Evaluation Report

National Action Plan 2015 – 2016

Early Childhood Care and Education

Institute of Early Childhood Development
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Contents

Introduction

There has been a deepening global interest in establishing integrated systems for the provision of quality ECCE services. From the Dakar Declaration (2000) which includes the expansion and improvement of Early Childhood Care and Education, to the adoption of the Framework for Action (2010) which emphasizes the holistic development of children, to the re-affirmation in the World Education Forum (2015) of commitment to building a strong foundation for lifelong learning through ECCE. Governments of the world have been concerned with developing strategies and implementing plans for the improvement of ECCE provisions, services and programmes.

In Seychelles national action planning based on the Seychelles Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education (2013) (SF-ECCE has become an institutionalised process to respond to national needs in line with international principles and policies. Thus far, two bi-yearly, national, multi-sectoral action plans have been implemented.

The first plan, the National Action Plan 2013-2014 ECCE was an ambitious plan which sought to encompass long-term ECCE provisions. Policy review, increased access, increased financial resourcing, expanding training opportunities, early detection, improved service delivery, building child-friendly communities were the major thrusts of the plan. To some extent many issues were addressed in the plan, such as, special needs provision, risk assessment, the production of the Seychelles Early Learning Framework and the ECCE Directory, parenting programme, standard day care design, childminding services. However, deficiencies in the design of the plan limited the full trajectory of projects and programmes although collaborative partnership had been built and ECCE sectors had been mobilised. This resulted in the achievement of 13 out of the 22 expected outcomes.

 The second plan National Action Plan 2015-2016 (NAP) sought to overcome some of those problems by adopting a project-based approach. Thirteen projects associated with five priority areas consisting of policy research and data management system, parental engagement and community involvement, training and professional development, early detection and child protection, access and equity has been were implemented.

Research Approach

A generic evaluation framework (Figure 1) has been used to capture the following sequences: strategies and activities, specific products, resulting outcomes, and possible impact.
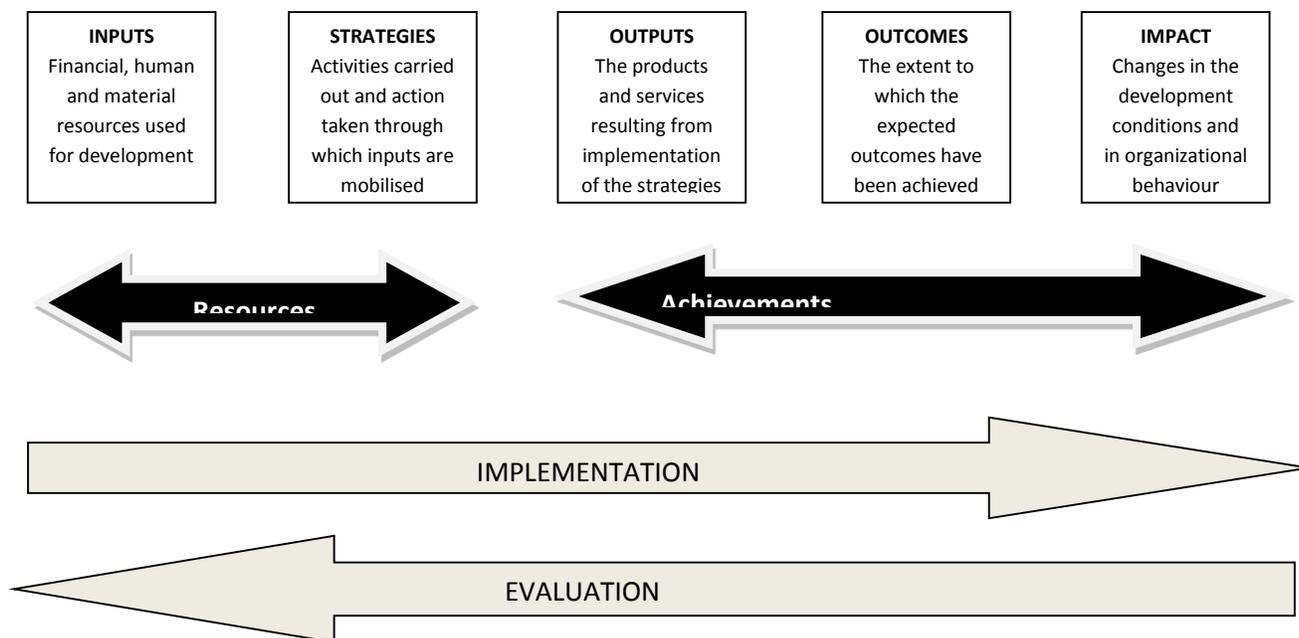
INPUTS	STRATEGIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	IMPACT
Financial, human and material resources used for development	Activities carried out and action taken through which inputs are mobilised	The products and services resulting from implementation of the strategies	The extent to which the expected outcomes have been achieved	Changes in the development conditions and in organizational behaviour

Resources ⟷   Achievements ⟷

IMPLEMENTATION ⟶

⟵ EVALUATION

Figure 1: Evaluation Framework (Adapted from United Nations Development Programme, 2006)

Aim of the Evaluation

The main aim of the evaluation is to provide information on the level of implementation of the NAP. More specifically the evaluation will seek to:

- assess the relevance of the NAP in relation to the country's policy direction for ECCE
- assess achievement in relations to strategies and activities in each sector and across sectors
- relate achievements to stated expected outcome
- determine the impact of the NAP on ECCE

Data source

The NAP was implemented through the ECCE Technical Team in the five ECCE Sectors comprising Education, Health, Social Affairs, and Community Development and Sports, and IECD and relevant statistical data have been collected from those sectors (including IECD). Moreover, project documents, procedural guidelines, and final reports have been reviewed as evidence of achievements.

More numerical information has been obtained from a questionnaire targeting the Technical Team Members of the five ECCE Sectors. The questionnaire consisted of three parts. In the first part, questions on specific achievement outcomes for the Priority Areas for which strategies have been developed by the sector were posed. The second part contained questions about IECD in its

coordinating and implementation role and the relationship with the different sectors. General questions on the plan itself and the impact of the plan were included in the third part.

The questionnaire has been used to support statistical indicators, documentary and qualitative information as a measure of progress, achievement of milestones, achievement of stated outcomes, and as a proxy measure of impact. In designing impact indicators the following have been considered: changes in resource inputs and working style; and changes in service delivery and in target groups.

Data Collection
Data have been collected using four main methods: document compilation, data extraction, mini-survey and interviews. Each Technical Team Chair completed a form which identified the Goals and Priorities for their sector, the strategies which have been implemented, the list of related documents, and statistical information available. The completed form was accompanied by a compilation of relevant documents. In addition the questionnaire was administered to all team members followed by a focus group interview.

Analysis
The discussion on the assessment of achievements in this report integrates the analytic process and synthesizes information on the implementation of the plan. It identifies emerging themes and extends the discussion to generate a reflection on possible impact of the overall plan.

Relevance of the Priority Areas

The NAP forms part of the national drive to place early childhood development at the forefront of the country's priorities. Policy issues arising from SF-ECCE aligned with international developments in ECCE has been addressed through five main themes as national priorities:

a) Strengthening the policy environment to monitor ECCE provisions and to provide pertinent information for national and international reporting has become a major concern. There was a need to improve information sharing and information structures by developing ECCE indicators and electronically recording child development outcome. The Institute of early Childhood Development is implementing two projects to address this issue.

b) The community is considered to be at the heart of ECCE and parental participation in providing quality ECCE. Parental involvement has been a common thread throughout the plan for the Health and Education, and IECD. A more targeted project has been expanded by the Social Affairs Sector to educate and support parents. The Parenting Programme in the new plan includes a more systematic monitoring and evaluation structure to gauge effectiveness.

c) Much emphasis has been placed on early stimulation in the SF-ECCE and this has been addressed by both the Community Development and Sports Sector, in a community-based project and through the extension of the Baby Gymnastic Programme, and by the Education Sector in the Early Learning Programme for children in Day Care Centres. Moreover, provision of access targeting vulnerable children has been attended to by the Health Sector in
the procurement of Special Aids for children with special need, and supporting the children and their parents.

d) Research has shown that the first 3-4 years are critical for the development of sensory pathways, social and emotional development and the basic pathways for reading and mathematics. It is stated in the SF-ECCE that there is a need to review and strengthen mechanisms for early detection and intervention to reduce educational and social inequalities. The three Sectors, Education, Health and Social Affairs have been making renewed efforts, respectively, in pursuing this priority in the new plan. Profiling of children as they enter the early childhood education system, the identification of learning difficulties, screening children to establish health and development status, engaging a wide range of stakeholders in early identification of risk factors and introducing suitability checks as a part of the child protection
programme have been pursued.

e) SF-ECCE recognises that staff qualification and professional development for all sectors, especially, those working with children in the 0-3 age group, as a major challenge in the provision of ECCE. IECD, from the recommendations of the Childminding Study has operated training programmes for the professional development of childminders.

Outcome
The NAP has been a two-year plan to increase ECCE focus in the different sectors and propel the sectors to initiate or extend actions and strategies that would lead to improved provision and services for ECCE children and their parents. The sectors incorporated within their plans actions relating to: policy and research, parental and community involvement, sensitisation and training, early detection and child protection, and quality access. Within the plans outcomes derived from project expectations had been set. The results presented in this section are intended to assess achievements in terms of expected outcomes or the level of progress towards the expected outcomes for the implementing ECCE Sector. Within that context factors which have inhibited or facilitated achievement of expected outcome have also been identified.

Three types of indicators have been used to provide a measure of progress towards the expected outcomes: the perception of Sector Technical Teams of the level of achievement, confirmatory documentation, and more direct quantitative data. Technical Team Members were presented with the title of their sector projects and related outcome statement for which they had to opt for a judgement response. The rating options with assigned values were as follows: "Exceeded expectation"=4, "Met expectation" =3, "Moderately did not meet expectation"=2, and "Substantially did not meet expectation"=1.

The mode was used as measure of the level of achievement of the outcome. The discussion arising from the data was matched with documentary evidence and numerical information.

Education Sector
In Table 1 the results for three outcomes expected for the two projects implemented by the Education Sector have been presented and the three outcomes have been rated as having 'Met expectation'. However, further analytic results showed that for Outcome I, II, and III one out of the thirteen technical team members responded with "Moderately did not meet expectation". More documented evidence is needed to validate some of the judgment of the technical team members for the two projects.

Table 1: Outcome results for Education Sector

Project	Expected Outcome	Achievement
1. Development of Early Learning Programmes for children aged 3 months to 4 years in Day Care Centres	(i) Early learning readiness established for children starting first year crèche through specifically designed assessment tool	Met expectation
2. Establish Profile Document for Day Care Children	(ii) Comprehensive child profile is available for early detection, appropriate intervention and support for teaching and learning (iii) Structure and mechanism are in place for sharing of information	Met expectation

The project was intended to introduce an early learning programme for children attending Day Care Centres. This was to prepare children for Crèche Education and to monitor learning readiness. Assistant day care operators, teachers and health professionals were recruited to participate in the project. The major activities included development of the programme, training of implementers and administration of readiness tools.

Commendable achievement can be noted for the production of an early leaning programme. The programme based on the Seychelles Early learning Framework (SELF) covered six essential learning areas: Well-being, Identity and Belonging, Communication and Language Development, Early Mathematics, Arts and Creativity, Knowledge and Understanding of the World. This was piloted in twenty-two day care centres covering about 31 percent of the population with the participation of 51 day care assistants.

This was accompanied by successful training of day care operators. From the observational data which was gathered to monitor implementation it was found that after the training around 90 percent of the care assistants were rated as "Very Proficient" and none were at the basic level of proficiency in the delivery of the early learning programme. Moreover, most of them, over 95 percent, were positive about the design, content and clarity of the programme although there were interactive instructional difficulties expressed for the pre-mathematics learning area.

Concurrently with the development of the early learning programme, an early learning assessment was carried out to monitor learning readiness in preparation for Crèche Education. The results from the readiness assessment on a cohort of over 800 children at the beginning of their first year of Crèche Education indicated that about 80 percent of children had reached an acceptable level of readiness. Nevertheless, children in home-based setting were at a disadvantage and there were significant rural urban differences which would warrant further investigation.

Profiling
The intention of this project was to establish a comprehensive profile document for every child attending day care centres (3 months to 4 years) in preparation for Crèche Education and to set up a structure to allow for professional sharing. Pertinent information was to be collected for every child to help with early detection and effective intervention, facilitate learning, and ensure smooth transition from day care to crèche and beyond.

A comprehensive profile document has been produced. It contains relevant information on the Early Learning Development Areas for each child. A range of training sessions were carried out for day care operators and their assistants to equip them with the knowledge and skills to complete the profile which was piloted in 23 day care centres with children due to enroll in crèche the following year. Factor analysis of the questionnaire data of the day care operators and assistants who completed the children's profile confirmed the "ease of implementation" of the profile and

its "appropriateness". It was concluded that a profiling system at this level can contribute positively towards the implementation of The Seychelles Early Learning Framework.

Moreover, detailed guidelines for the transition of the profile document from day care centre to crèche were drafted. This was to facilitate the handing over of the profiles to the Crèche Teacher-in-Charge who in turn would make it available to crèche year teachers and ensure that they make optimum use of the information for the child's further development and learning. The purpose of the document was clearly laid out. Zone committees was formed and the roles of all partners involved, that is, the Early Childhood Section at the Ministry of Education, day care centre personnel, crèche teachers, and parents were detailed out. Thus a participatory structure has been established for transition and continuity.

Health Sector

The Health Sector has anticipated the achievement of four outcomes. As it can be seen from Table 2, as judged by Technical Team Members, three of those have met expectation and one has not quite met expectation. These were the results from two projects: health screening in crèche as part of the Maternal and Child Health Programme and the provision of aids for children with special needs.

Implementing health screening at crèche enrollment
Early detention and early intervention are necessary in order to facilitate the learning and teaching process and to ensure healthy development of the child. This project sought to address these two issues through the implementation of screening for all children at crèche enrollment.
A Pilot Study was undertaken in which 252 children in five regional crèches and one private school crèche participated. Children were screened for health status, bodily functions, interpersonal relationship, level of independence, and developmental status. A profile which consists of personal information, results of medical and development test, physical assessment of weight and height has been produced for each child.

Some illuminating results emerged from the study. Impairment of bodily functions was noted for about 2 to around 6 percent of children. However dental status where over one quarter of the children was identified as "not normal" was considered as alarming. For over ninety-five percent of the children, interrelationship indicators were rated as "normal" whereas the level of independence was noted as 100 percent for girls and about 92 to 99 percent for boys. The pass rate for the Denver Development Screening Test was 99 percent. The rolling out of this project should prove useful for health and education professionals.

Table 2: Outcome results for the Health Sector

Project	Expected Outcome	Achievement
1. Implementing health screening at crèche enrollment	(iv) All children in the first term of the first year in crèche screened for early detection of risk factors that may interfere with learning and development	Met expectation
	(v) An established structure and process for information sharing between health professionals, school personnel, class teachers, and parents	Moderately did not meet expectation
2. Provision of aids for children with special needs	(vi) Children with special needs between 0-8 years are effectively making use of the Special Aids they require to facilitate their learning, to increase maximum functional independence and promote their development	Met expectation
	(vii) Teachers in class, and parents, at home, providing adequate support to the children	Met expectation

However, the complementary aspect of the project, the personalized information sharing arrangements for teacher, parent and health professionals for each individual child has not been documented. Although there has been meetings and individual handing over of profiles for individual children, the structural details have not been clarified. Thus the second outcome related to this project has only partially been met.

Provision of aids for children with special needs
Improving functionality of and providing adequate support for children with special needs are goals which should be pursued relentlessly. This is a priority although costly project intended to equip children with special aids to facilitate their learning and to help them cope with everyday activities. Funding strategies have been successfully developed to procure the Specials Aids both locally and from overseas, namely, reclining table, writing board, hearing aids, communication book, and lap board.

A teaching booklet with illustrations has been produced for the training of teachers and parents. Instruction on how to fix the reclining table and help children to maneuver themselves to make best use of the table, how and when to use the writing board, how to adapt the communication book to children's individual needs, how to position the lap board for effective use of the upper arms of the child for maximum functioning was practically conveyed. The booklet was used as tool for teaching and for monitoring progress.

Twenty-six children in Special Schools, in inclusive schools, and at home have benefitted from the Aids or Tools. There were some encouraging signs that the implementation of the project would lead to improved functionality of the children and more targeted support by the teachers and parents.

Reclining table - Five children were provided with reclining tables which were set up for reading and writing or scribbling, and carrying out manipulative activities. Improvement in level of independence, legibility of hand writing (as reported by one mother), and increased participation in fine motor activities at school were described.

Writing Board – Four children made use of writing boards. Although they needed help to set up the writing boards they all developed the ability to use the writing board independently at school during reading and writing activities (3 of 4 children) and for colouring and tracing during occupational activities at home (1 of 4 children). Some improvement in hand control and school work was noted for three of the children.

Hearing Aid – Seven children were provided with hearing aids and the usage varied from one hour daily increasing to four hours, with one child using the aid permanently. Increasing responses to sounds, music, and conversation were reported.

Communication Book – Six children had the opportunity to use the communication book. The results however were generally disappointing. It would appear that more time need to invested by the teachers in using the book and many of the teachers need further training for effective use of the communication book.

Lap Board – Five children were assisted with lap boards during feeding and therapy with mixed results. Two children had become quite independent in feeding themselves whilst three of them have dropped out of the programme.

Social Affairs Sector
The Social Affairs Sector implemented three projects related to a parenting programme, the child protection suitability check programme, and the Risk Indicator Framework (RIF). Only two questionnaire responses were forthcoming from the Sector. One of the respondents chose the option "I was not involved" for all three projects. The ratings of the Technical Chair have been shown in Table 3 for the five expected outcomes. Although not directly involved in the project, the Technical Chair claimed that expectation for outcome (viii) had been met, but did not respond to 'Expected Outcome' (ix) and (x). Nevertheless, she was convinced that the 'Expected Outcome' (xi) had been met for the Suitability Check Project and admitted that 'Expected Outcome' xii had not been met for the RIF Project. Further analysis of project documentation will be used for evaluative validation.

Parenting Programme
The Parenting Programme in which 1123 parents participated (1181 females and 142 males) has been initiated since 2013 when an ante-natal and post-delivery parenting manual was developed.

The ante-natal manual was quite substantial for the use of trainers and parents with the aim of preparing parent-to-be for the arrival of the new baby or babies in the family. The manual addresses some of the psychological impact of pregnancy and having a baby; the importance of nutrition and the dangers of certain substances. It also addresses issues of budgeting, stress management, communication and bonding, and preparation for hospital. It suggests active participatory adult learning methods and can be used as a reference and resource manual.

Table 3: Outcome results for the Social Affairs Sector

Project	Expected Outcome	Achievement
1. Implementation and evaluation of the ante-natal and post-delivery Parenting Education Programme	(viii) Improved knowledge of parenting practices	Met expectation
	(ix) Establish sets of baseline indicators on which to measure the effectiveness of the ante-natal and post-delivery parenting programmes	No response
	(x) A monitoring and evaluation mechanism in place to inform programme direction	No response
2. Establishing a suitability check system for childminders	(xi) Policy and procedures in place and links with key agencies established to operate suitability check for childminders	Met expectation
3. Strengthening the implementation of the Risk Indicator Framework	(xii) Increased use of RIF as a tool for child protection	Moderately did not meet expectation

A post-delivery parenting manual has also been produced as an extension of the pre-delivery parenting programme. It has been designed to provide interactive sessions with parents. The following topics have been highlighted:
- Communicating between parents, babies and other family members
- Changing responsibilities and relationships, skills on decision making
- Physical and emotional changes reactions to birth and motherhood & support
- Facts about Feeding and weaning
- Gender

- Abuse
- Child safety
- Coping with a new baby, approaches to baby care (patterns of behaviour & routines)
- Role of father

The parenting project has been designed to assess the effectiveness of the parenting education programme in 5 regions on Mahé and Praslin. A convenient sample of 98 parents who attended the parenting sessions and represented the 5 geographical regions was drawn. Moreover, 4 facilitators out of 6 responded to the self-administered questionnaire. Individual interviews with stakeholders, observation of the facilitators during the parenting sessions in each region and analysis of the pre and post test results were tools used in the study.

The results pointed to change in knowledge and perception of the participants, particularly on the use of alcohol, use of drugs and medication, and the importance of communicating with the unborn child. It was also found that participants rated the facilitators very high for their personal approach and their facilitation skills.
This project is on-going and the final report will be necessary to establish baseline for measuring the effectiveness of the programme and a monitoring mechanism for the evaluation of the programme (the two unrated outcomes).

Suitability Check
As part of the Child Protection Programme of the Social Affairs Sector, a suitability check project has been initiated to ensure that childminders do not pose a risk to children when working with them. Purportedly, this would assist in creating a safe and supportive environment where children can thrive. The aim of this project was to determine the suitability of childminders and the settings of their establishments.

Through wide consultation with partners and stakeholders a comprehensive "Standard Operating Manual for Suitability Check of Childminders" has been produced. It outlines the purpose of the check within the mandate of the Social Affairs Sector. It defines child protection and child's rights. Based upon the guiding principles of "best interest of the child", confidentiality, and interagency collaboration, it responds to the questions of who, what, how of the suitability check process. It also broaches pertinent topics such as automatic disqualification, making submission, and obligations and responsibilities.

A screening panel consisting of professionals, a multi-sectoral group of representatives of different organisations, chaired by the Social Affairs Department has been effectively constituted. The Terms of Reference has been defined to carry out the interviews, share information, liaise with other agencies, and make appropriate investigations. This was followed by a set of suggested interview questions concerning the background of the childminder, the immediate environment of the childminding establishment, frequent visitors of the establishment, the background of people in the household, safety and security issues in supervising children, recording and reporting cases of abuse. Also, a checklist has been designed to assess the physical environment of the

childminding setting, its neighbouring environment, and the general emotional climate of the establishment.

The suitability check has been remarkably effective. Sixteen panel sessions were conducted, 114 childminders were interviewed: Ninety-eight childminders were found suitable, two were found suitable with conditions, four were found unsuitable due to high risk factors such as criminal records, ongoing investigation, inappropriate activities in the immediate childminding environment. This project is a breakthrough in The Working with Children Suitability Check as a key prevention and monitoring system in the Child Protection Services.

Risk Indicator Framework
The aim of this project was to improve early detection and intervention of at risk children by strengthening the implementation of the RIF through the use of multi-agency assessment and referral forms. Attempts in previous plans have encountered difficulties mainly due to the lack of commitment of partner agencies. Nevertheless, increase in the use of the RIF (Table 3, row 5) was also proposed as the expected outcome of this project in the NAP. However, after a review of the project, it was decided that an audit had to be carried out to gather evidence of non-compliance and propose counter-acting measures with implementation practicalities.

A research approach has been adopted to undertake an audit that would identify problematic areas in the implementation of the RIF. A group of professionals from sectors who are more likely to use the RIF have been selected. The sample consisted of Health Professionals from Health Centres, School Counsellors from Schools, all the Social Workers and some Housing Officers. A questionnaire was administered to respondents from agencies who are implementers of the RIF and who should be using the risk assessment and referral forms.

Information on awareness of the RIF tool, perceptions of problems with the use of the assessment referral form, and availability and accessibility of the forms were gathered. It was found that although the majority of professionals were aware of the RIF, less than one-quarter of the respondents claimed that they had completed such a form and most of them were from the Social Affairs Sector and none of them had completed more than ten assessment forms.

Although about two-thirds of the respondents rated the form fairly highly as a child protection tool, concerns were expressed regarding the day-to-day use of the form and most of the suggestions referred to a review of the form for clarity, brevity and practicality, the need for more training, and the need for policy guidelines for its usage. Limitations on availability and accessibility were also expressed by about half of the respondents. This resulted in a series of recommendation for training workshop sessions, review and standardisation of the forms, and the development of formal procedural guidelines.

As follow-up, a comprehensive action plan has been drafted. It includes training, documentation review, standardization of referrals, integration of the forms in a Procedural Manual and revised strategies for implementation, coordination and management. In effect, although preparatory grounded activities have been implemented, the outcome has not met the pre-determined expectation.

Community Development and Sports Sector

As listed in Table 4, three projects have been implemented by the Community Development and Sports Sector with six expected outcomes rated by five technical team members. For the Day Care Centre Project all members agreed that both expected outcomes xiii, (xiv had been met. However, for the Kids Gathering Project outcomes xv and xvii were rated as having met expectations whilst for outcome xvi, team members agreed that expectations had not quite been met. On the other hand, 'Expected Outcome' xviii was rated positively by three members whilst the others chose the "I was not involved" option. These ratings have been clarified below with extended project information.

Provision of Day Care Centre Facilities

The Day Care Project was aimed at expanding day care provisions for children aged 0-3 years. Day care centres were being constructed or facilities renovated to meet the developmental and educational needs of children and the social needs of parents. This involved the construction of a new day care centre at Grand Anse Praslin, on-going construction work and development of facilities at Anse Etoile, and the extension and renovation of facilities at Bel Air.

A Standard Day Care Centre Building Design which takes into consideration site and community issues, interior design and space, external design and play elements, architectural design and child-friendly facilities have been drawn up. This well-researched document which has been authenticated by international and local experts is meant to be used as a guide "to support the development of facilities that are child and family oriented, environmentally safe and secure, that would promote healthy growth, that are aesthetically pleasing, functional in their design, and are cost effective to operate."

Table 4: Outcome results for the Community Development and Sports Sector

Project	Expected Outcome	Achievement
1.Provision of Day Care Centre Facilities	(xiii) Expanded access to children 0-3 years through innovative day care facilities to promote development and early learning	Met expectation
	(xiv) Meeting parents expectation with the new facilities services standards	Met expectation
2. Community-based Kids Gathering Initiative	(xv)) Children's early learning experience enhanced	Moderately did not meet expectation*
	(xvi) Quality community-based early learning opportunities and child-friendly environment	Moderately did not* meet expectation
	(xvii) Trained childminders to support children in learning through play	Met expectation
3. Expansion of the Baby Gymnastic Programme	(xviii) Children's motor, coordination, equilibrium and self-confidence improved, through training and continuous monitoring	Met expectation

*These ratings were revised with inputs from the National Coordinating Committee for ECCE

Patterned on this design, a fully-operational Day Care Centre in the district of Anse Etoile has been provided for communities in the North of Mahé. Although there have been construction challenges in following the model and various modifications had to be made, the Day Care Centre with fifty-one children enrolled and 5 staff members recruited is setting the example in day care provision in the country.

It boasts of an open-door policy where parents are welcome to drop-in. One of the aims of the day care centre known as Small Steps Day Care Centre in providing quality ECCE services to the community has been to establish mutually supportive partnerships between parents and staff.

Parental involvement in the programme is encouraged and a variety of social functions are organised.

In order to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the new Day Care Centre, a survey was carried out on parents whose children has been enrolled to appraise the quality of its registration processes, staff attendance, safety measures, early stimulation support and care. The results were promising.

Registration – All parents were satisfied with the registration process. They were warmly welcomed, the information exchange procedures were clear and the process was fast.

Quality of Staff – The majority of parents agreed that the Day Care Centre was adequately staffed and that the staff were attentive, protective and they were capable of identifying and addressing the needs of their children. Also, that there were a "happy" working atmosphere amongst members of staff.

Quality of Care Learning and Support - Most parents agreed that their children were happy at the day care; that there was a wide variety of activities, the children were enjoying themselves, the children's needs were being met, the children were being supported to reach their potentials, and they were encouraged to be healthy.

Quality of the Environment – The Centre has a good reputation for its brightness, cleanliness and orderliness. It was perceived by parents as being stimulating although only half of the parents thought the Centre was well equipped with adequate and appropriate educational books, toys, and other child-related items.

Community-Based Kid's Gathering Initiative
This is a developmental project with the aim of promoting the overall development of children aged 3months to 4 years and to improve childminding services through community facilities. As a pilot project in six districts there was a need to set up structures and initiate implementation processes. Community-based activities included identifying participating districts, upgrading facilities in those districts. Capacity building activities included training of resource persons, Strategic actions consisted of preparing assessment tools, and procuring toys and materials.

Effective interface with private organizations have resulted in the acquisition of the resources which consist of equipment, learning materials, and educational toys. Moreover, facilitative interactions with District Administrators to ensure that the environment is made safe, secure and child-friendly have been productive.

Three childminders and a total of 40 children have been accessing the service on a weekly basis. Individual interviews were carried out with the childminders to evaluate the merits of this new community initiative. The childminders expressed satisfaction with the level of support from the District Administration Offices. They contacted the office before they came, made the appropriate booking, and the toys were ready for them upon their arrival. However, they were concerned about the restricted number of toys and the management of the toys available.

Child minders noted that "some children were able to grasped objects more effectively; played well together and learned to share; understood and arranged puzzles and had lots of fun to the extent that they did not want to leave the centre and looked forward to going there every week."

Attempts have been made to upscale this project with limited success. The engagement with district administrators in upgrading community facilities has been inhibitory to the further development of the project. Moreover, human resources required to monitor developmental outcome has not been sufficiently mobilised.

Expansion of the Baby Gymnastic Programme
This is an ambitious project with the aim of expanding access to Baby Gym facilities. It provides complementary physical developmental activities for children aged 9 months to 4 years. One-hundred-and-twenty children from five pre-school and one childminding establishment were enrolled on the programme in the year 2016. Administrative level activities include upgrading of equipment, producing a timetable and preparing record-keeping tools.

It was reported that post assessment on the five basic skills, namely, "jumping", "balancing", "cradling" "rolling" and "scaling" at the end of 2017 showed that there has been an improvement in performance with over 95 percent of children rated as "Good" or "Very Good". Also information gathered from 30 parents who participated with their children indicated that parents were very satisfied with the programme: They believed that their children had improved and they were positive about the programme.

In the Project Profile it has been anticipated that apart from the on-going servicing of pre-schools on Mahé, new centres on Praslin and La Digue would be operational. This has not happened due to inadequate provisions. Moreover, whilst some attempts have been made to monitor children's basic gymnastics skills, more accurate and relevant information to gauge the effectiveness of the programme would be needed.

Institute of Early Childhood Development

The information contained in Table 5 provides some encouraging results considering the challenging characteristics of the three projects. Each of the three projects was managed by a Project Officer who judged his or her own project. Two expected outcomes have been assessed as meeting expectations, and the Project Officer concerned with the Data Management Project has been candid enough to admit that the expectation has substantially not been met whereas the Project Officer implementing the Childminder Standards Project felt that the outcome has moderately not met expectation. These are substantial projects with varied components which compounds implementation strategies.

Table 5: Outcome results for the Institute of Early Childhood Care and Education

Project	Expected Outcome	Achievement
1.Establishing structures and procedures for data collection based on ECCE indicators for the health Sector	(xix) Standardised data collection procedures in the Health sector to strengthen monitoring, evaluation and reporting of ECCE	Substantially did not meet expectation
2. Monitoring child development outcome: Denver Development Screening Test (DDST) in the Child Health Programme of the Ministry of Health	(xx) Levels of child development established and data being managed in an appropriate data base to monitor change and developmental delays as a means of strengthening information system for reporting on ECCE	Met expectation
	(xxi) Testing procedures and parental inputs analysed to inform policy decisions on the conditions of testing and reporting to parents	Met expectation
3. Assuring the quality of the Childminding Programme; building the capacity of childminders	(xxii) Childminders implementing quality standards to maintain good practice or to improve their practice	Moderately did not meet expectation

Data Management

In line with the recommendations of the SABER ECD Report to improve information system to make ECCE data readily available for national, regional and international reporting, this project has been conceived in four phases: consultation with partners, convocation of international consultant, validation of indicator framework, and piloting of data management processes.

The Health Statistics Unit is one of the key stakeholders in the project and the Department of Information Communication Technology (DICT) is the professional partner. Although, there have been interactive working sessions between IECD, the Ministry of Health, as the key stakeholder , and DICT as the professional partner, six months had elapsed before the breakthrough arrangement with World Bank for funding support through Japan Trust Fund and, subsequently, the recruitment of a consultant to spear head the project.

The ensuing situational analysis confirmed previous findings highlighting the weak state of the data management system. It was found that health records were mostly paper-based; data collected were primarily administrative and not analysed to inform policy or practice; some key indicators were not readily available, and growth monitoring standards were problematic.

Based on the situational analysis and consultation with the main partners, a draft list of indicators to be collected and calculated to capture many of the most pressing child health and nutrition issues in the country was drawn up. It was decided that these indicators mostly derived from clinical information would build upon existing systems and should be quite feasible to implement. After agreement on the list of indicators, it was anticipated that a draft a manual outlining how the indicators will be collected would be produced.

Thus due to a delayed start and the complex international procedures to solicit consultative and financing support, this project has not reached completion. However, exasperating obstacles have been overcome for the project to be fully implemented in the next plan and to consolidate national and international partnership.

Monitoring Child Development Outcome

This pilot research project sought to extend the data information process and target child development outcome, specifically. It aimed to establish the overall levels of development of

children in Seychelles and clarify issues associated with the Denver Development Screening Test (DDST).

A Pilot Study was carried out to explore the possibility of analysing the DDST data which are routinely collected through Well Baby Clinics, to evaluate the administration of the screening test and to seek parent views on the development of their children. A random sample of 244 children in four health centres was selected to participate. The DDST data were recorded and a parent questionnaire was administered to the mothers of those children. Moreover, 32 nurses who screened the children responded to the Nurse Questionnaire. It was found that (i) the pass rate was excellent at the age of 3½ and surpassed the 90 percent criterion, (ii) the testing conditions might need reviewing and (iii) although parents said they were satisfied with the service, there was limited nurse-parent engagement regarding the developmental status of the child and the use of the DDST.

 A Main Study on a whole cohort of children (1,444) was successfully undertaken in which the instruments were adjusted and data collection method reviewed with consequentially revealing results. Two important developmental milestone of Seychellois children from 0 - 3½ in relation to the DDST was established: it was revealed that the prevalence of children born pre-term and low birth weight compared favorably with not only the global figures but also with the Eastern and Southern African region. In conjunction, about two thirds of mothers were breasting feeding for the first six weeks after child birth and this dropped to about one quarter at six months.

With regards to support, an overwhelming number of mothers attended antenatal clinic and received post natal visits conducted by nurses. While the home environment was seen to be generally good, the need for further support to families in certain regions of the country was noted. Finally, the pattern in care provision by both parents at birth was explored and it was found that a relatively high number of fathers were absent at the time of birth to provide support, and this was particularly the case for the youngest mothers.

With regards to the administration of the test, through some of the findings, concerns emerged which may need attention. It was suggested that formal and refresher courses should be considered to ensure proficiency in the administration of the test and interpretation of the test results. Moreover, the provision of basic testing rooms was inconsistent across health centres and there was a lack of the basic resources such as a complete test kit and a manual in some heath centres. It also came to light that staff movement might be affecting service delivery.

Assuring quality standards for childminders
The lack of and inconsistency in the qualifications and training of personnel working in early childhood setting has been well documented. Home-based childminders have been specifically mentioned as this was a group who, previously, have been providing an informal child care service. Following recommendations from the Childminding Study (2013), as well as the SABER-ECD Country Report for Seychelles (2013) this project was developed to train childminders, sensitise parents and other stakeholders, and promote childminding national standards.

One-hundred-and-sixteen childminders and assistant childminders were effectively trained to implement the 10 standards.   An experienced-based training model was adopted to run a pre-

registration training programme for childminders based on the national quality standards. Training activities included developing the training programme for childminders and guidelines for the trainers.

Policy level activities consisted of developing promotional materials for the standards and the standards. A media-based campaign on the Quality National Standards for Childminders has been released, leaflets have been distributed, and illustrative posters have been designed and publicly displayed. Although piloting of the national standards has encountered some delays whilst awaiting the registration of childminders, the ground work has been effectively done to raise awareness and facilitate the implementation of the standards.

Impact

The NAP was conceived as a means of initiating action that would extend on the previous plan and show enhance qualitative changes at the level of the sectors but also at a more general level. As part of the wider scope of the ECCE Framework, it can be viewed as a way of focusing on ECCE policies and programmes, detailing best practices and promoting positive attitudes to the importance of the holistic development of children.

Four areas of impact have been identify: changes in knowledge and human resource capacity, changes in working style and working approaches, changes in ECCE provisions and practices, changes in attitude to the plan and ECCE in general.

Knowledge

Technical team members were asked to rate the extent to which they had developed or acquired knowledge and skills through the implementation of the NAP. They had to say whether it was "To a large extent", "To some extent", "To a minimum Extent", or "Not at all". They were also given the option "I don't know".

There were 9 statements as listed in Table 6 and the percentage of members who rated the statements 'To a large extent' has been presented. At the top of the list, it can be seen that more than half of members said that the implementation of the plan had helped them in planning and in acquiring research skills (59.9%). For more than forty percent the plan had prompted them to reflect on ECCE (46.7%), helped them to make group provisions, group discussion and to participate in validation activities (41.2%). The plan has been instrumental in the delivery of quality ECCE services (37.5) in communicating the work that they are doing (29.9%) in self-assessment and reporting (23.5%), with just over twelve percent having had some mentoring experience.

Table 6: Percentage of team members acquiring knowledge and skills

	"To a large extent"
	%
Research skills	52.9
Planning	52.9
Reflection on ECCE	46.7
Making group decisions	41.2
Validation	41.2
Making ECCE provisions	41.2
Delivering quality ECCE services	37.5
Communicating what you are doing	29.9
Self assessment	23.5
Reporting	23.5
Mentoring	12.5

These findings provide provocative evidence of the extent that the NAP has had an impact on the professional development of ECCE Technical Team Members. In addition, specific impact which has been a direct consequence of project implementation can also be enumerated. For example, many projects such as the data management, DDST, early learning programme have the potential to expand the research skills of participants in those particular sectors. Moreover, programmes such as the implementation of an early learning profile, monitoring child development outcome and establishing the risk indicator framework has specialized training components which will further increase the overall knowledge of ECCE. The nature of these projects and programmes encourages group planning, and communication and collaboration with internal and external partners, thus leading to a modification in working approaches.

Working Style

The ECCE Technical Team Members responded the description of several working approaches which have been propagated by IECD in order to develop the "integrated approach" proposed in the SF ECCE. Team members were asked to assess the extent to which each of those approaches had been developed through the implementation of the NAP. The ratings were 'To a large extent', 'To some extent', 'To a minimal extent', 'Not at all', with a 'Don't know' option. In Tables 3 the results have been recorded.

It is clear that all team members agreed that the different working approaches had been developed at least to some extent. Whilst there is almost unanimous agreement (84.2%) about 'Working in collaboration', and more than three-quarters of the respondent endorsed 'Working in partnership' and 'Working meetings', a much lower percentage around fifty admitted that

Table 7: Percentage of respondents rating working approaches

	To a large extent	To some extent	To a minimal extent	Not at all
	%	%	%	%
Working in collaboration	84.2	15.8	00.0	00.0
Working in partnership	78.9	21.1	00.0	00.0
Working meetings	73.7	28.3	00.0	00.0
Collaborative workshop	57.9	36.8	05.3	00.0
Supporting committee	50.0	33.3	00.0	16.7
Coordinating support	47.4	42.1	10.5	00.0

'Supporting Committees' (50%) and 'Coordinating support' (47%) had been developed, at least 'To a large extent' as a consequential result of the implementation NAP. This may be indicating areas in the development of working approaches which may need further attention. Supporting and coordinating committees have not been fully established for a minority of team members (over 16% rating 'Not at all') for 'Supporting Committees' and (over 10% rating 'To a minimal extent') for 'Coordinating Support'.

One of the tasks which IECD undertakes is to establish a working relationship with the ECCE Sectors. Through academic working sessions, supportive committee meetings, participation in joint projects, positive interaction, working approaches have developed and these are recognised by most team members as the analysis above indicate. The underlying intentions qualifying those favourable results can be clarified with the following statements made by ECCE Sector Teams:

> *There have been regular meetings with IECD and regular feedback. The approach has been very professional.* ***Education Sector***

> *IECD has led, guided and assisted the sector to the set targets.* ***Social Affairs Sector***

However, the relationship is evolving and perhaps IECD need to explore a little more with the team members the kinds of collaborative support that they expect as the following statement seems to indicate:

> *There should be more cooperation on both sides and clear instructions of what each partner is expected to do.* ***Community Development Sector***

Relationship with IECD
IECD works closely with sectors in the implementation of projects and for the promotion of ECCE. Through interactions with individuals and sectors IECD has developed a professional relationship with its partners and particularly with the ECCE Technical Team in the ministries or organisations. Ten possible descriptions (Table 2 column 1) of this relationship were presented to the team members and they were invited to answer "Yes" or "No" depending on their views of the relationship with IECD. Table 8 contains the percentage of respondents endorsing that particular description.

From Table 8 four groups of responses can be identified: responses relating to conducive atmosphere in the relationship between IECD and the technical teams and the commitment of IECD in promoting that relationship (the first 3 responses), those referring to the interactive

Table 8 Percentage of respondents saying "Yes"
to relationship description

		%
1	Facilitating	100.0
2	Cooperative	89.5
3	Attentive	73.7
4	Communal	68.4
5	Collegial	66.7
6	Dependable	33.3
7	Interfering	00.0
8	Authoritarian	00.0

professional partnership (responses 3 and 4), one isolated responses (6) which may be signaling the nature of the trust between members of the Technical Team and IECD, and those responses with negative connotations (the last 2 responses). These categories of responses have been formed from a judgment about the high, medium, low percentage of technical team members responding "Yes" to the adjectives describing the relationship between the Sectors and IECD.

In the first category, it is evident that the facilitating role of IECD is appreciated by all (100%). This facilitative role is further qualified by the spirit of 'Cooperation' in working with the sectors and attentiveness of IECD in considering their concerns endorsed by 90 and 75 percent of the respondents, respectively. These results highlight the dominant role of IECD as a catalyst and an enabler in the promotion of ECCE.

'Communal' and 'Collegial' relationship involves the more academic and professional sharing. This can be viewed as a developing relationship where sectors have to link with IECD. It is encouraging to note that around two-thirds (68.4% and 66.7%, respectively) of the respondents admitted to the existence of such a relationship. IECD is an academic institution which needs to be acknowledged and recognised by the various ECCE partners

Item 6 'Dependable' stands out on its own and may be difficult to interpret. However, only one-third of the respondents viewed IECD as 'Dependable'. This is an area for further exploration as this result may be signaling a feeling of malaise and the lack of trust since two-third of the respondents did not endorse this description as part of the relation between IECD and the technical teams.

The most striking feature of those results is that no one endorsed the two negative aspects 'Interfering' 'Authoritarian'. This will be indicating that IECD through its working style has developed a conducive, productive working environment in relating with the ECCE sectors.

Collaboration is a key factor in the implementation of the NAP. Through professional, dynamic interactions with individuals, sectors, organisations and international agencies IECD has been playing a pivotal role in promoting a collaborative working style, and has been engaged in inter-organisational working practices and partnerships.

Impact on Practice
The NAP has been conceived as a national plan to focus on ECCE, expand on, or initiate ECCE programmes and projects, promote ECCE in the country. In order to evaluate possible impact of the NAP on practice and ECCE in general technical team members were asked to rate the level of impact on the five aspects as listed in Table 9 (column 1). The options were "Considerable impact", 'Some impact", "Little impact" and "None at all"

Table 9: Percentage of respondents rating impact of the NAP on practice

	Considerable impact	Some impact
	%	%
Development of ECCE	66.7	33.3
Policy in ECCE	77.8	22.2
Programme development in ECCE	88.2	11.8
ECCE service delivery	82.4	17.6

The results in Table 8 are quite revealing. Nobody endorsed the two lower options for all the three items.

About two thirds (66.7%) and three-quarters (77.85) of the respondents rated the NAP as having had 'Considerable impact' on the development of ECCE and policy dialogue in ECCE, respectively. Remarkable evidence of the pervasiveness of ECCE as a result of the NAP can be gathered from the views of members in the different sectors. The Education Sector described it as "strategic document" which "has led to accomplishment of programmes/projects". The Health Sector considered it as "very relevant to sector plans and policies" The Social Affairs Sector underlined its benefits to "child protection work" as part of the mandate of the sector. The Community Development and Sports Sector commented on the partnership support which has been a direct result of implementing community projects in the NAP. This is further supported by IECD reiteration of the "positive collaboration and improved commitment of the sectors towards ECCE in Seychelles". These illustrative comments bring out the facts behind the figures that the NAP has generated a growing interest in ECCE and a growing recognition by ECCE sectors of the fundamental importance of the policy environment for ECCE and a deeper appreciation of the NAP as a unifying document which brings the sectors together for a common cause.

Also from Table 8, it can be deduced that the NAP has been instrumental in changing the ECCE landscape in Seychelles. It is clear that for a large majority of the technical team members (88.2%) considered that the NAP as having had a major impact on the development of programme. This is not surprising since programmes such as, early learning has been developed and has been systematically monitored, the child protection programme has been extended with the suitability check model, the child health programme has been enhanced with additional tests and reviewed procedures. Similar figures (82.4%) can be noted for "Service delivery". Projects related to childminding standards, profiling early learner, monitoring child development outcome are intended to have a direct bearing on improving service delivery. For "ECCE provision" the percentage figure for "Considerable impact" was slightly lower (76.5%). Perhaps this is reflecting marked progress made in areas such as special needs, the provision of day care facilities and community services but which has not reached fruition.

Attitude to ECCE

The NAP forms part of the strategies for the implementation of SF- ECCE and for the promotion of ECCE nationally. It has been anticipated that through the NAP positive attitudes to ECCE will be reinforced. In order to gauge the attitudes of the ECCE Technical Team about the focal importance of the NAP, they were asked to rate the fit of the NAP to SF ECCE, the relevance of the projects to ECCE development, the role of the NAP in the development of ECCE in frequency with which the NAP was consulted, and the quality of the NAP. The results have been presented in Table 10.

Table 10: Percentage of respondents rating attitudes to the different aspects of the NAP

NAP fits SF ECCE	Very well	Quite well	Don't know
	%	%	%
	77.8	16.7	5.6

Relevance of projects in NAP to ECCE development	All of them	Most of them	Some of them
	%	%	%
	89.5	10.5	0.0

How often NAP is consulted	Often	occasionally	At first
	%	%	%
	52.6	26.3	21.1

Role in the development of ECCE	Major role	Significant role	Minor or no role
	%	%	%
	66.7	33.3	0.0

Quality of NAP	Very high	Quite high
	%	%
	52.6	47.4

Awareness of the relationship between the NAP and SF-ECCE was quite evident. Over three-quarters (77.8%) of the respondents acknowledged that the NAP responds to national concerns as expressed through the main themes of the SF-ECCE. There was only a very small percentage (5.6) of respondents who claimed that they cannot judge the fit between the NAP and SF-ECCE. They were probably newly appointed team members who would need to become acquainted with the SF- ECCE as the NAP was being implemented in their sector.

Moreover, they found that all (89.5%) or most (10.5%) of the projects in the NAP are relevant to the development of ECCE.

Three statements from group discussions provide supporting information with examples in the selected sectors. Work orientation and positive attitudes in the sectors are clearly linked with the NAP and the development of ECCE.

Box1: Group interviews on the relevance of the NAP

The projects are very relevant as they relate to early learning in line with the SELF. The Early Learning Programme will help prepare children for learning at school, the readiness assessment will provide useful information of the competencies of each child when he/she enters crèche, and the Profile will help with early intervention and sharing of relevant information when children enter the school system. *Education Sector*

It is very relevant to our sector plan and policies.
For instance, for the special aids project it is in line with the ECCE motto – 'no child should be left behind' as it involves children with special needs. *Health Sector*

Very relevant, it will benefit child protection work, vulnerable children and families. In line with mandate of the sector and the projects have original dimensions away from the routine activities of the sector. *Social Affairs Sector*

An interesting indicator of changing attitude to ECCE relates to the spread of the reputation of the NAP and how it is used within sectors. This is captured through the views of Team Members on the role of the NAP in the development of ECCE, the NAP as a quality document and the frequency of consulting the NAP.

The impression we gain from the responses to the last three items in Table 9 is that the NAP has been seen as a useful and well appreciated document in the ECCE Sectors. Two- thirds (66.7%) of team members expressed that the NAP has played a 'Major role' in the development of ECCE in Seychelles with the other third admitting that the NAP has played a 'Significant role'. This is understandable since there are other advocacy initiatives, awareness raising activities, promotional campaigns targeting ECCE. Also as noted by IECD, the current NAP has taken a new departure in its approach which needs to be further tested and consolidated. Nevertheless, the NAP was judged as a document of very high (52.6%) or quite high quality (47.4%) and about three-quarters of team members claimed they consulted the NAP, at least, occasionally, in the course of their work. However consultation of the NAP needs further emphasis. It is clear that just under one-third (21%) of respondents consulted the NAP 'At First', perhaps when the NAP was being launched or at the beginning of projects when initial references were made.

Summary and Comments

The NAP has become a binding document for ECCE sectors. It provides strategic directions for selected key priority areas in SF- ECCE. A wide array of projects as an integral part of the plan has been designed and this has provided a rich field of experience that has shaped the responsibilities of participating sectors and expanded their roles in ECCE provisions.

An evaluation of the NAP has been carried out using a generic model to assess relevance, outcome and impact. Three main methods have been used to make judgment about the achievements of the NAP in a manner that is congruent with the multi-sectoral approach and the promotion of ECCE nationally as espoused in SF- ECCE. The specific methods were: questionnaire administration, group interviews and document review.

Relevance
Five main Priorities have been addressed and their relevance to the ECCE aspirations of Seychelles can be summarised under eight thematic areas:

1. Strengthening the Policy Environment through Data Availability
The lack of data for monitoring and reporting on ECCE has been a major concern. The DDST Project explored the use of available data to assess child development outcome whilst developing a policy dialogue on the administration of the screening test with a view to improving the accuracy of the data collection procedures and recording. For the Data Management Project a situational analysis has been carried out in the Health Sector and the underlying need to standardize procedures for collecting data at the point of service delivery, centralize the data, and build capacity to capture and analyse the data has been highlighted.

2. Quality Access and Community Participation
With the increasing focus on the 0-3 age group, three community projects have been extended to provide quality access to day care facilities, to promote the use of community centres for children and to expand on community programmes. A fully-operational Day Care Centre based on international standards has been constructed for communities in the North of Mahé, and renovated and extended facilities has been provided with the relocation of another Day Care in the Central Region of the island. As a means of improving childminding services through community facilities, the Kids Gathering Initiative has been reviewed to attract more childminders and increase the participation of children. Also, complementary physical developmental activities for children aged 9 months to 4 years have been included through the Baby Gymnastic Programme and improved performance of ninety-five percent of the children and the satisfaction of the participating parents has been reported.

3. Promoting Early Learning
Concentrated attention to the crucial importance on early learning led to three diverse projects: the development of a comprehensive document, The Seychelles Early Learning Framework followed by a provocative pilot study of an early learning programme in Day Care Centres and concurrently the trialing out of a profiling system to track children's early learning and development outcome.

4. Early Detection and Intervention
The necessity for early detection which would lead to early intervention cannot be overemphasized in the development of children and some targeted attention has been given from three perspectives, the education, health, and social. An early learning assessment was carried out in preparation for Crèche Education. Health Screening was piloted in five regional crèches and one private one school. The rolling out of this project should prove useful for health and education professionals to identify the children with risk factors for early intervention, and valuable for receiving schools to facilitate the teaching and learning process and to ensure healthy development of the child. The RIF is a multi-disciplinary tool aimed at identifying children who are at risk and in need at a very early stage so that they receive timely assistance and services. This project was revived through an audit to gain multi-agency commitment and develop a plan to implement the assessment and referral form.

5. Developing Child Protection Programmes – Social Affairs Sector
As a potential measure to reduce the risk of neglect and abuse from adults working with children and to assist in creating a safe and supportive environment where children can thrive, a suitability check system has been established for childminders in the first place. This may be the precursor of initiatives to screen other professionals working with children.

6. Attending to Special Needs – Health Sector
Attending to children with special needs has been a top priority to obtain the necessary materials and tools to launch the project and considerable funds have been made available. Improving functionality of and providing adequate support for children with special needs are goals which should be pursued relentlessly, and this has been reinstituted through the Special Aids Project.

7. Strengthening the Parenting Programme- Social Affairs Sector
The need for a parenting education is quite high on the ECCE agenda. The Parenting Programme in which over one thousand children participated has been assessed through an evaluation study. Nevertheless, careful consideration needs to be given to the necessary resources to expand and extend such a programme.

8. Training and Professional Development-IECD
In order to implement national standards for the childminding services, there has been an urgent need to train childminders on those standards. Although the piloting of the implementation of the national standards has been delayed, the ground work has been effectively done to raise awareness and facilitate the implementation of the standards to monitor quality.

Achievement of Expected Outcomes
Of the 22 "Expected Outcomes" in the NAP, 15 have been considered as having met expectation. Early learning programmes and development profiles have been implemented, special needs intervention have been initiated, procedural requirements for suitability check of childminders have been laid down, community and parental participation have been enhanced through day care provisions, community-based support of childminders and baby gymnastic programme, policy dialogue have been generated for adopting the RIF and reviewing the administration and use of the DDST. Moderate progress has been made towards the achievement of 4 "Expected Outcomes", information sharing processes for the transition of children from day care to crèche are being worked on, ground work has been completed to adopt the RIF, play activities for children enrolled in childminding establishment has begun in one community centre, and childminding standards has been set.

However, there has been substantial limitation in the achievement of the other 3 "Expected Outcomes" and inhibitory factors have been discussed, notably, time limitation which has retarded the development of indicators to establish a baseline for the monitoring of the parental programme which interfered with the evaluative aspect of the project, and international input to kick start the data management project.

Impact
The NAP has had considerable impact within in ECCE sectors. It has increased knowledge and understanding of ECCE within sectors and has encouraged reflection on the ECCE; it has had positive learning responses for members of the technical teams; and has brought into prominence essential research and monitoring skills. Through the collaborative working style sectors have cooperated and shared experiences, exchanged knowledge and consolidated the relationship with IECD. The extensive utility of the NAP has been acknowledged and has given rise to specialized programmes and relevant policy discussion for improved service delivery.

Finance

The planned budget for the NAP has been summarised in Table 11. The largest allocation has been made through Government to Community and Sports Sector for major Day Care Construction Projects. Unfortunately, provisions had not been made through the Government Budget for the other sectors and accessing adequate finance became one of the fundamental challenges in the implementation of the overall plan.

Table 11: Planned budget for the NAP by sector

Sector	Number of Projects	Cost (SCR)
Community Development and Sports	3	7,885,500
Education	2	400,000
Health	2	700,000
Social Affairs	3	301,000
IECD	3	1,810,500
Total	13	10,748,500

However, the overall success of the plan is due to an audacious protracted fund mobilisation exercise carried out by IECD and individual sectors. In collaboration with national partners, financing support was solicited from the Private Sector. Consultative sessions with presentations on the NAP were undertaken for a range of organisations to capture interest, Memorandum of Understanding documents (MOU) were signed and follow-up actions were instigated for the allocation of funds for individual projects in the plan. In addition, through protracted negotiations technical assistance was obtained from the World Bank who also facilitated financing arrangements to support the Data Management Project that required considerable funds - thus inflating IECD's budget requirement.

Nevertheless, the funding challenge remains to:
- Build on the partnership support with local and international partners
- Revise funding processes of the National ECCE Trust Fund
- Increase government budget to provide investment in ECCE
- Set funding levels for ECCE Sectors to implement the next plan

Conclusion

Through this evaluation, convincing and decisive evidence have been gathered to demonstrate that the objectives of the NAP are important for the development of ECCE provision in Seychelles. Through the implementation of the plan, sectoral projects and programmes have been designed and most of them have been successfully completed, collaboration within and between sectors have been strengthened, partnership across sectors have been built or enhanced with potential for capacity building.

Moreover, there is ample evidence throughout the analysis to show that the project-approach of the NAP has been instrumental in yielding formidable results. The plan has been focused on programme development and service delivery addressing issues such as early learning, early detection through profiling, increasing the functionality of children with special needs through the

provision of special aids, child protection suitability check, quality access to community facilities and programmes, assessing parent needs, exploring child development outcome data, developing ECCE indicators for reporting and decision making, and establishing quality standards for childminding services.

The NAP has brought professional, sectoral, international and national benefits. It has established an ECCE focus in the key sectors; it motivated the sectors to initiate actions and strategies that would lead to improved provision for ECCE children and their parents; it facilitated sectoral interchange and interaction. One of the major spin-off effects of the NAP has been the collaborative impetus for widening stakeholders' perspective and extending partnership. It is anticipated that this evaluation would be valuable in planning for ECCE and would provide the impetus to develop the next plan.

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