



## **INAUGURAL CONFERENCE OF PACIFIC EDUCATION MINISTERS**

**Aotea Centre, Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand**

**20 – 22 March 2023**

### **SESSION TWO: PacREF MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING REPORT**

*(PacREF (23) CPEM.05)*

*(Paper prepared by Pacific Community – Education Quality Assessment Programme)*

<b>Title/Topic</b>	<b>PacREF Monitoring Evaluation and Learning Report</b>
<b>Presenting Agency/Unit</b>	SPC/EQAP
<b>Purpose of the Brief</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To update members of the CPEM on important achievements and progress made in relation to key program deliverables and outcomes for the one and half years of implementation, and highlight key challenges and lessons learned.</li> <li>2. To share key findings and seek endorsement of the following research conducted by EQAP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis of link between ECE participation and quality with later PILNA outcome</li> <li>• In conjunction with countries, research into the underlying factors contributing to cohort survival rates, drop-out rates and re-entry rates in specific countries or contexts.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<p><b>Summary:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The PacREF endorsed through the Forum Education Minister’s Meeting (FEEdMM) in 2018 has established a new organising framework designed to raise the quality of schooling and student outcomes for the 15 Pacific Island participating countries over a 12-year period from 2018 through 2030.</li> <li>• All activities for PacREF are detailed in the Implementation Rolling Plan (IRP) with the associated PacREF Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan (MEL Plan) to keep in check, progress of activities with important lessons learned.</li> <li>• As part of the monitoring component, EQAP MEL works closely with IAs and participating countries through the MEL focal points to provide qualitative feedback regarding implementation of PacREF activities.</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress in the achievement of PacREF Outcomes</b></p> <p><i>Quality and Relevance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of ECE curricula – (underway) has started with the engagement of 15 focal points.</li> <li>• ECE Status report – (underway) first draft in place after the completion of surveys and interviews</li> <li>• Identifying and integrating non – cognitive skills (underway) consultation completed with IAs and selected countries.</li> <li>• Technical support to develop, embed and implement ECE quality standards through existing systems (completed for Vanuatu and underway in Kiribati, delayed in Tonga and Tuvalu).</li> </ul>	

### *Learning Pathways*

- Regional Inclusive Education Review – (completed) Report officially launched by the Minister of Education, Niue as Chair of the Pacific Regional Inclusive Education Taskforce during the PHES Steering Committee in November 2022.
- Strengthen TVET policy (underway). There are ongoing engagements with national stakeholders including tertiary institutions.
- Bridging programme for children in Year 10 and 12 who are ‘out of school’ (underway) close liaison with countries and putting together plans on the implementation and piloting of the programme in 2024 at USP before rolling out to other countries.
- Research in to underlying factors contributing to cohort survival rates, dropout rates and re – entry rates (completed) and findings shared in regional forums.

### *Student Outcomes and Wellbeing*

- Child Protection Policy – (advanced) being presented for endorsement within a broader Child Protection Framework.
- Development of Student Management System (underway). RMI has been identified as the third country that has developed SMS. In essence, five more countries have shown interest and have requested support for the development of SMS that includes Samoa, Solomon Is., Kiribati, Tuvalu, and Tonga.
- PILNA 2021 cycle (completed). Country reports have been released to all countries in the region.
- Lower Secondary Assessment (underway) with desk review work and regional consultations to determine the kinds of measures which would be most valued at the lower secondary level.
- Waka Moana Learning Hub (WMLH) platform (completed) provide regional literacy and numeracy teachers with online access to literacy and numeracy resources.
- Development of bilingual reading books for primary schools (underway) currently in progress in Samoa and 8 books completed for Kiribati.
- Research on the link between ECE participation with PILNA outcomes (completed)

### *Teaching Profession*

- Review/development of in-service teacher training programmes (curriculum and modalities) for ECE in line with Pacific ECE guidelines (planned) to commence in Tonga and Tuvalu.
- Pacific Regional Standard for Teachers (advanced) final draft has been endorsed at the last PHES meeting.
- Regional Leadership Standards (underway) preparatory work for the 2023 Regional Summit on Leadership Standards is in progress.

- Academic mentoring for local TVET trainers (advanced) continuous engagement with national TVET providers in the provision of academic mentoring for TVET trainers.
- Training of untrained teachers (planned) close collaboration with national teacher education institutions to design ‘fit for purpose’ programmes.
- Establishment of regional policy and planning facility (underway).

### **Factors affecting implementation.**

- Challenges included disruptions to school operations due to COVID-19, internet connectivity issues, unrealistic timelines and aspects of culture affecting the learning process, under-developed learning pathways in some countries, staff shortages, inadequate and inefficient EMIS, and assessment methodology of non-cognitive skills.
- Countries through their MEL focal points, requested for greater clarity in the coordination of PacREF particularly on the roles of PFU, implementing agencies and countries with clear guidance on how countries are to deliver on regional good<sup>1</sup> and activities under the IRP.
- Clarify who is the agency lead, the role of PacREF focal points and ensure alignment and integration between PacREF activities and national Strategic/Sector plans.
- More clarity on the roles of PacREF focal points, recognizing that this requires staff who are currently engaged on national implementation, to take on additional tasks.
- Identify ways to support Focal Points in carrying out their task, use in-country coordination mechanisms and mainstream PacREF into the same and ESPs/corporate plans.
- Strengthen role of PFU and provide capacity building and training for education systems.

### **What are we learning?**

As PacREF strived to meet some of its major milestones, there have been critical opportunities for learning and adjusting our programming and strategy along the way. PacREF has learned that:

- By pooling resources at the regional level and capitalising on an economy of scale, there is a greater potential for increased efficiencies in resourcing, systematic oversight, policy convergence and scaling.
- The PacREF has provided the opportunity for Pacific nations to amplify the voice of the region in a way that has “allowed donor discussions to happen in a Pacific way” and thereby, bringing the global agenda to the Pacific and, in turn, the Pacific to the global agenda.
- Country ownership is key as is the importance of the recognition of individual country needs in contextualizing programme activities as well as outputs. The

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<sup>1</sup> PacREF -15 regional goods and over 60 activities to be implemented by PacREF Phase 1 towards Phase 2.

PacREF Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) processes provide the opportunity for in-country stakeholders to learn from their experiences and to better identify what PacREF can do to address their needs.

- Efforts to engage countries in understanding PacREF programme and monitoring are worthwhile but will be more useful once countries can see PacREF in action more clearly and recognize that the work that they are doing themselves is also contributing to their PacREF outcomes.
- The Covid-19 experience has reinforced the need for the region to adopt and adapt effective and efficient technologies for communication and daily operations. It is possible that the response from Ministry of Education in various countries exposed some educational inequalities in the region, in terms of access to technology and connectivity for virtual learning.
- Investment in digital learning infrastructure will be key. At the national level, developing an affordable information and communications technology (ICT) network is core to building the information economy for education. At the school level, teachers must have access to the tools they need to fully realise the new opportunities that digital connectivity brings to teaching and learning.

**The Ministers are invited to note:**

- the progress of achievements of outcomes, important consideration and lessons learned through the PacREF implementation.
- way forward to overcome challenges raised and reflect on lessons learned for consequential improvement.

<b>Decision requested</b>	<p>(i) consider the challenges faced in implementing the Programme and support embedding of PacREF into national education sector plans.</p> <p>(ii) discuss the research findings from the two research presented and consider regional collaboration strategies for their implementation.</p>
<b>Minister’s Position</b>	Ministers <b>noted</b> with appreciation the report.

*The paper is prepared by the Secretariat of the Pacific – Education Quality and Assessment Programme (SPC-EQAP).*