

# DFAT Management Response: Mid-Term Review Of The Vanuatu Education Support Program II (2022)

## Purpose:

The Government of Australia, through DFAT, commissioned a mid-term review (MTR) of the Australian-funded Vanuatu Education Support Program Phase II (VESP II) in mid-2021 for the primary purpose of **investment improvement** to maximise **effectiveness, efficiency** and **sustainability** for an extension of the phase. The secondary purposes were for accountability and knowledge generation.

VESP II is a three-year program (2019 to 2021) with an option to extend for up to five years. The program builds on the achievements of VESP I (jointly funded with New Zealand, 2013-2019), by continuing to support improving primary education outcomes through a focus on access, quality and management. The MTR came later in the program than envisaged due to the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of COVID-19, the review was conducted remotely with support from the Australian High Commission in Port Vila. It was designed to be formative in nature, to generate evidence and learning from the implementation of VESP II. The MTR will inform DFAT's decision on whether to continue the current delivery modality and extend the program.

## Key findings:

The MTR found VESP II is strongly aligned with the Government of Australia's policy directions, and that the original goals and underlying assumptions of the program still hold true. The program is **relevant** to sector priorities outlined in the Vanuatu Education and Training Sector Strategy (VETSS) and managed to adapt to contextual changes that impacted the original program logic. VESP II is **complementary** to other education programs and navigates in close **coordination** through informal channels, even though MoET continues to need significant support in its efforts to coordinate certain sub-sectors. The MTR demonstrates VESP II **is performing well** in most areas and is tracking satisfactorily towards its IOs and targets. To sustain gains, VESP II needs to be adaptive in managing challenges to ongoing progress and provide broader system support in key areas. The MTR found that VESP II has experienced significant challenges with its **monitoring and evaluation** system since the start of the program. The latest of the three M&E frameworks is an improvement over the previous two but still fails to adequately meet all DFAT standards. VESP II is making appropriate use of time and resources towards achieving outcomes (**efficiency**). Adopting a longer-term view of investment in VESP II would increase the **sustainability** of the program. The MTR demonstrated that VESP II has raised awareness towards gender related issues and should improve its awareness raising of inclusion for people with disabilities (**GEDSI**).

VESP II has delivered outcomes in line with the needs and priorities of education and its adaptive response to meet MoET's Secondary Education curriculum was recognised. The MTR further found the VESP II end-of-program outcomes remained highly relevant, but that the Program Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) framework should be further refreshed to incorporate changes to the context. It concluded that the delivery modality for VESP II remains efficient.

## Overall response to the evaluation

The Government of Australia, through DFAT, welcomes and agrees with the MTRs findings and recommendations. These findings will inform and guide DFAT's future support to Vanuatu Education sector and its coordination, and in particular the continuity of assistance through the Vanuatu Education Support Program.

More detailed responses to each recommendation are included in the table below.

## Detailed Management response to the recommendations

No.	Recommendation from the evaluation	Response	Explanation	Action plan	Timeframe
1	VESP II should continue with the current modality for a further five years.	Agree	<p>The current modality has been found to be effective.</p> <p>A longer period is needed for VESP II to become fully embedded into MoET's planning and sustain its impact.</p> <p>2019 was a disrupted year with the resignation of the Team Leader and changes in the leadership team. Throughout 2020-22, COVID-19 and TC Harold disrupted activities and required the program to adapt. It pivoted activities to assist MoET to provide continuity of education across Vanuatu.</p> <p>In this context, a two-year extension would allow insufficient time for VESP II to embed key aspects of the program.</p>	<p>DFAT to facilitate amendment of the VESP II contract with Tetra Tech and ensure relevant documents are signed by 23 December 2021.</p> <p>DFAT to amend the subsidiary amendment with MoET to match the new end date of the contract. Document to be signed by HOM and MoET.</p> <p>DFAT to amend the end date of the Direct Funding Arrangement with MoET to match the new end date of the contract.</p>	Done
2	VESP II should support the Ministry in realistic devolution / decentralisation efforts including clarification of roles at provincial level and the possible adoption of a more nuanced approach in the way that it operates in the provinces.	Agree	<p>The MTR team found out that some respondents were not clear on the difference between decentralisation and devolution, and which tasks had been devolved to the provincial level.</p> <p>The program needs be further contextualised to take into account contextual and geographic differences in individual provinces.</p>	<p>The 2023 Annual plan presents provincial activities to be implemented during the calendar year.</p> <p>VESP II set up a grant mechanism to assist provinces to access funding to implement activities identified as priorities by the Provincial Education Office.</p>	2023

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				DFAT will work with VESP and MoET Education Services to monitor the access and the use of the grant at the provincial level. VESP will develop case studies (short videos, presentations) on the use of the grant.	
3	That VESP II should revise its M&E approach on an annual basis with a possibility of reframing it as a Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning (MERL) Framework or a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework.	Agree	<p>VESP II's EOPOs remain relevant in terms of GoV priorities but there is a need to review the M&amp;E plan, including the program logic pathways.</p> <p>M&amp;E has been challenging for VESP II since the program's commencement, with three different M&amp;E advisers and three different M&amp;E plans.</p> <p>Capacity building of MoET staff at an operational level has been impeded by a misalignment in planning calendars as well as a change in personnel which has not allowed for the building of close relationships</p>	<p>DFAT will ensure the new M&amp;E framework fully complies with DFAT standards, and that the Theory of Change (ToC) is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that the logic pathways remain relevant. This was outlined in the VESP II amendment signed in December 2021.</p> <p>DFAT education staff and the VESP II management team will develop options to sustain strong MEL in the future, to reduce turnover of M&amp;E advisers. A reflection workshop on MEL should be planned in 2023.</p>	2023
4	That MoET / VESP II / IES/ DFAT consider ways in which MoET can ensure that teachers in schools are qualified and that they are provided with ongoing professional development opportunities	Agree	<p>Vanuatu continues to experience teacher shortages. the Vanuatu Institute of Teachers Education (VITE) did not enrol new teaching cohorts for three consecutive years. This increased teacher shortages at all levels of education.</p> <p>In 2021, VITE was merged into the Vanuatu National University and as an immediate</p>	<p>DFAT will prioritise teacher training in VESP II activities. There is increasing demand for MoET to strengthen teacher training for delivery of the newly developed year eight curriculum.</p> <p>DFAT will raise the issue of teacher training at the Joint Sector Review planned in March 2023 and workshop</p>	On-going

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			consequence, the In-Service Unit run by VITE was dismantled, with no replacement options to provide short courses or training for teachers in the fields.	options to increase access to quality teacher training	
5	Additional technical advisory (TA) support is provided to enable VESP II to complete key tasks.	Agree	<p>Vanuatu's international borders were closed from March 2020 to July 2022. Only three long-term advisers were able to remain in Vanuatu during COVID-19.</p> <p>Short-term VESP advisers continued to support MoET managers remotely, which was challenging due to connectivity and time zone issues.</p>	<p>DFAT and VESP II management team will continue to work closely together to assess adviser resources needed to assist MoET to implement activities with the right amount of support.</p> <p>DFAT will review the 2023 Annual Plan to ensure sufficient TA support is available.</p>	On-going

The MRT report provided six (6) suggestions to be taken into consideration.

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1) That MoET and DFAT ensure that a body responsible for alignment and coordination of VESP II activities with those of other stakeholders is established or restored.	Agree	Donor coordination has been challenging, particularly since borders reopened in July 2022, resulting in an increased number of transactional and information meetings for MoET to engage with.	<p>DFAT is now the coordinating agent for the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and is playing a sectoral coordination role.</p> <p>The Local Education Group (LEG) ToRs have been revised to ensure the LEG acts as a coordinating body for the sector.</p> <p>DFAT will work with MoET to determine how the LEG, or a similar body could reduce the transactional</p>	On-going

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			burden of dealing with multiple development partners for MoET.	
<p>2) That the balance of responsibilities between DFAT and MC in terms of decision-making related to ways forward with Australia Awards for Vanuatu (AAV) requires further consultation.</p> <p>3) That VESP II and MoET enable AAV to continue to be sustained and promoted in new ways in the current environment.</p>	Agree		<p>DFAT has monthly meetings with the contractor to continuously seek efficiency improvements in AAV management.</p> <p>DFAT is providing regular feedback to improve the quality of AAV management products.</p> <p>DFAT is liaising with AAV to better define roles and responsibilities between AAV and DFAT.</p>	On-going
4) That VESP II, MoET and DFAT ensure that gender is not just seen to apply to girls but also to boys	Agree	There is a global trend towards girls out-performing boys. Further study on this trend is required to determine the drivers of this trend in Vanuatu.	The VESP team will working with MoET on data collection specifically for boys.	2023
5) That VESP II ensures that gains in the early years of the curriculum are sustained and that recent initiatives in literacy are embedded into the curriculum	Agree		VESP to review the curriculum statement and teachers' guides for year 1 to year 6.	2023

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6) That VESP II and MoET consider how best to ensure that teachers are prepared to teach through the medium of French and English.	Agree	<p>Teachers in schools are lacking fluent command of French and English and are struggling to transfer from mother tongue to international languages.</p> <p>The <i>Ademap wan lanwis</i> policy has been implemented and training provided to primary teachers, but more follow-up and mentoring are required.</p>	<p>VESP to support MoET to deliver language testing for teachers.</p> <p>VESP to work with MoET to consider delivery of additional mentoring and follow-up training to teaches.</p>	2023