

**Pacific Regional Conference on
Harmonizing M&E for Better Education
Nadi, Fiji, 2-4 July, 2008**

Background

The achievement of the Education for All (EFA) is a priority area for Pacific governments and for the regional development community. With the growing realization of the importance of education for national development, government spending and international aid for basic education have increased in most Pacific countries in the past decade. New global initiatives such as the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) have been set up to assist developing countries to speed up their effort in providing quality basic education to all children. The increased investment in and access to basic education has raised the demand for better education outcomes from governments themselves and development partners¹. They want to know what public policies, investments and interventions work well, which do not, and the reasons of why. This has necessitated a strengthening of education information systems as well as capacity development of staff for monitoring and evaluation activities. Development partners have attempted to work with government partners on monitoring and evaluation. But, too often, it has been ad hoc, fragmented and disconnected. Finding new ways of working together in a more collaborative and efficient manner between governments and development partners has become increasingly important in advancing further the effort of achieving EFA in the Pacific region.

Over the past decade or so, countries in the Pacific region have made considerable progress in achieving EFA with the support of the regional development community. However, this progress could be made bigger if governments and development partners could better harmonize their work in some fundamental and yet critical areas in their education systems. One such area, for instance, is monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Globally, more and more countries are now focusing on improving M&E at the system level to assess the progress and results of their educational improvement effort. Though Pacific countries have made achievement in M&E in education over the years, most M&E practices have been project/program based and fragmented. There is a lack of overall M&E framework or institutional M&E in the education sector in most Pacific countries. As a consequence, good data and M&E results are difficult to be found and used for making improvement policies and decisions. Can governments and development partners in the region work together in a more effective way to change this situation? Surely, they can. In fact, the regional development partners are willing to find new ways of working together to assist countries' effort in making further progress towards EFA through initiatives such as developing and strengthening country's M&E system in education. They have agreed to take a coordinated approach and work with the governments to make a difference in the coming years. To move the effort in this area forward, some ground work still needs to be done in the areas of awareness, consensus-building, and prioritization of improvement actions, even though we agree to build on the existing work done by the countries and by the development community.

In this context, a Pacific regional conference, "*Harmonizing M&E for Better Education*", will be held at the Fijian Shangri-la Resort in Nadi, Fiji, on July 2-4, 2008. It is intended to be a kick-off event to launch this new coordinated effort. This 3-day event will involve high-level policymakers and practitioners from all 15 Pacific countries. The development partners in the

¹ "Development partners" include both donor and non-donor agencies that work in the field of education development.

region have made the commitment to follow up with the outcome of this conference and provide necessary support both technically and financially to the countries in implementing the agreed actions at the end of the conference.

Conference Objectives

The main purpose of this proposed conference is to discuss among Pacific governments and development partners new ways of working together to achieve EFA, starting from a harmonized effort in strengthening and improving M&E systems for better planning, policy-making, and results in education. It is expected that regional governments and development partners can learn lessons from this test case of working together on M&E improvement and apply the harmonization methodology to address other EFA-related issues in the Pacific countries and region. More specifically, the conference is intended to provide a platform for countries and development partners to:

- Identify and agree on major obstacles to achieve EFA in the region by visiting the common issues revealed from country's EFA/MDG mid-decade assessment reporting
- Discuss how governments and development partners can better harmonize their work and speed up the effort in achieving EFA
- Understand the need and what takes of a sound M&E system for better EFA results and long-term development in the education sector
- Develop a general framework and agree on a concrete action proposal for strengthening M&E system as a test case for the discussed new way of working together between governments and development partners

Sponsors and Supporting Development Partners

Fiji is the host country for this conference. The conference is financed by the Australian Agency for International Development (AUSAID), the Fast Track Initiative (FTI/EPDF) and the World Bank, with support from New Zealand's International Aid & Development Agency (NZAID), South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment (SPBEA), UNESCO, and UNICEF. SPBEA is the conference organizer.