

Evaluation of Mobile Playgroup Project Fiji

Commissioned by

**The New Zealand Agency for International Development
Nga Hoe Tuputupu-mai-tawhiti**

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Executive summary

Introduction

The Mobile Playgroup Project (MPP) was introduced by Save the Children Fiji (SC Fiji) in 2002 in response to the need to improve access to and quality of early childhood education (ECE) for children in economically disadvantaged communities. The original objectives of the project were to improve access to ECE, to raise awareness of children's needs and issues and to help communities in informal and squatter settlements to develop and manage an ECE programme. Following a review in 2008, the objectives were revised to expand the project, to strengthen community commitment and capacity to manage MPP, to build the capability of community volunteers as ECE teachers and to put more focus on the management of the project by SC Fiji. The project objectives guiding MPP Phase 3 since October 2008 are these:

- Objective 1: By 2011, 27 new ECE centres established and a total of 44 centres functioning and recognized by Fiji Ministry of Education
- Objective 2: By 2011, 44 communities have the capacity to manage ECE centres through Community Education Committees (CECs) and community interest groups.
- Objective 3: By 2011, the capacity of community volunteers as ECE teachers has been developed to enable sustainability of the community centres and a quality ECE for the children.
- Objective 4: Strengthen the capacity of SC Fiji MPP staff to effectively provide management, monitoring and evaluation of the project.

Initially a mobile service in which an ECE teacher ran a playgroup from a purpose-equipped truck, in Phases 2 and 3 most communities have dedicated or shared premises from which the sessions are operated. The role of ECE teachers has become one of training and supporting volunteers selected by the community to take on the role of community teacher aides. More recently, the role of community development officer (CDO) has been created to support communities to govern and manage the centres and to seek recognition and funding from the Ministry of Education.

The military coups in 1987, 2000 and 2006 along with food and fuel price increases and a declining global economy have had significant negative impacts on Fiji. These problems have been compounded more recently by the turmoil in international money markets and the further downturn in the worldwide economic conditions. Informal settlements have poor infrastructure, housing and sanitation. Health and social problems as well as disputes with neighbours and other ethnic groups are common, as are disputes over community leadership. Significant barriers to achieving a sustainable livelihood include low levels of education and business literacy, limited budgeting experience, and limited access to funding. Women-headed households are over-represented in informal settlements and women are often required to undertake work in their communities as well as to provide an income, food, and security for their families.

The evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was to provide a basis for NZAID, SC Fiji and SCNZ to determine outcomes and plan future directions. The evaluation will be used to inform programming discussions and for further development of accountability reporting. The objectives of the evaluation were to determine the relevance, the effectiveness and the efficiency of MPP from its inception to June 2009.

The evaluation drew on a range of data sources including project documents such as funding agreements, PIDs, letters of variation, budgets, six monthly and annual reports, evaluation reports, appraisals, letters and emails; monitoring data collected and analysed by the project; interviews with stakeholders in New Zealand and Fiji; observations of MPP programmes in operation at 16 centres in

Suva, Labasa and Lautoka; visits to schools where principals and teachers were interviewed; interviews with a range of SC Fiji staff at all levels of the organisation; interviews with community teacher aides and community education committee members; and, interviews with parents, caregivers and other members of communities with MPP centres. The preliminary findings of the evaluation were synthesised during the in-country visit and discussed with key stakeholders during a feedback workshop following which findings were confirmed.

The scope of the evaluation, determined by time and budget, meant that not every centre was visited nor was every staff member and stakeholder interviewed. However, the evaluation team is confident that a good sample was achieved. The evaluation was limited by the student achievement data available, and by the quality of some of the monitoring data especially that on enrolment and attendance. The team met challenges in engaging with the Fiji Ministry of Education (MoE) although this was usefully illustrative of the difficulties the project itself has in engaging with the MoE.

Relevance

International research supports high quality ECE as being of great importance to children, families and communities particularly in developing countries. The first goal of *Education for All*, combined initiative of five international agencies, UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNFPA and the World Bank, is *'Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.'* With a development model that aligns with Fiji government policies and plans, prioritises local design and development, fosters community ownership and plans for sustainability through integration into government provision the purpose and objectives of MPP reflect sound development principles and are aligned with international priorities.

All the centres visited were in economically disadvantaged communities, some of them in extremely deprived communities. Features of deprivation included high levels of unemployment, high rates of single motherhood, low levels of education and housing insecurity exacerbated by political upheaval, difficult economic conditions and severe floods in January 2007, 2008 and 2009. As a consequence informal settlements have increased in number and more children are living in areas where ECE is not available. The MPP programme has responded by increasing the number of centres being established, the rate of introduction of new centres and by introducing a focus on income generating projects to help meet centre costs.

The evaluation team did not identify any comparable ECE projects targeting impoverished communities in the Pacific. In comparison with other ECE projects in the Pacific, MPP faces additional challenges of working within communities lacking traditional structures and operating in an environment of minimal government support.

SC Fiji is planning for the next phase of MPP envisaging an initial period of consolidation followed by a further period of expansion. SC Fiji intends to submit a proposal to NZAID and other donors before the end of the current funding agreement in 2011. Although designed for sustainability through integration with Fiji's other ECE provision, the process of achieving MoE recognition upon which this depends has been slower than expected. This, alongside a clear intention to continue expanding means that MPP will be dependent on external funding for the foreseeable future. To date MPP has been heavily reliant on NZAID funding with only small contributions from other donors and the evaluation recommends that SC Fiji directs more effort to building relationships with other donors currently supporting education sector activities in Fiji.

Effectiveness

From 2002-2008 MPP established 17 centres in Suva and Labasa. Reports show that over 1700 children were enrolled at the centres during that time. Information on achievements, although anecdotal, noted children showed marked gains in learning, co-ordination and cognitive development, that participating communities gained new skills, knowledge and livelihoods, that awareness of child rights increased and was embedded and that communities gained experience in

governing and managing centres. The evaluation team investigated whether any additional quantitative data measuring outcomes over this period existed but found nothing beyond that included in the monitoring reports submitted to NZAID. Narrative reports suggest that MPP centres provided informal settlements, which were without strong community networks, with a focus for collaboration as community members worked together to develop and manage the centres.

Establishment, operation and outcomes

Objective 1 of MPP3 is that by 2011, 27 new ECE centres will be established and a total of 44 centres functioning and recognised by Fiji Ministry of Education. There has been significant progress in establishing new centres with 14 centres established in Phases 1 and 2 joined by a further nine established in Year 1 of MPP 3 and a further four in the first 6 months of Year 2 giving a total of 27 centres in February 2010.

Initially an MPP centre needs to apply for MoE establishment, the requirements for which are reasonably straightforward. Once a centre is established the next formal process is to seek MoE recognition. Having centres recognised means that playgroup is absorbed into the formal education system and qualifies for Ministry resources including salary and building grants. Moving centres to MoE recognition is an essential part of SC Fiji's sustainability strategy. The requirements for recognition predominantly focus on health and safety aspects of the building from which the playgroup is to operate. The impoverishment of informal communities makes having a dedicated building that meets requirements beyond the resources of many – the key reason behind much slower progress towards MoE recognition and sustainability than was anticipated.

While systems are in place to capture enrolment and attendance data they are not sufficiently robust or well-kept to provide reliable information. The evaluation team saw evidence of an enrolment register and daily attendance records in all the centres visited. Centres aim for 80% attendance and in some locations actively follow-up children who are absent. The problems with the enrolment database and the incompleteness of the attendance data make it impossible to know whether or not, at an aggregate level, MPP3 centres are meeting their target of 80% attendance. The evaluation recommends that priority should be given to properly collected, aggregated and analysed attendance and enrolment data as without it no conclusions can be drawn from the tracking system (see below) into which such effort is being put.

A high quality ECE programme is one which integrates health, nutrition, education and socialisation in programmes for young children which are child-centred and based around play. While one of the benefits of ECE is that children enter formal schooling confident and ready to learn, a quality ECE programme does not include formal teaching of literacy and numeracy skills. The quality of the programmes in the MPP centres visited varied. Some showed elements of good practice while in other centres there was less evidence of an understanding of what constitutes good practice reflected in the programmes being largely teacher dominated and directed, activity-based learning centres very limited or absent and the work displayed was of prepared, adult-directed children's work. The evaluation recommends that more attention be directed to consistency of understanding and practice of quality of ECE in MPP centres.

The evaluation team visited eight schools spread across the three divisions and interviewed six principals and 18 new-entrant teachers. With one exception, the teachers all told us that there was a distinct difference between students who entered school having had some ECE and those who did not, and that ECE played a major role in preparing children for school. Furthermore, in those schools which took a number of students from MPP centres, the teachers reported that the students from MPP centres were as well equipped as students coming from any other ECE centres.

The MPP3 team has put huge effort and energy into tracking the progress of children who have graduated from MPP centres. A database of outcomes of students who graduated from MPP centres during 2009 is being constructed. While acknowledging the reasons and affirming the effort that has gone into the design and implementation of the system, the evaluation team is not convinced that the tracking system gathers sufficiently robust information about student outcomes to justify the

commitment of resources. The team is of the view that the value of good quality ECE has been established through international research and that the focus of MPP data collection and analysis should be on measuring access and ensuring programme quality.

Community capacity

Objective 2 of MPP3 is that by 2011, 44 communities will have the capacity to manage ECE centres through community education committees and community interest groups. Communities are identified as potential sites for an MPP centre either through community profiling of areas known to be disadvantaged or when a community approaches SC Fiji and asks for assistance to establish a centre. With the objective to expand and for centres to achieve MoE recognition driving MPP3, there is a temptation for MPP to respond to requests from communities which have a more organised community able to support the development and running of one and be more likely to be able to navigate the process towards MoE recognition. The evaluation found that every centre visited is of value to the children who attend but that three of the 16 centres visited are not in communities of greatest need.

With one exception an active CEC was supporting each centre visited. All CECs were actively involved in the management of the centre including provision of premises, recruitment and support of community teacher aides and raising funds to pay teachers and purchase resources. SC Fiji has initiated a range of structured and deliberate activities to build and support communities to take on the management of MPP centres.

All the centres visited were trying to pay their community teacher aides regularly, with most endeavouring to pay each teacher between \$15 and \$20 a week. Not all communities could pay their teachers regularly and relied upon the goodwill of the teachers to continue working even if no payment could be made. In some areas community teacher aides were willing to continue teaching even when the community could not afford to pay them regularly. In and around Suva, CECs and teachers reported if where payment could not be made teachers were not so willing, or perhaps economically able, to continue in the role and were forced to look for other income generating options. All the centres visited in Suva and Nasinu required attendance fees and that some parents reported that their children were unable to attend the centre if fees had not been paid.

Developing teacher capability

Objective 3 of MPP3 is that by 2011, the capacity of community volunteers as ECE teachers has been developed to enable sustainability of the community centres and a quality ECE for the children.

Once community teacher aides have been selected by their community they attend a five to six week 'attachment' at a kindergarten recognised by the MoE. After this and with the support of the ECE teacher educator they begin to run the MPP programme in their community. Project data provided to the evaluation shows that 90% of community teacher aides have completed training attachment and 10% have not but evaluation findings suggest project records may be somewhat out of date in this respect.

After the initial attachment community teacher aide training consists of on-site coaching and mentoring, periodic workshops, and monthly 'update' meetings. At times community teacher aides have difficulty getting to the ongoing training because of travel cost and the evaluation recommends that this is addressed. The evaluation found that a more structured training package for community teacher aides is necessary if programme quality issues are to be addressed. Further, MPP ECE staff need to recognise their role as educators of community teacher aides rather than as simply advisors.

Efficiency

Objective 4 of MPP3 is to strengthen the capacity of SC Fiji MPP staff to effectively provide management, monitoring and evaluation of the project.

A great deal of work has been done since 2008 to develop and implement systems and processes to strengthen SC Fiji as an organisation and the delivery and accountability of MPP3. A functioning

board guides the work of SC Fiji, the CEO manages the organisation well and the staffing structures are appropriate to the achievement of organisational objectives. Financial management processes in particular have been strengthened.

The evaluation found that project governance needs to be strengthened and recommends that the Advisory Committee be revitalised with additional members, renamed as the Steering Committee and given the responsibilities of governing the MPP. Management of MPP is highly objectives driven. All staff, especially the district co-ordinators, are focused on the revised objectives, particularly Objective 1, the expansion of the programme. The project is appropriately and adequately staffed with staffing resources directed both towards establishing ECE centres and building the community capacity to govern and manage them. Roles are well-defined and appropriate and accountabilities are clear. There are, as in any organisation, instances where improvements in individuals' capacity and capability would strengthen the project and improve efficiency. On the other hand, salaries are not high and SC Fiji has done well to retain some experienced staff who add real value to project.

The evaluation considered SCNZ's role in MPP management. All three parties, NZAID, SCNZ and SC Fiji identified both benefits and frustrations with the current management arrangements and the evaluation found that the current three-way management arrangements are not working optimally for any of the parties. The evaluation recommends that the arrangement be revisited and that SC Fiji reports directly to NZAID either in Fiji, or in Wellington.

The evaluation identified four areas in which cost savings could be made. SC Fiji to report directly to NZAID, rationalising reporting requirements, reviewing the currently budgeted need for additional personnel and increasing the proportion of MPP staff able and willing to drive project vehicles.

Supporting factors and challenges

A range of factors support the success of MPP and the achievement of outcomes. MPP is based on a sound development model where need is established, communities are supported to open a centre and then governance and management of the centre is progressively passed to communities which are assisted through the process to integrate them with other ECE provision. SC Fiji is a respected NGO and the MPP project has credibility. SC Fiji and MPP management systems are generally strong. The continuity of NZAID funding has allowed the project to develop and grow with SC Fiji now having one of, if not the, strongest team of ECE specialists in Fiji. The necessity to periodically review funding arrangements has provided the project with much needed review points from which it has been able to reflect, learn and refine objectives. Community teacher aides in many centres are not paid regularly but only when funding permits, yet they continue to run sessions regularly and demonstrate impressive commitment to the children's education.

Among the challenges MPP faces it that it lacks strong governance which would help priorities to be established and maintained and would play a key role in maintaining the quality of the ECE programme offered; the quality of MPP programmes varies; the limited engagement with the MoE makes it very difficult to address the complexity and delays of the recognition process; supporting the payment and therefore retention of community teacher aides without creating an access barrier through attendance fees is difficult; and, data collection systems are both onerous and not sufficiently robust to give confidence in their output.

Conclusions and recommendations

The evaluation found that MPP is highly relevant, reasonably effective and adequately efficient.

It is relevant in that its purposes and objectives address the needs, priorities and capacities of the impoverished communities for which it is designed, it aligns with the priorities of the Fiji Government and is consistent with their plans and policy statements for ECE. MPP is based on a sound development model and largely meets the indicators for good development practice. The programme fits well with NZAID's Fiji Country Programme Strategy 2005-2010, particularly in its focus on informal communities.

While improvements can always be made, MPP is reasonably effective. Children attending MPP centres are benefitting from an early childhood education which is preparing them for school as well as other ECE services. It is well-structured with resources devoted both to developing and supporting the operation of the centres and to enabling community groups to govern and manage the centres. The evaluation found the MPP approach likely to be the most effective way of achieving tangible and sustainable benefits given current constraints around government funding and support in Fiji. The project could benefit from more focus on indicators of programme quality, more active pursuit of MoE recognition for centres, and a more structured approach to training community teacher aides.

Efficiency has improved over the years of MPP and can always be better. However, SC Fiji is a well-managed organisation which provides a sound framework for the operation of MPP. Within the project itself governance needs to be strengthened and management arrangements could be enhanced. The collection and collation of both outcome and project management data is onerous and does not provide a good return on investment. While financial management in the organisation has been improved MPP budget management needs to stay in line with agreements.

The sustainability of MPP is of concern. There is no reasonable likelihood of significant government funding in the medium-term and MPP will need external funding for the foreseeable future. SC Fiji must engage more actively with potential funding partners both donors and corporate.

Recommendations

1. **MPP to continue and be supported.** The evaluation has found MPP to be highly relevant, reasonably effective and acceptably efficient. Appropriately targeted, based on a sound development model and operated by a respected CSO, MPP has increased the access to ECE for children in impoverished communities in the absence of meaningful government support.
2. **Consistent quality of ECE practice needs to be assured.** This should be led by a Project Steering Committee and based on the indicators of effective practice found in Appendix 13. Reconsider the objective to expand the number of centres at the end of the current funding agreement and have a period of consolidation before considering further expansion.
3. **Review the objective to expand.** The objective to expand is driving the project. At times this is at the expense of quality. Future objectives should focus on ensuring programme quality and on moving the majority of existing MPP centres to MoE recognition before further expansion is considered.
4. **Retain a focus on impoverished communities.** The push for expansion has led to some new centres being developed in more established settlements and communities. There is a risk that the most needy children and communities, for whom the project was designed, may be overlooked.
5. **SC Fiji to actively plan for the sustainability of the project.** SC Fiji should further develop its relationship with donors other than NZAID working in the education sector in Fiji, as well as commercial sponsorship, and explore the potential for investment in MPP.
6. **Strengthen project governance.** The Advisory Committee should be renamed, given the mandate to be a project steering committee, and actively engaged to steer the project. The membership could be increased to six to eight members with a mixture of ECE and management skills, and including knowledge of the policies and processes of the MoE. A structure for involvement of the Committee in the governance of the project should be established to ensure that the project benefits from the Committee's experience and expertise.
7. **Sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Education.** The sustainability of MPP is seriously threatened by the slow progress towards MoE recognition of MPP centres. Developing an MoU with the Ministry of Education outlining respective obligations and mechanisms for engagement is a priority.
8. **Clarify the role of MPP teachers as ECE educators.** The foremost role of MPP ECE teachers is to train community teacher aides on whom the quality of the programmes depends. MPP teachers must themselves be trained as ECE educators with a clear understanding of quality ECE practice

and proactively take responsibility for the training of community teacher aides rather than providing only advice and support.

9. **A properly structured training package for community teacher aides.** A properly structured training package for community teacher aides is required if quality ECE practice is to be consistent across MPP centres. An outline of what such a programme could look like is attached as Appendix 9.
10. **Reimburse community teacher aides' travel costs and expenses.** Trained and effective community teacher aides are central to the success of MPP. Travel costs to attend training are currently a barrier for some which should be addressed by reimbursement.
11. **Increase progress to MoE recognition.** A more targeted programme of advice and guidance for CECs, starting as soon as the CEC is established, to ensure they are better informed of requirements for MoE recognition, salary grant and building grant, and support for them through the process.
12. **Structured professional development programmes for MPP staff.** Professional development programmes for MPP staff focused on their responsibilities under 9 and 11 above in place to ensure that all staff have a common understanding of a high quality ECE programme, that MPP teachers are assisted to become teacher educators and that CDOs are able to provide the guidance required by CECs to ensure progress towards the goals of MoE recognition and independence.
13. **Monitoring and reporting requirements relevant, useful and manageable.** Monitoring, reporting and accountability have clearly been strengthened. Priority should now be given to monitoring and reporting enrolment and attendance data and programme quality indicators. SC Fiji and NZAID should discuss data requirements and agree on which monitoring and reporting systems should be prioritised.
14. **Consider the options for increased efficiency and cost savings outlined in this report.**

1 Introduction

1.1 The Mobile Playgroup Project

1. The Mobile Playgroup Project (MPP) was introduced by Save the Children Fiji (SC Fiji) in 2002 in response to the need to improve access to and quality of early childhood education (ECE) for children in economically disadvantaged communities.
2. The goal of MPP during the pilot phase was to provide basic education for economically disadvantaged children using a mobile kindergarten. MPP was also designed to support increased awareness of children's development and rights, and to develop the capacity of communities to manage playgroups. Initially, a qualified ECE teacher took a truck fitted out with the equipment to run an ECE session into informal communities and ran a morning or afternoon session for pre-school children. Supported by volunteers, teachers would offer up to three sessions a week in each participating community and the volunteers would frequently run a fourth session themselves.
3. The original objectives of the Phase 1 and 2 of the project were:
 - Objective 1: To increase access to early childhood education for economically disadvantaged children, initially in two locations (Suva and Labasa) so as to enhance their learning capabilities and preparedness for formal education.
 - Objective 2: To provide mothers and other primary caregivers in the target communities with information and support on a range of issues including parenting so as to increase their knowledge of children's developmental needs and enhance parental effectiveness.
 - Objective 3: To increase the capacity of targeted communities to develop and manage a local early childhood education programme and encourage self-help action.
 - Objective 4: to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme through systematic monitoring of expected outputs with a view to modifying and expanding the mobile kindergarten concept as required.
4. NZAID supported MPP Phase 1 and 2 from 2002-2006 with funding of approximately NZ\$757,000. Phase 3 of MPP was submitted to NZAID by SCNZ in April 2007 and proposed an expansion of MPP to squatter communities in Suva, Labasa and the Western Division while maintaining support services to established playgroups. NZAID agreed to support MPP3 from July 2008 (July 2008-June 2011), with funding of up to FJ \$1,428,879
5. Following a review of MPP in 2008, objectives were revised to address areas of weakness identified through the review. The new objectives were designed to expand the project, to strengthen community commitment and capacity to manage MPP, to build the capability of community volunteers as ECE teachers and to put more focus on the management of the project by SC Fiji. The new project objectives guiding MPP Phase 3, developed in October 2008, are these:
 - Objective 1: By 2011, 27 new ECE centres established and a total of 44 centres functioning and recognized by Fiji Ministry of Education
 - Objective 2: By 2011, 44 communities have the capacity to manage ECE centres through Community Education Committees (CECs) and community interest groups.
 - Objective 3: By 2011, the capacity of community volunteers as ECE teachers has been developed to enable sustainability of the community centres and a quality ECE for the children.
 - Objective 4: Strengthen the capacity of SC Fiji MPP staff to effectively provide management, monitoring and evaluation of the project.

6. Through the latter years of Phase 2 and in Phase 3 the project has changed from offering ECE sessions from the MPP truck to most communities having a dedicated or shared location from which the sessions are operated. ECE teachers employed by SC Fiji still come to the communities but their role has become one of training and supporting volunteers selected by the community to take on the role of community teacher aides. More recently, the role of community development officer (CDO) has been created to bring direct focus to building the capacity of communities through CECs to govern and manage the centres.
7. This evaluation covers MPP activities from inception in 2002 to the completion of Year One of Phase 3 in June 2009. The study evaluated the activities of MPP in Suva, Labasa, and Lautoka.

1.2 The development and policy context

8. The military coups in 1987, 2000 and 2006 along with food and fuel price increases and a declining global economy have had significant negative impacts on Fiji. These problems have been compounded more recently by the turmoil in international money markets and the further downturn in the worldwide economic conditions. Major challenges over the medium-term include the rebuilding of the economy, resolving land tenure issues and developing alternative agricultural crops to replace loss of export earnings from the sugar industry. As a consequence of these issues there is an ongoing movement of people who have been displaced, or for economic necessity, moving from their land to urban areas.
9. More than half of Fiji's population now lives in the rapidly expanding urban areas. It is estimated that close to 15% of the population lives in over 200 informal settlements around the country. The greater Suva area has the largest number of such settlements and it is estimated that by 2010, the Suva/Nausori corridor will have 15,000 households with 100,000 people in informal settlements.
10. These settlements have poor infrastructure and housing, limited hygiene and sanitation services and consequently high health risks. These health risks are compounded by substance abuse and high levels of domestic violence. Disputes with neighbours and other ethnic groups are common, as are disputes over community leadership. In purely economic terms, it is estimated that 60-80% of squatters are living below the poverty line. Significant barriers for families to achieve a sustainable livelihood include low levels of education and business literacy, limited budgeting experience, and limited access to funding. Women-headed households are over-represented in informal settlements and women are often required to undertake work in their communities as well as to provide an income, food, and security for their families.
11. The Fiji Government has expressed concern at the alarming rate of increase in informal settlements, yet it seems that informal settlements will increase rather than diminish in the foreseeable future.
12. In 2005 NZAID's Fiji Country Programme Strategy 2005-2010 was developed through a joint exercise between the governments of Fiji and New Zealand. The objectives of the Strategy are:
 1. To reduce the hardship suffered by those living in informal and squatter settlements in Fiji.
 2. To strengthen governance, particularly in the areas of public service, law and justice and human rights.
 3. To support the work of civil society organisations and communities to reduce the vulnerability to poverty of people experiencing high levels of hardship.¹
13. Following the December 2006 coup and the ongoing political volatility in Fiji, the New Zealand Government reoriented its aid to Fiji away from government to civil society. Assisting informal settlements and strengthening civil society were the focus of the \$5 million aid allocation for Fiji in 2008/09.
14. In April 2009 Cabinet approved a new mission statement for New Zealand's official development assistance (ODA) programme. The mission statement is to '*Support sustainable development in developing countries, in order to reduce poverty and to contribute to a more secure, equitable*

¹ NZAID (2005) Fiji Background Paper and NZAID/Fiji Country Programme Strategy

and prosperous world.' The new mission and policy settings put the Pacific at the forefront of ODA, and there is to be a focus on sustainable economic development.

15. The 2005-2010 NZAID/Fiji Aid Programme Strategy remains largely in place. Programme implementation is now focused on the Strategy's objectives of promoting democratic governance, strengthening civil society and assisting people living in poverty, especially those in informal settlements.

1.3 The method

16. The purpose of the evaluation was to provide a basis for NZAID, SC Fiji and SCNZ to determine outcomes and plan future directions. The evaluation will be used to inform programming discussions and for further development of accountability reporting.

Evaluation objectives

The evaluation has three objectives, each underpinned by a number of questions.

- 1 To determine the relevance of MPP from inception to June 2009.
- 2 To determine the effectiveness of MPP from inception to June 2009.
- 3 To determine the efficiency of MPP from inception to June 2009.

The questions sitting under each of these three objectives can be found in the Terms of Reference for the evaluation. (Appendix 1)

Full details of the evaluation method can be found in the evaluation plan attached to this report as Appendix 2. What follows is a summary of methods.

Data sources and collection methods

17. Project documents such as funding agreements, PIDs, letters of variation, budgets, six monthly and annual reports, evaluation reports, appraisals, letters and emails were provided by NZAID prior to the evaluation visit, and reviewed by the team. Further project documents were reviewed in Fiji with key examples retained by team. Relevant academic and expert papers were reviewed prior to departure. Some examples of work reviewed include papers on informal communities in Fiji, civil society facilitation in Fiji, and ECE quality indicators. Further details can be found in Appendix 3.
18. A great deal of monitoring data is now collected by MPP. The evaluation examined the extent and nature of the data as well as the systems for capture and analysis. This was largely accessed through the Project Manager who takes primary responsibility for collection and analysis of project data. Particular attention was given to outcome data recorded through the student tracking system. The database contains full details from 65 children who graduated from MPP centres during 2009 which represents approximately 20% of the 300 graduates of MPP that year. The tracking database also contains details on 71 graduates (4%) of MPP in earlier years (1700 graduates up to 2008), giving a total of 136 students on the database in Feb 2010. This is not a purposive sample but is the number who have been able to be successfully tracked to date.
19. Interviews, individual or group interviews as appropriate, were conducted with representatives from all groups of stakeholders. NZAID staff were all interviewed at their offices by two team members. SC Fiji staff were interviewed individually on-site with key staff members such as the CE and the Project Manager interviewed more than once. Other conversations with SC Fiji staff also occurred while travelling to and from MPP centres. In most cases the evaluation team visited the other stakeholders in Fiji and interviewed them at their locations, although in a few cases those stakeholders came to the team which was based at the SC Fiji office in Suva.
20. MPP sites were selected for the evaluation team by the local team member in conjunction with SC Fiji. A misunderstanding led to all sites initially selected being sites which had begun under MPP3, but when the evaluation team asked to visit some sites which had been operating longer, this was readily accommodated and replacements were made in the itinerary. However, as one

of the sites for the evaluation Lautoka has only been established under MPP3 there is still a preponderance of recently established sites in the sample.

21. At the MPP centres the team were usually welcomed and invited to observe a session in progress. The team asked for planning and monitoring documents which were reviewed by one team member during the observation. This was usually the local team member who was already very familiar with the way sessions are conducted. At the conclusion of the formal part of the session one team member interviewed the teachers, another any CEC members who were present and the third team member interviewed any parents who were at the session. Interviews were private in the sense that they usually took place between individuals in an open plan setting where other conversations and activities were happening. Where possible the team matched the gender of the interviewer and respondent. CEC members were interviewed individually at some centres and as a group at others. The 'sample' of CEC members and parents interviewed during visits to centres was made up of those who were there at the time of the visit. Both genders and a range of ethnicities were represented among those interviewed. Visits to schools usually included a brief interview with the principal outlining our purpose, followed by interviews with the teachers of Class 1.
22. Interviews were conducted as conversations based on semi-structured interview guides which can be found in Appendix 4. Structured interviews are used where quantification of the data is required but as quantification of interview data was not envisaged for this evaluation, and interviews took place during and after playgroup sessions, semi-structured interviews were seen to offer flexibility and other advantages. Where there are differences (language, culture, age, social background, education) between interviewer and interviewee as in this evaluation, semi-structured interviews enable the interviewer to pick up on the language and conceptual framework of the interviewee (eg 'kindergarten'), and to reflect that language in subsequent questions. Semi-structured interviews allowed interviews to develop as conversations that could be conducted while parents were tending to their children or supervising groups of children. Semi-structured interviews also allowed the interviewee to add new information (eg charging fees) and for that information to be followed up.
23. The team observed the delivery of MPP activities in 16 sites. The purpose of the observation was to identify characteristics of effective ECE and observations were guided by the observation checklist attached as Appendix 8.
24. At the end of the in-country visit a workshop was held with senior staff of SC Fiji and a representative of SCNZ. The purpose of the workshop was to present and discuss preliminary findings and to ensure that no relevant information had been overlooked. Other SC Fiji staff and external stakeholders in Suva were invited to morning tea on the final day of the evaluation and given an overview of preliminary findings.
25. Table 1 provides a summary of the primary data sources for the evaluation. Details can be found in Appendices 6 and 7.

Table 1: Data sources

Data source	Wellington	Suva	Labasa	Lautoka	Total
MPP centres visited		7	5	4	16
Community teacher aides interviewed		11	7	5	23
CEC members interviewed		9	12	12	34
Parents interviewed		18	13	9	40
Schools visited		3	3	2	8
Principals interviewed			3	3	6
Teachers interviewed		8	9	4	21
SC Fiji staff interviewed		7	2	3	12
NZAID personnel interviewed	6				6
Other stakeholders interviewed	3*			2	5

* including one by email from overseas

26. The team visited almost 60% of MPP centres, interviewed just over 60% of community teacher aides and spoke to just under half of all CEC members.

Data analysis

27. In this evaluation data analysis was on-going, taking place throughout the data collection process. As the different forms of data were gathered, the team thought about and discussed emerging themes and issues, adapting and changing data collection methods where necessary. Evaluation team members took notes of their interviews and these were shared and discussed at the debrief meeting held at the end of each day of the in-country visit. Emerging findings, themes and issues were identified through discussion. Where, after two or three interviews based on an interview schedule developed in the planning phase, participants were raising issues that had not been anticipated, the schedule for subsequent interviews was refined to include these issues.
28. Quantitative data was collected from SC Fiji's electronic and paper files. A sample of students was followed through the tracking system from source data (school reports), into the recording system, through to SC Fiji's analysis.
29. Interview data was collected through note taking. Qualitative data gathered through semi-structured interviews was analysed by theme. This type of analysis is inductive or grounded, which means that the evaluation allows the themes to emerge from the data rather than being imposed upon it. As well as allowing themes to emerge from the data, the analysis always referenced data back to the evaluation questions to ensure that data gathered provided evidence for evaluative judgments reached. The team reviewed interview data against the interview guide identifying common themes, outlying views and potentially significant new data that may need to be followed up in subsequent interviews. Themes and issues are reported overall, and where there are contrasting viewpoints from different stakeholder perspectives, this is mentioned.
30. The daily team meetings during the in-country visit were a crucial data analysis tool that the team used to share the data gathered that day and integrate it into their emerging findings.
31. The presentation of initial findings to the key stakeholders was another form of data analysis as ideas and emerging conclusions were tested and refined in light of their feedback.

Roles of evaluation team members

The local team member, an ECE specialist, was primarily responsible for:

- organising and co-ordinating visits to MPP sites
- undertaking observations of teaching practice and reviewing centre documentation
- introducing evaluation team members to stakeholders
- contributing to interviews
- advising and assisting with travel arrangements
- participate in daily debriefing meetings

- contributing to draft and final reports.

The responsibilities of the education specialist were to:

- undertake structured observations at MPP centres
- lead the interviews with teachers and CEC committee members at the centres
- identify and review quality indicators for ECE and assess MPP against indicators
- co-lead interviews with SC Fiji project team members (with evaluation specialist)
- participate in daily debriefing meetings
- contribute to draft and final reports.

The responsibilities of the team leader and evaluation specialist were to:

- manage the team
- allocate responsibilities and support team members to complete them
- co-ordinate daily meetings to analyse data and accommodate emerging issues, and to record the conclusions of the meetings
- conduct interviews with key national and international stakeholders including NZAID, SCNZ, SC Fiji, Fiji MoE, Fiji Childcare Assoc
- co-lead interviews with SC Fiji project team members (with ECE specialist)
- participate in centre visits focusing on interviews with parents and families
- lead end of visit workshop and presentation of findings
- prepare draft and final reports.

Limitations of the evaluation

32. The scope of the evaluation, determined by time and budget, meant that not every centre was visited nor was every staff member interviewed. However, the evaluation team is confident that a good sample of both was achieved.
33. The evaluation was asked to identify whether MPP has led to better educational performance for students who attended. The team considered ways to gather data to answer this question including identifying a comparison group to assess if school performance was different from children from a similar background but identifying a comparison group was not possible. Without a large scale, randomised control trial well beyond the scope of this evaluation, or a longitudinal prospective study that tracks children from infancy through their education, it is very difficult to prove beyond question whether and how early childhood education influences learning outcomes at school. Robust, expensive studies of this kind are rare in New Zealand, uncommon internationally and almost certainly beyond the infrastructure, resources and current data management systems of Fiji. While the tracking data collected by SC Fiji gives some indications of student performance this evaluation has placed more weight on the interview data collected from Class 1 teachers about the comparative readiness for school of children who have had ECE and those who have not. However, a limitation of this approach is that schools do not keep records of which ECE service children have attended and during interviews with teachers MPP staff had to remind teachers of the children who had come through from the centres.
34. The evaluation met challenges in engaging with the Fiji Ministry of Education (MoE). The evaluation team made over 30 approaches to the MoE for an interview, resulting in a 30 minute meeting on the day of our departure. This is indicative of serious under-resourcing in the ECE area, as well as wider-scale upheaval in the public service caused by the sudden introduction in 2008 of a compulsory 55 years retirement age. This inability to engage has limited conversations about the long-term sustainability of the MPP.
35. While a mass of data is collected by the MPP not all of it is of high quality, and the IT skills of some of those managing the data limit its usefulness. An example of this is enrolment and attendance data which is not robust enough for inclusion in this report. Other data reported to the team was not supported by evidence gathered during site visits. While SC Fiji has put significant effort into tracking students who have attended MPP centres this data is still very partial and could not support meaningful analysis.

36. The evaluation team was not able to interview all key stakeholders. The CEO of SCNZ was unavailable to the team and while the Acting Project manager was keen to co-operate with the evaluation she had been with the organisation only a very short time. The Board Chair of SC Fiji, although initially scheduled to meet the evaluation team, cancelled due to pressure of work. As mentioned previously, engagement with the Fiji MoE was very limited.

1.4 This report

37. This report takes its structure from the evaluation questions posed in the terms of reference for the evaluation. Chapter 2 discusses the relevance of MPP to the needs, priorities and capacities of target communities, Chapter 3 assesses the effectiveness of MPP, Chapter 4 discusses the efficiency of MPP, Chapter 5 identifies factors that support and those that limit MPP currently and in the future and Chapter 6 draws conclusions and makes recommendations.

2 The relevance of MPP

38. This section discusses the extent to which the activities under MPP3 are relevant to the needs, priorities and capacities of the informal communities they operate in. It looks at whether the project has responded to changes in Fiji's economic context including the impact of the global economic crisis. It reviews how the project aligns with good development practice principles and what plans are in place for the project beyond the life of the current NZAID funding agreement.
39. The framework for evaluating relevance has been taken from the NZAID guidelines. Key data sources include expert and background reports, international development theory, team members' comparative experience, interviews with people living in informal communities and interviews with SC Fiji staff.

2.1 Purpose and objectives

Importance of quality ECE programmes

40. International research supports high quality ECE as being of great importance to children, families and communities particularly in developing countries. Junko Miyahara, currently Coordinator at the Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC), summarises research findings into six arguments.
1. ECE helps to embed the rights of every child as the responsibility of parents, communities and governments through their policies and agencies.
 2. ECE supports children's health, physiology, nutrition, education, psychology and sociology which, in the early years of life, are critical in the development of the child into a successful and productive adult.
 3. ECE helps to modify distressing socio-economic and gender-related inequities.
 4. Good ECE programmes improve health, nutrition and educational outcomes of children, which in turn lead to lower health costs and economic gains through greater productivity over the child's lifetime – a benefit to both the individual and society.
 5. ECE programmes can promote community collaboration and participation. Children and their needs can become a focus around which a community functions as a unit.
 6. The United Nations has set goals for the quality of life and education for all children and ECE is seen as the essential starting point.
41. *Education for All*, a UNESCO led combined initiative of five international agencies (UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNFPA and the World Bank), aims to meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015. Goal 1 of *Education for All* is:
- Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children*
42. Designed to provide vulnerable and disadvantaged children from informal communities with access to quality ECE services, to include parents and communities in that provision and to develop the capacity of teachers and communities to run and manage the centres, the purpose and objectives of MPP are highly relevant to the needs and priorities of the community and aligned with international priorities.

² Miyahara, Junko. *Six reasons to support early childhood, care and education*. In Paumau P and Pene F (eds) 2008 *Early childhood care and education in the Pacific*. Suva, Fiji : Institute of Education, University of the South Pacific.

http://www.usp.ac.fj/fileadmin/files/Institutes/pride/Workplans_and_Reports/Paper_and_publications/ecce/junko.pdf

Community needs

43. All the centres visited were in economically disadvantaged communities, some of them in extremely deprived communities. Features of deprivation as reported by the CEC members and parents interviewed include high levels of unemployment, high rates of single motherhood, low levels of education and housing insecurity. Observations by the evaluation team noted other indicators of impoverishment including poor quality access, severely substandard housing and poor drainage and sanitation. In addition, several of the communities visited were at considerable distance from an urban centre and other ECE centres. The levels of deprivation and problems faced by the communities have been exacerbated by difficult economic conditions and recent severe floods in January 2007, 2008 and 2009.
44. Parents interviewed for this report were all very positive about the value of the MPP centres. Several talked of the awareness raising sessions held by MPP staff having helped them to understand the benefits of ECE for their children and their gratitude that this opportunity was being provided in their own community. CEC members talked of their community's desire to see the children get a good start and some preparation for school.
45. Many informal settlements are on land undesirable for other development including flood-prone areas. Many communities reported that they were badly hit by floods in 2007, 2008 and 2009 and the temporary nature of the dwellings in many of the communities is very obvious. This creates additional difficulties in achieving MoE recognition of centres as such recognition relies on communities having secure premises that meet sanitation requirements.

2.2 Response to economic context

46. Fiji's economy has been depressed over recent years as a result of changes of administration and global economic conditions³. Unemployment and underemployment rates are high and many families are struggling to meet basic requirements. Informal settlements are characteristically formed from displaced and disadvantaged families with no or low income. Since MPP began, the Fiji economy has deteriorated as a result of several coups and the global economic downturn. As a consequence informal settlements have increased in number and more children are in need of ECE. The MPP programme has responded by increasing the number of centres being established.
47. Families in informal settlements, already the poor in more prosperous times, have been even further disadvantaged by the downturn in the economy. Affording even a very few dollars a week to send a young child to a playgroup is beyond the means of some. There is evidence that cost is a barrier to attendance at playgroup for some families, particularly in the Suva/Nasinu area with parents at some centres reporting that it has been made clear that children are not welcome to attend unless fees have been paid. At one centre three parents reported they had been asked to attend on the day the evaluation team's visit despite being unable to pay the fees, but that this was unusual. ~~SC~~ Fiji does not support communities charging fees but as centres progress to self-management monitoring this becomes more challenging.
48. MPP3 has further responded to the straightened economic circumstances of communities in informal settlements by introducing a focus on income generating projects. This involves assisting communities with training, sourcing materials and helping to market products and services. The evaluation found that while there is much enthusiasm for income generating projects few if any have yet provided any meaningful financial return.

2.3 Alignment with good development practice

49. The Paris Declaration of 2005 is an international agreement through which over 100 signatories committed their countries and organisations to continue to increase efforts in harmonisation, alignment and managing aid for results with a set of monitorable actions and indicators. The Paris Declaration recognised civil society organisations (CSOs) as key participants in development

³ World Economic Factbook 2009 <https://www.euromonitor.com/pdf/factbook.pdf>

programmes but not as development actors in their own right⁴. The Accra Agenda for Action, drawn up in 2008, goes further by recognising the importance and diversity of CSOs as development actors in their own right.

50. The Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda articulate five principles good development practice – local and democratic ownership, alignment, harmonisation, managing for results and mutual accountability. Table 2 below briefly describes each principle and makes a comment about the extent to which MPP demonstrates the principle in action.

Table 2: Principles of good development practice

Local and democratic ownership of planning, design, implementation and monitoring.	From its beginnings MPP has been locally designed and owned. Developed in response to an identified lack of ECE in informal communities, the project has been shaped by SC Fiji through three phases with a fourth planned. Outside assistance has been sought and used, but decision-making has remained with the project. From the beginning the project has been led by an Advisory Committee made up of local stakeholders.
Alignment with the priorities and systems of the host country	MPP is aligned with the Fiji Government's Early Childhood Care, Development and Education Policy, draws on the Early Learning Development Standards, and is introducing the new ECE curriculum guidelines. The project is designed to support communities to open ECE centres and to develop them to the point that they are recognised by the MoE, receive ongoing government support and integrated with state education provision.
Harmonisation recognises the need to be part of the bigger picture in order to maximise effectiveness.	The goal of MPP is to establish sustainable quality ECE centres for children in informal settlements to enable better integration of children into primary education. MPP has a clear focus on ECE to provide a platform for further education. Project objectives include building the capability of individuals and the community through developing awareness, skills and systems contributing to strengthening the infrastructure of informal communities.
Managing for results means managing and implementing in a way that focuses on the desired results and uses information to improve decision-making	MPP is objectives driven and highly focused on results. Considerable energy and project resources are directed towards attempting to track and record student outcomes. MPP3 has a clear objective of expansion which is currently driving implementation, with less focus on programme quality.
Mutual accountability and transparency in the use of development resources.	SC Fiji works hard to meet the data and reporting requirements of NZAID, their major donor. Following some mismanagement in the recent past, the organisation is committed to managing resources in a professional, accountable and transparent way.

⁴ OECD (2009) *Better Aid: Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness*

51. SCF Fiji has children and their human rights at the centre of its mission. The organisation's vision is to work for a world which respects and values each child and where children are listened to. Its mission, through MPP and other programmes is to promote children's rights and respond to their needs thereby enabling them to become participating, contributing citizens. A child rights approach underpins MPP, is clear in the community education workshops, and in the evaluation was reflected back to the team by parents and other community members interviewed.
52. MPP encourages both men and women to take on leadership roles. Although almost all community teacher aides are women, both men and women were equally represented among CEC members interviewed for the evaluation. MPP playgroups enrol broadly equal numbers of boys and girls although in total at the centres on the day the evaluation team visited there were more boys (58%) than girls (42%) in attendance.

2.4 Comparison with similar activities

53. The Pacific Islands states, Fiji included, have recognised the importance of ECE. All have some provision of ECE but the extent and quality varies. Differences in government policy and limited resources have meant that in most countries, including Fiji, ECE has a lower priority than primary or secondary education. In some countries, ECE is totally community based and funded; in others it may be community driven but receive some government subsidy; in a few ECE may have a significant level of government funding.⁵ The development and implementation of ECE across the Pacific varies depending on a range of factors including the number of children, nature of communities, level of government resources, extent of policy development, community awareness, teacher qualifications and provision of teacher training to name a few. The variables make comparison between countries and programmes difficult.
54. In Fiji, the government has an Early Childhood Care, Development and Education Policy, has, with the assistance of UNICEF, developed Early Learning Development Standards, and has supported the preparation of ECE curriculum guidelines. Together these have provided a framework within which the MPP programme has been developed. However, the provision of support for ECE generally and for MPP specifically by the MoE in Fiji is currently severely constrained, in terms of both financial and human resources. This lack of government support means that MPP is working in an environment that is not uncommon in the Pacific.
55. MPP has some elements in common with other Pacific ECE programmes which are soundly based on quality indicators. These include:
- recognition that high quality ECE programmes are child centred and holistic
 - training and support of teachers
 - development and use of local resources
 - ensuring centres are supported by their communities.
56. However, the evaluation could not identify any project in the Pacific that specifically targets impoverished communities. Other projects tend to address aspects of ECE provision such as teacher training or use of environmental materials and across the entire ECE sector in the country concerned. One project where more detailed comparisons can be made is with the Solomon Islands. However, the comparison is still limited as there are some important differences that need to be acknowledged. Similarities between MPP and the Solomon Islands project include:
- provision of ECE centres in low income communities
 - limited resources
 - untrained and volunteer teachers
 - training package for teachers

⁵ Pene F. *The current status of ECCE in the Pacific*. In Paumau P and Pene F (eds) 2008 *Early childhood care and education in the Pacific*. Suva, Fiji : Institute of Education, University of the South Pacific
http://www.usp.ac.fj/fileadmin/files/Institutes/pride/Workplans_and_Reports/Paper_and_publications/ecce/pene.pdf

- community awareness programmes
 - community committees.
57. The Solomon Islands project also has some features that make it quite different from MPP:
- the project was in long-established villages, not informal settlements
 - government support was significant with key staff on MoE salary
 - technical support was provided by a tertiary institution
 - time and resources were devoted to developing a local teacher training package.
58. A direct comparison of the outcomes of the two projects is difficult. However, some of the positive outcomes of the Solomon Islands project can be attributed to having significant government support. Initially, four local ECE specialists supported by experts from New Zealand were dedicated to the development of the teacher training package. By the end of the project there were nine local educators trained to implement the teacher education package, all on government salaries.
59. The Solomon Islands centres were developed in long-established villages. The settled social structures and community management meant that there was a mechanism for establishing and supporting the centre. MPP is working in an environment where the community structures are limited and faces greater challenges in getting to the point of application for recognition by the MoE. Given limited resources, and the difficulties of working with informal settlements, the MPP project has achieved well.

2.5 Plans for the future of MPP

60. Plans for the future of MPP were determined through interviews with the CEO, NZAID and discussion at the key stakeholder feedback meeting.
61. MPP is a major part of SC Fiji's work programme and figures among the activities supporting its strategic goals for the next few years. SC Fiji is committed to the project and is keen to see it develop and grow. Plans for MPP4 being prepared are based on an initial period of consolidation, followed by a further period of expansion of the number of centres, although at a slower pace than under MPP3. SC Fiji intends to submit a proposal to NZAID and other donors before the end of the current funding agreement in 2011.
62. SC Fiji has sought, and been granted, some funding towards MPP from AUSAID and private donors. The AUSAID funding allowed a community in Labasa to erect a purpose-built centre with which the MoE recognition was applied for and granted. *Fiji Water Foundation* assisted MPP3 in providing 20 MPP centres with indoor learning materials and *Leadership Fiji* assisted seven other centres with learning materials and equipment.
63. MPP has been designed to be sustainable in the long term. The primary strategy for sustainability of the project is to support communities to apply for MoE recognition and when it is achieved to access available salary and building grants. This remains the strategy despite much slower progress towards recognition than had been anticipated. Realistically, MPP is likely to fall far short of its goal in Objective 1 to have 44 centres established and recognised by the MoE by 2011.
64. The evaluation did not find evidence of other planning for how MPP will be funded beyond the life of the current funding arrangement with NZAID. What will happen to MPP beyond the life of the current funding agreement remains a question. There is no evidence and little hope, that the Fiji Government will be in a position to support the continuation of MPP from 2011. Other donors supporting education projects in Fiji include AUSAID and the European Union (EU). AUSAID's education sector programme supports the MoE to implement strategic reforms to improve the quality of planning, management, provision and monitoring of education services, especially to disadvantaged and remote areas. AUSAID has a particular interest in ECE as in 2008/09 AUSAID, with other development partners, assisted the Fiji Ministry of Education to develop the first-ever kindergarten curriculum guidelines for teachers to standardise the curriculum and provide a more child centred approach. Through the EU-funded Fiji Education

Sector Programme, the EU has invested more than F\$50 million in the last few years to help provide all children of Fiji with access to education, the money has primarily been invested in primary school infrastructure.

65. The evaluation found that there are other donors, larger than NZAID, working in the education sector in Fiji and that it would be of value to SC Fiji to further develop its relationship with these donors, as well as commercial sponsors and explore potential investment in MPP. These findings have led to Recommendation 5 that SC Fiji actively plans for the sustainability of MPP.

2.6 Summary

66. The purpose and objectives of MPP are consistent with international priorities for ECE, appropriate to the context, in line with principles of good development practice and relevant to the needs of the target communities. The project has responded to a weakened economy by increasing the extent of provision and including a focus on income generating activities.
67. Comparison between MPP and other ECE projects in the Pacific is problematic as none known to the evaluation team is targeted on impoverished, informal communities, and most have more government support than MPP has been able to achieve.
68. The sustainability plan for MPP is that centres achieve MoE recognition and can then access salary and building grants but progress towards this goal has been slower than anticipated. SC Fiji intends to seek donor funding for MPP4 for which planning has begun. However, there is no contingency planning in place should donor funding be unavailable and the evaluation recommends that SC Fiji directs more effort to building relationships with other donors currently supporting education sector activities in Fiji.

3 The effectiveness of MPP

69. Following a review of achievements 2002-2008, this section takes its structure from the objectives, outcomes and indicators described in the project logic model in Appendix 2. In the absence of a clear project logic model at the outset the evaluation had to reconstruct a logic model based on project documents. The outcomes and indicators used to assess progress towards objectives form the framework of the evaluation in this section of the report. As levels of performance expected on key indicators were not established at the outset, in most cases quantification of progress towards indicators is not possible.

3.1 Achievements 2002-2008

70. This review of achievement is based on project documents 2002-2008 and interviews with MPP staff and other stakeholders.
71. A feasibility study in 2002 showed there was a rapidly growing need to expand ECE programmes in Fiji to ensure all communities had access to ECE services. A model was developed whereby a mobile kindergarten facility was taken into disadvantaged communities and an ECE programme offered to the children there. Alongside provision of ECE, community education committees (CEC) were established to support and guide the development of MPP centres, and mothers' groups were formed to support the work of the centre and to promote parenting skills.
72. For the purposes of the project, disadvantaged children were defined as children from squatter settlements, housing estates or rural communities; from households with a family income of less than \$5000 a year and with four or more children; from one parent households; children of disabled parents, and children who have been abandoned.
73. The original objectives of MPP were to provide access to ECE for economically disadvantaged children, to provide mothers and other primary caregivers in target communities with information and support to enhance parental effectiveness, to increase the capacity of communities to develop and manage an ECE programme and to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme through systematic monitoring.
74. The funding proposal for MPP3 submitted by SC Fiji in 2008 identified the following achievements from Phases 1 and 2 of the project.
- over 1700 children in 17 centres in Suva and Labasa benefitted from the project between 2001-2008
 - observation of the children identified marked gains in learning, co-ordination and cognitive development
 - participating communities gained new skills, knowledge and livelihoods
 - awareness of ECE, child rights and parental obligations increased in participating communities
 - communities gained experience in management and governance of centres
 - a child rights approach to development was embedded through collaboration with stakeholders and community leaders
 - at a policy level SC Fiji was able to contribute to policy and ensure the voices of children are heard.
75. Despite regular narrative reporting there is limited quantitative information available on the outcomes of MPP from 2002-2008. Project reporting from Phases 1 and 2 included claims about student achievement such as:
- 80% of the children of the community playgroups perform above average on entering into the mainstream education system through follow-up with the head teachers and class teachers. Children who are now within mainstream schools are within the top 10 percentile in their respective schools.¹⁶*

¹⁶ 2004/2005 Comprehensive monitoring report.

76. However, MPP staff in 2010 acknowledge that claims such as these were based solely on anecdotal information and had no data to back them up.
77. The evaluation team investigated whether any additional quantitative data measuring outcomes over this period existed but found nothing beyond that included in the monitoring reports submitted to NZAID. Narrative reports suggest that MPP centres provided informal settlements, which were without strong community networks, with a focus for collaboration as community members worked together to develop and manage the centres.
78. Following a review of achievements in 2008 the objectives of MPP were redeveloped and have guided the project since then.

3.2 Establishment and operation of centres

79. The findings in this section of the report are a synthesis of all data sources.
80. Objective 1 of MPP3 is that by 2011, 27 new ECE centres will be established and a total of 44 centres functioning and recognised by Fiji Ministry of Education. Table 3 shows the outcomes and indicators used to assess progress towards Objective 1.

Table 3: Outcomes and indicators for Objective 1

Outcomes	Indicators
Children from informal and squatter settlements access quality ECE	Number /proportion centres recognised by MoE by 2011
	Number / proportion community profiles documented
	Advisory Committee meeting regularly
	Children enrolled in MPP
	Children attending MPP regularly
	Children graduating from MPP
	All children from informal settlements have opportunity to attend MPP
	MPP centres offer quality ECE experience
School enrolment rates increase	MPP centres adequately/appropriately equipped
	MPP teachers follow ECE curriculum
	MPP centres are OSH compliant
	Number / proportion of MPP children enrolling in school
Children better prepared for school	School entry data
	Teacher perception of school readiness
	Parent/caregiver perception
Improved parenting practice	Structured/deliberate activities to enhance parenting
	Knowledge and skills
	Parenting practice observed, parent feedback

Establishment and recognition

81. There has been significant progress in establishing new centres. As can be seen from Table 4 below, 14 centres established in Phases 1 and 2 were joined by a further nine established in Year 1 of MPP 3, and four to date in Year 2 giving a total of 27. Community profiles exist for all of the centres established to date.

Table 4: Centres established in each phase of MPP

Community type	MPP1	MPP2	MPP3	TOTAL
Multiracial settlements	2		3	5
Squatters	2	3	3	8
Villages	2	2	4	8
Settlements			3	3
PRB centres	2			2
HART	1			1
TOTAL	9	5	13	27

82. Three other centres established in Phases 1 and 2 have discontinued – two of them because land ownership issues caused a reduction in community size making the centres no longer viable, and one because a multi-storey public housing building in Suva was demolished and the residents relocated.
83. SC Fiji data shows that eight of the centres are in squatter settlements, eight in villages, eight in multiracial or informal settlements and three operate under the management of the Public Rental Board (PRB) or the Housing Assistance Relief Trust (HART). (Table 4) All the centres visited open five mornings a week running sessions of between two and three hours each day.
84. During the set up phase for an MPP centre the community needs to apply for MoE establishment. The requirements for establishment are reasonably straightforward with the most challenging requirement being that from 2009 all teachers in front of students have to be registered with the Teachers' Registration Board. To be eligible for registration, community teacher aides must complete a six-week attachment at a recognised kindergarten.
85. Once a centre is established the next formal process is to seek MoE recognition. Having centres recognised means that playgroup is absorbed into the formal education system and qualifies for Ministry resources including salary and building grants. Moving centres to MoE recognition is an essential part of SC Fiji's sustainability strategy. The requirements for recognition include:
- The premises must be approved by and maintained to the satisfaction of the appropriate Health Authority and Education Department.
 - A minimum space of 10sq feet per child.
 - Adequate windows and doors to be provided to give good lighting, adequate ventilation, and easy access outside in case of emergencies.
 - Storage space must be provided for the materials and equipment.
 - Proper sanitary facilities. Toilets should be no more than 10-12 inches high [30cm] and there must be one for every 15 children or part thereof.
 - Wash hand basins and hand towels provided and placed within the children's reach.
 - Drinking water safe and free from contamination.
 - There must be ample supply of furniture and play equipment to cater for the number of children attending the center.
 - Outdoor play area – a minimum of 100 sq ft per child and layout should allow for easy supervision of all areas. The area should be fenced on all sides with a gate or thick hedge three feet high.
 - Every centre needs to create a learning environment for young children – a place where there is opportunity for experiencing and investigating, where many kinds of play materials provide a way for the child to form his own concepts of the world and through the use of a variety of equipment be stimulated to think and solve problems.⁷

⁷ Ministry of Education requirement for recognition 2005.

86. Furthermore, prior to recognition being granted the building and facilities are to be certified as OHS compliant by a city or town council health authority [for urban centres] or the local rural authority in the case of rural centres. In addition, the proposed centre management committee usually a CEC for MPP centres has to employ a trained ECE teacher or teacher aide.
87. Moving MPP centres through to MoE recognition has been slower than anticipated. Currently, just eight of 27 centres have been recognised by the MoE. One of these has received both salary and building grant, two have received a salary grant only, one has received a building grant only and four receive neither grant (Table 5). This limited progress towards MoE recognition makes the full achievement of Objective 1 by 2011 very unlikely. Full details can be found in Appendix 10.

Table 5: Status of MPP centres 2009

Status	Yes	No	Total
MoE established	13	14	27
MoE recognised	8	19	27
Salary grant	3	24	27
Building grant	3	24	27

88. SC Fiji playgroups operate in disadvantaged informal communities and settlements where the economic power of communities is very low. Unemployment is widespread and the income of many is below the poverty line so the capacity to fund the requirements of the MoE is very limited. The very nature of informal settlements means that often there are no permanent buildings within the settlement. Any permanent buildings usually belong to another person or organisation. Fewer than a third of the centres visited during the evaluation had their own premises or dedicated space, just under half were in church buildings, and three were operating from buildings that belonged to a community member who was making it available for the centre. (Table 6) Where there is a community owned building it has multiple uses, meaning that the MPP centre has to pack all equipment and materials away each day. None of these arrangements would enable the centre to obtain recognition from the MoE as the building must be owned by the community and for the sole use of the preschool. For informal settlements achieving MoE recognition is more difficult than it would be for more established communities, even if they are poor.

Table 6: Types of premises

Premises	Suva/Nasinu	Labasa	Lautoka	Total
Church or community hall	5	1	1	7
Own premises/dedicated space	1	2	2	5
Private home/annex	1	1	1	3
Outdoors		1		1
Total	7	5	4	16

89. Informal communities face difficulties even after they have achieved recognition. The evaluation found one community with a building that met requirements and for which recognition had been granted. A salary grant had also been approved but in order to obtain the grant money from the MoE, the CEC had to have a bank account into which the funds could be deposited. However, to open a bank account, the committee had to have \$500 which it did not have and could not raise. So, despite MoE recognition no salary grant could be claimed.
90. SC Fiji intends to pursue with MoE the possibility of setting up some regulations that are specific and more relevant to the impoverished situations in informal settlements, communities and

villages and which are more attainable for them. The evaluation recommends this discussion should commence as soon as an MoU is signed.

91. An additional reason for such slow progress in achieving recognition is that of capacity within the MoE. Currently, the MoE has just one person, a senior education officer, allocated to ECE. This person is responsible for all ECE policy, training and implementation matters, including the recognition process. Furthermore, the recently introduced age 55 compulsory retirement age from the public service has led to a lot of people, including this officer, taking annual leave two days a week for an extended period in order to use up accumulated leave before retirement. This means that the single person in the MoE with responsibility for ECE policy, implementation and standards is currently working three days a week.
92. While the cost and complexity of the recognition process and the limited capacity in the MoE are undoubtedly serious barriers to progress, the evaluation team also found that in some communities the CECs had only partial understanding of what the process required.
93. While SC Fiji endeavours to engage constructively with the MoE there has been no memorandum of understanding (MoU) between MPP and the MoE since the original MoU lapsed in 2005. Although a new MoU has been drafted this should be progressed with more urgency. This finding leads to Recommendation 7.

Enrolment and attendance

94. When children are enrolled at an MPP centre full details of the child and their family are recorded. This data is collected by MPP teachers, submitted through divisional co-ordinators to the National Manager and recorded in a spreadsheet. However, the spreadsheet is not kept consistently, and not enough confidence can be placed in enrolment data recorded to present it here. In brief, the issues are that not all centres appear on the spreadsheet, data for some centres is presented as annual enrolments and others as cumulative enrolments and much data is missing.
95. In all the communities visited CEC members and MPP staff have made vigorous efforts to ensure all the preschool children in the community are enrolled at the MPP centre. However, in some centres, particularly in and around Suva, we learned from parents that, although enrolled, their children are welcome to attend only if fees can be paid in advance.
96. A review of attendance registers at centres indicates that attendance data is taken by each centre daily and that daily and weekly totals are calculated. Community teacher aides and other community members are very familiar with the children's circumstances and seemed aware of the reasons that children are absent. Centres aim for 80% attendance and in some areas when attendance for an individual drops below 80% the MPP teacher will visit the child's family.
97. The evaluation team saw evidence of an enrolment register and daily attendance records in all the centres visited. Centres consistently reported high rates of attendance although several centres visited had fewer children in attendance on the day of our visit than were typically marked as being present on other days. In Suva in particular, MPP staff and CEC members talked of the transience of families through the informal settlements and more than one example was given of a child on the roll of one centre who left that community and turned up at another MPP centre in a neighbouring community. MPP staff talked of the mobility of families and the care of children often being shared between family members in different locations.
98. MPP teachers are supposed to collect attendance data and submit it to the divisional co-ordinators (Labasa and Lautoka) and to the National Manager in Suva. Investigation revealed that this process was working well in only one of the divisions. Problems in other divisions suggest that limiting factors include limitations in IT literacy and inconsistent practice on the part of MPP teachers in transferring attendance data in from their centres. In one division attendance records reviewed had not been updated for six months prior to the evaluation visit.
99. MPP monitoring reports from 2002-2008 provide some enrolment data but make no mention of attendance rates at MPP centres. Examination of data found more attention paid to enrolment data than to attendance, and in some cases, as with this quote from the annual report on Year One of Phase 3, there appeared to be some confusion between the two:

There has also been a big increase in centre attendance between the mid-year enrolment figures (174 in Jan 2009) and towards the end of the first year of implementation (398 in June 2009).⁸

100. These problems with the enrolment database and the incompleteness of the attendance data make it impossible to know whether or not, at an aggregate level, MPP3 centres are meeting their target of 80% attendance. There is evidence in at least one division that enrolment and attendance records are kept well and that the team is able to assess centres' progress towards the 80% attendance target leading the evaluation team to the conclusion that the issue is one of consistency. It is important to note that this division currently has only a small number of centres, with others planned. Considerable staff resource is devoted to capturing robust attendance data and, if necessary following-up families whose children are absent without explanation. This level of monitoring and support for high attendance will become more difficult as the number of centres increases.
101. The evaluation recommends that in discussions with NZAID about data requirements priority should be given to properly collected, aggregated and analysed attendance and enrolment data as without it no conclusions can be drawn from the tracking system into which such effort is being put.

Programme quality

102. A high quality ECE programme is one which integrates health, nutrition, education and socialisation in programmes for young children which are child-centred and based around play. Through the provision of carefully chosen resources, play activities which help the physical, social and emotional development of children form the basis of a programme in which there is no place for formal, didactic, teacher-centred instruction. While one of the benefits of ECE is that children enter formal schooling confident and ready to learn, a quality ECE programme does not include formal teaching of literacy and numeracy skills. Indicators of a high quality ECE programme can be found as Appendix 13.
103. *Na Noda Mataniciva*, the Kindergarten Curriculum Guidelines for the Fiji Islands has recently been developed. The Guidelines describe how a quality ECE programme will look in practice by identifying a set of principles to guide teaching and learning in kindergartens. The principles are:
- Relationships. Children's learning and development is enhanced when they have positive relationships with other children and adults, and when teachers have good relationships with the family and the community.
 - Culture and spiritual awareness. To develop a feeling of self-worth, children must appreciate and be confident in their own culture. They must also learn to respect the cultures and beliefs of others.
 - Caring and respect. Children must learn to care for and respect other children and their property; they must also learn to respect and care for the environment and living things.
 - Inclusiveness. Inclusiveness is about valuing diversity and ensuring that all children enjoy the benefits of the programme, without prejudice.
 - Child-centred learning. Children construct their own learning through play and active engagement with materials, adults and other children in supportive and meaningful learning environments.
104. The quality of the programmes in the MPP centres visited varied. Some showed evidence of good practice including, for example, learning centres from which children could choose activities and examples of children's work displayed on walls or from the ceiling. However, the extent of these good practice activities, even in the better centres, was limited. There tended to be few resources available and much better use could have been made of local materials to produce good quality, effective teaching equipment for the children to use.

⁸ MPP Project Phase 3 Annual Report Year 1 (July 2008-June 2009) p12

105. In other centres there was less evidence of an understanding of what constitutes good practice. This was reflected in the programmes being largely teacher dominated and directed. Activity based learning centres were very limited or absent and the work displayed was of prepared materials that the children coloured in, leaving little room for self expression.
106. There was some consistency of programme quality in the centres visited in each division which suggested to the team that the understanding of the elements of a good quality programme, and the training and support given to community teacher aides to deliver it was stronger in some divisions than in others. Seeing examples of stronger practice also gave the evaluation team confidence that it is possible to deliver good quality ECE programmes within informal settlements.
107. The characteristics of a good quality ECE programme can be found as Appendix 13. A good quality ECE programme recognises that young children learn through play. It is child-centred in that for much of time children should be able to choose the play activities they engage in, and the role of the teacher is to provide appropriate equipment and assistance rather than to direct the experience. Where possible resources for play and learning should be local sourced and familiar and relevant to the children. Using the observation checklist which can be found as Appendix 8 the evaluation did not observe these features consistently across the centres visited. These findings have contributed to Recommendation 2.

Student outcomes

108. The evaluation team visited eight schools spread across the three divisions. Schools were selected because they were close to MPP centres and they enrolled children who had graduated from the centres. In total the team interviewed six principals and 18 classroom teachers, the large majority of whom were teachers of Class 1 (new school entrants). In schools which had taken small numbers of children from MPP centres because the centres in that division were newly established, the team asked teachers to make the comparison between children who came to school having had ECE (of any kind) and those who had not. In schools which had enrolled children from MPP centres over a number of years we asked teachers for an additional comparison between the school readiness of children from MPP centres and those from other centres. The team considered that any comparison between children from MPP centres and those from other ECE centres unreliable in schools which had enrolled only small numbers of children from MPP centres. Schools do not keep records of which ECE service children have attended so at times teachers had to be prompted by MPP staff to remind them which children had come through MPP centres.
109. With one exception, the teachers all told us that there was a distinct difference between students who entered school having had some ECE and those who did not, and that ECE played a major role in preparing children for school. Furthermore, in those schools which took a number of students from MPP centres, the teachers reported that the students from MPP centres were as well equipped as students coming from any other ECE centres. Teachers said that, unlike children coming straight from home, those who had had ECE experience:
- had already adapted to the learning environment and came to school able to take instruction
 - were confident to participate in activities and to contribute
 - could recognise the sounds of letters and numbers, and in some cases letters and numbers when written
 - had basic fine motor skills such as using a pencil and were ready to write
 - were used to working in a group with other children
 - were able to work independently when necessary.
110. The MPP3 team has put enormous effort and energy into tracking the progress of children who have graduated from MPP centres. A database of outcomes of students who graduated from MPP centres during 2009 is being constructed. The process for tracking students is that parents are contacted and informed about the tracking exercise, asked for permission to track the child's progress, and asked about where the child attends school. MPP staff then visit the

primary schools to which children have graduated to explain the tracking purpose and process and to confirm whether the children are enrolled. A formal letter goes to the Permanent Secretary Education explaining the purpose and process of the tracking seeking approval for the exercise, and when approval is received letters go to schools confirming approval for tracking activity and to make appointments to visit for the tracking exercise. School visits are organised to discuss each child's performance with the head teacher and class teacher and to collect written reports on the children. Once gathered, the data from reports is entered into tracking database.

111. The tracking database records each student's name, school, graduation year from MPP, class and position in class. The number of students in each class is also recorded along with any teacher comment that appears on the written report.
112. The database contains full details from 65 children who graduated from MPP centres during 2009 which represents approximately 20% of the 300 graduates of MPP that year. The tracking database also contains details on 71 graduates of MPP centres in earlier years, just 4% of the 1700 graduates prior to 2008, giving a total of 136 students on the database in Feb 2010. This is not a purposive sample but is the number who have been able to be successfully tracked to date.
113. In order to assess the reliability of the data recorded in the database a random sample of student records was drawn and followed from the source data (school reports), into the recording system, through to SC Fiji's analysis. This analysis suggests the system is recording student data from school reports fairly accurately.
114. Achievement data on students' reports is limited to a range of marks and/or a place in class. SC Fiji has used place in class as the basis for their analysis. The analysis is not referenced to class size, although review of the data indicates average class sizes of 36 pupils. Their analysis is shown in Table 7 below.

Table 7: MPP 2009 graduates place in class

Place in class	Number of students
1st to 17th	42
20th to 30th	28
30th to 40th	28
No place entered on school report	38
Total	136

115. While SC Fiji is to be commended for the effort that has gone into setting up the tracking system at present no conclusions about the effectiveness of MPP in improving student outcomes can be drawn from the data. There are a number of reasons for this:

- 'graduates' include those who have graduated from MPP to school and those who have graduated to another kindergarten prior to entering Class 1
- the system does not record how long the student was enrolled at MPP or how frequently they attended
- 'graduates' may have been at school only a few weeks or months affecting their results in tests and exams
- only 65 of 300 MPP graduates in 2009 have been tracked so far
- there is no comparison data for non-MPP students
- schools provide copies of students reports which come in a range of formats (although many use a similar format for recording marks) so there is no consistent data capture.

116. While acknowledging the reasons and affirming the effort that has gone into the design and implementation of the system, the evaluation team is not convinced that the tracking system gathers sufficiently robust information about student outcomes to justify the commitment of resources. The evaluation recommends that data collection and analysis should focus on

enrolment, attendance and programme quality with a view to ensuring that centres are attracting the children in their community, and that barriers to attendance are identified and addressed, and that centres are delivering a quality programme. The evaluation found that the tracking system was developed in response to pressure to provide outcome data which could demonstrate the effectiveness of MPP. The team is of the view that the value of good quality ECE has been established through international research and that the focus of MPP data collection and analysis should be on measuring access and ensuring programme quality. A checklist of the elements of a high quality ECE programme can be found as Appendix 13. This finding has led to Recommendation 13.

Improved parenting practice

117. ECE teachers and CDOs run groups for parents in the communities which host MPP centres. As part of these sessions, as well as through the sessions run on the rights of children, appropriate parenting practice, including alternatives to corporal punishment, is described and discussed. While there are no formal measures in place to gauge improvement in parenting practice parents interviewed by the evaluation team said that they had learned a lot, particularly about children's rights, through the MPP project.

3.3 Community capacity

118. Objective 2 of MPP3 is that by 2011, 44 communities will have the capacity to manage ECE centres through community education committees and community interest groups. The table below shows the outcomes and indicators used to measure progress towards this objective.

Table 8: Outcomes and indicators for Objective 2

Outcomes	Indicators
Communities manage and maintain quality ECE centres	Number/proportion of MPP centres with CECs actively involved in their management
	Number /proportion of CECs with bank accounts, strategic and operational documentation (finance, personnel record keeping etc) in place. Structure and function of CECs
	Number / proportion of CECs passing the MPP checklist
	Structured/deliberate activities that build and support the capacity of CECs to take on the management of MPP centres
	Number/ proportion of CECs recognised by MoE
	Deliberate activities that develop/strengthen relationship between CECs and communities

Community selection

119. In all three divisions MPP staff described two ways in which communities are identified as potential sites for an MPP centre. The first is through community profiling by SC Fiji of areas known to be disadvantaged; profiling involves establishing the number of pre-school age children in the community, the location of the nearest schools and other preschools and gathering a range of other data about the community. On the basis of this information a decision is made about whether the community meets the criteria for establishment. The second way communities are identified is when a community approaches SC Fiji and asks for assistance to establish a centre. In most cases, but not always, those communities that are sufficiently well organised to take the initiative to approach SC Fiji are the better established communities.

120. With the objective to expand and for centres to achieve MoE recognition driving MPP3, there is a temptation for MPP to respond to requests from communities which have asked for a centre and may have a more organised community able to support the development and running of

one. Such communities are also more likely to be able to navigate the process towards MoE recognition. The evaluation found that every centre visited is of value to the children who attend but that three of the 16 centres visited are not in communities of greatest need. In one case SC Fiji was fully aware that the request for assistance to establish a centre came from a well-structured Fijian village and its rationale for agreeing to the request was twofold; firstly, that without it, no ECE provision would have been available to the children and secondly, that it provided an inroad into other Fijian village communities. However, the evaluation also found that in at least one location communities which have approached SC Fiji for assistance in setting up a centre have been declined on the basis that they are not impoverished enough. These findings have led to Recommendation 4.

Community organisation

Table 9: MPP centre community membership details

MPP centre details at 30/10/09	Number
MPP centres	25 ⁹
CEC presidents	23 ¹⁰
CEC secretaries	26
Assistant secretaries	4
CEC treasurers	23
Committee members	35
Community teacher aides	35

121. With one exception an active CEC was supporting each centre visited. SC Fiji keeps detailed and up to date records of the membership of CECs and Table 9 above shows that virtually all 25 MPP centres operating in September 2009 had at least three office bearers supported by an average of two more additional committee members. All CECs were actively involved in the management of the centre including provision of premises, recruitment and support of community teacher aides and raising funds to pay teachers and purchase resources. Table 10 below shows that the majority of the 27 centres operating at the end of 2009 had plans and personnel files in place and were involved in ongoing fundraising. Two-thirds had bank accounts and kept records of accounts.

⁹ Two more centres opened later in 2009

¹⁰ One community teacher aide (at Vésida) reports direct to the HART Foundation, and there are no office bearers. Another centre (Soasoa) had not submitted the names of office holders

Table 10: CEC planning, management and record keeping

Division	Centre plans	Personnel files	Ongoing fundraising	Bank accounts	Payments records
Suva/Nasinu (11)	10	7	10	6	7
Lautoka (4)	4	4	4	4	4
Labasa (12)	12	10	10	6	6
Total (27)	26	21	24	16	17

122. Not all communities could pay their teachers regularly and relied upon the goodwill of the teachers to continue working even if no payment could be made. In the Northern and Western divisions CECs and teachers reported that community teacher aides were willing to continue teaching even when the community could not afford to pay them regularly. In and around Suva CECs and teachers reported that where payment could not be made teachers were not so willing, or perhaps economically able, to continue in the role and were forced to look for other income generating options. The need to maintain consistent payment to community teacher aides is the reason that a number of centres visited in Suva and Nasinu required attendance fees and that some parents reported that their children were unable to attend the centre if fees had not been paid.
123. SC Fiji has initiated a range of structured and deliberate activities to build and support communities to take on the management of MPP centres. Detailed records have been kept of capability activities initiated with each community between June 2008 and Dec 2009. In this time presentations and workshops directly related to MPP included raising awareness of ECE, how to establish a centre, the roles and responsibilities of CECs and office bearers, strengthening relationships and fundraising. Other community education sessions run in this period by the CDOs include sessions on stopping domestic violence, breastfeeding and immunisation.
124. The development and ownership of an ECE in informal settlements is more difficult than in established communities. As with all community organisations, successful ownership depends on a number of dedicated people who between them have the skills and expertise to provide the leadership and management, both financial and administrative, to ensure success. The social structures that operate within a village or neighbourhood do not exist, and the newer the community, the less established are the social structures. The membership of the community, at least in the earlier stages of its development, is dynamic and changing. New members are constantly arriving and may stay only for a short time. Initially, members are likely to be focussed on establishing housing and seeking income for their family, with little time to participate in community affairs.
125. To establish an MPP centre leadership is required and this may be from a women's group, church organisation or from the emerging social leaders. Canvassing and fundraising efforts of the wider community by instigators, if successful, leads to the establishment of a CEC and an MPP centre. Their work is ongoing to ensure the development and success of the centre and its eventual recognition by the MoE. In all the communities we visited there was a genuine commitment to, and ownership of, the MPP centre and a desire to see it succeed.

Community ownership

126. The model of community ownership is based on sound development principles and is designed to secure the future of MPP centres beyond the involvement of SC Fiji. However, unless communities can achieve MoE recognition and access a salary grant for the community teacher aide they are in a difficult position. Either they rely on the goodwill of an unpaid, volunteer community teacher aide if they can find one, or they raise money from their community in other ways, or they charge fees to those using the centre. Relying on unpaid volunteer teachers makes the service vulnerable to teacher turnover as volunteers will be quick to move on should

an employment opportunity arise for them. The other two alternatives have become more difficult as economic conditions have tightened. Communities, with the support of CDOs are trying to establish income generating projects but examples shown to the evaluation team appear to have very limited commercial potential at this stage.

127. Some of the CECs had developed plans to meet the requirements for MoE recognition after which they could apply for a salary grant and a building grant. Eight had achieved this. However, many of the newer CECs had only a limited understanding of the MoE requirements. The evaluation found that more could be done to support CECs to a better understanding of the process and then to progress through it. Recommendation 11 picks up this issue.
128. Not all communities and CEC members interviewed demonstrated good understanding of what constitutes a quality ECE programme. This finding, in conjunction with centres' reliance on minimally trained community teachers, highlights the need for continuing outside support to ensure the quality of the programme.

3.4 Developing teacher capability

129. Objective 3 of MPP3 is that by 2011, the capacity of community volunteers as ECE teachers has been developed to enable sustainability of the community centres and a quality ECE for the children. Table 11 below shows the outcomes and indicators used to measure progress towards this objective.

Table 11: Outcomes and indicators for Objective 3

Outcomes	Indicators
Trained and qualified ECE teachers	Number / proportion MPP teachers trained, and to what extent
	Number / proportion of MPP teachers certified and/or passing MoE assessment
leading MPP programmes	Number / proportion of MPP teachers receiving grants and incentives
	Recruitment and retention of MPP teachers
	Nature and extent of teacher training activities offered.
	Uptake/ attendance of teacher training activities
	Assessment/evaluation of MPP teachers in place

Basic training and certification

130. Currently, once community teacher aides have been selected by their community they attend a five to six week attachment at a kindergarten recognised by the MoE. After this and with the support of the ECE teacher educator they begin to run the MPP programme in their community. Project data provided to the evaluation shows that 90% of community teacher aides have completed training attachment and 10% have not. The evaluation visited 16 centres with a total of 24 community teacher aides, 14 (about 60%) of who had completed the six week attachment which suggests that project records may be somewhat out of date in this respect. Every community teacher aide is expected to attend the training workshop conducted by the MPP team and other invited resource people. According to MPP records 98% have attended a training workshops as well as at least one Fiji Early Childhood Association (FECA) Conference and MoE workshops.

131. The community teacher aide workforce is a mobile one and teachers will move if a better opportunity opens up for them. This is understandable given what is at best a low level of remuneration for the position. This means that new community teacher aides constantly have to be recruited and trained.

Ongoing development and training

132. After the initial attachment community teacher aide training consists of on-site coaching and mentoring, periodic workshops, and monthly 'update' meetings. At times community teacher

aides have difficulty getting to the monthly updates because of travel costs. The evaluation found that travel costs sometimes are a barrier to community teacher aides attending monthly updates and other ongoing training. This finding has led to Recommendation 10.

133. Recommendation 9 of this report is that a more structured training package be developed for community teacher aides. In developing such a package there are a number of things that will need to be taken into account. Many community teacher aides may have had limited opportunity for personal education so any material used by the ECE teacher educator along with forms of reporting and assessment must be appropriate to their education level. Community teacher aides may be married with family and community commitments that may limit their time for study. The programme, therefore, needs to be practical and able to be completed largely during work time. The formal teaching will be limited to the opportunities available to have the teacher aides meet in a group. The current monthly update time will be useful but financial support needs to be provided to the teacher aides to ensure their ability to participate. Teacher aides need to be able to start the programme as soon as they begin their teaching role. This requires each component of the programme as far as it is possible, to be independent and not require the prior completion of another. While this is not possible in a programme of teacher education leading to a formal qualification, it is in a programme designed to be introductory only. Notes on what an introductory community teacher aide education programme might include can be found in Appendix 9.
134. Not all of the SC Fiji ECE teachers see their primary role as being to develop the practice of community teacher aides. Some consider themselves advisors to the community teachers and the community rather than as a provider of training in quality ECE practice. This is not the case in all areas, and in those places where the MPP staff are taking a more active role in the education and training of community teacher aides practice is generally of a higher quality. In order to fulfil this role effectively, the evaluation recommends that the ECE teachers be renamed as ECE educators and that their training needs for this role be identified and addressed. These findings have led to Recommendations 8 and 12.
135. There is no formal performance management process for community teacher aides. Performance issues are addressed through visits by the MPP ECE teachers, subsequent follow-up discussions and monthly update sessions. Weaknesses are dealt with on-the-spot or during follow-up workshops.
136. All the centres visited were trying to pay their community teacher aides regularly, with most endeavouring to pay each teacher between \$15 and \$20 a week. The communities were engaged in fundraising activities which, in almost all cases, were supplemented by attendance fees. About half the centres visited managed to pay their teachers regularly with the rest paying when they could and relying on the goodwill of the teacher to continue when there were insufficient funds.

3.5 Effect of 2008 realignment of objectives

137. Primary data sources for this section of the report are document review, staff interviews, centre visits and community interviews.
138. The MPP3 objectives developed in 2008 are clearly driving the project. They are reflected in all key documents and in the allocation of human and financial resources. The staff is focused on the objectives and they are reflected in the MPP staffing structure.
139. Significant progress has been made with the first part of Objective 1, increase in the number of centres, but less progress has been made in increasing the number of centres recognised by the MoE. Responsibility for expansion sits primarily with the district co-ordinators in Northern and Western divisions and with the Project Manager in Suva. Objective 1 drives the work of MPP and is firmly focused on expansion. The resources of the project are directed towards establishing centres with each division having an annual target of new centres. The view formed by the evaluation team is that the quality of the MPP programme is variable and needs attention which may require a reconsideration of the priority given to expansion. This view has led to Recommendations 3 and 4.

140. Objective 2, developing the capacity of communities to manage the centre, is the primary focus of the CDOs in each region, supported by other staff. A range of activities to build community capacity is in place and some are working well. Few centres have yet been able to meet the MoE requirements for recognition. The evaluation team thinks the goal of MoE recognition is an important one and that more of the community capacity building effort should be targeted to increase the proportion of centres achieving this goal. This conclusion has led to Recommendation 9.
141. Objective 3 is to develop the capacity of community teacher aides. Responsibility for this objective sits primarily with SC Fiji ECE teachers and the National Training Co-ordinator. While there is a range of activities in place to enable this to happen, and progress has been made, the quality of community teacher practice is still variable and in the view of the evaluation team the strategy to achieve this objective should be revisited. Recommendation 8 is the result of this finding.
142. Objective 4 has also been a strong focus and has been the impetus for the development of management, monitoring and evaluation of the project within SC Fiji. While systems have undoubtedly been strengthened compliance requirements are onerous. This view has led to Recommendation 13.
143. The revised objectives have made ECE accessible to more children from impoverished communities, although the future of that provision cannot be assured until centres have achieved MoE recognition. The quality of the ECE delivered under MPP is not consistently high although project documents indicate that the fundamental understanding of the components of a quality ECE programme is in place. The increased focus on building community capacity in a structured and deliberate way is a strength, and more of this will be required if the pace of MoE recognition is to pick up. In summary, the revised objectives have strengthened the project by bringing clear focus to the goals of quality provision, sustainability and community ownership. However, the focus on expansion drives the project sometimes at the cost of quality provision.

3.6 Summary

144. There is minimal quantitative data on the outcomes of MPP Phases 1 and 2. Narrative reporting suggests that over 1700 children in 17 centres in Suva and Labasa demonstrated gains in learning, co-ordination and cognitive development; that participating communities gained new skills, knowledge and awareness of child rights; that some volunteer teachers went on to jobs in ECE; and, that communities gained experience in governing and managing MPP centres.
145. Under MPP3 there has been significant progress in establishing new centres with 14 centres established in Phases 1 and 2 joined by a further nine established in Year 1 of MPP 3, and four more by February 2010 giving a total of 27. Only eight of the 27 have achieved MoE recognition required in order to access salary and building grants. The main obstacle to recognition is the challenge communities face in providing a dedicated space which meets MoE requirements for a playgroup to operate.
146. Robust data on enrolment, attendance and quality ECE practice in all centres is needed in order for MPP to be effective. Currently, data collection efforts are focused on a tracking system which attempts to establish academic and social outcomes at school for children who have attended MPP centres. However, without crucial enrolment and attendance data and better outcomes indicators than place in class the evaluation is of the view that the quality of data from the tracking system does not constitute an adequate return on the investment in it. A shared understanding and measures of programme quality also need to be developed.
147. Most, but not all centres are established in impoverished informal communities. Within a short time of being established virtually all centres are actively supported by a properly constituted CECs which has plans and monitoring systems in place. More support could be directed towards ensuring CECs understand and can progress the process of application for centre recognition by the MoE. Developing community teacher aide capability is a challenge as many communities are unable to pay the teacher aide regularly and as a result retention is an issue. Consideration

should be given to meeting travel costs and other expenses to reduce barriers to community teacher aides attending ongoing training.

148. The evaluation found that while effectiveness could be improved, MPP3 is a good model soundly delivered. The revised objectives have sharpened the focus on the goals of increased access to ECE, sustainability through MoE recognition, community ownership, teacher capability and quality provision. However, MPP3's focus on expansion drives the project sometimes at the cost of the other objectives. This finding has led to Recommendation 3.

4 The efficiency of MPP

149. This section examines how governance and management arrangements have supported or limited achievement of project objectives and how they could be enhanced to improve delivery. It comments on the extent to which the project has been managed within budget and whether cost savings could be made without compromising outcomes. Data sources for the findings in this section include interviews with the CEO, MPP National Manager, National Training Manager and Advisory Committee members, SCNZ and NZAID; a review of documents and records, interviews with MPP staff; and the observations of the evaluation team.
150. Objective 4 of MPP3 is to strengthen the capacity of SC Fiji MPP staff to effectively provide management, monitoring and evaluation of the project. Table 12 below shows the outcomes and indicators used to measure progress towards this objective.

Table 12: Outcomes and indicators for Objective 4

Outcomes	Indicators
SC Fiji manages the MPP project effectively and efficiently	Effective governance and policy framework in place.
	Robust systems in place, and used, for financial and resource management: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • budget setting • monitoring expenditure • Financial policies, procedures and controls. • asset acquisition and management
	Robust systems in place, and used, for personnel management: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recruitment and retention • direction and support • training • appraisal
	Robust systems in place, and used, for planning and reporting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strategic and annual plans in place, guiding operations and reported against.
	Robust systems in place, and used, for health and safety.
	Robust systems in place, and used, for monitoring and evaluation.

4.1 Project governance and management

Governance

151. From the beginning, the MPP Advisory Committee was designed as a representative governance body for the project. In its early stages, the Committee met regularly and played an active part in the design of the project contributing both professional and technical advice. However, over the last few years the active membership of the Committee has dwindled, meetings have been called less frequently, and the Advisory Committee has ceased to play an active role in the MPP.
152. One of the findings of this evaluation is that there is not a shared understanding of quality ECE practice, and how to develop it, in SC Fiji. We recommend that the Advisory Committee be revitalised with additional members, renamed as the Steering Committee and given the responsibilities of governing the MPP. The Steering Committee would be actively involved in setting objectives for MPP, providing professional guidance on a quality ECE programme, advising on the content of training programmes and reviewing progress and achievements. In response to a request from SC Fiji, a draft terms of reference for the Steering Committee is attached as Appendix 11. These findings have given rise to Recommendation 6

MPP management arrangements

153. The MPP programme is managed by the Project Manager, who also acts as the District Co-ordinator in Suva, supported by the district co-ordinators in Northern and Western Division. Northern and Western Divisions each have one team made up of ECE teacher and a CDO officer, Suva has two such teams.
154. Management of the MPP is highly objectives driven. All staff, especially the district co-ordinators, are focused on the revised objectives, particularly Objective 1, the expansion of the programme. No one interviewed for the evaluation, including NZAID personnel, seemed completely clear about where the objective for expansion had come from, and there was debate about who had been involved in developing the new objectives. In the SC Fiji Strategic Plan the expansion objective is linked back to 2008 (unconfirmed) evaluation of the project, but close reading of this document does not support this link. The mystery around where the objective has come from is a significant finding of the evaluation as it so clearly drives the project.
155. A key role of district co-ordinators is the collection and collation of management data and project data meaning that three positions of 12 are substantially dedicated to meeting reporting requirements. Not all of these people have sufficient levels of IT literacy to perform as well in this role as they need to.
156. ECE teachers provide support to community teacher aides in the design and delivery of their programmes, review teacher planning and evaluation, and help to access or develop teaching resources. However, during the evaluation one ECE teacher was having to teach daily in a centre in Suva as the CEC could not find a community teacher aide and the centre would have been in danger of closing had the SC Fiji staff member not stepped in. CDOs are responsible for building relationships with communities, establishing CECs, upskilling them in their responsibilities and introducing income generating projects. Both ECE teachers and CDOs also participate in awareness raising and community education.
157. The evaluation found that the MPP management arrangements are efficient and well designed to support the current objectives with roles well-defined and appropriate and accountabilities clear. There are, as in any organisation, instances where improvements in individuals' capacity and capability would strengthen the project and improve efficiency. On the other hand, salaries are not high and SC Fiji has done well to retain some experienced staff who add real value to project.

SCNZ's role in project management

158. The evaluation considered SCNZ's role in MPP management. Following some financial mismanagement within SC Fiji in 2006, and some subsequent changes at senior management level within that organisation, SCNZ took over direct management of the MPP project in 2008. The funding agreement for MPP3 is between SCNZ and NZAID with SC Fiji responsible for delivery of the project. Separately, SCNZ provides capacity building support to SC Fiji through KOHA funding.
159. SCNZ's management role in MPP is not articulated in any project documents. Personnel and structural changes within SCNZ meant that the acting Programmes Manager had visited SC Fiji and some MPP centres for the first time the week before the evaluation visit. Furthermore, she reported that SCNZ files were not able to throw much light on the nature of the relationship between the two organisations over the previous years. Review of project documents and correspondence in conjunction with interviews with SC Fiji staff suggest that prior to recent changes, SCNZ programme staff advised on project design and implementation, acted as a conduit for communications between SC Fiji and NZAID, provided advice and support to SC Fiji in the preparation of budgets and variations arising from them, and assisted with financial and narrative reporting.
160. All three parties, NZAID, SCNZ and SC Fiji identified both benefits and frustrations with the current management arrangements. Benefits for NZAID include increased confidence in financial and other reporting knowing that SCNZ has provided oversight and assistance to SC Fiji

in this area although this confidence has been tested recently with the changes in SCNZ; benefits for SC Fiji include the ongoing support of a neighbouring organisation in the Save the Children Alliance; benefits for SCNZ include the opportunity to help SC Fiji put into practice the support provided through SCNZ's KOHA-funded capacity building work. However, all parties identified similar frustrations with the arrangements including ongoing problems with accuracy of reporting, difficulties in parties meeting timeframes and unwieldy channels of communication leading at times to frustration and misunderstandings.

161. The evaluation found that the current three-way management arrangements are not working optimally for any of the parties, although SC Fiji asked the evaluation to note that it favours retaining the arrangement. Having acknowledged this view, the evaluation recommends that the arrangement be revisited and that SC Fiji reports directly to NZAID either in Fiji, or in Wellington. There are several reasons for this:
- The management capacity and capability within SC Fiji has been enhanced since 2008, there are now strong systems and processes in place (see 4.2). The MPP team has also been increased and the roles of divisional co-ordinators are focused on management, monitoring and reporting.
 - SCNZ is undergoing major restructuring and acknowledges that it may, in the short term at least, struggle to provide meaningful assistance to MPP.
 - SCNZ undertakes capacity building work with SC Fiji supported by the KOHA fund and thus the relationship between the two organisations, valued by SC Fiji, would be unaffected by any change in MPP management arrangements.
 - SC Fiji is accountable directly to all other funders and reports no difficulty in meeting funders' requirements.

162. This finding is picked up in Recommendation 14.

4.2 Governance and management within SC Fiji

Governance

163. The SC Fiji Board meets at least four times a year and provides oversight of strategic planning, financial management and monitoring. The Board is responsible for strategic leadership, stewardship, external relations, Board operations and support and guidance to the CEO.
164. The SC Fiji Board has recently developed and adopted a Strategic Plan 2010-2014 which includes high level strategic goals supported by a range of activities. Strategic goals focus on being an efficient, accountable, skilful organisation with integrity. A range of activities, including extending the MPP sit under the goals.
165. In the opinion of the CEO, SC Fiji has a representative, functioning governance Board that is well led. One member of the evaluation team is an SC Fiji Board member and reported that the Board is a business-focused governance body that has worked hard to ensure that robust management and reporting systems are in place. The evaluation team asked to meet the Board Chair and a meeting was scheduled for the day of the team's departure, but this proved not possible because other commitments took him out of Suva.

Management

166. SC Fiji appears to have good management structures and systems in place. The CEO has three second-tier managers including an overall Programmes Manager under whom the MPP team sits. The other two second-tier managers are Marketing and Fundraising and Finance and Administration.
167. Although the terms of reference for the evaluation did not include a comprehensive audit of systems and processes, the evaluation found SC Fiji to be an organisation with clear policies and operating procedures in place of which staff were aware. The team reviewed the key management areas of project planning and implementation, personnel, finances, property and assets, health and safety. Any policies, procedures or job descriptions requested from staff were provided without difficulty and were up to date.

168. Along with tightened financial accountability systems other management systems have been introduced to monitor work performance. MPP staff are required to submit a daily work plan in advance, to keep a daily work log and to have a weekly meeting with their manager to review achievements. Staff prepare weekly and monthly summaries of their work as well as maintaining records for vehicle use, finances etc. While there is no doubt that accountability has been improved, this management record keeping, in addition to collecting and collating a range of project data, places heavy demand on staff time and in some cases appears to be at the cost of time spent developing community teacher aides and supporting CECS. The evaluation team is of the view that reporting requirements should be reviewed and prioritised with NZAID actively clarifying its data needs. These findings have led to Recommendation 13.

4.3 Financial management and cost savings

Financial management

169. SC Fiji has suffered two serious incidents of fraud in recent years. Despite tightened procedures following the first fraud, the most recent incident was not discovered through audit but through SC Fiji's own systems. SC Fiji has put further financial accountability systems in place following the second, 2009, incident of fraud. These include:

- a two-person finance team
- weekly finance meeting and reconciliation
- full monthly finance report including balance sheet and bank reconciliation
- payments must be authorised by the relevant manager
- full quarterly audits.

170. SC Fiji is hopeful of recovering the money lost in the 2009 incident.

171. Financial management has been a cause of some tension between SCNZ and NZAID, particularly in 2009 over unapproved reallocation of funds from agreed training and advisory activities to personnel and administrative support.

MPP Budget

172. Analysis of NZAID funding allocated to each area of MPP operations for the three years of the current funding arrangement 2008-11 shows that administration and vehicle costs absorbed around 40% of funding in Years 1 and 2 with vehicle costs projected to reduce in Year 3. Personnel costs, understandably another major area of expenditure and the major budget item, are projected to increase in real terms across the three years. Training costs reduce across the three years of the funding arrangement although the amount for training community teacher aides actually increases slightly across those years while savings are made in training MPP staff and community education. 10-15% of the budget in each of the three years is spent on community education, awareness raising, child rights and child protection training. A budget summary can be found in Appendix 12.

173. Administration and vehicle costs have absorbed a significant proportion of project funds in Years 1 and 2 of MPP3. The CEO reports that the vehicle fleet urgently needed attention and that the vehicles purchased can be expected to last 7-10 years. The vehicle in Labasa is still inadequate for the terrain and the evaluation found that there are plans to move a more suitable vehicle from Suva to Labasa. It is encouraging to see that vehicle costs in particular are to reduce in Year 3 as the evaluation found that overheads and indirect costs are high.

174. MPP3 has seen a marked increase in personnel on the programme and it is now well staffed to complete the work required. Few, if any, further increases in project personnel should be required in the short to medium term which may create some possibility of cost savings in Year 3 of the current agreement.

175. The evaluation team identified the low level of payment for community teacher aides as a serious risk to the project both because teachers are hard to retain, and because in order to pay teachers communities charge fees that many parents cannot afford. SC Fiji had initially

budgeted for a community teacher aide allowance built into Year 3 but this has not been agreed. While providing payment to community teacher aides would doubtless help recruitment and retention it would significantly change the current model of community ownership and sustainability and would make the future of centres very vulnerable to any changes in project funding. The evaluation recommends that the project should continue to seek sustainable funding for community teacher aide salaries through pursuing MoE recognition and salary grant but should budget for reimbursement of travel costs and expenses associated with teacher aide training as well as considering other ways of rewarding community teacher aides such as through certificates recognising training and achievements.

176. Given the recommendations of this report, the evaluation noted with concern the decreasing amount budgeted for MPP staff training over the three years of the agreement. Ongoing training of MPP staff is essential to ensure programme quality and an important area for investment.
177. While the budget for community resources is low, the evaluation team considers that this is appropriate as more energy could be directed to encouraging communities to use no-cost local resources to provide teaching equipment and materials. Provision of resources, such as books, which cannot be locally made, is likely to appeal to other donors willing to support the project.

Cost savings

178. The evaluation identified four areas in which cost savings could potentially be made and efficiency increased.
1. SC Fiji reporting directly to NZAID would remove the necessity for a management fee to SCNZ set at 10% of the net budget.
 2. Rationalising reporting requirements would reduce the cost of staff time in this area allowing other efficiencies to be made.
 3. The need for additional project personnel currently budgeted could be reviewed.
 4. MPP started as a mobile service. Although sessions no longer operate from the truck and most communities operate the MPP from a building, MPP staff have to be mobile in order to visit communities and provide support. A number of MPP staff members do not drive, either because they don't have a drivers' licence or because they choose not to drive. This means they have to be driven to the centres by another staff member which is a significant cost to the organisation. It is clear that SC Fiji has provided significant support to staff to enable them to learn to drive and to sit their licence test. In some cases this support has resulted in an additional driver on the team, in other cases not. The insurance arrangements that staff have to sign agreement to when they take the position makes the staff personally liable for the cost of a repair up to the value of the excess of the policy if they are at fault. In practice the CEO says this would be invoked only in cases of negligence, but it is a perceived disincentive to drive to some staff at least – possibly the newly licensed or less confident drivers. Overcoming the barriers to more staff being prepared to drive could bring more efficiency to SC Fiji in saving staff costs. However, the CEO has a different view, noting that the limited number of vehicles means travelling to communities together optimises both the use of vehicles and the use of staff time.

4.4 Summary

179. The overall evaluation in this area is that a great deal of work has been done since 2008 to develop and implement systems and processes to strengthen MPP3 delivery and accountability. The CEO manages the organisation well and the staffing structures are appropriate to the achievement of project objectives. The MPP team is highly objectives driven and most staff demonstrate clear commitment to achieving the objectives.
180. The evaluation team formed the view that the delivery of MPP is largely efficient and the evaluation could not identify an alternative, viable, more efficient model of delivery that would provide access to ECE for children in impoverished informal communities in the context of minimal government support.

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5 Supporting factors and challenges

5.1 Factors that support success

181. A range of factors support the success of MPP and the achievement of outcomes. MPP is based on a sound development model where need is established, communities are supported to open a centre and then governance and management of the centre is progressively passed to communities which are assisted through the process of MoE recognition. Where CECs understand their roles and responsibilities and have the skills to execute those, community ownership is working well. Communities convey a sense of pride and commitment to their centres and in many cases community teachers are well supported. Eight MPP centres have achieved MoE recognition.
182. SC Fiji is a respected NGO and the MPP project has credibility. The Ministry of Health is keen to develop an MoU with SC Fiji to engage MPP centres in supporting the access of families in informal communities to immunisations and other health care. Other stakeholders interviewed including FECA, Ecumenical Research, Education and Advocacy (ECREA) and NZAID staff at post described positive relationships with SC Fiji. MPP is strongly objectives driven. All staff working on the project are clear about the objectives and working to achieve them. SC Fiji and MPP management systems are generally strong.
183. The continuity of NZAID funding has allowed the project to develop and grow with SC Fiji now having one of, if not the, strongest team of ECE specialists in Fiji. The necessity to periodically review funding arrangements has provided the project with much needed review points from which it has been able to reflect, learn and refine objectives.
184. In places where the MPP model is flourishing the commitment of community teacher aides and MPP ECE teachers and CDOs is clearly evident. Community teacher aides in many centres are not paid regularly but only when funding permits, yet they continue to run sessions regularly and demonstrate impressive commitment to the children's education. Similarly, in locations where the model is working well, the SC Fiji ECE teachers visit centres regularly and actively support the community teacher aides to strengthen their programmes.

5.2 Challenges

185. The MPP programme currently lacks strong governance which would help priorities to be established and maintained and would play a key role in maintaining the quality of the ECE programme offered. In the absence of good governance the project is at risk of being driven by management imperatives.
186. The quality of MPP programmes varies. While all of the programmes visited were of some benefit to the children attending, the team saw room for some of them to be improved if a quality ECE experience is to be provided. A checklist of programme quality indicators is attached as Appendix 13.
187. The limited capacity of the MoE in the ECE area makes it very difficult for the MPP to engage more closely with the Ministry to address the complexity and delays of the recognition process. The matter of an MOU should be progressed with urgency.
188. Handing over to community ownership in disadvantaged communities had led to fees being charged for attendance in almost all centres (15 of 16 visited). Although CECs and parents do fundraise, the impoverishment of the community within which they are fundraising means that what can be raised is limited. While fees are not high (commonly \$2.00-\$5.00 per week) and, at some centres, fees are waived in cases of need, at other centres parents have been given a clear message that if they cannot meet the fees they cannot bring their child to the centre. Communities do not necessarily have the same commitment to free access to ECE that NZAID

and SC Fiji have, particularly if they consider that parents are spending their limited income unwisely and that centre fees could be met if parental priorities were different.

189. Recruitment and retention of community teacher aides is a significant challenge and teacher turnover means continuous investment in community teacher aide training. As essentially a volunteer workforce receiving little or no pay it is very difficult to secure commitment and retention is an ongoing issue.
190. In response to pressure from NZAID to prove its effectiveness MPP directs substantial resources to collecting data on the outcomes of students who have used the service. Despite significant investment of time and energy the outcome data collected is not robust and has little prospect of being able to answer NZAID's questions. In order for MPP to establish its efficacy it needs robust data to show that the service is meeting quality indicators and of how many children are using the service and to what extent – both frequency and duration of attendance. While systems are in place to record and gather some of this data they are not being used consistently, and IT literacy issues are affecting how useful the data collected can be. Additionally, in the absence of good project governance the MPP is at risk of being driven by management requirements or perceived requirements. While the need for and fundamental value of the programme is not in doubt, a great deal of energy is being diverted to gathering project and management data of questionable value.

5.3 Government ownership

191. There is no precedent for the MPP project – the establishment of ECE in informal communities – to be replicated or owned by the Fiji government. The incremental target of increasing the rate of progress towards MoE recognition is more realistic. All ECE provision in Fiji is private, charitable or church-based. Government funding is available, and has in some cases been secured, for building grants and teacher salaries but there is no reasonable possibility in the foreseeable future that the government will be in a position to provide the level of assistance to informal communities that is needed for them to set up, govern and manage ECE centres.

6 Conclusions and recommendations

192. This evaluation has reviewed the Mobile Playgroup Project operated by SC Fiji against the indicators of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency set out in NZAID's Activity Appraisal Guidelines. In reaching its conclusions the evaluation has considered the context within which MPP is delivered as well whether there are lessons to be learned from any comparable activities in the Pacific.
193. The evaluation found that MPP is highly relevant, that its purposes and objectives address the needs, priorities and capacities of the impoverished communities for which it is designed, that it fits well with the priorities of the Fiji Government and is consistent with their plans and policy statement for ECE. MPP is based on a sound development model and largely meets the indicators for good development practice. The programme fits well with NZAID's Fiji Country Programme Strategy 2005-2010, particularly in its focus on informal communities.
194. The evaluation found MPP to be reasonably effective. Children attending MPP centres are benefitting from an early childhood education which is preparing them for school as well as other ECE services. MPP is well-structured with resources devoted both to developing and supporting the operation of the centres and to developing and supporting community groups to govern and manage the centres. The evaluation found the MPP approach likely to be the most effective way of achieving tangible and sustainable benefits given current constraints around government funding and support in Fiji. The project could benefit from more focus on indicators of programme quality, more active pursuit of MoE recognition for centres, and a more structured approach to training community teacher aides.
195. The third area of the evaluation is efficiency and the evaluation found MPP to be acceptably efficient. SC Fiji is a well-managed organisation which provides a sound framework for the operation of MPP. Within the project itself governance needs to be strengthened and management arrangements could be improved. The collection and collation of both outcome and project management data is onerous and does not provide a good return on investment. SC Fiji in discussion with NZAID should revisit what outcome data is collected and reported. While financial management in the organisation has been improved MPP budget management needs to stay in line with agreements.
196. The sustainability of MPP is of concern. Moving centres to MoE recognition and eligibility for salary and building grants has been much slower than anticipated and communities are struggling to raise funds to retain their community teachers. There is no reasonable likelihood of significant government funding in the medium-term and MPP will need external funding for the foreseeable future. SC Fiji must engage more actively with potential funding partners both donors and corporate.

6.1 Headline recommendations

1. **MPP to continue and be supported.** The evaluation has found MPP to be highly relevant, reasonably effective and acceptably efficient. Appropriately targeted, based on a sound development model and operated by a respected CSO, MPP has increased the access to ECE for children in impoverished communities in the absence of meaningful government support.
2. **Consistent quality of ECE practice needs to be assured.** This should be led by a Project Steering Committee and based on the indicators of effective practice found in Appendix 13. Reconsider the objective to expand the number of centres at the end of the current funding agreement and have a period of consolidation before considering further expansion.
3. **Review the objective to expand.** The objective to expand is driving the project. At times this is at the expense of quality. Future objectives should focus on ensuring programme quality and on moving the majority of existing MPP centres to MoE recognition before further expansion is considered.

4. **Retain a focus on impoverished communities.** The push for expansion has led to some new centres being developed in more established settlements and communities. There is a risk that the most needy children and communities, for whom the project was designed, may be overlooked.
5. **SC Fiji to actively plan for the sustainability of the project.** SC Fiji should further develop its relationship with donors other than NZAID working in the education sector in Fiji, as well as commercial sponsorship, and explore the potential for investment in MPP.

6.2 Supporting recommendations

6. **Strengthen project governance.** The Advisory Committee should be renamed, given the mandate to be a project steering committee, and actively engaged to steer the project. The membership could be increased to six to eight members with a mixture of ECE and management skills, and including knowledge of the policies and processes of the MoE. A structure for involvement of the Committee in the governance of the project should be established to ensure that the project benefits from the Committee's experience and expertise.
7. **Sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Education.** The sustainability of MPP is seriously threatened by the slow progress towards MoE recognition of MPP centres. Developing an MoU with the Ministry of Education outlining respective obligations and mechanisms for engagement is a priority.
8. **Clarify the role of MPP teachers as ECE educators.** The foremost role of MPP ECE teachers is to train community teacher aides on whom the quality of the programmes depends. MPP teachers must themselves be trained as ECE educators with a clear understanding of quality ECE practice and proactively take responsibility for the training of community teacher aides rather than providing only advice and support.
9. **A properly structured training package for community teacher aides.** A properly structured training package for community teacher aides is required if quality ECE practice is to be consistent across MPP centres. An outline of what such a programme could look like is attached as Appendix 9.
10. **Reimburse community teacher aides' travel costs and expenses.** Trained and effective community teacher aides are central to the success of MPP. Travel costs to attend training are currently a barrier for some which should be addressed by reimbursement.
11. **Increase progress to MoE recognition.** A more targeted programme of advice and guidance for CECs, starting as soon as the CEC is established, to ensure they are better informed of requirements for MoE recognition, salary grant and building grant, and support for them through the process.
12. **Structured professional development programmes for MPP staff.** Professional development programmes for MPP staff focused on their responsibilities under 9 and 11 above in place to ensure that all staff have a common understanding of a high quality ECE programme, that MPP teachers are assisted to become teacher educators and that CDOs are able to provide the guidance required by CECs to ensure progress towards the goals of MoE recognition and independence.
13. **Monitoring and reporting requirements relevant, useful and manageable.** Monitoring, reporting and accountability have clearly been strengthened. Priority should now be given to monitoring and reporting enrolment and attendance data and programme quality indicators. SC Fiji and NZAID should discuss data requirements and agree on which monitoring and reporting systems should be prioritised.
14. **Consider the options for increased efficiency and cost savings outlined in this report.**

Glossary

CEC	Community Education Committee
CDO	Community Development Officers
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ECREA	Ecumenical Research, Education and Advocacy
FECA	Fiji Early Childhood Association
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPP	Mobile Playgroup Project
NZAID	New Zealand Agency for International Development
PRB	Public Rental Board
SC F	Save the Children Fiji
SCNZ	Save the Children New Zealand

Evaluation of Mobile Playgroup Project Fiji

Commissioned by

**International Development Group of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
and Trade**

Appendices

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Terms of Reference
Mobile Playgroup Project Evaluation

1. Background and context

Context

A key area of focus of the Fiji/NZ Official Development Assistance (ODA) programme is to support the reduction of poverty and hardship faced by those living in informal and squatter settlements.

Informal and squatter settlements in Fiji have grown rapidly over recent years. In 2007 the New Zealand Agency for International Development Nga Hoe Tuputupu-mai-tawhiti (NZ Aid) estimated that approximately 140,000 people were living in 198 informal settlement areas throughout Fiji. Annual growth rates in these settlements are estimated at between 3.7 – 7 percent.

Consecutive household income and expenditure surveys have shown that in excess of one third of informal settlement households live below the official poverty line (another third remain acutely at risk of falling below the poverty line).

The development cooperation programme in Fiji aligns with NZ Aid's policies and strategic objective of "Sustainable development in developing countries, in order to reduce poverty and contribute to a more secure, equitable and prosperous world" as well as Fiji's National Strategic Development Plan 2007-2011. The programme has three broad outcome areas:

- Reduction of poverty and hardship faced by those living in informal and squatter settlements;
- Human development and strengthening governance, including law and justice, and human rights; and
- Supporting civil society in Fiji to deliver services to the poor.

Background

The Mobile Playgroup Project (MPP) was introduced by Save the Children Fiji (SCF) in 2002 in response to the need to improve the access to, and quality of, Early Childhood Education (ECE) for children in economically disadvantaged communities. A feasibility study was conducted in February 2002 in selected informal settlement and squatter communities in Suva and Labasa to identify pilot communities and the viability of the MPP.

The goal of the MPP during the pilot phase was to provide basic education for economically disadvantaged children using a mobile kindergarten. Other programmes supporting child advocacy and community development were to be incorporated into the delivery of ECE, resulting in empowered communities capable of creating a favourable environment for children's development. The MPP was also to focus on developing the capacity of communities to manage playgroups.

The original objectives of the MPP phase 1 and 2 were:

- Objective 1: To increase access to early childhood education for economically disadvantaged children, initially in two locations (Suva and Labasa), so as to enhance their learning capabilities and preparedness for formal education.

- Objective 2: To provide mothers and other primary caregivers in the target communities with information and support on a range of issues including parenting, so as to increase their knowledge of children's developmental needs and enhance parental effectiveness.
- Objective 3: To increase the capacity of targeted communities to develop and manage a local early childhood education programme and encourage self-help action.
- Objective 4: To evaluate the effectiveness of the programme through systematic monitoring of expected outputs with a view to modifying and expanding the mobile kindergarten concept as required.

NZAID supported the MPP phase 1 and 2 from 2002-2006 with funding of approximately NZ\$757,000. Funding is detailed in table one.

Funding Period	Tranche (NZD)
2002/2003	60,900
2003/2004	128,957
2004/2005	92,366
2005/2006	67,840
2007/2008	45,205

Table One: NZAID Funding to MPP (2002 – 2007)

Save the Children New Zealand (SCNZ) has undertaken a SCFiji Capacity Building Project through Kaihono hei Oranga Hapori o te Ao Partnership for International Community Development (KOHA PICD) funding for over four years (2003 – 2008). The project is now in the third phase. Funding for the previous phases is detailed in table two. The Programme Management Committee for KOHA PICD has requested an in-depth report on the Fiji Project to be delivered in November this year.

Funding Period	KOHA PICD Project	Tranche (NZD)
2004/05	Capacity Building Project (Phase Two), Suva.	\$120,000.00
2005/06	Capacity Building Project (Phase Two), Suva. Year Two.	\$93,640.97
2006/07	Capacity Building Project (Phase Two), Suva. Year Three.	\$65,975.64
2007/08	Capacity Building (Phase Two), Suva. Year Four	\$157,779.00

Table Two: KOHA PICD Funding SCFiji Capacity Building Project

Following some financial mismanagement by SCF in 2006, there have been changes in appointments of the SCF Board with a new SCF Chief Executive Officer and Financial Officer appointed in 2008. SCNZ has provided additional capacity building support to SCF, including SCNZ direct management of phase three from July 2008.

Phase Three of the Mobile Playgroup Project (MPP3) was submitted to NZAID by SCNZ in April 2007 and proposed an expansion of the MPP to extend coverage to squatter communities in Suva, Labasa and the Western Division whilst maintaining support services to established playgroups.

In a meeting with SCNZ in April 2008 NZAID agreed to begin funding MPP3 from July 2008 (July 2008 – June 2011), with funding of up to FJ \$1,428,879, with an Impact Assessment review planned in September 2008 in order to inform NZAID on the programmes effectiveness. Following the impact assessment SCNZ/SCF would review the programme and resubmit a request for a contract variation, if required.

An Impact Assessment of the MPP Phases One and Two was conducted in August 2008. It concluded that MPP had achieved very positive and significant results for children and communities. Over 1700 children benefitted from the project since its inception through the establishment of 17 ECE centres. Observation of playgroup children indicated marked progress in learning, coordination and cognitive development. NZAID have expressed concerns at the quality and methodology of the Impact Assessment.

Following the Impact Assessment SCNZ and SCF underwent a review of the MPP3 objectives, including the development of a Project Implementation Document (PID), in October 2008. The revised objectives and workplan have been in place since October 2008. NZAID incorporated the revised objectives and workplan with a Letter of Variation from 1 July 2009.

The revised objectives of the MPP3 (From October 2008) are:

- Objective 1: By 2011, 27 new ECE centres established and a total of 44 centres functioning and recognized by Fiji Ministry of Education
- Objective 2: By 2011 44 communities have the capacity to manage ECE centres through the Community Education Committees and community interest groups.
- Objective 3: By 2011 the capacity of community volunteers as ECE teachers has been developed to enable sustainability of the community centres and a quality ECE for the children.
- Objective 4: Strengthen the capacity of SC Fiji MPP staff to effectively provide management,

From July 2008 to June 2009 a number of contract management issues were highlighted by NZAID including changes to the workplan and budget outside the contract. SCNZ appeared to play a limited role in the management of the contract with repeated submission of incorrect variation requests throughout this period. While NZAID incorporated the revised objectives and workplan with a Letter of Variation from 1 July 2009, any expenditure, including the hiring of project staff, outside the agreed contract for year one will be met by SCNZ.

In a meeting in May 2009 NZAID and SCNZ agreed to conduct this assignment in order to fully evaluate the outcomes and consider the future directions of the project. The evaluation report will be used by SCF, SCNZ and NZAID to inform programming discussions in early 2010 regarding future directions of the programme.

SCNZ will be undergoing a significant restructure in late 2009, with considerable changes to staffing in the Programmes Team (reducing from seven to four programme staff). NZAID have identified SCNZ's ability to continue with the management of the project as a risk.

2. Purpose

Given that the Impact Assessment did not provide an adequate basis for NZAID and SCF/SCNZ to determine outcomes and plan future directions, NZAID considers that it is necessary to further evaluate the achievement and durability of Mobile Playgroup Project's results and the efficiency thereof. The evaluation will be used by SCF, SCNZ and NZAID as an input into programming discussions in 2009/2010 and for NZAID accountability reporting.

The evaluation report will be shared with key stakeholders including NZAID, SCF, SCNZ, and the Ministry of Education

3. Scope

This evaluation will cover the duration of the Mobile Playgroup Project from inception in 2002 to the completion of year one of phase three in June 2009. The study will cover the activities of the MPP implemented in Suva, Labasa, Nadi and Lautoka.

Key stakeholders considered important to this evaluation include parents, communities, community education committees, ECE teachers/teacher aides, the Ministry of Education, Fiji Early Childhood Association, SCF staff, SCNZ staff, NZAID at Post and in Wellington.

In looking at relevance, effectiveness and efficiency the intention is to draw conclusions about outcomes to date and the extent to which it has been/will be possible to achieve sustainability as was originally intended in the project design. The evaluation will not assess the impact of the project as the resources required to establishing the broader, attributable change resulting from the project cannot be justified given the past level of funding.

Important elements to be considered include the extent of community ownership and future directions considering both the remaining two years of phase three and plans for the project after June 2011.

NZAID is interested in determining value for money (considered part of efficiency). The evaluation will therefore assess if and to what extent finances could have been managed better without compromising the results achieved.

The evaluation will assess the effectiveness and future of the SCNZ advisory role. The evaluation will consider the institutional capacity of SCF and the potential of the project to become self-managing.

The evaluation is expected to be completed between October - December 2009 with the evaluation in-country visit to be undertaken in late October 2009.

4. Objectives and Key Questions

Objective One: to determine the relevance of the Mobile Playgroup Project to date (2002-June 2009).

- To what extent are the project's purpose and objectives consistent with meeting the needs, priorities and capacities of the target communities and stakeholders, noting in particular the context of informal settlements in Fiji?
- How has the project responded to changes in the Fiji economic context, Fiji Interim Government priorities and policies?
- How does this project compare with good development practice and other comparable activities that have had similar outcomes?
- Given that the current NZAID funding will cease in June 2011, what plans do SCF have for the centres and the project?

Objective Two: to determine the effectiveness of the Mobile Playgroup Project to date (2002-June 2009).

- What has the MPP3 project achieved to date including comment on outcomes and progress towards achieving higher-level outcomes?
- Has the realignment of objectives in 2008 strengthened the delivery and outcomes of the MPP3?
- What has the MPP3 achieved in regards to Ministry of Education certification and ownership of MPP3 centres, including success of handover of centres and integration into the state systems?
- What is the extent and success of community ownership of centres? Is this approach likely to be sustainable within the context of informal settlements?

What key factors have contributed to the success of the project and would be necessary for project replication and ownership by Fiji authorities? (Include key lessons to inform possible revision of project delivery and outcomes).

Objective Three: to determine the efficiency of the Mobile Playgroup Project to date (2002-June 2009).

- Is this activity an efficient way of delivering ECE in informal settlements, and how could management arrangements be enhanced to improve delivery (2010 – 2011 and post phase three)?
- To what extent have the management processes enabled or influenced delivery of the outcomes of the project? (including comment on the management systems (monitoring and reporting) needed for effective outcomes, the institutional capacity of SCF and potential to become self-managing)
- To what extent has the project been managed within budget and to minimise costs, given the level of outcomes achieved? Comment on whether cost savings could be made in the activity (without compromising outcomes) through different systems of management, procurement and/or design.

The evaluation report will include key recommendations across all areas as appropriate.

5. Methodology

Evaluation Process and management

The evaluation will be undertaken in accordance with NZAID's evaluation principles (see NZAID's Evaluation Policy, p. 4). These are:

- *Independence-evaluations must be carried out in a way that avoids any adverse effects of political or organisational influence on the findings.*
- *Transparency-evaluation processes are open and understood by all parties.*

The Team Leader is responsible for preparing an appropriate Evaluation Plan¹¹ following initial review of the project documentation for agreement by the Steering Group. In addition to questions identified in Appendix Two, the Evaluation Plan will also:

- *incorporate the principles identified above*
- *demonstrate how the views of key stakeholders are considered in the evaluation design and reporting, and*
- *specify the roles and responsibility of each team member*

It is expected that at the end of the in-country visit the evaluation team will check initial findings and interpretations with key informants and brief SCF, NZAID (Suva) and other stakeholders on the (tentative) conclusions to date.

6. Governance and Management

The evaluation will be overseen by a Steering Group comprising of a representative of the Strategy Advisory and Evaluation Group, NZAID; Team Leader – Central Pacific, NZAID; Chief Executive, SCF and Programmes Manager, SCNZ. The Steering Group will:

- *sign-off the Terms of Reference*
- *comment on the preferred contractors nominated by NZAID*
- *provide feedback to the consultants on the evaluation plan; and*
- *provide written comment on the draft report.*

¹¹ Refer Appendix Two: Questions for Evaluation Plan to Address
Draft 30 April 2010

Following submission of the final report, NZAID (including the Pacific Group, Strategy Advisory and Evaluation Group, and Suva High Commission) will consider the report and agreed recommendations as part of programming discussions with SCF and SCNZ.

NZAID is commissioning the evaluation and will contract two consultants to undertake the evaluation, in consultation with SCF/SCNZ. SCF will be invited to nominate a participant for the evaluation. The evaluation team will include:

- *Team Leader/ Evaluation Specialist*
- *ECE Specialist*
- *SCF Participant*

The Team Leader/Evaluation Specialist will lead the evaluation and take responsibility for ensuring the timing and quality of process and outputs and compiling the final report. Other team members will actively contribute to the evaluation and various aspects of the report – as agreed by the team and NZAID.

The Team Leader/Evaluation Specialist will have strong professional skills and experience in¹²:

1. Evaluation Specialist with significant experience in monitoring and evaluation, including leading in reviews and evaluations;
2. strong analytical and reporting skills;
3. significant development knowledge and experience;
4. ability to lead in a multidisciplinary team;
5. excellent communication skills (including report writing);
6. understanding of and commitment to mainstreamed and cross-cutting issues;
7. understanding of NZAID's goal, policies and operating principles;
8. commitment to participatory approaches and participation of stakeholders;
9. experience in Fiji is preferred; and
10. cross-cultural communication skills.

The ECE Specialist will take an active part in the evaluation including contributing to the drafting of report and evaluation plan. The consultant will have strong professional skills and experience in:

1. experience in monitoring and evaluation, including participation in reviews and evaluations;
2. experience of the Early Childhood Education sector, preferably in the Pacific region, and demonstration of:
 - *Policy experience in education and commitment to skills transfer, preferably in early childhood education.*
 - *Policy implementation and research skills and experience, preferably in early childhood education.*
 - *Professional Development/Teacher Training, preferably in early childhood education.*
3. strong analytical and reporting skills;
4. significant development knowledge and experience including an understanding of and commitment to mainstreamed and cross-cutting issues;
5. ability to work in a multidisciplinary team;
6. excellent communication skills (including report writing);
7. understanding of NZAID's goal, policies and operating principles;
8. commitment to participatory approaches and participation of stakeholders;
9. cross-cultural communication skills; and

¹² It is anticipated that the Team Leader/Evaluation Specialist may not have specialist knowledge or experience in Early Childhood however this specialist knowledge will be provided by the ECE Specialist and SCF Participant as required.

The SCF Participant will take an active part in the evaluation including contributing to the drafting of report and evaluation plan. They will have skills and experience in:

1. in-depth knowledge of MPP programme, activities and key stakeholders;
2. ability to work in a multidisciplinary team;
3. excellent communication skills (including report writing);
4. commitment to participatory approaches and participation of stakeholders;
5. cross-cultural communication skills.

7. Outputs and reporting requirements

The evaluation team will produce the following outputs:

Output 1: an Evaluation Plan for agreement by the Steering Group¹³;

Output 2: verbal debriefs with NZAID (Suva), SCF and key stakeholders and with NZAID (Wellington) and SCNZ following the completion of the in-country evaluation visit;

Output 3: a final draft written Evaluation Report¹⁴ within ten days on completing the in-country evaluation visit¹⁵;

Output 4: a final written Evaluation Report within ten days of receiving feedback from NZAID.

Report (including draft) will be delivered electronically (Word format) to the Development Programme Officer. The consultants will refer to the NZAID guideline on the structure of review and evaluation reports to ensure correct formatting and structure (refer Appendix One). The report will comply with NZAID *Guideline on the Structure of Evaluation and Review Reports* and *DAC Evaluation Quality Standards* (available at www.nzaid.govt.nz).

NZAID will advise the contractor if further work and/or revision of the report is required if the draft or final report does not meet the TOR or the quality is not of an acceptable standard.

The final report will be appraised before being considered for public release by NZAID's Evaluation and Research Committee (ERC). The Fiji Programme team will prepare a submission to NZAID's Evaluation Committee. This Committee will make recommendations regarding the distribution of the report within NZAID and advise whether any additional external distribution steps need to be taken.

The report, or any part of the report, will be made available publically (e.g. on the web or the NZAID website), unless there is good reason not to do so. Any information that could prevent the release of the report under the Official Information or Privacy Acts, or would breach ethical standards, must be placed in a confidential annex.

¹³ Refer Appendix Two: Questions for Evaluation Plan to Address

¹⁴ The Final Draft Evaluation Report must be to an appropriate standard in order to facilitate comments from the Steering Group. Refer Annex One: NZAID Evaluation Report Requirements

¹⁵ The Steering Group will provide consolidated written feedback to the draft written report within ten working days.

NZAID Evaluation Report Requirements

As a minimum, each evaluation report should include:

1. Title Page

- Title of report (including project/programme evaluated, country, region etc)
- Author(s) name(s) and affiliation(s) including designation
- Date (month and year) & location (e.g. Wellington)

2. Executive Summary

The Executive Summary should include:

- A brief background of why the review or evaluation was carried out
- A succinct description of the methodology used, who was involved, how? This section ought to describe how project/programme stakeholders participated in the evaluation
- Key findings. Where appropriate this should include intended and unintended changes/impacts as well as a description of how primary stakeholders – both men and women - perceive the changes brought about by the intervention(s).
- A section on value for money. How much has the intervention(s) cost – what have been the comparative results?
- Recommendations & suggested follow up action

3. Main body of the report

- The main text of the report will vary according to the specific study. However, it is important that this section contains:
 - A description of the background of the review or evaluation and the main users of the findings/report
 - Methodology used (including who participated, how and at what stage)?
 - The timing of the review or evaluation
 - Findings and conclusions:
 - What changes have been brought about by the intervention – positive and negative, intended and unintended, qualitative and quantitative?
 - What have been the differential effects of the intervention on men and women?
 - What has been the cost of the intervention(s) compared to the programme results? Has NZAID obtained value for money?
 - Other cross-cutting issues (e.g. human rights, etc)
 - Implications of the findings on future activities.

4. Appendices:

These should include:

- Evaluation Plan
- Glossary of acronyms used
- Terms of Reference for the review/evaluation
- Evaluation methodology and implementation plan
- List of data sources
- Diagrams, drawings, photographs generated through the participatory processes, etc (if appropriate).
- A Confidential Annex, if necessary
- References
- Analytical appendices, if necessary

NOTE: NZAID intends to place a summary of each review or evaluation on its website and will release the full report on request. To facilitate this, information that could prevent the release of the report under the Official Information or Privacy Acts, or would breach evaluation ethical standards should be placed in a Confidential Annex.

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Appendix Two: Evaluation Plan

The evaluation plan will address the following:

- Who are the stakeholders in the review or evaluation, what is their interest or stake in the evaluation or review, what type of stakeholder are they (primary - directly benefit from the activity being evaluated or reviewed, secondary - indirectly involved with the activity etc), what issues or constraints are there in their involvement in the review or evaluation (e.g. power issues, access, confidentiality)?
- What information will be needed to answer each of the evaluation or review questions?
- What are the most appropriate methods for data/information collection to address each of the evaluation or review questions? e.g. Will qualitative or quantitative methods be used and why? How will evaluation or review participants be selected? What specific methods will be used - interviews (face-to-face or phone), email questionnaire, workshops, survey, focus groups etc? For quantitative surveys how will the appropriate sample size be decided, and what statistical analysis will be used to allow judgement on the reliability of results?
- From whom will information be collected to answer each of the evaluation or review questions, and how will the evaluation or review team ensure that the opinions of all appropriate stakeholders (eg women and men, young and old, powerful and less powerful) are included?
- What questions will be asked in questionnaires or interviews?
- How will information gathered be cross checked?
- What procedures will be used for data analysis - how will qualitative data such as interview notes be analysed, how will survey results be analysed?
- How will the way that crosscutting and mainstreamed issues (gender, environment and human rights, and if appropriate HIV/AIDS and conflict) have been addressed in the activity being evaluated or reviewed be assessed, and how will the evaluation/review be conducted in a way that takes crosscutting issues into account? [Reference: Screening Guide for Mainstreamed and Other Cross Cutting Issues]
- How will the findings be fed back and discussed with appropriate stakeholders during the evaluation process, and how will this be incorporated into the report?
- What risks, limitations or constraints are there likely to be to the review or evaluation and how can these be mitigated?
- How will ethical issues be addressed? For example how will participants of the review or evaluation be informed of the purpose and use of information they will provide? How will sensitivity to gender and culture be ensured during the review or evaluation? Is informed consent required from evaluation or review participants, if so how will this be obtained? How will confidentiality of participants be ensured and how will confidential material be stored? What potential harm to participants is there and how will potential harm be minimised?

Appendix Three: List of relevant documents

1. MPP3 proposal, contract, LOV 2, correspondence
2. Revised MPP3 Proposal (June 2009)
3. Previous review reports
4. MPP3 Impact Assessment.
5. KOHA PICD Proposal, contract, reporting.
6. Initial Evaluation of Save the Children Fiji's Mobile Playgroup Project titled "Where the Children Come and Do", 2002.
7. Mobile Playgroup Project Progress Reports, 2002 – 2009
8. Annual Mobile Playgroup Project Reports, 2002 – 2009
9. Feasibility Study on expansion to the Western Division, 2006

Appendix 2

Mobile Playgroup Project Fiji

Evaluation Plan

November 2009

(Revised 12 Feb 2010)

Helena Barwick

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Appendix 2

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Appendix: MPP Project logic model with outcomes and indicators

Appendix 2

1.0 Introduction

The Mobile Playgroup Project (MPP) was introduced by Save the Children Fiji (SCF) in 2002 in response to the need to improve access to and quality of Early Childhood Education (ECE) for children in economically disadvantaged communities.

The goal of MPP during the pilot phase was to provide basic education for economically disadvantaged children using a mobile kindergarten. MPP was also designed to support increased awareness of children's development and rights, and to develop the capacity of communities to manage playgroups.

NZAID supported MPP Phase 1 and 2 from 2002-2006 with funding of approximately NZ\$757,000. Phase 3 of MPP was submitted to NZAID by SCNZ in April 2007 and proposed an expansion of MPP to cover to squatter communities in Suva, Labasa and the Western Division while maintaining support services to established playgroups. NZAID agreed to support MPP3 from July 2008 (July 2008-June 2011), with funding of up to FJ \$1,428,879

Following an impact assessment of MPP Phases 1 and 2 conducted in August 2008, project objectives were revised in October 2008. The revised objectives are:

- Objective 1: By 2011, 27 new ECE centres established and a total of 44 centres functioning and recognized by Fiji Ministry of Education
- Objective 2: By 2011, 44 communities have the capacity to manage ECE centres through Community Education Committees and community interest groups.
- Objective 3: By 2011, the capacity of community volunteers as ECE teachers has been developed to enable sustainability of the community centres and a quality ECE for the children.
- Objective 4: Strengthen the capacity of SC Fiji MPP staff to effectively provide management, monitoring and evaluation of the project.

This evaluation will cover MPP from inception in 2002 to the completion of Year one of Phase 3 in June 2009. The study will cover the activities of MPP implemented in Suva, Labasa, and Lautoka.

2.0 Stakeholders in MPP and the evaluation

MPP has a range of stakeholders who:

- directly benefit from the Project
- are in communities where the Project is active
- are involved in the delivery or administration of the Project
- have a role in regulating and certificating Project activities
- fund the Project.

2.1 Direct beneficiaries

The children attending Project activities and their parents – primarily mothers – are the most direct beneficiaries of the project. These stakeholders live in disadvantaged communities and are likely to be economically and socially vulnerable. It would be fair to assume they will be grateful for any services provided to them, and may be reluctant to criticise any aspect of the Project, especially to an evaluation team passing through briefly. However, it is essential that the evaluation gathers feedback from parents, and observes children participating in MPP activities.

Information will be gathered from these direct beneficiaries of the project through individual and group interviews with parents and guardians attending the activities at each MPP location visited, and with observations of children participating in MPP activities. Observations will be based on a checklist of activities and behaviours expected at a quality ECE centre and will note any differences in the treatment of girls and boys.

Appendix 2

2.2 Community stakeholders

Objective 2 makes it clear that for each MPP site a Community Education Committee (CEC) is a key piece of infrastructure required for the support and longer-term sustainability of MPP activities. The evaluation will seek a meeting with members of the CEC in each site visited and will strive to ensure that the views of both women and men community leaders are captured.

Primary schools and new-entrant teachers in primary schools are community stakeholders in MPP. Once again, the 2008 evaluation contains some detailed feedback from this group of stakeholders, which could be supplemented by visits to primary schools in the evaluation sites. Teachers will be asked for new entrant figures by gender.

Other community interest groups, particularly women's groups, are also potential stakeholders of interest to the evaluation because of the focus on the sustainability of MPP beyond the life of the funding agreement.

2.3 Stakeholders involved in delivery and/or administration

ECE teachers and teachers' aides are important stakeholders. In each site individual or group interviews will be held with teachers and teachers' aides involved in ECE delivery, as well as with any volunteers contributing to the delivery of activities. A gender analysis of ECE teachers will be included.

Other stakeholders involved in delivery or administration include the Project Manager, the National Training Co-ordinator, district co-ordinators and community development officers. Staff at both SCF and SCNZ are important stakeholders responsible for crucial decisions about project design and budget.

The stakeholders in this group all rely on MPP funding for some of all of their income which creates an important context in considering the data gathered from them as it may constrain their willingness to be critical of the project.

2.4 Stakeholders involved in regulation or quality assurance

The evaluation requires an exploration of supports and barriers to the long-term sustainability of MPP. Stakeholders who will have an important contribution in this area are the Fiji Ministry of Education and the Fiji Early Childhood Association.

2.5 Funders and sponsors

The views of NZAID will be sought in New Zealand and in-country, as well the views of the Fiji Ministry of Education.

Appendix 2

3.0 Evaluation objectives

The evaluation has three objectives, each underpinned by a number of questions.

- 1 To determine the relevance of MPP to date (2002-June 2009).
- 2 To determine the effectiveness of MPP to date (2002-June 2009).
- 3 To determine the efficiency of MPP to date (2002-June 2009).

A key purpose of the evaluation is to assess the sustainability of the Project beyond the current funding agreement.

3.1 Data sources

The evaluation will draw on a range of data sources, including:

- project documents – funding agreements, PIDs, letters of variation, budgets, six monthly and annual reports, evaluation reports, appraisals, letters and emails
- relevant academic and expert papers – eg on informal communities, mobile preschools quality indicators
- monitoring data – quantitative data collected and recorded by the Project and by SCF recording how much, how many, how often, acquittals etc.
- interviews – with all groups of stakeholders listed in 2 above. These will be individual or group interviews as appropriate and taking into account participants' preferences.
- observations – the team will observe the delivery of MPP activities and use this data to supplement and triangulate other sources.
- feedback and discussion workshop – at the end of the in-country visit a workshop will be held with key stakeholders in Suva to feedback preliminary findings and engage stakeholders in discussion about these.

The grid below shows where data sources and methods are matched to the evaluation questions; none of the evaluation questions will rely solely on one source of data.

Appendix 2
3.2 Evaluation questions and data sources

Evaluation questions	Data sources	Method
<p>Objective 1 To determine the relevance of MPP to date (2002-June 2009)</p> <p>To what extent are the project's purpose and objectives consistent with meeting the needs, priorities and capacities of the target communities and stakeholders, noting in particular the context of informal settlements in Fiji?</p>	<p>Expert and academic literature All stakeholders End of visit feedback and discussion with key stakeholders.</p>	<p>Document review (eg McKinnon et al) Interviews End of visit workshop for feedback and discussion with key stakeholders in Suva</p>
<p>How has the project responded to changes in the Fiji economic context, including the impact of the global economic crisis on the poor of Fiji?</p>	<p>NZAD, NZAID in-country staff; Ministry of Education; SCF; MPP Project Manager</p>	<p>Document review Analysis of monitoring data Interviews</p>
<p>How does this project compare with good development practice and other comparable activities that have had similar outcomes?</p>	<p>ECE experts Expert and academic literature Project documentation</p>	<p>Interviews Document review. Analysis of monitoring data Observations</p>
<p>Given that the current NZAID funding will cease in June 2011, what plans do SCF have for the centres and the project?</p>	<p>SCNZ and SCF.</p>	<p>Project documentation Interviews</p>
<p>Objective 2 To determine the effectiveness of MPP to date (2002-June 2009)</p>		
<p>What has MPP3 project achieved to date including comment on outcomes and progress towards achieving higher-level outcomes?¹⁶</p>	<p>Document review. Project reports, external evaluations and appraisals. Monitoring data. All stakeholders</p>	<p>Analysis of monitoring data, project documents and report Interviews</p>
<p>Has the realignment of objectives in 2008 strengthened the delivery and outcomes of MPP3?</p>	<p>Project staff Community stakeholders and schools ECE teachers SCF Fiji, SCNZ, NZAID</p>	<p>Project documentation review Analysis of monitoring data Interviews Observations</p>
<p>What has MPP3 achieved in regards to Ministry of Education certification and ownership of MPP3 centres,</p>	<p>Project manager SCF</p>	<p>Analysis of monitoring data National data (if available)</p>

¹⁶ A programme logic and detailed evaluation plan for measuring outcomes is attached

Appendix 2

<p>Including success of handover of centres and integration into the state systems?</p>	<p>Ministry of Education Fiji Early Childhood Assoc</p>	<p>Interviews</p>
<p>What is the extent and success of community ownership of centres? Is this approach likely to be sustainable within the context of informal settlements?</p>	<p>CECs Other community groups Project staff Fiji MOE</p>	<p>Interviews</p>
<p>What key factors have contributed to the success of the project and would be necessary for project replication and ownership by Fiji authorities? (include key lessons to inform possible revision of project delivery and outcomes).</p>	<p>All data sources.</p>	<p>Analysis of all data sources.</p>
<p>Objective 3 To determine the efficiency of MPP to date (2002-June 2009)</p>		
<p>Is this activity an efficient way of delivering ECE in informal settlements, and how could management arrangements be enhanced to improve delivery (2010-2011 and post Phase 3)?</p>	<p>SCF SCNZ NZAJB Ministry of Education</p>	<p>Project document review Interviews</p>
<p>To what extent have the management processes enabled or influenced delivery of the outcomes of the project? (including comment on the management systems (monitoring and reporting) needed for effective outcomes, the institutional capacity of SCF and potential to become self-managing)</p>	<p>SCF SCNZ NZAJB Ministry of Education</p>	<p>Project documentation review Analysis of monitoring data Interviews</p>
<p>To what extent has the project been managed within budget and to minimise costs, given the level of outcomes achieved? Comment on whether cost savings could be made in the activity (without compromising outcomes) through different systems of management, procurement and/or design.</p>	<p>SCF SCNZ NZAJB</p>	<p>Project documentation Acquittals Interviews Observation</p>

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4.0 Interview schedules

Interviews will be based on semi-structured interview schedules. These will ensure that all important areas are covered, but will allow space for the interview to have the shape of a conversation, and allow for anticipated feedback. As each group of stakeholders will require a different combination of questions, presented here are the main areas in which interview data needs to be gathered, and a grid indicating which areas of questions will be asked of each set of stakeholders.

- programme delivery
- community support and ownership
- project management
- national ownership and sustainability
- supports and barriers
- alternatives

	Families and MPP users	Teachers, teacher aides, volunteers	CEC and community groups	Primary schools	SCF Project staff	SCF Management SCNZ	Fiji MoE, Fiji Childcare Assoc	NZAID
Project delivery	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Project management	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Community support and ownership	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
National accreditation, sustainability		✓					✓	✓
Supports and barriers		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Alternatives								✓

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4.1 Programme delivery

Interviews will cover:

- actual activities delivered
- programme planning, delivery and support from SCF
- enrolment of students, needs assessment, outreach
- resourcing, location, equipment – adequacy
- ECE staff – recruitment, qualifications, turnover, development
- volunteer staff – recruitment, development and retention
- community support and ownership – relationships
- congruence with SCF mission, vision and goal
- monitoring data and records kept – nature, extent and availability

4.2 Project management

Interviews will cover:

- structure and roles of SCF project management staff
- impact of 2008 realignment of objectives and relative priority of four project objectives
- actual tasks and support involved in delivering on each objective
- SCF staffing – recruitment, qualifications, turnover, development
- budgets, development and monitoring
- alignment with needs, priorities and capacities of informal and squatter settlements
- reporting requirements, monitoring and evaluation – nature, extent and availability.

4.3 Community ownership and support

Interviews will cover:

- nature and extent of MPP involvement with community groups
- perceptions of progress towards community ownership
- community capacity to take ownership of MPP – resourcing, staffing, programme delivery
- congruence with SCF mission, vision and goal
- relationship with/support from SCF to meet project Objective 2

4.4 National accreditation, sustainability

Interviews will cover:

- data relating to accreditation how many centres have achieved, are in train or preparing for accreditation
- process for accreditation
- requirements for accreditation – how achievable
- how to accelerate progress towards accreditation

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- how has MPP responded to changes in the Fiji economic context, including the impact of the global economic crisis on the poor of Fiji
- government capacity to play an increasing role in funding and monitoring MPP, what is needed in order for ownership to move to government.

4.5 Supports, barriers, improvements and alternatives

- strengths/achievements of the current MPP model by objective
- limitations of the current MPP model
- recommendations for improvement to current MPP model by objective
- alternatives to current MPP model.

5.0 Data analysis

Any quantitative data available will be analysed and presented in ways that make the greatest contribution to answering the evaluation questions. Efforts will be made to establish how robust quantitative data is and therefore how much reliance can be placed upon it.

Interview data will be collected through note taking. Notes taken during interviews will be summarised and key points shared with participants at the end of the interview with an invitation to confirm or amend what they have said.

Quantitative and observation data will be disaggregated and analysed by gender and ethnicity where ever possible. Of particular interest and attention will be enrolment and attendance data as well as primary school enrolment from MPPs.

Qualitative data gathered through interviews will be analysed by theme. This type of analysis is inductive or grounded, which means that the evaluation allows the themes to emerge from the data rather than being imposed upon it.

In a project of this kind data analysis is an on-going process, taking place throughout the data collection process. As the different forms of data are gathered, the team will think about and discuss the emerging themes and issues, adapting and changing data collection methods if necessary. For example, if after three or four interviews using an interview schedule developed from the evaluation plan, participants are raising issues that had not been anticipated, subsequent interview schedules will be refined to include these issues. This is data analysis. It means thinking about what has been said or read, analysing the data, and adjusting the approach if required. Themes and issues will be reported overall as well as comment made on the consistency or contrast of data from different stakeholder groups. It is unlikely that data will be formally coded or qualitative responses quantified.

As well as allowing themes to emerge from the data, the analysis will always reference data back to the evaluation questions to ensure that what is being collected is supporting and providing evidence for evaluative judgments reached.

The daily team meetings during the in-country visit will be a crucial data analysis tool as team members share their findings and their ideas about the data gathered that day.

The discussion with key stakeholders around the presentation of initial findings will be another level of data analysis as ideas and conclusions are tested and refined in light of any feedback from stakeholders.

6.0 Roles of team members

6.1 Team leader, evaluation specialist

As team leader and evaluation specialist my roles will be to:

- manage the team

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- allocate responsibilities and support team members to complete them
- co-ordinate daily meetings to review findings and accommodate emerging issues
- conduct interviews with key national and international stakeholders including NZAID, SCNZ, SCF, Fiji MoE, Fiji Childcare Assoc
- co-lead interviews with SCF project team members (with ECE specialist)
- participate in interviews with MPP staff and volunteers
- lead end of visit workshop and presentation of findings
- prepare draft and final reports.

6.2 ECE specialist

The main roles of the ECE specialist will be to:

- lead the interviews and observations at the visits to MPP sites
- identify and review quality indicators for mobile preschools and assess MPP against indicators
- co-lead interviews with SCF project team members (with evaluation specialist)
- participate in daily debriefing meetings
- contribute to final and draft reports.

6.3 SC Fiji participant

The local team member will be primarily responsible for:

- co-ordinating visits to MPP sites
- identifying and approaching CECs and other community groups
- introducing the evaluation team to stakeholders
- participating in interviews
- advising and assisting with travel arrangements
- contributing to final and draft report.

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7.0 Cross-cutting issues

Cross-cutting issues of most immediate relevance to this evaluation are human rights and gender issues.

7.1 Human rights

SCF Fiji has children and their human rights at the heart of its mission. The organisation's vision is to work for a world which respects and values each child; a world which listens to children and learns and a world where all children have hope and opportunity. Its mission is to promote children's rights and responds to their needs by facilitating lasting improvements that enable children to become responsible citizens. SCF's goal is to strengthen the delivery of basic services for children; to promote the awareness of children's rights and values at all levels; and, to mobilise resources to address the diverse needs of children.

This evaluation will assess the extent to which MPP reflects the organisation's mission, vision and goal.

7.2 Gender equality

While women and men have largely equal rights in law in Fiji a study by the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) reports that women have relatively limited knowledge of their rights and frequently are not recorded on titles or other documents formalising ownership of family assets. Fijian women also tend to be excluded from the decision-making process on disposition of communal land.

Similarly, women are offered a reasonably high degree of protection in the family and with regard to the custody of children. However, violence against women is common and includes domestic violence, rape and indecent assault.

With the focus of MPP on the well-being and development of children significant differences in gender perspectives are not anticipated. MPP is designed in part to upskill community volunteers to become ECE educators, and given that ECE is a strongly female dominated profession, the evaluation expects to be able to capture the perspective of women through group and individual interviews. It is anticipated that the views of men may be captured through the CEC and other community group interviews, as well as through the interviews with SCF and other national level stakeholders.

7.3 Environmental impacts

MPP is serving disadvantaged communities in informal and squatter settlements. While the playgroups themselves may have minimal direct environmental impacts, they are contributing to building a community infrastructure in settlements that are rapidly burgeoning throughout Fiji.

One of the tasks of this evaluation is to assess the extent to which the project's purpose and objectives are consistent with meeting the needs, priorities and capacities of the target communities and stakeholders in the informal settlements in Fiji. It may be relevant to explore whether raising children's awareness of environmental issues is part of the MPP programme, and whether the MPP itself has any positive or negative impacts on the environment.

7.4 Conflict prevention and peace building

This cross-cutting issue is less relevant for Fiji than for some other countries in need of aid. However, the political, social and economic context in Fiji is more volatile than for most of the country's recent history and the evaluation approach will need to be sensitive to this context.

7.5 HIV/AIDS

There are no obvious implications for HIV/AIDS for this project or the evaluation.

8.0 Dissemination of findings

The team will conclude each interview with a feedback summary of the data collected during the interview. This will provide an opportunity for participants to check the accuracy of their data.

Preliminary findings will be shared with key stakeholders in Suva at the end of the in-country visit. This will be an opportunity to test findings, gather feedback and identify any gaps in the data or analysis.

Findings will be formalised into a draft report submitted to NZAID two weeks after completion of the in-country visit. A final report will be submitted following incorporation of feedback from NZAID.

9.0 Risks, limitations or constraints

Risks, limitations or constraints	Mitigation
Inadequate or poor quality quantitative data	Ensure that conclusions do not rely solely on any one data source. Triangulation very important.
Other team members not confirmed and have not	NZAID to appoint other team members as soon as possible.
Availability of individuals and groups required for interview	Visits and interviews arranged with as much notice as possible. Flexibility of team in rearranging at short notice. Ensure sufficient interviews scheduled to cover for any not able to be completed.
SCF unwilling to engage with evaluation following lack of acceptance of 2008 impact assessment	Discuss previous report including assessment of its strengths and weaknesses. Build relationship with SCF team members.
MPP users unwillingness to critique MPP because they are grateful for the service	Emphasise positive framing 'suggestions', 'improvements', 'other ideas' rather than negative framing, aspects of MPP more or less highly valued and why etc
MPP staff may behave differently when evaluation team is present and observing	Evaluation team to spend enough time at each centre to gain confidence of staff by participating in activities and talking and observing informally before moving to formal parts of visit.
SCF employees unwilling to critique MPP because of reliance on income.	Acknowledge this reality. Gain staff confidence and assure staff of confidentiality of input. Stress evaluation interest in strategic perspective, themes and issues not in attribution of views..
Reduced capacity of High Commission and NZAID staff in Fiji	Should this be the case the role of the Fiji based team member will become even more crucial as heavy reliance will be placed on her/his local knowledge
Tensions between NZAID, SONZ and SCF leading to reluctance to share information	Acknowledgement of tensions. (Realistic) assurance of confidentiality and non attribution within evaluation report. Emphasise importance of evaluation team understanding the strengths of the project and what is required for sustainability.
Staff changes and problems within SCF limiting capacity to participate in evaluation	Interview staff at all levels within SCF in an effort to ensure the perspectives of the organisation are gathered and properly reflected in the evaluation.

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10.0 Ethical issues

The inherent powerlessness of disadvantaged communities must be acknowledged, and all dealings with MPP services, users and communities approached with this in mind. The vulnerability of those reliant on MPP for their livelihood must also be respected in data collection and reporting.

All participation in interviews will be voluntary. Participants will be informed before interviews how the information they provide will be used, that information provided will not be attributed, and that they can not answer questions or withdraw from the interview at any time. Feedback will not be attributed to individuals in the report, and while the views of stakeholder groups will be discussed efforts will be made to ensure that these are not able to be linked to individuals.

I am a member of and abide by the Association of Social Science Research Code of Ethics. I also adhere to the guiding principles for the practice of evaluation developed by the American Evaluation Association (1994.) These guiding principles for evaluators identify the basic ethics that can be expected from an evaluator. They include:

1. Systematic inquiry. Evaluators conduct systematic, data-based inquiries about whatever is being evaluated.
2. Competence. Evaluators provide competent performance to stakeholders.
3. Integrity/honesty. Evaluators ensure the honesty and integrity of the entire evaluation process.
4. Respect for people. Evaluators respect the security, dignity, and self-worth of the respondents, program participants, clients, and other stakeholders with whom they interact.
5. Responsibilities for general and public welfare. Evaluators clarify and take into account the diversity of interests and values that may be related to the general and public welfare.

Project logic model with outcomes and indicators

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Goal Establish sustainable quality ECE centres for children in informal settlements to enable better integration of children into primary education.

The problem the project is trying to address
 Need for quality ECE for children in informal and squatter settlements

Stakeholders
 Children
 Families
 Communities
 SCFiji
 SCNZ
 NZAID
 Fiji EC Assoc
 Ministry of Ed

Inputs What we invest
 Money
 Paid staff
 Volunteers
 CEC time and skills
 Learning resources
 Training
 Equipment

Activities What we do
 Run playgroups
 Train staff
 Recruit volunteers
 Support CECs
 Parent education

Children
 Families
 Community
 Fiji

Outcomes		
Short-term	Medium-term	Long-term
Children access quality ECE Improved parenting practice Indegrate school enrolment	Children better prepared for success at school Sustained commitment to education	Longer tenure and better performance at school Economic benefits from children's higher achievement
Communities manage and maintain quality ECE centres ECE manages MPP effectively and efficiently Increased number of centres Centres recognized by MoE	Trained and qualified ECE teachers leading MPP groups Development of educational infrastructure.	Comprehensive and capable education system Better educated population. Economic benefits

External factors.
 Assumptions, constraints, risks etc that could affect the project.

The indicators
 How will it be clear when the outcomes are reached? What are the measures?

The Evaluation
 Identify the outcomes with the stakeholders, establish the measures, gather the data, analyse and interpret, discuss and report back.

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MPP – Indicators for evaluating progress towards outcomes.
 (Based on Performance Management Framework developed by SC Fiji, provided to NZAID May 2009)

Goal: To provide quality ECE to informal settlements and better mainstreaming of children into primary education			
Objectives:			
1. Establish and maintain ECE centres			
2. Develop community capacity to manage ECE centres, CEC, community interest groups			
3. Develop capacity of volunteers to become ECE teachers			
4. Enhance SCF's capacity to provide effective and efficient programme management			
Objective 1 Establish and maintain ECE centres			
Outcomes	Indicators	Data sources	Data collection tools
Children from informal and squatter settlements access quality ECE	Number /proportion centres recognised by MoE by 2014	MoE	Interview, data request Interview, data review Document review (minutes etc) Interview and data review
	Number / proportion community profiles documented Advisory Committee meeting regularly Children enrolled in MPP Children attending MPP regularly Children graduating from MPP	SCFiji Advisory Committee SCFiji	
All children from informal settlements have opportunity to attend MMP	How to establish proportion of children from informal settlements equipped	SCF ECE teachers Parents Children Teachers	Observation Interview
MPP centres offer quality ECE experience MPP centres adequately/appropriately equipped			Interview and observation Data review
MPP teachers follow ECE curriculum MPP centres are OSH compliant		SCFiji	Data review
School enrolment rates increase Children better prepared for school	Number / proportion of MPP children enrolling in school School entry data Teacher perception of school readiness Parent/caregiver perception	SCFiji SCFiji Teachers	Interview /data review
Improved parenting practice	Structured/deliberate activities to enhance parenting	Parents SCFiji	Interview/document/review

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	knowledge and skills Parenting practice observed, parent feedback	Parents Parents and caregivers	Interviews / discussions Observations
Objective 2: Develop community capacity to manage ECE centres, CEC, community interest groups			
Outcomes Communities manage and maintain quality ECE centres	Indicators Number/proportion of MPP centres with CECs actively involved in their management Number / proportion of CECs with bank accounts, strategic and operational documentation (finance, personnel, record keeping etc) in place. Structure and function of CECs Number / proportion of CECs passing the MPP checklist Structured/deliberate activities that build and support the capacity of CECs to take on the management of MPP centres	Data sources SCFiji CEC members	Data collection tools Interview and data review Interview and document review
		SCFiji	Interview and document review
		MoE CECs	Interview and data review Interview and document review

Objective 3: Develop capacity of volunteers to become ECE teachers			
Outcomes Trained and qualified ECE teachers leading MPP programmes	Indicators Number / proportion MPP teachers trained, and to what extent Number / proportion of MPP teachers certified and/or passing MoE assessment Number / proportion of MPP teachers receiving grants and Incentives Recruitment and retention of MPP teachers Nature and extent of teacher training activities offered. Uptake/ attendance of teacher training activities Assessment /evaluation of MPP teachers in place Teachers familiar with and using ECE curriculum	Data sources SCFiji MPP teachers CECs Teachers	Data collection tools Interviews and data review

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Objective: Enhance SC Fiji's capacity to provide effective and efficient programme management	
Outcomes	Indicators
SC Fiji manages the MPP project effectively and efficiently	<p>Effective governance and policy framework in place.</p> <p>Robust systems in place, and used, for financial and resource management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • budget setting • monitoring expenditure • Financial policies, procedures and controls. • asset acquisition and management <p>Robust systems in place, and used, for personnel management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recruitment and retention • direction and support • training • appraisal <p>Robust systems in place, and used, for planning and reporting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strategic and annual plans in place, guiding operations and reported against. <p>Robust systems in place, and used, for health and safety.</p> <p>Robust systems in place, and used, for monitoring and evaluation.</p>
	Data sources SCF Fiji
	Data collection tools Interviews Document and data review Observation

Documents reviewed for the evaluation

Date	Author and title
2002	Diana Guild. <i>Where the children come and do. The initial evaluation of Save the Children Fiji's Mobile Playgroup Pilot Project</i>
	Save the Children Fiji. <i>Annual report Mobile Playgroup Project</i>
2003	Save the Children Fiji. <i>Annual report and financial acquittal 2002 and revised budget 2003</i>
2004	Save the Children Fiji. <i>Revised budget for 2 years ending June 2006</i>
2005	Save the Children Fiji. <i>Year One progress report</i>
	Save the Children Fiji. <i>Annual report 04-05 year</i>
	NZAID. <i>Fiji background paper and NZAID/Fiji Country Strategy Programme</i>
2006	Ministry of Education. <i>Policy in early childhood education</i>
	UNESCO. <i>Fiji early childhood care and education programme</i>
	Save the Children Fiji. <i>The impact of internal displacement on the education and development of children living in squatter settlements in the Fiji Islands. A research project</i>
	Save the Children Fiji. <i>Progress report July-Dec 2005</i>
2007	Save the Children Fiji. <i>MPP expansion proposal</i>
	Save the Children Fiji. <i>Concept: the Mobile Playgroup Project 2007-2009</i>
	Save the Children Fiji. <i>Status of independent recognised kindergarten.</i>
	McKinnon et al. <i>Report of the Fiji Informal Settlements Scoping Mission</i>
2008	The Pride Project. <i>Early childhood care and education in the Pacific</i>
	<i>Fiji Informal Settlements Support Programme: Interim implementation framework</i>
	Save the Children Fiji. <i>MPP programme implementation document</i>
	Toganivalu and Hewick-Smith. <i>Unconfirmed impact assessment report</i>
2009	Sharon Bessell. <i>Strengthening Fiji's education system: a view from key stakeholders.</i>
	Rae Julian. <i>Fiji Civil Society Facilitation first report</i>
	<i>Logframe</i>
	Save the Children Fiji. <i>Performance measurement framework for the Mobile Playgroup Project 2008-2011</i>
	Save the Children Fiji. <i>MPP progress report June-Dec 2008</i>
	Save the Children Fiji. <i>Annual report Year 1 July 2008-June 2009</i>
	Ministry of Education (2009) <i>Na Noda Mataniciva: Kindergarten Curriculum Guidelines for the Fiji Islands</i>
2010	Save the children Fiji <i>Strategic Plan 2010-2014</i>
Undated	Save the Children Fiji. <i>Programme operations manual</i>

Interview guides

Families and MPP users

(These are not expressed as questions but as areas to explore in interviews)

1 Children's attendance at MPP

- How they heard about MPP.
- From what age child attended
- How frequently child attends. Establish how many sessions available/attended. If infrequent or irregular attendance explore why.
- Are there generally the same children/families at each session.
- What role do they play in the session. What role do other parents play. How do they know what to do during a session.

2 MPP programme delivery

- What activities happen during MPP session. EG free play, organised play, formal learning etc What are most valued.
- Does the programme seem to be planned or just happen each day.
- Role of teachers, role of volunteers
- Consistency of staff. Turnover. Quality of staff.
- Adequacy of resources including buildings/location, play equipment, other equipment.
- Any costs involved for them in attending MPP.
- Suggestions for other things that could be included in playgroup sessions.

3 MPP outcomes for children

- What changes has attendance at MPP had on child's learning, behaviour, socialisation etc
- If child approaching school age –how well prepared is the child for school.
- Will/where will child go to school.
- Any contact between MPP and school.

4 MPP outcomes for parents

- What have they learned through being involved in MPP sessions.
- What other activities offered by MPP (eg parenting groups) have they been involved in. If none, why not? If so, what did they learn or value from their involvement.
- What else could be offered through MPP that would help them or their children.

5 Organisation

- Do they have any contact with community education committee?
- Are they involved in the organisation or running of MPP in any way.
- If yes, how. If no, would they like to be.

6 Other areas to explore

- Do they know other young children who live in the community and don't attend MPP.
- If they do, what do they think are the reasons for non-attendance.

Interview guide – SCF Fiji

(Included in this guide are the areas in which we need to gather information from SCFiji. These will not all be covered in one interview. They are not expressed as questions but as areas to explore through a series of interviews.)

MPP programme and related activities

1. Centres

- Data required
 - current number of centres, history of number opened (and closed), duration of current centres (explore reasons for closure)
 - how is it decided where centres should be established.
 - session times and frequency
 - location – permanent or mobile
- MPP programme quality questions
 - use of curriculum
 - activities
 - resources
- Use of operations manual

2. Other activities offered through MPP

- Other activities offered – number, range, attendance, evaluation, benefits

3. Children and families

- Data required
 - enrolment data (by centre and gender)
 - attendance data
 - graduation data
 - evidence of changes for children
 - tracking data – what happens to children who have graduated, school enrolment, school progress etc
- How is MPP publicised within community.
- What outreach is done to reach and attract 'hard to reach' families

4. Staff

- Data required
 - staff numbers – project management, teachers, volunteers, others (over time)
 - number / proportion of MPP teachers certified and/or passing MoE assessment
 - number / proportion of MPP teachers receiving grants and incentives
 - retention and turnover
- Training offered and available - uptake/ attendance of teacher training activities
- Assessment and performance management of staff

5. Accreditation/recognition by MoE and other bodies

- Data required
 - number accredited by MoE, number in the process (explore process)
 - number OSH compliant

- Issues with the accreditation process and requirements
- 6. **Community capacity**
 - Data required
 - number with community profiles documented
 - number with CECs in place and operating effectively, number with CECs under development
 - number /proportion of CECs with bank accounts, strategic and operational documentation (finance, personnel, record keeping etc) in place.
 - number / proportion of CECs passing the MPP checklist (what is the checklist)
 - number / proportion CEC's recognised by MoF
 - How are CECs developed – structured and deliberate activities
 - Perceptions of community capacity and progress towards community ownership

SCFiji governance and project management

1. **Governance arrangements. Policy framework.**

- SCFiji as an organisation
- MPP
 - role of Advisory Committee

2. **Financial and resource management.**

Systems for and practice in areas of

- budget setting
- monitoring expenditure
- financial policies, procedures and controls.
- asset acquisition and management
- overlap KOHA/PICD capacity building funding (mainly an issue for SCNZ)

3. **Personnel management**

Systems for and practice in areas of

- recruitment and retention
- direction and support
- training
- appraisal

4. **Planning and reporting.**

Systems in place for

- strategic and annual plans in place, guiding operations and reported against
- impact of 2008 realignment of objectives for MPP

5. **Health and safety.**

Systems and processes

6. **Monitoring and evaluation.**

Systems for and practice in..

Stakeholder relationships

1. Relationship with MoE
2. Relationship with SCNZ – roles, activities, contribution, effectiveness
3. Relationship with NZAID
4. Relationship Fiji Childcare Assoc

Strengths, achievements and limitations

- 1 Strengths/achievements and limitations of the current MPP model by objective - number, community capacity, volunteer capacity, SCF capacity
- 2 How has MPP responded to changes in the Fiji economic context, including the impact of the global economic crisis on the poor of Fiji
- 3 Recommendations for improvement to current MPP model by objective - number, community capacity, volunteer capacity, SCF capacity

Ownership and sustainability

- 1 Who 'owns' MPP – who should own it
- 2 Government capacity to play an increasing role in funding and monitoring MPP, what is needed in order for ownership to move to government
- 3 Plans for beyond the life of NZAID funding
- 4 What other partnerships have been explored to support and sustain MPP (govt, non-govt, community, faith-based, corporate)

Interview guide – MPP centre staff and volunteers

(These are not expressed as questions but as areas to explore in interviews).

1. Playgroup sessions

- session times and frequency
- what activities happen during MPP session. EG free play, organised play, formal learning etc what in their view are the most valuable valued
- extent and nature of planning
- adequacy of resources including buildings/location, play equipment, other equipment.
- role of teachers, role of volunteers, role of parents
- use of curriculum
- suggestions for other things that could be included in playgroup sessions.

2. Children

- numbers and age range, boys/girls
- attendance records, consistency of attendance – barriers to attendance
- what changes has attendance at MPP had on child's learning, behaviour, socialisation etc
- what do they know about what happens to children who have graduated, school enrolment, school progress etc – any contact with schools

4. Families

- how is MPP publicised in community
- what outreach is done to try to attract 'hard to reach' families
- other activities offered by MPP (eg parenting groups). What is their involvement
- observations about parenting styles, any changes noticed
- what else could be offered through MPP that would help them or their children.

4. Support and training for teachers, volunteers and parents

- how long have they been teacher/volunteer/parent help
- what training have they received
- qualifications, registration etc
- support, appraisal etc – what have they received

6. Community Education Committee

- CEC in place
- how is it working

Interview guide CECs

(These are not expressed as questions but as areas to explore in interviews).

1. **History**
 - describe process of forming and development
 - how members selected or otherwise came to be involved
 - role of SCFiji in set up phase
 - men and women on CEC
 - how often meeting
2. **Extent of CEC management**
 - written plans or other guiding documents in place
 - responsibility for finances and resources – eg bank accounts
 - responsibility for payment and performance management of staff
 - interactions with MPP sessions and staff – frequency and nature
 - interactions with current MPP families
3. **Relationship with community**
 - how is MPP publicised to community
 - perception of how successful in attracting/retaining families (do they keep any data)
 - what outreach to 'hard to reach' families
 - interactions with schools
4. **Relationship with MoE**
 - is CEC recognised by MoE
 - Relationship between CEC and MoE
5. **Role of SCFiji in ongoing support and capacity building**
 - nature and type of dealings with SCFiji
 - training, support and other deliberate activities that build CEC capacity
6. **What supports and what limits CECs taking more responsibility for managing centres.**
 - achievements
 - challenges