

PHES STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

BLENDED EVENT

21 – 23 November 2022

Outcomes Document

Introduction

1. The meeting of the Pacific Heads of Education Systems (PHES) Steering Committee (SC) was convened on 21 to 23 November 2022. The meeting was held at the Mokosoi Room at the Peninsula Hotel for the first two days and then moved to the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) on the third day. It was co-hosted by the University of the South Pacific through the PacREF Facilitating Unit (PFU) and by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The first day (21/11) of the meeting was a closed session and only for the members of the SC, while the second and third days (22-23/11) included members of the regional partners (RPs), PacREF implementing agencies (IA's) and development partners (DPs).
2. SC members in attendance were from PNG (Chair-Troika member), Solomon Islands (representing Melanesia/Larger Island States), Tuvalu (Troika member), and Federated States of Micronesia (representing Micronesia) on all three days and Niue (Troika member/Polynesia) on day 1.

Monday 21 November 2022

3. The meeting officially commenced at 9.00am with all members present in-person and virtually. These include Dr. Uke Kombra (Chair-PNG), Mr. Wayne Mendiola (FSM), Mr. Neaki Letia (Tuvalu), Dr. Franco Rodie (Solomon Islands) and Ms. Birtha Togahai (Niue).
4. The Chair welcomed everyone and thanked them for their presence, then requested Mr. Filipe Jitoko (PFU) to say a word of prayer. The Chair gave his opening remarks and welcomed the SC members again and thanking them for attending the meeting in person which is the first face to face meeting after two years due to the challenges of Covid-19. He also thanked PFU and UNESCO for organizing this face-to-face and blended meeting. He then invited the members and the co-hosts to introduce themselves.

Talanoa 1: Reconnecting and Updates

5. The Chair then requested the members to refer to agenda and for Mr. Jitoko to take them through the program. Mr. Jitoko explained the importance of the meeting where various issues will need to be discussed and an important way to network and dialogue. It is a 3-day meeting (previously held for 2 days) and PFU and UNESCO are there to provide support. He further explained that the 1st day of the meeting comprises of Talanoa Sessions for SC members in which there are guiding questions should the members choose to use. The SC has been meeting virtually for the last 2 years and 2019 was the last face-to-face meeting held at USP.

6. Mr. Jitoko also explained that Day 2 of the meeting will be on discussions around the progress of implementation of PacREF and will be attended by partners and implementing agencies. He also mentioned that Covid-19 had a huge impact on the delivery of Regional Goods (RGs) and on the PacREF program. The 3rd day of the meeting will be held at the headquarters of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) where there will be discussions on CPEM and meeting of Pacific Heads Education Systems (PHES). The launch of the Inclusive Education Review Report will also be held where the Niue Minister for Education on behalf of the IE Taskforce will officially launch the report.

Talanoa 2: PHES/SC and How We Utilize This Network and Meetings.

7. The Chair put forward the guiding questions:
- (i) *What is the most effective way for PHES to influence regional programs and activities?*
 - (ii) *How can the SC and PHES best communicate with one another and share experience and ideas?*
 - (iii) *What capacity building needs are there? (e.g. Zoom, webinar, training, etc).*
 - (iv) *How do we see ourselves coordinating and communicating?*

Discussion

8. The SC discussed:
- (i) The following brief background of the SC and PHES was provided to guide discussions with an emphasis on the need for meetings:
 - ✓ The SC meets twice per annum;
 - ✓ PHES meets every two years;
 - ✓ The SC provides oversight on behalf of PHES, the implementation of the PacREF programme and progress, consider challenges in implementation and make decisions on resolving such challenges;
 - ✓ Ensure that all countries are participating in the regional policy dialogues and program and that no one is left behind;
 - ✓ Is the regional Local Education Group for the GPE funding;
 - ✓ Provides updates and progress reports to PHES at their meetings;
 - ✓ Clears the draft Conference of Pacific Education Ministers (CPEM) agenda for presenting to PHES;
 - (ii) Communication between SC and PHES needs to be on regular basis, making use of virtual platforms, webinars and having regular meetings and assistance provided to SC members in communicating key points with the PHES members.

Decisions

9. The SC recommends:
- (i) The PHES meetings to occur annually with in-person meetings every two years and virtually in alternate year to maintain regular communication and support implementation of regional initiatives.
 - (ii) The SC's decisions on PacREF and other regional matters are regularly communicated to the PHES and that the SC meeting outcome to be ready and shared one month after the meeting.

Talanoa 3: Reviewing PacREF and Moving Forward

10. The Chair put forward the guiding questions related to the priorities as reflected in the regional goods that PacREF will deliver:

- (i) *Have countries' priorities changed?*
- (ii) *Are there emerging priorities that should be considered?*
- (iii) *Which current priorities are no longer critical?*

11. The Steering Committee discussed:

- (i) The status of PacREF implementation. That actions at country level needs a paradigm shift where countries need to align and integrate PacREF activities into national education plans and not to be perceived as standalone activities. E.g. Solomon Islands where PacREF is being integrated into their National Education Action Plan (NEAP) and is complementing what Solomon Islands already have in their national education plans such as improving quality of education, teacher quality, etc.
- (ii) That countries were ready to roll out PacREF activities until Covid-19 pandemic and they had to re-organize and re-set their priorities and PacREF implementation became delayed. Recognized the need to re-focus and learn from experiences and move forward without being overly ambitious and be within their resources, acknowledging the different contexts and capacity of each country.
- (iii) Countries' priorities identified through the Transforming Education Summit (TES) should be followed up and taken into consideration. This alignment exercise started through the PacREF MEL workshop and continuing. SC members discussed their country priorities and status of the sector plans. IAs need to work together to effectively support countries in education sector reviews, and capacity building in planning.
- (iv) Currently PacREF is perceived as IA driven, i.e. IAs come in and tell them what needs to be done and expect countries to implement.
- (v) PacREF visibility is there in countries but it is not getting the traction it needs. Ministries have very minimal knowledge of PacREF and they see it as additional work.

Decisions:

12. The SC:

- (i) Recommended PFU and IAs to adopt a coordination strategy and to support country focal points, workshop them on their roles and the programme as a whole. There is a need for improvement in the coordination between PFU with the Focal Points bearing in mind the scattered nature of the island countries.
- (ii) Suggested if PFU can develop an Annual Calendar of activities where everyone can connect and refer to. IAs need better coordination and come together under one umbrella.

13. The PFU Coordinator responded that part of PFU's workplan is to bring Focal Points together to discuss the integration of activities in national education plans and create greater awareness of PacREF activities. He agreed that a calendar of activities is important and that the second day of the meetings will provide more details on activities of IAs which countries can use to map their action plans for the year. He also mentioned the Focal Points' meeting was scheduled for this year,

but there is a delay in the release of funding from ADB, and despite that, it is still part of the workplan. Mr. Jitoko also suggested an alternative is to discuss with the IAs on possibility of back to back meeting with other activities or approach development partners for funding.

Talanoa 4: Revisiting FEEdMM, 24th PHES and Towards Planning for the Next Meeting

14. The Chair requested a brief on the outcomes from the previous FEEdMM and the plan for the next Education Ministers' meeting.
15. Mr. Filipe Jitoko explained that the 2021 FEEdMM was a virtual meeting and was well attended. The last face-to-face meeting was in 2018 in Nauru where they endorsed PacREF programme. USP and PIFS utilized their networks to convey messages regarding the meeting and through the PIFS channel, French Polynesia and New Caledonia participated for the first time. Australia and New Zealand never used to send their Ministers to FEEdMM, but they attended the 2021 meeting in which New Zealand sent their Minister for Pacific Affairs while Australian Minister participated only in the Ministerial retreat.
16. Mr. Jitoko further explained that the NZ Minister for Education will be sending out invites to CPEM meeting as host. The Steering Committee needs to discuss sub-themes to guide the round table discussion which will have the presence of the development partners, IAs, and PHES members.

Discussion on potential themes:

17. A list of potential sub-themes for CPEM based on MFAT and TES consultations in the Pacific were discussed and to identify other important sub-themes.
 - (i) Ensuring effective & efficient education systems: Education planning, policy, coordination and financing
 - (ii) Building resilient Pacific communities: Climate change adaptation and mitigation in and through education and Disaster Risk Reduction & Sustainable digital learning solutions
 - (iii) Ensuring a qualified and motivated teacher workforce: Teacher management (incl shortages) & Teacher Continuous professional Development
 - (iv) Fast tracking skills development (including vocational skills at secondary and green skills)
 - (v) Strengthening social emotional/non-cognitive skills to respond to rapidly changing contexts, labour markets
 - (vi) Inclusion & Equity
 - (vii) Strengthening regional education governance – collaborative structures at national and regional levels, sustainable regional education financing, building strong country ownership of regional education programmes
 - (viii) Maintenance and revitalization of indigenous languages; protecting and drawing on Pacific indigenous knowledge and pedagogies
18. The proposed sub-themes are relevant and have been discussed in various forums, linked to SDGs. The sub-themes should be focused to allow discussion and suggested Financing Education System should be one of the key sub-themes. Maintenance and revitalization of indigenous languages to be one of the sub-themes.
19. The previous FEEdMM theme was *Building Resilience in Pacific Education Systems*. Mr. Jitoko explained that the discussion modality at CPEM would be through roundtables and led by Ministers where background papers will be provided to guide discussions.

20. The SC decided that four main areas for discussion under which sub-themes can be categorized and further developed.

- (i) *Quality and Relevance (teachers, Indigenous language, vocational, disability, soft skills)*
- (ii) *Financing and strengthening regional education governance*
- (iii) *Access, Inclusion, and Equity*
- (iv) *Building Resilience in Pacific Communities (Climate Change and ICT)*

21. The SC queried if higher education would be part of the list of potential sub-themes. For Tuvalu, Mr. Neaki mentioned that higher education is not part of the MEYS' mandate as their mandate is only for students from ECE to Year 13.

22. Dr. Rodie (Solomon Islands) mentioned that Higher Education receive minimal assistance and little awareness and their government is struggling to finance infrastructure investments in the sector. Development partners (NZ & Australia) provided support for primary and secondary but not tertiary institutions. There are now new national universities in Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga and not just USP as the regional university. He added, there are new opportunities for post-secondary education and there is a need to invest in their quality and quality assurance mechanisms. He asked if it is the right time to discuss tertiary education and proposed that there should be a forum of representatives from higher education institutions to discuss challenges faced in the sector.

23. The Chair said that in PNG, two ministries are starting to engage with and to improve linkages with basic and tertiary education, and involve in donor coordination. PNG would like to raise a concern that CPEM needs to define how to engage with tertiary sector and that higher education ministries could be invited.

Decision:

24. The SC:

- (i) agreed that Higher education be discussed through PHES and as needed make recommendations for CPEM.

Discussion on modalities and logistics:

25. PFU explained that both meetings (PHES and CPEM) will be in blended mode. NZ government will be providing sponsorships for CPEM for countries that need assistance as part of their host obligations. MFAT, PFU, EQAP will be working on logistics and pooling together their resources for efficiency and working on contractual agreement on financing of logistics. Pre-conference communications will be going out to create awareness and reach out to a wider audience across the region and globally. Meeting venue will be the Pasifika Fale, Auckland University. Accommodations are being booked at Pullman Auckland hotel for CPEM participants and EQAP meeting will also be held at the Pullman hotel. Invites will go out in December or early Jan 2023.

26. Mr. Jitoko enquired as to how Ministers can be briefed prior to attending CPEM and hopes that the PHES members will be responsible for briefing their Ministers well prior to attending CPEM. He added that conference papers will also be provided early to provide guidance to the Ministers.

27. The Chair raised the question of ministerial statements and whether ministers are expected to deliver such statements during the roundtables? Ministers are usually pressured if they have to do so and therefore, their PS and CEOs need to prepare such statements.

Talanoa 5: Exploring New Initiatives, Funding Opportunities and AOB

28. The Chair asked if GPE will be at the CPEM meeting, to which the response was yes, and that in the previous meeting the CEO spoke via a recorded message. He added that the 8 countries that receive GPE funding should share their experiences with GPE from a recipient point of view on the current funding modality.

29. The Chair added that the GPE Multiplier funding is difficult to absorb for small countries and that practical issues should be discussed. UNESCO and UNICEF to be requested to stay ready to support countries to apply for funding.

30. Mr. Letia (Tuvalu) mentioned that they received GPE Covid-19 fund and they are also applying for funding for TULEP with support from UNICEF as grant agent and DFAT to be the coordinating agency. Their request is to be submitted before the end of 2022 and it is a long process.

31. Mr. Mendiola (FSM) said they received GPE funding of US\$17.7m to fund training institution with apprenticeship program. The funds have already been approved and is awaiting Congress to approve its release for implementation. He added that US\$10m will be used to establish the compound.

Commented [FJ1]: Wayne may be asked to clarify if this funding is from GPE or the Compact Funding from US?

32. Mr. Jitoko (PFU) said that GPE has allocated \$1m for regional capacity grant. ADB has agreed to continue as grant agent and MFAT as the coordinating agent. PFU is looking at future GPE grant funding which could be in the form of a second Systems Capacity Grant. Current GPE funding also includes PILNA.

33. The Chair said that PILNA should be extended to all countries.

Should we seek bilateral partners to ensure that their programmes include a focus on assisting countries to use PacREF regional goods?

34. The SC discussed:

- (i) Since Covid there were lots of investments, and so many private organizations approaching schools and ministries directly. What can be done to invest in regional platforms such as Waka Moana that are more cost effective?
- (ii) PacREF is a regional movement, for regional goods to be available to all and be sustainable, all countries need to invest and use regional goods and guide partners to invest in regional goods and not develop parallel goods.
- (iii) If bilateral partners such as DFAT and MFAT can be approached to link support at country level to regional goods/contextualization.
- (iv) Mr. Letia (Tuvalu) said that in their discussion with their CEO on dates for PHES, they have decided for 1-3 March 2023, in Nadi.
- (v) 2 rapporteurs were chosen to report on selected outcomes from Day 1 during Day 2 meeting.

Closing

35. The Chair thanked everyone for their participation and contribution and looking forward to the discussions over the next 2 days. The meeting adjourned at 3.50pm Fiji Time.

Tuesday 22 November 2022

Opening

36. The second day of the Steering Committee meeting officially commenced at 9.00am with all members present. The Chair requested Dr. Franco Rodie to say a word of prayer. The Chair then welcomed and thanked those who were present in person as well as those who joined virtually. The Chair informed the forum that the SC had very good discussions during the first day of the meeting and he acknowledged the presence of the development partners and PacREF IAs and he looked forward to further good discussions and continuing the momentum from the first day's meeting.
37. The SC members who were present in person on the second day were Dr. Uke Kombra (Chair-PNG), Mr. Wayne Mendiola (FSM), Mr. Neaki Letia (Tuvalu), and Dr. Franco Rodie (Solomon Islands). Ms Birtha Tongahai of Niue attended virtually. PacREF IA Fono members in attendance were: Mr. Filipe Jitoko and Ms. Anthea Southey (PFU), Ms. Anna Smeby and Ms. Gail Townsend (UNICEF), Dr. Michelle Belisle – online and Mr. Seci Waqabaca (SPC-EQAP), Dr. Aya Aoki (UNESCO) – online, Ms. Anna Seeger, and Mr. Josefa Ravuso (UNESCO), Ms. Manaini Rokovunisei (PIFS), and Dr. Seu'ula Johansson-Fua (USP-IOE), Ms. Susan Sela (USP-PTAFE). Development Partners in attendance were: Mr. Frank Thompson (DFAT); Mr. Alfred Schuster and Ms. Amy McAteer (MFAT) who attended in person, while those who joined online were Mr. Per Borjegen, Ms. Emma Rita Ramona Jimenez Nava, and Mr. Axel Searle (Asian Development Bank); Mr. Mark Rowe and Ms. Prachi Nagrath (DFAT).

Session 1: PacREF 6 Monthly Review Report

Presentation of 2022 Six-Monthly Review Report and preliminary findings from the MTR review by PFU and EQAP.

38. Mr. Filipe Jitoko presented on PFU's 6 monthly report focusing on the Level 1 of the MEL Framework. The review is conducted every 6 months, with the first conducted in 2021 and the report has been sent to the IAs and SC. The second review report was conducted for January to June 2022 and the report has been disseminated.
39. The status of the implementation of the IRP was highlighted in the report. The SC were informed that 43 activities out of the total of 65 are progressing and being implemented by the IAs which gives a 67% implementation rate. The report also stated that since the last report, the number of activities that have commenced implementation has increased from 25 to 43, a 32% increase. There are 22 activities identified in this review period that are yet to start.

40. Out of the 40 activities planned for Year 1, 33 are in progress. For year 2, there are 9 activities in progress out of the 20 that were planned. 1 activity scheduled for Year 3 is already in progress.
41. The report highlighted some of the challenges that were faced, and which impacted the implementation of the activities, with the major one being the continuous spike of Covid-19 in the region which was quite high at the beginning of 2022 and impacted on some of the modalities that the IAs had planned to implement their activities particularly, in how countries were to participate in the activities.
42. The report also provided an update on the Mid Term Review which was conducted between the week of 10 October to early November. Consultations in Fiji was done with IAs based in Fiji, the Ministry of Education, and the Development Partners. Country visits included Solomon Islands, Samoa, Kiribati, and Tonga. Preliminary feedback from the review is that PacREF is progressing well despite the many challenges faced and performing better than expected.
43. Mr. Seci Waqabaca, EQAP's PacREF Implementation Adviser made a presentation on the Level 2 Monitoring Evaluation and Learning covering the 6-months period from 1 January to 30 June 2022. The report focused on the qualitative assessment of the impact of PacREF in Pacific Education and looks at the in-depth picture of PacREF progress. The SC were updated on the important lessons, the challenges, and the learnings from the reporting period and the qualitative progress of PacREF implementation.
44. Mr. Letia of Tuvalu commented that the reports being presented talked about countries taking ownership of PacREF and he also noted that in the mid-term review 4 countries were consulted but Tuvalu was not consulted and is probably due to Covid restrictions. He urged the need for more effective communication and the need for PacREF to be more visible now with borders opened and he looks forward to opportunities for discussions on PacREF.
45. Mr. Frank Thompson (DFAT) thanked PFU and EQAP for the very informative presentations and he was pleased to hear the positive findings that have been coming out of the recent MTR and asked if there's any analysis done on gender and inclusivity in the work undertaken so far.
46. Mr. Jitoko replied that reporting does not particularly focus on gender and inclusion but that has been part of monitoring particularly in the work that EQAP is doing where gender and inclusion is part of the disaggregation of data that is collected by EQAP. UNICEF has a focused activity on Inclusive Education and disability and the Review of Inclusive Education undertaken by UNICEF and the IE Taskforce will be launched tomorrow. He also urged IAs to provide data that focus on IE and Gender.
47. Dr. Fanco Rodie thanked Mr. Jitoko for the report which was presented during the MEL workshop in Nadi. One area he is very keen on is quality of teacher training. He added that it was good to see the development of the regional framework for teacher competency standards as this was an area they are also working on supported by MFAT and DFAT.
48. Dr. Rodie also commended the PILNA results as it helps inform decisions for improvements. He also posed a question on what other areas that Solomon Islands can get support in over the next 16 years. He is interested in curriculum and assessment areas that assist in teachers' development needs.
49. The Chair thanked Dr. Rodie for his comments and for stating the importance of teacher qualification and teacher professional development which are very critical for raising students'

learning outcomes. He added that overall the SC appreciates and acknowledge the work being done by PFU and all the IAs which are progressing very well despite the challenges being faced especially Covid and other emerging issues in the region. He thanked everyone on behalf of the SC for the presentations and the progress being made under difficult circumstances over the last few years.

Decision:

50. The SC:

- (i) **agreed** that ADB and MFAT will continue to be the Grant Agenct and Coordinating Agency for the next GPE funding round.
- (ii) **proposed** that Focal Points to meet as soon as possible and for PFU to make it possible.

Session 2: PacREF Examples of Activities and Country Engagement

51. The Chair invited USP-PTAFE for their presentation.

52. Ms. Susan Sela the Director Pacific Technical and Further Education (PTAFE) at USP presented on their Bridging Pathways Program. The updates are as follows:

- (i) The program is an 8-course program of which 5 courses are compulsory. The 5 compulsory courses include 2 language courses, 2 math courses and 1 basic IT course.
- (ii) There is a selection of 3 courses which students can choose 1 course from which is relevant to their area of specialization. These are either Science, Commerce or Social Science.
- (iii) PTAFE is about to complete the program and they are well on track to complete the program after Covid as they were supposed to complete the study at the end of 2021, but they will complete it at the end of 2022, so by December 2022 all the courses will have been written.
- (iv) They are preparing course learning materials. Each subject area will have a course booklet completed with a Teacher's Guide.
- (v) The Teacher's Guide will have an assessment portfolio and sample examination questions.
- (vi) The plan for 2023 is to submit the program to the relevant schools of USP as part of its Quality Assurance process and then submitted to EQAP for accreditation.
- (vii) Afterwards they plan to visit the countries and meet with the Ministries of Education to plan an implementation program i.e., how countries want it to be delivered, the piloting, training of teachers that will implement the program and ask the teachers to identify areas where the courses that can be contextualized more to the countries' context.
- (viii) Currently, the program is general to the Pacific but for the program to be relevant to the countries it needs to be contextualized to the countries and this will part of the piloting process. From the feedback, the Program will then be revised to suit each of the countries which will then become a good that belong to the countries.

53. Mr. Sunil Singh and his team from USP's Discipline of Education (DoE) presented the activities undertaken by DoE in the past year. These include the development and review of teacher education courses especially on Inclusive Education (IE); mainstreaming IE into all teacher education programs. They have also been doing consultation with teacher training institutions on the ECE teacher education programmes they are offering to see potential areas of collaboration. They are also designing an induction and mentoring program for beginning teachers which can also be used by other teacher training institutions.

Session 3: Rethinking PacREF and Weaving into our Priorities

54. The Chair introduced the next session and requested Mr. Wayne Mendiola (FSM) to provide an overview of the SC discussions from Day 1 on PacREF.
55. Mr. Mendiola informed the meeting that the SC members discussed some key concerns linked to PacREF Phase 1, revisiting priorities, implementation, communication and coordination and suggested ways forward. Discussions and recommendations resulting from the PacREF MEL workshop which took place prior to the SC meeting were shared and discussed to inform the SC's recommendations.
56. The Chair thanked Mr. Mendiola for his updates and added that with regards to GPE funding and support, the smaller countries find it difficult to access the Multiplier funding because of their limited capacity.
57. Ms. Amy McAteer enquired if there has been any consideration to bringing in other players to the table to ensure a coordinated conversation about GPE funding.
58. Mr. Mendiola replied that countries are working with each IAs for support in accessing systems capacity grants (SCG).
59. Ms. Anna Smeby (UNICEF) thanked the SC for the feedback from Day 1 and welcomed the idea of having a calendar of activities and integrating PacREF activities into country national plans. She suggest the need to have a joint planning which should be in line with country planning cycles, and how to organize the planning process so IAs can support each country to plan and ensure these activities are reflected in their national plans.
60. Mr. Jitoko reflected on the EFA days when UNESCO as the coordinating agency brought EFA coordinators to Nadi to assist in the integration of EFA goals into national sector plans and suggest a similar activity to assist countries integrate PacREF into their sector plans.
61. Dr. Seu'ula thanked the SC for their sharing of the Day 1 discussion and said there is a need to further elaborate on ownership and to look at examples of other activities in countries that they own to provide insight to IAs on improving ownership.
62. Dr. Rodie shared what his Ministry has done with the support from GPE to draft the next cycle of their NEAP which through UNICEF, they were able to get experts who were able to review their plan and align their international and regional obligations to their national plans.
63. The Chair commented on the lack of awareness of PacREF at Ministry levels in countries and if Focal Points (FPs) or PS's are not advocating for PacREF, then Ministers will not be aware and there will be little visibility. PacREF activities need to be more coordinated and given prominence and communicated to all Focal Points in each country and there is a need to build capacity of FPs so they become key drivers in countries.
64. Mr. Jitoko (PFU) responded saying that as stated in Day 1 that part of the work plan is the gathering of the all FPs to map out their ToR and their work at country level. It was also mentioned that we need to seek funding from development partners to fund the gathering.
65. Ms. Anna Seeger (UNESCO) said that UNESCO welcomes the request to provide support to Ministries in strengthening capacities and responding to government needs, strengthening sector

plans and asked what are the areas that countries need support in and if these could be articulated.

Session 4: Moving Forward with PacREF

66. The session resumed with the presentation by World Bank (WB) on the Pacific Secondary School Program (PSSP). The presentation was to inform the SC of the work being done under the PSSP, its alignment to PacREF agenda, and to engage the SC in progressing PSSP.
67. The PSSP fits in well with the PacREF agenda and has the potential to improving quality Secondary Education in the region and provide an opportunity to share lessons learnt from within and beyond the region in progressing the SDG 4.
68. The PSSP has 4 phases of intervention, and its objective is to identify and pilot interventions that can improve educational outcomes of secondary-aged youth in the Pacific. The program is a collaboration between WB, DFAT, and EQAP and four participating countries (Tonga, Fiji, RMI and Kiribati).
69. PSSP activities have been developed in consultation with PacREF IAs to avoid duplication and to complement PacREF activities.
70. Findings from Phase 1 of the PSSP were shared with the SC focusing on how secondary-aged students in the region are doing using existing reports and data. The SC were informed that the main challenge is the high percentage of student dropouts and not completing upper secondary. The findings also included factors and drivers that contribute to student dropouts.
71. Initial stages of Phase 2 of PSSP will include new surveys to fill gaps identified from Phase 1, while next steps will involve a wider range of stakeholder consultations in each country to discuss Phase 1 and identify Phase 2 activities which will then be implemented and completed by the end of 2023.
72. Dr. Rodie commented that the presentation shared things that they would have already known and the research by WB confirms what they already know in terms of the quality of secondary education in the Pacific. Dr. Rodie also enquired if there were other findings that are different from what is already known such as the impact of Covid-19 and why is it that students are finding difficulty in literacy, maths, and science subjects.
73. Professor Satish Chand (WB) replied that Covid-19 learning losses research in Fiji is still underway. He added that students who miss out on foundational skills in the early years tend to fall behind in upper classes. Ryoko also of WB added that children also need to have a good foundation of their native language.
74. The Chair asked the WB team if they have any recommendations for the SC to which Professor Chand replied that they would need the SC's guidance in scaling up of the PSSP across the countries.

Decision:

75. The Steering Committee:
 - i) **Noted** and thanked WB team for their presentation and the work they have done to help education systems in the Pacific;
 - ii) **Noted** the recommendations by WB for which the SC will have to formalize their position.

76. Ms. Anna Seeger presented on UNESCO's work on Strengthening Non-Cognitive/21st Century Skills in the Pacific. Regional Public Good 1 involves determining a regionally identified and agreed definitions(s) of non-cognitive skills. The presentation explained what exactly non-cognitive skills are, why non-cognitive skills are needed, and their characteristics. The SC were also informed of UNESCO's proposed action in this component which is the development of a regional framework for non-cognitive/21st Century Skills together with how-to-guidance for mainstreaming into Teacher Training, Curriculum, and Assessments.
77. Dr. Rodie commented that Teachers must be able to master these skills and to be able to teach them to the students effectively. He further questioned the level of preparedness of teachers and if they are equipped to teach these skills in the classrooms.
78. Ms. Seeger replied that research shows that currently, classroom teaching is not equipping students with these skills and that PILNA results and WB data must be used to inform how intervention strategies. She added that this work must not be an added burden to the teachers, but to be incorporated within daily teaching.
79. Mr. Mendiola also commented that this is an interesting topic and needs a deep dive into it. He agreed that there is a great need to add these skills in the classrooms because it is not so much about how smart you are but the quality of character you possess. He added that it is the deterioration of cultural values that is translating into lack of discipline and bad behaviors.
80. Dr. Seu'ula also commented that Tonga has just completed their curriculum review and what came out clearly was the importance of our culture and resilience. The spirit of Tonga which is the essence of who they are is their resilience. She encouraged the importance of connecting with outside stakeholders such as church and traditional leaders and utilizing our culture and traditions to add value to our curriculum.

Discussing PacREF implementation, coordination and communication strategies

81. Discussions by the IAs and the SC members revolved around ways and mechanisms for effective coordination of PacREF activities and plans. PFU suggested for IAs to look at activities that have not started and to look at plans to change activities or ways to accommodate new priorities and maybe even review current activities and reallocate resources to more relevant and emerging priorities.
82. Ms. Anna Smeby enquired about the possibility of IAs coming together to plan the activities jointly and identify country needs on an annual basis where IAs can obtain feedback from the countries.
83. Ms. Seeger agreed that intervention needs to be demand-driven and there is a need to align PacREF activities with national plans so as to identify the gaps.
84. PFU agreed that it is a good way forward and while it is a bit more work, it is a logical step.

Wednesday 23 November 2022

Opening Session

85. The third day of the Steering Committee meeting was hosted by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) at their facilities. The meeting began with all the SC members present (4 in person and 1 online) together with the PacREF IAs and development partners. The Chair welcomed everyone and requested Dr. Franco Rodie to begin with a word of prayer. The Chair then proceeded to introduce the Deputy Secretary General (DSG) for PIFS, Dr. Filimon Manoni and expressed his gratitude to the DSG for allowing the meeting to take place at his facility and for his presence at today's meeting. The SC members and participants were then requested to introduce themselves before the DSG was invited to make his remarks.

86. In attendance on the last day were the SC members: Dr. Uke Kombra (Chair-PNG), Mr. Wayne Mendiola (FSM), Mr. Neaki Letia (Tuvalu), and Dr. Franco Rodie (Solomon Islands), while Ms. Birtha Togahai (Niue) joined virtually. PacREF IA Fono members in attendance were: Mr. Filipe Jitoko and Ms. Anthea Southey (PFU), Ms. Anna Smeby and Ms. Gail Townsend (UNICEF), Dr. Michelle Belisle and Mr. Seci Waqabaca (SPC-EQAP), Ms. Anna Seeger and Mr. Josefa Ravuso (UNESCO), Ms. Manaini Rokovunisei (PIFS), and Dr. Seu'ula Johansson-Fua (USP-IOE). Development Partners in attendance were: Mr. Frank Thompson (DFAT); Mr. Alfred Schuster and Ms. Amy McAteer (MFAT). Joining virtually were: Mr. Per Borjegen, (Asian Development Bank); Mr. Mark Rowe and Ms. Prachi Nagrath (DFAT); Dr. Aya Aoki and Ms. Kalena Segi (UNESCO).

87. PIFS Deputy Secretary General Remarks:

- (i) Welcomed everyone to PIFS and made assurance to forum members that this is their secretariat and facilities, and they are welcome to utilize the space to conduct business for the region.
- (ii) Delighted to host the meeting today and to support the work of the committee and for education in the region.
- (iii) Acknowledged that the last two years have been challenging due to Covid-19 and its impacts on the economies of the region and socio aspects of our livelihoods which we are continuing to feel to this day. The impact is multiplied as the region is vulnerable to natural disaster and threats of climate change.
- (iv) Happy to hear good news on the question of loss and damage out of COP27 thanks to our leaders and champions and climate champions and hopes there will be progress towards a financial resolution.
- (v) Thankful to all the partners for the support to continue the progress and implementation through our on-going collaboration and commitment to Education despite these challenges.
- (vi) Education is key to development in our region and a lot of work is required to ensure that future generations are well equipped with knowledge and skills as we look to implementation of the 2050 Strategy in the next 30 years.
- (vii) Thanked GPE for the support towards the implementation of PacREF and support from IAs. The Secretariat continues to highlight that education and its role in delivering on our leaders' vision through key policy areas and existing regional frameworks and commends the PFU for taking this work forward.
- (viii) Referred to leaders' decision of July 14 2022 in endorsing the 2050 Strategy which is the long-term vision of our region and commitment to working together as a region and recognizes the role of education as a strategic pathway to driving the future that we want for our children.

- (ix) PIFS remains committed to supporting the work of PacREF in achieving its objectives and goals and strengthening our systems through collective collaboration.

88. The Chair thanked the DSG for his valuable remarks which will inspire and encourage the SC members, development partners, and IAs to work towards implementing PacREF which is a mandate from the Ministers. He also introduced the agenda for the day which will be focused on two items and these are the Ministerial conference in New Zealand in 2023 and the Pacific Heads of Education Systems' meeting which will be hosted by Tuvalu.

Session 7: Conference of Pacific Education Ministers (CPEM)

The session introduced the proposed CPEM concept, themes and formats to inform the Group discussion to follow.

- 89. The chair re-introduced the agenda for the 3rd day's meeting saying it will be focused around CPEM and the 25th PHES consultation and that there will be breakout groups for detailed discussions to gather inputs for the two forums. The discussions will be led by the two host countries, New Zealand and Tuvalu.
- 90. The Chair reminded the meeting that at the 12th Forum of Education Ministers' Meeting in April 2021 that FEdMM has changed its name to CPEM which will be held in NZ in March 2023. He advised that NZ is encouraging face-to-face participation, but depends on the different countries.
- 91. Ms. McAteer and Mr. Schuster of MFAT presented on the planned format of CPEM, including opportunities for discussions and reflections among Pacific education leaders, exchange between governments, partners, youths and civil society stakeholders.
- 92. The SC agreed on the importance of ensuring inclusive events, including voices from teachers, CSO's and youths.

Session 8: 25th Consultation Meeting of the PHES

The session introduced the scope and formats of the 25th Consultation Meeting of the PHES to inform the Group discussion to follow.

- 93. Dr. Aoki of UNESCO as secretariat to PHES and Mr. Neaki of Tuvalu, hosting the upcoming PHES meeting informed the meeting of past meeting outcomes and discussions and reminded everyone of the role of PHES, including making recommendations to the CPEM.
- 94. Mr. Filipe Jitoko raised the processes involved for the clearance of the CPEM agenda which is usually cleared by PHES. The timing of PHES will be a challenge as it is 2 weeks away from CPEM which gives very little time for adjustments but need to find a way to work within that timeframe and possibly to piggyback on other forums such as UNICEF's upcoming forum on ECD.
- 95. Further discussions pertaining to the above included Ms. Anna Smeby's response that UNICEF's ECD Forum will be on the week of 20th February 2023 and exact dates yet to be confirmed, to which the Chair responded it is just before PHES. Dr. Aoki explained that this was one of the considerations for the proposed PHES dates avoiding overlaps with other meetings and considering availability of Tuvalu and Fiji governments.
- 96. Ms. Amy McAteer (MFAT) said that they would prefer to have an agenda set as early as possible to ensure all arrangements are put in place and achieve a high value meeting and conference. NZ will need to have consultations with the PHES members and other stakeholders and this will be

an opportunity to engage them in the agenda and bring it back to the SC for their sign off and awareness.

Session 9: Breakout Groups to discuss:

- (i) *Inputs towards CPEM preparation*
- (ii) *Inputs towards 25th PHES preparation*

97. Participants broke out into two groups to discuss how to prepare for CPEM and PHES by unpacking themes to be discussed and discussing the format of the conference and the PHES meeting.

Launch of PRIEF Regional Review Report

98. UNICEF launched their Pacific Regional Inclusive Education review report which commenced with keynote remarks from Mr. Setareki Macanawai the CEO for Pacific Disability Forum before the official launching by the Niue Minister for Education who is also the PRIEF Taskforce Chair.

99. The SC thanked PDF, Niue and UNICEF for putting inclusive education on the top of all our agendas.

Session 10: Reporting from Groups and Discussions

100. The two groups reconvened and presented the outcomes of their discussions on the proposed themes and format for the PHES and CPEM forums.

101. UNESCO and MFAT will work closely with PHES members and wider development partner groups to ensure alignment between the two events.

Session 11: Meeting Outcomes

102. The Chair delivered a summary of outcomes from the three days meeting prepared by UNESCO and PFU.

Closing

103. The Chair thanked everyone for their participation and contribution for making the 2nd Steering Committee meeting a success. The Chair also thanked his SC colleagues who have been in Fiji for the last 2 to 3 weeks for their commitment to PacREF and PHES. He thanked PFU for facilitating the meeting this week and during the Covid period making sure activities continue despite challenges. His appreciation was also extended to UNESCO for their support towards the meeting and in the content to ensure the meeting is a success.

104. The Chair also acknowledged the contributions of the IAs and he also thanked the development partners MFAT, DFAT, and ADB and all the other partners who have contributed to education in the region as well as regional partners USP, PIFS, and the CSO community for their support and commitment towards the greater cause in the region.

105. Dr. Aya Aoki (UNESCO) informed the meeting that NZ and UNESCO will be providing support to the two meetings and would welcome recommendations on preparation for the two meetings.

106. Ms. Amy McAteer (MFAT) added that NZ and UNESCO will discuss recommendations and then reach out to the partners.

107. Mr. Filipe Jitoko thanked the SC Chair for his strong leadership and contribution to guide the work of the IAs and PFU and they will see to it that countries align their activities to their national plans. He added that should there be any further development, the IAs will seek the SC's consensus on what needs to be taken up to PHES so there can be a meeting of the SC on the margins of the PHES. He also thanked the Chair for his guidance on CPEM themes and subthemes and is looking forward to supporting Alfred and MFAT to ensure that the themes are fully captured in the agenda.

108. In concluding, the Chair thanked everyone again for their participation and contribution and brought the meeting to a close.

The meeting ended at 3.15pm Fiji Time.