



End of Programme Evaluation Samoa (Primary) School Fee Grant Scheme

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Abstract

The evaluation covers all aspects of the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme (SSFGS) since commencement of the programme in 2010 to its completion in June 2015. The purpose of the evaluation was to review progress in achieving the programme's intended outcomes, impact and objectives. It assesses the extent to which the programme had reduced financial barriers to primary school enrolment and had increased retention, whether improved learning outcomes had been achieved through an enhanced quality of education, and if school performance had improved against the Minimum Service Standards.

The evaluation was conducted in November and December 2015. The methodology consisted of two phases. The first was a desk study and analysis of documents provided by the Development Partners and MESC. The second involved a three week in-country visit where information was gathered through consultation with key stakeholders. The evaluation analysed the data collected against the Development Assistance Committee criteria: relevance; effectiveness; efficiency; impact; and sustainability

The evaluation shows that there have been considerable benefits from the Scheme including the reduction of financial barriers for parents resulting in new school enrolments, improved school environments with increased availability of learning and teaching resources, improved relationships between SSFGS and the Minimum Service Standards (MSS), and the up-skilling of principals as professional leaders and financial managers. Not all of the planned outcomes and objectives were achieved. In addition, other weaknesses in the system were identified. There are, therefore, caveats about the achievement of some outcomes and objectives.

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Executive Summary

An independent End of Programme Evaluation of the Samoa (Primary) School Fee Grant Scheme (SSFGS - the Scheme) was conducted in November and December of 2015. The evaluation covered all aspects of the SSFGS since commencement of the programme in 2010 and its completion in June 2015. It included a review of progress in achieving the Scheme's intended impact and outcomes. Information from the evaluation will feed into the *Education Sector Support Program (ESSP) July 2015-June 2018*.

The methodology for the evaluation was based on an evaluation plan that was approved by a Steering Group. There were two main phases. The first phase was a review of all documents relating directly and indirectly to the Scheme. The second phase was an in-country visit during which key stakeholders were interviewed. A total of eleven schools was visited, four in Savai'i and seven in Upolu. Included were government, mission and special schools, both rural and urban, of varying sizes. Interviews at the schools were with principals, school committees, parents and teachers. Other stakeholders interviewed included key GoS officials from the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, the Ministry of Finance, and other personnel connected with the Scheme. A workshop for invited stakeholders to discuss the preliminary findings of the evaluation was held on Friday 4 December 2015. A draft evaluation report was subsequently developed for comment by stakeholders.

Overview. There were significant strengths and benefits that had resulted from the scheme. The evaluation identified almost universal support for the school grants scheme from the people interviewed. Financial barriers had been reduced for all parents, and numbers of children previously not attending school had been encouraged to do so. 210 children, aged from seven to thirteen years, were identified who had attended school for the first time over the five-year period of the SSFGS. School environments, including provision of learning materials, libraries and computing facilities, had been improved. Responsibility had been devolved from the central control of the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (MESC) to schools, who now had more control than previously over decision-making and purchase of resources. Principals had become financial managers. Schools had direct access to resources, and expressed strong support for the SSFGS. The resources and training provided through the Scheme had helped principals and schools towards meeting the Minimum Service Standards (MSS). The ongoing support provided to schools by the Team Leader and the Team of Consultants (TOC) was a significant factor in determining the success of the Scheme.

While the Scheme has certainly provided significant benefits to schools, not all of the planned outcomes and objectives have been achieved. In addition, other weaknesses in the system have been identified. There are, therefore, caveats about some outcomes and objectives. An outcome of the programme was intended to be improved student achievement, with a lower number of students at risk in Samoan and English literacy, and in numeracy. However, it was not possible to find any compelling objective evidence about the

extent to which student achievement had improved. There were competing priorities which schools had to contend with. For example, the introduction of SSFGS coincided with the introduction of a new curriculum. The introduction of raised qualifications for teachers increased the problem of a shortage of teachers, resulting in large classes in many schools. Professional leadership and teacher quality were major issues. With very few exceptions, primary school principals are full time teachers. Their workload leaves little time for them to undertake professional development programmes with their staff.

The evaluation concluded that the original goals and objectives of the Scheme were too ambitious, particularly in relation to improving student performance. While new resources for teachers and students were made available through the SSFGS, provision of resources alone will not improve results. Unless teachers have guidance in how to use the resources effectively, the value of these resources could be limited. Coupled with coming to terms with a new curriculum, it may have been unrealistic to expect any significant improvement in student performance within a five year time frame.

Criteria for Evaluation. In making their assessment of how successful the Scheme had been, the evaluators applied the evaluation criteria developed by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). These criteria are: relevance; effectiveness; efficiency; impact; and sustainability.

Relevance. The SSFGS was found to have had relevance to all members of the school community, and to other stakeholders. Good resources were available in schools for students to use. These include classroom learning materials, library books, IT resources including laptops and computers, educational TV and specialist subject texts and equipment.

A number of factors make the SSFGS relevant to principals. Principals have been given the opportunity and financial resources to make professional decisions related to the purchase of resources for the school. To support this new role the principals have been given professional development and training. They have learnt sufficient skills in financial management and reporting to accurately account for the funds at their disposal.

In those schools where the principal and school committee enjoy a positive working relationship, the overall management and effectiveness of the school has increased. School committees and parents are generally now more engaged with the school. While there has definitely been a reduction in the financial cost for parents of their children's attendance at school, all costs to parents have not been eliminated. Further work needs to be undertaken by MESC with communities to eliminate unrealistic expectations, since "fee-free" education does not mean "free" education. Costs for tuition are eliminated under the SSFGS, but other parental costs such as school uniforms, school lunches, transport costs or contributing to capital development and upkeep of the school still remain.

The Scheme is relevant to the GoS, since it is a core strategic initiative to support the work of schools and to improve their performance. The Scheme is relevant to MFAT and DFAT, since it is aligned with their developmental policy to support the education sector.

Effectiveness. The clear consensus from the interviews was that the provision of school grants was vital to maintaining effective and efficient operations in schools, and that in the vast majority of cases the expenditure of the funds was effective in helping to meet sound educational objectives. A key question in the interview schedule was whether the money from the school grants was well used. Without exception, all those questioned replied in the affirmative.

In summary, the strengths of the scheme reported to the evaluators include an improved school environment, direct access by schools to resources, effective devolution of increased authority to schools, and improved principal leadership. These strengths indicate that the Scheme has been effective. Weaknesses include over-reliance on the Team Leader and the Team of Consultants, a risk of losing momentum if MESC does not move swiftly to strengthen the leadership and support to schools in the transition to full management of the scheme by the Government of Samoa, and the potential risk of delay in the recruitment, appointment and training of School Review Officers (SROs).

One key objective of the evaluation of SSFGS was to assess whether the programme had increased primary school enrolment and retention. While 210 new students were identified who enrolled at school during the period from 2010 to 2015, the national enrolment trend over the period 2009 to 2015 showed that enrolments had levelled off. Progression rates in primary schools in Samoa are generally over 90%. In general, there is sound internal efficiency of the system at primary school levels, and the SSFGS has been a contributor to this result.

There is some evidence that school performance has improved over the five years of the SSFGS. The evidence from the monitoring that has been undertaken by the SSFGS management team indicates that 90% of all primary schools recorded at least three improvements against the MSS. These improvements were from the following areas: school policies; school facilities; effective partnership with the community; and sufficient teaching and learning materials. The evidence from interviews with principals indicated that a result of the SSFGS has been an overall improvement in the school environment, especially in the purchase of school assets.

An outcome of the programme was anticipated to be improved student achievement with a lower number of students at risk in Samoan and English literacy and in numeracy. The evidence available to the evaluators suggests that student achievement results have deteriorated rather than improved, as was hoped. There is little objective evidence available apart from the Samoa Primary Education Literacy Level (SPELL) results. The Year 6 SPELL results show that the numbers of children at risk in both literacy and numeracy have increased between 2012 and 2013. In 2013, 55% of Year 6 boys were identified as being at risk in English literacy, and two-thirds of Year 6 boys were at risk in numeracy. The problem is greater for boys than girls, but is of concern for both. This increase in numbers of students "at risk" in literacy and numeracy is of concern, but should not necessarily be seen as a failure of the SSFGS. The reasons for the increase in "at risk" students are complex and need to be considered in a wider context (such as the need to improve teacher quality, the introduction of a new curriculum, and the need for teacher development to ensure resources are well used).

In general the current scope of the Samoa (Primary) School Fee Grant Scheme is adequate for its intended purpose. An advantage of the present scheme was that basing the allocation of school grant funds on enrolments was fair, objective and reasonable. Principals were asked in the interviews whether the SSFGS assisted schools with their school development planning. The evaluators have concluded that there remains a need to strengthen links between school development plans, the SSFGS, and school priorities for expenditure.

The Guidelines that have been developed by MESC for assisting principals in their management of the school grants scheme were being used by principals, and are effective. These Guidelines have worked because principals have had access to advice from the Team Leader and the Team of Consultants. It would be timely to review the 2010 SSFGS *Manual of*

Operations and expenditure categories, and to incorporate any recommendations from the TOC Team Leader.

There is scope for improved communication about the scheme, particularly with School Committees and parents. MESC needs to continue communicating with communities to ensure parents understand the intentions and benefits of the SSFGS and the sharing of the cost of education between the Scheme and the community, and therefore the parents' role in meeting costs.

Accountability for the SSFGS is generally well managed. While accountability requirements have been satisfied, no formal audit of the SSFGS has been undertaken by the GoS. The GoS needs to ensure that there are regular independent audits of the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme in future.

Efficiency.

Overall the SSFGS is an efficient scheme, and represents value for money. Its efficiency has been achieved through a number of factors. The scheme is simple in design and relatively easy to manage, both by MESC and schools. Good training programmes have been undertaken with principals and school committees to ensure compliance, and quarterly and annual reporting is of a good standard.

As part of the evaluation, the funding formula was reviewed. The formula is currently based on enrolments. This system was found to be fair. Alternative options for adjusting the grant, such as the introduction of a "distance" or "remoteness" factor, or a "socio-economic" factor to compensate for distance from markets or low socio-economic status, were considered, with a view to ensuring that the application of school grants could become more equitable. Based on discussions with principals and school committees, it appears that most think the present formula is fair and there were no strong arguments presented for change. The evaluators agree with this consensus and do not recommend any change to the funding formula.

Some principals reported that the purchasing power of the grant may be at risk of decreasing over time as inflation increases the costs for schools. The Samoan inflation rate over the period between 2010 and 2015 was 7.7%. The evaluators felt that consideration could be given by the GoS to inflation proofing the SSFGS as from the 2016 year on.

The evaluation team gave considerable consideration to the timeliness of the receipt of the grant money by schools. The present arrangement whereby the grant was delivered in one lump sum annually was regarded by most principals as satisfactory, although the date of delivery of the grant in the MERC guidelines was specified as June and the grant was usually received three months later than that date. The Ministry of Finance confirmed that in practice, because of Government cash flow considerations, the grant would be delivered to schools towards the end of the first quarter in the Government financial year. The formal date for delivery of the school should therefore be changed in the Guidelines to the end of September, so that schools had clear expectations of when the money would be lodged in their bank accounts. Delivery by this date would still allow schools to plan to have resources available by the beginning of the school year in late January/early February. There was little appetite for delivery of the funds in two tranches to correspond more closely to the school academic year, since such a change would unduly complicate administration of the grant.

The ongoing management of the grant was identified as an area of risk. The training and support provided by the TOC team and the Team Leader has been one of the Scheme's greatest strengths. Only the Team Leader remains on the payroll as at December 2015, and

her position is due to terminate at 30 June 2016. Approval has been given and finance budgeted for the appointment of 12 School Review Officers (SROs) who will work in the School Operations Division of MESC. The efficiency and sustainability of the SSFGS is dependent on the SROs being appointed and assuming responsibility as soon as possible. A senior position in MESC should be established to undertake the leadership role of managing the School Grants Scheme.

There is a case for improving communications by MESC with schools about SSFGS. It would benefit schools and their planning if they received prior notice of the amount of their grant, the roll number on which it had been calculated and an approximate date on which they could expect funds to be deposited in their bank account.

The Samoa Education Management Information System (EMIS) needs strengthening as an integrated tool that everyone (including schools) uses for the collection and analysis of data. The TOC team does use the school census information in EMIS for determining school entitlement to SSFGS funds, but the spreadsheet used for the calculation is held on the TOC Team Leader's computer and is not in the EMIS.

Impact.

The programme has had a positive impact upon stakeholders, families, principals and members of school communities in Samoa. Schools have been helped with direct access to resources to support wider education goals in a way that was not possible when they relied on fees from parents for revenue. During the five years of the programme, the grant funds have supported expenditure on teaching and learning materials and on building up school assets. The quality of school assets in particular has been significantly improved. Families have been supported through the scheme by a reduction in school fees, although some parents felt they should not have to pay anything towards their children's education. One suggestion was that changing the name of the Scheme to eliminate the word "fee" (so that the Scheme was called the "Samoa School Grant Scheme") would be one way of helping to eliminate confusion on the part of parents.

The management training that has been provided to principals through SSFGS was acknowledged in interviews as having been hugely beneficial.

During the evaluation it was found that the relationship between the principal and school committees was usually positive, with a good working partnership having been developed. There were occasions on which the role boundaries between principals, school committees and Village Councils were not well accepted, and this situation could at times cause tensions. Providing training to school committees on accountability and transparency should therefore form part of the work of MESC with schools.

Sustainability.

This evaluation has concluded that SSFGS, after five years of operation, is likely to become sustainable. The GoS has now assumed responsibility for management of the Scheme, and has allocated sufficient funds to support it in its 2015-2016 budget. The Scheme has introduced the first steps towards the development of self-managing schools, giving schools a degree of autonomy over the purchasing of teaching resources and fixed assets. Self-management, coupled with financial resources over which the school has control, provides the opportunity for better annual and longer term planning. This in turn sets the scene for improved student learning.

The training programmes in schools undertaken by the TOC team have made an excellent start towards ensuring that principals and school committees comply with the regulations governing the SSFGS. There is still a degree of reliance by principals on TOC support, especially in annual reporting. Further training to reduce this is necessary. Ongoing training and support will be required as school committee membership changes and new principals are appointed.

Monitoring and Evaluation. The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework developed in the original programme design has been modified by the Team Leader and the Team of Consultants, and has formed a useful framework for the regular monitoring and reporting on the scheme that has occurred during the five-year life of the scheme to date. The monitoring and evaluation reports that have been produced to date provide a comprehensive picture of achievements and issues that have arisen in the course of the five years of the programme. As the GoS undertakes full responsibility for the SSFGS, MESC could take the opportunity to revise the monitoring and evaluation framework.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps. The evaluation has identified a number of lessons learned during the course of the five years of operation of the Scheme. These are detailed in the full evaluation report. The most significant risk that needs to be addressed is that the management of the Samoa School Fee Grants Scheme (SSFGS) needs to be strengthened by MESC as a matter of urgency, so that the good work to support schools undertaken by the Team Leader and the Team of Consultants over the last five years is not wasted, but can be built on and consolidated. The next steps that need to be undertaken include the development of a strategy to deal with the transition from the TOC, a review and reissue by MESC of a revised *Manual of Operations*, provision of ongoing training for principals and school committees, and the development of a professional development strategy for principals and teachers.

Recommendations

It is recommended that

MESC

1. A senior position within MESC be established, responsible to ACEO School Operations, in order to manage the Samoa School Grant Scheme effectively.
2. School Review Officers be appointed and trained as soon as possible in order to give the necessary support to schools to manage the Samoa School Grant Scheme.
3. MESC develop a strategy for the professional development of principals and teachers, focused on teaching and student learning in schools, with particular emphasis on improving literacy and numeracy.
4. Urgent consideration be given to the development of a strategy to provide professional development in literacy and numeracy to all teachers of Years 1 – 3 classes.
5. MESC issue a revised and updated “final” version of the 2010 *Manual of Operations* so that principals have access to definitive written guidelines for management of the scheme.
6. MESC develop a strategy to communicate to schools and their communities in a comprehensive and transparent way the aims and objectives of the Samoa School Grant Scheme
7. MESC provide schools in advance with written information each year about the expected delivery date of the grant, its amount, and how it has been calculated.

8. MESC continue to support the development of an integrated education management information system (EMIS), accessible by schools and Government agencies, for sector co-ordination and analysis, interpretation and use of data.
9. MESC provide training to school committees on accountability and transparency with respect to management of fees collected from parents of school students, and provide a channel through MESC for principals to discuss concerns and have support in dealing with these issues.

GoS

10. The Government of Samoa consider adjusting the amount of the school grant each year from 2016 on, in the light of annual headline inflation, in order to maintain the purchasing power of the grant.
11. The Government of Samoa ensure that there are regular audits of the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme.

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Background

THE ACTIVITY

This report is an end of programme evaluation of the Samoa School (Primary) Fee Grant Scheme (SSFGS). The five year programme commenced in 2010 and was jointly funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Government of Samoa (GoS). Over the five years of the programme, donor funding decreased as the GoS assumed a greater responsibility for the funding. There was an understanding at the commencement of the programme that GoS would continue to fund the Fee Grant Scheme after the donor supported programme had ended.

The Scheme is a school grants programme with grants for operational expenses paid to schools annually, based on an accepted formula (a variable base grant plus WST100 for each enrolled student, or WST200 for each enrolled student with special education needs). The Scheme was designed to improve direct access to, and provide more equitable distribution of resources across Samoa primary schools (except for the private primary schools). Its underlying aim was to increase primary school enrolment and retention, and improved school performance against the Minimum Service Standards (MSS).

EVALUATION PURPOSE AND DESIGN

PURPOSE

The purpose of the evaluation is to review progress in achieving the programme's intended outcomes, impact and objectives, based on the original design, the Minimum Service Standards, School Operations Manual and the monitoring and evaluation framework. Its intention is to evaluate the extent to which the programme had reduced financial barriers to primary schooling enrolment and retention, whether improved learning outcomes had been achieved through an enhanced quality of education, and school performance had improved against the Minimum Service Standards. The terms of reference for the evaluation are attached as Appendix 1.

The specified outcomes and objectives to be achieved are set out below.

Intended outcomes of the SSFGS were to ensure that:

- i. financial barriers to primary school attendance are removed
- ii. all Samoan primary schools are able to offer a quality education
- iii. all Samoan children achieve higher learning outcomes
- iv. all Samoan children complete a full cycle of primary schooling
- v. goals are met in an efficient and cost effective manner.

These outcomes were to be met by achieving the following objectives:

- i. reduce financial barriers to primary schooling by providing direct government support to schools in lieu of school fees;

- ii. assist schools to improve their teaching and learning processes by meeting and maintaining MESC's Minimum Service Standards (MSS);
- iii. improve school-level resource management by introducing and/or supporting school based management practices such as the principal as a manager, the role of school committees, and an emphasis on school development and planning and budgeting and school level accountability for results.

Also, as part of wider efforts to improve schools and increase student outcomes, the SSFGS would increasingly empower principals and school committees to take charge of their resources through the development and implementation of School Improvement Plans, which are directed towards the achievement of the MSS. It is important to note that the MSS were developed during Year One of the implementation of the SSFGS and remained in draft form throughout the life of the programme. However, they continued to be referenced and used as the standard for monitoring education access and quality in schools.

SCOPE

The scope of the evaluation covers all aspects of the SSFGS programme since commencement of the programme in 2010 and its completion in June 2015. It includes a review of progress in achieving the Programme's intended impact and outcomes, based on the original Design, the Minimum Service Standards (MSS), the School Operations Manual and the monitoring and evaluation framework. Findings from the 2013 Mid-term Review of the scheme and any adjustments made to the design during the implementation of the programme have been included. For MFAT and DFAT, the evaluation is intended to serve as an end of programme evaluation. For the Government of Samoa (GOS), the evaluation provides information to support its ongoing provision of school grants. Information from the evaluation will feed into the Education Sector Support Program (ESSP) July 2015-June 2018.

OBJECTIVES

The following are the key objectives of the evaluation:

Objective 1: Assess the *effectiveness* of the SSFGS, in particular

- Has the programme met its key objectives of
 - i. Increasing primary school enrolments and retention?
 - ii. Improving performance against minimum service standards? Why/why not?
- To what extent has the development of personnel capacity within the Ministry and schools helped the programme meet set objectives?
- What unintended outcomes (positive and negative) have occurred as a result of the Activities?
- What has constrained or enhanced the achievement of outcomes?

Objective 2: Assess the *impact* of the programmes, in particular:

- To what extent has the programme benefited its stakeholders, including MESC, schools, students, parents and the wider communities?
- What impact has the programme had on New Zealand's and Australia's relationship with Samoa?

Objective 3: Assess programme *efficiency*, in particular:

- To what extent has the SSFGS contributed to the strengthening of school management and administration?
- How effective was the management of the programme by GoS, MFAT, and DFAT?

Objective 4: Assess the extent to which the results have proven to be *sustainable*:

- To what extent has the programme contributed to the strengthening of school management and administration?
- To what extent have the skills and knowledge acquired (MESC and school management) from the programme been sustained?
- To what extent are partner government and agencies likely to be able to sustain skills, management capacity, funding and other programme benefits?

Objective 5: Identification of *lessons learned* and *cross cutting issues*:

Lessons learned

- What are key lessons from the SSGFS – what works and what does not?
- What recommendations can be made to support achievement of the Sector Outcomes of the Education Sector Plan (ESP) and future investment in the sector?
- What changes should be made to the design, implementation or management for any future investment?

Cross cutting issues

- To what extent have cross cutting issues, in particular gender equality and disability inclusive development, been effectively addressed in planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation?

Objective 6: To assess the relevance of the SSFGS in the development and strengthening of the *relevant* areas of the education sector, in particular:

- Did the programme have clear strategic frameworks aligned with the MFAT and DFAT development policy and the GOS development objectives?
- To what extent has the programme remained relevant to the GoS, MFAT and DFAT?
- How well has the programme developed?

DESIGN

The Evaluation Design has been developed on the basis of the requirements in the Terms of Reference (see Appendix 1).

Prior to arrival in Samoa, the consultants developed an Evaluation Plan (see Appendix 2) that was approved by a Steering Group. The Evaluation Plan set out the purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation, and described the evaluation design, methods of information collection, and a proposed methodology. The methodology included detailed evaluation questions, an outline of the stakeholders who would be consulted, the proposed schedule of activities, and the evaluation tools. Evidence was to be collected and analysed to assess the

extent to which the programme's objectives had been achieved. The detailed methodology used to gather information that would be used to assess achievement of the scope and objectives is contained in the approved Evaluation Plan, which is included in this report as Appendix 2.

The design of the Samoa (Primary) School Fee Grant Scheme (SSFGS) itself and a description of how the Scheme operates is set out in Appendix 3.

A description of the methodology used is included as Appendix 4 to this Evaluation Report.

4

Overarching Findings

Initial Findings

This evaluation report is based on an analysis of the information gathered throughout the evaluation. The initial findings are presented below. These include the strengths and benefits of the Scheme, and some caveats.

Strengths and benefits of the SSFGS

Without doubt, schools have benefited significantly from the SSFGS (the Scheme). The benefits include:

1. Financial barriers had been reduced though not eliminated for all parents.
One of the goals of the Scheme was to reduce financial barriers for parents so that children previously not attending school would be able to do so.
2. “New” children attending school.
The Team of Consultants (TOC) reports identify 210 children, aged from seven to thirteen years, who have attended school for the first time over the five-year period of the SSFGS.
3. Improved school environments
Through the purchase of teaching resources, library books, posters, and through minor maintenance, the schools have been made more attractive and pleasant as learning environments, encouraging attendance by children. This dimension has included the development of libraries and computing facilities for the use of students.
4. Devolution of responsibility to schools
The Scheme, in providing bank accounts and direct access to funding, has devolved some responsibility from central control (MESOC) to schools. For the first time schools and their communities have the ability to make decisions for their schools and the ability to buy resources to implement those decisions.
5. Principals have become financial managers
Principals, in association with their school committees, have become financial managers as well as professional leaders. Training has been provided and most principals are now competent financial managers, with essential accounting and financial reporting skills.
6. Schools have direct access to resources
The Scheme has enabled schools to have direct access to resources including: learning resources for students and teachers; books for libraries; IT resources and fixed assets such as photocopiers and educational TV. This direct access enables schools to purchase items to meet their particular needs.

7. Buy in by schools
The benefits listed above have ensured that all schools have willingly accepted the regulations associated with the Scheme. Early difficulties and misunderstandings have in the main been overcome and the Scheme is welcomed by all schools.
8. Relationship between SSFGS and the Minimum Service Standards (MSS)
The resources and training provided through the Scheme have helped principals and schools towards meeting the MSS.

NOTE: The Team of Consultants (TOC) are to be congratulated on their work in implementing the SSFGS. The benefits and success of the Scheme are in large measure due to the training of principals and school committees, and the ongoing support provided by the TOC. In particular, the Team Leader has expertly trained the Team and guided their work.

Caveats

While the Scheme has provided significant benefits to schools, not all of the planned outcomes and objectives have been achieved. In addition, other weaknesses in the system have been identified. There are, therefore, caveats about some outcomes and objectives, including the following:

1. Extent to which student achievement has improved
An outcome of the programme was intended to be improved student achievement, with a lower number of students at risk in Samoan and English literacy, and in numeracy. While some Principals and teachers claim improvement in their school, they could supply no objective evidence to support their claim. Further, the Year 6 Samoa Primary Education Literacy Level (SPELL) results as published in the *MESC Statistical Digest* show that the number of children at risk in both literacy and numeracy has increased between 2012 and 2013. The problem is greater for boys than girls, but is of concern for both. This result should not necessarily be seen as a failure of the SSFGS, since the reasons for a lack of evidence to demonstrate improved student achievement are complex and need to be considered in a wider context. The topic is discussed more fully later.
2. Competing priorities
The introduction of SSFGS coincided with other changes within education with which Principals and teachers had to contend. Of particular note was the introduction of a new curriculum. The introduction of raised qualifications for teachers increased the problem of a shortage of teachers, resulting in large classes in many schools.
3. Professional leadership and teacher quality
With very few exceptions, primary school Principals are full time teachers. Their workload leaves little time for them to undertake professional development programmes with their staff.
4. Original objectives too ambitious
The original goals and objectives of the Scheme could be considered to have been too ambitious, particularly in relation to improving student performance. While new resources for teachers and students were made available through the SSFGS, resources alone will not improve results. Unless teachers have guidance in how to use the resources effectively, their value could be limited. Coupled with coming to

terms with a new curriculum, it may have been unrealistic to expect any significant improvement in student performance within a five year time frame.

DAC Criteria

The following sections of this chapter include an analysis of the SSFGS in the light of the evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability) of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The objectives specified in the terms of reference for this evaluation included questions that specifically targeted these criteria.

Relevance

The SSFGS has relevance to all members of the school community, and to other stakeholders.

1. Students

For the first time in many schools good resources are available for students to use. These include classroom learning materials, library books, IT resources including laptops and computers, educational television and specialist subject texts and equipment. Many are now able to take library books and reading material home to share with parents and siblings. For students, the school has become a much more attractive place to be.

2. Teachers

Teachers have access to a range of teaching resources which makes their teaching role easier. They are able to take part in discussions about the best use of the funds available and to exercise professional judgement in determining the best resources to purchase to meet the needs of the students in their class. The Scheme provides the opportunity for them to be better teachers and to take pride in their job.

3. Principals

A number of factors make the SSFGS relevant to principals. For the first time principals have been given the opportunity and financial resources to make professional decisions related to the purchase of resources for the school. To support this new role the principals have been given professional development and training. They have learnt sufficient skills in financial management and reporting to accurately account for the funds at their disposal. They are required to report quarterly to the TOC at MESC. However, they are still dependent on the TOC for annual reporting and acquittal. More training and delegation of responsibility to the principals could be given to enable them to undertake this function.

The opportunity to be the professional manager and leader in the school has increased. With the ability to purchase teaching and learning resources, the principal can engage in professional discussion with the teachers as to the best resources to purchase. This provides an opportunity for the principal to undertake professional development with teachers through discussions about identifying the needs of the students and which resources would best meet those needs. Further opportunity for professional development arises when the new resources arrive in the school and the teachers and principal can discuss the most effective teaching strategies using the resources. In many cases the maximum use of the professional development opportunities has not been taken. While teachers may have been involved in discussions as to the resources to be purchased, the opportunity to analyse student needs, identify the best resources to meet those needs and develop the best teaching strategies using those resources has not been fully exploited. The reasons for this include the principal not having the time because of a heavy workload as a teaching principal

and in many cases the principal does not have the knowledge and experience to lead such professional development. The relatively low salary received by teachers, and their family and other commitments, often make teachers reluctant to spend more time at school.

Until the SSFGS was introduced, the only financial resource for a school was the money collected by the school committee from fees paid by parents. The responsibility for this money was held by the school committee, not the principal. The SSFGS money changed the relationship of the principal and school committee, again giving the principal the opportunity to be a manager and professional leader. In those schools where the principal and school committee enjoy a positive working relationship, the overall management and effectiveness of the school has increased. However, where the relationship is not positive, tensions can arise. Intervention by MESC to help improve the relationship could be beneficial.

4. *School Committees and Parents*

As a result of the SSFGS, school committees now share the financial management of the school with the principal. The new funds ease the pressure and focus of the committee on school maintenance and provide opportunity for discussion with the principal and teachers on raising the standard of education. Jointly with the principal and teachers, long term planning to meet the needs of the school can be undertaken through the production of a three year development plan for the school. A good estimate of the finance available to the school over the three year period can be made, enabling the planning of the purchase of teaching resources and fixed assets.

There are costs associated with running a school for which the SSFGS funds cannot be used. These include grounds maintenance such as grass cutting, major repairs and new buildings. Travel expenses, telephone charges and some other administration expenses are also not permitted. As a consequence, school committees still collect donations from parents although, in all schools visited during the evaluation, the amount paid by parents was lower than it had been before the introduction of the SSFGS.

There has definitely been a reduction in the financial cost for parents of their children attending school, but it has not been eliminated. Some parents have not fully understood the parameters of the SSFGS and have expectations that all education costs for them have been eliminated, even to the extent that school uniforms should be paid for from the Scheme. Further work needs to be undertaken by MESC with communities to eliminate unrealistic expectations. However, the parents spoken to during the evaluation process spoke very favourably of the benefits to them of the SSFGS and the school committee representatives reported that such parents were the majority. Many parents were aware of the new resources available in the school and understood the potential benefits of these for their children's education.

5. *GoS, MFAT and DFAT.*

The Scheme is relevant to the GoS, since it is a core strategic initiative to support the work of schools and to improve their performance. The Scheme is listed as a core programme (Programme 2.2) in the MESC education strategic plan *Samoa Education Sector Plan July 2013-June 2018*. The Scheme is relevant to MFAT and DFAT, since it is aligned with their developmental policy to support the education sector as expressed in *the Investment Design: Samoa Education Sector Support Program (ESSP) July 2015 to June 2018*.

In essence, the SSFGS has direct relevance to all members of the Samoa education community. There have been positive gains both educationally and financially from the

Scheme, and there is potential for greater gains over time if further training and professional development opportunities are taken. A significant step towards school self-management and community input has resulted from the introduction of the SSFGS.

Effectiveness

1. Overall comment

The Scheme overall is effective. 160 primary schools received the grant in 2015. Of these, 143 were Government schools, 15 were Mission schools and 2 were Special Schools. The programme design constitutes a perfectly satisfactory short-term, medium-term and long-term set of objectives and guiding principles for managing Samoa primary school grants. The consultants interviewed a range of stakeholders, and have concluded that the provision of school grants in Samoa is essential to the effective operation of schools. A key question in the interview schedule was whether the money from the school grants was well used. Without exception, all those questioned replied in the affirmative.

The responses to a question about what respondents understood the school grants were for demonstrated that both principals and school committees had a good understanding of the intentions of the school fee grant scheme. Most responses indicated that the school grant funds provided for the purchase of teaching and learning materials, both for students and for teachers, for critical school assets (e.g. desks and chairs, photocopiers, laptop computers and printers), for utility costs such as water and electricity, and for other necessary administrative costs, and that without these grants the schools could not perform to a good standard their role of educating students. The provision of school grants was a positive factor that helped the development of all schools and assisted them in achieving their academic goal of promoting effective learning.

The school grants had been particularly important in helping to create effective school environments. The grants were of particular value in remote and rural schools where most parents were living on a subsistence income and were poor, and could not afford to pay for the cost of essential learning materials. The clear consensus from the interviews was that the provision of school grants was vital to maintaining effective and efficient operations in schools, and that in the vast majority of cases the expenditure of the funds was on purposes that met sound educational objectives.

2. New students attending school

The first key objective of the evaluation of the SSFGS was to assess whether the programme had increased primary school enrolment and retention. Census data in the MESC 2014 *Statistical Digest* shows that the Government and Mission primary school roll for all of Samoa for the period 2009 – 2014 has been relatively stable.

Table 1: Enrolment Data for Government and Mission Schools, 2009 - 2014

| Year | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
|----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Students | 37673 | 39005 | 37141 | 37107 | 38515 | 38524 |

There is a spike upwards in 2010 (to 39,005 primary school enrolments in Government and Mission schools, which might reflect enrolment growth in the first year of the SSFGS) but the numbers dropped in the next year (37,141 enrolments in 2011), and have remained below the 2010 level since then (38,524 enrolments in primary schools, excluding private schools,

in 2014). It is therefore difficult to sustain an argument that the school fee grants have increased enrolments over the period 2010 to 2014 by looking only at national patterns of primary school enrolment numbers. It is possible, however, that other factors are affecting national school enrolment trends, such as a slowing in the Samoa birth rate, or external migration, and that these other trends are counteracting increases in primary school enrolments as a result of the SSFGS. There have been acknowledged internal roll changes, both increases and decreases, in Samoan schools during the period of the SSFGS. Principals report this as normal and suggest there are a number of reasons - family movement in and out of the village, rural/urban shifts, or moving to a school with a reputation for success.

The Scheme was intended to eliminate school fees and thus any financial barrier for parents to sending their children to school. The *Quarterly Report* of the TOC (April 2015 – June 2015) identifies 210 children from all age ranges who have attended school for the first time since the beginning of the SSFGS. Each student is identified by name, Student Enrolment Number (SEN), gender, age, date of birth (where known), class, school and district. Boys make up 63% of the new enrolments. This data shows that monitoring of attendance and enrolments by the Team Leader and the Team of Consultants (who have been responsible for managing the SSFGS) has been effective in ensuring that schools enrol students who previously may not have attended primary school.

Progression rates (a measure of retention of students in the system) on average by year level for primary schools are above 90 percent, although a decline is evident in primary school progression rates in 2014 compared with 2013. None of the Principals interviewed thought that there were problems with retention in their schools. Nevertheless, there are still some reports of students being seen on the streets during school hours. In general, there is sound internal efficiency of the system at primary school levels, and the SSFGS has been a contributor to this result. Access to education appears to have been marginally increased as a result of the SSFGS.

3. Improved school performance

The second key objective of the SSFGS was to improve school performance against the Minimum Service Standards. The Minimum Service Standards themselves are carefully thought through and are well developed. The Minimum Service Standards deal with four major areas: school environment; school management and learning; teacher professional knowledge, practice and values; student achievement. The evidence from the monitoring that has been undertaken by the SSFGS management team indicates that 90% of all primary schools recorded at least three improvements against the MSS. These improvements were from the following areas: school policies; school facilities; effective partnership with the community; and sufficient teaching and learning materials.

The evidence from interviews with principals indicated that a result of the SSFGS has been an overall improvement in the school environment, especially in the purchase of school assets. The training of principals has been helpful in developing their financial management skills and in encouraging the development of self-managing schools. All principals interviewed had received training at some point over the five years of the scheme, although additional and ongoing refresher training was desirable. The interview with the ACEO Teacher Development and Advisory Division of MESC indicated that delivery of effective principal and teacher development was challenging with access to only limited resources.

4. Improved student achievement

An outcome of the programme was anticipated to be improved student achievement with a lower number of students at risk in Samoan and English literacy and in numeracy. While some principals and teachers claim improvement in their school, they have little objective evidence of measurable improvements to support their claim.

The objective information on student achievement that is available is that which is published about the Samoa Primary Education Literacy Level (SPELL) tests. Year 4 and Year 6 students sit SPELL Tests 1 and 2 respectively as a measurement and diagnostic tool to allow literacy standards to be monitored and to identify students who are at risk of achieving educational outcomes. The results of these tests are reported in the annual Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (MESC) *Statistical Digests*. The most recent results for the SPELL tests are for the year 2013, reported in the 2014 *Statistical Digest*.

The results of these SPELL tests have been analysed in some detail, and do display some worrying trends. The data shows that there has been an increase in the number of children at risk in literacy and numeracy, rather than the decline that it had been hoped would be achieved by the introduction of the SSFGS. The following tables identify the percentage of primary school students who are at risk with respect to literacy (in the subjects of Samoan and English) and numeracy at Year 4 and Year 6 levels in both the years 2012 and 2013. On the evidence of these results, it does appear that student achievement results have not improved over the life of the SSFGS.

Table 2: Percentage of Year 4 Students (Government and Non-Government Schools) identified as at risk in 2012 and 2013: Results from SPELL One test

| Subject | At Risk Boys | | At Risk Girls | |
|----------|--------------|------|---------------|------|
| | 2012 | 2013 | 2012 | 2013 |
| Samoan | 21% | 21% | 12% | 10% |
| English | 35% | 35% | 18% | 17% |
| Numeracy | 32% | 36% | 23% | 23% |

Boys at year 4 level are significantly more at risk than girls. This statement applies to both performance in Samoan and English (the measures of literacy) and to performance in numeracy. The numbers of Year 4 students at risk do not appear to be reducing over time, in spite of investments in school grants. There is some indication that the percentage of Year 4 boys at risk in numeracy is increasing (36% of boys at risk in 2013 contrasted with 32% at risk in 2012). It is of concern that one third of Year 4 boys are at risk in English literacy and in numeracy, and that the apparent observable trend is that the numbers of Year 4 boys at risk in these areas are not reducing. Girls are performing a little better. The percentage of Year 4 girls at risk in English literacy is less than 1 in every 5 girls, while about 10% of girls are at risk in Samoan. Slightly less than 1 in 4 Year 4 girls are at risk in the area of numeracy.

Table 3: Percentage of Year 6 Students (Government and Non-Government Schools) identified as at risk in 2012 and 2013: Results from SPELL Two test

| Subject | At Risk Boys | | At Risk Girls | |
|----------|--------------|------|---------------|------|
| | 2012 | 2013 | 2012 | 2013 |
| Samoan | 22% | 19% | 12% | 8% |
| English | 55% | 55% | 32% | 28% |
| Numeracy | 62% | 69% | 50% | 53% |

There is a pattern of deteriorating achievement by Year 6 students in the SPELL Two tests, as compared with performance of students in the similar SPELL One tests at the Year 4 level. Table 2 above shows an increase in the percentage of boys at risk in English literacy and numeracy, with over 50% of Year 6 boys at risk in English literacy and nearly two thirds of Year 6 boys at risk in numeracy. While the performance of Year 6 girls is better than the performance of Year 6 boys, nearly one third of Year 6 girls are at risk in English literacy and over half of the Year 6 girls are at risk in numeracy.

On the basis of this evidence, the investment of resources through the Samoa School Fee Grants Scheme appears to be having no measurable impact upon improving student achievement at the national level. At present the results of the SPELL tests provide the only data on which conclusions about performance in literacy and numeracy at primary school levels in Samoa may be based. The available evidence indicates a worrying trend.

This increase in the number of “at risk” students is of concern, but should not necessarily be seen as a failure of the SSFGS, since the reasons for the increase in numbers are complex and need to be considered in a wider context. A number of factors could have contributed to the increase in the number of children at risk in literacy and numeracy. These include:

- a) Introduction of a new curriculum. At the same time as the SSFGS was introduced, MESC had introduced a new curriculum that teachers were to implement. The SPELL test being used until 2015 was that prepared for the old, rather than the new curriculum. It may not be a valid measurement tool for the new curriculum that was being taught, and the published results need to be viewed with some caution as to their validity and reliability.
- b) Other than the SPELL results, there is very little useful data available from prior to the introduction of the SSFGS, against which to measure student achievement.
- c) It may also be premature to expect to measure improvements in student performance in a restricted time frame of say four to five years, when the implementation of new curriculum developments requires at least a decade or more to see measurable results. The time frame to assess any measurable improvement in student achievement may need to be extended by some years in order to give sufficient time to make a reasonable judgment about progress achieved.
- d) The provision of learning materials as a result of the SSFGS is only one factor affecting student achievement. The introduction of teaching resources for teachers and students does not automatically result in improved learning. The appropriateness of the resources and the ability of the teacher to use them determine their effectiveness.
- e) An overall lack of professional development opportunities for principals and teachers during the period when the Scheme was operating has affected the ability of principals and teachers to improve the quality of education.

5. Improvement in Education Quality

The evidence as to whether educational quality has been improved over the five-year period when the SSFGS has been operating is equivocal. Our assessment is that a longer time frame than five years is needed to assess any improvement in student achievement, in order to allow the impact of the implementation of the new curriculum to filter through to classroom practice, and to assess the impact of other initiatives currently being taken by the Government of Samoa as part of the *Samoa Education Sector Plan (2013 to 2018)* and the *Samoa Education Sector Support Program (ESSP) (July 2015 to June 2018)*. On balance, there has been a mixed result in assessing whether the SSFGS has led to an improvement in school performance against the MSS.

6. Strengths and Weaknesses of SSFGS

The strengths and weaknesses of the programme have been analysed in detail earlier (see previous section in this report on the strengths and benefits of the SSFGS). In summary, the strengths of the scheme include an improved school environment, direct access to resources, effective devolution of increased authority to schools, and improved principal leadership. Weaknesses include over-reliance on the Team Leader and the Team of Consultants, a risk of losing momentum if MESC does not move swiftly to strengthen the leadership and support to schools in the transition to full management of the scheme by the Government of Samoa, and the potential risk of delay in the recruitment, appointment and training of School Review Officers (SROs). A MESC Officer needs to be appointed to a senior position to exercise leadership of the scheme (either the Team Leader, whose contract ends in June 2015, or a replacement for the Team Leader, with a similar set of skills and expertise). SROs are unlikely to be in place by early in the 2016 school year. If the gains of the SSFGS over the 2010-2015 period are not to be lost, a transition process needs to be implemented. The major factor that has influenced the relatively successful achievement of the objectives of the SSFGS has been the effective work of the Team Leader and the Team of Consultants. Without their professional help and guidance, and their frequent visits to schools to provide assistance, the scheme would have been floundering and key accountability targets would not have been met, such as providing timely financial reporting on the scheme, and accounting for school expenditure according to the MESC Guidelines.

With the exception of the Team Leader, and the Team of Consultants (who have now finished their contracts), development of capacity of personnel within MESC to manage the scheme has been weak. The work of separate Divisions within MESC is characterised by a silo mentality. Much more effective collaboration and co-ordination of effort within MESC is needed (for example between the School Operations Division, the Policy, Planning and Research Division, the Curriculum Division, and the Teacher Development and Advisory Division). At the school level, principals have been able to develop leadership and have increased financial management skills.

7. Unintended Outcomes

Unintended positive outcomes of the scheme have been the increased awareness by principals of the need for integrity in their management of the scheme as a result of three principals being dismissed for fraudulent use of school funds. Unintended negative outcomes have included over-reliance on scheme managers who happened to have extremely well developed accounting skills. An initial over-emphasis on expenditure on school assets has now settled down, and schools have a good asset base of equipment such as photocopiers and computers and/or laptops, although the ongoing costs of administrative expenditure on items like toners for photocopiers and ink for printers remains high.

8. Scope of the Scheme

In general the current scope of the Samoa (Primary) School Fee Grant Scheme is adequate for its intended purpose. There is inevitably some debate over “allowable” and “non-allowable” items of expenditure, but these debates are matters for the Government of Samoa to resolve within its own policy guidelines, and do not affect the overall effectiveness of the scheme. The current extension of the scheme to secondary schools (funded by the New Zealand Aid Programme) is beyond the scope of this evaluation, but it is clear that the support for the primary school grants scheme by primary principals is likely to be replicated by secondary school principals. Principals who were asked a question in the interviews about widening the scope of the scheme were supportive of including minor infrastructure maintenance at the school as an allowable item, and supported a performance component

(such as a bonus payment for well-performing schools), but felt that it would be difficult to design fair and objective criteria for such performance initiatives. An advantage of the present scheme was that basing the allocation of school grant funds on school enrolments was fair, objective and reasonable.

9. *Impact of SSFGS on School Planning*

Principals were asked in the interviews whether the SSFGS assisted schools with their school development planning. Few principals produced a written School Development Plan when asked about it, but almost all claimed to have such a plan, and asserted that the priorities in the plan for expenditure were linked to their school grant income. Again, most principals noted that learning targets in their school plans included improvements in literacy and numeracy, and that a top priority was expenditure on teacher and learning materials. No school, however, was able to produce hard evidence such as assessment of improved student achievement against established benchmarks. Nevertheless, the consultants conducting the evaluation were shown evidence that teacher and student learning materials had been purchased and were deposited in libraries, in classrooms or in principals' offices. There is a need, nevertheless, to strengthen links between school development plans, the SSFGS, and school priorities for expenditure,

10. *Guidelines*

At the commencement of the SSFGS in 2010, schools were given a *Manual of Operations*. This Manual, based on the Handbook for a grants scheme in Tonga, provided information on the background to the scheme, and general guidelines for its use. A description of allowable and non-allowable expenditure categories was provided, as was advice on budgeting, expenditure (including procurement processes), financial transactions, the use of petty cash, the asset register, reporting, monitoring and dealing with complaints. It also contained information on bank accounts, cheque books and signatories to the account. Ten attachments with the Manual provided examples to follow and templates for use with budgeting and reporting. This guideline has proved to be an excellent guide for schools. The Guidelines¹ that have been developed by MESC for assisting principals in their management of the school grants scheme were being used by principals, and are effective.

Initially there was some misuse of the funds. A few cases of serious misuse resulted in the termination of the positions of the principals involved. Of the other misuse, most was minor and occurred through lack of understanding of the processes and of the regulations around categories of expenditure. Each school had a member of the TOC team attached to it who provided the principal and school committees with training on the scheme. The focus of the training has been on financial management and compliance. This process has been effective with little misuse of funds now occurring.

The expenditure categories listed in the Manual were revised and re-issued to schools in 2012. In 2014 a draft School Management and Organisation Manual was produced, which included the 2012 version of the expenditure categories (the "allowable" and "non-allowable" expenditure), but nothing else related to the SSFGS. This manual has not yet

¹ The Guidelines include *Samoa School Fees Grant Scheme: Manual of Operations 2010 (draft)*; *Samoa School Fees Grant Scheme Manual of Operations* (undated, but issued in 2012 – effectively a revised list of allowable and non-allowable expenditure) and *Final Draft: School Management and Operation Manual June 2014* (a wider set of guidelines that includes a section on the SSFGS with an updated list of allowable and non-allowable expenditure)

been finalised and distributed to schools. A revision to and reissue of the Guidelines is warranted.

11. Communication with schools and communities by MESC

Communications about the scheme appear to have been well managed, particularly in the early years of the scheme. Experienced principals are now well informed about the scheme. There is scope for improved communication about the scheme, particularly with school committees and parents.

12. Accountability

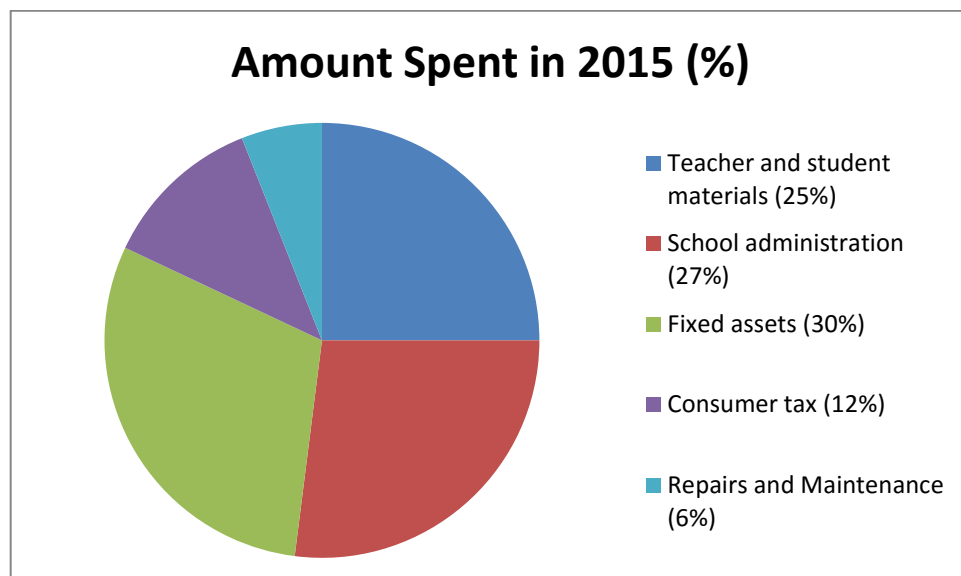
Accountability for the SSFGS is generally well managed. Accountability requirements are effective because of the high level of professionalism by the Team Leader and the Team of Consultants. While there is an element of “hand-holding” and central control in these procedures, the system works well for Samoa and is appropriate. Satisfying accountability requirements does nevertheless depend quite heavily on the presence and expertise of the Team Leader and the Team of Consultants. Their support to principals and their intervention when delays occur or when principals are experiencing difficulty have meant that accountability requirements have been well satisfied. The accountability documents that record financial transactions are stored in a room in the School Operations Division of MESC and are available for auditing. 2016 would be an appropriate time for the Government of Samoa to undertake a comprehensive audit of the School Fee Grant scheme. The GoS needs to ensure that there are regular independent audits of the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme in future.

Efficiency

1. Value for Money.

Overall the SSFGS is an efficient scheme, and represents value for money. The income received by schools in 2015 amounted in total to 4,056,900 Samoan tala. The distribution of funds by category for 2015 is set out in the following pie chart.

Figure 1: Amount Spent (%) in 2015 by Category



Although it was a difficult issue to determine, the evaluators considered that expenditure on school grants represented an efficient use of available funds compared to other possible

alternatives such as expenditure on central delivery of textbooks or readers by MESC, or expenditure on other forms of centralised investment to support education goals. The efficiency of the Scheme has been achieved by a number of factors. The scheme is simple in design and relatively easy to manage, both by MESC and schools. Good training programmes have been undertaken with principals and school committees to ensure compliance, and quarterly and annual reporting is of a good standard. The investment in the school grants management team (the Team Leader and the TOC) had been a cost-efficient way of achieving good results.

2. The Funding Flow Mechanism

The Consultants have investigated how the grant funding flows from the central Ministries to the schools. The purpose of this investigation was to ascertain if the funding flow mechanism is soundly based, and whether it is straightforward and efficient, or whether the detailed process of delivering funds to schools is unduly complicated, unwieldy or bureaucratic. The Consultants have concluded that the overall funding flow mechanism is relatively straightforward and efficient, and works reasonably well, in spite of the number of steps required. The checks and balances operating at the central level are reasonably efficient. The total school enrolment at the date specified by MESC on the paper form completed by schools (usually the Wednesday of the second week of March), is the basis for the grant funding. While there has been some inflation and inaccuracy in determining school rolls in the past, the introduction of the School Enrolment Number for each student has helped to reduce these errors. The steps outlined in Appendix 6 are then followed until the funds are provided to schools. The usual practice has been a single annual deposit of the school grant in one total amount in school bank accounts in the first quarter of the Government financial year (i.e. by the end of September). This amount is the school's annual funding for the Government financial year. While at times concern was expressed by principals about the lateness of the grant, they could see that this arrangement allowed them to plan their expenditure for the next twelve months, and to arrange for the purchase of resources such as text books or learning materials in good time for the beginning of the school academic year in the following January.

3. Review of the Funding Formula

A strength of the SSFGS is its simplicity. Principals and school committee members know and understand the formula used to calculate the grant and can check if the amount received is correct. It is interesting to note, however, that most schools appear not to check their funding, and place complete trust in MESC and its calculation of the grant. During the evaluation, alternative formulae were considered. Rural schools have significant travel costs that urban schools do not, such as travelling to a centre to get quotations for purchases over \$500. Another factor considered was related to the socioeconomic status of a school's community and whether an extra allowance should be made for those school communities of low economic status. Based on discussions with principals and school committees, it appears that most think the present formula is fair and there were no strong arguments presented for change. The evaluators agree with this consensus and do not recommend any change to the funding formula.

4. Erosion of Purchasing Power of the Grant

The purchasing power of the grant is at risk of decreasing over time as inflation increases the costs for schools. It is outside the terms of reference of this evaluation to undertake an exercise to calculate the optimum size of the grant. It is appropriate, however, to consider whether the effectiveness of the SSFGS will decrease if an adjustment is not made to retain its ability to meet the needs of the school. The Grant has two components – a base grant

and an amount per student. Since the Scheme began, the monetary value of these two components has not changed. Some of the schools indicated that with costs rising they were not able to purchase as much now as they could at the beginning of the Scheme. Information provided to the evaluation team by the Central Bank of Samoa shows that headline inflation in Samoa for the period of the scheme (point to point from 1 January 2010 to 27 November 2015) was 7.7%. This inflation figure supports the claim by principals that the purchasing power of their Grant is decreasing. There is potential for the efficiency and sustainability of the Scheme to be reduced if parental donations are gradually increased to match any incremental increasing shortfall in costs. Consideration could be given to linking the value of the components of the scheme to Samoa's annual headline inflation.

5. Audits of the Scheme

Sound financial management practices have been developed and introduced by the TOC team. The training of principals in financial management has been thorough and considerable attention has been given to ensuring compliance. A complete set of financial records relating to the scheme for each school is collected annually from schools and housed at MESC. Nevertheless, regular audits of the scheme would ensure that there is public confidence in the integrity of the management of the SSFGS.

6. Timeliness of the Grant

The evaluation team gave considerable consideration to the timeliness of the receipt of the grant money by schools. Many schools expressed concern at the variation from year to year of the date of receiving the grant and, in particular, the lateness of the grant in 2015. The process for calculating and depositing the grants into the schools' accounts involves both MESC and the Ministry of Finance (MOF). During the course of the programme the two Development Partners were also involved, and meeting their accountability requirements added an element of extra time to the process. From now on, only Government of Samoa requirements will need to be met, since the Government of Samoa is assuming full responsibility for funding and managing the Scheme. If questions arise during the checking processes between MESC and MoF, delays can occur. Delays may arise in the checking of bank account details between MoF and the Samoa Commercial Bank (used for the school accounts). While delays are inevitable if the checking requires reworking of information, these delays should be minimal. Delays may also occur because of the need to manage the cash flow requirements of the Government of Samoa. Because of the need to manage cash flow requirements in the first part of the Government financial year, the Ministry of Finance has advised that a realistic goal would be depositing the annual funding in school bank accounts by the end of September each year. It is anticipated that grants will be deposited into school bank accounts by the end of the first quarter of each Government financial year. The date for delivery of the school grant (June) stipulated in the written Guidelines should therefore be changed to the end of September.

In most respects, the academic year is related to a calendar year. Movement from class to class by students, and examinations, are all scheduled around a calendar year. Some principals expressed a desire to receive the grant funds early in the year as their planning, and thus expenditure, is based on an academic year. The SSFGS, however, is calculated on a Government financial year i.e. from 1 July to 30 June. The grant when received covers the first half of the Government financial year (1 July to 31 December) (which is the second half of the school academic or calendar year) and the second half of the Government financial year (1 January to 30 June) (which is the first half of the next (school) academic or calendar year). The school roll number on which the grant is calculated is the school roll on the date

specified by MESC on the school census form (usually the second Wednesday in March of the year in which the grant is received).

It would be a complex process to better align the receipt of the grant by the school with the academic or calendar year, and it would add to the overall administrative cost. One solution would be to pay the grant in two tranches, the first in July and the second early in the following year. Not all principals spoken to felt this was necessary or desirable. It is felt that the best solution is to have the grant paid annually as early as possible in the Government financial year (to cover a complete 12 month period), and to provide extra training to principals on budgeting to ensure they allocate funds in their budget to spend at the beginning of the school academic year.

7. Ongoing Management of the Scheme

The training and support provided by the TOC team has been one of the Scheme's greatest strengths. Only the Team Leader is still working on the Scheme, and as the sole remaining member of the management team she is not able to provide the extent of the support required to ensure ongoing success. Approval has been given and finance budgeted for the appointment of 12 School Review Officers (SROs) who will work in the School Operations Division of MESC. Their job description includes undertaking the work that was done by members of the TOC, although their role will be wider than that.

Much of the success of the SSFGS to date can be attributed to the Team Leader of TOC. Her leadership has driven the training and work of the TOC members and led to the successful implementation in schools. This level of time and commitment is necessary for the continued success of the SSFGS. While most principals and school committees are able to meet the requirements of the Scheme, many are still very dependent on support. The task of leading the SSFGS is a full time job and too large to be subsumed into the role of the ACEO of MESC. A senior position is required to be established to undertake this leadership role of managing the School Grants Scheme

There remains a degree of dependence on the support provided by the TOC team, especially in the area of annual reporting. With the TOC team now no longer employed, there is a risk that management of the scheme will deteriorate. The planned replacement for the TOC team needs to be implemented as quickly as possible. A further risk arises around leadership of the SSFGS management. Recommendations to help resolve these issues and manage the risk have been made.

8. Improving MESC Communications

Currently, the first indication that schools have of the grant being paid is when they receive a bank statement informing them of the grant having been deposited in their account. Most schools received this bank statement from a member of the TOC. It would benefit schools and their planning if they received prior notice of the amount of their grant, the roll number on which it had been calculated and an approximate date on which they could expect it to be deposited in the bank. The school could then check if they agreed with the amount of the grant and plan its use. There also needs to be discussion with the Accounts Division of MoF as to an anticipated date by which schools could expect to receive the grant.

9. Education Management Information System (EMIS)

The EMIS used by MESC is limited and accessible to few people. The TOC team and the officers of the Schools Operation Division have no electronic access to EMIS and maintain

data which may not be the same as that held within the EMIS. The TOC team does use the school census information in EMIS for determining school entitlements to SSFGS funds, but the spreadsheet used for the calculation is held on the TOC Team Leader's computer and is not in the EMIS. One improvement in the EMIS is the introduction of a Student Enrolment Number (SEN) for all students. The EMIS needs to be strengthened.

Impact

1. Impact On Stakeholders

The programme has benefited stakeholders and beneficiaries in Samoa. Schools have been helped with direct access to resources to support wider education goals in a way that was not possible when they relied on fees from parents for revenue. Before the introduction of the school fee grant, parental fees were spent mostly on repairs and maintenance. During the five years of the programme, the grant funds have supported expenditure on teaching and learning materials and on building up school assets. The quality of school assets in particular has been significantly improved. Training provided to principals through SSFGS has led to improved leadership in schools. Students have seen benefits through the purchase of text books and reading materials, and school furniture (desks and chairs). Parents have seen a reduction (though not total elimination) of school fees. MESC has seen benefits in the development of more autonomy for schools, though there is scope for increasing growth in capacity and opportunities for improved co-operation among MESC staff. The main beneficiaries of increased skills within MESC have been the Team Leader and the Team of Consultants who have been working directly with schools.

The programme has been much appreciated by schools who have received direct support. Principals were unanimous in their interviews in expressing their appreciation of the support of New Zealand and Australia. One significant benefit of the programme has been to cement the already strong relationship between Samoa, New Zealand and Australia.

2. Impact on Families

One of the goals of the SSFGS was to eliminate school fees for parents, thus reducing financial barriers to attendance by children. Families have been supported through the scheme by a reduction in school fees. Because school fees have not been entirely eliminated, there is a need to keep explaining to communities that the scheme supports "fee free" education, but not "free" education. The message that parents still need to support their schools bears constant repetition. However, in all schools visited, parents were still paying donations to the school committee. The size of the donation had been reduced in all schools, easing the cost to parents, but in many cases was still significant. The reason for the continuing donations was to provide the school committee with funds to meet those costs that are not permitted to be paid from the SSFGS money.

3. Name of Scheme

The SSFGS has caused some confusion which is not yet totally eliminated, despite the efforts by TOC and MESC to explain the Scheme to communities. Initially the information provided to communities explained the Scheme as a "fee-free" grant. Effectively, the provision of the grant means that parents do not now pay a fee for tuition. At the outset of the Scheme, many people interpreted a "fee-free" grant as meaning all education was to be free. Some people still think that they should not have to pay the donation requested by the school committee, and a few refuse to pay it. A small number of parents believe that other costs such as school uniforms and even lunch should be met by the school. It is worth considering changing the name of the Scheme as a means of helping to eliminate this confusion. It is

suggested that all talk of it being a “free” scheme be eliminated, and the word “fee” should also be removed from the title of the Scheme. If this were done, some of the parental expectations would be reduced. The Scheme would become known as the Samoa School Grant Scheme.

4. Management Training

The management training that has been provided to principals through SSFGS was acknowledged in interviews as having been hugely beneficial. Principals have developed new skills in financial management, in school development and planning, and in linking school priorities in school development plans to expenditure from the school grants scheme and to the Minimum Service Standards. The devolution implicit in SSFGS has had the positive effect of promoting self-managing schools. There is still a considerable distance to travel before schools in Samoa are fully self-managing, and the centralised control of schools by MESC is relaxed, but progress has been made.

5. School Community Relationships

A school is part of a diverse community - students, teachers, principal and parents. Add to this the School Committee, Parent Teacher Association and Village Council, and the result is a complex set of relationships. In successful schools, these relationships are all strong and positive, working in the best interest of the students. If any of the relationships are negative and/or not functioning well, the success of the school is compromised. During the evaluation it was found that the relationship between principal and school committees was usually positive, with a good working partnership having been developed. There were occasions on which the role boundaries were not well accepted, and this situation could at times cause tensions. School committees that had a member of the Village Council, especially a senior member of the Council who had skills and experience relevant to the committee (e.g. finance or planning) often functioned more effectively than those without such a connection. As a result, the school had the influence of the Village Council behind it.

However, there is potential for the school committee to be dominated by the Village Council, with the role of the school committee being subsumed into the wider functions of the Village Council. This development can create tensions between the principal, the school committee and the Parent Teacher Association. The tensions increase if the parents are not informed how their donations, collected by the school committee, are spent. With the school committees not formally accountable to any organisation, it is difficult to know if the donations have been spent on the school. The lack of transparency and accountability can cause resentment and questions as to the integrity of the use of parent donations. Accountability for expenditure of school committee funds could possibly be strengthened through including appropriate wording in the School Agreement between MESC and the school committee. Currently in this Agreement the school committee is required to be accountable only for proper use of Government provided resources, and not for funds provided by parents.

The issue indicated above, though not common, was found to be present during the evaluation. While the school committees and their functioning are outside the direct responsibility of the MESC, it is important to note that some schools face difficulties through ineffective relationships. Steps need to be taken to provide support and training to school committees and provision of avenues to give support to principals in order to strengthen school community relationships.

Sustainability

1. Long-term sustainability

The GoS has made a commitment to the continuation of the SSFGS, and it appears likely that the Scheme will be sustainable in the longer-term. WST4,140,400 has been included for the School Fee Grant Scheme (Primary School) in the Ministry of Finance Budget Estimates (see page 81 of the Estimates for the Financial Year 2015-2016). Approval has been given for the appointment of SROs and funds budgeted for the scheme. As long as the risks outlined below are managed, then the benefits of the SSFGS will be sustained. If good principal and teacher development can be implemented, then further benefits will accrue.

2. Devolution of Authority to Schools

The SSFGS has introduced the first steps towards the development of self-managing schools, giving the schools a degree of autonomy over the purchasing of teaching resources and fixed assets. Self-management, coupled with financial resources over which the school has control, provides the opportunity for better annual and longer term planning. This in turn sets the scene for improved student learning. While improved student learning is not yet evident, the potential for it remains. Improved teaching through good professional development of teachers and principals, coupled with the acquisition of resources through the SSFGS, should over time improve student learning outcomes.

3. Training

The training programmes in schools undertaken by the TOC team have made an excellent start towards ensuring that principals and school committees comply with the regulations governing the SSFGS. To date the focus of the training has been on financial management and compliance. This has been successful to the extent that now most schools meet the requirements and there is minimal misuse of funds. There is still a degree of reliance by principals on TOC support, especially in annual reporting. Further training to reduce this is necessary. Ongoing training and support will be required as school committee membership changes and new principals are appointed.

4. Risks to Sustainability

There is a significant risk to the sustainability of the SSFGS as the scheme changes from a donor supported programme to a Scheme that is the responsibility of the GoS and MESC. The major risk is that to date the responsibility for the implementation and management of the SSFGS has been delegated to the TOC team. There is still a significant reliance by schools on the support, advice and guidance provided by the TOC team. No other person in MESC has a complete understanding of the detail and complexity of the scheme.

With the exception of the Team Leader, the TOC team is no longer employed. The Team Leader now has responsibility for both the primary and secondary school grants schemes, and does not have the time to provide all the support that is necessary for primary schools. Further, her contract is due to finish in July 2016. Reliance on a single person for management responsibility means that the whole scheme is vulnerable. The establishment of 12 School Review Officer positions has been approved and budgeted for, but the appointment process for the positions has not begun. Of equal concern is the need for leadership of the SSFGS. It is too large a task to be subsumed into the role of the ACEO of the Schools Operation Division to which position the SROs will be responsible. Recommendations have been made elsewhere to help ensure that the risk to sustainability outlined above is managed.

5

Evaluation Conclusions

This section summarises the conclusions of the Evaluation, based on the analysis in the previous chapter.

Without doubt, schools have benefited significantly from the SSFGS (the Scheme). The analysis of data collected against the Development Assistance Committee criteria (relevance; effectiveness; efficiency; impact; and sustainability) found that the Scheme generally worked well, provided value for money, and supported schools in achieving their educational objectives.

The benefits include that:

1. Financial barriers have been reduced though not eliminated for all parents.
2. Over 200 children previously not attending school are now enrolled.
3. Principals, in association with their school committees, have become financial managers as well as professional leaders. Training has been provided and most principals are now competent financial managers.
4. With the devolution of financial responsibility to schools from MESC, principals and teachers can now plan and purchase teaching resources that meet their particular needs and those of their students.
5. School environments have improved through the provision of teaching resources and fixed assets.
6. The benefits listed above have ensured that all schools have willingly accepted the regulations associated with the Scheme. Early difficulties and misunderstandings have, in the main, been overcome and the Scheme is welcomed by all schools.
7. The resources and training provided through the Scheme have helped principals and schools towards meeting the MSS.
8. The evaluation found that, if the Scheme were not in place, schools would not have access to sufficient operational funding to meet day-to-day school requirements.

While weaknesses have been identified, and while there are caveats about the strengths and benefits associated with the Scheme (see page 18), these have not been of such significance as to detract from the overall positive impact of the Scheme.

Eleven areas where improvements could be made, or where MESC or GoS could take action to improve matters, have been identified. These areas include professional development; literacy and numeracy; guidelines; communication with schools; erosion of the purchasing power of the grant; audits of the SSFGS; ongoing management of the

SSFGS; leadership of the SSFGS; improving communications; education management information system; and school community relationships.

Professional Development. There appears to have been little professional development available for principals and teachers during the period of the Scheme. The TOC gave training while implementing the Scheme, but the emphasis was on ensuring compliance with the regulations and developing financial management skills. Within the MSS, there is a requirement for principals to provide professional development for teachers. Learning to manage the SSFGS while being full time classroom teachers left very little time for principals to develop and run professional development programmes. Many principals do not have the skills or experience to run effective programmes.

Other relevant factors that need to be considered in assessing student achievement include the quality of teaching (including the skills and qualifications of teachers, since teacher qualifications, experience and teaching skill vary), the quality of school leadership displayed by the principal, the availability of professional development programmes for teachers to implement a new outcome-based curriculum, and whether the assessment instruments were well designed and culturally relevant in the first place,

The new resources made available by the SSFGS have made the classrooms much more attractive and in many schools books and computer time are available to students. However, without professional development to raise teaching quality, there is unlikely to be a marked improvement in student learning.

Recommendation: MESC develop a strategy for the professional development of principals and teachers, focused on teaching and student learning in schools, with particular emphasis on improving literacy and numeracy.

Literacy and Numeracy. It is urgent that, if the number of students at risk in literacy and numeracy is to be reduced, the skills of teachers must be increased. The immediate focus needs to be on raising the skill levels of all teachers of Years 1 to 3 children as the foundation for the development of literacy and numeracy are laid in these years. If possible, early literacy and numeracy development should form part of the focus of early childhood education as this would benefit students on entering school.

Samoa has a National Teacher Development Framework, and Task forces on both Literacy and Numeracy. Within MESC there is a division responsible for teacher development. The National University of Samoa undertakes the pre-service training of teachers and has teacher qualification upgrade courses. This teacher development network provides a structure that could collaboratively address the professional development issue. One suggestion for consideration is the use of the “Early Grade Reading Assessment” (EGRA) and “Early Grade Numeracy Assessment” (EGNA) tools developed by the World Bank. However, there may be other sources of help that are considered more suitable for Samoa. Professional advice and support may be necessary from people or institutions outside of Samoa. Some further advice on this issue is provided in Appendix 8.

Recommendation: That urgent consideration be given to the development of a strategy to provide professional development in literacy and numeracy to all teachers of Years 1 – 3 classes.

Guidelines. The SSFGS Guidelines issued by MESC have worked because principals have had access to advice from the Team Leader and the Team of Consultants. Some of the work that might be expected to have been done by principals (such as completion of the end-of-year

accountability financial statements) has been done by the Team Leader and the Team of Consultants. None of the Guidelines, however, appear to have been issued as a formal final or definitive document. The June 2014 School Management and Operation Manual has a much wider scope, and only includes limited guidance on the Samoa (Primary) School Fee Grant Scheme. Principals still need access to the detail of the 2010 draft *Manual of Operations* (and its Appendices) for advice and guidance on the management of the scheme. It would be timely to review the 2010 SSFGS *Manual of Operations* and expenditure categories, incorporating any recommendations from the Team Leader or the TOC.

Recommendation: MESC issue a revised and updated “final” version of the 2010 Manual of Operations so that principals have access to definitive written guidelines for management of the scheme.

Communication with Schools. MESC needs to continue communicating with communities to ensure parents understand the intentions and benefits of the SSFGS and the sharing of the cost of education between the Scheme and the community, and therefore the parents’ role in meeting costs.

Recommendation: MESC develop a strategy to communicate to schools and their communities in a comprehensive and transparent way the aims and objectives of the Samoa School Grants Scheme.

Erosion of Purchasing Power of the Grant. Concern was expressed in the interviews about the erosion of the purchasing power of the grant since 2010 as a result of inflation. While any adjustment to the grant would be an additional cost to Government, such an adjustment on a regular basis (perhaps annually) would help to ensure that the benefits of the scheme are maintained and that the objective of reducing financial costs to parents was maintained. The goal of reducing the financial burden for parents is at risk if the school committee needs to increase donations from parents in order to meet rising costs. Consideration could be given to inflation proofing the SSFGS.

Recommendation: The Government of Samoa consider adjusting the amount of the school grant each year from 2016 on, in the light of annual headline inflation, in order to maintain the purchasing power of the grant.

Audits of the SSFGS. While there is every confidence that the financial management of the scheme at all levels has been excellent, an independent audit of the Scheme would provide a check on the integrity of the Scheme.

Recommendation: That the Government of Samoa ensures that there are regular audits of the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme.

Ongoing Management of the SSFGS. The efficiency and sustainability of the SSFGS is dependent on the School Review Officers being appointed, trained, and assuming responsibility as soon as possible.

Recommendation: School Review Officers be appointed and trained as soon as possible in order to give the necessary support to schools to manage the Samoa School Grant Scheme.

Leadership of the SSFGS. The SSFGS has succeeded because of strong leadership from the Team of Consultants. One position within the SROs should be made a more senior position, and this person could take the role of Team Leader.

Recommendation: A senior position within MESC be established, responsible to ACEO School Operations, in order to manage the School Grants Scheme effectively.

Improving Communications. There would be better understanding in schools of how the school grant has been calculated, and an independent check on the accuracy of the Ministry's calculations, if schools were provided in advance of delivery of the grant with written information about the delivery date of the annual grant, and an explanation of how the grant had been calculated.

Recommendation: MESC provide schools in advance with written information each year about the expected delivery date of the grant, its amount, and how it has been calculated.

Education Management Information System. The EMIS needs strengthening as an integrated tool that everyone (including schools) uses for the collection and analysis of data. Other databases used within MESC should as far as possible be eliminated.

Recommendation: MESC continue to support the development of an integrated education management information system (EMIS), accessible by schools and Government agencies, for sector co-ordination, and analysis, interpretation and use of data.

School Community Relationships. Provision of training to school committees on accountability and transparency should form part of the work of MESC with schools. Further, principals should have a channel through MESC to discuss concerns and have support in dealing with these issues.

Recommendation: MESC provide training to school committees on accountability and transparency with respect to management of fees collected from parents of school students, and provide a channel through MESC for principals to discuss concerns and have support in dealing with these issues.

6

Lessons Learned

The following is a brief summary of key lessons learned from the implementation of the Samoa School Fee Grants Scheme over the period 2010 to 2015 inclusive:

- The management of the Samoa School Fee Grants Scheme (SSFGS) needs to be strengthened by MESC as a matter of urgency to deal with the transition to Government of Samoa responsibility, so that the good work to support schools undertaken by the Team Leader and the Team of Consultants over the last five years is not wasted, but can be built on and consolidated.
- MESC needs to do more to communicate the benefits of the SSFGS to communities and to parents, and to ensure there is greater transparency about the scheme and how it is intended to help schools and parents. In this context, a message needs to be communicated clearly that “fee-free” education is not the same thing as “free” education, and that schools need the continuing support of parents and the school community.
- Principal leadership at the school level is vital to promote well-performing schools.
- The SSFGS gives schools direct access to resources needed to support teaching and learning, unlike the use of parental fees in the period before the introduction of the scheme, where funds were spent mainly on repairs and maintenance. Principals report that the introduction of the scheme since 2010 has supported better teaching materials and student learning in schools.
- The devolution of responsibility for financial management of schools has brought benefits such as improved self-management of schools, although the current highly centralised management of schools by MESC (for example, centralised control of teacher appointments) prevents principals from exercising more autonomy and introducing initiatives (such as more flexible use of staffing) that could potentially improve school performance.
- Schools should continue to encourage parents to enrol children in school, and to keep children enrolled throughout the school year. A strong point of the scheme has been that new students have been enrolled at all levels in Samoan primary schools each year. A focus on student attendance and on numbers of students attending school needs to be maintained.
- The SSFGS has led to improved accountability by schools for the use of school funds, and better communication with parents and school communities about how the funds are used. In general, school grant funds are being spent on the desired educational objectives. The latest figures (for the financial year July 2014 to June 2015) indicate that 25% of expenditure (nearly WST4 million) has been spent on teacher materials and student materials, 27% on school administration, 30% on fixed assets, 12% on consumer tax (CT) and 6% on repairs and maintenance.

- Training of principals as school leaders and as managers of grant funds is critical, and must be regular and ongoing. Leadership by the principal is a key factor in determining effective school performance. The links between school improvement plans, identified priorities for the school, the use of grant funds, and the Minimum Service Standards are important dimensions of effective school planning.
- Teaching principals in primary schools in Samoa (especially in larger schools) now have a heavy administrative workload which adds to the pressures of the position. Principals need ongoing support to carry out their essential functions of managing the performance of staff and establishing benchmarks to assess student achievement. Ongoing support is also needed to assist principals with the application and interpretation of the Minimum Service Standards.
- Professional development of staff (principals and teachers) is essential in order to improve teacher quality and the implementation of the new school curriculum.
- Improved co-ordination is needed of the different projects and funding streams (of which the SSFGS has been only one) as part of Development Partner support for the education plans for the sector (through *the Samoa Education Sector Support Program*, July 2015 to June 2018).

Cross-Cutting Issues

Gender

Of the 38,524 enrolments in Samoa Government and Mission primary schools in 2014, 51.8% (19,978) are male and 48.2% (18,546) are female. Gender parity therefore exists at the primary school student level. The evaluators did not observe any gender bias in the expenditure patterns of the school grants. The impact of implementing the SSFGS, alongside the Samoan legislation that stipulates compulsory attendance at school, has been a positive factor in encouraging universal enrolment in primary schools. However, there is concern about the performance of boys. There is a likelihood that more males will repeat primary school classes, and that males are less likely to survive in the school system to Year 8 than females. The results from the SPELL tests in 2012 and 2013 (discussed earlier in this report) at Years 4 and 6 show a worrying increase in at risk boys in both Samoan and English literacy, and in numeracy. The performance of girls in the SPELL test is better than boys, but there are still major numbers of at risk students of both genders at these age levels, where achievement needs to be improved. There is a particularly strong case for continuing and strengthening the concerted MESC strategy to improve the achievement of boys at all levels in primary schools. A teacher development strategy is needed (as discussed elsewhere in this report) that focuses on gender differences and develops appropriate strategies to improve school achievement by both male and female students.

Human Rights - Students with Special Needs

Managing delivery of education to students with special needs is an important human rights issue. One of the School Leaders who was interviewed was the CEO of a Special School. The SSFGS provides an additional allowance (a base grant of WST3,000 and WST200 per enrolment) for the Special Schools. The evaluation noted that an increase in the amount of the grant per student (from WST100 to WST200) had been made in the early years of the Scheme for special schools, and agreed that this change was justified. The SSFGS therefore assists students with special needs by provision of additional funding to special schools, over

and above the funding provided to other Government and Mission Schools. This funding does not meet the level required to provide adequately for the special educational needs of some students with severe learning difficulties, or with acute physical disabilities, who attend special schools. The CEO estimated that an adequate cost base for students with special needs might be an average of WST4,500 to WST5,000 per enrolment. He recognised nevertheless that some trade-offs on cost would be necessary, given that this amount of funding support is currently unaffordable.

One major additional cost for Special Schools is the cost of transport. The Special Schools have buses that collect their students from their homes at the beginning of the day, and deliver them back home after school has ended for the day. The SSFGS has been particularly helpful in assisting with the costs of transport (such as fuel) to enable students with special needs to attend school. The Special Schools are permitted a special exemption to spend up to 30% of the grant on transport costs. The CEO argued that more flexibility was needed for Special Schools in their expenditure (for example, he believed expenditure should be permitted on tyres, since this expenditure was a significant component of transport costs). The evaluators took the view that decisions on allowable or non-allowable expenditure were best made by the Government of Samoa. The grant also assists the Special Schools with the purchase of equipment and resources. The Special School visited had just moved into new premises, and anticipated that its present capped roll of 130 students could be increased in 2016 because there was now more physical room to accommodate more students with special needs. The potential for a future increase in the numbers of students with special education needs who could be enrolled in special schools in 2016 would assist in meeting the human rights of these students in Samoa.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework developed in the original programme design has been modified by the Team Leader and the Team of Consultants, and has formed a useful framework for the regular monitoring and reporting on the scheme that has occurred during the five-year life of the scheme to date. This modified framework has been used to produce regular quarterly and annual reports on progress on the school grants scheme. A total of four annual reports and nearly twenty quarterly reports on the SSFGS have been sighted and read. The reports that have been analysed as part of this evaluation have been carefully constructed and provide in-depth analysis of the progress of the scheme. These monitoring and evaluation reports provide a comprehensive picture of achievements and issues that have arisen in the course of the five years of the programme.

The consultants initially had some difficulty in determining which version of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework was the definitive version that was being used. It would be appropriate for MESC to issue a “final” dated version of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. For this reason the table that forms the heart of the agreed Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (and the one that has been used by the Team Leader and the Team of Consultants) is appended to this report as Appendix 7. As part of any process of issuing a revised “final” version of the M&E Framework, MESC could take the opportunity to update it where necessary. For example, some parts of the existing framework still refer to 2011 and 2012, and are now out-of-date. There were also some gaps in some parts of the reporting against the indicators specified in the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. Some indicators do not appear to have been reported against, such as, for example, the numbers of principals who have submitted annual plans and budgets, and the numbers of principals who have submitted school performance reports by the end of the year, as a proportion of

all principals. Either alternative indicators need to be developed so that reporting against these is possible, or procedures need to be put in place to collect the required information so that accurate and timely reporting against all the specified indicators can be completed. The process of regular quarterly and annual reporting against the agreed Monitoring and Evaluation Framework should continue.

Recommendations

It is recommended that

MESC

1. A senior position within MESC be established, responsible to ACEO School Operations, in order to manage the Samoa School Grant Scheme effectively.
2. School Review Officers be appointed and trained as soon as possible in order to give the necessary support to schools to manage the Samoa School Grant Scheme.
3. MESC develop a strategy for the professional development of principals and teachers, focused on teaching and student learning in schools, with particular emphasis on improving literacy and numeracy.
4. Urgent consideration be given to the development of a strategy to provide professional development in literacy and numeracy to all teachers of Years 1 – 3 classes.
5. MESC issue a revised and updated “final” version of the 2010 Manual of Operations so that principals have access to definitive written guidelines for management of the scheme.
6. MESC develop a strategy to communicate to schools and their communities in a comprehensive and transparent way the aims and objectives of the Samoa School Grant Scheme.
7. MESC provide schools in advance with written information each year about the expected delivery date of the grant, its amount, and how it has been calculated
8. MESC continue to support the development of an integrated education management information system (EMIS), accessible by schools and Government agencies, for sector co-ordination, and analysis, interpretation and use of data.
9. MESC provide training to school committees on accountability and transparency with respect to management of fees collected from parents of school students, and provide a channel through MESC for principals to discuss concerns and have support in dealing with these issues.

GoS

9. The Government of Samoa consider adjusting the amount of the school grant each year from 2016 on, in the light of annual headline inflation, in order to maintain the purchasing power of the grant.
10. The Government of Samoa ensure that there are regular audits of the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme.

Next Steps

There have been significant benefits to schools from the SSFGS. The following have been proposed as the next steps to be taken in order to maximise these benefits and retain the gains made.

1 Transition from TOC

The TOC team has been at the core of the success of the SSFGS through the training and support of principals and school committees in financial management and reporting. The benefits of the Scheme are well documented in this report. The disbanding of the TOC team has left a very significant gap in the Scheme and retaining the benefits is at serious risk because the proposed replacement structure for the TOC team is still to be finalised. It is likely that it will be mid 2016 at the earliest before the new SSFGS management structure is operational. The transition period, and how it is best undertaken to ensure schools have support, should be considered by all parties – GoS, MESC and the Development Partners. The transition arrangement needs to be managed by MESC, but may need input from Development Partners. It would be helpful if all those involved in the SSFGS considered the appropriate transition arrangements, so that the benefits of the scheme are not put at risk. It is urgent that some form of transition arrangement (possibly a task force) is put in place to provide support to schools until the personnel of the new structure have been trained and are ready to assume their support role.

2 Review of the *Samoa School Fees Grant Scheme: Manual of Operations 2010*

This Manual has served as the basis for the training of principals and school committees and for the management of the SSFGS since the beginning of the Scheme. It would be timely to review the document, taking note of any lessons learned by the TOC team. This manual was based on the Manual used in Tonga. Other Pacific countries have similar documents (e.g. Solomon Islands) and may be willing to share their expertise with Samoa. The electronic version of the 2010 document available to the Consultants does not include the “attachments”, such as specific templates and examples of vouchers, cash books, cash book templates, asset registers, how to deal with petty cash and how to prepare annual financial reports. Principals may have been given this information by the TOC, but it is important (especially for new principals) to have all the necessary advice formally documented in one place. For the avoidance of doubt, the advice on “allowable” and “non-allowable” expenditure also needs to be formally documented and published in an approved set of guidelines. MESC may need to develop a strategy in order to develop the Guidelines. A revised version of the 2010 *Manual of Operations* could then be used as the basis of ongoing training.

3 Ongoing training for principals and school committees

Excellent progress has been made in helping principals and school committees to gain the skills of financial management. There is still a significant degree of dependence by some on the support of the TOC. Notably, the production of annual financial reports has been undertaken by the TOC, rather than by schools. The new management structure should continue to provide support to schools to increase their independence in financial management and accountability. Schools in which new principals have been appointed and/or where there have been changes to the membership of the school committee may need substantive training and support. It is important that MESC identifies these schools and provides support as soon as possible.

4 Professional development for principals and teachers

A key goal of the SSFGS was to improve student performance. While there is some anecdotal comment that this has occurred, there is no verifiable evidence. SPELL data indicates that the number of at-risk students has increased, with boys more at risk than girls. This should not necessarily be seen as a failure of the SSFGS as the reasons for the lack of improvement are complex and the wider context needs to be considered. The SSFGS has set the scene for improvement in student learning, in particular through the acquisition of resources and books for students and teachers. One key to raising student performance is improving the quality of teaching through effective professional development for teachers and principals. Samoa has a “National Teachers Development Framework” and within MESC there is the Teacher Development and Advisory Division. Pre-service training of teachers is undertaken by the National University of Samoa. This provides scope for a collective approach to developing an effective professional development strategy. Appendix 8 sets out in further detail how the development of an effective professional development strategy (with a focus on teachers of children in Years 1 to 3) might be approached in Samoa. This strategy has been developed in order to provide advice and guidance to the Government of Samoa as to how the SSFGS objective of improving student achievement and school performance, and linking the SSFGS more effectively to the MSS, might be approached in the future.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference

Joint Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Government of Samoa (GoS) End of Programme Evaluation of the Samoa (Primary) School Fee Grant Scheme

Overview and Evaluation Purpose

The New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Government of Samoa (GoS) wish to commission a joint End of Programme Evaluation of the Samoa (Primary) School Fee Grant Scheme (SSFGS) 2010-2015 to assess its effectiveness and impact on the wider Samoan Education Sector.

For MFAT and DFAT this will be an end of programme evaluation; for the GoS, it will provide information to support its ongoing provision of school grants. Information gathered will also feed into the Education Sector Plan (ESP) going forward.

The evaluation is intended to summarise and document achievements, lessons learned and/or challenges faced during the life of the programme and provide short-medium term recommendations on areas requiring stronger focus/ improvement. It will also assess programme progress to date against its Monitoring and Evaluation.

The primary users of the evaluation are MFAT, DFAT and the Samoa Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (MESC) staff (Senior Executive and MFAT and DFAT Programme staff at desk and post). The Evaluation Report and lessons learned will be made available to all education stakeholders and interested parties including government officials and community leaders.

Background

The GoS is committed to the Education Goals set out in the Strategy for the Development of Samoa (SDS), the MESC Strategic Policies and Plan (SPP) 2006-2015 and the ESP 2013-2015. The SPP (Goal 2.4.1; Goal 2.4.2) and the ESP (Goals 1 and 2) are specific in their commitment to quality improvement at all levels of education and the achievement of universal primary education by 2015 and Enhancing Educational Access and Opportunities at all levels. Five key principles form the basis of policies and practices for education in Samoa – quality, equity, relevancy, efficiency and sustainability.

Primary education covers an eight year cycle from Years 1 – 8. Education is compulsory for children aged 5 – 14 or until completion of primary education at Year 8. All government primary schools are village owned and managed by school committees. There are 143 government primary schools, 17 mission and six private schools with a total enrolment in primary education in 2015 of 41,250 students.

Secondary education covers five years from Year 9 - 13. Entrance to secondary education is determined by the Samoa Primary Education Certificate Assessment (SPECA). There are 23 government schools, 12 mission and one private with a total enrolment in secondary in 2015 of 16,746 students.

In 2009 the Foreign Ministers of New Zealand and Australia jointly announced support to GoS for a 'fee free' education scheme at the primary level of education. The SAT\$17.8

million, five year programme commenced in July 2010. The SSFGS was designed to benefit primary students in 142 Government, 15 Mission and three Special Schools.

The Scheme was a school grants programme with grants paid to schools annually based on an accepted formula designed to improve and provide for more equitable distribution of resources across primary schools (except for the Private primary schools). Its main underlying aim was to increase primary school enrolment and retention, and improved school performance against the Minimum Service Standards.

The intended outcomes of the SSFGS were to ensure that:

- (i) financial barriers to primary school attendance are removed;
- (ii) that all Samoan primary schools are able to offer a quality education;
- (iii) that all Samoan children achieve high learning outcomes;
- (iv) that all Samoan children complete a full cycle of primary schooling; and
- (v) goals are met in an efficient and cost effective manner.

To contribute to the achievement of its outcome, the SSFGS was designed to achieve the following objectives:

- (i) Reduce financial barriers to primary schooling by providing direct government support to schools in lieu of school fees;
- (ii) Assist schools to improve their teaching and learning processes by meeting and maintaining MESC's Minimum Service Standards (MSS); and
- (iii) Improve school-level resource management by introducing and/or supporting school based management practices such as the principal as a manager, school committees, school development planning and budgeting and school-level accountability for results.

It was also intended that, as part of the government's wider efforts to improve schools and increase student outcomes, the SSFGS would increasingly empower principals and school committees to take charge of their resources through the development and implementation of School Improvement Plans, which are directed towards the achievement of the MSS. It is important to note, that the MSS were developed during Year One of implementation of the SSFGS and remained in draft form throughout the life of the programme. However, they continued to be referenced and used as the standard for monitoring education access and quality in schools.

The SSFGS was initially 100% funded by New Zealand and Australia with reducing percentage contributions by both countries commencing in Year Three (2012) of the scheme. Donor partner funding contributions declined over time and Samoa began to contribute its own Funds toward the SSFGS. The New Zealand and Australian funding contributions to the scheme finished at the end of June 2015, and Samoa has now assumed full financial responsibility for the SSFGS.

Programme Targets

The targets of the SSFGS were to:

1. Ensure that all children attend and complete primary schooling:

- (i) During 2010 all SSFGS school committees establish the number of out of school primary aged children in their areas and develop plans to bring them into school in 2011.
- (ii) 100 % gross enrolment in Year 1 by 2012.
- (iii) At least 85% net enrolment by 2013.
- (iv) Reduction of dropout rates to zero percent in all primary grades by 2015.

2. Ensure that primary schools progressively improve children's learning outcomes. Each school will set its own targets based on the school results for SPELL 1 and 2 in the last four years, once the MSS are clarified and principals become more proficient in planning and budgeting. The following targets may be used to monitor the success of the SSFGS.

- (v) The number of at risk children in English literacy in year 6 to decline by 6% every year and by 5% every year in year 4 in the next five years
- (vi) The number of at risk children in Samoan literacy in year 6 to decline by 3% every year and by 4% every year in year 4 in the next five years
- (vii) The number of at risk children in numeracy to decline by 5% every year in year 6 and 3% every year in year 4 for the next five years

3. Assist primary schools to understand the SSFGS and MSS programs.

- (viii) 100% of all SSFGS primary school principals and school committees are introduced to SSFGS and MSS programs in 2010 and provide basic SSFGS awareness, management, planning and reporting training. (These kinds of targets are in the M & E framework)
- (ix) (100%) SSFGS primary schools are visited by the Team of Consultant (TOC) members at least twice a month to provide ongoing support and advanced SSFGS and MSS training to principals and school committees. In addition, there will also be a formal monitoring visit by the harmonization team every quarter.
- (x) 100% of all SSFGS primary schools complete a self-assessment against the MESC MSS by the end of 2010.
- (xi) 100% of all SSFGS primary schools set annual targets to achieve MSS priority goals, plan associated activities, budget available funds and include these in their School Improvement Plans in 2011 and in each subsequent year.

4. Ensure that all primary schools are managed using best practices (including financial management) and are using their resources efficiently.

- (xii) 75% of all SSFGS primary schools successfully use the SSFGS system for accounting and SSFGS financial templates for recording and acquittal in 2011; 100% by 2012.
- (xiii) 100% of all SSFGS primary schools submit their completed SSFGS quarterly financial reports in 2010. In 2011 and subsequent years, this financial report will be submitted every six months.
- (xiv) Ensure that schools demonstrate progress towards meeting the MSS identified for any plan period (e.g. School Annual Management Plan (SAMP) or School Implementation Plan (SIP)).

Policy and Strategy Alignment

The SFGS complemented the new reforms under the Education Sector Project II (ESPII) by providing access to necessary teaching and learning materials for schools.

The SSFGS aligns with the priority Sector Goals outlined in the following key documents:

- i. Strategy for the Development of Samoa 2012-2016 (SDS)
- ii. Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture Strategic Policies and Plan (SPP) 2006-2015
- iii. Samoa Education Sector Plan 2013 – 2018.

The SFGS assisted the Government of Samoa in achieving the education – related Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) of universal primary education by 2015 and aiding with enforcement on the Compulsory Education provision stipulated in the Education Act 2009. The Grants scheme also assisted the Government of Samoa to honour other international obligations, including Education for All (EFA), compliance with the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the prevention of child labour in compliance with the International Labour Organisations and Child Labour Convention.

The SSFGS continues to be an important tool to support current interventions that are in place to improve the quality of education at the primary school level by:

1. Enabling schools to access teaching and learning materials to assist with the implementation of the new primary school curriculum.
2. Encouraging school-based management practices through the empowerment of principals to directly contribute to how the quality of education they deliver is strengthened and enhanced.
3. Importantly, the SSFGS continues to make schools, through their school committees and principals, more accountable to the communities they serve.

The scheme has been managed by MESC with the implementation of the Scheme contracted out to the local TOC, who have worked with the Ministry and primary schools to establish the Scheme.

Evaluation scope

The evaluation will cover all aspects of the SSFGS programme since commencement of the programme in 2010 and its completion in June 2015. It will include a review of progress in achieving the Programme's intended impact and outcomes, based on the original Design, the MSS, School Operations Manual and the monitoring and evaluation framework, including findings from the 2013 Mid-term Review of the scheme and any adjustments made to the design during the duration of the Program.

The evaluation will consist of a desk review and in-country consultations with key stakeholders.

Evaluation objectives, criteria and questions

Objective 1: Assess the *effectiveness* of SSFGS in particular:

- Has the programmes met its key objectives

- (i) increasing primary school enrolment and retention; and
- (ii) improving performance against minimum service standards?

Why and/or Why not?

- To what extent has the development of personnel capacity within the Ministry and schools helped the programmes meet set objectives?
- What unintended outcomes (positive and negative) have occurred as a result of the Activities and what has constrained or enhanced the achievement of outcomes?

Objective 2: Assess *impact* of the programmes, in particular:

- To what extent has the programme benefited its stakeholders and beneficiaries, including MESC, schools, students and the wider communities?
- What impact has the programme had on New Zealand, and Australia's relationship with Samoa?

Objective 3: Assess programme *efficiency*, in particular:

- To what extent has the SSFGS contributed to strengthening of school management and administration?
- How effective was the management of the programme by GOS, MFAT and DFAT?
- To what extent has the programme contributed to strengthening of school management and administration?

Objective 4: Assess the extent to which the results obtained have proven to be *sustainable*:

- To what extent has the programme contributed to strengthening of school management and administration?
- To what extent have the skills and knowledge acquired from the programme been sustained?
- To what extent are partner government and agencies likely to be able to sustain skills, management capacity, funding and other programme benefits?

Objective 5: To identify *lessons learned* and *cross cutting issues*

- What are key learnings from the SSFGS - what works and what does not?
- What recommendations can be made to achieve the Sector Outcomes in the Education Sector Plan (ESP) and future investment in the sector?
- What changes should be made to the design, implementation or management for any future investment?
- To what extent have cross-cutting issues, in particular gender equality, and disability inclusive development been effectively addressed including in planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation?

Objective 6: to assess the *relevance* of the SSFGS in the development and strengthening of the relevant areas of the education sector. In particular:

- How well has the programme developed?
- To what extent has the programme remained relevant to the GoS, MFAT and DFAT?

Did the programme have clear strategic frameworks aligned with MFAT and DFAT development policy and the GOS development objectives?

Evaluation team composition, roles and responsibilities

In addressing the objectives of this ToR and to ensure the independent nature of the evaluation, we envisage that the evaluation will be undertaken by a small multi-disciplinary team of independent contractors. We encourage the inclusion of locally based expertise as part of the evaluation team where appropriate.

The attributes (knowledge, skills, experience) required of the evaluation team include:

- Evaluation expertise and experience, including undertaking development evaluations in the Pacific region (particularly in Samoa)
- Experience in applying intervention logic, evidence based models of evaluation based on OECD DAC criteria
- Relevant technical experience and knowledge of education in a development context, including clinical expertise (and preferably in the Pacific)
- Expertise and experience in designing, implementing, managing/administrating school grant systems and school based management systems ideally in the Pacific or in developing countries
- Expertise and an understanding of the role of school fee grants in contributing to developing countries access and quality agendas
- Ideally knowledge of SSFGS, the Samoa Education System and the understanding of GOS national and education reforms
- Strong analytical skills including in budgetary and financial analysis
- Appropriate research, report writing and presentation skills.
- Effective cross-cultural and communication skills
- Ability to work together in a team environment and meet deadlines

Engagement with key stakeholders in Samoa

In support of a consultative and participatory approach, the evaluation team will be expected to engage with a number of key stakeholders. These stakeholders could include:

- partner country governments (Ministers and officials)
- development partners, including implementing partners
- key non-state actors including private sector and civil society organisations of the partner country
- school committees, principals, teachers and students.

The results of the evaluation will be reported and disseminated to MFAT, DFAT and relevant partner government institutions and other key stakeholders. The Partners reserve the right to publish the evaluation on its website.

Evaluation deliverables

The evaluation timeframe is indicative – final agreed timeframes will be negotiated based on acceptance of the Evaluation Plan. The evaluation process will commence first week of November and will be completed in December 2015.

Anticipated key deliverables and delivery dates are as follows:

| No. | Outputs | Description | Due date |
|------------------|---|---|-------------------------|
| Phase One | | | |
| 1 | Preliminary Briefing | The evaluation team will participate in a briefing (via teleconference) with the Steering Group (MFAT, DFAT and GOS) to discuss objectives, plans and expectations of the evaluation. | tbc |
| 2 | Document Review (Team) | Desk Based activity – Literature and documentation review to establish understanding of context and challenges and identify information which needs to be collected during the in country component to address the scope of services and terms of reference of the evaluation. This will form part of the final Evaluation Report. Key documents will be provided by MFAT, DFAT, MESC, MOF. | tbc |
| 3 | Develop and Finalise Evaluation Plan (Team) | A detailed work plan for the overall evaluation, which includes an Evaluation Plan prepared in accordance with Terms of Reference and submitted for approval by the Steering Group (MFAT, GOS, DFAT). | tbc |
| Phase Two | | | |
| 4 | In Country Briefing (Team) | Evaluation team will host a briefing with the Steering Group - MFAT, DFAT, GOS and the local consultant to go over any last minute changes and or questions. | tbc |
| 5 | In Country Mission (Team) | Field work including travel: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site visits to schools under the SSFGS programme (Upolu and Savaii) | Before 31 November 2015 |
| 6 | Presentation/ Workshop | Present initial key findings & conclusions to key stakeholders (Aide Memoire) | tbc |
| 7 | Draft Evaluation Report | Draft report circulated to stakeholders for comments within two weeks of the Aide Memoire | tbc |
| 8 | Final Evaluation Report | Acceptance/approval by the Steering Group (MFAT, DFAT and GoS) after any revisions of the draft is completed. | tbc |

Evaluation Plan

In proposing an Evaluation Plan, the Team Leader should identify the most appropriate approach, methodology and tools to generate credible evidence that corresponds to the evaluation's purpose and the questions being asked.

It is envisaged that this evaluation will include a short literature and documentation review in Phase One by the Team. Phase Two would apply a mixed or multi-method approach, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. This will increase the credibility and validity

of the results. The final approach will be confirmed in the Evaluation Plan and in consultation between the evaluation team, MFAT and DFAT.

Relevant documents and data will be provided to the Evaluation Team. See **Appendix A** for a list of key documents along with other relevant information and data.

The Evaluation Team Leader will be responsible for the development of a draft Evaluation Plan (using or being guided by MFAT's Evaluation Plan guides). The Evaluation Plan/s will outline the approach, method and tools to be used to meet the purpose and the objectives of the evaluation.

It will include:

- a stakeholder analysis;
- a communication plan;
- a high-level plan to disseminate the findings;
- an outline of evaluation governance arrangements;
- an outline of the quality ethical and cultural issues to be managed by the evaluation;
- a schedule identifying key deliverables and timeline;
- identification of the risks and how they will be mitigated;
- a description of how cross cutting issues will be considered throughout the evaluation.

It is anticipated that the Evaluation Plan will identify how the information needs can be met through current documentation (including undertaking documentary analysis), and what information gaps, if any, will need to be filled through fieldwork including in-country visits. Data collection methods, for example, interviews (structured and semi-structured), focus groups, direct observation and case studies should be outlined.

The Activity Results Frameworks for the various Activities that MFAT has funded during the period should form the basis of the evaluation.

The evaluation may be constrained by availability of key stakeholders and this should be considered in the design described in the Evaluation Plan.

The Evaluation Steering Group will approve the Evaluation Plan, following any required amendments. The Evaluation Plan must be approved prior to the commencement of any field work or other substantive work.

Reporting requirements

The Evaluation Report must as a minimum meet quality standards as set out in MFAT Evaluation Guidelines and Policy.

For the Report we expect:

- an Evaluation Report, including abstracts suitable for publishing and dissemination amongst programme stakeholders
- a one to two page evaluation fact sheet identifying the evaluations key findings, short and medium term recommendations and lessons learnt.

As this is an evidence-based evaluation, the findings, conclusions and recommendations must be based on clear evidence presented in a way that allows readers to form their own

views on the validity and reliability of the findings, including assessing the vested interests of sources.

Where there is conflicting evidence or interpretations, the report should note the differences and justify the findings.

The draft Evaluation Report will be reviewed by MFAT, DFAT and GoS staff, stakeholders and/or external experts to check for factual errors and completeness.

A signed agreement to the final report will be given by MFAT/DFAT/MESC and MOF.

Evaluation principles and standards

Consistent with the Development Partners evaluation principles, the evaluation will deliver useful, credible findings relevant to the purpose of the evaluation. The recommendations will be pragmatic and actionable, and presented in a way that promotes learning.

In conducting the evaluation, the evaluation team will work with our partners to increase ownership and use of evaluations. The evaluation team will be transparent and independent.

The evaluation team must have no vested interest in the outcomes of the evaluation and be independent of those responsible for policy making, design, delivery and management of the development intervention.

All evaluation processes and outputs are required to be robust and independent (carried out in a way that avoids any adverse effects of political or organisational influence on the findings) and transparent (process open and understood by all parties).

Quality standards

A list of Development Partners quality standards for evaluations is presented in **Appendix B**. These are based on the OECD-Development Assistance Committee (DAC) set of quality standards for development evaluation.

When conducting the evaluation, the evaluation team will comply with the respective organisations Code of Conduct.

Evaluation governance and management

The evaluation will be commissioned by MFAT and the evaluation team will be accountable for its performance to MFAT.

The evaluation will be governed by a Steering Group. The Steering Group will ensure the evaluation is fit-for-purpose and is delivered in line with the agreed Evaluation Plan.

Key responsibilities of the Steering Group will include agreeing the Terms of Reference, Evaluation Plan and Evaluation Report. Details of the purpose, roles and responsibilities are outlined in the Steering Group's Terms of Reference.

The MFAT Activity Manager for the SSFGS is responsible for day-to-day management and administration of the evaluation. Their responsibilities include contracting; briefing the evaluation team; managing feedback from reviews of the draft report; and liaising with the evaluation team throughout to ensure the evaluation is being undertaken as agreed.

Transparency

It is MFAT and DFAT policy to make Evaluation Report publicly available (e.g. on public websites) unless there is prior agreement not to do so. Any information that could prevent the release of an Evaluation Report under the Official Information or Privacy Acts should not be included in the report.

Ownership of information

All the key deliverables and the data/information collected will become the joint property of MFAT, DFAT and the GoS.

Appendix 2: Evaluation Plan

Evaluation Plan

End of Programme Evaluation of the Samoa (Primary) School Fee Grant Scheme

A joint evaluation for the New Zealand and Australian Aid Programmes

**Conducted by
Vince Catherwood & Associates Ltd
and Lester Taylor, with assistance from Nimeria Taofia**

Thursday 12 November 2015

Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

The New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Government of Samoa (GoS) have commissioned a joint End of Programme Evaluation of the Samoa (Primary) School Fee Grant Scheme (SSFGS) 2010-2015 to assess its effectiveness and impact on the wider Samoan Education Sector.

For MFAT and DFAT this will be an end of programme evaluation; for the GoS, it will provide information to support its ongoing provision of school grants. Information gathered will also feed into the Education Sector Plan (ESP).

The evaluation is intended to summarise and document achievements, lessons learned and/or challenges faced during the life of the programme and provide short-medium term recommendations on areas requiring stronger focus/ improvement. It will also assess programme progress to date against the monitoring and evaluation of the scheme that has been conducted.

The primary users of the evaluation will be MFAT, DFAT and the Samoa Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (MESC) staff (Senior Executive and MFAT and DFAT Programme staff at desk and post). The Evaluation Report and lessons learned will be made available to all education stakeholders and interested parties including government officials and community leaders.

1.2 Evaluation Purpose

The purpose of the End of Programme Evaluation is to review all aspects of the Samoa School Fee Grants Scheme, and to summarise lessons learnt and challenges faced during the life of the programme since its inception in 2010 until its completion in 2015.

The Evaluation will include a review of progress in achieving the Programme's intended impact and outcomes, based on the original Design, the Minimum Service Standards, School Operations Manual and the monitoring and evaluation framework, including findings from the 2013 Mid-term Review of the scheme and any adjustments made to the design during the duration of the Programme.

1.3 Key Focus and Strategic Context

The Terms of Reference, which define the extent of the evaluation, are very wide ranging, and all aspects of the School Fee Grant Scheme will be covered as required. However, to ensure that the final report is of maximum benefit to all stakeholders, a key focus for this evaluation project was discussed at a phone conference held on Wednesday 4 November 2015 involving the two consultants and the Steering Group.

A major outcome of the evaluation is to provide recommendations that will lead to ensuring the achievement of the Sector Outcomes in the Education Sector Plan (ESP) and the future investment in the sector through a focus on quality aspects of service. The specific ESP sector outcomes to which the Samoa Primary School Fee Grant Scheme makes a significant contribution are the following:

SO1: Improved student learning outcomes at all levels;

SO2: At all levels, more students, including those with special needs, have access to quality educational opportunities in safe, climate-resistant learning environments;
SO4b: Analysis of research findings, evaluations and monitoring evidence increasingly used to inform policy and planning across the sector;
SO5: Education resources are managed efficiently and sustainably across the sector.

These recommendations from the Evaluation will give guidance to GoS and MESC to support its ongoing provision of school grants under the new Education Sector Support Program between GoS, MFAT and DFAT, as it provides funds through Sector Budget Support, rather than through a specific project.

Throughout both phases of the evaluation process special emphasis will be placed on evaluating the effectiveness of all aspects of the programme. The lessons learned through and from the evaluation process will be used to develop the key recommendations to be provided in the report.

1.4 Evaluation Objectives

The Objectives of this end of programme evaluation are to:

Objective 1: Assess the effectiveness of SSFGS in particular:

- Has the programme met its key objectives?
 - (i) increasing primary school enrolment and retention; and
 - (ii) improving performance against minimum service standards?
- Why / Why not?
- To what extent has the development of personnel capacity within the Ministry and schools helped the programmes meet set objectives?
- What unintended outcomes (positive and negative) have occurred as a result of the Activities and what has constrained or enhanced the achievement of outcomes?

Objective 2: Assess impact of the programmes, in particular:

- To what extent has the programme benefited its stakeholders and beneficiaries, including Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, schools, students and the wider communities?
- What impact has the programme had on New Zealand, and Australia's relationship with Samoa?

Objective 3: Assess programme efficiency, in particular:

- To what extent has the SSFGS contributed to strengthening of school management and administration?
- How effective was the management of the programme by Government of Samoa (GoS), MFAT and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)?

Objective 4: Assess the extent to which the results obtained have proven to be sustainable:

- To what extent has the programme contributed to strengthening of school management and administration?
- To what extent have the skills and knowledge acquired (Ministry and school management) from the programme been sustained?
- To what extent are partner government and agencies likely to be able to sustain skills, management capacity, funding and other programme benefits?

Objective 5: To identify lessons learned and cross cutting issues:

Lessons learned:

- What are key learnings from the SSFGS - what works and what does not? (sustainability)
- What recommendations can be made to support achievement of the Sector Outcomes in the Education Sector Plan (ESP) and future investment in the sector? (effectiveness)
- What changes should be made to the design, implementation or management for any future investment? (efficiency)

Cross cutting issues:

- To what extent have cross-cutting issues, in particular gender equality, and disability inclusive development been effectively addressed, including in planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation?

Objective 6: To assess the relevance of the SSFGS in the development and strengthening of the relevant areas of the education sector, in particular:

- Did the programme have clear strategic frameworks aligned with MFAT and DFAT development policy and the GoS development objectives?
- To what extent has the programme remained relevant to the GoS, MFAT and DFAT?
- How well has the programme developed?

2. Evaluation Scope

The Evaluation will cover all aspects of the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme from its inception in 2010 until its completion in June 2015. The impact and outcomes of the scheme will be assessed against the design, objectives and targets of the scheme, as outlined in the terms of reference (TOR). Dimensions such as the impact of the Minimum School Standards, the School Operations Manual and the monitoring and evaluation framework of the school grant scheme will also be evaluated. The Evaluation Team will endeavour to find relevant qualitative and quantitative data that will enable a comparison of the situation in the education sector in Samoa *before* the scheme was introduced (say, data relating to the education sector in 2010), and the situation in the education sector *after* the completion of scheme (data about the current state of the education sector in Samoa in 2015). The Secondary School Grant Scheme in Samoa is not in scope.

3. Evaluation Design

Introduction

This section of the Evaluation Plan describes the Evaluation Design. It sets out how the New Zealand Aid Programme's evaluation principles and criteria will be addressed. It gives a brief overview of the Programme Design Document which will be used as a reference point in conducting the evaluation. It outlines the approach, method and tools that will be used to meet the evaluation's purpose and objectives, and it describes the methods of information collection. It includes the relevant criteria that will form the basis of the evaluation (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability) and includes how cross-cutting issues and environmental and social impacts will be addressed in the evaluation.

3.1 Evaluation Principles and Criteria

The Evaluation will use as a standard reference tool the OECD Development Assistance Committee *Quality Standards for Development Evaluation*.

The approach taken will be based on the New Zealand Aid Programme's evaluation principles which are consistent with Development Effectiveness Principles that Australia also shares. These principles include the following:

Partnership. The evaluation will be undertaken through working with key development partners, particularly Australia, and with the Government of Samoa (especially the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, and the Ministry of Finance). There will be close consultation with other key players in the education sector, such as mission school authorities.

Independence. The evaluation will be carried out in a way that avoids any adverse effect of political or organisation influence on the findings.

Participation. Stakeholders will be involved at all stages of the evaluation.

Transparency. The evaluation processes will be open and understood by all parties.

Capacity Building. We will seek to ensure that organisation capacity (particularly in the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture) to conduct future evaluation activity is enhanced through stakeholder involvement in the evaluation process.

Criteria will be used to underpin and focus the assessments that are made. Five criteria recommended by the OECD Development Assistance Committee will form the basis of the evaluation. These criteria are:

Relevance: whether and to what extent the SSFGS has addressed the priorities of the target groups (schools) and is aligned with the GoS policies and priorities.

Effectiveness: whether and to what extent the SSFGS has achieved the desired outcomes.

Efficiency: the extent to which the SSFGS could have been implemented at less cost without reducing the quality and quantity of the activities.

Impact: the positive and negative intended and unintended effects of the SSFGS.

Sustainability: whether and to what extent the benefits can be sustained after the end of the development partners' assistance.

3.2 Overview of Programme Design

The *Program Design Document* (May 5th, 2010) and the monitoring and evaluation framework (*Appendix 7: SSFGS Monitoring and Evaluation Framework*) provide a basis against which to evaluate the achievement of the goal, objectives / outcomes and outputs.

The *Program Design Document* describes the programme rationale and outlines findings from recent (2010) analysis. It sets out how the SSFGS will be linked to quality improvement. A set of guiding principles for the SSFGS is presented, along with key objectives and programme targets. Other dimensions of the SSFGS are described, such as SSFGS Beneficiaries, the SSFGS Grant Formula, the Fund Flow Mechanism, the Grant Distribution, and the costs of SSFGS and its funding. A section of the design document describes Grant Use (what the Grants may and may not be spent on) and outlines the SSFGS Process. The SSFGS Management and Administration is described, including a reference to the Manual of Operations.

Minimum Service Standards (MSS) are outlined, and the MSS are linked to the SSFGS.

A section of the programme design document describes how the monitoring, evaluation and reporting on the scheme will be undertaken. Other dimensions such as risk mitigation, and programme sustainability are described in detail. 6es cover School Level Financial

Procedures and Accountability, the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, and a table that sets out percentages of primary students identified as being at risk.

The Evaluation will cover the intention and logic of the design and its implementation, and will comment on the thinking and logic that underpinned the design and delivery of the programme. The linkages and relationships between the various participants in the programme will be examined in this context. This evaluation has been designed to enable the collection of relevant information across the evaluation objectives in order to assess the extent to which the goal, objectives, outcomes and outputs of the partnership have been achieved.

3.3 Evaluation Methodology

The methodology to be used in this Evaluation was set out in detail in the response to the Request for Quote submitted by Vince Catherwood & Associates Ltd.

The evaluation will be conducted by a team of three people: Vince Catherwood (Team Leader), Lester Taylor, and Nimera Taofia (Samoa counterpart). The evaluation will be based on available documentation (document reviews) and on interviews with stakeholders including MESC Principals, and School Committee members. Details of the evaluation techniques and strategies are included in this Evaluation Plan, and the Evaluation Plan will be included as Appendix 2 in the final report.

The evaluation methodology will cover all the dimensions listed in the terms of reference under "Evaluation Methodology". These are elaborated in more detail in the following sections.

We propose that the conduct of the evaluation is undertaken in two main phases, based on the structure of the Evaluation Deliverables set out in the terms of reference on page 11. Each of these two phases includes a number of specific components.

Phase One

Phase One is an initial planning, scoping and analysis phase. This phase includes

- A Preliminary Briefing (via teleconference) with the Steering Group. The purpose of the preliminary briefing is to discuss objectives, plans and expectations of the evaluation.
- A Document Review. The document review will examine and analyse available literature and reports, including the key documents provided by Development Partners and by Ministries in Samoa such as the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture and the Ministry of Finance. Of particular importance will be documentation that provides evidence related to achievement of the objectives of the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme. Other relevant documents and data will be sourced, such as examples of good practice in management of school grants in other jurisdictions, and previous reviews of selected school grant programmes elsewhere in the Pacific (in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, for example). A key objective of the document review will be to scope the context and challenges facing the management of the school grants in Samoa, and to identify any gaps in information where data needs to be collected during the in-country mission.
- Preparation of a Detailed Work Plan and an Evaluation Plan. The attached proposed Work Plan provides an outline of the main activities and the anticipated timeline of the Evaluation. The Evaluation Plan is based on the guidance provided in MFAT's Evaluation

Plan Template (available on the MFAT website). The Evaluation Plan has been designed meet the criteria stipulated in the Evaluation Plan section (page 12) of the terms of reference. A critical component of the Evaluation Plan will be a comprehensive set of Evaluation Questions (based on but extending those questions set out on pages 9 and 10 of the terms of reference), which identify in detail the issues, policies, practices and procedures about which the End of Programme Evaluation is seeking information, answers and advice. It is anticipated that this document (the Evaluation Plan) will be approved as part of Phase One activities before the field work commences.

Phase Two

Phase two focuses on the gathering, analysis and reporting of data about the Samoa Primary School Fee Grant Scheme and its implementation to date. It will include the work of the in-country mission in Samoa to gather further information about the impact of the school grant programme and its implementation in schools, and the analysis of the information gathered from sources such as interviews, focus groups, direct observation or case studies, and relevant documents. A workshop will be held at the end of the field work to present key findings to stakeholders. The final component of this phase will be the development of a Draft Evaluation Report for comment and feedback to the Evaluation Team, and the presentation of a Final Evaluation Report once any feedback has been incorporated.

Phase Two includes:

- An initial in-country briefing in person on arrival in Samoa with the Steering Group. The purpose of this briefing is to discuss with MFAT, DFAT, GOS and the local consultant/liaison person any further information or perspectives that need to be accommodated in the evaluation.
- Field work, including site visits to selected schools on both Upolu and Savai'i. Personnel to be consulted will include Head Teachers, teachers, School Committee members, and Parent-Teacher Association members. A range of types of primary schools varying in size and location will be visited (urban and rural schools, small and large schools, government and church schools). Consideration will be given to visiting some secondary schools which may have primary schools attached. The site visits to schools will be scheduled in the two weeks beginning Monday 16 November (schools on Savai'i) and Monday 23 November 2015 (schools on Upolu), in order to complete the interviews by Friday 27 November. Schools close for the school year shortly after this date and school interviews in December would not be practical.
- In-depth consultation interviews with key stakeholders, including personnel in both government and church schools on Upolu and Savai'i, key Government of Samoa officials in the Education, Finance and other relevant Ministries, officials in any Non-Government Organisations that have a stake in the school grant scheme, and Development Partners. The Evaluation Plan includes a stakeholder map that identifies the stakeholders who will be consulted. Interview schedules will also be developed for use in interviews. These interview schedules are included within the Evaluation Plan.
- Analysis of data gathered on key issues, and discussion of key findings. The detailed analysis will be presented initially in a draft statement (an Aide Memoire) towards the conclusion of the in-country mission.
- There will be a presentation at a workshop near the end of the in-country mission for a selected group of key stakeholders to consider and provide feedback on initial key findings and conclusions. The initial findings in the Aide Memoire will be presented for discussion and feedback in a Power Point presentation at the workshop.

- A Draft Evaluation Report will be delivered to the Government of Samoa and to Development Partners within about two weeks of the conclusion of the in-country mission.
- A Final Evaluation Report will be delivered once any feedback has been received from stakeholders and necessary revisions made, and once acceptance/approval has been given by the Steering Group.

3.4 Detailed Evaluation Questions

The methodology will use the key criteria set out in the OECD Development Assistance Committee Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance (namely, the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability), and the associated questions.

Some evaluation questions to be asked under each of these DAC criteria are set out in the terms of reference on pages 9 and 10. These questions in the terms of reference will be the main focus of the evaluation. Additional questions that will be posed as part of the evaluation are included below. The focus of the Evaluation Team will be on an evidence-based approach to gather data to provide answers to all these evaluation questions. It is recognised that considerable evidence may be available in the Activity Results Frameworks for the various activities that MFAT has funded during the period of the programme.

The evaluation questions below will form the basis of interviews with key stakeholders, although not all of these questions will necessarily be used if they are not relevant to a particular audience. These questions may be supplemented with additional questions related to the SSFGS, in response to matters raised in interviews. The questions below are organised to relate directly to the evaluation objectives.

Relevance

- What has been the relevance of the SSFGS in the development and strengthening of the relevant areas of the education sector? In particular:
 - How well has the programme developed?
 - To what extent has the programme remained relevant to the GoS, MFAT and DFAT?
 - Did the programme have clear strategic frameworks aligned with MFAT and DFAT development policy and the GOS development objectives?
 - Does the design of the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme assist schools in Samoa to meet their educational objectives?
 - To what extent are the objectives of the programme still valid? Are there needs that should have been but were not addressed?
 - Are the activities and outputs of the programme consistent with the overall goal and the attainment of its objectives?
 - Has the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme been implemented well?
 - Are the activities and outputs of the programme consistent with the intended impacts and effects?

Effectiveness

- How effective has the SSFGS been? In particular: Has the programmes met its key objectives by
 - (i) increasing primary school enrolment and retention; and
 - (ii) improving performance against minimum service standards?
- Why and/or why not?
- Could you summarise the strengths and weaknesses of the programme as you see them?

- What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives of the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme?
- To what extent has the development of personnel capacity within the Ministry and schools helped the programmes meet set objectives?
- What unintended outcomes (positive and negative) have occurred as a result of the Activities and what has constrained or enhanced the achievement of outcomes?
- Is the current scope of the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme adequate for its intended purpose, or should its scope be widened?
- Has access to education been improved under the school fee grant scheme?
- Has educational quality been improved under the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme? For example, what evidence exists to demonstrate improvement or otherwise of student achievement over the period when the school grants have been operating?
- Does the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme assist schools with their school development planning?
- What guidelines have been developed to assist schools in their management of the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme? How effective have these guidelines been?
- How have communications about the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme been managed?
- How is accountability for the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme managed, and is the accountability effective?

Efficiency

- To what extent has the SSFGS contributed to strengthening of school management and administration?
- How effective was the management of the programme by GOS, MFAT and DFAT?
- To what extent has the programme contributed to strengthening of school management and administration?
- Were the school fee grants cost-efficient?
- Are the current school fee grants adequate to meet the basic operational needs of schools?
- Was the financial and operational management of the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme efficient at both Government and school levels?
- Were objectives achieved on time? That is, were funds delivered to schools in a timely way?
- How efficient has the Government/Development Partner forecasting of financial resources to support Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme been?
- What monitoring and auditing of school fee grants has taken place? How efficient has this monitoring/auditing been?
- Was the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternatives?
- Have the funds available been used efficiently to achieve value for money?

Impact

- To what extent has the programme benefited its stakeholders and beneficiaries, including MESCS, schools, students and the wider communities?
- What impact has the programme had on New Zealand's, and Australia's relationship with Samoa?
- What has been the impact of the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme on families?
- What training has been provided to schools on the management of the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme?
- What impact has the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme had on the quality of school assets?

Sustainability

- To what extent has the programme contributed to strengthening of school management and administration?
- To what extent have the skills and knowledge acquired from the programme been sustained?
- To what extent are partner government and agencies likely to be able to sustain skills, management capacity, funding and other programme benefits?
- What challenges does the Government of Samoa face in maintaining the sustainability of the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme?
- What needs to happen to ensure long-term sustainability of any benefits of the programme?

Lessons Learned and Cross-Cutting Issues

- What are key learnings from the SSFGS - what works and what does not?
- What recommendations can be made to achieve the Sector Outcomes in the Education Sector Plan (ESP) and future investment in the sector?
- What changes should be made to the design, implementation or management for any future investment?
- To what extent have cross-cutting issues, in particular gender equality, and disability inclusive development been effectively addressed including in planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation?

3.5 Information Collection

Sources of information have been identified that will be needed to answer the key evaluation questions in the light of the purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation. Both qualitative and quantitative information will be collected and scrutinised. Procedures that ensure collection of data with respect to cross-cutting issues such as gender and human rights will be adopted. There are two main sources of information that will inform this review: existing documents, and feedback from interviews.

The document review will assess all existing reports and previous reviews of the Samoa School Fee Grants Scheme in order to identify what information is available. It is also likely that some information gaps will be identified. These gaps will be addressed as far as possible in the field work conducted as part of the in-country mission. A note of caution is necessary here, since the severe time constraints by which the evaluation must be completed may mean that not all the evidence or data desired may be able to be located or adequately collated. Document analysis will include analysis of written sources of information. In addition, the quality and structure of selected SSFGS reports will be examined. Any self-review documentation provided separately by MESC will be examined. Information (both qualitative and quantitative data) will be cross-checked and analysed through a process of triangulation to verify its accuracy. A list of the written documentation to be examined and analysed is set out in Appendix 5.

Interviews of a range of key stakeholders will include those involved in governance and funding of the SSFGS, key managers and implementers from MESC, the New Zealand Aid Programme and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Participants from schools in Upolu and Savai'i will be interviewed in order to ensure that the needs of rural and isolated schools are sampled, as well as the needs of schools in urban centres. If trade-

offs are required as a result of unavoidable constraints (e.g. owing to a limited amount of time available in country) these will be managed in consultation with the NZHC in Apia. Data collection instruments such as the Interview Schedules are included within the Evaluation Plan.

3. Evaluation Schedule

We therefore propose:

- A visit of 20 days by the two consultants to Samoa;
- Early engagement with the Evaluation Steering Group in Apia to discuss the Evaluation Plan, and again towards the end of the visit in order to present the draft findings, with other meetings as decided by the Evaluation Steering Group, or if requested by the team and agreed by the Evaluation Steering Group.
- Briefings with New Zealand Aid Programme staff, including entry and exit interviews with New Zealand High Commission staff in Apia;
- Individual stakeholder interviews in Samoa, including interviews with at least four schools on Savai'i and six schools on Upolu;
- A stakeholder workshop presentation, at the end of the visit to Samoa, for consultation on the findings of the evaluation.

| Activity | Timeline (Nov-Dec 2015, Jan 2016) |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Briefing phone conference with Steering Group to discuss scope and approach to evaluation | Wed 4 Nov |
| Delivery of Draft Evaluation Plan | Mon 9 Nov |
| Delivery of Final Evaluation Plan | Fri 13 Nov |
| Arrive in Apia to begin field work | Sun 15 Nov |
| In-country field work | 16 Nov – 4 Dec |
| Meet with Evaluation Steering Group | Mon 16 Nov |
| Visits to Schools | Wed 17 Nov – Fri 27 Nov |
| Stakeholder workshop | Fri 4 Dec |
| Completion of in-country visit | Fri 4 Dec |
| Draft Evaluation Report to NZ Aid Programme | Mon 21 Dec |
| Feedback to consultants on Draft Evaluation Report | Fri 15 Jan 2016 |
| Final Evaluation Report delivered | Fri 22 Jan 2016 |

4. Evaluation Stakeholders

4.1 Stakeholder Interviews

Feedback from stakeholder interviews will be a critical source of data for this evaluation. Most of the interviews will be face-to-face interviews, lasting approximately 45 to 60 minutes. If key stakeholders are not available when the consultants are in country, or are not based in Wellington or Apia, telephone interviews may need to be arranged.

The structured meetings will include one-on-one interviews with

- MESC and MOF senior management
- MESC personnel relating to the programme
- Principals, teachers and School Committee members;
- Other stakeholders (e.g. funders, development partners)

A schedule of stakeholder groups has been developed, describing the type of stakeholder, their interest in the partnership, and any issues there might be with their involvement in the evaluation. Table 1 sets out an analysis of these stakeholder groups.

Table 4: Analysis of Stakeholder Groups

| Stakeholder | Interest | Type of Stakeholder |
|--|---|----------------------------|
| Development Partners | Wish to see positive development outcomes, especially quality education. MFAT through the New Zealand High Commission (NZHC) contracted the evaluation. Knowledge of how the partnership has developed, and the processes and systems used. Have views on value for money of the funds spent, and on lessons learned. | Primary |
| MESC | Prime beneficiary of the programme. Practical knowledge of the processes, and of what worked and what didn't. Detailed experience of "walking the talk" and managing challenges and expectations | Primary |
| Principals and teachers and School Committee members | Direct engagement with SSFGS. Awareness of skills needed, what worked well, and of gaps that need to be addressed. | Primary |
| Other Government agencies, teacher union representatives | Experience of the impact of the partnership in various ways. Views on alignment of partnership with country needs. Views on impact of the programme on individuals. Views on lessons learned. | Secondary |

Table 5 sets out an overview of the Key Stakeholder Interviews.

Table 5: Overview of Stakeholder Interviews

| Role | Agency | Estimated No of Interviews |
|--|---|-----------------------------------|
| Development Partners | <p>NZ Aid Programme, DFAT, DPs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael Upton, First Secretary Development, NZHC • Perenise Stowers, Development Programme Co-ordinator, Education, MFAT <p>DFAT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rosemary McKay, DFAT • Vena-Liz Upton, Senior Programme Manager, (Education) DFAT • Valma Guluvao, (previous DFTA Officer) | 5 |
| MOF | <p>Aid Co-ordination Division</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peseta Noumea Simi • Lita Lui • Danielle Lio <p>Budget and Finance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abigail Lee-Hang | 2-4 |
| MESC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEO – Matafeo Falana’ipupu or Acting CEO • ACEO and Principal Officers MESC Corporate Division (if involved in executing SSFGS and payments for TOC Budget) • Acting ACEO School Operations Division (SOD) (housed the SSFGS) • Principal Officers of the SOD • Former ACEO SOD (Maimoana Petaia) • ACEO Curriculum (Leota Valma Galuvao) • Principal Curriculum Officers - Primary • Education Sector Co-ordinator • Selected members of the Team of Consultants • Previous ESP II Co-ordinator (Rosie Esera) | 12-20 |
| Principals, Head Teachers, School Committee members | <p>Government Schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principals/Head Teachers • School Committee reps from schools visited | 10-20 |
| Mission Schools: | | |
| Director of Education, Principals, teachers, PTA representatives and student representatives | <p>Savaii:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDA Siufaga Primary School • St Theresa- Fusi Safotulafai <p>Upolu:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St Peters Leauvaa PS | 6-12 |
| Special Schools | | |
| Heads of Special Schools, parents representatives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lototaumafai; and/or • Fiamalamalama | 2-4 |
| Total | | 37-65 |

4.2 Analysis, Reporting and Required Support

The analysis of data from interviews, and from documentary sources, will be critically assessed and triangulated in order to verify the robustness of different sources of information. Interview data will be collated under themes. Findings from the evaluation will be fed back and discussed with appropriate stakeholders at a facilitated workshop. This discussion of preliminary findings and conclusions will be held towards the end of the visit in order to check on the accuracy, appropriateness and feasibility of the observations, including any associated recommendations. We will need to call upon the New Zealand High Commission for administrative support for some arrangements such as the meeting with the Evaluation Steering Group.

5 Other Considerations

5.1 Quality Considerations

The Evaluation Team will have internal quality assurance processes in place to ensure that the evaluation principles and standards (page 13 of the TOR) are met. These internal quality assurance processes include peer review of text as it is being developed by Team Members during the course of the evaluation. The internal quality assurance processes will also include an independent critical scrutiny of the text of the Evaluation Plan, the Draft Evaluation Report and the Final Evaluation Report by a Co-Director of Vince Catherwood & Associates Ltd (Jenny Buist) who is not (or has not been) directly involved in the field work in Samoa.

5.2 Ethics

The Evaluation Team will abide by generally accepted research and evaluation ethics. The *Guidelines* recommended by the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD will be adopted. The evaluation process will be undertaken with integrity and honesty, and all participants will be treated with respect. The evaluators will respect human rights and differences in culture, customs, religious beliefs and practices of all stakeholders. The evaluators will consider gender roles, ethnicity, ability, age, sexual orientation, language and other differences when designing and carrying out the evaluation. Participants in the evaluation will be clearly informed of the purpose and outcomes of the evaluation and their role in it. The confidentiality of information will be protected and the participants will receive assurance of this. Individual comments will not be identified, and comments from interviews will not be directly attributed to individuals without that person's permission.

5.3 Identified Risks and their Proposed Management

The following table identifies potential risks for the evaluation process, and suggests mitigation strategies for managing those risks.

Table 6: Risks and Risk Management Strategies

The table below sets out risks that have been identified and the risk management strategies that are proposed to mitigate those risks.

| Risk | Likelihood | Impact | Severity | Risk Management Strategy |
|---|-------------------|---------------|-----------------|---|
| Limitations of documents/reports in providing information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to access documents • Bias in selection of documents • Lack of comprehensive coverage | L | M | M | Seek missing documents from sponsor or partners. If unavailable, plug any gaps through interviews with appropriate stakeholders who can provide the necessary information. |
| Slippage in the tight timeline will affect timely delivery of outputs | H | M | M | Appoint a liaison counterpart from MESC to assist the Evaluation Team with retrieval of information and organisation of school and other interviews |
| Unavailability of key stakeholders for interview (e.g. absence overseas, illness) | M | M | M | Use telephone interviews if face-to-face interviews not possible. Seek alternatives who could provide a similar perspective, in discussion with NZHC and Steering Group. |
| Unwillingness by participants to co-operate | L | H | H | Use an informed consent process to ensure participants have an understanding of the purpose and benefits of the evaluation. Work with peers in-country to achieve full participation. |
| Evaluation design faulty or inadequate, leading to premature conclusions | L | H | H | Undertake pilots of interview schedules. Review design if necessary. Ensure communication with NZHC and the Steering Group is frequent and effective |
| Interviews do not provide sufficient in-depth information | M | M | M | Reinterview if necessary. Redesign interview schedule following pilot. Ensure interview notes fully reflect feedback. Seek alternative sources of information if possible. |
| Breach of individuals' privacy or confidentiality | L | L | H | Use informed consent procedures to ensure participants are aware no individual will be identified in reports |
| Relationships damaged | M | H | H | Use of experienced consultants |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| through evaluation process (e.g. through adverse findings that may be disputed) | | | | should ensure issues with potential for conflict can be handled sensitively. Triangulate findings to ensure accuracy. Communicate sensitivities to NZHC and Steering Group. |
| Unanticipated delays (e.g. getting responses to invitations from Head Teachers) affect timing of field work interviews and /or delivery of draft or final reports | M | H | L | Use programme management skills to ensure programme keeps to timeline. Report to NZHC and Steering Group to discuss alternative strategies if slippage unavoidable. |
| Delays in feedback to consultants from MESC, DPs or NZ Aid Programme | L | M | L | Effective communication of response deadlines. Timely reminders. Discuss alternative strategies with NZHC and Steering Group if necessary. |
| Impact of natural disasters | M | H | H | Seek advice from NZHC and Steering Group if completion of evaluation is compromised |

5.4 Governance Arrangements

The Evaluation will be conducted under the supervision of an Evaluation Steering Group. The Evaluation Steering Group will be responsible for overall governance of the evaluation. The Evaluation Steering Group consists of the following people:

- Perenise Stowers, Development Programme Co-ordinator, Education, MFAT;
- Ingrid Van Aalst, Principal Evaluation Manager, MFAT;
- Vena-Liz Upton, Senior Programme Manager, (Education) DFAT;
- Nimera Taofia, Principal School Improvement (School Operations Division) MESC;
- Noumea Simi, Assistant Chief Executive Officer (Aid Co-ordination and Debt Management Division) MOF.

5.5 Evaluation Tools

Evaluation tools will be developed. These will include an information sheet about the programme, a message of thanks, and a consent form.

Annex 1: Work Plan

| Work Plan (1) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|---------------|----------|---|----|----|----|----------|----|----|----|---------|------|----|
| Programme Evaluation of the Samoa Primary School Fee Grant Scheme (Vince Catherwood & Associates Ltd & Lester Taylor) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ID | Task | Start | 2015 | | | | | | | | | | 2016 | |
| Month | | | November | | | | | December | | | | January | | |
| Week commencing Monday | | | 2 | 9 | 16 | 23 | 30 | 7 | 14 | 21 | 28 | 4 | 11 | 18 |
| | Phase One (Planning, Scoping & Analysis) | 2-Nov | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Preliminary Briefing (teleconference) | | █ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | Document review (including a literature search) | | █ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | Analysis of relevant documents /reports/Activity Results Frameworks | | █ | █ | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | Prepare detailed Work Plan | | █ | █ | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | Develop interview schedule | | █ | █ | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | Develop Evaluation Plan | | █ | █ | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7 | Quality Assurance of Evaluation Plan | | █ | █ | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8 | Finalise Evaluation Plan | | █ | █ | | | | | | | | | | |
| 9 | Contact schools/Ministries/invite people to participate | | | █ | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Phase Two (Gathering, Analysis, Reporting of Data) | 16-Nov | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 10 | International travel (NZ to Samoa) | | | █ | | | | | | | | | | |
| 11 | In-country briefing | | | | █ | | | | | | | | | |
| 12 | Select people for interviews | | | | █ | | | | | | | | | |
| 13 | Initial stakeholder interviews (MESCS,MOF,DPs, etc) | | | | █ | | | | | | | | | |
| 14 | School interviews (Upolu) (week beginning 16 Nov) | | | | █ | █ | | | | | | | | |
| 15 | School interviews (Savai'i) (week beginning 23 Nov) | | | | | █ | █ | | | | | | | |
| 16 | Further stakeholder interviews (NGOs, remaining Ministries, DPs, follow-up, etc) | | | | | █ | █ | | | | | | | |
| 17 | Data analysis (EMIS data, interview data, etc) | | | | | | █ | | | | | | | |
| 18 | Organise workshop/ dispatch invitations | | | | | | █ | | | | | | | |
| 19 | Develop draft of Aide Memoire | | | | | | █ | | | | | | | |
| 20 | Hold workshop/presentation for key stakeholders (Fri 4 Dec) | | | | | | █ | | | | | | | |
| 21 | International travel (Samoa to NZ) | | | | | | | █ | | | | | | |
| 22 | Prepare Preliminary Report | | | | | | | █ | █ | | | | | |
| 23 | Submit Preliminary Report | | | | | | | | █ | █ | | | | |
| 24 | Incorporate feedback on preliminary report from GOS, DPs and stakeholders | | | | | | | | | █ | █ | █ | █ | █ |
| 25 | Develop Final Report | | | | | | | | | | █ | █ | █ | █ |
| 26 | Submit Final Report | | | | | | | | | | | █ | █ | █ |

Key: MESCS = Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture; MOF = Ministry of Finance; DPs = Development Partners; GOS = Government of Samoa
 NGOs = Non-Government Organisations; EMIS = Education Management Information System

Annex 2: List of Documents

See Appendix 5 of this report

Annex 3: Interview Schedules

Interview Schedule (Schools)

Preamble: The purpose of this meeting is to evaluate the Samoa (Primary) School Fee Grant Scheme (SSFGS).

1. Date _____
2. Name of School _____
3. School Type _____
4. Name of Head Teacher/Principal _____
5. How long have you been a Head Teacher/Principal _____
6. How long have you been a Head Teacher/Principal at this school? _____

Relevance Issues

7. What do you understand the school fee grants are for? _____
8. How do the grants help your school? _____
9. What are the problems with the school fee grants? _____
10. What is the School Grant for 2015? _____
11. Do you know how the amount of the School Grant is calculated? If yes, how is it done?

12. Do you know when the last grant came to the school? Was it late?

13. Do you know payment dates in advance? _____
14. Do you know if the amount delivered in your school bank account has been accurately calculated? _____
15. Do parents make any voluntary contributions at this school, financial or otherwise?
Why or why not?
16. Do parents still pay fees? If yes, why? And how much? _____
17. Does the school have a School Development Plan? Yes [] No []
18. Who wrote the Plan? _____
19. How are the priorities in the plan linked to your school grant income? _____
20. Does the plan have any learning targets for the students? _____
21. Did you get to comment on the finished plan? Yes [] No []
22. Did the Plan get changed because of any comments? Yes [] No []
23. Have you noticed any links between the plan, school grants and measurable improvements in the students' literacy and numeracy skills? _____
24. Have you any comments on the plan? _____

Effectiveness issues

25. How many additional children are in school this year? _____
26. Why are the additional children now at school? (e.g. Now old enough? Now parents can afford to send them?) _____
27. Have some children who started school at the beginning of the year now stopped attending?

28. How many of these children are girls? _____ How many are boys? _____
29. Why do you think these children stopped going to school? _____
30. Are there parents in this community who do not send their children to school? _____
31. Why don't they send their children to school? _____
32. Have the school grants removed financial barriers for families? _____
33. Are the classrooms more crowded? If yes, why is this so? _____
34. How should this problem be solved? _____
35. Are the current school grants adequate to cater for the basic operational costs at the school level? _____
36. Do you think the school has more money than before the grants were in place? If yes, what is the money used for? _____
37. If No, why is that the case? _____
38. Are there enough books (exercise, text books and readers) to go round compared to before? _____
39. Is the eligible expenditure for school grants adequate to meet school operational costs? _____
40. Should the eligibility of the school grants be widened (e.g. to include minor infrastructure maintenance at the school)? _____
41. How much do parents participate in fund raising? _____
42. How much do parents participate in maintenance and construction? _____
43. Has this changed since the School Grants came in? _____
44. Why do you think this is the case? _____
45. How can the school grants be linked better to school performance? _____
46. How can the school grants be used to encourage:
 - a. engagement by students and parents,
 - b. engagement by school boards/committees, and
 - c. improved accountability of teachers and Principals to parents?

47. Should the school grants be linked to benchmarks such as a school development plan?

48. Should the school grants have a performance component? (That is, should better performing schools be eligible for a higher grant?) _____
49. How effective are the school grants in improving the quality of teaching and learning?

50. What would you recommend to make the school grants more effective? (With respect to Time frames? Targeting? Formulae? Any conditions?) _____
51. What should be the conditions for receiving the current school grants (e.g. acquittals, financial reporting)? Should these conditions be expanded? _____
52. Have you personally received any training in the management and use of the grant funds? If so, please describe the training. Was the training helpful? _____

Efficiency issues

53. Could you describe the management of the funds your school receives? (E.g. Who is responsible? Where is the money kept? Who approves school expenditure? How is this done?) _____
54. Does the school treat grant money and other contributions together?

55. What are the main items that this school spent the money from the grant on?

56. Are there guidelines or criteria for spending the money? _____
57. Do you know what items are eligible for funding from the School Grant? Yes [] No []
58. If yes, what are they? _____
59. Were the parents and/or the PTA consulted on spending the grant money? _____
60. Do you think the school had enough exercise books and other learning materials to start the year? Yes [] No [] Why do you think so? _____
61. Do you think any of the grant money has been misused in the past two years? Yes [] No [] _____
62. If yes, what happened? _____
63. Do you know if anyone from Ministry of Education Sports and Culture (MESC) has been to the school this year? Yes [] No [] If yes, who was it?

64. Were the school grants for last year fully accounted for with MESC satisfactorily? Yes [] No [] If No, what were the main problems with accounting for the Grant?

65. What happened? _____
66. Is the school generally better, worse or the same compared with before the school grants came in, and why? Better [] Worse [] Same []
67. What are some of the ways that the school fee grants scheme could be improved?

68. In what ways could parents help the school here develop more?

69. Is the current fee school grants scheme easy to administer?

70. Is the money from the school fee grants scheme well used?

71. What would you recommend to make the school grants easier to use? (For example: Time frames? Targeting? Use of formulae? Conditions?)
-

Sustainability Issues

72. Does the school find it necessary to ask parents for voluntary contributions? _____
73. Who should pay for the ongoing funding of school operations?
- a. The Government of the Samoa?
 - b. Parents?
 - c. Churches?
 - d. Donors/development Partners?
 - e. A combination of some or all of these? _____
74. Do you have any other suggestions for how payments for school operations can be made more sustainable in the longer term?
-

Thank you for your cooperation and participation in the discussion

Interview Schedule (School Committees)

Preamble: The purpose of this meeting is to evaluate the Samoa (Primary) School Fee Grant Scheme (SSFGS).

1. Date _____
2. Name of School _____
3. School Type _____
4. Name of Chairperson _____
5. How long have you been Chairperson? _____
6. Names of Committee Members _____

Relevance Issues

7. What do you understand the school fee grants are for? _____
8. How do the grants help your school? _____
9. Do the grants help parents and families?
10. What are the problems with the school fee grants? _____
11. Is the School Grant sufficient or do parents still have to make a contribution? _____
12. Have the parental contributions increased this year? By how much? _____
13. Have the grants lowered the contributions or have they increased anyway? _____
14. What are parental contributions used for? _____
15. Does the School Grant arrive at school at a time that meets the parents' needs? _____

Effectiveness issues

16. Have the School Grants allowed more children to go to school? _____
17. Why are the additional children now at school? (e.g. Now old enough? Now parents can afford to send them?) _____
18. Have some children who started school at the beginning of the year now stopped attending? _____
19. How many of these children are girls? _____ How many are boys? _____
20. Why do you think these children stopped going to school? _____
21. Are there parents in this community who do not send their children to school? _____
22. Why don't they send their children to school? _____
23. Have the school grants removed financial barriers for families? _____
24. Are the classrooms more crowded? If yes, why is this so? _____

Efficiency issues

25. Could you describe the management of the funds your school receives? (E.g. Who is responsible? Where is the money kept? Who approves school expenditure? How is this done?) _____
26. Does the school treat grant money and other contributions together?

27. What are the main items that this school spent the money from the grant on?

28. Are there guidelines or criteria for spending the money? _____
29. Do you know what items are eligible for funding from the School Grant? Yes [] No []
30. If yes, what are they?

31. Were the parents and/or the PTA consulted on spending the grant money?

32. Do you think the school had enough exercise books and other learning materials to start the year? Yes [] No [] Why do you think so?

33. Do you think any of the grant money has been misused in the past two years? Yes [] No []

34. If yes, what happened? _____
35. Do you know if anyone from Ministry of Education Sports and Culture (MESC) has been to the school this year? Yes [] No [] If yes, who was it?

36. Were the school grants for last year fully accounted for with MESC satisfactorily? Yes [] No [] If No, what were the main problems with accounting for the Grant?

37. What happened?

38. Is the school generally better, worse or the same compared with before the school grants came in, and why? Better [] Worse [] Same []
39. What are some of the ways that the school fee grants scheme could be improved?

40. In what ways could parents help the school here develop more?

41. Is the current fee school grants scheme easy to administer?

42. Is the money from the school fee grants scheme well used?

43. What would you recommend to make the school grants easier to use? (For example: Time frames? Targeting? Use of formulae? Conditions?)
-

Sustainability Issues

44. Does the school find it necessary to increase parental contributions? _____
45. Who should pay for the ongoing funding of school operations?
- a. The Government of the Samoa?
 - b. Parents?
 - c. Churches?
 - d. Donors/development Partners?
 - e. A combination of some or all of these? _____
46. Do you have any other suggestions for how payments for school operations can be made more sustainable in the longer term?
-

Appendix 3: Design of the Samoa (Primary) School Fee Grant Scheme

This Appendix describes the original design of the Samoa (Primary) School Fee Grant Scheme, explains how the programme is managed, and how it operates in practice.

Design of the Samoa School Fee Grant Programme

The purpose of the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme (SSFGS) is described earlier in this report. All Government and Mission primary schools as well as special schools receive funding under the Samoa School Fees Grant Scheme.

The Program Design Document (May 5th, 2010) and the monitoring and evaluation framework provide a basis against which to evaluate the achievement of the goal, objectives/outcomes and outputs of the SSFGS.

The Program Design Document describes the programme rationale and outlines findings from a 2010 analysis. It sets out how the SSFGS will be linked to quality improvement. A set of guiding principles for the SSFGS is presented, along with key objectives and programme targets. Other dimensions of the SSFGS are described, such as SSFGS Beneficiaries, the SSFGS Grant Formula, the Fund Flow Mechanism, the Grant Distribution, and the costs of SSFGS and its funding. A section of the design document describes Grant Use (what the Grants may and may not be spent on) and outlines the SSFGS Process. The SSFGS Management and Administration is described, including a reference to the Manual of Operations.

Minimum Service Standards (MSS) are outlined, and the MSS are linked to the SSFGS.

A section of the programme design document describes how the monitoring, evaluation and reporting on the scheme will be undertaken. Other dimensions such as risk mitigation, and programme sustainability are described in detail. Annexes cover School Level Financial Procedures and Accountability, the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, and a table that sets out percentages of primary students identified as being at risk.

How the SSFGS operates

The *Samoa School Fees Grant Scheme Manual of Operations 2010* sets out the basis on which the scheme operates. A formula is used to calculate the amount of the grant for each school. Every school receives a grant of WST100 for each student based on the number of students enrolled at the date in March specified on the school census form (although special schools receive a grant of WST200 for each student).

In addition, a base grant is provided, which varies depending on the size and type of school. Government Primary Schools receive a variable base grant, as follows:

- Base grant of WST1000 for schools with a roll of 301 students or more;
- Base grant of WST1300 for schools with a roll between 150 and 300;
- Base grant of WST1600 for schools with a roll between 51 and 150;
- Base grant of WST1900 for schools with a roll between 1 and 51.

Mission primary schools receive a base grant of WST2000. Special schools receive a base grant of WST3000.

The *Manual of Operations* provides general programme guidance. This written guidance has been supplemented by the oral advice and practical assistance provided through visits to schools by the Team Leader and the Team of Consultants (TOC). The Manual states that the fees grant will be distributed to schools once a year in early June, although in practice the grant is received by schools in September or October. The funds are deposited into the school's School Fees Grant account (which is a cheque account) with the Samoa Commercial Bank.

General Guidelines are provided for operation of the bank accounts. The Principal is responsible for the school's annual management or operational plan, for a school budget, for the use of the funds, and for recording and reporting on the grant. The School Committee or School Board must be consulted, and approve and sign the Budget. MESC through the Team of Consultants (TOC) monitors schools to make sure that all procedures are followed correctly. The School Fee Grant can be used for "allowable" items only (as described in the Manual, or in the subsequent revision to the Manual). The main use of the funds is to help schools meet the Minimum Service Standards. Money not spent at the end of the school year is carried over into the following year. School Fees Grant accounts are Imprest accounts and the Ministry of Finance (MOF) has oversight of each account. The advice provided in the *Manual of Operations* includes expenditure guidelines and procurement requirements for the purchase of goods and services (the procurement requirements are aligned with Government of Samoa procurement policies). SSFGS processes and procedures for financial transactions (including cash book entries, use of petty cash, reporting, monitoring, and requirements for signatories to the cheque book and the bank account) are described in detail.

The evaluation undertook an investigation of the current funding flow mechanism of the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme. This investigation has involved an examination of all the steps undertaken by MESC and by MoF in order to calculate the required amounts of funding for each school and to deliver the grant funds into the school bank accounts with the Samoa Commercial Bank. After consultation with relevant people in MESC and MoF, a description of the steps in the funding flow mechanism for the SSFGS in Samoa has been developed, and is attached as Appendix 6 to this report.

Initially the funding for the school grants was provided by Development Partners (Australia and New Zealand). Some steps in the funding flow mechanism were initially necessary to provide DPs with assurance that the funds had been spent on the appropriate purpose and had been appropriately accounted for. Gradually, over the five years of the scheme, the Government of Samoa has assumed increasing financial responsibility for funding the scheme. Now that the Government of Samoa has accepted full responsibility for funding and managing the primary school grants scheme as from the 2015-2016 financial year, the steps that relate to meeting the specific accountability requirements of the DPs for the grant funds can be dispensed with in future. DPs, however, still retain an interest in monitoring funds that are provided to support the education sector through budget support.

MESC has produced a set of Minimum Service Standards that are used by schools. The Minimum Service Standards set out standards in four areas: the school environment; school facilities and management and learning; teacher professional knowledge, practice and values; and student achievement. The *Manual of Operations* states that the purpose of the SSFGS is to provide schools with funds that will help them to meet the Minimum Service Standards, and in particular to help improve learning and teaching.

Regular monitoring and evaluation reports are developed by the Team Leader and the Team of Consultants, based on an agreed Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. A copy of the agreed Monitoring and Evaluation Framework is attached to this evaluation report as Appendix 7. Quarterly reports have been provided to MESC management after the conclusion of each quarter. An annual report is provided at the conclusion of each Government Financial Year. The annual school files are collected by the Team Leader and by the Team of Consultants (usually around the end of June of each year) and are stored in the School Operations Division of MESC. A consolidated annual statement of income and expenditure for the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme is put together by the Team Leader for each financial year. This annual statement is collated from school financial data and reports.

Appendix 4: Methodology

This Appendix outlines the methodology adopted in this Evaluation Report. The scope and objectives contained in the Terms of Reference for the Evaluation are detailed elsewhere in this report. Prior to arrival in Samoa the consultants had developed an Evaluation Plan that was approved by a Steering Group. The Evaluation Plan set out the purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation, and described the evaluation design, methods of information collection, and a proposed methodology. The methodology included detailed evaluation questions, an outline of the stakeholders who would be consulted, the proposed schedule of activities, and the evaluation tools. Evidence was to be collected and analysed to assess the extent to which the programme's objectives had been achieved. The detailed methodology used to meet the scope and objectives is contained in the approved Evaluation Plan, which is included in this report as Appendix 2.

This independent evaluation was conducted in November and December 2015. In summary, the methodology consisted of two phases. The first phase was a desk study and analysis of documents provided by the donors and MESC. A full list of the documents reviewed is contained in this report as Appendix 5. The documents fell into two categories:

1. Documents of direct relevance to the SSFGS.
Examples of these documents are the Quarterly and Annual Reports of the TOC team; the Mid-term Review of the SSFGS; the draft SSFGS Manual of Operations.
2. Documents not directly related to the SSFGS but which contain relevant information.
Examples of these documents are the MESC Statistical Digests; Minimum Service Standards; Samoa Education Sector Support Program.

The second phase began with a three week in-country visit where information was gathered through consultation with key stakeholders. This field work was conducted in Samoa over the period 15 November to 4 December 2015. A full list of those consulted is contained in the draft Evaluation Report (17 December 2016)

3. The categories of key stakeholders are:
 - MFAT and DFAT officials
 - MESC officials
 - Other GoS officials – e.g. Ministry of Finance
 - School principals
 - School Committee members
 - Parents

Schedules of questions were prepared to be used when interviewing principals and school committee members. The schedules vary slightly to reflect the differing roles of those being interviewed. Copies of the schedules are contained in the Evaluation Plan.

The schools visited were selected by MESC. A total of eleven schools was visited, four in Savai'i and seven in Upolu. Included were government, mission and special schools, both rural and urban, of varying sizes. Interviews at the schools were with principals, school committees, parents and teachers.

The following table identifies the schools, their location and type.

Schools Visited

| Location | Name of School | Type of School |
|----------|--|---------------------|
| Savai'i | Tufutafoe Primary School | Government |
| Savai'i | SDA Siufaga Primary School | Mission |
| Savai'i | St Theresa's Primary School -Fusi Safotulafai | Mission |
| Savai'i | Sapapali'i Primary School | Government |
| Upolu | Tafitoala Primary School | Government |
| Upolu | Vaivase Primary School | Government |
| Upolu | Lototaumafai Primary School | Government, Special |
| Upolu | Faleula Primary School | Government |
| Upolu | St Peter's Primary School, Leauva'a | Mission |
| Upolu | Apolima Primary School | Government |
| Upolu | Apia Primary School | Government |

Following the interview programme, the information and data gathered was collated and analysed. From this analysis an aide memoire was developed. A workshop for invited stakeholders to present the preliminary findings of the evaluation for discussion and comment was held on Friday 4 December 2015. The main conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation were discussed with participants at this exit workshop. This meeting had three main purposes:

- 1) To present the initial findings of the evaluation team, and the justification for them.
- 2) To ensure that the evaluation team had included all issues that the key stakeholders deemed relevant.
- 3) To seek feedback from the key stakeholders on these findings. Of particular importance was ensuring that the evaluation team had not misinterpreted information through language and cultural differences.

Following the exit meeting, a draft report was developed and forwarded to MFAT in Samoa for review by MFAT, DFAT and SoG. Feedback from that review was used to prepare the final report.

The terms of reference (TORs) for the evaluation required that the criteria for evaluations developed by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) committee of the OECD were used. To ensure that information relating to all the objectives was gathered, and that the DAC criteria for evaluation were met, the following table was developed for use in the collation and analysis of data. The table sought to identify the methods and sources of information to be collected, and the outcomes sought. This table was an important additional tool that was used as part of the methodology for the evaluation.

Table 7: Methods and Sources of Information to be Collected

| Objective | Method and sources of information | Required Outcomes |
|--|---|--|
| <u>Reduce financial barriers</u> to primary schooling by providing direct government support to schools in lieu of school fees; | Assessment of extent of elimination of school fees Interviews of principals and parents to assess parental contributions and de facto fees | Parents report reduced financial barriers Increased numbers of children attending school (increased enrolments) Improved primary school completion/retention rates |
| <u>Assist schools to improve their teaching and learning processes</u> by meeting and maintaining MESCs Minimum Service Standards (MSS); | MSS being met satisfactorily by schools Collection of data about Yr 4 and Yr 6 children at risk in literacy and numeracy | 80% of schools meeting MSS Improved literacy and numeracy outcomes |
| <u>Improve school-level resource management</u> by 1 introducing and/or supporting school based management practices such as the principal as a manager, 2 school committees, 3 school development and planning and budgeting 4 school level accountability for results. | Principals receive management training on use of grants and financial reporting School committees receive training on their responsibilities related to the grants School Improvement Plans and budgets in place School monthly and annual reporting in place | Improved/competent management by principal Improved/ competent governance by school committees Competent school planning and budgeting Adequate school reporting including financial acquittals |
| Assess the effectiveness of the SSFGS, in particular 1 Has the programme met its key objectives of a Increasing primary school enrolments and retention? b Improving performance against MSS. Why/why not? 2 To what extent has the | Analysis of data from MESC Statistical Digests on enrolment and retention rates. Analysis of TOC quarterly and annual reports during programme life. Analysis of policy documents and monitoring reports. Collection and analysis of evidence about improvement of quality. Analysis of information gathered | Enrolment and retention rates will have improved Performance against MSS will have improved Abilities and skills of MESC |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>development of personnel capacity within MESC and schools helped the programme meet set objectives?</p> <p>3 What unintended outcomes (positive and negative) have occurred as a result of the Activities?</p> <p>4 What has constrained or enhanced the achievement of outcomes?</p> | <p>from interviews with key personnel and from schools Guideline documents.</p> <p>Analysis of information gathered from interviews with key personnel and from schools</p> <p>Analysis of information gathered from interviews with key personnel and from schools</p> | <p>and school personnel will have improved</p> <p>Unintended outcomes identified. Steps taken to implement positive and manage negative outcomes</p> <p>Constraints identified and managed</p> |
| <p>Assess the impact of the programmes, in particular:</p> <p>1 To what extent has the programme benefited its stakeholders, including MESC, schools, students, parents and the wider communities?</p> <p>2 What impact has the programme had on New Zealand's and Australia's relationship with Samoa?</p> | <p>Analysis of information gathered from interviews with key personnel and from schools. Statistical data and information obtained from Statistical Digests and programme reports.</p> <p>Feedback from interviews with Samoan stakeholders and from Development Partners</p> | <p>All key stakeholders will have benefited</p> <p>New Zealand and Australia relationships with Samoa strengthened</p> |
| <p>Assess programme efficiency, in particular:</p> <p>1 To what extent has the SSFGS contributed to the strengthening of school management and administration?</p> <p>2 How effective was the management of the programme by GoS, MFAT, and DFAT?</p> | <p>Analysis of information gathered from interviews with key personnel and from schools. Examination of school annual reports. Analysis of school expenditure patterns.</p> <p>Examination of TOC quarterly and annual reports. Interviews with stakeholders. Review monitoring reports.</p> | <p>School management and administration will have improved</p> <p>SSFGS satisfactorily implemented. Satisfaction expressed by schools with level of support.</p> |
| <p>Assess the extent to which the results have proven to be sustainable:</p> <p>1 To what extent has the programme contributed to the strengthening of school</p> | <p>Analysis of information gathered from interviews with key personnel and from schools. Examination of</p> | <p>School management and administration will have improved</p> |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| <p>management and administration?</p> <p>2 To what extent have the skills and knowledge acquired (MESC and school management) from the programme been sustained?</p> <p>3 To what extent are partner government and agencies likely to be able to sustain skills, management capacity, funding and other programme benefits?</p> | <p>school annual reports.</p> <p>Analysis of information gathered from interviews with key personnel and from schools. Examination of reports over life of programme. Improved learning environments.</p> <p>Analysis of information gathered from agencies, especially MESC, MoF.</p> | <p>Quality of reporting will have improved over time. School environments will have improved.</p> <p>Structures will be in place to ensure the effective management of the SSFGS.</p> <p>Sufficient finance will be budgeted annually.</p> |
| <p>Identification of lessons learned and cross cutting issues: <i>Lessons learned</i></p> <p>1 What are key lessons from SSFGS – what works and what does not?</p> <p>2 What recommendations can be made to support achievement of the Sector Outcomes of the Education Sector Plan (ESP) and future investment in the sector?</p> <p>3 What changes should be made to the design, implementation or management for any future investment?</p> <p><i>Cross cutting issues</i> To what extent have cross cutting issues, in particular gender equality and disability inclusive development, been effectively addressed in planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation?</p> | <p>Analysis of information gathered from interviews with key personnel and from schools</p> <p>Analysis of all information and data gathered in meeting objectives listed above</p> <p>Analysis of all information and data gathered in meeting objectives listed above</p> <p>Gather relevant information from interviews with schools (including special schools) and MESC staff.</p> <p>Gather relevant information on gender issues from reports related to SSFGS, and from SPELL reports and data from Statistical Digests</p> | <p>Key lessons identified and documented</p> <p>Formulation of recommendations</p> <p>Identify changes and include in recommendations</p> <p>Identify extent to which the cross cutting issues have been addressed.</p> |
| <p>To assess the relevance of the SSFGS in the development and strengthening of the relevant areas of the education sector, in particular:</p> <p>1 Did the programme have clear</p> | <p>Information gathered through</p> | <p>Agreement that SSFGS was</p> |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| <p>strategic frameworks aligned with the MFAT and DFAT development policy and the GOS development objectives?</p> | <p>interviews with key personnel from MFAT, DFAT and GoS</p> | <p>aligned with policies</p> |
| <p>2 To what extent has the programme remained relevant to the GoS, MFAT and DFAT?</p> | <p>Information gathered through interviews with key personnel from MFAT, DFAT and GoS</p> | <p>Agreement that SSFGS remained relevant</p> |
| <p>3 How well has the programme developed?</p> | <p>Feedback from interviews with schools and stakeholders</p> | <p>Strong and systematic development of the programme</p> |

Appendix 5: List of Documents

The following list of documents sets out the major sources of background written documentation that has informed the End of Programme Evaluation of the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme.

Australian Government, Feb 2013. *Quality at implementation Report for Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme and TVET*

Australian Government, Dec 2013 *Quality at implementation Report for Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme*

Australian Government, Feb 2011. *Quality at implementation Report for Education Sector Program II*

Author Unknown, March 2010. *Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme (SSFGS). Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) Framework*

Author Unknown, undated. *SSFGS M and E Framework*

Author Unknown, May 2010 *The Samoa School Fees Grant Scheme (SSFGS) Program Design Document Final*

Author Unknown, July 2015. *Investment Design for Samoa Education Sector Support Program (ESSP) July 2015 to June 2018*

Barlow Schuster Consult, April 2015 *External Review Report for Period July 2013 June 2014: Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme Secondary Final Report 16/05/15*

Barlow Schuster Consult, Feb 2013, MidTerm Review Report: External Review of the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme

Catherwood, Vince and Reeves, Barry, July 2014 *Final Report: A Review of the Solomon Islands Basic Education School Grants Mechanism*

Development Assistance Committee, OECD, 2010. *Quality Standards for Development Education*

Government of Samoa, Dec 2013. *Samoa Education Sector Plan July 2013 – June 2018*

Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, undated. *Annex 1 Enrolment Trend Report 2011*

Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, undated. *Annex 2 Report Harmonised Visit April 2011*

Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, undated. *Annex 3 Improvements Against the MSS Recorded*

Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, undated. *Annex 4 Issues Register Updated*

Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, September 2011. *National Teacher Development Framework*

Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, undated. *Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme, Second Quarterly Report Year 1 October December 2010*. Written by Alaifea La'ititi Belford Su'a (National Consultant, Team Leader) and five National Consultants

Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, undated. *Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme, Third Quarterly Report Year 1 January March 2011*. Written by Alaifea La'ititi Belford Su'a (National Consultant, Team Leader) and five National Consultants

Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, undated. *Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme, Fourth Quarterly Report Year 1 April June 2011*. Written by Alaifea La'ititi Belford Su'a (National Consultant, Team Leader) and five National Consultants

Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, undated. *Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme, Fourth Quarterly Report April June 2011. Results of the Monitoring Process Based on the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for SSFGS*. Written by Alaifea La'ititi Belford Su'a (National Consultant, Team Leader) and five National Consultants

Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, undated. *Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme, First Quarterly Report - Year 2 July September 2011*. Written by Alaifea La'ititi Belford Su'a (National Consultant, Team Leader) and five National Consultants

Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, undated. *Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme, Fourth Quarterly Report - Year 2 April June 2012*. Written by Alaifea La'ititi Belford Su'a (National Consultant, Team Leader) and five National Consultants

Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, undated. *Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme, First Quarterly Report - Year 3 July September 2012*. Written by Alaifea La'ititi Belford Su'a (National Consultant, Team Leader) and five National Consultants

Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, undated. *Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme. Second Quarterly Report – Year 3. October – December 2013*. Written by Alaifea La'ititi Belford Su'a (National Consultant, Team Leader) and five National Consultants.

Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, undated. *Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme. Fourth Quarterly Report – Year 3. April – June 2013*. Written by Alaifea La'ititi Belford Su'a (National Consultant, Team Leader) and four National Consultants.

Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, undated. *Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme. Primary Schools Grant. Second Quarterly Report – Year 4. October – December 2013*. Written by Alaifea La'ititi Belford Su'a (National Consultant, Team Leader) and four National Consultants.

Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, undated. *Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme. Primary Schools Grant. Fourth Quarterly Report – Year 4. April – June 2014.* Written by Alaifea La'ititi Belford Su'a (National Consultant, Team Leader) and three National Consultants.

Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, undated. *Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme. Primary Schools Grant. Fourth Quarterly Report – Year 5. April 2015– June 2015.* Written by Alaifea La'ititi Belford Su'a (National Consultant, Team Leader).

Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, 2011. *Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme [First Annual Report 2010/2011 and Annex 1 (Students Who Have Attended School for the First Time)]*

Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, 2012. *Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme [Second Annual Report 2011/2012]*

Ministry of Education Sports and Culture, Jan 2011 *Minimum Service Standards A Guide for Schools*

Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, 2013. *Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme [Third Annual Report 2012/2013]*

Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, 2014. *Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme [Fourth Annual Report 2013/2014]*

Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, 2014 *Statistical Digest*

Ministry of Education Sports and Culture, Dec 2010. *Understanding the Minimum Service Standards (MSS) for Schools*

Ministry of Education. Sports and Culture, undated. *Samoa School Fees Grant Scheme. Manual of Operations 2010.*

Ministry of Education Sports and Culture, June 2014. *Final Draft School Organisation and Management Manual.*

New Zealand Aid Programme, July 2014. *Activity Monitoring Assessment for Samoa School Fee Grants Scheme*

Taylor, Lester, 2007 *Review of Primary School Operations Grant – Solomon Islands*

World Bank Group, 2013. *Independent State of Samoa: School Autonomy and Accountability. Systems Approach for Better Education Results- SABER Country Report.*

World Bank Group, 2015. *Samoa Education Management Information Systems (Systems Approach for Better Education Results - SABER Country Report)*

Appendix 6: Funding Flow Mechanism

The steps below outline the process of delivering funding to primary schools, through the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme, based on the Government of Samoa Guidelines.

Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture

1. School enrolment figures are identified from the annual school census form submitted to the MESC Policy, Planning and Research Division (PPRD). The school enrolment figures are sent by schools to MESC as at the census date (usually the Wednesday of the second week in March each year), although there may be a delay of two or more weeks before the forms are received by MESC.
2. Final confirmation of annual enrolment figures is done by 31 March. If a school is late with provision of enrolment data, one of the Team of Consultants follows up and provides support to the Principal to ensure the census form is completed and submitted.
3. The school enrolment figures for each school are entered by the Team Leader of the Team of Consultants onto an Excel spreadsheet. The school enrolment figures on this database are the same enrolment figures as are recorded by PPRD and published in the annual MESC Statistics Digest. The school enrolment figures are now reliable since every student has a Student Enrolment Number - SEN).
4. Each school's total funding entitlement in tala is calculated on the Excel spreadsheet using the MESC school grant funding formula (base grant plus approved rate (WST100 or WST200 for special schools) for each enrolment). The funding entitlement is for the period of the forthcoming Government Financial Year (for example the 2015 school funding is for 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016).
5. The Excel worksheet is printed and the figures are checked independently (peer reviewed) by at least two colleagues in the MESC School Operations Division.
6. A letter is drafted for the CEO of MESC to sign and send to the CEO Ministry of Finance, with the Excel attachment (worksheet) setting out each school's unique name, bank account number and forthcoming funding entitlement (160 Government, Mission and special primary schools).
7. The CEO of MESC signs the letter and sends the letter plus Excel spreadsheet attachments (worksheets) to the CEO of MOF (copy to Noumea Simi at the Aid Co-ordination Division, MOF). The aim is to complete this process by the end of April.

Ministry of Finance

1. In April/May the Aid Co-ordination Division of the Ministry of Finance (MOF) requests a transfer of funds from Development Partners (Australia and New Zealand) based on the formal Grant Funding Arrangements (one arrangement with Australia and one arrangement with New Zealand). This request is for funds for the next Government

financial year. MOF is aware that existing funds must be used first before additional funding can be disbursed.

2. Funds will be provided (the process may take some weeks) and will be deposited in the Treasury Direct Transfer Account before end of each FY. This account is a separate ANZ bank account.
3. The Aid Coordination Division will identify the specific project account (Samoa Primary School Fee Grant Account) and will notify the Accounts Division of MOF in order to have the funds lodged in the correct project account.
4. Each year MOF reconfirms details of the commercial bank account that has been set up with the Samoa Commercial Bank.
5. MOF awaits the formal letter from the CEO of MESC in order to confirm enrolment numbers and the grant amounts to be paid to individual schools. The letter arrives in with MOF in late April or early May of each year.
6. The calculations of the grant amounts for each school and the total funding requested by MESC are rechecked and verified by the MOF Aid Co-ordination Division.
7. After the formal letter from the CEO of MESC is sent to Accounts Division of MOF to action the transfer of funds, the Aid Co-ordination Division of MOF provides the project account number and the Government counterpart number (used to pay the Government of Samoa share). The agreed percentage to be paid by Development Partners (according to the respective Grant Funding Agreements), and the percentage to be paid by the Government of Samoa is calculated, and specified in tala and advised to MOF Accounts Division.
8. MOF Accounts Division will re-check all calculations and verification with the Samoa Commercial Bank and MESC (if necessary) will recheck the school bank accounts, and once all are confirmed and cleared MOF Accounts Division will transfer funds at this point to the Samoa Commercial Bank, along with the names of the schools, the list of school account numbers, and the amount of grant funds to be paid to each school.
9. The Accounts Section of the Samoa Commercial Bank verifies the school accounts against its database to ensure that everything is correct, and that school account numbers are accurate and up-to-date, and have not been changed. At this stage there can be queries because of anomalies with individual school accounts (new schools added, or information missing, or existing school bank account numbers changed)
10. The Samoa Commercial Bank asks the Accounts section of MOF to verify the list and the amounts to be given to schools, and to resolve any issues that have been identified.
11. MOF contacts MESC to clarify any changed accounts or missing information. This process can cause delays in delivery of funds to schools, since every query has to be successfully resolved before any funds can be delivered to any school bank accounts.
12. MESC comes back to MOF with the correct information.
13. Accounts division of MOF is asked to verify the list of schools and the grant amounts to be deposited in each school bank account.

14. MOF confirms the amended list, the school bank account numbers, and the grant amounts for each school with the Samoa Commercial Bank.
15. Samoa Commercial Bank deposits the grant amounts in each school's bank account.
16. Samoa Commercial Bank informs MOF that the process of dispersing funds to schools has been completed.

Note: The objective is to deliver funds to schools in the early part of the Government Financial Year. In practice the funds have been delivered to schools in September or October. This date is later than the date specified in the *Manual of Operations*. Any delays have been caused in the past because missing information has to be supplied, or for other reasons such as the addition of new schools, changed school bank account numbers, or cash flow issues that require resolution by the Government of Samoa. It is suggested that the *Manual of Operations* be changed to indicate that funds would be delivered to schools by the end of the first quarter of the Government Financial Year (i.e. by late September).

Appendix 7: Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

A MESC document entitled *Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting for the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme* sets out the full advice on monitoring, evaluation, research, reporting and sustainability. The specific part of this document relating to the monitoring and evaluation framework for the SSFGS is reproduced below.

| Objective | Indicator | Source of Information | Responsibility | Reporting/Timing |
|---|---|---|-----------------------|---|
| Increased primary enrolment and retention | SSFGS schools see rolls rise and dropouts decrease National enrolment and retention figures rise | Schools admissions books; discussions with principals and school committees. National statistics | TOC/schools | TOC quarterly reports |
| Primary school performance improved against Minimum Service Standards | All SSFGS schools record at least three improvements against MSS each year | Self assessment by principal and school committee against standards TOC analysis of school reporting | Principals TOC | Annual School Performance Report TOC reports; annually |
| | | | | |
| Output/target | Indicator | Source of Information | Responsibility | Reporting/Timing |
| <i>Compliance in Schools</i> | | | | |
| Financial reporting by all schools is regular, accurate and follows SSFGS procedures. <i>2011:75%; 2012:100%</i> | School financial records maintained TOC acceptance of acquittals and assessment of compliance | Cash books TOC records | Principals TOC | Principals quarterly / six monthly reports TOC quarterly reports |

| | | | | |
|---|--|---|--------------|--|
| | Number of MoF audits | TOC records | TOC | TOC reports; annually |
| All schools comply with SSFGS manual 2010: 75%; 2100:95%; 2012:100% | TOC assessment of schools as having no significant deviation from manual | TOC examination of school records and reporting | TOC | TOC monthly reports |
| Value for money obtained | Schools follow procurement rules | School records | Principals | Principals quarterly / six monthly reports |
| | TOC certification of procedures | TOC examination of school records | TOC | TOC monthly reports |
| <i>Effectiveness of processes in schools</i> | | | | |
| All school committees involved in school planning and budgeting | Committee Chair signs budget | School records | Principals | Annual budget submission |
| | Principals and members satisfied with working of Committee | TIOC school visits | TOC | TOC quarterly reports |
| Schools implementing reporting and assessment cycle in line with MSS | MSS finalised and introduced to all schools by end 2011 | TOC records | TOC | TOC reports; annually |
| | All schools submit annual plan and budget by end year | TOC records | Schools, TOC | TOC reports; annually |
| | All schools submit performance report by end year, identifying how SSFGS funds have helped them to improve | TOC records | TOC | TOC reports; annually |

| | | | | |
|--|---|---|---------------------------|---|
| | Numbers of schools for which planning, budgeting and reporting is assessed by TOC as being “partly” or “largely” consistent with MSS | TOC records | TOC | TOC reports; annually |
| Schools able to manage on SSFGS grants and not levying any form of fee | Balanced budgets, with non-SSFGS income transparently recorded TOC certification that no fees are being levied | School budgets TOC consultations with school committees | Principals TOC | Annual budget TOC quarterly reports |
| <i>Management and oversight of the scheme</i> | | | | |
| Funds available to schools according to design timetable | Date of deposit in school accounts Numbers of schools reporting inability to access funds | TOC records | TOC | TOC reports; annually TOC quarterly reports |
| TOC performing according to contracts and work programs | Acceptance by MESC of reports All SSFGS schools visited four times in each of 2011 and 2012 Principals satisfied with TOC support | TOC records TOC records Annual survey of principals | TOC TOC TOC | TOC quarterly reports TOC quarterly reports TOC reports; annually |

Appendix 8: Teacher Professional Development

An overview of a strategy to address the professional development needs of teachers of Year 1 – 3 classes in Samoan Schools

Background

One of the main goals of the SSFGS was to improve student achievement and to reduce the number of children at risk in literacy and numeracy. The end of programme evaluation report showed that this goal had not been achieved and that the numbers of children at risk in literacy and numeracy had increased. The report states that the reasons for the goal not being achieved are complex and numerous and that, rather than a failure of the programme, the goal was probably too ambitious.

One of the reasons for poor student achievement is related to the teaching skills of the teachers. While the SSFGS has provided the schools with many resources for use by both teachers and students, teachers often do not have the knowledge and skills to use the resources effectively. Many principals do not have the time or the skills to provide effective professional development for the teachers in their school.

Samoa has a National Teacher Development Framework, and Task Forces on both Literacy and Numeracy. Within MESC there is a Division responsible for Teacher Development. The National University of Samoa undertakes the pre-service training of teachers and has teacher qualification upgrade courses. While this teacher development network provides a structure that could collaboratively address the professional development issue, there is little co-ordination between them. The Literacy Task Force has met only once and the Teacher Development Division of MESC has very limited resources. The teacher qualification upgrade courses of the NUS have places for a limited number of teachers. While this is an excellent development and should continue, it is a long term solution and will have little immediate effect in improving student performance nationally.

Issues to be addressed

It is urgent that, if the number of students at risk in literacy and numeracy is to be reduced, the skills of principals and teachers must be increased. There is a need to develop and implement a strategy to improve the professional leadership capabilities of principals and the skills of teachers in teaching literacy and numeracy. The immediate focus needs to be on raising the skill levels of all teachers of Years 1 to 3 children as the foundation for the development of literacy and numeracy are laid in these years. At the same time, the skills of principals need to be raised to support the teachers.²

This will be a complex task and a number of issues need to be considered, including:

² If possible, early literacy and numeracy development should form part of the focus of early childhood education as this would benefit students on entering school.

- How to provide professional development in all schools at an affordable cost?
- What are realistic goals?
- Who is best able to provide the professional development?
- What is a realistic time frame in which to expect results to be seen in student achievement?
- What help should be sought?

An overview of a possible strategy

It would be too costly and take too long for a professional development programme to provide all the target group of teachers with a comprehensive understanding of literacy and numeracy and to develop their teaching skills to implement that knowledge. That can be an appropriate goal of pre-service and qualification upgrade programmes. For gains to be achieved more quickly the strategy should be simple, easily implemented and managed, reach all Yr 1 - Yr 3 teachers and not be over ambitious. The following attempts to provide an overview of a possible strategy:

1 Provide teachers with a basic tool kit

The goal would be to provide teachers with a tool kit for teaching reading, writing and mathematics. It would provide them with a step by step approach, including basic assessment techniques for determining children's strengths and capabilities and diagnosing their learning difficulties. The tool kit would include strategies and techniques to enhance identified capabilities and address identified needs.

There is a considerable amount of useful information available on line, much at no cost. The New Zealand Ministry of Education makes information and resources available through its website Te Kite Ipurangi (TKI). With New Zealand having a large Samoan population, there is much information that is directly relevant. The following web address would be a good starting point to search for material:

<http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/National-Standards>.

Another suggestion for consideration is the use of the "Early Grade Reading Assessment" (EGRA) and "Early Grade Mathematics Assessment" (EGMA) tools developed by the World Bank. Some Pacific countries (e.g. Vanuatu) have used these diagnostic tests to determine the basic literacy and numeracy skills of students.

Developing an effective tool kit would be the first step.

2 Training trainers

The second step would be to train a team of experienced teachers to be the trainers of the principals and the classroom teachers. Each trainer would be responsible for a group of schools and would work with the principal and the Yr 1 – 3 teachers on a regular basis – training, supervising and guiding the development of the teachers and their work in the classroom. Teachers would need to get support and be visited by the trainer every 2 – 3 weeks.

This model was used in the implementation of the SSFGS. The TOC team were the trainers of principals. Their work in training the principals in financial management and reporting was

effective. This model could be useful as a teacher development strategy, providing the trainers were sufficiently experienced and were well trained for the task. A dedicated team of trainers would be the best option to ensure a focus on improving student performance. An alternative could be to have a training function as part of the role of the School Review Officers who are to be appointed. However, there would be a risk that their other duties may compromise the professional development role.

3 Leadership of the programme

As with the SSFGS, leadership from within MESC is essential to ensure ownership of the teacher development programme by all stakeholders. The end of programme evaluation of the SSFGS identified the leadership of the TOC team as being a major factor in the success of the grant scheme. A similar level and quality of leadership would be essential for the teacher development programme. Involving suitably qualified and experienced staff from the Faculty of Education of the NUS would strengthen the resources of MESC.

4 External support/mentoring

For the programme to be successful there is a need for someone or a small team to have considerable experience and knowledge of the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics to children in the first two or three years of school. This is essential in the development of the tool kit and the training of the trainers. If such a person or people are not available from within MESC or NUS, then it will be necessary to contract that support. There may be suitably qualified people within Samoa, but if not, seeking support from outside Samoa will need to occur.

If external support is required, care should be taken in selection. Criteria for selection would include:

- a. Excellent knowledge and understanding of literacy and numeracy;
- b. Successful experience in the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics to children in the first years of primary school;
- c. Experience in Samoa or other countries within the Pacific;
- d. Experience teaching children for whom English is a second language;
- e. Successful experience providing professional development to teachers;
- f. Ability to mentor a team leader and team members.

5 Summary

The goal is to raise the achievement of students in primary school in literacy and numeracy. This will be achieved through providing teachers of Yr 1 – 3 classes with a tool kit of resources and the skills to use these effectively. The teachers will be trained and supported in the use of the tool kit by experienced trainers, possibly the School Review Officers, who will in turn have been trained by suitably qualified mentor(s).

The effectiveness of the programme will be dependent on a number of factors, including:

- a. The development of an appropriate tool kit.
- b. The quality of the training of the trainers, teachers and principals.
- c. Ensuring ownership by all stakeholders.
- d. The ability for the programme to be sufficiently flexible to meet emerging needs and different circumstances of teachers and schools.

- e. The ability of the mentor(s) to provide the guidance and support required, to promote local leadership and ownership and not usurp control.
- f. At all times, meeting the needs of the students through meeting the needs of their teachers must remain paramount.

Cautionary note: Research is a basic function of universities. A mentor(s) selected from a university may wish to incorporate a research project into the mentoring role. There is a tension between the professional development programme and research. The programme needs to be flexible, responsive to student and teacher needs and to have the opportunity for changes to be made to meet emerging developments. However, a research project is unlikely to allow changes to be made once the project has begun as this can nullify or compromise the research.

Appendix 9: List of Acronyms

| | |
|---------|--|
| ACD | Aid Co-ordination Division |
| ACEO | Assistant Chief Executive Officer |
| CEO | Chief Executive Officer |
| CMAD | Curriculum Materials and Assessment Division |
| CT | Consumer Tax |
| DAC | Development Assistance Committee (of the OECD) |
| DFAT | Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia) |
| DPs | Development partners |
| EMIS | Education Management Information System |
| ESAC | Education Sector Advisory Committee |
| ESC | Education Sector Co-ordinator |
| ESCD | Education Sector Co-ordination Division |
| ESP | Education Sector Plan |
| ESP II | Education Sector Program II |
| ESSP | Education Sector Support Program |
| GoS | Government of Samoa |
| IT | Information Technology |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| MESC | Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture |
| MFAT | Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (New Zealand) |
| MOF | Ministry of Finance |
| MSS | Minimum Service Standards |
| NTDF | National Teacher Development Framework |
| NUS | National University of Samoa |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| PSC | Public Service Commission |
| SAT/WST | Samoan Tala |
| SBS | Sector Budget Support |
| SEN | Student Enrolment Number |
| SOD | School Operations Division |
| SPELL | Samoa Primary Education Literacy Level Test |
| SSFSGS | Samoa School (Primary) Fee Grant Scheme |
| SWAp | Sector Wide Approach |
| TDAD | Teacher Development and Advisory Division |
| TOC | Team of Consultants |
| WST/SAT | Samoan Tala |