

# STATUS REPORT ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN VANUATU

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## Background

This (draft) paper is prepared by the National Coordinator of Disability Promotion & Advocacy Association (DPA), a self-help NGO established in 1999 to advocate for rights and promote abilities of persons with disabilities and mandated to ensure the implementation of Vanuatu's commitment to the 1<sup>st</sup> Asian & Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities 1993-2002. Following the High –Level Inter-government Meeting in Japan in 2002 to extend the Asia Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities to 2003-2012, DPA took on board and began advocating for the 7 Priority Areas of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities (BMF). In 2004 the Asian & Pacific Development Centre on Disability (APCD) (a regional institution established in 2003 to support the implementation of the BMF in the ESCAP region and funded by the Government of Japan and the Royal Thai Government) acknowledged DPA's work by appointing it as the national NGO Focal Point on the BMF in Vanuatu while the Office of the Prime Minister was recognized as the Focal Point in Government.

Vanuatu is also a party to the international commitment on the Education For All and established the national EFA Committee in 2001. The Vanuatu Society for Disabled People is represented on that Committee.

As a member of the UN ESCAP Vanuatu is also a party to the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities, a regional framework for action for the Asia & Pacific Decade of Persons with disabilities, 2003-2012. DPA has been advocating for inclusive education under Priority No. 3 of the BMF is on Early Detection, Early Intervention and Education since 2003. Another organization, the Vanuatu Society for Disabled People, has been promoting special education for many years.

## 2. National Plans

*What does your country National Development Plan and/or Education Strategic Plan say about provision for Inclusive Education?*

Vanuatu's national development plan is called the *Priorities & Action Agenda 2006-2016* (PAA) and it is Government's vision to have an educated, healthy and wealthy Vanuatu. Section 8.1 on Education and Human Resource Development, Government has committed itself to achieving the six Education For All (EFA) goals. Mention is made of 'the disadvantaged' but no definition is given to what disadvantaged means. Neither is there any definition or what 'inclusive education' means.

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<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to the Fiji Government, Pacific Island Forum Secretariat, Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of Basic Education, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment for the opportunity to participate in this regional meeting. Furthermore, I wish to thank the organizers the possibility of including Janet Selwyn, a mother of a boy who could not complete his school because he was deaf.

These are:

- Expanding and improving early childhood care and education, *especially for the disadvantaged* [italics added];
- By 2015 all children (especially girls, minorities, *the disadvantaged*) yo have good quality, free, complete compulsory primary education;
- All young people and adults to have equitable access to learning and life skills;
- A 50 percent improvement in adult literacy (especially for women) by 2015 and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults;
- Improved quality and excellence, especially so that targets are met in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills, and
- Elimination of gender disparities in education.

Ten priorities and strategies in the education and training sector from 2006 to 2016 have been earmarked for which the following are of significance for inclusion of children with disabilities:

1. Improve the relevance, quality and accessibility to pre-schools and Special Education for all young children as stipulated within the EFA National Plans and the Millennium Development Goals indicators;
2. Achieve relevant and quality universal Primary Education up to year 8 (EFA and MDG targets)
3. Increase accessibility and improve the relevance and quality of teacher education.

The performance indicators have to be refined as part of the sector wide approach (SWAp) planning as targets are prioritized and costed. The current performance indicators in the PAA does not include any performance indicators for inclusive education or for 'the disadvantaged'.

## 2.2 Vanuatu National Children's Policy 2007-2011

Vanuatu National Children's Policy 2007-2011 on the other hand categorises *children in especially difficult circumstances* to include **children with disabilities** as those without a safe and nurturing home environment, those who come into conflict the law, the many involved with armed or criminal groups, and any other child whose family requires state assistance to honour the basic rights of the child.

Six objectives are outlined for children in especially difficult circumstances and children with disabilities in the National Children's Policy.

Objective 3 is to promote the early detection and assistance of children in especially difficult circumstances, including those with disabilities, those in difficult family situations, and those suffering as a result of the family's economic or social situation.

Objective 4 is to develop the community's ability to respectfully care for, and reintegrate children in especially difficult circumstances, especially those with disabilities, in coordination with Government, development partners, NGOs and Churches (**but** does not indicate where these children will be reintegrated to).

Six activities have been identified to meet the various objectives. With reference to children with disabilities, Objective 5 states that the:

National Children's Committee, in association with Education and other relevant partners, to coordinate the reintegration of children with disabilities into all educational policies and plans for primary, secondary and vocational schools by 2007.

### **2.3 THE BIWAKO MILLENNIUM FRAMEWORK (BMF)& THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGs)**

Vanuatu – as well as other Forum countries – agreed in 2002 to give special consideration to children with disabilities. In 2003 the Forum countries endorsed the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action Towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in the region.

The underlying principle of the BMF is to promote the goals of an inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based society for persons with disabilities in the Asian and Pacific region. Four specific policy direction to be adopted by Governments include the following:

1. Enact and/or enforce legislation and policies related to equal opportunities and treatment of persons with disabilities and their rights to *equity in education*, health, information and communications, training and employment, social services and other areas. Such legislation and policies should include persons with all types of disabilities, women and men, and people in urban and remote and rural areas. They should be rights-based and promote inclusive and multisectoral approaches;
2. Ensure that disabled persons be an integral part of efforts to achieve the millennium development goals, particularly in the areas of poverty alleviation, *primary education*, gender and youth employment;
3. Strengthen national capacity in data collection and analysis concerning *disability statistics* to support policy formulation and programme implementation;
4. Adopt a policy of *early intervention* in all multisectoral areas, *including education*, health and rehabilitation, and social services for children with disabilities from birth to four years;

The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education recommended that inclusive education, with access to education in the regular community school provides the best opportunity for the majority of children and youth with disabilities to receive an education, including those in rural areas. It also acknowledges that in some instances, special education may be considered to be the most appropriate form of education for some children with disabilities. The education of all children, including children with disabilities, in community schools assists in breaking down barriers and negative attitudes and facilitates social integration and cohesion within communities and the involvement of parents and the local community in community schools further strengthens this process.<sup>2</sup>

Recognizing that the MDGs do not specifically address people with disabilities, the regional framework for action under the BMF explicitly incorporates the millennium development goals and their relevant targets to ensure that concerns relating to persons with disabilities become an integral part of efforts to achieve the goals.

Priority No. 3 of the BMF is Early intervention, early detection and education and set two targets to meet the MDG:

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<sup>2</sup> Biwako Millennium Framework for Action.

Target 1. Children and youth with disabilities will be an integral part of the population targeted by the millennium development goal of ensuring that by 2015 all boys and girls will complete a full course of primary schooling.

Target 2. At least 75 percent of children and youth with disabilities of school age will by 2010, be able to compete a full course of primary schooling.

It is clearly acknowledged that the attainment of the goals of the MDGs will not be met unless the goals and targets of the BMF relating to persons with disabilities are incorporated and addressed nationally. Clearly without considering the actions and targets identified in the BMF, Vanuatu – as well as other countries in the Asia Pacific region – will not achieve the MDGs.

### **UN Disability Convention**

On 17 may 2007, Vanuatu signed the UN Disability Convention. Unlike other international and regional commitments, the UN Disability Convention unambiguously recognizes the link between inclusive education and the right to education of persons with disabilities. Article 24 states that

“States parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States parties shall ensure an **inclusive education system** at all levels and lifelong learning.”

As a signatory to the Convention and possibility of ratifying it in the next 12 months, Vanuatu has a challenging task ahead of it to meet this requirement.

### **3. Policy**

*Does your country/Ministry of Education have a policy on Inclusive Education? Is yes, when was it developed? Who developed it? What are the main components of the policy? What groups are targeted in this policy?*

Not yet. The third draft of Vanuatu's *Inclusive Education Policy* of May 2006 is on hold until this regional meeting on inclusive education in Nadi has been held. The purpose for this action is so that officials can become more familiar with what inclusive education is and how to incorporate the principles and strategies for inclusive education. A meeting will be called by the Department of Education within two weeks after the return of the delegates to brief officials and identify strategies to move to finalize the Policy.

Similarly, the National Disability Policy and Plan of Action 2007-2015 has been put on hold until two meetings have been held:

***i. The mid term-review of the Biwako Millennium Framework*** for Action towards an inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based society for persons with disabilities was held. This meeting was held from 19-21 September where further recommendation under Priority 3 of the BMF were made. The draft BMF Plus recommendations under Priority No. 3 on Early Detection, Early Intervention and Education requires Governments to

(a) Explore the possibility of establishing efficient coordination and communication mechanisms among government bodies responsible for health and education matters in the provision of services to infants and young children with disabilities in terms of early identification, assessment, referral to, or enrolment in, early intervention and health-care services, preschools and schools;

(b) Pay increased attention to ensuring that the number of trained personnel in early intervention services is sufficient to provide services for all children with disabilities and their families in urban, rural and remote areas;

(c) Promote the access of persons with disabilities to an **inclusive education** system, including the acquisition of literacy skills, and to adult education and life-long learning;

(d) Promote the education of all children, including those with impaired sight and/or hearing and those who have learning and intellectual disabilities, so that it is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication;

(e) Take appropriate measures to train professionals and staff who work at all levels of education and to employ teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are adept in sign language, Braille, augmentative or alternative communication;

**ii. The regional meeting on inclusive education** to be held from 1-5 October 2007 in Nadi.

Following these two meetings the Ministry of Education will be holding a meeting to discuss the outcome of both meetings and how inclusive education can be incorporated into both the National Disability Policy and Plan of Action 2007-2015 and the *Education Policy on Inclusive Education*.

### **3. Budget**

*Is there any support given in the national (education) budget for IE? How much financial assistance is provided and what percentage of the education budget is it? Is there any other support for IE from international donors or development partners – if yes, who, how much and what is the nature of their support?*

There is not budget specifically targeted for inclusive education. What can be said, however, is that over the past 10 years, the Ministry of Education has received approximately 25 percent of the national budget. Donor agencies have contributed to including persons with disabilities in accessing education at the Vanuatu Institute of Technology. How accessible and inclusive this has been has not been documented.

### **4. Development of IE**

*What is the history of IE in your country? Who is responsible for the education of children with special needs? Please provide the name, job title and contact details. Who are the key stakeholders in IE? What is the nature of government support in IE?*

From 1986 until 1991 the Nakato Society<sup>3</sup> provided some centre-based education to children living around the Port Vila area. One of the worker was trained especially as an Special Education teacher; however, this programme stopped when the organization re-focused its attention and became a community-based rehabilitation provider in 1991. Today, it is assisting the Education and Health sectors by providing ear & eye testing for children in primary schools in a number of provinces.

There are no official records of who is providing education for children with special needs. Children are not denied access to education; however, qualitative data on what this means is not available.

In the NGO sector a number of community-based organizations have been advocating for inclusive education for a while. One such organization is the Frangipani Committee of Santo,

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<sup>3</sup> 'Nakato' means hermit crab. In 1997 the name was changed to Vanuatu Society for Disabled People.

an affiliate of DPA, which has been advocating since 2004 for rights to access education. Another community based organization and an affiliate of DPA is the Vanmolmol Committee which has started an Inclusive School of South Santo. Qualitative measures still have to be obtained to assess how inclusive this school is. Again there will be many such kindergartens and Government needs to address how they are incorporating the idea of inclusive education into their kindergartens.

## 5. Definition of IE

*How is IE defined in your country? When someone talks about IE, what do they mean in the national context?*

Currently there is no definition of inclusive education in Vanuatu. In 1994 for example, the idea was "... to introduce special education as an integral part of the initial teacher training programme so that there would be an integrated education system to cater for children regardless of their disabilities..." In a conversation held recently with an education official, inclusive education meant *including* children with disabilities in schools meaning that they were *not excluded* or denied access to schools. For a rights-based advocate, I see inclusive education to mean the accommodation of children within the education system where they are not discriminated against receiving an education because the system cannot provide for their learning.

One example we often cite to stress this point is the case which happened in 2004 to a 15 year old student in Grade 9 in Santo who had malaria and became deaf. When she recovered and returned to school she was told by the Principle that she could not continue her education and had to leave because she was now deaf. Our perspective as rights advocates is that the problem is not her deafness: The fact is that the education system has failed to provide her the right to be educated.

Additionally this approach highlights the fact that disability results in many ways from the environmental and other barriers that society places before persons with various impairments. For example, a person with a physical disability who is in a wheelchair is obstructed from enjoying a full life where ramps and other simple modifications are not in place to accommodate their basic movement and other needs. By identifying the 'problem' as being environment and society rather than the person with disability, this should help in reducing the underlying biases leading to discrimination against persons with disabilities and promoting an inclusive society.

Attitudinal barriers plus the general lack of understanding of what inclusive education is will hinder Vanuatu's progress to achieving an inclusive education system. This is reflected at the senior level and there is a definite need to define inclusive education, not only in Vanuatu but perhaps elsewhere in the Pacific. For example, following the UNESCO meeting in Paris in early 2006, the Hon Minister for Education was quoted in the Vanuatu Daily Post that:

"... In the area of education we continue to subscribe to the global priorities of basic education, secondary education, technical and vocational and higher education and the core initiative of literacy, HIV/AIDS and teachers training with an emphasis on in-country workshops, common themes, intersectorality and partnership. The Pacific Member States felt that perhaps we need to define clearly, for the purpose of future project, what we meant by the term "inclusive education ..."

## 6. Statistics/Education Management Information System (EMIS)

*Does your Ministry/Department of Education have an EMIS? Who is responsible for collecting educational information and data? Is any information collected on children with special needs? If yes, please provide details – e.g. age, disabilities.*

*Describe facilities and programme of IE available in your country. Who manages/runs these facilities? Comment on the quality of the facilities.*

Vanuatu does not have any facilities or programmes for Inclusive Education.

There are no recent data on the total population. The last census was taken in 1999 where a total of 2,749 people were counted as being disabled.

Table 1 Children with Disability in Schools in 1998

Province	Total	Number in Schools
MALAMPA	33	1
PENAMA	43	8
SANMA	47	6
SHEFA	69	17
TAFEA	62	3
TORBA	17	0
TOTAL	271	35

The Education Master Plan of 1999 recommended the establishment of two schools in urban areas (presumably Santo and Port Vila) without specifically pointing out whose needs these schools will be catering for plus the appointment of a Special Needs Officer. With insufficient data about the types of disabilities children had in schools as shown in Table 1, the idea to have two schools was premature and remains an idea.

**SOURCE:** Education Master Plan (1999), Annex 6, p. 1

The Special Needs Officer, however, was appointed in 2003 and commenced collecting data on children with disabilities in schools from kindergarten<sup>4</sup> to senior secondary schools.

The collection of data is the responsibility of Ministry through teachers who complete a standardized questionnaire on an annual basis. The returned data giving information on indicators such as sex, age, grade, island, disability, government or church/NGO run schools, anglophone/francophone schools, number of teachers and so forth are collected from kindergarten to senior secondary schools and compiled and tabulated by Mrs Fabiola Bibi, the Department's Statistician. In 2006 the Ministry of Education installed its education management and information system where *quantitative* data as shown here are readily accessible. However, the questionnaire does not contain any qualitative information on how accessible the school is such as basic physical access.

The past eight years has seen an increase in the enrolment of children with disabilities in schools. In 1998, for example, there were only 35 children with disabilities in schools. By 2004 when the Ministry of Education collected statistics on students with disability, 2,012 or 5 percent of children with disabilities out of a total of 38,960 children were enrolled in primary schools (Ministry of Education, 2005). This doubled to 3,963 or 12 percent of children with disabilities out of a total of 33,268 children in secondary schools in 2007. By senior secondary school, only 251 children with disabilities or 5 percent of the total population of 4,804 children were enrolled.

<sup>4</sup> Kindergartens are not the responsibility of the Education Department. This is a concern especially if Government is to begin taking the lead on inclusive education.

Table 2 Enrolment in Primary Schools by Province &amp; Sex, 2004

Province	All Primary Enrolments			Children with Disabilities			
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	%
MALAMPA	3,683	3,390	7,073	102	82	184	2.6
PENAMA	2,975	2,673	5,648	170	114	284	5.0
SANMA	4,063	3,677	7,740	285	369	654	8.4
SHEFA	5,338	4,879	10,217	210	165	375	3.6
TAFEA	3,442	3,178	6,620	232	167	399	6.0
TORBA	848	814	1,662	72	44	116	6.9
Total	20,349	18,611	38,960	1,071	941	2,012	5.1
%	52	48	100	53	47	100	

**SOURCE:** Ministry of Education, 2005.

Table 3 Enrolment in Primary Schools by Province, 2007

Province	Enrolments in Primary Schools		
	All Children	Children with Disabilities	% CWD
Malampa	6011	671	11.16
Penama	4363	438	10.04
Sanma	6814	920	13.50
Shefa	7335	826	11.26
Tafea	7114	668	9.39
Torba	1631	440	26.98
Total	33268	3963	
Overall %age			11.91

Table 4 Enrolment of Students in Secondary Schools, 2004

Province	All Secondary Enrolments	Children with Disabilities			
		Males	Females	Total	%
MALMAPA	1,505	77	74	151	10
PENAMA	1,872	1	1	2	0
SANMA	2,016	37	35	72	4
SHEFA	6,829	34	14	48	1
TAFEA	1,029	5	3	8	1
TORBA	147	0	0	0	0
Total	13,398	154	127	281	2
%		55	45	100	

**SOURCE:** Ministry of Education, 2005..

Table 5 Children with Disabilities Enrolled at Primary &amp; Secondary School Level by Province, 2007

Province	Enrolments in Secondary Schools		
	All Children	Children with Disabilities	% CWD
Malampa	800	37	Total
Penama	612	35	4.63
Sanma	977	104	5.72
Shefa	1690	178	10.64
Tafea	860	38	10.53
Torba	63	-	4.42
Total	5002	392	-
Overall %age			7.84

Table 6 Children with Disabilities Enrolled at Senior Secondary School Level by Province, 2007

Province	All Enrolments		
	All	SWD	% of SWD
Malampa	431	18	4.35
Penama	592	11	1.85
Sanma	974	91	9.34
Shefa	2384	104	4.36
Tafea	384	27	7.03
Torba	39	-	-
Total	4804	251	5.22

Figure 1 Percentage of Students with Disabilities Enrolled in Primary Schools by Province, 2004 &amp; 2007

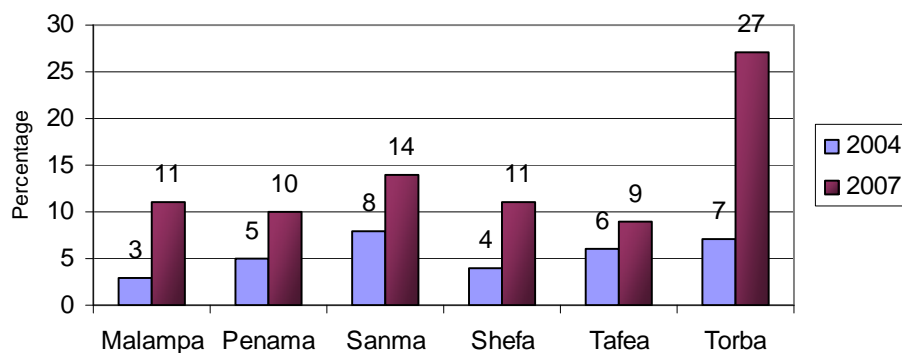


Figure 2 Percentage of Students with Disabilities in Secondary Schools by Province, 2004 & 2007

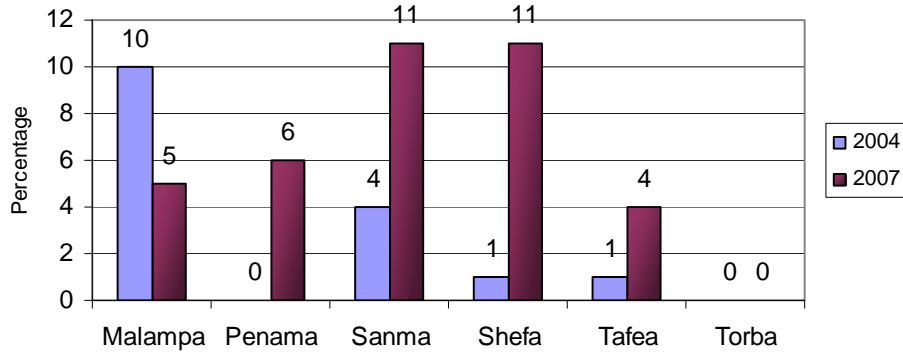
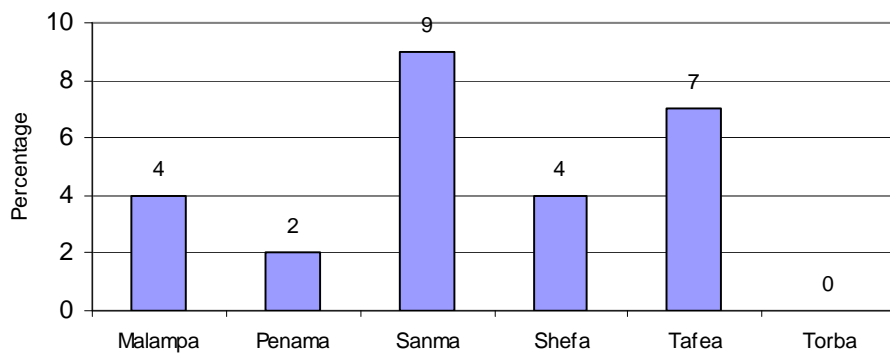
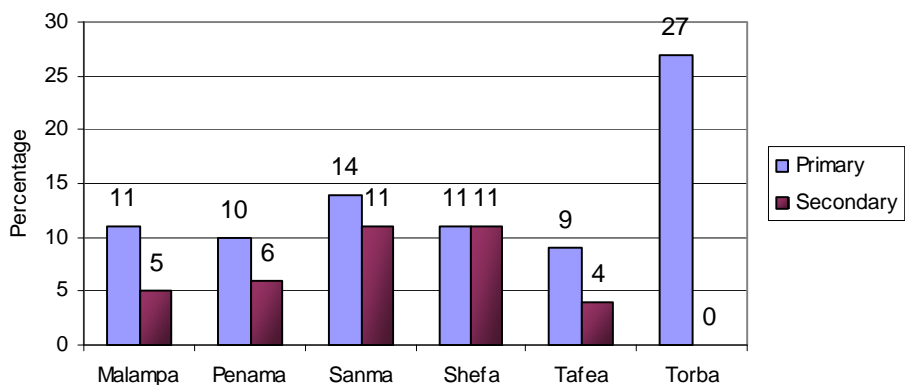


Figure 3 Percentage of Students with Disabilities Enrolled in Senior Secondary Schools by Province in 2007



One startling finding in the very cursory analysis of the statistics is the lack of data for children with disabilities in the secondary level. And so the big Question is: Where did the kids go after primary school?

Figure 4 Where have the Children from Torba gone?



Or perhaps an alternative question could be: Did these children make it to secondary schools in other provinces, and if so, how can we know? Qualitative data which provide answers to some of these questions should provide us with a clearer picture of what is happening.

For the first time in 2007 the Statistics Unit of the Department of the Education reports some 163 children at the kindergarten level and 247 in the primary school level who did not attend because of their disabilities. At the secondary school level, the Department reports that 17 males and 12 females are not attending schools due to disabilities.

Table 7 Children at the Primary School level **NOT** attending Early Childhood Education Level in Vanuatu due to Disability by Type and Sex, 2007

Disability Type	Males	Female	Total	% Female	
Down Syndrome	2	5	7		
Emotional/Social Problems	5	6	11		
Hearing	3	3	6		
Learning	6	8	14		
Mental	4	6	10		
Multiple	15	8	23		
Physical	19	9	28		
Sight Impairment	5	7	12		
Speech Impairment	12	10	22		
Others	4	3	7		
Blank	10	13	23		
Total	85	78	163		47.8

Table 8 Children at the Primary School level **NOT** attending Primary School Level in Vanuatu due to Disability by Type and Sex, 2007

Disability Type	Males	Female	Total	% Female
Down Syndrome	14	8	22	36.4
Emotional/Social Problems	-	-	-	-
Hearing	7	6	13	46.1
Learning	3	-	3	-
Mental	10	15	25	60.0
Multiple	32	21	53	39.6
Physical	38	24	62	38.7
Sight Impairment	8	4	12	33.3
Speech Impairment	27	20	47	42.6
Others	2	3	5	60.0
Blank	4	1	5	20.0
Total	145	102	247	41.3

In 2004 the Ministry of Education was also able to provide details of the types of disabilities or problems exhibited by children. These data, as well as those provided by the Vanuatu Society for Disabled People are invaluable sources of information which the Department can use for its programme, including any moves at providing inclusive education.

Table 9 Types of Disabilities / Problems Exhibited by Primary School Children, 2004

Types of Disabilities / Problems	MALAMPA		PENAMA		SANMA		SHEFA		TAFEA		TORBA		TOTAL		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	T
Slow learners	43	35	46	42	97	94	51	37	81	67	7	1	325	276	601
Started school late	40	28	33	17	81	132	50	37	73	64	15	15	292	293	585
Deaf/Hard of Hearing	5	6	21	15	28	31	16	22	34	24	1	2	105	100	205
Speech problems	3	2	28	16	13	27	34	23	19	6	5	4	102	78	180
Blind or partially sighted	3	0	12	10	14	18	9	5	9	5	21	11	68	49	117
Asthma	2	6	13	9	19	21	16	12	7	1	3	1	60	50	110
Emotional / Social	3	3	6	4	21	32	19	12	4	0	0	0	53	51	104
Physical disabilities	2	1	9	0	2	7	7	6	5	0	19	8	44	22	66
Down's syndrome	1	1	0	0	6	1	4	6	0	0	0	0	11	8	19
Albino	0	0	1	1	4	5	1	3	0	0	1	2	7	11	18
Others	0	0	1	0	0	1	3	2	0	0	0	0	4	3	7
Sub-Total	102	82	170	114	285	369	210	165	232	167	72	44	1,071	941	2,012
TOTAL	184		284		654		375		399		116		2,012		
%	9.14		14.11		32.50		18.63		19.83		5.76		99.97		

**SOURCE:** Ministry of Education, 2005.

Table 10 Types of Disabilities Identified in the Tafea Disability Survey (2003/2005) by Age

Types of Disability	Age							Total	% of Total
	0-5	6-14	15-20	21-30	31-39	40-49	50+		
Autism	0	4	3	1	0	0	0	8	1.4
Blind/Low Vision	2	19	9	10	5	14	42	101	18
Cerebral Palsy	1	3	2	0	2	0	1	9	1.6
Deaf/Hearing Impaired	6	38	31	28	10	6	19	138	25
Epilepsy	0	9	17	8	1	5	1	41	7.3
Intellectual	1	29	19	9	9	4	3	74	13
Physical	11	35	19	25	19	24	40	173	31
Psychiatric	0	1	1	4	3	2	4	15	2.7
Total	21	138	101	85	49	55	110	559	
% of Total	3.75	25	18	15	8.75	9.7	19.8		100

**SOURCE:** Jones & Pascoe, 2005, p. 14.

## 7. Teacher Training

*Where are your IE teachers trained? How many specially trained IE teachers/specialists does your country have? Please comment on the training programme at your teacher training institutions. What are issues in teacher education, if any?*

The Vanuatu Teachers College does not offer any training on inclusive education. I am aware of one trained IE teacher in the early 1990's who is currently working in the NGO sector. Although teachers are not yet trained for "special needs education", sign language is one way in which children who are deaf can participate in school if it is taught at the Teachers College. There is a need, however, for the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of CRP to collaborate

on how to make education inclusive beyond just providing training in sign language ...' (Jones & Pascoe, 2005).

### 8. Research

Has any research been conducted on IE and/or Special Needs Education in your country? If so, please provide a brief description on the results of the study.

I am unaware of any specific research that has been conducted on Inclusive Education and or Special Needs Education in Vanuatu. There are reports that allude to the special needs of children with disabilities

### 9. Challenges

*What are the key challenges your nation faces in the education of special needs children in an inclusive education setting?*

The key challenge facing us is the understanding of what inclusive education is.

While the Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals speak of universal education, there are two other concepts of *inclusive education* and *special education*<sup>5</sup> which must be fully understood in Vanuatu. The concept of *universal education* and *education for all* **includes** children with disabilities. Therefore it is important to note that if universal education is to be achieved, both *inclusive education* and *special education* must also be considered as integral to the education system and to the final achievement of these goals. For Vanuatu, it is recognized that the MDG to achieve universal education by the year 2015 will not be reached.

### 10. Strategies

*Identify practical strategies that can move IE forward in your country.*

- Understanding of the concept of Inclusive Education at all levels within the education system. One way to ensure that policy makers and decision makers at the senior levels are well versed on the idea, in-country consultations/meetings should be held prior to the completion of the Inclusive Education Policy. Additionally, regional agencies should support should convene a special meeting of the Forum Education Ministers Meeting where Inclusive Education is discussed. The Report of Vernor Munoz, Special Rapporteur on the right to education on '*The right to education of persons with disabilities*' provides a wealth of information that should be disseminated and consulted widely both within the education systems as well as to providers of education in the community. Understanding the *concept* of inclusive and acceptance that children with disabilities have equal rights to education which is often hindered by societal and environmental barriers as well as the challenges it poses to Governments in terms of budgetary constraints should assist Vanuatu in coming to grips with providing education for all children.
- Establish a Division of Inclusive Education with its own budget in the Ministry just as the Department has a Division for Primary and Secondary Education. Within this

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<sup>5</sup> Currently children with disabilities are mainstreamed, that is, they are able to access formal education through the regular community primary and high schools. The principle of 'special education' requires educational institutions to provide education for needs of specific category of children who cannot access the same education in regular schools. For example, special education can be provided to children who are blind in order that they can learn to read and braille and still access subjects taught in regular schools.

Division, annual reports highlighting both quantitative and qualitative data should be provided.

- Re-draft the Draft Inclusive Policy in consultation with, parents, disability organizations and representatives from the health, public utilities and infrastructure sectors to ensure that inclusive education is understood.
- Revise and complete the draft Disability Policy & Plan of Action by December 2007 to incorporate recommendations from the Nadi meeting on Inclusive Education.
- Develop a 10 Year Plan of Action on Inclusive Education. Declare 2008-2017 as the Decade of Inclusive Education in Vanuatu where plans and strategies to achieve an inclusive education system in Vanuatu.
- Identify one province or one location to introduce programmes on inclusive education.
- Collect qualitative as well as quantitative Statistics. One of the strategies identified in the BMF is that lack of statistical information has often been one of the factors leading to neglect of disability issues including the development of policy and measures to monitor and evaluate its implementation. As indicated earlier, one strategy that can enhance the collection of data in the Education Department is to include questions relating to qualitative data and not simply quantitative data including following children over a ten year period. Currently, statistics are collected, put in reports and left at that. Statistics from the National Census in 2009 should also be included. With the EMIS in place, a revision of the questionnaire to include an audit on access and how much budget is expended to inclusive education should be collected.
- Create a clearinghouse for data on inclusive education. At present the national Statistics Office is the legal body to collect and store data. However, it is not used by many Government departments or civil society organizations. A central location where data collected by various groups can be stored will assist Vanuatu to develop its plan for inclusive education based on solid information. More use of PRISM with annual updates can be a possibility.

Included in this idea is that definitions of disability used by service providers and the Department of Education should be the same. One of the strategies identified in the BMF is for governments to adopt definitions on disability based on the *Guidelines and Principles for the Development of Disability Statistics*<sup>6</sup>.

## 11. Any other comments

This exercise – of preparing a report on inclusive education – has helped me tremendously in filling the gaps in my understanding of inclusive education. The process of consultation with Government has also aid us in recognizing that there is much that still needs to be done in our country to begin the process of developing and delivering an education curriculum and system that will be inclusive.

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<sup>6</sup> United Nations publication, Sales No. E.01.XVII.15.

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