

## **Background**

The Solomon Islands Government (SIG) is committed to achieving universal access to education up to year nine level by 2015. However, the Solomon Islands experienced a period of ethnic tension followed by civil conflict and a breakdown in governance in 2006. This unrest, in conjunction with natural disasters and growth in school enrolments has placed strain on national childhood education infrastructure. In response, the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD) has undertaken a number of infrastructure development programmes. The New Zealand Aid Programme has been the major donor of these initiatives with additional European Union funding provided in 2009.

## **Purpose and objectives**

This review was undertaken to identify and assess the different methodologies used across the various school infrastructure projects, and to consider which methods provide the most appropriate approach to implementation for effective development. The following criteria were used for assessment:

- Relevance or the extent to which educational aims were achieved, and the wider impacts of these achievements.
- Effectiveness or the extent to which the infrastructure implementation methodology enabled the co-ordination of central and provincial authorities.
- Efficiency in terms of time and cost, and, the sustainability of the methodology.
- The extent of community involvement in the project, and degree of provision made to ensure equity access to education for minorities.

## **Main findings**

The common issues that occurred across projects related to: the quality of construction and design, timeliness of delivery, cost, coverage, community empowerment, implementation and future maintenance. Strong community support for schools and education was offset by policy implications due to “fee free” education; the underutilisation of existing infrastructure space and land issues regarding education infrastructure; communities dependence on foreign aid; and, logistical and capacity constraints facing MEHRD.

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

Main recommendations included: institutional refocusing from an implementation function to an asset management and outsourcing function; maximise the utilisation of existing infrastructure; recognise importance of setting strategic policy and priorities; development of infrastructure standards; provision of financial assistance for schools and communities to be responsible for the complete supply and maintenance of educational infrastructure; and better ensure that females and handicap students have equal access to education.