System Capacity Grant Annual Progress Report Template

Status: Accepted

Country	Grant ID	Grant Agent	Grant Effectiveness/Start Date
Tonga	GPE0016458	SCG	06/05/2024

Grant Amount	Timeframe Examined in this Report		Date of Report Submission
260,000 (USD)	From Date	To Date	04/16/2026
	12/31/2024	12/30/2025	

Area(s) and activity group(s) covered by grant

Window 1: Strengthen gender-responsive planning and policy development for system-wide impact

- System diagnostics, compact development and education sector analyses

Implementation Progress

Overall Project Progress this Reporting Period

Overall progress this reporting period [1]	Previous Rating
Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)

Detailed Description including factors that lead to an upgrade/downgrade in the rating

The overall progress of the grant is rated Moderately Satisfactory. Significant achievements were made in advancing major policy reforms, strengthening MET planning processes, delivering capacity-building activities and progressing STAT 3 assessment development. Sector coordination was robust, with active TWGs, PSC meetings and a successful JSR 2025. Delays in policy approvals and some scheduled activities were primarily due to two changes in Government and associated shifts in leadership and priorities, which also contributed to slightly lower financial absorption. Despite these external constraints, implementation remained on track, with strong management performance and clear plans in place to complete remaining deliverables in the next reporting period.

(i) Major Accomplishments This Reporting Period

During this reporting period, the program achieved substantial progress in strengthening the Ministry of Education and Training (MET) systems, policies and capacity:

The Joint Sector Review (JSR 2025) was successfully conducted on 9–10 September 2025, with reports disseminated to all stakeholders and uploaded to the HAMA platform, improving sector transparency, dialogue and accountability.

Policy Development:

Tonga School Grants & Subsidies Policy (2025–2030) revised (v0 ? v3) and progressing to Ministerial and Cabinet approval.

Minimum Service Standards (MSS 2025) approved by CEO and Minister, awaiting Cabinet endorsement.

National School Leaders Standards (NSLS) advanced through TWG workshops (v0 ? v1), with finalization expected March 2026.

Education Gender Policy initiated, with TWG consultations scheduled for March 2026.

Capacity-Building & Planning: Workshops on Corporate Plan (CP) and Annual Management Plan (AMP) conducted in Tongatapu, Vava?u, Ha’apai with ?Eua scheduled for March 2026, improving alignment across MET divisions.

Digital Access: MET website redesigned and launched ahead of schedule, with staff trained to ensure ongoing management and maintenance.

Assessment Development (STAT 3): Item writing, test constructs, and validation workshops completed for core subjects; pilot assessment scheduled for August 2026.

(ii) Implementation Challenges or Delays

Challenges/Delays:

Policy approvals: School Grants Policy, MSS and other standards still require Cabinet endorsement, delayed due to government elections and appointment of a new Minister.

Scheduling constraints: Workshops and consultations needed to align with MET operational priorities and director availability, causing minor delays in implementation.

Mitigation Measures:

The PMU developed detailed work plans and conducted regular follow-ups with MET divisions to maintain progress.

Continuous technical coordination and consultations were maintained through Technical Working Groups (TWGs) and the Project Steering Committee (PSC) to sustain momentum while awaiting formal approvals.

Remaining Actions:

Cabinet submissions and approvals for School Grants Policy and MSS – responsibility: MET and Cabinet – target: May 2026.

Finalize MSLS and submit for CEO/Minister approval – responsibility: MET, TWG – target: March 2026.

Gender Policy and Quality Assurance Framework development – responsibility: MET and TWG – commence TWG consultations: March 2026.

Pilot STAT 3 assessments – responsibility: MET and PMU – target: August 2026.

(iii) Factors Leading to Current Progress Rating

Strengths contributing to rating:

Strong policy development and system strengthening progress achieved

Strengthened partnership and collaboration between MET and non-government education systems with build up to endorsement of the Tonga Education Policy Framework 2025 – 2035, approved by Cabinet in October, 2025, as a national sector wide education framework.

Capacity-building activities successfully delivered across main islands.

STAT 3 assessment development advancing on schedule.

Limitations preventing a higher rating:

Several key policies and standards remain pending Cabinet approval.

Gender Policy and Quality Assurance Framework are still in early stages.

(iv) Progress in Mitigating Previous Challenges or Delays

Delays experienced in policy approvals and workshop scheduling have been mitigated through regular PMU follow-ups, adaptive work planning and TWG/PSC coordination.

Capacity-building delays in outer islands were addressed with scheduled CP & AMP workshops in Vava?u, Ha’apai and ?Eua.

MET has maintained momentum on STAT assessment development, successfully completing item writing and test constructs for STAT despite scheduling constraints.

Throughout the period, implementation arrangements, financial management, procurement, safeguarding, and M&E systems remained sound, with the PMU maintaining strong coordination with MET divisions and partners to sustain momentum and adapt workplans as needed.

Given the balance of strong technical progress, effective coordination, and manageable delays an overall rating of Moderately Satisfactory is appropriate

Conclusion: Substantial progress has been made in strengthening policies, planning and institutional capacity. Remaining actions are clearly scheduled, with responsible parties identified, ensuring that ongoing challenges are actively managed and are unlikely to compromise overall sector outcomes.

2026 priority activities

Component 1 Policies and planning

1.1 School Grants Policy to be finalized, printed and distributed schedule for May 2026, Training for Principals and Management of MET and other stakeholders on all the updated policies

1.2 National Teacher and Principal Standards to be finalized, translated into Tongan, printed and distributed May 2026

1.3 Update and disseminate Minimum Service Standards to be finalized, translated, printed and distributed by May 2026

1.4 The development and implementation of the Gender Policy and the Quality Assurance Framework is proceeding as scheduled.

1.5 Strengthen annual planning and reporting as planned.

1.6 Update and report MET website on a quarterly basis.

Component 2: STAT 3

2.5 – 2.7 Develop item banks

Development of item banks for all core subjects: English, Tongan, Mathematics and Science

Item panel meetings conducted for all core subjects: English, Tongan, Mathematics and Science

Item validation workshops carried out for all subjects : English, Tongan, Mathematics and Science

2.8 – 2.9 Develop of SOP and Training schedule for May-June 2026

2.10-2.11 Distribution and Conduct PILOT STAT 3 scheduled for August 2026.

Grant Implementation Progress, by Grant Window

Grant Window	Level of Progress this Reporting Period [2]	Previous Rating
Window 1: Strengthen gender-responsive planning and policy development for system-wide impact	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)

Detailed Description:

Window 1

During this reporting period, the program continued to support the Ministry of Education and Training (MET) in strengthening system-wide planning, policy development, and governance to promote inclusive and gender-responsive education. Key activities focused on advancing national policies and improving planning systems to guide consistent education service delivery across Tonga.

Key Activities and Outputs:

Minimum Service Standards (MSS) Policy and Guide (2025): Approved by the CEO and Minister, awaiting Cabinet endorsement. The MSS provides clear benchmarks for school infrastructure, learning environments, leadership, and student wellbeing, supporting equity and consistency across schools.

National School Leaders Standards (SLS): Progressed through multiple Technical Working Group (TWG) consultations and workshops; finalization is expected in 2026. These standards aim to strengthen leadership, accountability, and professional expectations for school leaders.

Tonga School Grants and Subsidies Policy (2025–2030): Revised for the first time in over ten years, incorporating transparency, equity, and accountability measures. Internal reviews and TWG feedback have advanced the policy to Version 3, pending Ministerial and Cabinet approval.

Education Gender Policy: The Ministry approved the policy to proceed, with TWG consultations scheduled to begin in March 2026, ensuring gender-responsive planning and implementation across the education sector.

Corporate Plan (CP) and Annual Management Plan (AMP) Capacity-Building: Workshops conducted in Tongatapu and outer islands strengthened divisional alignment with sector priorities and reporting processes.

Assessment of Progress:
Substantial progress has been achieved in advancing gender-responsive and system-wide policies and strengthening planning processes. While some key policies await Cabinet approval and the Gender Policy is still in the early consultation stage, the program is effectively on track to fulfil its capacity-strengthening objectives in this area.

Window 3 - Satisfactory

Planned activities were successfully implemented, capacity outputs were delivered and MET is on track to achieve objectives for scaling results and institutionalizing adaptive management.

The program continued to strengthen MET’s institutional capacity to plan, coordinate and implement education initiatives effectively, while fostering adaptive management and learning across the sector.

Key Activities and Outputs:

Joint Sector Review (JSR 2025): Conducted 9–10 September 2025, supporting sector dialogue, evidence-based decision-making and alignment of priorities.

Capacity-Building Workshops – CP & AMP: Delivered for MET Directors and administrative officers across Tongatapu (9 Feb 2026), Vava?u (17 Feb 2026), Ha’apai (24 Feb 2026), and ?Eua (scheduled 3 Mar 2026). Workshops strengthened divisional planning and reporting alignment.

Project Steering Committee (PSC): Provided oversight and adaptive management; met April 2025 (Q2) and 28 November 2025 (Q4).

STAT 3 Assessment Planning: Preparatory activities undertaken, including item writing, test construct development, and planning for pilot testing.

Assessment of Progress:
Capacity-building workshops and PSC oversight effectively strengthened planning, adaptive management and sector-wide learning. Activities reached both main and outer islands, supporting systemic impact.

Lessons, innovative/promising practices

Successful Practices/Innovative Interventions:

Strengthened coordination with Ministry leadership: Regular planning meetings with relevant Directors within the MET ensured project activities were aligned with departmental priorities and operational timelines. This improved responsiveness to ministry needs and strengthened government ownership of implementation.

Improved planning efficiency within MET: Through strengthened coordination and technical support, MET finalized its Corporate Plan (2026–2027) one month ahead of the submission deadline to the Ministry of Finance. According to the Director of Planning, Policy and Research, this is the first time the Ministry has completed its Corporate Plan ahead of schedule, demonstrating improved institutional planning processes.

Adaptive and accelerated policy approval process: An iterative drafting approach was adopted whereby policies at Version 3–4 were submitted to the CEO and Minister for early review and endorsement, rather than waiting for fully finalized drafts. Feedback was then incorporated through the TWG before finalization, accelerating approval timelines while maintaining technical quality and stakeholder engagement.

Results for the education system: These approaches strengthened internal coordination, planning efficiency and policy development within MET, enabling faster implementation of key education reforms that ultimately support improved learning environments and outcomes for students across Tonga.

Impact stories

Case Study – Website and Policies – (MET website) https://www.education.gov.to/media/attachments/2026/01/14/case-study--met-website--fnl-.pdf
More stories to follow under SCG - JSR 2025, JSR 2026, Gender Policy, CP etc.

Tangible Outputs, Knowledge Products, Results Framework and other Supporting Documentation

#	File Name	Document Type	Description
1	TON GPE SCG Tranche 3 Results Framework - 260316.xlsx	Results Framework	Results Framework

The documents listed were submitted with the progress report. If you'd like access to them, please contact the grant operations officer for your country.

Financial Reporting & Grant Management

Financial Reporting on GPE Grant

Cumulative Financial Absorption Rate

Approved Budget to Date	Cumulative Expenditure	Cumulative Financial Absorption Rate	Level of Financial Absorption
260,000	81,547.06	31.36	Off Track

Since the financial absorption is not rated as 'on track', please provide an explanation that identifies the main activities that have been delayed and their corresponding unspent amounts, as well as reasons for the delay and steps taken to ensure that expenditure absorption gets on track in the next reporting period.

The change in Government at the beginning of 2025 resulted in significant delays in the implementation of activities during the reporting period (January – December, 2025). The transition introduced shifts in national priorities and internal restructuring within the Ministry, which required alignment of programs and planned interventions with the new Government's strategic direction. As a consequence, key stakeholders were temporarily unavailable and redirected focus to accommodate revised institutional priorities. This affected the timely implementation of scheduled activities and slowed expenditure absorption. Furthermore, a subsequent Government change later in November, 2025 introduced additional implementation challenges toward the end of the reporting period. However, in response to these developments, the implementing has reviewed and adjusted work plans to align with the updated Government priorities, maintained continuous follow-up with key stakeholders and initiated re-engagement processes to facilitate the resumption of pending activities and for that are expected to improved implementation progress and expenditure absorption in the next reporting period.

Budget Variance Analysis for the Current Reporting Period

Total Approved Budget for the Current Reporting Period	Total Expenditure for the Current Reporting Period
87,003.73	81,547.06

Management Performance

Level of management performance

Satisfactory (S)

Detailed Description

1. Financial Management

Financial management remained sound and activities were implemented within the approved budget.

The PMU worked closely with the MET Finance Division and Save the Children Australia (SCA) to monitor expenditures, financial reporting, and compliance.

Some administrative processes slowed temporarily due to leadership transitions within the PMU and government changes, but financial oversight and reporting remained consistent.

Regular budget monitoring and coordination have helped maintain accountability and ensure activities continue as planned.

2. Procurement

Standard procurement processes typically require 2–3 months, which contributed to minor implementation delays.

Improved procurement planning and early engagement with relevant MET divisions have helped minimize delays and ensure compliance.

3. Safeguarding

All activities follow Save the Children safeguarding policies and standards.
Safeguarding considerations are integrated into workshops, consultations, and engagement with schools and communities.
No safeguarding incidents were reported during the reporting period.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

Regular monitoring and coordination meetings between PMU, MET divisions and SCA track progress across program activities.
M&E processes support tracking of key outputs such as policy development, STAT assessment work, and sector reforms.
Dissemination of the 2025 Joint Sector Review (JSR) and uploading to the HAMA platform strengthened sector monitoring and transparency.

5. Implementation Arrangements
Implementation is coordinated between the PMU, MET divisions, SCA, Non Government stakeholders and Technical Working Groups (TWGs).
Progress continued across key activities including policy development, standards development, and capacity-building workshops.
Government elections and the appointment of a new Minister temporarily slowed approvals for policies requiring Ministerial and Cabinet endorsement.
The PMU mitigated delays through detailed work planning and regular follow-up with MET divisions.

6. Governance and Aid Coordination
Strong collaboration between the MET, SCA, PMU and education sector partners continued through established sector coordination mechanisms. Regular LEG meetings (June 2025, October 2025 and January 2026) and the Project Steering Committee meetings(April 2025, November 2025) have provided strategic oversight, strengthened partner coordination and supported monitoring of implementation progress
TWGs have played an important role in facilitating stakeholder consultation and technical review of policies and sector initiatives, ensuring that reforms are informed by cross-departmental expertise and partner input.

The JSR in September 2025 further strengthened sector dialogue, transparency and shared accountability. In addition to national-level discussions, the JSR process was extended to the outer island groups of Vava?u, Ha?apai and ?Eua, enabling broader national outreach and ensuring that perspectives from schools and stakeholders across Tonga were reflected in sector review and planning.

Despite recent leadership transitions within MET, coordination mechanisms have remained stable and effective, maintaining continuity in sector dialogue, partner engagement and implementation progress.?

Revisions to the grant

This period, have there been any revisions to the grant other than those submitted to the Secretariat for their approval?
No

How likely is that the grant agent will submit a request for revision to the Secretariat in the next 12 months for their approval?
Unlikely

Annexes

Annex 1: List of Acronyms

Acronym	Description
AMP	Annual Management Plan
CP	Corporate Plan
LEG	Local Education Group
MET	Ministry of Education and Training
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MSS	Minimum Service Standard
PMU	Program Management Unit
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
STAT	Standard Test of Achievement for Tonga
TNU	Tonga National University
TOR	Term of Reference
TWG	Technical Working Group
JSR	Joint Sector Review
PSC	Project Steering Committee

1 Highly Unsatisfactory- The grant has major shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs and a resolution is unlikely. Unsatisfactory - The grant has significant shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs and a resolution is uncertain. Moderately Unsatisfactory - The grant has moderate shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs but a resolution is likely. Moderately Satisfactory - The grant is expected to achieve most of its major outputs efficiently with moderate shortcomings or delays. Satisfactory – The grant is expected to achieve almost all of its major outputs efficiently with only minor shortcomings or delays. Highly Satisfactory - The grant is expected to achieve or exceed all of the major outputs efficiently without significant shortcomings or delays.

2 Highly Unsatisfactory – The window has major shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs and a resolution is unlikely. Unsatisfactory – The window has significant shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs and a resolution is uncertain. Moderately Unsatisfactory – The window has moderate shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs but a resolution is likely. Moderately Satisfactory – The window is expected to achieve most of its major outputs efficiently with moderate shortcomings. Satisfactory – The window is expected to achieve almost all of its major outputs efficiently with only minor shortcomings or delays. Highly Satisfactory – The window is expected to achieve or exceed all of the major outputs efficiently without significant shortcomings or delays.

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