unicef | for every child

TERMS OF REFERENCE

International Consultant – Technical support to develop the National ECD Policies in Tonga and Palau and ECEC/ childcare system in Fiji.

CONTRACT MODALITY	Individual Consultancy
DUTY STATION	UNICEF Pacific Islands, Suva Fiji & Remote/home Based (With Possible Travel)
DURATION OF CONTRACT	**9 Months**

Purpose of Assignment

As custodian to the Pasifika Call to Action, the Pacific Regional Council for Early Childhood Development (PRC4ECD) unites Ministers and Permanent Secretaries from education, health, finance, and social welfare in 15 PICTs (Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tokelau, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu), and encourages countries to tailor the Call to Action to their specific contexts, and to drive collaboration among leaders, policymakers, and program implementers to address gaps in health, nutrition, protection, care, learning and stimulation that affect the development of young children across the region. These efforts align with broader regional priorities, such as the 2050 Blue Pacific Strategy, the Pacific Culture Strategy, and sectoral goals set by Pacific Ministers of Education, Health, and Women. Together, these frameworks also underscore the importance of parenting engagement as a central element in the holistic development of young children. Since 2017, The Pacific region has made important progress in strengthening national and regional ECD systems, including through the Pasifika Call to Action on ECD, national ECD policies, multisectoral coordination mechanisms, workforce development, monitoring systems, and support for parents and communities. In 2025, the Pacific ECD Forum Leaders have strengthened the regional mandate for Early Childhood Development by endorsing ECD as a standing agenda item within the People Centred Development thematic area of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. More recently, the PIF Women Leaders Meeting endorsed the importance of ECD as a cross-sectoral priority linked to gender equality, social inclusion, resilience, child wellbeing, and long-term human development. UNICEF supports governments by facilitating dialogues and coordinated action, providing technical support, and convening stakeholders in consultative and participatory sessions on ECD, including the coordination and integration of efforts across multiple sectors within ECD, as well as with cross-cutting concerns such as climate change. UNICEF is supporting PICTs in translating the momentum gained from the PRC4ECD commitments to concrete advances on ECD. At the national level, the focus is on improving the environment enabling ECD, specifically on multi-sectoral coordination within a clearly defined ECD system. Therefore, UNICEF is looking for a consultant to support the governments of Tonga and Palau to develop their National ECD Policies, building on the previous work that both countries has been advancing in this area. As the second stream of work, the consultant will also support the governments of Fiji, to assess the status and produce recommendations and suggested services on the way to build the ECEC/ childcare system for children aged 0-3/4.

Scope of Work

The purpose of this consultancy is two-fold,

• to provide technical assistance to the governments of Tonga and Palau to develop their National ECD Policies (Stream 1),

• and 2) to provide technical assistance to the government of Fiji in the development of their ECEC/childcare

system with country-specific recommendations (Stream 2)
The consultancy will build on existing frameworks/tools/approaches Ito the maximum extent possible, adapting for context and relevance as required. The consultancy will involve engagement with the critical sectors in ECD and ECEC/childcare, including but not limited to health and nutrition, education, child protection, social protection, climate and WASH, and will consider cross-sectoral issues of inclusion, gender, climate resilience and others. To fulfil the consultancy within the allocated period, it is necessary to complete aspects of the work simultaneously across Tonga, Palau and Fiji. The consultant is expected to be guided by the Pacific values and Pacific regional frameworks in co-constructing the overall approach and design of technical support in each country. The different country contexts have broad activities outlined below, however the final workplan will be determined after closer consultations with the partner governments and UNICEF. An inception report is required for each country at the initial phase of the consultancy to outline the approach, methodologies, activities and workplan to be discussed with and agreed upon with UNICEF and each of these partner countries. Consultant are expected to use participatory and consultative processes with partner governments and other key stakeholders (CSO, NGO, development partners, community leaders, etc.), with a view to support government driven ECD improvements that are fit to context, relevant and sustainable.

Methodology: The detailed methodology will be developed during the inception phase and confirmed with UNICEF and each government. It is expected that the methodology will include:
• a structured desk review of relevant regional and national documents, datasets, policies, frameworks and reports;
• identification of priority indicators and evidence domains for the report;
• consolidation of quantitative and qualitative evidence from available regional and national sources; • targeted consultations with relevant technical partners, regional agencies, sector specialists and selected national representatives;
• validation of findings with UNICEF, governments and relevant partners;
• preparation of a final report, executive summary, updated country-level profiles and presentation materials suitable for national governance discussions. The methodology should be practical, culturally grounded, policy-focused and proportionate to the available time and data. It should clearly identify limitations in the evidence base, including gaps in data quality, coverage, comparability and timeliness.

Expected Outcomes: The expected outcomes of the consultancy are:
• Inception report for each country: Tonga, Palau and Fiji;
• Mapping and assessment of ECD and ECEC/Childcare services for each of the countries;
• Support the set-up and strengthening of ECD coordination mechanism, including TOR and other formal guiding documents for each of the countries:
• Support to the development of ECD / ECEC/Childcare policy instruments, e.g. the ECD policy, ECD National, ECEC/Childcare Framework, Action Plan for each of the countries;
• Support to the development of an M&E framework across sectors on ECD;
• Report detailing the process, achievements and lessons learned in each country, and recommendations on ways forward for each country and for similar work elsewhere in the Pacific.

Work Assignments Overview	**Deliverables/Outputs**	**Delivery deadline to complete the deliverable**
Short Inception reports with methodology that will be used for each country: Tonga, Palau, Fiji	**Deliverable 1** Inception report for each country	15 of December 2026

Mapping and assessment of ECD / Childcare for each of the countries	**Deliverable 2** Mapping and assessment for each country and development of reports with recommendations	15th of February 2027
Support the set-up and strengthening of ECD coordination mechanism or thematic working groups, including TOR and other formal guiding documents for each of the countries	**Deliverable 3** TORs and key guiding documents for each country	30th of March 2027
Support to the development of ECD / Childcare policy instruments, e.g. the ECD policy, ECEC/Childcare Framework, Action Plan for each of the countries	**Deliverable 4** Progress report on the 2 ECD National Policies; 1 ECEC/Childcare draft report detailing best approaches and strategies.	15th of May 2027
Support to the development of an M&E framework, with clear targets and indicators across sectors on ECD	**Deliverable 5** 2 ECD M&E frameworks; 1 ECEC/Childcare final report	31st of July 2027
Synthesis reports detailing the process, achievements and lessons learned in each country, and recommendations on ways forward for each country and for similar work elsewhere in the Pacific, and short Executive Summaries for external audience	**Deliverable 6** Reports, Executive Summaries and Power Point presentations with notes	15th of August 2027

Payment Schedule:

Payment will be made on submission and acceptance of deliverables. UNICEF reserves the right to withhold payment in case the deliverables submitted are not up to the required standard or in case of delays in submitting the deliverables on the part of the consultant.

Important Notes

- Individuals engaged under a consultancy or individual contract will not be considered "staff members" under the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations and UNICEF's policies and procedures and will not be entitled to benefits provided therein (such as leave entitlements and medical insurance coverage). Their conditions of service will be governed by their contract and the General Conditions of Contracts for the Services of Consultants and Individual Contractors. Consultants and individual contractors are responsible for determining their tax liabilities and for the payment of any taxes and/or duties, in accordance with local or other applicable laws.
- Contracts are conditional upon the selected candidate's willingness to comply with any current or future vaccination requirements that may be established by UNICEF, where applicable. Failure to comply with applicable vaccination requirements, where required and without an approved medical exemption by UNICEF, may result in the withdrawal of the consultancy offer or termination of the contract in accordance with the General Terms and Conditions of Contract.
- UNICEF offers reasonable accommodation for consultants with disabilities. This may include, for example, accessible software, travel assistance for missions or personal attendants. We encourage you to disclose your disability during your application in case you need reasonable accommodation during the selection process and afterwards in your assignment.

QUALIFICATIONS / SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE / EXPERIENCE/ COMPETENCIES (CORE/TECHNICAL/FUNCTIONAL) / LANGUAGE SKILLS REQUIRED FOR THE ASSIGNMENT

- **Minimum requirements:**
- **Education**: Master in early childhood development, early childhood education, education policy and planning, public health, economics of education, or a closely related social science discipline
- **Work Experience**: A minimum of twelve (12) years of progressively responsible professional experience in early childhood development, early childhood education and care, of which at least five (5) years in professional experience in programme planning, management, and research within the field of early childhood development.

  Demonstrated professional experience in Pacific Island Countries, including direct technical work with Pacific ministries and governments.

  Demonstrated experience developing ECD plans and costed implementation plans and providing direct technical assistance to ministries from different sectors, including policy implementation.

  Demonstrated experience bringing analytical publications to print-ready standard in collaboration with designers and copy editors.

  Understanding of formal and non-formal ECEC provisions is preferred and issues pertaining to licencing, regulation, quality assurance

  Relevant experience in a UN system agency or organization is considered as an asset

- **Skills:** Demonstrated ability to translate systems analysis into ministerial-level policy recommendations and advocacy products.

  Excellent analytical writing in English, with the ability to write for both technical and ministerial audiences. Proven ability to work remotely across Pacific time zones, to engage government counterparts respectfully and effectively, and to deliver to firm deadlines within a regionally governed process.

- **Language Requirements:** Fluency in written and spoken English is required.
- **Desirables:** Work experience in other small island developing states of comparable scale and geographic dispersion. Familiarity with the Pacific Regional Council for Early Childhood Development (PRC4ECD) and with the Conference of Pacific Education Ministers process.

  Experience facilitating multi-country validation and capacity building processes