MID-TERM EVALUATION VANUATU EDUCATION SUPPORT PROGRAM

Prepared for
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Australian High Commission

NOVEMBER 3, 2022

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History

Version	Due Date	Submitted to	Status / Notes
Terms of reference	8th July	Yvette Andrews Christelle Thieffry	Draft
Terms of reference	3rd August	MoET through DFAT	Final Final draft available earlier (The ToRs went through several redrafts with Yvette Andrews and Christelle rewriting sections connected with the questions)
Evaluation Plan	28th July	Yvette Andrews Christelle Thieffry	Draft (The evaluation plan went through two rounds of requests for modifications and additions from post looking at additional questions to be answered)
Evaluation Plan	11th August	Yvette Andrews Christelle Thieffry	Final
Aide Memoire Draft	10th September	Yvette Andrews Christelle Thieffry	Draft
Aide Memoire Final	14th September	Yvette Andrews Christelle Thieffry	Final
MTR report outline	19th September	Christelle Thieffry Yvette Andrews	Outline accepted as appropriate on 20th September
MTR report	22nd September	Yvette Andrews Christelle Thieffry	Draft
Comments on MTR report	25TH September	Barbara Thornton	From Cathy McWilliam
Second draft of MTR	4th October	Yvette Andrews	Draft
Comments on MTR report	11th November	Yvette Andrews Christelle Thieffry	Email comments
Final draft of MTR report	27th November	Yvette Andrews Christelle Thieffry	Also sent to Palladium for QA Subject to review by PFM specialist
Quality Assured Report	March 2022	Yvette Andrews Christelle Thieffry	Quality of the report was not satisfactory
Comments on QA report received	17th May 2022 To 3 Nov 2022	Barbara Thornton	Thorough sentence level comments as well as some factual errors identified

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Disclaimer

The views expressed in this mid-term review report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Government of Vanuatu (GoV) or the Government of Australia (GoA).

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank all of those who gave their time to the Mid-Term Review (MTR) team to support Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) in reviewing the progress of Vanuatu Education Support Program II (VESP-II) and setting priorities for future support. Special thanks are due to the Director General (DG) Iati Bergmans, and Directors of Ministry of Education and Training (MoET), the Director for Policy and Planning (PPU), Serge Lewawa, the Director of Education Services, Samuel Katipa, the Director of the Finance and Administration Unit (FAU), John Gideon, and Director of Tertiary Services, Anne-Rose Tjiabong. They acted not only as respondents for this review but assisted with the development of its Terms of Reference (ToR) and contributed to the drafting of recommendations. Thanks also to other MoET staff both within the Central Ministry as well as provinces who provided a wealth of useful information on various aspects of the program.

Thanks also to the VESP II team for their helpfulness and openness and in particular VESP-II Team Leader David Letichevsky for his support and constant availability. Thanks to Bruce Trieff for his patience and flexibility and for being on hand whenever technical help was needed.

Thanks are due to DFAT staff, and in particular Yvette Andrews and Christelle Thieffry, for their advice and practical help during the review as well as their assistance with data collection, writing up of notes and conducting workshops. Finally, thank you very much to all the other key stakeholders, including Jean-Pierre Nirua, Vice-Chancellor, National University of Vanuatu, university lecturers, members of UN agencies, Non-Government Organisation staff and others who kindly gave up their valuable time to talk to the team.

Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
AAV	Australia Awards in Vanuatu
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AHC	Australian High Commission
AI	Appreciative Inquiry
APTC	Australia Pacific Training Coalition
CDU	Curriculum Development Unit
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DFA	Direct Funding Arrangement
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DG	Director-General
DP	Development Partner
EAU	Examination and Assessment Unit
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
EoPO	End of Program Outcome
FAU	Finance and Administration Unit
GEDSI	Gender equality, disability, and social inclusion
GoA	Government of Australia
GoV	Government of Vanuatu
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
ISU	In-Service Unit
JS	Junior Secondary
JSR	Joint Sector Review
KRQ	Key Review Question
LEG	Local Education Group
LTA	Long-Term Adviser
MC	Managing Contractor
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MERL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning
MFAT	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (New Zealand)
MoET	Ministry of Education and Training
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NGO	Non-government organisation
NSDP	National Sustainable Development Plan
NUV	National University of Vanuatu
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
OVEMIS	Open Vanuatu Education Management Information System
PEO	Provincial Education Officer
PFM	Public Financial Management
PPU	Policy and Planning Unit
PTR	Pupil Teacher Ratio

Acronym	Definition
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SBMU	School-Based Management Unit
SIO	School Improvement Officer
STA	Short-Term Adviser
SWOC	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Challenges
TA	Technical Assistance
TC	Tropical Cyclone
ToR	Terms of Reference
ToT	Training of Trainers
VANSTA	Vanuatu Standardised Test of Achievement
VESAP	Vanuatu Education Sector Action Plan
VERM	Vanuatu Education Road Map
VESP	Vanuatu Education Support Program
VETSS	Vanuatu Education and Training Sector Strategy
VITE	Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education
ZCA	Zone Curriculum Adviser

Executive Summary

The Vanuatu Education Support Program Phase II (VESP II) is a three-year program with an option to extend for up to a further five years. It is funded by the Government of Australia's (GoA) Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and implemented in cooperation with the Government of Vanuatu (GoV). The contract between the managing contractor, Tetra Tech International Development Pty Ltd was signed in 2018 and a mid-term review of the VESP Phase II was a contractual requirement.

Due to the disruption related to COVID-19 and Tropical Cyclone (TC) Harold, the virtual mid-term review took place later than originally planned and occurred between 9th August and 3rd September 2021. The key purpose of the review was to inform investment improvement in the sector with secondary purposes of providing accountability in terms of VESP II's performance and consolidating information that could provide an evidence-base for decision-making in the sector.

The review was designed to answer a series of key questions organised broadly under the DAC Criteria[1] as follows:

Relevance: Is VESP II doing the right things?
Coherence: How well does the intervention fit?
Efficiency: How well are resources being used?
Sustainability: Wil the benefits last?

A series of questions related to GEDSI were also included in line with DFAT's recommendations for MTRs.[2] The report addresses the nineteen key questions which formed part of the ToRs[3] (see Annex 1) along with two supplementary questions added during the review itself which were of particular interest to DFAT and the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET). The full list of questions and sub-questions is contained in Annex 2.

The report itself gives a background to the review before discussing the findings under each key question. The findings represent the information gained from documentation reviews, interviews and focus groups. In most cases the findings are based on information from more than one source e.g., two interviewees plus background documentation.

The key recommendations arising out of the findings are presented below:

- **VESP II should continue under the current arrangements for a further five years with modifications**

[1] OECD (2019), Development Assistance Committee Evaluation Criteria. Retrieved from https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm
[2] DFAT (2018), Monitoring and Evaluation Practitioner Level: Training Module
[3] Two further key questions were added while the review was in progress

VESP II, as originally designed, remains of high relevance to both the GoV and the GoA. A longer period is needed for VESP-II to become embedded into MoET's planning and have an impact. Its ability to fully integrate into MoET has been inhibited by the short periods of program extensions. The current operating environment has been characterised by the effects of COVID-19 and TC Harold, leading to delays, disruptions to activities and the need to transition to remote working for some aspects of the program. A two-year extension would allow insufficient time for VESP II to embed key aspects of the program. However, given the findings of this MTR, some issues need to be addressed. These issues are described in the recommendations below.

- **VESP II should support the MoET in realistic devolution / decentralisation efforts, including clarification of roles at provincial level, and adopt a more nuanced approach in the way it operates within provinces.**

- **VESP II should revise its M&E approach** with a possibility of reframing it as a Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning (MERL) Framework or a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework. The new framework needs to fully comply with DFAT standards. In line with the adaptive nature of the program, the Theory of Change (ToC) should be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that the logic pathways still hold.

- **VESP II should support MoET to ensure that qualified teachers are provided to schools.** Professional development opportunities need to be provided to teachers to enable them to meet the standards set by the MoET. This might include reviving some of the initiatives that commenced under VESP I e.g., field-based training and recognition of prior learning. Consideration needs to be given to ways in which MoET can ensure that teachers in schools are qualified and that they are provided with ongoing professional development opportunities. The MoET's Teacher Development Unit would need to be strengthened to develop clear and attainable strategies to enable this to happen.

- **Additional technical advisory (TA) support is provided to enable VESP II to complete key tasks.** VESP II should provide a full-time TA to support reporting. Tasks performed by the current Long-Term Advisors under the program need to be reviewed. The capacity building element of VESP II TA should be reviewed.

Contextual Background

Education Context

With a population of over 300,000 spread over 65 inhabited islands actively speaking over 100 languages, Vanuatu is the most linguistically diverse country per capita in the world. English and French serve as the official languages and Bislama as the national language.[4] While the multiplicity of languages causes some challenges, Vanuatu has embarked on an ambitious reform agenda over the last decade to improve both the access to and quality of

[4] VNSO (2021), Preliminary results of 2020 Census. Retrieved from https://vnso.gov.vu/index.php/en/about

education in Vanuatu. Considerable progress has been made in implementing these reforms, but gains need to be sustained. For example:

3. The numbers of children in the system are increasing yearly, with significant numbers of over-age children[5]. The most recent data shows over 96,000 children enrolled in 1,472 schools with many of those schools in rural areas. Delivering quality education to such a dispersed population is a challenge especially with large numbers of underqualified teachers.[6]

4. Prior to the commencement of VESP II, Vanuatu's new curriculum had been fully rolled out in Years 1 to 3 in conjunction with the MoET National Language Policy. That policy uses vernacular in the early grades.[7] Much has been undertaken as part of this rollout. However, there is still much that needs to be done to win over public opinion on the benefits of this policy.

5. At the commencement of VESP II, Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) was in the process of being integrated into MoET. This involved moving away from a community-only responsibility, with plans to support salaries of qualified teachers. Full integration of ECCE within the system will take time to embed.

6. Investment in in-service training under VESP I sought to improve the quality of training. However, when the National University of Vanuatu was established, the former Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education (VITE) became part of the University and the In-Service Unit ceased to exist. The School of Education now deals exclusively with training teachers towards formal qualifications rather than providing professional development (PD) for existing teachers.

7. School infrastructure in Vanuatu has relied on donor funding for decades and there is severe overcrowding in some schools in urban areas[8].

Recent Developments

As with other countries in the region, Vanuatu was affected by COVID-19 both in terms of the education system in general as well as VESP II programming. In March 2020, the GoV implemented precautionary measures, closing all its 1,472 schools, and using home-school packages in their place. Less than one month later, TC Harold hit Vanuatu causing widespread destruction, including severe damage to more than 1,000 schools. This compounded the challenges faced by the education system in the country. Schools in the affected areas were able to re-open two months later but as pointed out in the GoV report into its recovery strategy, the scale of disruption to essential services, including to education, continues to be severe[9]. The devastating impact of TC Harold and COVID-19 have in many ways defined the operating environment of VESP II, meaning that funds needed to

[5] MOET, (2021), Education Digest: Basic Tables of 2020
[6] MOET (2020), Educational Digest, 2019
[7] Vanuatu Education Support Program (VESP) Phase II Investment Design Document 2016
[8] MOET (2017), Education and Training Sector Analysis
[9] Government of Vanuatu (2020), Government of Vanuatu Recovery Strategy: COVID-19 and TC Harold

be diverted. In addition, visits and activities by TA were curtailed, causing disruption and delays to activities.

The mini census conducted in 2016 conducted post TC Pam found that 11.2% of children did not return in the period of school re-opening[10]. Similar levels of drop-out could be assumed after the recent period of closure.

The Background to VESP II

VESP II is a three-year program, with an option to extend for up to a further five years, funded by the GoA through DFAT and implemented in cooperation with the GoV[11]. VESP II was designed to build on the achievements and results from VESP I, through a continued focus on access, quality and management[12].

The end of program outcomes (EoPOs) of VESP II are:

EoPO 1 (Access): More children (girls and boys, including those with disabilities) are enrolled and attend the right year of primary school at the right age.

EoPO 2 (Quality): School principals, teachers, parents, and communities collaborate to ensure students achieve improved literacy and numeracy outcomes (Years 4 and 6).

EoPO 3 (Management): MoET effectively plans, trials/implements, and learns from devolution efforts and uses evidence to inform decisions (improved management).

The following Intermediate Outcomes will lead to the EoPOs:

- Intermediate Outcome 1: (Parents) Schools and their communities collaborate to support student learning.
- Intermediate Outcome 2: (Teachers) Teachers are supported by school leaders and provincial education officers (PEOs) to improve classroom learning
- Intermediate Outcome 3: (Teachers) Teachers are motivated to use skills and resources to support improved classroom learning, including for children with disabilities.
- Intermediate Outcome 4: (Institutional) School leaders engaged and supported to implement school improvement plans and working with teachers and communities to strengthen education service delivery.

For logistical and efficiency reasons, it was also decided that Australia Awards in Vanuatu (AAV) would be delivered under the same contract as VESP II.

[10] VNSO (2016), Mini-Census Report. Retrieved from https://vnso.gov.vu/images/Public_Documents/Census_Surveys/Census/2016/2016_Mini_Census_Main_Report_Vol_1.pdf

[11] DFAT (2018), VESP Design document

[12] Australia's long involvement in the sector can be seen from the fact that support was provided prior to VESP in the form of direct budget support from Australia, New Zealand, and UNICEF through the Vanuatu Education Road Map (VERM) and prior to that through VESAP.

VESP II is delivered through two main aid modalities: a Direct Funding Agreement (DFA) with MoET for School Grants for Kindergarten and Years 7-14; and a contract with Tetra Tech International Development Pty Ltd as Managing Contractor. While ECCE activity funding was previously through DFA in Phase I, this proved challenging and human resources were too limited for this to continue in VESP II. The DFA was, therefore, used to provide school grants from ECCE and Year 10 to Year 14 as well as fund aspects of ECCE. It was also used to channel funds for education as part of the humanitarian response in the COVID-19 and post-emergency period.

Background to current review

Goals of the Mid-Term Review

The main goal of the MTR is to inform investment improvement for the next five years, with secondary purposes of:

- Accountability: to assess VESP II's performance since January 2019 in terms of program achievements, the quality of its performance and to what extent it has resulted in change.
- Knowledge generation: to articulate what lessons have been learned which could provide an evidence-base for decision-making in the sector?

The review considers the MTR requirements as stated in the VESP II design and the Public Financial Management (PFM) Assessment of the MoET in 2020, which states: "Assessing the appropriateness and efficiency of the balance of funding modalities (VESP II design p.27) and undertaking an assessment of the modality and scope to rebalance between contract and DFA if required. [13]"

Users of the Review

The focus of the MTR is on immediate usability, bearing in mind the need to provide data for evidence-based decision for the immediate and medium-term future of investments by the users. The end users of the MTR will be:

- DFAT – Post Education Team, Post Management, and Desk, Education Section
- Ministry of Education and Training – Director-General and Directors.
- Department of Strategic Policy, Planning and Aid Coordination – Director and Sector analyst.
- Ministry of Finance and Economic Management – Expenditure analyst.
- Development Partners engaged or who will be engaged in the Sector e.g., UNICEF, Save the Children and the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT).

Mid-Term Review Process and Timing

[13] PFM Fiduciary Risk Assessment (2020,) p.42

A MTR of VESP II was built into the original design of the program and the Managing Contractor's contract stated that this would take place at the end of the second year of the program[14]. However, as previously noted, the effects of COVID-19 and TC Harold had an impact on timings. This MTR therefore comes later in the program than would have been normally expected.

The MTR itself was characterised by a long preparation period, a paced virtual mission and short reporting period, necessary because of time constraints related to decisions which needed to be made regarding program extension.

Approach and Methodology of the Mid-Term Review

Orientation / Approach

The review was designed to consist of a **light touch approach** using **Appreciative Inquiry** (AI) techniques.

"Appreciative Inquiry deliberately focuses attention on what is working well and how things could be made even better, instead of focusing on what is going wrong or needs to be fixed. It is often seen as an alternative to traditional forms of inquiry, which tend to focus on problems, challenges, and difficulties." (INTRAC, 2017 p.1) [15]

Appreciative Inquiry does not ignore lessons learned and indeed, advocates of the approach feel it can be better than other methodologies at getting stakeholders to talk about what did not go to plan within a supportive and appreciative environment. Appreciative inquiry is, "very focused around learning in order to improve, and therefore ensures M&E goes beyond simple reporting for accountability purposes. (Ibid.p.2)" The AI approach is therefore helpful in the current context to set the stage for the next phased of support to the sector.

The review was also designed to be **adaptive**. This was reflected in the flexibility of the "virtual mission." When additional questions which were of high interest to DFAT and MoET emerged during data collection, these were incorporated as far as possible (see section on M&E). The exercise was also **iterative** in nature. Since the data collection was spread over a longer timeframe, it was possible to interview the same respondent on more than one occasion to elicit further information and obtain clarifications. This had clear advantages in terms of relevance to stakeholders, but the lack of clear cut-off points also caused delays in reporting.

The key element of the approach was the **participatory** nature of the MTR. MoET was involved in drafting the questions that the MTR was designed to answer. Senior management were also involved in the analysis of the findings of the review.

[14] Coffey/Tetra Tech Contract p. 89.2 (2016) Clause 9.2(d)
[15] INTRAC (2017), Appreciative Inquiry. Retrieved from https://www.intrac.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Appreciative-Inquiry.pdf

Methodology

A mixed methodology was used and as far as possible, data was triangulated through asking the same or related questions of more than one respondent and checking information in documentation with results from interviews.

The following methods were included:

- Document analysis. Although efforts were made to prioritise the document analysis prior to the review itself, many essential documents emerged because of interviews and deeper research.

- Semi-structured stakeholder interviews facilitated by the MTR team (held remotely). Interviews were conducted using Zoom or Microsoft Teams and occasionally through WhatsApp. Interviews were based on an interview schedule but were tailored to the position and experience of the interviewee. Interviews used questions that DFAT provided that were related to certain individuals or groups of individuals. All interviews were treated as confidential, although on occasion permission was granted to record interviews to facilitate accurate notation. Where interviews were conducted in Bislama, permission was asked to record.

- Focus groups and other participatory group-based discussion methods. These included two workshops facilitated by the consultant and two workshop / discussions facilitated by the DFAT team. Materials for DFAT were provided two days before the team conducted the focus group sessions and included a SWOC analysis.

Critical to the MTR as specified in both the ToRs and the evaluation plan was that there would be a validation process of the findings of the review prior to recommendations being drafted. The MTR team presented the initial Aide-Memoire to two of the four MoET directors and the aide-memoire with attached questions was presented by DFAT to the other two directors. Their comments are reflected in the findings in this report.

Key Review Questions

The key questions for the review were originally made up of nineteen questions with two further questions added during the review itself. Many other sub-questions were included because they were of direct interest to either DFAT or MoET. The key review questions are below with a table also containing the sub-questions to be found in Annex 2. Because of the substantial number of questions, those which were a priority are bolded both in the table below as well as in the annex.

Table 1: Key Review Questions from ToRs

1. CONTINUED RELEVANCE

1.1 To what extent is VESP II aligned with, and contributing to the policy goals and setting of GoV and GoA, including responsiveness to emerging priorities, particularly in the

context of COVID-19 and post disaster (Ambae disaster, TC Harold) setting?

1.2 To what extent do the EoPOs, IOs and targets and Theory of Change remain relevant and achievable for the coming five years?

1.3 In what ways can VESP II remain flexible and adaptive in a changing context?

2 COHERENCE / COORDINATION

2.1 To what extent is VESP II complementary to other activities in the sector?

2.2 How does the program support coherence between the various sub-sectors of the education system e.g., ECCE to primary to junior secondary; schools to provinces to ministry?

2.3 In what ways could VESP II support to the provinces and schools (devolution and decentralisation) be improved?

2.4 In what ways could VESP II improve coherence and coordination support to MoET and other stakeholders?

3 EFFECTIVENESS

3.1 To what extent is VESP II on track to achieve its EoPOs, IOs, targets. What are the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of planned outcomes?

3.2 To what extent does the VESP II Monitoring and Evaluation Plan provide the right information to enable VESP II, MoET and DFAT to make evidence-based decisions related to the future of the program? Does it enable continuous learning?

3.3 In what ways could the following areas: professional development; induction/ongoing training for school principals and SIOs; other ongoing activities e.g., OVEMIS and financial management; and responsibilities and coordination between National University of Vanuatu, MoET and Curriculum Development Unit be improved?

3.4 In what ways could effectiveness be improved?

4 EFFICIENCY

4.1.1 To what extent is VESP II making appropriate use of time and resources towards achieving outcomes?

4.1.2 How is value for money (VfM) being achieved?

4.2 How could the different aid modalities in VESP II (contract, DFA, technical assistance/specialists) better align to support MoET?

4.3 How could efficiency be increased?

5 SUSTAINABILITY

5.1 What are the factors which could influence the sustainability of VESP II's supported activities and results?

6 GEDSI AND ENVIRONMENT

6.1 To what extent is VESP II successful in supporting the MoET GEDSI policies and issues?

6.2 How can GEDSI be improved at all levels of implementation?

6.3 What are the other national cross-cutting issues to be taken into consideration?

Data Treatment and Analysis

Initially interview notes were entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet organised according to the questions. As the MTR accelerated this proved challenging and remaining data was analysed retrospectively and organised under themes related to the key questions above.

Limitations

As in all studies, there are limitations. Some of these are due to the virtual nature of the MTR. The main limitations faced during this MTR included:

- at the outset of the consultancy, only one of the three TAs had been contracted, meaning that DFAT staff had to plug gaps by facilitating workshops, writing up notes and assisting with interviews.
- facilitation at a distance using technology requires different skills than face-to-face interviewing. However, with the current situation related to COVID-19 having lasted well over a year, the team has had ample time to hone such skills. The willingness of the DFAT team to step in and facilitate face-to-face meetings was also critical in overcoming this limitation.

1. some of the respondents may not have had enough experience with modern technologies to be comfortable with this way of eliciting information. All efforts were made to put them at their ease and give them options of platforms to use.
2. internet connectivity could have been a potential problem. In Vanuatu, VESP II agreed to provide technical assistance to ensure that meetings went smoothly and to assist with other administrative and logistical support. Fortunately, no events needed to be cancelled because of technology, although some did need to be postponed or rescheduled for other reasons.
3. the time difference with MTR Team Leader based in United Kingdom and the M&E specialist in Netherlands: a 10 hour-time difference with Vanuatu. The team agreed to take a three-week period where work patterns were changed to match the Vanuatu working day. This three-week period was designed to form a virtual in-country mission during which time all interviews and focus groups would be conducted. Despite this and the missions shifting from an initial 3-week to 4-week undertaking, time differences were not a material issue.
4. the participatory and adaptive nature of the MTR meant that questions were added while the review was in progress. This resulted in twenty-one key questions and fifty-one sub-questions. To make this more manageable, key questions of particular significance were prioritised. The team managed to answer all twenty-one key questions although there were several areas including AAV and gender where it was only possible to complete a light touch.
5. a cut-off point was needed even though information in the form of up-to-date documents came in after the aide-memoire had been finalised and the draft of the MTR report completed. This report therefore describes the situation up to the end of September 2021.
6. a major limitation was the task-to-time allocated for this MTR with only two days assigned for the M&E Specialist, as well as the short timeframe available to process and collate information.

There were, however, some advantages to the way the MTR was conducted. Frequently, MTRs are time bound with a concentrated period in-country with periods of back-to-back interviews and discussions. The virtual nature of this MTR and the longer period of data collection meant that it was possible to return for further interviews to request clarifications.

Findings

This section looks at the findings across the six areas of the MTR framework. This section is organised under the twenty-one key questions signalled as of particular interest to DFAT and MoET.

These findings describe only what the MTR discovered through interviews and documentation. They represent evidence from the field and do not include subjective interpretations. Recommendations based on the findings are contained in the concluding section of this report and represent a joint and agreed analysis of what the findings mean in terms of ways forward.

Relevance

Relevance relates specifically to the continued relevance of VESP II to GoA and GoV development priorities and in particular their responsiveness to emerging priorities. The review team were also asked to examine whether the higher-level goals of the program remain relevant. The changes which have occurred since the outset of the program are also described in this section.

Overall relevance findings - The mid-term review has found that:
1) the program is still very much aligned with Australian development priorities and the original goals still hold true as do the underlying assumptions.
2) The program is also relevant to needs of the sector including at both policy (VETSS) and implementation level; and
3) there have been several changes since the outset of the program and some of these have affected the original program logic.

Findings related to each of the questions in the ToRs are given below. The numbering relates to the numbering of questions in the ToRs.

Question 1.1. To what extent is VESP II aligned with, and contributing to the policy goals and setting of GoV and GoA including responsiveness to emerging priorities, particularly in the context of COVID-19 and post disaster (Ambae disaster, TC Harold) setting?

The relevance of VESP II to both GoV and GoA was reported as good by all stakeholders interviewed. Knowledge and ownership of the program was high and there were several mentions of improved ownership in some key areas when compared with VESP I. Regular articles appearing in the Daily Post referring to VESP II activities as a MoET program reinforced this message.[16]

[16] E.g., see Vanuatu Daily Post, August 17, 2021. Retrieved from https://www.dailypost.vu/news/teachers-trained-to-promote-inclusive-education/article_29cb78ed-6b4c-5b21-bfbf-991b2fae67f5.html

Key documents reviewed reinforced the continued relevance of the program which is aligned with Vanuatu's National Sustainable Development Plan 2016 – 2030, the Country's Highest Level Policy Framework. [17]
Within this framework, Society Goal 2 of Quality Education is of relevance:

- Ensure every child, regardless of gender, location, education needs or circumstances has access to the education system
- Build trust in the education system through improved performance management systems, teachers training, and reliable delivery of quality services
- Formalize early childhood care and education and life-long learning opportunities within the education system.

VESP II is also in alignment with the Vanuatu Education and Training Sector Strategy (VETSS) 2020-activities and sub-activities align with VETSS.

Continued alignment with the VETSS is further assured through cross-referencing each VESP activity with VETSS activities as part of regular reporting.

VESP II is part of a multi-decade agenda of sector strengthening building not only VESP I, but investments made through the Vanuatu Education Road Map (VERM) 2010 – 2015 and Vanuatu Education. Support Action Plan (VESAP) which preceded VERM.

Currently, DFAT has paused work on new international development policies to focus on the response to COVID-19 [18]. Its current priority is to work with partner countries to address the health, economic and social impacts of COVID-19 as stated in Partnerships for Recovery: Australia's COVID-19 Development Response[19]. Further details of how VESP II aligns with this key strategy are further given in Section 1.1d. below.

VESP II remains strongly aligned with existing policies including Pacific Step-Up[20] and the Pacific Development Framework[21] which emphasises increasing the quality of teaching and learning in schools starting with improving outcomes in basic skills, such as numeracy and literacy, at early childhood and primary levels. This aligns closely with the VESP II EoPO 2 focusing on quality of education and improvement in literacy and numeracy.
Australia is a global leader in disability inclusive development, and its policies for strengthening disability-inclusive development promotes action in key sectors including education. This strategy and Australia's *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy* continue to inform VESP II.

[17] Government of Vanuatu (2016) Vanuatu National Sustainable Development Plan: The People's Plan
[18] DFAT International Development Policy (2021). Retrieved from https://www.dfat.gov.au/development/international-development-policy
[19] Partnerships for Recovery: Australia's COVID-19 Development Response
[20] DFAT Pacific Step Up (n.d). Retrieved from https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/pacific
[21] Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (2017). Retrieved from https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=Pacific+Development+Framework&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8

The DFA has proven particularly relevant in its adaptiveness and flexibility in responding to emerging priorities. This is demonstrated through its use of the COVID-19 Pacific Response Package (Vulnerability and Economic Response Window) which provided AUD5m to provide funds to support a partial relief from school fees program allowing continuing access to education during the period of school closure. In this regard, VESP II's response is well aligned with the Vanuatu Recovery Strategy 2020 – 2023.[22]

Question 1.2. To what extent are VESP II's program logic end of program outcomes, intermediate outcomes, and targets still relevant and achievable?

There have been changes since the commencement of VESP II, including a new Minister of Education and Training, the establishment of a national university and the effective disbanding of the former In-Service Unit (ISU). Coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic and TC Harold have resulted in notable change in the operating environment for all stakeholders. It is therefore to be expected that there will need to be modifications to some aspects of the program.

This is discussed further in the section on Monitoring and Evaluation. However, in summary, VESP II's EOPOs remained relevant in terms of GoV priorities but there is a need to review the M&E plan overall including the logic pathways. This area is discussed further under effectiveness.

Question 1.3. In what ways can VESP II remain flexible and adaptive in a changing context?

Recent VESP II work has taken place in an environment which is unstable and in transition. However, even in more stable times, circumstances inevitably evolve which may affect programming in ways which are not predictable. For VESP II to be effective, it needs to be able to adapt in response to such changes as well as be able to address new information both from its planned research studies as well as other sources.

Suggestions were received in terms of how this could be achieved. These ranged from regular reviews of program logic through to dividing the budget into that to be used for essential activities and enabling activities which could be diverted or postponed according to emerging circumstances. Interviews with Vanuatu Skills Partnership (VSP) which is recognised as "one of DFAT's truly adaptive programs[23]" also yielded concrete suggestions including training in adaptive leadership for key stakeholders, a nuanced approach to two-way communication and its focus on adaptiveness in terms of ability to plan to meet key objectives in diverse ways.

It should, however, be noted that the ability to work adaptively requires flexibility in activity design as well as working within an environment that promotes intentional learning. Mention was made of the fact that the implementation of VESP II could incorporate these aspects to a greater degree.

[22] Government of Vanuatu (2020), Vanuatu Recovery Strategy 2020-2-23 (TC Harold and COVID-19)
[23] Vanuatu Skills Partnership (2020), Evaluation Report

o Coherence / Coordination

Coherence / Coordination looks at how VESP II fits with other programs as well as how the program supports coherence within MoET itself.

Overall Coherence / Coordination findings - The mid-term review has found that:
1) the program is complementary to others with close coordination through informal channels. More formal structures such as the Local Education Group ((LEG) work less well, and.
2) MoET continues to need significant support in its efforts to coordinate certain sub-sectors e.g., training, decentralisation, and devolution.

Findings related to each of the questions in the ToRs are given below. The numbering relates to the numbering of questions in the ToRs.

Question 2.1. To what extent is the program complementary to other activities in the sector? How does the program co-operate and collaborate with other development partners including non-government organsiations (NGOs) and the private sector?

One of VESP II's key crosscutting outputs involves cooperation with NGOs and the private sector. Such collaboration related to existing programs was mentioned positively by Development Partners interviewed.

Collaboration with future programs took place through both DFAT and VESP II, notably the upcoming MFAT Secondary Program[24]. While this program is not due to start until 2023, strategies are in place to ensure that there is no gap in curriculum provision for those children completing Primary Year 6 this year and progressing to Year 7 in 2022. Technical Assistance to develop the Junior Secondary (JS) curriculum is being jointly funded by DFAT and MFAT.

Coordination with other multilaterals, e.g., ADB and the World Bank, are also ongoing as is coordination with local and international NGOs. Cooperation with other programs funded through Australia[25] included plumbers trained under the Vanuatu Skills Partnership (VSP) program used to maintain schools in Ambae, and collaboration between the Australian Pacific Training Coalition (APTC) and the Pacific Theological College to deliver a Certificate IV in Leadership and Management.

At the system level, it was agreed that the VESP II steering committee functioned well and the suggestion that other DPs could be invited to these meetings was welcomed. The Local Education Group (LEG)[26] in contrast does not function well, having not met for a

[24] Tetra Tech (2021), Scoping Study of the Secondary Education System in Vanuatu: Draft Study Report
[25] McNaughton, B. and Kinsella, S. (2020) Draft Report Vanuatu Skills Partnership (VSP) Independent Evaluation 2020
26 Local Education Group and acronym "LEG" means "a collaborative forum for education sector policy dialogue under government leadership, where the primary consultation on education sector development takes place between a government and its partners"

considerable length of time. The ToRs for the LEG are currently under discussion but it was felt to be too unwieldy with many partners with competing agendas. However, the long-time lapse between LEG meetings could pose a risk to Vanuatu's member status under the Global Partnership for Education (GPE).

There is a need for a coordination body since a number of MoET staff mentioned the transactional burden involved in having to deal with multiple DPs. It was agreed that the LEG in its current form could not serve this purpose.

Question 2.2. How does the program support coherence between the various sub-sectors of the education system e.g., ECCE to primary, primary to secondary, schools to provinces?

The very fact that ECCE now comes under VESP II's support has increased coherence with greater co-operation in curriculum, training as well as professionalisation of ECCE teachers through opportunities for qualifications. Progression from Primary to Junior Secondary has been assured although time has been too short to allow for the normal process of curriculum development to take place. [27]

According to respondents, lack of coherence within the MoET hindered its own work, as well as the work of VESPII. This is particularly true in the areas of decentralisation / devolution and training.

Some aspects of decentralisation / devolution are working well. Vertical coordination from MoET to the provinces was reported as progressing smoothly despite problems related to internet connectivity issues.

MoET still needs considerable help in other aspects of horizontal coordination at provincial level. The roles of school improvement officers (SIOs), school principals, provincial officials and inspectors need to be clarified and reviewed. Section 53 of The Education Act of 2014 [28] deals with School Based Management and mentions School Improvement Officers, Zone Curriculum Advisors (ZCAs) and Provincial Finance Officers. There is no mention of school inspectors in this section. Currently School Improvement Officers appear to be doing ZCA work on top of the already substantial tasks they have been assigned.[29] There are also other anomalies in the system. For example, Provincial Coordinators exist for the ECCE sub-sector but not for primary.

It was suggested that MoET could release a Regulation Order to clarify these roles and make amendments to them. The review of the Education Act planned for 2022 also provides an opportunity for action in this area. However, there is an obvious need for more clarification of roles to support the finalisation and implementation of devolution plans and provide the actual support that both VETSS and VESP II envisage should be provided at school level.

27 UNESCO: International Bureau of Education, Curricular Resources. Retrieved from http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/ibedocs/curricular-resources
28 Government of Vanuatu (2014), Education Act no.9 / 2014
29 Since this report was first drafted, these positions have been abolished

There is duplication of training as well as a lack of follow up (see section on Efficiency / Effectiveness) caused in large part by the disbanding of ISU and its provincial trainers. There is no entity within the MoET responsible for overall coordination of training nor is there any overall annual planning in this area. Training is scattered, often with no clear means of follow-up. Mention was also made of the need for coordination on curriculum both by CDU, as well as VITE, to ensure teachers are not trained on an outdated curriculum. Rather than trying to ensure coherence, VESP II has tried to plug some of the more urgent training gaps.

Question 2.3. In what ways could VESP II support to the provinces (devolution and decentralisation) be improved?

VESP II is supporting the provinces in many ways. Respondents noted that needs varied across provinces and that this should be considered during the planning process allowing for innovations which might work in one province, but not another, to be tried. More assistance at system level including examining the feasibility of the workloads of SIOs, as well as assistance with realistic costings to enable officers to carry out their work, is needed. There have been some promising initiatives proposed e.g., possible VESP II support for innovations at provincial level, zone networking grants[30]. More initiatives could be implemented based on plans already made.[31]

Question 2.4. In what ways could VESP II improve coherence and coordination support to MoET and other stakeholders?

It is extremely difficult for VESP II to do this since it was reported that MoET has no individual in place who is tasked with the coordination of development assistance. Nevertheless, it was advised that such a position is foreseen in the organisational structure and is due to be recruited shortly.

The Joint Sector Review is currently in a planning stage may provide support in this area.[32]

o Effectiveness

Effectiveness looks at how well VESP II is achieving its objectives. The question relating to M&E (Question 3.2 and elsewhere in the ToR for the review) are answered separately within this section.

Overall Effectiveness findings - The mid-term review found that 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 mentioned below.

Findings related to each of the questions in the ToRs are given below. The numbering relates to the numbering of questions in the ToRs.

[30] MOET (2020), Vanuatu Ministry of Education and Training Provincial Zone Networking Grants
[31] Vanuatu Ministry of Education and Training (2019) Encouraging innovation at the school and provincial level
[32] VESP Joint Sector Review Briefing Note revised: August 2021

Question 3.1. To what extent is VESP performing well in relation to its original design? Is it on track to achieve its EoPOs, IOs, targets? What are the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of planned outcomes?

Responses to this question are organised under their relevant End of Program Outcomes and their Intermediate Outcomes, with achievements described at activity level under each IO followed by a discussion of challenges. As can be seen from the table below, VESP II is making progress in all areas. According to the latest VESP II Six Monthly Report (January to June 2021), 53% of annual activity targets have been achieved

EoPO 1 (access): More children (girls and boys, including those with disabilities) are enrolled and attend the right year of primary school at the right age.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS UNDER EoPO 1 BY IO

IO 1.1. MoET staff and PEOs ensure schools are resourced to increase access to schooling for out of school children, including those with disability

- VESP II supported MoET to implement the first phase of the National School Infrastructure Development Plan (NSIDP). This will contribute to greater efficiency of resources and improving the Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR). So far twenty-four schools have merged or amalgamated.[33]
    - The DFA element of VESP II supported grants from ECCE through to Year 10 as well as salaries for eligible ECCE teachers. VESP II is supporting MoET to manage its school grants program by ensuring communication about it reaches schools and communities. It is also reviewing school grant management guidelines.

IO 1.2. School principals, teachers, parents, and communities collaborate for higher enrolment and commencement at primary school at the right age, including children with disability

- VESP II supported MoET to design and deliver a regular communication campaign to promote right age school enrolment. These campaigns use a range of media, including Facebook, radio, and print. OVEMIS data indicates that enrolment in early primary education at the right age has been improving since the beginning of the campaign.

IO 1.3. School principals, teacher and parents and communities collaborate for better students' retention and progression, including children with disabilities

VESP II worked with the MoET to create and broadcast a radio show to support learning during the initial lockdown phase in early 2020. These shows supported families on home-learning practices, so they could engage with their children while schools were closed.

[33] MoET, (2019), National School Infrastructure Development Plan

Despite the activities described above, Open VEMIS shows that access has stagnated with minimal increases in both GER and NER from 2019 to 2020.[34] Several ongoing challenges remain to ensure continued progress in this area. These challenges include

- Ensuring that there are enough schools and teachers to accommodate enrolment growth.
- Ensuring school grants are sufficient to pay for "what schools need to pay for" especially considering the upcoming compulsory education policy
- Ensuring clarity around the documentation related to school grants
- Ensuring ECCE MEOs have permanent contracts
- Overcoming a lack of a communication via a counterpart for VESP II in MoET to enable messaging to be more widespread.
- Prioritising provincial-level training resources to facilitate the types of workshops needed.

EoPO 2 (quality): School principals, teachers, parents, and communities collaborate to enable students to achieve improved literacy and numeracy outcomes (measured at Year 4 and Year 6).

VESP II has engaged in a great deal of work to support improvements in literacy and numeracy including Ademap Lanwis yia 4-6 for teachers of English and French; revision of the lesson planning aspects of the ECCE curriculum, the Learn to Read Phonics Program and planned formative assessment of literacy, as well as the initiatives mentioned below[35].

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS UNDER EoPO 2 BY IO

IO 2.1. Teachers are supported by school principals and PEOs to improve classroom learning

In addition to the development and distribution of curriculum resources for Years 4-6, VESP II also worked with MoET to design and deliver a range of training programs targeting teachers, principals and SIOs, to enable them to support the implementation and consolidation of the new 1-6 curriculum. These included:

- Training for teachers and principals to implement the curriculum Years 4-6 delivered by the VITE ISU (the unit is now abolished).
- Development of a resource book and training program to provide teachers with strategies for Teaching English and French as a Foreign Language, noting that the training of trainers is near completion.
- Support to conduct an internal curriculum implementation monitoring study to review curriculum implementation in Years 1-6 Development of the Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Guidelines for Schools Years 1-6 including delivery of professional development to principals. Development of a class-based assessment manual for each teacher in Years 1-6 to facilitate self-paced, child-centred learning

IO 2.2. Teachers are motivated to use skills and resources to support classroom learning, including for children with disabilities

Despite its small staff, CDU has managed to roll out the curriculum on an annual basis. For the first time, textbooks with Vanuatu specific content are in the hands of children

[34] Source: Statistical Digest 2019, 2020. Interview data related to 2021.

[35] VESP (2021), Summary of MoET Literacy Activities. August 30, 2021

VESP II is also working with MoET to ensure teachers and principals can access learning resources from the MoET's website and OVEMIS. VESP II successfully made use of Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) by negotiating their free access by teachers through two private telecommunication companies. VESP II supported MoET to create and broadcast radio programs during the period of lockdown. These programs were designed to help parents to support their children during the home-schooling period. VESP II also supported the establishment of an audio and recording studio and it is providing technical support to the production of podcasts.

IO 2.3. Parents engage in children's learning with the school and at home

VESP II has supported MoET to review its ECCE Parent Support Program and expand its implementation and develop an M&E plan. VESP is also supporting MoET to coordinate this activity with other Development Partners, such as UNICEF and more recently Save the Children

VESP II also supported parental engagement specific to ECCE in partnership with UNICEF

- Despite the above achievements, the curriculum implementation study showed that some teachers were still struggling to deliver the curriculum. This is normal since changes in teacher practice and behaviour require time. Consideration should be given to consolidating curriculum implementation, in particular literacy and numeracy in the early years.
- Timing for the roll out of the curriculum for Junior Secondary remains extremely tight. Care will need to be taken related to quality issues of this curriculum development.
- While the ECCE Parental Support Program has been successful, issues remain in families' abilities to support learning and follow-up is needed.
- The conference on literacy revealed several conflicting views related to the language of instruction. This remains challenging and despite the Ademap language training being provided, it seems difficult to envisage how teachers will acquire and maintain the level of English and French required to teach through the medium of those languages. Evidence of the current levels of achievement in languages can be seen by difficulties some candidates have in applying for APTC courses. Many candidates are not satisfying the language requirements for certificate course entry. Testing of teachers' proficiency in French and English is necessary if language training is to be targeted at the right level. Ongoing exposure and CPD in language is needed if teachers are to maintain their levels of language proficiency.
- There are promising initiatives and proposals in literacy in the early grades and these should be carefully monitored and bult on, where appropriate[36]. Review of Teacher Guides for early years is one such area.

EoPO 3 (management): MoET effectively plans, trials, implements, and learns from devolution efforts, and uses evidence to inform affordable policies and budget decisions

- VESP II is supporting MoET to strengthen its utilisation of information and communication technology in terms of production of radio broadcasts and whitelisting of MoET's website[37]

[36] Cincotta-Segi, A. (2021) Ademap Lanwis yia 4-6: Ways forward

[37] Whitelisting of the website would mean that access would not be blocked for some users, while following cyber security measures.

- VESP II is working with MoET to provide technical and financial support to PEOs so they can design, implement, monitor, and evaluate programs. The focus of this support is improving literacy outcomes.
- VESP II has also supported MoET to deliver a training program to PEOs in Penama province on using OVEMIS.
- VESP II is supporting MoET to use evidence to inform planning and budgeting through its support to strengthening its financial management systems and its planning system. VESP is also supporting MoET to strengthen its ability to collect and analyse data, by supporting better OVEMIS features. Other activities to strengthen MoET's planning include:
    - Supporting joint planning exercises, with development partners,
    - Planning of a Joint Sector Review,
    - Production of a statistical digest, and
    - Supporting the establishment of a Monitoring Framework with clear indicators and targets.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS UNDER EoPO 3 BY IO

IO 3.1. School principals implement effective school-based management

3 VESP II supported MoET to develop a principals' handbook and roll-out an associated training program.

4 VESP II supported MoET to deliver inception training to nearly fifty new principals hired earlier this year.

5 VESP II supported MoET to produce a School Improvement Handbook and roll-out training to all SIOs.

6 VESP II supported MoET to strengthen school leaders and MoET officers' management and leadership skills by supporting their formal education, through the school leaders' Leadership & Management training (cert IV) program in conjunction with APTC and the Pacific Theological College leadership training. This training has graduated over thirty individuals. These were mainly school principals but some SIOs and other provincial officer participated in the programs. It has been very positively evaluated for its close links to application to the workplace and for not being one-off training. The value of the program is evidenced by the fact that a people not originally eligible for the program have been asking to join it.

IO 3.2. PEOs communicate and share learning and evidence with schools, communities and MoET staff

7 No evidence found during this review

IO 3.3. MoET staff at national and provincial levels use learning and evidence to inform education policy implementation, budget, and financing, planning and management

VESP II is also supporting MoET to strengthen its school-based management by reviewing MoET financial regulations and to produce associated manuals and training programs. VESP II is also providing on-going support to MoET to collect, analyse and share learning evidence from VANSTA results through its partnership with the MoET. VESP is working with MoET to design and deliver several critical research activities (curriculum implementation monitoring study, cost of education, teachers demand and supply, gender audit) to increase sector knowledge base and assist in the development of evidence-based initiatives.

However, challenges remain. These include

8 The competence to continue to develop OVEMIS requires skills sets which are challenging to source in Vanuatu.
9 The need to create a culture of professionalism and accountability also takes time and requires strong and committed leadership throughout the system.
10 The lack of a government officer to coordinate technical assistance places a burden on staff at best and causes confusion at worst. While engagement with most counterparts has been good, some challenges have been reported from both sides.

Question 3.3. In what ways could the following areas: professional development; induction/ongoing training for school principals and SIOs; other ongoing activities e.g., OVEMIS and financial management; and responsibilities and coordination between National University of Vanuatu, MoET and Curriculum Development Unit – be improved? (Plus, sub-questions: Who has overall responsibility for Professional Development? To what extent does VESP II support the planning of training? What can realistically be planned for the coming years given the lack of final decisions taken under the MFAT program?)

Professional Development.

There were suggestions for ways in which Professional Development for teachers could be improved. Firstly, an entity with overall responsibility for professional development could oversee coordination between the National University of Vanuatu and MoET and ensure that training which takes place within MoET is planned on an annual basis so that training is well-spaced and sequenced and there is an interdependent support between the trainings which are being offered. The standards previously developed for teachers and the Teacher Professional Development Plan provide pathways to ensure that training is based on competences rather than focusing on the transmission of content. In this light, consideration should be given to the skills required of trainers and whether content knowledge or knowledge of facilitation and training techniques is more important. Research shows that training without any follow-up is rarely effective in changing classroom practice.

The issue of qualifications for teachers needs to be addressed with previous field-based options abandoned or restricted. The previous work supported in Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) was also abandoned due to lack of staff available to focus on this area. The National University School of Education is currently working to provide qualifications to teachers, but it is likely to take considerable time to reach all teachers. The Teacher Development Unit should be supported to develop a realistic strategy for upskilling all teachers to minimum standards.

A policy on training and professional development might help to ensure the following aspects are addressed. Other countries typically include the following areas in their policies:

1. initial training of teachers through pre-service training and upskilling already existing teachers to the required standards to meet minimum qualifications
2. ongoing Continuing Professional Development for teachers

3. one-off trainings in response to new policies or initiatives e.g., a new curriculum, new language policy
4. training of specialist teachers e.g., language specialists, literacy specialists, inclusive education specialists
5. roles and responsibilities of the various entities
6. competences required of a trainer.

Induction / Ongoing Training for School Principals / Training in Open VEMIS and Financial Management

VESP II has supported induction training for school principals, financial management training and training in Open VEMIS. Such training needs to be followed up by officers who are skilled and knowledgeable in whom school principals have trust. Cluster-based mentoring has provided useful support for teachers to supplement training in some countries, although this would not be appropriate in all regions of Vanuatu. The balance between specialist content knowledge and training skills needs to be considered.

Curriculum Development

The Curriculum Development Unit remains very stretched as it tries to develop a curriculum for Year 7. It is therefore unlikely to have the capacity to provide high quality training especially when this is implemented using a cascade model (termed a "trickle down" model by one respondent). There were reported issues with the training delivery due to the heavy workload at CDU and the difficulties of making logistical arrangements for all the provinces from Port Vila. It is also likely that there will be some ongoing issues with support, monitoring and evaluation given the substantial number of Trainer of Trainers (ToT) participants spread across the provinces and the small number of Master Trainers. It is worth considering whether there is a more efficient zone or province- based model to support training in curriculum. The current centralised model is unusual in the region.

Question 3.4. How could effectiveness be improved?

More support in terms of TA. There is a need for more support across both the MC and DFA aspects of VESP II. TA to help with the reporting requirements of the DFA was provided to assist MoET. The current VESP II TA are spread too thinly and working across too broad a range of areas. Three long-term TA are not enough to support a program of this breadth. Effectiveness could be improved by increasing the technical expertise available to the program particularly in training, decentralisation, curriculum and OVEMIS. The need for a reassessment of the ToRs for international TAs was suggested as a way forward.

"VESP is involved in too many activities and is prioritising quantity over quality"

More support in terms of core areas. There is a need to focus support in core areas despite the temptation "to do what needs doing." This is particularly the case in the case of CDU.

C**lear strategy for AAV.** AAV has been particularly severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic with the lack of opportunities for students to study in Australia. It is likely that the

2022 cohort will also be affected. There is a need for agreement on clear strategic direction in the future.

Articulation with the MFAT program. The program is already working as closely as possible with the MFAT program which has allocated NZD2m for support to Junior Secondary in 2020–2022. Support for development of the Year 7 curriculum is jointly funded by MFAT and DFAT. Since the MFAT program will not begin until 2023, VESP II will need to work on the Year 8 curriculum. In the meantime, the Year 7 curriculum has been designated as a pilot subject to review so the curriculum can, if necessary, be retrospectively adjusted to align with MFAT's approach.

However, MFAT's work on the design of the Secondary Education Support Program is ongoing. Once the design is completed, a business case will need to be made to MFAT Wellington to secure funding for the program. Until this happens, there can be no absolute certainty over MFAT's involvement in the curriculum.

In terms of technical articulation, the scoping study indicates that the design will follow more standard procedures of curriculum development. This will begin with a needs assessment, examining demand side issues related to the curriculum e.g., work force needs, demands from communities and other stakeholders, as well as supply. It is important that VESP II takes note of any work being done in this area to ensure that the curriculum is of maximum relevance and is coherent with MFAT's design findings and recommendations.

Given the current unpredictability of MFAT's involvement, there is a need for clarity from MoET as to how much from their recurrent budget might be allocated to curriculum development. This is necessary for VESP II to be clear about the maximum resources available to support the development of the curriculum.

Question 3.2. Monitoring and Evaluation
Monitoring and Evaluation was included under the section on efficiency as Question 3.2 with five sub-questions. It is dealt with separately since it spans efficiency, relevance, and sustainability as well as effectiveness.

Overall Monitoring and Evaluation Finding - The mid-term review found that VESP II has experienced significant challenges with its monitoring and evaluation 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.

M&E has been challenging for VESP II since the start of the program with three different M&E STAs and three different M&E plans. M&E was brought up as an issue in the Managing Contractor's Partner Performance Assessment in both 2020 and 2021.

An evaluation of the current MEL plan is contained in Annex 3. Many of the earlier criticisms of the July 2019 (revised August 2019) have been addressed but the VESP II M&E plan does not yet fully meet DFAT standards. There are several gaps in the framework in the following areas:

Standard 2.11 Relevant aspects of the context and key risks are monitored
The framework lists assumptions that relate to risks, but it does not include discussion of strategies for monitoring.

Standard 2.12 Methods are fully described for sampling, data collection, management, analysis, and processing.
The framework lacks a detailed description of how VESP II /MoET will collect data, and a lack of baselines and targets with only one baseline for the seven indicators. Some earlier studies appear not to have been acted on e.g., the study into the curriculum due to no clear feedback mechanisms from the Monitoring and Evaluation aspects into learning. There are also gaps in the monitoring with little information available as to what is happening on the ground especially at the provincial level. Even though VESP II supports training, the review found little evidence of the normal monitoring of satisfaction, learning and transfer to the classroom. The robustness of monitoring procedures could be improved although the recent concept notes for upcoming studies are much more rigorous and well-designed than those which took place earlier in the program. The two recent reports into gender are well-researched and provide a wealth of information to inform learning[38]. Reporting has improved significantly with the latest VESP II report[39] but there was no discussion of the findings with key stakeholders below Director level.

Standard 2.13 Baselines are constructed where appropriate.
The outcomes monitoring framework provides for one baseline for the seven indicators. None of the indicators include annual targets. The framework does not provide a rationale as to why baselines are not included.

Standard 2.14 Responsibility is allocated to specific individuals (not organisations) for all M&E activities.
The framework assigns responsibilities to MoET and DFAT without specifying individuals.

Standard 2.15 Mutual accountability and joint assessment by local partners is provided for (using partner systems where appropriate
The intention of mutual accountability is acknowledged through establishing alignment of systems but details are lacking. No timeframe for such alignment is provided.

Standard 2.17 A strategy for the use of information is described
A brief section in the framework indicates that information will be shared. The section does not include strategies on how information will be used other than that VESP II will address all requests from MoET and DFAT.

Question 3.2.1. Is the balance/ interplay between monitoring and evaluation appropriate and effective?

[38] VESP II (2021) Primary Schools in Vanuatu: Qualitative Study into Gendered Expectations, Roles, and Results
[39] VESP II Six Monthly Progress Report, January – June 2021

The interplay between monitoring and evaluation is not mentioned in the M&E plan. It is unclear how the evaluative studies conducted relate to monitoring, although the research studies currently in planning stage are well thought-through.

Question 3.2.2. To what extent are the reporting mechanisms accessible and appropriate to enable MoET, VESP and DFAT to make timely decisions?

Reporting takes place largely through the VESP steering committee and the six-monthly reports. These are made available at director level within the MoET, although not to those tasked with M&E within MoET. The fact that institutions and not individuals are accountable for delivery of specific M&E tasks carries the risks of individuals not perceiving responsibility, tasks not being allocated and, consequently, reporting not happening as envisaged.[40] In particular, the users of MEL information should be specified more closely in terms of intended recipients, their data needs and when, how and in what format these should be met. The purposes of sharing information and how MEL data can be used not only for reporting purposes to the donor and MoET, but also used to inform internal learning to enhance the delivery of the VESP II should be specified.

Question 3.2.3. How does the feedback loop into ongoing planning work?

The feedback loop into ongoing planning is not formalised e.g., through reflection / planning workshops. Note is taken of the results of monitoring when engaging in annual work planning. A brief section in the framework indicates that information will be shared. The framework indicates that evaluative studies will generate information that will be shared by various stakeholders including the PPU, and that findings will be included 'into key internal decision-making processes.

Question 3.2.4. How is learning generated through the Monitoring and Evaluation process?

The M&E framework appears to be missing a learning component. This could include regular sharing of data on key performance indicators to inform evaluative meetings, or mechanisms to monitor if recommendations and other responses from MoET and DFAT are effectively addressed. The framework does not describe a pathway or methodologies that explain how findings from monitoring activities can be used for evaluation and learning, to enhance preparation of program interventions, to scale up good practice, to detect unintended outcomes, and how findings will be used for internal decision-making. The M&E plan could usefully be reframed as a MERL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning Plan) with research aiming to generate new learning based on gaps in knowledge.

Question 3.2.5. Does MoET understand the ways in which VESP is accountable?

There was a solid understanding of VESP II's accountability to DFAT. There was no mention of VESP II's accountability to MoET.

Question 3.2.6. To what extent is VESP supporting M&E capacity within the Ministry?

Capacity building of MoET staff at an operational level is impeded to some degree by a misalignment in planning calendars as well as the change in personnel which has not allowed for the building of close relationships.

[40] DFAT (2020), Partner Performance Assessment Coffey

The VESP M&E plan acknowledges an intention to support and align with MoET's information system, but does not contain any description of how data will be sampled, collected, analysed, reported, or used for analysis. The dependency on MoET for alignment of systems, plus the risk of a delayed alignment, could have consequences for the timely monitoring and reporting of areas that require data.

More recently efforts were made to align VESP II's M&E with the Ministry's own planning procedures including the corporate plan (MoET, 2020).[41] This is taking place largely at a strategic level with a consultant assisting MoET with the drafting of a research policy to feed into its own M&E and assisting with arrangements for a Joint Sector Review (JSR).[42]

○ Efficiency

Efficiency deals with how well VESP II is making use of its resources. The section deals with both the DFA and MC aspects of the program.

Overall Efficiency Findings VESP is making appropriate use of time and resources towards achieving outcomes. Assistance is needed to support the reporting requirements of the DFA.

The numbering below refers to the numbering of the questions in the original ToRs.
Question 4.1.1. To what extent is VESP making appropriate use of time and resources towards achieving outcomes?

The answer to this question is divided into two parts: Part 1: DFA and Part 2: Other VESP II activities.

Part 1: DFA

The VESP II DFA has proven itself efficient as a channel for rapid distribution of funds for disaster relief activities that are essential to supporting VESP II outcomes.

A significant achievement of VESP II has been its ability to function as a conduit for the timely delivery of funds down to the community level. This is no small achievement given the level of overlapping disruption that both crises have inflicted upon the education system and Vanuatu as a whole. This has been made possible because of the DFA stream of financing that was able to move money quickly to schools without delays at national and provincial government levels. This was only possible because of the school grant financing system developed by MoET. Since it was a tried and tested method, it provided confidence to donors to turn to this channel of finance distribution to meet the needs of communities during a time of crisis that extended beyond the education system. The comments of DFAT and MoET staff during the MTR showed the appreciation that both had for the existence of the school grant financial stream and their cooperation and confidence in its capacity to

[41] MOET (2020), Ministry of Education and Training Corporate Plan 2020-2023
[42] VESP II (2021), Joint Sector Review Briefing Note (Revised August 2021)

step up during a time of crisis. Details of the funds which were channelled are contained in Annex 2.

There have been delays in school grant payments to many schools due to lack or insufficient/inaccurate financial reporting through OVEMIS. Interviews with MoET staff indicated delays in the delivery of school grant money to schools. These delays resulted from insufficiently detailed or inaccurate financial reporting by schools through the OVEMIS system as required by the MoET regulations. These problems have been the result of inexperience at the school level on the part of the school principal, as well as other factors.

The solution adopted by MoET from this year has been to proceed with automatic allocations of the first two tranches of school grants to schools. It is with the payment of the final tranche that a delay or withholding of payment will occur where financial reporting through the OVEMIS system is not completed as required. The intention is to avoid punishing a school for a whole school year due to weakness in reporting from a school principal, and to allow the PIO to support the school principal and staff to resolve any problems in reporting without immediate withholding of school grant funds.
This appears a reasonable policy response in balancing school resourcing need, weak administrative capacity at the school level and fiduciary risk.

Part 2: Managing Contractor

VESP II has managed to achieve efficiencies using MC expertise across the region. Interviews with VESP II staff indicated opportunities to leverage such expertise in AAV since Tetra Tech is also managing much larger Australia awards programs in the region. The AAV program has suffered particularly considering the effects of COVID-19. A review of the current division of tasks between DFAT and the MC in this area might lead to greater efficiencies.

VESP II is currently undertaking cost analysis of school provision to rework the school grant formula to account for differences between school needs in ECCE and primary education. An examination of the actual costs that need to be incurred to deliver a minimum standard of schooling will enable a more efficient and effective use of school funds. This will apply to school grant funding as well as other GoV funding. It will also help to steer future use of DP investments and funding that may be run through the MC stream of VESP II or other program initiatives.

Teacher allocations are currently an area where there are inefficiencies, as is the uneven distribution of schools. VESP II has produced ToRs for a study into teacher supply and demand which will ensure that the number and type of teachers being qualified match the needs of the system, leading to greater efficiencies. The program has also attempted to reduce overcrowding in schools through providing financial assistance for school construction in urban areas

Question 4.1.2. How is value for money (VfM) being achieved?

1. The financial management capacity at the school level, which receives bi-annual grants (some partly funded by DFAT), can be weak.

An Internal Audit was conducted in twenty primary schools on Tanna in 2021. Some issues were presented back to MoET and measures to strengthen internal controls in place within the school management operation are needed.

However, it is a positive sign that these issues are being noted and that solutions have been identified. This gives confidence that issues involving fiduciary risk are not being ignored by MoET and provides a basis for improving the financial management capacity and integrity of the school grant mechanism in delivering money that is used as intended by GoV and donors.

2. Money for emergency response activities that requires quick turnaround, is managed through the MC instead of DFA. This is faster and provides ability to better monitor for fiduciary risk.

Flexibility to choose between DFA and MC delivery streams can help deliver speed and better control options for risk management. The cooperation between DFAT and GoV enables agreement and partnership to best manage the need to get money to schools and communities and to account for the use of the money. Discussions of the MTR team with MoET officials and DFAT officials both signalled they have cooperated well in choosing the best delivery option on a case-by-case basis. Both were optimistic this could carry into the future to deliver the optimal use of funds for each situation.

3. GoV planned to fund 25% of ECCE school grants by 2021. Due to fiscal shortage, their commitment will commence at 25% from 2022 and increase every year by 25%.

The overlapping crisis and the impost this has placed on GoV services has meant there has been some slippage including in ECCE grants. However, GoV commitment to support ECCE grants into the future promotes the sustainability of these grants. This supports the value for money argument of the original investment by donors by ensuring that grants will continue through GoV finance systems beyond the initial project investment.

4. On-Grant Efficiency/Effectiveness – Progress on Activities to Improve Value for Money

The public financial management (PFM) review of the education sector that was funded by DFAT and completed in April 2020 proposed a range of activities to minimise fiduciary risk within the education sector. A list of these activities as they related to on-grant efficiency and effectiveness was described in March 2021 as having made the progress captured in the table below. Some activities have been completed; others are in progress; whilst others are yet to commence. They cover a wide range of interventions that can support the future delivery of value for money interventions for donor partners and the GoV in the education sector.

Proposed Activity	Progress
Support review of School Grants Code (regulations)	Completed - 2020 revision of School Grants Code reviewed with comments provided to PEO Finance

Support OVEMIS changes, including improvements for School Grants verification	Not yet started.
Support monitoring and reporting on School Grant usage/ impact/ accountability	Not yet started
Support revision of school Financial Management guidance, including development of training modules	On target - First draft of guidance expected to be submitted to PEO Finance this week. Issues with cash management functions to be discussed
Support MoET to investigate outsourcing FM training to schools	Not yet started

Question 4.2. How could the different aid modalities in VESP II (contract, DFA, technical assistance/specialists) better align to support MoET?

VESP II to assist with reporting requirements for DFA

The burden on MoET staff in terms of reporting requirements related to DFA, coupled with requirements placed on them by other DPs, was repeatedly mentioned by those interviewed. If VESP II were able to provide support to MoET for DFA reporting, this would aid efficiencies.

Learning from other successful programs and in particular Vanuatu Skills Partnership

Vanuatu Skills Partnership (VSP) is widely regarded as one of the most successful DFAT programs[43] and the lessons learned could be shared more widely in areas where VSP has demonstrated efficiencies. For example, interviews with MoET staff identified weaknesses at provincial offices in terms of support to better school level financial management and reporting. It was suggested that VESP II should trial a greater engagement at province level and see how that progresses provincial capacity.[44] This would speed up decisions and provide better coordination.

It could help MoET if the Managing Contractor had an umbrella supervision of MoET Technical Assistance.

Currently TA into MoET from volunteer agencies have a line of reporting that takes them away from established on-island authorities. Where this occurs, it can lead to coordination problems with GoV and other DPs. One solution to this that was proposed to the MTR was for the MC of VESP II to be considered as the front-line authority for supervision and coordination of TA work undertaken by volunteers within MoET.

Transactional burden on MoET staff

It was reported that VESP II activities sometimes drew on the same key staff from MoET to deal with other partner activities e.g., MFAT, UNICEF, GPE. Tasks sometimes overlapped tasks and senior MoET staff reported that this drew them away from core business. A single line of communication and better coordination among VESP II TA would increase efficiency.

[43] McNaughton, B. and Kinsella, S. (2020) Draft Report Vanuatu Skills Partnership (VSP) Independent Evaluation 2020

[44] The possibility of sharing premises with VSP was mentioned as an option

More efficient use of TA
There were attempts to create efficiencies by using TA originally assigned to CDU across a range of other activities. However, the volume of work inevitably meant that it was impossible for one individual to cover the range of technical areas required. More effective ways of having short-term TA contribute their expertise could be incorporated to increase efficiency.

Question 4.3. How could efficiency be increased?

Strengthen the internal and external audit processes.
The education sector PFM Assessment Report (2020) found several significant fiduciary risks associated with external (and to a lesser extent) internal audit processes.

To address these weaknesses, the PFM Assessment Report recommendations include:
- Increase the technical assistance to the Office of the Auditor-General (OAG) in relevant areas and as per the OAG's Corporate Plan and annual plans.
- Develop a standard ToR for auditing DFAs and sector programs.
- Request the OAG to outsource the audits of the annual program financial statements and support the OAG to develop a quality assurance procedure.
- Pilot a multi-year contract for auditing DFAs and sector programs.
- Develop and document a process for DFAT's review of audit reports.

DFAT continues to review and revise staff guidance as necessary, e.g., in the form of a checklists, for the procedures related to releasing DFA tranches.
This will include reconciling DFA balances with DFAT's records, reviewing acquittal reports, and reviewing the annual external audit report.

Money for emergency response activities that requires quick turnaround, might be considered for management through MC instead of DFA.
In line with current practice, this can help disburse funds more quickly and with better ability to monitor for fiduciary risk in provinces/islands/schools which may have an elevated risk profile.

Narrowing support to CDU to focus on core business
CDU is extremely stretched and deals with a large portfolio of tasks including materials production and distribution that would typically be outsourced in other contexts. It is also attempting to conduct training; has assumed responsibility for classroom assessment; and conducts some monitoring. It is understandable when so much effort and so many resources have gone into curriculum development that officers want to ensure that the content of the curriculum is accurately transferred to those delivering it in the field. However, even in large, well-resourced ministries a curriculum development unit would not undertake such a range of tasks which places very specifical technical responsibilities onto individuals.

Re-examining costs of curriculum development and implementation for Year 7
The budget for curriculum implementation for Year 7 does not appear to have been included in costings. Such a budget would normally include the costs of all resources (particularly important as subject specialisms in areas such as science assume greater importance),

training, follow-up and assessment. The costs for Year 7 curriculum development should also be reviewed. Cost savings could be incurred through doing lower-cost printing for the Year 7 curriculum during its pilot year in 2021. Further discussion of this area is beyond the scope of a light-touch review. However, it is suggested that an additional short paper is produced to give further details and signal ways forward.

Re-examining the respective roles of MC and DFAT in AAV
Current arrangements see the MC primarily dealing with logistical and administrative areas while DFAT deals with strategic issues. This may not be the most efficient way. DFAT could keep technical oversight while devolving greater responsibility to the MC to enable it to leverage its regional experience in this area.

Sustainability

Sustainability included only one key question. However, one of the sub-questions mentioned as of particular interest is also dealt with under this section.

Overall Sustainability Finding – The MTR found that adopting a longer-term view of investment in VESP II would add to sustainability.

The specific question from the ToRs in this area was:

a. *What are the factors which could influence the sustainability of VESP's supported activities and results?*

Respondents mentioned:

3. The short period of extensions of VESP II left insufficient time for it to mature into a full program. This inhibited longer-term planning and prevented VESP II from becoming fully integrated into the MoET. The short-term nature also meant that VESP II tended to focus very much on delivery of activities rather than adapting to the changing context.

4. VESP II needs to address the skills gaps in MoET. A more nuanced approach to capacity building / capacity development was mentioned as being needed with different approaches likely to lead to increased gains depending on the individual / unit / institution.

5. There were some mentions of initiatives undertaken under previous programs which were forgotten only to resurface later: benchmarking of curricular outcomes, RPL, the partly completed gender study of 2020 which originally began before VESP 1, and teacher standards were areas which were mentioned.

6. For there to be sustainability, major system-wide changes need to be evidence-based. One example was the abandonment of ZCAs and their "replacement" by SIOs. This was highlighted by one respondent from CDU who suggested that ZCAs might be reinstated.

7. For there to be gains in training, it should not be one-off. Training should include a practical element of application and key skills should be reinforced over time. One concern around sustainability of training is the extent to which gains made in language proficiency through language training can be maintained when teachers do not actively use the language outside the classroom. Efforts in language will need to include longer-term solutions as well as training, especially when that training is conducted using a cascade model.

8. Maximising investment in the AAV program is taking place through some alumni events but efforts in this area could be more strategic. Given the ongoing COVID-19 situation, realistic ways forward need to be considered.

9. Mentions were made of the fact that VESP II tended to focus on policy rather than its implementation. The Policy and Planning Unit created a template to be used by all those involved in the development of policy which includes the requirement that all policies should include a costed work plan. However, this requirement is rarely followed. Without such costings, interventions will not be sustainable.

10. The program needs to keep a close eye on the political economy e.g., changing views related to language of instruction, to ensure that initiatives in early literacy remain sustainable.

Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI)

This section deals with questions around Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion.

Overall GEDSI Finding – VESP II has raised awareness of gender related issues and to a lesser extent disabilities

The numbering relates to the numbers of the questions in the original ToRs

6.1. To what extent is VESP II successful in supporting MoET GEDSI policies and issues?

Stakeholders reported that VESP II's emphasis on inclusive education has increased awareness of the needs of children with disabilities although limited specialist training and a lack of accessible infrastructure meant that schooling was challenging for many children with disabilities.

VESP II is working with MoET to assist children with disabilities to attend and learn in schools through the Inclusive Education (IE) program. This program includes:

- Systematic communication campaigns, using radio, Facebook, and print media
- Purchasing and piloting IE kits in six schools
- Supporting a network of IE schools. This network of schools is generating lessons to be scaled to the system. Currently forty-nine schools are part of this network.
- Developing a range of resources to help teachers identify children with disabilities and strategies to support them.

6.3 How can GEDSI be improved at all levels of implementation?

Further attention should be paid to the needs of boys because girls outperformed boys on all aspects of the Vanuatu Standardised Test of Achievement (VANSTA). This finding is typical of that found in many countries and in other contexts and has been attributed to different developmental stages in boys and girls. Studies from other countries have also found that this may be due to different expectations related to gendered behaviours with girls more likely to possess the ability to learn in traditional, less active classrooms than boys. The recently completed qualitative study into gender found that boys were widely reported to be badly behaved and have negative attitudes to schooling when compared to girls. This results in boys being on the receiving end of discipline in school which makes it more likely they will skip school (VESP II, 2020).[45] There is also some evidence that boys experience more bullying and disadvantages related to alcohol and substance abuse. Girls are also more likely than boys to continue into Junior Secondary across all provinces.

VESP II's initiatives in Women's Leadership were welcomed although women still do not have the same opportunities to progress in management as men. Quotas have been used with success in other countries.

6.4 What are the other national cross-cutting issues to be taken into consideration?

As well as providing useful information related to gender, the School Participation Gender Audit[46] highlighted other areas of social inclusion noting that there were unequal inequalities in access between different provinces. For example, there are marked provincial differences in progression rates from Grades 6 to 7 between Torba (about 40%) and Sanma and Shefa (70%). This also mirrors the results from VANSTA which are poorer in Torba. In general, VANSTA[47] showed that children from urban areas tended to perform better despite the often-overcrowded classrooms.

Further findings of interest from this study were related to the fact that students enrolled in Years 1 – 6 primary schools are twice as likely to drop out of Year 6 than students in primary schools offering Years 1 – 8.

The AAV program had good gender parity, but other social inclusion indicators were not measured. Concern was also expressed that some of the interview questions asked of potential awardees focused too much on past academic performance rather than focusing on future potential.

Recommendations for the Future

Findings from the MTR were presented to MoET Directors and DFAT along with preliminary recommendations. The recommendations which follow are a result of fine-tuning of the

45 VESP II (2020) Primary Schools in Vanuatu: Gendered Expectations, Roles, and Results
46 VESPII (2020), School Participation Gender Audit
47 MoET (2019) VANSTA Results: English and French

preliminary recommendations and a joint analysis of the findings. They represent those supported by the most evidence and those on which there was unanimous agreement. Each recommendation / suggestion is based on more than one source of evidence.

Key Recommendation 1:
VESP II should continue with the current modality for a further five years.

This is based on the finding that VESP II has made satisfactory progress in difficult circumstances and is at a critical juncture with the roll out of the Junior Secondary Curriculum next year. The attitudinal changes required in terms of language policy which has gone from a virtual ban on vernacular languages and Bislama in schools to their use as a language of instruction, requires considerable time to embed within the system. Devolution and decentralisation also represent significant changes for the MoET in its way of working with many practical details of implementation still needing to be worked out. A five-year window would allow MoET and the program to engage in strategic longer-term planning. This is also in line with GoA's view of adopting a longer-term view of its aid investments.

Associated Recommendation: There should be modifications to the program which DFAT and VESP II should address.

Some of these improvements were suggested by VESP II staff themselves and are easy to implement e.g., clarifications of roles within the team. Others such as a narrowing of focus would require greater consideration.

Key Recommendation 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.

This is based on the finding that although here have been positive developments at school level at provincial level including the phonics work and the use of grants, there is a lack of clarity at the system level. Some respondents were unclear about the difference between decentralisation and devolution and which tasks had been devolved to the provincial level. There was also a lack of clarity related to roles and responsibilities. In particular, the roles of SIOs should be reviewed and any tasks assigned to them should be fully resourced.

Key Recommendation 3:
That VESP II should revise its MEL on an annual basis.

This is based on the finding that VESP II has experienced challenges in Monitoring and Evaluation with three different TAs producing consecutive plans in the area with three different theories of change. The most recent MEL represents a significant improvement over the previous two but still does not fully meet standards. It is also not well aligned with MoET's own M&E systems. The new MEL framework will need to consider:

- MoET's framework
- What it is realistic to achieve
- Measurement of the issues mentioned in this report

Key Recommendation 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

This is based on several findings. While VITE has mobilised quickly to provide a diploma and later bachelor's in education to ensure a supply of qualified teachers but is hampered by not having received the latest curricular materials. With the disbanding of ISU, it is currently unclear exactly who oversees the planning of CPD for teachers. There are no annual plans to coordinate the various trainings and ensure there is coherence and continuity. SIOs are responsible for many trainings and despite the training received, there is evidence that teachers still find the curriculum challenging to implement. The language proficiency of teachers in French and English remains problematic. There is no plan to upskill all teachers and the work done under VESP 1 on Recognition of Prior Learning has been unsustained.

Key Recommendation 5:

Additional technical advisory (TA) support is provided to enable VESP II to complete key tasks.

That additional support in terms of a full-time TA is provided to support the DFA and that the tasks being performed by the current LTAs under the program are reviewed. This recommendation is the joint responsibility of DFAT, VESP II and MoET.

This recommendation is based on direct requests from those interviewed. Furthermore, with STAs unable to work in country, LTAs have assumed greater responsibilities with the risk that they are spread too thinly and must work outside their area of expertise.

Further Recommendations / Suggestions

The following recommendations were made at individual level for consideration by the key audience for this report:

Suggestion 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. The LEG needs reviving with a further examination into why it is not functioning effectively. Consideration should also be given to how the LEG, or a similar body could reduce the transactional burden on the Ministry in terms of having to deal with multiple development partners.

Suggestion 2:

That the balance of responsibilities between DFAT and MC in terms of decision-making related to ways forward with AAV requires further consultation.

Suggestion 3:

That VESP II and MoET enable AAV to continue to be sustained and promoted in new ways in the current environment. This may involve a more detailed specification of respective roles.

Suggestion 4:

That VESP II, MoET and DFAT ensure that gender is not just seen to apply to girls but also to boys.

Suggestion 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.

Suggestion 6

That VESP II and MoET consider how best to ensure that teachers are prepared to teach through the medium of French and English.

Annexes

Annex 1: ToRs
Annex 2: Key Review Questions and Sub-Questions
Annex 3: Review of the VESP II Monitoring Evaluation and Learning Plan against Standard 2 of the 2017 DFAT M&E Standards: Investment Monitoring and Evaluation Systems
Annex 4: Funds Channelled through the Direct Funding Arrangement system

Annex 1: Terms of Reference for Mid-Term Review

1. Background and orientation

The Vanuatu Education Support Program Phase 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 (2013-2019) in continuing to support improving primary education outcomes through a focus on access, quality and management.

The program is implemented through a mixed modality: (i) a contract with Tetra Tech to manage most of the institutional activities with MoET and supporting delivery of the Australia Awards Vanuatu (AAV) (ii) a Direct Funding Arrangement (DFA) with the Government of Vanuatu (GoV) to support school grant funding (ECCE/kindy and yr10 to yr14) and for emergency, response and recovery activities (3) Independent Education Specialist who provides technical oversight on the program.

The end-of program outcomes (EOPOs) of VESP II are:
EOPO 1: More children (boys and girls, including those with disabilities) are enrolled and attending the right years of primary school at the right age (improved access)
EOPO 2: School principals, teachers, parents and communities collaborate to ensure students achieve improved literacy and numeracy outcomes (Years 4 and 6) (improve quality)
EOPO 3: MoET effectively plans, trials/implements and learns from devolution efforts and uses evidence to inform decisions (improved management)

These EOPOs were designed to support MoET goals to:
- Increase equitable access to education for all people at all levels of education in Vanuatu
- Improve the quality of education
- Improve and strengthen the management of the education system

The following intermediate outcomes will lead to EOPOs:
Intermediate Outcome 1: (Parents) Schools and their communities collaborate to support student learning.
Intermediate Outcome 2: (Teachers) Teachers are supported by school leaders and provincial education officers (PEOs) to improve classroom learning
Intermediate Outcome 3: (Teachers) Teachers are motivated to use skills and resources to support improved classroom learning, including for children with disabilities.
Intermediate Outcome 4: (Institutional) School leaders engaged and supported to implement school improvement plans and working with teachers and communities to strengthen education service delivery.

A mid-term review (MTR) of the program had been planned from the outset. The VESP II design and Tetratech contract foresaw an independent performance review to be conducted at the end of year 2. However, 2019 was a challenging year for the program, and

as with other countries in 2020 COVID-19 had an effect both on the education system in general as well as VESP-II implementation plans in particular. In March 2020, the Government of Vanuatu implemented precautionary measures, closing all its 1,453 schools and implementing home-school packages in their place. Just one month later, Tropical Cyclone (TC) Harold hit Vanuatu as a category 5 causing widespread destruction, including severe damage to more than 1,000 schools (including kindergartens), severely compounding the challenges faced by education systems in the country. Schools were able to re-open two months later but as pointed out in the Government of Vanuatu (GoV) report into its recovery strategy, the scale of disruption to essential services including education continues to be severe (GoV, 2020). The impact on VESP II activities was intensified by the swift closure of international borders meaning that visits by TA were curtailed.

This MTR therefore comes later in the program than envisaged. Its purpose also differs slightly from a more usual MTR in that it is more formative in nature and is designed to generate evidence and learning from the implementation of VESP-II from its outset to July 2021.

This ToR has been prepared by the Independent Education Specialist in consultation with DFAT Post Education Team and MoET. In particular, MoET has had input into key areas of the study which are of interest to them.

Assumptions and areas for further clarification

It is assumed that:

- Relevant partners are aware of the MTR and are available to engage in focus group discussions or interviews during a three-week time period
- MoET staff will be closely involved in the review
- During and before the data collection period, VESP II will provide administrative support to the consultant in the form of arranging interview and focus group slots, reminding participants of these and assisting with technology to ensure these can go ahead smoothly
- During initial meetings, clarification will be sought from DFAT in particular related to the design of the sub-evaluation questions and the role of other potential team members for the MTR.

2. Overall goals of the Mid-Term Review

The MTR will take place for the main purpose of:

1. Investment improvement for the next five years;

and secondary purposes of:

2. Accountability: to assess VESP's performance since January 2019 in terms of program achievements, the quality of its performance and to what extent it has resulted in change?
3. Knowledge generation: what lessons have been learned which could provide an evidence-base for decision-making in the sector?

The review will take into account the MTR requirements as stated in the VESP II design and the Public Financial Management (PFM) Assessment of the MoET in 2020.

- Assessing the appropriateness and efficiency of the balance of funding modalities (VESP II design p.27), and undertaking an assessment of the modality and scope so as to rebalance between contract and DFA if required (PFM FRA April 2020, p.42).

3. Key Evaluation Questions

These evaluation questions are based on an initial meeting held with MoET, input from PEOs in Santo and consultation with other stakeholders. They are based broadly around the DAC criteria and take into account the adaptations to the DAC criteria proposed by DFAT (DFAT, 2018).

3.1 Continued Relevance

1.1 To what extent is VESP II aligned with, and contributing to the policy goals and settings of GoV and GoA including responsiveness to emerging priorities, particularly in the context of COVID-19 pandemic, and post disasters (Ambae disaster, TC Harold) setting:

1.2 To what extent are the EOPOs, IOs and targets and Theory of Change remain relevant and achievable for the coming five years?

1.3 In what ways can VESP II remain flexible and adaptive in a changing context?

3.2. Coherence / Coordination

2.1 To what extent is VESP II complementary to other activities in the sector?

2.2 How does the program support coherence between the various sub-sectors of the education system e.g. ECCE to primary to junior secondary; schools to provinces to ministry?

2.3 In what ways could VESP II support to the provinces and schools (devolution and decentralisation) be improved?

2.4 In what ways could VESP II improve coherence and coordination support to MoET and other stakeholders**?**

3.3. Program Effectiveness

3.1 To what extent is VESP on track to achieve its EOPOs, IOs, targets. What are the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of planned outcomes?

3.2 To what extent does the VESP Monitoring and Evaluation Plan provide the right information to enable VESP II, MoET and DFAT to make evidence-based decisions related to the future of the program? Does it enable continuous learning?

3.3 In what ways could the following areas: professional development; induction/ongoing training for school principals and SIOs; ongoing e.g. OVEMIS and financial management; and responsibilities and coordination between National University of Vanuatu, MoET and Curriculum Development Unit – be improved?

3.4 In what ways could effectiveness be improved?

3.4. Efficiency

4.1 To what extent is VESP II making appropriate use of time and resources towards achieving outcomes? / How is value for money (V4M) being achieved?

4.2 How could the different aid modalities in VESP (contract, DFA, technical assistance/specialists) better align to support MoET?

4.3 How could efficiency be increased?

3.5. Sustainability

5.1 What are the factors which could influence the sustainability of VESP II's supported activities and results?
5.2 To what extent can VESP II supported policy implementation (including GEDSI) be sustained over time?

3.6. Gender equity and social inclusion (GEDSI), disability, and environment

6.1 To what extent is VESP II successful in supporting the MoET GEDSI policies and issues?
6.2 How can GEDSI be improved at all levels of implementation?
6.3 What are the other national cross-cutting issues to be taken into consideration?

4. End users

The focus of the MTR should be on immediate usability, bearing in mind the need to provide data for evidence-based decision for the immediate and medium-term future of investments by the users.

The end users of the MTR will be:

- Ministry of Education and Training - Director General and Directors
- Department of Strategic Policy, Planning and Aid Coordination – Director and Sector analyst
- Ministry of Finance and Economic Management – Expenditure analyst
- DFAT – Post Education Team, Post Management, Desk, Education Section
- Development Partners engaged or who will be engaged in the Sector e.g UNICEF, Save the Children, MFAT.

5. Approach and Methodology

The review constitutes a light touch approach designed to support future decision-making for VESP II.
In addition, the proposed approach will be:

Participatory in nature in that stakeholders including MoET, DFAT and VESP II itself are involved in the review process. Specifically, stakeholders will be involved at the following stages:

- Giving input on the purposes of the review (ToR);
- Helping to generate questions for the review ensuring that locally relevant questions are incorporated; and
- Contextualising and providing explanation for the findings.

It is particularly important to make use of such a participatory approach when the review team consists of those external to the country and won't have opportunities to travel in Vanuatu. It has been proposed that What's App and emails, be used for the purpose of keeping senior stakeholders up to date.

Methodology will consist of document analysis, interviews, focus groups and other participatory discussion-based methods. A detailed evaluation plan will lay out Key Review Questions (KRQs). As far as possible, multiple sources of data will be used to bring out the viewpoints of the various parties. This may include asking the same or similar questions of one respondent or checking the validity of information in previous documentation.

A first step has already been taken in ensuring the participatory nature of the process. The team leader of the MTR produced a short video explaining the rationale and general approach to the review, together with examples of preliminary questions the MTR might seek to answer. The aim of the video and accompanying plan was to elicit questions which would be of interest and use to MoET. This exercise was facilitated by DFAT Post Education Team who also asked officials at provincial level for their views. The resulting questions and comments received were of extremely high quality. Part of the reason for this might be that they were, at least in part, a result of internal discussions rather than questions asked by an external reviewer in a more formal context.

The team leader would like to request that there is at least one further meeting of this type which is facilitated by DFAT Post Education Team. This could take the form of an initial SWOT analysis of VESP II or discussions based round key questions. Preliminary lessons indicate that it may also be more appropriate to hold less informal meetings to gather some of the data.

6. Risks, Limitations, Constraints and Opportunities of the Evaluation

There are a number of limitations as a result of the virtual nature of the MTR. These include:

- facilitation at distance using technology requires different skills to face-to-face facilitation. However, with the current situation have now lasted well over a year, the team leader has had ample time to hone such skills.
- some of the respondents may not have had enough experience with new technologies to be comfortable with this way of eliciting information. All efforts will be taken to put them at their ease and give them options of platforms to use.
- INTERNET connectivity may be a problem. In Vanuatu, VESP II has agreed to provide technical assistance to ensure that a computer and dongle can be made available to interview respondents and to assist with other administrative and logistical support.
- the time difference as the team leader is based in UK, a 10 hour-time difference with Vanuatu. The team leader agreed to take a three-week period where she changes here work patterns to match Vanuatu working day. This three-week period would form a "virtual in-country mission" during which time all interviews and focus groups will be conducted.

A further constraint is that the mid-term review is coming towards the end of the current VESP -II program contract, so the time constraint is crucial as the contract has to be amended and approved by December 2021.

There are, however, some advantages to the current situation. Frequently, mid-term reviews are time bound with a concentrated period of time in-country with periods of back-to-back interviews and discussions. The virtual nature of this review means that it will be

possible for an initial period of for example three days of data collection, followed by a period of analysis or reflection on the preliminary results before going into a second round of interviews. It may be possible to conduct either two or three rounds of data collection interspersed with analysis and reflection. It will also be possible to include various stakeholders in the reflection periods so that they can be aware of and give input to future directions

7. Ethical considerations

The team will adhere to normal ethical standards during the course of the review e.g.(AES) Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct of Evaluations, and the DFAT Ethical Research and Evaluation Guidance.
The team will fully inform interview and focus group participants of the purpose of the review and how the information will be used. If a person being interviewed is uncomfortable or unwilling to answer any question the team will not pursue the line of questioning. Participants will be assured that their responses will be anonymous. Response data will be kept securely.

8. Allocation of roles and responsibilities

8.1 General

Since this is a light touch evaluation, the team will consist of the team leader supported by specialists with skills and experiences in PFM and MERL (monitoring, evaluation, research and learning) to provide advice on VESP II's effectiveness and efficiency and in particular the appropriacy of the M&E system and DFA aspects of the review. The recruitment of these two specialists is underway.
The team leader is contracted by DFAT Post Education Team as the Independ Education Specialist for VESP II and her first task is this MTR, she is responsible for:

- The overall strategic management of the review,
- presentation of the aide-memoire and key recommendations,
- draft and finalisation of the MTR report.

It is requested that DFAT Post Education Team staff take part in the facilitation of a limited number of meetings. The long personal and professional relationships of individuals from DFAT Post Education Team with senior members of MoET has led to a level of trust where sensitive issues can be discussed leading to high quality participation as evidenced by the preliminary task conducted as part of the design of these ToRs.

8.2 Roles and responsibility of the team leader / Independent Education Specialist

- Draft and submit Terms of Reference (this document) for the MTR based on consultation with MoET and DFAT Post Education Team
- Draft an evaluation plan that sets out the review's methodology and reflects professional practice standards and time and resources available for the assignment, in line with DFAT M&E Standard 5, and in light of COVID-19 constraints.
- Lead the review process including: participating in regular briefings; assigning tasks to the two Specialists; coordinating team inputs; and leading the review including consultations/interviews.

- Ensure that the review produces useful and practical information for improvements to the Program's operations, impact and decision making.
- Use the expertise of all team members effectively in meeting the Terms of Reference.
- Draft and finalise an Aide Memoire presentation in consultation with other team members.
- Lead the presentation to the Australian High Commission and Ministry of Education and Training at an end-of-review briefing.
- Coordinate and quality assure the development of the draft report to ensure the report meets DFAT M&E Standard 6.
- Lead the incorporation of DFAT feedback on the draft report in the production of the final version.
- Ensure timely delivery of the draft and final reports.
- Assist DFAT Post Education Team to incorporate the findings to the amended contract where necessary.
- Liaise with DFAT Post Education Team staff during the review.

8.3 Roles and responsibility of PFM Specialist

- Review the documents relating to the 2020 and 2021 PFM review done in Vanuatu.
- Take the lead on Goal 3 of the current review i.e. Investment improvements: what changes should be made to the VESP design when extending the contract ensuring a complementarity with the DFA, and ensuring adaptivity and responsiveness to emergent needs. This will also include supporting the review goal on the effectiveness of the program.
- Provide technical advice on the MTR plan related to his/her area of expertise.
- Undertake data analysis and assist with the aide-memoire and final report related to Goal 3 and effectiveness goal.
- Make written contributions to the draft and final reports.
- Participate in interviews, focus groups as recommended by the team leader
- Participate in discussions with Vanuatu Post staff as required by the team leader.

The PFM Specialist will have the following skills and experience:

- At least 10 year-experience in the area of PFM in development programs.
- Experience in sector financing and decentralised and deconcentrated service delivery systems.
- Previous experience of working with DFAT systems including DFA managing contractors.
- Previous experience as a member of an MTR team.
- Ability to synthesise information from a range of sources.
- Strong oral and written communication skills.
- Previous Pacific regional experience highly desirable.

8.4 Roles and responsibility of M&E Specialist

- Give input into the MTR plan to ensure it meets DFAT's M&E standards.

- Provide technical advice on the identification and selection of appropriate tools to collect data needed to answer the Review questions, to analyse data.
- Attend or undertake limited interviews or focus groups as required by the Team Leader
- Undertake data analysis, synthesis and drafting as requested by the Team Leader.
- Drawing from the data collected and document analysis, provide technical advice and recommendations in relation to specific aspects of the review requested by the team leader.
- Assess the performance and quality of VESP II's monitoring and evaluation system.
- Make written contributions to the production of draft and final reports.
- Participate in interviews, focus groups as recommended by the team leader
- Participate in discussions with Vanuatu Post staff as required by the team leader.
- Undertake any other tasks as requested by the team leader.

The M & E Specialist will have the following skills and experience.

- At least 10 years' professional experience in program review, monitoring and/or evaluation (MERL) roles in international development contexts.
- Demonstrated technical expertise in data collection, analysis, monitoring, and evaluation of development activities.
- Experience in developing/reviewing M&E systems and using a range of evaluation tools.
- Excellent written and spoken skills in English.
- Excellent interpersonal and communication abilities, including a proven ability to liaise and communicate effectively in a cross-cultural environment.
- Previous Pacific regional experience highly desirable.

3 Indicative Timings

Precise timings and stages will be further discussed with Post and finalised in the evaluation plan. Indicative timings and ceilings on days are given below:

- June - July 2021 – finalisation of MTR ToRs
- July – August 2021 – Palladium contracting of the additional specialists to support the team leader
- August 2021 – preparation and approval of the MTR Plan
- August 2021 – implementation of the review
- September 2021 – draft report & peer review
- October 2021 – final report
- October – December 2021 - DFAT management response
- July - December 2021 – DFAT Contract amendments

Key Tasks	Team Leader	PFM Specialist	M&E Specialist	Dates (2021)
Consultations/briefings, TORs, MTR Plan	4	1		May - July
Document Review	3	1	1	July - August
Consultations/interviews, preparation and presentation of end of mission Aide Memoire	13	3	1	August - September
Draft MTR report	5	1	0.5	September
Final MTR report	3	1	0.5	October
Sub-total	**Up to 28 days (or as needed)**	**Up to 7 days**	**Up to 3 days**	

Key outputs from the MTR are:

(i) an Aide Memoire that is presented at the end of the MTR to DFAT Post and key GoV personnel; and
(ii) an MTR report that comprehensively addresses the MTR questions, including clear recommendations linked to a robust, evidence-based rationale, and accompanying MTR presentation slideshow. The MTR report must be:

- provided in an easy communicable format to read with both a 2-page Executive Summary;
- Of the highest standard of quality, including report content, format, spelling and grammar;
- Prepared in accordance with DFAT Monitoring Standards; and
- Provided in electronic format in Microsoft Word and PowerPoint (for presentation).

9. References

- Government of Vanuatu (2020), Vanuatu Recovery Strategy 2020-2023, TC Harold and COVID-19
- https://dsppac.gov.vu/
- VESP Phase II design
- VESP Contract with Coffey International Development / Tetra Tech
- Public Financial Management (PFM) Assessment of the MoET 2020

10. Key Documents for Review

- VESP Phase II Annual plans 2019, 2020, 2021
- VESP Phase II Six Monthly reports: Jan – June 2019; July – Dec 2019; Jan- June 2020; July – Dec 2020; Jan – June 2021
- VESP Phase II Milestones: Strategy for provincial pilots and sector update
- VESP Phase II Deliverables: curriculum materials production and distribution; gender quantitative report
- VESP Phase II Bi-monthly reports
- VESP Phase II Steering committee minutes 2021
- VESP Phase II DFA 2021 catch-up notes from weekly meetings with MoET

- VESP AAV Six Monthly reports: Jan – June 2019; July – Dec 2019; Jan- June 2020; July – Dec 2020; Jan – June 2021
- VESP AAV Annual plans 2019, 2020, 2021
- VESP Phase I Completion Report 2018.

Annex 2: Key Review Questions and Sub-Questions

ToRs	Questions and Sub-Questions
CONTINUED RELEVANCE	**1.1.** To what extent is VESP II aligned with, and contributing to the policy goals and setting of GoV and GoA including responsiveness to emerging priorities, particularly in the context of COVID-10 and post disaster (Ambae disaster, TC Harold) setting? Sub questions: To what extent is VESP II aligned with the policy goals of GoV including policies previous Australian assistance helped to support? To what extent is VESP II aligned with policy goals of GoA? To what extent is VESP II aligned with current priorities in the emergency setting? **1.2.** To what extent do the EOPOs, IOs and targets and Theory of Change remain relevant and achievable for the coming five years? Sub questions: To what extent does the theory of change still hold? To what extent are the ToC, EOPOs and IOs still congruent with the directions of MEYS? What changes, if any need to be made to ensure continued relevance? 1.3. In what ways can VESP II remain flexible and adaptive in a changing context? Sub questions: To what extent is VESP II's current way of working adaptive and flexible? In what ways has VESP II demonstrated its flexibility? *How can the adaptive approach be improved?*
COHERENCE / COORDINATION	2.1. To what extent is VESP II complementary to other activities in the sector? Sub questions: To what extent is VESP II complementary to other activities in the sector e.g. SCA, UNICEF, GPE as well as future proposed programs e.g. MFAT, ADB? 2.2. How does the program support coherence between the various sub-sectors of the education system e.g. ECCE to primary to junior secondary; schools to provinces to ministry? Sub questions: To what extent is VESP II helping to support a smooth transition and coherence in approach between the various sub-sectors of the education system? 2.3. In what ways could VESP II support to the provinces and schools (devolution and decentralisation) be improved? Sub questions: To what extent is VESP II supporting vertical and horizontal coherence in terms of devolution and decentralisation? (Vertical: Ministry to Provinces SIO Coordinator to SIOs to Schools; Horizontal: SIOs – Inspectors - Provincial Officials – Provincial Trainers) Are provincial structures working efficiently?

ToRs	Questions and Sub-Questions
	Are sufficient resources being deployed to ensure that work at province level can progress smoothly? 2.4. In what ways could VESP II improve coherence and coordination support to MoET and other stakeholders? Sub questions: What part does VESP II play in helping MoET make connections between various initiatives? What has VESP's role been in the LEG to date and are other coordination mechanisms necessary or desirable? *How can coordination be ensured in the future as newer DPs enter the sector?*
EFFECTIVENESS	3.1. To what extent is VESP on track to achieve its EOPOs, IOs, targets. What are the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of planned outcomes? Sub questions: What has been achieved? What has not been achieved? *What are some likely reasons why?* 3.2. To what extent does the VESP Monitoring and Evaluation Plan provide the right information to enable VESP II, MoET and DFAT to make evidence-based decisions related to the future of the program? Does it enable continuous learning? Is the balance/ interplay between monitoring and evaluation appropriate and effective? Sub questions: To what extent are the reporting mechanisms accessible and appropriate to enable MoET, VESP II and DFAT to make timely decisions? How does the feedback loop into ongoing planning work? How is learning generated through the MEL process? Does MoET have an understanding of the ways in which VESP is accountable? 3.3. In what ways could the following areas: professional development; induction/ongoing training for school principals and SIOs; other ongoing activities e.g. OVEMIS and financial management; and responsibilities and coordination between National University of Vanuatu, MoET and Curriculum Development Unit – be improved? Sub questions: Who has overall coordination responsibility for Professional Development? Is it planned and implemented in the most effective way? To what extent are the various trainings taking place through SBM, CDU, supportive of each other? How is training followed up to ensure transfer to the classroom?

ToRs	Questions and Sub-Questions
	To what extent does VESP II support the planning of training e.g.. through annual training plans? With the year junior secondary curriculum status as it is, what can realistically be planned for the coming years given the lack of final decisions taken under the MFAT program? How would this be articulated with the MFAT program? 3.4 In what ways could effectiveness be improved? Sub questions: How can the managing contractor, DFA, IES work together better to support MoET? (likewise efficiency) In what ways could the strengths of the program be built on to improve effectiveness? What worked well in VESP and should continue? What worked well in the DFA and should continue. What aspects needs to be improved? (Also efficiency)? What activities can be dropped? (Also efficiency)
EFFICIENCY	4.1.a To what extent is VESP II making appropriate use of time and resources towards achieving outcomes? Sub questions: How can the use of international TA be optimised now that the fly in / fly out model is not possible (also efficiency) 4.1.b How is value for money (V4M) being achieved? 4.2. How could the different aid modalities in VESP (contract, DFA, technical assistance/specialists) better align to support MoET? Sub questions: How does VESP and its TA specialists support the DFA? 4.3. How could efficiency be increased? Sub questions: Are roles and responsibilities e.g. for training; at provincial level clear? Is there any overlap or duplications? To what extent do VESP II's internal structures support program efficiency?
SUSTAINABILITY	5.1. What are the factors which could influence the sustainability of VESP II's supported activities and results? Sub questions: Are resources available to sustain VESP II activities? What is the degree of MoET's ownership of VESP II? To what extent have previous activities e.g. the extensive support to the primary sub-sector been consolidated?
GEDSI AND ENVIRONMENT	6.1 To what extent is VESP II successful in supporting the MoET GEDSI policies and issues? Sub questions: To what extent are VESP II activities benefitting girls and boys, those with disabilities and those from vulnerable backgrounds in terms of access and quality of learning opportunities?

ToRs	Questions and Sub-Questions
	To what extent are management opportunities equitable for men and women? 6.2 How can GEDSI be improved at all levels of implementation? Sub questions: How can GEDSI be improved at national, provincial and school level? 6.3 What are the other national cross-cutting issues to be taken into consideration? Sub questions: How are environmental issues taken into account? To what extent is education for sustainable development taken into account? What other cross-cutting issues are important in the current situation?

Annex 3: Review of the VESP II Monitoring Evaluation and Learning Plan against Standard 2 of the 2017 DFAT M & E: Investment Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

The following table lists the elements under this standard. The rating in the third column indicates to what extent the standard has been met, applying the following scale:

1. Latent
2. Emerging
3. Established
4. Advanced

The final column lists brief analyses and suggestions how the MER framework can be enhanced.

Follow this link for the April 2017 version of the DFAT Monitoring and Evaluation Standards.

Standard 2: Investment Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

No.	M&E Plan (MEL)	Eval	Comments
2.4	There is a summary of the investment goals, outcomes, investment size and length and any other relevant information	3	All aspects of this element are present in the framework, apart from the start and end year of the program.
2.5	There is an adequate basis for the development of the M&E Plan (*e.g.* Evaluability or Readiness Assessment)		No information available

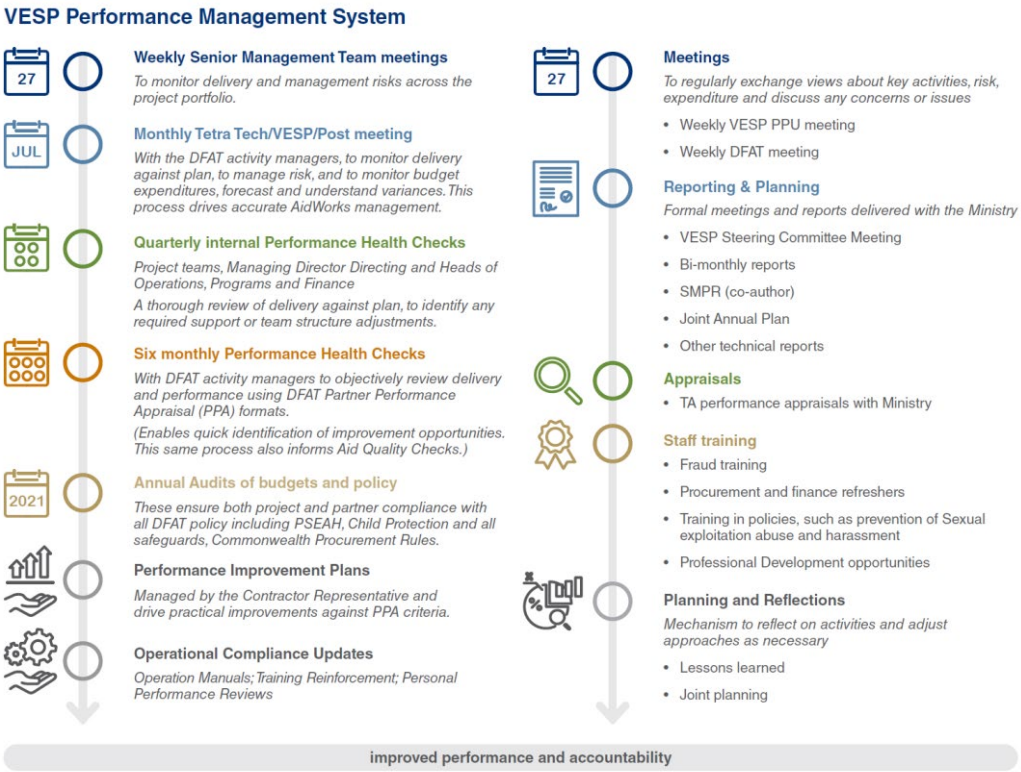
No.	M&E Plan (MEL)	Eval	Comments
2.6.	The M&E Plan provides a summary of the overarching system design including key M&E approaches and activities	4	A summary is included in the framework.
2.7	The M&E Plan is consistent with current international standards for evaluation practice (*e.g.* Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation – Program Evaluation Standards)	3	The framework was reviewed in 2019 against the DFAT M&E Standards (2017) and consequently updated in 2020. Although the current framework appears to reflect DFAT standards, no explicit reference is made to these, or to other international M&E standards such as JCSEE Programme Evaluation Standards, OECD DAC standards or Evaluation Criteria
2.8	Goals and End-of-program outcomes are clearly articulated and assessed	3	Outcomes are clearly articulated. The EoPo (Access) reflects social inclusion aspects including gender and disability. The EoPo on quality education is limited to literacy and numeracy, not taking into consideration other aspects of learning, such as socio-emotional and physical development.
2.9	The plan is focused around key performance indicators and evaluation questions linked to specific intended uses of the information	4	Key Performance Indicators for both EoPo's (3 KPI's) and IO's (4 KPI's) are described, as well as four Evaluative Questions that measure the higher goals related to EoPo's.
2.10	The reach/coverage, quality, and exposure of participants to key deliverables are monitored and evaluated	3	Output monitoring is provided for in the Outputs Monitoring Matrix (Section 4.2). The matrix includes annual targets and information sources. Some outputs are measured by indicators that are too general and these do not necessarily measure the Output. For example, the Output 'Provincial staff having increased capacity to support school improvement' cannot just be measured by the indicator 'Number of MEOs, Inspectors and SIOs trained' as this training could serve a variety of purposes.
2.11	Relevant aspects of the context and key risks are monitored	1	The framework lists assumptions that relate to risks (e.g., natural disasters), however it lacks a section dedicated to risk management, including methods for monitoring and strategies that need to be in place to mitigate risks. The framework does not provide for a coverage of

No.	M&E Plan (MEL)	Eval	Comments
			unintended outcomes, or unintended differential coverage of special sub-groups.
2.12	Methods are fully described for sampling, data collection, management, analysis and processing	2	The framework provides a snapshot oversight of six evaluative studies. The framework states that approval of these studies is needed prior to a description of detailed overview of methodologies. The framework lacks a detailed description of how VESP/MoET will collect data. There is an intention to support and align with MoET's information system, but no description how data will be sampled, collected, analysed, reported (or used for learning).
2.13	Baselines are constructed where appropriate	1	The Outcomes Monitoring Framework provides for one baseline for the seven indicators. None of the indicators include annual targets (Section 4.1). The framework does not provide for a rationale why baselines are not included.
2.14	Responsibility is allocated to specific individuals (not organisations) for all M&E activities	2	The framework does allocate areas of work to two M&E officials, one M&E expert and one M&E advisor. And the framework lists main responsibilities of DFAT, MoET and the Program. However, the framework does not indicate who, within these organizations, is accountable for delivery of specific tasks. This carries the risks of individuals not perceiving responsibility, tasks not being allocated or implemented, and consequently, that monitoring, and reporting are not happening.
2.15	Mutual accountability and joint assessment by local partners is provided for (using partner systems where appropriate)	2	There is an intention of mutual accountability and joint assessment, through establishing alignment of data collection with MoET systems, OV and VANSTA. The alignment depends on the review of MoET's Business, Corporate and Strategic Planning in 2021. The framework does not provide for a time-frame when the alignment should be realized.

No.	M&E Plan (MEL)	Eval	Comments
			The dependency on MoET, plus the risk of a delayed alignment could have consequences for the timely monitoring and reporting of areas that require data. There is no indication that the risk is mitigated by a back-up plan or alternative data collection methods.
2.16	Individuals responsible for implementing the M&E plan have capacity to do so (time, resources, skills)	n/a	The 'light touch' nature of this MTR does not enable a review of individual capacity to implement the MER framework.
2.17	A strategy for the use of information is described	2	A brief section in the framework indicates that information will be shared. The section does not include strategies how information will be used other than that VESP will respond to all responses from MoET and DFAT. The framework indicates that evaluative studies will generate information that will be shared by various stakeholders including the PPU, and that findings will be included 'into key internal decision-making processes' However, the framework does not describe a pathway or methodologies that explain how findings from monitoring activities can be used for evaluation and learning, to enhance preparation of program interventions, to scale up good practice, to detect unintended outcomes, and how findings will be used for internal decision-making. The VESP II 2021 implementation plan does include a Performance Management System (See figure 1 below), however its relationship with the MER implementation is not clear. The MER appears to miss a Learning component, that could include regular sharing of data on KPIs to inform evaluative meetings, or mechanisms to monitor if recommendations and other responses from MoET and DFAT are effectively addressed.
2.18	A complete schedule of M&E activities shows when all key M&E activities will		At the time of the review, this was not easily available

No.	M&E Plan (MEL)	Eval	Comments
	be carried out and information available		
2.19	The M&E plan can be easily understood by non-specialists and key stakeholders	3	The MEL framework is easy-to-read for primary users to quickly understand the main concepts. The logical framework is clearly explained, as well as the relationships between outcomes, outputs and activities. However, the MEL framework has gaps, particularly around areas related to quantitative data collection, and the operationalisation in general (activity planning, detailed task allocation.) The fact that the MER Framework is not complete can constrain the full understanding.
2.20	The M&E plan is resourced and costed	1	There is no evidence in the framework that it is costed.
	M&E Products		
2.21	M&E reports or products are available upon request and report against planned M&E activities	2	
2.22	Progress reports meet stakeholder needs, report against M&E plan, have a credible basis for claims, and recommend actions to improve performance	3	
2.23	M&E reports demonstrate how monitoring and evaluation systems have informed learning, decision-making and action	2	

Figure 1: VESP Performance System (2021 Annual Plan)



General observations

- The MEL framework meets, to some extent, most DFAT Standards for M&E Plans. Further refinement of the framework is needed.
- There are several gaps in the framework that makes the framework incomplete. This is particularly true for the Results Measurement Framework that lacks baselines and targets. But it also applies to the operationalization aspect, including clear description of sampling procedures, and information how data is collected, analyzed, reported, and used.
- The framework does list responsibilities; however, these are too general. To strengthen the implementation, allocation of tasks to individuals is needed, as well as a Gantt chart that shows when MEL activities should be implemented by whom, and when deliverables are expected.
- The dependency on MoET systems for collecting data is the right approach, however the intended alignment carries a risk. If the alignment is delayed or incomplete, then VESP cannot meet important monitoring and reporting obligations. This is a considerable weakness of the framework.
- The framework needs a risk assessment, that includes mitigating strategies and that allow for detecting and reporting on unintended program outcomes.
- The users of MER information should be more specific: Who are the intended recipients, what exactly are their data needs, and when, how and in what format should those needs be met? What is the purpose of sharing information, and how can MER data be used not only for reporting purposes to the donor, but also used to inform internal learning to enhance the delivery of the program?

Annex 4: Funds Channeled through the Direct Funding Arrangement system

The table below presents a breakdown of the Direct Funding Arrangement (DFA) related activities that were able to be channelled through VESP II program, as of August 2021.

DFA Related Activities via VESP II	**Sum of Payment AUD**	**Sum of VT**
1.Ambae Recovery Education Support Grant	3,960,300.00	2,551,943.00
2.Beverly Hills Primary School	1,105,750.00	7,475,882.50
3.Covid-19 Response Grants	4,000,000.00	6,440,000.00
4.School Grant for kindy, Year 7 - Year 13/14	12,605,000.00	1,029,734,900.00
5.TC Harold Emergency Response & Early Recovery	4,703,042.00	376,497,652.62
6.TVET Ambae Recovery	400,000.00	31,644,000.00
7.Vanuatu Skills Partnership	594,819.00	48,804,898.95
Grand Total	**27,368,911.00**	**2,203,149,277.07**