# **Papua New Guinea Partnership Fund Education Grants - Independent Mid-term Review**

## Summary of Management Response

**Since 2017, the PNG Partnership Fund has supported three education grants which aim to improve literacy and numeracy in the early grades of school. The purpose of the Mid Term Review was to:**

1. identify actions/recommendations to improve the grants through an extension phase from June 2020 to February 2022 and
2. inform the design of a future investment in foundational education in PNG, including recommendations on approaches to improving basic literacy and numeracy and their most effective delivery modalities.

**DFAT accepts the findings and recommendations to improve program effectiveness and efficiency in the extension phase as well as planning and designing of future education support.**

**We note** the review was constrained in the development of findings of ‘what works’, as it occurred less than two years into implementation for two of the grantees. Nonetheless, undertaking the review was timely in informing decisions on future phases of support to education in PNG.

**We agree to strengthen the grants through deeper and sustained engagement with stakeholders, particularly PNG Government agencies. An overarching Theory of Change for the whole Fund will articulate the pathways to achieving change.**

**We note that the Mid Term Review was conducted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Australia’s support to PNG’s COVID-19 response involves contributions in the education sector, including through the PNG Partnership Fund. This flexibility has ensured continuous assistance is being provided in line with Australia’s PNG COVID-19 Development Response Plan and delivering on outcomes in PNG’s Education in Emergency Response and Recovery Plan.**

| **Recommendation** | **Response** | **Explanation** | **Action Plan** | **Timeframe** |
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| Recommendation 1The Australian Government should engage the PNG Partnership Fund (PPF) Secretariat to design and facilitate a collaborative process to engage key stakeholders in a review of project progress, including but not limited to, the mid-term review findings. | Agreed | DFAT acknowledges the need to deepen engagement and sharing of information with key stakeholders and has taken steps in this direction. Ongoing collaboration and sharing of information with key partners is vital in ensuring project outcomes are achieved in line with key government plans and goals. | Throughout 2019, DFAT brokered an MOU between the National Department of Education (NDOE), the three NGO consortia and the PPF Secretariat and established the PPF National Oversight Committee (NoC) to improve oversight, engagement and collaboration among key stakeholders. Since the inaugural NOC meeting in December 2019, several collaboration processes have taken place including on project progress and the mid-term review findings, planning and information sharing workshops, technical working groups, and monitoring and evaluation visits.  | Complete |
| Recommendation 2The Australian Government should engage the PPF Secretariat to design and facilitate the conduct of a PPF Education Grants Theory of Change (ToC) workshop to develop a more integrated program logic and associated results framework to guide all projects during the extension phase to February 2022. | Agreed | DFAT agrees that a need for an overarching PPF Education grants ToC emerged in the initial phase of PPF implementation. PPF and its partners can use the ToC as a tool to guide projects during the extension phase, including strategies for effectiveness in teaching and learning. | In February 2020, based on this recommendation, the PPF Secretariat facilitated a ToC Workshop. This included consultations at the national and provincial levels to develop a coordinated and well-integrated program logic. Workshop participants comprised representatives from the three consortia, DFAT, National Department of Education (NDoE), provincial Departments of Education and National Planning and Monitoring. The ToC has been used to inform a Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning framework (finalised March 2020), common evaluation and learning questions and key performance indicators to guide the extension phase to February 2022.  | Complete  |
| Recommendation 3The Australian Government should request for a special meeting of the PPF National Oversight Committee to endorse the agreements and direction resulting from the PPF Education Grants ToC workshop. | Agreed | DFAT agrees on the need for the Committee to endorse the new ToC.  | A meeting of the NOC was planned for April 2020 to endorse the direction of the program, including the mechanism for NDoE engagement on research, learning and teacher education priorities. Due to the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic, including lockdowns in Port Moresby, the NoC meeting could not be held face to face. However, papers were sent out via email and recommendations endorsed by email response in August 2020.  | Complete |
| Recommendation 4The Australian Government should task the PPF Secretariat to develop clear institutional engagement and communication protocols for the PPF Education Grants that meet Australian Government needs and provide for appropriate and timely engagement and communication between the PPF Secretariat and grantees with GoPNG at different levels. | Agreed | DFAT agrees there is value in clarifying communication protocols amongst stakeholders.  | Clear institutional engagement and communication protocols have been established through the MOU (signed between the NDOE, the three NGO consortia and the PPF Secretariat in December 2019) and the establishment of the National Oversight Committee. In response to the planning and ToC workshop in February 2020, NoC members endorsed the establishment of two Technical Working Groups to oversee research and progress teaching and learning, strengthening engagement and communication between key stakeholders at different levels.In addition, PPF is providing technical advisory support to the PNG Government in response to COVID-19, including helping shape the Education in Emergency Response and Recovery Plan. These interactions have facilitated more regular and open lines of communication between the PPF Secretariat and GoPNG. | Complete |
| Recommendation 5The Australian Government should engage the PPF Secretariat to develop appropriate and cost-effective strategies and processes to strengthen data analysis and knowledge acquisition and sharing, particularly for the end line evaluation study. | Agreed | DFAT agrees that efficiencies in monitoring and evaluation can be gained across the three grants particularly during the end line surveys.  | Building on the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) framework developed in March, a program MEAL plan and a final research design will be developed by the Research and Learning Technical Working Group. The program MEAL plan will include detailed indicators at the program level, which each grantee will report on. This will enable consistency in data collection and analysis, that can also be better aggregated to tell a whole of program performance story.  | November 2020 |
| Recommendation 6The Australian Government should review and potentially expand and/or adjust the role, functions and level of effort of the PPF Secretariat. | Agreed | DFAT agrees that an expansion to the PPF Secretariat with more dedicated resources would improve implementation.  | The PPF Secretariat has increased the resources dedicated to education by 0.5 FTE from a (full time) Program Manager/Education Advisor to a full time Program Manager and part time Education Advisor. This has led to strengthened engagement between the Secretariat and both NDoE and DFAT, as well as enabled PPF to be nimble in adapting the education grants to the new COVID-19 environment. Once travel restrictions are lifted, we anticipate the increased resources will also enable more regular monitoring visits to the projects.  | Completed |
| Recommendation 7The Australian Government should direct the PPF Secretariat and the three grantees to work towards consolidation of the interventions rather than expand to include additional targets during the extension phase. | Agreed | DFAT agrees on the need for consolidation rather than expansion. The development of a flexible ToC (Recommendation 2) has helped consolidate results.  | The focus of the extension phase will be on sustainability and implementing the recommendations of the Mid Term Review (MTR). Outcomes will continue to be measured against the baselines agreed at the outset of the PPF program with a number of common indicators developed to measure results across grants. COVID-19 has necessitated PPF to adapt its activities into handwashing, school hygiene messaging and psychosocial support for teachers in line with Australian and PNG priorities but this has not been a substantive expansion. | Ongoing |
| Recommendation 8The Australian Government should continue support to improving the quality of basic education, specifically early grades literacy and numeracy, in PNG for the medium to long-term and communicate this intention to the GoPNG. | Agreed in principle | DFAT agrees in the importance of a long-term commitment to PNG’s basic education. | Australia’s aid program has increased support to basic education in PNG as a response to COVID-19, aligned to the Stability pillar of ‘Partnerships for Recovery: Australia’s COVID-19 Development Response’. DFAT plans to design a long-term basic education program in partnership with PNG in 2021 that will build on the successes of the PPF in supporting basic education in PNG.  | 2021 |
| Recommendation 9The Australian Government should require the design of future investments in education to deliver technical assistance and delivery support through government institutions, which could be facilitated through a managing contractor. | Partially agreed | DFAT agrees that the NDoE and provincial and district education offices have the responsibility and accountability for delivery of quality basic education in PNG.  | DFAT’s forthcoming basic education design will advise on the most appropriate mechanism to support the PNG Government implement its national education plan.  | 2021 |
| Recommendation 10The Australian Government should conduct a ‘value-for-money’ assessment of project interventions and use this information to inform future investments in early grades literacy and numeracy focus in four areas: 1) teacher development; ii) teacher supervision, coaching and support; iii) development/provision of low-cost quality supplementary learning resources; and, iv) whole school development.  | Agreed | DFAT agrees in the utility of a value for money assessment, particularly to inform any scale up of such activities in the forthcoming basic education program. | The PPF Secretariat conducted a value for money assessment in preparation for the ToC workshop in February 2020. DFAT will ensure the basic education design team consider PPF’s value for money in considering future investments in early grades literacy and numeracy | Completed |
| Recommendation 11The Australian Government should incorporate an ‘NGO education grant consortia’ modality in future investments in early grade literacy and numeracy and consider engaging a single managing contractor. The managing contractor will be expected to facilitate the delivery of technical assistance and delivery support in a joint decision-making capacity with partner government institutions.  | Partially agreed | DFAT acknowledges the benefits of an NGO grant consortia under a single managing contractor that also delivers technical assistance, jointly presided over by DFAT and NDOE.  | The modalities and partnership models of any future investment will be determined through the design and tender process. DFAT will ensure the design team to take into consideration the recommendations of this mid-term review.  | 2021 |