New Perspectives on Strengthening Government Capacity to Intervene for School Readiness in Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu

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THE WORLD BANK GROUP
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Executive Summary

Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu have achieved considerable progress on boosting primary and secondary school enrolment. Now policy makers are focusing on strengthening early grade literacy and numeracy. One significant constraint to early grade literacy and numeracy is the readiness of children to learn and succeed in a school environment. The purpose of this report is to provide an assessment of the capacity of these three countries to intervene for school readiness and present international examples of how similar capacity constraints have been resolved in order to set an agenda for national dialogue. Capacity to intervene is assessed at two levels: the national level and the community level. To assess capacity at the national level, the World Bank’s benchmarking tool for early childhood development policies (SABER-ECD) was applied. To assess capacity at the community level, a tool was developed drawing on concepts from the school-based management literature and community driven development.

The assessment of national capacity identifies three priorities for strengthening the ability of government to intervene for school readiness. First, none of the three countries measure school readiness outcomes systematically, which means that they cannot identify problems in school readiness and that differences among sub-populations—between boys and girls or between wealthy and poor—are unknown. Second, none of the three countries are able to systematically allocate resources and efforts across different sectors (education, health, social protection, etc.) to address problems even if they could be identified. Third, Tonga and Vanuatu struggle to enforce and report on compliance for regulations regarding preschools.

The assessment of community-level capacity reveals significant potential to strengthen participation for school readiness. Preschools have the de facto role to prepare children for primary school, and they are mostly financed by communities. During the study, communities identified two major constraints for school readiness: a lack of value that parents have for preschool and a lack of financial resources for the poorest. Communities also identified different types of interventions that they could implement independently to help alleviate both constraints. Consequently, communities have the potential to alleviate school readiness problems independently if participation is strengthened. However, poorer communities would still need external financing to be able to compensate and retain trained and experienced preschool teachers.

Consequently, national dialogue is needed to address three priorities before effective, child-focused school readiness interventions can be sustained:

i) Strengthen capacity at the national level through: (a) systematic measurement of school readiness to identify problems; (b) improved multi-sectoral coordination to address problems; and (c) strengthening quality assurance of school readiness (early childhood) service providers.

ii) Strengthen participation at the community level through increasing capacity to identify and resolve school readiness constraints independently beyond providing preschools.

iii) Increase public budget for Finance preschool and other school readiness services, priority should be provided to the most disadvantaged groups.

A wide range of international experience can inform national dialogue on how to achieve these priorities, but careful adaptation and evaluation is needed to ensure their success.
1. Introduction

As 2015 approaches, governments in the Pacific and elsewhere are taking stock of their progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). With just three years left, achieving these goals is still a core aspiration of policy-makers in the Pacific. Yet the record of achievements in education and health is mixed.

Starting with education, in the past ten years enrollment in primary and secondary school has increased substantially. Governments across the Pacific are delivering on the promise to ensure broader access to education. As a result of concerted efforts – and with assistance from donors and non-government organizations – countries including Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu have sustained net primary enrollment rates well above 90 percent since the 1990s.

Despite these high enrolment rates, policymakers are increasingly concerned by poor outcomes from basic education. A growing evidence base, including from World Bank efforts in Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), school-to-work research, and functional literacy surveying, reveals worse outcomes in literacy and numeracy than previously assumed, with long-term impacts on employability and labor participation.

Strengthening early literacy and numeracy is an essential part of governments’ efforts to improve human capital and boost development in the Pacific region. However, policy makers are concerned about poor learning outcomes in the early grades. For example, the EGRA adapted and applied to Tonga in 2009 and Vanuatu in 2011 found that reading levels in the early grades are low and progression towards fluency for comprehension very slow: only 3 in 10 students in Tonga and 2 in 10 students in Vanuatu are able to read with enough fluency to understand most of the text they read after three years of schooling (Tonga Ministry of Education and Training and World Bank 2012; Vanuatu Ministry of Education and World Bank 2012a; Vanuatu Ministry of Education and World Bank 2012b).

Much of the variation in EGRA performance is within classrooms and not between. Figure 1 presents within- and between-classroom variation for letters correct per minute from the EGRA studies in Tonga and Vanuatu in the first year of primary school. Between-classroom variation represents 28 percent of the variation in letters correct per minute in Vanuatu and 18 percent in Tonga. Most of the variation in grade 1 performance is within classrooms and this is also true for higher grades.

Because most of the variation in EGRA performance is within classrooms, the reason why some children do well and others struggle has more to do with differences in individual student factors rather than differences in classrooms or teaching. Variation in EGRA performance between classrooms reflects the influence on learning of factors that are different between classrooms: differences in teaching, classroom materials, peers, etc. Variation in EGRA performance within classrooms reflects the influence on learning of factors that are different between students in the same classroom: differences in child development, motivation, innate ability, development, parenting, etc. Figure 1 reveals that most of the variation in EGRA performance is within classrooms indicating that individual factors of children are the primary determinant of whether a child succeeds in acquiring reading ability at school.
Differences in Grade 1 EGRA performance mostly within classrooms

The concept of “school readiness” or “readiness to learn at school” has emerged over the past decade or so and represents the ability of children entering primary school to succeed at school. For example, the Offord Centre for Child Studies (2013) defines readiness to learn as “the child’s ability to meet the task demands at school”, and as “the child’s ability to benefit from the educational activities provided by the school.”

School readiness is often conceptualized as a child’s development along five dimensions, following the U.S. National Education Goals Panel: (1) physical well-being and motor development, (2) social and emotional development, (3) approaches towards learning, (4) language development and (5) cognition and general knowledge (Kagan et al. 1995 in Naudeau et al. 2011:36; Hair et al. 2006). Children who lack cognitive, physical and socio-emotional development tend to have lower education outcomes in the future (Heckman and Masterov 2007; Reynolds et al 2001; Feinstein 2003; Pianta and McCoy 1997; Currie and Thomas 1999). Neurological research suggests that cognitive and emotional function develop within the first few years of a child’s life (Young and Mustard 2007; Young 2002). Nutrition and health of young children have a large impact on a child’s learning outcomes at school (Irwin et al. 2007). For example, the impact of stunting on cognitive, linguistic and socio-emotional development becomes irreversible after 24 months (Naudeau et al. 2011; Allen and Gillespie 1998 in World Bank 2012).

While the EGRA raises questions about the preparedness of children to succeed in school, this assessment is not a direct measure of school readiness. The data to further assess the preparedness of children are limited. There are no data on cognitive or socio-emotional development of children prior to entering primary school and very limited data on physical development. Table 1 presents key indicators on physical development, including health and nutrition outcomes for young children.

Under-five mortality rates remain far from their 2015 MDG targets except in Vanuatu. There are no data on the prevalence of being underweight or stunted for Samoa or Tonga. For Vanuatu, just over a quarter of young children suffer from stunting.
Table 1. Key health and nutrition outcome indicators for young children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Samoa</th>
<th>Tonga</th>
<th>Vanuatu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 5 mortality (per 1000)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDG Target 2015</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underweight Prevalence (percent)</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stunting Prevalence (percent)</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source UNICEF 2012a UNICEF 2012b UNICEF 2012c

The early environment of young children is a crucial determinant to a child’s cognitive, socio-emotional and physical development and subsequently his or her school readiness. A young child’s experiences affect learning, behavior and other skills which impact future outcomes for the child (Cunha and Heckman, 2007; Heckman, 2006; Cunha et al, 2005; Carneiro and Heckman, 2003; Shonkoff and Philips 2000). Stimulation and early learning activities have been shown to be just as important as genetics in determining a child’s cognitive ability (Fernald et al. 2009).

While data reflecting the quality of the early environment of young children does not exist for Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu, there exist some data reflecting behavior towards the early environment, including health and nutrition practices, support for education at home, and participation in preschool, among others. Table 2 presents these. For example, progress is needed on immunization rates in Samoa and Vanuatu and exclusive breastfeeding in all three countries. The EGRA datasets provide some indication of the support children receive at home for learning. Table 2 presents the percent of children included in EGRA receiving support from home in grade 1; while this is not a direct measure for younger children, this is the best glimpse possible. Finally preschool net enrolment rates as shown in Table 2 are generally low ranging from 21 to 38 percent.

Table 2. Summary of indicators affecting child development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Samoa</th>
<th>Tonga</th>
<th>Vanuatu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health and nutrition inputs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% immunized against measles</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% immunized with 3 doses of DPT</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% immunized with 3 doses of Hib</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of children under 6 months receiving exclusive breastfeeding</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources</td>
<td>UNICEF 2012a UNICEF 2012b UNICEF 2012c</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early stimulation (a proxy)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of grade 1 students whose parents help them with homework</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>TEGRA 2011</td>
<td>VanEGRA 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early childhood education and care</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool net enrolment rate</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources</td>
<td>UNESCO UIS</td>
<td>UNESCO UIS</td>
<td>UNESCO UIS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Early childhood education is typically seen as the main input for preparing children for primary school. Almost all preschools in Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu are community or church owned. They are financed primarily by donations from community members, churches and tuition fees. The Government of Samoa provides some public funding to preschools and Tonga is beginning a preschool grants program. Overall, a lack of public expenditure is endemic across the Pacific; no Pacific island country spends more than 1 percent of government expenditure on early childhood despite spending more than 15 percent on education (World Bank 2007; Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat 2010). Table 3 presents an idea of per student expenditure based on anecdotal evidence of private expenditure. A nationally representative survey to estimate private expenditure on education at the preschool level is not available. These figures exclude non-monetary contributions including in-kind donations and volunteer labor from teachers and community members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public expenditure per student</th>
<th>Samoa</th>
<th>Tonga</th>
<th>Vanuatu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private expenditure per student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical tuition based on anecdotal evidence</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School uniform based on anecdotal evidence</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total private expenditure</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total expenditure per student</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Estimates of private expenditure are not available. Private expenditure presented here is an estimate based on the typical tuition fee and typical cost based on anecdotal evidence. Only Samoa subsidizes preschools; last year the preschool grant was 50 Tala per child. *Tonga is beginning a school grants program for preschools this year.

As Table 3 reveals, there is very little expenditure on preschool in Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu. At the same time, there is very little information about the development of children in domains that international literature have identified as crucial for success in a school environment. There is also very limited data on the early environment of children that contribute to their development. If the preparedness of young children to learn in a school environment hinders early literacy and numeracy, governments would need the capacity to assess school readiness, identify factors that constrain the readiness of children to learn at school, and take action to resolve these problems with existing resources.

### 2. Objective of the report

This report has two objectives. First, this report presents an assessment of the capacity of government to govern for school readiness: the capacity to define, to measure, to identify constraints and intervene to improve school readiness. Based on this assessment, the second objective of this report is to present international models of how to strengthen government’s capacity and strategies to adapt, pilot and evaluate these models in country-specific contexts. The audience of this report is policy makers seeking to reform how government approaches the issue of school readiness and
seeking ideas on how to collaborate with international donors and partners to invest for school readiness.

To help provide new perspectives and hypotheses on how the capacity of governments to govern for school readiness can be strengthened, the World Bank conducted two research activities. First, the World Bank applied its policy assessment tool, Systems Assessment for Better Education Results – Early Childhood Development, to assess each country’s national policy framework in order to identify constraints in how governments manage resources and activities for school readiness. Second, because the important role that communities play both in the lives of people in Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu and also the provision of preschools, community workshops were conducted in 30 villages in the three countries. These workshops assessed the capacity and potential for communities to better participate for school readiness and to identify the types of problems faced both by parents and service providers. Analysis of existing data including the EGRA and household surveys was also conducted when possible to corroborate the findings of the two research activities. These activities revealed new perspectives on how to improve the capacity of governments to govern for school readiness in four areas:

i. **Strengthening multi-sectoral governance and monitoring nationally:** School readiness requires cognitive, physical and socio-emotional development, but accountability and authority for education, health, nutrition, and social protection for young children is generally fragmented. Responsibilities are not clearly defined between stakeholders leading to confusion and a lack of coordination. Developmental outcomes for all domains need to be measured and autonomy and accountability for outcomes needs to be consolidated; this enables resources and activities for young children to be prioritized across sectors and not solely within sectors. For autonomy to be effective, capacity is needed to regulate and assure quality of early childhood centers.

ii. **Strengthening capacity of communities to improve school readiness:** Improving ECD outcomes requires changing behavior and values. Discussions between parents and stakeholders directly involved in ECD as well as on analysis of the existing data suggested that parents, especially fathers, undervalue school readiness needs; community members proposed intervention at the community level is needed to change their behavior. Communities need technical assistance and resources to identify and resolve the local coordination failures and demand and supply constraints. This type of intervention could have a considerable impact on school readiness outcomes.

iii. **Supporting school readiness for the poorest:** Although discussions among communities suggested boosting parents’ value for school readiness could increase participation in preschool significantly, there is evidence that children from the poorest families would still lack access to preschool. Also, poor communities cannot afford to support preschools that are able to pay preschool teachers competitively in order to retain trained teachers. Subsidies are needed to ensure the poorest can participate in preschool and other early childhood services and can support high quality preschools. Only Samoa subsidizes preschools with a per capita grant; however, children who excluded from preschool—likely the poorest—do not benefit. Several programs including community CCTs, individual CCTs and specially designed school grants can help.

iv. **Piloting and evaluating programs first:** The reforms and program proposed here are based on discussions between community members, analysis of sector governance, and analysis of household survey data. These sources do not establish causality or whether these programs would be successful in the Pacific context. For example, while subsidies will likely be needed for the poorest, pilot and evaluation of a program to boost community-level governance would reveal just how much
subsidization is really needed and to what extent community-intervention without additional government expenditure can accomplish. This helps ensure that interventions can be as financially sustainable as possible. Piloting and evaluating also helps identify how to improve programs. Strategies to evaluate the policy options conclude the report.

3. Methodology

In order to assess the capacity of the government to govern for school readiness, the link between government intervention and school readiness needs to be identified. While the particular definition of school readiness is under the prevue of governments, international research has established the link between child development in various domains. The National Education Goals Panel defined five domains of child development for school readiness: (1) physical well-being and motor development, (2) social and emotional development, (3) approaches towards learning, (4) language development and (5) cognition and general knowledge (Kagan et al. 1995). Table 4 describes these dimensions in more detail.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical health and motor development</th>
<th>Social and emotional development</th>
<th>Approaches to learning</th>
<th>Language development</th>
<th>Cognition and general knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rate of growth; physical fitness; chronic conditions such as diabetes, disability, malnutrition; fine motor skills; gross motor skills; self-care abilities</td>
<td>Ability to form positive relationships with teachers and peers; aspects of self-concept and self-efficacy, ability to express feelings appropriately, and sensitivity to others’ feelings</td>
<td>Openness and curiosity to tasks and challenges, task persistence, imagination, attentiveness, and cognitive learning style (e.g.: better at processing information by listening than observing or reading)</td>
<td>Verbal language: listening, speaking, social uses of language (e.g.: using social conventions and manners) and spoken vocabulary. Emergent literacy: interest in books and stories, emergent writing (scribbling to imitate writing), print awareness (understanding that text represents spoken words), and sequencing (stories follow a standard sequence)</td>
<td>Knowledge of the properties of objects (e.g.: color, weight, and movement); understanding the relationships between objects, events, or people (e.g.: determining how two objects are different); learning social conventions or school-learned knowledge (e.g.: knowing one’s name address or being able to count).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Nadeau et al. 2011:36 based on Kagan et al. 1995
There has been substantial research linking these domains to a future cognitive achievement (Heckman and Masterov 2007; Reynolds et al 2001; Feinstein 2003; Pianta and McCoy 1997; Currie and Thomas 1999; Young and Mustard 2007; Young 2002; Allen and Gillespie 1998 in World Bank 2012). The young child’s early environment is a key determinant for shaping development in these domains (Cunha and Heckman, 2007; Heckman, 2006; Cunha et al, 2005; Carneiro and Heckman, 2003; Shonkoff and Philips 2000; Fernald et al. 2009).

For Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu, a child’s early environment consists primarily of his or her household and, for those that attend, his or her preschool; the health services available to parents and young children are also an important determinant of a child’s development. Consequently, parents play a crucial role in determining their child’s early environment. They influence what educational and stimulation activities children are exposed to at home, the child’s diet, whether or not the child attends preschool, and whether or not health services are taken advantage of. In this sense, parents are the demanders of early childhood services, preschools and health services are the suppliers of early childhood services, and, because parents have influence over the household, they are also a supplier themselves. Figure 2 depicts this model. Government intervenes in this interaction between demanders and suppliers of a child’s early environment to ensure efficient and equitable school readiness outcomes.

In Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu, the role of the national government varies, and in all three countries, communities and community-based organizations are the main financer and provider of early childhood education services in these countries. Consequently, national government is not the sole intervener, but as Figure 2 depicts, communities are also considered as an intervener given their significant role in preschool provision and financing in practice.

Figure 2. Government intervention in school readiness

Intervention by government and communities

- Physical health and motor development
- Social / emotional development
- Approach to learning
- Language development
- Cognitive development and general knowledge

Households
Preschools
Health services

Success at school

Demand Side
Supply Side (Inputs)
Development Outcomes
School readiness
Given the lack of information or expenditure on school readiness in Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu, the focus of this study is on the capacity of government to intervene for school readiness and in particular the capacity of government to define, measure, identify and resolve problems for school readiness. Two research activities were conducted in this study to assess the capacity of government to intervene for school readiness. The first examines national-level governance analyzing policies and programs to promote school readiness. The second, in recognition of the important role that communities play in Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu, examines the capacity and potential for community-level participation for school readiness focusing on preschool.

**Methodology for assessing national level governance**

The World Bank’s System Assessment for Better Education Results instrument for Early Childhood Development (SABER-ECD) was applied in Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu. The SABER-ECD instrument collects data on national level policies and analyzes the level of development of policies and programs towards (1) establishing an enabling environment, (2) implementing widely, and (3) monitoring and assuring quality. The instrument takes stock of programs and policies related to early childhood development in a country. It uses information on these programs to classify programs as sectoral, cross-sectoral, multi-sectoral, and comprehensive, and to evaluate the level of development of policies at the national along the three critical policy goals of ECD.

For each policy goal, three policy levers are identified through which countries can influence each goal. The three policy goals and nine policy levers together comprise a coherent ECD policy system which should lead to the desired outcome of ensuring that all children have the opportunity to reach their full potential. Figure 3 depicts this instrument’s methodology.

**Figure 3. SABER-ECD methodology**

The SABER-ECD instrument describes four levels of development, ranging from less developed (or “latent”) to emerging, established, and fully developed (or “mature”) based on the information collected with the instrument.

Because this study focuses on the capacity of government to intervene for school readiness, the findings of particular interest from the SABER instrument are the elements related to measuring child development across different developmental domains, the ability to coordinate resources and
efforts across education, health and other sectors, and the ability for government to regulate early childhood service providers are focused on. The SABER-ECD instrument helps assess the effectiveness of existing policies for these three topics.

Methodology for assessing community-level participation

In Pacific cultures, communities play a central role in the upbringing of children. Communities are of significant importance to an individual’s identity and children are viewed as crucial to the community’s survival both economically but also culturally (Farran 2009; Huffer 2006). Non-formal early childhood education in the Pacific emphasizes culture and the development of identity (Toganivalu 2008). Many villages practice “community-parenting” where all children are taken care of and disciplined by all members of the community (Huffer 2006; Griffen 2006). This type of social capital for the development of young children is apparent in how preschools are predominantly provided by communities and financed both by tuition fees but also donations - especially in-kind - from community members.

Given the predominant role communities have for school readiness, their capacity and potential to intervene must be thoroughly assessed. To assess the capacity and potential for communities to be part of governance for school readiness and intervene locally, a methodology was developed based on the participatory monitoring and evaluation approach (World Bank 2002). This approach emerged at the end of the 1990s to improve the capacity of communities to engage in participatory development programs. These programs, such as the Village Level Participation Approach, enabled communities to participate in managing their own development, but it became increasingly apparent that communities needed stronger capacity to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of how they managed their development. For example, World Bank (2002) found that communities in Niger, Benin and Cameroon had developed and implemented community development plans, but they did not revisit or monitor these plans systematically. As a result, participatory development programs had empowered communities, but participatory monitoring and evaluation was needed to boost the capacity of communities to best make use of this empowerment.

Communities in the Pacific, through their social capital, seem empowered to intervene for school readiness. To assess their capacity to influence school readiness, the participatory monitoring and evaluation approach was adapted and applied through community workshops. The workshops focused on preschool because this is the chief method that communities are contributing to school readiness. This component of the study focused on preschool enrolment and the reasons why parents were unable to send their children to preschool and the difficulties that preschool teachers faced helping children prepare for school. During these workshops, participants completed three main tasks

(1) discussion of what challenges parents face in sending their child to preschool
(2) discussion of what challenges preschool teachers faced
(3) discussion of what the community alone could do solve these challenges
Map 1. Community Dialogue Series Locations

1. Fanafo, Feb 20, 2012
3. Dokia, Feb 22, 2012
6. Tuhu, March 5, 2012
8. Whitesard, March 8, 2012
9. Lenapau, March 9, 2012
11. Ha'ateiho, March 14, 2012
12. Toloa, March 16, 2012
15. Uliha, March 20, 2012
17. Hano, March 21, 2012
18. Fotua and Latafoa, March 22, 2012
21. Fatuvalu, April 2, 2012
22. Safotu, April 2, 2012
23. Sala I lua, April 3, 2012
25. Sehe, April 4, 2012
26. Malelupo, April 4, 2012
27. Tofoa, April 5, 2012
28. Lopa, April 10, 2012
29. Falealu, April 11, 2012
30. Sisdac, April 11, 2012
These workshops established what types of problems communities believed were hindering preschool participation and the ability of communities to resolve problems independently. Workshops were conducted in 30 villages in Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu from February to April of 2012. Villages were selected to include different country contexts (rural areas, remoteness, EGRA results, etc.) and also on feasibility of visiting given weather conditions and travel time. Participants typically included parents, preschool and primary school teachers, district education officials, and other community leaders or stakeholders. This deliberate selection of communities ensured that experiences of different types of communities could be witnessed; however, the information is not intended to be used for inference about the all villages or the population as a whole. Map 1 presents the communities in which these workshops were conducted.

4. Hypotheses on how to strengthen capacity to intervene

These two research activities identify hypotheses on how to strengthen the capacity of government to intervene for school readiness; however, they do not provide conclusive proof that a particular intervention will be successful. Careful adaptation, piloting and evaluation of programs based on these findings are needed to verify them. This section presents the main findings from the two research activities. Data from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) in Vanuatu, the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) in Tonga and Vanuatu, and administrative data is used to help assess these hypotheses where possible.

4.1 Hypotheses from analysis of community participation

Workshops with communities revealed three key hypotheses on the potential for communities to promote school readiness and their limitations:

1. Community driven interventions that boost mothers’ and fathers’ value of school readiness needs could improve preschool participation and parenting considerably.

2. Subsidies are needed to enable the poorest to access quality preschools but the amount of government funding needed may not be too large.

3. Dialogue within communities on improving school readiness can help substantially to resolve supply constraints and local coordination failures.

Community driven interventions that boost mothers’ and fathers’ value for school readiness needs could alone improve preschool participation and parenting considerably.

When community members were asked to discuss the main reasons why parents did not send their children to their village’s preschool, they almost always mentioned reasons related to (1) a lack of understanding of the benefits of preschool and (2) a lack of affordability of preschool. In fact, in every community meeting except Lenapau in Vanuatu, a lack of understanding of the benefits of preschool was mentioned. In two villages, Yapilmai on Tanna Island and Hog Harbor on Santo Island, affordability was not mentioned as reasons after participants discussed why they thought parents did not send their children to preschool.
These two hypotheses for demand constraints require very different types of interventions: boosting understanding of benefits of preschool (and school readiness needs in general) versus subsidizing preschools. Given the expense implied by the latter, better understanding of the importance of each constraint is crucial for identifying the most cost effective interventions.

Affordability can be a barrier for two reasons. It could be that a household’s income is too low to be able to afford to send their child to preschool or it could be that the household does not value preschool enough to justify (or plan) for the expense. In other words, affordability is partly a product of understanding the value of preschool. For example, in Natawa, Vanuatu one woman who believed fees was a reason why parents did not send their children to preschool said later that if parents in that community understood the value of preschool, then fees would not be an issue. Additionally, if parents do not value preschool, they do not plan their finances to save for it; the head teacher at Natawa Primary School suggested teaching parents how to budget their income.

![Graph showing preschool participation rates for richest and poorest 50 percent](image)

**Little difference in preschool participation between richest and poorest**

*Figure 4. Preschool attendance rate for 3 and 4 year-olds for richest and poorest 50 percent*

For those who thought that increasing parents’ understanding of the benefits of preschool would have a considerable impact on preschool participation, the data (though limited) is supportive. For example, Figure 4 compares the percent of children aged 3 and 4 in Vanuatu that attend preschool between the richest and poorest 50 percent. Twenty nine percent of children from the wealthiest households attend preschool while 20 percent of the poorest households attend preschool. The poorest 50 percent while underrepresented are not excluded from preschool. Additionally, the households within the same villages have very similar levels of wealth: only 25 percent of the variation in the MICS wealth index is within survey clusters (typically a village or group of neighboring villages). For this reason, affordability of preschool should not vary much within villages. Figure 4 also compares preschool participation rates between the richest and poorest 50
percent within survey clusters: the difference is very small at 5 percent and is not statistically significant. In other words, the wealthiest and poorest households within the same survey cluster (village or group of villages) are about as equally likely to send their child to preschool. If affordability were a major constraint, the wealthiest household would be much more likely to participate in preschool.

Another indication that fees alone are not a deterrent to school participation is low primary school attendance reported in some communities. For example, teachers at Yapilmai French primary school reported low attendance despite the recent abolishment of school fees. Low participation in preschool and primary school may be a symptom of a low value of education in general as was suggested by the school’s head teacher. Box 1 describes how education is the fourth priority there, and this sentiment is likely the same for other villages in Vanuatu.

While the limited existing data is consistent with the hypothesis that boosting parents’ understanding of the value of preschool could be very effective at increasing preschool participation, it is not conclusive. Parents who attend community meetings about preschool probably value education very highly and asset indices, such as the wealth index in MICS, do not reflect short-term cash income which is variable for subsistence-based economies. To truly measure the impact of such an intervention, it needs to be designed, piloted, and evaluated. And designing such an intervention that increases parents’ understanding of the value of preschool that actually translates into a change in behavior and a real substitution of expenditure is far from easy. For example, teachers in the village of Whitesand in Vanuatu did not think boosting understanding of the value of preschools would be effective, citing the many awareness activities that have taken place.

**Box 1. Yapilmai – Education is the 4th priority**

Yapilmai is located on the southwest side of Tanna Island in Vanuatu, approximately 6 kilometers from the coast in dense bush and accessible only by four-wheel drive vehicle. Its population is approximately 3,000 and comprises of several smaller villages. The preschool is adjacent to the Francophone primary school and housed in a traditionally constructed building. 37 children are enrolled; 20 of the children are aged 5 or less while the remaining 17 are between 6 and 10 years old. However, this represents only a small proportion of preschool aged children that live in the surrounding villages. Approximately 30 parents participated in the community dialogue on school readiness on March 7th, 2012, and the main reason given as to why parents did not bring their children to school was a lack of value for education in general. According to the head teacher, education is the fourth priority in the village. The top priority is the kastom or traditional ceremonies and dances. The second priority is farming and gardening, followed by home activities. Because of this, primary school participation is also low, even though no fees are charged. When asked what the community can do alone to boost parents’ value for preschool, participants thought that parents, especially men, needed to be actively encouraged to send their children. A committee of men was formed at this meeting and each was to be responsible for encouraging men at one of the surrounding villages to send their children to preschool; they said they would do this at the surrounding nakamals, the houses where men meet in the afternoons to drink kava.
As part of the community workshops, participants were asked to identify how to resolve the problems they identified including how to increase parents’ understanding of the value of the school readiness needs of their children. While the specificities varied by country and context, almost all communities were able to identify solutions that could be implemented by communities that they thought would be effective.

For example, in Fanfao, community members thought that house-to-house visits were the best way to encourage parents to send their children, and in Yapilmai, their solution was to form a committee of men each responsible for encouraging parents to send their children in specific parts of the village. In Uiha, on Tonga, the town officer speaks to all parents individually to encourage them to send their child to the preschool. Also, in Moataa in Samoa, parents suggested that the village council be responsible for speaking with parents of young children not in preschool. The solutions provided during community dialogue all involved a community member or group of members taking responsibility for directly encouraging parents to send their children to preschool.

That community-level interventions could be effective is consistent with research on relations within villages in the Pacific. For example, Huffer (2006) and Griffen (2006) find that children in village settings are taken care of by all members of the community; in Vanuatu, there is a saying that “it takes a whole village to raise a child” (Griffen 2006).

Communities also stressed the importance of boosting the understanding not just among mothers, but also fathers. In all three countries, men typically did not participate in activities related to the preschool. For example, in Natawa, Vanuatu it was suggested that men are usually in the bush working or engaged in Kava drinking during these activities. In Kolovai, Tonga, community members indicated that men did not like to attend these types of meetings because they were mostly attended by women; separate meetings for men were suggested.

Ensuring men understand the value of preschool just as much as women do is important because they have an important role in household expenditure decisions. In fact, the value fathers have for their child’s education may be crucial to whether the household sends the child to preschool. Figure 5 compares preschool attendance rates across whether mothers, fathers, or both read to their children (3 and 4 year-olds), for the poorest 60 percent of households in the Vanuatu MICS dataset. Only 18 percent of children attend preschool when neither of their parents read to them. When at least one parent reads to them, the attendance rate is slightly higher at 22 percent. However, when both parents read to their children, the attendance rate is much higher at 30 percent. For the poorest 60 percent, 49 percent of children’s mothers read to them while only 25 percent of their fathers do. If obtaining books and reading to their child is indicative of the value the parent has for reading and education in general, then it seems crucial that interventions especially target fathers.
Preschool attendance is much higher if both parents read to children

Figure 5. Preschool attendance rate for 3 and 4 year-olds for the bottom three wealth quintiles

This type of community-driven intervention where community members are responsible for encouraging both mothers and fathers to send their children to preschool could be broadened to other school readiness needs including child health, nutrition and early stimulation. The need for parents to be trained was suggested by participants in Kolovai, Tonga, and the data presented above on poor child health and nutrition reinforces this suggestion. Given the preference for a community member to actively encourage parents, a counseling type of home outreach program could be the most effective way to ensure both mothers and fathers understand the importance of health, feeding, and early stimulation practices. Another approach is curriculum-based home outreach programs where this type of information is presented to parents in workshops or classes. For this type of model, community members should still be responsible for ensuring both mothers and fathers attend. Examples of possible programs are discussed below.

While the model and scope for a community-driven intervention that boost the value for school readiness needs would vary by country and context, the need and the strategies to evaluate such an intervention are very similar. The need to evaluate such an intervention arises from how inexpensive it would be relative to subsidizing preschools. Government (and foreign donors) should try to encourage parents as much as possible to finance preschool themselves before embarking on an expensive and potentially unsustainable attempt at subsidizing them. Strategies to pilot and evaluate such interventions are discussed in the next section.

**Subsidies are needed to enable the poorest to access preschool but the amount of government funding needed may not be too large.**

Even if a lack of understanding of the benefits of preschool is the main demand constraint, there will likely be some in the community who cannot afford the costs associated with preschool even if they were to value it highly. For example, in Tuhu, Vanuatu, community members said that they are
subsistence farmers; cash income, and therefore preschool participation, depends on revenue from crop sales. In meetings across Vanuatu and Tonga, it was reported that community members were less likely to send their children to preschool if they had a child in high school; any extra funds had to support the high school student’s tuition and costs.

In some cases, subsidization of preschool for the poorest does not require additional public expenditure. This occurs if the (marginal) cost of adding students is zero, for example when preschools already have enough teachers and materials. This is essentially the situation in Uiha, Tonga. Here the community allows the children of those who cannot afford the school fee to attend the preschool anyway. It does not require additional teachers because this is not a large number of children; apart from materials and additional effort by teachers, there is no cost to extra attendees. This is a striking example because it proves that communities can in some cases independently ensure equitable access to preschool if the political will exists; Box 2 explains this in more detail.

Public funds are also not required for subsidization if additional teachers and materials can be provided for free through volunteers and donations. Many communities reported that they are using either very low-paid or volunteer teachers. If additional volunteers are willing to teach and provide materials, then the poorest can be admitted to preschool without additional public expenditure; preschool access in this case is subsidized in-kind through a reallocation of the community’s labor. To enable this reallocation, communities would need to have a stronger value for preschool to motivate community members to volunteer.

Box 2. Uiha – Some communities can alone ensure equitable access to preschool

In the 2011 census, 415 people live in the village of Uiha which is on the northern end of an outer island of Ha’apai with the same name. The preschool was started ten years ago by the community. Originally it was a traditional thatch structure, but a wealthy emigrant from the village donated money to the village to construct a concrete structure. The preschool is run by two young volunteer women who completed secondary school. Almost all preschool aged children attended the preschool last year including those children whose families did not have any money to pay; however, it was a challenge to achieve this. Many children are looked after by grandparents or other adults because their parents are away working on other islands, and many of these adults are not interested in taking the time from their chores or work to take the children to the preschool. What enables the preschool to have almost full enrolment is the town officer which is equivalent to a mayor. He believes that education and especially its foundation – preschool – is crucial to the future of the village. He personally visits each household to convince parents and caregivers to take the time to send their child to preschool. Even those who cannot afford to pay the school are welcome to participate. This shows that if political will exists, a small isolated community can independently ensure near universal preschool participation. Two thirds of communities in Tonga are smaller than Uiha and account for 20 percent of the population in the country. These communities are generally isolated and relatively poor compared to larger communities – exactly the demographic for which ECD interventions are the most effective.
However, public expenditure will be needed when volunteer labor and donations are not available. Publicly funded subsidization can still occur by the community alone if the community has funds; however, this requires the political will to help the poorest access preschool which in turn requires communities to have a strong value for preschool. For communities with little funds, alternative financing schemes are possible. For example, after the community meeting in Fatuvalu, Samoa, members of the town council said they would discuss at their meeting later in the week the possibility of lending poor families money for their child to attend preschool which they could pay back throughout the year. For communities without enough funds, government subsidization would be required.

Additionally, even if poorer communities are able to support preschools independently through low-paid or volunteer teachers; one supply constraint identified is high teacher turnover as a result of low pay. When teachers leave, any in-service training they have accumulated is also lost. Subsidization is needed in these areas in order for preschools to hire competitively paid teachers and stabilize teacher training. Community governments in poorer areas likely do not have the funding to do this; national government support would be required.

There are many different mechanisms for subsidizing poorer households to access existing preschools and for local markets for school readiness to support preschools with competitively paid and consistently trained teachers. Given the cost of this type of subsidization, monitoring and evaluation would be crucial to ensure public funds are translating into better school readiness outcomes. Also, programs would need to be evaluated to help identify how much subsidization is needed and how much other interventions such as boosting value for preschool participation can achieve the same results. Low cost interventions are crucial for ensuring that school readiness outcomes are improved sustainably, and rigorous piloting and evaluation can help identify the lowest cost options.

**Dialogue within communities on improving school readiness alone can help substantially to resolve supply constraints and local coordination failures.**

The community workshop series also revealed the value of community members discussing school readiness needs in their communities. For example, a community can have demand for preschool from parents and community members willing to volunteer to run the preschool, but unless someone takes initiative and coordinates these efforts, a preschool will not exist. Last year in Sala-i-lua, Samoa, a woman from the village saw the need for a preschool and organized fundraisers to construct the building and fence, purchase materials, hire teachers, and find volunteers to support. The preschool has 85 children registered in its first year, and the community now wants to take it over. A similar story took place in Uiha, Tonga about ten years ago; like Sala-i-lua, the building for their preschool was constructed from local materials, but once the preschool was operating, emigrants from the village sent donations to build the new, permanent structure. In these cases, there was strong demand for preschools but no one had previously taken the initiative to start one.

Dialogue alone as an intervention can be sufficient to resolve coordination failures. Community dialogue meetings in Ha’ano and Latafoa in Tonga and Falealupo in Samoa concluded with a commitment by participants to hold a broader community meeting and work towards starting a preschool. Providing technical assistance to the community to understand the steps involved would make it easier for preschools as was suggested in Tafua, Samoa. However, initiating a new preschool in a community requires broad support from the community: donations and volunteers are needed to construct the building, volunteers are needed to staff it if community members together cannot afford
to pay teachers, and some materials will need to be purchased. Government intervention to trigger new preschools would be ideally aided by interventions that boost value for preschools as discussed above.

Dialogues with communities also revealed the diverse and immediate needs that preschools have, but many of these needs could be resolved by the community at no cost to the preschool if the community and preschool had better communication. For example, many teaching materials can be made from local resources. Sand and other play materials can be provided locally. In Kolovai, Tonga, parents help the preschool grow food to help improve the nutrition of the children’s lunches. At the community meeting at Sisdac Preschool in Apia, Samoa, parents mentioned that distance to the preschool discourages children to attend; the church’s pastor who also attended the meeting offered to speak to the church leadership about the preschool using their van. Without an established communication link between the preschool and the community, needs that can be fulfilled by the community may not be realized. During the community dialogue in Yapilmai, Vanuatu, community members decided that the primary school parents’ committee should become the parents committee for the preschool and help address the preschool’s needs. However, building the willingness for community members to help the preschool requires the community to value the preschool strongly; this type of communication link could be tied into the demand-side interventions described above.

Box 3. Ha’ano – Importance of Dialogue

Two villages are located at opposite ends of the island of Ha’ano in Ha’apai, Tonga. The larger of the villages on the south end of the island is Fakakai with 176 residents while the village of Ha’ano (same as the island) has 115 residents. Both villages are very similar in terms of economy and population size. Both have primary schools and both of these primary schools have rooms that are not being used by the school. Both communities have retired teachers and high school graduates living in them. However, only Fakakai has a preschool; Ha’ano does not. The preschool in Fakakai is located in one of the empty classrooms and run by the retired teacher and three others with high school diplomas. At the community dialogue meeting in Ha’ano on March 21st, 2012, participants said that there was no preschool in their community because they did not have a teacher, tools, or books and that they needed a donation. However, once they learned that the preschool in Fakakai also had none of these things to begin with, they agreed to organize a town meeting and learn from the experience of the neighboring village. In other words, while they had the same resources as the next village, they had not organized themselves to begin the preschool. Dialogue alone could be enough to trigger the establishment of a preschool.

4.2 Hypotheses from assessing sector governance

The SABER-ECD tool provides a rich assessment of national-level policies for promoting early childhood development across the education, health, nutrition and social protection sectors. The full SABER-ECD reports are available as background papers and for dialogue with governments on early
childhood development more broadly. This report draws on this analysis to present three main hypotheses related to strengthening the capacity of government to intervene for school readiness:

(1) A stronger multi-sectoral approach to ECD is needed to ensure government can identify and resolve market failures and ensure equity for all aspects of school readiness.

(2) Monitoring of developmental outcomes needs to be improved in order to enable government to intervene effectively for school readiness.

(3) Regulations are in place or are being developed to improve the ECE market’s efficiency, but enforcement and reporting on compliance needs to be improved.

A stronger multi-sectoral approach to ECD is needed to ensure government can identify and resolve market failures and ensure equity for all aspects of school readiness.

A child’s ability to learn effectively in a school environment hinges on not just his or her cognitive development but also his or her socio-emotional and physical development. As a result, in order for the government to intervene and improve school readiness, an approach that spans health, social protection, education and enrichment of the early environment is needed. The SABER-ECD instrument collects data about the types of policies and agencies that work across different sectors to improve early childhood development. Figure 6 summarizes the progress Vanuatu, Tonga and Samoa are making at approaching early childhood development in a multi-sectoral way.

Figure 6. Progress towards a multi-sectoral approach

Vanuatu, for example, has a multi-sectoral policy through the National Children Policy and the Early Childhood Care and Education policy. Implementation of this plan has been partially developed and costed in the education sector; however, a plan to mobilize resources to fund the objectives of this plan has yet to be developed. In contrast, Tonga has no multi-sectoral policy for young children. Samoa has a multi-sectoral policy for children including early childhood development. There is an implementation plan but no costing.
In order for the government to identify and resolve market failures and inequities for school readiness, a plan that identifies weaknesses and sets targets across education, health, nutrition and social protection as well as prioritizes interventions across these domains would be needed. Vanuatu has made considerable progress at bringing these different sectors together into a single policy document, but implementation and especially mobilization of resources is needed to improve the effectiveness of this policy. Tonga is currently developing early childhood education policy, but a cross-sectoral approach would enable government to identify the extent to which health and nutrition are bottlenecks to ensuring children are ready for school when they enter.

**Box 4. Jamaica’s Multi-sectoral approach**

A strategic review of the ECD sector in 2000 resulted in the creation of the Early Childhood Commission in 2003. This commission was tasked with developing standards and licensing regulations for early childhood service providers, assisting in the planning and preparation of strategies and policies related to young children, and monitoring the implementation of programs. The commission’s work led to the passing of the Early Childhood Act in 2005 which legalized regulations, standards, licensing and policies related to ECD. The commission consists of the permanent secretaries from the ministries of education, health, labor, social security, local government and community development and finance; it also consists of experts and members of the opposition political party. This ensures that standards and regulation on ECD are concentrated on a body represented by different agencies and expertise (see Naudeau et al 2011).

*Monitoring of developmental outcomes needs to be improved in order to enable government to intervene effectively for school readiness.*

Because school readiness implies cognitive, physical, emotional and language development, government would need an indication of the extent of this development for children entering primary school and how this development varies across different sub-populations. While indirect measures such as primary entry rates and grade repetition provide hints, more direct measures would enable government to identify which developmental domains need support and to set targets for policies to achieve. Monitoring participation in existing programs for young children is also important for understanding why developmental domains are lagging and whether certain sub-populations are excluded. Figure 7 summarizes data collected under the SABER-ECD tool about the type of data that exists.
Figure 7 presents whether data measuring the particular domain exists and, additionally, whether data can be disaggregated by socio-economic status. Participation data, for example, is often available by gender, urban and rural, etc., but specialized surveys are needed to measure how rich and poor differ. For example, Vanuatu participated in the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) in 2006 and Samoa participated in the Demographic and Health Survey in 2009; consequently, both countries have data on physical development of children which can be disaggregated by rich and poor using an asset index. This data can also be used to measure differences in participation in preschool and use of health services by wealth quintiles as was presented in Figure 4. Tonga collects information on physical development of children as well as participation in preschools and health services, but data is not available by wealth quintile.
Box 5. Early Development Instrument

The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is an example of an assessment specifically designed for monitoring and evaluating ECD investments. This assessment was developed by the Offord Centre at McMaster University in Canada. It is a rating type assessment for measuring school readiness of a population of children and not individual children; the instrument is a checklist filled out for each sampled child by preschool teachers at the end of the school year. Because it is a rating type assessment, it requires no interaction between the child and a trained specialist, only between the trained specialist and a teacher for training, and is therefore cost effective. It covers five developmental domains: physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and critical thinking skills, communication skills and general knowledge. EDI has been adapted and used in at least 16 countries for different purposes. As part of an early development assessment program, it has been used in Canada, Chile, and the United States. In Mozambique, Cambodia, Kosovo, Indonesia, Brazil it was used to evaluate specific ECD evaluations and in Vietnam, Moldova, Jordan, Ireland, Egypt, Philippines, New Zealand, and the Netherlands, to inform policy in general. Approximately 10 years of research supports the instrument’s concurrent and predictive validity. For example, its correlation with direct cognitive measures has been established in Australia, Canada, Philippines and Jordan.

Neither country, however, collects data about cognitive, language or social outcomes for young children. This means that neither government would be able to identify which areas of development that children need most for school readiness or able to establish targets for policy making. It also means that equity in school readiness—including gender and socio-economic status differences—cannot be measured by government. Several instruments exist that would provide this type of data to government. For example, the Early Development Instrument is described in Box 5. This type of data collection does not need to be conducted every year, but routine collection of this data would help improve the ability of the government to intervene in the school readiness sector considerably.

**Regulations are in place or are being developed to improve the ECE market’s efficiency, but enforcement and reporting on compliance needs to be improved.**

In Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu, the government’s primary role so far has been as a regulator, not as a provider, nor, except for Samoa, a financer. While this approach leverages the advantages of markets to provide ECD services, a strong regulatory environment is needed to ensure efficient and equitable outcomes, especially given the importance of school readiness. Standards are a crucial aspect of regulation in any sector of the economy to ensure that consumers are able to understand the value of the services they are purchasing. Both Tonga and Vanuatu have regulations establishing standards for preschools ranging from curriculum to building standards; Figure 8 summarizes these from the data collected by the SABER-ECD instrument.
Vanuatu has service delivery standards, regulations governing preschool teacher qualifications, availability of potable water, hygienic facilities and other construction standards. Enforcement mechanisms exist for service delivery, and building standards. Teacher qualifications cannot be enforced because many areas cannot afford to retain qualified teachers; see the discussion above. However, information about compliance to these standards is not generally available, except for potable water and hygienic facilities which are part of the education management information system (EMIS). Tonga is in the process of developing its Early Childhood Education policy and regulations governing teacher qualification and other areas will be established; how these will be enforced is yet to be determined. Samoa is the most advanced in terms of regulating early childhood education centers. Inspection and accreditation of facilities are conducted by the National Council of Early Childhood Education as well as teacher training.

Figure 8 shows that data does not exist on compliance to several of the standards in Vanuatu and Tonga. This may be the result of either a poor enforcement mechanism which is especially true in remote areas, or that the government is not sharing this information. However, in order for parents to make informed decisions about whether to send their children to preschool and to influence the quality of their preschool, compliance to standards needs to be collected and disseminated. This is especially true when the private sector is the main provider of preschool services as it is in these countries.
5. Evaluating program and policy options

These hypotheses on how to best intervene stem from school readiness from parents, teachers and other local stakeholders as well as from analysis of how the sector is governed, and provide guidance on which policy reforms and programs could help improve school readiness in Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu. However, to verify how accurate these hypotheses are, programs based on them need to be thoroughly evaluated. Policies and programs can be categorized into those that (1) enhance the government’s ability to intervene in the school readiness sector those that (2) help ensure school readiness is equitably distributed.

5.1 Policies and programs for improving governance

While analysis of the governance of the sector revealed the need for strengthening the multi-sectoral approach to school readiness, discussions between local stakeholders revealed the paramount need for local-level intervention to resolve immediate coordination failures as well as supply and especially demand constraints. Programs and policies to improve governance of the school readiness sector are presented at two levels:

(1) Strengthening national-level governance of school readiness

(2) Strengthening capacity of communities to improve school readiness

These models of policies and programs are presented to provide policy makers with different approaches on how to strengthen governance of the school readiness sector. Policies and programs that are suited to the contexts of particular countries might reflect combinations of these examples and would require careful adaptation to ensure they are suited to countries’ institutional and financial capacities. As discussed below, piloting and evaluation of subsequent policies and programs would help ensure they have been adapted correctly for the countries’ contexts.

Strengthening national-level governance

Application of the World Bank’s SABER-ECD tool to identify the weaknesses in how the ECD sector as a whole is governed revealed that a stronger multi-sectoral approach is needed in both Tonga and Vanuatu. For policy makers aiming to improve school readiness, a multi-sectoral approach would be required because school readiness depends not only on education outcomes but on all aspects of a child’s development. To effectively intervene to improve school readiness, policy makers would need to be able to monitor the population of young children across all developmental domains, not just those of a particular sector, in order to identify which domains are most vulnerable and what services are needed most. Consequently, policy makers would need to be able to allocate resources across different sectors and not only within a single sector to effectively intervene for improving school readiness.

This type of multi-sectoral governance requires a consolidation of accountability for school readiness as a whole to a single body that is able to monitor child development across all areas of child development and prioritize resources and activities across sectors. In other words, the ability to monitor cross-sectorally, be accountable cross-sectorally, and have autonomy over allocating
resources and efforts cross-sectorally, is needed for a balanced system. Figure 9 summarizes this consolidation.

Internationally, countries consolidate decision making about ECD across sectors using different approaches, and it is not clear from the evidence base which approach is most effective. For example, Box 4 described the National Children’s Commission of Jamaica. Chile also provides another example of how ECD policy making has been consolidated (see World Bank 2012). In the Chile example, consolidation is also achieved through a specific program: the Programa de Apoyo al Desarrollo Biopsicosocial (PADB) tracks children’s development from prenatal to age 4 and refers children as needed to services from different sectors. In practice, these approaches focus on child wellbeing more broadly than school readiness.

Towards a stronger multi-sectoral approach to school readiness
Figure 9. Consolidating autonomy and accountability for ECD outcomes

Vanuatu, Tonga and Samoa are at different stages of progress towards a multi-sectoral approach for school readiness and ECD governance more generally. For example, Vanuatu has multi-sectoral policy through the National Children’s Policy but implementation and costing has only been completed for the education component of this policy. No costing across sectors or resource mobilization plan that prioritizes across sectors has been conducted. In Tonga, a multi-sectoral policy does not exist but is currently being developed. Samoa has a multi-sectoral policy for children but it has not been costed.

A strong, multi-sectoral orientated governance structure is needed in the sector in order to ensure that engagement with external donors, reforms targeting preschool teachers, etc. are properly identified and evaluated. Table 5 outlines different models of how multi-sectoral governance has been tried in other countries; these models are stylized, in practice, countries combine these different models.

Samoa provides an example of one approach. It has a National Council for the Convention of the Rights of the Child which was established in 1998 whose role is to promote and advise on the implementation of the National Children’s Policy. The council is advised by a technical committee and both the council and committee meet 6 times per year. Members of the council include the
Ministry of Women, Community, and Social Development, the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Justice Courts and Administration, the Office of the Attorney General, the Samoa Law Reform Commission and two NGOs: the Mapusaga O Agia and the National Council for Early Childhood Education. The technical committee includes members from the same organizations as well as the Ministry of Police, the National Health Service, as well as five other NGOs: Loto Taumafai, Aoga Fiamalamalama School, the Samoa Victim Support Group, Nuanua o le Alofa Council for Disabilities, and the National Council for Churches. While the Council does not exclusively focus on Early Childhood Development it does present an example of an approach to coordinate across sectors.

Besides consolidating autonomy and accountability for early childhood development and school readiness, information on developmental outcomes is needed to help inform decision making. For school readiness, information would be needed on physical development, social and emotional development, a child’s approach to learn, language development and cognition and general knowledge. All countries collect some data on physical development, but none collect information on the developmental outcomes for the other domains. Table 6 presents different types of assessment tools used internationally.

A first step would be to improve monitoring of child development for not just physical development but also cognitive, language and social domains and to be able to monitor these across sub-populations to identify and help those who are excluded. Neither Tonga nor Vanuatu collects or monitors cognitive, language and social development for young children; Table 6 presents different assessment tools used internationally.

Being able to monitor child development helps those accountable for school readiness to identify and resolve demand and supply constraints; however, to resolve these constraints they require the ability to assert influence or have autonomy over developmental outcomes. One important aspect of this is regulating suppliers of early childhood services.

Preschools in Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu are predominantly community-based organizations financed directly by parents (see Table 3). While this helps ensure preschools are directly accountable to parents, it requires that parents and providers have the capacity to judge whether their preschool is providing high quality care. Poor quality early childcare can adversely affect developmental outcomes of children (Shonkoff and Phillips 2000). Regulation of early childhood service providers helps provide guidance to providers on high quality service delivery and to parents to judge whether the services they are financing are effective.

Regulation requires careful consideration. Policy dialogue typically focuses on the scope of what should be regulated. For example, if accountability for school readiness across sectors is consolidated into the agency with regulatory authority, then early childhood centers might be charged with providing not just education but also nutrition programs or parent outreach. Clear service delivery standards such as learning standards for children might be included. For example New Zealand’s curricula for English and Maori language preschools establish clear learning standards for children in reading, writing and mathematics (World Bank 2012). Early childhood centers might be regulated on staffing qualification requirements, physical and safety standards and processes for registration and accreditation.
### Table 5. Stylized models for consolidating autonomy and accountability for ECD into a single entity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Coordinating across agencies (e.g.: cabinet committee for children)</th>
<th>Integrating use of agencies’ services (e.g.: program for accessing services)</th>
<th>Unifying agencies’ services (e.g.: single provider for all services)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>Coordinating body with representatives from education, health, and other agencies at national but also lower levels. Authority to allocate resources and effort across health, education, and other services through existing ministry channels.</td>
<td>Program to monitor child development and ensure they have access to particular services as needed. Authority to allocate resources across health, education, and other services based on child needs</td>
<td>Education, health and other services provided through a single service-provider. Authority to allocate resources and effort across health, education and other services is through either regulatory authority over providers (if non-state provided) or directly (if state provided).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advantages</strong></td>
<td>Structure of ministries can be preserved although new programs may need to be adopted within ministries</td>
<td>Agencies can retain their independence although may require adaptation as needed; children and parents have better access to range of services</td>
<td>All ECD services located in one place and children’s needs can be addressed directly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disadvantages</strong></td>
<td>Requires creation of coordinating bodies; does not provide parents and children with convenient source of different services unless coordinated at a decentralized level (e.g.: community)</td>
<td>Establishing programs to monitor and direct children to needed services can be costly; monitoring complicated by different agencies data sources</td>
<td>Creating unified providers of services from different agencies requires restructuring of ministries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Examples</strong></td>
<td>Australia’s Investing in the Early Years – A National Early Childhood Development Strategy outlining new programs and spending in education, health, and other ministries to achieve ECD targets.</td>
<td>Chile’s <em>Chile Crece Contigo</em> is a program that monitors child development, provides guidance to parents on existing services and ensures access to different services depending on specific needs of children.</td>
<td>Jamaica’s Early Childhood Commission is responsible for leading research on ECD, identifying needs, establishing education, health and nutrition standards for ECD centers, and enforcing compliance of standards to ensure ECD centers provide needed education, health, nutrition and other services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6. Comparing assessment tools for school readiness outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Indirect Tests</th>
<th>International household surveys</th>
<th>Direct tests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>Informant such as a teacher or parent is the respondent to the instrument about the development of a child.</td>
<td>Household surveys that have been applied in other countries.</td>
<td>Interaction between a trained expert and child to assess development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advantages</strong></td>
<td>Inexpensive; there is no interaction between trained expert and child; the main costs are training of the informant.</td>
<td>Instruments, sampling procedures, and analysis are well developed; comparable to other countries. Provides very rich information.</td>
<td>Provides rich information about a child’s development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disadvantages</strong></td>
<td>Validity of the instrument in terms of how it correlates to direct tests and how it predicts future learning outcomes needs to be established because it does not rely on direct tests.</td>
<td>Very expensive to conduct; not all cover cognitive skills.</td>
<td>Expensive to conduct as it requires on interaction between an expert and child for a period of time and resources to validate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Examples</strong></td>
<td>Early Development Instrument</td>
<td>Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), etc.</td>
<td>Peabody Picture Vocabulary Development Test, the First STEp cognitive and language measure, and the Who am I? nonverbal language assessment, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, designing regulation is much more than deciding what should be regulated and to what standard. Understanding the cost to early childhood service providers to comply with regulations and the cost to government to enforce compliance are crucial for regulation to be effective. Figure 10 summarizes this.

**Strengthening government capacity to regulate**

*Figure 10. Design considerations for regulation and quality assurance of early childhood services*

Estimating the cost of service providers to comply with regulations is crucial for understanding both the feasibility of regulation and also equity impacts. If regulations will be imposed on suppliers without public funds, the cost of complying with regulations will be transferred directly to parents. This has an immediate impact on the affordability of services and, if costs per child are substantial, could result in the poorest and most disadvantaged families to be excluded. If public funds will be used to support service providers’ compliance, then the cost has to be calculated and a source of funding found.

Costs to compliance would depend on the scope of regulation including training costs for staff, salaries for additional staff to meet child-caregiver ratios, materials for construction, etc. Many costs for preschools, especially in the Pacific, are non-monetary originating from in-kind donations or volunteer labor. However, these represent real costs that need to be calculated in order for policymakers to fully appreciate the impact of regulation. Naudeau et al. (2011) provides detailed guidance for costing ECD programs in general.

The second consideration for regulation is the cost to government to administer the regulations. This includes monitoring and supervision costs, incentives and penalties for compliance and non-compliance, and disseminating results of inspections to the public. A typical model is a centrally managed monitoring system where service providers are visited periodically by inspectors who report on compliance and provide guidance to service providers to improve services. The Swedish Schools Inspectorate for preschools is an example (World Bank 2012). An alternate approach is a
self-assessment model where the service provider together with parents assesses compliance through a tool.

Regardless of the model for compliance, cost or scope of regulation, understanding its impact on developmental outcomes is crucial for justifying the cost and improving regulation. Evaluation of regulatory reforms are rare but could be conducted if implementation is designed carefully. While randomly assigning communities to be subject to new regulations is generally not possible politically, randomized assignment of inspection or of advocacy programs for compliance could provide a measure of the impact regulation.

5.2 Strengthening capacity of communities to improve school readiness

Discussion between parents, teachers, government and other local stakeholders suggested that community-level interventions are crucial to resolving market failures for school readiness. The lack of value parents and especially fathers have for school readiness needs emerged as a major demand constraint, and the appropriate channel to resolve this demand constraint is through existing community channels such as women’s and men’s committees and kava groups, etc. Community-level dialogue also emerged as necessary for organizing new preschools and resolving simple supply constraints. Communities have social capital that could be allocated to improving school readiness, but this social capital is not mobilized.

In order for communities to utilize their social capital to intervene for school readiness, they need to be empowered. This means they would need to have the capacity to identify and resolve problems related to school readiness and need to have incentive to do so. To boost capacity, communities would need to develop plans to define and measure school readiness, identify demand, supply constraints and coordination failures through participatory approaches with different stakeholders, and take action to resolve them. Figure 11 provides an idea of different options for strengthening local-level governance for school readiness.

The core intervention presented in Figure 11 is technical assistance to communities. This assistance could enable communities to develop a strategy to define and monitor school readiness outcomes, engage different stakeholders including women, men and teachers to identify problems and solutions, and take action to resolve these problems. This intervention could focus only on preschool or if sufficient resources and coordination is possible, be comprehensive and include other sectors including health, nutrition and social protection. The technical assistance could range from organizational activities to actual counseling of community groups on feeding practices, etc. A small grant component would complement this activity by providing incentive to communities and could be conditional on developing a strategy or even achieving targets. Incentivizing communities may be crucial for the success of the technical assistance. One approach would be to augment technical assistance to existing grant programs to primary or preschools.

Table 7 compares these different options and presents international experience. For example, technical assistance to communities on increasing preschool participation while limited in scope could be implemented by existing preschool officials visiting communities and holding meetings. Some training would be required for the officials, but this could almost be implemented immediately. The most complicated intervention, where communities receive technical assistance on ECD more broadly and small grants if targets are achieved, would be more challenging to establish but would be
an innovative and low-cost approach to coordinating ECD services; this could be effective even in absence of a multi-sectoral approach at the national level.

**Community ownership of school readiness**

*Figure 11. Alternative programs to boost community / participatory governance*

**Community technical assistance (preschool focus)**

Technical assistance to communities on designing and implementing a community development plan to:

- Monitor and establish targets for preschool participation and quality
- Identify and resolve demand and supply constraints including encouraging parents to send their children to preschool and plan for expenses
- Identify alternative ways to prepare children for school as needed

**Community technical assistance (comprehensive for school readiness)**

Same as preschool focus but extend technical assistance to:

- Include health, nutrition and early stimulation activities
- Provide specially trained mentors to work with mothers on child health and nutrition
- Provide specially trained mentors to work with parents on early stimulation activities

...with small community grant (preschool focus)

In addition to technical assistance, provide small grants to empower and incentivize communities to establish and execute a strategy as described above. Grants could be conditional on achieving preschool participation targets.

...with small community grant (comprehensive for school readiness)

In addition to technical assistance, provide small grants to empower and incentivize communities to establish and execute a strategy as described above. Grants could be conditional on achieving education, health and nutrition targets.
### Table 7. Comparing programs to boost community-level and participatory governance for school readiness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community technical assistance</th>
<th>[...]with small community grants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preschool focus</strong></td>
<td><strong>Comprehensive</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advantages</strong></td>
<td>Inexpensive as it would only require a few additional staff at the district level, training and increased travel budget. Would foster a participatory approach to improving preschool participation if designed properly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disadvantages</strong></td>
<td>Narrow focus and may not adequately address other school readiness needs including health, nutrition and early stimulation. Interventions would be limited by what communities can finance. If specially trained mentors / counselors are used this would add to the cost and would require participation from other sectors for providing expertise which complicates implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluation</strong></td>
<td>Random selection of villages including phased selection (random selection to be the first to receive the intervention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Int'l examples</strong></td>
<td>The evidence base for most community participation models related to ECD focuses on home outreach programs with community components. For example, in Nepal, a community-based participatory intervention organized regular women’s meetings in villages with a trained facilitator and was shown to reduce neonatal and maternal mortality rates. In Uganda, communities received matched grants to support ECD projects and child fairs were held every 6 months in villages. In Vietnam, information sessions were held separately for men and women. CDD approaches that include human development sectors typically focus on infrastructure; however, community grant programs (e.g.: Mexico’s <em>Programa Escuelas de Calidad</em> and community conditional cash transfer programs (e.g.: Indonesia PNPM Generasi) target human development outcomes with the latter using these outcomes as conditions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, increasing the role of communities requires increased accountability from government. Literature on community-driven development programs find that these programs are more successful when central government are also strong, especially in terms of the ability of central government to monitor results at the local level (Ghazala and Rao 2013). For example, capacity building for communities requires training and follow-up by national authorities. Grants to communities require oversight for financial management but also for results and effectiveness.

Additionally, an evaluation strategy is crucial for these types of intervention. Community driven development programs are highly context specific requiring not only adequate adaptation but evaluation to ensure this adaptation has been effective in each context. Second, the motivation for these types of intervention is based on hypotheses raised through discussion amongst community members and informed as much as possible by existing data. The only way to know whether mobilizing community’s social capital towards school readiness can be effective is to pilot and evaluate. This would also help identify whether the program is effectively mobilizing this social capital. Finally, these proposed interventions are very low cost and financially sustainable. An evaluation of this type of intervention would identify how much a low-cost intervention alone could achieve revealing to what extent subsidies are needed.

5.3 Policies and programs for ensuring equity

In addition to being able to govern and resolve market failures for school readiness, government has a role to ensure equity in school readiness outcomes. The SABER-ECD tool revealed no programs in Tonga or Vanuatu that were designed to support early childhood education for the poorest. Samoa provides a per capita grant to preschool each year, but because this is a school grant, those who are poor and cannot afford to attend preschool are excluded. Discussions within communities suggested that subsidies would be needed for the poorest to attend existing preschools and that subsidies would be needed for poorer communities to support preschools that have competitively paid and consistently trained teachers.

There are several different models for subsidizing preschool, and these models generally apply to broader ECD service providers. Figure 12 presents three types. The first are community transfers or block grants. One relatively recent innovation is community conditional cash transfers (CCT). Generally communities receive a base grant and then additional grants depending on whether certain conditions are met. For example, a community CCT could be designed such that communities receive the grant if a community maintained a high preschool enrolment rate, immunization rate, etc. The conditionality could also be designed around outcomes such as average performance of children entering primary on a cognitive skills assessment or on nutrition outcomes such as the percent of young children stunted, etc. An evaluation of Indonesia’s PNPM Generasi community CCT found positive impacts on human development outcomes including nutrition and health (Olken et al 2011). The advantage of community CCTs over individual CCTs is that they can be directed by the community to either demand or supply side constraints (Olken et al 2011). They would also empower the community further to intervene locally for school readiness which discussion among community members revealed as crucial. However, community CCTs have few studies at this point and with weak local-level government, extensive capacity building would be required if grants are large and require sophisticated financial management.
Another subsidy model is a supply-side subsidy through preschool grants or transfers. There are numerous international models of this. Tonga and Vanuatu have experience with grants at primary and secondary levels of schooling where grants are allocated based on a formula including the number of students, remoteness, etc.; grants are allocated by school in consultation with parents. Samoa provides grants to preschools based on the number of children in the preschool. Other transfers to schools include in-kind transfers: government employed teachers are deployed to preschools or learning materials sent directly to preschools. Other models of financing include matching funds where government matches private spending by parents (or businesses) to preschools. The disadvantage of grants to service providers is that those who are not using the service (for example families that cannot afford preschool or those who live too far away) do not benefit.

A third subsidy model is household-level transfers. Traditional conditional cash transfers are examples of a transfer to households if children attend schools, receive health checks, etc. There are numerous international models on these to provide guidance, and this is one advantage of this type of financing approach. However, CCT programs are complicated and can be expensive to establish, especially for CCTs that target disadvantaged groups. Alternate individual household transfers include tax credits if poorer households pay tax and parent leave. Table 8 compares these options and presents advantages and disadvantages of each.
### Table 8. Comparing subsidy programs to improve quality and access to preschool for the poorest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Community transfers (demand and supply side intervention)</th>
<th>School transfers (supply side intervention)</th>
<th>Individual transfers (demand side intervention)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advantages</strong></td>
<td>Enables communities to resolve both demand and supply constraints within the community and to target those whom they identify as being most in need of support. It also strengthens community ownership of school readiness.</td>
<td>All three countries have experience with primary school grant programs already, so this would be the easiest to implement. Could be implemented as an extension to existing primary school grant programs if teacher salaries are permitted.</td>
<td>Internationally, there is a lot of examples and experience with CCT programs. CCT’s can be very effective if designed properly. Evidence base for CCT’s on ECD outcomes is promising.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disadvantages</strong></td>
<td>Requires transparent and reliable monitoring of conditioning variables and special financial management procedures (participatory procurement method) as well as increased capacity of community leadership.</td>
<td>Targets only supply-side constraints and unless the grant is large enough to subsidize all children to participate in preschool, those who do not attend preschool would not benefit.</td>
<td>Expensive to implement as it requires a strong monitoring framework and public awareness to ensure conditionality measures are fair and known to recipients. Also requires a lot of coordination across sectors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluation</strong></td>
<td>Random selection of villages, different treatments to test different types of conditionality including unconditional, conditional on outcomes (e.g.: weight for age rate, under 5 mortality rate, cognitive test scores rate), conditional on inputs (e.g.: participation in programs, immunizations, preschool attendance, etc.).</td>
<td>Random selection of preschools with different treatments to test the importance of grant sizes and training for preschool head teachers.</td>
<td>Cluster randomization by village or regression discontinuity design if eligibility rules permit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Int’l examples</strong></td>
<td>Evaluation of Indonesia PNPM Generasi community CCT found positive impacts on human development outcomes including nutrition and health but preschool and early cognitive outcomes were not included.</td>
<td>Numerous international examples; Samoa already has a preschool grants program while Tonga and Vanuatu have grant programs for primary school.</td>
<td>Numerous international examples, positive ECD impacts found for the disadvantaged in Ecuador (Bono de Desarrollo Humano), Mexico ( Opportunidades), and Nicaragua (Atencion a crisis).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Next Steps

That most of the variation in early literacy outcomes in the Early Grade Learning Assessment were within classrooms has focused attention on the preparedness of children entering primary school to learn in the school environment. The international literature on school readiness links child development in the cognitive, socio-emotional, physical and other domains to success in a school environment. However, there is very little data about the development of young children especially socio-emotional or cognitive. In terms of inputs for child development, some data suggests that feeding and health practices are not sufficient and possibly too little is being spent on preschool.

Given that the governments of Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu collect little information on school readiness and direct very few public resources towards preschools - the primary vehicle for promoting school readiness - the objective of this study is to assess the capacity of government to intervene for school readiness and to identify policy options to strengthen this capacity that government could assess, adapt and evaluate.

Two research activities were conducted to help identify hypotheses on how to improve the capacity of government to intervene for school readiness. First, community workshops with parents, teachers and other local stakeholders revealed two main reasons why parents did not send their children to early childhood care and education programs. Many believe that parents -especially fathers - did not value the benefits of preschool enough to send their children; those who believed this also thought that community-level interventions are needed to change the behavior of parents and fathers. Similar ideas were expressed for improving parenting in general. Others believe that a lack of income prevented parents from sending their children to preschools, and a mix of community-level interventions and external support were proposed.

Second, analysis of how early childhood sectors are governed revealed deficiencies at the national level that prevents government from resolving underinvestment or reallocating resources to improve equity. For example, a body that is accountable for the early environment of children across education, health and social protection, does not exist. There is also no systematic data collection on cognitive, physical and socio-emotional development for young children. This prevents government from (1) detecting deficiencies in school readiness, and (2) taking action to prioritize across sectors to resolve them. Finally, even if accountability for school readiness across sectors was consolidated and data on outcomes did exist, regulatory capacity remains weak.

Governments in Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu have numerous options to improve governance of the school readiness sector and support school readiness for the most disadvantaged. There are many international models for consolidating autonomy, accountability and monitoring of child development for school readiness and for regulating early childhood service providers. Participatory approaches at the community-level provide an opportunity to resolve local constraints for school readiness, especially on the demand-side. Various mechanisms to finance school readiness including community, school and individual transfers have been used in international context and could be adapted in the Pacific. Table 9 summarizes the various interventions presented in this report.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Different approaches and design considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strengthening national government capacity to intervene</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessing developmental outcomes for school readiness</td>
<td>School readiness assessment programs including indirect test and rating instruments, international household surveys, or direct tests (see Table 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consolidating autonomy and accountability for school readiness</td>
<td>Models to coordinate across agencies, to integrate the use of agencies’ services, or to unify agencies’ services (see Table 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthening capacity to regulate</td>
<td>Scope of regulations, cost of compliance to regulations, administration and compliance (see Figure 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strengthening community-level capacity to intervene</strong></td>
<td>Technical assistance on planning including how to improve preschool participation, how to improve school readiness in general; technical assistance on child development methods (see Table 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical assistance to communities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small grants to communities</td>
<td>Small grants to support and incentivize technical assistance or conditional grants subject to local child development targets being met (see Table 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Promoting equity</strong></td>
<td>Individual conditional cash transfers, community conditional (or unconditional) cash transfers, preschool grants (see Table 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsidy programs</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
The purpose of this report is to identify different types of interventions to strengthen the capacity of government to intervene for school readiness - this is seen as a prerequisite for identifying specific interventions to improve child development directly. The policy options and design considerations listed in this report are in response to the assessment of the capacity of both government and communities to intervene for school readiness. These policy options are based on international experience, and, consequently, may not be directly applicable to the different contexts of Samoa, Tonga or Vanuatu.

To best act on the policy options presented in this report, a first step would be a national dialogue to compare the advantages and disadvantages of the various policy and program options. Tables 5, 6, 7 and 8 present advantages and disadvantages based on international experience, but local knowledge is needed to vet these options further. Given the complexity of issues related to school readiness, different types of interventions would need to be prioritized carefully to identify which models would be feasible and sustainable given political and financial contexts of Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu.

If government and donors wish to pursue any of these options, the second step would be to design pilots of these interventions in such a way that they can be evaluated. The perspectives on the causes of underinvestment in school readiness are based on opinions of parents, teachers, and other local stakeholders as well as analysis of household survey data, school survey data and how the sector is governed nationally; these sources cannot conclusively say whether a program will work or which programs and policy reforms are better. Impact evaluation of pilot programs can be designed to judge whether programs work, whether one model works better than another, and what needs to be done to improve it if it does not work.
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