



NECDA

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

"Building a better Future for Children"

NATIONAL ECD ALLIANCE

QUARTER 1 NEWSLETTER

"A SECTOR AT A TURNING POINT"



Dear Members, Partners and Friends,

It is my privilege to welcome you to this edition of the NECDA Network Newsletter. This period reflects significant progress in strengthening our collective voice and positioning NECDA as a key driver of sector-wide coordination and influence.

Over the past six months, our work has focused on deepening partnerships, strengthening internal systems, and ensuring that the realities of the ECD workforce continue to shape national dialogue. From grassroots engagements to national platforms, NECDA has remained committed to bridging the gap between policy and practice.

A defining highlight was the **NECDA 20 Year Anniversary Conference in Cape Town** a moment of reflection, celebration, and renewed commitment to advancing early childhood development in South Africa. This milestone reaffirmed the strength of our network and the importance of collective leadership.

Our engagements during this period have focused on:

- Strengthening collaboration with government and sector stakeholders
- Supporting workforce development and training pathways
- Advancing dialogue on qualifications, accreditation, and RPL
- Addressing systemic barriers affecting ECD centre sustainability

As we move forward, our priority remains clear, to build a responsive, inclusive, and sustainable ECD system that supports both practitioners and the children they serve. Sincere appreciation to our Board, our members, partners, and stakeholders for your continued commitment and active participation in the work of NECDA.

Together, we continue to shape the future of ECD.

Abigail Peacock

Chief Operations Officer



Dear Members,

The past six months have been decisive for Early Childhood Development in South Africa. NECDA has stood at the forefront – shaping national debate, confronting systemic barriers, and demanding that the needs of our children and practitioners drive policy, not paperwork.

We delivered key breakthroughs:

1. Building the Workforce, We Deserve

Our Donor Member Dialogue with the Department of Basic Education and Investec launched the National ECD Practitioner Training Fund (NEPTF). This is more than a fund. It is the foundation of a structured, sustainable system to train, recognise, and dignify every ECD practitioner in this country.

2. Dismantling Barriers

We intensified our campaign against regulatory chokeholds especially municipal by-laws that close centres instead of supporting them. NECDA will not rest until the compliance environment enables growth, not exclusion.

3. Putting ECD on the World Stage

At the G20 ECD Indaba, we ensured that early childhood development was not a side note, but a national priority. Commitments were made. Now we hold power to account to turn promises into centres, into jobs, into better outcomes for children.

4. Resolving the Qualification Crisis

Through relentless engagement with SAQA, ETDP SETA, and DBE, we are unlocking pathways for thousands of practitioners whose qualifications were stuck in bureaucracy. No practitioner should be left behind.



Looking Ahead: Our Line of March

- **Strengthen the Workforce:** Professionalise ECD through accredited training, fair wages, and clear career paths.
- **Drive Policy into Practice:** Reform is not real until a mother in a rural village feels it. We will monitor implementation ward by ward.
- **Expand Equitable Access:** Every child, in every corner of South Africa and the SADC region, deserves quality ECD. We are taking NECDA's footprint beyond our borders.
- **Centre the Child:** Policy, funding, and politics must serve one master the child and those who nurture them.
Colleagues, the turning point is here. The old excuses of "no budget" and "no capacity" have expired. The sector is awake. The state is listening. Now we must deliver.

The future of this nation is not written in boardrooms. It is written in our ECD centres. Let us make it a future worth inheriting.
In solidarity and service.

Rex Molefe

**Chairperson, National Early Childhood Development Alliance
(NECDA)**

"Nothing for us, without us."



KEY ACTIVITIES & SECTOR ENGAGEMENTS

Over the past six months, NECDA has maintained a strong presence across governance, policy, and sector development platforms.

Governance and Organisational Strengthening

- Successful hosting of the NECDA Annual General Meeting (AGM)
- Ongoing Board and EXCO strategic sessions focused on sustainability and growth
- Active subcommittee engagements strengthening governance oversight

National & Regional Engagements

- Representation at G20 ECD engagements, contributing to global dialogue
- Participation in regional collaboration platforms with SANECD and TRANAC in Eswatini and Botswana
- Engagement with the SADC Parliamentarians Forum

Government & Policy Engagement

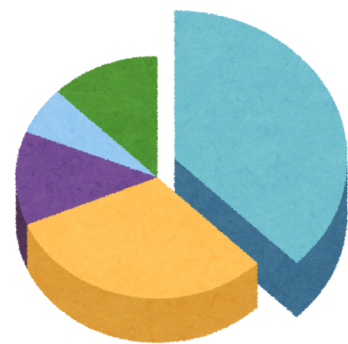
- Ongoing collaboration with the Department of Basic Education (DBE)
- Participation in Ministerial stakeholder consultations
- Participation at the national of the Intersectoral Forum (ISF)
- Engagement with provincial legislatures and national policy processes

Sector Capacity Building

- Hosting of QCTO webinars addressing accreditation and qualification transitions
- Participation in ECCE systems mapping processes
- Support for training, curriculum development, and sector alignment

Major Events

- NECDA 20-Year Anniversary Conference (Cape Town)
- NASCEE Blueprint Civil Society Engagement
- ECD Stakeholder Dialogues and Workshops
- ECCE Outcomes Fund Launch



Strategic Partnerships

NECDA continues to strengthen collaboration with key partners:

- **NASCEE:** Monitoring, evaluation, and research collaboration
- **UNICEF:** National Parenting Programme alignment
- **CIPPT:** Continuous Professional Development
- **SA ECD Congress:** Strengthening Partnerships
- **Ilifa Labantwana:** Engaging Systems strengthening and advocacy
- **Sasol Foundation & Investec:** Exploring Strategic funding and programme alignment opportunities.

Programme Highlights

National Parenting Programme (NPP)

- Provided capacity building training for more than 16 000 parents across South Africa impacting over 45 000 children

Start Well Foundation

- Development of nutrition focused training materials
- Alignment with occupational qualifications

National ECD Practitioner Training Fund (NEPTF)

- Fund established and gaining momentum
- Ongoing donor in government engagement.

Workforce Development & RPL

- Addressing qualification transition challenges
- Preparation for the upcoming RPL Indaba



Regulatory Reform

- Advocacy for simplified registration processes
- Addressing barriers linked to municipal by-laws

Child Wellbeing & Violence Prevention

- Participation in multi-sectoral engagements
- Promotion of integrated approaches including nutrition and caregiver support



Our Members: The Strength of NECDA

NECDA is, at its core, a member-driven alliance. The strength, credibility, and impact of our work is made possible by the active participation and commitment of our members across all provinces.

We warmly welcome new members who have recently joined the NECDA network. Your inclusion strengthens our collective voice and enhances our ability to advocate for meaningful change in the sector.

We also take this opportunity to emphasise the importance of membership fee contributions. These fees are critical in sustaining the operations of the Secretariat, enabling coordination, advocacy, and support services to continue effectively. A strong and sustainable NECDA requires the active commitment of its members both in participation and in contribution.

Appreciation to Leadership

We extend our sincere gratitude to the NECDA Board for their continued leadership and guidance. Their voluntary service, strategic oversight, and commitment to the sector are invaluable to the success and integrity of the organisation.

Resource Mobilisation

NECDA continues to actively pursue funding to support its work: These efforts are essential in ensuring the sustainability and growth of NECDA's programmes.

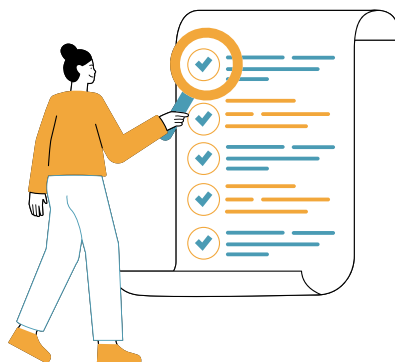
Looking Ahead

As NECDA moves into the next phase of its work, the focus remains on strengthening systems, deepening impact, and ensuring that the ECD workforce is adequately supported in a rapidly evolving environment.



Key priorities for the coming period include:

- Securing funding and scaling the National ECD Practitioner Training Fund (NEPTF) to expand access to structured training and professionalisation pathways
- Hosting the RPL Indaba, creating a platform to address Recognition of Prior Learning challenges and unlock opportunities for practitioners
- Rolling out the NECDA Provincial Roadshow Dialogues to gather sector-wide input following the ECD function shift and strengthen the voice of practitioners on the ground in collaboration with SA ECD Congress and NASCEE.
- Enhancing provincial coordination mechanisms to ensure alignment, responsiveness, and effective implementation at local level with the provincial ISF structures.
- Expanding member support initiatives, with a focus on practical tools, guidance, and capacity strengthening.
- Deepening strategic partnerships with government, donors, and sector stakeholders to influence policy and unlock resources.
- Advancing Continuous Professional Development (CPD) opportunities for facilitators and practitioners to strengthen quality across the sector.
- Delivering NECDA–NASCEE webinars, providing accessible learning and knowledge-sharing platforms for members.
- Ongoing consultations with statutory bodies, ensuring alignment on qualifications, accreditation, and regulatory frameworks.



Through these priorities, NECDA remains committed to building a more responsive, inclusive, and professionalised ECD sector one that is informed by evidence, strengthened through collaboration, and driven by the voices of its members

Closing Reflection

NECDA continues to grow as a credible, strategic, and solution-driven leader within the ECD sector.

Our work remains focused on one shared goal:

To ensure that every child has access to quality early learning, and that every practitioner is supported, recognised, and empowered.



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Eswatini AFECN SANECD Regional Engagement



NECDA Board Pre Conference Appreciation Dinner



ECCE Systems Mapping Engagement



G20 UNICA Engagement





NECDA Board Members at HCI Workshop



NECDA Appreciation Award at PWAP Annual Awards Ceremony



NECDA Presentation at the DBE ISF Meeting



NECDA Attendance at the SA ECD Congress Elections



NECDA Attendance at SADC Parliamentarian's Forum Engagement



NECDA Attendance at the SA ECD Congress Annual Conference