

Pacific Pride

Issue 6

The Newsletter of the PRIDE Project

April 2006

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The PRIDE Project (Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of basic Education) is implemented by the Institute of Education at USP and is jointly funded by the European Union and New Zealand AID.

PRIDE serves Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.



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The PRIDE Project celebrates its second birthday

Staff and friends of the PRIDE Project recently gathered to celebrate another milestone - its second birthday!

And our very special guest was our namesake, Lydia Pride Taukafa, who was born around the same time that PRIDE was birthed about two years ago.

We have taken 1st April 2004 as the birth date of the PRIDE Project because three staff members (the Project Manager, an Education Advisor, and the Accountant) joined the Project Director on this date, including our namesake's father - PRIDE's accountant, known to everyone as Tasi.

As this date fell on a Saturday, we celebrated the occasion on Friday 31 March at the PRIDE building.

There was much to celebrate as we had much to be pleased about. Thirteen countries have developed or are developing their strategic plans with the remaining two



Lydia, Tasi's very own pride.

countries in the process of reviewing their plans.

Thirteen sub-projects in nine countries are in the process of project implementation with discussions continuing on sub-project development in four more countries.

Over 200 educational planning and related documents are now available electronically on our

online resource centre with as many waiting to be placed on the web.

Many discussions have taken place between PRIDE, our donors EU and NZAID and other donors to ensure the common interests of our participating countries are more effectively taken care of.

As well, PRIDE has two publications in our Pacific Education Series under its belt - one in book form and the second in CD-ROM, and two more publications arising out of two previous workshops will shortly be available.

So we had much to celebrate!



From the Director

Aid dependency, and its manifold consequences, is an issue which the PRIDE Project increasingly has to deal with in its work within many of our fifteen participating countries. This particular challenge manifests itself in the slow development and implementation of in-country sub-projects, resulting in the slow disbursement of funds from the Project to the countries; 53% of the Project funds are allocated for in-country sub-projects.

The Project recognised this challenge from the onset and has developed specific measures to address this challenge. Our very first workshop in September 2004 focused on building the capacity of our National Project Coordinators (NPCs) at the Ministry of Education (MoE) and informing them of their roles and responsibilities in the implementation of the Project. We provide continuous support to our NPCs through annual NPC workshops, in-country visits, and via the telecommunication network. However, these NPCs, who usually hold senior positions in their Ministries find themselves struggling to cope with this additional demand placed on them.

While this is understandable, there is too much at stake for MoEs to lose if they do not make every

effort to utilise their portion of sub-project funding. We are quite concerned because the funds have to be spent and fully accounted for by the end of December 2009.

We are almost half way through the life of the Project and yet many countries have been sluggish in preparing their sub-project proposals to implement priority areas of their strategic plans. To date, nine out of the fifteen countries have submitted a total of thirteen proposals. Two countries have not submitted any requests for sub-projects and we are currently negotiating with four countries for their first sub-project.

We are also concerned because of the enormous amount of time the PRIDE Team is spending in assisting countries to initiate their sub-projects. While the turnaround time for PRIDE approval, at least in principle, is two weeks, countries take a long time either to revise their sub-projects or to begin implementation. In some cases, there is a lapse of up to six months between approval and actual implementation.

One of PRIDE's goals is to encourage countries to stand on their own feet and to reduce the sense of helplessness and lethargy that MoEs have in utilising readily available funds. There is a definite need to

reduce the heavy dependence on PRIDE personnel to initiate discussions on strategic plans and sub-project proposals and/or implementation. MoEs need to feel empowered and have a sense of ownership of their national educational destinies. For this to more effectively occur, they will need to be more proactive in preparing and implementing sub-project proposals.

I would like to suggest two strategies to assist MoEs maximise their PRIDE portion of development assistance. First, give their NPCs the time and space needed to develop, implement and monitor sub-projects. Secondly, encourage a team sharing, collegial approach where directors/secretaries of education and other senior staff help their NPCs in identifying key priority areas and assist wherever possible in the development and implementation of projects. NPCs need to be strongly supported from within by their own peers and colleagues, and not made to work in isolation.

One way of NPCs gaining much needed support is for them to provide regular PRIDE updates to Ministry staff in order to keep them fully informed. If MoE staff have, for some reason, not been briefed yet on the

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Distance learning in Vanuatu helps build a community

Vanuatu has an idea, and with help from the PRIDE Project, they're putting it into action! Like other Pacific Island countries, Vanuatu is challenged by the remoteness of most of its communities, where transportation is limited and telecommunication is unreliable and often available only in commercial centres.

Within these isolated communities are over 400 primary schools that are in need of assistance, but the Ministry of Education (MoE) has limited capacity to provide support. The MoE wants to change this, and is well on the way to making this happen through its Open and Distance Learning (ODL) initiative supported by PRIDE.

Distance learning has long been used in the Pacific to provide correspondence courses to remote areas. However, most of these activities have been in isolation, and Vanuatu would like to change that through their new approach of developing an ODL system in partnership with other countries, institutions, and global distance learning activities.

Vanuatu submitted a sub-project for PRIDE's assistance resulting in the project funding a consultant,



Vanuatu's reception at PNG Department of Education's Flexible, Open and Distance Education. John Niroa, Acting Director of Secondary Education and PRIDE's NPC, Grayleen Lapi, ODL Officer, and John Henly, ODL Advisor.

John Henly, to assist with the development of an ODL Policy.

Vanuatu's approach began in the community through a country-wide policy consultation. In October 2005, the Ministry's ODL Unit traveled throughout the country conducting workshops with education stakeholders to help paint "a picture of success" for children in Vanuatu. This wide consultation was the

foundation for the new Policy for Open and Distance Learning for the MoE.

In February 2006, two staff members of the ODL Unit along with Mr Henly traveled on study visits to Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands to learn first-hand about successful distance learning programmes in these two countries. The visits have helped Vanuatu prioritize

its ODL focus, and have resulted in a network of new friends with an active willingness to collaborate with Vanuatu on ODL and other educational activities.

Through wide consultation and planning, Vanuatu is now ready to take the next step. The ODL Unit has recently developed a Primary Education Improvement Project (PEIP) proposal that will implement ODL strategies in two important areas: teacher certification and school data collection. The project will create a field-based certification system for unqualified, in-service teachers—over 30% of primary teachers in Vanuatu, and test technology-based strategies for improving school data collection.

PEIP will work closely with the Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education to help revise their current residence-based program to be offered in the field. A number of partnership agreements have been reached with volunteer agencies and international ODL content sharing activities to support PEIP.

The PRIDE Project is very excited about the ODL activities in Vanuatu and looks forward to helping make PEIP a success! ■

Bob Teasdale: Intrepid CEO of the PRIDE Project

With vast Pacific experience behind him, Bob Teasdale was thrown into the deep end two years ago when he joined the PRIDE Project as its director. Despite this, he describes this job as the best he has ever undertaken.

Before stepping foot in his new office in January 2004, his first day on the job was spent travelling from Australia to attend the Forum's Education Ministerial meeting in Apia, Samoa. Bob admits that this was probably the best way to begin his work because the Education Ministers, PRIDE's key stakeholders, discussed in detail their expectations and exhibited a strong sense of ownership of the Project.

An Englishman by birth, Bob has the unique status of being both Australian and European although most of his life has been spent in Australia.

Bob fell in love with his wife Jennie when he volunteered to teach to drive when they were both post graduate students at the University of New England (UNE) in Armidale, NSW. Jennie is the dynamic manager of the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development programme in Fiji, where all the young professionals in her care become part of her extended family.

Bob fell irrevocably in love again when he first set eyes on his first grandchild Hamish who is now eight months old. Bob and Jennie's two

grown up children, Alice and Jonathan, both live in Australia.

His first real introduction to the Pacific was sharing a room at Wagga Wagga Teachers College in NSW in 1959 with Tiu Malo from Fiji who has remained a good friend. Then some six years later, Bob taught a number of Fijian student teachers, including Emitai Boladua and Tupeni Baba, at the UNE.

Bob's interest in the Pacific was kindled when he received an invitation as visiting fellow to the USP Institute of Education (IOE) in the 70s and this relationship continued into the 80s when he and Jennie taught summer school for teachers at IOE.

He was also editor of the South Pacific Journal of Teacher Education from 1975-83. Through his association with the Institute of Education and the School of Education, Konai Thaman was invited to be Associate Editor of the journal.

Bob has worked in the School of Education at the Flinders University in Adelaide for 34 years, the last 7 as



Bob and grandson Hamish sharing the lighter side of life.

Director of the Institute of International Education.

While based at Flinders, he was also part-time manager of the human resource component of AusAID support for USP for eleven years with an office and two staff assisting him in utilising about AU\$8 million over these eleven years. He made two to four annual visits to Fiji as manager of this programme.

In 1983, Bob was selected by AusAID to coordinate the first future directions review of USP which effec-

tively was his first regional job. It entailed travelling to ten USP countries, including Fiji.

While the 1980s was a period of consolidating relationships at USP, the early 1990s was spent at the Fiji College of Advanced Education where he and Jennie were recruited as education advisors in the Fiji-Australia Teacher Education Project.

Here, he worked directly with Priscilla Puamau, Una Nabobo, Rokosiga Morrison and two other teacher educators in the School of Education; the former three are now USP staff members.

So when Bob was selected as Director of the PRIDE Project in early 2004, he not only brought with him vast experience working in development projects and travelling the region, but also a rich network of Pacific friends and colleagues that he has known for many decades.

When asked what his biggest challenge was, Bob responded that it is "to help countries break aid dependency and take control of their educational systems". He finds this "worrying because many countries are waiting for PRIDE to help them move on with their sub-projects but the intention is for PRIDE to help countries to help themselves".

"The whole issue of the long-term sustainability of the project to fulfil the dream and vision of Pacific Ministers of Education is also a big challenge". ■

A breakthrough for RMI: PRIDE assists with proposal to develop its education sector strategic plan

The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) has an education sector strategic plan which expired in 2005. The Minister for Education, the Hon. Wilfred Kendall and the staff of the Ministry of Education (MoE) are now planning for the development of a new strategic plan that would outline priority areas for renewal and development in education in the next five to ten years.

The RMI MoE approached PRIDE for financial and technical assistance to facilitate the development of their new strategic plan and for advice on the best way to approach this important exercise.

Eveli Tokai, Education Advisor of the PRIDE Project and Abel Nako, former Director General for Education in Vanuatu, visited RMI from 16-24 February at the invitation of the Ministry of Education to assist in mapping out the best way possible to undertake the development of their education sector strategic plan.

The week from 20 – 24 February was a very busy time for the Ministry as it had organized an “Education Week” where stakeholders were invited to participate in education related activities. Although the week was a busy one, the MoE officers were available to assist when their services were required. About thirty-five people made up of senior staff of the Ministry and Principals of schools

in Majuro attended the first presentation. The large attendance was a reflection of their eagerness and commitment to participate and to be involved in the planning process.

There was a strong emphasis on **ownership** of the plan as the Ministry would not like to see a plan developed in isolation by consultants with-

fore the plan is drawn up and finalized.

A **bottom-up approach** to planning would be encouraged where the process would include consulting with all stakeholders, including high school students. The people of RMI need to be given the freedom to decide for them-

behind people with knowledge and skills required to coordinate planning in the Ministry.

Leadership and the commitment from the top management, and having the **right climate for planning**, to name a few, were also seen as crucial factors in this very important exercise.

Apart from the ‘plan to plan’ phase for the development of the strategic plan, the Secretary for Education, the Assistant Secretary Policy and Planning and other senior staff members highlighted two issues that were seen as very important in terms of providing quality education for the children of RMI.

The Ministry will put forward proposals to PRIDE for assistance in two areas: one would be for funding of two senior teachers to mentor/coach and assist teachers in the outer islands; and second, the Ministry will request training attachments for one or two staff in a country that has a strong focus on Technical and Vocational Education.

Overall, the visit to RMI was fruitful and successful as the Ministry staff, along with assistance from Eveli and Abel, were able to produce a draft proposal which will be submitted to PRIDE to assist in the development of a strategic plan for the education sector in the Marshall Islands. ■



After completing their mission with the MoE, at RMI, Eveli (left) and Abel research a beach at Waikiki.

out the involvement of the people of RMI. Instead, the Ministry believes that the people should be involved right from the beginning if they are to have ownership of it.

There was also a general agreement on the **participation** of stakeholders in the planning process. Wide consultations will be carried out be-

selves the type of education system they want for their children.

Furthermore, the importance of **building the capacity** of the staff of the Ministry in the development of the strategic plan was also highlighted. MoE staff were very receptive to this idea that when the consultants leave, they would leave

Online Resource Centre and Collection expands

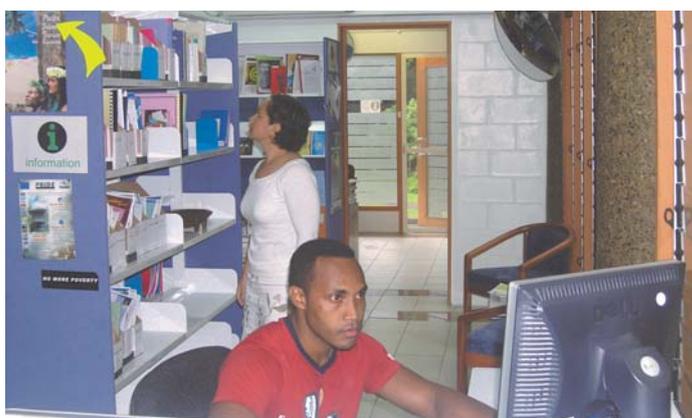
Since the beginning of this year, over 800 unique users have visited our Online Resource Centre with more than 1,500 visits and over 5000 pages accessed.

Online use of the Resource Centre has grown considerably this year and it is encouraging to see our collection being used, not only in the Pacific but also internationally. We are informed by our web statistics that people are accessing from all over the globe, not only within the Pacific but also from Senegal, Malaysia, Ethiopia and Israel!

Our online portal www.usp.ac.fj/pride_resourcecentre provides access to a growing collection of educational planning and development material from the 15 Countries of the PRIDE Project. This includes access to over 200 online and full text documents.

PADDLE, the Pacific Archive of Digital Data for Learning and Education www.paddle.usp.ac.fj provides full text access to a comprehensive collection of publications from participating Ministries of Education (MoE); including strategic plans, education legislation, curriculum frameworks and school policies.

PADDLE also includes material from UNESCO, Asian Development Bank, the Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, the Common-



A busy day, Francis Idu, a USP student, conducting online research while Dr Johansson Fua, a USP staff member, searches through the hard copies.

wealth Secretariat and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.

Libby Cass, Information Specialist, reports that 2006 has been a busy year for the resource centre. She said, “Recently I have been very busy collecting material for inclusion in PADDLE, focusing on curriculum and TVET material to provide support and resources for impending workshops”.

She adds, “I have also been busy assisting resource centre users which include those accessing from offsite via our website and the increasing number of people visiting in person.”

Libby’s main aims for 2006 are:

- To improve the collection in order to possess the most comprehensive collection of Pacific education material and to promote use of the Centre
- To work on initiatives to make online access user-friendly
- To facilitate effective use of the physical resources
- To conduct training for users around the region, primarily the national project coordinators and other educators involved in the Project. ■

Online educators’ network launched

An exciting new initiative connecting over 300 people online was launched on 8 March 2006 by the Institute of Education (IOE) with the assistance of PRIDE.

The Network of Pacific Educators (NOPE) is implemented by IOE as part of the Re-thinking Pacific Education Initiative by Pacific People for Pacific People (RPEIPP) and aims to:

- develop an active network of people in education and development in the Pacific;
- provide a forum for discussion & information sharing;
- improve networking and communication amongst its members;
- provide a vehicle for discussion on issues relating to NOPE;
- encourage the interchange of information and ideas related to education and educational development in the Pacific; and
- provide a forum in which to seek assistance/support for education related projects, publications, etc.

The first phase was the completion of a mailing list and a website: www.usp.ac.fj/nope. To become a member contact Dr Seu’ula Johansson-Fua, Fellow (Research and Leadership) at johanssonfua_s@usp.ac.fj.

The PRIDE team was sad to lose Repeta Puna, the former Director for Policy & Planning, and our National Project Coordinator (NPC) for the Cook Islands (CI). She has moved on from the Ministry of Education to take up the position of Operations Manager at the Cook Islands National Superannuation Fund.

The PRIDE Project acknowledges and thanks Repeta for her contributions in furthering the work of PRIDE and we give her our very best wishes in her new job.

We are delighted to welcome our new NPC, Alexis Wolfgramm, the new Director for Policy & Planning, who was fully briefed on the role and responsibilities of the NPC when Priscilla Puamau, PRIDE Education Advisor, recently visited the Cook Islands.

Alexis was born and raised in New Zealand with a CI mother and a Tongan father. After 28 years in Western Australia working in the non-profit sector as the manager of several NGOs, she "returned" to her origins in the Cook Islands.

Her work history includes



During her trip to the Cook Island, Priscilla (left) drops in at the NPC Office to brief Alexis on her role and responsibilities as our NPC.

establishing and heading the Consumer Credit Legal Centre, the Midland Information, Debt and Legal Advice Service and the Women's Legal Service in WA, Co-ordinator for the Refugee Council of WA, CEO of the Northern Suburbs Migrant Resource Centre and Director of the Western Institute of

Self Help (WISH).

Alexis led the development of Moana Pasifika Inc, Western Australia's largest Pacific cultural organisation, including establishing the "Spirit of the Pacific" Radio Program on multicultural radio station 6EBAFM.

Welcome aboard Alexis! ■

Latest news from the Project

☑ The Project will have its fifth **Regional Workshop** in Tonga from the 24-31, May 2006. Participants will engage in discussions on reconceptualising the way literacy (both English and Vernacular) and numeracy is thought about and practised in their own country, and in the region. Participants will be required to reflect on global developments in literacy and numeracy and to examine implications for the Pacific. The notion of syncretising the best of the contemporary global with the best of the local is embedded at the heart of this workshop.

☑ A **third Education Advisor** will join the Project on July 01, 2006. The Advisor will provide responsive advice, support and technical assistance to the Pacific ACP region, particularly in the areas of educational policy, planning, monitoring and evaluation. The advisor will also provide capacity building in areas such as the financing of education, educational management information systems, education monitoring, education statistics, and the evaluation of education outcomes.

☑ Mr Bill Pennington was selected as the consultant to develop an **M&E Framework** for the Project. The consultant will develop a comprehensive M&E framework and methodologies, guided by the PRIDE benchmarks and associated principles and indicators and other PRIDE

documents. The framework and methodologies will be field tested with full implementation by the end of 2006.

☑ UniQest Pty has been contracted to develop an **Education Information Management System (EMIS)** for Nauru, Niue, Tokelau, and Tuvalu. The specific needs of these small states in terms of system capacity and manageability will be addressed while ensuring a high standard of system output capability. Report on data against international monitoring and evaluation frameworks such as the UNESCO EFA Indicators and the MDGs will be included in this system. Work on the EMIS will commence in late May.

☑ Dr Priscilla Puamau will give the keynote address at the forthcoming **Australian and New Zealand Comparative and International Education Society 2006** conference at the Australian National University in December. The theme of the conference is *Global Governance, Educational Change, and Cultural Ecology*.

☑ An independent **Mid-Term Review (MTR)** of the Project will commence July 2006. The Terms of Reference are being finalised. The MTR report will be tabled at the upcoming Forum Education Ministers Meeting scheduled for 26-27 September in Fiji, to advise Ministers on progress of the Project.

(continued from page 1)

PRIDE Project, then this needs to be attended to as a matter of urgency. NPCs who would like to make a presentation to their ministry staff can liaise directly with any of PRIDE's education professional staff (Bob, Priscilla, Epeli) or the project manager for assistance in this area.

There is a feeling in some countries, because of the lack of publicity on the Project within MoEs, that those in the know are a select, elite secret group. Misconceptions and misunderstandings then exist about what the Project is all about. A briefing session, followed by regular updates would contribute significantly to a greater sense of ownership by MoEs in the region.

MoE staff can also contribute by initiating discussions about key priority areas where PRIDE assistance might be sought. They need to keep the dialogue open with NPCs and assist them in any way they can. After all, the beneficial effects would be shared by the whole Ministry, if not the entire country.

In other words, the Ministry needs to be dialoguing and consulting within to ensure that they are in the loop, not only about PRIDE assistance, but also about total donor assistance to ensure there is no duplication and to check that gaps in their education strategic plans are taken care of.

The PRIDE Project looks forward to countries initiating their own sub-project proposals and seeing to the successful implementation and monitoring of each sub-project. We anticipate NPCs and senior staff working collaboratively in-country to ensure that they maximise, not only on PRIDE funding, but just as importantly any other donor assistance they are getting from other sources. ■

Dr. Priscilla Puamau,
Acting Director of PRIDE

New sub-projects

As the project enters its third year in 2006, there was renewed vigor in the development of sub-projects by the countries. Five countries have recently applied for and received funding for their sub-projects:

Cook Islands: The sub-project will address the training needs for Principals, Teachers and School Administrators in the use and maintenance of IT equipment currently being provided by the Ministry. These equipment and new technologies will enhance the system for resources management in all schools including asset registers, inventories, resource replacement, budgeting etc. through the provision of electronic equipment.

Fiji: The sub-project will educate teachers/administrators on the ills of substance abuse and will be implemented by the National Substance Abuse Advisory Council. Workshops will be conducted from April – November, 2006, aimed at creating awareness amongst key stakeholders on substance abuse and the dangers and risks associated with drugs; promoting healthy, safe and drug free schools and communities; creating good partnerships to curb the problem of substance abuse; and identifying actions for teachers and parents.

Kiribati: The project will assist the Ministry in the establishment of an Early Childhood Education (ECE) Unit. Initial stakeholder

consultations will be conducted from which a PRIDE funded advisor will develop an ECE Policy for the Ministry.

Samoa: The sub-project will address, amongst others: access for the increased number of children with special needs; the provision of assistance to Special Needs teachers; development of policies/procedures for schools regarding physical access to school: specifications for ramp gradients, door widths, railings, toilets. The sub-project will document innovative practice in inclusive education to share amongst the Pacific Island countries and from Pacific to Asian countries.

Tonga: Currently ECE is delivered through private institutions which is unaffordable to the average Tongan. The Ministry's Corporate Plan has identified the delivery of ECE programmes as a priority but it lacks the resources. Strategies were identified to address the establishment of an ECE unit which will be initially funded by PRIDE. PRIDE will assist the MOE in the development of a Policy, and then in the implementation of pilot programmes. ■