

Tuvalu

State of Playgroups Report

2021

"Dream. That our children, look forward to the future"



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Summary

This is the inaugural State of Playgroups report for Tuvalu. Playgroups are a key mechanism in the early childhood systems for supporting childrens development, by engaging participating families, who, through the provision of resources, and modelling from Playgroup Facilitators, parents/caregivers can develop knowledge and skills to improve the home learning environment and thus improve their children's early learning and development outcomes.

From a policy perspective, Tuvalu are tracking in a positive direction with a National Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum Framework, underpinned, and supported by the Tuvaluan Early Learning Development Standards and a Resource book created for children from birth to five years old.

Tuvalu currently has 18 Early Childhood Centres, all of which deliver preschool, and Playgroup programs. While preschool is focused on children from ages 3 – 5, Playgroup offers an opportunity to engage children from birth, right through to five years old, their parents/caregivers and the whole community in the importance of the early years.

This report provides a point in time reflection on the number of playgroups and number of parents/caregivers attending and other relevant data to the playgroup experience in Tuvalu. Limitations include the absence of an ongoing system to report enrolment and attendance data. The data presented in the first part of this report is on the basis of reports provided by each of the ECCE Centres.

Training delivered in December 2021 sought to address the gap in recording attendance data for Playgroups, and provide clarity for all ECCE teachers on the difference between Playgroup and Preschool. An introductory Playgroup Manual was developed, provided as a resource to all centres, and included as part of the training. This State of the Playgroup Report includes a summary of the training delivered, and outcomes achieved with a set of recommendations based on feedback and observations from the training.

When governments invest in the Early Years, they ultimately improve the quality of life of all citizens across the lifespan.

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State of Playgroups: What we know

Data presented below is based on 16 of 18 Centres. Ensuring families have access to, and participate in Playgroups on weekly basis, improves child development outcomes, and provides opportunity for improving parenting capability. Currently, 8 ECCE Centres deliver one session per week, and 8 ECCE centres deliver two sessions per week. The availability of Playgroups in Tuvalu is a strength in the Early Childhood System, ensuring children will be thriving when they start preschool. The benefits of attending playgroup extend to the home learning environment, as parents can access resources and activity ideas they can deliver at home with their children.

24
sessions of
playgroup per week



Playgroup Sessions: Start time

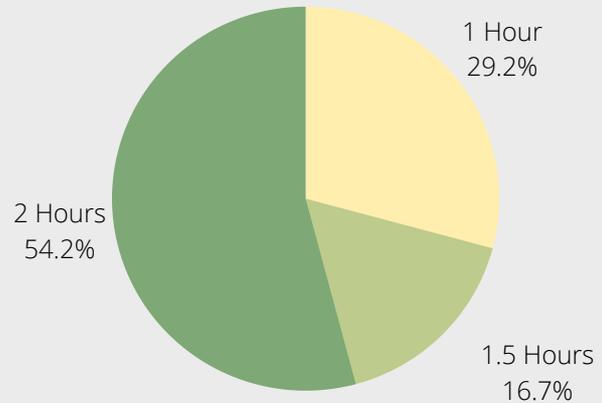
- 21 sessions start at 8.00
- 2 sessions start at 10.00am
- 1 Session starts at 10.30am

Time of the day sessions start can influence the number of families attending a Playgroup on a weekly basis. For ECCE Centres surveying parents to find out what the best time for Playgroup, may improve attendance and enrolment at Playgroups.

Length of sessions

ECCE Centres may consider delivering weekend Playgroup events for the whole community. This can provide opportunities to engage the whole community in early childhood messaging, and the benefits of supporting child development in all communities.

Further work can be completed to determine if there is a difference in attendance rates based on what time the Playgroup starts.



Registered and attending



179 parents attending with children

19 caregivers attending with children

7 children attending without parent/caregiver



SoP Summary

The data presented here has been self-reported by the ECCE Centres. On the basis that 179 parents, 19 caregivers attend Playgroups with children and 7 children attend playgroups without a parent, we can assume that there must be more than 200 children attending Playgroups. The TuECHI, 2021 data collection showed that 391 children attend playgroups, while 712 attend preschool. The age distribution is fairly similar for both preschool and playgroup attendance: ~9-10% are aged 2 years; 66% aged 3-4 years; 24-25% aged 5 years.

Given this is the first State of the Playgroup report for Tuvalu, we can see a number of gaps in data being reported, largely due to not having mechanisms in place to report on data items like, number of children and parents/caregivers enrolled in playgroups, number of sessions delivered during a calendar year. A registration database for Playgroups in Tuvalu, could include data fields like session times, days of the week Playgroups operate and collect attendance data that could be uploaded by ECCE Head Teachers. A database will provide a solution for improving data collection and understanding the impact of playgroups in Tuvalu.

Other improvements for Playgroups, can be Community Health Nurse visits. Playgroups are an excellent opportunity for nurses to meet with the youngest Tuvaluan citizens, complete developmental health checks, and provide early intervention for any delays noted. This can help the preschool teachers to provide a suitable individual curriculum for the children, ensuring they have activities and experiences they can complete and build their confidence with.

Recommendations for Playgroup

- R1. Develop a fully manualised Playgroup Program, evidence-informed and specific to the context of Tuvalu. For these documents to be translated into Tuvaluan.
- R2. Develop and train ECCE Teachers in the delivery of the program.
- R3. Develop enrolment forms for families to enrol in Playgroup sessions.
- R4. Develop attendance forms for Playgroups to record attendance by children and parents.
- R5. Identify a role to collect and collate data on enrolment, registration and number and details of Playgroup sessions in Tuvalu.
- R6. Survey families and teachers for interest in weekend playgroup events

Training Summary

A key deliverable in the Terms of Reference for the International Playgroup Consultant was to deliver two full days of Professional Development. These two days were convened on the 10th and 13th December 2021.

Topics presented included:

- Playgroup and the Benefits
- Working Together
- Introduction to Child Development
- Tuvalu Early Learning Development Standards
- Playgroup Manual
- Playspaces + Programming

Additional topics on Child Development, including developmental milestones at different ages and stages of development and activities that support learning were prepared. Due to timing, and internet connectivity challenges these topics were not presented.

Overall, the participants engaged well in the topics presented. Discussions and activities throughout the workshop involved engagement from most, or all of the participants. This report provides a brief summary, without going into the detail of the presentations. The common aspirations as discussed by the participants has been included in the results, along with the qualitative and quantitative feedback provided by participants.

Results

Qualitative feedback

Assessing participants qualitative feedback provided insights relating to what respondents found most helpful/interesting in the workshop, what learnings they will take back to their school community from the workshop, and how the workshop could be more helpful/interesting in terms of managing challenging behaviour in the classroom. Analysis of the qualitative feedback was completed by reviewing participant responses, identifying any common themes, and adding these common themes applying a brief content analysis. A summary of this analysis has been provided below

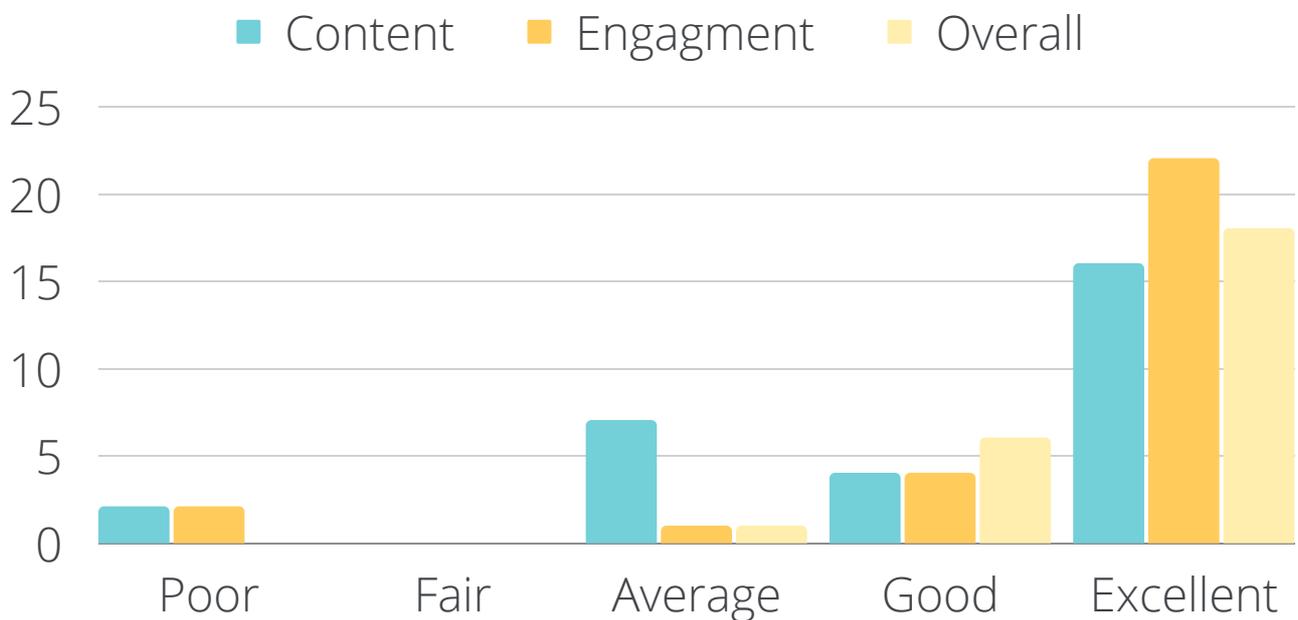


Results cont...

Quantitative feedback

Quantitative feedback asked three questions with participants providing a rating on a five point Likert scale. The descriptive statistics are presented below with all participant respondents. Participants were asked to rate the content presented, the engagement of the presenter and an overall score.

The overall quantitative feedback showed positive results for the content, engagement and overall scores. For the overall score, 90% or 24 of 25 responses reported excellent or good as overall ratings.



Content

Of the 29 responses received, 69% reported the content as good to excellent, 24% average and 7% poor. It should be noted that the 7% is equal to 2 responses.

Engagement

Regarding engagement, a total of 90% reported excellent to good, 1 person reported average and 2 people reported a rating of poor.

Overall

Overall, 72% reported the presentation as excellent, 24% as good and 1 person reported average.

Most Interesting

An opened ended question, asked participants what was the most interesting component of the training. Responses referred to learning about the benefits of playgroup and the difference between Playgroup and Preschool. Four responses referred to the importance of having parents involved, and having skills that support parents to connect with their children. One participant wrote:

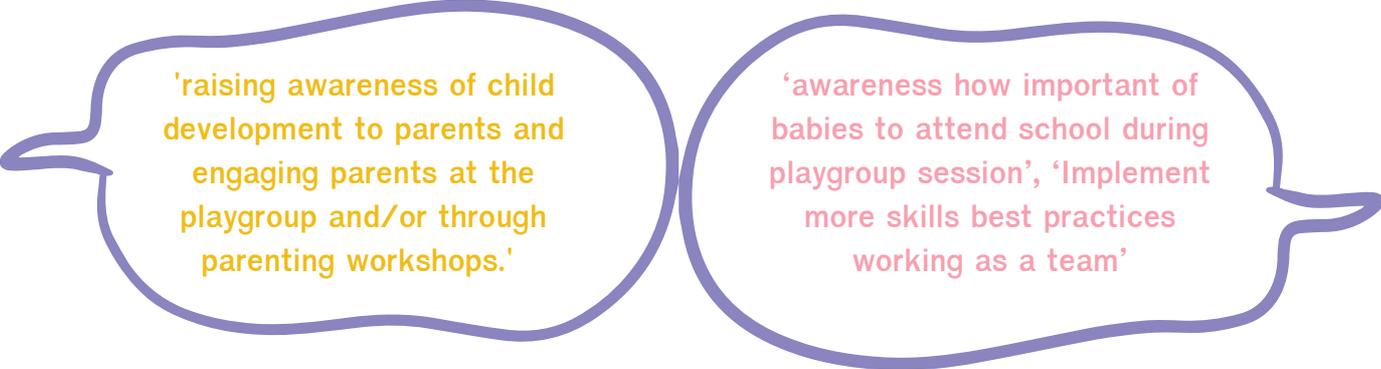
'Benefits of playgroup help the children to learn their skills and to promote parent/child and encouraging families to join or to include in programme of playgroup in school.'

A number of participants noted the discussion on working together presented by the National Playgroup Consultant was very helpful.



What will you take back to your Community?

On the question of what will you take back to your community, the range of answers provided included:



'raising awareness of child development to parents and engaging parents at the playgroup and/or through parenting workshops.'

'awareness how important of babies to attend school during playgroup session', 'Implement more skills best practices working as a team'

During the presentation an idea was presented to the participants about organising an excursion into the local primary school for Playgroup children to get to know the environment. A number of ECCE Centres noted that they do visits to schools with preschool children, and this is something they could do with Playgroup children and families.

Findings

Feedback provided across the 29 responses including references to all topics covered, demonstrating that the training has had a positive impact, particularly on understanding the difference between playgroups and preschool, improving their understanding of child development, and above all the importance of engaging parents in playgroup.

During discussions with participants, a common theme or challenge for most or all centres was the challenge of engaging parents to stay at playgroup and to play with their children. Another common challenge was encouraging parents to bring babies to playgroup. Based on discussions throughout the sessions and some qualitative feedback provided, it's noted, that potentially some teachers were not aware that babies could go to playgroup.

On this basis, and supported by the TUECHI results, the report recommends that the activity bank to be developed by the International Playgroup Consultant focus the development of these activities for children aged 0 -3, and these activities be developed for parents to implement in the home environment for parents to be able to engage their infants and younger children in developmentally appropriate activities.

Findings cont...

The importance of collaborating and working together was referred to in much of the feedback, and will inform improvements in the way the ECCE teachers and other teachers work within their centre and with other stakeholders, and potentially creating additional opportunities for Professional Development. During the session on working together, participants were asked to develop a common aspiration or prayer for their centre.

Providing a common aspiration for all teachers in each of the centres to work toward will likely support the development of a cohesive and focused team that will ultimately enhance children's development. It is recommended that ongoing sessions are established regularly for teachers to work together in a *communities of practice* format to learn from each other and improved practice and pedagogy within the early childhood system in Tuvalu.

In addition to the feedback surveys, Playgroup Program Session Plan templates completed by each participant or at least each centre were provided. This demonstrates a good understanding of the content, and how to best prepare and plan for a Playgroup session.

There is much room for improvement once ECCE Head Teachers and other teachers in ECCE centres have a foundational knowledge of what it is to deliver a Playgroup, development of a model specific to the needs of Tuvalu would be a logical next step.

Developing a model of Playgroup specific to Tuvalu would include a focus on the interaction between teacher and parent, and then parent and child. To address one issue noted by Teachers in the PD sessions, a Playgroup model could include learning for parents supported by fact sheets about the domains of development, and easy to apply activities aligned with these domains, that parents can implement in the home learning environment.



Training Workshop Results

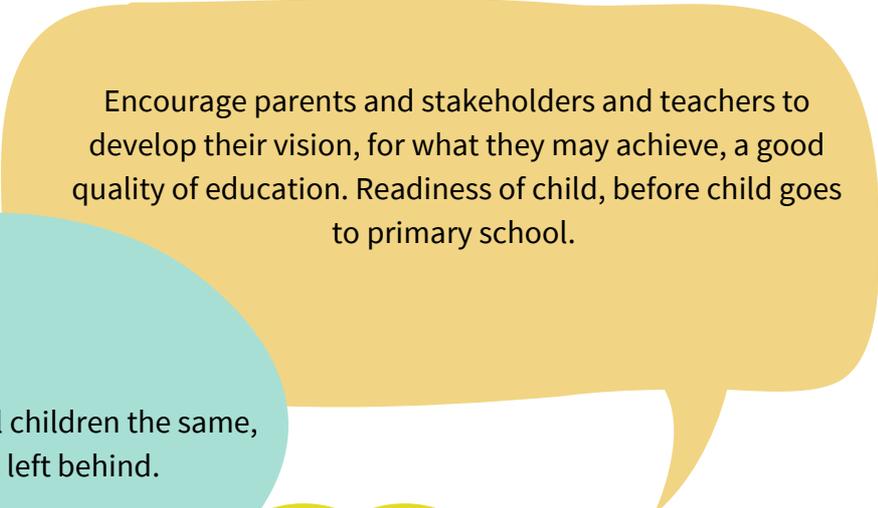
Common Aspirations

There were a number of interactive sessions during the training where participants were asked to contribute their ideas, support their planning capabilities for the coming year. One of the interactive sessions focused on Developing a Common Aspiration or Prayer for each of the communities for the future of Tuvalu's children.

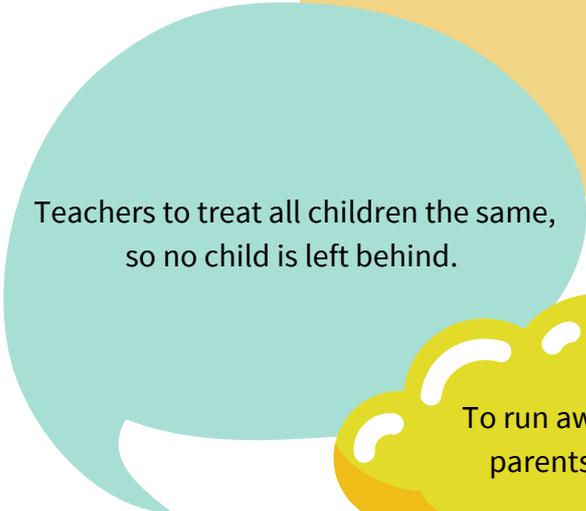
The exercise was designed for future thinking, and for the ECCE Teachers to located themselves in a place of leadership to contribute to change for all children in Tuvalu. Ultimately supporting all centres to work to together for improved early childhood outcomes. Below you can read the Common Aspirations shared by the different teachers.

Common Aspirations

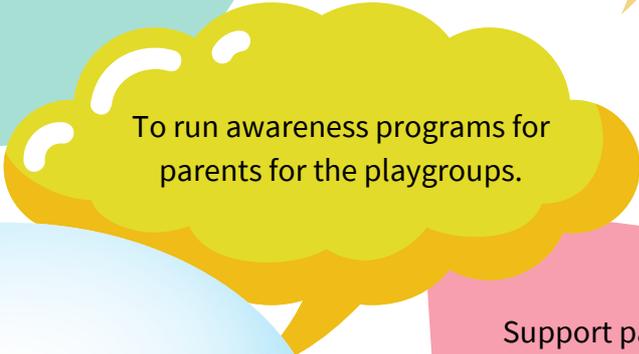
ECCE Centres from Funafuti



Encourage parents and stakeholders and teachers to develop their vision, for what they may achieve, a good quality of education. Readiness of child, before child goes to primary school.



Teachers to treat all children the same, so no child is left behind.



To run awareness programs for parents for the playgroups.



To provide quality playgroups, to have a better future for our Tuvaluans.



Support parents and community for inclusive learning.

Common Aspirations – Outer Islands

ECCE Centres Outer Islands

Support from the parents,
so they attend every
workshop, so children do
best.

To work hard on our plans, so
our playgroups work together
with parents and community to
be able to build a good future

Dream that our
children look forward to
the future

Ensure each child is
valued, respected feels
safe and secure and
develops positive self-
concept. Parents
community and all
stakeholders to work
together for betterment
of children.



Recommendations

R1. Ongoing fortnightly or monthly Communities of practice are set-up to continue development.

R2. The development of 40 activities for the Activity Bank, to be focused on activities for parents to engage in appropriate developmental activities in the home.

R3. Further development of the activity bank could include a one page summary and information for parents on the domains of development.

R4. Develop 'Virtual Partner Playgroup & Preschool' link program with playgroups and preschools in Australia to connect and share ideas.

R5. Any future Terms of Reference developed focus on developing a specific Playgroup model based on establishing:

- standards of practice for Playgroup
- specific learning topics to support parents create a home learning environment.







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