

# Sootaga Mautu Faaleaoaoga

A partnership document for education in Samoa focusing on ensuring seamless, relevant and supported pathways based on strong early learning foundations.

December 2023.

## Glossary

APTC – Australia Pacific Technical College  
CPEM – Conference of Pacific Education Ministers  
CSO – Civil Society Organisations  
DFAT – Department of foreign Affairs & Trade  
DPs – Development Partners  
ECE – early childhood education  
EMIS – Education Management Information System  
EFA – Enabling Factor Analysis  
EQAP – Education Quality and Assessment Programme  
ESA – Education Sector analysis  
ESAC – Education Sector Advisory Committee  
ESP – Education Sector Plan  
ESPIG – Education Sector Plan Implementation Grant  
ESSP – Education Sector Support Programme  
ESWG – Education Sector Working Group  
GAG – Gender Achievement Gap  
GER – Gross enrolment rate  
GESI – Gender Equity and Social Inclusion  
GDP – gross domestic product  
IE – inclusive education  
IAs – implementing agencies  
ITAP – Independent Technical Assessment Panel  
MEC – Ministry of Education and culture  
MFAT – Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade  
MWCSO – Ministry of Women, Community & Social Development  
M & E – Monitoring and Evaluation  
NCECE – National Council for ECEs  
NER – net enrolment rate  
NGO – Non Government Organisation  
NUS – national university of Samoa  
ODA – Official Development Assistance  
PacREF – Pacific Regional Education Framework  
PHES – Pacific Heads of Education  
PSET – Post school education and training  
PDS – Pathway for the Development of Samoa  
SDG – Sustainable Development Goal  
SEMIS – Samoa Education Management Information System  
SMF – Sootaga Mautu Faaleaoaoga  
SQA – Samoa Qualifications Authority  
SPC – Secretariat for the Pacific Community  
STG – System Transformation Grant  
TVET – Technical Vocational Education and Training  
UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Fund  
UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation  
USP IOE University of the South Pacific Institute of Education

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## Sootaga Mautu Faaleaoaoga<sup>1</sup>

Samoa is a Polynesian Pacific Island country consisting of ten islands, the largest two of which are Upolu and Savaii. The country's capital, Apia, is located on the main island of Upolu. Of the remaining eight smaller islands, three (Manono, Apolima and Namua) are inhabited. According to World Bank estimates, Samoa has a population of 222,382 people (2022), 37 per cent of the population are under the age of 14, while 18 per cent of the population reside in urban areas, with 82 per cent living in rural areas.<sup>2</sup>

Samoa is classed as a lower middle-income country. In 2022, Samoa's gross domestic product (GDP) per capita was estimated at US\$3745.60 and the economic growth rate was -3.4 per cent, which is likely to be a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2019, Samoa received US\$123.7 million in Official Development Assistance.

The education sector comprises three implementing agencies: the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), the Samoa Qualifications Authority (SQA) and the National University of Samoa (NUS).

School based education, including Early Childhood Education (ECE) is overseen by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The Samoa Qualifications Authority is mandated under the SQA Act 2010 to provide policy advice and to ensure quality provision of Post School Education and Training (PSET) in Samoa meets national and international standards. The Post School Education and Training sub-sector of Samoa's education system includes all learning that occurs outside of ECE, primary, and secondary education levels.

The National University of Samoa was established by an act of parliament in 1984. The Faculty of Education is the most prominent provider of teachers to schools in Samoa. In 2020, enrolment to the Faculty of Education increased by 3% to reach 20% of total enrolments at the University.

Since 2013, a sector wide strategy has guided how the three implementing agencies partner to support the Government of Samoa's goals for the Education through a five-year planning cycle. The current plan which started in July 2019 ends in June 2024. The development of a new plan has begun and is due to commence in July 2024. The strategic direction of the Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2019–2024, is designed to address the education sector's priorities, recommendations and lessons learned from the ESP 2013–2018.

Goals 1 and 2 of the current ESP 2019–2024 focus on the quality of, and access to, teaching and learning from ECE to PSET, including implementing agencies. Goal 3 is focused on supporting students to transition from school to employment or further education. Goals 4 and 5 focus on creating the right environment for quality education and training through planning, governing, and managing resources effectively. The development of a new ESP will be based on learnings from the implementation of previous plans. A set of thematic studies (including gender and inclusion) and a comprehensive sector analysis will inform the development of goals and focus areas. The priority reform and related activities of this document will be fully embedded into the new plan.

Education and Training is also guided by *Samoa 2040* and the Pathway for the *Development of Samoa 2021/22-2025/26 (PDS)*. Samoa 2040 recognises education as a critical enabler to fully realizing opportunities in the four identified areas of: tourism, agriculture and fisheries, the digital economy,

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<sup>1</sup> Sootaga Mautu Faaleaoaoga, in English means strong education relationships. It is the name chosen by Samoa for this document as it captures the intent of strengthening/establishing partnerships to support the education sector and its priorities.

<sup>2</sup> World Bank Data Set, retrieved from [https://data.worldbank.org/country/samoa?](https://data.worldbank.org/country/samoa?locations=SA)

and labour mobility. The document identifies that all four levels of education, ECE, primary, secondary, and PSET, requires further work and alignment to local and international demand for workers. The PDS identifies quality education as a key priority area to achieve the strategic outcomes of Improved Social Development. The PDS states that education is key to the delivery of national economic prosperity and commits to “Continued emphasis will be placed on developing and raising literacy and numeracy skills, enhancing ECE, and facilitating smoother transitions to the job market”.<sup>3</sup>

Regionally, Samoa is a member of both the Conference for Pacific Education Ministers (CPEM)<sup>4</sup> and the Pacific Heads of Education (PHES), Samoa has endorsed the Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF), which aim to support the development of regional knowledge and services through analysis, tools, and collaboration in education and promote the achievement of the sustainable development goal 4 across the region.

Through this document, the *Sootaga Mautu Faaleaoaoga*, MEC, NUS, SQA and partners, cognizant of the guiding strategies and mandates, make a joint commitment to a priority area believing it will bring change to the education outcomes for all people in Samoa and, through being embedded in the new ESP, has the potential to transform education through the coming decade and beyond; *focusing on ensuring seamless, relevant and supported pathways based on strong early learning foundations.*

## Introduction

This *Sootaga Mautu Faaleaoaoga* is a product of ‘talanoa ma faasoa’ sessions with the education sector’s valuable partners, using existing processes. Consultations are held annually by the implementing agencies of the sector to discuss and confirm the Annual Review Reports. These consultations provide the sector with meaningful information on what has been done and what could be done to address emerging issues from implementation in previous years.

In August and September of 2022, The MEC held consultations under the banner of the Transforming Education Summit. The consultations were held at a time when schools were just coming out of two nation-wide lockdowns and restrictions on movement and gatherings. As expected, the discussions covered access to teaching and learning when face-to-face was no longer feasible.

A Sector Mid-Term Review of the current ESP 2019-2024 was conducted from November 2022 to March 2023. The review found that literacy and numeracy required immediate attention. From July to August of 2023, consultations were held for the Enabling Factor Analysis. Further consultations and workshops were held specifically for the Enabling Factor Analysis in October, where consolidation and validation of views supported a relook at the foundational years of learning, diversifying pathways, and strengthening partnerships and engagement of communities.

The governance arrangements for Education and Training in Samoa sector include a working group and Education Sector Advisory Committee (ESAC) that lead key discussions and decision-making in the direction and focus for the sector. Members of the Education Sector Working Group (ESWG) and Advisory Committee (ESAC) were involved in the above consultations, as well as many of the Development Partners that have a presence in-country and have some form of engagement with Education and Training in Samoa. Civil Society Groups were also engaged in these consultations.

The current ESP 2019-2024 which expires in June 2024, aims to enhance quality education for learners, access to, and creating diverse pathways to match labour market demand, both nationally and

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<sup>3</sup> Government of Samoa (Ministry of Finance), 2021 Pathways for the Development of Samoa 2021/22-25/26, pg. 10

<sup>4</sup> Previously known as the Forum Education Ministers Meeting (FEEdMM)

internationally. In addition, the ESP 2019-2024 also recognized that the planning, monitoring and evaluation, reporting and coordination (vertical and horizontal), needed to shift to a higher level for efficiency and effectiveness of implementation.

The ESP 2019-2024 is aligned to the SDG 4 of 'Quality Education' at the global level, and its related indicators. At the regional level, the work of the Sector and ESP is also aligned to the four policy areas of the Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF), of 'Quality & Relevance,' 'Learning Pathways,' 'Student Outcomes & Wellbeing,' and 'Teacher Professionalism.' In addition, the Blue Pacific 2050 endorsed by Pacific Leaders in 2022, shows commitment from Leaders to improving research and *"enhancing regional scientific and technological capability through education, skills, curriculum development, training, strengthening human resource development and retention strategies that promote gender equality and social inclusion for all Pacific people."* (2050 Strategy, Implementation Plan 2023-2030, p14). The 1<sup>st</sup> Conference of Pacific Education Ministers (CPEM) held earlier in 2023, worked around the theme of, "Empowering Education for Pacific People". Some of the issues discussed at this forum were around inclusive education and ECE and commitments to action recommendations of the various reports. There was also commitment from Development Partners to *'...strong coordination for engagement and investment in the education sector...'* (CPEM Outcomes, p9).

At the national level, the ESP 2019-2024 is aligned to the 'Pathway to the Development of Samoa 2021/22 – 2025/26'. Under one of the Key Strategic Outcomes of 'Improved Social Outcome,' there are two key priority areas that fall under the purview of the Education Sector. These are Quality Education and Skilled Workforce.

### Considerations of the Underlying Principles and Values of Samoa

So'otaga Mautu Fa'aleaoaoga, as this document has been titled, recognizes that strengthened connections in education is a firm platform from which reform can be launched. The required changes will need the coming together of different players in the sector for a successful implementation and seamless transition from old ways of working. The following Samoan values, that speak to how as Samoans we relate to each other, both underpin and facilitate the implementation of the Sootaga Mautu Faaleaoaoga.

#### *Faasinomaga & Tupuaga*

Identity is linked with lineage and plays an important part in learning environments and the relationships of the different parties in schools or in any organization. Students know where they stand in schools and in families and communities. This also guides the complex relationships.

#### *Ava fatafata*

Respect is not only a value for public servants, but it also underpins every service and strengthens relationships within families and communities.

#### *Soalaupule –*

Is the process of sharing decision making and finding solutions to an issue. This is a common practice even in the settings of school when stakeholders of the school come together to discuss and find best for the best interest of the child.

#### *Alofa*

Alofa (love) is not only a value but part of everyday life for any Samoan. Alofa is taught through actions such as loving and caring for others right from the home and is then reflected in other settings. Alofa is a huge part of Samoan way of life and most often decisions are made out of love for others.

## *Tautua*

Tautua (service) to the elders, to the family, to the work and areas where they are called with full commitment, honesty and sacrifice.

## *Talanoa ma faasoa*

Consultations and formal and informal exchanges in large or targeted groups is in line with the culture and ways of working to not only understand the communities but also to introduce any new reforms. Talanoa and faasoa enables discussing of concepts and perceiving the nuances in the exchange to allow for better implementation strategies.

## The Priority Reform

### The Rationale

During the consultations on the Enabling Factor Analysis, the need to elevate attention to the relevancy of education to learners and the labour market was documented. Further discussion as part of the consultations for the Sootaga Mautu Faaleaoaoga identified that curricula and programmes were available but that the lack of clear pathways between them and ways for students to show evidence of learning to access different pathways within and between sub-sectors<sup>5</sup> was a bottleneck. Addressing this disconnect between complimentary parts of the system to create those seamless pathways is central to reform. In addition, significant concerns were raised about pathways earlier in students' education and how strengthening early learning systems and practice and supporting progression and transitions through the system will make students more likely to remain engaged in learning and access the different pathways available. Strengthening early learning and systems to support progression and transition are the building blocks from which pathways can become accessible.

Family and community (aiga) is one of the three pillars of Faásamoa, the culture and way of life in Samoa. Genuine engagement with families and communities must be a part of any educational reform if it is to be successful. In particular, consultations drew on experiences of learning during the COVID-19 period and the need to provide a space in which parents can take responsibility and lead initiatives to support their child's education beyond the more traditional areas of fund raising and school maintenance.

Samoa will therefore prioritize ensuring that relevant seamless pathways are available to learners across all levels of learning and that success in these is supported through quality early learning and support programmes for progression and transition through education with the full engagement of families and communities.

The workshops and consultations that informed the development of this document identified a number of issues to be addressed through the Sootaga Mautu Faaleaoaoga both in education and communities and contributing factors to these:

The ECE sub-sector was identified as needing considerably strengthened coordination and clarity of governance and management systems. There was strong consensus in all consultations and bilateral discussions as to the importance of ECE as foundational to later success in education. However, overall participation in ECE remains extremely low. With an average GER over the 2017-21 period of 25.6% and average NER for the same time period of 23.8%<sup>6</sup> there is no indication that this is a system capacity issue but more likely related to advocacy for, sustainability of and quality of ECE provision. Currently overseen

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<sup>5</sup> Sub-sectors in this document refers to the different levels of education – ECE, primary, secondary, post-secondary and higher education.

<sup>6</sup> From analysis of data in MESC Annual Education Statistics Digest 2021 pg. 15

by the National Council for ECE (NCECE). The council is appointed by MEC as the administrator of ECE in Samoa and registers all centres. All but one ECE Centre are run by church and/or community groups including residing in premises of the same. Whilst this grounding in community for ECE is positive and makes strong connections to the values and practices of Fa'asamoa, the sharing of facilities and the required use for other purposes leads to disruption in centre times, the need to dismantle learning spaces, resources etc. which then have a negative effect on quality and delivery. The governance structure does not lead to well-coordinated sub-sector development in terms of planning or implementation of programmes for teacher qualification and ongoing development, curriculum review, infrastructure or resourcing. The big-ticket items of ECE teacher salary and infrastructure coming fully under government are desired outcomes. Both would need careful consultation, scoping and phasing and while full implementation may be outside of the timeline of this Sootaga Mautu Faaleaoaoga groundwork on supporting governance and policy structures, teacher development and resourcing, costing and advocacy can certainly be achieved.

Following ECE, ensuring a smooth, school, family and community enabled transition to primary school was considered important for the added value of ECE to be fully realized. Attention here was given to curriculum delivery in Year 1-3 with an emphasis on continuing an ECE thematic approach to learning. The continued emphasis on developing skills, values and competencies that are core to Samoa, including the Samoan language, as foundational to other learning remained. Recognition of early identification and intervention for students at risk at this transition point was also identified as pivotal to students maintaining opportunity to access later learning pathways. The need of some students, particularly those with a disability, to have ongoing support and intervention, and how this should be resourced and mainstreamed was also discussed as both a quality and equity issue.

The ESP 2019-2024 identifies Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is “a critical tool for improving productivity and reducing Samoa’s high unemployment, particularly of youth and school leavers.”<sup>7</sup> The policy objectives for TVET under the ESP 2019-2024 are to promote the quality and relevance of TVET programmes, to improve participation particularly for those who have become disengaged from further education, training and employment and to create improved pathways within secondary schools and between schools and PSET. These are fully in-line with both social and economic aspirations of the ‘Pathway for Development and Samoa 2040’. Consultations emphasized that the transitions from secondary-post secondary needed to be seamless to enable an environment where each learner has the opportunity to succeed. The current practice is that the transition begins at the end of secondary rather than at different exit points in secondary education, this leaves students in somewhat of a black hole. The creation of additional steps for transition to remove gaps in pathways, with the possible use of short courses, and different modalities of learning were all possibilities given consideration.

Traditionally, summative tests and exams have been both valued and mandated by the education system. Less attention has been paid to formative, child centered in class assessment across the year. Sound policy on assessment ‘of’ and ‘for’ learning exists but there is a lack of coherence between policy and practice that requires attention. Greater use of formative assessment through a range of tools and modalities is needed to better inform the next steps in learning for students. Focused and practical, in-context pre and in-service training on formative assessment and the use of assessment data is required for teachers along with school leaders so that ongoing in-school support can be provided. Rationalising the quite high level (3 different year level cohorts) of national level summative assessment at primary level is also suggested.

Earlier attention to remedial programmes, especially in literacy and numeracy will support student progress and successful transitions through and across education pathways. Reliant on the use of valid, student-

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<sup>7</sup> Samoa Education Sector Plan (2019-24) pg. 38



centered assessment mentioned above, the consultations as part of the development of this Sootaga Mautu Faaleaoaoga considered remedial programmes from an early level in schooling as “critical support to students”. Cohorts progress through year levels in school but individual students carry any learning deficiency with them that, if not addressed, compounds over time. It is recognized that remedial programmes can be resource intensive, but they are identified as required to ensure students have every opportunity to meet learning targets, achieve competencies and can be successful in points of transition in education and have opportunity for seamless pathways rather than bottlenecks in progress due to earlier learning deficits. Students with these opportunities are more likely to complete cycles of education and continue learning. Attention to remedial and recovery learning from an earlier level will give all students the skills they need for transitions or bridging programmes into post - secondary TVET or higher education.

In response to these consultations and findings, and reflection on guiding national, regional and global mandates, MEC, NUS, SQA, and partners have identified the following domains of work to progress the priority reform; Early Years Foundations, Learner Centered Progressions and Transitions and Collaboration and Communities.

These are not discrete domains with such a structure utilized for ease of planning and organization. In reality, the areas overlap in intent and strategy with such overlap strengthening the overall outcome for the learner over time. This can be represented through the *afa*, a cord made from the braiding of three strands of coconut sinnet. The resulting cord can be used for many purposes and is particularly strong and resilient – representing the learner that has the skills, knowledge and values to follow their aspirations and contribute to their communities.



*O poutu e lalagaina le lumanai o fanau – the strands weaving the future of our children.*

#### Considerations of Gender and Social Inclusion in the Priority Reform

The education sector has not engaged in either a gender or social inclusion stock take in recent years. Data that is sex disaggregated suggests parity, or favours girls in core indicators, but all stakeholders recognize that there are issues beyond parity that need to be considered such as access. A gender equality and social inclusion study is intended as part of an upcoming Education Sector Analysis that will look at inclusion of all different student cohorts including through a gender lens. This recognizes that more needs to be understood about the social factors influencing the participation in and

outcomes of education for both boys and girls. The review will include analysis of differential access, opportunities and challenges facing boys and girls.

Samoa has given significant attention to inclusive education in recent years including establishment of posts, policy work and capacity building. The 2021 Pacific Regional Review of Inclusive Education identified this commitment but that changes were only just emerging in practice and would require further support to be embedded and sustained. The ESA will also include a review of recent work in this area with findings and recommendations expected to inform both the drafting of the new Education Sector and Corporate Plans as well as ensuring an inclusive lens on the continued development of priority reform strategies. To date inclusive education has predominantly been through a lens of disability inclusion. The work to be undertaken within the ESA will expand this to include other lenses of inclusion such as urban/rural, socio-economic and type of educational institution.

Learning and teaching practices within the reform must also foster inclusion and inclusive approaches. This will include consideration of the learning materials/resources developed, teaching methodologies, language use, classroom environment (including EoTC) and the opportunities students are given to demonstrate evidence of learning. Discussion has already noted that some traditional practices have gender specific roles. This is recognized and care will need to be taken to ensure that the knowledge about the practice does not then perpetuate other gender stereotyping or learning opportunities for students. This will shift gender and social norms and positively impact the way that boys and girls, including those with disabilities, perceive themselves and their abilities to learn and succeed.

#### Domains and Priority Actions

The following table outlines the priority actions for each of the domains identified.

*Table 1 Domains of Reform and Priority Actions*

<b>Reform:</b> Focus on ensuring seamless, relevant and supported pathways based on strong early learning foundations	
<b>Domain</b>	<b>Priority Actions</b>
Early Year Foundations:	<p>Full sub-sector review of ECE, including governance and Policy review/revision            Medium term costing of the sub-sector (short term ring fencing to ensure budget sufficiency if required)            ECE teacher training and resourcing (pre-service qualification accreditation and in-service programmes)            Review of ECE minimum service standards (2015) and quality assessment of ECE settings            Other strategies indicated from findings and recommendations of the ECE sub-sector review process</p> <p><b>Systems</b>            Development of an Options Paper for government taking responsibility for ECE teacher salaries            Development of Options Paper on ECE infrastructure</p>
Learner centered progressions	Review curriculum delivery in early years (G1-3) to support successful transition from ECE/home settings.

and transitions	<p>Broadening current IE programmes to include implementation of early intervention at ECE and all points of transition</p> <p>Strengthening capacity/relevant partnerships to identify the learning needs of students with a disability and/or delayed learning</p> <p>Strengthening teacher capacity to adapt curriculum delivery to meet the needs of students – in particular those with disability or learning delays</p> <p>Identification of opportunities for assistive technologies and other use of ICT to support learning interventions</p> <p>Development, staff training, resourcing and delivery of remedial programmes with a focus on literacy and numeracy, including literacy across the curriculum at secondary level. Development of alternative assessment approaches at all levels of education (initial focus on primary and secondary/pset transition)</p> <p>Teacher capacity building on the use of alternative assessment approaches</p> <p>In-service programmes on the development and use of formative assessment to inform classroom-based learning programmes.</p> <p>Mapping of secondary school curriculum to PSET to identify multiple pathways from different secondary exit points including bridging, alternate and second chance opportunities.</p> <p>Development/revision of school based TVET to assure seamless alignment to PSET TVET qualification programmes (including recognition of partial completion of qualification levels)</p> <p>Establish Industry/Education advisory panels to inform curriculum development and implementation for TVET.</p> <p>Scope options for workplace based learning as part of TVET curriculum delivery and assessment</p> <p>Ensure planned Gender Equality and Social Inclusion study includes TVET programmes within scope, findings and recommendations</p>
Collaboration and Communities:	<p>Training for school leaders on ways to support learning focused parent and community engagement with schools</p> <p>Development and implementation of Matua Tulai Mai relevant to support all level of education</p> <p>Guidelines for and resourcing of child focused community learning initiatives through the development of mutually accountable (with MEC) MoU</p> <p>Homework centres</p>

### The Potential for Transformation

Pathways is a metaphor used to describe the range of different routes that learners follow as they move into, through and out of an education and training system.<sup>8</sup>

By focusing on pathways, this Sootaga Mautu Faaleaoaoga recognizes that a person’s learning is lifelong and consists of interactions between the learner, schools/formal and non-formal education and training providers, families, communities and the world of work. It also recognizes that pathways are not linear and flexibility learners to successfully cross between pathways, taking prior learning and competency attainment with them and responding to evolving education/training needs is important. Likewise, ensuring that the youngest learners have had the opportunity to develop strong foundational skills and be supported to address gaps in learning so that they can be successful in the pathway of

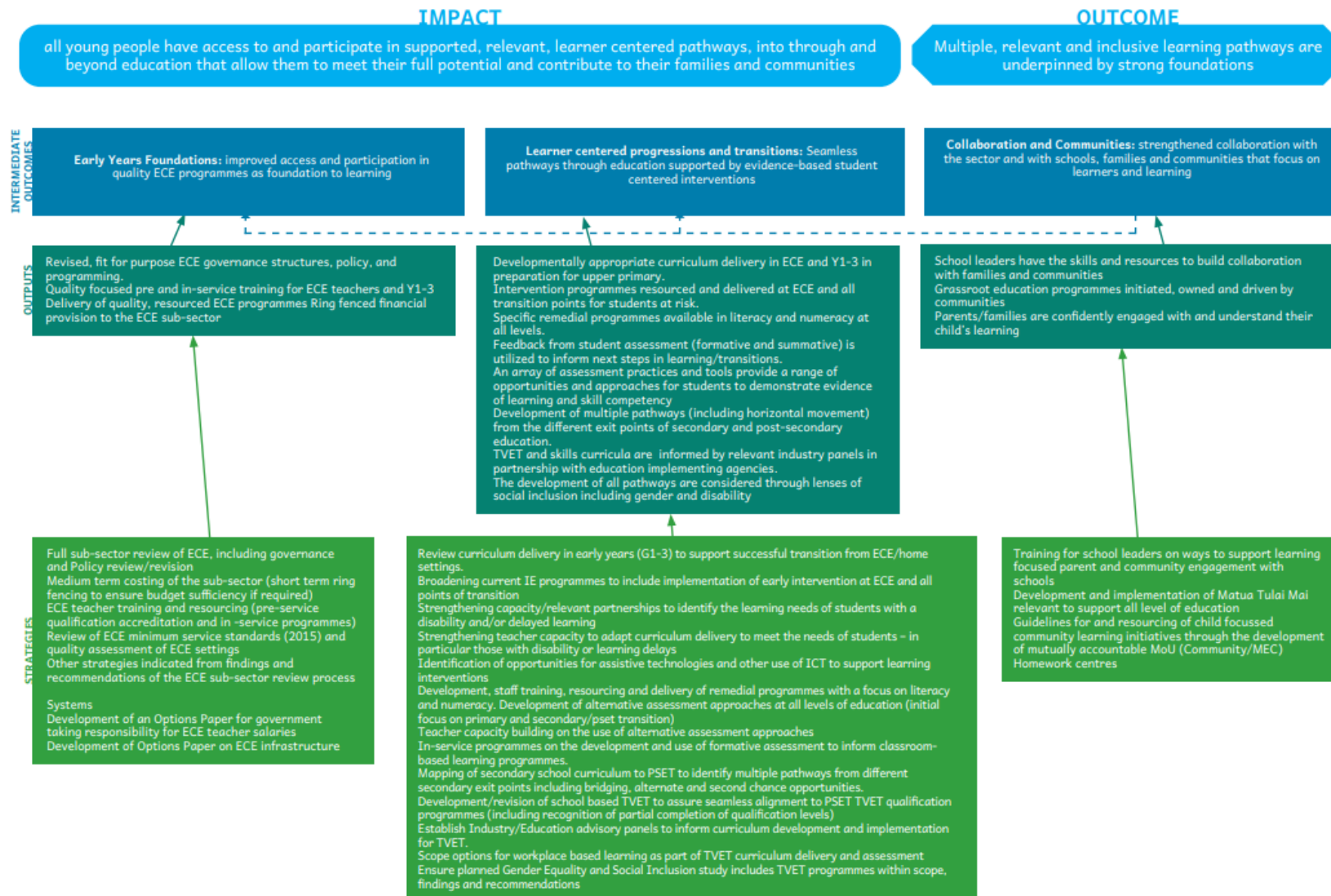
<sup>8</sup> Govt. of Australia (DFAT), 2018. Education Pathways. Retrieved from <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/foundation-education-pathways.pdf> on 29.11.23

their choice addresses quality and equity as well as the return on investment by the system in that early learning.

The priority reform and its domains of this Sootaga Mautu Faaleaoaoga will work together to create the opportunity for all students to have a pathway in turn, increasing foundational skills, retention and completion and the relevancy of education.

This focus on pathways from the beginning of education will ensure learners, and their families, are better equipped to make informed and confident decisions about their steps because i) the steps exist and ii) support systems are in place to make taking those steps successful.

# Theory of Change



## Outcomes of the Enabling Factor Analysis

An Enabling Factors Analysis (EFA) of the education system of Samoa was prepared prior to the development of the So’otaga Mautu Fa’aleaoaoga. The approach was one of self-review of the three implementing agencies to complete Part 1, with significant domestic stakeholder consultation for Part 2. The consultation formed the basis of a priority area statement which, through the process of developing the So’otaga Mautu Fa’aleaoaoga, has become the priority reform and its domains. The consultation also identified areas of systems capacity relevant to the reform not necessarily identified in the self-review of part one that have also been included. The analysis identified the urgent need (high priority) to act on data and evidence and domestic financing with sector planning and coordination accorded a medium priority. The Independent Technical Advisory Panel (ITAP) process has not yet been completed however Samoa will still look to this process to inform specific capacity strengthening activities in future planning and during reviews of this So’otaga Mautu Fa’aleaoaoga.

### Data and Evidence

With a history of quantitative data collection, analysis and reporting attention to data sharing mechanisms between the sector agencies would improve efficiency and use of data in decision making. Currently data sits in individual agencies, and sometimes even within individual divisions, which creates considerable time lags in analysis and availability of data for use across the sector. Additionally, more qualitative and evaluative work would provide MEC, NUS, SQA and partners with more information, through different lenses with which to contribute to planning and policy work. A Sector Research Strategy has been endorsed (2022) to support research capacity but is yet to be funded for implementation.

In terms of the priority, the following have been identified to inform strategies that will contribute to the desired reform:

1. Further analysis of subject choices at secondary level to understand default selections disaggregated to identify any issues of stereotyping, impact of remoteness on options etc.;
2. An understanding of pathways through and beyond secondary education and the different perceptions of each with a particular look at STEM and TVET and how these relate to post school options;
3. A mechanism for collecting and analysis data on community initiatives to support learning such as homework centres is needed so that targeted support to the identified grassroots initiatives can be provided.

### Gender-responsive Sector Planning, Policy and Monitoring

Samoa has an established architecture for sector planning, monitoring and reporting with the implementing agencies drawing on the sector plan for both medium term corporate and annual planning. Work has just commenced on the next iteration of the sector due for implementation from July 2024. This gives an opportunity for the strategies relating to this priority reform to be fully integrated into the new ESP. Likewise, the current quarterly monitoring and annual reporting mechanisms can also be used to monitor this Sootaga Mautu Faaleaoaoga through alignment of relevant indicators.

A gender audit has not been carried out in the education sector although a Gender Assessment Gap (GAG) study has recently been completed and a Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) study is expected as part of the ESA to inform the new sector plan. In terms of the approaches to the reform, the GESI will help to identify issues, beyond parity, that the sector needs to address for the access to and relevancy of pathways and support programmes. This should include, but not be limited to

gender stereotyping in subject options and curriculum resources, impact on scope of curriculum delivery to remote students and perceptions on mainstreaming students with a disability.

### Sector Coordination

There is an established government appointed and led coordination architecture of CEO of sector implementing agencies with senior officials and identified sector partners including DP and CSO. A variety of reference groups are utilized to inform coordination and members of the coordination team (housed in MEC), and focal points of the implementing agencies also participate in discussion fora of other sectors.

In terms of the identified reform, it is recognized that specific coordination efforts will need to be made in the area the secondary-post-secondary interface to achieve the attended outcome. This will need to be between implementing agencies in the sector as well as other government agencies and CSO/NGO engaged with the youth and employment sectors.

The implementing agencies and those involved in the sector coordination mechanism have recognized that dissemination and awareness of policies and plans to community groups could be improved, especially for those outside of the urban areas that have less opportunity for engagement. In terms of this priority, stronger links and coordination with community initiatives will be needed. Better utilization of the current reference groups under the current coordination structure could be used to support schools in championing the changes however, when it is intended that these be community/family led care will need to be taken for the established architecture to disempower those community stakeholders.

### Volume of Domestic Funding

Whist the Education sector has one of the highest allocations from government budget, there are still budget shortfalls in meeting the needs of the sector. The average 15% of total appropriation to the sector over the last three years being overspent at least 1% per annum. There are also capacity issues in meeting spending, compliance and reporting requirements. A better understanding of how budget is being used in each implementing agency is required. The suggested expenditure review will allow informed decision making and enhance discussions on equity and prioritization in the use of allocation.

In relation to the reform, both ECE and Inclusive Education stakeholders have voiced concern on the limited funding sources to support their operation and currently, there are no specific funding allocations for either in domestic appropriation with reliance on development partner funding. Creating viable and valid secondary – post-secondary pathways, especially in TVET is also recognized as incurring additional cost as part of the reform. Consideration was given to decreasing attention to this in the Sootaga Mautu Faaleaoaoga but stakeholders and agencies agreed that its importance to education and national development overall will only be realized and supported if it continues to be prioritized and advocated for.

### Delivery

With Samoa commencing development of the new Education Sector Plan (ESP), there is opportunity to fully integrate the strategies relating to this priority reform into the ESP and the related corporate and implementation plans of each implementing agency. This will create cohesion between these initiatives and those of the wider plan. The costing and monitoring and evaluation of the Sootaga Mautu Faaleaoaoga strategies within the ESP can also be fully integrated so that the priority is not seen as a

separate activity from MEC, NUS and SQA programmes but contributes to the effectiveness of the ESP to deliver inclusive, quality, relevant education across all levels in Samoa.

#### Partners and the Priority Reform

There are a number of current initiatives from partners that are relevant to the priority area and have potential to further contribute to the same based on discussions during the Sootaga Mautu Faaleaoaoga development.

Through the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (MWCSO), the Samoan government supports the District Development Plan/ Fono Fa'avae programme. This allocates an annual fund to each local council to use for the purposes of social development in their communities. Whilst the decisions on how this is used, sits with the communities and council there has been some funding allocation to education initiatives such as school transport and PSET scholarships. Advocacy by the implementing agencies both with MWCSO and directly with councils will create opportunity for Fono Fa'avae supported initiatives that align to the priority reform, particularly in the domain on collaboration and communities but also the continued support to student pathways from secondary to post-secondary education.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), from Australia and New Zealand currently support a harmonized programme through a budget support model to the education sector. The current programme, the Education Sector Support Programme (ESSP), is due for completion mid-2024. All parties have agreed to continue the current programme as transitional while the new Education Sector Plan is developed and new iteration of the ESSP or other mechanism jointly decided upon can be developed to reflect that plan. Based on the current plan, activities to support literacy and numeracy outcomes and to improve retention in secondary education and make more successful transitions from school to further learning and work align significantly to the priority area identified. More specifically, indicators in the current ESSP, demonstrating intended utilization of the budget support, that align to this priority include; an increase in number of ECE centres meeting minimum standards, improved literacy and numeracy outcomes at both primary and secondary level, improved completion rates at all levels, an increase in TVET programmes at secondary level, and GER and graduation rates at PSET.

Through DFAT, Australia also provides financial support to the Tautua programme, a multi sectoral programme focused on human development and social inclusion outcomes. Current programme activities and outputs that have potential to contribute to the reform area include:

- i) Promoting participation in ECE through advocacy materials and resource support to ECE centres.
- ii) Teacher training on language literacy and literacy pedagogy with an initial emphasis on secondary level education.
- iii) Trainers and teacher training in assessment and revised assessment practices at both school and PSET level.
- iv) Support to inclusion through teacher aides in classrooms and accessible (braille and oral text) teaching and learning resources.
- v) Forming partnerships and piloting community-based reading initiatives.

UNESCO's recent programmes that align closely with the priority includes TVET curriculum review, enhancement of qualifications framework, disability inclusion and awareness raising among TVET providers and employers.

With data and evidence identified as a high priority in the EFA, UNESCO through PacREF phase 1 project, MEC's initiative in SEMIS policy development, to be followed by support in strategies and programs to empower EMIS staff and relevant education stakeholders with the skills and knowledge



to utilize data, analyze and apply to policies and programming. This builds on in the SDG 4 data collection, data quality and benchmarking establishment/monitoring support through UIS in partnership with SPC over a number of years.

UNICEF has a growing partnership with Samoa, particularly in early childhood development, early childhood education and system strengthening, and inclusive education all of which align with this priority. Currently, an ECE sub-sector analysis is under way, the findings and recommendations of which will be able support decision making on governance, financing and next steps for ECE. In addition, support to a review of recent attention to Inclusive Education is also commencing to synthesise the impacts of recent investments, the remaining gaps and recommendations for addressing these. UNICEF has been particularly engaged in the region with early literacy and will continue to work in this area with Samoa.

The Education Quality and Assessment Programme (EQAP) of the Pacific Community (SPC) will continue to provide support to literacy development through the current work on Samoa Phonics and teacher capacity development programmes to write listening and reading comprehension texts. EQAP have also indicated that will support other curriculum review work the MEC may take on as well as the continuing work through the PILNA assessment. EQAP are also looking to provide a micro-qualification for examiners on the development of national examination papers and questions. It may be possible for this work to increase in scope to offer support to formative and other modalities of summative assessment.

Samoa are also a member country of the regional University of the South Pacific (USP) and host the regional campus for tropical agriculture in Apia. Although a Bachelor of Education is available through USP and USP and NUS do collaborate in a number of regional spaces, NUS is the lead provider of pre-service teacher training for Samoa. The USP Institute of Education (IoE) does provide support directly to MEC through work on bilingual reading resources and teacher leadership programmes.

UNESCO, UNICEF, USP, APTC and SPC/EQAP are also Implementing Agencies (IA) of the regional PacREF with a number of aligned activities. These include the development of frameworks for all life-skills, home-school transitions and the engagement of families with education.

#### Support from the Global Partnership for Education

Samoa is a relatively new member of the Global Partnership for Education. It has directly benefitted from accelerated funding towards its education response to COVID-19 and currently has a Systems Capacity Grant (partial MCA) for an education sector analysis and development of new sector plan with supporting activity. Samoa chose to “pool” its previous Education Sector Plan Implementation Grant (ESPIG) with five other Pacific countries in support of the implementation of the Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF). In relation to the priority identified in Sootaga Mautu Faaleaoaoga, Samoa intends to also apply for a Systems Transformation Grant (STG). With recognition of indicative support from partners as described above, the STG will be used to address funding gaps in identified strategies and seek to complement the current and proposed work of partners. Such strategies include but are not limited to:

- i) Defining and strengthening ECE governance (including options papers for phased implementation)
- ii) Early primary curriculum delivery
- iii) Design, implementation and resourcing of remedial and recovery programmes
- iv) School/TVET/Industry interface scoping and piloting.

In addition to this, Samoa has some remaining SCG allocation available. Further consideration will be given to the use of this funding once the ITAP review is completed, and the development of the next ESP and corresponding Corporate Plan is also further along. Current consideration, although subject to change based on ITAP and further consultation, is being given to additional support for:

1. Supporting legislative and regulatory changes required for emerging strategies and outcomes. Discussions have already identified that work may be required around both ECE and expected changes at upper secondary level. (window 3)
2. A Public Expenditure Review of education to identify efficiencies and effectiveness in financing of the sector and where ring-fencing of funding and harmonized modalities can provide additional opportunity. (window 1)
3. Policy scoping and development work including for ECE and data sharing. (window 3)
4. Additional support to the sector research strategy (window 1)

## Monitoring and Evaluation

As noted previously, it is fully intended for the work of the priority reform to be fully integrated into the new ESP on which work is currently being initiated as well as reflecting Samoa 2040, and Samoa’s regional and global education commitments to PacREF and SDG 4. With this in mind, the M&E framework of the ESP will be used to also monitor the progress of interventions identified within this Sootaga Mautu Faaleaoaoga

With baselines and targets to be set within the M&E framework of the new ESP by July 2024, the following indicators are identified for monitoring the impact of the priority implementation Sootaga Mautu Faaleaoaoga:

Indicator	Disaggregation	Method of Data Collection/Validation	Frequency
<b>Output Indicators</b>			
Number of lecturers /teachers/tutors trained in development and use of formative assessment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) <i>Pre or in-service training</i></li> <li>ii) <i>Level of education taught</i></li> <li>iii) <i>Gender</i></li> <li>iv) <i>Subject area</i></li> <li>v) <i>Focus of training (tool development, use of data, student engagement etc)</i></li> <li>vi) <i>Modality of training (workshop/remote/self-paced)</i></li> </ul>	Workshop reports MEC NUS	Half Yearly
Number of Year 1-3 teachers trained in thematic curriculum delivery and assessment and ECE – early years transition support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) <i>Gender</i></li> <li>ii) <i>District</i></li> <li>iii) <i>Focus of training (unpacking curricula, planning, assessment)</i></li> <li>iv) <i>Modality of training (workshop/remote/self-paced)</i></li> </ul>	MEC	Annual
Number of student learning centered MoU developed with communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>v) <i>District</i></li> <li>vi) <i>Focus of MoU</i></li> </ul>	MEC	Annual

(that maintain currency)			
Number of industry panel meetings focused on relevancy of programmes and creation of pathways	vii) Industry	SQA/NUS	Annual
<b>Outcome Indicators</b>			
ECE enrolment	i) Year level ii) Gender iii) District	School Census	Annual
Literacy and Numeracy Rates	i) Transition level ii) Gender iii) District	National Assessment PILNA	Annual Three year cycle
Transition Rates	i) Transition level ii) Gender iii) District	School Census NUS (foundation – degree)	Annual
Completion Rate (Years 8, 10, 12), NUS.	iv) Grade level v) Gender vi) District	School Census NUS	Annual

In addition to the monitoring carried out under the review processes of the sector plan, the So’otaga Mautu Fa’aleaoaoga requires a separate programme evaluation after the first two years of implementation. The first year of implementation may not necessarily show the impact of the interventions, so it would be good to review after the second year. The first year progress will be captured in the normal annual sector review anyway and these are usually descriptive in nature. More important is that the sector processes should be fluid enough to allow for any adjustment and/or tweaks required for this programme regardless of when the review is undertaken.

The programme evaluations after the first two years and every year thereafter, should consider the analytical approach while the final year evaluation could look at comparing the system that was, with the system at that point, with where to next.

Possible evaluations/reviews identified to date (acknowledging that these will be at different time periods of implementation and adjusted to suit), include:

- i) The value add of MoU with communities to strengthen attention to learner centered grassroots initiatives
- ii) An evaluation on the change in classroom assessment practices and impact on teacher’s planning for learning.

In addition, as the strategies and activities of the Sootage Mautu Faaleaoaoga will be integrated in the next ESP, they will also form part of that M&E and progress also be monitored and evaluated through the ESP/ESSP processes.

## Statement of Endorsement

As members of the Education Sector Advisory Committee (ESAC) of Samoa we confirm the broad consultation with sector and partners that has developed this document, including those outside of ESAC, and our combined support to the priority reform to *focus on ensuring seamless, relevant and supported pathways based on strong early learning foundations* and the related activities outlined in this Sootaga Mautu Fa'aleaoaoga.

We collectively endeavor to work to achieve better learning and competency outcomes for the young people of Samoa so that they have opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge they need for the pathway they wish to follow in order to be strong, resilient, contributing members of their society.