# INDEPENDENT END OF PROGRAM EVALUATION
# DFAT MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Prepared by:     Padric Harm, Senior Program Manager, Suva Post

Approved by:     Christina Munzer, Counsellor Development Cooperation Fiji and Tuvalu, Fiji Post

Date Approved:   05 February 2018

## SUMMARY

| Initiative Name | Access to Quality Education Program | | |
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| AidWorks initiative number | INJ515 | | |
| Commencement date | 15 October 2010 | Completion date | 30 June 2017 |
| Total Australian $ | 43,300,000 | | |
| Delivery organisation(s) | Palladium International | | |
| Country/Region | Fiji Islands / Pacific | | |
| Initiative objective/s | The goal of AQEP was to work in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts (MEHA) and other relevant stakeholders (including education and disability stakeholders) to improve the ability of children from very poor communities, including those with disabilities, to access a quality school education. The AQEP end-of-program outcomes (EOPOs) were: • Improved access to education for children from poor communities with a reduction in disparities based on location, disability and gender • Improved quality of education for children from poor communities with a reduction in disparities based on location, disability and gender • Sustainable adoption of AQEP approaches and principles at school, district and MoE level to improve access and quality for children from poor communities, including children with disability. AQEP also contributed significantly to disaster response efforts in the education sector on behalf of DFAT. | | |

# EVALUATION SUMMARY

## Evaluation Objective:

The purpose of the End of Program Evaluation (EPE) was to evaluate the extent to which the Fiji Access to Quality Education Program (AQEP) had achieved its end-of-program outcomes; assess the effectiveness of program implementation and the relevance of program interventions; compile lessons learnt; and provide recommendations that will inform and shape DFAT's future engagement with the Fiji Government through the Ministry of Education.

The EPE was tasked to independently assess relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of AQEP activities, with a specific focus on:

- Capacity building approaches;
- Management effectiveness;
- Stakeholder engagement and cooperation;
- Monitoring and evaluation;
- Analysis and learning; and
- Cross-cutting issues such as disability, gender and emergency response.


### Evaluation Completion Date: 20 November, 2017.

### Evaluation Team:

Geoff Peterson – Team Leader

Jo Crawford-Bryde – Education Specialist

Rhys Gwilliam – Infrastructure Specialist

# SUMMARY OF MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

The evaluation was managed by the Fiji Program Support Facility with oversight from DFAT's bilateral aid section at Suva Post. DFAT considers the evaluation to be of acceptable quality and to have sufficiently addressed the requirements of the Terms of Reference.

The evaluation noted that AQEP was a successful program overall, and provided evidence that AQEP objectives were satisfactorily achieved. AQEP supported a total of 222 schools and 45,927 students through all of its activities over the life of the program. The program as a whole was highly relevant, responding to needs in all key areas of work across the three program components – access, quality and strategic support to Ministry of Education (MEHA) priorities. It was generally effective across all program components. Despite challenges associated with contextual change in both Fijian and Australian government policies and budgets, AQEP was able to deliver the interventions efficiently within budget. In the area of sustainability, AQEP was generally successful in enabling MEHA to adopt best practice, for example, the Literacy and Numeracy package now has a MEHA budget allocation, and is supported by dedicated staff.

There were notable advances in new literacy and numeracy strategies, in infrastructure repair, and data management through the Fiji Education Management Information System (FEMIS). Support to disability inclusion has been a strong focus of AQEP, and AQEP has led to a growth in awareness regarding disability inclusive education and how to integrate disability inclusion in a school setting.

AQEP was able to improve teaching quality through coaching and mentoring of teachers in literacy and numeracy. These literacy and numeracy strategies have had a positive impact on learning outcomes, and these strategies have been adopted by MEHA.

Infrastructure improvements were highly relevant interventions in the areas of improving access to school, creating better quality learning environments, responding to the needs of students with disabilities, and repairing damage from natural disasters.

FEMIS has been effective in assisting MEHA collect and manage data. While AQEP has improved compliance and accountability in MEHA through FEMIS, there remains a need for MEHA to move from compliance and accountability to using FEMIS for evidence-based decision making and the improvement of teaching and learning.

The attendance rate for AQEP supported schools improved from 85% in 2012 to 91% in 2017. This is slightly higher than the average national attendance rate of 90% in 2017 – the challenge of school access remains, however it should be noted that AQEP focused on the most disadvantaged schools in the country.

The recommendations proposed in the evaluation are based on lessons learned through AQEP, as well as how AQEP successes can be built upon through future support to the education sector in Fiji. Post is in agreement with all the recommendations. AQEP has in a very real sense succeeded in laying important groundwork for future support to the MEHA at the systems level. Gains across literacy, numeracy, disability inclusion, and data management can be consolidated and embedded in a future phase of support, where the focus most likely should transition from a school based management model to one of centralised system support, with a continued line of site to the school level to ensure on-going evidence of sustainability of core areas of external support to MEHA from AQEP.

## Individual management response to the recommendations

| Recommendation | Response | Explanation | Action plan | Timeframe |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Recommendation 1**<br><br>That DFAT support the Literacy and Numeracy Program. | Agree | | The new bilateral education program (2018-2022) will take forward continued support to literacy and numeracy.<br><br>The transitional activities currently being implemented by the Fiji Program Support Facility (the Facility) are supporting the MEHA with the national roll out of Literacy and Numeracy training. | 2018-2022 under the Fiji Program Support Facility (the Facility). |

| Recommendation | Response | Explanation | Action plan | Timeframe |
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| **Recommendation 2**<br><br>That a process of co-development be considered for literacy and numeracy support and culturally appropriate reading materials. | Agree | | The new bilateral education program (2018-2022) will take forward this approach.<br><br>DFAT acknowledges that representatives from teacher training institutions, MEHA Curriculum Development Unit and District Officers will need to be engaged to embed new strategies across all levels. | 2018-2022 under the Facility. |

| Recommendation | Response | Explanation | Action plan | Timeframe |
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| **Recommendation 3**<br>DFAT should continue to support the disability inclusion strategy. | Agree | | The new bilateral education program (2018-2022) will take forward continued support to disability inclusion.<br><br>The transitional activities currently being implemented by the Facility are supporting the MEHA with training on the FEMIS disability disaggregation tool. | 2018-2022 under the Facility. |

| Recommendation | Response | Explanation | Action plan | Timeframe |
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| **Recommendation 4**<br><br>School leadership and management qualities make a big difference on quality and access interventions and need to be supported more explicitly. | Agree | | The new bilateral education program (2018-2022) will consider explicit support to Head Teacher leadership and management.<br><br>This is likely to be covered under the systems strengthening support to MEHA to implement civil service reforms on open merit recruitment and Human Resource management, which should have a positive impact on leadership and management quality across the Ministry. | 2018-2022 under the Facility. |

| Recommendation | Response [Select one, delete others] | Explanation | Action plan | Timeframe [If practical, please specify timeframe here] |
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| **Recommendation 5**<br><br>AQEP's infrastructure initiatives including the MEHA minimum infrastructure standards need to be revised and integrated into the Ministry's legal and policy framework. | Agree | | The new bilateral education program (2018-2022) will consider support to MEHA infrastructure standards.<br><br>DFAT is considering support to the MEHA Assets Monitoring Unit to strengthen technical capacity. | 2018-2022 under the Facility.<br><br>November 2017 – June 2018. |

| Recommendation | Response [Select one, delete others] | Explanation | Action plan | Timeframe [If practical, please specify timeframe here] |
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| **Recommendation 6**<br><br>A baseline audit to assist the Assets Monitoring Unit should be supported. | Agree | | The new bilateral education program (2018-2022) will consider support to the Assets Monitoring Unit.<br><br>DFAT is considering support to the MEHA's Assets Monitoring Unit to strengthen technical capacity. | 2018-2022 under the Facility.<br><br>November 2017 – June 2018. |

| Recommendation | Response | Explanation | Action plan | Timeframe |
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| **Recommendation 7** MEHA should help support use of FEMIS transition from a utility focused approach to a learning focused one with DFAT assistance. | Agree | | The new bilateral education program (2018-2022) will take forward continued support to MEHA on FEMIS. The transitional activities currently being implemented by the Facility are supporting the MEHA with FEMIS technical assistance. | 2018-2022 under the Facility. |

| Recommendation | Response | Explanation | Action plan | Timeframe |
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| **Recommendation 8**<br><br>Future training for principals and teachers should focus on using data to improve teaching and learning, management and planning. | Agree | | The new bilateral education program (2018-2022) will consider future training for principals and teachers.<br><br>The transitional activities currently implemented by the Facility are supporting the MEHA with FEMIS technical assistance, as well as the national roll out of Literacy and Numeracy training. | 2018-2022 under the Facility. |

| Recommendation | Response | Explanation | Action plan | Timeframe |
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| **Recommendation 9**<br><br>FEMIS data from Early Childhood Education Centres, Technical Colleges and Higher Education Institutions need to be targeted in the near future. | Agree | | The new bilateral education program (2018-2022) will workclosely with MEHA to explore options to include higher education institutions, technical colleges and early childhood education centres in FEMIS to track progress and achievement of students through the entire education cycle. | 2018-2022 under the Facility. |