



Fiji Education Program (FEP)

Mid-Term Review 2021

Prepared for // Department of Foreign Affairs
and Trade

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The Fiji Education Program (FEP) is an AUD 25 million investment which aims to ‘*improve learning outcomes for all Fiji girls and boys*’. Currently in the fourth year of implementation (including a transitional year between July 2017 and June 2018), it is the latest iteration of a long-term commitment by the Australian Government to support the education sector in Fiji. The FEP was preceded by the Fiji Education Sector Support Program (FESP, 2004 to 2009) and the Access to Quality Education Program (AQEP, 2011 to 2017).

The FEP was designed to help the Government of Fiji put in place the systemic conditions for improving literacy and numeracy skills of children in Fiji. The FEP proposed activities across three interconnected pillars:

- **Improving centralised policymaking and management of education by the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts (MEHA)**, including through the Fiji Education Management Information System (FEMIS)
- **Improving the performance of schools and teachers**, including through engagement with Fiji’s five Teacher Training Institutions (TTI’s)
- **Building stronger links with communities** and engaging them in the management of schools

However, following the commencement of the FEP, a range of factors led to a shift away from FEP’s original Theory of Change. Emerging Government of Fiji priorities related to public service employment reforms, changed MEHA leadership, and COVID-19 changed the day-to-day work and strategic direction of the program. This led to the development of a revised Theory of Change in mid-2020, with the FEP focused on progressing four key outcome areas including:

1. An inclusive Literacy and Numeracy Curriculum
2. Sufficient resources for Special and Inclusive Education (SIE)
3. MEHA systems that allocate staff and funds fairly and efficiently
4. Evidence-based policies in areas identified by MEHA

Overview of the Mid-Term Review

In May 2021, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) commissioned a Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the FEP (the ‘Review’). It comes as the FEP nears the end of Phase 1 (December 2021), with approval having been given for a three-year program extension to December 2024. The Review was delivered from June-August 2021. The purpose of the Review was to:

- Assess the performance of the FEP to date (including its responsiveness to MEHA priorities and needs)
- Situate the assessment of performance within significant recent changes in the operating environment (including challenges associated with COVID-19)
- Identify opportunities for the next phase of the FEP, which is due to commence in January 2022

The Review team participated in a ‘virtual’ mission over the period from 8-23 July 2021, though interviews continued to be held with stakeholders up to and including 25 August 2021. A total of 55 interviews were conducted, mostly via Zoom. Key stakeholders were interviewed from all levels of MEHA (from the Permanent Secretary (PS) for Education down to several Heads of Schools), DFAT in Suva, Fiji Education Program staff, Fiji Program Support Facility staff, Teacher Training Institutions, and other institutions with an interest in the education sector.

Relevance: To what extent is FEP aligned with the strategic priorities of GoF and GoA, particularly in the context of COVID-19?

The Fiji Education Program (FEP) is strongly aligned with the key priorities of the GoF and the GoA. It is a critical reflection of the ambition outlined in the Vuvale Partnership, signed by the Prime Minister of Fiji and the Prime Minister of Australia in September 2019.

The FEP is highly relevant to national strategies and plans in Fiji such as the 5-year and 20-year National Development Plan and MEHA's Strategic Plan 2019-2023, which reflect commitments to provide universal access to education at all levels, improve the quality of education and to ensure education is more inclusive. The alignment of the FEP to these national strategies is reflected through the different FEP workstreams including the revisions to the curriculum, special and inclusive education (SIE) and the strengthening of Ministry systems (including FEMIS). The FEP has also supported the short-term priorities of the Ministry, for example, by reallocating program resources following TC Yasa (December 2020) and the COVID-19 pandemic to support remote learning.

The FEP is an important part of Australia's COVID-19 Development Response Plan for Fiji, which notes the importance of education in Fiji as an essential building block for future employment. The FEP's advocacy for gender equality and women's empowerment and disability inclusion within the education sector in Fiji is also consistent with broader objectives of the Australian Aid Program.

The design of the FEP proposed interventions across three distinct levels of 'systems' that were considered necessary for improving learning outcomes for all Fiji girls and boys. This included Central/Ministry systems, District and School level systems and Community level systems. **However, from the beginning, the FEP has been responsive to changing MEHA priorities, and a significant proportion of the FEP budget was reallocated towards the strengthening of Central/Ministry systems at the request of MEHA.** This is most clearly reflected in the significant increase to the number of technical advisers embedded in the Ministry in 2018 and 2019, which was agreed to by DFAT and implemented by the FEP.

The responsiveness of the FEP to changing MEHA priorities is clearly one of its key strengths, ensuring that the work of the FEP, including through its technical advisers embedded in the Ministry, is highly relevant to Ministry needs. **However, the focus on responsiveness has often come at the expense of the strategic ambition of the program outlined in the FEP design.** The trade-offs or the opportunity costs associated with changing priorities do not seem to have been factored into decisions to reallocate resources. One of the key reflections of this Review is that results have been strongest in areas where the FEP has provided consistent resources, built relationships and demonstrated a long-term commitment, providing an opportunity to support incremental reforms and improvement. In a highly responsive program where priority areas frequently change, these gains are not realised to the same extent.

Effectiveness: To what extent is the FEP delivering outcomes that meet the needs and priorities of key stakeholders?

The design of the FEP identified that progress was required across three interconnected pillars or 'systems' to achieve the long-term development outcome (*Improved learning outcomes for all Fiji girls and boys*). However, most of the 'effort' to date has been directed towards Pillar 1 (Central Ministry) and there has therefore been less progress made within the other two pillars (District and School level, and Community level). **This means that progress on strengthening the 'systems' required for all Fiji girls and boys to learn, as per the original intended outcome of FEP (i.e., for the current phase), has been uneven.**

In mid-2020, the FEP Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) team led a revision of the program Theory of Change (ToC). The revised ToC maintained the long-term development outcome

identified in the FEP design (*Improved learning outcomes for all Fiji girls and boys*) but provided greater specificity to this ambition by stating that this would be achieved through:

1. An inclusive Literacy and Numeracy Curriculum
2. Sufficient resources for SIE
3. MEHA systems that allocate staff and funds fairly and efficiently
4. Evidence-based policies in areas identified by MEHA

The FEP is expected to achieve the revised end-of-program outcomes in some but not all of the four priority areas. It has achieved some excellent results in some niche areas, most notably the strengthening of Ministry systems (including FEMIS) and in SIE. Progress has also been made on the revisions to the literacy and numeracy curriculum, although the pilot of the primary curriculum has not proceeded as planned because of school closures due to COVID-19. **But the FEP has also struggled to gain traction in some other priority areas**, most notably gender equality, while there have been missed opportunities to embed emergency preparedness within FEP activities.

At the activity level there is considerable evidence that information generated by the MEL system has been useful and supported program improvement. However, **there is less evidence that the ToC and the monitoring framework have been used to inform decision-making at the program level**. A key driver for this has been the nature of the program itself, which has prioritised responsiveness to the Ministry, while the absence of governance forums such as program management committee meetings and steering committee meetings for the majority of the FEP has also been a factor. In effect, the MEL system has been inverted and has been used to try to make sense of what has been done and to join the threads, rather than being used to inform strategic decision-making.

The FEP could continue to be a responsive, adaptive program through the next phase of the FEP if this is agreed between DFAT and MEHA. But the MEL system should then be recrafted to reflect this. A different approach to MEL would involve a slimmed down results framework and much greater emphasis on testing the effectiveness of the activities that are being delivered and the impact they are having, with a view to gathering information and evidence to inform future decision-making around those activities.

The revised end-of-program outcomes as they are currently drafted only substantively address one and perhaps part of a second of the three levels of systems required to progress the long-term development goal (as outlined in the FEP design). Therefore, the likelihood that '*Improved learning outcomes for all Fiji girls and boys*' will be achieved is unclear. It has not, to date, been tested by the MEL team.

This Review recommends a return to the original ToC for the next phase of the FEP, or at least a modified version of it, which would mean targeted activities across the three levels of systems necessary for '*Improved learning outcomes for all Fiji girls and boys*' to be achieved. The logic included in the original FEP design is sound and remains relevant, and several of the key drivers that led to a diversion away from this approach no longer seem to apply. **An added benefit of reverting to the original ToC and/or an increased focus on working across the three levels of systems is that it would allow important issues such as Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) and emergency preparedness to be genuinely reflected as cross-cutting in the ToC and would ensure they are mainstreamed across all aspects of FEP's work.**

Efficiency: To what extent are the FEP's implementation arrangements appropriate and contributing to the delivery of outcomes?

The FEP's budget allocation of AUD 5 million per year for FEP is approximately 33 per cent lower than the average annual budget provided for the previous iteration of the program (AQEP). The budget is also less than two per cent of the total of MEHA's operating budget. However, it is still large enough to support meaningful investments in niche areas of the Fiji education sector. **Areas of**

the program where there has been little traction or progress do not appear to be because of a lack of available budget (overall), but due to other challenges.

The FEP is part of the broader Fiji Program Support Facility (the Facility) and technical resources in areas such as MEL, communications/public diplomacy, GEDSI, CSE, and emergency preparedness and response are provided at the Facility level. These advisers work across all Facility programs, including the FEP. **For MEL and for disability inclusion/SIE, the Review considers that the resources available to the FEP to progress these issues have been sufficient. However, the Review considers that the FEP has under-invested in gender equality and emergency preparedness**, which is consistent with the lack of progress observed in these two areas through the FEP to date.

The Facility was implemented with a view to creating efficiencies in terms of program support and delivery, including for the FEP. Feedback from stakeholders indicates that some efficiencies have been gained at the operational level in terms of work planning and budgeting, financial management and through a common approach to MEL and performance reporting. And these efficiencies have been realised by the FEP. On the other hand, the risk of inefficiencies being created at the program level appears to be high given some overlap between program support (provided by the Facility) and program management and decision-making (led by the FEP).

Another important driver for adopting a Facility model is to promote information sharing and lessons learned across programs working in a similar context and grappling with similar challenges. Stakeholder consultations provided some evidence of this occurring, but the Review would contend that more could be done to optimise the benefits from this opportunity. A Facility-wide GEDSI Network was established in April 2021, but it is somewhat revealing that this was not in place earlier. Nor are there similar, formal, cross-facility networks in place for other key issues such as emergency preparedness.

Despite a clear approach to program governance being outlined in the FEP design, governance forums (including meetings of the Steering Committee and Program Coordination Committee) have been largely non-existent since the first 12 months of program. Without these forums, there has been no formal opportunity to discuss the trade-offs associated with changing priorities and reallocating resources, and no forum to discuss progress (or otherwise) being made towards the jointly agreed end-of-program outcomes. **The absence of effective governance forums has been further compounded by consistent staff turnover in key positions across the Ministry, DFAT and the FEP.**

The absence of an overarching partnership agreement, which was also flagged in the FEP design, is a missed opportunity, and it has meant that MEHA and DFAT have operated in a manner that is consistent with a ‘transactional’ style of relationship. For the next phase of the FEP, there would be value in exploring the development of a more collaborative, partnership-style model between DFAT/FEP and MEHA as envisaged in the FEP design, with principles of mutual responsibility and accountability at its core. There would also be merit in clarifying roles and responsibilities and articulating individual contributions to the agreed program goal and objectives. Most importantly, this would ensure that MEHA and DFAT are ‘on the same page’ at an organisational level and reduce the risks to the strategic ambition of the program associated with changes in key staff members.

During stakeholder consultations, many Ministry staff continued to refer to the ‘program’ as AQEP and were unaware of the shift to FEP. Similarly, while many MEHA staff, including quite senior staff, were familiar with FEP as it related to their area of responsibility; almost none had a concept of the FEP’s broader strategic objectives. To some extent this reflects the lack of governance mechanisms; regular meetings of the Steering Committee and Program Coordination meetings would otherwise have provided an opportunity for the FEP’s strategic objectives (which were jointly agreed with the Ministry) to continue to be raised and reinforced with Ministry staff. **However, it is also potentially a missed opportunity for the Australian Government in terms of public diplomacy.**

Future Opportunities: What are the opportunities for FEP to evolve in the future?

The Review team considered key lessons learned from the FEP to date. These should feature prominently in the discussions with MEHA and DFAT during the FEP 'design update'. These lessons include:

- The most significant progress has been observed in areas where the FEP has been engaged long-term (for example, FEMIS and SIE)
- Relationships are critical; the FEP needs to be intentional in thinking and working politically and building and sustaining relationships with MEHA within a COVID-19 setting
- Gains have been made where locally, contextually appropriate solutions have been implemented, and where FEP has been able to leverage what is already in place
- The overarching purpose of the FEP needs to be clear, including the balance between responsiveness vis-a-vis commitment to a set of long-term strategic objectives
- People can be reluctant to change, and Ministry stakeholders need to be brought along the journey
- Key staff will move on, and mitigation measures need to be in place to minimise the associated risks
- Digitisation and connectivity are critical in the COVID-19 context, but there is currently insufficient capacity in Fiji to support remote working and remote learning

Through the consultations with stakeholders, many suggestions were made in terms of where FEP could provide support during the next phase; some ideas/activities the FEP is already supporting, others would be new. **The Review recognises it is unlikely that all the opportunities listed here can be progressed unless additional budget is provided. The Review would support additional budget being provided to the FEP if it is available.** If not, these ideas should be used to inform discussions with the Ministry during the FEP 'design update' regarding priorities for the next phase.

The opportunities have been structured as per the three levels of 'systems' identified in the FEP design as being critical for the long-term development outcome of the FEP to be achieved, along with cross-cutting issues. This is not intended to be a prescription of the ToC for the next phase; this needs to be developed in consultation with DFAT and the Ministry during the design update process. However, the three levels/pillars (and cross-cutting issues) are a simple way of clustering the different (high-level) opportunities.

Focus on Central/Ministry systems

Curriculum: The work being supported by the FEP on the literacy and numeracy curriculum revisions, including the teacher training guides, is critical to progressing the long-term development goal of improving learning outcomes for all girls and boys in Fiji. An additional area identified by stakeholders during interviews was the need to strengthen the examination/assessment component.

FEMIS/ICT/Finance: Further reforms to FEMIS and financial management have been earmarked, and the FEP has an important role to play in bringing these to fruition. For example, while secondary schools can reconcile their expenditure of the Free Education Grant in FEMIS, this functionality is yet to be rolled out to primary schools. There are also plans to bring calculations for other grant types, such as the SIE grant and transport assistance, onto FEMIS. Linked with improving the functionality in FEMIS is the need to build capacity of MEHA staff to use data for decision-making.

Connectivity/digitisation/support for remote learning and professional development: This is potentially a new area of focus for the FEP but is strongly linked to the 'emergency preparedness' cross-cutting theme. It responds to the need for alternative solutions to be in place where face-to-face learning and/or face-to-face training and mentoring of MEHA staff (including teachers) is not possible. Given the size of the FEP's budget it is not possible for the FEP to fund the large-scale infrastructure development required to improve internet connectivity across Fiji. But there are other

opportunities. For example, while the Government of Fiji is seeking support from multilateral donors to fund additional 'hardware' to support improved connectivity, there may be a role for the FEP to provide technical support for other parts of the solution. Another related priority area is Moodle, which is currently under-utilised, and which could have a key role to play in supporting teacher training and professional development while lockdowns continue.

District/school level systems

Engagement with TTI's, including on teacher standards: The FEP could and should consult closely with TTI's on the revisions being made to the primary and secondary curriculum. The FEP should also work with TTI's to embed GEDSI into their training programs. The draft Fiji Teacher Attributes Framework (FTAF), currently with the Minister for approval, could also provide several entry points. For example, FEP could assist TTI's to align their teaching programmes/ curriculum with the standards in the FTAF. FEP could also facilitate collaboration between TTI's to support program delivery and promote consistency, and it could facilitate collaboration between TTI's and CAS (MEHA) on the FTAF and the link to the primary and secondary curriculum.

'In-service' teacher professional development and school leadership: FEP could utilise Moodle to provide training and professional development modules for teachers that could be completed online. This could include the promotion of new approaches to teaching, including training teachers themselves to increase the use of technology in education delivery. Interviews with Heads of Schools indicated a clear desire for further leadership training, which could also be progressed via Moodle.

Support for individual schools: This Review is not recommending a return to the AQEP model. But stakeholders who had been working in schools that received targeted support under AQEP spoke highly of the support that had been provided under AQEP and were able to provide strong evidence that the assistance received had made a meaningful, concrete difference. Working within a small number of individual schools may provide coverage for the FEP to show it is contributing to improvements in learning outcomes (including literacy and numeracy) in the short-term until the long-term benefits from system-level reforms start to be realised at the school level. These opportunities should be determined by FEP/DFAT but could potentially be aligned with the pilot of the revised literacy and numeracy curriculum in the 45 participating schools from January 2022.

Community systems

School counselling: The need for counselling services in schools is extensive. Once schools do return for face-to-face learning, the demand for counselling services in schools is expected to grow significantly. The FEP could play an important role in this area. While the pilot supported by the FEP in 25 schools through CSOs in 2019-2020 will conclude in 2021, there are other opportunities to build on this work. For example, the next phase of the program could see a pivot towards supervision and mentoring for the new school counsellors. Or the delivery of training to teachers on how to identify students that require support and/or to provide information on referral pathways.

Parents: The FEP design noted that the institution of school ownership in Fiji has great potential for involving parents and the owning community in the school to the benefit of students. However, feedback from many stakeholders (including Heads of Schools, DEO's, and faith-based organisations) is that, broadly, parents are not involved enough and not motivated enough to support their children to learn. Several ideas for community-level engagement were included in the FEP design and these should be further explored.

Cross-cutting issues

Emergency preparedness and GEDSI are key priority areas for DFAT. They are highly relevant to the education sector in Fiji and should be considered within all the activities funded by the FEP in the next phase. DFAT/FEP should be advocating for these cross-cutting issues to be reflected in the next iteration of MEHA's Strategic Plan.

Summary of key findings and recommendations

Relevance

	Findings	Recommendations
1.	The FEP is highly relevant to both GoF and GoA priorities as reflected in key strategic documents and plans. It is a critical reflection of the ambition captured within the Vuvale Partnership. It focuses on niche areas that are critical to improving learning outcomes for boys and girls in Fiji, including those with disabilities, and it has an important role to play in supporting economic and social recovery from COVID-19.	The importance of the FEP to the GoF, and to the GoA, including its role in supporting economic and social recovery from COVID-19 in Fiji, should be at the forefront of any discussions on budget allocations/reallocations within the Australian Aid Program in Fiji.
2.	The FEP has been flexible and responsive to GoF priorities, which has ensured it is a highly relevant program. However, the focus of the FEP on responsiveness has often come at the expense of the strategic ambition of the program outlined in the FEP design. Several new activities that were funded by a reallocation of FEP resources were not ultimately completed, while some priorities outlined in the FEP design were not progressed due to resources being reallocated elsewhere.	DFAT/FEP and MEHA should work closely and collaboratively in coming months to agree priority areas for the next phase of the FEP and this 'design update' should be signed off by both parties. Any future changes to priorities and/or strategic focus should be considered and agreed by the Steering Committee (see point 10 below), which should include senior representatives of both MEHA and DFAT/FEP.

Effectiveness

	Findings	Recommendations
3.	The FEP has achieved some important results and a strong case can be made for effectiveness, despite the frequent changes to priorities. At the same time, the focus has been largely on just one of the three levels of 'systems' identified in the FEP design as needing to be strengthened for the long-term development outcome of the FEP to be achieved. The FEP's end-of-program outcomes were revised in mid-2020 and there are now four clear priority areas/end-of-program outcomes. The FEP is expected to achieve some, but not all, of the end-of-program outcomes.	The FEP should return to the ToC outlined in the FEP design for the next phase (or a modified version of it), which would mean delivering activities within each of the three levels of systems required to achieve improved learning outcomes for all Fiji girls and boys (with the available budget to determine what is possible within each level). Several of the drivers that led to a diversion away from this approach in recent years no longer appear to be relevant.
4.	Progress on cross-cutting issues has been mixed. There are some excellent results for disability inclusion/special and inclusive education, which stem from a clear strategic approach and long-term, consistent engagement. Less progress is visible for gender equality, though recent steps to refresh the GEDSI strategy and the establishment of a new gender adviser role in the Ministry bode well for the next phase. There are opportunities to further mainstream emergency preparedness within FEP's activities.	GEDSI and emergency preparedness should be clearly reflected as cross-cutting issues in the Theory of Change/Results Framework for the next phase. These cross-cutting lenses should be applied across all activities supported by the FEP.
5.	The MEL system and the Theory of Change has had little influence over programming decisions (which instead have been largely driven by the priorities of the PS), though there are several examples where MEL has been used to inform the delivery of individual activities.	DFAT/FEP and MEHA should agree on the overarching purpose of the FEP for the next phase. Is it an adaptive, responsive program that meets the priorities of MEHA (and changes when those priorities change), or is it a 'traditional' program with

		shared strategic objectives? The FEP MEL framework/approach should then be developed accordingly. Information from the MEL system should be fed into FEP governance mechanisms and regularly considered by key decision-makers (see point 10 below).
6.	The frequent changes to the priorities of the FEP has meant frequent updates to the MEL architecture, including the results framework. The time spent doing this appears to have come at the cost of more useful analysis/deep dives on program-level issues that might otherwise be used to inform programming decisions.	Once the overarching purpose of the program is clear, DFAT and FEP should agree on minimum reporting requirements for the next phase. Ideally, more time should be spent testing the effectiveness of the component parts of the program and the extent to which they are contributing to the long-term development outcome. These analytical pieces should be discussed with DFAT (and MEHA) beforehand to ensure buy-in.

Efficiency

	Findings	Recommendations
7.	The annual FEP budget is significantly less than it was under AQEP. It is less than 2 per cent of MEHA's operating budget. But while the program is small and focused in niche areas, the budget appears to be sufficient for the FEP to make a meaningful contribution to the long-term development outcome. Gaps in progress/results achieved do not appear to be because of a lack of budget, but because of the way the budget has been allocated (at the request of MEHA and with the support of DFAT).	Intended outcomes for the next phase of the FEP should be specific and focused in niche but transformative areas, appropriate to the size of the program budget. If additional budget becomes available there are opportunities for it to be deployed effectively (see point 14).
8.	There is considerable capacity within the FEP (i.e., human resources) and further technical support available from the Fiji Facility. In areas such as MEL and SIE, the level of resources available to progress these issues appears to be sufficient. However, gender equality and emergency preparedness both appear to have been under-resourced.	All cross-cutting issues should be appropriately resourced for the next phase of the FEP. For gender equality and emergency preparedness, this means increasing resources from current levels. For all it means providing resources (tools and methodologies) to build the capacity of FEP staff to mainstream these issues in their work, as well as progressing relevant activities with the Ministry.
9.	There are some examples of information sharing and collaboration between different parts of the Fiji Facility, which have benefited the FEP. But there are also opportunities to strengthen this. A cross-facility GEDSI network has been established, but there do not appear to be other similar cross-facility networks where knowledge can be shared, and common challenges discussed.	There should be more intentional collaboration between FEP and other sectors/programs within the Fiji Facility to share knowledge, promote learning, and develop strategies to resolve common challenges.
10.	Governance mechanisms for the FEP have been largely non-existent since the first 12 months of the program. Without these forums, there has been little opportunity to consider the merits of changing focus/priorities, including the impact of these decisions on progress towards the FEP's long-term development outcome.	Governance mechanisms, including a Steering Committee with representation from MEHA, DFAT and the FEP, should be re-introduced to provide strategic oversight of the program.
11.	The engagement between MEHA and DFAT/FEP has been largely transactional in recent years, and program priorities have changed as key staff have changed (particularly the PS for Education).	MEHA and DFAT/FEP should explore the merits of a more collaborative, partnership-style mode of working, with principles of mutual responsibility and accountability, clearly articulated roles and responsibilities and individual contributions to the agreed program objectives. This should be reflected

		in a formal agreement (partnership agreement or similar), signed by both parties. This would mitigate the risks associated with staff turnover.
12.	MEHA stakeholders have little concept of the strategic ambition of the FEP beyond their immediate area of responsibility. Many still refer to the program as AQEP. Given the focus of AQEP was at the school level, Australian support was highly visible. With the focus of the FEP at the system level (and largely at the central/Ministry level), this is no longer the case.	DFAT/FEP should consider ways of communicating/showcasing the work that is being progressed through the FEP to ensure that public diplomacy benefits are being maximised.

Future opportunities

	Findings	Recommendations
13.		<p><u>In terms of the 'how' of program delivery...</u></p> <p>In addition to reinstituting appropriate governance and management mechanisms (point 10), the FEP should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • broadening the modalities of program delivery • setting aside a small amount of the program budget to be responsive to additional requests for support from the Ministry
14.		<p><u>In terms of 'what' the program could focus on (subject to budget availability):</u></p> <p>Central/Ministry level systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum revisions (though with an added focus on assessments) • Updates to FEMIS and support for ICT (including use of data in decision-making); potential advisory support to strengthen MEHA monitoring systems • Connectivity/enabling environment for remote learning and remote teacher professional development (including Moodle) <p>District/School level systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for TTI's on the implementation of the Fiji Teacher Attributes Framework (<i>pre-service</i>) • Professional development for <i>in-service</i> teachers and school leaders aligned with the FTAF (including through Moodle) • Targeted support and intervention for a small number of individual schools to improve literacy and numeracy <p>Community level systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training, mentoring and/or supervision of new school counsellors funded by the Ministry • Training for teachers to identify students who require support • Building the involvement of parents in the delivery of education <p>Cross-cutting issues – gender equality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the Ministry to respond to new requirements under the Gender Transformative Institutional Initiative (including gender-based

		<p>budgeting) and the Fiji Country Gender Assessment</p> <p>Cross-cutting issues – disability inclusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the Ministry to verify students with disabilities in inclusive schools, and build the capacity of teachers to deliver special and inclusive education <p>Cross-cutting issues – emergency preparedness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for connectivity/the enabling environment for remote learning. And ensure an emergency preparedness lens is applied to all other activities being supported by the FEP
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List of Acronyms

AHC	Australian High Commission
APTC	Australia Pacific Training Coalition
AQC	Aid Quality Check
AQEP	Access to Quality Education Program
AUD	Australian Dollar
CSE	Civil Society Engagement
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DEO	Divisional Education Officer
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EQAP	Education Quality and Assessment Program
FEG	Free Education Grant
FEMIS	Fiji Education Management Information System
FEP	Fiji Education Program
FESP	Fiji Education Support Program
FHEC	Fiji Higher Education Commission
FJD	Fijian Dollar
FPSF	Fiji Program Support Facility
FTAF	Fiji Teacher Attributes Framework
GEDSI	Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion
GoA	Government of Australia
GoF	Government of Fiji
HR	Human Resources
L&N	Literacy and Numeracy
LANA	Literacy and Numeracy Assessment
LTA	Long-Term Adviser
MEHA	Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
PS	Permanent Secretary for Education

SEO	Special and Inclusive Education Officer
SIE	Special and Inclusive Education
SIEG	Special and Inclusive Education Grant
STA	Short-Term Adviser
TA	Technical Adviser
TEL	Technology Enabled Learning
TEST	Technology Employment Skills Training
TL	Team Leader
ToC	Theory of Change
TC	Tropical Cyclone
TTI	Teacher Training Institution
USP	University of the South Pacific

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1. Introduction

Background and purpose of the review

The Fiji Education Program (FEP) is funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and contributes to improved learning outcomes for all Fiji girls and boys. Currently in the fourth year of implementation (including a transitional year from July 2017 to June 2018), it is the latest iteration of a long-term commitment by the Australian Government to support the education sector in Fiji. The FEP was preceded by the Fiji Education Sector Support Program (FESP, 2004 to 2009) and the Access to Quality Education Program (AQEP, 2011 to 2017).

In May 2021, DFAT, via the Australian High Commission in Suva, Fiji, commissioned a Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the FEP (the 'Review'). It comes as the FEP nears the end of Phase 1 (December 2021), with approval having been given for a three-year program extension to December 2024. The MTR took place over the period from June-August 2021.

The purpose of the MTR was to:

- Assess the performance of the FEP to date (including its responsiveness to MEHA priorities and needs)
- Situate the assessment of performance within significant recent changes in the operating environment (including challenges associated with COVID-19)
- Identify opportunities for the next phase of the FEP, which is due to commence in January 2022

The key audience for the MTR is DFAT Post (staff in the AHC Suva), and staff from the Fiji Education Program. The Government of Fiji, specifically the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts (MEHA), and other key organisations working in the education sector in Fiji will also have an interest in the Review findings and recommendations.

Program Overview

The FEP was designed to help the Government of Fiji put in place the systemic conditions for improving literacy and numeracy skills of children in Fiji. The long-term development goal for the FEP was identified as:

"Improved learning outcomes for all Fiji girls and boys"¹

The end of Phase 1 outcome (December 2021) was:

"Central and decentralised systems and partnerships deliver the support to schools that enables all girls and boys to learn"²

The FEP design proposed the implementation of activities across three interconnected pillars:

- Improving centralised policymaking and management of education by MEHA, including through the Fiji Education Management Information System (FEMIS)
- Improving the performance of schools and teachers, including through engagement with Fiji's five Teacher Training Institutions
- Building stronger links with communities and engaging them in the improved management of schools

¹ FEP design pg.2

² FEP design pg.3

However, following the commencement of the FEP, a range of factors led to a shift away from FEP's original Theory of Change. Emerging Government of Fiji priorities related to public service employment reforms changed MEHA leadership, and COVID-19 changed the day-to-day work and strategic direction of the program. This led to the development of a revised Theory of Change in mid-2020, with the FEP focused on progressing four key outcome areas including:

1. An inclusive Literacy and Numeracy Curriculum
2. Sufficient resources for SIE
3. MEHA systems that allocate staff and funds fairly and efficiently
4. Evidence-based policies in areas identified by MEHA

The FEP is part of the Fiji Program Support Facility (the 'Facility'), which was established by DFAT in 2017 to support and implement Australia's health, education, Australia Awards and governance programs in Fiji. The Facility also supports the Australia Awards and education programs in Tuvalu. The Facility integrates cross-cutting themes, including gender equality, disability inclusion, climate change, emergency preparedness and response and civil society engagement across its sector programs.

Context for the MTR

The Fiji Education Program has been operating during unprecedented times. The Fiji education sector has had more than its fair share of disruption over this period. The MTR has come at a time when Fiji is yet to see an end to the sequence of disruptions.

Fiji has always been prone to tropical cyclones which can cause immense disruption in those areas that lie in their path. During this phase of the Fiji Education Program, many communities have been attempting to rebuild infrastructure following the devastating visit of Tropical Cyclone Winston in February 2016 (a recovery operation which continues to this day). Complicating matters have been further visits from TC Yasa in December 2020, and from TC Ana in January 2021. Each of these cyclones have left their mark in communities across the Fiji Islands. Not only has there been appreciable destruction of infrastructure, but resources have been lost or damaged beyond use, access to communications disrupted, and the energies of communities diverted away from the education of children.

In 2020 the Fiji Government deemed it necessary to instigate precautions in the event that the COVID-19 pandemic might reach Fiji. In late 2020, a few cases of the virus were detected, but spread was successfully controlled. However, by April 2021, COVID-19 had established a stronger foothold, and this led to the introduction of tight controls that have limited the operations of schools and prevented student attendance. These controls continue to this day.

The Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts (MEHA) is responsible for education in Fiji including early childhood, primary, secondary, and technical and vocational education and training. However, of the 714 primary schools only two are government schools. The control of the majority rests with community-based committees (75%), religious bodies (18%), and cultural organisations (7%). MEHA has representation in each of the four Divisions of Fiji, which in total comprise nine districts. It is through the Divisional Education Offices that the Ministry provides support and guidance to all schools, irrespective of their control structures.

As the lockdown continues, MEHA has endeavoured to provide learning support to students by seeking new and innovative ways to support remote learning. Where there is an established internet communication available, distance learning is being attempted. However, there is inequality across the country with respect to the available access to remote learning opportunities. For example, in the North Division, close to 50 primary and secondary schools have no internet connectivity, and teachers in these schools must travel either out to sea or to nearby villages to connect via hotspot. Students in urban areas are at a distinct advantage over students from rural and remote areas.

Where remote learning cannot be completed online, schools are printing worksheets and delivering them to settlements and villages. But the proportion of students completing the worksheets is reportedly low, with the sheets simply ignored or parents completing the sheets instead.

A further consequence of going through hard times has been the pressure on the Government of Fiji to constrain its expenditure. This has led to budget cuts from which the education sector has not escaped, and further cuts are possible if revenue does not rebound as forecast in the first half of 2022.

MTR Scope and Methodology

In the initial planning phase, the Review team considered the key review questions in the draft Terms of Reference (see [Annex 1](#)) and made some refinements to the questions following discussions with DFAT, FEP and MEHA staff. The revised framing of the questions supported a sharper focus to the Review while ensuring the key interest areas for DFAT and FEP were covered.

As outlined in the Review Plan, the main methods/tools used by the evaluation team were as follows:

- Review of key documents and data (see [Annex 3](#))
- Stakeholder interviews (conducted remotely) (see [Annex 4](#))
- Reflection, validation and synthesis

The Review team participated in a ‘virtual’ mission over the period from 8-23 July 2021, though interviews continued to be held with stakeholders up to and including 25 August 2021. A total of 55 interviews were conducted, mostly via Zoom. As per [Annex 4](#), key stakeholders were interviewed from all levels of MEHA (from the PS for Education down to several Heads of Schools), DFAT in Suva, Fiji Education Program staff, Fiji Program Support Facility staff, Teacher Training Institutions, other institutions working in the education sector (such as FHEC) and several representatives from faith-based organisations.

The Review was delivered by Mr Stuart Kinsella (Team Leader) and Ms Ana Raivoce (Education Specialist) (‘the Review team’) on behalf of IOD PARC³. Support for the Review team was provided by Ms Alrina Ali (MEHA) and Ms Olita Nagera (DFAT).

Limitations

The main limitation of the Review was that stakeholder interviews needed to be conducted remotely; the Review team could not conduct face-to-face interviews or undertake school visits. The challenges of remote working were also experienced by the Review team, with the Team Leader working from Australia and the Education Specialist working from Fiji.

Internet connectivity was surprisingly sound for the most part and it meant that most interviews could be held via Zoom as planned. However, there are significant downsides to not being ‘in the room’ during interviews with key stakeholders, and it meant that the informal discussions/feedback that might otherwise inform the Review ‘off the record’ were missed.

The Review team also acknowledges the broader context in which the Review took place in Fiji, most notably in terms of the COVID-19 pandemic, which means that schools in Fiji are currently closed, and staff are mostly working from home.

³ IOD PARC is an independent consultancy firm specialised in assessing performance and managing change in the field of international development (iodparc.com).

2. Findings against the Key Review Questions

Relevance

1. To what extent is FEP aligned with the strategic priorities of GoF and GoA, particularly in the context of COVID-19?

1.1. To what extent is the FEP currently aligned with, and contributing to, the policy settings of the GoF (including the FNDP, Vuvale Partnership and the MEHA Strategic Plan 2019-2023) and the GoA (including its Partnerships for Recovery framework, Vuvale Partnership and Fiji COVID-19 Development Response Plan) and how could this be strengthened?

The Fiji-Australia Vuvale Partnership signed in September 2019 by the Prime Minister of Fiji and the Prime Minister of Australia reflects a commitment to collaboration and deeper engagement between Fiji and Australia on a range of different issues, including the strengthening of economic and people-to-people links. While the high-level annual Ministerial consultations flagged in the Vuvale Partnership are yet to take place, the Partnership is an important agreement that establishes a 'reset' in diplomatic relations between Australia and Fiji after several years of tension.

The Fiji Education Program (FEP) is a critical reflection of the ambition outlined in the Vuvale Partnership. The importance of deepening the partnership between Fiji and Australia through the education sector was noted by the Fiji Prime Minister immediately after the signing of the Vuvale Partnership, where he was reported as saying:

*"It is important to recognise that our partnerships today broadening far beyond security with Australia... Nowhere will this be more evident than in the Fijian classroom as we continue to build upon our ongoing education revolution that is transforming the way Fijians teach and learn using lessons from the Aussies along the way to make a more efficient and effective education sector."*⁴

Alignment with Government of Fiji (GoF) priorities

The FEP is strongly aligned with key national strategic documents in Fiji such as the 5-year and 20-year National Development Plan, which includes a commitment from the GoF to the provision of universal access to education at all levels, improving the quality of education and ensuring education is more inclusive, including through greater support for girls and for children with disabilities and special needs.⁵ Recent activities supported by the FEP that directly progress the policies outlined in the National Development Plan include the review of the literacy and numeracy curriculum for primary and secondary schools, the counselling services provided for primary and secondary schools, the updates to the Fiji Education Management Information System (FEMIS) and the support provided for Special and Inclusive Education (SIE).

The design of the FEP pre-dates the current Ministry of Education, Heritage and the Arts (MEHA) Strategic Plan (2019-2023), which is considered to be the 'roadmap' for MEHA to deliver its responsibilities under the National Development Plan. However, there is still considerable alignment and the support being provided to MEHA via the FEP is both acknowledged and highly valued by MEHA counterparts, up to and including the Permanent Secretary for Education. The MEHA Strategic Plan identifies ten major Strategic Priority categories, and several are being directly progressed by the FEP including 'Systems and Processes', 'Access and Equity', 'Curricular (Learning and Teaching)' and 'Research and Development'. Support provided by the FEP is also linked to at

⁴ <https://fijisun.com.fj/2019/01/18/fiji-and-australia-set-new-vuvale-partnership/>

⁵ 5-Year and 20-Year National Development Plan pg.4

least four sectorial thematic topics which have been integrated into the development of MEHA's Strategic Priority categories including Curriculum, Disabilities and Special Needs, Information Management and Counselling.

During stakeholder consultations, it was noted by several Ministry staff that MEHA's Strategic Plan was a useful guiding document, but it was also acknowledged that it was both quite high-level and broad and that it was not difficult to 'make the case' for new activities/priorities. From the perspective of the FEP this means it has been straightforward to align new activities to the high-level strategic architecture and to make the case for relevance of the program. But, on the other hand, it has not provided 'strong hooks' for the FEP in terms of identifying specific priorities and ensuring there is a joint commitment to the long-term goal and strategic objectives of the program. This is further explored in [Section 1.2](#) below.

In broad terms, the overarching goal of the FEP to contribute to improved learning outcomes for boys and girls in Fiji is of relevance to the GoF given low levels of literacy and numeracy across the country. Table 1 below shows the Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (LANA) results for 2017 and 2019 for Year 5 and Year 7 students in Fiji. The results show that between 66-90 per cent of Year 5 and Year 7 students are below the 'proficient' level for literacy and numeracy. Concerningly, the results did not improve from 2017 to 2019 and, in the case of literacy and numeracy in Year 5, appear to have worsened.

		2017	2017	2017	2019	2019	2019
LANA Level	Benchmark Level	N Sat	No of Students	% at Benchmark Levels	N Sat	No of Students	% at Benchmark Levels
Lit Y5	Advanced	17977	3668	20%	18010	2161	12%
Lit Y5	Proficient		1725	10%		1904	11%
Lit Y5	Basic		9774	54%		10545	59%
Lit Y5	Critical		2810	16%		3400	19%

		2017	2017	2017	2019	2019	2019
LANA Level	Benchmark Level	N Sat	No of Students	% at Benchmark Levels	N Sat	No of Students	% at Benchmark Levels
Num Y5	Advanced	17960	565	3%	17944	283	2%
Num Y5	Proficient		2547	14%		1446	8%
Num Y5	Basic		12839	71%		14164	79%
Num Y5	Critical		2009	11%		2051	11%

		2017	2017	2017	2019	2019	2019
LANA Level	Benchmark Level	N Sat	No of Students	% at Benchmark Levels	N Sat	No of Students	% at Benchmark Levels
Lit Y7	Advanced	16881	2868	17%	17627	2843	16%
Lit Y7	Proficient		2902	17%		3075	17%
Lit Y7	Basic		9292	55%		9390	53%
Lit Y7	Critical		1819	11%		2319	13%

		2017	2017	2017	2019	2019	2019
LANA Level	Benchmark Level	N Sat	No of Students	% at Benchmark Levels	N Sat	No of Students	% at Benchmark Levels
Num Y7	Advanced	16859	765	5%	17599	852	5%
Num Y7	Proficient		2799	17%		2948	17%
Num Y7	Basic		9695	58%		10238	58%
Num Y7	Critical		3600	21%		3561	20%

In recent times, the FEP has demonstrated its strong alignment with GoF's priorities through its ability to be agile in response to both TC Yasa (December 2020) and the COVID-19 pandemic which has prevented face-to-face learning in Fiji schools. Solutions for remote learning in Fiji are constrained by connectivity challenges, particularly in rural and remote regions, with a large proportion of schools, let alone households affiliated with those schools, not having reliable access to the internet. However, FEP has been able to provide additional support to MEHA at short notice to support remote learning, such as through the delivery of a suite of literacy and numeracy radio broadcasts and through the delivery of a small pilot program where 20 modems were installed in remote and maritime schools. Remote learning is clearly an area where the FEP could provide ongoing support to MEHA given the current context and is not just relevant to the current COVID-19 pandemic but is also important given the frequency with which natural disasters such as cyclones occur in Fiji. This issue was raised on multiple occasions during stakeholder consultations, with several Ministry officials noting that COVID-19 is a 'gamechanger' and acknowledging that there is currently 'no plan B or plan C' with regards to education delivery (other than face-to-face learning). This is further discussed in [Section 4.2](#).

The current budget challenges being experienced by the GoF due to the economic downturn from COVID-19 mean the support provided by the Australian Government through the FEP is increasingly critical. Around 85 per cent of the GoF's education budget is allocated towards teacher salaries and so there is little margin for MEHA to absorb budget cuts. In the recently announced budget for 2021-22, MEHA received a further cut of 1.7 per cent to its operating budget from 2020-21, after having received a 3.7 per cent cut to its operating budget in 2020-21 from the previous year. With significant downside risks to the budget for the remainder of 2021-22, the prospects of further cuts to the education budget would seem to be high. However, the support being provided by the FEP in areas such as the curriculum, special and inclusive education, and FEMIS ensures that

the systems and processes of the education sector can continue to be strengthened and improved, which would otherwise not be possible in the current environment.

Alignment with Government of Australia (GoA) priorities

The goal of the FEP, to contribute towards improved learning outcomes for Fiji girls and boys, is strongly aligned with the policy direction and strategic intent outlined by the Government of Australia (GoA). This is reflected in key strategic documents such as the Partnerships for Recovery framework (including Australia's COVID-19 Development Response Plan for Fiji), which notes the importance of education in Fiji as an essential building block for future employment. It is also consistent with Pacific Step-Up, one of Australia's highest foreign policy priorities, which has at its core the ambition of supporting healthy, educated, inclusive populations across the Pacific.⁶

The FEP represents the continuation of a long-term investment by the GoA in education and human development in Fiji, which are seen to be core pillars of economic growth and poverty reduction. Australia's support for education in Fiji goes back as far as the Fiji Education Support Program (2003-2010), followed by the Access to Quality Education Program (2011-2017). A budget allocation of approximately \$5 million per year out of a total bilateral program of \$35 million shows the value and the importance placed by the GoA on supporting education in Fiji.

Through the Australian Aid Program, the GoA places significant importance on inclusion, particularly through support for women and girls and people with disabilities, ensuring they are provided with opportunities to participate in education and training and to gain employment. This is also jointly agreed with the GoF as part of the Vuale Partnership, which includes commitments to end violence against women, increase women's leadership and decision-making opportunities, and create economic opportunities for women and for people with disabilities. The FEP is an important mechanism for advancing these objectives in Fiji and are identified as such in the program's Theory of Change and results framework, although the extent to which the program has been able to achieve results in these areas has been mixed (further discussed in [Section 2.1](#)).

1.2. How has the FEP responded to changes in the context (including GoF/MEHA strategic priorities and resourcing) since the commencement of the current phase?

The design of the FEP noted the contrasts between the two previous iterations of the education program, the Fiji Education Sector Program, which focused on systems, and the Access to Quality Education Program, which was largely a schools-based program. The intent for the FEP was to take the best of both programs and to 'systematise' the effective support that had been delivered to schools under AQEP.⁷

The design of the FEP therefore proposed interventions across three distinct levels of 'systems' that were considered necessary for improving learning outcomes for all Fiji girls and boys, including:

- **Pillar 1: Central Ministry systems** (including strengthening FEMIS and strengthening curriculum and learning assessment)
- **Pillar 2: District and school level systems** (including professional development and capacity building for teachers, Heads of Schools and district Senior Education Officers)
- **Pillar 3: Community level systems** (including support for the participation of children with disability in education, and partnerships with CSOs and school owner organisations)

⁶ <https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/pacific/engagement/stepping-up-australias-pacific-engagement>

⁷ FEP design, pg.2

The *proposed* budget for the first full year of the FEP (2018-19) shows this ‘spread’ of effort and allocation of resources across the three different pillars. Approximately 52 per cent of the FEP activity budget was allocated towards strengthening Central Ministry systems (Pillar 1), 27 per cent allocated to District and school levels systems (Pillar 2) and 21 per cent allocated to Community level systems (Pillar 3), with the remainder allocated to Management and Governance.⁸

However, from the outset the FEP has been highly responsive to changing MEHA priorities, with this directed and approved by DFAT. Consistent progress across the three pillars has therefore not been observed as envisaged.

Since the first year of the program, a significant proportion of the FEP budget has been reallocated towards the strengthening of central Ministry systems, including reforms to business processes and human resources, at the direct request of MEHA. This was tied to significant reforms implemented across the entire civil service in Fiji from 2017, which led to redundancies and redeployments of large numbers of civil service staff. MEHA was not spared from these reforms; for example, in the Curriculum Advisory Services (CAS) there was a reduction in the number of positions from 48 to 26.

To facilitate the organisational reform process, MEHA requested a significant increase to the number of technical advisers embedded in the Ministry, which was agreed to by DFAT and implemented by the FEP. At one point there was up to 11 separate technical advisers supporting different parts of the Ministry, including five Business Process Improvement Specialists who were working alongside MEHA’s IT and HR teams on reforms such as a new online performance management and appraisal system, e-contracting/online recruitment and school leadership, as well as FEMIS. As noted in [Section 2](#) progress was patchy, with some advisers making important contributions to the reform of MEHA policies and processes, while others struggled to gain traction.

FEP’s Annual Report for 2019-20 notes that technical advisers accounted for 77 per cent of the FEP’s total activity costs. The clear implication of this, which was noted in the FEP’s Annual Report 2019-20, was that other priority areas identified in the design (particularly relating to strengthening the capacity of teachers and community-level engagement) could not be progressed as originally planned. This was further compounded by instructions from the former PS that the FEP should not engage with Teacher Training Institutions (TTI’s), which meant there was little progress made against Pillar 2, particularly in the first 18-24 months of the program.

It should also be acknowledged that COVID-19 and the response to TC Yasa (and TC Winston before it) have also been key disrupters through the implementation of the FEP and both have had a big influence on MEHA priorities and the allocation of FEP resources. Key stakeholders noted, for example, the attention and resources required to support the response and recovery effort from TC Yasa in late 2020 and early 2021, which caused significant damage to around 85 schools in the North Division. Similarly, COVID-19 has resulted in two extended periods of lockdowns, with the latest lockdown still ongoing, and schools have been unable to deliver face-to-face teaching to students. In response, MEHA requested that FEP provide support for remote learning, including through the design and delivery of literacy and numeracy radio broadcasts, the development of activities and worksheets for children with disabilities, and through general support for MEHA staff to navigate the complexities associated with school closures.

The responsiveness of the FEP to changing MEHA priorities is clearly one of its key strengths, ensuring that the work of the FEP, including through its technical advisers, is highly relevant to the needs of the Ministry. This in itself has been a clear priority for the GoA, with the instruction provided from the Australian High Commission that the FEP should be a ‘demand-driven’ program.

However, the focus on responsiveness has often come at the expense of the strategic ambition of the program outlined in the FEP design. The FEP design noted that learning improvements for all Fiji

⁸ Education Program Work Plan Budget (SO 9), July 2018 – June 2019

girls and boys requires strengthening capacity across three separate pillars, however the FEP has, for the most part, focused almost exclusively on just one of these three pillars. The additional activities funded to support the central Ministry have all individually had merit. And yet, the trade-offs or the opportunity costs associated with changing priorities do not seem to have been a factor in these decisions, and there was not seemingly any pushback from FEP and/or DFAT when requests for assistance clearly went beyond the agreed design of the FEP (further discussed in [Section 3.2](#)).

In addition, several initiatives started by the FEP were not completed before resources were reallocated elsewhere. This was noted during several stakeholder interviews:

*“It is unfortunate that many of the initiatives didn’t quite see the end for whatever reason”
[Comment from MEHA stakeholder]*

For example, at the request of MEHA, FEP provided funding for a School Leadership Learning Development Program, an online professional development program that was aligned to the civil service reform. The intent was to enable school heads and other potential leaders to complete online training modules. The FEP recruited three TAs to develop 10 online modules, and the first module was tested with about 81 school heads. However, there was no further progress beyond the pilot of the first module and the program was put on hold. **In addition, the FEP were asked to fund 800 specialised printers to support a new Phonics By Phone and Maths By Phone initiative**, however these activities were not supported by a subsequent Permanent Secretary and thus implementation ceased.

In [Section 4.1](#), one of the key lessons learned is that results have been strongest in areas where the FEP has provided consistent resources and demonstrated a long-term commitment, providing an opportunity to build on gains made and to support incremental reforms and improvement. The trade-off for a highly responsive program where priority areas frequently change is that gains are not realised to the same extent.

Effectiveness

2. To what extent is the FEP delivering outcomes that meet the needs and priorities of key stakeholders?

2.1. To what extent is the FEP on track to achieve the (revised) end of Phase 1 outcomes, including in relation to cross-cutting issues such as gender, disability inclusion, emergency preparedness and response, and climate change and DRR?

Summary view

The Fiji Education Program was established with a clear intended outcome for Phase 1 (by December 2021), specifically that:

‘Central and decentralised systems and partnerships deliver the support to schools that enables all girls and boys to learn’⁹

This was considered an important stepping-stone towards the long-term development outcome of ‘Improved learning outcomes for all Fiji girls and boys’¹⁰, particularly in terms of literacy and numeracy. The FEP design noted that disability, gender and social inclusion were critical issues for the FEP and were encapsulated in the framing of ‘all Fiji girls and boys’.¹¹

⁹ FEP design pg.3

¹⁰ FEP design pg.2

¹¹ FEP design pg.3

However, the design also stated that the benefits of ‘system strengthening’ were unlikely to be reflected in the results of national literacy and numeracy assessments until 2022-2025 at the earliest.¹² In fact, a key risk identified in the FEP design was that it may take longer than envisaged to embed reforms to the Ministry, improve teacher quality and school culture, and therefore systemic improvements to learning outcomes for Fiji girls and boys may not be visible by the end of the initial phase of support.¹³

This has proven to be the case.

During stakeholder interviews it was said several times that the FEP design was overly ambitious given the available budget and the complexities associated with driving system-level change from the Ministry down to the school level in Fiji. These are reasonable observations.

But it is also the case that while the design of the FEP identified the need to work across three interconnected pillars, the three levels of ‘systems’ necessary to support improved learning outcomes for Fiji girls and boys, **the reality is that most of the ‘effort’, reflected in the allocation of FEP resources, has been directed towards Pillar 1 (Central Ministry) at the request of MEHA, and there has therefore been less progress made within the other two pillars (District and School Level, and Community).** This means that progress on strengthening the ‘systems’ required for all girls and boys to learn, as per the original intended outcome of FEP Phase 1, has been uneven.

In the last 3.5 years the FEP has been able to achieve some important results, and these have clearly been in areas of interest and importance to MEHA. The ability of FEP to be responsive to the needs and demands of MEHA is in itself a strong indicator of its effectiveness and its relevance. **But there have also been some considerable gaps.** These gaps need to be addressed if the long-term development outcome, ‘*improved learning outcomes for all Fiji girls and boys*’, is to be realised by the end of the next phase (December 2024). This is further discussed in [Section 4.2](#).

Review of progress against the four priority areas of the FEP

In mid-2020, the FEP Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) team led a revision of the program Theory of Change (ToC). This was done acknowledging that the direction of the program had been considerably diverted from its original ambition at the request of MEHA (supported by DFAT), and to better reflect what the program was actually doing and the issues it was addressing (as discussed in [Section 1.2](#)).

The revised ToC maintained the long-term development outcome (impact) identified in the FEP design (i.e., *Improved learning outcomes for all Fiji girls and boys*) but provided greater specificity to this ambition by stating that this would be achieved through:

1. An inclusive Literacy and Numeracy Curriculum
2. Sufficient resources for SIE
3. MEHA systems that allocate staff and funds fairly and efficiently
4. Evidence-based policies in areas identified by MEHA

The revised ToC provided a detailed outline of what success would look like for each of these four priority areas, which collectively represent a narrower level of ambition compared to the original design. The revised priority areas were used as the framework for FEP reporting for the first time in January 2021 (reflecting progress for July-December 2020 period).

This Review has considered previous FEP performance reports and completed 55 interviews with key stakeholders, which has informed our assessment of the progress made by the FEP. Key results achieved by the FEP against each of the four priority areas, as well as progress towards cross-cutting

¹² FEP design pg.21

¹³ FEP design pg.4

objectives such as emergency preparedness are outlined below. *This analysis is not intended to be a comprehensive account of all the results achieved by the FEP* but is included to support an overall view of where progress has been strong (and where the program is on track to achieve intended outcomes by the end of Phase 1) and where progress has been more limited within the four priority areas.

Broadly, our analysis finds that the FEP is expected to achieve the end-of-program outcomes in some but not all the four priority areas. It has achieved some excellent results in some niche areas, most notably the strengthening of Ministry systems (including FEMIS) and in special and inclusive education. But it has struggled to gain traction in some other priority areas, most notably gender equality.

1. Curriculum

Extensive work has been undertaken by FEP advisers in partnership with MEHA counterparts to revise the *primary* curriculum for literacy and numeracy. Scope and sequence documents and teacher guides have largely been completed and literacy and numeracy support ‘kits’ have been distributed to some schools. The revised curriculum has recently been reviewed and updated by FEP advisers from a GEDSI perspective.

Plans to pilot the new primary curriculum, which was originally scheduled to take place in Term 3 2021, have now been deferred to January 2022 due to the ongoing school closures associated with COVID-19. Assuming schools return to face-to-face learning in Term 1 2022, the new curriculum will be trialled in 45 schools (identified as underperformers by MEHA). The delay provides additional time for the FEP to provide training to teachers and to engage with Teacher Training Institutions (TTI’s) on the content of the new curriculum, which up until recently has not been possible.

Work has also begun on revisions to the secondary curriculum for literacy and numeracy, currently at the preparation phase. All going well the revised secondary curriculum will be piloted in 2023.

The Review would note that while the primary curriculum is still to be piloted and rolled out (as was envisaged by now in the revised ToC/results framework), good progress has still been made. Importantly, the support being provided by FEP staff to Curriculum Advisory Services (CAS) in the Ministry is recognised and appreciated.

‘They [FEP advisers] have been very good and I fall back on their expertise all the time. The program goes out of their way to support us’ [Comment from MEHA stakeholder]

The revised literacy and numeracy curriculum was noted by several MEHA stakeholders and TTI representatives as being essential for improved learning outcomes for girls and boys in Fiji, and it is critical that this remains as an area of focus for the FEP in the next phase of the program.

2. Inclusion (Special and Inclusive Education)

The decision to have ‘inclusion’ (Special and Inclusive Education) as a standalone priority area in the revised ToC is an indicator of the importance placed by DFAT/FEP on this issue. But it also carries the risk of ‘siloeing’ the work to progress disability inclusion, instead of mainstreaming it across all areas of the program.

Overall, the FEP’s efforts to progress SIE are impressive and reflect the benefits of a long-term, consistent approach, building on gains made under the previous phase of the program (AQEP). The FEP has a clear strategy for progressing SIE which includes:

- Increasing the number of students with a disability enrolled in Fiji schools (inclusive and special schools) and providing specialist support
- Strengthening teacher capacity to deliver SIE

- Strengthening curriculum and assessment to support the learning needs of students with disabilities
- Strengthening MEHA's SIE policy framework
- Strengthening the evidence-based delivery of the Ministry's SIE grant (through FEMIS)

It is clear SIE is 'on the radar' for the Ministry and it is reasonable to conclude that a key driver for this has been the support and advocacy provided by the FEP over a long period (including back to AQEP days). For example, MEHA now has a Special and Inclusive Education Policy (which was developed with the support of AQEP/FEP advisers), and it has staff who have been employed to progress SIE, including a Senior Education Officer (SEO) for SIE and another newly appointed curriculum officer in CAS. Four SIE 'coaches' have also recently been employed by the FEP for each of the four Divisions in Fiji, adding to the capacity of the Ministry in this area. The fact that the Ministry has created a new SIE position (in CAS) and employed a new staff member in a recently vacated position (SEO for SIE) in the current environment where its operational budget has been cut is an excellent result and suggests that MEHA understand and see the value of this important area.

In recent years there has been a significant increase in the number of 'inclusive' schools in Fiji, which cater for children with disabilities and which, in turn, have seen substantial growth in the number of children with disabilities enrolled in schools. The SIE team recently produced a SIE 'Snapshot', which included the following high-level results¹⁴:

755 verified students with disabilities are attending school (256 F, 499M)

1413 unverified students with disabilities are attending school (518F, 895M)

415 schools attended by students with disabilities (17 special schools, 398 inclusive schools)

62 schools received the SIEG in 2020 (17 special schools, 45 inclusive schools)

Stakeholders noted the key drivers for the increase in students with disabilities attending school include:

- **Resources:** schools receive teacher aides from MEHA and can access other forms of technical expertise
- **SIE grant:** which provides a further boost to the resources available for individual schools if they enrol students with disabilities)
- **Policy framework:** the MEHA SIE policy notes that all schools should be inclusive, and no child should be left behind)

Results relating to Special and Inclusive Education have also been achieved across other priority areas of the FEP. This includes within 'MEHA policy and systems', with the UNICEF / Washington Group Child Functioning Module now embedded in FEMIS, demonstrating the 'institutionalisation' of disability inclusion within MEHA, together with the introduction of a new module in FEMIS that

¹⁴ Special and Inclusive Education – A Snapshot – August 2021

allows student attendance data to be disaggregated by disability. The SIE team has also worked closely with the team working on the revisions to the literacy and numeracy curriculum.

3. Ministry policy and systems

The support for strengthening MEHA policy and systems has been a key focus of the FEP since the outset. It has largely been implemented by technical advisers who have been embedded within different parts of the Ministry. **And some excellent results have been achieved.**

“The value we have received from the technical advisers you can’t even begin to quantify. We hope this support will continue”. [Comment from MEHA stakeholder]

Since the commencement of the FEP, reforms have been implemented to FEMIS to automate key processes that were previously done manually, such as the calculation of the Free Education Grant (FEG) for schools. This has led to considerable time savings, with manual calculations that could take up to a week now minimised to just a few seconds. It has also promoted greater transparency and accountability and reduced errors associated with calculations of the grant. Similarly, secondary schools are now able to do reconciliations against the FEG in FEMIS, which allows them to track expenditure quickly and easily against their annual grant and compare to the funds available in their bank account. With this information in FEMIS also available to the Ministry, the data can help the Ministry to understand how schools are utilising their FEG. Stakeholders also noted that staff are now being allocated to schools and their salaries paid based on approved staffing formulas embedded in FEMIS.

FEP advisers have also provided key inputs to the development of new policies and procedures for the Ministry, driving operational efficiencies and reducing costs. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Reforms to staff performance management and assessment
- Merit-based recruitment and selection processes
- Learning and development guidelines
- Disciplinary guidelines
- Strategic planning and work planning templates for school principals and vice-principals
- Revision of the School Management Handbook

Another important reform supported by FEP advisers was the establishment of e-contracting, with MEHA systems updated to manage the recruitment and contracting of staff (including teachers) online. **FEP advisers also provided key inputs to the development of the Transport Assistance Policy** which was recently approved by the Minister, which will promote transparency and accountability for the delivery of assistance program, particularly when automated in FEMIS.

It should be noted that not all the technical advisers embedded in the Ministry had the same level of success driving reforms to MEHA policies and systems, and several advisers who were recruited in the early days of the FEP did not have their two-year contracts renewed. Detailed information about this was difficult to find. However, anecdotal evidence suggests some advisers had difficulty getting buy-in from their counterparts in MEHA, which was also acknowledged at the highest level in the Ministry during consultations for this Review.

An important question for the Review was to consider the extent to which these reforms to systems, policies and processes have been successful in driving improvements at the school level, with this being the ultimate test of effectiveness. Feedback from stakeholder interviews at school level, divisional level, and within the Ministry itself was positive and indicates that at least some of the benefits have filtered down. For example, several Heads of Schools and several Divisional Education Officers reflected on the value that FEMIS was able to offer them in terms of ease of reporting and availability of data to track indicators such as student attendance. Several

stakeholders also reflected on the benefits of having FEMIS data available at the click of a button and noted that it provided them with information that would otherwise not be available or would take days to collate.

“FEMIS gives us a lot of information, it is very beneficial. We used to keep things manually in files, now everything is automated. The student attendance data is really helpful for monitoring. We identify if students aren’t attending and develop strategies to respond to this. Also, the Ministry often asks for details on our students and FEMIS helps me to respond to this. It makes our work very easy.” [Comment from a Head of School]

FEMIS is also clearly being used by the Ministry to inform decision-making, although this could be further strengthened. For example, after TC Yasa in December 2020, the Ministry used FEMIS to track student attendance and confirm how many students were back at school.

“Where there was poor attendance we checked with DEO’s to see why. And it was because kids were missing school uniforms and school bags. And so, we were able to partner with DFAT to provide this”. [Comment from MEHA stakeholder]

Efforts to promote the use of data in decision-making more broadly across the Ministry have increased, with the FEP currently supporting a technical adviser with the sole aim of making the data in FEMIS more accessible to decision-makers in MEHA. This includes the development of summary information ‘dashboards’ in areas such as finance and disaster management. During stakeholder interviews it was acknowledged that there has been a strong focus on putting data ‘in’ to FEMIS, but less on the type of information and analysis that could be taken ‘out’ of FEMIS. Making the data in FEMIS more accessible to more people will support the Ministry to make more evidence-based/ data-driven decisions.

Stakeholder consultations revealed there are some concerns relating to the sustainability of the gains made in terms of strengthening MEHA systems, particularly for FEMIS and in ICT. In particular, the challenges of retaining local staff were raised, with stakeholders indicating that once local staff are trained their skills are in high demand, and they are often ‘poached’ by other government departments or by organisations in the private sector who can pay higher salaries. This is further discussed in [Section 4.2](#).

4. Evidence-based research to inform policy

The fourth focus area of the revised ToC is considerably broad, and effectively acts as an umbrella for a series of quite different activities and interventions. And again, results have been quite mixed.

One important intervention included here is the successful pilot of the school counselling initiative. Under this initiative, FEP partnered with two NGO’s (Empower Pacific and Medical Services Pacific) to pilot a school counselling program, with three counsellors employed to work in 12 schools in the Western Division and another three counsellors employed to work in 13 schools in the Central Division. This was implemented to test a less resource intensive model of student support services that could subsequently be adopted by MEHA. The FEP also supported 35 Fijian teachers and MEHA staff to complete a Diploma of Counselling through the Australia Pacific Training Coalition (APTC). This Review considers there is an important role for the FEP to play in school counselling going forward, which is further discussed in [Section 4.2](#).

Other activities supported by the FEP under this priority area include a small pilot on technology enabled learning (TEL), with 20 modems provided to remote or maritime schools, 25 ‘smart’

projectors installed in select classrooms, and coaching given to 45 school staff on the use of TEL.¹⁵ The effectiveness of the pilot is currently being assessed by the MEL team.

Two research activities completed by the FEP at the request of MEHA are also of relevance to this priority area, one on school bullying and another on out-of-school children. While these research pieces have reportedly been provided to the Ministry, it is not immediately clear how they have been used by MEHA, if at all.

Cross-cutting issues – gender equality

This Review considers that progress of the FEP in advancing gender equality has broadly been limited despite some recent gains, an assessment that was widely supported by stakeholders from DFAT and FEP during interviews.

In the first few years of the FEP, the strategy for progressing gender equality focused on training and capacity building for MEHA staff, while there was also some initial engagement with TTI's on how to integrate gender equality into their teaching programs. But the benefits of this approach are hard to quantify and FEP staff reported that it was hard to engage MEHA on these issues.

Progress was therefore limited.

Stakeholder interviews identified several contributing factors. First and foremost, the Ministry has not had a dedicated focal point for gender equality, in the same way that there is an SIE team/focal point embedded in MEHA. The Ministry *has* agreed to embed an FEP adviser within MEHA with a specific focus on gender, but recruitment rounds have so far failed to identify a suitable candidate for the role. This has been a critical gap, with the position still vacant and FEP in a 'holding pattern', with important work (such as an update to the Ministry's gender policy) not being progressed. **It would also seem that FEP did not (and still does not) have the required level of resources/technical capacity to ensure gender equality issues would be suitably progressed** (further discussed in [Section 3.1](#)). This led to missed opportunities to progress gender equality, such as the review of the draft literacy and numeracy curriculum which was initially reviewed by the SIE team but not from a gender perspective (though this has since been addressed).

In late 2020, as part of a new GEDSI strategy developed for the Fiji Program Support Facility (the 'Facility'), the strategic approach shifted from training of MEHA staff to ensuring that gender equality is embedded within the design of all FEP activities and streams of work and promoting the visibility of gender within the FEP ToC and results framework. This has been an important development.

Several new tools have also been developed to support the integration of gender into FEP activities and recent reports suggest improved gender results are being achieved. The new tools include a *GEDSI wheel* (used to guide integration of gender, disability, and social inclusion into the curriculum development process), while a *program-level GEDSI 'tracker'*, developed by the Facility GEDSI adviser, has recently been introduced as a way of highlighting progress and challenges and driving improved performance across the program. Stakeholder interviews revealed recent examples where technical expertise on gender has been integrated into other aspects of the FEP, for example, through the development of a *survey to explore women and leadership in Fiji*, an initiative developed at the request of the PS for Education.

But more could be done. This Review considers there is a critical need to elevate strategic discussions on gender with the Ministry. The role of the Facility GEDSI adviser is key to this, and consideration should be given to increasing the engagement of this position in high-level/strategic meetings, including with the PS where appropriate, to advocate and promote gender equality issues. The new gender equality adviser position to be embedded in the Ministry should also provide

¹⁵ FPSF 6- monthly report (July-Dec 2020)

considerable opportunities to elevate gender within the Ministry (though the position is still to be filled). The potential re-establishment of FEP governance mechanisms such as a Steering Committee (further discussed in Section 3.2) will also be an important forum for gender issues to be discussed with the Ministry.

Cross-cutting issues – emergency preparedness climate change and DRR

This Review considers there have been missed opportunities to consider and embed emergency preparedness within FEP activities. The lockdowns associated with COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021 have revealed the lack of alternatives available to MEHA when students are unable to meet in the classroom for face-to-face learning. And this is starting to be considered by the FEP in areas such as the revisions to literacy and numeracy curriculum. Yet the frequency of natural disasters in Fiji such as tropical cyclones, which can cause widespread damage to infrastructure and prevent face-to-face learning, suggests that emergency preparedness could have been given greater attention by the FEP from the outset. Emergency preparedness is also relevant to, for example, the strengthening of MEHA systems such as FEMIS, which can be used to store data on things such as school infrastructure; this data should be accessible to the Ministry during an emergency response.

In terms of climate change and disaster risk reduction, this Review has found little evidence that these issues have been embedded in key program activities, although there would seem to have been less opportunities to do so than for emergency preparedness. The Review would note the efforts made to embed climate change considerations where appropriate into the curriculum revision, which includes engagement with advisers from the Australia Pacific Climate Partnership.

Cross-cutting issues – Civil Society Engagement

This Review did not formally consider progress of the FEP in terms of CSE. However, subsequent discussions with FEP/Fiji Facility staff indicate that CSE is one of the Facility's cross-cutting themes (along with GEDSI, emergency preparedness and response and climate change/DRR). This Review notes that the FEP worked closely with MEHA on two separate activities with different CSO's which fostered collaboration and closer relationships between the CSO's and MEHA. The first is the school counselling pilot (already mentioned above), while the second relates to implementation of UNICEF's Three-Star Approach for WASH in Schools, implemented from 2019 to 2020. In particular, the FEP supported two CSO's to deliver WASH services in a small number of schools with a particular focus on inclusion through accessible WASH and menstrual hygiene. The extent to which CSE is a priority for the FEP in the next phase of the program needs to be clarified in discussions with DFAT

2.2. To what extent is the FEP's Theory of Change, MEL system and performance reporting being used to support program performance and improvement? To what extent is FEMIS being used to do the same? How could this be strengthened?

Theory of Change and the link to program performance and improvement

The purpose of a Theory of Change is to demonstrate how the activities or interventions undertaken by a program are expected to lead to the achievement of short, medium, and longer-term outcomes. It is an *enabler* for good program management and is often used as a logical 'check' to ensure that activities undertaken by a program can reasonably be expected to drive the intended long-term outcomes.

In Section 1.2 and Section 2.1 the Review outlined many ways in which the FEP has been responsive to MEHA requests for assistance, often in areas that were outside the agreed scope of the FEP design. The Review has also identified that from the outset of the program, considerable resources were reallocated towards Pillar 1 (Central/Ministry systems), at the expense of Pillar 2 (District/School level systems) and Pillar 3 (Community level).

Given the extent to which the program had shifted in terms of its activities and focus of effort relative to the original FEP design, the MEL team led a refresh of the ToC in mid-2020. In doing so, there was acknowledgement that the activities being supported by the FEP were no longer expected to lead to the short- and medium-term outcomes as outlined in the FEP design being achieved.

In this way, the FEP was effectively trying to play catch-up; the ToC does not appear to have been considered when decisions were made to reallocate resources across the program. As such, the ToC seems to have played little role in supporting program performance and improvement. An important factor in this is the absence of any meaningful joint governance or management mechanisms with MEHA since the early days of the FEP, which is further discussed in [Section 3.2](#). Even now, with the program continuing to be highly responsive to MEHA requests for assistance, the revised ToC has had to remain broad and high-level, so that any new initiatives can still reasonably be seen to be aligned.

MEL system, performance reporting and program improvement

The FEP MEL team has had the unenviable task of trying to construct a monitoring framework that provides a meaningful way of tracking the progress of the FEP towards its long-term development outcome while also accommodating the regular changes in priorities driven by the Ministry. The challenge of trying to tell a coherent story of progress towards a long-term development outcome from a series of incoherent investments/activities, which change frequently and at short notice, should not be underestimated. Interviews with both DFAT and FEP stakeholders suggest the MEL team has had to spend large periods of time updating the results framework to ensure it is current, and it was suggested this has often come at the cost of more meaningful analysis/deep dives on specific issues that might then be used to inform programming decisions.

At the individual activity level, there is considerable evidence that information generated by the MEL system has been useful and supported program improvement. For example:

- In April 2021, the MEL team supported the SIE team to conduct a **survey of 45 ‘inclusive’ schools** to determine how many schools were receiving and using Special Inclusive Education Grants (SIEG) and the impact SIEGs were having on student learning. The survey and subsequent analysis identified that a high proportion of schools attended by students with disabilities (37 per cent) had not received funds this year, while some Heads of Schools were not aware that SIEG funds had arrived, as they had not received a notification in FEMIS. These findings were communicated to MEHA and has led to further efforts from MEHA to improve communication to schools regarding the SIEG.
- The MEL team also recently conducted a **survey of parents of children with disabilities and their experience of early childhood education (ECE)**. This is being fed into a situation analysis of access to ECE for children with disabilities that the SIE team is implementing.
- In early 2021, the MEL team supported the student support services (counselling) pilot by conducting a **survey of student support officers who had recently completed APTC’s Diploma of Counselling**. The survey identified that officers were struggling to understand the new case work system, and as a result the FEP was able to arrange a workshop with the officers and provide additional training on how to use the system.

At the program level, the evidence for the MEL system being used to influence programming decisions is less compelling. A key driver for this has been the nature of the program itself, which has prioritised responsiveness to the Ministry. In effect, the MEL system has been inverted, and has been used to try to make sense of what has been done and to join the threads, rather than being used to inform assessments of progress towards the long-term development outcome. This is certainly reflected in the style of the regular 6-monthly and annual reports to DFAT, which tend to be activity-focused rather than providing a narrative on progress towards the long-term development outcome of the program (and the risks and the challenges therein).

The Review notes there is considerable value in the regular (6-monthly) reflect and refocus sessions, which are facilitated by the MEL team at the whole-of-program level, and which draw in other Facility staff as well as DFAT. These are extremely useful forums that allow the different workstreams of the FEP to provide an update on results achieved and lessons learned, and to consider joint solutions to common challenges. The Review is also aware of similar reflect and refocus sessions being facilitated by the MEL team within individual workstreams such as for SIE, which also draw in MEHA representatives.

However, while these are useful forums for knowledge and information sharing, the extent to which they influence changes in programming is unclear. And they only occur every 6 months. The same could be said for the FEP performance reports submitted to DFAT. For example, it has been known for some time that the FEP was struggling to provide evidence of results achieved in terms of gender equality and women's empowerment, an area of critical importance to DFAT. Presumably this issue was raised during earlier reflect and refocus sessions; if not in terms of risk, then in terms of simply identifying that there wasn't much to report. But it did not lead to a change in strategic approach or resourcing until late 2019/early 2020 when a new GEDSI strategy and action plan was approved and a new Facility GEDSI adviser was recruited.

During consultations, it was acknowledged there was a need for more frequent discussions between FEP staff and DFAT where information from the MEL system could be discussed. The absence of regular program management committee meetings and steering committee meetings for the majority of the FEP has certainly not helped with this; going forward the re-establishment of these governance mechanisms in the next phase (see [Section 3.2](#)) could reasonably be expected to assist.

The overall assessment of this Review is that MEL is not being optimally utilised to inform planning and program improvement. But the Review would also note that a key reason for this is that there is a lack of clarity around the overarching purpose of the FEP. The design of the MEL system, with the emphasis on a comprehensive results framework, is reflective of a more 'traditional' management approach to program delivery, with the FEP responsible for the design and implementation of activities that are expected to lead to the long-term development outcome being achieved. But, in reality, this is not how the FEP has been implemented, it has not had full control over the activities that it has been required to deliver and as discussed, several of these have been outside the scope of the original design.

FEP can continue to be a responsive, adaptive program if this is agreed between DFAT and MEHA. But if this is the agreed approach, then the MEL system needs to be recrafted to reflect this. A different approach to MEL would involve a slimmed down results framework and much greater emphasis on testing the effectiveness of the activities that are being delivered and the impact they are having, with a view to gathering information and evidence to inform future decision-making around those activities. Either way, the approach to delivery of the FEP needs to be clarified for the next phase of the program so that the MEL framework can be designed accordingly.

FEMIS and the link to monitoring

As previously outlined, FEMIS is an excellent tool that appears to be used widely by the Ministry at all levels, and it continues to be updated in ways that enable operational efficiencies to be gained, while also strengthening accountability, promoting transparency, and reducing errors. The data in FEMIS is also available to FEP and is used where relevant to inform performance reporting to DFAT.

During stakeholder interviews, the view was consistently expressed that there were opportunities for the FEP to be more strategic in the way that it uses data in FEMIS to inform policy discussions with the Ministry. One good recent example where data has been used to inform strategic discussions was raised by the L&N team, which used the LANA results to show TTI's that the

proportion of the students in the 'basic' or 'critical' category for literacy and numeracy is up to 70-80 per cent.

More broadly, it is clear there is a lack of clarity around who is responsible for monitoring of schools within MEHA, and this appears to be an area of considerable need. During stakeholder interviews this became clear across multiple areas, from the monitoring of the FEG, to the coaching and mentoring of teachers and school leaders, to the verification of students with disabilities (which is the trigger for the SIEG to be paid to the school).

'Monitoring at the school level is a big gap... there are some schools that haven't been visited for years' [Comment from FEP staff member]

'The Government has put students with disability in mainstream schools but have not got effective monitoring practices' [Comment from MEHA staff member]

It is clearly not the responsibility of the FEP to assume responsibility for the monitoring of MEHA's own programs. And yet, it is potentially an area where the FEP could provide considerable strategic/advisory support, in the same way that FEP technical advisers have provided strategic support to reform other areas of the Ministry's systems, policies and practices. This is worthy of further consideration by the FEP in discussions with the Ministry during the FEP 'design update' process.

2.3. Are FEP's revised end-of-program outcomes 'fit for purpose'? How do they relate to the original ambition outlined in the FEP design?

The FEP's revised end-of-program outcomes are reflected within four different priority areas. As discussed in [Section 1.2](#) and [Section 2.1](#), they were revised in mid-2020 to reflect where the FEP was working and the issues it was addressing, which had deviated substantially from the original design. From this perspective the revised end-of-program outcomes are currently 'fit for purpose'.

However, the long-term development outcome (or impact) the FEP is contributing to (i.e., 'Improved learning outcomes for all Fiji girls and boys') remains the same. This is of relevance because the FEP design makes a compelling case that **if this impact is to be achieved, then progress needs to be observed across three levels of 'systems':** Central Ministry, District and School level, and Community level¹⁶. **In our view the revised end-of-program outcomes as they currently stand only substantively address one and perhaps part of a second of these three levels,** and so the likelihood that 'Improved learning outcomes for all Fiji girls and boys' will be achieved is unclear. It has not, to date, been tested by the MEL team.

A new phase of the FEP will necessarily involve a refresh of the Theory of Change and the associated results framework. And there are likely to be some important changes. For example, there is greater appetite from the Ministry for FEP to engage with TTI's and to support pre-service and in-service training of teachers in line with the Fiji Teacher Attributes Framework (FTAF) (further discussed in [Section 4.2](#)). Similarly, the FEP could reasonably be expected to have a role to play in supporting school counselling in some form (also discussed in [Section 4.2](#)), building on the pilot delivered in 2020 and early 2021. FEP's involvement in key activities such as the revisions to the L&N curriculum and further strengthening of MEHA systems (such as FEMIS) are also expected to continue. Furthermore, feedback from stakeholder interviews suggests that much of the work completed by TA's on MEHA's policy and system reform processes has either been completed or is

¹⁶ FEP design pg.3

ending, meaning that the reliance on TA embedded in the Ministry as a modality for the delivery of the FEP is expected to fall.

As such, the Review recommends a return to the original ToC for the next phase of the FEP, or at least a modified version of it, which would mean targeted activities across the three levels of systems necessary for *'Improved learning outcomes for all Fiji girls and boys'* to be achieved. The mandate of the Review is not to define the end-of-program outcomes for the next phase; these need to be developed collaboratively by DFAT and MEHA, with support from FEP. However, our view is that the logic reflected in the original FEP design is sound and remains relevant, and that several of the key drivers that led to a diversion away from this approach no longer seem to apply.

An added benefit of a reversion back to the original ToC and/or an increased focus on working across the three levels of systems is that it would allow important issues such as GEDSI, emergency preparedness and CSE to be reflected as genuinely cross-cutting in the ToC and would ensure they are mainstreamed across all aspects of FEP's work. Under the current version of the ToC, 'inclusion' is currently included as a standalone workstream, which highlights the importance placed on these issues by the FEP, but also creates a risk that the work of the inclusion team is siloed from the remainder of the program. Similarly, emergency preparedness is clearly a critical issue in Fiji and there are compelling reasons to embed emergency preparedness and resilience across all aspects of the program, even without the added impetus created by COVID-19. There are certainly opportunities for the FEP to strengthen its focus on emergency preparedness within the next phase of the program.

This Review recognises the importance of MEHA's Strategic Plan in signalling 'buy-in' from the Ministry on these cross-cutting issues. As such, DFAT/FEP should work closely with MEHA through the development of the next iteration of its Strategic Plan to ensure that cross-cutting issues are reflected.

Efficiency

3. To what extent are the FEP's implementation arrangements appropriate and contributing to the delivery of outcomes?

3.1. To what extent is the level of resourcing for the FEP such as budget, human resources, and contractor support (including through the wider Fiji Facility) adequate to achieve and sustain planned outcomes? How might this be adjusted in the next phase of the FEP?

Resourcing (program level)

The FEP has been implemented with an annual budget allocation of approximately AUD 5 million, although figures provided by the FEP suggest that actual expenditure has been less than this (for example, FEP expenditure in FY 2020-21 was approximately AUD 3.96 million¹⁷). The independent evaluation of AQEP completed in May 2018 observed that annual allocations for AQEP had fluctuated considerably, but that average expenditure was approximately AUD 7.5 million per year over the course of the program (2011-2017).¹⁸ The budget allocation of AUD 5 million per year for FEP therefore represents a reduction of approximately 33 per cent compared to the budget provided for AQEP.

MEHA's annual operating budget in FY 2021-22 is approximately FJD 443 million (approximately equal to AUD 291 million).¹⁹ This means the FEP budget as a proportion of MEHA's operating budget is, and has been, less than two per cent of the total. As such, FEP support has been focused in niche areas that contribute towards the long-term development outcome (improved learning outcomes for all girls and boys in Fiji). It is important therefore to have a realistic view of what is achievable by the FEP given the scale of the challenge and the available budget.

The extent of the opportunities available to FEP for the next phase, further discussed in **Section 4.2**, would suggest that more could be done if additional budget (i.e., more than AUD 5 million per year) was provided by DFAT. However, the assessment of this Review is that, to date, the available budget for the FEP has been sufficient to progress key initiatives of interest and the program's end-of-program outcomes as they are currently drafted. Areas of the program where there has been little progress do not appear to be because of a lack of budget (overall), but due to other challenges.

Resourcing (human resources/technical advisory support)

The Review assessed the resourcing across different parts of the FEP and is also mindful that the FEP sits within a broader Facility structure. Technical resources in areas such as MEL, GEDSI, and emergency preparedness are therefore available at the Facility level and these advisers work across all the Facility's programs, including the FEP. Some of these resources are reflected within the FEP's annual expenditure (for example, 30 per cent of the senior MEL adviser's time is allocated to the FEP and paid for by the FEP), while others are not.

During stakeholder consultations, concerns were raised that FEP has, on occasions, been required to compete against other programs within the Facility for technical resources, particularly for locally engaged staff. For example, all programs under the Facility require technical expertise in areas such as GEDSI, MEL, emergency preparedness, climate change and DRR, and there is a limited pool of local staff with technical skills in these areas. The Review did not explore this in depth as it was considered a Facility issue and therefore out-of-scope. But it is important feedback and is something the Facility should be aware of.

¹⁷ Australia's Support to Fiji's Education Sector Program - FY20/21 Breakdown

¹⁸ AQEP End of Program Evaluation, May 2018, pg.29

¹⁹ <https://www.fijitimes.com/2021-2022-budget-60m-for-free-education-initiative/>

In terms of MEL, the Review would contend that the resources currently available to support MEL are sufficient, with the annual allocation of approximately 5 per cent of the total program (FY 2019-20) spend squarely within the optimal range identified by DFAT (3-7 per cent of total program expenditure). However, the Review is also aware that MEL resourcing has ebbed and flowed through the course of the program. Initially, there appears to have been a view the Facility was over-resourced for MEL, which led to the FEP MEL STA being released. Subsequently, however, concerns were raised that the program wasn't investing enough in MEL, which led to the current arrangement where the Facility MEL adviser devotes 30 per cent of their time to work specifically on the FEP. For the next phase of the FEP, this Review has already noted the importance of having clarity regarding the strategic objectives for the program and ensuring that the MEL system is designed accordingly. Additional resources for MEL could be effectively deployed, but this Review would contend it is more important that existing resources are reallocated from the continual revisions to the results framework to more in-depth analytical work that would test the extent to which the program's activities/interventions are effectively progressing the long-term development outcome.

The program has devoted considerable resources to progress special and inclusive education over a long period. There are currently three SIE coordinators employed by the FEP and another four SIE coaches have just been recruited to progress disability inclusion through a variety of activities: SIE policy review, curriculum review, and verification of students with disabilities in their schools (thereby ensuring the schools receive the SIE grant from MEHA). In addition, two senior highly credentialed STA's (disability inclusion specialists) provide technical support to the SIE team (the STA role is shared). The Review attempted to source annual expenditure for disability and social inclusion since 2018 to determine any trends (up or down) in terms of the resources allocated since the commencement of the FEP. However, this was not straightforward to compare on a like-for-like basis across the years, as it involves aggregating discrete expenditure borne by the FEP, other TA work involving disability inclusion advisers across other parts of the FEP (for example, integration of disability inclusion into the L&N teacher guides), and a proportion of the Facility-funded activities/costs shared across all programs under the Fiji Facility. The Review is unable to determine how resources have changed over the period of the FEP but is of the view that the current level of resources allocated to SIE is sufficient.

In terms of resources for gender equality and women's empowerment, the Review considers that FEP has under-invested in this area. There is, currently, a Facility GEDSI adviser who is spending some time working directly on the FEP and a GEDSI curriculum specialist (STA) is working with the curriculum team on the revisions to the literacy and numeracy curriculum. But this appears to be the extent of the technical support available to the FEP on gender. While it is reasonable to say that gender is a cross-cutting issue and gender is therefore everyone's business, the reality is that FEP staff require technical support, including tools and methodologies, to do this effectively. This does not seem to have been prioritised to date by the FEP. The Review is, however, aware that MEHA has agreed to have a gender specialist embedded within the Ministry, which will be paid for by FEP. This is a critical position and will provide considerable opportunities for the FEP to progress gender issues with the Ministry in the next phase.

Regarding emergency preparedness, the Review would contend that this area has also been under-resourced. At the outset (i.e., pre-COVID), the FEP did have resources (budget/personnel) allocated to emergency preparedness and it was noted as a key issue in the FEP design given the vulnerability of Fiji to severe weather events like flooding and cyclones.²⁰ For example, in the approved FEP budget for 2018-19, there was a line item for 'Develop and coordinate emergency preparedness training' under the Community systems pillar. Support/resources could also be accessed through other service orders under the Fiji Facility. But the FEP Annual Report for 2018-19

²⁰ FEP design pg.53

indicates that activity relating to emergency preparedness was ‘*not included in Year 1 Workplan*’²¹, one suspects because of the reallocation of resources to support reforms at the Ministry level. Some technical advisory support on emergency preparedness has been provided to the FEP from Fiji Facility advisers, but more could be done. In [Section 2.1](#), the Review noted the additional ways in which an emergency preparedness lens could be applied to other parts of the FEP. This clearly needs to be prioritised, and resourced accordingly, in the next phase of the FEP.

The Fiji Program Support Facility and links to efficiency

The FEP is part of the Fiji Program Support Facility (the ‘Facility’). When the Facility was established in 2017, 12 separate Service Orders with DFAT were condensed down to two. Stakeholders reflected that this model has led to efficiencies in terms of work planning and budgeting and, for example, has provided much greater flexibility for adviser costs to be shared across the different programs of the Facility. Stakeholders also suggested the Facility-model had led to other efficiencies, including:

- Savings from the sharing of other operational systems and processes, such as payroll and finance processing
- Supporting a common approach for engagement with external stakeholders, such as with CSO’s, across the different component parts of the Facility (i.e., education, health, emergency preparedness etc)
- Streamlined MEL and performance reporting, with a single Facility-wide report for the Facility and a single Facility-wide results framework now in place.

However, there also appears to be some overlap between program support (provided by the Facility) and program management and decision-making (led by the FEP). In these instances, there is a risk of *inefficiencies* being created at the program level through efforts to promote consistency/efficiency from a program support perspective. While acknowledging the benefits of consistency across all Facility programs, each program under the Facility still needs to be empowered and enabled to manage their program according to their own needs and unique challenges.

Another important driver for adopting a Facility model is to promote information sharing and lessons learned across programs working in a similar context and grappling with similar challenges. Stakeholder consultations provided some evidence of this occurring, but the Review would contend that *more could be done* to optimise the benefits from this opportunity. However, the Review acknowledges that these perspectives are from the FEP only; the scope of the Review means that these reflections have not been tested across other programs within the Fiji Facility.

In terms of specific examples where information and knowledge has been shared across the Facility (with associated benefits for the FEP), it was noted there has been some engagement between FEP and the Health program, including in areas such as counselling and SIE, while stakeholders also reflected there had been good coordination on engaging with CSO’s across the different parts of the Facility. The Review would also note that a Facility-wide GEDSI Network was established in April 2021, which brings together GEDSI Focal Points across the different programs of the Facility and provides a forum for the information and lessons to be shared. *But it is somewhat revealing that this was not in place earlier. Nor are there similar, formal, cross-facility networks in place for other key issues such as emergency preparedness.*

²¹ Fiji Facility Annual Report 2018-19 (Annexes), pg.26

3.2. To what extent are the existing governance and management arrangements for FEP fit-for-purpose? How could they be strengthened?

Governance arrangements

The FEP design indicated that a **partnership agreement** with MEHA would underpin Australia's support to Fiji's education sector, and that it would define the objectives, financial commitment and the management and governance arrangements for the program.²² The design also noted that a '**Sustainability Steering Committee**' would be established to provide oversight of planning and implementation, with representatives from the MEHA, DFAT, Prime Minister's Office and Ministry of Economy. It also flagged the establishment of a '**Program Coordination Committee**', which would be responsible for the contestability and accountability of Program activities and outcomes, and which would include members from the Ministry of Education, other government Ministries and DFAT.²³ **Technical Working Groups** were also envisaged, which would provide specialised input into the planning, programming, and monitoring of various streams of the FEP.

This Review considers the proposed approach to governance of the FEP was sound.

However, the governance arrangements for the FEP have been largely non-existent since the first 12 months of program. For example, stakeholders from both MEHA and from FEP and DFAT indicated there had not been a Steering Committee meeting for more than two years. Program Committee meetings and Technical Working Groups have also been absent, although some meetings were reportedly held early on. Similarly, a partnership agreement does not seem to have been finalised, which means there are no agreed principles for how DFAT/FEP and MEHA will work together or a commitment to mutual accountability.

The absence of the high-level governance forums has been a 'missing piece' in terms of the effective delivery and oversight of the FEP, and it is critical they be restored for the next phase of the program. Without these forums, there has been no formal opportunity to discuss the trade-offs associated with changing priorities and reallocating resources, and no forum to discuss progress (or otherwise) being made towards the jointly agreed end-of-program outcomes. Instead, the strategic direction of the FEP has largely been driven by the priorities of the PS, and DFAT has not attempted to push back. The lack of agreed decision-making forums and processes has led to requests for assistance that were clearly outside of the scope of the FEP design. These requests were sometimes made by MEHA staff directly to the FEP TL (not via the PS), and on some occasions were made directly to the FEP's technical advisers embedded in the Ministry (not via the FEP TL).

The absence of effective governance mechanisms has been further compounded by consistent staff turnover in key positions across the Ministry, DFAT and the FEP. For example, since the commencement of the FEP there have been three different Permanent Secretary's for Education, each with different views on the priorities for the education sector in Fiji and how the FEP could assist. There has also been a significant turnover in senior staff in the Ministry working in areas supported by the FEP, including in CAS and in Technology Employment Skills Training (TEST). Similarly, on the DFAT side, both the DFAT Counsellor and the Senior Program Manager for Education changed in 2019, while there have now been three different individuals who have occupied the FEP Team Leader role. In some ways this is not unexpected; staff turnover happens. But with no agreement that stipulated how MEHA and FEP/DFAT would work together and, importantly, how changes to priorities would be discussed and agreed, the FEP was vulnerable to the strategic direction of the program being driven by individual preferences, particularly those of the PS for Education. And this is how it has played out.

²² FEP design pg.43

²³ FEP design pg.43

This Review considers the absence of an overarching partnership agreement is also a missed opportunity, and it has meant that MEHA and DFAT have operated in a manner that is consistent with a ‘transactional’ style of relationship. For the next phase of the FEP, there would be value in exploring the development of a more collaborative, partnership-style model between DFAT/FEP and MEHA as envisaged in the FEP design, with principles of mutual responsibility and accountability at its core. There would also be merit in clarifying roles and responsibilities and articulating individual contributions to the agreed program goal and objectives. Most importantly, this would ensure that MEHA and DFAT are ‘on the same page’ at an organisational level and reduce the risks to the strategic ambition of the program associated with changes in key staff members.

Management arrangements

As outlined in Section 3.1, the FEP is one component program of the much broader Fiji Facility. The Facility operates via a matrix management structure. This means, for example, that technical advisers report to the Deputy Team Leader of the Facility (as the head of the Facility Management Unit) but then provide services to the education program (or other programs as required under the Facility). It was noted that this operating structure creates efficiencies and provides considerable flexibility but is also complex to manage, with FEP staff often having multiple reporting lines (i.e., technical vs management).

While there seems to have been an improvement in recent times, stakeholder consultations suggest there have been gaps in terms of coordination across the FEP, with few opportunities for the different workstreams to share knowledge and ideas and to work together. The reflect and refocus sessions facilitated by the MEL team are certainly a positive development, but they only occur every 6 months and given the number of people participating it is difficult to delve deeply into the detail of each workstream.

“We feel a bit siloed as we don’t have many intersection points with other parts of the program. There are a number of threads out there, but they don’t feel connected” [Comment from FEP staff member]

While there may be opportunities for coordination and communication to be improved within the FEP, communication between the FEP and DFAT appears to be sound. There is regular engagement between DFAT and the FEP TL, with meetings held at least twice per week, and one of those meetings usually includes a representative from a specific area of the FEP who is invited to provide an update on progress and to discuss any challenges being experienced.

One important issue that came up during stakeholder interviews relates to the reporting lines for technical advisers embedded in MEHA. While these advisers are clearly employed as FEP staff (i.e., their salaries come from the FEP budget), some do not see themselves as progressing FEP strategic objectives in the first instance and consider that their primary reporting line is to the PS/Ministry.

“When I started, I was instructed to report to the PS, not to the Facility, except for HR matters. This was the same for all the system’s advisers. We were considered separate advisers based in the Ministry; we didn’t go to program meetings” [Comment from FEP staff member]

While this appears to have changed in the last 12 months or so and the technical advisers seem to be more connected with the program (including now participating in team meetings, reflect and refocus sessions, etc), this is still a critical issue for the FEP. Given such a large proportion of the FEP budget is allocated to technical advisory services, it is hard to see how the FEP can feasibly be working towards a set of strategic objectives if those advisers don’t see themselves as FEP staff or as progressing FEP priorities.

In terms of modalities for program delivery, this Review considers there are opportunities to expand these beyond the current focus on technical support for the Ministry, which has been

effective but is also expensive. The FEP design identifies several different opportunities beyond technical assistance, including institutional partnerships (for example, an Australian State Department of Education and/or a curriculum and assessment authority that would provide capacity building for senior MEHA staff) and twinning arrangements (for example, between an Australian Principals' Institute and the Fiji School Heads and Principals Associations). To date these types of arrangements do not seem to have been explored and/or be in place, and this is clearly an opportunity for the next phase of the FEP.

Our final reflection on the management arrangements for the FEP relates to the visibility of FEP as distinct from AQEP. During stakeholder consultations, many Ministry staff, from Heads of Schools to Divisional Education Officers to staff working in the Ministry itself, continued to refer to the 'program' as AQEP, and were unaware of the shift to FEP. Similarly, while many MEHA staff, including quite senior staff, were familiar with FEP as it related to their area of responsibility, almost none had a concept of the broader strategic objectives of the program. To some extent this reflects on the lack of governance mechanisms in place; these forums would otherwise have provided an opportunity for the FEP's strategic objectives (which were jointly agreed with the Ministry) to continue to be raised and reinforced with Ministry staff. However, *it is also potentially a missed opportunity for the Australian Government in terms of public diplomacy.* A clear benefit of the approach under AQEP was that Australian support at the school was extremely visible. In fact, several stakeholders reflected that vehicles with the AQEP logo are still being driven around. This is no longer the case with the focus of the FEP having been largely at the Ministry level. This is potentially an area to be addressed by the FEP for the next phase, in conjunction with DFAT, to ensure that public diplomacy benefits associated with the support being provided by the Australian Government can be realised.

Future Opportunities

4. What are the opportunities for FEP to evolve in the future?

4.1. What lessons have been learned through the delivery of FEP Phase 1 to date? What has worked and what have been the challenges?

The analysis to date has revealed several high-level lessons of relevance to the FEP as it prepares for the next phase. This not intended to be a comprehensive list of all the lessons learned across every part of the program, which are available in other documents and records such as the minutes from FEP team meetings and the reflect and refocus sessions held every 6 months.

Instead, the Review has tried to focus on the most significant/strategic lessons. Our view is that these lessons need to feature prominently in the discussions with MEHA and DFAT during the FEP 'design update'.

1. **The most significant progress has been observed in areas where the FEP has been engaged long-term.** This particularly relates to the FEP's support for key Ministry systems such as FEMIS (and ICT more broadly), while it also applies to SIE. The progress made in these areas clearly show the benefits afforded by iterative development/iterative progress. It also shows the value of incremental improvements over time; where results are achieved and gains are made *the FEP needs to continue to invest and to build on them to ensure sustainability*, not withdraw and focus on different priorities.
2. **Relationships are critical.** This came up on multiple occasions during stakeholder interviews, both from FEP staff (who noted the importance of having established relationships at different levels of the Ministry to support policy influence) and MEHA staff (who indicated the value of working alongside trusted technical advisers). This is also a critical point because establishing and maintaining relationships is currently so much harder due to the COVID-19

pandemic and the lack of face-to-face meetings and interaction with MEHA staff. Going forward, FEP needs to be intentional in thinking and working politically and building and sustaining relationships with MEHA within a COVID-19 setting.

3. **Gains have been made where locally, contextually appropriate solutions have been implemented, and where FEP has been able to leverage what is already in place.** *FEP staff emphasised the need to steer clear of 'flashy' solutions to complex challenges and noted that 'simple' was better; that 'simple' solutions hold the greatest prospects for sustainability. This is obviously relevant to ICT. But it is also of relevance to other areas of the FEP, such as the revisions to the literacy and numeracy curriculum and, potentially, teacher training (see Section 4.2).*
4. **The overarching purpose of the FEP needs to be clear.** Is it a responsive program that aims to meet the immediate priorities of MEHA? And fills gaps in the Ministry? Or is it a more traditional development program, with a jointly agreed long-term development goal and set of end-of-program outcomes, where there is commitment and mutual accountability from both partners to the agreed objectives? *Over the last 3.5 years the FEP seems to have been caught between these two different approaches.* It was clearly designed as a more traditional development program, but it has been delivered as a program that is purely responsive to MEHA needs. *Prior to the next phase, this needs to be discussed by staff within FEP/DFAT (to ensure everyone is on the same page), and then agreed with the Ministry.*
5. **People can be reluctant to change.** For example, there can be vast differences between individuals in terms of technical ability and understanding how things work. Some are pro-technology; others are against it. This is certainly the case with the Ministry and reflects the different experiences of the technical advisers in recent years, with some able to drive considerable reforms to policies, processes and systems, and others struggling to gain traction. *Ministry stakeholders need to be brought along the journey of change,* which may need to be underpinned by an influencing strategy developed at the program level.
6. **Key staff will move on, both on the MEHA side and the DFAT/FEP side. Therefore, there needs to be suitable mitigation measures in place to minimise the associated risks.** Whatever the agreed strategic ambition of the FEP (see point 4), it is critical that this be reflected in an agreement at the organisational level between DFAT and MEHA. This will ensure the FEP is not required to continually adjust its priorities based on the preferences of one or two individuals (see point 1).
7. **Digitisation and connectivity are critical in the COVID-19 context.** Fiji has limited capacity to deliver remote learning during the pandemic. Vast numbers of schools in Fiji, particularly in rural and remote areas, do not have any connectivity or at least reliable connectivity to the internet, let alone the households affiliated with those schools. MEHA staff are working from home, teachers are working from home, children are at home, but there is insufficient capacity in Fiji at all levels to support remote working and remote learning. The pandemic may have passed within 12 months, but there is also a real risk that it will still be ongoing, and that face-to-face learning/working will still be impossible. *Digitisation/connectivity needs to feature prominently in the design of the next phase to ensure effective alternatives are in place.*

4.2. What are the opportunities for FEP to evolve in the future, particularly in a COVID-19 and post COVID-19 context?

The period from now through to the end of 2021 is an important time for the FEP. The consultations and planning that will occur over the next few months (i.e., the FEP ‘design update’), both internally within the FEP team (including with DFAT) and then with MEHA, will be critical in establishing the strategic direction for the FEP during the next phase.

It is straightforward for the Review to identify new opportunities and suggest ideas for the FEP in an environment where the program budget is expanding. It is much harder to do so when the program budget is contracting. This is the situation facing the FEP. There has already been a small reallocation of resources from the FEP to the Fiji Health program for FY2021-22 (relative to FY 2021-21), to support the response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic in Fiji. Given the situation, further reductions to the FEP budget are at least a strong possibility. It is also important to highlight again that the MEHA operating budget has already been cut in 2021-22, and there are further significant downside risks to the MEHA budget for the second half of the financial year, which may create additional pressures for the FEP to finance activities that MEHA is no longer able to finance themselves.

The Review recognises it is unlikely that all the opportunities listed below can be progressed unless additional budget is made available. The Review would support additional budget being provided to the FEP if it is available. If not, these ideas should be used to inform discussions with the Ministry regarding priorities for the next phase.

The analysis of future opportunities for the FEP is broken down into two parts:

- **The first section focuses on the ‘how’ of program delivery.** This does not necessarily have direct budget implications for the FEP although the analysis will point to potential cost savings, for example, broadening the modalities for program delivery.
- **The second focuses on ‘what’ opportunities/challenges the FEP might respond to in the future.** These are structured as per the three levels of ‘systems’ identified in the FEP design as being critical for the long-term development outcome of the FEP to be achieved. Cross-cutting issues then follow. This is not intended to be a prescription of the ToC for the next phase; this needs to be developed in consultation with DFAT and the Ministry as part of the FEP ‘design update’. However, the three levels/pillars (and cross-cutting issues) are a simple way of clustering the different (high-level) opportunities.

Future opportunities for the FEP – the ‘how’

As outlined in [Section 3.2](#) and in [Section 4.1](#), the overarching purpose of the FEP in the next phase needs to be clear. Is it purely a responsive program that meets the short-term needs of MEHA, or do MEHA and DFAT share a long-term strategic ambition? Our consultations have indicated that both the Ministry and DFAT are interested in moving towards a more collaborative, partnership-style model of working and that this would be towards a shared, long-term strategic vision. But either way, it is critical that this be discussed and agreed, and that it be formalised in a document that is signed by the Ministry and DFAT (i.e., partnership agreement or similar). The agreement should also outline the governance and management mechanisms that will underpin the program. At a minimum, this should include the re-establishment of a Steering Committee with senior-level representation from MEHA, DFAT and the FEP, which would promote transparent discussions regarding the progress being made towards the strategic goals of the program.

The Review also considers there are opportunities to broaden the modalities of program delivery (discussed in [Section 3.2](#)). This would potentially involve reducing the reliance on long-term technical advisers, thereby freeing up funds to support other initiatives. In any case, from a long-

term sustainability perspective, it is critical that a transition plan be established to build the capacity of local staff and mentor them so that TAs can ultimately exit. But it is acknowledged this will not be straightforward, and that the long-term TAs currently embedded in the Ministry are strongly supported by their MEHA counterparts (in fact, several MEHA stakeholders requested additional TAs be embedded in the Ministry in the next phase of the program). A gradual transition from LTA to STA inputs is one option, but in the current COVID-19 context this may not be possible.

A final point is the need for the FEP to set aside a small proportion of its budget each year to allow responsiveness to additional requests for support from the Ministry. Opportunities will come up, and the FEP should be positioned to respond. However, if it is contained to a small amount, these requests should not derail the strategic ambition of the program.

Future opportunities for the FEP – the ‘what’

1. Central/Ministry systems

Curriculum: the work being supported by the FEP on the literacy and numeracy curriculum revisions, including the teacher training guides, is critical to progressing the long-term development goal of improving learning outcomes for all girls and boys in Fiji. While it is recognised that the benefits (as reflected in LANA results) won’t be visible for several years, it is critical that this work continues.

One additional area identified by stakeholders during interviews was the need to strengthen the examination/assessment component that goes hand-in-hand with the new curriculum:

“Unless you design assessments to align with your curriculum you only solve half of the problem. The examination regime needs to be modified to see improvements in curriculum delivery. Otherwise, teachers won’t use the new curriculum, they will only teach to what is in the exam” [Feedback from FEP staff member]

“We currently have a very exam-oriented curriculum. Teachers deliver the curriculum but don’t consider pedagogies” [Feedback from TTI representative]

Interviews conducted for the Review suggest there is interest and support from the Ministry for the FEP to move more directly into this space, but it needs to be further explored. If this is supported, then the FEP should also move to strengthen its engagement with the Educational Quality and Assessment Program (EQAP) to ensure that the literacy and numeracy curriculum and the related assessments are comparable to regional benchmarks for performance.

Another important element is the need for the FEP to consult widely with MEHA staff and with TTI’s on the curriculum revisions.

“I would like to see a reference group set up to review the revised curriculum, which would include internal plus external stakeholders, such as some employers, to ensure that the revisions are aligned with the expectations and needs of the country” [Comment from MEHA stakeholder]

FEMIS/ICT/Finance: The Review has previously noted results achieved in terms of FEMIS, financial management (through systems and process improvements) and ICT more broadly which have been supported by the FEP. It has been argued that these developments have led to operational efficiencies within the Ministry and improved transparency and accountability. But further reforms have been earmarked, and the FEP will have an important role to play in bringing these to fruition. For example, while secondary schools are able to reconcile their expenditure of the FEG in FEMIS, this functionality is yet to be rolled out to primary schools. Stakeholder consultations also indicated there were plans to bring calculations for other grant types, such as the SIE grant and transport assistance onto FEMIS in the near future.

Linked with improving the functionality in FEMIS is the need to build awareness and capacity of MEHA staff at all levels to use data for decision-making. Senior MEHA staff are aware that while some of the data in FEMIS is being used, as a general resource it is under-utilised. Part of this will involve working with different sections of MEHA to understand their data requirements and what would be useful for them, and then preparing reports from FEMIS so that this information is readily available to them. It will also involve training education officers and potentially Heads of Schools so they understand how the data in FEMIS can help with their work.

Connectivity/digitisation/support for remote learning and professional development: This is potentially a new area of focus for the FEP but is strongly linked to the ‘emergency preparedness’ cross-cutting theme. It responds to the need for alternative solutions to be in place where face-to-face learning and/or face-to-face training and mentoring of MEHA staff (including teachers) is not possible. In the current context, this is clearly relevant given the lockdowns associated with COVID-19. But it is also relevant to a more ‘BAU’ setting where the risk of cyclones and flooding is high and where, for example, damage to school infrastructure means face-to-face learning isn’t possible. MEHA staff, particularly the Heads of Schools and the Divisional Education Officers, consistently raised this as an area of critical need.

“We have limited connectivity at our school and most people in our community do not have access to the internet in their homes. We are trying to deliver hard copy worksheets to all our students, but the high cost of fuel means we can’t do this every week” [Comment from a Head of School]

Given the size of the FEP’s budget it is not possible for the FEP to fund the large-scale infrastructure development required to improve internet connectivity across Fiji. But there are other opportunities the FEP might consider, which could be further discussed with MEHA. For example, while the Government of Fiji is seeking support from multilateral donors to fund additional ‘hardware’ to support improved connectivity, there may be a role for the FEP to provide technical support for other parts of the solution. In addition, as part of developing the new curriculum, the FEP could also consider developing additional resources to ensure the curriculum can be taught in multiple modes.

Another related priority area is Moodle, which is currently under-utilised, and which could have a key role to play in supporting teacher training and professional development while lockdowns continue (see section 2 below). The lack of technical capacity in the Ministry regarding Moodle was identified as a key risk by MEHA stakeholders.

2. District/school level systems

Engagement with TTI’s, including on teacher standards: In previous years the FEP was discouraged from engaging with TTI’s or being involved in pre-service or in-service teacher training. This has clearly been a considerable gap in the program. But these constraints now appear to have been lifted and the Ministry has indicated it would support the FEP working in this space in the next phase. The capacity of teachers in Fiji is critical to improving the learning outcomes of all boys and girls in Fiji. Yet teacher quality was consistently raised as a key constraint during stakeholder interviews.

FEP support for TTI’s could take several different forms. For example, the FEP could and should consult closely with TTI’s on the revisions being made to the primary and secondary curriculum. The FEP should also work with TTI’s to embed gender equality and special and inclusive education approaches into their training programs, noting that teacher capacity in this area is critical to ensuring that girls and children with disabilities are able to successfully transition to higher level learning. There may also be opportunities for the FEP to support TTI’s in other aspects of their training programs, particularly in terms of pedagogical approaches.

“There is too much of a focus on traditional modes of teaching, we haven’t really moved to absorb and embrace technology, and teachers aren’t supported to teach in this way... when graduate teachers start teaching in the classroom they revert back to traditional modes of delivery” [Comment from TTI stakeholder]

“Teacher quality is a recurring problem. Graduate teachers who appear to be progressive meet with a blackboard!” [Comment from TTI stakeholder]

A key outcome of the Teacher Quality Steering Committee in 2019 (which no longer appears to be meeting), which included the previous FEP TL, was the development of a draft Fiji Teacher Attributes Framework (FTAF). This work was funded by MFAT. The Fiji Higher Education Commission consulted widely on the framework through late 2019 and 2020 and it has been aligned with the Pacific Teacher Attributes Framework owned by EQAP. It is already being considered by TTI’s in the delivery of their teaching programs, but it is still to be approved by the Minister (with the delay largely due to COVID-19).

Once it is approved by the Minister, the FTAF provides several entry points for the FEP in terms of working with TTI’s. For example, FEP could assist TTI’s to align their teaching programmes/ curriculum with the standards in the FTAF. FEP could also facilitate collaboration between TTI’s to support program delivery and promote consistency, and it could facilitate collaboration between TTI’s and CAS (MEHA) on the FTAF and the link to the primary and secondary curriculum.

‘In-service’ teacher professional development and school leadership: Collaboration with TTI’s is an important step to ensuring that graduate teachers have skills and competencies that aligned with the FTAF. But it does not address the capacity needs of teachers already working in schools (i.e., in-service teachers) who do not meet the standards in the FTAF. This is a critical need.

“School systems are hard to change. Graduate teachers bring new ideas into their schools, but they die out because they are not supported or encouraged. We need to change the existing system so these new ideas can take hold” [Comment from CSO member]

The FEP is unlikely to have sufficient budget to support one-on-one training and mentoring of in-service teachers, and this modality is not currently viable anyway due to the ongoing lockdown associated with COVID-19. However, there are other ways this could be done. For example, FEP could utilise Moodle to provide training and professional development modules for teachers that could be completed online. This could include the promotion of new approaches to teaching, including training teachers themselves to increase the use of technology in education delivery.

“We need to use technology more. We developed a training program on Moodle but haven’t yet got it off the ground. We were going to run a one-day training course in each district, but it didn’t happen because of the lockdown, we need to consider other ways to support schools virtually” [Comment from FEP staff member]

There also remains a critical need to build the capacity of school leaders. Stakeholder consultations reiterated that the reason the School Learning Development Program was originally developed by the FEP was because more than 75 per cent of school leaders had not successfully passed a leadership assessment conducted by the Ministry in 2017. Interviews with Heads of Schools indicated a clear desire for further leadership training, and the PS herself noted during interview that Heads of Schools should be using the time they have available to further develop their leadership skills. This could also be progressed via Moodle, which would maximise the reach of the FEP for minimal cost.

Support for individual schools: This Review is not recommending a return to the AQEP model. But during our consultations, stakeholders who had been working in schools that received targeted support under AQEP spoke highly of the support that had been received and were able to provide strong evidence that assistance received under AQEP had made a meaningful, concrete difference.

“Teachers who were here under AQEP participated in a lot of workshops which really helped them and taught them how to teach literacy and numeracy to our students. We were considered one of the underperforming schools, but under AQEP we saw progress, we went from red to green” [Comment from Head of School]

“Since the support from AQEP has finished, the good things that happened in the school have continued. The fruit of the support was seen in just a few years, before I left, we had moved into the green zone. I am no longer in an AQEP school, but I am still implementing all those new things I learnt back in 2014” [Comment from Head of School]

One of the reasons for shifting away from an individual school-based focus (as per AQEP) was to systematise the gains/reforms so that all schools in Fiji could benefit. Some progress under the FEP has been made, but it is a long-term game, and the FEP is at risk if it cannot show meaningful progress at the school level (in terms of improved learning outcomes for Fiji girls and boys) within a reasonable timeframe. Working within individual schools, even if only a small number of schools, may provide coverage for the FEP to show it is contributing to clear improvements in learning outcomes (including literacy and numeracy) in the short-term until the long-term benefits from system-level reforms start to be realised at the school level. These opportunities should be determined by FEP/DFAT but could potentially be aligned with the pilot of the revised primary literacy and numeracy curriculum in the 45 ‘Hope’ schools, which is due to occur in January 2022.

3. Community systems

School counselling: This is an area of critical need for Fiji. Even prior to COVID-19, the resources allocated to school counselling in Fiji were inadequate. Prior to 2020, there were two school counsellors for the whole of the country, one in the Western division, the other in the Eastern division. These counsellors were responding to individual cases in schools on issues such as bullying, cyber-bullying, physical and sexual abuse, and drugs to name but a few.

“There is overwhelming demand for counselling services, and the need is becoming greater. COVID-19 and natural disasters have exacerbated this” [Comment from MEHA stakeholder]

In 2019-20, the FEP supported 35 teachers to complete a Diploma of Counselling with the Australia Pacific Training Coalition. In 2021, the Ministry itself announced it would support another 50 teachers to complete the same training. The need for counselling services in schools is extensive, and it is only likely to be increasing given the current lockdown. Once schools do return for face-to-face learning, the demand for counselling services is expected to grow significantly.

The FEP could play an important role in this area in the next few years. While the pilot supported by the FEP in 25 schools in 2020 (counselling services provided by two NGO’s) will finish in 2021, there are other opportunities that may be identified through the action research component of the pilot. For example, the next phase of the program could see a pivot towards supervision and mentoring for the new school counsellors. Or the delivery of training to teachers on how to identify students that require support and/or to provide information on referral pathways.

Parents: The FEP design noted that the institution of school ownership in Fiji has great potential for involving parents and the wider community in the school to the benefit of students. The design also noted that increasing parents’ involvement can reduce student absenteeism and increase students’ interest in learning.²⁴ It isn’t immediately clear to the Review what role the FEP could play in this space, although again we note there were several ideas included in the FEP design, including working closely with School Management committees and CSOs to develop and pilot solution for

²⁴ FEP design pg.17

supportive learning environments.²⁵ The purpose of including this here, however, is to be faithful to the feedback from many stakeholders (including Heads of Schools, DEO's, and faith-based organisations) that, broadly, parents are not involved enough and not motivated enough to support their children to learn, and this is a critical need with children now learning from home.

“The main challenge I would like to share is the lack of support we receive from our parents. We find it very difficult. They have low education themselves. Our teachers meet with the parents and try to explain to them, but nothing happens. Last week, we collected the first batch of learning packs and most had been completed by the parents, not the children”
[Comment from a Head of School]

Cross-cutting – Emergency preparedness

It is critical that an emergency preparedness lens be applied to all FEP activities. A key driver for the cluster of activities around connectivity and digitisation and support for remote learning is the need for the education sector in Fiji to be better prepared to respond to emergencies. But emergency preparedness should also be considered as part of the design and development of the new curriculum, particularly noting that cyclones or floods (or COVID-19) frequently occur and can prevent children from meeting for face-to-face learning. Emergency preparedness is relevant to the work being undertaken to upgrade FEMIS, for example, FEMIS can be used to store data and information on school infrastructure, or FEMIS can be used to monitor student attendance before and after a natural disaster (as it was by the Ministry following TC Yasa). Emergency preparedness is also relevant to the potential work on school counselling.

Cross-cutting – Special and Inclusive Education

The FEP has made excellent progress on special and inclusive education. And the Ministry has made encouraging steps towards institutionalising SIE, including by continuing to fund two Special and Inclusive Education Officer positions. But the gains have been hard fought and this issue needs to continue to be prioritised. During consultations, stakeholders identified the need for stronger systems to identify and support students with disabilities given there are so many more students with disabilities enrolling in mainstream schools. As it stands, the number of students with disabilities in mainstream schools is growing at a rate that is beyond MEHA's capacity to verify them. There is also a need to improve the capacity of teachers to teach children with educational support needs, including the ability to deliver the curriculum in a differentiated way, noting that around 1/3 of the teachers currently working in special schools are not qualified to teach in them. Again, as per emergency preparedness, the work of the SIE team should cut across all the different components of the FEP.

Cross-cutting – Gender equality

Recent changes in the context suggest there will be greater opportunities to progress gender issues in the next phase of the FEP. For example, in 2020 the Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation introduced the Gender Transformative Institutional Capacity Development Initiative, which aims to enhance technical knowledge, competence and resources on transformative gender mainstreaming across various government institutions, sectors and settings in Fiji.²⁶ As part of this initiative, Ministry's within the GoF, including MEHA, are now required to undertake gender-based budgeting. Similarly, in late 2020, the Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, announced that the Government of Fiji would be undertaking a Country Gender Assessment, with a

²⁵ FEP design, pg.34

²⁶ <https://www.fiji.gov.fj/Media-Centre/News/FIJI-TO-IMPLEMENT-A-GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE-INSTITUT>

view to providing a comprehensive overview of gender issues in various sectors and critical areas including Health, Education, Economy, Violence against Women and Girls, Gender and Environment, Women in Leadership and Decision Making and others.²⁷

Both initiatives provide excellent entry points for the FEP to progress gender as a cross-cutting theme in the next phase and is particularly relevant for the new FEP to be embedded in the Ministry to progress gender issues. It was also noted during stakeholder consultations that a study on barriers to female leadership in education may be conducted, and the results of this study would feed into other potential investments, including in teacher training and professional development.

²⁷ <https://www.fiji.gov.fj/Media-Centre/News/FIJI-COUNTRY-GENDER-ASSESSMENT%E2%80%AC>

3. Summary of findings and recommendations

Relevance

	Findings	Recommendations
1.	The FEP is highly relevant to both GoF and GoA priorities as reflected in key strategic documents and plans. It is a critical reflection of the ambition captured within the Vuvale Partnership. It focuses on niche areas that are critical to improving learning outcomes for boys and girls in Fiji, including those with disabilities, and it has an important role to play in supporting economic and social recovery from COVID-19.	The importance of the FEP to the GoF, and to the GoA, including its role in supporting economic and social recovery from COVID-19 in Fiji, should be at the forefront of any discussions on budget allocations/reallocations within the Australian Aid Program in Fiji.
2.	The FEP has been flexible and responsive to GoF priorities, which has ensured it is a highly relevant program. However, the focus of the FEP on responsiveness has often come at the expense of the strategic ambition of the program outlined in the FEP design. Several new activities that were funded by a reallocation of FEP resources were not ultimately completed, while some priorities outlined in the FEP design were not progressed due to resources being reallocated elsewhere.	DFAT/FEP and MEHA should work closely and collaboratively in coming months to agree priority areas for the next phase of the FEP and this 'design update' should be signed off by both parties. Any future changes to priorities and/or strategic focus should be considered and agreed by the Steering Committee (see point 10 below), which should include senior representatives of both MEHA and DFAT/FEP.

Effectiveness

	Findings	Recommendations
3.	The FEP has achieved some important results and a strong case can be made for effectiveness, despite the frequent changes to priorities. At the same time, the focus has been largely on just one of the three levels of 'systems' identified in the FEP design as needing to be strengthened for the long-term development outcome of the FEP to be achieved. The FEP's end-of-program outcomes were revised in mid-2020 and there are now four clear priority areas/end-of-program outcomes. The FEP is expected to achieve some, but not all, of the end-of-program outcomes.	The FEP should return to the ToC outlined in the FEP design for the next phase (or a modified version of it), which would mean delivering activities within each of the three levels of systems required to achieve improved learning outcomes for all Fiji girls and boys (with the available budget to determine what is possible within each level). Several of the drivers that led to a diversion away from this approach in recent years no longer appear to be relevant.
4.	Progress on cross-cutting issues has been mixed. There are some excellent results for disability inclusion/special and inclusive education, which stem from a clear strategic approach and long-term, consistent engagement. Less progress is visible for gender equality, though recent steps to refresh the GEDSI strategy and the establishment of a new gender adviser role in the Ministry bode well for the next phase. There are opportunities to further mainstream emergency preparedness within FEP's activities.	GEDSI and emergency preparedness should be clearly reflected as cross-cutting issues in the Theory of Change/Results Framework for the next phase. These cross-cutting lenses should be applied across all activities supported by the FEP.
5.	The MEL system and the Theory of Change has had little influence over programming decisions (which instead have been largely driven by the priorities of the PS), though there are several examples where MEL has been used to inform the delivery of individual activities.	DFAT/FEP and MEHA should agree on the overarching purpose of the FEP for the next phase. Is it an adaptive, responsive program that meets the priorities of MEHA (and changes when those priorities change), or is it a 'traditional' program with shared strategic objectives? The FEP MEL framework/approach should then be developed

		accordingly. Information from the MEL system should be fed into FEP governance mechanisms and regularly considered by key decision-makers (see point 10 below).
6.	The frequent changes to the priorities of the FEP has meant frequent updates to the MEL architecture, including the results framework. The time spent doing this appears to have come at the cost of more useful analysis/deep dives on program-level issues that might otherwise be used to inform programming decisions.	Once the overarching purpose of the program is clear, DFAT and FEP should agree on minimum reporting requirements for the next phase. Ideally, more time should be spent testing the effectiveness of the component parts of the program and the extent to which they are contributing to the long-term development outcome. These analytical pieces should be discussed with DFAT (and MEHA) beforehand to ensure buy-in.

Efficiency

	Findings	Recommendations
7.	The annual FEP budget is significantly less than it was under AQEP. It is less than 2 per cent of MEHA's operating budget. But while the program is small and focused in niche areas, the budget appears to be sufficient for the FEP to make a meaningful contribution to the long-term development outcome. Gaps in progress/results achieved do not appear to be because of a lack of budget, but because of the way the budget has been allocated (at the request of MEHA and with the support of DFAT).	Intended outcomes for the next phase of the FEP should be specific and focused in niche but transformative areas, appropriate to the size of the program budget. If additional budget becomes available there are opportunities for it to be deployed effectively (see point 14).
8.	There is considerable capacity within the FEP (i.e., human resources) and further technical support available from the Fiji Facility. In areas such as MEL and SIE, the level of resources available to progress these issues appears to be sufficient. However, gender equality and emergency preparedness both appear to have been under-resourced.	All cross-cutting issues should be appropriately resourced for the next phase of the FEP. For gender equality and emergency preparedness, this means increasing resources from current levels. For all it means providing resources (tools and methodologies) to build the capacity of FEP staff to mainstream these issues in their work, as well as progressing relevant activities with the Ministry.
9.	There are some examples of information sharing and collaboration between different parts of the Fiji Facility, which have benefited the FEP. But there are also opportunities to strengthen this. A cross-facility GEDSI network has been established, but there do not appear to be other similar cross-facility networks where knowledge can be shared, and common challenges discussed.	There should be more intentional collaboration between FEP and other sectors/programs within the Fiji Facility to share knowledge, promote learning, and develop strategies to resolve common challenges.
10.	Governance mechanisms for the FEP have been largely non-existent since the first 12 months of the program. Without these forums, there has been little opportunity to consider the merits of changing focus/priorities, including the impact of these decisions on progress towards the FEP's long-term development outcome.	Governance mechanisms, including a Steering Committee with representation from MEHA, DFAT and the FEP, should be re-introduced to provide strategic oversight of the program.
11.	The engagement between MEHA and DFAT/FEP has been largely transactional in recent years, and program priorities have changed as key staff have changed (particularly the PS for Education).	MEHA and DFAT/FEP should explore the merits of a more collaborative, partnership-style mode of working, with principles of mutual responsibility and accountability, clearly articulated roles and responsibilities and individual contributions to the agreed program objectives. This should be reflected in a formal agreement (partnership agreement or

		similar), signed by both parties. This would mitigate the risks associated with staff turnover.
12.	MEHA stakeholders have little concept of the strategic ambition of the FEP beyond their immediate area of responsibility. Many still refer to the program as AQEP. Given the focus of AQEP was at the school level, Australian support was highly visible. With the focus of the FEP at the system level (and largely at the central/Ministry level), this is no longer the case.	DFAT/FEP should consider ways of communicating/showcasing the work that is being progressed through the FEP to ensure that public diplomacy benefits are being maximised.

Future opportunities

	Findings	Recommendations
13.		<p><u>In terms of the 'how' of program delivery...</u></p> <p>In addition to reinstituting appropriate governance and management mechanisms (point 10), the FEP should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • broadening the modalities of program delivery • setting aside a small amount of the program budget to be responsive to additional requests for support from the Ministry
14.		<p><u>In terms of 'what' the program could focus on (subject to budget availability):</u></p> <p>Central/Ministry level systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum revisions (though with an added focus on assessments) • Updates to FEMIS and support for ICT (including use of data in decision-making); potential advisory support to strengthen MEHA monitoring systems • Connectivity/enabling environment for remote learning and remote teacher professional development (including Moodle) <p>District/School level systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for TTI's on the implementation of the Fiji Teacher Attributes Framework (<i>pre-service</i>) • Professional development for <i>in-service</i> teachers and school leaders aligned with the FTAF (including through Moodle) • Targeted support and intervention for a small number of individual schools to improve literacy and numeracy <p>Community level systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training, mentoring and/or supervision of new school counsellors funded by the Ministry • Training for teachers to identify students who require support • Building the involvement of parents in the delivery of education <p>Cross-cutting issues – gender equality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the Ministry to respond to new requirements under the Gender Transformative Institutional Initiative (including gender-based budgeting) and the Fiji Country Gender Assessment

		<p>Cross-cutting issues – disability inclusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the Ministry to verify students with disabilities in inclusive schools, and build the capacity of teachers to deliver special and inclusive education <p>Cross-cutting issues – emergency preparedness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for connectivity/the enabling environment for remote learning. And ensure an emergency preparedness lens is applied to all other activities being supported by the FEP
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Annex 1: (Original) Terms of Reference

Background

Australia's Support to Fiji's Education Sector (referred to as the "Fiji Education Program" or FEP) is a DFAT-funded four-year, \$25 million investment focused on improving learning outcomes for Fijian school children. It is currently in the fourth year of implementation (including a transitional year from July 2017 to June 2018). FEP has expended approximately \$10,194,000 up to June 2020. The current completion date for the Program is January 2021, however a second phase is likely if DFAT extends the Fiji Program Support Facility (FPSF) within which FEP is delivered.

DFAT established FPSF ("The Facility") in 2017 to support and implement Australia's health, education, Australia Awards and governance programs in Fiji. The Facility also supports the Australia Awards and education programs in Tuvalu. The Facility integrates cross-cutting themes, including gender equality, disability inclusion, climate change, emergency preparedness and response and civil society engagement across sector programs. In particular, the Facility seeks to strengthen program outcomes by better addressing the needs of targeted beneficiaries including those who are often marginalised.

FEP is the latest in a series of Australian-funded education sector support programs in Fiji. It was preceded by the Fiji Education Sector Support Program (FESP, 2004 to 2009) and Access to Quality Education Program (AQEP, 2011 to 2017). The FEP design integrated lessons from both programs into its program Theory of Change, working across three interconnected pillars:

- Improving centralised policymaking and management of education by the Fiji Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts (MEHA), including continuing AQEP's strong results in developing the Fiji Education Management Information System (FEMIS)
- Improving the performance of schools and teachers, including through engagement with Fiji's five Teacher Training Institutions (TTIs)
- Building stronger links with communities and engaging them in the improved management of schools

Since implementation started in July 2017, a range of factors has resulted in a shift away from FEP's original Theory of Change. Emerging Government of Fiji (GoF) priorities related to public service employment reforms changed MEHA leadership, and COVID-19 has changed the day-to-day work and strategic direction of the program.

In response, FEP is in the process of shifting focus to align better with GoF, DFAT and MEHA priorities. The Program is reviewing its Theory of Change, and the range of activities supported through FEP.

While FEP's overall objective of 'Improving learning outcomes for all Fijian girls and boys' remains the same, the Program is moving away from the three pillars described above and towards four end-of-program outcomes:

- Outcome 1: Curriculum – *Teachers are starting to use a more relevant, contemporary literacy and numeracy curriculum at ECE and primary levels, using up-to-date and inclusive L&N teaching materials that promote gender equality, disability and social inclusion.*
- Outcome 2: Inclusion – *Inclusive schools are resourced to support learning by students with disabilities (including funding, curriculum and inclusive learning resources).*
- Outcome 3: MEHA policy and systems – *Improved MEHA systems and policies, and access to accurate disaggregated data, that will lead to more efficient, equitable and inclusive allocation of staff, teaching resources and funding to schools across Fiji.*

- Outcome 4: Research-based evidence – *MEHA policy responses to emerging issues informed by evidence from research and pilots.*

Significant FEP activity streams contributing to these outcomes include:

- Supporting disability inclusion by advising MEHA on integration of students with disabilities into mainstream schools and building a supportive policy framework
- Updating Fiji's literacy and numeracy curriculum, and training teachers in its use
- Supporting MEHA's HR reform agenda, including merit-based selection and more efficient recruitment and administration
- Building MEHA's operational capacity through improved financial and information management (including support for the Fiji Education Management Information System, FEMIS)
- Trialling approaches to technology enabled learning
- Trialling approaches to providing student support services in Fijian schools

In addition to the four outcome areas and activities, FEP maintains a cross-cutting commitment to mainstreaming gender equality, disability inclusion, addressing the effects of climate change and disaster risk reduction across all activities.

FEP aligns with MEHA's Strategic Plan 2019-23 (and contributed to the Plan's development) and the GoF's National Development 5- and 20-year Plan, with a focus on supporting quality education for all Fijian children.

COVID-19 disrupted schooling (with schools closed from March to June) and has severely constrained MEHA's budget. FEP provided immediate support to students during school closure including resources for home learning. Engagement with MEHA on emerging priorities over the recovery period is ongoing. Release of DFAT's Fiji COVID Response Plan is also expected to aid identification of priorities.

Review Purpose

This Mid-Term Review (MTR) of FEP will have both formative and summative purposes. In line with the key review questions outlined below, it will:

- Review FEP's performance so far, including its performance responding to MEHA priorities and needs.
- Situate the assessment of performance within significant recent changes in the operating environment.
- Review the management of FEP through the FPSF.
- Make recommendations relevant to any extension or new phase of the program.

Key Review Questions

Key review questions for the MTR are:

1. *To what extent are the FEP's end of program outcomes on-track to being achieved?*
2. *How well has FEP supported the building of MEHA's operational capacity?*
3. *Is FEP's approach to program planning, delivery, and reporting still relevant and fit-for-purpose?*
4. *To what extent has FEP addressed cross cutting issues in planning, delivery and reporting?*

These questions will be refined, focused, and finalised as part of the development of the evaluation plan with DFAT, MEHA and FEP.

It is expected that the MTR will use a mixed methods approach to gathering evidence in response to these questions, drawing on a desk review (of workplans, annual reports and existing assessments of FEP performance), interviews with DFAT, MEHA, CSO and FPSF staff and FEMIS and FEP MEL data.

Review Process

The MTR will require up to 30 days of inputs (allocation of days by review team member outlined below) and will be completed no later than end-May 2021.

The MTR will involve the steps, processes and reporting (**payment milestones are underlined**) outlined in timing and duration below.

The MTR team will report to DFAT Senior Program Manager Tina Seniloli. The review plan, aide memoire and MTR report will be submitted to tina.seniloli@dfat.gov.au.

The MTR will be published on the DFAT website, as per the DFAT Evaluation Policy. Publication will consider any sensitivities in the public version of the report.

Review team roles and functions

DFAT will commission the MTR team which will have four members and be led by a professional evaluator. Consideration will be given to travel arrangements for team members given current COVID-19 restrictions.

DFAT considers that activities of this nature provide an opportunity for program staff to gain exposure to thematic and monitoring and evaluation experts and would like Post/program manager to participate as an observer in the evaluation. This will ensure contextual knowledge of DFAT's operations and structure.

Participation from the GoF enables knowledge and lessons from the evaluation to be retained within Government and may enhance future engagement between DFAT and the Government on this program.

DFAT may procure two consultants to fill the Team Leader and Specialist roles or both roles may be filled by a single person who possesses the quality and requirements of the positions as set out below.

The MTR team lead responsibilities may include drafting the review plan; drafting the aide memoire and presenting initial findings to DFAT; developing review tools; training review team members in use of tools; directing fieldwork; drafting review report; and, revising review report.

The MTR specialist lead responsibilities may include providing education and inclusion technical inputs into all aspects of the review; thematic advisory support to the review team leader; contextual advice on Fiji education sector; and practical, contextually appropriate policy and technical recommendations based on review findings.

Other team members will work under the overall direction of the Team Leader; provide advice on context, access to networks, and an understanding of GoF and DFAT processes; and participate in other activities as directed by the Team Leader.

DFAT will provide assistance with program briefing on Australian aid investments in the education sector; sourcing and provision of relevant documents; logistics such as organising and confirming meeting schedules and domestic travel arrangements; and hosting the aide-memoire presentation.

Timing and duration

The MTR is proposed to be undertaken as follows. All aspects are subject to discussion and agreement with DFAT. A briefing will be scheduled to discuss detailed timing at the commencement of services. Dates are indicative and negotiable with preferred tenderer. The review may involve contact with children and school visits. Should either be required, all review team members will undergo police and MEHA checks prior to participating in the review.

Team member:	Indicative timeline Wks	Team Leader	Specialist	DFAT	GoF
Initial briefing, document review, review planning	1	3	3	3	3
Preparation of draft MTR plan including proposed in-country schedule	1	3	3	1	1
Submission of draft MTR plan to Suva Post	2				
Discuss draft review plan and confirm evaluation questions with Suva Post	3	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Preparation of final MTR plan	3	1	1	0.5	0.5
Submit final MTR plan to Suva Post	3				
Virtual and face-to-face in-country mission: initial team meeting and briefings with Suva Post, consultations in each division and at least one maritime community, preparation of aide memoire	4 & 5	12	12	12	12
Presentation of initial findings and aide memoire	6	1			
Preparation of draft MTR report including data processing and analysis	7	5	4	1	1
Submission of draft MTR report to Suva Post	8				
Comments on draft MTR report from Suva Post	9				
Preparation of final MTR report	9	2	2	0.5	0.5
Submission of final MTR report to Suva Post	10				

Annex 2: Revised Theory of Change (as at April 2021)

What FEP and Australian Aid is contributing to				
Impact	Improved learning outcomes for all Fiji girls and boys, through: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• An inclusive L&N curriculum• Sufficient resources for SIE• MEHA systems that allocate staff and funds fairly and efficiently• Evidence-based policies in areas prioritised by MEHA			
What will happen in MEHA and schools by the end of this phase of FEP				
End-of Program outcomes (Phase 1, Dec 2021)	<div>1. Curriculum</div> <div>1.a Teachers at targeted schools use a more relevant, contemporary L&N curriculum incorporating up-to-date and inclusive teaching materials that promote climate change awareness, disaster risk reduction, gender equality, disability and social inclusion</div> <div>1.b MEHA has information it needs to apply a coherent L&N coaching approach across all Fiji schools (including how to coach teachers on differentiation and adjustment)</div> <div>1.c Quality of L&N teaching in targeted classrooms improves, including of children with disabilities, boys and girls</div>	<div>2. Inclusion</div> <div>2.a MEHA endorses new SIE Policy and Implementation Plan, and SIE working group</div> <div>2.b Increased number of children with disabilities enroll in school, particularly girls</div> <div>2.c MEHA allocates more human and financial resources to SIE centrally and to schools via the SIEG</div>	<div>3. MEHA policy and systems</div> <div>3.a. MEHA HR system is merit-based and efficient</div> <div>3.b. MEHA accesses disaggregated education data in FEMIS to make decisions</div> <div>3.c. MEHA has improved oversight of resource flows to schools, including planning and accountability</div> <div>3.d. Teachers and school heads improve their skills and awareness of MEHA policies</div> <div>3.e MEHA accepts recommendations of FEP-funded gender equality specialist, in line with international good practice</div>	<div>4. Evidence-based policy</div> <div>4.a. MEHA makes evidence-based decisions on use of TEL</div> <div>4.b. MEHA makes evidence-based decisions on student support services, drawing on piloted tools and methods that promote gender equality and inclusion</div>
What MEHA and schools will have, or do differently as a direct result of FEP actions				
Intermediate outcomes	<div>MEHA has fully scoped and sequenced L&N curriculums at all levels, supported by teacher guides that provide high impact teaching strategies</div> <div>Teachers have access to online materials to update knowledge of L&N teaching, including on differentiated teaching/adjustments</div> <div>CAS, teacher mentors and DEOs pilot coaching at 45 Hope schools (including on differentiated learning and adjustments)</div> <div>The curriculum integrates content and messaging on equality, respectful relationships and inclusion as well as pedagogies that support learning by boys and girls and differentiated teaching techniques for children with disabilities</div>	<div>FEP and MEHA have evidence on gender disparities in identification and support for students with disabilities</div> <div>New SIE Policy and Implementation Plan drafted, integrating GESI</div> <div>SIE organisational capacity situation analysis recommendations endorsed by MEHA</div> <div>More students with disabilities verified in FEMIS</div> <div>Schools use and report on use of SIEG for learning outcomes</div> <div>Teachers and School Heads understand how to teach students with disabilities</div>	<div>MEHA applies and uses new online HR systems</div> <div>MEHA uses systems that improve access to data and increase efficiency, including FEMIS</div> <div>MEHA implements policies that govern resource flows to schools, collection of data, risk management, inclusion and planning</div> <div>Teachers and school heads use learning resources and guidance to improve their skills and awareness of MEHA policies</div> <div>FEP-funded gender equality specialist identifies and recommends specific changes to MEHA policy and practice</div>	<div>MEHA has data and evidence on root causes of bullying and student absenteeism</div> <div>MEHA has evidence on the tools, policies and methods that support TEL</div> <div>MEHA has access to data, evidence, tools and systems that support school counselling and student support services</div> <div>Students access student support services at pilot schools (particularly at-risk and disadvantaged students)</div>
What FEP will deliver in response to MEHA needs and priorities				
Outputs	<div>• Development of scoped and sequenced curriculum, guides and training package, integrating GEDSI, CC and DRR</div> <div>• Trial of curriculum and teacher guides at pilot Hope schools</div> <div>• Training of instructional coaches</div> <div>• In-school teacher training programs in all school districts</div>	<div>• Research on gender disparities in identification and support for students with disabilities</div> <div>• Lead development of new SIE Policy and Implementation Plan (integrating gender and social inclusion)</div> <div>• Lead SIE organisational capacity situation analysis</div> <div>• Support verification through Inclusive Education Coaches</div> <div>• Strengthen FEMIS disability module, tools and processes</div> <div>• Strengthen SIEG processes</div> <div>• Conduct ECE situation analysis</div> <div>• Develop and disseminate videos, including for community engagement on enrolment of students with disabilities</div> <div>• Training and coaching in SIE, IEPs and ITPs</div> <div>• Curriculum review</div> <div>• Update and disseminate IE Toolkit</div>	<div>• Revised, up-to-date and digitised HR systems</div> <div>• Online teacher learning and performance systems</div> <div>• MEHA finance systems based on updated policies</div> <div>• FEMIS data systems supporting input and extraction of data</div> <div>• Placement of gender equality adviser</div>	<div>• Research on bullying in schools, including differential impacts on girls, boys and children with disabilities.</div> <div>• Study on out-of-school children including differential impacts on girls, boys and children with disabilities.</div> <div>• Pilot of student support services (including of differentiated approaches to providing support services for girls, boys and students with disabilities).</div> <div>• Pilot of technology-enabled learning, including differential needs of girls, boys and children with disabilities.</div> <div>• Provision of services and equipment related to pilot activities (including counselling services at high-need schools and TEL equipment and remote and/or remote schools)</div>

Annex 3: Key Documents

Access to Quality Education Program (AQEP) 2011–2017, Lessons Learned from the Program

AQEP End of Program Evaluation (May 2018)

Australia's Support to Fiji's Education Sector - Design Document (June 2018)

DFAT – Aid Program Performance Report 2018-19, Fiji (September 2019)

DFAT – Fiji COVID-19 Development Response Plan (October 2020)

FEP Budget/Costed Workplans (2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21)

FEP Theory of Change and Results Framework (April 2021)

Fiji-Australia Vuvale Partnership (September 2019)

Fiji Facility Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan (May 2021)

Fiji Program Support Facility Annual Reports (2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20)

Fiji Program Support Facility 6-month Progress Reports (2018, 2019, 2020)

Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan 6-Month Tracker – Education (June 2021)

Ministry of Economy, 5-Year and 20-Year National Development Plan – Transforming Fiji (November 2017)

Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts, Strategic Plan 2019-2023

Special and Inclusive Education - A Snapshot (August 2021)

Special & Inclusive Education Grant Survey Report (June 2021)

The Australian Government's Fiji Program Support Facility, Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan (November 2020)

The Australian Government's Fiji Program Support Facility, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Guide

Annex 4: Stakeholder Interviews

Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts

Name	Position
Dr Anjeela Jokhan	Permanent Secretary for Education
Mr Hem Chand	Head, Human Resources
Mr Josua Naisele	Director Substance Abuse Advisory Council
Mr Edwin Kumar	Head, Corporate Services
Ms Alrina Ali	Head, Executive Services
Mr Suliasi Vuli	Divisional Education Officer, Eastern
Ms Iliseva Volai	Divisional Education Officer, Northern
Mr Sanaila Nauga	Divisional Education Officer, Western
Mr Ronald Krishna	Divisional Education Officer, Central
Mr Satesh Deo	MEHA SIE Coordinator
Ms Alice Pickering	Divisional Counsellor, Western
Mr Ranjish Raj	Manager of Learning and Development
Ms Ruci Qele	Principal Education Officer, CAS
Ms Shayal Sharma	Manager of Grants
Ms Anaseini Tuinaosara	Head of School (Domonisavu District School)
Mr Setareki Waqalevu	Head of School (Vatukacevaceva Village School)
Mr Timoci Naloma	Head of School (Ratu Naivalu Memorial School)
Mr Michael Kumar	Head of School (St. Agnes Primary School)
Mr Sakiusa Verelo	Head of School (Latianara Primary School)
Ms Samuela Wailevu	Head of School (Levuka Public Primary School)
Mr Asishwar Prasad	Head of School (Vunikavikaloa Arya School)
Mr Michael Ali	Head of School (Nukuloa Sanatan Dharm School)
Ms Sisilia Cokanauto	Head of School (Nasekula District School)

DFAT, Australian High Commission Suva

Name	Position
Ms Rochelle White	Counsellor, Human Development
Ms Tina Seniloli	Senior Program Manager, Bilateral Education
Ms Olita Nagera	Program Manager, Education
Ms Betty Jitoko	Education Adviser (Regional)
Ms Emily Elliott	Gender Adviser

Fiji Education Program

Name	Position
Ms Necia Billingham	Team Leader – Education
Mr Ben Mayes	Deputy Team Leader – Education (previously acting TL)
Ms Michelle King	L&N Curriculum Specialist (Primary)
Ms Ceinwyn Elleway	English Curriculum Specialist (Secondary)
Ms Sereana Tagivakatini	Maths Curriculum Specialist (Secondary)
Mr Simon Whitehead	Financial Management Adviser
Mr Colin Connelly	IT/FEMIS Adviser
Ms Ruth Williams	Business Process Improvement Specialist
Mr Sidhart Nambiar	Data Analysis Specialist
Mr Jovesa Korovulavula	SIE Coordinator
Ms Merelesita Qeleni	SIE Curriculum Coordinator
Ms Bianca Murray	CSO Engagement Manager
Ms Beth Sprunt	Disability Inclusion STA
Ms Sally Baker	Disability Inclusion STA
Mr Daniel Kark	Senior MEL adviser
Ms Tauyavu Tuvana	MEL Coordinator - Education

Fiji Program Support Facility

Name	Position
Mr John Farquharson	Facility Leader
Ms Tanya Edmonds	Deputy Facility Leader
Ms Seema Naidu	Senior Adviser, Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion

Teacher Training Institutions

Name	Position
Dr Reijeli Liligeto	Deputy Principal, Fulton College
Dr Rosi Lagi	Head of SPACE, USP
Professor Unaisi Walu Nabobo Baba	Dean, College of Humanities and Education, Fiji National University

Other

Name	Position
Dr Priscilla Puamau	Former FEP TL
Mr Michael Noa	Team Leader, Policy and Research Division, EQAP
Ms Reshika Kumar	Fiji Higher Education Commission
Mr Nemani Drova	Director Education, Archdiocese of Suva, Catholic Church in Fiji
Mr Wessley Vatanitawake	Fiji Council of Churches General Secretary

Annex 5: Alternate text for Annex 2 (accessible)

What FEP and Australia Aid is contributing to

Impact:

Improved learning outcomes for all Fiji girls and boys through:

- An inclusive L&N curriculum
- Sufficient resources for SIE
- MEHA systems that allocate staff and funds fairly and efficiently
- Evidence-based policies in areas prioritised by MEHA.

What will happen in MEHA and schools by the end of this phase of FEP

End of program outcomes (Phase 1, Dec 2021):

1. Curriculum
 - a. 1.a Teachers at targeted schools use a more relevant, contemporary L&N curriculum incorporating up-to-date and inclusive teaching materials that promote climate change awareness, disaster risk reduction, gender equality, disability and social inclusion²
 - b. 1.b MEHA has information it needs to apply a coherent L&N coaching approach across all Fiji schools (including how to coach teachers on differentiation and adjustment)
 - c. 1.c Quality of L&N teaching in targeted classrooms improves, including of children with disabilities, boys and girls
2. Inclusion
 - a. 2.a MEHA endorses new SIE Policy and Implementation Plan, and SIE working group
 - b. 2.b Increased number of children with disabilities enroll in school, particularly girls
 - c. 2.c MEHA allocates more human and financial resources to SIE centrally and to schools via the SIEG
3. MEHA policy and systems
 - a. 3.a. MEHA HR system is merit-based and efficient
 - b. 3.b. MEHA accesses disaggregated education data in FEMIS to make decisions
 - c. 3.c. MEHA has improved oversight of resource flows to schools, including planning and accountability
 - d. 3.d. Teachers and school heads improve their skills and awareness of MEHA policies
 - e. 3.e MEHA accepts recommendations of FEP-funded gender equality specialist, in line with international good practice
4. Evidence-based policy
 - a. 4.a. MEHA makes evidence-based decisions on use of TEL
 - b. 4.b. MEHA makes evidence-based decisions on student support services, drawing on piloted tools and methods that promote gender equality and inclusion

What MEHA and schools will have, or do different as a direct result of FEP actions

Intermediate outcomes

1. Curriculum
 - a. MEHA has fully scoped and sequenced L&N curriculums at all levels, supported by teacher guides that provide high impact teaching strategies
 - b. Teachers have access to online materials to update knowledge of L&N teaching, including on differentiated teaching/adjustments

- c. CAS, teacher mentors and DEOs pilot coaching at 45 Hope schools (including on differentiated learning and adjustments)
 - d. The curriculum integrates content and messaging on equality, respectful relationships and inclusion as well as pedagogies that support learning by boys and girls and differentiated teaching techniques for children with disabilities¹
2. Inclusion
- a. FEP and MEHA have evidence on gender disparities in identification and support for students with disabilities
 - b. New SIE Policy and Implementation Plan drafted, integrating GESI
 - c. SIE organisational capacity situation analysis recommendations endorsed by MEHA
 - d. More students with disabilities verified in FEMIS
 - e. Schools use and report on use of SIEG for learning outcomes
 - f. Teachers and School Heads understand how to teach students with disabilities²
3. MEHA policy and systems
- a. MEHA applies and uses new online HR systems
 - b. MEHA uses systems that improve access to data and increase efficiency, including FEMIS
 - c. MEHA implements policies that govern resource flows to schools, collection of data, risk management, inclusion and planning
 - d. Teachers and school heads use learning resources and guidance to improve their skills and awareness of MEHA policies
 - e. FEP-funded gender equality specialist identifies and recommends specific changes to MEHA policy and practice
4. Evidence-based policy
- a. MEHA has data and evidence on root causes of bullying and student absenteeism
 - b. MEHA has evidence on the tools, policies and methods that support TEL
 - c. MEHA has access to data, evidence, tools and systems that support school counselling and student support services
 - d. Students access student support services at pilot schools (particularly at-risk and disadvantaged students)

What FEP will deliver in response to MEHA needs and priorities

Outputs

- 1. Curriculum
 - a. Development of scoped and sequenced curriculum, guides and training package, integrating GEDSI, CC and DRR
 - b. Trial of curriculum and teacher guides at pilot Hope schools
 - c. Training of instructional coaches
 - d. In-school teacher training programs in all school districts
- 2. Inclusion
 - a. Research on gender disparities in identification and support for students with disabilities
 - b. Lead development of new SIE Policy and Implementation Plan (integrating gender and social inclusion)
 - c. Lead SIE organisational capacity situation analysis
 - d. Support verification through Inclusive Education Coaches
 - e. Strengthen FEMIS disability module, tools and processes
 - f. Strengthen SIEG processes
 - g. Conduct ECE situation analysis

- h. Develop and disseminate videos, including for community engagement on enrolment of students with disabilities
 - i. Training and coaching in SIE, IEPs and ITPs
 - j. Curriculum review
 - k. Update and disseminate IE Toolkit
3. MEHA policy and systems
- a. Revised, up-to-date and digitised HR systems
 - b. Online teacher learning and performance systems
 - c. MEHA finance systems based on updated policies
 - d. FEMIS data systems supporting input and extraction of data
 - e. Placement of gender equality adviser
4. Evidence-based policy
- a. Research on bullying in schools, including differential impacts on girls, boys and children with disabilities.
 - b. Study on out-of-school children including differential impacts on girls, boys and children with disabilities.
 - c. Pilot of student support services (including of differentiated approaches to providing support services for girls, boys and students with disabilities).
 - d. Pilot of technology-enabled learning, including differential needs of girls, boys and children with disabilities.
 - e. Provision of services and equipment related to pilot activities (including counselling services at high-need schools and TEL equipment and remote and/or remote schools)