Solomon Islands

Population: 490k
Details: n/a
ICT Access: Low

Background
The Solomon Islands relative poverty, poor infrastructure, political instability and years of ethnic conflict are widely perceived as having been a hindrance to development. NGOs play a vital supportive role and although there is little or no ICT used in schools, recent developments in the Solomons include the emergence of model low-cost, eco-friendly rural telecenters as part of the PeopleFirst Network initiative, and a strong interest in the One Laptop Per Child programme.

Policy
Although ICT is rarely used in schools, the Solomon Islands ICT Working Group outlined specific objectives relating to education: Developing a national ICT strategy in all sectors and rural/urban areas; and supporting the provision of affordable rural access to ICT, including the development of rural communications through the People First Network (PFNet). The Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development is implementing an Education Sector Investment and Reform Programme. Areas of focus include cultivating the innovative (laptop, resource-providing, VSAT-based, local content-generating) Distance Learning Centres Project, building an Education Management Information System, and the development of a new eLearning policy.

The perceived benefits of the Distance Learning Centres Project extend beyond learning, and include building a new rural communications platform, the control of Lands Administration from the provinces, access to credit and secure payment online, access to legal services, remote training for rural health workers, online specialist medical support, creation of employment opportunities and better promotion of tourism.

Revising the curriculum and boosting the capacity of the teacher training college (SICHE) to improve access to ICT is another priority. Creating further opportunities for collaboration & partnership with educational institutions such as USP, the School of Nursing, the School of Education, Solomon Telekom and other stakeholders has been another priority. Indicators include ICT in education policy formation, curriculum redesign, increasing the numbers of new teacher trainees, continued roll-out of rural telecenters, and ongoing growth of the successful Youth First, and PFnet programmes.
Challenges

- Poverty; Absence of basic infrastructure
- High demand for education; Lack of capacity and resources for development

Recommendations

- Extend growth of rural telecenters on the PFnet model.
- Provide scholarships and training opportunities to increase ICT capacity
- Provide training opportunities, workshops, seminar to improve awareness and skills.
- Increase collaborations between stakeholders and sponsoring partners.