



Press release

Lifting up education quality: teachers are the key

Over the next two weeks, children all around Vanuatu will return to school. Under the Vanuatu Government's Universal Primary Education Policy, and with support from its development partners Australia, New Zealand and Unicef, grants direct to primary schools have replaced most parental fees. As a result, there are more children than ever attending school. This is a great outcome for the country, but the next challenge is to make sure that children are getting a quality education.

Recent assessments show that many school children in the early years simply aren't able to pass standard tests for their grade. Improving the learning outcomes for Vanuatu's primary school students is the next key challenge facing the government and its development partners, and teachers are the key to success. Some 42% of the country's primary teachers are not certified from the Vanuatu Institute of Teachers' Education or similar institutes. Even teachers holding a teaching diploma often work for years in the classroom without any opportunity for refresher or in-service training. A new initiative by the Ministry of Education, together with Australia, New Zealand and Unicef, is getting much needed support to teachers, especially untrained teachers, around the country.

In 2010 an In-Service Training Unit (ISU) was established as part of the Vanuatu Institute of Teachers' Education based at Malapoa. This unit provides relevant refresher training to teachers across Vanuatu to enable teachers to upgrade their skills and receive the necessary support to teach effectively. "In-service training of teachers is crucial to improve the quality of education in Vanuatu." Elvie Tamata, the ISU's manager, said.

Last year, a team of twelve highly motivated provincial trainers were trained in order to then train and support fellow teachers (certified and un-trained) across all six provinces of Vanuatu. As a result of this initiative, each province now has two trainers, one anglophone and one francophone. Throughout 2012, these provincial trainers travelled around the islands to meet, train, support and assess untrained primary school teachers. Of 397 teachers, mostly untrained, 81% successfully passed the two training modules and will receive certificates from VITE.

"As a former teacher, I know how complicated is teaching when you don't have all the necessary materials, especially in the islands but without any training it's just extremely hard," said Roupie Manu, a provincial trainer during a presentation of their achievements to representatives of the Ministry of Education and development partners in December 2012.

Marian Curtis, an education specialist advising the In-Service Training Unit observed the high level of dedication shown by provincial trainers to their job. She told the story about some of the trainers walking some 40 kilometres (one way) to reach a remote school on Erromango Island just because they didn't want to miss one teacher!



Australian Government



The twelve new provincial trainers

ISU provides innovative, practical, school-based training where teachers develop teaching skills through teaching real students, as well as through roleplay and lesson simulations. Training happens in a positive, supportive environment where teacher self-reflection is encouraged and teachers work together, support and help each other. Training provided to date has covered effective lesson planning, monitoring and assessment, making your own teaching resources and using a 'learner centred' approach. In this learner-centred approach, manager Elvie Tamata explained, the students are at the centre of the lesson.

"Teachers were so grateful to receive training and support. They feel more motivated and more confident. They know our goal is to develop their skills so they can be a good teacher in the classroom", confirmed one of the provincial trainers.

"The Ministry of Education is very committed to have trained teachers in all the schools. The Government thanks the Education development partners – especially Australia, New-Zealand, and Unicef- for the support provided to upgrade the teachers' skills in the field. These teachers will then deliver quality learning outcomes to the kids of Vanuatu." Director General for Education, Youth Development and Training, Mr Jesse Dick said.

In 2013, the Ministry of Education and its key development partners – Australia, New Zealand and Unicef – will continue their work to improve education quality, with the focus on improving literacy and numeracy in the early grades. Further information is available from ISU at 23024.