

Submission on Digital Strategy 2.0

This submission is presented by the **Pacific Regional Information for All Programme (IFAP)** Committee of the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**. UNESCO's Information for All Programme seeks to help UNESCO Member States *"develop and implement national information policies and knowledge strategies in a world increasingly using information and communication technologies (ICTs)."*

Information for All Programme (IFAP)

UNESCO's Information for All Programme exists within the framework of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and UNESCO's Medium Term Strategy 2008 – 2013. IFAP recognises the important role that information has in development. Our focus is on ensuring that all people have access to information they can use to enhance their lives. We plan to achieve this by encouraging governments to develop policy frameworks for five priority areas – information for development, information literacy, information preservation, information ethics and information accessibility.

2005 Digital Strategy

The New Zealand Digital Strategy has been held up within UNESCO as an international exemplar of a national knowledge strategy, especially with its coverage of the three "C's" – connectivity, confidence (capability) and content. IFAP's focus is on the confidence and content components, but we recognise these cannot stand alone from the third "C".

The 2005 Strategy also included specific reference to **Pacific Communities**:

The Digital Strategy recognises that working with Pacific communities is important. Pacific Communities and people have goals for the use of ICT. The Digital Strategy will assist Pacific Communities to achieve these goals, noting that goals will be important for social, cultural, economic expression and development.

Pacific people are both creators and consumers of content. Pacific communities content is developed in broadcasting, the arts, music and creative industries, as well as being an important part of the education, health, and business sectors. Pacific digital content is important not simply for its economic potential, but also as a vital means of expressing culture in today's society, and strengthening Pacific society and identity, and connection between Pacific peoples in New Zealand and nations of the Pacific.

But this important sector of our community appears to have been overlooked in Digital Strategy 2.0

Pacific Digital Strategy

We have welcomed the development by the Pacific Forum of a **Pacific Digital Strategy**, but have already commented to the Forum that the singular focus on infrastructure (connectivity) fails to recognise the need to invest adequately in the other two components – capability and content – in parallel. For the Pacific, as in other developing countries, a fourth "c" is of equal importance – "cost". For communities and people living in these countries, the cost of accessing and using a digital environment must be affordable relative to local incomes. Because of the low population densities and low

level of underlying infrastructure access to information is likely to only be achieved with significant government subsidy.

Pacific Communities in New Zealand

New Zealand has a unique relationship with the Pacific Island countries with many Pacific Island people migrating to live in New Zealand. Digital communications provide excellent opportunities for these migrant communities to stay in touch with their family and friends at home as well as retain their language and culture. However, statistics on digital connectivity indicate that Pacific Island families in New Zealand are well below national averages.

Digital Strategy 2.0

The omission of Pacific communities in the draft Digital Strategy 2.0 is a serious omission, especially since the original 2005 strategy did acknowledge the importance of these communities. The draft strategy fails to recognise the special challenges and digital opportunities for Pacific Island and other migrant communities. Programmes such as the 2020 Communications Trust's *Computers in Homes* initiative helps to address basic digital skills and access for migrant communities, but such initiatives need to be turbo-charged in scale if they are to respond adequately to the needs of migrant communities. The strategy also fails to mobilise the digital opportunity presented with NZAid's \$200 million Pacific Bilateral aid programme. Increased investment in digital connectivity, capability and content through development assistance would not only benefit Pacific Island communities in their home countries but also their parallel communities in New Zealand.

Our Proposal

NZAid should investigate digital opportunities as part of all Pacific Bilateral funding programmes.

Government support is needed for:

- Promoting implementation of the Pacific Digital Strategy
- Assisting Pacific Island countries develop their own national digital strategies (modelled on the New Zealand Digital Strategy)
- Supporting Pacific Island digital initiatives through NZAid funding
- Promoting digital literacy amongst Pacific Island and migrant families living in New Zealand
- Encouraging migrant communities to retain and celebrate their indigenous languages and cultures
- Supporting the creation of digital content by Pacific Island people and communities