



*PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT*

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**FORUM EDUCATION MINISTERS MEETING**

Suva, Fiji

11 - 12 December 2002

**SESSION 6 BACKGROUND PAPER**

**AGENDA ITEM 6(d):  
ISSUES IN BASIC EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH  
WITH DISABILITIES**

This issues paper has been prepared by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific – Bangkok and Port Vila Pacific Operations Centre offices – in consultation with Disabled Persons International, Oceania subregional office, Suva, for the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.

**BRIEFING PAPER**  
**ISSUES IN BASIC EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH**  
**WITH DISABILITIES**  
[PIFS(02)FEDS.11]

**Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the current situation concerning the educational status of children and youth with disabilities in the Pacific and to provide guidance on policy that governments can implement in order to meet the goals and targets agreed in international fora that relate to disability and education.

**Issues**

2. The education of children and youth with disabilities remains one of the most serious challenges facing Governments in the Pacific region. Evidence suggests that less than 10% of children and youth with disabilities have access to any form of education.

3. Education is a basic human right and all children, including children with disabilities, have a right to education. The lack of adequate education remains the key risk factor for poverty and exclusion of all children and youth, both those with disabilities and the non-disabled. Exclusion from education for children and youth with disabilities results in exclusion from opportunities for further personal development, diminishing their access in particular to vocational training, employment, income generation and business development.

4. The Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons has been extended for another decade (2003-2012) and the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action, Towards An Inclusive Barrier-Free And Rights-Based Society Of Persons With Disabilities, was adopted in October 2002, to guide policy development and implementation for the next decade. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) has been ratified by all Pacific Governments. It mandates that states make primary education compulsory and available free to all children on the basis of equal opportunity, with protection from all kinds of discrimination, including discrimination on the basis of disability. Many governments around the Pacific region are beginning to address this need through strengthening existing education policies and developing new strategies.

5. There are many barriers to the inclusion of children and youth in education and training such as lack of policy, lack of teacher training, physical constraints of buildings as well as attitudes. Some Governments and communities in the region have been addressing these constraints for many years and a number of policy models and approaches are now in use and able to be replicated. The most common form of educational provision for children with disabilities in the region has been segregated special schools. These are mostly located in urban areas and have limited capacity. Many are run by NGOs, with or without government financial support.

6. Experience has demonstrated that integrated or inclusive education, with access to education in the local neighbourhood or community school, provides the best opportunity for the majority of children and youth with disabilities to receive an education including those in rural areas.

7. Awareness of children's right to education needs to be raised in families of children with disabilities. Teacher training, the most important component of change, must also ensure that all teachers develop attitudes and skills to equip them to teach children with diverse abilities in regular community schools as well as special schools. Government and non state actors will need to work together to address education priorities in this area.

8. Given the resource constraints faced by most Pacific island countries, a regional approach in support of inclusive basic education and to increase access for children and youth with disabilities is desirable.

## **Recommendations**

It is recommended that Ministers:

- (a) **agree** that they address the issue of access to education for children with disabilities, with a view to increasing the number of children with disabilities attending school in Pacific island countries, with 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, **agree** 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) **direct** the Forum Secretariat, in collaboration with other regional organisations though CROP, 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) **direct** 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.

Forum Secretariat  
Suva, Fiji  
18 November 2002



## FORUM EDUCATION MINISTERS MEETING

Suva, Fiji

11-12 December 2002

### AGENDA ITEM 6(d) : ISSUES IN BASIC EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the current situation concerning the educational status of children and youth with disabilities in the Pacific and to provide guidance on policy that governments can implement in order to meet the goals and targets agreed in international fora that relate to disability and education.

#### **Background**

##### *Why disability*

2. People with disabilities in Pacific island countries are among the poorest and most marginalised members of their communities. Recent World Bank estimates suggest that around 20 % of the world's poorest persons are people with disabilities.<sup>1</sup> Disability limits access to education and employment and other basic social services and leads to economic and social exclusion, while disabled people and their families face prejudice, discrimination and rejection. Disability is both a cause and consequence of poverty. The 1997 Fiji Poverty Report<sup>2</sup> found that many disabled people lived in poverty. It is the view of ESCAP and the World Bank that including people with disabilities in development strategies has both economic and social benefits.

3. Governments are responsible for the development of all their citizens. If people with disabilities are to be included in the national development process, then the development of policy, legislation and service provision must be established in full partnership with organisations of people with disabilities and other concerned agencies. A recent ESCAP assessment<sup>3</sup> of the current situation in the Pacific context

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank, *The World Bank and Disability* (<<http://wbln0018.worldbank.org/hdnet/hdocs.nsf>>)

<sup>2</sup> *Fiji Poverty Report, 1997*, Government of Fiji and UNDP. Pages 55 and 65.

<sup>3</sup> Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Special Body on Pacific Islands Developing Countries, Seventh Session, 14-15 May 2002, Bangkok, *Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Pacific Island Countries in the Context of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002, and Beyond*.

suggests that serious attention is needed to address these issues. The ESCAP Pacific assessment of Pacific disability developments also noted that a lack of access to education, training, employment and income-generating activities results in poverty for people with disabilities. The assessment noted that education and training for employment are two of the most neglected areas of development in the Pacific island countries.

4. Negative attitudes towards disabled people often stem from cultural beliefs. It is often thought that having a disabled child is a punishment for wrongdoing, or that an evil spirit is the cause, or that they are in some way 'hopeless'. Such beliefs can influence parents' views about education for their children: they may think that there is no point sending disabled children to school. There is an urgent need to banish the endemic social prejudice towards disabled people that exists at all levels of society. There is a strong tendency to see the disability rather than the person and this intensifies the struggle people with disabilities experience to attain equal educational opportunities.

5. Despite these cultural and social barriers, the provision of education for people with disabilities has a long history in the Pacific with many special schools starting in the 1960's. In Fiji the Red Cross Society began a day rehabilitation centre and the Crippled Children's Society opened the first special school in Suva in 1967 following an epidemic of poliomyelitis in the early 1960's. There are similar patterns of development in other Pacific Island countries, largely characterized by NGOs taking the lead, usually within a policy vacuum. Little was done to address prejudice and misunderstanding and to raise awareness in the wider community of the needs of people with disabilities. Even in 1969 when Fiji had its first Education Commission, no reference was made to education for children with disabilities.

### *Participation in Education*

6. Available evidence suggests that less than 10% of children and youth with disabilities have access to any form of education in the Asian and Pacific region, compared with an enrolment rate of over 70% for non-disabled children and youth in primary education. Many disabled children do not attend school at any time in their life.<sup>4</sup>

7. Some governments around the Pacific have addressed, or are planning to address, legislation and national education policies mandating the school attendance of all children and youth with disabilities. Several governments have specifically included them in national **education for all** (EFA) plans. There are good examples of governments, NGOs and local communities taking action to create more inclusive communities and schools. These examples from a number of FICs are explored below.

8. Current educational provision for children and youth with disabilities is predominantly provided by special schools in urban centres and are available to limited numbers of children. As recommended in the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994), educational policy at all

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<sup>4</sup> See Fiji Education Commission Review report, page 234.

levels, from the national to the local, should stipulate that a child with a disability should attend the local school. The practice of ‘mainstreaming’ or including children with disabilities needs to be an integral part of national plans for achieving **education for all**. Inclusive education<sup>5</sup>, which is accessible education within the regular local neighbourhood or community school, provides the best opportunity for the majority of children and youth with disabilities to receive an education.

9. Governments in the Pacific region are constantly under pressure from competing sectors of education for budgetary allocations. Tertiary education has typically been granted high per capita allocations in order to build up human resource capability and expertise. Technical and vocational education is also a high cost sector that is often seen as a solution to the problem of overly academic education systems. In recent years there has been increasing pressure to allocate greater levels and proportions of total public resources to improving the overall quality of basic education, and to bridge the yawning gaps between rural and urban education resources as well as to make provision for early childhood education. Pacific governments have invested substantially in education in attempts to widen access, reduce inequalities, improve quality and relevancy, and increase the number of better-educated and skilled human resources needed for development. Many countries within the region are coming under increasing fiscal pressures and are finding it increasingly difficult to provide even basic education to many communities. This paper will highlight the way many governments in the region have attempted to address these constraints and, despite the fiscal pressures, are working toward developing a more inclusive education system.

#### *International and Pacific Commitments*

10. Education is a basic right for all children, including children with disabilities. Exclusion from education diminishes opportunities for development by limiting access to training, employment and full social participation, and increases vulnerability to poverty.

11. The right to education for all children has been enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, (1948), the Convention on the Rights of the Child, (1989), the Jomtien Declaration on Education For All (1990), the Dakar Framework for Action on Education For All (2000), and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs, 2000). Most Forum Island countries have either signed or signalled agreement with these conventions and understandings.

12. Eleven Forum Island countries<sup>6</sup> have signed the UN ESCAP **Asia/Pacific Proclamation on the Full Participation and Equality of People with Disabilities**. Some countries that have not signed the Proclamation, such as Papua New Guinea, have

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<sup>5</sup> Inclusive education refers to schools and education centres that are open to ALL children. This may require teachers, schools and systems to change to better accommodate the diversity of needs that pupils have. It requires removing barriers within and around the school that hinders learning. (UNESCO,2001:16)

<sup>6</sup> Thirteen including Australia and New Zealand. Countries and years of signing were: Australia (1993), Cook Islands (2000), Fiji (1993), Kiribati (1999), Republic of Marshall Islands (1997), Federated States of Micronesia (1993), New Zealand (1995), Niue (1997), Palau (1997), Samoa (1998), Solomon Islands (1994), Tonga (1999), Vanuatu (1999).

taken an active part in Decade activities, and others which have signed have taken little or no action. The Decade included targets such as enabling at least 75% of all children and adults with disabilities to participate in formal and non-formal education programmes, with the appropriate support services; excluding from all educational and functional literacy material with contents that are derogatory towards persons with disabilities and include in those material illustrations and references supportive of the integration of persons with disabilities, into everyday life; reducing the dropout rate of children with disabilities by at least 50%; and, integrating disability issues into mainstream programmes (see Appendix 2: *Summary of Responses of Pacific island Governments on Education In the Regional Review of Achievements of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons*).

13. By resolution 58/4, UN ESCAP proclaimed the extension of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons for another decade, 2003 – 2012. The High-level Intergovernmental Meeting to Conclude the Decade, held in Otsu, Shiga, Japan, 25-28 October 2002, adopted the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society of Persons with Disabilities, to guide policy development and implementation for the next decade. The Framework, which incorporates the MDGs (see Appendix 1) to give them a disability dimension, specifies seven priority areas for action including early detection, early intervention and education.

#### *The Barriers*

14. The education of all children, including children with disabilities, in regular community schools, assists in breaking down barriers and negative attitudes, and facilitates social integration and cohesion within communities. The involvement of parents and the local community in community schools further strengthens this process.

15. The major barriers to the provision of quality education for children with disabilities include:

- lack of early identification and intervention services;
- negative attitudes;
- exclusionary policies and practices;
- inadequate teacher training, particularly training of all regular teachers to teach children with diverse abilities;
- inflexible curriculum and assessment procedures;
- inadequate specialist support staff to assist regular class teachers;
- lack of appropriate teaching equipment and devices;
- unmodified school environment to make it fully accessible, and
- lack of political commitment to legislative protection, policy development and implementation.

16. These barriers can be overcome through policy development, planning, implementation of strategies and allocation of resources to include children and youth with disabilities in education development initiatives.

## **Initiatives in Inclusive Education**

17. Some very effective initiatives have been taken in various Pacific island countries to break down barriers of attitude as well as physical barriers and to address the exclusion of people with disability from education and training.

### *Empowerment of Rural People with Disabilities*

18. The **Samoa** Government and UN Volunteer (UNV) project aims at building the capacity of NGOs and community based organisations (CBOs) to deliver effective special needs services and develop income earning possibilities for rural disadvantaged groups.

19. Prior to the development of the UNV project, The Department of Education conducted a national survey (with the support of the UNDP) to identify all children aged 0-14 years with special needs, the majority of whom live in rural areas. It has also provided in-service training on Special Needs Education (SNE) for all mainstream teachers, is establishing Special Needs Units in village schools and a Special Needs Education Coordinator has been appointed to the Curriculum Development Unit of the Department of Education.

20. The current Development strategy of the Government of Samoa notes the importance of the development of the village economy to spread the benefits to all parts of Samoan society and the need to promote organic agriculture as a means to diversify the village economy. The government has recognised the lack of social services and poor income earning opportunities for rural villages.

21. The *Empowerment of Rural People with Disabilities* project, which commenced in July 2002, links education and training for people with disabilities with income generation in collaboration with local NGOs and the community. The project staff are community based and plan to work with local groups to help make villages more inclusive of people with disabilities.

22. Two NGOs are the key implementing agencies for this project, one focusing on special needs education and the other on small business opportunities training. The newly formed Organic Farming Association will be helped by the Women in Business Foundation (WIBF) to take on the necessary tasks to maintain and continue the education of farmers, disabled persons and young people so that more organic gardens will be developed in Samoa. A demonstration organic garden will be established to provide training for farmers, disabled persons, nutritionists and unemployed youth to learn new skills while the WIBF and Organic Farmers Association can identify buyers for processed organic products. The WIBF has trained several individuals over many years. It recognized that people with disabilities are well motivated to produce products that WIBF can market, particularly in the area of organic farming and the production of niche products for export. Organic agriculture and WIBF training provides disabled persons with opportunities to gain status and involvement in society.

## *Policies and Planning*

23. Many FIC governments are developing inclusive policies and plans clearly identifying the need to address education for all children including those who have disabilities.

24. The Government of **Papua New Guinea** has had a *National Special Education Plan* since 1993 and Special Education Committee as part of the National Education Board. The plan was reviewed in 2001 and many recommendations were made including:

- Developing resource teams of trained special needs teachers in the provinces;
- Establishing special education resource centres;
- A national workshop on inclusive education for Teachers Training College staff;
- PNG Education Institute offer in-service training programmes and inclusive education courses;
- Department of Education to establish a national position within the Curriculum Unit to coordinate and ensure the provision of appropriate teaching aids, assistive devices and promotion of awareness of appropriate facilities needed for inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in educational settings;
- Department of Education to hold a national in-service training week with the theme: “inclusive education: quality education for all.”
- School action plans should include community based rehabilitation (CBR), early intervention; training of teacher aides and support of self-help groups.

25. The **Federated States of Micronesia** has a “Special Education Act of 1993” which recognises the need to provide free “elementary education” for all children including children with disabilities and also makes provision for “disabled children ... [to] receive necessary supplemental services in regular classrooms.”<sup>7</sup>

26. The philosophical framework of the **Solomon Islands** Ministry of Education, *Education Strategic Plan 2002-2004* notes:

*Education must be available to all, regardless of gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic background of citizens. In particular, basic education must be accessible to and be accessed by all school age children in the Solomon Islands. (p.2)*

*Quality education enables individuals to improve their quality of life, have better health and improved environment that in turn will reduce poverty, social injustice and unemployment.*

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<sup>7</sup> Office of the Attorney General, Federated States of Micronesia, “Code of the Federated States of Micronesia – Education.”

27. Expected outcomes noted in the Strategic Plan include:

*To provide equitable access to services regardless of sex, ethnicity, ability or disability, location, economic status or age. (p.4)*

28. Objective 1.7 of the Strategic plan is *promoting equity in education* and identifies outputs including: *education and learning needs of people with disabilities identified; economically marginalised students identified ...*

29. Furthermore, the Plan says that the Education Ministry will conduct field studies to identify the scope of problems of people with disabilities and identify the economic constraints to achieving access to education and design programmes to overcome these.

30. Although the education policy has been drafted in the Solomon Islands, with the assistance of the European Union, the difficulty in the current context is going to be translating the policy into reality given the severe economic and security constraints the country currently faces. At present only a minority of children with disabilities have access to education at a Red Cross special education centre in Honiara.

31. The Government of the **Cook Islands** has a draft “Special Needs Education Policy.” This policy targets all students “who for various reasons are not developing to their full educational potential or are at risk of not achieving the major learning outcomes of the education system.”<sup>8</sup>

32. The Cook Islands strategy aims to provide schools with guidelines for developing a Special Education programme which caters for students with special education needs and also outlines, inter alia, the responsibilities of the “Special Needs Education Advisor.”

33. The Cook Islands has also conducted a survey of people with disabilities in 2001 with the support of Inclusion International and NZAID. The survey provided detailed information about the number, type and spread of students of school age with disabilities and made various recommendations for the education sector.

34. The Fiji Social Justice Act, 2001, draws attention to the area of Special Education and students with special needs as being the most disadvantaged group. Consequently the Government of **Fiji** published in 2002 and approved, following public consultations, a *Blueprint for Affirmative Action on Special Education*, the blueprint draws on the work of the 2000 Education Commission and is designed to:

- Provide distinct policies and strategies to uplift the quality of life of students with disabilities and thereby complement the country’s vision for development;
- Focus the national vision on the challenges that students with special needs face; and
- Enhance access to education and training for every student with a disability.

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<sup>8</sup> *Revised Special Needs Education Policy*, (undated).

35. The Fiji Government's ratification of the *Blueprint* makes specific provision for:
- establishment of a Special Education Section within the Ministry of Education;
  - establishment of a Special Education Infrastructure Committee to address access issues to buildings and teaching resources;
  - strengthening of the curriculum to meet the needs of all students;
  - community awareness and family support programmes;
  - encouragement and support for inclusion of students with disabilities into mainstream schools within their local communities as well as strengthening of special schools as appropriate;
  - review of early intervention strategies by Ministries of Health and Education;
  - special education teacher training curriculum development;
  - strengthening of *Project Heaven's* capacity to screen all primary and secondary students for visual and auditory impairments;
  - strengthening of vocational training in collaboration with relevant NGOs, trainers, people with disabilities and the private sector;

#### *Teacher Training and Support*

35. Many teacher training institutions in the region training on special needs for all teacher trainees. The Lautoka Teachers College in Fiji has been offering a one-year course for special education teachers since 1999. The University of the South Pacific (USP) offers courses in special needs and diverse education at the diploma level, and a certificate in disability studies by distance education, to people working in NGO agencies in many Pacific island countries.

36. A new Vocational Training Centre has recently been opened with the assistance of the Government of Japan at the Nadi Centre for Special Education in Fiji. The new training centre will enable young people with disabilities to gain access to training and better prepare them with skills to find productive employment. In addition, the facilities will strengthen the capacity to provide its pupils with intellectual, physical and hearing disabilities with classes, in addition to pre-vocational education for young adults with disabilities.

37. The Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE) is exploring establishing a course for teacher trainees in early childhood education as well as special needs education. SICHE may need to seek outside assistance to develop and establish these programmes.

38. The Federated States of Micronesia, Department of Health, Education and Social Affairs has a Special Education Programme focusing on strengthening training of teachers and Services Assistants. Each State has conducted parent training and has increasing numbers of parents active in community and school activities. FSM has had a number of students complete a Masters in Special Education through the University of Guam which has significantly increased local capacity for further teacher training.

39. In countries where access to primary education is high, as is the case in most Pacific island countries, children and youth with disabilities are widely denied their right to education. There is a need for each country, and the region as a whole, to review the resources made available for teacher training, to provide greater in-service support for teachers and more adequate pre-service training for both mainstream class teachers as well as special needs teachers. This is a regional concern which could be explored by regional organisations under the auspices of the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP).

### **Providing Education for People with Disability**

40. If children and youth with disabilities are to have equal opportunity to participate fully in, and contribute to, their societies, governments must ensure their access to the same range of educational opportunities that is available to non-disabled children, from pre-school to tertiary (post-school) education and training.

41. In addition, infants and young children with disabilities require access to early intervention services, formal and informal assessments for early detection and identification (0 – 6 years), with support and training to parents and families to facilitate the maximum development of the full potential of their disabled children. Failure to provide early detection, identification and intervention to infants and young children with disabilities, and support to their parents, results in secondary disabling conditions which further limit their capacity to benefit from educational opportunities.

42. A key component in ensuring access to education for all, is the crucial role played by “non state actors,” which includes a range of church based organisations, and other nongovernmental and charitable organisations directly providing schools and training for people with disabilities as well as assisting with early intervention. For example, in Fiji, the Crippled Children Society’s (CCS) *Project Heaven* is a primary school programme which started in 1998 and which had screened 100,000 children throughout the country by the end of 2001 for vision and hearing impairment. The project has been supported by the private sector, the Fiji government, donors and UNICEF and also provides hearing aids and spectacles. CCS also runs the Early Intervention Center in Suva which is registered as a primary school with its own establishment. Children with physical and sensory disabilities constitute the majority of students enrolled at the Centre and they are transferred to other special schools in Suva once they have completed their early intervention programme.

43. There is a recognised need for increased levels of parent and community participation in the education of children with special needs. The role of self-help groups of disabled people is becoming increasingly important in the region, as elsewhere in the world, in advocating for the needs and rights of the disabled.

### **Strategies to Address disability Concerns in education**

44. In order to address the issues raised in this paper and to follow the best practices quoted above, governments could consider a mix of the following strategies as appropriate in order to develop inclusive education:

- Legislation, with enforcement mechanisms, to mandate education for all children, including children with disabilities, to meet the goals of the Dakar Framework for Action and the Millenium Development Goal of (primary) education for all children by 2015.
- Inclusive educational policy and planning, in consultation with families and organizations of people with disabilities, and develop inclusive programmes of education which enable children with disabilities to attend their local primary schools.
- Children with disabilities explicitly included in all national plans for education, including the National Plans on Education for All (EFA) of the Dakar Framework for Action.
- Specific budgetary allocation for the education of children with disabilities.
- Comprehensive data collection on children with disabilities, from 0 – 16 years, for planning appropriate educational provision, resources and support services.
- Five year targets set for the enrolment of children with disabilities in early intervention, pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary (post-school) education and training, and progress towards meeting these targets monitored with a view to achieving the goal of 75 % of children with disabilities able to complete primary school by 2010.
- Ministries of Health and other concerned ministries establish early detection and intervention services through hospitals, primary health care and community-based health care services, and in collaboration with other self-help organizations, NGOs and community-based agencies and provide training to children (0 – 6 years) with disabilities and their families.
- Children with disabilities included in regular community pre-schools, and families encouraged to send their children to local pre-schools.
- Partnerships with NGOs at national and local level, to conduct public awareness campaigns to inform families of children with disabilities, schools and their local communities, of the right of children and youth with disabilities and with particular emphasis on the inclusion of girls with disabilities to participate in education.
- Awareness education and training for government officials, educational administrators, school administrators, head teachers and teachers, to promote positive attitudes to inclusive education, increase sensitization to the rights of children with disabilities to be educated in local community schools and to train them in practical strategies for including children and youth with disabilities in regular schools.

- Comprehensive pre- and in-service teacher training for all teachers, with methodology and techniques for teaching children with diverse abilities, the development of flexible curriculum, teaching and assessment strategies. Teacher trainees with disabilities specifically selected for the teaching profession.
- Procedures for child screening, identification and placement, child centered and individualized teaching strategies, full systems of support, including resource centers and specialist teachers, to children with disabilities and their teachers in inclusive schools, in rural and urban areas.
- Teaching materials, equipment and devices made available to meet the needs of children with disabilities.
- Flexible curriculum which is relevant and appropriate to the abilities of individual children to leave room for the schools or the individual teacher to make adaptations in the local context and for the individual learner; and assessment and monitoring procedures are appropriate for the diverse needs of learners.
- Progressive programmes to ensure that all schools are made barrier-free and fully accessible by 2012.

45. Intra-regional cooperation, the sharing of experiences and development of best practice examples will assist countries in addressing policy gaps and priorities, learning from experiences elsewhere and developing effective and inclusive education and training practices.

## **Conclusions**

46. People with disabilities tend to be the most excluded in our Pacific Island societies, and children and girls are particularly disadvantaged. Schools are under resourced to include children with disability as are special needs schools. The level of awareness of the needs of children with disabilities in both schools and the wider community is changing and traditional attitudes are beginning to change to be more inclusive of children and youth with special needs. Teacher training to provide teachers with a wider range of strategies to include children with disabilities in their classroom will be an important component in developing a more inclusive basic education system for children and youth.

47. There are many working models of policy initiatives, community based and non-state actor initiatives that are effectively addressing the needs of children and youth with disabilities. An effective working partnership between the non state sector and government will be essential in addressing the needs of children and youth with disabilities and to provide for the necessary support for both pre-service and in-service training and support of teachers.

48. Similarly, given the resource constraints faced by most Pacific Island countries, a regional approach in support of inclusive basic education and to increase access for children and youth with disabilities is desirable.

49. Key areas that Ministers may wish to consider in addressing the issues raised are:

- (a) The issue of access to education with disabilities, with a view to increasing the number of children with disabilities attending school in Pacific island countries, and consider agreeing on the target of 75% of children with disabilities able to complete a full course of primary school by 2010.
- (b) Consider the examples presented on policy and strategic planning developments in education along with the mix of possible policy options presented in paragraph 44 with the view to developing a national response to such policies and strategies.
- (c) Direct the Forum Secretariat in collaboration with other regional organisations, through the Council for Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP), to 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) Explore the possibility of obtaining resources from the Asian Development Bank/World Bank, for a regional project to develop technical expertise on a region-wide basis to promote inclusive education for children with disabilities in Pacific countries, and the sharing of regional expertise and examples of good practice.

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## **APPENDIX 1 MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

### **Millennium Development Goal 3 – Achieve universal primary education**

Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

Targets of the **Biwako Millennium Framework for Action Towards Inclusion of People with Disabilities in the Asian and Pacific Region (2003-2012)** in the area of Early detection, early intervention and education:

Target 5: Children and youth with disabilities will be an integral part of the population targeted by Millennium Development Goal Target 3.

Target 6: At least 75 % of children and youth with disabilities will, by 2010, be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

Target 7: By 2012 all infants and young children (0 – 6 years ) will have access to and receive community-based early intervention services, with support and training for their families.

## APPENDIX 2

### Summary of responses of Pacific island Governments on Education In the Regional Review of Achievements of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons (2002)

<b>Education</b>	<b>Governments</b>
Legislation mandating education for all children passed or planned	9
Children with disabilities included specifically in national education for all (EFA) plans	3
Limited data collection on children with disabilities in education	7
Government funding for children with disabilities	9
Education provision in separate schools	10
Some educational provision in regular schools	9
Early intervention services established or planned	9
Pre-school services established or planned	7
Special training for regular class teachers	8
Some access to post-school (tertiary) education	13