

Pacific Benchmarking
for
Education Results

Mid-term Review

David Dean
Diana Guild

February 2016

CONTENTS

Abbreviations and acronyms.....	2
Executive Summary	4
1 INTRODUCTION.....	9
1.1 Background.....	9
1.2 The Mid Term Review	12
2 FINDINGS.....	15
2.1 Progress against intended outcomes and outputs	15
2.2 Financial Management and Procurement.....	22
2.3 Stakeholder Perceptions: Qualitative reflections on PABER	26
3 MTR CRITERIA: SUMMARY FINDINGS, CHALLENGES & RECOMMENDATIONS.....	33
3.1 Relevance	33
3.2 Effectiveness.....	33
3.3 Efficiency	34
3.4 Impact.....	36
3.5 Sustainability.....	36
Appendices	38
APPENDIX 1: Overview of PaBER.....	38
APPENDIX 2: Mid-term Review Terms of Reference	41
APPENDIX 3: Documents reviewed	50
APPENDIX 4: Stakeholders Consulted	52
APPENDIX 5: Examples relating to Informants’ perceptions of the PaBER Pilot Program	55
APPENDIX 6: SABER results	60
APPENDIX 7: Detailed comments on Financial Reports.....	65

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACER	Australian Council for Education Research
AusAid	Australian Agency for International Development (now DFAT)
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia, formerly AusAID)
DoE	Department of Education (Papua New Guinea)
ECDF	Education Capacity Development Facility (DFAT, Papua New Guinea)
EFA	Education for All
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ERF	Education Resource Facility (AusAID/DFAT)
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
EQAP	Educational Quality and Assessment Program (formerly SPBEA)
FEdMM	Forum Education Ministers Meeting
GoPNG	Government of Papua New Guinea
HDNED	Human Development Network, Education Department (World Bank)
ICA	Institutional Capacity Analysis
LPMU	Literacy Policy Management Unit (Solomon Islands)
MAPS	Mapping Assessment Policies and Systems for Learning (World Bank, SABER)
MEHRD	Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (Solomon Islands)
MESC	Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (Samoa)
MFAT	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (New Zealand)
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NDOE	National Department of Education (Papua New Guinea)
NEAP	National Education Action Plan
NZAP	New Zealand Aid Program
PaBER	Pacific Benchmarking for Education Results
PBEQ	Pacific Board for Education Quality
PILNA	Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment
PILL	Pacific Island Literacy Levels
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Survey
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment, OECD
PESDA	Pacific Education and Skills Development Agenda (AusAID)
PEDF	Pacific Education Development Framework.
PICs	Pacific Island Countries
PNG	Papua New Guinea
QA	Quality assurance
SABER	Systems Approach for Better Education Results
SACMEQ	Southern and East African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SC	Steering Committee
SI	Solomon Islands
SISTA	Solomon Islands Standardized Test of Achievement
SPBEA	Secretariat of the Pacific Board for Educational Assessment (now EQAP)

SPC	The Pacific Community (formerly known as Secretariat of the Pacific Community)
SPELL	Samoa Primary Education Literacy Level
TA	Technical Assistance
TIMMS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
ToRs	Terms of Reference
TPAW	Teachers Policies Around the World (World Bank, SABER)
TWG	Technical Working Group
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund.
USP	University of the South Pacific
WEFS	Worldwide Education Finance Systems (World Bank SABER)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Mid-Term Review (MTR) finds that the Pacific Benchmarking for Education Results (PaBER) pilot, implemented in Papua New Guinea (PNG), Samoa and the Solomon Islands (SI), has provided a sound platform for a second phase of the activities beyond June 2016, with additional countries. However, the very nature of PaBER with its complex regional and participating countries structure, and multiple activities, has led to challenges in implementation that would need to be addressed in the next phase.

The MTR report considers those challenges and proposes recommendations for consideration. Principally, better clarity in the second phase of PaBER is recommended so that stakeholders in countries joining the program know where responsibilities lie. One option for achieving greater clarity could be nested log-frames in which “improving literacy and numeracy” is the aim of a Pacific Community over-arching log-frame. This would ensure that the emphasis on literacy and numeracy improvement remains prominent, but at the same time responsibility for improvement is clearly located with countries and not with the PaBER program. The aim of PaBER in its subordinate log-frame could then be limited to an appropriate statement on policies that support improvements in literacy and numeracy. Further precision could be achieved by specifying that PaBER provides the analysis of systems and policies, and recommendations for what is needed in participating countries, but responsibility for implementing policy reform lies with the countries themselves. Outputs and outcomes would need to be carefully worded to avoid the possibility of false expectations of PaBER.

Through documentary analysis the review gathered evidence of PaBER’s organisational structure, implementation procedures, roles and responsibilities, financial management, and progress of the project. The review gathered evidence for the Key Questions associated with the MTR through interviews with stakeholders, participation in the November 2015 Steering Committee meeting, and review and analysis of PaBER documents. Findings from these activities are presented in Section 2.1 and 2.3 of this report. Evidence and analysis of PaBER’s financial management and procurement activities is presented in Section 2.2 of this report.

Summary findings from both the quantitative and qualitative aspects and the recommendations that they underpin are presented below structured in terms of the review criteria; relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

In general terms, firstly the MTR concludes that much stronger chains of communication are required throughout Ministries/Department and schools, both vertically and horizontally, in order to make the best use of the Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) recommendations, priorities, and their implementation. Secondly, PaBER activities and results need to be factored into education sector plans and Ministerial/Department of Education reform efforts. Thirdly, PaBER should also be integrated into donor-funded projects and support, and use the “PaBER approach” to guide donor-funded projects and support.

A future phase of PaBER will need to focus on lessons learned and best practices identified at both country and regional levels from the pilot PaBER experience, and build on them. This will require a clear strategy on the implementation of policies, and the monitoring of that process and effectiveness of policy implementation.

Relevance

Findings

Quantitative and qualitative findings confirmed that at the regional level and high-level Ministries/Department of Education PaBER is indeed very relevant to both country education needs and the operations and management of Ministries/Department of Education, where policy analysis and development occurs. This report presents evidence that the PaBER approach is relevant in that it provides a framework for policy work, and acts as a “guide” for policy makers.

We did however find that most mid- and lower-level Ministry/Department of Education informants were unclear on which recommendations from the SABER reports have been implemented, suggesting that the relevance of PaBER was not fully disseminated throughout Ministries/Department of Education.

Recommendations

If a further phase is to be implemented we recommended that PaBER institutes much stronger chains of communication vertically and horizontally throughout the Ministries/Department and schools to make the best use of the SABER recommendations and priorities. In order to achieve improved communication it would also be beneficial to widen the PaBER team to encompass members of all Ministry/Department divisions.

It is also suggested that participating countries would benefit from better integration of PaBER in the education sector (e.g. universities and qualification authorities) and expanding the knowledge learned from and about the SABER process to all stakeholders.

Effectiveness

Findings

It is clear from both documentary analysis and discussions with regional PaBER members and high-level Ministry/Department of Education personnel that the “PaBER approach” is extremely effective at informing and guiding policy dialogue. However, discussions with stakeholders revealed that PaBER evidence is not consistently used to support policy dialogue at the lower levels of Ministry/Department of Education (or at the school level) in Solomon Islands or Papua New Guinea, and wide groups of stakeholders do not garner benefits or skills from the PaBER approach.

The benefits of regional collaboration are clearly evident from both Steering Committee and Technical Working Group documentation and through discussions. This is a major strength of the PaBER pilot project, but clarity about PaBER, its focus, outcomes, and outputs was lacking below the beneficiary regional level.

Timeliness in the achievement of PaBER activities and outputs was noted as a challenge at all levels. Resources and expertise have proved difficult to procure. The bilateral component of DFAT funding to pilot countries has been difficult to access owing to government administrative procedures. There have also been delays caused by lack of availability of suitable Technical Assistance.

Recommendations

We recommend that the PaBER program facilitates wider capacity development in the regional and national members in order to; a) clarify the “PaBER approach” and b) improve PaBER members’ abilities and effectiveness in leadership and communication. This professional development would need to be supported by the development and implementation of a robust communication strategy.

PaBER effectiveness would also be improved by a clearer timeline and earlier initiation of procurement to address the “domino effect” of these challenges.

Efficiency

Findings

The implementation process for SABER was found to be time consuming and particularly hindered by delays in procurement, the possibility of which should have been considered at the outset of the pilot program. Tendering for outside consultants is unwieldy, and this modality has affected the efficiency of program implementation. Current procedures are that funding allocations by DFAT may or may not be tagged for PaBER use, resulting in difficulty in using funds for PaBER activities.

Early on in the PaBER program, there were unclear regional procurement processes as well as different country procurement processes. Difficulties thus arising led to debate about whether PaBER would be better if it were entirely funded as a regional program, or through a series of bilateral funding arrangements with partner countries.

The review found that management and governance structures, and implementation arrangements, are not efficient at the lower Ministry/Department of Education division (and school) levels, particularly in the area of communications. Informants stated that they receive from the country coordinator little to no feedback on outputs, policies, or PaBER activities.

Recommendations

If SABER recommendations are to be implemented efficiently it is necessary that country programs include them, and the field research findings, in their work plans. It would also be beneficial if country findings from the field research were disseminated at the regional level to be meta-analysed in order to contextualize the situation within and between countries.

To address implementation challenges in future PaBER should consider using a regional facility that has pre-approved consultants available and use generalist consultants more than once, and in more than one country to garner additional benefit from their knowledge of the PaBER program and processes; for example more extensive use of EQAP and its regional consultants.

We strongly recommend that all future PaBER funding should be tagged to ensure timely disbursement and to improve accounting and budgeting processes. It would also improve efficiency of the program and reduce delays if PaBER activities were included in National and Provincial Education Action Plans, as such inclusion mandates funding support from the Government.

In response to the question of the relative merits of funding through a regional program or through a series of bilateral funding arrangements with partner countries, we believe the next phase of the program would be better served by a combination of the two modalities, as it is in the pilot. However in order to address the challenges of the pilot there must be articulated early on (i.e. in the project design document):

- an agreed process for working through issues.
- a unified set of procurement rules to be followed.
- procurement processes, including accessing goods and services, and use of savings.

Since most activities will be at the country level, DFAT funding for activities should go to countries provided the challenges of accessing funds have been met, including clearer budget lines and arrangements for disbursement of funds. Funding for activities that can be administered at the regional level should be managed by EQAP.

Much stronger chains of communication, both vertically and horizontally, are needed throughout the Ministries/Department and schools to disseminate SABER recommendations, and prioritise their implementation. This could be achieved by widening the PaBER team to encompass members of all Ministry/Department divisions.

Impact

Findings

Clearer evidence of policy reforms based on SABER recommendations will be contained in the reports of research to be published in 2016 under Component 3, but early indications from the MTR suggest that few recommendations have been implemented. This is to be expected, as PaBER is a pilot project focussing on collection and analysis of information.

When implementing recommendations Ministries/Department of Education will need to guard against being overwhelmed. SABER reports for Samoa, for example, led to 48 policy recommendations across the five domains. Ministries will need to carefully consider their priorities and set out a manageable road map for implementation. There is evidence that Ministries/Department of Education are already acting on PaBER outputs such as PILNA and SABER reports and have undertaken reforms in advance of a supporting policy framework.

Recommendations

Ministries/Departments of Education need to prioritise recommendations, and should assess evidence carefully within their own contexts. It is important that they should bide their time and obtain and triangulate evidence and follow the PaBER process before implementing reforms to ensure correct future directions.

Sustainability

Findings

At the regional and higher-levels of the Ministry/Department of Education both documentation and discussions with informants led the MTR team to conclude that sustainability of this important project is being actively addressed through systemic approaches. At mid-level of Ministry/Department of Education it is not apparent that PaBER approaches and strategies are being institutionalised. At the school level the review found that neither principals nor teachers knew about the PaBER approach and so were unable to discuss the extent of institutionalization and sustainability of PaBER.

Recommendations

As recommended elsewhere, much stronger chains of communication vertically and horizontally throughout the Ministries/Department and schools are needed to make the best use of the SABER recommendations, priorities, and their implementation. PaBER activities and results need to be factored into education sector plans and Ministerial/Department of Education reform efforts. PaBER should also be integrated into donor-funded projects and support, and use the “PaBER approach” to guide donor-funded projects and support.

We recommend that participating countries widen the PaBER team to encompass members of all Ministry/Department divisions and integrate PaBER into the education sector (universities, qualification authorities, etc), thereby expanding the knowledge learned from and about the SABER process to all stakeholders.

The country representatives along with other education sector stakeholders should develop a PaBER “exit plan” to ensure sustainability of PaBER benefits and implementation of recommendations and activities.

Focus on lessons learned and best practices identified at both country and regional levels from the pilot PaBER experience, and assist countries to build on them.

Support development of clear strategies on the implementation of policies, and the monitoring of the process and effectiveness of policy implementation.

Financial Management

Findings

Review of the PaBER consolidated financial reports found a number of inconsistencies between them, and found the reports submitted in the first two years of the pilot to be confusing. Improvements were made in the six-monthly report for January to June, 2015, but there remain weaknesses in accounting and financial reports that need to be addressed. Much confusion, as well as delay, results from the way the bilateral component of funds is absorbed into government finances through a budget support mechanism, making it difficult to access for PaBER activities, hence our recommendation that future PaBER funding should be tagged for PaBER activities.

Recommendations

It is essential that any project is able to account adequately for finance received from its funding agency. This accountability to DFAT is especially difficult for PaBER given the complex nature of the project and the complication of PaBER country funds appearing in the same accounts.

In the event of a second phase of PaBER, the review recommends that DFAT explores the possibility of separate financial reports for DFAT regional funding and each participating government. This does not preclude a consolidated report summarising the accounts. It is encouraging to note that some steps in this direction were taken in the Financial Report for January to June 2015.

1.1 Background

PaBER was designed in 2010, following endorsement by the Pacific Forum Education Ministers Meeting (FEEdMM) with the overall aim of improving literacy and numeracy levels of children in the Pacific region. Its purpose is “to provide Pacific education ministries with a systematic and reliable means to learn from their own systems and their neighbours which policies, processes and activities have helped to make a positive impact on the quality of education and specifically on learning”¹.

The PaBER Theory of Change, articulated in the Inception Report², is that benchmarking provides information that helps teachers to target their teaching, while effectively utilising limited resources. It also allows stakeholders at community, local and national level to hold teachers and the education system accountable. It thereby supports the design of targeted interventions to improve systems’ performance and improve learning outcomes.

PaBER has a complex organisational structure. Education ministries of the three pilot countries are involved at senior management level through the Steering Committee and Technical Working Group, but they also have day to day operational responsibility for activities. Overall management responsibility for the pilot lies with the Educational Quality and Assessment Program (EQAP, formerly SPBEA) which is governed by The Pacific Community. Funding of the pilot is also complex with a mixture of bilateral support from DFAT to pilot countries and direct grants to EQAP. Financial management of PaBER is considered under Section 3.2: Efficiency.

Further complexity is added by involvement of external agencies such as World Bank (SABER assessments and reporting) and the Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (PILNA), a collaboration between EQAP and UNESCO, with the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) providing financial support from 2015.

See Six monthly consolidated Progress Report (Jan –June, 2015) Paper 2a Page 8

Figure 1 presents an overview of PaBER’s organisational and delivery structure.

1 *Program Design Document for a Regional Pilot Program in Papua New Guinea Samoa and Solomon Islands, 2012*

2 *Developing a Design Proposal for a 3-5 year pilot in PNG, Solomon Islands and Samoa: Inception Report and Work Plan*

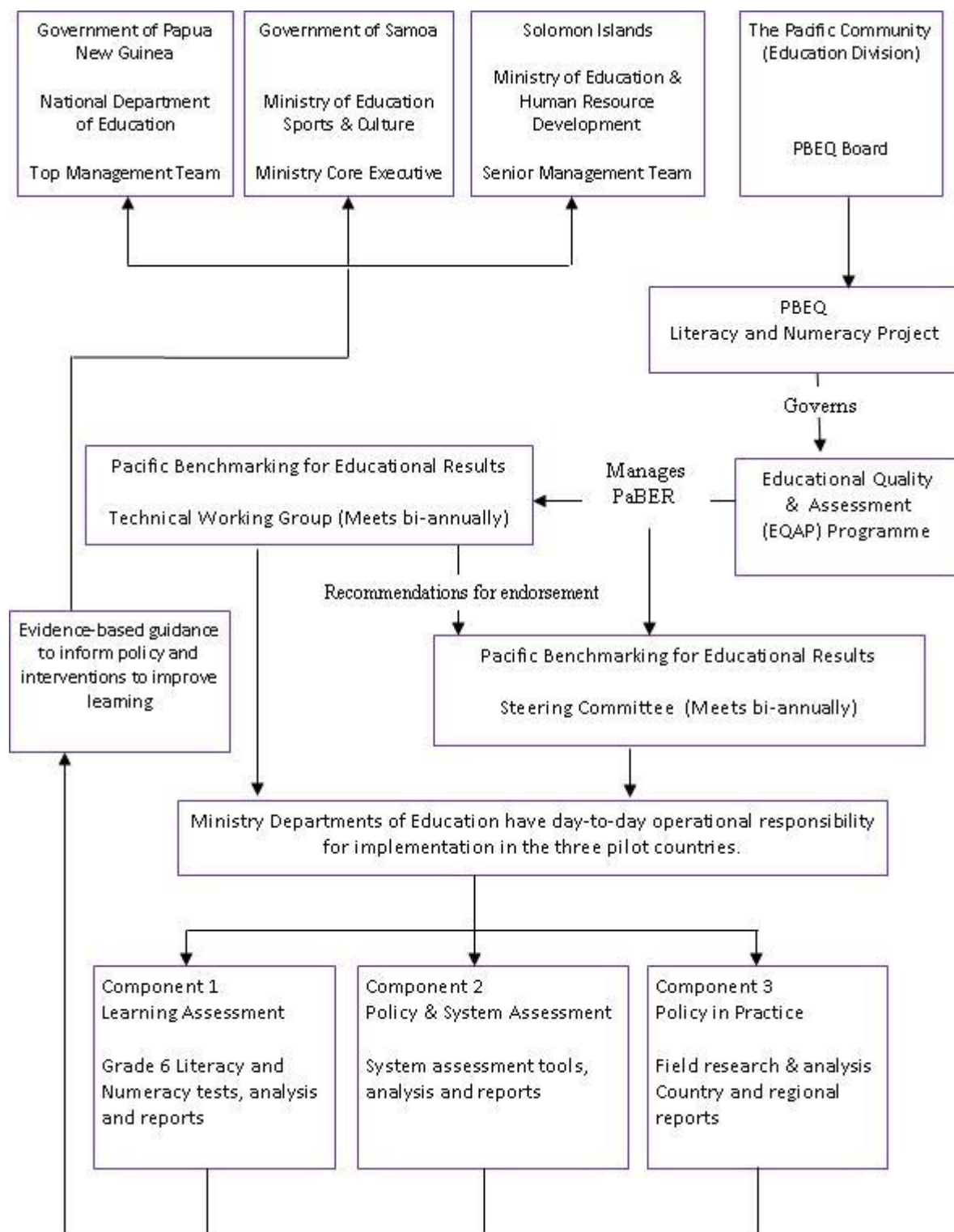


Figure 1: Overview of PaBER's organisational and delivery structure

Figure 2 shows the proposed roles and responsibilities for the implementation of PaBER as presented in the Program Design Document (April 2012).

Component / Activity	Lead agencies	Participating agencies	Support agencies
Component 1. Learning Assessment			
1.1. Institutional capacity analysis	Ministries / Departments of Education In-country Technical Assistance (TA)	EQAP	
1.2. Development of Instruments	EQAP / UNESCO	Ministries / Departments of Education	
1.3. Finalisation of Instruments	EQAP / UNESCO	Ministries / Departments of Education	
1.4. Administration of test / data collection	Ministries / Departments of Education	EQAP	
1.5. Analysis of data / reporting	EQAP and Ministries / Departments of Education	UNESCO, In-country TA	DFAT commissioned QA
Component 2. Policy and Systems Assessment			
1.1 Institutional capacity analysis	Ministries / Departments of Education / In-country TA	EQAP / World Bank (HDNED)	
1.2 Development / Adaption of tools	World Bank (HDNED), EQAP	Ministries / Departments of Education	DFAT commissioned QA
1.3 Peer Review / Field Testing	EQAP	Ministries / Departments of Education	World Bank (HDNED)
1.4 Administration of Tool / Data collection	Ministries / Departments of Education	EQAP / World Bank (HDNED)	
1.5 Analysis of Data / Reporting	Ministries / Departments of Education / EQAP	World Bank (HDNED), In-country TA	DFAT commissioned QA
Component 3. Policy and Practice			
1.1 Design of research program	Ministries / Departments of Education	World Bank (HDNED) / EQAP	UNESCO, Universities / Research Institutes / UNICEF
1.2 Implementation of fieldwork	Ministries / Departments of Education	In-country TA	EQAP
1.3 Analysis of data	Ministries / Departments of Education	EQAP / In-country TA	UNESCO, Universities / Research Institutes / UNICEF
1.4 Country / Regional Reports	EQAP	Ministries / Departments of Education	UNESCO / UNICEF, World Bank (HDNED ³) DFAT commissioned Quality Assurance (QA)

Figure 2: Roles and Responsibilities of PaBER implementation

³ HDNED is the World Bank's Human Development Network, Education Department

To date, the implementation process has mostly followed the intended plans, with some adjustments. Additional activities have been introduced, such as the skills audit, and progress was assessed without the support of DFAT commissioned QA in months 9 and 21. The review also reports that UNICEF has had little involvement supporting in Component 3.

1.2 The Mid-Term Review

Purpose

The purpose of the MTR is to inform the next phase of the project by assessing progress after three years of program implementation towards intended outcomes which are stated in Section 4.3 of the Program Design Document as:

1. Pilot countries will be better positioned to plan and implement interventions that will improve learning through:
 - a) Diagnoses of Year 6 students' performance are used to inform policy development for improving learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy; (Component 1)
 - b) National benchmarks are established that better reflect regional and international norms which are publicised and approved for implementation; (Component 2)
 - c) Evidence is available and used to inform policy reform and affect whole of systems' educational change and school improvement, (Component 3).
2. In seeking to achieve these outcomes the pilot program will help strengthen country systems and build technical capacity at both regional and country levels.

Scope of the Mid-term Review

The MTR covers the period from initial implementation of PaBER in July 2012 to the time of review (November 2015) and addresses the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the program. Benchmarking activities in Samoa, Solomon Islands, and Papua New Guinea (PNG) are central to PaBER and the MTR, but the tools used by EQAP in the implementation of PaBER, such as the World Bank SABER instruments, are not *per se* within the scope of this review.

Governance

A small Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) was established to oversee the MTR, comprising representatives from DFAT, EQAP and PaBER. Details of ERG members can be found in Appendix 4.

The role of the ERG is to ensure that:

- the Terms of Reference for the review reflect the priorities and interests of pilot countries
- the review plan developed by the review team is appropriate and realistic
- the process and conduct of the review enables appropriate participation of relevant stakeholders
- the deliverables of the review are in a form that support practical utilisation at country level.

Methodology

In order to ensure robust evidence to inform its findings, the review team collected and analysed multiple sources and types of data. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to ensure reliable and valid data collection and analysis. An extensive range of documentation was examined for evidence regarding the key review questions.

Background documents and reports included:

- Steering Committee tabled papers
- SABER country reports
 - Student Assessment
 - Teachers
 - School Autonomy and Accountability
 - Education Management Information Systems
- Curriculum and Materials country reports (based on SABER tools and methods)
- PILNA reports including:
 - Summary Regional Report (SPBEA, July 2013)
 - Report to FEdMM (July 2013)
- PaBER reports to FEdMM
- PaBER Six monthly Consolidated Reports
- Reports to donor organisations
- Policy documents

A full list of documents reviewed is included in Appendix 3.

Stakeholder consultation

The review team used a participatory approach to individual interviews and focus group discussions. Opinions of a variety of primary and secondary stakeholders (across gender, age and power/influence) were canvassed in order to address the key questions provided in the MTR Terms of Reference (ToR -see Appendix 2). As the review includes in-country consultations for only two pilot countries, extrapolation or generalisations of results and recommendations are necessarily limited. Primary stakeholders included:

- PaBER Steering Committee (SC) and Technical Working Group (TWG) members (regional focus)
- PaBER country coordinators
- EQAP
- Solomon Islands Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD)
- Papua New Guinea National Department of Education (NDoE)
- Principals and school management groups in PNG and SI

Interviews were conducted face-to-face either individually, or in focus groups with regional stakeholders in Fiji, and national stakeholders in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. A full list of contact persons and informants is included in Appendix 4.

Initial key review questions were provided within the Terms of Reference, associated with the MTR criteria for relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability, with supplementary follow-up questions arising during discussions. Key questions were as follows:

Relevance

- Are PaBER activities relevant to benchmarking needs/approaches in the pilot countries?

Effectiveness

- How effectively is PaBER supporting policy dialogue:
 - Within each Ministry?
 - Amongst all stakeholders?
- Are the activities and outputs of the components the right ones (necessary and sufficient), in the right sequence (timely), to achieve the intended outcomes?

Efficiency

- How efficient are the management/governance/implementation arrangements?
- How well are these arrangements supporting achievement of intended outcomes:
 - Across the whole program?
 - At country level?
- What explains the low level of utilisation of funding support at country level?
- Comment on added value, and value for money, of running PaBER as a regional program (vs. three bilateral programs).

Impact

- To what extent are the intended outcomes of each component being achieved?
 - Component 1, Learning Assessment: Diagnoses of year 6 students' performance are being used to inform policies and practices to improve learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy.
 - Component 2, Policy and System Assessment: National benchmarks are established that better reflect regional and international norms.
 - Component 3, Policy in Practice: Evidence is available and being used to inform policy reform and effect whole of systems educational change and school improvement
- Is the monitoring and evaluation evidence being collected appropriate and sufficient to be able to demonstrate achievement at outcome level?
- What factors determine the influence PaBER has and is likely to have on how countries are implementing their national action plans?

Sustainability

- To what extent has each country taken ownership of the methodology? Is there any evidence that approaches are being institutionalised?
- What factors are limiting utilisation and/or integration of PaBER support to implement new country-driven activities?
- (Supporting question) If funding is not available how will your Ministry/Department sustain the benefits of PaBER or carry out further work in policy implementation/benchmarking?

The analysis of interviews was conducted using a qualitative approach. Information provided from interviewees in response to the key questions was analysed both vertically (within institutions in each PaBER country) and horizontally (comparing PaBER countries). This allowed the review team to determine areas of strength and challenges for individual countries and across the pilot project, and to provide clear recommendations for future directions.

Due to travel time constraints, the review was limited to interviewing only one PaBER stakeholder from Samoa. Fortunately the first Component 3 research findings were available in draft form and this partially compensated for the lack of Samoan informants.

Findings of the MTR are presented in three sections: a quantitative review of progress against outcomes and outputs; a review of financial management and procurement activities; and a review of supporting qualitative evidence from stakeholder interviews in response to the Key Questions, under the review headings of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency impact and sustainability.

2.1 Progress against intended outcomes and outputs

In this section progress against outcomes and outputs is reviewed, using as sources of evidence the full range of PaBER documents, with particular reference to consolidated reports presented to the Steering Committee, and country reports.

There are two elements to the aim of PaBER, as set out on p.26 of the Design document:

1. *The aim of the PaBER program is to improve literacy and numeracy levels of children in the Pacific region.*
2. *The PaBER Pilot will begin a process that will equip policy makers in Pacific countries with the information and knowledge to drive interventions that will have a real effect on learning results*

The aim is followed by the purpose of PaBER:

PaBER will provide Pacific education ministries with a systematic and reliable means to learn from their own systems and their neighbours which policies, processes and activities have helped to make a positive impact on the quality of education and specifically on learning. Participating countries will pilot a benchmarking approach to test its usefulness as a model to drive interventions that will have a positive impact on learning in the region.

2.1.1 Component 1: Learning Assessment

Component 1 provides key baseline data for PaBER on levels of students' literacy and numeracy in the three pilot countries.

PILNA tests were administered on schedule in 2012. Results published in the PILNA Consolidated Report (August 2013) revealed low levels of achievement, not only in the pilot countries, but throughout the region. The low levels of achievement were also emphasised by the Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment 2012 (SPBEA, July 2013) which described the literacy and numeracy situation in the Pacific as "at a dire situation with only three in every ten pupils demonstrating the literacy skills expected after 4 and 6 years of primary schools, compared with five in every ten pupils for numeracy". The second round of PILNA tests were conducted in October 2015 and results are expected by March 2016.

The second element of Component 1 is the Institutional Capacity Analysis (ICA) of national education assessment systems. This was completed by the Australian Council for Education Research (ACER) in collaboration with the pilot countries, and reports were delivered in 2013 (PNG and Solomon Islands) and 2014 (Samoa). In March 2014 the Steering Committee endorsed a skills audit of assessment personnel across the three assessment units of pilot countries to complement the ICA. This was carried out in October 2014 and results presented to the Steering Committee in April 2015.

Progress with regard to the outcomes of Component 1 are summarised in the table below:

Component 1. Learning Assessment	
Target	Each country will improve their literacy and numeracy achievement levels in 2015 by at least 5% from the established baseline defined by gender.
Review comment	<p>The 5% improvement target was not mentioned in the PaBER Design Document (since at that time there were no plans to repeat PILNA) but was introduced in the Consolidated Monitoring and Evaluation Reports. There is already evidence of interventions to improve literacy and numeracy, notably:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PNG repositioning Grade 5 level curriculum content since PILNA items provided evidence that the PNG Grade 5 was 1.5 years behind SI and Samoa and not of international standard as previously assumed. • The establishment of Solomon Islands Literacy Policy Management Unit (LPMU) and the development of a national literacy policy.
Baseline	Results of learning assessment conducted in Year 1 of program
Review comment	Results of the 2012 PILNA are available as the baseline, indicating very low achievement levels for the region as a whole, not just the three PaBER countries. The results, described as “dire” (SPBEA, 2013) may well have prompted local initiatives in advance of the PaBER process.
Outcome	Diagnoses of Year 6 students’ performance are used to inform policy development for improving learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy
Indicators	Progress
a) Pilot countries have administered literacy and numeracy assessment using PILNA tool in 2012 and 2015	<p>PILNA was administered successfully in 2012 to provide the baseline measurements.</p> <p>PILNA tests were administered in October 2015 at the time of the MTR team’s visit to the region. Results are expected by March 2016.</p>
b) Pilot countries modify policy on the basis of data and analyses provided by the assessment of Grade 6 literacy and numeracy	<p>Following the ICA review and skills audit of assessment personnel the three PaBER country reports made recommendations for professional development and improved staffing levels, along with some restructuring.</p> <p>There is some evidence that the policy of review and modification has begun, e.g. the set-up of the LPMU and development of national literacy policy in SI.</p>

Component 1. Learning Assessment	
Outputs	Achievements
1a A regional tool for measuring literacy and numeracy learning outcomes (PILNA) at the primary level (year 6) developed/adapted and field tested	<p><u>Completed</u></p> <p>2012 PILNA tests were completed on schedule in the three PaBER countries.</p> <p>Solomon Islands and Samoa have taken steps to integrate the PILNA tests into their national tests (SISTA and SPELL) for the October 2015 administration, but the integrated version was only piloted in Solomon Islands, and the 2015 results for PaBER purposes are based only on PILNA items.</p>
1b Results from implementing the tool in three pilot countries	<p><u>Completed</u></p> <p>Results were published in 2013 showing very low levels of achievement in literacy and numeracy, not just in the PaBER countries, but across the Pacific Region.</p>
1c Regional agreement to monitor and learn from the results of PILNA implementation and resulting policy development for improved support for literacy and numeracy learning	<p><u>Agreement reached</u></p> <p>All three countries have consistently shown strong commitment to PaBER and its processes as evidenced by acceptance of the regional agreement, country reports and participation in PaBER activities.</p>
1d Capacity developed within relevant ministries for using diagnostic data to develop policy for improving learning	<p><u>On-going progress</u></p> <p>The skills audit of assessment personnel (carried out in October 2014 as an additional element of the ICA) identified a <i>significant skills gap</i> across the assessment units of the three PaBER countries, indicating a <i>mismatch between what the job requires and the skills available</i>.</p> <p>Country reports included specific recommendations that mostly referred to additional staffing levels and professional development, but also some restructuring (e.g. MSB in PNG) and physical expansion of the NESU in Solomon Islands. Implementation of the recommendations is an on-going process.</p>
1e Policies and interventions in place to improve learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy by July 2015	<p><u>On-going progress</u></p> <p>Outputs 1a, 1b and 1c provide the evidence base and guidance for steps to be taken to improve literacy and numeracy through policy development and interventions, but July 2015 was perhaps too ambitious a target date for intervention to be in place.</p>

2.1.2 Component 2: Policy and System Assessment

Component 2 plays a crucial role in the overall success of PaBER since it provides the evidence base for policy reform and development, and the relevance of any such reforms and developments depends on the accuracy and reliability of the policy and system assessments.

Four policy domains were identified in the PaBER design as having particular relevance to the needs of participating countries: Student Assessment, School Autonomy & Accountability; Teachers; and Curriculum & Materials. Indicating an encouraging level of ownership in the PaBER process, the Steering Committee decided to add Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) as a fifth domain for policy and systems assessment. Pilot countries' capacities in four domains (Student Assessment, School Autonomy & Accountability, Teachers, and EMIS), were assessed using the World Bank Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER). In the absence of a SABER tool for the Curriculum and Materials assessment, a parallel instrument for this domain was developed by Pearson International, modelled on the World Bank's SABER instruments.

The assessments were carried out on schedule over 2013-2015, but analysis and compilation of reports by the World Bank SABER team was beyond the control of PaBER and the pilot countries, and took longer than expected. Draft SABER country reports for all domains are now available and have been presented to the Steering Committee. A summary of SABER results, and an overview of findings, recommendations and responses to the SABER-based review process is included in Appendix 6.

In Samoa, SABER reports led to 48 policy recommendations across the five domains and 63 recommendations for activities were proposed by the Ministry of Education Sports and Culture (MESC) across 4 domains (EMIS was not discussed in a regional workshop). A review of all policies is under way but there is still work to be done with many policies and guidelines 'in process' and far from completion. PaBER (SABER) policy assessments have directly impacted on three policy guidelines (in school operations) and contributed to five key documents in MESC and there has been progress on amending policies and developing interventions from those agreed within MESC.

Progress with regard to the outcomes of Component 2 are summarised in the table below:

Component 2. Policy and System Assessment	
Target	Revised national benchmarks established in each of the 3 policy domains in each of the countries by July 2015 Draft regional benchmarks established in each of the 3 policy domains for testing in Phase 2
Baseline	Performance level as established through the policy assessment
Status	SABER tools have been administered in the three original policy domains, plus EMIS (added later at the request of the Steering Committee) and a parallel instrument was developed and administered for Curriculum and Materials based on the SABER model. Performance levels have been established by means of the draft reports for School Autonomy and Accountability (2013), Teachers (2014), Student Assessment (2014), Curriculum and Materials (2014) and EMIS (2015).
Outcome	National benchmarks are established that better reflect regional and international norms which are publicised and approved for implementation.

Component 2. Policy and System Assessment	
Review comment Reports produced based on results of the SABER tools provide sound benchmarks in line with the desired outcome. However challenges to the PaBER implementation schedule have been caused by reliance on World Bank procedures and the time taken for publication of reports.	
Indicators	Progress
a) Pilot countries have applied the instruments of the target policy domains	Fully achieved in the original four policy domains plus EMIS using SABER tools and an additional instrument for Curriculum and Materials based on SABER tools that was developed and applied.
b) SPBEA ⁴ and country representatives develop country reports on target policy domains as contributions to new knowledge	Policy and system assessment country reports for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Autonomy and Accountability (2013) • Teachers (2014) • Student Assessment (2014) • Curriculum and Materials (2014) • EMIS (2015)
c) Pilot countries adjust policy and systems in line with international and regional norms for policy influencing learning	Policy and system assessment reports make many recommendations for adjustments to policies and systems. For example, the Technical Working Group in its Draft Curriculum and Materials Cross Country Analysis Report (March 2015) made many recommendations for new or revised policies and guidelines. There were three main regional recommendations plus a host of country specific recommendations: 20 recommendations for PNG 20 recommendations for Samoa 18 recommendations for Solomon Islands Adjustment of government policies is a lengthy process and the status of the recommendations is not yet clear.
Outputs	Achievements
2a Instruments for benchmarking systems in two key policy domains are adapted and administered in Years 1-2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Quality • School Autonomy and Accountability 	<u>Complete</u> SABER tools administered on schedule for Teachers and School Autonomy and Accountability.

⁴ Now EQAP

Component 2. Policy and System Assessment	
2b Instruments for benchmarking systems in two key policy domains are adapted/developed in years 2-3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EMIS • Student Assessment • Curriculum and materials 	<p><u>Complete</u></p> <p>SABERs tools for EMIS and Student Assessment administered.</p> <p>PaBER Curriculum and Materials tool (developed by Pearson International and modelled on the World Bank's SABER tools) was also administered.</p>
2c Country and regional reports on target policy domains (as contributions to new knowledge)	<p><u>Complete</u></p> <p>SABER Country Reports and Cross-country Report on School Autonomy and Accountability, Teachers, Student Assessment and EMIS delivered to Steering Committee.</p> <p>Draft Curriculum and Materials Cross Country Analysis Report delivered to SC in April 2015.</p>
2d Capacity building in benchmarking development is evident in relevant ministries for improving target policy areas	<p>Capacity development is evident in the roles played by staff of the ministries in the SABER assessment exercises and country reports.</p> <p>In Samoa, capacity development activities were conducted in the area of assessment tools and policies. Staff have also been enrolled in higher education courses relevant to PaBER activities. In Solomon Islands, PaBER team members used their risk management capacity development activities at the regional level to develop a risk management process for PaBER activities within MEHRD.</p> <p>All three countries have participated in capacity building in the area of the development of tools for the field research activity, as well as triangulation methods and pilot testing strategies. These were used in-country for Component 3.</p>
2e Policies and systems adjusted as a result of international norms	<p><u>In progress</u></p> <p>Adjustment of government policies can be a lengthy process, but there is some evidence of countries taking appropriate steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft National Teacher Standards Framework (PNG) • National Education Policy Framework: PaBER Policy Recommendations (PNG) • Establishment of the Literacy Policy Management Unit (LPMU) and the development of a national literacy policy (Solomon Islands)

2.1.3 Component 3: Policy in Practice

Component 3 is central to the ultimate objective of PaBER, namely the establishment of evidence-based policy reforms designed to improve students' levels of literacy and numeracy achievement:

The PaBER pilot will begin a process that will equip policy makers in Pacific countries with the information and knowledge to drive interventions that will have a real effect on learning results.⁵

Research to assess the evidence of progress has been completed in Samoa and is underway in PNG with results expected by February 2016. The Solomon Islands research had not started at the time of the MTR visit (4th November 2015), but informants indicated some progress such as establishment of the Literacy Policy Management Unit (LPMU) and development of a national literacy policy. Preliminary findings⁶ from the research in Samoa are encouraging with evidence showing a solid commitment and sense of ownership in MESC to the PaBER program in general and specifically on the policy assessments. The third year of the pilot has seen improved integration across the divisions of the analytical work carried out under PaBER, although there remain key individuals who have not been sufficiently involved in the policy discussions. Progress with regard to the outcomes of Component 3 are summarised in the table below:

Component 3. Policy in Practice	
Target	All countries have implemented new or existing reforms or interventions as a result of evidence from the 3 components
Review comment	PaBER progress reports suggest that this is a lengthier process than the pilot design anticipated. Research in the three countries began in October 2015 and results are expected in February 2016.
Baseline	Evidence from Components 1 and 2 is used to inform strategic improvement / intervention in educational policy reform
Review comment	The baseline as stated appears to be more of an outcome than a baseline, and indeed closely matches the outcome below.
Outcome	Evidence is available and used to inform policy reform and effect whole of systems educational change and school improvement
Indicators	Progress
a) Relevant divisions / units within ministries have capacity for using tools and evidence for analysis and development of policy	Staff have participated in collection of evidence.
b) Policy reforms developed and implemented as a result of evidence.	Preliminary evidence from PNG and evidence collected by the MTR in SI suggests that the process of reform based on SABER recommendations has begun:

⁵ Sheona McKenna, *Regional Program Director Health, Education and Leadership, DFAT. 28-29 October 2015, Nadi*

⁶ *PaBER Policy Mapping Exercise: Preliminary Findings, Fred Brooker, November 2015*

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft National Teacher Standards Framework PNG • National Education Policy Framework: PaBER Policy Recommendations PNG • Literacy Policy Management Unit (LPMU) and the development of a national literacy policy: Solomon Islands.
Outputs	Achievements
3a Valid and reliable data are collected on education policy influences on school and classroom, relevant to the target domains	<u>In progress</u> Research has been conducted in Samoa (October 2015) and PNG (November 2015) with results expected in 2016. Data collection completed in Samoa and preliminary findings reported.
3b Capacity building is evident in relevant ministries for comparative analyses of country practice	<u>Not yet started</u>
3c Policy briefs based on field evidence and designed to facilitate policy review and development in related domains are approved by ministry executive bodies	<u>Not yet started</u>

2.2 Financial Management and Procurement

In this section, the review takes a broad look at issues arising from financial management of the PaBER program. Scrutiny of PaBER documents, including consolidated financial reports submitted to the Steering Committee, reveals that the utilisation of funding question is not in itself sufficient to address the efficiency of PaBER.

Summary

A review of the PaBER consolidated financial reports found a number of inconsistencies and found the reports submitted in the first two years of the pilot to be confusing. Improvements were made in the six monthly report for January to June, 2015, but there remain weaknesses in accounting and financial reports that need to be addressed. Much confusion, as well as delay, has resulted from the way the bilateral component of the funds is absorbed into government finances through a budget support mechanism, making it difficult to access. It would be beneficial for PaBER if future funding were tagged for PaBER activities.

The Funding Agreement between Government of Australia and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) specifies a grant to SPC totalling AUD 2,822,000 to be disbursed in four tranches as follows:

Indicative date	Tranche number	Amount of grant funds (AUD)
Within 30 days of the date of the agreement.	1	600,000.00

15 th January 2013	2	545,000.00
15 th January 2014	3	1,114,000.00
15 th January 2015	4	563,000.00

In 2014 there was an amendment, increasing the total amount to AUD 3,122,000 and adjusting the disbursement schedule as follows:

Indicative date	Tranche number	Amount of grant funds (AUD)
Within 30 days of the date of the agreement.	1	600,000.00
15 th January 2013	2	545,000.00
15 th March 2014	3	914,000.00
15 th March 2015	4	863,000.00
15 th March 2016	5	200,000.00

The final tranche has since been reduced to AUD 90,000.00, when AUD 110,000 was transferred or reallocated to the mapping exercise.

The grant agreement (Para. 12.2) between DFAT (formerly AusAid) and SPC specifies rigorous financial management procedures typical of such agreements. According to the agreement the release of funds is subject to the provision of an acquittal statement showing 85% disbursement of the previous tranche of funds, but the consolidated financial reports do not provide sufficient evidence of compliance with the agreement

The review notes inconsistencies in PaBER financial reports that reflect on efficiency.

Reports submitted to the PaBER Steering Committee show the following amounts as income:

Date	Amount	PaBER Report Description	Source
Jan – Dec 2012	1,086,759.64	AusAid PaBER	Income and Expenditure Statement (Regional) January – December 2012
June 2013	600,000.00 545,000.00	Balance brought forward 2 nd Tranche	Consolidated PaBER Financial Report for 1 January - 30 June 2013
May 2015	867,609.17	DFAT agreed contribution	Financial Report for the period 1 January to 30 June 2015

The initial amount, although reported as coming from AusAid, is not consistent with the agreement. Only the amounts reported for June 2013 are consistent with the amounts given in the agreement, corresponding to the first two tranches. The figure given for May 2015 is very close to the revised Tranche 4 (A\$4,609.17 more than the revised allocation).

PaBER activities at the country level are supported by DFAT bilateral funding under existing partnership agreements. The estimated costs were given in the Agreement as:

- PNG 1,530,000 AUD
- Samoa 661,000 AUD
- Solomon Islands 848,000 AUD

The review found that DFAT funding allocations to PaBER countries may or may not be tagged for PaBER use. For example, in Solomon Islands, DFAT takes a sector-wide approach. DFAT funds go to MEHRD, which then follows its own budgetary and procurement processes. MEHRD determines priorities, funding, and contracts consultants or researchers. DFAT Solomon Islands maintains a list of prequalified firms to facilitate efficiency in the procurement process.

PaBER coordinators are engaged differently in each country, and funding sources are utilized differently. For example, the Solomon Islands Government funds the country coordinator, as does the government of PNG (GoPNG) and both country coordinators operate within the National Ministry/Department of Education. In Samoa, the country coordinator is engaged through DFAT regional funds, and although the Samoa country coordinator is seated in MESC, she is not employed by MESC.

Papua New Guinea has faced specific challenges that have had an impact on PaBER:

Papua New Guinea Case Study

There have been challenges involving funding of the PaBER pilot programme in PNG. In early 2014, the reviewers found, DFAT Direct Finance Scheme (DFS) (budget support) funds to GoPNG were frozen due to acquittal irregularities and the inability to monitor impact of activities. As PaBER in PNG does not have a funding line in the budget, the DFS was the main mechanism that GoPNG uses to support PaBER activities. At the same time, DFAT transferred budgetary responsibility for PaBER to its Education Capacity Development Facility (ECDF). This allowed the PaBER pilot programme staff at the NDoE to devise an updated workplan, and apply for and access funding for activities, which included the main sub-projects of ICA research (Component 2) and the research field work (Component 3). This move maintained efficiency of completing programme outputs in a timely manner. However, different perspectives about the availability of pilot programme funding are apparent. All informants from the NDoE stated that DFAT funding was still frozen, and that they were unable to complete tasks because of this. When asked for more detail, they related that activities were completed (or being implemented at this time), through ECDF. One other area regarding management and implementation, and its effect on capacity development, arose during the Mid-term review in PNG. ECDF employed outside firms to conduct research country-wide in order to complete the subprojects. NDoE PaBER staff were initially concerned about the data collection methodology and data collectors. This concern was ultimately assuaged.

Procurement within PaBER

Procurement is governed by administrative procedures at both the country and regional level. Each country has its own procurement and financial processes, and informants at the regional levels

stated that these processes are not sufficiently flexible. In addition, informants stated that it was difficult to achieve regionally-consolidated work plans and budgets.

The likelihood of delays in procurement should have been considered at the outset of the pilot. Tendering for outside consultants is unwieldy, and this modality has affected the efficiency of PaBER implementation. It may be beneficial to consider using a regional facility that has consultants on hand, for example more extensive use of EQAP and its regional consultants.

The three PaBER country coordinators stated that procurement and tendering for technical assistance are bureaucratic processes that have taken more time than at first assumed. High-level Ministry/Department of Education staff and regional PaBER members asserted that funding utilisation has increased over the past months at country level. One explanation may be the initiation of the Component 3 field research activity.

Budget envelopes are intertwined with other expenditure lines, and PaBER needed benchmarking and regional activities to occur at the same time. If there is a problem with bilateral funding in one country, it affects all three countries and the regional budget may have to step in (Appendix 5, Section 4.3 K).

Budgeting was discussed at the regional Steering Committee meeting in Nadi (November 2015). Representatives agreed that it is difficult to quantify costs. Main challenges include “hidden” costs such as time, human resources and in-kind services. There is a need to have a fuller perspective of what PaBER might actually entail for those countries that may want to join in the future. A clear costing would be informative to new countries.

Regional budget administration was considered by the Steering Committee to be realistic, and the PaBER pilot program has generally worked within its budget.

For both Solomon Islands and PNG, government funding is easier to obtain if the programs or aspects of them are integrated into the National Education Action Plan (NEAP). If it is “in the NEAP”, it is mandated by the government and must be funded.

PaBER financial reporting procedures

In terms of Financial Reports presented to the Steering Committee, the six-monthly Financial Reports have not followed a common format. This is perhaps to be expected, since the TWG and SC have responded to emerging needs and the reporting system has evolved over the duration of the pilot in order to meet those needs. Lack of continuity does however create difficulties for undertaking a detailed analysis of the PaBER financial accounts.

It should nevertheless be possible, if not essential, to maintain some continuity in the overall financial reporting, especially for the funding directly disbursed by DFAT to the regional budget, but this has not always been the case. There are two particular difficulties that arise when analysing the consolidated financial reports:

- Balances brought forward do not always correspond to balances to be carried forward from the previous reports
- Confusion arises between funds released, that appear as income in the financial reports, and approved budgets, that may appear in the same column as funds.

Government financial contributions to PaBER add a further complication to accounting since there are two types of funding; direct release of the bi-lateral funds for activities (that can be recorded as income) and indirect funding, (such as salaried staff assigned to the project), that would be difficult to include in financial reports and yet have a fiscal implication for the country.

A detailed analysis of financial documentation is included in Appendix 7.

2.3 Stakeholder Perceptions: Qualitative reflections on PaBER

In this section results from qualitative evidence is presented. It was gathered through individual interviews and focus group discussions with stakeholders during the MTR team's visits to Fiji, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. Stakeholders' responses and their perceptions of PaBER are structured by key review and supporting questions. (Examples relating to informants' perceptions are included as Appendix 5.)

Stakeholder⁷ responses are categorised by:

- Regional PaBER Informants: Members of the PaBER Steering Committee and Technical Working Group
- High-level Ministry/Department of Education Staff: Assistant Secretaries
- Mid-level Ministry/Department of Education Staff: Division Heads
- Lower-level Ministry/Department of Education Staff: Directors, Managers

The review of efficiency also includes a more detailed analysis of financial management.

2.3.1 Relevance

Key Question: Are PaBER benchmarking activities relevant to the needs of pilot countries and their approaches to education reforms?

The PaBER theory of change is designed to meet the needs of pilot countries to improve students' literacy and numeracy, and the review therefore focuses the "relevance" question on pilot countries' approaches.

At the regional Steering Committee and Technical Working Group levels, informants stated that PaBER benchmarking activities are highly relevant to the needs of the pilot countries and their individual approaches to education reforms. Benchmarking is now very well integrated and used as a basis for country reforms, and brings country-specific evidence to the regional perspective (Appendix 5, Section 4.1 A). The only instance of PaBER countries questioning relevance of the program concerns the PILNA tests, which are being utilised by PaBER although they were not designed by PaBER. Both Samoa and Solomon Islands felt that the tests lacked suitable content validity for their countries and for the 2015 PILNA administration they adapted the tests in line with their national tests, SPELL and SISTA respectively.

Responses were mixed at the mid-level within Solomon Islands and PNG. At the mid-level within the MEHRD in Solomon Islands, Ministry staff were not certain of PaBER activities, and could not provide information on the relevance of PaBER to operations, systems, or processes. In PNG, mid-level staff were clear about the relevancy of PaBER to their own work and systems (Appendix 5, Section 5.1 B).

This difference in knowledge of PaBER occurred several times during qualitative information collection, especially with the mid-level of the Ministry/Department of Education staff. It may be a function of "branding": Identifying PaBER as an active approach and program with strategies and tools, or carrying out activities that have been informed by the PaBER pilot program but not overtly using the "PaBER approach".

PaBER is seen by the regional PaBER members and the highest levels of Solomon Islands MEHRD and Papua New Guinea Department of Education to be relevant to their efforts at educational reform.

⁷ *The agreed MTR plan included the review team's intention to include relevant school personnel as stakeholders. Focus group discussions were held in both Solomon Islands and PNG. However, it became clear during these discussions that since PaBER is policy-focused, the informants were not involved in the PaBER process beyond conducting PILNA tests and could not add much value to the mid-term review. As such, most of their comments have not been included in this report. The interview notes are available should the PaBER pilot programme team at any time wish to review these comments.*

The recommendations of SABER reports reinforce, confirm, and complement work occurring in the Ministries/Department of Education. PaBER offers the ability to identify, through analysis, where there are gaps in policies formulated and at the implementation stage (Appendix 5, Section 5.1 C).

In the area of institutional capacity development at the regional PaBER level, informants reported that Solomon Islands staff have been sent for training, and Samoa expects to do the same. In Samoa, staff have been enrolled in higher education.

Country Coordinators in Solomon Islands and PNG discussed the opportunities for capacity development associated with the PaBER pilot program. Capacity development in the area of risk management, PILNA testing, and field research have been conducted regionally and within countries (Appendix 5, Section 5.1 D).

The intention of PaBER is to collect and analyse information (benchmarking) before any actions are taken, and that those actions would be integrated into Ministry/Department of Education action plans. Data collection and analysis is still ongoing. However, regional PaBER members and high-level Ministry/Department of Education staff stated that the results from the benchmarking assessments conducted outlined some important policy recommendations that have led to policies being developed before the pilot program was completed. For example, in Solomon Islands SABER reports, and the PaBER Curriculum and Materials report, are being used to inform planning for the next NEAP (2016 -2020).

However, at mid- and lower level most informants are unclear on which (if any) policy recommendations from the Systems Assessment have been implemented. This may speak to the challenge that PaBER regional representatives and country coordinators have in communicating PaBER program intentions and processes to stakeholders (Appendix 5, Section 5.1 E)

2.3.2 Effectiveness

Key Question: How effectively is PaBER supporting policy dialogue within each Ministry, and amongst all stakeholders?

At the PaBER regional level and the highest levels within the Ministry/Department of Education in Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea informants were clear that PaBER effectively supports policy dialogue. It is noted that policy discussion between the countries at the Steering Committee and Technical Working Group meetings are one of the greatest benefits of the PaBER pilot program. The “PaBER approach” consciously contextualizes from the regional level to country-specific and *vice versa*. This allows the country PaBER pilot program participants to mirror the diversity locally, or internally, that occurs in discussions at regional level. In other words, at the highest levels, informants stated that PaBER provides a relationship, a “connectivity”, within the region, and this model is expanded to ministry dialogue, and in-country stakeholders. Regional representatives stated that they, in turn, have policy discussions with division heads within their Ministries/Department of Education. PaBER has been instrumental in the recognition of best practices and international standards.

According to mid-level division heads and school personnel, policy dialogue is not usually conducted at lower levels of Ministry/Department of Education in Solomon Islands or Papua New Guinea. However, division heads in both Solomon Islands and PNG provided examples of being included in policy dialogue or activities in the PaBER-focused areas of teacher training, curriculum development, and EMIS updating (Appendix 5, Section 5.2 F).

Key Question: Are the activities and outputs of the components the right ones (necessary and sufficient), and in the right sequence (timely), to achieve the intended outcomes?

In general, informants at the regional level stated that the activities and outputs of the components are appropriate and necessary. Informants stated that the domains in which information was collected and analysed might have been ordered differently or prioritised depending upon the country context. However, it is noted that the regional perspective and costs of doing this would have compromised the pilot program. Timeliness was noted as a challenge at all levels. Resources and expertise have proved difficult to procure. Informants suggested that a clearer timeline and earlier initiation in procurement and benchmarking activities would be beneficial to address the “domino effect” of these challenges.

Informants at the regional levels were clear about the completion of outputs of the PaBER pilot program. However, at the mid-levels within the Ministry/Department of Education in both Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea division heads were not certain of PaBER outputs or the level of completion. Some outputs have changed over the duration of the PaBER pilot program. At the recommendation of the Technical Working Group (March 2015) EMIS was included in the Component 2 systems assessments to be conducted by World Bank using their SABER tools.

2.3.3 Efficiency

Key Question: How efficient are the management, governance, and implementation arrangements?

Key Question: What explains the low level of utilisation of funding support at country level?

The intent of the PaBER pilot program in this area was for governments to undertake responsibility for the management, governance and implementation arrangements for PaBER activities. The implementation process for SABER was found to be extremely time consuming (Appendix 5, Section 5.3 G).

Procurement processes are bureaucratic at both the country and regional level. Each country has its own procurement and financial procedures, and informants at the regional levels stated that these processes are not sufficiently flexible. In addition, informants stated that it was difficult to achieve regionally-consolidated workplans and budgets.

Funding allocations by DFAT at country level may or may not be tagged for PaBER use. (Appendix 5, Section 5.3 H). Country coordinators are engaged differently, and funding sources are utilized differently (Appendix 5, Section 5.3 I). At the lower-level Ministry/Department of Education division informants stated that they receive little to no feedback on outputs, policies, or PaBER activities from the country coordinator. This is to be expected due to the focus of PaBER at higher-level policy development. Turnover of Ministry/Department of Education staff has also had a negative impact on the PaBER pilot program (Appendix 5, Section 5.3 J).

Key Question: How well are these arrangements supporting achievement of intended outcomes across the whole program, and at country level?

Each of the three countries has different management, governance, and implementation arrangements for conducting the PaBER pilot program.

In relation to Component 1 Outcome 1, informants stated that arrangements in each country are seen by regional PaBER members and high-level Ministry/Department of Education staff to be effective at using the PILNA results to inform policy development for improving learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy, although Samoa & SI felt the actual tests themselves lack content validity for their countries and integrated them into national tests for 2015.

To be more accurate, each Ministry/Department of Education has used the results of PILNA to review their arrangements and to undertake large or small structural reforms within the Ministry/Department to be able to better address learning needs. Informants at all levels stated

that no real improvement in student performance is expected for Component 1, by the end of the pilot program as PaBER is not designed to initiate activities or interventions to address literacy and numeracy. The pilot program is focused on assessing policies associated with selected domains, capacity development, and research into policy implementation and practice. Once all data are collected and analysed, informants stated that they expect to be able to use the information to develop policies and implementation “road maps” or frameworks.

In relation to Component 2 Outcome 2, all regional and high-level Ministry/Department of Education PaBER participants stated the SABER benchmarking results reflect accurately regional and international norms. The results have been shared between the countries at the regional PaBER levels. However, SABER results and benchmarks have not been consistently shared with mid-level Ministry/Department of Education staff.

At the time of the MTR, evidence relating to Component 3 Outcome 1 was not yet available since data analysis from Component 3 field research activities had not been completed. However, Ministries/Department of Education view the SABER reports as evidence and have undertaken reforms as stated above, including:

- Draft National Teacher Standards Framework, (PNG)
- National Education Policy Framework: PaBER Policy Recommendations, (PNG)
- Literacy Policy Management Unit (LPMU) and the development of a national literacy policy, (Solomon Islands)

At the time of the MTR, PNG Department of Education management arrangements did not support the achievement of this outcome due to budgetary problems.

Regarding Outcome 2, High-level Ministry/Department of Education informants stated that there is collaboration and coordination between the divisions or departments. The PaBER approach is a model for interlinking at the regional level which is mirrored internally. The TWG is a strong structure for building ownership. Informants at the regional level stated that good systems were implemented across the whole program, as well as regionally. There is seen to be a clear governance structure.

Key Question: Comment on the added value of running PaBER as a regional program as opposed to three bilateral programs.

Without exception, high-level Ministry/Department of Education officials and regional PaBER participants believe that the regional component of PaBER is essential to the success of the program. The “PaBER Approach”, that of collaboration, sharing and learning from each other at the regional level is seen as a strength of the PaBER pilot program. In addition, there are economies of scale to be gained with a regional program, for example, data collection instruments and methodologies.

From this pilot project, lessons have been learned at the regional level: early on in the PaBER program, unclear regional procurement processes and different country procurement processes caused delays and frustration. Correspondents suggest that, in the next phase of PaBER there is a need to articulate in the project design document an agreed process for working through issues such as procurement processes for accessing goods and services, and use of savings. This may be difficult when there is a need to allow for flexibility in the dynamic process that is the “PaBER Approach” (Appendix 5, Section 4.3 L).

At the regional level, benchmarking and comparisons were seen as important, as was the benefit of collegiality and collaboration. However, much of the work for the SABER assessments and the field research are country-focused, as will be the utilisation of data collected and analysed. Importantly, it is at the country level that correspondents see that inefficiencies, delays, bureaucratic and financial issues occurred.

According to the ERG, the PaBER pilot program has thrived even through changes in personnel at the SC and TWG levels. The Solomon Islands TWG team, the PaBER team in MEHRD, and DFAT SI staff have remained consistent. This is an advantage as the group carry institutional knowledge, and have sound experience of the “PaBER Approach”. Regionally, there remain few original members of the Steering Committee, but no comment was made about any impact on the efficiency of the pilot due to changes in personnel.

However, it appears from discussions at mid-level and lower-level Ministry/Department of Education staff that the benefits of regional collaboration are not as evident. Although regional members stated that they “mirror” the PaBER process (for example building teams from members in different divisions) clarity about PaBER, its focus, outcomes, and outputs was lacking below the regional level (Appendix 5, Section 4.3 M).

2.3.4 Impact

Key Question: To what extent are the intended outcomes of each component being achieved?

For Component 1, correspondents report that diagnoses of year 6 students’ performance are being used to inform policies and practices to improve learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy. Discussions at the regional level have highlighted issues surrounding the PILNA assessment, including language of assessment, numerous different assessments, and how the PILNA assessments will be integrated in the longer term within each of the countries (Appendix 5, Section 4.4 N).

For Component 2, national benchmarks are being established that better reflect regional and international norms. All regional PaBER team members and high-level Ministry/Department of Education informants stated that the SABER benchmarking results reflect accurately regional and international norms. The results have been shared between the countries at the regional PaBER levels. The SABER results and benchmarks have not been consistently shared with mid-level Ministry/Department of Education staff.

For Component 3, at the time of the MTR evidence was not yet available to inform policy reform and effect whole of systems educational change and school improvement. Data analysis from Component 3 field research activities, examining the extent to which centrally developed policies are implemented at school level and their influence on school dynamics, had not been completed, although some preliminary findings from Samoa were made available to the MTR team.

At the regional level, the Steering Committee members discussed the challenges of field research including recruitment and procedures, limited local research expertise and capacity at both the national and regional levels, and the strict delivery timelines (Appendix 5, Section 4.4 O).

Key Question: Is the monitoring and evaluation evidence being collected appropriate and sufficient to be able to demonstrate achievement at outcome level?

Solomon Islands and PNG PaBER members have developed annual frameworks and workplans for monitoring progress as well as implementation of activities. Informants also reported that annual evaluation reports are produced for the program itself and for Ministry/Department of Education. Outside monitoring by another division in the Ministry/Department of Education for in-country programs (i.e. external to PaBER) is not conducted.

In support of this, monitoring and evaluation does occur at the regional level of PaBER, based on in country M&E reports. Informants at the regional level also discussed the potential issue of accurate monitoring against the PILNA baseline as PILNA instruments have changed, and the target cohort has also changed. It was also noted that some initiatives have been implemented by countries before all evidence has been considered.

Key Question: What factors determine the influence PaBER has, and is likely to have, on how countries develop their policies, and implement them through their national action plans?

Informants at both the regional and high-level Ministry/Department of Education discussed several factors that determine the influence PaBER has on policy development and the ability to implement policies through NEAPs, including:

- Political will
- Finance/funding
- Knowledge about policy development and implementation enforcement strategies
- EMIS (Appendix 5, Section 4.4 P)

2.3.5 Sustainability

Key Question: To what extent has each country taken ownership of the methodology?

At the regional level, informants stated that Ministries/Department of Education, through prioritisation of bilateral funding, NEAP reforms and restructuring, are responding to the challenges identified through the PaBER pilot program. DFAT informants confirm that sustainability is built into the program structure. Through the assessments that have been done, the Ministries/Department of Education have evidence of country education strengths and weaknesses, and use them to inform sector plans. This builds in sustainability.

Ministerial/departmental divisions or units also report undergoing structural reform and developing long term strategies to address PaBER results (Appendix 5, Section 4.5 Q)

Key Question: What evidence is there to demonstrate the extent to which approaches are being institutionalised?

High-level Ministry/Department of Education informants in PNG and Solomon Islands discussed the extent to which PaBER approaches are being institutionalized, including:

- NEAP reforms
- Restructuring of the Department of Education in PNG
- Enhanced communication between PaBER country education systems and officials
- FEEdMM mandates for PaBER approaches

In Solomon Islands SABER reports are regarded as very important in terms of identifying gaps and how to address them. MEHRD uses the SABER report results to align the different policies to drive and focus on mechanisms to improve literacy and numeracy.

However, at the mid-level of Ministry/DoE it was not apparent that PaBER approaches are being institutionalized.

Key Question: What factors may be limiting utilisation or integration of PaBER support to implement new country-driven activities?

Correspondents highlight how procurement processes, technical assistance recruitment delays, and inflexible bureaucratic procedures consistently limit their ability to conduct PaBER activities. This question focuses on “implementation of new country-driven activities”. The PaBER pilot program is not implementation-focused. However, both PNG and Solomon Islands have implemented PaBER-related new country-driven activities, as mentioned above, and informants in both countries consistently identified the same factors limiting their utilisation or integration. Additionally, initial risk management processes were seen at the regional level as being a limiting factor for PaBER activities (Appendix 5, Section 4.5 R).

The limiting factor most discussed by mid- and low level Ministry/Department of Education staff was ineffective and inefficient vertical and horizontal communication. This may be a result of the functioning of the national education system structures, and not a reflection of the PaBER pilot program itself. However, vertical and horizontal communication within the education institutions

will need to be strengthened in order to maximize the benefits of the PaBER approach (Appendix 5, Section 4.5 S). However, at the level of the regional PaBER groups, communication is presented as an exceptional aspect of the PaBER pilot program.

Supporting Question: If funding is not available how will your Ministry/Department sustain the benefits of PaBER or carry out further work in policy implementation/benchmarking?⁸

Regional informants at the SC meeting discussed the need in a future phase for continued (but reducing) regional coordination and functionality. They considered that the regional role would be to facilitate integration, deconstruction, reconstruction, and provide expertise. The regional body would support countries and ensure lessons learned from the pilot program were addressed. In addition, the regional informants stated that the countries must develop a PaBER “sustainability exit plan” (Appendix 5, Section 4.5 T). Regional PaBER informants saw a role for EQAP in offering ongoing support to the original three countries and any others in the future.

PaBER country coordinators and high-level Ministry/Department of Education staff discussed how the PaBER approach itself allows ownership and sustainability (Appendix 5, Section 4.5 U).

⁸ *The agreed MTR plan included several supporting questions. Qualitative informant responses deemed to be of value to those questions have been subsumed under Key Question headings, with the exception of this one.*

This section of the MTR report considers the major challenges identified by the MTR along with suggested recommendations for consideration. These are structured under the MTR criteria for relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

3.1 Relevance

Quantitative and qualitative findings confirmed that at the regional PaBER level and high-level Ministries/Department of Education, PaBER is seen as highly relevant to both country education needs and to the operations and management of Ministries/Department of Education, where policy analysis and development occurs.

The PaBER approach provides a framework for policy work, and acts as a “guide” for policy makers. In response to our finding that most mid- and lower-level Ministry/Department of Education informants were unclear on which recommendations from the SABER reports have been implemented, it is recommended that PaBER institutes much stronger chains of communication vertically and horizontally throughout the Ministries/Department and schools to make the best use of the SABER recommendations and priorities.

Doing so would require establishing a broader PaBER country team, encompassing members of all Ministry/Department divisions. We also suggest that participating countries would benefit from better integration of PaBER in the education sector (e.g. through universities and qualification authorities) and expanding the knowledge learned from and about the SABER process to all stakeholders.

Challenges

Mid- and lower-level Ministry/Department of Education staff are unclear on which (if any) recommendations from the SABER reports have been implemented.

Recommendations

If a further phase of PaBER is implemented: encourage stronger chains of communication vertically and horizontally throughout the Ministries/Department and schools to make the best use of the SABER recommendations through prioritization and implementation. Widen the PaBER team to encompass members of all Ministry/Department divisions. Integrate PaBER into the education sector more widely (e.g. universities and qualification authorities) and expand the knowledge learned from and about the SABER process to all stakeholders.

3.2 Effectiveness

It is clear from both document analysis and discussions with regional PaBER members and high-level Ministry/Department of Education personnel that PaBER is extremely effective at informing policy dialogue, and that the “PaBER Approach” is used to guide those discussions. Discussions with stakeholders revealed that PaBER evidence is not consistently used to support policy dialogue at the lower levels of Ministry/Department of Education or at the school level in Solomon Islands or Papua New Guinea, thus wide groups of stakeholders do not garner benefits or skills from the PaBER approach. We therefore recommend that the PaBER program facilitates capacity development in the regional and national members to: a) clarify the “PaBER approach” and b) improve PaBER members’ abilities in leadership and communication.

Timeliness in the achievement of PaBER activities and outputs was noted as a challenge at all levels. Resources and expertise have proved difficult to procure. The effectiveness of PaBER has been seriously impeded by delays in implementation of activities. There have been two major causes of delays; difficulties in accessing the bilateral funding, and availability of suitable TA. The bilateral

component of DFAT funding to pilot countries has been difficult to access owing to government administrative procedures. There have also been delays caused by lack of availability of suitable Technical Assistance.

A clearer timeline and earlier initiation in procurement and benchmarking activities would be beneficial to address the “domino effect” of the activities.

Challenges

1. Timeliness in the achievement of PaBER activities and outputs was noted as a challenge at all levels. Resources and expertise have proved difficult to procure.
2. PaBER evidence is not consistently used to support policy dialogue at the lower levels of Ministry/Department of Education in Solomon Islands or Papua New Guinea, thus wide groups of stakeholders do not garner benefits or skills from the PaBER approach.

Recommendations

1. In a future phase: Develop a robust communication strategy.
2. Develop and support transparent and effective procurement and benchmarking activities to address the “domino effect” of the challenges.
3. Facilitate capacity development in the regional and national members to clarify the “PaBER approach”.

3.3 Efficiency

The implementation process for SABER was found to be time consuming. Delays in procurement should have been considered at the outset of the pilot program. Tendering for outside consultants is unwieldy, and this modality has affected the efficiency of program implementation.

To address this challenge in future, PaBER should consider using a regional facility that has pre-approved consultants available and use generalist consultants more than once, and in more than one country to garner additional benefit from their knowledge of the PaBER program and processes, e.g. more extensive use of EQAP and its regional consultants.

The current procedure is that funding allocations by DFAT may or may not be tagged for PaBER use, resulting difficulty in using funds for PaBER activities.

In order to address the challenges of the pilot there must be articulated early on (directly in the project design document) the following:

- A unified set of procurement rules to be followed.
- An agreed process for working through issues.
- Procurement processes, including accessing goods and services, and use of savings.

It would also improve efficiency of the program and reduce delays if PaBER activities were included in National and Provincial Education Action Plans, as inclusion mandates funding support from the Government. The review found that management and governance structures, and implementation arrangements, are not efficient at the lower Ministry/Department of Education division (and school level) particularly in the area of communications. Informants stated that they receive little to no feedback on outputs, policies, or PaBER activities from the country coordinator.

Challenges

1. The implementation process for SABER was found to be time consuming. Delays in procurement should have been considered at the outset of the pilot program. Tendering for outside consultants is unwieldy, and this modality has affected the efficiency of program implementation.
2. Funding allocations by DFAT may or may not be tagged for PaBER use, resulting difficulty in using funds for PaBER activities.
3. The management and governance structure, and implementation arrangements are not efficient at the lower Ministry/Department of Education division and school levels, particularly in the area of communications. Informants stated that they receive little to no feedback on outputs and policies, nor PaBER activities from the country coordinator. No arrangements have been communicated to pilot schools.
4. The benefits of regional collaboration are not clearly evident at mid- and lower-levels of the Ministry/Department of Education. Clarity about PaBER, its focus, outcomes, and outputs was lacking below the beneficiary regional level. There is little implementation or synthesis of results.
5. Early on in the PaBER program there were unclear regional procurement processes as well as different country procurement processes. Reversion to following a unified regional procurement procedure has introduced delays and frustration.

Recommendations

For a future phase of PaBER:

1. Consider using a regional facility that has pre-approved consultants available. Use generalist consultants more than once, and in more than one country to garner additional benefit from their knowledge of the PaBER program and processes (e.g. more extensive use of EQAP and its regional consultants).
2. Tag PaBER funding to ensure timely dispensation of funds and to improve accounting/budgeting processes. Ensure that PaBER activities are included in National and Provincial Education Action Plans, as inclusion mandates funding support from the Government.
3. Encourage much stronger chains of communication vertically and horizontally throughout the Ministries/Department and schools to make the best use of the SABER recommendations, prioritization, and their implementation. Widen the PaBER team to encompass members of all Ministry/Department divisions. Integrate PaBER into the education sector (universities, qualification authorities, etc) and expand the knowledge learned from and about the SABER process to all stakeholders.
4. Recommend that country programs review and respond to SABER recommendations and the field research findings. Communicate country findings in the field research to the regional level to be meta-analysed in order to contextualize the situation to and from the countries.

3.4 Impact

Clearer evidence of policy reforms based on SABER recommendations will be contained in the reports of research to be published in 2016 under Component 3, but early indications from the MTR suggest that few recommendations have been implemented. This is to be expected, as PaBER is a pilot project that was focused on collecting and analysing information.

When implementing recommendations Ministries/Department of Education will need to guard against being overwhelmed. SABER reports for Samoa, for example, led to 48 policy recommendations across the five domains. Ministries will need to carefully consider their priorities and set out a manageable road map for implementation. There is evidence that Ministries/Department of Education are already acting on PaBER outputs such as PILNA and SABER reports and have undertaken reforms in advance of a supporting policy framework. It is important that they should bide their time and obtain and triangulate evidence and follow the PaBER process before implementing reforms to ensure correct future directions.

Evidence of the planned impact will become clearer when results of Component 3 research becomes available, although the early indications from the Samoa research suggest a positive impact.

Challenges

Systems assessments have – and may in future - generate so many recommendations for participating countries that they may feel overwhelmed.

Recommendations

Ministries/Departments of Education need to prioritise recommendations, and should assess evidence carefully within their own contexts.

3.5 Sustainability

At the regional and higher-levels of the Ministry/Department of Education, both documentation and discussions with informants led the MTR team to find that sustainability of this project is being actively addressed through systemic approaches. At mid-level of Ministry/DoE it is not apparent that PaBER approaches and strategies are being institutionalised. At the school level, principals and teachers were unaware of the PaBER approach and were unable to discuss the extent of institutionalization of PaBER.

Sustainability depends on the level of ownership shown by Ministries/Department of Education in the PaBER process, exemplified by integration of activities into work plans. There has been some progress but this remains a general weakness which would need to be addressed in a second phase.

Challenges

1. At mid-levels of Ministry/DoE it is not apparent that PaBER approaches and strategies are being institutionalized.
2. Ensuring that benefits of carrying out further work of PaBER is sustained.
3. Identifying key lessons learned and best practices.

Recommendations

1. Encourage much stronger chains of communication vertically and horizontally throughout the Ministries/Department and schools to make the best use of the SABER recommendations, prioritization, and their implementation. Widen the PaBER team to encompass members of all Ministry/Department divisions. Integrate PaBER into the education sector (universities, qualification authorities, etc) and expand the knowledge learned from and about the SABER process to all stakeholders.
2. The country representatives along with other education sector stakeholders should develop a PaBER “exit plan” to ensure sustainability of PaBER benefits and implementation of recommendations and activities.
3. Factor PaBER activities and results into education sector plans and Ministerial/Department of Education reform efforts.
4. Integrate PaBER into donor-funded projects and support, and use the “PaBER approach” to guide donor-funded projects and support.
5. Clearer budget lines and arrangements for disbursement of funds are needed. Since most activities will be at the country level, DFAT funding for activities should go to countries, whereas funding for activities that can be administered at the regional level should be managed by EQAP.
6. Focus on lessons learned and best practices identified at both country and regional levels from the pilot PaBER experience, and assist countries to build on them.
7. Support development of a clear strategy/ies on the implementation of policies, and the monitoring of the process and effectiveness of policy implementation.

APPENDIX 1: OVERVIEW OF PaBER

Background

PaBER was designed in 2010, following endorsement by the Pacific Forum Education Ministers Meeting of the concept of Benchmarking the Quality of Education for Results to improve the literacy and numeracy levels of children in the Pacific region. The overall aim of the program is to improve literacy and numeracy levels of children in the Pacific region. Its purpose is “to provide Pacific education ministries with a systematic and reliable means to learn from their own systems and their neighbours which policies, processes and activities have helped to make a positive impact on the quality of education and specifically on learning”⁹. PaBER builds on current and former support to education benchmarking in the Pacific. This includes:

- Regional Standards for Benchmarking Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills – a collaboration between the Education Quality and Assessment Program (EQAP) of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, UNESCO and UNICEF with a focus on literacy and numeracy at Years 2, 4, 6, & 8.
- Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessments (PILNA) - a collaboration between UNESCO and EQAP to develop tools for assessment at Years 4 and 6.
- Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) - a collaboration of USAID and the World Bank to develop a diagnostic tool to assess reading acquisition skills in the early grades.
- System Assessment and Benchmarking for Education Results (SABER) - a World Bank initiative with a focus on understanding the key policies that affect learning outcomes.

The theory of change for PaBER is that benchmarking provides information that helps teachers to target their teaching, while effectively utilising limited resources. It also allows stakeholders at community, local and national level to hold teachers and the education system accountable. It thereby supports the design of targeted interventions to improve systems’ performance and improve learning outcomes.

Program Description**Aim**

1. The aim of the PaBER program is to improve literacy and numeracy levels of children in the Pacific region.
2. The PaBER Pilot will begin a process that will equip policy makers in Pacific countries with the information and knowledge to drive interventions that will have a real effect on learning results.

Purpose

PaBER will provide Pacific education ministries with a systematic and reliable means to learn from their own systems and from those of their neighbours which policies, processes and activities have helped to make a positive impact on the quality of education and specifically on learning. Participating countries will pilot a benchmarking approach to test its usefulness as a model to drive interventions that will have a positive impact on learning in the region.

⁹ Program Design Document for a Regional Pilot Program in Papua New Guinea Samoa and Solomon Islands, 2012

Outcomes

Pilot countries will be better positioned to plan and implement interventions that will improve learning through:

- a) Diagnoses of Year 6 students' performance are used to inform policy development for improving learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy;
- b) National benchmarks are established that better reflect regional and international norms which are publicised and approved for implementation;
- c) Evidence is available and used to inform policy reform and effect whole of systems educational change and school improvement.

In seeking to achieve these outcomes, the pilot program will help strengthen country systems and build technical capacity at both regional and country levels.

Scope and Coverage

The pilot benchmarks literacy and numeracy outcomes in Year 6 in Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Samoa; specifically policy and system information which has a critical influence on these learning outcomes in four key policy domains:

- a) Teacher Quality
- b) Assessment Systems
- c) Curriculum and Materials
- d) School Governance and Management

The pilot phase of the program was initially planned for three years, (2012 to 2015) but has been extended to June 2016. During this phase it was proposed to benchmark teacher quality and assessment systems in Years 1 and 2 followed by curriculum, materials and school governance and management domains in Years 2 and 3.

Summary of Components

Component 1: Learning Assessment

Outcome: Diagnoses of Year 6 students' performance used to inform policies and practices to improve learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy

Outputs:

- 1a A regional tool for measuring literacy and numeracy learning outcomes (PILNA) at the primary level (Year 6) developed/adapted and field tested
- 1b Results from implementing the tool in three pilot countries
- 1c Regional agreement to monitor and learn from the results of PLINA implementation and resulting policy development for improved support for literacy and numeracy learning
- 1d Capacity developed within relevant ministries for using diagnostic data to develop policy for improving learning
- 1e Policies and interventions in place to improve learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy by July 2015

Component 2: Education Policy and System Assessment

Outcome: National benchmarks are established that better reflect regional and international norms which are publicised and approved for implementation.

Outputs:

- 2a Instruments for benchmarking systems in two key policy domains are adapted and administered in Years 1 and-2:
 - Teacher Quality
 - Assessment Systems
- 2b Instruments for benchmarking systems in two key policy domains are adapted / developed in Years 2 and 3:
 - School Governance and Management
 - Curriculum and materials
- 2c Country and regional reports on target policy domains (as contributions to new knowledge)
- 2d Capacity building in benchmarking development is evident in relevant ministries for improving target policy areas
- 2e Policies and systems adjusted as a result of international norms

Component 3: Policy and Practice

Outcome: Evidence is available and used to inform policy reform and effect whole of systems educational change and school improvement

Outputs:

- 3a Valid and reliable data are collected on education policy influences on school and classroom, relevant to the target domains
- 3b Capacity building is evident in relevant ministries for comparative analyses of country practice
- 3c Policy briefs based on field evidence and designed to facilitate policy review and development in related domains are approved by ministry executive bodies

Advisory Services for Mid-term Review (MTR)
Pacific Benchmarking for Education Results (PaBER)

1. PURPOSE OF MID-TERM REVIEW (MTR)

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) seeks to engage a contractor to engage, manage and provide logistical support to two (2) consultants who will conduct a mid-term review (MTR) of the Pacific Benchmarking Education for Results program pilot (PaBER).

The purpose of the MTR is to assess progress towards intended outcomes after two years of program implementation in order to inform the final year of the pilot. The findings from the MTR will also influence decisions on the future implementation of PaBER activities by other Pacific island countries.

Primary users of the review report

The primary users of the report are staff of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) including its Australian Aid Program (Senior Executive and Program staff at desk and post), education ministry officials in partner governments, Pacific regional stakeholders and the education community.

Management response to the review report

Evidence and lessons learned from the review will be used to inform the future direction of investments in benchmarking beyond the life of current DFAT funding and taking into consideration priorities of the all stakeholders.

REVIEW TEAM

The two consultants will fill the roles of:

- i. Team Leader
- ii. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Specialist

The Team Leader and M&E Specialist are to be sourced from the market (relevant qualifications, experience and competencies for the position are detailed in Section 8).

BACKGROUND TO PaBER

PaBER builds on current and former support to education benchmarking in the Pacific. This includes:

- **Regional Standards for Benchmarking Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills** – a collaboration between the Education Quality and Assessment Program (EQAP) of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, UNESCO and UNICEF with a focus on literacy and numeracy at Years 2/4/6/8.
- **Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessments (PILNA)** - a collaboration between UNESCO and EQAP to develop tools for assessment at Years 4 and 6.

- **Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA)** - a collaboration of USAID and the World Bank to develop a diagnostic tool to assess reading acquisition skills in the early grades.
- **System Assessment and Benchmarking for Education Results (SABER)** - a World Bank initiative with a focus on understanding the key policies that affect learning outcomes.

PaBER was designed in 2010, following endorsement by the Pacific Forum Education Ministers Meeting of the concept of *Benchmarking the Quality of Education for Results* to improve the literacy and numeracy levels of children in the Pacific region. PaBER aims to provide Pacific education ministries with a systematic and reliable means of determining the policies, processes and activities, which are most likely to have a positive impact on the quality of children's education and learning outcomes, drawing on information and data from their own education systems and those of neighbouring countries. The theory of change for PaBER and other benchmarking programs is that benchmarking provides information that helps teachers to target their teaching, while effectively utilising limited resources. It also allows stakeholders at community, local and national level to hold teachers and the education system accountable. It thereby supports the design of targeted interventions to improve systems' performance and improve learning outcomes.

Design of PaBER

The overall aim of the PaBER program is to improve literacy and numeracy levels of children in the Pacific region. The purpose and intended outcomes are shown in the box below.

Purpose and intended outcomes of PaBER

Purpose

To provide Pacific education ministries with a systematic and reliable means to learn from their own systems and their neighbours which policies, processes and activities have helped to make a positive impact on the quality of education and specifically on learning.

Intended outcomes

1. Pilot countries will be better positioned to plan and implement interventions that will improve learning through:
 - i. Diagnoses of Year 6 students' performance are used to inform policy development for improving learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy;
 - ii. National benchmarks are established that better reflect regional and international norms which are publicised and approved for implementation;
 - iii. Evidence is available and used to inform policy reform and effect whole of systems' educational change and school improvement.
2. Country systems and technical capacity at both regional and country levels will be strengthened.

Source: Secretariat of the Pacific Community – about PaBER

<http://www.spbea.org.fj/Our-Work/Projects/PaBer/About-Paber.aspx>

PaBER has three components: learning assessment; policy and system assessment; and policy in practice.

Funding arrangements

The intention was that the cost of the PaBER pilot would be covered by the governments with additional support from DFAT. The Australian bilateral programs in Samoa, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea provided funding under their existing partnership agreements to cover in-country costs including operational costs and technical assistance. Matching funding from partner governments would either already exist or be in the pipeline, and be specified in partner's annual plans and budgets. The estimated total cost to the bilateral programs was \$3,039,000 (Samoa – \$661,000; Solomon Islands - \$848,000; and Papua New Guinea - \$1,530,000). Additional Australian funding would be provided to EQAP within the Literacy and Numeracy Project to cover the PaBER related costs, estimated over the length of the program at \$2,822,000.

Implementation arrangements

PaBER operates at regional and individual country level. It is governed by a Steering Committee and Technical Working Group (TWG) which operates under the auspices of the **Pacific Board for Educational Assessment (PBEA)**. PBEA is made up of representatives of Pacific Island Country Ministries of Education plus representatives from Australia and New Zealand aid programs. PBEA governs The Educational Quality and Assessment Program (EQAP), and as such has oversight of PaBER.

EQAP (formerly known as South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment) manages the PaBER program, including coordinating activities across the three participating countries. This is in line with its regional coordination role for related initiatives such as PILNA and SABER. Additional technical assistance has been provided to EQAP to support its management of PaBER.

Ministries / Departments of Education manage PaBER activities in their countries, through existing management structures. The core functions of Ministries of Education in relation to PaBER are to:

- endorse and/or approve key PaBER documentation, including country reports, analytical work and instruments;
- include policy reforms and intervention strategies recommended by PaBER in their corporate plans; and
- advocate to donor organisations to fund specific policy reform and intervention programs recommended by PaBER.

Progress since inception

PaBER is on track to complete most of the activities related to components 1 and 2. In addition the systems analysis, one element of component 3, is largely complete. It involved field-based and school surveys. There is some indication that this work has led to introduction of new practices, which the evaluation will need to verify.

Challenges have also emerged. Participating countries are finding it difficult to fully integrate the PaBER approach into their education action/implementation plans. There are two main challenges:

- *Mobilisation of domestic funding* - The Solomon Islands promptly made funding available, while Samoa did not make funding available until 2014. Papua New Guinea has now also provided domestic funding after long delays.
- *Utilisation of bilateral support* - Most of the bilaterally funded activities carried out at country level supplement PaBER activities coordinated by the regional PaBER team. However, countries are still trying to work out how to integrate the PaBER approach into their national education strategies. As a consequence, funding support provided through DFAT bilateral programs remains largely unspent.

The limited engagement of countries makes it difficult to determine what influence, and consequently impact, PaBER is having.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) arrangements

M&E of the program occurs on three levels:

1. *Education System Performance Monitoring* to support the design of interventions based on sound evidence. The M&E Framework prepared by the TWG is embedded in the Education Sector Performance Assessment Frameworks in each country and has standardised indicators of progress.
2. *Program Implementation Monitoring*, reporting to the Pacific Forum Education Minister's Meeting. This annual meeting involves all partner organisations with representatives on the Steering Committee and TWG. It is timed to coincide with the annual meetings of the Heads of Education in the Pacific to allow for high level of engagement and wider participation.
3. *Program Evaluation* including this MTR.

2. KEY REVIEW QUESTIONS

The key questions for this review are based on the standard DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability, which are normally applied for endpoint evaluation. At the midpoint, the focus is on those aspects of the criteria that can bring useful insights that can be actioned.

CRITERIA	KEY QUESTIONS
Relevance	1. Are PaBER activities relevant to benchmarking needs / approaches in pilot countries?
Effectiveness	2. How effectively is PaBER supporting policy dialogue: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Within each Ministry? ii. Amongst all stakeholders? 3. Are the activities and outputs of the components the right ones (necessary and sufficient), in the right sequence (timely), to achieve the intended outcomes?

CRITERIA	KEY QUESTIONS
Efficiency	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. How efficient are the management /governance /implementation arrangements 5. How well are these arrangements supporting achievement of intended outcomes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Across the whole program? ii. At country level? 6. What explains the low level of utilisation of funding support at country level? 7. Comment on added value, and value for money, of running PaBER as a regional program (vs. three bilateral programs).
Impact	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. To what extent are the intended outcomes of each component being achieved? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. <i>C1 Learning Assessment</i>: diagnoses of year 6 students' performance are being used to inform policies and practices to improve learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy ii. <i>C2 Policy and System Assessment</i>: national benchmarks are established that better reflect regional and international norms iii. <i>C3 Policy in Practice</i>: evidence is available and being used to inform policy reform and effect whole of systems educational change and school improvement. 9. Is the M&E evidence being collected appropriate and sufficient to be able to demonstrate achievement at outcome level? 10. What factors determine the influence PaBER has and is likely to have on how countries are implementing their national action plans?
Sustainability	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. To what extent has each country taken ownership of the methodology? Is there any evidence that approaches are being institutionalised? 12. What factors are limiting utilisation and/or integration of PaBER support to implement new country-driven activities?

3. SCOPE OF WORK

The consultants will be engaged for a maximum of four (4) months with inputs as agreed by DFAT and in line with the qualifications and experience for both positions under Section 8. Travel to the Pacific is envisaged for both consultants. Travel information as well as the number of days of engagement is outlined under Section 8.

The Contractor must provide the following Services:

1. review terms of reference provided by DFAT and develop a salary package for identified positions in accordance with the specified Adviser Remuneration Framework level
2. source potential consultants for DFAT review
3. enter into relevant agreements for the following consultants
 - i. Team Leader – David Dean
 - ii. M&E Specialist – Dianna Guild

4. arrange travel and accommodation for specified consultants, based on DFAT approved terms of reference and/or work plan. Any travel arrangements in addition to those specified in the terms of reference or adviser work plan are to be agreed in advance
5. ensure all advisers adhere to DFAT policies such as, but not limited to, child protection, social inclusion, security and risk management
6. manage agreements for the consultants, including the provision of relevant insurances and payment of invoices.

The Contractor is not required to provide any reports, but is expected to quality assure reports and deliverables from the consultants.

4. DELIVERABLES

The deliverables are:

- Evaluation Plan to be agreed prior to the commencement of the review
- Draft Report preceding a Final Report of not more than 30 pages with a 2-3 page executive summary
- Summary Report of not more than 4 pages
- Contribution to a workshop/conference comprising a presentation and accessible written materials/presentation tailored to the audience.

5. OVERSIGHT AND MANAGEMENT OF THE MTR

Oversight

A small Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) will be established to oversee the MTR, comprising a nominee from DFAT (to be confirmed) and 3-4 members of PaBER's TWG. The role of the ERG is to ensure that:

- the terms of reference for the review reflect the priorities and interests of pilot countries
- the review plan developed by the review team is appropriate and realistic
- the process and conduct of the review enables appropriate participation of relevant stakeholders
- the deliverables of the review are in a form that support practical utilisation at country level.

Management

DFAT is the client for the review and has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that it is managed in a way that is participatory, timely and cost effective. This includes:

- managing the process of consultation to finalise the terms of reference within DFAT and with the PaBER TWG and SC
- commissioning a managing contractor to recruit and manage the MTR team
- providing documentation to the team
- overseeing development of the Evaluation/Review Plan (specification of detailed methodology, timelines, deliverables)
- briefing the review team and facilitating briefing with the ERG and key stakeholders
- facilitating video conferencing (if required)
- hosting a feedback meeting of preliminary conclusions and recommendations
- receiving, circulating and compiling comments on the draft report and other deliverables

6. METHODOLOGY

Process and methods

The main methods used will be documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews:

- Documentary analysis will be done in two phases: 1) in order to prepare the Evaluation/Review Plan including clarification and elaboration of the key evaluation questions and the associated methodology for answering them; 2) during the review and for the purpose of producing the deliverables
- Interviews will be conducted face to face or remotely via video conferencing (to be determined in line with cost effectiveness considerations and available budget)
- The review would be conducted in PaBER countries and Fiji. A small number of key stakeholders from the three countries will be travelling to Fiji for an existing PaBER workshop where they will be interviewed in person by the review team
- Each country will nominate ministry staff to serve as key informants in the review process
- Additional interviews will be conducted by teleconference as required.

7. REVIEW TEAM

The composition of the team will be as follows:

The Team Leader

Qualifications

- Post-graduate Degree in Monitoring and Evaluation, Education, Development or a similar qualification.

Experience

- Extensive experience in leading evaluation, strategy and design for public and private education organisations, including non-profit sectors.
- Experience in national, regional and international learning assessments.
- Significant expertise in forging partnerships with multiple education stakeholders including international and bilateral donors, foundations and grassroots providers.
- Proven high level communication and interpersonal skills, and the ability to lead a team.
- Experience in the Pacific highly desirable.
- Experience in leading education improvements in fragile and conflict affected areas desirable.

The M&E Specialist

Qualifications

- Degree in Monitoring and Evaluation or a similar qualification

Competencies and Experience

- The M&E Specialist should possess excellent technical skills in evaluation, research and project performance assessment.
- Demonstrated experience in monitoring and evaluation of development project activities.
- Strong communication and facilitation skills and ability to establish good working relationships with stakeholders.
- Excellent data analysis skills and interpretation. Must have ability to write clearly and concisely, and have sound quantitative skills (managing, analysing and interpreting data).
- Broad knowledge and understanding of education in a developing country
- At least 5 years' experience in M&E design and implementation at the project level.
- Experience in the Pacific desirable.

Consultant Days (to be reviewed against Evaluation Plan)

ACTIVITY		NUMBER OF DAYS
TEAM LEADER		
TOTAL NUMBER OF DAYS		41
M&E SPECIALIST		
TOTAL NUMBER OF DAYS		32

Travel Requirements (to be reviewed against Evaluation Plan)

The Team Leader will make one return trip to Fiji and one return trip to a PaBER country. The M&E Specialist will make one return trip to a PaBER country.

Timeline

TIME	ACTIVITY	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE
Oct	Review team contracted	DFAT
Oct	Document review / Evaluation Plan agreed	ERG, Consultant(s)
Oct/Nov/Dec	Review takes place	Consultant(s)
Jan	Draft report received and circulated for comment	Consultant(s)
Feb	Validation and presentation to TWG	Consultant(s), ERG, DFAT
Feb	Finalisation of report	Consultant(s),

8. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The Contractor is not required to provide any reports, but is expected to quality assure reports and deliverables from the consultants.

All reports from consultants must:

- a. be provided in accordance with the requirements of the Services Order;
- b. be accurate and not misleading in any respect;
- c. be prepared as directed by DFAT;
- d. be provided in the format and on the media approved or requested by DFAT;
- e. not incorporate either the DFAT or the Contractor's logo;
- f. be provided at the time specified; and
- g. incorporate sufficient information which allows DFAT to monitor and assess the success of the services in achieving the objectives.

The Consultant will work with DFAT to resolve any inconsistencies resulting in outputs required.

9. TIMING

The Team Leader and the M&E Specialist must be engaged for a **29 September 2015** start date and provide inputs through to **29 February 2016**. Breakdown of consultant days are noted at section 8.

APPENDIX 3: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

Documents reviewed by the MTR team include:

Benchmarking Education Quality for Results in the Pacific	Forum Education Ministers' Meeting	October 2010
Developing a Design Proposal for a 3-5 year pilot in PNG, Solomon Islands and Samoa: Inception Report and Work Plan	Ian Collingwood & Fred Brooker	January 2011
Report to UNESCO on the PILNA Trial	SPBEA	November 2011
PILNA Report to FEdMM	SPC	July 2013
Program Design Document for a Regional Pilot Program in Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Solomon Islands	PaBER	April, 2012
What Matters Most for Student Assessment Systems: A Framework Paper	Marguerite Clarke, World Bank	April 2012
Institutional Capacity Analysis of National Education Assessment System (Samoa)	ACER	2013
PNG School Autonomy and Accountability SABER Report	World Bank	2013
PNG Students Assessment SABER Report	World Bank	2013
Samoa School Autonomy and Accountability SABER Report	World Bank	2013
Samoa Students Assessment SABER Report	World Bank	2013
Solomon Islands School Autonomy and Accountability SABER Report	World Bank	2013
Solomon Islands Students Assessment SABER Report	World Bank	2013
Financial Report (Regional)	EQAP	February 2013
Institutional Capacity Analysis of National Education Assessment System (Solomon Islands)	ACER	February 2013
PILNA 2012: A summary regional report	SPBEA	July 2013
Six-monthly Consolidated Financial Report from 1 January to 30 June, 2013	EQAP	September 2013
PNG Curriculum and Materials Country Report	PaBER	2014
PNG Teachers SABER Report	World Bank	2014

Samoa Curriculum and Materials Country Report	PaBER	2014
Samoa Teachers SABER Report	World Bank	2014
Solomon Islands Curriculum and Materials Country Report	PaBER	2014
Solomon Islands Teachers SABER Report	World Bank	2014
Institutional Capacity Analysis & Plan for Capacity Development Measurement Services Branch Department of Education Papua New Guinea	ACER	January 2014
Six-monthly Consolidated Financial Report from 1 July to 31 December, 2013	EQAP	March, 2014
A Report on PILNA & PaBER Progress to FEdMM	PaBER TWG	April 2014
Six-monthly Consolidated Financial Report from 1 January to 30 June, 2014	EQAP	October, 2014
PNG EMIS SABER Report	World Bank	2015
Samoa EMIS SABER Report	World Bank	2015
Solomon Islands EMIS SABER Report	World Bank	2015
Six-monthly Consolidated Financial Report from 1 July to 31 December, 2014	EQAP	April 2015
Skills Audit of Assessment Personnel	PaBER	April 2015
Annual PaBER Monitoring and Evaluation Report, 1 July 2014 – 30 June 2015	PaBER	October 2015
Formulating Evidence-Based Policy Interventions for Pilot Countries	PaBER	October 2015
PILNA and PaBER 2015 and Beyond	PaBER	October 2015
Revised Consolidated Work Plan and Budget for 2015/16	PaBER	October 2015
Risk Management Report	PaBER	October 2015
Six-monthly Consolidated Financial Report from 1 Jan to 30 June, 2015	EQAP	October 2015
Six-monthly Consolidated Progress Report: 1 January to 30 June, 2015	EQAP	October 2015

APPENDIX 4: STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED

Steering Committee

Dr Uke Kombra	Acting Secretary for Education, Department of Education, PNG
Dr Visessio Pongi	PaBER Regional Coordinator
Fred Brooker	Senior Education Specialist, DFAT
Ms Sheona McKenna	Regional Program Director - Health, Education & Leadership Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia
Dr Michelle Belisle	Director, Educational Quality and Assessment Program (EQAP)
Mr Tanielu Aiafi	CEO of Ministry of Education, Sports & Culture, Samoa
Dr Franco Rodie	Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, Solomon Islands

Technical Working Group

Dr Michelle Belisle (Co-chair)	Director, EQAP
Fred Brooker	Senior Education Specialist, DFAT
Betty Jitoko	PaBER Program Manager, DFAT
Doreen Alfred	Country Coordinator, MEHRD, Solomon Islands
Constance Nasi	Undersecretary, MEHRD, Solomon Islands
Maimoana Petaia	Country Coordinator, MESC, Samoa
Regina Mabilia	Country Coordinator, DoE, Papua New Guinea
Cameron Nobbs	Learning Assessment Advisor, ECDF/DoE, Papua New Guinea
Adrian Alamu	Assessment Officer, EQAP
Seema Prasad	Assessment Officer, EQAP
Violet Prasad	Administrative Officer, EQAP
Shalom Akao-Waita	DFAT, Solomon Islands
David Letichevsky	Education Specialist, ECDF, Papua New Guinea

PaBER Evaluation Reference Group

Betty Jitoko	PaBER Program Manager, DFAT
Dr Michelle Belisle	Director, EQAP
Dr Visessio Pongi	PaBER Regional Coordinator
Constance Nasi	Under Secretary National Education Services, Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development PaBER Country Representative (Solomon Islands)
Fred Brooker	Senior Education Specialist, DFAT

Solomon Islands

Jane Bastin-Sikimeti	DFAT, Solomon Islands
Constance Nasi	Under Secretary National Education Services, Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development PaBER Country Representative
James Bosamata	Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development
Dagnal Dereveke,	Under Secretary Corporate Services, Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development
Ambrose Malefoasi	Under Secretary Education Authorities Support Services, Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development
George Saemane	Principal, Florence Young Christian School,
Lynette Ramo	PILNA teacher, Florence Young Christian School
Nesta Row	PILNA teacher, Florence Young Christian School
Mathias Kutai	Division Head Teaching Services, MEHRD
Charles Rouikera	Division Head Teacher Training, MEHRD
James Niutaloa	Act. Division Head, Inspection Services, MEHRD

Papua New Guinea

Eliakim Apelis	Papua New Guinea Deputy Secretary, School and Education Standards Directorate, Department of Education
Nida Bland	Principal, Carr Memorial Primary School (SDA)
Jethro Rabie	Senior Head teacher, Carr Memorial Primary School (SDA)
Rayleen Gaure	Teacher, Carr Memorial Primary School (SDA)
Pauline Amigu Dage	Teacher, Carr Memorial Primary School (SDA)
Rachael Idah	Teacher, Carr Memorial Primary School (SDA)
Jochabed Lagani	Teacher (ECE) Carr Memorial Primary School (SDA)
Bob Stanley	Facility Director ECDF,
Anthea Edmunds	Senior Associate, Project Operations, The Palladium Group
Louise Jennion	Senior Associate, Project Operations, The Palladium Group
Catherine Yates	Country Manager, ECDF/Palladium PNG
Brian Gaius-Moni	Manager, Policy Development and Review Branch, Department of Education
Dorcas Mugga	Director, Research and Evaluation Division, Department of Education
James Agigo	Assistant Secretary, Research, Evaluation, and Statistics, Policy and Research Wing, Department of Education
John Kagawe	Acting Assistant Secretary, Policy and Planning Division Department of Education
Priscilla Rasehei	Statistics Director, EMIS, Research and Evaluation Division, Department of Education
Stephen Close	Human Development Specialist, World Bank

APPENDIX 5: EXAMPLES RELATING TO INFORMANTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE PaBER PILOT PROGRAM

Section and Key Questions	Examples Provided by Informants
5.1 Relevance	
Are PaBER benchmarking activities relevant to the needs of pilot countries and their approaches to education reforms?	<p>(A) In Solomon Islands, for example, the SABER benchmarking DCI identified an urgent need for teacher workforce reform. As the Solomon Islands National Education Action Plan is reviewed over the next few months recommendations from the SABER DCI will be included to address teacher workforce needs. This process will be related back to the regional level.</p> <p>(B) In PNG, mid-level staff were clear about the relevancy of PaBER to their own work and systems Their assessment system is being reformed. Research conducted within the Research and Evaluation Division has absorbed and will mirror PaBER methodologies. Curriculum division policies were reviewed and there is now a clear mandate to update them. PaBER has also facilitated structural reforms. The national DoE is responsible for policies, strategies, and the National Education Action Plan (NEAP).</p> <p>(C) For example, in PNG, the results of the Pearson Report support curriculum development. During analysis it was determined that PNG's Grade 5 curriculum was 1½ years behind Solomon Islands and Samoa and not of international standards as assumed. PNG's Department of Education has since repositioned content at the Grade 5 level. The PNG DoE is also reviewing the Education Act in order to reform it to include more direct access to schools in response to SABER tools and PaBER regional discussions about roles and responsibilities of Provincial Education Authorities regarding school operations and teacher training</p> <p>(D) Capacity development in the PaBER pilot program in Solomon Islands and PNG included the development of tools for the field research activity, as well as triangulation methods and mini-pilot testing have been topics for capacity development. In this component area, the next step for will be on data validation and entry. Additionally, both Country Coordinators stated that capacity development for themselves and curriculum division staff was provided on Item construction and criterion marking for PILNA tests. In Solomon Islands MEHRD, risk assessment and management has begun to be instituted in all divisions. In PNG, the conduct of PILNA test and the completion of required questionnaires facilitated the organization of the DoE EMIS system and school level census information.</p> <p>(E) At the mid-level within the Ministry/Department of Education in both Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea Ministry division heads were not certain of many PaBER activities or SABER/Pearson report recommendations. Several were unaware of recommendations in any area.</p>
5.2 Effectiveness	
How effectively is PaBER supporting	<p>(F) In Solomon Islands, division heads were aware of the teacher quality assessment, and attended a training session on it, but asserted that they had not</p>

Section and Key Questions	Examples Provided by Informants
<p>policy dialogue:</p> <p>Within each Ministry?</p> <p>Amongst all stakeholders</p>	<p>met to discuss the report itself and were unsure of the policy dialogue process. In PNG, for EMIS and in the curricular areas, it was acknowledged by informants that policies need to be developed or updated as soon as possible. The PaBER review process influenced policy dialogue in these areas. PaBER information is passed to lower-level DOE staff through the E-Learning steering committee.</p>
5.3 Efficiency	
<p>How efficient are the management, governance, and implementation arrangements?</p>	<p>(G) According to regional level informants, the implementation process for SABER was found to be extremely time consuming. Data collection in each domain using SABER tools by country coordinators and their teams took more time than expected, and the analysis of data by World Bank and reporting results and recommendations, as well as the approval by each of the countries, of the World Bank reports takes time. In addition, informants at the regional level understood that they could not use the World Bank SABER reports until they were published on the World Bank website. Cross-country analysis and regional comparisons take time, as does the provision of a regional report with recommendations. This report then must return to country governments for acceptance, and ultimately use.</p> <p>(H) For example, in Solomon Islands, DFAT takes a sector-wide approach. DFAT funds go to MEHRD, which then follows its own budgetary and procurement processes. MEHRD determines priorities, fundings, and contracts consultants or researchers. DFAT Solomon Islands maintains a list of prequalified firms to facilitate efficiency in the procurement process.</p> <p>(I) For example, the Solomon Islands Government funds the country coordinator, as does GoPNG for its country coordinator. Both country coordinators operate within the National Ministry/Department of Education. In Samoa, the country coordinator is engaged through DFAT regional funds, and although seated in MESC, she is not employed by MESC.</p> <p>(J) Mid-level staff discussed the issue of lateral transfers of personnel with PaBER knowledge to different departments, taking “their knowledge with them”. Delays also occur awaiting placement of decision-makers, (or those with PaBER budget management responsibilities) who then need to familiarize themselves with all the aspects of their new positions, in addition to PaBER.</p>
<p>What explains the low level of utilisation of funding support at country level?</p>	<p>(K) For both Solomon Islands and PNG, PaBER is not in the budget line. Activities are captured all over the Ministry/Department of Education. This makes it difficult to verify and report on finance. Informants at the regional and high-level Ministry/Department of Education stated that budgeting difficulties are also caused by a lack of political will, or ownership at the highest management levels. Untagged funds are available to be claimed for higher “priorities”, leaving PaBER, at country level, vulnerable. In Solomon Islands, in 2013 PaBER used 90% of its funds. In 2014, only 60% were utilized. It is expected that the remaining amount will be spent on time for the completion of research fieldwork.</p>

Section and Key Questions	Examples Provided by Informants
<p>Comment on the added value of running PaBER as a regional program as opposed to three bilateral programs.</p>	<p>(L) The Solomon Islands has maintained a clear funding set up and process. In-country activities are budgeted with government funds as well as DFAT bilateral support. Clear recognition of ownership and responsibilities ensure important PaBER activities are completed.</p> <p>In PNG PaBER suffered because of a funding freeze that had nothing to do with PaBER itself.</p> <p>(M)Mid-level Ministry/Department of Education staff agree that although the regional focus may be advantageous, they believed that there have been few tangible outputs and outcomes of PaBER, and that they saw little implementation or synthesis of results. They stated that recommendations need to be put into country programs in order to contextualize their situation to and from other countries.</p>
5.4 Impact	
<p>To what extent are the intended outcomes of each component being achieved?</p> <p>Component 1: Learning Assessment</p> <p>Diagnoses of year 6 students' performance are being used to inform policies and practices to improve learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy.</p>	<p>(N) One potential issue was identified in Samoa. PILNA assesses in English, but the country language policy in Samoa is bilingual. In response to concerns about the relevance of PILNA, Solomon Islands and Samoa have integrated national numeracy and literacy tests with PILNA. Solomon Islands used all three tests in 2015. The SI PaBER country coordinator explained that this integrated approach will assist MEHRD to arrive at a common understanding, as reviewing each test provides a different perspective. The SISTA addresses higher, middle, and lower achieving students. PaBER provides a long-term perspective. The Curriculum Director in DoE stated that PILNA has not been fully utilized, as the DoE also uses EGRA test to assess literacy at the primary levels. Information from the PILNA numeracy test will be considered.</p>
<p>To what extent are the intended outcomes of each component being achieved?</p> <p>Component 3: Policy in Practice</p> <p>Evidence is available and being used to inform policy reform and effect whole of</p>	<p>(O) At the regional level, PaBER members expected that the research will complement the benchmarking work through triangulation, vertical and horizontal comparison, sharing of results, and problem solving.</p> <p>As the research has not yet been completed, it cannot be determined if it provides further insights in to learning achievement, strategies to address problems, or sharing successful practices. However, at all levels, informants expect that these will occur.</p> <p>Once results have been obtained, and recommendations for policies have been inserted into NEAPs, there is the challenge of practical activities for implementation. Regional PaBER members discussed areas for further exploration including: strategies for the Ministry/Department of Education to</p>

Section and Key Questions	Examples Provided by Informants
systems educational change and school improvement	meet targets, and consistent, country-wide implementation of policies given constraints including geography, political will, and funding issues. In addition, both Solomon Islands and PNG, provincial education authorities have some independence from the national level. More coordination and communication will be needed to ensure policy implementation and enforcement at the provincial/district/school level.
What factors determine the influence PaBER has, and is likely to have, on how countries develop their policies, and implement them through their national action plans?	<p>(P) Informants discussed several factors that determine the influence PaBER has on policy development and the ability to implement policies through NEAPs, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political will: SABER reports and other research conducted to inform national, provincial, and local education policy development and implementation often depend on personalities, authority, and “championing”. • Finance/funding: PaBER activities are funded and there are persons officially responsible for carrying out activities in policy development and implementation. Unless funding occurs, PaBER activities will not be implemented. • Knowledge about policy development and implementation enforcement strategies: There are difficulties for Ministry/Department of Education staff in the understanding of concepts of and differences between “policy”, “regulation”, “framework”, and the capacity to develop policies and plan for implementation. Additionally, implementation of new policies within school settings will be difficult to enforce • EMIS: Discussion with statistics divisions in both countries showed that PaBER pilot program EMIS research is very likely to influence future EMIS activities and stronger participation in Ministry/Department of Education activities in all divisions.
5.5 Sustainability	
To what extent has each country taken ownership of the methodology?	(Q) In PNG, informants reported that the DoE has taken ownership of the different domains through quality improvements, for example the development of a teacher code of ethics. The DoE has taken ownership of the methodology used in research projects, conducts research, obtains evidence, provides recommendations, prioritises and implements recommendations. In Solomon Islands, MEHRD has integrated PILNA tests into SISTA. In addition, PaBER participants support the PaBER approach for any research that is conducted through MEHRD.
What factors may be limiting utilisation or integration of PaBER support to implement	<p>(R) The regional PaBER Steering Committee instituted a procedure for project, a “risk register” including forecasting against a budget, rather than a continuous risk inventory approach in order to increase efficiency of country activities..</p> <p>(S). Ineffective and inefficient communication has resulted in a lack of awareness</p>

Section and Key Questions	Examples Provided by Informants
new country-driven activities?	<p>of PaBER, as illustrated by these quotes from informants: “No flow of communication saying what is available”; “We don’t know what is there”; “Have not received any benefits”. Informants also reported that neither SABER nor PILNA results have been communicated to teachers and principal informants in both countries.</p>
If funding is not available how will your Ministry sustain the benefits of PaBER or carry out further work in policy, implementation & benchmarking?	<p>(T) PNG has mirrored this recommendation into a policy of having exit strategies for all aid projects</p> <p>(U) In Solomon Islands the implementation of policies will not be concluded. MEHRD officials stated that the Ministry will definitely continue with the process, and have factored SABER results and recommendations into sector plans as part of the education sector reform. All PaBER activities will be implemented.</p> <p>In Solomon Islands, sustaining the benefits of PaBER and carrying out future work will be done through technical support and sustainability through TA consultants. Informants expected to increase the sharing and exchange of knowledge within the Ministry. The Country Coordinator and PaBER team members discussed “anchoring” initiatives with institutions, archive research, lecturing, knowledge expansion, and capacity development. There has already been investment in the LPMU and Assessment Division.</p> <p>In PNG, informants within DoE stated that conducting research will be key to sustaining progress. Policies have not yet reached schools, and implementation of policies will be key. These PaBER team members discussed the idea that the field-based research in component three would provide a roadmap to strengthening schools and the Department itself through the formalization of good practice into programs for school improvement. The next steps of PaBER in PNG include the establishment of an assessment system, including capacity development in assessment tools.</p> <p>In both Solomon Islands and PNG sustainability has been addressed through the inclusion of policy recommendations in the National Education Action Plans. In addition, Solomon Islands uses the SABER and other benchmarking reports’ results to align different policies to focus on mechanisms specifically to improve literacy and numeracy.</p>

APPENDIX 6: SABER RESULTS

The SABER reports were published as follows:

Domain	Country Reports published
Student Assessment	2014
School Autonomy and Accountability	2013
Teachers	2014
Curriculum and Materials	2014
EMIS	2015

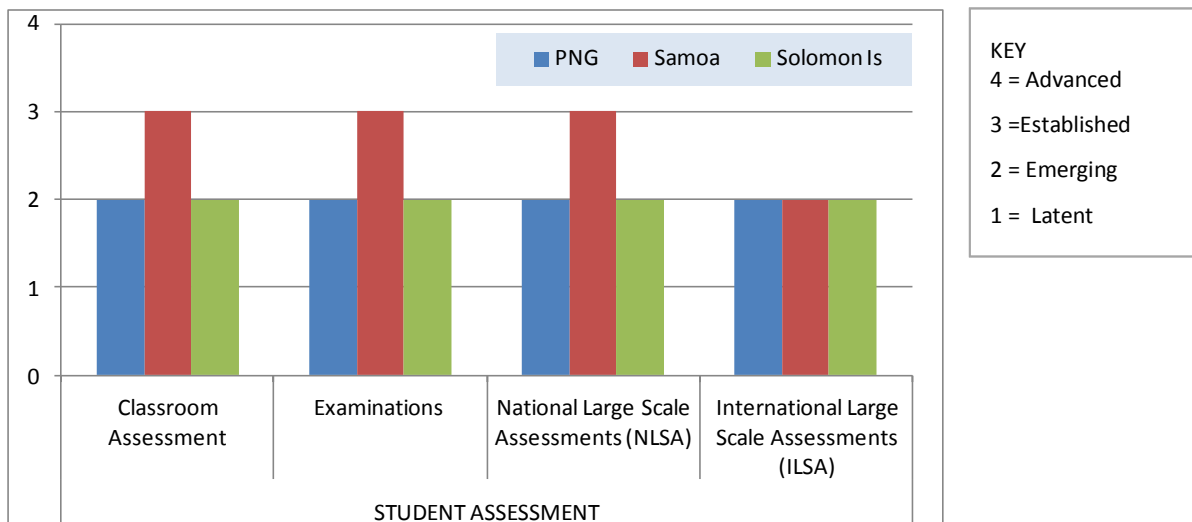
Scores on the policy domains are placed on a four-point scale with the following descriptors:

- | | | |
|---|-------------|--|
| 1 | Latent | Limited enabling environment, processes, structure, data management, utilization |
| 2 | Emerging | Basic enabling environment, processes, structure, data management, utilization |
| 3 | Established | Enabling environment, processes, structure, data management, utilization in place with some integration |
| 4 | Advanced | Comprehensive enabling environment, processes, structure, data management, utilization, and integration in place, with intelligent analytics |

Results for the 27 policy areas within the five domains show some variance between the 3 countries, but almost half of the results (47%) classify the countries as emerging in these areas, illustrating the relevance of PaBER to participating countries. Detailed results are provided for reference in Appendix 6.

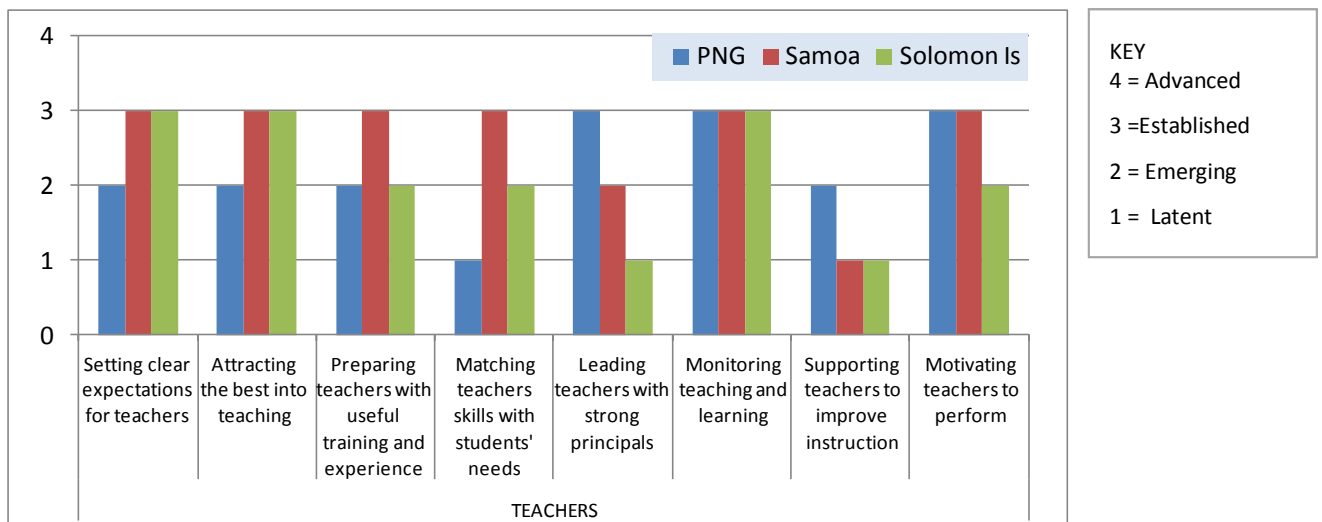
Domain: Student Assessment

Solomon Islands and PNG were deemed to be emerging in all four policy areas, whereas Samoa is established in three of the four areas.



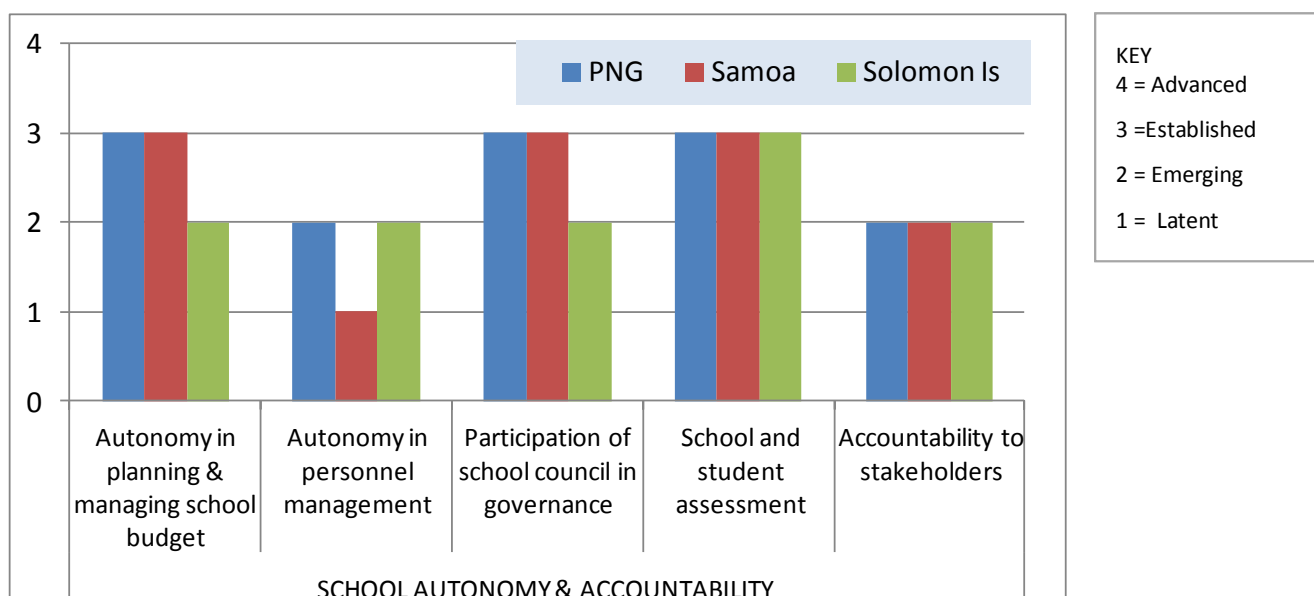
Domain: Teachers

There is clearly more variance between countries in the status of policies and systems relating to teachers, with support for teachers to improve instruction a particular weakness in Samoa and Solomon Islands, and PNG found wanting in matching teachers' skills with students' needs. On the other hand all three countries have established systems for monitoring teaching and learning.



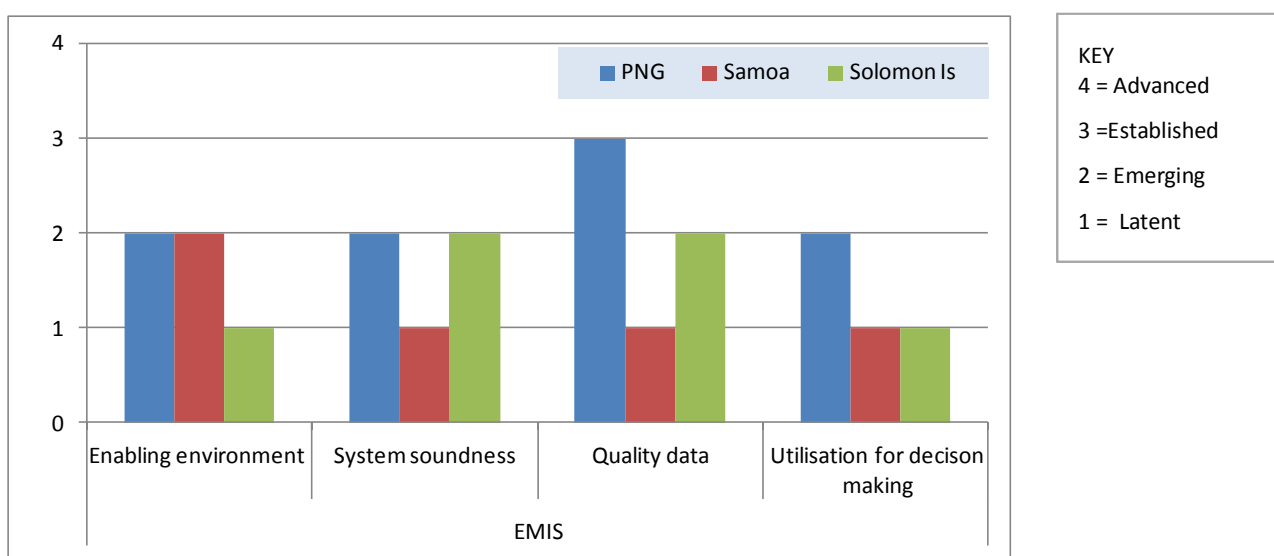
Domain: School Autonomy and Accountability

Variance in the School Autonomy and Accountability results tends to be between aspects of the domain rather than between countries, with all three reported as having established school and student assessment systems, and autonomy in personnel management seen as a general weakness, especially in Samoa.



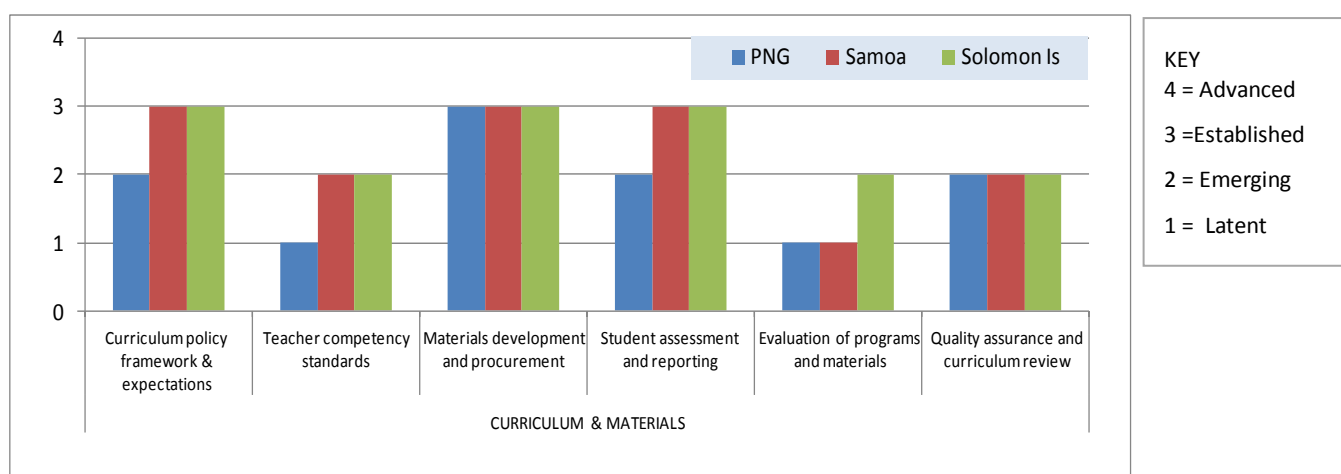
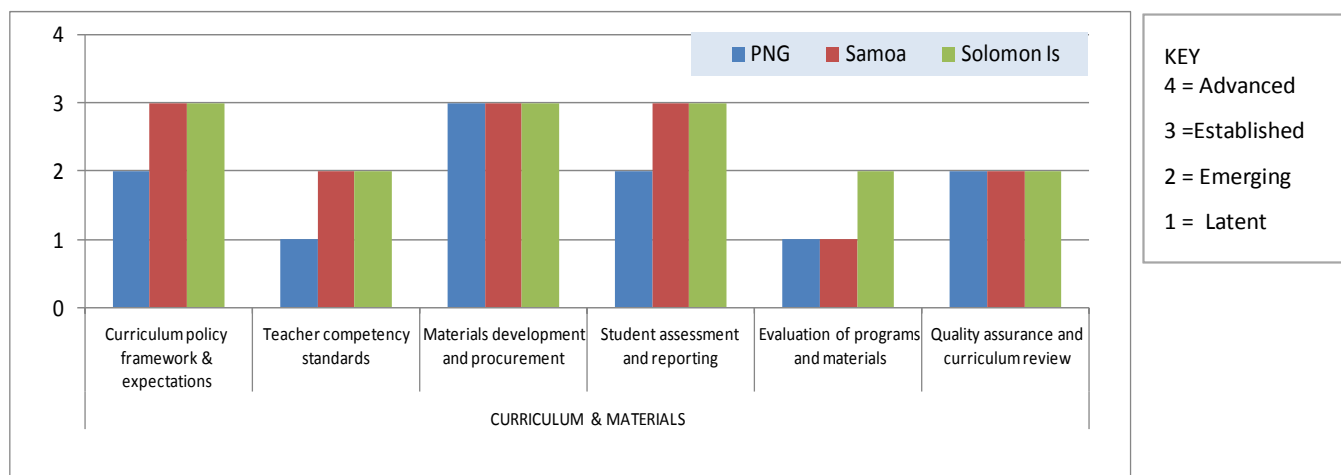
Domain: Education Management Information Systems

Although EMIS was not part of the PaBER design it has been a useful addition to the policy and systems review, since EMIS provides a platform for decision-making based on relevant and reliable education data. Results show that the inclusion of EMIS was indeed a wise decision, identifying all-round weaknesses in the existing systems, with only PNG's quality of data reaching the "established" standard. The SABER analysis found that although PNG has an established EMIS that collects, processes, and disseminates education data on a regular basis, there are no comprehensive EMIS policies nor a budget for EMIS. Information sharing with other government units and local levels, especially schools, is deemed to be inadequate, although the actual quality of data collected is accurate and reliable.



Domain: Curriculum and Materials

The PaBER Curriculum and Materials tool was developed by Pearson International and modelled on the World Bank's SABER instruments. Results show that many aspects of this domain are established, but there appears to be a general weakness in evaluation of programs and materials.



Recommendations emerging from the SABER-led assessment process:

SABER reports present clear indications of the status of country status in the five domains and provide appropriate recommendations for policy and system reforms. In accordance with the PaBER process the reports and their recommendations are consolidated into a regional analysis which is presented to Steering Committee meetings for approval

Draft SABER Country Reports and the Cross-country Report on Student Assessment (October 2014) recommend that all three pilot countries should have policies on regional (PILNA) and international large scale assessment engagement and should define clear responsibilities for such assessments. Similarly the reports recommend that all three countries have clear guidelines on the use of PILNA results and they review their policies and procedures and identify appropriate and relevant interventions.

Draft SABER Country Reports and PaBER Cross-country Report on Teacher Quality (October 2014) make recommendations for policies that define entry requirements and working conditions for teachers and also policies for attracting the best into teaching.

The Final Report on SABER School Autonomy and Accountability (SAA) and Cross-country Analysis Report (October 2014) recommends that pilot countries adopt policies for improved school autonomy through, for example, devolved school budgets and staff recruitment as well as increased roles for school management committees.

Recommendations in the Draft Curriculum and Materials Cross Country Analysis Report (March 2015) include the guidelines for policies on mobile learning and use of technology, teacher competency and improved teaching of literacy and numeracy.

Draft SABER EMIS reports (2015) for the three PaBER countries contain some common themes, including heavy dependence on donors that has resulted in lack of regular investment and affected long term sustainability. Recommendations include the need for detailed EMIS-specific policies to support ongoing operations, moves towards integrated EMIS systems that include student-level data, complemented with training programs designed for staff on the usage of the system. There are also recommendations for separate budgets to be allocated to EMIS activities with additional funding from donors routed through the government systems.

Country responses to SABER-led recommendations:

The review found that the PaBER countries have responded positively to recommendations made in the five SABER-based reports.

In total, the review found 202 recommendations in reports for the five policy domains. Some can be implemented with minimum intervention, but others, such as changing policies on entry requirements to the teaching service, and improving working conditions of teachers require structural and legislative changes that take longer to implement, but it is encouraging to note that countries have been proactive in addressing the recommendations.

During discussions at the Steering Committee and Technical Working Group levels, informants stated that SABER benchmarking activities are highly relevant to the needs of the pilot countries and their individual approaches to education reforms. In Solomon Islands, for example, the SABER benchmarking DCI responded positively to the identified need for teacher workforce reform. As the Solomon Islands National Education Action Plan is reviewed over the next few months recommendations from the SABER DCI will be included to address teacher workforce needs.

In PNG, where management of education is decentralised to the provinces, PaBER has facilitated a move towards structural reforms. The national DoE, responsible for policies, strategies, national action plan, is reviewing the Education Act in order to introduce reforms that include more direct access to schools in response to SABER tools and PaBER regional discussions.

These examples illustrate that reforms are being initiated as a result of PaBER, but change that require legislative reforms can be a lengthy process.

All higher-level regional and Ministry/Department of Education PaBER participants stated the SABER benchmarking results reflect accurately regional and international norms and results have been shared between the countries at the regional PaBER levels. However, we found that SABER results and benchmarks have not been consistently shared with mid-level Ministry/Department of Education staff, indicating the need for improved communication, both horizontally and vertically in education sectors.

At the school level, informants were generally unaware of PaBER activities or SABER recommendations, even though schools were involved in the PaBER pilot program and PILNA testing.

APPENDIX 7: DETAILED COMMENTS ON FINANCIAL REPORTS

January to December 2012

The first report covering the period from January to December 2012 had a simple structure showing income and expenditure with budget lines for the three PaBER countries plus the regional component (headed SPBEA). With the AusAid grant as the only income, although the amount was very different from the first tranche release, and little expenditure in these early stages of PaBER the accounts were straightforward and brief, and show a surplus of income over expenditure of 917,253.92.

January to June 2013

It is expected that the surplus from the previous accounting period would show in the accounts for January to June 2013 as income under the heading “balance brought forward” but this is not the case. The balance brought forward to January 2013 is given as AUD 600,000.00, this being the DFAT first tranche release, although since it didn’t appear in the previous financial report it wasn’t strictly speaking “brought forward”.

		Consolidated PaBER Financial Report for 1 January - 30 June 2013				
Activity/ Task Identifier	Specific Activities	Regional			PNM	
		Actuals	Budget	UNDER/OVER	Actuals	Budget
		as at	Total	BUDGET	as at	Total
		30/06/2013	2013	2013	30/6/2013	2013
INCOME					ER=0.43	
	Balance Brought Forward	600,000.00	600,000.00	-		
	2nd Tranche - AUD545,000	545,000.00	545,000.00	-		
	3rd Tranche - yet to be paid	-	220,504.00	(220,504.00)		
	Total Income	1,145,000.00	1,365,504.00	(220,504.00)	398,570.99	481,000.00
EXPENSES						

Figure A6.1: Extract from Financial Report for January to June 2013 showing regional income

The accounts for this period also show budget lines for each of the PaBER countries plus the region, with lines for income and budget, along with a third column headed “over/under budget” (see Figure 3). Samoa shows no expenditure for this period, but the financial report shows Solomon Islands expenditure of 7,087.55 against an approved budget of 253,835.50, (Figure 4) but it is not clear how this was paid since there is no income shown for Solomon Islands.

Solomon Islands			
	Actual	Budget	Under/over budget
Total expenses	7,087.55	253,835.50	246,747.95
Surplus / loss		246,747.95	

Figure A6.2: Solomon Islands expenditure and budget for January to June 2013.

July to December, 2013

Given the Solomon Islands expenditure of 7,087.55 with no recorded income (from the previous report), it is expected that the following accounts would initially show a negative balance brought forward in the Income column for the Solomon Islands, but this is not the case, and the financial reports do not show how this deficit was paid.

Accounts for this reporting period are notable for low expenditure in the three PaBER countries, particularly Samoa and Solomon Islands. Savings in reports to this point are calculated as approved budget less actual expenditure rather than actual income less actual expenditure.

January to June 2014

Lack of continuity is again a feature of the Financial Report for January to June 2014, with no relationship between Balance Brought Forward and the balance of income over expenditure in the previous report. The emphasis on approved budget rather than actual income continues in this report, but lack of funds released by the three PaBER countries meant that income fell well short of approved budget and actual expenditure was again low.

The Financial Report for January to June 2014 introduced a new structure from previous reports with income and expenditure for the three PaBER countries and the region no longer shown separately. Under the income budget line there is no entry for balance brought forward from the previous accounting period, but monthly budgets totalling 476,011.05 appearing as income (Figure 5). Again there is no relationship between balance brought forward and surplus to carry forward from the previous accounts.

Activity/Task Identifier	Specific Activities	ACTUAL Jan 2014	ACTUAL Feb 2014	ACTUAL Mar 2014	ACTUAL Apr 2014	ACTUAL May 2014	ACTUAL Jun 2014	JAN TO JUN TOTAL 2014	JAN TO DEC BUDGET 2014	JAN TO DEC SURPLUS/ DEFICIT
	INCOME									
	Balance Brought Forward							-	-	-
	Budget	60,884.00	169,122.00	100,417.10	67,801.94	35,840.17	41,945.84	476,011.05	1,617,000.00	1,140,988.95
	Total Income	60,884.00	169,122.00	100,417.10	67,801.94	35,840.17	41,945.84	476,011.05	1,617,000.00	1,140,988.95
	EXPENSES									
	COMPONENT ONE - LEARNING ASSESSMENT									
	Major Task 1.1: Reviewing of PILNA Instruments									
1.1.1	Review of PI and procedures for 2015 Administration LNA Instruments									-
	Total Expenses for Major Task 1.1									-
	Major Task 1.5: Institutional Capacity Analysis of assessment systems									-
1.5.1	Follow up on ICA Report - Jan 2014							-		-
	Cross-country analysis of ICA in pilot countries - Feb 2014									-
1.5.2	Workshop in Nadi - 05 to 07.02.14		26,824.46					26,824.46	25,000.00	1,824.46

Figure A6.3: Extract from Financial Report for January to June 2014

There is some confusion in this report regarding income, with total income in Figure 5 from Page 1 of the Financial Report shown as 476,011.05 and yet five pages later actual income of 914,000 showing as income received from DFAT for the period January to June, 2014, this being the revised Tranche 3. It also appears that the 239,166 savings added to this, along with projected interest or exchange rate gain, to give a the total income, is actually under-spend of the approved budget rather than actual income. Clearly this is not good accounting practice.

Activity/Task Identifier	Specific Activities	0.6074	0.6041	0.5966	0.5941	0.5913	0.5907	JAN TO JUN TOTAL 2014	
		ACTUAL Jan 2014	ACTUAL Feb 2014	ACTUAL Mar 2014	ACTUAL Apr 2014	ACTUAL May 2014	ACTUAL Jun 2014		
	INCOME								
	Balance Brought Forward							239,166.00	Savings from 2013
	Projected Bank Interest/Exchange Gain 2014							24,780.00	
	Income Rec'd in 2014	-	-	-	-	-	914,000.00	914,000.00	Contribution from DFAT
	Total Income	-	-	-	-	-	914,000.00	1,177,946.00	

Figure A6.4: Second Extract from Financial Report for January to June 2014

July to December 2014

The covering note for the Consolidated Financial Report from July to December 2014 recognises that challenges faced are “more an indication of the complexity of the way PaBER is managed and the relationship between the regional part of the program and the country component”.

The covering note also refers to low levels of country led activities accounting for little disbursement of funds and acknowledges that:

“while the approved work plan for each year has clearly indicated regionally-led as well as country-led activities with anticipated outputs, the implementation has so far focused only on the regionally-led activities and the report from both the region as well as from the countries focused on supporting the regional activities and implementing recommendations from such activities. Little effort is made by the countries on country-led activities that complement the regional activities. A clear example of this is the current situation facing the field research where over a year has been spent on the regional activities such as getting the framework as well as the instruments ready but little effort done at the country level to get the research work started. This is despite the several regional consultations held to date, three in 2014 and one scheduled for May 2015, in an effort to get the research going at the country level”.

There is clearly a challenge in implementing activities as well as reporting on the finances, especially at the country level, where staff working on PaBER are funded by the Ministry of Education in each country, and yet the cost of such staff has not been factored in as part of the cost for the project. Logically, and from an accountancy perspective, the staff costs should be shown as income from the respective governments, but this would make a single finance and accounting system extremely complex, suggesting the need for separate financial reports. There is also the issue that funds disbursed to each country under the PaBER project are not tagged, and consequently accessing those funds can be problematic and a lengthy process. This was particularly the case in Samoa and less so in Solomon Islands. PNG however has a different mechanism for accessing the funds thus making the task of preparing a consolidated financial report an ongoing challenge¹⁰. Because of the challenges, PaBER has yet to develop a fully consolidated progress report or financial report.

January to June 2015

Following a decision of the SC in 2014 the Financial Report for January to June 2015 is based on real income and actual expenditure on implementing regionally led activities. This avoids the confusion of reporting expenditure against approved budgets. We note that the balance carried forward of 298,375.55 is consistent with the surplus reported in the previous financial report and it appears that the decision of the Steering Committee has had a positive impact on the financial reporting system.

¹⁰ See PNG Case Study

i) DFAT Agreed Contribution	\$ 867,609.17,
ii) Savings from 2014	\$ 298,375.55,
iii) Bank Interest	\$ 8,758.96, and
iv) Exchange gain/loss (reported as a loss)	-\$ 14,548.32

Figure A6.5: Income for 2015 as shown in the Financial Report January to June 2015.

This financial report includes as annexes separate reports for each of the PaBER countries, although the three country reports have very different formats:

- PNG shows expenditure with some breakdown within PaBER components, but no income;
- Samoa shows overall expenditure by component with no breakdown, but grant received as income and balance remaining;
- Solomon Islands shows detailed expenditure by component, but no income.

The main points of Consolidated Financial Reports presented to the Steering Committee are summarised below.

SCM February 2013	Paper 8 Financial Report for January to December 2012	This first report is an income and expenditure account. There is no mention of budget
SCM September 2013	Paper 3b Six monthly consolidated financial report for January to June 2013.	Budget is introduced in this financial report showing a regional budget balance brought forward of 600,000. This is the second tranche of the DFAT payment to PaBER. The surplus from previous report of 144,538.67 does not appear on the current report. Samoa & SI still no income and no budget allocation.
SCM March 2014	Six monthly consolidated Financial Report for July to December 2013.	The consolidated Financial Report for July to December 2013 shows no income.
SCM October 2014	Six monthly consolidated financial report for January to June 2014	Budget now included with income and not reported separately. This report shows monthly budget for January to June and also the total annual budget for 2014, but otherwise no income. The difference between annual budget and total for the first six months (1,140,988.95) is reported as an income surplus that is adjusted taking into account total expenses, leaving a budget balance of 701,935.06 to be carried forward.

SCM April/May 2015	Papers 2b Consolidated Financial Report July – December 2014	<p>Income brought forward in the Consolidated Financial Report for July to December 2014 does not match the figure to be carried forward from the previous report and there is no explanation for the discrepancy.</p> <p>The report presents two annexes:</p> <p>Annex 1: Summary of Income and Expenditure for 1 July – 31 December 2014</p> <p>Annex 2: Financial Statement for 1 July – 31 December 2014.</p> <p>Annex 1 has budget lines for six-monthly totals whereas Annex 2 has a separate budget line for each month, but the totals reported in Annex 1 do not match the totals in Annex 2.</p>
SCM April/May 2015 (continued)	Annex 1 Summary of Income & Expenditure for 1 July to 31 December 2014	<p>Income brought forward = 838,076.20</p> <p>Total expenditure = 539,700.65</p> <p>Surplus = 298,375.54</p> <p>Annex 1 Page 4 of Paper 2b, describes AUD 838,076.20 as the income brought forward to the second half of 2014, against an approved budget for this period of AUD 730,300.00.</p> <p>Total expenditure is given in Annex 1 Page 6 as AUD 539,700.65, leaving a surplus of income over expenditure of 298,375.54 to carry forward</p>
	Annex 2 Financial Statement for 1 July to 31 December 2014	<p>Annex 2, titled Financial statement for 1 July to 31 December 2014, of the same report has a different set of figures.</p> <p><i>(We assume that the column headings Jan to June are an editing error and the months should be July to December).</i></p> <p>Income brought forward = 242,417.65</p> <p>Budget = 170,800.22</p> <p>Exchange gain = 30,311.75</p> <p>Total income = 443,529.62</p> <p>Expenditure</p> <p>Component 1 = 26,396.30</p> <p>Component 2 = 94,241.77</p> <p>Component 3 = 33,744.58</p> <p>Component 4 = 289,146.68</p> <p>Total expenditure = 433,529.33</p>
SCM October 2015	Paper 2b Financial Report for the period January to June 2015.	<p>Reports actual income received for 2015 and expenditure for the six months from January to June. The balance brought forward, 298,375.55, tallies with the surplus of the previous report.</p> <p>The income reported as DFAT agreed contribution does not correspond to the 4th tranche of payment in the Agreement.</p> <p>Annexes 3, 4 & 5 show summary reports for the three PaBER countries.</p>