Partner focus
UNICEF and UNESCO

Regional focus
Africa

Issues
Literacy and marginalised children
The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) is one of the world’s leading educational research centres. For 80 years ACER has developed a solid reputation as a provider of reliable support to education policy makers and professional practitioners. ACER’s extensive research capacity is conducted across nine research programs:

- Assessment and Reporting (Humanities and Social Sciences)
- Assessment and Reporting (Mathematics and Science)
- National Surveys
- International Surveys
- Systemwide Testing
- Teaching, Learning and Transitions
- Policy Analysis and Program Evaluation
- Higher Education
- Psychometrics and Methodology

As a not-for-profit organisation independent of government, ACER receives no direct financial support and generates its entire income through contracted research and development projects and by developing and distributing products and services. The organisation has offices throughout Australia, as well as branches in Dubai and New Delhi.

**International influence**

ACER works in an increasingly international context, providing research and assessment services, consultancy, support and professional development programs to governments and educational organisations in numerous countries. In addition, ACER develops, implements and evaluates regional, national and international assessment programs for a broad range of international clients.

ACER has been engaged in significant collaborative work with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as the leading partner in a consortium responsible for the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). More recently, ACER led an international consortium in the development and implementation of the OECD’s Assessment of Higher Educational Learning Outcomes (AHELO) feasibility study.

ACER also collaborates on a number of international development projects with organisations such as the World Bank, AusAID and the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), contributing to educational evaluation and reform in a number of countries.

Further, ACER is the International Study Centre responsible for the IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) and jointly conducts the IEA Teacher Education Development Study (TEDS) with Michigan State University.
Making a difference in developing countries

The work of ACER in education is making the difference in educational outcomes for students across the world, particularly in developing countries, as Peter McGuckian explains.

ACER has worked internationally for more than 15 years, focusing initially on international assessments, particularly the Programme for International Student Assessment of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, and increasingly on other aspects of international education. ACER’s growing contribution in the area of international education includes policy analysis and program evaluation; research into teaching and learning; and research and evaluation addressing technical and vocational education and training, and higher education.

Through this work, as well as through the establishment of offices in India and the United Arab Emirates, ACER has world-class expertise in understanding the particular education challenges faced by developing countries, and is contributing to a body of evidence-based knowledge on education and development.

In order to better coordinate ACER’s growing range of education and development activities, and apply the organisation’s decades of education expertise to the context of education in developing countries more strategically, ACER has developed a specific research agenda around the principle aim of making a contribution to the improvement of educational...
capacity in education in developing countries by working in partnership with governments and development organisations to design and implement contextually relevant policies and programs to increase education access, quality, inclusiveness and achievement for all learners. The aim of research in this field is the development of an evidence base to inform effective educational policies and practices in less developed countries.

Over the past five years, ACER has undertaken education and development projects for AusAID, the World Bank, UNESCO, the Asian Development Bank and UNICEF in countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Zimbabwe, Tajikistan, Ethiopia and Indonesia, as well as Samoa, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Tonga and Fiji. Underlying this work is ACER's mission to create and promote knowledge and tools that can be used to improve learning across the lifespan, and the belief in the importance of ongoing, lifelong learning both for the fulfilment of individuals and for the wellbeing of society.

At ACER, current and recent projects that are representative of education and development research include evaluations, policy analysis, assessment and research. Such projects include:

- the AusAID Education Resource Facility, where ACER is one of three members of a consortium to provide research, analytical and advisory support to AusAID staff members working in and with education and development
- the UNICEF State of the Art Review and Case Studies to Address Social Norms and Equity in Education, which draws upon a variety of disciplinary approaches to examine the interplay between social norms and student equity, with case studies undertaken in Nepal, Liberia, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Ethiopia
- the Systematic Review of the Impact of Large-Scale Assessments on Education Policy and Practice in Developing Countries, which was part of a competitive global call for proposals by AusAID, Britain's Department for International Development and 3ie, builds upon ACER expertise in large-scale assessments to examine the relevance and role of such programs in education and development policy making, programming and practice
- East Asia Summit Educational Cooperation Taskforce support, where ACER provided support to identify and formulate areas of potential cooperation between 18 countries, taking account of the economic, political and social context of each country and the region as a whole
- the UNICEF Zimbabwe Early Learning Assessment Program to support and enhance national capacity within Zimbabwe to review, reform and reorientate the current system of student assessment, and evaluate the impact of UNICEF's Education Transition Fund program on children, their caregivers, schools and the education sector in general, and
- the South Africa Workbooks Evaluation to support the South African Department of Basic Education's project to provide 'lesson-a-day' learning materials in all 11 official languages for approximately six million children from Reception to Grade 9.

This issue of International Developments highlights specific projects addressing ongoing work with the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). It also focuses on Africa as a region in which education and development initiatives are being implemented, and outlining current and planned contributions to this important field.
ACER has been working with United Nations organisations on multiple projects.

Projects with UNICEF

UNICEF and ACER work to evaluate education interventions in Africa

In Africa, ACER is working with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) on a number of programs to monitor the equity, access and quality of education provision as African states increase primary school enrolment rates in line with the Millennium Development Goals regarding universal education and gender equality in education. UNICEF has engaged ACER to provide expertise on a number of projects that are improving learning in the African region. (See ‘Regional focus: Africa,’ page 10 in this issue of International Developments for more.)

UNICEF and ACER workbooks and textbooks project

In South Africa, the Department of Basic Education, with support from UNICEF, commissioned ACER in 2012 to undertake an independent formative evaluation of a South African Department of Basic Education workbooks and...
‘Without a clear understanding of school assessment at the national, regional and international levels, you’re not able to draw any meaningful conclusions about the current quality of your educational provision.’ Dr John Cresswell

textbooks project. The project provides ‘lesson-a-day’ learning materials in South Africa’s 11 official languages for approximately six million children from Grade R to Grade 9, as well as the provision of textbooks addressing language and literacy skills in Grades 10 to 12.

ACER’s formative evaluation was led by Dr Rachel Outhred and Dr Adrian Beavis. The formative evaluation and recommendations aim to inform further development of the workbooks and textbooks project. ACER’s final report included recommendations for adjustments to the workbook intervention for future editions.

**UNICEF and ACER work to evaluate the Education Transition Fund Program in Zimbabwe**

In Zimbabwe, Dr Rachel Outhred, Professor Gabrielle Matters and Dr Adrian Beavis from ACER are working with UNICEF to evaluate the impact of the Education Transition Fund (ETF) program and with the Zimbabwe Schools Examination Council (ZimSEC) to establish and implement the UNICEF-funded Zimbabwe Early Learning Assessment program.

The Early Learning Assessment program seeks to evaluate the impact of the multi-donor sector-wide Education Transition Fund Program, totalling a $180 million dollar investment in Zimbabwe’s education sector.

**UNICEF and ACER work on social norms in Nepal, Liberia, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Ethiopia**

In 2012, UNICEF engaged ACER to examine the interplay between social norms – the values, beliefs and attitudes that govern behaviours – and student equity. The review and case study investigations by Dr Rachel Outhred in Nepal, Liberia, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Ethiopia looked at how social norms can reinforce exclusion and disparities but can also enable inclusion and equity.

The study identifies effective UNICEF programs that are perceived to effectively address norms affecting education outcomes, and recommends strategies to encourage social norms that promote inclusion in education.

Dr Rachel Outhred and Leila Ismail presented the initial findings of the study at UNICEF’s headquarters in New York in late 2012. Final recommendations and a proposed program strategy are currently being formulated by the research team and will inform UNICEF’s policies and frameworks to help eliminate disparity in education and support marginalised groups who endure multiple social and educational inequalities.

**Projects with UNESCO**

**UNESCO and ACER work on the UIS Observatory of Learning Outcomes**

With the support of ACER’s International Development team, Dr John Cresswell, Deputy Research Director of International Surveys in the Educational Monitoring and Research Division, has been involved in a pilot study in 24 countries for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics (UIS).

‘Following our evaluation report to the UIS on the pilot study, the UIS Observatory of Learning Outcomes program is now being rolled out across 200 countries for 2013,’ Dr Cresswell explains.

‘The UIS Observatory of Learning Outcomes is in some ways like an audit of assessment practices that enables nations to see how their assessment systems compare,’ Dr Cresswell explains.

‘It’s important to note that this is not about drawing specific comparisons, nor about providing comparable data about student achievement, but about providing detail on the types of national and international assessments that are conducted in various nations, the student cohorts that are involved,'
the focus of these assessments in terms of reading, say, or mathematics, the languages used in assessments, the purposes of such assessments and so on.

‘The comprehensive detail generated through the UIS Observatory of Learning Outcomes can then inform the thinking of policy makers at the national and international levels. UNESCO is interested in stimulating policy debate about the most effective kinds of assessment, and using assessment at the national, regional and international levels to drive educational improvement.’

The project supports the goals of the Global Partnership for Education (previously Education for All) to provide access to basic education for all, but also to improve the quality of education.

‘Without a clear understanding of school assessment at the national, regional and international levels, you’re not able to draw any meaningful conclusions about the current quality of your educational provision, nor are you able to make informed decisions about what you’re doing well and what you want to improve,’ Dr Cresswell says.

‘We’ve done a great deal of work on the UIS Observatory of Learning Outcomes that is helping policy makers, and us, to formulate the sorts of assessments that support high-quality education across the world.’

**UNESCO and ACER work on a learning assessment framework in the Arab States**

Dr Cresswell is also leading an ACER and UNESCO Beirut collaboration to develop a common regional learning assessment framework to be used as a benchmark for measuring educational quality in the Arab States.

The collaboration on educational research in the Arab States supports UNESCO’s Education for All program in terms of educational policy development in the region.

The ACER and UNESCO Beirut initiative is supporting the development of educational assessment and evaluation programs for the Arab States. ACER and UNESCO Beirut are facilitating training workshops to build national capacity for the programs’ implementation.

The common regional learning assessment framework to be used as a benchmark for measuring educational quality in the Arab States outlines the context and defines terms for a common regional educational improvement initiative, proposes a management structure, identifies appropriate measures, and develops a model for calculating these measures and interpreting results.

‘The Arab States are heavily engaged in national and international assessments but until now little work has been done on translating data into information, policy and practice,’ Dr Cresswell says.

‘The program is therefore focusing on building capacity within the Arab States to analyse, interpret and make good use of existing assessment results, before embarking on more assessment.’

**UNESCO and ACER work on using assessment to improve learning in South America**

Dr Mike Timms addressed ACER’s work on using assessment to improve learning in South America at the ‘Quality and Equity in Education: International seminar on learning assessment’ in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in November 2012. Co-sponsored by Rio’s Municipal Secretariat of Education and UNESCO, the international meeting addressed theoretical and methodological advances, and challenges of educational assessment systems; how schools and education systems use student assessment to improve education; and alternative models to assess the quality of education.

The study identifies effective UNICEF programs that are perceived to effectively address norms affecting education outcomes.
Regional focus Africa
Significant work on evaluation and assessment aimed at addressing equity and educational quality in Africa is being undertaken by researchers at ACER. **Rachel Outhred** reports.

African countries comprise 34 of the world’s 49 least developed countries, as classified by the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS). The *Education for All* Global Monitoring Report of 2012 from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) indicated that the number of out-of-school children in sub-Saharan Africa increased by 1.6 million between 2008, the number of illiterate adults rose by 27 per cent since 1990 and pre-primary gross enrolment ratios are the lowest of any region in the world. The report suggested that the deterioration in the quality of education in some African countries is not only due to the recent increase in enrolments, but to a ‘chronic quality problem’ in many sub-Saharan African states.

Prior to the Human Development Report of 1990, development was conceptualised as an economic process, measured through a nation’s gross domestic product. However, it has now undergone a paradigm shift, with development now being conceptualised as **human development**. The UN Human Development Report of 1990 asserted that ‘people are the real wealth of a nation.’ Education is at the heart of human development.
Major challenges surround the provision of quality education for primary school children in Zimbabwe.

According to a report in the *Economist* in 2011, between 2000 and 2010, six of the world’s 10 fastest-growing economies were in sub-Saharan Africa, but the extent to which this economic development will expedite progress towards the development of human capabilities in Africa is the *real development question*. UNESCO estimates that if revenue from natural resources in resource-rich countries, including Ghana, the Niger and Uganda, were dedicated to financing education, access to schooling could be achieved for 86 per cent of out-of-school children and 42 per cent of out-of-school adolescents. So while the educational challenges in Africa may appear daunting, data indicates that they are not insurmountable.

The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) is closely involved in improving the quality of education in Africa, and has engaged ACER to provide expertise on a number of projects that are improving learning in the African region.

**The South Africa Workbook Evaluation**

South Africa has achieved a number of the indicators attached to the Millennium Development Goals regarding universal education and gender equality in education, and is now addressing the issue of quality. As part of quality improvement measures, in 2011 the South African Department of Basic Education launched a workbook development...
project to provide ‘lesson-a-day’ learning materials in South Africa’s 11 official languages for approximately six million children from Grade R to Grade 9. The first delivery of workbooks to schools took place in 2011. The second delivery took place 2012.

The workbook project aims to assist teachers and learners directly in the classroom. Specific objectives include the provision of worksheets, activities to reinforce language and literacy skills, helping teachers monitor student performance, the provision of easy-to-use lesson plans and assisting teachers to focus on the skills that learners should be acquiring at each grade level as outlined in the curriculum. The additional provision of textbooks in Grades 10 to 12 aims to provide students with adequate resources that reinforce language and literacy skills.

In 2012, the Department of Basic Education commissioned ACER, with support from UNICEF, to undertake an independent formative evaluation to inform further development of the workbooks and textbooks project. The evaluation focused on the effectiveness and utilisation of the workbooks in relation to curriculum objectives, outcomes and coverage.

In order to gain a sense of how the intervention is working in South Africa’s 24 000 primary and secondary schools, the ACER evaluation addressed a representative sample of schools to investigate the ways in which workbooks were being used in the classroom and at home, and assessed the extent to which the workbooks have the characteristics of quality workbooks.

In order to gain a more detailed and richer understanding of workbook and textbook utilisation, ACER collaborated with the South African research group, Ask Afrika, to conduct three case studies. The case studies used teacher interviews, parent focus groups and student focus groups to identify and compare expectations, strengths, benefits, challenges and perceived impact of the workbooks.

ACER’s final report included recommendations for adjustments to the workbook intervention for future editions. The logic of the workbook intervention is that through the ongoing
development of adequate, engaging workbooks and textbooks, the South African government will accelerate progress towards Education for All in terms of both access and quality of education.

Evaluation of the Zimbabwe Education Transition Fund Program

Major challenges surround the provision of quality education for primary school children in Zimbabwe. According to UNICEF, demographic and health survey statistics indicate that the nation’s rural and poor citizens are substantially overrepresented in drop-out rates and repetition rates.

ACER is working with UNICEF to evaluate the impact of the Education Transition Fund (ETF) program in Zimbabwe. The ETF program is a multi-donor sector-wide education intervention.

The theory behind the ETF program intervention is that the provision of essential material resources and support for the systems and structures that provide education will result in increased access to quality education for all Zimbabwean children. The measure of quality used in ACER’s evaluation of the ETF is the extent of improvement in students’ learning outcomes in the early years of schooling.

ACER is working with the Zimbabwe Schools Examinations Council to establish and implement the UNICEF-funded Zimbabwe Early Learning Assessment (ZELA). The project seeks to improve Zimbabwe’s system of student learning assessment by introducing early-grade learning assessments in numeracy and establishing a national data collection related to student background characteristics, teaching resources, and funding and facilities. It also aims to support and enhance national capacity to review, strengthen and reorientate the current system of student assessment in Zimbabwe.

The program commenced in 2012 with the assessment of a representative sample of approximately 15,000 Grade 3 students in almost 500 schools in order to establish a baseline against which to measure for improvement.

Two further assessment cycles, in 2013 and 2014, will provide feedback about changes in the system in order to inform ETF program interventions. The final evaluation study will take place in 2015 and will determine whether the ETF program has had the desired effects on children, their caregivers, schools and the education sector in general.

Review of social norms and equity in education

The Social Norms and Equity in Education review is primarily concerned with the complex interplay between societal expectations and equity in education. Education is often held up as a mechanism able to challenge and redress prejudicial
social norms and student equity, and to undertake case studies in Nepal, Liberia, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Ethiopia. The review and case studies looked at how social norms can reinforce exclusion and disparities and, conversely, how they can have a positive impact on inclusion and equity.

The study aims to challenge prejudicial social norms, by identifying effective UNICEF programs that have been proven to successfully address cultural practices affecting education outcomes, and by recommending strategies that enhance social norms that promote inclusion in education. ACER is designing a program strategy that will highlight good practice and areas for improvement, and provide suggestions on how lessons and strategies can be applied and adapted in a variety of settings.

The review and case studies include an examination of socioeconomic and sociopolitical aspects of social norms and shed light on the predominant set of values, beliefs, rituals, and institutional procedures and relations that operate systematically and consistently within the education context – and within society more broadly – to the benefit of certain persons and groups, and at the expense of others.

ACER presented the preliminary findings of the study at UNICEF’s headquarters in New York in late 2012. The recommended strategies will inform UNICEF’s policies and frameworks, and will help eliminate disparity in education and enhance support for education for marginalised groups who endure multiple social and educational inequalities.

Future priorities
In the interests of building the capacities of all, the focus on access, quality and equity in education is likely to remain at the centre of the development agenda in Africa. As African nations continue to work towards educational quality and equity, the need for data to inform educational decision making increases. ACER will continue to work in the region, in line with its organisational mission to improve learning across the life span.

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Literacy and the most marginalised children

Researchers, practitioners and policy makers interested in the field of inclusive education gathered at a roundtable meeting to discuss synergies across the Australian and international development education policy arenas regarding literacy interventions for the most marginalised children. Megan Robinson reports.

Megan Robinson is a journalist at the Australian Council for Educational Research.
ACER hosted the literacy roundtable in conjunction with children's development organisation PLAN Australia at the State Library of Victoria in September.

Themes from the roundtable included literacy acquisition and mother tongue instruction, cultural diversity and pedagogy, teacher and teaching quality, and student voice.

Deputy Executive Dean of the College of Education at the University of South Africa, Professor Veronica McKay, delivered the opening address, presenting on the South African Department of Basic Education's workbook development project that currently provides 'lesson-a-day' learning materials in all 11 official languages for approximately six million children from Grade R to Grade 9.

Professor McKay explained that South Africa has achieved a number of the indicators attached to Millennium Development Goals 2 and 3, regarding universal education and gender equality in education, and is now addressing the issue of quality. The workbooks are designed to address the low levels of learner performance in a range of national and international student achievement tests. The conceptualisation of the workbook packages are based on the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa which seeks to enhance the status and development of the 11 official languages in South Africa, through the use of an additive bilingualism model.

The workbooks are designed to be as colourful and vibrant as possible so that children are excited to open and read the books. Similarly, all of the workbooks include activities in the back on separate pages, such as finger puppets and stickers.

'With really poor children, one of the teachers said to me that when the books arrive it's like Christmas because they know they are going to get fun things to do,' said Professor McKay.

In another presentation, Academic Director of the International Projects Group at the University of the Sunshine Coast, Professor Merv Hyde, discussed research from Indonesian Papua. Professor Hyde discussed how diversity can be embraced and supported within the education system, using his research in Indonesian Papua as a case study. The study drew a representative sample across the remote and diverse Indonesian province, and identified the social and cultural patterns of young school children and their communities. Classroom observations were conducted within schools to gain a further insight into the pedagogical approaches commonly used within the province.

Professor Hyde then discussed a four-year teacher enrichment program, funded by AusAID for 100 senior teachers and principals in Indonesian Papua. The program saw Indonesian Papua's position on a national ranking of teacher competence rise to ninth out of the 33 Indonesian provinces from its previous position of 31st.

The roundtable was an opportunity to activate shared learnings and insights across the international and domestic domains. In other case studies shared during the roundtable:

- Dr Adrian Beavis from ACER presented the findings of an evaluation of a teacher quality improvement program in Bangladesh that surveyed 100,000 teachers and conducted classroom observations across the country seeking to evaluate the extent to which teachers understand and use interactive teaching.

- Dr Paul Molyneux from the University of Melbourne discussed the benefits and challenges of bilingual education programs operating in Victorian schools, with a focus on an English-Karen language program at a school in Melbourne's outer-western suburbs. His research clearly articulates the centrality of student voice, identity and belonging in culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Australia.

- Trish Bremner from the Catholic Education Office of Melbourne shared her experiences as a literacy project officer in Australia’s Kimberley region. Her research evaluated an accelerated literacy program aimed at increasing Aboriginal students' abilities in Standard Australian English.

- Katherine Fell from PLAN Australia described a PLAN Australia project that created picture story books using local knowledge to introduce text-based literacy to isolated communities in the Philippines.

- Joanne Webber from international development organisation CBM gave a presentation about the need for a human rights approach to inclusive education in order to support those marginalised by disability. She advocated a ‘twin-track’ approach to disability inclusion whereby learners are empowered in their own capacities at the same time as the school removes barriers to inclusion.

The roundtable continued a conversation that began at the AusAID-sponsored Australian National University and Save the Children Forum in March 2012 on ‘Aid Effectiveness, Education and Inclusion.’ One of the themes that emerged from that forum was the need to consider the synergies between issues that face education policy workers in Australia and issues that face education policy workers in the aid sector. This theme was articulated by David Howes in his ‘Education and development: a modest proposal for a TEPID network’ post on the Development Policy Blog.

The roundtable 'Literacy and the most marginalised children: A dialogue on Australian and international experience, hosted by ACER with PLAN Australia, was held at the State Library of Victoria on Tuesday 11 September 2012. Podcasts, videos and slides from the roundtable are available at http://www.acer.edu.au/international/news/literacy-and-the-most-marginalized-children-presentations.
Current international projects

Analytical and capacity development in Indonesia

The Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and the European Union (EU) have funded the Analytical and Capacity Development Partnership (ACDP) in Indonesia. Oversight of the program rests with the Asian Development Bank (ADB). ACDP aims to contribute to Indonesia’s medium term development policies and strategies to reduce poverty, achieve education for all and reach the education-related Millennium Development Goals, and improve its regional and global economic competitiveness. ACDP also aims to promote policy dialogue and institutional reform across the education sector. A consortium including ACER is one of the partners selected by ACDP to work on projects that will be tendered under this facility. ACER’s consortium includes Cambridge Education, Hong Kong Institute of Education, SMERU Research Institute, ANU Indonesia Project, Universitas Negeri Sebelas Maret and Institut Agama Islam Sunan Ampel. ACER is currently leading the ACDP Study on Teacher Absenteeism. The study will provide nationally representative information on the rates and determinants of teacher absenteeism in Indonesian primary and junior secondary schools. It will also contribute to the formulation and implementation of effective policies, strategies, and financing.

Solomon Islands consultancy for AusAID

AusAID has engaged ACER to work with the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development of
policies. The recommendations provided by ACER are already under implementation by NESU. ACER has also been requested to carry out item analysis of student responses for a pilot sample of the revised Solomon Islands Standardised Tests for Years 4 and 6.

Process review for national assessment program in Chile

The United Nations Development Program, Chile, has commissioned ACER for the evaluation of processes and products related to the building of instruments, field operations and data processing of the national Sistema de Medición de la Calidad de la Educación (Education Quality Measurement System or SIMCE) tests. The proposed evaluation, among other things, will:

- review all relevant technical aspects related to instrument construction, field operations and data processing/analysis of the current SIMCE program
- highlight potential issues or risks with current practices, and
- recommend improvements to those areas where any issues have been identified.

ACER staff will visit SIMCE teams in Santiago, Chile, to understand existing systems and processes. The evaluation for each of the areas will be informed by a review of relevant documents, including sample items, conceptual framework documents and manuals or technical documents, as well as interviews with SIMCE project staff.

Quality Assurance for the Bangladesh national assessment system

ACER has won a second project with the World Bank in Bangladesh to provide quality assurance consultancy services for the Bangladesh National Student Assessment (NSA) for both Primary and Secondary Education. The aim of this project is to ensure that Bangladesh learning assessment programs produce valid, high-quality assessment materials, analysis and reports. ACER is providing intensive technical assistance to the NSA team comprised of personnel from the Department of Primary Education, the National Assessment Cell and the National Curriculum and Textbook Board, the agencies within Bangladesh that have joint responsibility for the design and delivery of the national assessment program in Grades 3 and 5. Similar assistance will be provided to the Monitoring and Evaluation Wing in the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education in the Bangladesh Ministry of Education. The Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education has responsibility for the implementation of learning assessments in secondary education. Staff from the ACER India office are leading this project.

Post-secondary success and the International Baccalaureate

The International Baccalaureate (IB), a non-profit educational foundation, offers international education programs to more than one million students in 144 countries. There are 98 IB world schools in India, 85 of which offer the Diploma Program (DP), equivalent to Grade 12 in India and accepted by the Association of Indian Universities as an entry qualification to all universities. ACER will be undertaking a research study to explore and document the enrolment patterns, persistence and performance of IB DP students who undertake undergraduate studies in India. A mixed-methods approach will be adopted involving the systematic collection of qualitative and quantitative data. ACER will collect enrolment, background and performance data from select colleges in the University of Mumbai. Based on the analysis of the data, a purposive sample of students will be identified and interviewed. Analyses will involve overall themes and sub-themes around how the IB DP prepares students for undergraduate study. ACER has started work on a feasibility study prior to the main research study to assess the availability of required data at the University of Mumbai.