



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

PIFS(06)FEDMN.06

EDUCATION MINISTERS MEETING

*Nadi, Fiji
26 – 27 September 2006*

SESSION THREE

**MID TERM EVALUATION OF THE PACIFIC REGIONAL INITIATIVES FOR
THE DELIVERY OF BASIC EDUCATION (PRIDE) PROJECT**

The attached paper, prepared by the Consultants commissioned by NZAID, is the final Draft of the Mid-term Evaluation Report of PRIDE Project that was recently undertaken.



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Summary brief

SESSION THREE: MID TERM EVALUATION OF THE PACIFIC REGIONAL INITIATIVES FOR THE DELIVERY OF BASIC EDUCATION (PRIDE) PROJECT

Purpose

This paper presents the final draft of the Mid-term Evaluation Report of the PRIDE Project that was recently undertaken.

Background

2. The Mid-term Evaluation (MTE) is based on data gathered from the majority of stakeholders through direct consultation, telephone conversations and a questionnaire. Thirteen out of 15 countries participated in the MTE. A comprehensive analysis of documents was undertaken to support the evaluation.
3. The MTE team has made a series of recommendations that they believe will assist the PRIDE Project. The recommendations propose major actions that should be taken to improve outcomes and a number of smaller actions that should ensure compliance and increase efficiency.
4. The major actions necessary include:
 - (a) the establishment of monitoring and evaluation strategies for the Project and its subprojects
 - (b) a comprehensive review of the strategic plans of countries to measure
 - consistency with benchmarks
 - consistency with FBEAP
 - effectiveness and realism of budgeting
 - (c) Based on the review of the strategic plans, work with each country to ensure the development of an implementation plan is completed and sub-projects identified
 - (d) Work with each country to identify barriers to implementation and assist with actions to remove the barriers

Recommendations

5. Ministers may wish to:

- (a) Note the Final Draft of the Mid-term Evaluation Report of the PRIDE Project.
- (b) Note the recommendations proposed in the report
- (c) Endorse the major actions that need to be undertaken by the PRIDE Secretariat to improve Project outcomes

FINAL DRAFT

MID TERM EVALUATION

OF THE

**PACIFIC REGIONAL INITIATIVES FOR THE DELIVERY
OF BASIC EDUCATION (PRIDE) PROJECT**

**Project Number: 9-ACP-RPA-001 under the 9th EDF
Financing Agreement Number 9046/REG**

Prepared for NZAID

**Presented to the Pacific Islands Forum Education Ministers Meeting
Nadi, Fiji
26 - 27 September 2006**

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The staff within the PRIDE project office made the review team welcome and dedicated considerable time to ensuring that any requests were responded to as quickly as possible. Generous working space and refreshments were provided and we thank them sincerely.

ABBREVIATIONS

ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific
AWP	Annual Work Programmes and Budgets
CROP	Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific
EC	European Commission
EDF	European Development Fund
EU	European Union
FBEAP	Forum Basic Education Action Plan
FA	Financing Agreement
FJD	Fijian Dollar
IOE	Institute of Education, USP
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTE	Mid Term Evaluation
NPC	National Project Co-ordinator
NZAID	New Zealand Agency for International Development
PIFS	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
PMC	Project Monitoring Committee
PRIDE	Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of Basic Education
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RAO	Regional Authorising Officer
SPBEA	South Pacific Board of Evaluation and Assessment
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USP	University of the South Pacific

LIMITATIONS

Every effort has been made to ensure that the Mid Term Evaluation is as reliable, valid and useful as possible. However, there have been a number of factors that have placed limitations on the MTE, resulting in less data being gathered and verified than would normally be expected in an evaluation. The review team has had to rely on three sources of information for data. The first was a review of documents; the second was the questionnaire to all countries; and the third was the field study comprising interviews and focus discussion groups with stakeholders in Fiji and in the four case study countries. The team encountered a number of constraints, particularly in relation to the first two of these data sources. Baseline data against which to measure progress was very limited.

As a consequence, many of the recommendations relate to providing mechanisms for gathering data, researching issues and determining strategies and actions, rather than making firm suggestions as to ways forward. Where the MTE team has the confidence to do so, specific actions have been recommended. However, there are some areas where recommendations as to how to find solutions or determine actions have been given, rather than providing specific advice. In many instances it was felt that research investigating the needs specific to each country, by each country with support from PRIDE, would be far more effective than external insights which necessarily are based on limited data gathered within a short timeframe.

In reading the report, consideration should be given to the limitations which include:

1 Timeframe for the MTE

Less than eight weeks was available to the MTE team to undertake the data gathering, analyse the data and prepare a draft report for consideration. This has necessarily limited the ability of the team to cross check data, request further information or follow up on issues arising from the questionnaires

2 Timeframe for countries to respond

As a consequence of the short time frame for the MTE, countries were given a very short time to respond to the questionnaire which was the main source of data gathering. While a good response was achieved, respondents were under significant pressure and were not given the time desirable to respond to the questionnaire. Similarly, the time available to all parties to respond to the draft report was very short and the MTE team received little feedback from countries.

3. Baseline data

Baseline data had not been collected at the outset of the project making it difficult for the MTE to determine what can be attributed to PRIDE.

4. Starting position of countries

Before PRIDE began its work, at least 9 countries already possessed, or were in the process of finalising, strategic plans. For some countries the PRIDE project may have made a significant contribution; for others their involvement was at the end

stages only. It was impossible for the MTE to determine what was attributable to PRIDE. As a consequence it was impossible for the MTE to determine to what extent the interventions of PRIDE contributed to the strategic goals of the FBEAP.

5. Lack of a monitoring and evaluation strategy

The Financing Agreement required a monitoring and evaluation strategy to be part of the inception phase of the Project. However, the logframe developed for the Project made a requirement that the monitoring and evaluation strategy be developed by the end of Year 3 and this has been what the Project has followed. As a consequence, there has been no detailed monitoring and evaluation of much of the work of PRIDE, including sub-projects and other country based activities. It has, therefore, been very difficult for the MTE to make valid assessments about the impacts of much of the Project.

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PRIDE is a five-year project funded through the Human Resource Development sector of the 9th European Development Fund (EDF) Pacific Regional Indicative Programme and the NZAID Regional Education Programme. PRIDE is implemented by the University of the South Pacific (USP), from its Laucala campus, for the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) as Contracting Authority and Regional Authorising Officer (RAO). The project covers the following fifteen Pacific Island countries: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. The project is administered by the University of the South Pacific through its Institute of Education.

The specific purpose of the project is to:

“Improve the capacity of the Pacific ACP States to effectively plan and deliver quality basic education through formal and non-formal means, and to improve the coordination of donor inputs to assist countries implement their plans”

The key result areas of the project are:

- Comprehensive strategic education plans covering formal and non-formal education
- Implementation of strategic education plans through capacity building at the national and regional level and access to sub-project financing.
- Strengthening regional and national capacity to assist Pacific ACP countries to support strategic planning and implementation in basic education. The project will significantly strengthen the Institute of Education, USP, to assist Ministries of Education in the region and develop an on-line database and resource centre.

The mid term evaluation is based on data gathered from the majority of stakeholders through direct consultation, telephone conversations and a questionnaire. Thirteen out of 15 countries participated in the MTE. A comprehensive analysis of documents was undertaken to support the evaluation.

Real satisfaction can be taken in the achievements of the PRIDE project to date. There was unanimous agreement from respondents from member countries that PRIDE has provided substantial benefits and that the country's progress was dependent to a significant degree on the support provided through the project. All staff of the PRIDE team are regarded by those that they work with in member countries as being professional, approachable and competent to provide the support being sought. Progress has been made in each of the three result areas required by the Financing Agreement and, while some expectations of people may not have been realised, in large measure the TORs have been met. The project is well within its overall budget, which has led to some concern about the achievements to date, but the reasons for the under-expenditure is more complex than at first appears.

The project has three result areas as follows:

Result Area 1: Comprehensive Strategic Plans covering formal and non-formal education are developed in Pacific ACP countries;

Result Area 2: Implementation of Strategic Plans are commenced (within individual plan time frames);

Result Area 3: Strengthened national and regional capacities to plan and implement basic education strategies.

There has been significant achievement in each of the areas. However, there are a number of improvements that can be made that will enhance the benefits to countries. Recommendations have been made to achieve these enhancements.

Relevance, Design. Participating countries in the MTE consider that the PRIDE Project objectives, outputs and outcomes, and overall approach are consistent with their priorities and are therefore highly relevant to their needs. The PRIDE Project is very significant to countries' ongoing development of education through the financial and technical resources it provides to implement strategic plans; the opportunities to network and learn from each other; assistance in donor harmonization, and the challenge to re-think historical and current policies, strategies and practices. In one instance, the PRIDE Project is considered to be very important for continuing and strengthening the country's existing relationship with USP IOE.

Design hierarchy of objectives, purpose, results, and activities. To achieve the overall Project objective, the Project purpose, results and activities focus on educational planning with a degree of implementation expected within the Project time-frame. A total of 18 indicators have been developed for the higher level Project objective, purpose, and results. In terms of the indicators for the Project objective, there will be other contributing variables within individual country strategies to the achievement of increased retention rates, increased opportunities for TVET, improved pedagogy, and gender balance in secondary and post secondary enrolment, making it difficult to distinguish PRIDE's contribution.

Indicators. The logical framework does not include indicators for some of the critical project outcomes. These are (1) significantly strengthening the capacity of the Institute of Education, USP, through which regional support to Pacific ACPs Ministries of Education will continue after Project completion; (2) the work of subprojects; (3) all project activities; and (4) indicators for Project management to enable the assessment of effectiveness of management and delivery.

Specific indicators relating to strengthening IOE would have been helpful in focusing the involvement of all concerned parties. In relation to sub-projects, the log-frame notes that additional specific indicators are to be established once minimum standards are developed and agreed. This has not yet happened. In the absence of indicators for all project activities, the interpretation of the scope, outcomes, and quality of the activities was left to the Project to determine. Evidently in the case of some of the activities, for example, that interpretation was limited in scope and depth with negative consequences on the extent to which other related activities were carried out. The absence of indicators

at the activity level also pose the risk that the activities may well be carried out but their outcomes are unrelated to the higher level result, purpose, and project objective. The regional workshops which have incurred the highest expenditure so far do not feature in the log frame activities although they are included as a project input (Annex II Financing Agreement Section 3.1). The absence of indicators against which the effectiveness of this provision could be measured runs the risk of any benefits remaining with individual participants at the workshop.

Overall outcomes and impact. This is a worthwhile project that has started well and has achieved many things within activities both at the large scale and in certain cases, at the individual country level. While it would be premature to evaluate the impacts of the project at this point, participants on the whole are very positive about the project to date and value the projects' contribution to individual country's development and the opportunities provided for the Pacific people to meet, reflect critically and dialogue about the issues of importance to them.

Achievements against the log frame indicators

Result 1: Comprehensive Strategic Plans covering formal and non-formal education are developed in Pacific ACP countries

Strategic plans. Strategic plans are in place and are being implemented in most countries. For a number of countries educational planning was well underway or even completed before PRIDE. Nine countries have completed strategic plans: Fiji, Nauru, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu. Of these, 5 have completed policy documents (Fiji-3yrs, PNG-10yrs, Samoa-9yrs, Tonga-15yrs, Vanuatu-10yrs); 3 strategic plans will expire in 2006 (Nauru, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands). Three countries have draft strategic plans (Niue, Kiribati, Cook Islands). The last 2 are expected to be ratified this year. Two countries are currently developing their next strategic plans (Palau, RMI). The Federated States of Micronesia is developing their first strategic plan from a federal plan

Benchmarks. Minimum benchmarks/standards for the quality strategic plans have been established with a second edition ratified by the PSC in September 2005. While the benchmarks on the whole are comprehensive in principles and indicators they do not capture the significance of non-formal means in the delivery of basic education. Non-formal education has a legitimacy of its own and is an integral part of any country's development strategy for basic education, promoting individual livelihood, quality of life and community. It should not be narrowly referenced to a national curriculum provision as in benchmark number 6.

The benchmarks further do not include the first principle, *Strong, objective, visionary leadership*, established through comprehensive discussions at the first regional and NPC training workshop. It is not clear why this principle is not in the benchmarks given its importance in the planning process, in shaping the vision of not only the whole education sector but at all levels of the sector. In the school sector for example, principals as school

leaders are often left out of professional development programmes that concentrate at teacher level. Yet if school leadership is ineffective, the whole culture of the school is affected making any investments at teacher level ineffective. One of the key strategies in any education strategic plan has to focus on the quality of leaders it has and needs to develop.

Quality of plans. The benchmarks have been used to raise awareness about the quality of strategic plans at the consultation phase for those countries assisted by the Project in this phase. They have also been applied in the review of two of the countries' existing strategic plans. These are Samoa's 1995-2005 Education Policies, and Republic of Marshall Islands' 2000-2005 Strategic Plan. There was strong agreement by the countries in their responses to the questionnaire and during interviews that their strategic plans are consistent with the benchmarks. On the whole, the achievement of the benchmarks within the strategic plans is a more involved qualitative measure that is yet to be undertaken by the Project. The degree to which the plans are consistent with the FBEAP cannot be ascertained at this point through independent evaluation.

Costings. Inadequate information and knowledge of whether strategic plans are adequately and realistically budgeted is available at the PRIDE Project Office. Costings may well be located with ministries/departments but are not able to be verified at the time of the MTE.

Strategic plan analysis and evaluation. The Project has provided technical and financial assistance in the development of strategic plans for 13¹ countries. The assistance has been primarily through the provision of technical assistance at the pre-writing processes of reviewing existing plans, data analysis to identify the issues, and data gathering through facilitation of consultation meetings.

Analysis and review of strategic plans have not been strong features of the Project's work to this point. The emphasis of the Project's work in relation to strategic planning has been at the front end processes. The remaining half of the Project should see a shift to the evaluative dimension, particularly as some countries' plans are due to be completed in 2006. This should include developing a framework for the analysis and review of existing plans, ascertaining strategic plans are adequately and realistically budgeted, ascertaining fully costed implementation plans are in place and providing assistance where needed.

Impact of project interventions on education sector planning and capacity

With twelve countries having completed strategic plans (9) or drafts going through the final endorsement stages (3), it is clear that Result Area 1 is being achieved to a large extent. To what extent the achievement is attributable to PRIDE Project intervention is not as straightforward. Many countries' plans were pre-PRIDE and some had other sources of assistance. The proportion of the Project's financial contribution to the planning activities relative to other sources of funds within individual countries cannot be ascertained. Where the Project's contribution was in the form of technical assistance it is a complex matter to ascertain whether this form of assistance impacted on local planning

¹ Niue, and Solomon Islands did not request assistance in this area. Both countries had pre-existing plans.

capacity and in what way. The technical assistance may have resulted in the completion of the plans but the transfer of skills and, therefore, increase in local capacity may not have been a priority.

The sources of data on which to draw conclusions regarding the Project's impact on education planning and human resource development in relation to better education planning capacity involve a much wider pool of respondents, documentation and involved engagements than was possible in the time available to the MTE.

The complexities surrounding the assessment of impact of Project interventions likewise make it difficult to assess the likelihood of the Project achieving the anticipated longer term benefits of improved competency in basic skills that will improve the livelihoods of children and youth, strengthened education systems through improved planning and implementation of plans, and the wider anticipated benefits of improved health, social; cohesion, crime reduction and technological innovation.

Result 2: Implementation of Strategic Plans are commenced (within individual plan time frames)

Sub-projects. The Project logical framework stipulates that at least 60% of in-country sub-projects are to have commenced by end of project year three. The progress so far is mixed, and unlikely to be achieved by the target date. To date² 24 subprojects have been approved from 11 countries. Half of the approved subprojects have either completed (5), or have commenced (7). Four countries do not have approved subprojects. Two of these countries are still developing their strategic plans. Overall at the individual country level, 6 of the countries (40%) have not commenced any subprojects half way into the life of the project.

The PRIDE Project team has noted a concern with delays in receiving proposals and in sub-project start-up, but believes it is not for lack of support and encouragement from the PRIDE team. Rather, it appears to be a combination of lack of time, personnel and organisational capacity within the countries.

The countries responding to the MTE identify a mix of contributing factors to their ability to propose and implement subprojects. The three most frequently identified factors are having a strategic plan in place; having the professional capacity and adequate numbers in the ministry and in country; and having technical and financial assistance through PRIDE.

There could be a number of reasons why a country has not made full use of this resource. The Project team acknowledges a need to work in a more proactive and even directive way to ensure efficient sub-project start-up. The Project further needs to undertake research to identify why countries are not proposing and/or initiating sub-projects and to find solutions to problems limiting sub-projects.

² 4th July 2006 PRIDE Project Sub-Project Progress Report version 2 8th August 2006

Donor co-ordination. There are differences in the views of country respondents to the MTE and the Project reports on the extent to which the Project has contributed to improved co-ordination of donor inputs, and improved donor support of national plan implementation. Regionally and during visits to each of the 15 countries, the PRIDE Project has liaised and maintained working relationships with donor agencies. In case of one country, Tuvalu, brokerage and planning services between Tuvalu and donors has been a significant PRIDE project activity in which PRIDE has been instrumental in coordinating donors to the roundtable. However, at least 7 countries maintain the PRIDE Project has not contributed to donor coordination.

The MTE suggests that it is a difficult undertaking for ultimately PRIDE with its status as a project has limited power to influence what donor agencies and organisations do. The Project can certainly act to create a forum for discussions but as a project there are limitations on its capacity to participate let alone influence the discussions, thereby improving donor support of national plans.

Result 3: Strengthened national and regional capacities to plan and implement basic education strategies

Basic education resource centre. Much progress has been made with regard to the development of a regional basic education resource centre. The Resource Centre is housed in the Project building on the USP campus. It has a small but growing collection of books and journals and has computer terminals available for use by staff and post-graduate students of the university. The Pacific Archive of Digital Data for Learning and Education (PADDLE) was installed in August 2005 by USPL and now has over 250 documents accessible online. This is available on a web-site www.paddle.usp.ac.fj, and a CD-ROM version that was recently launched.

Use of resource centre. Respondents to the questionnaire make use of the on-line resource to support research purposes and for general information on what other countries are doing. Access, however, is reported by some to be limited to those in the main centres while some have limited/unstable access to the internet. Orientation and training for other users in the ministry has yet to take place in some of the countries. The CD-ROM version of PADDLE helps offset issues of access but will need to be updated on a regular basis.

Consultative [in country] multi-stakeholder processes. The Project has been strong in this area and has strengthened community's ownership of strategic plans and sub-projects at country and provincial levels. The combined efforts of the re-thinking Pacific education initiatives and the planning methodology developed by the Project have strengthened the stakeholder processes for plan formulation and implementation. Participatory and consultative approaches are strong features of the initial stages of planning for all countries. Consultations have included a wide cross section of the communities. For some, this is a marked improvement from previous planning exercises that were primarily external to the communities either as a result of developers from outside or developments remaining within the ministries themselves.

Ongoing consultation. There is a concern that front-end consultation should not be the end point with people next being asked to approve a final document but that the process of consultation encourages real ownership by involving stakeholders in a cycle of draft-review-revise in which they are continually being informed and giving feedback as the documents are taking shape.

National and Regional Workshops. In terms of capacity strengthening the Project's inputs have included (1) country visits to work specifically with countries to review, develop and/or implement strategic plans, (2) financial support to national level workshops, (3) annual workshops for National Project Coordinators, and (4) regional workshops in different country locations as a tool for providing information and capacity building for selected participants on a range of topics.

There is mixed reaction with regard to the sustainable benefits of regional workshops.

Value of regional workshops. There is general agreement on the enormous value of the regional workshops for their networking, professional development opportunities, and for the mental shifts they have encouraged in participants. In particular, the Re-thinking Pacific Education workshops³ were considered highly influential in shifting the mental processes participants applied in their decision making as educators. The workshops are said to have impacted on the processes of education planning that are now being used such as the extensive consultations with stakeholders to reconceptualise the vision for education. It has impacted at policy level, for example in the way the Ministries think about language policies and strategies, and the place of culture and indigenous languages in education.

A shared response by some of the small island nations and in particular those of the north Pacific are that regional workshops were essential to the professional development of ministry staff.

However, not all countries agree that the regional workshops have achieved their intended impact. Some note that the regional workshop focus have had limited relevance to their needs and have not had sustainable impact on their education system without the appropriate follow up.

The independent evaluation of the workshops noted a number of considerations that needed to have been factored into the Projects' decision making on subsequent provision of regional workshops⁴. These concerns included the need for workshops to be in-

³ Respondents to the MTE make a significant point about the re-thinking workshops which are believed to be a separate provision outside of the PRIDE Project, for example, the re-thinking workshop on culture and values in the curriculum 2005 in Fiji. It is acknowledged however that the re-thinking Pacific education philosophies have also underpinned the work in the PRIDE funded regional workshops

⁴ Evaluation Report for PRIDE'S Workshop September 2004, author Dr Seu'ula Johanson Fua 16 September 2004; Final Assessment of PRIDE Workshop on The Financing of Education, author Dr Wadan Narsey, 10 August 2005; Evaluation Report 4th PRIDE Regional Workshop Teacher Education for New Times: Reconceptualising Pedagogy and Learning in the Pacific; author Dr Unaisi Nabobo-Baba 28 Nov-2 December 2005

country, the need for workshop content to be relevant to country needs, and the need to include a focus on monitoring and evaluation of strategic plans.

Suggested alternatives to regional workshops include sub-regional workshops, a focus on in-country workshops, and opportunities to learn from each other through attachments.

Coordination with other organisations and agencies. There are a number of organisations that undertake projects or developments that overlap with the PRIDE Project. These include UNESCO, UNICEF, SPBEA, IOE, NGOs and bilateral arrangements. A serious concern raised by respondents is the lack of coordination among regional agencies and the PRIDE Project when it comes to regional workshops resulting in duplication, drain on limited local capacities, and the increased risk of confusion among participants.

Budget utilisation. At the end of 2006, the third year of implementation, expenditure utilisation is estimated to reach 6,062,000 FJD or 28% of the Financing Agreement budget. The low rate of budget utilisation can be linked to a number of reasons. However, poor project financial planning and management and the lack of monitoring are some of the clear contributing factors.

Financial planning. The absence of detailed budgeting in the design phase is a clear indicator that financial planning was to be a key feature during implementation. Unfortunately the Project has not prepared detailed annual operational plans and budgets and not carried out any forward planning for the remaining period of the Project. This has given the Project team more flexibility in managing PRIDE resources than is normally desired during implementation. It is likely to be one of the main reasons why many stakeholders view PRIDE as another donor and, therefore, partially responsible for creating some of the tensions between the Project and major stakeholders.

Improvements in financial planning, management, and monitoring are essential to better-direct PRIDE resources, including the Project team, and ensure extensive feedback from the Project is provided to participating countries.

Issues. There are a number of issues that need to be addressed if the maximum benefit is to be realised from the project. Perhaps the most important is that of the relationship of the PRIDE project to the IOE and USP. The relationship is not functioning adequately, resulting in tensions that are a barrier to the project and its outcomes. The university is currently addressing the problem and a satisfactory solution is probable.

Committee structure. The current committee structure supporting the project has the potential to create governance/management issues and needs resolution. The current Project Monitoring Committee has both a management and a governance role, and undertakes some of the responsibilities that belong to USP. Separation of the roles is essential.

Sub-project funding. Discussion needs to be held over the allocation of funds for sub-projects. While the current method of allocation was discussed and approved, there are

varying opinions as to its appropriateness. In particular, concern has been expressed by donors and the Forum. There are both practical and equity issues associated with the allocation that need further thought and agreement needs to be reached between stakeholders. Similarly, further work needs to be undertaken to determine why some countries appear to be having difficulty in initiating and implementing sub-projects. A key issue here is for countries to ensure that the National Project Co-ordinator that they appoint has the seniority, experience, time and support to undertake the role effectively. Without this the country will not obtain the level of benefit that the project has the potential to provide.

Monitoring and evaluation. While there have been obvious benefits from the project, inadequate monitoring and evaluation have severely limited the ability to undertake an in-depth cost benefit analysis of the work of PRIDE and of the sub-projects at national level. There is a requirement in the logframe for a monitoring and evaluation strategy to be developed by the end of Year 3 and this work is underway. With hindsight, it would have been better for this strategy to have been developed earlier, as was required in the Financing Agreement.

Sustainability. Thought should be given by the stakeholders to the relationship between the PRIDE project and other projects and bilateral arrangements. As well, any extension to the project or other method of building on its success should be considered before the end of the project.

The MTE team has made a series of recommendations that they believe will assist the PRIDE Project. The recommendations propose major actions that should be taken to improve outcomes and a number of smaller actions that should ensure compliance and increase efficiency.

The major actions necessary include:

- (e) the establishment of monitoring and evaluation strategies for the Project and its subprojects
- (f) a comprehensive review of the strategic plans of countries to measure
 - a. consistency with benchmarks
 - b. consistency with FBEAP
 - c. effectiveness and realism of budgeting
- (g) Based on the review of the strategic plans (2 above), work with each country to ensure the development of an implementation plan is completed and sub-projects identified
- (h) Work with each country to identify barriers to implementation and assist with actions to remove the barriers

The actions outlined above require a shift in emphasis for PRIDE from a regional to a national approach. There may be opportunities for sub-regional actions.

Recommendations:

The following recommendations have been made to give guidance as to the next phase of the Project. Each recommendation incorporates one or more of the Actions given in the report. They have been organised under the relevant organisation responsible for actioning.

For the PRIDE Governance and Management Structures

Recommendation 1: that effective monitoring and evaluation strategies for all aspects of the PRIDE Project be put in place immediately
(Actions 1, 10, 17)

Recommendation 2: that options be explored that will separate governance and operations
(Action 18)

Recommendation 3: that consideration be given to defining the requirement related to donor harmonisation
(Action 5)

For the PRIDE Project Team

Recommendation 4: that the Project's work to date related to strategic planning be reviewed in order to inform decision making for future work related to Result Area 1
(Actions 2, 3)

Recommendation 5: that PRIDE review its strategy related to regional workshops and other policy issues, including relationships with regional activities carried out by other projects and organisations

Recommendation 6: that issues related to sub-projects be examined to improve planning and implementation of sub-projects for all countries
(Actions 6, 19, 20)

Recommendation 7: that steps be taken to improve financial planning, management and accountability
(Actions 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17)

For Individual Countries

Recommendation 8: that all countries ensure that their NPC has the experience and status required to lead the PRIDE work within the country, and that sufficient time and other support is made available to the NPC to ensure that the benefits of the project can be maximised
(Action 21)

For Donors

Recommendation 9: that 12 months before the end of the PRIDE project, work is commissioned to plan the best way to sustain the gains made by the project and to continue to provide advice and support to the region.

(Action 22)

2 METHODOLOGY

The Terms of Reference for the Evaluation are included as Annex 1. The key outcomes of the mid-term evaluation of the PRIDE Project were:

1. A review of the impact of project interventions since the start of the project and their possible implications for the priorities of the project.
2. An assessment as to what extent the project is achieving or is likely to achieve the outcomes and benefits defined in the Annex II of the Financing Agreement
3. An assessment as to the extent to which ownership and engagement by participating countries, regional collaboration and donor harmonisation are being achieved;
4. Conclusions regarding the appropriateness of original project design, resources and structures, key project successes and challenges and analyse the progress that has taken place as a result of these. On this basis, make recommendations to EU/NZAID that would optimise the quality and impact of the programme.

To achieve these outcomes a number of actions were taken. A comprehensive analysis of a range of documents was undertaken. These included the guiding documents of the Project (Financing Agreement and Log frame), annual work plans, annual reports and records held within the PRIDE office including registers recording developments related to strategic planning and sub-projects. A record of the documents reviewed is listed as Annex 2.

Efforts were made to gather data on both the extent and effectiveness of the work of the Project and to triangulate the data held in the PRIDE office where possible. A detailed questionnaire seeking information on the outcomes, effectiveness, benefits and level of support of the Project was sent to the Department or Ministry of Education of each country participating in the Project. This was supported by a telephone interview of the Director of Education, NPC or other appropriate person. For a copy of the questionnaire, see Annex 3.

Four countries were chosen by NZAID as case study countries – Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands and Tuvalu – as a cross section of the countries within the Project. Each of these countries was visited by one of the team members and discussions held with a number of people who were able to contribute evaluative comments. As well as members of the Ministry/Department of Education, discussions were held with other organisations or agencies with whom the PRIDE Project had contact. In all thirteen countries (87%) participated in the mid-term evaluation through questionnaire and interview responses, and the case studies (4 countries). The review team spent a week together in Suva where detailed discussions were held with all the stakeholders. This included NZAID, EU, PIFS, USP senior management, IOE, SPBEA and the PRIDE team. The names of all people interviewed have been included as Annex 4.

3 OVERVIEW OF THE PRIDE PROJECT

PRIDE is a five-year project funded through the Human Resource Development sector of the 9th European Development Fund (EDF) Pacific Regional Indicative Programme and the NZAID Regional Education Programme. PRIDE is implemented by the University of the South Pacific (USP), from its Laucala campus, for the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) as Contracting Authority and Regional Authorising Officer (RAO).

The project covers the following fifteen Pacific Island countries: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

The overall objective of PRIDE is:

“To expand opportunities for children and youth to acquire the values, knowledge and skills that will enable them to actively participate in the social, spiritual, economic and cultural development of their communities and to contribute positively to creating sustainable futures”

The specific purpose of the project is to:

“Improve the capacity of the Pacific ACP States to effectively plan and deliver quality basic education through formal and non-formal means, and to improve the coordination of donor inputs to assist countries implement their plans”

The key result areas of the project are:

- Comprehensive strategic education plans covering formal and non-formal education that meet minimum standards/benchmark criteria developed by the project;
- Implementation of strategic education plans through capacity building at the national and regional level and access to sub-project financing. Brokerage and planning services are a crucial project activity to coordinate financing of certain aspects of the plans by interested donors.
- Strengthening regional and national capacity to assist Pacific ACP countries to support strategic planning and implementation in basic education. The project will significantly strengthen the Institute of Education, USP, to assist Ministries of Education in the region. It will also develop a regional education on-line centre that builds upon existing USP databases that will provide a wide range of education data and resources. At the regional level the project will assist in establishing plan monitoring and evaluation systems.

The PRIDE project is administered through the Institute of Education (IOE) of USP and the staff of the project are members of staff of the IOE. The project is housed in excellent facilities with offices, resource centre and meeting room.

4 FINDINGS OF THE MID-TERM EVALUATION

The main findings of the MTE evaluation are detailed below:

4.1 Project Team

The Project Team at the time of the review was fully staffed except for the Project Managers' position which became vacant at the end of June 2006. This position was filled on 14 August 2006. Prior to his appointment the new member of staff worked in a senior position under the 8th EDF Human Resource Development Project funded by EU, which is also being implemented by USP.

The Project team comprises the following positions: A Director who provides strategic guidance in the implementation of the project, and is advised by 3 Education Specialists and an Information Specialist. The Project Manager, assisted by the Accountant and Administrative Assistant (supported by a Cleaner/caretaker), administer the day-to-day operations facilitating implementation of planned activities while ensuring compliance with rules and procedures.⁵ The Project is administered by IOE but the management links between the two have been largely missing.

4.2 Log Frame Implementation

This section describes the Project achievements against the log frame, and associated issues and challenges. As much as possible in the time constraints of the MTE, sources of verification have been triangulated using any combination of document review, questionnaire responses, face to face and phone interviews, and observation. Details of achievements with sources of verification, issues and challenges are presented in Annex 7.

In general all countries participating in the evaluation confirm that the PRIDE Project objectives, outputs and outcomes, and overall approach are consistent with their priorities and are therefore considered highly relevant to their needs. The Project is considered by countries to be very significant to ongoing development of education through the financial and technical resources it provides to implement strategic plans; the opportunities to network and learn from each other; assistance in donor harmonization; and the challenge to re-think historical and current policies, strategies and practices. In one instance, the PRIDE Project is considered to be very important for continuing and strengthening the country's existing relationship with USP IOE.

4.3 Hierarchy of objectives, purpose, results, activities

The PRIDE Project is governed by the Financing Agreement No. 9046/REG and a Log Frame which was developed by a sub-committee of the Forum Education Ministers and the Human Resource Development Working Group. The Project has 3 key result areas as follows:

Result Area 1: Comprehensive Strategic Plans covering formal and non-formal education are developed in Pacific ACP countries

⁵ Source: 2005 AWP.

Result Area 2: Implementation of Strategic Plans are commenced (within individual plan time frames)

Result Area 3: Strengthened national and regional capacities to plan and implement basic education strategies.

A total of 18 indicators have been developed for the higher level Project objective, purpose, and results. The indicators are based on the input-process-output model of education. Consistent with the focus of the result areas, at least 70% of the indicators are process related with fewer relating to outcomes and impacts.

For the indicators of the Project objective, there will be other contributing variables within individual country strategies to the achievement of increased retention rates, increased opportunities for TVET, improved pedagogy, and gender balance in secondary and post secondary enrolment, making it difficult to distinguish PRIDE's contribution.

The logical framework does not include indicators for some of the critical project outcomes. Under Result Area 3, it is stipulated that the project will significantly strengthen the capacity of the Institute of Education, USP, through which regional support to Pacific ACPs Ministries of Education will continue after Project completion. This has not been captured in the indicators. Specific indicators relating to this outcome would have been helpful in focusing the involvement of all concerned parties.

Indicators are not included for any of the activities. Without the indicators for the activities it is difficult to know and be able to assess expected outcomes in terms of quantity, quality, time, and whether the outcomes were 'process' oriented or 'impact' oriented. It meant the interpretation of the scope, outcomes, and quality of the activities was left to the Project to determine. Evidently in the case of some of the activities, for example, that interpretation was limited in scope with negative consequences on the extent to which other related activities were carried out. For example for Activity 1.3 *Analyse and review existing national education plans and survey of education characteristics in each Pacific ACP state*, the outcome is a grid summary identifying the current status and phase of development of the existing plans. A framework for the analysis and review of existing plans and survey of education characteristics is not described. The review grid does not indicate that consideration was given to other elements such as the nature or characteristics of the strategic plans in terms of issues, types of strategies being proposed in formal and non-formal education, the focus on basic education, the degree to which policies are developed, the history and processes followed in planning development and so on. A deeper analysis and review of existing plans would have alerted the Project team to some of the contextual issues that would have informed the Project's planning and approaches to different countries.

The absence of indicators at the activity level also poses the risk that the activities may well be carried out but their outcomes are unrelated to the higher level result, purpose, and project objective. The regional workshops which have incurred the highest

expenditures so far do not feature in the log frame activities although they are included as a project input (Annex II Financing Agreement Section 3.1). The absence of indicators against which the effectiveness of this provision could be measured runs the risk of any benefits remaining solely with individual participants at the workshop.

54% of the funds are to be utilised for sub-projects. The only indicator relating to sub-projects concerns the quantity of the sub-projects to have started by the end of year three. The log-frame, however, notes that additional specific indicators were to be established once minimum standards are developed and agreed. This has not happened.

Further, the log frame does not include indicators for Project management to enable the assessment of effectiveness of management and delivery.

Action 1: the Project governance and management structures along with country stakeholders:

- **explore and develop alternative indicators that would provide information on the intangible impacts of education stated in the second part of the PRIDE Project (Objective: *To expand opportunities for children and youth to acquire the values, knowledge and skills that will enable them to actively participate in the social, spiritual, economic and cultural development of their communities and to contribute positively to creating sustainable futures*)**
- **develop indicators for: (1) strengthening the capacity of the Institute of Education; (2) PRIDE Project activities including any regional workshops, (3) PRIDE Project Management**
- **assist individual countries to define appropriate, relevant and valid indicators for the sub-projects in their contexts**

4.4 Achievements against the logframe

This is a worthwhile project that has started well and has achieved many things within activities both at the regional, and in certain cases, at the individual country level. While it would be premature to evaluate the impacts of the project at this point, participants on the whole are very positive about the project to date and value the projects' contribution to individual country's development and the opportunities provided for the Pacific people to meet, reflect critically and discuss the issues of importance to them. The following quotes illustrate this.

We have benefited from the many opportunities that PRIDE has provided for training, workshops, the NOPE and PADDLE sites, technical assistance and sub-project funding. The overall approach to our country has been supportive and effective.

PRIDE and our ministry have worked closely in the evaluation of our current 10-year education master plan as well as the development of our new 10-year education master plan. PRIDE also assisted our ministry in hosting the first education summit for our country, in which more than 400 key stakeholders

deliberated on education issues and made recommendations for our new 10-year education master plan. We are extremely satisfied with the outcome of these two activities (our education summit and our long-term education master plan).

PRIDE's resources and benchmarks have been useful to the process and the PRIDE team have been supportive. Involvement in the PRIDE workshops has afforded the Ministry the opportunity to participate in regional fora expanding our knowledge and increasing our networks with other countries that has been invaluable

PRIDE assisted in the development of our 3 year strategic plan – useful and achieved the objective of support. PRIDE also provided funding for two workshops for curriculum planning and curriculum writing. These were really useful in the development of the sub-project and establishing of the policy framework.

I am one of those people (mostly ministers) who developed the Forum Basic Education Action Plan at New Zealand, and I have been with the PRIDE Project from its very beginning. I have carefully observed how the PRIDE Project has operated and have likewise observed the people working for the Project. I truly believe they have done outstanding job in managing the project. I congratulate them for excellent job well done and request that they remain with the project for as long as the project exists.

But it does have some weaknesses. These weaknesses are collected around the idea that the project shouldn't just be working at the task/activity level; it is also supposed to be trying to bring about substantial and sustainable development. This requires the project to be more involved in reviewing and evaluating processes and outcomes to identify 'quality' rather than just 'quantity'.

The achievements, issues, challenges, and recommendations are described around each of the Result areas.

4.5 Result Area 1: Comprehensive Strategic Plans covering formal and non-formal education are developed in Pacific ACP countries

Achievement against the Result Area 1 indicators

- *Minimum benchmarks/standards for quality strategic plans and educational outcomes defined and agreed by PSC by end 2005.*

Benchmarks for national strategic plans have been established with a second edition ratified by the PSC in September 2005. Based on the FBEAP, the document lists 10 benchmarks along with associated principles and indicators. They include (1) pride in cultural and national identity; (2) skills for life and work in a global world; (3) alignment with national development plans and regional and international conventions; (4) access and equity for students with special needs; (5) partnerships with communities and stakeholders; (6) holistic approach to basic education; (7) realistic financial costing; (8) use of data in educational planning; (9) effective capacity building for all education personnel; and (10) a framework for monitoring and evaluation. The benchmarks have been used to raise awareness about the quality of strategic plans at the consultation phase. They have also been applied in the review of the existing strategic plans of two countries. These are Samoa (1995-2005 Education Policies) and Republic of Marshall Islands (2000-2005 Strategic Plan).

The benchmarks on the whole are comprehensive in principles and indicators except for two areas, non-formal education (NFE), and leadership. The significance of non-formal methods in the delivery of basic education is recognised in the FBEAP in the Ministers' commitment to very specific strategies that include the review and development of non-formal education programmes, and the promotion of the role of civil society in providing non-formal skills training. This is further stressed in the PRIDE Project objective. Benchmark 6 acknowledges the importance of non-formal education in the principle *The Plan demonstrates effective articulation between formal and non-formal education*. This unfortunately is not captured in the indicator, *National curriculum provides for education from early childhood to secondary that can be used in the formal and non-formal sectors*, which reduces the essence of non-formal education to a centralised national curriculum provision within the school sector.

The risk with this treatment is that the orientation of strategic plans and their implementation could be narrowly focused on strategies within the formal education sector as opposed to a holistic approach. Non-formal education has a legitimacy of its own and is an integral part of any country's development strategy for basic education, promoting individual livelihood, quality of life and community sustainability. As such it should be acknowledged in both the principles and indicators of the benchmarks.

The benchmarks further do not include the first principle, *Strong, objective, visionary leadership*, established through comprehensive discussions at the first regional and NPC training workshop. It is not clear why this principle is not in the benchmarks, given its importance in the planning process in shaping the vision of not only the whole education

sector but at all levels of the sector. In the school sector for example, principals as school leaders are often left out of professional development programmes that concentrate at teacher level. Yet if school leadership is ineffective, the whole culture of the school is affected making any investments at teacher level ineffective. One of the key strategies in any education strategic plan has to focus on the quality of leaders it has and needs to develop.

Action 2: (1) the benchmark indicators for non-formal education are revised to reflect the significant contribution it brings to basic education; (2) the principle of *Strong, objective, visionary leadership* is articulated in the benchmarks

- *National Education Plans developed in at least 7 PACPs by end of project year two and in at least 10 PACPs by end year five.*

Nine countries have completed strategic plans: Fiji, Nauru, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu. Of these, 5 have completed policy documents (Fiji-3yrs, PNG-10yrs, Samoa-9yrs, Tonga-15yrs, Vanuatu-10yrs); 3 strategic plans will expire in 2006 (Nauru, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands). Three countries have draft strategic plans (Niue, Kiribati, Cook Islands). The last 2 are expected to be ratified this year. Two countries are currently developing their next strategic plans (Palau, RMI). Federated States of Micronesia are developing their first strategic plan from a federal plan.

Several of those countries whose plans will be expiring in 2006 have started the development of their next strategic plan in consultation with the PRIDE Project, and/or with other donors.

While a number of countries educational planning was well underway or even completed before PRIDE commenced, there is evidence that the Project has assisted through technical and financial assistance in the development of 13⁶ countries' strategic plans. The assistance has been primarily through the provision of technical assistance at the pre-writing processes of reviewing existing plans, data analysis to identify the issues, and data gathering through facilitation of consultation meetings. The assistance has contributed to capacity building for ministry/department staff. As well it has raised awareness of the strategic plan benchmarks and the critical importance of consultative and participatory processes in national planning.

- *Strategic plans adequately [and realistically] budgeted*

Inadequate information and knowledge of costings of strategic plans is available at the PRIDE Project Office. Costings may well be located with ministries/departments but are not able to be verified at the time of the MTE. As a result the MTE is unable to determine the degree to which plans meet this indicator which is also Benchmark 7. The absence of this information has implications for the degree to which the Project can effectively undertake Activity 2.1: Facilitate donor coordination and financing of strategic plans.

⁶ Niue and Solomon Islands did not request assistance in this area. Both countries had pre-existing plans.

- *Strategic plans consistent with agreed criteria/benchmarks*
- *Strategic plans consistent with Forum Basic Education Action Plan*

There is strong agreement by the countries in their responses to the questionnaire and during interviews that their strategic plans are consistent with the benchmarks. The benchmarks have been applied to the initial phase of consultation for planning formulation. However, the benchmarks have yet to be applied to the final documents through independent evaluation to be carried out by the Project. It is easy to verify that benchmarks have been established. However, the achievement of the benchmarks within the strategic plans is a more involved qualitative measure that is yet to be undertaken. The degree to which the plans are consistent with the FBEAP cannot be ascertained at this point through independent evaluation. As well not all countries developed their plans through the PRIDE Project initiatives as they were already completed. They have not had the benefit of using the benchmarks during the development phase. The degree to which these pre-PRIDE plans are consistent with the benchmarks is yet to be ascertained.

Analysis and review of strategic plans have not been strong features of the Project's work to this point. This does not mean the country strategic plans do not meet the agreed benchmarks. It is to signal that the emphasis of the Project's work in relation to strategic planning has been at the front end processes. The remaining half of the Project should see a shift to the evaluative dimension particularly as some countries' plans are due to be completed in 2006. This should include developing a framework for the analysis and review of existing plans, ascertaining strategic plans are adequately and realistically budgeted, ascertaining fully costed implementation plans are in place and to provide assistance where needed. The PRIDE Project needs to be proactive in this area. An important area for a summative evaluation to consider is the place of policies in the strategic planning developments. Many areas raised in the stakeholder consultation need policy decisions to underpin the strategies. For example, the issues raised in some countries' consultations relating to the lunch programme, teacher quality and development, principals' roles, school governance and management, more English in schools, the role of communities in schools, language and culture in education, and many others, require policy decisions to guide strategies. Policies and strategies are therefore integral parts of each other. It would be important for the project to support country decisions on how to deal with policy needs whilst undertaking strategic planning. One way of dealing with this is to include policy development as a key objective in the strategic plan. What should be discouraged is an approach that leaves policy development as a subsequent activity to be undertaken after the 3, 5, or even 10 year strategic plan.

A summative evaluation of current completed strategic plans will be important for Project planning decisions. For example, suggestions have been put forward by the Project team and others about shifting to policy development. A review of strategic plans and their implementation should provide the Project with a stronger base for such a decision. In another example, suggestions of using project money to fund an administrative assistant to support the implementation of sub-projects are not easily accepted without data that a review of strategic plans and implementation can provide.

Action 3: the Project undertakes a comprehensive review of strategic plans. The review will assess the extent to which strategic plans are consistent with the benchmarks; the extent to which they are consistent with the FBEAP; the extent to which they are adequately and realistically budgeted. The review will form the basis of discussions with countries to determine and implement assistance that the Project can provide, and on monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Achievement against the activities for Result 1

1.2. Establish, train, equip and backstop national focal points

National Project Coordinators have been established for all 15 countries with training opportunities provided during annual meetings or country visits by the Project staff. Regular audio meetings planned for 2004, 2005 have not taken place due to technological difficulties. Office equipment has been provided in 12 countries.

Most NPCs are very senior education ministry staff. Some are the secretary/directors of education themselves eg Nauru, Niue, Palau. While it is necessary to have senior ministry staff as NPC for oversight, the overall functions of the NPC place additional strain on already very large workloads. At least 4 of the initial NPCs have changed (Cook Islands, Kiribati, Niue, Vanuatu. Tuvalu's NPC has been on study leave and will return by the end of August.

1.3. Analyse and review existing national education plans and survey of education characteristics in each Pacific ACP state

An initial analysis and review of existing education plans, EFA action plans and educational characteristics of these countries was completed. The analysis and review undertaken focused on the status of the strategic plans in terms of their currency and development phase. The report (as in 2004 Annual Report Section 3.1.3; and in its Annex IX) noted that countries were in varying stages in their planning processes - 9 countries had existing plans. It included the status of strategic planning and database systems.

The second part of the activity – '[analyse and review] survey of education characteristics in each Pacific ACP state' is not evident in any of the documents reviewed.

A framework for the analysis and review of existing plans and survey of education characteristics is not described in any of the documents reviewed. The review report does not indicate it had considered other elements such as the nature or characteristics of the strategic plans in terms of issues, types of strategies being proposed in formal and non-formal education, the focus on basic education, the degree to which policies are developed, the processes followed in planning development and so on. Such an analysis would have shown characteristics of the Pacific ACP states that could have informed the Project's planning and approaches to different countries. In the case of one country, an analysis of the strategic plan for example, would have established that the country has had a recent history of strategic planning advice and documents that have been varied in quality, with consequential difficulties in implementation and outcomes. Such history

should have alerted the PRIDE Project to the need for ongoing support and monitoring to the strategic planning process currently underway, in particular providing the country with the assurance that consultant advice will not be a repeat of their recent historical experiences in strategic planning.

Without the indicators for these activities it is difficult to know and be able to assess expected outcomes in terms of quantity, quality, time, and whether the outcomes were ‘process’ oriented or ‘impact’ oriented. It means the interpretation of the scope, outcomes, and quality of the activities was left to the Project to determine. Evidently in this case that interpretation was only in terms of the currency and phase of development of the existing plans. In the example above, the benchmarks were applied in the review of the existing plan. The findings of this assessment are not fully integrated in the subsequent analysis and recommendations. Issues of teacher quality, inclusive education, monitoring and evaluation evident in the Benchmark assessment do not feature in the analysis and recommendations.

Overall this activity has been conducted at the surface level in terms of review and analysis with findings not impacting on the quality of processes and subsequent strategic planning activities. The use of benchmarks as an assessment tool has at best been incidental.

1.4. Develop planning methodology including gender strategy, sex aggregated data collection and analysis, consultation and participatory approaches among stakeholders.

Planning methodology was established through comprehensive discussions at the first regional and NPC training workshop resulting in a publication entitled “Education Planning in the Pacific, Principles and Guidelines”. The planning methodology includes 12 principles and the 10 benchmarks described above, recommended as a guide for the development of national strategic plans.

The list of principles and benchmarks constructed for strategic educational planning in the Pacific are almost identical except for the first principle: *Strong, objective, visionary leadership*. It is not clear why this principle is not in the benchmarks given its importance in the planning process, in shaping the vision of not only the whole education sector but at all levels of the sector. In the school sector for example, principals as school leaders are often left out of professional development programmes that concentrate at teacher level. Yet if school leadership is ineffective, the whole culture of the school is affected making any investments at teacher level ineffective. One of the key strategies in any education strategic plan has to focus on the quality of leaders it has and needs to develop.

The development and implementation of a gender strategy, detailing how the project will approach gender issues in each and every key result area and activity, including project management, planning and coordination is not featured in the annual reports and their status cannot therefore be verified by the MTE at the time of writing. Nor can gender disaggregated data collection and analyses be verified. It is possible that the gender disaggregated data collection was a feature of the Education Statistics workshop in January 2005.

A workshop on An Education Management Information System (EMIS) suitable for the four microstates (Nauru, Niue, Tokelau, Tuvalu) is being planned for September this year. The aim is to develop an EMIS compatible with the ones Uniquet helped to prepare for Kiribati and Solomon Islands, and to provide intensive professional development for data management personnel from the four countries. One country has expressed disappointment at the 18 month delay in this provision.

It is difficult to assess whether the outcomes of activities were the intended ones and whether processes were the intended result or outcomes/impact were the expectation. The interpretation by the Project is evident in the reporting but it is not clear whether the design had intended these to be the outcomes, for example, the publications. It is further difficult to trace the outcomes of the activities back to the higher level result, project purpose and project objective. For example, in having determined the principles and the benchmarks, published the outcomes of the workshops in a text book, has Result 1: Comprehensive Strategic Plans covering formal and non-formal education are developed in Pacific ACP Countries, been achieved?

Action 4: the Project develops and implements a gender strategy, detailing how the project will approach gender issues in each and every key result area and activity, including project management, planning and coordination

1.5. Provide technical assistance for strategic plan formulation and financing options

The assistance to countries on strategic plan formulation and implementation is provided on request. Local planning is led by the NPC with support from PRIDE team. Countries are also expected to request the services of consultants to assist with specific aspects of strategic plan development and implementation. During 2004 PRIDE staff worked with Tokelau, Nauru, Cook Islands. During 2005 PRIDE staff worked with Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, PNG, Samoa, Tokelau, Tuvalu and Vanuatu on the review, development and/or implementation of their strategic plans for education. During 2006, PRIDE supported work in Palau, Tuvalu, Republic of Marshall Islands and FSM. A Financing Education Workshop was conducted for the region on 12-16 Sept 2005. Technical assistance was provided to Tuvalu to cost its strategic plan.

With regard to Result Area 1, the PRIDE Project has made much progress on the required activities. The MTE suggests that a concern is that the involvement of the Project is at the front end of strategic planning formulation with minimal ongoing monitoring of the development and evaluation of final quality of the strategic plan. The point has been raised before that no evidence could be located for the assessment of the current final plans against the benchmarks, and therefore the FBEAP, and there was no indication of PRIDE Project knowledge on the extent to which the plans were adequately costed. The focus of the work of the Project could have been assisted by the identification of indicators at the activity level.

Where consultants are providing the technical assistance, countries still need an external quality assurance mechanism to ensure they are not once again facing conflicting advice

from consultants. Countries should be able to access PRIDE for such an assurance. The PRIDE Project has a role to read and provide feedback on the developments, providing the countries with additional support mechanisms throughout the development of their strategic plans. This of course varies from country to country with some not needing deep engagement by the Project, and others very much depending on it.

4.6 Result Area 2: Implementation of Strategic Plans are commenced (within individual plan time frames)

Achievement against the Result 2 indicators

- ***Donor support of national plan implementation improved***

There are differences in the views of country respondents to the MTE and the Project reports on the extent to which this has been achieved. Regionally and during visits to each of the 15 countries, the PRIDE Project has liaised and maintained working relationships with donor agencies, especially NZAID, AusAID, EU and JICA, and with the ADB Suva Office. In the north Pacific links were established with the Office of Insular Affairs, US Department of the Interior, Honolulu, which manages US education compact funding to RMI, FSM and Palau. The Annual Report 2005 maintains the Project has achieved in 15 countries the Project purpose ‘improve the coordination of donor inputs’. The cited evidence, however, does not consistently support this claim. For instance, the activities described for three of the countries are not donor coordination but support to countries to undertake activities for strategic planning. The claim is further not supported by at least 7 countries who maintain PRIDE has not contributed to donor coordination. Six country questionnaires and one case study country state that PRIDE has not contributed to donor coordination for their ministry. In the case of Tokelau, donor coordination is not appropriate. Brokerage and planning services between Tuvalu and donors has been a significant PRIDE project activity in which PRIDE has been instrumental in coordinating donors to the roundtable.

The differences between the Project’s activities in this regard and the perception by countries of their purpose and outcomes are indicative of the difficulties associated with this indicator. While the PRIDE Project has reportedly worked to establish collaborative links with donor agencies at regional level and within countries, it is a difficult undertaking for ultimately PRIDE with its status as a project has limited power to influence what donor agencies and organisations do. It is further questionable whether it is appropriate for the PRIDE Project to act in any capacity with regard to country-donor relations. It can certainly act to create a forum for discussions but as a project there are limitations on its capacity to participate let alone influence the discussions that will assist the harmonisation of donor support of national plans. This point is illustrated in the following case. Despite much assistance from PRIDE to coordinate donor roundtables, the senior ministry official was not confident their combined efforts had achieved donor support of their national plan. They had not at the end of the last roundtable received explicit commitments for their national plan.

The MTE suggests that this is an unrealistic expectation of a project. In its current place on the log frame, this is a difficult indicator for the project to meet. It is even more difficult to measure the contribution of PRIDE to improved donor support of national plan implementation.

Action 5: consideration is given to defining the requirement related to that of providing support to countries to achieve donor harmonisation

- ***Consultative [in country] multi-stakeholder processes improved***

The Project reports two levels of engagement, verified by country respondents: (1) other stakeholders and international organisations, for example, Commonwealth of Learning, SPBEA, ASBBAE, UNESCO Office for the Pacific States; and (2) in-country multistakeholder participation. In 2005 the Project had provided assistance to 9 countries and so far in 2006 at least 3 countries. Three forms of assistance are provided by the Project: (1) PRIDE staff being directly involved in facilitation of stakeholder processes (2) financial assistance for stakeholder processes (3) technical assistance through consultants. In some countries, a communication strategy is established as part of their consultative processes for strategic plan.

The Project has been strong in this area and has strengthened community's ownership of strategic plans and sub-projects at country and provincial levels. The combined efforts of the Re-thinking Pacific Education Initiative and the planning methodology developed by the Project have strengthened the stakeholder processes for plan formulation and implementation. Participatory and consultative approaches are strong features of the initial stages of planning for all countries. Consultations have included a wide cross section of the communities. For some, this is a marked improvement from previous planning exercises that were primarily external to the communities either as a result of developers from outside, or developments remaining within the ministries themselves.

There is a concern that front-end consultation should not be the end point with people next being asked to approve a final document but that the process of consultation encourages real ownership by involving stakeholders in a cycle of draft-review-revise in which they are continually being informed and giving feedback as the documents are taking shape. The language of consultations and the language of written documents are fundamental to the realisation of ownership principles, not only at the conceptualisation phase but also at the review and endorsement phases. Key documents such as the strategic plan will therefore require translation to facilitate meaningful review and endorsement processes by the stakeholders. As such, translation needs to be valued through appropriate remuneration, and scheduled in the activities to ensure the time necessary for its proper completion, including quality assurance processes, is realistic.

There is acknowledgement that ministry staff themselves needs to be included in the consultation cycle and be trained on using the strategic plan to direct and monitor work activities.

- ***At least 60% of in-country sub-projects commenced by end of project year three.***
NOTE: Additional specific indicators to be established once minimum standards are developed and agreed

The Project logical framework stipulates that at least 60% of in-country sub-projects were to have commenced by end of project year three. The progress so far is mixed, and unlikely to be achieved by the target date. To date⁷ 24 sub-projects have been approved

⁷ 4th July 2006 PRIDE Project Sub-Project Progress Report version 2 8th August 2006

from 11 countries. Half of the approved sub-projects have either completed (5), or have commenced (7). Four countries do not have approved sub-projects. Two of these countries are still developing their strategic plans. If we look at the individual country level, 6 of the countries (40%) have not commenced any sub-projects half way into the life of the PRIDE project.

Procedures to guide the development and approval of in-country sub-projects have been established and NPC trained in their use. Model sub-project proposals are also available for further assistance.

The PRIDE Project team has noted with concern that not only have there been delays in receiving proposals but also in sub-project start-up, and believes it is not for lack of support and encouragement from the PRIDE team. Rather, it appears to be a combination of lack of time, personnel and organisational capacity within the countries. It is further the view of the PRIDE team that there is a deep-seated aid dependency in at least some of the fifteen countries resulting in inertia amongst local staff to take on the work themselves and appear to be waiting for the PRIDE team to come and implement the sub-projects.

The countries responding to the MTE identify a mix of contributing factors to their ability to propose and implement sub-projects. The three most frequently identified factors are having a strategic plan in place; having the professional capacity and adequate numbers in the ministry and in country; and having technical and financial assistance through PRIDE.

There could be a number of reasons why a country has not made full use of this resource. It is possible for example, that sub-project proposals and implementation are being confined to the formal education sector with limited involvement of NGOs and civil society providing non-formal education. Should this be the case, progress could be hastened with the use of capacity in the non-formal education sector.

PRIDE needs to be proactive in assisting countries to determine barriers to sub-project development and to overcome these. Consideration should be given to assisting countries with the development of costed implementation plans for their strategic plan. This would identify sub-projects. The Project team acknowledges a need to work in a more proactive and even directive way to ensure efficient sub-project start-up.

Action 6: PRIDE undertakes research to identify why countries are not proposing and/or initiating sub-projects and to find solutions to problems limiting sub-projects

4.7 Result Area 3: Strengthened national and regional capacities to plan and implement basic education strategies

Achievement against the Result 3 indicators

- *Regional basic education resource centre online by end of 2005*

Much progress has been made on this. The Resource Centre is housed in the Project building on the USP campus. It has a small but growing collection of books and journals and has computer terminals available for use by staff and post-graduate students of the university. The Pacific Archive of Digital Data for Learning and Education (PADDLE) was installed in August 2005 by USPL and now has over 250 documents accessible online. This is available on a web-site www.paddle.usp.ac.fj, and a CD-ROM version was recently launched. The development has been undertaken in liaison with USP library to ensure common cataloguing and digitization software. The Resource Centre is assisting staff of the School of Education and the Institute of Education in preparing reading lists for all students. A comprehensive analysis of use of the database is possible and the information gained from the analysis is being used in planning development and extension.

In carrying out document search and review for the MTE, the team found both the Resource Centre and PADDLE to be extremely efficient and useful. Respondents to the questionnaire make use of the on-line resource to support research purposes and for general information on what other countries are doing. Access is reported by respondents to be limited to those in the main centres though some main centres have limited/unstable access to the internet. Orientation and training for other users in the ministry has yet to take place in some of the countries.

- *Effective plan monitoring and evaluation systems are functional at national and regional levels by end of 2006*

Work is currently being undertaken by a consultant to develop a monitoring and evaluation strategy. A draft of the report is to be presented before the end of September 2006. This will be discussed by NPC and the Project Steering Committee before a final report is prepared

With hindsight it could be considered a flaw in the original project design that this work was not carried out earlier in accordance with Annex II of the Financing Agreement Section 4.1 *Monitoring Arrangements: An internal project monitoring strategy will be developed during the Inception Phase. The project team will undertake day-to-day monitoring of project progress and achievement including monitoring and evaluation of National sub-project activities.* Aspects of the work of the Project to date could have been enhanced by more rigorous monitoring and evaluation.

The project team could also have heeded the advice from NPCs and data managers. The independent evaluation of the first regional/NPC workshop back in 2004 noted that one

of the participants' recommendations was for a future workshop on how to monitor and evaluate plans implemented. This is echoed by some of the countries' responses to the questionnaire which noted that a lack of ongoing evaluation by PRIDE in regards to the sub-project achievements to date has been disappointing.

"For sub-projects, PRIDE needs to evaluate the implementation of activities to ensure that objectives are achieved and countries have gained from the experience."

"Most donor projects have well defined monitoring and reporting mechanisms for both the program and the use of funds which is something that PRIDE needs to have in place for effective management and monitoring of the project."

"A clear monitoring and evaluation framework for effective management of the project. Countries need to be well briefed on this and PRIDE needs to enforce the requirements of the framework."

- *National and Regional Workshops*

In terms of capacity strengthening the Project's inputs have included country visits to work specifically with officials to review, develop and/or implement strategic plans. National level workshops for three countries have been financed through the Project in 2005. Annual workshops for National Project Coordinators were undertaken in 2004, 2005 and the 2006 one will take place in September. The Project has conducted 5 regional workshops in different country locations as a tool for providing information and capacity building for selected participants on a range of topics. These are: (1) Capacity Building Workshop Sept 2004, in Suva (regionally & NPC); (2) Education Statistics Jan 2005 in Samoa; (3) Language Policy Education Feb 2005 in Suva; Teacher Education Nov 2005 in Samoa; (4) Financing of Education July 2005 in Vanuatu; (5) Literacy and Numeracy May 2006 in Tonga. The next planned workshop focuses on TVET and is to be held in Palau. The workshops use resource people from within the region and as well as outside the region. The key goal is to develop a resource (print or electronic) on the topic that can be used by the participants on their return for capacity building in country.

There is mixed reaction with regard to the sustainable benefits of regional workshops.

There is general agreement on the enormous value of the regional workshops for their networking, professional development opportunities, and for the mental shifts they have encouraged in participants. "They provide the opportunity for Pacific educators to come to meet, think, and dialogue about issues of importance to them, to reflect and think critically through current practice. They enable participants to understand global trends in education and the identified need for indigenous approaches to education and learning, indigenous values, cultures and philosophies".⁸

⁸ Independent evaluation report: 4th PRIDE Regional Workshop: Teacher Education for New Times: Reconceptualising Pedagogy and Learning in the Pacific 28 Nov-2nd Dec 2005 NUS, Samoa. Author: Dr Unaisi Nabobo-Baba.

In particular, the Re-thinking Pacific Education workshops⁹ were considered highly influential in shifting the mental processes participants applied in their decision making as educators. The re-thinking workshops are said to have impacted on the way educators view current and historical education policies and practices, what these mean for the focus of education in their local contexts, and the place of Pacific languages, culture and values in the delivery of that education. (It is noted that the Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative is not part of the PRIDE project).

The workshops are said to have impacted on the processes of education planning that are now being used such as the extensive consultations with stakeholders to reconceptualise the vision for education. It has impacted at policy level, for example in the way the Ministry thinks about language policies and strategies, and the place of culture and indigenous languages in education.

A shared response by some of the small island nations and in particular those of the north Pacific are that regional workshops were essential to the professional development of ministry staff. In the case of one of these countries, the regional workshops were said to have provided the impetus for the momentum in the ministry's planning activities currently underway.

However, not all countries agree that the regional workshops have achieved their intended impact. Some note that the regional workshop focus have had limited relevance to their needs and have not had sustainable impact on their education system without the appropriate follow up.

The regional developments through the workshops provided so far by PRIDE have had limited relevance to our needs. The areas for the workshop – teacher training, literacy and numeracy, vernacular language have some general relevance for us. My own concern about these workshops is the ability of the representatives to apply learned knowledge or skills gained through their work without follow-up. I am not sure that the approach of having workshops is an effective one without the appropriate follow-up.

No. This model of training is not having a sustainable impact on our education system.

Only attended 1 regional workshop (Financing Education) and both my colleague and I did not learn anything new. There is also no follow up to see whether the workshop has had any impact at the country level.

While participant evaluations in the workshops are highly positive, the independent evaluation of the workshops noted a number of considerations that needed to have been factored into the Projects' decision making on subsequent provision of regional

⁹ Respondents to the MTE make a significant point about the re-thinking workshops which are believed to be a separate provision outside of the PRIDE Project, for example, the re-thinking workshop on culture and values in the curriculum 2005 in Fiji. It is acknowledged however that the re-thinking Pacific education philosophies have also underpinned the work in the PRIDE funded regional workshops

workshops¹⁰. In three of the independent evaluations the MTE has been able to view, a common recommendation for future workshops was that they be in-country or be country specific in their focus. For example, the first regional workshop in Lautoka in 2004 noted that participants are conscious of the desire to have a united Pacific voice but at the same time are cautious of losing each country's unique specific needs. Further training that is specific to each country's needs and circumstances was noted in addition to future topics to include monitoring and evaluation of strategic plans. The workshops also draw a mixture of participants with diverse experience making it difficult for the workshop to accommodate all levels of needs. The financing workshop for example, drew dissatisfaction from senior participants as being somewhat 'light'. These concerns are reiterated in one of the responses to the questionnaire:

Needs analysis to be conducted prior to any regional workshop. Currently, the focus of regional workshops is either determined by the Ministers or PRIDE based on their experience and knowledge of the existing issues in the Pacific. However, to better utilise resources, an assessment of where each country is at in terms of development needs to be conducted so that the content of the workshop is appropriate for everybody.

A needs-based approach at sub-regional level was accepted by many during the MTE consultations, as a cost-saving measure. On the other hand, some caution that one of the risks is drawing together countries that have been in the 'same box', for example the countries of the north Pacific with a strong American influence. The regional workshops have allowed people to share the experiences of those outside their 'sub-regional box', providing a wider perspective from which they can assess education development in their own contexts.

A suggested alternative was to maintain regional workshops but of lesser frequency and duration, and to provide countries with the opportunity to study closely those countries they believe they can learn best from. For example, where countries are familiar with TVET in other countries, a preferred arrangement is to have their TVET person be attached to one of the countries that is known. Similarly, countries without their own training institutions would like the opportunity to study how such an institution operates in a south Pacific country such as Samoa. In the words of one country's suggested modifications to the project design:

[Provide] more opportunities to learn from the outcomes of other member country sub-projects as they be relevant to other nations. What went well and why, what went wrong and why – what could be improved for next time? While we are a regional project, there are few opportunities to learn from each other.

¹⁰ Evaluation Report for PRIDE'S Workshop September 2004, author Dr Seu'ula Johanson Fua 16 September 2004; Final Assessment of PRIDE Workshop on The Financing of Education, author Dr Wadan Narsey, 10 August 2005; Evaluation Report 4th PRIDE Regional Workshop Teacher Education for New Times: Reconceptualising Pedagogy and Learning in the Pacific; author Dr Unaisi Nabobo-Baba 28 Nov-2 December 2005

Further work should be done to ensure that regional workshops are achieving long term sustainable benefits through the effective use of the published resources and the workshop participant/trainer in country. For example, are the differing needs of countries being adequately addressed through regional workshops? The evaluations of this effect will help to determine whether or not regional workshops are cost-effective whether they are consistent with the higher-level overall objective, purpose and results of the Project.

Action 7: regional workshops are scaled down in terms of their frequency and that emphasis is placed on sub-regional, national level workshops, and needs-based attachment within the region.

There are a number of organisations that undertake projects or developments that overlap with the PRIDE Project. These include UNESCO, UNICEF, SPBEA, IOE, NGOs and bilateral arrangements. Another very real concern raised by respondents is the lack of coordination among regional agencies and the PRIDE Project when it comes to regional workshops resulting in duplication, drain on limited local capacities, and the increased risk of confusion among participants.

There needs to be proper coordination between the various regional organisations donors and PRIDE in terms of assistance provided to countries. The different organisations need to work together in providing support to the development of education in the region to better utilise the limited resources that we have and not confuse the countries. An example is the number of regional workshops coordinated by the different organisations with a similar focus.

Coordination of workshops / resources between PRIDE, SPBEA, UNESCO – e.g. workshops held by SPBEA/UNESCO on literacy and numeracy benchmarks could have been included into the Pacific literacy and numeracy PRIDE regional workshop and SPBEA workshop on teacher effectiveness could be included in another PRIDE activity such as the workshop on Teacher Education, held in Dec 2005? Financial Management and Systems.

No. So far, things are going well. If anything, we have a very small administration, and when workshops, meetings, and conferences are scheduled so close to each other or in parallel, we have difficulty sending our officials as we run out of people to send for these workshops, (We cannot all or mostly be travelling at the same time as we run out of administrators in our office).

Opportunities for Pacific peoples to meet and dialogue about education issues of importance to them are needed and should always be encouraged. However, without monitoring and evaluation to ascertain their impact at local level, it is difficult to assess if they had wider application or the benefits have remained solely with individuals who participated.

Action 8: the PRIDE Project work collaboratively with regional agencies to improve the coordination of common interest workshops.

- ***Implementation capacity at national level***

The project assumption ‘that sufficient implementation capacity exists at national level’ in relation to the implementation of national sub-projects is valid for less than half of the respondent countries (3 out of 10). There is no apparent common feature with these countries except that they are utilising existing ministry financial and monitoring structures to support the work of PRIDE. In the case of one country, PRIDE funds co-ordinators from outside the ministry for the work of sub-projects as well as local experts for their implementation. Capacity thus exists within this country to support PRIDE Project activities, although this may not necessarily be located within the Ministry of Education.

The same cannot be said for other countries where capacity is an issue as illustrated by the following responses:

There is funding available for the education sector in our country but the capacity to implement is a concern, in terms of manpower.

The political and geographic conditions of one country make it necessary to have additional support to the NPC in each of the states.

There is a need for the NPC at the national level to have counterparts in each of the states. With counterparts in the states, communication, planning, coordination, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of project and sub-projects will be effective.

The small island states have limited capacity within the ministries as well as in country.

National level capacity is a very difficult criteria to meet for a small Pacific island state such as ours. We would like to make a submission for another sub-project but know that it would be difficult to manage given the department’s size and lack of capacity, as well as the capacity of the education system to be able to absorb two sub-projects alongside other developments.

Sufficient implementation capacity at national level is an issue for us in terms of implementing its strategic plans and therefore sub-projects. The central ministry has a core professional staff of 7. The 2006-2010 Strategic Plan focuses on 5 Objectives. The scope of strategies and activities to achieve the objectives is comprehensive. However, the central ministry does not have sufficient capacity to coordinate, manage, monitor and evaluate implementation. In recognition of this, the Ministry proposes in the new organisational structure 2 further positions¹¹. As well short term contracts/consultancies will be used to bridge gaps.

The assumption that the NPC is engaged at the operational level of project or sub-project activity coordination is unrealistic in the case of our country. The NPC is the under-secretary of Policy and Planning with direct responsibility for

¹¹ Not yet formally approved.

other divisions such as Testing, Grant Office, Management Information System, and Statistics. As a senior ministry staff, the NPC provides oversight to the work, and linkages to the Ministry's executive decision making structures.

A key factor in the momentum to date on strategic planning has been the financing by PRIDE of a short term contract assistant to the NPC to coordinate all of the activities associated with strategic planning. The assistant's role is instrumental in liaising with the consultants, the PRIDE office, the Ministry and all stakeholders, developing consultant terms of reference, coordinating all consultations and meetings, organising workshops logistics, preparing all communication including media releases, coordinating financial arrangements and reporting, recording meeting proceedings, preparing progress reports. It is envisaged that such a role will continue to be crucial when sub-projects are being proposed and implemented.

On the matter of PRIDE funds to be used to support an assistant to the National Project Coordinator, it was noted in the draft record of the second Project Steering Committee Meeting, 25 October 2004, that NZAID supported a case-by-case approach as long as the applicant country demonstrates that efficiency is gained by this position through the coordination of EFA, FBEAP, and PRIDE activities. A proposal was put forward that countries make submissions to NZAID through the PRIDE Office. It was also noted by the EU that the implementation of sub-projects was a priority and that the request for an assistant should be contingent on the successful implementation of in-country sub-projects. Both donors requested that this decision be deferred pending consultations with the PRIDE team and their respective finance departments. PRIDE was to communicate the outcome of discussion to members. The MTE was not able to locate what the decision was.

Evidently, the capacity issue is acknowledged by the Project as a number of countries are accessing PRIDE funds to support the role of the NPC. The country responses above illustrate that one country's sub-projects have co-ordinators who are paid an allowance for their role. Another has hired an assistant on a 3 month contract to support the development of the strategic plan. In yet another case, PRIDE has enabled another country to have a Curriculum and Assessment Coordinator to work with their Curriculum Development Adviser (contracts).

The MTE suggests that the precedence has been set within the sub-project provision for an administrator or co-ordinator to be appointed and paid for within sub-project funding, and it has been demonstrated that the sub-project or other PRIDE related activity would have been at risk without such a person. On a case by case basis such a move is acceptable. What is not recommended, however, is a blanket approval for the funding of a recurrent salary which will have implications for the public service of a country in which the Project has no role.

Action 9: consideration is given to the appointment of an administrator or co-ordinator within PRIDE funds to assist with the implementation of sub-projects

5 FINANCE AND CONTRACTS

5.1 Grant amount

The total grant to PRIDE is approximately 22,000,000 FJD. This grant consists of 8,000,000 Euro from the EU and 5,000,000 NZD from NZAID.

5.2 Implementation phase

The implementation phase covered by the EU Financing Agreement is five years.

The first financial statement prepared by the Project covers the period from 1 November 2003 to 31 December 2004. This results in the implementation phase ending on 31 October 2008 in terms of the EU grant.

The EU Financing Agreement allows for a possible extension of the implementation phase by 14 months to 31 December 2009.

The NZAID funding arrangement expires on 31 December 2006 after 38 months of implementation of PRIDE. A decision on future NZ funding is expected this year.

5.3 Project Costing

The 9th EDF Regional Strategy Paper and Regional Indicative Programme, signed on 5 October 2002, set aside 8,000,000 Euro for the Human Resource Development sector, which was entirely allocated to PRIDE.

No substantial project costing or budgets were prepared during the design (February 2003) or re-design (April 2003) of PRIDE.

At the end of March 2003, the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP) HRD working group concluded that the EU grant approval process for PRIDE was likely to take at least 2 years. In light of this timescale, the Samoan Minister of Education subsequently wrote to the NZ Minister of Education for bridging finance for PRIDE. The initial indicative funding was 3,000,000 NZD for two years covering the periods 2003/04 and 2004/05. The NZ funding was later increased to 3 years i.e. including 2005/06 with an additional grant of 2,000,000 NZD. The additional funding support provided by NZAID changed this grant from bridging finance to a co-finance arrangement for the implementation of PRIDE. However, contractually no co-funding arrangement exists between the donors and USP.

The Project is required under the Contribution Agreement to observe all the regulations and protocols of USP with respect to financial management, procurement of supplies and appointment of staff and consultants, unless those of the EDF are more stringent e.g. the ACP/EU origin and competition rules, at which time the EDF protocols apply. With effect from 1 February 2006, however, revised EU provisions now allow CROP to engage individuals and to procure supplies and materials according to their own rules i.e. with no restriction to procure services and supplies from ACP/EU member states, if the internal CROP rules allow otherwise.

It is assumed that the project implementation period will be extended by a further 14 months and 36 months for the EU and NZAID grants respectively, without a cost increase. This implies that to some extent the project costing was over estimated and/or that the original implementation period was over ambitious in its expectations.

However, given that there are 15 participating countries, the project budget as contained in the FA (including NZAID funds) is realistic and has been used by the MTE team to measure actual performance.

5.4 Cost–benefit

Please refer to section 4.4 above for the immediate benefits of the project to-date.

From the perspective of participating countries, an immediate cost would be the time civil servants and civil society have spent working on furthering their country’s commitment to the objectives of PRIDE. National commitments can be measured by the time spent attending workshops, attending the PSC, working in national committees, and in identification, formulation and implementation of sub-projects. Also in some cases, PRIDE has contracted civil servants from the region as short-term consultants.

The “opportunity” cost of the “invested time” in PRIDE would be the time spent in-country working in other areas of concentration in the Education Sector.

Another immediate cost would be the financial resources that countries have committed to support the work of PRIDE in-country. These commitments can be measured by the costs funded by Governments.

No field surveys were carried out or data collected as part of ongoing monitoring by the Project team. Therefore it was not possible to collect the data as part of the MTE to attempt a social cost-benefit analysis for PRIDE.

Action 10: Project to start collecting data for monitoring purposes during implementation and for use during the final evaluation of PRIDE.

5.5 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Fourteen out of fifteen participating countries have signed an MOU with USP endorsing their commitment to the PRIDE project objectives, which form the basis for access to funds for national sub-projects. Kiribati is the only country yet to sign an MOU, which is holding up the approval of its first in-country sub-project.

5.6 Financial and Narrative Reports

Annual reports have been prepared by the Project for 2004 and 2005 (undated reports). The results and activities are expressed in the form of a logical framework. Expenditure is presented in the same format as the FA Budget, which does not reflect budgeted commitments under the three result areas. This indicates to some extent that the project costing was not based on thorough budgeting and, therefore, the FA budget breakdown could not be presented under the three result areas.

The Project team, however, could have adopted this approach at the commencement of the Project. Financial information presented under the three result areas would have

better directed the Project team and encouraged participating countries through the PSC (the PSC approves Annual Work Programmes of the Project) to ensure that investments through PRIDE were made where impact in the delivery of basic education to children can be achieved. As an example the rationale to hold two regional workshops this year, estimated to cost 575,000 FJD, would be clearer to all stakeholders if such an approach were taken by the Project team.

The MTE team notes that the Project will still be required to present a financial statement in the format of the FA budget to donors and for the purpose of carrying out an external financial audit.

Action 11: financial reports expressed in the form of a logical framework should be in place for use by the project and for reporting to the PSC.

5.7 External Financial Audits

The PIFS prepares the terms of reference of the external financial audit of PRIDE and also receives the draft audit report for comments.

External financial audits have been prepared by KPMG for the periods, 1 November 2003 to 31 December 2004 (report dated 14 July 2005) and 1 January to 31 December 2005 (revised report dated 7 August 2006). Recommendations on the registration of fixed assets and reporting of interest income have not been addressed by USP as the issues reappear in the draft report for 2005. USP is in the process of responding to the auditor's management letter. Discussions with USP's Finance Department indicate that the issues raised by the external auditors will be fully addressed.

5.8 Annual Work Programmes and Budgets

Annual Work Programmes & Budgets (AWP) have been prepared by the Project for the years 2004, 2005, and 2006 respectively.

The AWP activities are numbered and grouped under the three result areas following the logical framework. The budget is presented in the same format as the Financing Agreement Budget, which does not group budgets under the three result areas.

While the AWP generally meets the requirements of the FA, it is not sufficiently detailed for use as an operational plan and budget for the implementation of PRIDE.

Action 12: operational plans and budgets under the three result areas with timetable against which to evaluate progress, monitor results and improve internal financial management and reporting should be in place.

The MTE team notes that no forward plan and budget has been approved, nor has the Project been guided by the annual budgets contained in the Contribution Agreement for the preparation of AWP. This planning inadequacy has resulted in a higher (124%) budget allocation for "Meetings and Travel" in three years of operation against the FA budget of 5 years.

In the case of national sub-projects an inadequate AWP allocation of 31% has been made against the log frame expectation of 60% by the end of 2006. See table 1 below.

Action 13: Put in place a forward plan of operation with an annual budget and timetable for the remainder of the project to closely reflect what can be actually committed after taking into account what has been spent and committed to 31 December 2006 against the budget headings in the financing agreement.

Table 1: Budget allocations 2004 – 2006 AWP against Financing Agreement (FJD)

FA Budget Headings	FA Budget	2004 AWP	2005 AWP	2006 AWP	Total Years 1-3	Percent Allocated
	FJD	FJD	FJD	FJD	FJD	FJD
Technical Assistance	5,022,984	576,584	780,437	727,157	2,084,178	41
Equipment and Supplies	628,567	294,204	159,000	80,500	533,704	85
Meetings and Travel	1,831,585	384,375	1,090,880	788,710	2,263,965	124
Operating Costs	1,279,335	192,000	158,000	78,000	428,000	33
In-country Sub-projects	11,655,544	250,000	1,445,000	1,970,000	3,665,000	31
Indirect Costs	367,705	50,915	73,129	73,351	197,395	54
Contingency	971,295	84,858	181,666	182,218	448,742	46
Independent reviews budget 335,463 FJD not included						
Total Project Costs	21,757,016	1,832,936	3,888,112	3,899,936	9,620,984	44

5.9 Financing Agreement Budget Utilization Rates

At the end of 2005 total actual expenditure was 3,105,968 FJD or 14.2% of the budget¹². At the end of 2006 expenditure utilization is estimated to reach 6,062,000 FJD or 28% of the budget. See table 2 below.

Sub-projects have been allocated 54% of the budget or approximately 11,655,000 FJD. At the end of 2005, only 192,429 FJD had been spent when projects worth 1,627,446 FJD were approved in 2005.

At the time of the MTE, commitments in the form of approved sub-projects have increased to 1,935,000 FJD or 16% of the budget allocated to sub-projects. At the end of 2006 expenditure is estimated to reach 1,228,000 or 11% of the budget. See table no. 2 below.

The low rate of budget utilisation can be attributed to a number of reasons, such as, one country has not signed the MOU and this is holding up approval of their first sub-project; applications for sub-projects have not been made by four participating countries; the slow start and rate of implementation of approved sub-projects; lower requirements for provision of equipment and supplies; use of regional technical assistance; and lower

¹² Utilization rate does not take into consideration the budget set aside for independent reviews, which will not be committed under AWP.

operating costs of the Project. The only budget heading envisaged to exceed the Financing Agreement allocation at the end of 2006 is the meeting and workshop budget.

Countries have commented favourably on the flow of funds from the Project to countries for the implementation of sub-projects.

Given the low rate of budget utilisation to date, a no cost extension by 14 months covering the EU grant and a 36-month extension covering the NZAID grant should be re-programmed. Also, if planned activities will exceed the amount allocated to budget headings in the EU FA by more than 15%, a budget revision (i.e. reallocation) will need to be requested by the Project (article 9.2 of the Contribution Agreement).

The MTE team noticed that the Project charges short-term consultants contracted to conduct or assist with workshops to the “Meetings and Travel” budget heading, while in the FA Budget all short-term consultancies are grouped together under the “Technical Assistance” budget heading. It is very likely for this reason amongst others that the expenditure utilization rates against the FA Budget for “Meetings and Travel” is overstated and the “Technical Assistance” utilization rate is understated.

Action 14: a no cost extension with budget reallocation to be requested for both the EU and NZAID grants to push the project implementation through to 31 December 2009.

Table 2: Utilization rates: Project Expenditure against Financing Agreement Budget¹³

FA Budget Headings	FA Budget	2003/2004 Actual	2005 Actual	2006 Estimate	Total Years 1-3	Utilisation Rate
	FJD	FJD	FJD	FJD	FJD	%
Technical Assistance	5,022,984	397,958	788,515	782,074	1,968,547	39
Equipment and Supplies	628,567	190,723	51,319	84,972	327,014	52
Meetings and Travel	1,831,585	387,950	777,164	889,250	2,054,364	112
Operating Costs	1,279,335	17,785	123,857	77,508	219,150	17
In-country Sub-projects	11,655,544	18,037	174,392	1,036,452	1,228,881	11
Indirect Costs	367,705	33,007	57,457	86,108	176,572	48
Contingency	971,295	87,804	-	-	87,804	9
Independent reviews budget 335,463 not included						
Total Project Costs	21,757,016	1,133,264	1,972,704	2,956,364	6,062,332	28

¹³ Annex III Table 1.3 contains a detailed project expenditure breakdown against the financing agreement budget (FJD).

5.10 Payments received from EU and NZAID

Payments to USP from the EU total approximately 2,761,000 FJD (1,314,763 Euro)¹⁴. This consists of 866, 244 FJD (401,763 Euro) for the 2004 AWP and 1,894,756 FJD (913,000 Euro) as an advance for the 2005 AWP. At the end of June 2006 the total expenditure charged to the EU is 2,802,632 FJD (approximately 1,344,212 Euro).

The MTE team recognises that the main reason for this financial deficit has been in the interpretation of the provisions of the Contribution Agreement, Annex II General Conditions, Articles 2, 15 and 16 relating to finance. The provision of audited financial accounts seems to have been incorrectly interpreted as a prerequisite for additional “interim” payments after the first payment from the EU. Accordingly, USP would have been entitled to receive an additional payment in the first quarter of 2006 once the EU received the 2005 Annual report and the 2006 AWP of PRIDE.

Payments to USP from NZAID to-date total 1,906,093 FJD, which is the total advance, paid for the 2004, 2005 and 2006 AWP respectively. At the end of June 2006, total expenditure charged to NZAID was 1,738,463 FJD.

5.11 Expenditure allocations to EU and NZAID and eligible EU costs

Annual expenditure incurred by PRIDE and charged to the EU expenditure code in the USP Financial System is split between EU and NZAID at a rate of 67% and 33% respectively.

The MTE team noticed that the financial report for PRIDE is manually produced by the Project, which is time consuming and, therefore, not readily available for day-to day management decision making. Discussions with USP’s finance department revealed that the project now has access to the recently developed Management Information System of USP, which is expected to enhance PRIDE project management.

Non-eligible costs from the EU grant i.e. purchases that do not comply with the ACP/EU rules of origin, expenditure for Tokelau a non-ACP/EU country and technical assistance with non ACP/EU Nationalities have been charged only to NZAID. As an example, the salary of the the Information Specialist (Australian) has been charged to NZAID. With effect from 1 February 2006, however, revised EU provisions now allow CROP to engage individuals and to procure supplies and materials according to their own rules i.e. with no restriction to procure services and supplies from ACP/EU member states, if the internal rules of the CROP allow otherwise.

The MTE notes that PRIDE has applied the PIFS per diem rates on the basis that USP had received approval on this from the RAO in August 2003, and this “exception” is foreseen in USP’s financial rules and regulations. However, the RAO’s approval was given specifically for the EU funded Human Resources Development Programme (8th EDF) which unlike PRIDE (9th EDF) is not implemented under a Contribution Agreement arrangement. In the case of PRIDE, travel and subsistence costs are accepted direct costs, provided they do not exceed those normally borne by USP (Contribution Agreement, Annex 11, Article 14.2).

¹⁴ Source: on-line accounting system report from EU.

5.12 Selection process for technical assistance

USP's selection committee (in which donors have participated) have recruited the long-term technical assistance for PRIDE using USP's terms and conditions, rules and regulations. Refer to section 5.11 above on the Projects approach to the ACP/EU nationality rule.

The Project recruits short-term technical assistance using a number of selection methods. The consultants for the monitoring and evaluation framework were selected from a shortlist after publishing an expression of interest. In some cases, consultants were recruited after recommendation by participating countries and/or were identified by the Project team directly.

From the questionnaire response received, there is strong emphasis from participating countries that the Project must continue to seek their recommendation on the recruitment of consultants for the implementation of in-country activities. EDF procedures support this consultation process. However procurement of services (supplies and works) is also based on clear competition rules. Therefore, while countries should continue to recommend consultants, the Project must request countries or propose to countries a shortlist of at least 3 consultants when the costs of consultancies are above approximately 10,000 FJD (5,000 Euro).

The Project and USP emphasises the use of regional consultants, which supports one of the key result areas of the PRIDE and has kept costs down.

Action 15: USP to review selection process used by the Project and redress. Documentation and recording of the selection process to be improved to ensure transparency and prudent financial management by the Project.

5.13 Financial and Administrative Procedures for sub projects

The Project provides a choice from the following three options (in order of preference by the Project) for sending funds to countries for the implementation of in-country sub-projects:

- An account for the Ministry of Education is opened at USP Centre as per procedures and conditions detailed in the USP Financial Procedures Manual.
- Independent account established with the Treasury Department for the sole purpose of implementing PRIDE-funded projects.
- Independent Ministry of Education Imprest account opened for the sole purpose of implementing PRIDE-funded projects

In 2004, under result area 2, PRIDE established an application process for sub-project funding, which includes the selection criteria and application format. However, the Project did not establish detailed guidelines for the draw down of funds sent directly to the Ministries of Finance or to the Ministries of Education. The MTE team notes that some general financial and administrative procedures are contained in the MOU's signed by 14 participating countries.

The MTE team noted two draft guidelines (undated) prepared by the Project for options 2 and 3 above, which have yet to be finalised and sent to the participating countries. Acquittals for expenses should be made on the provision of original supporting documents and the Project must ensure that tendering rules take into full consideration the EDF guidelines on competition.

From questionnaire responses received it is evident that varying types of advance payments have been made to the countries, which have contributed to the general lack of financial monitoring by the Project. The MTE team notes that in some cases 100% advance has been made, while in others, annual instalments have been set. In one case funding is being provided in the form of reimbursement of expenses incurred in the country.

Action 16: financial and administrative procedures manuals for the management of in-country sub-projects should be in place as a matter of high priority.

5.14 Project Management Capacity

Currently, the Project Accountant reports to the Pride Manager. At the time of the MTE, the Finance Department of USP had plans for the Project Accountant to also have a line reporting responsibility to the Finance Manager at the Faculty of Arts and Law, then becoming under the overall supervision of the USP's Director of Finance. This is a positive development to ensure a professional accounting set up is maintained by USP for the Project.

5.15 Internal Monitoring and Evaluation

The 2004 AWP planned to develop an internal project monitoring strategy. However, no result was reported on this activity in the 2004 and 2005 Annual Reports and was still outstanding at the time of the MTE. It is clear that an internal M&E strategy should have been in place at the start of the project as a vital management tool for use by all stakeholders.

Participating countries have commented on the absence of monitoring of national sub-projects by the Project team. The MTE team noted that no financial report on spending by individual sub-projects or by country was compiled by the Project team. Subsequently, a report was prepared by the Project on the request of the MTE team.

Without a monitoring and evaluation plan in place, successes as well as shortcomings do not seem to have been identified quickly for action by the Project. The project has not displayed the characteristics of an adaptive management, which it must embrace for the remaining life of the Project.

Action 17: As foreseen in 2004, develop as a matter of high priority an internal project monitoring plan, select key indicators (progress, coverage and impact indicators) and establish periodic targets that are useful for their planning, management and communication about progress.

ISSUES

During the evaluation process a number of issues arose. Some of these impact directly on the ability of the project to deliver results as required within the log frame. Others, while having less direct impact, may provide an opportunity to enhance results. The issues are discussed below.

6.1 Relationship between PRIDE and USP

The relationship of the PRIDE Management team with USP, and particularly with IOE, is a concern. The members of the PRIDE team are contracted staff of the IOE and the Project is administered by IOE. The skills and knowledge of the PRIDE team enhance the capacity of the IOE to provide advice and guidance in the region. As well the skills and expertise available to the PRIDE Project should be enhanced through the use of other staff of IOE.

However these benefits are not occurring as many people see PRIDE as independent of IOE. The latest Annual Report of the IOE does not record PRIDE staff as part of the staff of the IOE and does not list PRIDE as one of the projects administered by IOE. At times it is viewed as an organisation in its own right, rather than a project. There have been occasions when it has been regarded as a donor. PRIDE tends to be seen as being at USP rather than being part of USP.

The reasons for the dislocation of PRIDE and the IOE have been a mixture of personal and philosophical differences and pragmatic decisions to overcome immediate problems. Added to this are some salary disparities that cause dissatisfaction. Allocating blame is of little value but it is important that the issues are resolved. One of the outputs of Result Area 3 for the Project is to significantly strengthen the capacity of IOE. Recently steps have been taken by the university and by the Project team to develop working partnerships. These are small steps but do indicate a willingness by both parties to work together. The Review team discussed the issues with all parties and expressed its view that the relationship needs significant improvement if the positive outcomes being achieved by PRIDE in the region are to be sustained beyond the life of the project. All agreed that the present situation was unsatisfactory and needed resolution.

USP is undertaking a substantive restructuring. It is inappropriate for the Review team to try to influence the way in which the university should manage its affairs and so no advice is given in this report with respect as to how the restructuring should be done to ensure a better relationship between the PRIDE project and the IOE. However, the review team was assured that the IOE will be strengthened within the restructuring and that an effective relationship between PRIDE and IOE will be developed. After our discussions the Review team have confidence that a satisfactory solution was being planned and would be implemented.

6.2 Governance and Management

The review team suggests that the committee structure related to the PRIDE Project has the potential for governance/management complications. The current structure does not

effectively separate management from governance. The Project Steering Committee (PSC) is the main governance committee. As it meets infrequently, the Project Monitoring Committee (PMC) carries much of the governance role. However, the PMC is also the only committee associated with PRIDE within the university and as such is a management committee. It is inappropriate that representatives of the donors and the PIFS sit on a management committee and are able to contribute to discussions which are rightfully those of the university. Many of the issues between the PRIDE team and the university should have been dealt with in-house, rather than at the PMC.

Action 18: USP, the PIFS and Donors explore options to separate governance and management

6.3 Under-spending of Budget

Concern has been expressed that the project expenditure is considerably less than was originally planned. In particular, the expenditure on sub-projects is low. The reason for the under-expenditure is difficult to determine and there is likely to be more than one contributing factor. Original estimates may have been too high and based on examples that were inappropriate for the Pacific. It has been suggested that the initial planning was based on the funding to be given by the European Union and that when the NZAID funds were added, no adjustment was made to the expected outcomes. The project team may have been able to work more economically and achieve more savings than was expected. The review team have not located any documentation that shows any initial planning and budgeting for the project that links to the resources available. Whatever is the reason, the project has a greater level of funds to spend than anticipated in the second half of its life. Planning needs to be undertaken to ensure effective use of the resource.

6.4 Sub-projects

Criteria for sub-projects have been developed and are available to countries when preparing a sub-project proposal. There are parallel criteria for approval when a sub-project is being considered. Proposals are considered and approval or rejection determined by the Director or one of the Education Officers within the team. The work is shared to reduce the load.

It has been suggested that some proposals have been rejected unfairly. This is difficult to substantiate but the fact that the concern exists suggests that either criteria may not be fully understood by developers or that approval is not consistent. The process of individual staff within the project team making the decision puts the staff member at risk of being accused of unfair or inappropriate practice.

One solution advocated was that selection be undertaken by the Project Steering Committee. However, as this committee meets only once or twice a year, there would be too much delay in implementation. Proposals need to be considered soon after being received and an answer given in as short a time as possible. This is the reason for the current system.

It would be to the benefit of both the project team and the country seeking approval for a sub-project if a neutral and quick process could be developed. Consideration should be given to a small, Suva based panel that could be used for selection purposes. It could be convened when a proposal was received, or meet on a monthly basis if a number of proposals were forthcoming. A panel of three with a fourth member being one of the project team would seem appropriate. Panel members could be chosen from the IOE, USP School of Education, SPBEA or other suitable education organisation.

Action 19: an approval strategy for sub-projects be developed that is neutral, timely and fair to all parties.

6.5 Allocation of Funds for Sub-projects

Another area of concern with respect to sub-projects is the allocation of resources. This is done on a pro rata basis using a formula which takes a number of factors into account. The minutes of the Project Steering Committee Meeting of 2004 shows that approval for the following allocation was granted, based on a recommendation received from a meeting of the NPCs. The formula for the distribution of funds is for 70% to be distributed amongst the 15 countries at 3 levels:

- 13.33% each for the two large countries (Fiji, PNG)
- 6.67% each for the nine medium size countries
- 3.33% each for the four small countries (Nauru, Niue, Tokelau, Tuvalu)

The remaining 30% of the funds were to be allocated for sub-projects on a needs basis.

Donors have indicated that the original intention was for the funds to be used on a needs basis. To date some countries have used all of the funds allocated to them while others have not. Most have under spent, resulting in the current large surplus.

The Project Steering Committee needs to give serious thought to this issue to ensure that the available resources are used effectively over the second half of the project. As indicated above, some countries may not need the money that has been allocated to them as they have alternative sources of funds. Others may not have the capability of implementing sufficient sub-projects to use the funds allocated. However, others may be able to implement projects if given support.

Moving to a needs based use of the funds needs careful thought. How is need to be defined? A needs based method of allocating would introduce an element of competition and place a need to determine priorities if the resource became better used than has been the case. This would add a significant and new dimension to the selection process. Within a country, setting priorities is often not easy but can be done. Between countries it would be a very difficult task.

Another approach is to use a demand based allocation – support all sub-projects that meet the criteria as they arise, regardless of the country. Again, this has some issues associated with it as countries that are larger or have a smaller resource capacity and/or capability could be disadvantaged. Within this option is for those with the greatest capacity to be allowed to undertake all the projects that they can, making maximum use of funds.

Those countries with less capability could have more dependence placed on bilateral arrangements within which additional technical support could be provided.

Another option could be to have some money allocated to each country and have a second component that is held as a contestable pool. This would ensure that all countries can implement some projects and ensure that the resource is fully utilised. A country that has spent less over the life of the project could be given priority in the use of contestable pool money if selection between countries became difficult.

There will be other options that can be explored. To ensure that all countries can benefit to the best extent possible, the Project Steering Committee should give serious thought to this issue. The allocation of resources and developing strategies to assist those countries that have not made good use of the sub-project funding (see earlier recommendation) should be considered together.

Action 20: the PSC reconsider the allocation of funding for sub-projects to ensure that all countries obtain maximum benefit and that those with more limited capability are assisted to take advantage of the funding.

6.6 National Project Coordinators

The Project relies heavily on NPCs – the coordinators for each country. It is essential that PRIDE has an official within a Ministry of Education with whom to interact. Such a contact is also important from the perspective of the country if the maximum benefit is to be gained from the Project. There are two key features to be considered when making an appointment of the NPC. The first is that the person should have sufficient seniority and experience within the Ministry to command respect from colleagues and to know and understand the culture and protocols. The second is that the NPC must be given sufficient time to undertake the requirements of the position. There were comments made during interviews with countries that indicate that lack of time of the NPC, due to other responsibilities, may be one of the factors that has resulted in some countries making less use of the resources from PRIDE than might have been expected.

Ideas for alternatives to the NPCs were sought during discussions but none were made. On more than one occasion it was suggested that PRIDE resources be used to pay for an assistant to the NPC to reduce the workload conflict. That has been raised at PSC level and rejected as not fitting within the PRIDE protocols. Such a move would be funding a recurrent salary and is not recommended. Further, it is adding to the establishment of the public service of a country and that has implications and issues which a project such as PRIDE should not create. It might be considered within a sub-project for an administrator or co-ordinator to be appointed and paid for within sub-project funding if it can be demonstrated that the sub-project would be at risk without such a person.

The review team suggest that it is not unreasonable for a country to provide the necessary support to their NPC as part of their commitment to participation in PRIDE and to ensure that they obtain the maximum benefit. This could be by adjusting the workload of the

NPC to provide sufficient time for the PRIDE work or to provide the NPC with an assistant.

Action 21: all countries ensure that their NPC has the experience and status required to be able to lead the PRIDE work within the country and that sufficient time and other support be made available to the NPC to ensure that the benefits of the project can be maximised.

6.7 Relationship of Pride Project to other projects and organisations

There are a number of organisations that undertake projects or developments that overlap with the PRIDE Project. These include UNESCO, UNICEF, SPBEA, IOE, NGOs and bilateral arrangements. An initiative has been taken by SPBEA to have organisations discuss their proposed work plans in order to minimise duplication and encourage the sharing of resources. The review team sees the participation of IOE through the PRIDE management team in this as not only positive but essential.

Requests have been made relating to PRIDE providing funding support to others. Consideration should be given to PRIDE funds being used where it can be clearly shown that such expenditure would meet the conditions of the PRIDE Financing Agreement. It would need to be demonstrated that the funds were going to a country, and for a specific activity related to basic education. PRIDE funds should not be provided to support another project or an organisation to carry out its work.

6.8 Monitoring and evaluation

In the logframe, there is a requirement under Result Area 3 to have effective monitoring and evaluation systems that are functional at national and regional levels by end 2006. Work is currently being undertaken by a consultant to develop a monitoring and evaluation strategy. A draft of the report is to be presented before the end of September 2006. This will be discussed by NPCs and the Project Steering Committee before a final report is prepared.

With hindsight it could be considered a flaw in the original project design that this work was not carried out earlier. In fact, the financing agreement had monitoring and evaluation strategies to be developed in the initial phase of the Project but this was omitted in the Logframe. Aspects of the work of the Project to date could have been enhanced by more rigorous monitoring and evaluation. Greater focus should be placed on evaluating the work of the Project and sub-projects during the second phase than has been the case up to now. This is essential to ensure outputs are sustainable beyond the life of the project. The monitoring and evaluation strategy would be enhanced by further specification of indicators against the activities, and in particular those involving the sub-projects. Data needs to be gathered to ensure that costs effectiveness can be measured. No such data is currently available.

6.9 Donor co-ordination

Assisting countries with donor co-ordination is a requirement under Result 2. A detailed comment on this has been provided in Section 4.6 of this report. The following comment

is given in addition to those in Section 4.6 and relates to potential conflict between PRIDE and other donor projects and activities.

Many donors have bilateral aid programmes in education with the potential to overlap with the work of PRIDE. For example, AusAID has a large education project in Fiji. NZAID and the EU have a SWAp with Solomon Islands. There are both existing and potential tensions between the PRIDE project and other education projects in the region. While the PRIDE team is taking initiatives to work with others and to attempt to assist countries with donor co-ordination, donors need to consider impacts as they plan new programmes with countries.

6.10 Future Directions

It is likely, based on activities and expenditure to date, that significant resources will remain at the planned end of the project. Further, the IOE should have considerable expertise within its staff to be able to continue with ongoing advice and support to the region. However, some of those staff will be on fixed-term contracts, ending when the project ends.

Thought should be given to how both the human and financial resources can be most effectively used beyond the life of the current project. While it is too early for this planning to be done with any confidence, some key points for consideration can be identified. The IOE of USP is likely to be the best organisation to manage any future work but that will be dependent on USP strengthening the IOE and managing the relationship with the PRIDE project more effectively than at present. As indicated above, the MTE team is confident that this will occur.

In developing TORs for any extension of PRIDE or for a new project, attention should be given to the achievements of the PRIDE project in each country. Already there are marked differences between countries in the extent of development and implementation of their strategic plans and progress in basic education. This will be more pronounced at the end of the current project. The focus will probably need to be national or sub-regional, rather than regional.

Consideration should also be given to other projects and bi-lateral arrangements as there is a need to reduce potential overlap and duplication of resources. Donor co-ordination will be essential.

Action 22: 12 months before the end of the PRIDE project, work is commissioned to plan the best way to sustain the gains made by the project and to continue to provide advice and support to the region.

7 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Real satisfaction can be taken in the achievements of the PRIDE project to date. In gathering data from the countries involved through the questionnaire and telephone and face-to-face discussions, there has been unanimous agreement that PRIDE has provided substantial benefits and that, for many, their progress was dependent to a significant degree on the support provided through the project. All staff of the PRIDE team are regarded by those that they work with in member countries as being professional, approachable and competent to provide the support being sought. Progress has been made in each of the three result areas required by the Financing Agreement and, while some expectations of people may not have been realised, in large measure the TORs have been met. The project is well within its overall budget, which has led to some concern about the achievements to date, but the reasons for the under-expenditure is more complex than at first appears.

The MTE has identified ways in which the project could be enhanced. These relate to both the three result areas and to financial management. As well there are a number of issues that have emerged that require resolution if the maximum benefit is to be realised.

It has become evident during the MTE that the countries involved in the project are at different stages of development, have differing capability to undertake the next steps in their development and have distinct needs that will not be met by a regional approach. The Project should focus more closely on sub-regions and place a greater effort on working with each country individually.

It has been noted from discussions with officials and from country responses to questionnaires that there are a variety of reasons as to why, for example, some countries have done little in the way of implementation of strategic plans through sub-projects. The MTE has not had sufficient time to work in detail with each country to try to make individual recommendations and it is unlikely that ideas based on the limited information and in the timeframe available could be accepted with confidence.

The MTE team have made a series of recommendations that it is believed will assist the PRIDE Project. The recommendations propose major actions that should be taken to improve outcomes and a number of smaller actions that should ensure compliance and increase efficiency.

The major actions necessary include:

- a. the establishment of monitoring and evaluation strategies for the Project and its subprojects
- b. a comprehensive review of the strategic plans of countries to measure
- c. consistency with benchmarks
- d. consistency with FBEAP
- e. effectiveness and realism of budgeting

- i. Based on the review of the strategic plans (2 above), work with each country to ensure the development of an implementation plan is completed and sub-projects identified
- ii. Work with each country to identify barriers to implementation and assist with actions to remove the barriers

The actions outlined above require a shift in emphasis for PRIDE from a regional to a national approach. There may be opportunities for sub-regional actions.

Recommendations:

The following recommendations have been made to give guidance as to the next phase of the Project. Each recommendation incorporates one or more of the Actions given in the report. They have been organised under the relevant organisation responsible for actioning.

For the PRIDE Governance and Management Structures

Recommendation 1: that effective monitoring and evaluation strategies for all aspects of the PRIDE Project be put in place immediately
(Actions 1, 10, 17)

Recommendation 2: that options be explored that will separate governance and operations
(Action 18)

Recommendation 3: that consideration be given to defining the requirement related to donor harmonisation
(Action 5)

For the PRIDE Project Team

Recommendation 4: that the Project's work to date related to strategic planning be reviewed in order to inform decision making for future work related to Result Area 1
(Actions 2, 3)

Recommendation 5: that PRIDE review its strategy related to regional workshops and other policy issues, including relationships with regional activities carried out by other projects and organisations

Recommendation 6: that issues related to sub-projects be examined to improve planning and implementation of sub-projects for all countries
(Actions 6, 19, 20)

Recommendation 7: that steps be taken to improve financial planning, management and accountability
(Actions 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17)

For Individual Countries

Recommendation 8: that all countries ensure that their NPC has the experience and status required to lead the PRIDE work within the country and that sufficient time and other support is made available to the NPC to ensure that the benefits of the project can be maximised

(Action 21)

For Donors

Recommendation 9: that 12 months before the end of the PRIDE project, work is commissioned to plan the best way to sustain the gains made by the project and to continue to provide advice and support to the region.

(Action 22)

