STORY TIME AND PLAY PILOT FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

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Dictionary

Acronyms	Description
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Commission
AFTRS	Australian Film Television and Radio School
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECCE	Early childhood care and education
KEQ	Key Evaluation
MERL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Learning
MESC	Samoan Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture
MFAT	New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
NCECE	Samoan National Council for Early Childhood Education
PacREF	Pacific Regional Education Framework
PIA	Plan International Australia
STP	Story Time and Play
ToC	Theory of Change
ToT	Train the trainer
VfM	Value for Money

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Clear Horizon would also like to thank those who have contributed to this report through sharing their own personal experiences, documentation, and insights as evidence against our findings. We thank you for sharing your honest experiences, and in turn hope that this report is fruitful for the future of this Program.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This report presents the findings of a formative evaluation undertaken by Clear Horizon on behalf of the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) on the Pilot of Plan International Australia's (PIA) *Story Time and Play (STP): a children's media project* ('the Pilot') with the Pilot activities being conducted in Niue, Samoa and Solomon Islands. Focusing on the design and pilot implementation stages of the program, this evaluation sought to understand the relevance and coherence of the design and implementation of the Pilot thus far, if the Pilot has been able to demonstrate value for money, and what the optimum conditions for scaling are in each of the Pilot contexts. The evaluation only considered the Pilot activities conducted at the time of evaluation and did not consider any other initiatives across the Pacific.

The methodology for this evaluation involved a two-step approach: the first step was data collection and analysis from the following data sources: an implementing partner survey (11 responses), semi-structured interviews of implementing partners, community leaders and parents and caregivers (45) and a document review. The evaluation also drew from two literature reviews: one media and play-based early childhood development and education initiatives in the pilot countries, and the other on best practice of pilots to scale. The second step of the evaluation was learning and improvement which involved reflection workshops for Niue and Solomon Islands implementing partners and a summit workshop with MFAT and PIA to discuss and interpret the findings.

Findings

The key findings of the evaluation are as follows:

1. Relevance and responsiveness of the Pilot for its operating context

The Pilot has been relevant and responsive for the operating context. The design of the STP program and policy is catering towards a gap in each pilot country, as well as demonstrating alignment with MFAT and partner needs and priorities, and international ECD and ECE frameworks. It is too early within the Pilot to fully understand the responsiveness of the Pilot for various Pilot stakeholders, however the Pilot is relevant for the implementing partners, including play hub trainers and facilitators, and media producers and mentors. The Pilot design is the most relevant for the Solomon Islands context, with adaptations required in Niue to ensure it is fully responsive to the operating context. It is too early in Samoan implementation to comment.

See section 4.1 below for more information.

2. Pilot alignment within the context of other interventions

The Pilot's objectives align with ECD and ECE aims for New Zealand and Pilot partner countries, and the Pilot has been able to leverage existing resources as much as possible through the selected implementing partners. It is intended that PIA will continue to leverage other development partners beyond the Pilot period. In addition, there is clear evidence that elements of the Pilot are innovative, with no similar investments in each of the pilot countries identified. However, there is a lack of clarity about the role and involvement of education ministries in the Pilot and broader programming, noting challenges

with implementation for a 12-month pilot, recognising the benefits to contributing to aid coordination and sustainability of outcomes beyond the intended program phase.

See section 4.2 below for more information.

3. Value for money

With consideration of the context and implementation of the Pilot, overall, the Pilot has achieved between excellent and good value for money. The Pilot has been excellent at demonstrating innovation through trying and learning something new, at leveraging resources for sufficient quality of delivery, and engagement and ownership from Implementing partners. The Pilot has also been good at adapting to different contexts, noting small challenges with adaptation in activity implementation, and there are good signs for ensuring sustainability of achievements and outcomes, though noted that it is too early to tell in implementation about how these achievements and outcomes will be sustained beyond Pilot implementation.

See section 4.3 below for more information.

4. Optimum conditions for scaling for the Pilot

The Pilot has demonstrated that it was the 'right fit' for the Solomon Islands context, with notions of localisation and mentoring deemed appropriate for all pilot contexts. There have also been learnings from pilot implementation at an overall pilot level as well as adjustments suggested for both the media and Play Hub components of the Pilot. Based on early days of implementation, it is too early to determine if the STP model is scalable and which components are the most scalable. It is recommended a 12-month extension to the current pilot implementation will assist in understanding the viability of scaling moving forward. Within this timeframe, it is suggested some adjustments are made, including integrating play hubs and media in community, embedding learning cycles, establishing clear roles and responsibilities, formally expanding media beyond radio, and adjusting elements of play hub programming to ensure it is fit-for-purpose for the operating contexts.

See section 4.4 below for more information.

Conclusion and recommendations

The evaluation found that while elements of the Pilot could be improved, there was generally good engagement and ownership of innovative concepts from implementing partners. The Pilot has demonstrated it is the 'right fit' for the Solomon Islands context, with notions of localisation and mentoring deemed appropriate for all contexts across the Pilot and concepts included in the Pilot being somewhat familiar to previous development programming. The Pilot would have benefited from a more in-depth situational analysis in Niue and Samoa, not so much to surface ideas around relevance and coherence, but to understand practical, attitudinal, and cultural obstacles that may hinder this innovation gaining traction. The existence of enabling policy and recognised need is important but only a part of the picture that indicates success. It was too early in the Pilot to understand if the new approaches were likely to make a difference to the way parents engage with their children in the longer term, or if there is an ongoing appetite for traditional stories to be available to children. As a result, it is difficult to determine if STP should be scaled. It is suggested a 12-month extension on the current model of STP to understand scaling validity. Recommendations for adjustments during this extension period include (with further explanation in section 5 below):

- Working more to integrate play hubs and media in-country/community.

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- Embedding learning cycles with implementing partners.

- Clear clarification of roles and responsibilities and concepts for all involved with the program.

- Formally expand Pilot media activities to media beyond radio episodes.

- Adjust play hub programming in Niue to ensure that it is fit-for-purpose in the operating context.

- Address possible barriers to access and use of parenting resources in each community context.

- Continue to train play hub facilitators and trainers.

Beyond the pilot extension period, or if the extension does not go ahead, in addition to recommendations already discussed, below are recommendations for the future of STP based on learnings from this evaluation (with further explanation in section 5 below):

- Establish and revisit the main objective of the program.

- Allow for more flexibility to allow for diverging of program delivery.

- Work closely with ministries of education across the Pacific as a key stakeholder in the program.

- Continue to engage and invest in capacity building of program implementers.

1   INTRODUCTION

This report presents findings from the formative evaluation of Story Time and Play: Children's Media Project, a children's media initiative (the 'Pilot'), which has been in operation throughout 2022. This evaluation was undertaken by Clear Horizon on behalf of the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT). The evaluation considers the design and implementation process of the Pilot (2018-2022).

This evaluation explored answers to understand:

- The relevance of the Pilot in each operating context
- Alignment of the Pilot design with other interventions in each of the pilot countries
- Value for money for each of the different pilot stakeholders
- Learnings so far and opportunities for scaling

This evaluation report is structured as follows:

- Section 1: Introduction (this section)
- Section 2: Background to Story Time and Play
- Section 3: Key evaluation questions (KEQs) and sub-questions, followed by the methodology undertaken to answer these KEQs
- Section 4: Key findings and supporting evidence for each KEQ sub-question
- Section 5: Conclusion
- Annexes:
  - Theory of change
  - STP design iterations
  - Data collection tools
  - Key findings from feasibility and scoping studies
  - Alignment with MFAT Partnering for Resilience principles
  - Literature review on Pacific ECE and ECD initiatives
  - Value for money
  - Pilots to scale best practice note
  - Suggested revised theory of change hierarchy
  - References

In addition, the data collection tools (such as interviews and survey guides) are sent as a separate attachment to this report.

2 BACKGROUND

About Story Time and Play

Story Time and Play: Children's Media Project (STP) was created to develop an integrated media and early childhood development (ECD) program combining children's radio and early childhood programming targeting pre-school and early grade school children (4-7 years) across three pilot countries in the Pacific. The Pilot is being undertaken over a one-year period (2021-2022) in Niue, Samoa and the Solomon Islands. Led by Plan International Australia (PIA) and funded by MFAT, the Pilot was intended to create local, co-created children's media (radio episodes and podcasts), which will be linked the Play Hubs at community level to support children's learning through play. The Pilot aims to generate vibrant local children's media and Play Hubs that promote inclusion and equitable learning opportunities for all girls and boys in the Pacific, and to encourage parents to participate in play activities with their children. The two main types of activities the Pilot is delivering includes context-specific radio episodes and Play Hubs in community. These two activities are described further below:

- **Radio program –** An audio series developed by local media teams to generate traditional stories for safe keeping and content creation to stimulate cultural knowledge transference for children in the target age group. The radio series is being produced through a mentoring program with leaders in children's media professional development, resulting in the production of relevant and engaging children's radio series by local partners. Media producers in each of the pilot countries work with mentors in pre-production, production and post-production to co-create and co-produce an engaging and context relevant audio series for children, with the final outputs being defined by country partners to ensure it is locally led and owned and fit-for-purpose for the local context. At the time of evaluation, the status of the radio programming in each of the pilot contexts is outlined below:

    - Niue: three radio programs aired, another three in production
    - Samoa: no radio programs aired, planning process underway
    - Solomon Islands: three radio programs aired, another three in production

- **Play Hubs –** Community-managed playgroups focused on learning through play are also a part of this Pilot, to provide an increased opportunity for parents and caregivers, boys and girls to engage in learning through play, and to utilise information from the audio content for storytelling and play purposes. The Play Hubs are designed to be linked to existing social infrastructure where applicable, such as parenting groups, faith groups and mothers' groups and are supported by local ECD partners and run by their relevant volunteer networks[1]. At the time of evaluation, the status of the Play Hubs in each of the pilot contexts is outlined below:

    - Niue: four of the play hub sessions implemented[2]
    - Samoa: no play hubs had been implemented, planning underway
    - Solomon Islands: play hubs up to session 8 of the 12 sessions[3] had been implemented across the three pilot communities in the Guadalcanal province

The theory of change for the Pilot and broader program including the pilot activities and outcomes is attached to this document in Annex 1 – Theory of change.

Please note for the purpose of this evaluation the term 'implementing partners' refers to any stakeholder who is not PIA or MFAT who is delivering this Pilot. This includes media producers and mentors and play hub facilitators and trainers.

Scoping and design process

The concept for this Pilot went through multiple iterations prior to how it has been eventually implemented in 2022 (see Annex 2 - STP design iterations). In 2018 PIA and Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) International Development undertook a scoping study of children's media in the

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[1] This is the model and methodology in Solomon Islands but was adapted for Niue and Samoa based on partner's existing structures, their context and suggested methodological approaches
[2] Collected at the time of the reflection workshop (3 November 2022)
[3] Collected at the time of the reflection workshop (10 November 2022)

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Solomon Islands to explore opportunities and demand for children's media. The study found there is a growing demand for quality children's media particularly for content that reflects the unique context of the Pacific. Following a feasibility study led by the Akina Foundation (Akina) in 2020, recommendations were put forward for a concept of a children's media program that was locally led and focusing on capability building of local partners in the Pacific. By September 2021, STP was approved under a general funding agreement with MFAT, with three priority countries (Niue, Samoa and Solomon Islands) identified to participate in the project.

Throughout September-November 2021, PIA co-led a design process with implementing partners and relevant government representatives including MFAT and Clear Horizon to develop the design of the program and of the Pilot. The original design was submitted in November 2021, with a 'refresh' design submitted in October 2022, with updated information based on the roll out of the Pilot activities. Clear Horizon developed the Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Learning (MERL) Plan and Framework, which due to the slower than anticipated roll out of the Pilot activities, is expected to be a useful asset for the next phase of program delivery.

This evaluation

Purpose and scope

The purpose of this evaluation was to learn from the Pilot delivery to date to inform next steps of implementation and scalability. The evaluation covered the Pilot in its entirety (from design to implementation 2021-2022) but is formative in approach due to delays in implementation. The evaluation considered all Pilot activities in the three participating Pacific Island Countries, and the targeted/engaged communities within these specific countries. The evaluation also considered stakeholders engaged to date and the alignment with and any leveraging from other activities in these countries (specifically in relation to ECD and children's media)[4]. This evaluation did not include any other interventions or contextual considerations across the Pacific, nor did it focus directly on evaluating and assessing outcomes, but some initial outcomes surfaced naturally as the result of evaluative inquiry.

Audience

The primary audience for this evaluation included MFAT and PIA. The information for this audience required included:

- To understand lessons learnt (including success factors and challenges) of the Pilot to date

- To understand how (and who) the Pilot is engaging with, and how the Pilot activities are being received by the communities

- To understand how the resources are being used, to inform the program beyond the Pilot

- To understand the extent of alignment of the Pilot in its operating context (within the three Pilot countries, and what is happening in children's media, ECE more broadly), and opportunities to avoid duplication and/or leveraging opportunities

- To inform the scaling report (particularly to understand success factors and what needs to change for scalability)

Information from this evaluation may also be of interest to STP implementing partners, and other prospective partners in the region (including ministries of education in the Pilot countries) who may be interested in the overall findings and learnings from this Pilot.

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[4] Engaging with additional stakeholder beyond the Pilot partners was noted as out of scope during the evaluation, however the evaluation continued to look at what had occurred during the design and throughout the pilot implementation period.

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Key evaluation questions (KEQs)

The KEQs are the overarching questions developed in response to the evaluation purpose and information needs of the primary audience. Sub-questions are included to guide the collection of evidence to answer the KEQs. The KEQs and sub-questions are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Key evaluation questions

Key Evaluation Question (KEQ)	Sub-question
Relevance/Coherence	
1. How relevant and responsive is the Pilot for the context in which the Pilot is operating?	a. How relevant is the design of the Pilot for its operating context?
	b. How relevant and responsive is the design of the Pilot for the various stakeholders?
2. How well does the Pilot fit within the context of other interventions?	a. How compatible is the Pilot with other donor led interventions/activities in the Pilot countries?
	b. To what extent does the project align with other interventions to avoid duplication and enhance aid coordination?
Efficiency	
3. To what extent has the Pilot demonstrated value for money (for MFAT, PIA and implementing partners)?	
Scalability	
4. What are the optimum conditions for scaling and in what context?	a. What are we learning about the delivery of the Pilot in each of the working contexts? (including success factors and barriers)
	b. What adjustments would need to be made for scaling in each country?

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3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Methodology to answer the KEQs

The following section presents the evaluation's methodology. The evaluation was guided by the evaluation plan (August 2022), based on discussions with MFAT and PIA to capture both qualitative and quantitative data.

To answer the KEQs, the evaluation followed a two-step approach: 1) data collection and analysis; 2) learning and improvement.

Step 1: data collection and analysis

The evaluation drew primarily on data from data collection tools developed and agreed specifically for the evaluation. The evaluation sought to understand the how the program design aligns with the objectives of MFAT and partner governments and lessons learnt of the roll out of the Pilot so far. PIA and MFAT provided relevant documents and contacts that they considered may provide evidence towards relevance, efficiency and understandings of scalability. Further documentary evidence and contacts emerged during the evaluation through snowball sampling techniques. The data collected was then analysed as individual data sets (by data collection type and stakeholder group) and synthesised against the KEQs at a whole of Pilot level, and country level. The data collection tools used for this evaluation are listed below in Table 2 and detailed in Annex 3 – Data collection tools.

Data from each data collection tool was analysed separately by Clear Horizon. The qualitative data sources from the surveys and interviews were thematically analysed – looking for key themes and patterns, and where relevant, significant convergence and divergence of findings noted. Due to the limited quantitative data received, descriptive statistics and basic inferential statistics were applied where feasible.

Step 2: learning and improvement

This step was broken into two different components:

- **Reflection workshops**: two online reflection workshops[5] were held (one for Niue, one for Solomon Islands) to examine the data specific to each mode of delivery and country context to inform lessons learned and conditions for scaling in each operating context with PIA and relevant implementing partners.
- **Summit workshop**: The final summit workshop was held with MFAT and PIA on Zoom to collectively validate the evaluation findings and come up with conclusions to feed into the scalability report (including making judgements on value for money for MFAT and PIA).

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[5] Due to extenuating circumstances, we were unable to hold a workshop for Samoa due to timing clashes. However, as the program is in its early stages, we believe all the data had been captured throughout the interview process.

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Table 2. Data collection tool summary

Data collection tool	Description	Quantity and description (if applicable)
Document review	Documents provided by PIA and MFAT to assist in providing background information ahead of the evaluation, as well as to triangulate the results from the survey and interviews.	• ECE and ECD literature and best practice documents • Feasibility and scoping study documents • Historical and current design documents • Implementation documents including progress reports, parenting cards, Play Hubs Facilitation Guide and Operations manual, radio episodes for Niue and Solomon Islands and evaluation handouts • PIA additional resource documents for safeguarding and MERL
Survey	Two online surveys were distributed: one for media implementing partners and the other for play hub trainers. Potential respondents were identified by PIA and Clear Horizon to be the most relevant implementing partners to provide responses to the KEQs. The media survey was distributed to three potential respondents between 6 and 14 October with three reminders follow up emails sent in this period. Participants were also invited to share the survey with other potential respondents who they believed could respond to the survey questions. The play hub survey was distributed to four potential respondents and was 'live' between 6 and 20 October, with three reminders follow up emails sent in this period. Participants were also invited to share the survey with other potential respondents who they believed could respond to the survey questions.	• 8 responses for the Play Hub implementing partners (200% response rate); 7 responses from Niue, 1 from the Solomon Islands • 3 responses for media implementing partners (100% response rate); 1 response per Pilot country
Semi structured interviews	45 semi-structured interviews were conducted with implementing partners, MFAT, PIA and parents and caregivers in each Pilot country. The interviews with implementing partners, MFAT and PIA were all conducted remotely via videoconferencing software. The parents and caregivers and Play Hub facilitators in Solomon Islands were interviewed in person by hired local data collectors.	• 19 x implementing partners (including 1 x Play hubs advisor, 3 x Play hubs trainers, 6 x Play hubs facilitators in Solomon Islands, 4 x Media partners, 5 x Media mentors) • 4 x Community leaders in Solomon Islands

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		• 4 x MFAT (2 from Wellington; 1 x Development Coordinator from Niue and Samoa)[6]
		• 3 x PIA representatives
		• 15 x Parents and caregivers in Solomon Islands
Community snapshot	Clear Horizon was commissioned separately by PIA to conduct a baseline study for the Pilot. At the time of conducting the study, it was too early to be able to conduct a baseline fully[7], so snapshots of the relevant Pilot communities was conducted to understand the available and use of radio, the participation in ECE/ECD groups in the community, as well as parenting groups. The information collected also provided a wide-reach of population-level data, to understand the age groups within the community, including gender and disability disaggregation.	• 1 snapshot in Niue • 1 snapshot in Samoa • 3 communities in Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands
Additional information	Clear Horizon also conducted additional studies and research to support the evaluation findings. This included: • A grey literature review on existing ECE/ECD initiatives in the Pacific • Practice note on pilots to scale	• An informal review of existing online literature on ECE/ECD in the Pacific, focusing on the three STP countries and the topics of early childhood development, use of media, parental/caregiver involvement, culture, storytelling and play. See Annex 6 – Literature review on Pacific ECE and ECD initaitives for more information. • A best practice note on the different phases of innovation and what needs to be considered for pilots to scale was created as part of this study, drawing on existing online literature, both within and outside of the international development space. Please see Annex 8 - Pilots to scale - best practice for more information.

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[6] Please note the Development Coordinator for Solomon Islands was unable to participate in the study.

[7] The Play Hubs in each of the Pilot communities had not yet started, so collecting formative data to understand attitudinal changes from parents/caregivers who may or may not be involved in the Play Hubs was deemed inappropriate.

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3.2 Limitations

As with any evaluation, there were some limitations of the data collected and analysed. This included:

- **Early days of Pilot implementation**. The Pilot implementation activities have only been running from June/July 2022, noting that data collection was undertaken throughout October 2022 (roughly three months into implementation. Although data was collected using the most recent knowledge of participants, there may be some perceptions of the Pilot that are 'too new' to consider/understand in detail and to establish sufficient judgements.

- **Diversity of Pilot countries and communities within countries makes it difficult to compare contrast one another and difficult to provide generalised findings.** This is also particularly due to the different stages of implementation that Pilot is being conducted in each of the Pilot countries. Instead of conducting a direct comparison of each of the countries, we have noted the different contexts where there have been major differences in findings, otherwise providing a narrative to explain each of the contexts in detail where relevant.

- **Limited data collected in Niue**. Due to timing of data collection activities (during Niuean holiday period), as well as challenges obtaining local data collectors in country (limitations around country population size), the evaluation data relies on information from the play hub trainers and project coordinator in country. In addition, the reflection workshop assisted in validating the findings and added as a form of triangulation from the information provided.

- **Possibility of bias.** Most evaluation participants (except for parents/caregivers and community leaders in Solomon Islands) were in some way contracted to the program, which may introduce bias into some of their responses. However, we believe that responses were quite balanced and insightful and reflected both positive and negative aspects. Similarly, in reflection workshops there was a hierarchy which may have prevented some participants from being as open as they might otherwise have been. However, the use of an anonymous survey would possibly have mitigated this.

To overcome some of the limitations above, triangulation of data sets was conducted where available to validate the findings, including utilisation of the reflection workshop processes with partners. Where there was limited data to back up claims, qualitative evidence was used to provide examples.

4 FINDINGS

This section is structured to answer the four KEQs which focus on: the relevance and coherence of the design and implementation of STP in each of the Pilot countries (KEQs 1 and 2); the Pilot's efficiency in delivering project activities in line with value for money principles (KEQ3); and information relating to the possible scalability beyond the pilot phase (KEQ4). Evidence to support the findings is included within each section, along with recommendations where relevant. To protect privacy, stakeholder sources are broadly categorised as either parents or caregivers, implementing partners (distinguishing between media and play hub partners including mentors and advisors where possible), MFAT and PIA.

Section 1: Relevance/coherence

4.1 KEQ1. How relevant and responsive is the Pilot for the context in which the Pilot is operating?

Key finding.

The Pilot has been relevant and responsive for the operating context. The design of the STP program and policy is catering towards a gap in each pilot country, as well as demonstrating alignment with MFAT and partner needs and priorities, and international ECD and ECE frameworks. It is too early within the Pilot to fully understand the responsiveness of the Pilot for various Pilot stakeholders, however the Pilot is relevant for the implementing partners, including play hub trainers and facilitators, and media producers and mentors. The Pilot design is the most relevant for the Solomon Islands context, with adaptations required in Niue to ensure it is fully responsive to the operating context. It is too early in Samoan implementation to comment.

4.1.1 KEQ1a. How relevant is the design of the Pilot for its operating context?

Summary finding.

The design of the STP program and Pilot is relevant for its operating context. The design is catering towards a need in each country, with the scoping and feasibility studies conducted in the Solomon Islands context, and the design document responding to gaps in ECE and ECD challenges in all three Pilot countries. The self-nomination of countries has also determined an identified need for this type of programming, with named lack of opportunities that this Pilot responds to. The design of the STP program and Pilot is also aligned with international ECD and ECE frameworks, relevant MFAT needs and priorities, and Pilot partner country priorities.

4.1.1.1 Catering towards a relevant need in each country

The Pilot was filling an existing gap and catering towards a need in the following areas: ECD knowledge for parents, promotion of traditional stories in local language and creation of children-specific media content. Though the scoping and feasibility studies are centred around the Solomon Islands' context, the self-nomination of countries to be a part of the Pilot as well as additional research for each of the Pilot countries demonstrates there was a need for this type of programming in each of the Pilot countries.

The scoping (2018) and feasibility (2020) studies delivered as part of the original design document (outlined in Annex 4 – Key findings from Feasibility and scoping studies for Story Time and Play**) were conducted within and for the Solomon Islands context.** The scoping study highlights the demand for children's content, parental engagement, active play-based learning, values-based

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education, collective approach, partnerships, and a mix of media (including audio content through radio, social media, USBs, and audio-visual using animation, songs and regular updated on social media, with the potential to expand into local newspapers). The feasibility study (2020) notes that the three principles to be used in future programming to include: 1) local content created by local people; 2) content produced in local languages; 3) 'good enough' production quality. These two studies highlight the need and demand for a program such as STP and the design of the Pilot (and broader STP project) is centred on the recommendations from only one of the Pilot countries. While there were no specific scoping studies undertaken in Niue and Samoa, the November 2021 design document presents evidence of limited access to children's media in traditional languages[8].

The design of STP also responds to ECE studies and known gaps mentioned by the information provided. This information is mainly in the design document but is also aligned with and responds to the 2017 Status Report on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in Pacific Island Countries and the Status of Pacific education (UNICEF, 2021 and SPC, 2021).

The self-nomination of countries had determined that there is an identified need and positive response to this type of programming. It is understood prior to the design phase of the Pilot (and project), MFAT had a meeting with the relevant MFAT Posts across Melanesia, Polynesia and Realm countries to see if there was any appetite and interest from these countries for this type of programming. It is understood the MFAT Posts had consulted with the relevant education ministries within the countries they were working in and as a result, the three Pilot countries were the countries that 'put their hand up' (Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands). This demonstrates that there was an appetite for this type of programming in these countries, therefore catering towards a relevant need.

As noted in the design document, as well as other supporting documents and interviews with relevant STP stakeholders, the Pilot was responding to the needs of (in each pilot community):

- Lack of opportunities for:
    - Parent/caregiver and child connection and relationship-building
    - Parent ECD education
    - Traditional storytelling appropriate for children
    - Children's media in Niue and Solomon Islands, created for and by Pacific Islanders
        - In Samoa, it was noted radio has been used as a medium to provide education for primary school aged children in local language – has been going for the last 20 years. What is new for STP is:
            - Utilising traditional storytelling in creative and dramatic ways into the process
            - For a different target audience – at the ECD/ECE level (aged 4-7 years) instead of primary school level (aged 5-12 years)
        - In Solomon Islands there was a previous program called Kastom Stori, telling traditional stories in local language. This project revives this, and makes it more appropriate and compelling for children
- To preserve local language and traditional storytelling, which is seen to be beneficial for ECD (learning in local language)

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[8] For instance, Samoa has a long history of children's radio, but the format is a one way, teacher-student classroom format without use of drama, traditional story or other child-engaging formats of song etc. It has been variable for the purposes of ECE/ECD access and attendance.

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4.1.1.2 Alignment with MFAT and partner country needs and priorities

The design of the program is aligned with MFAT and partner country needs and priorities. This includes international ECD and ECE frameworks, the MFAT *Partnering for Resilience* principles, and alignment with most recent and relevant pilot country and whole-of-Pacific framework and strategies. This is further described below:

Alignment with international ECD and ECE frameworks

The design of the Pilot is aligned with international ECD and ECE frameworks including the following:

- The **Nurturing Care Framework (2018),** particularly component 4 around opportunities for early learning as outlined in Figure 1 below:

| **Component 4: Opportunities for early learning** | **Universal access to good-quality day care for children, as well as pre-primary and primary education** Developmentally appropriate early education is crucial to children's cognitive and social development, and to their preparation for formal schooling. It is important for children across all demographic groups to have access to tuition-free pre-primary and primary education. This is especially important for children from vulnerable populations, as stress adversely affects children's learning. | • Information, support and counselling about opportunities for early learning, including the use of common household objects and home-made toys
• Play, reading and story-telling groups for caregivers and children
• Book sharing
• Mobile toy and book libraries
• Good-quality day care for children, and pre-primary education
• Storytelling of elders with children
• Using local language in children's daily care |

Figure 1. Component 4 of the Nurturing Care Framework

This Framework refers to any opportunity for a baby, toddler, or child to interact with a person, place or object in their environment, with at home and in childcare space examples including: activities that encourage children to hear and use language, telling stories (including by elders), exploring books together, talking to the child and age-appropriate play with household objects.

- Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF) (2018), endorsed by 15 Ministries of Education in Pacific Island Countries, seeking to improve the quality of education in each of the signatory countries

- UNESCO guidelines on intercultural education (2006) also highlights the importance of integrating culture and language within education, as well as how to include and the role of intercultural education, with the following three principles (page 30):

  - Intercultural Education respects the cultural identity of the learner through the provision of culturally appropriate and responsive quality education for all

  - Intercultural Education provides every learner with the cultural knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to achieve active and full participation in society

  - Intercultural Education provides all learners with cultural knowledge, attitudes and skills that enable them to contribute to respect, understanding, and solidarity among individuals, ethnic, social, cultural and religious groups and nations.

Alignment with MFAT needs and priorities

STP is aligned with MFAT needs and priorities, including the *Partnering for Resilience (2021)* principles. Highlighted in the design document (2021 and 2022), the program (and Pilot) aimed to support MFAT's Aid Program polices and strategies, with a table outlining how the approach aligned with the principles of the New Zealand Aid Program. In addition, the design document references MFAT Child and Youth Well-

being Strategic Action Plan (2021-2025), specifically referencing alignment to the multi-sectoral interventions for ECD through ECE, and MFAT's Gender Action Plan (2021), seeking to support transformative change through advancing gender equality through programming. There is also reference to New Zealand's Ministry for Pacific People's Pacific Language Weeks (2022), highlighting the complementarity of the Pilot with the goal of preserving language heritage and promoting literacy from early on to the future generations in each of the Pilot countries.

The Pilot design is also aligned with the Pacific Regional Four-Year Plan (2021) including the *Partnering for Resilience* principles as much as possible. It is noted in the Four-Year Plan that 'education is vital for empowering communities and building capacity across all sectors' (page 13) with the medium-term outcomes including (MO3.1) '*Pacific governments deliver sustainable and inclusive education and health improvements for Pacific people*' and (MO3.4) '*Human rights are upheld across the region, and political, social and economic inclusion is increased for women, children and youth, people with disabilities, indigenous groups, and other marginalised groups*' with the shorter term outcome (ST07) noting '*Regional support improves access to high-quality, equitable and relevant education for Pacific learners at all levels*' and (STO13) '*Regional initiatives strengthen human rights and inclusive development for women, children and youth, indigenous people and marginalised groups (including people with disabilities and diverse sexual orientation, identification to expression, or sex characteristics*'. Alignment to the *Partnering for Resilience* principles is outlined in Annex 5 – Alignment with MFAT Partnering for Resilience principles.

Alignment with partner country priorities

The design of STP is aligned with all Pilot partner country priorities. Ten of the 11 survey respondents said they agreed (n=2) or strongly agreed (n=8) that they were confident the aims of the program were consistent with the relevant country policies (in either ECD or ECE). The alignment with each pilot partner country priorities are described individually by country below:

- **Niue:** The STP design document directly references alignment to the Potu Paogo Niue ECE Curriculum which is based on the New Zealand education curriculum (Te Whariki) and is intended as a base for educators in Niue to develop their own local curriculum. In addition, the program is aligned with the Niue National Strategic Plan (2016), where it outlined one of its key principles as *'promoting gender equality and human rights through equal opportunities',* with one of the areas under the social services pillar responding to *'quality, nurturing education services for happy, healthy and vibrant children'* and all components under the Tāgoa Niue pillar being relevant for the program (all residents and visitors embrace and respect Tāgoa Niue, Tāgoa Niue actively integrated from the home to the national level, and the cultural bridge with Niueans abroad is strengthened).

- **Samoa:** The STP design document refers to the Samoan Education Act (2009), which explains the importance of literacy skills up to year 3 in primary school, and that the Government of Samoa acknowledges that parents and caregivers play a vital role in year 3 primary school with parents encouraged to read and talk to their children in support of their children's learning. The program design is also aligned with the *Pathway for the development of Samoa (FY2021/22-FY2025/26)* under Key Strategic Outcome 1: Improved Social development - key priority area 3: quality education, with aims to close the gaps between boys and girls and enhancing access to and quality of ECE. In addition, as the Samoa Pilot has been working closely with the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture (MESC) and the National Curriculum Authority throughout the planning and implementation of the Pilot, the Pilot activities are closely aligned with the relevant government policies and requirements, including that the story selection process is aligned with the education curriculum.

- **Solomon Islands:** The STP design document notes the National Education Action Plan (2022-2026) in ECE that basic education also targets equitable access with affordable expansion of access and implementation of new measures to reach specific target groups. The Solomon Islands Government's Education Strategic Framework (2016) which aims to ensure that more girls and boys

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have equitable access to free, quality ECD, care and pre-primary education so they are ready for primary education. There is alignment with the play hubs to provide more opportunities for children to engage in early learning programs and get ready for primary education. The design is also aligned with the Solomon Islands National Development Strategy (2016), particularly under objective three: all Solomon Islands have access to quality health and education, with specific reference to Medium Term Strategy 9: Ensure all Solomon Islanders can access quality education and the nation's manpower needs are sustainably met, highlighting the long term goals of providing access to all girls and boys to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education by 2030 and to achieve full enrolment of all 5 year-olds by 2020. One of the focuses on the education sector is also to emphasise equity, inclusion and gender equality, and encouraging vernacular language teaching.

1.1.2 KEQ1b. How relevant and responsive is the design of the Pilot for the various stakeholders?

Summary finding.

It is too early within the Pilot to fully understand the responsiveness of the Pilot for the various stakeholders, or to make substantive comparisons across the Pilot communities. However, the Pilot was seen to be relevant for the play hub implementing stakeholders (including play hub trainers and facilitators) as well as media implementing stakeholders (including media producers and media mentors). The Pilot design was also relevant the Solomon Islands, with community elders and parents and caregivers providing responses highlighting the need for this type of programming and their participation thus far. However, the play hub model was less appropriate for parents and caregivers in Niue, with a positive unintended outcome being the use of the audio files on social media connecting the wider Niuean diaspora.

It it too early within Pilot implementation to understand the responsiveness of the Pilot activities thus far, to make substantive comparisons against each of the three pilot countries and their own individual contexts. However, there is information on how well the different stakeholder groups have engaged with the Pilot thus far, and their reactions to how it has been received in their own contexts. The information from each of these stakeholder groups are described below:

4.1.1.3 Play Hub implementing stakeholders

The play hub implementing stakeholders for the Solomon Islands (including the play hubs advisor, trainers and facilitators) generally felt that the pilot activities were relevant for their context. The play hub trainers and facilitators felt that the play hubs were filling a knowledge gap in terms of children's literature in the Pacific, the utilisation of traditional stories, and the use of the parenting cards for parents to use with the children outside of the play hub setting. Most of the Solomon Islands facilitators (n=6) reported good engagement with the Play Hub from parents (both male and female) and children during their sessions). One survey respondent said:

> *This [project] has also enabled me to help parents and grandparents who have children coming to the centre to encourage them to come especially the fathers…I have seen the change in the attitude of parents especially the young parents being more involved and engaged in their children's learning. I've also seen the positive comments of my village parents and how grateful they are that the Village playgroup is operating successfully like how it was in the beginning and evidence to show is in the slow increasing of attendance each week. I'm happy to see parents bringing their children slowly back to the village playgroup. I've also seen that parent's attendance especially the fathers are seen when we have fieldtrips – Implementing partner survey respondent*

The play hub implementing stakeholders in Niue (including the play hubs advisor and trainers) noted the pilot activities were generally relevant to their context, however there needed to be adjustments to make implementation easier for them to implement. Suggestions include using traditional songs that parents already know and reinvigorating existing resources.

4.1.1.4 Media implementing stakeholders

All media implementing partners (both media producers and media mentors) believe that the program was fulfilling a need in each of the pilot countries. The partners interviewed (n=4) described the impact and the importance in preserving language and culture through traditional storytelling.

In terms of relevance and responsive for themselves, all media implementing partners highlighted the responsiveness of PIA to adaptation and that it is noted and appreciated.

To increase reach and engagement with media content, media producers of the Pilot noted that there needed to be a digital component of the program, though creating a starting base of radio scripts has been helpful. Some of the media producers has been thinking of the radio episodes as audio files, that they can then utilise and re-distribute the episodes in other formats (such as social media, over a public announcement (PA) speaker, podcast, or other alternative formats. The media producers also highlighted the requirements for visual content to compliment the audio files, with some of the producers already doing this with the help of the mentors as video of the radio recording with supporting visuals, to theatre and puppetry. The mentoring component of the program, along with the masterclasses has been well received by the media producers. Although the masterclasses were originally just for Samoa, it was appreciated by all media producers to be invited to these sessions and hear from people who had various involvement in children's media production and traditional storytelling. Most valued topics in the masterclasses and mentoring were adaptation of traditional stories to contemporary context (story within a story), technical production skills to create dramatic 'soundscapes', and creation of radio 'variety-style' radio shows using song, call and response, in addition to traditional stories.

The media mentors who were most valued, as well as the ones who saw the most benefit of being in the Pilot were those with a First Nations background[9], though all mentors saw the benefit of being a part of the Pilot. The media mentors note they have been able to get a lot out of providing support to the media producers, as they were hungry for skills and this sort of program. One interview participant said:

> *What I love is working with people fully engaged and listening and receptive to what we're passing on – with all three (countries). Having a receptive and captive audience. Having them provide honest feedback to us has been fantastic. – Media mentor interview participant*

4.1.1.5 Solomon Islands Community Elders

The Solomon Islands community elders who were interviewed and knew about the program (n=3) believed that this Pilot was relevant and responsive. The community elders reported on how the activities promote learning opportunities (both male and female) and found it positive that it was seen to be 'grassroots from community'. The elders found it positive that the Pilot was able to encourage parents to participate and connect with their children, highlighting the engagement is strongest for parents who are more educated. However, there was no engagement or knowledge of the radio episodes, due to the lack of radios available in their communities.

4.1.1.6 Parents/caregivers engagement

Overall, the Pilot was relevant and responsive in most areas for parents and caregivers, with more slight adjustments needing to be made for future implementation to ensure it remains contextually relevant and

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[9] Please note when referring to First Nations communities, this report is referring to First Nations peoples of Australia

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responsive to parents and caregivers needs. This is described through the play hub and media relevance and responsiveness below.

- **Play hub relevance and responsiveness**

The play hubs are relevant and responsive to the needs of parents and caregivers in the Solomon Islands. Parents and caregivers (both women and men) are engaged in the play hub sessions with almost all parents and caregivers interviewed (n=15) saying they had been involved in the play hubs for most, or all sessions, with one parent/carer attending only two sessions. Most parents and caregivers said that their child(ren) have participated in almost every session and enjoyed them, with two of the parents and caregivers noting their children had only attended less than half of the sessions. Facilitators interviewed (n=6) reported good engagement with the play hub from parents (both women and men) and children. Three parents and caregivers interviewed (n=15) mentioned that the play hub learning activities do not always hold their child's attention, demonstrating there may have been confusion around parent's expectations that child's attention is held throughout the entire play hub session. One interview participant said:

> *In the learning it only takes 15 minutes for my child to play in the activities and challenges is the timing and different age group can take his attention. Another said that their 5-year-old boy sometimes [stays] for a few minutes [but will then go] out to play with other kids. – Solomon Islands parent/caregiver*

All parents and caregivers interviewed (n=15) said they had used the parenting cards, with some noting they used them every day, with others saying they use them once a week, noting the '*guidelines are useful to teach the children'* and that the cards are '*simple and approachable'* to use. Two parents/carers (n=15) said they faced difficulty engaging their child with the parenting cards because the '*timing is too long*', assuming they had to conduct all of what was on the parenting card at once, rather than to select only some the suggested activities on the card to use at any one time at home.

Recommendation: It is suggested play hub trainers/facilitators spend more time ensuring parents and carers understand what can be expected around children's engagement in the play hubs sessions, as well as how to use the parenting cards at home.

There was also comment around the challenges of participating in the play hubs in Solomon Islands if the parent/carer had limited literacy capabilities or if they or their child has a disability. It was noted that although the parenting cards were useful, that it would be difficult for someone to engage with the cards if they could not read it. One interview participant noted that their child does not attend the play hub sessions because they have a disability, but are able to go home and use the parenting card to teach them, which while useful, would be better if the child was able to socialise and engage in the play hubs sessions themselves as well.

Recommendation: It is suggested STP address possible barriers to access and use of parenting resources in each community context, ensuring parents and caregivers who have low literacy levels and parents, careigvers and children with disabilities can equally participate and engage in the play hubs.

Although the play hub model was relevant and responsive for the Solomon Islands context, the **model was less appropriate for parents and caregivers in Niue**, who were more likely to drop children off, assuming it was similar to the creche or childcare, rather than stay for the session. Parents in Niue are also reported to wear many 'hats' because of the small population, hence time and work pressures are a challenge for successful engagement of parents in Play Hubs.

- **Media relevance and responsiveness**

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The **appropriateness of radio episodes was seen to be mixed for both of the Pilot countries who had radio epsiodes aired at the time of the evaluation**. Niuean interview participants noted verbal feedback and anecdotal responses on how unexpected stakeholders who are not working at the time the episode is aired have been engaging with and positively responding to the radio episodes (including the elderly and unemployed). Additionally through the use of uploading the audio file to other broadcasting services such as social media, widened the audience of the episodes to diaspora living across the Pacific and in Australia and New Zealand, with reports that the media producer in Niue had been contacted by New Zealand and Australian academics to use the content in langauge classes.

Media stakeholders in Solomon Islands also provided anecdotal evidence about how positive the listening party responses were to the radio episodes. Four of the 11 parents and caregivers in Solomon Islands reported child enjoyment of the radio epsiodes, but most parents and caregivers (11 out of 15 participants) said they did not have access to the radio at home and had not listened to the episodes.

There was a disconnect in both Niue and Solomon Islands between the media and play hub elements of the Pilot resulting in the play hubs not using the media content during the sessions as was originally intended[10]. However, in both Niue and Solomon Islands, while there was some discussion between media and play hubs, it was not as cohesive and integrated as expected. This means that even though the play hubs and the children's media may have been deemed relevant and responsive as individual components of the pilot, *it is difficult to determine the relevance of the two components together*.

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[10] This could possibly be due to the timing of the evaluation, where the initial radio epsiodes had been broadcast, and the play hub sessions had not yet progressed halfway through the 12-week content in Niue and Solomon Islands.

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4.2 KEQ2. How well does the Pilot fit within the context of other interventions?

> **Key finding.**
>
> The Pilot's objectives align with ECD and ECE aims for New Zealand and Pilot partner countries, and the Pilot has been able to leverage existing resources as much as possible through the selected implementing partners. It is intended that PIA will continue to leverage other development partners beyond the Pilot period. In addition, there is clear evidence that elements of the Pilot are innovative, with no similar investments in each of the pilot countries identified. However, there is a lack of clarity about the role and involvement of education ministries in the Pilot and broader programming, noting challenges with implementation for a 12-month pilot, recognising the benefits to contributing to aid coordination and sustainability of outcomes beyond the intended program phase.

4.2.1 KEQ2a. How compatible is the Pilot with other donor led interventions/ activities in the pilot countries?

> **Summary finding.**
>
> The Pilot's objectives align with national ECD and ECE aims (for both New Zealand and Pacific partner countries), and the Pilot is able to leverage existing resources as much as possible, given capacity and timing constraints within the Pilot period. It is intended that PIA will continue to progress leveraging existing resources, and collaborating with other development, ECD/ECE and media partners beyond the Pilot period.

The Pilot's objectives are aligned with national ECD and ECE aims, for both New Zealand and partner countries. As outlined in section 4.1 above, the Pilot's objectives and the activities within are aligned with relevant policies, needs and practices for all key countries involved. When speaking with MFAT development coordinators (n=2), participants noted that there were no other donors who focused on ECD the same way this project did, and that the focus was much needed.

One MFAT interview participant (n=4) said that there was an overlap in the Government of New Zealand policy priorities with Pacific country priorities in the collection of indigenous stories and the role they have in maintaining and revitalising indigenous languages. It was also highlighted by another MFAT participant that the Strategic Plan for one of the countries targets education, culture and local language awareness, with another participant noting that the education sector in their country has a plan with goals lined out, with a priority focus for ECE, but no donor activities attached to it.

The Pilot has also been able to leverage existing resources as much as possible, given capacity constraints and timing within the Pilot period (12 months). It is recognised that throughout the design process there were multiple and structured opportunities for key stakeholders who had knowledge and expertise in the ECD and media sectors in each of the Pilot countries to provide input into what was already going on in country, with a full stakeholder list provided in the design document. It was an opportunity for these stakeholders to provide a broad view of what was going on and to confirm that what PIA wanted to provide as a Pilot was adding value and to validate all of the thoughts around the project.

PIA highlighted that working with Save the Children Solomon Islands and the Niue Primary School was a strategic move to leverage existing resources as they were available. The media partners were selected due to their expertise and interest in the program as well, which therefore leveraged their expertise, not starting from scratch. With the use of the media mentors and play hubs advisor, the program was also able to draw on relevant experience in terms of content, process and expertise in terms of delivery for the program (this is discussed further in section 4.3.2 below).

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1.1.3 KEQ2b. To what extent does the project align with other interventions to avoid duplication and enhance aid coordination?

Summary finding.

There is clear evidence that elements of the Pilot are an innovative way of programming in all pilot countries, filling gaps in the children's media landscape, traditional storytelling using local language and parental involvement in ECD programming and outcomes. Through a targeted literature review, there are no similar investments in each of the pilot countries, noting that further studies may need to be conducted to understand this more deeply. In addition, there is a lack of clarity about the role and involvement of education ministries in the Pilot. For sustainability, coordination and coherence reasons, MFAT would potentially want to see a relevant government department being closely involved and indeed taking 'ownership' of the initiative, with suggestions from PIA that education ministries should be involved and consulted throughout implementation, but should not be led by them, rather relying on those with media and play expertise to lead this Pilot in country. How this plays out in each country is variable and is discussed further in section 4.4. In addition, by continuing to consult with education ministries in each of the pilot countries, the program will continue to contribute to aid coordination and sustainability of achievements and outcomes beyond the intended program phase.

There is clear evidence from all interviews (including MFAT, PIA and implementing stakeholders) that elements of the **Pilot are an innovative and new way of programming in all pilot countries**, demonstrating that the **program is not duplicative**. STP is unique in its programming, not only targeting parents, but also through mentoring and capacity building of implementing staff, developing media content and ECD curricula. It was noted from MFAT and PIA that other known donor-led initiatives in each of the pilot countries around ECD and ECE mainly focus on policy support to education ministries, or infrastructure development and technology provision, such as the building of school facilities or providing laptops/tablets for school use.

It is acknowledged that most interventions in media across the Pacific are generally support for 'old school journalism', with Pasifika TV the only key example leading the way on developing children's media. PIA noted that the lack of investment in arts for development for ECD and ECE outcomes demonstrates an identified need, noting that there is a lot of investment for sports for development (including for ECE and ECD outcomes), but not in the same way for visual or performative art (including, but not limited to ECE and ECD). Media teams for this program were selected as they were part of the emerging market, rather than strongly established organisations to provide benefit through capacity building and develop a niche resource within these media entities. PIA acknowledged that by using those already in media, the Pilot was able to leverage existing resources, especially as PIA did not have to spend money on things like infrastructure and equipment, rather focus the resources available on capacity building and knowledge strengthening for effective implementation.

> …we really tried to leverage existing ECD structures and the reason for that is it wasn't about building infrastructure, this project never was about that. It was designed specifically with this idea that we could layer on knowledge with existing teams. We basically had ECD teams and already excellent media teams but wanted to build this extra skill set. – PIA interview participant

There are no other similar projects in each of the pilot countries. Through the targeted literature review outlined in Annex 6 – Literature review on Pacific ECE and ECD initaitives, it was difficult to ascertain whether there were similar projects in Niue, Samoa and the Solomon Islands targeting ECD through parental involvement, traditional storytelling and play-based activities, as well as utilising media as a medium for communicating traditional storytelling in local language. One similar program was in Tonga that used videos and jingles and used Tongan languages and images to encourage parents to read to their children. It is recommended that a full study is conducted both in Niue and Samoa to understand beyond the grey literature what else is happening on the ground in relation to parental

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engagement with ECD, media and traditional storytelling beyond the Pilot phase. It is understood this may naturally occur in the next phase of the program when PIA will be able to connect with other ECD/ECE actors in the region (see section 4.2.1 above).

In addition, by **connecting and utilising MESC throughout the Pilot process (originally a delivery partner, now a consultative stakeholder), as well as Niue and Solomon Islands implementing partners being connected with their relevant education ministries also assists with avoiding duplication and enhancing relevance** of materials for ongoing education. One example is that the traditional stories to be used in radio programming in Samoa will be closely tied with the ECE curriculum. This also assists in the program being more sustainable if it continues to involve education ministries as a consultative partner throughout programming. This strong link to education ministries needs to be clarified for the next phase.

For sustainability, coordination and coherence reasons, MFAT would potentially want to see a relevant government department (such as a ministry of education) being closely involved and indeed taking 'ownership' of the initiative at some point in the future, especially as there is opportunity to use the media files to support outputs in the curriculum and supporting blended learning approaches. However, PIA has stressed from the outset that although education ministries should be involved and consulted throughout the Pilot design and implementation and involved in the program beyond the Pilot (as they have been to date), the Pilot should not be led by the ministries, rather relying on those with media and play expertise to lead this Pilot in country. How this plays out in each country will vary and is discussed further in section 4.4. In addition, by continuing to consult with education ministries in each of the pilot countries, the program will continue to contribute to aid coordination and sustainability of achievements and outcomes beyond the intended program phase.

Recommendation: Clarify how STP relates to education ministries in the Pacific, as well as clearly outlining roles and responsibilities with ministries of education in the Pacific.

4.3 KEQ3. To what extent has the Pilot demonstrated value for money (for MFAT, PIA, and implementing partners)?

Key finding.

With consideration of the context and implementation of the Pilot, overall, the Pilot has achieved between excellent and good value for money. The Pilot has been excellent at demonstrating innovation through trying and learning something new, at leveraging resources for sufficient quality of delivery, and engagement and ownership from implementing partners. The Pilot has also been good at adapting to different contexts, noting small challenges with adaptation in activity implementation, and there are good signs for ensuring sustainability of achievements and outcomes, though noted that it is too early to tell in implementation about how these achievements and outcomes will be sustained beyond Pilot implementation.

This evaluation undertook a principles-based approach to determining value for money (VfM), establishing a list of principles to then make sounds judgements on how the Pilot was demonstrating VfM (King, 2022). As there was only high-level financial data available for the evaluation, and each of the Pilot country operating contexts were vastly different, it would not have been feasible to make a judgement based on spend alone. Therefore, through the evaluation planning process, Clear Horizon worked with MFAT and PIA to establish a set of criteria to define how the Pilot would be assessed on VfM.

MFAT, PIA and implementing partners in Niue and Solomon Islands provided information on how the Pilot has demonstrated VfM through answering survey questions, as well as providing qualitative information through semi-structured interviews and at the reflection workshops (King, 2022)[11].

The judgements against the criteria per stakeholder group are outlined below, with Annex 7 – Value for money available for the explanation of the standards and a full list of the criteria.

4.3.1 Demonstrating innovation

The Pilot has been excellent at demonstrating innovation through trying and learning something new, as shown in Table 3 below. As mentioned above in section 1.1.3, there is not a project we could find in these pilot countries that is doing this kind of work. The combination of children's media outputs alongside parenting ECD classes (then evolving into more traditional playgroup settings with parental involvement), whilst capacity building the implementing partners throughout is unique to this Pilot, in these countries, and therefore demonstrates innovation.

Table 3. Demonstrating innovation judgement

VfM criteria	Rating
Demonstrating innovation through trying and learning something new	EXCELLENT ✓

Instances of innovation from the Pilot include:

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[11] Implementing partners from Samoa were able to provide contextual comment on some of the VfM criteria in their interview processes, however it was deemed too early to make a judgement on VfM for this pilot country and have been omitted from this assessment.

- **Creation of documented children's media resources:** The ability to archive stories and work with storytellers on how to tell a story and record it, so the process can be repeated. This contributes to the longer-term vision of a children's media hub in the Pacific, for anyone to be able to draw from a plethora of resources in local language to tell traditional stories. One MFAT interview participant said:

> *What this [project] has done has taken storytelling to the next level where the younger generations are going to be more engaged than flicking through a book or rewinding a tape. It is quite innovative because others would just take videos and then leaving it in storage and then delete it and it's in the archives and only come across it 20 years later! Funding resource made the recording possible as well at the launching. - MFAT interview participant*

- **Parental ECD education and involvement:** Utilising Play Hubs as a tool for parental education and engagement, rather than just as a mode of childcare is seen to be quite innovative for some pilot countries. In previous models, playgroups are seen as a form of childcare and that ECD for children is the 'teacher's responsibility'. However, because of the layout of the Play Hub sessions (parent-specific learning for the first four weeks of Play Hubs, then involving children in the Play Hub content beyond the toys), there has been early instances of mind shifts of parents to realising the importance of Play Hubs. One Play Hubs participant stated that *"parents discovered things they didn't know about child development" (Play Hub interview participant)*, demonstrating doing something this innovative is providing early signs of positive change.

- **Traditional story promotion in local language:** The use of traditional language promotion through songs and stories for an early audience (aged 4-7 years) has been tried on occasions but is also now seen to be innovative in each of the pilot countries, including being of cultural value. As is the case for some of the pilot countries, local languages are becoming endangered, the use of communicating traditional stories in a meaningful way to a wide audience has been seen to be quite innovative to revive the language. In addition, the creation of communicating these stories for children aged 4-7 years is also seen to be quite innovative. Examples of other traditional storytelling in these pilot communities have been made for an adult audience or telling non-traditional and translated stories through media for a child-friendly audience. Combining traditional storytelling in local language for a child-friendly audience has been seen to be unique for the pilot countries and communities.

4.3.2   Leveraging resources

The Pilot has been able to demonstrate excellent VfM for leveraging existing resources for sufficient quality of delivery as shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Leveraging resources judgement

VfM criteria	Rating
Leveraging resources used for sufficient quality of delivery	EXCELLENT ✓

This has been highlighted in two ways by the program:

- **Utilising implementing partners who already have existing knowledge:** All implementing partners, including media producers, media mentors, play hub trainers and the play hubs advisor all had existing contextual knowledge about how to produce appropriate content for the relevant audience, as well as the media mentors and play hubs advisor having extensive knowledge in children's-specific media and education. In addition, the Implementing partners in country already had existing resources and networks in the media/ECD space, and had a deep, local understanding of the context, being able to produce and deliver content that was context-specific and appropriate for the relevant audiences. One key example is the involvement of Save the Children in Solomon

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Islands. By using this organisation as the play hub trainer, they were able to leverage their existing relationships from a project Save the Children Solomon Islands ran in Guadalcanal, as well as their previous ECD knowledge to be able to implement effectively in each of the three Guadalcanal communities. One of the interview participants said:

> *[Save the Children Solomon Islands] themselves already are early childhood development practitioners… so [we were] working with really skilled personnel and training them in this particular project and building on their existing strengths, capability and knowledge for this particular project. – PIA interview participant*

- **Leveraging existing infrastructure:** As the Pilot was able to leverage implementing partners who already had contextual knowledge and were already in the media or ECD/ECE space, the Pilot was also then able to leverage existing infrastructure, including physical spaces to host the Play Hubs, as well as media equipment. This meant that the Pilot did not utilise the funds to buy new equipment or build new spaces, but rather was able to focus the financial resourcing on building the skills of the implementing partners for effective implementation.

4.3.3   Context adaptation

Overall, the Pilot has been good at adapting to different contexts as shown in Table 5 below. This was demonstrated through being able to be flexible and workarounds for Samoan implementation, as well as Pilot implementation changes and adjustments at a community level.

Table 5. Context adaptation judgement

VfM criteria	Rating
Adapting to different contexts	GOOD ✓

- **Samoan implementation adaptation**: Although there were delays due to ministerial sign off with the MESC for implementation (the original implementation partner), the Samoan Pilot project coordinator and PIA were able to work closely with MESC and the national peak body, the National Council for Early Childhood Education (NCECE) to ensure that some of the pilot activities would be carried out in the 2022 calendar year.

- **Pilot adaptation at a community level**: The Pilot has involved implementing partners throughout the design and implementation, to ensure all the pilot activities were able to be adapted for the specific contexts, particularly as there are differences between each of the pilot countries. Key examples of this include:

  - The creation of the play hub operational manual as requested by the Play Hub trainers and facilitators in Solomon Islands, to ensure effective play hub implementation across the three different pilot communities.

  - Media producers in Solomon Islands creating a puppetry performance, visual components and content for TV to complement the radio episodes, as well as conducting 'listening parties' for community members to attend to listen to the radio episodes and for the media producers to receive immediate feedback on the radio episodes broadcast.

  - Media producers in Niue producing visuals to accompany the audio media series, as well as broadcasting the radio episodes/audio files through social media to reach a wider audience including Niue diaspora living in New Zealand, Australia and elsewhere.

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However, it was noted that there were some challenges in socialising the concept of parental participation at the Play Hubs in Niue, with parents being time poor and assuming the Play Hub model was like childcare. In addition, in Niue, the play hub facilitators are all former teachers, so they have their own ways of working and changing ingrained attitudes takes longer than the time provided by the Pilot.

In addition, there were challenges in ensuring that play hub participants in the pilot communities in the Solomon Islands had access to the radio component of the Pilot. Most Solomon Islands parents interviewed (11 out of 15) did not have access to a radio at home and play hub facilitators also noted that they did not have access to a radio for the play hubs, so they could not use the radio episodes within the play hub sessions[12]. Media producers consider both traditional and digital platforms are needed given there is no 'one preferred platform' for a larger national audience, with both radio and digital platforms offer advantages and disadvantages for delivering STP content depending on where the audience lives.

> **Recommendation:** *It is suggested the Pilot media activities are formally expanded to media beyond radio episodes, to ensure the program continues to appropriately adapt to each operating context.*

4.3.4   Ensuring sustainability

Table 6 below shows the Pilot has been good at ensuring sustainability of achievements and outcomes. It was noted by most Pilot stakeholders that it was too early to determine sustainability as the Pilot implementation has only been over the last 6 months of 2022. However, it is noted that the Pilot is pointing to good signs of ensuring sustainability. It is difficult to determine if activities were delivered within reasonable cost, however there is evidence to demonstrate the use of local resources has assisted with sustainability of activities and outcomes. Additionally, implementing partners have been able to establish skills and relationships to deliver children's media and play beyond the Pilot (and STP), including developing transferable skills and being able to adapt new and revised tools and skills easily. This is further described below.

Table 6. Ensuring sustainability judgement

VfM criteria	Rating
Ensuring sustainability of achievements and outcomes	GOOD ✓

4.3.4.1 Activities were delivered within reasonable cost

As mentioned above, without the specific financial information being provided to MERL team, **it is difficult to determine if activities were delivered within reasonable cost**. However, in comparison to the initially submitted Children's Education Program Proposal: Iumi Stori valued at NZD4,130,628 to record 13 television episodes in Australia, the current version of the Pilot is delivered at reasonable cost, especially considering the positive benefits and importance of localisation and contextual appropriateness, with a reduced cost.

In terms of costs in the community, feedback from Solomon Islands play hub facilitators and community leaders was that the facilitator model is not sustainable due to extra time required to prepare for the

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[12] Solomon Islands has a diverse media environment featuring unequal access to traditional and digital media channels. In general, urban (especially the capital city and surrounds) have high access and preference for Facebook and YouTube for news and media consumption, whereas rural/provincial audiences have higher access and preference for radio, and often limited digital access.

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delivery of the play hubs. The stipend covered the training, session preparation and delivery, but was underbudgeted according to feedback from some play hub facilitators. One facilitator noted:

> *One thing I want to say is our stipend $30 for 2 hours is not enough because what we do here is all our effort we have to prepare session for activities and it's just like the teacher in high school when they prepare for their class…We also have family to provide for – Solomon Islands play Hub facilitator*

Additionally, five facilitators interviewed (n=6) and one community leader felt that the resourcing provided to deliver the play hubs was inadequate. This included money for materials such as refreshments, paper and access to radio, which were seen to be important for the delivery for play hubs. One community leader noted that sometimes they paid for things for the program that were not allowed for a refund, with one facilitator saying:

> *Sometimes when we do an activity at the end will have a small refreshment and we use our own budget to buy things – Play Hub facilitator*

Recommendation: *In creating a budget beyond the Pilot phase of STP, consult with implementing partners in-country to determine what resources (and how much) are required to run the activities.*

4.3.4.2 Implementing partners established skills and relationships to deliver children's media and play beyond the Pilot (and STP), developed transferable skills and adapted new/revised tools and skills easily

Implementing partners were able to develop and establish their skills and relationships to deliver children's media and play beyond Pilot (and STP) activities. All survey respondents (eight play hub respondents, three media producers) said that they would be able to use the things they have learned in the future after the program finishes. This was mainly demonstrated two-fold:

- **The use of media mentors and masterclasses** has helped the media partners build their skills in developing children-specific media content, production management, as well as build relationships with one another and other key children's media supports in the region. It was mentioned that originally some of the media partners were wanting to produce 40–60-minute episodes, reading out a traditional story, almost in a 'lecture-style' format. However, once being introduced to the media mentors, the mentors were able to suggest much shorter episodes (10-15 minutes), and package in a 'variety show' format with songs, call and response and sound effects to increase young children's attention and engagement as they are listening to the episodes[13]. As mentioned in the context adaptation above, the media producers are now finding ways to translate the episodes into different formats (such as theatre, visual and TV formats), demonstrating they value the core content they have produced and have established skills to use beyond what was initially required in the Pilot, and could carry this into the future beyond the Pilot and STP.

- **Play Hub trainers and facilitators** have also been able to establish skills and relationships to deliver children's play activities beyond the Pilot. The Play Hub trainers have established relationships with the Play Hubs Advisor to be able to draw on their experience and advice where possible. In addition, the Play Hub facilitators in Solomon Islands were not early childhood professionals prior to the Pilot, and gained a lot of knowledge and skills in facilitating ECD activities in their communities. In Niue, Play Hub facilitators who responded to the survey (n=8) noted that the

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[13] One example of this is the 'story within a story' approach for the audio episode.

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play hub training was '*a great refresher course*' that they '*learnt quite a lot*', and they will '*continue to do more with my role as a teacher*' because of this Pilot.

In addition, the Pilot used the train the trainer (ToT) model, with the Play Hubs Advisor creating the content (at a high-level so it could be adapted) and training the Play Hub Trainers in country. This meant that not only were the Play Hub Trainers and facilitators able to develop transferable and project-specific skills and able to grasp the concepts easily, but the ToT model also ensures sustainability with the Play Hub Trainers now being skilled up in this type of programming. They can combine it with their own lived experiences to continue on with these practices into the future – both beyond the Pilot and beyond STP overall.

Recommendation: *It is suggested STP continue to engage and invest in capacity building of program implementers through the use of coaching and mentoring opportunities, as well as opportunities for program implementers to learn from one another across community contexts.*

4.3.5 Implementing partner engagement and ownership

Table 7 below shows the Pilot has been good at having engagement and ownership from implementing partners. Despite the lack of time available for implementation, noting that setting up new programs both on the MFAT/PIA end (in terms of contracting etc) and setting up systems, processes and training in country to deliver the media content and play hubs takes time, there has been a significant amount of drive and buy-in from each of the implementing partners to be able to deliver the Pilot to the extent it has in the last 12 months.

Table 7. Implementing partner engagement and ownership judgement

VfM criteria	Rating
Engagement and ownership from implementing partners	EXCELLENT ✓

One of the major highlights from all STP implementing stakeholders is that this program has been led and guided by the partners on the ground, prioritising lived experience and contextual knowledge over any form of required implementation. Most of the implementing partners on the ground were involved in the design workshops of the Pilot and since then the project and project activities have been adapted and guided by them, with PIA providing overall guidance and support where necessary.

It should also be highlighted that the fact this Pilot was able to be delivered to this calibre, to start seeing early instances of outcomes in a short amount of time in the middle of travel restrictions for the Pilot support systems (PIA, media mentors, play hubs advisor), particularly in communities where establishing relationships is so important, demonstrates the high level of implementing partner engagement and ownership this project has had.

Recommendation: *Continue to engage and strengthen relationships with and between implementing partners across the STP portfolio of work.*

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4.4 KEQ4. What are the optimum conditions for scaling and in what context?

Key finding.

The Pilot has demonstrated that it was the 'right fit' for the Solomon Islands context, with notions of localisation and mentoring deemed appropriate for all pilot contexts. There have also been learnings from pilot implementation at an overall pilot level as well as adjustments suggested for both the media and Play Hub components of the Pilot. Based on early days of implementation, it is too early to determine if the STP model is scalable and which components are the most scalable. It is recommended a 12-month extension to the current pilot implementation will assist in understanding the viability of scaling moving forward. Within this timeframe, it is suggested some adjustments are made, including integrating play hubs and media in community, embedding learning cycles, establishing clear roles and responsibilities, formally expanding media beyond radio, and adjusting elements of play hub programming to ensure it is fit-for-purpose for the operating contexts.

4.4.1 KEQ4a. What are we learning about the delivery of the Pilot in each of the working contexts (including success factors and barriers)?

Summary finding.

Although the implementation activities have only been conducted throughout the second half of 2022, there are early signs of success of the program. This includes the perception of community leaders that the project has contributed to building relationships between parents and children, the uptake of radio and sharing traditional stories in local language, building parents' ECD knowledge and capability and local ownership and knowledge sharing of media content. The factors that have contributed to these early instances of success include: the play hubs being the 'right fit' for the Solomon Islands context, using local partners, the masterclasses and mentoring approach and having a flexible and adaptable approach. Despite the early instances of success and success factors, there have also been several barriers and learnings for pilot implementation. These include: challenges around the overall Pilot (such as changes in program managers and changing partners, disconnect between media and play hub partners in community, specific nuances in country and community contexts), adjustments for the media component (challenges around mentoring online, who has the final say in the creation of traditional stories for the 'modern world', translation and language) and adjustments for the play hub component (including difficulty with the training model, socialisation of Pilot concepts, content engagement and additional financial requirements).

It is important to note that the Pilot's influence activities (as seen in the theory of change in Annex 1 – Theory of change) have only started implementation over the last 6 months of 2022. It is still early days within the program to determine the success factors and barriers, as well as capturing overall learnings about the Pilot delivery.

There have been early indications of progress towards expected and unexpected outcomes of the pilot activities. This includes:

- **Building of relationships between parents and their children:** All community leaders interviewed (n=4) mentioned the development of a strong connection in the Solomon Islands between parents who attended the play hubs and their children[14].

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[14] This was seen to be a difficulty in Niue, where parents and caregivers have been inconsistent in attending play hubs, with the parents and caregivers not attending the play hub sessions initially

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- **Uptake of radio and sharing traditional stories in local language**: Parents and caregivers interviewed who had access to radio (n=2) said that their children enjoyed listening to the radio episodes, with additional anecdotal information from MFAT development coordinators and media partners that the radio episodes had been well received with media partners in Niue and received positive feedback 'on the streets' about the aired episodes (including from those who were not the target group for the radio series), as well as immediate responses from the listening parties in the Solomon Islands. Additionally, by working closely with and collecting stories from elders, the media producers have been effective in sharing traditional stories in local language.

- **Building parents' ECD knowledge and capability**: Most facilitators in the Solomon Islands (n=5) noted that both the parents and caregivers and children enjoy the activities at the play hub, with some parents and caregivers (n=6) saying they and their children enjoy participating in the play hubs and they enjoy using the parenting cards with their children. Additionally, all parents and caregivers interviewed (n=15) said they feel included in the play hub. However, there is no available data to understand if this was also the case in Niue.

- **Local ownership and knowledge sharing of media content**: Media partners (both producers and mentors, n=9) noted that they felt as if they owned the media content and were able to drive the pilot activities into what they thought was needed. An example of this as mentioned in section ☐ above, media producers in Niue and the Solomon Islands have been able to adapt the radio episodes/audio files into other audio and visual formats to reach a wider audience. All media partners noted that they were able to collaborate and share their own knowledge of what has been working well in their episode production and distribution and to share how they have been able to overcome challenges and learn from one another.

The early indications of success demonstrate what some of the success factors have been for the Pilot delivery. This includes:

- **The play hubs in the Solomon Islands have been a success**. By leveraging the existing relationships Save the Children had in all three communities in Guadalcanal, as well as having access to existing structures, the Pilot was easier to 'get off the ground'. Additionally, as the scoping and feasibility studies were created for a Solomon Islands audience, the Pilot was able to address the identified need of parents learning and engaging with ECD/ECE. This was different for the Niuean context, where parental engagement in ECD and pre-schools is a new concept and required some socialisation for parents and caregivers to attend. Play hubs are yet to roll out in Samoa, and therefore it is too early to make any judgement.

- **Using local partners is a valuable and sustainable model**. Further to the above point, using local partners to implement the program (media producers and play hub trainers and facilitators) not only leads to sustainability (see section 4.3.4 for more information), but also ensures the Pilot deliverables have been contextually appropriate, using the appropriate local language, the right stories and using and drawing upon already established relationships.

- **Masterclasses and mentoring approach enabling knowledge building and sharing between media partners**. Although initially intended just for the media producers in Solomon Islands, all media producers have highlighted a success factor of knowledge sharing to be from the Masterclasses, as they have been able to learn from experts and collaborate with one another, even if their situations and operating contexts were completely different. The mentoring model was also seen to be a success factor, particularly with the mentors who had previously children's-specific media experience. In addition, the mentors who identified as First Nations were able to draw upon and share knowledge of indigenous storytelling, which was integral to the development and production of the radio episodes in each of the pilot contexts.

- **The approach was mostly flexible and adaptable**. The local ownership of the radio episodes, as well as the relevance of the play hub content was due to the flexibility and adaptability of the Pilot, including delivery times (within reason), and ways the content was created and produced. Examples

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of this include the additional operations manual created for the Solomon Islands play hubs, the additional visual content created complementary to the radio episodes, as well as broadcasting the radio episodes though alternative sources such as PA systems, social media and listening parties.

Despite all the early indications of success, there have also been some barriers for implementation. These include:

- Overall Pilot challenges:

  - **Changing program managers and changing partners had a significant impact on timeliness of implementation, consistency, and clarity throughout**. Throughout the design and implementation (including from proof of concept and proposal stages), there were changes in staffing leading the project and Pilot processes from both MFAT and PIA. There were also changes in partners who were leading components of the program throughout the design phase (including ABC International Development, and the Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS)[15]. In addition, due to delays for financial sign off from the program within the Government of Samoa, the implementing partner for play hubs in Samoa changed from MESC to NCECE, with MESC still being involved as a consultative partner. Although these changes could not be helped (and is quite common with new concepts and programs), it delayed programmatic processes, such as contracting, and elements of the program had to be reiterated and adjusted to meet the expectations of new stakeholders. This led to elements of the implementation of the program 'feeling rushed' from implementing partners, as well as a disconnect in clarification of objectives and roles and responsibilities. There was also a lack of clarity and resulting challenges in relation to the MERL component, with Clear Horizon contracted separately as the MERL partner for the program involved in the design and creation of the MERL Plan, but not embedded sufficiently to understand the numerous adjustments and adaptations or have insight into program management decisions.

Recommendation: Continue to establish strong relationships with all STP partners (not just implementing partners) and come to a common understanding on STP's objectives, roles and responsibilities, so as when changes in program managers and partners do occur (as is natural in a program cycle), it will not be detrimental to implementation.

  - **Disconnect between media and play hub partners in community**. As noted, there was limited engagement and collaboration of the play hub partners and media partners in community. This was a missed opportunity due primarily to timing constraints and contracting deliverables. In addition to allowing more flexibility in terms of timing and deliverables, it is suggested that project coordinators[16] in each of the countries should be neutral or independent (i.e. not a media partner or play hub trainer/facilitator) to allow for enhanced coordination between the two stakeholder groups, to be able to share and learn from one another throughout planning, delivery and reflection.

Recommendation: It is suggested neutral project coordinators in each country to be recruited to ensure cross-learning, collaborating and sharing of project activities and objectives between the play hubs and media components of STP.

  - **Specific nuances in country and community contexts have inhibited further successes of Pilot implementation.** As mentioned in section 4.1.1 above, the scoping and feasibility

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[15] AFTRS was involved in the design component of the program, but did not progress through to contracting for implementation

[16] It is understood that there are project coordinators who exist in each community, but have not yet been able to play the role to coordinate and collaborate between the two different implementing stakeholder groups, generating siloed implementation.

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study was conducted in Solomon Islands, therefore acknowledging that the success of the Pilot in Solomon Islands is due to catering towards a specific need in this context as well as other success factors mentioned above. However, due to some constraints in understanding the specifics of ECD and media in Niue and Samoa (including the mode and timing of delivery), there have been some challenges with implementation. This includes spending time to understand and socialise concepts of parents' involvement in ECD with parents and teachers in Niue. In addition, the relevance and availability of media needs to be established before pursuing the radio path, evidenced by only two of the parents and caregivers interviewed in Solomon Islands having access to a radio.

- Specific adjustments for media content creation and mentoring:

  - **It is difficult to build effective relationships online**. Although this was not able to be overcome (COVID-19 restrictions inhibited mentors or producers from connecting face to face), it is suggested this is a consideration for any future programming.

  - **Tension and balance of local stories for the 'modern world' and who has the final say**. Media mentors commented that there were challenges around finding the right balance between telling traditional stories in local language how they have always been told, and meeting some of the requirements for the Pilot (including gender and disability inclusive language and storytelling). Media producers commented there was a challenge when they sent mentors specific stories that suggested adjustments to include women, or to include more inclusive language, or to remove a story altogether, which changed the traditional story from its original form. One approach to dealing with this issue was using a 'story within a story' approach (where the audio content has a character that 'modernises' or socialises the concepts of gender equality and social inclusion and allows a discussion of the stereotypes that may exist in the original story. However, there remains a question about who has a final say in developing these stories and balancing the need to progress equality and inclusivity in all programming, as well as ensuring the program is locally led.

Recommendation: It is suggested that PIA work with STP partners roles and responsibilities not only for program management, but also understand who has the final say in story development, ensuring that any nuances and changes are culturally and contextually appropriate.

  - **Difficulty around utilisation of language and translation**. As with any program involving multiple languages, there was difficulty with the stories being told in local language, then being translated for the sake of mentor engagement and editing, or approval (by both PIA and implementing partners). At times, some implementing partners did not know the local language, and therefore proving difficult to edit for production. This proved to be challenging, particularly when edits were made and then translated back into local language, and then not making 'sense'. Other media partners felt edits made in English by mentors lost the impact and nuance of in-language storytelling.

- Specific adjustments for play hub implementation

  - **Difficulty with training model:** Although the facilitators interviewed (n=6) said that they felt prepared to lead or participate in the play hubs, some facilitators (n=3) noted that the time for their initial training was insufficient, as well as struggling with the mode of delivery of the training. It was noted that this was dependent on the literacy level of the facilitator, with one facilitator reporting their education level was at a year 6 level and found it difficult to comprehend some of the concepts they needed to lead the play hubs sessions.

  - **Socialisation of Pilot concepts**: Possibly aligned with the first point about the training model, it is noted there were some concepts for the play hub facilitators to grasp, to then lead a play hub session on a particular topic. This included the role of the teach versus the parents in ECD, gender roles, and the communication of traditional stories. One stakeholder noted that it was

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difficult to contextualise the traditional stories into the specific narrative format that they play hub wanted, because of how the story is structured. In relation to gender, one of the play hub interview participants said:

It was probably the first time somebody told them to reflect on 'is it okay if boys wear dresses'… and it was really challenging of older members of staff to get them to think about it… they do need to think about the risks if they run into the community saying 'we've been told it's okay for boys to wear dresses and then you get a big backlash because you haven't got the right message…I think there's some important lessons about how we tackle gender…I would definitely start with sensitising and orientation first with the teams in country to make sure there is a shared understanding – Play Hubs interview participant

Recommendation: Continue to work closely with play hub facilitators and trainers to ensure they are across concepts they would need to communicate and contextualise for the play hub audience.

- **Ability to engage with the content**. It is suggested for additional resources to be provided for those parents and caregivers and/or facilitators who had trouble engaging with the content due to low literacy levels or having a disability. In addition, it was noted that some of the parents and caregivers in Solomon Islands had difficulty using the parenting cards because they were written in English, so the facilitators had to translate them for use. Parents and caregivers and facilitators in Solomon Islands also suggested that traditional knowledge was used in all play hub activities, not just for the storytelling[17].

- **Additional financial requirements:** This challenge is two-fold (see section 4.3.4.1 for more information):
  - The requirement of additional financial resources to pay for incidentals. This included paying for things such as refreshments, paper and a radio.
  - Remuneration for facilitators is not enough, with the volunteer model not sustainable

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[17] Participants specifically referenced the songs and prayer used in the sessions were all from Western culture and could be adapted to use traditional songs and prayers instead.

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1.1.5 KEQ4b. What adjustments would need to be made for scaling in each country?

> **Summary finding.**
>
> Although there are early instances of success of the pilot activities, it is too early to determine if the STP model is scalable due to the short implementation timeframe and disconnect between the media and play hub components. To be able to understand what elements should or should not be scaled, there would need to be an additional 12 month extension to determine what is working where and for whom. Adjustments that should be made in this time include: integrating play hubs and media components of the program, embedding learning cycles with implementing partners, establishing clear roles and responsibilities, formally expanding to media beyond radio, adjusting play hub programming in Niue to ensure it is fit-for-purpose, addressing possible barriers to access STP in community and continuing to train play hub facilitators.

Although there are early instances of success of the pilot activities, **it is too early to determine if the STP model is scalable** as pilot implementation has only been running for 6 months.

One way to understand scalability is through looking at the different stages of innovation as noted in Annex 8 - Pilots to scale - best practice. It is understood the **discovery stage** for STP included the original proof of concept and the scoping study, with the **define and ideate stage** being the feasibility study, proposals and design iterations (see Annex 2 - STP design iterations and Annex 4 – Key findings from Feasibility and scoping studies for Story Time and Play for more information). From the multiple design documents, as well as our knowledge of the Pilot, we believe **that this Pilot sits between a prototype and a pilot** – testing out multiple different models (creation of children's media, traditional storytelling in local language in media, parental involvement in ECD, mentoring media professionals, training play hub facilitators), as well as implementing it in a live environment.

The STP Pilot has been conducted on a small scale in multiple complex and diverse environments, with the prototypes not being pre-tested *therefore making it difficult to determine scaling and how STP should be scaled*. To understand if there is validity in scaling, there would need to be more time to determine what is working where and for whom. **It is suggested the current model of STP (i.e. play hubs and media in Niue, Samoa and Solomon Islands) continue as an extension of the current Pilot model over the next 12 months** to understand this more.

This evaluation proposes adjustments during this extension period. These include:

- **Working more to integrate play hubs and media in-country/community**. This includes having the role of a neutral in-country project coordinator whose role is to integrate the two components of the program, to learn and leverage from one another, as well as to look after resourcing (human, financial) constraints and challenges during implementation.

- **Embedding learning cycles with implementing partners.** As originally outlined in the MERL of the Pilot, frequent learning cycles are important throughout the pilot stage to understand what is working, what is not working and any adjustments that need to be made quickly. It is important that the learning cycles in the form of a monthly meeting held by the in-country project coordinator to not only integrate the play hub and media components of the program, but also to capture those learnings to determine scalability beyond the extension period. There is a risk without the learning cycles, there will be continue to be challenges in determining scalability.

- **Clear clarification of roles and responsibilities and concepts for all involved with the program**. It is suggested that through a participatory process, there needs to be clear programming roles and responsibilities for all partners who are involved in the program. This includes at the donor/management level, all the way through to the program implementers on the ground. Once all partners are clear on what their roles and responsibilities are, as well as the main objectives and

concepts are in the program[18], rollout will be much easier and more effective, with more room for collaboration between partners. This will also assist in MERL activities for the program, including capturing learnings throughout the delivery both general and context specific, as well as all 'levels' of the program (managerial/donor level, right through to partner level).

- **Formally expand Pilot media activities to media beyond radio episodes**, to ensure the program continues to appropriately adapt to each operating context.

- **Adjust play hub programming in Niue to ensure that it is fit-for-purpose in the operating context**. This may mean having to conduct a context analysis (i.e. interviewing parents about when and how play hubs should be run) to ensure more parents attend play hub sessions with their children to get the full benefit of the activity.

- **Address possible barriers to access and use of parenting resources in each community context.** This includes working with play hub facilitators to ensure facilitators, parents and caregivers who have low literacy levels and parents, caregivers and children with disabilities can equally participate and engage in the play hubs and media.

- **Continue to train play hub facilitators and trainers** in content to ensure they are across concepts they would need to communicate and contextualise for the play hub audience (such as gender roles). It is also suggested to work with the play hub trainers and facilitators to explain expectations on children's engagement in the play hub sessions with parents, as well as how to use the parenting cards at home.

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[18] Including who has the final say in product development (such as the final scripts for media episodes).

5   CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation found that while elements of the Pilot could be improved, there was generally good engagement and ownership of innovative concepts from implementing partners. The Pilot has demonstrated it is the 'right fit' for the Solomon Islands context, with notions of localisation and mentoring deemed appropriate for all contexts across the Pilot and concepts included in the Pilot being somewhat familiar to previous development programming. The Pilot would have benefited from a more in-depth situational analysis in Niue and Samoa, not so much to surface ideas around relevance and coherence, but to understand practical, attitudinal, and cultural obstacles that may hinder this innovation gaining traction. The existence of enabling policy and recognised need is important but only a part of the picture that indicates success. It was too early in the Pilot to understand if the new approaches were likely to make a difference to the way parents engage with their children in the longer term, or if there is an ongoing appetite for traditional stories to be available to children.

Implementing partners worked extremely hard to ensure the success of the Pilot, including leveraging multiple resources, but they needed a longer time and more support to get ready for implementation, including to connect with the other stakeholders in the Pilot, and more flexibility to implement the new approaches in their own way and time after the initial capacity building phase.

The evaluation notes despite initial progress towards intended outcomes, due to the delays in implementation and various complexities in the delivery of the Pilot, it is difficult to determine if STP should be scaled. To understand if there is validity in scaling, it is suggested a 12-month extension on the current model of STP. Recommendations for adjustments during this extension period include:

- **Working more to integrate play hubs and media in-country/community**. This includes having the role of a neutral in-country project coordinator whose role is to integrate the two components of the program, to learn and leverage from one another, as well as to look after resourcing (human, financial) constraints and challenges during implementation.

- **Embedding learning cycles with implementing partners.** As originally outlined in the MERL of the Pilot, frequent learning cycles are important throughout the pilot stage to understand what is working, what is not working and any adjustments that need to be made quickly. It is important that the learning cycles in the form of a monthly meeting held by the in-country project coordinator to not only integrate the play hub and media components of the program, but also to capture those learnings to determine scalability beyond the extension period. There is a risk without the learning cycles, there will be challenges in determining scalability.

- **Clear clarification of roles and responsibilities and concepts for all involved with the program**. It is suggested that through a participatory process, there needs to be clear programming roles and responsibilities for all partners who are involved in the program. This includes at the donor/management level, all the way through to the program implementers on the ground. Once all partners are clear on what their roles and responsibilities are, as well as the main objectives and concepts are in the program[19], rollout will be much easier and more effective, with more room for collaboration between partners. This will also assist in MERL activities for the program, including capturing learnings throughout the delivery both general and context specific, as well as all 'levels' of the program (managerial/donor level, right through to partner level).

- **Formally expand Pilot media activities to media beyond radio episodes**, to ensure the program continues to appropriately adapt to each operating context.

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[19] Including who has the final say in product development (such as the final scripts for media episodes).

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- **Adjust play hub programming in Niue to ensure that it is fit-for-purpose in the operating context**. This may mean having to conduct a context analysis (i.e. interviewing parents about when and how play hubs should be run) to ensure more parents attend play hub sessions with their children to get the full benefit of the activity.

- **Address possible barriers to access and use of parenting resources in each community context.** This includes working with play hub facilitators to ensure facilitators, parents and caregivers who have low literacy levels and parents, caregivers and children with disabilities can equally participate and engage in the play hubs.

- **Continue to train play hub facilitators and trainers** in content to ensure they are across concepts they would need to communicate and contextualise for the play hub audience (such as gender roles). It is also suggested to work with the play hub trainers and facilitators to explain expectations on children's engagement in the play hub sessions with parents, as well as how to use the parenting cards at home.

Beyond the pilot extension period, or if the extension does not go ahead, in addition to recommendations already discussed, below are recommendations for the future of STP based on learnings from this evaluation:

- **Establish and revisit the main objective of the program**. Due to the fact there are multiple prototypes being tested as part of this Pilot, as well as lack of clarity about what this program and Pilot is trying to achieve, it is important to be clear on the main objective of the program. This includes whether the main objective of the program is improving or expanding access to ECD/ECE, or if it is the preservation of local language. By revisiting the problem statement and becoming clearer on the objective (and having it communicated to all partners), this will assist in determining what needs to be scaled and what needs to be 'dropped'.

- **Allow for more flexibility to allow for diverging of program delivery**. Although one of the success factors named was the flexibility and adaptability of the Pilot, as well as PIA's flexibility being noted specifically from the media partners and MFAT, there needs to be more fluidity on how play hubs and media are carried out to be relevant for the audiences. This includes suggestions to survey Niuean parents to see when would be best (both timing and frequency) for play hub implementation so they are able to engage effectively, as well as ensuring the right media medium is used from the beginning (i.e. if the Solomon Islands pilot communities did not have access to a radio, what is another form of media they could have used to engage with the traditional stories). If the outcomes and principles of the program are the same, the activities may look different to be contextually appropriate. A suggestion for the theory of change hierarchy is outlined in Annex 9 – Suggested revised ToC hierarchybelow.

- **Work closely with ministries of education across the Pacific as a key stakeholder in the program**. It is suggested STP continue to find ways to engage and consult with ministries of education in countries where activities are being implemented to ensure they are fit-for-purpose and aligned with the relevant needs and priorities. This will also assist with ongoing sustainability and scaling of project activities, with natural opportunities to use some of the content (particularly the media content) in other spaces, such as in primary school classrooms.

- **Continue to engage and invest in capacity building of program implementers**. The mentoring opportunities for both media and play hubs implementing partners, as well as the addition of the media masterclasses are seen as a significant benefit to the success of this Pilot. It is suggested to continue to leverage coaching and mentoring opportunities, as well as opportunities for program implementers to learn from one another across community contexts.
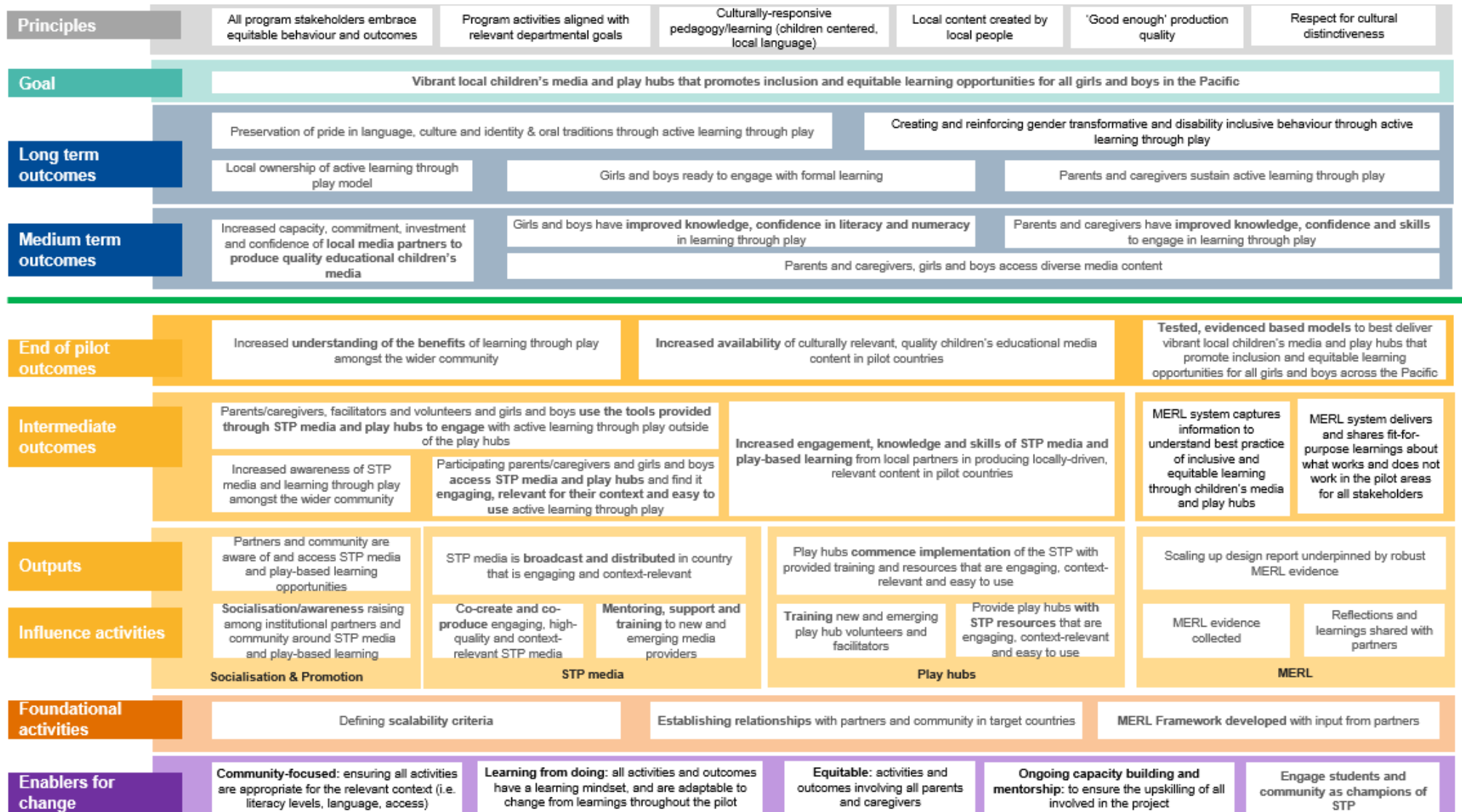
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ANNEX 1 – THEORY OF CHANGE

Principles	All program stakeholders embrace equitable behaviour and outcomes	Program activities aligned with relevant departmental goals	Culturally-responsive pedagogy/learning (children centered, local language)	Local content created by local people	'Good enough' production quality	Respect for cultural distinctiveness

Goal	Vibrant local children's media and play hubs that promotes inclusion and equitable learning opportunities for all girls and boys in the Pacific

Long term outcomes	Preservation of pride in language, culture and identity & oral traditions through active learning through play		Creating and reinforcing gender transformative and disability inclusive behaviour through active learning through play
	Local ownership of active learning through play model	Girls and boys ready to engage with formal learning	Parents and caregivers sustain active learning through play

Medium term outcomes	Increased capacity, commitment, investment and confidence of local media partners to produce quality educational children's media	Girls and boys have improved knowledge, confidence in literacy and numeracy in learning through play	Parents and caregivers have improved knowledge, confidence and skills to engage in learning through play
		Parents and caregivers, girls and boys access diverse media content	

End of pilot outcomes	Increased understanding of the benefits of learning through play amongst the wider community	Increased availability of culturally relevant, quality children's educational media content in pilot countries	Tested, evidenced based models to best deliver vibrant local children's media and play hubs that promote inclusion and equitable learning opportunities for all girls and boys across the Pacific

Intermediate outcomes	Parents/caregivers, facilitators and volunteers and girls and boys use the tools provided through STP media and play hubs to engage with active learning through play outside of the play hubs	Increased engagement, knowledge and skills of STP media and play-based learning from local partners in producing locally-driven, relevant content in pilot countries	MERL system captures information to understand best practice of inclusive and equitable learning through children's media and play hubs	MERL system delivers and shares fit-for-purpose learnings about what works and does not work in the pilot areas for all stakeholders
	Increased awareness of STP media and learning through play amongst the wider community	Participating parents/caregivers and girls and boys access STP media and play hubs and find it engaging, relevant for their context and easy to use active learning through play			

Outputs	Partners and community are aware of and access STP media and play-based learning opportunities	STP media is broadcast and distributed in country that is engaging and context-relevant	Play hubs commence implementation of the STP with provided training and resources that are engaging, context-relevant and easy to use	Scaling up design report underpinned by robust MERL evidence
Influence activities	Socialisation/awareness raising among institutional partners and community around STP media and play-based learning	Co-create and co-produce engaging, high-quality and context-relevant STP media / Mentoring, support and training to new and emerging media providers	Training new and emerging play hub volunteers and facilitators / Provide play hubs with STP resources that are engaging, context-relevant and easy to use	MERL evidence collected / Reflections and learnings shared with partners
	Socialisation & Promotion	STP media	Play hubs	MERL

Foundational activities	Defining scalability criteria	Establishing relationships with partners and community in target countries	MERL Framework developed with input from partners

Enablers for change	Community-focused: ensuring all activities are appropriate for the relevant context (i.e. literacy levels, language, access)	Learning from doing: all activities and outcomes have a learning mindset, and are adaptable to change from learnings throughout the pilot	Equitable: activities and outcomes involving all parents and caregivers	Ongoing capacity building and mentorship: to ensure the upskilling of all involved in the project	Engage students and community as champions of STP

Figure 2. STP theory of change

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ANNEX 2 - STP DESIGN ITERATIONS

Table 8 outlines the different documents provided by PIA on the various design iterations, as the project evolved over time. This includes proposals co-created by various stakeholders, as well as the final approved design document (2021) and revised version (2022). The table references the specific document name, the intended model of the project including which stakeholders informed the design, the intended age group of the program, which countries it would be implemented in and the implementing partners. The table also notes the intended goal or objective of the design, the key activities, and any key changes from document to document, to demonstrate the evolution of the program and Pilot over time.

Table 8. STP design iterations

Year	Document	Model	Goal/Objective	Key activities	Key changes
2020	Children's Education Program Proposal: Iumi Stori	A Pacific Children's integrated media and community-led early childhood education program with children's TV, radio and community led early childhood programming targeting pre-school and early grade school children across the Pacific. The programs would provide a vehicle to discuss and explore development issues facing children and their families, as well as establishing a significant platform to showcase regionally-relevant issues, ideas and knowledge, and to share traditional stories and songs with the next generation.	*To educate and encourage childhood learning; empower parents to actively engage in their children's learning, and to preserve traditions through recording and sharing of cultural knowledge.*	• **Regional Children's TV** series (Potential broadcast partners ABC Australia and Pasifika TV); • **Localised Radio series** broadcast in four "anchor" countries: Solomon Islands, PNG, Tonga and Samoa; • **Online platforms** for sharing content regionally and outside of the Pacific tapping into the diaspora market; • **Community Led Play Hubs**. Provide opportunities to link to and extend the learning from both TV and radio and provide parents and children with direct experience of play-based learning. Linked to existing	N/A

		• **Informed by**: ABC International Development and Plan International scoping study in children's media in the Solomon Islands in November 2018. • **Age group**: Play Hubs target birth to eight years old. • **Countries**: 4 'anchor' countries: Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, and Samoa. The Play Hubs to be piloted in 1-2 countries. • **Partners**: ABC International Development (ABCID) and Plan International.		social infrastructure e.g. church groups. • **Local capacity building** across production and education roles.	
2020	Program proposal: Child Friendly Covid-19 Communications in the Pacific	A context-specific children's audio/radio programming, targeting pre-school and early grade school children and their families for broadcast across the Pacific. • **Informed by**: ABC International Development and Plan International scoping study in children's media in the Solomon Islands in November 2018. • **Age group**: Play Hubs target birth to eight years	*To educate families and children on important health and hygiene practice and encourage ongoing childhood learning in the face of significant disruption; empower parents to actively engage in their children's health and learning, and to provide messaging on social and family cohesion, even in the face of significant physical distancing*	• **Localised audio/radio series**. Broadcast across 5 countries in local language. Video production options are available. • **Online platforms** and distribution of physical media (CDs/DVDs). To provide an opportunity for the Pacific diaspora beyond Oceania to engage. • **Play Hubs**. Physical resources provided to families so enable physically	• **Objective**. The program objective shifted and expanded in scope in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. • **Pilot countries**. The pilot countries for the radio series expanded to 5 countries, from the original 4. • **Key activities**. The scope excluded regional children's

		• **Countries**: Radio episodes across 5 countries • **Partners**: No specific mention	*requirements. By supporting local production, we hope to ensure relevance of messaging and preserve and share relevant stories and cultural knowledge.*	distanced support. Linked to existing social infrastructure.	TV, and to exclude local capacity building.
2020	Let's Play – Design Document – Draft 061120	An integrated media and community-led early childhood education program with children's radio and community-led early childhood programming targeting pre-school and early grade school children. The program will take an ecosystem approach to design, development, implementation and impact evaluation. • **Informed by**: ABC International Development and Plan International scoping study in children's media in the Solomon Islands in November 2018. • **Age group**: 4-7 years (p1/16); Play Hubs – birth to eight years (p2/16). • **Countries**: Four pilot countries (p1/16); radio series – three pilot countries: Solomon Islands, Niue and Samoa (p2/16);	*Promote the dispositions for learning through culturally relevant early childhood educational media, engaging children through play to receive the care, support and services they need to survive, thrive and learn, free from discriminatory gender norms and expectations.* • *Promote learning through play with quality children's educational media and Play Hubs* • *Collate learning from the Pilot to inform scaling up in other countries and/or other media formats*	• **Localised Radio series** produced and broadcast in three pilot countries: Solomon Islands, Niue, and Samoa, supported by social media promotion; • **Community-Led Play Hubs** that provide opportunities to link to and extend the learning from radio and provide parents/caregivers and children with direct experience of play-based learning. • **Local capacity building** across production and ECCE roles.	• **Name of the project**. Renamed to Let's Play. • **Key activities**. The scope excluded online platforms. Local capacity building was reinstated in scope. • **Age group**. First introduction of the target range being 4-7 years old although this is different throughout the document. • **Pilot countries**. Number of pilot countries inconsistent in document. Introduction of Niue as a pilot country for the Radio episodes. No mention of PNG or Tonga.

		Play Hubs – three pilot countries (p5/16). • **Partners**: Plan International, ABCID, Akina Foundation			
2021	Story Time and Play: Children's Media Project Design Document November 2021	Seeks to create local, co-created children's media (radio episodes), which will be linked to Play Hubs at community level to support children's play and learning. Parent/caregivers and children can play and learn together using the children's media content, that link to the community Play Hubs. • **Informed by**: Research and feasibility studies from 2018-2020 and a series of virtual design workshops in September 2021. • **Age group**: Audio series targeted at children aged 4-7 years old • **Countries**: Three pilot countries – Niue, Samoa and the Solomon Islands • **Partners**: Plan International Australia, Australian Film, Television and Radio School, Akina Foundation, Clear Horizon, Save the Children Solomon Islands, Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation,	*Vibrant local children's media and play hubs that promotes inclusion and equitable learning opportunities for all girls and boys in the Pacific*	• **STP Media**. Co-created and co-produced engaging, high-quality and context-relevant STP media. Mentoring, support and training to new and emerging media providers. • **Play Hubs**. Linked to existing social infrastructure. New and emerging Play Hub volunteers are trained and resourced. • **Socialisation and promotion**. Raising awareness among institutional partners and community around STP media and play based learning. • **Monitoring, Evaluation, Reflection and Learning (MERL).** Collection of MERL evidence, and sharing of learnings and reflections across partners	• **Name of the project**. Renamed to Story Time and Play: Children's Media Project (STP). • **Goal/Objective**. Reduced to succinct statement. • **Partners**. ABCID no longer a partner. Clear Horizon on boarded as a MEL partner. Increased number of implementing partners. • **Theory of change**. Theory of change developed for the Pilot. • **Pilot countries**. Shift to three pilot countries: Niue, Samoa and Solomon Islands. • **Key activities**. Socialisation and promotion, as well as MERL included

					explicitly (e.g. previously MERL was not listed as a key activity although was always mentioned as critical). The capacity building/peer learning activities are now captured under the STP Media (mentoring) component and the MERL component (peer learning).
2022	Stakeholder Design Document September 2022	Story Time and Play: Children's Media Project is an integrated media and community-led early childhood development program with children's media and community-led early childhood programming targeting pre-school children and their caregivers across three pilot countries. The Pilot is being undertaken in the Pacific Island countries of Niue, Samoa and Solomon Islands. The Pilot seeks to create local, co-created children's media (radio and podcast episodes), which will be linked to Play Hubs at community level to support children's play and learning. • **Informed by**: Co-design workshop with partners in	*Vibrant local children's media and play hubs that promotes inclusion and equitable learning opportunities*	• **STP Media**. For social media, radio and podcast. Mentoring would also be provided for the media component in a 3 tiered model • **Play Hubs**. Community members facilitate community Play Hubs, trained by ECD practitioners. ECD practitioners to be trained by the Play Hubs Advisor in the Play Hubs curriculum. • **Socialisation and promotion**. Raising awareness among institutional partners and community around STP	• **Goal/Objective**. Reduced slightly to omit 'for all girls and boys in the Pacific'

The top-left cell (above 2022 row) contains:

Dreamcast Theatre, Rock Steady Enterprise, Niue Primary School and Early Childhood Education, Broadcasting Corporation Niue, Ministry for Education Sports and Community, Ministry for Communication Information Technology, National Council for Early Childhood Education.

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				media and play based learning.
		every country, as well as input from education specialists, media specialists, church groups, and local NGOs/CSOs.	
		• **Age group**: 4-7 years of age	• **Monitoring, Evaluation, Reflection and Learning (MERL).** Collection of MERL evidence, and sharing of learnings and reflections across partners.
		• **Countries**: One reference to implementation in two countries (Niue and Samoa p1/20) and one reference to three countries (Niue, Samoa and Solomon Islands p#/20)	
		• **Partners**: Plan International Australia, Akina Foundation, Clear Horizon, Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation, Save the Children Solomon Islands, Niue Primary School and Early Childhood Education, Broadcasting Corporation Niue, Ministry for Education Sports and Community Samoa, Ministry for Communication Information Technology Samoa, National Council for Early Childhood Education Samoa as well as identified master class guest speakers.	
2022	Story Time and Play refresh	Seeks to create local, co-created children's media (radio episodes), which will be	*Vibrant local children's media and play hubs that promotes inclusion and* • **STP Media**. For social media, radio and podcast. • **Partners**. Some changes in listed

design October 2022	linked to Play Hubs at community level to support children's play and learning. Parent/caregivers and children can play and learn together using the children's media content, that link to the community Play Hubs.	*equitable learning opportunities*	Mentoring would also be provided for the media component in a 3 tiered model	partnerships e.g. on boarding of Big hART, Dreamcast Theatre, Rock Steady Enterprise etc.
	• **Informed by**: A series of research and feasibility studies from 2019 and a September 2021 series of virtual design workshops. These design workshops explored country feedback on Early Childhood Education (ECE) attendance, Quality Children's Media, Play Based Learning, and Local Language.		• **Play Hubs**. Community members faciliate community Play Hubs, trained by ECD practitioners. ECD practitioners to be trained by the Play Hubs Advisor in the Play Hubs curriculum.	• **Omission of integration with other initiatives** acknowledging this will be undertaken beyond the Pilot.
	• **Age group**: 4-7 years		• **Socialisation and promotion**. Raising awareness among institutional partners and community around STP media and play based learning.	
	• **Countries**: 3 countries – Niue, Samoa and the Solomon Islands.		• **Monitoring, Evaluation, Reflection and Learning (MERL).** Collection of MERL evidence, and sharing of learnings and reflections across partners.	
	• **Partners**: 'A suite of partners': Plan International Australia; Akina Foundation; Clear Horizon; Big hART; Save the Children Solomon Islands; Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation; Dreamcast Theatre; Rock Steady Enterprise; Niue Primary School and Early			

		Childhood; Broadcasting Corporation Niue; Samoa GEM; Ministry for Education, Sports and Community; Ministry for Communication, Information Technology; National Council for Early Childhood Education			

ANNEX 3 – DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

Documents reviewed

Table 9. Reviewed documents list

Provided by	Document name	File type
Feasibility and scoping studies		
PIA	IUMI Story Final Report	.ppt
PIA	Akina IUMI Story feasibility review	.pdf
PIA	Traditional Storytelling for Children in Solomon Islands – Final Report (V1&V2)	.doc
Historical and current design documents		
PIA	Let's Play – Design document – draft 061120	.doc
PIA	Let's Play – Workplan – Draft 061120	.doc
PIA	ABCID_Plan Iumi Stori Proposal 2020_V5	.doc
PIA	PLAN full proposal IUMI stori	.pdf
PIA	Story_Time_and_Play_FINAL DESIGN DOCUMENT_181121	.doc
PIA	Stakeholder Design Document_September 22	.pdf
PIA	Story_Time_and_Play_refresh design_Oct 22	.doc
Implementation documents		
PIA	Activity-Progress-Report Feb until May 22 - FINAL	.pdf
PIA	Activity-Progress-Report May-Jul 2022-FINAL	.pdf
PIA	Scale up STP document for Progress Report May 31 2022	.docx
PIA	Parenting card example	.png
PIA	Parenting cards	.pdf
PIA	Play Hub Facilitation Guide_final	.pdf
PIA	Play Hub Operational Manual _FINAL	.doc
PIA	Play Hub Training M&E Handouts	.doc
PIA	Pre and Post test template	.doc
PIA	Sols – Play hub Facilitator pre and post Excelsheet-06092022	.exl
PIA	Dreamcast. Gecko and The Flowers(Marco Tepuke)	.mp3
PIA	Dreamcast. The Turtle and The Bat (Jonathan Levo)	.mp3

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PIA	EPISODE 1 – PART 1 21062022	.odt
PIA	EPISODE 1 PART 2 25062022	.odt
PIA	EPSIODE 1 PART 3 09072022	.odt
PIA	EPISODE 2 PART 1, 2_3 updates 23092022	.odt
PIA	EPISODES 3 – PART 1_2 UPDATES 09072022	.odt
PIA	NIUMATAOLA PROJECT EPSIODE 2 – PEKA	.mp3
PIA	NIUMATAOLA PROJECT – EPISODE 3 AUDIO FINAL	.mp3
PIA	NIUMATAOLA PROJECT EPISODE 1 – KO E UGA	.mp3
PIA additional resources		
PIA	GLO-AOGD-ECD_core_components_overview	.pdf
PIA	GLO-Framework_for_Ethical_MER-Final-GH-Eng-May20	.doc
PIA	GLO-MER_Safeguarding_Risk_Assessment-Final-GH-End-Nov20	.exl
PIA	GLO-Safeguarding_in_MER-Final-GH-End-APR20	.doc

Survey stakeholders

Below in Table 10 notes the number of stakeholders surveyed, if they were female or male (if applicable) and their relevant pilot country against each stakeholder type.

Table 10. Survey stakeholders information

Stakeholder type	Total no. of surveys	Gender disaggregation		Relevant pilot country implementation		
		Female	Male	Niue	Samoa	Solomon Islands
Media	3	1	2	1	1	1
Play hub	8	8	0	7	0	1
TOTAL	11	9	2	8	1	2

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Interview stakeholders

Below in Table 11 notes the number of stakeholders interviewed, if they were female or male (if applicable) and their relevant pilot country against each stakeholder type.

Table 11. Interview stakeholders information

Stakeholder type	Total no. of interviews	Gender disaggregation (where applicable)		Relevant pilot country implementation			
		Female	Male	Niue	Samoa	Solomon Islands	Other
MFAT Wellington Desk	2	1	1	0	0	0	2
MFAT Development Coordinators	2	2	0	1	1	0	0
PIA	3	3	0	0	0	0	3
Play hubs advisor	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
Play hubs trainers	3	3	0	1	0	2	0
Play hubs facilitators	6	3	3	0	0	6[20]	0
Media partners	4	2	2	1	1	2	0
Media mentors	5	5	0	2	2	1	0
Community Leaders	4	No data provided; at least one female	No data provided	0	0	4	0
Parents and caregivers	15	10	5	0	0	15[21]	0
TOTAL	**45**	**At least 31**	**At least 11**	**5**	**4**	**30**	**6**

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[20] Two per community
[21] Five per community

ANNEX 4 – KEY FINDINGS FROM FEASIBILITY AND SCOPING STUDIES FOR STORY TIME AND PLAY

Traditional stories for children, Solomon Islands, ABCID – Plan International, November 2018.

Undertaken by ABCID and Plan International in 2018, the purpose of this scoping mission was to explore the opportunities and demand for traditional storytelling for children with a focus on achieving development outcomes in the areas of education, health, resilience and wellbeing and how traditional knowledge that has already existed for generations can be reinforced through media.

- There is demand for locally produced children's content with culture and Kastom stories at the heart of the content. This demand is not being met by commercial stations. It is also one of the priority areas for the national broadcaster SIBC to focus on children's education and media and reach young children across Solomon Islands.

- Parental engagement is key and this must be considered in the programme, particularly around positive parenting and encouraging parents involvement with their child's learning.

- Active play-based learning is endorsed by the Ministry of Education and should be at the core of the programme. This should involve the promotion of inquiry and curiosity through open ended questioning, experimenting and cooperation in discovering answer to problems.

- Value based education should be implemented in accordance with the Ministry of Education's priorities. These 12 values are caring; fair; honest; obedient; peaceful; prayerful; purposeful; respectful; responsible; thankful; united; and well-mannered.

- A collective approach should be taken to ensure that the programme is locally led, owned and fosters collaboration between relevant sectors and actors.

- Partnerships should underpin this programme and include media partners; education partners; Kastom story orators; production and distribution partners; and the Solomon Islands National Museum.

- A proposed mix of media for the initial stage of the project would include radio as the primary medium with audio-visual content distributed through social media, USBs and DVDs through schools and community based organisations.

IUMI Story Feasibility Review. Akina. April 2020.

The IUMI Story Feasibility Review explored the feasibility of creating entertaining content for children in the Pacific that delivers education messages.

Programme impact

The programme could produce the following outcomes: (i) Improved educational outcomes; (ii) improved health outcomes; (iii) improved connection to culture.

This programme should be founded on three principles:

1. **Local content created by local people**. Ensure that Pacific Island Communities take a lead role in the design and delivery of the content. Technical mentors to provide capability building, but decisions as to the shape and content of productions should be made by the Pacific Island Partners.
2. **Content produced in local languages**. The most widely spoken local language should be used.
3. **'Good enough' production quality**. Focus on getting content that is 'good enough' rather than striving for broadcast levels of production.

Programmes focused on creating entertainment content with educational messages for children in the Pacific should consider implementation in two phases:

a. a one-year pilot in three Pacific Island Communities[22] and
b. a multi-year programme to develop and deliver children's content across the Pacific. The first phase should start with a co-design process with key collaborators – Plan International, content creators, experts on indigenous content creation and external advisers. This phase should also involve remote mentors who will support content creation and continue to provide capability development support[23].

The audience

The primary audience are children between the ages of three and six years old, with a preference for those who are not being exposed to formal education. Parents are a secondary audience for the health and nutrition information contained within the content. Three categories of audience were identified: (i) urban families in Pacific Island Countries (ii) remote families in Pacific Island Countries (iii) diaspora. Of these, the impact potential was considered highest for remote families in Pacific Island Countries. The media they have access to include radio and digital download.

Interviewees indicate that it may be a challenge to reach rural and remote communities in Pacific Island Communities because of lack of access to broadcast signals; lack of equipment/power to receive broadcast signals; low penetration of broadband internet; and lack of access to devices that can download and deliver audio-visual material.

Revenue potential

The programme has very little potential for revenue generation. Funding support from donors and philanthropists will be required over the medium term. Suggested revenue streams include advertising, listener donations and ticketed live events.

Content format

There is not a role for TV in distributing content for this initiative due to the changing media landscape towards PayTV. The content could be produced in either audio or audio and video format. The recommendation is that video is likely to be more engaging but more expensive. Regardless of the format, Play Hubs are the best distribution method, followed by distribution on physical media, and finally via Internet. Content should be produced in the language that is understood by most children in the community and is most empowering to the Pacific Island Communities involved in the project.

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[22] It is not clear based on the review why a one-year pilot in three Pacific Island communities is suggested
[23] The idea is that there is a 'bootcamp' intensive collaborative in person training with key collaborators and then shift to remote mentor support, though the study does not provide a clear justification. However, we assume the physical 'step back' of technical mentors creates space for Pacific leadership/ownership

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Monitoring and evaluation

Consider random sampling of communities outside the target group in order to understand if the content has spread virally via peer-to-peer sharing.

Capability building

This element of the programme should include a co-design Bootcamp which brings together content creators, experts and implementers, online resources and remote support from audio-visual specialists and educational advisors.

ANNEX 5 – ALIGNMENT WITH MFAT PARTNERING FOR RESILIENCE PRINCIPLES

Table 12. Alignment with MFAT Partnering for Resilience Principles

Principle	Description relevant to STP	Alignment with Design
Tātai Hono: The recognition of deep and enduring whakapapa connections	Shared history and meaningful relationships will shape our engagement, reinforcing New Zealand's depth of connection within the region and increasing understanding of Pacific peoples.	• Utilising local implementing partners to implement the program • Principle: community focused
Turou Hawaiiki: Navigating together	Our engagement will recognise that we share common values and will reflect the unique and substantial overlap with New Zealand domestic policy decisions in respect of the Pacific.	
Whāia te Taumata Ōhanga: Journey towards a circular economy	Our engagement will recognise that the journey we each take is different but our horizon is the same. We will aim to achieve lasting resilience through Pacific Island countries' enhanced capability to deliver on national and regional priorities through supporting sustainable human, economic, and social development. We recognise each country's mana to determine and protect its own kaitiakitanga.	• Principle: learning from doing • Considering sustainability of achievements and outcomes from the Pilot stage of the program • Alignment with partner government ECE and ECD policies
Tātou Tātou: All of us together	Our cooperation will be underpinned by the principles of whanaungatanga and friendship, including honesty, trust, and respect. We will listen and have conversations. We will act with predictability, consistency, and based on the values we share as people of the Pacific. We will harmonise our efforts with others. We will confidently share New Zealand's views and perspectives, being clear about the things we will do and the things we will not do. The strength of friendship allows us to communicate openly even when our views differ.	• The design was co-developed with planned Implementing partners, noting that in some areas of the Pilot, activities needed to be tweaked to meet the changes in the operating context
Arongia ki Rangiātea: Focus towards Excellence	We will actively take an integrated approach across each New Zealand Government agency to recognise the centrality of the Pacific.	Not relevant to the Pilot. The Pilot focused on 'good enough' delivery to ensure the Pilot activities were able to be implemented in the short time frame provided.

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ANNEX 6 – LITERATURE REVIEW ON PACIFIC ECE AND ECD INITAITIVES

This short literature review was undertaken to capture any grey or accessible literature to understand if there are any similar interventions to STP in the three pilot countries (Niue, Samoa and Solomon Islands). The available literature relevant to the Pacific and within the pilot countries was not extensive, though was able to fill in some gaps to understand what is currently being done on the ground in the ECD/early childhood media space in these countries beyond the existing Pilot.

This annex is structured first exploring parental involvement in ECD in the Pacific, the use of traditional storytelling in local language for ECD/ECE interventions and the use of media for children.

Pacific parental involvement in ECD

It was difficult to find information on parental involvement on ECD in Niue, however, there are examples from Samoa and the Solomon Islands.

Samoa

A recent study of parental involvement in ECE in **Samoa** (Tuia et al., 2022) aimed at understanding whether parents' willingness to assist children's movement from the home to the school (via ECE) ensures a smooth transition and provides the best educational results for the child. The study concluded parents' contributions to improved learning are supported in the global literature, and that close collaboration between them and teachers would benefit children's education, including in preschool years (Tuia et al., 2022).

Another second type of parental and caregiver support, noted in the 2022 **Samoa** report (Tuia et al.) - involvement outside the classroom – is reflected in a report on a Solomon Islands early childhood education project (World Vision Australia, 2008). The report highlights unanticipated community engagements, and their value. This included kindys having provided a way for different generations to interact and engage (particularly for mothers), and that older people engaged in imparting local cultural traditions, history and stories, maintaining history and identity through oral tradition and written formats.

The study concludes that parents' contributions to improved learning are supported in the global literature, and that close collaboration between them and teachers would benefit children's education: Fagbeminiyi (2011) explained *'a child's growth and development is nurtured by the overlapping support of parents, family, community, and child learning opportunities, as most effective for successful outcomes'*. Therefore, parents' contributions should be accepted and acknowledged in children's preschool years (World Vision Australia, 2008).

An earlier study on ECD in Samoa (World Vision Australia, 2008) found that parental engagement at home overlaps in terms of influence with attendance at ECE: '*the influence of preschool is strong, [but] it is interactions in the home environment – caregivers reading, telling stories, and naming, counting or drawing to/with their children – that have the strongest relationship with children's development'* (World Vision Australia, 2008).

Solomon Islands

Solomon Islands has made progress in implementing ECD over time. A World Bank SABER report on the status of ECD in the Solomon Islands in 2013 indicated that a system of ECD was at an early stage of establishment: it was rated as latent or emergent only (World Bank, *2021).*

In 2021, the Solomon Islands launched its nation-wide Pre-Primary year. 'Five-year-old children in the Solomon Islands will now have the opportunity to go to school. As part of compulsory basic education, the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, with the support of UNICEF, the Government of New Zealand and the Government of Australia, has created a high-quality Pre-Primary Year for all children before they start primary school' (UNICEF, 2021).

Involvement for parents outside the classroom is reflected in a report on a Solomon Islands early childhood education project (World Vision Australia, 2008). The report highlights unanticipated community engagements, and their value (see box).

Community engagement

One unplanned outcome from the project is that kindys have provided a way for different generations to interact and engage. Interaction with parents, particularly **mothers**, was a fairly predictable outcome, however the focus on the six aspects of child development – physical, social, cognitive, language, emotional and moral – has meant that members from most groups within the community are actively involved one way or another.

Men and older boys have built playground equipment, such as swings, climbing frames and see-saws. Climbing and swinging was previously done in trees, without supervision, and often resulted in injury.

Older people are engaged in imparting local cultural traditions, history and stories, which form an integral part of the kindy project. *This also helps maintain history and identity through the oral tradition and, now, in written form. People regularly comment on the return of story telling and local rhymes that had been forgotten. For communities caught between tradition and modernity it is important that the two are compatible.*

World Vision: ECE A solid Foundation, P.19. (Emphases added)

Culture, traditional storytelling and play-based projects in local language

Culture

A number of researchers address the importance when discussing or working within a country of acknowledgement of and respect for culture which may be different from one's own. An article recording the development of the ECE curriculum in **Solomon Islands** (Kelly et al., 2011) stresses this point several times (including in its title) and at a stakeholders meeting: '*At an ECE stakeholders meeting a number of issues and concerns were raised that related to the proposed diploma content. There was unanimous support for knowledge of the Solomon Islands contexts to occupy a central place in the new diploma. Teachers and officials alike emphasised the need for culturally responsive teacher education*' (Kelly et al., 2011).

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A study exploring the role of ECE (kindergartens) in cultural change in the Kahua region of **Solomon Islands** (Burton et al., 2012) contrasts earlier, western traditions in education with more contextual, culturally sensitive approaches, stating that ECE programs are unlikely to be sustainable unless they account for cultural practices and parental beliefs: *'… due to their incongruence with the cultures and context in which they are being implemented'* (Burton et al, 2012, p.159). While there is a risk of loss of traditional Kahua culture, knowledge and customs, the kindergarten/ ECE was perceived to have a keen role to play in supporting their survival: '…*the kindy was found to hold much potential as cultural reinvigorator in addressing these cultural concerns'* (Burton et al., 2012, p. 165).

A different setting provides information on the value of integrating **Samoan** culture into early childhood education for Samoan children in New Zealand (The Education Hub, 2021). The presentation refers to developing '*Pepe Meamea'* (infants and toddlers) - a framework for Samoan ECE pedagogy supporting Samoan culture and identity.

Pepe Meamea is intended to offer a perspective reflecting Samoan cultural values, while not refuting existing principles and concepts (see box).

Pepe Meamea offers opportunities to think differently about practices that have become taken for granted such as primary caregiving, attachment theory or the image of the child. The concepts and practices within the Pepe Meamea framework will add to teachers' knowledge and practices, enriching their pedagogy and enabling greater engagement with parents and the community.

Understanding diverse cultural practices, knowledge systems and pedagogies will support teachers to ground themselves in their own cultures, to share their own cultural perspectives, and **to empower children with knowledge of their own culture.**

Education Hub Webinar, 2021 (Emphasis added)

Storytelling

Storytelling has a long and respected history in all cultures and settings. A review of Pacific parental engagement and intergenerational storytelling in New Zealand (Cunningham et al., 2022) indicates many identified values of storytelling including:

- Storytelling is a key way that messages and expectations are communicated within families, and can be simultaneously individual, social and cultural.

- Socially the stories we share of our life's experiences are shaped by the stories others tell to us ways in which stories are told will vary across cultures, they are closely connected to the beliefs and values prioritised by a community

- They are a way of sharing lived experiences, exploring personal beliefs and discovering wisdom.

- Narratives facilitate reflection and analysis and make meaning of experience (Cunningham et al., 2022, p. 128).

The study interviewed both Pacific parents and adolescents on the value of storytelling. The adolescents in particular '*expressed value for family practices and cultural knowledge that had been passed on to them from their parents and extended family through shared stories*' (Cunningham et al., 2022, p. 138).

As the study notes, this finding highlights the importance - for non-Pacific teachers - of learning about the cultural perspectives that Pacific children hold, and the collective nature of their academic success, echoing the Samoan studies above.

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Use of media for children

There was limited information in this review to understand existing projects who create child-specific media for ECD outcomes. This section is informed by a handbook comprising a wide-ranging collection of research on ECD. It includes a chapter on media and their possible effects on children and their learning (Britto et al., 2013).

Media of different types – including technological media, phones and books - can be beneficial to young people and children, including for example as socialising agents, story tellers, information providers and entertainment. There are several educational positives associated with appropriate-age-level media output:

- Language development and early literacy can be improved, e.g. through games, stories and songs
- Characters and themes can be inspirational.

On the other hand, if not anticipated and avoided, negative effects may include: stereotyping of characters and gender leading to adverse responses or negative feelings; and violence and fantasy may elicit antisocial attitudes or behaviour.

The important issue for appropriate media use and output for STP will be to take a holistic approach and focus on developmental needs, reflect culture, seek to educate and to build resilience.

Similar projects to STP

From the brief literature review, it is unclear if there are similar projects like STP in the current pilot countries. It is highly probably that there is more literature on storytelling and play-based learning in projects which may have useful insights for STP. A future study is recommended to synthesise the evidence and draw lessons from it for this program.

The only similar project that could be identified from this study was the Pacific Early Age Readiness and Learning (PEARL) Program run by the World Bank in Tonga, Tuvalu and Kiribati. In Tonga a series of surveys on literacy and school readiness revealed parents lacked awareness of the value of ECD, and children were not ready for school (World Bank, 2019).

The Tongan response was a two-part program: Public awareness: 'Read with your child' and Community Play-based Activities (Jarvie, 2019).

A brief summary indicates the high-level support (Crown Princess, MoE) for the Read with your child – 10 Minutes a Day program, and its wide visibility and recall of videos and jingles, use of Tongan language and images, men shown reading with children, use of positive images. Unfortunately, in the **short (8-week) program it did not change parents' behaviour overall – acknowledging that one short burst is not enough, it takes a sustained approach to change behaviour**.

The Community Play-based Activities (CPBA) program was free, flexible and adaptable. It had community support and volunteers, wide coverage, and has shown some **good results in influencing what parents do at home and in children's pre-literacy and pre-numeracy**: parents of CPBA children did more reading to children, sang more songs and named or counted things with children more than non-CPBA children. CPBA children increase pre-literacy and pre-numeracy scores by 24% over normal gains in one year.

ANNEX 7 – VALUE FOR MONEY

Value for money criteria

Below is a list of the criteria agreed by MFAT and PIA to determine VfM for this evaluation:

- The Pilot demonstrated innovation through trying and learning for something new

- The Pilot leveraged resources used for sufficient quality of delivery within the specified time, and considerations of context (multi-country and new approach)

- The Pilot was able to adapt to different contexts (PIA)

- The Pilot ensured sustainability of achievements and outcomes by:

    - Activities were delivered within reasonable cost
    - Implementing partners established skills and relationships to deliver children's media and play beyond the Pilot (and STP)
    - Implementing partners developed transferable skills
    - Implementing partners adopted new/revised tools/skills easily

- There was a high level of engagement and ownership from Implementing partners throughout design and delivery

Below Table 13 shows the descriptions of the ratings to answer the value for money KEQ.

Table 13. Value for Money ranking description

Rating	Description
EXCELLENT ✔	• Strong achievement across the implementation of this principle.
GOOD ✔	• Good achievement in most areas related to the implementation of this principle, but partial achievement in others.
SATISFACTORY ✔	• Achievement mixed related to the implementation of this principle but generally meets minimum expectations. • An area where the program is generally delivering value for money but could do better.
UNSATISFACTORY ⚠	• Poor achievement in the implementation of this principle, with urgent remedial action required in some areas. • An area where the program is clearly failing to deliver value for money.

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ANNEX 8 - PILOTS TO SCALE - BEST PRACTICE

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to outline a process from existing literature about the best way to conduct a pilot with the intention of scaling. This practice note draws on theory and current practices to provide an overview of pilots, including clarifying the process for developing, implementing and learning from pilots, as well as considering the scaling of interventions. The first section describes the innovation process, with the second section capturing key lessons for successfully designing, implementing and scaling pilots.

Section 1: Innovation process

Innovation can broadly be defined as the development of a new idea, method or service. It can be further defined into two forms of innovation: evolutionary and revolutionary innovation.

- **Evolutionary innovation** - adapting new ideas to the existing world and involves incremental improvements, such as the addition of new features to cars

- **Revolutionary innovation** – seeks to adapt the world to new ideas and involves the creation of whole new industries or business models and leads to the decline of others such as the development of digital photography (Fahey, 2013)

Broadly, these forms of innovation follow a phased approach to programming from discovery, definition/ideation and prototyping to piloting and scaling. The process is not linear with learnings from each stage looping back to inform early stages, such as learnings from pilots being used to refine ideas and prototypes and then revised pilots; nevertheless, there are distinct phases with different approaches to implementing, monitoring and evaluating. Figure 3 below provides and overview of the innovation process and are further discussed below.
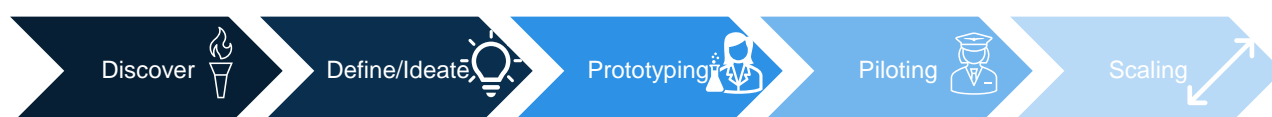

Figure 3. Innovation process stages

Discover

In the discover stage, the program team undertakes research to clarify the specific development constraint that the program seeks to respond to, the constraint's context and the opportunities for positive change. Methods include problem tree analysis, systems/stakeholder mapping, literature reviews, informant interviews, expert advice and rapid ethnography. Participatory approaches are particularly important at this stage, as by engaging with potential beneficiaries and future implementers it is more likely to produce innovations which are supported and are relevant, feasible and sustainable.

Define/ideate

The define stage or better known as the ideation stage is about making sense of the research findings and in particular, prioritising opportunities and developing concrete solutions that can take advantage of these opportunities. Solutions could be assessed against a mix of the following decision-making criteria (Faustino & Booth, 2014):

- To what extent is the solution relevant, not only to potential beneficiaries' needs, but to the partner government? (Relevance)

- To what extent does the solution contribute to the program's goals? (Impact)

- To what extent is there evidence to suggest that the solution is potentially effective? (Effectiveness)

- To what extent does the solution address causes rather than symptoms? Solutions that address the root of constraints are more likely to lead to substantial and sustainable change. (Sustainability)

- To what extent is the solution feasible? Is there the capacity, capability and resources available to not only pilot the solution, but scale it? (Implementation)

- To what extent is the solution potentially able to provide improved value for money including the potential to leverage resources from third parties (e.g. private sector, government)? (Value for money)

- To what extent does the solution consider gender, disadvantaged groups or people with disabilities? (Inclusion)

The extent to which the solution addresses the criteria could be assessed through rubrics. A rubric is a tool for ranking solutions according to a set of defined standards. For example, a rubric for feasibility could set out what high, medium and low feasibility could look like and solutions could be mapped against this rubric.

Prototype

A prototype is an early-stage model that helps to make the intangible aspects of an idea visible so that we can test an idea in action rather than just conceptually. Types of prototyping include paper prototyping, tabletop prototyping, framework prototyping, scenario prototyping, and enacted prototyping (Clear Horizon & The Australian Centre for Social Innovation, 2018).

Prototypes involve multiple, relatively short loops of learning that may last hours, days or weeks. The prototyping loop involves testing an idea and based on that test deciding whether to iterate, reject, pivot the idea in a new direction or proceed to piloting. Prototyping can also pass through several phases with the solution being prototyped using paper to flesh it out and then moving to storyboarding and then finally being tested with a limited number of users. The emphasis throughout this process is to interrogate the prototype's model to assess whether it could potentially drive solutions that the idea is seeking. As pilots do require substantial resources, testing the prototype's model before piloting is essential, as it is far cheaper and simpler to "fail" at this stage than the pilot stage.

While knowing when a prototype is ready is likely to not be clear cut nor without uncertainty, a decision-making framework that incorporates the processes below can provide greater clarity as to when to progress the pilot to the next stage:

- The causal flow of the logic model should be interrogated to determine its plausibility (i.e. there are no miracle leaps between outcomes). Any evidence gathered through M&E of the prototyping,

particularly of any immediate outcomes, should be mapped against the logic to assess its plausibility. This is particularly relevant in the case of enacted or live prototyping where users are engaging with the innovation.

- The program logic should also be tested for 'what could go wrong' by mapping possible risks across the model and assessing their likelihood and consequence. Those risks that are highly likely and pose a serious risk may require the prototype to be revised or dropped.

- The prototype should also be passed through the investment decision-making criteria to ensure that it still addresses the criteria, such as relevance and sustainability, as the prototype may have changed since the ideation stage.

Those prototypes with reasonably robust models and address the decision-making criteria have the potential to be piloted. As noted previously, having a clear set of investment decision making criteria and preferably a rubric for judgement is a useful tool to assess the ideation, prototype and then the link to piloting. While these tend to be principle-based and qualitative, it provides a framework for assessing the prototypes using risk-weighted and performance-weighted criteria. These enable absolute assessments (i.e. assessments of prototypes against each criteria) as well as comparative assessments (i.e. compare prototypes performance with others that seek similar types of changes). The weighted criteria can set benchmarks for:

4. Keeping the prototype development and progressing to the pilot stage,

5. Changing the prototype development through a stage of regression to seek to improve its design, or

6. Dropping the prototype from the program and seeking no further development on the concept.

These benchmarks are required to be tailored to each program.

Pilot

A pilot is a model that it is implemented in a live environment with real people on a small scale in order to gauge its potential to be scaled. It has a clearly defined logic that seeks to demonstrate causation – the hypothesis is that the intervention will make a change to outcomes based on theory and/or practice. Pilots are more fully developed prototypes that have been selected for more in-depth testing and have more clearly defined scope and modalities. At this stage, resourcing requirements increase substantially so pilots are only done on well-developed prototypes that are already pre-tested. With the resources for pilots generally being more substantial, the need for generating lessons is of even greater importance thus requiring well considered evaluative frameworks.

Pilots can be divided into early and late-stage pilots with pilots often transitioning from one stage to another. In the early stage of a pilot, there may be multiple potential pathways of causation and logics being tested, with the emphasis still on learning. Later stage pilots have more stable principles and logic models, often being tested to better understand the potential for scaling.

Scale

Scaling involved expanding a successful pilot beyond its initial context in order to have a broader impact. There are four general categories when considering scaling (Riddell & Moore, 2015, and Cabaj, 2018):

Type of scaling	Description	Main strategies
Scaling out	Expanding the innovation so that it reaches more people.	Expanding programs geographically such as to other schools or districts not involved in the original pilot. This can be done either through direct replication or increasing awareness of the

		innovation so that it is implemented in new locations.
Scaling up	Changing policies and practices so that the innovation becomes codified within institutional structures, and as a result, changes the 'rules of the game'.	Engaging in policy change efforts, such as advocacy or partnering with government partners in policy reform. This could include using the results of a pilot on teacher incentives to advocate for changes in how teachers are paid.
Scaling deep	Changing values, beliefs and identities of people, organisations or communities so that the idea underlying the innovation is embedded.	Undertaking a comprehensive behaviour change program which can include a range of interventions, including awareness raising, capacity building and developing communities of practice.
Ripples	Adapting an innovation or an idea to a different area.	Disseminating principles to other, unrelated areas. This could involve intentionally partnering with other actors to adapt the principles found to be effective within an education pilot into the health sector.

Challenges common to all or several types of scaling include (Waddington, 2012, Hartmann & Lin, 2007, and Jonasova & Cooke, 2012):

- **Different contexts -** The scaling of an innovation will inevitably lead to it being implemented in different contexts. This raises potential challenges, such as the conditions that contributed to the success of the pilot may not be present in the contexts in which the pilot is being scaled or the methods used in one context may not be appropriate in another. Context not only includes the geographical or social context, but the organisational context. Innovations are often piloted in more participatory approaches and then implemented by agencies who can have a more administrative culture. Understanding the contexts in which the solution is piloted and to be scaled and how these contexts affect the efficacy of the solution need to be identified and used to identify where it is most appropriate to scale the solution or how the solution could be adapted.

- **Opposition -** There may be opposition to the innovation being scaled, such as staff who must change to their practices or interest groups whose may be losing access to resources. Using such approaches such as political economy analysis or change management strategies, potential sources of opposition could be identified and strategies developed to co-opt these challengers or at least, mitigate their influence where possible (see point below regarding leadership).

- **Lack of leadership -** While the program team might be the key driving force in the pilot, the scaling process will likely need to be driven by other actors, particularly those external to the program team such as government actors. If there is no leadership, it becomes difficult to overcome opposition as well as prevent fragmentation. Key champions whether individuals or organisation should be identified to lead the scaling process and preferably engaged during the piloting stage to build their buy-in.

- **Weak capacity and capability -** Capacity (resources and time) and capability (skills) to expand the pilot, such as to other districts or nationally, may be weak. Scaling needs to take into consideration how capacity and capability will be strengthened to adopt the pilot.

- **Implementation at scale -** During the pilot stage, program teams may carefully train and monitor their staff/partners to ensure that the pilot is implemented appropriately. At scale, the program management may differ and the ability to train and monitor will likely have a significant influence on outcomes. How implementers will be trained and monitored should be clearly set out and as above, capacity to do so should be built. In cases where the pilot requires intensive monitoring of

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implementers which may not be possible when scaled up at the national level, the pilot may not be feasible or only elements of the pilot may be suitable.

Section 2: Key lessons for piloting and scaling

Lessons for designing and implementing pilots

Clear decision-framework

For an intervention to progress to the next stage, there needs to be a clear decision framework around its absolute and relative value. A set of decision-making criteria, as well as a program logic and performance standards such as milestones, targets (stretch or hurdle) and rubrics can be used as the basis of the framework. This framework can then be used to consider these four options at each intersection:

- Keep the intervention as is;
- Change the hypothesis and the intervention based on new data;
- Drop the intervention as it is not demonstrating value; or
- Add a new intervention to be considered.

Whether an intervention should progress should be informed by potential beneficiaries and future implementers and not solely the program team. Such a framework is critical throughout the process, but it is particularly important for decision making between the ideation, prototype and piloting stages. Not all solutions should be piloted. As pilots require substantial resources, only the most feasible solutions should proceed to piloting.

Clearly defined model

Pilots should have clear hypotheses that they are aiming to test and prove. This can be developed through a program logic which articulates the outcomes that a pilot seeks to achieve. The program logic not only enables the program team and funders to determine whether a pilot has been effective, but provides the outlines of a model that can be scaled. However, often what makes a pilot work may be intangible, such as how to form relationships with key stakeholders or how to adapt to changing circumstances. Codifying the model's tacit knowledge is particularly important if the model is to be scaled to new sites or if the model is to be implemented by other organisations (Management Systems International, 2012).

Plan for learning and adaptation

More programs are referring to 'Problem Driven Iterative Approaches' or some form of learning and adaptation in the program theory. These rely on good quality monitoring and evaluation to know when things are working well or not. It is important that program managers continue to consider whether interventions should be kept, dropped, changed, or added. This is particularly important in the ideation and prototyping stages, when adaptation is expected to be greatest; and when going into pilots when learning and impact evaluation should be the focus.

Plan for scaling

The intervention should have a plan, if not multiple plans, for how it may be scaled in the future. Without the political buy in or the economic backing, it may not be worthwhile to pilot an intervention. A successful hypothesis does not guarantee the intervention will be implemented. Therefore, don't wait to

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plan for scaling once the pilot is successful, plan for scaling during the design of the pilot. Any plan/s should:

- **Define the pilot's strategic intent**. Where possible, this should be developed jointly with partner governments. This then increases ownership and facilitates mutual accountability.

- **Consider the type and extent of scale that the pilot could achieve**, such as how many districts the pilot could be replicated in.

- **Include a timeframe for scaling**. The timeframe will depend both on the complexity of the innovation and the context in which it is being piloted.

- **Consider the sequencing of scaling in any timeframe** as scaling is often an ongoing process and not a single action. For example, a pilot may be scaled up from the village to the district level. If the pilot continues to show promise, it could be scaled across multiple districts, then to province level and so on. This could be reflected in a scaling road-map outlining each the timeframe for each stage of scaling.

- **Specify as far as possible who will fund and manage both the scaling up process but also implementation at scale**. For successful scaling, governance arrangements should be clearly set out, and in particular, how and when responsibility of the program is to be transferred to the government. Funding and human resources should be set aside or explicitly accessible for scaling.

- **Identify key enablers and barriers to scaling**. Identifying barriers such as the lack of capacity among partners or necessary infrastructure and how these barriers will be overcome is essential to successfully scaling. This analysis should also consider the political environment including potential supporters, as well as any political constraints and how these can be mitigated as far as possible.

- **Outline the approach to multi-stakeholder collaboration**. Scaling up (i.e. policy change) requires collaboration among a range of stakeholders at various levels (local, provincial and national) and from different sectors (government, non-governmental and private sector) (Fargher & Kelly, 2012).

Lessons for scaling pilots

Ensure that the model is cost-effective

Models must be designed for volume and efficiency if they are to be successfully scaled. If the most effective components of a pilot are extremely resource intensive, it is likely to be a poor candidate for scaling. Per unit costs should be reduced where possible to better ensure scalability (Brown, 2005).

Keep it simple

Refine the pilot as much as possible without losing what is essential for it to be effective. While increasing the complexity of the model may appear to be necessary as it is scaled, this should be avoided where possible. Increased complexity will make the scaling process more difficult and may lead to resistance among partners, particularly government partners, who have to implement the model (Cooley & Linn, 2014, and Management Systems International, 2012).

Context matters

The context in which a pilot is implemented may be different to the context it is replicated (i.e. local vs national or from one group to a larger group). This should be used to adapt the scaling of the model to ensure that it is replicated in similar contexts or elements of the model are adapted to fit different contexts (Appadurai et al., 2015).

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Scaling takes time

The successful scaling up of programs to national scale can take ten to fifteen years, or longer. This emphasises the need for securing and maintaining commitment and resources from policy makers and donors and outlining a strategy for maintaining progress throughout this period (Cooley & Linn, 2014, Management Systems International, 2012).

Be learning oriented

Learning is particularly important when scaling pilots, as there are likely to be challenges and issues that may arise throughout implementation. Capturing and reflecting on these learnings enables the scaling process to be adapted and thus more likely to be successful.

ANNEX 9 – SUGGESTED REVISED TOC HIERARCHY

Table 14. Suggested revised ToC hierarchy

Name on ToC hierarchy	Description
Goal	Same as the goal on the existing ToC, the long-term impact that the project expects to **contribute** towards. Other factors and programs will likely also affect change at this level.
End of program outcomes	Same as the long-term outcomes on the existing ToC, the specific outcomes that the program expects to significantly impact at the end of the program.
Intermediate outcomes	Combining the short- and medium-term outcomes on the current ToC, the specific outcomes the program expects to impact, utilising the if/then approach (i.e. if x happens, then y will happen).
Activity areas	High-level areas that the program is currently working on, replacing the existing influence activities. Suggestions of this could include 'Traditional Storytelling through media' and 'ECD initiatives for parents'.
Principles	Same as the principles in the existing ToC, the ways of working that underpin all the activities and outcomes of the program.

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