'Ātakai 'o e Ako*

Family, Village, and School as Partners for Learning and Literacy

Our English Literacy Project

Since late 2012, Peace Corps/ Tonga's English Literacy Project has worked with the Ministry of Education and Training and other partners to help Tongan schools and communities to use an innovative "student-centered" approach to language and literacy education. This is one of a series of Technical Notes that describe practices developed in this project. It relates in particular to Project Objective 3.2: "Srrengthen family and community support for literacy development opportunities."

* *'Ātakai 'o e Ako* means "The Environment of Learning."

Why this Technical Note was written

Overview

A key message of this guide is that, to become fluent in the oral and written forms of a language, children must get a lot of exposure to and practice and encouragement in using the language.

This Technical Note was written to help those concerned about the well-being of Tongan children to make better use of the learning resources available in a typical village. It proposes that Tongan families, schools, and other village stakeholders be more conscious and focused in how to use these many resources to benefit the positive development of their children. Rather than having children experience these influences in an uncoordinated, random way, village stakeholders might intentionally organize these influences into a "community learning system."

<u>Audiences</u>

This document is written for people who are looking for new ways to promote literacy development and positive change in Tonga. These people include:

- <u>Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) and staff;</u>

- <u>Educators</u> (administrators and policy makers, principals, teachers, researchers, trainers of teachers, curriculum developers, and people who might want to become teachers or teaching assistants in Tongan schools);

- <u>Heads of Tongan families</u> (parents and other adult family members who recognize the importance of supporting their children's literacy development as a foundation for academic and adult success);

- <u>Community leaders</u> (including leaders of village councils, churches, youth groups);

- <u>Staff of governmental and non-governmental agencies</u> working in Tongan communities (in areas such as public health, public safety, economic development, environmental protection, sanitation . . .);

- <u>Funders of educational programs.</u>

<u>Goals</u>

We hope that these audiences will understand . . .

- the importance of a more comprehensive, community-wide approach to literacy development.

- practical things they can do to provide literacy development opportunities to children and other community members.

- how they and other stakeholders can work together, to learn from each other and support each other in a community-wide effort.

- why and how they can be advocates for literacy development and positive growth in their communities.

Some definitions

Here are some working definitions of two terms used in this guide:

Community learning system The term "community learning system" borrows concepts from collaborative education and development models being developed around the world. As used in this Technical Note, this term is based on several assumptions:

- Children develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to learning in general and literacy development in particular through interaction with many influences. These include formal learning settings such as schools as well as many less-formal ones such as their families, their friends and neighbors, various non-school institutions they interact with, and the media. Learning is often something that happens unconsciously, through experience, trial and error, and direct and less-direct feedback and rewards.

- Children can also engage in "self-study" in which they develop knowledge and skills through reading, observing, listening, watching videos, and doing informal research about a topic of interest.

- As they grow older, individuals encounter new social contexts and other opportunities to learn and develop, through work, family, and civic roles. These environmental factors constitute the "learning ecology" (the "environment of learning" or "'Atakai 'o e Ako") that the child grows up in.

- In a Tongan community, children attend school, but before they do so they spend about five years in the family home, where they learn how to behave through observation of older family members performing their various roles, listening, trying to communicate and perform various tasks themselves, and getting feedback from family members and others in the community. They go to church, to the market, to neighbors' and relatives' homes, to play areas, to the bush and seaside, and to health care providers. They also might be exposed to electronic (radio, TV, DVD, phone) media and print materials. All of these influences impact the child's interest and confidence in taking on learning tasks. These influences also shape the background knowledge and cognitive and language skills that are the child's foundation for learning and language and literacy development.

- This guide organizes these influences into three categories of stakeholders:

    - <u>The school</u> (i.e., the principal, teachers, and fellow students)
    - <u>The family</u> (i.e., parents, siblings, older family members)
    - <u>Various other institutions and groups in the village</u>, including:
        - religious organizations (churches);
        - government agencies and leaders;
        - health care providers;
        - sports organizations;
        - cultural and arts groups;
        - social organizations (e.g., women's groups, youth organizations);
        - businesses;
        - other.

- In a well-functioning community learning system, each of these stakeholders has one or more roles to play to support the learning and literacy development of children (and other residents, as well). These stakeholders often also interact and collaborate with other stakeholders, to pool resources, ideas, etc.

- This interaction can be mutually beneficial to all parties. An important by-product of effective collaboration is the fact that families and the larger community will also benefit.

<u>Literacy development</u>

"Literacy development" refers to the processes that individuals go through to develop fluency in oral and written forms of a language. In Tonga, this normally refers to fluency in Tongan literacy and English literacy. These processes occur both in formal educational settings (i.e., school) and outside formal educational settings. "Non-school" uses include how language and literacy are used:

- in the home;
- in the community (e.g., at church, when shopping, in play, in cultural ceremonies and gatherings);
- on the radio, television, and other electronic media;
- in reading materials.

Part 1

Why a "Community Learning System" Approach?

Tongan children – and those who support their growth – face a number of challenges and opportunities – related to the development of effective literacy in Tonga.

While schools are making important contributions to literacy development, they can't do this big job alone, especially since they are too often under-equipped with the human and material resources they need to do the job well.

Part 1 summarizes:

- factors that can block or support Tongan children's success in learning and literacy development;

- arguments for a community learning system that involves schools, families, and a range of other community stakeholders.

Factors that can block or support Tongan children's success

Challenges: English literacy development lacks adequate supports.

Experience and research inside and outside Tonga show that children face a number of major challenges to development of the English literacy fluency they will need for academic success and to successfully perform the work, family, and civic roles they will face as adults in a changing society. These challenges include:

Under-equipped schools

Primary schools are often under-equipped to support successful literacy development of students, especially in a foreign language like English which most students have very limited regular exposure to. Schools are challenged in these ways:

- Schools typically devote only a few hours (typically under five hours per week) to intentional teaching of English.

- Though doing so could provide students with additional useful practice in English, limited systematic effort is made to integrate English literacy with other subjects (e.g., science, math) in which English literacy fluency is important;

- Many English teachers are not comfortable using modern, more effective English teaching methods, due to lack of exposure to those practices or other factors;

- Teachers often tend to focus on helping the "more advanced" students and neglect the children who are "slower," with the result that the "slower" children tend to fall behind and stay there;

- Schools generally have few reading materials or other language-instruction aids (e.g., videos, audio recordings, computer programs) available that are relevant to the background knowledge and interests of students and to their English language skill levels;

- Much instruction is focused on the "passing of exams" rather than development of the more complete English literacy and language skills that students will need for academic and real-world success. While both goals are important, the development of broader fluency in English is often neglected.

- Instructional activities in most subjects tend to still rely on drill-and-practice and rote memorization rather than practices that promote curiosity, creativity, trying and learning new things – the kind of learning skills and attitudes fundamental to the learning of a new language and all other subjects;

- Formal English curricula are often written at too advanced a level for most students and don't provide teachers with easy-to-use, effective teaching activities.

Lack of support for English literacy in the home

The family environment is the place where language skills and many other foundational areas of knowledge, skills, and attitudes are formed. Many children do not grow up in homes in which they see literacy behaviors being modeled, where they are read to or told stories, or where they hear English spoken (or sung) or are given access to appropriate literacy materials (books, pictures, writing and drawing materials). In some cases, parents (or other adults in the home) are simply not aware of why and how to provide such supports to their children and/or are not comfortable with oral or written English.

Older siblings can also be great supporters of the literacy development of younger family members. They can read to their younger siblings, help them with homework, sing English songs with them, and watch and interpret appropriate English language videos. But older siblings need to be guided and encouraged to take on these roles, and given appropriate tools (e.g., reading, writing, art, video, play, or audio resources) to help them do so.

Lack of support for English literacy in community institutions

While "teaching English" is not the primary mission of churches, most government agencies, health care providers, sports clubs, businesses, and other community groups in a typical village, all have roles they could play in supporting opportunities for learning, literacy development, and positive growth in the community.

A community-wide effort to do so can make the community a positive place to live and do business, deal with community challenges (e.g., health, environment, employment, safety and security). Doing so conveys the message to children of the importance of education and literacy development.

Leaders of community institutions can join school leaders (principal, teachers, PTA leaders . . .) to identify the community as a place where learning is emphasized and supported for people of all ages, and where an educated populace is central to the health and positive growth of all residents. With such a common vision, the kinds of community literacy opportunities described below can take root.

Opportunities: Despite these challenges, promising literacy supports are being developed.

Despite these significant challenges, some very good models are being developed of literacy-development supports that can be used by schools, families, and multiple community institutions.

This work is being done by creative educators, parents, and leaders of community and government institutions. Examples of these promising practices are presented in Part 2 of this Technical Note titled "How Schools, Families, and Other Community Stakeholders Can Work Together."

Readers are encouraged to consider these models, adapt and revise them, invent some new ones, and share what they learn within their communities and across the nation – as advocates for literacy development tied to positive community and national development.

Arguments for a community learning system approach

1. In most Tongan homes and communities, English is not commonly used and children are otherwise exposed to limited meaningful literacy activities. Children thus come to school with a very limited foundation of oral and written skills needed to become fluent in the English skills they will need for academic success and to perform work, family, and civic roles as adults. This lack of English literacy thus has major implications for the children, families, communities, and nation of Tonga.

2. Language and literacy are tools that require practice through repeated application to meaningful communication and problem-solving tasks. At school, children have limited time and other supports to give to such practice.

3. Families and other community partners can provide encouragement and opportunities for children to greatly expand their interest in and involvement in literacy and language learning.

4. Schools, in turn, can further support the positive development of families and communities through joint efforts with these important local partners.

5. Such a collaborative, community-wide approach makes better use of available resources and increases the likelihood that what children learn will be used and sustained.

6. Creating a community learning system is an opportunity to build new vision, energy, growth opportunities, and leadership for a community.

7. This approach requires creativity, a willingness to stretch oneself and to try something different, and a cooperative spirit, patience, and perseverance.

Part 2

How Schools, Families, and Other Community Stakeholders Can Work Together

Part 2 presents six strategies that schools, families, and other community stakeholders can take to build an effective community learning system that supports the general learning and literacy development of its children.

"Learning that is relevant, meaningful, and useful. In the English syllabus, all learning is related to real life contexts."

Tongan English Literacy Syllabus

Strategy #1: Integrate family and community themes into literacy instruction.

Why: As illustrated in the following passages from its English Syllabus for Basic Education in Tongan Schools, the Ministry of Education and Training encourages teachers to integrate English literacy instruction with other academic and real-world subjects:

- *"Development of the whole person: The English syllabus is focused on the students' immediate and future communication needs, enabling them to function fully within the school and to reach their potentials in later life." (page 2)*

- *"Learning that is relevant, meaningful, and useful. In the English syllabus, all learning is related to real life contexts. Communication skills and knowledge are learnt within the language subjects but could be applied within other subject areas." (page 2)*

- *"An integrated approach to learning. All learning in English is based upon present and future communication needs and the emphasis is on meaningful and relevant application of skills. To achieve these, English is taught in an integrated manner in order to achieve the outcomes. Integration across subjects should occur where there is a clear connection and need and should not be artificially applied. (page 2)*

- *"Learning that relates to the wider world. Proficiency in English enables students to participate in the wider world through social contact within Tonga; through maintaining social contact with relatives overseas; and through accessing information through the Internet, media, and written texts." (page 2)*

The Syllabus also goes on to explain how the teaching of English should be connected to real-life themes of:

1. *Tongan culture and values*
2. *Life skills*
3. *Education for sustainable livelihoods*
4. *Enterprise*
5. *Education for sustainable development. (pages 3-4)*
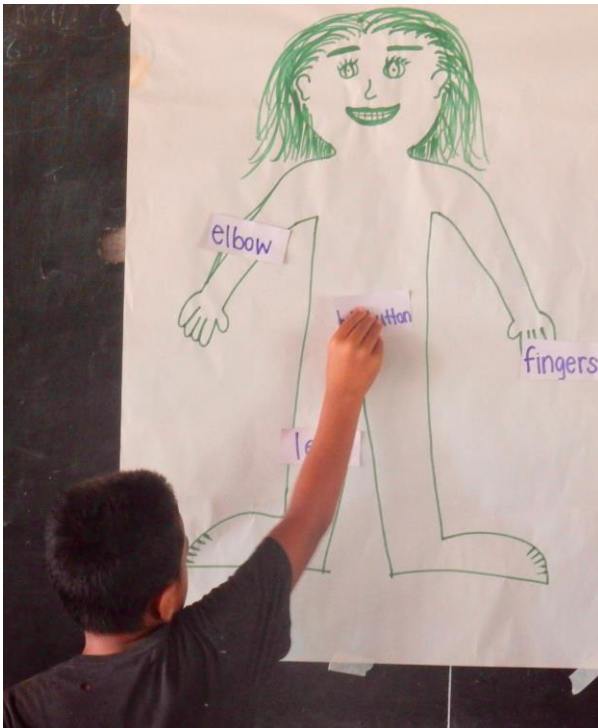
Such activities can:

- Help students develop useful background knowledge, connections, and skills (in English and other areas such as science and technology) to prepare them for academic and real-life tasks that lie ahead of them.

- Provide students with extra practice in both English and other subject areas.

- Potentially be tied to a certificate system in which students – by demonstrating what they have learned (through a simple test, demonstration, and perseverance) – can be recognized, encouraged, and rewarded with a series of certificates. These can in turn become part of a portfolio for the student, which can guide and encourage further learning.

How: In the first four years of our English Literacy Project, Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) in Tonga have worked with Tongan counterparts to develop the following activities that integrate English into other areas of the Tongan primary school curriculum and/or real-life topics. This learning is done through formal classroom-based work and/or via activities outside the classroom. Here are some examples:

- Sight Word Books and guided reading: Volunteers have worked with Tongan artists, writers, and editors to prepare a series of "Sight Word Books." These short (10 page) booklets tell simple stories, using simple English words, around a theme familiar to students (e.g., "The Classroom," "Foods in Tonga," "Things We Do," "In My Village," "The Body," "Transportation," "Let's Be Healthy"). They were created as an alternative to reading materials commonly found in Tongan schools which focus on unfamiliar topics and use language that is too hard for students to understand, relate to, or master. These books – and the

guided reading lesson plans that accompany them – have proven to be popular and effective as ways to introduce Tongan children to reading and to build their fluency in the understanding and reading of simple English words.

- English for Health: At the request of the Ministry of Education and Training, our English Literacy Facilitator PCVs have incorporated health education activities into their work in Tongan schools. These activities are designed to promote healthy habits in such areas as nutrition (e.g., growing, preparing, and eating of healthy foods), exercise (e.g., a variety of exercise and sports activities), and hygiene and sanitation (e.g., tooth brushing, simple first aid, and use of clean water). These topics are all "real" to students and often provide opportunities for fun, engaging physical and other "hands-on" activities in non-classroom settings. Practical uses of English are woven into the instructions, print materials, and other communications associated with these activities, while the students also develop background knowledge about the why's and how's of various ways they can keep themselves healthy. These activities also potentially lay the groundwork for the science health, and math classes they will engage in during primary, secondary, and post-secondary education.

- <u>English for Earth</u>: Similar to the above-described "English for Health" activities, our Volunteers have worked with Tongan counterparts to develop a number of activities which merge environmental education with English literacy instruction. Examples include working with students and community members to develop a community waste management system, upgrading the water catchment systems (i.e., the roofs, gutters, pipes, and water tanks that catch rainwater) at schools, and the creation and use of eco-friendly school gardens. In all these projects, students and community members develop solutions to real-world environmental problems (i.e., environmentally-friendly sanitation and recycling, water management, food security practices) while developing knowledge and skills (including relevant English vocabulary) they can apply to similar community challenges.

- <u>Integration of English with science education</u>: Some Volunteers work with Tongan counterpart teachers who teach other subjects to find ways to support the work of those teachers while also helping students develop English vocabulary relevant to those other subjects. In one such case, a Volunteer meets with the science teacher prior to that teacher's class to identify key English terms related to the lesson being covered. The Volunteer then develops activities for the science teacher to use to introduce and practice the English vocabulary, while the Volunteer also reinforces those same words in the English class. The science topics (e.g., the rain cycle, which Tonga depends heavily on for nutrition, sanitation, hygiene, agriculture) covered are often directly related to the lives of students and community members.

- <u>Performing arts, visual arts, and games as teaching tools</u>. Our Volunteers commonly use a variety of performing arts (e.g., music, role plays), visual arts (e.g., drawing and coloring), and games as ways to actively engage students in the learning of various types of English skills.   In some cases, these activities adapt local music, crafts, and games that are familiar to students who come from a culture with rich traditions of song, dance, weaving, and other arts.

- <u>Project-based learning</u>:   In keeping with Education Ministry guidelines, our Volunteers have students do "projects" in which they search for information, solve problems, and communicate what they learn. For example, one curriculum unit has students doing research about their families by interviewing family members about basic information related to the family (e.g., number of family members, their church, favorite hobbies). Students then report what they've learned back to their English classmates, and data for the entire class are compiled into a chart.   In this project, students learn interviewing skills, how to record and communicate information, and how to interpret graphic reports.   They can also learn things about their own families and develop a curiosity about the history, make-up, and interests of other families in their community

- <u>Use of Bible stories</u>: Many schools incorporate the telling and reading of Bible stories and singing of church songs (in English and Tongan) into their curricula. These stories and songs are familiar to students and help them use language skills to share and learn messages that are culturally relevant.

Strategy #2: Use family and community members as learning resources at school

Why: In Tonga, budgets for teachers are limited. Schools thus have to rely on teachers who are expected to teach large classes and/or who are not fully equipped to provide the education students need. At the same time, communities often have people who can provide useful services to support learning at the school. By tapping into these local educational resource persons, schools can provide useful help to students and teachers. At the same time, those local resource persons can get a better understanding of the school and its students – what they do, what they need, and ways to support the growth of the school and students. Community members can also develop a greater sense of ownership for the school if they are invited to play meaningful roles as resource persons for the school. And, when community members are invited in to help in their schools, they are visible signs (to funders, policy makers, and other community members) that the school is providing a service that the community finds useful.

How: Here are some examples of how parents and other community stakeholders have gotten involved as resource persons at their schools:

- Guest presenters: Community members often have particular expertise (e.g., knowledge of local history, occupational knowledge, artistic skills) that they can use to help teachers run instructional activities on those topics. These local subject matter experts can talk about the topic, do demonstrations, bring in "realia" (real objects related to a particular topic), or mentor students as they carry out projects related to that topic. In one such example, PCVs conduct youth leadership programs in which community members make guest presentations about a particular topic (e.g., personal health, community service, environmental protection) while also serving as role models (e.g., "Model Moms.")

- Teaching assistants: Some schools have parents or other family members come in and help the teacher with such tasks as classroom management. These teaching assistants can also help to prepare educational materials, read to students, or keep students organized and safe on group trips.

- Religion teachers: Some schools invite members of local church congregations into the school to conduct religious activities for children who are members of those congregations.

Strategy #3: Improve the school's physical infrastructure

Why: In Tonga, budgets for school supplies, equipment, and facilities are limited. Students, their families, and community stakeholders commonly contribute their labor and other resources to provide material supports to their schools. The benefits of this in-kind assistance include:

- School infrastructure is maintained and upgraded.

- Community members have a greater understanding of and investment in their schools.

- Community member involvement shows funders, policy makers, and other community members that the school is providing a service that the community finds worth investing in.

How: Here are some examples of how local stakeholders take care of their school facilities:

- Fundraising: A major function of school Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) is the raising of funds to pay for school equipment, supplies, etc. In Tonga, this can take the form of "market day" sale of items or a school concert ("konseti") in which participants pay a modest fee while getting together with friends, listening to music, and maybe dancing a bit.

- Daily cleaning by students: In Tonga, students typically are expected to sweep the school grounds and classrooms and otherwise keep the facility clean. This is seen as providing a useful function (in schools where there are no budgets for "school custodians") while instilling a sense of responsibility, work ethic, and practical skills in students.

- Volunteer labor by community members: PTA members and other local residents sometimes volunteer to help with the upgrading of facilities at PCVs' schools. Examples include:

- Construction of housing for teachers (including Peace Corps Volunteers): As a condition of having a Peace Corps Volunteer assigned to the school, each school must provide a suitable house for the Volunteer. In some cases, this means upgrading an existing structure. In other cases, schools construct a new house from scratch. These houses in turn are often used by other teachers after the Volunteer departs. This is in keeping with Tongan traditions of local communities supporting the housing of teachers assigned to their schools.

- Support for school gardens: In one PCV school, community members volunteered their construction skills, using materials purchased through a donor agency, to construct fencing and a seed nursery and also install a water tank for the school garden. In another school, parents sold produce from the school garden to purchase additional healthy ingredients (e.g., chicken) that were added to a chicken vegetable soup for a school nutrition program. (Additional funds were raised by selling of recycled aluminum cans collected by students.)

- <u>Helping with the upgrading of school water catchment systems</u>: In a number of Volunteers' schools, community members joined with work crews from the Rotary Club to do the manual work required to upgrade the schools' gutters, pipes, and water tanks. Local residents typically do some of the basic labor (e.g., digging trenches for underground pipes) prior to the arrival of the specialists provided by the Rotary Club. Community members are also expected to do ongoing maintenance of the upgraded catchment systems.

- <u>Providing sanitary toilets for schools</u>: In one PCV school, the principal communicated with the PTA about the need for a new toilet block for the school. The PTA then took the lead to raise funds from the community (including former community residents now living overseas) and then build a new toilet block for the school. This was seen as especially important because the school was an especially large one and the community had had recent outbreaks of typhoid, which is linked to poor sanitation.

- <u>Improving school libraries</u>: In several PCV schools, PTA and other community members help with repairs (e.g., building shelves) for the school library.

- <u>Adopt-a-school program</u>: In some PCV schools, local churches bring congregants to do regular cutting of the grass, painting, or major repairs (e.g., installing new windows and flooring) at the school. This is seen as a community service in keeping with church traditions of service to others.

Strategy #4: Provide learning opportunities in the home and community

Why: Children need lots of meaningful practice if they are to master English or other skills covered in school curricula. Students' homes and the villages they live in provide many situations and locations in which students can apply and expand on what they are learning in school. (This is consistent with the Tongan concept of "'Uluaki 'Apiako 'ko 'Api" ["The First School Is the Home."]) Students can also develop relationships with community resource persons and those same resource persons can, in turn, better understand and take ownership of what goes in in their local schools.

How

<u>In the community</u>

- <u>Community service projects</u>: Children can "give back" to the communities they live in by providing various kinds of services (e.g., community clean-ups) to their villages and local individuals (e.g., people with disabilities) and groups.

- <u>Children's reading programs</u>: Communities can provide facilities (e.g., town halls, church halls) to host reading programs like that held on Saturday mornings at the Tupou Tertiary Institute in Nuku'alofa and the Neiafu Public Library. (Some PCVs run reading activities in their homes, at their schools, or – in one case – in a former storefront converted to a community learning center.)

- <u>Field trips</u>: Organizations and businesses can host "field trips" in which local students can learn about what happens in that location, how the students might interact with that organization, etc. (The University of the South Pacific campus in Vava'u hosted such a visit by participants in a teen leadership camp run by PCVs. Vava'u students also have visited waste management and recycling facilities to learn about environmentally-friendly waste management practices.)

- <u>Sports facilities</u>: Sports clubs and other organizations can provide venues for sports and exercise activities for children, as a number of Mormon churches have done for after-school basketball programs organized by PCVs on Tongatapu.

- Newsletter: A school can create a newsletter for families and other community stakeholders (written in a mix of Tongan and English) to inform them about what is going on at the school and how they can support learning opportunities for children, youth, and adults. The newsletter might include educational resources (e.g., reading materials, games, etc.) that community members can use and which also serve as examples of materials being used in the schools.

- Use of local subject matter experts: Students can be given assignments in which they need to get information about a particular subject from a local person who has expertise in that topic. These "subject matter experts" could include church leaders, crafts persons and artists, and people who work in particular occupations (e.g., shop keepers, healthcare personnel, public safety officers, farmers, fishermen). Some Tongan teachers run extra night classes for children in the villages where they live.

In students' homes

- Learning activities in the home: Parents can support their children's learning and literacy development by using appropriate reading, art, and other simple materials with their children at home.

  Activities might include regular reading with their children, putting signs and posters in the house, setting up a space and schedule for reading and homework, and listening to songs or watching videos that reinforce English skills.

- Parent education activities: PCVs and other teachers can conduct parent education workshops on these topics at school, at a PTA meeting, or at the homes of interested parents, and can send home short "how to help your child succeed" tips to parents. Examples:

  - A church in Vava'u hosted an Education Night in which parents were shown activities they can use to support their children's educational success.

  - PCVs have conducted parent education sessions for the parents of the children who attend Saturday morning reading programs at the library of the Tupou Tertiary Institute in Nuku'alofa.

- Some PCVs deliver or send games, pictures, or worksheets to students' homes for parents to use with their children.

- Volunteers sometimes visit homes of their students, talk with parents about what the children need help with, and provide tutoring – using easy-to-use, engaging activities and materials -- while parents and older siblings observe and help out.

- Some Volunteers make regularly-scheduled visits to students' homes – both when the PCVs first arrive in their new villages and over the course of their two years. These might take the form of "get-to-know-you" dinners or lunches after church on Sundays or brief introductory visits to homes in the company of a Tongan counterpart teacher. These are ways to get to know the families, help them to become acquainted and comfortable with the PCV, and set a foundation for possible further visits and collaboration between the Volunteer, Tongan counterparts, and family members.

- School newsletters (See description above.) can be sent home with children, to provide information and activities for both parents and students to use.

- "English Movie Nights" can be places where kids, parents, and teachers can view and discuss English language movies and otherwise exchange ideas about how families can support children's learning.

Strategy #5: Advocate for quality learning opportunities for all children

Why: Effective education practices need to be recognized and supported if they are to be sustained. While educators can make the case for their schools, parents and other community stakeholders can also play important roles in generating needed support for effective education and for students.

How: Stakeholders can advocate for students and education at local, district, and national levels, and can communicate their advocacy messages to education policy makers, funders, and other decision makers and potential supporters of education.

Individuals and groups can . . .

- Advocate for students and education within the family.   Parents can stress the importance of education to their children and rally support from other members of the family, including grandparents, aunts and uncles, and students' older siblings. They can set high expectations for their children, support their learning, and reward them (with praise and other incentives) for positive performance.

- Advocate for students and education at the school. Parents and other stakeholders can monitor the performance of schools, identify needed improvements, and get involved (through the PTA and other means) in advocating for improvements in the school, to ensure that all children get positive learning opportunities in a welcoming, healthy, and safe environment. Parents and other stakeholders can also celebrate the successes – even small ones – of their schools and the students in the community.

- Advocate for students and education in communications with policy makers and funders. Advocates for effective education can communicate with education officials, public policy makers, and funders, to educate them about why and how they can better support effective education for all children.

Part 3
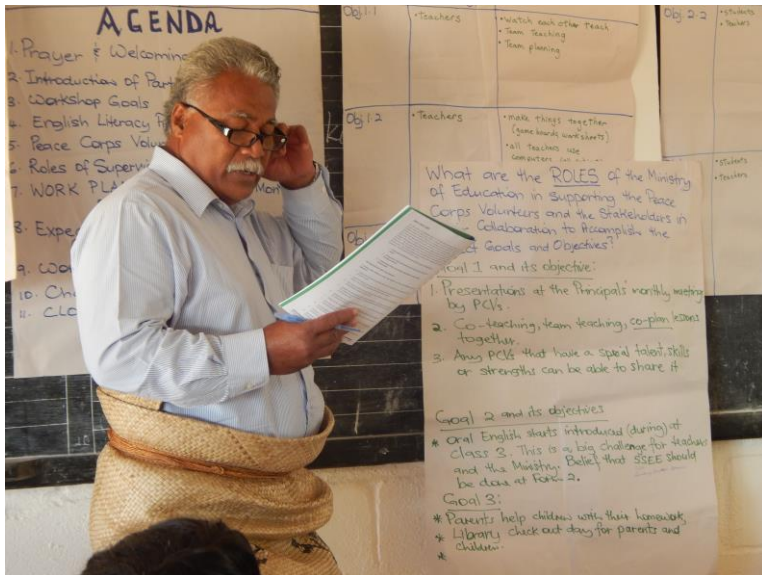
Getting Started: How to Develop and Pilot a Plan for Your Community

It is useful to be familiar with the above options for ways that families and other community stakeholders can work with schools.

However, it is also vital that those who want to move ahead with any of these options be well-organized in how they choose, organize, and implement the option(s) they want to pursue.

Outlined below are five steps that interested individuals and groups might take:

Step 1: Form a "Community Education Committee."

- Pull together a group of interested individuals who might like to pursue one or more of the above strategies. Possible members of this committee could be your principal, one or more teachers, some parents, the Town Officer, the kava circle, or leaders of the local church or other organization or group.

Step 2: Review the list of possible strategies.

- Review the above list of possible ways that schools, families, and other community stakeholders might work together.

- Decide which of these options the group might like to pursue. (You might focus initially on one of those strategies, then try others later.)

Step 3: Do more research to confirm you are heading in the right direction.

Reach out to parents and other community members and organizations to clarify:

- What is the level of interest in your proposed activity?

- What would be the benefits of such an activity – and for whom?

- What individuals and organizations might want to be involved in leading the activity, supporting it, or participating in it?

- What resources would be needed and where might they be obtained?

- Has a similar activity been carried out in this community – or another one? If
  yes, what was the result? And is there anyone who could provide you with more information about that experience?

- Should you move ahead with your proposed activity or possibly with a different one?

Step 4: Pilot a simple version of your proposed activity.

- Have selected members of your team plan and carry out a simple version of your proposed activity.

- Document what you are doing, monitor how it works, and make needed changes as you proceed.

Step 5: Reflect on your pilot and decide whether and how to continue.

Decide whether and how to continue:

- the activity you just piloted.

- another activity from the list in Part 2 above.

In sum: Clearly this five-step process is not very detailed. But the point is that you will need to work with other interested people to do some planning, try out an activity, learn from it, and then decide whether and how to move forward with the same activity and/or other ones. (See "For Further Information" for a list of resources related to project planning.)

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

- Peace Corps posts worldwide run Project Design and Management workshops for PCVs and community partners, to learn how to plan, implement, and sustain meaningful projects in their communities.

- Peace Corps/Peru's "Sustainable Development in Peace Corps Projects" presents ideas for working with communities to plan effective projects.

- Participatory Analysis for Community Action (PACA) is a tool used by PCVs worldwide to identify community needs and resources, to help PCVs know where to target their efforts and human and material resources they can tap into.

- Peace Corps/Tonga asks recently-sworn-in PCVs to complete a Technical Resources Inventory in their first two months at site, to clarify existing and potential resources the Volunteers might use to implement the seven objectives of the post's English Literacy Project.

- In 2015, PCVs in Tonga created a "Library Committee" that developed guidelines for PCVs to use when working with their counterparts and PTAs to establish libraries and other educational resources in their schools.