Save the Children
Australia

International Development and Early Learning Assessment (IDELA)

Solomon Islands pilot study review

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List of acronyms

ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
IDELA	International Development and Early Learning Assessment
MEHRD	Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development
MoET	Ministry of Education and Training
NDoE	National Department of Education
UoG	University of Goroka

Executive summary

Save the Children has been supporting the education sector in Solomon Islands since 2009. In 2013, Save the Children included Early Childhood Education (ECE) as a core component of its education sector programming, acknowledging the important role ECE plays in providing a strong foundation for children's later learning and development.

The International Development and Early Learning Assessment (IDELA) tool was developed by Save the Children US to measure children's early learning and development across four developmental domains:

- physical development/motor skills
- early language and literacy skills
- early numeracy/problem solving skills
- socio-emotional skills

IDELA was designed to support continuous program improvement across Save the Children's and partners' numerous country sites; to increase accountability among early childhood care and development (ECCD) initiatives globally; and to offer cohesive and ongoing data and evidence about children's learning and development across countries to help governments and global actors to bring successful ECCD programs to scale. IDELA was not designed as an individual diagnostic or screening tool and is not meant to be used for decision-making around readiness for school. Rather, IDELA's aim is to use evidence to promote best practice, inclusion and equity in ECCD provision.

Save the Children Australia plans to use IDELA within its ECCD programs in the Pacific region to measure the learning and developmental progress of children participating in Save the Children-supported ECCD programs and to engage with local early childhood development stakeholders to inform ECCD policy and practice and future program development. Solomon Islands was selected as a pilot site as discussions are already underway between Save the Children and the Solomon Islands Government Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD) regarding ECCD policy and practice. The Ministry recognises the current limited ability to measure the levels of service delivery of ECCD programs across the country and acknowledges IDELA as a tool that can help address this situation. MEHRD is therefore very interested in this pilot study.

The overall objective of the review of the IDELA pilot study in Solomon Islands was to examine the appropriateness of IDELA in Pacific contexts in ECCD policy development, implementation and service provision. The study confirmed the IDELA tool can be administered in a range of different contexts[1] to assess children's learning and developmental milestones. It is relatively easy to implement and generates valuable

[1] To date, IDELA has been used to successfully measure developmental outcomes of children in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Malawi, Mali, Pakistan, Rwanda and Zambia. This pilot study was the first application of IDELA in the Pacific.

information for ECCD planners, developers and implementers. Generated data can be used to enhance the quality of ECCD curricula to improve children's early learning experiences and outcomes; to inform preliminary assessment of the skills and knowledge of ECCD facilitators and determine their capacity development needs; and to guide monitoring and continuous improvement of ECCD programs.

The IDELA pilot study was conducted at five sites across four Save the Children Early Childhood Development (ECD) program locations in May 2016. A total of 73 children between the ages of three and nine years[2] were assessed, comprising 44 girls and 29 boys. No statistical significance can be drawn from the study results due to the small sample size and the participant selection process but this was not the purpose of the study. The pilot study set out to examine the appropriateness of IDELA in Pacific contexts, using Solomon Islands as a pilot, and this was achieved.

After just one week's training, the Solomon Islands assessment team was able to conduct assessments, record responses and enter quality data into the data entry system. It was evident in interviews the exercise has been an overwhelmingly positive experience for them and they are eager to build on it.

There were some issues identified that need to be addressed when conducting future assessments. The biggest challenge encountered in the pilot study was translation, particularly to the local mother tongue languages spoken in some of the assessment locations. The importance of mother tongue in education was not adequately considered by the Solomon Islands country team and the assessment team did not have the necessary local language skills to engage with all the children being assessed. In future, there needs to be a thorough situational analysis undertaken in advance of any data collection to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the language/s spoken in the communities and sites to be surveyed, and significant advance planning and adequate training is required to ensure teams are set up for success.

The number of questions with no response/missing responses was notable across the entire survey, especially in the socio-emotional skills domain (between 63%/N=46 and 70%/N=51 across four of the five domain items). The assessment team members interviewed reported that language had been a challenging issue throughout the pilot study and this had contributed to children often not understanding the questions being asked. Interviewees also reported that younger children had found the exercise more difficult than older children. The IDELA data needs to be further disaggregated by location and age of child respondent to understand if these perceptions are actually evidence-based.

In recognition of the important role a young child's home environment plays in determining their chances for positive development, IDELA also includes a caregiver survey to gather key information about what is happening at household level in terms of the quality of children's

[2] IDELA is intended to be used with children aged three and a half to six years; the inclusion of older children should not have happened and this needs to be covered in future trainings.

early learning environment. A total of 58 caregivers were interviewed as part of the pilot study but due to challenges with the survey implementation, it is not possible to correlate information between the 58 caregivers and the 73 children assessed. This is an important lesson and future IDELA training workshops need to focus on how to accurately administer the caregiver survey, including trialling it in the practical field tests.

The IDELA tool is undoubtedly a useful tool to assess children's developmental milestones and this study has shown it can be applied in a Pacific context. There are some modifications required to ensure the IDELA questionnaire is contextually appropriate for Solomon Islands (eg graphics need to be locally relevant) but these can be addressed. It would be interesting to engage ECD facilitators and ECE teachers in the contextualisation of the tool as part of their own capacity development and to build local ownership.

Recommendations

- Save the Children should organise a meeting to share the findings from this pilot study with the Solomon Islands MEHRD Director of Community Education and School Services Department and promote the use of IDELA as an assessment tool across the country. Save the Children needs to be aware MEHRD has limited capacity to lead the roll out of IDELA and any implementation strategy will need to be undertaken by Save the Children and/or other partners, with the endorsement of MEHRD. Save the Children should continue to invite MEHRD personnel to participate in any future IDELA trainings.

- Save the Children should share the findings of this pilot study with the Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu Country Offices and identify potential opportunities for engaging with relevant stakeholders (Papua New Guinea National Department of Education, the University of Goroka, Vanuatu Ministry of Education and Training etc). Save the Children should also explore possible cross-country learning opportunities between education sector projects in the three countries.

- Future IDELA training workshops need to be at least five full days in length. Trainings need to adopt more 'learning by doing' and reduce the 'learning by listening' approach and the schedule needs to include sufficient time for a comprehensive debrief after every field practice visit. Practice assessments should be undertaken with children from three and a half years to six years if possible so assessors have the opportunity to practice their skills with different age groups.

- Future IDELA training workshops also need to reinforce the importance of caregiver surveys and how to correctly administer them in order to correlate child and caregiver data and maximise the learning from this information.

- All training tools and materials need to be translated into the appropriate local languages in advance of the training and all translation needs to be verified by an external party for quality assurance.

- IDELA assessment teams must have the appropriate language skills to conduct data collection at a given location – this needs to be a mandatory selection criterion.

- All materials used during the IDELA assessment must be contextually appropriate for the specific assessment location, including consideration of both urban and rural contexts and the wide diversity of flora and fauna across geographically dispersed countries. ECD facilitators and ECE teachers could be involved in the contextualisation of the tool to increase their familiarity with it, leverage their local knowledge, and enhance their understanding of IDELA's purpose.

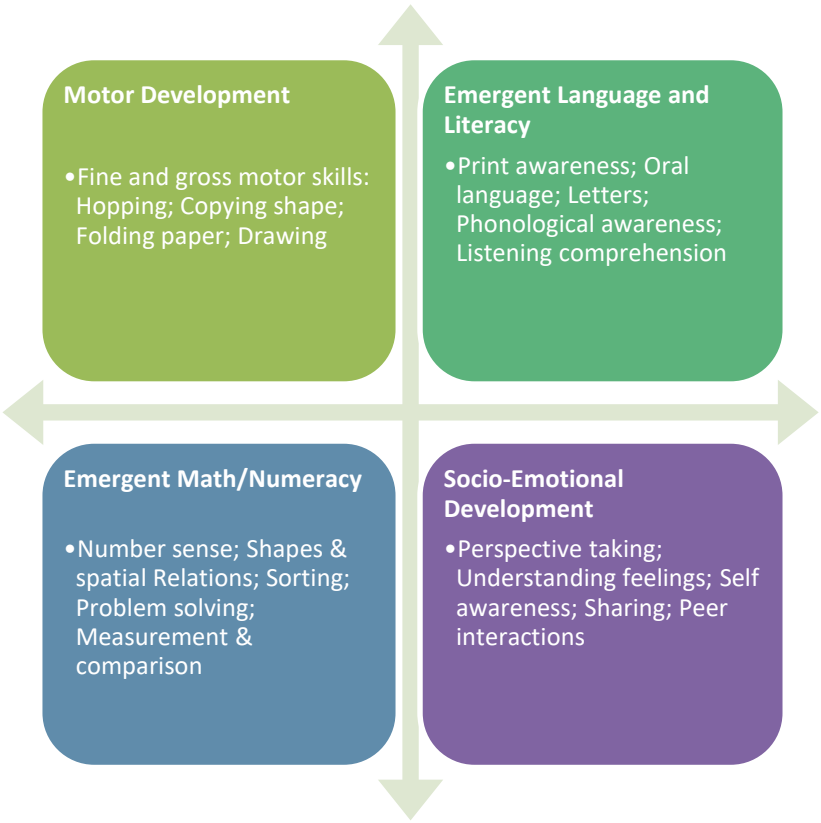
Introduction

Save the Children has been present in the Solomon Islands since 1986 and supporting the education sector since 2009, focusing mainly on improving access to basic education and increasing community participation in school management. Child rights and child protection have been at the core of Save the Children's education work. In 2013, Save the Children included Early Childhood Education (ECE) as a core component of its education sector programming, acknowledging the important role ECE plays in providing a strong foundation for children's later learning and development.

The International Development and Early Learning Assessment (IDELA) tool is an assessment tool developed by Save the Children US to measure children's early learning and development across four developmental domains:

- physical development/motor skills
- early language and literacy skills
- early numeracy/problem solving skills
- socio-emotional skills

Figure 1: IDELA measurement framework



IDELA was designed to support continuous program improvement across Save the Children's and partners' numerous country sites[3], to increase accountability among early childhood care and development (ECCD) initiatives globally, and to offer cohesive and ongoing data and evidence about children's learning and development across countries to help governments and global actors to bring successful ECCD programs to scale. IDELA was not designed as an individual diagnostic or screening tool and is not meant to be used for decision-making around readiness for school. Rather, IDELA's aim is to use evidence to promote best practice, inclusion and equity in ECCD provision.

The assessment of the four domains is conducted through direct child interview, rather than relying on teachers' or parents' reports of children's skills. IDELA is an interactive tool, comprising 24 items across the four developmental domains, and questions are framed in a game-like format as much as possible. IDELA is intended to be used with children aged three and a half to six years.

In addition to direct child interview, assessors are also asked to observe and report on children's *approaches to learning* by assessing a child's persistence, motivation and attention to completing the assessment tasks.

In recognition of the important role a young child's home environment plays in determining their chances for positive development, IDELA also includes a caregiver survey to gather key information about what is happening at household level in terms of the quality of children's early learning environment.

Save the Children Australia plans to use IDELA within its ECCD programs in the Pacific region to:

- Measure the learning and development progress of children who are participating in Save the Children-supported ECCD programs
- Engage with local stakeholders such as Early Childhood Development (ECD) teachers, community leaders and relevant government officials to inform quality community-based ECD practices, future Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) policy and future program development

Solomon Islands was selected to pilot IDELA in the Pacific as discussions are already underway between Save the Children and the Solomon Islands Government Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD) regarding ECCD policy and practice. The Ministry recognises the current limited ability to measure the levels of service delivery of ECCD programs across the country and acknowledges IDELA as a tool that can help address this situation. MEHRD is therefore very interested in this pilot study. For Save the

[3] To date, IDELA has been used to successfully measure developmental outcomes of children in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Malawi, Mali, Pakistan, Rwanda and Zambia. This pilot study was the first application of IDELA in the Pacific.

Children, the findings from this pilot study are intended to inform ECCD programming across the Pacific region.

Objectives and scope of the pilot study review

The overall objective of the review of the IDELA pilot study in Solomon Islands was to ***examine the appropriateness of IDELA in Pacific contexts in ECCD policy development, implementation and service provision*** by understanding:

1. How does IDELA align with any existing ECCD frameworks in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu? [4] How does IDELA align with similar tools currently being used in Pacific contexts and in our ECD programs to measure children's learning and development?
2. Does the data from IDELA pilot sites measure the relevant children's learning and development milestones?
3. What are the strengths and limitations in the implementation of IDELA in Solomon Islands?
4. What modifications and upgrades are recommended to better contextualize IDELA in Solomon Islands?
5. How can Save the Children better implement IDELA data collection, analysis and interpretation for strengthening future ECCD programming and policy-making in the Pacific?

Methodology

The pilot study review adopted a combined approach of desk review of ECCD frameworks from Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu[5]; the IDELA assessment tool and guidelines; data collected from the Solomon Islands IDELA pilot sites[6]; and a series of qualitative interviews with Save the Children representatives from the Melbourne and Honiara offices and a representative from the Solomon Islands Government MEHRD. (The list of interview participants is included at Annex A.)

Limitations

Each IDELA area of investigation is called an 'item'. Many of the items are made up of a number of 'sub-items'. The Solomon Islands IDELA data was analysed by Save the Children to item level. Unfortunately, there was a formula error in the data sheet which meant that

[4] Note: the scope of this review did not include a comprehensive literature review therefore the review only focused on ECCD frameworks and measurement tools provided by Save the Children staff in the Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu offices in response to this question.
[5] Ibid
[6] Raw data as well as the cleaned and analysed data from Save the Children

results were only produced at three levels: (1) all sub-items are correctly completed; (2) not all sub-items are correctly completed – regardless of whether the *number* of sub-items a respondent correctly completed is zero or the majority; and (3) no-response/missing response. This limited more nuanced analysis of children's performance across the different assessment domains but as noted previously, that was not the purpose of the exercise. However, in terms of testing the applicability of the IDELA tool in Solomon Islands, more nuanced data might have enabled further analysis of any aspects of the tool that were challenging for enumerators to administer.

Save the Children analysed the data from the pilot study using STATA statistical software which only one person was able to use. Given the relatively small amount of data involved and the level of analysis desired, a simple excel system would have enabled more people to participate in the analysis, allowing for deeper exploration of the data at this pilot stage.

Findings

This section of the report presents the results of the IDELA pilot study in Solomon Islands, examines any factors contributing to success as well as challenges encountered, and assesses the potential for wider implementation of IDELA in Solomon Islands and other countries in the Pacific region.

Study sites

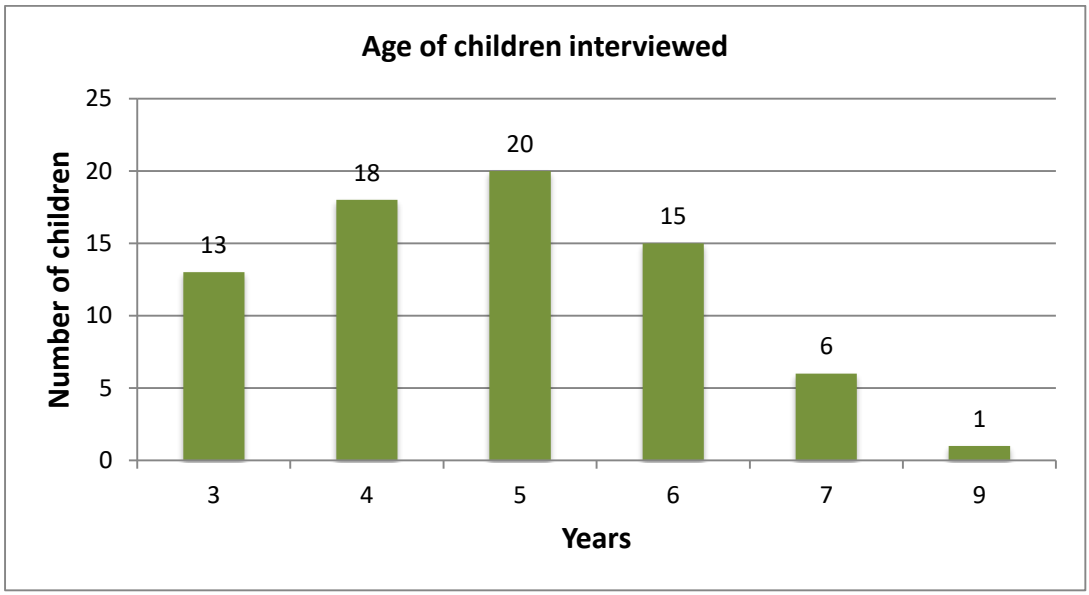
The IDELA pilot study was conducted at five sites across four Save the Children ECD program locations in Solomon Islands: Gilutatea, Taubariki, Veuru and Vura. All the sites are located in Guadalcanal Province. Gilutatea, Veuru and Vura are rural locations and Taubariki is semi-rural. Subsistence farming and fishing are the main livelihood activities in Gilutatea, Veuru and Vura. In Taubariki, people are involved in petty trade such as selling (market stall) and preparing food (canteens). Few people have salaried jobs.

Respondents

The data collection team set out to interview 20 children and 15 caregivers in each of five sites. They reached 73% of their target for children (N=73) and 77% of their target for caregivers (N=58). Some families had other commitments and their children weren't there on the day the team visited and some children were not in the correct age range of three and a half to six years. However, some assessors did include children of three, seven and nine years. It is not clear how this happened but is something to follow up on when conducting future training.

The 73 children assessed included 44 girls and 29 boys. Seventy percent of respondents (N=51) were between the ages of three and five years and 30% (N=22) were six years and above.

Figure 2: Age of children interviewed



How does IDELA align with any existing ECCD frameworks in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu?[7] How does IDELA align with similar tools currently being used in Pacific contexts and in our ECD programs to measure children's learning and development?

In **Papua New Guinea**, the government approved the National Early Childhood Care and Development Policy in 2007. The National Department of Health, National Department of Education (NDoE) and National Department of Community Development are each responsible for different aspects of the policy implementation. The NDoE is responsible for elementary and inclusive education but there is no national ECCE policy framework and ECCE centres in Papua New Guinea are operated by the private sector, including community based and faith based organisations. The University of Goroka (UoG) has developed an ECE curriculum, which is used to train ECCD diploma students. The curriculum comprises six areas: personal, social and emotional development; speaking & listening, phonics, early reading & writing; problem solving, reasoning & numeracy; discovery of the world around us; creative development; physical development. Save the Children is currently supporting the Autonomous Region of Bougainville (ARB) Department of Education to develop its ECCD framework. Save the Children has faced challenges in the past engaging in ECCD in Papua New Guinea but the work in ARB could provide an entry point to re-engaging and introducing IDELA within the ECCD framework development process. Save the Children

[7] Note: the scope of this review did not include a comprehensive literature review therefore the review only focused on ECCD frameworks and measurement tools provided by Save the Children staff in the Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu offices in response to this question.

could also explore with the University of Goroka if there is opportunity to incorporate IDELA into their suite of ECE tools and ECCD diploma curriculum.

A review of the ECE sector in **Solomon Islands** conducted in 2015 found that there were no criteria and no system for monitoring and evaluating ECE programs[8]. The Solomon Islands Government MEHRD recognises the current limited ability to measure the levels of service delivery of ECCD programs across the country and acknowledges the IDELA as a tool that can address this. ECCD is largely delivered by non-governmental organisations and civil society organisations and there is limited standardisation of curricula across the country. MEHRD is currently reviewing its ECCD policy with support from UNICEF and working on the development of minimum standards for delivery that will inform the revision of the 2009 ECE curriculum. This is an opportune time for Save the Children to engage in this discussion if it wishes to promote IDELA within Solomon Islands. Save the Children should also review its own Solomon Islands ECD curriculum to assess the extent to which it is addressing children's core learning and developmental needs as set out in IDELA.

Save the Children did invite the MEHRD Director of Community Education and School Services Department to participate in the IDELA pilot study but she was unfortunately only able to attend one day of the training. The Director expressed interest in having MEHRD personnel involved in IDELA training and is keen to see the results from this pilot to understand the potential for implementation of IDELA in Solomon Islands. However, as highlighted in the 2015 ECE sector review, Save the Children needs to be aware that MEHRD is already overstretched and it is unlikely they will have capacity to lead on any roll out of IDELA across Solomon Islands in the near term. Therefore, if Save the Children wishes to move ahead, they will need to be prepared to lead the initiative themselves, with approval from MEHRD.

The Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) in **Vanuatu**, with the support of UNICEF, has developed *'The Vanuatu National Early Childhood Care and Education Framework'*[9], which aims to provide a comprehensive approach to ECCE. The Framework provides the rationale and core principles of effective ECCE implementation, intended to support government, donors and other stakeholders to work together in advancing ECCE. Responsibility for monitoring and supervision of ECCE centres sits with the MoET and all assessment tools must be linked to the MoET's ECCE learning expectations and outcomes which focus on: literacy, numeracy, science, and living in our community (healthy living; civic and community relationships; caring for the environment; spiritual and character development; visual and performing arts)[10]. An assessment tool for monitoring ECCE centres has been developed by the MoET but this appears to be focused on teacher performance and quality of the learning environment (this requires further investigation). Monitoring and

[8] Solomon Islands Early Childhood Education Sector Review, Ball, J; November 2015 (page 32)
[9] https://moet.gov.vu/docs/ecce-reports-and-policies/Vanuatu%20National%20Early%20Childhood%20Care%20and%20Education%20Framework.pdf
[10] Ibid, page 30

assessment of children's learning is a core component of the MoET's ECCE framework. The learning and developmental domains assessed through IDELA align with the MoET's core ECCE learning outcomes and there could be an opportunity for Save the Children to collaborate with MoET to support ECCE monitoring and assessment in Vanuatu. This should be further explored with MoET.

Does the data from IDELA pilot sites measure the relevant children's learning and development milestones?

This study confirmed the IDELA tool is able to be administered in Solomon Islands to assess children's learning and developmental milestones. It is relatively easy to implement and generates valuable information for ECCD planners, developers and implementers.

It is evident from this pilot study that IDELA has the potential to generate rich and tangible information that can be mined to enhance the quality of ECCD curricula to improve children's early learning experiences and outcomes; inform preliminary assessment of current skills and knowledge of ECCD facilitators and their capacity development needs; and guide monitoring and continuous improvement of ECCD programs. IDELA enables comprehensive data disaggregation including by sex, age, location, caregiver engagement, language and ECD centre.

The pilot was focused on the applicability of IDELA in Solomon Islands and therefore only limited analysis of the data collected has been conducted.

Figure 3 shows the results for children surveyed across the four IDELA developmental domains disaggregated by sex. Girls scored higher positive results than boys across all domains except motor skills but the differences are not significant. Both girls (89%, N=39) and boys (79%, N=23) recorded their strongest performances in the emergent numeracy domain.

Figure 3: IDELA results disaggregated by sex

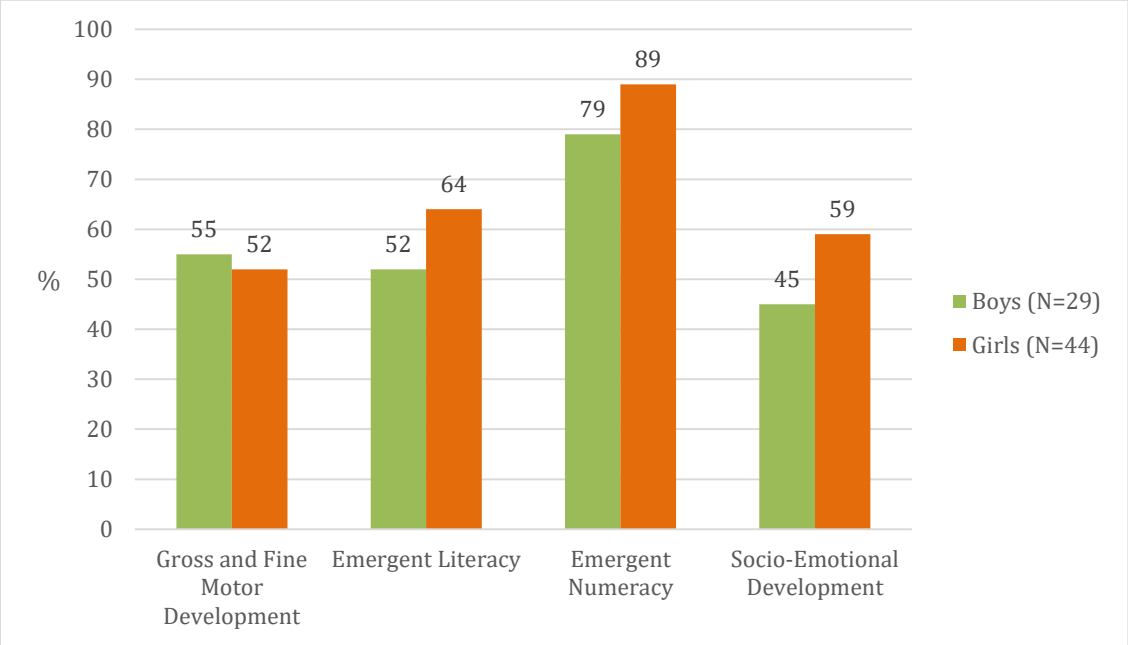


Figure 4 shows the results across the four IDELA domains disaggregated by age. 86% of children three-five years (N=44) and 82% of children six years and above (N=18) recorded their strongest performances in the emergent numeracy domain. 45% of three-five year olds (N=23) scored positively in the motor skills domain and 45% of children six years and above (N=10) scored positively in the socio-emotional skills domain.

Figure 4: IDELA results disaggregated by age

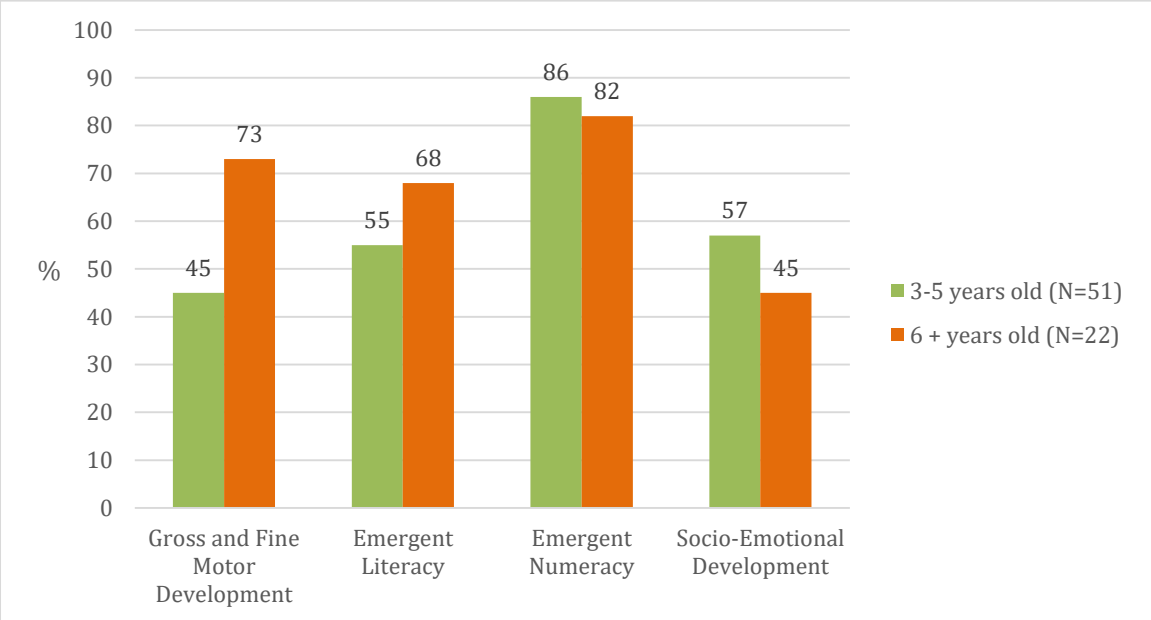
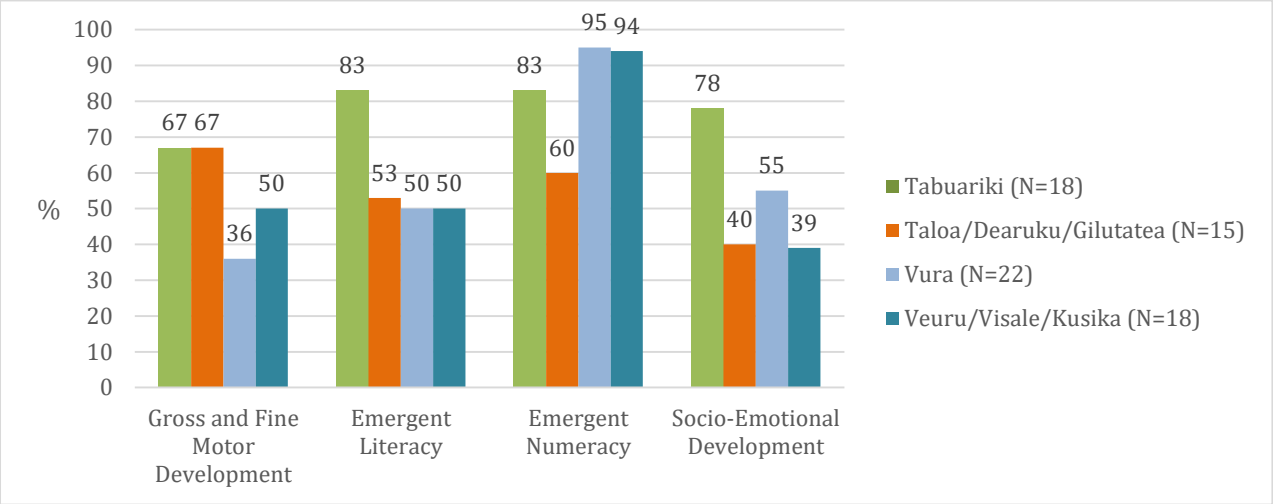


Figure 5 shows the results across the four IDELA domains disaggregated by location. Children in Tabuariki scored positively across all four domains. In the other locations, there was at least one domain where less than half of children scored positively.

Figure 5: IDELA results disaggregated by location



What are the strengths and limitations in the implementation of IDELA in Solomon Islands?

The assessment team were happy with the pilot study and reported it to be a success. They were very positive about the training experience and felt the assessments went well overall. Trainees all commented they would have liked more training but they all felt capable of conducting assessments after the training they received. Nobody reported they were unable to administer the tool unless there were language issues. And there were no questions the team felt they could not ask.

Whilst there were some issues with translation into languages other than pidgin (see below), the trainees felt the IDELA pidgin translation was good enough to be able to assess children who spoke that language.

After just three and a half days' training, the team was able to conduct assessments, record responses and enter the data into the data entry system. Save the Children Australia's Program Quality Advisor was happy with the quality of the data and felt the data entry was good and certainly within an acceptable range for analysis.

It was evident in the interviews the exercise has been an overwhelmingly positive experience for the team and they are eager to build on it. There are some issues that need to be addressed before expanding the pilot to any new locations and these are outlined below.

Translation & linguistic diversity

The biggest challenge encountered in the pilot study was translation. The Solomon Islands team were confident before the workshop commenced that translation of the tool into pidgin would be sufficient. The IDELA tool was translated into pidgin in advance of the training workshop but when the workshop began, it materialised that the local mother tongue languages in the pilot sites was not pidgin and further translation was required. The additional translation from pidgin into local languages was undertaken by the assessment team in the workshop – eating into precious training time. And the quality of the translation was questionable as there was no time for it to be independently verified. Also, some concepts just simply do not translate easily and the team needed to spend time working together to agree how these questions would be conveyed to ensure consistency of approach. In future, the tool needs to be translated into relevant local languages in advance and verified by an external party so that in the training, the team can focus on building a shared understanding and approach. Part of the training will be for the team to suggest modifications to the translation to ensure the accuracy of the intent of the IDELA questions. This issue also underscores the need for teams to be aware of the importance of mother tongue in education – something that was not adequately considered in the pilot study.

'Translation was a big learning – we need to insist it is done prior to training and we need to rigorously test the translation in advance.'[11]

A further complexity is the linguistic diversity of Solomon Islands. There are more than 70 languages spoken across the country[12]. This was another oversight as the members of the assessment team did not have the combined skills to cope with all of the languages spoken by the children across the ECCD centres that were assessed. For some languages, only one person could translate so nobody could validate or check quality; for others, none of the team was able to speak the local mother tongue of some of the children. The most challenging location was Vura where all of the children spoke their mother tongue and only one member of the assessment team was able to speak that language. That meant one team member had to do all the assessments.

Assessors need to be able to speak the language/s of the communities they are assessing in order to engage directly with the children. In locations where the assessment team members were not able to converse directly with the children they were interviewing, they had to rely on parents to translate. This is clearly not ideal as it immediately introduces a level of bias – something that was noted by several interviewees:

'The most difficult thing was where children use their mother tongue because I can't understand – it was hard to communicate with them. We asked the parents to help translate but it didn't work well because I observed that they were telling the children the answers.'[13]

[11] Interview respondent, May 2016
[12] http://www.ethnologue.com/country/SB
[13] Interview respondent, May 2016

Assessors also reported that children who could speak pidgin remained more engaged because they could understand, whereas those who didn't have pidgin lost focus more easily.

'The kids who knew pidgin stayed focused through the whole assessment – especially the four years and above.'[14]

One way around the language issue could be to engage local ECD facilitators and ECE teachers to participate in the assessments. They could conduct assessments at peer centres rather than their own centre to avoid any issues of bias and this would also serve as a learning and development opportunity for them.

Training

The IDELA training workshop was held over a period of three and a half days. The trainers and the trainees both felt this was too short and that at least one more day was needed to properly deliver all of the content and provide trainees with sufficient time to practice and debrief.

'You need five full days for the training at least, including a minimum of two practical sessions in the field. We had two field practice days but there wasn't time on the second day to review results and debrief. This was a loss.'[15]

The number of no response/missing responses was high across all areas of the survey developmental domains, especially in the socio-emotional skills domain (up to 70% of respondents in the Personal Awareness item). When asked about this, the members of the assessment team who were interviewed identified that language had been a challenging issue throughout the pilot study – particularly in Vura where only one of the assessment team spoke the local mother tongue – and this had contributed to children often not understanding the questions being asked. Interviewees also reported that younger children had found the exercise more difficult than older children. The IDELA data needs to be further disaggregated by location and age of child respondent to understand if these perceptions are accurate. None of the interviewees considered the number of no responses/missing responses to be associated with any challenges with the training, nor a lack of understanding of the IDELA tool on their part, but this is something that needs to be explored further in future training.

The assessment team reported that it was easier to engage older children than younger ones, who lost focus more easily. It is a reasonable assumption that younger children will lose interest more quickly but the IDELA data needs to be further disaggregated by age to understand if this perception is actually evidence-based.

[14] Interview respondent, May 2016
[15] Interview respondent, May 2016

Interestingly, one of the respondents commented that during the training, most of the children at the two sites visited were four-six years old and they didn't get sufficient chance to build their skills with younger children before having to do the full pilot assessment.

'In the training sites, most of the children were four-six years – for a future training, we need to also make sure we pilot with younger children.'[16]

Planning

The assessment team noted that the schedule did not provide sufficient time to conduct all the assessments in the centres. The children were only there from 8.30–11.30am and it was difficult to speak with everyone so they had to undertake some assessments after children left the centre. This introduced the variable of parents being close by and able to influence the child's responses.

'You need more number of days in the future – two-three days per centre. Just one day is hard to get through everything and not every child comes to the centre every day.'[17]

'First we worked in pairs, but we had five ECD centres we had to complete – so we changed to do one person, one child. We had to do two things at once – administer the questions and complete the scoring sheet. That was challenging at the start but as we got to understand the questions better, it got easier.'[18]

The team had gained advance consent only from selected caregivers rather than all, which meant they could not then interview alternative children if those who had provided consent were not there.

'In the future, it would be better to have all the children's consent and then everyone is a viable interviewee.'[19]

The assessments were conducted close to the ECD centres in each location, which was not ideal. Many interviewees reported that they were too close to the other children who were doing their activities and the children being assessed were not fully focused on the assessment. This is something that needs to be taken into account when planning future assessments.

'The ECD centres are quite disturbing and noisy – you'd need to go a bit away from them to get some quiet.'[20]

Caregiver survey

Collecting information about what is happening in children's homes, along with child level data on early learning and development, provides a much needed, nuanced picture of how the overall quality of care and support affects the developmental outcomes of children in

[16] Interview respondent, May 2016
[17] Interview respondent, May 2016
[18] Interview respondent, May 2016
[19] Interview respondent, May 2016
[20] Interview respondent, May 2016

the long and short term. A caregiver survey can also help identify specific targeted interventions needed in early childhood development[21].

Whilst it was useful for the team to practice administering the caregiver survey questionnaire in this pilot study, and the findings are of interest in terms of how caregivers in the locations perceive they are supporting children's learning and development, unfortunately the data gathered from caregivers during the pilot cannot be correlated with the children who were assessed. A total of 58 caregivers were interviewed but there is no Child identification code on any of the caregiver survey forms and it is therefore not possible to correlate information between the 58 caregivers and the 73 children assessed. Names of children were recorded but parents and caregivers were often using different names for the children to those recorded by the teacher on the consent form. This is a huge lesson and the importance of correctly recording caregiver and child identification in order to maximise learning from the two data sets needs to be well covered and practiced in any future IDELA training.

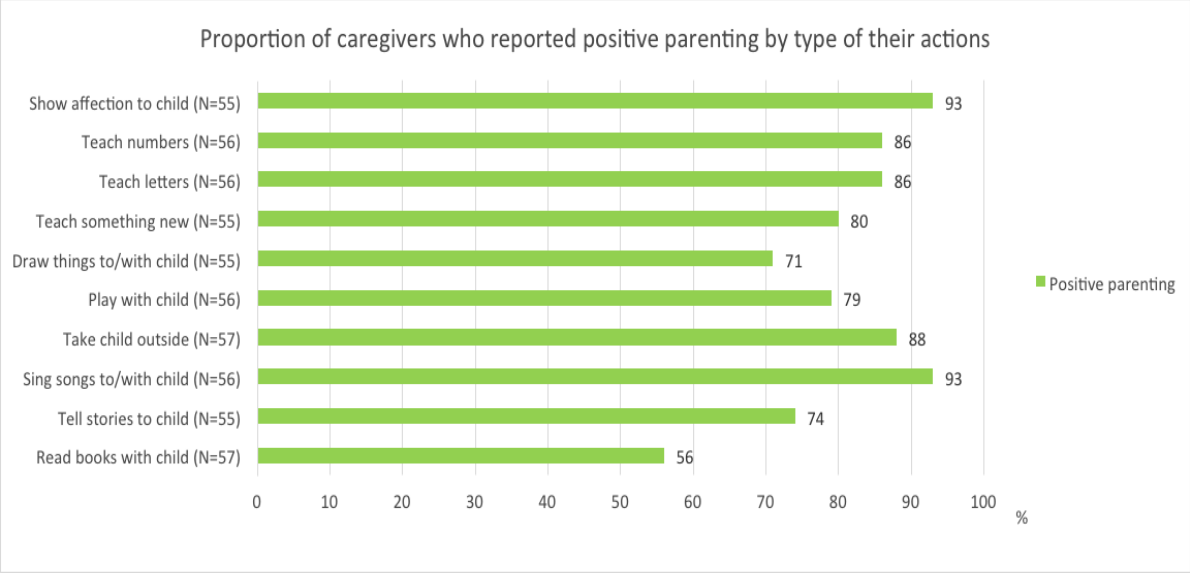
'Some of the communities we went to, we were trying to reach the target number – so sometimes we tried to fill the gap but not necessarily with a parent/relation to the child being interviewed. We need to plan better in the future – giving people at least a few days notice before so they can prepare accordingly.'[22]

The figures below are included only to demonstrate the type of data that can be generated from caregiver respondents regarding their own self-assessment of their positive and negative parenting practices. No conclusions can be drawn from this data regarding the children who were assessed as part of the pilot.

As shown in figure 6, the caregivers interviewed rated themselves quite highly across all of the positive parenting behaviours except reading books with child. The highest rated behaviours were singing songs with child (N=52) and showing affection to child (N=51). 55% of all respondents (N=32) said they read books with child.

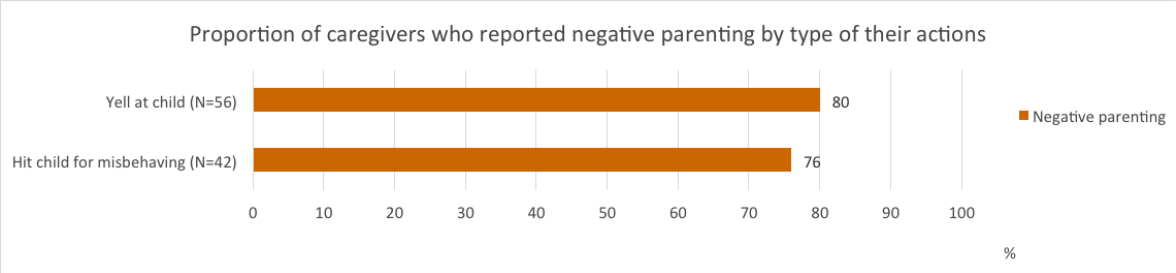
[21] IDELA Technical Working Paper, August 2015
[22] Interview respondent, May 2016

Figure 6: Caregivers' self assessment of positive parenting



In terms of negative parenting behaviours, 76% of all respondents (N=44) said they yell at their child and 55% of all respondents (N=32) said they hit their child for misbehaving.

Figure 7: Caregivers' self assessment of negative parenting



What modifications and upgrades are recommended to better contextualise IDELA in Solomon Islands?

As already noted in the previous section, language was the key issue in this pilot study. In future, there needs to be a thorough situational analysis undertaken in advance of any data collection to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the language/s spoken in the different communities and sites that are to be surveyed. All stakeholders need to be aware of the importance of mother tongue in education. Assessment tools need to be tailored accordingly and an assessment team assembled and trained that comprises people with appropriate language skills to be able to interact with the children, caregivers, teachers and community members in each location. This takes a considerable amount of advance planning but is pivotal to the success of any future assessment exercise.

In terms of the IDELA tool itself, interviewees identified that some of the pictures that were used were not contextually appropriate for Solomon Islands and need to be changed for a future assessment. For example, some of the children didn't recognise pictures of the animals because they had never seen them before. The same comment was raised about the fruits that were pictured.

'We need to contextualise much better and use local items that children are used to seeing and being around. In some islands we have local apples but they are very different from the one we had in the training cards.'[23]

'When you show them a picture, they have no idea – especially in rural communities. We also need to recognise the diversity across Solomon Islands – for example, differences between locations close to urban areas versus remote provinces.'[24]

How can Save the Children better implement IDELA data collection, analysis and interpretation for strengthening future ECCD programming and policy-making in the Pacific?

This pilot study confirmed the IDELA tool can be administered to assess children's learning and developmental milestones in a Pacific context. As this report outlines above, there are modifications required to ensure the IDELA tool is contextually appropriate for Solomon Islands but these can be addressed. It would be interesting to engage ECD facilitators and ECE teachers in the contextualisation of the tool to increase their familiarity with it, leverage their local knowledge, and enhance their understanding of IDELA's purpose as part of their own capacity development. Future assessments also require significant advance planning and adequate training to ensure assessment teams are set up for success.

It is evident from this pilot study that IDELA has the potential to generate rich and tangible information that can be mined to enhance the quality of ECCD curricula to improve children's early learning experiences and outcomes; inform preliminary assessment of current skills and knowledge of ECCD facilitators and their capacity development needs; and guide monitoring and continuous improvement of ECCD programs.

There is a substantial amount of information within the IDELA pilot data set that would be of enormous value to further explore. For example, assessors commented on the influence of age and language in terms of children's level of interest, engagement and performance. It is a reasonable assumption that these are important factors but the data set needs to be further analysed to understand if these assumptions are actually evidence-based or if the factors are actually negligible.

Disaggregation of the data down to sub-item level would also provide more nuanced information to facilitate greater analysis. A substantial amount of the current data set is categorised 'not all correctly completed' – a category that comprises both incorrect and

[23] Interview respondent, May 2016
[24] Interview respondent, May 2016

correct responses across sub-items. Increased granularity of analysis would provide a more nuanced picture of how children are performing across the different assessment domains and facilitate further triangulation of information through qualitative follow up.

It would also enable much deeper analysis of where enumerators might be encountering challenges. For example, during the training, once assessors were familiar with IDELA, they took approximately 45 minutes per assessment. This is in line with what is usually expected. However, when the team went out to conduct the pilot, the time taken to conduct the assessments ranged from 16 minutes to 100 minutes. The majority of assessments (59%) fell within the range of 30-49 minutes but the outliers would be interesting to explore in more depth. It would be useful to understand if there is any correlation between time taken and numbers of no-response/missing data; if there are any trends over time (ie did the assessors get faster or slower as the schedule progressed); or if there are any trends related to particular assessors. This would all be highly valuable data to inform future training programs.

Recommendations

- Save the Children should organise a meeting to share the findings from this pilot study with the Solomon Islands MEHRD Director of Community Education and School Services Department and promote the use of IDELA as an assessment tool across the country. Save the Children needs to be aware MEHRD has limited capacity to lead on the roll out of IDELA and any implementation strategy will need to be undertaken by Save the Children and/or other partners, with the endorsement of MEHRD. Save the Children should continue to invite MEHRD personnel to participate in any future IDELA trainings.

- Save the Children should share the findings of this pilot study with the Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu Country Offices and identify potential opportunities for engaging with relevant stakeholders (PNG NDoE, UoG, Vanuatu MoET etc). Save the Children should also explore possible cross-country learning opportunities between education sector projects in the three countries.

- Future IDELA training workshops need to be at least five full days in length. Trainings need to adopt more ‘learning by doing’ and reduce the ‘learning by listening’ approach and the schedule needs to include sufficient time for a comprehensive debrief after every field practice visit. Practice assessments should be undertaken with children from three and a half years to six years if possible so assessors have the opportunity to practice their skills with different age groups.

- Future IDELA training workshops also need to reinforce the importance of caregiver surveys and how to correctly record caregiver and child identifications in order to correlate the two data sets and maximise the learning from this information.

- All training tools and materials need to be translated into the appropriate local languages in advance of the training and all translation needs to be verified by an external party for quality assurance.

- IDELA assessment teams must have the appropriate language skills to conduct data collection at a given location – this needs to be a mandatory selection criterion.

- All materials used during the IDELA assessment must be contextually appropriate for the specific assessment location, including consideration of both urban and rural contexts and the wide diversity of flora and fauna across geographically dispersed countries. ECCD facilitators should be involved in the contextualisation of the tool to increase their familiarity with it, leverage their local knowledge and enhance their understanding of IDELA's purpose.

References

Pisani L, Borisova, I, Dowd AJ, *IDELA Technical Working Paper*, Save the Children US, August 2015

Ball, J, *Solomon Islands Early Childhood Education Sector Review*, November 2015

Government of Vanuatu, *National Early Childhood Care and Education Framework* (https://moet.gov.vu/docs/ecce-reports-and-policies/Vanuatu%20National%20Early%20Childhood%20Care%20and%20Education%20Framework.pdf)

Annex A: List of interview participants

Interviewees	Organisation
Nora Charif Chefchaouni	Education Advisor, Save the Children Australia
Julian Fenny Lilo	Director of Community Education and School Services Department, Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development
Nami Kurimoto	Program Quality Advisor, Save the Children Australia
Joy Likaveke	Program Officer, Save the Children Solomon Islands
Florence Maega'asia	Program Officer, Save the Children Solomon Islands
Sheebah Mirisa	Program Quality Advisor, Save the Children Solomon Islands
Placida Misiga	Program Officer, Save the Children Solomon Islands
David Nye	Program Quality Manager, Save the Children Australia
Hellen Sara	ECD Facilitator, Save the Children Solomon Islands
Fredrick Seni	Program Quality Advisor, Save the Children Solomon Islands
Paul Sukulu	Program Quality Advisor, Save the Children Solomon Islands

Annex B: Pilot study program schedule

Resources

- Class list - four locations (Taubariki, Vura, Veuru, Gilutatea)
- Consent forms – Parents
- Consent forms – Children
- Questionnaires for Caregivers
- IDELA toolkit
- Sample size (children: 15 – 20), Parents (10 – 15)
- Watch to keep time

Logistics

- Transportation (vehicle)

Program for IDELA assessment: Monday 25-Friday 29 April 2016

Date	Site	Activity
25 April	**Taubariki**	• Depart from Office • Arrive at Taubariki ECD Centre • Prepare assessment sites • Identify children who live further away • Introduce SC staff & Ready child's consent form and Officers collect children • Conduct Assessment (Children – 20 – 3 children/assessor) • End of Assessment • Caregiver interview (Caregivers – 15 - 2/3 caregivers per officer) • Debrief on Day 1 and preparation for Day 2 • Data sorting and entry
26 April	**Taubariki**	• Depart from Office • Arrive at Taubariki ECD Centre • Prepare assessment sites • Identify children who live further away • Ready child's consent form and Officers collect children • Conduct Assessment (Children – 20 – 3 children/assessor) • End of Assessment • Caregiver interview (Caregivers – 15 - 2/3 caregivers per officer) • Debrief on Day 2 and preparation for Day 3 • Data sorting and entry • Call Vura to confirm preparation for Day 3
27 April	**Vura**	• Depart from Office • Arrive at Vura ECD centre

		• Prepare assessment sites • Introduce SC staff • Ready child's consent form and Officer collect children • Identify children who live far away • Conduct Assessment (Children – 20 – 3 children/assessor) • End of Assessment • Caregiver interview (Caregivers – 15 - 2/3 caregivers per officer) • Debrief of Day 3 and preparation for Day 4 • Data sorting and entry • Call Veura to confirm preparation for Day 4
28 April	**Veura**	• Depart from Office • Arrive at Veura ECD centre • Prepare assessment sites • Introduce SC staff • Ready child's consent form and Officers collect children • Identify children who live far way • Conduct Assessment (Children – 20 – 3 children/assessor) • End of Assessment • Caregiver interview (Caregivers – 15 - 2/3 caregivers per officer) • Debrief of Day 4 and preparation for Day 5 • Data sorting and entry • Call Gilutatea to confirm preparation for Day 5
29 April	**Gilutatea**	• Depart from Office • Arrive at ECD centre • Prepare assessment sites • Introduce SC staff • Ready child's consent form and Officers collect children • Conduct Assessment (Children – 20 – 3 children/assessor) • End of Assessment • Caregiver interview (Caregivers – 15 - 2/3 caregivers per officer) • Debrief of Day 5 • Data sorting and entry