At the regional ECCE workshop in Honiara, there were two participants from each of the fifteen Forum Pacific Island countries, one representing the government and the other representing the non-government organisations involved in ECCE in their country. These participants contributed information to a matrix which had the following sections: strategy/operational plans, finances, EC development issues for 0 – 3 year-olds, organisational issues, and action that needs to be undertaken by the government/NGOs. This information provides a picture of the current ECCE status quo in the Pacific region in 2007. It should be mentioned here that, in most of the countries, provision for 0 – 3 year-olds is the responsibility of the health authorities, but there is a general feeling among the workshop participants that the education and health authorities should work together for the holistic benefit of children in this age group.

**Cook Islands**

The Cook Islands has a set of Education Regulations, which states that all children who are 3½ years old are eligible to attend pre-school, and strategies are being
implemented to ensure that all do so. The Cook Islands Curriculum Framework (2002: 28)\(^2\) includes ECE and states: ‘The early childhood education curriculum provides guidance for designing and establishing learning environments that are non-threatening, closely linked to the home environment, caring and safe, involving participation of adults in a variety of supportive roles’. There is government funding for ECE, determined by the roll of each centre, most of which are attached to primary schools. The Ministry of Education coordinates monthly meetings for ECE teachers.

**What needs to be done**

While the government has already begun to implement some of its policies, a lot more work is needed to raise public awareness and disseminate information about ECCE, support ECCE teachers and encourage them to become qualified.

**Fiji**

In Fiji, ECCE centres are established by NGOs. However, there is an Action Plan for Implementation of the Recommendations of the 2000 *Report of the Fiji Islands Education Commission/Panel* and the Fiji Ministry of Education’s *Education for All 2015 National Action Plan*, the first goal of which is to expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children. There is also the 2005 Suva Declaration, where Framework 1 targets the child. The Fiji Ministry of Education has formulated a Policy in Early Childhood Education and is currently working on Early Childhood Care, Development and Education Standards (ECCDES) for the 0 – 6 age range (see Chapter 9). The government supplies salary grants for ECE teachers. In the 2007 budget the Salary Assistance was F$550,000.00, the Building Grant was $100,000.00, the Equipment grant was $32,000.00 and the ECE Grant was $50,000.00. Other sources of finance are UNICEF, school management committees, NGOs, communities and donor countries.

Concerning provision for the 0 – 3 year-olds, some local government authorities provide playgrounds and parks, and Ministry of Health clinics are baby-friendly, with nursing and diaper changing facilities.

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2. All the documents mentioned in this chapter can be accessed from: www.paddle.usp.ac.fj.
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What needs to be done

The status of ECCE teachers needs to be regularised and improved. This can be done if the Fiji Government absorbs them into the civil service and pays them a salary according to their qualifications and experience, rather than continuing the current system of salary assistance grants. When it comes to the 0 – 3 age group, a lot more could be done if local authorities and the health and education ministries combined efforts to provide safe, clean and baby-friendly facilities in public places.

Kiribati

ECCE in Kiribati caters for 3 – 5 year-olds and is mostly run by island councils, the churches (the Bahai, the Kiribati Protestant Church, the Catholic Church and the SDA), and private individuals. The council and church schools are often conducted in the village mwaneaba, or meeting house, although some church-run schools in Tarawa have their own premises. The individuals who run schools are trained ECCE teachers and retired primary school teachers, but there is concern about some of these schools as they are run in private homes that do not offer a safe, healthy environment and many are not registered. All three types of pre-school levy fees of varying amounts which are used to pay the teachers. Like Tonga and Vanuatu, Kiribati has no government budget allocation for ECCE.

Government and pre-school operators are working together and teachers are expected to use the national curriculum after attending workshops on how to do so. These workshops have been held on most islands in the group. Most preschools with a small roll follow a multi-age organisation, where children work together but do different activities according to their interest and ability. If there are enough children of the same age, they are grouped according to their age for some activities.

Several years ago, the pre-schools formed KECEA, the Kiribati Early Childhood Education Association. KECEA has had a varied history, sometimes very active, other times less so. One of the things they achieved was to endorse a set of standards relating to fees, safe environments for ECCE centres, teachers’ qualifications, teacher:child ratio and curriculum.
Provision for 0 – 3 year-olds

In Kiribati, workshops for island councillors, pre-school teachers, and community and church leaders were conducted in many villages by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MEYS) and the Ministry of Health and Medical Services, funded by AusAID. The aim was for interested stakeholders to learn how to provide appropriate care, health and a safe learning environment for the children in their community, and to raise awareness of pre-school, rather than primary school, being the first stage of education. An action plan on how to go about establishing play centres for this age group was formulated by representatives from different church denominations.

In addition, KECEA intends to include provision for 0 – 3 year-olds in their plan. They have encouraged urban and island councils to include play areas for young children in public parks and to set up play centres.

What needs to be done

After several years of little progress regarding the improvement of ECCE provision in Kiribati, plans are now taking shape to remedy this. Education Ministry personnel are currently reviewing and refining the ECCE policy, which was written in 2000, but they need assistance to finalise it. At the time of the March 2007 Honiara workshop, a draft policy had been written which includes: the age range (2 – 5), fees, teacher qualifications, curriculum, health and safety, teachers’ responsibilities, resources, relationship with the community, medium of instruction (Kiribati), excursions, assessment and record keeping. Plans for the next few years have also been drafted and include expanding the number of centres; redesigning the one-year course for ECCE teaching at Kiribati Teachers’ College (KTC), first begun in 1996 but discontinued after six years; regularising the registration of ECCE centres; and translating the curriculum into Kiribati (personal communication Bwenaata Baukin, MEYS).

There is also a need to revive KECEA and work with MEYS, as it is felt that together they can play a big part in ECCE development. Another need is a resource centre for ECCE providers.
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Nauru

Nauru has an Educational Strategic Plan (2005 – 2006) which promises to ‘[r]eview existing successful Early Childhood curriculum through a process of backward mapping to ensure continuity with primary education’. The Plan is based on outcomes of students, schools and management team and has three major components: the learning programme, the school support services programme and the management and accountability programme. Finances come from the Republic of Nauru Government, NZAID and AusAID. Government initiatives include community based child care centres for 0 – 3 year-olds, managed by community groups, with funding and parent education and training programmes provided by the government. A national centre coordinator has been appointed to develop a training programme, formulate policies, collect data and monitor the quality of the ECCE programmes offered in the centres. In addition, the government has initiated parent awareness education workshops. These are conducted by teachers, who produced a series of pamphlets called Parent Kits, which touch on many issues of parenting and culture. The workshops are aimed at promoting the concept of community childcare centres and the training of volunteers to be parent teachers or supervisors. The centres are used as outreach centres by the Health department to screen children from birth and provide healthcare services, food and nutritional supplements, immunisation and breastfeeding training for mothers.

What needs to be done

Government needs to take an integrated approach to improving parental involvement in their children’s development and learning, at home and at school. This should include NGOs, the media, and government departments dealing with women’s affairs, youth affairs, and health. More childcare centres and support services are needed, as well as advice and finances from donor organisations.

Niue

With a population of a little over 2,000, Niue runs one pre-school, one primary school and one secondary school. According to the draft Niue EFA National Plan 2003 – 2010, all four-year-olds attend the ECE Centre, which is part of the
primary school, but it is acknowledged that there is room for a lot of improvement in teacher performance. Another problem identified in the Plan is poor sanitation facilities.

**Provision for the 0 – 3 year-olds**

Provision for this age group between 1993 and 1999 was a Mobile Education Unit run by the Government of Niue to serve village play groups. In 2000, the Niue Education Project (NEP), in partnership with Dunedin College of Education and funded by NZAID, began and is still running. According to the draft Niue EFA National Plan 2003 – 2010, the declining child population affects the establishment of play centres.

**Papua New Guinea**

The Papua New Guinea Policy on ECCD is a new policy endorsed by the PNG Government in 2007. It took two years to research, consult and collate, and has an implementation strategy for a term of five years. There is a budget allocation to cover the five years. The current allocation is K500,000. Sadly, the Child Care and Pre-school Association that was established in the 1980s is defunct, so there is no NGO involvement in ECE.

**What needs to be done**

It is important that the Childcare and Pre-school Association be revived, and that the assistance of UNESCO or UNICEF or the Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of basic Education (PRIDE) be sought for this purpose. Secondly, a permanent technical and advisory mechanism for the Government Sectoral Committee as provided for in the 2007 policy needs to be set up.

**The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI)**

The Marshall Islands uses a programme run by the NGO Women United Together Marshall Islands (WUTMI). WUTMI’s affiliated sponsors and partners include the Asia Foundation, the United Nations Development Programme, Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, several government ministries within the RMI Government, the Council of RMI NGOs and the New Zealand
Agency for International Development. WUTMI has 24 chapters in RMI and serves as the voice of women. Other objectives are to support and strengthen Marshallese families, and prepare the younger generation for their role in society. Among its several programmes is Jined im Jemed ilo Kobo: Early Childhood Parent Education (ECPE) 0 – 5 years old. Jined ilo Kobo is a principle upon which Marshallese cultural and social relationships are built. It means that the mother protects and sustains, moulds and shapes. The programme, however, includes fathers and aims to help fathers earn the title of Jined ilo Kobo. Patterned on the Parents as Teachers (PAT) programme, it is an early childhood family education and support programme based on research into brain development and its links to behaviour. Activities include home visits; practical advice; parents’ group meetings and workshops; medical screening to detect potential problems in development; a radio programme on early childhood parenting skills, and a network of resources and services. Over the next five years, WUTMI hopes to secure more funding and expand the programme.

**What needs to be done**

Funds are needed so that the ECPE programme can be expanded to all the outer islands in the Republic.

**Samoa**

In Samoa, the most recent Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture’s (MESC) Strategic Policies and Plan 2006 – 2015 states that: ‘Government will continue to support the development of ECE. Parents, community and development partners are encouraged to continue their current role in the development of ECE’. The vision is: ‘A quality early childhood education for all children between the ages of 3 – 5 in Samoa’ (MESC Strategic Policies and Plan:18).

The Policy Statements for ECE are given below.

- The establishment of one ECE centre in a village will be encouraged.
- The Ministry will explore ways to fund ECE teachers’ salaries.
- Teachers in ECE centres will be encouraged to enrol in ECE programmes offered by the NCECES, USP and the NUS.
• All ECE programmes should be guided by the approved National Curriculum.
• MESC will conduct in-service training for ECE in collaboration with NCECES.
• MESC and NCECES will collaborate in monitoring the quality of ECE centres. (MESC Strategic Policies and Plan:19)

The NGO, the National Council for early Childhood Education in Samoa (NCECES), was established in 1998. Their objectives are to:

• review the ECE Constitution
• provide training for pre-school teachers
• co-ordinate all activities on ECE in collaboration with MESC
• provide education for all children including those with special needs, through qualified teachers
• facilitate community involvement of early childhood education in the community
• increase service providers’ knowledge through creating community awareness of services offered by NCECES
• actively promote principles of the Convention on Rights of Children.

The NCECES Strategic Plan 2006 – 2010 covers provision of in-service and pre-service training, workshops on making resources, conducting ECE awareness programmes, classification of pre-schools according to the Pre-School Standards, and liaising with the Ministry on progress and future plans.

Within NCECES are several organisations, such as religious organisations, that run their own schools, and there are also village schools and private schools that operate independently. All pre-schools are responsible for hiring staff, for school resources, and for the fees paid by parents. A Minimum Standards Guideline has been formulated that all ECE centres must adhere to.

The Ministry worked with NCECES, has reviewed the national pre-school curriculum and plans to hold in-service training workshops for teachers. The curriculum has three sections. Section 1 focuses on the importance of child development; education in the early years; play; teachers, parents and the
community; health and safety issues; and special needs. Section 2 focuses on the child, the community, animals, machines and physical forces. Section 3 includes guidance for staff, safety and record keeping.

All registered ECCE centres are eligible to receive financial assistance from government grants, but as yet the government does not pay teachers’ salaries, although it is considering this. Other funding comes from the Government of Canada and also from JICA, the EU, and the ADB. Links with the Samoa Umbrella for Non-government Organisations (SUNGO) and Komiti Tumama have enabled NCECES to access funds for training.

What needs to be done

Funding is urgently needed to develop learning resources, to run ECCE workshops for professional development, and to improve pre-school facilities. Currently, 40% of pre-schools do not have their own premises, operating in school halls, women’s committee fale and private homes, and the NCECES head office and model school are in need of an upgrade. In addition, it is hoped that the government will find a way to pay teachers’ salaries.

Solomon Islands

The Solomon Islands Ministry of Education is about to finalise the research and formulation of their new ECCE policy, develop standards and regulations and conduct a baseline survey of all ECCE centres. Funding is sourced from the Solomon Island Government Recurrent Budget SI$350,000, UNICEF, NZAID (to finalise the ECCE Policy), PRIDE (Standard and Regulations for Registration and Accreditation), and the EU through its provincial support. Financial support is also provided for sponsorship of ECCE training at the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education and for teachers’ salaries.

Tokelau

Tokelau has a Strategic Plan 2005 – 2006 which includes the strategy: ‘[to] develop standardised curriculum statements for each learning area from ECE to Year 11 adhering to the policies as outlined in the National Curriculum Policy Framework’.
ECCE is covered under the Tokelau National Curriculum Policy Framework, and is financed by the governments of Tokelau and New Zealand.

**Tonga**

It was royalty that initiated ECCE in Tonga; the first centre was established in 1965 following a request by King Taufa’ahau Tupou IV, and the first Tonga Pre-school Association was established following a request from Queen Halaevalu Mata’aho in 1976. It is still going strong.

The Tonga Education Policy Framework (final draft) 2004 – 2019 (p 34), undertakes to appoint an ECCE officer (or officers); conduct a survey of pre-school provision in Tonga; register all pre-school centres; review the ECCE curriculum and develop culturally appropriate learning materials; develop and implement a training programme for early childhood teachers; set up pilot projects for community-based ECCE centres; and develop a policy for provision of subsidies for ECCE education. Subsequently, in 2006, the Tonga Early Childhood Advisory Committee was established. It was formed to consult with all early childhood providers, government stakeholders, church leaders and the MOE Management Committee and develop the ECCE Strategic Plan. The survey was completed in the same year and the Strategic Plan is based on this survey.

Also in 2006, the first ECCE officer was appointed and tasked with the job of working closely with the MOE, NGOs, the Tonga Institute of Education and all other ECCE stakeholders. There are currently six main NGO providers of ECE, who work with the MOE in planning and implementing programmes for all the centres. They each run their own programmes, but in 2007 they combined to support the development of the ECCE Policy Framework, the in-service training and the staff professional team.

Unlike most other PICs, the Tongan government has no budgetary allocation for ECCE. PRIDE funded the ECCE policy development and the in-service training for all the ECCE teachers. Salaries are paid by management committees, churches and communities.
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Tonga raises awareness through the Parents as First Teachers programme (PAFT). This programme targets parents of 0 – 5 year-olds and is implemented through TV, radio and print.

What needs to be done

There is a need to develop ongoing pre- and in-service training programmes to encourage teachers to qualify and bring retired primary school teachers into the system. Development of good quality resources is another area that needs attention. A lot of work needs to be done to increase community participation in ECCE, and funds are needed to provide strong financial support and improve sustainability. Other needs are to improve the organisational structures and management of ECCE, and make the transition into primary school smooth by developing a transition programme. The Education Ministry’s Early Childhood Sector needs a data system, and an ECE curriculum should be developed. Formal support by the government would help to achieve some or all of these.

Tuvalu

The (first draft) of *Tuvalu Te Kakeega II 2005-2015 National Strategies for Sustainable Development* (p 58) states:

> Historically, the Government has not been involved with preschools, but is now considering a more supportive and regulatory role. The Government now provides annual grants for salaries of up to three qualified teachers in each registered preschool, support for preschool infrastructure, and materials have been provided through various donor programmes.

There is a government recurrent budgetary allocation for pre-school teachers’ salaries of $45,924 and a pre-school support allocation of $20,000. In a strategy operational plan 2006 – 2010, designed to set out a phased programme of priority education policy and strategy reform, priority areas for ECCE are: teacher training; improving the existing permanent ECCE centres, all of which are run by their own management committees, at a rate of two centres annually; and developing ECCE curriculum guidelines. Activities which have already been implemented are
the drafting of an ECCE policy, funding two students to study full-time for the ECCE Diploma at USP’s Tuvalu Centre, and improving two centres (the Vaimele Centre on Vaitupu Island and the Funafuti Centre). Currently, the National ECCE Council is working with the ECCE Teachers’ Association to finalise the ECCE policy.

The ECCE Teachers’ Association is very active, meeting monthly at different centres on Funafuti to do their own fund-raising and make teaching resources for the centres at their own expense.

What needs to be done

The upgrading of the existing centres needs to be continued according to plan, and there needs to be more collaboration among NGOs, government, the National ECE Council and other stakeholders so that activities are not duplicated.

Vanuatu

Vanuatu has an Education Master Plan 2000 – 2010, which states:

We intend to introduce vernacular-language education in the early years of the basic-education cycle ... We intend, over a period of ten years or more, to establish community-built and -maintained schools in virtually every village and hamlet, based on Vanuatu’s hundreds of existing kindergartens wherever possible, in which a preparatory year and Grades 1 and 2 will be offered in the local vernacular language. ... This measure will enable the smaller children (ages 5-7) to continue to live in their homes and be taught by a teacher living in the village, known to everyone, and speaking the vernacular language. Teachers will be mature individuals who are respected in the community (e.g., retired teachers, community leaders) and who have completed at least ten years of education (pp 6,7).

Their Corporate Plan 2004 – 2006 (p 7) states: ‘The Government of Vanuatu policy is to provide national access to basic education up to year 8, working towards ten years of education, including two years of Pre School, over the next decade.’
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The Government Strategic Plan, launched in 2006 after the National Educational Summit and in line with the concept of the Vanuatu Education Sector Strategy, includes the following objectives:

- to achieve universal primary school completion
- to strengthen numeracy, literacy and life skills for all children 0 – 8 yrs
- to provide relevant and accessible curriculum materials and assessment systems
- to provide qualified, productive and well-supported teachers for every school
- to strengthen the professional competence of teachers.

There is no budgetary allocation for ECE. In recent years financing has come from UNICEF, the Norman-Kirk Memorial Fund and UNESCO.

Vanuatu has an NGO, the Pri Skul Asosiesen Blong Vanuatu, which plans to (a) have an early childhood centre at Emalus Campus USP by 2008/9, so that students taking ECE courses can use it for their practical training, (b) improve awareness of ECE from 0 – 3 years among teenage mothers, families and the wider community, and (c) encourage the use of the vernacular in centres and the wider community.

Provision for 0 – 3 year-olds

The Pri Skul Asosiesen Blong Vanuatu provides support and training to teenage mothers and caregivers, and raises awareness about ECCE.

Conclusion

These brief ‘snapshots’ of ongoing efforts to improve the provision of ECCE and the participants’ views about what still needs to be done show that efforts are being made to improve provision of ECCE, but that in every country there is still more to be done. More awareness-raising, more financial assistance from governments, better integration of local authorities and NGOs, better training of ECCE teachers, more community participation, and improved data collection will improve the situation. It is encouraging to see what has been achieved, and this workshop has informed, inspired and motivated participants to continue in their efforts.