



Government of the Cook Islands



TE PITO MANAVA O TE ANAU



COOK ISLANDS

NATIONAL POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR
CHILDREN



2017 ~ 2021



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Government of the Cook Islands through the Ministry of Internal Affairs gratefully acknowledge the core support provided by UNICEF to the development of the Te Pito Manava o te Anau – Cook Islands National Policy Framework for Children 2017-2021, the first national Policy for Children of this nation.

The same acknowledgement extend to key government stakeholders, non-government organizations, community leaders and individuals who kindly gave valuable contributions and support during the consultations and compilations of this policy. Most unique in the development of this policy is the contributions by school students aged 5 – 18 years old on Rarotonga, Aitutaki, Atiu and Mangaia.

A special acknowledgement to Ms Elizabeth Wright-Koteka for the technical expertise in developing this policy. Atawai wolo.

Set on a sunrise background in the Northern Group islands of the Cook Islands, the photographs of the children on the cover page of the Policy depict the 15 islands of the Cook Islands and are only for the purpose of this policy

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FOREWORD

As Minister for Internal Affairs, it is my great pleasure to present the Te Pito Manava o te Anau – Cook Islands National Policy Framework for Children 2017 - 2021.

This document sets out the Government's key commitments to children up to the age of 18. It is rooted in the determination to make the Cook Islands a great place in which to be a child.

Our vision is that the Cook Islands is a great place in which to grow up in and raise a family, and where the rights of all children are respected, protected and fulfilled, where their voices are heard and where they are supported to achieve their maximum potential now and into the future.

There are two strong messages in this vision. Firstly, our commitment to protect the rights of children and listen to them. Secondly, we value our children for who they are as what they will become in the future.

In doing so, we recognise that this is a shared commitment and accountability for better outcomes and a brighter future for all our children. We value the primary role of parents and families and the importance of community engagement and support. This framework also acknowledges that Government must take the lead, so that we really give current and future generations the best chance possible to realise their potential now and in the future.

Genuine partnerships is critical in implementing this framework. It is my hope that we will all work together and collaborate in bringing about the life and future that our children want.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Albert Nicholas', written in a cursive style.

Hon. Albert Nicholas
Minister for Ministry of Internal Affairs
Cook Islands
August 2017

INTRODUCTION

Te Pito Manava o te Anau: National Policy Framework for Children sets out the Cook Islands Government's agenda and priorities in relation to children aged under 18 years – up to the year 2021. It signifies a whole of Government effort to ensure brighter futures for children, acknowledging the shared responsibility of achieving results and the importance of doing so within available resources. Although focused on a whole of Government effort, it recognises that implementation requires a concerted effort by the Government to engage with communities; Non-Government, Civil Society, Faith Based Organisations; and Development Partners. This policy framework is grounded in the Cook Islands culture and also the country's commitments under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

Te Pito Manava o te Anau: National Policy Framework for Children adopts an outcomes approach, based on five national outcomes for children. These outcomes are that our children:

1. Are active and healthy, physically and mentally.
2. Are achieving their full potential in all areas of learning and development.
3. Are safe and protected from harm.
4. Have economic safety measures and opportunity.
5. Are connected, respected and contributing positively to their world.

This outcomes approach will underpin all subsequent interrelated strategies.

To realise the five national outcomes for children, a number of cross cutting themes that require strengthening have been identified and prioritised. These themes are termed 'transformational goals' as they are key to ensuring policies and services are made more effective in achieving outcomes. These goals will be a core focus for collective attention and improvement within the timeframe of *Te Pito Manava o te Anau: National Policy Framework for Children*. The six transformational goals are:

1. Support parents and families
2. Earlier intervention and prevention
3. Listen to and involve children
4. Ensure quality services
5. Strengthen transitions
6. Cross Government and interagency collaboration and coordination

This Policy Framework is aligned to the goals of the National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP) in particular:

Goal 1	Improve welfare, reduce inequity and economic hardship
Goal 2	Expand economic opportunities, improve economic resilience and productive employment to ensure decent work for all
Goal 7	Improve health and promote healthy lifestyles

Goal 8	Inclusive, equitable and quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities
Goal 9	Accelerate gender equality empower all women and girls, and advance the rights of youth, the elderly and the disabled
Goal 14	Preserve our heritage and history, protect our traditional knowledge, and develop our language, creative and cultural endeavours
Goal 15	Ensure a sustainable population, engaged in development for Cook Islanders by Cook Islanders
Goal 16	Promote a peaceful and just society and practice good governance with transparency and accountability

Te Pito Manava o te Anau Policy Framework is also aligned to other key strategic documents, such as the Education Master Plan, National Health Strategy, National Strategy and Action Plan for NCD, National Gender Policy, Disability Inclusive Development Policy and Action Plan. It should be noted that this Policy Framework is also closely aligned and overlaps with the National Youth Policy 2015-2020. It also reflects key legislation such as the Education Act, Ministry of Health Act, Welfare Act and its Amendments, Prevention of Juvenile Crime Act and its Amendments, Crimes Act and its Amendments, Disability Act, and the Family Protection and Support Act.

The framework has been informed by comprehensive consultations in the Cook Islands community, including, most importantly, children aged 5 – 18 years old. A child is defined in this framework as below the age of 18 aligning with the definitions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Family Protection and Support Act. These consultations with children were conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. Gaining insights into children’s perspectives was through participatory activities at the primary school level and a voluntary online survey for secondary school students. A total of 559 primary school students and 176 secondary school students have significantly informed this Policy Framework.

Input was also gained from key government stakeholders, non-government actors, Island Government’s, traditional leaders and communities both in Rarotonga and selected Pa Enuā. This input was provided through face to face meetings, focus group discussions and an online community survey.

Te Pito Manava o te Anau Framework hopes for a concerted effort to move policy development and service delivery beyond the present scenario – where children are viewed primarily through the lens of narrow organisational responsibilities – to a whole of Government response, that will work collaboratively with other non-government actors and the community as a whole. This represents a shift in thinking which aspires for a more seamless approach between a range of child, youth and adult services, uniting policy focus on children.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SUPPORTING CHILDREN FOR THEIR FUTURE AND THAT OF SOCIETY

Our five national outcomes spell out what we want for our children now and as they mature to adulthood and become parents themselves. Investment in children is not only a social responsibility but that it makes good economic sense, requiring a medium to long term perspective. Our children and young people are the future of our country. They are a significant resource which should be an important element in our economic planning. Investment in children is parallel to a capital investment from which there are significant returns.

It is scientifically proven that the brain is most determinative in the early years of life. Its ability to adapt and develop slows with age. Early experiences determine whether a child's developing brain makeup provides a strong or weak footing for learning, behaviour and physical and mental health in the future. Investment in a child's early years is essential. The early years are also a critical time to identify and intervene in providing support for children with disabilities or special education, education, health and social behavioural needs.

Investment must continue throughout childhood and adolescence. Children's experiences, knowledge and skills gained have important implications on his/her prospects in adulthood. While there may be factors in a child's life that increase propensity of getting into trouble, there are also protective factors that can buffer harmful influences. These protective factors promote resilience, which leads to the achievement of good outcomes despite risks to development.

Consultations have indicated that resilience can be built and good outcomes achieved if there is a sense of self-worth, self-esteem, relationships that offer care, love, trust both within and outside of the family, and when they grow and develop in supportive and caring communities.

The consultations have shown that the majority of children in the Cook Islands are relatively healthy, enjoy school and are happy with their lives. However, a small, but important fraction need focused support to ensure that they too lead good lives.

As a country, we aspire to be a society where children are special. The voices of children say that we should support their wellbeing, happiness and health. Their voices have also indicated that childhood is a precious time of exploration, excitement, joy and wonder.

'Te Pito Manava o te Anau' sets out the policy framework in which we will collectively improve outcomes for children. It identifies, the approaches and priorities that will enable us to deliver on our aspirations.

OUR VISION

The Cook Islands is a great place in which to grow up in and raise a family, and where the rights of all children are respected, protected and fulfilled; where their voices are heard and where they are supported to achieve their maximum potential now and in the future.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Te Pito Manava o te Anau is guided by the following principles. These principles will, consecutively, steer the implementation and monitoring of this Policy Framework.

Akangateitei – Respect

Respect is defined as having regard for the feelings, wishes or rights of others. It is the foundation of solid relationships. It is acknowledged that the feelings, wishes and rights of children should be respected, and in return, children will respect their parents, families, authorities and society as a whole.

Te Tikaanga o te Tamariki – Children’s Rights

The rights of children, as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, are recognised. It is acknowledged that children’s developmental and age-appropriate needs evolve over time, and that children are sometimes vulnerable and largely depend on adults for their care and needs.

Ututuanga e te kopu tangata – Family focused

The family is recognised as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and wellbeing of children. It is acknowledged that parents have the primary responsibility for children’s upbringing and that Government has a duty to help parents in fulfilling this responsibility.

Akaaitete I te ngakianga – Equality

The diversity of children’s experiences, abilities, personalities and circumstances is acknowledged and reducing inequalities is promoted as a means of improving outcomes and gaining greater social inclusion.

Tatari matatio kia tiratiratu – Evidence informed, accountable and outcomes focused

Policies and services must be evidence based and outcomes focused, with accountability mechanisms and clear lines of responsibility for delivery to ensure effective implementation. It is acknowledged that policies and services for children and their families are based on identified needs, informed by knowledge, practice and focused on achieving results within agreed timeframes and in a targeted cost-effective manner.

PART 1

TRANSFORMATIONAL GOALS



These 6 transformational goals are cross cutting across all of the 5 national outcome areas of Te Pito Manava o te Anau – National Policy Framework for Children. These will be pursued in parallel to the aims and actions targeting the realisation of the 5 national outcome areas of Te Pito Manava o te Anau – National Policy Framework for Children.

1 SUPPORT PARENTS AND FAMILIES

Parents are the primary carers of children. Good parenting can provide a loving, safe home; encourage learning and healthy living; influence the development of social networks; and support children in their journey towards greater independence and interaction with the world around them. Ensuring parents and families are appropriately supported to care for their children is essential to realising the rights of children, preventing child abuse and neglect. Raising a family is never easy. Contemporary parenthood faces many diverse pressures and challenges from managing a work-life balance, to trying to understand and access information and assistance. Supporting parents to positively and confidently parent is essential.

Hearing our children and communities voices and seeing the facts

- During consultations both children and adults have highlighted the importance of good parenting and the positive influence of families in the development of children.
- The majority of children consulted have indicated that their families are the most important element in their lives.
- The majority of children consulted have indicated that they are loved by their parents and their families.
- Both children and adults consulted recognise the growing hardships faced by parents and families. This seems to be more predominant on Rarotonga in comparison to the pa enua, where subsistence livelihoods are still a strong feature of family life.
- There appears to be greater engagement between parents/families and children in the pa enua in comparison to Rarotonga. This is attributed to the fact that children are very involved in maintaining subsistence livelihoods – planting and fishing with their parents or other family members. In addition, there is a stronger sense of community in the pa enua and the participation of the entire family in community activities, such as church is the norm.
- The changes in lifestyles and desires account for transformations in family life. In Rarotonga, it is common for both parents to be in paid employment to maintain a certain lifestyle. In some cases, this contributes to the neglect of children, alcohol and substance abuse by parents/caregivers, domestic violence, and so forth.
- Consultations have also indicated that parents have far greater distractions now than the past, with many parents regularly socialising. It has also been suggested that in some instances, this has become a means of escaping the pressures of parenting and the hardships of life in general.
- Neglect or abuse by parents or family members can increase children’s risk of entering the justice system.
- Inability to parent due to substance misuse, disability, mental health issues, domestic violence are key factors leading to children being placed at risk.
- ‘Tau te uki, tau te tuatau’, ‘e uki marokiakia e te kaurarokore’ are commonly heard phrases. Parents say that children in this generation are difficult, they do not want to work like they used to, they lack respect, they don’t listen and they spend too much time on their technological gadgets. Children respond by saying parents do not

understand them and that times have indeed changed. They need to be more connected to the world outside.

- A small, but significant number of children have been identified as coming from families which suffer from 'intergenerational hardship or dysfunctionality' and are regularly getting into trouble, apparently, just as one of their parents did. This intergenerational condition needs to be addressed.
- Parents and families need support at every stage of a child's development, from pregnancy to early childhood to adolescence.
- Good parenting supports/instruments should encourage positive parenting and discipline approaches.
- A significant proportion of children are being cared for by grandparents and other relatives, illustrating the changes to family structures as a result of a child moving from the outer islands to Rarotonga, a child moving from New Zealand and Australia to the Cook Islands or parents moving abroad to seek greater economic opportunities.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child places a duty on Government to respect the rights and responsibilities of parents (Article 5) and to assist them with their child-rearing responsibilities (Article 18).

The Government Recognises:

- Almost all aspects of public policy impact on some aspect of parenting, including health, education, environment, justice, employment laws, welfare payments.
- Parents and families have the greatest influence for good outcomes for children.
- *What* parents and families do is more important than *who* they are. How children are parented has a greater impact on a child's future than wealth, socio-economic standing or any other social factor.
- Structural and macro-economic factors including income, employment, labour market forces, demography, politics, culture, society structures; can impact on parents and families creating parental and family stress.
- Good parenting support can improve some of the negative effects of intergenerational hardship or dysfunctionality.
- A supportive home learning environment is linked with children's early achievements and wellbeing.
- Good parenting programs and interventions used should be proven to improve parenting skills, confidence, reduce parental stress, improve child wellbeing and behaviour and increase enjoyment and satisfaction in parenting.
- The importance of maternity and parental leave in enabling parents to be with their children in their first days.

GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS

The Government commits to:

(Note: Government ministry/agency responsible for action in brackets, with the lead agency indicated in bold)

1. Develop a high-level policy statement on Parenting and Family Support to guide the provision of parenting support systems/mechanisms. This should target parental and familial factors impacting on parenting and family functioning and identify responses needed for at risk children, families and communities. **(Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, Police)**
2. Work together with non-government and faith-based organisations and communities to ensure planning and coordination of parenting and family supports at the island/community levels through Children's Services Champions. **(Ministry of Internal Affairs, Island Governments)**
3. Continue to financially support parents and families with the costs of raising children through the provision of the Child Benefit and other social protection programmes, continually examining ways of better improving financial support to parents and families. **(Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management)**

2

EARLIER INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION

Prevention and early intervention means getting involved when children are very young, or earlier on when difficulties are presumed and observed, or at stages where vulnerability is increased such as adolescence and parenthood.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child puts a duty on Government to work towards the prevention of discrimination (Article 2), child abuse (Article 19), other forms of exploitation (Articles 33 and 34) and to have in place preventive healthcare and services. Early intervention is often a determining factor in the realisation of children's rights. For example, a successful intervention which keeps a child in school will help fulfil his/her right to education (Article 28).

Hearing our children and communities voices and seeing the facts

- In health, our immunization program for children is effective as a result of the implementation of the Ministry of Health National Immunization Policy. Public Health nurses are proactive in ensuring that children receive the immunization required.
- Whilst there are intervention and prevention measure in place, according to those consulted, these are inadequate in terms of reach, capacity to implement, resourcing and therefore effectiveness.
- Early intervention and prevention initiatives are not known to the wider public. There needs to be greater awareness of services that are available to ensure that those in the community who recognise the need for early intervention and prevention know how and where assistance can be sought from.
- Greater collaboration is required to ensure good early intervention and prevention.
- Prevention and early intervention should address developing problems and the pathway to more positive outcomes for the child involved, with the view of also breaking intergenerational disadvantage.
- The school counselling team commenced collating statistics for students presenting issues in 2016 over the 4 terms of the year. Issues presented were: self-esteem (confidence, resiliency, vulnerability); family problems (conflict, safety, relationships, support); grief or loss (family loss, change, separation); relationships (conflict, breakdown, communication, support); peer pressure (vulnerability, victimisation, antisocial behaviour, bullying); sexual health (safety, wellbeing, health education, referrals); parent meeting (family meeting, support, disciplinary, wellbeing); general health (wellness, physical, treatment referrals); mental health (emotional wellbeing, health); school problem (attendance, behavioural, disciplinary); community issues (offending, support, referral, community agency liaison); other (general information, support, mentoring, community agency referrals). Of these issues, the top three most frequently presented were relating to self-esteem, family problems and relationships.

- The school counsellors noted that term 3 of 2016 presented the most issues. This could possibly be attributed to the increased pressure faced by students during examination time. The majority of cases were self-referral by the student. Others were referred for counselling by teaching staff, other schools, family and community including the Police and Ministry of Internal Affairs.

The Government recognises:

- Common services are the main providers of prevention and early intervention, therefore schools, youth, community and health services need to be inclusive and accessible.
- Prevention and early intervention makes economic sense. The lifetime costs associated with early school leaving, personal difficulties and behavioural issues are assumed by a wide range of agencies, both within and out of Government. Therefore a partnership approach to planning, funding and implementation of prevention and early intervention services is required.

GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS

The Government commits to:

(**Note:** Government ministry/agency responsible for action in brackets, with lead agency indicated in **bold**)

- Continue to implement the National Immunization Policy. (**Ministry of Health**)
- Continue to provide free health services to all children. (**Ministry of Health**)
- Continue to increase investment in quality early years care and education for all children. (**Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Internal Affairs**)
- Support quality youth work targeting adolescences, both as a protective factor contributing to the young person's overall development and in reaching out to young people at risk of dropping out of the formal education system, committing crime or anti-social behaviour. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Police)
- Training and up-skilling of people across formal and non-formal situations to be able to identify potential child welfare and mental health issues, and to provide preventative and early intervention support. (**Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health**, Office of the Public Service Commissioner)
- Profile key risk factors for poor outcomes for children and develop instruments to assist in identifying and working with families to mitigating these risks. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health)
- Develop and implement Area Specific Childhood Programs to improve outcomes in areas of disadvantage, given that there are differences between and within our islands and communities. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health)

- Explore opportunities to rebalance resources with a greater emphasis on prevention and early intervention. (**Ministry of Finance and Economic Management**, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health)
- Provide the opportunity for more dialogue and awareness on the early intervention and prevention initiatives (including processes to follow) to the general public on Rarotonga, as well, as the outer islands.

3

LISTEN TO AND INVOLVE CHILDREN

Children should be empowered to be actors in the decisions that affect their lives. Therefore listening to and involving children is a central social process for inclusion and encouragement for children to be active members of society in their own right. If better outcomes are desired for children, then they should be listened to and involved, in relation to decisions impacting on their lives.

A general principle of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is that a children's views be taken into consideration in all matters which affect them in accordance to their age and maturity (Article 12)

Hearing our children and communities voices and seeing the facts

- The children consulted have indicated that they would like to be able to express their views on matters that impact on their lives. Some children have said that they would be happy if their parents and families talked to them much more, not only telling them what to do, but also asking them for their opinions and perspectives.
- The majority of adults consulted have also indicated that children should be involved in decision making processes that will impact on their lives and that children's opinions should be encouraged and not suppressed. Adults should facilitate children's voices to be heard.

The Government recognises:

- Promoting the participation of children in decision making involves taking their views and opinions seriously, acknowledging them and responding to them appropriately.
- The process of hearing and listening to children's voices should be respectful of the dignity of children and the contribution that they can make, based on their unique experiences and perspectives either individually or collectively.
- 'Seldom-heard' children (for example, children with disability) are also important and effort must be made to ensure that they are heard.

GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS

The Government commits to:

(Note: Government ministry/agency responsible for action in brackets, with lead agency indicated in **bold**)

- Develop and implement a National Policy on Children's Participation in Decision-making to strengthen efforts to ensure that children can express their views on all matters affecting them and to have those views considered, including those of 'seldom heard' children. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**)

- Strengthen opportunities for children to be heard in primary, secondary schools and vocational institutions, through student councils and age appropriate mechanisms. **(Ministry of Education)**
- Implement provisions of the Family Law Act relating to providing children the opportunity to be heard in judicial proceedings affecting them. **(Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Justice)**
- Establish Children’s and Youth Participation Hubs to promote children’s participation in decision making where appropriate, at the national, island and community levels. **(Ministry of Internal Affairs)**



ENSURE QUALITY SERVICES

Meeting the needs of children requires quality and effective services and supports. These should be in child/adolescent friendly surroundings and provided in ways that make them accessible to children/adolescences.

Having quality and effective services and supports will contribute positively to the achievement of the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Hearing our communities voices and seeing the facts

- The children and communities consulted have indicated that services provided to address children's needs are inadequate.
- There is insufficient evidence to inform the services and supports required for children, parents and families.
- The approach to service provision is fragmented with collaboration lacking across key actors.
- Services for children from disadvantaged backgrounds are lacking and are generally ineffective.
- There is too much focus on academic achievement in the education curriculum meaning that those less academically focused are left behind and have propensity to be at risk.
- There should be greater collaboration between the government, non-government organisations, faith based organisations, community structures and communities as a whole.
- Capacity in delivering quality and effective services is lacking.
- Some services are better delivered by those outside of government. However, resourcing is an issue and should be supported by Government.

The Government recognises:

- The literature on quality and effective services for children indicate that these need to be outcomes focused and evidence based; address the multifaceted nature of needs building on family strengths and seeking to empower families; work with the child as an individual and as part of a family and the wider community; be grounded in and work in partnership with the community, actively encourage participation and engagement of children and their families; be delivered by trained and supported staff and volunteers; have good quality assurance systems in place; have strong leadership with appropriate structures, culture and strategic direction; have interagency working collaboratively and communicating well.
- The importance of inclusion and access for those children from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with disabilities.
- Children in the Pa Enea may face particular difficulties in accessing services given the spread of islands and the cost of delivery for services.

- The need for joint and shared responsibility for the welfare and protection of children across all actors working with children.

GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS

The Government commits to:

(**Note:** Government ministry/agency responsible for action in brackets, with lead agency indicated in **bold**)

- Develop and implement a National Service Delivery Framework for children’s welfare and protection. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health)
- Review the scope and functions of Government agencies working with children to ensure improve delivery of services and supports. (**Office of the Public Service Commissioner**)
- Develop a common assessment approach with all agencies working with children to ensure that decision making is consistent, timely and comprehensive. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, Police)
- Ensure that Government funded programs and services are outcomes focused with clear demonstration that outcomes can be improved. (**Ministry of Finance and Economic Management**)
- Prioritise programs (with particular attention to community based programs and those to be implemented by non-government organisations) for children most at risk. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management)
- Support the training and capacity building for those working directly with children. (**Ministry of Education**, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Internal Affairs)

Promote greater collaboration between Government, non-government and faith based organisations, community structures and communities as whole in addressing the needs of children. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, Police)



SUPPORT EFFECTIVE TRANSITIONS

Children experience some key transition points in their lives and their journey from childhood to adulthood. They experience changes when they begin early childhood education, attend primary school, move on to secondary school, leave school, and from living at home, to live on their own or others. Some children may transition from living at home to living in care situations and then leaving that care setting. Others may transition from being a carefree child to requiring health or mental services. Given the fluid nature of population mobility, some children transition from living in New Zealand or Australia to living in the Cook Islands, while others have to adapt from living on their home islands to living in Rarotonga. All these transitions reinforce the development of a child's identity and sense of self-worth and wellbeing.

Supporting effective transitions will contribute positively to the achievement of the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Hearing our communities voices and seeing the facts

- Adapting to change is difficult.
- There is not enough focus on ensuring that our children transition well.
- Moving from the pa enua to Rarotonga is difficult. For those children that move, transition to living in a different environment, usually with other family members and to learning in an environment that is different from what they are accustomed to can be a challenging experience.
- Moving from New Zealand or Australia, for some children is difficult requiring the child to adapt to a different environment with possible dissimilar societal norms can be destabilising.

The Government recognises:

- Transitions for some children can be upsetting and destabilising.
- Children that are vulnerable can be placed at greater risk during times of transition.
- Providing support at key moments of transition can help towards better outcomes.
- The value of strong social networks gained through involvement in youth, sporting, cultural and community activities can positively contribute to stability in times of transition, particularly for those children who are more vulnerable.
- The importance of transition during the educational journey of a child and the change between school and employment.
- The challenge in transitions for those children with disabilities maybe greater than for those that are able.
- Supporting effective transitions is beneficial to the individuals themselves and to the community as a whole.

GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS

The Government commits to:

(Note: Government ministry/agency responsible for action in brackets, with lead agency indicated in **bold**)

- Bring a stronger focus on effective transitions, particularly within education, health, child welfare and justice services. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice)
- Explore and adopt strategies to strengthen transitions through the education system, including ensuring coherency of curriculum approach, school connections and promoting in-school practices such as peer to peer support. (**Ministry of Education**)
- Increase opportunities for adolescences to enter employment through strengthening work experience opportunities. (**Ministry of Education**, Ministry of Internal Affairs)
- Strengthen programs to provide support for adolescences who are most at risks to ensure better transitions. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Education**, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health, Police)

CROSS-GOVERNMENT AND INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION

This is a framework for all of Government, and the added value that can be gained through greater collaboration and coordination, with a focus on implementation. By placing the needs of the child at the centre of implementation, better outcomes, more efficient use of resources and improved satisfaction among parents, children and those who work with children can be realised by working together.

Hearing our communities voices and seeing the facts

- Consultations indicated that our approach to ensuring good outcomes for children is fragmented across government. There is lack of clarity on roles, responsibilities and accountability.
- Leadership is an essential element for change and improvement in the lives of children.
- Good outcomes for children are dependent on the people that surround the child.
- There is not enough real time data that is analysed to inform decision making, planning, resourcing and policy.
- Examples of 'what works' and 'why' from elsewhere can also be used to inform decision making.
- Children's issues are not given enough prominence. They need to be given priority with adequate resources provided.

GOVERNMENT RECOGNISES:

- The importance of cross-government and interagency collaboration and coordination is required across the dimensions of people, organisational structures, evidence and data analysis and funding.
- Bringing about change requires significant leadership at all levels – nationally, locally, politically, professionally and within the community. Champions are required to drive the agenda for children forward.
- There must be active involvement by those working with children in addressing systems, processes and decision making.
- Everybody working with children (including politicians, policy makers, educators, health professionals, youth workers, social workers, the judiciary, legal professionals) have to work collaboratively; create a culture that respects and progresses the rights of the child; involve and consult with children; be accountable for results.
- Organisational barriers should not become implementation barriers.
- The importance of understanding data and research is critical for informed decision making.
- Alignment of funding priorities for children, taking into consideration fiscal constraints and the most effective and efficient use of resources.

- Strengthening partnerships with non-government and faith based organisations, community structures, development partners and the community as whole is fundamental.

GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS

The Government commits to:

(**Note:** Government ministry/agency responsible for action in brackets, with lead agency indicated in **bold**)

- Support the development of training programs which encourages leadership and collaboration of people working with children. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Office of the Public Service Commissioner)
- Build the required project and change management capabilities to implement this Framework. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Office of the Public Service Commissioner)
- Strengthen the performance culture within the public service through continuously improving performance management systems and management of under-performance. (**Office of the Public Service Commissioner**)
- Adopt an effective interagency approach in relation to cases of child welfare and protection, establishing information and coordinating processes between agencies serving children, and adult focused addiction, domestic violence and mental health services. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Police, Office of the Public Service Commissioner)
- Formally establish the National Children’s Committee which will be linked to implementation and awareness at the local and community levels, as well as compliance with international reporting obligations. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**)
- Where viable, establish integrated services or ‘hubs’ for children. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health)
- Address information sharing issues across government and strengthen the integration of data systems. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Police, Office of the Prime Minister’s ICT division, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management’s National Statistics Office)
- Develop information protocols to assist in the sharing of information, where appropriate, in particular for children who are vulnerable or at risk. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, Police)
- Develop a comprehensive set of indicators to support the Framework and ensure monitoring of the 5 outcome areas. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Office of the Prime Minister’s Policy and Planning division)
- Ensure that resource allocations are to services and programs that can justify and provide evidence of effectiveness in improving outcomes for children. (**Ministry of Finance and Economic Management**)

PART 2

NATIONAL OUTCOMES

In Part 1, the Framework addresses 6 identified cross cutting transformational goals, which will be prioritised over the next 5 years to enable better outcomes.

In Part 2, the Framework focuses on each of the 5 National Outcome Areas and captures current commitments and improving policy and services in relation to each area.

Active & Healthy,
Physically &
Mentally

Achieving full
potential in all
areas of learning &
development

Safe and protected
from harm

Economic safety
measures &
opportunities

Connected
respected &
contributing to
their world

Active & Healthy, Physically & Mentally

UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Achievement of Outcome 1 will further the Cook Islands implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Relevant Articles include:

Article 6

Children have the inherent right to life and Government shall ensure to the maximum effort possible the survival and development of the child.

Article 22

Children have the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and health services and Government shall take steps to combat disease and develop preventive health care.

Article 31

Children have the right to rest, engage in leisure, play and recreational activities and participate in cultural and artistic activities.

Article 33

Children have the right to protection from illicit drug use and involvement in drug production and trafficking.

Article 23

Children with physical disability or learning difficulties have the right to special care, education and training designed to help them to achieve the greatest possible self-reliance and to lead a full and active life.

INTRODUCTION

Being active and healthy is a significant contributor to overall wellbeing. The Global School Based Student Health Survey (GSSHS) conducted in 2013, from a representative sample of over 1200 year 8 to year 13 students from 23 schools across the Cook Islands, collected information using scientifically rigorous methods on alcohol and other drug use, weight status and dietary behaviours, hygiene-related behaviours, mental health issues, physical activity, protective factors, HIV infection knowledge, tobacco use, and violence and unintentional injury. Some key findings were:

- 37% of all students drank at least one drink containing alcohol on one or more of the 30 days prior to the survey and among these 48% usually drank two or more drinks per day on the days they drank alcohol;
- 15.2% of male students and 7.9% of female students had used marijuana one or more times;
- 32% of male students and 24% of female students were obese;
- Only 40% of children had 5 or more serves of fruit and vegetables in the past 30 days compared to 60% who had one or more carbonated soft drinks;
- The majority of children in the Cook Islands have good teeth cleaning and hand washing practices. Only 13% of male students and 6% of female students cleaned or brushed their teeth less than one time per day and 7% of male students and 3% of female students never or rarely washed their hands before eating during the 30 days prior to the survey;
- A small proportion (7.6%) of students reported that they felt lonely most of the time or always during the past 12 months. However, 13.8% of female students and 8.7% of male students 'most of the time' or 'always' were worried about something that they could not sleep at night during the past 12 months;
- Male students (37.7%) more than female students (32.3%) were more likely to miss class or school without asking permission on one or more of the past 30 days;
- Physical activity was more common among male students. Male students (44.6%) were more likely than female students (32.3%) to do physical activity for at least 60 minutes per day on five or more days during the past seven days;
- Knowledge of HIV was generally high with more female students (85.6%) than male students (79.4%) who had heard of HIV infection or the disease called AIDS. 58.9% of male students and 61.7% of female students had been taught on how to avoid HIV and AIDS;
- 21.4% of male students and 20.7% of female students smoked cigarettes or used other tobacco products on one or more days during the past 30 days;
- Of concern was that 41.2% of male students and 35.1% of female students were physically attacked one or more times in the past 12 months.

In an online survey conducted in June 2017, responded to by 176 year 9 to year 13 students, the following are some key observations:

- 86% of students believe that health is a very important issue for those growing up in the Cook Islands. 53% believe that they were healthy, 17% thought that they were unhealthy, while 30% did not respond to the question.

- Like the GSSHS survey in 2013, male students were more inclined to exercise. The majority students exercising, did so for a period of 30 minutes to an hour, one to four times a week. More boys than girls participated in organised sports.
- In relation to mental health, 57% of students responded that their mental health was very good and that they were happy most of the time. 31% indicated that they were not so good and often get stressed. 5% responded that they had poor mental health, where there were a lot of things that they were not happy about. 3% indicated that their mental health was very poor and that they were struggling at the moment, while 4% did not respond. Girls (53%) were more inclined to have good mental health, compared to boys (47%). When queried if they were getting help for their mental health issues, 39% responded by saying 'yes'. 23% indicated that they were not receiving help, while 38% did not respond. The majority of those who were receiving help indicated that this was from their family. Friends, school and health professional were also identified as sources of help. This indicates that formal support for mental health should be strengthened to complement the help being received from the family and friends.
- When queried about trying alcohol, 63% have, 24% had not, while 13% did not respond. This result indicates that alcohol is accessible to children and perhaps they are being exposed to a drinking culture.
- With regard to smoking cigarettes, 57% did not try smoking, 36% have, while 4% did not respond. Of those who have tried smoking, 53% were boys and 47% were girls. The majority of students are not regular smokers, but rather seems to have wanted to try cigarettes.
- The students were also asked, have you ever tried cannabis or any other form of illegal drugs? 67% of students have not, 17% did not respond, while 16% said yes. Surprisingly, more girls (54%) have tried drugs, in comparison to boys (46%).
- On the issue of sexuality, 52% are not sexually active, 21% are, while 27% did not respond. Of those that are sexuality active, 25% responded that they practiced safe sex most of the time, 39% responded that they practiced safe sex, 28% said they did not, while 8% did not respond.

In consultations with primary school children, they identified play as one of the most important and enjoyable aspects of being a child growing up in the Cook Islands.

Based on these facts, the following are the aims to achieve Outcome 1:

<p>AIM 1.1 PHYSICALLY HEALTHY AND MAKING POSITIVE HEALTH CHOICES</p>
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Physical health is essential for overall health and wellbeing. One can be born with ill-health and life-limiting conditions, or one can develop ill-health or acquire a disability through illness, accident or injury. It is possible to protect and improve one's health through a good diet, plenty of exercise and a healthy lifestyle. Protecting physical health, preventing illness and early diagnosis of health difficulties are critical for healthy outcomes.

For a growing number of children and young people, an unhealthy lifestyle can have damaging effects on their health and overall quality of life. For example, overweight and obese children are likely to stay obese into adulthood and are more likely to develop diseases like diabetes

and cardiovascular diseases at a younger age. This is an area of concern particularly given the high incidences of non-communicable diseases in the Cook Islands. Reversing the trend of increases in non-communicable diseases is therefore a high priority for Government, including early on-set in children.

THE GOVERNMENT RECOGNISES

- All those working with or caring for children have a role to play in promoting their health and wellbeing.
- Children’s health needs change as they get older and therefore policy, services and practice, must take into account the transitions the transitions from child to adolescent to young adult and the associated increase of personal autonomy.
- The importance of timely assessment and equity of access to appropriate treatment from therapeutic, mental health and disability services for children and young people with behavioural difficulties, alcohol and drug problems, and those at risk.
- The importance of education as a protective factor against substance misuse.
- Those that are most vulnerable, have particular challenges in terms of health and must be regarded as priorities in terms of policy and provision.
- When children become ill, proximity to family and the ability of parents to stay close to them is important.
- Girls and boys experience and deal with their health differently, so policies and strategies should reflect this.
- Sports have an important role to play in developing the physical capacity and wellbeing of all children.
- Access to quality, affordable services that support children and young people in leading a full and varied life is critical to overall wellbeing and development.
- The important role of parents and families in providing the additional care and support that children and young people with a disability or chronic illness may require.
- Children with poor physical health, a disability or a chronic illness may need support to develop the skills required to maximise their independence and to develop their capacity to contribute socially, economically and culturally to society.
- The essential role of parents and families in ensuring a child has a healthy diet, exercises regularly and is able to make good choices about healthy living.
- Schools play a very important role in supporting children and young people to be physically healthy through education, the promotion of healthy eating policies, skills development and the integration of sports, exercise and physical activity into the school day.
- The role of community, sporting and youth organisations in health education and skill development, providing opportunities to be active and live a healthy life.
- The importance of having the physical environment, facilitating and promoting access to safe spaces where physical activity can take place.

AIM 1.2 GOOD MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is defined as a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her

potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community. Children and young people's mental health is the most important aspect of their social and cognitive development. Incidence of self-harm and suicide among children is of significant concern.

THE GOVERNMENT RECOGNISES:

- The mental health of parents and caregivers of children is fundamental in supporting children's social and emotional development.
- There are a wide range of factors that can impact on a child or young person's mental health, both positively and negatively. Children need support to build protective factors, such as emotional resilience, having a sense of self-esteem, good social networks and participation in community, as well as an ability to address risk factors such as tackling bullying.
- The teenage years are a period of increased vulnerability in mental health disorders.
- It is important to have at least 'one good adult' in children's life and that they need positive role models and positive relationships with older people.

AIM 1.3 POSITIVE AND RESPECTFUL APPROACH TO RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUAL HEALTH

Having good friends and positive relationships is a significant factor for emotional wellbeing throughout childhood and the adolescence years. Children's experience during childhood and adolescence of positive relationships with family, other significant adults and their peer group will form the foundation of their ability to go on to make successful and emotionally satisfying relationships as an adult, both with a partner and future children, as well as at work and in the community. Learning how to develop and nurture positive friendships is an important part of growing up. These skills can make coping with hardships easier.

Sexual health is a state of physical, mental and social wellbeing in relation to sexuality. It requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, including maturity of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence.

THE GOVERNMENT RECOGNISES:

- Being able to interact positively with others is an essential part of life.
- Families, schools and youth organisations and all who work with children and young people share responsibility for helping children and young people to develop socially responsible behaviours.
- During adolescence, children learn to form safe and healthy relationships with friends, parents, teachers and romantic partners. Peers, in particular, play a big role in identity formation, but relationships with caring adults (including parents, teachers, youth workers, mentors or coaches) are also important for adolescent development.

- As children become more aware of their sexuality, so too do they become more cognisant of their sexual orientation and gender identity. Many young people can face discrimination because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- The need to improve knowledge and awareness of sexual health and relationships.
- All children need to be supported in addressing issues that impact on sexual wellbeing, such as stigma, homophobia, gender, ability/disability, mental health, alcohol and drugs.

AIM 1.4 ENJOYING PLAY, RECREATION, SPORTS, ARTS, CULTURE AND NATURE

Play, recreation, sports, arts, culture and the natural environment are essential to the health and wellbeing of children. These activities promote the development of creativity, imagination, self-confidence and self-efficacy, as well as physical, social, cognitive and emotional strength and skills.

THE GOVERNMENT RECOGNISES:

- Play, sports and recreation are play a significant part in the lives of children, and are highly valued by them.
- Play is central to children’s spontaneous drive for development and is very important in brain growth, particularly in the early years.
- Play and recreation facilitate children’s capacities to negotiate, regain emotional balance, resolve conflicts and make decisions.
- Through play, recreation and the arts, children learn by doing; they explore and experience the world around them; they experiment with new ideas and experiences and in so doing, learn to understand and construct their engagement with their world.
- The significance of sport in character formation as well as health.
- The important role of youth, community and sporting organisations and volunteers in engaging with children on their healthy development and overall wellbeing.
- The importance of built and green spaces in promoting play, sports and recreation.

GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS

THE GOVERNMENT COMMITS TO:

- Implement the National Policy for Non-Communicable Diseases, including fiscal measures to support healthy lifestyles with a specific focus on children. **(Ministry of Health, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management)**
- Encourage children, parents and their families to make healthier choices. **(Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education)**
- Continue to strengthen Paediatric Care. **(Ministry of Health)**
- Continue support for accessible youth and sports activities that promote children’s overall personal and social development, including healthy behaviours and better engage children who may be at risk of early school leaving or participating in criminal

activity and anti-social actions. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education)

- Address premature alcohol consumption, use of illicit drugs and incidence of smoking among children through a combination of legislative, regulatory and policy measures. (**Ministry of Health**, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Internal Affairs)
- Ensure access to children or adolescence mental health services. (**Ministry of Health**, Ministry of Education)
- Ensure access for children to age appropriate information and services relating to relationships and sexual health. (**Ministry of Health**, Ministry of Education)
- Enable greater access to sports, arts and culture for all children. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Culture Development)
- Develop play and recreational spaces for children such as playgrounds, youth cafes, sports and leisure centres and so forth. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Cook Islands Investment Corporation)

Achieving full potential in all areas of learning & development

UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Achievement of Outcome 2 will further the Cook Islands implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Relevant Articles include:

Article 28

Children have progressive and equal rights to education; the Government shall make primary education compulsory and free for all; develop different pathways of secondary education and make it available and accessible to all, make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity; take measures to encourage school attendance, and to ensure that school discipline is administered consistently with children's dignity in mind.

Article 29

Education should be directed at developing children's personality and talents; fostering respect for human rights; own cultural, natural values, and the environment.

Article 14

Children have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, subject to appropriate parental guidance and national law.

Article 23

Children with physical disability or learning difficulties have the right to special care, education and training designed to help them to achieve the greatest possible self-reliance and to lead a full and active life.

INTRODUCTION

The vast majority of children in the Cook Islands enjoy learning. Overall education achievement in the Cook Islands is on track with continuous improvement in literacy and numeracy rates at the primary school level and high levels of achievement at the National Certificate of Educational Achievement at secondary school.

Children with special needs require additional support to achieve their learning potential. Whilst additional teacher aides are being provided for children with disabilities in schools, this needs to be adequately resourced.

Other factors that may play a role attainment in educational attainment are socio-economic factors, absences from school, and formal academic focused education not suited to the student.

In consultations conducted with primary school students, feedback on education was that learning is important, school is enjoyable, teachers are good, and so forth. From the perspective of secondary school students consulted, 65% enjoyed school most of the time, 17% did not, and 18% did not respond. When secondary students were queried if they were achieving what they want from education, 59% responded positively, 16% negatively and 25% were unsure. It would be safe to conclude that the majority of children in the Cook Islands enjoyed school as well as being generally satisfied with the education that they are receiving.

Support by parents and families in education is essential for success. When queried on whether their parents and families help with their school work, secondary school students responses where that 52% help sometimes, 25% help always, 11% never help and 12% of did not respond to the question. Students are generally getting some help at home with their school work.

In regards to the relationship between parents, the school and the community, 60% of secondary school students think that the relationship is good, 15% did not think that it is good and 25% were indifferent. This indicates that there is room for improvement on the relationship between the student and his/her family, the school and the community.

When queried if they would continue with their education post-secondary school, 60% of students answered 'yes', 15% responded with 'no' and 25% were not sure. More than half of those surveyed hope to pursue higher education, emphasising the importance of educational achievement to Cook Islands children.

Based on these facts, the following are the aims to achieve Outcome 2:

AIM 2.1 Learning and developing from birth

Children are learning from birth. Their chances in life are shaped and enhanced through support for their early learning and development. Their early experiences of parental love and attention lay the foundation for their future development. Children's capacity for learning

depends on having caring adults who understand how to support their learning and development.

THE GOVERNMENT RECOGNISES:

- The importance of giving every child the best start in life and recognises that a child's social and emotional foundation is laid down in the early years, during which time the social and emotional functions of the brain is formed.
- Strengthening parental understanding of the importance of the ante-natal period is vital and the consequences of alcohol, drugs, smoking and poor diet in pregnancy.
- The importance of early intervention strategies throughout the life cycle and through second-chance education to enable children to achieve across the five national outcomes.
- The importance of maintaining the implementation of the Education Master Plan to achieve desired outcomes in education.
- The need to support parents of young children early on to ensure the establishment of quality parent-child relationships. This includes supporting parents with their own mental health.

AIM 2.2 SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Children's social and emotional wellbeing is fundamental to their ability to function in society in the journey from childhood to adulthood. This includes the capability to self-regulate; to have understanding and compassion; and to be emotionally resilient.

THE GOVERNMENT RECOGNISES:

- The basics of social and emotional wellbeing are formed during infancy and can be strengthened and developed throughout life.
- Children's sense of wellbeing can be negatively impacted by life events and experiences, including the quality of family relationships and factors within the home.
- Schools, youth, sports and community organisations play an important role in the promotion of positive mental health and wellbeing, and can provide a safe and supportive environment for building life skills, emotional resilience and a strong sense of connectedness to school and community.

AIM 2.3 ENGAGED IN LEARNING

Nurturing love and commitment to learning requires engaging students' actively in individual and collaborative education. Our schools attempt to get children engaged positively with their learning, achieving qualifications and outcomes and yearning for learning beyond school. The Government is committed to implementing the Education Master Plan to ensure 'Learning for Life'.

THE GOVERNMENT RECOGNISES:

- The importance of engaging and inspiring children, and for school itself to instil a love of learning, to achieve good educational outcomes.
- The importance of student participation, with real influence over strategic decision-making, has been shown to improve engagement and attainment, while also fostering important attributes such as responsibility and emotional intelligence.
- Strengthening relationships between schools, parents and communities promotes student engagement, behaviour and achievement.
- Technology development offers opportunities for transforming teaching, learning and assessment, and delivering education, particularly to the pa enua.
- The need to support and improve recognition of the role of non-formal and informal learning, particularly those being delivered by non-government and faith-based organisations, sports groups and youth groups.

AIM 2.4 ACHIEVING IN EDUCATION

How children do at school is a key determinant of their future success. The quality of teaching is a significant contributor to better learning outcomes. Quality encompasses leadership, positive school culture, applying active learning methods and the integration of technology into learning. Priorities in this area are investment in teacher education, continuous professional development and supporting school principals to manage performance and lead school transformation.

The implementation of the Education Master Plan aspires that children in the Cook Islands will be able to:

- Participate in programmes that provide them with experiences of success
- Identify opportunities for own personal and career development
- Enjoy learning environments that are comfortable, supported and assist them to achieve their goals
- Function as highly literate and numerate members of society
- Take advantage of opportunities locally, regionally and globally to further their development.

THE GOVERNMENT RECOGNISES:

- The significant importance of the parents role as the primary educators of their children, the connection between learning at home and learning at school, and the strong association between family involvement and students' educational achievements.
- The early foundations for academic achievement are laid by quality care and education access in children's early years.
- The need to strengthen relationships between schools and other services at key points of transition to ensure better educational outcomes.
- Education is not just about knowledge attainment, but also about learning critical skills that can be applied across all life and career domains.

- Developing good literacy and numeracy skills, among all children is fundamental to the life chances of each individual and essential to the quality and equity of society.
- Constantly improving literacy (including Maori language) and numeracy standards is a national priority.
- Particular attention needs to be paid to developing boys' education as girls now outperform boys at both primary and secondary schools.
- Investing in teacher professional development is central to improving the quality of educational outcomes.
- The importance for a child to have a sense of belonging within school and the community, and the fact that schools play a vital role in building inclusion, supporting them to feel part of their community and creating stability in their lives.
- The important contribution of informal and non-formal learning to supporting children's academic education, skills development and preparation for the workforce.

GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS

The Government commits to:

- Maintain implementation of the Learning for Life Cook Islands Education Master Plan 2008-2023 and its four focus areas of Taku Ipukarea Kia Rangatira; Learning and Teaching; Learning and the Community; Infrastructure and Support. **(Ministry of Education)**
- Implement strategies to improve school engagement and reduce incidences of suspensions and expulsions and early school-leaving through strengthening the engagement of parents in schooling, supporting transitions, promoting different styles of learning to better engage boys, and fostering inclusive school environments where all pupils flourish **(Ministry of Education)**
- Strengthen programs which will allow students to develop key skills, such as effective communication, collaborative working, independent thinking, problem-solving and analytical skills. **(Ministry of Education)**
- Reinforce the whole-school approach to health and wellbeing to bring about a cultural focus on wellbeing as a basis for effective learning, strengthening the collaboration between the education, health, youth and social sectors to provide multidisciplinary supports when problems arise. **(Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Internal Affairs)**
- Support and link existing partnerships, strategies and initiatives that aim to improve the decision-making capacity of children and young people through strengthening self-esteem, resilience, responses to social and interpersonal pressure, health and media literacy (including social media literacy). **(Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Internal Affairs)**
- Provide opportunities for early school-leavers to engage with further education and training. **(Ministry of Education)**
- Ensure that education is accessible to children with special needs, particularly those with disabilities. **(Ministry of Education, Ministry of Internal Affairs)**

Safe and protected from harm

UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Achievement of Outcome 3 will further the Cook Islands implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Relevant Articles include:

Article 9

Children have the right not be separated from their parents unless it is in their best interest. When they are separated, children have the right to maintain contact with parents on a regular basis unless it is not in their best interest.

Article 10

The Government is obliged to foster and enable family reunification.

Articles 19, 36 & 34

Children have the right to protection from all forms of abuse (19) and exploitation (36), including sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (34).

Articles 39, 11, & 35

The Government has a duty to promote the recovery of child victims of abuse (39) and to act to prevent child kidnapping (11), abduction and the sale and/or trafficking of children (35).

Articles 20, 25 & 21

The Government is obliged to assist a child without a family (20); children have a right to a periodic review of their care placement (25); and adoptions should only be carried out in the best interest of the child.

Article 37

Children have the right to protection from torture, degrading treatment or punishment; unlawful arrest or deprivation of liberty. Children in detention should be separated from adult prisoners and have the right to maintain contact with family.

Article 40

The Government is obliged to promote alternatives to Court hearings and detention.

Article 17

The Government is obliged to ensure access to information from a diversity of media sources and to take measures to protect children from harmful material.

INTRODUCTION

Keeping children safe and protected from harm is the responsibility of everyone in society. Children must be educated and made aware of dangers and how to protect themselves from harm and harmful or risky behaviour.

The majority of children consulted indicated that the Cook Islands being a safe place with a lot of freedom is among the best things about life in the country. According to 85% of secondary school students, they feel safe in their community. 5% of students did not feel safe and 10% did not respond. In response to the question of whether they have a secure, stable and caring home environment, 79% said yes; 6% responded no and 15% did not answer the question. On the issue of experiencing abuse, neglect or mistreatment, 15% of students answered in the affirmative; 62% said no; and 23% did not express their view. For those that have experienced abuse, neglect or mistreatment, the majority indicated that this was at the hands of family members or someone known to them.

In the consultation with children, being in unsafe situations (such climbing trees, swimming in rough seas, being out on the road at night, etc.); bullying; being smacked or getting hidings; people fighting; being sworn at; teasing, peer pressure and the pressure to live up to family expectations were judged as among the worst things about life in the Cook Islands.

When looking at the data presented by the Ministry of Justice, in 2014-2015, 118 young people aged between 16-20 years stood before the court. Of this number, 102 were male and 16 were female, while 2 were juveniles under the age of 16. From 2015-2016, 164 young people appeared before the court. Of this number, 138 were male, while 26 were female, 1 was a juvenile under the age of 16. In the Children's Court jurisdiction which is limited to those over the age of 14, but under the age of 16, there were 37 children appearing in 2014-2015, and 19 in 2015-2016. It is assumed that the decline is due to the introduction of the Te Koro Akaau. A key element in the Te Koro Akaau is the Uipaanga Kopu Tangata (meeting of the family). The underlying principle of this approach is that the community (including the nuclear and extended family, traditional leaders of the community including leaders in the church, etc.) should participate in resolving the conflict. In June 2017, there were 5 children placed under the supervision of the Child and Family division of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Since 2012, only 1 child has been removed from their own family setting and placed with another family.

While children and young people need safeguarding, the Government recognises, that specific groups of children are particularly at risk and so need additional supports and protections. Vulnerable children include those with special needs and disabilities.

Whilst the Cook Islands is considered a safe place, this should not mean that we should not be complacent and ignorant about factors that can impact and change our generally safe environment.

Based on these facts, the following are the aims to achieve Outcome 3:

AIM 3.1 Secure, stable, caring home environment

Continuity and stability in family relationships strongly contribute to an individual's wellbeing and social steadiness, and are especially powerful for children. A caring home environment enables children's emotional needs for security, belonging, support and intimacy to be satisfied. The nature and quality of family life influences not only how a child copes with life growing up, but also helps determine the quality of their relationships, parenting and mental health in adulthood. Having caring relationships and experiencing love and trust builds resilience – a significant protective factor in enabling children and young people to get through difficult times.

THE GOVERNMENT RECOGNISES:

- The importance of parents and families in providing a safe and secure, stable and caring home environment for children.
- With the growing use of technology by children, parents need advice and information on how to best protect children from harm online and in relation to social media and texting. Equally children need guidance from those around them to learn to manage and cope with this added feature of modern life.
- The importance of security for children from the adults in their lives who are carrying out the parenting role.

AIM 3.2 Safe from abuse, neglect and exploitation

Childhood and adolescence is a very precious developmental period. Experiencing the trauma of neglect, abuse or exploitation may have a significant and permanent negative impact on children. It may change their own life trajectory and that of the family. Abuse may involve neglect (both intentional and unintentional), sexual, physical or emotional harm. Abuse can also result from family substance misuse, the witnessing of parents substance use or domestic violence, exposure to inappropriate or harmful material (particularly on the internet). Children are also at risk of exploitation through pornography and prostitution.

THE GOVERNMENT RECOGNISES:

- All forms of neglect, abuse, exploitation of or violence towards children are unacceptable and the Government has a duty to act to protect and support children.
- Standardised assessment, good communications between services and timely decision making to ensure that no child is left in an abusive environment is needed.
- Keeping children safe requires a whole of society response. Everybody, in particular those working directly with children or in a position of authority, has the responsibility to protect children from abuse.
- The majority of instances of child abuse involve a family member or someone that is known to the child.

- The need to ensure that systems of detection, assessment, therapy and criminal investigation and prosecution work in a coordinated manner and take account of the trauma that children of abuse and crime experience, with a view of preventing re-occurrences of victimisation.

AIM 3.3 Protected from bullying and discrimination

Children have identified bully and peer pressure as among the worst things about being a child in the Cook Islands. Bullying and discrimination can have a detrimental effect on a child's mental health and may hinder their educational achievement, health wellbeing and other life opportunities.

The Government recognises:

- All forms of bullying and discrimination are unacceptable and must be challenged, and the Government has an obligation to ensure that laws, policies and practices do not discriminate.
- The role of parents and the wider community in creating an environment that does not tolerate or foster bullying is important.
- Schools, youth, church and community groups can play an important role in developing a positive culture of equality, inclusion, empowerment for all children.
- The need to support children perpetuating bullying behaviour and to understand the impact of their behaviour and change their ways.

AIM 3.4: Safe from crime and anti-social behaviour

Children should feel safe within their community and be protected and deterred from being drawn into anti-social and criminal behaviour. The risks and dangers presented by online approaches to children should be recognised. Such approaches may lead to the possession of or production of illegal images. Involvement of children in criminal behaviour can have a detrimental impact on their life outcomes.

The Government recognises:

- The importance of providing safe, friendly recreational spaces for children especially as they grow older.
- The significant role that parents, families and communities play in preventing and reducing crime (including online crime) and anti-social behaviour.
- The critical role that community and sports organisations play in building children's participation and engagement in their community, and in building their self-esteem and other protective factors, including the awareness of their own safety.
- Alcohol and substance abuse are closely associated with anti-social and criminal behaviour.

GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS

THE GOVERNMENT COMMITS TO:

- Strengthen the collection of disaggregated data for children to enhance our knowledge and understanding of abuse and children’s experience of the Court system through the development of the National Child Care Information System and Child Care Law Reporting Project. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Justice, Police)
- Improve the nature of Court proceedings, reducing the potential negative impact on children and introducing child-friendly court practices such as the Te Koro Akaau. (**Ministry of Justice**, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Police)
- Support efforts to limit exposure by children to age-appropriate material on the internet, including via mobile phones. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Office of the Prime Minister’s ICT Division)
- Assist with the effective and timely protection and support services, including counselling support for child victims of abuse and crime. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health, Police)
- Develop a National Framework for Anti-Bullying, taking a community wide approach to tackling bullying from childhood through to adulthood. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Education)

Economic safety measures & opportunities

UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Achievement of Outcome 4 will further the Cook Islands implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Relevant articles include:

Article 27

Children have the right to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. Parents have the primary responsibility to provide this. The Government has a duty to assist parents, where necessary in fulfilling this right.

Article 18

The Government has an obligation to recognise and promote the principle that both parents and guardians have common responsibilities for the upbringing and development of the child, the Government shall support parents or guardians in this task through the provision of appropriate assistance.

Article 26

Children have a right to benefit from social security.

Article 28

Children have a right to be protected from harmful labour exploitation.

INTRODUCTION

Young people want work and advancement in life. Their natural talents, entrepreneurship and creativity need to be harnessed and opportunities given to gain useful qualifications and valuable work experience. During consultations children identified having a good job as an important element in their lives.

Children identified that expensive costs of goods and living were one of the worst things about living in the Cook Islands. Children also identified that there was a need to increase the monthly Child Benefit and also increase the scope from 12 years to 16. When asked to elaborate, children indicated that the costs to families of raising children did not end in the child's 12th year, but rather continued to the when the child completed school. From their perspective, increasing the scope of those eligible for the child benefit from 12 to 16 years, also serves as an incentive for parents to ensure that children remain at school. In June 2017, there were 3432 children under 12 collecting the Child Benefit.

Certain families are at risk of facing financial hardship. Although 44% of children surveyed responded that their families did not experience financial hardship, 25% did, while 31% did not respond to the whether their families experienced financial hardship. This probably indicates that they are unsure or unaware of whether their families are indeed in financial hardship. Children have also indicated that the cost of goods is expensive demonstrating an understanding of the increasing cost of living.

The Cook Islands economic progress forms the context within opportunity for children will be achieved. It is assumed that economic security is having a stable income or other resources to support a standard of living now and into the future.

Although data on youth employment is lacking, it would be safe to presume that youth unemployment represents a huge loss to society and a significant immediate and long-term cost in terms of health, lost taxes and social exclusion. Young people's experiences now, and their ability to get into paid and stable employment, will have a generational impact on the life chances and expectation of their children yet to be born.

Young people must be encouraged to find or create their own jobs, to actively contribute and to shape Government, economy and society's responses to youth unemployment.

AIM 4.1 Protection from economic hardship and social exclusion

Protecting children and young people from economic hardship and social exclusion is about ensuring that they have adequate income and resources, are living in adequate housing, have access to quality affordable food, good quality education, and healthcare, and have the opportunities to develop and participate in society.

The Government recognises:

- Every child should grow up in a family with access to adequate resources, support and services to nurture and care for the child, and to foster the child’s development and full and equal participation in society.
- Economic hardship and social exclusion limits and undermines opportunities for children’s emotional, social and intellectual development.
- The most effective ways in addressing economic hardship faced by children are those underpinned by policies that are centred on prevention and improving the wellbeing of all children, while giving targeted support to children with additional needs.

AIM 4.2 Living in child friendly sustainable communities

Children should enjoy an adequate standard of living, consistent with a life of dignity. They should be able to live and grow up in a safe, healthy, sustainable and child-friendly environment that supports their developmental and learning needs. Child friendly communities cover issues about access to services (including safe water and sanitation), schools, an environment that is safe, and outdoor green spaces for play, recreation and sports.

The Government recognises:

- The adverse impact of growing up in disadvantaged context, including early school leaving and intergenerational difficulty, exposure to a culture of substance abuse, criminal activity and anti-social behaviour.
- The role of Government and the community in developing physically safe, sustainable communities, ensuring safe places for children to play and congregate.

AIM 4.3 Opportunities for ongoing education and training

Opportunities for ongoing education and training are part of a commitment to lifelong learning. Access to these services are critical to both parents and children to ensure their active participation in the economy and their capability to build economically secure lives for themselves and their children. The Education Master Plan promotes learning for life.

The Government recognises:

- There is a strong relationship between educational achievement, employment and future earnings.
- The importance of providing flexible opportunities to continue formal education.
- The significance of non-formal education and learning opportunities, as both to complement formal education and provide an alternative learning environment to early school leavers.

AIM 4.4 Have pathways to economic participation and independent living

The majority of young people want to work and secure employment, to pursue a career and contribute to society. Failure to secure employment increases the risk of economic hardship

and social exclusion. Training, volunteering, job placements, internships and support for entrepreneurship are all helpful tools in increasing employment opportunities.

The Government recognises:

- The importance of ensuring that our young people can transition into adulthood holding a job, being economically independent, confident and capable.
- Unemployment, and in particular long term unemployment, has negative impacts on young people, not only in terms of their economic independence, but also on their self-esteem and confidence.
- Living independently require both the material means and the life skills to manage and to make good choices, recognising that some young people may require support to achieve this independence.

GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS

THE GOVERNMENT COMMITS TO:

- Adopt a multifaceted approach to tackling economic hardship. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Office of the Prime Minister's Policy and Planning division, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management)
- Promote vocational education and training, encouraging entrepreneurial skills among young people, promoting internship programs and strengthening links between schools and local businesses. (**Ministry of Education**)
- Support young people building businesses and livelihood, particularly in the paeenua focusing on agriculture, fisheries, food, hospitality and tourism. (**Business Trade and Investment Board**, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Marine Resources, Ministry of Education, Cook Islands Tourism Corporation)

Connected, respected & contributing to their world

UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Achievement of Outcome 5 will further the Cook Islands implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Relevant Articles include:

Article 2

All rights guaranteed by the Convention must be available to all children without discrimination of any kind and the Government is obliged to protect children from discrimination.

Article 12

Children have the right for their view to be considered and taken into account in all matters in accordance with their age and maturity.

Article 16

Children have a right to protection from interference with privacy, home and correspondence from libel or slander.

Article 30

Children have the right to enjoy their own culture, practice their religion and use their language.

Article 13

Children have a right to obtain information and to express their own views, unless this violates the rights of others.

Article 15

Children have the right to meet with others or to join or set up associations, unless this would violate the rights of others.

Article 42

The Government is obliged to make the rights in the Convention widely known to adults and children.

INTRODUCTION

Children should be supported and encouraged to participate in decision making and play an active role in society, recognising that they, by their own choices and determination, can greatly influence their own lives and communities.

It is acknowledged that some children face challenges and discrimination that may isolate them from others, and impact significantly on their lives. Issues may be related to personal identity, gender, social standing, family, mental health or imprisonment. Measures are needed to create a society in which all children are valued and respected for who they are, so that they can freely express their identity and engage in their communities positively.

Consultations with secondary school students indicate that the majority of them are involved in some form of community group such as cultural groups, uniformed organisations, church and sports associations.

Outcome 5 speaks to friendships and belonging, having positive self-esteem and personal resilience, having a voice and independence and personal agency.

AIM 5.1 Sense of own identity, free from discrimination

In early childhood children begin to develop a sense of their own identity and this continues throughout their life's journey. A positive sense of identity and belonging are central human needs. Understanding their family and cultural identity is of huge significance to children and have a profound effect on their psychological development and stability.

The Government recognises:

- The value of the community in promoting equality.
- The importance of children being supported to know and develop their own identity, having the opportunities to explore life and build experiences.
- Positive experiences allow children to develop an understanding of themselves as important and respected, and feel a sense of belonging essential for wellbeing and their participation in society.
- The importance of the 'reo Maori' to national identity, culture and heritage.

AIM 5.2 Positive networks of friends, family and community

Family, friends, neighbours and the wider community make up the social networks of children. 'Community' accounts for the multiple groups and relationships that children may be part of, whether physical or digital. All of these networks have the potential to enrich children's lives and are potential layers of support when needed.

The Government recognises:

- The importance of friendship to children. Friendships contribute positively to health and wellbeing, sense of belonging and purpose.

- Friendships are essential for the psychological, emotional and social development of children, enabling them to learn how to relate to others and also about reciprocity, social standing and power.
- The ability to develop and maintain friendship can assist with positive mental health and educational outcomes for children.
- When children withdraw from their social networks, this can be an indication of a deeper problem, as well as isolating them from support systems to address these problems.
- As children grow older, they rely less on their parents for guidance and turn to their friends.
- The significant role of technology in forming and maintaining friendships in children's lives.

AIM 5.3 Proud Cook Islanders, socially and environmentally conscious

Children live as part of families and communities. Many children contribute significantly to their communities. They are often interested in the social, political and environmental issues affecting society, envisioning the kind of world they want to be part of and for some, taking action to create such as world. Technology, in particular social media, has helped connect children to the wider community and world.

Civic engagement results in outcomes in which human rights are respected, the child's dignity and worth is acknowledged, the rule of law is followed, responsibilities are fulfilled willingly and the common good is pursued.

The Government recognises:

- All children need and deserve the chance to make a difference in their families, schools, communities, nation and the world. This is promoted through exposure to caring behaviour, awareness of the needs of others, a sense of personal responsibility, volunteering, leadership and service.
- Involving children in decision-making encourages them to become active participants in society and contributes to a sense of achievement.
- Children should be aware of their connection to the natural world, motivating them to live more sustainably.
- Children should display a respect for Cook Islands culture.

AIM 5.4 Aware of rights, responsible and respectful of the law

Children should be aware of and informed of their rights, as well as feeling confident and able to affirm those rights. Children are largely dependent on adults for their care. As children grow, they take on more responsibility for their own actions. As members of their communities, they have the duty to respect law, engage in democratic process and be respectful of others, their property and environment.

The Government recognises:

- A specific group of young people need targeted support because their behaviour has led to their involvement in the justice system.
- The age when offending peaks is between 16-20 years, at the point where young people exit the juvenile justice system and therefore more likely to gain a criminal record, significantly affecting their potential life trajectory.

GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS

The Government commits to:

- Support non-government and faith based organisations to provide safe, supportive and developmental opportunities for children. **(Ministry of Internal Affairs)**
- Promote and recognise children's active citizenship and engagement in democratic processes, participation in social and environmental activities and volunteering. **(Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Education, National Environment Service)**
- Ensure the views of children in participation forums and consultation are taken into account. **(Ministry of Internal Affairs)**
- Strengthen the teaching of civic duty and human rights in the education curriculum. **(Ministry of Education)**

PART 3

IMPLEMENTATION

The following table summarises the Cross Cutting Transformational Goals, Outcomes, Government Commitments, Milestones and key implementing Government ministries/agencies and possible funding solutions for the implementation of the Te Pito Manava o te Anau.

GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS	IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSIBILITY	POSSIBLE FUNDING SOLUTIONS
CROSS CUTTING TRANSFORMATIONAL GOAL 1: SUPPORT PARENTS AND FAMILIES		
Develop a high-level policy statement on Parenting and Family Support to guide the provision of parenting support systems/mechanisms. This should target familial factors impacting on parenting and family functioning and identify responses needed for at risk children, families and communities.	MOIA MOE MOH MOJ POLICE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing budgets • Development Partner Assistance
Work together with non-government organisations and communities to ensure planning and coordination of parenting supports at the islands/community levels through Children’s Services Champion.	MOIA ISLAND GOVERNMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing budgets • Community Initiative Scheme • Development Partner Assistance
Continue to financially support parents and families with the cost of children through the provision of the Child Benefit and continually examining ways to better improve financial support to parents and families.	MOIA MFEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing funds • Possible additional Government funds
CROSS CUTTING TRANSFORMATIONAL GOAL 2: EARLIER INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION		
Continue to implement the National Immunization Policy	MOH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing budgets
Continue to provide free health services for all children	MOH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing budgets
Continue to increase investment in quality early years care and education for all children.	MOE MOH MOIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rephrasing existing funds • Possible additional Government funds • Development Partner Assistance
Support quality youth work targeting adolescences, both as a protective factor contributing to the young person’s overall development and in reaching out to young people at risk of crime or anti-social behaviour	MOIA MOE MOH POLICE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rephrasing existing funds • Possible additional Government funds • Development Partner Assistance

Training and up-skilling of people across formal and non-formal situations to be able to identify potential child welfare and mental health issues, and to provide preventative and early intervention support.	MOE MOH OPSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rephrasing existing funds Cook Islands Scholarship Program Development Partner Assistance
Profile key risk factors for poor outcomes for children and develop instruments to assist in identifying and working with families to mitigating these risks.	MOIA MOE MOH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rephrasing existing funds Development Partner Assistance
Develop and implement Area Specific Childhood programs to improve outcomes in areas of disadvantage, given that there are differences between and within our islands and communities.	MOIA MOE MOH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Development Partner Assistance
Explore opportunities to rebalance resources with a greater emphasis on prevention and early intervention	MFEM MOIA MOE MOH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets
CROSS CUTTING TRANSFORMATIONAL GOAL 3: LISTEN AND INVOLVE CHILDREN		
Develop and implement a National Policy on Children’s Participation in Decision-making to strengthen efforts to ensure that children can express their views on all matters affecting them and to have those views considered, including those of ‘seldom heard’ children.	MOIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Development Partner Assistance
Strengthen opportunities for children to be heard in primary and secondary schools through student councils and age appropriate mechanisms.	MOE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Development Partner Assistance
Implement provisions of the Family Law Act relating to providing children the opportunity to be heard in judicial proceedings affecting them.	MOIA MOJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Possible additional Government funds
Establish Children’s and Youth Participation Hub to promote children’s participation in decision making where appropriate, at the national, island and community levels.	MOIA Island Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development Partner Assistance
CROSS CUTTING TRANSFORMATION GOAL 4: ENSURE QUALITY SERVICES		
Develop and implement a National Service Delivery Framework for children’s welfare and protection.	MOIA MOE MOH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Development Partner Assistance
Review the scope and functions of Government agencies working with children to ensure improve delivery of services and supports.	OPSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Development Partner Assistance
Develop a common assessment approach with all agencies working with children to ensure that decision making is consistent, timely and comprehensive.	MOIA MOE MOH MOJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Development Partner Assistance

	POLICE	
Ensure that Government funded programs and services are outcomes focused with clear demonstration that outcomes can be improved.	MFEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets
Prioritise programs (with particular attention to community based programs) for children most at risk.	MOIA MFEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Initiative Scheme
Support the training and capacity building for those working directly with children.	MOE MOH MOIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Cook Islands Scholarship Program Development Partner Assistance
Promote greater collaboration between Government, non-Government and faith based organisations, community structures and communities as a whole in addressing the needs of children.	MOIA MOE MOH MOJ POLICE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets
CROSS CUTTING TRANSFORMATIONAL GOAL 5: SUPPORT EFFECTIVE TRANSITIONS		
Bring a stronger focus on effective transitions, particularly within education; health; and child welfare and justice services.	MOIA MOE MOH MOJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Possible additional Government funds
Explore and adopt strategies to strengthen transitions through the education system, including ensuring coherency of curriculum approach, school connections and promoting in-school practices such as peer to peer support.	MOE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets
Strengthen programs to provide support for adolescences who are most at risk to ensure smoother transitions	MOIA MOE MOJ MOH Police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible additional Government funds Development Partner Assistance
Increase opportunities for adolescences to enter employment through strengthening work experience opportunities.	MOE MOIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets
CROSS CUTTING TRANSFORMATIONAL GOAL 6: CROSS GOVERNMENT AND INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION		
Support the development of training programs which encourage leadership and collaboration of people working with children.	MOIA MOE MOH OPSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Cook Islands Scholarship Program Development Partner Assistance

Build the required project and change management capabilities to implement this Framework.	MOIA OPSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Development Partner Assistance
Strengthen the performance culture within the public service through continuously improving performance management systems and management of under-performance.	OPSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets
Adopt an effective interagency approach in relation to cases of child welfare and protection, establishing information and coordinating processes between agencies serving children and adult focused addiction, domestic violence and mental health services.	MOIA MOJ MOH MOE POLICE OPSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets
Formally establish the National Children’s Committee which will be linked to implementation at the local and community levels.	MOIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Development Partner Assistance
Where viable, establish integrated services or ‘hubs’ for children.	MOIA MOE MOH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Development Partner Assistance
Address information sharing issues across government and strengthen the integration of data systems.	MOIA MOJ MOE MOH POLICE OPM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Possible additional Government funds Development Partner Assistance
Develop information protocols to assist in the sharing of information, where appropriate, in particular for children who are vulnerable or at risk.	MOIA MOE MOH MOJ POLICE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets
Develop a comprehensive set of indicators to support the Framework and ensure monitoring of the 5 outcome areas.	MOIA OPM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets
Ensure that resource allocations are to services and programs that can justify and provide evidence of effectiveness in improving outcomes for children.	MFEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets
NATIONAL OUTCOME 1: ACTIVE AND HEALTHY, PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY		
Implement the National Policy for Non-Communicable Disease, including fiscal measures to support healthy lifestyles with a specific focus on children.	MOH MFEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Rephrasing existing funds

Encourage children, r parents and their families to make healthier choices.	MOH MOE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets
Continue to strengthen Paediatric care.	MOH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rephrasing existing funds
Continue support for accessible youth and sports activities that promote children’s overall personal and social development, including healthy behaviours and better engage children who may be at risk of early school leaving or participating in criminal activity and anti-social actions.	MOIA MOH MOE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Possible additional Government funds Rephrasing existing funds Development Partner Assistance
Address premature alcohol consumption, use of illicit drugs and incidences of smoking among children through a combination of legislative, regulatory and policy measures.	MOH MOE MOIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Possible additional Government funds Rephrasing existing funds Development Partner Assistance
Ensure access to children and adolescence mental health services.	MOH MOE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Possible additional Government funds
Ensure access for children to age appropriate information and services relating to relationships and sexual health.	MOH MOE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets
Ensure greater access to sports, arts and culture for all children.	MOIA MOE MOH MOCD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets
Develop play and recreational spaces for children such as playgrounds, youth cafes, sports and leisure centres and so forth.	MOIA MOE MOH CIIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible additional Government funds Development Partner Assistance
OUTCOME 2: ACHIEVING FULL POTENTIAL IN ALL AREAS OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT		
Maintain implementation of the Learning for Life – Cook Islands Education Master Plan 2008-2023 and its four focus areas of Taku Ipukarea Kia Rangatira; Learning and Teaching; Learning and the Community; Infrastructure and Support	MOE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Possible additional Government funds Development Partner Assistance
Implement strategies to improve school engagement and reduce incidences of suspensions and expulsions and early school-leaving through strengthening the engagement of parents in schooling, supporting transitions, promoting different styles of learning to better engage boys, and fostering inclusive school environments where all pupils flourish.	MOE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Possible additional Government funds Development Partner Assistance

Strengthen programs which will allow students to develop key skills, such as effective communication, collaborative working, independent thinking, problem-solving and analytical skills.	MOE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Possible additional Government funds Development Partner Assistance
Reinforce the whole-school approach to health and wellbeing to bring about a cultural focus on wellbeing as a basis for effective learning, strengthening the collaboration between education, health, youth and social sectors to provide multidisciplinary supports when problems arise.	MOE MOH MOIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Possible additional Government funds Development Partner Assistance
Support and link existing partnership, strategies and initiatives that aim to improve the decision-making capacity of children and young people through strengthening self-esteem, resilience, responses to social and interpersonal pressure, health and media literacy (including social media).	MOE MOH MOIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Possible additional Government funds Development Partner Assistance
Provide opportunities for early school-leavers to engage with further education and training	MOE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Possible additional Government funds Development Partner Assistance
Ensure that education is accessible to children with special needs, particularly those with disabilities.	MOE MOIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Possible additional Government funds Development Partner Assistance
OUTCOME 3: SAFE AND PROTECTED FROM HARM		
Strengthen the collection of disaggregated data for children to enhance our knowledge and understanding of abuse and children's experience of the Court system through the development of the National Child Care Information System and Child Care Law Reporting Project.	MOIA MOJ POLICE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible additional Government funds Development Partner Assistance
Improve the nature of Court proceedings, reducing the potential negative impact on children and introducing child-friendly court practices such as the Te Koro Akaau.	MOJ MOIA POLICE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Possible additional Government funds
Support efforts to limit exposure by children to age-appropriate material on the internet, including via mobile phones.	MOIA OPM's ICT Division	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Development Partner Assistance
Assist with the effective and timely protection and support services, including counselling support for child victims of abuse and crime.	MOIA MOE MOJ MOH POLICE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Possible additional Government funds Development Partner Assistance

Develop a National Framework for Anti-Bullying, taking a community wide approach to tackling bullying from childhood through to adulthood.	MOIA MOE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Development Partner Assistance
OUTCOME 4: ECONOMIC SAFETY MEASURES AND OPPORTUNITIES		
Adopt a multifaceted approach to tackling economic hardship.	MOIA OPM MFEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Development Partner Assistance
Strengthen vocational education and training, encouraging entrepreneurial skills among young people, promoting internship programs and strengthening links between schools and local businesses.	MOE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Possible additional Government funds Development Partner Assistance
Support young people building businesses and livelihood, particularly in the pa enua focusing on agriculture, fisheries, food, hospitality and tourism.	BTIB MOA MMR MOE CITC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Possible additional Government funds Development Partner Assistance
OUTCOME 5: CONNECTED, RESPECTED AND CONTRIBUTING TO THEIR WORLD		
Support non-government and faith based organisations to provide safe, supportive and developmental opportunities for children.	MOIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Community Initiative Scheme Possible additional Government funds Development Partner Assistance
Promote and recognise children's active citizenship and engagement in democratic processes, participation in social and environmental activities and volunteering.	MOIA MOE NES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets Possible additional Government funds Development Partner Assistance
Ensure the views of children in participation forums and consultation are taken into account.	MOIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets
Strengthen the teaching of civic duty and human rights in the education curriculum.	MOE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing budgets

Government will assess the effectiveness of the implementation of the commitments in this National Policy Framework which will be led by the Family and Children's division of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Identifying key indicators will be a priority action of this framework to enable us to track progress in improving outcomes for children across the five outcome areas to give a richer and more extensive picture of children and their lives.

TE PITO MANAVA O TE ANAU AT A GLANCE



The Outcomes Framework, with national outcomes and aims for each



APPENDICES

CONSULTATIONS WITH PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Consultations were conducted with Primary and Secondary School Students in Rarotonga, Atiu, Aitutaki and Mangaia. The following is a summary of their responses:

RAROTONGA

YEARS 1 & 2

For the youngest students (Avarua and St Joseph's schools), the primary objective was to gauge the opinion of children based on observation. Prepared statements were prepared and children were asked to go towards the face that they felt best represented their feelings. A happy face 😊 for agreement. A sad face to demonstrate disagreement ☹️ and not sure or don't care face to reflect that sentiment.

The statements were:

- I am a happy child.
- I like/enjoy school.
- I have everything I need.
- I feel loved.
- I feel safe.
- Nothing bad happens in my home.
- I love my parents and family.
- I want a good job when I grow up.
- I have a good life.

Year 1 students of Avarua and Year 2 of St Joseph's schools were consulted. The majority of the students – more than 95% responded positively demonstrating that children are generally happy and feel safe in their families, school and communities.

YEARS 3 & 4

“What is the most important thing to you?” was the question posed to this age group (Takitumu and Avarua schools). Students were asked to draw or write on balloons their responses and present to the class.

Responses were as follows:

- Friends and family
- School
- Being happy
- Not being sad
- Being loved and appreciated
- Family
- A good job when I grow up

- My home
- Myself
- Myself and my family
- Being with family

- Playing with my friends School

- Mum and dad
- Church/God/Sunday school
- Friends
- Brothers and sisters
- Family
- Fruits
- Happy/happiness
- The ocean
- Being beautiful
- Being nice
- Playing
- Flowers
- Helping
- Drawing
- Food
- Home
- Playground
- Other children
- Watching TV
- Pets
- Sports
- Picnic
- Fishing
- People
- Clothes
- Our house
- Learning to get a good job

Years 5 & 6

Students (Takitumu and Avarua Schools) were asked to write a letter to their friend telling him/her about what it is they enjoy or like the most about living in Rarotonga and what it is that they don't enjoy or like about living in Rarotonga?

Responses were as follows:

What I like	What I don't like
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -playing video games (4 occurrences) - going over to friends house - friends (6 occurrences) - God - sports (3 occurrences) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - chores (5 occurrences) - staying at home for a long time - shops don't have everything that I want (3 occurrences) - siblings

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School/subjects at school (6 occurrences) - movie stars - references to nature (5 occurrences) - Rarotonga is beautiful (6 occurrences) - playing (4 occurrences) - riding motor bike - sleeping - movies - I get to go anywhere (2 occurrences) - going camping - shopping - dancing (3 occurrences) - having a mobile and laptop - safe - swimming (3 occurrences) - nice beaches (2 occurrences) - its paradise - meeting new friends - my family (8 occurrences) - my teacher - having sleepovers - it's hot/sunshine (2 occurrences) - everybody is happy - drinking nu - helping - cleaning - it's cool (3 occurrences) - people are good - it is fun (3 occurrences) - nice food (3 occurrences) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mosquitos - fish dying in the sea - no doctor in Mangaia - people fighting (usually married ones) - expensive technology - things are expensive - family so far away (2 occurrences) - wet and rainy weather - insects - don't have video games - not being allowed to play with friends - being teased - being bullied - people fighting - weather too hot
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What I like	What I don't like
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fun activities (5 occurrences) - Beautiful environment (3 occurrences) - Being with friends (3 occurrences) - Happy place - Family (6 occurrences) - Swimming (2 occurrences) - Freedom - Know everybody - Can go visit other islands (2 occurrences) - Beautiful place - Food is plentiful - Beaches - Water park at Avatiu - Animals - Paradise - Safe - Drumming - Wonderful place to live and my home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Miss my nana - Mossies - Sores and infection - boring

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cool place to live - School// - Never ending vacation - Not a busy city - No seatbelts and you can stick your head out of the window - Friends - Great place to live - Lovely people 	
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YEARS 7 & 8

Students (Arorangi and Nikao schools) were placed into groups and asked to respond to a series of questions. The responses were as follows:

What is most important to you?	What is the best things about growing up in the Cook Islands?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Family - Our island - God/church - Culture - Nature including ocean - Nature - Life - Love - Trust - Food - Education - Lifestyle - Water - School - Medication/health - Exercise - Books - Friends - Virtues - Home - Pets bins - transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Friends - Singing and dancing - Sports - School - Playing - Family - Culture - Church - Holidays - Birthdays - Umu - Celebrations - Swimming - Fishing - Lifestyle - Happiness - Working/chores - Lagoon and swimming - Weather - Activities - Being raised as a Cook Islander - Following in parents steps - Movies and Palace burgers
What are the worst things about growing up in the Cook Islands?	What would you change if you were Prime Minister?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teacher - Deaths - Dogs - Working in plantations - Bullying - Speeding - Getting hidings - Violence - Natural disasters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Raii on the island - More resources for schools - Better education - Free lunch - Free bus - Every kid goes to school - Better medical care - Helping people, giving them food and shelter and money

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having no friends - Violence - Family leaving - Funerals - Swearing - Detention - Having bad people on the island - Not playing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Looking after lost people - Make a swimming pool for the school - Make a zoo park - Make bigger church - Make bigger tuck shops with cheaper prices - Cut out violence - Have music, techno, science classes - Free flights for children from outer islands to come to school in Rarotonga
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Why do you like living in the Cook Islands?	Why don't you like living in the Cook Islands?	If you were Prime Minister, what would you change?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The people are friendly - Culture is unique - Local food - Beautiful beaches and lagoons - Less crime - We are Christians - Hard working people - Our island is paradise - We welcome tourists - Not much poverty - Don't have to wear seatbelts - There's not much pollution - It's safe - Exquisite scenery - Our tour attractions(markets, resorts) - Friendly environment - Beautiful paradise - Clean environment - Passionate culture - Delicious foods - Unique language - Kind hearted and helpful people - Less crime - Strong history - Safe place - Our traditional practices - The fish - The road - No tall buildings - No rules - Its peaceful and clean - Good education - We own our own lands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Too many chores after school - Feeding pigs - Too much rubbish around the island - Too much smoking and drinking - Hate waking up early in the morning - Hate hunting fishes - Hate dogs pooping all over our field - Too many stray dogs - Too many mozzies - No MacDonaldis, KFC - A lot of accidents - A lot of fights - A lot of people with sickness - People stealing - Pollution in the ocean - Discrimination here (racism, sexist, ageism) - Bringing bad habits from overseas - Bad weather - Chores - Expensive things - Getting hidings - Internets not free - No theme parks - Not enough entertainment places to go to - No shopping malls - No amusement parks - Too much stonefish/corals - Too hot - A lot of scary houses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stop smoking and drinking - Look after our marine life - Lower taxes - Don't pay bills - Stop purse seine fishing - Make flights cheaper - Let people drive at 12 years old - Change the payscale-payrise - Increase children's benefit to \$100 a fortnight - Free bus to school - More resources for schools - Provide job opportunities for the unemployed - Cut down the cost of things in stores - Look after the widows and destitutes - No homework - 50% off all items in stores - Clean the lagoon - No taxes - 10 and over to get licence - Lower prices - Cheaper airfares - Invest more money in education and health - Limit the prices of drinking alcohol and smoking - Making fresh fruits and vegetables cheap - Getting better doctors - Free lands and rent - Stop fishing in our oceans - Change the helmet law - Keep the island clean

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We can plant our own foods - We can go anywhere - We have the harbour 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Free wifi
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AITUTAKI

YEARS 4, 5 & 6

Students were asked to write a letter to their friend telling him/her about what it is they enjoy or like the most about living in Aitutaki and what it is that they did not like about living in Aitutaki?

Responses were as follows:

What I like?	What I don't like?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feeding pigs (9 occurrences) - Playing (25 occurrences) - Having good food (13 occurrences) - School (15 occurrences) - Sports (39 occurrences) - Safety - Doing school work (6 occurrences) - Going to the wharf/swimming (24 occurrences) - My parents (13 occurrences) - Chasing chickens (16 occurrences) - Fishing (17 occurrences) - Having a phone (2 occurrences) - Moving the lawn - Driving a motor bike (8 occurrences) - My home (2 occurrences) - Cooking (2 occurrences) - Listening to my family (2 occurrences) - Going to NZ - Going on the vaka - Watching movies (13 occurrences) - Picking flowers - Resting (3 occurrences) - Shooting pigs (2 occurrences) - Going to the motu - Climbing coconuts - Drinking niu - Friends (21 occurrences) - Collecting shellfish - Dancing (6 occurrences) - Reading - Helping parents and family (5 occurrences) - Washing dishes - Racking rubbish (2 occurrences) - Being allowed to parakoka (2 occurrences) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Siblings (akamea and mean) (4 occurrences) - Being in unsafe situations (e.g. falling of trees, swimming in rough seas, etc.) (8 occurrences) - Arguments (8 occurrences) - Chores (12 occurrences) - Staying home from school (3 occurrences) - Being disrespectful to mama - Eating imported foods - Speaking Maori - Overeating (4 occurrences) - Crying (5 occurrences) - Untidy home - Not doing well at school (2 occurrences) - People smoking (3 occurrences) - Kutu and ria (2 occurrences) - People drinking alcohol (2 occurrences) - People fighting (2 occurrences) - Getting a smack (5 occurrences) - Staying at home instead of going out to play (3 occurrences) - Watching bad movies (2 occurrences) - Being sworn at (2 occurrences) - People showing off (2 occurrences) - Rotten teeth - Netball - Expensive food - School work is hard - Too much socialising and noise - Change in attitude and having no respect for parents - Children having bad attitude at school - Myna birds are noisy - Eating fish - Angry children (3 occurrences)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Getting tupa (3 occurrences) - Dyeing my hair - Going on the plane - Having a big house (2 occurrences) - Having a mobile (2 occurrences) - Having a big tv - Playing video games (4 occurrences) - Going to church (3 occurrences) - Planting - Playing with ipad (2 occurrences) - Nobody takes children and free life (2 occurrences) - Family (7 occurrences) - Going to Fiji - Going on the motu (4 occurrences) - Animals and birds (4 occurrences) - Good life (2 occurrences) - Teacher and family help out (2 occurrences) - Helping my friends (2 occurrences) - My teacher (4 occurrences) - Looking after my nephew (2 occurrences) - Singing (2 occurrences) - painting - planes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Patipati children - Being disobedient to family and teachers (2 occurrences) - Watching movies/tv (3 occurrences) - Playing electronic games - Fishing - People stealing - My mum doesn't listen but dad does - Bullying - Playing with naughty children - Children smacking me (2 occurrences) - Child abuse - Cheeky kids - Being told off - Getting my hair cut (3 occurrences) - Annoying teacher, she raises her voice (2 occurrences)
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Students were also asked to think about what is most important to them and present to the class.

The responses were as follows:

Vaitau school students made references to the family – Looking after the family, looking after the children, looking after certain family members (grandparents, uncle, siblings, etc.)

Other responses were as follows:

- Going to church
- Obeying your parents
- Catching chickens (3 responses)
- Taking care of the home
- My Girlfriend
- My friends
- Watching TV
- Getting a good job (2 responses)
- Having a good time
- Listening to the teachers

Araura Primary school responses were as follows:

- 10 responses related to the family
- 6 responses related to education
- 9 responses related to sports (rugby, soccer, volleyball, netball, golf, athletics)

- 4 responses related to fishing
- 1 response to eating good food
- 4 responses related to chasing and catching chickens
- 1 response to dancing
- 1 response related to cooking
- 1 response related to hanging out with friends
- 1 response related to helping out with planting
- 3 responses related to playing
- 1 response related to making sure the home is in order
- 1 response relating to having a good job and earning good money
- 1 response relating to helping at home like feeding the pigs

YEARS 7 & 8

Students of Araura College were placed into groups and asked to respond to a series of questions. The responses were as follows:

What is/are the most important things in your life?	What are the best things about growing up in Aitutaki?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Family - Friends - education - relationships - God - religion - food - water -money - house - clothes - environment - having God in our family - showing respect to others - education to get good jobs - friends - What my future holds for me? - My Education - My health - Helping one another - our rights - having fun - Parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Life in Aitutaki - School - Family - Freedom - Government protection - Food - Beauty of Aitutaki - Sports - swimming - freedom - natural foods - lagoon - travelling - celebration - work - fishing - praying - planting - boys brigade - having fun - playing video games - building - girls - chores - church - playing - looking after family - celebrating our birthdays - receiving gifts - proud to be an Aitutakian - picnics - Our culture (dancing, drumming, singing)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - going to church - working for money - activities
What are the worst things about growing up in Aitutaki?	What would you change if you were Prime Minister?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Being bullied by other people - Drink driving - Untidy environment - No dogs - Too many mozzies - Gossip - Working - Getting a hiding - Fighting - Drunk people - People Polluting our island - Smoking - The temperature - School rules - Shops - Detention - thieves - People who lie and swear - Parents who smoke around children - Parents who are cruel to their children - Going home from school late 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allow underage driving - Free products from shops - A full education - Better education, health, money - More holidays - Free everything (supplies, trips, resources) - Build more schools, parks, water parks, theme parks - Increase the age of the child benefit - Better hospitals - Free lunch at school - Make the laws work - Increase the child benefit - Provide more assistance - Buy more new school buses - Make bigger classrooms - Longer lunch breaks - Increase the school budget - Employ more bilingual teachers for the benefit of Cook Islands students - Hospital needs to train more doctors and nurses - No purse seine fishing - Make sure that our culture will not be extinct - More police to maintain order - Bring down the cost of goods in shops

One group of students went on to say that the Children’s Policy should be for the Children’s future, giving hope to our children, for the benefit of our children, taking account children’s rights and also our way of life. Lastly it should matter to all people.

MANGAIA

Years 3 & 4

“What is the most important thing to you?” was the question posed. Students were asked to draw or write on balloons their responses and present to the class

The results from the Years 3 & 4 students of Mangaia were as follows:

Year 3	Year 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Being happy, playing sports and being able to relax - The environment and the sea and ocean 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Helping at home by feeding the animals, pigs and goats

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Myself - Myself - People around me - My sister and I - My dad - Myself - My family - Love - My dad - Playing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Doing things that makes me happy like swimming - School because I like Maths and English - School and swimming - Playing especially ripper rugby - Playing - Drawing - School and play - Being happy - My family - School - Behaving myself
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YEARS 5 & 6

Students asked to write a letter to their friend telling him/her about what it is they enjoy or like the most about living in Mangaia and what it is that they don't enjoy or like about living in Mangaia?

Responses were as follows:

What I like	What I don't like
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Family (2 occurrences) - Friends (17 occurrences) - Going into the sea (2 occurrences) - School (7 occurrences) - Playing (5 occurrences) - Food is plentiful (3 occurrences) - Sports (3 occurrences) - Lots of fruit and vegetables (2 occurrences) - Going to the beach - Feeding the animals (2 occurrences) - Swimming (2 occurrences) - Good people (2 occurrences) - Caves, lakes and taro patches - Having a playstation - Mangaia is beautiful (3 occurrences) - Looking after my parents - Going to be an evangelist and then work for money - Nothing bad happens (2 occurrences) - No fighting (2 occurrences) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The temperature is hot (child living in Mangaia for a year and half) - Going inland to the plantations (5 occurrences) - Coming to school on the bus (too crowded) (2 occurrences) - Mosquitos - No big shops in Mangaia - No playground - Children saying mean things - Bullying - I miss my mum - Feeding pigs and looking for coconuts - Stepping on rocks in the makatea - I like Rarotonga, Mangaia is old. Lots of transport and things in Rarotonga - I like Rarotonga, lots of things there, shops and a playground - I like the playground in NZ, sky tower, shopping, soccer and I like school in NZ. - Want to go to NZ there's plenty of money - I like Rarotonga, Avarua school and its activities - I sometimes get tired of living in Mangaia

YEARS 7 & 8

Students were placed into groups and asked to respond to a series of questions. The responses were as follows:

What do you like about living in Mangaia?	What don't you like about living in Mangaia?	What would you change if you were the Prime Minister?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lots of delicious food (mamio, paka, fish) - Freedom - We feel safe - Enjoy feeding the pigs - Perfect life - No hurricanes - Not much accidents - Lots of local food - Not many insects - Playing - Sports, Going inland - Planting - Schoolwork - Sports - Plantations - Different foods - Safe - Swimming at the harbour - School - Hanging out with friends - Mangaia is beautiful - Different foods - Fishing, planting - Swimming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Don't like seeing drunk people - People stealing fish in the rau - People driving fast - Rude people - Road is dusty - Beach is rocky - Power sometimes so off - Working, feeding pigs - Cheeky kids - Bullying - Senior bullies - Need better computers - Need to seal roads - Bad roads - Feeding the pigs - Weeding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide another bus - Free food at school - Better education (stationery, shoes, uniform, computer, new toilets) - Give fruits to eat - Improve water supply especially at the school - Provide more sports equipment - More resources for the school (books, stationery, computer, technology, picnic table) - More resources for the school - Have a tuck shop - Rebuild our school - Have an extra bus - More resources for the school - Provide children with a Xmas gift

ATIU

YEARS 3, 4 & 5

“What is the most important thing to you?” was the question posed. Students were asked to draw or write on balloons their responses and present to the class

The responses from the students of Atiu were as follows:

1. Tiare maori, puaka, tangata, kuri, are, enua, birds, fruits, chores, writing, beauty
2. Immediate surroundings, clothes, friends, home, school
3. School, playing, home, pets, immediate surroundings, money, friends, land
4. House, car, food, pigs, books, fishing, taro, meeting other people
5. Playing and school
6. Immediate surroundings and the environment
7. My home, birds, flowers, fish
8. My home, flowers, plants
9. My family, school, Sunday school, books, treats
10. Playing and school
11. Friends, toys, water, singing, church

12. My home, sports, chores, learning, church and food.

YEARS 6 & 7

Students asked to write a letter to their friend telling him/her about what it is they enjoy or like the most about living in Atiu and what it is that they don't enjoy or like about living in Atiu?

Their responses were as follows:

What I like	What I don't like
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Swimming (7 occurrences) - Sports (rugby, soccer, volleyball, netball) (14 occurrences) - Staying together with family (3 occurrences) - School (10 occurrences) - My teacher (4 occurrences) - Fishing - Friends (10 occurrences) - Playing with friends (12 occurrences) - Doing homework at school (2 occurrences) - Going on motor bike (6 occurrences) - Many fruits (3 occurrences) - Eating - Like staying with grandfather and grandmother (3 occurrences) - Going shopping - Church (5 occurrences) - Picking rubbish (3 occurrences) - Going to my friend's house (2 occurrences) - Looking after Animals (9 occurrences) - Fresh food (2 occurrences) - Going down to the land with dad and family (2 occurrences) - Family (13 occurrences) - Fishing (6 occurrences) - Training - Riding my bike (4 occurrences) - Riding the car (2 occurrences) - Dance and drumming (2 occurrences) - Island of birds - Love/like going to church (4 occurrences) - Singing (6 occurrences) - Learning the bible - Eating fish - Freedom (2 occurrences) - Girl guides (2 occurrences) - Girls brigade - Going on the reef - Learn a lot from the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Raking rubbish (6 occurrences) - Too hot to play outside (2 occurrences) - Cutting the grass - Walking to school - Washing dishes - Feeding pigs - Cow - Chores (2 occurrences) - Dogs biting shoes - pigs

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Peaceful (2 occurrences) - Sunday school - Support my friends (2 occurrences) - Reading (4 occurrences) - Climbing coconut trees (3 occurrences) - Atiu is beautiful (2 occurrences) - Helping my mum/mama (2 occurrences) - Friendly - Playing on phone - Painting/art (2 occurrences) 	
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Years 8

Students were placed into groups and asked to respond to a series of questions. The responses were as follows:

What is the most important thing to you as a child growing up in the Atiu?	What is the thing/s that you like or enjoy about living in Atiu?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The most important thing is my family. They raise and look after us - My education so that I can reach a high standard of life. - To pass school and reach university - Helping each other so that we won't do bad things. - Going to church to get help - 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Going to school and enjoying playing sports - My friends are similar to me - Playing sports - Meeting your family that you haven't seen as a child
What is the thing/s that you don't like or enjoy about living in Atiu?	If you were Prime Minister what would change for children in Atiu?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Being smacked/by parents - Washing clothes - When someone in my family passes away - When parents growl children and the children can take the parents to the police - Bad dreams - When my parents won't let me go on the plane - Being sent around - When my family from abroad return overseas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Changing the school starting time to 9am - Building a road from Atiu to Rarotonga - For children under the age of 12 not to be allowed out on the road at night - For children under the age of 16 not to be allowed to drive motor bikes - To have a hair salon - Given funding/money support - Bus to bring them to school - Find ways for children to achieve high standards by going to school, church, listening to their elders, providing extra resources for the pupils and teachers, having visiting teachers and upskilling.

CONSULTATION WITH UNIFORMED ORGANISATIONS

Consultations were also carried out with uniformed organisations comprising of the Boys Brigade, Girls Brigade and Girl Guides. They were organised into groups to discuss what their

views in what would help in the lives of children and young people, then responses were presented to the wider group. Responses were as follows:

Group 1

- Increase the child benefit to children over 12 years still going to school. There should be a continued support to the expenses of children still attending school. Especially for those who go from the pa enua to Rarotonga. This can become expensive for parents in the pa enua.
- There is funeral assistance for the elderly when they pass away but none for children. This assistance should be extended to children too.
- More funding should be provided to NGOs (uniformed organisations, youth groups, etc) to help in implementing programs targeting children and young people.
- Purchase a bus to help transport children to school and other activities to help with attendance.

Group 2

- Education should be continued and more focus on transition from school to when a child is no longer in school.
- Encourage community policing. For e.g. children driving bikes not being controlled by formal police.
- Encourage protection of physical and verbal abuse maybe through more awareness of the impacts of these incidents on children and young people's lives.
- Change the school starting time from 9am – 3pm.
- Ways where fathers of teenage pregnancy can have some responsibility in child raising.

Group 3

- Listen to children's views. Parents only telling children what to do but children not given the opportunity to express their views.
- Focus on children and young people's education and health issues.
- Actively try to increase employment opportunities for young people and tie this in with the education system – not only formal post college education but also vocational/practical education.
- There should also be a strategy for young people between 18-21 years.
- Children's rights should not impede on parents authority. There should be awareness raising on the rights of the child and also the rights of the parents so everybody is clear on what these mean.
- Support mechanisms for parents is needed not only for children.

Group 4

- There should be an avenue for children to voice their grievances, perhaps aside from the law/police. Options should be explored.
- Children's voices should be heard through perhaps raising awareness of this issue.
- Children under the age of 14 should not be allowed to roaming around on the road especially after dark.
- Targeted assistance to special needs children.

Group 5

- The parent's authority should not be overrun by children. Ways of how to get a balance should be looked at.
- Education should be promoted and encouraged, especially to achieve higher education – university.

- Targeted health programs for children and young people.
- Ways of making sure children are safe needs to be looked at.
- Make sure that the environment is safe and clean for children.
- Parents need to be supported to lessen family problems. Some programs can be developed to provide parent support and pro-active positive parenting.
- More activities for children to participate in and bring them together keeping them out of trouble and at the same time developing them.

CONSULTATION WITH SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

A voluntary online survey was conducted with secondary school students (from Titikaveka, Tereora, Mangaia, Aitutaki and Atiu) . The question presented in the survey were related to health, education, and lifestyle. These questions were quantifiable and results are included in the Policy Framework. Three additional qualitative questions were also asked of students. These were:

1. What do you think is good about being a young person in the Cook Islands?
2. What is hard about being a young person in the Cook Islands?
3. If you were the Prime Minister, what is the one thing that you would change for young people?

The most common responses were related to the following:

1. What do you think is good about being a young person in the Cook Islands?

- It is a beautiful place to live in
- We don't experience extreme poverty
- It is a good place to be raised in
- We have better opportunities than our parents did
- There are many opportunities to get a good education and jobs
- It is peaceful
- It is safe
- The culture is still strong
- You get to experience life before taking on the adulthood

2. What is hard about being a young person in the Cook Islands?

- Adapting to change and not being able to do so with the new opportunities given.
- Doing chores
- Being young is hard. You have to work at home, school, and get a good education and job.
- Lack of resources required at school
- High cost of telecommunications
- Barriers for young people like the helmet law
- Getting a lot of criticism
- Looking after younger siblings
- Not as many opportunities as bigger countries
- Some young people don't feel welcome in their homes
- Too many distractions and need good role models to go in the right direction
- Having problems that they can't solve and end up committing suicide

- Too much responsibility
- Peer pressure
- Living up to expectations and high standards
- Strict parents
- Personal stuff
- Financial issues
- Teenage problems
- No privacy
- Getting hidings
- Getting picked on
- Not knowing your rights, being mistreated and not standing up for yourself
- Learning the culture and language
- Being dependent on parents
- Violence and doing the wrong things
- Parents not being able to give you what you want, for example, money
- Balancing life

3. *If you were the Prime Minister, what is the one thing that you would change for young people?*

- More studies, training that will prepare for opportunities given
- Improve resourcing for schools
- Improve education
- Improve the minimum wage
- Have cheaper internet
- Ban drugs
- Provide more services for juvenile
- Eliminate the helmet law
- More opportunities for young people who are not working after finishing college
- Do more to make young people safe
- Improve policy decisions
- Lend financial support to families who can't afford basic needs
- More counselling services
- More activities for young people
- Give young people the chance to get better jobs and a better future
- Give the young people voice
- Support all children even the naughty ones
- Change the alcohol limit to 21 years
- Create family friendly places where young people can go to
- Have more mentors
- I would help them and try to understand them so that they wouldn't feel so different from others and wouldn't be alone or have trouble living the life that they want

CONSULTATIONS WITH THE COMMUNITY

Consultations with the community was conducted via an on-line survey and also community meetings. These focused on three questions. The questions presented were as follows:

1. Identify three of the best and worst things about life in the Cook Islands for children and young people?
2. How can positive behaviour and citizenship be supported for our young people?
3. What actions are needed from family, community and Government to support children and young people move confidently into adulthood?

The most common responses were related to the following:

The Good things about life in the Cook Islands for children and young people?

4. Relatively safe environment
5. Can have family support systems
6. They have a lot of opportunities
7. Good community embracement of the child and the principle that it takes a community to raise the child
8. Good opportunities via sports, cultural events and education
9. Freedom
10. Rich cultural experience
11. Learning early to work
12. Living close to nature
13. Good atmosphere and environment
14. Mostly free education and health services
15. Good health system
16. Good education system
17. Knowledge and skills passed down
18. Getting to know about God
19. People around them encourages participation in activities and life
20. Proximity
21. Ease of life
22. Church plays a strong role in the development of children and youth in learning principles
23. Not over developed – limited drug access
24. Lifestyle
25. Less exposure to bad things
26. Exposure to culture
27. Accessibility to food and water
28. Strong sense of connection to the environment and protection of natural resources and social consciousness
29. The access to the Child Benefit but that this be increased to 16 years
30. Knowing everyone in the pa enua
31. Food is plentiful

The bad things about life in the Cook Islands for children and young people?

32. Not enough structured support systems
33. Possible economic hardship linked to high cost of living
34. Limited resources to address issues
35. Generally voices of young people are not heard
36. Pa enua do not have the same opportunities as Rarotonga

37. Most vulnerable, most susceptible to abuse, family violence and psychological and physical harm not being helped
38. Opportunities seem better abroad leading to depopulation
39. Alcohol and drinking from an early age
40. Seen not heard attitude
41. Few places to go for support
42. Individual family situations and negative environment for example, alcoholic parents, physical and verbal abuse, sexual abusive family members
43. High cost of living
44. Poor access to reliable and affordable public transport
45. High price of telecommunications
46. Online activities encouraging online gaming, unhealthy eating habits, reduced hours of sleep resulting in anti-social behaviour, concentration in school and in living life
47. Social and peer pressure
48. Petty crimes, drug and alcohol abuse
49. Violence and domestic disputes
50. Drink driving
51. Depression
52. Suicide
53. Access to negative influences via the internet
54. Teenage pregnancy
55. Alcohol culture
56. Poor parenting skills mean poor role models, living, discipline, etc.
57. Lack of proper home life – little stability, children left to their own devices, parents not at home
58. Motivation – lose interest quickly, bored easily and have to be paid to do something
59. Everything is easy with free association with NZ
60. Culture, identity and language not upheld
61. Falling on the wrong side of the law
62. Neglect and no family support
63. Poverty
64. Education is not up to standard expected
65. Not enough affordable healthy food
66. Children not knowing their rights
67. Children are too dependent
68. Limited choices with school framework for specialised areas
69. Easy to leave school uneducated
70. No robust systems for protection
71. Need more community based programs where children can contribute towards their growth as positive members of society
72. Lack of job experience outlets for part-time work
73. Inadequate medical care
74. Inadequate mentoring and parental guidance
75. Bullying
76. Road accidents
77. Limited extra-curricula activities (dance classes, sports clubs, study clubs, science technology museums)
78. Need to improve sense of self and wellbeing
79. Poor lifestyle choices

80. Inadequate child benefit payments
81. Physical abuse
82. Not enough assistance
83. Communal/social stereotypes
84. Lose of the reo
85. Lazy – chores are becoming extinct
86. Too much freedom can lead to trouble
87. Easy access to transport and alcohol
88. Mixing in the wrong crowd
89. Religious teaching not being part of family life
90. Being able to be confident in private matters
91. Gossip
92. Perception that foreigners are better than locals
93. Laws discriminating corporal punishment
94. Dependence on money for everything
95. Disrespect for parents and each other
96. Absence of goal setting with support leading to misguided decisions
97. Not promoting good role models
98. Wanting more from their parents beyond what they can afford
99. Failure of the justice system
100. Parents neglecting children with no repercussions
101. Helmet law
102. Growing gap between the 'haves' and the 'have nots'

How can positive behaviour and citizenship be supported for our young people?

- Provide more advocacy and outreach
- Put in place support mechanisms for both parents and children
- Better incorporate children's and human rights issues into the formal teaching curriculum
- Allow children to be involved in decision making, drafting strategies and so forth, that involves them
- Ensure that opportunities are offered to all children, particularly those in the pa enua
- Young people need more of a voice. They are taught to respect their elders, they too must be respected and their opinions valued
- More monitoring and encouraging the community to report on unfavourable home situations
- A well-resourced organisation to deal with children's issues
- More counsellors to be a source of help, encouragement and motivation to young people, especially those who have fallen off the rails
- Basic lessons in calculating families or school values; culture that embraces family values; valuing own self, own conduct, boundaries as parents, teachers, caregivers – starts from home, school, church, uniformed organisations, etc.
- Community orientation
- Church, youth groups, sports, spiritual interventions
- Targeted education
- Youth being involved in leading activities for youth
- Education on moral, ethical and patriotic values
- Positive role models and positive mentoring
- Awareness
- Setting honest and realistic goals

- Creating youth activities promoting positive behaviour
- Keeping up with ideas – creating youth centres
- Developing strategic plans that demonstrate key priorities and tasks for generating national goals for young people. Perhaps reaching out to returning graduates and employers and developing programs around schools that give them insights into career opportunities and pathways
- Providing opportunities to gain skills outside the norm. More vocational jobs
- Ensuring that children have limited access to things that bring about bad behaviour
- Ensure that there is pride in being a Cook Islander at multiple levels: pride in language that sees it being used more often publicly- signage, newspaper.
- Having a pride in Cook Islands culture. Not just dancing but history and custom; food; plants; medicine; the land, sea, etc.
- Respect with the connection between people and things, respecting people’s rights and property
- Through the schools and integrated into the curriculum
- Parents spending time teaching their children about core values including acceptable behaviour and respect
- More youth programs
- Encourage young people to participate in community activities and provide leadership
- Better role models from leading personalities
- More family activities in family friendly areas
- Parenting workshops, after school activities
- Provide incentives for families to be involved in activities relevant to a good and better life
- Incentivise positive behaviour, for e.g. National Young Achievers Award
- Better advertise opportunities for young people
- Better involvement in our national democratic processes (mock parliaments, etc.)
- Accommodate traditionally and genetically kinaesthetic learning styles
- More community support
- Right attitude and determination need to be promoted

What actions are needed from family, community and Government to support children and young people move confidently into adulthood?

- Better resourcing
- Getting the community involved in children and parents issues
- Provide access to opportunities
- Give children a voice
- More counselling support for children and parents
- More transition services
- Develop confidence through cultural activities and supporting voice in the classroom, home and communities
- Setting boundaries, stop spoon feeding/hand holding
- Provide motivational coaching and mentoring
- Implement partnership activities informed by young people
- Evidence based reporting
- Ensuring political buy-in for activities involving children
- Having a transitional policy from childhood to adulthood
- Strong education and health and positive living program
- Implement laws to reduce discrimination

- Improve care and protection
- Promote inclusion in the community
- Provide youth centres to provide support
- Community and government mechanisms to instil collective values
- Have ongoing consultation with young people
- Community to be made aware of opportunities that Government provides
- Providing more funding to make young people realise their abilities
- Providing low cost housing to young people wanting to stand on their own feet
- Family positive reinforcement – providing a loving and supportive environment
- Having encouragement programs readily available
- Provide guidance on the changing needs of parenting
- Inclusive holistic approaches in schools
- Having job/internship opportunities
- Making internet access cheaper
- Counselling free of charge
- In country learning scholarships
- Increasing the minimum wage
- Reducing the cost of living
- Bridging the gap between neglected youth and succeeding in life
- More development studies by people qualified to do studies
- Providing forums for youth to be heard
- Implementing a 'week following a champion'
- Subsidising cost for the more vulnerable (working parents on the minimum wage)
- Providing more support to Ministry of Education
- Parents and families to be held accountable for children's actions
- More life skills being available and accessible



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