



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

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FORUM EDUCATION MINISTERS' MEETING

Nuku'alofa, Tonga

24-26 March 2009

SESSION TWO

**REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE FORUM BASIC EDUCATION ACTION
PLAN AND ASSOCIATED REGIONAL PROCESSES**

This report was prepared by a team of consultants, contracted to the Forum Secretariat.



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Summary brief

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to present the findings of the review of the Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP) and associated regional processes, which was mandated by the 2007 Forum Education Ministers Meeting.

Background

2. At their 2007 meeting, Education Ministers noted that the FBEAP was now seven years in existence and that it was timely to undertake a thorough review of the contents of the Plan and its relevance to the educational priorities expressed by member countries.
3. Ministers endorsed a full evaluation of the FBEAP in 2008 that would result in a revised and consolidated action plan; including a review of the Education Ministerial meeting process; and options for an appropriate regional support mechanism for education.
4. A comprehensive Terms of Reference was developed and the review was undertaken in 2008 by a team of independent consultants. It was managed by the Forum Secretariat and funded by NZAID.

Key issues

5. A key component of the review was a detailed analysis of the educational priorities and challenges facing Forum Island Countries (FICs). This provides the context for the Review. While recognising the differences among FICs, significant commonalities were found in the broad priorities for and challenges facing education.
6. The Review was asked to i) assess the continued validity and relevance of FBEAP; ii) assess how FBEAP and related mechanisms have facilitated member countries achieving

EFA and MDG goals; iii) assess the impact of FBEAP on traditionally marginalised groups and iv) assess whether FBEAP and its related mechanisms have facilitated capacity building at national level.

7. The Review found that there was limited knowledge of FBEAP, its purpose, its context, its specific scope and coverage across the region. Despite current limited knowledge and usage, countries and regional partners indicated their support and need for a regional education plan or framework.

8. In terms of a revised document the Review supports the need for a refreshed Vision statement. It is essential that the vision adopted has strong ownership amongst member countries.

9. The review undertook a high level impact assessment of the impact of PRIDE. This provides important background context for the analysis of future regional initiatives to support Pacific education. The review came to two overall findings. First, the focus and energy of PRIDE has been greater at the national and sub-project level than at regional level; and second the impact at national level has varied significantly between countries.

10. The review conducted an analysis of the value of the Forum Education Ministerial Meeting process. It found that the core business of FEdMM has been monitoring the implementation of FBEAP as the regional policy framework for education and PRIDE as the main vehicle for implementation. In addition to the monitoring of FBEAP and PRIDE and the Ministers' retreat, the FEdMM agenda has involved the Ministers considering a number of key cross-cutting themes and strategies in respect of basic education and other sub-sectors.

11. Almost all those consulted felt that FEdMM is a worthwhile process and should be continued. At the same time there emerged a strong consensus around aspects of the process that could be improved with an expected positive impact on achievement of the stated objectives. The aspects of the process most valued by Ministers and country officials were the opportunity to be a part of a regional benchmarking process and the opportunity provided through the FEdMM to broaden knowledge of regional and global education issues and developments. A well structured FEdMM process can contribute significantly to capacity building and strengthening of educational leadership within the region. The dialogue with other countries and development partners and exposure to issues in a regional/international context afforded through the FEdMM can contribute significantly to improved knowledge and strategy at country level.

Regional support for Education

12. National governments of Pacific Island countries have come to rely on support and expertise of regional organisations and providers of technical assistance and support in education. At the same time, the review found that countries were seeking improved coordination and harmonisation of such technical assistance. While significant harmonisation efforts are already underway among a number of development partners and regional agencies, such as the CROP agencies, more is desired.

Options for a future Regional initiative to Support Pacific Education

13. At the seventh FEdMM in Auckland 2007 Ministers authorised the PIFS to commence planning and scoping for a future regional initiative to follow on from PRIDE when it concludes at the end of 2009. The review has developed a range of options for consideration by Ministers of such a future regional initiative. Both the stakeholder consultations and the analysis undertaken for the Review confirm the need for further regional efforts to follow on from the PRIDE project. The review has taken the view that a long term perspective is needed and that a need will continue to exist for regional programmes of support for Pacific education for at least the next 10 to 20 years.

Recommendations from the Review

14. Ministers may wish to consider the following recommendations:
(The paragraph reference in the report is included with each reference.)
- i. The Review supports the need for a refreshed Vision statement in a revised regional plan. Suggested new Vision: **‘Quality Basic Education for All in Pacific Island countries’** has the support of the Review as it has the advantage of clarity, simplicity and it has a clear link to the EFA and Millennium Development goals. (para. 3.14)
 - ii. The Review recommends that the revised regional education plan be known as the Pacific Education Development Framework (PEDF).(para 3.42)
 - iii. The Review recommends that the FEdMM continue to meet every 12 to 18 months (para 5.22)
 - iv. The Review recommends that the meeting of Pacific heads of Education Systems be given the role of screening items for the FEdMM agenda. (para 5.22)
 - v. The Review recommends that the PIFS develop an Action Register for effective follow-up and monitoring of FEdMM decisions. (para 5.22)
 - vi. The Review recommends that the Ministerial retreat be formalised as a part of the FEdMM with appropriate time allocated to it. (para 5.22)
 - vii. The Review recommends that arrangements for Chairing the FEdMM be reviewed. (para 5.19)
 - viii. Three models for a future regional initiative, A, B C are presented for consideration of Ministers. The third model C is a ‘hybrid’ model incorporating strengths of each of the first two models. The Review recommends that Ministers consider each of the three models with a view to giving direction based on these models for a future regional initiative to follow on from PRIDE. (para. 7.12)

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Suva
3 March 2009

Review of

The Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP)

January 2009

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ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BE	Basic Education
CCT	Cross-cutting theme
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CROP	Council Of Regional Agencies in the Pacific
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information Systems
EU	European Union
FBEAP	Forum Basic Education Action Plan
FEdMM	Forum Education Ministerial Meeting
GAR	Gross Admission Rate
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HRD	Human Resource Development
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IE	Inclusive Education
ISE	In-service Education
KRA	Key Result Area
MDA	Mid decade Assessment
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MEF	Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
MTR	Mid term review
NAR	Net Admission Rate

NER	Net Enrolment Rate
NOPE	Network of Pacific Educators
NPC	National Project Coordinator
PATE	Pacific Association for Teacher Education
PEDF	Pacific Education Development Framework
PIC	Pacific Island Country
PIF	Pacific Islands Forum
PIFS	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
PILL	Pacific Islands Literacy Levels
PREL	Pacific Resources for Education and Learning
PRIDE	Pacific Regional Initiative for Delivery of Education
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands
RAO	Regional Authorising Officer
RIF	Regional Institutional Framework
RPEI	Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative
RQR	Regional Qualifications Register
SGA	System Governance and Administration
SIS	Small Island State
SPBEA	South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
SPELL	Samoa Primary Education Literacy Levels
SWAp	Sector wide approach
STAKI	Standardise Testing for Achievement in Kiribati
TA	Technical Assistance
TESIP	Tonga Education Sector Improvement Programme
TOR	Terms of Reference

TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UBE	Universal Basic Education
USP	University of the South Pacific
UPE	Universal Primary Education
VESS	Vanuatu Education Sector Strategy
WHO	World Health Organisation

Executive Summary

At their last meeting (Auckland, November 2007) the Education Ministers decided that, given the seven years since FBEAP was originally endorsed by Ministers, a comprehensive evaluation should be undertaken of FBEAP during 2008. A review of FBEAP during 2008 was also seen as being able to contribute constructively to the Pacific Plan which is also being reviewed in 2008.

The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) was tasked by the Ministers to manage the Review process for which an independent group of consultants was engaged. The objective of the Review is to provide an analysis of the utility and impact of FBEAP including its associated processes such as PRIDE and the FEEdMM.

Funding for the Review was provided by NZAID. Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) enabled the participation of Dr Hilda Heine in the Review team. Following an inception mission in June 2008 and preparation of a work plan, a comprehensive programme of regional and country consultations was undertaken over the period mid-June to mid-August 2008. Each of the Forum Island countries was visited by the Review team and discussions were held with over 160 stakeholders at policy/strategy, implementation and community levels. This consultation process has generated a solid appreciation and knowledge of the purpose and importance of the review within the region and also a sense of ownership of the analyses and main conclusions.

A key aspect of the Review has been an in-depth analysis and research of the recent relevant literature and documents addressing education in the Pacific region at both country and regional levels.

The Team Leader of the Review and the Social Policy Adviser from PIFS met with the Heads of Pacific Education Systems at their meeting in October 2008. An in-depth discussion was held on the key issues and findings from the review particularly in respect of the FBEAP and the way forward. In Chapter Seven of the report a number of models are presented for consideration by Education Ministers. The models which arose out of the September workshop and the October meeting of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) attempt to capture the salient features of the spectrum of views in terms of the most appropriate way of supporting Pacific education at the regional level in the future.

Challenges and Priorities

A key component of the Review has been a detailed analysis of the educational priorities and challenges facing Forum Island countries.

The contextual conditions for the education sector in terms of history, geography, demography and economic stages of development vary considerably across the 15 countries that have been the subject of the Review. However, the Review has found significant commonality in the broad **priorities** for education sector development articulated by each country. In general terms these priorities as expressed in country national development plans,

and education sector strategic plans are clustered around the following policy themes: quality and relevance, access, equity of opportunity, and management and efficiency of resources.

The **challenges** facing the education system in addressing these priorities are partly internal and partly external to the education sector. One of the major challenges facing every country is the issue of securing sustainable resources to underpin quality and expansion of the education sector. Education is a major component of each nation's economy, and finance and provision is sourced primarily from the public sector. The ability of the public purse to provide the necessary resources is very much based on the economic health of the countries and specifically the rate of economic growth. The ability of systems to diversify their sources of finance for education is also critically dependent in the long term on achieving sustained increases in the rate of economic growth.

The last decade has seen a significant rise in the amount of international labour mobility particularly as a consequence of increasing skills shortages in specific sectors in developed economies. This increased mobility of labour is a relatively new challenge for Pacific Island country education and training systems.

One of the most pressing external challenges facing the education systems in Forum Island countries is the demographic context. The patterns of demographic change vary significantly across the region throwing up a number of different challenges. The Melanesian countries of PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are all still experiencing **high rates of population growth**. At the other extreme, Cook Islands, Niue and Palau are experiencing **population decline** which generates a major challenge for these systems given the very small population of the countries. These countries (along with countries such as Tonga, Tuvalu and Fiji) are experiencing significant loss of population in the outer islands, in some cases to the point where traditional models of provision of education are becoming non-viable. Increasingly the challenge is to explore the potential of alternative modes of delivery to ensure equitable provision to those affected.

The **increasing drift of population from outer islands** and from remote rural communities and villages to the towns and urban areas is a major challenge in some form in almost all Pacific island countries. The degree of **urbanisation** in the Pacific is already significant. The immediate impact of increased urbanisation (generally unplanned) is higher population density, and more intensive utilisation of social and physical infrastructure leading to overcrowding of facilities such as schools. However, the impacts are much broader and research undertaken by SPC has shown that the growth of unplanned informal or squatter settlements in the urban centres is associated with rising unemployment, increased levels of poverty, hardship, alcohol and substance abuse and urban crime, increased incidence of gender-based violence, and increase incidence of sexually transmitted diseases (STIs) including HIV and AIDS and other related social issues. Clearly, increased urbanisation in recent years is generating major challenges for education providers in terms of quality and equity in education. Closely associated with urbanisation is the **growing incidence of poverty** in the Pacific. With respect to education, this increased poverty, not just in the urban settlements but also in rural areas, is generating a new marginalised group, for whom

traditional service delivery strategies may not be effective. Many countries have enjoyed high rates of access to education but this is in danger of slipping in the face of increasing poverty as children from poor families tend to have poor attendance rates. This is a key emerging challenge for the education systems.

The **geography of the Pacific and the physical environment** continue to generate a whole range of challenges outside the control of the education systems. Many of these challenges are logistical in nature associated with poor or very limited physical infrastructure in remote communities, high costs associated with maintaining and developing such infrastructure, and irregular shipping schedules to remote islands presenting an ongoing challenge.

The influence of the colonial legacies is still far-reaching in the education systems of all countries affecting curriculum, governance, organisation structures and also legislation.

There are major health issues in the Pacific which are generating significant challenges for education systems. The most challenging of these issues is **the spread of HIV AND AIDS** where in PNG it is estimated that 5% of the teaching force is infected. Indeed the spread of HIV and AIDS is one of the most pressing development challenges in PNG and potentially in other Pacific countries and is one that the education system needs to address openly.

The research undertaken by the Review has revealed that despite the substantial differences in social, historical, demographic and economic contexts the 15 Pacific Island Countries (PICs) are experiencing many of the same challenges and have identified very similar priorities for further development of their education sectors. All of the countries are experiencing **access** challenges of some sort. In the case of PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu the challenges are still substantial at the level of compulsory education, with substantial numbers of children not enrolled in school and many others dropping out before completing primary school. The Polynesian and Micronesian countries have achieved close to universal primary education but all have access issues at secondary level particularly for children in remote areas. All countries in the region have access challenges in the ECCE sector and all countries (with exception of the three northern countries) have major gaps in terms of providing access for children and youth with disabilities.

All countries have major challenges in terms of **quality** of education currently provided. While substantial progress has been made in access (as measured across a range of indicators) the same cannot be said with regard to quality of education. The Review has found that there is little valid and reliable data in the region on quality measures for education. However the data that does exist, particularly data from literacy and numeracy tests in primary education, and also the considered views of professionals at country level and in technical agencies working in the region, paints a picture of stagnating quality or even regression. This is probably the major challenge in Pacific education as it affects almost all countries. A recent study on Pacific education sector performance conducted by the World Bank came to the conclusion that the early promise of improved access and quality that was evident in the 1990s had stalled by the turn of the century.

Consultations conducted during the Review were unanimous in the view that the critical input in quality of education in the Pacific is teacher quality. While several countries (Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Palau, RMI, FSM) have considerable challenges in terms of qualifications and certification of their teachers, even those countries with teacher workforces in which close to all teachers are qualified (PNG, Samoa, Fiji), have critical challenges in terms of teacher and head teacher/school principal competence. Key priorities for many countries in addressing this challenge are the development of teacher and principal accountability frameworks and standards and development of ongoing and sustainable programmes for in-service training of teachers and school leaders.

The poor state of the physical learning environment of schools and classrooms including textbooks, classroom learning materials, libraries, ICT tools and the lack of maintenance of school buildings and infrastructure is a challenge that all countries are facing. This challenge is linked to the issue of sustainable financing of education systems and the structure of education outlays in which for most systems salaries represent over 90% of recurrent budgets.

Ensuring that the education delivered, particularly the curriculum taught in schools, is meaningful and relevant to an increasingly diverse student population is another critical challenge. Comprehensive curriculum review and redevelopment (including development of curriculum and assessment frameworks) is one of the top priorities in current educational plans in more than half of the countries. Central to these reviews is the emphasis being placed on language and culture and the rethinking of education philosophy, policy and practice and in this process shedding residual negative legacies of the colonial period.

With respect to equity, the challenges being addressed are very much grounded in the specific Pacific context. Under representation of girls remains a challenge in the Melanesian countries although gaps are generally closing. In most of the other Pacific countries close to gender parity has been achieved in compulsory education. Females are under-represented in TVET enrolments in all systems and in a number of countries in upper secondary education. When educational outcomes are considered most PICs are being challenged by boys' underachievement.

Apart from the very small single island states of Nauru and Niue, ensuring equitable provision of quality education to outer islands and remote rural communities is a major challenge across the region particularly where population in these communities is falling and drifting to the urban centres. Out-of-school youth is another major challenge with these young people constituting a growing marginalised group across the system. Countries have been struggling with responding to this challenge in terms of providing some meaningful 'second-chance' learning opportunities. All countries are grappling with the increasing array of issue and challenges affecting youth including violence, substance abuse, teenage pregnancies and alienation.

Since FBEAP 2001 there has certainly been greater advocacy and consideration given in education plans, policies and budgets to the needs of children and youth with disabilities.

However all systems are far removed from providing an equitable educational provision to these young people.

Another equity challenge affecting a number of countries (Tonga, FSM, RMI & Palau in particular) is the ‘public/private’ divide in terms of resources and opportunities.

All countries have major capacity gaps in their systems that are holding them back in responding to the access, quality and equity challenges that have been documented in the review.

Many countries (PNG, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Kiribati, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Cook Islands) have explicit capacity building objectives in their key recent and current programs of bilateral support. And building capacity in educational planning and implementation is the purpose of the regionally funded PRIDE project in which all PICs are involved.

FBEAP: its impact and continuing validity

The Review was asked to i) assess the continued validity and relevance of FBEAP; ii) assess how FBEAP and related mechanisms have facilitated member countries achieving EFA and MDG goals; iii) assess the impact of FBEAP on traditionally marginalised groups and iv) assess whether FBEAP and its related mechanisms have facilitated capacity building at national level.

The Review has found that there is limited knowledge of FBEAP, its purpose, its context, its specific scope and coverage across the region. Despite current limited knowledge and usage, countries and regional partners have indicated in the Review their support and need for a regional education plan or framework.

In terms of a revised document the Review supports the need for a refreshed Vision statement. It is essential that the vision adopted has strong ownership amongst member countries. The Review contains some options and a recommendation for a new vision statement for consideration by countries.

The specific needs, challenges, priorities and strategies identified in FBEAP 2001, understandably were shaped by the policy and planning context in the region at that time. The revised regional plan needs to be more than a consolidation of existing content. The plan also needs to be refreshed to ensure that it addresses current needs and challenges across the region. The Review has undertaken some background research into the evolution of the term Basic Education (BE) and its current usage. The OECD Handbook for Internationally Comparative Education Statistics defines BE as the first nine years of schooling or primary education plus lower secondary education. Within UNESCO, BE has tended to become a synonym for the EFA agenda. Forum Island Countries themselves, as with the rest of the world, have a number of differing operating definitions of BE. However most follow the international OECD or UNESCO standards or something very similar.

This issue of the scope of a revised plan or framework was the subject of considerable discussion at the September workshop and the October consultation with Heads of Education

Systems. Arising out of these discussions a consensus was reached on two aspects. First, that Basic Education needs to be defined in broad terms consistent with the common UNESCO usage (allowing countries to interpret/modify as appropriate to their own contexts), and second that a revised regional education plan needs to embrace TVET in the widest sense. Accordingly the Review has determined that the revised plan needs to address two broad agendas: first the EFA or Basic Education agenda which covers the foundation of education; and second the training/employment/economic agenda. This second agenda was the genesis of the original meeting of Education Ministers through the referral from leaders on the basis of recommendations from Economic ministers and has recently been highlighted as a priority for Pacific education and training systems by the Forum Leaders in their Niue communiqué. By explicitly grounding the revised plan in these two agendas the revised plan will be better aligned with the Pacific Plan.

A number of Ministers and CEOs reported that they perceived FBEAP as being unwieldy and not ‘user-friendly’. The Review believes that a revised FBEAP needs to adopt a different style and format more in keeping with plans developed at country level and other regional plans such as the Pacific Plan.

The Review has found that FBEAP has had limited direct impact on the policy and planning agenda in countries due to its limited knowledge and exposure amongst the key actors in the process. At the same time it is difficult to disentangle/apportion the influences of FBEAP and PRIDE in most countries. The PRIDE emphasis on robust strategic and sector planning processes has brought about significant changes at country level, particularly in a number of the SISs.

It also needs to be recognised that the relationship between FBEAP and country level planning is a two-way process with a number of issues brought to the attention of the FEEdMMs and incorporated in the ‘living’ FBEAP as a result of these issues first gaining prominence at country level. In this way for example FBEAP has legitimised emphasis on indigenous languages and culture as well as a Pacific ‘response’ to education. The Review has found the profile across the Forum countries of the needs of children and youth with disabilities and also the ECCE sector has either directly, or indirectly through PRIDE, been raised as a result of FBEAP and the FEEdMM process.

The Review has found that there is strong alignment of country education plans to FBEAP and EFA and MDG goals in respect of education. This is not surprising given that FBEAP 2001 and its subsequent amendments strongly reflect country needs and priorities. The planning benchmarks developed under PRIDE have been influential in facilitating this alignment. Regional mechanisms have worked alongside and complemented national and bilateral programmes and processes in assisting countries achieve their global commitments. The commitment of Pacific countries and development agencies to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness since the launching of both FBEAP and PRIDE has been a most significant development along with the emergence of sector wide approaches (SWAs) as the primary channel for delivering development assistance for the education sector in many of the Forum countries.

In several of the smaller countries FBEAP through PRIDE has directly assisted such countries work towards achieving some of the EFA goals.

The two ongoing mechanisms for implementation of FBEAP have been the Ministers' meeting process (FEEdMM) and PRIDE. However several other activities, large and small, have taken their mandates from FBEAP, two of the key initiatives being the Regional Qualifications Register (RQR) and the ADB funded 'Skilling the Pacific' study.

Analysis of the impact of PRIDE and FEEdMM form the basis of Chapters 4 and 6 of the Review report. In each case the impact on capacity building in specific situations has been significant. The Review has found that the impact of FBEAP on national capacity building within departments and Ministries, independent of its related mechanisms, has been minimal. However on the demand side the Review has detected some evidence of important grassroots capacity building through the profile given to issues and needs such as Inclusive Education (IE) and the ECCE sector.

The Review has found that FBEAP has played an important advocacy function in addressing the needs of marginalised groups in Pacific education. The PRIDE benchmarks for sector planning specifically address the needs of marginalised groups and as a result marginalised groups are an aspect of countries' strategic focus.

The revised document needed to be reborn in a new title. Following extensive discussion, the Heads of systems recommended that the document be referred to as framework, rather than an action plan.

Accordingly the Review recommends that the revised plan be known as the Pacific Education Development Framework (PEDF).

Impact of PRIDE

The review has undertaken a high level impact assessment of the impact of PRIDE. This provides important background context for the analysis of future regional initiatives to support Pacific education. The Review used three strategies to collect information and data regarding PRIDE's impact. The first was a review of documentation that included country strategic plans, PRIDE project reports, country subproject reports, regional workshop agendas and reports, policy frameworks, teaching plans and assessment analyses, student records, and resource texts produced through the regional workshop. The second was the country visits comprising interviews, group discussions, and observation. Interviews and discussions were also conducted with regional agencies and development partners. The third was a questionnaire administered to countries and regional agencies.

The review came to two overall findings. First, the focus and energy of PRIDE has been greater at the national and sub-project level than at regional level; and second the impact at national level has varied significantly between countries. To the Review it is not surprising that a regional project such as PRIDE with a strong national focus involving 15 countries with varying histories, socio-economic, political, geographical contexts, capacities and access to resources will have varying degrees of impact/success.

The review has found that in overall terms PRIDE has strengthened, through support for education strategic plans, the capacity of national education systems in the Pacific to plan basic education. All countries have made significant progress in developing and implementing strategic plans. PRIDE has had direct impact on 11 out of 15 countries' strategic plans through technical support, funding, and capacity strengthening. Completing strategic plans is a significant impact of the project in contexts where previously none existed or countries did not have a unified plan with consensus on activities. This is one of PRIDE's most significant success stories.

The PRIDE project benchmarks document derived from the FBEAP has provided useful common standards against which countries have been able to assess their own strategic plans. The Review has found that the PRIDE Project, in association with the Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative (RPEI), is beginning to influence national level thinking and decisions on the place of local cultures, languages, and epistemologies in education.

PRIDE has been influential in generation of relevant contemporary knowledge regarding Pacific education and sharing this knowledge through capacity building of NPCs on an annual basis, the annual regional workshops, the online Resource Centre (PADDLE), the online discussion site NOPE (Network of Pacific educators), and the publication of outcomes of the regional workshops into the Pacific Education Series. Collectively these activities have been significant. The Review has found that overall the regional workshops are viewed positively for their contribution to professional knowledge sharing, and awareness of the host countries. Also some of the workshops are acknowledged as having impacted on regional policy changes. For example, the workshops on Inclusive Education and ECCE resulted in a number of proposals/recommendations endorsed by FEdMM.

The review has found that the Online Resource centre continues to advance with the ongoing collection and digitisation of materials. In December 2008, 366 documents were available on line and this is expected to increase to approximately 800 by March 2009.

The review has found that the impact of PRIDE at the national and sub-project level has varied considerably across countries. In some countries there has been a high level of engagement with PRIDE sub-projects having the prospect of significant impact at the national sector level. In other countries PRIDE has struggled to capture leadership attention and energy resulting in poorly designed and planned sub-projects with slow or stagnant implementation.

Countries where strategic plans and subprojects have achieved some positive performance outcomes with long term effects or impacts likely to have some measure of sustainability are the following: Samoa, Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau, Palau, Vanuatu, Fiji, Tonga, RMI, Nauru, Tuvalu.

In other countries (Solomons, PNG, Kiribati) the PRIDE project has been slow to establish, due to structural and administration issues constraining effective implementation. In these countries subproject uptake has been particularly slow and overall sub-project activity is unlikely to have any meaningful impact.

FSM is in another category of its own as it has only recently (2008) completed strategic plans at national and state levels and there is the prospect that they will not have the benefit of time to implement all the sub-projects that have been approved.

The analysis conducted by the Review indicates that in overall terms PRIDE has been beneficial for the Small Island States (SISs) both in terms of the sub-projects and also the networks that have been formed. PRIDE has generally had a lesser impact in the larger countries. The positive impact on the SISs is significant as these are prioritised in the MDGs and also explicitly by the Forum.

The number of sub-projects submitted and approved for each country varies considerably from 5 to 6 in some countries to 15 to 19 in others. A small number of countries have targeted two or three priority themes. The majority of countries have taken a broader approach to project identification and this in itself has made assessment of impact difficult. Given that one of the key aims of PRIDE has been to help countries help each other, the Review believes that a more strategic and targeted approach to sub project selection would have been more beneficial with greater prospective impact on lesson-learning across the region. This is a key issue for consideration in a subsequent project.

The knowledge and awareness of PRIDE and commitment to it from senior country agency leadership is very high. This high level of leadership support and ownership is a critical success factor in terms of the positive impacts evident or likely to become evident over the longer term.

PRIDE has also played a key role in developing and nurturing a network of educators committed to improving the quality, relevance and equitable provision of education and training in the Pacific. PRIDE has not been the only player in building this network. However it can be said with confidence that the emerging network is stronger as a result of the work of PRIDE.

The Review has identified opportunities for improvement in PRIDE as a regional intervention. An initiative to follow on from PRIDE could be a more effective regional development assistance strategy if it were more strategically focused on a number of common high educational priorities across the region. A future initiative is likely to have more downstream impact on educational outcomes if it is more selective and targeted in the areas to be supported.

The value of FEdMM

The Review conducted a content analysis of the FEdMM agenda and attendance patterns. This analysis shows that the agenda has essentially comprised three groups of items: i) core business; ii) discussion of key strategic sectoral issues and iii) briefings and presentations.

The core business of FEdMM has been monitoring the implementation of FBEAP as the regional policy framework for education and PRIDE as the main vehicle for implementation. Each FEdMM has spent considerable time on these two key items and in the case of PRIDE, critical decisions have been taken in terms of focus and direction. Since the second FEdMM,

the Ministers' Retreat (closed session) has become a regular part of the agenda and an aspect of the FEdMM which has become very highly valued by the Ministers.

In addition to the monitoring of FBEAP and PRIDE and the Ministers' retreat, the FEdMM agenda has involved the Ministers taking a pro-active look and consideration of a number of key cross-cutting themes and strategies in respect of basic education and other sub-sectors.

Almost all country delegates and in particular Ministers felt that FEdMM is a worthwhile process and should be continued. At the same time there emerged a strong consensus around aspects of the process that could be improved with an expected positive impact on achievement of the stated objectives. The aspects of the process most valued by Ministers and country officials were the opportunity to be a part of a regional benchmarking process and the opportunity provided through the FEdMM to broaden knowledge of regional and global education issues and developments. A well structured FEdMM process can contribute significantly to capacity building and strengthening of educational leadership within the region. The dialogue with other countries and development partners and exposure to issues in a regional/international context afforded through the FEdMM can contribute significantly to improved knowledge and strategy at country level.

There was a strong consensus from the interviews that the main constraint or challenge limiting the effectiveness of the FEdMM process is the regular turnover of Ministers. There is also turnover of heads of Education Ministries particularly in countries where such appointments are on a contract basis and where officials tend to move between portfolios with Ministers. However in aggregate terms, the degree of continuity is much greater with senior officials and this has implications both for their role in briefing Ministers on the context for the FEdMM agenda but also in terms of developing a stronger sense of ownership of the agenda and work program.

Both officials and Ministers felt that Ministers were not sufficiently well prepared for the FEdMMs. This was due to a combination of factors including papers arriving late, Ministers not being properly briefed by their Ministries on the papers, and issues papers being far too long and, often because of time pressures and other priorities, the agenda papers not being fully read before the meetings. It is acknowledged that in spite of the high level of support from countries for the FEdMM process, urgent domestic priorities will often take precedence over consideration of regional issues.

Although a draft agenda is distributed to countries up to three months in advance of each FEdMM for comment, country delegates expressed the view during the Review that they felt a limited sense of ownership with the FEdMM agenda and that this impacted negatively on engagement and commitment. This view was particularly strong in the northern Pacific.

Donors and development partners have also tended in most instances to provide active and strong support to the FEdMM and interviews confirmed that they regard it as very useful for Ministers to meet regularly. They felt that there needs to be a more structured process to ensure more rigour, discipline and capacity building of those involved. More effective screening of agenda items is seen to be required. For donors and development partners the

process is seen to be a very valuable and cost-effective opportunity for networking with Ministries and with the Pacific development community generally.

There has been no formal reporting of the FEdMM outcomes to the Forum Leaders. This has been left to Ministers in each country to report to their own leaders and to Cabinet. Ministers and officials generally felt that this aspect of the whole process was one area that could be improved both at the regional level and in each country.

The Review has found that the FEdMM needs to continue. The meetings need to be held every twelve to eighteen months. The purpose of the FEdMM as an ongoing process needs to be clarified and a formal process needs to be developed such that there is agreement and ownership in advance of the specific objectives/anticipated outcomes for each meeting. The Review has noted that the Meeting of Pacific Heads of Education Systems has considered this matter recently and will be recommending to Ministers that the meeting of Heads be the body to perform this function.

The Ministerial retreat needs to continue as a key part of the agenda with the time allocated extended to at least half a day. The Chairing arrangements require some review as the current situation is an ad hoc process with the Chair selected at the start of the meeting. This part of the process was mentioned by a number of officials and ministers as something that also needs attention. The length of papers needs to be kept to a manageable level. Where papers contain recommendations it is important that the resourcing and implementation arrangements are clearly elaborated. A number of countries felt that the meeting process itself needs to become less formal in tone and more conducive to discussion and dialogue. An informal tone may also facilitate more open communication giving the less dominant voices a greater chance of being heard.

Regional support for Education

National governments of Pacific Island countries have come to rely on support and expertise of regional organisations and providers of technical assistance and support in education. At the same time, the Review has found that countries are seeking improved coordination and harmonisation of such technical assistance. While significant harmonisation efforts are already underway among a number of development partners and regional agencies, such as the CROP agencies, more is desired.

The Review has found that for the most part, countries have had positive experiences with regional technical education assistance. Most technical assistance providers do have in place a mechanism, often in the form of a signed agreement, to guide their country assistance. These agreements or technical assistance plans can be on an annual basis as in the Pacific Regional Education and Learning (PREL) plans of assistance, or can be for five years as in the case of UNICEF Plans. The SPC is currently developing three year joint country strategies.

The Review found that countries are generally sourcing their technical support for education from approximately five to seven agencies, often two to three bilateral donors and the

equivalent number of regional and international development partners. Provided the support is delivered in a harmonised manner the so-called donor fatigue should not be a major issue for Pacific countries in education. Certainly the number of active ‘players’ is significantly less than in other regions.

The Review found regional support for education has to meet certain criteria to be impactful. It has to be long term, predictable and transparent to allow for recipient countries to make medium and long term plans; it has to be supportive to, and aligned and integrated with, national educational plans and priorities. Furthermore, such support cannot focus primarily on advancing the agenda of donors or development partners with little regard for national priorities.

The extent to which countries benefit from regional support also depends greatly on the countries’ own capacities to absorb and build upon such technical support. Small Island States (SISs), where staffing is thin and most staff are overburdened with multiple assignments, have to be creative to maximise support from a myriad of technical assistance providers.

The Review has found that some countries are experiencing difficulties in actually absorbing the extra funding from donors. Additionally, countries often do not clearly articulate needs for donors to support, nor are they ready to say “no” when they perceive offers of support to be inappropriate. This is particularly true in SISs, where, given a small population, staffing capacity is often limited. A very strong message emanating from the Review is that the need for regional harmonisation of technical support for education cannot be underestimated. It benefits all the key stakeholders – countries, donors and technical assistance providers.

The Review has found that the support for and need for a strong regional approach in support of education in the Pacific is far from uniform. At one end of the continuum, a country such as PNG being a very large country is able to provide almost all of the services that are necessary to support schools and other education providers from within its own resources. At the other end of the continuum, very small countries such as Nauru, Tuvalu, Niue and Tokelau are very much dependent on a regional approach not just in terms of networking and information sharing but importantly to draw on the resources and capability of the region to provide services for which provision would be uneconomic nationally.

Options for a future Regional initiative to Support Pacific Education

At the seventh FEdMM in Auckland 2007 Ministers authorised the PIFS to commence planning and scoping of a future regional initiative to follow on from PRIDE when it concludes at the end of 2009. The Review has developed a range of options for consideration by Ministers of such a future regional initiative. Both the stakeholder consultations and the analysis undertaken for the Review confirm the need for further regional efforts to follow on from the PRIDE project. The Review has taken the view that a long term perspective is needed and that a need will continue to exist for regional programmes of support for Pacific education for at least the next 10 to 20 years.

The majority of countries feel that PRIDE has been a very effective regional instrument and has usefully complemented the work being undertaken at national level supported by bilateral and multilateral donors. A wide range of views has merged during the Review regarding the shape and direction of a future regional initiative.

In developing models for future regional initiatives it is extremely important that such models build upon the work that has been undertaken under PRIDE and also recognise and give due consideration to the bilateral and multilateral programmes operating at country level and also the parallel regional initiatives currently being implemented or in the planning pipeline by regional and international agencies. A future regional initiative to further develop Pacific education needs to complement and not duplicate or compete with the country programmes and other regional endeavours. A future initiative needs to be strongly grounded in the core principles of the *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* and the more recent *ACCRA Agenda for Action* (September 2008) which lays out a strategy for accelerating the implementation of these principles.

Three Models have been developed for consideration of countries and Ministers. Two key assumptions or principles underpin each model – **inclusivity** and **flexibility**. A regional project needs to be inclusive of all the Pacific Island Forum countries. This is essential to maintain and promote a sense of regional identity. At the same time, the design and operating detail of the models needs to be **flexible** enough for individual country ‘draw-downs’ of packages or elements of the proposed assistance. This is recognition that a ‘one size fits all’ approach will not be effective in many countries. The detailed project design of any of the models has to be based on the notion of ‘progressive engagement’ recognising that countries differ significantly amongst each other both in terms of educational gaps and challenges and also in terms of their capacity to address those gaps.

The Review is also of the view that as a regional initiative, the design further needs to be mindful that in the interests of strengthening regional cooperation and integration in the Pacific several quite different concepts of regionalism are put forward in the Pacific Plan.

Three models A, B C are elaborated in the final Chapter of the Review report. The third model C is a ‘hybrid’ model incorporating elements of each of the first two models.

Model A: A Regional Facility to support national initiatives

- This model would be an extension of the current PRIDE with the same objectives and purpose.
- This model is grounded in the first concept of regionalism – regional cooperation, with some elements of regional or sub-regional provision also incorporated.
- The rationale for this model is that the capacity building work of the current PRIDE 1 will not be finished at the end of 2009. Accordingly a further five years of a regional initiative to consolidate the work of PRIDE 1 is required to ensure some form of sustainability.

- The model would differ in project design from the current PRIDE in that the design would be explicitly based on **differential or progressive engagement** for countries reflecting their needs and capacity. A four package approach could be developed reflecting differing degrees of country draw-down. Flexibility would be essential in the design and project operations ensuring that countries would be able to move from one package to another over the life of the project.
- **Package 1** would reflect the current PRIDE model where countries implement sub-projects ‘on their own’ with the PRIDE office performing a Quality Assurance (QA) role.
- **Package 2** would involve countries undertaking sub-projects with project funded technical assistance/advisory support (level based on capacity assessment).
- **Package 3** would restrict country involvement to regional and/or sub-regional sub-projects.
- **Package 4** would restrict country involvement to drawing on PRIDE sourced TA from core staff or consultancy pool.
- In contrast to the current PRIDE, the resourcing arrangements under this model, reflecting the progressive engagement principle, would be ‘demand driven’ and not formula based.
- As with the current PRIDE a central feature of this model would be countries determining both the specific activities to be included as sub-projects and second countries also setting their level of draw down of project assistance. As with the current PRIDE, these features could be expected to result in a very high level of country ownership of the initiative.
- The sense of ‘regionalism’ would not come from the core sub-projects but would be dependent on other regional elements of the overall initiative such as the continuation of a regional resource centre and the regional workshops.
- The disadvantage of this model is that it may entrench some of the features of PRIDE which have been less successful. If this model is adopted a new strategy will need to be developed to link more closely sub-projects to national and regional goals and to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation framework with a stronger focus on managing for results.

Model B: A Regional Project to add value to the work at national level.

- Under this model the future initiative would be a **Regional** project – addressing common issues across the region.
- Rather than funding individual activities at the country level, the focus would be on funding activities designed to generate innovative cost-effective solutions to critical regional issues.

- Under this model the exploration and testing of the second concept of regionalism – regional provision – would be central to the rationale. There are elements of education provision in addition to tertiary education where some form of regional provision can assist countries with improving not just quality of education, but also other policy concerns such as equity and system governance and administration. The model would be focussed on identifying these areas and in so doing building on the first concept of regionalism – regional cooperation and dialogue.
- There would be a major emphasis on information sharing, action research, lesson learning and, where needed, sharing of resources of the region.
- A needs assessment of the critical regional issues would be undertaken drawing on the FBEAP Review. The intention would be that four or five critical challenges or cross-cutting issues are identified to give the initiative a strategic focus.
- Countries during the Review consultations identified a number of areas where a regional or sub-regional approach would add value to the work at national level. Many countries indicated that they lack the technical skills and capability to develop effective strategies in a number of these areas. A regional approach to developing pilots can be an effective way of sharing and spreading risk and testing new and innovative approaches to critical problems.
- An additional rationale for this model is the context across the region in which almost all countries are involved in major bilateral or special purpose programs supported by donors or other development partners. As these increasingly become longer term in nature with the needs and priorities determined in partnership under national government leadership, the need for regional projects to fund specific national needs becomes less.
- Under this model there should be no competition with or duplication between national and regional programs. However the regional and international agencies are currently working with individual countries and groups of countries on a number of their challenges. This being the case, a very close collaborative working arrangement with these agencies would be essential under this model. The agencies could be implementing partners for specific activities.

Model C: A Regional Project incorporating elements of Models A and B

- A third Model C could be a hybrid model incorporating strengths of each model.
- Under such a model a future regional initiative could have one component (Component 1) for national sub-projects and another component (Component 2) for agreed regional focus areas.
- Component 1 would reflect the principle of progressive engagement and as such would be grounded in the regionalism concept of regional cooperation and dialogue.

- Component 2 would address a small range of critical regional issues (as per model A) and would test and strengthen where appropriate the concept of regional provision in aspects of education across the Pacific region.
- Funding parameters would be relevant in determining the number of regional focus areas and also the balance between the two components. It is important that any new initiative is designed to maximise impact and not to try and do too many things.

Recommendations

The review has made a number of recommendations for consideration of Forum Ministers. The paragraph reference in the report is included with each reference.

1. The Review supports the need for a refreshed Vision statement in a revised regional plan. It is essential that the vision adopted has strong ownership amongst member countries. Suggested new Vision 1: '**Quality Basic Education for All in Pacific Island countries**' has the support of the Review as it has the advantage of clarity, simplicity and it has a clear link to the EFA and Millennium Development goals. (para. 3.14)
2. The Review recommends that the revised regional education plan be known as the Pacific Education Development Framework (PEDF).(para 3.42)
3. The Review recommends that the FEdMM continue to meet every 12 to 18 months (para 5.22)
4. The Review recommends that the meeting of Pacific heads of Education Systems be given the role of screening items for the FEdMM agenda. (para 5.22)
5. The Review recommends that the PIFS develop an Action Register for effective follow-up and monitoring of FEdMM decisions. (para 5.22)
6. The Review recommends that the Ministerial retreat be formalised as a part of the FEdMM with appropriate time allocated to it. (para 5.22)
7. The Review recommends that arrangements for Chairing the FEdMM be reviewed. (para 5.19)
8. Three models for a future regional initiative, A, B C are presented for consideration of Ministers. The third model C is a 'hybrid' model incorporating strengths of each of the first two models. The Review recommends that Ministers consider each of the three models with a view to giving direction based on these models for a future regional initiative to follow on from PRIDE. (para. 7.12)

Chapter One: Introduction and Background to Review

Background

1.1 The first meeting of the Forum Education Ministers was held in May 2001 in Auckland, New Zealand. This initial meeting arose out of a recommendation from the Forum Economic Ministers (Apia, July 1999) that the Leaders consider convening an ad hoc meeting of Forum Ministers of Education to review the results of some work commissioned in the area of human resource development. The Leaders subsequently (November 1999) directed that the Education Ministers meet to review the agenda prepared by the Economic Ministers.

1.2 At the Auckland meeting Ministers were presented with the results of a range of evidence which highlighted that basic education systems in Pacific countries were failing the majority of young people and leaving them ill-prepared for dealing with their futures in either the formal or informal sectors of society. Ministers, in their deliberations, recognised that basic education is the fundamental building block for society. Ministers agreed to a Pacific Vision for education and to a number of goals including goals and commitments under the Education for All (EFA) framework. In addition to the vision and goals, Ministers committed themselves to a number of regional and country strategies under the Forum Basic Education Action Plan 2001 (FBEAP).

1.3 What was intended to be initially an ad hoc meeting has now become a regular process and since the initial meeting in 2001, five subsequent meetings have been held in 2002, 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007. These Forum Education Ministers meetings (FEEdMM) have considered a broad agenda in education including a review of the FBEAP and the outcomes of the meetings have been documented as an update to FBEAP 2001. In this way the FBEAP has become a 'living' document.

1.4 Following the initial FEEdMM, at the Ministers request, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) sought funding for a project design for a regional initiative to facilitate the implementation of FBEAP within the region. The Pacific Regional Initiative for the Delivery of Basic Education (PRIDE) was launched in 2004 under funding from the EU under the 9th EDF and NZAID and has become the major mechanism within the Pacific region for the implementation of FBEAP.

1.5 In October 2005 the Forum Leaders endorsed the Pacific Plan with the goal of enhancing and stimulating economic growth, sustainable development, good governance and security for Pacific countries through regionalism. Improved education and training is one of the strategic objectives of the Plan in support of this goal.

1.6 At their last meeting (Auckland, November 2007) the Education Ministers decided that, given the seven years since FBEAP 2001, a comprehensive evaluation should be undertaken of FBEAP during 2008. A review of FBEAP during 2008 was also seen as being able to contribute constructively to the Pacific Plan which is also being reviewed in 2008.

The PIFS was tasked by the Ministers to prepare Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Review which was to be conducted by an independent group of consultants. The full TOR are included as Annex C. The objective of the Review is to provide an analysis of the utility and impact of FBEAP including its associated processes such as the FEEdMM. In response to an advertised tender, a team of consultants comprising Mr Ian Hind (Team Leader), Dr Hilda Heine and Ms Elaine Lameta was contracted by PIFS to undertake the Review.

Terms of Reference

1.7 The specific terms of reference of the Review which are addressed in this report are the following:

1. An analysis of the key education priorities and challenges facing Forum Island countries, using the FBEAP as a starting point;
2. An assessment of the continuing validity and relevance of the FBEAP;
3. In the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for All (EFA) initiative, an assessment of how the FBEAP and its related mechanisms have facilitated member countries achieving the required goals;
4. An assessment of the impact of the FBEAP on traditionally marginalised groups such as women, rural communities and children with disabilities;
5. An assessment of whether the FBEAP and its related mechanisms have facilitated capacity building at the national level;
6. An assessment of the value of the FEEdMM process;
7. A clear analysis of what aspects of education should be appropriately supported and harmonised at a regional level;
8. An overview of the impact of regional education projects such as PRIDE, but this should not be seen as a complete project review;
9. Recommendations for options for regional education initiatives that could support Pacific education.

1.8 The Review team was mobilised in mid-June 2008 for a range of inception briefings organised by PIFS which has been the executing agency for the Review. Funding for the Review was provided by NZAID. PREL enabled the participation of Dr Hilda Heine in the review team. Following the inception mission and preparation of a work plan a comprehensive programme of regional and country consultations was undertaken over the period mid-June to mid-August 2008. Each of the Forum Island countries was visited by the Review team and discussions were held with over 160 stakeholders at policy/strategy, implementation and community levels. Included in the country consultations were meetings with 8 current Education Ministers and three former Ministers and 18 heads of education at National and State levels. Consultations were also held with education officials from

Tokelau. In addition, the team consulted with 46 officials working in 13 regional agencies and development partners. All key PRIDE staff at the project office at the University of the South Pacific (USP) and all PRIDE National Project Coordinators (NPCs) were involved. A questionnaire was prepared for both the country and regional consultations. A number of countries and regional organisations provided written responses. A full list of those involved in the consultations is included as Annex C. In addition to the country consultations two members of the Review Team and the Social Policy Adviser from PIFS attended the regional workshop on *Harmonising Monitoring and Evaluation for Better Education* held in Nadi early July 2008. Attendance at this workshop enabled contact to be made with key personnel at both country and regional level and facilitated greatly the arrangements for the consultation program.

1.9 A key aspect of the Review has been an in-depth analysis and research of the recent relevant literature and documents addressing education in the Pacific region at both country and regional levels. The literature survey encompassed the following types of documents and reports:

- Country development strategies
- National education strategic and annual plans & annual reports
- National Performance indicator frameworks and statistical digests
- Country sector reviews
- EFA Mid-decade assessments
- MDG reports
- Donor policy and strategy documents
- PRIDE annual work plans, sub-project proposals and other project documents
- Independent research reports
- Regional desk and field studies
- FEdMM meeting papers and meeting records

A full listing of all reports and documents referred to during the course of the Review is included as Annex D.

1.10 A three day workshop was held with education officials and representatives of development partners and regional agencies on 17-19 September. The purpose of this workshop, attended by 28 officials from 13 of the countries (including Tokelau) and 8 regional agencies/development partners, was to present the key findings from the country visits, related research and regional consultations; to seek feedback on and verification of the findings and to seek consensus on a way forward. In broad terms the workshop verified the findings from the consultations and these findings are included in the relevant chapters of this

report. In terms of a way forward, the workshop confirmed the importance and validity of a regional education plan or framework and the value of the FEdMM process in providing oversight regarding implementation of regional education initiatives. Suggestions and recommendations arising from the workshop in respect of a revised and consolidated regional plan and concerning improvements that can be made to the FEdMM process have been incorporated in Chapters 3 (concerning FBEAP) and 6 (concerning FEdMM). With regard to the scope and shape of future regional education initiatives, a wide range of views emerged during the consultations and during the course of the workshop.

1.11 The Team Leader and the Social Policy Adviser from PIFS met with the Heads of Pacific Education Systems at their meeting in October 2008. An in-depth discussion was held on the key issues and findings from the review particularly in respect of the FBEAP and the way forward. In Chapter Seven of the report a number of models are presented for consideration by Education Ministers. The models which arose out of the September workshop and the October meeting of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) attempt to capture the salient features of the spectrum of views in terms of the most appropriate way of supporting Pacific education at the regional level in the future. A draft of the Review was circulated to countries and the Reference Group for comment in November 2008 and this report incorporates feedback and comments received.

1.12 A Reference Group comprising representatives of relevant organisations was established by PIFS to provide additional guidance to the work of the Review Team. The Reference Group has met twice, in the first instance in late June to review the work programme, proposed methodology and the arrangements for the consultation and in the second instance in mid-September following the workshop that was conducted to review the findings from the consultations and literature review.

Limitations

1.13 A strength of the Review process has been the coverage of the consultation process in particular the visits to each Forum country. This consultation process has generated a solid appreciation and knowledge of the purpose and importance of the review within the region and also a sense of ownership of the analyses and main conclusions. However some limitations need to be acknowledged and these were discussed at the regional workshop held in September. First, the time spent in country generally limited scope for school and other education site visits and also discussions with officials outside the education Ministries. Second, and this is not so much a limitation, but more so a clarification of the nature of the review. The focus of the Review is the regional level. The Review is not based on detailed sectoral reviews of basic education in each country. Where such reviews have been undertaken, the Review has drawn on the key findings where appropriate to the TORs. While references are made in the Report to country specific issues, such references are made for the purpose of illustrating examples of issues or trends across the region. Thirdly, the Review is not a full project review of PRIDE. Nonetheless, assessment of the likely impact of PRIDE is central to the thinking behind the options developed in respect of future regional support in the final chapter. At the time of undertaking this Review less than 20% of PRIDE sub-

projects had been completed and many others were in very early stages of implementation. This being the case the analysis in Chapter Four which deals with PRIDE is very much based on assessment of likely impact. Finally the Review has been constrained by data limitations. The poor availability of consistent and reliable data to inform education policy analysis has been identified in most countries as one of the key challenges hampering efforts to develop strategies for education improvement. These data limitations will inevitably impact on any regional review.

Organisation of the Report

1.14 The findings and conclusions of the review are included in this report in the following manner. Chapter Two synthesises the key challenges confronting Pacific education systems and the priorities that have been formulated in response to these challenges. The challenges encompass not only those internal to the education systems but also those external to the system such as demographic change and issues such as increased urbanisation and poverty and HIV AND AIDS. A more detailed analysis of country specific challenges and priorities is included as Annex E.

1.15 Chapter Three addresses the TORs that relate to FBEAP. This covers the issues concerning validity and relevance, how FBEAP has facilitated countries achieving their strategic goals for education, and impacts on capacity building and marginalised groups. Chapter Four examines the impact of PRIDE as a regional project. The Chapter outlines the critical success factors which are contributing a significant impact in some countries and which are less apparent in other countries. Chapter Five addresses the FEdMM process and draws extensively on the perspectives of stakeholders who have been closely involved in the process thus far. The chapter includes a number of recommendations that would improve the effectiveness of the FEdMM with the intention of increasing the level of ownership and making the whole process more strategic in terms of shaping the Pacific education policy and planning agenda.

1.16 Chapter Six provides a synthesis of technical and policy support which is currently being provided by a range of organisations in support of Pacific education. The chapter identifies areas where opportunities exist for further harmonisation of this support and provides the context for the final chapter on options for future regional support.

1.17 Chapter Seven canvasses a number of options for future regional initiatives to support Pacific education. These options are presented as Models with a précis of the key advantages and disadvantages of each model.

Chapter Two: An Analysis of Priorities and Challenges facing Forum Island Countries.

2.1 A key component of the Review has been a detailed analysis of the educational priorities and challenges facing Forum Island countries. This analysis provides the context for the revision and consolidation of FBEAP. The contextual conditions for the education sector in terms of history, geography, demography and economic stages of development vary considerably across the 15 countries that have been the subject of the Review. However, the Review has found significant commonality in the broad **priorities** for education sector development articulated by each country. In general terms these priorities as expressed in country national development plans and education sector strategic plans are clustered around the following policy themes: quality and relevance, access, equity of opportunity, and management and efficiency of resources.

2.2 The **challenges** facing the education system in addressing these priorities are partly internal and partly external to the education sector. This Chapter provides a synthesis of these challenges and priorities across the region. The analysis focuses on the broad trends providing specific examples at country level or where appropriate at sub-regional level. Annex E provides more specific detail on the priorities and challenges in each country. These were the subject of review and verification at the September workshop.

External challenges

2.3 In the country consultations, when asked to identify the key challenges, most stakeholders involved directly in the education systems tended to focus on the challenges in the internal education environment (e.g. teacher quality). The national development plans and the regional and sector reviews tend also to identify, in addition to the internal environmental challenges, the elements in the external environment that continue to represent challenges to the education systems.

Economic environment

2.4 One of the major challenges facing every country is the issue of securing sustainable resources to underpin quality and expansion of the education sector. Education is a major component of each nation's economy, and finance and provision is sourced primarily from the public sector. The ability of the public purse to provide the necessary resources is very much based on the economic health of the countries and specifically the rate of economic growth. The ability of systems to diversify their sources of finance for education is also critically dependent in the long term on achieving sustained increases in the rate of economic growth. The growth performance of Pacific Island countries has been recently reviewed by AusAID (Pacific Economic Survey, 2008). The survey found that economic growth in the Pacific has been sluggish and below the average for developing countries. The pattern of growth has also been very volatile with environmental and physical shocks (e.g. cyclones, tsunamis) having severe short term impacts. During the 1990s and the first half of the 2000s, four out of the five Melanesian countries experienced negative growth. During this period

the Polynesian countries performed better. However, over the last three years, three of the Melanesian countries have experienced a more favourable growth situation. Solomon Islands recent growth in excess of 6% per annum reflects the more stabilised environment of the post-conflict context; the Vanuatu government has initiated a range of reforms that have resulted in growth averaging 6% over the last 5 years. Papua New Guinea (PNG) has been benefiting from the global commodity boom resulting in a doubling of its growth rate from 3% to 6% and Government revenue as a percentage of GDP rising from 28% in 2002 to 36% in 2006. Samoa and Palau have also experienced improved growth performance fuelled by tourism in both countries but also by a reform program encouraging private sector growth in the case of Samoa. These recent improvements in growth performance particularly in countries such as Vanuatu, PNG and Solomon Islands which are also experiencing high rates of population growth have created a more favourable environment in which governments are able to tackle the system goals of universal access to basic education. The AusAID review identified that in respect of economic growth, there are three aspects of the challenge and its implications. First, growth needs to become more even across the Pacific; second the nature of growth needs to become more pro-poor; and finally growth needs to be sustained at higher levels than has been the case over the last decade.

2.5 The challenge of economic growth is by no means confined to the Pacific region. While many parts of the world have experienced a prolonged period of above average growth since the early 1990s, at the time of conducting this Review it has become clear that the world is experiencing a period of major economic and financial volatility. Few countries can be totally protected from these global shocks. The extent and depth of the emerging global financial crisis gripping most of the major developed nations can only be a matter of speculation. It can only be expected that impacts will be significant on developing countries.

2.6 The last decade has seen a significant rise in the amount of international labour mobility particularly as a consequence of increasing skills shortages in specific sectors in developed economies. This increased mobility of labour is a relatively new challenge for Pacific Island country education and training systems. On the one hand countries such as Kiribati, Nauru and Tuvalu with very restricted employment opportunities for school leavers in the formal sectors are increasingly looking to global local markets to provide income-earning opportunities for school leavers. On the other hand countries such as Cook Islands, Palau and PNG have skill shortages in sectors such as tourism and mining with high levels of expatriate employment. Kiribati is struggling in meeting the challenge of preparing its young people with the required skills (including language skills) and knowledge to access these global employment opportunities. The Guam military build up is a recent development with potential implications across a large part of the region. New Zealand's Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme providing seasonal work to meet the country's horticultural labour shortage prioritises Pacific Forum countries. In the first year (2007) of the RSE, 78% of the 4681 workers were from the Pacific Forum countries (Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu). Australia announced in August 2008 its seasonal worker pilot study with 2500 workers from Vanuatu, Kiribati, Tonga and PNG over the next three years to work in horticulture. Seasonal work schemes are considered beneficial to Pacific development,

economic success and stability in the region. Increased flows of remittances into rural communities are used for improved housing, payment of school fees or community programmes, and potentially lift an unskilled labour force out of poverty. However the social costs associated with temporary labour schemes could be significant.

2.7 Increasing global labour mobility not only impacts on education systems and their capacity to provide the skills required in a global context; there is also sometimes a more direct and immediate impact on the children of the growing expatriate workforce. Often the children do not accompany their parents when they work abroad and their welfare and responsibility for attending to education is left with relatives. Representatives of a number of education systems in the interviews for the Review identified these children as an emerging marginalised group with special educational needs.

Demographic environment

2.8 One of the most pressing external challenges facing the education systems in Forum Island Countries is the demographic context. All education systems have a responsibility to respond to the social demand for education. The patterns of demographic change vary significantly across the region, throwing up a number of different challenges. The Melanesian countries of PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are all still experiencing **high rates of population growth** although the rate of growth has fallen from the very high levels the 1970s and 1980s. In aggregate terms this rapid population growth is a major challenge as 86% of the population in the region is in Melanesia and the pattern of growth in this group of countries accounts for the current average rate of growth across the region of 2.3%. The main challenges of rapid population growth for education systems are twofold. First the increased pressure on government budgets to provide the required services in education and health and also the increased unemployment amongst youth that results from the population cohort of youth growing faster than the growth in employment in the formal sector. Unavoidably, as a result of rapid population growth, the goal of increased access to basic education continues to be the highest education priority of these countries.

2.9 At the other extreme, Cook Islands, Niue and Palau are experiencing **population decline** which generates a major challenge for these systems given the very small population of the countries (Cook Islands, approx. 14,000, Niue approx. 1,538, and Palau approx. 20,000). Except Niue (a single island country), these countries (along with countries such as Tonga, Tuvalu and Fiji) are experiencing significant loss of population in the outer islands, in some cases to the point where traditional models of provision of education are increasingly becoming non-viable. Increasingly the challenge is to explore the potential of alternative modes of delivery to ensure equitable provision to those affected.

2.10 The **increasing drift of population from outer islands** and from remote rural communities and villages to the towns and urban areas is a major challenge in some form in almost all Pacific island countries. The issue is prominent in the national and education sector development plans and is very high on the agenda of Ministers and senior officials as reflected in the Review consultations. The degree of **urbanisation** in the Pacific is already

significant. The SPC has estimated that half of all Pacific Islanders outside of PNG live in urban areas (this falls to 25% if PNG is included). Urban population growth is outpacing rural population growth with patterns of rural-urban population migration becoming sustained and permanent. The SPC projections indicate that some urban centres in the Pacific are expected to double in size over the next 5 to 15 years. This pattern of increased urbanisation in the Pacific is reflected globally where the fastest growth of urbanisation is taking place in the less developed regions. The challenges associated with increased urbanisation are multi-sectoral with Pacific leaders in 2005 identifying the issue as one of the key issues facing the region particularly for the education systems. The immediate impact of increased urbanisation (generally unplanned) is higher population density, and more intensive utilisation of social and physical infrastructure leading to overcrowding of facilities such as schools. However, the impacts are much broader and research undertaken by SPC has shown that the growth of unplanned informal or squatter settlements in the urban centres is associated with rising unemployment, increased levels of poverty, hardship, alcohol and substance abuse and urban crime, increased incidence of gender-based violence, and increase incidence of STIs including HIV and AIDS and other related social issues. Clearly, increased urbanisation in recent years is generating major challenges for education providers in terms of quality and equity in education.

Poverty

2.11 Closely associated with urbanisation is the **growing incidence of poverty** in the Pacific. There is still limited recent data on poverty across the region. However surveys and anecdotal data point to a growing problem. A recent AusAID report has argued that ‘extreme poverty (<less than \$1US/day) is estimated to have increased markedly over the last decade (AusAID 2008). A World Bank estimate has found that poverty in PNG has increased from 38% in 1996 to 54% in 2005. Surveys in Fiji have shown that poverty has risen from 11% in 1975 to 25% in 1990 and 34% in 2002. Very high levels of poverty have also been reported in Kiribati. The Review has not been able to undertake an analysis as to the reasons for this increased poverty although it is clear that the root causes are associated with developments in the global political economy. The direct manifestation of this in the Pacific is the erosion of traditional safety nets through urbanisation, population growth and the growth of cash economies and household cash dependency. With the conversion of productive land to other uses as a result of urbanisation, **food security** is becoming a key issue for many families. With respect to education, this increased poverty, not just in the urban settlements but also in rural areas, is generating a new marginalised group, for whom traditional service delivery strategies may not be effective. Many countries have had high rates of access to education but this is in danger of slipping in the face of increasing poverty as children from poor families tend to have poor attendance rates. This is a key emerging challenge for the education systems.

Physical environment

2.12 The **geography of the Pacific and the physical environment** continue to generate a whole range of challenges outside the control of the education systems. Many of these

challenges are logistical in nature associated with poor or very limited physical infrastructure in remote communities, high costs associated with maintaining and developing such infrastructure, irregular shipping schedules to remote islands presenting an ongoing challenge. Research (UNESCO/USP, 2008) is suggesting that **vulnerability to natural disasters** is increasing. **Climate change** is a major global challenge with implications extending to all parts of the globe and requiring global responses. While many sections of the community may not at this stage identify climate change as one of the most pressing challenges for education, the implications for education systems are already multi-faceted.

Historical and institutional environment.

2.13 Most of the Forum Island Countries have now at least one generation of their population born since the time of achieving political independence. However the influence of the colonial legacies is still far-reaching. In a number of countries the legislative framework for education has not been reviewed since the colonial times. Even curriculum frameworks which in a number of situations were developed post-independence are based on colonial or western models of education. The **colonial legacy** is most evident in Vanuatu where the Ministry is continuing to grapple with the major challenges associated with the dual system inherited from the English/French condominium. The post-independence period for a number of countries has been associated with significant political instability to the extent that five (Kiribati, PNG, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu) of the 35 nations globally that have been identified by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD as ‘fragile states’ are located in the Pacific. Improved governance is central to sustainable achievement of educational goals and priorities and so support to these states for example through RAMSI in the case of Solomon Islands has emerged since FBEAP as a key priority and challenge within the region.

HIV and AIDS and other health related challenges

2.14 There are major health issues in the Pacific which are generating significant challenges for education systems. The most challenging of these issues is **the spread of HIV and AIDS** where in PNG it is estimated that 5% of the teaching force is HIV positive. Indeed the spread of HIV and AIDS is one of the most pressing development challenges in PNG and potentially in other Pacific countries and is one that the education system needs to address openly.

2.15 Substance abuse, including alcohol, tobacco, kava, marijuana and glue sniffing, poses a significant challenge to Pacific societies including the education community.

Challenges and Priorities: country focus

2.16 **PNG**, the largest country in the region is facing the greatest set of educational challenges with over half a million school aged children still not attending school. With a population now in excess of 6 million, PNG is one of a number of countries experiencing **rapid population growth** (est. 2.7% per annum). Approximately 85% of the population lives in rural areas and over 800 languages are spoken. The sheer scale of the education system in

PNG is another major challenge with over 7000 schools and colleges, 1,150,000 students and over 37,500 teachers. The education system itself is highly decentralised with the 21 provincial governments having responsibility for running the basic education sector. The most pressing challenge facing education in PNG is still **restricted access to education** and addressing this challenge is the country's number one educational priority. The magnitude of the access problem has been made clearer to the authorities following analysis of the 2007 school census which for the first time included age related data.

2.17 In PNG's Elementary Schools the Gross Admission Rate (GAR) was 77% but the Net Admission Rate (NAR) was only 11.5%, indicating large numbers of over age children enrolling. In primary schools the Net Enrolment Rate (NER) for Grades 1 to 6 was 45% and for Grades 3 to 8, 37%. The rates were lower for girls by about 2%. Major differences in enrolment patterns exist between the provinces indicating that parts of the country are severely educationally disadvantaged. The structural educational reforms that were introduced in the 1990s are having a positive impact on access with significantly more students now enrolled in Years 7 and 8. However, the 2007 data show significant numbers still dropping out of primary school with completion rates from Grade 1 to 6 only 61.8% and from Grade 3 to 8, 56%. At the secondary level the enrolment rates are 23% in lower secondary and 7.5% in upper secondary. At present only one out of four students completes lower secondary education and 1 in 14 completes a full secondary education. PNG continues to experience a gender difference in enrolment rates at all levels. The latest data indicate that female participation is improving at upper secondary level but not at lower secondary level. The difference in transition rates between boys and girls from grade 8 to grade 9 has increased from 2.8% in 2001 to 3.8% in 2007 (boys 56.9% and girls 53.15%)

2.18 Given the magnitude of the challenge still facing PNG with respect to access, the PNG Government is clear that the MDG goal of universal primary education by 2015 will not be met. The Government has identified Basic Education as the number one priority in its current National Education Plan for the period 2005-2014. In the context of improved economic growth and fiscal management, the government has recently(2007) established a Universal Basic Education (UBE) task force to develop a plan for achieving UBE in a shorter time frame than envisaged in the current National Education Plan. PNG is moving progressively towards a Sector Wide approach (SWAp) in planning investments towards the goal of UBE.

2.19 Another major challenge facing the education system in PNG is the HIV and AIDS epidemic in which an estimated 6,000 are expected to die from in 2008. An estimated 77,000 people are HIV positive in PNG with the majority living in the rural areas. Infection rates are twice as high among young people who do not finish school. HIV and AIDS is a major issue for the education system with significant work on policy, strategy, education and research underway. Internal law and order and security is another major challenge.

2.20 **Solomon Islands:** The third largest country in terms of population (est. 538,000), Solomon Islands is experiencing many of the same challenges as PNG. With a population growth rate estimated to be 2.8% Solomon Islands (SI) is experiencing the most rapid growth

in population in the region. Solomon Islands had a ranking of 128th out of 177 countries in the UN Human Development Index for 2006, placing it among the lowest for all the Pacific Islands. Solomon Islands experienced major social unrest and ethnic tension in 2000/2001 resulting in loss of life and severe economic and social dislocation. The country is now slowly recovering with the assistance of RAMSI.

2.21 The three key priorities being pursued by the Ministry are quality, access and improved management of resources. Major improvements in access have been achieved in Solomon Islands over the last decade and the Ministry expresses some confidence in achieving universal primary education by 2015. The NER in 2005 was 94% and the transition rate from Grade 6 to Grade 7 has now reached approximately 90% which is a major increase over the last five years. The NER in Junior Secondary level is still only 23%. Although the gap has closed somewhat, there is still a gender imbalance in favour of boys which becomes marked by junior secondary level. The situation in Solomon Islands illustrates acutely the quality/access trade off that can become very evident when an access gap exists to which resources are directed. Despite the improvements in access that have occurred, quality is a major issue at every level in the Solomon Islands education sector and the data that does exist and the opinions of policy makers and implementers paint a picture of declining quality. In primary schools the key issue is teacher quality with only 67% of teachers qualified. In secondary schools approximately 20% of the teachers are unqualified. One indicator of the poor quality is the low levels of literacy at 44% and numeracy at 54% in the Standard 4 SISTA trial in 2004.

2.22 Historically, both Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and TVET have been neglected sub-sectors in Solomon Islands. These areas are now being addressed, with PRIDE assistance in the case of ECCE, and with EU funding in the case of TVET. Solomon Islands continues to face severe challenges in terms of management capacity, problems compounded in the context of the current post-conflict environment of the country.

2.23 Solomon Islands is addressing all of the key challenges through a SWAp in which NZAID and EU are providing funding support with other donors involved at policy dialogue level.

2.24 **Vanuatu:** The third of the three Melanesian countries categorised by the OECD as a 'fragile state', Vanuatu shares many of the challenges of PNG and SI but in addition has another major challenge arising from the colonial legacy of the inherited high cost inefficient dual system of education. The Vanuatu Government and development partners have invested heavily in efforts in recent years to improve the education system and to redress inherited problems of inefficiency, inequity, declining quality and a curriculum lacking relevance to individual and social needs. The Government is committed to a long term vision of developing a more equitable, efficient, relevant high quality education system that will be financially sustainable in the long term. An indicator of the strength of Government commitment to education is the education share of national expenditure which at 26% is the highest in the region. Education as a percentage of GDP has increased from 4.8 % in 2005 to 6% in 2007.

2.25 Vanuatu has experienced high population growth and a significant drift of population from the rural to urban areas especially in Port Vila and Santo where the urban areas are growing at 7.5% per annum. Only half of the population has access to safe water and sanitation.

2.26 Educational statistics in Vanuatu are of poor quality. However the Ministry is of the view that only 74% of the primary aged group are enrolled in school. The key planning documents indicate that Vanuatu is off target to achieve the key MDG and EFA targets of universal primary completion by 2015 and the EFA goals of improved literacy, numeracy and life skills. As in SI, Vanuatu has a major problem with supply and quality of teachers. In primary school 42% of teachers are untrained and a recent survey found that 70% of primary teachers and 72% of secondary teachers had received no in-service education (ISE) over the last five years.

2.27 The current planning and policy response in Vanuatu to the key education challenges reflects most acutely the issues many countries are grappling with in terms of **donor harmonisation and aid management** generally. Drawing on the Vanuatu Education Sector Strategy (VESS) completed in 2006, the Vanuatu Government and key development partners over the last two years have agreed to develop and implement a SWAp for support to education with the objective of prioritising resources from Government and development partners and moving in a phased fashion from traditional project support to a form of budget support to education, with external support integrated with funds from the national budget appropriation and fully managed by the Ministry of Education. The VESS states that since independence, the development of the Education Sector has been essentially and generously funded and driven by donors and development partners. There has been insufficient harmonisation or coordination of these donor activities. As a consequence the education sector has been developed around the different agendas and parallel offices and systems of donors, rather than around a Government national education sector strategy. The time and energies of education staff have been consumed by responding to donor projects and adviser needs, with local ownership, self-reliance and trust consequently lessened. Despite the generous support of the Government and donors, key strategic targets have not been delivered. There continues to be duplication and waste. There has been little evaluation of the impact of donor interventions, and most of this has been donor/ adviser-driven, with few lessons for local staff to learn. The Vanuatu Ministry is strongly of the view that donor technical assistance can be better harnessed under the emerging SWAp in which the Ministry of Education is taking the lead role.

2.28 The critical challenges identified in the VESS have been prioritised and action plans are being drawn up for a three year period to address the issues of language policy, remoteness, the rapidly expanding youth population, access, school dropouts and truancy and impact of school fees, capacity building of the Ministry in policy development, planning, research, implementation auditing and financial management. The organisational structure has been revamped to align more effectively with the VESS and to give effect to greater decentralisation of decision-making. A high priority is being placed on evidence-based policy and strategy development.

2.29 **Fiji:** On the key indicators of human resource development (92nd out of 177 countries on the HRD index in 2005) Fiji is the most advanced of the Melanesian Forum countries. Fiji is no longer faced with the access challenges of PNG, SI and Vanuatu. The country also does not have the problem of significant numbers of unqualified teachers, with 98% of primary teachers and 96% of secondary teachers qualified. In fact, Fiji has an oversupply of teachers. Fiji is on target to achieve MDG2 of Universal Primary Education (UPE) but there is concern about the growing number of school dropouts from primary schools.

2.30 Fiji's major challenges in the education sector, as identified in the sector plans and by senior officials, are **equity and quality**. A key challenge is providing an equitable education to students in remote and isolated areas where 63% of primary schools (40% of students) and 30% of secondary schools (14% of students) are located. Issues associated with this challenge are high cost of provision, difficulties in attracting and retaining teachers to the rural areas and poor quality of resources and infrastructure. The EFA Mid-decade assessment (MDA 2008) said 'in most schools the facilities are poor and in most instances essential equipment and textbooks are not available. This is a major contributor to poor performance and poor quality of education'. The Ministry, with PRIDE assistance, is developing strategies utilising IT and distance learning to better serve the needs of the remote and isolated communities. Although net enrolment in secondary education is a healthy 71%, there is growing concern about unemployment of secondary school leavers.

2.31 Providing equity to other marginalised groups (women, students with disabilities, and the socio-economically disadvantaged) is another key challenge. In terms of exam performance, ethnic Fijians lag behind other ethnic groups and significant gaps in performance are evident between students from urban and rural areas. **Poverty and the broader socio-economic environment is a major issue** and a focus of government policy. The most recent data indicates that over 40% of those in rural areas are living in poverty. There has been deterioration in recent years on a range of health indicators – child mortality, maternal mortality and HIV and AIDS and other diseases. In terms of HIV and AIDS, Fiji has passed the initial stages of the epidemic and is now in the explosive stage. **The use of substances is becoming a major threat** to the education system in Fiji.

2.32 In addition to the key priorities of improving quality and addressing equity of provision, Fiji's education priorities include further development of the ECCE and TVET sectors and implementation of a trilingual language policy. Fiji has benefited from major capacity building programs funded by AusAID and also sector programs funded by EU. Some development assistance has been suspended following the 2006 military coup and the formation of the interim government.

2.33 **Kiribati:** With an HRD index of 0.515 Kiribati ranks 11th of 14 Pacific Island Forum countries. Basic development indicators for health, education and life expectancy are among the poorest in the Pacific region. Infant mortality and child morbidity rates are particularly high, and access to water and sanitation facilities is a persistent problem. Overcrowding on Tarawa, resulting from high national population growth, and drift of population from the outer islands is a pressing problem. With an economy experiencing very limited employment

growth, community expectations of the education system are based on the need for the system to prepare many young people for working in global labour markets.

2.34 The critical challenges facing the education system relate to **quality and capacity** at all levels. Access has been almost achieved at primary level with a NER in excess of 97%. Although the number of teachers with a minimal qualification and fully qualified is increasing, **teacher quality and teacher competence are seen to be deteriorating**. Quality assurance of programmes and teaching is far from effective mainly due to lack of applicable teaching standards. Literacy and Numeracy testing has commenced in years 4 and 6 through the Standardised Testing for Achievement in Kiribati (STAKI) test. This was trialled in 2004 and conducted again in 2007. Much work has still to be done for this to be a useful diagnostic tool. **English language skills, particularly in the outer islands, have fallen away considerably**. There is no curriculum framework as such in primary schools and the syllabus being taught is essentially the one developed during colonial days with some modifications and improvements.

2.35 Kiribati has a well-structured education sector plan, developed with the assistance of PRIDE, and based on wide stakeholder consultation including a national education summit held early in 2008. The immediate priorities for the next three years are to develop a competent and effective workforce, a high quality, coherent and relevant curriculum, to improve the facilities and learning environment in schools and to build capacity and competence within the Ministry and strengthen school-level administration.

2.36 **Nauru, Tuvalu, Niue and Tokelau**, being four very small island nations with populations less than 10,000, and in some cases (Nauru and Niue), experiencing declining population, share many of the basic development challenges of small island states (SISs). The needs of SISs have been prioritised by the Forum leaders. The Ministries responsible for supporting the education systems in these countries each have no more than ten people responsible for the full range of policy development, planning implementation and quality assurance roles and functions. As a result these Ministries are all confronted with the day to day challenges arising from system diseconomies of scale. Capacity within these Ministries is very thin and loss or turnover of staff can have a major impact on the ability of the Government to plan and deliver services. Because of the small number of students, the unit cost of providing many services is unavoidably high. Some services can simply not be provided due to the non-existence of the required technical skills or the excessively high cost of provision. None of these countries is able to train (pre-service) its own teachers.

2.37 Very recently **Nauru** was on the brink of bankruptcy as a result of mismanagement of the country's resources. Although the economic base of the country is very narrow with few resources and limited opportunities for economic growth, Nauru is slowly attempting, with significant support from the region and the Australian government, a redevelopment plan including rebuilding the education system. While some of Nauru's education challenges are similar to the other SISs in the Pacific, other challenges are unique and part of the bigger picture associated with the country's recent history. With a need now to develop its own secondary education system rather than send students abroad, Nauru is experiencing a major

challenge in developing a competent and effective teacher workforce. The system is very heavily reliant on expatriates with few, if any, qualified Nauruan teachers. There is a layer of challenges stemming from the fragile nature of the social, economic and state institutions all contributing to a community loss of confidence in the education system. The clearest indicator of this loss of confidence is the very high level of both student and teacher absenteeism which, in the case of students, is running at approximately 40% of the student population. Nauru's education strategic plan, Footpath II, developed with PRIDE assistance, addresses and prioritises the country's education challenges. The priorities for the next three years are to improve teacher quality and qualifications, undertake curriculum review and development, improve facilities and resources in schools to rebuild community confidence and to reduce student and teacher absenteeism, and to strengthen national capacity through regional cooperation. Nauru has been a strong advocate of PRIDE and the need for regional solutions to address the problems of small island states in education.

2.38 **Tuvalu**, similar to the other small atoll countries, faces cross-sectoral challenges of SISs including a limited natural resource base, a widely scattered and sparsely populated island geography, a small domestic market with little potential for economies of scale, limited access to major international markets due to expense, and an increasingly competitive international market for seamen who historically have provided important remittance income for the nation. Tuvalu's key challenges being addressed in the Education Sector Plan for 2006-2010 include very limited management and capacity building at the national level, sustainability of resources particularly maintenance of buildings and facilities, declining literacy and numeracy in primary education, and the need to create a range of learning opportunities for various types of learners. Tuvalu's population continues to rise and the drift of population from the outer islands is accelerating. **Climate change is a critical challenge** underscoring the need for strategies to support Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Tuvalu is working closely with NZAID, AusAID and EU in responding to its challenges particularly in teacher training, curriculum development, including ECCE, and outer island development. Regional assistance through PRIDE provides valuable complementary support.

2.39 **Niue**, a single coral island, shares the challenges of the other Pacific SISs. One of the biggest challenges for the country in education, in the view of senior officials, is arresting the **loss of national identity** that has been occurring. Niue's level of GDP per head is one of the highest in the Pacific and it is on track to achieve the key MDG and EFA goals. Like Cook Islands, Niue is also experiencing **significant population decline**, and as a result the country faces critical economic and financial challenges as it attempts to diversify the economy and also reduce dependence on aid. Along with Palau it has one of the oldest populations in the Pacific. Linked to this decline in population which brings with it a diminution of the resource base, is a sense of 'loss' of national identity and values. The government's priorities in the education sector are to enhance the quality of education, specifically to raise the achievement of all children, to secure and promote the unique identity of the Niue people and to increase the effectiveness of governance and management of the Education system.

2.40 **Tokelau**, with a population of approximately 1500, is vulnerable to environmental and economic changes similar to other SISs in the Pacific. Its geography and relative isolation makes delivery of basic economic and social services very costly and a significant challenge. With the intention of making service delivery in the public sector more responsive to local needs, the Tokelau Government has recently devolved public administration to the village councils on each of the three atolls. In the case of schools, this means all decisions regarding teacher related policies, strategies and issues are now the responsibility of the village council. This has created a key challenge for the Department of Education to ensure the quality of education is not compromised by decisions taken or not taken as the case might be. In similar manner to the other small atoll nations, Tokelau has the challenges of capacity, shortages of trained teachers, issues around the quality of school leadership and the absence of monitoring and evaluation of schools and staff appraisal. Tokelau also has a critical challenge in terms of teacher supply at the foundation levels of basic education (ECCE and primary), where teachers need to be able to speak the Tokelau language. Tokelau's six year education sector plan (2008-2013) has priorities in five broad areas to address these challenges – human resource development, professional leadership development, infrastructure development, Tokelau language and culture, and research, monitoring and evaluation.

2.41 **Samoa** was the first country in the region to complete its EFA Mid Decade Assessment (November 2007) and undertook the work as a capacity building activity under PRIDE. The MDA provides a comprehensive up-to-date picture of the country's education challenges and priorities. The HDI for Samoa has been increasing reflecting the very high priority placed on the development of the social sectors by the Samoa Government. The Government has been committing approximately 22 to 25% of the national budget to education, targeting priorities identified in a ten year plan for the development of the sector. The period of the first ten year plan (1995-2005) saw major developments in the sector and development projects implemented with assistance of AusAID, NZAID and ADB. These projects addressed the challenges of limited capacity in the Ministry, curriculum and materials development, teacher training and access and equity in lower secondary education.

2.42 Samoa has also been pro-active in developing the ECCE sector and has developed a policy and management framework for special needs education. As a result of these programs and reforms Samoa is on target to achieve most of the MDG and EFA goals pertaining to education. With respect to access, the completion rate in primary education is now over 90% although lower on the island of Savaii. The number of qualified primary teachers has increased from 92% in 2001 to 96% in 2007, and for secondary teachers the increase was from 85 to 90%.

2.43 Despite the achievements that have been made in sector development, **Samoa continues to experience the challenge of achieving sustainable improvement in quality of education.** The situation in Samoa in this regard exemplifies the state of education in the Pacific more generally. The SPELL test results indicate **continuing problems with literacy in primary schools** with the number of 'at risk' students in English increasing from 46% in 2000 to 53% in 2006. **Girls are outperforming boys consistently** and this is another

challenge in most countries. Senior officials believe that teacher quality and school leadership are the critical issues in Samoa impacting on learning outcomes of students. Although the Ministry and development partners have invested heavily in ISE for teachers, commitment of teachers and principals in terms of leadership remains a major challenge. Shortages of secondary teachers have developed and have become critical in some subject areas, particularly mathematics and science.

2.44 **Tonga** is another country that is rebuilding its education system following recent social and political unrest (the '16/11' riots of 2006). The factors contributing to these riots were complex. Nevertheless the leadership of the sector feels that the riots have taught a painful lesson that something significant has been missing from the curriculum and education provided to young people. Prior to the riots a sector study (funded by World Bank and NZAID) had been undertaken in which strengths and weaknesses of the education system were comprehensively documented. Arising from this study a 15-year strategic plan and a 3-year corporate plan were approved by the Tongan Government confirming the direction to be taken in addressing the key systemic challenges.

2.45 The vehicle for implementing the recommendations arising from the sector study is the Tonga Education Sector Improvement Programme (TESIP) which commenced in 2005. This programme is another SWAp with donor support from NZAID, World Bank and, most recently, AusAID. The key challenges being addressed are quality, access at secondary level, equity in provision of services, capacity building within the Ministry and sustainable financing of the sector (the education share of government expenditure at 15% is low compared to the rest of the Pacific).

2.46 Tonga is another country experiencing **population decline in the outer islands** and is struggling with equitable provision and quality of service to these communities. There is also a **substantial resourcing gap in the non-government secondary schools**. Addressing these challenges in the current post-conflict environment creates additional challenges and pressures. The Government's first priority in the TESIP is addressing quality at all levels including curriculum review, followed by rebuilding the education system and capacity building following the riots and the Government's redundancy program, ensuring equity to schools through a school grants program, and the promotion of culture in schools.

2.47 **Cook Islands** is also grappling with the challenge of demographic change. Overall the population is declining with two demographic patterns at work: migration from the outer islands to the national capital and secondly onward migration from New Zealand to Australia. The country's MDG report of 2005 noted that 'the scattered islands with small pockets of population makes the delivery of basic economic and social services very costly and a significant challenge'. The country is looking at the use of ICT as a possible solution in terms of remoteness and costs. Cook Islands has one of the highest levels of GDP per head in the Pacific but major risks exist in terms of sustaining current levels of development due to vulnerability of the country to structural, geographic, demographic and labour force constraints. The country has become dependent on a high level of expatriate employment to sustain development in both the public and private sectors.

2.48 Cook Islands has achieved close to universal access to basic education with 99% of the school aged population attending school. However, **school completion rates beyond age 14 are very low** leaving many young people without formal qualifications and the necessary skills for the local job market. Teacher supply is a critical challenge as a result of migration of teachers to New Zealand. Alternative strategies are needed to attract and retain teachers. Along with the other Polynesian countries, Cook Islands is facing a key challenge with language shift and language and culture loss in the younger generation. The policy and planning issues associated with demographic change underscore the need for a fully functioning EMIS and the development of skills in policy and data analysis so that policy and strategy can be more evidence based. This is a common challenge across the region and a targeted area for capacity development.

2.49 The **three Micronesian countries of the northern Pacific, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI), and Palau** are experiencing many of the same challenges of the Polynesian countries in terms of net migration loss, drift of population from outer islands, language culture and life skills loss, deteriorating teacher quality and poor physical learning environment for many students. The countries also face the same challenge that the Melanesian countries of Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are facing in terms of large numbers of unqualified or less than fully qualified teachers. RMI and the states of Chuuk and Pohnpei in FSM all have remote islands and face the logistical challenges and high cost of bringing teachers to in-service training. Keeping young children in school is a major challenge across the sub-region, and senior officials feel that the needs of out-of-school youth have not been well addressed in sector planning. All of these three countries face major financing and resource allocation challenges associated with Compact funding and other tied US federal grants from the US. Although the general influence of the US education system is strong there is still considerable diversity within the sub-region. The difference in standards and learning outcomes between public and private schools tends to be greater in this sub-region than elsewhere in the Pacific. Several of the private schools have had US accreditation for some time whereas only a few public schools have this accreditation. There are no significant gender differences in access (although boys do less well in educational attainment) and the main marginalised groups are those living in remote communities and the increasing numbers of out of school youth. The northern Pacific countries are further advanced than elsewhere in the Pacific in addressing special education need and development of Inclusive Education (IE) policies and practice.

2.50 **RMI**, which renewed its Compact funding for a further 20 years in 2003, has both acute outer island challenges and also some unique urban pressures with extreme population density in the urban centre of Ebeye. In the last two years, the government has undertaken a major initiative or set of strategies to “rethink” the education system so that it is relevant and better reflects Marshallese culture, values, skills and traditions. These strategies include **vocationalisation and Majolising or indigenising the curriculum**, starting in the primary grades, an effort to strengthen and introduce life-skills education, both traditional and modern skills, needed to survive in the Marshall Islands. Developing a system of student assessment tools to monitor student achievement is another strategy undertaken for improvement.

Capacity building to analyse and interpret assessment results to improve instructions and other key education elements is needed.

2.51 Raising teaching skills and qualifications is the key investment in the country's education strategic plan Vision 2018. Despite RMI being one of the highest spenders for education in the Pacific, spending more per capita and more as a percentage of public expenditure (30% of public expenditure), the number of unqualified teachers is very high at 50%. The situation in RMI illustrates the public/private challenge and the disadvantage students in the outer islands experience. Access to primary school is essentially good compared to other Pacific islands, but drop-outs before Grade 8 are high and the transition rate to Grade 9 is poor, although improving. Students from the outer atolls are doubly disadvantaged. They have a lower probability of reaching the public high school cut-off score, and if they wish to attend a private secondary school most of which are located on Majuro, their (on average) lower household income generates issues of the affordability of attending private high schools. The PILL scores show that boys are more "at risk" than girls. Private schools have a lower proportion of "at risk" students than public schools according to both the PILL results and the Grade 8 exam scores.

2.52 **FSM** encounters many of the challenges of RMI, but being a federation of four states is also grappling with the system governance, communication and planning issues associated with a federal system. FSM being culturally and linguistically diverse with a geographically dispersed population presents a challenge for communications. Responsibility for education is shared between the national and state governments with both national and state governments having strategic plans for the sector. The state plans have been developed through PRIDE. The national department has an oversight responsibility but lacks the authority to put in place sanctions and improvement activities without states being on board. Thus, while the national department sets goals and standards for the nation, the states set their own priorities and these priorities may or may not reflect the national goals or standards. As an example, while the national department is set to look at school accreditation in the FSM as a priority, this is not a state shared priority. Furthermore, the federal-state relationship is hampered by a lack of communication plan or strategies in place to ensure efficient and effective communication up and down and between the national education division and state education agencies. Thus, a number of national, regional and international education initiatives do not filter down to the state education agencies resulting in education managers who are not necessarily conversant with regional and international education issues, plan or initiatives. The interviews conducted by the Review in FSM indicated that there is a very real disconnect between national and state levels. Although there is a mechanism of regular meetings between the parties, information seems not to flow effectively in either direction. Information on FBEAP and FEDMM goes to the national level, whereas PRIDE is implemented at the state level.

2.53 Although there is considerable diversity between the four FSM states in terms of educational conditions, particularly in terms of population to be served, common weaknesses or challenges include lack of qualified teachers (up to 40% without a post secondary qualification), poor physical learning environment in classrooms and schools, particularly in

Chuuk state, high levels of absenteeism for both teachers and students, language and culture and how they could be incorporated into practice and attending to the needs of school ‘push-outs’ and drop-outs. The high levels of teacher absenteeism in some FSM states and other countries such as PNG, Solomon Islands and Nauru is a clear indication of a **need that countries have to strengthen teacher and principal accountability frameworks**.

2.54 **Palau**, the smallest of the three northern Pacific countries in terms of population, is facing an end to its Compact of Free Association with the US in 2009 and this being the case the issue of **sustainable financing** is seen by the leadership of the education sector to be **the greatest challenge** currently facing the system. On most indicators the Palau education sector is further developed than the other northern countries and the Ministry has a depth of experience in education strategic planning and education performance monitoring. A high priority is placed on developing and implementing assessment tools to monitor student achievement. Palau is also seen to have developed good practice in respect of developing a responsive TVET sector in the context of a small island state. Like the Cook Islands in the south, Palau is also experiencing a **declining population** and is facing the challenge of managing declining school rolls, necessitating, in some instances, school closure. **Teacher quality is an ongoing challenge** made difficult in terms of attracting good teachers by the low remuneration offered. In addition to the issue of sustainable financing, the key priorities of Palau in the education sector are improving teacher competence and pedagogical skills, principals’ leadership and management skills, transition programs at years 9 and 10 to help curb the high rate of school drop-outs, and capacity building in the Ministry particularly in policy development.

Summary of country level challenges and priorities

2.55 The research undertaken by the Review has revealed that despite the substantial differences in social, historical, demographic and economic contexts the 15 Pacific Island Countries (PICs) are experiencing many of the same challenges and have identified very similar priorities for further development of their education sectors. All of the countries are experiencing **access** challenges of some sort. In the case of PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu the challenges are still substantial at the level of compulsory education with substantial numbers of children not enrolled in school and many others dropping out before completing primary school. The Polynesian and Micronesian countries have achieved close to universal primary education but all have access issues at secondary level particularly for children in remote areas. All countries in the region have access challenges in the ECCE sector and all countries (with exception of the three northern countries) have major gaps in terms of providing access for children and youth with disabilities.

2.56 All countries have major challenges in terms of quality of education currently provided. While substantial progress has been made in access (as measured across a range of indicators), the same cannot be said with regard to quality of education. The Review has found that there is little valid and reliable data in the region on quality measures for education. However the data that does exist, particularly data from literacy and numeracy tests in primary education, and also the considered views of professionals at country level and

in technical agencies working in the region, paints a picture of stagnating quality or even regression. This is probably the major challenge in Pacific education as it affects almost all countries. A recent study on Pacific education sector performance (*Opportunities to Improve Education Sector Performance*, 2006) conducted by the World Bank came to the conclusion that the early promise of improved access and quality that was evident in the 1990s had stalled by the turn of the century.

2.57 Consultations conducted during the Review were unanimous in the view that the critical input in quality of education in the Pacific is teacher quality. While several countries (Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Palau, RMI, FSM) have considerable challenges in terms of qualifications and certification of their teachers, even those countries with teacher workforces in which close to all teachers are qualified (PNG, Samoa, Fiji), have critical challenges in terms of teacher and head teacher/school principal competence. Key priorities for many countries in addressing this challenge are the development of teacher and principal accountability frameworks and standards and development of ongoing and sustainable programs for in-service training of teachers and school leaders.

2.58 The poor state of the physical learning environment of schools and classrooms including textbooks, classroom learning materials, libraries, ICT tools and the lack of maintenance of school buildings and infrastructure is a challenge that all countries are facing. This challenge is linked to the issue of sustainable financing of education systems and the structure of education outlays in which for most systems salaries represent over 90% of recurrent budgets.

2.59 Ensuring that the education delivered, particularly the curriculum taught in schools is meaningful and relevant to an increasingly diverse student population is another critical challenge. Comprehensive curriculum review and redevelopment (including development of curriculum and assessment frameworks) is one of the top priorities in current educational plans in more than half of the countries. Central to these reviews is the emphasis being placed on language and culture and the rethinking of education philosophy, policy and practice and in this process shedding the residual negative legacies of the colonial period.

2.60 With respect to equity, the challenges being addressed are very much grounded in the specific Pacific context. Under representation of girls remains a challenge in the Melanesian countries although gaps are generally closing. In most of the other Pacific countries close to gender parity has been achieved in compulsory education. Females are under-represented in TVET enrolments in all systems and in a number of countries in upper secondary education. When educational outcomes are considered most PICs are being challenged by boys' under-achievement. Further research is needed to address this challenge although systems are addressing the issue in the context of curriculum and pedagogical review.

2.61 Apart from the very small single island states of Nauru and Niue, ensuring equitable provision of quality education to outer islands and remote rural communities is a major challenge across the region particularly where population in these communities is falling and drifting to the urban centres. Out-of-school youth is another major challenge with these

young people constituting a growing marginalised group across the system. Countries have been struggling with responding to this challenge in terms of providing some meaningful ‘second-chance’ learning opportunities. All countries are grappling with the increasing array of issues and challenges affecting youth including violence, substance abuse, teenage pregnancies and alienation.

2.62 Since FBEAP 2001 there has certainly been greater advocacy and consideration given in education plans, policies and budgets to the needs of children and youth with disabilities. However all systems are far removed from providing an equitable educational provision to these young people.

2.63 Another equity challenge affecting a number of countries (Tonga, FSM, RMI & Palau in particular) is the ‘public/private’ divide in terms of resources and opportunities.

2.64 All countries have major capacity gaps in their systems that are holding them back in responding to the access, quality and equity challenges that have been documented in the review.

2.65 These capacity gaps include ability and skills to efficiently manage sector resources (at national, state, provincial and school level) including donor provided resources, ability to develop and analyse policies at sectoral and sub sectoral level, ability to develop, manage and modify education management information systems (EMIS), ability to develop and nurture stakeholder relationships with other government departments, civil society, and other educational authorities and lack of fully institutionalised M & E systems to track sector performance.

2.66 Many countries (PNG, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Kiribati, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Cook Islands) have explicit capacity building objectives in their key recent and current programs of bilateral support. And building capacity in educational planning and implementation is the purpose of the regionally funded PRIDE project in which all PICs are involved.

2.67 This stock-take of common challenges and priorities across the PIC countries provides the context for the assessment of the current validity and relevance of FBEAP which is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Three: Continuing Validity and Relevance of FBEAP

3.1 This chapter addresses the specific TORs of the Review that deal with FBEAP. Specifically the Review was asked to i) assess the continued validity and relevance of FBEAP; ii) assess how FBEAP and related mechanisms have facilitated member countries achieve EFA and MDG goals; iii) assess the impact of FBEAP on traditionally marginalised groups and iv) assess whether FBEAP and its related mechanisms have facilitated capacity building at national level. Finally the Review has been asked to prepare a revised education plan for the Ministers' consideration at the next FEEdMM. A draft revised education plan will be included as Annex A in the final Review report.

Key Questions Relating to FBEAP

3.2 The analysis undertaken for this chapter draws on a content analysis of the original FBEAP and subsequent amendments and the perspectives of stakeholders at national and regional level working in the policy/strategy, implementation and community domains. In addressing these TORs, the Review Team identified the following key issues and questions which formed the basis of the country and regional consultations. Is it worthwhile having a regional plan for basic education in the Pacific? For countries? For development partners? What is the purpose of FBEAP? Is there a clear statement of priorities in FBEAP to guide action at both national and regional level? What influence has FBEAP had in shaping the education policy and planning agenda in the Pacific? Now that the Pacific Plan has been developed what should be the link of FBEAP to the Pacific Plan? Are there benefits in maintaining a separate FBEAP or should it be integrated or amalgamated with the Pacific Plan with less individual reporting for countries?

3.3 At the outset before any of these issues/questions could be satisfactorily addressed it was necessary for the review to ask what is FBEAP? The Review has found that there is limited knowledge of FBEAP, its purpose, its context, its specific scope and coverage across the region. To a certain extent the Review itself has created a somewhat artificial environment for ascertaining who is aware of FBEAP and how it is used. Reviews such as this by their very nature stimulate awareness of the matter under consideration. This is a methodological issue that the Review has taken on board and factored in to the conclusions reached.

3.4 It may be obvious, but the first point worth mentioning is that FBEAP is very much a Ministerial document in format and presentation. It was signed off by the Forum Education Ministers at their first meeting in May 2001 and Ministers have endorsed several additions to the Plan at the five subsequent FEEdMMs. All of these additions are detailed in Annex G. In updating the plan at each FEEdMM, Ministers have endeavoured to ensure that FBEAP remains a 'living' document. The process has also resulted in FBEAP itself having a high level of ownership amongst Forum Education Ministers. The Ministerial nature of FBEAP is also reflected in the language of the document itself. FBEAP is written as a series of Ministerial decisions. It is an unusual style for a plan and with its repeated references to

other FEdMM meeting papers which may be inaccessible to the reader, the overall style and format lacks user friendliness and lessens considerably the plan's potential utility.

3.5 A number of Ministers and CEOs reported that they perceived FBEAP as being unwieldy and not 'user-friendly'. The Review believes that a revised FBEAP needs to adopt a different style and format more in keeping with plans developed at country level and other regional plans such as the Pacific Plan. The Review believes that Ministers now need to consider whether the language style of FBEAP remains appropriate if it is to have a broader level of stakeholder ownership in the future.

3.6 FBEAP 2001 was an 11 page document accessible on the PIFS website. With all of the amendments at subsequent FEdMMs, the current version of the Plan runs to 40 pages. The reason that the document has evolved into such a large document is that the meeting formalities and all of the outcomes of the FEdMMs, whether they specifically relate to FBEAP or not, have been included as additions to the Plan.

3.7 Amongst those who are familiar with the existence of FBEAP, the document itself is not well understood. The Review found that outside the small circle of officials linked to Minister and CEO offices, the knowledge of FBEAP was very limited. In the country consultations a number of officials at senior levels indicated that they were unaware of anything specific about FBEAP, they had not read it, or were unaware as to how to obtain a copy. A number of officials indicated that they first became aware of FBEAP when they attended a FEdMM and had some responsibility in briefing their Minister on the FEdMM agenda.

3.8 There appeared to be a greater awareness of FBEAP in the smaller as against the larger states. Implementers involved in PRIDE understandably were better informed of FBEAP although even at this level the Review found cases where PRIDE country coordinators had little, if any, knowledge of FBEAP. What became clear in the country consultations is that FBEAP has not been prominent at all in policy and planning dialogue at the national level. FBEAP is however referenced in some national plans. The Review found that FBEAP was much more widely known amongst regional agencies and other development partners. In the light of these review findings, a strong communication strategy will need to be developed and implemented for the revised version of FBEAP, the proposed Pacific Education Development Framework.

3.9 Despite the rather limited knowledge of FBEAP 2001 and its subsequent amendments, almost unanimously, stakeholders at the national level agreed with the 'idea' of having an FBEAP.

What does FBEAP cover?

3.10 As a plan FBEAP includes most of the key elements of a sector based strategic plan or framework. Plans for education generally address the following fundamental questions. **What** is to be achieved (vision/goals/objectives)? **Who** will be responsible for achievement? **How** will the objectives be implemented? And **when** is progress towards the objectives

expected? What is the time frame of the plan? What key **measures** can be used to monitor progress towards the vision/goals/objectives?

3.11 When FBEAP is analysed it is clear that it incorporates most of these key planning benchmarks. It includes a Vision statement, a set of goals and a number of strategies to be followed in the pursuit of the goals. Unlike national sector/strategic plans and business/corporate plans, FBEAP is not time bound. This is an issue for consideration in a revised FBEAP. There are few quantifiable targets or measures of progress other than the global EFA goals which were reaffirmed in FBEAP 2001. Where targets have been developed, for example in the case of Children and Youth with Disabilities (FBEAP addition 2002), the targets are understandably cautious and conservative given a reluctance of countries to be tied to a target that may be unrealistic in terms of countries' current state of development and resourcing environment. This is unlikely to change in the future and the Review has come to the view that the revised FBEAP should not contain specific quantifiable targets in priority areas other than global commitments already entered into.

The Vision of FBEAP

3.12 Few stakeholders were aware during the Review consultation of the specifics of the FBEAP vision. When asked to consider it at the consultation workshop in September, country delegates felt the current Vision was both too wordy and also lacking inspiration. The current FBEAP Vision is as follows:

Basic education as the fundamental building block for society should engender the broader life skills that lead to social cohesion and provide the foundations for vocational callings, higher education and lifelong learning. These when combined with enhanced employment opportunities create a higher level of personal and societal security and development.

Forum members recognised that development of basic education takes place in the context of commitments to the world community and meeting the new demands of the global economy, which should be balanced with the enhancement of their own distinctive Pacific values, morals, social, political, economic and cultural heritages, and reflect the Pacific's unique geographical context.

3.13 The delegates reporting back from group work at the workshop argued that the Vision needs to be articulated in simple terms that are catchy, easily memorised with countries able readily to assume ownership. The shorter the vision, the fewer the number of ideas that will be captured. Four alternative visions are presented for consideration in a revised regional plan. These arose in discussions at the September workshop and the October meeting of Pacific Heads of education systems. The first Vision focuses on the Goal. The second vision focuses on the student. The third vision focuses on the region and the regional planning process. The fourth vision is based on the PRIDE objective as the vehicle for the current plan's implementation.

Suggested new Vision 1: Quality Basic Education for All in Pacific Island countries

Suggested new Vision 2: Our students will be successful and live sustainably in the Pacific community and the world

Suggested new Vision 3: Pacific Island countries and development partners working together sharing knowledge, ideas and resources to assist member countries achieve their goals of access, quality, relevance, equity and sustainability in Pacific education.

Suggested new Vision 4: Expanded opportunities for Pacific children and youth to acquire the values, knowledge and skills for active participation in the social, spiritual, economic cultural and sustainable development of their communities.

3.14 The Review supports the need for a refreshed Vision statement in a revised regional plan. It is essential that the vision adopted has strong ownership amongst member countries. Suggested new Vision 1 has the support of the Review as it has the advantage of clarity, simplicity and it has a clear link to the EFA and Millennium Development goals.

3.15 The goals or objectives of FBEAP currently address the policy concerns of access, quality and equity. The specific goal is as follows:

Current Goal: To achieve universal and equitable participation and achievement. To achieve access and equity and improve quality and outcomes.

3.16 Delegates at the consultation workshop felt that this goal statement captured three of the four critical policy concerns across the region and that a revised FBEAP needed to also include in the goal statement the policy concern of effectiveness/efficiency and sustainability. The following could thus be added to a reworded goal statement to capture these policy concerns/principles:

Revised Goal: To achieve universal and equitable access to Pacific education and training.

To improve quality and outcomes.

To achieve efficient and effective utilisation of resources ensuring balanced and sustained development of Pacific education systems.

Content of FBEAP

3.17 The specific needs, challenges, priorities and strategies identified in FBEAP 2001, understandably were shaped by the policy and planning context in the region at that time. Over the seven years since FBEAP 2001 a number of specific areas have been addressed in more detail or given, explicitly or implicitly, high priority. When the content of FBEAP including the revisions is juxtaposed against the identified challenges and priorities identified

in this Review (Chapter Two) it becomes apparent that the revised regional plan needs to be more than a consolidation of existing content. The plan also needs to be refreshed to ensure that it addresses current needs and challenges across the region. The following table presents a summary content analysis of FBEAP 2001 and the additional focus areas added to over the period 2002-2007.

3.18 The original FBEAP identified a number of broad challenges in Pacific education such as teacher quality, the poor performance of students, poor resourcing of schools and rural/urban differences in resources and outcomes. The plan then elaborated or highlighted the following priorities areas or strategies for action at the national and regional level.

- Non-formal education(NFE)
- Engagement of Civil Society
- Different forms of secondary and vocational education
- Early Childhood Education (ECE)
- Pre-service education of teachers
- In-service education of teachers
- Classroom facilities
- Community Involvement
- Indigenous language
- ICT
- TVET
- Financing of education
- Improved donor coordination
- Partnerships with the private sector
- Governance & civics in the curriculum

3.19 Subsequent FEdMMs elaborated further on a number of the challenges and priority areas such as ECE, Language and Culture, TVET, ICT, assessment and donor financing. In addition the following new themes were addressed at FEdMMs and subsequently added to the FBEAP: Children & Youth with Disabilities, Pacific Protocol for Teacher recruitment, Entrepreneurship Education, Health Promoting Schools, Education for Sustainable development and Inclusive education. In this way FBEAP became a ‘living’ document.

3.20 From the content analysis conducted by the Review of FBEAP and the subsequent amendments it became clear that several of the current key challenges and priorities have

received inadequate attention in FBEAP. Some of these issues which receive little attention include the challenge of access at primary and secondary level, challenges of rapid population growth and also challenges of population decline, increasing poverty and urbanisation in Pacific communities, student and teacher absenteeism, problems of youth, teacher and principal accountability, state vulnerability and education management in post-conflict environments, challenges of small island states, outer island resourcing and equity challenges, HIV and AIDS, and capacity building needs especially in policy development and analysis. The revised and consolidated regional plan will need to reflect the stock take of challenges and priorities as documented in the Review.

What is the purpose of FBEAP?

3.21 FBEAP is referred to as an ‘Action plan’. This is somewhat misleading as while some action statements are included, the plan is much more aspirational in nature dealing with issues, guidelines and principles rather than specific actions.

3.22 When asked about the purpose of FBEAP in the consultations, countries tended to argue that its purpose is to lay out the strategic policy **framework** for basic education in the Pacific. Having such a framework, countries felt, is particularly important in dialogue with development partners. Countries were strongly of the view that FBEAP should guide country level planning and not be prescriptive. As such, countries see FBEAP embodying benchmarks and guidelines not dissimilar to the benchmarks for strategic plans developed under PRIDE. Countries were mainly of the view that FBEAP should not be time-bound and that priorities should not be ranked. This was seen as a strength of FBEAP in its current form.

3.23 Stakeholders who were involved in the original FBEAP development and the early stages of development argued that the original intent of FBEAP was for it to endorse a regional approach to ideas such as access, quality, equity and inclusive education. The intention was that FBEAP would coordinate regional activities and provide advocacy and a leadership role in policy dialogue at the regional level. In this way FBEAP could act as a powerful vehicle for inspiring collaborative efforts to identify and implement innovative Pacific responses to basic education issues.

3.24 In the consultations, regional development partners tended to argue that FBEAP should be more strategic than at present with a more focused set of priorities. They argued that FBEAP should have a shelf life. A medium term time-frame of 2015 was suggested by a number of partners. This would also be consistent with EFA/MDG targets. There was also a strong view that a revised and consolidated FBEAP should be better aligned with the Pacific Plan.

3.25 Countries and regional partners have indicated in the Review their support and need for a regional education plan. There are some clear differences regarding the purpose of such a plan and as a result the nature of the plan itself. The analysis in Chapter Two of Challenges and Priorities in education within the region also lends support to the need for having a regional plan. When FBEAP 2001 was formulated, the global and regional policy and

planning context was primarily **access** to education and the Dakar EFA framework. The analysis undertaken for this Review indicates that access is still central to the policy context but more in terms of access to **quality** education and education that is **relevant**. The analysis in Chapter Two clearly indicates that access is still not achieved in a number of countries and major quality gaps exist in all Pacific countries. A key issue emerging from the Review is sustainability of finance for education and affordability of sustaining the improvements that have been achieved since FBEAP 2001. In this context the continuing need for a regional education plan should be apparent on the assumption that regionalism can add value to national planning in education.

What should be the sectoral coverage of a revised regional plan? What is Basic education?

3.26 The current FBEAP is seen by the Ministers to be an action plan for ‘**Basic Education**’. The plan itself does not define the intended coverage of Basic Education (BE) although it can be inferred that BE is interpreted to cover all sub-sectors of education with the exception of higher education i.e. it is intended to cover ECCE, primary education, secondary education, non-formal education, and TVET. However within FBEAP 2001 itself, a narrower interpretation is implied where, within the Vision, BE is referred to as ‘the foundation building block’ (paras. 4 and 5). Also in the section on Financing Education, BE is implied to exclude secondary education –“the current financing of education in the Pacific tends to emphasise secondary and post-secondary education at the expense of basic education.’

3.27 The Review has undertaken some background research into the evolution of the term Basic Education and its current usage. The recent EFA Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO 2008) considers the usage and interpretation of BE in some detail. The Report found that usage of the term Basic Education has increased considerably over the last ten to twenty years with increasing numbers of countries referring to some segment of the education system as basic education. The OECD Handbook for Internationally Comparative Education Statistics defines BE as the first nine years of schooling or primary education plus lower secondary education. However within UNESCO documents, BE, since the Dakar framework of 2000, tends to refer to all programs providing for basic learning needs including pre-primary, primary, lower secondary as well as other youth and adult literacy programs. Within UNESCO BE has tended to become a synonym for the EFA agenda. However a recent review by UNESCO of its usage including use in policy documents and country legislation has found a range of different interpretations. The UNESCO survey of 113 countries found that approximately two-thirds of countries follow the OECD handbook definition. In the other countries the term is equivalent to primary only or primary plus pre-primary or secondary education.

3.28 Forum Island Countries themselves, as with the rest of the world, have a number of differing operating definitions of BE. However most follow the international OECD or UNESCO standards or something very similar.

3.29 Countries do not regard TVET to be part of the BE sector (other than vocational subjects in primary schools and lower secondary education) and in most instances secondary education, specifically upper secondary education is also excluded.

3.30 In the context of limited understanding and knowledge of FBEAP generally, the gap between the original intention of FBEAP's intention for BE and the more common interpretation within countries, is exemplified in the way in which issues relating to TVET has been handled. FBEAP 2001 and the records of subsequent FEdMMs are quite clear that FBEAP was intended to cover the full TVET sector. However, when an analysis of PRIDE is undertaken, (refer Chapter 4) which has been the main vehicle for implementation of FBEAP, what becomes apparent is that countries through PRIDE have confined their activity in terms of sub-projects to **VET in schools**.

3.31 This issue was the subject of considerable discussion at the September workshop and the October consultation with Heads of education systems. Arising out of these discussions a consensus was reached on two aspects. First, that Basic education needs to be defined in broad terms consistent with the common UNESCO usage (allowing countries to interpret/modify as appropriate to their own contexts), and second that a revised regional education plan needs to embrace TVET in the widest sense. Accordingly the Review has determined that the revised plan needs to address two broad agendas. First the EFA or Basic education agenda which covers the foundation of education, and second the training/employment/economic agenda. This second agenda was the genesis of the original meeting of Education Ministers through the referral from leaders on the basis of recommendations from Economic ministers and has recently been highlighted as a priority for Pacific education and training systems by the Forum Leaders in their Niue communiqué. By explicitly grounding the revised plan in these two agendas the revised plan will be better aligned with the Pacific Plan. Another option in which the revised plan only addresses BE, as defined by UNESCO was discussed at the October meeting. However a number of countries strongly put the position that the revised plan also needs to include TVET as a broad sector reflecting the priority this sector currently has for these countries.

3.32 The revised plan is able to draw on the recent comprehensive review of the TVET sector in the Pacific (Skilling the Pacific, 2008 ADB & PIFS) for documenting critical challenges and priorities for development.

Influence of FBEAP on the education planning and policy agenda at national level

3.33 The Review has found that FBEAP has limited direct impact on the policy and planning agenda in countries due to its limited familiarity and exposure amongst the key actors in the process. At the same time it is difficult to disentangle/apportion the influences of FBEAP and PRIDE in most countries. The PRIDE emphasis on robust strategic and sector planning processes has brought about significant changes at country level, particularly in a number of the SISs.

3.34 It also needs to be recognised that the relationship between FBEAP and country level planning is a two-way process with a number of issues brought to the attention of the

FEEdMMs and incorporated in the 'living' FBEAP as a result of these issues first gaining prominence at country level. In this way for example FBEAP has legitimised emphasis on indigenous languages and culture as well as a Pacific 'response' to education. The Review has found the profile across the Forum countries of the needs of children and youth with disabilities and also the ECCE sector have either directly, or indirectly through PRIDE, been raised as a result of FBEAP and the FEEdMM process. At the same time the Review has also found that since FBEAP 2001 the attention to national imperatives has strengthened in many countries through the various types of SWAp that are emerging. In a number of the country SWAp environments (particularly the larger countries) regional issues have been pushed to the margins or not addressed at all.

FBEAP and its role in countries achieving their EFA and MDG goals

3.35 The Review has found that there is strong alignment of country education plans to FBEAP and EFA and MDG goals in respect of education. This is not surprising given that FBEAP 2001 and its subsequent amendments strongly reflect country needs and priorities. The planning benchmarks developed under PRIDE have been influential in facilitating this alignment. Regional mechanisms have worked alongside and complemented national and bilateral programs and processes in assisting countries achieve their global commitments. Programme and technical assistance provided through multilateral (World Bank, ADB) and global and regional agencies (UNESCO, UNICEF, SPBEA, PREL) also have played an important role. In the larger countries, given the scale of the bilateral programs, FBEAP and its related mechanisms have played a very minor role, in some situations an insignificant role.

3.36 The analysis in Chapter 4 on impact of PRIDE indicates that where capacity is limited and where the pressures of the bilateral programmes have been major, the absorptive capacity of countries to utilise effectively regional mechanisms has been minimal. In such a situation regional mechanisms have the potential to compete with and dilute energy from the major bilateral programs. With a proper needs and capacity assessment country by country, this situation should be avoided in the next phase of regional initiatives following PRIDE 1.

3.37 In several of the smaller countries FBEAP through PRIDE has directly assisted such countries work towards achieving some of the EFA goals. The analysis shows that in general terms countries have used FBEAP, through PRIDE to address aspects of **quality** (EFA goal 6) and to a lesser extent access to ECE (EFA goal 1) and access to learning and life skills for young people and adults (EFA goal 3). Approximately 68% of the effort through PRIDE sub-projects has been directed towards the quality aspect of the EFA agenda. By implication the main thrust of effort towards achieving universal access to primary education (EFA goal 2 and MDG goal 2) has been in the country bilateral and multilateral programs. Although there are gender disparities in both participation and performance across the Forum countries, with some exceptions, gender issues have not been seen to be priority areas for strategy development or action since FBEAP 2001. For example no PRIDE sub-projects directly addressed EFA goal 5 concerning **gender disparities**.

Impact of FBEAP and related mechanisms on capacity building at national level

3.38 The two ongoing mechanisms for implementation of FBEAP have been the Ministers' meeting process (FEEdMM) and PRIDE. However several other activities, large and small, have taken their mandates from FBEAP, two of the key initiatives being the Regional Qualifications Register (RQR) and the ADB funded 'Skilling the Pacific' study. Analysis of the impact of PRIDE and FEEdMM form the basis of Chapters 4 and 6 of this report respectively. In each case the impact on capacity building in specific situations has been significant. The Review has found that the impact of FBEAP on national capacity building within departments and Ministries, independent of its related mechanisms, has been minimal. However on the demand side the Review has detected some evidence of important grassroots capacity building through the profile given to issues and needs such as Inclusive Education (IE) and the ECCE sector.

Impact of FBEAP on marginalised groups

3.39 Given the differing status of education sector development at country level, and the differing socio-cultural and historical background of the Forum countries, it is only to be expected that there are country variations in 'marginalised' populations. Nevertheless, the Review has found that FBEAP has played an important advocacy function in addressing the needs of marginalised groups in Pacific education. For example, community stakeholders consulted during the Review felt that the FBEAP inclusions of 2002 regarding children and youth with disabilities have raised the profile of this marginalised group significantly across the region. A start has been made in most countries in addressing needs and developing appropriate policies. The PRIDE co-sponsored workshop on Inclusive Education put on a spotlight on this topic and has given it prominence regionally. The Review has found that the proceedings of the workshop have been a useful resource for policy framework discussions in country.

3.40 The PRIDE benchmarks for sector planning specifically address the needs of marginalised groups and as a result marginalised groups are an aspect of countries' strategic focus. Stakeholders emphasised in the Review consultations the continued impoverished situation of a number of the marginalised groups in particular out-of-school youth and that a revised FBEAP needs more explicitly to address the issue of Pacific consciousness, including language and culture of the poor and the situation of youth and remote and isolated communities.

A Revised Pacific Education Framework

3.41 At the October meeting of Pacific Heads of Education Systems, country representatives were asked to consider the nature of the revised and consolidated document to follow FBEAP. Heads felt that the revised document needed to be reborn in a new title. Following extensive discussion, the Heads of systems recommended that the document be referred to as framework, rather than an action plan.

3.42 Accordingly the review recommends that the revised plan be known as the Pacific Education Development Framework (PEDF).

3.43 The PEDF will be developed in table/matrix format and will contain a refreshed Vision and Goal statement. The PEDF will include six sub-sectors viz:

- Early Care and Childhood education (ECCE)
- Formal school education (Primary and Lower secondary)
- TVET
- Non-Formal education (NFE)
- In-service Education (ISE) and Pre-service Education (PSE) of teachers
- System Governance and Administration (SGA)

3.44 In the implementation framework for each sub sector, challenges and priorities will be identified with agencies (national and regional) responsible for action/strategy development.

3.45 In addition to the six sub sectors the PEDF will address a number of cross-cutting themes (CCTs) including Culture and Language, Inclusive Education (IE), Gender and equity, ICT, Sustainable development, HIV and AIDS, Youth and Poverty.

3.46 The PEDF will be underpinned by the following Guiding principles and values:

- Diversity
- Harmonisation
- Holistic approach
- Partnerships (all for education)
- Education as a human right
- Five pillars of education (learning to know, to do, to be, to live together and to live sustainably).

Chapter Four: An assessment of the impact of PRIDE

4.1 The PRIDE project is the major vehicle for implementing the Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP). The project was launched in 2004. Its five-year operational phase is due for completion in December 2009. The closure phase in which final audits and evaluation are carried out will be completed by December 2011. The project includes the fifteen Pacific Island countries.

4.2 PRIDE is being implemented by the University of the South Pacific for the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) which is the Contracting Authority and Regional Authorising Officer (RAO). Funding for PRIDE is provided by the European Union and NZAID. The PRIDE project office which comprises eight professional and support staff is located in the grounds of the main campus of USP in Suva, Fiji.

The Objective and Purpose of PRIDE

4.3 According to the financing agreement and the original project documents the objective of PRIDE is as follows:

- 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.

4.4 To achieve the overall project objective, the clearly stated purpose or mandate of PRIDE is to:

- Enhance the capacity of Pacific education agencies 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.

4.5 Three Key Result Areas (KRAs) identified in the project log frame are the focus of the various activities under PRIDE:

- comprehensive strategic plans
- implementation of strategic plans
- strengthened regional capacity to support strategic planning and implementation in basic education

The work of PRIDE: What has PRIDE been involved in?

4.6 In pursuit of the overriding objective and purpose the work of PRIDE has clustered around six distinct sets of activities:

- i) helping each country, supported by regionally sourced technical assistance (TA), develop comprehensive strategic plans for the education and training sector;

- ii) develop a set of benchmarks to guide the planning process;
- iii) support the implementation of key priority areas of the plans by funding national sub-projects;
- iv) establish an online education resource centre;
- v) arrange a number of regional workshops on priority themes, and subsequently publish the results and proceedings of the workshops; and
- vi) facilitate appropriate study and training visits within the region.

4.7 More than half of the project funding has been allocated to activity iii) – the implementation of national sub-projects of which over 140 have been approved by the PRIDE Project Steering Committee (PSC).

PRIDE Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (MEF)

4.8 The PRIDE project has developed its own Monitoring and Evaluation framework (MEF) which distinguishes three levels at which information is being gathered for monitoring and evaluation for the project: i) at the project/regional level, ii) at the national/sub-project level and iii) for the management of the project.

Challenges in the concept of impact

4.9 In examining the impact of PRIDE the Review has focused primarily at the Project/regional level and at the sub-project level. Consistent with the major development agencies, the Review has adopted the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) definition of impact as: “positive, negative, primary and secondary long-term effects or changes produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.”

4.10 Measuring the precise longer term impact of a development initiative such as PRIDE presents significant methodological, epistemological and institutional challenges. Indeed the PRIDE MEF acknowledges that many long-term impacts will not be directly measurable during the life of the project. Some of the challenges which make a precise assessment of the impact of PRIDE include:

- attribution of the influence of PRIDE when in reality many projects and programmes are operating concurrently in education in the Pacific;
- weak institutional capacity within the Forum countries to capture and analyse educational data;
- the difficulties of applying linear log frame logic to a project such as PRIDE with over 140 separate sub-projects many of which were designed to be synergistic in purpose;

- and lastly and most importantly the challenge of seeking to obtain an overall regional impact where it is clear that the individual country impacts vary significantly.

4.11 The approach taken was to explore what has changed and how, at the project/regional level and at the national/sub-project level, to build up a plausible association between the changes reported and the PRIDE activities and outputs. It has involved identification of changes in collaboration with country officials, and other stakeholders interviewed, discussions with the PRIDE team, and through analysis of relevant documents.

Review Questions

4.12 The key review question emanates from the relevant terms of reference (TOR 8): *In overall terms what is the impact of the PRIDE Project?*

4.13 From this key question others were developed to focus the review task using the three levels identified in the MEF for monitoring and evaluation purposes: the project/regional level; the national/sub-project level; and the management of the project. The specific review questions are included in Annex F.

Review methods and approaches

4.14 The review used three strategies to collect information and data. The first was a review of documentation that included country strategic plans, PRIDE sub-project reports, regional workshop agendas and reports, policy frameworks, teaching plans and assessment analyses, student records and resource texts produced through the regional workshop. The second was the country visits comprising interviews, group discussions, and observation. Interviews and discussions were also conducted with regional agencies and development partners. The third was a questionnaire administered to countries and regional agencies.

Data Collection

4.15 The data collected was primarily qualitative comprising 19 country interviews and discussions (15 + each of the 4 states of FSM), interviews and discussions with regional agencies, and development partners, interviews and discussions with the PRIDE team; analyses of 32 subprojects for 13 countries (Cook Is, Fiji, Nauru, Niue, Palau, PNG, RMI, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Palau, Tonga, Tokelau, Vanuatu); and responses to country and regional agencies' questionnaires. The documents reviewed were used to verify interviews and discussion. While the Review was able to engage with stakeholders in specific sub-projects, this part of the Review does not comment on the impact or issues associated with individual sub-projects. The purpose of analysing sub-project data was to identify key contextual factors and design elements that are significant in evaluating overall impact.

Findings – overview of impact of PRIDE

4.16 The findings are presented under the three categories: Project/Regional level; National and sub-project level; and Management of a regional project.

4.17 The review came to two overall findings. First, the focus and energy of PRIDE has been greater at the national and sub-project level than at regional level; and second the impact at national level has varied significantly between countries. To the Review it is not surprising that a regional project such as PRIDE with a strong national focus involving 15 countries with varying histories, socio-economic, political, geographical contexts, capacities and access to resources will have varying degrees of impact/success.

- **Project/Regional Level**

Has there been a strengthening of capacity to plan and deliver basic education?

4.18 The review has found that in overall terms PRIDE has strengthened, through support for education strategic plans, the capacity of national education systems in the Pacific to plan basic education. All countries have made significant progress in developing and implementing strategic plans. PRIDE has had direct impact on 11 out of 15 countries' strategic plans through technical support, funding, and capacity strengthening. Completing strategic plans is a significant impact of the project in contexts where previously none existed or countries did not have a unified plan with consensus on activities. With PRIDE assistance, all four states of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) now have state education strategic plans in place. Marshall Islands, Kiribati and Nauru completed the development of their new plans. Tokelau has commenced consultations for a new strategic plan while several countries have sought PRIDE assistance in reviewing their current strategic plans. This is one of PRIDE's most significant success stories.

The impact of PRIDE on the quality and relevance of education sector Planning

4.19 The PRIDE project benchmarks document derived from the FBEAP has provided useful common standards against which countries have been able to assess their own strategic plans. The eleven benchmarks specified are (1) pride in cultural and national identity; (2) skills for life and work in a global world; (3) alignment with national development plans and national conventions; (4) access and equity for students with special needs; (5) partnerships with communities and stakeholders; (6) a holistic approach to basic education; (7) realistic financial costing; (8) use of data in educational planning; (9) effective capacity for all educational personnel; (10) framework for monitoring and evaluation; and (11) integration of health and physical education in the curriculum and school activities. Field tested in the development of strategic plans in nine countries, the Review has found that the benchmarks document has become an integral part of the strategic planning process of the education sector in the region where they are used to review draft education strategic plans before they are finalized. They are also used to review plans that have been completed and implemented. The benchmarks continue to be reviewed, standing up well to external review and application.

The impact of PRIDE on Pacific languages and culture

4.20 The Review has found that the PRIDE Project, in association with the Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative (RPEI), is beginning to influence national level thinking and

decisions on the place of local cultures, languages, and epistemologies in education. Seven countries and two states of FSM have identified language and culture as a priority area. Out of the 141 sub-projects under current implementation, at least 10% are in the area of language and culture. The fourteen sub-projects with a cultural underpinning address revival of language and culture through awareness raising, knowledge and skill building activities, curriculum change, capacity building of teachers, production of culturally rich learning resources that include readers in local languages, developing local research capacity, and the development and implementation of language policies. Of particular significance is the increase in the children's readers in local languages where virtually none existed (e.g. Nauru), investments in infrastructure support for publication such as machinery, training of staff and children as writers, establishing systems in place for translation and quality assurance.

4.21 The RPEI is considered to have challenged and refocused Pacific educators' processes, approaches, attitudes and values on indigenous perspectives, and knowledge bases, with resultant changes in policies and strategies that affirm and develop Pacific languages and cultures.

4.22 By increasing the volume and quality of materials available in local languages, PRIDE has indirectly impacted on the status or the position of local languages relative to that of English. Materials creation in local languages is designed to develop and advance the languages through word creation, standardisation of orthography, and through increasing the contexts within which the languages can be used. Such interventions raise the status of local languages and make them attractive for literacy purposes.

The impact of PRIDE on regional knowledge generation and sharing

4.23 PRIDE has been influential in generation of relevant contemporary knowledge regarding Pacific education and sharing this knowledge through capacity building of NPCs on an annual basis, the annual regional workshops, the online Resource Centre (PADDLE), the online discussion site NOPE (Network of Pacific educators), and the publication of outcomes of the regional workshops into the Pacific Education Series. Collectively these activities have been significant. Action research as an important vehicle for innovation and the generation of knowledge has not however featured prominently in the work of PRIDE. A stronger emphasis on action of research in future regional initiatives would increase the scope for regional collective learning.

4.24 The Review has found that overall the regional workshops are viewed positively for their contribution to professional knowledge sharing, and awareness of the host countries. Their main impact has been to increase participants' knowledge base for decision making and in a number of countries the workshops have directly resulted in policy reviews and changes. Also some of the workshops are acknowledged as having impacted on regional policy changes. For example, the workshops on Inclusive Education and ECCE resulted in a number of proposals/recommendations endorsed by FEDMM. As outcomes of the regional workshops, PRIDE has published five books in its Pacific Education Series on Educational Planning, a CD-rom on Financing of Education, Literacy and Numeracy, Teacher Education

and Early Childhood Care and Education. Two more publications are expected by early 2009 – Inclusive Education and TVET. The publications, which in the main are of high quality, represent a significant contribution to the volume and expansion of the Pacific knowledge base on pertinent education and training issues.

4.25 Although in overall terms the Review has found that the regional workshops have been influential in knowledge creation and sharing, some countries raised concerns during the Review relating to non-negotiated objectives and programme content making the link to country priorities weak; the uncertainty of whether the right participant was sent, and the lack of follow up after the workshop in country and by the PRIDE office. While the knowledge gained may have been important, it can remain confined to those who attended if there is no accountability requirement of the participants. Where countries have required reports and action plans, the knowledge gained has influenced changes in policies and strategies. The opportunity cost for ministries was another expressed concern particularly when regional workshops are of a week's duration. Small countries are particularly vulnerable in this regard.

4.26 Regional workshops for training the NPCs are generally thought to have had a positive impact on capacity building although in some places, a criticism is that little flowed through from the NPC after the workshop. A further criticism was that in the early stages of PRIDE NPCs were not trained in project implementation and there were, therefore, unrealistic expectations on the NPCs. High rates of turnover of NPCs in some countries have been a critical factor not just in respect of capacity building but also in terms of tardy sub-project implementation.

4.27 The Review has found that a myriad of in-country factors influence how much of the regional workshop knowledge actually gets taken on board. For example where there is not a strong organisational culture of communication and sharing of information within a ministry, the links, actual and potential, between regional developments and national policies may not be well understood. The northern Pacific countries were highly positive about the regional workshops and valued the opportunities they have provided for increasing their knowledge and awareness of countries in the south. An observation pertinent to the northern Pacific countries is that many are still not linked closely with regional efforts. While regional efforts are clearly valued, a view expressed particularly by those who have attended regional forums, is that more effort is needed to strengthen connections between regional activities such as PRIDE, regional CROP agencies and northern countries. The northern countries felt that more frequent visits from staff of CROP agencies are needed as well as greater effort to convene workshops in the northern countries. The review noted that of the five regional workshops three were held in the Polynesian countries, one was held in Solomon Islands, and one in the northern Pacific (Palau).

4.28 The Review found that from all countries, there was strong support and appreciation of the impact of PRIDE on facilitating networks and collaboration resulting in strengthened regional understanding amongst countries, and a strengthening of a regional identity.

The impact of the Online Resource Centre

4.29 The establishment of the Online Resource Centre (PADDLE) was identified in the PRIDE MTR as one of the key achievements of PRIDE in its early stages. The centre's key aim is to share best practice in the Pacific. Internal PRIDE working documents show that although use of the physical collection has been low by project stakeholders, the online aspect of the centre has experienced increased usage over the life of the project. The review has found that the centre continues to advance with the ongoing collection and digitisation of materials. In December 2008, 366 documents were available on line and this is expected to increase to approximately 800 by March 2009. An online discussion site, NOPE (Network of Pacific Educators) is up and running with over 500 members. During the course of the Review, the review team experienced at first hand the growing networking and exchange of ideas and experiences through the NOPE. This is a valuable development in breaking down professional isolation in Pacific education.

4.30 In the second half of PRIDE's life, the Information Specialist (PADDLE manager) has increased engagement with countries providing technical assistance in information literacy development through assessment of school libraries and ICT resources. There has been increased use of the Resource Centre resources and collection following group and training sessions for students and lecturers. As a hub for information collection, retrieval and dissemination, the Resource Centre and the technical assistance provided through the Information Specialist and relevant networks have influenced policy and strategy decisions around information literacy amongst other education areas. Sustainability of the work of the Resource Centre beyond PRIDE is a critical issue dependent on decisions regarding a future project and also decisions by USP in respect of integration of the Centre into ongoing USP operations. The centre is also highly dependent on the skills of the current Information Specialist.

The impact of training attachments and study visits

4.31 PRIDE has further facilitated knowledge sharing and learning amongst countries through training attachments and study visits which were reported to the Review as having positively influenced policies and strategies. Tuvalu ministry staff visited Tonga and Fiji focusing on assessment and senior school provision; and Tokelau visited Tuvalu focusing on the school-based Preliminary and Foundation programmes. Other planned attachments included Solomons in PNG for their school inspection system, Tonga in the Cook Islands for ECE and Inclusive Education, and Tokelau in Niue for ECE and literacy development.

Impact of PRIDE on harmonisation

4.32 As noted in para. 4.4 above, part of the mandated purpose of PRIDE was to improve the coordination of donor inputs to assist countries implement their plans. The Review found that overall PRIDE has not been influential in this area. This should not be seen as a criticism of PRIDE, as subsequent to the launching of PRIDE in May 2004, the whole landscape and agenda for harmonisation has changed considerably. The key development has been the majority of Pacific countries and the development partners committing to the

Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) in which enhanced harmonisation is one of the key principles.

4.33 Notwithstanding these developments PRIDE as a project has worked in collaboration with other regional agencies to strengthen coordination and harmonisation on education interventions. Of particular note is the active collaboration and partnership between PRIDE and PREL to narrow the divide between the Northern and Southern Pacific. At the country level, following the *Paris Declaration*, the major vehicle for harmonisation has been the development of sector-wide approaches (SWAp) with strong leadership from the national education agencies. In some of the Pacific countries which have utilised SWAp as the main vehicle for harmonisation (eg Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, PNG), PRIDE has tended to operate at the margin of the development dialogue. In other countries PRIDE has been more aligned with the broader SWAp framework. The Review has found that the role of the PRIDE NPC has been pivotal in leveraging PRIDE to positive effect in strengthening coordination and harmonisation of educational interventions. In some countries the NPC has not had the organisational authority for PRIDE to have an impact in this area.

- **National and sub-project level:**

4.34 The review has found that the impact of PRIDE at the national and sub-project level has varied considerably across countries. In some countries there has been a high level of engagement with PRIDE sub-projects having the prospect of significant impact at the national sector level. In other countries PRIDE has struggled to capture leadership attention and energy resulting in poorly designed and planned sub-projects with slow or stagnant implementation.

4.35 From the evidence to date on the three result areas of PRIDE, (1) strategic plans; (2) sub-project activities; (3) national and regional capacity, the Review is confident in saying that

- in contexts where a number of influential conditions have been present, there is a plausible association between PRIDE and a number of positive changes in education sector plan implementation;
- in some other contexts, the evidence suggests that PRIDE is having minimal or no impact for a number of possible reasons that include (a) countries have not started implementing subprojects or have only completed one or two with little to show for it, (b) they have system capacity and management issues, (c) they have other more pressing priorities, (d) or they are trying to do too many things.

4.36 Across the Region as a whole, in terms of Result 2, the implementation of country strategic plans through sub-project activities has been slow, and with one more year of PRIDE to go, 27 subprojects have been completed (as at November 2008) and another 114 are being implemented. Across the region, the impact of PRIDE in this area has been mixed with countries showing varied achievements.

4.37 Countries where strategic plans and sub-projects have achieved some positive performance outcomes with long term effects or impacts likely to have some measure of sustainability are the following: Samoa, Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau, Palau, Vanuatu, Fiji, Tonga, RMI, Nauru, Tuvalu.

4.38 In other countries (Solomons, PNG, Kiribati) the PRIDE project has been slow to establish, due to structural and administration issues constraining effective implementation. In these countries sub-project uptake has been particularly slow and overall sub-project activity is unlikely to have any meaningful impact. Other issues for these countries relate to geographic size, geographic dispersal, demographic features, post conflict experience. For Solomon Islands and PNG, the sheer geographical, social and political conditions means they are still grappling with the fundamental issues of equity of access, in addition to quality related issues.

4.39 FSM is in another category of its own as it has only recently (2008) completed strategic plans at national and state levels and there is the prospect that they will not have the benefit of time to implement all the sub-projects that have been approved.

4.40 The analysis conducted by the Review indicates that in overall terms PRIDE has been beneficial for the Small Island States (SISs) both in terms of the sub-projects and also the networks that have been formed. PRIDE has generally has a lesser impact in the larger countries. The positive impact on the SISs is significant as these are prioritised in the MDGs and also explicitly by the Forum.

4.41 The sub-project data shows that PRIDE, where it has had some impact has strengthened national capacities at the organisational level of ministries and schools, at the individual level of ministry personnel, teachers, community support persons, and students.

4.42 The entry level of participants has affected achievement and the nature of the impact. Countries such as Samoa and Fiji which have benefited from major bilateral capacity building projects prior to PRIDE have been able to draw on this capacity building to good effect in PRIDE project implementation. Positive impacts are felt where certain influential contextual features are present such as policy frameworks, quality and quantity of capacity, sector wide approaches to planning and stable and committed leadership. Where these features exist the enduring effects of front end impacts such as capacity building have begun to take root reflected in changes in policies, pedagogy, systems, and student outcomes. In a small number of situations recurrent budget funding has been committed to sustaining the momentum for activities initiated under PRIDE. Inconsistent or minimal impacts of sub-projects particularly at school level can be attributed to poor leadership qualities and systems, the absence of a system wide culture of monitoring and evaluation and weak capacity in project planning and implementation.

4.43 In overall terms the sub-projects being implemented at the national level are well aligned with the priorities of FBEAP and the EFA goals. Approximately 68% of sub-projects have addressed EFA Goal 6 of Improving the Quality of Education, 22% have focused on EFA Goal 3 Improving Equitable Access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes

and 10% have addressed EFA Goal 1 in Early Childhood Education. A content analysis of the whole 140 plus sub-projects has found that the four most common types of activities have been the areas of i) educational planning; ii) ICT in education; iii) teacher quality; and iv) language and culture.

4.44 The number of sub-projects submitted and approved for each country varies considerably from 5 to 6 in some countries to 15 to 19 in others. A small number of countries have targeted two or three priority themes. The majority of countries have taken a broader approach to project identification and this in itself has made assessment of impact difficult. Given that one of the key aims of PRIDE has been to help countries help each other, the Review believes that a more strategic and targeted approach to sub-project selection would have been more beneficial with greater prospective impact on lesson-learning across the region. This is a key issue for consideration in a subsequent project.

- **Management of a regional project**

4.45 The Review has found that the ‘regional’ nature of PRIDE is being interpreted differently by some development partners and beneficiaries with resulting tensions in expectations of what a ‘regional’ project should achieve. The way PRIDE has been implemented, i.e. a regional facility for coordination with much of its emphasis at national level, is essentially a consequence of the PRIDE design which prioritised country ownership and choice. To promote a strong ‘regional’ approach that addresses a number of common strategic issues or themes across the region would require a different design and criteria for the construct of ‘region’ and specific guidelines.

4.46 The effectiveness and efficiency of PRIDE project management has not been a focus of this Review. What has been raised in the consultations for the Review is consideration of the nature of future regional support to education and a possible management structure for it. Not unexpectedly there was very strong support from most countries for a continuation of PRIDE. There was shared appreciation for features of PRIDE’s design such as flexibility, ownership by countries, and ease of access to finances. The financing arrangements under PRIDE from a country perspective are much more favourable than under previous regional projects. This is relevant in evaluating the country perspectives.

4.47 There were a few views on the possible management structure of a future regional support to education. There was support for the existing management structure under USP systems stressing however the need to retain its independence from any institute, faculty or school. Concerns were expressed however over the application of university processes and procedures to PRIDE, thereby constraining administrative efficiency and responsiveness. A future regional project under the USP would need a commitment by the university to attend to policies and systems that are specific to projects. In another view, future regional support to education was seen as best located within an integrated established system such as SPC that addresses education issues and delivery cross-sectorally from a human resource development approach.

4.48 In another perspective, it was felt that greater benefit in some countries comes from technical assistance and networking, and that engagement in sub-projects was not necessary due to the country's focus on sector wide approaches. A regional project such as PRIDE, existing as a 'parallel' project was welcomed in another view, so long as the activities are well managed and innovative in nature with any lessons learned capable of being mainstreamed within the SWAp. Some countries felt that parallel projects, if well designed and managed, have the potential to act as an incubator of innovative educational practice. To address the area of 'like countries,' a view expressed by some countries is to focus on sub-regional arrangements (networks and sub-projects) with occasional regional forums.

Regional vs. bilateral assistance

4.49 A critical question/issue which the Review put to each of the Forum countries and the development partners is why have a regional project when the aid could be channelled through bilateral arrangements? This question generated a wide range of responses. The most common response was that a regional project such as PRIDE is valued for its networking, knowledge creation and sharing dimensions. These are benefits not easily captured through a range of individual bilateral programs. Furthermore, compared to bilateral arrangements, PRIDE funding was considered easily accessible and with greater scope for flexibility in country choices, and processes for reporting. In a number of cases, PRIDE was seen primarily as a funding 'agency' whose funds filled the gaps left by government and other development partners. In the northern Pacific where there are not major bilateral development programs, PRIDE has been regarded as a key development assistance intervention. In a small number of cases, PRIDE has in effect been used for budget support. While there was no explicit evidence of competition between PRIDE and bilateral arrangements, the Review did find that where a country has been grappling with the demands of a major programme such as a SWAp, embedded in complex geographical, social and economic issues, PRIDE as a regional project has been marginalised. The Solomon Islands and PNG are cases in mind.

4.50 To the questions of what would have happened in Pacific education without PRIDE, and what would be different for countries/Pacific region if PRIDE had not existed, the Review is able to make a number of observations. Those countries achieving positive performance outcomes through PRIDE would not otherwise have been able to achieve the gains because existing funding sources were either insufficient, or they did not include the areas covered by PRIDE. This situation would tend to apply to the SISs.

4.51 The element of timing has also been crucial with PRIDE enabling countries to 'fast track' some initiatives much sooner than would have been possible under government timelines and budgets. In a few cases, countries indicated that they would have sought funding support from other agencies had PRIDE not existed. In other countries activities would have lapsed in the absence of PRIDE. Regionally, it is fair to say that without PRIDE there would not have been the extent of networking and knowledge creation and sharing that has been made possible.

Concluding overview

4.52 The Review team has distilled a number of messages or stories regarding the impact of PRIDE. The knowledge and awareness of PRIDE and commitment to it from senior country agency leadership is very high, which is unusual compared to many other regional initiatives and projects both in the education and other sectors. This high level of leadership support and ownership is a critical success factor in terms of the positive impacts evident or likely to become evident over the longer term.

4.53 The second positive message is the role of PRIDE in developing and nurturing a network of educators committed to improving the quality, relevance and equitable provision of education and training in the Pacific. PRIDE has not been the only player in building this network. However it can be said with confidence that the emerging network is stronger as a result of the work of PRIDE.

4.54 The Review has also identified opportunities for improvement in PRIDE as a regional intervention. An initiative to follow on from PRIDE could be a more effective regional development assistance strategy if it were more strategically focussed on a number of common high educational priorities across the region. A future initiative is likely to have more downstream impact on educational outcomes if it is more selective and targeted in the areas to be supported. Finally, far greater consideration needs to be given to the level of capacity on the ground across the region in the design of implementation arrangements. The region varies greatly in terms of both educational needs and capacity, and the design of educational interventions needs to explicitly provide for these differences through calibrated implementation modalities if they are to have the positive impacts that stakeholders are seeking. These issues are addressed further in Chapter Seven.

Chapter Five: The Value of the Forum Education Ministers Meeting (FEdMM) process

5.1 As part of the review of FBEAP, Forum Education Ministers requested an assessment of the value of the process of regular meetings of the Education Ministers known as the FEdMM. Including the first meeting in Auckland in May 2001, there have now been six FEdMMs in total with the seventh scheduled for Tonga in March 2009. In addressing this particular aspect of the Review the Consultancy team has undertaken two tasks. First a detailed analysis of the FEdMM agenda, papers presented and meeting outcomes has been undertaken. Second, interviews were held with stakeholders including Ministers and past Ministers and senior officials from country and observer delegations and from the PIFS who had participated in the FEdMMs and/or who had been involved in the administration and management of the process.

Key questions regarding the FEdMM

5.2 The document and interview analysis addressed the following specific questions:

- Who participates in and who benefits from the FEdMM?
- What are the objectives of FEdMM and what has the FEdMM agenda covered?
- Is the mechanism appropriate to achieve the objectives?
- Is there appropriate follow-up of decisions made at both regional and national levels?
- Is there an appropriate communication strategy regarding the FEdMM, particularly in respect of decisions made?
- Is there an effective reporting and monitoring framework of action items?
- Can the resources allocated to FEdMM be justified in terms of cost-effectiveness?
- Are there ways in which the FEdMM could be made more effective?

Who is involved in the FEdMM?

5.3 The analysis of the FEdMM meeting records has revealed that there have been 397 attendees with an average of 66 attendees for each of the six FEdMMs. The country delegations have averaged 40 attendees and the delegations from observers have averaged 29 attendees. A total of 37 Education Ministers have attended the FEdMMs over the six year period. It is clear that, with only a few exceptions, the FEdMM process has been well supported by both Forum member countries and from various regional agencies that have participated as observers.

5.4 Over the six FEdMMs, 144 different officials and Ministers have been part of the country delegations. This number is reduced to 106 if the NZ and Australian delegates are excluded. Only 45 out of the 106 delegates from PICs have attended more than one FEdMM, and the number of delegates that have attended more than half of the FEdMMs is only 7 or 6.7%. These figures are probably not all that surprising given the relatively large turnover of Ministers and senior officials across the region over the last few years and in some countries in particular. The Review believes that the high turnover of delegates at the FEdMM does raise issues regarding institutional memory and ownership of the agenda and the FEdMM ‘work programme’. Fortunately, within the PIFS there has been minimal turnover of the relevant officials who have been responsible for providing the secretariat and policy support to the FEdMM. The current Social Policy Adviser has been responsible for the process since the second FEdMM in 2002.

What are the objectives of FEdMM and what has the FEdMM agenda covered?

5.5 A detailed analysis of the FEdMM agenda for each meeting and the outcomes is included as Annex G. This analysis shows that the agenda has essentially comprised three groups of items: i) core business; ii) discussion of key strategic sectoral issues; and iii) briefings and presentations.

5.6 The core business of FEdMM has been monitoring the implementation of FBEAP as the regional policy framework for education and PRIDE as the main vehicle for implementation. Each FEdMM has spent considerable time on these two key items and in the case of PRIDE, critical decisions have been taken in terms of focus and direction. Since the second FEdMM, the Ministers’ Retreat (closed session) has become a regular part of the agenda and an aspect of the FEdMM which has become very highly valued by the Ministers.

5.7 In addition to the monitoring of FBEAP and PRIDE and the Ministers’ retreat the FEdMM agenda has involved the Ministers taking a pro-active look and consideration of a number of key cross-cutting themes and strategies in respect of basic education and other sub-sectors. The following issues have been on the formal agenda. Other issues may well have been considered during the retreats.

- Basic education issues
- Financing of education
- SWAps
- Language & culture
- Pre-university courses
- Assessment
- TVET*
- ECCE*

- Disabilities & Inclusive Education*
- ICT*
- Entrepreneurship education
- Curriculum: sexual & reproductive health

5.8 The items with an asterisk were addressed at the FEdMM on two or more occasions and the interviews with Ministers and officials confirmed these as priority issues in the work programme. The last category of agenda items has been briefings and presentations from PIFS, regional organisations and other development partners. These main briefings have been on:

- UNESCO Skills Development project
- Life Skills Programmes for Primary & secondary schools
- Education for Sustainable Development
- ADB Regional Skills Development Study
- Health Promoting Schools (WHO)
- UNESCO National Education Strategies
- Youth Mapping Exercise (SPC)
- Pacific Resources for Education & Learning (PREL)
- Stepping up Pacific Education from Good to Great (NZ Education)
- Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers
- Oceania Football Federation

Is the mechanism appropriate to achieve the objectives?

5.9 Almost all country delegates and in particular Ministers felt that FEdMM is a worthwhile process and should be continued. At the same time there emerged a strong consensus in the interviews and in the regional workshop (September) around aspects of the process that could be improved with an expected positive impact on achievement of the stated objectives. The aspects of the process most valued by Ministers and country officials were the opportunity to be a part of a regional benchmarking process and the opportunity provided through the FEdMM to broaden knowledge of regional and global education issues and developments. A well structured FEdMM process can contribute significantly to capacity building and strengthening of educational leadership within the region. The dialogue with other countries and development partners and exposure to issues in a regional/international context afforded through the FEdMM can contribute significantly to improved knowledge and strategy at country level.

5.10 There was a strong consensus from the interviews that the main constraint or challenge limiting the effectiveness of the FEdMM process is the regular turnover of Ministers. There is also turnover of heads of Education Ministries particularly in countries where such appointments are on a contract basis and where officials tend to move between portfolios with Ministers. However in aggregate terms, the degree of continuity is much greater with senior officials and this has implications both for their role in briefing Ministers on the context for the FEdMM agenda but also in terms of developing a stronger sense of ownership of the agenda and work program. Both officials and Ministers felt that Ministers were not sufficiently well prepared for the FEDMMs. This was due to a combination of factors including papers arriving late, Ministers not being properly briefed by their Ministries on the papers, and issues papers being far too long and, often because of time pressures and other priorities, the agenda papers not being fully read before the meetings. In some situations due to immediate domestic priorities changes to country delegations are made at the very last minute and in such situations the degree of ownership and knowledge of the agenda is significantly reduced. It is acknowledged that in spite of the high level of support from countries for the FEdMM process, urgent domestic priorities will often take precedence over consideration of regional issues.

5.11 Although a draft agenda is distributed to countries up to three months in advance of each FEdMM for comment, country delegates expressed the view during the Review that they felt a limited sense of ownership with the FEdMM agenda and that this impacted negatively on engagement and commitment. This view was particularly strong in the northern Pacific where support (in terms of Ministerial attendance) for the FEdMM has been less than elsewhere. A related issue identified by some countries has been the timing of the FEdMMs which at times conflict with other Ministerial commitments. Again this appeared to be a significant issue in the northern Pacific where Ministers have obligations to several other Regional Ministerial meetings each year. These meetings are usually of three days duration.

5.12 If the timing of the FEdMM is inconvenient and the agenda does not appear to be highly relevant to Ministerial/country priorities and concerns, then decisions taken by countries late in the piece not to send a Minister to a FEdMM and to send a proxy are understandable given the amount of travel time required from some countries for what amounts to a meeting which is usually less than two days duration. Some of these issues such as the travel time required are inherent in the process. However it could reasonably be expected that commitment and impact would increase if measures were taken to ensure greater ownership of the agenda and process by countries.

5.13 Donors and development partners have also tended in most instances to provide active and strong support to the FEdMM and interviews confirmed that they regard it as very useful for Ministers to meet regularly. It was felt that for Ministers the most beneficial aspect of the process has been 'the retreat' and that for the agenda itself there needs to be a more structured process to ensure more rigour, discipline and capacity building of those involved. More effective screening of agenda items is seen to be required. For donors and development partners the process is seen to be a very valuable and cost-effective opportunity for

networking with Ministries and with the Pacific development community generally. Some development partners queried the extent to which the FEdMM has been strategic in terms of moving forward on the key issues in basic education in the Pacific region. There was also concern in some quarters regarding the value of the meetings being convened under the Forum. However, the clear majority of Ministers and country delegates felt that there is considerable value in the current arrangements. This issue may need to be revisited once the rationalisation arrangements under the RIF have been bedded down.

Is there an effective reporting and monitoring framework of action items? Is there appropriate follow-up of decisions made at both regional and national levels?

5.14 Consistent with the Forum protocols for Ministerial meetings, an ‘Outcomes Statement’ is prepared by PIFS for sign off by the Ministers at the conclusion of each FEdMM. However a standard action register of decisions has not been part of the monitoring and follow-up process. There has been no formal reporting of the FEdMM outcomes to the Forum Leaders since the process changed in 2005. This has been left to Ministers in each country to report to their own leaders and to Cabinet. Ministers and officials generally felt that this aspect of the whole process was one area that could be improved both at the regional level and in each country.

Can the resources allocated to FEdMM be justified in terms of cost-effectiveness?

5.15 The overall cost of hosting each FEdMM is significant given the number of attendees involved (average 68 for each FEdMM). At present the costs of the country delegations (two persons) are funded from PIFS core budget and observers are responsible for their own costs. The host country generally incurs some minor expenses associated with the meeting itself. Regional agencies have also shared some costs associated with hosting part of the meetings. To this juncture all of the FEdMMs have been held in New Zealand, Samoa and Fiji, each of these locations being reasonable in terms of cost and travel schedules. If all of the costs and opportunity costs (including participants’ time) are accounted for, the resources involved in arranging each FEdMM would amount to several hundred thousand dollars (AUD). In effect the costs of the FEdMM can be viewed as part of the ‘overheads’ of education systems at country level and a key component of the cost of pursuing a regional approach in respect of basic education within the region. Ultimately these costs, as with all discretionary overheads, have to be measured in terms of their role in adding value to policy, strategy and regional knowledge generation and sharing. During the course of the Review, stakeholders have identified a number of opportunities for improvement to the FEdMM process, which if implemented, would ensure that the benefits continue to exceed the ongoing costs associated with the FEdMM.

Are there ways in which the FEdMM can be made more effective?

5.16 The Review has found that the FEdMM needs to continue. The meetings need to be held every twelve to eighteen months. This is regarded as the optimum schedule as anything more frequent, putting to one side matters of cost, would not allow sufficient time for the ‘work programme’ to progress sufficiently and if the meetings were only held every two

years momentum would be lost and institutional memory would be considerably diminished given the frequency of turnover of Ministers across the region.

5.17 The purpose of the FEdMM as an ongoing process needs to be clarified and a formal process needs to be developed such that there is agreement and ownership in advance of the specific objectives/anticipated outcomes for each meeting. A Standing Committee of the FEdMM comprising Directors/CEOs from each country could be established with a clear mandate to develop the agenda for each FEdMM. This group could also consider regional matters of a technical nature ensuring that the Ministerial agenda is confined to matters of policy/strategy and political significance. The Review has noted that the Meeting of Pacific Heads of Education Systems has considered this matter recently and will be recommending to Ministers that the meeting of Heads be the body to perform this function.

5.18 The Ministerial retreat needs to continue as a key part of the agenda with the time allocated extended to at least half a day. Ministers need to be alerted well in advance in respect of the retreat and the opportunity the retreat provides for them to raise county specific issues.

5.19 The Chairing arrangements require some review as the current situation is an ad hoc process with the Chair selected at the start of the meeting. This part of the process was mentioned by a number of officials and ministers as something that also needs attention. There is advantage in a process whereby the Chair is decided well in advance giving PIFS ample opportunity for the Chair to be fully briefed on the background to each item.

5.20 Interviewees who had attended past FEdMMs felt that material prepared for the FEdMM can be better structured. In particular, the length of papers needs to be kept to a manageable level. Where papers contain recommendations it is important that the resourcing and implementation arrangements are clearly elaborated.

5.21 A number of countries felt that the meeting process itself needs to become less formal in tone and more conducive to discussion and dialogue in keeping with a workshop style of meeting. An informal tone may also facilitate more open communication giving the less dominant voices a greater chance of being heard.

5.22 Recommendations

That the FEdMM continue to meet every 12 to 18 months

That the meeting of Pacific heads of Education Systems be given the role of screening items for the FEdMM agenda

That the PIFS develop an Action Register for effective follow-up and monitoring of FEdMM decisions

That the Ministerial retreat be formalised as a part of the FEdMM with appropriate time allocated to it.

That arrangements for Chairing the FEdMM be reviewed.

Chapter Six: Support for Education at Regional Level

6.1 National governments of Pacific Island countries have come to rely on the support and expertise of regional organisations and providers of technical assistance and support in education. At the same time, the Review has found that countries are seeking improved coordination and harmonisation of such technical assistance. While significant harmonisation efforts are already underway among a number of development partners and regional agencies, such as the CROP agencies, more is desired. It is important to recognise that technical assistance and aid support strategies have evolved over the years as providers and donors struggle to ensure best fits for countries. In conjunction with this is the recognition that the change process, in the form of project aid or in kind technical assistance, takes many years to produce significant results.

6.2 This chapter presents the results of a mapping exercise of regional support for education to PIF countries. It examines who provides the support, how the support is provided, an assessment of effectiveness, including timeliness, depth and breadth, of such support, and an examination of gaps. The final section highlights education areas where regional support is recommended. Primary data for this chapter came from country reports developed as part of the Review process including interviews with education officials and site visits to various countries that are covered in this review.

What education support is currently available regionally and who provides this support?

6.3 For the purposes of this chapter, technical assistance is referred to support provided by technical assistance providers/donors that expand and broaden existing skills of institutional staff or strengthen institutional infrastructure (e.g. data management, policies) resulting in improved delivery of education nationally and regionally. Technical assistance reviewed for this chapter focused on strategic areas contained in the FBEAP framework.

6.4 With respect to types of educational support and assistance, PIF countries receive direct funding support and technical assistance extended through provision of expert assistance, internship and attachments across organisations, countries or with donor agencies, as well as international, regional and in country thematic workshops and conferences.

6.5 Study visits and attachments were seen as positive strategies to keep in mind for regional assistance. For example, countries interested in learning about assessment would benefit from attachments in Palau. Similarly, northern countries could sponsor attachments in the area of special education. The increased use of Pacific consultants was seen as a very positive trend.

6.6 Regional workshops and conferences that bring attention to important topical areas or issues are a common method of providing regional assistance in education. The regional workshops on Inclusive Education and Early Care and Childhood Education held in 2007 were designed to help countries learn and share best practices in these two areas. These

workshops, jointly sponsored by a group of regional and international agencies¹, as well as the NPC meetings, were considered valuable for sharing ideas, resources and information.

6.7 In particular, these workshops were found to be useful, particularly for small countries where one person wears many hats as they provide a level of collegial support within the region. The high costs associated with putting on a regional workshop or conference precludes organisations from convening more than one such regional workshop/conference annually.

6.8 With resource constraints, regional cooperation, coordination and harmonisation of technical support is seen as critical and necessary to maximise benefits to countries. Coordination needs to be carried at different levels: donor level, technical assistance provider level and country level.

6.9 At the technical assistance provider level, a new positive trend is a working partnership by regional development partners and organisations through joint work programmes that results in cost-sharing of activities benefiting countries. More recently in 2007, organisational partnerships enabled PRIDE, PREL, USP, PIFS, SPBEA, UNESCO and UNICEF to convene regional workshops on Early Care and Childhood Education and Inclusive Education. These were good examples of donor harmonisation where a number of development partners pooled their resources for greater effectiveness.

Strengthened harmonisation through SWAps and the Paris Declaration

6.10 Another major change in the donor landscape since FBEAP 2001 and the launching of PRIDE in 2004 is that the main donor agencies, particularly NZAID, AusAID and EU, have also moved toward the sector wide approach (SWAp) away from the project based approach that characterised the majority of donor and technical assistance in the region during the 1980s and 1990s. The SWAp approach exists in various forms in Tonga, PNG, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Samoa. Similar initiatives at the country level to coordinate common training and sharing of resources are encouraging.

6.11 The emergence of the SWAp as the main channel for education support in the Polynesian and Melanesian countries over the last three to four years follows the commitment to the *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* by the development agencies and the majority of Pacific countries. Some of the key principles of this declaration – especially ownership and alignment – had featured prominently in the Pacific region in the implementation of various initiatives under FBEAP including PRIDE. Pacific countries and the development agencies working in the region recognise that there is still work in progress in ensuring that education interventions reflect the other *Paris Declaration* principles of harmonisation, managing for results and mutual accountability.

6.12 The Review has found that for the most part, countries have had positive experiences with regional technical education assistance. For example, countries' experience with the

¹ PRIDE, PREL, SPBEA, PIFS, UNICEF, UNESCO

strategic planning process conducted by PRIDE was positive. Most technical assistance providers do have in place a mechanism, often in the form of a signed agreement, to guide their country assistance. These agreements or technical assistance plans can be on an annual basis as in the Pacific Regional Education and Learning (PREL) plans of assistance, or can be for five years as in the case of UNICEF Plans. The SPC is currently developing three year joint country strategies.

6.13 Technical assistance providers and donor agencies are, for the most part, flexible and often go outside of their agreements to respond to countries' unplanned request for assistance. Depending on expertise available in their offices, providers respond directly or through cost-sharing arrangements with the requesting country (e.g. UNESCO). In this case, countries may be asked to pay for travel or hotel accommodations or honorarium or a combination of any two or three of these.

6.14 A brief description of the major donor agencies and providers of technical assistance in education in PIF countries is provided in Annex H. There are currently four major bilateral donors providing technical support to education across a range of PIF countries – EU, AusAID, NZAID, and JICA. The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank has provided finance in a few countries. Since FBEAP 2001 DFID, which, historically had been a significant donor in education in the Pacific in the post-colonial period, closed its Pacific office as part of a global strategy of targeting its assistance to fewer countries. The UK government does provide support to the region through its membership of the EU. The French Government is also a prominent provider of assistance to its present and past territories. In the case of the PIF countries this assistance is confined to Vanuatu. In the case of the three northern PIF countries, Palau, RMI and FSM the US federal agencies of Department of Education and Department of Interior each play an important role in respect of tied grants and Compact funding.

6.15 In terms of other development partners, the mapping exercise conducted by the Review indicates that six regional and global development partners provide significant support across a range of countries - SPC, SPBEA, PREL and USP in the case of regional agencies and UNESCO and UNICEF in the case of international agencies. In addition, although not an agency, PRIDE is also a provider of technical support. In sum, although there is no 'home' for education in the region as is the case with some other sectors, the support that countries are able to tap into is extensive.

6.16 The Review found that countries are generally sourcing their technical support for education from approximately five to seven agencies, often two to three bilateral donors and the equivalent number of regional and international development partners. (Refer Annex H, Table 2 for details.) Provided the support is delivered in a harmonised manner, the so-called donor fatigue should not be a major issue for Pacific countries in education. Certainly the number of active 'players' is significantly less than in other regions.

How effective is the support provided? How timely is the support provided? Is there sufficient breadth (in terms of sectoral coverage) and depth to respond to a number of country needs?

6.17 A comprehensive assessment of the quality of regional technical support is outside the mandate of the FBEAP Review process. There are few impact data available to shore up positive or negative claims emanating from regional activities. What is available is anecdotal data from interviews with country staff. Countries were not shy about expressing opinions regarding the utility and effectiveness of technical assistance they had received. The impact of technical assistance provided through PRIDE activities including the regional workshops has been addressed in Chapter Four. During site visits the Review heard time and again that regional support for education via technical assistance has to be longer term to have lasting impact. Educational supports provided through short-term “fly in today; fly out tomorrow” consultancies tended to be regarded as inefficient with limited lasting impacts.

6.18 The more technical assistance is integrated with national priorities and plans, the more successful it becomes. Larger countries, such as Samoa or Fiji, for example, reported successful integration of technical support with their ongoing national reform initiatives. These countries are more likely to have the required staffing capacity, data required, and the readiness to gain maximum benefit from outside assistance and built capacity of staff in the process. The need to tailor technical assistance to fit the capacity level of the recipient country becomes an essential consideration for technical providers and donors.

6.19 Countries expressed preference for technical assistance that is coordinated and supportive of educational reform plans. They called for a balance of technical assistance that is tailor-made to specific country needs as well as regional support in the form of regional and sub-regional workshops. A number of countries expressed strong support for sub-regional or workshops specific to a group of countries with similar profiles noting that regional workshops are often not the best fit for everyone. Tokelau, for example, highlighted the fact that small island countries deal with high turnover rate of staff and must train more than one person to ensure continuity of activity and knowledge. The Review found that the Melanesian countries are increasingly working together on a range of educational issues and challenges.

6.20 In short, the Review found regional support for education has to meet certain criteria to be impactful. For example, it has to be long-term, predictable and transparent to allow for recipient countries to make medium and long-term plans; it has to be supportive to, and aligned with and integrated with, national educational plans and priorities. Furthermore, such support cannot focus primarily on advancing the agenda of donors or development partners with little regard for national priorities. Vanuatu is a country where technical support over the last two decades has been considerable. Yet the country has come to the conclusion that the positive impact on the sector has been minimal. Through a nationally led SWAp strategies are now being developed to align technical support more closely to national priorities.

6.21 The extent to which countries benefit from regional support also depends greatly on the countries’ own capacities to absorb and build upon such technical support. Small Island States (SISs), where staffing is thin and most staff are overburdened with multiple assignments, have to be creative to maximise support from a myriad of technical assistance

providers. Reporting to multiple donors and technical assistance providers in such situations becomes cumbersome.

What are the significant gaps in regional support? Which education areas or aspects of education lend themselves or could best be coordinated at regional level and why? What factors, if any, should be considered when choosing regional initiatives?

6.22 The Review has found that capacity development needs of countries continue to be lagging in many areas. Several reasons are attributed to this. In the first place, developing capacity of counterparts takes time and a level of sustained intensity that most technical assistance has not been able to provide. Time constraints and limited resources have not allowed that. Thus capacity continues to be an issue. The focus on capacity development, using existing capacities rather than creating new ones, is also lagging. This means prioritising the use of national expertise as a priority along with strengthening existing institutions.

6.23 Secondly, one-size “best” practice models of delivering technical support are often not appropriate to the particular context of the country seeking such support. For effective impact from TA providers/donors need to understand the particularities of each country’s contexts and needs. The Review found that, quite often, there are tendencies for nationals to resist support when individual donors propose different and sometimes incompatible forms of support, and following different timetables and goals. This further slows down the capacity development process.

6.24 The Review has found that some countries are experiencing difficulties in actually absorbing the extra funding from donors. Additionally, countries often do not clearly articulate needs for donors to support, nor are they ready to say “no” when they perceive offers of support to be inappropriate. This is particularly true in SISs, where, given a small population, staffing capacity is often limited. At the same time, it is sometimes hard for donors and technical assistance providers to justify amounts of assistance provided to SISs based on the population base that exists, further limiting sorely needed assistance. This issue is crucial and necessitates harmonised technical assistance to minimise demand on already over-tasked education staff in SISs.

Mechanisms to promote regional cooperation and coordination for education

6.25 A very strong message emanating from the Review is that the need for regional harmonisation (one of the key *Paris Declaration* principles) of technical support for education cannot be underestimated. It benefits all the key stakeholders – countries, donors and technical assistance providers. At the same time, it is not easy to put into practice. The current mechanisms to effect cooperation and coordination are fraught with their own shortcomings. At the country level the SWAp is a key process being increasingly adopted for more effective harmonisation. The PRIDE initiative has been another key regional strategy for regional coordination and cooperation. The goal is to make work easier and more efficient for donors as well as for recipient countries. However this has been an area of PRIDE’s work that the project has found difficult to implement effectively. Regional

partners working together with countries to develop joint work programmes, in response to country needs/requests, is another key harmonisation strategy. To the degree that these initiatives have been successful, future initiatives can build upon their successful features.

6.26 Leveraging resources to increase maximum benefits for countries is a stated goal for participating donors and technical assistance provider in the FBEAP framework. At the institutional level, particularly when it involves finances, it means harmonising donor practices which may include developing uniform and common procurement procedures, common financial management and common auditing requirements reporting formats. These will go a long way to assist small island countries who struggle with multiple formats and requirements for the same procedures.

6.27 The Review has found that clear accountability guidelines and requirements mandated by aid donors and technical assistance providers need to be simplified and standardised with country procedures as much as possible. Otherwise they add yet another set of reporting tasks to already over-tasked staff. The less complicated and cumbersome, the easier assistance will be carried out.

6.28 How countries of the region are grouped to receive technical assistance deserves attention. There is a strong belief that countries, particularly small island states (SISs), stand to benefit from increasing use of **sub-regional technical assistance** where countries are grouped by geographic location, common needs or similar size. This sentiment was echoed by Kiribati, Nauru, FSM, Tokelau, Cook Islands and Niue. Some countries (e.g. Kiribati) expressed the view that a regional approach is not always the answer. A regional approach can tend to work better for countries which are further advanced and have more influence. On the other hand a very small SIS such as Nauru believes strongly that SISs stand to benefit from a regional approach in education through sharing resources, expertise and experiences. To get the most out of a regional approach, Nauru argued that a regional project such as PRIDE should focus on countries with the greatest need. In this respect it was argued that the focus in a regional approach should be on SISs. At the same time arrangements should enable learning from the larger countries and sharing of skills with SISs that have a weak human resource base.

6.29 In the northern Pacific PREL is providing assistance and training in a number of states in FSM and the rest of Micronesia. Officials in these countries felt there are opportunities for harmonisation through cooperation and coordination of the work of PREL with that of PRIDE.

6.30 Five strategies were mentioned a number of times as possible mechanisms to promote regional cooperation and coordination. The first is use of regional workshops, with more emphasis on sub-regional workshops. Speaking about regional cooperation, a Samoan educator put it this way:

“Issues to do with teacher quality and professionalism can be handled better at regional or sub-regional level rather than national level. Another area is Inclusive Education where there is a lot of confusion on approaches. This

could be handled regionally to develop a sensible and cost-effective way forward. Other areas are multi-grade teaching, ICT and distance learning.”

6.31 The second suggested strategy has to do with expanded and efficient utilisation of USP Centres in member countries, but particularly in SISs for training and sharing good practices, both regionally and sub-regionally. While potential benefits of this strategy do not extend to non-USP member countries, it is worth exploring for the majority of countries that might reap benefits.

6.32 The third strategy is development of ICT in education across the region, as a means for teaching and learning. In connection with that, the use of USPNet is recommended to facilitate communication within and between countries and for training and continuing education purposes. As a Tokelauan educator expressed the issue:

...in Tokelau, the USP Net /centres can extend their services to include wider continuing education needs not just USP based programs, e.g. Fakaofu and Nukunonu to be linked to USP net on Atafu; rather than one net, have it available on other atolls to facilitate internal communication because telecommunication within small countries are beyond education sector alone. Countries can share the cost of any extra net – or another donor could expand/fund the band at USP Suva.

6.33 Other uses of ICT, particularly in promoting distance learning for teachers and other education professionals represent the wave of the future. The geography of the Pacific Islands region lends itself to such a strategy.

6.34 The fourth mechanism has to do with promotion and strengthening of professional organisations and initiatives for, and by educators, including such organisations as Pacific Association for Teacher Education (PATE), the Council of Pacific Educators (COPE) and Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative for and by Pacific Peoples (RPEIPP). These organisations have strong ownership by Pacific Islanders and have become effective voices for change in education in the Pacific region.

6.35 The fifth and final mechanism involves the strengthening the regional organisations (CROP and others such as PREL) and harmonisation across these agencies.

6.36 In the final analysis, the success of technical and donor assistance to education is connected to the degree to which assistance is built upon needs and strength of in country educators; the ownership factor, needed in both the design and delivery phases of assistance, cannot be underestimated.

6.37 The Review has found that the support for and need for a strong regional approach in support of education in the Pacific is far from uniform. At one end of the continuum, PNG being a very large country is able to provide almost all of its services that are necessary to support schools and other education providers from within its own resources. The country trains its own teachers, and provides a comprehensive range of curriculum development assessment and monitoring services. It has its own distance learning provider. PNG still has

significant needs and capacity gaps which are being addressed through its SWAp. The value that PNG sees in regional involvement is primarily information sharing and lesson learning. At the other end of the continuum, very small countries such as Nauru, Tuvalu Niue and Tokelau are very much dependent on a regional approach not just in terms of networking and information sharing but importantly to draw on the resources and capability of the region to provide services for which provision would be uneconomic nationally. These countries do not train their own teachers, have very limited capacity in assessment and do not have the resources and technical expertise to develop strategies or services in areas such as ICT, curriculum materials production and school principal leadership development. Even larger countries such as Solomon Islands and Vanuatu still have extremely limited capability in areas such as assessment services.

6.38 The extent to which country needs, gaps and challenges are being addressed through bilateral programs also varies significantly across the fifteen countries of the Review and as a consequence there is no consistent interplay between bilateral and regional approaches. While in the Melanesian countries of PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu the bilateral support is far more significant in terms of financial resources than that provided regionally through PRIDE in countries such as Tuvalu and Tokelau, the regional support almost represents a ‘lifeline’ for these countries hence their strong support for and commitment to a regional approach.

6.39 In other countries with significant bilateral programs such as Tonga, Fiji and Samoa, regional programs are able to complement the bilateral programs in addressing specific needs which are not able to be accommodated in the bilateral or national programs/budgets. This was often referred to as the ‘gap-filler’ perspective. Often the regional support through PRIDE was perceived to be more responsive (simplified rapid approval processes) than that provided through ongoing bilateral mechanisms. In the northern countries initiatives that are able to be supported through regional programs are highly valued and complement the support provided through tied grants from US federal agencies.

6.40 When asked to identify areas of education that should be targeted for regional (or in some cases sub-regional) support, countries tended to specify areas of education which met one of three criteria. First were the situations where the need was common to a group of countries such as leadership training for school principals, in-service training of teachers and language policies. Second were those areas where technical expertise was lacking in-country but likely to be available regionally for example EMIS and assessment and evaluation. The third criterion or focus area concerned technical/ policy difficulty where advantage could be gained in sharing resources initially to spread risks and minimise start-up costs. Examples of this criterion were TVET, ICT support for education, distance learning and policy and practice for students and youth with disabilities.

6.41 These three perspectives combined with an assessment of the impact of PRIDE nationally and regionally form the basis of a small number of models of regional support for the consideration of future regional initiatives. These models are outlined in the following (final) chapter.

Chapter Seven: Options for Future Regional Initiatives

7.1 At the seventh FEdMM in Auckland 2007 Ministers authorised the PIFS to commence planning and scoping of a future regional initiative to follow on from PRIDE when it concludes at the end of 2009. Part of the TOR for this Review is the development of a range of options for consideration by Ministers of such a future regional initiative.

7.2 Both the stakeholder consultations and the analysis undertaken for the Review confirm the need for further regional efforts to follow-on from the PRIDE project. The majority of countries feel that PRIDE has been a very effective regional instrument and has usefully complemented the work being undertaken at national level supported by bilateral and multilateral donors. A wide range of views has emerged during the Review regarding the shape and direction of a future regional initiative. These views emerged during the in-country consultations and the September workshop in which extended discussion and debate took place. The September workshop recommended that a range of models be developed to capture the key features of these differing viewpoints. Four models were subsequently developed by the Review team and presented at the October meeting of Pacific Heads of Education Systems. After considering the four models in detail, the Heads felt that only two or three models should be presented for consideration by Ministers.

7.3 In developing options or models for future regional initiatives it is extremely important that such models build upon the work that has been undertaken under PRIDE and also recognise and give due consideration to the bilateral and multilateral programs operating at country level and also the parallel regional initiatives currently being implemented or in the planning pipeline by regional and international agencies. A future regional initiative to further develop Pacific education needs to complement and not duplicate or compete with the country programmes and other regional endeavours.

The need for a future regional project

7.4 The analysis undertaken in Chapter Two (Challenges and Priorities) and Chapter Four (Impact of PRIDE) makes very clear that the Pacific Island countries continue to face some critical challenges as they develop and implement plans designed to improve the state of education systems. All countries continue to experience major gaps in terms of quality of education. Although very little reliable regional data exists, countries and technical agencies feel that quality has stagnated or even regressed. There is little evidence to indicate that quality is improving. Countries, often with the support of bilateral/multilateral donors, are developing and implementing plans to address the critical issues. Regional agencies, in particular, SPBEA, UNESCO, PREL and UNICEF, are working with countries on specific aspects of the 'quality' agenda. The objective of PRIDE has also been improving quality through student learning outcomes.

7.5 Countries also have challenges in terms of access to education at various levels and also equitable provision for disadvantaged groups such as those living in poverty (in both rural and urban areas). Common to all countries is the need to further develop their capacity to plan and implement programs and to monitor and evaluate the impact of programmes for

educational improvement. All of these issues and challenges are long term in nature which require stable, predictable and long term programmes of action whether they be national programmes or regional programmes. The key donors recognise this in terms of their country programs and are very forthright in their view that programs which are designed to start and finish within a period of 3 to 5 years are in fact being set up to fail. Accordingly the Review has taken the view that a long-term perspective is needed and that a need will continue to exist for regional programmes of support for Pacific education for at least the next 10 to 20 years.

7.6 **Principles:** Two key principles underpin each model – **inclusivity** and **flexibility**. In developing the models for the consideration of Ministers, the Review has taken the view that an inclusive approach is central to any regional initiative. A regional project needs to be inclusive of all the Pacific Forum countries. This is essential to maintain and promote a sense of regional identity. The concept of regionalism promoted in the Pacific Plan is that of countries working together for their joint and individual benefit. A regional approach is seen as supporting and complementing national programmes, and taken only if it adds value national efforts.

7.7 The extent of actual commitment to regionalism still needs proactive encouragement and development. Involving all countries in regional projects helps to build the commitment and understanding of the role of regional initiatives and of regionalism in the context of education. So each of the models has to be broad enough in design to **include all countries**.

7.8 At the same time the design and operating detail of the models needs to be **flexible** enough for individual country ‘draw downs’ of packages or elements of the proposed assistance. This is recognition that a ‘one size fits all’ approach will not be effective in many countries. The detailed project design of any of the models has to be based on the notion of ‘progressive engagement’ recognising that countries differ significantly amongst each other both in terms of educational gaps and challenges and also in terms of their capacity to address those gaps.

7.9 The Review is also of the view that as a regional initiative, the design further needs to be mindful that in the interests of strengthening regional cooperation and integration in the Pacific several quite different concepts of regionalism are put forward in the Pacific Plan for consideration:

Setting up dialogues or processes between governments. Regional cooperation means services (e.g. health, statistics, audit, etc) are provided nationally, but often with increased coordination of policies between countries. This is either based on an agreed strategy – such as the Forum Principles on Regional Transport Services – or arranged through a coordinating body, such as the Oceania Customs Organisation.

Regional Provision of Public Goods/Services: Pooling national services (e.g. customs, health, education, sport, etc) at the regional level. Governments are freed from daily management of some services and can concentrate on service delivery in other areas and on policy development. For example, by providing tertiary education through the University of the South Pacific (USP), Pacific Island governments can

focus more on ensuring their individual primary and secondary education systems cater to their unique national needs.

Regional Integration: *Lowering market barriers between countries. These barriers may be physical (e.g. borders) or technical (e.g. quarantine measures, import taxes, passport requirements, etc). Regional integration can improve access for Pacific businesses to consumers, increasing economies of scale and, therefore, reducing prices and making more goods available.*

(Pacific Plan October 2007 version).

7.10 Whether the concept of regionalism adopted in the design of a future regional initiative is cooperation, regional provision of services or integration, or a mix of these, requires an ‘assessment of obstacles to development and consideration of benefits and costs’ keeping in mind that in the Pacific where vast distances are costly in service delivery, any regional approach is expected to provide the highest gains.

7.11 The concept of regionalism appropriate to particular goods or services depends very much on the economic and social dimensions of such services. Internationally basic education is recognised as a national or state responsibility (in federal systems) of government. Service delivery is located at the local level (village/town) with responsibility for policy and standard setting generally at the central (national/state) level. In small countries such as the Pacific SISs, certain aspects of provision of basic education may not be cost-effective at the national level. Examples in the Pacific include pre-service teacher training and aspects of assessment. In such situations countries look to regional solutions to their particular needs. So the two concepts of regionalism – regional cooperation and regional provision – are already reflected in aspects of the delivery of basic education in PICs. The third concept of regionalism – regional integration – is likely to increasingly come in to play as the region harnesses the benefits of ICTs to improve access and equity in delivery of services particularly education for remote communities.

7.12 The models for consideration by Ministers also need to be firmly grounded in the principles of the *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* to which the majority of Forum countries and the development partners have committed. These principles of ownership, alignment, harmonisation, managing for results and mutual accountability provide a robust framework against which the models can be evaluated. Ownership and alignment have been strong features of PRIDE.

7.13 Globally, a recent evaluation has indicated that this declaration has created a powerful momentum for changing the way developing countries and donors work together on the ground. However the pace of change is still too slow and an *Agenda for Action* (ACCRA September, 2008) has been committed to by partners to accelerate progress on aid effectiveness. Whatever model is selected for the future, it is important that the model strengthens regional and country capacities in monitoring and evaluation and results based management.

Models for future Regional Education Initiative

7.14 Three models A, B C are presented for consideration of Ministers. The third model C is a 'hybrid' model incorporating strengths of each of the first two models.

7.15 Model A: A Regional Facility to support national initiatives

- This model would be an extension of the current PRIDE with the same objectives and purpose.
- This model is grounded in the first concept of regionalism – regional cooperation, with some elements of regional or sub-regional provision also incorporated.
- The Emphasis of Key Result Area 1 of the current PRIDE - Development of Strategic Plans, would change to: Assistance with policy development, costing, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of country strategic plans.
- The rationale for this model is that the capacity building work of the current PRIDE will not be finished at the end of 2009. Some countries only became engaged fully with PRIDE in the second half of the project period and have only recently completed their strategic plans. These countries will have only implemented a few activities within their plans by the completion of PRIDE. Most of the other countries still have major capacity gaps in aspects of plan monitoring and evaluation and plan financing and costing. These needs are becoming ever more critical as more countries move in to a SWAp modality. Accordingly a further five years of a regional initiative to consolidate the work of PRIDE 1 is required to ensure some form of sustainability.
- The model would differ in project design from the current PRIDE in that the design would be explicitly based on **differential or progressive engagement** for countries reflecting their needs, scale and capacity. A four package approach could be developed reflecting differing degrees of country draw-down. Flexibility would be essential in the design and project operations ensuring that countries would be able to move from, for example, Package Four to Package Three or Two over the life of the project.
- **Package 1** would reflect the current PRIDE model where countries implement sub-projects 'on their own' with the PRIDE office performing a Quality Assurance (QA) role. This package would suit the most advanced countries in terms of capacity development. Such countries still have significant educational needs not being met or funded but are now able to design, manage and implement sub-projects with only minimal technical assistance.
- **Package 2** would involve countries undertaking sub-projects with project funded technical assistance/advisory support (level based on capacity assessment). This situation would apply to a number of the SISs that have significant gaps in terms of needs not being met or funded but have very limited capacity to respond to these needs.

- **Package 3** would restrict country involvement to regional and/or sub-regional sub-projects. This would apply to countries that have significant gaps/challenges that are being addressed through SWApS thereby limiting the need for separate national sub-projects under a regional program. The effort required in managing separate regional sub-projects may compete with and dilute the effort of the programs under the SWAp. The countries may however see value in being involved in sub-projects at a regional or sub-regional level where the issues are germane to current national priorities.
- **Package 4** would restrict country involvement to drawing on PRIDE sourced TA from core staff or consultancy pool. This would be the minimum draw-down package and may be appropriate to a country whose absorptive capacity is very limited in the context of the country having urgent pressing priorities that would tie up resources required to manage regional sub-projects. A country in such a situation may wish to defer a higher level of draw down (e.g. Package 2 or 3) at a later stage in the regional project cycle.
- The rationale for this model draws on the Review of impact of the current PRIDE. National sub-projects have been useful mechanisms in countries that have sufficient capacity to take on all that is required with this modality. The progressive engagement approach would explicitly recognise and provide appropriate implementation arrangements consistent with differences in both needs and capacity between countries.
- In contrast to the current PRIDE, the resourcing arrangements under this model, reflecting the progressive engagement principle, would be ‘demand driven’ and not formula based.
- As with the current PRIDE a central feature of this model would be countries determining both the specific activities to be included as sub-projects and second countries also setting their level of drawn down of project assistance. As with the current PRIDE, these features could be expected to result in a very high level of country ownership of the initiative.
- The sense of ‘regionalism’ would not come from the core sub-projects but would be dependent on other regional elements of the overall initiative such as the continuation of a regional resource centre and the regional workshops.
- The disadvantage of this model is that it may entrench some of the features of PRIDE which have been less successful. If this model is adopted a new strategy will need to be developed to link more closely sub-projects to national and regional goals and to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation framework with a stronger focus on managing for results.

7.16 **Model B: A Regional Project to add value to the work at national level.**

- Under this model the future initiative would be a **Regional** project – addressing common issues across the region.

- Rather than funding individual activities at the country level, the focus would be on funding activities designed to generate innovative cost-effective solutions to critical regional issues.
- Under this model the exploration and testing of the second concept of regionalism – regional provision – would be central to the rationale. The model reflects the demographics of the Pacific where two-thirds of the countries have a population base of approximately 100,000 or less. Accordingly there are elements of education provision in addition to tertiary education where some form of regional provision can assist countries with improving not just quality of education, but also other policy concerns such as equity and system governance and administration. The model would be focused on identifying these areas and in so doing building on the first concept of regionalism – regional cooperation and dialogue.
- There would be a major emphasis on information sharing, action research, lesson learning and, where needed, sharing of resources of the region.
- A needs assessment of the critical regional issues would be undertaken drawing on the FBEAP Review. The intention would be that four or five critical challenges or cross-cutting issues are identified to give the initiative a strategic focus.
- Some of the common challenges that could be addressed covering aspects of quality, equity, access and capacity are:
 - TVET – a priority area noted for action in the Pacific Plan
 - Harmonisation of curricula and assessment systems across the region
 - Principal and teacher accountability standards
 - School Principal leadership
 - Developing a new generation of educational leaders across the region; leadership development for senior officials (and possibly Ministers)
 - Literacy and numeracy
 - Equity for marginalised groups such as youth and isolated communities
 - Disabilities & Inclusive education
 - Language/culture
 - EMIS and M &E tools
 - ICT/Distance learning
 - Development of NFE

- The above issues were identified by countries during the Review consultations as areas where a regional or sub-regional approach would add value to the work at national level. Many countries indicated that they lack the technical skills and capability to develop effective strategies in a number of these areas. Under this model, for it to be cost-effective, a few key agreed areas would need to be selected as the focus of the intervention. A regional approach to developing pilots can be an effective way of sharing and spreading risk and testing new and innovative approaches to critical problems.
- An additional rationale for this model is the context across the region in which almost all countries are involved in major bilateral or special purpose programmes supported by donors or other development partners. As these increasingly become longer term in nature with the needs and priorities determined in partnership under national government leadership, the need for regional projects to fund specific national needs becomes less.
- Under this model there should be no competition with or duplication between national and regional programmes. However the regional and global agencies (SPBEA, SPC, PREL, UNICEF and UNESCO) are currently working with individual countries and groups of countries on a number of these challenges. This being the case, a very close collaborative working arrangement with these agencies would be essential under this model. The agencies could become implementing partners for specific activities.
- The principle of progressive engagement would also be central to the operation of this model. Once the focus areas are identified under such an approach, countries would indicate how and to what extent they would seek to be involved in sub-projects or activities at a regional, sub/regional or other level. Countries could take leadership roles in particular activities which would add further to capacity building.

7.17 **Model C: A Regional Project incorporating elements of Models A and B**

- A third Model C could be a hybrid model incorporating the strengths of each model. A hybrid model could deliver both specific education support to some member countries and also take advantage of economies of scale to meet regional priorities that individual countries are not able to achieve with their own resources.
- Under such a model a future regional initiative could have one component (Component1) for national sub-projects and another component (Component 2) for agreed regional focus areas.
- Component 1 would reflect the principle of progressive engagement and as such would be grounded in the regionalism concept of regional cooperation and dialogue.
- Component 2 would address a small range of critical regional issues (as per model A) and would test and strengthen where appropriate the concept of regional provision in aspects of education across the Pacific region.

- Funding parameters would be relevant in determining the number of regional focus areas and also the balance between the two components. It is important that any new initiative is designed to maximise impact and not to try and do too many things.