

SOLOMON ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

**Ministry of Education and
Human Resources Development**



EDUCATION STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

2007 – 2015

Honiara, Solomon Islands

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FOREWORD

It is my pleasure to present this *Education Strategic Framework (ESF), 2007-2015* to the people of the Solomon Islands. The present Government came to power in 2006 and presented its policies in a document entitled *Grand Coalition for Change Government: Policy Translation Implementation Document, 2006-2009*. That document sets out a commitment to the Government's vision to give the people of the Solomon Islands hope, prosperity and peace in a secure environment. This present document is a key instrument for the Solomon Islands education system to assist in achieving that vision.

Our young people carry our hopes for the future. It is in their education that the hope of the nation lies. This *Education Strategic Framework (ESF) 2007-2015* provides a clear direction for the future, and a benchmark against which the development of our country's education system can be evaluated. It provides a long term vision that will assist in shaping the development of our most precious resource, our people.

This document is a key staging point at the end of a long process of consultation and development. The *Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2004-2006* was the implementation plan for the Solomon Islands Government and the main Development Partners, European Union and NZAID within the framework of the *Education Sector Investment and Reform Programme (ESIRP), phase I*. It set out to provide equitable access to quality basic education for all children in the Solomon Islands. It also aimed to provide access to community, technical, vocational and tertiary education that will meet individual, regional and national needs for a knowledgeable skilled, competent and complete people. Finally, it sought to manage resources in an efficient, effective and transparent manner. These goals remain the basis of this new *Education Strategic Framework (ESF) 2007-2015* and link this present document to the consistent direction of our Solomon Islands education system over the last three years.

The *Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2004-2006* included a recommendation that provincial education action plans be developed. With assistance and financial support from the European Union and the New Zealand Agency for International Development, that process of development has been

completed. The ten provincial education plans have been discussed nationwide at a series of provincial workshops coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development. The findings of these provincial plans have been synthesised and merged with inputs from the central level into a national document, a *National Education Action Plan (NEAP) 2007-2009 of April 2007*. This latter document has a three year focus, and provides a basis for the practical implementation of initiatives that will improve equal access to quality education for all our young people.

This document, the *Education Strategic Framework (ESF) 2007-2015*, is a revision of the *Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2004-2006*. It correlates with the Provincial planning documents for the medium term (the *Provincial Education Action Plans (PEAP)* and the *National Education Action Plan (NEAP), 2007-2009*. It also captures the planned process beyond 2009 and covers a long-term period of 9 years. This means that the nature of this overall education planning document can change. It is called a 'framework' rather than a 'plan' because it sets out a way forward. It does not provide all the answers, nor even detailed annual costed work plans. However, our Ministry of Education and Human Resources (MEHRD) is now able to produce clear annual work plans, like for 2007 with clear linking to the approved recurrent and development budget and expected outcomes of the *National Education Action Plan, 2007-2009* and the *Policy Translation Implementation Document (PTID) 2006-2009* of the Grand Coalition for Change Government. This year the MEHRD wants to develop the costing for the *National Education Action Plan (NEAP) 2007-2009* and a *Mid Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF)*.

In April 2007 the Solomon Islands Government represented by Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Development Planning and Aid Co-ordination and Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development signed a *Letter of Arrangement* with the main Development partners, European Union and NZAID which guaranteed the longer term technical and financial support for the *Education Sector Investment and Reform Programme (ESIRP), phase II* and the *National Education Action Plan, 2007-2009*

The *Education Strategic Framework (ESF)* charts a course by identifying key education policy issues, and assists in developing possible criteria (a *Performance Assessment Framework, (PAF)* against which the performance of the education sector can be assessed. In other words, it helps us to get a clear

idea about the progress towards the expected impact of our sector wide education programme in 2015.

It is essentially a document to reflect on change, reform and development. It takes a longer term view than its predecessor, the *Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2004-2006*, but is entirely consistent with that document. It recognises that change or reform is never simple or easy, but that if we are to progress as a nation, the development of our human resources through education is essential. The Sector Wide Approach and the planned change in the education sector needs ample time and also longer term commitment and interest of all stakeholders. Changes, in particular policy and organisational changes are not made in one day. We need to listen to all, in particular to those who know what is happening in the classrooms, also in the remote areas. That is why the MEHRD is eager to continuously invite all stakeholders in the discussion and the development of the education sector..

The *Education Strategic Framework (ESF)* together with the *National Education Action Plan (NEAP), 2007-2009* will help us to jointly focus on the main issues in all sub-sectors as early childhood, primary, secondary, tertiary and technical, vocational and community and adult education. It is also necessary to make sure the fundamentals and policies are sound. Nowhere is it more important to get the foundations right than in education. 2015 is an important year for world-wide education. It will be the year to assess to what extent all countries have achieved the United Nations' *Millennium Development Goals (MDG's)*. Do we have then all the children enrolled in relevant primary education and did we achieve or maintain a gender balance at all levels of education? The Government of Solomon Islands is committed to achieve these goals and even to achieve more. Our ambitious goals are expressed in this *Education Strategic Framework (ESF) 2007-2015*.

I commend this *Education Strategic Framework 2007-2015* to you, as I believe that it provides a very sound basis for the development of the people of the Solomon Islands, and a solid foundation for investment in our country's future.

Hon Dr Derek Sikua,
Minister of Education

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Definition of Terms

Basic Education	The level of education that constitutes the foundation stage offered to all children. In the Solomon Islands this means the first nine years of formal education from the preparatory year through to Form 3 or other programmes offered elsewhere at similar levels for out-of-school youth and adults.
Preparatory Year	The first year of primary schooling in the classroom before Standard 1 (for six-year-old children on average)
Primary Education	Preparatory Year to end of Standard 6
Lower Primary	Preparatory Year, & Standards 1, 2 & 3
Upper Primary	Standard 4 to Standard 6
Secondary Education	Form 1 to Form 7
Junior Secondary	Form 1 to Form 3 (also called lower secondary)
Senior Secondary	Form 4 to Form 7 (also called upper secondary)
Early Childhood Education	Community-based learning mainly for 3 to 5 year olds done partly in private centres but also supported by government.
Other Education and Training Providers	Private and provincial education authorities and private and national, provincial (rural) training centres.
Indigenous Education	Skills, customs, knowledge, including traditional pursuits, craft and music/dance of the people belonging naturally to the various areas of the Solomon Islands.
Community Standard	Community standard financing is a progressive user pay system where parents contribute a

Financing	larger percentage of the cost of their children's education as the children advance through the system. A formula showing parent/ national and provincial government contribution ratios are determined. For example, a primary school contribution where parents contribute 10% and government 90% of the total cost, a junior secondary ratio of parents 30%/ government 70%, and a senior secondary ratio of parents 50%/ government 50%. (Remark: we need the right percentages here for primary, secondary and TVET)
Pre-service training	Training undertaken to learn the profession or trade. Teacher pre-service training is training received while studying for the teacher diploma before beginning service as a qualified teacher.
In-service training	Training undertaken while on active service in a profession or trade. Teacher in-service training is a form of professional development to ensure that qualified teachers are kept up-to-date with curriculum, teaching methods, strategies and approaches to teaching.

Abbreviations

AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CAO	Chief Administrative Officer
CCC	Curriculum Coordination Committee
CDC	Curriculum Development Centre
CHS	Community High School
COL	Commissioner of Lands
EA	Education Authority
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EO	Education Officer
ESIRP	Education Sector Investment Reform Programme
ESP	Education Strategic Plan
ESF	Education Strategic Framework, 2007-2015
FBTP	Field-based Training Programme
ICTWG	Information and Communications Technology Working Group
IOA	Institutional and Organisational Assessment
IT	Information Technology
MEHRD	Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MTEF	Mid Term Expenditure Framework
NCB	National Curriculum Board
NCC	National Curriculum Committee
NEAB	National Examination and Assessment Board

NEAP	National Education Action Plan, 2007-2009
NEB	National Education Board
NERP	National Education Reform Committee
NESU	National Examination and Standards Unit
NF3	National Form 3 Examination
NFE	Non-formal Education
NLAB	National Library Advisory Board
NRB	National Research Board
NSS	National Secondary School
NSTP	National Skills Training Plan
NTB	National Training Board
NTC	National Training Committee
NTDTC	National Teacher Development Training Committee
NTTT	National Trade, Testing and Training Unit
NTU	National Training Unit
NZAID	New Zealand Agency for International Development
OETP	Other Education and Training Providers
PAF	Performance Assessment Framework
PCDO	Principal Curriculum Development Officers
PCRU	Planning Coordination and Research Unit
PEA	Provincial Education Authorities
PEAP	Provincial Education Action Plan
PEDP	Primary Education Development Project
PFNet	People First Network
PS	Permanent Secretary

PSC	Public Service Commission
PSS	Provincial Secondary School
PSSC	Pacific Secondary School Certificate
PVIA	Pacific Vocational Interest Analysis
RTC	Rural Training Centre
SAC	Subject Advisory Committee
SIARTC	Solomon Islands Association of Rural Training Centres
SIBC	Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation
SICHE	Solomon Islands College of Higher Education
SIDEN	Solomon Islands Distance Education Network
SINTA	Solomon Islands National Teachers Association
SISC	Solomon Islands School Certificate
SISEE	Solomon Islands Secondary Entrance Examination
SOE	School of Education (SICHE)
SPBEA	South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment
STABEX 99	Stabilisation of Exchange Rates for 1999
TA	Technical Assistance
TDO	Teacher Development Office
TS	Teaching Service
TSC	Teaching Service Commission
TSD	Teaching Service Division
TTDO	Teacher Training and Development Officer
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
US	Under Secretary
VHF	Very High Frequency

WB	World Bank
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EDUCATION STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

2007-2015

Introduction

During 2006, considerable feedback was received on the *Education Strategic Plan 2004-2006*. A stocktake and analysis, reported in *A Stocktake Analysis of the Education Strategic Plan 2004-2009*, was undertaken in May 2006 with the aim of analysing the progress and status of the education strategic plan with respect to completion and non-completion of activities stipulated in the plan. It found that a large proportion of the activities had not met the projected milestones. Similarly, the 2005 *Annual Report* of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD) noted that a major shortcoming was that plans were too ambitious in relation to local capacity to implement the programmes and projects. This finding was to be addressed by reviewing the *Education Strategic Plan 2004-2006* in 2006 to bring plans in line with realistic capacity, bringing the MEHRD up to approved establishment, and using both local and international technical assistance judiciously.

The sequence of activity over July to October 2006 has involved the further development of ten provincial education action plans, discussion of these draft documents at a series of provincial workshops, and consideration of feedback on the drafts from the “grassroots”. The findings and feedback from these ten provincial education action plans were incorporated into a draft *National Education Action Plan (NEAP) 2007-2009*. During a National Workshop held in Honiara on 11 and 12 October 2006 both documents, the *Education Strategic Plan* and *National Education Action Plan (2007-2009)* were discussed and reviewed. It resulted in a draft *Education Strategic Framework* for the period 2007-2015 and a revised *National Education Action Plan*. After another workshop in February the latter one was finalised and approved in April 2007 and the Framework developed to its 4th version.

Representatives from provincial education authorities, from Church authorities, from the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education, from interested community groups, and from the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development attended the workshops in 2006 and 2007.

The *National Education Action Plan 2007-2009* reflects the general needs of all divisions at national level, of the provinces and needs specific to individual

provinces. It is derived from the ten provincial education action plans (Central Islands, Choiseul, Guadalcanal, Honiara, Isabel, Makira-Ulawa, Malaita, Renbel, Temotu, and Western).

The Solomon Islands National Education Action Plan 2007-2009:

- is based on three education sector-wide strategic goals (derived from the Education Strategic Plan 2004-2006);
- includes a set of outcomes, objectives and expected outputs designed to guide collective action and frame key challenges and potential projects;
- builds on past successes and on the progress made in developing ten provincial education action plans;
- includes a set of activities, human resources and organisations responsible for achieving the expected outputs and outcomes;
- provides a mandate for leadership.

The National Education Action Plan 2007-2009 is the planning document that focuses on a three-year time frame (the “shorter term”). That document can be regarded as a “business plan” that provides a focus for action for the whole education sector, with specific proposals that are related to each of the main education sectors (early childhood education, primary education, junior secondary education, senior secondary education, tertiary education and technical and vocational education and training). It is derived from, and supports, the ten provincial education plans. The plans of the Church education authorities are reflected in this overall national planning document. The annual work programmes of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, as reflected in the MEHRD’s Education Corporate Plan 2006-2008, are also directly related to this plan. Other donor activity will be coordinated with national needs reflected in the national planning documents.

The revision of the Education Strategic Plan 2004-2006 has resulted in the production of this document, the Education Strategic Framework 2007-2015. Because of the existence of the National Education Action Plan 2007-2009, this present document has changed in character from the previous Education Strategic Plan 2004-2006. It is nevertheless derived directly from its predecessor, and is broadly consistent with its original direction. In addition,

it is acknowledged that there exists a plethora of reports and planning documents relating to education in the Solomon Islands. What was previously lacking was a longer-term overarching education policy framework that brings all these together and provides a touchstone against which various projects and initiatives can be evaluated.

This Education Strategic Framework 2007-2015 differs from its predecessor (the Education Strategic Plan 2004-2006) in a number of ways:

- Its focus is a medium to longer term strategic view of the Solomon Islands education system.
- It concentrates only on high-level goals, outcomes and objectives.
- It includes an analysis of key policy issues, and key anticipated policy outcomes.
- It provides a benchmark against which other planning documents and proposed initiatives can be measured.
- Detailed short-term activities have been eliminated, since these activities are now incorporated in the medium term National Education Action Plan 2007-2009.
- Some activities have been deferred for consideration later in the planning cycle.

This Education Strategic Framework 2007-2015 is therefore intended to be a document that provides overall longer term strategic direction and oversight for the Solomon Islands education system out to 2015. The broader policy issues have been presented as higher level objectives in the context of this longer time frame. In time it is possible that the Education Strategic Framework 2007-2009 and the Education Sector Investment and Reform Programme (ESIRP), phase II will be integrated as a single high-level strategic planning document that gives validity and forward direction to the proposed education reforms.

At completion of the planning period, the objective is that the nation will have achieved universal basic education to form 3, and will have a technical, vocational and further education system meeting the skill needs of the nation. The system will be managed with financial efficiency and transparency and with stakeholder involvement.

1. Philosophical Framework

Learning is a process by which individuals gain fundamental knowledge, skills, competencies, attitudes, values, beliefs, and symbolic systems to enable them to live with their family, their community, the wider Solomon Islands society and the world beyond. Learning takes place over a lifetime and occurs in the home, the community, and the workplace, as well as in schools and centres of learning.

Education involves planned activities to develop the whole human being, usually occurring in schools or other institutions. Education enables people to extend their physical, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual skills, competencies or perspectives, through a range of opportunities.

Quality education enables citizens to develop to their potential and to become self-reliant. Quality education enables individuals to improve their quality of life, have better health and an improved environment that in turn may reduce poverty, social injustice and unemployment.

We believe that responsibility to support basic education resides with teachers, parents, the community, education authorities, local governments and the national government. All these stakeholders are part of an evolving and dynamic partnership.

We believe that traditional knowledge, skills and attitudes are an essential part of education. Education should include understanding traditional and Christian values and beliefs, ways of thinking, reasoning and understanding, and ways of doing things such as tool making, music, art and craft, fishing, growing crops and other useful trades. It should also include language, literature (including oral tradition), culture, history, modern technologies, the arts and the sciences.

Education must be available to all, regardless of gender, ethnicity and socio-economic background. In particular, *basic education* must be accessible to and be accessed by all school age children in Solomon Islands. Likewise, adults should have access to further education and training to enable them to develop skills for employment or to broaden their knowledge.

2. Purpose Of The Education Strategic Framework

This *Education Strategic Framework 2007-2015* has been prepared by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD) to present the strategic education policy framework within which the long term development of the Solomon Islands education system will be framed, designed and implemented over the next nine years. It establishes priorities and a plan of action to ensure that the education system can implement necessary reforms in order to improve student achievement and to contribute to economic growth.

It is premised on there being a national commitment to directing resources sufficient to meet the education and training needs of the majority of people who live in rural and regional areas.

The Framework is an extension and revision of the *Education Strategic Plan 2004 – 2006*. It consolidates the recommendations of working groups established by the MEHRD between 2004 and 2006 to develop 10 Provincial Education Action Plans through a process of consultation with key stakeholders and clients of the education system throughout the Solomon Islands. It captures the *National Education Action Plan 2007-2009* which summarises and synthesises the priorities for the medium term till 2009 and which is based on the provincial education action plans. Moreover, it is an outcome of nationwide consultation and two national workshops held in Honiara to discuss its implications and to provide feedback on the priorities identified, the first on 11 & 12 October, 2006, and the second on 15 & 16 February, 2007. It is a homegrown document.

This Framework provides a basis for the MEHRD's objective to ensure universal basic education is available to every child of school age in the Solomon Islands. It will enable the MEHRD to continue its reform of the education system to make it more responsive and appropriate to the needs of Solomon Islanders. It identifies strategies for enhancing the capacity of the education system to be better able to cope with the rapidly expanding demands being placed upon it. It includes changes and reforms to the provision of basic education services, technical, vocational and further education, and the management of the education system.

The *Education Strategic Plan 2004 – 2006* envisaged that a significant outcome would be the development of Provincial Education Action Plans and the National Education Action Plan that would detail a comprehensive reform programme to be implemented over the short term. These activities were completed in 2007. Based on this work, the MEHRD has confirmed the outline and some details of the education reform agenda out to the Year 2015 in this revised Framework. It now needs to gain public support and commitment for its plans, and to secure financial and other support from national and international funding agencies and development partners. The MEHRD proposes to consult further with development partners to review this Framework in 2009.

3. Global and Regional Context

Education in the Solomon Islands, while an important national priority, is also linked to global international goals for education and to our broader regional context in the Pacific.

This education strategic framework for the Solomon Islands is directly associated with the Millennium Development Goals adopted at the turn of the century by the United Nations. In particular, the emphasis on achieving access to universal basic education for all Solomon Islands children in our long-term strategic goals is derived directly from the second Millennium Development goal. Millennium Development Goal No 2 sets out an aim of achieving universal primary education. The target is to ensure that all boys and girls complete primary school. The target date to achieve the Millennium Development Goals is 2015, and the period covered by the Solomon Islands Education Strategic Framework (2007-2015) is therefore aligned with this target date.

In addition, the UNESCO sponsored *Asia and Pacific Regional Framework for Action: Education for All* sets out guiding principles, specific goals and targets for 2015. These goals and targets were adopted by the Asia-Pacific Conference on Education for All 2000 Assessment, held in Bangkok, Thailand from 17-20 January, 2000. The education strategy of the Solomon Islands is linked to and is consistent with this international and regional development.

Our strategic goals are also linked with the regional goals for education adopted by the Pacific Education Forum. These regional goals for education focus on the Pacific Islands Forum Basic Education Action Plan., and on the regional initiatives sponsored by the Pacific Regional Initiative for the Development of (basic) Education (PRIDE). There is an emphasis on supporting basic education in the Pacific Islands Forum Basic Education Action Plan, and in the PRIDE initiatives, which is consistent with the strategic direction adopted by the Solomon Islands education system. The PRIDE Project is also supporting the development of education strategic planning in Pacific countries. The Pacific Plan is based on the concept of regionalism: that is, countries working together for their joint and individual benefit. Regionalism under the Pacific Plan does not limit national sovereignty. It is not intended to replace national programmes, only to support and complement them. This Pacific regional approach is supported because it adds value to our own national efforts in the education sector here in the Solomon Islands.

4. Vision

Our vision is that all Solomon Islanders will develop as individuals and possess the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to earn a living and to live in harmony with others and their environment. We envisage a united and progressive society in which all can live in peace and harmony with fair and equitable opportunities for a better life.

Parents and members of the community are to develop a sense of ownership of all educational institutions.

5. Goals

The long-term goals for the Solomon Islands education system are to plan and take action over the planning period (2007 to 2015) to:

- Provide equitable access to quality basic education for all children in the Solomon Islands.
- Provide access to community, technical, vocational and tertiary education that will meet individual, regional and national needs for a knowledgeable, skilled, competent and complete people.
- Manage resources in an efficient, effective and transparent manner.

6. Strategies

The overarching strategic goal is to provide universal access to quality basic education for all children by 2015, and improved access to technical and vocational education and training. Government has undertaken to place priority on refocusing education sector expenditure on providing services at primary and junior secondary schools to achieve universal basic education by 2015. Six key strategies have therefore been developed as a focus for the period 2007 to 2015.

These 6 immediate key strategies for development are the following:

- To strengthen planning, management, co-ordination and monitoring of the SWAp, in particular of the *National Education Action Plan, NEAP (2007-2009)* and *Education Sector Framework ESF, 2007-2015*
- To develop (like for Secondary and Tertiary education), revise (like the Education Act) or finalise (like for Early Childhood) policies for the different sub sectors or cross cutting areas (like Teacher Training and Development, decentralisation processes)
- On the basis of a national demand, to ensure longer term interest, technical assistance (including the development of a national TA-pool) and funding from Development Partners for the SWAp, ESIRPII, NEAP (2007-2009), ESF (2007-2015)
- To develop and implement a programme of Human Resource Development and capacity building
- To develop and implement an improved and harmonised grants system to support school operations in primary, secondary education

and in TVET.

- To develop and implement an improved and harmonised school infrastructure programme for primary, secondary education and TVET.

Actions to develop and implement each of these key strategies, with an allocation of responsibilities and specific timelines for completion of tasks, are included in the *National Education Action Plan 2007-2009* and it is expected to further develop a revised *National Education Action Plan II* for the period 2010-2012, which will fit in the *Education Strategic Framework, 2007-2015*. Annual work plans and associated budgets will be developed by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development to sustain the education system by resourcing the *National Education Action Plan 2007-2009* and supporting the goals and strategies set out in this *Education Strategic Framework*.

Specific objectives (see also 9) that will be addressed in the longer term include:

- To prepare a medium term financing framework to support the education system;
- To seek development partner support to operate schools and training centres, to develop the capacity of the MEHRD and the Education Authorities, and to support teacher training at SICHE;
- To develop a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (Performance Assessment System) to monitor and evaluate the performance of the Solomon Islands education system

7. Outcomes

The Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development will direct resources to achieve the following main outcomes:

The following outcomes will be achieved:

management of human and financial resources, a sound system of monitoring and evaluation, and effective development of appropriate skills and competencies in the education work force.

8. Objectives

The following objectives are derived from the strategic goals and outcomes:

1. To increase access to all levels of education by provision of

- 1.1. An adequate number of schools, classrooms, desks, dormitories and other infrastructure
- 1.2. (Financial) Support from government and other stakeholders

2. To improve equal access to all levels of education for

- 2.1 Children, students and people with special needs
- 2.2 Girls and boys, in particular in isolated locations

3. To improve quality for all levels of education by:

- 3.1 Provision of an adequate number of qualified teachers and other workers, in the education sector
- 3.2 Development and maintenance of a high quality process of teaching and learning
- 3.3 Development, distribution and use of a relevant, high quality and modern national and local school curricula
- 3.4 Provision of an adequate number of modern, relevant teaching and learning materials, facilities, equipment and materials
- 3.5 Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for all education staff
- 3.6 Monitoring and assessment of sound standards of student literacy and numeracy and students' progress in other subjects
- 3.7 Improvement of efficiency and effectiveness of sub sector education systems, in particular tertiary education by giving it a more (labour) demand oriented direction

I. For Basic Education:

- **Outcome 1 (*Access and Equity*):** All children in the Solomon Islands regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, location or disability have access to Basic Education, which is including pre-school, primary, and secondary junior school till Form 3, achieved through an adequate number of schools, classrooms, desks, dormitories and other infrastructure and financial support from government and other stakeholders

II. For other levels and types of education:

- **Outcome 2 (*Access and Equity*):** People in the Solomon Islands regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, location or disability have improved access to relevant, demand oriented community, technical, vocational or tertiary education achieved through an adequate number of schools or centres, classrooms, desks, dormitories, equipment and other infrastructure and financial support from government and other stakeholders

III. For all levels and types of education and training:

- **Outcome 3 (*Quality*):** All levels and dimensions of the Solomon Islands education system consistently demonstrate standards of excellence and deliver a quality education, which means high quality of learning achieved through provision of an adequate number of qualified teachers and other workers, in the education sector, relevant national school curriculum and local curricula, adequate number of modern, relevant teaching and learning materials or facilities, sound standards of student literacy and numeracy.

IV. In relation to management:

- **Outcome 4 (*Management*):** The management of the Solomon Islands education system is effective and efficient, including effective education policy development, planning and budgeting, effective

4 To improve the management of Sector Wide Education Programme by implementing the 6 Strategies (see also page 12,13) which includes:

4.1 Strengthening planning, budgeting, management, co-ordination and monitoring

- To produce a logical framework for the SWAp which creates interlinkages and increased cohesion between ESIRP II, NEAP (2007-2009) and ESF (2007-2015) as well as among the different sub sectors and stakeholders involved
- To timely produce more outcome oriented and cohesive annual budgeting, planning and reporting based on SIEMIS and a Performance Assessment Framework (PAF)
- Revitalise TWG's on planning/budgeting and monitoring
- To develop a 3-year, outcome oriented Mid Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF)
- To develop a strong sector secretariat and sector co-ordination team
- To develop a PAF and strengthen utilisation of SIEMIS.
- To strengthen the role of Provincial Government and Authorities in planning, implementing and monitoring NEAP

4.2 To develop, revise or finalise policies for the different sub sectors or cross cutting areas

- To revitalise the TWG's for policy
- Make an inventory of all policies to be developed, revised and finalised
- Organise inputs and participation from all kinds of actors (Government, Development Partners, Civil Society, Private sector, NGO's, international agencies)

4.3 On the basis of a national demand, to ensure longer term interest, technical assistance (including the development of a national TA-pool) and funding from Development Partners for the SWAp, ESIRPII, NEAP (2007-2009), ESF (2007-2015)

- To finalise and to sign the Arrangement between Development Partners and SIG and to make amendments as necessary.

4.4. To develop and implement a programme of Human Resource Development and capacity building

- To start an Institutional and Organisational Analysis (IOA) including a HR-needs analysis to support for the development of a programme for Human Resource Development and capacity building

4.5 To develop and implement an improved and harmonised grants system to support school operations in primary, secondary education and in TVET

- To assess the grants system to support school operations in primary, secondary education and in TVET to support for the development of a harmonised grant system.

4.6 To develop and implement an improved and harmonised school infrastructure programme for primary, secondary education and TVET.

- To assess the school infrastructure programme for primary, secondary education and TVET to support for the development of a harmonised infrastructure system.

The specific tasks, activities and/or outputs that will be undertaken over the period 2007-2009 in relation to each of these key objectives are set out in the National Education Action Plan 2007-2009 in the Schedule of Activities

9. Roles

Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development

The role of the MEHRD is to provide nation-wide leadership in the implementation of this Framework and associated planning documents. Its key responsibility is the development and implementation of effective education policy. In so doing, the MEHRD shall promote, coordinate, facilitate, evaluate and report changes that will result in the equitable delivery of quality education and training services to all people throughout the Solomon Islands.

The MEHRD will strengthen and establish new partnerships with stakeholders and clients in designing, implementing and monitoring the

equitable and sustained delivery of education services. These are the provincial governments, education authorities, churches, non-government organisations, communities, parents and children.

Role of Education Authorities

The role of Education Authorities is to provide leadership in contributing to the development and revision of this Framework, in implementing it, including the associated planning documents at their level. The authorities shall coordinate, facilitate and evaluate activities approved in the Framework and those that will enhance effective delivery of the National Education Action Plan. As well, Authorities will provide reports to MEHRD on the activities and changes that will occur as a result of implementing the planned direction for the education system.

Role of Educational Institutions

The role of educational institutions is to coordinate the implementation of specific activities according to the education strategic framework. To this end, all educational institutions will maintain the operation of current programmes, while at the same time they will cooperate and coordinate specified relevant activities of the Framework and provide reports to respective Education Authorities on the effects of the Framework on the institution. Also, the institutions should provide an avenue for the inclusion of parents and members of the immediate communities to enhance active involvement in the implementation process. Educational institutions include all schools and training centres in both the formal and non-formal sub-sectors.

Role of Parents and Communities

The role of parents and communities is to provide support and advice on the application of the Framework and associated planning documents according to specific local contexts. To achieve this, community representatives are expected to participate in the dialogue concerning the implementation of the Framework and to be actively involved in approved activities where necessary.

10. Issues And Constraints

The issues we confront are:

- A national population growth rate estimated at 2.8% per annum (one of the highest in the Pacific) and a school age cohort constituting a significant proportion of the population will increase the demand for primary and junior secondary education. 136,624 school students were enrolled in 2005. The Solomon Islands school age population (ages 6 to 19) is forecast to be over 185,000 in 2014, out of an estimated total population of over 577,000.
- Deficiencies in access to schools, poor education facilities, and a lack of trained teachers, materials and equipment result in less than 100% of primary school age children attending primary school, and a low progression rate to secondary, vocational, technical, and post-secondary education.
- The existence of a large number of small isolated rural communities in the Solomon Islands means current approaches to providing educational services are costly and inefficient.
- The development of syllabuses, curriculum and learning materials, although presently under review, has not generated a level of student achievement that meets the expectations of parents and employers.
- The assessment system in the past was designed to exclude young people from education rather than to assess competencies, promote learning or enhance teaching practice.
- A generally under resourced, disparate, traditional and supply oriented technical and vocational education structure provides low quality services and fails to produce a sufficient number of people possessing the high-level skills needed for economic advancement of communities, regions or the nation.
- A highly centralised system has become increasingly alienated from the very diverse local and provincial priorities and specific demands of its clients and fails to lead in establishing and achieving priorities.

- A multi-layered management and inefficient administrative system has unclear responsibilities and lacks correlation with performance and increased outputs and quality of service delivery, and within it existing legislation, regulations and procedures are not adhered to in a disciplined manner.
- A considerable proportion of the national budget on a per capita basis is directed to senior secondary and tertiary education at the expense of primary and junior secondary education.

11. Basic Education

11.1 Principles Underpinning Basic Education

Basic Education is seen as the gradual and planned systematic introduction of a child to worthwhile information, knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to prepare that child to develop to his or her full potential to contribute fully to the community and nation. The following are the principles on which we believe that basic education in the Solomon Islands should be based. They provide basic principles for the development of programmes proposed in this Framework. We believe that:

- Basic education progressively introduces a child to the information, knowledge and skills necessary for life;
- Basic education is holistic; it encompasses physical, mental, social and spiritual aspects of life;
- Basic education models and shapes behaviour and attitudes compatible with the wider society in which the child is to live;
- Basic education provides basic skills and competencies required for economic activity and development;
- Basic education prepares a child to become self-reliant and responsible, a resourceful member in the community, and promotes committed and responsible leadership;

- Basic education encourages a child to adhere to and respect religious, traditional and cultural values, beliefs, norms and codes of conduct of Solomon Islands society;
- Basic education provides the basis for a child to recognise and accept the diversity of Solomon Islands' culture, tradition, religion, and ethnicity throughout the Islands.

11.2 The Reformed Education System

Ten years of Basic Education will be the minimum level of formal education provided to all school age children in Solomon Islands. This programme will begin with the Preparatory Year followed by a coherent continuous set of learning experiences through primary schooling to Form 3. A brief outline of the Solomon Islands education system and a structural framework diagram is presented in Appendices 1 & 2.

The MEHRD recognises that education can be shared with other education and training providers. Understanding its obligations to ensure that quality education and training is provided to its people, MEHRD will establish policies to guide and regulate other education and training providers to develop and deliver quality education. Other education and training providers include church and private education authorities running schools and tertiary institutions.

As a matter of high priority, the MEHRD will incorporate activities within other programmes and special programmes to achieve gender equity in access to basic education. Of equal priority will be the need to identify the needs of students in the 10 to 19 year old age groups who have been pushed-out or dropped out of formal education, and to design programmes to enable them to re-enter the system or to progress along alternate education and training paths.

In addition the MEHRD will conduct field studies to identify the scope of problems of people with disabilities and identify the economic constraints to achieving access to education and design programmes to overcome these.

11.3 Critical Constraints to Achieving These Outcomes

The Framework proposes significant and substantial changes to the structure, content and management of the education system that have been widely discussed with stakeholders in all provinces and in many schools and communities. We recognise the need for further consultation, and the possibility of local level differences. We believe that there is widespread support for the proposed changes. We therefore do not see community support as a constraint.

The most critical constraint will be gaining access to the financial resources required to maintain current services and to implement the Framework and the associated planning documents.

The capacity of the national economy to generate the required budgetary resources is limited. At best Government revenue will be barely sufficient to maintain the current level of service. In fact, the revenue base will be inadequate even for this task. Government will therefore rely on financial support from its development partners if it is to sustain current service levels. Continued support will be required from its bilateral partners.

Importantly, the Government of the Solomon Islands will require access to substantial investment or development funds if it is to provide the teachers, buildings and materials required to expand the system and to improve the quality of services delivered. There has been significant support from the European Union, through STABEX and Economic Development Funds, to support basic and technical, vocational and further education. Similarly, the New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID) has provided a high level of support to the Solomon Islands education system over the period 2004-2006. And also other Development Partners maintain their support in their specific areas, like UNICEF in Early Childhood and Basic Education. UNICEF increased its support with an intensive and co-ordinated response to the recent earthquake and Tsunami of April 2007. The Republic of China and Government of Japan organise support for infrastructure and scholarships and UNESCO gives technical assistance to its National UNESCO office.,

12. Policy Areas, Expected Policy Outcomes, and Government Response

This section outlines 18 key education policy areas that have been identified as the critical issues with which the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development will need to engage in order to achieve the goals that lie at the centre of this Framework.

The structure of each sub-section in this part of the Framework is similar. The education policy issue is described, an anticipated policy outcome is articulated, and a Government policy response to the issue is provided. Proposals for new investments to address the issues that have been raised are presented.

The 18 key policy areas are:

- Policy Development, Planning, Research, Management, Co-ordination and Monitoring
- Universal Basic Education (Primary)
- Universal Basic Education (Junior Secondary)
- Senior Secondary Education
- Early Childhood Education
- Special Education
- Improving Literacy and Numeracy
- Curriculum
- Assessment
- Teacher Supply
- Teacher Quality
- Tertiary Education
- Technical and Vocational Education and Training
- Capacity Development
- Efficiency
- School Infrastructure
- Information and Communications Technology

- Financing Options and Financial Sustainability

12.1 Policy Development, Planning, Research, Management, Co-ordination and Monitoring

Policy Issue and Policy Outcome

The policy issue is the need to ensure that education policy development in the Solomon Islands is effective, and to strengthen the capacity to develop education policy in the MEHRD to support that objective. A further policy issue is the need to strengthen planning, research, management, co-ordination and monitoring skills in the MEHRD. Capacity also needs to be strengthened in other stakeholders, in particular in the provinces, the provincial government and different education authorities, but also in NGO's. A major constraint to effective implementation of the first three years of the Education Sector Investment and Reform Programme (ESIRP), phase I has been the lack of skilled human resources throughout the system . This would be a challenge for the new phase II (2007-2009) as well. The Sector Wide Programme (SWAp) which caters for all sub-sectors requires strong co-ordination, communication and management of a comprehensive programme which goes beyond the level of basic education only. . The SWAp includes the development of a dialogue with all stakeholders, from all levels, national and international (Development Partners) in order to involve them in the development of policies, the implementation and monitoring of the programme.

The desired policy outcome is that the MEHRD should have the appropriate¹ capacity to develop policy, and to design, plan, co-ordinate, implement and monitor the existing education system and any new investments that are envisioned. The education system should meet the following criteria:

- The education system is informed and steered by education policy that has been designed and developed according to an appropriate

¹ "Appropriate" in terms of the size of the education system and the extent to which quantitative information is seen as important for policy formulation, planning, management and monitoring

education policy framework and a robust education policy methodology;

- to the extent that it is appropriate in the Solomon Islands context, policy, planning, research, co-ordination, management, assessment, monitoring, administration, budget preparation, and resource allocation will be based (or, at least validated by) reliable information and analysis, and linked to measures or indicators of learning outcomes and social benefits;
- there will be MEHRD staff specifically responsible for these functions, and policy, planning, co-ordination, management, and monitoring would be seen as “core” responsibilities;
- the “culture” of information-based and evidence-based decision making will be developed throughout the system (e.g. by research and improved communication and monitoring systems), and staff at all levels will be provided with necessary equipment and skills to utilise information efficiently and effectively;
- improved internal and external communication by MEHRD and between its main stakeholders: The burden on those responding to requests for information will be minimised, and information will be used at all levels from the classroom through the school to the MEHRD;
- redundant data capture and duplicated tasks will be eliminated;
- time-series data, in a consistent format, will be available for analysis;
- projections and indicators, comparable to international, national and regional norms and standards, will be generated and reviewed on a regular basis;
- a robust monitoring and evaluation framework will be in place.
- a research agenda, planning and budgeting system will in be in place to guarantee implementation of research and practical follow up of studies

The policy methodology required will consist of, first, provision of high quality policy advice (based on existing data, new research and monitoring systems), and, second, the undertaking of policy development and analysis activities, plus policy projects.

Government Policy Response

As an interim measure, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, in collaboration with other implementing agencies, will proceed with existing information and its current staff capacity, in anticipation of modest improvements, over time.

At the same time it will request external support to provide the needed capacity as a priority activity under the three-year National Education Action Plan. This approach will be clearly linked to a plan and a commitment to establish and institutionalise the required positions and functions during the framework period (2007-2015).

The development of this plan will require undertaking a major review of the MEHRD policy and planning functions. Strengthening policy and planning will be a priority component of the National Education Action Plan and the associated MEHRD Corporate Plan, with a firm timeframe and indicators for having an information-based planning and policy capacity fully operational within three years. This capacity will include addressing staffing requirements through a request for new positions and/or a re-designation of existing posts within the MEHRD, and will address space requirements through a redesign or relocation of the MEHRD work space.

Over the period 2004-2006 the MEHRD, with donor assistance, has developed the databases required to manage school returns and other data used to monitor and plan the development of the system. The development of the Solomon Islands Education Management Information System (SIEMIS) and the associated publication of the *Digest of Education Statistics 2005* marked a major step forward in collating and reporting data about the education system. This resource is valuable tool for education planners, and for policy-makers. The development of SIEMIS needs to continue (for instance, by including reporting on tertiary education and TVET information in the annual digest of statistics), while at the same time staff need to be trained to use the data for policy development and planning purposes. A Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) need to be developed in order to enable to organise and share with all stakeholders annual quick scans of the progress made in the education sector and the Sector Wide Programme and to feed in the Annual Joint Reviews for new planning purposes.

During the period 2007-2009, the programme will focus on strengthening MEHRD capacity in policy development, planning, research, co-ordination management and monitoring, and on strengthening communication and information systems and their use. The MEHRD, in collaboration with other implementing agencies, will also develop the capacity it needs, and obtain the information required to design and implement a programme for the remaining years of the *Education Strategic Framework* period (2010 to 2015).

The MEHRD will review its administration, co-ordination and management in order to strengthen its policy development role, its administrative structure, and its capacity to deliver education more effectively. The policy development and policy analysis roles of the MEHRD need to be strengthened, so that its administrative structure meets the new proposed national requirements, and so that its efficiency is increased.

The approach involves integrating information gained from selected investments with an overall initiative to strengthen MEHRD capacity. This Education Strategic Framework identifies 18 key areas in which reform has been planned. Initial investment under the related three-year National Education Action Plan involves a combination of capacity building, research, strengthening data systems, and staffing reform to address the full range of policy, planning and monitoring requirements for the Education Strategic Framework period. In addition to the direct investments to be made, investments in each of the remaining 17 policy areas include activities which will provide, test and/or validate information essential to policy and planning.

By the end of 2009 (the three-year period covered by the National Education Action Plan), the MEHRD will have a fully staffed policy, planning and monitoring capacity with information and staff skills appropriate to this function. SIEMIS will be fully functional to support these activities at all levels of the system, including school and classroom management. The MEHRD will have developed a comprehensive and detailed plan for the next three-year phase of the Education Strategic Framework period. Investments in each of the 18 main policy areas will have been implemented, monitored and evaluated, and this process will constitute an important input into continuing the strategic planning process.

Capacity building activities will be initiated through a combination of project support and grant funding. During the three years 2007-2009, the MEHRD will develop the necessary capacity to move forward in the remaining years. While data collection and analysis tasks can be supported under a project, responsibility for policy making cannot be delegated. The MEHRD will have to invest time and staff in order to engage with the implications of information that will be produced. The principal risk of this approach is that the culture of information-based analysis and the associated skills will not be internalised in the MEHRD and that, at the end of the project, the investment will be of marginal value. The benefit of this approach is that the quantitative data and analyses needed to justify the interventions required, to implement the MEHRD plans, and to put them into operation, could be produced relatively quickly.

Education policy in the Solomon Islands is enshrined in the Education Act. The Education Act 1978 provides the legal basis on which the education system is managed and administered. It defines the roles and responsibilities of the Minister, Secretary and the MEHRD, the Education Authorities and school heads. This includes procedures for establishing new schools and appointing teachers. The Administration Manual is based on the Act, as are the Teaching Service Handbook, regulations and guidelines.

The MEHRD is directly responsible for the school curriculum, examinations and inspections to ensure that quality education is delivered. Final authority for registration of schools resides with the MEHRD. Authorities are responsible for the operation of schools, their equipping and maintenance, as well as provision, support and training of teachers.

The provisions of the Education Act, regulations and guidelines have not been rigorously applied for a number of years, with the result that administration of the system has become ad hoc and based on precedent. Some decisions have been inconsistent with the underlying Act; this applies especially to the processes adopted for establishing Community High Schools. There is a need to review administrative arrangements, make revisions as necessary, including clarification and further specification of the roles and responsibilities of the MEHRD, Education Authorities and Principals, and to both build and enhance the capacity of managers at all levels, especially at the provincial authority level. Some of the reforms and

programmes identified in this Framework imply changes to the Education Act of 1978 and other legislation and regulations. In order to strengthen and clarify its education policy development role, and to update the current legislative provisions to reflect current practice, the Government of the Solomon Islands through the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development may need to consider a review of the Education Act.

Proposed Investments

The following investments are proposed:

Strengthen Policy Planning and Evaluation

- Support consultative policy forums
- Identify information required to manage education system
- Train staff in using the Education Management Information System (with a focus on all staff, including those at sub-sectoral and lower levels in the education system)
- Develop, strengthen, improve, and implement a policy framework
- Develop an education policy & planning methodology
- Provide high quality policy advice
- Undertake policy studies and research
- Review the Education Act

Capacity Building & Support Services

- Identify and develop the skills required to implement the National Education Action Plan
- Appoint staff (policy, IT & property analysts)
- Train staff (including policy analysts, IT specialists, & property staff)
- Undertake capacity building activities

12.2 Universal Basic Education (Primary)

Policy Issue and Policy Outcome

The policy issue is how to deliver universal basic education to all children of primary school age in the Solomon Islands. The desired policy outcome is that there be universal basic education in the Solomon Islands for all children in the primary education sector, that is from the Preparatory Year to the end

of Standard 6. This universal basic education should meet the following criteria:

- education should be available to all primary school children on an equitable basis;
- the education should be of high quality, should promote student achievement at a high level, and should meet individual and national needs; and
- it should be delivered by competent, qualified and motivated teachers; and
- it should be compulsory and free.

The education policy issues include:

- how the Government can move towards accepting responsibility for providing a universal basic education for all primary school children, given the constraints of limited resources.
- what implications there are for the age at which primary schooling should begin.
- what implications, if any, the policy of universal basic education for all primary school pupils might have for revising staffing arrangements (pupil: teacher ratios) at all levels of the primary school system;
- how an estimated 1300 unqualified primary school teachers can gain access to good quality teacher training;
- the impact that increased funding (either directly to staff through salaries, or through grants to schools) would have on resources for other inputs, the likely impact on the quality of education, and any differential impact between schools and communities in various parts of the country in their ability to raise additional funds;
- what intervention or combination of interventions (expanding existing government primary schools, establishing extension schools or new schools, additional support for church schools) is appropriate;
- how to improve the partnership between the Government and Non-Government education authorities;

- whether there is an aggregate need (independent of ownership) for additional classroom places, and the cost-effectiveness of investments in new physical infrastructure;
- whether there is a need for investment (given the unique situation of the geography of Solomon Islands schools) to improve provision of basic facilities such as water and sanitation in schools, in order to protect the health and safety of all primary school children;
- projections as to whether additional facilities will be used in future, given trends in population growth and internal and external migration (i.e. school mapping and siting issues);
- the level of any additional support that would be needed to trigger the elimination of school fees at both Government and non-Government primary schools, and whether this should be done in stages or as a comprehensive policy change;
- the danger of unintended consequences, and contingencies to deal with any changes;
- policy on whether students should be retained in order to promote improved learning, or socially promoted each year;
- policy on equality of teaching/learning across all systems; and
- policy on recognising the development levels of girls and boys.

Government Policy Response

In order to reach the ultimate goal of universal attendance at primary school, the Government has made a commitment in principle to fund the full cost of the education of all primary school students in both Government and non-Government schools. In 2005, 14.8% of primary school students were enrolled in non-Government schools. The results of the Government's policy commitment to universal basic education at the primary school level are evident in the increased proportion of students in the Solomon Islands reported as attending primary school in the *Digest of Education Statistics 2005* (a net enrolment ratio for primary education of 86% in 2004, and an increase to 94% in 2005). A strategic plan will be developed to achieve the desired objective of 100% participation in primary schooling. Policy will need to be developed on how this objective might be achieved, how any additional funding required might be found, and where exactly any funding would be targeted.

For purposes of forward planning, it will be critical that the Government develop and announce a clear set of principles and intentions. If Government provision is to be expanded to accommodate all primary school students, this commitment will have implications for legislation governing school attendance and possibly for the age at which students start primary school. It will have implications for teacher supply, pre-service and in-service teacher training, and for the provision of school facilities. The policy may also have downstream implications for the organisation and viability of both Government and Non-Government primary schools.

The age at which pupils should be required to begin their primary schooling is a key policy issue in this context. The current law allows parents of children in the Solomon Islands to enrol their children at primary school at any time between the ages of 6 and 9. In practice most parents in the Solomon Islands now enrol their children in the "preparatory year" in primary schools at about age 6.

The Minister of Education is consulting with people in the Solomon Islands on whether an amendment should be made to the Education Act to specify the age at which parents would be required to enrol their child in a primary school. He is considering two possibilities. One possibility is to require all children to be enrolled in a primary school by age 6. Another possibility is to require all children to be enrolled in a primary school by age 7.

The reason for seeking to change the current law is that the early years of a child's life are critical for that child's development. While parents have a central role in nurturing and developing their child, the education system also has an important role. Regular attendance at school is essential to assist students to maximise their potential. Early access to education at primary school helps every child develop a range of skills and understandings needed in society. The skills learnt at school include language development (speaking, listening, reading and writing) and number skills, social skills, motor development skills, and a range of other skills and understandings which all people need to function effectively in the modern world. Early intervention by teachers when the child is young will also help the child's learning and development, and will help prevent failure or alienation at a later

stage in life. For these reasons most countries around the world require compulsory attendance of children in a primary school from a specified age.

Schools, in partnership with parents, are responsible for promoting the regular attendance of students. Encouraging regular attendance is a core school responsibility. Requiring all children in the Solomon Islands to be enrolled at primary school by a specified age (say, age 6 or age 7) will assist each child's individual physical, intellectual and social development, and will bring longer-term benefits for the country as a whole through a well-educated citizenry.

In considering this issue, due regard has to be had for the special characteristics of the Solomon Islands (its people, geography and culture, the location of the primary schools, and the distance young children might have to travel to school). Parents' views about how the young should be brought up in Solomon Islands society are also important.

In the context of considering when to make school attendance compulsory, it may be necessary to consider whether legislation should also allow parents to be given the right to educate their children at home (home schooling).

It is an issue whether the "Preparatory Year" should be included within the early childhood sector or considered part of the primary school sector. Pupils enrolling in this year are usually aged about 6. The Government's preliminary view is that the "Preparatory Year" should be considered part of formal primary schooling, in order to recognise the importance of education at this early stage of a child's life. However, the education offered to pupils at this stage should be based on a developmental curriculum that is consistent with an early childhood education philosophy, and which allows the child to learn in an environment which fosters creativity and self expression, rather than in an environment dedicated to regimentation and drill.

During the next three years (2007-2009) investments will focus on improving the quality and efficiency of education services in primary schools by continuing to provide resources for non-salary recurrent inputs in the form of school grants, and by improving the implementation and management of these grants. The investment will also support data collection, analyses and

consultative processes required to design and negotiate strategies required to move toward full government funding and universal, free, compulsory education through to the end of primary schooling (standard six).

The strategy during 2007-2009 would be designed to identify those students of school age not attending primary school, to encourage parents to enrol them, and/or to identify the barriers to their enrolment in primary schooling. A related policy issue is whether there should be any restriction on transfer of students between schools. There is some concern that urban schools are under increasing enrolment pressure as a result of internal migration within the country.

The Government's decision to make primary education free has been a significant factor in increasing the number and proportion of students attending primary school. The Government will need to monitor the "free" education policy to ensure there is consistency across the country.

The strategy would also be targeted at improving standards in primary schooling, with minimum cost. A key dimension of this strategy would be investment in improving teacher education. The strategy would assist the MEHRD and non-Government partners in identifying the best strategies for gaining maximum impact on learning outcomes, and would help to strengthen the collaborative relationship needed to move towards free, universal provision of basic education for all primary school children.

The MEHRD will provide policy guidance and technical support to schools and systems in helping them to identify critical constraints to quality improvement, and to design school improvement plans. Each school will use part of its annual grant to develop and implement its plan. Once the annual plan is agreed, schools will receive an additional grant to assist in financing non-salary inputs required to meet objectives. Schools will be required to implement a monitoring system to assess the impacts of school improvement plans. Responsibility for implementation and management will rest entirely with the provincial or non-Government school controlling authorities. The MEHRD will provide assistance by providing examples of best practice and options, but full responsibility and control will rest with the provincial education authorities and the non-Government education authorities.

This activity would initially be funded through a special fund. During the course of 2007-2009 the MEHRD, in consultation with the Ministry of Finance and development partners would move to restructure the annual budget submission. Provisions would be agreed to ensure that additional Government resources were allocated to non-salary recurrent inputs to match any funds to be provided by development partners.

Outputs and outcomes anticipated during 2007-2009 include the following:

- Identification of the recurrent cost implications of enrolling all Solomon Islands pupils aged either 6 or 7 and over in primary schooling.
- The implementation, assessment and validation of a range of strategies and options for best using additional resources to maximise student learning outcomes.
- A comprehensive plan for moving to fully-funded free primary school education, with specific agreements on the elimination of fees at non-Government schools on a quid pro quo basis.
- Improved public perceptions regarding the quality and desirability of education at primary schools.

Proposed Investments

The following investments are proposed, and will be included in the National Education Action Plan:

- Develop policy on age at which attendance at school is compulsory
- UBE implementation plan developed and approved
- Provide additional funding support for pre-service education for training of primary school teachers at Solomon Islands College of Higher Education
- Provide help to schools with school improvement grants
- Provide per capita grants to Government and non-Government schools for non-salary recurrent costs
- Assess the impact of school improvement grants

12.3 Universal Basic Education (Junior Secondary)

Policy Issue and Policy Outcome

The policy issue is how to provide universal basic education for all Solomon Islands students of junior secondary school age (approximate ages 13 to 15) when the number of places is restricted and population growth in the age cohort is expanding. The desired policy outcome is that all children in the junior secondary age cohort have access to educational services appropriate to their interests and abilities. The education system should meet the following criteria:

- Beyond standard 6, all Solomon Islands young people will have access to a place at a junior secondary school (either at a national secondary school, at a provincial secondary school, or at a community high school);
- Beyond standard 6, Solomon Islanders will have increased options for alternative training paths and will receive partial support in identified high priority areas;
- Both government and non-government providers will have equal access to public support under a system that links finance to output and outcomes; and
- The MEHRD will assume responsibility for establishing and monitoring quality and performance standards in institutions and programmes receiving public funds.

The education policy issues include:

- how the Government can move towards accepting responsibility for providing a universal basic education for all students who wish to enrol in junior secondary schools, given the constraints of limited resources;
- how and when the Government can move to phase out the Solomon Islands Secondary Entrance Examination at the end of standard 6;
- how to ensure sufficient trained teachers are available to meet the anticipated expansion in student numbers;

- how to provide sufficient junior secondary school places to meet demand, given the limitations and constraints on existing infrastructure;
- how the current rapid expansion of community high schools will be controlled to ensure standards of quality are maintained, and issues of equity and management are addressed;
- how to develop a flexible system, responsive to changes in the national and global environment, with provisions to redirect focus;
- how to offer junior secondary school students a range of aptitudes and interests and to provide equal opportunity and support for alternative pathways;
- how to serve the needs of junior secondary school age children, to ensure that they have the skills and competencies required for both a local and a global economy; and
- how to ensure that service providers meet agreed quality standards and that students and taxpayers are getting value for money.

Government Policy Response

The two key issues are ensuring access to form 1, and maintaining quality. The Government of the Solomon Islands will make a commitment in principle both to provide sufficient places and to move (over time) to fund a substantial proportion of the cost of the education of all students in forms 1, 2 & 3 in either Government or non-Government schools. A strategic plan will be developed to achieve the desired objective. Policy will need to be developed on how additional funding might be found, and on priorities for expenditure. Implementation of the policy might need to be staged over a period of several years, and may not be fully achievable within the time frame of this Education Strategic Framework.

The Provincial Education Action Plans and the National Education Action Plan have signalled plans to expand existing community high schools and to establish new ones to accommodate the projected growth in enrolments over the period 2007-2009. These plans will need to be carefully staged and controlled to ensure that the education of young people is not compromised by poor planning and premature decisions to expand provision of primary

schools into forms 1, 2, 3 and even beyond, without first ensuring that sufficient properly trained teachers are available and that appropriate facilities and equipment can be provided. Improved planning is required. The central Government proposes to establish criteria that provinces will need to meet prior to expanding provision through extension of existing primary schools to become community high schools or through establishment of new community high schools.

The expansion of community high schools has been rapid in recent years. Most of these schools are day schools. In order to maintain access to form 1 for students who live in remote areas, it will be necessary to designate some CHSs as boarding schools. Decisions as to which schools should be awarded boarding school status should be made on the basis of a careful analysis of geographical factors, population density data and population trends.

The rapid development of CHSs has met community expectations of easier and more convenient access to secondary schooling, and has been valuable in meeting equity and access objectives. The rapid and uncontrolled expansion of CHSs has, however, brought with it a risk of poor quality of delivery. The MEHRD, in consultation with provincial education authorities, will undertake a stocktake before any proposals to establish further new CHSs are approved, and will also consider whether mergers of CHSs may be appropriate in order to maintain quality.

In urban school settings, with community support, schools should be allowed to enrol students up to forms 5 & 6, but prior approval of MEHRD will be needed to secure support and finance.

The Government also proposes a fundamental revision of the junior secondary curriculum, providing more courses and opportunities for those students in school who elect to follow a non-academic path. This curriculum development essentially involves expanding the range of programmes on offer in existing junior secondary schools. At the same time it will develop policy to promote a seamless movement between secondary and tertiary education institutions.

In tandem with this approach, the Government will expand alternative opportunities for the junior secondary age cohort out of school. This approach envisages providing public support for those of a designated range of age cohorts who select technical and vocational training options outside schools.

During the period 2007-2009, investments will focus on improving the quality and efficiency of junior secondary education services by providing additional resources for non-salary recurrent inputs in the form of school improvement grants. The investment will also support data collection, analyses and consultative processes required to design and negotiate strategies required to move toward full government funding and universal basic education through to the end of form 3, with high quality service delivery by all providers.

Proposed Investments

The following investments are proposed, and will be included in the National Education Action Plan:

- Provide funding for school improvement grants at community high schools, provincial secondary schools, and national secondary schools
- Provide additional funding support for pre-service education for training of junior secondary school teachers at the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education
- Revise curricula and provide learning materials to cater for agriculture, industrial arts, home economics & technology
- Establish pilot projects to develop technical and vocational training initiatives
- Undertake impact assessments of alternative service delivery modes

12.4 Senior Secondary Education

Policy Issue and Policy Outcome

The policy issues are how to meet expectations for increased access to senior secondary education, and how to ensure that girls get equal access to education at this level. The desired policy outcome is that all young people in the senior secondary age cohort (approximate ages 16 to 18) have access to educational services appropriate to their interests and abilities. Public funds should be allocated in an equitable manner, and skills provided to these young people should allow them to contribute to national development and enable them to obtain marketable skills, while at the same time promoting integration into village life for those who will not travel further afield.

The education system should meet the following criteria:

- beyond form 3, Solomon Islanders would have increased options for alternative training paths and would receive partial support in identified high priority areas;
- beyond form 3, girls will have equal access to education alongside boys;
- the relevance of skill training investments would be reflected in increased employment;
- all providers (both Government and Non-Government) would have equal access to public support under a system that linked finance to output and outcomes; and
- the MEHRD would assume the responsibility of establishing and monitoring quality and performance standards in institutions and programmes receiving public funds.

The education policy issues include:

- how to develop a flexible system, responsive to changes in the national and global environment, with provisions to redirect focus;
- how to serve senior secondary age students with a range of aptitudes and interests and to provide equal opportunity and support for alternative pathways;

- how to ensure that girls get equal access to senior secondary education alongside boys, that facilities such as dormitories for girls are constructed where necessary, and that an appropriate curriculum for girls is delivered;
- how to ensure sufficient trained senior secondary teachers are available to meet increased student numbers;
- how to develop an appropriate and integrated qualifications framework that allows students pursuing non-academic areas to gain credit and recognition which could be applied to further education;
- how to serve the needs of senior secondary school age young people who may travel as adults (either internally within the Solomon Islands, or overseas), ensuring that they have the skills and competencies required in a global economy;
- how to ensure that service providers meet agreed policy standards and that students and taxpayers are getting value for money; and
- how to ensure that the system is sufficiently flexible to accommodate changes in the labour market and economy, and that the MEHRD has the required information and flexible options to redirect areas of focus and support in response.

Government Policy Response

The Government of the Solomon Islands will continue to strengthen the current academic programme, and at the same time revise the senior secondary curriculum, to provide more courses and opportunities for those students in school who elect to follow a non-academic path. This approach essentially involves expanding the range of programmes on offer in existing institutions. At the same time it will develop policy to promote a seamless movement between secondary and tertiary institutions. This approach could involve the provision of targeted funding to secondary schools to enable them to purchase instruction or places in short vocational or technical courses at some post-secondary providers for selected students for part of the school day (the New Zealand “STAR” funding (secondary/tertiary alignment resource) is an example of this type of initiative).

In tandem with this approach, the Government of the Solomon Islands will expand opportunities for the secondary age cohort out of school. This approach envisages providing public support for those of a designated range of age cohorts who select technical and vocational training options outside schools. The actual mechanism used might involve a voucher or entitlement (probably a subsidy delivered to an institution) for vocational, technical or life skills training delivered by Government and non-Government providers. The MEHRD Secondary Division would develop the capacity to administer a system of vouchers or an entitlement system (possibly needs-based), and to set and monitor standards of training providers in non-school settings.

The MEHRD will analyse the downstream implications for senior secondary schools of the proposal to phase out the SISEE. One implication is that appropriate selection criteria are necessary if students are to be selected for entry to National Secondary Schools, especially at senior levels.

It has been proposed that Provincial Secondary Schools and the National Secondary Schools should become, at some point in the future, senior secondary schools enrolling students in forms 4, 5, 6 and 7 only, while the community high schools would enrol all students in forms 1, 2 and 3. This proposal will be the subject of careful policy analysis based on relevant data, a cost/benefit analysis, and consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of all possible options. The MEHRD will consider the potential downstream impact of such a decision on access to forms 1, 2 and 3 in a period of roll growth, given the Government’s commitment to universal basic education in junior secondary schools. The likely educational, social and financial consequences in terms of future enrolments on the schools in question, and the educational advantages and disadvantages of such a policy decision will also be examined. PSSs and NSSs have indicated that they will find it hard to no longer enrol students in forms 1, 2 & 3 if these senior secondary school restructuring proposals proceed. An assessment will also be made of community reaction to the proposal before any decision is taken.

There currently appears to be some gender discrimination against women in the senior secondary sector and in tertiary education. It may be necessary to introduce single-sex (girls only) schools or streams to address this issue.

A longer-term objective (beyond the three-year horizon of the National Education Action Plan, but possibly within the period 2007-2015) would be to provide incentives for efficient delivery of education appropriate to the needs of all students in the 13 to 18 year-old age cohort (both junior and senior secondary education). Over time, public finance could be reconfigured to follow individuals (through scholarships and/or vouchers) in targeted skills areas. The system would include non-academic courses. This option would maximise freedom of choice and encourage competition. This approach would also provide greater flexibility in skills targeting and in the annual level of financing. Government and non-Government post-school training institutions (e.g. rural training centres) would be developed that would enrol students alongside junior and senior secondary schools. Rural training centres run by non-Government providers would be supported with partial government funding, and programmes that serve the clients (including those in the secondary school age cohort) would become autonomous and self financing in order to “level the playing field.”

Proposed Investments

The following investments are proposed:

- Provide funding for school improvement grants at community high schools, provincial secondary schools, and national secondary schools
- Provide additional funding support for pre-service education for training of senior secondary school teachers at the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education
- Revise curricula and provide learning materials to cater for agriculture, industrial arts, home economics & technology
- Establish pilot projects to develop technical and vocational training initiatives
- Implement training for teachers delivering technical and vocational curricula

12.5 Early Childhood Education

Policy Issue and Policy Outcome

The policy issue is how to ensure increased access to early childhood education. The desired policy outcome is that the Solomon Islands has an education system that ensures equal access to early childhood education (ECE) (i.e. pre-school education). There is strong international evidence of a high rate of return from investments in early childhood education. Pre-school education is important for laying the foundation for primary schooling. There are also equity dimensions: children from least advantaged communities are likely to benefit most from early childhood education.

The fundamental principle underlying support for early childhood education is that a child’s development can be fostered by positive learning experiences in the early years, and that such experiences, based on a developmentally appropriate curriculum, provide an excellent foundation for formal schooling. Access to organised pre-schooling leads to improved achievement levels of children in primary schools, when compared with those who do not have access to such provision. There is a need for formal recognition of the importance of the role of the early childhood education sector in child development. The growth and development of this sector, and support for parents in their roles, needs to be acknowledged as a priority because of the positive impact investment in the sector has upon children’s development.

The Government interventions proposed to support early childhood education are also based on the principle that the formal education system should recognise, and build upon, the important role parents play in the education of their children. Parent education that recognises the role of parents as first teachers in the very early years contributes positively to children’s subsequent progress in formal schooling. There is potential to further support parents and families in this important task.

Government Policy Response

International experience and research highlights the importance of early childhood learning in establishing the social values and attitudes and achievement of children in the formal education environment. The MEHRD proposes a combination of policy responses, including direct and indirect support for early childhood education by the Government. The present policy of encouraging community initiatives and community ownership of early childhood initiatives in local communities should be continued. This policy is having the positive effect of leading gradually to an extension of provision of early childhood education in the Solomon Islands. Community ownership and direct involvement of parents in supporting these early childhood initiatives have strengths that should be fostered.

As a means of improving quality, the MEHRD will develop a system of incentives to encourage teachers in the early childhood sector to improve their qualifications. The existing field-based training will continue. At the same time, the MEHRD will move gradually to increase its formal support of early childhood education through a number of strategies.

These strategies include

- finalisation of the policy for ECE
- formal registration of all pre-schools and kindergartens;
- development of an early childhood education curriculum;
- production and dissemination of culturally appropriate developmental learning resources;
- provision of additional pre-service teacher training for early childhood teachers at Solomon Islands College of Higher Education;
- provision of in-service training and professional development programmes for existing teachers at the early childhood level;
- strengthening the sustainability of the ECE programme, especially the Field Based Training Programme, through assessment of probationers, and monitoring of training;

- incentives to improve the qualifications of teachers in the early childhood sector, such as financial subsidies (through the scholarship system) for access to University of the South Pacific and other tertiary institution courses in early childhood education for people wishing to work in this area in the community;
- support for the attachment of early childhood centres to primary schools, or development of new early childhood centres, in areas where there is no provision;
- support for parent education initiatives; and
- undertaking an analysis of the long-term implications of providing a subsidy for enrolments in early childhood education.

Resource constraints preclude the immediate adoption of a direct Government funding subsidy for enrolments in early childhood education at this time. At a later stage, a direct funding subsidy for pre-school education based on actual enrolments could be considered. Direct Government financial support should be considered only when a more developed infrastructure and an improved information base for the early childhood sector has been established.

Proposed Investments

The following investments are proposed:

- Undertake registration of all pre-school centres.
- Review ECE curriculum and develop culturally appropriate learning materials.
- Develop and implement training programmes (including field-based training programmes) for early childhood teachers.
- Set up pilot projects (demonstration or model centres) for community-based ECE centres.
- Develop policy for provision of subsidies for ECE education.

12.6 Special Education

Policy Issue and Policy Outcome

The key policy issue is how to provide appropriate education for students with disabilities. The desired policy outcome is that the Solomon Islands has an education system that ensures equal access to education and training for those children and adults with special learning needs. Those people with special learning needs include the physically handicapped, the visually impaired (the blind or near-sighted), those with hearing impairment (the deaf), those with speech defects, and those with intellectual disabilities. The category of those with special needs also includes the emotionally disturbed.

The rationale for Government intervention is based on the principle that access to education should be provided to enable all people with disabilities to develop to their full potential. Students with physical and intellectual disabilities face impediments that make access to learning difficult, and as a matter of equity should be assisted to take their place in the formal education sector and develop fully as individuals.

The first step in improving the opportunities for students with physical or intellectual difficulties is to recognise their rights to access education. Such recognition will bring obligations which the MEHRD will need to meet. While education of disabled children was previously catered for in the Solomon Islands by the extended family, this policy has meant that considerable human potential has remained undeveloped, owing to lack of access to education. Focused intervention would prevent this wastage of human potential. There exists therefore a need to provide more effective support, particularly for people with special needs who are of school age.

Government Policy Response

The MEHRD wishes to support the special needs of children and adults with physical and intellectual disabilities by recognising that these children and adults need to have access to appropriate educational opportunities, and by supporting policies to provide this support within the acknowledged resource constraints.

The MEHRD proposes a combination of policy responses, including direct and indirect support for special education by the Government. While the current community initiatives to support those with special needs are to be encouraged, the Government now wishes to consider how it might provide additional targeted support. A draft special education strategic plan has been developed for consideration by the MEHRD. This plan sets out guiding principles and goals, and suggests areas for further attention.

At present the Solomon Islands Red Cross implements a special education programme for children with disabilities. There is a need to decentralise services, since only one centre is not enough. There is also a case for state support of children with disabilities, rather than leaving the responsibility to the private sector or the community. There are currently few specialist teachers of children with disabilities in the Solomon Islands, and the needs are much greater than can be met by the current small number of specialist teachers.

The MEHRD accepts that there is a need for clear direction and policy on special education (education for children with disabilities or special learning needs, and also for adults with disabilities). It would be appropriate to undertake a review of special education needs in the Solomon Islands. A survey has already been done for the Ministry of Health, and could be used as a basis for future policy direction.

A clear message that the claim of students with disabilities has been recognised would be provided if the MEHRD was able to appoint a special education adviser. A special education adviser could devise a work plan that would include a thorough survey of the needs of students with disabilities, an outline of the assistance available through NGOs and other regional bodies, an assessment of the potential for incorporating some special education training into the course offerings at SICHE and provision of assistance for the development of individually targeted curricula by teachers.

The MEHRD accepts that training in catering for children with disabilities needs to be provided for every teacher. Special education and inclusive education should be included in the SICHE curriculum.

The MEHRD would undertake to move towards formal support of children with special needs through a number of strategies, staged over a period of years. These strategies include:

- undertaking a review of special education provision in the Solomon Islands, by inviting donors to fund specialist technical assistance to help the MEHRD undertake a formal review, by establishing national working parties to support the review, and by considering in this review the issue of mainstreaming children with special needs within the formal education system, and the costs and benefits (social and financial), of such a policy for the Solomon Islands education system;
- conducting a baseline survey to ascertain the nature, number and extent of children with special needs (including those children currently attending schools, and those whose needs are too acute and who do not attend school);
- establishing a central database with detailed information about those people (adults and children) who have special learning needs, having due regard to privacy considerations;
- providing assistance for special needs children in existing schools through
 - a special needs component in all pre-service teacher training,
 - providing teachers of children with special needs with professional development opportunities and targeted in-service training to assist them to help each child with special needs, and
 - training of teacher aides who could provide individual assistance to children with special learning needs;
- reviewing the school curriculum to ensure that it caters adequately for children with special learning needs, and making available appropriate learning materials and equipment for special education;
- provision of incentives to improve the qualifications of teachers in the special education field, such as financial subsidies (possibly through the scholarship system) for supporting access to special education programmes for teachers of special needs children offered by tertiary education providers, including the University of the South Pacific, and making provision for training of special education

teachers at SICHE (i.e. additional specialist training for regular trained teachers); and

- supporting classes for adults with special needs in the community.

Proposed Investments

The following investments are proposed:

- Appoint special education advisor(s).
- Baseline survey of current provision for children and adults with special needs.
- Review of special education provision in the Solomon Islands.
- Develop an approved plan to support education for learners with special needs
- Provision of learning materials and specialist equipment for learners with special needs.

12.7 Improving Literacy and Numeracy

Policy Issue and Policy Outcome

The policy issue is how to address the weakness in standards of literacy and numeracy as revealed in the results of the Solomon Islands Standardised Tests of Achievement (SISTA). The desired policy outcomes are that students at all levels will develop proficiency in a vernacular language, that students will speak, understand and read English by the end of Standard 6, and that students will be competent in oral and written English by the end of secondary schooling. Students will also develop proficiency in everyday mathematical skills.

The Solomon Islands, in common with other countries in Melanesia, is characterised by a variety of indigenous vernacular languages, most of which are primarily used in an oral context. Both English and Pijin are also used as a common means of communication ('lingua franca'). All Solomon Islanders need to be literate in English. Students also need to have opportunities to learn other languages.

Education policy issues include determining appropriate language teaching methodologies, the appropriate point at which the language of instruction in schools may need to switch from a vernacular language to English, and appropriate diagnosis and support of language learning difficulties.

Basic literacy and numeracy skills are essential to success in education and are the right of all children. Two key principles therefore underpin policy on languages and literacy:

- effective education builds on the child's early learning in the mother tongue;
- literacy in the first language is needed before the introduction of reading and writing in the second language can take place.

The adoption of these principles will ensure the enhancement of the vernacular languages and Solomon Islands culture. Pijin in this context can be considered a "vernacular" language. Many schools will choose to use English as the language of instruction from the Preparatory Year, since for some children English is the mother tongue.

While the vernacular language may be more important in the early years, English becomes of equal or more importance by the time form 1 is reached. The key to achieving student competence in literacy is the development of high standards of literacy and effective literacy teaching methodologies by teachers, both in English and in a vernacular language. The teaching of reading is fundamental. Good quality reading materials are needed to assist classroom teachers in developing literacy.

Development of skills in numeracy is also essential for survival in the modern world. Counting, numbering, calculating, measuring, and estimating are basic skills that we use every day.

Effective learning is predicated on good literacy and numeracy skills. There is growing evidence that good levels of literacy in the students' first language improves their learning of all subjects taught later in a second language. High priority should be given to early learning in a vernacular language. Given the

problems identified with student literacy, assistance for a supply of primary readers in vernacular languages is therefore a high priority. The most immediate mechanism for meeting such demand is the adaptation/translation of existing relevant readers from other countries, and/or reprinting existing readers in selected Solomon Islands vernacular languages.

There is a perceived need (evident from the workshops held to discuss the Provincial Education Action Plans) to improve basic literacy and numeracy levels throughout the schooling system. Support and resources are required to allow teachers to diagnose and address learning difficulties experienced by students at an early age. Early intervention, diagnosis and remediation can keep a student on track in his or her schooling, and avoid more expensive remedial work, and other undesirable consequences, at a later age. More resources need to be directed at diagnosing and addressing the literacy and numeracy difficulties experienced by students in the early years of primary schooling.

There is recognition that increasing globalisation, the Solomon Islands trade and relations in the Pacific with other English-speaking nations, and the fact that English is used as the language of much business in the Solomon Islands make proficiency in English for all Solomon Islanders a necessity.

Government Policy Response

The MEHRD will review the existing language policy on languages, literacy, and bilingualism. It will develop a comprehensive policy on languages, literacy, bilingualism, and the language of instruction, including use of diagnostic instruments at an early stage of primary schooling to identify students with literacy problems. The policy will include provision for intensive retraining of teachers, and development and distribution of learning resources (graded readers and quality books) in both English and Solomon Islands vernacular languages (including Pijin).

In undertaking a review of the existing language policy on languages, literacy, and bilingualism, the MEHRD intends to take into account the fact that all Government primary schools will follow language teaching methodologies that recognise the first language of the majority of students. Basic literacy will

be established in a vernacular language alongside the introduction of English. While the main language of instruction in Government primary schools will be English, a vernacular language may be used up to the end of Standard 2, while a bilingual approach (both a vernacular language and English) will be used to support instruction in Standards 4, 5 & 6. English will be the main language of instruction from Form 1 onwards.

The MEHRD will reactivate the Vernacular Language Task Force to advise it on the development of language policy. It is recognised that production of vernacular language materials to go with a vernacular language policy will be a challenge. The MEHRD will undertake research as part of policy development into the lessons on vernacular education learned elsewhere, especially in the Pacific.

Through this appointed task force, CDC will facilitate the development of policy on the teaching of vernacular languages to include a pilot project coordinated by MEHRD and other relevant organisations. In order to develop a policy on vernacular education, the Government will need to analyse carefully the implications of posting teachers with the appropriate language skills to teach in their area of origin.

To support any new language policy, significant investment will be required in appropriate in-service training to develop skills in teaching literacy in both Solomon Islands vernacular languages and English by early childhood and primary school teachers. This investment is intended to ensure that primary school teachers will be adequately trained and appropriately skilled to meet the stated language objectives for the curriculum. Solomon Islands culture will also be taught throughout all schools from the Preparatory Year to form 7.

Diagnostic instruments will be developed and used at an early stage of primary schooling to identify students with literacy problems. These diagnostic instruments will include a major focus on diagnosing students' reading skills through use of techniques such as the individual running record of a students' progress in reading. Individual remediation by the class teacher, based on this assessment, should follow if necessary.

High priority will be given to developing, producing and distributing quality learning resources to support the development of literacy and numeracy (both graded readers and good quality books), both in English and in Solomon Islands vernacular languages. Investment will be made in the development of quality, attractive learning materials for the first three years of the primary school, by employing writers who are fluent in selected Solomon Islands vernacular languages, and who are also competent teachers knowledgeable about the curriculum. In addition, an adequate supply of books, both in English and in selected Solomon Islands vernacular languages, will be made available for use across the curriculum.

The public policy questions on the language of instruction involve a trade-off between the need for retention of Solomon Islands culture, the importance of the Solomon Islands vernacular languages to national identity, the sheer number of these vernacular languages in a small but geographically dispersed country, and the reality that most Solomon Islanders speak a vernacular language as their mother tongue when they start school. Alongside these issues is the importance of English as an international language and the language of discourse in much business in the Solomon Islands, and the need to develop an appropriate policy on bilingualism and schooling that recognises that proficiency in English as well as in at least one Solomon Islands vernacular language is essential.

Different views have been expressed on the stage at which it is appropriate to switch to learning in English in the school system. Policy on this issue will be further developed by the MEHRD. Current policy is that primary schools are required to offer instruction in English.

The MEHRD may need to develop a core of education advisers as specialists in literacy and numeracy. Additional resources will be needed for this proposal to become a reality. The possibility of a partnership between these MEHRD specialists and an overseas tertiary education institution will also be investigated.

Opportunities should be made available to learn languages other than English (French, Mandarin, Japanese and German, for instance).

Proposed Investments

The following investments are proposed:

- Review language & bilingualism policy & training programmes.
- Develop a National Literacy & Numeracy Strategic Plan.
- Complete the monitoring system (SISTA) by developing a system of objective measures and benchmarks at other levels in addition to the Standard 4 tests.
- Establish national baseline data for literacy and numeracy.
- Develop improved early diagnostic methods & train teachers.
- Produce Solomon Islands vernacular language learning materials.
- Deliver teacher in-service programmes to improve literacy teaching.
- Deliver teacher in-service programmes to improve standards of numeracy.
- Increase opportunities for students to learn other languages.

12.8 Curriculum

Policy Issue and Policy Outcome

The policy issue is whether the current school curriculum prepares Solomon Islands young people adequately for life in the modern world. The desired policy outcome is that the school curriculum prepares students to live fulfilling lives, is of high quality, promotes high level student achievement, and meets individual and national needs.

The curriculum policy issues include

- the need for review and modernisation of the curriculum to accommodate advances in knowledge and new developments such as technology;
- whether the current school curriculum is sufficiently comprehensive (including the study of health, environmental awareness, indigenous

cultures and customs, (e.g. music, creative arts, carving, fine arts and traditional architecture), and sports;

- the extent to which the current curriculum includes sufficient practical skills and abilities to meet the needs of the non-academic student;
- the appropriate relationship between Solomon Islands curriculum objectives and assessment criteria and procedures;
- the balance between the extent to which the school curriculum captures the uniqueness of Solomon Islands culture and prepares students for life in the Solomon Islands, and the extent to which the curriculum develops skills that may be required in a global world; and
- an evaluation of the quality of support for children's learning provided by current learning resources in the Solomon Islands, and by current pre-service and in-service teacher education.

Improving learning in schools will assist in better matching the outcomes of education with the requirements of Solomon Islands society, and should lead to individuals who are better equipped to participate in their society and in the wider world. Well-rounded individuals with skills that complement their interests and abilities are more likely to find employment and integrate well into their society.

The keys to improving learning in schools lie in the areas of curriculum and assessment, literacy and numeracy, and the abilities of the teachers charged with managing students' learning.

The curriculum and assessment systems should value equally the full range of student abilities and should address the needs of society for a range of employment opportunities. The current curriculum and assessment system should provide more scope for students to demonstrate or practise their creative, artistic, physical and practical abilities. There is also a need to acknowledge the importance of these skills and abilities in the wider Solomon Islands society.

An effective curriculum will support the development of basic literacy and numeracy skills which are fundamental to success in education, and underpin all learning (See previous section). Review of curricula should occur on a

regular and planned basis, and revision should be undertaken as a result of evaluation of existing curricula and changes in society.

Government Policy Response

The National Curriculum Reform Programme initiated as part of the previous *Education Strategic Plan 2004-2006* will be continued.

In partnership with stakeholders, the MEHRD through the Curriculum Development Centre is establishing the philosophical and pedagogical foundation for a major overhaul of the objectives for basic education. Syllabus development is under way for all subjects to cover learning from Years 1 to 10. In conjunction with this curriculum development, learning materials are being developed, in-service training for teachers for the revised syllabus areas will be carried out, and revisions to pre-service training curricula are in process. All curriculum documents are being revised to integrate and update course syllabi, and to establish a continuous learning pathway from the preparatory year through to form 3. The objective is to develop an integrated Year 1 to 10 curriculum framework. This framework is intended to promote the achievement of learning outcomes that better prepare young people for life in the Solomon Islands. Clear objectives are being developed for each course, which provide the basis for continuous, school-based assessment of learning.

The MEHRD will therefore continue its review of the primary and secondary school curriculum in order to ensure appropriate linkages between the levels of schooling, to further enhance transition between the levels, and to foster the introduction of new subjects. This process will lead to the production and delivery of:

- a broader curriculum which recognises existing strengths while relating school learning outcomes and objectives to the educational, social and economic goals of the country;
- an appropriate sequence of revised specific subject syllabi within an overarching curriculum framework;
- additional good quality resources to support improved achievement in literacy and numeracy;
- development of curriculum and resources to support the teaching and learning of science and social studies;

- curriculum development in health education, environmental education, creative arts and crafts (including music and other indigenous arts and crafts), agriculture, home economics, industrial arts, and technology through an early request for assistance to ensure that progress in these areas is initiated or supported, and to meet the pressing need for more relevant practical courses in secondary schools;
- a revised primary and secondary physical education and sports syllabus (or syllabuses);
- sufficient and appropriate teaching and learning support resources to enable children to maximise their potential; and
- improved school broadcasting programmes, such as radio and television, for ECE, primary and secondary schools
- the development of Distance Flexible Learning materials and integration with curricula for TVET and Tertiary Education and for non-formal education and life-long learning initiatives

Continuous curriculum improvement will be emphasised in the initial stages. Developments in specified areas of the curriculum will be continued. The preliminary policy focus will be on the development of quality learning resources to support the curriculum, particularly in the language area, and on improvement to teaching skills and competencies through a programme of in-service training and professional development in targeted areas of the curriculum.

Donor assistance will be sought for continuing the development, production and dissemination of learning resources, and to support a programme of teacher professional development.

The approach to curriculum development will focus on learning outcomes, and will be developed and owned by all teachers. This approach implies an outcomes-based approach to curriculum design, and a focus on assessing student achievement against specified criteria. All individual curriculum statements and syllabi will require some revision over a period of time. Curriculum development will be accompanied by production of learning resources and teacher professional development in order to implement any new curriculum effectively. It will be a long-term project, that will need to proceed in phases.

In the period 2007-2009, the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) will focus on provision of in-service training to assist teachers in revised syllabus areas, with a focus on the use of year 5 and year 6 learning materials, and year 7 to year 9 learning materials. In-service training to support teachers of year 1 to year 4 pupils will be revisited. Teachers' guides and student texts will be produced for years 1 to 6, and for years 7 to 9.

In addition, syllabus development will be initiated for years 10 and 11. This development will examine links and sequencing between year 10 and year 11, and will examine how practical subjects leading to TVET courses can be strengthened.

The MEHRD, School of Education and Education Officers will jointly implement teacher in-service programmes. Teacher and student support and reference materials for each subject will be produced or purchased and provided to each school within twelve months of commencing the revision of each subject.

Development in general encompasses the interaction of cultures. It is the responsibility of each nation to ensure that its values and customs are protected and maintained. The MEHRD will therefore work towards establishing values education in the curriculum. This will involve the development of syllabi on cultural, social, moral and spiritual/religious values, as well as values that promote peace, democracy and national unity. In general these holistic values will include an appreciation of the interconnectedness of people and their environment, as well as topics such as population education, reproductive health education and HIV AIDS.

The preservation of indigenous knowledge and skills is important for the sustainable development of the Solomon Islands. This dimension will be incorporated into the formal and non-formal curriculum where appropriate.

CDC will also facilitate the development and promotion of indigenous education including traditional knowledge, customs, medicine, music and dance, and arts and craft. A TA adviser may be appointed to coordinate its activities.

Proposed Investments

The following investments are proposed:

- Develop appropriate curricula and resources in health education, environmental education, creative arts and crafts (including music and other indigenous arts and crafts), agriculture, home economics, industrial arts, physical education and sport, and technology.
- Develop & produce learning materials to support improved learning and performance in literacy, numeracy, science and social studies.
- Develop and deliver in-service teacher training programmes.
- Develop DFL-curriculum materials for pre-and in-service teacher training programmes, TVET-courses and for NFE/adult, community education and life-long learning activities
- Develop improved school broadcasting programmes for ECE, primary and secondary schools

12.9 Assessment

Policy Issue and Policy Outcomes

The policy issue is whether current approaches to assessment promote effective learning. The desired policy outcome is that the assessment system in the Solomon Islands promotes excellence in teaching and learning, provides information for teachers to allow them to ensure each child performs to the best of her or his ability, and does not discriminate against any student.

The assessment policy issues include striking an appropriate balance between different purposes of assessment. Assessment can be used for different purposes:

- assessment for learning, in order to diagnose any learning difficulties, and to indicate the direction of further learning that may be required, thus improving learning and teaching;

- assessment to monitor and report on progress against learning objectives;
- assessment for selection for further study or limited places in some learning institutions; and
- assessment for the purpose of providing a summarised report and feedback on student learning that has been achieved.

An evaluation may need to be made of the relationship between Solomon Islands curriculum objectives and assessment criteria and procedures, and of the quality of support for children's learning provided by current system-wide assessment methods.

Assessment should continue to focus on support of learning objectives. The assessment system in the Solomon Islands is being redesigned to cover the whole range of student abilities, to support student learning, to assist in diagnosing student difficulties, and to inform teachers of the effectiveness of strategies they use.

The school assessment system provides for external examinations at the end of standard 6, form 3 and form 5. These are used to select those who will progress to the next education level. The external examinations do not cover all subjects. They promote teacher and student attention on those subjects that are tested, which in turn leads to an undervaluing of those subjects that are not examined. The examination system does not evaluate or report pupil progress in achieving desired learning outcomes, and does not promote the adoption of teaching practices that support continued learning through the schooling period. The examination system emphasises provision of school infrastructure and materials to enhance performance in those subjects that are tested, with the result, for example, that many Community High Schools cannot adequately teach those subjects requiring special facilities such as science, home economics, industrial studies, creative arts or agriculture.

Where assessment is to be used to select students for further study, this assessment should be used only for the purpose for which it was designed and only if that purpose is essential, so that the smallest possible number of students is disadvantaged.

It is an issue whether the number of examinations is excessive. Many believe that there are too many selective examinations that dominate the work of the school and distort the efforts of curriculum writers and well-intentioned teachers. Many do not accept that children should finish schooling if they are not successful in the Solomon Islands Secondary Entrance Examination. The examinations are also expensive to organise and administer.

The “backwash” effect of restricted assessment practices on the curriculum may be distorting effective learning. The focus of national examinations may be too narrow, since large areas of the curriculum are omitted. In form 3, only two (English and Mathematics) of the ten subjects were examined in the past, and only a small proportion of the objectives are actually examined. The range of subjects examined at form 3 needs to be extended. The emphasis on the more easily tested theoretical aspects, at the expense of practical skills, produces a distortion that is widely recognised in the schools. As long as examinations play such a crucial role, teachers will continue to narrow their focus and students will continue to restrict learning to the few skills that are examined.

There are policy issues relating to setting of standards and awarding of credentials. The definition of merit should be extended. The examination prescriptions need to be revised to bring the examinations into closer alignment with the objectives of the curriculum in a number of subjects. Prescriptions need to set specific criteria and standards, or levels of competence, to be expected before the examinations are set, or school-based assessments made. Then, students and parents, employers and institutions will know what is to be examined, will more readily understand and accept the results and have a clearer understanding of what grades and certificates mean.

How and when the Solomon Islands Secondary Entrance Examination (SISEE) can be gradually phased out is an issue, so that all standard 6 students can proceed to form 1. In those geographical areas where enough form 1 places exist, it will be possible to dispense with the SISEE. Some provinces have already reached this state. Other provinces, because of rapid population growth and insufficient places at form 1, may need to continue with SISEE as a selection mechanism for entry to form 1 for a few years.

The breadth of the national form 3 examination should be extended to

include all subjects taught in forms 1-3. By examining only English and mathematics, teachers and students have neglected the other subjects. The options need to be analysed by NESU, CDC and subject teachers to produce prescriptions to guide the examiners. The national form 3 regulations should also be changed to allow for the use of school-based assessment in each of the core subjects. The work of the students throughout the year is not weighted, while a student who is unwell or upset on examination day is disadvantaged. Moreover, many of the skills included in the curriculum can only be assessed by teachers who observe students work throughout the year, as in English, science and vocational subjects.

The assessment system reinforces the perception that the education system is a pathway to formal sector employment, and in practice promotes further disharmony within communities and the national society.

Up to date examination prescriptions, spelling out the content, skills and standards to be examined and assessed, should be available to guide the form 3 examiners in each subject, and to inform teachers and students before the examinations take place. NESU should work with CDC and subject teachers to prepare prescriptions in the areas that have not yet been updated, so that the content, standards and weightings of each examination and school-based assessment requirement are known and understood.

Currently secondary school students in the Solomon Islands follow a national curriculum at form 5 leading to the Solomon Islands School Certificate, and follow a regional curriculum in form 6 leading to a regional Pacific qualification (the Pacific Senior Secondary Certificate). The issue is whether these different assessment systems promote a coherent, systematic and integrated approach to learning.

Government Policy Response

The MEHRD will broaden the assessment system in the Solomon Islands to ensure a wider range of students' skills and abilities is assessed, by:

- phasing out the Solomon Islands Secondary Entrance Examination (SISEE) at standard 6, according to a timetable to be determined by the MEHRD, but by 2010 at the latest;
- producing an assessment handbook for teachers; and

- developing and applying assessment instruments across the early primary years to assist with diagnosing learning difficulties and remediation strategies.

New assessment instruments will be developed for use in all primary schools to assist with diagnosis of learning difficulties, associated with in-service training for teachers for follow-up remediation. These instruments would include the enhancement of existing techniques used by teachers in the Solomon Islands, such as the development of a running record of a student's progress in reading.

The proposal to phase out the Solomon Islands Secondary Entrance Examination at standard 6 level is important. The MEHRD plans to commence phasing out the external SISEE at a pace and in regions where all pupils can continue from standard 6 to form 1. The SISEE will be phased out by 2010.

The SISEE will be replaced with broader, school-based assessment instruments and procedures. The objective is to replace this screening and selection examination with procedures that promote and monitor learning. When fully implemented, the proposed reform will provide an assessment of pupil progress at standard 6 after seven years of basic education, while allowing pupils to continue to the end of form 3.

Teacher in-service training programmes in methods of assessment will be implemented by NESU to assist teachers at primary and secondary schools to make sound formal assessments of their pupils. In-service training for all primary teachers will be undertaken.

Planning for phasing out SISEE will allow MEHRD (through the National Examination and Standards Unit (NESU)) to review assessment instruments, document and update assessment prescriptions and procedures, and improve communication with parents and schools.

The MEHRD will broaden the scope of assessment at form 3 to include all subjects, using a combination of school-based and external examinations. School-based assessment will be introduced for those subjects not currently examined externally. This approach will require the MEHRD to amend the national form 3 examination regulations. NESU will be responsible for this

change, in collaboration with CDC and subject panels.

With CDC, NESU will develop a list of required student competencies and related assessment prescriptions for all junior secondary subjects. These will provide teaching guidelines and the framework for an in-service training programme to prepare teachers to commence continuous school-based assessment of pupils.

These programmes will include such topics as: selecting the most appropriate form of assessment for different objectives; planning an effective measuring device; setting quality questions, at the appropriate level; understanding and ensuring reliability of assessment; devising effective marking and scaling systems; and moderating assessments to conform to national standards.

The system-wide assessment instruments (the Solomon Islands Standardised Tests of Achievement) will be further developed and extended, by developing a system of objective measures and benchmarks at other levels in addition to the standard 4 tests. In 2006, Solomon Islands Standardised Tests of Achievement at standard 6 level are being undertaken. Results are expected to be available in 2007. These tests will help teachers to realistically assess students' abilities, provide models of good assessment practice, and lead to teaching to students' strengths and weaknesses.

In addition, collection of national baseline data to assist in establishing benchmarks for performance by Solomon Islands students in literacy and numeracy will be initiated. The MEHRD, through NESU, will consider undertaking national surveys of achievement in these core subjects in a restricted sample of schools, at standard 4 and standard 6 levels, and repeating these every 4 years, using many of the same tasks. Pacific Islands Language and Literacy (PILL) tests could be used to assess English literacy and numeracy, but would need further development. Removing the external examination at standard 6 would mean there is no national measure of accountability until the end of form 3. Introducing national surveys of achievement on a 10% student sample, to be applied every 4 years, would provide some regular and consistent information about student performance on benchmarked tasks. Measures of science and social studies could be added for the standard 6 survey.

This mechanism would ensure that standards are being maintained in each province, and in the nation, and in a wider range of curriculum objectives

than is possible under the examination system. This system would be less expensive than preparing new examinations each year.

Consideration will also be given to streamlining and rationalising the certification system used to assess student achievement in the final years of secondary schooling.

Proposed Investments

The following investments are proposed:

- Develop a national assessment policy.
- Develop an assessment handbook for teachers.
- Develop a strategy to replace the Secondary Entrance Examination.

12.10 Teacher Supply

Policy Issue and Policy Outcomes

The policy issue is how the Solomon Islands can secure an adequate supply of well trained and qualified teachers to meet the educational needs of a rapidly expanding school population. It is also an issue whether current national teacher development plans will deliver the required number of teachers of appropriate quality, and whether existing teachers have access to appropriate professional development. The desired policy outcome is that education in the Solomon Islands is supported by an adequate supply of competent, trained, and well-qualified teachers at all levels, teaching in the Solomon Islands is perceived as an attractive profession, teachers are motivated to stay and contribute to the education sector, all teaching positions are filled by teachers of quality, and advance planning for teacher supply is undertaken to ensure that teacher shortages do not occur.

The teacher supply policy issues include more effective forecasting, planning and monitoring of teacher supply in the Solomon Islands. It is necessary to verify whether there is any exodus of teachers from the profession, and, if so, to identify which parts of the teaching profession are experiencing loss rates, and the reasons for any trends that may be emerging. Trend analyses of

teacher mobility and past and future teacher loss rates (including teacher retirements) are required. The development of a robust model is needed to forecast future teacher supply needs for the Solomon Islands accurately.

Policy on appropriate sources of future teachers needs to be developed. A review of policy is required on teacher recruitment and retention, and teacher preparation in and beyond the Solomon Islands, including the policy on the annual intake to SICHE (or other providers such as USP). Recruitment of expatriate teachers may need to be considered. Policies to improve the quality of teaching are also needed, in order to improve and upgrade the skills of the existing teaching work force, particularly the estimated 1300 unqualified teachers in the primary service. If there are to be basic changes in the secondary curriculum, the data and analysis requirements must be extended to reflect these changes. This extended analysis would also be essential if there is to be more emphasis upon provision of qualified tutors for expanded vocational and technical education.

The availability of qualified teachers is an essential pre-requisite for an effective education system. Teacher salary levels affect recruitment and retention, and teacher salaries in Government schools will influence compensation levels in non-Government institutions. Increasingly, there is an international market for qualified teachers in specialised areas and it is essential to monitor the dynamics of the supply and demand equation. A labour market response may be needed if monitoring discloses that there are teacher shortages occurring.

Government Policy Response

The MEHRD sees teacher training as an important priority. Teacher training is needed both to train teachers to teach in schools and to train TVET teachers.

The MEHRD will set up a team to identify the information required to predict short and longer term teacher supply needs in the Solomon Islands, and to develop appropriate policies on teacher supply and quality. The MEHRD will also document the existing situation in the Solomon Islands

with respect to teacher supply needs. Interventions which the Government will consider include:

- Field-based training to upgrade the skills of unqualified teachers in the service;
- Appointing a teacher recruitment officer to attract young people into the teaching profession;
- A public relations exercise to promote the teaching profession;
- A regional teacher recruitment programme that targets expatriate teachers from elsewhere in the Pacific;
- Developing alternative school-based models of teacher training using a mentor system;
- Introducing more contestability into the teacher education “market”, and considering and possibly allowing other providers to train teachers;
- Targeted (and bonded) scholarships for secondary teachers to study overseas, who then return to teach in the Solomon Islands;
- Support for teachers who enrol in USP programmes to upgrade their qualifications (distance education, summer schools, etc);
- Approaches to donors for assistance with a specific proposal for a teacher support and/or teacher development programme;
- Technical assistance to develop a teacher supply model and database to forecast Solomon Islands teacher supply needs for the early childhood, primary and secondary education sectors over the medium term;
- Incentives to attract previous teachers back into the teaching profession; and
- Initiation of a programme to upskill existing teachers.

During the period 2007-2009, the MEHRD will focus on identifying factors related to the supply of and demand for teachers (with specialised skills) at different levels of the system. Special emphasis will be placed on issues of remuneration and the implications of devolution of authority for staffing decisions to institutions. By the end of this period, the MEHRD will have appropriate information to develop a coherent and financially sustainable strategy for balancing pupil: teacher ratios, conditions of service for teachers, and support for non-salary operating inputs to maximise system efficiency. Initial estimates of the recurrent cost implications of teacher upgrading and modest improvements in terms and conditions will be made.

Recruitment of overseas teachers would be considered only when there is an evident shortage of teaching skills.

During 2007-2009 the MEHRD will examine these issues within the framework of on-going labour market analyses, plans for expansion of vocational/technical training, trends in teachers' wages, projections of the education labour market, and analyses of the cost implications of teacher upgrading and salary increases. The MEHRD will develop a coherent, information-based strategy to ensure a supply of adequately trained and motivated teachers. This work will be undertaken in close collaboration with other Government agencies such as the Ministry of Finance.

The entity charged with responsibility for planning, managing and monitoring teacher training and development is the Teacher Training Development Office. This office coordinates teacher training and development programme implementation. It has overall responsibility for the development, implementation and monitoring of the National Teacher Development Plan. Training for multi-grade teaching in primary and secondary schools is a significant issue, especially for teachers in areas where student numbers are not large. This dimension will be included in the plan, and in the revised teacher education programmes offered by the School of Education at SICHE.

The purpose of the National Teacher Development Plan is to document and cost pre-service and in-service teacher training and development. An important objective of the plan is to strengthen in-service training capacity for school teachers and school administrators. The MEHRD will review the National Teacher Training and Development Plan, and will determine its status. The review will examine whether the plan exists in formal written form, or whether it is a more dynamic informal arrangement. An assessment will be made of whether the plan now adequately reflects reforms to the School of Education at SICHE, and if it includes appropriate measures to fund pre-service teacher education. It will assess whether the procedures for awarding teacher-training scholarships have been included within the scope of the plan. The over-riding objective is to review whether an appropriate framework is in place to field sufficient qualified teachers to support universal attendance at primary school and at junior secondary school by

2015. The review will also assess whether the skills and capacity of practising teachers are being adequately developed. Technical assistance will be sought if necessary to support the proposed review.

The MEHRD will continue to seek budget and development partner assistance to complete the training of those already enrolled in pre-service teacher training programmes at SICHE, and those to be enrolled in the future. The MEHRD will support the School of Education in obtaining national funding to deliver these courses.

The MEHRD will work with the School of Education at SICHE and its partner institution, the University of Waikato, to review and develop the teacher education programmes. The objective is to replace the two-year certificate for primary teachers with a revised three-year Diploma in Teaching, which would be the minimum entry point for the teaching service. In addition to other skills, diplomats will be expected to have skills in multi-grade teaching, school-based assessment, and specialist teaching areas. This approach will reduce the need for in-service programmes to up-grade primary teachers to take up places in junior secondary schools. The MEHRD will seek financial support to assist the School of Education to complete the repair, refurbishment and re-equipping of its existing facilities to enable it to enrol approximately 360 – 390 new Diploma students annually.

The following investments will be supported during 2007-2009:

- analysis of school population projections and trends over a ten-year time frame;
- study of patterns in teacher retention, mobility, and loss rates;
- time series analysis of real (inflation-corrected) teacher wage patterns;
- data base on numbers and location of teachers in the community pool;
- tracer studies of new teacher trainees;
- analysis of trends in advertisements for teacher vacancies;
- analysis of time series data on intakes at SICHE;
- study of changes in the attitudes of a sample of secondary students regarding the teaching profession; and
- identification of options and incentives to introduce more “contestability” into the teacher education market.

Outputs and outcomes anticipated during the preliminary activities (2007-2009) include the following:

- a comprehensive “model” of teacher supply and demand, under a range of assumptions;
- analysis of the long-term cost implications of teacher upgrading and improvements in remuneration, in the context of possible savings related to improved teacher pupil ratios;
- a progress report on the impact of current initiatives to strengthen SICHE, and an assessment of the increased numbers of pre-service trainees that will be enrolled over the period 2007 to 2015; and
- identification and costing of options to increase alternative modes of teacher training provision.

Proposed Investments

8.1 The following investments are proposed:

- Finalise the National Teacher Training and Development Policy
- Review the National Teacher Training and Development Plan.
- Develop teacher supply & demand projection model(s).
- Develop an improved teacher data base.
- Support field-based training approaches to upgrade skills of unqualified primary teachers.
- Fund abbreviated teacher training courses for university degree graduates;
- Recruit overseas teachers to teach in the Solomon Islands.
- Undertake SICHE intake analysis.
- Undertake study of teacher recruitment and retention.
- Investigate "contestability" strategies and provide funding for alternative approaches to teacher education and teacher supply.

12.11 Teacher Quality

Policy Issue and Policy Outcomes

The policy issue is how to ensure that teachers in the Solomon Islands meet appropriate standards of quality. The anticipated policy outcome is that all teachers in the Solomon Islands are well qualified, trained, committed and competent, and are able to motivate and encourage all students to learn. Teaching will be perceived as an attractive profession and held in high regard by the community, and all teaching positions will be filled by teachers of quality.

The key education policy issues relate to ways of raising the standard of teaching, improvements to the quality of pre-service and in-service teacher education, and whether formal registration of teachers is required in order to maintain standards of quality and ensure public confidence in the profession.

Policy on teacher education should be supported by a regime that maintains a core of trained specialists in teacher education at SICHE, and should ensure that teacher education specialists are accessible to the various education systems for assistance with in-service delivery, curriculum review and development, and examinations expertise.

Teacher education is the heart of human resource development in an education system, since the quality of teaching is the single most important factor that relates to the quality of student achievement. Effective learning in schools depends upon effective teaching. Improving the quality of teaching is therefore a significant factor in raising the level of student achievement.

The effective preparation and supply of teachers are fundamental aspects of a well-performing education system. Government has an important role in creating the environment in which teachers can be well prepared for their role. While not all teachers need necessarily be trained in the state institution, in a country like the Solomon Islands the Government has a particular responsibility to ensure that its one teachers' training college is well

supported and resourced, is itself staffed by well qualified teachers or lecturers, has a sound system of quality assurance in place, and is able to deliver quality programmes.

A key priority will be developing a strategy to upgrade the skills of the estimated 1300 unqualified teachers in the primary school sector, and providing professional development programmes (in-service training) for the primary-trained teachers who now teach at junior secondary levels in Community High Schools.

The establishment of an Advisory Committee on Teacher Education (concerned with advising on pre-service and in-service teacher education) may be desirable to ensure that scarce resources are used most efficiently for the benefit of all teachers, irrespective of the system in which they teach. The Advisory Committee would be tasked with ensuring that the present impediments to all teachers' access to professional development are eliminated. The committee would also be tasked with ensuring that the in-service offerings associated with the adoption of new curriculum and assessment systems are planned, integrated and delivered for optimal teacher development.

Creating a more "level playing field" in the teaching labour force by moves to decentralise functions such as appointment of staff, and fostering an environment in which non-Government systems compete for teaching staff on an equal basis with Government schools, would have the effect of improving the quality of teaching overall in Solomon Islands schools.

Government Policy Response

In pursuit of a goal of improving the quality of teaching, the MEHRD will undertake reforms to improve the teacher education system. Policies will be developed to improve the overall quality of teacher education. A teacher development plan will be prepared (encompassing both pre-service and in-service training) that sets out initiatives for improving the quality of teaching at all levels of the education system.

Policy on how the SICHE/SOE could help improve the in-service training of teachers as well as pre-service training will be developed. An in-service

development group will be formed involving teachers from all education systems in the Solomon Islands along with MEHRD officers, to assist in producing the proposed in-service component of the teacher professional development plan.

The establishment of a Teacher Education Advisory Committee will be considered. Among the functions of this Advisory Committee are the need to:

- advise the Permanent Secretary and the Minister on strategies for improving teacher education in the Solomon Islands;
- coordinate and advise on all pre-service and in-service teacher education offerings;
- develop a coordinated plan for pre-service and in-service education in the Solomon Islands, which recognises serving teachers' need for a qualification;
- encourage partnership between Government and non-Government providers for integrated planning; and
- ensure that in-service training forms an integral part of the overall revision of curriculum and assessment in schools.

Measures to improve the quality of teacher education that will be considered by MEHRD include teacher exchanges with neighbouring regional countries as a way of raising skills, investment in research and development for teachers, strengthening of teacher appraisal systems, and development of a training programme for untrained teachers. The MEHRD recognizes that there is a need to strengthen in-service programmes, and to cater for leadership and management needs of school leaders.

The policy on selection of trainees to enter pre-service training is another issue that impacts upon quality. The selection of trainees for teaching must be based on quality criteria.

Another more immediate initiative, that will run in parallel with the work of the proposed Advisory Committee for Teacher Education, is to seek formal links ("twinning") through a Memorandum of Agreement with an already accredited overseas provider of quality teacher education. This process has

already been initiated by SICHE/SOE through contact with the University of Waikato, with a view to improving the quality of teaching programmes at SICHE/SOE. This conjoint arrangement should enable SICHE/SOE to improve its own standards by giving it access to other established high quality teacher education programmes, support from high quality staff at the “twinned” institution, and a raising of its standards through improvement of its own programmes and procedures. This arrangement could be extended to Vanga Teachers College & other providers (if a suitable partner could be found).

Incentives will be developed to improve the quality of teaching by encouraging existing teachers to improve their existing qualifications by undertaking degree studies. It may also be desirable to explore links and co-operation with the University of the South Pacific (USP) or (Open) University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG), which has developed many modules for teacher training and also wants to open a centre in the Solomon Islands . Studies to upgrade existing teacher qualifications could be undertaken either through the USP or UPNG and in combination with DFL-modes through Internet and e-mail facilities as offered by the provincial Distance Learning Centres or through SICHE/SOE if arrangements to offer a teaching degree programme at that institution can be finalised.

SICHE/SOE will be supported, through donor assistance and by the MEHRD, to ensure that:

- pre-service curricula and teaching and learning processes anticipate and reflect proposed changes in school curriculum and assessment;
- the SICHE is accredited by an appropriate overseas accreditation agency, in order to improve the quality of its teacher education programmes;
- the SICHE curriculum is strengthened in areas of diagnosis and remediation of children’s learning difficulties and working with children with special needs;
- the SICHE curriculum is further strengthened in areas of language and literacy learning (bi-lingual literacy);
- the programme for early childhood education teachers can increase its enrolments;

- the Advanced Standing programme is continued to target the training of teachers in areas of skills shortage for senior secondary levels; and
- teacher education programmes for post-secondary/tertiary teachers and teachers of vocational and technical programmes are provided.

The MEHRD has a Teacher Service Handbook that prescribes formal registration and contracting of all teachers (in both Government and Non-Government systems) in order to increase efficient resource management, maintain standards of quality and to ensure public confidence in the profession. Registration and contracting of teachers would provide protection for students and a means of establishing quality by ensuring that only qualified teachers who were suitable for teaching were appointed to permanent teaching positions. An accurate list (register) of all teachers in both Government and Non-Government systems will be developed initially, with a record of each teacher’s name, qualifications, teaching experience, current place of employment, and other relevant information.

One policy issue that has a significant impact upon the quality of teaching is the policy on the remuneration of teachers. The difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff suggests that a labour market response may also need to be a factor in the recipe for improving quality. The recent increase in teacher remuneration will need to be monitored to determine if it has resulted in improvements in quality. While financial incentives for teachers to improve their qualifications should be considered, this policy response is not the only answer to improving teacher quality. The MEHRD may wish to consider whether a policy to increase teacher-pupil ratios is warranted in order to reduce the overall number of teachers and free up funds that could then be targeted at providing incentives to teachers to raise their qualification standards and performance.

Some decentralisation of functions by the MEHRD and provincial authorities will be considered in order to allow schools more autonomy in the appointment of staff. Quality would be improved by moving towards more school self-management and creating a more “level playing field” in the teaching labour force, by freeing up access to teachers outside the Government system to apply directly to the Solomon Islands Government

schools for appointment, and by encouraging moves that would allow non-Government providers to compete for teaching staff on an equitable basis.

A review of the teacher appraisal system will be conducted, with a view to developing more positive incentives for teachers to improve the quality of their performance.

The school inspectorate programmes will be supported as a means of evaluating teacher effectiveness and improving teacher quality. A programme of upskilling for school inspectors will be provided as a matter of priority. In addition, the capacity of the Teaching Service Division of the MEHRD will be strengthened in order to complete the elimination of “ghost” teachers and to assist in upgrading the untrained teachers throughout the country.

The MEHRD will complete the reconciliation of the teaching establishment and payroll to ensure that it pays only teachers actually in schools. It is anticipated that this will reduce the salary bill by as much as 15 percent.

In partnership with Education Authorities, Teaching Service Commission and SINTA, the MEHRD will implement the Teachers Service Handbook published in 2006. This handbook includes policy on the conditions of employment for teachers, including procedures for recruitment, deployment, salary scales, promotion, training, performance review, and code of conduct.

The Teaching Service establishment and procedures for deploying teachers will be implemented to achieve equitable distribution of trained teachers in primary and junior secondary schools, based on actual pupil enrolments.

Implementation of these activities will be monitored by the enhanced Inspectorate service.

Proposed New Investments

The following investments are proposed:

- Strengthen SICHE/SOE.

- Establish a "twinning" arrangement between SICHE/SOE and an accredited overseas provider for delivery of teacher education degree programmes.
- Strengthen in-service programmes.
- Provide a programme to support and upskill the school inspectorate.
- Develop improved facilities at SICHE/SOE.
- Introduce access to degree and/or diploma programmes for existing teachers.

12.12 Tertiary Education

Policy Issue and Policy Outcomes

The policy issue is how best to support delivery of quality education and skills training in the post-secondary (tertiary) education sector. Policy outcomes include a coordinated national system of post-secondary education and training with adequate provision to meet the needs of the Solomon Islands society and economy. The system should be characterised by equity, quality, relevance and efficiency. Qualifications would be internationally accredited and recognised, and limited resources would not be dissipated through unnecessary duplication of services. An anticipated policy outcome is an effective tertiary education policy for the Solomon Islands, including a strategic plan for the development of post-secondary (tertiary) education. This broader policy and associated strategic plan would include policy on technical and vocational education and training (discussed in more detail in the next section). A further policy outcome would be the development of "demand-driven" funding models.

A review of current policy is required, including policy on the award of scholarships. It appears that a mix of policy approaches will be required in future. While expanding and strengthening SICHE is a logical first step towards the development of a robust tertiary education sector, the reality of the geography of the Solomon Islands suggests that strengthening training through rural training centres and other training organisations will need to be a focus of initiatives, at least in the short and medium term. The role and contribution of the University of the South Pacific and of Papua New

Guinea will also need to be considered. The longer-term objective is the creation of a “market” environment in which public finance will follow individual enrolments (through scholarships, vouchers or subsidies) in targeted skills areas.

The education system should meet the following criteria:

- tertiary education graduates would possess a range of generic skills, including skills required in the work force;
- the quality of tertiary education and training delivered in Government and non-Government institutions will be of a high standard, so that the needs of the Solomon Islands economy can be met,
- sufficient personnel will be trained in a range of programmes in order to meet the diverse needs of the Solomon Islands economy;
- tertiary education opportunities, including in-country training and provision of scholarships for overseas study, will be designed to be cost effective and efficient, and to meet national human resource development priorities;
- the quantum of funding devoted to tertiary education and training would be appropriate, but would reflect the Government’s emphasis on universal basic education as the first priority for limited education expenditure;
- opportunities and public support would be in place to encourage individuals to upgrade their professional and vocational skill as an on-going activity in order to maintain international competitiveness;
- increased awareness of the value of tertiary education and training in creating and sustaining a livelihood and in contributing to society generally would be evident in Solomon Islands communities.

Government Policy Response

The MEHRD wishes to reform and co-ordinate the provision of post-secondary education and training in the Solomon Islands. A review of tertiary education will be undertaken in order to develop an effective national tertiary education policy. (The necessity for a further review of tertiary education will be reassessed following receipt of the study on the National Skills

Training Plan being undertaken in 2006 by the World Bank, NZAID, AUSAID, EU and other stakeholders.) Associated with the development of appropriate tertiary education policy will be the development of a strategic plan for post-secondary education and training in the Solomon Islands (a National Skills Training Plan), as part of the MEHRD broader planning for education in the Solomon Islands. The development of the proposed national tertiary education policy will be wide-ranging and comprehensive, including examination of existing policy on scholarships and awards, development of policy on institutional provision of tertiary education (including strengthening of the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education and further consideration of the development of a Solomon Islands campus of the University of the South Pacific) and policy on skills development and training (incorporating appropriate policies for technical and vocational education and training). The next section deals with TVET issues in more detail. A planned approach to the development of formal post-secondary education should lead to a more efficient sector.

A study is being undertaken in 2006 to assist the Government to develop a National Skills Training Plan (NSTP). This study, supported by the World Bank and by NZAID, will provide advice which will facilitate the construction of an implementable NSTP by identifying national objectives, key issues, strategic options and opportunities, implementation options, and resource implications and requirements. This proposed plan is intended to provide a basis for the Government to plan for its future investment in the skills training and education of the nation’s work force. The intention is that this plan will be linked to the future skilled manpower needs (both formal and informal) of the economy. The work on developing the NSTP will support the development of an appropriate national tertiary education policy.

The study has undertaken a survey of private sector firms, and government institutions and agencies at national and provincial levels, as well as tertiary education providers, to ascertain the immediate and medium term demand for training, to assess the capacity of employers to contribute towards the cost of training, and to assess the capacity of tertiary education providers to deliver the training of the type and to the levels required. An anticipated outcome of this skills survey will be the identification of priority sectors on

which training should be focused, and proposals for the development of mechanisms for employer and employee contributions to costs.

The proposed National Skills Training Plan will be developed in tandem with the development of an effective tertiary education policy, following receipt of the final report of the study in the beginning of 2007. The plan will reflect a macro-economic and social sector analysis based on available data on economic and education/training trends. It will also provide an analysis of how past secondary and post-secondary graduates have contributed to the economy. It is anticipated that this plan will be a major contributor to the development of an effective national tertiary education policy which will outline and advise on the economic development trends over the medium and long term and the likely demand for and supply of skilled/educated personnel. Particular attention in policy development will be paid to the needs of the informal economy and to the education/skills base needed to sustain micro enterprises and the social economy in rural areas where 80% of Solomon Islanders live.

Once adopted by the Cabinet, the national tertiary education policy and the associated strategic plan for delivery of post-secondary tertiary education and training (the National Skills Training Plan) should be used by all Ministries and non-Government organisations to guide their strategic investment in education and skills training over the Framework period.

The MEHRD recognises that national and regional development requires trained people. It also recognises that despite years of sponsored training programmes at national and international post secondary and tertiary institutions, the gap between the expertise needed and that available has not been reduced. Further, those who have been trained at public expense have, in the main, returned to urban-based employment, with the result that the rural areas in the Solomon Islands continue to have insufficient numbers of skilled and competent people.

Government and donor scholarship programmes and support to SICHE account for a disproportionate share (more than 20%) of the national budget estimate for education and training. National and community leaders raise concerns at the lack of transparency in the award of scholarships and suggest

that while expensive pre-service and in-service programmes benefit the recipient, there is often little benefit to the nation.

Overall responsibility for national human resource planning, implementation and monitoring needs to be better coordinated. Relevant activities are carried out by the Ministry of Finance, National Reform and Planning, by the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, and by the Labour Division and the National Trade Training and Testing Unit of the MEHRD of Foreign Affairs, Commerce and Tourism. The strategies proposed in this Framework are designed to improve national human resource planning, and will be implemented by whichever Ministry has appropriate responsibility.

The capacity of the National Training Unit (NTU), currently located within the MEHRD, will be enhanced to support the administration of an effective tertiary education policy, including implementation of the proposed national skills training plan. The NTU will also be charged with monitoring and reporting on the results of public expenditure on training. These changes will provide the institutional framework for focused attention to planning, implementing and monitoring national policy and the National Skills Training Plan.

The MEHRD will review and propose alterations to the manner in which national and donor scholarships should be awarded and managed, particularly how specific allocations of scholarships will be made to meet the priority needs of provincial governments and employers. In respect of these tertiary training awards, the National Training Committee should use the proposed Plan (if available) to guide its award decisions for 2007 onwards. The Government needs to ensure that these allocations of awards are not subject to political interference as has occurred in the past, since the current costs of awards (for the 845 overseas tertiary students in 2006) are unsustainable. Over the next few years a large number of graduates will find it difficult to find employment in the current economic environment.

It will be necessary to strengthen the administration of tertiary education and training in the MEHRD. It may be necessary to establish a senior position within MEHRD to oversee the development of tertiary education in the Solomon Islands in order to provide a focus for lifting standards and driving the tertiary education reforms that are required.

The Solomon Islands Government has invited the University of the South Pacific to carry out a joint feasibility study to establish a USP campus in the Solomon Islands. The feasibility report needs to be examined and given practical follow up by a committee from USP/MEHRD/SICHE in order to coordinate the development of the proposed campus. In this context, the increased use of technology to access learning and recognised qualifications could be a cost effective way to achieve higher education outcomes.

The outcomes of these initiatives on skills training will be consolidated in the national tertiary education policy and the associated strategic plan for delivery of post-secondary tertiary education and training (the National Skills Training Plan). The MEHRD will be responsible for developing and implementing the national tertiary education policy. It is anticipated that the strategic plan (derived from the national policy) will provide the sectoral and geographic priorities for scholarships and other training, as well projections of training needs. The strategic plan will be used as the basis for investment and development activities in technical and vocational education, and for the future development of SICHE.

The Solomon Islands College of Higher Education is the only national tertiary education institution in the Solomon Islands, and is a significant provider of tertiary education and technical and vocational training. It has a central role to play in developing the national human resource base.

Government grants to SICHE account for approximately 10% of the MEHRD annual budget estimates, to which must be added student allowances and other payments. Government has, however, had difficulty in making these payments in full over recent years. NZAID provided support of SBD13 million in 2006 for SOE of SICHE. The Council will develop and approve a SICHE Development Plan as the basis for national, donor and private sector investment. This strategic plan will develop the college and move it forward as a service provider to both the private and public sectors. This strategic plan is intended to deliver the organisational and structural changes required to reduce costs and increase revenue.

The College will draw on the proposed national tertiary education policy and the associated strategic plan for delivery of post-secondary tertiary education and training (the national skills training plan), as well as the technical and

vocational education policies, to target its programmes to meet the specific needs of government, the private sector and rural communities.

The policy strategies required include the following:

- If necessary, undertake a review (based on a suitable methodology including USP, SICHE and external consultants) of post-secondary education in the Solomon Islands, to examine the nation's longer-term needs for infrastructure and systems for post-secondary education and training;
- Development of an effective national tertiary education policy and an associated strategic plan for delivery of post-secondary tertiary education and training (the National Skills Training Plan);
- Strengthening of existing post-secondary tertiary education institutions (e.g. by supporting SICHE through articulation agreements with international institutions, by enhancing the Solomon Islands Centre for the University of the South Pacific through further consideration of the establishment of a full campus in the Solomon Islands, and by maximising the use of technology to facilitate on-line and distance education);
- Establishment and maintenance of a register of providers of post-secondary education;
- Examination of how a "demand driven and labour market oriented" system of funding tertiary education and training based on a funding subsidy provided for each verified student enrolment could improve the efficiency of the existing system;
- Development of an appropriate environment for delivery of high quality tertiary education and training, including an equivalent full-time student (EFTS) system and an appropriate education management information system for recording consumption of post-secondary education.

Proposed Investments

The following investments are proposed

- Support for undertaking a comprehensive review of tertiary education and training provision in the Solomon Islands to examine

longer-term needs for infrastructure and systems for post-secondary provision (if a review is necessary, following the receipt of the 2007 report from the World Bank/NZAID study).

- Support for the development of an effective national tertiary education policy and for the associated development and implementation of a strategic plan for delivery of post-secondary tertiary education and training (the National Skills Training Plan).
- Design and support regular national skills surveys to monitor the skills needs of the Solomon Islands economy.
- Appoint an officer in the MEHRD to a senior position to oversee Solomon Islands tertiary education development.
- Establish and maintain a register of tertiary education providers.
- Strengthen rural training centres.
- Develop and implement a SICHE Development Plan.
- Develop & pilot "demand-driven, labour market oriented" funding models.
- Develop an equivalent full-time student (EFTS) system to record consumption of tertiary education

12.13 Technical and Vocational Education and Training

The policy issue is how to strengthen the delivery of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) to improve the skills base of the country's work force and to provide alternative pathways for young people. Delivery of TVET in the Solomon Islands is weak. There is a need to integrate TVET more firmly into the formal education system rather than leaving it as a sole responsibility of the "informal" sector (the rural and vocational training centres). The desired policy outcome is the development of skills and competencies required for economic and social development in the Solomon Islands, with competent educators delivering high quality, relevant, and cost-effective services.

The education system should meet the following criteria:

- graduates from the formal education system would possess a range of generic skills required in the work force;
- the quality of skills training delivered will be of a high standard, and the skills developed and credentials delivered would meet regional and international standards, so that the needs of the Solomon Islands economy can be met,
- the diversity of skills training offered will extend across the skill needs of the entire Solomon Islands economy;
- the relevance of skill training investments would be reflected in increased employment;
- the quantity of skilled workers trained will be sufficient to meet the needs of the Solomon Islands work force;
- opportunities and public support would be in place to encourage individuals to upgrade their vocational and professional skill as an on-going activity in order to maintain international competitiveness;
- student competencies would increase (using criterion-based standards) and the linkage to teacher skill improvements would be demonstrated; and
- increased awareness of the value of technical and vocational education and training in creating and sustaining a livelihood and in contributing to society generally would be evident in Solomon Islands communities.

The education policy issues include:

- how to ensure that the formal schooling system develops the skills required in the local and national work place, including work readiness, initiative and enterprise skills;
- how to develop a flexible system to develop and deliver skills training, in ways that are responsive to changes in the national and global environment, with provision to redirect focus where necessary;
- how to assist students and adults to develop a range of skills and aptitudes, and to provide equal opportunity and support in alternative pathways;
- how to serve the needs of all Solomon Islanders, both those who live and work in the country, still mainly in the rural areas and those who will live overseas;

- how to improve TVET instructor training and staff development;
- how to provide professional development to upgrade the skills of MEHRD staff;
- how to strengthen curriculum development activity in the TVET sector so that a focus is on competency-based learning and skills capability development;
- how to develop credible quality assurance systems and procedures to monitor and improve skills development programmes and the performance of providers;
- how to improve the management capability of controlling authorities and skill centre management boards and skill centre managers; and
- how to improve co-ordination among providers, while maintaining freedom of choice with the features of market efficiency.

Government Policy Response

Existing policy is set out in *Education for Living: Approved Policy on Technical, Vocational, Education and Training* (March 2005). The MEHRD, with support from the European Union, has played a central role in formulating and launching *Education for Living*. This document sets out a Solomon Islands approved policy on Technical and Vocational Education and Training. This Plan was developed in partnership with stakeholders, especially the Solomon Islands Association of Rural Training Centres (SIARTC), and the private sector.

The Government of the Solomon Islands sees the appropriate delivery of technical and vocational education and training as one of its highest priorities. The MEHRD recognises the urgent need to train the skilled and competent people on which economic recovery and development will be based.

Rural Training Centres (RTC), community and non-government organisations and groups, SICHE and other organizations such as Don Bosco and government agencies deliver technical and vocational education. Many of these institutions are part of the “non-formal” sector. They provide the main opportunity to develop skills and competencies needed for economic activity in rural-based or formal sector businesses for those who

do not gain a place at a secondary school (“push-outs”), or for those who are not able to continue their education (“dropouts”), or for school leavers.

Despite their importance, these institutions, with the exception of SICHE and government agencies, have received limited financial support in the past from the Government. The national Government does now make a significant contribution (by grants per individual student) to costs of rural training centres. The controlling authorities of RTCs have developed and delivered structured and non-formal programmes to meet perceived local needs, often without comprehensive analysis of local economic and commercial needs. It is acknowledged that a number of these programmes duplicate or partially duplicate both those programmes offered by other Centres, and the programmes offered by SICHE.

In recognition of the need to achieve some coordination and enhance national capacity for skills training, the controlling authorities have established the Solomon Islands Association of Rural Training Centres (SIARTC), with more than 40 affiliated members. The EU is supporting RTCs and SIARTC to build the physical and human capacity of these centres.

Two studies on TVET have been undertaken in 2006 in order to assist in the development of appropriate policy responses. These studies will include a comprehensive review of international experience in technical and vocational education to inform the development of appropriate policy in the Solomon Islands.

The first study is the comprehensive survey of public and private employers undertaken as part of the World Bank/NZAID study to support a National Skills Training Plan. The purpose of this survey was to determine and analyse national training needs. The purpose of the training needs analysis was to provide data that might inform the MEHRD strategic response to match more effectively the output of the education system with the needs of the labour force. The findings of this study will be analysed, and a National Skills Training Plan developed. (The previous section on Tertiary Education also provided detail about this study).

The second study is the 2006 scoping and design study² for the integration of TVET into the formal and non-formal system of the Solomon Islands education system, undertaken by a team of two international and three local consultants. The specific objective of this study was “to prepare an overall project design and costings for a three-year programme with a detailed first year work programme for the introduction and integration of the TVET policy.” This specific objective was set within the overall objective “to enhance practical and vocational skills of students emerging from the formal and non-formal education system in Solomon Islands.” The findings of this study will also be considered and analysed in the development of technical and vocational education policy and the associated National Skills Training Plan.

The programme design outlined in this second study provides a sensible roadmap as a way forward. It focuses on four key result areas:

- skill training centres provide a range of qualitative and relevant programmes;
- quality and relevance of instructor training is strengthened;
- the capacity of planning and implementing authorities is strengthened; and
- the development of relevant curricula for education in practical subjects in the formal school system is supported.

The MEHRD proposes that a mix of policy responses will be adopted to improve TVET. The findings of the two studies mentioned above will be incorporated into the mix of policies finally adopted. Some further international comparisons with other Pacific countries may also be required. As a basis for planning and monitoring, systematic and regular collections and analyses of data on the training needs of the economy will also be required in future.

² Thomas, Harold & Bryam, Martin & Galo, Cherry & Maneipuri, Joash & Sito, Dalcy *Scoping and Project Design for the Integration of TVET into the Formal and Non-Formal Education System of the Solomon Islands*, April 2006.

During the planning period, investments will focus on improving the match between the education system and the needs of the economy by making the system more flexible and responsive to market “signals.” The concept of learning will be expanded to include activities that occur outside formal school settings, such as community development training and other non-formal short courses, and will encompass lifelong learning and greater use of distance education and ICT. The Distance Learning Centre Project, which is designing opportunities for accessing a more diverse range of courses, provides a useful mechanism to assist in developing a more flexible system.

More work will be needed to define and ensure quality standards in a flexible and “market-driven” environment. Qualifications need to be quality assured, either through links with accredited overseas organisations or quality assurance bodies, or (at a later stage) through the development of a Solomon Islands qualifications framework.

As a first step, the MEHRD will assist in training providers to document the competencies required of teachers and instructors, and in publishing an Interim Register of Accredited Technical and Vocational Training Providers. The MEHRD intends to coordinate an inventory of all technical and vocational courses offered, and will consider how ways of accrediting these as nationally approved programmes can be developed. Concurrently the MEHRD will liaise with providers and trade testing authorities to devise protocols and procedures for certifying the qualifications of graduates to assure quality outcomes by all providers, regardless of the method or courses delivered to develop these competencies.

A quality assurance system based on the competencies achieved by the learner (rather than the course offered) will be required. It would be desirable to seek external advice from a credible international quality assurance agency in establishing this system. It would also provide a credible guarantee of quality if key Solomon Islands providers of TVET sought linkages with accredited overseas providers of similar technical and vocational education and training, or sought independent accreditation from an international quality assurance agency.

A policy will be developed to provide public support to those of secondary school age who select technical and vocational training options outside

schools. This policy might involve a voucher for vocational, technical or life skills training delivered by Government and non-Government providers, or alternatively a subsidy arrangement of some sort. This response is intended to address access and equity concerns. The review of the secondary school curriculum (referred to in greater detail in the section on Curriculum) would expand opportunities for secondary students to access technical and vocational training. A complementary policy will target the skill development needs of the adult population.

The MEHRD proposes that SICHE be assisted by an in-depth audit and benchmarking of its technical and vocational courses. This audit should be undertaken by external experts. The purpose of this proposal is to explore possible avenues where the current programmes offered by SICHE can be upgraded. Depending on the outcomes of this audit, it may be appropriate to undertake a feasibility study for the establishment of a national polytechnic or technical and vocational education institution.

Additional support will be provided in order to upgrade instructor training. The initial focus will be on strengthening Vanga Teachers' College. Opportunities (possibly through scholarships) will be offered to existing instructors to raise their standard of teaching through specialised targeted training courses at Vanga Teachers' College. It may be necessary to help SICHE to develop suitable training programmes that aim to train instructors that have higher education levels, so that a better standard of technical training can be delivered.

The MEHRD proposes developing the existing tertiary education system over time. The Government and non-Government sectors will need to work together. Most of the rural training centres are run by the Churches, and their input will be essential. A system of financing needs to be devised that will give support to TVET as part of a "level playing field". A system will be devised so that public finance will follow individual enrolments (through scholarships, vouchers or subsidies) in targeted skills areas. The system will need to include non-academic courses, and will be designed to maximise freedom of choice and encourage competition. This proposed system would also provide greater flexibility in skills targeting and annual levels of financing. This policy response would address the need for efficiency and for

a coherent move away from funding inputs to funding outputs. This approach will be an essential reform if the MEHRD wishes to have the flexibility and capacity to redirect resources, in response to market signals. The implications of such a proposed change, in terms of organisation, staffing, finance and culture are immense, and the MEHRD recognises that a transition will undoubtedly take many years to fully design and implement.

The feasibility of providing short courses will be considered to meet the mix of skill needs required in the workforce (including the public sector). Examples include competency-based courses, generic management courses, and community outreach courses. The delivery of short-term courses is a flexible response in the context of the diverse sectoral needs in the Solomon Islands. Through an appropriate mix of delivery modes, these courses can be more effective than formal courses provided in an institution. Short courses can also cater for the variation in skill needs in the economy, and the course content can be tailored more flexibly to target particular needs. Short courses should provide a useful function in bridging the gap between the skill needs of the economy and the skills delivered by current formal training.

There is a need for initiatives and pilot schemes that foster an improved linkage between employers and education and training providers. Skills training needs to be driven by the needs of industry. Employers need to have greater input into the mix of skills required of young people emerging from schools and education institutions. For this to occur, opportunities for on-job training in the workplace need to be expanded, pilot skill development projects that are anchored in the workplace should be set up, and consultation with the private sector must be undertaken.

These initiatives, and the studies under way or completed in 2007, will be used to develop technical and vocational education policy and the associated National Skills Training Plan (NTSP). This initiative is described in more detail in the previous section.

Outputs and outcomes anticipated include the following:

- a system for the on-going monitoring and projection of skill needs in the Solomon Islands economy (as well as skills required in the region and internationally);
- information on the cost-effectiveness, flexibility and responsiveness of a range of skills delivery approaches; and
- information needed to implement a policy of outcomes-based skills training with public finance linked to outcomes.

Proposed Investments

The following investments are proposed:

- Support for any necessary adjustments to national technical and vocational education policy, and for the associated development and implementation of a strategic plan for delivery of post-secondary technical and vocational education and training (the National Skills Training Plan).
- Develop and implement a policy on entitlements for out-of-school technical and vocational training.
- Support for undertaking further national training needs assessments in future (as necessary, once the 2006 study undertaken by the World Bank and NZAID has been received and assessed).
- Provide support for Rural Training Centres
- Undertake an audit of SICHE technical courses, and, depending on the result of this audit, undertake a feasibility study for the establishment of a national polytechnic.
- Strengthen Vanga Teachers' College.
- Expand opportunities for on-job training.
- Negotiate work experience placements with employers for students.
- Develop pilot skill development projects.
- Undertake on-going consultation with the private sector.
- Increase the provision of short courses at the national level, with a focus on courses that maximise public returns.

12.14 Capacity Development

Policy Issue and Policy Outcome

The key policy issue is how to strengthen human resource development throughout the education sector. There is a need to strengthen the capacity of staff of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development to be able to implement effectively the Education Sector Investment and Reform Programme (ESIRP) and to integrate the project of Stabex99 into MEHRD recurrent activities. There are similar capacity development needs for staff in the provincial education authorities. There are also skill development needs in schools, with particular reference to management skills and financial skills.

The expected policy outcome will be trained and competent staff, both in the MEHRD and in provincial education authorities, who are capable of managing and implementing the Sector Wide Programme (SWAp) including its major education reforms.. Principals and Head Teachers will also have well developed management skills, including educational leadership skills, personnel management, project management and financial management skills.

Government Policy Response

This Framework provides the basis of a capacity building programme for the MEHRD and Education Authorities. The programme will continue for 8 years. The MEHRD accepts that effective policy development, co-ordination and management is a cornerstone of a well-performing education system. High-level skills are required to manage and give effect to the programme of education reform and school infrastructure development. Critical skills required include efficiency, organisation and delivery of programmes (e.g. teacher professional development programmes), procurement skills, ICT-skills, contract management and supervision, relationship management, and financial management. Other essential skills include monitoring and evaluation skills, and report writing skills. In all these skill areas there are weaknesses both at MEHRD level, at provincial education authority level, in other education authorities, and at the school and institution level.

There is also a need to integrate the activities currently undertaken by staff of the EU Programme Implementation Unit into the mainstream of the MEHRD. Integration of these programmes into the MEHRD will require the development of staff with financial management skills, high level computer spreadsheet and word processing skills, and contract management skills. The management of the school infrastructure grants programmes will require specialist property and facilities management skills.

The issue is not so much a shortage of staff, as a shortage of staff with the appropriate high-level skills to manage the system.

It is accepted that, while some financial and management training for staff has been undertaken, the need for continuous improvement in a range of skill areas still exists.

An Organisational and Institutional Assessment (IOA) is required that identifies the organisation needs and skills and competencies of personnel that are required to manage the education sector programme efficiently. An audit will also be required of the organisation, skills, and the level of proficiency, that currently exist in staff at MEHRD national office, at provincial level in education authorities, and at the school level.

On the basis of this audit and associated survey, gaps in existing capacity of the organisation and its staff should be identified. An Organisational Change and/or Human Resources Development Plan should then be developed. This plan will guide management of change in MEHRD and could include in-house training for staff to improve in areas where existing skills are deemed to be inadequate. Some training packages will need to target all staff. Other packages will focus on skills sets required of managers. Other targeted programmes may need to target specific skills sets appropriate to specific jobs. To manage this process of capacity development, it is likely that it will be necessary to contract an external accredited provider of high quality recognised training that leads to a recognised qualification.

Incentives may be needed to encourage staff to invest the time and effort that will be needed to result in a substantial lift in staff performance. The

introduction of an effective performance appraisal system may assist in this respect.

The Inspectorate Service monitors the teaching of the curriculum, ensures that teachers are present at schools, and that financial resources are allocated according to expectations. It also supports teachers in developing their professional skills. The Inspectorate is understaffed and under-resourced and does not have a sufficient number of suitably qualified and experienced officers to inspect all schools, particularly secondary schools. The capacity of the Inspectorate needs to be significantly strengthened if the MEHRD is to be assured that national expectations are being met.

The skill sets required of teachers are addressed elsewhere (in the section on Teacher Quality).

Proposed Investments

The following investments are proposed

- Undertake an Institutional and Organisational Assessment (IOA) of the organisational aspects and skills of personnel required to manage the education sector
- Design a Plan for Organisational Change and/or Human Resources Development Plan
- Identify and engage with stakeholders who could contribute with TA and financial assistance to the practical follow up of the Plan for Organisational Change and/or Human Resource Development Plan
- Implement the Organisational Change and/or Human Resources Development Plan

12.15 Efficiency

Policy Issue and Policy Outcomes

The policy issue is whether there is wastage in the education system that could be eliminated, and whether the existing resources used to support the education system are being used as efficiently as possible. The desired policy outcome is that available resources be used to maximise educational outcomes (internal efficiency) and that these educational outcomes meet the needs of Solomon Islands society and economy (external efficiency). The education system should meet the following criteria:

- criteria, indicators and information systems would be in place to monitor internal efficiency and to support management and school improvement;
- external efficiency should be monitored, based on information from industry and commerce, rate of return analyses and tracer studies;
- policies and plans would be based on realistic resource projections and inputs would be financed to ensure adequate balance (e.g. non-salary recurrent inputs would be adequate);
- public resources should be allocated equitably, and a system of equity targets and indicators would be developed; and
- the need for donor support would be eliminated over time.

The education policy issues include:

- how to constrain recurrent costs;
- how to increase efficiency through rationalisation of schools with non-viable numbers, reduced repetition, improved pupil: teacher ratios, and the use of multi-grade teaching and technology; and
- how to improve external efficiency, while protecting personal choice.

Government Policy Response

The MEHRD recognises that it needs to take steps to improve internal efficiencies, reduce costs and wastage in the system, and to build partner confidence. To these ends the National Board of Education will ensure community and stakeholder participation in determining the future direction

and administration of the system. Similarly, the MEHRD will take steps to re-establish school boards of management and a community awareness programme to ensure local level involvement in education and to stimulate families to enrol their children at school.

Investments will focus on identifying cost-effective ways to improve efficiency. Efficiency checks are required at the system and at the school level. The MEHRD will consider efficiency and restructuring options, but is not in a position to make a commitment to any specific course of action or reform, at this time. Further analysis and policy development is required before firm decisions can be made. Special attention will be paid to efficiency issues both at the system level (such as reviews of the configuration of schooling provision, and of school staffing), and at the school level. Consideration will also be given to the impact of increasing resources for operations, teaching and learning materials, maintenance and supplies within the framework of school improvement plans.

The Government's response will be to adopt a mix of different policies that have the potential to increase efficiencies. The process will involve a careful, information-based analysis of efficiency in the existing system, and the identification and analysis of difficult policy reforms to reduce repetition, increase pupil: teacher ratios (or enforce existing staffing guidelines), redirect available resources towards operating costs and learning materials, upgrade staff, and provide more equitable financing of primary and secondary education. Savings realised through implementing such reforms would be available for quality enhancements under this *Education Strategic Framework 2007-2015* and the related planning documents.

Staffing requirements for schools are set out in the publication *Ministry of Education & Training: Solomon Islands Teaching Service: Teaching Service Handbook*. The MEHRD will examine whether further reform to existing staffing arrangements can be undertaken in the Solomon Islands context.

A preliminary examination of school rolls and the teacher and student numbers at individual schools has revealed quite wide variations in teacher: student ratios and unit costs. Data from a survey of primary schools conducted some years ago shows that there is a wide range in mean school enrolments, with a number of very small and very large schools in each

province. There is also variation between provinces as to the mean size of each school, with the mean school enrolment in Honiara, Malaita, Guadalcanal and Isabel being higher than the national average. The data suggests that cost reductions might be achieved by merging some smaller schools to achieve larger classes, with one trained teacher to a full class of 30 pupils. There is a need for local level planning to ensure equitable access within provinces, and national level coordination to ensure that children in one province are not inequitably disadvantaged or advantaged.

The same survey indicates that some primary schools were not offering all grades. The MEHRD aims to achieve an average of one trained teacher for every class of 30 pupils. The mean class size reported by surveyed schools is significantly less than this, and actually declines between the Preparatory Year and Standard 6. Adopting multi-grade teaching will allow classes to be amalgamated and would result in a need for fewer smaller schools, or fewer untrained teachers being employed. The MEHRD will consider whether there is scope for rationalisation and a better (and fairer) distribution of resources.

On the basis of projected efficiency savings over the longer term, the MEHRD will propose maintenance of the current Government allocations to education, and external funding of other costs through budgetary support. To complement this approach, the MEHRD will move forward with preliminary analysis and policy development of efficiency options, leading to a reform and investment strategy, based on the information that is available.

In the context of analysing efficiency issues, the MEHRD will examine critically how resources are currently used at the system level within the existing Vote: Education, and whether the current use of resources represents best value for money. It is acknowledged that the necessary analysis of these issues and the subsequent development and implementation of suitable education policies will take some time to complete, and that where community involvement is required, building understanding and consensus on the way forward will be both difficult and time-consuming. For this reason, the time frame to achieve the efficiencies sought in the Solomon Islands education system may extend over several years.

The current national network of schooling provision will be analysed, with a view to finding ways of improving effectiveness and efficiency in the use of scarce resources for education. The goal will be to establish a national network of schooling provision, based on principles of access, efficiency and effectiveness. The possibility of school mergers where appropriate will be examined, and measures to eliminate overcrowding will be considered. The possibility of mergers of education authorities will also be investigated.

In situations where efficiencies appear to be possible and viable, the MEHRD will also initiate a process of community engagement to identify the most effective site solution, with a view to improving the overall quality of education provision. While it may be logical to merge schools for reasons of economies of scale or a more effective use of scarce resources, the emotional attachment of communities to schools must also be dealt with. It may be useful to consider providing incentives where school mergers seem possible or desirable (such as reinvestment of savings on an identified site for a period of time, or using savings for purchase of supporting learning resources such as computers).

Block grants could be delivered twice yearly to schools as an efficiency measure (instead of quarterly as at present) to enable Principals to manage schools more effectively.

The MEHRD and the provincial education authorities will consider whether an appropriate decentralised staffing policy might be more effective in meeting the requirements of schools and other sectors of the education system.

The following investments would be supported:

- analysis of unit costs at all levels of the system;
- pilot testing options for multi-grade teaching and alternative pupil: teacher ratios;
- assistance to schools in developing school improvement plans;
- block grants to schools to develop improvement plans and to monitor implementation and impacts;

- analysis and policy development in respect of current schooling provision (school mergers); and
- dissemination and implementation of school staffing policies.

Outputs and outcomes anticipated may include some or all of the following:

- revised budget priorities and submissions with increased Government allocations for non-salary recurrent inputs to increase efficiency;
- decentralisation of decisions on resource allocations to the school level;
- validated options for improving pupil: teacher ratios through use of multi-grade teaching, ICT and other innovations; and
- a comprehensive system of indicators to monitor systemic efficiency.

Proposed New Investments

The following investments are proposed

- Analysis of unit costs.
- Develop policy for current schooling provision (school mergers).
- Disseminate and implement policy on school staffing.
- Pilot test options for changing pupil: teacher ratios.

12.16 School Infrastructure

Policy Issue and Policy Outcomes

The key policy issue is how to maintain and develop a quality school infrastructure (school buildings) to accommodate a rapidly increasing expansion in the school-age population. Existing school buildings in many parts of the Solomon Islands are in poor repair or have not been well maintained, and schools therefore lack proper storage and classroom space. Good quality school furniture is often not readily available. Specialist rooms (science laboratories, etc) are not available for many new community high schools. The policy outcome anticipated is that all school students will receive access to instruction in well appointed schools, that overcrowding

will be eliminated, and that standards of children's safety will be protected by provision of clean drinkable water and good quality sanitation facilities.

Government Policy Response

A large number of primary schools has been established to serve the needs of widely dispersed and small communities. Many of these are small schools which have insufficient enrolment to allow them to offer all grades, which have small classes, which fail to attract trained teachers, and which are expensive to support. Although improvements have been made to many primary schools through the Primary and Secondary School Infrastructure Development Programmes, primary school infrastructure in some schools is still a serious state of disrepair, and needs improvement.

National, provincial and community resources have been directed to establishing Community High Schools. The rapid growth of these schools has largely been unplanned by either the Education Authorities or the MEHRD. In many cases they have been established as a result of community pressure and not as a result of an analysis of population distribution or areas of greatest need. Although Community High Schools have significantly increased access to junior secondary education, they have grown with little reference to the capacity of the Government to provide teachers, equipment or resources. Most lack the facilities needed to deliver quality education in all junior secondary subjects, are poorly maintained and are staffed by inadequately untrained teachers.

It is essential that a planned approach be taken to rationalise the number of primary schools and to control the rate of establishment of new Community High Schools, and to manage the repair and re-equipping of existing schools. If the number of school places continues to expand without national and regional plans, quality will continue to decline and the cost to government will expand further beyond its capacity.

An assessment will be made of all school infrastructure, including water and sanitation needs. The MEHRD, in collaboration with the Ministry of Lands, will assess the condition and determine the exact location of all schools nation wide. This information will be used in conjunction with census and topographical data to define the catchment for each primary and junior secondary school, to quantify school repair needs, and identify locations in

which schools might be established, amalgamated or reduced. This information will be provided to provincial officials to devise provincial plans for the refurbishment of existing schools and to identify those locations at which new schools will be established. Priority will be given to establishing Community High Schools in catchments large enough to provide student numbers sufficient for all primary grades, and to which junior secondary grades may be added. These plans may include reclassifying some primary schools to cater for junior primary grades (Standard 1 to 3) with pupils transferring to a Central School when old enough to travel the extra distances involved.

A policy for school establishment and school land acquisition will be developed. Land on which schools are located has become a growing concern with an increasing number of land disputes caused in part by the expansion of primary schools into Community High Schools. This situation will be addressed by ensuring that all land sites where schools are located must be registered under the controlling Education Authority. Results of topographical surveys undertaken by the Ministry of Lands will be made available to the MEHRD so that EMIS can incorporate a digitalised school-mapping format. MOUs and agreements on land acquisition will be signed between EAs and landowners. All school land will be registered by 2015.

The MEHRD will continue to seek donor assistance to specify and cost standard buildings, including multipurpose buildings for science, home economics, industrial arts and creative arts, and make these available. Likewise donor assistance will be sought to develop and cost a programme to establish school libraries at all Community High Schools, and to prepare a national plan to improve communication with schools and schools broadcasting.

The Provincial Plans and those completed by the MEHRD will be co-ordinated, and consolidated into one National School Infrastructure Development Programme for government approval. Government will seek donor assistance in implementing the 10-year Programme to establish Community High Schools and to provide sufficient classrooms for all pupils in primary schools and for junior secondary pupils by 2015.

The MEHRD proposes that Education Authorities and other bodies place a moratorium on expanding existing or creating new schools while planning is

under way.

In order to avoid overcrowding, it may be necessary to set a standard for a maximum class size (e.g. 1:35 teacher: pupil ratio).

Since provision of expensive resources is an issue, several schools could share specialised facilities where appropriate, such as science laboratories.

It is recognised that current arrangements for management of school property responsibilities could improve. The MEHRD will consider the establishment of a separate property division, with responsibility for planning, management and supervision of all school infrastructure development. A separate Property Division for MEHRD would need a presence/link with the provinces. The Planning, Coordination and Research Unit of MEHRD is responsible for policy development, planning, and monitoring, and while it may be expected to plan and exercise strategic oversight of school property development, it does not yet have the resources or skills available to implement the programme. What is needed is the development of a comprehensive national plan for school infrastructure development, with a clear allocation of priorities.

The MEHRD will complete Phase 1 of the Primary School Infrastructure Programme and carried out an independent review in February 2007. The MEHRD acknowledges that the current programmes (Secondary Schools Grant Programme/ Primary Infrastructure Programme/Minor Capital Works/Grass Roots/Community Sector Programme/Micro Projects Programme) need to be better coordinated, but still allow for different approaches by donors and communities, because school and community needs, availability and suitability of local materials and (inter)national designs for classroom construction could be very diverse. The selection of schools to participate in the different programmes will be better coordinated and improved awareness-raising will be promoted by the MEHRD through Provincial Education Offices. MEHRD will try to harmonise the two different infrastructure programmes for the different levels of primary and secondary and merge them into one standardised system for identification, awareness raising, community involvement, capacity building, procurement, financial management and construction.

Water and sanitation are regarded as a high priority, as generally standards are very poor. The Primary Infrastructure Programme will include improvements to water and sanitation as part of the building programme. A minimum school standard (infrastructure/water and sanitation /management/learning resources) will be established and adopted to assist provinces with their provincial education action plans.

MEHRD agrees that it needs to support school community needs, not the other way around. Primary Infrastructure building designs should reflect local needs and availability of local materials. For instance, there is a lack of gravel and sand in some locations. A provincial-based engineer with local knowledge is required.

It is recognised that students should have better access to learning materials and well equipped libraries.

The response to the earthquake and Tsunami of April 2007 is regarded as a priority. An assessment must be made of the damage in the affected areas and then a response and recovery plan needs to be developed, with plans for infrastructure, curricula and counselling and training. Meanwhile the co-ordination between and collaboration with different stakeholders and Development Partners in this response must be managed by the MEHRD. MEHRD must document the different phases and experiences of assessment, response and recovery in order to create local capacity in coping with natural disasters in the future and getting less dependent from external TA support for education in emergency situations.

Also the refurbishment programme of the School of Education at SICHE is recognised as one of the main areas for improvement of infrastructure.

Proposed Investments

The following investments are proposed:

- establishment of a separate property division within MEHRD to plan, to harmonise and to implement the infrastructure needs of schools

- carry out the recommendations of the review in 2007 of Phase I of the Primary Infrastructure Programme.
- Finalise the assessment report on the earth quake and Tsunami and develop response and recovery plan (2007) including costings
- Complete the refurbishment programme at the School of Education, SICHE
- After a national survey of all infrastructural needs of the whole education system in SI, develop a comprehensive national plan for school infrastructure development, with a clear allocation of priorities

12.17 Information and Communications Technology

Policy Issue and Policy Outcomes

The policy issue is whether and how new and modern information and communications technology can be used to improve learning and education outcomes. The desired policy outcome is that the Solomon Islands has an education system that provides as many students as possible with up to date skills in the use of information technology, and that the system uses available information and communications technologies to maximum advantage in planning, management, and the delivery of educational services.

The education system should meet the following criteria:

- the needs of the Solomon Islands economy and private sector for personnel skilled in information and communications technology would be met;
- training in ICT would focus on training at all levels to ensure maximum benefits are achieved;
- students at all levels of the system would develop competence in using new information and communications technologies;
- new ICT-based opportunities for delivering instruction would be evaluated and adopted, as appropriate, in areas such as multi-grade

teaching, distance education, assessment and remediation, and meeting special needs;

- a broad range of life-long learning opportunities would be made available to all Solomon Islanders; and
- ICT would be effectively integrated into the operation of the sector through use of the EMIS and other initiatives, including improved systems of school records, scheduling and dissemination of information.

Government Policy Response

The MEHRD recognises that there are unique opportunities in the use of information and communications technology (ICT) and approaches. Investments in information and communications technology will assist in more efficient management and analysis of information, but will need to be offset by efficiency-related savings in service delivery, if they are to be affordable. Opportunities to invest in ICT as well as in human resource potential will be acted upon accordingly where the efficiency related savings cover expenses. The MEHRD also recognises that the geography and isolation of parts of the Solomon Islands, and the associated expense, may make implementation of an ICT policy difficult and slow.

The MEHRD will develop its capacity to design and revise an ICT policy and strategy on an ongoing basis. This approach may require an explicit ICT brief in the job description of a senior MEHRD official. Given the rate at which technology changes, intensive and focused on-going tracking of issues and opportunities will be required.

It is recognised that ICT is another tool to facilitate and enhance teaching and learning. Schools will need to have a policy to guide pupils in use of ICT (e.g. computer use). Sustainability of facilities and technical support is also an issue.

ICT as a tool for improved planning and management in schools is supported. The MEHRD will also consider the use of radio as a means of teaching children, and will use the strengths of the medium for educational purposes e.g. traditional Solomon Islands music etc. The MEHRD will also

need to consider how the Distance Learning Centre Project will merge with any new proposals.

Under the direction of a senior official, the MEHRD will undertake a comprehensive review of options for using information and communications technology in four areas:

- the capacity of the education system to upgrade information and communications technology skills in the population at large, in order to contribute to the Solomon Islands economy;
- the capacity of the MEHRD and other institutional providers to use information and communications technology to deliver improved services;
- the use of information and communications technology to improve learning and teaching, and to deliver instruction, and
- the capacity of the MEHRD to use ICT to improve management decisions.

This activity would probably require a major review of the ICT literature, a study tour to countries that have appropriate systems in operation, and the commissioning of a series of studies. The objective of this exercise would be to both develop a set of policy recommendations (to be included in this *Education Policy Framework 2007-2015*) and to put in place a system to ensure that policies and strategies are continuously reviewed and updated in light of changes in technology. An Advisory Board could be used to ensure that information remains current.

There is international support for ICT initiatives. The MEHRD will develop a policy on how best to use this support, including the use of technical assistance and volunteers. NZAID and EU are supporting a regional initiative on educational policy and planning (PRIDE Project). The MEHRD will explore opportunities for technical assistance and the broader issues of collaboration in the development of curricular materials and instructional software that is appropriate to Pacific Island states.

The cost structure of ICT differs fundamentally from traditional educational inputs. Capital costs (hardware, software development, replacement of equipment) are relatively high. The marginal costs of replicating instructional materials and service delivery are extremely low, approaching zero in some

instances. This factor implies a major change in the paradigm of policy analysis and planning, as well as regional and international collaboration in sharing these high development costs. The MEHRD will seek to invest the gains resulting from more efficient distribution of materials and improved management and administrative systems in educational improvement initiatives, as a way of offsetting the higher capital costs of ICT investment. The MEHRD recognises that capital investment will be required through Government of the Solomon Islands budgetary support and through external donor assistance in order to achieve the potential benefits that ICT might generate.

Additional funding will be sought to provide the information technology and training needed to efficiently manage the system. Investments will focus on improving the information base related to ICT and on identifying and testing options for using ICT at all levels of the system. Given the rapid rate of change in ICT, the MEHRD will need the capacity to update information and revise policies on a continuous basis.

Experience throughout the world indicates that distance education and information technology are extremely important and normally complement each other. The MEHRD will develop a Distance Flexible Learning and e-learning policy and ICT-policy.. It will implement a pilot project in collaboration with PFnet and Solomon Telecom to establish distance learning centres in rural secondary schools. The pilot projects will be evaluated and the outcomes disseminated to schools. The MEHRD will continue to work with SIBC and SOE/SICHE to support school broadcasts via pilot projects in three province

The MEHRD proposes the following investments be supported:

- development of a policy for DFL/e-learning and ICT-policy for MEHRD
- developing a system for collection and analysis of information on ICT educational uses and “best practice” elsewhere;
- dissemination of information on ICT options to school managers, linked with criteria and a system of competitive grants

under which schools and other institutions could pilot test and evaluate ICT solutions;

- analysis of the cost-effectiveness of ICT delivery modalities, with special emphasis on the costs and benefits of substituting technology for labour, and the potential impact on salary savings relative to costs;
- analysis of the capacity and costs associated with maintaining and supporting ICT hardware and software, and appropriate schedules for equipment depreciation and replacement, and
- establishing an ICT Education Advisory Committee.

Outputs and outcomes anticipated include the following:

- institutionalised MEHRD capacity (staff and procedures) to review “state of the art” ICT opportunities for education and training;
- ICT policies, validated on the basis of pilot tests; and
- systems and policies in place to support integration with ICT in capacity building/training and to support ICT-services. Also to maintain and upgrade equipment.

Proposed Investments

The following investments are proposed:

- Develop DFL/e-mail learning policy and ICT-policy for education in Solomon Islands.
- Review of best practice for use of DFL/e-mail learning and of the integration of ICT in Ministries of Education and education programmes
- Design pilot projects using ICT at all levels.
- Analyse options for use of ICT-based distance education.
- Institution capacity building in using ICT for administration.

12.18 Financing Options and Financial Sustainability

Policy Issue and Policy Outcomes

The key policy issue is how to secure adequate sustainable finance to support the education sector, given the Government's limited resources. The desired policy outcome is that the Solomon Islands provides high quality educational services to meet the needs of all citizens, with provision to ensure the equitable allocation of public funds and targeted support to vulnerable groups on a time frame and basis that is financially realistic and sustainable.

The education system should meet the following criteria:

- policies and plans would be based on realistic resource projections;
- conditions of service (in both Government and non-Government institutions) would be adequate to attract and retain qualified and motivated staff;
- recurrent costs would be controlled to ensure an effective balance of staff and other inputs;
- assets would be appropriately maintained and sufficient resources should be allocated for this purpose;
- public resources would be allocated equitably, and a system of equity targets and indicators would be developed and tracked;
- provisions would be in place to ensure that low income and other groups with special needs have equitable access to quality education; and
- need for donor support would be eliminated over time.

The education policy issues include

- how to constrain recurrent costs;
- whether, and under what conditions, external support for recurrent expenses should be sought; and
- the appropriate scale and timing to implement the *Education Strategic Framework 2007-2015* and associated planning documents.

Government Policy Response

The MEHRD recognises that it may be necessary to adjust its expectations to reflect resource availability. It will therefore develop a range of "scenarios" to ensure that its plans are realistic and can be implemented. This "reality therapy" will mean constraining new investments to levels and rates consistent with the capacity of the Government to finance recurrent costs and within the MEHRD's staffing and capacity. On this basis it will be possible to make some moves immediately, without the delay associated with analysis, or the need to meet the demands of donor agencies.

At the same time, the MEHRD proposes to undertake a careful, systematic, information-based analysis of efficiency in the existing system. Savings realised through such reforms would be available to (partially or fully) address the recurrent cost implications of new investments proposed under this *Education Strategic Framework 2007-2015* and the related planning documents. At present, the Solomon Islands budget is insufficient to adequately support free universal basic education up to from 3, and to support the other services provided or administered by the MEHRD. New investments and extension of public support to include the junior secondary schools carry the danger of "over-stretching" resources which may result in a "downstream" deterioration of quality and efficiency.

The MEHRD takes the view that the goals and policy objectives emerging from the provincial education action plans and the national education action plan and subsequent consultations are of sufficient importance and urgency to warrant "fast track" implementation. While, in the medium term, these investments may "outstrip" the Government's capacity to finance recurrent costs, in the long term they will need to be financially sustainable. Of greater importance, the investments in education and human resources will contribute directly to economic growth and development in the Solomon Islands, thereby providing the revenue base necessary to make them financially sustainable.

The MEHRD will therefore continue to argue for (and provide justification for) increased annual Government allocations to education, and external funding of recurrent costs through budgetary support. External support will

be for a fixed period (say, for the remaining nine years of this planning period) on a decreasing scale. This approach will be predicated on the assumption that, with economic growth, the Government would be able to eventually fully finance the improved system without continued dependence on external funding, thus leading to a sustainable system. A clear plan for implementing efficiency reforms will be developed as an essential precondition for seeking additional resources. There will be a need for a transparent review of public expenditure to secure the budgetary support required.

The financing of education in Solomon Islands is supervised by an Education Coordinating Committee which meets every quarter. The proposed approach will require close engagement of the Government with donors, and discussion of how other micro funds supplied by donors will be incorporated within a coherent framework. It has been practice for a Memorandum of Understanding to be developed to set out understandings of each partner. Partners are encouraged to sign up to the MOU, more recently called a Letter of Arrangement.

Experience with the expenditure of education funds has highlighted deficiencies in financial management at Education Authority and school levels. The MEHRD has designed a financial management training programme for appropriate personnel in MEHRD, provincial education authorities and schools that includes simplified procedures for school financial record keeping, to ensure that funds are expended according to the prescribed purpose and can be accounted for. This training programme will provide more confidence that national and international funds are wisely and correctly used.

The Education Act specifies the funding procedures for the education system, which in summary commit Education Authorities to finance schools. In the case of Provincial Education Authorities, funds are to be provided by the provincial government. Provincial government support, especially to primary schools, has been minimal, while those funds that have been specifically granted by the national government in the past have been used for other purposes, within and outside the education system. The MEHRD has been given responsibility for disbursing school operation grants to the Education Authorities to achieve more control over their allocation.

Experience of disbursing school rehabilitation funds provided by development partners has highlighted the need for improved financial control and reporting mechanisms at the level of the Education Authorities and in schools. Financial training programmes for Principals and Bursars in primary and secondary schools have been implemented in 2006 to improve financial management.

The Government of the Solomon Islands has adopted the policy that grants for school operation and regular maintenance will be based on a per capita grant for each student enrolled. While this procedure has not always been implemented smoothly and consistently, a grant system based on enrolments remains the objective.

The MEHRD has also accepted the principle of establishing a Community Standard for School Funding, by which stakeholders (national government, education authorities and school communities) will agree and abide by their mutual obligations to resource each school. In implementing this formula the MEHRD is providing training for system administrators, school managers and treasurers, as well as community awareness and mobilisation programmes. The Provincial Education Action Plans include recommendations for implementation of the Community Standard Funding arrangements, and the implementation of these recommendations will be monitored carefully over the three years 2007-2009.

The following investments will be supported:

- training, study tours, technical assistance and other activities required to strengthen MEHRD capacity in financial planning, forecasting, developing projections, and management;
- construction of indices and indicators to track the financial and equity implications of the existing system and proposed reforms, including a public expenditure review of the education sector.

Outputs and outcomes anticipated include the following:

- the capacity to execute systematic analyses of the entire education sector, projecting costs and effectiveness under different “scenarios” of resource

allocation, with recommendations regarding reallocation of resources between sub-sectors, and in ways that maximise access and equity; and

- a comprehensive plan and proposal for combining Government and external support under a Medium Term Expenditure Framework, leading to sustainable high-quality education.

Proposed Investments

The following investments are proposed:

- Capacity development activities to strengthen financial planning, forecasting, projection and reporting.
- Development of indices and indicators.
- A review of public expenditure within the education sector.
- Strengthening of monitoring capability.
- Development of a Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF)
- Identification of stakeholders (Development Partners) for Technical Assistance in the proposed investments above

13 Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

A critical aspect of the *Education Strategic Framework 2007-2015* and the related planning document (the *National Education Action Plan 2007-2009*) will be the monitoring and evaluation framework that is put in place to monitor progress of the plans as they proceed, and to evaluate and modify the plans as necessary.

A robust monitoring and evaluation framework would include performance indicators of quality, quantity, timeliness and cost to measure performance against agreed objectives. Some preliminary performance measures have been constructed in the *National Education Action Plan 2007-2009*. These include specific targets. These measures need to be further developed over time as part of the planning process to include appropriate dimensions of quality, quantity, timeliness and cost. Regular reporting against each of these performance measures is required.

The *National Education Action Plan, (NEAP) 2007-2009* also includes the development of a Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) which will identify a minimum set of core indicators to enable all stakeholders to follow the progress in the Sector Wide Programme (SWAp)/NEAP. It is also necessary to develop some minimum standards as the basis on which the quality and success of the Solomon Islands education system could be monitored. These standards were originally developed at the Annual Joint Review of the Education Sector Investment and Reform Programme (ESIRP) in June 2004 and now need to be revised and aligned to the PAF. The selected indicators provide a basis for the sector level monitoring and evaluation framework, to assist MEHRD officers, education authorities, donor partners and other education sector stakeholders in evaluating progress towards the goals and objectives of the ESIRP, phase II, NEAP and the Education Strategic Framework (ESF). Progress against the agreed PAF should be reported at least annually at both provincial and national levels.

The MEHRD needs to ensure that it has, within its organisational structure, developed the capacity necessary to manage the ongoing monitoring and reporting against the performance measures in the planning documents. At least one full-time staffing position is required to undertake this work

thoroughly and successfully. This aspect is described in the first Policy Area (*Policy Development, Planning and Monitoring*). This monitoring is an essential part of effective management of the overall planning process.

Regular semi-annual reporting against all the performance measures in the *National Education Action Plan 2007-2009* will be required. This monitoring should be integrated with the semi-annual reports and the annual Digests of Education Statistics of MEHRD.

The information recorded within the Solomon Islands Education Management Information System will need to be used with the performance measures included in the planning documents in mind, in order to allow the capture and recording of the essential information that is needed to track progress against the specified benchmarks and to ensure that effective monitoring takes place.

Feedback from the monitoring of the plan should be used to make adjustments to the planning documents on an annual basis as the proposed activities are implemented. Experience in managing the plans will show where targets were unrealistic, or where timing needed to be adjusted because of unanticipated events. Those responsible for monitoring the plans should also be engaged in the process of forward planning as the MEHRD *Corporate Plan, National Education Action Plan, 2007-2009* and other future planning documents are revised and redesigned on a rolling basis.

14 Financing

It will be necessary to estimate the costs of implementing the proposed education reform package outlined in this Framework. To do this, it is proposed that a Medium Term Expenditure Framework be developed in order to provide a basis for the MEHRD budgeting. The strategy proposed to implement the complete package included in the two integrated planning documents (the *Education Strategic Framework 2004-2015* and the *National Education Action Plan 2007-2009*) is described in more detail in this section.

The approach adopted will be to focus on the Solomon Islands Government two main education goals: universal basic education, and technical and vocational education. These two key goals will be implemented through a focus on the six key strategies approved by the Education Coordinating Committee meeting at its October meeting. These key strategies for development are:

- To strengthen planning, management, co-ordination and monitoring of the SWAp, in particular of the *National Education Action Plan, NEAP (2007-2009)* and *Education Sector Framework ESF, 2007-2015*
- To develop (like for Secondary and Tertiary education), revise (like the Education Act) or finalise (like for Early Childhood) policies for the different sub sectors or cross cutting areas (like Teacher Training and Development, decentralisation processes)
- On the basis of a national demand, to ensure longer term interest, technical assistance (including the development of a national TA-pool) and funding from Development Partners for the SWAp, ESIRPII, NEAP (2007-2009), ESF (2007-2015)
- To develop and implement a programme of Human Resource Development and capacity building
- To develop and implement an improved and harmonised grants system to support school operations in primary, secondary education and in TVET.

- To develop and implement an improved and harmonised school infrastructure programme for primary, secondary education and TVET.

The MEHRD will structure its Annual Budget submissions around the National *Education Action Plan 2007-2009* and the *different strategies*. This process will reflect the Solomon Islands Government priorities, and possible anticipated external support. Costs incorporated within the *Education Strategic Framework 2007-2015* and the *National Education Action Plan 2007-2009* will both be based on the Solomon Islands Government internal Budget processes and approach. In general, two main principles could be followed:

Continuity. The Solomon Islands Government and development partners recognise agree that the existing accomplishments in the education sector must be protected. The first priority, therefore, is to ensure continuity of existing programmes and services with no compromise on quality and standards. The existing funds provided by the Solomon Islands Government for each of the designated Programmes in its Annual Budget will be maintained in this category.

Improvement. The *Education Strategic Framework 2007-2015* has identified a number of areas in which the MEHRD wishes to expand access (particularly Universal Basic Education) and to improve the quality of existing services. Development partners have been supporting improvements to the Solomon Islands education system for some years, and have indicated a willingness in principle to continue to assist the Solomon Islands Government in mobilising resources required to meet the objectives set out in the planning documents. Donors will be invited to contribute funding to new proposed Sub-Sector Programmes for improvement of education in Solomon Islands

The MEHRD will therefore prepare a budget to accompany its three-year *National Education Action Plan 2007-2009* within the overall Budget structure, but with new proposed investments presented within these two broad categories.

15. Appendix 1: The Solomon Islands Education System (ECE & Schools)

Background

Formal or school based education was first introduced to the Solomon Islands to provide skilled people to administer government, to provide services, to resource the emerging private sector, and to promote the values of the various churches. It was, and in many ways continues to be seen as, a step to employment in the formal sector, and as a pathway from rural, village life.

Early Childhood Education

Early Childhood Education centres are community based, staffed by teachers possessing a Certificate in Teaching from SICHE or personnel who have completed the field based training programme (FBTP). The age of enrolment in ECE varies from ages 3 to 5 for most, to some who are 8 or 9 years old. There were 331 ECE Centres in 2005, enrolling 11,251 children.

Primary Education

Primary schooling covers seven years of education.

Formal education commences at the preparatory year, which is delivered at primary schools. Children begin the preparatory programme at the age of approximately six years (some begin at age 5). It lasts for one year.

Children continue at primary school for six further years, progressing from standard one (average age 7) through to standard six (average age 12).

The purpose of primary education is to introduce children to the skills needed for writing, reading, mathematics, community studies, science, agriculture, art, music, physical education and Christian education. Primary education is not compulsory, although governments desire that all children in the Solomon Islands attend primary school. A child is expected to commence at the age six or seven and continue for six years.

There were 533 primary schools in 2005. 117 Community High Schools also offered primary education, making a total of 650 schools offering primary education. 100,356 pupils were enrolled in primary education in 2005.

Secondary Education

Secondary education follows after primary schooling. Junior secondary education spans three years (from form 1 to the end of form 3, average ages 13 to 15). Senior secondary education covers the next three years, form 4 to the end of form 6 (average ages 16 to 18), and for a small number extends to the end of form 7.

The purpose of secondary education is to expand knowledge of subjects already studied at primary school including literature, science, mathematics, social studies, commerce and other subjects essential for physical and intellectual development. Secondary education is also expected to prepare students for specialised skills training.

There are three types of secondary schools: National Secondary Schools (of which there were 9 in 2005), Provincial Secondary Schools (16 in 2005) which are boarding schools, and Community High Schools (117 in 2005) which are day schools with some limited boarding.

Students are admitted to form 1 on the basis of their performance in the Solomon Islands Secondary School Entrance Examination. All students enrolled in these schools follow the same curriculum and sit the form 3 Examination.

Provincial Secondary Schools were established in the 1980s to expand the number of junior secondary school places. They have since expanded to offer places to students in forms 4 and 5. In many cases the facilities available, such as libraries, science laboratories and dormitories, have not been expanded.

The first Community High Schools were established in the early 1990's. There has been a rapid growth in their number, in response to community support and pressure. This growth has strained the capacity of governments to provide trained teachers, equipment and curriculum support materials. Most do not possess the buildings required to teach all subjects, especially science, or libraries.

Enrolment data for secondary schools showed 25,017 students enrolled in 2005. Of these, 16,188 (64.7%) are enrolled at Community High Schools, 5,377 (21.5%) are enrolled at Provincial Secondary Schools, and 3,452 (13.8%) are enrolled at National Secondary Schools.

While each CHS has fewer students, in total CHSs enrol over 60% of junior secondary students. CHSs provide a cost-effective alternative to residential boarding schools. There is evidence that parents are more willing to enrol daughters in day schools than at PSSs and NSSs, which require them to reside away from home.

Although a number of CHSs have expanded to offer classes to Form 4 and 5 level, the majority of pupils progress to these levels at PSS and NSS.

Statistical detail about schools, teachers and school enrolments is included in *Digest of Education Statistics 2005*, published by MEHRD, using information collated from the SIEMIS database.

The Teaching Work Force

School attendance returns seek information on teacher: name, gender, date-of-birth, marital status, denomination, registration number, academic qualification, status as trained or untrained, subject specialisation, salary level, post and/or date of entering post.

The MEHRD has published a *Teaching Service Profile Report 2005* which summarises this data.

The *Digest of Education Statistics 2005* identifies 739 ECE teachers, 3,964 primary teachers and 938 secondary teachers in 2005

Women are significantly under-represented in both the primary and secondary teaching service.

Management of the teaching service is complex. New graduates are registered by the Teaching Service Commission (TSC) and appointed on probation to a school administered by a provincial or church education authority. Although the salary of registered teachers is met by the national government, the teacher is considered to be an employee of the relevant Education Authority (EA). The EA is able to transfer teachers between schools under its control. Transfers between EAs are initiated by the teacher, and must be approved by

both EAs. The Teaching Service Division (TSD) and TSC do not control the transfer process. The expectation is that the EAs will keep the MEHRD informed of these changes, and of teacher absences, but this communication does not always happen. When informed, the TSD instructs Treasury to adjust payroll as required. Frequently the TSD is not informed or fails to update its records or inform Treasury.

Curriculum, Assessment and Inspection

The MEHRD is directly responsible for the national curriculum, for assessing student performance and for inspecting schools. Together these functions provide the quality assurance system for the education system.

Curriculum

The Curriculum Development Centre (part of the MEHRD) is responsible for the development of the Solomon Islands national curriculum.

Inspectorate

The Inspectorate Service monitors the teaching of the curriculum, ensures that teachers are present at schools, and that financial resources are allocated according to expectations. It also supports teachers in developing their professional skills.

Assessment

Students take four external examinations as they pass through the Solomon Islands education system. The first three are organised by the National Examinations and Standards Unit (NESU) under delegation from the Minister of Education. The final examination is controlled by the South Pacific Board of Educational Assessment (SPBEA) based in Fiji.

The examinations are:

The Solomon Islands Secondary Entrance Examination (SISEE), taken at the end of Year 6, examines all students in English, Mathematics and General Studies (Science and Community Studies). There is no school-based assessment for this examination. Its original purpose was to select students for progression into secondary schooling, and it is still used in some provinces for that purpose.

The National Form Three Examination (NF3), taken at the end of form 3

examines all form 3 students in English and mathematics, science and social studies. There is no school-based assessment. Prescriptions are based on the form 3 Curriculum.

The Solomon Islands School Certificate (SISC), taken at the end of form 5, examines all students in four core subjects, (English, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies), and two optional subjects (Agriculture, Art, Business Studies, Home Economics, Industrial Arts, and New Testament). Prescriptions are based on the curriculum in each subject. Most subjects allow for some school-based assessment of aspects that are not easily tested by a written examination.

The Pacific Senior Secondary Certificate (PSSC), taken at the end of Form 6, is set by the SPBEA. Uniform prescriptions are set by SPBEA, in consultation with NESU, and allowance is made for school-based assessment in all subjects. These assessments are checked each year by SPBEA and compared with the results of the external examinations. Students who perform well in PSSC move to tertiary level, while others move to employment or further training.

Appendix 2: Structure of the Formal & Non-Formal Education System

