

FINAL REPORT
RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOL REHABILITATION (EU RPSR) PROJECT
FSP VANUATU COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMPONENT
PHASE I EXTENSION
Project Code 6.ACP.VA.25
Contract Code 04/97 - FSP/PWD

This is the final report of FSP Community Development Component of the EU Rural Primary School Rehabilitation Project Extension. Phase I (1995 - 1997) included the rehabilitation of 42 schools, the development of a *Primary School Maintenance Policy*, and a training programme targeted to school committees and headteachers including manuals entitled, *Community Participation in School Maintenance*, *A Manual for the Maintenance of Schools*, and *Basic Skills for Primary School Committees*. The Extension project covered the rehabilitation of an additional 8-10 primary schools over a period of six months. The *Primary School Maintenance Policy* and manuals formed the basis for community workshops held in the 51 schools covered under Phase I and the Extension.

1.0 FSP Community Development Component Objective:

To increase the level of community involvement toward school maintenance in 8 - 10 primary schools.

This was completed through a series of workshops that provided awareness and training in community involvement in primary school maintenance. In addition, FSP negotiated agreements with communities on their specific roles in the immediate school rehabilitation works. Please see Annex 1 for the FSP Terms of Reference.

2.0 Activities toward Objectives

During Phase I of the EU RPSR project, FSP held community workshops in all 42 project schools. Initial workshops focused on gathering information for the *Primary School Maintenance Policy* and for the *Basic Skills for Primary School Committees* training programme. Later workshops began putting the information into practice. Toward the end of Phase I, FSP had developed a training workshop and manuals that were based on the school committees' self defined needs for information and skills in order to improve school maintenance.

Entering into the Extension phase, FSP's primary activities focused on continuing the participatory workshops in the ten (later reduced to nine) schools chosen by MoE for inclusion in the Project. As the workshops had been trialed in Phase I, little preparation was necessary before implementation in the schools.

The workshops were jointly conducted by FSP Vanuatu and the PWD Training Unit in seven Anglophone and two amalgamated schools throughout the country. Target groups were the head teachers, school committees and community members located near project

schools. Target beneficiaries from surrounding schools were invited to all workshops in order to involve and provide skills training and awareness to as many people as possible.

The workshops were based on two manuals, *Basic Skills for Primary School Committees* (See Annex 2) and *A Manual for the Maintenance of Schools*. As mentioned above, the manuals were developed by FSP Vanuatu and the Public Works Department (PWD) for the Phase I of the Rural Primary School Rehabilitation Project. Both manuals were devised primarily to reinforce the concepts in the *Primary School Maintenance Policy* (Annex 3) developed by FSP Vanuatu during the initial EU RPSR Project phase. The workshops focused on motivating communities to become more involved in developing school maintenance plans and actively maintaining their schools, to strengthen planning and financial skills including local fundraising, to develop leadership styles and strong school committees, and to promote the creation of school constitutions to give primary school committees legal status and vision.

FSP Vanuatu through its project Community Development Adviser (CDA) has also participated in a number of meetings and workshops to discuss project matters and demonstrate the skills being taught through the EU RPSR project.

2.1. Workshop Activities

In each of the nine schools where maintenance workshops were carried out, participants covered all topics in the *Basic Skills for Primary School Committees* manual and Mr. Kalwajin Skepha of the PWD held a session on the *Manual for the Maintenance of Schools*. On a number of occasions when Mr. Skepha was unavailable, FSP was able to run those sessions on behalf of the PWD. Workshops were generally 2 - 2.5 days long.

Normally a course evaluation was included as part of the workshop in order to help FSP improve its workshop methodology to better meet the needs of the participants.

Although touring reports covered participants' responses to topics on a school by school basis, a brief summary of the activities carried out in the nine schools follows. Touring reports have been submitted to Project Management and are available on request from FSP.

2.1.1 Roles of Primary School Committee and Stakeholders

The major issues covered in this session were the legal entity of a school committee, school constitutions, leadership roles of primary school stakeholders and duties of school committee office bearers. Although a few participants had good knowledge about these topics, the majority did not. It was made clear during this session that school committees do not have legal rights unless they have a registered constitution signed by the Minister of Education. With this in place, the school committee can make legal decisions regarding the school and its activities. Most participants clearly understood the importance of developing school constitutions which would not only give legal authority to school committees, but would also empower school committees to better manage the affairs of a school and give strength to school discipline. School constitutions can also make the

Government aware of the problems primary school committees face without legal authority and help encourage the implementation of the *Primary School Maintenance Policy* developed during Phase I.

Two example constitutions were distributed along with an example School Policy. Groups were formed to discuss the constitutions and how they may be applied to their schools. It was found, however, that participants could have used more time to discuss their ideas and the development of a school constitution should be another workshop in itself. Since the workshops began, FSP has received a number of requests for assistance in school constitution development.

2.1.2 Simple Accounting Methods

The premise of this session is that if school committees are to manage their own maintenance budget, either from Government or from locally raised funds, they will need basic bookkeeping skills to monitor financial transactions properly. If the *Primary School Maintenance Policy* is eventually approved, school committees will be responsible for managing an annual maintenance budget.

This session began by first determining the participants' current knowledge of accounting and bookkeeping concepts and skills. This knowledge allowed the facilitator to tailor his training to the appropriate level. In general, participants knew the basic concepts but only a small percentage actually had the skills that were taught in the session. Consequently, this session was confusing for some who had little exposure to numbers, but very useful to those involved in the school committee, those who had their own businesses or were treasurers of other community organisations.

Discussions on budgeting inevitably led to discussions on the current policy of teachers' rents being appropriated by the Government regardless of ownership of the house, and on current Government maintenance budget allocations. Virtually all participants in all workshops felt teachers' rents should be used to maintain and upgrade schools, and current maintenance budget allocations often seem arbitrary and unfair. Both of these current policies were modified in the *Primary School Maintenance Policy*, but the Policy has not yet been accepted by the Ministry of Education. FSP could only advise participants to lobby their Provincial Education Officers and the Department of Education to change current policy and provide a more fair means of allocating resources.

The practical sessions took participants through basic skills in developing a school budget and keeping records of school funds in an account book. The importance of receipts and accurate records was emphasised. Participants' group exercises were focused on transactions that head teachers and treasurers would normally experience in schools and in communities. Using small groups, those participants who had greater experience were able to assist those just learning these new concepts and skills.

2.1.3 Planning

Although planning has been carried out by communities for well over a century, the type of planning espoused by the EU RPSR Project was somewhat different from what people were used to. "Community Action Planning" as a methodology used by the project, asks communities to look into the reasons why they want to take certain actions in order to ensure the task is a priority. Often, actions plans are based on school or community problems, and Community Action Planning can help people clearly think through and find alternative solutions. One method of planning uses a table to help communities detail their problems and solutions.

| What is the task or problem? | Why is there a problem? | How do we solve it? | When do we start? | Who will do it? | What resources do we need? | Who will supply the resources? | Who will follow up? |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |

The table is, of course, only a basis for discussions and planning, however, it compels the community to ask the difficult questions that need to be asked and acted on. Participants felt that the Community Action Planning methodology was useful as it clearly laid out responsibilities to ensure accountability. Too often plans are made, but the details of how they will be implemented and who will implement them are left out, and the plan fails.

Practical exercises required participants to develop a plan of action for their school, including school maintenance.

2.1.4 Sources to Obtain Maintenance Funds

This topic was of great interest to nearly everyone in every workshop. The session began a discussion on why local income generation (as opposed to Government and other Aid) is advantageous to schools. Brainstorming brought out many different comments and ideas but the issue of self-reliance nearly always came out as the most important. As time goes on, communities are beginning to realise and accept that the Government's role in financing primary schools is reducing no matter how worthy their intent, and communities need to take on more responsibility for their children's education.

Competition for local fundraising in most communities is fierce with churches, women's groups, youth groups, schools and other interest groups all vying for a limited amount of disposable income in the community. Frequently, creative fundraising activities are able to generate more income, as are new project ideas. The manual highlights over 100 different ideas, some new and some commonly used. The session highlighted some of the ideas in the manual and participants were asked to discuss their experiences, comments, and questions. The facilitator emphasised the importance of choosing activities appropriate to the local situation and the leadership styles within the school. Some activities need specific personalities to carry them out while others need certain local resources such as

good ground or trees. It was during this session that most schools committed themselves to initiating new income generating activities to raise funds for school maintenance.

2.1.5 Skills in Obtaining Technical Assistance

This section was developed mainly to assist and promote community utilisation of its local experts. Most schools in Vanuatu are still dependent on the Government for their technical maintenance and repair work. This can be an expensive means of maintaining the school and often unnecessary. Through FSP's experiences in Phase I of the project, it has been shown that nearly every community area or island has a wealth of experienced local experts able to complete all but the most difficult of tasks. Utilising these people has many advantages, and the first exercise of the session asked participants to list reasons for utilising local expertise so they began to think about what can be accomplished locally. Normally this list highlighted the availability of local experts, the potential improvement in relationships between community and school, the cost effectiveness and sustainability in using those local experts. Later exercises motivated participants to list down local experts in their communities and these lists were later returned to the community along with the workshop report.

3.0 Achievement / Results:

While the long term impact of this component of the project will be evident further in the future through skill and knowledge demonstrations and improved school maintenance, there were some immediate achievements noted by FSP. These include:

3.1 School representatives trained: A total of nine schools completed training under the Extension of Phase 1. This involved nine school committees comprising over 219 members and 106 community members. Details of workshop locations and numbers of participants are presented in Annex 4. Also refer to Annex 5, a map of Vanuatu showing school locations covered under the Extension phase.

3.2 Nine Schools have a School Maintenance Plan of Action: During the workshops participants developed Plans of Action as an exercise for the workshop, and also to put to practice what they learned.

The product of the workshop then became a management tool for each school. Participants commented that the exercises were very practical and could help improve schools in the rural areas.

3.3 Community Contributions to the Project: In each workshop conducted, the community was asked to contribute to the school rehabilitation. Below are the common local community commitments:

- a) Delivery of building materials to safe places
- b) Storage of building materials
- c) Housing building contractors
- d) Offer voluntary labor when needed.

3.4 Additional Contributions: An interesting aspect noted in this project was that participants were so motivated that some immediately began discussing and planning new projects for their school; using the skills learned during the workshop.

Eight out of nine schools have set up new projects as a component of their respective school Action Plans. Noaiwia School on Nguna Island was the only one that showed little interest in planning a new project, although attendance at this workshop was very low. These small projects will assist in generating income to schools particularly for on-going maintenance. Below is the list of the schools and the type of projects initiated .

| <u>School</u> | <u>New Project</u> | <u>Old Project</u> |
|---------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Dillon's Bay | Cattle project | - |
| Gambule | School canteen | - |
| | Poultry | |
| Ishia | Poultry | - |
| Lausake | Ginger | Telephone |
| Liro | Kava project | |
| | Yam project | - |
| Noaiwia | - | - |
| Nofo | Poultry | - |
| Nuguhu | Poultry | - |
| | School canoe | |
| Pialulup | Cattle project | Coconut plantation |
| | | Cocoa plantation |

Most of the schools had no projects of their own before, but during the workshop participants realised the importance of setting up these projects. Responsibility for project implementation is generally under the care of the head teacher and students during schools days and school committees during school holidays. Gambule School and Pialulup School have already indicated that their projects are functioning. Support from the Provincial Education Officers in monitoring the progress would be very useful for the sustainability of the projects.

3.5 Impact on Neighbouring Schools: The popularity of EU project and FSP workshops has had a great impact on neighbouring schools and communities. Neighbour schools sent representatives to workshops at Dillon's Bay, Gambule, Liro and Lausake schools. Participants from those schools have invited FSP Vanuatu to conduct similar workshops in their schools but due to other commitments and financial constraints workshops have been restricted to the schools involved in the EU Project.

FSP Vanuatu has received invitations from schools on the Island of Tongoa to participate in the Tongoa Education Day 16th of March, 1998 and speak on the roles of a committee

and community within a school. Roau School Committee sent another invitation for the 30th of April, 1998 to speak at their school, and the Director of the SDA Youth also sent and invitation for FSP to attend their workshop on the 7th of May, 1998. All those invitations and others have indicated community appreciation and interest in the project.

3.6 Post workshop evaluation: At the end of most workshops, participants were given evaluation forms to complete and indicate their views and perceptions of the workshop. Most participants responded positively, saying they found the workshop useful and defined a need to continue with the rehabilitation project in other schools. A sample of Post Evaluation Form (in Bislama) is attached as Annex 6.

4.0 Project Administration

FSP Vanuatu was responsible to the EU RPSR Project Manager for all aspects of project administration.

4.1 Staffing: Overall project administration was the responsibility of the FSP Country Director and Assistant Country Director. They provided project supervision, prepared final reports and accounts (See Annex 7 Final Expense Summary), and ensured secretarial and administrative services for the project. The CDA was the primary person responsible for implementing workshops and related activities. The PWD Training Unit under Kalwajin Skepha's supervision was responsible for the Public Works Department component of the workshops.

4.2 Reporting Procedures: The Community Development Adviser was responsible for submitting workshops reports from each project school and a final summary report of the project to FSP Country Director. Workshop reports were submitted to the Project Manager in two lots of five reports, and the final report submitted separately for lump sum payments. Travel expense receipts were reimbursed separately.

4.3 Copies of Workshop Reports: After each project workshop, a copy of the workshop report was usually sent to the community through the school head teacher. This was one of several means by which communities received feedback from the workshops. Others included direct feedback from FSP or the Department of Education and CDA availability to answer further questions.

5.0 Problems Encountered

There were number challenges and constraints identified that if solved, would have minimised project difficulties and maintenance problems in the Government schools.

5.1 Provincial Education Officer and Department of Education involvement: A general lack of the Provincial Education Officers' involvement and coordination with the EU Project and school rehabilitation will effect future school activities. A deeper involvement would have allowed communities to use the PEOs as a resource for planning, accounting and fundraising activities. FSP would have liked to have seen their on-going involvement and support focused on:

- Income generating projects set up by FSP to assist school maintenance.
- Actual rehabilitation of Project schools
- Improved community awareness on maintenance issues.
- Coordination of community contributions to the EU Project schools.

5.2 Transparency of funding and project activities: Questions were asked at nearly every workshop about the overall project, its funding and specific rehabilitation activities taking place. FSP was not able to gain the information to answer the questions sufficiently, putting the facilitator in the difficult position of not knowing about the project he was representing.

5.3 Demand for further project activities: Community demand for additional rehabilitation and FSP workshops was high. FSP has received numerous requests from schools and other organisations to run additional workshops, which they are unable to do given funding limitations. This puts FSP in the difficult situation of having to decline opportunities to work with other schools even though the need exists and methods proven.

5.4 Lack of Government support for the *Primary School Maintenance Policy*: The Vanuatu Government has not implemented the '*Primary School Maintenance Policy*' despite support from primary stakeholders. Some difficult issues identified by communities that the Government needs to deal with include:

- Legal status of school committees
- Allocation of rent from teacher's houses should go to schools rather than the department. Cases have been documented where communities funded and built teachers' houses but the Government still deducts rental fees.
- All primary schools need training on the development of school constitutions.
- All head teachers and school committees need basic book-keeping and budgeting skills
- Head teachers need to be compensated for their administrative responsibilities.

6.0 Recommendations:

For future community education projects and on-going education work:

- a) FSP workshops should always take place before rehabilitation works begin.
- b) There is a need to improve coordination of the European Union Rural Primary School Rehabilitation Project and other projects at the Provincial level to ensure on-going support and sustainability of project activities.
- c) Provincial Education Officers should be involved in all community workshops and activities to ensure sustainability and support of project activities.

- d) There should be transparency and free information flow in future education projects.
- e) Vanuatu Government should legally accept and implement the '*Primary School Maintenance Policy*' which was developed during the project.
- f) There remains a need for more clarification between the roles of the school council (secondary schools) and school committees (primary schools) to provide consistency of information.
- g) FSP should be funded to continue its training activities in other primary schools throughout the country.

7.0 Lessons Learned:

Briefly, a number of lessons were identified during the Extension phase of the project:

- a) Successful projects require excellent project coordination and communication among the major stakeholders, particularly within the Department of Education.
- b) Cooperation and coordinated activities between Government Departments, NGOs and communities is a viable option for project implementation.
- c) The training developed by FSP for the EU RPSR Project is both appropriate and needed within all Vanuatu primary school committees, as shown by the response received.
- d) School maintenance issues should be appropriately linked to other school activities such as general planning and fundraising in order to ensure continued interest and support for maintenance activities.
- e) Motivated and competent project staff are necessary for project success, as shown by FSP's Community Development Adviser.
- f) Community involvement in the planning process is critical for appropriate project training and activities.
- g) Cooperation and commitment between head teachers and school committees is important in developing action plans.

Tom Sari summary: Generally, the nine EU RPSR Project workshops were successful. Most participants commented positively on topics covered in the manuals. Participants felt privileged in attending the workshops and in every workshop the numbers of participants increased between day 1 and day 2. Also, in nearly every workshop they complained about the shortness of time. This is true as different people have different capacities for learning. Although there were minor concerns about timing and workshop notifications, I believe that we have achieved the overall goal of getting the community involved in school maintenance and other school developments.