2019 Pacific Early Childhood Development (ECD) Forum
Implementing Pasifika Call to Action on ECD
23–25 October 2019
Sheraton Hotel, Nadi, Fiji
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<td>BMI</td>
<td>Body Mass Index</td>
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<td>CC</td>
<td>Climate Change</td>
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<td>CCD</td>
<td>Care for Child Development</td>
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<td>CCS</td>
<td>Childcare Services</td>
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<td>CPBA</td>
<td>Community Play Based Activities (Tonga)</td>
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<td>CRC</td>
<td>Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organization</td>
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<td>EC</td>
<td>Early Childhood</td>
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INTRODUCTION

The 2019 Pacific Early Childhood Development (ECD) Forum, held at Nadi, Fiji on 23-25 October, was a three-day, high-level meeting of government ministers and officials from Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) to discuss how to better support the optimal development of young children (see Annex 1 for the three-day programme). Organized by UNICEF, with funding support from the Government of New Zealand, the Forum progressed the initiatives of the first regional conference on ECD in 2017 which introduced the Pasifika Call to Action on ECD (PCAonECD)—a nine-point action plan to improve ECD across the Pacific.

The Forum was attended by 150 delegates, including Ministers, Permanent Secretaries or their representatives from Ministries of Education, Finance, Health, and Social Welfare from 15 countries: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI), Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tokelau, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. They were joined by representatives of development partners, civil society organizations (CSOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other multi-lateral organizations (see Annex 2: Participant list).

The Forum produced several important outcomes for ECD, as contained in an Outcomes Statement (see next page), foremost of which was the establishment of the Pacific Regional Council for Early Childhood Development (PRC4ECD) with Ministerial representation from the 15 countries at the Council level and Permanent Secretaries representation at the Steering Committee level. Hon. Dr. Ifereimi Waqainabete, Minister of Health Fiji, and Hon. Sili Epa Tuioti, Minister of Finance, Samoa were appointed as interim co-chairs until the election of these positions at the next council meeting. UNICEF remains as the PRC4ECD secretariat. The ministers also endorsed a reporting pathway for PRC4ECD to Pacific Leaders via the Forum of Economic Ministers Meeting, with the support of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.

With the theme Implementing the Pasifika Call to Action on ECD, the Forum also resulted in an increased understanding of strategies and programmes to support young children and families. The Forum stimulated south-south learning on ECD, with almost all the 15 countries on stage to present their own work on ECD. Multi-sectoral group discussions resulted in the delegates’ identification of priority actions that they would undertake immediately after the Forum.

This report provides summaries of these presentations, discussions and decisions. The outcomes from group work of countries are included in Annex 3. The report aims to serve as a useful reference for Forum participants and other ECD stakeholders as they convert the outcomes into regional and country-level initiatives to ensure that no child in the Pacific region is left behind.
2019 ECD FORUM OUTCOMES
STATEMENT

WE, Ministers of Education, Health, Social Services and Finance Sectors and our senior government representatives from 15 Pacific Island Countries, and development partners, gathered in Nadi, Fiji from 23 to 25 October 2019 for the 2019 Pacific Early Childhood Development (ECD) Forum, subsequent to the 2017 Pacific ECD Conference where the Pasifika Call to Action on ECD was endorsed:

1. Recognizing the need to collectively endorse the terms of reference of a regional council for ECD;
2. Recognizing the need to follow-up on advances made since the Declaration of the Pasifika Call to Action on ECD;
3. Recognizing the need to have a forum following on the culmination of a series of consultations across the region to discuss and agree on the governance and priorities of a multi-sectoral, regional council for ECD and to determine the implementing guidelines and monitoring framework of the Pasifika Call to Action on ECD;
4. Recognizing the need to spur coordinated and amplified action on ECD;

Therefore, after considerable discussion at this Forum, we accept the following outcomes:

On the Pacific Regional Council for ECD

5. Endorsement of the Terms of Reference of the Pacific Regional Council for ECD, with Ministerial representation at the Council level and Permanent Secretaries representation at the Steering Committee level and with Hon. Dr. Ifereimi Waqainabete, Minister of Health Fiji and the Hon. Sili Epa Tuioti, Minister of Finance, Samoa as the interim co-chairs until the election of these positions at the next Council Meeting.
6. Collaboration with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat to explore a pathway for reporting on ECD through the Forum Economic Ministers Meeting.
7. Directive from the Ministers for the design of a 10-year workplan (2019-2029) for the PRCECD, with specific milestones leading to the achievement of Pasifika Call to Action on ECD and Sustainable Development Goals@2030.

On the implementation of the Pasifika Call to Action on ECD

8. Strong recognition that political commitment at the highest level is critical to prioritize ECD. Countries have committed to establishing a multi-sectoral coordination mechanism for ECD, unique to the country context, specifically at the Ministerial level, where it does not exist and/or in alignment with national priorities, plans and policies.
9. Strong commitment to collective, whole-of-government and society action that strengthens planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation of ECD that leaves NO child behind, aided by robust data disaggregated by age, gender and disability.
10. Commitment to develop a Pacific multi-sectoral model for ECD at all levels.¹

11. Commitment to addressing the triple burden of malnutrition – stunting, micronutrient deficiency, maternal and childhood overweight and obesity – in the Pacific is critical to ECD and call for countries to take appropriate multi-sectoral action.

12. Strong recognition that the lack of investments requires the creation of fiscal space for ECD.

13. Strong recognition of multi-sectoral frontline workers and the need to build their capacities to counsel and support parents, communities, and children, including those with disabilities.


15. Strong commitment that all countries will monitor SDG 4.2.1² and SDG 4.2.2³, which will also be disaggregated by disability.

**Conclusion**

16. We, Ministers of Education, Health, Social Services and Finance Sectors and our senior government representatives from 15 Pacific Island Countries, and development partners, reiterate our commitment to providing a regional, collaborative approach in ECD to ensure that **No Child is Left Behind**.

17. We reiterate the call to all governments to implement the Pasifika Call to Action on ECD.

¹Regional, national, sub-national and local

²Proportion of children under 5 years of age who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being by sex

³Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age, by sex)
Forum Highlights: Day 1
(Wednesday, 23 October 2019)
Opening ceremony

The three-day forum began with an opening ceremony on 23 October 2019. Master-of-ceremonies, Ms. Bernadette Ganilau, welcomed all participants while a traditional Fijian welcome was extended to all chief guests. Leaders of the Pacific region addressed the opening session. They expressed their commitments to Early Childhood Development (ECD) and called for even more coordinated approaches to further progress on ECD in the region.

Welcome Remarks by UNICEF

Welcoming delegates, UNICEF Pacific Representative Mr Sheldon Yett said the Forum was an opportunity to “take stock of what we have done, what challenges remain, and how we can do better.” Referring to the Pasifika Call to Action, he said children need action, not just words. He thanked New Zealand and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat for its support of the Forum and emphasized that ECD is the highest priority of UNICEF globally and in the Pacific region.

By video message, UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore, also welcomed the delegates to the Forum and congratulated the Pacific governments for the impressive progress they have made in implementing the nine-point Pasifika Call to Action on ECD. She emphasized UNICEF’s continuing partnership with governments on ECD and urged delegates to further support children in the first stage of their lives.

A transcript of the body of Mr. Yett’s welcome remarks is below:


It is an honour for UNICEF to be organizing this important event, with the support of the New Zealand government and other regional partners. We are pleased to see all 15 countries well represented at this forum across different arms of government, plus development partners and civil society organizations. Our presence here for these three days is a strong demonstration of our shared commitment to the Pacific’s youngest citizens.

In 2017, UNICEF organized a similar forum to draw attention to ECD – based on the irrefutable science and evidence on the impact of experiences in the early years to the success and productivity of individuals and societies. At that 2017 Conference, we collectively endorsed a call to action for young children – the Pasifika Call to Action on ECD.
Now, two years after that landmark conference, we gather here again in Nadi to take stock of where we are since the call. What have we done to support the full realization of children’s potential? What challenges do we still face? What can we be doing better to make even more progress on ECD?

The Pacific’s children need actions – not just words and commitment. This is why it was important for UNICEF to convene this forum for all of us to share concrete achievements – in terms of policies, systems strengthening, services and programmes – and to discuss with each other what we should be doing to make these ECD initiatives scalable, sustainable and inclusive. The mandate to follow up on implementation of Pasifika Call to Action was given to UNICEF at the 2017 conference.

On behalf of UNICEF, I want to emphasise our continuing support for ECD in the Pacific. UNICEF has been partnering with the Government of New Zealand, and other Pacific governments and partners, so that the Pacific islands can be a better home for children.

Our work is guided by the SDG’s principle of ‘leaving no one behind’. With ECD, we are intervening at the most critical stage of human development, when we are in a better position to break the vicious cycle of intergenerational and structural poverty, and inequality of opportunities, ensuring that no child, anywhere in the Pacific, is left behind.

I thank our partners:

- The Government of New Zealand for their crucial support of ECD across the Pacific, including funding support for this forum;
- the Government of Fiji, for the warm welcome and hosting of our forum;
- Governments of the Pacific for their critical work on ECD and for children;
- the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat for the strong collaboration we have on ECD and the support it extends to its Member states as they advance on this critical issue;
- And to our colleagues in the Pacific community and other development partners and civil society organizations, who support a broad portfolio of programmes across health and nutrition, education, WASH, child protection and social welfare.

ECD is of the highest priority across UNICEF’s work globally and UNICEF’s Executive Director, Ms. Henrietta Fore, who is unable to join us right now, has recorded a special message for us all.

A warm welcome to all of you once again, and over the next three days we look forward to hearing your ideas, suggestions and- most importantly- your commitment to do what is right for children.

Thank you.
Remarks by Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat

Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), Honourable Dame Meg Taylor, said that as PIFS approached its 50th anniversary, the Pacific faces a major climate crisis. Children and young people will be the worst affected, she said. There was need for better nutrition, health services, security and protection from child abuse. The threat of child trafficking was growing. Hon Dame Meg Taylor informed the Forum that in 2018 Pacific Islands Leaders recognized these challenges in the Boe Declaration on Regional Security. She said the SDGs highlight the lack of data on stunting and childhood obesity and the case for investing in ECD cannot be stressed enough. She acknowledged ongoing efforts, but the Pacific was challenged by lack of resources and there was a need to work with partners collaboratively. We have to ensure that children and young people are central in the vision, strategies and the ‘Blue Pacific’ core identity that drives collective action in the region. Our children will face a very different world than ours, she said.

A transcript of the body of Hon. Dame Meg Taylor’s remarks is below:

I am pleased to be here with you all at this meeting which considers a crucially important aspect of the future of our Blue Pacific Continent – our people. Indeed, it is the children whose lives we will be discussing today who will inherit the future Blue Pacific, and it will be they who judge our efforts to secure their future.

Please allow me to thank UNICEF for convening this Forum on Early Childhood Development (ECD), and the Government of Fiji for hosting us all here today.

The Pacific Islands Forum has successfully forged a community of nations that work together on a range of shared challenges so all Pacific people can lead free, healthy and productive lives.

But today, on the cusp of the Forum’s 50th anniversary, our Blue Pacific region faces new challenges, none more pressing than the unprecedented threat of a climate change crisis and its impact on human development and security. Most concerning is that children and future generations will suffer its worst consequences.

Furthermore, our young people are confronted by what are being increasingly identified as non-traditional human security challenges. Improving access to early childhood development needs to be addressed within a complex environment where our children also need improved access to health including vaccine and hygiene services. Furthermore, our children need greater protection against abuse and exploitation. In this context, the future viability of our Blue Pacific is not guaranteed.
It would be remiss of me to not mention the tragic killing in Yap last week of the acting Attorney General. Reports that link her killing to human trafficking and the exploitation of children are chilling reminder of the threats which still exist in many countries in this region and are not being addressed.

In 2018, our Leaders recognized these increased challenges in the Boe Declaration on Regional Security which outlined an expanded concept of security inclusive of human security, humanitarian assistance, prioritizing environmental security, and regional cooperation in building resilience to disasters and climate change, including through regional cooperation and support.

Investing in Early Childhood Development
Experiences in the early years of a child's life are crucial as they affect the development of the brain, the foundation for all future learning, behaviour and health.

Furthermore, evidence show that if a child does not receive adequate nutrition, stunting may occur, intellectual development may be impaired, they are more vulnerable to disease, tend to underperform in school, and are less likely to become productive adults.

The first Pacific quadrennial report on Sustainable Development including the sustainable development goals highlights the lack of data for us to get a full picture of stunting in the region.

In recognition of this, our Leaders at their annual meeting in 2018 in Nauru called for a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach to addressing ECD, NCDs, stunting and childhood obesity.

This call emphasises the point that investment in early years demonstrate rates of return that are among the highest in public investment options, with benefits accruing to society in the form of higher incomes, better health, and lower crime rates.

The children of our Blue Pacific are our future, and they will face great challenges in their lifetimes due to the impacts of climate change, and non-traditional security challenges. The case for investing in early childhood development cannot be stressed enough – we must nurture and equip our children to be the best they can be – they deserve nothing less.

It was an emotional moment for me to be greeted upon arrival to the 50th Pacific Islands Forum in August by small children of Tuvalu – submerged in water surrounding a model of their sinking islands. Their message was clear – climate change is real, and the future of our children is extremely uncertain if we remain complacent.

We need to act now to reverse the negative impacts of climate change and other imminent development challenges, so they no longer threaten the development of our children and young people. We must work cohesively – as Pacific governments, civil society, and development partners – to find measures to address them.
Tremendous work has been undertaken so far on early childhood development, and this must be acknowledged. Also gratitude to partners who have worked alongside us to help ensure a secure and prosperous future for our children.

Sadly, though, across Pacific countries there are low investments in ECD. The challenge for us, as members of the Blue Pacific, is capitalizing on the resources that we do have and working together using a coherent and coordinated approach to build a secure and fulfilling future for our young people and those that come after them.

2050 Strategy
At their meeting in Tuvalu earlier this year, Forum Leaders endorsed the development of a 2050 Strategy for the future. The Strategy seeks to promote the spirit of working together as one ‘Continent’, now and into the future, in order to secure the viability of our region by 2050 and realise the Leaders vision for the Pacific. This is work in progress – investment in the health and security of our children must be a prominent feature of this Strategy.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I raise this high-level context simply to remind us all to consider the future world in which the children of today will be required to live, work and survive. Their development must prepare them for a very different world than the one we all inhabit now. I encourage us to keep this in mind for our deliberations at this Forum.

Conclusion
This Forum is designed to be a platform for significant south-south cooperation on ECD; for Pacific island countries and territories to share successes, challenges, and lessons learned in improving policies and services for young children and their families.

I thank you. Vinaka.
Remarks by New Zealand Government

New Zealand’s High Commissioner to Fiji, Honourable Jonathan Curr told delegates that New Zealand shares the vision of the Forum to build a better future for children and young people. His country’s *Child and Youth Well Being Strategy* was recently launched by the Government of New Zealand. He emphasized the importance of government leadership but equally so, the engagement of families, communities and grassroots organizations. He said New Zealand was committed to supporting regional and national initiatives that benefit children and young people, and of continuing the partnerships that support this work.

*A transcript of the body of Hon. Jonathan Curr’s remarks is below:*

*E nga mana, E nga reo, E nga hau e wha, Tēnā koutou katoa, tena koutou, tena tatou katoa.*

Bula Vinaka and warm Pacific greetings to you all. I congratulate you all on this Forum as you gather together to discuss how to improve Early Childhood Development in the Pacific.

New Zealand shares this vision of building a better future for every child and young person. Our support to the Pacific region for early childhood development spans several sectors including education, health, nutrition, water sanitation and hygiene. We have been happy to partner with organisations such as UNICEF as well as our Pacific Government partners to support regional and national initiatives that benefit children and young people. We are committed to continuing our partnerships in this space.

Every child should have the opportunity and right to protection, development and belonging. New Zealand recently launched a Child and Youth Well-being Strategy to improve the well-being of our own children and young people. We want New Zealand to be a great place for children to grow up, and I am sure that you share that goal for the children of your respective countries. The Strategy was developed with input from 10,000 New Zealanders – including over 6,000 children and young people, who told us what makes for a good life and what gets in the way. There was strong support for improving the journey of the child and their family, particularly in the early years.

Throughout this process Government leadership and coordination were critical, but so was the engagement of families, communities and grass roots organisations. Working together, through forums and meaningful engagement such as this gathering, will benefit children and young people across the Pacific region.
Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today on behalf of the New Zealand Government and Prime Minister Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern. I hope that you enjoy the Forum and wish you the best in achieving positive outcomes from your discussions.

I know we are all ready for the challenge of lifting up our young people and giving them the opportunities to learn, grow, to be loved and to belong.

*He taonga te mokopuna, Kia whangaia, Kia tipu Kia rea* [A child is a treasure, to be nurtured, to grow, to flourish]

*Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa.*
Opening Remarks by Fiji Government

Fiji’s Acting Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Defense and National Security, Honourable Inia Seruiratu welcomed Forum delegates to Fiji. He said there was now a window of opportunity on ECD. He recognized the nine strategic actions in the Pasifika Call to Action, and said Fiji was allocating the necessary resources and working across government ministries for a holistic approach. Fiji Government is committed to ECD and he described the various Fijian initiatives that the financial assistance given to pregnant women, the food voucher system and the 90 days of maternal leave and five days of paternal leave in Fiji. Noting the contribution of this Forum he said Pacific Islands countries were “stepping up” on ECD. Children in the region were full of potential, he said, and they were raised with the Pacific values of kindness, humility and service to others. He announced that Fiji had joined the global initiative- Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement – and invited other countries to consider joining the movement. Concluding, he said he was confident that via the Forum, Pacific Islands countries will get closer to achieving ECD targets.

A transcript of the opening remarks is below:
Ni sa bula Vinaka and a very good morning to you all.

On behalf of the Government of Fiji and the Fijian people, I extend my warmest welcome to all of you and I am pleased to be formally opening this 2019 Pacific Early Childhood Development (ECD) Forum. Ladies & Gentlemen, what a pleasure to see all of us gathered here again. I congratulate you all for demonstrating the commitment and dedication necessary to better support our young children and their families. It is an honour for Fiji to host senior levels of leadership from the finance and socials sectors from 15 Pacific island countries and territory. It is a momentous event and I thank UNICEF, the New Zealand government, and other regional partners for convening such a forum.

Progress on ECD in the Pacific
As many of you know, this forum builds on a similar gathering just two years ago – the 2017 Pacific Early Childhood Development Conference. At that conference, we convened across sectors to learn about global developments on ECD – including the compelling scientific and empirical evidence demonstrating how the period of early childhood provides a singular window of opportunity to make the most impact – on the future trajectory of individuals and the sustainable development of nations. Based on what we have learned, we identified a set of 9 strategic actions for governments to prioritize- the Pasifika Call to Action on ECD.
Following that conference, Ladies & Gentlemen, there was tangible momentum for ECD across the region. Many countries went back to make significant changes in the way they design programs for children, the way they allocate resources for early education, health and social welfare, and the way they work across ministries to provide multi-sectoral services to support the holistic development of young children.

Fiji’s investments in young children and families

Ladies & Gentlemen, The Fiji governments remains resolutely committed to equality and inclusivity for all of our citizens and to create a golden era of opportunity for young Fijian girls and boys to take advantage of.

• For example, we have vastly expanded access to early childhood education. And a capital infusion for health facilities will result in new and extensively-upgraded hospitals and health centres throughout Fiji, including an ongoing major extension of CWM’s Maternity Unit.

• We have increased paid maternity leave to 98 days and introduced a 5-day paternity leave and 5-day family care leave, allowing parents to spend more time with their young children. There is also a 150per cent tax deduction for businesses paying salaries to those employees during the time they take paternity and family care leave.

• To support working parents, day care centres are being established in major hubs of the country. We also established a national task force on early childhood, chaired by the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, which will spearhead the development of regulations and incentives for providing quality child care services.

• We run the Parenthood Assistance Payment program, where we extend $1,000 to mothers whose household income is $30,000 and below. Once newborns are registered and issued a birth certificate, a new bank account is opened in any participating bank in the mother’s name to receive the assistant. The first $500 is given immediately to the mother and the second $500 is in the bank earning interest and can be accesses when the child enters year

Accelerating progress on ECD

Ladies & Gentlemen, I know that like Fiji, many other Pacific governments are stepping up and making bolder and better investments in young children. This forum celebrates where we are as a region since the endorsement of the 2017 Pasifika Call to Action on ECD. And throughout this three-day forum, we will be hearing from each other on the advances that we have made in honour of our children.

Children in the Pacific are born full of potential, with access to resources, customs and traditions that position them well for a lifetime of success. We have collective and family-oriented societies, which mean our children often grow up in the supportive and loving company of relatives and friends. We have beautiful natural resources which our children enjoy. We have deep values that ground our children in kindness, humility and service to others.

But Ladies & Gentlemen, for some families in disadvantaged circumstances, they need support to be able to realize the full potential of their children. For us in government, what this entails is that we provide the legislative mandate, the political commitment, the financial and
human resources to deliver high-quality and comprehensive services. Education ministries need to work closely with health and nutrition, social welfare, child protection and finance to develop comprehensive, national programmes that reach everyone, especially those in disadvantaged communities.

The SUN Movement
The Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement was launched in 2010 by then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon and I am delighted to have joined the SUN Movement as one of the 27 members of the SUN Lead Group. The Group involves multiple sectors at multiple levels from the highest levels of government to local community leaders, led by Governments and supported by the UN, Civil Society, Business, Academia and Donors. The effective coordination of all these sectors, levels and stakeholders is at the heart of the principles of SUN and this is why we are all here today.

Each of us here represent our governments and peoples desire to collectively support young children, and that involves addressing malnutrition, in a multi-sectoral and holistic approach. We must all embody and empathise with the SUN Movement’s strategic objectives for each of member countries to:

• Expand and sustain an enabling political environment to address all forms of malnutrition;
• Prioritize and institutionalize effective actions in multiple levels, by the multiple stakeholders all supporting a common national results framework and national policies, strategies and plan that contribute to good nutrition;
• Effectively use, and significantly increase, financial resources for nutrition; and lastly to
• Monitor progress of nutrition results and financing and ensuring accountability.

Ladies & Gentlemen, Pacific countries and our partners must scale up nutrition, as an essential component of ECD, and join the SUN Movement by submitting a letter of commitment to the objectives I have just listed. I urge us here today to join the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement and to ensure global collective action. Commit to staying your commitment to ensure every child, adolescent, mother and family realise; their right to food and nutrition, to reach their full potential, and shape sustainable and prosperous societies.

Climate Change and ECD
Ladies & Gentlemen, while we have moved forward on ECD, we need to be doing much more. ECD investments are even more critical as we come face to face with the impacts of climate change. Children’s unique vulnerability to climate change fundamentally threatens the realization of many, if not all, of their rights as articulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The losses associated with degradation of health, education and protection caused by climate change are high. In turn, if we put in adaptation measures to protect children, especially during the earliest stages of life, we can offset these losses and realise significant economic gains. If we invest early in children, we build the resilience and adaptive capacities of our people, of our communities, and of our nations.

Concluding Remarks
Ladies & Gentlemen, I wish you all the best in these three days as you listen to distinguished speakers and experts on ECD, as you hear from government colleagues in the Pacific who will
showcase their achievements and share lessons learned, and more importantly, as you dis-
cuss amongst yourselves the important recommendations and concrete actions we should
be taking to further advance ECD in the region and in our own countries.

I am confident that with different arms of government, including the highest levels of lead-
ership, present here at this forum, the Pacific will get even closer to meeting the ambitious
targets we set for ECD and to fulfilling every single child’s potential for success.

I congratulate you in advance for the impact of your actions, the boldness of your commit-
ments, and the strength of our Pacific-wide cooperation at this forum.

Thank you and bula vinaka!
Keynote address: Prioritizing a Holistic Agenda for Young Children by Honourable Dr. Teuea Toatu, Vice-President of Kiribati

“Children are our wealth, children are our foundation for development and children are our leaders of tomorrow,” Hon. Toatu reminded the Forum in his keynote address. He reflected on current investments in ECD, outlining the benefits of early investments to broader socio-inclusive goals.

Hon. Toatu said Kiribati had adopted a national law on early childhood education, established a steering committee and technical working group on ECD, and the development of an ECD national policy and action plan is in process. Kiribati’s 20-year national plan embraced ECD in its five pillars and the family role in it was key. These features of their enabling environment, which promote multi-sectoral approaches, have improved ECD service delivery, resulting in comprehensive programmes, including the integration of a WASH program with components on health, nutrition, hygiene and gender equality. So too had a parenting initiative with community-selected champions sharing positive parenting practices.

Challenges Kiribati faced were the health of children, malnutrition, disease, abuse, domestic violence, divorced parents and lack of support for education at home and at school. This highlighted the responsibility of parents and individuals. Issues came in multiple forms and from different sources, he said, stressing the importance of everyone to working together.

The ECD agenda in the Pacific, Pasifika Call to Action is a critical action agenda, Hon. Toatu said. We must take action, not just give words. Hon. Toatu referenced the Forum Leaders Blue Pacific commitment and said children need to be part of national climate change response. Finally, he requested delegates to monitor the outcomes of the 2019 Pacific ECD Forum and to hold each other accountable on these outcomes—for the future of children in the Pacific.

A transcript of the Keynote Address is below:

I begin by sharing the peace and blessings of the Almighty in our Kiribati traditional way, Kam na mauri and Nisa Bula Vinaka!

At the outset, I wish to convey the sincere regrets of His Excellency Beretitenti Taneti Maamau, who unfortunately could not join you on this important occasion and on whose behalf, and on behalf of the Government of Kiribati, I am very honoured to give the keynote address for the 2019 Pacific Early Childhood Development Forum.
Let me begin by acknowledging with gratitude the Government and the people of Fiji for the warm hospitality extended to my delegation since our arrival including UNICEF and those involved in the preparation of this important Forum.

In Kiribati, we remind ourselves every day that education is everyone’s business and so, it is truly pleasing to see different sectors represented here today, whether it be Government, Civil society, development partners, churches, business communities and many other stakeholders – our presence speaks volume of one shared commitment – and that is our individual but important collective responsibility in nurturing and securing the full development of our children and grandchildren in our Blue Pacific Home.

Earlier this month, the Government hosted in Kiribati the Early Childhood Development Forum with the theme I referenced earlier in my opening, focusing on the theme – Our Children, Our wealth, Nurture them with Love.

I want to begin by reflecting on a number of key common sayings relating to the importance of our children which includes the following:

*Children are our wealth*

*Children are the foundation for development*

*Children are the leaders of tomorrow*

I have every confidence that all of us present here today would agree to these inspirational proverbs emphasizing the importance of our children. The question then that remains and one that we should ask ourselves is: Do we know how much exactly has been done to fulfil our obligations to ensure that our children are transformed into our true wealth? Do we know exactly how many children in the Pacific whom we have truly fulfil our obligations and responsibilities for to ensure that we fully transform them to our wealth?

I would like us to contemplate and reflect on our individual but important responsibility for the development of our children whether it be a parent, a teacher, a social worker, a nurse, a policeman, a grandparent, a school committee to name a few.

How much exactly have we invested to support our children development to ensure that he or she truly become the wealth of our nation? To what extent have we invested in our policies, our work, our obligations and commitment in implementing our respective roles to support our children's development?

This will serve as a living reminder to us individually and collectively in our collective efforts to take Early Childhood Development forward and would be some of the key questions that you will need to address in your deliberations in the next few days from today.

At the international level, a lot of findings from the study and research work have confirmed that supporting children’s development up to the age of 8 is the key to supporting a child’s brain that forms the very foundation of a child’s strength and ability. The findings also con-
firmed that children who received sufficient support during this period are proven to be effective and efficient in school and are able to complete their education leading to a successful life post education.

Based on this finding, a lot of work and investment both at the regional and international level have been made to improve and strengthen programmes on early childhood development.

Children formed part of our human capital and wealth and therefore investment in our children at the earliest stages of their life will yield higher returns and strengthen our ability to achieve broad social economic development goals. Providing our young children with quality and stimulating early childhood experiences will help support them to grow healthily and become productive and responsible citizens.

Some of our key challenges that we experience today relating to our young children have a lot to do with our failure in investing in young children and which often resulted in irreversible effects on individuals’ educational attainment, health and productive earnings, all of which in return incur significant costs for Governments.

In Kiribati, we are proud that we have progressed with small steps in advancing ECD commencing with the adoption of the first ever national law known as Early Childhood Care and Education Act 2017, establishment of a Steering Committee to provide leadership and oversight to the work of ECD, and establishing a Technical Working Group that covers ECD specifically to name a few.

I also would like to acknowledge the improvements we are making on this enabling environment for ECD, which also support the concurrent improvements we are making on ECD service delivery. The following are some of a few examples we have worked on with the support of our partners:

WASH from Start: This is the one of the first in the region to leverage WASH with nutrition to achieve cross-cutting results in gender, health, early childhood development, nutrition and WASH. This extends previous success under the KIRIWATSAN project implemented by my government, UNICEF and SPC with Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) to all 16 Outer Islands of the Gilbert Group to encourage communities take ownership of their sanitation challenges. Now this is extending to early childhood education centres and healthcare facilities.

1st 1000 days: This focuses on the strengthening of policies and health systems, coupled with a behavioural change component, to support the provision of and access to critical services that support the healthy development of young children.

Positive Parenting: We help ensure parents are supported in providing stimulating home environments and responsive caregiving at a time when children’s brains develop most rapidly. The programme adopts a maroro (discussion or talanoa) approach, where community-selected parent champions share positive parenting practices with others.
The design of the new national ECD policy is also underway, and to be supported with an action plan to cover existing priorities and programmes across health and nutrition, early childhood education, child protection, social welfare and sectoral plans.

The actions taken in strengthening multi sectoral coordination on ECD is in line with global studies in the effectiveness of improved outcomes and efficiencies through the whole of government approach to ECD. Studies undertaken have showed that children who are provided and supported in all domains such as health, nutrition, hygiene, and learning protection tend to do better in school and are able to gain the most benefit from formal learning compared to those who only received the nutrition component.

Challenges
The studies undertaken have showed that the challenges faced relating to improving ECD come in many forms starting from the health of the child, malnutrition, disease, abusive child discipline, domestic violence, divorced parents, lack of support for child education from home and at school among others.

Each of this challenge relates to our respective role and responsibility in nurturing our children and it remains our important responsibilities to avoid these issues from happening and to ensure that we protect our children from any potential harm that I have just highlighted.

Fulfilling our responsibility in nurturing and looking after our children rests with us individually as what we sow today for our children and grandchildren will determine our contribution in developing our human capital critical for our national development.

In addition, because these issues come in multiple forms and sources, the importance of interventions on child development through a whole of society approach cannot be further emphasized. We must all work together collaboratively to reach those in need of support in the early years as this is a most critical time for brain development and will be central in setting the course of their lives and collectively, of our nations.

ECD in the Pacific
As many of you know, this forum builds on many commitments we have made at the international, regional and national levels. At the 49th Pacific Islands Forum in Nauru in July 2018, our Leaders jointly “expressed alarm at the increasing incidence of childhood obesity and stunting, particularly its impact on future generations of Pacific people” and called for “a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach” to address non-communicable diseases (NCD’s), childhood obesity and ECD.

This aligns with the Pacific region’s monitoring of progress on the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), given ECD as a key target in the SDGs and its multiplier effects across most of the development goals.

The ECD agenda in the Pacific is also based on commitments embodied in the Pasifika Call to Action on ECD, a 9-point action agenda, which was endorsed by 15 Pacific island countries at the 2017 Pacific ECD Conference in Fiji. This Call to Action, which you will further unpack in the next few days of this forum, is a significant action agenda. It announces our collective rec-
ognition of the critical role of the early years in securing the lifetime success and well-being of our citizens. Equally important, the Pasifika Call to Action on ECD outlines concrete actions we must take – words alone are not enough, action is what counts.

In Kiribati, our national development blueprint is our Kiribati Vision for 20 years. It is our collective aspiration that carries the voice of our people and dream for a wealthier, healthier and peaceful Kiribati in the next 20 years. The vision is founded on four pillars: Wealth, Peace and Security, Infrastructure, and Governance. Under the Wealth Pillar is our effort to develop the natural capital, human capital, and cultural capital to improve economic growth and reduce poverty.

The place of young children in our development blueprint is strongly embedded by this statement in our KV20: “The constituents of human capital are nurtured through a family system starting from the womb to tomb. Investment in human capital, through the family system, is also critical during the early childhood development. Early childhood development is important in laying the social and attitudinal foundation of the Human Capital.”

Climate Change and ECD
I make special mention of the interlinkages between our priorities on climate change and ECD – because they are very much connected. At the recent Leaders Forum in Tuvalu, Pacific Leaders acknowledged the centrality of health in the Vision for a Blue Pacific. The challenges we face in ensuring the health and wellbeing of our children will only be amplified by the impact of the climate crisis – requiring all of us to take urgent action now to ensure we secure the future of our Blue Pacific for our children.

Children should form part of our national response to climate change. We need to invest in children, including ECD, as part of national climate plans on mitigation and adaptation. We need to design programs to increase the adaptive capacity of children and their communities, have education programmes that instil the values and habits of environmental stewardship, and develop children’s capacities to be agents of change and custodians of our God’s given environment and homes.

ECD Forum Outcomes
Over these next few days, you will discuss and share with each other how to achieve important targets for young children and their families, guided by the SDGs as a common global development charter and framed by relevant regional frameworks, our own national agendas and sectoral plans.

I have been informed that an inter-governmental ECD task force team, with the support of UNICEF and PIFS, has developed an implementation guidance and monitoring framework as a tool to help advance the work on ECD. This, of course, needs to be adapted and contextualized to our own contexts but I encourage that you utilize this platform.

Over these past months, the ECD task force has also been consulting with governments to design a multi-sectoral regional council for ECD – the Pacific Regional Council for ECD. There is the goal to have the structure, composition and functions of this council endorsed by the Ministers this afternoon. Once established, I anticipate this council to play a leadership role in coordination, knowledge-management, and technical support on ECD for Pacific islands countries and territories.
Concluding Remarks

Again, I congratulate all of you for your presence at this forum, it only confirms our shared interests and commitments to Early Child Development and an acknowledgment of its importance as core and smart investments to our national development.

There is no question that investment and thriving human capital is vital to securing the future of our nations and our Blue Pacific home. Getting it right from the beginning is easier and more effective than trying to realign then in later years and this is why ECD investments are one of the smartest and cost-effective investments countries can make.

As we prepare to embark on our joint mission today, I encourage all of us to take it upon ourselves to be vigilant in monitoring the outcomes of this forum and to hold each other accountable to the pledges we have made for our children at all levels. It is critical that we maintain the momentum and maximize this occasion to learn from each other support each other on our important journeys to realize the full potential of all our children.

I extend my best wishes as you move forward with ECD and wish all every success in your deliberations towards look forward to hearing of our collective and individual accomplishments in securing the future of our children and of our nations, and I do so with our Kiribati’s traditional blessings of Te Mauri, Te Raoi ao Te Tabomoa.

Kam bati n rabwa, Vinaka vakalevu and thank you all young people across the Pacific region.
Remarks by the World Bank

By video address, World Bank’s Vice-President for Human Development, Ms Annette Dixon, said investing in ECD is the best foundation for the future. Many children were not reaching their full potential because of inadequate nutrition, a lack of early stimulation and learning and exposure to stress—all of which could adversely address a child’s early development. To address these shortcomings, the World Bank’s Human Capital Project encouraged countries to invest more, and more effectively, in their people and thus their children. Making smart early investments in human capital through education and health could lead to large payoffs.

The World Bank had more than doubled investments in ECD over the past five years in more than 30 countries. Support was provided in three main areas: better nutrition, early stimulation and learning, and protection from stress. The World Bank has also been working with the Global Partnership for Education for countries in the Pacific on the Pacific Early Age Readiness and Learning (PEARL) Program to identify gaps in early learning and school readiness and to pilot interventions.

Wishing the Forum well, Ms. Dixon said she hoped the meeting would help the Pacific to identify good policies, programs and interventions on ECD.
Plenary session: Realising a Holistic Agenda for Children: Policies and Systems that Support a Whole-of-government Approach to ECD

Dr Pia Britto, UNICEF Global Senior Advisor on ECD, congratulated Pacific Islands countries for their performance on ECD and said the Pacific region stands apart and ahead. Dr. Britto talked about the fundamentals of ECD, explaining why it is important and how investments will pay off in the future, including:

- Return on investment for individuals: ECD investments can increase adult earning by as much as 25 per cent.
- Return on investment for societies: Investments in early childhood programmes, starting with the youngest, yield more than a 13 per cent return in reduced poverty and income gaps and increased prosperity and economic competitiveness.
- ECD Programmes are affordable: On average, ECD programmes cost $0.50 per capita per year when added to existing health and nutrition service-delivery programmes.
- The cost of inaction is high — for people and for governments: Governments spend 2-3 times the cost of ECD programmes in related health and education programmes by not making these initial investments from the start of a child’s life.
- Dr. Britto also outlined the ECD commitments of the Pacific, linking the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the 2017 Pasifika Call to Action on ECD, the 2018 Pacific Leaders’ Communiqué and National Development Plans.

Dr Britto highlighted the importance of enabling environments for ECD – the policies and systems that support a whole-of-government approach to ECD. To illustrate these, she presented three different country examples of best practices on ECD: Chile, India and Paraguay. She offered the following common features of large-scale ECD programmes:

- Are motivated by political concerns about social inequality, poverty, social exclusion
- Are informed by local and global scientific and economic evidence
- Have a vision of comprehensive and integrated services for children and families in
- Are informed by whole-of-government and joined-up thinking;
- Are founded by statute or formally communicated government strategy
- Are funded by government
- Are led by a government department or agency working collaboratively with other departments and civil society organizations
- In many cases, report to Cabinet
- Take advantage of different entry points, most often health starting from pregnancy
- Across all, what was key was political commitment demonstrated by budgetary allocation and legislation.
Officials Forum: Final deliberation on draft Terms of Reference of the Pacific Regional Council for ECD (PRC4ECD)

Ms. Danielle Cochrane, Permanent Secretary of Education of the Cook Islands and ECD Taskforce member, moderated the Officials Forum. She reminded the Forum that this session was a culmination of consultations with Pacific countries and territories on the draft Terms of Reference for the Pacific Regional Council for ECD. Final recommendations to the document would be considered by the ECD Taskforce and finalized over lunch in preparation for the Ministerial Roundtable immediately after the break.

Among the key agreements for revisions to the Terms of Reference were the following:

- Vanuatu submitted that the Council should be at Ministerial level, with a Permanent Secretary as alternate member if Minister was unable to attend. For Vanuatu, it had been difficult to get the attention of Ministers on ECD at the national level and to gain buy-in for a multi-sectoral approach. A regional ministerial mechanism would help achieve national level support for ECD from ministers. Cook Islands first endorsed the proposal for ministerial participation at full Council level, with a minimum of two sectors (finance and social sector) represented. This was followed by the same endorsement of all other countries, including agreement to do away with the sub-regional clusters of representation and for all 15 countries to be represented individually at the Ministerial and PS level.
- Vanuatu also suggested that the council uses consensus instead of voting.
- Samoa proposed to remove the Advisory Group as there was an overlap with the nature of the Taskforce. Each country would have existing frameworks and mechanisms for consulting with the private sector and civil society organisations working in this area. As necessary, the council can form a taskforce of advisors on a specific work area.
- Fiji asked what would happen to the Secretariat after two years and suggested that UNICEF remains Secretariat without the two-year timeframe.
- Fiji also noted that there was no mention of the budget and all operational matters needed to happen at the country level, with potential to go sub-regional and then regional. Fiji also emphasized that ECD would utilize relevant international partners, remembering that the driving force is the National Development Plan (NDP) in countries.
- Tonga raised the need for the regional ECD Forum to have a mechanism to report to Ministers on status of ECD—possibly a meeting of a Ministerial Council.
- Papua New Guinea supported Council meetings every two years.
Ministerial Roundtable: Endorsement of Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Pacific Regional Council for ECD (PRC4ECD)

Presenter: Ms. Danielle Cochrane, Secretary of Education, Cook Islands/ECD Taskforce
Member Roundtable
Chair: Hon. Dr. Ifereimi Waqainabete, Fiji Minister for Health and Medical Services

1. **Key points of discussion and agreements**
   **Four key changes to the ToR as a result of consultations at the ECD Forum:**

   a. **Structure**
      - Council has now been elevated to the Ministerial level, with at least two Ministers from each country – one from the Finance sector and at least one from the Social sector (including education, health, and social welfare). Representation is for all 15 countries. Social sector ministers are a minimum of one and up to four (to cover the areas/sectors involved in ECD, i.e. health, education, social welfare and finance).
      - Steering Committee has the composition as above, but at PS/CEO level.
      - Advisory Group has been removed from the ToR but the intent of the advisory group has been maintained and combined with Task Team role; and will be convened as and when the need arises to complement government expertise, including civil society organizations and private sector groups.

   b. **Functions**
      - As Ministers, Council will provide high-level strategic oversight.
      - Functions as outlined in the ToR will remain but will be carried out by the Steering Committee, which is comprised of PS/CEOs.
      - Greater emphasis on prioritising national plans over regional issues and priorities, and ensuring that these inform regional priorities; and then get captured in international and global mechanisms and frameworks.

   c. **Working mechanisms**
      - Decision-making by consensus; allows for more dialogue, conversations and discussion of issues.
      - Reporting will utilise existing Forum mechanisms to minimise duplication (see later discussion on reporting through PIFS process).
2. **Comments by Ministers**  
**PRC4ECD composition**

**Vanuatu** reiterated reason for proposing the Council be convened at Ministerial level and for consensus voting (see earlier submissions). Vanuatu noted the need to revise wording that reflects full decision-making rights and not voting rights.

**Samoa** supported the revisions made to the ToR and the clarity around the Council and the Steering Committee composition. Samoa agreed with the decision to delete the reference to Advisory Group and noted the need to delete reference to Advisory from Page 8 in the revised ToR.

**Chair** noted the preference for the term Task Teams as it did not limit the teams to one sector or area. The Chair supported the multi-sectoral approach to ECD being promoted through the Pasifika Call to Action.

**Vanuatu** asked for clarification on the relationship between the Council and the ECD Forum (i.e. the current ECD Forum). UNICEF made reference to the revised ToR, noting that the Steering Committee now meets annually; and Council meets every two years. With regard to Functions, UNICEF referred to wording on connections of the Council to other Ministerial meetings in liaison with PIFS, including reporting to the Leaders Meeting, e.g. in Education (the Forum Education Ministers’ Meeting [FEdMM]), and Finance (the Forum Economic Ministers’ Meeting [FEMM]).

**Validity of ToR**
Cook Islands asked how long is the ToR valid for? UNICEF answered that the ToR should make provision for its duration and review.

**Reporting on ECD to Pacific Leaders**
PIFS Secretary General (SG) advised the Roundtable that PIFS and the Pacific Forum Leaders have had more to do with social issues in recent years. The construct of this Ministerial reporting process would need endorsement by Leaders. For example, Ministers for Sports meeting in Samoa recently did not have a formerly agreed process, but Samoa’s Prime Minister raised it at the recent Forum meeting and it thus gained the attention of Leaders. There was a need to ensure there is an agreed process—working with officials and Ministers—to get it through to the Leaders. Education Ministers meetings were managed through USP; Health Ministers through SPC. There was a need to have a conversation with Leaders about how the reporting line will go. It required discussions with officials and then on to Leaders. In the case of Sports Ministers, Samoa’s PM raised it at the Leaders Forum and reported back. A review of all meetings that PIFS was responsible for was done in 2017 and reduced the number of Ministerial meetings organised by PIFS to five. PIFS SG offered to find a way to get a reporting line to Ministers for ECD. In her experience, Health Ministers recommendations did not gain high profile, so there was a need to work through a process to ensure that this gets on to the Leaders’ agenda and therefore the report gets endorsed. She indicated that this should be of high priority given its multi-sectoral nature, connections with regional security and climate change, etc., referring to her opening comments in the morning session.
**Samoa** suggested that the pathway be through FEMM as Leaders prioritize matters of economic importance. Given that ECD came through 2018 PIFL Communique, its multi-sectoral nature with Finance as one of the key sectors identified for action and the fact that FEMM is held before the Leader’s meeting. Samoa deferred the matter to PIFS SG. **PIFS SG** said Forum Officials meet next week and she would be pleased to take the matter to this meeting.

**Vanuatu** asked how did ECD get on the 2018 PIF agenda? RMI proposed it at the Leaders meeting, in the Dialogue process, after all the issue on the agenda were discussed.

**Chair** sought discussion on way forward in negotiating reporting process. UNICEF and PIFS proposed drafting a concept paper to get the process moving.

**Tonga** asked whether this Roundtable can approve setting up the Council or did it have to wait for the Leader’s endorsement? Clarification was needed on the process of establishing Council versus process of reporting to Leaders. PIFS SG explained that she was only offering a way to get the issues from this meeting on to the Forum Leaders’ agenda. Chair recommended that this Roundtable go ahead and set up the Council; and leave reporting to the Leaders’ decision. The Chair said there was an urgent need to move ahead on this given the multi-sectoral nature of ECD.

**Tonga** supported proposal from Samoa to work through FEMM. Vanuatu agreed, noting that the ToR already states that Ministers of Finance are members of the Council so it makes sense that ‘we work through’ FEMM.

**PIFS SG** reminded the meeting that if it goes through FEMM, then it would go to the PIFS Officials Committee in May or June. Chair sought submissions on any other issues on the ToR, for example, on links to SDGs.

**PRC4ECD workplan**

**Tonga** suggested a 10-year implementation plan for PRC4ECD which would enable a stock-take of progress in 2029 in time for reporting on the SDGs. **Chair** suggested a 10-year plan with two-year milestones.

**Tonga** asked who will develop the workplan? UNICEF said the workplan will be prepared by the Secretariat, working with the Steering Committee.

**PIFS SG** said an important milestone is the 2022 SDG Quadrennial Report that goes to PIF Leaders. ECD progress should be captured in this report and the plan should reflect this.

**Final endorsement of the ToR**

**Tonga** proposed that all the amendments to the ToR be adopted. All the members of the meeting agreed and endorsed the revised ToR.

**UNICEF** suggested that this was in fact the first meeting of the Council which was planned for Day 3. An action point will be to deliver the 10-year plan that would take into account agreements/actions from the meeting.

**UNICEF** thanked Ministers for their deliberations and efficiency. The **Chair** thanked the members for their participation.
Family friendly policies (FFP) are good for children, women, business and economy, Dr Britto said. One month of maternal leave can decline infant mortality, increases the duration of breastfeeding, improve child nutrition and decline the incidence of diarrhoea. Optimal breastfeeding decreased national health care costs, delivering an estimated USD35 to USD1 return on investment. Quality affordable childcare benefits the economy, she said, increasing the number of women in the workforce and raising a country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

UNICEF asks Governments and businesses to redesign workplaces for the future, making them more enabling environments for parents. Transformative shifts required included from ‘maternal’ to ‘paternal’, ‘infrastructure’ to ‘people’, from individual to ‘co-responsibility’, and from ‘reducing parental stress’ to ‘enhancing family well-being’. Governments can design various policies to help achieve these shifts (see table below):
Ms. Jennifer Poole, Permanent Secretary for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, Fiji

According to Ms. Poole, early years’ interventions could play a critical role in shaping the demographics, human capital and GDP per capita of the country for the next generation. Investments in ECD would help sustain Fiji as a young and vibrant country.

ECD was a progressive right—to social rights. Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) services in Fiji were regulated by the Education Act 1978 and the Policy in Early Childhood Education 2013. The right to early childhood and primary education was also enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji 2013, under the ‘Right to Education’ provision.

Fiji Government provides three types of grants to ECCE services: student grant of FJD150 per child aged five or above; a salary grant available for kindergarten teachers appointed by the MEHA and registered with the Fiji Teachers Registration Board; and the infrastructure grant which is available on a case-by-case basis. Childcare in Fiji was made up of formal and business childcare services, day-care centres and formal childcare. Paid maternity and paternity leave (maternal= 98 days, paternal= 5 days) and paid parental leave (5 days). Only the five days of parental leave is tax deductible at 150 per cent.

A small and fledgling industry of privately-owned and operated childcare had developed in urban centres, driven by educators with a passion for the early years. Research demonstrated that parents would use childcare services if it was affordable. There was a growing demand for childcare services in and near workplaces in Fiji, she said. However, there was no national quality framework for childcare centres, nor an agency to monitor them, but the Ministry for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation (MWCPA) was committed to responding to this gap and was working with the World Bank/IFC in this area. There were no tax incentives for employer supported childcare in Fiji but there were opportunities for encouraging employer supported childcare.

MWCPA had created an ECCE taskforce under a National Coordinating Committee for Children (NCCC). Next steps were for the taskforce to review the current regulatory framework and oversight of childcare services and inspection of centres, and examine the significant role of the private sector supporting development of ECC. The taskforce was comprised of MWCPA, ministries of Health, Economy and Education, development partners (including IFC, UNICEF, WB) and private sector representatives. It will address the policy and regulatory framework for childcare services and collaborate with development partners.
Ms. Lilika Fusimalohi, Program Coordinator, Gender Business Group, International Finance Corporation (IFC), World Bank Group

According to Ms. Fushimalohi, IFC recognized and promoted the benefits of gender equality and retaining of women in the workforce. It had launched a global initiative on employer-supported childcare that looked after the needs of working parents. Poor quality of childcare services was a major barrier, she said. IFC focused on women’s employment programs to address the lack of women in the labour force. In Fiji only 37 per cent of the workforce were women. The lack of childcare services was been one reason for this—women must juggle between work and childcare, miss work and have their productivity affected by concerns about their child’s safety while they were at work.

According to IFC, childcare-related responsibilities affected work productivity, with 12.7 per cent of work days lost due to childcare responsibilities. In Fiji, only eight per cent of parents use childcare services: this was because the services were not in the same location of parents, too expensive, opening hours do not match and lack of awareness on what services were available. Child safety was the biggest concern of parents. Most mothers miss work because of worries that about babysitters not giving the right food and not showing up on time (especially on Mondays).

The solution she said was backup or emergency care, parents resource groups, flexible work time for managing childcare responsibilities, and a referral information system on childcare services. IFC will soon be supporting a peer learning series for Fiji’s private sector to apply the lessons of the research to their workforce.

Questions and answers
Tuvalu commented on reducing potential stress on childcare responsibilities to the families. In small Pacific island countries, especially in villages, the stress of childcare is passed on to the family, the delegate said, not just on the mother.

FSM asked about access to childcare for children with disability, as 10 per cent of children had a disability. The burden on women caring for children with disability was increased.

Fiji remarked that consideration should be given on how to provide childcare services and training to rural communities and to families with children with disability. In response, Ms Poole acknowledged the lack of childcare services for child with disability. Inclusiveness in this area was being looked into.
Fiji noted that implementation of childcare services the Pacific is difficult. PICs lack gender equality compared to other countries. The economies in PICs are different, there were trade wars, tight finances, and intangible benefits need to be relayed into monetary terms. There was a need to calculate the cost of benefits and to make childcare affordable.

Dr Britto responded that there are a range of implementation challenges in many countries, and there are means to overcome these challenges. We are doing this, she said, by starting to learn about the benefits of FFP. For example, in Sri Lanka there was a saving in double digits (in unpublished data) due to parental care. This was because the employer did not have to double train staff, as shown in Vietnam’s largest shoe factory. Data showed that factory floor provision of these policies had tremendous benefits.

Cook Islands commented that PICs have small population size with smaller work population and high number of people with low salary/pay. Cook Islands recommend adding a 5th policy which is to redesign the “time-based” workplace to a “productivity-based” workplace.
Plenary: Announcement of Ministerial Decision on Terms of Reference for the Pacific Regional Council for Early Childhood Development (PRC4ECD)

Fiji’s Minister for Health and Medical Services, Hon Dr Ifereimi Waqainabete, announced to the Forum that the ToR for the Pacific Regional Council for Early Childhood Development (PRC4ECD) had been endorsed by Ministers. The key points were:

1. Council was endorsed and established at the Ministerial level.
2. Steering Committee was endorsed and established at the Permanent Secretary (or their equivalent) level.
3. Agreement reached to work with PIFS to use the pathway of the Forum Economic Ministers Meeting to report to Forum Leaders.
4. A 10-year work plan for PRC4ECD was endorsed and needs to be developed.
Plenary: The Triple Burden of Malnutrition in the Pacific

Burden #1 Stunting

Ms. Wendy Erasmus, Chief of Health and Nutrition, UNICEF Pacific, explained that nutrition is an essential precondition for early childhood development. But good nutrition is under threat in the Pacific. In this session, she explained that the panelists are going to present three of the most prevalent nutritional threats to early childhood development that we see in the Pacific: stunting, micronutrient deficiency and overweight and obesity. Ms. Erasmus further explained these forms can be present in the same child, the same household and in the country. A child could be stunted, have anaemia, and be overweight. A household could have a stunted child, an obese mother, and both could be anaemic. And the country could be trying to institute policies and delivery services to tackle all three forms.

Focusing on stunting, Ms. Erasmus explained that stunting was evident in children who were too short for their age and could exist despite them being well nourished and healthy. It was determined by measuring height and comparing this with age. Stunting not only represents growth flattening in the first 1000 days, it also represents growth impairment in the brain: the brain connections in a stunted child are significantly fewer than a well-nourished child. Within the first 1,000 days, stunting is preventable – after that it is largely irreversible.

According to Ms. Erasmus, there are many factors that contribute to stunting. Most immediate are the diets and care for women and children. Underlying those are inadequate food- examples of which are not breastfeeding early or exclusively for six months, lack of nutritious, age-appropriate foods, and food security. Inadequate feeding is also a contributing factor. It is not only about what the child eats but how they eat, including responsive feeding, stimulation, and hygiene. And the last factor is an unhealthy environment, including poor sanitation and poor quality of services in health, nutrition and sanitation. At the root of all these are factors related to poverty, access to resources, the socio-cultural, economic and political contexts and governance.
Ms. Erasmus argues that stunting is a critical issue because it can lead to losses up to 11 per cent of GDP due to lost workforce, reduced productivity and excess preventable healthcare costs. Preventing stunting, she explains, prevents overweight and obesity and NCDs.

Ms. Erasmus further notes that whereas the rates of stunting have seen a drop in many regions of the world, what we see in the Pacific is stagnant or rising rates of stunting.

**Burden #2 Micronutrient deficiency – Hidden Hunger**

Dr. Wendy Snowdon, Team Coordinator, World Health Organization (WHO), said one in three children in PICs are affected by hidden hunger. She explained that children need to be tested to determine micronutrient deficiency. The deficiencies were of iron, Vitamin A, zinc, folic acid, and other micronutrients. Micronutrient deficiency affects overall growth, immunity, cognitive growth and resulted in increased mortality, poor health and risk of disease. Micronutrient deficiencies in men decreased productivity and overall decreases in health.

On anaemia and iron deficiency, the main causes were deficient diet, the presence of chronic illness and frequent infections—for example hookworms. Anaemia affects lives of children and women and was the most prominent form of micronutrient deficiency globally. It impacted on mothers resulting in miscarriage and health problems. There was a tendency to feel fatigue and tiredness with decreasing productivity at work and in children performing poorly in school. PICs have high rates of anaemia in children, women and men, Ms. Snowdon said. The global target was to achieve a 50 per cent reduction of anaemia in women of reproductive age by 2025.

In concluding her presentation, Dr. Snowdon emphasized that there are significant micronutrient deficiency problems in all PICTs; gaps in data exist; and the impacts of these micronutrient deficiencies on health and development are extensive.
Burden #3 Maternal and Childhood Obesity

According to Ms Elisiva Na’ati, Adviser, Public Health Nutrition, The Pacific Community (SPC), obesity was excessive fat accumulation that may impair health of all age groups. It was a risk factor for the development of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and other medical conditions for children and adults. Obesity can be measured using the Body Mass Index (BMI) measure and STEPS surveys, which showed that whereas worldwide 15 to 20 per cent of women of child-bearing age were obese, in the Pacific it was between 24 and 80 per cent. In 10 countries of the region, more than 50 per cent of women and children are classified as obese. High pre-pregnancy BMI was associated with adverse obstetric outcomes including gestational diabetes during pregnancy, high blood pressure, prolonged labour and/or miscarriage and perinatal complications such as big babies and pre-term births.

Ms. Na’ati explained that several factors drive maternal and child overweight globally. These include food advertising aimed at children, large portion sizes, overconsumption of sugar sweetened beverages, declines in overall physical activity, decreased physical education and recess time at school, increased availability of low-cost, high-calorie, refined grains and added sugars, community environments that inhibit active living, and increased frequency of eating away from home.

In ending, Ms. Na’ati cited the work of WHO’s Childhood Obesity Commission which calls on governments to take leadership and provide a platform for sharing best practices and innovative approaches. The Commission was reviewing and aligning interventions with global and regional commitments, providing assistance for research to address knowledge gaps, giving resources to PICTs to implement activities and strengthening partnerships to combat the problem. Another network is the Pacific Ending Childhood Obesity (ECHO) initiative started by SPC, which promotes physical activity, restricting the marketing of unhealthy foods and non-alcoholic drinks to children, measuring childhood obesity, and sharing knowledge in the region.
Ms. Christiane Rudert, Regional Adviser for Nutrition, UNICEF East Asia and the Pacific (EAPRO), offered a model for a common solution of the triple burden of malnutrition in the Pacific — a list of double-duty actions to ensure adequate food, adequate feeding and a healthy environment. She explained that the drivers of malnutrition are intertwined: biological, socio-economic and environmental. These shared drivers required shared solutions, she said, placing parents and children at the centre of the response:

Ms. Rudert showed delegates how the predictors and situation analysis of malnutrition could lead to strategic actions on food availability and accessibility, health and nutrition services, water, sanitation and hygiene, social protection services, and education systems. The strategic overarching actions include 1) developing a comprehensive and innovative social and behavior change communication strategy, 2) improve collection and reporting of data through surveys and routine data, and 3) operational research to understand how to improve service delivery.Ms. Rudert emphasized that each sector has a role to play to improve nutrition in the Pacific, including Ministries of Health, Education, Health, Agriculture, Social Welfare, Labour, Trade, Commerce and Finance.

Finally, Ms. Rudert urged countries to make child nutrition a priority, emphasizing the need to focus on food systems and a multi-systems approach.

Questions and answers
Tonga asked whether, in relation to strategies for solutions at Government level, there was a similar list for civil society and other partners. UNICEF answered that yes, it was working with governments to mobilize other stakeholders that includes civil society and development partners.

A delegate asked how one balances placing parents and children at the centre of the solutions without overburdening parents with messaging from each sector. UNICEF replied that it was not just about messaging but about dialogue. Everyone should work together to target messages according to the situation. It involved making small changes at the family level. It was about a coordinated approach and delegates were asked to cross-reference with a model of ECD presented by Dr. Britto from the morning’s presentation.

Solomon Islands asked whether, when offering solutions, the impact of climate change on food systems in the Pacific has been considered? Ms Na’ati (SPC) responded yes, SPC takes climate into account.
Vanuatu submitted that the strategy and recommendations were very ambitious. The delegate asked whether the uniqueness of the Pacific was being addressed and consideration given to the fact that most of Pacific populations were rural? This raises data issues, he said, and were there things to learn from other countries? Natural disasters are a big problem for Vanuatu, he said. Rice was the main staple there. How close was UNICEF working with the SUN Movement? A representative of UNICEF said the way a country joins SUN is to approach the Secretariat through a letter articulating their commitment and interest to join. In response to the concern about plans being ambitious, it was about working with partners and bringing to bear all the resources available in country to help each country to customize support to address the specific situation.

Plenary Address: Promoting Healthy Eating in Pacific Homes

Mr Robert Oliver, Celebrity Chef and Host of Pacific Island Food Revolution, said that food in the Pacific was connected to identity. The story of food was the story of the Pacific, he said. In relating how his Pacific Island Food Revolution TV series was developed, Mr Oliver said poor nutrition was ‘bringing the region to its knees’. Watching some of the presentations it was painful seeing some children unwell. “Listening to this, I felt unwell myself,” he said. He was honoured to be involved in the 2.5–year project which was a “Pacific solution to a Pacific project.” In making the cooking competition show it was important to realize the power of emotion and he showed a video clip of a participant explaining that we should not feel embarrassed about our natural, local food and on the contrary, be proud of our foods and celebrate them. Afterwards, the forum enjoyed a special screening of an episode of Pacific Islands Food Revolution where participants cooked nutritious meals for young children.
Forum Highlights: Day 2 (Thursday, 24 October 2019)
Special Message by Government of Tonga, “ECD Investments in the Pacific”

Prime Minster of Tonga, Hon. Dr. Pohiva Tu’i’ionetoa, stressed the importance of a multi-sectoral approach to ECD at the national and regional levels. In the Pacific, our connectedness—especially at the family and community levels—should be reflected in ECD efforts at the national and regional levels, and across all sectors. It was our outmost priority to develop human capital for the nation, the region and worldwide.

Hon. Pohiva said the 2018 Forum Leaders’ meeting had brought to light the importance of ECD and the links between nutrition, childhood obesity, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and the negative impacts on development. Tonga was listed as the third most overweight country in the world and childhood obesity and how this was impact on them reaching their full potential was alarming, he said. Following the PIF Leaders meeting, these issues were everyone’s business as countries needed to move away from consuming imported processed food and return to eating local fruits and vegetables. Countries need increased investment in this area and urgently need to achieve the Healthy Islands vision and the SDGs.

Tonga’s budget relied on development partner support and there was a constant need to reduce costs and overlap and increase cooperation with the whole-of-society and whole-of-government approaches to ECD. It was imperative that everyone worked together. In the Pacific, our connectedness at family and community levels made this possible. Hon. Pohiva acknowledged the work of the forum and hope that it had broadened perceptions on ECD. He says, “The time to act is now, to invest in ECD, and to invest in our future.”

A transcript of the body of Hon. Tu’i’ionetoa’s speech follows:

Introduction

I am very pleased and honoured today to be part of the Early Childhood Forum over these few days here in Nadi.

The magnitude of this ECD Forum, with its distinguished participants, from across sectors supporting early childhood, is testimony to the importance of ECD as a foundation to sustainable development, not only to the young child but to their families, their communities and consequently our own respective Pacific island countries.
Our country priorities determine our investment strategies. The aim of today's Forum is not only to help us leave this conference convinced on the importance of investing in early childhood but to invest in a holistic manner, addressing all areas that contribute to building a healthy, protected and educated child.

Our lenses should therefore be multi-focal to see the child as a whole and not in silos or fragmented into health, education, water and sanitation, nutrition, child protection or social welfare. With that said, investment should also be balanced throughout priority sectors and relevant stakeholders.

Budget spending
‘Quality Education’ and “Health” including universal health coverage, are part of Tonga's nine strategic priorities in its medium-term budgetary framework. Education and Health have traditionally received the largest share of government’s recurrent budget, averaging 15 and 12 percent respectively. This indicates the utmost priority of developing our human capital as the foundation for sustainable development not only in the Pacific but worldwide.

As part of our effort towards quality education, the first government pre-school in Tonga's history was established in March 2019, which is a working goal to pilot early childhood education. It is anticipated that more government preschools would be established to increase access and participation for preschool aged children, while at the same time acknowledging the efforts of non-government parties in this sector.

Investments in facilities and capacity is needed. A new allocation for student teacher allowance was created to increase the capacity in the number of teachers contributing to quality education. Establishing a degree program for pre-school teachers is also in line with improving the expertise of early childhood teachers.

I must say that despite the said efforts, this Forum has brought to light the need to invest more in the early childhood education sector. The limited budget for early childhood education poses an enormous challenge upon the Ministry of Education to meet Sustainable Development Goal 4.2- “that by 2030, all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.” We recognize the need to increase investment in this key sector, both from the national and development budget, for us to reach this goal by 2030.

Investment in Water and Sanitation has increased tremendously over the years. Even more so after Tropical Cyclone Gita with many villages, communities and families benefiting from new water harvesting systems funded by our development partners. This is crucial for Early Childhood Development.

Health receives the second largest share of our national budget and national priority is accorded to address NCDs, CDs and Universal Health Coverage. Health also receives a large number of assistance from development partners.

In our Plan known as the “Path to Good Health,” as well as our “National Strategy for Preven-
tion and Control of NCDs, 2015 – 2020,” areas of early child development are well covered - from the mother’s health and well-being, prenatal care, to improving infant and toddler nutrition.

Childhood obesity is a serious concern as it is reaching alarming levels in many Pacific Islands countries including Tonga. For this young generation, they will face a greater risk of lifelong NCDs primarily diabetes and heart disease.

At the Pacific Island Leaders Meeting in Nauru last year, the Leaders expressed alarm at the increasing incidence of childhood obesity and stunting, particularly its impact on future generations of Pacific people, and committed to leading a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach at the national level to address NCDs, childhood obesity and early childhood development. In other words, ECD is everyone’s business.

Many children today are growing up in an obesogenic environment. The production and availability of healthy food such as fruits and vegetables have declined, while the production, importation and consumption of unhealthy processed food have increased. Addressing childhood obesity requires consideration of the environmental context, life course dimensions, and whole of government and society approach.

Increased investment and escalated actions that address childhood obesity through strengthening leadership, policy and legislation, multi-sectoral engagement, capacity and accountability are urgently needed to meet regional and global commitments including the Healthy Islands Vision and SDGs.

Laws and regulations
Investment is not only in monetary terms. It is also about ensuring structures that support holistic, positive early childhood development are in place, implemented and accessible. And as I mentioned earlier on, appropriate legislations, policies and facilities are needed.

Tonga’s Education Act 2013 has mandated the compulsory school age to begin from age 4. This is a milestone for Tonga, putting itself a step ahead over some of its neighbouring island countries. It also indicates committed future plans to invest in early childhood education and to ensure that free pre-primary education is accessible by all four-year olds.

On 31st of May 2019, Tonga presented an Initial State Party Report on the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in Geneva, Switzerland. While there are many areas that are yet to be addressed in order to fully embrace the Rights of the Child, the CRC Committee’s feedback gave Tonga the much-needed opportunity to view addressing the child in a holistic manner, much the same way we are trying to work together as sectors today. Committee feedbacks stressed the importance of National Coordinating Committees for children with necessary legislations, policies, human, technical and financial resources.

It is critical that each individual Ministry, relevant to early childhood, play their part in investing, one way or the other, on early childhood development. However, leaders of ECD-related Ministries, experts on ECD, working partners of Pacific Island countries, would not be gathered here today, if all is well with Early Childhood Development.
The challenges are there, without a doubt, so are the prevailing issues. Tonga, in 2012, was named the third most overweight country in the world. The fact that ECD indicators show that children in the Pacific are not reaching their full potential, is alarming. At the same time, this is confirmation of perceptions that perhaps were lingering in the backs of our minds. I have talked about how at national level we contribute to addressing early childhood development by injecting resources to health, education, sanitation and such.

However, I have not elaborated much on whether the child is actually benefiting. That is because we do not have the data to suggest we have made significant contributions to enforcing quality early childhood development. For example, Tonga lacks input on child welfare because it recognises that child welfare is an area that is still under developed.

As said earlier, despite Education occupying the largest budget share, early childhood education still remains a lesser priority relative to Primary and Secondary education. The children currently enrolled in early childhood education centres take up only 30 percent of preschool aged children. There are 77 preschools in Tonga, 45 of those are in the Nuku’alofa urban district. The remaining 32 are distributed sparsely throughout the rural villages and outer islands.

Harmonization across sectors
As stated in the Pasifika Call to Action, a whole-government, whole-of-society model of support, which places the child and family at the centre, calls for harmonisation across all sectors towards a comprehensive integrated approach towards Early Childhood Development in the Pacific, especially when we have limited resources.

Tonga's development budget is about 47 per cent of total budget which indicates heavy reliance on development aid both from multilateral and bilateral agencies. We need to encourage our development partners to increase and harmonise assistance to support regional and national implementation of ECD related policies and investments, and to reduce cost by eliminating overlaps and fragmentation, while at the same time promoting shared mechanisms and south-south cooperation.

I had the opportunity last week to meet the Vice President of the World Bank for East Asia and the Pacific as part of the World Bank Annual Meeting, where one of the subjects we discussed was the importance of investing in Human Capital, an area that is very close to the heart of the World Bank, which we need to capitalise on together with other development partners including UNICEF to advance our ECD agenda.

Our strength as Pacific people are our connectedness, especially at family and community levels. This connectedness, establishing and maintaining of good working relationships should also be practiced at government, national and regional levels. Government efforts are strengthened by investing using a whole-of-society approach, targeting parents and families, in the protection, stimulation and responsive caregiving of young children.

To achieve this, an alignment across sectors of plans, strategies, implementation and monitoring efforts is imperative. The urgency and focus on early childhood are to echo empirical
evidence and child development attesting to the economic and sociocultural benefits of investing in early childhood development, and to do this as early as possible.

Conclusion
We never cease to learn new things, and today, I hope the perceptions on early childhood development has been broadened. Tonga, given this opportunity to encourage its fellow neighbouring countries of the Pacific, leave you all with this message – Our country, our Pacific, our people, our children, the time to act is now, to invest in early childhood development, to invest in our future.
Plenary: Implementing the Pasifika Call to Action on ECD:
Presentation of the guidance document on implementation and monitoring

Dr. Nemia Bainivalu, Undersecretary, Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Solomon Islands/ECD Taskforce member, thanked countries that sent feedback to the ECD Taskforce on the Implementation Guidance and Monitoring Framework of the Pasifika Call to Action on ECD (PCAonECD: Implementation Guidance and Monitoring Framework). He said the document is a guidance tool to help PICTs implement and monitor the PCA.

As background information, Dr. Bainivalu presented a timeline of key events on ECD leading up to the development of the guidance document.

- The September 2017 Pacific ECD Conference in Nadi, Fiji, with its theme Moving Forward with SDGs for Early Childhood, was the occasion for the endorsement of the Pasifika Call to Action on ECD. Around 150 delegates from 15 PICs participated, mostly ministers and senior-level government officials across the sectors of education, finance, health, child and social protection—a first gathering of its kind in the region. The conference paved the way for cross-sectoral discussions on comprehensive programs and services for young children. Following the conference, interest in the integration of ECD into national development or sector plans and strengthening services for young children and families increased across the region.

- At the 49th Pacific Islands Forum in September 2018 in Nauru, Pacific Leaders shared their concern over the increasing incidence of stunting in children and called for a “whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach” to address ECD, further giving a directive to the region to prioritize ECD.

- In mid-2019, UNICEF, as acting Secretary of PRC4ECD and the lead UN agency on the realization of children’s rights, convened an inter-governmental ECD Taskforce to develop the draft implementation guidance tool for the PCAonECD. The taskforce was comprised of Permanent secretaries of the Ministries of Education, Finance, Health and Social Welfare of Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, RMI, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. In their June 2019 meeting hosted by PIFS, the taskforce agreed that UNICEF and PIFS would draft a guidance tool and monitoring framework and would disseminate this to PICTs for their feedback and input.
Dr. Bainivalu explained that the guidance document is a tool to support Pacific island countries and territories in their implementation and monitoring of the PCA. It elaborates key information and steps including:

- background information on ECD and why a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach to ECD is important,
- unpacks the nine action points contained in the PCA and offers practical steps toward their achievement,
- concrete ideas of how to increase geographic coverage and advance access to quality services and support for young children and their families,
- an approach to monitoring country and regional progress toward the achievement of global and regional ECD goals, and
- a framework for tracking the realisation of the objectives of the PCA.

Dr. Bainivalu also shared that the 2019 Pacific ECD Forum provided the opportunity to look at how countries were implementing the PCA and discuss what we would need to do, as priority actions, to accelerate progress on ECD in our own countries. Because it would be too much to go through all 9 action points, the forum has clustered these actions together into 4 thematic actions to be discussed on day 2 and 3 of the forum.

Across each of these thematic sessions, Dr. Bainivalu encouraged the delegates to learn from the global experts who will help frame the issues and provide the latest empirical evidence on the actions we should be taking. He also said the delegates should be learning from the Pacific experts – government representatives who will share their own programmes and services on ECD – their successes and lessons learned. There will be various opportunities for group discussions so we can reflect on what we have heard and discuss with our country colleagues what we may prioritize within this thematic actions when we return to our countries. We are also encouraged to identify priorities for the region, which we can ask PRC4ECD or other regional bodies to prioritize or support.
Plenary: Creating and enabling environment for comprehensive ECD service delivery

Dr. Pia Britto, Global Senior Adviser on ECD, UNICEF, first reminded the forum delegates of four important points in the PCAonECD that were crucial:

- Develop and strengthen national systems on holistic ECD through a coordinating multisectoral mechanism for the development and review of legislation and policies, coordination of budget allocation and provision of quality services for young children while ensuring the inclusion of the 0–3 age group and children with special needs.
- Incorporate ECD into national development plans with clear implementation mechanisms including cost effective, innovative and scalable interventions.
- Articulate the roles and responsibilities of each Ministry, the lead agency for ECD, and mechanisms for interagency collaboration.
- Improve coordination between government and non-government stakeholders who contribute to ECD

Dr. Britto argued that ECD requires multi-sectoral interventions. The adversities that children and families face are complex, so single sector solutions are often insufficient. Multi-sectoral interventions need to be packaged together and delivered using existing platforms.

Dr. Britto explained that ECD coordination is the process of allocating responsibility for ECD services within and across levels of government and between public and private sectors. These should cover functions like the design and development of programmes and services, their implementation, monitoring, and inspection, supervision, finance and coordination.

It was worth remembering that one size does not fit all, Dr Britto said. It did not always require new ways of doing things but was more about connecting services and better analysing what is needed for these services to come together. Sectors may serve children and families independently or maybe under a structure for sharing responsibility nationally and locally. It could be under a single ministry in collaboration with other sectors; or under a high-level central council or similar body.

In determining what factors need to be considered to create effective enabling environments for ECD, Dr. Britto gave the following points:

1. WHAT: Effective interventions embedded within systems
2. WHERE: Delivery platforms to reach families
3. WHO: Workforce delivering the service
4. Understanding demand: Beneficiary Perspectives
Dr. Britto shared that we know what interventions are effective. She cited the example of Care for Child Development, where community workers are trained to encourage, model, prompt, and praise mothers and caregivers. This programme has been integrated effectively within systems in many countries, including Paraguay where the same programme was integrated into existing delivery platforms of ministries of education, social development, health, and municipal governments. Governments should start with identifying what programmes are required and how to embed them.

From identifying the interventions, the next step is to identify the delivery platforms that can reach families. Health and nutrition platforms include health centres and clinics and hospitals. Education platforms include preschools. Community platforms include childcare centres and workplaces. And protection platforms include the social welfare system and home visiting. Health and nutrition services are an important platform to consider because it is a relatively well-developed platform in high burden countries. It also has extensive reach to women, families and young children, starting from conception, and even pre-conception. Dr. Britto invited delegates to name alternative delivery platforms in their countries. Delegates cited churches, womens’ groups and sports.

Dr. Britto stressed the importance of frontline workers and responding to family needs. She argued that the critical make-or-break factor in the ECD services delivery system was the “who”: Who was doing the work and were they trained for it? Usually it was the community health worker, and it needed to be someone trained and skilled who was trusted in the community.

To make this frontline worker effective, Dr. Britto said they need to have to the whole system behind them – health, finance and governance. That trained frontline worker interacted with parents and was the key person in delivery of services through whom all the ministries needed to work and interact with the community. She highlighted the importance of soft skills which were needed in working with families and children, and as a way of mobilising others to the cause. Frontline workers must understand what families want and need and respond accordingly.

Focusing on demand, Dr. Britto said that with ECD delivery, we are tapping into the latent beliefs and values of families. The beneficiary perspective is important and we have to know how to harness, shape, and respond to those perspective, ultimately building social accountability. It was a common factor around the world that every parent wants the best for their child, for him or her to be happy and healthy. “How do you harness that demand to give it voice?” she asked. The point was that ECD was not just about supply, it was also about demand and importantly, changing behaviour was a demand side element.

In conclusion, Dr. Britto said the four big actions were: 1) what are we delivering, 2) where are we delivering it, 3) who is delivering it? 4) And do we have in mind the demand side and the beneficiaries’ perspective in this delivery service?”
Question and answers

Vanuatu asked how to combine oral health services with ECD and whether the training and reporting process can be combined in one mechanism. In reply, Dr. Britto said she wasn’t sure about these two exact interventions being combined together (oral health and ECD), but in general, there were many country examples of combining services in this manner. It is possible to combine training but not if they are in completely different areas. Joint reporting is generally better when packaging interventions and Dr. Britto suggests exploring ways of reporting on one sheet to reduce burden on the workers. Finally, she explained that supportive supervision is important to enable frontline workers to receive feedback and be more effective.

CBM Australia thanked Dr. Britto for talking about the frontline workers, which is particularly important in the field of disability.

Pacific Disability Forum noted that cross-sectoral cooperation is easier said than done, especially when it came to budgets. PDF asked Dr Britto for any example on how this could be achieved, noting that in his experience ministries did not share budgets. Dr. Britto cited examples of the various systems of cooperation in the Middle East and Africa. In Jordan, the National Council of Family Affairs worked under the highest authority of government. It convened the ministers to ensure that the emphasis was on families and children and ministries complemented the work of others. She explained that in this model, there is no sharing of budgets and ministries kept their own power and accountability. But wherever services are being delivered, the needs of childcare are also provided for. A second example was in the manner of actual reporting of outcomes. In several countries in eastern and southern Africa, they used mother-child cards showing health, nutrition, education, detection of disabilities, etc. Every sector used the same card for a family- one family, one document. Each social worker fed information into that document. Meanwhile, budgeting integration did not work so well, she said, because there were problems with lines of reporting.

Tonga expressed interest with the Care for Community Package and said there was a need to consider the extended family—in the Pacific, grandparents, uncles and aunties were good frontline workers. Was there a package for training families on how to deliver coordinated services at the community level? Tonga had a growing population of elderly people and there was an opportunity to use them. Dr. Britto said that Care for Child Development was not created specifically for a family member. They are more general on what messages should be exchanged, and they are then adapted for the person who is going to deliver it. But the package may be adapted to take in cultural considerations.
Country examples: Coordinating an ECD plan of action across agencies

**Moderator:** Mr. Pablo Stansbery, Regional Adviser for ECD, UNICEF EAPRO  
**Panel:** Hon. Ginson Saonu, Governor of Morobe, PNG; Ms. Bwakura Metutera Timeon, Secretary, Ministry of Education, Kiribati; Ms. Molly Helkena, National ECD Adviser, Republic of Marshall Islands

Commencing the discussion, Mr. Stansbery said they would unpack what a multi-sectoral coordination mechanism might look like in three contexts, remembering that conditions will vary from country to country. “One size does not fit all,” he said, it was all dependent on the local economy, political will and cultural values. He asked panelists to first provide background on the ECD experience in their countries before talking about the mechanisms.

Ms. Timeon (Kiribati) said the ECD structure in her country was simple. Following the 2017 Forum, Kiribati’s Ministry of Education had started work around ECD, developing a ministerial committee, a steering committee and technical working groups. Four ministers came to the first meeting (Health, Women and Social Affairs, Finance and Education). Later UNICEF came in and the committee expanded. The technical working group had focused on positive parenting, early learning and the first 1000 days. Meetings were chaired by different ministries. With the blessing of Cabinet, the first National ECD Forum had been held two weeks prior to this forum. Mr Stansbery said this engagement at the senior level was very strategic.

Ms. Helkena (RMI) said that in addition to a historical lack of mechanisms for ECD in RMI, there were deficiencies in diet and general low awareness of the importance of ECD. Thanks to a 2017 UNICEF study on ECD in RMI, the World Bank had now provided funds for a six-year multi-sectoral ECD program, she said. Ministries of education, health, cultural and social affairs were now working together through a similar structure to Kiribati with a ministerial committee as the steering committee and plans to establish a technical working group. The office of the Chief Secretary provided the secretariat function.

Hon. Saonu (PNG) said he had appointed an ECD coordinator in his Morobe province. Second, he needed to find money to make it happen, and this was done. The ECD program had therefore started in Morobe. Meanwhile, ECD occurred primarily at the village community level, so establishing positions of responsibility and standards of management in villages were the first steps towards ECD.
Asked by Mr. Stanbery about the challenges and how they had faced them, Ms. Timeon said that gaining the cooperation of the various ministries was not easy, especially between government and the NGOs who had work related to ECD. She said that at times it was hard to get the ministers’ and secretaries’ attention as they had competing priorities. Although the ECD management structure had the blessing of Cabinet, it did not have their formal approval. She suggested development partners provide financial and technical support. For RMI, Ms. Helkena said that like in other countries, they had tried to develop a national framework to ensure there was no duplication of effort and everyone worked in harmony on ECD. In PNG, a major challenge was training for teachers on ECD and who should do the training. Hon. Saonu added that a curriculum needed to be developed and the National Government had to put in place a policy on ECD.

Questions and answers

Solomon Islands asked panelists how they had achieved alignment in their approaches. In their case, they had followed the Action Plan. Ms. Timeon replied that in Kiribati they were working for alignment within the Education sector plan and the framework for action.

Referring to PNG, Vanuatu asked how they are going to address ECDs in some remote areas and islands where they did not even have nurses or teachers. In reply, Hon. Saonu said that in PNG you had to start with village management principles and pre-conditions. Moderator Mr. Stansbery reminded the meeting that in many countries such as PNG, ECD was community-based and decentralized from government and urban areas.
Country examples: Child protection in the early years

Moderator: Ms. Brigitte Sonnois, Chief Child Protection, UNICEF Pacific
Presenter: Dr. Nemia Bainivalu, Under-Secretary, Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Solomon Islands
Panel: Ms. Daisy Korina, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Women, Youth, Sport and Social Affairs, Kiribati; Mr. Horasio Cook, Director, Child Protection Directorate, Ministry of Justice, Nauru; Ms. Ela Tukutukulevu, Assistant Director, Child Services Unit, Social Welfare Division, Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, Fiji

Solomon Islands—Dr. Nemia Bainivalu provided an overview of the Government response to child neglect, physical and sexual abuse. Data was limited, he said, and reported cases do not reflect the true extent of the problem. Dr. Bainivalu cited the 2015 Demographic and Health Survey which showed that 74 per cent of children aged 2-4 years experienced aggression in the form of discipline, 73 per cent physical punishment, 22 per cent of which was severe. Fifty-nine per cent of children had witnessed at least one incident of intimate partner violence. Government had introduced the Child and Family Welfare Act 2017 and measures were being taken to strengthen responses and services for community caring practices and protection. Training and appointment of welfare officers was continuing, he said. Supportive action to victims of child abuse were to support to child, includes counselling, logistical support, safe housing. Families were supported on explanation of process, justice system and expected events. And there was case conferencing with police, family members, educational authorities and safe places/shelters for women and children.

Kiribati—Ms. Daisy Korina showed data on the number of cases of children under six years of age that Social Welfare Services had received for the period 2015-2019. Case categories were maintenance, custody, neglect, abuse (sexual, physical, exploited labour). The largest number of cases more recently were in the areas of child maintenance and child custody. Cases of child neglect and child abuse were also increasing. Kiribati accepted that many incidences of child abuse go unreported.

In Kiribati there were two systems of in place for child protection—prevention and response. For prevention, the Ministry for Women, Youth, Sports and Social Affairs, the Social Welfare Division provided various services including positive parenting supported by New Zealand and UNICEF and the YES I do program to educate young couples about marriage and how to sustain married life and family. Response initiatives were implemented through the Social Welfare division, including case management, plans development and authority to remove
children from harmful situations on an emergency basis and finding alternative care placements and arrangements for children. Counselling services were also provided to families and individuals requiring assistance following incidences of abuse, violence and trauma.

Social Welfare officers were based on all the outer islands in Kiribati. These officers undertake child protection training 2-3 times a year to upgrade knowledge and practice, implementation tools, data, referral pathways, review and reporting. Research and structures in place included the Child Protection Baseline Study (2009), Child Protection Working Group, Children Young People and Family Welfare Policy (2012), Child Young People and Family Welfare Act 2013.

The multi-sectoral approach through the Working Group involves the Ministries of Education, Police, Health and Medical services, Attorney General, Ministry for Women, Youth, Sports and Social Affairs, Internal Affairs, Faith Based Organizations and other civil society actors. Police were responsible for rescue, investigation and filing of cases to court; Health for treatment, examination/report; Education for care and protection of children at school; Attorney General for legal advice and assistance; Internal Affairs for collaboration of Island Councils on Child Protection in the outer islands, and; FBOs/CSOs for alternative temporary care or support for victims.

Fiji - Ms. Tukutulevu presented the Child Welfare Act 2010, which is the main legislation for the care and protection of children. The mandate for its application rests with the Department of Social Welfare. In alignment with the definition of “child” under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), this was anyone below the age of 18, therefore including those that are under five years of age.

In responding to child cases, under the Act, the Department maintained a database that records all cases that are reported to the Department and are referred to the respective agencies. Process for dealing with cases includes components of case management such as: meeting and interviewing the child’s family and family group conferencing. Placement being the last option, there was use of the IAG for case conference or seeking the necessary support and intervention of partners, and developing a plan for the concerned child with partners. Raising awareness on child abuse was done through radio, television, talkback shows, and social media.

The challenges were to ensure child protection is included across other Ministry budgets. Otherwise, it had to come out of the small Ministry budget and there needed to be prioritising of ECCE in the national budget. The solution could be for partners to promote ECCE, capitalising on the New Regional Ministerial Council. Welfare officers also needed to be trained in CP, which was starting to happen thanks to UNICEF.

Nauru – Mr. Cook provided an overview of the issues and challenges in providing an adequate, sustained response to child neglect and abuse in Nauru. He focused on the challenges within an under-resourced Government system to implement a multi-sectoral response to prevention and protection. Staff capacity was limited, and staff turnover was often responsible for system set-backs which hinders services.
Child protection on Nauru was the responsibility of the Child Protection Division in the Department of Home Affairs. The CP Division was formally set up in June 2015 and has 10 staff. The Child Protection and Welfare Act 2016 is the domesticated law of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Data collection is an ongoing issue. Nauru has been able to collect data from 2015-2018 and disaggregate this data by sex, district, religion, nationality, type of abuse and perpetrator. There was a pressing need to improve data collection, he said.

The multi-sectoral response on Nauru was through an interagency committee which involves civil society, faith-based organisations and the church. One of its first actions was to establish a pathway for victim support services which culminated in the establishment of a victim refuge/space.

There had been a lot of progress challenges remain, including on confidentiality, lack of resources and qualified trauma counsellors. Bureaucratic red tape frustrates and slows down interagency collaboration and often other departments do not know what their role is. There was a lack of institutional memory, expertise and experience due to high staff turnover. This requires training and retraining which takes staff away from their responsibilities in progressing cases. Although CP was a critical need and should be prioritized, Mr Cook said it was not seen as an economic/revenue earning sector so had low priority. Consequently it did not get the attention and resources it needed to realise its potential—to support children, youth, women and families and in that way contribute to Nauru’s development and its economy.

But successes must be celebrated, he said, and these include: collaboration with other parts of Government, appointment of a lawyer to ensure that processes are being followed, and that there is now a reporting mechanism in the application of the Child Protection and Welfare Act. These were all positives and Nauru will continue to build on them.

Summing up the session, Ms. Sonnois (UNICEF) made four points. First, the number of cases may seem small, but most were not reported. Second, the presentations highlighted the importance of having child protection legislation and an agency having authority to intervene when a child is in danger. Third, the session demonstrated the multi-sectoral nature of child protection where different authorities such as health, justice and police were involved. And fourth, it underscored the importance of the qualifications of the welfare officers, how police officers needed to know how to interview a young child, for a doctor to recognize abuse and a teacher to be aware of the signs of a child being mistreated. On prevention and the financial aspect of child protection, she said the area was under-resourced and “we want to make that front page.” Child protection was all about investing in people for prevention and studies showed that the cost of not investing was greater than investing.
Country examples: Promoting early learning in Solomon Islands

According to Mr. Franco Rodie, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, Solomon Islands promotes early learning as part of ECD. As part of a National ECD Forum in October 2018, national stakeholders agreed for a national steering committee to be established, and plans are in place to map and review existing governance structures and delivery mechanisms to determine better coordination models.

There are three main goals for early learning in Solomon Islands:

- All children between 3 and 5 years old benefit from access to a quality and sustainable early childhood education;
- Expand and enhance quality ECE for 3 and 4 year olds. Expand access to non-formal quality community-based ECE centres to cater for children ages 0-5.
- Promote parenting education.

Mr. Rodie shared recent developments in ECE in the country. A review of ECE policy was underway and Solomon Islands needed to move quickly on the development of quality standards, a database, and coordination systems. A main achievement was the introduction of a pre-primary year (PPY), with a new curriculum for 5-year olds piloted and rolled out across 9 provinces, with over 1000 ECE teachers trained. Parent and community support was key, he said, as their role was so important. An accompanying communication and community engagement strategy is also being developed. The ministry is also designing a parenting package to be used in ECE centres and home.

Mr. Rodie acknowledges several challenges, including improving access to early education, developing teaching and learning resources, the continuing professional development of ECE teachers, the awareness-building of stakeholders on the reforms being done in ECD, and funding.

Mr. Rodie also shared next steps for ECD in the country, including capturing the ECE sub-sector in the revised Education Bill 2019, plus the revision of the ECE policy to align with the revised bill. A new curriculum for five-year-olds was being piloted across five provinces and more than 1000 ECE teachers were being trained. Five thousand more children had been reached and Government was moving to provide classroom support and mentoring to all nine provinces of the Solomon Islands. ECD multi-sectoral coordination and dialogue was being promoted through a new ECD coordination body led by the National ECD coordinator and awareness of the PCAonECD had been raised throughout the Solomon Islands. Mr. Rodie emphasized his Ministry’s ongoing commitment to ECD.
Country example: Papua New Guinea

Dr. Uke Kombra, Secretary for Education, Papua New Guinea, explained that previously ECCE was covered by the Department of Community Services in PNG, but the Government had now decided ECD should be included in the education system. In 2017, the Government had restricted the whole education system, moving grade 1 and grade 2 into primary schools and children aged four and five into preparatory or pre-school. The Government was yet to decide whether it will be called pre-school.

There were huge financial considerations for PNG considering that 20,000 teachers were required for the early childhood sector in PNG, Dr Kombra said. The Education Act was under review and it was hoped that there was the political will for this, he added. Meanwhile, to prepare for the change, the University of Goroka developed a certificate in teacher training and developed a diploma program for Early Childhood Development.

Dr Kombra said that co-ordination with other ministries was a challenge, but to help this a symposium on ECD had been set up. “PNG is a big country with a big population,” he said. “But nonetheless, we are committed to ECD.”
Country example: Marurung Ataei: A healthy start, a thriving child in Kiribati

Ms. Tinia Raj, Acting Officer in charge, Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Kiribati, described a programme on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) programs in schools, health care facilities and communities. This is done in a cross-sectoral manner, bringing together key Government Ministries to ensure Kiribati maximizes the use of minimal resources, and targeting the same population in different settings (schools, health care facilities and the communities). The initiative was supported by UNICEF and New Zealand Government.

As background information, Ms. Raj shared that Kiribati has the highest infant mortality and some of the highest rates of malnutrition in the Pacific. Access to basic sanitation services is lower than most countries. The main causes of death in children aged 0-5 years were related to pneumonia and diarrhoea, the highest rate in the Pacific. She said the Marurung te Ataei programme aimed to reduce the number of i-Kiribati children who are dying before reaching the age of five and others who are stunted. Increasingly, the linkages between WASH, health, nutrition and education and were being understood, documented and recognised. Poor nutrition and poor WASH practices were major contributors to infant mortality, stunting and malnutrition in Kiribati.

The Marurung te Ataei programme focuses on community- and facility-based health wash & nutrition interventions targeting children from conception to adolescence, and beyond as they go on to be the next generation of parents. Covering 16 of the Gilbert Islands Group, the programme uses multi-sectoral service delivery platforms (schools, healthcare facilities and communities) to reach approximately 37,000 children across all health care facilities, 100 pre-schools and Early Childhood Centres of Education, primary schools, and junior secondary schools on the 16 islands.

The Activity will scale-up WASH across the Outer Islands of the Gilbert Group and will complement other WASH, health and early childhood development activities already being implemented in Kiribati.

The programme reflects the type of multi-sectoral collaboration needed within and across development partners, ultimately achieving a broader and deeper impact on the development outcomes of young children. The programme will leverage existing coordination platforms in country such as the early childhood development subsector platforms; link with Government of New Zealand funded programs like Positive Parenting and; use island level decision-making structures and actors such as village welfare groups, island education coordinators, water technicians, and island councils to deliver activities.
The Marurung te Ataei programme was also linked to the Kiribati 20-Year Vision which aimed to extend access to potable water to 75 per cent of households by 2019 and to all households by 2036; and increase access to suitable sanitation facilities to 50 per cent by 2019 and to all households by 2036.

The focus in 2019/2020 will be to establish a picture of the political environment and understanding of the framework of ‘WASH from the Start’ as an integrated approach; strengthen the WASH and Health position in the implementation group of the ECD coordination mechanism and to develop the appetite for an operational multi-sectoral framework of implementation. In this same year, the membership in the ECD coordination platform will be used to create knowledge and information sharing for different activities in Kiribati across the member ministries and partners to identify gap areas for maximizing WASH from the Start. The mapping of what WASH looks like in schools, healthcare facilities and in homes will be assessed in this first year to identify priority focus for the installations and rehabilitation of facilities in Year 2. The results from year 1 will set the scene and create momentum for delivering into year 2 and beyond.
Plenary: It takes a village to raise a child—building on the nurturing care framework

Mr. Pablo Stansbery, Regional Adviser for ECD, UNICEF EAPRO, started by remarking how he often told Ministries of Education that they seem to think children are born at age 5 or 6. The period before this age is often left unnoticed. He reminded everyone that preschool is not early childhood development and that a child’s development begins way earlier even pre-natally.

Mr. Stansbery then outlined the nurturing care framework and described the stages of early learning and development:

- **On health**, Mr. Stansbery emphasized that nurturing care meant paying attention to the health and wellbeing of caregivers and children. Young children’s good health is the result of caregivers actions, like responding to child movements, sounds, gestures and verbal requests; and providing adequate nutrition, safety and security.

- **On nutrition**, Mr. Stansbery made the connections between the pregnant mother’s health and the developing child’s nutrition and growth. When pregnant women do not have enough micronutrients, they need supplements, including iron, he said. Young children flourish on exclusive breastfeeding—from immediately after birth to six months—together with skin-to-skin body contact. From the age of six months, young children need complementary foods that are frequent and diverse enough, and which contain the micronutrients required for the rapid growth of their body and brain.

- **On responsive caregiving**, Mr. Stansbery noted that this include responsive caregiving, which is especially important for low weight or ill infants. Before young children learn to speak, the engagement between them and their caregivers is expressed through cuddling, eye contact, smiles, vocalizations and gestures. These mutually enjoyable interactions create an emotional bond, which helps young children to understand the world around them and to learn about people, relationships and language. These social interactions also stimulate connections in the brain.

- **On security and safety**, Mr. Stansbery explained that pregnant women and young children are also most vulnerable to environmental risks. Young children, once they are mobile, can touch and swallow objects that can harm them, and an unclean or unsafe environment is full of potential threats. Young children can experience extreme fear when people abandon them – or threaten to abandon or punish them. Across the world, toddlers are the
group most often harshly punished, by being beaten painfully with sticks, belts and other objects. These experiences cause uncontrollable fear and stress that can programme the young child’s response systems in ways that can lead to emotional, mental and social maladjustment. Children can withdraw socially, learn to mistrust adults, or act out their fear in aggression towards other children. Ensuring caregivers’ mental health, working with them to prevent maltreatment, is needed.

- On early learning, Mr. Stansbery emphasized that children’s learning begin at conception as a biological mechanism called epigenesis. In the earliest years, we acquire skills and capacities interpersonally, in relationship with other people, through smiling and eye contact, talking and singing, modelling, imitation and simple games, like “wave bye-bye.” Playing with common household items can help a child learn about objects’ feel and quality, and what can be done with them. Even a busy caregiver can be given the motivation and confidence to talk with a child during feeding, bathing, and other routine household tasks. These interactions help the child learn about other people.

Mr. Stansbery ended his presentation with a reminder to ECD stakeholders and government officials that due to limited resources, our approach to ECD must be equity and justice-based, allocating funds to those who need it more.
Country example: Positive parenting: Promising approaches in Vanuatu

Hon. Jean Pierre Nirua, Minister for Education and Training, Vanuatu started his presentation with key findings of a Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices Baseline Study conducted by UNICEF in 2014. The study found that only 26 per cent of kindergarten-aged children ate a balanced diet. In 34 per cent of households, neither parent played with their child. In 39 per cent of households, parents did not read or look at books with their child. And 78 per cent of parents self-reported spank, shake and slap discipline methods.

The findings promoted the Ministry of Education to develop a Parenting Support Programme (PSP) that helps improve parenting knowledge and skills. Demonstrating the whole-of-government approach, all government sectors were involved in consultation and workshops on PSP and the Ministry for Education and Training took the lead.

Program achievements to-date included the development of a Parenting Support Handbook, which has nine modules implementing a holistic, interactive and engaging approach. The modules covered topics on health brain, handwashing and hygiene, engaging with children, positive discipline, food and nutrition, early stimulation, early literacy, children with disabilities, and child safety at home. Parents were most interested in the Brain Development module, and the linkages of other modules to brain development. Workshop evaluations identified positive changes and the program attracted parents beyond those with children in ECCE centres. There was huge interest from parents and requests for more workshops, he said.

Challenges in Vanuatu included the inability to mobilise the whole community and encourage diversity at workshops which currently are dominated by women. Communities varied widely in how many modules were completed. There was also a need to develop more information on child development and support to children with disabilities.

In terms of the way forward, Vanuatu plans to conduct reflection meetings in the eight zones of Penama province. They will use the findings and recommendations to guide short- and long-term implementation strategies. The existing and new materials for PSP would be reviewed, with a view to expand PSP nationwide. On ECD more broadly, Hon. Nirua also shared results of a Council of Minister’s approval for a series of important ECD activities in the countries. They confirmed the Ministry of Education as the lead Ministry for ECD and a focal point in the Ministry to oversee the overall coordination of ECD. Plans are in place to convene an ECD national workshop in Port Vila, followed by consultation workshops in the provinces.
Country example: Community-based early learning in Tonga

Minister Hon. Siaosi ‘Ofakivahafolau Sovaleni, Minister for Education, Tonga presented on the holistic approach to early learning and development in Tonga, highlighting two initiatives: the Tonga PEARL (Pacific Early Age Readiness and Learning) project and the Health Series initiative.

The PEARL project aimed to help access to early childhood education and enable all children to come to school ready to learn, considering the Tongan context and the child’s cultural identity and spirituality. A survey tool—the Tonga Early Human Capability Index (TeHCl) survey—was developed and a baseline study was conducted in 2014. This found that a significant number of children at pre-primary age were not ready for school. There were weaknesses in pre-literacy, pre-numeracy and perseverance. Most did not go to preschool, highlighting issues of access. Many had no parent games and reading at home or stories at all and there was a lack of awareness on other factors that affect performance such as perseverance and approaches to learning.

In response, Tonga Government introduced innovative approaches to school readiness, employing a community approach targeting children and their families not already accessing early childhood education centres. The Community Play Based Activities (CPBA) program aimed to encourage early development through engaging parents/caregivers and family members that these young children spend most of their time with. It was low cost because the facilitation of these playgroups were parents, done on a voluntary basis. They were provided with a start-up kit which consisted of pre-school materials. An end-of-project survey using TeCHI was completed in 2017 and found significant improvements in parent engagement, pre-numeracy and pre-literacy skills of children.

The second holistic approach towards ECD was done in partnership with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Institute of Education (USP) and the Canada Fund. This was called the Health Series and was a collaboration to address NCDs and improve early literacy. Connected to healthy lifestyle initiatives, it mirrored Education’s desire to enforce health and well-being domains of their young children. The Health Series also reinforced Education’s language policy and emphasis on trying to strengthen and maintain the Tongan language. The program produced a set of 10 children’s books with healthy lifestyle messages. They were distributed to all 77 preschools (2414 children enrolled) throughout the four island groups of Tonga.
Hon. Sovaleni shared several lessons learned in the implementation of the two projects. Both projects were only able to reach 30 per cent of early-aged children and their families. It is clear that investing in families is pivotal and stronger support from all sectors is needed. Multi-sectoral approaches were essential, and they needed to focus on prevention rather than intervention.

Tonga’s goal for ECD going forward was to work in partnership, to ensure that every child is healthy, in body, mind and spirit. All should have access to quality education and quality life through a healthy, knowledgeable and sustainable network of parents, educators, communities and governments. There are plans to establish a national ECD taskforce with a 10-year strategic plan.
Country examples: Leave no child behind: Disability-inclusive ECD in Pacific communities

In their joint presentation, Mr. Setareki Macanawai, CEO, Pacific Disability Forum and Ms. Karen Heinicke-Motsch, Disability Inclusion Adviser, CBM Australia emphasized the need to understand the lived experiences of children and adults with disabilities, in the context of development and human rights commitments. They started by noting that 1 in 10 children in the Pacific has a disability yet they are hardly visible in ECD programmes. Children with disabilities are one of the most marginalized and excluded groups of children, for example, are four times more likely than non-disabled peers to experience violence. Data on children with disabilities is also very poor, with data rarely disaggregated by disability. The Pacific region has many commitments on disability, including the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Pacific Framework for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Ms Heinke-Motsch from Australia highlighted activities in support of children with disabilities in three countries: Vanuatu, PNG and Fiji. She said there was excellent work going on in this area in the region and we should be celebrating our successes.

In Vanuatu there was work on referring of children with disabilities for enrolment and with teachers for their successful inclusion in classes. There were play-based early interventions and a home visit service. Networks were being established with the Ministry of Education, parents, caregivers and information on human rights was provided. Community awareness was also provided through activities with the Vanuatu National Youth council and in cooperation with UNICEF.

CBM showed a video of children with disabilities in schools in PNG. A pilot program there had grown as was now reaching children with disabilities. There was also increasing coordination with disability service providers, churches, DPOs and regional/national governments. This expanding program in PNG was exciting and worth keeping an eye on, she said.

In Fiji the five pilot schools of Access to Quality Education each had an ECD program. With community awareness, children with disabilities were successfully transitioning to schools. The Frank Hilton Organization provided a range of interdisciplinary services for young children with disabilities, ensuring that there was support in homes and for families and parents, and on transition to schools.
CBM called for inclusive conference outcomes, including reinforce regional action via the various frameworks and commitments, to commit to taking collective action that strengthens disaggregated data, and to promote learning between Pacific Islands Countries. Ms. Heinke-Motsch provided Forum delegates with five key tips for inclusive ECD across all sectors.

- Understand children’s rights and the rights of children with disabilities as fundamental to early childhood development obligations.
- Know your population and children at risk within the population. To support this, we need disaggregation of data
- Know who is doing what in the early childhood and the disability services sectors (public and private)
- Make cross sectoral coordination a priority at local, provincial and national levels by budgeting for and attending coordination meetings and undertaking practical activities together.
- Work with the disability movement in coordination mechanisms and consult with parents of children with disabilities to improve ECD programs and support services.
**Groupwork**

Country groups were asked to convene to discuss their own challenges and solutions relating to key themes for Day 2 of the forum. Representatives of Samoa, FSM, Palau and Tokelau addressed the Forum with their feedback. All written feedback from the groups is provided in Annex 3: Group work feedback.

**Group discussion questions:**

Creating an enabling environment for comprehensive ECD service delivery

- What are the challenges with coordinating services for children in our country? How can they be overcome?
- What are 1-2 priority actions to improve coordinated and comprehensive ECD service delivery in our country and for the region?

Support parents, families and communities in providing nurturing care

- What are we currently doing to support parents in raising their children? Can any of these interventions be packaged together for better impact?
- How are we promoting community engagement on ECD? What can we be doing better?
- What are 1-2 priority actions to improve support to parents and community mobilization in our country and for the region?
Forum Highlights: Day 3
(Friday, 25 October 2019)
Plenary: Early investments in the human capital of the Pacific

Dr. Carol Dayo Obure, Health Economist, World Bank shared about the World Bank’s Human Capital Project, the reasons for investing in the early years to build human capital, and World Bank’s work in these areas in the Pacific. Dr. Obure cited the Human Capital Index, which measures the contribution of health and education to the wellbeing of individuals considering three main elements: child survival, school and health. No countries had a perfect score while most PICs were at around the medium and lower levels in the rankings. Poor outcomes in the Pacific were linked to low achievements on ECD in—health, nutrition and learning. Information for Fiji, Samoa, RMI and FSM was missing.

The benefits of investing in the early years were fundamental to building human capital, Dr Obure said. It would create a skilled workforce, improve education and health outcomes (reduces stunting, disease), raise Gross Domestic Product (GDP), support families and communities, and prevent violence and abuse. But building human capital is a long-term investment and needed to be through a whole-of-government approach.

For its part, the World Bank’s role on ECD and building human capital in the Pacific could be seen in the Pacific Early Age Readiness and Learning Program (PEARL) in Tonga, Tuvalu, Samoa, Kiribati and Solomon Islands Kiribati. This three-year package of interventions was carried out to improve school readiness and early literacy of children. Since then, the WB had backed the Early Childhood Development Project in RMI in 2019 with a USD13m grant. The project was championed by President HE Hilda Heine. The World Bank was looking forward to working with other partners such as UNICEF and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in this effort in RMI and elsewhere in the Pacific.

Question and answers
Vanuatu asked why the HCI only focused on schooling? What about pregnancy and reproductive health? Dr Obure answered that the World Bank focus was on what data was available.

Mr. Pablo Stansbery, UNICEF, asked what have Dr Obure had seen in terms of bundles of services that are most effective on the first 1000 days? Dr Obure did not have an immediate answer and offered to get back to Mr. Stansbery.

Kiribati Vice-President asked what were the key factors and institutional impediments in the way of the development of human capital in the region? In reply, Dr Obure said that with the HCI, WB had not dealt with those questions—it was not as part of this. But she thought that some of the impediments were the lack of multi-sectoral approaches and the lack of cohesiveness across sectors.
Country example: Investments in ECD in Samoa, Niue and RMI

Moderator: Mr. Stanley Gwavuya, Chief of Policy, Evidence and Social Protection, UNICEF Pacific

Panel: Hon. Sili Epa Tu’ioti, Minister of Finance, Samoa; Ms. Gaylene Tasmania, Director-General of Social Services, Ministry of Social Services, Niue; Mr. Gee Liong Bing, Assistant Commissioner, Ministry of Education, Republic of Marshall Islands

Samoa’s Minister of Finance, Hon. Tuoiti said he was inspired by the 2017 Forum and returned home from that meeting committed to making changes that would prioritise and improve ECD. An integrated approach was critical, he said, and Samoa was doing this. The Ministry of Education corporate plan now prioritised ECE including improving teacher and student performance. Budget changes so far include Tala 14.2m as a government grant for ECD programs—including Tala 1.1m for village school stationery and Tala 7.1m improving access and quality ECD education. Through shuffling of budget priorities, resources had been redirected. Samoa will continue to invest more resources to ECD, working closely with the Ministry for Education and Women to take a multi-sectoral approach immediately and for the long-term. Samoa had also contacted development partners to help in national efforts, including the World Bank and others. Meanwhile, Climate Change, NCDs and natural disasters might crowd the focus on ECD, but ECD must was very much a priority of development planning. “We are firmly committed to ECD—from Cabinet level through to the whole of government,” he said. In Samoa they had to keep challenging their current thinking and approach and keep learning from others to develop a Samoa model. Samoa will work with UNICEF and partners to ensure that the Samoa model is solid, he said.

Niue was just one island with less than 1000 people who were New Zealand citizens, Ms. Tasmania reminded the Forum. Government offers free education and health care for all citizens and could track ECD progress efficiently and respond effectively. Ms. Tasmania noted the difference between the 2017 Forum and current meeting was that this 2019 Forum was more representative of other agencies of government and stakeholders, and not just Education. She said that in 2014, Niue created the Ministry of Social Services as part of a Public Service transformation program which brought together Health, Education, Culture and Heritage, Justice and Land Survey and resulted in a synergizing of the sectors. After the 2017 Forum, Niue had opened its first ECE centre/unit (for seven months to four years of age) and parents were sending their children to the centre. Niue did not create an ECD taskforce but just expanded existing services as it did not have the human resources to create another mechanism—it was part of their core business. Their biggest challenge was the capacity of the workforce to provide the services and it was opened it up to volunteers who needed training. However, the political will for ECD was strong on Niue and they will continue to work with community and CSOs.
RMI had strong leadership on ECD and this was the key to progress on ECD there, Mr. Gee Leong Bing said. Thirty-five per cent children in RMI were stunted, he said. RMI’s President, HE Hilda Heine was very concerned about this and had approached the WB for their support. USD13m was now committed to ECD in RMI. With Cabinet support an ECD steering committee at the Secretary level was established, along with a multi-sectoral Technical Committee at the working level. ECD was a high priority of the RMI government, he said. He hoped development partners noticed and support this commitment. The priority for RMI going forward was to work more closely with partners and other actors to optimize resources and to minimize duplication.

Questions and answers

Vanuatu asked Hon. Tuioti for the proportion of the national budget in Samoa that goes to ECD. Hon. Tuioti replied that 60 per cent of the budget goes to health and education. There was a commitment to increase and fine-tune this, and to target ECD.
Dr. Michael Samson, Director of Research, Economic Policy Research Institute, said the Pacific region has reaped demographic dividends— but rising dependency ratios create important challenges that threaten economic stagnation, middle-income traps (has not happened in the Pacific) and falling living standards. Dependency ratios were falling slower in the Pacific region and this offered an opportunity for investment in human capital to better cope with the development demands of the coming centuries.

Dr. Samson cited research that concludes “investing in social protection, certainly when child-sensitive, is the most productive pathway to long-term economic prosperity,” with rates of return that contribute to social and economic goals. He talked about the cognitive capital of nations, emphasizing that this mostly develops in the antenatal and early childhood periods. Social protection, he argues, provides the most flexible and effective early childhood investment, building the cognitive capital that enables children to reach their full potential, while building the assets that today drive the wealth of nation.

Citing the example of Mauritius, Dr Samson showed how investment in social protection and ECD explained their economic miracle. Mauritius in the 1950s was comparable to PICTs and an integrated social policy enabled Mauritius to restructure its economy onto an inclusive high-growth path. Today, Mauritius is a global leader in early childhood investments, with among the lowest poverty rates in the world, and among the highest economic growth rates over the past decades.

Dr. Samson proceeded to describe ECD integration at three levels – policy, programmes and delivery. He explained that integration of programs in health, education and social welfare and finance working efficiently and effectively together generated better results. Dr. Samson presented a planning matrix for co-ordination of programs and objectives showing how siloed investments delivered less effective results over the longer term. Multi-pronged approaches including on nutrition, social protection, gender, livelihoods and infrastructure achieved much greater results. “Integrated systems work better,” he said. For example, through inter-sectoral co-operation we could get stunting down to zero he said. He demonstrated this through examples from different regions in Ethiopia which had siloed and integrated approaches.

Dr. Samson also explained the various financing options for ECD investments. One can be through re-allocation of existing spending, although this can be politically challenging because of entrenched interests. He recommended a re-allocation that can harmonise fragmented programmes. Another option can be through development partner support,
can catalyze other funding and programmes. Countries can also borrow money, although it is a politically risky option. Multi-lateral banks provide billion-dollar loans for social protection that can demonstrate ECD impacts. And the last option is through domestic revenue, including taxation, which is the most long-term and sustainable option.

Dr. Samson argues that single-sector approaches are not likely to be affordable, citing the example of public spending on nutrition that research shows is not enough to bring stunting rates to zero. However, cross-sectoral approaches, including nutrition, health, education, WASH, social protection, child protection, and other sectors, can succeed and are more affordable and cost-effective. Research has shown that cross-sectoral interventions have been able to reduce stunting rates to zero.

Concluding, Dr Samson shared three important messages:

- Early childhood development delivers children’s rights, builds strong and healthy families and promotes child wellbeing. It is the right thing to do.
- Smart early childhood investments, linking health, nutrition, education, social protection, child protection, water and sanitation, and other sectors, go further. They build the cognitive capital which today is the foundation of the wealth of nations, and particularly relevant for the economic challenges in the Pacific.
- Comprehensive and integrated approaches link sectors together to deliver complex interventions that generate synergies that yield complex outcomes, like improved nutrition. These impacts are affordable and cost-effective and strength inclusive social development and equitable economic growth.

Question and answers

Vanuatu asked how to provide for children with disabilities and help their parents avoid the associated stigma. Dr Samson said this was a good question which highlighted the importance of inclusive and integrated systems to cater for those with special needs.
Country examples: Child-Sensitive Social Protection in the Pacific

Moderator: Dr. Michael Samson, Director of Research, Economic Policy Research Institute
Panel: Mr. Rupeni Fakiaki, Director of Social Welfare, Fiji; Ms. Anne Herman, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Cook Islands; Ms. Corrina Ituaso-Lafai, Crown Counsel, Tuvalu

Dr. Samson asked each of the panelists to talk about social protection systems and programs and priorities in their countries.

Mr. Fakiaki said Fiji's social protection schemes go back to 1979 when they were first introduced for specific target group and then in 1990 with a care and protection allowance. Other schemes included those for bus fares, free education, food vouchers, rural programs and pregnant mothers' allowance—influenced and recommended by the World Bank and instituted by the Government. Administering agencies include the Ministries of Health and Education. Programs were targeted at children and single mothers and extended to grandparents.

Cook Islands has a social protection system in place since 1965, Ms Herman said. Social Protection was a top priority in the national budget as was universal child benefit, education and health care. There was unanimous support for ECD in Parliament, recognizing the vital link between social protection and economic development with impacts for labour productivity and lowering crime rates. The quadruple impacts of social protection were relieving the burden on the carer, i.e. less financial and emotional stress, domestic violence, fraud and sick leave. It was better for economic prosperity and better for overall citizenship. Future actions in Cook Islands needed to be more focused on coordination and working with wider range of stakeholders and partners.

Tuvalu has two ongoing programs, Ms Ituaso-Lafai said—an old persons pension scheme (70+); and monthly allowance for people with disabilities. There was a gratuity allowance for people over 80. Children have access to free health and education services and there was a small domestic violence fund. Social Protection programmes operate under a fragmented legal framework and there was a need for one legal framework so that sectors can work together and be more coordinated, she said. There was no counselling service for follow up, and the absence of a well-coordinated effort leads to challenges of not understanding roles and responsibilities across government, Ms Ituaso-Lafai said. Looking ahead, a baseline study on child protection conducted in 2019 will inform social protection programs with the community becoming more involved.
Questions and answers

Tuvalu said it was important to have better data on this issue, and to convince development partners of the need for assistance for investment in cognitive development. There has been a failure on the part of Government to gather good data on these issues to convince donors to support them.

Tuvalu raised a question on free healthcare versus medical insurance, asking the panel what they would recommend. The panel answered that universal access was important. How countries got there was dependent on their situation. Quality and accessibility were key in this and cost was less important.
Special session: Climate Change and ECD

Special Message: We Need Action!

Fiji’s well-known voice on climate change at the global level, Young Climate Activist Timoci Naulusala, addressed the Forum, urging government leaders to work together as a team to combat climate change.

A transcript of his speech is below:

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. Good morning and welcome. Thank you for being here with us today.

My name is Timoci. My friends call me Jim. I am here because climate change has had a major impact on my life and on the lives of the children and families in my country – Fiji.

I remember Cyclone Winston when it struck our nation two years ago. My family, brothers and sisters, stayed together in our home – listening as the winds howled and the rains poured. I have never heard anything like that. It was the loudest thing I have ever heard. I was very afraid. After the storm passed, it was very bad for my community and for us kids. I saw houses blown away. Farms were destroyed and crops were washed away. I know people who lost their family. My school was badly damaged. Books and school supplies were gone.

Today, things are still not right. We are not back to where we were before the cyclone. For all of us who live in island nations, we are already seeing, and feeling, and living, the consequences of a warming planet.

But I am not alone. Please raise your hand if you or someone you know has been affected by climate change. Climate change affects us all. We need everyone to understand that we must work as a team before it’s too late. Speak up, this is our time.

We have time to take action against climate change – but that time is nearly up. I am so worried about future generations and the lives of children in Fiji and the Pacific who will struggle to survive if we do not stop this problem. Future generations should live in a beautiful, clean planet.

I have a message for the adults and leaders: I think that some of you are trying your best to protect the planet for future generations, but you can do more. You shouldn’t just talk about it, you need to take real action. I like to say you need to walk the talk. AND you need to listen to us.

I also have a message for my fellow young people: We cannot give up and we have to stick together. We are stronger together and I know that if we keep pushing, we can change the world forever. We are children. We are young people. And we will not be ignored because it is our future and the future of our planet that is at stake.
Special Message: Investing in our Children’s future

Her Excellency Hilda Heine, President, Republic of the Marshall Islands addressed the Forum by video, telling delegates that efforts to promote ECD would not be successful if we do not link it with ongoing work building resilience to climate change. She shared how her government has taken significant steps in advancing many of the key priority actions contained in the Pasifika Call to Action, including a USD13 million multi-sectoral early years project supported by the World Bank that will support reproductive, maternal and newborn healthcare, child health and nutrition, social support to families with young children, and expanded access to early learning programs. She said that while there have been advances on ECD, there was a lot more to be done. She urged delegates to benefit from the shared ideas at the Forum and to collectively commit to actions that support our children, especially in the first 1000 days.

A transcript of her message is below:

Excellencies, distinguished guests, colleagues, friends, ladies and gentlemen. Iakwe and warm greetings from the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

It is a pleasure and honor to deliver a few remarks at this 2019 Pacific Early Childhood Development Forum. I wish to thank the organizers of this conference for the invitation. Unfortunately, I am unable to join you in person at this important conference, as I have other commitments. I do acknowledge the importance of our engagements as leaders in these regional events, so thank you again for this opportunity to address this forum.

Ladies and Gentlemen, our efforts to promote ECD will not be successful if they are not interwoven into our region’s focus on building resilience and response to the effects of climate change. At the recent Leaders Forum in Tuvalu, we acknowledged the centrality of health in the Leaders’ Vision for a Blue Pacific. The challenges we face in ensuring the health and well-being of our children will only be amplified by the impact of the climate crisis.

While climate change will increasingly impact everybody, children are disproportionately affected, especially those in disadvantaged backgrounds. Children are also most exposed to the impact of climate change due to their less developed physiology and immune systems, psychological vulnerabilities and specific needs.

Studies show that climate change will result in decreased nutritional value of staple crops, which in turn, contribute to stunting, anemia, and malnutrition in children. Droughts and flooding can also degrade food production, and this affect child who bear the greatest burden of hunger and malnutrition. As temperatures increase, together with water scarcity and air pollution, children become more exposed to water-borne diseases like dengue fever and diarrhea as well as dangerous respiratory conditions.

In short, climate change threatens children’s survival, development, nutrition, education and access to health care. We need to invest in children as part of national climate plans on mitigation and adaptation.
This forum celebrates where we are as a region since the endorsement of the 2017 Pasifika Call to Action on ECD. We in the Marshall Islands have taken significant steps in advancing in many of the key priority actions contained in this Call to Action.

In April 2019, my government made a significant investment in ECD – a $13 million multi-sectoral early years project supported by the World Bank that will support reproductive, maternal and newborn healthcare, child health and nutrition, social support to families with young children, and expanded access to early learning programs.

Even with this project, we also acknowledge that there is a lot more to be done. I have tasked the team from the Marshall Islands to bring home some concrete actions that the government and stakeholders can implement to create real change in early childhood development.

In conclusion ladies and gentlemen, I encourage all of you to use this momentous occasion to share ideas and experiences with each other, to collectively commit to even more impactful actions for our region and our countries, and to support each child’s earliest years, especially the first 1,000 days of life, so that they can be poised for lifelong well-being and success.

Marshallese belief in the concept of “ajiri in ibunini“ or children are precious gifts to be treasured, adored, valued and protected at all costs.

I hope this Forum starts from that premise and come up with recommendations to ensure that children are indeed treasured and protected at all costs. They are the future of our Blue Pacific.

_Kommol tata im jeramon nan aolep._
Plenary: Where do we begin? The fundamental role of ECD in the Pacific’s Climate Change Resilience and Adaptation

Dr Adrian Cerezo, Fellow, Zigler Center for Child Development and Social Policy, Yale University first explained the myriad of risks that climate change imposes on young children, including risks to food and nutrition which could lead to malnutrition and stunting. This in turn impacted on capacity to learn and in the long-term the prospects for employment and economic development. Displacement and forced migration increased the risk of toxic stress for the mother and the child. When severe, it increased the risk of changes in the brain, he said. It reduced the capacity of the body to fight disease and increased the risk of chronic disease. Changes in the patterns of infectious disease and vectors add stress to the young child’s system and adds costs and complications to the health systems of developing countries. Finally, he said there was the sense of despair and hopelessness about climate change and other environmental challenges.

Following from this, Dr. Cerezo explained how policies and programmes focused on ECD provide a pathway towards climate resilience and adaption capacity. He noted how ECD initiatives contribute to the fulfillment of SDGs, including SGD 13 on Climate Action. We begin with ECD, he notes, saying that programmes in the early years create resilient young children that will grow up to become resilient and adaptable adults.

Ms. Teaa Tira, Strategic Program for Climate Resilience (SPCR) Secretariat Coordinator, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, talked about regional initiatives to build climate resilience in the Pacific, as a means of securing the future of our children. Ms. Tira first shared the Framework for Resilient Development (FRDP) in the Pacific (2017-2030), with the aim to change and improve the way we build resilience across the region and grounding the work on climate change and disaster risk in ‘development’ using an inclusive approach from a wide range of interests, viewpoints and aspirations. She emphasized that climate change is not a sector in itself, making leaderships, partnerships, and collective efforts as one regional village critical.
Ms. Tira further shared that the lead implementation mechanism for the FRDP was the Pacific Resilience Partnership, drawing on the energy and enthusiasm of various stakeholders. There is an increasing momentum and enthusiasm at the regional level to ensure that the actions through these regional policy instruments and mechanisms are done so in a coordinated manner to more effectively support actions at the national level.

Ms. Tira also explained that under the Boe Declaration for regional security, Pacific Leaders have recognized the expanded concept of security beyond traditional security issues. There are various technical working groups, including those on human mobility, disaster risk finance, policy making and legislation, and information and knowledge management. Ms. Tira shared that there is potential for even more collaborations and working groups that could support priorities and issues raised at the ECD Forum.
Plenary: Monitoring ECD: What matters and how do we monitor?

Dr Pia Britto, Global Senior Adviser on ECD, UNICEF, said that in the end, it will be the results that speak. She framed the presentation by first giving an overview of the levels of measurement, as below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Population level SDG 4.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>Responsive Caregiving (MICS: Quality of Care Indicators)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Output</td>
<td>National Policy Frameworks (HMIS/EMIS: Coverage and Quality Indicators)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inputs</td>
<td>Investment Benchmarks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the impact level, Dr. Britto explained Target 4.2 in the SDG which aims to ensure that “by 2030, all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education. She pointed out 4.2.1 as an indicator underneath this target, looking at “proportion of children under 5 years who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being.” UNICEF is the custodian agency for SDG 4.2.1, helping countries to strengthen reporting mechanisms, collating, computing aggregates and databases. Measurement tools include the Early Childhood Development Index (ECDI), captured by the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (now being completed by many PICTs). ECDI is one of the first population-based measures of ECD available at an internationally comparative level. UNICEF is also working on a Global Scale of Early Development, which would be a new metrics for 0-3 years old. Measuring across ministries and sectors was difficult, she said, but meanwhile support was forthcoming from the G20 which had shone a spotlight on ECD.

At the outcome level, Dr. Britto focused on responsive caregiving and cited SDG 4.2.3, a thematic indicator, which looks at the “percentage of children aged 24-59 months with whom an adult has engaged in four or more activities to provide early stimulation and responsive care in the past three days.”

At the output level, ECD monitoring should align with National Policy Frameworks for ECD. Dr. Britto explains that many countries have sectoral indicators relevant to ECD that are designed to take account of their national contexts, corresponding to their sectoral systems, plans and policy agendas. Relevant ECD sectors such as health and education for example, routinely collect (or can collect) indicators at either national or sub-national levels that can provide a broader basis for national accountability in ECD. Program implementation indicators, including quality of services, which are associated with specific child outcomes are also sometimes included in service data platforms at the national level. But countries need to improve data collection and availability across relevant ministries to support better programming and accountability.
In conclusion, Dr. Britto encouraged Pacific countries to take advantage of these M&E tools now available. Dr. Britto said the MDG era had developed the measurement tools, but with SDGs we finally have the chance to measure ECD. We are the first generation with the ability and mandate to do this and it was an exciting time to monitor via target 4 and specifically, 4.2.1. She asked delegates to make sure 4.2.1 was part of their national monitoring. “Fix 4.2.1 in your dreams;” she said. “Make your children proud of you as the first to be tracking this.” through these regional policy instruments and mechanisms are done so in a coordinated manner to more effectively support actions at the national level.

Questions and answers

Ivan Amezquita of UNICEF asked Dr Britto about the extent of participatory monitoring for ECD. Dr. Britto explained that the SDG just gave one number, but if we want to find out how we got there we do need to undertake participatory monitoring. Especially when measured at municipality level, comprehensive data was very helpful in determining what services are needed and where.
Plenary: Data on ECD in the Pacific

Mr. Stanley Gwavuya, Chief of Policy, Evidence and Social Protection, UNICEF Pacific reflected on what the delegates have learned so far about what a developing child needs. He said the child’s development results from interactions with the environment. We have learned that a developing brain needs multiple inputs – health, nurturing care, protection, and enrichment. By incorporating these multiple inputs into our early childhood development efforts, we can foster the developmental potential of young children. Mr. Gwavuya added that the nurturing care framework summarizes the factors at home and other support services that are key to child development. Monitoring these interrelated areas of health, nutrition, responsive care giving, security and safety as well as early learning will give an indication of child’s environment which contributes to a child’s own development.

These input indicators fed in to UNICEF’s Early Childhood Development Index (ECDI). The ECDI was mainly collected through Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), which UNICEF assists countries in collecting and analyzing for monitoring the situation of children and women. This international household survey system was adopted by Pacific Statistics Methods Board in May 2018. It could collect up to 33 SDG indications (25 Pacific relevant PSDI), was nationally and regionally relevant and globally comparable.


Another instrument to monitor ECD in the Pacific is the Early Human Capability Index (EHCI), which was developed by the World Bank for an ECED impact evaluation in Tonga and captures capabilities and delays in young children’s development (uses a census approach for every 3-6-year-old nationally). It is designed to help facilitate population monitoring, policy and programme evaluation, and prediction of future capabilities. ECHI was used in Tonga (2014/2017), Tuvalu (2015), Samoa (2016) and Kiribati (2017).
Mr. Gwavuya then presented various outcome level indicators and their corresponding population data sources, as per the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prevalence of stunting*,#</td>
<td>DHS/MICS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevalence of malnutrition#</td>
<td>DHS/MICS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under-five mortality*,#</td>
<td>DHS/MICS/Census</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neonatal mortality*,#</td>
<td>DHS/MICS/Census</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child poverty#</td>
<td>DHS/MICS/HIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeracy and literacy in grades 2/3#</td>
<td>MICS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent discipline</td>
<td>MICS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other Pacific frameworks using indicator: #Pacific Sustainable Development indicators, *Health Islands Monitoring framework, ^Pacific Regional Education Framework

Support and services for ECD can also be monitored with existing monitoring frameworks in the Pacific, according to Mr. Gwavuya. He also outlined these indicators and population data sources across health, nutrition, early learning, responsive caregiving and security and safety services/programmes.

Questions and answers

Dr Gwavuya was asked whether UNICEF uses Washington Group questions on disability? This was in progress, he said.

PNG asked why they were not mentioned in the data presentation. It was mentioned by implication, was the reply. Dr Gwavuya had only mentioned countries that had participated in MICS.

Tokelau questioned how UNICEF ECD monitoring/data collection process related to SPC and WHO data collection processes which all PICTs engage in. He looked forward to MICS being conducted in Tokelau. Mr. Gwavuya responded that MICS was implemented in collaboration with SPC.

Pablo Stansbery of UNICEF said ECD is undergoing the transition from advocacy to one that is driven by data. He reiterated the support of UNICEF to assist Pacific countries with regional and country level monitoring of ECD. The data was very important to tell the story, he said. “When the villages own the data, that’s when we are going to see change.”
Plenary: Monitoring Framework for Pasifika Call to Action on ECD

Ms. Sherri Le Mottee, ECD Specialist Consultant, UNICEF said monitoring would increase accountability at multiple levels and support evidence-led action to inform policy decisions and national plans. It would enable program improvements to be made based on what works and increase resource flows by identifying what the costs area and where more money/resources were needed.

Ms. Le Motee explained that the PRC4ECD has the mandate to support implementation of the nine action points, monitor progress and report every two years. She noted that Action 8 of the PCA calls for the development, strengthening and use of comprehensive data management, monitoring and assessment systems for informed decision-making on ECD at country and regional levels.

In mapping what needs to be monitored across the nine action points of the PCA, Ms. Le Mottee presented the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action 1</td>
<td>An enabling environment: well developed multi-sectoral, whole-of-government policy and legal framework guides the implementation of ECD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 2</td>
<td>ECD is fully integrated into NDPs as a whole-of-government priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 3</td>
<td>The systems ‘architecture’ of a whole-of-government approach to ECD is clearly mapped out including roles and responsibilities of each ministry, lead agency, mechanisms for collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 4</td>
<td>ECD is prioritised at budgetary with gradual growth in allocations toward a goal of 2.7% (WB) of GDP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 5</td>
<td>Government and non-governmental organisations have clearly defined mechanism for collaboration and partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 6</td>
<td>A fit for purpose, professional and remunerated ECD workforce able to deliver a whole-of-government program + universalise access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 7</td>
<td>Parents, community and other stakeholder understand the importance of ECD, demand for services is high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 8</td>
<td>A robust monitoring and reporting system informs ECD decisions and improvements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 9</td>
<td>Development partner support and investments are guided by a harmonised agenda at country and regional level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ms. Le Motte presented several steps that lead to better ECD programme planning, resourcing and implementation. These include at the base 1) agree on multi-sectoral whole-of-government workplan and indicators, 2) build national capacity and systems, 3) collect data on progress at country level, 4) collage at regional level and disseminate strategically, 5) make evidence-led improvements and strengthening of ECD.
Celebrating CRC30

According to Ms. Cate Heinrich, Chief of Communications, UNICEF Pacific, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which was celebrating its 30th year of ratification in 2019, was central to ECD and what the Forum had discussed over the past three days. It captures children's basic rights, from the beginning of life, and all countries represented in the room had ratified the convention.

Ms. Heinrich shared that thirty years ago, world leaders made a promise to every child to promote and protect their rights by adopting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – an international agreement on childhood. The Convention became the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history and helped transform children's lives. Governments have taken actions to ensure more children survive, develop and have decisions taken in their best interests, fewer suffer discrimination and more can participate in their societies. But not every child enjoys childhood. Millions still suffer violations of their rights when they are denied adequate healthcare, nutrition, education and protection from violence, among others.

Ms. Heinrich further explained that thirty years on, child rights have not changed - they have no expiry date. But childhood has changed. In 1989, there was no worldwide web, climate change was not fully understood and there were fewer protracted conflicts displacing populations. The rise of digital technology, environmental changes and mass migration are creating new threats, and new opportunities, for children to realise their rights. We must work together to seize those opportunities and identify solutions to old and new threats standing in the way of the realisation of child rights.

Ms. Heinrich noted that today, it is children who see these new challenges and opportunities most clearly. Young people are speaking out for their right to an education, demanding an end to discrimination, marching against violence in schools, striking for action on climate change, campaigning for digital reform and calling on leaders to protect their future. Children are telling us, loud and clear, it is time for every child, to have every right. Children are standing up for their rights.

Ms. Heinrich informed the Forum that on 20 November there would be a special UN General Assembly meeting at which all countries who re-committed to the CRC would be listed. Solomon Islands and Vanuatu had already re-committed with a CRC 30 Global Pledge on 30th anniversary and she invited other countries to do the same. The CRC30 Global Pledge is a voluntary statement of renewed commitment to the full implementation of the CRC.

Leading up to 20 November, the region will be celebrating World Children's Day. Celebrations will take place around the Pacific, including a Paint Samoa Blue event, the U-Report in Kiribati national launch to coincide with national youth summit organized by outer island youth, national youth summit in Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). Ms. Heinrich invited countries to celebrate this important day, which UNICEF would be happy to support.
Presentation and deliberation of 2019 Pacific ECD Forum Outcomes/Action Points

Ms. Danielle Cochrane, Secretary of Education of Cook Islands and ECD Taskforce Member, presented the outcomes document which had been circulated to delegates and facilitated a discussion on whether it captured the main agreements reached at this forum. The delegates provided feedback to the document, after which it was revised by the ECD Task Force and disseminated to all delegates. This Outcomes Statement is found in the first section of this report.
Closing Address by Fiji Government

Hon. Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, Speaker of Parliament of the Republic of Fiji, congratulated UNICEF for successfully organizing the Forum and acknowledged the support of the New Zealand government and the close collaboration with regional partners. He also congratulated participants for their work for ECD and recognised the establishment of the Pacific Regional Council on Early Childhood Development to take on the regional leadership, advocacy, and multi-sectoral support for ECD. He was impressed to hear of the concrete outcomes of the Forum and hoped participants will return home with renewed and inspired commitment to ECD.

A transcript of the speech follows:


On behalf of the Government of Fiji, it is indeed an honour and great pleasure to give the closing remarks for this three-day forum on early childhood development. As the host country of this important forum, I hope that we have been able to extend to each one of you, especially the visitors to our shores the customary Fijian warmth and hospitality during your stay here in Nadi.

I would like to congratulate UNICEF for successfully organizing this forum. In this connection I also acknowledge the ready support of the New Zealand government and the close collaboration with regional partners.

Outcomes of the forum
I would also like to extend my hearty congratulations to every participant of this forum, for the work that you have done in these past days learning about the recent developments on ECD from renowned experts and Pacific colleagues, giving critical input to the issues that affect our children and their families, and openly engaging with each other to determine an even more ambitious agenda to realize the full potential of every child in the Pacific.

Together you have reached across ministerial and sectoral lines to think more strategical-ly about how we can increase our investments to better support the development of our youngest citizens in the Pacific. Specifically, you have established a high-level multi-sectoral body – the Pacific Regional Council on Early Childhood Development- to take on the regional leadership, advocacy, and support for ECD. Appropriately comprised of the Ministers and
Permanent Secretaries from the ministries of education, finance, health and social welfare, of each country the PRC4ECD is poised to fast track our work on ECD. I sincerely hope that you will continue to engage with the PRC4ECD and to steer it with care to be truly responsive to the deliberate efforts of your very own country on ECD.

I am very impressed to hear of the concrete outcomes of this forum – the set of priority actions that you have identified throughout the forum sessions. This spans actions on family friendly policies, multi-sectoral coordination, comprehensive ECD service delivery, parent and community empowerment, improved investments and resourcing, and quality monitoring of ECD. I am also equally impressed to hear of the robust discussions on the triple burden of malnutrition in the Pacific and to know that you also discussed the linkages between climate change and ECD and the imperative to marry these two regional priorities.

Moving forward on ECD
The children of the Pacific- our children- they do not need words; they need actions from us, their government leaders. The success of this forum will ultimately rest on our fulfilment of the priority actions as clearly outlined in this forum.

Starting tomorrow, you will be making your way back to your countries. I hope that by attending this forum, you will feel rejuvenated and you will go back with renewed and inspired commitment to ECD. And that soon after, you will start to accelerate national plans that support the success of our youngest citizens, including increasing financial investments in ECD.

Despite the progress we have had- from that first multi-sectoral ECD conference in 2017 – the work is far from over. In fact, we should all be rolling up our sleeves for the even more difficult work ahead.

There is no disputing that a thriving human capital is vital to securing the prosperity of our nations. What this forum has highlighted is that this human capital is nurtured best during the early years. The future success, health and well-being of every child is determined in a large part before he or she turns eight years old, when they are under close caring parental influence. So let us get that right and working. Getting things right the first time is easier and more effective than trying to fix them later. This is why ECD investments are one of the most cost-effective investments countries can make and must make.

At this juncture I would like to point out that for Fiji the guidelines are aptly and clearly laid out in the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji, Chapter 2 under the content heading Bill of Rights, Section 41 - Rights of Children

“Every child has the right to be registered at or soon after birth, and to have a name and nationality; to basic nutrition, clothing, shelter, sanitation and health care; to family care, protection and guidance, which includes the equal responsibility of the child’s parents to provide for the child whether or not the parents are, or have ever been, married to each other; and whether or not the parents are living together, have lived together, or are separated; to be protected from abuse, neglect, harmful cultural practices, any form of violence, inhumane treatment and punishment, and hazardous or exploitative labour, and not to be detained, ex-
cept as a measure of last resort, and when detained, to be held only for such period of time as is necessary; and separate from adults, and in conditions that take account of the child’s sex and age. The best interest of a child are the primary consideration in every matter concerning the child.”

So for us in Fiji the Rights of Children are already catered for but we have to all work together closely to ensure that these rights are fully realised.

I call on all of us here today to continue to cooperate with each other and to hold each other accountable to the agreements we have made at this forum. The momentum for ECD in the region has been steadily growing. We should not let this dissipate and instead support the acceleration of progress, in line with the global development charter, our regional frameworks in the Pacific, and our own national development plans. I look forward to the support of UNICEF and other development partners to help move our ambitious plan for ECD in the pacific.

Concluding Remarks
Again, I congratulate all of you for your active participation at this forum. I extend my best wishes as you move forward with the task of strengthening services and programmes for young children and their families. I trust that we will remain supportive of each other as Pacific brothers and sisters. In appreciation, I invite all of you for a Fijian-themed dinner tonight hosted by the Fiji government.

Farewell and Thank you by UNICEF

UNICEF Pacific Representative, Mr. Sheldon Yett, thanked delegates for their participation and their commitment to ECD. It was clear, he said, that the Pacific region was much further ahead than other areas of the world and there was much to learn from the region. He thanked those who had made the Forum possible—the Leaders, the Governments of New Zealand and Fiji, PIFS and the UNICEF organizing team. He urged participants to continue the important work of change in their countries. “If we change the beginning of the story, we change the whole story,” he said.
Annex
Annex 1: Programme of the 2019 Pacific Early Childhood Development (ECD) Forum Implementing Pasifika Call to Action on NCD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Speaker/organization</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08:30-09:00</td>
<td>Welcome Ceremony</td>
<td>Master-of-Ceremonies: Mrs. Bernadette Rounds Ganilau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09:00-09:10</td>
<td>Welcome Remarks by UNICEF</td>
<td>Mr. Sheldon Yett, Representative, UNICEF Pacific &amp; Ms. Henrietta Fore, Executive Director, UNICEF (video-recorded)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09:10-09:20</td>
<td>Remarks by Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS)</td>
<td>Dame Meg Taylor, Secretary-General, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09:20-09:40</td>
<td>Special Message: Supporting Children’s Well-being</td>
<td>His Excellency Jonathan Andrew Curr, New Zealand High Commissioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09:40-10:00</td>
<td>Official Opening: Children as the Foundation of Sustainable Development in the Pacific</td>
<td>Hon. Inia Batikoto Seruiratu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Fiji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00-10:05</td>
<td>Special ECD Video: Invest in Me</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:05-10:25</td>
<td>Keynote Address: Prioritizing a Holistic Agenda for Young Children</td>
<td>Honourable Dr. Teuesa Toatu, Vice-President of Kiribati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:25-10:30</td>
<td>Remarks by the World Bank</td>
<td>Ms. Annette Dixon, Vice-President for Human Development, World Bank (video-recorded)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30-10:50</td>
<td>Plenary Session: Realising a Holistic Agenda for Children: Policies and Systems that Support a Whole-of-government Approach to ECD</td>
<td>Dr. Pia Britto, Global Senior Adviser on ECD, UNICEF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:50-11:10</td>
<td>Group Photo-taking</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:10-11:30</td>
<td>Coffee and Tea Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:30-12:30</td>
<td>Officials Forum: Final deliberation on draft Terms of Reference of the Pacific Regional Council for ECD (PRC4ECD)</td>
<td>Moderator: Ms. Danielle Cochrane, Permanent Secretary of Education, Cook Islands/ECD Task Force Member</td>
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(This session is a culmination of consultations with Pacific countries and territories. Any final recommendations to the document will be considered by the ECD Task Force and finalized over lunch in preparation for the Ministerial Roundtable.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12:30-13:30</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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</table>

Ministerial Roundtable (for Ministers and ECD Task Force team) | Concurrent Session: Family Friendly Policies (for Officials and other participants)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Participants</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13:30-14:30</td>
<td>Ministerial Roundtable: Endorsement of draft <em>Terms of Reference of the Pacific Regional Council for ECD (PRC4ECD)</em></td>
<td>Dr. Pia Britto, Global Senior Adviser on ECD, UNICEF</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Presenter: Ms. Danielle Cochrane, Secretary of Education, Cook Islands/ECD Task Force Member</td>
<td>Ms. Jennifer Poole, Permanent Secretary for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, Fiji</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roundtable Chair: Hon. Dr. Ifereimi Waqainabete, Fiji Minister for Health and Medical Services</td>
<td>Ms. Luli Ka fusimalohi, Program Coordinator, Gender Business Group, International Finance Corporation (IFC), World Bank Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:30-15:00</td>
<td>Coffee and Tea Break</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:00-15:10</td>
<td>Plenary: Announcement of Ministerial Decision on <em>Terms of Reference of PRC4ECD</em></td>
<td>Hon. Dr. Ifereimi Waqainabete, Fiji Minister for Health and Medical Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>15:10-16:00</td>
<td>Group Discussions to identify Steering Committee Members</td>
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</table>

Special Session: The Triple Burden of Malnutrition in Young Children of the Pacific

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16:00-17:00</td>
<td>Plenary Session: Addressing the Triple Burden of Malnutrition in the Pacific * followed by Q&amp;A</td>
<td>Ms. Wendy Erasmus, Chief of Health and Nutrition, UNICEF Pacific</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Dr. Wendy Snowdon, Team Coordinator, World Health Organization (WHO)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ms. Christiane Nedert, Regional Adviser for Nutrition, UNICEF East Asia and the Pacific (EAPRO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17:00-17:15</td>
<td>Plenary Address: Promoting Healthy Eating in Pacific Homes</td>
<td>Mr. Robert Oliver, Celebrity Chef and Host of Pacific Island Food Revolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17:15-19:00</td>
<td>Cocktail hosted by UNICEF and Special Screening of Pacific Island Food Revolution’s Episode on “Food for the First 1,000 Days”</td>
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</table>

Day 2

Days 2 and 3 will focus on the strategic actions of the Pasifika Call to Action for ECD, with a view to accelerating its implementation. The objectives for these sessions are to:
- Strengthen cross sector collaboration to enable the achievement of a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach to ECD
- Agree on key priority actions and recommendations on implementation of Pasifika Call to Action on ECD at country and regional level, including monitoring status of ECD

Opening session: Setting the scene – the Status of ECD in the Pacific Islands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08:30-08:50</td>
<td>Special Message: <em>ECD Investments in the Pacific</em></td>
<td>Honourable Dr. Pohiva Tu’Tonetoa, Prime Minister of Tonga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:50-09:00</td>
<td>Recap of Day 1</td>
<td>Master-of-Ceremonies: Mrs. Bernadette Rounds Ga’nilau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09:00-09:05</td>
<td>Video Presentation: ECD in the Pacific</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09:05-09:20</td>
<td>Plenary Session: Implementing the Pasifika Call to Action on ECD: Presentation of the guidance document on implementation and monitoring</td>
<td>Dr. Nemai Bainivalu, Undersecretary, Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Solomon Islands/ECD Task Force Member</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Strategic Action 1: Create an enabling environment for comprehensive ECD service delivery (Action points 1, 2, 3 & 5 of Pasifika Call to Action).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session/Event</th>
<th>Presenter/Leader</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 09:30-09:50   | Plenary Session: *Creating an enabling environment for comprehensive ECD service delivery*  
* followed by Q&A | Dr. Pia Britto, Global Senior Adviser on ECD, UNICEF                          |
| 09:50-10:30   | Country Examples: *Coordinating an ECD plan of action across agencies*  
* followed by Q&A | Moderator: Mr. Pablo Stansbery, Regional Adviser for ECD, UNICEF EAPRO          
Panellists:  
- Hon. Ginson Saoru, Governor of Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea  
- Ms. Bwakura Metutera Timeon, Secretary, Ministry of Education, Kiribati  
- Ms. Molly Helkana, National ECD Adviser, Republic of Marshall Islands |
| 10:30-11:15   | Country Examples: *Child Protection in the Early Years*  
* followed by Q&A | Moderator: Ms. Brigitte Sonnios, Chief Child Protection, UNICEF Pacific         
Presenter: Dr. Nemia Bainivalu, Under-Secretary, Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Solomon Islands  
Panellists:  
- Ms. Daisy Korina, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Women, Youth, Sport and Social Affairs, Kiribati  
- Mr. Horacio Cook, Director, Child Protection Directorate, Ministry of Justice, Nauru  
- Ms. Ela Tukutukulevu, Assistant Director, Child Services Unit, Social Welfare Division, Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, Fiji |
| 11:15-11:30   | Coffee and Tea Break                                                          |                                                                                 |
| 11:30-11:50   | Country Example: *Promoting Early Learning in Solomon Islands*  
* followed by Q&A | Mr. Franco Rodie, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, Solomon Islands |
| 11:50-12:10   | Country Example: *Marunung Atoei: A healthy start, a thriving child in Kiribati*  
* followed by Q&A | Ms. Tina Raj, Acting Officer-in-Charge, Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Kiribati |
| 12:10-12:40   | Groupwork (per country)  
- What are the challenges with coordinating services for children in our country?  
- How can they be overcome?  
- What are 1-2 priority actions to improve coordinated and comprehensive ECD service delivery in our country and for the region? |                                                                                 |
<p>| 12:40-01:00   | Plenary and group feedback                                                     |                                                                                 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Speaker/Organisation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13:00-14:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14:00-14:20</td>
<td>Plenary Session: <em>It Takes A Village to Raise a Child – Building on the Nurturing Care Framework</em></td>
<td>Mr. Pablo Stensberg, Regional Adviser for ECD, UNICEF EAPRO</td>
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<td>* followed by Q&amp;A</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* followed by Q&amp;A</td>
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<tr>
<td>14:40-15:00</td>
<td>Country Example: <em>Community-based early learning in Tonga</em></td>
<td>Hon. Siaosi 'Ofakivahafolau Sovaleni, Tonga Minister of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* followed by Q&amp;A</td>
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<tr>
<td>15:00-15:30</td>
<td>Country Examples: Leave no child behind: Disability-inclusive ECD in Pacific communities</td>
<td>Mr. Setareki Macanawai, CEO, Pacific Disability Forum &amp; Ms. Karen Heinicke-Motsch, Disability Inclusion Adviser, CBM Australia</td>
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<td></td>
<td>* followed by Q&amp;A</td>
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<tr>
<td>15:30-15:45</td>
<td>Coffee and Tea Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>15:45-16:15</td>
<td>Groupwork (per country)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What are we currently doing to support parents in raising their children? Can any of these interventions be packaged together for better impact?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• How are we promoting community engagement on ECD? What can we be doing better?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• What are 1-2 priority actions to improve support to parents and community mobilization in our country and for the region?</td>
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<tr>
<td>16:15-16:45</td>
<td>Plenary and group feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:45-17:00</td>
<td>Celebrating CRC30: <em>ECD gives children their basic rights, from the beginning of life</em></td>
<td>Ms. Cate Heinrich, Chief of Communications, UNICEF Pacific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17:00-17:15</td>
<td>Recap of Day 2</td>
<td>Master-of-Ceremonies: Mrs. Bernadette Rounds Ganilau</td>
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**Day 3**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Recap of Day 1</td>
<td>Master-of-Ceremonies: Mrs. Bernadette Rounds Ganilau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:45-09:05</td>
<td>Plenary Session: <em>Early Investments in the Human Capital of the Pacific</em></td>
<td>Dr. Carol Dayo Obure, Health Economist, World Bank</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* followed by Q&amp;A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09:05-09:45</td>
<td>Country Example: <em>Investments in ECD in Samoa and Niue</em></td>
<td>Moderator: Mr. Stanley Gwamuya, Chief of Policy, Evidence and Social Protection, UNICEF Pacific</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* followed by Q&amp;A</td>
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**Strategic Action 3: Improve investments in ECD (Action points 4 & 9 of Pasifika Call to Action)**

<table>
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<td>Dr. Carol Dayo Obure, Health Economist, World Bank</td>
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<td>09:05-09:45</td>
<td>Country Example: <em>Investments in ECD in Samoa and Niue</em></td>
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<td>* followed by Q&amp;A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Session/Activity</td>
<td>Speaker/Contact Person</td>
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<tr>
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<td>* followed by Q&amp;A</td>
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<td>Panelists:</td>
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<td>- Mr. Rugeni Fakiaki, Director of Social Welfare, Fiji</td>
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<td>- Ms. Anne Herman, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Cook Islands</td>
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<td>- Ms. Corrina Iuaso-Lafai, Crown Counsel, Tuvalu</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:50-11:10</td>
<td>Coffee and tea break</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:10-11:30</td>
<td>Special Message: <em>We Need Action!</em></td>
<td>Timoci Naulusala, Young Climate Activist</td>
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<td>11:30-11:40</td>
<td>Special Message: <em>Investing in our Children’s Future</em></td>
<td>Her Excellency Hilda Heine, President, Republic of the Marshall Islands (video-recorded)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:40-12:40</td>
<td>Plenary Session: <em>Where do We Begin? The Fundamental Role of ECD in the Pacific’s Climate Change Resilience and Adaptation</em></td>
<td>Dr. Adrian Cerezo, Fellow, Ziegler Center for Child Development and Social Policy, Yale University &amp; Ms. Tea Teva, Strategic Program for Climate Resilience (SPCR) Secretariat Coordinator, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat</td>
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<td>12:40-13:40</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<td>13:40-14:10</td>
<td>Plenary Session: <em>Monitoring ECD: What matters and how do we monitor?</em></td>
<td>Dr. Pia Britto, Global Senior Adviser on ECD, UNICEF</td>
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<td>14:10-14:40</td>
<td>Plenary Session: <em>Data on ECD in the Pacific</em></td>
<td>Mr. Stanley Gwavuya, Chief of Policy, Evidence and Social Protection, UNICEF Pacific</td>
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<td>14:40-15:00</td>
<td>Plenary Session: <em>Monitoring Framework for Pasifika Call to Action on ECD</em></td>
<td>Ms. Sherri LeMotte, ECD Specialist Consultant, UNICEF</td>
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<td>15:00-15:15</td>
<td>Celebrating CRC30: ECD gives children their basic rights, from the beginning of life</td>
<td>Ms. Cate Heinrich, Chief of Communications, UNICEF Pacific</td>
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<td>15:15-15:45</td>
<td>Coffee and Tea Break</td>
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<td>15:45-17:00</td>
<td>Presentation and deliberation of 2019 Pacific ECD Forum Outcomes/Action Points</td>
<td>UNICEF</td>
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<td>Closing Ceremony</td>
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<td>17:00-17:20</td>
<td>Closing Address</td>
<td>Hon. Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, Speaker of Parliament, Republic of Fiji</td>
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<td>17:20-17:30</td>
<td>Farewell and Thank you</td>
<td>Mr. Sheldon Yett, Representative, UNICEF Pacific</td>
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<td>7:00pm-onwards</td>
<td>Farewell Dinner (Hosted by Government of Republic of Fiji)</td>
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Annex 2: Groupwork Outcomes on Priority Actions for ECD

1. Samoa

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<tr>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>How to Overcome</th>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of a common understanding, significance and implications of what ECD is and what it stands for</td>
<td>People need to understand the overview so that sectors can link into it – what is ECD? What does it look like? ECD begins 1000 days from the date of conception through to 2 years after birth – once 2 years old reached, it becomes irreversible</td>
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<td>People do not connect the wellbeing of the mother and baby and the environment – this is critical as it dictates the potential of what a child can reach</td>
<td>Training and awareness</td>
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<td>Absence of a national coordinating body</td>
<td>Political will and understanding to endorse the setting up of a national coordinating body (either a Task Force or a Steering Committees, representing the relevant sectors) together with the appropriate funding support</td>
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<td>Difference in sector priorities.</td>
<td>Commonality of sectors conviction of the significance of ECD</td>
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WHAT ARE 1-2 PRIORITY ACTIONS TO IMPROVE COORDINATED AND COMPREHENSIVE ECD SERVICE DELIVERY IN OUR COUNTRY AND FOR THE REGION?

- Endorsement by Cabinet of the Set-Up of an ECD Coordinating Body
- Mapping all activities from different sectors informed by the 5-points module of the Framework (Good Health; Adequate Nutrition; Responsive Caregiving; Security and Safety; Opportunity for Early Learning)

WHAT ARE WE CURRENTLY DOING TO SUPPORT PARENTS IN RAISING THEIR CHILDREN? CAN ANY OF THESE INTERVENTIONS BE PACKAGED TOGETHER FOR BETTER IMPACT?

- Legislating and establishing ECE has been done
- Existing policies e.g. In progress of completing child protection policy; paternity and maternity leaves; breastfeeding and nursery in workplaces
- Currently have district development plans – encouraging engagement and participation of communities
- Primary healthcare programmes (PEN FAASAMOA)
- Village Women Committees and Village Councils

**These can be packaged together through the National Coordinating Body**
2. FSM

What are 1-2 priority actions to improve support to parents and community mobilization in our country and for the region?

- Education outreach programs
- Include parents and community support into policy framework

What are the challenges with coordinating services for children in our country? How can they be overcome?

- No legislation that mandates children under 6 to be in school
- Introduce legislation- Advocacy campaign to heads of government and get buy in
- Limited Resources (human and financial)
- Request and seek additional funding
- Specialized capacity building
- Weak Coordination mechanism
- ECD policy framework development

What are 1-2 priority actions to improve coordinated and comprehensive ECD service delivery in our country and for the region?

- Meet the leadership of the nation (president)
- Convene a FSM Multi-sectoral ECD forum

What are we currently doing to support parents in raising their children? Can any of these interventions be packaged together for better impact?

- Pre-natal and post-natal care visits
- Well child visits
- Immunization visits
- Child Find
- Home visits for children with special needs
- Interventions can be packages with health and education but needs to be spelled out in a policy framework

How are we promoting community engagement on ECD? What can we be doing better?

- Parents Policy Council in the communities
- Parents literacy week
- Coordination between sectors during community visits

What are 1-2 priority actions to improve support to parents and community mobilization in our country and for the region?

- Education outreach programs
- Include parents and community support into policy framework
3. Palau

Enabling environment for service delivery
• Already working with all government agencies to establish a strategic approach. Capturing students in Headstart (3-5 yr olds) and pre-school (4 yr olds) but not those out of school/out of Headstart.
• Public health system support for pregnant women and provide health information to Headstart. Challenge to access those outside of the main urban centre – especially three outlying villages only accessible by boat.
• PTA meetings coordinating efforts to reach teachers and parents in coordinated manner by most Government agencies – used to address range of development issues. Also coordinate through community clinics in villages.

Priority actions to improve
• Need strategic intervention from Ministerial level – Government Officers to return to Palau and advocate for Ministers to set up coordinating mechanism, in order to enable a stronger framework for Officials at technical level to move forward.
• Structure in the Government must reflect the importance of the issue – recognized at top levels but need to sit with a roundtable of Ministers to make concrete next steps.

Support parents, families and communities in providing nurturing care
• MoE and MoH working with parents on healthy eating habits – using PTA and other avenues to educate parents and teachers on healthy menus and preparation of healthy foods.
• Hosting workshops for parents to support skill development in supporting their children in maths and reading in the home.
• Supporting parents to understand the outline of the curriculum so they can support at home.
• Ownership is at the community level for this – coordinated through PTA Chairmans who advise the ministries.
• Would be possible to work with UNICEF to utilize this structure to educate parents on ECD parenting skill-building (especially for those with younger siblings).

Priority actions to improve
• Improve capacity and counselling skills of service providers to address issues in the community and have a longer-term effect. They are the people visiting the community regularly so can build on the contact with each visit if they have good delivery of messages.
• Frontline service providers trained well on the difference they can make and developed to be highly skilled in order to gain the trust and engagement of the families and communities. Many families live an hour or more drive away from the clinic – if they do not see the value in the engagement they will not return.
• Need to strengthen the connection with the community to drive the demand.
• Need to think about reaching the parents through the new mediums of technology – parents have expressed desire to have information online. Currently still working though traditional modes of sitting face to face, but younger parents are interested in technological interventions and more mobile services.
4. Tokelau

Challenges:

- Getting the commitment and participation form all stakeholders e.g. political leaders, department sectors, community groups
- Funding
- Initiating ECD programs & process

Solutions:

- Take a stock take (data collection) of the current situation for Tokelau and provided informed advice to all stakeholders.
- Persistent communication with relevant stack holders.
- Include ECD services in the TNSP

Services Provided to Parents:

- Provide vaccination
- Provide weekly maternal and child care (MCH)
- Home visits disabled people including children
- School health program
- Free ECE with attendance rates of 80 per cent
- Sanitation and clean drinking water is not an issue
- Child benefits of NZD$100 per month per child is being paid.
- Maternity leave of 6 month where only 1 month is paid.

Priority Actions:

- Improve maternal & introduce paternal leave entitlement to be fully paid.
- Improve spiritual & cultural values to assist ECD priorities /services. (inati system)
- Formulate ECD policies for all sectors.
5. Papua New Guinea

Challenges with organizing services for children in PNG

• Bringing responsible Departments together

Priority Actions

• Review the ECD Policy
• National Executive Council Submission
• Education Act to reflect ECD
• Include ECD in respective sector Plans
• Education
• Office of Child and Family Services
• Community Development and Religion
• Health

Support to Parents, Families and communities in providing nurturing care
Ongoing positive parenting support in selected province

Packaging of parenting support

Possible – For example in ECD centres, health centres, churches, community centres

Community Engagements in ECD
Challenge – Understanding ECD by parents is limited

Strategies

• Develop a communication strategy
• Work with stakeholders
6. Vanuatu

What are the challenges in coordinating services for children in Vanuatu?
- lack of multi-sectorial coordinated planning amongst Ministries
- there is no clear accountability for the coordinating policies, plans and services for ECD
- effective data collection for ECD needs to be addressed

How to overcome:
- to legislate all ECD activities within line Ministries and incorporate within the Corporate and Business Plans for line Ministries

Priority Actions:
1. ECD Coordinator Position (advertised last week)
2. ECD Policy Approved by CoM
3. PMOs to fulfill their role as the coordination unit for ECD through the establishment of the ECD Coordinating Unit)

What are we currently doing to support parents in raising their children?
- PSP implemented in Penama Province
- Rollout of WASH, Nutritional, immunization and supplements to all children focusing more on the decentralisation levels
- Gov’t is committed to financial assistance for ECCE Programme
- Providing social services, to parents, addressing cybercrime, policing and social inclusion
- The PSP implementation in Penama Province has shown that parents should be part of the ECD program; Awareness to children and communities

Can any of these interventions, be package together for better impact?
- antenatal care and parenting can be integrated
- Package training curriculum of ECD trainers of trainers for ECD
- develop a multi module ECD curriculum that can be deliver by the VHWs, ECCE teachers and Volunteers

How are we promoting community engagements on ECD?
- using the VHW and ECCE Teachers to promote and delivery ECD services
- Development of the Disability Inclusive Development 2018 – 2025
- Development of Child Protection Policy
- 80 per cent immunization coverage in the country

Priority Action
- roll out the PSP to other provinces as well
- setting up the national multi-sectorial ECD Council
- involve the husbands and fathers to be actively involved in ECD activities within communities
7. Solomon Islands

What are the challenges with coordinating services for children in Solomon Islands?

Health:
Challenges:
• funding, funding comes from donors, difficulty to sustain the programmes with limited funding and challenge to scale up.
• Commitment from government to include this in the Budget.
• Meeting minimum standards
• Inadequate human resources within the Ministry to go and advocate the minimum standards in the provinces and throughout Solomon Islands.
• The message (e.g. of what is a healthy diet) is still not reaching parents throughout Solomon Islands; and where it is, parents are not acting in response to the message.
• WASH in schools – funding, capacity (need plumbers, builders, designers and a source of water), access to water, quality to water and infrastructure. Only ~20per cent has access to town water.
• Oral health: Affordability. Need to step up in rural areas.

Overcoming challenges
• Community participation, e.g. through Parent Teacher Associations
• Build awareness
• Develop guidelines for schools
• Health: WASH in schools – Prioritising CLTS (Community led total sanitation) is important
• Need: funding and infrastructure for WASH.
• Engage Ministry of Infrastructure

Protection:
Challenges:
• Yet to have an MoU
• Capacity of church facilitators, need for training
• Challenge to driving the passion and interest from the community to ensure their participation

Overcoming challenges:
• Select those who are interested to train,
• Translate the manual into Pidgin
• Use the manual to raise understanding of child and family welfare
• Educate parents to know the referral process as articulated in the Act

Education
Challenges:
• Access – lack of centres in rural areas
• Quality – lack of proper curriculum for ECD, pedagogy and assessment
Overcoming challenges:

- **Access** – we need to establish more centres in the communities, early intervention.
- **Quality** – Developing a curriculum framework for ECD, training teachers on pedagogy, early stimulation, and assessment for this level. Resources for positive parenting for early learning.
- **Collaborative responses** – Combining education and health – e.g. family life education from Primary School through to Secondary- to educate the parents of the future. A prevention measures

What are 1-2 priority actions to improve coordinated and comprehensive ECD service delivery in Solomon Islands and for the region?

- We need to establish the National ECD coordination body to promote cross-government cooperation.
- Complete a country mapping exercise to obtain a picture of ECD services and supports across Solomon Islands.
- This will inform an ECD Action Plan for Solomon Islands.
- Establish a national Policy for ECD.
8. Niue

What are the challenges with coordinating services for children in our country? How can they be overcome?
- Challenges in coordinating services appears to be minimal or absent mainly because the majority of sectors responsible for Child Services fall under one Ministry- the Ministry of Social Services.

What are 1-2 priority actions to improve coordinated and comprehensive ECD service delivery in our country and for the region?
- Building on the existing facility for preschool education. We have now expanded pre-school services to begin from 12 months, where previously preschool services started at 4 years.
- We need to expand the infrastructure that we currently have to be able to provide this service to all children in Niue aged 12 months to 4 years.
- We also need to provide training for the staff at this Centre, as the staff are not trained specifically in preschool education.

What are we currently doing to support parents in raising their children? Can any of these interventions be packaged together for better impact?
- We see mothers as part of their antenatal and postnatal health checks and we see the children immediately from birth and we have the ability to track development of the child through our immunization programme and other maternal and child health services in the first 5 years of life.
- Information and trainings delivered to parents through workshops organized by the ministry of education as part of preschool education programme.

How are we promoting community engagement on ECD? What can we be doing better?
- Little work is being done in this area, specific to ECD. It is not given a specific name as part of the package, but it is carried out as ‘Business as Usual’. It is a service we provide as part of our mandate in the Ministry of Social Services, there needs to be a concerted effort in supporting parents through targeted parenting programmes.

What are your 1-2 priority action to improve support to parents and community mobilization in our country and region?
- Be opportunistic - utilise existing pathways where interactions with mothers or parents are strong. Eg: Health staff- frontline workers- ante-natal checks could expand to include specific information on child development during the first 1000 days.
- Improve demand by engaging interested parents who can become a community-based group that can be trained to provide community education programmes in ECD. They should be financed by Government as part of service delivery.
9. Fiji

Challenges
- No set definition on what “ECD” means for Fiji
- No supporting policy or ToR – policies exist but are not cohesive between agencies

Opportunities
The National Childrens Coordinating Council (NCCC) does exist and could be a platform from which to start. Currently does not include the Ministry of Finance.

Priorities
- Create a Taskforce (initially PS level but then passed to senior officials for technical work).
- Define ECD
- Identify actions, roles and responsibilities
- Develop ToR for coordination
- Intent for this to be a standalone ECD Forum for the first 3-5 years that once it has established ways of working and made any changes necessary to be effective and efficient could then become a taskforce of the NCCC.
- Would sit with Children (part of Ministry of Women) and this would be the reporting line to cabinet.
- Ministries would keep own plans and budgets.
10. Nauru

What are the challenges with coordinating services for children in our country?
- There is no specific committee on ECD. There is an Inter-Agency Committee. Child Protective Services, Education, Health. Challenges in relation to having the relevant skills, better coordination and communication between the sectors. The linkages with the different sectors sometimes becomes an issue because of miscommunication. The challenges Finance and Planning, Inter-agency committee.
- Lack of common understanding, significance, and implications of what ECD is and what is stands for.

How can they be overcome?
- Political will and understanding to endorse the setting up of a NCC with the appropriate funding support. An endorsement by cabinet of setup of coordinating body and a mapping of current situation. Better coordinated services in relation to children. The best way is to ensure that there is a greater communication and cooperation between the departments.

What are 1-2 priority actions to improve coordinated and comprehensive ECD service delivery in our country and for the region?
- The 2 priority areas are better coordinated approach and meeting with the leadership of the nation to enable an environment which will allow a setting up of an ECD multi sectoral strategy.
11. Cook Islands

What are the challenges with coordinating services for children in the Cook Islands? How can they be overcome?

Challenges
- Lack of opportunity to collaborate – Still working in silos.
- No common understanding of ECD across Ministries
- Lack of consolidated information management system for children.
- All Ministries have data, however not shared or analysed effectively. Lack of sharing of information across Ministries
- NGO/CSO strengthening – no specific CSO for children. (CIFWA, PTI, Child Welfare – clinics, faithbased/sports org/ youth groups etc)

How to overcome
- Review the composition of National Advisory Committee for Children and ToR. Ensuring there is commitment from PS level (health, education, finance and internal affairs). Expand scope to include strategic discussion, not just operational updates.
- Support the electronic welfare system. EWS records every birth.
- System to have access to information from Health, Education, welfare etc.
- All existing systems to speak to each other
- Establish an NGO strengthening programme
- Encourage voluntary ‘public service volunteer leave’ – to encourage public servants to serve within a CSO, using their skills and knowledge to bolster impact of CSO. I.e. 5 days a year??

What are the 1-2 priority actions to improve coordinated and comprehensive ECD service delivery in the Cook Islands, and for the region?
- High-Level Meeting on Cook Islands ECD- Engagement Opportunity with all relevant Ministers and PS’s. First initial meeting based on ECD outcomes document.
- Seeking commitment of all four to work together
- Mapping Task- What are we doing well? Where are our gaps? The gaps will then inform the workplan of this group.
- Do we need a policy?

What are we currently doing to support parents in raising their children? Can any of these interventions be packaged together for better impact?
- Free education and health care systems & services
- Social welfare system
- New-born allowances, child benefit, maternity leave allowances

Better Impact
- One stop shop for child sensitive services– register baby, apply for allowances, apply for mat leave, RMD registration… consolidation of all processes, making it easier for families.
- Services to be delivered in three steps, after conception, after birth, at immunization stages
- Packaged around anti-natal care, post birth and pre-compulsory schooling.
How are we promoting community engagement on ECD? What can we be better doing?
- Silo'd media campaigns need to be delivered under one package.
- Include faith-based/community groups to support

What are the 1-2 priority actions to improve support to parents and community mobilisation in the Cook Islands, and for the region?
- Explore childcare services – strengthening through subsidies, introduction of standards of care (facility and quality of service)
- Targeted parenting programmes including nutrition, development, general care etc.

Additional Cook Islands Consideration – Utilise Kia Orana Values programme to strengthen ECD awareness

1. Political Commitment
2. Capacity building – increased common understanding
3. Coordination Mechanism
4. National stocktake (Mapping of gaps)
5. Set action plan
6. Packaging of actions
7. Implementation
12. RMI

What are the challenges with coordinating services for children in our country?
1. Coordination of Data and information sharing
2. Service delivering to Outer Islands due to
   a) Limited resources
      e.g.: Funding, Capacity, Transportation
   b) Scatteredness of O.I
      E.g. Transportation far from Capitol
3) Human Resources in the Outer Islands
   e.g.: Teacher, Doctors

How can they be overcome?
1) Recent Establishment of Steering Committee for ECD.
2) a. Combining Resources and Funds
   e.g.: Mobile Team
 b. Strengthening planning and coordination for service deliveries
 c. Intergraded systems

What are the 1-2 priority actions to improve coordinated and comprehensive ECD service delivery in county and region?
1) Steering Committee is the Key:
   a. Develop a national ECD policy and legislative reviews

What are we currently doing to support parents in raising their children? Can any of these interventions be packaged together for better impact?
• Ministry of Education, Sports and Training in contracting WUTMI to work on Parents as Teachers to train Mothers.
• School Feeding and Learning Garden Program- yes these can be packaged together for better impact

How are we promoting community engagement on ECD? What can we be doing better?
• Merging and Expanding
• Increase awareness on the important of ECD

What are 1-2 priority actions to improve support to parents and community mobilization in our country and for the region?
• Developing in communication strategies.
13. Tonga

What are the challenges with coordinating services for children in our country? How can they be overcome?
- No governance framework

What are 1-2 priority actions to improve coordinated and comprehensive ECD service delivery in our country and for the region?
- Setting up an ECD taskforce with 10-year workplan to be aligned with PRC4ECD. Once approved by Cabinet, work can happen. With approved structure, government can allocate funds to implement
- Establishing a strong Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for reporting, seeing the effectiveness of initiatives and to have accessible data for decision making.
- Strengthening Public People Partnership- PPP. Working together with communities and already existing providers, helping them increase their capacity until they are fully effective.

What are we currently doing to support parents in raising their children? Can any of these interventions be packaged together for better impact?
- PEARL
- Health Series

How are we promoting community engagement on ECD?
- We are already working on the 9 action points of the Pasifika Call to Action

What can we be doing better?
- Integrate into National workplans of Ministries
- Support community-based learning programmes

What are 1-2 priority actions to improve support to parents and community mobilization in our country and for the region?
- Community awareness programmes
- Multi-sector coordination and approach
14. Kiribati

What are the challenges with coordinating services for children in our country?
• Competing interests from our different key stakeholders thus cannot get them together.
• Coverage of ECD to the outer island
• Funding to support meetings
• Culture and tradition
• Lack of a common understanding, significance and implications of what ECD is and what it stands for

What are 1-2 priority actions to improve coordinated and comprehensive ECD service delivery in our country and for the region?
• After-hours meeting (put this will requires funding)
• Dedicated staff from different Ministries and stakeholders to be assigned to deal with ECD matters.
• Taking ECD to the outer island
• Alignment of Strategies on ECD.
• Utilizing and engaging youth groups in provision of aspects of ECD program
• Support parents, Families and Communities in providing nurturing care

What are we currently doing to support parents in raising their children?
• Positive parenting and child protection.
• Early education training for parents

Can any of these interventions be packaged together for better impact?
• Wash, Nutrition and Hygiene can be integrated and offered as one package when visiting different communities and outer island.

How are we promoting community engagement on ECD?
• School Improvement Program – where parents support their children and school.
• Outreach and training programs to parent champions who in turn convey the same message to their community members
• Involvement of communities/groups in competitions on ECD

What can we be doing better?
• Involvement of youth groups in parenting awareness programs as they are future parents

What are 1-2 priority actions to improve support to parents and community mobilization in our country and for the region?
• Integrating and using existing structures to reach out and communicate our services (Integrated Communication Approach)
15. Tuvalu

Creating an enabling environment for comprehensive ECD service delivery?
• The Education Act is currently under review and ECD doesn't have any place in the current Acts in general.

What are the challenges with coordinating services for children in Tuvalu?
• There is informal collaboration and coordination between MEYS & MHARD & local governments, schools committees and community (especially in the maritime islands) Apart from these, there is currently no coordinating mechanism. Equity is high on the agenda of government ministries to contribute towards the enabling environment.
• Transportation, communication and service provision to maritime islands is a REAL issue.

How can they be overcome?
• Establish a coordination mechanism mandated by the newly revised Education Act
• Child Protection & Education and areas of synergy between Ministry of Education, Youth & Sports (MEYS) & Ministry of Home Affairs & Rural Development (MHARD)

Priority Action? Establish a coordination mechanism mandated by the newly revised Education Act and familiarize all ministers including prime minister and other stakeholders with the Nurturing Care Framework. This will be implemented by writing a white paper for cabinet to start with.
## Annex 3: Participants

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<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Ministry of Education</th>
<th>Ministry of Health and Medical Services</th>
<th>Ministry of Finance and Economic Development</th>
<th>Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation</th>
<th>Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Danielle Cochrane</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Anne Herman</td>
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<td>Jennifer Pode</td>
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<td>Hon. Vaine Maloeru</td>
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<td>Elfriek Tubu</td>
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<td>Ruqia Fatuasi</td>
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<td>Aloria Berkel</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Dr. Tafa Tani</td>
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