

AusAID
Access to Quality Education Program, Fiji
Framework for Delivery

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Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer
CPI	Consumer Price Index
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DSI	Disadvantaged Schools Index
DSW	Department of Social Welfare
ESSDP	Education Sector Strategic Development Plan
EU	European Union
FAP	Family Assistance Program
FESP	Fiji Education Sector Program
FJ\$	Fiji Dollar
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoF	Interim Government of Fiji
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HRD	Human Resource Development
ICR	Independent Completion Report
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
LIC	Low Income Country
M & E	Monitoring and evaluation
MDG	Millennium development goal
MoE	Ministry of Education
MPD	Ministry of Provincial Development
NER	Net Enrolment Ratio
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
PCC	Program Coordinating Committee
PDD	Program Design Document
TA	Technical Assistance
TAG	Technical Advisory Group
ToR	Terms of Reference
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organisation

Executive Summary

This document presents the Framework for Delivery of the new *Access to Quality Education Program, Fiji*. The program represents a continuing Australian presence in the Education Sector in Fiji after the end of Australia's long term assistance, the *Fiji Education Sector Program*, in December 2009.

Background

The Ministry of Education (MoE) is responsible for the administration and management of education policy and delivery of educational services. It provides the curriculum frameworks, policy guidelines and directions and qualified teaching personnel who support all schools in the delivery of school education for students. The development of a national curriculum framework, learning arrangements and assessment, the provision of grants to schools, and the payment of teacher salaries are all mandated functions of MoE. It also has the responsibility for the (i) management of resource planning and policy development related to education and training, (ii) provision of program support to education and training institutions, (iii) regulation and recognition of education and training providers, (iv) accreditation of instructional programs, and (v) accounting for the resources allocated by government to the education system. As a general rule, MoE officers do not manage or become involved with routine school operations (only 2% of the schools in Fiji are government owned). Further, over 2009 and 2010 the Ministry decentralised many centralised operations, tasks, procedures and decision making to its Divisional offices.

The MoE maintains a number of very comprehensive databases on financial resources, expenditures, teachers, enrolments, school inventories and conditions, and national assessments. However, there are problems of quality control of data entry and some incomplete records. These databases can be extremely useful in informing MoE planning and policy if inaccurate data is corrected; missing data inserted or estimated, and if there is effective analysis of these databases to generate summary reports on key indicators to MoE.

The MoE Education Sector Strategic Development Plan 2009-2011, (ESSDP) outlines the following priority outcomes:

- all children, especially those in kindergarten, disadvantaged students and those with special needs to have access to expanding, improving and inclusive education and care, and to a relevant, flexible and innovative curriculum;
- all schools to be well resourced to offer responsive learning programs;
- an education workforce that is appropriately qualified, competent and committed to deliver quality education services with integrity and transparency;

- an increased prominence of TVET and a consolidation of its role in developing a skilled and productive workforce;
- communities, stakeholders and donors responsive to the education and development needs of students; and
- improved management through accountability, transparency and good governance.

MoE has projected that the cost (recurrent and development combined) of achieving these outcome objectives is FJ\$246m in 2009, FJ\$259m in 2010, and FJ\$272m in 2011. They predict financing shortfalls of: FJ\$11m in 2009, FJ\$24m in 2010, and FJ\$37 in 2011. A worsening economic situation suggests that the predicted shortfall may exceed these estimates, and it is unlikely that these objectives will be fully met.

The Education budget has generally made up 15 - 20% of the total National Budget, which is in line with international benchmarks which suggest that countries need to spend about 20% of the government budget on education to develop robust education systems. However, the bulk of the Education Budget (80 – 85%) goes towards the teacher salary bill, resulting in maintenance and upgrade of education infrastructure being an area that is severely under-resourced (on average making up only 5% of the MoE recurrent budget). Over the years, inadequate infrastructure resourcing has seen a significant decline in the physical condition and safety of classrooms and school facilities for the vast majority of schools in Fiji. Around 98% of schools in Fiji are owned, and have been built, by non-government organisations (religious and community groups) that are also unable to sustain funding for regular maintenance and upkeep. Damage sustained by school buildings from natural disasters adds considerable financial pressure to rebuild and rehabilitate school premises. A continued shortage of capital funding from MoE and school management committees, exacerbated by increasing costs of building materials, will result in schools falling into further disrepair.

Many schools, particularly those in rural and remote locations, do not have a reliable or safe water supply, or proper ablution blocks. Poor water and sanitation facilities within schools contribute to the spread of communicable diseases e.g. typhoid among young children. The poor state of school infrastructure and water/sanitation facilities have the potential to undermine financial assistance to encourage school attendance and retention, and are areas that will also require attention.

Program Description of the Access to Quality Education Program, Fiji

The new *Access to Quality Education Program, Fiji* will be a five year program aimed at reducing the barriers for children to accessing education in Fiji. The program has been prepared to help safeguard gains and achievements in the education sector by mitigating negative impacts of the financial crisis on the poorest families of Fiji.

The design for this program reflects both specific program assistance to Fiji's education sector and AusAID's Pacific regional approach to education and training. Equitable access to school education in Fiji and the effective participation in school education by children from Fiji's poorest households is the fundamental outcome of this new program. The program is designed as a Framework for Delivery to include the necessary flexibility to change with the fluid circumstances. This will allow real-time analysis on the best interventions within the inception stage of the program. AusAID and the Program Coordinating Committee (PCC) will need to approve all proposed activities under the rolling design.

Accordingly, the **goal** of the program is to, in conjunction with the MoE and other relevant stakeholders, improve the ability of children from very poor communities, including those with a disability, to access a quality school education.

The **objective** is to work with MoE and other education service providers to adequately support poor families to mitigate financial and social barriers that limit access to school education for poor girls and boys in remote and rural areas.

In support of this objective, the **purpose** of the program involves a highly targeted approach through three related components:

1. reducing financial barriers to accessing school education;
2. investing in school infrastructure in the poorest communities to ensure that facilities are adequate and safe, and contribute to improved student learning outcomes; and
3. conducting targeted research and analysis on the systemic challenges to achieving improved education outcomes in Fiji. This activity will also involve a range of short-term, demand-driven technical assistance to support strategic priorities of MoE, including curriculum development, assessment and database support, and also the provision of assistance to MoE to key thematic areas relevant to its ongoing sector planning.

The program can be best summarised in the table below:

Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	
Increase access to schools	Improve school facilities & learning environments	Support to the Ministry of Education to improve education quality and analysis	Program management & implementation
Financial barriers to accessing education reduced for the poor	Poor schools strengthened through improved and safer campuses and learning environments including through the installation of safe water supply and sanitation; Rehabilitation to classrooms; Provision of student learning materials including basic items (stationary, exercise books, student resources);	MoE provided with direct and rapid support by means of: Installation of a Core Education Program Team in MoE; Provision of short-term technical assistance to support MoE strategic priorities i.e. curriculum, assessment and improved student learning outcomes;	The Program will be implemented and managed by a Contractor. The Contractor will be responsible for the tasks and assignments of the Core team and the provision of technical assistance. A focus of the Contractor will be continuous improvements in Program activity; the

	School-community planning. School-based classrooms allocated for pre-school.	Studies to explore linkages between Components 1 and 2 and improved student learning outcomes; Assistance to improve databases and knowledge products in support of understanding the impact of poverty on education.	seamless upscaling of activity over the 5-year Program; and the flexibility to respond to changes in policy/priorities and the economic situation.
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Component 1: Increase Access to Schools through initiatives to reduce financial barriers to schooling. Component 1 initiatives could include grants to school boards or cash transfers to families, and will reach the most disadvantaged schools in Fiji by targeting the bottom 10% of schools in the MoE Disadvantaged Schools Index – approximately 90 schools per year with an estimated student population of 18,000. The detail on how this could be delivered will be developed in year one based on analysis of poverty trends and other available data.

Component 2: Improve School Facilities and Learning Environments will strengthen the basic infrastructure of schools based on school plans. This could include improvements to water and sanitation facilities – a vital improvement to stop the spread of diseases in the communities; rehabilitation of classrooms; and provision of learning materials for the school. Similar to Component 1, Component 2 will upgrade up to 90 schools per year (targeting the 10% of most disadvantaged schools in Fiji); and support large scale repairs for 5 schools per year affected by natural disasters.

Component 3: *Support to the Ministry of Education to improve education quality and analysis* will provide demand-driven support to MoE on their strategic priority areas such as curriculum development, assessment and support to enhance MoE's Disadvantaged Schools Index through the inclusion of socio-economic indicators. Under the new program, a number of studies and analysis will be undertaken to increase the existing research both to underpin the interventions in the program and also for any future support in Fiji Education. These studies will be agreed by the PCC in the inception stage following finalisation of the interventions under component 1.

Management and Implementation

Due to the economic and political climate in Fiji, the lack of suitable large international NGOs or other donors and multilateral agencies in the area, and the limitations of engagement with Fiji Government systems, this program will be delivered through a Managing Contractor. AusAID will contract the Managing Contractor through an open tender. The Managing Contractor will need to be sensitive to working with MoE and AusAID, and have the flexibility to provide demand-driven technical assistance sourced nationally, regionally and where appropriate, internationally.

1. Analysis and Strategic Context

A. Country and sector issues

The Republic of the Fiji Islands is an island nation with an estimated population of 850,000 people and an annual population growth of 0.8%. The country has a total land area of 18,333 square kilometres, and a much larger exclusive economic zone of 1.26 million square kilometres that encompasses over 320 islands of which 105 are inhabited. The largest inhabited islands are Viti Levu (10,390 square kilometres) and Vanua Levu (5,538 square kilometres). Together these islands make up about 87% of the nation's landmass. Fiji is second only to Papua New Guinea as the Pacific island country having been most affected by natural disasters since 1990.

World Bank reports that the social and economic implications of climatological and hydrological risks in Fiji are considerable across all primary production sectors, especially agriculture. Floods and droughts disrupt agricultural production for domestic markets and export activities. Owing to heavy rain, landslips cut roads and disrupt communications and access. Further, cyclonic events are a threat to settlements, infrastructure, tourist facilities, and the bulk of the population that is located on the coastal fringe of the high-islands and on the low-islands¹.

The economy of Fiji is experiencing difficulty. While the Fiji Reserve Bank forecasts 1.8% growth for 2010, this relies on several factors aligning including improvement in exports and the continued growth in tourism arrivals. While tourism arrivals continue to grow, domestic and commercial credit within the economy continue to decline. Consumption expenditure has also slowed with new car sales down 40% annually. Inflation and unemployment continue to be high². Supported by improved prospects in the tourism sector and the use of capital controls, the Standard & Poor's rating agency revised Fiji's outlook from negative to stable³. In the first 10-months of 2009, the government recorded an \$88.7 million net deficit, equivalent to -1.5% of GDP. In the same period, Government expenditure and revenue were 17.6% and 8.25% lower than budgeted levels⁴. Government expenditure increased from 2005 but dropped substantially in 2008 and has not

¹ *Reducing the Risk of Disasters and Climate Variability in the Pacific Islands Republic of Fiji Country Assessment*, World Bank, Washington DC, 2008. Also see *Asian Development Bank & Fiji Islands. Fact Sheet*, December 2008.

² According to a December 2009 joint AusAID/World Bank study, prospects for the economy of Fiji in 2009 were dimmed by 2-shocks: the global financial crisis and natural disasters with 'recession now bearing down on Fiji'. The report advises that the global food and fuel crisis caused inflation for 2008 to rise to 6.6%. *Design of Technical Assistance and Management Support to the Fiji Department of Social Welfare. Concept Note*. East Asia Social Protection Unit, World Bank, December 2009.

³ The AusAID *Situation Analysis: Fiji Education. Final Report*, December 2008 summarises the key economic and political constraints. Prepared as a rapid assessment rather than a full sector review study, the analysis nonetheless succinctly describes steadily rising poverty and unemployment in a context of significant skill shortages.

⁴ The *Fiji Times* advised on 27 March 2010 that there had been a 20% to 30% drop in revenue in the construction industry. It reported that industry sources described the 'local market is quiet and subdued'. With few prospects for an expansion of demand domestically industry was seeking international clients to off-set the decline in local demand.

recovered. Expenditure has not kept pace with inflation. In constant terms, the level of government expenditure has dropped by 22% over this period.

Results from sector studies and the recent *Workshop on Poverty Impact Assessment* (Suva, April 2010) point to widespread poverty with an agreed estimate of 45% of the population living below the poverty line⁵. The *Pacific Food Summit* held in Suva in April 2010 advised delegates that sugar production is below levels reached in 1961, rice production is 60,000 tonnes below annual requirements whilst dairy production is falling 15,000 tonnes short of demand⁶.

It is generally acknowledged that the sugar industry, traditionally regarded as the backbone of the economy, is in difficulty. There has been a steep rise in the price of dairy products with some prices increasing by 50% in 2010⁷. CPI data reveals that food prices are rising more rapidly than other sectors of the economy. Increasing unemployment, inflation and shortages in the supply of basic food items has resulted in greater hardships on most families. In early 2010, around 19,000 individuals had to 'purchase' rice, flour, cooking oil and tinned fish by means of food vouchers under the Interim Government's Family Assistance Program. Demand upon Fiji's formal welfare mechanisms is growing with Department of Social Welfare staff advising that increasing numbers of individuals are requesting welfare assistance.

Box 1 provides a snap-shot of economic conditions and hardship on families.

Box 1: Snap-shots of life in Fiji

Cyclone Tomas damage estimated at \$76 million.

Decline of the sugar industry resulting in insufficient supply to meet demand (stores reporting that the supply of sugar has decreased by 60%)

Food voucher program introduced by the government to provide basic food items to poor families needing welfare assistance.

⁵ Key studies include: W. Narsey, *Gender Issues in Employment, Underemployment and Incomes in Fiji*, Vanuavou Publications, Suva, 2007; W. Narsey, *The Quantitative Analysis of Poverty in Fiji*, Vanuavou Publications, Suva, 2008; K. Barr, *Squatters in Fiji: the need for and attitudinal change*, CFF Policy Dialogue Paper No.1, 2007; *Poverty in Paradise: no way to live*, CCF Policy Dialogue Paper No.2, 2007; *Study of the impacts of the political crisis on children and families in Fiji*, Save the Children Fiji, Suva, 2004; *Keeping Children in School*, Save the Children Fiji, Suva, 1998.

⁶ Issues reflecting ongoing or new hardship include: increasing evidence of limited access to basic services for squatter settlement populations and peri-urban shanty settlements; under utilisation of land or productive land being left idle by land owners (this reflecting a steep decline in Fiji's sugar cane production); a rise in rheumatic heart disease amongst school children, and children being abandoned owing to family breakdown. Civil liberties continue to be an issue with some 27 Church ministers in court facing charges in relation to breaches of the Public Emergency Regulation (which has been extended).

⁷ Some 24,000 households are receiving direct financial support through Fiji's Family Assistance Programme (FAP). There is also significant unmet demand for FAP support owing to insufficient government funds allocated to the program. A joint AusAID/World Bank study advised that a large number of poor are not covered by the FAP and that this figure includes working poor as FAP support tends to target single female headed households with dependents and poor people with limited labour capacity (e.g. the chronically ill, disabled, etc). *Design of Technical Assistance and Management Support to the Fiji Department of Social Welfare. Concept Note*. East Asia Social Protection Unit, World Bank, December 2009.

Shortages of powdered milk (secured through food vouchers). Northern Division stores 'swept clean' of powdered milk.

Butter rises by 52% on 10 April. Powdered milk rises by 41% on 12 April.

Food voucher program widened with key supermarkets awarded tenders to supply basic food items (rice, flour, oil, powdered milk, canned food). Several supermarket chains with wide reach and holding basic food items are awarded 6-month contracts to supply food voucher holders with basic food.

Ongoing urban water supply disruptions owing to weaknesses in physical infrastructure and plant.

Periodic power outages (affecting mainly urban/residential areas).

A reflection of the general decline in sugar cane production and the sugar industry throughout Fiji is seen in the very fertile Bainisoqosoqo Valley. Farmers here used to produce 40,000 tonnes of cane annually. They now produce 5,000 tonnes and this is declining. This reflects a weakening of village economies and poorer access to cash.

B. Problem Analysis

Central to any problem analysis on Fiji in 2010 is measuring accurately and in real time the incidence of poverty. Worsening human development indicators across Fiji give donors concerns about Fiji's progress towards millennium development goals (MDG). According to a study funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) cash incomes of working age household members are very low. On average, cash income for the average working age person surveyed in 2005 was FJ\$536 per year. In the Outer Islands and Vanua Levu the average was FJ\$490 per year whilst the Viti Levu rural areas are 34% better off, with FJ\$658 per year⁸. The study concluded that of those surveyed 'none are rich and most can be considered poor'⁹. If these figures from 2005 have remained consistent until 2010, the devaluation of the Fiji dollar would partly explain how increasing numbers of the population are being trapped by poverty. Still, the prevalence, depth and extent of poverty must be carefully assessed in Fiji as recent studies amongst squatter settlements in Suva have established that even when one or more families share a household some 80% of households have only one bread winner.

The intersection of social, human, financial and technological capital, pervading kinship relationships and external remittances make it extremely difficult to define poverty. It becomes more complicated when rural residents live and work for short periods of time in Suva, Nadi and tourist resorts returning to their settlements with hard earned cash. The 2005 ADB study on rural

⁸ D. Abbott, *Analysis of the 2002/03 Household Income and Expenditure Surveys. Estimation of basic needs poverty lines and incidence of poverty in Fiji*, UNDP Pacific Sub Regional Centre, August 2006. This analysis also needs to consider resilient livelihoods. In Vanuatu, the global economic crisis appears to have had minimal impact of the daily life of people except in urban areas. 'The traditional economy as the source of resilience in Melanesia', Ralph Regenvanu, Member of Parliament, Vanuatu, Director, Vanuatu National Cultural Council. Paper presented at the Lowy Institute Conference **The Pacific Islands and the World: The Global Economic Crisis** 3 August 2009, Brisbane, Australia.

⁹ A. McGregor, *Rural and Outer Islands Project. Draft Final Report*, ADB, November 2005.

and island livelihoods concluded that 'simplistically applying a standard of US\$1 per day to cash income' suggests that 70% of these populations would be poor. Further, 'even allowing that half [of daily] needs are met from subsistence and a simple US\$0.5 per day would still leave 50% poor'. It is these sorts of observations, coupled with a dramatic weakening of Fiji's export-led economy that has led observers to conclude that poverty is now widespread and increasing despite government anti-poverty measures¹⁰.

The economic difficulty Fiji is experiencing is evident in public education funding. Expenditure has dropped by 12% since 2007. Education expenditure as a proportion of government expenditure has dropped from 19.2% in 2007 to 14.6% in 2010. In its *Millennium Development Goals 2nd Report, 1990-2008* (2010) Fiji's Ministry of National Planning advised that it was unlikely that Fiji would meet most MDGs by 2015. The report found that 'Fiji has gone backwards' since 2004 and is on track to meet only three of the eight goals. Goals to (i) eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, (ii) promote gender equality and empower women, (iii) reduce child mortality, (iv) improve maternal health and (v) combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases are unlikely to be met¹¹.

While public reports state that Fiji has met Millennium Development Goal 2 (by achieving universal primary education), the MoE has reported increasing dropout rates at both the primary and secondary levels, as families struggle to meet the costs of schooling: in 2008 15% of all primary students enrolled did not complete primary education (19,855 out of 132,368 primary students) and 25% of secondary students enrolled did not complete secondary school (16,935 out of 67,738 secondary students).

Rising poverty has a direct impact on families accessing basic services including education, health, social welfare and potable water and sanitation. Education is not free in Fiji and as incomes have reduced, the affordability of school education has moved beyond the reach of poor families and households¹². Studies by Save the Children Fiji from as early as 1998 advised that for low income families with several children, the cost of school education 'can be overwhelming'.

There are approximately 700 pre-school centres operational in Fiji, all of which are non-government managed. There are 721 primary schools, 17 special schools and 172 secondary schools. More than 98% of schools in Fiji are owned by non-government organisations. Many were established by churches as they sought to expand their reach and others by communities seeking to serve their own needs. These schools are reliant on school levies and government recurrent grants to operate as household incomes drop and the organisations that own them appear to be in no position to provide additional funding.

¹⁰ Results in the *Fiji Sun* from the *Workshop on Poverty Impact Assessment*, Suva 20 April 2010.

¹¹ This observation takes account of *Leading by Example. Protecting the most vulnerable during the economic crisis. The Global Health Campaign for the Health Millennium Development Goals* (2009). Moreover, the *Introductory Workshop on Poverty Impact Assessment* (Suva, April 2010) advised that although poverty has been rising throughout Fiji 'there has been no study to see the impact the [poverty] programmes have made'. This workshop also advised that people living in poverty was now 45%.

¹² K. Barr, *Poverty and Education*, Address to the Fiji Teachers' Union, 2008; K. Barr, *Urbanisation: fertility, housing, education, health, environment*, Regional Symposium on Population and Development. UNFPA and USP, November 2009.

As mentioned in the Country Issues, Fiji is second only to Papua New Guinea as the Pacific island country having been most affected by natural disasters since 1990. In 2009, Cyclone Mick damaged 146 schools while flooding affected 66 schools; and in 2010 Cyclone Tomas damaged 153 schools, highlighting the risks of damage to poorly maintained school infrastructure during natural disasters. This puts considerable pressure on school management authorities and MoE to rebuild and rehabilitate school premises. Many schools, particularly those in rural and remote locations, do not have a reliable or safe water supply, or proper ablution blocks. Poor water and sanitation facilities within schools also contribute to the spread of communicable diseases, with a recent outbreak of Typhoid occurring in a school on Taveuni. According to the WHO, Fiji has one of the highest rates of typhoid fever in the world, and recent studies show that young children are commonly affected and are extremely vulnerable to the disease.

Although the education sector is described in the literature as having made good progress with notable achievement in student retention, participation and achievement, many gains are in danger of being reversed. In short, the sector faces a period where earlier gains are in need of protection otherwise a steady decline in education development achievement levels will be experienced or what one AusAID study refers to as 'development erosion'¹³.

A summary of key indicators illustrate the point:

- the overall education budget in support of the national education system has declined with both the recurrent and development budgets falling below previous levels. There are indications that future national allocations to education may remain or drop below current levels, with no anticipated increases due to the constrained economic situation in Fiji. Even if national education allocations remain at constant levels, inflation and the 20% devaluation of the Fiji dollar effectively translate into a decrease in real terms ;
- the MoE recurrent budget is dominated by the teacher salary bill (around 80 – 85%), with very little available to schools for running costs, including teaching/learning resources and facilities management. This issue is particularly pronounced at the primary level with 93% of the recurrent primary education budget on average spent on salaries.¹⁴
- in addition, the maintenance and upgrade of education infrastructure is an area that is severely under-resourced. On average, only 5 per cent of MoE's annual recurrent budget is allocated to capital works and school management committees (who own, and have built around 98% of schools in Fiji) are unable to sustain adequate funding for regular maintenance and upkeep. Over the years, inadequate infrastructure resourcing has seen a significant decline in the physical condition and safety of school facilities for the vast majority of schools in Fiji. A continued shortage of capital funding from government and school management committees, exacerbated by increasing costs of building materials, will result in schools falling into further disrepair.

¹³ *Situation Analysis: Fiji Education. Final Report, AusAID, December 2008, p.21.*

¹⁴ Collingwood, Ian (2007), A Paper to Inform the Draft Policy Framework for Australian Development Assistance to Education in the Pacific, p 2 (unpublished).

- international development assistance contributions to the national education system have also declined with a significant reduction in 2010;
- there is a decline in the net enrolment rate in primary school education and student cohort survival¹⁵ ;
- class sizes in rural schools are 'shrinking' owing to declining enrolments and school drop-out rates. Smaller schools are having to close and Divisional Schools for disadvantaged youth in remote and outer island areas periodically shut down when operational funds run out;
- there is an estimated 15% drop-out rate in primary schools and 25% drop-out rate in secondary schools;
- transition rates from the K-8 primary schools to Form 3 can be as low as 48%¹⁶; and
- schools in poor urban areas report that collection of school levies is problematic with one school in Suva reporting a \$3000 gap in expected and received income from levies.

Financial barriers preventing children from attending school and enjoying effective participation once in school are numerous. Obvious barriers include a wide range of school levies, the cost of school uniforms, foot-wear, school stationery and textbooks¹⁷. Other barriers including travel have been largely overcome by the interim government meeting the cost of bus travel but this primarily benefits students in urban and peri-urban areas. For rural settlements travel is both expensive and time consuming. Travel to a rural boarding school in inland Vanua Levu amounted to \$72 for a one-way trip¹⁸. The high cost and lengthy travel time are a considerable disincentive for children to remain at school. It is recognised that the longer it takes to get to secondary school, the fewer the proportion of people who complete primary and secondary school.

Evidence of declining economic and social indicators upon children is becoming all too obvious. The need of the interim Government of Fiji to fund the travel of children to school by bus, the widening of a food voucher program, the provision of free textbooks and proposals to subsidise the supply

¹⁵ Some of this can be explained by migration.

¹⁶ The ADB-funded *Rural and Outer Islands Project* (2005) reported that over 40% of people surveyed did not go beyond primary school and in Vanua Levu and some of the Outer Islands, over 50% had left school before completion of primary school.

¹⁷ According to the Foundation for the Education of Needy Children in Fiji, the total cost of schooling for a child is around \$2,000 a year. This includes admission/enrolment fees, annual fees and a range of other fees (for sport, art, and library), a uniform, footwear, textbook rental, stationery and meals. In rural areas, travel to and from school can be very expensive, up at \$70 a journey. This cost must be met by families.

¹⁸ There is evidence that village economies are struggling. For instance, the women of the rural village of Nasivikoso several hours from Nadi, no longer weave mats or prepare other textile items for sale in Nadi. The hire of a van to take vegetables, root crops and textiles to Nadi is \$120 one way. There is insufficient cash to meet this cost so the village women no longer make products for sale nor produce extra crops for retail. The group also struggles to travel to health centres as travel costs amount to \$10 one way for each family.

and distribution of school uniforms is evidence that the affordability of a school education for families is becoming an issue. Very high drop-out rates in secondary schools signals the fact that for a number of families school education is losing relevance and/or demand patterns are changing. Further hardship is being experienced by families as a result of reduced incomes owing to inflation and the devaluation of the Fiji dollar.

Additional institutional constraints are faced by the sector. With the mandatory retirement of school teachers and non-teaching staff employed by MoE and a freeze on overall staff numbers there has been a significant loss of intellectual capital in support of the maintenance and performance of the national education system. The major teacher training institute, Lautoka Teachers' College (now part of the Fiji National University) has seen some 39% of academic staff retire in recent years. Outmigration is also contributing to a loss in skilled personnel. Collectively, this amounts to a serious loss of human talent. It is timely for an age profile of teachers to be conducted as new School Heads met during the Design Mission were quite young and keen for further professional training.

The Fiji Teachers' Union and Fijian Teachers' Association advise that the compulsory retirement of teachers continues adding to the loss of rare human talent and intellectual capital built up over the last decade in the areas of education and school leadership, curriculum leadership and curriculum reform. The unions also report that teachers are not being replaced when they leave the service for sick leave, maternity/family leave or early resignation. During the Design Mission, all Principals and School Heads met had been appointed within the last 9-12 months. In the health sector, the loss of senior staff has impacted upon the sector so rapidly that former staff has been re-engaged on service contracts. There is a pressing need for the education sector to resort to this strategy to fill significant skill gaps.

It is within the above context that a new generation of Australian development assistance to the education sector is being determined and defined. The Access to Quality Education Program, Fiji is the first step in Australia's next period of development assistance to Fiji.

C. Consistency with existing AusAID and other donor/multilateral programs

The Government of Australia is strongly committed to help improve economic prospects and raise the living standards for people throughout the Pacific region. To this end, the Government of Australia has adopted a regional outlook for its development assistance program to Pacific Nations. Its *Pacific 2020: Challenges and opportunities for growth* emphasises 9-key sectors to maximise growth of which education and training is one. AusAID's draft *Pacific Education and Training Agenda* (AusAID-Pacific Branch 2010) provides performance targets that put a focus on (a) improved learning outcomes for Pacific children and (b) increased employability of Pacific islanders. These targets in turn aim for improved literacy and numeracy rates for primary school children and increased numbers of Pacific islanders with regionally accepted and/or internationally recognised qualifications.

The Australian Government remains committed to support the ordinary people of Fiji by maintaining programs to improve economic opportunity. The Government of Australia will continue to support programs to generate employment and economic development and to help those groups most vulnerable to the impacts of the recession and global financial crisis.

To this end, Australia's aid program's priorities are:

- partnering with the Ministries of Health and Education, Department of Social Welfare and civil society organisations to provide targeted services to vulnerable groups, and in particular women and children; and
- rural enterprise development and financial inclusion programs to generate local employment, promote better access to financial services and improve livelihoods, and ensuring continued delivery of core health and education services.

Translated to education sector activity, this focus involves improved access to education for disadvantaged populations, including children in rural and remote areas and children with disabilities, who are currently poorly served by formal school education. Accordingly, the design for this Program has as its primary focus mitigating the effects of political instability and the global recession on the most vulnerable people through reducing financial barriers to school education.

The country strategy for Fiji articulated through AusAID programmatic activity has a focus on several sectors including the education and health sectors, civil society support, rural enterprise development and Fiji's productive capacity in at-risk industries including textiles, clothing and footwear. The proposed AusAID-supported education program is consistent with this sector orientation particularly the need to continue to support the ordinary people of Fiji and the need to stay involved in the education sector.

Key bilateral donors in the Fiji education sector include Australia, the European Union (EU), and the Embassy of Japan/Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Australia has traditionally focussed on systems strengthening and capacity building at the Ministry of Education level. The main emphasis of the EU Fiji Education Sector Program was on improving school infrastructure and facilities, and the Embassy of Japan/JICA provides short-term training and the provision of volunteers in the areas of special education, basic education, mathematics and technical vocational education and training. Australia is the largest donor in the sector and, from 2011, will most likely be the only significant bilateral education donor once the EU commitment through EDF9 concludes at the end of 2010. While the EU may continue to provide support to Fiji through EDF10, this is likely to focus on water and sanitation.

D. Rationale for AusAID involvement

The stated position of the Government of Australia to its development assistance program to Fiji is to support the ordinary people of Fiji. The focus of the Access to Quality Education Program, Fiji will provide both a level of social protection and educational opportunity to Fiji's poorest families by reducing financial barriers to school education. This focus also involves measures to improve schools amongst the poorest communities, settlements and districts including improving water

safety and security. Very poor squatter settlements, unproductive farms, the poor performance of the sugar industry, and rising unemployment require a response to enable the next generation of children to have hope and dignity through better access to education and health¹⁹. The quality of services is poor especially in rural and outer island areas and the expanding squatter settlements.

There are pressing needs for AusAID to shift its program of development assistance in the education sector from greatly strengthened capacity of the education administration to direct support to the poorest families and schools. There is also a need to understand better the depth, extent and direction of poverty in Fiji and how access to a quality school education can offer a path for the children of the poorest families to move beyond hardships being currently experienced. The task of identifying vulnerable populations is now challenging given the increasing numbers of people falling below the poverty line. The intersection for identifying **who** the poor are and **where** they now live is being undertaken by AusAID's Social Protection Program in conjunction with the World Bank. The *Access for Quality Education Program, Fiji* will be able to use this research to identify schools and communities that need assistance to reduce the barriers to education. Recognising the importance of research and analysis consistent with AusAID education sector strategies in general, the Program will have a strong focus on operational research and education and social sector studies as a basis for improved decision-making in ongoing education sector development and the continuous improvement of the student learning experience and student learning outcomes.

E. Lessons Learnt

Australian support to the education sector in Fiji goes back to the early 1990s. The *Basic Education Management and Teacher Upgrading Project* and the *Fiji Education Sector Program* (FESP) represent a long period of almost uninterrupted Australian assistance to the sector. Indeed, when the FESP commenced in 2003, Australian support to the education sector was expected to continue for a 15 to 20-year period. During the preparation of the Access to Quality Education Program, Fiji an Independent Completion Report (ICR) focusing on FESP was taking place. Normally, such a review provides a platform for a new design with lessons learned from the previous 15-years of assistance providing a road map for next steps. During the review of FESP, some of these impacts were quite striking. The review team concluded:

- student learning outcomes have not improved over the last 10-years of Australian supported assistance;

¹⁹ The US Department of Labor advises that the number of working children under the age of 15 in Fiji is unknown. It notes that homeless children can be found working in the informal sectors of the economy and on streets where they are susceptible to commercial sexual exploitation. (Source: www.dol.gov/ilab/media/reports/iclp/tdaz004/fiji/htm) The ADB has some anecdotal evidence regarding a number of young girls who have been lured into the commercial sex industry as a result of poverty and/or homelessness. Asian Development Bank, *Priorities of the People. Hardship in the Fiji Islands*, Manila: ADB, September 2003. *Poverty in Paradise: no way to live*, CCF Housing and Social Exclusion Policy Dialogue Paper No.2, 2007, provides a number of snap-shots and case studies of the difficulties women and children face in day-to-day life in Fiji's squatter settlements.

- multiple investments covering school leadership, curriculum and assessment and pre-service teacher training have not yet raised the overall quality of education for children;
- poor progress in the translation of a National Curriculum Framework into units of work (for students) reflecting improved teaching strategies and learning arrangements;
- high demand for the training of teachers in-service has not been met resulting in implementation problems of the curriculum framework; and
- weak evidence of project impact on the primary school classroom.

Some observations by the FESP review team appear harsh given the political and economic climate in Fiji but there is little doubt that the Ministry of Education saw an unfinished agenda as the FESP wound up. Ministry concerns about poor linkages between the national curriculum framework and student assessment procedures are echoed in the review team's report. These concerns remain active exacerbated by the loss of many staff who undertook professional training within the FESP. Interestingly, the review team expressed concern about poor data, weak approaches to trend analysis and an overall poor record keeping in the area of program performance assessments. This observation is consistent with the preparation of the Design where data and information gaps constantly weakened appraisal of key issues concerning poverty, school attendance and retention and how schools are actually financed. But the issues and concerns raised by the review team cannot be ignored. For instance, issues of access to early childhood education raised in the review are highly relevant to the pro-poor focus of the Access to Quality Education Program, Fiji and the suggestion for improved access for the children of the poor in early childhood education has been taken on board²⁰.

While the Program does capture some of the recommendations and concerns in the ICR, it must be recognised that the new Program is moving away from the previous period of Australian support to the education sector. In fact, as the **Problem Analysis** reveals, the Program represents a departure from the conventional approach to education sector development in Fiji and indeed in other AusAID country programs. During the Design, the team was struck by the resilience of the school system to continue day-to-day operations despite funding cuts, political instability and the activity of numerous donors that was often not complimentary. This resilience can be explained by a key characteristic of Fiji's national education system. The majority of schools are owned and managed by private education authorities including major churches and religious groups. Despite changes in government, economic crisis and a general weakening of the economy, the school system seems to operate routinely. However, the Ministry of Education and the various levels of education administration, have keenly felt the impact of changes particularly interruptions to normal governance, financial cuts and the loss of both teaching and non-teaching staff. To continue a

²⁰ The FESP completion report advised that MoE is keen for donors to have the same approach to early childhood education that has been adopted for universal primary education. The team argued that 'survey evidence showed that while pre-schoolers do subsequently perform better academically, relative to those who did not attend pre-school ... the differences are far more significant for children from poorer families than for children from average or well-to-do families'. Further on they urged that a program 'with a focus on improving access for the children of the poor [to early childhood education] ... could well be an excellent activity in any future donor program of assistance to the education sector in Fiji'. *Draft FESP Independent Completion Report*, May 2010.

program of support like FESP in the current environment is not likely to result in sustainable and effective outcomes. Rather the new program will focus on limiting the impact of the current situation on poor families with an option to scale up support, both to the Ministry and schools, if the situation improves.

The European Union is currently implementing its Fiji Education Sector Program (EU FESP). This program has a strong emphasis on the provision of infrastructure to schools. While this program is still being implemented and hence completion reviews are unavailable, there are some early lessons that can be applied to this component. In particular, lessons can be learnt about complexities of dealing with land ownership and expired land leases, challenges in securing building contractors, difficulties and delays associated with transporting machinery/materials to remote locations, the shortage of civil and structural engineers in Fiji, and the advantages of imposing high building standards to ensure investments are less susceptible to damage from natural disasters.

F. Architecture of government

In December 2006, the democratically elected Government of Fiji was overthrown in a military coup. Elections have been postponed until 2014. Fiji has been suspended from the Pacific Islands Forum and the Commonwealth. The Constitution was abrogated in April 2009 leaving the country to be governed under Public Emergency Regulations (which limits the right to assembly and freedom of speech). Fiji is now ruled through the regular issue of Decrees, and overall decision-making rests with interim Cabinet.

With Fiji's Constitution abrogated, the People's Charter for Change, Peace and Progress provides the guiding principle for the interim government of Fiji. The People's Charter establishes compulsory guidelines for government policy in Fiji for the near future. The fundamental changes and reforms captured in the Peoples' Charter are being implemented through the *National Strategic Development Plan - Roadmap for Democracy and Sustainable Socio-economic Development 2009-2014*.

Permanent Secretaries and Directors are responsible for the day-to-day running of Ministries and Government Departments. Permanent Secretaries are also Chief Accounting Officers for their respective Ministries. Decisions involving Ministry operations and mandated functions are made at Cabinet level in consultation with the Public Service Commission. The main Ministry counterparts for the Access to Quality Education Program, Fiji are likely to be the Ministry of Education, the Department of Social Welfare and the Ministry of Provincial Development.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for the administration and management of education policy and delivery of educational services. It provides the curriculum frameworks, policy guidelines and directions and qualified teaching personnel who support all schools in the delivery of school education for students. The development of a national curriculum framework, learning arrangements and assessment, the provision of grants to schools, and the payment of teacher salaries are all mandated functions of the Ministry of Education. It also has the responsibility for the (i) management of resource planning and policy development related to education and training, (ii) provision of program support to education and training institutions, (iii) regulation and recognition

of education and training providers, (iv) accreditation of instructional programs, and (v) accounting for the resources allocated by government to the education system.

The bulk of the annual education budget is committed to teacher salaries, increasing from 80 to 85 % over the last 10 years of the total MoE budget. As a general rule, MoE officers do not manage or become involved with routine school operations (only 2% of the schools in Fiji are government owned). Further, over 2009 and 2010 the Ministry decentralised many centralised operations, tasks, procedures and decision making to its Divisional offices.

In early 2010, the Ministry of Provincial Development assumed responsibility of the infrastructure needs of schools. This had formerly been a key responsibility of the Ministry of Education. Now, schools submit proposals for maintenance and upgrading of school buildings and classrooms. The Ministry of Provincial Development determines which schools will receive support. Currently, the Ministry of Provincial Development and Ministry of Education have been working closely to allocate these grants. The Ministry of Provincial Development is charged by Cabinet to implement government rural development policies, programs and activities through its district and divisional administration. This includes the provision of administrative support services, regional planning and policy advice, rural development and rural housing, disaster management and other ancillary services.

Accordingly, infrastructure investments couched within the Access to Quality Education Program, Fiji will need to work with both Ministries in assessing which schools could be supported by the new program.

The Department of Social Welfare is responsible for maintaining a social safety net for the citizens of Fiji. It exercises oversight of the Family Assistance Program, the Child and Protection Program and the Poverty Alleviation Project. The mandate of Social Welfare covers orphans and adoption, child care and children's services, marriage counselling and statistics. Given the Access to Quality Education Program's strong social protection angle and the targeting of assistance to those families who need the most assistance, the Program will need to work closely with this Department (and the World Bank/AusAID Social Protection Program) in examining potential mechanisms for identifying poor and deserving families who will benefit from the Program's support.

The Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of National Planning will not be directly involved in any of the Access to Quality Education Program's activities. They play a key role in deciding budget allocations, ceilings, parameters, and priorities for all Ministries. It is important that the funding from the Government of Australia remains additional to Education, Provincial Development and Department of Social Welfare budgets and does not replace or provide a substitute for existing funding.

2. Program Description

A. Goal and Objectives

The design for this program reflects both specific program assistance to Fiji's education sector and AusAID's Pacific regional approach to education and training. Equitable access to school education

in Fiji and the effective participation in school education by children from Fiji's poorest households is the fundamental outcome of this new program.

Program Goal

The **goal** of the program is to, in conjunction with the MoE and other relevant stakeholders, improve the ability of children from very poor communities, including those with a disability, to access a quality school education.

Program Objective

The **objective** is to work with the MoE and other education service providers to adequately support poor families to mitigate financial and other barriers that limit access to school education for poor girls and boys.

In support of this objective, the **purpose** of the Program involves a highly targeted approach focusing on three related components:

1. reducing financial barriers to accessing school education²¹;
2. investing in school infrastructure in the poorest communities to ensure that facilities are adequate and safe, and contribute to improved student learning outcomes²²; and
3. conducting targeted research and analysis on the systemic challenges to achieving improved education outcomes in Fiji²³. This activity will involve a range of short-term, demand-driven technical assistance and the provision of flexible support to MoE strategic priorities, including curriculum development, assessment and database support, and also the provision of assistance to MoE to key thematic areas relevant to its ongoing sector planning.

The purpose reflects a strategy attending to priority education need amongst the most vulnerable populations and schools underpinned by action research and analysis addressing issues, constraints and opportunities in agreed thematic areas including education and social protection and work towards the better definition of the nature and extent of poverty in Fiji. The Program's strong focus on access will work towards overcoming the barriers to school education. The Program will also work with MoE to improve quality provisions for school education leading towards enhanced student learning outcomes. Enhancing the overall student experience is fundamental to the Access to Quality Education Program, Fiji.

²¹ This approach is consistent with AusAID's Pacific regional priority of removing financial and social barriers to education and training that limits access for girls and boys, people with a disability, the poor and those in rural and remote areas.

²² This approach is also consistent with AusAID Pacific regional priorities in the area of upgrading existing schools facilities.

²³ This approach is central to AusAID support to the education sector in general and will become increasingly evident through robust use of expertise through the Education Thematic Group, Education Research Facility and other technical assistance teams in country-specific programs.

Schools and communities will be identified using poverty mapping data from household surveys, findings from the World Bank/AusAID Social Protection Program, and MoE's Disadvantaged Schools Index (DSI). The DSI currently categorises schools based on geographic locations - urban, peri-urban, rural or remote, where each location category is given a measure of disadvantage e.g. an urban school is generally given a rating of less disadvantage compared to a rural or remote school. The DSI also considers the state of physical infrastructure (e.g. access to shopping and banking facilities, electricity, water, public transport) and the new Program proposes to further enhance the DSI through the inclusion of socio-economic indicators.

The Program will provide important new opportunities to assist poor families to send their children to school. The Program will be delivered through a rolling design mechanism. The overall objectives and components have been determined in this design document, however it is very important that some of the activities under the Components (particularly 1 and 3) are designed in-country in real time analysis to ensure that the activities accurately reflect the current circumstances in Fiji. To this end, the first year of the program will involve the development of detailed analysis, costings, gender and disability strategies and workplans for the Program. The PCC and AusAID will be responsible for formal approval of the proposed activities and studies under the components.

The Program will be delivered in two Phases. Phase 1 will operate for two years, with optional extension for a further three years (Phase 2), based on program outcomes and contractor performance. Approval will be sought for Phase 2 after an independent review has been completed during year two. Phase 2 will be a continuation of the program outlined in this design document with the exact activities to be finalised by the PCC and AusAID during the annual planning process.

Outcomes of the new program in Phase 1 will include:

- Implementation of systems which reduce the costs of schooling for the poor. An analysis in the first 12 months of the Program will determine the mix of systems which may include direct grants to school boards, to families through the social welfare system, or through vouchers;
- A national plan for improved school facilities, including water and sanitation, in operation - with works underway in up to 90 schools per year, targeting the lowest 10 per cent of the most disadvantaged schools in Fiji according to the MoE Disadvantaged Schools Index, and large scale repairs underway for 5 schools per year affected by natural disasters; and
- Progress towards the achievement of the broader outcomes for the whole 5 year Program

The Access to Quality Education Program, Fiji will be delivered by means of several linked components of assistance. Put simply, the different components comprise:

Component 1: Increase access to schools: This component will look at introducing 1 or 2 social protection measures into schools or communities to reduce the financial barriers to school education. In the first year the managing contractor will undertake a range of analysis to determine the best intervention to increase access to schools for poor families.

Component 2: Improve school facilities and learning environments: this component will identify schools and communities that will benefit from school infrastructure improvements. This support will create a safe environment conducive to learning and improved student learning outcomes. The activity will use the MoE's Disadvantaged Schools Index to implement a pro-poor school facility support program involving the provision of a reliable water supply and sanitation facilities and support for school rehabilitation and maintenance to the poorest schools in urban squatter communities and rural, remote and outer island areas. There is scope in this component to support the provision of school-based classrooms allocated for pre-school (Early Childhood Education) to meet the government priority need to have more children actively participate in pre-school education and child development. There is also scope to support rehabilitation of school facilities if they are damaged by natural disasters.

Component 3: Support to the Ministry of Education to improve education quality and analysis: this component will support MoE's strategic priorities including the provision of policy studies and options on poverty reduction and improving student enrolment and retention, which impact on access and quality of education in Fiji. This will involve further work in school-based curriculum development linked to relevant and practical student assessment and learning arrangements in support of improved student learning outcomes; as well as support to enhance MoE databases (including the incorporation of socio-economic indicators in the Disadvantaged Schools Index). This support will cut across the other components through the provision of studies and knowledge products needed for the effective implementation of these two components. The exact studies for this component will be decided in the inception stage based on the proposed interventions and priorities identified under the program.

These components will support the reduction of financial barriers to accessing school education for the poor and also contribute to improved student learning outcomes. It is expected that the Program will protect educational gains made to date in progressing Fiji to reach MDG2 and provide a sound environment for strengthening student performance and progression through the school system. The Program will be put in place and managed by a Core Education Program team contracted through a Managing Contractor. Central to the Contractor's implementation strategy will be direct support to MoE in a manner consistent with earlier periods of Australian development assistance which aimed to utilise a management arrangement embedded within the Ministry to:

- promote coordination of activities and alignment to strategic priorities;

- provide for flexibility and responsiveness in meeting changing needs;
- minimise the burden on MoE of managing donor programs (thereby reducing the need for a MoE staffed Program Implementation Unit); and
- provide an effective mechanism for different donors funding common initiatives.

The Program will be implemented over a 5-year period of development assistance. As noted, management and implementation responsibilities will be out-sourced to a Managing Contractor. It is anticipated that the components will require some sub-contracting of pieces of work to strong and credible NGOs, civil society organisations and research institutes including universities and TAFE colleges in Fiji.

B. Strategies and Principles

As discussed under Section 2C: Expected Outcomes, the Access to Quality Education Program, Fiji needs to take immediate and visible action providing direct support to the poorest families experiencing difficulty in sending children to school owing to the cost. The Program Design enables understanding of poverty and education that will enable further targeted assistance to be delivered to school aged children. This approach involves a continuous analysis of social and education sector developments over the short-term.

The Access to Quality Education Program, Fiji will require solid cooperation between a wide range of school management boards/committees, MoE, DSW and the Ministry of Provincial Development. It is expected that a program targeting schools, the improvement of school facilities, improved student enrolment and retention will increase community participation in whole school planning and school development. To this end, the successful intersection of these access interventions across the sector will significantly improve the quality of education.

Increase access to schools: The Design Document does not propose to be prescriptive in defining the best approaches for reducing cost barriers to the poor for schooling but rather outline a delivery framework for the program and a method of designing, selecting and implementing the activities. It is important that the few activities decided under the program are simple, easily implemented, and have the appropriate evidence-base to ensure that they will reduce the financial barriers to schooling. Several options could be considered in greater detail in the inception stage (first year of the program) including (i) financial assistance to poor families by means of cash transfers (this may filter across to pre-schools); (ii) school feeding programs; and (iii) school-community development through grant-based financial support to Fiji's poorest schools. A number of assessments and policy studies will be undertaken in Fiji involving World Bank/AusAID funded research teams under FAP. These assessments and studies will focus on poverty analysis, social protection mechanisms and the success/progress of a range of poverty alleviation projects already in place. These studies will contribute to a better understanding of the likely success and impact of the proposed 'access' strategies and it will be important to include the findings in the analysis on potential activities.

On completion of in-depth analysis, AusAID and the PCC will make a decision about the exact make-up of interventions under the access component. A number of criteria will be used to determine which intervention will take place. These criteria will include:

- (i) interventions target the poorest schools and families using the DSI and poverty mapping data from the Family Assistance Program;
- (ii) interventions must be appropriate to the specific issues in Fiji (and therefore there may need to be different interventions between rural and urban schools);
- (iii) all proposed interventions must have a do-no harm analysis;
- (iv) the interventions must be fully costed and be affordable and effective;
- (v) all interventions must be achievable in the program's timeframe and consider pull-out implications if the intervention is to end;
- (vi) the intervention must include a financial management component (i.e. if it involves grants to schools there is both auditing and training in financial management); and
- (vii) interventions must be acceptable to the general community and school groups. If interventions are considered to have the potential to create division amongst the school community or ethnic groups (i.e. due to targeting), strategies to mitigate these issues will need to be designed.

Improve school facilities and learning environments: A key area of immediate support to poor families, poor communities and school-community development will be upgrading school facilities and improving learning environments. The Design is predicated on activity that can be rapidly put in place with visible and measurable results. Improvements to school campuses and learning environments will include rehabilitation of classrooms and works associated with improved water supply and sanitation. Each rehabilitation activity will involve disaster risk reduction assessments including cyclone and flood proofing buildings. The assessment tasks are critical as during Cyclone Tomas it was found that health facilities (government funded and built) fared better than schools (community funded and built). A task of the Core Education team with MoE assistance will be to prepare a short-list of schools to benefit from improvements using the DSI. This list will also consider the 17-Special Schools who provide educational opportunities to students with disabilities and impairments across Fiji to ensure that the facilities within selected special schools enable improved access to students (including transport to and from their homes). In addition, it will ensure that all selected schools have appropriate access and facilities for students with disabilities (e.g. ramps and rails).

The ***Improve school facilities and learning environments*** component will provide individualised interventions to each school to meet the particular needs identified by the MoE and the School Management Authority. The School Infrastructure Specialist will assess each school proposal to ensure the best use of resources. Each proposal must articulate a maintenance plan for the school to enhance the sustainability of the interventions. This component will be responsive to changing needs in Fiji, in particular to the impacts on school facilities of natural disasters.

In accordance with the Australian aid program's commitment to cross cutting policies such as disaster risk reduction and disability, any construction or rehabilitation will need to be structurally sound and able to withstand flooding and natural disasters as well as being able to safely accommodate students with disabilities.

Possible assistance under this component could include the rehabilitation of classrooms and boarding facilities, improvement or installation of safe water supply and sanitation, assistance to improve consistent power supply, and provision of school learning materials.

The ***Support to the Ministry of Education to improve education quality and analysis*** component will provide support to MoE priority areas aligned with their Education Sector Strategic Development Plan. Principal concerns for MoE involve student assessment processes linked to new learning arrangements. Further work on strengthening the National Curriculum Framework and the correct selection of student learning outcomes (by Band and Area of Learning) is required²⁴. It is proposed that the Access to Quality Education Program, Fiji will provide a rapid response capacity to MoE concerns.

Owing to interruptions and in some cases a cessation of development assistance programs, there has been a lack of documentation (research, policy studies, cross-sector situational analysis, and sector analytical studies) crucial for evidence-based planning and the informed selection of activity in support of education development (with horizontal linkages to social protection). With assistance from MoE a series of studies will be prioritised and set in motion. Proposed analytical work conducted by World Bank on the Family Assistance Program from May to October 2010 will necessarily affect this prioritisation but also provides opportunities for Australian assisted studies to piggy-back with the World Bank program. Collectively, this will provide a strong knowledge base for future Australian and broader donor assistance to the sector.

Assistance to MoE will continue to support work that was commenced under FESP in areas where further assistance may be required, including curriculum development, assessment and database support and analysis i.e. the Schools Information Management System database, the Fiji Education Staffing Appointments database, and the Disadvantaged Schools Index (by incorporating socio-economic indicators). The DSI support will assist in making decisions regarding the protection of vulnerable populations during the ongoing political and financial difficulties. A key strategy in the Program involves ongoing technical assistance in the area of policy studies, tracer studies and a

²⁴ It should be noted that the Curriculum and Standards Framework (CSF) used widely throughout Australian schools have been superseded by Essential Learning Standards which in turn are linked to the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy or NAPLAN. For instance, the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) organises the K-10 curriculum by means of Domains (knowledge, skills and behaviours) and Dimensions (standards). Future Australian assistance to Fiji education sector development should be more closely linked to curriculum frameworks reflected by VELS. The CSF remains a useful curriculum reference for teachers to support learning programs by VELS and NAPLAN are more closely aligned to national student learning outcomes by Domain and Dimension.

range of sub-sector reviews so that lessons can be learned on the nature of education sector support during this period and the foreseeable future. Technical assistance (advisory and operational) will necessarily involve linkages with other social sector support programs under consideration (including strategies for widening the social safety net through improved social protection programs which can underpin school education programs particularly in the areas of early childhood development and an inclusive curriculum to involve the most disadvantaged children).

In summary, the ***Access to Quality Education Program, Fiji*** is organised as follows:

Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	
Increase access to schools	Improve school facilities & learning environments	Support to the Ministry of Education to improve education quality and analysis	Program management & implementation
Financial barriers to accessing education reduced for the poor	Poor schools strengthened through improved and safer campuses and learning environments including through the installation of safe water supply and sanitation; Rehabilitation to classrooms; Provision of student learning materials including basic items (stationary, exercise books, student resources); School-community planning. School-based classrooms allocated for pre-school.	MoE provided with direct and rapid support by means of: Installation of a Core Education Program Team in MoE; Provision of short-term technical assistance to support MoE strategic priorities i.e. curriculum, assessment and improved student learning outcomes; Studies to explore linkages between Components 1 and 2 and improved student learning outcomes; Assistance to improve databases and knowledge products in support of understanding the impact of poverty on education.	The Program will be implemented and managed by a Contractor. The Contractor will be responsible for the tasks and assignments of the Core team and the provision of technical assistance. A focus of the Contractor will be continuous improvements in Program activity and the seamless upscaling of activity over the 5-year Program.

C. Expected Outcomes

The overall goal of the Program is to ensure that children from very poor communities, including those with a disability, have equitable access to a quality school education by removing or reducing financial barriers to school education and by providing an enabling environment to make the student learning experience more positive in Fiji's poorest schools. Collectively, this will result in improved student learning outcomes for the poor.

The impact of the Program will ensure that access to, and quality of, education for the poor will be maintained and system efficiency further enhanced during the current political, economic and financial difficulties and thereafter.

The outcomes of the Program will be:

Component 1

- Improved school access, retention and completion rates for the most economically disadvantaged children by targeting the bottom 10% of schools in the MoE Disadvantaged Schools Index – approximately 90 schools per year with an estimated student population of 18,000. This outcome will support the gains made by Fiji in reaching MDG2 and contribute to achieving MDG2 by 2015;
- An inclusive approach for the integration of children with disabilities into formal school education by ensuring that children with disabilities have improved access to special schools with a view to graduates continuing on to a mainstream secondary and tertiary education, and vocational education and training programs. An outcome will also be improved physical infrastructure for disabled students in mainstreamed schools.

Component 2

- Component 2 will upgrade facilities in up to 90 schools per year (targeting the 10% of most disadvantaged schools in Fiji according to the MoE DSI); and support large scale repairs for 5 schools per year affected by natural disasters;
- Improved water supply and sanitation in these schools to protect the health and well-being of school children.

Component 3

- The promotion of evidence-based planning as a result of systematic research contributing to knowledge management consistent with AusAID's draft Pacific Education and Training Agenda (2010);
- Improved curriculum and assessment within the MoE, and support to other strategic priorities that emerge during the life of the program;
- Improved student learning outcomes through support to MoE's efforts to improve education quality, and increased capacity within MOE to assess student learning outcomes;
- Enhanced capabilities of MoE databases, such as the Disadvantaged Schools Index, the Fiji Education Staffing Appointments database and the Schools Information Management System database.

In terms of effective partnerships, the Program will work with MoE to improve access to school education through:

- demand-driven technical assistance (advisory and operational) to MoE Divisions and Units to support improved student learning outcomes including specific support on curriculum

and assessment to maintain some continuity between the proposed program and the recently concluded *Fiji Education Sector Program*;

- research and analysis to improve capacity within MoE and partners to assist the most vulnerable access education, and measure improvements in access and education outcomes including improvements to MoE's databases to strengthen analysis. The intention is to build up a stock of knowledge products to inform education decision-making;
- building upon MoE initiatives in free bus travel for students and free textbooks, where possible the Program will expand support and introduce other initiatives to improve access to education for the most vulnerable; and
- targeted infrastructure support to improve safety of school environments for the most vulnerable using the MoE's DSI as a guide for school selection.

D. Sustainability

While the program aims to work with Ministry of Education and education stakeholders in a sustainable, efficient manner, it needs to be recognised that the interventions in this program are designed to mitigate particular circumstances and to minimise the impact on vulnerable populations. Therefore, while the interventions are appropriate for the current environment, they may not necessarily be highly sustainable. This program is designed to ensure that Australia stays engaged in the education sector, recognising that it is a very important sector for development and that the current circumstances could threaten the gains made in the Fiji education sector to date. The program is designed to be an interim measure due to these circumstances and not necessarily a long-term solution. However, the program will have the flexibility required to increase the current focus on capacity and quality issues (should circumstances improve).

3. Implementation Arrangements

A. Management and Implementation Arrangements

AusAID has a long-standing partnership with the MoE through a number of long term programs. The governance and management structures for the Access to Quality Education Program, Fiji are designed to build on this strong relationship while recognising that the program will also be focusing directly on schools and communities (particularly in Components 1 and 2).

The Design team was asked to consider implementation arrangements during the inception period of the Program. The following three options had to be appraised: (i) contracting a respected international or national NGO with a track record of working successfully in school level improvement; (ii) placing a Program management team with MoE; and (iii) engaging a managing contractor. Although the first option is felt to be sound and appropriate, the complexity of the

Program would require a large international NGO with solid expertise in operating in either a post-conflict or post-economic crisis environment. Such an NGO does not currently operate in Fiji.

The conclusion reached was to merge the second and third options with an emphasis on locating a strong Program management team in MoE charged to be responsive to MoE priorities in improving education planning and education service delivery. This will necessitate the recruitment of a Managing Contractor and preferably one with a proven track record in operating effectively in a post-conflict development context, a demonstrated expertise in building the adaptive capacity to sustain livelihoods of people needing to respond to change and/or adversity, and capacity to manage infrastructure rehabilitation programs.

Managing Contractor:

The *Access to Quality Education Program, Fiji* will be implemented through a Managing Contractor sourced through open tender. The Managing Contractor will be engaged using a commercial contract to provide a package of management support and technical assistance to MoE, other relevant Ministries and AusAID to support the implementation of the program.

The Managing Contractor will be contracted for Phase 1 of the Program (2 years) with the possibility of a 3 year extension if 1) the program continues into Phase 2 and 2) if there has been satisfactory Contractor Performance.

The Managing Contractor should actively aim to source expertise locally and regionally for relevant positions (through the Core Education Program Team). Ideally, given the skill mix of the team and the scope for additional specialists, the Managing Contractor should have the flexibility to recruit qualified staff in a highly responsive manner. Part of this flexibility will involve removing advisors, smoothly and effectively, in the event the advisor proves to be unsuitable for assigned tasks or cannot work well with MoE staff or other stakeholders. As this Core Team will provide daily operational and logistic support to MoE they may be tasked to assume responsibility for duties not covered in their terms of reference.

The Core Education Program Team:

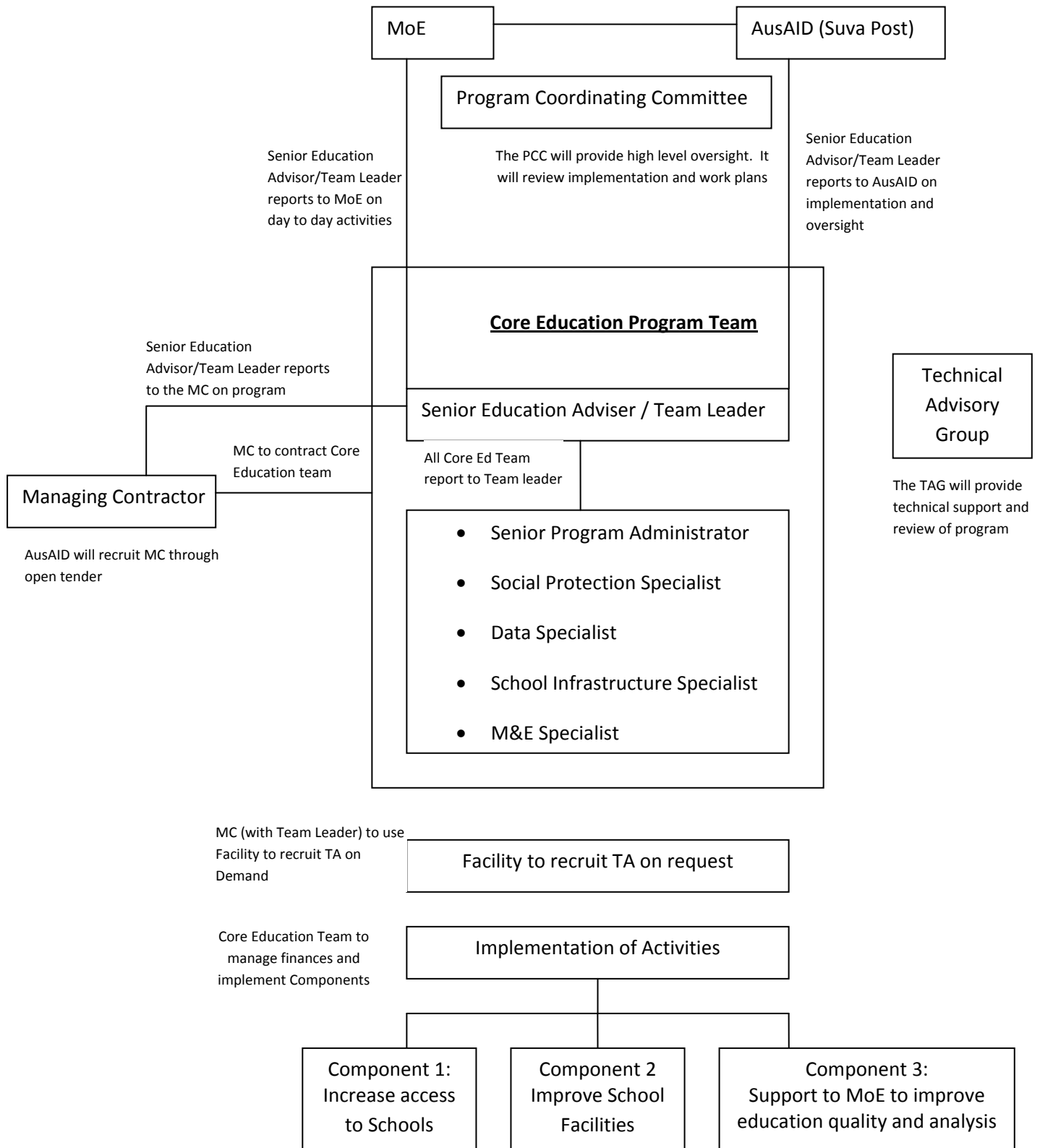
The Core Education Program Team will support the implementation of all of the components of the Program, and if circumstances permit may be located within the Ministry of Education (subject to approval from MoE and the availability of office space etc). The Managing Contractor will be required to recruit the Core Education Program team. This Core Education Program team could include, but is not limited to, MoE officials and teachers that retired under recent changes to the mandatory retirement age. The Core Education Team will be led by a Senior Education Advisor/Team Leader who will manage the team, provide overall direction to the program and provide policy advice. The Senior Education Advisor/Team Leader will have multiple reporting responsibilities – directly to AusAID on the implementation and oversight of the program, day to day reporting to MoE and reporting to the Managing Contractor on administration and program management.

The team will also include a Senior Program Administrator who will be responsible for financial management, administration, logistics for program operations and for accurate and transparent accounting and reporting, including fiduciary accounting to AusAID.

Other members of the Core Education Team will include:

- Social Protection Specialist
- Database Specialist (Not full time - will provide input as/when requested by Team Leader).
- School Infrastructure Specialist
- M&E Specialist (Not full time - will provide input as/when requested by Team Leader).

Program Management Structure



Financial Management

Program finances will be managed by the Managing Contractor, who will be responsible for ensuring that all processes comply with Australian Government Guidelines. Finances will be subject to audit.

AusAID will disburse funds to the Managing Contractor at regular intervals under conditions agreed in the contract. Most of the activities under the program will be managed on a reimbursement basis.

Where appropriate, the budgeting process for the three components will align directly with those of the Interim Government of Fiji (shadow systems alignment).

Procurement

Procurement will be arranged by the Managing Contractor, and must be in line with the Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines and, where appropriate, the guidelines of MoE. Procurement will be subject to audit if required.

AusAID Technical Oversight of the Program

AusAID (Suva Post) will have a full time program manager (Education) to manage the day to day interactions with the Program. Technical support will be provided by a Technical Advisory Group (TAG). AusAID will engage the services of the TAG, with the membership and scope being determined by AusAID after selection of the Managing Contractor and associated personnel. The Managing Contractor will be required to cooperate with, and facilitate the work and visits of the TAG. The primary role of the TAG is to provide AusAID with independent technical and other advice on any aspects of the Program and to assist AusAID to assess the performance of the Program. The flexible nature of the program will mean that the Managing Contractor is able to adapt to any recommendations that arise from the TAG.

B. Planning and Budgeting

The *Access to Quality Education Program, Fiji* is designed to have flexibility to be able to meet the changing needs of the key stakeholders. This is particularly important given the fluid political and economic climate in Fiji. The program is designed to be able to scale up (or scale back) activities to meet circumstances. It also has the flexibility to provide demand-driven support to the Ministry of Education.

To be able to ensure the program has this flexibility, annual workplans will need to be drawn up to reflect yearly priorities. This will need to occur in-sync with the Interim Government of Fiji's Budget Cycle to ensure that the programs are consistent with Government Budgets (and to ensure that the program is additional to interim Government of Fiji contributions).

As this is a rolling design program, in the first year the Managing Contractor must:

- Provide in-depth analysis on the best mechanism(s) for delivering component 1 including:
 - Do no harm analysis

- Poverty mapping (using DSI and FAP data)
- Studies of primary aged out-of-school children: incidence, cause, location and identification of support required for school participation.
- Data analysis and reports (disaggregated by division/district/school/gender and disability in: enrolment trends; school participation; student absenteeism; and student drop out.
- Develop a detailed implementation plan and costing for Component 1 (which must be agreed by the PCC and AusAID).
- With MoE, select schools for infrastructure assistance under Component 2.
- Develop a detailed implementation plan and costing for Component 2 including on the financial management of the funding to schools and begin to implement Component 2.
- Once arrangements for Components 1 & 2 have been finalised, develop ToR and implement any further studies needed to provide evidence for improvements in education quality and access (in consultation with MoE, the PCC and AusAID).
- Provide assistance to MoE to upgrade their data collection programs, and data analysis.
- Developed a detailed M&E framework for the program and undertake baseline studies.
- Develop gender and disability strategies for the program
- Once Components 1 & 2 have been decided, develop a detailed workplan and budget for the rest of the program (to be revised annually).

Governance Arrangements

A Program Coordinating Committee (PCC) will provide high-level oversight of the *Access to Quality Education Program, Fiji*. It will meet every six months to review program implementation and to decide on the annual workplans. The PCC will be able to meet on an ad hoc basis should any urgent matters arise out of the regular meeting schedule.

Given the rolling design of the program the PCC will have a major role in deciding the activities for implementation under each of the Components as well as agreeing to the annual budget and workplan. Following the inception Phase, the PCC will convene a special meeting to approve the specific activities and workplan.

The PCC will consist of Senior MoE Officers, the AusAID Counsellor, and the AusAID Education Program Manager, and may also include representation from the DSW, MPD, and other donor /NGO agencies. The Senior Education Adviser/Team Leader will be expected to provide secretariat support and technical advice.

AusAID will supervise the implementation of the *Access to Quality Education Program, Fiji*. Its primary focus is the Program level outcomes and it will participate in the annual PCC meetings. If

there is disagreement in the PCC on the activities and workplan, AusAID in consultation with MoE will make the final decision on the directions of the program. AusAID will contract the Managing Contractor through an open tender and will manage this relationship. AusAID will also commission the independent Mid-Term Review of the Program and convene the TAG for review.

The Ministry of Education will provide day-to-day supervision for the Program and the program will likely be co-located with the MoE (subject to MoE approval and availability of office space etc).

The Managing Contractor will manage the hiring and management of the Core Education team and ad hoc technical assistance, the implementation of the three components and the management of the program's budget. It will be responsible for ensuring that the Core Education Team provides six- monthly reports to AusAID and the PCC on the progress of the program.

C. Report and Review

The Core Education Program Team will provide AusAID and the PCC with six monthly reports on the implementation of the program. The reports should be concise and include: a general review of the previous six months; progress against targets; key issues and constraints; acquittal of program expenditure and requests for alterations to the planned activity schedule.

In addition, a more comprehensive Annual Report should be prepared each year and should include an annual review against the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, a workplan (to be agreed by the PCC) of the next year's activities and a reconciliation of the yearly expenditure.

D. Monitoring and Evaluation

It is important that the program maintains a constant focus on objectives and outcomes to ensure program effectiveness. The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework will provide the basis for the program to monitor its progress and performance. The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework will assess the performance of:

- Program implementation – is the program operating as planned?
- Program outcomes and results – is the program having the desired effect (and how will we know success when we see it?)
- Program efficiency – is the program being implemented at reasonable cost for the outcomes?

The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework will provide management information to AusAID and the Managing Contractor to ensure the program is heading in the right direction; provide a basis to assess the performance of each activity; and generate performance data for reporting to AusAID.

The Access to Quality Education Program, Fiji is a rolling design within the parameters of the agreed objectives and outcomes. The specific activities that will be undertaken to achieve those objectives and outcomes, and the inputs and modalities, will be identified and agreed between AusAID, the PCC and the Managing Contractor in the inception phase and annually thereafter. It is

not possible to currently chart a detailed set of activities and indicators for the program, so the rolling design framework will ensure that the indicators and baselines are picked up for all new activities.

To enable reliable and accurate reporting to take place, the Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist will be in-country to assist with the initial establishment of a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. This will occur after (or concurrently with) the identification of the activities under Component 1 and Component 3 to allow for the identification of indicators and baselines. On-going monitoring, particularly on a monitoring intensive program such as the School Infrastructure Program (Component 2) will be carried out by national core education team members with assistance from the international M&E specialist who will provide in-country inputs when needed. The M&E Framework should also link to existing MoE M&E systems, using where possible, MoE data and systems to ensure that results of the program are relevant to MoE reporting requirements as well as those of the program.

AusAID Post may need to allocate staff time/resources to the M&E process, especially in the initial stages of the Program, to strengthen the consistency and reliability of the data and to clearly identify information that is to be collected and reported on. There will be an annual Contractor Performance Assessment meeting to review progress, standards and any issues that have been raised during Program implementation. Through this process, the Post will provide comment and feedback on the services provided. Comments and observations from the Contractor Performance Assessment will be provided to the Contractor as a consolidated set of recommendations and the Contractor will be expected to adapt and improve the operations and systems in response to outcomes of this annual assessment.

Principles for a draft Monitoring and Evaluation Framework are provided in **Annex 3**.

E. Overarching policy issues

Gender

The *Access to Quality Education Program, Fiji* aims to reduce economic hardship on poor families in Fiji and households with a particular emphasis on the social protection of women, girls, boys and infants. The direct beneficiaries will primarily be children and in particular young children who are amongst the most vulnerable during periods of economic and financial hardship. The Program aims at encouraging parents to send their children to school and provides a range of interventions and strategies to reduce additional hardships on families through having to meet the burden of school costs. The Program (by being pro-poor) is non-discriminatory through encouraging poor women, particularly single mothers and other female carers to keep their children in school for as long as possible. Disadvantaged groups and children with disabilities will be brought into the program of assistance. As noted throughout the Design Document, overarching policy issues are now quite complex in Fiji and with significant levels of poverty, issues concerning gender and gender equity, child protection and anti-corruption are pressing. Additional well-informed and targeted research will need to be undertaken to understand the situation of women and children better and for the

formulation of affordable solutions to reduce the burden of poverty and the financial hardships surrounding school attendance and student retention.

The Managing Contractor, when preparing the Risk Management approach and M&E Plan, will be expected to approach these tasks informed by a solid grasp of incorporating social and gender dimensions in activity identification, design and definition. There is little doubt that if poverty widens, the burden of hardship will fall increasingly on poor women and children. Increased social mobility across Fiji has resulted in both increased internal migration and the out-migration of skilled and professional workers. The loss of human talent will no doubt be uneven in terms of long-term impacts but if male bread-winners have to leave the country to find better-paid work abroad there will be a time lag before remittances reach families who may have been left behind.

The Managing Contractor will be required to develop a gender strategy in the inception stage to integrate gender considerations into the program.

Disability

The situation regarding disabled children is also a pressing concern. It was explained to the Design Mission that remote rural and outer island villages and settlements tend to disguise the incidence of disability. Senior staff involved with Special Schools advised that parents in these settlements were not convinced that there were benefits in sending their disabled sons and daughters to a far-off location in Suva. The connection between the provision of an integrated curriculum program linked to vocational education and training and eventually employment, seemed to be highly elusive or remote for these parents. Accordingly, the need for providing an inclusive education for these communities is something that will need to be marketed by means of robust outreach programs. In the current economic environment this will involve providing greater access to scarce funds to key providers of education programs and facilities for students with disabilities. This is an area which the Program will explore further. It will be a challenge for the Program to identify and overcome access barriers for both poor families and those with disabled children. For instance, in urban settlements and squatter areas there is resistance to enabling disabled children to attend school owing to a social stigma of being a parent to a disabled child. Clearly outreach programs are just as necessary for nearby populations as well as those in remote and outer island areas.

The Managing Contractor will be required to develop a disability strategy in the inception stage to integrate disability issues into the program.

Child Protection

The Design Mission was unable to delve into the area of child protection as much as would have been desirable. Although quality research has been conducted into key areas including gender and unemployment, just wages and an overarching poverty analysis, issues surrounding child labour and the use of children in commercial sex work continue to be works-in-progress. It is reasonable to

suspect that as poverty has widened and more children drop out of school, the risk of children being subject to a wide range of exploitation is on the rise. The *Global Report on Child Labour* released by the United Nations (May 2010) advised on the need for greater global efforts to end child labour but the situation regarding children in Fiji is poorly understood.

The Managing Contractor and all advisors will have to comply with AusAID's child protection policies including police checks for positions working directly with children.

Anti Corruption

The Program faces challenges by not being able to use or engage with interim Government of Fiji systems. Considerable effort will need to be put into the area of anti-corruption to ensure that Program funds directed to families, schools, School Boards/Managements are protected. Due diligence will need to be exercised in all facets of the Program. The M&E Plan, Risk Management Plan, annual implementation plans and annual reports developed by the Contractor will need to alert AusAID of actual and potential corruption risks and how these may be overcome. Zero tolerance to fraud and risks will be managed closely. All incidents regarding suspected fraud are required to be reported to the AusAID Fraud section immediately and to local police.

Public Diplomacy

The Access to Quality Education Program, Fiji will be a highly visible program of development assistance. If implemented effectively with a commitment to ongoing due diligence and the continuous improvement of interventions, the Program will be 'felt' as often as 'seen' and recognised. Key features of public diplomacy have been raised in the discussion on the Program structure and function (under the Program Description).

The Program's activities will involve the building of strong partnerships between AusAID, key government agencies, responsible school boards and parents and children. The Program aims to remove disadvantage, reduce poverty and increase social mobility through concrete actions that will benefit students, parents and schools directly, with the Government of Australia being recognised as the funding source. The potential for advising households and communities about the various interventions through television and radio will need to be explored.

In requiring solid cooperation between a wide range of school management boards/committees, MoE, DSW and the Ministry of Provincial Development, the new program may well bring these central agencies closer together in exercising mandated functions. By promoting the goal of improved student learning outcomes and an overall improvement in school performance, a positive contribution by central government agencies to school education development will be secured. To this end, school infrastructure investments will enable opportunities for the role of the Australian Government and key Fiji government departments to be spelt out on signboards on school grounds. It is anticipated that programs improving school water supply and sanitation will also involve

signage and media campaigns to raise public awareness of the role schools can and will play in water and food security. Similarly, social protection measures under Component 1 could provide opportunities for the national and local media to promote awareness which in turn will maximise Australian Government visibility.

Public and community access to the range of access interventions within the Program, and school rehabilitation will require public media outreach to get vital information across to households and schools. This in turn enables additional visibility to the contribution of the Australian Government to Fiji's ongoing economic development and social welfare. The Contractor will work with MoE and the Australian High Commission to identify media opportunities and to clear media releases, launches and communication opportunities.

Development effectiveness

In the preparation of the Design, the team was mindful that an Independent Completion Report (ICR) of the *Fiji Education Sector Program* was being undertaken and that the ICR process would identify any issues, gaps and constraints that may have prevented the FESP from achieving its objectives, outcomes and expectations.

The new program will work as closely as possible with MoE systems particularly in planning, monitoring and evaluation, data management and reporting. While finances will not be going through the MoE budget, the system set up will ensure alignment with MoE financial and procurement systems (shadowing). Further analysis will be undertaken by the Core Education Team at the start of the program.

The use of international and national advisors will be able to assist MoE and even the provincial level of education in filling both knowledge and skill gaps in the administration of the education system, but these advisors will need to be skilled in the areas of effective development in a context of fragmented organisational and administrative systems. For instance, the approach to decentralised education management is quite unique in Fiji as schools are largely autonomous.

The Program will find ways to be compatible with government systems. Further work in shadow systems alignment will be required if the Program draws on this approach to underpin effective Program implementation.

Environment and Climate Change

It is unlikely that the Program will involve any environmental impact of a negative nature. All building projects included in the *Improve school facilities and learning environment* component will be designed to mitigate the impacts of climate change and natural disasters. Environmental Impact Assessments will be required for all school improvements, including the potential to assess disaster risk reduction, carbon footprint reduction and climate change adaptation.

F. Critical Risks and Risk Management Strategies

There are significant risks with the *Access to Quality Education Program, Fiji* on several levels. The suggested range of activities will need to have a strong evidence base and acceptability to communities before interventions can be implemented. If there is poor progress, then the aim to reduce cost barriers to school education for the poorest families will be delayed. Similarly, the supervision of school infrastructure activity under the EU-funded FESP was very expensive and as many poor schools will be located in remote areas, the quality assurance and oversight of rehabilitation work and the provision of safe water and sanitation could prove to be time consuming and costly. How students manage between these cycles will be a risk and may result in drop-out. So although the proposed activities are desirable and needed, there are risks.

As AusAID and the Contractor cannot work through interim Government of Fiji systems there are risks associated with effective governance, consistency of service levels in areas that are poor and/or remote, and poor alignment with MoE education programs. In terms of a risk analysis, poor systems alignment represents a very high-risk area warranting much deeper probing.

As a guide, the following major risks have been identified. These will require safeguards built into the implementation process:

- major variations in service level or quality across Fiji in the area of school rehabilitation owing to poor supervision of civil works;
- unexpected results from Access activities including schools increasing levies in other areas;
- divisions emerging between the poor and non-poor in the same school or area. Some access programs could create tension and possibly conflict within a community. Even in urban areas there is significant inter-dependency between families and the exclusion of non-poor can be quite visible in a school. Strategies to mitigate this risk will need to be included in each activity;
- changing priorities within the sector, hindering longer term planning and implementation;
- loss of AusAID identity in the education sector program owing to poor visibility of Australian Government assistance; and
- poor Contractor performance leading to key objectives not being fulfilled.

The political situation in Fiji presents a number of additional risks. They include:

Political Risks:	risks relating to the political environment in which the Program operates at the national, provincial and school community levels. This includes political involvement in Program specific decision-making.
Financial Risks:	risks relating to interim Government of Fiji capacity to contribute resources in the context of a shrinking national education budget.
Technical Risks:	risks relating to the lack of capacity within MoE and in the area of educational leadership to ensure effective service delivery in all areas of school education. This involves an over-dependency of the provision of technical assistance by the donor.
Organisational Risks:	risks relating to organisational structures and inter-agency relationships. For example, the overreaching role of the Ministry for Provincial Development in monitoring the activity and core work of line Ministries including Education may erode MoE confidence and leadership.
Systemic Risks:	risks related to the adequacy or otherwise of national and provincial policies in support of education development given the loss of senior Education leadership and a shrinking education budget.
M&E Risks:	risks related to the capacity to identify, measure and analyse data relevant to national and provincial planning. There is evidence of this risk with the poor analysis and reliability of data in relation to school education.

It will be incumbent on the Contractor to prepare a risk assessment and risk treatment strategy against which each risk can be appraised annually.

Conclusion

The *Access to Quality Education Program, Fiji* is a response to GoF budget constraints in education and to challenges for families and households to meet education costs during current economic and financial difficulties. The proposed programs to increase access to education; and provide support to the poorest schools including safe water supply and sanitation and instructional materials to students from poor families will help maintain school enrolment and attendance rates by reducing parental costs for education. To maintain the quality of learning environments in schools serving the poorest and disadvantaged student populations, an infrastructure program will provide funding for maintenance and essential school repairs. There is scope for the Program to interface with other programs in health and social protection supported by Fiji government agencies, other development partners and AusAID. The Program provides a basis for reform in the education sector to ensure pro-poor targeted and efficient development of school education. The access to education component supports a pro-poor focus and will benefit those who are most in need. This approach will address long-term human development by ensuring that education services are protected during the current political and economic environment.

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Annex 1: Risk Management Matrix

Risk	Effect on the Program	Likelihood ¹ of Risk Occurring	Consequence of Risk Occurring ²	Risk level ³ (Likelihood * Consequence)	Risk Treatment	Responsibility	Timing
Political Risks							
Political environment is unstable	Program implementation is interrupted	Possible	Severe	High	Close monitoring of the political situation Flexibility in programming	Contractor with AusAID	Continuous
Changing leadership in MoE.	Mixed guidance and direction from MoE in key strategic decision-making in direct support to schools and school children.	Possible	Moderate	High	Agreed MoE/AusAID roles for the Core Education Program team with the team seeking AusAID assistance to resolve key issues and constraints (with MoE).	Core team with AusAID	Continuous
Overarching control of MoE and DSW functions by the Ministry of Provincial Development.	Difficult to reach a consensus of Program targeting by Province, District and settlements. Political oversight of beneficiaries in targeted Divisions. Loss of national-level support.	Unlikely	Moderate	Moderate	Early and regular communication with key MPD officers on Program strategies and solutions. MPD agreement on key MoE contributions to the Program.	Contractor with Core team	Continuous

¹ Likelihood assessed under the following fields: Almost Certain, Likely, Possible, Unlikely, Rare

² Consequences assessed under the following categories: Negligible, Minor, Moderate, Major, Severe

³ Risk Level assessed under the following categories: Low, Moderate, High, Very High

Financial Risks							
GoF annual budget allocation to education continues to decline	Poor financial sustainability of previous GoF and GoA investment in the education sector. Decline in school physical and Institutional infrastructure.	Possible	Major	High	Bi-annual review by the Core Team and AusAID on GoF spending by sector. Tight definition of poverty and the location of Fiji's poorest families.	Core Team with MoE assistance in DSI data	Continuous
GoF assistance in school travel support and free textbooks stalls.	Added pressure on the Program to widen the social safety net to support a larger number of poorer school children.	Unlikely	Moderate	Moderate	Consultation between AusAID, MPD, MoE, DSW and the Core team to re-calibrate assistance. Flexible approach with response to changing circumstances. Possible down-scaling of some interventions with up-scaling required in other areas. Less provision of technical assistance to MoE with more funds going directly to schools and scholarships.	All key stakeholders	On demand
Technical Risks							
Poor capacity of School Boards or School Management to handle new system of payments.	<p>Possible low-level corruption with schools being overpaid for goods and services.</p> <p>Internal dissent in schools amongst non-poor students for not receiving funding support.</p>	Possible	Moderate	High	Correct targeting of schools where there is a large number of poor children. MoE and DSW assistance in installing a valid system for cross-checking school services/supplies with family payments. Sanctions applied to a school misusing Program funds. Training for School Boards or School Management on new systems, financial management and	Contractor with AusAID and MoE	Continuous

					reporting/acquittal requirements. Clear guidelines on which students receive support.		
Organisational Risks							
Key staff in MoE, DSW and AusAID do not understand the Program design or strategy and do not fully appreciate supervisory roles during Program implementation	Program outcomes in school enrolment and retention are not understood in terms of a long-term process. Tendency to expect impact assessments before impact is likely to be 'felt' at the school level. High or unrealistic expectations on Program performance and the performance and achievements of the Program team.	Unlikely	Minor	Low	Quarterly meetings between the MoE, AusAID and Program team on Program activity. Preparation of an Annual Implementation Plan where progress against plans can be measured and updated quarterly.	Contractor with Core team	Quarterly
System Risks							
Inexperienced education system staff in the sector. Current staff cuts and retirements are not conducive to a national HRD Plan to underpin sector planning and development.	Pressure on Program team to address systemic issues rather than concentrate on key Program outcomes.	Likely	Moderate	High	Use of short-term technical assistance input (operational) to bridge skill gaps in key MoE Units. Possible development of a major education sector analysis and review to provide a frank assessment of the 'health' of the education sector and prospects for future donor assistance to the sector.	Core team with possible donor input	On demand
Policy guidance on provincial development is absent, weak or confusing.	Mandated duties of MPD do not translate evenly at the Divisional and Provincial levels resulting in ongoing lack of clarity on how the Program can most effectively operate at these	Possible	Minor	Moderate	Direct support by the Program to the provincial level of education administration through the allocation of short-	AusAID with Contractor	Continuous

	levels. Poor provincial development results in scarce human and financial resources at the school level being diverted to the Division.				term technical assistance. Policy studies conducted by the Program to underpin provincial level decision-making.		
M&E Risks							
Limited availability of action research, baseline data and policy studies results in data not being collected as scheduled.	Additional pressure of the Program to rapidly and efficiently conduct a range of quality studies to quantify the relationship between poverty growth and the quality of school education including the quality of student participation.	Likely	Minor	Moderate	The Program team to work closely with World Bank study teams (for the FAP) and isolated research conducted by other donors and multilateral agencies to develop a research quantum to provide a baseline for measuring developments and need in the education, health and population and social sectors.	Core team with UNICEF, UNDP, World Food Program and World Bank	On demand
Difficult for the Program to be accurately monitored in terms of progress towards Program targets and outcomes.	Delays in collecting Program-related data including targets and outcomes. Political interference in Program delivery and the ongoing identification of beneficiaries. GoF withholds key data from the Program including annual enrolments and retention rates. Data on the nature and use of DSI also withheld (this also effecting accurate targeting of beneficiaries).	Possible	Minor	Moderate	Close cooperation between AusAID, MoE and donor partners on the release of data including household income and expenditure surveys. Frequent use of short-term technical assistance to conduct rapid social assessments in key areas in relation to the ongoing affordability of school education.	AusAID with MoE	Continuous
Owing to low donor activity in the education, key agencies do not collect, sort, interpret or maintain baseline data	Ongoing problems with the lack of data to measure Program performance and benefits. Systematic weakening of MoE and donor understanding of the national education system and its day-to-day	Unlikely	Minor	Low	The Program team, with MoE assistance, prepare a simplified manual for the collection and maintenance of data. Use of strong NGOs to systematically	Core team with selected NGOs	Continuous

systems or information that can be fed into MoE data systems.	operations.				collect data on school enrolment, retention and drop-out. These data collection exercises concentrate on the reasons contributing to school drop-out and under-enrolment.		
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Annex 2: Draft Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

As discussed in the design document, the Monitoring and Evaluation System will provide the basis for the program to monitor its progress and performance. It will enable the Managing Contractor and AusAID to feed the performance results back into the implementation of the program so that lessons learnt can be picked up and performance (where necessary) can improve.

Key principles that will underpin the M&E system for the program include:

- **Thorough:** The M&E system will examine program results at different levels including at the Ministry level, at Schools and for poor girls and boys; the M&E system will also provide feedback on the quality of implementation and provide an overview of the progress of the program and its impacts.
- **Integrated:** The M&E system will be integrated with the management and implementation of the program so that information gathering responds to the decision-making needs of staff and management, and results are used to inform decision making at all levels of the program.
- **Timely:** The M&E system will support real time learning and information-based decision-making; information gathering and analysis will be appropriately timed so that M&E outputs are available when decisions need to be made.
- **Practical:** the M&E system will be manageable within the overall program structure; M&E staff will choose cost-effective methods for information gathering and explicitly identify ways to achieve economies in studies conducted. Where possible, the program will use MoE data and systems. The M&E system will be streamlined with operating procedures.
- **Credible:** the M&E system will draw on thinking and methodologies and lessons learnt by other programs, such as FESP (Australia and EU),

As discussed in the design document, the M&E will focus on assessing three aspects on the performance of the program:

- A) Program implementation – is the program operating as planned?
- B) Program outcomes and results – is the program having the desired effect (and how will we know success when we see it?)
- C) Program efficiency – is the program at reasonable cost for the effects?

A) Program Implementation

Program Implementation will examine how the program is being run, what the issues for achieving goals are, etc. It will focus on Managing Contractor performance as well as other external factors impacting on program implementation. Program implementation will be assessed through 6 monthly progress reports.

The following criteria are provided as a guideline for judging Contractor performance:

1. Personnel Performance

All Contractor personnel:

- act professionally and with integrity, and produce high-quality work and outcomes ;
- communicate with AusAID and other stakeholders in a clear, transparent and effective manner;
- deliver outputs on time.

2. Program Management

- good working relationships with AusAID Post;
- effective coordination across Fiji and consistency of service levels across the Fiji islands;
- finances and financial systems are soundly and transparently managed and financial reporting meets AusAID accountability requirements;
- reports are clear, constructive and timely and meet the expectations of AusAID;
- responsiveness to the reporting, management and planning needs of AusAID;
- baseline data recorded for evaluation use during course of program;
- regular audits of recipients of assistance and payment processes;
- ongoing monitoring and evaluation is undertaken effectively and is analysed and reflected in continuous improvement by the Core Education Program team.

3. Communication and Coordination

- clear management arrangements and effective communication between all Contractor personnel including those in remote locations;
- Program personnel take proactive steps to ensure effective communication and working relationships with all stakeholders and beneficiaries;
- Program personnel develop and implement a communication strategy (with AusAID) about articulating the achievements of the program to the communities and stakeholders
- management identifies and reports any major difficulties in communication and stakeholder relationships to AusAID as they arise.

4. Risk Management

- Program personnel respond effectively to new or changed environments or requirements from AusAID;
- management and implementation issues are identified and resolved in a timely manner and reported to AusAID for decisions where relevant;
- management provides sound analysis of risks and develops and applies effective risk management measures.

B) Program outcomes and results

In the inception stage, the M&E Specialist will need to develop frameworks for assessing program results for each activity. The approach should include:

- set indicators for each activity
- establish a baseline for the indicators
- set targets (with AusAID and PCC) for each activity
- design and implement a plan for collecting data to monitor and assess the performance (including if it will qualitative or quantitative, if it is already collected or a new process etc)
- Analyse the information generated to understand the results, assess the effectiveness of interventions, pinpoint gaps and identify lessons learned.
- Feed the analysis into regular decision-making within the program and report relevant results and analysis both internally and externally.

C) Program effectiveness

This will assess the value for money in implementing the program. Much of this will occur through analysing the results of A and B above but if necessary, cost-effectiveness and impact studies could also be carried out. The program will undergo AusAID's quality at implementation process annually.

Note that this draft M&E framework will need to be updated by the Managing Contractor and the Core Education Program Team. This M&E framework will need to be closely aligned with MoE systems and databases and hence needs further input to ensure this alignment. At the start of the program, the M&E specialist will spend up to 1 month in country working with MoE, the Core Education Program Team and AusAID to finalise the MoE Framework and collect baseline data.

Design Logic	Key Indicators/Performance Targets	Data Source and/or Reporting Mechanisms	Assumptions
Goal			
The <i>Access to Quality Education Program, Fiji</i> , in conjunction with the MoE and other relevant stakeholders, improves the ability of children from very poor communities, including those with a disability, to access a quality school education.	Net school enrolment rate of 95.8% for primary school maintained through to 2014.	MoE baseline data and/or studies on enrolment, retention, grade progression, and textbook provision to all primary school students. Studies undertaken by the Core Education Program team. Progress reports on Millennium Development Goals. Periodic evaluations by AusAID/MoE/Program.	Education remains a GoF priority. Limited MoE budget cuts. Improved MoE capacity to manage the education system.
Objective			
Work with MoE and other education service providers to adequately support poor families to mitigate the financial and social barriers that limit access to a school education for poor girls and boys in remote and rural areas of Fiji and urban squatter settlements within Suva and Nadi.	<p>Increase in net enrolment rates in Early Childhood Education (%) (particularly those in lowest socio-economic quintile)</p> <p>Increase in net enrolment rates for Primary education</p> <p>Retention rate to Class 8 (%)</p> <p>Transition rates from Class 8 to Form 3</p> <p>Gender Parity Index for NER Class 1 to 8</p>	<p>Baseline and impact studies</p> <p>MoE databases.</p> <p>MoE databases</p> <p>MoE databases</p> <p>MoE databases</p> <p>MoE databases</p>	<p>GoF commits to ongoing support to free bus travel to school and free and equitable supply of textbooks.</p> <p>No further reduction to MoE leadership capacity.</p> <p>School management fully supports the Program.</p>

Outcomes			
Improved school access, retention and completion rates for the most economically disadvantaged children in targeted communities. This outcome will support the gains made by Fiji in reaching MDG2 and contribute to Fiji achieving MDG2 by 2015.	Indicators will be further developed once the activities for Component one have been agreed on. It is likely that they will be similar to the Objective indicators (i.e. based on change in Net Enrolment and Primary completion and transition rates for the lower socio-economic quintiles).	MoE databases	<p>Reliable disbursement of funds maximizes the positive impact of the Program.</p> <p>Improved GoF budget allocation reduces financial pressure on the Program and Program team.</p> <p>Availability of suitable and qualified short-term technical advisors to support and improve the Program.</p>
Upgraded and/or well maintained school facilities in targeted poor settlements with a particular emphasis on improved school conditions in squatter settlements and rural and remote locations.	<p>Number of schools upgraded</p> <p>School plans outline maintenance requirements</p>	<p>Program progress reports/MoE databases</p> <p>Program progress reports/MoE databases</p>	School management can handle Program activity without MoE direct assistance.
Improved water supply and sanitation in targeted schools to protect the health and well-being of school children.	Number of schools with improved water and sanitation facilities	Program progress reports/MoE databases	School management can handle Program activity without MoE direct assistance.
An inclusive approach for the integration of disabled children into formal school education by ensuring that children with disabilities have improved access to special schools with a view to graduates continuing on to a mainstream secondary and tertiary education, and vocational education and training program.	<p>Number of children with disabilities enrolled in primary education</p> <p>Number of children with disabilities completing primary education</p> <p>Number of children with disabilities continuing to mainstream secondary and tertiary education and vocational education</p>	<p>MoE database/Fiji National Council for Disabled Persons database</p> <p>Enrolment and completion data from Special Schools</p>	
The promotion of evidence-based planning as a result of systematic research contributing to knowledge management consistent with	Number of studies completed	Program Progress Reports	

AusAID's draft <i>Pacific Education and Training Framework</i> (2010)			
Improved curriculum and assessment within the MoE, and support to other strategic priorities that emerge during the life of the program	<p>New curriculum and assessment frameworks developed.</p> <p>Work plan for implementation of priorities developed</p>	Program Progress Reports	
Increased teaching and student learning through support to Ministry of Education's efforts to improve education quality	Indicators to be developed	MoE database	
Increased capacity within the MoE to assess student learning outcomes	MoE assessment plans	Program Progress Reports	

Annex 3: Position Descriptions

CORE EDUCATION TEAM

Senior Education Advisor/Team Leader

Location: Suva

Duration: 2 years from commencement of the Program (with possibility for extension if program is extended into Phase 2)

Reporting: To AusAID for program oversight and Implementation
To MoE for day to day activities
To the Managing Contractor for contractual performance

Role: The Senior Education Advisor will be responsible for the major planning and implementation requirements of the Program. The Advisor will work closely with MoE and AusAID on each facet of the Program. Specifically, the Senior Education Advisor will:

- (a) Develop and supervise detailed annual Program implementation plans and provide assistance for regular monitoring and review of such plans, in collaboration with the Education Program Team, MoE, AusAID, other consultants, and key counterparts;
- (b) Assist the Contractor in the establishment of a Program performance management system and produce timely reports accordingly;
- (c) Provide professional leadership, direction, and support for all consulting services under the Program and coordinate the inputs of international and national consultants;
- (d) Provide oversight, policy advice and leadership on the implementation of all the Components under the Program;
- (e) Provide responsive and flexible advice to MoE on priority areas for action;
- (f) Along with the Senior Program Administrator, coordinate with the relevant MoE staff, consultants, and key counterparts in developing a comprehensive plan of activities, with a detailed plan on Program management, finance, and procurement for the entire Program period including, as necessary, the development of financial reporting system and financial management guidelines;
- (g) Provide guidelines to responsible MoE staff and consultants in the areas of Program management, finance, consulting services, and procurement to expedite Program implementation;
- (h) Lead an annual Program performance review and assist the relevant staff in adjusting the plan of activities as necessary, and in developing an annual plan of activities including review of each annual implementation plan;
- (i) Prepare the budget for procurement packages by component, including the procurement list, procurement mode, and distribution list;
- (j) Implement AusAID's gender, disability, fraud and anti-corruption, HIV/AIDS, child protection and environment policies; and
- (k) Any other duties as requested by the PCC and/or AusAID.

Senior Program Administrator

Location: Suva

Duration: 2 years from commencement of the Program (with possibility for extension if program is extended into Phase 2)

Reporting: To the Senior Education Advisor/Team Leader

Role: Responsible for financial management, administration, logistics for program operations and for accurate and transparent account and reporting, including fiduciary account to AusAID.

- (a) Provide administration, financial management, procurement and logistical support to the program;
- (b) Along with the team leader, coordinate with the relevant MoE staff, consultants, and key counterparts in developing a comprehensive plan of activities, with a detailed plan on Program management, finance, and procurement for the entire Program period including, as necessary, the development of financial reporting system and financial management guidelines;
- (c) Monitor the timeliness of Program implementation, ensuring accountability and transparency at all levels;
- (d) Prepare an annual procurement plan in accordance with Program annual implementation plans, in a form and manner acceptable to AusAID;
- (e) With the team leader, prepare the budget for procurement packages by component, including the procurement list, procurement mode, and distribution list;
- (f) Organise the PCC and any other consultative/review meetings requested by AusAID/MoE; and
- (g) Any other duties as required by the Team Leader and/or AusAID.

Social Protection Specialist

Location: Suva

Duration: 2 years from commencement of the Program (with possibility for extension if program is extended into Phase 2)

Reporting: To the Senior Education Advisor/Team Leader

Role: To develop a program of assistance under Component 1 (Increase Access to Schools) of the program,

- a) Develop a series of small-scale analytical studies on mechanisms to reduce cost barriers to school education including looking at:
 - i. School grants to school management committees
 - ii. Cash grants to parents (conditional and non-conditional
 - iii. School Feeding programs
- b) If necessary, develop additional studies to examine the need for ongoing and/or expanded assistance in:
 - i. home to school travel,
 - ii. food security and water security and sanitation,
 - iii. textbooks, school stationary,
 - iv. school uniforms and foot wear, and
 - v. student welfare including assessment of the need for scholarship programs for the poorest of the poor tied into sustainable livelihood programs for parents.
- c) Analyse study results and recommend the most appropriate mechanism(s) to deliver Component 1 based on the criteria listed in the PDD;
- d) Develop a fully costed implementation plan to be approved by the PCC and AusAID; and
- e) Work with the Team Leader on the Gender and Disability Strategies for the Program.

School Infrastructure Specialist

Location: Suva

Duration: 2 years from commencement of the Program (with possibility for extension if program is extended into Phase 2)

Reporting: To the Senior Education Advisor/Team Leader

Role: The School Infrastructure Specialist will supervise Component 2 of the Program: Improve School Facilities & learning environments. This position will:

- (a) Work with MoE to identify schools for assistance;
- (b) Along with School Boards and Management, identify in each school the needs for infrastructure development and provision of supplies;
- (c) Assist schools to develop School Plans (which include maintenance on the new building works);
- (d) Work with the Core Education team and MoE on funding mechanisms for provision of Component 2 to schools;
- (e) Monitor and audit work on schools; and
- (f) Where necessary, at the request of AusAID and/or Team Leader, provide advice on response to any natural disaster.

Data Specialist

Location: Suva

Duration: Short term inputs (up to a total of 12 months) throughout the program as required

Reporting: To the Senior Education Advisor/Team Leader

Role: Working with MoE, the data specialist will assess and quality assure the data available within MoE and then supervise and produce the production of data reports and analysis to provide an updated situation of education outcomes in Fiji. All data will be disaggregated by rural/urban/remote location, and gender. All reports will include trend analysis where data is available.

The Specialist will:

- (a) Supervise data cleaning and data quality assurance;
- (b) Conduct a quality assurance survey on most recent data submitted by schools;
- (c) Produce reports that contain the necessary data, and undertake data analysis required to show the recent trends (last 10 years) and the current status of key issues;
- (d) With MoE, analyse the databases currently in use in MoE and examine if there needs to be any consolidation of database systems; and
- (e) Work with MoE counterparts to build capacity in data management and analysis.

Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist

Location: Suva

Duration: Short term inputs (up to a total of 10 months) throughout the program as required

Reporting: To the Senior Education Advisor/Team Leader

Role: The M&E Specialist will provide ad hoc assistance to the program to:

- (a) Finalise the Monitoring and Evaluation framework of the program;
- (b) Ensure that a complete set of baseline data is available from each school assisted. In this area they will liaise with MoE and the Data Specialist;
- (c) Coordinate Impact Evaluation studies of the program and activities;
- (d) Provide annual Monitoring and Evaluation reports; and
- (e) Conduct a final Monitoring and Evaluation report.

Unallocated technical assistance

Unallocated short-term technical assistance will be provided on an ad-hoc basis to meet the needs of MoE and the Program. The Managing Contractor will have a facility that will be able to provide assistance quickly and in response to the changing needs of the program. Any new TA will be approved by AusAID and MoE (and if time allows the PCC).

Helpdesk Research Report: Social Protection and Access to Education

Date: 10.09.2010

Query: Please identify lessons learnt from social protection measures (such as school grants, cash grants and school feeding programs) to reduce the financial barriers to accessing schools in difficult environments.

Purpose: To contribute to the design of an education programme in Fiji by providing inputs on social protection.

Contents

1. Overview
2. Cross-cutting literature
3. Cash transfers: conditional and unconditional
4. Consumption transfers: abolition of fees
5. In-kind transfers: school feeding programmes
6. Related GSDRC reports
6. Additional information

1. Overview

Financial barriers can greatly limit access to education for the poor. The key financial burdens of schooling are direct costs (school fees), indirect costs (uniforms, stationary, other learning materials and transportation) and opportunity costs (time for household tasks and foregone wage labour). Macro-level barriers in situations of conflict and fragility (lack of capacity or will to provide primary education and underinvestment in education) overlay financial and other barriers to accessing education.

The goal of 'Education for All' and the Millennium Development Goals have raised the profile of efforts to alleviate financial barriers to schooling. Such efforts have taken place in a range of contexts, from middle-income countries to low-income conflict-affected and fragile states. They include a variety of social protection measures:

Cash transfers programmes

Alongside the provision of 'free' universal services, cash transfers can alleviate opportunity costs and out-of-pocket expenses, such as travel, textbooks and uniforms. Transfers can be unconditional or conditional. The requirement for conditional cash transfer programmes is that recipients commit to undertaking certain behavioural changes in exchange, such as enrolling children in school and maintaining adequate attendance levels. Scholarships, bursaries and stipends are also a form of conditional cash transfer, designed to help maintain school enrolment for students who have performed well academically.

There is an ongoing debate concerning whether transfers aimed at improving access to schooling should be conditional. Evaluations have found that conditional transfers have increased school enrolment and attendance rates among poor families. In addition, scholarships have helped poor households to maintain access to education. Many have been targeted specifically at girls, and have been successful in expanding girls' access to education. Unconditional cash transfer programmes, however, have also been shown to generate strong benefits, such as improved school attendance. Experience indicates that families will often prioritise spending on education even where it is not a condition. Chapman argues that conditional transfers may have more of an impact where demand for child labour is high (opportunity cost) or discrimination against girls or other marginalised groups is high.

There is concern that since conditional cash transfer programmes require adequate education infrastructure, they are often implemented in communities that already have school services. This may exclude poor, remote or dispersed communities and their households. Attention needs to be paid to how to implement such programmes in areas with limited service provision capacity, such as through community schools or accreditation of non-state providers. There is also a danger that conditions can exclude the very groups in need of transfers. Stipend qualification criteria, for example, can be exclusionary. They are received by girls who are able to do well, many of whom come from affluent families. Girls from poorer families who may not do as well in exams are more likely to be excluded from the programme.

Abolition of fees

The abolition of school fees and provision of 'free' universal services has been implemented in many countries in order to remove financial barriers to enrolling and maintaining children in school. Careful planning and prior analytical work is necessary in order to calculate and compensate for foregone fees. The provision of school grants is a common mechanism to replace the revenues collected through fees. Preconditions for the sound functioning of school grants include: simple implementation guidelines and training; a reliable school registry and reliable enrolment data; and an effective financial system for transferring resources. Challenges include the financial sustainability of grants; and the effectiveness and transparency of grant mechanisms.

School feeding programmes

School feeding programmes include meals served in school and take-home rations conditional on school attendance. These programmes aim to increase the net benefits of schooling enough to change household behavior and to increase children's access to schooling. There is evidence that school feeding programmes increase school enrolment, reduce absenteeism, enhance participation and contribute to learning through avoiding hunger and enhancing cognitive abilities. Some programmes incorporate special provisions for girls' nutrition. Others have been targeted at remote areas, particularly in conflict-affected and fragile states. The programmes eliminate the need for children to travel long distances for mid-day meals and provide for some of the necessary caloric intake usually provided by families.

Feeding programmes have been commended for having a dual focus of increasing enrolment and improving learning and cognitive abilities through nutritional benefits – absent in other programmes aimed to increase school participation. They have been criticized, however, for being more costly. School meal programmes are commonly provided to all children in a targeted school, which results in the provision of transfers to children who would have attended school anyway, including children from high-income homes. If learning and cognitive benefits to school-aged children are found to be small, then it may be more effective to increase school participation through small, cash-based programmes. Other criticisms include: a decrease in teacher time as they are taken out of class to prepare and serve meals; lower attendance in schools that don't receive food; larger class sizes in schools that do serve food and in some cases, a rise in fees in these schools.

Cross-cutting lessons

Integrating supply and demand-side interventions: Rapid expansion of access through the removal of tuition fees or cash transfer programmes can undermine service quality (through overcrowding, insufficient teachers and shortage of school facilities and textbooks) unless there is also increased investment in service provision. Similarly, while school feeding programmes can improve enrolment, attendance and contribute to learning, whether these translate into improved education outcomes depends on the quality of teaching and availability of school materials. Access and quality issues cannot be seen as sequential but need to be conceptualised in a mutual supportive way. Planning for a greater supply of resources to meet increased enrolment requires a solid database on key inputs.

Embedding social protection measures in comprehensive programmes: Measures designed to increase access to schooling must be part of a more comprehensive reform package, such that sufficient supply of teachers, classrooms and textbooks are available for the start of the school year. Other reforms may include curriculum reform and the promotion of various innovative programmes, such as alternative basic education. School feeding programmes, which are often considered as hunger interventions and separate from the education sector, should be embedded in national education plans.

Moving beyond access: Access and service utilization should be seen only as an 'intermediate' outcome. Attention should be paid to whether those enrolled as a result of social protection programmes complete more years of schooling, learn more, and earn higher wages as adults. There is a need to adopt a curriculum and create a school environment that is relevant and accessible. There is also a need to sustain the demand for education, in particular that of girls, through opportunities for further education and post-school employment.

Addressing gender barriers: Interventions to address socio-cultural biases against schooling for girls may also need to be addressed alongside efforts to target the enrolment of girls. This is especially needed where such biases play a bigger role than cash incentives. In other cases, substantial increases in school enrolment of girls have resulted in more positive attitudes toward educating girls.

Political commitment: Political leadership and sustained political commitment is important for the introduction and scaling up of social protection programmes aimed at improving access to schooling. This is particularly the case where such programmes are a major departure from current policies.

2. Cross-cutting literature

Dryden-Peterson, S., 2010, 'Barriers to Accessing Primary Education in Conflict-Affected Fragile States: Literature Review', International Save the Children Alliance

http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/docs/Barriers_to_access_Literature_Review_Final.pdf

This literature review stresses that macro-level barriers in situations of conflict and fragility (lack of capacity or will to provide primary education and underinvestment in education) overlay all other barriers to accessing education. These other barriers often intersect and include poverty, residence, gender, minority discrimination and displacement. The review discusses various barriers and interventions that have helped to improve access to education:

- **Poverty:** the direct costs (school fees), indirect costs (uniforms, stationary, other learning materials and transportation) and opportunity costs (time for household tasks and wage labour) can be large barriers to education for the poor. *Conditional cash transfers, which offer resources to households that enrol and keep their children in school, have been successful in enrolling and retaining the poor children they target.* There are some criticisms, however, that such programmes could be more efficient in reaching excluded children in remote areas, where poverty and ethnicity, language and region intersect to create large barriers.
- **Region and rural/urban residence:** high transportation costs (long distances from school) and high opportunity costs in rural areas (time and labour to collect firewood, fetch water, herd livestock) are barriers to accessing education. *School feeding programmes (in-kind transfer to*

families) have been effective in increasing enrolment and attendance of children (and lowering drop out rates) in remote areas, particularly in conflict-affected fragile states. They eliminate the need for children to travel long distances for mid-day meals and provide for some of the necessary caloric intake usually provided by families. There are some criticisms, however, that these programmes can have negative consequences: they have resulted in a decrease in teacher time as they are taken out of class to prepare and serve meals; lower attendance in schools that don't receive food; larger class sizes in schools that do serve food and in some cases, a rise in fees in these schools.

- **Gender:** the exclusion of girls from education is more pronounced in conflict-affected fragile states. This is in part because conflict can exacerbate inequalities and increase the vulnerabilities of women and girls. The opportunity costs associated with girls' school attendance; girl-unfriendly structures, cultures and environments; and gender-based violence are all key barriers to girls' access to education. *In addition to conditional cash transfers and school feeding programmes, scholarships have also been successful in expanding girls' access to education.* In Bangladesh, for example, a scholarship programme has increased girls' enrolment and contributed to changing cultural practices and transforming the gender-nature of the society.

The review stresses the importance of integrating demand-side and supply-side interventions in education reforms. Access and quality issues, for example, cannot be seen as sequential, but need to be conceptualised in a mutual supportive way, such that quality of education does not suffer with increased enrolment. Conditional cash transfers, for example, are ineffective if there are no concurrent supply-side interventions to increase the availability of schools in remote areas. Large public investments are necessary – specifically in areas of school construction, fee abolition, and training and compensation of teachers. Evidence demonstrates that such interventions can greatly expand access, including for the hardest to reach children.

UNESCO, 2010, 'Reaching the Marginalised', EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010, UNESCO, Paris
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001866/186606E.pdf>

This report includes a section on social protection programmes that can broaden opportunities in education. They can be targeted not only at the very poor, but also at the most marginalised groups or regions. These programmes range from cash transfers to employment-based safety nets and interventions to support nutrition. Support for education can be direct, including stipends, bursaries, fee waivers and funding for transport and books; or it can be incidental, resulting from employment creation, nutrition programmes or other measures that enable households to get through difficult periods.

Cash transfers: Key issues to consider in designing cash transfer programmes are the scale of transfer and the terms of transfer. Large-scale programmes have had a significant effect on poverty partly because the money they provide represents a large increment in the income of the very poor. It is important, however, for policy-makers to consider the marginal benefit of increasing transfers and the potential trade-off between reaching more people and providing larger transfers. Regarding terms of transfer, some programmes condition cash transfers on specific education and health requirements for children. Such programmes have resulted in greater school enrolment and in some cases an increase in transitions to secondary schools, particularly in rural areas. Unconditional cash transfer programmes can also generate strong benefits, however, such as declines in absenteeism. Thus, social protection can have an effect even in countries that are unable to implement and monitor conditional transfers.

School feeding programmes: Well-designed programmes that include micronutrient fortification and deworming can provide significant nutritional benefits – and increase school attendance, participation and educational achievement. Many programmes incorporate special provisions for girls' nutrition. There is uncertainty however, over the ideal scale of the benefits and the most effective delivery mechanism. There is some limited evidence that a combination of on-site meals and take-home rations have the strongest effect on enrolment. There are various limitations to school feeding programmes: by targeting schools rather than individuals, they risk providing large transfers to children from high-income homes instead of to those with the greatest need. In addition, some critique such programmes for failing to

address malnutrition at more critical stages – during pregnancy and up to age 3. It is important that school feeding is incorporated into wider anti-poverty programmes, such as reducing hunger and malnutrition.

UNESCO, 2007, 'Education for All by 2015: Will We Make It?' EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008, UNESCO, Paris

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001548/154820e.pdf>

This report discusses initiatives aimed at improving equity and access to education. The abolition of school fees along with compensatory grants to schools; and cash transfers to targeted households to assist with indirect expenses have increased in recent years. Cash transfer programmes have been found to have increased participation in primary school, improved attendance and reduced grade failure and drop-out rates. They can also be integral in increasing transition rates from primary to secondary school (e.g. Cambodia's scholarship for girls who transition to secondary school). Such programmes, however, have faced various challenges and difficulties. These include:

- Weak monitoring and administrative capacity
- Problems with payment systems and shortage of facilities
- Political interference in the selection of beneficiaries
- Exclusion of poor and isolated communities, with large programmes operating in communities that already had school services
- Failure to integrate direct support to schools with other school improvement policies
- Failure to plan for and address the impact of increased enrollment, leading to overcrowded schools, poor education quality and shortage of basic facilities and teachers

In order for cash transfer programmes to be successful, they must be transparent and credible. Further, the expected consequences of higher enrollment should be fully assessed and integrated into national and donor plans. Funds are necessary for additional teachers, classrooms and learning materials.

3. Cash transfers: conditional and unconditional

Künnemann, R. and Leonhard, R., 2008, 'A Human Rights View of Social Cash Transfers for Achieving the Millennium Development Goals', Brot für die Welt and Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst, Bonn / Stuttgart

<http://www.fian.org/resources/documents/others/a-human-rights-view-of-social-cash-transfers-for-achieving-the-mdgs/pdf>

Social cash transfers have expanded in middle income countries and in low income countries through pilot programmes. Such transfers (including social pensions) have increased children's enrolment in school and attendance.

A key issue is whether to provide unconditional or conditional transfers. There is little data that indicates that conditionalities lead to higher school attendance than unconditional transfers. This paper advocates for unconditional transfers and outlines some of the key criticisms of imposing conditionalities:

- If a conditionality is not met by one of the children and their households are excluded from the programme, the other developmental benefits of cash transfers will also be eliminated.
- Often, families 'punished' by exclusion are the poorest of the poor and screening them out is counter-productive
- Conditionalities deprive the poor of the freedom to take the appropriate decisions to increase household welfare. It is based on the presumption that poor people are irresponsible and don't know what is good for their family. This presumption is usually shown to be false; instead, experience indicates that families increase their use of schools and health centres if a certain minimum income is available to them.

- Conditionalities fail to consider that the respective services in many areas may be very weak or distant. It may not be possible for those in the most vulnerable households in these areas to take advantage of them at reasonable cost.

The paper also addresses issues of targeting. It stresses that 'exclusion errors', whereby an eligible person is not reached by the programme' can be extremely detrimental. Given difficulties in handling criteria for eligibility, it may be preferable to avoid selection in social cash transfers particularly in situations of generalized poverty as in rural Africa.

Chapman, K., 2006, 'Using Social Transfers to Scale up Equitable Access to Education and Health Services', Background Paper, Department for International Development, London

<http://www.educacionenvalores.org/IMG/pdf/social-transfers-back.pdf>

This paper discusses the impact of demand-side interventions, in particular social cash transfers, on access to education and health services by the extreme poor. Key points include:

- *Social transfers can reduce demand-side barriers, in particular costs, of chronically poor households.* Alongside the provision of 'free' universal services, they can alleviate opportunity costs (lost income from children giving up work) and out-of-pocket expenses, such as travel, textbooks and uniforms.
- *Social transfers (conditional and unconditional) have increased poor people's demand for education services.* Conditional cash transfer programmes, for example, have increased school enrolment and attendance rates among poor families. Scholarships have helped poor households to maintain access to education. Unconditional cash transfers have also improved school attendance. Evidence shows that people will often prioritise spending on education even where it is not a condition.
- *Social transfers can enhance long-term cognitive ability by improving nutrition in children's early years (pre-school).* Unlike in-school feeding programmes, they can also benefit other household members.
- *Conditional transfers are most likely to be effective in increasing equitable access to services where demand for child labour is high (opportunity cost) or discrimination against girls or other marginalised groups is high.* Unconditional transfers are more likely to impact on human development where vulnerable groups have sufficient access to information to make informed choices about education. They may also be more appropriate where service coverage is poor.
- *There is a danger that conditions can exclude the very groups in need of transfers.* While payments that are made on condition of exam performance have resulted in higher pass rates, for example, girls who are less likely to do well in exams are the ones more likely to drop out of school without the extra payment. In addition, the poor who live in remote or disperse communities may be unable to fulfill the requirements of accessing services.
- *In some cases, conditional cash transfer programmes are specifically implemented in areas where there is adequate education service provision. This excludes those in areas lacking such services,* who are likely to be among the most vulnerable. Attention needs to be paid to how to implement such programmes in areas with limited service provision capacity, such as through community schools or accreditation of non-state providers.
- *Investments need to be made in both the supply-side and demand-side.* Rapid expansion of access through the removal of tuition fees or conditional cash transfer programmes can undermine service quality unless there is also increased investment in service provision. In Nicaragua, for example, teachers receive a modest bonus per child participating in the programme, half of which is to pay for school materials.
- Social transfers can complement other forms of social assistance such as removal of user fees, fee waivers and exemptions, or scholarship and stipend programmes. They also need to be implemented alongside interventions that address other barriers, such as access to information, discrimination by providers and cultural constraints.

Samson. M. et al., 2007, 'The Social and Economic Impact of Cash Transfers', Social Transfers Evidence Base, Synthesis Document, Economic Policy Research Institute (EPRI), Cape Town
<http://faqs.hungersafetynet.org/Samson%20-%20evidence%20on%20social%20transfers.doc>

This paper provides a synthesis of key findings from the evidence base on the impact of cash transfers, including impact on education. It finds that conditional and unconditional social transfers have had positive effects on schooling indicators (rates of enrolment, advancement, absences and drop-outs). The effects are greater for those groups and contexts where enrolment prior to the transfer is low (e.g. secondary school students; low income countries). It notes though that there is a gap in evidence on the impact of conditionalities themselves.

Adato, M. and Bassett, L., 2009, 'Social Protection to Support Vulnerable Children and Families: The Potential of Cash Transfers to Protect Education, Health and Nutrition', AIDS Care, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 60-75
http://pdfserve.informaworld.com/301436_915029589.pdf

This report discusses the potential of cash transfers to protect the human capital of vulnerable children and families based on a review of documents on cash transfer programmes around the world. The impact of cash transfers on education is reviewed on pages 62-66. In general, it finds that cash transfers have the potential to increase and protect children's education by covering school expenses, compensating for lost income when children are sent to school rather than work and providing an incentive for attendance when transfers are conditional.

Conditional cash transfers

World Bank, 2009, 'Conditional Cash Transfers: Reducing Present and Future Poverty', Policy Research Report, World Bank, Washington DC
http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTCCT/Resources/5757608-1234228266004/PRR-CCT_web_noembargo.pdf

The report presents findings from conditional cash transfer programmes. The section on the effects on school enrolment and attendance states that virtually every programme that has had a credible evaluation has found an improvement in school enrolment. While most popular in Latin America, such programmes have extended to countries in Asia, such as Bangladesh, Pakistan and Cambodia – although, they are often referred to instead as 'scholarships' or 'stipend' programmes. In these countries, many of the programmes target girls and have resulted in increased female enrolment in schools.

The report emphasises that service utilization should only be seen as an 'intermediate' outcome, however, and attention should be paid to whether those enrolled as a result of such programmes complete more years of schooling, learn more, and earn higher wages as adults. It notes one study that found that beneficiaries of conditional cash transfers did not necessarily learn more than children in the control group. Still, the report notes that transfers may still contribute to higher wages in the future.

Son, H. H., 2008, 'Conditional Cash Transfer Programs: An Effective Tool for Poverty Alleviation?', Economics and Research Department Policy Brief Series, no. 51, Asian Development Bank, Manila
http://www.adb.org/Documents/EDRC/Policy_Briefs/PB051.pdf

This brief discusses issues related to the rationale and implementation of conditional cash transfer programmes and assessments of their effectiveness. While such programmes can be a means of achieving socially optimal levels of investments in human capital, critics argue that they are too costly, their administrative requirements are too high, and they can be perceived as demeaning by imposing conditions regardless of preferences. Evaluations have found that programmes have had a positive effect

on education, with higher enrolment rates. This effect is particularly high in countries where pre-programme enrolment rates are extremely low. Such programmes do not necessarily impact, however, on school attendance rate, on school achievement, or in attracting drop-outs to school. The brief advocates that these elements should be integrated into the design of conditional cash transfer programmes or as complementary interventions. In addition, interventions to address socio-cultural biases against schooling for girls may also need to be addressed alongside efforts to target the enrolment of girls. This is especially needed where such biases play a bigger role than cash incentives (e.g. Turkey). In other cases (e.g. Mexico and Nicaragua), substantial increases in school enrolment of girls have resulted in more positive attitudes toward educating girls.

The brief also emphasises the importance of supply-factors in increasing access to education. A presumption of the conditional cash transfer approach is that the supply of education services is in place. This may not be the case in some countries; as such, there is no guarantee that successes of such programmes in some countries can be duplicated in others. Low-income countries with limited social service infrastructure need to integrate supply-side issues in order to avoid policy inconsistency and resource wastage. Further, there is also no guarantee that translation of higher educational earnings will lead to higher earnings as the absorption capacity of skilled labour in low-income countries may be low – and thus the returns to education. A key concern is the low returns to education in the rural sector.

Scholarships/ bursaries/ stipends

Gardener, J. and Subrahmanian, R., 2006, 'Tackling Social Exclusion in Health and Education: Case Studies from Asia', Report prepared for DFID Asia Division, GHK Consulting Ltd., London
<http://www.eldis.org/fulltext/tackling-social-exclusion.pdf>

This paper outlines lessons from interventions to counter social exclusion in health and education in Asia. Of particular relevance to this query is the profile of the Female Stipend Programme (FSP) in Bangladesh. It aims to increase girls' enrolment in grades VI-X through the provision of stipends and tuition waivers. Conditions of the stipends and waivers include a minimum 75 percent attendance rate, a minimum 45 percent performance in school exams, and deferred marriage until the qualifying exam or the age of 18. The programme contributed to a vast expansion in girls' enrolment in secondary school such that it is now generally accepted (even in more traditional, rural areas) that girls can and should attend secondary school. Lessons learned from programme implementation include:

- The scaling up of the stipend programme has been the result of a policy context of sustained political commitment and consensus among all political parties and national elite on the importance of the education.
- Heavy investment in the demand side has resulted in overcrowded classrooms and concerns that the quality of education has been negatively affected, with a particular impact on girls.
- Stipend qualification criteria can be exclusionary. They are received by girls who are able to do well, many of whom come from affluent families. Girls from poorer families who may not do as well in exams are more likely to be excluded from the programme.
- A targeted programme aimed at girls from poorer families, instead of a universal programme, could result in a smaller-scale and more sustainable programme. However, more closely targeted programmes require difficult targeting mechanisms, such as means-testing.
- There is a need to look beyond 'access' and to create a school environment that meets the needs of girls. This may entail curriculum changes to increase relevance and accessibility.
- There is a need to sustain the demand for girls' education through the opportunities for further education and post-school employment.

4. Consumption transfers: abolition of fees

The World Bank and UNICEF, 2009, 'Abolishing School Fees in Africa: Lessons from Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, and Mozambique', The World Bank, Washington, DC

The School Fee Abolition Initiative (SFAI) seeks to accelerate progress toward quality education for all children by supporting policies that remove cost barriers that prevent parents from enrolling and maintaining their children at school. This operational guide aims to provide guidance and support to countries planning to abolish school fees with respect to the development and implementation of such policies. It outlines practical lessons based on case studies from Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi and Mozambique:

- **Political leadership:** successful implementation of fee abolition requires strong political leadership at the highest level, particularly when it is a major departure from current policies.
- **Fee abolition as part of more comprehensive reforms:** fee abolition must be part of a more comprehensive reform package, such that sufficient supply of teachers, classrooms and textbooks are available for the start of the school year. Other reforms may include curriculum reform and the promotion of various innovative programmes, such as alternative basic education and school feeding programmes.
- **Careful planning:** prior analytical work is necessary in order to calculate and compensate for foregone fees; and to determine the extent of additional teachers, classrooms and training materials necessary to satisfy increases in enrolment, and how to finance these resources. This requires a solid database on key inputs.
- **Communication and building partnerships:** preparation of fee abolition should include comprehensive communication and consultation to explain the policy, impact and implementation to key stakeholders. It may also require consensus building with opposition politicians who may not have supported this new policy.
- **Phasing in the reforms:** while a comprehensive ‘big bang’ approach avoids having to make difficult selection decisions and allows all those previously excluded the opportunity to enrol in primary school education, such a major enrolment surge may be problematic. Phasing in the decision may instead allow for more time to mobilise the required teachers, classrooms and training materials – as well as the necessary implementation and monitoring mechanisms.
- **Measures to protect quality:** a key cause of concern with the abolition of school fees is a potential deterioration in the quality of education. Challenges to quality must be addressed before declaring the abolition of fees.
- **Use of school grants to replace fee revenues:** the provision of school grants is a common mechanism to replace the revenues collected through fees. Preconditions for the sound functioning of school grants include: simple implementation guidelines and training; a reliable school registry and reliable enrolment data; and an effective financial system for transferring resources. Challenges include the financial sustainability of grants; and the effectiveness and transparency of grant mechanisms.

5. In-kind transfers: school feeding programmes

Bundy, D. et al., 2009, ‘Rethinking School Feeding: Social Safety Nets, Child Development, and the Education Sector, The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank, Washington, DC

http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1099079877269/547664-1099080042112/DID_School_Feeding.pdf

The demand for school feeding programmes has increased in low-income countries affected by the social shocks of the current global crises. This review aims to provide guidance on how to develop and implement such programmes. It highlights three main findings:

- i. School feeding programmes in low-income countries vary in cost, indicating opportunities for cost containment;
- ii. As countries get richer, school feeding costs become a much smaller proportion of the investment in education;

- iii. The main preconditions for the transition to sustainable national programmes are embedding school feeding in national policies and plans, particularly education sector plans (i.e. those aimed at promoting enrolment and attendance); identifying national sources of financing; and expanding national implementation capacity.

There is evidence that school feeding programmes increase school enrolment (particularly for girls), reduce absenteeism, enhance participation and contribute to learning through avoiding hunger and enhancing cognitive abilities. These effects can be augmented when such programmes are supported by complementary actions such as deworming and micronutrient fortification or supplementation. The review emphasises, however, that whether these educational benefits translate into improved educational outcomes depends on endogenous factors, such as the quality of teaching and the availability of textbooks.

There is insufficient evidence concerning the benefits and costs of particular school feeding programmes. Both take-home rations and in-school meals appear to increase attendance and possibly educational attainment. There is a need to develop an evidence base that allows for careful trade-offs among targeting approaches, feeding modalities and costs.

Adelman, S. W., Gilligan, D. O. and Lehrer, K. 2008. 'How Effective are Food for Education Programs? A Critical Assessment of the Evidence from Developing Countries', Food Policy Review, vol. 9, International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington, DC
<http://www.schoolsandhealth.org/sites/ffe/Key%20Information/How%20effective%20are%20food%20for%20education%20programs.pdf>

This report discusses food for education programmes, including meals served in school and take-home rations conditional on school attendance. The aim of such programmes is to increase the net benefits of schooling enough to change household behaviour and to increase children's school participation. The programmes also have the potential to increase learning and cognitive outcomes by increasing the consumption of nutritious food by undernourished children. There is some evidence that in-school meals have contributed both to improvements in school attendance and to better learning efficiency while in school. Food programmes have larger impacts in areas with low school participation and on children with greater initial malnutrition. As such, it may be beneficial to conduct assessments of schools' needs in target areas before starting a food for education programme in order to improve targeting and to tailor the programme to local needs. Programme administrators should also be willing to consider complementary programmes to improve school quality.

Critiques of such programmes argue that they are more costly than other programmes that aim to increase school participation. School meal programmes are commonly provided to all children in a targeted school, which raises the costs of achieving the objectives as it provides transfers to many children who would have attended school anyway. It may be more possible to target take-home rations to groups with greater need, such as poor or female children. They may be more likely to change their behaviour based on the programme.

There is a need for more information and a stronger evidence base on the impact of food for education programmes impact on school attainment, learning, and cognitive development – and how these aspects may be improved through more effective targeting, changes to the size and composition of food transfers, or provision of other schooling and health inputs. There is also no comprehensive side-by-side comparison to other popular programmes, such as conditional cash transfers. If learning and cognitive benefits to school-aged children are small, for example, then it may be more effective to increase school participation through small, cash-based programmes.

Gelli, A., Al-Shaiba, N. and Espejo, F., 2009, 'The Costs and Cost-Efficiency of Providing Food through Schools in Areas of High Food Insecurity', Food and Nutrition Bulletin, vol. 30, no. 1, pp. 68-76

<http://www.schoolsandhealth.org/sites/ffe/Key%20Information/The%20costs%20and%20cost-efficiency%20of%20providing%20food%20through%20schools%20in%20areas%20of%20high%20food%20insecurity.pdf>

This paper aims to start to bridge the gap in the evidence on cost-effectiveness of food in school programmes, looking at World Food Programme data from 2005. It provides estimates of yearly expenditures for various modes of delivery (e.g. on-site meals, take-home rations, fortified biscuits) and finds that the provision of fortified biscuits is the most cost-efficient option.

6. Related GSDRC reports

The following GSDRC materials provide additional reading on cash transfers:

Helpdesk research reports

- **Financing and Cost-effectiveness of Cash Transfer Schemes** (July 2010): What does the evidence base on the costing, financing and cost effectiveness of cash transfer schemes tell us?
<http://www.gsdr.org/go/display&type=Helpdesk&id=611>
- **Political Economy of Cash Transfers** (August 2010): What does the evidence base on the politics and political economy of cash transfer schemes tell us? What do we know about how questions of affordability have been addressed from a political perspective? What is the nature and scope of that evidence base?
[See attachment 'PE Cash transfers'](#)

7. Additional information

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Selected websites visited

Asian Development Bank, Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity, Education Policy and Data Centre, Eldis, GSDRC, IDS, Overseas Development Institute, Save the Children, UNESCO, The World Bank

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