Community Participation in Schools Maintenance Manual

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INTRODUCTION

The core reason behind maintenance of any school lies in the belief that schools (primary in this instance) are a crucial part of Human Development. Primary schools are breeding grounds for future leaders. It is therefore crucial that schools and their surroundings are properly maintained to enable the children of this nation to develop to their full potential. The Republic of Vanuatu CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (RATIFICATION) ACT No. 26 OF 1992, adopted from the United Nations' CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD 1989, Article 29 1(a) reads:"...the education of the child shall be directed to the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential".

The aim of this manual is to outline the approach to be used by Provincial Education Officers (PEO) and Head Masters (of primary schools) in gaining community participation in school maintenance. This manual was prepared by the Foundation for the peoples of the South Pacific (FSP) with the European Union being the funding agency. The manual contents are not comprehensive and interpretation and application for the involvement of community members in maintenance shall not be limited to the recommendations in this manual but left at the discretion of Provincial Education Officers (PEOs), Head teachers and Primary School Committees. It is the responsibility of Provincial Education Officers to bring the provisions of this manual to head teachers and primary schools committees within the provinces.

Primary school committees provide the necessary link between head teachers, provincial education officers and communities. It is the responsibility of school committee members to involve head teachers, provincial education officers and communities in discussing issues relating to primary schools maintenance. The main principles adopted in this manual are in line with what is known as "community development approach".

Community Development Approach, through the assistance of primary schools committee members, requires that community members themselves do their own investigations, analysis and presentations of issues relating to schools maintenance. Fundamental to this approach is not only the activities but also a philosophy of approach. In many cases, outsiders have lacked the attitudes and behaviour to build rapport with the community members. Community members have been assumed to be ignorant, lectured at and been told what to do. This approach emphasises, amongst other things, respect for the community members, patience, listening and learning, and recognition of their (community members') knowledge. The main objectives of this manual therefore is to:

- foster local ownership and independence over maintenance of primary school using community resources
- involve local community in decision making regarding maintenance of primary schools and
- facilitate communities in identifying, analysing and suggesting ways as to how various issues can be addressed.

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The Community Development Approach is widely used, both in the Government departments and in Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), nationally and internationally and it follows a logical sequence starting with:

- the generation of data
- analysis of the data
- and application of the data

SECTION 1: DATA GENERATION

(a) Holding Meetings

Prior to involving community members in discussing schools maintenance issues, a meeting(s) is required to get the consent of all (or the majority of) village leaders. This will include also chiefs, church, women and youth leaders. Involvement of all sections of the community in discussions and decisions is crucial to getting people involved in primary schools maintenance. The possibility of involving the majority of community members in discussing maintenance issues must also be determined during these initial meetings. During this meeting, a report detailing the current condition of the school must be presented. This will serve as a starting and focal point for discussions. A decision must also be taken on the date of the next meeting which will involve the majority of community members and all community members must be notified of the outcome of this initial meeting.

Figure 1: *Inter-relationships possible within a typical Vanuatu community.*

Recognition of the complexity of relationships between sections within a community are crucial, to enable, not only participation by those involved but also reaching decisions which are well-informed and which can also bind members to participate in carrying out what is decided.

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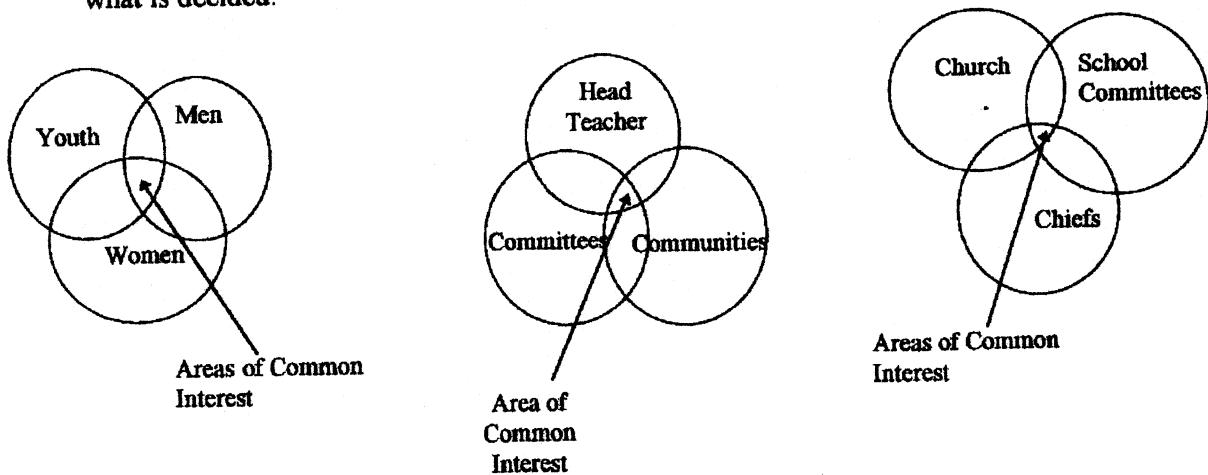
(b) Questionnaire

Questionnaires are a set of questions given to respondents and designed to provide information relevant to the researched area. Questionaires may be completed by the respondent themselves or be completed by an interviewer. In this case, questionnaires may not only concern the recording of facts but also how community members perceive maintenance of primary schools in their particular locality. Questionaires may be distributed to potential respondents after the first initial meeting takes place in order to give some background or feelings about the Issues in question. Figure 2 is an example of a questionnaire that may be used to gather information relating to primary schools maintenance.

Figure 2: *Community Household Questionnaire*

Village:
Household Name:
Number of members in household:
Ages of household members:
Special skills and/trade of household members (please give name and specify):
What are the household income-generating resources?
Name of school that household is most associated with?
How many household members have gone through this school?
How many household members still go to this school?
Do you think that there is a need to keep the school running?
How far away is the nearest school?
How do you feel about involvement in maintenance of the primary school that you associate most with?

Section 2: Data Anaysis (Community Development Tools)

Armed with the knowledge drawn out from the questionnaires and our understanding of the conditions of the school, the following tools may be used to draw more attention to the issue in discussion.

i) *Time line*

This tool is used to show the historical context of the particular primary school. It may address issues such as:

- When was the school built?
- Who was it built by?
- How many buildings were there originally?
- Has there been any major repairs?
- When was the school repaired last?
- Is the school a Government or a private school?
- Has there been any major damages to the school? What was the cause (if any)?

This exercise mainly serves to get community members focussed on the primary school in question. Figure 3 below is an example of how a time line is shown graphically.

Figure 3: *Time line of Vatumaru school*

Year	Event	Surrounding Circumstances
1964	School built	Under British Administration in Partnership with the church.
1980	School nationalised come under direct Government control	Vanuatu Independence
1984	Buildings damaged in Cyclone	Repairs done by PWD funded by N.Z. Government

ii) *Seasonal Calendar*

This tool is used mainly to highlight and assist in making any plans which are related to primary schools maintenance. The following may be raised when using this exercise:

- When are the school holidays?
- When are the cyclone seasons?
- When are the harvest periods for various local produce (eg, Yams, Taro, etc.)?

When addressing these issues, community members will have a better idea of planning any activities relating to maintenance. Figure 4 is a table showing, not only the months of the year, but also, points of concern relating to schools maintenance.

Figure 4: *Example of a Seasonal Calendar*

		J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Common Season	Hot and Wet	—										—	—
	Cool and Dry					—	—	—	—				
	Cyclone Season	—	—										
School Holidays	Christmas/New Year	—											—
	Two Weeks Holiday					—			—				
Celebration Days	Independence Day							—					
	Custom Day											—	
Local Produce Harvest Season	Yams, Taro, etc.,												

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iii) *Institutional Analysis*

This exercise helps community members to examine various groups that exist within the community and consider the linkage(s) that each one has to the school. This type of analysis creates more awareness among community members about the functions of each groups and opens up discussions on how each may contribute towards maintenance. The following sequence of activities are recommended when carrying out this exercise:

- Explain what institutional analysis is and its importance
- Ask community members to list out all community organisations
- Get community members to show on a diagram the relationship between the school and the various organisations within the community and show how they are related to one another
- Discuss what is expressed on the diagrams
- record what is expressed

Figure 5: *Example of Institutional Analysis*
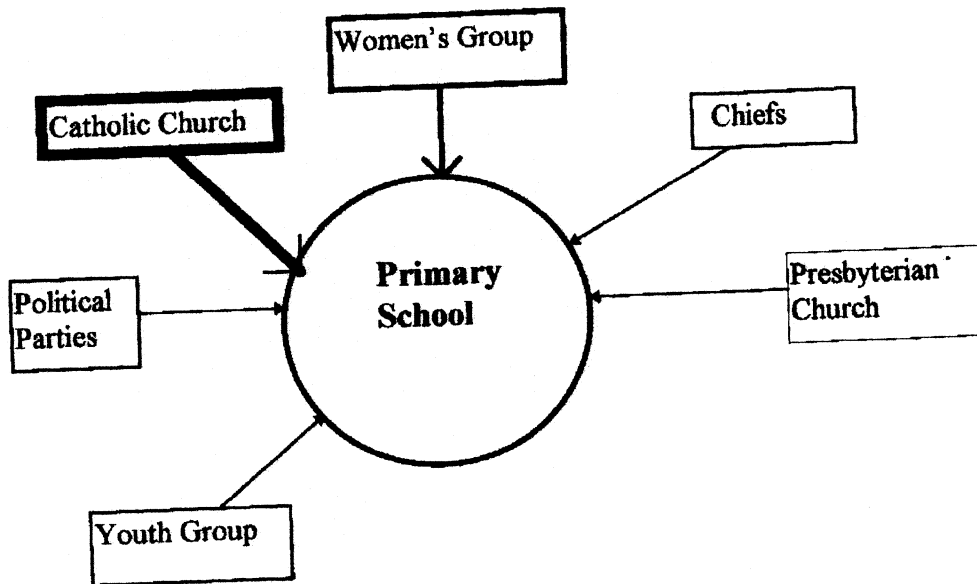
In this example, the thickness of the arrows represent involvement of these various institutions in activities of Vatumaru primary school. The Catholic Church has the biggest involvement followed by the Women's Groups and Chiefs. This exercise is not to implicate any groups for non-involvement but act as an impetus for discussions on how all groups within the community(s) can be involved in primary schools' activities.

iv) *Mapping*

Getting community members to map the school boundary is a very necessary exercise. Getting community members to work on this together may mean, coming up with a school boundary that the majority agrees with and may lessen the chances of future disputes on the school boundary. The following sequence of activities are recommended when carrying out this exercise:

- explain the importance of drawing a school map
- the initial maps should be drawn on the ground to allow input from a wider audience
- ask questions about various symbols represented on the maps
- record the issues expressed on the map
- in the whole group, ask group members to do presentations on these and discuss the issues raised

**Figure 6:** *School Map of Vatumaru Primary school and feeder villages*
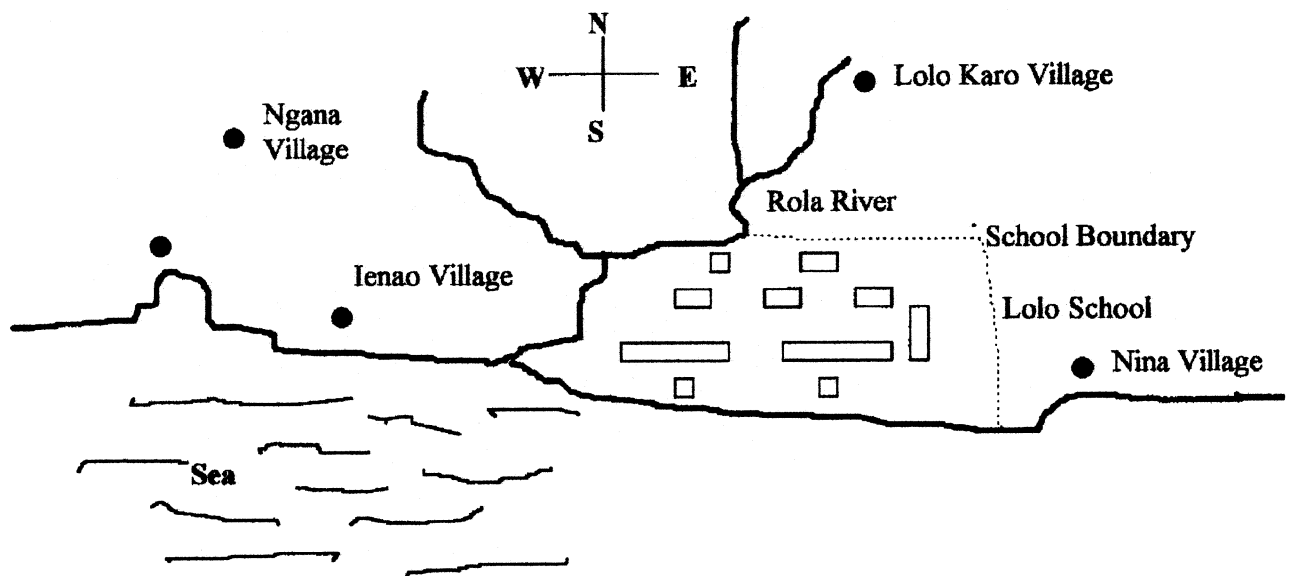
v) *Trend line*

This exercise will help community members to be more aware of various changes or trends within the community. Numerous issues can be represented on trend lines. In this particular instance, the example given will only be on population changes within a community. This issue is chosen particular to be show the level of population at any one time and the pressure that this may have on schools, especially primary.

Figure 7: *Population trendline for Vatumaru community*

Population
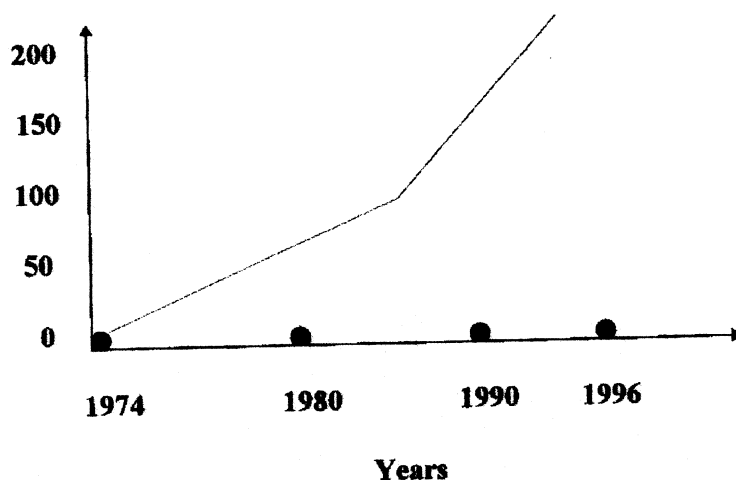
On this graph, the level or number of the population is shown on the left side of the graph while at the bottom specifies the period. Note that since 1974, the population has really exploded within the community. Points of discussion will be on how this increase will affect primary schools.

vi) *Problem Analysis*

The previous exercises will have given community members a lot of awareness about the issues and problems related to maintenance that need to be addressed. Community members will then be asked to discuss these issues and problems, at the same time stating causes of these problems and possible solutions. Recording of these discussions may be in a table as exemplified in the following table.

Figure 8: *Problem Analysis table*

Problems	Causes	Possible Solutions

Section 3: Data Application (Community Action Plan)

Once the issues which are problematic, likely causes and possible solutions have been identified, the next step is to get the community members to produce a Community Action Plan. A CAP is like a binding agreement between community members to address specific problems that are related to primary schools maintenance and decide on how to overcome this problems (as a team). Some of the common points of thought that may come out when doing this exercise are:

- reiteration of what the problems are
- suggestions of possible causes to the problems
- suggesting ways to solve these problems
- agreeing on individuals or groups that need to be involved in meeting these problems
- agreeing on a commencing date
- discussing and agreeing on resources that may be needed
- finding out where the resources to be used are coming from
- agreeing on names of those who are entrusted with the responsibility of making sure that action is being taken to fulfil what is agreed on

It must be noted that when dealing with these particular section, the problems must first be prioritized so that critical issues are dealt with first. The information gathered in this exercise may be stored in a table, as exemplified in figure 8.

Figure 8: *Community Action Plan for Vatumaru Community*.

Problems Identified?	Possible Causes?	How will we solve this?	Who will be responsible?	When will we start?	What resource do we need to address this problem?	Who will supply the Resources?	Who will be responsible to make sure that activities agreed upon are carried out?

Section 4: Roles of Major Stake holders

When meeting with community members, it is very important that roles of major stake holders in primary schools maintenance is specified. This will serve not only to clarify any misconception but also specify how the major parties are connected to schools maintenance. The following are the roles of the major stake holders in primary schools maintenance.

i) *Head Masters*

- Assist in Developing the school constitution or rules to safe guard the school
- Assist school committees and communities to understand their roles in school maintenance
- Assist in preparation of annual budget
- Assist in income-generating activities
- Assist in documenting school finances
- Responsibility over storage of maintenance material and equipment
- Assist in identifying and organising local resource people (when required)
- Occasional communication with Provincial Education Officers (PEO)
- Act as the formal link between the Government and school committee

ii) *School Committee*

- Assist in developing the school constitution
- Organise community involvement in school maintenance
- Co-ordination of maintenance work during school holidays
- Approval of school budgets
- Assist in preparation of school reports
- Assist Head Masters in maintaining school disciplines
- Organise, with the help of communities, voluntary labour
- Occasional contact with Provincial Education Officer

iii) *Central Government Auditing*

- Checking the receipts of any spending to ensure that the money is spent on the areas that it (the money) is allocated for
- Checking receipts or any other documents detailing any income generated within the school and ensuring that the amount stated matches these receipts
- advising the PEOs and the Central Education Department of any suspected mismanagement of school funds

iv) *Provincial Education Officers*

- Occasionally, communicate with head teachers and school committee members
- Receive financial and narrative reports from school committees
- organise training for head teachers and school committee members
- In charge of authorising technical assistance to schools when necessary
- Advises the department of education and Ministry of Education on proceedings in particular schools
- Oversees proceedings within the whole province

v) *Community(s)*

- Provision of free community labour and material resources
- provision of local maintenance personnel
- Making other contributions when required
- Cooperate with school committees, head masters and Provincial Education Officers