



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

**Independence Anniversary
Message**

from

HONOURABLE JAMES MARAPE, MP

Minister for Education

INTRODUCTION

Greetings to you all on our country, Papua New Guinea's Independence Anniversary.

As we celebrate our achievements and prepare for the challenges ahead, I would like to wish all the students, teachers, parents and our stakeholders in education throughout the country memorable and peaceful celebrations.

PARTNERSHIP IN EDUCATION

The operation and development of the National Education System is based on partnership and the close co-operation between the different levels of government, parents, communities, development partners, education agencies such as churches and Non- Government Organizations.

As we celebrate our Independence, I would like to thank all our partners and stakeholders in education for their continued support and contribution to the successes in education. The successes in education would not have been possible without their continued support and I encourage them to continue to give their support as we take education a step further.

On this occasion of our Independence, I would like to take this opportunity to also congratulate the Prime Minister Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare on achieving 42 years in politics. During his term in Government we have seen significant improvements in the education sector. These improvements can be attributed to his leadership and vision for the development of our human resource in Papua New Guinea.

We in education recognize these improvements through the continued support from the Government under the able leadership of Sir Michael. On this occasion I as the Minister responsible for education would like to commend him for his leadership and his continued support in the development of education in our country.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN EDUCATION

Under Sir Michael's leadership and vision, we have been able to improve access to relevant quality education and training which is in line with the Medium Term Development Strategy (2005-2010) that aims to achieve Universal Primary Education. That means all children will be able to complete nine years of basic education.

Last year the Prime Minister launched the Universal Basic Education Plan (2010 – 2019) whose overall aim is to have all school aged children have equal access to quality basic education.

The implementation of the Universal Basic Education Plan for 2010 to 2019 began this year where elementary prep to elementary grade 2 fees were fully subsidised.

Because parental inability to pay school fee is a major contributing factor to student absenteeism and withdrawal from school, the Government's long term plan is to abolish school fees in all sectors of education.

The Department of Education as the leading implementation institution, aims to focus on a successful implementation of the UBE plan within the given timeframe with commitment and dedication.

The department aims to try as much as possible through the support of other stakeholders to ensure that up to 98% of all school aged children will have access to basic education by the end of 2019. However the cost of running this program will be massive as it will cost the Government K16 billion in the next ten years. The annual cost of implementing UBE is K1.7 billion.

The Universal Basic Education Plan addresses four key areas. They are access, retention, quality and good governance. I believe that with the full implementation of UBE we will be able to wholistically address the problems of access, retention.

The National Education Plan 2005-2014 complements the MTDS by making an effort to continue to improve access, relevance and quality education and to ensure that education is affordable, sustainable, achievable and equitable.

The Technical Vocational Education and Training sector has expanded greatly at both the vocational and in technical and business colleges.

As a result of the UBE Plan for 2010 to 2019, there will be more and more students coming out of schools in Grade 8 and we will need to absorb them into the education system. Thus a pathway has been set up so we have more Technical Vocational Education and Training [TVET] institutions in the country.

The pathways will lead to four Polytechnic Institutions in the four regions of the country, a technical school in each province and for a vocational school in each district of the country.

A National Qualifications Framework has led to greater opportunities for articulation and accreditation.

In concurrence with the UBE plan we will also emphasize the TVET sector. We aim to increase opportunities for post primary education and training, especially life skills training for self reliance, income generation and adult literacy.

The new curriculum offers a more flexible curriculum designed for the needs of our people. At the secondary level, the new curriculum offers a number of pathways, not just the academic pathway.

The foundation of the reform is the promotion of culture, values, attitudes, knowledge and a range of skills appropriate for Papua New Guinean society along with the need for international competitiveness.

EDUCATION AND LITERACY IN NATION BUILDING

Before I conclude I would like to remind all Papua New Guineas about the importance of education and literacy and the fight in the eradication of illiteracy in our beautiful country, Papua New Guinea.

Education and literacy are very important for Integral Human Development of an individual as well as community and nation building.

They are also the ingredients for a peaceful, prosperous, productive and self-reliant society. We must continue to work together as one nation and one people to achieve our common goals and build a prosperous and self reliant nation.

We just celebrated National Literacy Week from September 6 – 10 with the official opening and closing in Oro Province and celebrations in all the provinces.

National Literacy Week is an occasion to remember that literacy remains a right that is denied to about 44% of Papua New Guinea's population. Our challenge is to translate our recognition of the importance of literacy into practical effect so that hope is given to the millions of women, men and children who cannot read or even write their own names.

Progress is slowly being attained through adult literacy and non-formal education programs in many villages but tremendous challenges still remain. "An estimated 44% live without basic literacy skills and two-thirds of them are women. Thousands of children are still not enrolled in primary school and more than half of them are girls.

Papua New Guinea still has a long way to go before our adult population is 100 percent literate. We can achieve this if we all can do our part by assisting others who are illiterate to learn to read and write so that they can contribute meaningfully to their own

lives and that of their communities.

We do not have to rely only on the churches, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), the Department of Education through the National Literacy and Awareness Secretariat (NLAS) and the Department of Community Development to eradicate illiteracy in Papua New Guinea.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, I encourage all of us Papua New Guineans to be proud of ourselves, our nation and the achievements in the last 35 years.

I encourage our schools, students, and teachers to celebrate this Independence with pride that we are one people and one nation but with more than 800 different languages and traditions making our country very unique.

I also call for peace and understanding during the day.

We must respect each other and continue to work together to develop our communities and our country. I now join all other Papua New Guineans to congratulate Papua New Guinea on her 35th Independence Anniversary and wish everyone a happy, safe and memorable celebration.

HONOURABLE JAMES MARAPE, MP

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