



Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture  
REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA  
2017

DEVELOPMENT OF A COMPREHENSIVE HUMAN RESOURCES  
DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY  
FOR THE NAMIBIAN BASIC EDUCATION SECTOR

**BACKGROUND REPORT**

# **Incorporating Early Childhood Development (ECD) into the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture**



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**Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture**  
GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

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# Contents

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Acknowledgements .....	ii
Foreword .....	iii
<b>Creating a home for ECD in the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture .....</b>	<b>1</b>
The challenge of ECD .....	1
Placing ECD services within the MoEAC whilst maintaining the multi-dimensional nature of ECD .....	2
<b>Creating an ECD Directorate in the Ministry .....</b>	<b>3</b>
The need for a separate ECD Directorate .....	3
Functions of the ECD Directorate .....	4
<b>Quality of ECD Services .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Registration and monitoring of ECD centres: Regional capacity .....	4
Training ECD caregivers .....	5
<b>Funding ECD Centres .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Summary and Human Resource Implications for the MoEAC .....</b>	<b>7</b>
Bibliography .....	8

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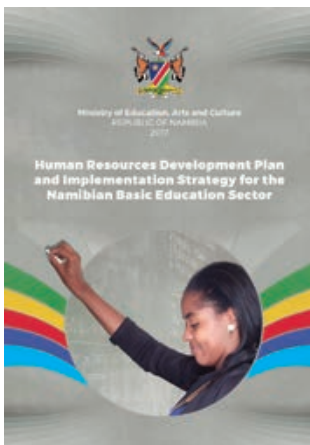
# Acknowledgements

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This project required considerable inputs from a wide range of people and institutions. The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture thanks all of the Ministry officials and stakeholders at national and regional level who shared their insights and data for the development of the HRDP.

Finally, we thank our partner, UNICEF, for the support that made this vital project possible. UNICEF's input and guidance towards inclusive, equitable and quality education for all children in Namibia, particularly the most vulnerable, are always greatly appreciated.



## DEVELOPMENT OF A COMPREHENSIVE HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY FOR THE NAMIBIAN BASIC EDUCATION SECTOR

### SET OF FIVE REPORTS

MAIN REPORT

*Human Resources Development Plan and Implementation Strategy*

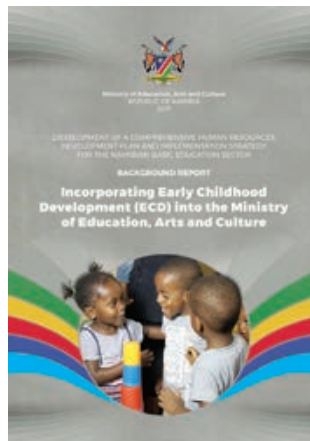
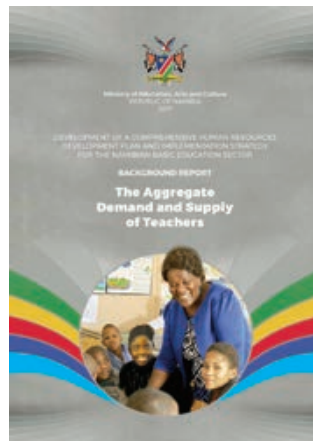
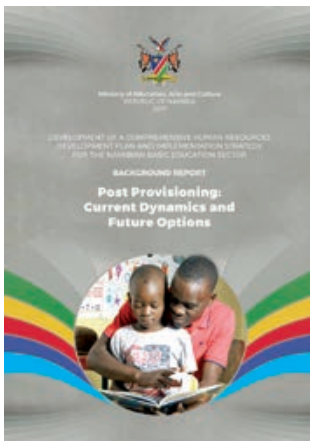
BACKGROUND REPORTS

*The Aggregate Supply and Demand of Teachers*

*Post Provisioning: Current Dynamics and Future Options*

*Incorporating Early Childhood Development (ECD) into the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture*

*Fieldwork Findings: Understanding Human Resources Development in Practice in 7 Regions*



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# Foreword

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This report is one of the four background reports identified on the previous page.  
The Minister's Foreword in the main report is repeated here for the sake of comprehensiveness.

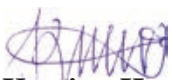
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**E**nrolment rates in Namibian schools have progressively increased since Independence in 1990. The introduction of Universal Primary Education in 2013 and Universal Secondary Education in 2016 has further increased the accessibility of education. The growing demand for schooling in turn creates a need for sufficient teachers in terms of both numbers and specialised training. The report points to the need for teachers who are committed and able to be deployed to the country's most remote areas. In the project reported on, there is a strong emphasis on *post provisioning*, meaning the system whereby teachers and other staff are distributed across public schools. The report presents an analysis of this issue, and offers solutions to the current problems.

There remains, however, a concern about the number of teachers being trained in national tertiary institutions, and the specialisations that they are currently undertaking. Also, research points to poor learning outcomes in both primary and secondary education. Learner performance in the sciences and English language remains poor across both of these levels. For example, only 28% of those who took the Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations (NSSCO) in 2016 received a D grade or higher in English, and only 45% received a D or higher in Mathematics. This poses a serious challenge for creating a new generation of well-qualified teachers, especially when it comes to training higher-level Maths, English and Science teachers.

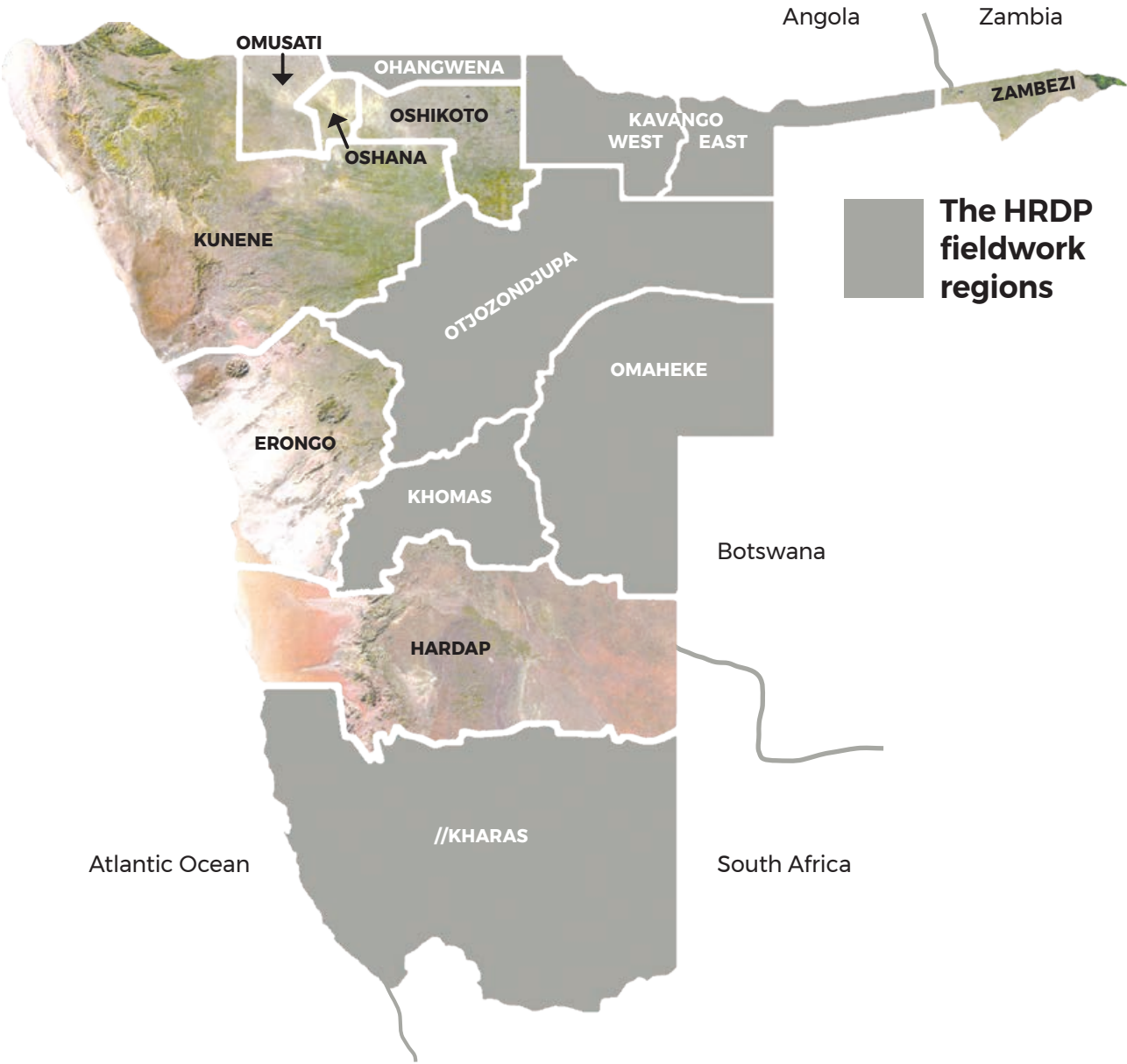
The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture requested technical and financial assistance from UNICEF for a comprehensive study of need, supply and demand in respect of human resources in the basic education sector. Research on Socio-Economic Policy (ReSEP), a research group attached to the Department of Economics at the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa, undertook the study to develop a *Comprehensive Human Resources Development Plan and Implementation Strategy for the Namibian Basic Education Sector*. This project entailed field research in six of Namibia's regions (//Kharas, Khomas, Otjozondjupa, Ohangwena, Kavango and Omaheke), for the purpose of analysing trends in education, current outputs of the tertiary institutions, and the post-provisioning, training and recruitment processes. This report conveys the findings, and provides insight on the enrolment trends, current teacher numbers and attrition rates, and demand and supply in the future. It also examines post-provisioning and recruitment policies, and provides clear recommendations and a comprehensive implementation plan.

It is clear that Namibia faces a dramatic skills shortage in the basic education sector, and that multi-sectoral collaboration is needed to address the shortfall. A collaborative task force has been appointed to address the issues raised in this valuable report. I call on all stakeholders in education to support the Government in addressing the recommendations made in the report.



**Katrina Hanse-Himarwa, MP**  
Minister of Education, Arts and Culture

# Namibia's 14 Regions



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# Creating a home for ECD in the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture

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## The challenge of ECD

Despite improvements in recent years, one in every 20 children in Namibia die before their fifth birthday – the under-5 mortality rate is 54 deaths per 1000 children born, and the infant mortality rate (death within the first year) is 39 per 1000 live births (Ministry of Health and Social Services & ICF International 2013: 88). Those surviving are often affected by poor health and poor nutrition. Almost one-quarter (24%) of children under 5 are stunted, i.e. short for their age, and 8% are severely stunted, as a result of chronic under-nutrition or poor health, according to data from the 2013 Demographic and Health Survey (Ministry of Health and Social Services & ICF International 2014: 131). Stunting also has permanent consequences for children's cognitive development. It is against this background that the failure to provide good ECD services can have devastating consequences for the education of many of Namibia's children, as the Fourth National Development Plan (NDP4) acknowledges:

*“The challenges relating to the quality of education start with the limited access to early childhood development (ECD) services. ECD refers to the growth and change that take place from preconception until the age of 6. In these early years, the most critical neurological development takes place, with the most significant brain growth occurring in the first three years of life. As at 2012, there are no Government-owned ECD centres in the country. There are no legal regulations for ECD centres; there are few qualified teachers/educarers trained in ECD; and there is a severe undervaluation of ECD-trained individuals – leading to underpayment and limited incentive to work in this field. ECD is generally under-valued and often misunderstood. Moreover, investment in ECD is low – although the potential returns of quality ECD have been shown to be very high.” (NDP4, 2012: 46-7)*

## **Placing ECD services within the MoEAC whilst maintaining the multi-dimensional nature of ECD**

The Namibian Government has committed itself to Early Childhood Development (ECD) as a key route to the development of the potential of its children, youth and workforce, therefore ECD plays a central role in NDP4. Further, a decision has been taken based on the NDP4 recommendation whereby responsibility for ECD centres, an important part of the ECD services currently offered, would be transferred to the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC). Along with this, some other ECD functions or programmes (e.g. oversight over community play groups, community mothers’ programmes, parental education and outreach programmes regarding ECD, etc.) would become the MoEAC’s responsibility. This has major implications for human resource needs in the MoEAC, as a growing ECD sector would require proper staffing to ensure that this sector’s envisaged rapid expansion is well managed and that the ECD services flourish.

ECD usually refers to the development of children up to 8 years of age, therefore it encompasses different stages in the development of the child, and different needs that have to be addressed by different institutional structures.

*“A number of inputs are needed to promote and protect the development of young children. These include a healthy and safe pregnancy and birth, health care, good nutrition, loving care, a stable family, and opportunities to learn and exercise new skills. This means that multi-sectoral services are needed that address each of these aspects of children’s early development.” (Richter et al. 2014: 37)*

Between birth and age 6, there is typically progression in the time spent away from the household, which initially dominates, to ECD centres and subsequently schools. In this process, services of various kinds must be provided to households and the community, ECD centres, and pre-primary education. Reaching children in all of these places is essential in a successful ECD strategy. Such a strategy must consider, for instance, the nutritional and child development information that parents need, thus requiring extension services and media campaigns; health services for infants and young children; financial support in the form of grants; child protection services to deal with abuse or neglect; and the cognitive, physical, emotional and social development of children. ECD centres become especially important at the age of 3 to 4. In these centres, nutrition, physical and emotional care, and the cognitive and social development of children all need to be addressed for a large part of the child’s day, though the household still continues to play a vital role. The shift to largely school-based pre-primary education at age 5 or 6 implies



a further growing emphasis on cognitive development, again without neglecting other factors. But health and welfare services as well as social grants for very poor parents continue throughout the ECD stage and beyond.

In these circumstances, ECD centres provide a particular form of ECD intervention that can never be seen on its own, but which becomes the main vehicle through which children of about age 3 or 4 are reached. This is one part of the ECD function that will become the responsibility of the MoEAC, but the need for **integrated service provision for ECD** also requires careful planning and integration of services between the different role players, and that the MoEAC takes responsibility for ensuring this.



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# Creating an ECD Directorate in the Ministry

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## The need for a separate ECD Directorate

Incorporating responsibility for ECD centres into the MoEAC (pre-primary is already this Ministry's responsibility) would require creating a separate directorate within the MoEAC, with responsibility for ECD centres and linking closely with the provision of pre-primary education in schools. A case can also be made for placing Pre-Primary education and ECD centres in a single structure. However, the danger then exists that school needs would dominate and not enough specific attention would be given to ECD. Clearly, monitoring pre-primary education in schools is similar to monitoring of other school functions, whereas monitoring of ECD centres, for instance, is quite different. Also, whilst Pre-Primary funding is closely integrated with that of school education, the same should not apply for ECD centres and programmes. ECD is a specialised function, and it is desirable that this Directorate be staffed largely with specialists trained in ECD. To the extent that this is not always possible, staff may in some cases be drawn from the Pre-Primary and Lower Primary levels, which are closest to ECD in terms of understanding the special needs of young children.

## Functions of the ECD Directorate

Against the framework of the Namibian Government's commitments to ECD and to the rights of children, the MoEAC Directorate for ECD would have to take responsibility not only for the ECD centres, but also for promoting children's rights to care, education, protection and development; ensuring implementation of national ECD policy; developing and promoting equitable access to quality ECD programmes and services, including improving quality of existing services; and developing the legal, institutional and subsidy framework for ECD provision and the registration of ECD centres.

Such a directorate would have to liaise closely with other ministries involved in ECD in various ways, such as the Ministry of Health and Social Services and the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare. ECD services have to be integrated across different ministries, as no one ministry can take responsibility for all the diverse needs of children.

Similarly, the ECD Directorate should have close links with staff responsible for pre-primary education, which is closely linked to ECD and will benefit much from good-quality ECD centres.

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## Quality of ECD Services

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When ECD services are introduced in a country where a large part of the population is not literate, where the role of ECD is not yet clear and where trained staff are still in short supply, there is a danger that such ECD services will initially be of poor quality. Once this has become the norm, it is difficult to turn this around and it usually takes many years to improve quality substantially. Thus it is important to pay much attention to ensuring quality ECD services from early on, rather than placing most emphasis on expanding services rapidly. For instance, once parents and communities expect ECD centres simply to provide child care for working parents and perhaps also subsidised food for children, there is a danger that this norm will become entrenched. Therefore particular attention needs to be paid to ensuring that ECD centres offer *quality* child development services. This has important implications for the process of registration and monitoring of the functioning of these centres, and creating capacity for child development.

### **Registration and monitoring of ECD centres: Regional capacity**

Proper attention must be given to registration and functioning of ECD centres. It is of crucial importance that these centres offer good nutrition, considering the poor state of nutrition amongst large proportions of Namibia's population. Subsidy programmes should allow for this, but to ensure that the subsidies are converted into adequate and nutritional food being provided to children in ECD centres, regular monitoring is needed. This requires adequate and well-trained

staff falling under the ECD Directorate in all regions, with appropriate mechanisms to ensure coordination between national and regional levels as regional devolution proceeds. Dedicated and trained regional staff are required for these functions, particularly in light of the fact that there are so many ECD centres to be monitored, and the number is expected to grow rapidly as ECD provision improves. In 2012, a survey of 2070 ECD centres was undertaken, of which over 1700 were formally registered.<sup>1</sup> The difficulty of monitoring ECD centres is put in perspective when it is considered that there are only 1733 schools in Namibia – fewer than the 2070 ECD centres surveyed in 2012. Moreover, the ECD sector still has to expand considerably: The 61 000 children enrolled is a small proportion of children who should receive these services. Currently, even amongst those aged 4 and 5, where coverage is highest, only one-quarter of children are covered. Thus it is likely that the number of centres will still grow substantially in the coming few years, with implications for the staff required to manage and monitor this sector. Moreover, closer monitoring of such centres is required, given the importance of ensuring good nutrition, physical care and child development that is needed, and the difficulty of monitoring this in small community-based centres relative to monitoring schools.

## Training ECD caregivers

Training of ECD caregivers is another aspect that requires great attention. ECD centres must be more than simply places that provide only the most basic physical care; they must actively stimulate children's physical, emotional, social and cognitive development. This is essential for children's development to their full potential, and the proper functioning of ECD centres would also provide a much better foundation for cognitive development in the Lower Primary phase at schools.

Once the Directorate has been established, it would have to investigate the best means of taking training forward. Currently training for ECD caregivers is largely provided by the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL), which provides (NAMCOL 2013: 4-5):

- ▶ an 18-month Certificate in Early Childhood Development (CECD) with the aim “... *to provide learners with an opportunity to gain training in early childhood development, so that all children at pre-school level in Namibia have access to well-trained staff who offer suitable and appropriate services at ECD centres*”, and
- ▶ a 3-year Diploma in Early Childhood and Pre-Primary Education (DECPPE), “... *to address the critical shortage in early childhood educators and pre-primary teachers, who should lay a solid foundation for lower primary learning*”.

This training is insufficient in terms of coverage – in 2012 it was established that just over one-third of ECD centres had staff who had not received any ECD training – thus training opportunities would have to be expanded. NAMCOL appears to have such capacity to expand – enrolment in the CECD programme increased strongly to 605 in 2013 from 380 the previous year, whilst the DECPPE, a new programme, attracted 149 students in 2013 (NAMCOL 2013: 12). However, it is essential to undertake an evaluation of the quality and appropriateness of the NAMCOL training for ECD, especially the practical component of the training needs of ECD carers.

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the non-registered centres may have been missed by the survey, though because receiving government subsidies depends on registration, it is likely that most centres are registered. But registration itself is not well regulated or controlled. The new Child Care and Protection Act does legislate for the first time for such registration and inspection.

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# Funding ECD Centres

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The funding of ECD and ECD centres would need careful attention in coming years. As the Namibian Government has made clear that it attaches great importance to ECD for developing the potential of its population and creating a society that is more equitable and can sustain a modern economy, it is essential to set aside the human, physical and financial resources required to make this possible. The planned expansion of ECD would require substantial additional resources. It is also necessary to consider higher levels of subsidisation per child of ECD centres. Furthermore, monitoring ECD centres and planning the development of the sector would require growing resources. This must not occur at the expense of funding school education. Thus it would be in the interests of transparency and would assist with budgeting if the funding that the MoEAC needs for its new ECD Directorate be specified separately in the budget. Expansion of this budget should be justified separately to the Ministry of Finance in the annual budgetary process. It would be in no-one's interest if the expansion of ECD takes place to the detriment of spending on school education, as this would create a situation where the intended synergies between ECD and school education are not generated by placing ECD in the MoEAC; rather, there would then be a danger that it becomes a zero-sum game with the MoEAC begrudging the ECD Directorate any additional funding. Thus it would be best to have ECD as a separate item in the budget, and to separate it as far as possible within the budgetary structure from spending on school education.





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# Summary and Human Resource Implications for the MoEAC

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The moving of several ECD responsibilities from the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare to the MoEAC is indicative of the greater attention that the MoEAC is expected to devote to what happens before children enter formal schooling. One of the strategic initiatives for the education sector expressed in NDP4 is: *“Create more opportunities for early childhood development, especially in poorest sections of society”*.

The new responsibilities for the MoEAC would require the following:

- ▶ Creation of a new ECD Directorate, which needs to be well staffed with dedicated and specialist staff. From the foregoing, it is clear that such staff would have to include:
  - people responsible for policy and liaison across sectors, to deal with the multi-dimensional nature of ECD and to put in place an ECD policy that goes beyond simply what takes place in ECD centres; and
  - people responsible for monitoring implementation and the functioning of ECD centres.
- ▶ Dedicated ECD staff at regional level, responsible for monitoring the functioning of ECD centres and the practical implementation of ECD policy as it evolves at the national level. It is important that such staff be specialists who can ensure that services provided at ECD centres are of a good quality.
- ▶ A funding and budgetary dispensation that ensures that the growth of ECD within MoEAC does not crowd out other MoEAC functions.

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