PROPOSAL TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL MONITORING OF EDUCATION IN THE PACIFIC

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INTRODUCTION

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) is inviting the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to establish a partnership to enhance UIS activities in the Pacific in order to address some of the key statistical challenges faced by the region. In particular, the UIS is seeking to improve international and regional monitoring of education through increased capacity support to Member States and the Regional EMIS Facility.

This proposal is based on close consultation with national and regional statistical authorities and is closely aligned with the priorities identified in the UIS Medium-Term Strategy 2014-2021, which was approved by the Institute's Governing Board. Given the complex nature of statistical work, the UIS is seeking to establish a multi-year agreement with DFAT in order to build a stable financial base required to execute this work efficiently.

UIS BACKGROUND

The UIS is the statistical branch of UNESCO. It was established in 1999 to foster a culture of evidence-based policy, both nationally and internationally, through the collection and use of high-quality, timely data in education, science and technology, culture, and communication.

To this end, the Institute was granted functional autonomy and deploys the highest professional standards and intellectual independence in data collection and analysis. The Institute is based in Montreal (Canada).

The UIS has made considerable progress since its creation, notably by developing the world's most comprehensive education database. It is the official data source for the education-related targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA). UIS statistics on education, literacy and science data are featured prominently in leading publications and databases, such as:

- EFA Global Monitoring Report;
- World Development Indicators (World Bank);
- Human Development Report (UNDP);
- State of the World's Children (UNICEF);
- UN Millennium Development Goals Report.

The UIS statistics are used in calculating a number of key development indexes such as: Human Development Index, Gender Inequality Index, Knowledge Index, Knowledge Economy Index, Information Communication Technology (ICT) Development Index, and Global Gender Gap.

The UIS is well recognized and highly appreciated for the quality of its work and its effective and efficient management.

External Evaluation by *Martin, Jenkings and Associates* (2007):

- "*UIS is* highly relevant *to UNESCO, particularly its education programme, and to the needs of Member States*."
- "*UIS has achieved significant results, particularly in its role as a guardian of cross-national data*."
- "*UIS is well governed and managed and operates efficiently."*

External Audit by the French *Cour des comptes* (2011):

- "*The increase in expenditure has been focused on the programmes, while overheads have remained stable*."
- "*UIS plays a leading and unifying role in its field of activity, functioning as a centre for active and close networking with leading national and international statistical institutions, particularly those in developing countries*."

UIS mission objectives

The UIS organizes its work programme according to four **main lines of action (MLAs)** which form the basis of the Institute's mandate. The MLAs consist of:

1. Development of education indicators and promotion of data use and analysis;
2. Development of international statistics on education outcomes;
3. Development of international statistics on science and technology, communication and information, and culture; and
4. Reinforcement of cross-cutting statistical activities.

In addition, in its Medium Term Strategy 2014-2021, The UIS has identified **three priority goals**, which cut across the four MLAs:

I. Statistics for human development, including:
   a. educational opportunities for children and youth, especially for girls;
   b. learning outcomes, education quality and human and financial resources for education;
   c. cross-sectoral linkages and statistics (i.e. the impact of education on health, nutrition, employment, etc.).

II. Strengthening the public good of statistics by:
   a. expanding the scope of policy relevant data at the regional and global levels;
   b. improving access to data and its usability.

III. Improving data quality by:
   a. maintaining high standards in data quality, especially concerning its relevance, comparability and reliability;
   b. providing training to statisticians and reinforcing the statistical capacities of Member States to produce and use data for effective policymaking and thereby maximize the impact of financial resources invested in programmes designed to achieve national and international development goals.

PROGRAMME PROPOSAL

UIS contribution to regional efforts to improve education monitoring in the Pacific, 2015-2017

Aligning UIS activities with regional priorities

The UIS, in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), is seeking to reinforce education statistical capacity in the Pacific. Recent reviews of statistical data collections, outputs and dissemination processes in the region have identified three critical areas that need to be addressed:

- the need for statistical capacity building to enable countries to collect, produce and analyze data of good quality in order to formulate evidence-based education policies;
- poor visibility of education issues in the Pacific at the international level primarily due to the lack of available data; and
- weak statistical systems hinder efforts by governments and donors to monitor regional progress towards international and national education goals.

This proposal presents a series of activities designed to address weaknesses in the production and dissemination of education data and indicators at the national and regional levels. In addition, these activities will also considerably raise the profile of education challenges and progress in the Pacific at the global level by improving the availability of internationally comparable indicators. It should be noted that Pacific education data are the least comprehensively and consistently reported of any region in the world.

The low response rates to international surveys are a direct reflection of the quality of national education management information systems (EMIS) and the region's capacity to produce data and indicators according to international standards. Consequently, the first priority of this proposal is to address weaknesses at the country and regional levels including:

- varying (and generally low) quality of EMIS systems;
- disconnect between political commitments and the implementation of monitoring and evaluation frameworks,
- over-reliance on external consultants leads to a lack of ownership of national databases and little transfer of knowledge to national statisticians;
- limited use of data that are collected;
- irregular support to statistical capacity in the region;
- discrepancies in population data- used to calculate education indicators; and
- duplication of requests from regional and international stakeholders due to lack of coordination among regional and international stakeholders.

The UIS, in line with the priorities identified in its Medium-Term Strategy 2014-2021 and in synergy with the objectives of the Pacific Education Development Framework 2011-2015 (PEDF) as well as the Ten Years Pacific Statistics Strategy 2011-2020 (TYPSS), is proposing a work plan to support and complement activities underlined by SPC in its "Investment Design for Strengthening Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) in the Pacific"[1]. In particular, the UIS work programme in the Pacific will continue to be carried out in partnership with the SPC-housed Regional EMIS Facility. The proposed activities complement those of the Facility while drawing on the specific expertise and resources of the UIS.

UIS work programme objectives and summary

Based on the above, this UIS work programme in the Pacific for 2015-2017[2] will focus on four goals: 1) assess and improve the quality of education statistics in Pacific Island Countries (PICs); 2) improve the visibility of education progress in the Pacific at the international level; 3) improve the monitoring of progress against regional education agendas such as the Pacific Education Development Framework (PEDF); and 4) increase the use of education statistics by stakeholders at the country and regional levels.

As previously stated, the UIS work programme is directly aligned with regional priorities and activities linked to the regional EMIS facility to be established by SPC. In particular, the programme supports and complements SPC's goal to create: "efficient and effective Pacific Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) that are used to produce, analyse and disseminate high quality, timely and relevant education statistics." It reinforces high level programme outcomes highlighted by SPC in their initial Investment Design document. Table 2 below illustrates the ways in which the UIS work programme will directly contribute to SPC's End of Programme Outcomes.

Enabling conditions for effective delivery of the programme

Optimization of efforts through formalized cooperation between stakeholders in the region

Due to the small size of PICs and the complementary nature of organizational expertise and priorities, partnerships between organizations working in the Pacific are crucial for interventions designed to improve the collection and use of education data and statistics in the region. The UIS, together with the SPC and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), are in the process of formalizing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) that documents the agreement by all three organizations to jointly and cooperatively pursue the common objective of improving the collection, processing, dissemination, reporting and use of education statistics in the Pacific. For each activity, the MoU also details the roles and responsibilities of the UIS, SPC and PIFS in order to reflect the complementary mandates and expertise of the organizations. The MoU also serves as a platform to allow SPC, UIS and PIFS to allocate resources more efficiently and thereby increase their impact than if the organizations were working separately. It will include an annual governance meeting between the three stakeholders to discuss and plan activities for each year.

[1] "Investment Design for Strengthening Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) in the Pacific", AusAID Investment Design Template, SPC, 2014

[2] The execution period of the project actually spans over three years starting from the signature of the contract.

Additionally, recent efforts have been carried out to coordinate efforts with the World Bank in diagnosing the quality of EMIS in the Pacific through both UIS DQAF and SABER EMIS.

Potentially associated with the UIS-SPC-PIFS annual governance meeting, the UIS (and relevant partners) will hold program governance meetings with DFAT, at least annually, to discuss program progress, successes, challenges, and anticipated program directions for the next 6-12 months

Sustainable support to the region through a UIS cluster advisor in Apia

UIS capacity building activities at the regional level are conditioned by the presence of a team dedicated to regional projects. In Asia-Pacific, the main UIS regional presence is in Bangkok and has the mandate to cover Pacific countries as well. However, current resources don't allow for an adequate support to Pacific countries from Bangkok. So throughout 2014, the UIS with the support of DFAT reinforced its presence in the Pacific with an associate expert position based in Apia (Samoa). The presence was seen by countries as very beneficial and the need for a more sustainable position was mentioned at several regional forums including the Asia Pacific Regional Education Conference (APREC). The current proposal seeks to respond to these needs by establishing a UIS presence in the Pacific in a relevant and sustainable way. Concretely, the largest share of all activities described in the proposal will be led and carried out by UIS cluster advisor in the Pacific with the support of a technical assistant supported by and based in the UNESCO Cluster Office for the Pacific States in Apia.

Core support from UIS Montreal and UIS Bangkok office

UIS activities I n the region will be reinforced by the contribution of already well-established infrastructures to collect, process, and disseminate education data in addition to the regional expertise of the UIS Bangkok field office. In particular, the UIS regional office in Bangkok will continue to advocate at the international level for statistical capacity in PICs. In addition, general support to data quality assessment, data collection and dissemination will be facilitated by UIS HQ in Montreal to ensure the quality and the sustainability of international and regional education data produced for the region. It should be noted that a part of this core support is not estimated in this work proposal because it is included in the UIS "Proposal to Improve the Quality and Use of the Global Education Database: A Selection of Core Services"[3]. In effect, this work programme is largely inter-related with outcome 4 of the UIS core funding proposal, notably *Activity 4.1; Regional indicator programme*, and outcome 5, notably *Activity 5.1; Training and capacity development*. UIS core funding proposal includes the sustainable presence of a regional advisor in Bangkok, a position which has yet to be secured through adequate funding. See table 2 below for more details.

The next sections specifically describe UIS activities, expected results, and monitoring indicators (see Annex II). These discussions include detailed information about budget requirements to implement the work programme.

[3] "Proposal to Improve the Quality and Use of the Global Education Database: A Selection of Core Services", UNESCO Institute for Statistics, May 2014

Table 1: Summary of UIS proposed work programme in the Pacific, 2015-2017*

Goal 1: Assess and improve quality of education data collected in PICs	
Development Objective(s)	**Quality of education data used for monitoring at national, regional and international levels by PICs and the international community is evaluated and improved based upon recommendations**
Activities	**Expected result 1.1:** Countries and regional stakeholders are aware of the quality of EMIS in Pacific region and the required improvements
	1. Adapt UIS Data Quality Assessment Framework (DQAF) into rapid, web-based, self-guided modules 2. Support PICs' self-assessment using rapid web-based self-guided modules 3. Conduct six in-depth assessments using full DQAF methodology
	Expected result 1.2: Countries and regional stakeholders receive targeted support in addressing the identified weaknesses in national EMISs
	1. Provide training and expertise to enable national teams to address identified weaknesses in national EMISs
Goal 2: Improve visibility of education progress in the Pacific at the international level	
Development Objective(s)	**Internationally comparable education data from PICs are visible to donors and other international stakeholders**
Activities	**Expected result 2.1:** SPC receives appropriate UIS materials and technical backup to support the national EMIS teams in producing and reporting internationally comparable statistics on education
	1. Provide questionnaires, ISCED 2011 mappings and other materials to SPC so that technical support provided through the Regional Facility will help to document and when possible automate the completion of UIS questionnaires from national EMISs
	Expected result 2.2: Countries, upon demand, receive additional direct UIS support to ensure timely and quality reporting of the national education statistics to UIS education survey
	1. Provide two WebEx-based regional workshops annually to train EMIS teams on UIS questionnaires and ISCED 2. Coordinate communication about UIS questionnaires between UIS offices, SPC and national EMIS teams 3. Provide ad hoc support as needed to national EMIS teams to complete UIS questionnaires
	Expected result 2.3: PIFS successfully achieves high level support of the data collection strategy based on UIS questionnaires
	1. Attend meetings and provide statistical summaries upon request from PIFS to demonstrate value of UIS data collection strategy in the Pacific
	Expected result 2.4: Regional organizations in Asia and the international education community are aware of the data and statistical needs of PICs
	1. Make proactive efforts to ensure that PICs data are included in regional and international reports on education 2. Incorporate the statistical needs of PICs into larger initiatives designed to improve data availability and quality at the regional and international levels

Goal 3: Improved monitoring of progress against regional education agenda	
Development Objective(s)	**Indicators and targets agreed on in regional education fora such as the Pacific Education Development Framework are accurately and sustainably monitored and reported**
Activities	**Expected result 3.1:** Regional partners develop and implement a data collection strategy to monitor and evaluate education progress through PEDF using the UIS regional module
	1. In close collaboration with PIFS, SPC and UNESCO Apia, identify and select elements of the PEDF monitoring and evaluation framework to be supported through additional data collection via a UIS regional module 2. Develop a Pacific regional module to supplement the data collection from Pacific countries by UIS 3. Conduct a regional workshop to train EMIS teams on the regional module
	Expected result 3.2: SPC develops and maintains a database of PEDF indicators for monitoring and evaluation
	1. Establish data-sharing processes between UIS and SPC 2. Regularly provide updated da ta for SPC PEDF database
Goal 4: Increased usage of education statistics by stakeholders at the country and regional levels	
Development Objective(s)	**Use of education statistics in the Pacific is increased. All stakeholders in the region use education statistics for evidence-based policy making and analysis**
Activities	**Expected result 4.1:** Regional stakeholders and PICs have access to statistical summaries, indicators and descriptive analysis based on the reported statistics
	1. Design and send country summary statistics and descriptive analyses to national EMIS teams on an annual basis or more regularly 2. Contribute to a joint report on the state of education in the Pacific 3. Assist SPC in training countries in data analysis and report writing 4. Training PIFS staff to query and use data from UIS data center
	Expected result 4.2: PICs have better understanding of statistical outputs and enhanced ability to use them for informed decision-making about education policies and related issues
	1. Training countries on developing outputs tailored to their audiences 2. Assist and train PICs in producing national education digests and other reports

*The actual duration of the project is three years upon signature of the contract.

Table 2: Description of activities in terms of target, recipient, level of outcome and main stakeholder responsible for delivery

Activity	Target of activity	Recipient of activity	Level of expected outcome	Activity delivered by	Expected Result in UIS proposal	Alignment with SPC's Investment Design for Strengthening EMIS in the Pacific End of Program Outcomes (EOP)
Adapt DQAF methodology for the Pacific context	MoE (incl. complete EMIS)	UIS, SPC	National	UIS*	Goal 1, Expected Result 1.1	EOP 1. Improved data collection in PIFCs
Provide methodology and training to undertake a DQAF diagnosis	MoE (incl. complete EMIS)	SPC	Regional	UIS*		
Conduct DQAF diagnostics	MoE (incl. complete EMIS)	MoE, EMIS team	National	UIS and SPC		
Training on how to organize and manage school statistics	School record management systems	EMIS team, MoE staff, School principals	School level	UIS*	Goal 1, Expected Result 1.2	EOP 2. Improve knowledge and skills of PICs MoE staff regarding EMIS hardware and software
Assistance to improve the distribution and collection processes of school surveys	School data collection	EMIS team, MoE staff, District officers	National	UIS*		
Assistance to automate data entry into EMIS	EMIS database	EMIS team	National	SPC		
Upgrade EMIS software and trouble shoot problems	EMIS database	EMIS team	National	SPC		
Make recommendations for EMIS hardware upgrades	EMIS database	EMIS team	National	SPC		
Assistance to automate database quality checks	EMIS database	EMIS team	National	SPC		
Training on how to calculate and interpret indicators	EMIS outputs	EMIS team	National	UIS*		EOP. 3 Improve research and analysis of education data
Assistance to develop school surveys to meet national, regional and international needs	School data collection	EMIS team	National	UIS*		EOP 4. Education decision makers have access to high

Possible work to define minimum standard set of data to be collected in the region (determined by EFA, PEDF, UIS)	School data collection	EMIS team	National	PIFS, SPC and UIS		quality education data, statistics and indicators
Assistance to identify and extract data and indicator needed by data of users	EMIS outputs	EMIS team	National	UIS		
Assistance to automate the filling of UIS surveys including PEDF regional module	International data collection	EMIS team	National	SPC	Goal 2, Expected Result 2.1	EOP 4. Education decision makers have access to high quality education data, statistics and indicators
Training in how to complete UIS surveys and ISCED mapping	International data collection	EMIS team	National	UIS*	Goal 2, Expected Result 2.2	
Provide statistical summaries and data as requested	Regional statistical outputs	PIFS	Regional	UIS	Goal 2, Expected Result 2.3	EOP. 3 Improve research and analysis of education data
Training, support and assistance provided to enable PICs to participate in regional and international data quality initiatives (e.g. Out-Of-School Children Initiative)	EMIS coverage and quality	EMIS team, MoE staff	National	UIS	Goal 2, Expected Result 2.4	EOP 1. Improved data collection in PIFCs
Support to include Pacific data in international publications	International publications	International data users	International	UIS		EOP 4. Education decision makers have access to high quality education data, statistics and indicators
Assistance to incorporate new elements of the PEDF regional module in school surveys	School data collection	EMIS team	National	UIS	Goal 3, Expected Result 3.1	EOP 1. Improved data collection in PIFCs
Training on how to complete PEDF regional module	Regional data collections	EMIS team	National	UIS		
Design regional module and collect data from PICs	Regional data collections	PIFS	Regional	UIS*		EOP 4. Education decision makers have access to high quality education data, statistics and indicators
Training on additional data collection and reporting for regional PEDF module	School record management systems	EMIS team, MoE staff, School principals	School level	UIS		

Provide expert advice on regional data collection strategy for PEDF	Regional data collections	PIFS	Regional	UIS		
Periodically deliver data and indicators for PEDF database	PEDF database	SPC	Regional	UIS*	Goal 3, Expected Result 3.2	EOP 4. Education decision makers have access to high quality education data, statistics and indicators
Provide regularly all UIS Pacific data to SPC	Regional data collections	SPC	Regional	UIS*		
Include SPC in all communication and feedback to PICs on UIS data submissions	International data collection	SPC	International	UIS*		
Produce statistical report for each country and send to PICs annually	UIS data center	MoE, other data users	International	UIS*	Goal 4, Expected Result 4.1	EOP 2. Improve knowledge and skills of PICs MoE staff regarding EMIS hardware and software
Assistance to develop school statistical report and automate production in EMIS	EMIS database	EMIS team, MoE staff, School principals	National	SPC		EOP. 3 Improve research and analysis of education data
Training on data analysis and report writing	MoE data use	MoE, EMIS team	National	SPC		
Produce report on state of education in the Pacific	International publication	All	International	UIS		EOP 4. Education decision makers have access to high quality education data, statistics and indicators
Training to PIFS staff on use of UIS database	Regional statistical outputs	PIFS	Regional	UIS*		
Assistance to develop automated outputs (completed UIS questionnaires, standard lists of indicators, standard inputs to statistical digest etc.)	EMIS database	EMIS team	National	SPC	Goal 4, Expected Result 4.2	EOP 2. Improve knowledge and skills of PICs MoE staff regarding EMIS hardware and software
Training and assistance to produce/improve education statistical digest and other reports	National statistical outputs	EMIS team	National	UIS		EOP. 3 Improve research and analysis of education data
Training to identify the types of outputs to meet the needs of users in each country	National statistical outputs	EMIS team, MoE staff	National	UIS		EOP 4. Education decision makers have access to high quality education data, statistics and indicators

*Indicates that the activity includes inputs from UIS HQ in Montreal and/or UIS Bangkok that are not costed in this table but are included in the UIS Proposal to Improve the Quality and Use of the Global Education Database: A selection of core services, mainly under outcomes 4 and 5.

Note: The UIS will provide expertise to a number of SPC activities. It should be noted that travel and accommodation costs of the UIS staff members are not included in this proposal because they have already been integrated in the "Investment Design for Strengthening Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) in the Pacific", AusAID Investment Design Template, SPC, 2014. See also logical framework presented in Annex III.

Goal 1: Assess and improve quality of education data collected in PICs

For education data to be of high quality, all stages in the information chain must operate effectively. This chain spans from the collection of student, teacher and school infrastructure information at the school level to the education statistics disseminated by the EMIS unit. Improvements in data quality are most likely to result from targeted interventions to strengthen the weak points in the information chain and these weak points are best identified through a thorough assessment of the efficacy of the individual links in the chain and the entire system.

With the support of SPC and in conjunction with national EMIS teams, the UIS will carry out data quality assessments in 15 PICs, including 6 in-depth assessments. Based on the recommendations arising from these assessments, the UIS will also provide targeted support to countries to address weaknesses in their information chains.

The 15 PICs that will undertake the data quality assessments are all developing countries that are either UNESCO Member States or Associate Members within the Pacific Cluster. This would include: Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau (Associate Member), Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.

It is important to note that three of the PICs (Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Solomon Islands) are also participating in the World Bank's Pacific SABER programme (PaBER), which uses the UIS data quality assessment framework (DQAF) as a core instrument. To maximize the potential benefits, the UIS, SPC and the World Bank are already discussing synergies between the two exercises.

Expected Result 1.1 Countries and regional stakeholders are aware of the quality of EMIS in Pacific region and the required improvements

The Data Quality Assessment Framework (DQAF) was designed to assess the outputs of a statistical production process as well as the process itself. It provides a comprehensive evaluation of education data quality by comparing a country's data production with current international standards and practices. It is used as a powerful assessment tool to identify the weaknesses and strengths of the data production system and recommend improvements. The framework covers all aspects of the statistical environment or infrastructure in which data are collected, processed and disseminated. This tool has been used and improved by the UIS following several years of experience in Africa.

Activity 1.1.1 – Adapt UIS DQAF into rapid, web-based, self-guided modules

In order to carry out 15 assessments within a year, the format of the DQAF will need to be adjusted to allow national EMIS teams to carry out their own basic assessments with guidance and support from the UIS. To do this, the framework should be simplified to address the parts of the information chain that are under the remit of the EMIS teams, and then re-packaged into modules that EMIS teams can work through independently in order to make a self-assessment of the different elements of their respective information chains.

Activity 1.1.2 – Support PICs to undertake self-assessment using rapid, web-based, self-guided DQAF modules

The web-based approach will enable countries and encourage them to do their own appraisal of the quality of their data with the support and the supervision of the UIS. The activity includes a regional workshop to: train all PICs staff,

disseminate the materials and assess further needs for onsite support. Web-based DQAFs will be broken down into modules to enable countries to take a step-by-step approach while the UIS and SPC keep track of progress and possible setbacks in order to ensure that all countries undergo the full assessment.

The UIS will support each of the EMIS national teams by delivering:

- a regional workshop to train national officers on the DQAF methodology;
- frequent and scheduled on-line communication with each EMIS team during the completion of each module;
- support and guidance on how to formulate and implement the recommendations arising from each module.

Activity 1.1.3 – Undertake six in-depth assessments using full DQAF methodology

The UIS will undertake, with support from SPC, six in-depth assessments using the DQAF methodology. PICs are quite diverse in terms of their size, institutional settings, needs and geographic landscape. In order to address in depth as many challenges as possible, the UIS proposes to undertake, in partnership with SPC, a minimum of six DQAFs. It should be noted that these initiatives require significant commitment from countries so it will be essential to organize an initial period of consultation and discussions with regional stakeholders and Member States. Countries will be selected based on national demand/priorities, country characteristics as well as consultation with regional partners (notably SPC, PIFS, the World Bank and DFAT).

The cost-benefit of conducting additional in-depth DQAFs will be reviewed in Program Year 2, in consultation with SPC, PIFS, DFAT and relevant PICs. If further in-depth DQAFs are to be conducted (i.e. more than six), additional staff and funding resources may be required.

Expected result 1.2 Countries and regional stakeholders receive targeted support in addressing the identified weaknesses in national EMISs

Using the findings and recommendations from the rapid and in-depth assessments, the UIS will work with regional partners to provide targeted support to countries as they address the identified weaknesses. The UIS has developed considerable resources and expertise to deliver support and training to national EMIS teams to help address the causes of low data quality. These can be tailored to the Pacific context and delivered by UIS Pacific staff with support from UIS Bangkok and Montreal. In addition, the UIS will work

Activity 1.2.1 – Provide training and expertise to enable national teams to address identified weaknesses in national EMISs

The UIS will deliver training and support that is tailored to the needs identified in the data assessments. The types of activities could include:

- training provided on how to keep school records;
- assistance to improve the distribution and collection processes of school surveys;
- training provided in use of school records for school management;
- training in extracting data for school surveys;
- assistance to develop school survey to meet national, regional and international user needs;
- possible work to define minimum standard set of data to be collected in the region (determined by EFA, PEDF, UIS);
- assistance to automate data entry into EMIS;

- upgrade EMIS software and trouble shoot problems;
- make recommendations for EMIS hardware upgrades ;
- assistance to identify data and indicator needs of users;
- assistance to extract data and indicators demanded by data users;
- training in how to calculate and interpret indicators;
- training in how to test different aspects of data quality in EMIS database; and
- assistance to build in automatic database quality checks.

Goal 2: Improved visibility of education progress in the Pacific at the international level

There is low visibility of education in the Pacific at the international level due to poor reporting of education data to the UIS in the past. This poor reporting is likely to be the result of several factors, including:

- unavailability or poor quality of data at the national level;
- difficulty filling out UIS questionnaires;
- UIS questionnaires considered a low priority for busy EMIS teams (probably due to lack of perceived benefit from filling them out);
- lack of follow-up and support from UIS;
- irrelevance of some aspects of UIS questionnaires.

The poor visibility and data quality issues may be having a significant impact on wider support for PICs, especially in terms of wider education and statistical initiatives undertaken in Asia and internationally. For example, donors and other stakeholders may not be aware of the progress or particular challenges facing Pacific countries because their data do not appear in monitoring reports. As a result, these countries may not receive the same level of investment or engagement in donor-supported initiatives. Moreover, PICs may ultimately be excluded from regional and international initiatives designed for example to achieve education goals if they are unable to demonstrate their abilities to monitor progress according to international standards.

The UIS will, in conjunction with SPC, PIFS and UNESCO Apia, improve the international visibility of education in the Pacific by encouraging and supporting PICs to fill out the UIS questionnaires, including the Pacific regional modules. The UIS questionnaires will be the vehicle through which internationally comparable education data are collected in the Pacific. The UIS will also take proactive efforts to ensure that PICS data and statistical needs are accurately reflected in regional and international reports and initiatives designed to improve education data and policymaking.

Expected result 2.1 SPC receives appropriate UIS materials and technical backup to support the national EMIS teams in producing and reporting internationally comparable statistics on education

To enable national EMIS teams to more easily complete UIS questionnaires on time, the UIS will support SPC, through the Regional EMIS Facility, to provide the technical support needed to automate the completion of UIS questionnaires in national EMISs.

Activity 2.1.1 – Provide questionnaires, ISCED 2011 mappings and other materials to SPC to allow technical support provided through the Regional EMIS Facility to automate UIS questionnaire completion in national EMISs

The UIS will provide the UIS questionnaires and technical advice to help SPC to deliver technical support to national EMISs to automate the completion of UIS questionnaires (where possible). The UIS will also ensure that SPC is notified of any changes to the UIS questionnaires in advance so that updates can be built into the national EMISs.

Expected result 2.2 Countries, upon demand, receive additional direct UIS support to ensure timely and quality reporting of the national education statistics to UIS education survey

The UIS will engage directly with national EMIS teams on a regular basis to help and encourage them to complete the UIS questionnaires and submit them on time.

Activity 2.2.1 – Provide two WebEx-based regional workshops annually to train EMIS teams on UIS questionnaires and ISCED

The UIS staff in Apia, in collaboration with UIS Bangkok, will provide two WebEx-based regional workshops to train EMIS teams on how to fill in UIS questionnaires and ISCED. The first workshop will be held early in the year (February) to provide training on ISCED and to finalise any outstanding ISCED mappings (in follow-up to regional workshop held in Noumea in February 2014). The second will occur in the middle of the year (June-July) to provide training on UIS questionnaires. These workshops will also enable EMIS teams to fill out questionnaires (in part or whole) with real time support from UIS staff.

Activity 2.2.2 – Coordinate communication about UIS questionnaires between UIS offices, SPC and national EMIS teams

The UIS will coordinate all communications regarding UIS questionnaires between the countries involved, UIS staff (in Apia, Bangkok and Montreal) as well as SPC staff. This will ensure that the efforts of the different partners are aligned while encouraging EMIS teams to complete and submit their surveys. This will include all follow-up communication during the data processing phase.

Activity 2.2.3 – Provide ad hoc support as needed to national EMIS teams to fill in UIS questionnaires and ensure accurate processing at UIS Headquarters in Montreal

UIS Apia staff will provide ad hoc support to national EMIS teams via email, skype, WebEx and telephone to help countries to complete and submit their questionnaires and to resolve any inconsistencies in the data or other issues raised by the data processing team at UIS Headquarters in Montreal.

Expected result 2.3 PIFS successfully achieves high level support of the data collection strategy based on UIS questionnaires

PIFS has committed to advocate for the UIS questionnaires to be the vehicle of education data collection from countries for regional and international purposes. The UIS will support PIFS in their efforts to build high-level support in the Pacific for submitting data to the Institute.

Activity 2.3.1 – Attend meetings and provide statistical summaries upon request from PIFS to demonstrate value of UIS data collection strategy in the Pacific

The UIS staff in Apia will attend select regional meetings (at the invitation of PIFS) and provide statistical outputs (such as regional summary statistics) to demonstrate the importance and value of regularly submitting data to the UIS.

Expected result 2.4 Regional organizations in Asia and the international education community are aware of the data and statistical needs of PICs

In order to improve the visibility of PICs in regional and international publications, the UIS will ensure that the education data of PICs are disseminated and promoted both within the Pacific and the wider region of Asia as well as the larger international education community. UIS will also advocate within and outside the Pacific region, including in Asia and more widely, to ensure that the statistical needs of the PICs are identified and incorporated within larger initiatives designed to improve data availability and quality at the regional and international levels.

Activity 2.4.1 – Make proactive efforts to ensure that PICs data are included in regional and international reports on education

UIS staff will promote the data of PICs in Asia and more widely by ensuring that both country-level data and Pacific aggregated results are included and visible in relevant UIS and international publications and data releases to make it easier for data users to access and analyse Pacific-specific information.

Activity 2.4.2 – Incorporate the statistical needs of PICs into larger initiatives designed to improve data availability and quality at the regional and international levels

The UIS will ensure that PICs are included in initiatives to improve data availability and quality at the regional and international levels. The UIS regularly undertakes large-scale initiatives that focus on improving data in one or more aspects of education. The UIS will work with PICs to ensure that the Pacific is included in both the pilot phase of the project design (so as to ensure PICs' statistical needs are taken into account) and in the data collection work when it is undertaken more broadly (to support PICs to report as part of the initiative).

Goal 3: Improved monitoring of progress against regional education agendas

The Pacific Education Development Framework (PEDF) is the major regional education agreement in the Pacific and was endorsed by Education Ministers at the Forum Education Ministers' Meeting in Tonga, 2009. The framework details a vision for "Quality Education for all in Pacific Island Countries" and encompasses all education sub-sectors from early childhood education to adult education, excluding higher education. The PEDF sets out challenges, priorities and strategies for six education sub-sectors - Early Care and Childhood Education; Formal School Education; Technical and Vocational Education and Training; Non-formal Education; Teacher Development; and System Governance and Administration – and seven cross-cutting themes – Language and Culture; Students with Special Educational Needs and Inclusive Education; Gender and Equity, Information and Communication Technologies; Education for Sustainable Development, HIV and AIDS; Youth; and Poverty.

The PEDF Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework includes objectives, outcomes and performance indicators for each of the sub-sectors and cross-cutting themes. PICs have agreed to report against this framework through the production of an annual regional PEDF Tracking Report.

While the current round of the PEDF is coming to a close (2015), there will be further discussions about the continuation of a regional education development agenda. The most recent attempt at monitoring progress against the regional framework (the PEDF tracking report 2014) demonstrated that there is still a long way to go before the region is able to implement strong monitoring of the agenda, notably in terms of data quality and comparability.

While UIS questionnaires already collect a significant amount of relevant data, it was shown that there are several areas where additional data collection will be necessary if PICs are to comprehensively and consistently report their progress against the regional M&E Framework. This will need to be taken into account in future discussions to establish the next Pacific education development monitoring framework.

To this end, the UIS will work closely with PIFS, SPC and UNESCO Apia to inform and develop a regional data collection strategy that will support the monitoring of the next iteration of the Pacific education development agenda.

The UIS is leading the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) for post-2015 education indicators which is instrumental in informing the monitoring framework for the education goal and targets included in the Sustainable Development Goals. The goals and targets of the new international development agenda will be adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015. The UIS is well informed of the constraints and difficulties in elaborating frameworks to monitor progress, on a comparable basis. This experience will be beneficial during regional to establish the next Pacific education development framework.

In addition, the UIS is proposing to develop a Pacific regional module to collect the specific data required. The UIS has both the infrastructure and experience required to develop regional education data collections designed to inform regional education agendas (http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/regional-data-collections.aspx). The Institute is prepared to support future regional monitoring needs through the collection of data and the production of regionally and cross-nationally comparable education indicators. This work must be closely aligned with activities under Output 1.2 to ensure that countries are supported to expand their national data collections where deemed necessary.

Expected result 3.1 Regional partners develop and implement a data collection strategy to monitor and evaluate education progress through the reviewed PEDF or the next Pacific education development agenda using the UIS regional module

While many of the monitoring indicators listed in the PEDF M&E Framework, especially for the sub-section on formal education, are the same as those produced based on UIS data, at least at the national level, there are many indicators in the M&E framework that require data that are not currently collected by the UIS or many countries in the region. In response, the UIS will develop a regional module to collect additional data from Pacific countries in select areas.

Activity 3.1.1 – In close collaboration with PIFS, SPC and UNESCO Apia identify elements of the reviewed PEDF M&E framework that could be monitored using data collected from a UIS regional module

Considering the large number of indicators included in the PEDF M&E framework and the limited capacity of EMIS teams in the region to significantly and rapidly expand their collection of education data, the UIS will work with PIFS, SPC and UNESCO Apia to identify a specific data set to be collected from countries through a UIS regional module. The aim is to submit this list of selected indicators and related strategy for endorsement during the next meeting of the Pacific Heads of Education.

Activity 3.1.2 – Develop a Pacific regional module to supplement UIS data collection currently underway in Pacific countries

Based on the findings of Activity 3.1.1 and the education development framework that will be endorsed by the Pacific Heads of Education, the UIS will develop a regional module to supplement the UIS education questionnaires used in its annual survey. This module might focus on one or more critical areas including sub-national education data, enrolment and completion data for TVET, or teacher development; among others.

Activity 3.1.3 – Train EMIS teams on the regional module

It will be necessary to train EMIS team about the concepts and questionnaire items of the new regional module. Given the importance and complexity of this new module, it will be important to provide this training in person through a regional workshop. In addition, these workshops foster closer working relationships between the UIS, SPC and national EMIS teams and provide a valuable opportunity to follow-up on Activities 1.2.1, 2.2.2 and 2.2.3. This support will be essential to ensure the success of the regional module.

Expected result 3.2 SPC develops and maintains a database of reviewed PEDF indicators for monitoring and evaluation

The SPC has committed to develop and maintain a database of indicators and other data relevant to PEDF or the future regional education development agenda. The UIS will provide the data for this database to SPC and work with SPC to ensure consistency between this SPC PEDF database and the UIS Data Centre by providing SPC with updated data in line with the UIS data release schedule.

Activity 3.2.1 – Establish data-sharing processes between UIS and SPC

The UIS and SPC will work together to develop the data set needed for publishing the reviewed PEDF indicators in the SPC PEDF database. The UIS and SPC will also work together to find the most efficient approach to share data between UIS and SPC for the PEDF database.

Activity 3.2.2 – Regularly provide updated data for SPC PEDF database

The UIS will, according to the agreements made in Activity 3.2.1, supply data from the UIS Data Centre to SPC for use in the establishment and maintenance of the PEDF database.

Goal 4: Increased usage of education statistics by stakeholders at the country and regional levels

The collection of education statistics in Pacific countries should be demand-led, with stakeholders providing a clear directive to EMIS teams for what data they require for decision making and analysis. High level demand for education statistics exists in the Pacific as demonstrated by the commitment at FEdMM to improving education monitoring and evaluation. However, this high level demand does not consistently translate into the use of education statistics by government agencies and other stakeholders.

UIS will contribute to fostering the use of education statistics by providing summary statistics and indicators, and brief descriptive analyses in the form of country and regional summaries on the one hand and by improving the capacity of national teams to produce high quality analysis and publications.

Expected result 4.1 Regional stakeholders and PICs have access to statistical summaries, indicators and descriptive analysis based on the reported statistics

In order to make education statistics more accessible, easy to use and easy to understand, the UIS will publish and send to countries updated national statistics, indicators, and descriptive analyses based on their submission of data to UIS. These summaries will be based on the country summaries already produced within the UIS data center.

Activity 4.1.1 – Design and send country summary statistics and descriptive analyses to national EMIS teams on at least an annual basis

The UIS will produce country summaries of education statistics based on the data submitted to the Institute. The first objective is to provide countries with a useful product in return for their submission of data. In addition, these summaries will help promote the use and visibility of education data among key stakeholders. The UIS will send these summaries to countries in a form that can be linked to government websites, printed in publications and easily used for internal analytical purposes (with due reference to the UIS).

Activity 4.1.2 – Contribute to a joint report on the state of education in the Pacific

The UIS, in partnership with SPC and PIFS, will contribute to a joint report on the state of education in the Pacific. The report will showcase PICs' data and analyse the progress that has been made in education and identify the challenges ahead. This report will also serve to demonstrate the improvement in the availability and quality of education data in the Pacific as a result of the activities undertaken during the three-year time frame of this work program. The report will be the first Pacific regional education report to assess the state of education in the Pacific against the post-2015 education agenda.

Activity 4.1.3 – Assist SPC in training countries in data analysis and report writing

UIS will support SPC in training countries with their analytical and writing skills. UIS has notably developed a modular training on statistical monitoring of education for Asia and the Pacific. As knowledge transfer is critical for the sustainability of education monitoring in the region, the UIS will coordinate with SPC to ensure that national officers enhance their analytical and writing skills.

Activity 4.1.4 – Training PIFS staff to query and use data from UIS data center

UIS education data for Pacific countries as for all countries are available free of charge on UIS website through the UIS data center. Using the data center in an efficient way requires training and UIS will train staff from PIFS to rapidly and efficiently extract the data they need for their own use at the regional level.

Expected result 4.2 PICs have better understanding of statistical outputs and enhanced ability to use them for informed decision-making about education policies and related issues

As improvement of the use of education statistics relies on better use of outputs from their EMIS, the UIS will support SPC in providing training to staff from MoE and national statistics offices in analysing education data and writing reports.

Activity 4.2.1 – Training countries on developing outputs tailored to their audiences

Dissemination of education data and indicators might not take the same form and media depending on the audience one wants to reach. The UIS will support Pacific countries to tailor their monitoring outputs to the varying needs and nature of their audience.

Activity 4.2.2 – Assist and train PICs in producing national education digest and other reports

As the key publication for most MoE's statistical offices, national education digest are particularly important. Currently the production of these digests in the Pacific suffers from irregularity and varies a lot in quality. The UIS will support countries in mainstreaming and routinizing the production of these reports.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The success and reputation of the UIS as the primary source of data used to monitor international education goals is based on a range of factors, including the expertise of its staff, extensive contacts among statistical agencies at the national, international and regional levels, as well as its rigorous planning and careful monitoring of all aspects of the Institute's work – from the development of new international standards and indicators to the calculation and dissemination of UIS statistics.

The activities described in this proposal are based on a thorough assessment of the statistical needs of Pacific countries and the results of a recent workshop jointly organized by the UIS and SPC. Following this event, the UIS, SPC and PIFS decided to join forces to successfully tackle the issue of education data in the region.

The three partners are currently discussing a Memorandum of Understanding to ensure efficient and sustainable education data collection in the region by mobilizing their respective expertise in a joint strategy. As such the UIS will be able to benefit from: 1) political leverage from PIFS to advocate for the importance of good statistical systems in the region; and 2) on-site technical support from SPC which has extensive knowledge of the Pacific and regionally–based staff. This partnership between the three organizations is already bearing fruit with countries such as Niue and Tuvalu submitting data to the UIS for the first time.

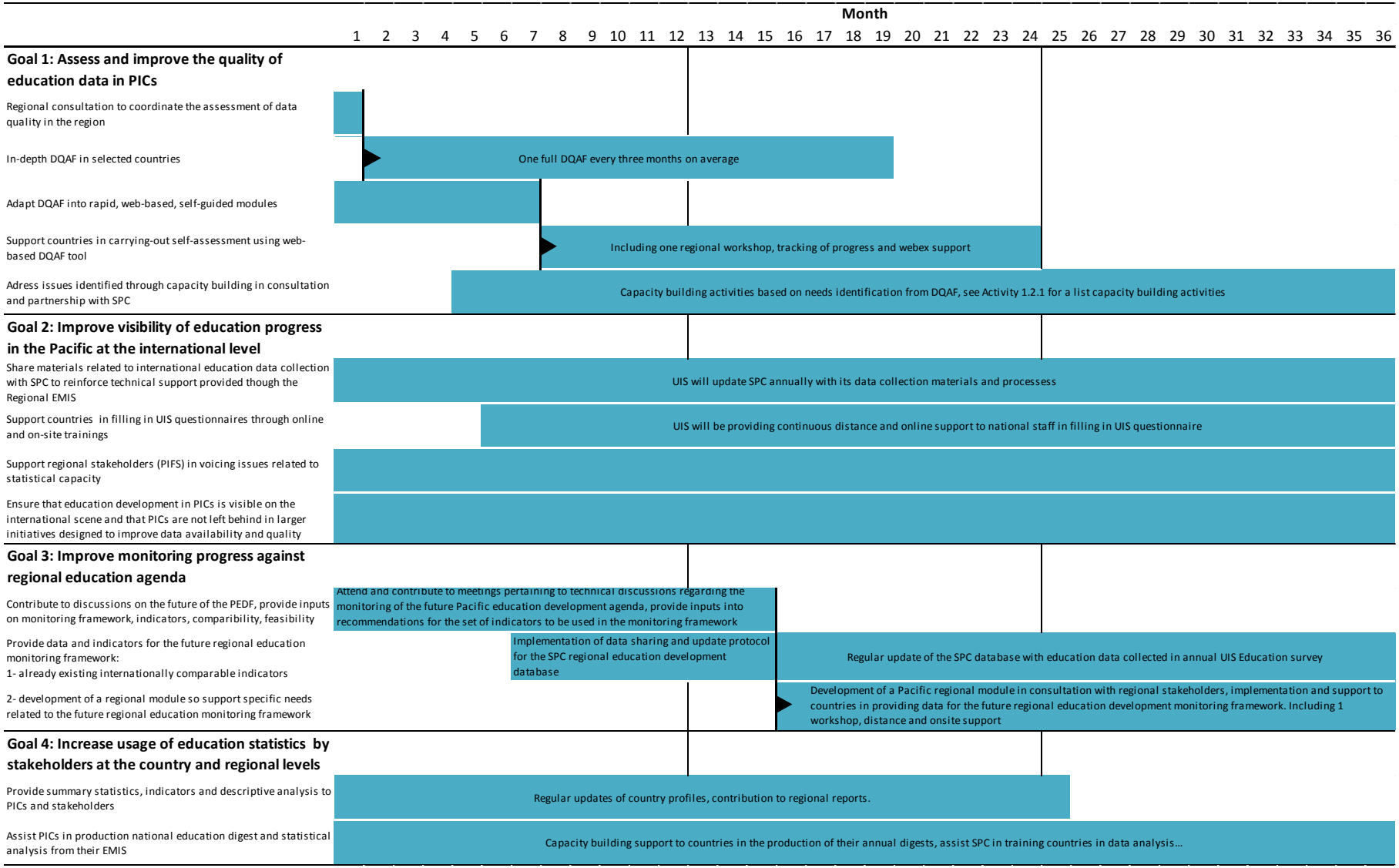
It is important to note that the Institute has demonstrated remarkable efficiency in its management of resources and execution of its programme of activities (as noted in the most recent external audit evaluation). Despite the expansion of activities and related expenditure levels between 2003 and 2011, the Institute substantially reduced its overhead costs, which averaged 26% between 2003 and 2007 (prior to re-structuring) and have fallen to an average level of less than 17% of total expenditures between 2008 and 2013. This same level of efficiency is projected for 2015 and beyond.

Financial uncertainty poses the greatest risk to the work of the Institute and, consequently, to the implementation of this proposal. The single most important investment and asset of the UIS is its staff. However, due to budgetary constraints, the Institute has been forced to essentially freeze recruitment of existing vacant posts and cancel certain positions as in the case of the cluster adviser in the Pacific. In addition, a significant proportion of UIS staff (50%) work on short-term contracts and project appointments. In 2014, the UIS was forced to reduce the length of these contracts from twelve to six months. This uncertainty presents a serious risk to staff retention, which is a major issue given the extremely specialized nature of the work of the Institute.

In addition, the nature of UIS work – data collection and analysis – necessitates a steady and robust funding over time to bring the best results. Statistical information becomes an important monitoring tool when it can show development over a period of time. For this, the UIS should be able to run its operations regularly to produce time series data rather than one-time snapshots. Thus, short-term funding (such as a year) threatens the overall success of the Institute.

Specific risks arising at the national level when working in the Pacific region include: low priority assigned to UIS data collection due to lack of political commitment; and limited statistical capacities when responding to international education surveys (either in terms of the number of people responsible for completing questionnaires or their knowledge of international education indicators). By joining forces with two of the main regional actors, the UIS is determined to address these issues and enhance its activities and outputs in the region.

Annex II: Indicative timeline



* Month 1 corresponds to the month immediately following the signature of the contract