
EFFECTIVE CROSS- DEPARTMENTAL AND INTER-GOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT:

THE FIRST STEP IN DEVELOPING THE ECD SECTORAL
STRATEGY FOR THE 2024-2029 MEDIUM-TERM
NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN



**national planning
commission**

Department:
The Presidency
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



NPC ADVISORY¹

EFFECTIVE CROSS-DEPARTMENTAL AND INTER-GOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT:

The first step in developing the ECD sectoral strategy for the 2024-2029 Medium-Term National Development Plan

Investment in ECD has multiple positive consequences for development, for equity, for establishing a fair chance for learning in the early grades of schooling, and brings multiple benefits to women, particularly black women, by providing decent jobs, advancing gender equity, and stimulating the local economy.

Ten-Year Review of the National Development Plan 2012-2022²

We anticipate and depend upon parents and caregivers, families and households, faith and community-based organisations, non-government organisations, our traditional healers, the business sector, traditional leaders, government and parliament, international agencies, UNICEF, and other international and UN agencies that they will continue through the implementation of their mandates, to support us in the implementation of this National Plan of Action for Children. This is critical because it is through these partnerships that we can accelerate our efforts to be a country fit for all our children.

President Cyril Ramaphosa³

We call on all South Africans to refocus on the goals of the NDP. Government cannot achieve the goals of the NDP alone but needs the whole of society to partner with it. In its role as an independent advisory body and custodian of the NDP, the NPC strives to mobilise society towards the NDP: Vision 2030, encouraging ownership and implementation of the NDP by all key societal stakeholders.

Ten-Year Review of the National Development Plan 2012-2022, Call to Action⁴

¹ The NPC wishes to thank the many ECD specialists in government, in SALGA, in ECD NGOs, and in ECD research units who have contributed to the development of this advisory by sharing their knowledge and experience, and who contributed painstakingly to earlier drafts of this advisory. This advisory would not have been possible without these contributions.

² NDP, 2023, p.32

³ South Africa's National Plan of Action for Children (NPAC), 2019 – 2024. p 11

⁴ NDP, 2023, p.32

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List of Acronyms

APP	Annual Performance Plan
BELA	Basic Education Laws Amendment Act
COGTA	Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
COS	Conditions of Service
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSG	Child Support Grant
CWP	Community Works Programme
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DDM	District Development Model
DG	Director/s General
DPME	Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation
DSD	Department of Social Development
DPWI	Department of Public Works and Infrastructure
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECDG	Early Childhood Development Grant
ELP	Early Learning Programmes
FFC	Finance and Fiscal Commission
FOSAD	Forum of South African Directors-General
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IF	Institutional Forum
IGF	Intergovernmental Forum
IMC	InterMinisterial Committee
MRR	A methodology that integrates Monitoring, Reporting, and Responding
MSA	Municipal Systems Act
MTP	Medium-Term National Development Plan
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
MTSF	Medium Term Strategic Framework
NDP	National Development Plan (2010 – 2030)
NIDC	National InterDepartmental Committee
NIECD	National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy
NMF	Nelson Mandela Foundation
NPAC	National Plan of Action (for Children)
NPC	National Planning Commission
ORC	Office on the Rights of Children
PDoh	Provincial Department of Health
PED	Provincial Education Department
PEIR	Public Expenditure and Institutional Review for Early Childhood Development
PPT	Project Preparation Trust
SAHRC	South African Human Rights Commission
SALGA	South African Local Government Association

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This advisory has three main purposes:

1. To make a case for a set of **urgent interventions to address challenges in the coordination mechanisms in achieving an integrated Early Childhood Development sectoral strategy** which will inform the draft **2024-2029 Medium-Term National Development Plan (MTP)**. It is the view of the NPC that effective coordination is indispensable to building the necessary base for the design, implementation, and monitoring of a successful integrated ECD Sectoral Strategy. The goal of ensuring concerted action across national departments and spheres of government is paramount to benefitting all children and ensuring equitable access to quality ECD services. It is noted that current structures are not functioning robustly or serving their intended functions.
2. To signal the intention of the NPC to further explore and develop the challenges identified in this case study of ECD, in relation to their **application to other vexing problems of coordination** in government, as one of the major challenges in the building of state capacity.
3. To stress a **'whole of society approach' in our national response to supporting the optimum development of young children**. Government cannot support children alone – nor should it. A national commitment to placing children at the centre of our concerns must be inclusive of all components of society, all levels of government, and all relevant government departments. Work within the DBE in developing an urgent solution for at-scale service delivery which brings government and social partners together to ensure every child is reached by the services they need, is acknowledged. Non-state providers are integral to this solution, and there is much innovation in the sector from non-state actors and learning from these experiences can optimise ECD reach and effectiveness.

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION:

Benefits, Coordination, Capability, Hunger and Legal Framework

In 2010 NDP prioritised ECD, indicating that, the **benefits of intervening early in the lives of children include: better school enrolment rates, retention as well as academic performance, higher rates of high school completion, lower levels of antisocial behaviour, higher earnings later in life and better adult health and longevity**'. It also acknowledged that **'the coordination weaknesses between the different sectors and departments responsible for early childhood development services need to be addressed 'in order to strengthen collaboration'**. This work is now even more urgent.

In this advisory, the NPC explores challenges in inter-departmental coordination, notes the unfortunate tendency to elevate matters requiring coordination to the Presidency, thus overloading this office, and proposes mechanisms for facilitating the resolution of coordination challenges by strengthening existing systems. The following are explored in relation to ECD:

- Formal delegation of responsibility to a lead ministry in respect of a coordination role.
- A coordination facilitating and problem-solving role of the Minister in the Presidency.
- Lead Ministers reporting quarterly to cabinet on a cabinet-approved, and publicly available, plan of implementation for 'coordinated' functions.
- Outcome-based coordination as a mechanism for planning and monitoring functions that require coordination across departments. This requires that DPME plays a key monitoring role to identify what needs to be escalated for strategic discussion at Ministerial level, and the Auditor General audits formal commitments in relation to functions requiring coordination within an outcome-based model as part of the MTSF.

With respect to **coordination of ECD at national level**, the NPC recommends that the Minister in the Presidency should urgently convene the inaugural meeting of a Ministerial ECD working group/ inter-ministerial subcommittee of the Social Protection, Community and Human Development Cabinet Cluster (to be led by the Minister of Basic Education and comprised of DBE, DSD, DoH, DPWI, and COGTA) by the latest by the end of the first quarter of 2024, and preferably earlier in order to meet MTSF timeframes for 2024-9. The FOSAD counterpart to this subcommittee, led by the DG DBE, should prepare the documentation for this meeting.

At provincial level, MEC's responsible for Basic Education and for the development of provincial ECD strategy, together with their colleagues on the provincial Premier-in-Executive-Council responsible for components of ECD, should present the provincial strategy for ECD to the Premier-in-Executive-Council for adoption, and to the provincial IGF for information. Reports on the operationalisation, and progress and challenges in implementation, should be presented to the Premier-in-Executive-Council and to meetings of the provincial IGF on a regular basis. The DG in each province should support the responsible MEC's in making these arrangements for coordination. The MEC's responsible for ECD should work through MEC's for COGTA to streamline communication with municipalities in respect of ECD.

The NPC recommends that policy clarity is provided specifically regarding **future plans for the age at which school attendance is compulsory**, in order for long-term planning to take place. The NPC proposes that, for the foreseeable future, the age of compulsory school attendance should remain as the year in which the child turns 6 (which means that 5-6 year-olds would attend Grade R), as is envisaged in the Basic Laws Amendment Act. At the same time, quality pre-school enrolment of 4-5 year-olds should be strongly encouraged and facilitated by government in order to incrementally achieve universal access for this age cohort. A decision regarding community-based provision for 4-5-year olds before entering school would provide a more educationally and socially appropriate institutional informality for this age group, policy, and planning clarity for both the primary schooling system, and for

non-state providers of early learning programmes; and guidance for budgeting processes in relation to expansion of the grant to support growing universal access for this age group.

The advisory below examines **the legal framework** that gives expression to the Constitutional commitment that 'Every child has the right to basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services and social services.' It is this legal framework that must guide the realisation of these rights, and any gaps and ambiguities must be identified in ECD, accordingly. The legislative basis of these functions must be agreed upon by the provincial and national education departments as the basis for establishing systems and the capacity to implement these systems, and ensuring that the necessary funding follows agreement on the distribution of these functions. This work is being undertaken by the DBE, but working 'interim' agreements must guide the immediate work of developing the 2024-9 ECD sector strategy across the key departments and as the basis of planning in the MTSF in the recommended focus key for ECD of early learning, early nutrition, and family support.

The crisis of child hunger and consequent stunting of children are of particular concern to the NPC and recommendations are made in this regard.

The DBE faces challenges due to the current asymmetry in its **institutional arrangements in relation to its ECD capabilities** at national, provincial and education district levels. Prior to the function shift, the DBE did not have a role in ECD below Grade R, and no substantial working relationships between education districts and municipalities had been needed. With the transfer of the functions for early learning programmes, there is now an urgent need to establish the new set of capabilities and mechanisms required at provincial and education district level in order to interact with the municipalities within each education district. This will require strong leadership at Education District level, led by the provincial and national departments. The 'transfer of the ECD function' means that the ECD is an integral part of the work of districts. Responsible district officials will need to have a different set of skills for engaging with informal service providers at community level. Education officials are accustomed to operating

within an institutional framework that is highly regulated. Supporting communities as partners in developing early learning programmes will require a set of skills more orientated to development. Officials will have to move from a mindset of “we are responsible for providing” to a mindset of “we are responsible for creating an enabling and supportive environment for our partners in the sector to provide”. This is a massive mindset change that needs to happen all the way from the top to the bottom.

It may be useful to undertake a detailed assessment of the extent to which the administrative functions are adequately resourced **across all departments and spheres of government** at national, provincial and district levels (with appropriate qualifications, skills, expertise, and tools of trade). Consideration could then be given to identifying any need for additional technical capacity. This review of specialist skills is important for all departments central to delivery of ECD. Without **building capacity and capability** to plan and execute key functions the challenges of centering ECD in the work of all departments, efforts to improve coordination mechanisms will not succeed.

CONSOLIDATED LIST OF ALL RECOMMENDATIONS MADE IN THIS ADVISORY

These recommendations function as the focus of the ensuing advisory. The NPC is cognisant that this advisory is detailed and wide-ranging and will be read by a broad range of stakeholders with different interests and for different purposes, and with different needs for the detail informing the recommendations.

Note: Page references for the recommendations are provided within the text below, so that readers can navigate to the relevant section for the evidence-base and reasoning which inform the recommendations that are of interest to them. Some main points are reiterated to enable readers’ focus, navigation, and selection. We recommend:

1. Urgently Consider and Implement Key Recommendations for Improving Cross-Department Coordination of Planning for ECD before finalising the Sectoral Strategy on ECD which will inform the 2024-2029 Medium-Term National Development Plan (MTP). (p. 15)

- 1.1. Outdated and unworkable policy arrangements regarding coordination are hampering progress in coordination, and a clear national strategy is needed to guide provincial strategies and plans.
- 1.2. The sector strategy for ECD for 2024-9 must be collaboratively developed and must belong to all key departments of DBE, DoH, DPWI, DSD, and COGTA rather than being located solely within the DBE.

2. Child Hunger (p. 29)

- 2.1. Urgent action is required to address the immediate crisis and to reduce the severe long-term health-related and cognitive consequences of malnutrition for children.
- 2.2. In the coordinated work of developing an ECD Sector Strategy across Health, Social Development and Basic Education, it is imperative that a coherent strategy be developed to address child hunger, with realistic strategies for implementation which are monitored throughout the implementation period, and with indicators to measure progress and respond timeously to challenges identified.

3. Age of Commencement of Compulsory Schooling (p. 32)

- 3.1. The NPC proposes that, for the foreseeable future, the age of compulsory school attendance should remain as the year in which the child turns 6 (which means that 5–6 year-olds would attend Grade R) as is envisaged in the Basic Laws Amendment Act (BELA). Policy certainty is required in this regard for planning purposes.
- 3.2. At the same time, quality pre-school enrolment of 4–5 year-olds should be strongly encouraged and facilitated by government with the goal of achieving universal access to early learning programmes.

4. Recognition of the role and reach of non-state providers of early learning programmes is essential to accelerating our ELP goals (p.34)

- 4.1. The critical importance and urgency of effective collaboration with, and pro-poor targeted support for, non-state providers in early learning must be an urgent priority if we are to extend the reach to all children of participation in learning programmes. An urgent solution is needed for at-scale service delivery, which brings government and social partners together to ensure every child is being reached by the services they need. Non-state providers are integral to this solution.
- 4.2. New forms of public-private partnership are required with appropriate institutional arrangements and systems for robust governance, effective implementation, and proper monitoring. In the immediate-term, the government will have to build these institutional arrangements and ensure that they are a coherent part of the overall coordinating and accountability framework.
- 4.3. A full analysis of the new institutional arrangements required at national and provincial levels for ECD public-private partnerships will need to be undertaken together with a consideration of how these should interface with coordinating mechanisms.
- 4.4. Accelerating registration of ELP centres is an urgent priority.
- 4.5. The DBE's consideration of extending a form of the National School Nutrition Programme to unregistered centres, should be further explored.
- 4.6. Any consultative or coordinating mechanisms for ELP centres must recognise the significance of the scale of non-state providers in these arrangements.

5. Achieving Consensus for Legislative Mandates for Priority ECD Functions (p. 40)

- 5.1. It is recommended that an ECD Ministerial Working Group convened by the Minister of Basic Education considers recommending to Cabinet that interventions in early nutrition, early learning, and family support are prioritised as key areas of focus for the ECD Sector Strategy for 2024-29.

- 5.2. This is an urgent priority requiring supportive leadership from the Minister in the Presidency, and is a necessary first step in developing the Integrated and Coordinated ECD Sector Strategy for 2024-9.
- 5.3. It is recommended that each of the departments supporting these priorities review and confirm its legislative mandate, particularly at the different spheres of government as a basis for clear agreement on roles and responsibilities in the coordination process at different levels.
- 5.4. The legislative mandates for these areas at different levels of government must be agreed by the Ministerial Working Group and gaps must be identified.
- 5.5. This may assist the DBE in fast-tracking the legislative work already underway. If support is given to the proposed legislative amendments and these gazetted for public comment, it could be possible for the legislation to be tabled in Parliament immediately post-election, and enacted in 2025.

6. Inter-Ministerial Coordination (pp. 45)

- 6.1. The Minister in the Presidency should urgently convene the inaugural meeting of the inter-ministerial ECD working group (comprised of DBE, DSD, DoH, DPWI, and COGTA) by the latest in first quarter of 2024, and preferably earlier in order to meet MTSF timeframes for 2024-9. The agenda for this meeting which, with its documentation, should be prepared by the DBE for consideration, and should include:



- 6.1.1. Agreement that the inter-ministerial ECD working group will be led by the Minister of Basic Education, and that the FOSAD counterpart will be convened by the DG DBE.
- 6.1.2. Discussion and agreement on a process and time frame to agree on the legal responsibilities of each department
- 6.1.3. Discussion and Proposed Priority areas of focus for the joint ECD Strategy for 2024-9⁵
- 6.1.4. Agreement on the joint development of the 2024-5 ECD sector strategy within the necessary time frames.
- 6.1.5. Discussion on outcome-based coordination as a useful mechanism for planning and monitoring functions that require coordination across departments.
- 6.1.6. Discussion on time-frames and a process for the development of a public plan of implementation for ECD for approval by cabinet, and subsequent quarterly reporting.
- 6.1.7. Agreement that the Minister of Basic Education will report quarterly to Cabinet on the cabinet-approved plan of implementation for 'coordinated' functions.
- 6.2. The implementation of this recommendation will require ongoing alignment with any new re-configuration of executive portfolios and departments.
- 6.3. The IMC in the NIECD plan should be considered redundant. The Ministers may prefer to call the ECD Ministerial Working Group an "Inter-Ministerial Committee" (IMC) for ease of historical continuity.

7. Arrangements for Inter-Departmental Coordination of ECD at National Level (pp. 46 – 47)

- 7.1. Section 17 will recommend that officials from the three key departments meet quarterly to review progress against the

agreed indicators and implementation plan. Where ministerial deliberation is required to find resolution to challenges identified, the responsible officials should prepare a consolidated report for processing by their DG before meetings of the Ministers. This would include identifying targets which may be at risk of not being met.

- 7.2. These processes should be supported by routine, issue-based, horizontal working relationships between units working on intersecting issues, as and when these are required and should be initiated by the relevant officials operating rigorously within appropriate delegation and reporting frameworks.
- 7.3. If the recommendation is accepted, then the IMC envisaged in the NIECD should be considered redundant.
- 7.4. Departments could consider nominating 'ECD leads' within each department nationally, provincially (and at local level, where possible) who have the flexibility to operate across departments at different levels.

8. Provincial Executive Coordination of ECD (p. 48)

- 8.1. MEC's responsible for Basic Education and for the development of a provincial ECD strategy, together with their colleagues on the provincial Premier-in-Executive-Council responsible for components of ECD, should present the provincial strategy and implementation plan for ECD to the Premier-in-Executive-Council for adoption, and to the provincial IGF for information.
- 8.2. Reports progress and challenges in implementation, should be presented to the Premier-in-Executive-Council and to meetings of the provincial IGF on a regular basis.
- 8.3. The DG in each province should support the responsible MECs in making these arrangements for coordination.

⁵ The PEIR report proposed the following immediate priorities: (1) Early learning interventions (ECD programmes and pre-primary programmes); (2) Family support interventions (social assistance transfer programmes targeted to children; caregiver education about early stimulation, growth, and development; childcare and child protection services); and (3) Early nutrition interventions (complementary feeding; adequate, nutritious, and safe diet; and micronutrient supplementation and fortification).

9. Institutional Arrangements for Coordination of ECD at Municipal Level and for Provincial – Municipal Coordination (p. 49)

- 9.1. Rather than creating an additional inter-governmental forum (IGF) between provinces and municipalities, or creating District IGF to 'promote and facilitate intergovernmental relations in the governance and implementation of early childhood development services', metros and districts may wish to consider including ECD matters on the agenda of the existing IGF or – on other fora established for coordination - when substantive matters arise which require strategic deliberation.
- 9.2. The existing MUNIMEC structures might be the best vehicle for MECs responsible for ECD to work with COGTA MEC's to communicate with municipalities

10. Role of COGTA (p. 52)

- 10.1. Clarity is required in relation to the role of COGTA in respect of ECD. The proposed inaugural meeting of the ECD Inter-Ministerial Working Group to be led by the Minister in the Presidency would be an important first step in pursuing this.
- 10.2. In order for COGTA to play its role, when agreed, in ECD, its organisational structure may need to be reviewed so that there is specific line accountability within COGTA for the exercise of its oversight responsibilities in relation to the promotion of the development of local government capacity to perform their functions and to manage their responsibility for ECD in general - and the development of facilities for early learning programmes in particular - especially in relation to any functions allocated in terms of Section 90 of the Children's Act.
- 10.3. Legislative clarity would need to be accompanied by engagements with National Treasury with respect to the 'funds follow function' principle

11. Guidelines for including ECD in the development of IDP and participation IDP processes (p. 54)

- 11.1. The DBE, together with the departments of Health, Social Development and Public Works and Infrastructure, should as an urgent priority, work with COGTA and SALGA to develop a set of guidelines for municipalities – an ECD 'Strategy Guideline for Municipalities'. This guideline should provide not only legal and procedural clarity regarding the role of municipalities in ECD (in its holistic sense, beginning from conception), but should also advocate for a developmental role for municipalities in putting children at the centre of IDP planning.
- 11.2. Given the importance of community participation in the development of IDP, the DBE, together with the Health, Social Development and Public Works and Infrastructure, should consider producing guidelines for community activists and service providers with an interest in ECD to assist them to participate in the IDP planning process.

12. Municipal Buildings and ECD (p. 58-59)

- 12.1. Given that ELP centres (and other ECD) are provided by private persons (and may receive a government subsidy for operational costs), SALGA should consider developing guidelines to support municipalities with the legal frameworks of private persons using municipal buildings for ELP centres or other ECD or ELP facilities.
- 12.2. Municipalities are to be encouraged to respond to community requests for the establishment of ELP centres or other ECD or ELP infrastructure as part of integrated development planning, and to include provision of sites in their IDP planning.
- 12.3. Where private providers (usually entrepreneurial women) provide ELP opportunities for children, the municipality should provide support beyond 'generally what a municipality would do in respect of any facility that operates in its jurisdiction e.g., a retail shop' in recognition of the valuable community service being provided.

12.4. In the work going forward, innovative funding models for the provision of ECD infrastructure should be explored – including nationally provided state grants given on the basis of clear legal agreements at municipal level regarding the use of this infrastructure including pro-poor targeting.

13. Institutional Arrangements for Inter-Departmental Coordination at Municipal Level (p. 62)

- 13.1. The Integrated Development Plan (IDP) should be the primary mechanism for planning of ECD at municipal level.
- 13.2. Key departments must participate as stakeholders in the representative fora and platforms of the IDP processes (including DDM).
- 13.3. The DBE, DSD, and DoH might consider influencing the inclusion of planning for ECD and ELP centres nationally at local level by engaging the 'Joint Reporting Forum for Local Government' (co-chaired by Treasury and COGTA) to seek the inclusion of an ECD target for local government in the agreed set of key indicators.
- 13.4. Agreement across departments on the indicator to be proposed could be a priority task of the MTSF planning process outlined in Section 17.
- 13.5. Guidelines should be developed to guide continuous service delivery matters requiring coordination at Municipal Level. These should be developed consultatively, based on a review of existing practice, and be informed by principles guiding routine coordination.

14. The Role of the DBE in Advancing ECD and ELP at Municipal Level (p. 64)

- 14.1. The DBE and PED should invest in the development of a new set of capabilities and orientations for education district officials to play a development role in relationships with municipalities and their development forums, and with community-based providers of ELP.
- 14.2. Deliberate steps should be taken by municipalities to engage ECD stakeholders between March and May each year, when the annual IDP is open for consultation.

14.3. The DBE and PDE should provide district officials with the necessary guidelines and an agenda for consideration of the inclusion of ECD and ELP in IDP processes in particular.

14.4. The DBE and PDE should invest in guidelines to support those participating in IDP processes as the key mechanism for integrating ELP and ECD consideration into development planning at municipal level.

14.5. The DBE may wish to consider, where this is necessary, improving the alignment between education districts and circuits with the boundaries of municipalities to facilitate optimum working relationships.

14.6. Education District Directors should lead the processes of municipal engagement at District level in respect of inserting provision for Centres providing Early Learning Programmes into IDP processes. This would include ensuring that ECD and ELP issues are agenda items in the DDM or District IDP Representative Forum meetings, and in ensuring participation in sectoral forums and in quarterly IDP Mayors forums.

14.7. District Directors and Circuit Managers should, in particular, seek to establish working relationships with the IDP managers in the municipalities within the district.

15. Inter-sectoral Forums and ECD (p. 67)

15.1. Mechanisms for coordination with civil society must be cognisant of:

15.1.1. The considerable dependence of the state on non-state providers of Centres providing Early Learning Programmes prior to the commencement of formal schooling.

15.1.2. The role of non-state parties in design, delivery, and financing of Centres providing Early Learning Programmes.

15.1.3. The strategic resource of institutions and NPO with valuable technical expertise.

15.2. Consideration should be given to the development of a focused strategy that recognises the distinct and complementary role of these components.

- 15.3. The critical importance and urgency of effective collaboration with, and pro-poor targeted support for, non-state providers in early learning must be an urgent priority if we are to extend the reach to all children of participation in learning programmes, and hence, accelerating registration of ELP centres is an urgent priority.
- 15.4. Any consultative or coordinating mechanisms for Centres providing Early Learning Programmes must recognise the significance of the scale of non-state providers in these arrangements.

16. The MTSF framework as a coordinating mechanism (p. 72)

- 16.1. Consideration should be given to addressing the following findings in the PEIR report by using the MTSF framework as a coordinating mechanism:
- 16.1.1. Linkages between planning, budgeting and ECD outcomes (including over time and across provinces) are weak and must be addressed.
- 16.1.2. The lack of integrated planning and budgeting results in inadequate funding levels and disparate funding flows, particularly for areas which span multiple departments, such as nutrition which spans across the education, health, and social development sectors.
- 16.2. It is proposed that the existing institutional arrangement of the MTSF be used as the integrating framework and the basis for detailed planning. The MTSF is intended to promote alignment, coordination, and ultimately full integration of all development planning instruments into an integrated framework bearing results without duplication, role conflict and development contradictions, and with better coordination of implementation.
- 16.3. In order to facilitate and coordinate ECD planning and reporting, two options are proposed:
- 16.3.1. A single MTSF goal for ECD which integrates the contributions of all departments

16.3.2. ECD continuing to be a component of department-specific MTSF process – but with a transversal synthesis of ECD components to facilitate joint reporting on ECD.

- 16.4. In either option, with the support of DPME, it is proposed that the DBE work with all departments central to ECD on an outcome-driven framework for the ECD implementation plan based on the jointly agreed Sectoral Strategy for ECD for 2024-9 and MTSF commitments so that the components, for which individual departments would take responsibility cohere into a sufficiently comprehensive ECD strategy for the country with shared sense of responsibility across departments for the achievement of the goals and its outcomes.
- 16.5. It is strongly recommended that the Auditor General (AGSA) plays a role in formulating commitments and then in auditing these in the outcome-based model of coordination in the MTSF.
- 16.6. The frequency of joint review of progress in respect of the interventions, including joint problem-solving should be determined. It is recommended that this be quarterly with the dates being scheduled in advance.
- 16.7. This process is urgent as it must inform the development of provincial strategies and plans.

17. Red Tape Reduction in ECD (p. 74)

- 17.1. The DG for DBE must ensure that the multiple departments involved in registration of Early Learning Programmes are collectively briefed by the Presidential Red Tape Reduction (RTR) ECD focus area team, and that clear decisions are taken and acted upon to implement the recommendations made and agreed upon within an agreed specified time. This must include the role of COGTA in taking forward the work of the ECD focus area group in the RTR process by producing the necessary frameworks, including regulatory, to expedite streamlined processes of the registration of ELP centres at municipal level.

17.2. Progress on meeting the targets should be reported to the Social Protection, Community and Human Development Cabinet Cluster or a meeting of the relevant departments convened for this purpose.

18. Recommendation: Strengthening Capacity for the Coordination Role in the DBE (p. 76)

Some of the capabilities that the DBE could consider strengthening for optimum functioning of its coordinating role include:

- 18.1. Coordinating the combined ECD MTSF process.
- 18.2. Supporting the Implementation of the NIECD at all levels of government.
- 18.3. Engaging non-state players in meaningful partnerships regarding the implementation of the NIECD including:
- 18.4. Driving a national communication strategy on ECD
- 18.5. Supporting the Office on the Right of the Child (ORC) in its responsibilities in relation to ECD
- 18.6. Convening key parties to participate in fora in pursuit of the above.



ADVISORY

1. Purposes of this Advisory

The advisory does NOT examine the content of the ECD strategy which is in the process of development by the DBE at national and provincial levels. The excellent work being done by the DBE is applauded -especially:

- The proposed Early Childhood Development Service Delivery Model and, in partnership with Treasury and a range of stakeholders, the progress being made on development of a 'publicly planned and publicly coordinated mixed provisioning model'.
- The work on legislation to guide work in ECD including the amendments to the Children's Amendment Bill, and the ECD legislative and regulatory review.
- Substantial Progress in digitisation of records.
- Establishing an electronic management information system for ELP centres.
- The ongoing review of the National Integrated ECD Policy which, once complete, has the potential to achieve strategic alignment across departments and to agree on goals and deliverables.
- Work on public-private partnerships.

The purposes and orientations of this advisory are threefold, and bear reinforcing, as they impact on the recommended strategies for progress:

Firstly, to make a case for a set of urgent interventions **to address challenges in the coordination mechanisms for an integrated Early Childhood Development strategy**. It is the view of the NPC that this effective coordination is indispensable to building the necessary base for the design, implementation, and monitoring of a successful Integrated ECD Sectoral Strategy for 2024 - 2029. This strategy requires a coordinated system which is made up of various state and non-state actors and functions, encompassing planning, coordination, delivery, the necessary infrastructure, effective regulation, systematic monitoring which enables timeous responses to challenges identified, which includes appropriate support at all levels, and which is adequately funded. The goal of ensuring

concerted action for the benefit of all children and ensuring equitable access to quality ECD services, is paramount.

Secondly, the advisory signals the intention of the NPC to further explore and develop the challenges identified in this case study of ECD in relation to their application to other vexing problems of coordination in government, as one of the major challenges in the building of state capacity.

The third purpose is to stress a **‘whole of society approach’ in our national response to supporting the optimum development of young children.** Government cannot support children alone – nor should it. A national commitment to placing children at the centre of our concerns must be inclusive of all components of society, all levels of government, and all relevant government departments. This must be reflected in arrangements for coordination which must recognise the necessity of partnering with non-state actors and accessing their considerable capacity and resources to bring change in caring for all of our children – particularly the most vulnerable – and their contribution to creating a repository of knowledge about what works in achieving positive outcomes for children⁶. There is much innovation in the sector from non-state actors and learning from these experiences can optimise ECD reach and effectiveness.

The ‘Call to Action’ made by the NPC in 2023 could not be more appropriate than in an area like ECD:

Guided by the vision of change that informs the NDP, the NPC is convinced that for the goals of the NDP to be achieved, a comprehensive, coordinated, multisectoral approach to development is required. Such an approach must

include partnerships between civil society, the private sector, government, and academia. (p. 3)

2. Why this Advisory is Urgent

The recommendations in this advisory for improving what are largely dysfunctional mechanisms for cross-department and intergovernmental coordination, currently, should urgently inform the processes of developing the **Sectoral Strategy on ECD** which will feed into the draft **2024-2029 Medium-Term National Development Plan (MTP)**. Without clear processes of coordination across key departments, we will not achieve an integrated sectoral strategy for ECD for the next administration. If the development of an ECD strategy for 2024-2029 is seen as the responsibility of Basic Education alone, and is not collaboratively developed with the departments with which it shares responsibility for ECD, we will not have a comprehensive and integrated ECD strategy in South Africa for 2024-9.

The sector strategy for ECD needs to be collaboratively developed and must belong to the key departments of DBE, DoH, DPWI, DSD and COGTA rather than being located solely within the DBE.

Given that provincial education departments are responsible “for a provincial strategy aimed at a properly resourced, co-ordinated, and managed early childhood development system⁷”, and given that the bulk of the administrative work for ELP centres is located at provincial level, it is particularly important that the ECD sector strategy developed collaboratively by the key national departments informs the development of provincial strategies and plans across the contributing departments as soon as possible.

⁶ Interesting work is being done by the Hollard Foundation on community mobilisation, and of parents of children in Early Learning Programmes in particular, to support women providing Early Learning Programmes. This work, and the guidelines it generates, could usefully inform strategies of the DBE at local level. This initial work is focused on ELP centres in rural areas.

⁷ Clause 92(2)(b) Children’s Act, 2005

Recommendation: Urgently Consider and Implement Key Recommendations for Improving Cross-Department Coordination of Planning for ECD before finalising the Sectoral Strategy on ECD which will inform the 2024-2029 Medium-Term National Development Plan (MTP).

- Outdated and unworkable policy arrangements regarding coordination are hampering progress in coordination, and a national strategy is needed to guide provincial strategies and plans.
- The sector strategy ECD for 2024-9 must be collaboratively developed and must belong to all key departments of DBE, DoH, DPWI, DSD, and COGTA rather than being located solely within the DBE.

3. A Note on Definitions

This advisory must define the terms it uses in relation to early childhood development, the institutional arrangements for early learning programmes, and the age ranges covered. It is noted that the PEIR⁸ report indicated that:

‘there is a lack of consensus about the definition of ECD across key departments (including the age ranges to focus on and the specific interventions to be included), which tends to derail conversations during meetings’ (2023, p.124).

This attempt to provide working definitions for clarity within this advisory in no way intends to suggest that these terms should continue to be used, but are offered to help the reader navigate this advisory without confusion or ambiguity.

EARLY CHILDHOOD - The National Integrated ECD Policy⁹ (NIECD) defines early childhood as ‘the period of human development from birth until the year before a child enters formal school’ (p.11). For the purposes of this advisory, **early childhood refers to the period of human development from conception to when the child turns 6 years old.**

These amendments are made to the NECD definition because:

- It is generally accepted that development begins from conception and that pregnancy is a developmentally sensitive period warranting special care.
- The legislative framework provides that compulsory education begins from the year in which the child turns 6 years of age.

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (ECD) is ‘the process of emotional, cognitive, sensory, spiritual, moral, physical, social and communication development of children from birth to school-going age’¹⁰. It includes, inter alia, nutrition, health, social and education components. Because ECD encompasses a breadth of development beyond education, it is vital that a range of state departments with functions that contribute to the wellbeing of young children, are considered as role-players in early childhood development. Much of the focus of this advisory is on the coordination of support for this holistic concept of early childhood development across functions and levels of government.

EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMME (ELP). This advisory will use ELP to refer to **a facility that provides an early childhood programme with a learning/ educational focus for children up until the year before they enter Grade R/formal school.** ELP are one component of ECD and focus on the learning component of ECD. This definition is adapted from the NIECD (205 p.11) which uses this definition in relation to Early Childhood Development (ECD) Centres.

This advisory will not use the term ECD to refer to Early Learning Programmes as this reinforces the perception that ECD is a term that applies predominantly to education interventions. When ECD is used to refer to ELP, it functions to reinforce the dominant perception that ECD relates to early learning rather than the range of interventions required to support child development from birth.

⁸ The Public Expenditure and Institutional Review for Early Childhood Development (PEIR) was conducted by the DBE and the World Bank and was published in 2023

⁹ The National Integrated ECD Policy (NIECD) was adopted by Cabinet in 2015

¹⁰ Children’s Act 2005, 91(1).

The PEIR report defines ECD programmes as ‘a crèche, pre-school, day mother, home-based play groups, **grade R and the lower grades of primary**, **but Grade R and the lower grades of primary are not included in the use of ELP centres in this advisory, nor are non- centre-based services which include play groups, toy libraries, child-minders and mobile ECD.** ELP fall within the statutory responsibilities of the Minister of Basic Education, and registered Centres for Early Learning Programmes particularly so¹¹.

The advisory uses ELP Centres to refer specifically to formal **registered Centres for Early Learning Programmes.** Conflation of ECD with ELP in the way the terminology is used, sometimes confuses this distinction, and constrains coordination and communication.

4. A Preliminary Note on Cross-Department Responsibility for ECD

This distinction above between ECD (as a holistic, integrated concept) and ELP is important. The Children’s Act makes the Minister of Basic Education responsible for ELP, but the Minister is only one of several Ministers responsible for ECD. Effective coordination of ECD is their joint responsibility, under the leadership of the Minister of Basic Education. Presidential Proclamation 21 of 2021, by allocating, inter alia, Chapter 6 of the Children’s Act to the Minister of Basic Education confers on her the responsibility of developing a ‘Strategy concerning Early Childhood Development’. Clause 92(1) provides that:

“The Minister [of Basic Education], after consultation with interested persons and the Ministers of [Social Development], Finance, Health, Provincial and Local Government and Transport must include in the departmental strategy a comprehensive national strategy aimed at securing a properly resourced, coordinated and managed early childhood development system, giving due consideration as provided in section 11, to children with disabilities or chronic illnesses”.

Section 91 (1) of the Children’s Act defines ECD thus:

“Early childhood development, for the purposes of this Act, means the process of emotional, cognitive, sensory, spiritual, moral, physical, social and communication development of children from birth to school-going age”.

This gives the Minister of Education the overarching responsibility for coordination of ECD broadly (including national policy and planning, and regulation of all types of ELP programmes); while the departments of Health, Social Development and COGTA remain responsible for certain service areas such as maternal and child health, nutrition, and social protection and for ensuring that municipalities perform their functions. These Ministers are individually responsible for including these responsibilities in their departmental strategies, and for ensuring that the achievement of these strategies are appropriately resourced, and effectively monitored.

While the Minister of Basic Education is responsible for a comprehensive national strategy, Clause 92(2)(b) of the Children’s Act provides that provincial education departments must, within the national strategy, “provide for a provincial strategy aimed at a properly resourced, coordinated, and managed early childhood development system”. Again – ‘partner’ departments at provincial level would be responsible for strategies, resources, and monitoring for functions within their remit.

Effective coordination across government departments and spheres of government is crucial to effective planning, delivery, and monitoring of ECD. This includes the development of a sector strategy for ECD.

¹¹ Section 91 (3) of The Children’s Act defines an early childhood development programme as ‘a programme structured within an early childhood development service to provide learning and support appropriate to the child’s developmental age and stage’.

This is the predominant focus of this advisory.

5. Executive Authority/ Responsibility for Coordination of Departments and Administrations

Section 85 (1) of the Constitution addresses the executive authority of the Republic:

85 (1) The executive authority of the Republic is vested in the President.

(2) The President exercises the executive authority, together with the other members of the Cabinet, by—

- (a) implementing national legislation except where the Constitution or an Act of Parliament provides otherwise;
- (b) developing and implementing national policy;
- (c) co-ordinating the functions of state departments and administrations;
- (d) preparing and initiating legislation; and
- (e) performing any other executive function provided for in the Constitution or in national legislation.

The President and Cabinet are jointly responsible for ensuring coordination of government functions. However, the NDP is replete with references to difficulties in government coordination. Examples of priority areas of government requiring coordination across state departments and administrations include, for example:

- Crime prevention
- Substance Abuse
- Early Childhood Development
- Food security
- Gender-based violence

Coordination of the work of government as a component of Strengthening State Capacity is a matter of central concern in the work of the third NPC. It intends to build on this 'case study' of ECD to further explore mechanisms to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of coordination in government.

Of particular concern is the possible over-load on the presidency by dint of the inclination to elevate to the

presidency matters requiring coordination without exhausting mechanisms for improving coordination within cabinet. In a 2023 discussion paper¹² the NPC notes that 'structural solutions need to be complemented by the kind of relational statecraft that continuously facilitates the building of effective collaborations and partnerships within each state institution, between state institutions, and between state and non-state institutions' (p. 26). This is a key element of both routine and strategic coordination where members of the executive and officials at all levels 'learn to collaboratively solve specific problems in ways that build system-wide capabilities over time' (p. 26).

The National Planning Commission's Working Paper on "Relational Governance as an Approach to State Reconstruction" argues that 'state capacity is not only about institution-formation but creating public value by institutionalising state capability. In other words, it is important in the theory of the state that consideration is given as to how to optimise its effectiveness and efficiency "to get things done" for the good of society'. The NPC argues against 'a tendency to solve state performance problems structurally' and in particular, when this manifests as, 'each time a problem arises, a structure or an institution is created to supposedly deal with it. This is what the theory of state formation and institutional building calls institutional fundamentalism'. A key objective in all of the ways that we approach the structure of the state, and its internal arrangements, must be a 'deliberate strategic intention to build state capacity and institutional capability.'

The work of the NPC, and the recommendations in this advisory, will have the deliberate strategic intention to build state capacity and institutional capability. The 2020 recommendations in the NDP will also be invoked. These proposals include:

- 'Identifying and resolving specific weaknesses in coordination and capacity rather than creating new structural arrangements' (p.59) noting: 'The temptation is to create new structures such as interdepartmental clusters and implementation forums. While these structures have an important role to play, it is a mistake to assume that all

¹² Callaghan, N and Swilling, M. 2023. "Relational Governance as an Approach to State Reconstruction: A Case Study of the Presidential Climate Commission". A Working Paper of the National Planning Commission.

coordination problems can be resolved through high-level coordination mechanisms (p.429). It also noted that new structural arrangements can be 'destabilising'.

- Focusing on the 'routine day-to-day coordination between units of departments that do similar work' (p. 301).
- Only involving the Presidency 'to bring different parties together when coordination breaks down' (p.72) or in 'resolving strategic issues' (p. 410).

The work of coordination could also be informed by a distinction made in the NDP between routine and strategic coordination:

"Routine coordination: Most coordination problems are easier to address if they are broken down into specific issues. These can be dealt with through horizontal coordination between branches, chief directorates, and directorates in different departments. This would make it easier to build constructive working relationships at the level where they are needed. Routine coordination is particularly relevant where the problems relate to implementation more than policy formulation. This requires that responsibility is delegated to officials at appropriate levels, together with the necessary guidance. This means moving away from a hierarchical system where it is expected that all coordination agreements will be formalised at the highest level.

"Strategic coordination: Some coordination problems arise because of disagreements between departments or gaps that no department is dealing with. In these cases, high-level coordination needs to take place on strategic issues. Both the cluster system and the Presidency have a role to play in strategic coordination. (NDP, p. 429)

Key to the success of 'routine 'coordination' is horizontal coordination, at the right level, on specific issues. For routine coordination to function, there needs to be clarity on core functions and no 'duplication or conflict over the allocation of responsibilities and resources' (p. 59).

In the consultation processes that informed this advisory, many officials made reference to the difficulties of one 'lead' ministry convening and leading other departments and identified this difficulty as a major challenge in achieving coordination. In particular, reference was made to the problem of a 'lead' ministry having no mechanism to ensure that each department is accountable for fulfilling their role in relation to the functions requiring coordination.

This advisory will make recommendations for the role of the Presidency in assisting with this difficulty. These include:

- A facilitating and problem-solving role of the Minister in the Presidency.
- Formal delegation of responsibility to a lead ministry in respect of a coordination role.
- A role for the Auditor General in auditing formal commitments in relation to functions requiring coordination within an outcome-based model as part of the MTSF.
- Outcome-based coordination as a useful mechanism for planning and monitoring functions that require coordination across departments. This requires that DPME plays a key monitoring role to identify what needs to be escalated for strategic discussion at Ministerial level.
- Lead Ministers reporting quarterly to Cabinet on a cabinet-approved plan of implementation for 'coordinated' functions that is public.

Preliminary lessons regarding challenges of 'coordination' in government as a problem in state capacity from the case of coordination in ECD include:

- Multiple duplication of parallel structures with similar purposes and compositions place excessive demands for meetings on Ministers with implications for general efficiency.
- Critical reflection might be useful about the extent to which cabinet clusters (and FOSAD forums) are working as deliberative structures rather than simply approval structures for processing before cabinet.

The State Capacity Task team intends to undertake further work on these challenges in respect of other government functions.

In respect of coordination in Early Childhood Development, the NDP acknowledged that ‘the coordination weaknesses between the different sectors and departments responsible for early childhood development services’ need to be addressed ‘in order to strengthen collaboration’. The Commission undertook to ‘work with the respective departments to find a solution to the perennial coordination challenge in the delivery of early childhood development services’. (p. 301).

Twelve years later, despite some promising steps, little has been achieved. The work of finding solutions to coordination challenges must now be done with determination, solutions found, and further refined in implementation – with implementation being consistently monitored to identify and promptly correct weaknesses in design or implementation.

6. Early Childhood Development: A Critical Priority of Government

The National Planning Commission’s 10-year review of the National Development Plan 2012-2022, published in September 2023, highlights the importance of Early Childhood Development (ECD) as an ongoing priority component of our plans to achieve the goals of NDP 2030:

*‘Investment in ECD has multiple positive consequences for development, for equity, for establishing a fair chance for learning in the early grades of schooling, and brings multiple benefits to women, particularly black women, by providing decent jobs, advancing gender equity, and stimulating the local economy’.*¹³

The social, health, educational, and economic benefits are well established internationally,

*‘Investments in early childhood development (ECD) offer a remarkable return for individuals and societies, including better health outcomes, reduced repetition and drop-out, and increased achievement in school. The cognitive and socio-emotional skills children develop in their early years are critical to success in the workplace and in life. The benefits of early investments are more pronounced for children from poor households and have the potential to stop the inter-generational transmission of poverty. The long-term benefits of investing in ECD include reduced involvement in crime, increased employment and productivity, better health, and increased equality, all of which promote economic growth and reduce the burden on government systems.’*¹⁴

Additional arguments for the importance of strengthened ECD include:

- If all children were on track in terms of physical growth, South Africa would add R62 billion/year to its GDP¹⁵. In turn, if a universal early learning programme resulted in a fully literate working population, South Africa’s GDP could grow by about a quarter as a result.¹⁶
- A properly equipped national home visiting programme would save the health sector R29.9bn over 10 years¹⁷. It would also add R427bn to the country’s GDP through the multiplier effect of increased employment and the added productivity of a healthier population.
- 27% of children below the age of 5 years are stunted.¹⁸ Among childhood factors, height at two years of age is the best predictor of adult human capital¹⁹.
- There is a 30% gap between the child support grant and the basic income needed to feed a child.

¹³ NDP, 2023, p.32

¹⁴ South Africa Public Expenditure and Institutional Review for Early Childhood Development. 2023. World Bank and DBE. (p. v)

¹⁵ Jamieson L & Richter L (2017) “Striving for the Sustainable Development Goals: What do children need to thrive?” In: Jamieson L, Berry L & Lake L (eds) South African Child Gauge 2017. Cape Town, Children’s Institute, University of Cape Town. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w19185>, accessed 1 September 2021

¹⁶ Gustafsson M et al. “The costs of illiteracy”. Stellenbosch Economic Working Papers: 14/10. 2010. http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1727649, accessed 1 September 2021

¹⁷ Daviaud E, Besada D, Budlender D, Sanders D, Kerber K (2018). “Saving lives, saving costs: Investment Case for Community Health Workers in South Africa”. Cape Town: South African Medical Research Council. ISBN: 978- 1-928340-32-4

¹⁸ Statistics South Africa (2017). “South Africa Demographic and Health Survey” 2016: Key Indicator Report, Statistics South Africa. Report No. 03-00-09. <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/Report%2003-00-09/Report%2003-00-092016.pdf>

¹⁹ Victora C, Adair L, Fall C, Martorell R, Richter L, Sachdev H for the Maternal and Child Health Undernutrition Study Group (2008). “Maternal and child undernutrition: consequences for adult health and human capital”. *Lancet* 371:340-357

- With adequate child-care in place, 2.3m women caregivers would be able to seek livelihood opportunities²⁰.

In addition to the women entrepreneurs who provide ELP in communities, accessible child-care is an important strategy for the economic participation of women²¹. The ILO estimates that globally, women spend three times more hours than men on unpaid care work²². This fundamental imbalance in the care burden is a key contributor to the gender employment and pay gaps, which directly impact on a country's economic productivity.

Affordable and convenient childcare can enable women to seek work, secure independent income, and become less dependent on social grants. Conversely, mothers who cannot access child-care are often caught in a downward spiral of labour market exclusion and low income.

Research on Kenyan mothers living in an informal settlement found that access to subsidised child-care significantly increased labour force participation, and that, on average, these mothers experienced a 24% increase in earnings²³. A 2013 study in Brazil demonstrated similar results. Increased family income has direct benefits for family and child welfare. World Bank studies in a range of countries have found that increasing the share of household income controlled by women, results in increased spending on education, health, nutrition, or housing - in other words, increased spending on the very things that drive improved child outcomes.

These are compelling arguments for immediate action in planning for increasing access to quality ECD interventions, and for the urgency of accelerating implementation of a coordinated strategy for ECD across all key government department and levels of government (horizontally and vertically) in the

2024-2029 Medium-Term National Development Plan (MTP).

The NPC has identified challenges in the coordination of planning and implementation in the ECD sector as a significant constraint on implementing this vision. The inclusive processes undertaken in the development of this advisory have sought to clarify roles, responsibilities, resource alignment, coordination mechanisms, and a common vision for ECD as a whole. An effective strategy can only be built on the basis of such clarity. This advisory and its recommended improvements for coordination mechanisms are intended to optimise the role of all organs of state, at all spheres of government, as an enabler of accelerating progress in achieving our goals for ECD - in holistic partnership with society.

7. ECD Requires Cross-Departmental and Inter-Governmental Coordination

Children living in South Africa have rights to survival, health, protection, and development²⁴. These rights are enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa and in international law. Section 28 (c) of the Bill of Rights in the Constitution asserts that, 'Every child has the right to basic nutrition²⁵, shelter, basic health care services and social services'.

The National Development Plan to 2030, adopted by Cabinet in 2011, provided a sufficiently comprehensive set of recommendations for ECD which, together with the existing policy and statutory framework, laid the basis for the development of a plan: the National Integrated Policy for Early Childhood Development in South Africa: Towards 2030 (NIECD). The NIECD was adopted by Cabinet in 2015 after a development process that was cross-departmental.

²⁰ Ilifa Labantwana modelling analysis

²¹ This section has benefitted from discussion with the ECD Directorate in the DBE.

²² International Finance Corporation (2017). "Tackling childcare: A guide for employer supported childcare". <https://www.ifc.org/content/dam/ifc/doc/mgrt/201911-a-guide-for-employer-supported-childcare.pdf>

²³ Clark. S et al (2019). "Free childcare could increase African women's economic empowerment". <https://www.niuspp.org/gender-issues/free-childcare-could-increase-african-womens-economic-empowerment/>

²⁴ Convention of the Rights of the Child.

²⁵ A paper by Tatiana Kasim of the Equal Education Law Centre (EELC), with input from Nurina Ally, Centre for Law and Society, University of Cape Town (UCT), provides an excellent analysis of the content of the right of the child to nutrition: "Early Childhood Development and the State's Duty to Provide Basic Nutrition to Young Children In South Africa" for those who wish to pursue this further.

The implementation plan of the NIECD provides this summary of the recommendation of the NDP in relation to ECD:

“Chapter 9 of the NDP 2030 sets out a clear objective for the country. i.e., “Make early childhood development a top priority among the measures to improve the quality of education and long-term prospects of future generations. Dedicated resources should be channelled towards ensuring that all children are well cared for from an early age and receive appropriate emotional, cognitive, and physical development stimulation”. Its motivation for this is evident by stating that the benefits of intervening early in the lives of children include better school enrolment rates, retention as well as academic performance, higher rates of high school completion, lower levels of antisocial behaviour, higher earnings later in life and better adult health and longevity.

The early childhood years are a crucial period in the growth and development of children. These years are a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to lay strong foundations through integrated services and support for lifelong health, ability to learn, and even earning potential in adulthood. The following are universally accepted as comprehensive early childhood services and support (the Essential Package) to be delivered:

- maternal, new-born, and child health services.
- nutritional support.
- support for primary caregivers.
- social services & protection; and
- quality early learning.

The 2022 Public Expenditure and Institutional Review (PEIR) developed a useful graphic summarising the range of critical interventions required to support ECD from conception and into the first 72 months of life across key functions. This is reproduced overleaf. The PEIR review was undertaken with a view to prioritising two key ECD outcomes:

- Reduced malnutrition in the early years, and
- Improved early learning.

The review argued that these two outcomes are mutually reinforcing, with:

- Malnutrition and stunting being significant predictors of child development, including cognitive and social development, and
- Early learning programmes which provide early stimulation and learning activities, while also providing meals.

The report is clear that in order to ‘achieve these two outcomes, the ECD service delivery system needs to be strengthened’. (PEIR, 2023, p.6).

Maternal, new-born and child health services; and nutritional support

South Africa’s health system has a far-reaching network of primary health care facilities but has not yet fully leveraged how they can serve children beyond the provision of health services. Close to a third (31%) of South Africa’s children under two years are nutritionally stunted because of persistent malnutrition²⁶. The DoH ‘Road to Health Booklet’ could be a key resource and source of information for caregivers and the health workforce on ECD with an emphasis on 0–2 year-olds.

Social services and protection

Social services have the responsibility to ensure children are protected from harm and neglect and that children are registered at birth²⁷ and receive social grants. Early registration of births is important because a birth certificate is the gateway to the Child Support Grant (CSG). Uptake of the CSG in infancy remains below target, with only 64% of poor children under a year receiving the grant, compared to 82% of poor children under six years.

Quality early learning

Early learning starts in the home, soon after birth, and language and cognitive development is most intense during the first three years of life. For this reason, early language and learning support through parenting and reading programmes is essential to maximise the benefit of later out-of-home early learning exposure. The greatest ELP service and

²⁶ Child Gauge 2020, p. 28.

²⁷ The Department of Home Affairs plays a central role in registration of births and includes this function as part of its key performance indicators.

support gap exists for children and care-givers in the poorest 60% of households – specifically in terms of early learning and care-giver support services. This is where service provision is driven locally by women in the communities in which they live - women who lack support, acknowledgement, and resources. ELP providers in the poorest communities and their

employees – mostly women – are underpaid and tend to operate informally without government support or access to formal skilling opportunities. Civil society organisations have stepped in to bridge this gap and have developed innovative mechanisms to leverage these local resources as a strength and support them.

CRITICAL INTERVENTIONS FOR ECD (PEIR OVERVIEW REPORT, 2023 2013, p.8)

Figure 1: Key interventions for young children and their families

	Pregnancy	Birth to 24 Months	25 to 48 Months	49 to 72 Months
Nutrition	Counselling on adequate diet during pregnancy	Exclusive breast feeding	Adequate, nutritious and safe diet	
	Prevention of low birth weight	Complementary feeding	Therapeutic zinc supplementation for diarrhea	
	Iron-folic acid for pregnant mothers			
	Micronutrients: supplementation and fortification			
	Household food security			
Health	Antenatal visits	Routine immunization		
	Prevention of mother-to-child transmission		Deworming	
		Access to health care (integrated management of childhood illness)		
				School health
		Family planning		
	Mental health screening and prevention of substance abuse	Screening for development delay		
Early Learning	Provide pregnant parents with information on early learning and nurturing care	Safe, stable, nurturing environment and responsive care at home		
		Access to play materials and age appropriate books		
		Early stimulation (caregivers touch, talk, listen and respond to children)		
		Early learning and development opportunities in ECD programmes and pre-schools (including Grades RR and R)		
				Transition to Grade R
				Transition to Grade 1
		Inclusion of children with disabilities in early learning programmes		

Social Services	Access to social services to prevent and address risk factors (including early intervention services)		
		Child protection services and psycho-social support	
	Preparation for parenting	Parental support and education programmes	
	Prevention and treatment of parental depression		
		Special care services for children with moderate and severe disabilities	
Water & Sanitation	Access to safe water		
	Adequate sanitation		
	Safe and age appropriate hygiene practices (e.g handwashing)		
Social Protection		Birth registration	
		Access to social grants	
		Maternity and family responsibility leave	
		Childcare services for working or work-seeking caregivers*	
	Poverty alleviation and job-creation programmes		

Source: Adapted and reworked based on Berry L, Biersteker L, Dawes A, Lake L & Smith C (eds). 2013. *South African Child Guage 2013*. Cape Town: Children's Institute University of Cape Town, and Republic of South Africa. 2015. *National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy*. Pretoria: Government Printers (pp 54 to 72).

The delivery of the Essential Package of ECD services requires coordination and collaboration between government and a variety of non-state actors in order to ensure that no child falls behind in their developmental milestones.

8. Child Hunger: Urgent Coordinated Action is Required

“South Africa’s agriculture, social protection, health systems, water and sanitation systems and its schools and early childhood development centres all need to be mobilised by the Government to fight this violence. Businesses that act to make nutritious foods more available and affordable should be rewarded by fiscal policy; those that wantonly do the opposite should be punished by the same levers. Civil society should organise around the violence against children that is malnutrition. Where is the “extinction rebellion” against unaffordable nutritious food?”

Dr. Lawrence Haddad, Executive Director of the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition²⁸

The 2019-2024 MTSF (p.121) reminds us that addressing the root causes of poor development requires, inter alia, attending to malnutrition in children:

‘The NDP called for sustainable, rights-based development through investments in children. It recognises that breaking historical patterns of poverty and inequality requires the provision of services that interrupt the intergenerational transmission of risks which keeps historically marginalised children trapped in a cycle of poor development.

‘Realising the NDP’s goals, as well as the country’s international and constitutional child-rights imperatives, requires the adoption of a rights-based developmental child-care and protection policy that provides a nationwide vision for driving investment in programmes that:

²⁸ May et al, 2020. p.8

- Guarantee the universal rights of all children to survival, protection, development, and participation
- Address the root causes of poor development among vulnerable children at risk of poor development, including violence, poverty, fractured families, malnutrition, poor education, and substance abuse’.

However, the MTSF for 2019/2024 (p. 103) also acknowledges that,

‘Contrary to the vision of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) 1994 of combating malnutrition, the levels of stunting (low height for age) in South Africa have increased, reaching 27 percent in 2016. This trend was inherited in 1994, but it had previously decreased to 21.6 percent in 1999. Limited inter-sectoral collaboration has also contributed to this challenge’.

The situation in relation to child hunger continues to deteriorate. As many as 1 230 000 of the households which included children reported ‘inadequate’ or ‘severely inadequate’ access to food in 2021 (Stats SA, 2023, p 9). The highest proportion of those households are found in KwaZulu-Natal (21,4%) and Gauteng (22,2%) provinces. Two thirds of households that experienced hunger are located in urban areas. The City of Cape Town (11,6%) and the City of Johannesburg (11,5%) have the highest proportions of households that experienced hunger in all the six metros. (Stats SA, 2023, p 7).

It must be noted that child hunger refers to “a child experiencing food insecurity rather than just missing a meal. Food insecurity means going without food consistently, which results in a child becoming undernourished or malnourished”. (Stats SA, 2023, 8)²⁹

The 2020, the annual publication, Child Gauge, focused on Food and Nutrition Security³⁰. May et al demonstrated that ‘levels of chronic undernutrition have remained high since 1993 when the Project on Statistics on Development and Living Standards

(PSLDS) reported a stunting prevalence of 30.2% of children under 5 years of age, with the most recent estimate of the 2016 SADHS reporting a prevalence of 27%. (May et al, 2020, p. 28). Stunting is an indication of chronic malnutrition³¹, and is a less subjective indicator of malnutrition than household reports of hunger. Malnutrition and stunting may occur even when ‘hunger’ is not reported where diet is dominated by cheap but non-nutritious food. Urgent action is required to address the immediate crisis and to reduce the long-term health and cognitive consequences of malnutrition for children.

The provision of adequate nutrition for children is a Constitutional obligation (s28(1)(c)). The immediate national priority must be to eliminate the incidence of severe acute malnutrition, for which about 15,000 children were hospitalised in 2022/3, and over 1,000 died.³² In a rapidly urbanising country, this requires urgent attention to food affordability. Specifically, government and industry must work together to ensure that consumers have sufficient buying power to purchase at least the minimum amount of nutritious food needed to develop and sustain children.



²⁹ Statistics South Africa “Assessing food inadequacy and hunger in South Africa” in 2021 using the General Household Survey (GHS) (Report 03-00-20)

³⁰ May, J., Witten, C., and Lake, L. 2020. “Food and Nutrition Security”. South African Child Gauge, Children’s Institute

³¹ May et al p. 9.

³² SA Department of Health District Health Information System. Written reply in Parliament Question No. 2501, 30 June 2023

The MTSF (pp.136-137) committed the Department of Social Development to an outcome of ‘Implement food and nutrition security Initiatives for vulnerable individuals and households’ with an MTEF Budget Allocation of R333 million for 4.5 million people and 1.9 million households. However, in 2021, about 2,6

million households had inadequate access and a further 1,12 million had severely inadequate access to food (Stats-SA, 2022, p. 3). The budget allocation is not sufficient to reach all of these families. The indicators in the monitoring framework for this outcome are:

Outcome	Indicator	Baseline	Target
Implement food and nutrition security initiatives for vulnerable individuals and households	% of food insecure vulnerable households accessing food through food and nutrition security initiative	11.8% households vulnerable to hunger	Reduce household vulnerability to hunger to 5.7% by 2024
	% of Individuals vulnerable to hunger accessing food through food and nutrition security initiatives	13.4.% of individuals vulnerable to hunger (GHS 2016)	Reduce individuals vulnerability to hunger to 6.6% by 2024

For the Department of Health’s 2014-9 MTSF outcome of ‘Reduce maternal and child mortality’, the intervention of ‘integrated management of childhood disease services’, the monitoring framework uses an indicator of the severe acute malnutrition case fatality rate for children under 5 years. The baseline was 7.1% in 2018. The target of less than 5.0% by 2024 is not likely to be reached given the growing levels of hunger in children.

Basic Education has a role to play in addressing child hunger in the prioritisation of its funding. Section 93 of The Children’s Act of 2005 provides that:

- (1) The MEC for social development may, from money appropriated by the relevant provincial legislature, provide and fund early childhood development programmes for that province.
- (4) The funding of early childhood development programmes must be prioritised—
 - (a) in communities where families lack the means of providing proper shelter, food, and other basic necessities of life to their children

In the development of the ECD Sector Plan across Health, Social Development, and Basic Education it is imperative that a coherent strategy is developed to address child hunger with:

- Realistic strategies for implementation which are monitored throughout the implementation period.
- Indicators to measure progress.

This will be taken forward in Section 17 which proposes that a single MTSF goal for ECD is collaboratively developed by Health, Social Development and Basic Education.

Inter-sectoral efforts to address child hunger should be supported by the National Food Security Policy gazetted in 2014. However, the PEIR Overview Report, 2023, notes that:

“In 2017, the South African Presidency released what can be considered South Africa’s first major plan aimed at aligning work on food and nutrition security across the various relevant sectors, the National Food and Nutrition Security Plan for South Africa: 2018-2023. A key feature of the plan was the creation of a multi-sectoral Food and Nutrition Security Council to oversee the alignment of policies, legislation, and programmes; coordinate implementation of services to address food and nutrition security; and draft new policies and legislation. But the Council was not established, and the lack of a strong coordinating agency and accountability system means that nutrition interventions remain fragmented and uncoordinated across multiple departments, rather than being addressed holistically”. (2023, pp 24-25)

The reasons for the failure to establish the Food and Nutrition Security Council should be explored by the NPC. It may be that these are related to endemic

challenges of coordination across departments as explored in this advisory.

Given the significant cross-cutting nature of nutrition and the lack of both a policy and programmatic response, the ECD sector strategy for 2024-9 should prioritise the development of a nutrition strategy for children under the age of 5 (before entering schools and accessing the National Schools Nutrition programme). There are several interventions which could be explored collaboratively in the development of the ECD sector strategy:

- The Child Support Grant (CSG) has been a critical safety net for the third of households children are living below the food poverty line. Until 2018, the CSG kept pace with inflation, but its buying power is now being eroded, placing more children at grave risk over the next decade. In the short-term, there should be a commitment to ensuring at least inflation-linked increases for the CSG, while the medium-term objective should be to close the food gap by pegging the CSG at the food poverty line.
- Both DSD and DoH should consider the importance of nutrition during pregnancy to reduce the prevalence of low-birth-weight babies (now at about 14%, contributing substantially to national stunting rates). DSD might consider fast tracking the approval of the policy that will extend the CSG into pregnancy – this will also ensure immediate uptake of the grant for the child at birth.
- Food supplementation (in the form of vouchers redeemable for highly nutritious foods) could be made available to all children under two who are failing to thrive as a result of any food supplementation strategies across different provinces.
- With regard to ELP programmes, the DBE might think of children’s nutrition separately from registration and subsidy payment being dependent on registration. ECD programmes must benefit from nutrition support from PDED even if they are not registered. Children’s nutritional needs cannot be tied to the registration of an ECD programme. DBE should develop a policy position in favour of this whilst mechanisms are developed.
- COGTA might support municipalities with guidelines to work with the food industry and with local traders, so that the availability of nutritious foods in informal settlements can be improved by analysing and seeking to strengthen food value chains in areas currently regarded as ‘food deserts’ for children.
- In rural and other agricultural areas, the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development should combine its extension efforts with those of non-government organisations and businesses seeking to strengthen local food production and markets.

Recommendations: Child Hunger

- Urgent action is required to address the immediate crisis and to reduce the long-term health and cognitive consequences of malnutrition for children.
- In the coordinated work of developing an ECD Sector Strategy across Health, Social Development, and Basic Education it is imperative that a coherent strategy is developed to address child hunger with realistic strategies for implementation which are monitored throughout the implementation period and indicators to measure progress and respond timeously to challenges identified.

9. Compulsory School-Going Age

Policy clarity is needed regarding future plans for the age at which school attendance is compulsory in order for long-term planning to take place

While the NDP2030 advocated for making “2 years of quality preschool enrolment for 4- and 5- year-olds compulsory before Grade 1” (p 300), it also argued that we must “improve state funding for early childhood development. Current funding mechanisms are not adequate for the expansive early childhood development programme reflected in this plan. It is important to test and develop funding models that cover the comprehensive package of services³³” (p.301).

The NPC proposes that, for the foreseeable future, the age of compulsory school attendance should remain as the year in which the child turns 6 (which means that 5–6 year-olds would attend Grade R) as is envisaged in the Basic Laws Amendment Act (BELA)³⁴. At the same time, quality pre-school enrolment of 4–5 year-olds should be strongly encouraged and facilitated by government in order to incrementally achieve universal access for this age cohort.

This is consistent with the observation in the NDP (p.300) that,

‘The youngest (0–3 years) are best served through clinic, home, and community-based programmes that focus on working with families. 4–5 year-old children benefit from some structured learning in group programmes’.

This recommendation is made for two reasons. Firstly, the social needs of 4-5 year-olds may be best served in less formal institutional settings and in partnership with the community. Secondly, the costs of making education compulsory from the years in which the child turns 5 are prohibitive, and lastly, even the achievement of the now legal age of admission to School (Grade R - the year in which a child turns 6) may not be immediately feasible in fiscal terms despite the adoption of BELA.

This recommendation on coordination is made because it is necessary for clarification of system planning, in giving direction in terms of allocation of responsibilities, and in the reorientation of officials in provincial departments towards supporting the developmental approach to community- based ELP, rather than in the more formal arrangements of schools.

Given that NDP 2030 projected a GDP growth (average) of 3.3%, and the actual in 2022 was only 1.1%, and the expectation in the NDP was that rapid economic growth would broaden opportunities for all and generate the resources required to improve education (NDP 10-Year Review, 2023, p. 11 and 12), the consequences for balancing both recommendations may mean some hard fiscal choices must be made. This should include putting a brake on any consideration for introducing system-wide Grade RR for 4- to 5-year-olds. The financial considerations are explored below.

The Basic Education Laws Amendment Act (BELA) provides that,

“(1) Subject to this Act and any applicable provincial law, every parent must cause every learner for whom he or she is responsible to attend school, starting from grade R on the first school day of the year in which such learner reaches the age of six years. (section 3 Clause 2 A).

We have achieved near universal access for 5-6 year-olds, and the BELA amendment for the compulsory admission age is achievable. The percentage of learners attending educational institutions in 2019 (prior to the Covid-19 disruption of attendance) was by age:³⁵

- 6 year- olds, 96.9% attendance
- 5 year-olds, 92.8% attendance
- 4 year-olds, 72.5%

The DBE reports that nearly 94% of learners in Grade 1 in 2018 had attended Grade R. Despite achieving near universal access, the cost implications of making Grade R compulsory are nevertheless considerable.

³³ NDP2030 also indicated that “The interventions should be different for children of different age groups. The youngest (0–3 years) are best served through clinic, home, and community- based programmes that focus on working with families. 4–5-year-old children benefit from some structured learning in group programmes. p.300

³⁴ At the time of writing, BELA had been adopted in the House of Assembly and was proceeding to the National Council of provinces for adoption.

³⁵ Statistics South Africa stats General Household Survey Report 2020-21, page 5

Extending compulsory schooling to Grade R would require extra funding for teachers and infrastructure of up to R17.2 billion annually³⁶. Treasury has estimated an infrastructure cost of R12.4bn for the 10 412 schools currently without Grade R classrooms³⁷. In addition, because the provisions in BELA will make Grade R a full function of the basic education sector, there will be implications in terms of provisioning of educators at two levels with funding implications:

- The migration of the current Grade R practitioners to the mainstream conditions of service (CoS) for educators. This will be a recurrent cost.
- Enrolment in Grade R at public school is expected to increase with educator-provisioning implications.

Provisioning will therefore have to take into account the funding implications from a change in conditions of service and potential growth in learner numbers. Treasury has noted that a transition to a future landscape of the Grade R Sector on the current monthly salary rates for Grade R Educators/Practitioners and assuming an equalisation of conditions of service would increase the annual salary bill by R5.3bn (for both an additional 6 560 educators and equalisation of Conditions of Service). It must be noted that Treasury has indicated that these costs are an ‘unfunded mandate.’

Given the challenges of progressively completing full enrolment at Grade R, the provision made in BELA for earlier admission of learners (below Grade R) cannot be seen as achievable at system level.

BELA does make provision for earlier entry:

“The admission age of a learner to a public school to grade R is age four turning five by 30 June in the year of admission: Provided that, if a school has limited capacity for admission in grade R, preference must be given to learners who are subject to compulsory attendance.” (BELA Bill, Clause 4c)

While there may be circumstances that warrant admission of 4-5 year-olds in exceptional cases, this should not be a system-wide expansion of the compulsory school age to Grade RR.

The NPC is of the view that the educational arguments for the less formal arrangements in smaller institutional settings for 4-5 year-olds are compelling. A decision regarding community-based provision for 4-5-year-olds before entering school would provide:

- A more educationally and socially appropriate institutional informality for this age group
- Policy and planning clarity for both the primary schooling system, and for non-state providers of early learning programmes.
- Guidance for budgeting processes in relation to expansion of the grant to support growing universal access for this age-group

*SmartStart*³⁸ has produced a very useful policy analysis which argues that “making Grade RR available only in primary schools has many implications for children, including:

- “Very young children will move from small, personal settings to large, impersonal settings which are less conducive to the type of care and nurture that has been shown to be beneficial at this age.
- “Very young children will spend significant time alongside much older children, with the associated risks.
- “Very young children in rural areas will have to travel substantial distances.
- “There is an increased risk of the ‘schoolification’ of play and learning in the early years” (SmartStart, 2019).

The DBE must now focus on extending access to quality ELP Centres for 4 - 5 year-olds. This includes improving systems of registration of early learning centres and accelerating registration. Confirmation

³⁶ https://pmg.org.sa/committee-meeting/37338/?utm_source=transactional&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=minute-alert

³⁷ https://pmg.org.sa/committee-meeting/37338/?utm_source=transactional&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=minute-alert

³⁸ SmartStart is a social franchise with the ambition of ‘ensuring that every young child has access to a quality early learning programme in preparation for the opportunities ahead’. <https://smartstart.org.sa>

that compulsory schooling for children below the year in which they turn 6 will not be implemented will give

greater certainty for population-based planning for needs-led service delivery in the medium to long-term.

Recommendation: Age of Commencement of Schooling

The NPC proposes that, for the foreseeable future, the age of compulsory school attendance should remain as the year in which the child turns 6 (which means that 5–6 year-olds would attend Grade R) as is envisaged in the Basic Laws Amendment Act (BELA)³⁹. Policy certainty is required in this regard for planning purposes. At the same time, quality pre-school enrolment of 4–5 year-olds should be strongly encouraged and facilitated by government with the goal of achieving universal access to early learning programmes.

10. The Role and Reach of Non-State Providers of Early Learning Programmes

If the commencement age of compulsory schooling remains as the year in which the child turns 6, then the critical importance and urgency of effective collaboration with, and pro-poor targeted support for, non-state providers in early learning for children below the age of 6 is an urgent priority if we are to extend the reach to all children of participation in early learning programmes with the aim of achieving universal access in community programmes in the years before compulsory school attendance. The state currently is not the provider of these early learning opportunities, but provides targeted, pro-poor subsidies to private providers of ELP.

The PEIR report estimates that more than an estimated 42,420 non state entities provide learning opportunities to between 1.7m and 2.2m children below the age of 5 years⁴⁰. This is an immense contribution to the care of young children and must be further strengthened and supported through state investment.

The DBE⁴¹ estimates that:

- 1.3 million 3–5 year-olds are not accessing any form of early learning.
- 66% of children in Quintile 1 are not in ELPs compared to 36% of children in Quintile 5.
- About 80% of 0–5 year-olds in poor rural areas do not attend ELPs.

The DBE has indicated that approximately 600,000 children receive the per child ELP subsidy whereas about 4.7 million 0 - 5-year-olds are eligible to receive it. (DBE presentation to the Portfolio committee, June 6, 2023).

Registration of ELP sites has to be an urgent priority so that all children eligible to receive the subsidy (including the food component of the subsidy) are able to do so⁴². The PEIR report (p.11) indicates that, *‘A large group of children are doubly disadvantaged, suffering from hunger, and not attending any ECD programme. In a majority of local municipalities, more than 10 percent of children ages 3-4 were hungry and not attending any form of ECD programme. In 2016 In some municipalities, this proportion rose to 20 percent or more’.*

³⁹ At the time of writing, consideration of BELA was in process of adoption within Parliament.

⁴⁰ Using Household Survey Data, the DBE estimates that About 2.2 million 0–5 year-olds attend an ELP such as a creche, nursery, pre-school, playgroup, or day mother. This includes about 720,000 0–2 year-olds

⁴¹ ECD Draft Service Delivery Model, 2023, p.1

⁴² The Vangasali campaign (a project of the Nelson Mandela Foundation and Impande) collected data on ECD services. 45 000 ECD services were identified in this phase – most of which were unregistered. The second phase of the campaign is aimed at supporting ECD services to apply for registration using the ECD census data. The campaign aims to drive a nationwide implementation of the ECD Registration Framework to create a developmental pathway for the registration of all ECD services. The Framework allows for conditional registration of ECD services that do not comply fully, and full registration for those ECD services which fully comply. This will apply across municipalities whereas compliance expectations were not previously consistent across municipalities. Provisional or full registration at municipal level makes it possible for ECD services to register with the DBE and access funding streams. This tiered registration approach will enable the registration of ECD services especially in poor areas, that were previously not able to register owing to financial and municipal barriers.

For ELP centres that are registered, a per-child subsidy is received based on economic need. This subsidy includes a food component. The DBE is considering extending the school nutrition programme to children in unregistered sites. This would be a significant intervention and should be pursued,⁴³ with the fast-tracking of a pilot programme.

It is recognised that fiscal constraints mean that there is a limited ‘envelope’ of resources that are available for subsidies for ELP and yet, at the same time, slow processes of registration may result in not all of the allocated resources being deployed. Work is being done to improve registration efficiency – including the President’s ‘Red Tape Reduction’ process (see Section 18) and the work of NGOs supporting acceleration of registration. This work must consciously seek to ensure the reach of these efforts to ELP sites which have the capacity to reach the most vulnerable children in the poorest communities, remembering that while an increase in the number of ELP sites may increase with a registration drive, it is the number of children reached which will determine the impact on the per-child subsidy formula, not the number of sites. The registration of sites should therefore be prioritised in order to reach as many children as possible with a focus on the poor and most vulnerable.

Government has made a commitment to provide universal access to quality ECD services for children younger than five years by March 2023⁴⁴. It aimed to achieve this by:

- developing an ECD service delivery model that outlines government’s approach to the delivery of ECD services and the role of each stakeholder
- providing training to trainers of the parenting programme to empower parents and caregivers.

This goal has not been achieved. New goals must be set that are disaggregated by province and by socio-economic conditions within provinces so that the actions taken can be targeted to the most vulnerable.

An urgent solution is needed for at-scale service delivery, which brings government and social partners together to ensure every child is being reached by the services they need. Non-state providers are integral to this solution. The new ECD service delivery model will require new forms of public-private partnership. These partnerships require the right institutional arrangements and systems for robust governance, effective implementation, and proper monitoring. In the immediate-term, the government will have to build these institutional arrangements and ensure that they are a coherent part of the overall co-ordinating and accountability framework.

Recommendation: Recognition of the role and reach of non-state providers of early learning programmes is essential to accelerating our ELP goals

- The critical importance and urgency of effective collaboration with, and pro-poor targeted support for, non-state providers in early learning must be an urgent priority if we are to extend the reach to all children of participation in learning programmes.
- An urgent solution is needed for at-scale service delivery, which brings government and social partners together to ensure every child is being reached by the services they need. Non-state providers are integral to this solution.
- New forms of public-private partnership are required with appropriate institutional arrangements and systems for robust governance, effective implementation, and proper monitoring. In the immediate-term, the government will have to build these institutional arrangements and ensure that they are a coherent part of the overall co-ordinating and accountability framework.
- A full analysis of the new institutional arrangements required at national and provincial levels for ECD public-private partnerships will need to be undertaken together with a consideration of how these should interface with coordinating mechanisms.

⁴³ A useful paper by Droomer et al explores this concept and would be a useful resource to the DBE: Laura Droomer (Ilifa Labantwana), Tarryn Cooper-Bell (Equal Education Legal Centre), Sheniece Linderboom (Legal Resources Centre), Kayin Scholts (DG Murray Trust), and Donela Besada (South African Medical Research Council): “Implementation Strategies for Nutrition Support to Children in Early Learning Programmes”. October 2023

⁴⁴ ENE 2021/2 Vote 19 Social Development

- Accelerating registration of ELP sites is an urgent priority with a focus on reaching the most vulnerable children in the poorest communities
- The DBE consideration of extending a form of the National School Nutrition Programme to unregistered centres should be further explored.
- Any consultative or coordinating mechanisms for ELP must recognise the significance of the scale of non-state providers in these arrangements.

11. Legislative Mandates for ECD

This section examines the legal framework that gives expression to the Constitutional commitment that ‘Every child has the right to basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services and social services.’⁴⁵ It is this legal framework that must guide the realisation of these rights, and any gaps and ambiguities must be identified. This work is being undertaken by the DBE.

Legislative mandates are a critical component of the foundation for effective coordination. The process of establishing mechanisms for coordination will start with legislative mandates.

This is an urgent priority requiring leadership from the Minister in the Presidency in support of the work being done in the DBE and is a necessary first step in developing the integrated and coordinated ECD sector strategy.

The Function Shift of Early Learning Programmes
The Presidential Proclamation of May 2021, issued in terms of section 137 of the constitution, provided for the transfer of the following administrative powers and functions entrusted by legislation from the member of the executive responsible for Social Development to the member of the executive responsible for Basic Education:

- Chapter 5 of the Children’s Act, 2005 (Act No. 38 of 2005) (“the Children’s Act”), in respect of only partial care facilities that provide early childhood development services as defined in section 91(2) and early childhood development programmes as defined in section 91(3) of the Children’s Act to the extent that they provide such programme or service.

- Chapter 6 of the Children’s Act.
- Chapters 20 and 21 of the Children’s Act only in respect of the powers transferred in paragraphs (a).

The transfer from Social Development to Basic Education was effective from 01 April 2022.

In its essence, the proclamation makes the Minister of Basic Education (instead of the Minister of Social Development) responsible for the administration of the regulatory framework governing non-state providers of early learning programmes.

This is a significant shift in respect of the role and scope of the DBE – and ECD and ELP within the DBE must not be seen as a separate function separate from the mainstream work of provinces and districts. The DBE has worked hard to use its standing mechanisms for provincial coordination to orientate PED to the function shift. This includes putting strategic ECD matters on the agendas of the Council of Education Ministers (CEM) and the Heads of Education Committee (HEDCOM). It also includes quarterly 2-3 days meetings of the ECD Directors of all provinces for collective planning, problem-solving and report backs. This ongoing work must, over time, bring together the various role-players and units (including, for example, District Directors, circuit managers and infrastructure units) at provincial and district level into seeing ECD and ELP centres as central to the mission of the province and districts in education.

In terms of having sufficient ECD specialist skills at the right level, the provincial education departments now have significant responsibilities in an area in which they have not previously worked. Now that the administrative processes of the function shift

^w Section 28(1)(c)

are complete, it may be useful for a high-level and detailed assessment of the transfer of human resources, assets, and an assessment made of the extent to which the administrative functions are adequately resourced at national, provincial and district levels (with appropriate qualifications, skills, expertise, and tools of trade). Consideration could then be given to identifying any need for additional technical capacity.

This review of specialist skills is important for all departments central to delivery of ECD. Without **building capacity and capability across all departments and spheres of government** to plan and execute key functions the challenges of centring ECD in the work of all departments, efforts to improve coordination mechanisms will not succeed.

In terms of viewing ECD and ELP from a 'developmental lens', a system wide orientation may be required for officials who are used to managing and supporting a highly regulated and government funded schooling system. Van der Berg et al⁴⁶ (2020, p. 23) made several comments in their 2020 NPC review paper which indicate some of the ways in which the DBE has to re-orientate to fully understand and plan for ECD:

"As new responsibilities in the pre-school sector are assumed, one can expect the DBE's plans to display a deeper and holistic understanding of the qualitative aspects of improving pre-schooling. The word 'stunting' does not appear in the DBE plan when arguably it should, given the NDP's concerns about this for early childhood development in the country... A better engagement [is needed] with the pre-school statistics in the provinces and what this means for early childhood development, especially for the poor. One can expect the provincial plans to provide evidence of a good grasp of the pre-schooling sub-sector, currently in the process of being 'migrated' to the provincial education departments. How pro-poor is the current coverage, in simple participation terms, but also in terms of the quality of services? ... Household data would be important for answering some of these questions."

There is a risk that the focus will remain on the ECD centre-based component, and this will exist within provinces and districts almost as a separate department without a shared vision for improving access, quality, and equity in education through quality ELP and comprehensive and integrated ECD in which the DBE contributes leadership.

Statutory ECD Functions of Key Departments at National and Provincial Levels

The DBE and UNICEF have commissioned a comprehensive review of the regulatory framework for ECD. When this is complete, it will greatly assist in clarifying the responsibilities for ECD across departments, and across spheres of government. Until then, the 2023 PEIR study (pp. 124-5) provides an indicative overview of the functions of the Departments of Education, Health, and Social Development at national, provincial, and local levels by the prioritised intervention subsequent to the function shift. Appendix 1 presents an adapted version of this. As indicated earlier, the PEIR study focused on the priority ECD outcomes of reduced malnutrition in the early years and improved early learning. This table lists functions on the basis of these priorities.

The review identified twenty-five interventions that are 'critical for a child's healthy growth and development, beginning from pregnancy through to transition to primary school'. The review then grouped these critical interventions for young children and their families by sector and then grouped these into three 'buckets':

- (i) early learning interventions (ECD programmes and pre-primary programmes);
- (ii) family support interventions (social assistance transfer programmes targeted to children; caregiver education about early stimulation, growth, and development; child-care and child protection services); and
- (iii) early nutrition interventions (complementary feeding; adequate, nutritious, and safe diet; and micronutrient supplementation and fortification)".

⁴⁶ Servaas van der Berg, Martin Gustafsson and Kholekile Malindi. 'Education and skills for the economy and links to labour markets in South Africa'. Resep, Stellenbosch University, National Planning Commission, 2020

This prioritisation is important. Over time, we must progressively realise the full range of interventions envisaged in the NIECD, but given the challenges of ‘getting moving’ (especially with the complexities of the function shift), of getting coordination mechanisms to begin to work smoothly, and of delivering on key priorities within fiscal constraints, it is important that institutional capacity is firmly established before the addition of further priorities. To try to address all components of what the NDP considered to be important in ECD is not realistic in the next five years and attempts to do so might result in our ambition collapsing under limited capacity and resources.

The NPC therefore recommends that the focus of the ECD Sector Strategy for 2024 - 2029 should be on making significant progress in the core objectives of early nutrition interventions, early learning interventions, and family support interventions.

Each of the three core national departments carry responsibility for **Policy and Planning, Norms and Standards for Service Provision, and Evaluation of Efficiency and Effectiveness of** programmes in their sphere of primary responsibility:

- Early Learning - Education
- Early Nutrition - Health
- Family Support – Social Development

However, with the exception of family support interventions, the PEIR suggests that implementation in each of these functions is distributed across more than one department and more than one tier of government.

Firstly, while Basic Education at national and provincial level have the primary responsibility for early learning interventions, Social Development plays a role at provincial level, and local government plays a significant role. In respect of early nutrition interventions, provincial departments of education play an implementation role, and the health departments play a role at national and provincial level. It is of concern that the crucial issue of addressing child hunger is not explicitly included as a function of Social Development.

Secondly, Provincial Education Departments carry substantial responsibilities in implementation of

both early learning, and early nutrition, interventions. Many of these responsibilities are new (consequent on the ‘function shift’) and an assessment is urgently needed as to whether or not the requisite capacity has been provided for effective delivery of these services in all provincial education departments.

This is a complex matrix. It is the view of the NPC that the capability to drive the multi-dimensional and programmatic development of costed and time-bound interventions across the multiple levels and ‘departments’ cannot be assumed – nor can the capacity for coordination and convening. Of particular concern is the convening complexity across functions at different levels – and this convening is critical to effective programmatic planning. Of deep concern is that the complexities of convening and planning would be exacerbated if not adequately resourced..

The specificity of provincial and national functions in relation to these areas in the table in Appendix 1 is derived from a study of the applicable legislation. This is function specific. For example, Chapter 6 of the Children’s Act is specific in relation to a distinct division of responsibilities at national and provincial level, and in relation to consultation with intersecting departments.

In respect of ‘Strategy Concerning Early Childhood Development’, clause 92(1) provides that,

“The Minister [of Basic Education], after consultation with interested persons and the Ministers of [Social Development], Finance, Health, Provincial and Local Government and Transport must include in the departmental strategy, a comprehensive national strategy aimed at securing a properly resourced, coordinated and managed early childhood development system, giving due consideration as provided in section 11, to children with disabilities or chronic illnesses”.

Clause 92.2 provides that provincial departments must develop a provincial strategy consistent with the national strategy but are in addition given responsibility for maintaining records of registration “The MEC for [education] must—

- (a) maintain a record of all the early childhood development programmes registered in the province; and

- (b) within the national strategy referred to in subsection (1), provide for a provincial strategy aimed at a properly resourced, co-ordinated, and managed early childhood development system”.

The PEIR review suggests that the following functions in ECD are the responsibility of provincial education departments:

- Curriculum Implementation and monitoring
- Training in early learning development
- In-service practitioner development
- Provision of resources
- Administration of conditional grants (Education Infrastructure Grant and Expanded Public Works Social Sector Programme)
- Contracting with private providers (for-profit and non-profit) in the delivery of ECD programmes
- Contracting with private providers (for-profit and non-profit) in the delivery of ECD programmes (new)
- Provincial population-based planning and management for pre-grade R (new)
- Where ECD programme personnel are directly appointed by the department, the management and supervision of these personnel (new).
- Ensure ECD programmes are equipped with necessary play and learning materials and have capacity to ensure quality of materials is maintained and regularly updated (new).
- Provision of subsidy to ECD programmes, conditional grant payment (ECD conditional grant), registration of providers, subsidy allocations decisions and monitoring (new).

The legislative basis of these functions must be agreed upon by the provincial and national education departments as the basis of establishing systems and the capacity to implement these systems, and ensuring that the necessary funding follows agreement on the distribution of these functions.

It is recommended that the proposed core departments of Education, Social Development, and Health should urgently review the PEIR analysis of departmental functions at different levels against their individual legislative and regulatory framework to ensure that a comprehensive list is confirmed, and

so that the responsibilities for national and provincial levels are agreed as the basis for action. This is particularly important for education where provincial departments have considerable new responsibilities, and have not historically had the requisite capacity. It is also important to identify gaps in the legislative framework. A process for exploring this is proposed in Section 17.

The PEIR has provided a limited set of functions listed against COGTA. As will be shown in section 11, the critical role of municipalities has thus far been inadequately developed and agreed upon.

It is critical that decentralisation of functions – particularly at municipal level – allows for better targeting of children at risk, flexibility to prioritise local needs, and for programme delivery that is appropriate to the local context and institutions.

It is proposed that the ECD Ministerial Working Group includes the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure. While the DPWI does not have legislated functions in relation to ECD, it does have fiscal responsibilities through its funding for the Expanded Public Works Programme. This has two components related to ELP Centres and ECD⁴⁷:

- increasing the number of registered ECD centres and subsidised children
- training of ECD practitioners which since 2010 has extended the servicing the 0-4 age group to training for ECD practitioners beyond the 0-4 year age group.

EPWP funding from 2010 is also available via the Community Works Programme (CWP) in the budget of COGTA. This provides for a stipend to community members for work on projects that address needs identified by the communities in which the project operates. ECD-related activities can be included in work done by community members. Giese and Budlender (2021) have shown evidence of extensive use of CWP funding for ECD activities.

The inclusion of DPWI in the proposed Ministerial Working Group is recognition of its potential to make a significant contribution in these key areas and the need for coordination to maximise efficiencies.

⁴⁷ Giese, Sonja and Budlender, Debbie.” Government funding for early childhood development”. Ilifa Labantwana 2011

Recommendations: Achieving Consensus on Legislative Mandates for Priority ECD Functions

- It is recommended that an ECD Ministerial Working Group convened by the Minister of Basic Education consider recommending to Cabinet that interventions in early nutrition, early learning, and family support are prioritised as key areas of focus for the ECD Sector Strategy for 2024-29.
- This is an urgent priority requiring supportive leadership from the Minister in the Presidency and is a necessary first step in developing the integrated and coordinated ECD sector strategy for 2024-9.
- It is recommended that each of the departments supporting these priorities review and confirm its legislative mandate, particularly at the different spheres of government as a basis for clear agreement on roles and responsibilities in the coordination process at different levels.
- The legislative mandates for these areas at different levels of government must be agreed by the Ministerial Working Group and gaps must be identified.
- This may assist the DBE in fast-tracking the legislative work underway. If support is given to the proposed legislative amendments and these gazetted for public comment, it could be possible for the legislation to be tabled in Parliament immediately post-election, and enacted in 2025.

12. Review and Analysis of Institutional Arrangements for the Coordination of ECD across Departments

The adoption by Cabinet in December of 2015 of the National Integrated Plan for Early Childhood Development in South Africa: Towards 2030 (2017/18 to 2029/30) was a significant milestone which took forward the guidance provided in the NDP and was the result of intensive cross-department work to take the programmes suggested and develop an integrated cross-department plan. The NIECD was hailed within the sector, was comprehensive in its scope, intentions, and in the subsequent development of an implementation framework. It remains the key planning document for the sector.

Chapter 7 of the NIECD, 'Leadership and Coordination of the National Integrated Early Childhood Development System', provided for a National Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) with specified responsibilities which was to be supported by a National Inter-Departmental Committee (NIDC) for Early Childhood Development. It also provides that the IMC would be led by the Minister for Social Development (p. 87). The functions of the IMC (supported by the NIDC) were envisaged to be responsibility for:

- "Planning, coordinating, overseeing, and monitoring the implementation of this Policy and related priorities;
- "Developing and overseeing implementation of a national strategy to meet its mandate; and
- "Reporting annually to Cabinet on its work, implementation of plans, status of early childhood development services in the country, attendance of members, and other matters of importance". (p. 89)

Functionality of the NIECD ECD Coordinating Structures

The PEIR report noted⁴⁸ that the Inter-Ministerial Committee IMC referred to in the above paragraph 'is known to have only convened once in 2015 around the launch of the NIECD Policy'.⁴⁹

Section 5.3 of the NIECD implementation plan indicated that,

The National Inter-Ministerial Committee for Early Childhood Development shall develop an annual implementation monitoring plan based on this plan before 28 February each year, which will guide its operations for the next financial year.

The PEIR report indicates that the 'annual implementation monitoring plans' have not been developed because the IMC has not met since 2016'

⁴⁸ The Public Expenditure and Institutional Review was jointly conducted by the Department of Basic Education, the World Bank, and the National Treasury
⁴⁹ PEIR OVERVIEW REPORT, 2023, 2023 Overview Report, 2022, p. 32

(in 8 years), and has not met since the publication of the PEIR report.

While the NIDC continues to meet quarterly, it has been observed that,⁵⁰

- The NIDC has been reduced to a quarterly meeting of mostly junior level officials from a large number of departments who do not have any decision-making power.
- Attendance is inconsistent.
- The primary focus has been on the centre-based component of ECD.
- It is not an effective coordination structure and does not provide strategic direction for the sector.
- Strategic functions, such as developing data systems, were delegated to sub-committees.
- Planning has remained department specific with no real attempt to coordinate planning or to utilise data from monitoring reports and evaluation report findings to inform planning and systems strengthening across the different sectors.

These observations are confirmed in the PEIR report, *“These structures are not currently functioning robustly or serving their intended functions... These committees were led and coordinated by the DSD until March 2022, but they are considered largely ineffective, and various concerns have been raised related to the lack of strategic direction or a clear plan to guide the committees and the inability to use these forums for meaningful collaboration, for example, to improve the registration process for ECD programmes. This lack of effective coordination is a common challenge across countries in contexts where one line department does not have authority over another or where accountability mechanisms are not well defined. DBE received the mandate for ECD in April 2021 and has several new roles and responsibilities. To effectively promote the multi-*

sectoral nature of ECD could be challenging in an environment that is focused on early learning and taking on a more robust coordination role could lead to additional pressure in an already under-capacitated and under-resourced environment.” (2023, p. 32)

The PEIR report suggests both design and operational weaknesses in functioning – compounded by the ‘function shift’ and consequent implications for departments. The next section will explore how operational weaknesses may be a consequence of design flaws and will make recommendations for addressing these.

Review of the ECD Coordinating structures envisaged in the NIECD and proposed amendments

It is the view of the NPC that flaws in the design of the IMC and NIDC proposed in the NIECD are fatal to their effective implementation.

This advisory examines these flaws in the design of coordination across ministries, and across departments in two separate sections. It does so because it will propose that cross-departmental coordination is not simply a matter of administrative functions ‘mirroring’ ministerial coordination functions, and it will argue that doing so compounds challenges of effective coordination.

The Executive: Ministerial Level

The NIECD plan (pp. 88-89) proposed an Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) of twelve Ministers who are core members⁵¹, and a further thirteen Ministers who are co-opted⁵². In addition, the plan lists four state agencies⁵³ who are co-opted members. Whilst ‘co-opted’ is not defined in the plan, the working assumption for this analysis is that ‘co-opted’ Ministers are only required to attend meetings in which matters of direct concern to them are on the agenda.

⁵¹ Core Members (12): 1. Basic Education, 2. Social Development, 2. Health, 4. National Treasury, 5. Higher Education and Training, 6. Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, 7. Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation in the Presidency, 8. Home Affairs, 9. Correctional Services, 10. Transport, 11. Youth and Disability, Women, 12. Rural Development and Land Affairs

⁵² Co-opted Members (13) that are Departments of State [this distinction – Departments of State - is introduced for the purpose of this analysis]: 1. Public Works, 2. Public Service and Administration, 3. Labour, 4. Arts and Culture, Sports, and Recreation, 6. Water and Sanitation, 7. Agriculture, 8. Human Settlements, 9. Tourism, 10. Telecommunication and Postal Affairs, 11. Police, 12. Justice and Constitutional Development, 13. Science and Technology,

⁵³ Co-opted members (4): [that are State agencies] 1. Statistics South Africa, 2. National Development Agency, 3. South African Local Government Agency, 4. Government Communication

Firstly, the envisaged size of the IMC proposed in the NIECD is unwieldy. At a practical operational level, the scheduling of such large meetings of between twelve and twenty-five Ministers would be a nightmare given the multiple competing demands on the time of Ministers.

Secondly, the range of ministries included in both the core and the co-opted components is overambitious – and is an overreach of the core function of the IMC. It appears to confuse departments which ‘may have a role to play in ECD,’ or ‘would be useful to be kept informed’, with departments which have key roles in the implementation of the core activities of ECD.

Finally, and most importantly, this structure duplicates and ignores a more effective coordinating mechanism for inter-ministerial strategic issues that already exists, and is operational – the Cabinet cluster system. We are reminded of the NDP recommendation in 2011 that the cluster system has a key role to play in strategic coordination (NDP, p. 429) and the NPC’s deliberate strategic intention to build state capacity and institutional capability

The ***Social Protection, Community and Human Development Cabinet Cluster***⁵⁴ is currently co-chaired by the Ministers of Health and Basic Education, both of whom have significant responsibility in relation to ECD. Eight of the sixteen members of this cluster are ‘core’ members of the NIECD’s IMC⁵⁵, and a further six are ‘co-opted members of the NIECD’s IMC⁵⁶. There are only two members of the cluster that are not included in the intended NIECD IMC.⁵⁷

There are only three ministries that were envisaged by the NIECD to be core members of the IMC, but which are not in the cluster;⁵⁸ and seven Ministries

which are not in the cabinet cluster but are listed as co-opted members of the NIECD IMC.⁵⁹ It is the view of the NPC that where coordination is required with ministries that are not members of the cluster, appropriate arrangements can be made.

This begs the question as to why an ECD IMC is needed at all? Any member of this cabinet cluster, but most importantly the Minister of Basic Education, who is one of the two co-chairs and is responsible for ECD strategy, is at liberty to place issues of mutual strategic interest in relation to ECD, and which therefore require coordination across ministries, on the agenda of the cluster. An IMC may simply add another step in the process which consumes both time and resources. Cabinet clusters are regularly scheduled, and the calendar of meetings is known well in advance.

The composition of this cluster also includes the Ministers with whom the Minister of Education is required to consult⁶⁰ in relation to Sections 77 and 92 of the Child Care Act with regard to strategy concerning partial care. This sub-committee could be the mechanism for facilitating that consultation.

In considering the question – ‘is an ECD IMC needed at all given the existence of a cabinet cluster with a similar composition’, it is useful to consider the stated purpose of the cluster system.

The main function of the clusters are given as:

- ‘Ensuring alignment of government-wide priorities
- Facilitating and monitor the implementation of priority programmes
- Providing a consultative platform on cross-cutting priorities and matters being taken to Cabinet ⁶¹.

⁵⁴ Composition of Cabinet Cluster: Social Protection, Community and Human Development
Co-Chairpersons: Minister of Health, Minister of Basic Education.

Members: Ministries of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development; Basic Education; Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs; Employment and Labour; Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment; Health; Higher Education, Science and Innovation; Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation; Justice and Correctional Services in the Presidency; in the Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities; Public Works and Infrastructure; Small Business Development; Social Development; Sport, Arts and Culture; and Transport

⁵⁵ Agriculture; Land Reform and Rural Development; Basic Education; Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs; Health; Higher Education; Science and Innovation; Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities; Social Development, and Transport.

⁵⁶ Employment and Labour, Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation, Justice and Correctional Services, Presidency (DPME), Public Works and Infrastructure, and Sport, Arts and Culture

⁵⁷ Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, and Small Business Development

⁵⁸ Home Affairs, Correctional services, Treasury

⁵⁹ Public Service and Administration, Labour, Water and Sanitation, Tourism, Police, Water and Sanitation, Telecommunications

⁶⁰ The Minister, after consultation with interested persons and the Ministers of Education, Finance, Health, Provincial and Local Government and Transport, must include in the departmental strategy a comprehensive national strategy aimed at ensuring an appropriate spread of partial care facilities throughout the Republic, giving due consideration as provided in section 11, to children with disabilities or chronic illnesses.

⁶¹ <https://www.gov.za/government-clusters#:~:text=The%20main%20functions%20of%20clusters,matters%20being%20taken%20to%20Cabinet.>

These functions are appropriate to the challenges of coordinating ECD as a priority for government, and imply a deliberative and strategic approach to matters on the agenda of the cluster.

However, given the multiple matters serving before the cluster, the Ministers of Education, Health, Social Development, COGTA, and Public Works and Infrastructure may wish to create an ECD Ministerial Working Committee that meets when required, and which processes ECD matters prior to submission to the cluster when this is required. This would be led by the Minister of Basic Education given that Clause 92(1) of the Children's Act gives her the responsibility of developing a 'Strategy Concerning Early Childhood Development' which must aim to secure "a properly resourced, co-ordinated, and managed early childhood development system, giving due consideration as provided in section 11, to children with disabilities or chronic illnesses".

However, given the difficulties outlined in section 5 of one Minister convening others and the inordinate time required in setting up these arrangements, it is proposed that the Minister in the Presidency urgently convenes the inaugural meeting which should take place early by the end of first quarter of 2024, but preferably earlier in order to meet MTSF timeframes for 2024-9.

The agenda for this meeting could include:

- Agreement that the inter-ministerial ECD working group will be led by the Minister of Basic

Education, and that the FOSAD counterpart will be convened by the DG DBE.

- Discussion and agreement on a process and time frame to agree on the legal responsibilities of each department
- Agreement on the joint development of the 2024-5 ECD sector strategy within the necessary time frames.
- Discussion on outcome-based coordination as a useful mechanism for planning and monitoring functions that require coordination across the departments.
- Discussion on time-frames and a process for the development of a publicly available plan of implementation for ECD for approval by cabinet, and subsequent quarterly reporting. Adoption and quarterly reporting to the Social Protection, Community and Human Development Cabinet Cluster will ensure that all ministries proposed in the NIECD's IMC, will have an opportunity to deliberate on this report.
- Agreement that the Minister of Basic Education will report quarterly to Cabinet on the cabinet-approved plan of implementation for 'coordinated' functions.

This advisory will, in section 17, recommend a process to assist the Minister of Basic Education and the DBE to ensure that key matters regarding ECD are brought to the attention of the cluster as a whole as and when necessary.

Recommendation: Inter-Ministerial Coordination

- The Minister in the Presidency should urgently convene the inaugural meeting of the ECD Ministerial ECD working group (comprised of DBE, DSD, DoH, DPWI, and COGTA) by the latest in first quarter of 2024, and preferably earlier in order to meet MTSF timeframes for 2024-9. The agenda for this meeting which, with its documentation, should be prepared by the DBE for consideration, could include:
 - Agreement that the inter-ministerial ECD working group will be led by the Minister of Basic Education, and that the FOSAD counterpart will be convened by the DG DBE.
 - Discussion and agreement on a process and time frame to agree on the legal responsibilities of each department
 - Discussion and Proposed Priority areas of focus for the joint ECD Strategy for 2024-9⁶²

⁶² The PEIR report proposed the following immediate priorities: (1) Early learning interventions (ECD programmes and pre-primary programmes); (2) Family support interventions (social assistance transfer programmes targeted to children; caregiver education about early stimulation, growth, and development; childcare and child protection services); and (3) Early nutrition interventions (complementary feeding; adequate, nutritious, and safe diet; and micronutrient supplementation and fortification).

- Agreement on the joint development of the 2024-5 ECD sector strategy within the necessary time frames.
- Discussion on outcome-based coordination as a useful mechanism for planning and monitoring functions that require coordination across departments.
- Discussion on time-frames and a process for the development of a public plan of implementation for ECD for approval by cabinet, and subsequent quarterly reporting.
- Agreement that the Minister of Basic Education will report quarterly to Cabinet on the cabinet-approved plan of implementation for 'coordinated' functions.
- The implementation of this recommendation will require ongoing alignment with any new re-configuration of executive portfolios and departments.
- The composition of the IMC in the NIECD plan should be considered redundant. The Ministers may prefer to call the ECD Ministerial Working Group an Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) for ease of historical continuity

National Inter-Departmental Coordination

Executive coordination depends on officials identifying matters which require the strategic leadership of the Ministerial ECD Working Group of the core departments. The DGs of these departments would be responsible for processing matters for the working group.

In order for meetings of the Ministerial to be substantive and deliberative, rather than dealing with routine matters, the task of the officials would be to prepare a consolidated report across the participating departments identifying areas that require ministerial deliberation in order to find resolution. This would include identifying targets which may be at risk of not being met. Recommendation in this regard will be made in section 17.

The ECD Inter-Departmental Committee proposed in the NIECD should be replaced by the above structure, with matters requiring broader participation being processed in the FOSAD counterpart to the cabinet cluster.

Meetings of officials preparatory to the FOSAD meetings should be handled by officials across departments working with maximum flexibility within the general guidance on inter-departmental routine coordination in the NDP (p. 249):

- “Most coordination problems are easier to address if they are broken down into specific issues.

- “These can be dealt with through horizontal coordination between branches, chief directorates, and directorates in different departments.
- “This would make it easier to build constructive working relationships at the level where they are needed. Routine coordination is particularly relevant where the problems relate to implementation more than policy formulation.
- “This requires that responsibility is delegated to officials at appropriate levels, together with the necessary guidance.
- “This means moving away from a hierarchical system where it is expected that all coordination agreements will be formalised at the highest level”.

This requires that officials adopt an ethos of working in a deliberative bureaucracy (Mangla, 2022)⁶³ where professionals ‘use their judgement, apply critical thinking, and work collaboratively across silos with a problem-based orientation in an organisational dynamic centred on solving problems, and interpreting policies in a flexible manner, adapting policy rules to local needs thereby improving the quality of services’. Mangla argues that a ‘deliberative bureaucracy’s advantages stem from its ability to solve complex problems, which call for repeated interactions between officials and coordination across different levels of the state’ (p. 21) based on a deliberation which ‘involves the mutual exchange of ideas and reasons for the resolution of collective problems’ (p.54), and which ‘understands policy as a

⁶³ Mangla, Ashkay. 2022 Making Bureaucracy Work. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

problem-solving tool' (p. 59). This is more effective than an organisational dynamic where officials rigidly 'protect hierarchical boundaries and procedures'.

Coordination arrangements between officials at all levels need to be agile, rigorous, orientated to be problem-solving, and deliberative – and with less rigidity in respect of insisting on communication at

commensurate levels. The organisation arrangements in different departments do not result in neat correspondence of function within hierarchies across departments. To facilitate such arrangements, it may be useful for Departments to nominate 'ECD leads' within each department nationally, provincially (and at local level, where possible) who have the flexibility to operate across departments at different levels.

Recommendation: Inter-Departmental Coordination at National Level

- Section 17 will recommend that officials from the three key departments meet quarterly to review progress against the agreed indicators. Where ministerial deliberation is required to find resolution to challenge identified, the responsible officials should prepare a consolidated report for processing by their DG before meetings of the Ministers. This would include identifying targets which may be at risk of not being met.
- These processes should be supported by routine, issue based, horizontal, working relationships between units working on intersecting issues as and when these are required and should be initiated by the relevant officials operating rigorously within appropriate delegation and reporting frameworks.
- If the recommendation is accepted, then the IMC envisaged in the NIECD should be considered redundant.
- Departments may wish to nominate 'ECD leads' within each department nationally, provincially (and at local level, where possible) who have the flexibility to operate across departments at different levels.

Provincial Executive Council ECD Coordination

The NIECD addressed the provincial level of the executive in several paragraphs the first of which is: (NIECD, p.90)

"Provincial Governments will establish similar structures at a provincial level for the planning, coordination, and monitoring of early childhood development services at a provincial level.

The size of a provincial Premier-in-Executive Council is constitutionally limited to ten, and thus coordination is less complex than at the national level. It is the view of the NPC that provincial governments do not need to put in place any provincial equivalent of an IMC, but could choose to manage to coordinate ECD in any Executive Council clustered sub-structure arrangement, or any other effective mechanism for strategic or policy matters.

The NIECD also suggests that,

"The Premier of each province will establish in terms of section 16 of the Inter-governmental Relations Framework Act No. 13 of 2005 a

provincial intergovernmental forum to promote and facilitate intergovernmental relations in the governance and implementation of early childhood development services with membership as prescribed in Section 17 of the Act. This Forum shall meet at least once per financial year. (NIECD p. 90)

Section 17 specifies the composition of a 'Premier's intergovernmental forum' in respect of ECD:

17. (1) A Premier's intergovernmental forum consists of-

- (a) the Premier of the province.
- (b) the member of the Executive Council of the province who is responsible for local government in the province.
- (c) any other members of the Executive Council designated by the Premier.
- (d) the mayors of district and metropolitan municipalities in the province.
- (e) the administrator of any of those municipalities if the municipality is subject to an intervention in terms of section 139 of the Constitution; and

a municipal councillor designated by organised local government in the 35 provinces.

- (2) The Premier is the chairperson of the forum.
- (3) The Premier may invite any person not mentioned in subsection (1) to a meeting of the forum.

A cursory check of functionality of these structures envisaged in the NIECD at provincial level indicates that none have been established. It is the view of

the NPC that rather than creating an additional inter-governmental forum (IGF) to 'promote and facilitate intergovernmental relations in the governance and implementation of early childhood development services with membership', provinces may wish to consider including ECD matters on the agenda of the existing IGF when substantive matters arise requiring strategic deliberation, and that national policy should be amended accordingly.

Recommendation: Provincial Executive Coordination

- MEC's responsible for Basic Education and for the development of a provincial ECD strategy, together with their colleagues on the provincial Premier-in-Executive-Council responsible for components of ECD, should present the provincial strategy for ECD to the Premier-in-Executive-Council for adoption, and the provincial IGF for information.
- Reports on the operationalisation, and progress and challenges in implementation, should be presented to the Premier-in-Executive-Council and to meetings of the provincial IGF on a regular basis.
- The DG in each province should support the responsible MECs in making these arrangements for coordination.

The Executive: Municipal Level

The NIECD (p. 90) indicates that local and metropolitan municipalities will establish similar structures supporting the planning, coordination, and monitoring of early childhood development services and implementation of the specific programmes described above.

'The Mayor of each District Municipality will establish in terms of Section 24 of the Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act No. 13 of 2005 a district intergovernmental forum to promote and facilitate intergovernmental relations in the governance and implementation of early childhood development services with membership as prescribed in Section 25 of the Act. This Forum shall meet at least once per financial year.'

The Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act provides for the establishment of district intergovernmental forums. Clause 24 gives the purpose of the district IGF as promoting and facilitating intergovernmental relations between the district municipality and the local municipalities in the district. Clause 25 provides for the composition of the district IGF.

- (1) A district intergovernmental forum consists of:
 - (a) the mayor of the district municipality;
 - (b) the mayors of the local municipalities in the district or, if a local municipality does not have a mayor, a councillor designated by the municipality; and
 - (c) the administrator of any of those municipalities if the municipality is subject to an intervention in terms of section 139 of the Constitution.
- (2) The mayor of the district municipality or, if that municipality is subject to an intervention, the administrator of the municipality is the chairperson of the forum.
- (3) The chairperson of the forum may invite any person not mentioned in subsection 30 (1) to a meeting of the forum.

It is the view of the NPC that rather than creating an additional inter-governmental forum (IGF) at district municipality level, districts may wish to consider including ECD matters on the agenda of the existing IGF when substantive matters arise requiring strategic deliberation.

The Project Preparation Trust (PPT) has done a great deal of work on ECD in local government to

develop programmatic and scalable ECD solutions to support systemic change including the collaborative development of ECD policies, plans and strategies with government and municipalities; supporting municipalities in establishing local ECD response programmes; developing a Municipal ECD Guide for Planning and Infrastructure support and various discussion documents; establishing Municipal ECD Multi stakeholder Steering Committees to plan, coordinate and monitor the implementation of local ECD response programmes; and working with KZN COGTA to get ECD included in IDPs in KZN.

On the basis of learning from this work, the PPT recommends that engagement by the DBE with municipalities could be taken forward in each province in a working relationship with the COGTA MECs in existing MUNIMEC structures to, inter alia,

- Create ECD awareness and obtain buy-in for the establishment of a Municipal ECD Multi-Stakeholder Steering Committee and the inclusion of ECD in IDPs
- Request COGTA's provincial IDP Management Units to support local and district municipal IDPs Units with the inclusion of ECD in IDPs.

The PPT experience also suggests that Municipal ECD Multi Stakeholder Steering Committees should be established with representatives from relevant municipal units, PED, DOH, and DSD to plan and oversee the implementation of ECD programmes within the municipal area (supporting the One Plan concept required by the District Development Model). The DSD has already established ECD Forums in many municipalities with the participation of ECD centres, NGOs, state departments, and municipal officials. Education District Offices should continue establishing and managing these broader ECD forums in all municipalities as they provide a platform where the needs and challenges of the ECD centres can be raised, where government can communicate new policies, or disseminate information and where challenges can be channelled to the relevant authorities (for example, land use matters, fire certificates, building plan issues, environmental health inspections, childminding registrations, municipal services related matters, and primary health care and nutritional matters). It can also refer matters such as ECD educational programmes, registration, and subsidies to the

Municipal ECD Multi Stakeholder Steering Committee for discussion.

Recommendation: Institutional Arrangements for Coordination of ECD at Municipal Level and for Provincial – Municipal Coordination

- Rather than creating an additional inter-governmental forum (IGF) between provinces and municipalities, or creating District IGF to 'promote and facilitate intergovernmental relations in the governance and implementation of early childhood development services', metros and districts may wish to consider including ECD matters on the agenda of the existing IGF or – on other fora established for coordination - when substantive matters arise requiring strategic deliberation.
- The existing MUNIMEC structures might be the best vehicle for MEC's responsible for ECD to work with COGTA MEC's to communicate with municipalities

13. The Importance of Municipalities in ECD and the Role of COGTA

Statutory Responsibilities for ECD at Local Government Level

The Constitution gives municipalities original powers in ECD. Section 4B of the Constitution gives powers to municipalities:

- To pass legislation and policy relating to child-care facilities.
- For municipal planning, which includes the regulation of land use for child-care facilities.

The NIECD policy argues that the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the Municipal Systems Act No. 32 of 2000 and the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005 read together make local government responsible for:

1. Provision of basic services, including water and sanitation, to communities;
2. Contributing to the realisation of rights set out in the Constitution, including health-care services, food and water, and social security;
3. Development of policies and laws governing child care facilities, including child-minder services;

4. Municipal planning and spatial development, including providing and regulating land used for child care facilities and for safe and adequate play and recreation facilities; and
5. Where the provincial Department of Education [previously Social Development] assigns responsibility to municipalities for the provision of partial care services as provided for in section 88 and 102 of the Children's Act, No.38 of 2005 municipalities are responsible for the provision (including the registration, regulation, and monitoring and evaluation for compliance with norms and standards) of partial care and early childhood development programmes that take care of more than six children on behalf of their parents or care-givers for a specific number of hours.

To this end, the NIECD stipulated that,

- ECD services and all its resultant responsibilities and resources must be contained in the municipal Integrated Development Plans (IDP's).
- Every municipality should have a 5-year plan on early childhood development services within its boundaries in support of this Policy.
- By-laws should be reviewed to support ECD outcomes.

The Nelson Mandela Foundation has argued that this would include⁶⁴:

- Planning (reliable data, population-based planning, ECD sector/ 5-year plan to be reflected in the IDP, etc.).
- Infrastructure (preparing infrastructure pipelines for basic services, improvement of existing ECD centres and new builds, procurement, and implementation, etc.) and
- Regulation, compliance, and registration (environmental health/child-care by-laws, ECD Registration Framework and simplified, more affordable land-use arrangements to enable ECD registration, registration of child- minders etc.).

These responsibilities are consistent with the original powers given to municipalities in the Constitution (Section 4B):

- To pass legislation and policy relating to childcare facilities.
- For municipal planning, which includes the regulation of land use for child-care facilities.

However, the list above appears to go further than the functions of 'planning' and 'provision of basic service infrastructure' to include 'new builds'. The provision of buildings for ELP centres is by no means a generally accepted function of local government. This will be discussed in more detail in a later section.

There is further ambiguity in relation to the 'funding' responsibilities for ECD in Local Government. The NIECD (p. 79) indicates that the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs is responsible for:

'funding and promoting fulfilment of municipal responsibility for development of early learning facilities, and for synergising the Expanded Public Works Programme and Community Work Programme with the community-based human resource provisioning for early childhood development. It should provide guidance and capacity development to municipalities in relation to their responsibilities and obligations for early childhood development services, in particular the inclusion thereof in IDP's.'

The Role of the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA)

The previous section showed that the constitution gives municipalities original powers in ECD. However, these powers are 'to the extent set out in Section 155(6)(a) and (7) of the Constitution' which provides for monitoring and support of the function by provincial government, and that the province must promote the development of local government capacity to enable municipalities to perform their functions and manage their own affairs.

Section 154(1) of the Constitution provides that:

'The national government and provincial governments, by legislative and other measures, must support and strengthen the capacity of municipalities to manage their own affairs, and to exercise their powers and to perform their functions.'

Section 155 (7) additionally provides that:

'The national government, subject to section 44, and the provincial governments have the legislative and executive authority to see to the effective performance by municipalities of

their functions in respect of matters listed in Schedules 4 and 5, by regulating the exercise by municipalities of their executive authority referred to in Section 156(1)'.

This is important as this dual responsibility for monitoring and support together with capacity building will be a critical function for provinces as ECD capacity is established and must be supported by both national and provincial governments.

COGTA is of the view that while Section 155 (7) indicates that provincial and national departments should support local government, this should not be read outside of the Municipal Systems Act (No. 32 of 2000) which indicates that for any function or responsibility to be implemented by local government, the Minister in collaboration with the relevant MEC, is required to assess the capacity and capability of the municipal structure and concurrency of responsibility only applies when an assessment has been made that the necessary capacity and capability does not exist.

There is additional legislation that allows for the assignment of functions to municipalities.

Section 87 of the Children's Act of 2000 provides that

(1) The provincial head of [education] may, by written agreement with a municipality, assign the performance of some or all of the functions contemplated in Sections 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85 and 87 to the municipal manager if the provincial head of [education] is satisfied that the municipality complies with the prescribed requirements with regard to the capacity of that municipality to perform the functions concerned.

It would seem that the implementation of this provision, and the monitoring of the performance of any assigned function by the provincial head of education as required in 87(8)(a) would need to be taken with some consideration for the consultation envisaged in the Municipal System Act. Where functions are allocated by assignment as above, or by the regulations envisaged in Section 90 of the Children's Act, those functions given to municipalities relate to the constitutional mandate of municipalities, and COGTA needs to be involved.

Recommendation: Role of COGTA

- Clarity is required in relation to the role of COGTA in respect of ECD. The proposed inaugural meeting of the ECD Inter-Ministerial Working Group to be led by the Minister in the Presidency would be an important first step in pursuing this.
- In order for COGTA to play its role, as and when agreed, in ECD, its organisational structure may need to be reviewed so that there is specific line accountability within COGTA for the exercise of its oversight responsibilities in relation to the promotion of the development of local government capacity to perform their functions and to manage their responsibility for ECD in general - and the development of facilities for early learning programmes in particular - especially in relation to any functions allocated in terms of Section 90 of the Children's Act.
- Legislative clarity would need to be accompanied by engagements with National Treasury with respect to the 'funds follow function' principle

Current Status of ECD as a Priority in Municipal Integrated Development Planning

The NMF has argued that there is limited awareness of ECD as a national priority programme at municipal level, or of the roles and responsibilities assigned to them in terms of the NIECD. (NMF, 2022, p.9).

Several surveys of IDP at metro and district level show minimal references to child-care. The NMF reports that,

"an assessment of all 53 municipal IDPs in KZN was undertaken by the Project Preparation Trust in 2018 to determine awareness and the level to which Municipalities provide for ECD in their IDPs.

None of the 53 municipalities mentioned ECD as national priorities and none referred to the roles and responsibilities of municipalities as set out in the NIECD.⁶⁵

Research conducted by the Real Reform For ECD⁶⁶ Steering Committee provides a comparative reflection on the plans of eight municipalities including three Metros) across six provinces. The report found that unevenness in the approach, with minimal references to ECD, and little evidence of programmatic intentionality by way of clear plans including a budget, locations, and responsible personnel. This is consistent with a study undertaken by the Municipal Demarcation Board in 2019 which found that childcare facilities are among the four 'least commonly performed [Municipal] functions'.⁶⁷

There is no mention of ECD or of children in relation to local government in the 2019/2024 MTSF (including in the appendix for Outcome 9: Responsive, accountable, effective, and efficient developmental local government system).

While the proposed coordination arrangements at local level in Section 12 can contribute to addressing this neglect, consideration should be given by COGTA to developing guidelines for municipalities in respect of their multiple responsibilities in ECD so that this critical function is strengthened. The overarching integrating role of municipalities in relation to functions such as health facilities at municipal level are key – for example, in pre-natal care.

Other than the provisions of the NIECD policy listed above, there is no overarching enabling national framework that would indicate to every municipality how those functions are going to be pursued.

Whilst the current draft Children's Amendment Bill includes specific roles and responsibilities for municipalities around infrastructure and health and safety, this needs to be supported by clear guidelines to advance the implementation of these

amendments once accepted. Real Reform for ECD made a submission to COGTA in 2022 that the regulations regarding IDP's should be amended to make it clear that the IDP must include ECD planning, by incorporating: A municipality's integrated development plan and developmental strategies, which -

(seek to address gender equality, youth development, early childhood development, protection of children, social cohesion, and the rights of persons with disabilities)".

Inclusion of this would assist in the prioritisation of ECD in the IDP process, and where possible in making existing infrastructure available for ECD facilities.

It is critical that COGTA and SALGA are involved in the immediate process of laying a coherent institutional basis for the strategic plan for ECD for the next MTSF – and that ECD is adopted as a priority programme within municipalities.

The need for Guidelines for Municipalities and the Leadership Role of the DBE

It would be helpful for the DBE, as an urgent priority, to work with COGTA and SALGA to develop a set of guidelines for municipalities – an ECD 'Strategy Guideline for Municipalities'. The suggestions below for topics to be considered for possible inclusion in these guidelines are drawn from the work of the NMF⁶⁹:

- Optimal stakeholder roles.
- Guidelines to achieve more effective coordination and integration on ECD.
- Practical solutions as to how statutory and regulatory flexibility can be achieved in order to scale up ECD infrastructure.
- Approaches to ECD infrastructure support at municipal level (including consideration of the Municipal Infrastructure Grant) in order to scale up the provision of ECD infrastructure. (The document notes that the DSD, DBE, COGTA and SALGA have been in discussions about developing an ECD Infrastructure Sector Plan

⁶⁵ Nelson Mandela Foundation, ECD Discussion Document #3: "Barriers to Effective ECD Service Provision at Scale

⁶⁶ An NGO working to ensure an enabling legal, policy and regulatory environment for the provision and expansion of ECD services

⁶⁷ Radikonyana, P. and Dube, G. (2019) 'A critical analysis of the 2018 Municipal Demarcation Board capacity assessment', p. 18

⁶⁸ SALGA is an autonomous association of all 257 South African local governments, comprising of a national association, with one national office and nine provincial offices. Membership of the association is voluntary. SALGA accounts to its members in terms of the SALGA Constitution (as amended in 2016) and its Governance Framework regulating its structures and mandating processes. (<https://www.salga.org.za/About%20Us%20W.html>)

⁶⁹ Nelson Mandela Foundation, ECD Discussion Document #3: "Barriers to Effective ECD Service Provision at Scale", p. 9

template for use by municipalities – it is vital that this work is assessed and continues).

- Practical strategies and plans relating to how limited budgets can be used.

The guidelines should include consideration of maximising the involvement of traditional leaders in areas of their influence.

Of particular importance and urgency is the role of COGTA in taking forward the work of the ECD focus area group in the Red Tape Reduction process by producing the necessary frameworks, including regulatory, to expedite streamlined processes of the registration of ELP centres at municipal level.

The development of the ‘guidelines’ might be assisted by exploring the developmental role of local government in ECD. The NMF has published an instructive discussion document on the Developmental Role of Local Municipalities in ECD . The discussion document highlights the critical and unique developmental role and responsibilities assigned to municipalities in terms of the NIECD. The paper correctly characterises the majority of ECD facilities in low-income areas as being ‘under-resourced, leaving large numbers of children vulnerable and without access to acceptable early learning’. The key challenges include ‘poor infrastructure, a lack of capacity, funding constraints and a rigid regulatory environment’ (p.3).

The discussion document shows how municipalities, working with other stakeholders, have a key role to play in helping to overcome these barriers and thus enabling a more developmental and programmatic approach. A cogent argument is made for

municipalities to play not only a regulatory role, but a development role. The paper suggests that this could include ‘population-based planning, ECD strategies, establishing much-needed regulatory flexibility, ECD infrastructure provision, and more effective coordination with other key ECD stakeholders (provincial education departments, ECD operators, and ECD support organisations)’ (p. 3).

In addition to the proposed ‘Strategy Guideline for Municipalities’, it would be helpful if the DBE could produce guidelines for community activists and service providers with an interest in ECD to assist them to participate in the IDP planning process. *SmartStart*⁷¹ has produced an excellent advocacy toolkit for ECD practitioners and parents of young children which could be promoted as is. It explains what the IDP is, provides a simple step by step plan for how to get involved, suggests some key ECD issues that could be raised, provides a template to make a written submission, and describes the IDP participation process for municipalities.

The source of the energy and momentum for propelling ECD generally, and ELP centres specifically, into the local government planning-process resides in these community members. This is an example of the way in which the DBE, in order to succeed in its goals for ECD and ELP centres, must adopt a ‘whole of society approach’ in its response to supporting the optimum development of young children, and must recognise the necessity of partnering with non-state actors to accessing their considerable capacity and resources to bring change in caring for all of our children. And the officials need to constantly assert that Early Learning programmes are but one component of ECD.

Recommendations: Guidelines for including ECD in the development of IDP and participation IDP processes

- The DBE, together with the departments of Health and Social Development, should as an urgent priority, work with COGTA and SALGA to develop a set of guidelines for municipalities – an ECD ‘Strategy Guideline for Municipalities’. This guideline should provide not only legal and procedural clarity regarding the role of municipalities in ECD (in its holistic sense, beginning from In addition to the proposed ‘Strategy Guideline for Municipalities’, it would be helpful if the DBE could produce

⁷¹ SmartStart is a social franchise with the ambition of ‘ensuring that every young child has access to a quality early learning programme in preparation for the opportunities ahead’. <https://smartstart.org.za>

guidelines for community activists and service providers with an interest in ECD to assist them to participate in the IDP planning process. *SmartStart*⁷² has produced an excellent advocacy toolkit for ECD practitioners and parents of young children which could be promoted as is. It explains what the IDP is, provides a simple step by step plan for how to get involved, suggests some key ECD issues that could be raised, provides a template to make a written submission, and describes the IDP participation process for municipalities.

- conception), but should also advocate for a developmental role for municipalities in putting children at the centre of IDP planning.
- Given the importance of community participation in the development of IDP, the DBE, together with the departments of health and social development, should consider producing guidelines for community activists and service providers with an interest in ECD to assist them to participate in the IDP planning process.

14. Local Government and Infrastructure for Early Learning Programmes

There is considerable ambiguity in relation to the role of local government in the development of infrastructure for Early Learning Programmes. The 2016/2017 Technical Report of the submission from the Finance and Fiscal Commission (FFC) for the Division of Revenue in 2015 indicated that,

“How the roles and responsibilities for ECD facilities are divided across the three spheres of government creates considerable intergovernmental contestation. National and provincial governments are responsible for delivering ECD services (i.e., operating subsidies) but not infrastructure, which is expected to be a local government mandate. However, local government is primarily occupied with delivering priority basic services, and budget allocations to ECD are almost non-existent – although metropolitan municipalities such as Tshwane and Johannesburg are running fully funded ECD facilities. The current subsidy model for ECD does not provide for infrastructure development and maintenance, which leads to inequitable provision of services, especially in poor areas where facilities are unavailable (Richter et al., 2012)”. (FFC, 2015, p. 93).⁷³

This 2015 observation remains valid in 2023 with serious consequences for the health and safety of young children. It must be noted that that 65% of ELP centres charging the lowest fees have no access to flush toilets.⁷⁴

The FFC’s 2016/2017 Technical Report indicated that while infrastructure is critical to the delivery of ECD facilities, and while it is expected that municipalities are expected to be responsible for infrastructure, ‘local government is primarily occupied with delivering priority basic services, and budget allocations to ECD are almost non-existent.

“A national audit found that 70% of ECD centres are unsuited to providing ECD services, and 40% require urgent maintenance (DSD, 2014a). Children are often housed in unsafe facilities that do not have heating, ventilation, sanitation, separate kitchen and administrative facilities, water, or electricity. (Viviers et al., 2013). The majority of these centres lack the necessary resources to build “fit for purpose” facilities because they are donor- or self-funded (private and community-based) or non-profit organisations (NPOs) (Ilifa-Labantwana, 2011). The lack of funding and high start-up costs deter the establishment of new facilities in poor communities (Viviers et al., 2013), which in turn prevents many ECD facilities from registering and accessing the operational subsidy available from the Department of Social Development (DSD)”. (FFC 2015, p. 92).

⁷² SmartStart is a social franchise with the ambition of ‘ensuring that every young child has access to a quality early learning programme in preparation for the opportunities ahead’. <https://smartstart.org.za>

⁷³ Financial and Fiscal Commission, 2015. 2016/2017 Technical Report Submission for the Division Of Revenue for an Equitable Sharing of National Revenue.

⁷⁴ Heny, J and Giese S (2023) “Reviewing the Socio-Economic Gradient in Learning Outcomes for Children who Participated in the Thrive by Five Index”. Data Drive.

It is the view of the NPC that further work needs to be done to understand the role of municipalities in the provision of infrastructure. Work also needs to be done on understanding the potential of existing funding mechanisms and how these can be optimised by the DBE now that the function has shifted.

For example, in a Treasury Briefing on the Early Childhood Development Grant (ECDG) for 2021/22 to the Select Committee on Appropriations in September 2022, the purpose of the ECDG was given as:

- To increase the number of poor children accessing subsidised early childhood development (ECD) services through centre and non-centre-based programmes
- To support early childhood development providers delivering an ECD programme to meet basic health and safety requirements for registration
- To pilot the construction of new low-cost ECD centres.

The goal of the ECDG is to increase access to quality ECD services for poor children, and the infrastructure component (5% of the total grant) aims to ensure that ECD centres comply with the health and safety norms and standards. A presentation by DSD to the committee on the same day indicated that the purpose of the development of the low cost ECD centre designs was to provide for uniformity in the construction of the ECD and to reduce the time taken by provinces to develop their own designs.

The outputs used by Treasury to measure performance in respect of infrastructure are the number of:

- ECD centres assessed for infrastructure support and health and safety standards.
- ECD centres whose registration status improved as a result of the infrastructure component within 24 months of receiving the grant.
- low cost ECD centres constructed.

In the 2021/22 financial year the ECDG targets were not met. Only 195 centres benefitted from the grant as against a target of 273 (71%). Reasons given for this were:

- Delays in the procurement process for maintenance, slow delivery by implementing agents and municipal delays in securing land for construction of new centres.
- Social Development departments experienced delays with claims submitted by NPO's.

A recommendation was made that the DBE should 'look at training to capacitate staff at centres so that claims are filed on time with minimal errors', and that 'although provincial education departments have well-established infrastructure units, challenges experienced by Social Development with maintenance and new construction should be considered'.

The work on infrastructure should also include an examination of what is currently provided in the Department of Human Settlements' Development Grant (which mostly consists of 'new builds') and is implemented by municipalities but funded by Human Settlements.

In their engagement with the NPC, SALGA⁷⁵ articulated its understanding of Schedule 4 (Part B) of the constitution is understood by municipalities. SALGA observed that the current dominant thinking is that municipalities provide a regulatory role and provide infrastructure support services, including planning and zoning, water, sanitation, electricity, and roads. This would include:

- Provision of sites for child care in the Spatial Development Plan
- Providing basic services to these facilities and facilitating access thereto
- Ensuring existing centres comply with health and safety standards and issuing compliance certificates.

In this minimalist view of the role of municipalities for ECD as limited to regulatory compliance, that is 'generally what a municipality would do in respect of any facility that operates in its jurisdiction e.g., a retail shop'.

However, SALGA is of the view that It is the responsibility of municipalities to go beyond this minimalist view and to mainstream children's needs in

⁷⁵ "SALGA interaction with the NPC", October 2023

municipal plans, as part of mainstreaming vulnerable groups, and has called for a cohesive national strategy (including clarity regarding authority and roles) for ECD coordination and resourcing. SALGA is keen to contribute to a process for developing this

SALGA has suggested that the mainstreaming of children in municipal plans could include supporting communities in building some of the required facilities especially in poor communities, where no 'private investor' may be interested. However, SALGA notes that there is no provision in municipal funding for the development of facilities and support of ECD operations within the many competing priorities, and argues that ECD must be included in government infrastructure grants like MIG, IUDG, USDG, and non-government funding (private sector, donor, infrastructure funding.)

The issue of responsibility for the provision of infrastructure for ECD cannot be resolved without considering the complexity of 'ownership' of the infrastructure, which organisations use the infrastructure, and under what conditions. This is particularly relevant to Early Learning Programmes (ELP) which in this advisory refers to a facility that provides an early childhood programme with a learning/ educational focus for children up until the year before they enter Grade R/formal school noting that:

- The PEIR report defines ECD programmes as 'a crèches, pre-school, day mother, home-based play groups, grade R and the lower grades of primary' and ELP fall within the statutory responsibilities of the Minister of Basic Education, and Early Learning Centres, particularly so⁷⁶.
- The state currently is not the provider of these early learning opportunities, but provides targeted, pro-poor subsidies to private providers of ELP centres.

If a municipality were to be involved in responding to community prioritisation of ECD by building the 'top-structure' of a ECD facility rather than just including provision for such sites in its spatial planning, it would presumably be for the use of an organisation which would privately provide the service in a municipal building.

Should this assumption be correct, it is important that SALGA considers developing guidelines (which must not be onerous) to support municipalities with the legal frameworks of managing this – especially because municipalities are to be encouraged to respond to community requests for the establishment of this infrastructure as part of integrated development planning.

Where private providers (usually entrepreneurial women) provide ELP opportunities for children, the municipality should provide support beyond 'generally what a municipality would do in respect of any facility that operates in its jurisdiction e.g., a retail shop' (a phrase used by SALGA in the consultation process) in recognition of the valuable community service being provided.

In developing proposals for Municipal ECD facilities (including ELP centres), the IDP process will have to ensure that it has budgeted for the 'life-cycle costs' of the infrastructure including maintenance and management. In arguing for the inclusion in IDPs of the establishment of ECD infrastructure, communities must be vigilant to ensure that the long-term budgeting includes these costs.

As the DBE takes this area forward, it would be useful to consult extensively with regard to existing work done on ECD infrastructure support by local NGO's such as PPT.

Recommendations: Municipal Buildings and ECD

- Given that ELP centres are provided by private persons (and may receive a government subsidy for operational costs), SALGA should consider developing guidelines to support municipalities with the legal frameworks of private persons using municipal buildings for ELP centres or other ECD facilities.
- Municipalities are to be encouraged to respond to community requests for the establishment of ELP centres or other ECD infrastructure as part of integrated development planning.

⁷⁶ Section 91 (3) of The Children's Act defines an early childhood development programme as 'a programme structured within an early childhood development service to provide learning and support appropriate to the child's developmental age and stage'.

- Where private providers (usually entrepreneurial women) provide ELP centres for children, the municipality should provide support beyond 'generally what a municipality would do in respect of any commercial facility that operates in its jurisdiction in recognition of the valuable community service being provided.
- In the work going forward, innovative funding models for the provision of ECD should be explored – including nationally provided state grants given on the basis of clear legal agreements at municipal level regarding the use of this infrastructure including pro-poor targeting.

15. Cross- Sectoral Coordination and ECD at Municipal level

Integrated Development Plans

The Municipal System Act (2022) contains significant elements which provide the opportunity for coordinated planning and monitoring of key ECD interventions at municipal level. The Act defines development as 'sustainable development' which integrates social, economic, environmental, spatial, infrastructural, institutional, organisational, and human resources upliftment of a community aimed at:

- improving the quality of life of its members with specific reference to the poor and other disadvantaged sections of the community; and
- ensuring that development serves present and future generations.

Clause 23 of the Municipal System Act (MSA) stipulates that municipal planning is to be developmentally oriented so that it contributes to the progressive realisation of the fundamental rights contained in the Bill of Rights

The integrated development plans (IDPs) should be a key mechanism achieving coordination in ECD planning as a fundamental component of development. The assumption made in this recommendation is that local government has 'wall-to-wall' reach in respect of planning for ECD through the IDP process. The responsible departments will need to consider how it will reach children living in those informal settlements outside of the IDP spatial planning process. The best available current data

is that in 2018, nearly 1.7 million children (9%) in South Africa lived in backyard dwellings or shacks in informal settlements. The number of children in informal housing has declined slightly from 2.3 million (13%) in 2002⁷⁷. This figure includes both informal settlements and backyard dwellings which may be within the spatial reach of the IDP.

COGTA guidelines for the development of IDP are clear that Departments must participate in the IDP process to ensure that national priorities are reflected in local IDP. This provides an opportunity for the DBE and provincial education departments, and the key departments of Health and Social Development to work with stakeholders in the IDP development and review processes to argue for the inclusion of ECD broadly, and ELP centres specifically in the local IDP⁷⁸. Both COGTA and SALGA have advised that the best way to optimise the inclusion for ECD in the planning-processes of local authorities is through participation of the key departments in the representative forums of the IDP processes as stakeholders. SALGA has stressed the importance of the platforms provided in the District Development Model (DDM).

The experience of the Project Preparation Trust (PPT) suggests that an ECD forum is established in each municipality, and that this platform is open, for example, to ECD centres, ECD forums, NGOs, state departments, and municipal officials. This provides a platform where the needs of the ECD centres can be raised with a focus on registration and subsidisation of ECD centres. These deliberations can then be directed to the Municipal ECD Multi-Stakeholder Steering Committee.

⁷⁶ Katharine Hall, "Children's Access to Housing". 2019. Children's Institute, University of Cape Town. https://ci.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/content_migration/health_uct_ac_sa/533/files/CC2019%2520-%2520Children%25E2%2580%2599s%2520access%2520to%2520housing.pdf

⁷⁷ This point was made by the COGTA representative at a meeting convened by ORC on ECD on 24th October 2023.

Another opportunity for the DBE, DSD, and Health to influence the inclusion of planning for ECD and ELP centres nationally at local level, would be to explore the possibility of engaging the 'Joint Reporting Forum for local government which is co-chaired by Treasury and COGTA and in which the Auditor General participates. While the intention of this form is to reduce the volume of indicators to simplify reporting, the forum may be open to the inclusion of key indicators which would assist in monitoring progress in ECD. It must be noted that SALGA has stressed the responsibility of COGTA in setting clear and appropriate targets for ECDs in municipalities. This indicator could be proposed as an outcome of the MTSF planning process outlined in Section 17.

SALGA⁷⁹ has noted weak participation of sectoral departments in,

'IDP processes and in mechanisms for IGR coordination as envisaged in the IGR Framework Act (No. 13 of 2005), which provides for coordination by Mayors and Municipal Managers, of government and private sector work in the municipal space in support of the needs of the communities as expressed in the IDP, has led to many developmental programs as required by

national and provincial government happening outside the IDP. This has led to a 'silo mentality' and frustration in the municipal space, leading to municipalities focussing on their constitutional mandate (explicitly funded mandates through conditional grants), and not coordinating the whole of government for the benefit of communities. ECD, as a function of national and provincial government, first under DSD and now under DBE was one of the programs that are left out of Mayoral coordination. The DDM hopefully will bring this back into the municipal coordination space, and thus have clear plans and accountability measures by all concerned'.

Core components of the IDPs include that they must reflect the council's vision for the long-term development of the municipality (23a), with a special emphasis on the municipality's most critical development and internal transformation needs. They must include at least the seven areas listed in the table below. The table below has been constructed to show the opportunities to link ECD to each of these requirements, and thereby to illustrate the opportunity to position ECD as central to local development.

CONTENT REQUIREMENTS OF IDP (SECTION 23. MSA)	OPPORTUNITY FOR ECD
Progressive realisation of the Bill of Rights	Section 28 (c) of the Bill of Rights in the Constitution asserts that, 'Every child has the right to basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services and social services'
Specific reference to be made to the poor and other disadvantaged sections of the community	This category of analysis could be applied to children in the municipality
An assessment of the existing level of development in the municipality	This category of analysis could be applied to the number and location of ELP centres in the municipality, and the percentage of children attending
The council's development priorities and objectives for its elected term	Care for children in of early learning interventions; family support interventions and early nutrition interventions (complementary feeding; adequate, nutritious, and safe diet; and micronutrient supplementation and fortification could be argued as a council priority
The council's development strategies which must be aligned with any national or provincial sectoral plans	The national and provincial ECD sectoral plans would usefully inform municipal strategies
A spatial development framework which must include the provision of basic guidelines for a land use management system for the municipality;	Planning for ELP sites is key in spatial development frameworks.
The key performance indicators and performance targets	KPI for ECD could be aligned, where possible, with indicators and targets adopted nationally and provincially.

⁷⁹ SALGA engagement with the NPC, October 2023.

The MSA is explicit regarding the process through which the IDP must be developed. Section 29 (1)(a) (i) of the MSA stipulates that the local community is to be consulted on its development needs and priorities in predetermined programme specifying timeframes for the different steps [29 (1) (b)] so that the local community can participate in the drafting of the integrated development plan [29 (1)(a)(i)].

There are opportunities for working developmentally with ELP providers, and with relevant officials to seek alignment and coordination in relation to children. This includes the opportunity of providing guidelines for municipalities and members of the community to inform their contributions in the consultation process;

The advocacy role of the District Director would be invaluable in this process, as would the provincial MECs responsible for education, health, and social development sharing the guidelines with the MEC responsible for municipalities to inform the exercise of his/her powers in section 31 to 'assist a municipality with the planning, drafting, adoption, and review of its IDP'.

Continuous Service Delivery Matters Requiring Coordination at Municipal Level

It is important that officials working across functions have mechanisms for coordinating their work across these line functions and spheres of government. These

may include, for example, ensuring that referrals and sign-posting between different departments are functioning, or ensuring that EHPs and social workers do joint monitoring and assessments of new ELP centres, or that nurses cover all ELP's to do health screening. Guidelines may be developed to support this coordination, but it is recommended that these are developed by reviewing existing arrangements and assessing what is currently working, or not working, and developing a framework that allows for maximum flexibility given the wide range of contexts such guidelines should serve.

Again, the principles provided in the NDP (p. 429) for managing routine coordination may be useful:

- Most coordination problems are easier to address if they are broken down into specific issues.
- These can be dealt with through horizontal coordination between departments.
- This would make it easier to build constructive working relationships at the level where they are needed.
- Routine coordination is particularly relevant where the problems relate to implementation more than policy formulation.
- This requires that responsibility is delegated to officials at appropriate levels, together with the necessary guidance.
- This means moving away from a hierarchical system where it is expected that all coordination agreements will be formalised at the highest level.

Recommendation: Institutional Arrangements for Inter-Departmental Coordination at Municipal Level

- The Integrated Development Plan (IDP) should be the primary mechanism for integrated planning of ECD at municipal level.
- Key departments must participate as stakeholders in the representative forums and platforms of the IDP processes (including DDM).
- The DBE, DSD, and Health might consider influencing the inclusion of planning for ECD and ELP centres nationally at local level by engaging the 'Joint Reporting Forum for Local Government' (co-chaired by Treasury and COGTA) to seek the inclusion of an ECD target for local government.
- Agreement across departments on the indicator to be proposed could be a priority task of the MTSF planning process outlined in Section 17.
- Guidelines should be developed to guide continuous service delivery matters requiring coordination at Municipal Level. These should be developed consultatively, based on a review of existing practice, and be informed by principles guiding routine coordination.

Growing Education District capacity to work developmentally in ECD at municipal level

The DBE faces challenges in the current asymmetry in its institutional arrangements in relation to its capabilities in ECD at national, provincial and education district levels so that provinces and districts are in a better position to coordinate the work within each of the 257 municipalities in South Africa. Until the function shift, the DBE did not have a role in ECD below Grade R, and no substantial working relationships between education districts and municipalities had been needed.

With the transfer of the functions for early learning programmes, there is now an urgent need to establish the new set of capabilities and mechanisms required at education district level (beyond the corps of social workers transferred from DSD) in order to interact with the municipalities within the education district. In particular, processes must be undertaken to build the capacity of responsible officials in education districts participating in IDIP processes – and the sectoral processes within it – to:

- Confidently participate in IDIP processes to motivate for ECD issues to be included in this coordinated planning mechanism.
- Share clear guidelines from the DBE as to what outcomes are desired for ECD and ELP centres.

This will require strong leadership at Education District level, led by the provincial and national departments. The ‘transfer of the ECD function’⁸⁰ means that the ECD is an integral part of the work of districts, and is not a separate ‘box’ added on as an ‘outside room’ inhabited by the staff transferred from DSD. The DBE might wish to consider requesting that District Directors be actively engaged in the IDP process as their seniority and experience would add weight to the participation of the provincial education department in these processes. District Directors should, in particular, seek to establish a working relationship with the IDP managers in the municipalities within the district and ensure the active participation of the District in the sectoral fora of the IDP process, and Circuit Managers should be involved in IDP processes in relation to ECD and ELP centres at sub-district municipal level.

SALGA has recommended⁸¹ that

- The DBE may wish to request an overview from each District of the alignment of the managerial structures of the districts and its circuits with the boundaries of municipalities in order to make adjustments that maximise alignment.
- At a district/ metro level, the DBE district offices in their jurisdiction should attend the DDM, and ensure that ECD issues are agenda items in the DDM or District IDP Representative Forum meetings.
- Circuit Managers should represent the DBE in existing municipal planning and accountability platforms, so that ECD is integrated in these discussions rather than having a separate forum that will require the same role-players.
- Specific bilateral arrangements between DBE and district/Metro municipal officials to discuss ECD issues may be arranged.

Responsible district officials will also need to have a different set of skills for engaging with informal service providers at community level. Education officials are accustomed to operating within an institutional framework that is highly regulated. Supporting communities as partners in developing early learning programmes will require a set of skills more orientated to development. Officials will have to move from a mindset of “we are responsible for providing” to a mindset of “we are responsible for creating an enabling and supportive environment for the sector to provide”. This is a massive mindset change that needs to happen all the way from the top to the bottom.

A significant contribution that could be made immediately by the DBE would be to prepare guidelines for community workers and municipalities providing the information required to participate in IDP processes related to the following functions allocated to municipalities in the NECD:

- supporting childcare facilities to meet minimum infrastructural health and safety standards in the development of new infrastructure for ECD services.
- identification of available infrastructure that may be used for the expansion of early learning services and programmes in areas of need.

⁸⁰ A discussion is needed with the DBE as to whether the ‘transfer of the ECD function’ should not be better understood as transfer of the ELP function and broad ECD strategy rather than the ‘ECD’, as this continues to be distributed across several departments.

⁸¹ SALGA engagement with the NPC, October 2023

The NPC is of the view that the proposal by the DBE that ‘District ECD Coordinating Committees’ must be established, chaired by the Education District, with involvement of other provincial departments and municipalities will be less likely to succeed than the DBE positioning itself to actively participate in the already functioning and established mechanisms that exist in every municipality such as IDP fora and their sectoral processes. The support to ELP practitioners in their participation in IDP processes, is an example of a developmentally-orientated support function that could have significant impact.

It may be especially important for education districts to participate in District Development Model planning processes, and for a case to be made for construction of ELP facilities to be a DDM priority.

SALGA has indicated that it is willing to partner with the DBE in building capacity for local government in ECD planning and would do so in its capacity building programme and through its provincial working groups⁸².

Recommendations: The Role of the DBE in Advancing ECD and ELP centres at Municipal Level

- The DBE and PED should invest in the development of a new set of capabilities and orientations for education district officials to play a development role in relationships with municipalities and their development fora, and with community-based providers of ELP.
- Deliberate steps should be taken by municipalities to engage ECD stakeholders between March and May each year when the annual IDP is open for consultation.
- The DBE and PDE should provide district officials with the necessary guidelines and an agenda for consideration of the inclusion of ECD and ELP centres in IDP processes in particular.
- The DBE and PED should invest in guidelines to support those participating in IDP processes as the key mechanism for integrating ELP centres and ECD consideration into development planning at municipal level.
- The DBE may wish to consider, where this is necessary, improving the alignment between education districts and circuits with the boundaries of municipalities to facilitate optimum working relationships.
- Education District Directors should lead the processes of municipal engagement at District level in respect of inserting provision for Centres providing Early Learning Programmes into IDP processes. This would include ensuring that ECD and ELP centres issues are agenda items in the DDM or District IDP Representative Forum meetings, participating in sectoral fora, and in quarterly IDP Mayors forum
- District Directors and Circuit Managers should, in particular, seek to establish working relationships with the IDP managers in the municipalities within the district.

16. Coordination with Key Stakeholders: The Inter-Sectoral Forum of the NIECD

The NIECD was unequivocal about the importance of collaboration between government, civil society, private sector, and communities so as to achieve the 2030 goals. The NIECD (p. 90) provides that,

“The Minister of Social Development will, through the National Inter-Departmental Committee for Early Childhood Development, establish the South African Inter-Sectoral Forum for Early Childhood

Development to serve as a national platform upon which the Government and the non-government sector involved in early childhood development service delivery will be engaged on early childhood development services in South Africa. This forum will meet at least twice per financial year and will operate based on mutually accepted Terms of Reference.

However, the NIECD conception of the composition of this as a civil society forum, does not adequately disaggregate the different components of ‘the

⁸² Notes submitted by SALGA for an engagement with the NPC on 23rd October 2023

non-government sector'. The composition of the inter-sectoral forum (IF)⁸³ includes a wide range of sectors with disparate interests and roles. Some of these are examined below with consideration of the implication for structures of coordination at national, provincial, and local level.

In addition, the IF does not sufficiently acknowledge in these arrangements:

- The considerable dependence of the state on non-state providers of Centres providing Early Learning Programmes prior to the commencement of formal schooling⁸⁴.
- The role of non-state parties in design, delivery, and financing of Centres providing Early Learning Programmes.
- The strategic resource of institutions and NPO with valuable technical expertise.

The current MTSF acknowledges the role of:

- Community Based Organisations and Non-profit Organisations in relation to the migration of the responsibility for pre-schooling to the Department of Basic Education without specifying what this role is – is it assumed that this is as beneficiaries?
- Academic institutions and other service providers which 'create an enabling environment for children's services through legislation, policy, effective practice, monitoring, evaluation, and quality assurance'. Again, the nature and form of this contribution is not specified.

Given the important contributions made by non-state actors in centres providing Early Learning Programmes, whilst it is not possible to do this in the time frames of this MTSF, going forward it would be good to quantify some of these non-state-funded contributions and formally acknowledge these in the MTSF. Section 17 proposes that a mapping is undertaken of what is directly delivered by

government and what is currently delivered outside of government.

This advisory proposes that a more focused strategy that recognises the distinct and complementary role of these components be developed. The NIECD provides for the following key categories of social partners:

Early Childhood Development NGO's

The greatest ECD service and support gap exists for children and caregivers in the poorest 60% of households – specifically in terms of early learning and caregiver support services. This is where service provision is driven locally by women in the communities in which they live - women who lack support, acknowledgement, and resources. ELP providers in the poorest communities and their employees – mostly women – are underpaid and tend to operate informally without government support or access to formal skilling opportunities. Civil society organisations have stepped in to bridge this gap and provide support to many of these women. These intermediary organisations are an important resource to improve communication and understand the varied circumstances of the women providing care, nutrition and learning opportunities to young children, and are an important resource to the government.

There are many innovative examples of partnerships that can be conceptualised and developed in collaborative fora of government and NGO. An example of an existing form of a partnership that could be reviewed and extended is the DBE Quality Assurance and Support System which proposes that immediate quality assessment and support be provided by NGO's contracted for this purpose to ELP centres they meet very basic health and safety standards. This would be a viable way for the DBE to

⁸³ The membership of the South African Inter-Sectoral Forum for Early Childhood Development will include, but not be limited to, the following:

- National integrated early childhood development NGOs, i.e., any organisation rendering primarily (more than 60 per cent of total services) early childhood development services and having infrastructure in at least four or more provinces;
- International partners providing support in the advancement of early childhood development;
- National integrated early childhood development training institutions (private and public sector) i.e., any training institution that delivers SETA-accredited early childhood development training programmes and has infrastructure in at least four or more provinces;
- National research institutions, i.e., any accredited research institution, other than universities, that has a prominent focus on research related to young children (birth to school-going age) over the past 24 months or a representative body thereof. The latter may include a representative body for universities;
- National government departments (relevant government departments);
- National government agencies (relevant national government agencies)

⁸⁴ Section 17 proposes that a mapping is undertaken of what is directly delivered by government and what is currently delivered outside of government.

provide support for improving quality in partnership with NGO. Partnerships could also be explored in which NGO provide registration support.

A forum for these organisations is very important – at provincial, national and municipal levels. Government should encourage the voluntary formation of an association of service providers themselves at local level.

Other Partners

For the other key social partners identified in the NIECD, it seems a single forum might be cumbersome, may attempt to serve too many interests, and is over-regulated for the purpose.

- International partners providing support in the advancement of early childhood development.
- National integrated early childhood development training institutions (private and public sector): any training institution that delivers SETA-accredited early childhood development training programmes and has infrastructure in at least four or more provinces;
- National research institutions: any accredited research institution, other than universities, that has a prominent focus on research related to young children (birth to school-going age) over the past 24 months or a representative body thereof. The latter may include a representative body for universities.

Recommendations: Civil Society as a partner in ECD

- Mechanisms for coordination with civil society must be cognisant of:
 - The considerable dependence of the state on non-state providers of Centres providing Early Learning Programmes prior to the commencement of formal schooling
 - The role of non-state parties in design, delivery, and financing of Centres providing Early Learning Programmes.
 - The strategic resource of institutions and NPO with valuable technical expertise
- Consideration should be given to the development of a focused strategy that recognises the distinct and complementary role of these components.
- The critical importance and urgency of effective collaboration with, and pro-poor targeted support for, non-state providers in early learning must be an urgent priority if we are to extend the reach to all children of participation in learning programmes. Accelerating registration of ELP centres is an urgent priority.
- Any consultative or coordinating mechanisms for Centres providing Early Learning Programmes must recognise the significance of the scale of non-state providers in these arrangements.

17. Resuscitating the NIECD Integrated Implementation Plan of 2018

Subsequent to Cabinet adoption of the NIECD, a comprehensive implementation plan was developed by the National Inter-Departmental Committee for Early Childhood Development with support from UNICEF. A detailed summary is provided in Appendix 2. The final version is dated February 2018, and it was meticulously developed over a period of just over two years after the adoption of the NECD.

Section 5 of the implementation plan for the NIECD indicated that,

'The management for the implementation of the National Integrated Plan for Early Childhood Development in South Africa: Towards 2030 (2017/18 to 2029/30), with due cognisance of the provisions of Chapters 6 and 7 of the National Integrated Policy for Early Childhood Development shall be the responsibility of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Early Childhood Development supported by the National Inter-Departmental Committee for Early Childhood Development. Similarly, as contemplated in

paragraph 7.3.3.3 National Integrated Policy for Early Childhood Development provincial and local spheres of government shall take on their respective responsibilities’.

However, the detailed implementation has not been implemented, nor is it in the public domain. This may be because the IMC for ECD was given responsibility for the management of the plan, but has never met. This is not to say that separate discrete elements were not implemented by responsible departments, as is seen in Appendix 3.

While it is unfortunate that the implementation plan developed for the policy seems to have been stillborn, this plan is a national asset that must be revived as a matter of urgency. Its detailed attention to goals and objectives with targets organised thematically across departments and spheres of government could be the basis for accelerating effective coordination in the sector, with the provision of adequate capacity and strong political leadership⁸⁵.

Outputs for ECD in the NIECD Implementation Plan (Appendix 1)

“The NDP sets forth the following outputs particular for early childhood development, which were integrated into the National Integrated Policy for Early Childhood Development as well as this plan. Below are some of the key provisions across the NDP that were also taken into account in the development of [the NIECD and its plan for implementation].

“Prioritise early childhood development:

- High-quality, universal early childhood education.
- Make early childhood development a top priority among the measures to improve the quality of education and long-term prospects of future generations.

“Early childhood development programmes and delivery:

- a) Define and phase in a comprehensive package of services for all young children.

- b) Broaden the definition of early childhood development, considering all the development needs of a child. Use the expanded definition as the basis for all strategies.
- c) Make 2 years of quality preschool enrolment for 4- and 5- year-olds compulsory before Grade 1. All children should have at least 2 years of pre-school education⁸⁶.
- d) The state is responsible for ensuring that all vulnerable families receive a comprehensive package of early childhood development services.
- e) Home and community-based early childhood development interventions should be piloted in selected districts. Financing for this initiative could involve working closely with foreign donors and private sector funders.
- f) Reduce maternal, infant and child mortality.
- g) Significantly reduce prevalence of non-communicable chronic diseases.
- h) Reduce injury, accidents, and violence by 50% from 2010 levels.
- i) Identify the main elements of a comprehensive food security and nutrition strategy and launch a campaign.
- j) Develop proposals for an acceptable minimum standard of living and proposals on how to achieve this over time.
- k) All children should enjoy services and benefits aimed at facilitating access to nutrition, health care, education, social care, and safety.
- l) Address problems such as hunger, malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies that affect physical growth and cognitive development, especially among children.
- m) Expose learners to history, heritage, and culture. Foster common values across language, culture, religion, race, class, and space.
- n) Developing and implementing plans for a more effective arts and culture curriculum in schools with appropriate educator support’.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ A summarised version of the plan is provided in the appendix.

⁸⁶ The Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill (at the time of writing, it has been passed by the portfolio Committee and will proceed to the House) makes education compulsory for children in the year in which they turn 6 years of age (Grade R). A further extension of compulsory education in formal schooling to the year in which they turn 5 is currently unaffordable, and schools may not be the most appropriate institutional arrangement for children of this age. The NPC recommends that the compulsory school-going age remains at the year in which learners turn 6 (see section 8)

⁸⁷ “National Integrated Implementation Plan for Early Childhood Development in South Africa: Towards 2030”

This list of outputs will need to be reviewed and updated in a process involving the key departments. For example, output (c) should be universal access as a goal for the 2 years prior to commencement of compulsory education. Others, while important, might not be considered an immediate and urgent priority for the next MTSF.

The 'function shift' of the transfer of the functions for early learning programmes in the Child Care Act of 2005 from the Minister of Social Development to the Minister of Basic Education early learning programmes through Presidential Proclamation 21 of 2021 (effective 1 April) will have shifted the location of some of these goals and objectives with targets, but the process of taking this forward should be able to make the necessary adjustments with ease.

This will be discussed – with recommendations – in the next section. The fact that it was developed by an interdepartmental committee suggests that it may be a good basis for integrated and coordinated action.

18. THE 2024 - 2029 SECTORAL STRATEGY ON ECD: A COORDINATING FRAMEWORK FOR AN OUTPUT-DRIVEN COORDINATION PROCESS FOR PLANNING, IMPLEMENTING, AND MONITORING IN ECD

The PEIR report (p. xiii -xiv) noted that:

The linkages between planning, budgeting and ECD outcomes are weak. Annual performance plans (APPs) and annual reports of national and provincial departments represent an important nexus for improving planning and accountability, but they often omit key interventions and indicators required to measure performance against these outcomes. For example, PDoH's are not reporting consistently on essential nutrition interventions for young children as discussed earlier. Moreover, APPs and annual reports do not allow for easy comparison over time or across

provinces, and it is common for departments to make plans available online only a few years after they have been approved. A broader issue with departmental APP's and annual reports is that they tend to focus extensively on populating standard tables with expenditure values and non-financial indicator values, but very little on matters such as unit costs, purchasing power trends within budget programmes, balancing of non-staff and staff inputs, and the relationship between expenditure patterns and service delivery outcomes.

There is no holistic approach to budgeting for child development across key departments and key interventions; this results in inadequate funding levels and disparate funding flows, particularly for areas which span multiple departments, such as nutrition, which spans across the education, health, and social development sectors.

It is proposed that the existing institutional arrangement of the MTSF be used as the integrating framework and the basis for detailed planning noting that:

"integrated monitoring framework focuses on monitoring and outcomes, indicators, and targets towards the achievement of priorities.

"The MTSF 2019-2024 promotes alignment, coordination and ultimately full integration of all development planning instruments into an integrated framework bearing results without duplication, role conflict and development contradictions, better coordination of implementation..."⁸⁸

It is understood that the DPME wishes to ensure that the new MTSF is more 'lean' and reduces the number of indicators it is tracking. In order to facilitate coordinate ECD planning and reporting, there are two options that could be pursued:

- A single MTSF goal for ECD which integrates the contributions of all departments.
- ECD continuing to be a component of department-specific MTSF process – but with a transversal synthesis of ECD components to facilitate joint reporting on ECD.

⁸⁸ MTSF 2019-2024, p. 24

In either option, with the support of DPME, the DBE could work with all departments central to ECD on an outcome-driven framework for the ECD implementation plan based on the jointly agreed sectoral strategy for ECD for 2024-9 and MTSF commitments.

This would ensure that the components, for which individual departments would take responsibility, cohere into a sufficiently comprehensive ECD strategy for the country, and that key departments have a shared sense of responsibility for the achievement of the goals and its outcomes. Certain functions of ECD such as nutrition, disability, and early language development do not fit exclusively within a single line department, and complementary interventions are necessary while maintaining the integrity of individual department resource allocation as per the MTEF and annual budgets. It would also provide a co-ordinated accountability system which will allow for comprehensive tracking of the progress made in each of the functions, and reporting to the responsible Ministers.

This process is urgent as it must inform the development of provincial strategies and plans. It is strongly recommended that the Auditor General (AGSA) play a role in formulating commitments and then in auditing these in the outcome-based model of coordination in the MTSF.

Some of the tasks that could be undertaken by departments in preparation for either of these processes, include:

1. Mapping what is directly delivered by government and what is currently delivered outside of government.
2. Examining the outcomes, interventions, and resourcing allocation of the MTSF 2019-2024 framework (see Appendix 3 for a consolidation of ECD in the 2019/24 framework) in relation to the following in order to identify any gaps and reflect on progress made:

- 2.1. Statutory responsibilities including the function shift of 2021
- 2.2. Guidance provided in the NIECD or any other policy document
- 2.3. Interventions not or partially undertaken
- 2.4. The NIECD Implementation Plan of 2018 (see Appendix 2)
3. Making an assessment of current capacity to deliver ECD interventions including, for example:
 - 3.1. Education - for 2024/5, the dedicated capacity of provincial and district officials to fulfil the full range of new functions with clear measures of capacity. Indicators should be set for monitoring the development of capacity over the MTEFF period.
 - 3.2. Health - for 2024/5, the availability of trained Community Health Workers as part of Ward-Based Primary Health Care Outreach Teams (OTs)⁸⁹ by province and municipality. Indicators should be set for monitoring the development of capacity over the METE period.
4. Aligning interventions with the resources available in the MTEF for interventions.

Work that could be to be done collaboratively across Departments on the basis of the above in a process convened by Basic Education:

1. Identifying:
 - 1.1. Gaps
 - 1.2. Points of intersection (or of mutual dependence)
 - 1.3. Priorities
2. Developing the outline of an interdepartmental MTSF Framework for ECD for 2024/5 -2029/30, including:
 - 2.1. Agreeing on a shared vision for ECD
 - 2.2. Agreeing on key outcomes
 - 2.3. Identifying cross-linkages should be identified (ideally both lead and supportive)
 - 2.4. Outcomes can be cross-departmental

⁸⁹ The PEIR Report provides a useful overview, pp. 102-3

2.5. Identifying:

2.5.1. The potential role of key technical partners or donor agencies

2.5.2. Key interventions

2.5.3. Key indicators (targets) to monitor progress.

2.5.3.1. The NPC believes that it is important to include an indicator in the MTSF that looks at the percentage of children in SA who THRIVE BY FIVE⁹⁰ (i.e., they are on track when it comes to their physical growth (measured in terms of height for age/ stunting) and for early learning in the 5 domains

As a country, monitoring how children start school is as important (if not more so) as monitoring how they complete school. The Thrive by Five baseline index was initiated by DBE, DPME, DSD, DOH, Treasury, and StatsSA. Ongoing use of this index should be central to the monitoring implementation within the MTSF⁹¹.

2.5.3.2. The Department of Health should consider including the components of the early nutrition interventions suggested in the PEIR report (p. 113) including: micronutrient supplementation (folic acid, iron, vitamins) for pregnant women; breastfeeding promotion and support

(other than standard post-natal visit); growth monitoring and micronutrient supplementation for young children; and nutrition information/training as these 'are crucial for tracking progress and to inform responsive programming' (PEIR, p.112). It must also be noted that the PEIR report indicates that, 'The lack of data in PDoH annual reports on nutrition interventions, including on implementation (beneficiary numbers and unit costs) and key nutritional outcomes, underlines the need to strengthen data collection and reporting mechanisms'

2.5.3.3. It is advised that the working group engage with the work done by FUEL⁹² who co-created, implemented, and embedded a methodology called Monitoring, Reporting and Responding (MRR) within DBE's National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP). The methodology was adopted by DBE and is being used by all nine provinces to support and hold schools accountable to serving nutritious meals to learners on time. In 2016, Fuel used the MRR methodology to partner with Kago Ya Bana (KYB) and City of Joburg to develop a comprehensive

⁹⁰ "Important Developmental Domains for Early Learning" that are assessed in the THRIVE BY FIVE Index:

- Gross Motor Development: Facilitates peer engagement through participation in games, and is associated with emotional well-being as well as with academic achievement.
- Fine Motor Coordination and Visual-Motor Integration: Important for coordinating the use of the hands and the eyes; and makes a specific contribution to early mathematics and early literacy.
- Emergent Numeracy and Mathematics: Strongly predictive of later school success. Good maths foundations are essential for a deeper understanding of more complex mathematical concepts and problem-solving.
- Cognition and Executive Functioning: Helps children hold information or instructions in mind during classroom activities, focus on task-relevant stimuli during problem-solving tasks, and resist distraction.
- Emergent Literacy and Language: Affects the ability to understand what is being said and read by a teacher, as well as to communicate effectively through speech and writing.

⁹¹ Information on the Index is available here - www.thrivebyfive.co.za.

⁹² FUEL is an NGO which has supported the DBE and all the provinces with MMR of the National School Nutrition Programme. <https://www.fuel.org.sa/home/?re=1&te=2>

monitoring tool for Childcare Officers (CCO's) to use to monitor and support ECD centres in the Metro. Fuel has also recently started working with the Limpopo Provincial Department of Education to use the MRR methodology to empower Social Workers to support and hold ECD sites accountable for implementation of quality ECD practices which result in school ready children (Early Learning/NCF, Health and Safety, Nutrition and use of Funds provided). In parallel,

Fuel will be working with key stakeholders to simplify administrative processes at districts (learner verification, site registration and funds transfer and management thereof).

The frequency of joint reviews of progress in respect of the interventions, including joint problem-solving should be determined. It is recommended that this be no less than twice a year with the dates being scheduled in advance. There should be deliberative reflection on lessons learned from the process and what can be improved 3 years into the MTSF period so that improvements can be considered before the next period.

Recommendations: The MTSF framework as a coordinating mechanism

- Consideration should be given to addressing the following findings in the PEIR report by using the MTSF framework as a coordinating mechanism:
 - Linkages between planning, budgeting and ECD outcomes (including over time and across provinces) are weak and must be addressed.
 - The lack of integrated planning and budgeting results in inadequate funding levels and disparate funding flows, particularly for areas which span multiple departments, such as nutrition which spans across the education, health, and social development sectors
- It is proposed that the existing institutional arrangement of the MTSF be used as the integrating framework and the basis for detailed planning. The MTSF is intended to promote alignment, coordination, and ultimately full integration of all development planning instruments into an integrated framework bearing results without duplication, role conflict and development contradictions, and better coordination of implementation
- In order to facilitate coordinate ECD planning and reporting, two options are proposed:
 - A single MTSF goal for ECD which integrates the contributions of all departments
 - ECD continuing to be a component of department-specific MTSF process – but with a transversal synthesis of ECD components to facilitate joint reporting on ECD
- In either option, with the support of DPME, it is proposed that the DBE work with all departments central to ECD on an outcome-driven framework for the ECD implementation plan based on the jointly agreed sectoral strategy for ECD for 2024-9 and MTSF commitments so that the components, for which individual departments would take responsibility cohere into a sufficiently comprehensive ECD strategy for the country with shared sense of responsibility across departments for the achievement of the goals and its outcomes.
- It is strongly recommended that the Auditor General (AGSA) plays a role in formulating commitments and then in auditing these in the outcome-based model of coordination in the MTSF.
- The frequency of joint review of progress in respect of the interventions, including joint problem-solving should be determined. It is recommended that this be quarterly with the dates being scheduled in advance.
- This process is urgent as it must inform the development of provincial strategies and plans

19. Addressing Pre-Existing System Weaknesses: What can be Learned from the Presidential ‘Red-Tape’ Reduction Initiative?

Some of the administrative resource challenges consequent to the function shift require urgent attention. However, the extent to which many of the challenges existed before the function shift has become clear in the Red Tape Reduction (RTR) focus area of ECD. A presentation by the Presidency on the RTR in November 2022 indicates that,

‘The objective of the RTR team, in the short- to medium term, is to make tangible progress in reducing excessively complex rules, regulations, procedures and processes that inhibit economic growth and job creation in key areas of the economy, working with relevant role-players across government, the private sector and community-based organisations’.

The same presentation makes it clear that, *Addressing the selected impediments is dependent on the co-operation of the relevant*

administrative authorities, including at national, provincial, and local government level.

A diagnostic of these weaknesses would be strengthened by comment by that working group, this should be solicited, and lessons included in the process of developing the MTSF goal for ECD, and in the guidelines to be developed for municipalities.

The initiative has focused on:

- Conducting municipal level business process engineering to streamline and strengthen the ECD registration process.
- Developing municipal guidelines on how to process ECD applications effectively, particularly for township based ECDs.
- Drafting standard municipal by-laws on ECD registration.
- Change management to promote adoption of new standard bylaws.

All of these are urgent areas requiring fast-tracking at the highest level of the relevant departments.

Recommendation: Red Tape Reduction (RTR) in ECD

The DG for DBE must ensure that the multiple departments involved in registration of Early Learning Programmes are collectively briefed by the Presidential Red Tape Reduction (RTR) ECD focus area team, and that clear decisions are taken and acted upon to implement the recommendations made and agreed upon within an agreed specified time. This must include the role of COGTA in taking forward the work of the ECD focus area group in the RTR process by producing the necessary frameworks, including regulatory, to expedite streamlined processes of the registration of ELP centres at municipal level. Progress on meeting the targets should be reported to the Social Protection, Community and Human Development Cabinet Cluster or a meeting of the relevant departments convened for this purpose.

20. Strengthening Capacity for the Coordination Role in the DBE.

Some of the capabilities that the DBE could consider strengthening for optimum functioning of its coordinating role include:

1. Coordinating the combined ECD MTSF process including:

- 1.1. Leading the processes, with the DPME, of developing the 2024/9 ECD MSTF goals and accompanying targets and monitoring frameworks

- 1.2. Liaising with relevant state entities and departments (such as DPME, the AGSA, and StatsSA) in respect of monitoring and performance data and other data requirements.
- 1.3. Operating the ‘data refinery’ needed for the above.
- 1.4. Setting up processes of regular cross-department review of progress.
- 1.5. Undertaking systematic risk-mapping and development of mitigation proposals.

- 1.6. Drafting reports analysing progress (and challenges for resolution) by the ECD Ministerial Working Group and, where necessary, the cabinet subcommittee.

2. Supporting the Implementation of the NIECD at all levels of government

- 2.1. Supporting provincial Premiers in Executive Councils with the necessary information and data for them to take forward their role (in liaison with the relevant departments)
- 2.2. Supporting liaison between the responsible departments and municipalities and SALGA

3. Engaging non-state players in meaningful partnerships regarding the implementation of the NIECD including

- 3.1. Facilitating the design and development of a social compact model that draws on innovative delivery mechanisms and external resources (both financial and non-financial) to offset the costs to government.
- 3.2. Synergising public and non-government provision of services.
- 3.3. Mobilising private resources for strategic issues arising in ECD
- 3.4. Working with technical experts (including within international agencies, philanthropic organisations, and Institutions of Higher Learning Exploring) to explore evidence-based innovative ideas that would assist in improving and accelerating implementation of the NIECD.

4. Driving a national communication strategy on ECD⁹³

- 4.1. The NIECD envisaged that,
 - This communication strategy could be 'targeted at the full range of stakeholders and aiming to promote changes in behaviour, attitude ensure the development and implementation of coherent, sustained, well-resourced communications, public awareness and advocacy interventions and practice that are necessary to realise the objectives of the national integrated early childhood development policy'.

- 'The success of the programmes and attainment of the early childhood development investments necessary to support their realisation depend in large measure on the development and implementation of a national integrated early childhood development communications and advocacy programme that provides public information aimed at promoting the behaviour, attitude, and practice changes necessary amongst parents, care-givers, practitioners, educators, and government and non-government role players, amongst others.

- 'Underpinning the provision and successful achievement of the objectives of the services making up early childhood development services is ongoing media and public communication that:

- Reinforces the nature of – and critical window of opportunity offered by – appropriate quality interventions early years of life;
- Emphasises the crucial positive role parents and families play in the development of infants and young children; and Conveys important messages to support early childhood development, including Nutrition and health care; Safety and protection, including alternatives to corporal punishment; Responsive and loving care; and Early learning and development' (NIECD, pp. 59-60).

- 4.2. The development of this communication and its branding is urgent and could optimally be coordinated with the communication strategy of the Office on the Rights of the Child (ORC).

5. Supporting the Office on the Right of the Child (ORC) in its responsibilities in relation to ECD with respect to:

- 5.1. children's rights mainstreaming and advocacy strategy, and in particular working with the ORC in developing a nation-wide ECD campaign, so all stakeholders are clear

⁹³ It was envisaged in the NIECD that this would be in place by 2024.

- on the vision and priorities for ECD, and in which the President plays a role.
- 5.2. strategic leadership and advocacy in relation to ECD partnerships within a whole of society approach.
 - 5.3. advancing an integrated National Children's Rights Policy.

- 5.4. the conducting of research on pertinent children's rights issues in ECD;
- 5.5. engagement on monitoring and evaluation activities in the ECD.

6. Convening key parties to participate in fora in pursuit of the above

Recommendation: Strengthening Capacity for the Coordination Role in the DBE

Some of the capabilities that the DBE could consider for strengthening its capacity for optimum functioning of its coordinating role include:

- Coordinating the combined ECD MTSF process (with the support of DPME) – both the initiation of this and its quarterly reviews
- Supporting the Implementation of the NIECD at all levels of government
- Engaging non-state players in meaningful partnerships regarding the implementation of the NIECD including
- Driving a national communication strategy on ECD
- Supporting the Office on the Right of the Child (ORC) in its responsibilities in relation to ECD
- Convening key parties to participate in fora in pursuit of the above

CONCLUSION

This advisory has attempted to capture and motivate for the following three purposes, which each encompasses numerous priorities, details, and recommendations, as specifically outlined above:

1. To make a case for a set of **urgent interventions to address challenges in the coordination mechanisms in achieving an integrated Early Childhood Development sectoral strategy** which will inform the draft **2024-2029 Medium-Term National Development Plan (MTP)**. It is the view of the NPC that effective coordination is indispensable to building the necessary base for the design, implementation, and monitoring of a successful integrated ECD Sectoral Strategy. The goal of ensuring concerted action across national departments and spheres of government is paramount to benefitting all children and ensuring equitable access to quality ECD services. It is noted that current structures are not functioning robustly or serving their intended functions.
2. To signal the intention of the NPC to further explore and develop the challenges identified in this case study of ECD, in relation to their

application to other vexing problems of coordination in government, as one of the major challenges in the building of state capacity.

3. To stress a **'whole of society approach' in our national response to supporting the optimum development of young children**. Government cannot support children alone – nor should it. A national commitment to placing children at the centre of our concerns must be inclusive of all components of society, all levels of government, and all relevant government departments. Work within the DBE in developing an urgent solution for at-scale **service delivery which brings government and social partners together** to ensure every child is reached by the services they need, is acknowledged. Non-state providers are integral to this solution, and there is much innovation in the sector from non-state actors and learning from these experiences can optimise ECD reach and effectiveness.

In summary, we urge stakeholders, educators and government at the various levels addressed in the above advisory to move forward on the crucial matters of ECD and ELP's including the imperatives of family support interventions; child hunger and nutrition initiatives; critical investment in infrastructural support for the needs and rights of young children; and the establishment of concrete

steps towards developing ECD and universal access to early learning programmes. We hope to see decisive action to develop and advance the

ECD Sector Strategy for 2024-9 collaboratively, and in a coordinated manner, across the key departments.

APPENDIX 1: Roles and Responsibilities for ECD by Priority Intervention, Department, and Level Of Government

(adapted from PEIR OVERVIEW REPORT, 2023, 2023 Review, pp. 124-5⁹⁴)

DEPARTMENT	EARLY LEARNING INTERVENTIONS	EARLY NUTRITION INTERVENTIONS	FAMILY SUPPORT INTERVENTIONS
EDUCATION National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Norms and Standards for Service provision</i> • <i>Evaluation of efficiency and effectiveness of programmes</i> • Curriculum • Overall registration requirements and quality standards • Transfer of funds to provinces ECD conditional grant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer funds for the provision of meals to children in grade R through the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) • Transfer funds for the ECD conditional grant – subsidy component used for nutrition 	
EDUCATION Provincial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum Implementation and monitoring • Training in early learning development • In-service practitioner development • Provide resources • Administration of conditional grants (Education Infrastructure Grant and Expanded Public Works Social Sector Programme) • Contracting with private providers (for-profit and non-profit) in the delivery of ECD programmes • Contracting with private providers (for-profit and non-profit) in the delivery of ECD programmes (new) • Provincial population-based planning and management for pre-grade R (new) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of National School Nutrition Programme (in grade R) • Provision of ECD subsidies – subsidy component used for nutrition (new) 	

⁹⁴ The DBE and UNICEF have commissioned a comprehensive review of the regulatory framework for ECD. This will be complete soon and will greatly assist in clarifying the responsibilities for ECD across departments, and across spheres of government

DEPARTMENT	EARLY LEARNING INTERVENTIONS	EARLY NUTRITION INTERVENTIONS	FAMILY SUPPORT INTERVENTIONS
EDUCATION Provincial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where ECD programme personnel are directly appointed by the department, the management and supervision of these personnel (new) Ensure ECD programmes are equipped with necessary play and learning materials and have capacity to ensure quality of materials is maintained and regularly updated (new) Provision of subsidy to ECD programmes, conditional grant payment (ECD conditional grant), registration of providers, subsidy allocations decisions and monitoring (new) 		
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT National	Child Care and Protection		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Policy and Planning</i> <i>Norms and Standards for Service provision</i> <i>Evaluation of efficiency and effectiveness of programmes</i> Grant payments (SASSA)
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT Provincial		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other food distribution points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provincial population-based planning and management Registration, monitoring, and quality improvements of programmes Short course training; contracting with private providers (for-profit and non-profit) in the delivery of services Where service personnel are directly appointed by the department, the management and supervision of these personnel

DEPARTMENT	EARLY LEARNING INTERVENTIONS	EARLY NUTRITION INTERVENTIONS	FAMILY SUPPORT INTERVENTIONS
HEALTH National		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Policy development, national planning, regulation and development of norms and standards for service provision</i> • <i>Evaluation of efficiency and effectiveness of these programmes</i> • Development of training curricula in partnership with the Department of Basic Education for the delivery of ECD programmes 	
HEALTH Provincial		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provincial planning and management of services (centre and non-centre based) • Management and supervision of personnel employed directly by the department 	
COGTA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit and identification of available infrastructure that may be used for expansion of early learning services • New early childhood development service provision infrastructure • Supporting childcare facilities to meet minimum infrastructure, health, and safety standards • Registration of child-minding services • If required by provincial DSD and capacity exists, provision of ECD programmes (registration, payment verification and management, regulation, and delivery) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOCAL HEALTH FACILITIES • Management and supervision of assigned personnel (including community health workers) • Delivery and monitoring of services (centre and non-centre based) 	

APPENDIX 2: Extracts from the Implementation Plan of the NECD

(Final version dated February 2018) Developed by National Inter-Departmental Committee for Early Childhood Development with support from UNICEF

5. MANAGEMENT FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN (p. 4)

5.1. The management for the implementation of the National Integrated Plan for Early Childhood Development in South Africa: Towards 2030 (2017/18 to 2029/30), with due cognisance of the provisions of Chapters 6 and 7 of the National Integrated Policy for Early Childhood

Development shall be the responsibility of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Early Childhood Development supported by the National Inter-Departmental Committee for Early Childhood Development. Similarly, as contemplated in paragraph 7.3.3.3 National Integrated Policy for Early Childhood Development provincial and local spheres of government shall take on their respective responsibilities.

- 5.2. The participation of civil society in the implementation of this plan is subject to the provisions of the National Integrated Policy for Early Childhood Development, sectoral departmental policy provisions and the spirit of the NDP. The overall implementation of this plan is subject to close collaboration between government, civil society, private sector, and communities to achieve the 2030 goal.
- 5.3. Supportive Plans for implementations
- 5.3.1 The National Inter-Ministerial Committee for Early Childhood Development shall develop an annual implementation monitoring plan based on this plan before 28 February each year, which will guide its operations for the next financial year.
- 5.3.2 This National Integrated Plan for Early Childhood Development in South Africa: Towards 2030 (2017/18 to 2029/30) provides the strategic actions that are required for the implementation of National Integrated Policy for Early Childhood Development. This should guide and support respective line departments to develop more detailed sectoral plans to ensure full implementation against their own strategic plans and annual performance plans.
- 5.4. Monitoring and Reporting
- 5.4.1 The National Inter-Departmental Committee for Early Childhood Development shall publish (publicly available) annually before or on 30 June each year, through the National Inter-ministerial Committee for Early Childhood Development and subject to approval by Cabinet, an annual progress report on the implementation of the National Integrated Plan for Early Childhood Development in South Africa: Towards 2030 (2017/18 to 2029/30).
- 5.4.2 The National Inter-Ministerial Committee for Early Childhood Development shall devise such protocols and agreements necessary to obtain information timely for the aforesaid reporting from the provinces, districts, and municipalities.
- 5.5. Responsibilities of lead and supporting departments per activity:
- (a) Lead department: Is indicated in bold with each activity and is also the first one mentioned. A lead department is responsible for the following:
- To take the overall leadership in the implementation of a strategic activity
 - To analyse the requirements in terms of time and resources for the implementation of the specific activity against the policy, as well as other relevant policies and programmes and government's obligations.
 - To convene the supporting departments related to the specific activity as to ensure cross-sectoral understanding and implementation.
 - To provide the core resources for the implementation of an activity.
 - To provide the required data and information for reporting on the specific activity.
 - To report to the National Inter-Departmental Committee on the respective activity timeously as requested
- (b) Supporting department is indicated below in italic print. A supporting department is responsible for the following:
- Participates fully under the leadership of the lead department and supports the implementation of an activity.
 - Provide the required resources linked to its participation and obligations for the implementation of an activity.
 - Provide the required data and information to the lead department for the reporting on the specific activity.
 - To report to the leading department on the respective activity timeously as requested.
 - To report to the National Inter- Departmental Committee on the respective activity timeously as requested.

6. NATIONAL INTEGRATED POLICY FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR IMPLEMENTATION BY 2030

6.1. This section provides the detailed implementation of the National Integrated Plan for Early Childhood Development in South Africa: Towards 2030 (2017/18 to 2029/30). It is divided into six sub-sections directly linked to the National Integrated Policy for Early Childhood Development. Each subsection is cross referenced to the said policy and other macro plans such as the NDP, Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), National Plan of Action for Children (NPAC) and the South African Integrated Programme of Action for Early Childhood Development-Moving Ahead (2013/14-2016/17) (SAIPOA)

6.2. Each sub-section indicates:

(a) Objectives which were derived directly from the National Integrated Policy for Early Childhood Development

- (b) A cross-linkage for an objective (and in some cases activities) to the said policy, the NDP, MTSF, NPAC and the NIP.
- (c) Strategic activities, indicators, baselines, and targets (linked to the MTSF where possible)
- (d) Regulatory actions needed, which refer to amendments to policies and laws that are required to ensure alignment with the National
- (e) Links with other plans/policies so as to ensure cross referencing and synergy in implementation plan of the National Integrated Policy for Early Childhood Development
- (f) Timeframes, which are linked to the policy's commitment or other commitments towards implementation.
- (g) Responsible department, both lead and supportive
- (h) Budget, which is an indication of the budget needed for implementation.

THIS TABLE IS A SUMMARY OF THE MORE DETAILED TABLE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (see Section 6 above for missing components)

SECTION OF NIECD & AIM/ POLICY STATEMENT	GOAL		OBJECTIVES
7.1 COMPREHENSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME To implement the Comprehensive National ECD programme as contemplated in Chapter 5 of the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (2015)	1. HEALTH CARE & NUTRITION	By 2024 to provide the package of services described above to improve the mental and physical health, nutritional status, development and safety of infants and young children from conception until the year before they enter school.	9
	2. SOCIAL PROTECTION	By 2024 to provide the required package of services necessary to ensure that all young children and their caregivers have early access to national identification documents such as birth certificates and identity documents, and the income support necessary to provide the living conditions to secure the survival and development of young children to their full potential.	2

SECTION OF NIECD & AIM/ POLICY STATEMENT	GOAL		OBJECTIVES
7.1 COMPREHENSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME To implement the Comprehensive National ECD programme as contemplated in Chapter 5 of the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (2015)	3. PARENTAL SUPPORT	By 2024 to provide the preceding programmes of parenting support services necessary to improve parental knowledge, capacity and practices related to young children's holistic development, including information, capacity building, referrals, and specialist parental support of especially vulnerable parents so as to address any mental health problems, substance abuse, disability, abuse or neglect problems that they may face and which impact their child's development, or any problems that their children may face	3
	4. OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING	By 2030, to provide a universally available comprehensive quality age and developmental stage- appropriate opportunities for learning for all children from birth until they enter formal school, which lay the foundations for optimal early learning, inclusion and the socio- emotional, physical, intellectual and language development of young children through play and other related, recognised methods for early learning, as well as safe daily care in the absence of their parents and/or primary caregivers.	5
	5. NATIONAL PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS	By 2024, to ensure the development and implementation of coherent, sustained, well-resourced communications, public awareness and advocacy interventions targeted at the full range of stakeholders and aiming to promote changes in behaviour, attitude and practice that are necessary to realise the objectives of the national early childhood development policy.	3
	6. STANDARD OF LIVING	By 2030, to ensure that all infants and young children, especially those living in poverty and in under-serviced rural and informal urban areas, live in safe and adequate dwellings which have basic services, including safe drinking water, safe sanitation facilities, refuse removal services, and a safe source of affordable energy.	3
	7. FOOD SECURITY	By 2030, to ensure that all infants and young children enjoy healthy physical growth, are well-nourished and enjoy sustained access to nutritious food, and to ensure implementation of a comprehensive multi-sectoral national strategy for children from birth until the year before they enter school aimed at eliminating stunting and malnutrition, reducing obesity, and preventing hunger and food insecurity.	3

SECTION OF NIECD & AIM/ POLICY STATEMENT	GOAL		OBJECTIVES
	8. PLAY FACILITIES, SPORT, AND CULTURE	By 2030, to ensure that all infants and young children have access to play, recreational and cultural environments and facilities that are safe, inclusive, and age- and developmental stage-appropriate, especially those living in poverty, under-served rural areas, and informal urban areas; those with disabilities; and those living in institutions.	4
7.2 MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT To ensure an integrated, cross-sectoral approach and plan across government departments that involves civil society organisations, the corporate sector, religious organisations, non-government organisations, parents, and children	9. LEADERSHIP AND COORDINATION	To ensure the establishment of arrangements necessary to further accountability, leadership, oversight, coordination, partnership, expertise, and autonomy, which are essential to the realisation of the national comprehensive and integrated vision, goals, and objectives of this Policy Objectives: 9.1 To strengthen departmental leadership, management, and accountability in all spheres of government (national, provincial, and local) to ensure the fulfilment of the roles, responsibilities, and delivery of early childhood development services for which the relevant departments are responsible; 9.2 To establish a coordinated national management and oversight system for early childhood development, i.e., an Inter-Ministerial Committee for Early Childhood Development to drive and lead the elevation of the national integrated early childhood development agenda at all levels of government and society, and to facilitate multi-sectoral coordination, planning, and accountability to the national comprehensive early childhood development vision	2
	10. FUNDING FOR ECD	10. To secure and distribute sufficient funds to ensure universal availability of, and equitable access to, the comprehensive quality early childhood development programmes and services, with prioritisation of the identified essential components thereof, especially for low-income families that cannot afford user fees.	3

SECTION OF NIECD & AIM/ POLICY STATEMENT	GOAL	OBJECTIVES	
7.2 MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT To ensure an integrated, cross-sectoral approach and plan across government departments that involves civil society organisations, the corporate sector, religious organisations, non-government organisations, parents, and children	11. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR ECD	11. Government invests in the growth and maintenance of infrastructure which is safe for infants and young children and their caregivers; secures a sufficient number of service delivery and support spaces, and learning and teaching support materials and tools, in adequate proximity to children and their caregivers to ensure universal availability of quality early childhood development services, particularly early learning and parenting support programmes; Provides a service delivery environment conducive to the delivery of quality early childhood development services; Is adequately and appropriately designed to ensure that access barriers for vulnerable children are addressed, notably, that all infrastructure is designed to ensure the inclusion of children with disabilities; and specifically remedies the infrastructure deficits for early learning services.	4
	12. HUMAN RESOURCES FOR ECD	12. Develop appropriate cadres of early childhood development practitioners, in sufficient numbers and with sufficient skills to support the implementation of the national integrated early childhood development policy and programme.	3
	13. M&E for ECD	13. Develop and implement national integrated early childhood development monitoring, evaluation and research framework that establishes the required mechanisms that will ensure the implementation of the National Integrated Policy for Early Childhood Development in a consistent, accountable, inclusive, and equitable manner.	3

APPENDIX 3: MTSF 2019-2024 Extracts ON ECD and Children

PRIORITY 3: EDUCATION, SKILLS, AND HEALTH

EDUCATION

Introduction to Education Skills and Health: Education and Training (pp. 71 – 72)

Early childhood development

Access to Grade R is almost universal. Since 2009, more than 90 percent of learners in Grade 1 have previously attended Grade R. The General

Household Survey indicates that the percentage of children between the ages of 0 and 4 participating in ECD programmes has increased from 8 percent in 2002 to 42 percent in 2017. Despite these dramatic improvements in early learning, quality and access limitations remain. Grade R for poor children has shown to have little effect on learning, indicating a problem in quality. Below Grade R, coverage is uneven; and the poorest and most vulnerable are often excluded.

Stronger policy, implementation and leadership is necessary. ECD policy must be further refined in terms of entitlement of citizens, composition of the package of services, financing, oversight, and delivery responsibility. Legislation is needed to

firmly establish the policy to guide the responsible institutions and to provide clarity for monitoring and accountability.

Expanding the rollout of ECD services, in addition to systematic population-based planning to reach the poorest, requires more funding using a streamlined system and effective oversight of providers, mostly individuals and not-for profits. Innovation is needed to develop underlying operational systems and data capturing systems, which can provide

appropriate information for monitoring, planning, and improvement. Such information is essential to identify quality problems in Grade RR, R, and other parts of the system. The proposal to roll out pre-Grade R requires careful conceptualisation and planning. Introducing this component of the system too quickly could destabilise an already weak system.

More focused attention should also be given to improving the quality and content of the services for pregnant women and children in their first 1 000 days.

**Implementation Plan: Early childhood development
Outcome: Improved School Readiness of Children**

OUTCOME	IMPROVED SCHOOL-READINESS OF CHILDREN ⁹⁵						
Interventions	Resourcing (MTEF budget allocation – DBE allocation only)	Contribution by DFIs, SOEs and public entities	Investment, contribution and partnerships by the private sector, labour, and civil society	Human capital, skills, and technology requirements	Spatial planning reference and spatial action area in terms of the NSDF, PSDF and SDF	Provincial and district municipality	Lead and contributing departments
Migrate the responsibility for pre-schooling to the DBE	The costing will be finalised by end of December 2019	All institutions that have a responsibility in ECD are affected as well as entities like SETAs	ECD stakeholder groups and some business entities	Office of the chief financial officers of DBE and DSD	National, provincial, district and local municipality	All levels	DBE, PEDs, DSD
Develop and operationalise an ECD planning, funding, registration, and information systems	The costing will be finalised by end of December 2019	All institutions that have a responsibility in ECD are affected as well as entities like SETAs	ECD stakeholder groups and some business entities	CFO's, TI specialists at DBE and DSD	National, provincial, district and local municipality	All levels	DBE, PEDs
Develop and operationalise school readiness assessment system	2019/20 R9 million 2020/21 R9.5 million 2021/22 R9.6 million	National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) Private Sector	DBE	Experts on digital online platforms and assessments	National, provincial, district and local municipality	All levels	DBE, PEDs, National Treasury

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Monitoring Framework: Early childhood development

2024 Impact: Access to pre-schooling expanded to 95% and Quality Improved ⁹⁶								
Outcomes	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Interventions	Indicators	Baseline	Targets	Lead and contributing departments
Improved school-readiness of children	Proportion of 6-year-olds (Grade R) enrolled in educational institutions by 2024	96% respectively (2017)	99%	Migrate the responsibility for pre-schooling to the DBE	Amendment of legislation to regulate the new ECD landscape	New Indicator	Amendment of NEPA, SASA, and Children's Act completed within 9 months of cabinet proclamation on change Approved costed plans by 2021	DBE, PEDs, DSD, NGOs, CBOs
	Proportion of 5-year-olds (Grade RR) enrolled in educational institutions by 2024	88% (2017)	95%	Develop and operationalise an ECD planning, funding, registration, and information systems	Develop new funding models for ECD delivery Operationalise an ECD Education Management Information System	New Indicator New Indicator	Approved funding model by 2023 ECD Education Management Information System operational by 2024	
	Proportion of Grade R learners that are school ready by 2024	New	15% increase of the baseline that will be established in 2021	Develop and operationalise school readiness assessment system	School readiness assessment system	New Indicator	School Readiness Tool Assessment system operational by 2021	

HEALTH

NB: References to children and maternal health have been extracted for the tables below.

Implementation Plan: Universal Health Coverage

OUTCOME	UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE FOR ALL SOUTH AFRICANS ACHIEVED ⁹⁷						
Interventions	Resourcing (MTEF budget Allocation)	Contribution by DFIs, SOEs and public entities	Investment, contribution, and partnerships by the private sector, labour, and civil society	Human capital, skills, and technology requirements	Spatial planning reference and spatial action area in terms of the NSDF, PSDF and SDF	Provincial and district municipality	Lead and contributing departments
Improve access to maternal health services.	Interventions to improve maternal health services are implemented across budget programmes. -Over the 2019-2021 MTEF period, the budget allocation for District Health Services grows from R98.2 billion in 2019/20 to R106 billion in 2020/21 and to R114 billion in 2021/2022. This is an 8% growth in expenditure over the MTEF, and constitutes 44% of the total public health sector MTEF expenditure. The budget for Provincial Hospitals grows by 6.1% over the MTEF period, from R36 billion in 2019/20 to 39 billion in 2020/2021 and to 41 billion in 2021/2022. The budget for Central Hospitals grows by 6.2% over the MTEF period, from R43 billion in 2019/20 to R46 billion in 20/21. However, the health sector project a R2.5 billion budget deficit for 2019/20	N/A	Technical (in-kind) support from development partners and NGO/CBOs	National HRH Plan completed by March 2020	Nationally, in all 9 Provinces and 52 districts	All districts and local municipalities	NDOH

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⁹⁷ p.107

OUTCOME	UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE FOR ALL SOUTH AFRICANS ACHIEVED ⁹⁷						
Protect children against vaccine preventable diseases	The health sector set aside an amount of R1.7 billion for children's vaccines for 2019/20, as part of the Non- Negotiable budget items. As of August 2019, the sector projected an over- expenditure (budget deficit) of R644 539. Overall, the health sector projects a R2.5 billion budget deficit for 2019/20	N/A	Technical (in-kind) support from development partners and NGO/CBOs	National Health HRH Plan completed by March 2020	Nationally, in all 9 Provinces and 52 districts	All districts and local municipalities	NDOH
Improve the Integrated Management of Childhood Diseases services	Interventions to improve child health services are implemented across budget programmes. -Over the 2019-2021 MTEF period, the budget allocation for District Health Services grows from R98 billion in 2019/20 to R106 billion in 2020/21 and to R114 billion in 2021/2022.	N/A	Technical (in-kind) support from development partners and NGO/CBOs	National HRH Plan completed by March 2020	Nationally, in all 9 Provinces and 52 districts	All districts and local municipalities	NDOH

Impact Framework for Life Expectancy

2024 IMPACT: TOTAL LIFE EXPECTANCY OF SOUTH AFRICANS IMPROVED TO 70 YEARS BY 2030 ⁹⁸								
Outcomes	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Interventions	Indicators	Baseline	Targets	Lead and contributing departments
Reduce maternal and child mortality	Maternal mortality ratio	134 deaths per 100 000 live births (2016)	<100 per 100 000 live births by March 2024 Improve access to reproductive health services	Provide good quality antenatal care	Antenatal first visit before 20 weeks rate	68.7% in 2018	75% by 2024	NDOH
					Antenatal clients initiated on ART rate	93% in 2018	98% by 2024	NDOH
	Infant mortality rate	23 deaths per 1 000 live births (2017)	<20 per 1 000 live births by 2024	Protect children against vaccine preventable diseases	Immunisation coverage under 1 year	81.9% in 2019	90% by 2024	NDOH
	Under-5 mortality rate	32 deaths per 1 000 live births (2017)	<25 per 1 000 live births by 2024	Improve the integrated management of childhood disease services	Children under-5 years severe acute malnutrition case fatality rate	7.1% in 2018	<5.0% by 2024	NDOH
					Children under 5 years pneumonia case fatality rate	1.9% in 2018	<1.0% by 2024	NDOH
					Children under- 5 years diarrhoea case fatality rate	1.9% in 2018	<1.0% by 2024	NDOH

PRIORITY 4: CONSOLIDATING THE SOCIAL WAGE THROUGH RELIABLE AND QUALITY BASIC SERVICES

INTRODUCTION (p. 117)

A comprehensive, inclusive, and responsive social protection system ensures the resilience of citizens. Social protection is critical for income security and protecting human capital during transition phases, as well as promoting the flexibility and competitiveness of the economy, particularly in an environment where change will accelerate as cultural, climate and technological change put traditional livelihood, solidarity, and coping mechanisms under more

pressure. A continuing, increased focus on this comprehensive, inclusive, and responsive social protection regime will become more urgent in the next five years. This requires:

1. an effective policy framework and accompanying accessible mechanisms (norms, standards, and processes).
2. an enabling economic inclusion. Therefore, the next five years will see the effective implementation of a consolidated social wage and social protection system to safeguard the livelihoods of all South Africans.
3. This requires actions to improve the reliability and quality of basic services with a focus on

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affordability, universality and ensuring that no one is left behind especially vulnerable individuals, households, and communities. The capacity, efficiency, effectiveness, targeting and alignment of the existing social system must be improved.

South Africa's NDP 2030 accords a central role to social protection in addressing the critical challenges of eradicating poverty and reducing inequality. Social protection contributes to ensuring that no-one slips below a minimum standard of living, as well as a more transformative and developmental role of moving towards a more inclusive growth path and to ensure more inclusive development outcomes.

In keeping with addressing the multi-dimensionality of poverty and inequality, in the South African context, social protection is an umbrella concept that brings together:

- Social security which draws on section 27 of the Constitution to address income dimensions of poverty and contribute to ensuring a standard of living below which no-one falls;
- Measures to address capability poverty: support to early childhood development and investments in children;
- Labour market activation policies and measures that foster productive inclusion of the under- and unemployed – public employment programmes;
- Protective measures for nutritional and food security.
- Developmental social welfare interventions to address (i) economic and social exclusion and strengthen social cohesion; (ii) ensure that families and individuals are able to access services, entitlements, and potential economic and social opportunities; and (iii) developmental social services to reach out and provide care to the vulnerable such as those affected by HIV, women & children abuse, disabled etc.

Prioritising the social protection of children (p.120)

South Africa has a large and mobile child-population requiring care and protection services. In 2018, the total population was estimated at 57.73 million. There are 18.5 million children between the ages of 0-18 years in the country, constituting 34 % of the total population.

Children are the most vulnerable as their welfare is directly impacted by the economic, educational, and social statuses of those on whom they depend. They are often excluded from services offered by government due to administrative burdens, lack of information and systemic errors. Although programmes targeting children such as ECD and child support grants have been extended, a number of children remain outside of the system, including those who are two years and below; orphans; particularly those who have lost both their parents, older children who have dropped out of school; children with mothers who have no schooling; children of teen mothers; children living only with their fathers; children who experience limited mobility; and children of refugees.

A 2017 review conducted by the Children's Institute suggests that about 18 percent of the country's children are excluded from access to the child support grant. Children with disabilities are also struggling to access the care dependency grant, largely due to the highly stringent application and medical assessment processes. ECD funding needs to be increased for all ages, particularly for children in their first 1 000 days of life. There is also a need to resolve the foster care grant and align it with the child support grant, and further resource the foster care programme with enough social workers. This will ensure that foster care cases are swiftly resolved, and children placed in stable family environments with access to the appropriate social grant. A 2017 report by the Department of Social Development noted that over 500 000 children were in foster care placements. Renewing foster care placement orders every two years has been the major challenge. The NDP calls for sustainable, rights-based development through investments in children. It recognises that breaking historical patterns of poverty and inequality requires the provision of services that interrupt the intergenerational transmission of risks which keeps historically marginalised children trapped in a cycle of poor development.

Realising the NDP's goals, as well as the country's international and constitutional child-rights imperatives, requires the adoption of a rights-based developmental child-care and protection policy that provides a nationwide vision for driving investment in programmes that:

- Guarantee the universal rights of all children to survival, protection, development, and participation.
- Address the root causes of poor development among vulnerable children at risk of poor development, including violence, poverty, fractured families, malnutrition, poor education, and substance abuse.

child support grant by eligible children under one should be improved in order to better improve the nutritional outcomes as well as improving the quality and access of ECD services to children between the ages of 0-4, and by improving access, and investing in infrastructure development.

The following tables, plans and frameworks are extracted from the MTSF 2019-2024:

NB: References to children have been extracted from the original tables.

Implementation Plan: Transformed developmental social welfare

OUTCOME	TRANSFORMED DEVELOPMENTAL SOCIAL WELFARE ⁹⁹						
Interventions	Resourcing (MTEF budget Allocation)	Contribution by DFIs, SOEs and public entities	Investment, contribution, and partnerships by the private sector, labour, and civil society	Human capital, skills, and technology requirements	Spatial planning reference and spatial action area in terms of the NSDF, PSDF and SDF	Provincial and district municipality	Lead and contributing departments
Create an enabling environment for children's services through legislation, policy, effective practice, monitoring, evaluation, and quality assurance.	R10 million - national Available in Baseline Budget Included in the 2020 MTEF baseline	Civil society, national and provincial departments	Designated child protection organisations	Human capital, skills	National and provincial	Provincial DSD	DSD

Monitoring Framework: Comprehensive developmental social welfare

Outcomes	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Interventions	Indicators	Baseline	Targets	Lead and contributing departments
Transformed social welfare	Improvement in social welfare services Index.		60% improvement in social welfare services index.	Expand the number of social services professionals	Sector strategy for the employment of social service professionals developed	Demand model for social services practitioners	Sector strategy approved by Cabinet by 2024	DSD
					Increase the number of social service professionals in the public service	18 300 social workers	31 744	DSD
				Create an enabling environment for children's services through legislation, policy, effective practice, monitoring, evaluation, and quality assurance	Amendments to the Children's Act enacted	Children's Act, (Children's Act No. 38 of 2005)	Children's Act amended, costed, and implemented by 2024	DSD
					Children's Act 2005 Regulations	2009 Training Guidelines on the Children's Act	Regulations for the Children's Amendment ✓ 80% sector workforce capacitated on children Act by 2024	DSD Provincial DSD, academic institutions, and other service providers

⁹⁹ p. 124

Outcomes	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Interventions	Indicators	Baseline	Targets	Lead and contributing departments
Transformed social welfare	Improvement in social welfare services Index.		60% improvement in social welfare services index.	Review Social Development legislative framework	White Paper for Social Development implemented	Draft reviewed White Paper on Social Welfare, 1997	Approved White Paper on Social Development implemented by 2024	DSD

Implementation Plan: The social protection of children

OUTCOME	INCREASED ACCESS TO QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (ECD) SERVICES ¹⁰⁰						
Interventions	Resourcing (MTEF budget Allocation)	Contribution by DFIs, SOEs and public entities	Investment, contribution, and partnerships by the private sector, labour, and civil society	Human capital, skills, and technology requirements	Spatial planning reference and spatial action area in terms of the NSDF, PSDF and SDF	Provincial and district municipality	Lead and contributing departments
Provide quality ECD services to children (0-4).	ECD conditional grant subsidy expansion and infrastructure: 2019/20 R518 228 R552 949 R583 361 ECD Equitable Share Subsidy: 2019/20 R3 052 749 2020/21 R3 191 098				National, provinces and municipalities	Provincial DSD and municipalities	DSD
Migrate the responsibility for pre-schooling to the Department of Basic Education	The costing will be finalised by end of December 2019	All departments that have a responsibility in ECD are affected as well as the entities like SETAs	ECD Stakeholder groups and some business entities		National, Provincial, District and Local Municipality.	All levels	DBE PEDs DSD
Develop and operationalise an ECD planning, funding, registration, and information systems	The costing will be finalised by end of December 2019	All departments that have a responsibility in ECD are affected as well as the entities like SETAs	ECD Stakeholder groups and some business entities		National, Provincial, District and Local Municipality.	All levels	DBE PEDs DSD
Develop and operationalise school readiness assessment system	2019/20 R9 million 2020/21 R9.5 million 2021/22 R9.6 million	National Treasury	Research Institution	Experts on digital online platforms	National, Provincial, District and Local Municipality.	All levels	DBE PEDs DSD
Address social grants exclusions to CSG by increasing access of the CSG for 0- to 1-year-olds							DSD
Improve coverage and efficiency							

¹⁰⁰ (p. 128)

Monitoring Framework: The social protection of children

OUTCOME	INCREASED ACCESS TO QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (ECD) SERVICES ¹⁰¹						
Interventions	Resourcing (MTEF budget Allocation)	Contribution by DFIs, SOEs and public entities	Investment, contribution, and partnerships by the private sector, labour, and civil society	Human capital, skills, and technology requirements	Spatial planning reference and spatial action area in terms of the NSDF, PSDF and SDF	Provincial and district municipality	Lead and contributing departments
Provide quality ECD services to children (0-4).	ECD conditional grant subsidy expansion and infrastructure: 2019/20 2020/21 2021/22 R518 228 R552 949 R583 361 ECD Equitable Share Subsidy: 2019/20 R3 052 749 2020/21 R3 191 098				National, provinces and municipalities	Provincial DSD and municipalities	DSD
Migrate the responsibility for pre-schooling to the Department of Basic Education	The costing will be finalised by end of December 2019	All departments that have a responsibility in ECD are affected as well as the entities like SETAs	ECD Stakeholder groups and some business entities		National, Provincial, District and Local Municipality.	All levels	DBE PEDs DSD
Develop and operationalise an ECD planning, funding, registration, and information systems	The costing will be finalised by end of December 2019	All departments that have a responsibility in ECD are affected as well as the entities like SETAs	ECD Stakeholder groups and some business entities		National, Provincial, District and Local Municipality.	All levels	DBE PEDs DSD
Develop and operationalise school readiness assessment system	2019/20 R9 million 2020/21 R9.5 million 2021/22 R9.6 million	National Treasury	Research Institution	Experts on digital online platforms	National, Provincial, District and Local Municipality.	All levels	DBE PEDs DSD
Address social grants exclusions to CSG by increasing access of the CSG for 0- to 1-year-olds							DSD
Improve coverage and efficiency							

¹⁰¹ pp. 128-129



**EFFECTIVE CROSS-
DEPARTMENTAL AND
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CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT:**

**THE FIRST STEP IN DEVELOPING THE ECD SECTORAL
STRATEGY FOR THE 2024-2029 MEDIUM-TERM
NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN**