



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

FORUM BASIC EDUCATION ACTION PLAN - 2001

Auckland, New Zealand

15 May 2001

Preamble

Ministers of Education of the Pacific Islands Forum met in Auckland on the 14th and 15th of May 2001, as directed by Forum Leaders in Palau in November 1999, to consider issues related to human resource development in the Forum region.

2. The meeting was chaired by the Honourable Young Vivian, Minister of Education for Niue. Ministers from Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga attended the meeting, with Australia, Nauru, Palau, Tuvalu and Vanuatu also represented. Observers from the ADB, DFID (UK), UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, SPC, SPREP and the USP were present.

3. Ministers deliberated on issues concerning the delivery of basic education to the peoples of the Pacific. Education Ministers noted that Leaders, in calling for this meeting, had asked them to consider the work of the Forum Economic Ministers in the area of human resources development, whose deliberations are set out in Annex 1.

Pacific Vision for Education

4. Ministers recognised that basic education is the fundamental building block for society. If this foundation is weak, then livelihoods are more difficult to pursue or students struggle in the higher reaches of education. Furthermore, through the teaching of health, culture, governance and other subjects basic education can engender the broader life skills that lead to social cohesion and which, when combined with an enhancing of employment opportunities, creates a higher level of personal and societal security.

5. As a first step Ministers agreed on the following as the vision and goals for Forum members:

Vision

Basic education as the fundamental building block for society should engender the broader life skills that lead to social cohesion and provide the foundations for vocational callings, higher education and life long learning. These when combined with enhanced employment opportunities create a higher level of personal and societal security and development.

Forum members recognised that development of basic education takes place in the context of commitments to the world community and meeting the new demands of the global economy, which should be balanced with the enhancement of their own distinctive Pacific values, morals, social, political, economic and cultural heritages, and reflect the Pacific's unique geographical context.

Goal

To achieve universal and equitable educational participation and achievement.
To ensure access and equity and improve quality and outcomes.

6. In adopting this Vision Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the Dakar 2000 Education for All Framework for Action goals and noted the actions being taken at the national level for the development of strategic plans. These goals are:

- Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
- Ensuring that by 2015 all children, with special emphasis on girls and children in difficult circumstances and from ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.
- Ensuring that learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes.
- Achieving a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.
- Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.
- Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence for all, so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

7. In addition Ministers committed themselves to the following specific strategies:

- The promotion of different forms of secondary and vocational education.
- To review the curricula of training centres and non-formal education programmes to match skills taught (outcomes) with the requirements for employment and livelihood in the traditional subsistence economy.
- Develop non-formal education and work-based programmes in cooperation with civil society and the private sector.
- Promote the role of civil society in providing non-formal skills training.

Where to Now?

8. Ministers noted that while basic education has been a priority in the region, this has not been turned fully into effective action. While recognising that some countries have made progress, and that the severity of problems with basic education varies significantly between countries, it appears that significant gains could be made through Forum members sharing their experiences - both successes and failures - in basic education. Ministers also noted the potential for sharing resources - particularly for inputs into basic education system - across the region.

National and Regional Development Context

9. Ministers recognised that basic education has, by its nature, very broad and strong impacts on the potential for private sector development and for the success of students pursuing higher education. But it should also be acknowledged that it is a very intensive user of manpower and financial resources. The goals set for basic education and the strategies to be followed therefore need to be well integrated with national planning policies and planning frameworks.

10. Ministers therefore agreed that there is an urgent need for each country, in line with national development goals and commitments, to improve basic educational planning, through clearly identifying desired basic educational outcomes and the learning needs of individuals and groups in that society. To this end it was further agreed that:

- (a) national planning for universal and equitable educational participation must take into account:
 - (i) the cultural, moral social, political and economic contexts of education;
 - (ii) the inter-relationships of the various levels of educational provisions and institutions.
- (b) in order to develop sound policy and planning frameworks it is essential to improve:
 - (i) data and information collection and retrieval systems to provide accurate, timely, and relevant data for informed policy decisions;
 - (ii) the capacity of national systems to develop coherent national educational plans through high level training of key personnel and strengthening of the human and material resources of planning units.
- (c) that Ministers of Education consider the setting up of a regional qualifications framework, covering basic, primary, secondary, TVET and tertiary education, benchmarked against appropriate international standards and qualifications.

Delivery and Resourcing of Basic Education

11. Ministers acknowledged that there are weaknesses in education systems as indicated by drop-out and repeater figures and in terms of basic literacy and numeracy achievements. The school curricula, despite attempts at redirecting these to vocational needs, remain largely academic and do not fully meet needs of all Pacific students. The identified weaknesses in education systems can be summarised as:

- alienation and poor performance of students, the result of:
 - the quality and number (relative to student numbers) of teachers;
 - the relevance and lack of Pacific foundation of the curriculum; and
 - poor or unresponsive departmental and school managements;
- poor resourcing of basic education, which could be overcome through:
 - re-prioritise education and national government spending;
 - improving the effectiveness of education spending; and
 - developing partnerships with CSO, NGOs and the private sector.

12. Ministers identified an urgent need to address the provision of education to deliver better quality development and education outcomes, which has implications for the whole process of education, and requires policy, planning, and resources to achieve improvements in:

- the competence and confidence of teachers with relevant skills and knowledge;
- curriculum programmes;
- the quality and relevance of teaching materials;
- teaching methods and learning styles;
- school management and culture;
- the relationships with communities and stakeholders;
- the quality of school buildings;
- assessment procedures, which should be valid and reliable;
- the participation of all stakeholders in the planning and delivery of education.

Improving Quality in Basic Education

13. In reviewing the elements affecting the quality of education, Ministers further agreed on the following measures:

- (a) Early Childhood Education (ECE)

That while continuing with collaborative efforts with NGOs, church and community organisations in providing ECE to pre-school age children, governments should address resource requirements for ECE teacher training and assess how ECE teachers can obtain appropriate status and conditions of employment.
- (b) Pre-Service Teacher Education
 - (i) That upgrading of pre-service training programmes, staffing and resources at the training institutions that is either in process or is being anticipated in most training institutions, be fully addressed as a matter of priority.

- (ii) That induction for beginning teachers is formalised involving teacher training institutions, CDUs, field staff and schools.
 - (iii) That small island states that do not have their own training institutions consider establishing teachers' centres to be used for complementary training of local trainees who are undertaking USP and other institutions' extension courses in Education as a route to a teacher qualification. A substantive position of a co-ordinator of the teachers' centre be established and filled by a qualified teacher educator who would also supervise school-based training of trainees.
- (c) In-Service Teacher Education
- (i) That existing data bases be further utilised to generate teacher supply projections where necessary and plans be implemented to train all untrained teachers as soon as practicable.
 - (ii) That upgrading programmes be considered for serving teachers who are found to be partially trained as assessed against the level of pre-service training currently being offered in most FIC primary training institutions.
 - (iii) That intensive in-service courses targeting specific needs of teachers such as proficiency in English and skills in multi-class teaching be mounted in countries where teachers need such courses.
- (d) Classroom Teaching
- In accordance with the local database on the conditions that exist in schools in terms of the quality of classrooms and physical facilities, attention be paid to upgrading those classrooms which are currently impoverished and provide a sub-standard educational environment for teaching and learning.
- (e) Community Support
- That the current initiatives in promoting the active involvement of the school community in the affairs of the school be strengthened in order to enhance the quality of facilities and teaching-learning resources.
- (f) Towards Enhancing Professionalism in Teaching
- That enhancing professionalism in teaching, whereby the profession is guided by the ethos, standards and ethics of the profession itself, be promoted as a long-term goal for enhancing teachers' capacity for managing changes and their identity as teachers.

14. Ministers acknowledged the value of using the indigenous language as the language of instruction in the early years of education.

15. Ministers noted that the development of information technology had greatly advanced the infrastructure available for the delivery of all education services, including in-service training of teachers, and urged that institutions involved in education services make greater use of this technology. However, Ministers noted that the cost of accessing this infrastructure is a serious impediment to widening its use and requested that their governments urgently implement the measures recommended by Forum Economic Ministers and Communication Ministers to address this issue.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

16. Ministers noted that a high proportion of students in the education system do not, or are unable to, aspire to carrying on their education through to formal tertiary education, and that the needs of these students were not yet adequately catered for. Having noted the Report of the Technical/Vocational Taskforce on Education and Training in the Pacific Region, Ministers agreed:

- (a) that, in accordance with existing national provisions for TVET, governments should endeavour to raise the status of TVET in national education policies;
- (b) that governments should endeavour to include TVET as a priority in their national plans;
- (c) that any work on financing of education include studies on how best to finance TVET, including through partnerships with the private sector, and associated requirements for the setting of a qualifications system; and;
- (d) that UNESCO be invited to organise a Pacific Conference on the delivery of TVET skills development programmes and the provision of new programmes, with special consideration of standards and comparability of qualifications within and between Pacific countries.

Financing Education

17. The key issue in improving the quality of basic education is its financing, an area that needs significantly more work. Ministers noted that governments have come under increasing community pressure to allocate greater public resource to improving the overall quality of basic education, and to bridge the yawning gaps between rural and urban education resources and outcomes.

18. Ministers acknowledged that with communities having to take on the bulk of the financial responsibility for preschools, this significantly disadvantages children from poorer families, despite evidence that "preschoolers" subsequently perform better academically, relative to those who did not attend pre-school. In this context Ministers also acknowledged that the current financing of education in the Pacific tends to emphasis secondary and post-secondary education at the expense of basic education.

19. These issues remain to be addressed and there is an urgent need for strong empirical research to identify the factors that are leading to good academic outcomes, and to reallocate financial resources to boost the efficiency and productivity of these factors throughout the education system. In this context the Ministers directed that the Forum Secretariat work with multilateral development institutions and other development partners to:

- (a) provide a synthesis of existing studies of financing education and analysis of other financing situations.
- (b) further examine issues in regard to recurrent cost funding, including consideration of the concept that at least 10% of education budgets should

be devoted to non-salary expenses such as books and in-service training and mechanisms through which to achieve this.

- (c) analyse the implications of current and future funding capabilities and needs in education and exploring effective option for achieving effective delivery of and improved outcomes from education in the Pacific.

20. Ministers noted that a number of problems faced by Forum Island countries could be addressed through:

- (a) improved co-ordination among donors, and between donors and stakeholders, including Forum island governments; and
- (b) finding ways to better merge and share work on the development of basic education within developed countries.

21. Ministers welcomed the focus on human resource development in the regional strategy being developed for Economic Development Funding(EDF) under the Cotonou Agreement. For programmes at the regional level Ministers requested that the Pacific ACP National Authorising Officers and the Regional Authorising Officer take into account this Forum Basic Education Action Plan

Developing Partnerships

22. Ministers recognised that although governments will continue as the major funder of basic education in order to protect access and equity, government funding alone will be insufficient to provide basic education for all. Greater participation by non-government partners can increase the level of resources available, and increase the relevance and effectiveness of the learning process.

23. Recognising that non-formal education (NFE) is an important strategy for development, Ministers agreed to address immediate NFE needs, including budgetary needs, by undertaking the following actions:

- (a) provide effective communications linkages between NFE, micro-enterprise and micro-financing initiatives.
- (b) establish a focal point (within the appropriate Ministry or department within a ministry) which has close partnerships with NFE providers.
- (c) provide an enabling environment by actively co-ordinating NFE initiatives.
- (d) develop clear and robust national policy on NFE.
- (e) support training at national and regional levels for NFE key personnel.
- (f) ensure effective evaluation and monitoring of NFE programmes.

24. In recognition of the partnership with civil society organisations (CSOs) and the private sector already in place in all Forum Island Countries in the provision and delivery of basic education, and to enhance the achievement of national, regional and international commitments, Ministers directed the Forum Secretariat, in association with other regional organisations and UN agencies, to document and quantify the contribution of civil society in the provision and delivery of basic education with the view to developing model enabling government/CSO partnership policies.

Other Issues

Gender and Equity Issues

25. Ministers noted that a key issue is equitable participation and achievement, including for both girls and boys, those from rural and urban areas and other who are disadvantaged in current system delivery. The commitments made under the Dakar 2001 Education for All Framework for Action were also noted and to further these Ministers agreed:

- (a) Recognising and building on existing initiatives, and in fulfilment of existing commitments to the Pacific Platform for Action, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Education for All(EFA) and the World Social Summit, to encourage their governments to undertake the following actions:
 - (i) at the national level undertake gender analysis of education access and quality and use the findings to support education policy revision and to ensure allocation of resources in support of gender equal education;
 - (ii) collaborate with Ministers for Finance and Economics to support gender analysis of budget processes in order to highlight ways in which government budgets can more effectively support sustainable and equitable education and HRD;
 - (iii) encourage teacher training institutions to utilise existing regional and national services that are providing gender awareness training and data collection training;
 - (iv) direct vocational and technical training institutions to provide data on enrolment and completion rates for men and women to government on an annual basis and encourage them to develop institutional gender policies in line with existing constitutional mandates and government commitments to gender equality; and
 - (v) review rules and regulations about treatment of students who become pregnant while in school and those with children to ensure they are not discriminated against under existing law.
- (b) Governments should consider other issues of equity, for example, access, socio-economic and variability as between rural and urban areas.
- (c) Direct the Forum Secretariat to undertake the following actions in promoting equitable education policies:
 - (i) work with other regional and international agencies to develop quantitative and qualitative indicators and data categories to monitor equality in education.
 - (ii) devise strategies to include these indicators and categories in existing and new program activities such as household surveys and censuses across the region.

Teaching of Governance and Civics

26. Ministers emphasised the importance of encouraging children – as future adults – to participate fully in their societies, to which end basic education should address human rights, governance, the enhancement of Pacific heritages and participation in the global community. The curriculum should also encompass safety and wellbeing, including drug use and STD.

27. While recognising that concepts of governance can be reinforced in formal basic education through traditional curricula, such as history and social studies, Ministers agreed that ensuring that curricula, teacher training and resources cover the relevant material would be a valuable adjunct to the work already undertaken by civil society. In this regard Ministers agreed that:

- (a) Education for governance needs widespread support to be effective and for the formal sector requires explicit government recognition. In this respect it is suggested that education for governance be incorporated into national educational development plans as a key policy for HRD and that the component activities be catered for and supported in the national education budget.
- (b) National efforts in education for governance be extended to the wider community, through non formal education, and to assist in this:
 - (i) That a first phase of advocacy and awareness programs be undertaken with key stakeholders in education to build partnerships, networking and linkages aimed at promoting basic education for good governance.
 - (ii) That formal and non formal providers of basic education be represented on national curriculum advisory bodies to provide advice on social science and the means for incorporating a governance focus in the content and delivery processes.
- (c) The lack of information on which to build good curricula and resource materials has been noted and suggests:
 - (i) That agencies such as UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF and USP be encouraged to set up web pages containing basic source material on education for governance.
 - (ii) That the Forum Secretariat or the USP establish a collection of printed source material on educating for good governance.
 - (iii) That a training component on case writing be integrated into CSO capacity building programs so as to encourage the documentation of field experiences and practices relating to education for good governance.
 - (iv) That a directory of expertise on basic education for good governance be compiled for purposes of strengthening networks and collaboration.

Conclusions

28. Ministers agreed that education is the foundation for the process of economic and social development, and that a mechanism is required to ensure that the Pacific Vision and Strategies for Basic Education are actively pursued. Consequently Ministers recommend to Leaders that they meet on a regular basis.

29. Ministers requested that the Secretariat be mandated to facilitate the arrangements to bring about the implementation of the Forum Basic Education Action Plan.

FORUM ECONOMIC MINISTERS

Apia, Samoa

July 1999

Decision on Human Resource Development

26. In our first two meetings, Economic Ministers focussed on the urgent need to improve governance, rebalance the public sector and attract investment. Nonetheless, we have recognised that there is a need to ensure that priorities are set such that economic and social development and our other strategic objectives will be effectively targeted. One such universal objective is the development of human resources in support of sustainable economic development. This requires, in turn, a refocusing of formal and informal education activities to better support the private sectors' needs through widening employment opportunities.

27. Accordingly, we have reviewed the current status and situation of both formal and informal education throughout the region and have considered priorities for human resource development that best meet the regions' strategic development objectives. We agree that:

- (i) high priority be given to education in national development planning and budgeting;
- (ii) increased emphasis is required on the foundation of training and education at the level of basic formal education.

28. We also consider that continuing efforts are required to bolster human resource development efforts and to this end direct the Secretariat to identify and to work with Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) and other relevant agencies:

- (i) to undertake further research in the delivery of basic level education in Forum countries and define the scope for involving the private sector (including civil society and non-government organisations) in the delivery of formal and non-formal education;
- (ii) to assist with the development of national human resource development and education strategic planning;

29. We recommend that Leaders consider the convening of an ad hoc meeting of Forum Ministers of Education and that this meeting consider the results of the work that we have directed to be undertaken in the area of human resource development.



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

FORUM BASIC EDUCATION ACTION PLAN – 2002 REVIEW

Suva, Fiji

12 December 2002

Preamble

Ministers of Education of the Pacific Islands Forum met in Suva on 11 and 12 December 2002, to consider issues related to implementation and enhancement of the Forum Basic Education Action Plan 2001.

2. The meeting was chaired by the Honourable Ro Teimumu Kepa, Minister of Education for Fiji. Ministers from Cook Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu attended the meeting, with Australia, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati and Palau also represented. Observers from New Caledonia, the Commonwealth of Learning, UN ESCAP-EPOC, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, the World Bank, South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment, Secretariat of the Pacific Community and the USP were present.

3. Ministers welcomed this opportunity to review implementation of the Forum Basic Education Plan, and to consider the conclusions of a number of papers prepared in the process of its implementation.

Review of Implementation of the Forum Basic Education Action Plan

4. Ministers reviewed the Forum Basic Education Action Plan and noted the steps taken for its implementation and the importance in this respect of the proposed programme for funding under the European Union's 9th EDF Pacific Regional Indicative Programme.

5. In respect of the Human Resource Development Programme for funding under the 9th EDF Ministers agreed that:

- (a) further work to revise and finalise the proposed programme, including optimisation of benefits to, and control by, member countries, be undertaken by the CROP Human Resource Development Working Group, including within this process:
 - (i) an opportunity for member country education officials to comment on the programme design, by the end of January 2003;
 - (ii) the CROP HRD Working Group to revise the programme design, taking into account country comments, for submission by the end

- of February 2003 to education Ministers and officials for their clearance;
- (iii) the programme design to be finalised for submission to the European Union by the end of March 2003;
- (b) that a sub-committee comprising the Ministers of Education of Fiji (Chair), Samoa, Kiribati and Papua New Guinea review country priorities and then the revised programme design prior to its submission to member countries in February 2003; and
 - (c) that UNESCO, UNICEF and PATVET should be more fully involved in the design and implementation of the Programme given their experience and expertise.

Education for All

6. Ministers welcomed the report by UNESCO on progress in implementing Education for All in the Pacific, noting that all Forum island countries had completed their EFA Plans at the end of 2001, and requesting that development partners give greater emphasis to supporting implementation.

Basic Education Finance in Pacific Forum Island Countries

7. Ministers recalled from their first meeting the importance placed on addressing issues concerning the financing of education. They welcomed the paper on this topic and noted the strategies presented for their consideration, especially in the context of external economic pressures on countries and the rationalising of the size of the public sector and political instability, which have reduced some national education budgets.

8. Ministers agreed that they direct their officials to use the paper's `funding framework and guidelines to review finance issues for purposes of annual budgeting and medium term and long term education sector planning. In addition they agreed that:

- (a) development partners be requested to support regional workshops and training to assist with financial reviews
- (b) the Forum Secretariat be directed to use national reviews for further regional assessments and upgrade of the regional review paper on financing education.

Early Childhood Care and Education in Forum Island Countries

9. Ministers recognised that high quality ECCE programmes can benefit countries by promoting intelligence of young children, increasing the efficiency of primary and secondary education, contributing to future productivity and income, reducing costs of health and other public services, reducing gender inequities and increasing female participation in the labour force.

10. Acknowledging that integrated ECCE programmes may be the single most effective intervention for helping children, families, communities, and nations break the cycle of poverty, Ministers agreed that they will undertake country reviews of national policies on early childhood care and education using the guidelines set out in Annex 1.

Basic Education for Children and Youth With Disabilities

11. Ministers recognised that the education of children and youth with disabilities remains one of the most serious challenges facing Governments in the Pacific region. Noting that education is a basic human right and that all children, including children with disabilities, have a right to education, and that the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons has been extended for another decade (2003-2012), Ministers:

- (a) agreed to address the issue of access to education for children with disabilities, with a view to increasing the number of such children attending school and, within the context of each countries' situation and capacity and finance available, aim for a target of 75% of children with disabilities able to complete a full course of primary school by 2010;
- (b) to assist in, and as part of, addressing this, agreed that national legislation, strategies, policies and plans for education should include specific targeting of those with disabilities, in the ways suggested in the issues paper (paragraph 44);
- (c) directed the Forum Secretariat, in collaboration with other regional organisations through the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific, to initiate and review regional training and curriculum development for the training of Special Needs teachers with the view to making recommendations on strengthening regional teacher training opportunities;
- (d) directed the Forum Secretariat in collaboration with other regional organisations, Asian Development Bank, World Bank, Japan and other donors, to explore the possibility of a regional programme to develop capacity that will provide inclusive education for children with disabilities in Pacific countries, the sharing of regional expertise, and provide examples of good practice.

Pacific Association Of Technical and Vocational Training (PATVET)

12. Ministers welcomed the formation of a regional association of service suppliers for technical and vocational training, and agreed:

- (a) to recognise the Pacific Association of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (PATVET) as having a key contribution to make in reducing poverty in our countries;
- (b) to the establishment of a working committee to set up policy and procedures leading toward regional acceptance of qualifications and academic awards throughout the Pacific region, including Australia and New Zealand; and

- (c) that PATVET be invited to participate in the CROP Human Resources Development Working Group.

Next Meeting

- 13. Ministers recommend to Forum that it agree that Education Ministers convene their third meeting in May 2004.

Guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education

- (a) Clarifying government roles and responsibilities for ECCE programmes
- (b) Undertaking a leading role in the coordination of development partnership assistance in order to create sustainable support and ensure follow-through of development plans.
- (c) Developing national plans of action on ECCE that identify the priorities and specific areas of development to include the following:
 - Appointing a national ECCE Coordinator and Area Advisors to provide advisory services, monitor development of ECCE programmes, and liaise between communities, PSAs, and governments
 - Prioritise curriculum development and implementation in their national education development plans
 - Undertake an analysis of teacher remuneration costs in order to inform governments' future discussions for the financial assistance of teachers' salaries
 - Prioritise the clarification of roles and responsibilities of providing teacher education and training in ECCE policy guidelines
 - Conduct an analysis of trained and untrained teacher needs in order to inform teacher education plans
 - Develop a consistent, ongoing programme of professional education utilising national and/or regional tertiary institutions
 - Initiate the collection of data in order to monitor ECCE programme operations and inform future plans for upgrading of ECCE services.
 - Develop policies on facilities, toilets, safe drinking water and educational material and resources for licensing and monitoring purposes



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

FORUM BASIC EDUCATION ACTION PLAN – 2004 REVIEW

Apia, Samoa
29 January 2004

Preamble

Ministers of Education of the Pacific Islands Forum met in Apia, Samoa, on 28 and 29 January 2004, alongside the UNESCO Education Ministers meeting, to consider issues related to implementation and enhancement of the Forum Basic Education Action Plan 2001.

2. The meeting was chaired by the Honourable Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, Minister of Education for Samoa, with the Honourable Marian Hobbs, Associate Minister of Foreign Affairs (ODA) and Education for New Zealand, serving as Vice-Chair. Also in attendance were Ministers from Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Palau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, together with representatives of Australia, Fiji, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and Solomon Islands. Observers comprised representatives of New Caledonia, Tokelau, UNESCO, the World Bank, the Commonwealth of Learning, the South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment, the University of the South Pacific and the European Union.

3. Ministers thanked UNESCO for its role in convening and supporting the meeting. They welcomed this opportunity to review the Forum Basic Education Action Plan and to consider the conclusions of a number of papers with a bearing on various facets of its implementation.

Implementation of the Forum Basic Education Action Plan.

4. Ministers reviewed the Forum Basic Education Action Plan and noted the steps taken for its implementation. In particular, they noted progress made with the Human Resource Development Programme, through the Pacific Regional Initiative for the Development of (basic) Education (PRIDE) funded by the European Union under its 9th EDF and by NZAID. In considering a proposal for a biennial stocktake, Ministers noted that this should not in itself detract from implementation, and that work on qualifications should not disrupt the delivery of education.

5. Ministers agreed to:

- (a) note progress on implementation of the Forum Basic Education Action Plan, especially through the inception of the PRIDE project;

- (b) initiate a biennial stocktake of progress in implementation of the Forum Basic Education Action Plan at the national and regional levels; and
- (c) approve the further development of a register of qualifications, to be managed and coordinated by the Forum Secretariat.

The Role of Assessment in Improving Quality in Education

6. Ministers noted that standards based assessment founded on defined learning outcomes needs to be introduced at the school level as well as nationally and that each country should develop an assessment framework, in line with its curriculum framework. Such a strategy should emphasise the role of assessment as one of enhancing teaching and learning.

7. Ministers agreed to consider developing national assessment frameworks in line with the national curriculum frameworks.

Review of Pre-University Courses in the Pacific

8. Ministers recalled previous discussion on the issue of pre-university courses at the December 2003 USP Council Meeting and the 2003 SPBEA annual meeting. They noted, further, that the USP Foundation courses were subject to a review, the outcomes of which were to be reported to the May 2004 meeting of the USP Council, and that the USP had accepted the South Pacific 7th Form Certificate, subject to setting specific course requirements.

Language and Cultures in the Pacific Region: Issues, Practices and Alternatives

9. Ministers recalled from their first meeting the importance placed on addressing issues concerning language and culture in the Pacific region. They:

- (a) noted the contents of and suggestions in the paper provided by the USP concerning the inclusion of indigenous language and culture in Pacific education;
- (b) agreed to consider adopting national language policies as part of the education planning process; and
- (c) requested PRIDE to hold a follow-up regional meeting on language policy and practice for senior education officials.

Case study on ICT: People Friendly Network in Solomon Islands

10. Ministers heard of the People First Network, an innovative approach to connectivity for remote, rural and underprivileged communities in Solomon Islands and how it has been applied to deliver education to remote island communities. They noted the utility of the technology and the immediate benefits to students and facilitators. Ministers called on their governments to more actively implement the Pacific Regional ICT Policy and Plan.

Other Issues

11. The World Bank announced that it will be funding and running research for a review of human development in health, education, and social protection. There will be formal presentations at ministerial meetings and workshops to discuss outcomes.

Next Meeting

12. Ministers agreed to reactivate the sub-committee established in Suva in 2002, with the inclusion of FSM, to monitor regional activities, including PRIDE, on their behalf.

13. Ministers recommend to Forum that it agree that Education Ministers convene their fourth meeting in May 2005.

PIFS

Apia, Samoa

29 January 2004



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

FORUM BASIC EDUCATION ACTION PLAN – 2005 REVIEW

Apia, Samoa
23-24 May 2005

Preamble

Ministers of Education of the Pacific Islands Forum met at the University of the South Pacific's Alafua Campus, Apia, Samoa, on 23 and 24 May 2005, to consider issues related to implementation and enhancement of the Forum Basic Education Action Plan 2001.

2. The meeting was chaired by the Honourable Teima Onorio, Minister of Education, Youth and Sports and Vice President of Kiribati, with the Honourable Michael Laimo, Minister of Education for Papua New Guinea serving as Vice-Chair. Also in attendance were the Prime Minister from the Cook Islands, and Ministers from Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, together with representatives of Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and Tonga. Observers comprised representatives of New Caledonia, Tokelau, the Commonwealth of Learning, the South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment, the University of the South Pacific, the National University of Samoa, the Pacific Association of Technical and Vocational Education and Training, UNESCO, UNICEF, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, the European Union and JICA.

Opening

3. The Deputy Secretary General of the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat, Mr Iosefa Maiava, welcomed participants to the meeting, noting that it was the fourth meeting of Forum education ministers and that there was good progress to report on regarding implementation of the Forum Basic Education Action Plan.

4. The Minister of Education for Samoa, Honourable Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, welcomed participants to the meeting on behalf of the Government of Samoa. She noted that progress has been made since the first Ministerial meeting and requested that all countries take ownership of PRIDE.

Keynote address

5. Sir John Daniel, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), presented the keynote address. Sir John acknowledged the positive input of Pacific membership of the board of COL, in particular the Honourable Fiame Mata'afa. He noted that development equated with people expanding the freedoms that people enjoy and that technology can potentially contribute greatly to this process. He advanced the notion of 'TVET for All', which could particularly benefit those who have not had the advantage of completing an

education. Sir John outlined the work of COL in the Pacific as well as new initiatives such as the Virtual University for Small States and work in health and literacy and livelihoods. He further noted that PATVET is a powerful network to encourage networking and sharing of resources.

Review of the Implementation of the Forum Basic Education Action Plan

6. Ministers reviewed the Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP) and noted the steps taken for its implementation at both national and regional levels. It was noted that most elements of the FBEAP are contained in national education systems although there is substantial variation in access to information communication technology throughout the region. Areas where member governments could increase their involvement include early childhood education and education for children with special needs.

7. At the regional level, it was noted that while the main vehicle for implementing the FBEAP is the PRIDE project, initiatives have been taken in several other areas including disability and special education; TVET, language policy and the regional qualifications register.

8. Ministers agreed to:

- a. Note the progress on the implementation of the FBEAP nationally and regionally, especially the PRIDE Project;
- b. Note the results of stocktake report on the implementation of the FBEAP at a national level;
- c. Note the capacity of the FBEAP to act as a powerful vehicle for inspiring collaborative efforts to identify, document and apply innovative Pacific responses to the challenge of ensuring that basic education serves as a critical element in building equity in education for development;
- d. Agree that the FBEAP be highlighted in all relevant discussions on social issues undertaken around the region;
- e. Further endorse the current initiatives underway to develop teacher education courses in Special Needs Education at the University of the South Pacific.

Review of the Implementation of the Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of Basic Education (PRIDE) Project

9. Ministers reviewed the progress on PRIDE, noting its substantial achievements since the last Education Ministers' meeting.

10. Ministers reiterated that the FBEAP was the principal policy in education for the region and that PRIDE was the major vehicle for implementing this policy.

11. Ministers noted with concern the slow progress in the development and submission of sub-projects and especially of the release of national sub-project funds and acknowledged that countries will need to be more proactive in the submission of national sub-projects for funding assistance.

12. Ministers agreed to:
 - a. Note the progress of PRIDE;
 - b. Endorse the benchmarks for education strategic plans;
 - c. Note that support for TVET could be provided through PRIDE.

The Pacific Plan

13. Ministers heard a presentation on the draft Pacific Plan that is currently under development, noting in particular how education relates to the overall economic and social development of the individual country and the region.

14. Ministers noted that the education sector is ahead of the Pacific Plan with regards to sectoral policy and planning as is highlighted by the Forum Basic Education Action Plan.

15. Ministers expressed the view that education should be given greater prominence in the Pacific Plan and should not just be seen as a prerequisite to achieving other areas of the Plan. It was recommended that the FBEAP become an integral part of the Pacific Plan. It was noted that education is increasingly seen as a tradable commodity, which is regretted.

Implementing TVET

16. Ministers noted the TVET activities currently underway in Fiji and the Solomon Islands, in particular the development of TVET policy in the Solomon Islands.

The Pacific Association of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (PATVET)

17. In 2002, the Ministers welcomed the formation of PATVET and agreed to recognise PATVET as having a key contribution to make in reducing poverty in our countries.

18. PATVET reported to Ministers in 2004 and again in 2005, proposing recommendations that emanated from a regional workshop in TVET.

19. Ministers agreed to:
 - a. Note the progress achieved in moving the TVET agenda forward at both the national and regional level in the Pacific to date;
 - b. Acknowledge the lead role by PATVET in moving the TVET agenda forward;
 - c. Acknowledge the commitment by a large number of national, regional and international partners to work with PATVET to achieve the goals set by the Education Ministers in the FBEAP in relation to TVET;
 - d. Note that while there has been some progress in TVET in some countries since the launch of the FBEAP 2001, it is recognised that additional financial resources for TVET are still needed;

- e. Champion the role, status and development of TVET at the national level in Pacific Island countries and help mobilise resources to enhance the wider understanding and acceptance of TVET in the region;
- f. Endorse the planned development of a regional Inventory of TVET institutions in the Pacific in 2005;
- g. Endorse the planned development of the regional Qualifications Register after the completion of the Inventory of TVET institutions, and subsequently the regional Qualifications Framework;
- h. Strongly urging the SPC to accommodate the request to host the PATVET Secretariat;
- i. Confirm the importance of TVET in the context of the FBEAP and agreed to encourage greater support for TVET through regional programmes including PRIDE, SPC, and the Forum Secretariat among others.

Entrepreneurship Education

20. The Forum Basic Education Action Plan refers to the need to enhance employment opportunities and entrepreneurial education is seen as a part of this process. Ministers heard that entrepreneurial education has the potential to enhance job creation, thus alleviating the region-wide problem of youth unemployment.

21. Ministers noted the need for integration of entrepreneurship education into the overall education curriculum.

22. Ministers:

- a. Agreed that at the regional level:
 - o Further research be undertaken in order to progress the introduction of EE into schools in FICs;
 - o The Forum Secretariat seek and develop a regional resource base for EE that can provide technical assistance to Members particularly through ILO, PRIDE and COL, among others. This could include information sharing mechanisms such as a website as well as training for teachers.
- b. Noted that at the national level, countries could:
 - o Develop policy, curriculum and related teaching materials on the basis of locally conducted research, with regional assistance where required;
 - o Develop meaningful partnerships between Ministries of Education and the private sector;
 - o Seek assistance from other regional and international agencies in developing and strengthening EE;
 - o Conduct further research by local researchers in order to progress the introduction of EE into schools.

UNESCO Skills Development Project

23. Ministers heard a presentation on the regional project that encourages unemployed young people to develop indigenous skills to earn livelihoods.

Pre-University Courses

24. Ministers expressed concern that the USP had not accepted several students who had passed the South Pacific Form Seven Examination, whereas those who had sat the USP's Foundation course appeared to gain easier access to the university. There is frustration over this issue as it has been ongoing for some time and has not been resolved.

25. Ministers recommended that the Forum Secretariat commission an independent body to conduct an independent benchmarking exercise to resolve the issue of the relative standard of both examinations and their grading systems.

Pacific Protocol for Teacher Recruitment

26. The issue of a possible protocol for teacher recruitment was raised as smaller FICs will continue to need to recruit teachers from within the region. It was noted that the Commonwealth has recently developed such a protocol. A Pacific protocol could be based on this, but should be more relevant to the needs of the region. Such a protocol would provide some measure of protection for teachers who are recruited within the region. While many teachers are recruited under bilateral arrangements, such a protocol could provide a check-list of areas to be covered.

27. Ministers requested the Forum Secretariat to prepare a draft protocol for the next Forum Education Ministers meeting.

Other Issues

28. UNESCO briefed Ministers on the International Decade on Education for Sustainable Development.

29. UNICEF briefed Ministers on its Life Skills Programme for Primary and Secondary Schools.

30. The Forum Secretariat, on behalf of the Asian Development Bank, briefed Ministers on the ADB's proposed regional study on skills development. Ministers:

- a. Endorsed the proposed ADB regional study on skills development;
- b. Agreed that any projects arising out of the study be supported in the form of grants from the ADB and other development partners.

Next Meeting

31. Ministers agreed that Education Ministers convene their fifth meeting in October 2006.

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
Apia, Samoa
24 May 2005



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

FORUM EDUCATION MINISTERS MEETING

Nadi, Fiji
26-27 September 2006

FORUM BASIC EDUCATION ACTION PLAN – 2006 REVIEW

Preamble

Ministers of Education of the Pacific Islands Forum met at the Tanoa International Hotel, Nadi, Fiji, on 26 and 27 September 2006 to consider issues related to the implementation and enhancement of the 2001 Forum Basic Education Action Plan [FBEAP] and to deliberate on some key issues on Education for Sustainable Development in the Pacific.

2. The meeting was chaired by the Honourable Parekura Horomia, Minister of Maori Affairs and Associate Minister of Education of New Zealand, with the Honourable Va'aiga Tukuitonga, Minister of Education for Niue serving as Vice-Chair. Also in attendance were Ministers from Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa; Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, together with representatives of Australia, Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Observers comprised representatives of Tokelau, the World Bank, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth of Learning, Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL), the South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment, the University of the South Pacific, the University of Fiji, the PRIDE Project, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, World Health Organisation, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and the Australian Sports Commission.

Opening

3. The Opening Address was delivered by His Excellency Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi, Vice President of Fiji. His Excellency noted that in the Pacific where distances are vast and resources limited, it makes good economic, social and political sense for neighbours to cooperate in areas of mutual interest, which is why the Forum Basic Education Action Plan and the PRIDE project were developed. He further noted the provision of education to as wide a section of the population as possible and at acceptable standards remain continuing challenges.

4. His Excellency highlighted that education is perhaps the most critical aspect of national and regional development because it relates to the enhancement of the capacities of our human resources. However, how they are moulded and prepared for the workforce in economies at the mercy of global forces beyond our control is critical. If we are to survive both as a region and as individual States, our educational infrastructure must have the flexibility to respond to changing circumstances. At the same time, identity and culture must not be overlooked.

5. His Excellency further noted that while human rights governance and gender have become incorporated in the education agenda together with a focus on technical, special and inclusive education, he recommended adding a comprehensive element on sex education with particular emphasis on HIV and AIDS. This needed to be dealt with openly and honestly otherwise we may have an entire generation of young Pacific Islanders lost to us.

6. His Excellency stressed the eventual success of the FBEAP depends on the commitment and resolve of Forum members. The Secretariat will only achieve the level of harmonisation and integration that its Governments are prepared to allow. It will be necessary that we cooperate more closely in order to create economies of scale and the critical mass to be able to be more effective in the fields which reflect our collective strengths. He concluded by stating that he was optimistic about the prospects for the FBEAP and its implementation because our fates are inextricably interwoven for better or worse.

7. The Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Mr Greg Urwin, welcomed participants to the meeting, noting that it was the fifth meeting of Forum education ministers and that there was good progress to report on regarding implementation of the Forum Basic Education Action Plan. He noted that FBEAP and PRIDE have been cited as “good practice” and other sectors have shown an interest in emulating this model for development. Both the Action Plan and PRIDE are noted in the Pacific Plan as models.

8. The Secretary General stated that the Forum Secretariat is very happy to be able to play its part in creating an environment where many stakeholders are able to report on their work in education in the region and was pleased that new players are entering the region.

Implementation of the Forum Basic Education Action Plan

9. Ministers reviewed the Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP) and noted the regional initiatives that have been on-going and recently implemented and suggestions for further actions for consideration.

10. At the regional level, it was noted that while the main vehicle for implementing the FBEAP is the PRIDE project there is a need to ensure that the implementation of regional FBEAP activities is undertaken in close collaboration and consultation amongst all key stakeholders in the area of Human Resource Development in the region. In this way, duplication of activities is avoided and the promotion of the Leaders’ vision of regionalism is facilitated and fostered.

11. Ministers were informed that the link between the FBEAP and PRIDE should continue to be highlighted when discussing either project. This will ensure wider promotion and dissemination of knowledge of both projects and promote a regional perspective on education. Ministers:

- a Noted the progress on the implementation of the FBEAP at a regional level, especially the PRIDE Project;

- b Requested a comprehensive national stocktake be presented at the next Forum Education Ministers' Meeting; to be undertaken collaboratively with the Education For All (EFA) Mid –Decade review and that this be brought to the attention of Pacific Forum Leaders;
- c Requested the Forum Secretariat to progress work on Civics Education;
- d Noted the draft Pacific protocol on Teacher Recruitment to develop appropriate and ethical codes of conduct and to consider adopting it at the national level where appropriate;
- e Noted progress on the ADB Regional Skills Development Study;
- f Noted progress on the Pacific Qualifications Register and thanked AusAID for its offer to fund the initial scoping phase for this initiative; and
- g Noted the results of the report on Pre-university Qualifications; but further noted that concerns surrounding English language entry requirements to the University of the South Pacific remain an outstanding issue for some member countries and requested further discussion among key stakeholders on this issue.

Review of the Implementation of the Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of Basic Education (PRIDE) Project

12. Ministers reviewed the progress on PRIDE, and expressed their appreciation for assistance provided to their countries and pledged their on-going support for PRIDE. The Chair noted the substantial support for PRIDE as well as challenges faced by the project. Ministers:

- a. Noted the progress of PRIDE.
- b. Agreed to continue support for the PRIDE Project

Mid-Term Evaluation of the Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of Basic Education (PRIDE) Project

13. Ministers were presented with a summary of the final draft report of the Mid-term Evaluation (MTE) of PRIDE Project that was recently undertaken by Consultants commissioned by NZAID. The MTE is based on data gathered from the majority of stakeholders through direct consultation, telephone conversations and a questionnaire. Thirteen out of fifteen countries participated in the MTE. A comprehensive analysis of documents was also undertaken to support the evaluation.

14. Ministers were informed that the MTE team has made a series of recommendations that they believe will assist the PRIDE Project. The recommendations propose strategies that should be taken to improve outcomes as well as a number of additional actions that should ensure increased efficiency. Ministers:

- a. Noted the final Draft of the Mid-term Evaluation Report of the PRIDE Project.
- b. Noted the recommendations proposed in the report
- c. Endorsed the major actions that need to be undertaken by the PRIDE Secretariat to improve Project outcomes

Proposal on a Pacific Programme for the Fast Track Initiative for Education For All

15. Minister heard a presentation from the World Bank outlining a proposal for the introduction of the Fast Track Initiative for Education for All in the Pacific. The Ministers noted that the proposed grant-based programme highlighted two objectives:

- To accelerate progress in each of the region's countries towards the MDG of universal completion of a quality primary education by 2015.
- To facilitate the optimal use of the resources available for the development of primary education in Pacific region.

16. Ministers were informed of the extent to which Pacific Island countries are progressing towards meeting the Millenium Development Goal relating to universal primary education; information on the Fast Track Initiative (FTI); an explanation of why the World Bank were proposing that the PRIDE Project be the vehicle to facilitate the participation of Pacific island countries in the FTI; and information on how this proposal would be funded.

17. The World Bank stressed that it would not be financing PRIDE but would add value to PRIDE's activities through technical assistance to countries especially in strategic planning, financial planning and monitoring and evaluation. The World Bank stressed that it would not duplicate the work of other agencies in the region but would enhance current initiatives in the region. Ministers:

- a. Endorsed the proposal for the World Bank and its partner donors to explore how to establish the FTI in Pacific region via an association with the PRIDE project and its partners.

Education for Sustainable Development in the Pacific

18. Ministers noted that the 1987 report of the World Commission on Environment and Development defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". Ministers noted in particular that Pacific island countries joined their global counterparts in pledging commitment to the Decade at the Mauritius meeting of Small Island States in January 2005.

19. Ministers heard the overview presented by the Forum Secretariat on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in the Pacific which summarized three initiatives in the Pacific for ESD. Ministers noted how the region could benefit from a common and coordinated approach.

20. Ministers noted the presentation by UNESCO which provided recommendations for a regional basis for collaboration and cooperation to achieve the goals of ESD and the Pacific Education for Sustainable Development Framework which was included as a consultative document.

21. Ministers, in using the Pacific Plan as the overarching context for achieving Forum Leaders vision for the Pacific:

- a) endorsed the Pacific ESD Framework, coordinated by UNESCO, for collaboration and partnership to promote ESD initiatives in the region;
- b) agreed to use the Pacific ESD Framework, and other regional frameworks and action plans as the basis for completing a Pacific Regional Action Plan to guide ESD in Forum member countries; and
- c) agreed to use the combined CROP Human Resource Development (HRD) and Sustainable Development (SD) Working Group mechanism to take this initiative forward

Education Initiatives under the Pacific Plan

22. Ministers heard a proposal on a partnership between UNESCO, UNICEF and SPBEA on harmonising education approaches and coordinating support for basic education under the Pacific Plan and within the context of the FBEAP. Ministers were requested to consider a proposal to develop regional benchmarks in literacy, numeracy and life-skills. Ministers:

- a. adopted the proposed regional benchmarks for literacy, numeracy and life-skills;
- b. agreed that the regional benchmarks be used as the basis for monitoring the quality of education at the country and regional levels;
- c. endorsed national household literacy, numeracy and life skills surveys for 15+ year olds out of schools; and
- d. agreed that SPBEA, UNESCO, UNICEF, and PRIDE collaborate to carry out this monitoring work at the national and regional levels.

23. Ministers were also briefed by the Australian Sports Commission on the Australian Sports Outreach Programme. Ministers:

- a. noted the presentation by the Australian Sports Commission.

Report from the Ministers Retreat

24. Ministers had a wide-ranging discussion on PRIDE, especially noting concerns on the sustainability of the project. Ministers discussed the Fast Track Initiative proposed by the World Bank and sought further clarification from the World Bank. They agreed that it could provide useful opportunities for the region.

25. Ministers requested that the outcomes of this meeting including those of reports on FBEAP and PRIDE be submitted to Pacific Islands Forum Leaders at their forthcoming meeting and brought to the attention of development partners, particularly regarding harmonisation issues at the country level.

26. Following the address of the Vice President of Fiji who urged Ministers to address the issue of sex education, Ministers requested the Forum Secretariat to work collaboratively with UNFPA and other partners to support curriculum development on

sexual and reproductive health to address the issues of Sexually Transmitted Infections, HIV and AIDS and teenage pregnancy.

27. Given the potential benefits of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to education, Ministers support the work of UNESCO, PRIDE, the Commonwealth of Learning and other partners, in furthering development of work in ICT in education policy and planning and in strengthening the implementation of the Regional Digital Strategy. Ministers further request the Forum Secretariat to give priority to the furtherance of ICT needs for education in the context of the Regional Digital Strategy.

Other Issues

Health Promoting Schools

28. WHO outlined for the Ministers the concept of Health Promoting Schools, describing what is currently being undertaken in the Pacific and recommending opportunities for strengthening the partnership between education and health to enhance learning through improved livelihoods of children in the Pacific region. WHO highlighted that a recent regional workshop on 'Implementation of Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health' in the Pacific recommended that Health Promoting School and school based strategies be raised as an agenda item for the 2006 Pacific Ministers of Education Meeting. Realizing that health is an essential element of growth, learning and education, Ministers:

- a. endorsed the adoption of the 'Health Promoting Schools' concept and process for implementation in their respective countries as a mechanism to strengthen the inextricable link between health and education which would demonstrate an appreciation for the immense opportunity that exists for the Health and Education ministries to work together towards their common goal for generations of youth who are healthy and productive.
- b. Agreed that in collaboration with PRIDE, "Health Promoting School" be a workshop theme for discussion in the next Ministers of Education Meeting with the World Health Organisation as facilitator.
- c. Endorsed that health be incorporated as an additional benchmark indicator for Education Strategic Plans for countries in the Pacific through the PRIDE project.
- d. Agreed that respective Ministry of Education in countries consistently work in close collaboration and partnership with Ministry of Health to effect their national strategy and vice versa.
- e. Agreed that continued advocacy is required for closer collaboration between education and health at country level as well as at regional level (WHO, SPC, and the PRIDE project as well as other regional initiatives). Donors, governments and NGOS be encouraged to work towards operationalizing regional and country-level cooperation

Violence against Children

29. UNICEF briefed Ministers on the United Nations Secretary General's Global Study on Violence against Children. Ministers agreed that this was a serious issue in the region that needs to be addressed and noted the contents of the presentation.

Pacific Resources for Education and Learning

30. Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) briefed Ministers' on its activities in the region and expressed an interest in extending its work to Forum Island Countries that are not members of PREL.

Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers

31. The Commonwealth Secretariat briefed the Ministers on the upcoming 16th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers. Ministers were invited to attend the upcoming Conference in South Africa.

Next Meeting

32. Ministers agreed that Education Ministers convene their sixth meeting in the second half of 2007.

33. The Chair thanked all concerned with the organisation of the meeting.

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
Nadi, Fiji
27 September 2006



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

FORUM EDUCATION MINISTERS MEETING

*Auckland, New Zealand
26-28 November 2007*

FORUM BASIC EDUCATION ACTION PLAN – 2007 REVIEW

Preamble

Ministers of Education of the Pacific Islands Forum met at the Waipuna Hotel and Conference Centre, Mt. Wellington, **Auckland, New Zealand, on 27 and 28 November 2007** to consider issues related to the implementation and enhancement of the 2001 Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP) and to deliberate on the meeting theme on enhancing educational outcomes for Pacific children and youth.

2. The meeting was chaired by the Honourable Chris Carter, Minister of Education, New Zealand and the Associate Minister of Education of New Zealand, the Honourable Parekura Horomia. In attendance were the Prime Minister and Minister of Education from Cook Islands and Ministers from Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Tonga. Also in attendance were representatives from Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Observers comprised representatives of Tokelau, Timor Leste, South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment, University of the South Pacific, PRIDE Project, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Oceania Football Confederation, Commonwealth of Learning, European Union, NZAID, UNESCO Office for the Pacific States, UNESCO Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding, New Zealand National Commission for UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank.

Traditional Welcome and Opening

3. The Official Welcome and Opening address was delivered by the New Zealand Associate Minister of Education, the Honourable Parekura Horomia at the University of Auckland's Fale Pasifika on the evening of Monday 26 November 2007.

Opening session

4. Honourable Horomia welcomed participants and thanked them for attending the official opening dinner held the previous night, 26 November 2007 and for the warm welcome during the Forum Education Ministers' Meeting in Fiji in 2006. Honourable Horomia also thanked the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, UNESCO, World Bank and WHO for supporting education initiatives in the Pacific region.

5. Honourable Chris Carter, as Chair, acknowledged the presence of the Prime Minister from the Cook Islands. Honourable Carter also acknowledged commitment of countries in providing quality education. He reiterated that education is the key to opportunity and that there is a real challenge for lifting education standards in the region.

6. The Deputy Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Mr Feleti Teo, welcomed participants to the meeting, noting that it was the sixth meeting of Forum Education ministers. He thanked the New Zealand Government for hosting the official opening dinner and the 2007 Forum Education Ministers Meeting (FEEdMM) and for logistical support for the convening of the 2007 meeting

7. The Deputy Secretary General stated that the Forum Secretariat is very happy to be able to play its part in creating an environment where many stakeholders are able to report on their work in education in the region and was pleased with the depth of partnership and collaboration amongst key education stakeholders in the region in the planning and implementation of key regional education initiatives including Inclusive Education and Early Childhood Education.

8. He highlighted that this may be the last Ministerial meeting before PRIDE Project is integrated into Institute of Education (IOE) at the University of the South Pacific (USP) so this meeting was important to consider the post PRIDE period. The Deputy Secretary General also noted that given that this was the seventh year since FBEAP was formulated, it was timely that Ministers consider the consolidation of the Plan.

9. The Deputy Secretary General noted the large number of observers and thanked them for their participation and support highlighting that most of the observers are development partners involved in the implementation of the FBEAP initiatives. He further stressed that while support for education at national and regional levels was important and welcomed, regional organisations must handle with sensitivity the implementation of regional projects to ensure they add value to national initiatives.

Implementation of the Forum Basic Education Action Plan

10. Ministers reviewed the Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP) and noted the regional initiatives that have been on-going and recently implemented as well as suggestions for further actions for consideration. Ministers also noted initiatives currently being implemented at the national level.

11. Ministers noted that the FBEAP was now seven years in existence and that it was timely to undertake a thorough review of the contents of the Plan and its relevance to the educational priorities expressed by member countries.

12. Ministers further noted the FBEAP initiatives currently being implemented by key partners and stakeholders. Ministers raised their concern that the ADB study focused on identifying skills for economic development and lacked focus on

developing traditional skills that would be important for students returning to their communities.

13. Ministers:

- a. noted the contents of the Regional Skills Development report and directed the Forum Secretariat to continue to seek funding for the proposed regional projects that would incorporate traditional skills as an integral component of overall skills development;
- b. noted progress on the development of the Regional Qualifications Register;
- c. noted the paper on non-formal education (PIFS(07)FEDMA.04(c)) and requested UNESCO, regional organisations and other stakeholders to continue their work in non-formal education, working towards the development of a regional approach to non-formal education;
- d. considered and endorsed the implementation of the outcomes of the regional workshop on early childhood care and education, specifically:
 - i. that each Government work with stakeholders to develop its national policy for early childhood care and education with age parameters to be set nationally;
 - ii. that a national advisory body is established to advise government on early childhood matters;
 - iii. that a regional council is established to coordinate professional and community issues relating to early childhood in the Pacific;
 - iv. that early childhood curriculum, teaching pedagogies, assessment strategies, resources and teacher education are grounded in local cultures and languages; and
 - v. that data for 0-8 year olds in both licensed and unlicensed centres are included in the education management information system.
- e. considered and endorsed the implementation of the outcomes of the regional workshop on Inclusive Education, specifically to:
 - i. note the progress for Inclusive Education at the regional and national level and supporting the current paradigm shift from the charity and medical models to social and rights-based models of disability;
 - ii. note the actions required in the Biwako Millennium Framework (BMF) and the BMF plus 5 as a basis of advancing Inclusive Education at the policy level of Forum Island Countries;
 - iii. endorse an integrated approach to Inclusive Education that recognises all children's right to education; and
 - viii. endorse the use of the UNESCO toolkit on Inclusive Education as the basis for promoting the philosophies of Inclusive Education in Forum Island Countries.
- f. noted the results of stocktake report on the implementation of the FBEAP at a national level;
- g. noted the gaps identified at the national level in the provision and achievement of quality education; and
- h. endorsed a full evaluation of the FBEAP in 2008 that would result in a revised and consolidated action plan; including the Education Ministerial meeting process; and options for an appropriate regional support mechanism for education.

Review of the Implementation of the Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of Basic Education (PRIDE) Project

14. Ministers reviewed the progress on PRIDE, and expressed their appreciation for assistance provided to their countries. Ministers also noted that this may be the last ministerial meeting before the PRIDE Project is finally integrated into USP's Institute of Education.

15. Ministers raised their concerns on the absence of a PRIDE Director and whether this had affected the provision of oversight to the projects direction. Ministers also raised their concerns on whether an exit strategy existed and on the long term sustainability of the project.

16. Ministers acknowledged the funding period for the PRIDE project was drawing to a close and there must be a concerted effort to seeking additional funding for the continuation of the PRIDE project. Ministers expressed concern that the PRIDE project would be integrated into IOE.

17. Ministers acknowledged the important achievements of the PRIDE project in the implementation of the Forum Basic Education Action Plan and the National Educational Plans of the countries. In view of the project's imminent closure at the end of 2009, Ministers tasked the Forum Secretariat to seek funding opportunities for the continuation of the project.

18. Ministers:

- c. noted the progress of PRIDE;
- d. agreed to continue to provide support for the PRIDE Project; and
- e. agreed that the Forum Secretariat seek additional funds for the continuation of the PRIDE Project beyond its current funding period.

Education For All Mid-Decade Assessment

19. Minister heard a presentation from UNESCO on the need to monitor progress towards achieving education goals (national, regional and global) and to identify gaps in achieving the identified goals. Ministers were informed that the lack of appropriate data from countries had prevented the development of a thorough analysis of the situation with education initiatives and status of education in the region.

20. Considering the importance of data in evidence-based planning and policy formulation, Ministers acknowledged the urgent need to collect data that are urgently needed as the basis for policy review / development as well as planning and resource allocation.

21. Ministers further acknowledged that countries need to ensure that appropriate staff are available for capacity development as it would go a long way in ensuring sustainability in the area of data collection, data analysis / interpretation and reporting on status of education in each country.

22. Ministers:

- d. agreed to give priority to the collection and management of the relevant education data at country level, given the importance of evidence-based data for planning and policy formulation and revision;
- e. endorsed the efforts of development agencies (UNESCO, UNICEF, PRIDE, SPBEA, etc) to continue working with countries to ensure the process of monitoring the education initiatives (FBEAP, EFA, MDG) are successfully completed; and
- f. endorsed the efforts of development and donor agencies to continue to work with countries improve the quality of the education management information system (EMIS) so that appropriate data are available when needed.

UNESCO National Education Strategies

23. Ministers heard a presentation on the UNESCO National Education Support Strategy (UNESS) which is part of UNESCO's reform in response to the UN Reform and "Delivering as One". Ministers were informed that UNESS is the official planning tool for UNESCO and defines its in-country support strategy which is a complete turn around from previous strategy that was thematic and regionally focused.

24. Ministers were informed that this approach involved responding to national priorities rather than focusing on UNESCO's mandate and includes the analysis and interpretation of existing information complemented with discussion and consultations with stakeholders. The Ministers noted that the UNESS document becomes UNESCO's planning document for its long term (6years) and short term (2years) support strategy for each country.

Sector Wide Approaches in Pacific Education

25. Ministers heard a presentation by the Ministry of Education, Women and Culture (MEWAC), Tonga, Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD), Solomon Islands, and Education Team, New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID) on Sector Wide Approaches (SWAps) in Pacific education.

26. Ministers were informed that the SWAp approach to education sector development is providing a useful framework for partnership between donors and education stakeholders. The SWAp approach also brings about effectiveness in donor harmonisation, lower transaction costs for governments and education departments, improved monitoring and evaluation of education initiatives as well as achievement of key education development goals nationally, regionally and globally.

27. Ministers noted that there is no blueprint for a SWAp. Every country has to find its own way in developing the most ideal SWAp. When there is sufficient consultation with all stakeholders, the SWAp will be effectively supported and implemented. As such, SWAp is a participatory process and the active involvement from all stakeholders in dynamic sector wide dialogue is crucially important.

28. Ministers were informed of several challenges in the adoption of the SWAp approach. The challenges include the management and coordination of SWAp, the

need for quality database management and monitoring that would support information based decision making, better coordination of all stakeholders and committed ownership and strong leadership for the SWAp approach.

29. Ministers noted that while many issues and challenges remain, there is emerging evidence of some of the benefits of SWAp especially in relation to strengthening local capacity building in strategic planning and policy making, enhanced awareness of the need for national ownership and coordination of education development, strong national leadership and to overall aid effectiveness.

30. Ministers noted the presentation on Sector Wide Approaches, in particular the benefits and challenges to recipient countries.

Draft Action Plan on Education for Sustainable Development

31. Ministers recalled their agreement in 2006 to use the Pacific Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Framework, and other regional frameworks and action plans as the basis for completing a Pacific Regional Action Plan to guide ESD in Forum member countries. Ministers also recalled their agreement to use the combined CROP Human Resource Development (HRD) and Sustainable Development (SD) Working Group mechanism to take this initiative forward.

32. Ministers were provided with an update from the University of the South Pacific on the preparation of the *Education for Sustainable Development Pacific Regional Action Plan*. Ministers were informed that the joint Working Groups agreed that the *Pacific Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development* (PACE-SD) with its mandate within USP would coordinate the development of the Pacific Regional Action Plan for ESD. The joint Working Groups also agreed that a Technical Working Group (TWG) would work with PACE to develop the draft Action Plan in consultation with countries, involving Ministries and Department of Education, Department of Environment, Planning and a cross section of other stakeholders.

33. Ministers were informed that the Action Plan is a living document which provides a common platform for all regional organisations and development partners in the promotion of ESD in the region and is the result of this broad consultation.

34. Ministers noted that while the development of the Action Plan was straightforward, the most difficult phase would be the implementation of the Plan given the number of initiatives that need to be addressed. In addition, coordination of all activities would be a major challenge. Ministers acknowledged that support from countries on the implementation of the Action Plan was crucial.

35. Ministers:

- d) noted the progress made by the ESD Technical Working group;
- e) considered and endorsed the Draft ESD Pacific Regional Action Plan; and
- f) noted the need to strategise the implementation of the Action Plan

The Islands of Wisdom (and Learning); the Role of ICT and Distance Mode in Education Reform in Solomon Islands: the Case of the Distance Learning Centres Project

36. Ministers recalled their support in 2006 of the work of UNESCO, PRIDE, the Commonwealth of Learning and other partners, in furthering development of work in ICT in education policy and planning and in strengthening the implementation of the Regional Digital Strategy.

37. Ministers heard a presentation from Mr David Leeming, a Consultant from the Solomon Islands on the Distance Learning Centers Project in Solomon Islands funded by the European Union. Mr Leeming outlined the use of technology in enhancing learning opportunities particularly in remote communities.

38. Ministers appreciated the opportunity to further develop ICT in schools with the use of the one laptop per child (OLPC) computers; however, further noting that the use of computers must be complemented by appropriate educational input and trained personnel to make computers valuable. Ministers highlighted the importance of protecting students against the negative impacts of internet access particularly to pornography.

39. Ministers acknowledged the need to be mindful of the associated costs of this initiative and appealed for the support of donors for the development of ICT in the education system.

40. Ministers:

- a. agreed that at the regional level to request regional and international agencies to work closely with countries to:
 - i. share and replicate best practice and models for harnessing information and communications technology to improve access to quality education, especially for the remote and rural communities, especially through application of the distance learning mode;
 - ii. consider introducing models for bridging the rural-urban digital divide in the region, using emerging and lower cost wireless, solar-powered and 'eco-friendly' last-mile solutions, with new VSAT technologies for infrastructure, and low cost laptop technology such as OLCP;
 - iii. develop and share repositories of pertinent locally relevant information and education materials; and
 - iv. design interventions involving ICT for educational use in remote areas to encourage synergy and partnerships that multiply the development impacts.
- b. noted that at the national level, countries could consider:
 - i. making electronic resources more available to schools;
 - ii. introducing simple first steps in creating an eLearning content capacity into curriculum development in the region;
 - iii. providing wider access to ICT training at all levels, leading to overall capacity development and awareness about ICT and education; and

- iv. encouraging coordination with national regulatory authorities to create national ICT policies that enable, rather than restrict, the full potential of modern Internet-based technologies and regional opportunities in improving connectivity for their education systems.

Report from the Ministers Retreat

41. Ministers noted in their retreat that all countries are concerned with providing educational options to suit the needs of all students' abilities and interests as well as the needs of their communities. There was an expressed need to incorporate traditional skills into education, especially into TVET. This has been implemented in some countries but such programmes require special facilities which can be costly.

42. There was a proposal for more intra-regional TVET opportunities, especially as small island countries cannot provide the training needs of all. Such training does exist to a limited extent and should be enhanced when the Australia Pacific Technical College is fully underway.

43. Linked to discussions on TVET was discussion on the parity and equivalence of qualifications across the region and the Regional Qualifications Register that will tie all national qualifications mechanisms together.

44. Ministers reiterated their support for the FBEAP and noted that it should be an ongoing living document that can be revised and consolidated to match changing needs. It should include the priorities of Education For All and the Millennium Development Goals. It was further noted that there should be more advocacy for the FBEAP.

45. Countries expressed their appreciation of PRIDE, especially for sub-projects assist to fulfil aspects of education sector plans and national sustainable development strategies. There was, however, concern expressed that in the past year there has been poor communications between the project and countries. Concern was also expressed at the integration of the project into USP's Institute of Education, especially by countries that are not members of USP. Ministers expressed concern on the relative lack of information provided on PRIDE, especially financial information. There was a strong feeling that PRIDE should continue if donor funding were available, preferably as a stand-alone project.

Other Issues

Oceania Football Confederation

46 The Oceania Football Confederation provided the Ministers an outline of their current activities in the Pacific. Ministers noted the contents of the presentation and expressed their appreciation of the work being undertaken by the Confederation.

The Secretariat of the Pacific Community

47. The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) briefed Ministers' on the preliminary findings of its Youth Mapping Exercise and the proposed way forward to respond to the findings of the mapping exercise.

48. Ministers were informed that an important next step is the development of an integrated multi-stakeholder coordination framework for responding to the finding of the mapping.

49. Ministers:

- a. noted the progress of the Pacific Youth Mapping Exercise; and
- b. supported the planned development of an integrated multi-stakeholder framework for responding to the findings of the mapping exercise.

Teacher and Education in the Pacific Project.

50. The University of the South Pacific's Institute of Education briefed Ministers on the progress of the Teacher and Education in the Pacific Project.

51. Ministers requested that the University of the South Pacific look into the possibility of providing professional training for Principals and Deputy Principals.

Stepping up Pasifika Education from Good to Great

52. The New Zealand Ministry of Education briefed Ministers on their initiative for Stepping up Pasifika Education from Good to Great.

Next Meeting

54. Ministers agreed that Education Ministers convene their seventh meeting in March 2009 in Tonga.

55. The Chair thanked all concerned with the organisation of the meeting.

*Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
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