

EFA 2000 ASSESSMENT

COUNTRY REPORT

Name of Country: Republic of the Marshall Islands

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TO : Edna Tait
 Director, UNESCO Office for the Pacific
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SAMOA

FROM : GOVERNMENT OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

SUBJECT : EDUCATION FOR ALL 2000 REPORT - ENDORSEMENT

We are pleased to enclose the above-mentioned Report, which has been compiled by Patrick B. Langmoir, EFA Coordinator, and Dr. Falairiva Taafaki, Special Adviser to the Minister of Education, for the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

The Ministry of Education prepared the Report through a consultation process involving sectoral Ministries, data gathering and compilation as well as various evaluation and reviews undertaken by the Government and development partners in the Republic of the Marshall Islands. It highlights achievements, constraints and future challenges in meeting the goals of EFA established by the Government during the last decade.

We take this opportunity to thank UNESCO and other development partners in contributing towards this exercise and have much pleasure in submitting the Report with our full endorsement.

We look forward to our continuing collaboration in further strengthening the EFA principles into the next millennium.

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Justin DeBrum
 Honorable Justin DeBrum
 Minister of Education

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The report was produced by Dr. Falairiva Taafaki, Special Adviser to the Minister of Education of the Marshall Islands, and Mr Patrick Langmoir, Under Secretary for Primary and Secondary education.

In the process of producing this report special recognition is due to the Minister of Education of the Marshall Islands, the Honourable Justin de Brum, whose support of the work of UNESCO and Education for All 2000 Assessment has been consistent throughout.

That this work is able to reach its final stage is due to the persistent effort of UNESCO, Apia, and its Support Team which included Mrs Celia Barelle and Mrs Ada Pannett. Special thanks to Mrs Edna Tait, Director of UNESCO Apia, for her continued support and inspiring guidance which enabled the final assembling of this report.

Thanks are also extended to the members of the Pacific RTAG Group for their assistance and support.

A final word must, however, must be said on the contribution of Mrs Ada Pannett to the report . The meticulous organisation of the document and the professional guidance that went into the report is appreciated.

INTRODUCTION

The Republic of the Marshall Islands consists of thirty-three atoll islands spread over one million square kilometres of ocean. Such a vast expanse of ocean poses logistical implications for the management of education and its delivery. Historically, the Marshall Islands had a series of political suitors including the Germans and the Japanese before it became a United States Trust Territory after World War II. The Marshall Islands gained political independence in 1979 and in 1986 entered into a fifteen year Compact of Free Association with the United States - an arrangement that covered both economic and security obligations. The Republic of the Marshall Islands is an active member of the international community, becoming a full member of the United Nations in 1984 and thereafter WHO, UNESCO and the UNDP. In the Pacific region, the Republic of the Marshall Islands is a member of the South Pacific Forum, the Pacific Community and the University of the South Pacific.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands has a population of approximately 55,000 and a birth-rate of 4%, making it the highest in the Pacific region, and which raises enormous problems for education and for human resources planning. The existing capability of Head Start Program to expand its enrolment for example nowhere meets the rapidly increasing pre-school population. Unless substantial and dramatic approaches are adopted the problems for education in the very near future will grow deeper and more complex. Of the 55,000 population, 50 % are concentrated in the two main urban towns of Majuro and Ebeye

The Republic's economy is artificially sustained through aid and support from the United States and other donor communities. Efforts to increase the productivity of the private sector are strongly supported by Government through the creation of favourable policies and incentives. To date the Government continues to be the largest employer although there are strenuous efforts to reduce the Civil Service work force. Retraining programmes designed to prepare a large number of Civil Servants to fit into the Private Sector are ongoing.

The Compact of Free Association with the United States allows for free access to Marshallese to enter and reside in the mainland United States. This pattern of migration appears to be increasing as the future of the Compact draws near the year 2001. No study has been conducted to date to determine what the possible implications are of this migration on the future of the country.

The traditional economy is based on rural farming and agricultural activities, but the level of production has been strictly subsistence. Production of copra, the only cash crop in the country could not be increased although the price has been at its all time high, the reason being that there is not enough shipping to transport copra from the main production areas- the outer islands. Effort by government to decentralise wherever possible certain functions of education, health, economic development is steady but slow.

An influential phenomenon that is affecting the whole sphere of national development in the island nations of the Pacific, including the Marshall Islands, is the fact that these nations are increasingly becoming part of a larger process that is taking place in the region. Alliances, whether political, economic or security are continuously being forged. The process of regional integration appears to be quite irreversible. Public reforms, for example, is a requirement of the economic model proposed by the Asian Development Bank and adopted by some members of the South Pacific Forum. These requirements are in part set upon by donor communities as conditions for their support of national development in small island nations. Criteria for economic support such as accountability are a part of this larger process. Island nations are grouping together to strengthen their position on environmental and fisheries issues. Similar patterns appear to be developing with respect to education. Academic performances of the Republic of the Marshall Islands public primary schools are now assessed using the PILL test, which is a test designed for Grade 4 in primary schools of a number of countries in the region. The possibility is therefore, that a regional curriculum framework for primary schools in the region cannot be ruled out. If this happen, countries like the Republic of the Marshall Islands may have to review their budgetary appropriation for primary school education.

PART 1- Background

1. EFA GOALS AND TARGETS

National Plans /EFA Plans

A number of national efforts commissioned to review education in the country included the Report of the Education Committee of 1984, the Master Ten Year Plan of 1989 -1999, Education Conference of 1990 and the National Economic and Social Summit of 1996. These discussed the need for an educational system that is thorough and efficient, and were designed to help develop children's capacity for self-reliance. National plans or initiatives to promote education in the Marshall Islands at whatever level, have adopted this philosophical vision, which found itself incorporated as the cornerstone of the Education Act of 1991 (P.L. 1991-125). The aim of education, as stated, was to prepare children of the Republic of the Marshall Islands to become self-reliant individuals and to function socially, politically, and economically in society.

(i). Early Childhood Education

Goals:

Since 1990, however, the Head Start Program in the Marshall Islands has developed to the point where it could establish long term goals, prominent among which are:

To incrementally expand pre-school enrolment over a ten year period until it is able to cater for at least 50% of pre-school children in the county.

This goal was especially made urgent by the mounting pressure brought about by the high birth rate in the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

To ensure that Head Start program is accessible to children from socially and economically disadvantaged families, including young single mothers.

The idea was to make pre-school education accessible to all children regardless of their social and economic background.

To expand the number of outer island Head Start centres and to increase the enrolment of existing centres to ensure that all children living in the rural sector benefit from Early Childhood Development programs.

About 45% to 50% of the children of pre-school going age resided in outer islands of the Republic. Expansion of enrolment and establishment of new centres would help enhance the ability of outer islands to accommodate more pre-school children.

To strengthen teacher training programs through collaboration with training agencies such as the University of the South Pacific and PREL.

The importance of well-trained teachers at the pre-school level was considered to be critical. Their availability in adequate number was just as important in order to ensure that the recognised pupil-teacher ratio was achieved and maintained.

To foster an active and ongoing joint working relationship with non-governmental organisations running pre-school programs.

The relationship was ad-hoc at the time and was confined to children of non-governmental organisations using Head Start recreational facilities or officials of both programs getting together for social activities. Structuring an arrangement in which both parties could benefit from shared learning experiences or programs would give the relationship a deeper meaning.

To strengthen the relationship between Head Start and the parent community.

This is already the hallmark of the Head Start program. However, Head Start had hoped to secure the voluntary services of parents with special or recognised skills, to encourage the support of the private sector, and to work together with parents over issues important to the operation of the Head Start program.

To securing a stable long term financial base.

Given the uncertainties surrounding United States funding and the future of the Compact, exploring and securing guaranteed sources of funding for pre-school education in the Republic of the Marshall Islands was considered to be of the utmost importance.

(ii). Primary

Goals:

To make primary education the national standard for all citizens of the Republic of the Marshall Islands and concentrate available resources on strengthening primary education before all else.

This was based on the belief that primary education would probably continue in the foreseeable future to be the only formal schooling that half of the population would receive. It should therefore be pursued as the priority area for investment of the Republic of the Marshall Island's limited resources.

To make a significant shift from central administration to local administration of primary schools in order to encourage and enable local communities to assume a greater share of the responsibility for oversight, maintenance and improvement of their schools.

Local ownership of the schools was considered a critical factor in achieving improvement goals for the primary schools. Long range educational reforms in the primary education would not be realised if local communities did not have a central responsibility for their own schools.

To establish a revised system of financing primary schools whereby annual subsidies on a per capita enrolment basis are offered to local communities to

cover a substantial part of the cost of maintaining and operating primary schools, with additional funds provided when necessary for building construction and other capital costs.

Communities would need some initial basic support as they build their capacity to augment more fully the subsidies provided by government.

To launch a pilot program to institute a community based governance system at six or eight schools selected on the basis of their readiness to serve as model schools.

This was viewed as a substantial change in the management of primary schools. It was designed to give local governments the opportunity to build their capacity to administer and to manage public schools in their jurisdictions.

To revise the role of the Ministry of Education from direct administration of all primary schools to one of providing national leadership and incentives to encourage local communities to develop and operate improved schools and to strive to achieve national goals and serve in the best interest of the Republic. The role of the Ministry of Education would focus on:

Standards: to develop and promulgate a set of minimum standards for the establishment and operation of primary schools.

Evaluation: to establish a system of evaluating the performance of primary schools managed by local communities and to conduct national standards and achievement tests.

Support: to develop new capabilities to support the efforts of communities and the needs of schools under their care in areas such as teacher training, recruitment and curriculum development.

To establish limits (lower limits as well as upper limits) on the size of the primary schools, that is no fewer than ten and no more than sixty students per grade level, in order to control the proliferation of tiny remote schools that are too small to be either academically or financially viable.

Few schools were too large for any meaningful learning to take place. On the other hand, more than forty schools had fewer than eighty students.

To adopt and implement a schedule of increasing subsidies to private schools to at least double the current amount over the next three years while making the subsidy contingent upon meeting minimum performance standards set by the Republic of the Marshall Island's government.

Subjecting public and private schools to the same standards should make both equally eligible to government support. In addition, subsidy support would make up for the anticipated loss or reduction in United States grant funds by way of textbooks and other instructional materials.

To make primary school attendance compulsory for children between the ages of 6 and 14 and restrict enrolment in primary schools to children of those ages. This

goal was intended to overcome the ongoing problem where there was an extensive range in age among students at every grade level.

To postpone the development and operation of pre-school and kindergarten programs for a few years until the problems of the primary schools are substantially resolved and their performance substantially improved.

This goal considered the development of operation of pre-school programs less of a priority compared to the urgency needed to promote primary education. There was a perception that pre-schools require less complex management skills and therefore local communities could handle them for the time being.

(iii). Learning Achievements

Goals:

To focus special attention on the acquisition of fluency and literacy in both English and Marshallese.

This was essential in order to lay down a strong foundation of language skills necessary to prepare young children to comprehend, to express, and to understand concepts in all other fields of knowledge

To develop basic maths skills and a functional knowledge of basic science.

Acquisition of basic maths skills would prepare children to understand simple computational concepts useful for their academic learning in the middle and high school. Functional knowledge of basic science laid the foundation for later learning in high school and set the basis for children to explore the world of nature and the elements of other physical sciences.

To acquire basic understanding of the social and natural environment

Children would need to gain some understanding of the important elements in their own culture, its values, the Marshallese family and its values, and how society functions. They needed to gain basic understanding the type of natural environment that the Marshall islands has, the nature of island formation, the natural fauna and flora, and how the Marshallese people interacted and made a living (fishing) out this type of environment.

(iv). Adults Literacy

Goals :

To establish a national adult literacy programme aimed especially at the population group between 15 and 35 years of age, and to incorporate the necessary incentives necessary for adult achievement.

Creating a programme with a national scope would give the literacy initiative the necessary impetus. Restricting participation to this particular age group would ensure the involvement of a potentially active labour force.

To ensure that emphasis of the literacy national initiative is directed at the participation of women.

The goal would restore the current imbalance in the literacy rates between men and women. In addition it would highlight the importance of the mother as the first educator of the child.

To provide an adult literacy teacher training programme designed to provide teachers to instruct in the literacy programme.

A cadre of very well trained and highly motivated literacy teachers would ensure high rates of success.

To establish a number of adult literacy centres in selected islands with high population for the purpose of conducting literacy programmes.

Decentralising the literacy education process would ensure high level of involvement by those who were most in need of literacy learning.

To tie the literacy programme closely to local governments and to community-based social groups and non-governmental organisations, and to solicit their support in the management of literacy activities.

This would maximise the effective support of local institutions and grass-root social groups, who, for the most part, were working closely with young people and families at the community level.

(v) Skills

Overall the goals for skill development were:

To develop systematic vocational education that is integrated with academic learning and to co-ordinate such initiatives with other work related programs.

The idea was to make vocational training at the high school level capable of providing the basic academic learning desired as well as preparing the student for the employment market.

To provide a wide range training options in occupational skills to the young people who are vocationally inclined to enable them enter the job market and to become useful contributing member of the society.

A whole range of vocational options was necessary in order to meet the different skill needs of both the young people and the demand of the job market.

To create a national administrative entity that co-ordinates all vocational training in the Republic, maintain national standards, provide skill testing, monitors implementation of programs, liase with the employment sector, and issue certification.

The establishment of such a national entity would ensure that conflict in program offers were avoided, duplication eliminated, and quality of training carefully

monitored and adhering to one national standard. Such an arrangement would ensure the efficient use of limited resources.

(vi). Quality of life

Goals :

To systematically explore the possibility of maximising benefits with respect to learning and training through the use of mass media including the use of cultural and traditional modes of idea dissemination.

The idea was to exploit all possible venues, which could contribute to the raising of the quality of life

To enhance the accessibility of the printed media including newspapers to outer islands by producing them in the local language.

The majority of those who were not always receiving the benefit of development must be brought into the process of national development.

To train Republic of the Marshall Islands educators in producing educational and training information using mass media as means for social change.

In order for the means for change to be effective those using them must also be trained in their use.

To encourage the local population, especially those from outer islands, to discuss their concerns and suggestions using the mass media channels.

The intention was to encourage local leadership and grassroots social and cultural groups to share their insights and concerns.

2. EFA Strategy and/or Plan of Action

Most of the important initiatives in the area of education in the Republic of the Marshall Islands were the sole responsibility of the Ministry of Education, both in terms of implementation and achievements of goals set. The Ministry of Education initiated a process of planning through the use of collaboration with other Ministries and Departments and non-governmental agencies where relevant. At this level overall major goals were set and appropriate policies were proposed for Government approval. Specific initiatives pertaining to specific areas of programs were allocated to those individual bureau or departments responsible. These were responsible for the direct managing and monitoring of activities in that area. Regular reviews of performance were then scheduled throughout the implementation period. Constraints were tracked down and remedies were instituted.

Over the years the Ministry of Education had conducted extensive collaboration with a number of international agencies in an attempt to achieve EFA national goals. Some of these agencies included UNESCO and other United Nations organisations, the Asian Development Bank and the Japanese Overseas Volunteers, US Peace Corp. and the Church Mission Support from Abroad.

Usually the Ministry of Education would appoint a Project Task Force mandated to monitor both the progress of the various initiatives and the use of necessary resources. In practice, one or more of the donor community members funded financial support for the creation of project implementation. The reviewing process was a joint enterprise comprising participating members of the donor community and officials of the Republic of the Marshall Islands. The Cabinet was regularly briefed and updated through the Minister of Education. Critically important national initiatives might result in administrative structuring of a certain component of the Ministry in order to make the necessary adjustment.

3. EFA Decision-Making and Management

Who decided on the formulation of a particular policy depended very much on the nature of that policy and its intended objective. For example, issues that had strong cultural bearings were bound to require the participation of a representative of the Council of the Chiefs. Issues with strong political connotations would likewise be submitted for due consideration of Cabinet, otherwise all policies which were strictly educational in objectives remained the responsibility of the Minister, Secretary of Education and, at times, the Under Secretaries. Other relevant and necessary information might be obtained from Heads of the various educational institutions and programmes. Educational matters concerning communities and outer island schools would involve consultation with Mayors, Marshall Islands Mayors' Assn and local Government Councils.

Late last year the Ministry of Education established a National EFA Advisory Committee with members appointed from amongst high Government officials. Also established at the same time was the Technical Group drawn mainly from the Ministry of Education but with others from other Ministries including the Ministry of Planning, Internal Affairs and the University of the South Pacific Extension Centre. Two representatives are from non-governmental organisations, and more than 50% in this group are women. While the EFA Advisory Group met but once to be briefed over the basic concepts of EFA and their tasks, the Technical Group met several times, in which each member was assigned a specific task to perform and to report to the group in subsequent meetings. All members of this group are full-time employees, some from the Ministry of Education, others from different sectors or Ministries. However, all were willing to take time off to carry out their assignments.

4. Co-operation in EFA

National initiatives approved by Government normally receive maximum attention and co-operation from all Ministries and Government officials. There are, however, certain matters that could cause unnecessary delay - the retrieval of records and information ranks very high on the list.

This data gathering activity of EFA was taking place at the same time as the Republic of the Marshall Islands was in the middle of its population census. In addition, the Government was also active in the process of its tax reforms. All of these required the asking of questions within Ministries, agencies and households. Timing was very unfortunate as most of those with information were engaged in the implementation of these major projects.

Projects established:

Primary Education

- the establishment of an ADB funded National Teacher Training Programme based at the College of the Marshall Islands. This project was designed to provide training for as many teachers as possible in as short a time as possible. The project is still ongoing.
- the development of a National curriculum through a joint collaboration between subject specialists from abroad and officials of the Ministry of Education. The curriculum now awaits implementation until the relevant textbooks have been procured.
- The gradual decentralisation of a number of primary schools to local communities to be managed by local Governments, and this is a goal recommended in the Ten Year Master Plan. The Ministry of Education now focuses on the maintenance of standards in skill-testing activities, the evaluation of Primary school teachers and the provision of the necessary support for the maintenance of physical facilities. The decentralisation strategy is designed to empower local communities to be responsible for their own schools.
- The gradual introduction of computers to a number of schools where teachers are trained on their use and how to access information and where students can begin to become familiar with the use of technology prior to their high school education.
- The appropriation of funds to ensure a substantial upgrading or renovation of the physical facilities of all schools in the outer islands.

In implementing these EFA goals the Ministry of Education received assistance and support from a wide range of agencies.

The following agencies provided support and assistance in these ways:

UNESCO - financial support for the Youth to Youth Movement, the revival of cultural crafts and skills including canoe building; sponsoring numerous officials of the Ministry of Education and private organisations to educational workshops and seminars in the region including three EFA workshops this year; and visits by UNESCO officials to Marshalls to advise on a range of issues and on the EFA initiative.

Asian Development Bank - assisted in the funding of a number of national projects including teacher training programme and the development of the national curriculum.

Japanese Grants - funded the comprehensive multi building complex for the middle schools and the high school and providing Japanese vocational volunteers to help teach at the primary school in the areas of science and mathematics.

AUSAID - funded a wide range of capital projects and provided annually scholarships for Marshallese students to attend universities in the region. Funded a science project for primary schools and provided their own instructors to facilitate the project in a number of outer islands, also provided funds for improving electrification in a number of primary schools and funded computers for 5 primary schools.

UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC - through its Extension Centre in Majuro, collaborated with the Head Start management and the Minister of Education in setting up a teacher-training programme designed to prepare Head Start teachers in their careers.

SPBEA - which, through collaboration with the Ministry's National Bureau of Assessment and Evaluation, conducted over the past six years, annual testing of all Grade 4 students in Marshall's public primary schools.

NEW ZEALAND AID through its Regional Embassy in Kiribati expanded its scope of support on the provision of scholarships for Marshallese students to study in New Zealand. Seven students are currently studying in New Zealand universities.

THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT through its embassy in Suva funded the installation of a satellite dish to help Majuro radio broadcast BBC Education Programmes to the outer islands.

US PEACE CORP - up until 1995 the US Peace Corp were closely involved in helping promote education in the country, particularly in the area of teaching and administration.

5. Investment in EFA since 1990

Primary education derives its legal basis from the Constitution itself and so it commands a very favourable approval of Government so far as its financial support is concerned. Primary education in the Marshall Islands to date receives 10% of the GNP, an increase of about 2.5% over the 1991 appropriation. This 10% status has remained steady over the past three years and has given the sector of education a fairly stable basis for future planning and development. This figure includes the direct grants from the United States.

When the percentage of the Republic of the Marshall Islands' operating budget appropriated to education is compared to the figure appropriated to education by

other countries in the former Trust Territories, it becomes evident that RMI gives the lowest amount to education. For example, Kosrae FSM gives about 28%, Pohnpei FSM 22%, American Samoa 20%, and Yap FSM 18%.

Education receives a larger portion of the GNP than the Police and is on comparable level with the Ministry of Health. Both Ministries, however, receive a reasonably reliable level of funding through Federal Grants from the United States Government. Although public primary education is relatively cheap compared to private schools the imposition of progressive fees, beginning five years ago with the registration fee, indicates the Republic of the Marshall Islands' desire for greater community sharing in the burden of education.

Funds from local sources are not sufficient even to cover personnel salaries, 20 % of which is met for through United States grants.

There is a tendency in the Marshall Islands that with respect to the use of donor funds a growing realisation is that core and essential programmes or any other national initiatives relating to human resources development must receive its funding support as far as possible from the Republic of the Marshall Island's Government. Donor funds are increasingly directed towards capital projects, including classroom resources and equipment.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands must inject the necessary guarantee to ensure that essential programmes are continued, even at the reduced level of operation. This strategy pertains to the Republic of the Marshall Island's determination to adhere to the principle of self-reliance implicit in the Education of 1991.

PART II -Analytic Sections

6. Progress towards goals and targets

Through the commitments the Government has made to international conventions and declarations, in particular those outlined below, the Government has also recognized the following national goals in relation to education.

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

The Republic of the Marshall Islands ratified the CRC on 4 October 1993, thereby, making a commitment to the child's right to education. Article 28 of CRC establishes that right. Education is recognised to be essential for all children. The article stresses the right must be achieved on the basis of equal opportunity". This in summary includes:

- Making primary education compulsory and available free to all;
- Promoting the different forms of secondary education and vocational education;
- Making higher education accessible to all;
- Making educational and vocational information readily available; and
- Taking measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and reducing dropout rates.

6.1 Early Childhood Development

(i). Early Childhood Development

The significance of Early Childhood Development, while generally recognised, did not receive much attention in the various studies or plans relating to improving education in the Marshall Islands. In fact, the very detailed Ten Year Master Plan of 1989-1999 referred to above recommended for adoption by government a policy that called for a postponement of pre-school and kindergarten programs. Early Childhood Development is not mandatory, unlike primary education. During 1994-95, approximately 1200 pre-school children, ages 4 and 5, were enrolled at 36 Head Start program sites, spread out in 35 atolls including Majuro.

The Head Start program takes in the largest number (70%) of pre-school age children. A few non-governmental organisations, mainly the church, do run a limited number of pre-schools, and caters for about 30% of the overall enrolment. There is a belief, however, that some of these are more care-taking arrangements than are agencies with well organised Early Childhood Development programs. The largest enrolment under both Head Start and church /non-governmental organisations since 1995 occurs in the urban towns of Majuro and Ebeye where the population is heavily concentrated. Head Start enrolment records for Majuro and Ebeye stand at approximately 36% and 23% respectively, representing more than 50 % of the total Head Start national enrolment.

The current Gross enrolment ratio (GER) is only 14.3%, indicating that more than 70% of the children in the official pre-school age do not benefit from any organised Early Childhood Development program. While the Head Start program endeavours to push for a substantial expansion in its enrolment, an area that is now beginning to show promising potential in running pre-schools is the private institutions. As evidenced in the quality of primary and secondary schools they run, once organised and well supported, private schools tend to perform better in the management of learning.

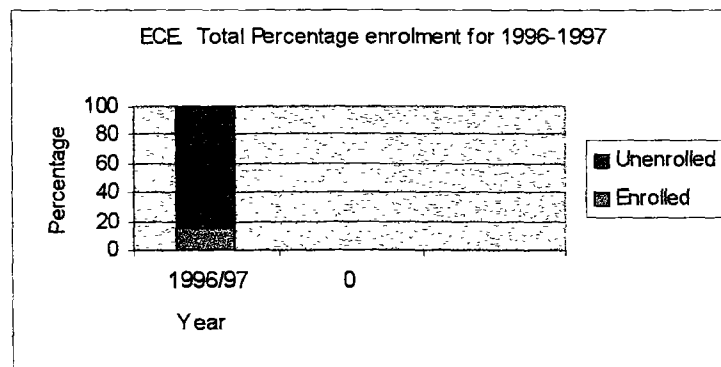
Progress towards goals:

To incrementally expand pre-school enrolment over a ten year period until it is able to cater for at least 50% of pre-school children in the county.

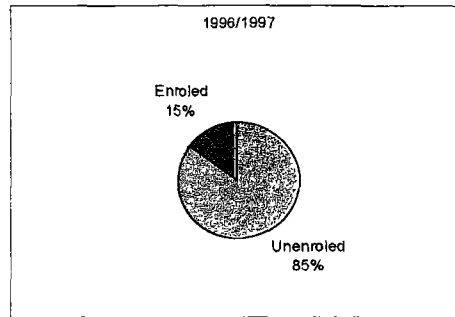
Head Start is entirely dependent upon United States of America Federal Grants for operation and for capital improvement. It operates according to Head Start United States laws and regulations and is therefore subject to any change designed for United States Early Childhood Development needs. Expansion in enrolment, for example, is not only governed by the amount of funds available, but is also influenced by regulations designed for all Head Start programs in the United States and other former United States Trust Territories. This restriction prevented Head Start Program from having the necessary authority and resources to launch in a major way a campaign designed to achieve the above goal.

In addition, the low profile given to Head Start Program in the Ten Year Master Plan simultaneously reduced the necessary emphasis and concern that should have been given to Head Start Program or to any other pre-school initiative in the country. These factors no doubt greatly retarded Head Start's ability to achieve its expansion goal.

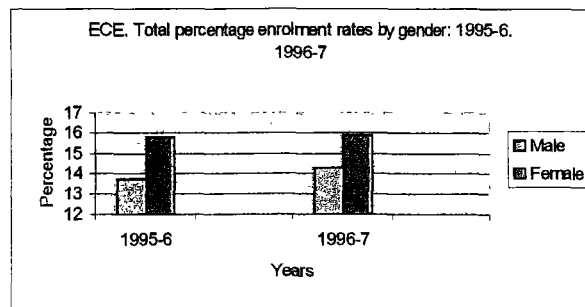
However, a recent change in the policy of the Region 9 has enabled Head Start to submit a proposal for the launching of a very large enrolment expansion programme, which will more than double its current enrolment status.



Source Table 1, Indicator 1, Database



Source Table 1, Indicator 1, Database



Source Table 1, Indicator 1 Database

Indicator 1: Gross enrolment ratio in early childhood development programmes. The Early Childhood Development (ECD) Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for 1995-6 and 1996-7 is 14.3% and 15.2%, (a difference of about 1%) indicating that the vast number of children within the official age group of 3-4 years old do not benefit from any organised pedagogical Early Childhood Development programmes. The federally funded Head Start programme (public) caters for about 70% of the Early Childhood Development enrolment, the remaining 30% by church and limited private organisations. About 90% of those enrolled in Head Start are in two urban centres of the country. While the Constitution guarantees primary education, it does not provide the same guarantee for pre-school education. The difference between the gender ratio during the same period is also about 1%, which is encouraging.

To ensure that Head Start program is accessible to children from socially and economically disadvantaged families, including young single mothers.

A number of reasons formed the basis for pursuing this goal. It has been found, for example, that new entrants into grade 1 of the primary schools who have had Early Childhood Development learning experience tend to perform better than those without. Making pre-school education available to those from disadvantaged backgrounds would provide them with an extra leg up in their academic pursuits. In addition, a large percentage of the Republic potentially active labour force constituted young parents from families in the lower social and economical bracket. Their contribution to national development was being affected because of the need for one or both of them to stay home and care for the infant.

Unfortunately, the achievement of this goal was hampered by the same constraints elaborated above. In addition, the lack of basic knowledge about the social and economic status or profile of parents made it very difficult for Head Start to determine those who would fall into the desired definition or who are eligible.

To expand the number of outer island Head Start centres and to increase the enrolment of existing centres to ensure that all children living in the rural sector benefit from Early Childhood Development programs.

About 45% to 50% of the children of pre-school going age reside in outer islands of the Republic. Expansion of enrolment and establishment of new centres would help enhance the ability of outer islands to accommodate more pre-school children.

Head Start effort in this direction was hampered by the regulations of the central Administration. It did not have therefore the required resources to establish the required number of centres and to train the number of teachers and administrators necessary to manage them. However, Head Start was able to secure some funds and to garner the local support of parents, which made it possible for a number of centres to be built in outer islands. The Head Start programme has also made waves in other areas. The procurement of a boat has enabled the Director and staff of Head Start to visit and to supervise more closely Head Start Centres in the outer islands.

To strengthen teacher training programs through collaboration with training agencies such as the University of the South Pacific and PREL.

The importance of preparing especially trained teachers for pre-school teaching was fully recognised during the past ten years. One of the main achievements thus far for Head Start is its institutional collaboration with staff development and teacher training agencies like the University of the South Pacific Extension Centre. More than twenty Head Start teachers have completed their Teacher Training Certificate under the University of the South Pacific programme supervision.

Ongoing teacher training collaboration with other professional institutions has enabled Head Start teachers to expand their scope of skills into new areas such as the teaching of science and social skills. New insights were also achieved on the management of an ideal learning environment and understanding the essential elements of a pedagogical approach to teaching young children. Head Start anticipates that in the next five years it will have a cadre of very well trained pre-school teachers and Centre administrators.

To foster an active and ongoing joint working relationship with non-governmental organisations running pre-school programs.

Head Start and church non-governmental organisations currently caters for 70% and 30% of Early Childhood Development enrolment respectively. Collaboration with the non-governmental organisations involved in pre-school programmes has also been strengthened. A new structure has been developed under the joint leadership of the Head Start programme and these private entities to continue to strengthen collaborative and learning programmes. Head Start has been consistent in its support and provision of professional services to these non-governmental organisations, which in turn have given Head Start support at the community grass root level.

To strengthen the relationship between Head Start and the parent community.

Cultivating a strong and vibrant working relationship with its parent community has been a major achievement of Head Start. Parents provide a substantial part of Head Starts' voluntary force. They play a very significant role in giving Head Start the necessary moral support and the backing it needs to attract the necessary political attention. Head Start has been successful in consolidating this element by an open door and frank consultation with parents and inviting them to offer their services in various facets of the Program. Parents are becoming increasingly aware that the best way for their children to do well in primary schools is for the children to have a sound pre-school preparation and grounding.

To securing a stable long term financial base.

Like most federally funded educational programmes or otherwise in the Republic of the Marshall Islands it is often difficult to project or to formulate long term policies when funding support is not completely guaranteed. Major initiatives contemplated by Head Start, including enrolment expansion, are subjected to this type of shortcomings. Recent directives received by Head Start in Majuro from the United States appear to give a signal that there might be a substantial reduction in future financing of Head Start. Head Start has therefore initiated attempts to explore multiple venues from which it can derive continuous funding. One such venue is a firm commitment from the Republic of the Marshall Islands Government that it will support Head Start activities to the fullest extent possible.

It was once thought that the pre-school level of education would be provided for by Section 16(e) of the Education Act as “resources permit”. This apparent lack of consideration for Early Childhood Development was probably due to the fact that the pre-school program, the Head Start, was adequately funded by Federal Grants and efficiently managed by Regent 9, an external entity which followed rules set by the United States of America government. However, the effect of not considering Early Childhood Development as priority is reflected in the very low Early Childhood Development Gross Enrolment Ratio at the Head Start Program. For example, in 1996-7 the GER was only 14.3% indicating that a very large number of pre-school age Marshallese children do not benefit from any Early Childhood Development activity

Both public and private primary schools have in the past few years taken serious note of the benefits derived from participation of Head Start programmes. New entrants who have had early childhood learning experience in the Head Start programme have consistently performed well in the early stages of their primary education ensuring a higher survival rate to Grade 5 in the future. This realisation has prompted both the Head Start and primary school administrators to forge a closer working relationship. Head Start is determined in its intention to enrol as many as possible children from disadvantaged family backgrounds, making its services to the community more equitable.

A proposal was made in the Ten-Year Master Plan that the development of the Head Start programme is deferred until the primary school education was better organised. The result was that the Head Start Teacher Training Improvement Scheme was put on a complete halt.

Indicator 2: Percentage of new entrants to Grade 1 who have attended some form of organised ECD programme.

The percentage of new enrolment in Grade 1 for 1996-7 who have had some form of Early Childhood Development learning experience is 90%, suggesting that the majority of new entrants have had some benefits from Early Childhood Development programmes. The figures for public and private schools are 91.1% and 89.5% respectively. There is quite a marked difference in the gender ratio though where the national total is 87.4 male and 94.1 female. This difference is due to the large enrolment of girls in the private schools where males stands at 80.5% while girls are significantly higher at 98.6%.

(ii) Basic Education

Primary education receives a substantial share of attention in most national plans, programs and reviews conducted to assess the progress of education in the country. This is partly because primary education is clearly emphasised in the Constitution, and partly because of the realisation that it constitutes the foundation necessary for a successful high school academic education. The goals reflected in the Ten Year Master Plan together with observations submitted by

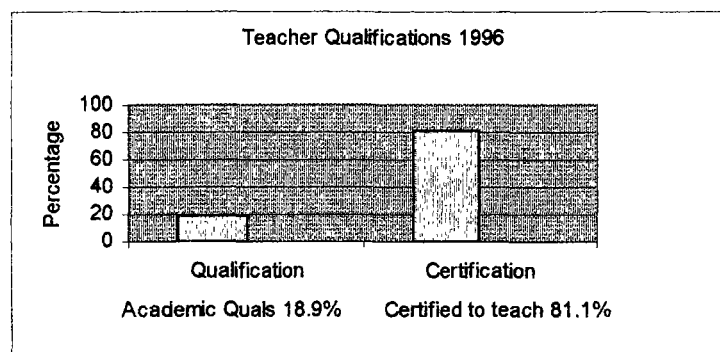
various studies including those conducted by the Asian Development Report (1996) converged on the majority of the following:

Goals:

To make primary education the national standard for all citizens of the Republic of the Marshall Islands and concentrate available resources on strengthening primary education before all else.

One of the main achievements relating to improvement of the location at primary school level is the completion of a national curriculum for Grades 1 to 6. Its implementation was launched last year following a series of workshops in the new curriculum conducted by the Ministry of Education for teachers. This is the first national curriculum of the Republic of the Marshall Islands has had since its independence in 1979. Its full implementation will finally standardise primary education standards in the country. Current efforts to expedite its use however is stalled by the lack of materials, text books and the lack of proficiency in the English language of teachers in the lower grades to understand the curriculum requirements.

Teacher Training programs for primary school teachers have been ongoing. A teacher training education programme funded by ADB is now in its fourth year of implementation at the College of the Marshall Islands. Unfortunately this programme cannot produce the number of teachers per year required to fill in teacher positions in the primary schools. Graduate courses for teacher training is also available at the University of Guam, but the number of Marshallese teachers completing these courses have been very few. Nevertheless the pupil-teacher ratio has been substantially improved from 24 to 1 in 1994 to the current status of 20 to 1 in 1999, producing an effective well trained teaching work force is the government's major concern for without this the newly developed curriculum will not be a success.



Source Table 3, Indicators 9 & 10 Database

The responsibility for disabled children and the provision of their education is recognised as a right, and is viewed with great respect at both the public and political level. Special education in the Marshall Islands receives a Special Education Funding quota and a Bureau has been especially established and

charged to administer this particular sector of education. What is needed however, is a core of very well trained teachers and administrators in the area of education of the disabled to enable them to better meet the needs of the students. All disabled students are part of the overall student body of the school and no special arrangements are made to cater for their special needs, including the need for classrooms and specialist equipment.

To make a significant shift from central administration to local administration of primary schools in order to encourage and enable local communities to assume a greater share of the responsibility for oversight, maintenance and improvement of their schools.

To establish a revised system of financing primary schools whereby annual subsidies on a per capita enrolment basis are offered to local communities to cover a substantial part of the cost of maintaining and operating primary schools, with additional funds provided when necessary for building construction and other capital costs.

The implementation of this goal was quite successfully carried out in collaboration with local governments, which were willing to take on the responsibility. Subsidy amount was based on a per student/capita basis and appropriated to local governments concerned with the management of schools. This course of action prompted local government themselves to incorporate within their own budgets a certain percentage towards the management of schools under their care. In addition, a fixed registration fee per student was instituted and has now been in operation for over five years. The funding is used strictly used for minor repairs and maintenance and for limited school supplies.

To launch a pilot program to institute a community based governance system at six or eight schools selected on the basis of their readiness to serve as model schools.

A major feature in education during the past years has been the introduction of the concept of community-based governance system, in which a number of primary schools have been transferred to the management of local government. The full impact of these initiatives may be too early to be realistically assessed since local government and the local community will take time to learn to cope with their new responsibilities. The objective of the Ten Year Master Plan in calling for a partial decentralisation of the primary school system is to free up the Ministry of Education to focus on a number of critical issues and functions necessary for the improvement of quality of education in the country. The Plan argues that decentralisation, as in the Marshall Islands is a concept that is overly American and failed to take into account the geographical logistics of the country.

To revise the role of the Ministry of Education from direct administration of all primary schools to one of providing national leadership and incentives to

encourage local communities to develop and operate improved schools and to strive to achieve national goals and serve in the best interest of the Republic.

The issue was quite complicated since teachers and administrators of schools were part of the Public Service Commission and the devolution of leadership to local government required the transfer of teachers from the Ministry of Education to local governments, which is a sphere that is completely out of the jurisdiction of the Public Service Commission.

Nevertheless, a rearrangement of domains of authority was necessary to enable the transfer to take place and thus ensure that local leadership could assume responsibility for administration of schools.

Substantial improvements of school facilities are a key priority of the Ministry of Education. Ongoing improvements have taken place in physical facilities in schools on outer islands. This work is being carried out in collaboration with local governments and school communities.

To establish limits (lower limits as well as upper limits) on the size of the primary schools, that is no fewer than ten and no more than sixty students per grade level, in order to control the proliferation of tiny remote schools that are too small to be either academically or financially viable.

The total number of students in Marshallese schools varies from place to place. Over thirty schools have a population of less than twenty, while others have more than a hundred. Such a situation poses the question of financial liability. The issue has never been resolved because to remedy the situation will result in families relocating to areas surrounding the major schools, which then creates overcrowding and environmental problems.

To adopt and implement a schedule of increasing subsidies to private schools to at least double the current amount over the next three years while making the subsidy contingent upon meeting minimum performance standards set by the Republic of the Marshall Island's government.

Private schools have traditionally played a very significant roll in the improvement of primary school education in the country. Most of these schools are run and managed by a number of church organisations. They charge fees and they seek out their own sources of funding. The government has continued to maintain a low level of subsidies to help support private schools. In recent years however the significance and the importance of private schools have become increasingly evident and the government has responded by more than doubling its financial support. The Ministry of Education is also increasingly collaborating with the leadership of the private schools over areas of educational programmes, training and management.

To make primary school attendance compulsory for children between the ages of 6 and 14 and restrict enrolment in primary schools to children of those ages.

The compulsory nature of basic education, where every Marshallese student is entitled to education, while finding its legitimacy in the Constitution poses all kinds of problems for the proper regulation of quality education. While private schools can be selective in admitting students and may, and can indeed remove under performers, public schools are loath to do this for fear of parental response and political complications. The result is that they carry with them, as long as possible, the under achievers

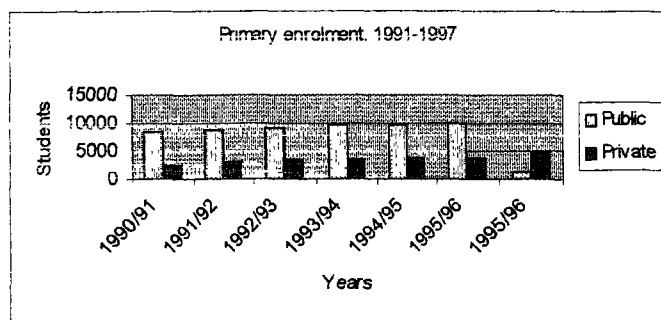
To postpone the development and operation of pre-school and kindergarten programs for a few years until the problems of the primary schools are substantially resolved and their performance substantially improved.

The postponement entailed a curtailment in the ability of Head Start to embark on new projects, innovations, or plans. It was a freeze, which prevented Head Start from expanding its enrolment and from building new constructions especially new classrooms and centres. It stopped Head Start from making the Head Start Program more accessible to children from socially and economically underprivileged family background.

Although the intention was successful insofar as it postponed Head Start's major initiatives, it was a goal that did not take into account the high population growth of the Marshall Islands. It also overlooked the fact that improving the performance of primary education is a gradual process and one which would take years to achieve.

Indicator 3: Apparent (Gross) and net intake rates in primary education.

The data shows a 100% Apparent Intake Rate (AIR) as a national total i.e. new entrants in primary Grade 1 over the population of the official primary school entrance age. The high AIR reflects a very high level of access to primary education. The fact that primary education is virtually free in public schools perhaps accounts for the high level of access. Children going to private schools obviously come from families who can afford the fees. Since promotion in public schools is automatic regardless of performance, the incidence of repeaters and over-age in grade 1 is considered nil.



Source:
Table 4,
Indicators
5 & 6,
Database

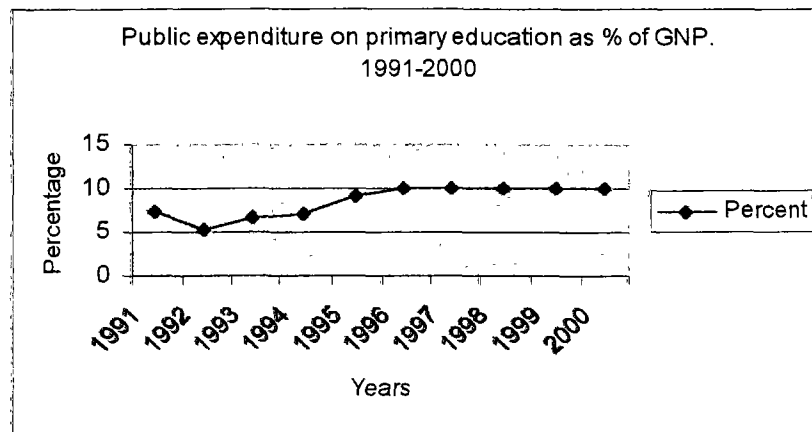
Indicator 4: Apparent (Gross) and net intake rates in primary education.

The assumption is that all children of primary school going age attend school (universalised primary education by Constitution). This plus the fact that promotion is automatic, makes the Net Intake Rate (NIR) the same as AIR in Indicator 3: 100%.

Indicators 5 & 6: Gross and net enrolment ratios in primary education.

There appears to be some discrepancies over the Gross enrolment ratio (GER) and the Net Enrolment ratio (NER) for 1996-7. In both cases, the percentage expressed is well over 100% suggesting that there are either repeaters, over-aged or under-aged. This partly contradicts the point made earlier about automatic promotion, which eliminates the possibility of repeaters.

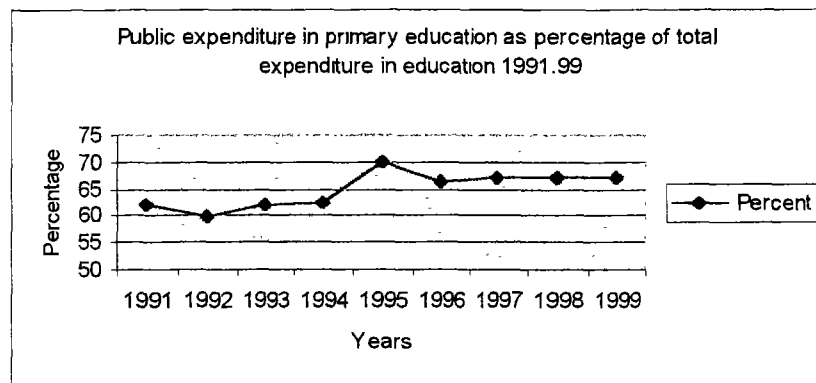
Indicators 7 & 8: Public expenditure on primary education, national education and per capita express percentage of GNP.



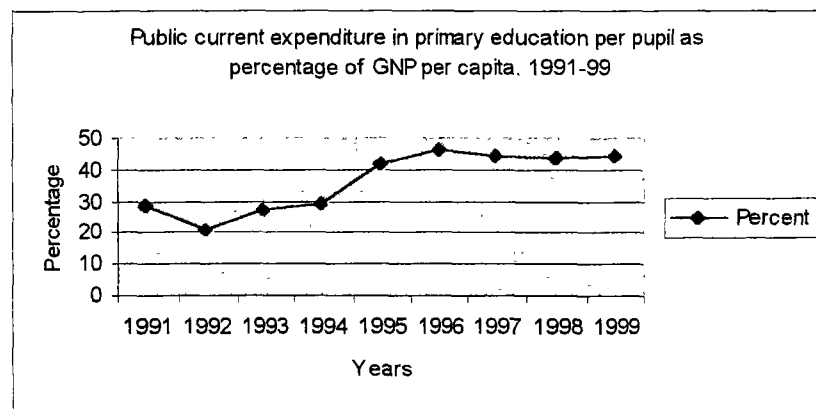
Source Table 5, Indicator 7 & 8 Database

The data available (1991-1999) showed public expenditure on primary education, on all levels of education, and the GNP for each year. This year, 199, the public current expenditure on primary education percentage of total expenditure on education is approximately 67%. This is an increase of approximately 6% from 1991. The total percentage did not vary too widely during this period except for 1992 (59.9% lowest) 1995 (70.0% highest). This shows that primary education takes the largest share of the investment on education over the years. It also shows that the investment level on primary education has been fairly steady/stable over the same period. Public current expenditure on primary education expressed as percentage of GNP has remained at 9.9% over the past three years; an increase of 2.6% from 1991's to 7.3%. We have no investment policy at present to gauge whether 9.9% is a reasonably good figure. The public current (1999) expenditure

on primary education per pupil as % of GNP per pupil is 44.2% compared to 28.6% in 1991. This is understood given that the GNP has increased since 1991, but then so has the total enrolment figures over the same period increased substantially. What this seems to indicate, is a renewed commitment of the government to the task of improving the quality of education at the primary school level.



Source Table 5, Indicator 7 & 8 Database



Source: Table 5, Indicator 7 & 8

Indicators 9 & 10: Percentage of primary school teachers having the required academic qualifications; and percentage of primary school teachers who are certified to teach according to national standards.

The figures given are those from the public primary schools only and for year 1996-7. They reflect the total number of teachers, male and female combined. No figures were available from private schools. 18.9% of the total number of teachers had High School Diploma as minimum academic qualification. 81.1% has an Associate Degree as the recognised certified qualification to teach.

Indicator 11: Pupil-teacher ratios in primary schools.

The national average of PTR for year 1996-7 is 20.7. It should be noted, however, that this figure does not specify whether it includes the number of part-time teachers and teacher aides. For public and private primary schools the average is 20.9 and 20.1 respectively. These figures fall very well within the nationally recognised PTR, which is about 20. There are however, substantial differences in the PTR in some individual schools. For instance, public primary schools in the urban towns of Majuro and Ebeye, have a much higher PTR, varying from 25 to more than 50. In a number of outer island schools, the PTR is as low as 3 to 7. Consolidation of schools in the outer islands has been a subject of discussion at certain levels of government. It is difficult to create a more acceptable PTR in urban schools because of the lack of teachers to meet the growing urban primary school age population.

| Type of School | Total Teachers | Total Enrolment | S/T Ratio |
|----------------------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------|
| Pre School [Head Start] | 890 | 1099 | 12.34 |
| Public Schools | 445 | 9136 | 20.93 |
| Private Schools | 165 | 3327 | 20.16 |

Source: Table 6, Indicator 11, DataBase
Marshall Islands Ministry of Education Student Enrolment,
1996/97

Indicator 12: Repetition rate in primary education by grade.

Although it has been indicated earlier that promotion is automatic regardless of performance, it appears from the data that there is a certain degree of repetition. For year 1996-7 repetition occurs throughout from Grades 1 to 5, with the highest in Grade 1 and the lowest in Grade 5. Gender-wise, the figure for males is consistently higher than females for all grades. The percentage of repetition is

less for both genders in the higher grades. No official reasons/data are currently available to explain the basis of repetition, whether it is performance-based or is determined by the capacity of the next grade (classroom space and PTR) to take on students from the grade below. No explanations/data are available either as to why the incidence of repetition reduces as the grades progress.

Indicators 13 & 14: Survival rate to Grade 5 and coefficient of efficiency.

The survival rate (SR) for Grade 5 for the year 1996-7 is 94%; both sexes (MF) combined. Individual gender data indicates the SR for males to be 93.5%, and females, 94.3% suggesting that both sexes compare well throughout the primary school grades, 1 to 5 with females doing slightly better. This data does not necessarily reflect the quality of learning achieved. The fact that the SR is not 100% signals there has been either repetition or incidence of dropouts or both. The ideal or official number of pupil-years for a cohort to complete Grade 1 to 5 is five. Data available (Indicators 12, 13 and 14) clearly show the occurrence of repetition throughout grades 1 to 5. This is reflected in the coefficient of efficiency (less than 100%) to grade 5 as follows: both sexes: 87.8% males 85.9% and females 89.8% The gender difference in the SR and coefficient gender parity index is about 1% respectively.

(iii) Learning Achievement

The Marshall Islands Ministry of Education employed several testing programs as a means for gauging the level of learning of its students. Among these tests are: the Micronesian Achievement Test Series (MATS), the California Achievement Test (CAT), and the Armed Forces Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB). In more recent years PILL Test under the SPBEA has also conducted each year a series of its test nation-wide for grade 4 students. These tests varied in their particular area of learning objectives. Some emphasised reading, listening and mathematics, others such as PILL focused on English, Marshallese (local) and Mathematics. The learning achievement goals of the Republic for primary level education focus as reflected in the curriculum were as follows:

Goals:

To focus special attention on the acquisition of fluency and literacy in both English and Marshallese, to develop basic maths skills and a functional knowledge of basic science, and to acquire basic understanding of the social and natural environment

The results of examinations conducted over the years in various grades of basic education indicate a large gap and a need for improvement. Tests conducted by the Micronesian Achievement Test Series (MATS), the Californian Achievement Tests (CAT) and the PILL Test conducted under the auspices of the SPBA indicated a very low academic performance in the public primary schools. The percentage of 'at risk' students in English and Marshallese and in Mathematics ranged from 75% to 85%. The performance of primary schools

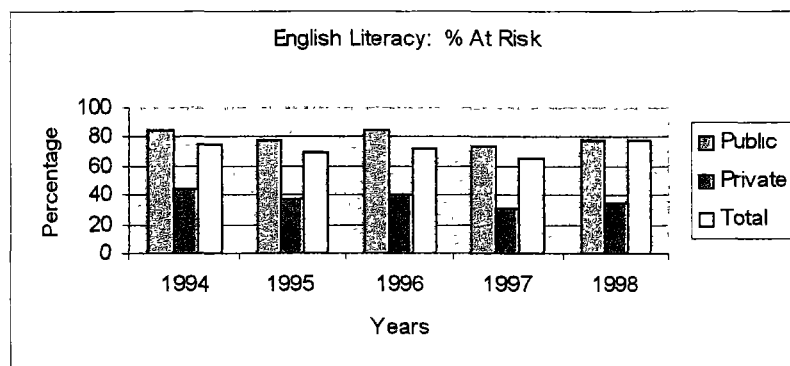
students in the primary schools however point to an 'at risk' percentage which ranged from 40% to 60%. This low performance of the part of primary school education has persisted over the years prompting some international agencies to comment that all effort to improve this performance had failed.

Source: Marshall Islands Pacific Islands Literacy Levels, Year 4, 1998 Report

The Ministry of Education is putting together a three year Strategic Improvement Plan designed to provide a very concentrated, coherent package of improvement programmes directed to a number of selected schools. This package would involve the selection of highly trained teachers, a specially designed programme under strict management and supervision of the Ministry of Education. Regular reviews over a three-year period to determine its efficiency would lay the basis for the Ministry to expand the programme nation-wide. It is anticipated that this programme will be put together in collaboration SPBA, the Asian Development Bank and the Ministry of Education.

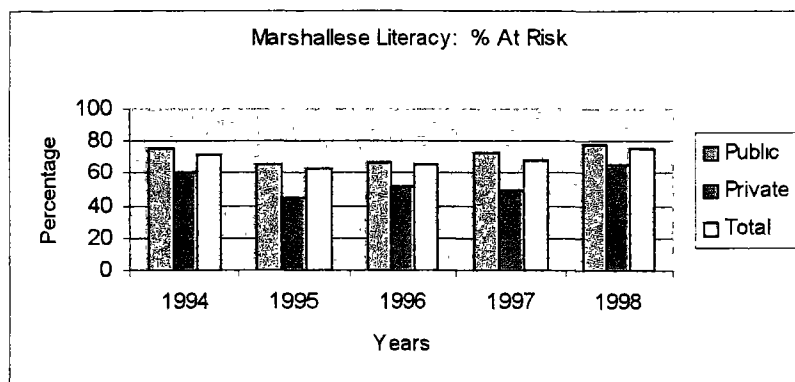
It is difficult to present a specific analysis of learning achievement at the primary school level, since in the context of the Marshall Islands the practice has always been that students, regardless of their abilities, would automatically move up to the next grade. If the results of the Pill Test which covers abilities in the English and Marshallese languages and mathematics are taken as a basis to measure students literacy level then it is possible to say that as high as 60% to 80% of students in Grade 4 in all public schools are below the recognised literacy standard.

Table No 7



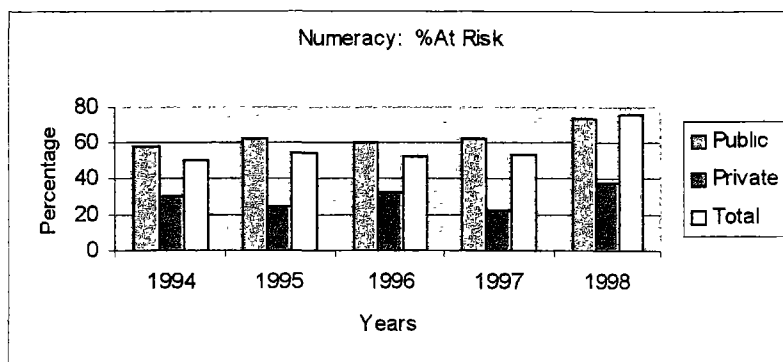
Source: Marshall Islands Pacific Islands Literacy Levels 1 (Year 4) 1998 Report

Table No 8



Source: Marshall Islands Pacific Islands Literacy Levels 1 (Year 4) 1998 Report

Table 9



Source: Source: Marshall Islands Pacific Islands Literacy Levels 1 (Year 4) 1998 Report

Indicator 15: Percentage of pupils who master basic learning competencies. RMI does not have an established national assessment/test system for the primary level of education at the present. SAT (School Assessment Test) and PILL Test have been used from time to time. Each school has its own assessment/test arrangement. Although PILL Test scores for Grade 4 are available from 1994 to 1998 except for 1996, there are numerous issues which question its validity and which require some explanation. A combination of comparable tests (PILL plus others) together with perhaps the creation of some suitable statistical formulae may be necessary. Since this matter has not been reasonably settled yet no attempt has been made in this narrative to show PILL test scores as it may create

confusion or wrong impressions on which future policies relating to the subject may be based.

Indicators 16, 17 & 18: - Adult Literacy rates 15-24 years and 15 years and over; Literacy Gender Parity Index (GPI) - No goals were set

(iv) Adults/Literacy

Figures derived from Population Census 1988, showed the average national rate for adult literacy in the Republic of the Marshall Islands was about 85%. The literacy rate for women was slightly lower at about 75 to 80%. When compared to literacy rates of other island countries in the region the Republic of the Marshall Islands literacy rates seemed relatively low. There seemed to be a number of reasons for this state of affairs - until two decades ago the Marshall Islands had never had an educational system of their own. Prior and during the Trust Territories days education was a relatively makeshift enterprise. The resulting weakness and limitation of the educational system then, and particularly the primary level, combined with a complete absence of any adult education programmes, ensured the continuity of low literacy rates. There was, even then, an ongoing concern that increase in the number of 'at risk' students in the public primary schools would lead to high drop-out rates early in their academic career. This would result, eventually, in high illiteracy rates during the adult's life. The following national goals were designed towards promoting literacy in the Republic of the Marshall Islands:

Goals:

To establish a national adult literacy programme aimed especially at the population group between 15 and 35 years of age, and to incorporate the necessary incentives necessary for adult achievement.

Developing the necessary plans to help facilitate the achievement of this goal was never formalised and thus was hardly off the ground. Although there were false starts on a number of occasions, it did not materialise. There was once an arrangement for its funding or part of it to be met for by the New Zealand Government, and a team to undertake the initial surveys was anticipated. It is possible to assume that since most Marshallese at the age group of 15 to 35 years were sufficiently literate with respect to basic skills or understanding in their own language and basic skills in numeracy there was no urgency to pursue the goal.

The Adult Basic Education, or General Education Development Program, a federally funded program, caters towards the needs of high school dropouts to have a chance to get their high school equivalency certificates, or diplomas.

To ensure that emphasis of the literacy national initiative is directed at the participation of women.

To provide adult literacy teacher-training programme designed to provide teachers to instruct in the literacy programme.

This goal was not achieved

To establish a number of adult literacy centres in selected islands with high population for the purpose of conducting literacy programmes.

This goal was not achieved

To tie the literacy programme closely to local governments and to community-based social groups and non-governmental organisations, and to solicit their support in the management of literacy activities.

This goal was not achieved.

(v) Skills

The expansion of basic education into areas of skill development starts quite early in the academic career of a student. Goals 2000 introduced basic concepts of occupational skills in a number of limited areas at the primary school level. All high schools had two tracks of studies: academic and vocational, the latter providing a range of vocational and technical skills for youth in the basic skill areas such as electricity, auto-mechanical, carpentry, agriculture and home economics. Other technical programs were being offered by training providers such as the Job Training Partnership Act and the College of the Marshall Islands for adults under the agencies of the National Training Council.

Overall the goals for skill development were:

To develop systematic vocational education that is integrated with academic learning and to co-ordinate such initiatives with other work related programs.

A number of tracks or venues do exist in the Marshall Islands, enabling the translation of basic education into useful skills. All public high schools operate a vocational track that integrates with the academic curriculum. This track offers students who are vocationally inclined a number of basic skill areas which includes

- electrical wiring
- auto mechanics
- agriculture
- Marine engineering
- Home Economics

To provide a wide range training options in occupational skills to the young people who are vocationally inclined to enable them enter the job market and to become useful contributing member of the society.

Graduates from high school vocational programmes may either enter directly the job market or pursue further training at the Job Training Partnership Act Programme (JTPA) which is federally funded. The JTPA conducts exactly the same type of programmes as the high school teaches but more focused and intensive. JTPA instructors are well trained; some of whom were a product of Technical Institutes in Australia. The College of the Marshall Islands also provides skill development training in the area of Business Management, Accounting, Computer Science, Nursing and Teacher Training. The University of the South Pacific Centre also offers a range of options including Library Management and Computer Sciences. The Fishery National Training Centre (FNTC) offers basic skills in navigation, marine cadets and basic fishery skills.

To create a national entity that co-ordinates all vocational training in the Republic, maintain national standards, provide skill testing, monitors implementation of programs, liaise with the employment sector, and issue certification.

In 1994, a law called the the National Training Council Act (P.L. 1994] was passed by the Marshalls Parliament establishing the National Training Council. The Council, under the granteeship of the Minister of education, was effectively made the overall national co-ordinating body for all training and human resources development in the country. The National Training Council is a quasi entity governed by a Board whose members are drawn from all sectors of the public and private sectors. The Board is basically responsible for setting policies and for overseeing the work of the Council. In specific terms, NTC ensures the maintenance of standards of all training activities in the area of trade and vocational. It liases with the employment sectors and training providers, both within the country and abroad.

The budget for the Council is met for from fees collected from all alien workers in the country.

(vi) Quality of Life (Education for Better Living)

Goals :

To systematically explore the possibility of maximising benefits with respect to learning and training through the use of mass media including the use of cultural and traditional modes of idea dissemination.

No study was ever taken to determine the most effective mode, or a combination of modes for communicating innovations and ideas within the cultural and social

context of the Marshallese people. The use of the mass media to convey educational information designed to raise awareness and to acquire knowledge and skills and the Ministry of Education throughout had used values to great effect. In the Marshall Islands forms of mass communication included radio, television, and local newspapers, social, economic and traditional groups and the church.

Nevertheless, there has been a dramatic increase in the use of the mass media to convey educational information during the past decade. The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Cabinet accepted the responsibility to establish a media centre, fully funded and managed by trained technicians. This centre prepares teaching material, printing and videos, and voice cassettes for use in outer island schools. In addition the Ministry of Education takes advantage of its allotted time over the radio to air its regular teacher training advisory notes. A number of schools now do have Very High Frequency (VHF) equipment which allows teachers in outer island schools to communicate directly with the appropriate divisions of education in Majuro. The operation of this equipment in various schools has greatly reduced the cost of air travel by Ministry of Education staff and vice versa.

The Health Education Department of the Ministry of Education also takes advantage of a combination of mass media venue, including radio and videotapes to conduct its various teaching programmes, including HIV/AIDs and Nutrition.

The installation of a full fledged University of the South Pacific Net Satellite will open up a new vista for Marshallese teachers to benefit directly from Teacher Training Education delivered from the University of the South Pacific, Suva Campus.

A plan is being formulated under the leadership of the Minister of Education to see whether teacher training could be conducted, even to a limited degree, using new forms of technology for the benefit of outer island schools. In a number of primary schools in the Marshall Islands, and especially in the Majuro school system, the use of video is extensive.

To enhance the accessibility of the printed media including newspapers to outer islands by producing them in the local language.

People in the outer islands had the radio as their only source of information. There was only one national paper, which was privately owned and was in English. Efforts to produce a publicly owned paper in Marshallese have been slow.

To train Republic of the Marshall Islands educators in producing educational and training information using mass media as means for social change.

None of the representatives from all Ministries was professionally trained in using the mass media as a means of effecting change and development. Each depended on the local radio announcer to "announce" information for them.

To encourage the local population, especially those from outer islands, to discuss their concerns and suggestions using the mass media channels.

Communication had been a one-way flow: from government and other social organisations to the people. Those at the grassroots were usually media shy and had not been exposed to using the media as a means for participating in the welfare of the community or the nation.

Almost all Ministries of Government use mass media for public information. The Ministry of Health in particular, because of the geographical logistics of the country, depends very largely on the radio for announcing its messages and for communicating directives to outer islands Health Clinic centres. The Ministry of the Interior, which manages all local government, is another heavy user. The private sector and more recently, the business community have increased the demand for more efficient means of communication with their operations in the outer islands. The National Radio broadcasting capability has been upgraded, increasing its distance capacity, which encompassed every island in the group.

The Youth to Youth Movement created some ten years ago through the tireless effort of a young woman has grown both in strength and in vision beginning with a modest membership it has now increased to the extent that almost every young Marshallese belongs to this movement. The government of the Marshall Islands favourably supports it, although the bulk of its finances come from the fund-raising of its own activities. In recent years it has developed its capacity to collaborate with regional and international organisations, including UNESCO. Church organisations within the country and the region have also recognised the potential of this movement to bring about change in the community. The Youth to Youth Movement works quite closely with a number of Ministries including the Ministry of Health and Environment, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Education. The Movement is especially apt in using Marshallese culture to convey educational, health and development issues. The result is the creation within itself of a very active drama group that tours the outer islands. In recent years the group has represented the Marshall Islands in a number of cultural events abroad.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands private sector community, in particular the Chamber of Commerce, is involved in a number of social issues aimed at improvement of the quality of life of the people. They have contributed funds towards the installation of recreational facilities in sports in a number of primary schools and have set up garbage collection facilities in key points, particularly in the urban centres.

The French Government provided both finance and technology know-how for the complete solar power installation on the entire island of Mejit.

The Department of the Interior of the United States provided substantial equipment for the desalination plants during the prolonged El Nino drought and compensations for the damage caused by Cyclone Paka.

The Japanese Government also provided a substantial amount of funds to improve the quality of roads in the city of Majuro.

A number of church organisations continue to render major support to specific areas of health education. One such organisation (an American group) focused particularly on means for addressing problems associated with diabetes.

The UNFPA has, over the years, conducted a number of seminars, workshops and discussions on the area of family planning. They are particularly strong in education of the public and in the development of the necessary database.

The UNDP supports a number of development areas. Their recent series of workshops focused on environmental protection, including coastal protection, and the development of an inventory of all Marshallese bio-diversity/plant species.

ST. JOHN'S AMBULANCE AND RED CROSS - These two organisations have, over the years, injected a high level of support, particularly on health-related issues.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION - provided regular support, particularly in the area of health management and support, and has provided guidance on how the Republic of the Marshall Islands could best exploit opportunities within the organisation to its benefit.

Non-governmental organisations are active on a number of issues that affect the lives of families; in particular the mothers and other child care problems. These organisations work with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Health. The Pacific/Micronesian Association for the Training of Social Workers and Midwives are an active group in the area and have hosted a number of training workshops in the Marshall Islands. The Association particularly focused of the training of midwives and social workers to help families in the training of Mother/Child Care and maternal skills.

The Ministry of Health carries out an active programme of TB control in connection with the United States Government and the Centre for Disease Control, Atlanta.

BAWAJ Club is the Marshall Island's Women's Group whose membership are women from a number of atolls and they been very prominent in social activities

and recently fundraised, and achieved, their goal of providing for the Ministry of Health a Mammogram machine, the first such machine in the Marshall Islands.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands responded to the threat of the El Nino drought by putting into practice two specific strategies :

(a) The construction of a very substantial water catchment in Majuro itself capable of storing almost 3 million gallons of water. Connected to this was an underground pipe that ran for 17 miles from an underground water table. This arrangement greatly helped meet the demand of a heavy populated urban centre. The use of fresh water for waste disposal was discontinued and this was replaced with the use of seawater.

(b) The launching of a domestic water supply scheme in the outer islands which involved the mapping of underground water tables, followed by the installation of water tanks in family houses, schools and health clinics. This work was done in conjunction with local governments.

A resurgence of cultural heritage in a number of areas including canoe building has encouraged the Government to set aside a day in the year (Public Holiday) where traditional competitors could participate in canoe racing.

7. Effectiveness of the EFA strategy, plans and programmes

Almost all national plans, short or long term, experience a hard time to reach their final stage of completion. A number of reasons can be attributed to this apparent shortcoming. To begin with local educators are rarely partners in the conceptual and planning stages. External organisations tend to come in with large concepts of organisations and management. These are attractive to local ministries and institutions because of the large sums of money which usually accompany these projects or programmes. Assessing local capacity in terms of programme implementation and management is hardly carried out. The result is that for the most part, the forward momentum of these initiatives is almost dependent upon external consultants. Such an approach continues to alienate externally conceptualised educational and development programmes from those who are supposed to implement the projects. An effective medium, which would define a working relationship between the two is needed for both parties would need the support of the other.

A possible solution to this difficulty is to carve the programme to the level that is within the management capabilities of the executing institution. This will reduce the complexity that is always associated with macro-planning and then subject such small entities to extensive joint reviews by both local operators, the planners and consultants. It is desirable that no new major initiatives should be introduced while local operators and the institution which is involved are fully engaged in the

implementation of an existing programme, otherwise dilution of effort and time will occur and the quality of performance will be severely affected.

The three major or principle achievements in EFA since 1990 were:

The completion of the national curriculum for primary school level, grades 1 to 6, which is the first national curriculum that the Marshall Islands has ever had since its independence. Its implementation ensures one standard of primary education throughout the country. The second achievement is the teacher-training programme. Although this is currently facing obstacles it has the potential to grow and to systematise itself into a permanent teacher training institution. The third achievement is the Community Based Governance System in which a number of primary schools have been transferred from the Ministry of Education to the management of local government. This has already shown positive results and has freed the Ministry of Education to focus more on the maintenance of standards, evaluation and the provision of necessary support.

8. Main problems encountered and anticipated

Leadership changes

During the past five years the Ministry of Education has had four ministerial changes and four Secretaries of Education. These substantial changes in the leadership level have had direct impact on the ability of the Ministry to maintain the momentum of its major initiatives.

Further and substantial changes occurred when public reforms requiring reduction in force (capital RIF) resulted in a number of teachers and personnel being retired from the Ministry.

Proliferation of Education Programmes

There is an ongoing proliferation of educational projects that often tends to overload the ability of the Ministry to implement its already heavy schedule. Most of these activities are associated with the availability of federal funds. Their adoption means the relinquishing of ongoing activities. They are never integrated into the already defined goals of the Ministry of Education; they operate as separate entities by virtue of the fact that they have independent funding support. They are never permanent but terminal and their end comes when the Government of the United States no longer needs them.

Programs too large for local institutional capacity

Most of the major initiatives proposed and funded by donor communities often come as massive projects requiring complicated methods for planning and management.

Geographical Location

Geographical conditions in the Marshall Islands pose immense difficulties in the delivery of education - vast expanses of ocean raised problems with the planning, supervision and monitoring of education. The dispersion of islands reflects the dispersion of the demography as well, making the consolidation of schools virtually impossible. Current effort by the Ministry of Education to establish distance learning through modern technology is underway. Air services are unreliable and the weather conditions do not often permit contact between outer island schools and the Ministry of Education.

Teachers Qualifications

The majority of teachers engaged in primary school education are themselves products of the same schools. They have had limited years at high school level before assuming a teaching career. A few have been exposed to short-term in-service teacher training either at the College of the Marshall Islands or elsewhere. It is rare to find one who has been through the rigour of a systematic teacher training programme for at least two years. We are thus faced with a teaching work force, which is in need of substantial professional development.

Communication

Communication between the Ministry of Education and schools or local government officials in the outer islands is often very difficult, the radio being the only mode of communication for a long time and only recently was VHF equipment installed. Communication within the region and international organisations is almost as difficult. The cost itself is prohibitive.

National Standards

There is no recognised national academic standard required by primary school students entering high school. The Marshall Islands High School in Majuro accepts students with 38% passing grade. Jaluit High School accepts students with 33% passing grade. The Northern High School takes in those with 30% passing grade.

Data gathering and Analysis

This area continues to be a major deficit with the Ministry of Education. To date the Ministry lacks a database that contains important information for analysis and for future planning. Agencies or persons wishing to gain insights into the preferences of students, for example, would have developed their own tools and instruments. Changes in Ministry of Education personnel also contribute greatly to this problem.

Lack and Uncertainty of Finance

Relative to GNP the annual appropriation for education has been fairly steady. However, two major concerns need to be addressed - ongoing public reforms and financial management has already curtailed the level of funding from government. The upcoming negotiations for the Compact of Free Association

with the United States provides a cloud of uncertainty on whether the Ministry of Education will continue to benefit from Federal Grants support, and whether the government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands will have the ability to sustain its present level of commitment.

The Republic of the Marshall Island's artificial economy continues to be sustained by funds available through Compact agreements. This agreement will end in the year 2001. Over the years the package of funding has been annually subjected to gradual reduction. Whether there will be substantial changes in the level of support remains uncertain. This poses problems for long term planning and the formulation of the necessary policy for operating a national education system. Over the years too, the Ministry of Education has benefited from United States Federal Grants that help support a number of its key programmes, including the Head Start Programme and the Job Training Partnership Act. Funding for both programmes may be terminated in the very near future.

9. Public awareness, political will and national capacities

Public support for basic education, like political support, has always been strong. Government support for the achievement of national EFA goals, for example, is consistent with its national commitment over the years. Ongoing public reforms pertaining to the creation of a well-trained, capable work force has brought into sharper focus the need for an efficient Ministry of Education, and plans are under way to review the present structure and to incorporate a more streamlined administrative operation. One of the major tasks facing the Ministry of Education is to examine closely those elements within its structure and functions which were originally derived from the American system of education and which no longer have any relevance in the context of the Marshall Islands.

Most schools in the Marshall Islands have strong Parent-Teacher Associations, which meet regularly and discuss the affairs and progress of the schools. This is a great improvement from what used to be during the past ten years - the parents tended to look at the responsibility of education as the business of government. The introduction of fees, for example, in recent years, has not resulted in the reduction of enrolments or parents withdrawing their children from school.

The political support for all educational initiatives, with the potential for building human capacity of the Marshallese people, has been consistent throughout. The establishment of the College of the Marshall Islands, charged with the responsibility of providing tertiary education is one such example. The creation in 1993 of the National Training Council, with a mandate to co-ordinate all technical and vocational training in the country, is another. The substantial expansion of the capacity of high schools to take in more students is sufficient demonstration of the political commitment to education. These are done despite the economic constraints facing the Republic. The passage of the Education Act of 1991 which delineated the laws and regulations designed for the advancement

of the country, and a call in 1996 by the government on all ministries, local governments, non-governmental organisations, and traditional leadership to a national summit in Majuro to discuss issues of development, and in particular, education, are a measure of the political determination to make education a pivotal priority to the progress of the nation.

The Republic of the Marshall Island's institutions, like all other development agencies in the country, are learning to assume greater responsibilities. It is a learning process for most and perhaps an appropriate measure for defining national capacities should be the ability of these developing entities to work together, to collaborate, and to develop a shared vision to its common goals. Increasing partnership between the public and private sectors ensures the combined forces a united approach to development. The religious segment continues to constitute a domain that gives both public and private education perfect partnership to addressing education needs of the country.

10. General Assessment of the progress

The exercise of pulling together all the necessary information pertaining to EFA is the first of its kind in the Marshall Islands. Its importance to the country, for purposes of planning and analysis, is immense. It will constitute the basis for the establishment of the database for the Ministry of Education. Given its importance the key groups involved are of the considered opinion that an office be set up, be fully supported, and if necessary, be brought into close collaboration with the Bureau of National Assessment and Standards. It is also proposed that the office, once established, should be involved in the formulation of policies and strategies for education, and that the current operating groups may either be evolved or formalised to ensure that the correct momentum is maintained. The office should have the capacity to publish its reports so that other ministries and the public in general benefit from the information.

On the whole the major parts of EFA plans have exhibited progress one way or the other, some more than others. The Government's steady budgetary commitment has continued to give the Ministry of Education a certain measure of stability. The National Teacher Training Programme, despite major constraints, continues to produce more than twenty trained teachers a year. The national curriculum with emphasis on science education is well on its way despite text books non-availability. The community based governance system is gaining momentum through the increased support of the school community and local government. The Ministry of Education forged ahead with its renovation programmes for outer island schools despite acute shortage of funds. The introduction of computers in a number of private schools is gaining popularity with teachers and students and is attracting potential for assistance from a number of donor agencies. A number of the Republic of the Marshall Islands' students are now studying in New Zealand universities and the University of the South

Pacific, a signal that the Republic of the Marshall Islands' students can compete with their counterparts in the region. The increased appropriation for Special Education and further assistance from the United States Government may result in the creation of an effective entity within the Ministry of Education to deal and to manage Special Education needs of this particular programme

PART III - Prospectives

11. Presentation of new policies

Early Childhood Development

The Head Start Programme, or whatever it may be termed in the future, will endeavour to expand its enrolment until such time as it is able to accommodate the pre-school educational needs of at least 50% of pre-school children in the country.

The Head Start Programme, or whatever it may be termed in the future, will ensure in its selection process, that socially and economically disadvantaged children have equal access to admission in all public pre-school institutions.

The Head Start Programme will adopt an ongoing, decentralisation policy and will endeavour to ensure that all children residing in the rural sector or outer islands benefit from Early Childhood Development Programmes.

The Head Start Programme will establish a minimum professional qualification for all teachers engaged in pre-school teaching, and will ensure that the professional development of these teachers will continue throughout their teaching career.

The Head Start Programme will endeavour to cultivate working relationships with all non-governmental organisations operating pre-school programmes.

The Head Start Programme will endeavour to strengthen its relationship with the parent community, seeking to benefit from the professional services and the voluntary support of the community.

The Head Start Programme will ensure that adequate facilities, resources and space, are available and up-to-standard to ensure an acceptable and safe environment for children learning.

Given the fact that pre-school education does not receive due mention or recognition in the Education Act of 1991, and given the uncertainty surrounding its future funding, and taking into account the contribution that the Head Start Programme provides in terms of preparing new entrants to primary education it is desirable that a law, either an amendment of the existing Education Act, or a new law incorporated, be established so that due emphasis, recognition and funding are provided for pre-school education.

Basic Education

The Ministry of Education will endeavour to make primary education the national standard for all citizens of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and will give it due support with respect to resources and importance.

The Ministry of Education will strengthen its commitment to ensure that an efficient teacher-training programme is established and is capable of meeting the needs of primary education in the country

The Ministry of Education will continue with its devolution of local schools to the management and administration of local government, and will continue to render the necessary support with respect to resources and encouragement and the maintenance of standards.

The Ministry of Education will revise a system for financing primary schools whereby the community and the local government will provide a higher level of resources for the maintenance and operation of primary schools in their jurisdiction.

The Ministry of Education will, in collaboration with the Marshall Islands' Mayors' Association, formulate a collaborative arrangement that will require local government a much greater role in the running of education in the outer islands.

Government will encourage and will provide the necessary support and incentive to help local governments set up within their structure a local education office that will be responsible for the supervision of schools under local government's care.

The Ministry of Education having established the limits on the number of students per grade in primary schools will ensure that principals abide and adhere to this policy.

The Ministry of Education will ensure that adequate facilities, resources and space, are available and up-to-standard to ensure an acceptable and safe environment for children learning.

The Ministry of Education will place a particularly high emphasis on the strengthening of language, science and mathematics.

Learning Achievement

The Ministry of Education will do everything in its power to ensure that primary school students will achieve the highest learning standards in English and

Marshallese, in basic math skills and a functional knowledge of basic science. In addition it will endeavour to ensure that the students gains an understanding of its social and natural environment.

The Ministry of Education will establish one national testing programme for all primary schools, and will institute an entrance examination for all grade 7 students entering the middle school. The practice of automatic promotion will need to be reviewed if we want to improve the quality of primary education.

The Ministry will monitor carefully and on a more regular basis its evaluation, assessment and testing programme and will institute appropriate educational strategies and approaches to remedy the deficiencies in students' learning.

Adults/Literacy

The Republic of the Marshall Islands will establish a national adult literacy programme and will provide the necessary measures and means for its administration and implementation. The programme will place due emphasis on minorities, women and the socially and economically disadvantaged.

The Government of the Marshall Islands will establish an appropriate number of adult literacy centres in all outer islands for the purpose of conducting literacy programmes.

The Ministry of Education will work closely governments, community-based social groups and non-governmental organisations, including the Youth to Youth Movement, in the planning and management of literacy activities.

The Government will initiate an adult literacy teacher-training programme designed to prepare teachers to instruct in the literacy programme.

The Government will appropriate a reasonable percentage of its annual operating budget towards the cost of operating the national literacy programme.

To ensure that the national literacy programme is given due recognition and support it may require the enactment process of law.

The Government will establish an appropriate organisational structure, either within a given ministry or as a separate entity, and will charge it with the task of developing all the training materials and the methods of implementation required for the programme.

The Government will establish a book policy and a National Commission to promote, disseminate, and increase adult literacy in the country.

Skills

The Ministry of Education will endeavour to develop and implement a systematic vocational education programme that is integrated with academic learning and to co-ordinate such initiatives with other work-related practica.

The Minister of Education, in consultation with national entities responsible for occupational skills development, will ensure that a wide range of training options are available to enable young Marshallese to function in a job market and to become useful members of society.

The Minister of Education, in consultation with the Board of the National Training Council, will ensure that the existing National Training Council is developed fully to the level where it will have the necessary institutional capabilities to co-ordinate all occupational and vocational training in the country, to maintain national standards, to provide skill testing, to liaise with the employment sector, and to approve and issue certification for those who successfully complete the programme.

Quality of Life

The Government will endeavour to explore all possibilities, maximising the benefits of learning through the mass media.

The Government will give due support to efforts designed to use the tradition of the country as a means for social change. This will include the use of drama and folklore modes of communication.

The Government will endeavour to create a local newspaper, in the local language, so that Marshallese will have access to information necessary for social change.

The Government will endeavour to support and to provide all incentives necessary, including the provision of financial subsidies to encourage national and local groups, or organisations, as a way to enhance their active participation and contribution to the social, cultural and economic development of the nation.

The Government will do whatever is possible to encourage local people to have access to the mass media.

The Government will provide assistance to enable Marshallese educators to receive the necessary training in the use of the mass media.

The Government has been fully supportive of the installation of the University of the South Pacific satellite in Majuro where the public will have accessibility to new knowledge and information involved in the extension programme. The Minister of Education is currently pursuing other appropriate media technology, which will make distance learning within the Marshall Islands possible for teachers and schools in the outer islands.

The Government will take advantage of all possible joint endeavours between itself and other regional or international agencies in creating workshops/seminars and ongoing dialogue in the area of health improvement, family planning, communicable diseases including HIV/AIDS, nutrition, vaccinations, immunisation environmental/coastal management.

The Government will undertake to sponsor a study that will help determine the progress of various facets in the life of the nation over the past ten years.