

Republic of Vanuatu

Higher Education Policy Brief

Angelique Stevens

Context for the Report

Published in 2010, the report is destined for the United Nations to read to inform them on progress. Back in 2002, the UN Secretary commissioned the creation of a project to help underdeveloped nations¹. That project has become the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The eight goals are time-bound, as they are to be accomplished by the end of 2015. One of those goals is related to education ("Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education"²). This context is important to acknowledge when analyzing the report that the Republic of Vanuatu produced in 2010. It was meant to inform the United Nations of its progress on the MDGs. This is the second progress report produced by the Prime Minister's Office, the first having been released in 2005.

The Problem

According to data available in the 2010 report³, Vanuatu had known a dip in enrollment in primary school (from 88% in 1990 to 75% in 2000)⁴. A bigger issue with primary schooling was present though. Indeed, in 2000, 63,8% of pupils who started first grade in Vanuatu did not complete their last year (8th grade). As the report was drafted in 2010, the last available data point is in 2009, demonstrating that both enrollment (86% in 2008) and student retention (66%) have gone up.

Description of the Education Policy

To increase enrollment from year to year, the Republic of Vanuatu has phased out their fee-based system to replace it with a funded system:

"A concerted effort with development partners to provide 'fee free' primary level education up to Year 6 in Government and Government—assisted schools began in some areas in 2009 and achieved full coverage in 2010. Compulsory primary school contributions have been phased out and replaced by grants paid directly to the schools." (Prime Minister's office of the Republic of Vanuatu. (2005). *Millennium development goals report*. p. 20)

Anticipated Outcomes

The outcomes of this policy seem to be societal. According to the data from the report, in 1990, only 32% of the adult population (15-24 year-olds, women and men) was literate. That number increased to 92% in 2009. Because the MDG is set at 95% adult literacy, it is safe to assume that Vanuatu will reach this goal.

Factors and Influences

The advancement of the Millennium Development Goals was the biggest factor to push the Ni-Vanuatu Government to pass a policy to tackle the enrollment problem. Funding from

¹ United Nations. (2006). UN millennium project | about the MDGs

² Read more at <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/education.shtml>

³ Chart with data found in Prime Minister's office of the Republic of Vanuatu. (2005). *Millennium development goals report*. (p. 20)

the United Nations was the main source of revenue for this government program. It should also be noted that involvement from partner organizations was probably due to the fact that the MDG was such a big enterprise- the UN name attracted attention to the situation in Vanuatu, among other developing nations.

SWOT Analysis

Internal		External	
Strength	Weakness	Opportunity	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education for the people means better life - Grant directly given to the school - Positive impact already demonstrated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unsustainable funding in the long term - Dual, inconsistent primary educational system - Rise in attendance number- structural problem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rise in attendance number will help to reach MDG - Recognition established through current program success - Awareness of IOs to tackle problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reliant on political support from government - Funding not renewed past 2015 - Possible fall into oblivion on the international scene

	Strength	Weakness
Opportunity	Education of the population will strengthen the local economy Leverage past success to coincide with IO values	Use awareness and recognition on the international scene to raise funds Increase of student attendance can be used to increase grant funding
Threats	Partnership with other Pacific countries to sustain growth in enrollment (teaching staff) Utilize continued success to remain relevant internationally	Use current reforming of the primary educational system to leverage governmental funds Allow the rising attendance to gain further support from governments and IOs

Critical Analysis of Policy

The Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu was able to identify the root of the problem that prevented pupils from attending primary school from the data it collected. Overall, the policy is a sound solution to the problem of the affordability of primary school for the Ni-Vanuatu people.

The policy lacks attainability since no means of sustaining the spending for the Ministry of Education is exposed in this policy. It seems like most of the funding is reliant on the participation of development partners. However, this raises doubts towards what will happen once the MDG is attained- will those development organizations move onto other projects? This vulnerability to outside influence is a great threat to the grant-based program.

Moreover, as the Ministry of Education announces in the report (Prime Minister's Office, p 20) that the concept of junior schools will be phased out and absorbed into primary education, this raises the issue of a sudden increase in enrollment numbers. This leads us to wonder whether or not the new grant system will be able to handle this structural change.

References

1. Prime Minister's office of the Republic of Vanuatu. (2005). *Millennium development goals report* (19-26). Retrieved from Republic of Vanuatu website:
<http://aid.dfat.gov.au/countries/pacific/vanuatu/Documents/vanuatu-mdg-report-2010.pdf>
2. United Nations. (2006). UN millennium project | about the MDGs.
Retrieved January 7, 2015, from
<http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/goals/index.htm>
3. United Nations. (2015). United Nations Millennium Development Goals.
Retrieved January 7, 2015, from
<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/education.shtml>