

AUSAID / Vanuatu Church Partnership Program (VCP) Institutional Strengthening Strategy (ISS) for – The Vanuatu Mission of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church (through ADRA Vanuatu) in partnership with ADRA Australia

1. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges (SWOC) facing the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Vanuatu.

In order to inform the development of the VCP design document, and the development of the SDA Church's Institutional Strengthening Strategy (ISS), a baseline survey was carried out during March 2008 which consulted community members and rural membership of the SDA Church in Vanuatu. The information gathered from this baseline survey was then discussed and analysed during a consultation workshop with SDA Church leadership in Port Vila during November 2008. Through this consultation process a SWOC table was established and agreed upon by Church leaders. *Table 1*, is the SWOC analysis table that resulted from the consultation process and is being used by the SDA Church and ADRA to guide the prioritisation of strategic capacity building activities within this ISS document for the next 3 years.

Table 1: SWOC table developed by SDA Church Leadership in Port Vila

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Church infrastructure is already in place in country. ▪ Church membership is a strong – human resource pool. ▪ Church delivers good services– not just a spiritual message. ▪ Staff development is good – trainings. ▪ A good financial base exists. ▪ The right people are in the right place – HR. ▪ Global Mission ▪ Common language (Bislama) makes operating easy. ▪ Unity amongst Church membership. ▪ Volunteerism – members willing to donate time and resources. ▪ GoV recognition of and partnership with SDA Church activities. ▪ Strength exists within Membership families. ▪ Education system is strong. ▪ Health system exists in country. ▪ Grassroots organisations are respected – e.g. Dorcas society. ▪ Systems exist within the Church (e.g. communication channels). ▪ Technology – Church has the means and the know-how. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wrong people in wrong place/role (HR) ▪ Technology is not always appropriate and is difficult to service. ▪ Volunteerism is sometimes taken for granted. ▪ Lack of or inadequate / unfinished infrastructure. ▪ Physical isolation of Churches. ▪ Communications with rural areas / congregations. ▪ HR development only focusing on teachers and pastors. ▪ Lack of strategic planning. ▪ Service delivery done poorly. ▪ Poor health practices of members. ▪ Lack of implementation skills. ▪ Not enough consultation among workers. ▪ Poor record keeping and reporting. ▪ Revolving of Church office holders. ▪ Lack of training for Church office holders – e.g. nepotism. ▪ Unmaintained infrastructure. ▪ Misuse of Church funds, assets and resources.
OPPORTUNITIES	CHALLENGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Integrated annual planning. ▪ Proximity to GoV services and donor agencies to access funds & resources. ▪ Connections within Church governance structure to access training opportunities e.g. TPUM SPD. ▪ Expansion of Infrastructure. ▪ Melanesian values – opportunities for support and strengthening of families. ▪ Access to tertiary institutions – USP VIT. ▪ Influence curriculum development @ GoV level. ▪ Accommodate needs & issues of children & youth within Church. ▪ Work with different denominations – program deliver. ▪ ADRA work expansion. ▪ Access to short term trainings, workshops & courses locally. ▪ Volunteerism – use of members skills for training and upskilling. ▪ Reach out more effectively to grassroots. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High cost of living – low income for workers. ▪ Global economic crisis. ▪ Health. ▪ Moral/personal issues. ▪ Sustainability of staff – how to keep them interested. ▪ Job attraction from outside the SDA Church – “grass is greener”. ▪ Lack of opportunity for staff development. ▪ Geographical and logistical constraints in rural areas. ▪ Rundown infrastructure (new or current infrastructure). ▪ Asset management. ▪ Communications. ▪ Lack of redundancies (assets/staffing). ▪ Continued constituency support of Church. ▪ Reduction in GoV grants. ▪ Difference between Church and other school systems. ▪ Cultural differences; sending workers to ethnically different islands. ▪ Lack of creativity – monotonous service delivery. ▪ Secularism, materialism and Individualism.

2. Key Priorities For Strengthening The Capacity of the SDA Church in Vanuatu.

Based upon the SWOC analysis undertaken during 2008, the activities proposed to improve the institutional efficiency of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Vanuatu will be matched to one of 5 key priority areas described below. These five key priority areas are designed not only to strengthen the SDA Church institution, but are also chosen to match and support the various community development and service delivery activities already undertaken by the Church throughout Vanuatu. Table 2 portrays the five key priority areas that the SDA Church will focus attention on during the next 3 years, providing a background as to why these priorities have been chosen and linking them to the key indicators of progress that are detailed in Table 3 below.

Table 2. SDA Church Key Priority Areas 2009 – 2011

Key Priority Area	Reason for Prioritisation
<p><i>Key Priority #1: Strategic Planning and Direction</i></p>	<p>The Vanuatu SDA Mission is comprised of 6 departments with each department having a head and in some cases an associate also. These departments are: Health, Education, Women's & Children's Ministries; Family Life; Stewardship, Sabbath School & Ministerial and Finance. In consultation with each of the departmental heads it was found that currently there is very little or no synergy or cooperation amongst the departments and with very little or no accountability on the types of programs or activities that they are running beyond financial accountability requirements. When further probed departmental heads stated that Vanuatu Mission does not have a strategic and common goal that everybody should be aiming for in their work. This has meant that at times departmental heads are running programs or activities for the sake of running them, not knowing what their programs are contributing to or whether they have been effective in what they had originally intended them to do. Most departments are working with or according to Government policy as much as possible but, as mentioned before, without reference to each other. Being a relatively new addition to the SDA Church's development work in Vanuatu, ADRA is also in need of a strategic framework from which to implement its interventions and partnerships.</p> <p>By addressing this priority area first, Church departments and entities will be able to better plan and coordinate their specific ministries and services based on the contemporary needs of Church membership and the community and large.</p>
<p><i>Key Priority #2: Financial Management & Sustainability</i></p>	<p>The Vanuatu SDA Mission's operational cost depends entirely on the tithes and offerings received from its local Churches. In other words, its financial performance determines the output of programs and activities implemented. In addition, the financial capacity also determines the size of recruitment of personnel to carry out the Mission's aims and goals. Anecdotal evidence shows that although there is an efficient and well established tithes and offering system to run the Mission's affairs, there are also a number of factors hindering the flow of money from local Churches to the Mission headquarter such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Factors contributing from local Churches (members) include; 1) a lack of knowledge on the importance on submitting tithes and offering to Mission, 2) a lack of understanding on their role as the local Church treasurer, 3) insufficient knowledge on financial management and reporting to Mission, 4) mismanagement of the Church budget. ▪ Factors contributing from Mission headquarter include; 1) a lack of contact with and knowledge of local Church situations, 2) a lack of provision of financial capacity building training for local Church treasurers, 3) insufficient provision of information and education to local Churches on the importance of tithes and offering, 4) a lack of information sharing on family budgeting.

	<p>Effective financial management within the Vanuatu Mission, however, goes beyond the collection of tithes and offerings to include the collection of education revenues, the management of external grants for community development activities (e.g. ADRA Vanuatu) and any other cost recovery mechanisms at work within SDA health services. This factor means that those responsible for collecting, managing and accounting for other forms of revenue within the SDA Church departments, also are in need of having their capacity to work efficiently built through financial management training.</p>
<p><i>Key Priority #3:</i> Human Resource Development</p>	<p>Over the past 10 years staff at the Vanuatu SDA Mission have felt that there has been minimal attention paid to them in regards to their human resource (HR) management needs. This was highlighted during a workshop SWOC analysis session conducted with the Mission employees in November 2008 and it became apparent that this has been ongoing for sometime. This issue has been exacerbated in the last few years by a General Secretary (who by default is the one delegated to be taking care of the HR needs of the Mission) who was placed in an administration role despite not having the required experience or willingness to perform in that role. As such staff are unclear on what the Mission's HR policies are and remain unsure of the mechanisms to have issues addressed by the administration. Add to this the fact that staff are also not clear on what career progression opportunities exist for them, and if/when there are options available then they are not clear on procedures to access them. As a result staff at times feel neglected by the Mission Administration and may not willing to give their best effort.</p> <p>While ADRA Vanuatu is in a growth phase after having just commenced operations as a Country Office in February 2008 it is an ideal time to address issues that arise during such a time. As such , with HR needs being a priority, the HR needs of ADRA Vanuatu staff will also be included within this key priority area.</p>
<p><i>Key Priority #4:</i> Governance</p>	<p>For the overall operations of the Vanuatu SDA Mission and its various entities and services to run well they require effective functional governance and where an entity's board is not governing effectively, it can be expected to have an adverse effect on all aspects of the efficiency of the operations of that entity. The Administration and Departments of the Mission are overseen by the Vanuatu SDA Executive which only meets twice a year and or if called for an extra-ordinary session. Separately, the day to day operations of the Mission are overseen by the Administrative committee and Church schools are each governed by their consecutive school boards meeting on a quarterly basis, with local Church boards meeting on an as needed basis. The ADRA Vanuatu board meets on a quarterly basis or on an as-needed basis.</p> <p>With so much hinging on effective governance it is not surprising that entities with poor or non-effective governance struggle to operate as efficiently as they should. These governing boards become ineffective with members that are just "rubber stamping" decisions and not value adding to the entities that they are responsible for. In other cases people are appointed to governing bodies for political expediency, and not because of what they offer or how they can add value to the organisation, also causing governance to stagnate or even fail.</p> <p>This objective seeks to improve the governance of the entities of the Vanuatu SDA Mission and by flow on effect improve the overall operations of those entities.</p>
<p><i>Key Priority #5:</i> Resourcing, Advocacy and Program Support (M&E)</p>	<p>This objective is targeting the ability of SDA service delivery departments and ADRA Vanuatu, to improve their ability to access and successfully obtain financial or in-kind support for their development activities from various Government and alternative (non-VCPD) donor sources. Currently the ability to adequately write grant requests to donors is low in most Church</p>

	<p>departments and this, together with limited knowledge on how and where to find potential donors is limiting the Church departments access to increasing funding for service delivery.</p> <p>Equally important in this process is the ability of Church entitees and departments to advocate effectively to government on issues affecting communities throughout Vanuatu. Currently, the ability of Church employees within key departmental roles to influence and contribute to government dialogue of social issues and needs is limited, but with effective guidance and support could be improved to act as a voice for the needs of the communities that are served by the SDA Church in Vanuatu.</p> <p>Within the SDA Church itself there is a growing understanding of the need to provide follow-up support to the service delivery aspects of the Church, but a limited understanding of how to monitor the efficiency of activities and knowledge of how to evaluate the effectiveness of Church services is ensuring the adequate and informed follow-up and support for Church services is not occurring. Mainstreaming a basic understanding of monitoring and evaluation throughout Church departments is one way the program support can be improved within the Vanuatu Mission.</p>
--	---

3. Measuring and Evaluating the Progress of the Institutional Strengthening Strategy and Organisational Change

Measuring Organisational Change

For the SDA Church to assess progress against the planned priorities outlined within this ISS, an annual consultation process will be held within each Church department or entitee (*including measurement of progress against the indicators in Table 3.*) and will culminate with an annual general VCPP meeting to review the ISS attended by key Church department heads. This annual meeting will be the forum in which Church wide progress is discussed among key Church stakeholders and the lessons learned from the past year will be used to update and if necessary re-prioritise aspects of the ISS. The Strategic Plan to be developed in first year by Vanuatu SDA Mission will be reviewed annually and will also serve as a basis from which the ISS can be modified.

Measuring Institutional Progress

In order to measure real progress and institutional strengthening within the SDA Church in Vanuatu, Table 3 has been developed to serve as a measure of progress against the Key Priority Areas. Key indicators of change have been chosen for each priority area, with a variety of assessment and evaluation methods that will be utilised where appropriate to measure the progress of the ISS and the supporting activities of the VCPP. Through a process of annual review, it will be possible to determine areas where progress has occurred and areas that need further intervention and support.

Table 3: Indicators of Progress and Methods of Assessing Change

Key Institutional Priorities	Indicators of Change	Method/s of Assessing this Change
<p><i>Key Priority #1:</i> Strategic Planning and Direction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strategic plans (<i>2 in tota</i>) are developed and used to guide the work of the SDA Vanuatu Mission, and ADRA Vanuatu. ▪ Number of meetings held by Church departmental heads to coordinate complementary activities. ▪ Number of programs run by Church departments in conjunction with each other. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Documentation of each strategic plan. ▪ Comparison of strategic goals and objectives against achieved outcomes. ▪ Departmental reports presented to Administration and Church Executive Committee.

<p><i>Key Priority #2:</i> Financial Management & Sustainability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improved accuracy and consistency of financial reporting. ▪ Increased revenue from improved financial management practices. ▪ Increased performance and efficiency of Vanuatu SDA Mission Treasury staff. ▪ Increased recruitment of service delivery staff due to increased incomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Vanuatu Mission and ADRA Vanuatu Audit reports. ▪ Annual Mission Income reports. ▪ Individual Church income reports. ▪ Treasury Staff performance reviews ▪ Feedback from SDA Church constituency on perceived performance of Treasury Department.
<p><i>Key Priority #3:</i> Human Resource Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ HR policy developed. ▪ Staff understand their roles. ▪ Staff receive opportunities to upskill and further their training. ▪ Vanuatu SDA Mission developing initiatives to address HR issues identified. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Documentation of HR policy. ▪ Interviews with Church and ADRA staff. ▪ Documentation of attendance at training workshops. ▪ Post training surveys, annual employee reviews. ▪ ISS activity proposals developed targeting HR issues.
<p><i>Key Priority #4:</i> Governance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Effective executive board leadership of the SDA Vanuatu Mission. ▪ Effective school board management at key primary/secondary schools. ▪ Effective board involvement in the management of ADRA Vanuatu. ▪ Greater cohesion and accountability of Vanuatu SDA Mission departments in the activities and programs that they implement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focus group discussions with various board management entities. ▪ Interviews with Church departmental directors. ▪ Involvement of board members in the work of ADRA Vanuatu outside of normal meeting times. ▪ Review of activities and programs implemented/attended against the stated activities in the Vanuatu SDA Mission strategic plan.
<p><i>Key Priority #5:</i> Resourcing, Advocacy and Program Support (M&E)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improved ability of SDA/ADRA staff to write grant requests to various donors. ▪ Increased # of funding requests submitted to government and donors. ▪ Increase in (\$) funding for SDA and ADRA development activities. ▪ Increased # of support (monitoring) visits undertaken by departmental staff. ▪ Increased inter-action and advocacy with government authorities on social priorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Internal mechanisms (e.g. project proposal appraisal committee) will ensure that grant requests are of a high standard. ▪ Interviews with donors/supporters. ▪ Monitoring reports from various Church departments and entities. ▪ Program evaluations.

Mainstreaming Monitoring and Evaluation Skills

ADRA Vanuatu's program coordinator will work directly with Church department heads – with support from the ADRA Vanuatu Country Director – to guide and assist in their understanding of monitoring and evaluation methods and help them to identify areas where progress is occurring, and to focus attention on those areas that remain under-performing. ADRA Vanuatu will serve as the link through which effective Monitoring and Evaluation skills are mainstreamed through the SDA Church in Vanuatu.