NEW ZEALAND
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS & TRADE
Aid Programme

MFAT Management Response to a Review of Tonga Education Sector Project II

About this document

This document describes the programme's response to the evaluation.

Evaluation report title:	Tonga Education Sector Project II: Independent Progress Review
File title of final pdf report:	TESP II Final Independent Progress Review – Sep 14 2015
GDM Link to final Word report:	TESP II Final Independent Progress Review – Sep 14 2015
AMS Activity Number:	K11585
Activity Manager:	Debra Allan / Chloe Stewart
Programme:	Tonga, PACDEV
MFAT response approved by:	Matthew Howell, Deputy Director
Approved date:	10 November 2015
Evaluation cost to MFAT:	NZ$23,480.35

Approval

Approval of the MFAT Management Response to Evaluation
Approved by:
Signature: _____ David Nicholson (Director)
Date: 18/8/16

Evaluation team members

Members of the evaluation team were:

Name	Role
Sue Emmott	Independent consultant, team leader
Rob McIntosh	MFAT-nominated independent consultant, economic and institutional analyst
Anh-Thu Nguyen	Review management and oversight desk officer, DFAT
David Coleman	Education Adviser, DFAT
Kalolaine Moeaki	Government of Tonga representative

Key findings/conclusions of the evaluation

The key findings/conclusions of the evaluation are:

- Several of the key assumptions underpinning the design of TESP II have proved over ambitious.
- Human resources, institutional capacity, and political and institutional change were significant factors in the level of progress achieved.
- MET and donor partners had different expectations of the level of direct support donor partners would provide for TESP II.
- Evaluating the achievements of TESP II is challenging owing to weak systems for information management and reporting.
- Progress in delivering the intended outputs is variable. Progress has continued at the classroom level; at the system level progress is less advanced.
- The earmarked budget support modality has proved challenging for MET. The reviewers note that the current modality was a significant leap for MET from the last funding modality, which was implemented using a World Bank financial arrangement and heavy donor partner involvement.
- The funding for grants, salary subsides and curriculum and professional development are essential to continuing development of the Tongan education system.

Lessons for MFAT

Lessons that MFAT can take from the evaluation are:

No.	Lesson	Programme response
1	The earmarked budget support modality needed more donor partner support than was anticipated.	*MFAT has always worked to support country led ownership and management of their own education system. Earmarked budget support was at the time agreed with MET and considered the most appropriate modality for country ownership.*
2	Reporting has been limited. This has resulted in the governance arrangement for TESP II focusing on the detail of implementation, rather strategic and effective partner dialogue.	*Work is under way to support improvements to the data management system, SPC has provided analysis of the national assessment results to MET and Tonga is participating in the New Zealand funded Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment which will provide outcome level information for years 4 and 6. SPC is also providing support to the national assessment system. These efforts should strengthen MET's data management and internal and external reporting requirements to inform planning and decision making.* *We are also discussing with MET the possibility to fund more targeted technical support to their planning and management functions that will also enable clearer communications with partners.*

No.	Lesson	Programme response
3	The breadth and scope of TESP II was overly ambitious.	*We acknowledge that embedding technical assistance (TA) into MET to provide continuity and support would have been beneficial. MET specifically requested that it source TA locally but through the period of the project it became difficult to recruit suitably experienced TA locally. Discussions are already under way to plan for more support to MET for further phases of work and to provide more technical expertise from New Zealand.* *In line with wider MFAT strategy and recommendations from the report, any future activity will focus on a small number of key intervention areas that are key in changing outcomes in the classroom.*
4	MET receives support from a range of donors. Given MET's limited absorptive capacity, this has affected the success of TESP II.	*MFAT has already put in place measures to reduce the number of education activities in Tonga (e.g. a hold on any new education Partnerships Fund activities). We will continue to proactively encourage harmonisation and coordination between the activities that remain.*

Recommendations for MFAT

The review team recommend prioritising the following until the end of the GFA in June 2016:

No.	Recommendation	Programme response
1	Planning, reporting and monitoring and evaluation, including better co-ordination of core MET activities and progressive mainstreaming of key functions (e.g. school based management unit) to ensure activities align, are efficiently delivered and are sustainable	*We agree that these three areas should be prioritised in the final months of TESP II. We are currently working with MET to update the workplan to reflect these priorities.*
2	Information. MET critically needs a clear plan for strengthening the EMIS to produce good quality system information to support future planning, reporting and resource allocation	
3	Making a difference in the classroom. MET can make the most difference to teaching and learning in the classroom by prioritising the delivery of professional development, including for principals.	

The review team also recommended MFAT and DFAT consider the follow option for future engagement in education in Tonga:

Option	Programme response
The review found that the funding has made a difference and should be continued. The review weighed three modality options for future support, ranging from projectising to general budget support. They consider a two pronged approach to future support to Tongan Education would be a good option. 1. *Funding for grants and salary subsidies* could be provided through general budget support earmarked for education. 2. *Funding for more discretionary improvement initiatives* could be provided via either earmarked budget sector support or project funding. The choice would be dependent on the level of confidence that MET could provide.	*Taking the review's recommendation into account, we will explore modality options for any future engagement through the concept and design process. However, we will look to narrow the scope of any future agreement with MET to ensure both MET and Donor Partners can achieve the intended outcomes.*

Further programme response

MET has experienced internal instability over the last year. Recent events include the removal and replacement of MET's Acting CEO, resulting in three different people as Acting CEO in the space of four months; controversy around the CEO recruitment process; and, a petition to the King, led by the former CEO, seeking to remove the education portfolio from the Prime Minister and prevent the Acting Minister for Education taking up any future responsibility of the education portfolio.

As a result of MET instability, Post has found it difficult to gain substantive traction over the last six months. However, both Post and DFAT are actively working with MET to achieve some of the intended results in the period through to June 2016, when TESP II will end.

The MFAT team is currently engaged in early internal discussion on MFAT's transition to the next phase of education support and are developing a concept note that will seek approval for the design phase. This is planned to be undertaken in the early months of 2016. Any

future design will deliberately take into account the lessons learned from TESP I and TESP II, and the recommendations of this review.

MFAT follow up actions

These may be the responsibility of staff outside the programme that commissioned the evaluation.

This table lists actions that MFAT will undertake in response to the findings, lessons and recommendations of the evaluation.

Lesson learned / Recommendation	Action	Who will action	When	Resource Implications
Lesson 1: The earmarked budget support modality needed much more donor partner support than was anticipated.	These lessons will be closely considered in any future activity design and implementation.	PACDEV (Chloe Stewart) SED (Tara Thurlow-Rae) Post (Adele Plummer/ Debra Allan)	Over the next 6 months.	
Lesson 2: Without adequate reporting the governance arrangement for TESP II has been bogged down in the detail of implementation and has not supported effective partner dialogue.				
Lesson 3: The breath and scope of the programme was unmanageable for MET, given the resource and capacity constraints.				
Recommendation 1: Planning, reporting and monitoring and evaluation, including better co-ordination of core MET activities and progressive mainstreaming of key functions to ensure activities align, are efficiently delivered and are sustainable.	These recommendations have been communicated to MET. Post is working closely with MET to ensure these recommendations are prioritised by in MET's revised workplan.	Post (Debra Allan/Adele Plummer) Supported by: PACDEV (Chloe Stewart) SED (Tara Thurlow-Rae)	Post will continue to monitor progress through regular meetings	

Lesson learned / Recommendation	Action	Who will action	When	Resource Implications
Recommendation 2: Information. MET critically needs a clear plan for strengthening the EMIS to produce good quality system information to support future planning, reporting and resource allocation			until July 2016. We are looking at options for support for EMIS, in particular, as a key priority.	
Recommendation 3: Making a difference in the classroom. MET can make the most difference to teaching and learning in the classroom by prioritising the delivery of professional development, including for principals.				
Future option recommendation	This recommendation will be closely considered in any future activity design.	PACDEV (Chloe Stewart) SED (Tara Thurlow-Rae) Post (Adele Plummer/ Debra Allan)	Over the next 6 months.	

Dissemination plan

The evaluation will be/has been shared with partner organisations, MFAT staff and other stakeholders in the following ways:

No.	Method of dissemination	Responsibility of	When
1	Review report published on the New Zealand Aid Programme website	Tonga Desk officer and DSE evaluation team	By 27/11/2015

No.	Method of dissemination	Responsibility of	When
2	Review report distributed between TESP II stakeholders	DFAT	Complete – September 2015

Report Release Checklist

Note: This checklist must be used for all evaluations that will be published in full on MFAT's website. Where the report has been commissioned by a partner organisation and is published on their website, MFAT should simply seek written permission from the partner to provide a link to the published evaluation from our website. Attach a copy of the partner's permission to this MFAT Response to Evaluation template in lieu of this Report Release Checklist.

NAME OF THE REPORT: TONGA EDUCATION SECTOR PROGRAMME II: INDEPENDENT PROGRESS REVIEW

AUTHOR(S): SUE EMMOTT AND ROB MCINTOSH

REPORT MONTH AND YEAR: SEPTEMBER 2015

All evaluation reports should be able to be publicly released in accordance with the principle of availability (Section 5 of the Official Information Act (OIA). However, this principle can be overridden if there is 'good reason' (as set out in the OIA) to withhold information. Use this checklist to help you decide if sections in the evaluation report should be withheld.

If any of the answers to these questions is 'yes' then:
- *A hard copy of the report should be marked up with brackets around the information to be withheld, and the OIA section under which the information is to be withheld noted (refer to MFAT Style and Practice Guide OIA Requests)*
- *The PDF copy of the report that is submitted to the Development Support Officer (DSE) for the library and public release will have the withheld information whited out and the reasons for withholding noted in the margins. The following note should be placed in the report: Certain information in this report has been withheld in accordance with the Official Information Act and the grounds for withholding, as at the time of publication, are noted in the margins.*

If you are unsure whether a good reason to withhold exists seek advice from the IDG staff member responsible for OIAs or the MFAT corporate legal team.

OIA Section 6 Conclusive Reasons: Are there words in the evaluation that are likely to:		
a) Prejudice the security or defence of NZ or NZ's international relations?	☐ Yes	☒ No
b) Prejudice the entrusting of information to the Government of NZ on a basis of confidence by (i) the Government of any other country or (ii) any international organisation?	☐ Yes	☒ No
c) Prejudice the maintenance of the law?	☐ Yes	☒ No
d) Endanger the safety of any person?	☐ Yes	☒ No
e) Damage seriously the NZ economy?	☐ Yes	☒ No

OIA Section 7 Special Reasons: Are there words in the evaluation that are likely to:		
a) Prejudice the security or defence of the Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau or the Ross Dependency?	☐ Yes	☒ No
b) Prejudice relations between the governments of NZ, and governments of the Cook Island and Niue?	☐ Yes	☒ No

c) Prejudice the international relations of the governments of the Cook Islands or Niue ☐ Yes ☒ No

OIA Section 9 Other Reasons: Are there words in the evaluation that need to be withheld to:
(Note: There is need to balance Section 9 grounds for withholding against 'public interest considerations'. Consider the negative consequences from release, and whether or not these consequences are outweighed by the public interest in access to the information.)

		Yes	No
a)	Protect the privacy of natural persons?	☐ Yes	☒ No
b)	Protect trade secrets and commercial positions?	☐ Yes	☒ No
c)	Protect information that is subject to an obligation of confidence where release of the information would be likely to i) prejudice the supply of similar information from the same source and it is in the public interest that such information should continue to be supplied or (ii) otherwise damage the public interest?	☐ Yes	☒ No
d)	Avoid prejudice to measures protecting the health or safety of members of the public?	☐ Yes	☒ No
e)	Avoid prejudice to the substantial economic interests of New Zealand?	☐ Yes	☒ No
f)	Avoid prejudice to measures that prevent or mitigate material loss to members of the public?	☐ Yes	☒ No
a)	Maintain the constitutional conventions including the confidentiality of advice tendered by ministers and officials?	☐ Yes	☒ No
b)	Maintain effective conduct of public affairs through free and frank expressions of opinion and protection from improper pressure or harassment?	☐ Yes	☒ No
c)	Maintain legal professional privilege?	☐ Yes	☒ No
d)	Enable a minister department or organisation holding information to carry out commercial activities without prejudice or disadvantage?	☐ Yes	☒ No
e)	Enable a minister, department or organisation holding the information to carry on negotiations without prejudice or disadvantage?	☐ Yes	☒ No
f)	Prevent the disclosure or use of official information for improper gain or advantage?	☐ Yes	☒ No

Other Reason: Is there any other reason for withholding information?

	Yes	No
• If the answer is yes then seek advice from the IDG staff member responsible for OIA or the MFAT corporate legal team.	☐ Yes	☒ No

RECOMMENDATION

☐ Withhold selected parts, noting sections of the OIA applying to these in a copy of the report that is filed, and white-ed out in the copy of the report to be forwarded to the Development Support Officer (DSE) for public release and the library

☒ Release entire report

Signed by Debra Allan (Activity Manager)

Signed by Adele Plummer (Development Counsellor)

Matthew Howell (Deputy Director)

Date: Day/Month/Year