills, knowledge and attitudes.
- foster their wellbeing so that they reach their full potential.
- value cultural traditions and languages.
- provide them with learning opportunities to become successful, industrious, independent and socially responsible citizens.

through the Government working in partnership with parents, the community and other stakeholders.

### **A quality ECE-centre will include**

#### **A curriculum/programme which incorporates;**

- learning opportunities which are age -appropriate and culturally relevant.
- teachers' planning and implementing programmes to encourage children's learning.
- an interactive approach – teachers interact with children and parents in positive ways-
- the vernacular-
- a rich and stimulating programme which will be based on free play and guided by a Solomon Islands National ECE curriculum-
- teachers using multigrade teaching, observation, remedial teaching, and assessment strategies to enhance children's learning.

### **Resources**

- Qualified teachers or teachers in training-
- National ECE-Curriculum and learning resources – the curriculum, learning opportunities and play-programme are flexible and locally oriented so that they reflect values that are culturally relevant and fit with the beliefs and traditions of the local community.

- ECE infrastructure which
  - utilizes natural resources which can be found in the community environment.
  - is standardized, culturally appropriate, healthy, clean and safe to ensure the wellbeing of the whole child.

#### **Children and community**

- Teachers who establish positive relationships with children and their parents
- Ideal teacher-child ratio is 1:15
- Parents being provided with an awareness programme
- Teachers being encouraged to work in close partnership with parents

#### **Planning and finance**

- Every ECE-centre has a centre development plan and budget
- ECE-centres should demonstrate responsible financial management
- ECE-centres follow administration and management guidelines.

## **Annex 4 : Requirements of Building facilities, Equipment, Learning Resources for ECE Centres**

- 3.1 Equipment and materials provided should offer opportunity for all children, including all girls and children with disabilities to explore, experiment, manipulate, discover, and problem solve and therefore ought to be challenging, stimulating and interesting for all children to play with.
- 3.2 Classroom buildings for Early Childhood Education centres can be either, permanent, semi-permanent or traditional leaf house but should be well structured with appropriate height, light and sufficient ventilation.
- 3.3 The building must be well ventilated, with adequate windows and at least two doors for easy access and openings in case of emergency.
- 3.4 There must be adequate space for both indoor and outdoor activities. At least 2sq. metres per child indoor and 5sq. metres outdoor.
- 3.5 The flooring of the classroom is to be covered with mats or woven coconut leaves or plastic sheeting to avoid infections or allergies.
- 3.6 There needs to be a toilet for every 15 children or separate toilets for boys and girls and a separate toilet for staff use.
- 3.7 Toilets that are to be used must be safe and child-sized and must be recommended and approved by the Ministry of Health
- 3.8 ECE Centres that are attached to primary schools are to have separate toilet and shower facilities from the Primary Education section.
- 3.9 All children must have access to safe drinking water supply. Where there is no water supply the teacher should make water available to children in large containers either for drinking or for washing.
- 3.10 All ECE building, toilets and water supplies are to be inspected and certified by the relevant Works Authority or Health Authority accompanied by Education Officer - ECE before the centre can be registered or licensed.
- 3.11 ECE Outdoor learning area must have safe and appropriate structures to allow opportunities for climbing, crawling digging, jumping, balancing, swinging, sliding, pushing, pulling and other active and adventure play and should have plenty of shades for the children.
- 3.12 All furniture and equipment must be durable, safe, colourful , child and environmental friendly.

- 3.13 There needs to be adequate furniture and equipment, educational learning resources to enhance children's learning and development and that cater for all children enrolled at the ECE centre. Gradually therefore a 1/1 pupil/chair/desk/book/learning materials ratio need to be achieved.
- 3.14 All furniture and centre facilities must be child and aged sized for children between 3 and 5 years old and children's comfort
- 3.15 All learning resources are to be regularly changed or adapted to the changing context and latest insights in ECE to maintain children's interest and ensure there is regular supply of new and interesting resources and equipment.
- 3.16 All ECE Centres must have adequate storage space for equipment, materials and office space.

## Annex 5. Background

### Rationale

- 5.1 The *National Education Action Plan 2007-2009* and the associated longer-term *Education Strategic Framework 2007-2015* provide the strategic direction for the development of the Solomon Islands Education Policy Statement for Early Childhood Education.
- 5.2 The first of the strategic goals in the *National Education Action Plan 2007-2009* is to 'provide equitable access to quality basic education for all children in the Solomon Islands'. This goal is consistent with the Dakar Framework for Action, 2000 on Education for All (goal 1. *Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children*') and the Millennium Development Goals (especially the second of the Millennium Development Goals which seeks to achieve universal Primary Education by 2015).

The second strategic goal of the *National Education Action Plan 2007-2009* is 'to provide access to community, technical, vocational and tertiary education that will meet individual, regional and national needs for a knowledgeable, skilled and competent people'.

The third strategic goal of the *National Education Action Plan 2007-2009* is 'to manage resources in an efficient, effective and transparent manner'.

### Context, Analysis and History

- 5.3 International experience and research highlights the importance of early childhood learning in establishing the social values and attitudes and achievement of children in the formal education environment. Despite this, Early Childhood Education in the Solomon Islands has, until recently, received minimal attention from the national or provincial governments. In the main, early childhood education has remained the domain of the churches and community groups
- 5.4 Early Childhood Education (ECE) in the Solomon Islands is viewed as a parental rather than a state responsibility. Most ECE-programmes are therefore supported by the voluntary sector, and are not fully funded by central government. While ECE Centres do not get full financial assistance, they are subsidized to some extent. Salaries of ECE teachers trained at the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education to teacher's certificate level are paid by the government, and the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD) employs officers who monitor the provision of ECE.
- 5.5 Some early childhood education was introduced to the Solomon Islands prior to the 1980s by individuals, groups or voluntary organisations, mainly in urban

- centres such as Honiara, Gizo and Auki. During that period missionaries and wives of employed expatriates opened Early Childhood Education centres to cater for their own needs as well as those of others. These centres were in operation until the expatriates left, and Solomon Islands women took over on a commercial basis.
- 5.6 A commission then recommended that an additional year of primary education be established, which was called the “Preparatory year”. In 1981, the Honiara Pre-School Association (HOPA) was established to cater for six pre-schools. Its aim was to ensure proper use of teaching materials, and to maintain the training of trainers. By 1984, the Government initiated preparatory classes on a pilot basis with the assistance of UNICEF. During the same year, the “Preparatory Year” was incorporated into the general structure of the primary education system as part of the national policy guidelines. With this development, more and more parents realised that beginning the education of children at an early stage appeared to assist a child’s development later on in the formal education system. As a result of this realisation, many kindergartens were organised by various individuals and interested groups. It is because of the establishment of these kindergartens that HOPA was able to be formed.
- 5.7 Although more and more kindergartens were set up, there was a concern that most of those who operated the ECE centres were not trained for their roles in education. A community based Early Childhood Education programme delivered outside of the school system was initiated with New Zealand and UNICEF assistance in the mid-90’s.
- 5.8 As a result of this project, one of the country’s training programmes, field-based training (FBT) was developed to train the kindergarten teachers who were working in the ECE centres up until 1996. By 1998, another training programme was developed and commenced in the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE) for the formal training of the Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers. The first SICHE intakes for the Certificate in Teaching (ECE) were from the first cohort of teachers who had undergone field-based training.
- 5.9 Since 1995 there has been increased participation in Early Childhood Education. There has been an increase in the number of children enrolled in Early Childhood Education, an increase in the number of teachers trained at SICHE, and an increase in the number of teachers graduating from the Field- Based Training throughout the provinces.
- 5.10 The *Education Strategic Plan 2004 – 2006* has proposed that the “Preparatory Year” should be phased out from the primary education sector, and merged into the ECE sector. It observed that preparatory classes were offered in primary schools, often delivered by inadequately trained teachers, and that recent experience indicated that these classes may in fact undo the benefits of community-based learning.

5.11 The current issues and constraints affecting ECE in the Solomon Islands include:

- Unclear policies and regulations.
- Unclear roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders, in particular the SIG, the Provincial Authorities, the communities, and Solomon Islands' Development Partners.
- Insufficient financial and other resources to support the sector and therefore the difficulty communities have in affording financial support for ECE;
- No National Curriculum for ECE.
- A lack of quality learning resources and equipment.
- A lack of qualified ECE teachers.
- Poor facilities in existing ECE centres, and very few ECE spaces specifically designed with the needs of young children in mind; and
- A general lack of awareness of the benefits of early childhood education.
- Poor implementation, monitoring, and evaluation or assessment strategies.

### **Actual situation**

The actual situation in relation to the main goals of the *National Education Action Plan, 2007-2009* is the following:

### **5.12 Improved access and equity**

5.12.1 Early Childhood Education is currently not accessible to all children in the Solomon Islands. Approximately 28% of children in the 3-5 year old age group have access to and participate in ECE. There is also inequality of access in some constituencies. The difficulty faced by some parents is that access to early childhood education by very young children is difficult if the ECE Centre is not close to the home, since young children cannot travel long distances. There is easier access to Early Childhood Education in the urban centres where enrolment numbers are larger and where it is therefore more efficient to operate a centre because the numbers attending make it financially viable (see annex I, ECE-data)

5.12.2 While ECE-centres are designed for children aged 3 to 5 years, in practice many children remain in kindergarten beyond 5 years of age, before going on to start primary school. Other children start ECE when they are older than 5 (see annex I, ECE-data).

5.12.3 Information is not available to determine if there are equity issues with respect to access to early childhood education for the children with disabilities (e.g. children who are physically disabled, visually impaired, hearing impaired, intellectually disabled, or who have other types of disability).

### **5.13 Facilities**

5.13.1 There is a need to improve existing facilities at most ECE Centres currently in operation throughout the country. There is also pressure to expand capacity in order to improve access and to accommodate projected increases in demand.

Current arrangements for ECE facilities are not ideal, since there is a need for specially designed and developed early childhood learning spaces, and not all the current spaces being used for early childhood education meet this criterion. Access to ECE facilities is problematic. Toilets, safe drinking water, safe and sanitary equipment are common problems.

- 5.13.2 Government policy for the communities in the catchments area to be responsible for the construction and maintenance of ECE-facilities is also becoming burdensome.

## **5.14 Improved quality of teaching and learning**

### *Teacher Supply and Demand*

- 5.14.1 There is certainly a shortage of well-trained and qualified ECE teachers. The total number of ECE teachers in the Solomon Islands in 2005 was 739 (652 women and 87 men). Over 80% of these teachers were unqualified, although many of these unqualified teachers may have had some field-based training. Teachers who have completed field-based training are technically classified as “unqualified” and need to complete the ECE teacher training programme at SICHE in order to qualify as a trained ECE teacher.
- 5.14.2 SICHE currently accepts thirty ECE students per year. In the future the intake is likely to be sixty students per year. SICHE has few qualified lecturers in the ECE faculty with relevant ECE qualifications.
- 5.14.3 A large number of teachers have undergone the Ministry of Education’s Field-Based Training (FBTP) that provides only introductory training. Teacher trainee assessment is difficult because of distance and financial constraints.
- 5.14.4 The University of the South Pacific (Solomon Islands Campus) offers a Certificate in Early Childhood Education. Currently (2007) there are 14 students enrolled in the programme. In addition, USP offers a Diploma and Bachelor’s degree in ECE through distance education or at the main campus in Fiji. The SIG does not yet recognize USP’s Certificate in Early Childhood Education as this course does not include a supervised practicum or Solomon Islands specific content.
- 5.14.5 The teacher pupil ratio for ECE in 2005 was 1:15.2<sup>4</sup>. This ratio is close to the recommended 1:15 teacher - pupil guidelines, although many teachers are not qualified

### *Curriculum*

- 5.14.6 No formal ECE Curriculum has been approved for the Solomon Islands by the Government. In general the Early Childhood Education curriculum in the Solomon Islands is not structured. While there are some learning materials available to support ECE programmes, supply of these materials is limited.

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<sup>4</sup> 11.194 ECE enrolments in 2005 divided by 739 ECE teachers.

5.14.7 ECE teachers acquire some knowledge and skills about the ECE curriculum through the Field-Based Training which is conducted by the provincial ECE coordinators, and through pre-service teacher training at the School Of Education at the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE).

## **5.15 Improved management**

### *Financial management*

5.15.1 Communities raise funds to support the running costs of each ECE Centre. Both community-owned centres and private-owned ECE centres charge a fee for service in order to maintain financial viability. Current financing is provided by parents, who pay fees and raise funds, by the Solomon Islands Government (which pays the salaries of trained ECE teachers), by the provinces (which provide support) and by donors.

### *General management*

5.15.2 The Early Childhood Education centres are generally community based, and are given various forms of community support such as use of buildings by the communities that own the centres. The MEHRD requests communities also to be responsible for the salaries of the teachers who have completed the FBTP. However, informal data indicate that only 1% of FBTP trained teachers receive any kind of salary. Instead, communities often compensate the teachers in kind. In addition, some communities provide food and/or small allowances for teacher trainees during the FBTP, but this is not a formal responsibility.

5.15.3 It is the responsibility of communities to build the facilities and to meet the wages of the teachers who have received Field-Based Training. There appears to be little community awareness of the importance of ECE, which leads to low community involvement in the support of ECE programmes within villages.

5.15.4 Currently there is lack of clear administration and programme management regulations. Most ECE centres have programmes that operate between three to five days per week, for half-day. Individual teachers determine length of time for instruction, language of instruction, and teacher-to-children ratios. A programme operations manual to guide the management of ECE centres to use has yet to be developed.

### *Human resources management*

5.15.5 Only 17% of the ECE teachers in the community based settings are considered qualified, and are paid by SIG (*Digest of Education Statistics 2005*). Other trained ECE teachers are paid by their communities, private providers/ Authorities, according to their financial affordability.

5.15.6 Although there is some capacity for teacher assessment, lack of funding prohibits assessment on a large scale. There are insufficient early childhood personnel to administer the probationer performance assessment tool.

### *Monitoring*

- 5.15.7 At the present time MEHRD is developing procedures for monitoring and evaluating the education sector by a Performance Assessment Framework (PAF). However, the Early Childhood sub sector has not yet a regulatory framework which provides standards against which to monitor and evaluate the relevance, feasibility, impact and sustainability of early childhood education.
- 5.17.8 Accreditation and registration procedures are not consistent. There are currently only six EO-ECE's serving the ECE sub -sector in the country.