

# **Civil Society Engagement with Governments on Education Policy in the Asia Pacific Region**

## **AusAID Agreement 50873**

### **ASPBAE Australia Final Report to AusAID for the Pilot Project 12 June 2009 – 12 October 2010**

#### **a) Summary of Implementation**

ASPBAE Australia is pleased to report significant achievements in the Pilot Year of the project 12 June 2009 to 12 October 2010 as measured by the indicators outlined for this project.

The following comments are listed according to project objectives.

- 1. Strengthen ASPBAE Australia's ability to provide effective in-country capacity development and mentoring support for CSO Coalitions in PNG, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu.**
  - a. Contracting in-country Mentoring and Advocacy Support Officers in each of the three countries to liaise closely with CSO coalitions and key organisations, and provide more dedicated hands-on mentoring and support that is tailored to the local situation and responsive to the changing local conditions.**

ASPBAE successfully recruited in-country Mentoring and Advocacy Support Officers (MASOs) in each of PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. ASPBAE inducted and trained them in their work and they have each proven to be of great value to each of the education coalitions. They have provided support to the coalitions in relation to:

- Day to day office operations and systems
- Developing strategic plans
- Project planning and implementation
- Financial and program management
- Coalition membership strengthening
- Education policy research and analysis
- Training in education survey design.

Examples of the crucial work role played by the MASOs include:

- In PNG the MASO, Mr Joachim Orapa who began work on 28 July 2009, has provided support PEAN to ensure it remained functioning following the non-renewal of the Coordinator's contract by the Board due to non performance, the resignation of the Advocacy Officer and later the resignation of its Finance Officer, both going to higher paying jobs in the private sector. Without the MAS Officer's support on the ground, this level of instability could have spelt the end of the coalition.
- In Solomon Islands the MASO Ms Mary Haridi, who began work on 26 October 2009, played a crucial role in helping to keep the COESI office running following the Coordinator leaving to contest the national elections. Mary took a lead in sorting out financial reporting, organizing the external audit and in developing the recently approved CSEF funding proposal for COESI. COESI is advertising for a new Coordinator.
- In Vanuatu, the MASO, Ms Anne Pakoa, was only appointed in May 2010, due to the uncertainty over future funding for this project and the limited number of applicants. Anne has been instrumental in helping VEPAC set up its office systems, in supervising an Australian volunteer and played a major role in organizing a weekly VEPAC national radio education talk back program which provides awareness-raising on education issues. This was at a crucial time before the VEPAC Coordinator was appointed and when the VEPAC Policy Research Officer's contract was not renewed.

- b. Strengthening the capacity of the South Pacific office of ASPBAE by adding a Sub Regional Mentoring and Advocacy Support Officer to provide guidance to the in-country Officers and to develop opportunities for collaborative sub-regional education and education aid policy advocacy. Also strengthening ASPBAE Australia's capacity to ensure effective financial management of the program.**

The Canberra based Regional Mentoring and Advocacy Support (RMAS) Manager, Mr. Ali Tuhauku, who commenced work on 17 August 2009, provided constant support to the three coalitions via face to face visits, email, skype and phone calls.

Numerous mentoring and capacity support visits were made to the three coalitions, by the RMAS Manager, the Documentation Officer and / or the Executive Director of ASPBAE Australia. Three visits were made to PEAN, PNG: 17-22 January; 11-16 April and 23-28 May. Four visits were made to COESI, Solomon Islands: 5-12 January; 23-28 February; 3-7 May, 17-30 June, 14-30 September while five visits were made to VEPAC Vanuatu: 23-29 January; 6-10 April; 16-22 May, 7-11 June and 12-15 October.

Each of these visits were timed to ensure ASPBAE staff were available at key moments for the Coalition, for example their AGM, a Board meeting, the selection of a new staff member, a strategic planning workshop or training. Subsequent visits have been made by ASPBAE staff in the period mid-October to end January, utilizing ASPBAE's own resources, to ensure a continuation of the mentoring work.

Throughout the period of the pilot project, the RMAS Manager:

- Supported COESI, PEAN, and VEPAC in developing strategies for engagement of government education departments in education policies, programs and budgets.
- Provided support to the three Melanesian coalitions in beginning the process of budget review and analysis including discussions regarding community based tracking.
- Provided support to the Coalitions in developing strategic direction
- Initiated discussions regarding Pacific regional education platforms and opportunities for CSO input.
- Provided hands-on support to COESI to undertake a literacy survey in two provinces in Solomon islands.
- Provide support to the drawing up of VEPAC's constitution, registration of the organization, and recruitment of VEPAC staff.

Further skills development was provided by ASPBAE on 25-30 Sept in Manila where MAS officers from each country were provided training in the use of survey data encoding and tabulation software in preparation for the next round of survey work.

ASPBAE Australia's financial management capacity was also bolstered by the appointment of Ms Carol Gibbins as Finance Officer, partly funded by the AusAID grant. Carol began work on 12 October 2009 and has provided excellent service. She has also assisted PEAN, COESI and VEPAC in getting their financial recording and reporting systems organized and their CSEF financial reports in on time. In late October 2010 Carol travelled to PNG to work with the newly appointed PEAN Finance Officer, building his knowledge and ensuring his financial systems were in order.

- 2. Engage a Research and Documentation Officer to record, analyse and report the impact of the work of CSOs, national coalitions and ASPBAE as the regional support organisation in their efforts to more effectively engage governments on education policy, budgets and programs.**

Ms Joanna Lindner, the Research and Documentation Officer (RDO) helped adapt ASPBAE's baseline coalition capacity assessment tools, which include questionnaires on each coalition's history since formation and progress to date. They also include a substantial interview component with key coalition staff and board members which helped garner key information and document the lessons learned. The outcomes of the capacity assessment process for each coalition will assist greatly in developing the final case-studies. The baseline capacity assessment was implemented in Solomon Islands, PNG, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan during the period. Additionally the RDO has been developing case studies and documenting best practice and lessons learned. A fuller documentation report is being finalized.

**3. With ASPBAE Australia's support, national coalitions in PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu will be better placed to secure for themselves valuable funding support under the CSEF program to June 2010 and with the strong prospect of additional resources for two further years and beyond with the establishment of National CSEF mechanisms.**

ASPBAE Australia played an instrumental role in ensuring both PEAN and COESI submitted proposals to the CSEF Funding Committee for Year 1 to June 2010 and these efforts were successful, with funding secured. Funds were also secured for VEPAC in the final months of Year 1 in a supplementary round of proposal acceptances.

This was followed up by a concerted effort in the period June to September 2010 where ASPBAE Australia worked closely with PEAN, COESI and VEPAC to ensure their proposals for Year 2 were accepted by the Funding Committee at its meeting on 5-6 September 2010 for funding through to June 2011. Considerable mentoring was involved as the proposal requirements for CSEF are quite onerous. A no-cost extension period negotiated by the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) will enable coalition spending through to December 2011. ASPBAE also assisted PEAN in gaining some funding support from the European Union in relation to research on female illiteracy and assisted COESI in gaining funding support from the World Bank from April to June 2010 for an education experience survey and literacy assessment in Isabel Province and Rennell and Bellona Province.

Additionally ASPBAE has held discussions with each of the coalitions regarding developing plans for longer term financial sustainability from education aid donors to their particular country. ASPBAE and COESI met with a representative of the donor pool in Solomon Islands to discuss possibilities for an in-country funding mechanism to support ongoing CSO education policy engagement.

## **Coalition Progress from June 2009 to 12 October 2010 as per Performance Indicators of Strategy 1**

With mentoring and capacity support of ASPBAE Australia the following progress has been achieved with coalitions as per the 6 performance indicators:

### **1. Coalition Institutional Strengthening**

#### **PEAN, PNG**

- a) Assistance with the employment of a Coordinator for PEAN, Mr Ben Kote
- b) Employment of Joachim Orapa the ASPBAE MAS Officer.
- c) Development and submission of a proposal to the CSEF Funding Committee. The proposal was successful, resulting in US\$100,000 being made available to PEAN
- d) Refined and adapted baseline capacity assessment tools and began the capacity assessment process with PEAN staff and Board members.
- e) Development of administrative and financial systems and procedures at PEAN.
- f) Training to undertake an education policy and budget review and analysis.
- g) Shifted office to a more secure location in Port Moresby and which included broadband internet access.
- h) Proposal for funding from Democratic Governance Transition Phase (DGTP) to further develop its capacity. This proposal was successful.
- i) Assistance in the employment of a new Coordinator for PEAN, Ms Priscilla Kare.
- j) Assistance in the employment of a new Finance Officer for PEAN, Mr Andrew Malt.
- k) Development and submission of their Year 2 proposal to the CSEF Funding Committee. The proposal was successful, resulting in US\$118,000 being made available to PEAN through to Dec 2011
- l) Provided training to undertake an education policy and budget review and analysis.
- m) Provide support to PEAN in securing funding from EU to undertake a study /research in female literacy in PNG.
- n) Organised the participation of four PEAN staff in a regional CSO capacity development training facilitated by ASPBAE and held in June, 2010.
- o) Sent Joachim Orapa on a training to develop skills for utilizing data encoding software, CSPRO, and survey processing software, (SPSS).

- p) Assisted PEAN in the planning and training for an education experience survey and literacy assessment of Gulf Province.
- q) Organised for our Finance Officer to work with PEAN's Finance Officer to ensure he knew how to manage the finances, develop his systems and report on time.
- r) Organised for 3 coalition staff to participate in a regional training held in Jakarta in November 2010.
- s) Organised for the Chair of PEAN, Ms Janet Russell to participate in a UNESCO workshop on literacy and language policy in Bangkok in early November.

#### **COESI, Solomon Islands**

- a) Revitalisation of COESI. This required calling a meeting of key member organizations, going through the steps required for formal registration such as refining the COESI constitution, holding a General Meeting, electing a Board, and opening bank accounts.
- b) Assistance in the employment of a Coordinator for COESI, Mr Samson Maneuta and the MAS Officer, Ms Mary Haridi.
- c) Development and submission of a proposal to the CSEF Funding Committee by the closing date. The proposal was successful, resulting in US\$ 100,000 being made available to COESI.
- d) Refined and adapted baseline capacity assessment tools and began the capacity assessment process of COESI staff and Board members.
- e) Development of administrative and financial systems and procedures at COESI.
- f) Training to undertake an education policy and budget review and analysis.
- g) Advertised for a Finance Officer.
- h) Provided concerted organizational management support for COESI following the resignation of their Coordinator to run for parliament and assisted them in selecting a new Coordinator Mr Paul Fia and full time Finance Officer, Mr Justin Kuluta.
- i) Took the COESI Coordinator to meet donor officials (AusAID and NZAID) to ensure good two-way updates and build confidence in undertaking such meetings.
- j) Provided support in the design of survey instruments for work with the Education Experience Survey and Literacy Assessment in two Provinces.
- k) Provided training to COESI staff on survey field work training and data encoding including with ASPBAE resource people in Manila.
- l) Development and submission of their Year 2 proposal to the CSEF Funding Committee. The proposal was successful, resulting in US\$100,000 being made available to COESI through to December 2011.
- m) Organised the participation of a COESI staff member and a Board member in a regional CSO capacity development training facilitated by ASPBAE and held in June, 2010.
- n) Organised for 2 coalition staff and the new Board Chair Mr Timothy Omani, to participate in a regional training held in Jakarta in November 2010.

#### **VEPAC, Vanuatu**

- a) Helped revitalize VEPAC which was dormant for two years.
- b) Contracted Ms Angie Beru for an initial 4 weeks in October-November 2009 to help organize a meeting of key CSOs on 26 November 2009. The meeting exceeded expectations. Representatives from 12 organisations were present. The meeting agreed to set up an Interim Steering Committee to develop the constitution, by-laws and governance mechanisms for the coalition, prepare a position description for the coalition's Coordinator and to develop a proposal to submit to the CSEF for funding in the coming 18 month period.
- c) ASPBAE Australia staff met with Mr John Niroa of the Ministry of Education and also separately with Ms Belynda McNaughton, AusAID Education official in Vanuatu to update them on developments. Each meeting was very productive, focusing on how the newly emerging coalition might engage constructively in the education policy process in Vanuatu.
- d) Assisted in drawing up the VEPAC Constitution and in opening a bank account
- e) Assisted VEPAC in getting formally registered in May 2010.
- f) Assisted in the selection of a Finance Officer and a Research Officer
- g) Selected the ASPBAE MAS staff, Ms Anne Pakoa
- h) Helped select the VEPAC Coordinator Mr Nigel Warelei, and inducted him into his role
- i) Helped development an interim VEPAC funding proposal for the months of June to August followed by the development of their Year 2 proposal to the CSEF Funding Committee. The proposal was successful, resulting in US\$117,000 being made available to VEPAC

- j) Organised for an Australian volunteer with research and writing skills to work with VEPAC for a period of 3 months
- k) Held meetings with Board members to plan ways to strengthen the Board
- l) Helped VEPAC organize a 2-day awareness raising workshop for members and other stakeholders, including MPs, media representatives and government officers
- m) Organised the participation of three VEPAC staff and a Board member in a regional CSO capacity development training facilitated by ASPBAE and held in June, 2010.
- n) Provided training to the Coordinator and Program Officer regarding planning and conducting research and surveys. This was held both in-country and also in Manila with ASPBAE resource staff.

## **2. Coalition Expansion and Member Capacity Building**

### **PEAN, PNG**

- a) Reviewed membership criteria and processes and began to raise awareness at the provincial level: meetings held in Chimbu Province as well as the National Capital District (NCD).
- b) PEAN, with other CSOs, took the lead in organizing an event for International Literacy Day 8 Sept 2009. The event was held in Boroko, NCD and following the National Literacy Week theme of 'Literacy for Success'. The event was attended by the Hon Dame Carol Kidu, with a crowd of 1,000 people in attendance. The event was successful with widespread media coverage, references made to PEAN's education research and advocacy work and the PEAN coordinator being interviewed in The National newspaper.
- c) PEAN implemented its literacy survey in Sundaun Province to raise awareness at the provincial and community level on its role and function. Provincial and community based CSOs expressed interest becoming members of PEAN.
- d) PEAN used its Annual General Meeting in May 2010 as a way of attracting potential members from Port Moresby based CSOs and raising awareness of the work of the coalition. The response from CSOs attending the AGM was very positive with many requesting to become member of PEAN in the coming period.
- e) PEAN held a successful stakeholders meeting in late October. Speakers included the Minister for Community Development, Dame Carol Kidu and AusAID Senior Education Advisor, Fred Brooker. There were also representatives from the Departments of Planning and the National Research Institute. This was an excellent opportunity to strengthen member capacity to engage government and donor representatives.

### **COESI, Solomon Islands**

- a) A review of COESI membership criteria and processes was undertaken.
- b) Awareness-raising at the provincial level was begun. COESI staff undertook a trip to Central Islands Province to establish networks and identify key people to assist in an education experience survey and literacy assessment. They met with the Provincial premier, representatives from the Churches, NGOs, Chiefs, the Provincial Council of Women, Ward Council of Women, and youth groups.
- c) COESI organized an event for International Literacy Day and gained significant media coverage including with the national television, radio and the population daily newspapers. The speech by COESI's Coordinator was released through all media outlets (TV, newspaper, radio).
- d) COESI promoted its work through the national literacy network used its literacy survey work in Isabel and Renbel Provinces to raise awareness of its work and membership drive at the provincial and community levels. They met with the Province premier, representatives from the Churches, NGOs, Chiefs, the Provincial Council of Women, Ward Council of Women, and youth groups. The response has been very positive.
- e) COESI held a members and stakeholders meeting and AGM in October 2010. The event was well attended by members and representatives from other organisations interested in joining COESI. Ms Nicki Simmons, from NZAID and coordinator of the donor education aid pool gave a presentation on education aid.
- f) The new COESI Coordinator and Project Officers summarized COESI's work and presented the financial report for approval. A new Board was elected, with Mr Timothy Omani elected as Chair. The Board of six has new organisations represented and includes two women.

#### **VEPAC, Vanuatu**

- a) In a short space of time, VEPAC has done very well in attracting members. The Vanuatu Teacher Union (VTU) is a key member, as are the other main CSOs in Vanuatu: Vanuatu Council of Churches, Vanuatu Rural Development Training Centers Association, Vanuatu National Labour Union, Foundation for the People South Pacific, Vanuatu Branch (FSPV), Vanuatu Young People's Project, Vanuatu National Youth Council, Vanuatu Association of NGOs (VANGO), Vanuatu National Council of Chiefs, Vanuatu Women in Development Vanuatu Center for Disabled.
- b) Many of these organisations are represented on the Board.
- c) Discussions have been held with other community organizations for their interest in membership and were invited to a 2 day awareness raising workshop held in June 2010.

### **3. Education Policy, Budget and Program Research and Analysis**

#### **PEAN, PNG**

- a) The staff have carried out a number of education experience surveys and literacy assessments, most recently in Sandaun and Gulf Provinces.
- b) PEAN is in the process of analyzing literacy and education experience data collected from this primary research and also from previous surveys in NCD, NIP and Simbu Provinces.
- c) PEAN staff have been liaising with the PNG National Economic and Fiscal Commission to review education budget allocation and delivery at the provincial level.
- d) PEAN staff have undertaken preliminary PNG national education policy and budget analysis to the extent that data has been made available by the Department of Education
- e) A PEAN staff member has received training from ASPBAE in understanding the research and data collection software packages of CSPro and SPSS.

#### **COESI, Solomon Islands**

- a) COESI provided input into the draft Solomon Islands National Education Action Plan 2010-2012. This required a rapid review of existing education policy frameworks based on achieving the EFA goals. COESI identified policy gaps in relation to early childhood education, adult literacy and education, and education for people with disabilities. The episode was a good example of growing capacity to respond quickly to the opportunity that had arisen.
- b) COESI completed education experience surveys and literacy assessment field work and data encoding of three provinces, namely Central, Isabel and Renbel. With support from ASPBAE a first draft report of literacy survey findings in Isabel and Renbel provinces has been completed. The final report will be used as a basis for education advocacy work.
- c) A COESI staff member has received training from ASPBAE in understanding and utilizing the research and data collection software packages of CSPro and SPSS.
- d) COESI has participated in policy development discussions through its informal membership some education technical working committees of the Ministry of Education.
- e) COESI is developing a community and schools based budget delivery tracking structure to gauge quality education delivery during the coming period.

#### **VEPAC, Vanuatu**

- a) In its first few months of operating, VEPAC has produced an admirable and substantive piece of research and analysis on the Vanuatu national education context, policy settings and education budget processes and sectoral and provincial allocations
- b) VEPAC has adapted an education experience survey and literacy assessment tool used in PNG and Solomon Islands for use in the Vanuatu context. This has included translating the questionnaire into Bislama and French.
- c) VEPAC are preparing to implement their first survey and assessment in Shefa Province in February 2011.
- d) Two VEPAC staff have received training from ASPBAE in understanding the research and data collection software packages of CSPro and SPSS.

### **4. Medium and High Level Engagement with Government and Ministry officials and Other key stakeholders, and**

## **5. Gaining and Maintaining Civil Society representation on Key Education Advisory Committees**

### **PEAN, PNG**

- a) PEAN is a member of the National Literacy Awareness Secretariat (NLAS) Taskforce to review the national literacy policy.
- b) PEAN has maintained its involvement as a member of the Education Sector Improvement Program (ESIP) Committee.
- c) PEAN held meetings with staff from the National Department of Treasury and the National Economic and Fiscal Commission.
- d) PEAN continues participation with the National Department of Community Development to participate in the monthly Early Childhood Care and Development Sector Committee meetings.
- e) PEAN held meetings with the Deputy Secretary of the National Statistics Office (NSO) to discuss sharing of valuable education sector information and survey data.
- f) PEAN has met with media representatives and received good coverage of its International Literacy Day events.

### **COESI, Solomon Islands**

- a) COESI and ASPBAE met with the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education to discuss CSO participation in the policy making process. The Permanent Secretary welcomed COESI's future participation. Key entry points identified include the technical working groups of the Ministry of Education, the Medium Term Expenditure Framework Working Group, and Education Expenditure Review Group.
- b) COESI became a member of a Working Group of People with Disability Solomon Islands (PWDSI). The WG had made their comments on the Pacific Regional Strategy On Disability 2010-2015 which was accepted by the Ministers of the Pacific Islands. The WG also made inputs regarding the Solomon Islands Disability Bill. COESI met with the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education regarding this Bill which covers the protection and recognition of people with disabilities and calls for improvements in their welfare, including access to education, employment and taking into account specialized transportation to be available to especially those in Honiara.
- c) COESI and ASPBAE also met with NZAID and EU. (AusAID officials were unavailable for meetings at this time). NZAID and EU both welcomed strong CSO engagement in the education policy process. Discussions with NZAID also focused on the setting up a national civil society education fund to ensure sustainable future CSO participation on education policy and budget issues.
- d) COESI's Coordinator participated as one of the panelists on a Government Technical Working Group which included the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education and other education authorities. The topics discussed were on Improving Teachers Welfare and the place of Private Schooling in the Solomon Islands.
- e) COESI was also invited to be a member of the Solomon Islands National Teachers Association (SINTA) Technical Working Group which prepared a submission on teacher's welfare to be presented to the government.
- f) COESI participated in the consultations for review of the National Education Action Plan 2006-2009, as well as formulation of National Education Action Plan 2010-2012. This entailed meeting with the Minister and Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Education, as well as heads of divisions.

### **VEPAC, Vanuatu**

- a) VEPAC held a successful first meeting with the Minister for Education, who was keen to see that an MOU be drawn up to help facilitate VEPAC's participation in a range of the MOE's education committees. He welcomed VEPAC's emergence in the education policy arena.
- b) VEPAC held a two day awareness raising workshop which drew Members of Parliament, government officials and key media representatives, all of whom gave VEPAC positive feedback on the event and the quality of the discussions.
- c) VEPAC secured a weekly talk-back hour on national radio, thereby gaining a large regular audience and raising broad public awareness. The response from callers and others listening in – including Members of Parliament - has been very positive.

- d) VEPAC staff met with AusAID's Senior Program Officer for Education, Ms Christelle Thieffry, in the Vanuatu office to provide her with an update on VEPAC activities and ASPBAE support. VEPAC received a very positive response.

## **6. Contribute to Positive Change in Education Policy, Budgets and / or Programs**

- a) No significant changes in education policy are attributable yet to CSO input and engagement but this was not expected until Years 2 and 3 of the project.
- b) However at PEAN and COESI organized events in the past 9 months, the respective Ministers for Education in PNG and Solomon Islands made public pronouncements on the need to increase funding for literacy programs for out of school youth and adults.
- c) At a VEPAC meeting with the Vanuatu Minister for Education, he stated that he wanted to see clearer policy and program improvements in relation to education for people with disabilities.

## **Strategy 2: Effective Research and Documentation**

See the section a) 2 above. A set of ASPBAE templates have been adapted for coalition baseline assessment and information gathering.

They consist of:

- 1) A Coalition History and Development Form,
- 2) A Coalition Collective Capacity Assessment Form,
- 3) A Coalition Collective Impact Assessment Form,
- 4) A Staff Capacity and Training Needs Self-Assessment Form,
- 5) A Board Capacity and Training Needs Self-Assessment Form
- 6) A Feedback Form from Heads of Member Organisations
- 7) A Coalition Baseline External Interviewer Assessment Question Sheet.

This set of tools has been used with coalitions in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, PNG and Solomon Islands.

The Coalition baseline assessment work has progressed well. A meeting was held in Manila in September 2010 between the ASPBAE Australia staff including the Research and Documentation Officer (RDO) and the South and SE Asian CSEF Capacity Development and Advocacy Support Officers to discuss the roll out of the baseline assessment work and the case study development.

Two additional forms have been developed to harness best practice and lessons learned

Case studies will be built from the information drawn from this process.

The RDO has visited COESI, Solomon Islands and conducted one-on-one interviews. She also met with representatives of 5 coalitions in Dhaka, Bangladesh in March 2010 and facilitated a workshop in Colombo, Sri Lanka involving representatives of 12 coalitions in the region regarding monitoring, evaluation and documentation in June 2010.

Six case studies are being fast-tracked: 3 Pacific coalitions: PNG, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, 2 Southeast Asian Coalition: Cambodia and Timor Leste; and 1 South Asian Coalition: Sri Lanka.

All in all the pilot year of this project has gone very well given the constraints of delayed funding and also delayed funding to the coalitions from the CSEF. The first years' experience has certainly highlighted the fact that national coalitions need quite a deal of in-country and external capacity support in their early years. All three coalitions have expressed their appreciation of ASPBAE's mentoring and support and the desire for this to be continued for at least another two years. Obstacles that need to be constantly address include the small pool of sufficiently skilled CSO leaders able to take on the work, the turnover of key staff, the low capacity of governments, the lack of basic infrastructure, the political, economic and environmental instability and unpredictability in these countries. Nonetheless, the main lesson to be learned is that with carefully targeted and reliable mentoring support, tangible progress can be made, and already there is exciting evidence that CSOs in each of PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu can play an increasingly valuable role in engaging governments to bring about education policy more likely to achieve the EFA goals. Much of the groundwork has now been done, so we would be likely to see a greater level of stable, credible engagement in the coming years, should the project's funding be continued.

Bernie Lovegrove  
Executive Director



ASPBAE Australia Ltd