

PNG EDUCATION ADVOCACY NETWORK (PEAN)

CSO SPOTLIGHT KEY MESSAGES ON SDG 4

Accelerating actions for transformative and resilient education amidst COVID-19



PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Population:
8.2 million

2020 Global Index Score:
51.7

2020 Global Index Rank:
155

SDG 4 Dashboard:
Major challenges

SDG 10 Dashboard:
Major challenges

HDI Value/Rank:
0.674, 122 (UNDP, 2019)

GNI per Capita:
USD 2,780 (WB, 2019)

Secondary Net Enrolment:
12.7%

Education Expenditure:
4.1% of the GDP²
11.9% of the total budget
of Kina 2.9 billion³
(2018)

The PNG Education Advocacy Network (PEAN) welcomes Papua New Guinea's (PNG) adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA Pathway) to achieve their long-term Vision 2050. The SAMOA Pathway is clear on priorities, mentioning transitioning from basic to secondary education, building education infrastructure, ensuring vocational skills training, and focusing on the most vulnerable, especially those with disabilities.

To show progress in delivery education services, the PNG VNR cites their Tuition Fee Free (TFF) policy and the resultant improvement in the net enrolment ratio in primary education from 68 per cent (2014) to 87.7 per cent (2017). Beneficially, this has resulted in a significant increase in enrolment rates in Elementary Prep and the rates of girls' enrolment. However, drop-out occurs early, with a loss of 16% of boys and 19% of girls at the Elementary to Grade 3 transition. The most significant loss of transition occurs from Grade 8 in primary to Grade 9 in lower secondary where about 64% (2018) of boys but only 55% of girls' progress.

Unfortunately, the relatively rapid upsurge in student numbers brought about by TFF has overwhelmed both the capacity of existing infrastructure and the number of teachers available. Many urban schools are seriously over-crowded with ratios of over 50:1. 'Access at the expense of quality' is the Government's own assessment of its basic education performance.

The increase in access to basic education is where the good news stops. Despite the focus of the SAMOA Pathway and the SDGs on those with a disability, the PNG government is putting few resources into this area, instead relying on civil society organisations to provide services. Most children with disabilities do not go to school.

The VNR reports on difficulties in delivering services in the country, and admits that 'often forgotten are the marginalised and most vulnerable groups'. It admits 'limited technical and financial capacities, lack of coordination, poor accountability and governance'. Collection of and use of up-to-date data is another problem for the government, as can be seen in the SDG 4 report in which part of the VNR used data from 2014 and before, therefore not covering the SDG period.

PEAN recommends the PNG Government to:

- Improve access by establishing more secondary schools to increase the absorption capacity of the secondary sectors to absorb all students completing primary education.
- Improve quality by ensuring all existing teachers are properly qualified.
- Develop and implement an inclusive strategy for girls, older children, most vulnerable and children living with disabilities so that they can have equal opportunities to appropriate schooling.
- Transfer the responsibility of Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) from the Department for Community Development and Religion (DfCDR) to the National Department of Education (NDoE) and ensure it is adequately funded and staffed.
- Establish Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) schools in each district to meet future demand, with an appropriate skills-for-living curriculum.
- Provide scholarships for TVET teachers to upgrade their trade skills, as well as to acquire teaching qualifications, and to learn the techniques of competency-based training.
- Initiate a government-funded literacy survey or research, then disseminate the findings to each province, so action plans can be developed to address literacy at the province and district levels.
- Properly and adequately fund literacy programmes at province and district levels.

PEAN urges the government to be wary of so-called 'Innovative Financing for Development' initiatives mentioned in the VNR as these may saddle the country with long-term debt. Rather, we urge the government to look for appropriate development partners and to fund education from domestic revenues by increasing education's share of the budget.

¹ Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, 14 November 2014, 69/15. SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway

² Including debt servicing. Excluding debt servicing 23.6%. (CI-PNG program, GPE, 2018)

³ Attachment 2-2 a PNG GPE Domestic Financing Spreadsheet (28 07 2018)



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