

Vanuatu Education Sector Program

Design Document

FINAL

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

‘Government’ refers to the Government of Vanuatu.

‘Development partners’ refers to the donors for the Vanuatu Education Sector Program: the Australian Government (AusAID), New Zealand Government (NZMFAT) and UNICEF.

‘Implementing partners’ refers to the NGO, university and private sector partners to be procured to implement parts of the Vanuatu Education Sector Program.

AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
ANS	Assessment of National Systems
DPs	Development Partners
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
ERF	Education Resource Facility
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
GPI	Gender Parity Index
IP	Implementing Partners
ISU	In Service Training Unit
JPA	Joint Partnership Arrangement
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MFEM	Ministry of Finance and Economic Management
MoE	Ministry of Education
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIR	Net Intake Rate
NZMFAT	New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PEFA	Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability
PMO	Prime Minister’s Office
TA	Technical Assistance
UNCTAD	UN Committee for Development Policy
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
VANSTA	Vanuatu Standardised Test of Achievement
VEMIS	Vanuatu Education Management Information System
VERM	Vanuatu Education Road Map
VESP	Vanuatu Education Sector Program
VESS	Vanuatu Education Sector Strategy
VITE	Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education

Executive Summary

I. ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

- 1. Vanuatu has high levels of poverty and vulnerability despite its moderate per capita income.** Around 13% of people live below the national basic needs poverty line,¹ and a further 22% are estimated to be vulnerable to experiencing poverty (ie. from food or fuel price increases) as they are close to the poverty threshold.² The education Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of universal primary education completion is amongst those unlikely to be met by 2015. Yet it is crucial for Vanuatu's future development.
- 2. Primary education and the education MDG are Government of Vanuatu priorities.** Vanuatu's development agenda, *Priorities and Action Agenda for Vanuatu 2006-2015*, has as its vision 'an educated, healthy and wealthy Vanuatu'. This agenda sets primary education as one of its three overarching goals. Within this goal, it focuses on the education MDG and the international Education for All goals, which include the quality of education and early childhood care and education (ECCE).
- 3. Progress has stalled on improvements to primary education.** Enrolment rates are low and static. Only 37% of children are enrolling in year 1 at the correct age.³ There are high repetition and dropout rates, and significant differences in enrolment rates between provinces. Gender imbalance at the primary school level is minor in most provinces, at least compared with secondary schools, although access for children with disability is a problem. The major problem facing primary education is the quality: well over half of all children are failing to adequately achieve the basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy.
- 4. Causes of low pupil achievement** include the following: overage enrolment; many teachers are under-equipped, unsupported and sometimes not even in attendance; teachers have been inadequately trained in the teaching of literacy and numeracy; there is insufficient use of initial instruction in the mother tongue (of which there are 105 in addition to the official languages Bislama, French and English); instruction materials are inadequate for supporting reading and writing; there is low community and parental demand for accountability; and highly restricted access to and poor quality of ECCE means few children are receiving early learning support.
- 5. Low pupil achievement is in turn a cause of low enrolment, repetition and dropout.** The policy of requiring children to repeat years is not an efficient means of dealing with low achievement and should be discontinued. Another cause of low enrolment, premature dropout and poor pupil achievement is the poor state of much of the infrastructure, with over-crowding in many classrooms. The overall supply of teachers is not a major problem – more teachers are probably being trained than are needed – but lack of in-service training and teacher management are major problems.
- 6. The Ministry of Education has an effective *Vanuatu Education Sector Strategy 2007-2016* (VESS). It also has a sound plan for its implementation, the *Vanuatu Education Road Map* (VERM).** Both VESS and VERM provided the foundation for a sector based approach to development assistance which emerged in 2010. Through a Joint Partnership Arrangement, Australia, New Zealand and UNICEF (hereafter 'development partners') have pooled funds to allocate against the Government of Vanuatu's (hereafter 'Government') basic education priorities as articulated in VERM. The VERM has supported a number of promising initiatives, including: school grants to provide fee-relief and increase access; the development of minimum service standards for primary schools; the introduction of school based management reforms to

¹ 2010 data, Vanuatu National Statistics Office (forthcoming publication), *Vanuatu Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2012*

² RMIT Feeny et al (2012), *Vulnerability and Resilience to Shocks in Melanesia: Policy Brief*

³ VEMIS Net Intake Rates 2011

enhance the school grants scheme; a new ECCE policy; and a revised curriculum syllabus for year 1 to year 3.

7. **But progress on implementing the VERM has been very slow:** less than half of the 2011 activities financed by development partners have been implemented, with similar slippage in 2012. One reason is the shortage of Ministry of Education staff: only half the positions are currently filled and for a long time there was no Director General. It was also noted that implementation slowed when technical assistance was reduced and direct financing of Ministry activities increased. The channelling of all funds through Government systems is no longer considered feasible, except for funding school grants and the outsourcing of ECCE. Whilst the 2012 AusAID-funded Assessment of National Systems found sound financial systems in most respects, low capacity, procurement and internal audit were rated as substantial fiduciary risks in line agencies.
8. **Development partners agreed with Government that a re-design of their support to the VERM was required.** To improve results and restore progress towards the education MDG, a changed delivery approach is needed. There has been broad Government consensus that development partner support going forward needs to use a mix of modalities, which will include more outsourcing, community involvement and management support. Future support also requires a renewed focus on addressing the root causes of poor quality in the early years of education so that children will learn more and stay in school longer.
9. **There is a strong case for continuing development partners' support to the VERM.** Improved education outcomes will make a real difference to the lives of Vanuatu's people, as well as to the high-level development goals of reduced poverty and economic growth. Besides development partners' commitment to the MDGs, such support is seen as a priority within their respective partnership agreements and action plans for Vanuatu. Australia and New Zealand have a comparative advantage in the sector from the length and scale of their previous support as well as their leadership of development assistance to the sector in Vanuatu.

II. PROGRAM DESIGN AND DESCRIPTION

10. **This design document covers development partners' support to the VERM over the next five years from 2013 to 2017.** Development partners have acknowledged that results will only be realised over a longer term 10 year planning horizon to which partners are committed.
11. **The new Vanuatu Education Sector Program (VESP) will continue to work towards a sector based approach.** The program's long term goal is: "Vanuatu has improved education quality, more equitable access to education for all people, and the education system is well managed." This combines the VERM goals and has been agreed with Government. The main focus of the program will be on improving learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy in ECCE and the first 4 years of primary education (K to 3). VESP will work with Government to achieve progress towards the following end of program outcomes by 2017, which will be assessed against corresponding draft targets, as outlined in table 1 below:

Table 1: End of Program Outcomes and Targets (2017)

Long term goal	End of Program Outcomes	Draft Targets (2017)
Improved education quality	1. Literacy and numeracy levels of children in early years of education reach national standards	1a. Proportion of children meeting literacy standards at the end of Grade 3 increases from 29% to 45% 1b. Proportion of children meeting numeracy standards in grade 3 increases (baseline to be established)
	2. Children complete primary school	2a. Survival rate to grade 4 increases from 77% to 85% 2b. Survival rate to grade 6 increases from 58% to 65%
More equitable access to education for all people	3. All girls and boys, including those with disabilities, are able to access early years of schooling	3a. Girls enrolling at correct age in year 1 versus number of boys enrolling at correct age in year 1 (net intake rate) is maintained at current parity
	4. More children enrol at primary school	4a. The proportion of the total population of children in Vanuatu who enrol at the correct age in year 1 (net intake rate) increases from 37% to 50% 4b. The proportion of the total population of children who enrol at the correct school age in years 1 to 6 (net enrolment rate) increases from 88% to 100% (current MDG commitment agreed by the Government of Vanuatu)
Education system is well-managed	5. Ministry of Education management at all levels implements policies in key outcome areas	<i>To be agreed and outlined in the management action plan prior to the first annual joint review.</i>

12. To achieve the end of program outcomes, VESP will have the following implementation strategies:

1. Train and support teachers to implement the new curriculum;
2. Strengthen early childhood care and education delivery;
3. Engage the community through school based management;
4. Provide locally relevant and efficient delivery of facilities and equipment;
5. Develop capacity within the Ministry of Education to deliver an effective, well-managed and de-concentrated⁴ education system in Vanuatu.

13. The form of aid is a pragmatic and flexible program approach which supports the ECCE and primary school components of the VERM. Government systems will be used as far as possible,⁵ including the channelling of funds through Government systems for school grants. However, NGO or private sector partners will implement parts of the program on behalf of the Ministry of Education and development partners, with support from technical assistance and a research and advisory pool. A managing contractor will source, contract and performance manage most technical assistance and implementing partners (excludes independent education specialist). In light of recent audit findings,⁶ this is preferable to on-going extensive use of direct financing or a return to project support that would undo the past successes of building a sector wide approach. The Ministry's annual work plan process will continue to be used as a planning tool to ensure

⁴ Although Government has a decentralisation policy, it is far from being realised, particularly in education. A more gradual shift, characterised as 'de-concentration', is more realistic in the current context and means more donor assistance will be provided at the provincial level rather than just at the central level.

⁵ Development partner support will continue to use upstream components ('on plan', 'on budget'). Only school grants and the funding for the ECCE contract will be 'on accounting' until greater capacity is built within the Ministry of Education.

⁶ Barrett and Partners Audit of 2010 Donor Funds found poor internal controls, weak compliance and several cases of fraud.

transparency of both Ministry and development partners' funding.

14. The estimated development partner contribution for operational costs to be channelled through the managing contractor is up to A\$42 million over 5 years, commencing in 2013.

Additional funding will be provided direct to Government for school grants and for the outsourcing of the ECCE strategy. Pre-commitments and options for performance linked aid will be agreed with Government over the coming months, and further informed by the public expenditure review. Pre-commitments may include Government maintaining at least its current level of funding to non-salary expenditure, and passing legislation enabling the efficient allocation of teachers.

III. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

15. A transition plan will be supported by development partners to bridge the current approach with the new program. The existing Joint Partnership Arrangement (JPA) for VERM will form the basic governance arrangement for VESP with only minor changes. The VERM Steering Committee includes representatives from the Ministry of Education, Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, Education Partners Group and development partners.

16. VESP will use Government officers, technical advisers (local and international) and implementing partners to deliver education services, taking care to ensure value for money and mitigate risks to sustainability. The implementation strategies will be developed in further detail during the transition period. The commencement and roll out of these strategies will keep pace with absorptive capacity within the Ministry of Education, provinces and communities (see Annex 7 for an indicative implementation schedule). The pace of implementation and delivery approaches, particularly in newer areas such as ECCE, will be monitored closely by the VERM Steering Committee and adjusted as needed to match capacity.

17. A draft results framework for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) was developed during the design of VESP (Annex 3). The program's M&E system adviser will lead work to refine this on a partnership basis and complete development of a robust M&E system during the first six months of implementation. This adviser will develop a plan outlining how the system will work and how the evidence base for the program will be scaled up over time. The program will have an outcome- and utilisation-focus on M&E,⁷ building on what is currently working. The M&E system will meet development partners' reporting requirements and align with AusAID's Evaluation Capacity Building standards for Vanuatu.⁸

18. VESP will use a managing contractor to source, contract and performance manage technical assistance and implementing partners. The contractor will also provide backroom support to the program through the Secretariat Manager, for example for quality assurance. Development partners will take steps to minimise the risk of the contractor disempowering the Ministry. The Ministry will be fully engaged in the development of detailed implementation strategies, procurement and ongoing management. The managing contractor's deliverables will be monitored at several levels, including by the Ministry, the VERM Steering Committee, development partners and an Independent Education Specialist. The Independent Education Specialist will be recruited by and report directly to development partners and the Ministry separate from the managing contractor. There will be mandatory annual external audits of VESP expenditure.

19. There are several factors supporting the sustainability of VESP outcomes. One is the 10 year horizon, providing a realistic timeframe for achieving results and enabling planning beyond the 5

⁷ Currently annual VEMIS surveys collect a lot of data that is rarely utilised by anyone.

⁸ These provide detailed guidance on standards for monitoring and evaluation for AusAID and partners. These standards will be discussed with the Managing Contractor prior to mobilisation.

year program. Other factors supporting sustainability include the full alignment with Government policies, plans and budgets; and harmonisation among other donors. The Ministry's strong ownership of and sense of direction for the sector together with its participation in planning processes demonstrates commitment to achieving change in the sector. Better management of people, support to schools and data should result in sustained improvements in education outcomes. A more de-concentrated approach to service delivery will also encourage sustainability at school, community and provincial levels.

20. **The program has been designed to take full account of key overarching issues.** The program will directly and indirectly contribute to gender equity and to the needs of disabled children. The program will include environmental safeguards as well as measures for disaster risk reduction and resilience against climate change. The program will also take measures to minimise the risk of corruption and ensure attention to child protection issues.
21. **The design identifies risks to the success and sustainability of VESP outcomes along with mitigation strategies.** Key risks include: inadequate Government leadership and ownership; and reduced sustainability due to a high level of technical assistance, coupled with a possible high turnover of Government staff. The program's use of a managing contractor together with implementing partners will help mitigate against the risks of limited implementation and poor procurement and management. To ensure Government leadership, the program will remain on policy, on plan and on budget. Technical advisers will be selected and managed carefully to ensure they mentor Ministry of Education staff and hand over responsibilities throughout the course of the program. Another key risk to mobilisation is the timing of the election in October 2012 and possible political instability that surrounds this period.

Section 1: Analysis and Strategic Context

I. COUNTRY DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

22. **Vanuatu has high levels of poverty and vulnerability.** This is despite a moderate gross national income per capita (US\$1737 in 2009) and medium Human Development Index ranking (125th out of 187 countries). The UN Committee for Development Policy (UNCTAD) kept Vanuatu on its list of Least Developed Countries in 2009 because of its vulnerability:⁹

- Vanuatu has dramatic rural-urban income differences – over 80% of the population depends on agriculture for their livelihood, yet the rural sector contributes only 8% of Gross Domestic Product;
- Around 13% of people live below the national basic needs poverty line,¹⁰ and a further 22% are estimated to be vulnerable to experiencing poverty (ie. from food or fuel price increases) as they are close to the poverty threshold;¹¹
- The adult literacy rate is only 33%;¹²
- The country is extremely vulnerable to violent natural shocks including tropical cyclones, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, flood and droughts.

While the 2012 UNCTAD review is still under consideration, Vanuatu's economic growth rate has dropped from 5% to 3% due to the Global Financial Crisis, and it remains vulnerable to further economic impacts and natural disasters.¹³

23. **The education MDG is amongst several MDGs unlikely to be met by Vanuatu by 2015.**

According to Vanuatu's 2010 MDG Report¹⁴ other targets unlikely to be met are productive employment, hunger, food security, gender equity in education and parliament, and environmental sustainability. Achievement of the education MDG – universal completion of primary education – was then seen as 'probable', with a 'strong policy environment'. But subsequent data shows that improvement has stalled; universal access to education is now unlikely to be met. According to the latest census, 13% of females over 5 years of age have never been to school, nor have 10% of males.¹⁵

24. **The Vanuatu 2010 MDG Report identifies major challenges to achieving the MDGs, including:**

- Limited Government finances - 80% of the budget goes to wages and salaries, leaving little for development initiatives;
- Government human resource constraints;
- High cost of service delivery due to remoteness of islands;
- Language diversity (there are 105 vernaculars, 2 official languages and 1 national language);
- Political instability characterised by local allegiances and divisions;
- High rates of population growth and urbanisation, which pose a major challenge for

⁹ UNCTAD (2009), *Vulnerability profile of Vanuatu*.

¹⁰ 2010 data, Vanuatu National Statistics Office (forthcoming publication) *Vanuatu Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2012*

¹¹ RMIT Feeny et al (2012), *Vulnerability and Resilience to Shocks in Melanesia: Policy Brief*

¹² Early, R & Tamtam, H (2007), *Report on Literacy Survey*, University of the South Pacific.

¹³ UNCTAD (2012), *Vulnerability profile of Vanuatu*.

¹⁴ Vanuatu Prime Minister's Office (2010), *Millennium Development Goals 2010 Report for Vanuatu*.

¹⁵ Vanuatu National Statistics Office (2009), *National Population and Housing Census: Gender Monograph – Men and Women in Vanuatu*

service delivery and infrastructure.

25. **Primary education is a priority for Vanuatu's development.** Education is a key driver of economic development and poverty reduction. It enhances people's ability to make informed decisions, be better parents, sustain a livelihood, adopt new technologies, cope with shocks and be responsible citizens.¹⁶ Women with at least a basic education have higher standards of hygiene, health and nutrition. Investing in good quality education that is empowering makes people aware of their human rights, fosters democracy and contributes to political stability.¹⁷

Sector Policy Context

26. **The Government's development agenda *Priorities and Action Agenda for Vanuatu 2006 – 2015*¹⁸ has as its vision "an educated, healthy and wealthy Vanuatu".** This agenda sets improved access to primary education as one of its three overarching goals. It strongly endorses the education MDG and the international 'Education for All' goals. The agenda identified four main policy objectives for the sector:
- Improve access to education and ensure gender and rural/urban balance;
 - Raise the quality and relevance of education;
 - Improve planning, fiscal and financial management in the sector;
 - Develop a distinctively ni-Vanuatu¹⁹ education system.
27. **The *Priorities and Action Agenda* notes that the sector operates in a policy context of decentralisation and a sector wide approach.** It states that, "the Ministry is currently embarking on a major restructure to decentralise school administration and support to the provincial level, strengthen planning monitoring and auditing at the national level, and consult school communities and stakeholders as part of planning for an Education Sector Wide Approach (SWAp) to strengthen the system."
28. **The *Vanuatu Education Sector Strategy 2007-2016 (VESS)*, developed in 2006, provided an analysis of and vision for the sector,** identifying issues and constraints as well as policies, strategies and priority programs. The VESS included the Ministry of Education Corporate Plan and Medium-Term Expenditure Framework for 2007 to 2009.
29. **The *Vanuatu Education Road Map (VERM)* incorporates the strategic vision of the VESS and is the key medium-term working document for the Ministry of Education.** It is based on the MDGs, especially Vanuatu's progress towards universal primary education, and the implementation of the *Priorities and Action Agenda* and VESS. The road map groups planned activities into the following: school grants; school facilities; basic education; curriculum development; teacher education; human resource development; policy development; and planning, management and coordination. The VERM goals are to:
- Increase equitable access for all people at all levels of education;
 - Improve the quality of education;
 - Improve and strengthen the management of education.

¹⁶ World Bank (2011), *The World Bank Education Strategy 2020: Learning for All Investing in People's Knowledge and Skills*.

¹⁷ AusAID ERF (2011), 'Education, Human Rights and Democracy'.

¹⁸ Vanuatu Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (2006), *Priorities and Action Agenda for Vanuatu 2006 – 2015*.

¹⁹ 'ni-Vanuatu' comes from the French née Vanuatu, meaning a citizen of (or otherwise someone that shares a sense of belonging with) the Republic of Vanuatu

II. PROBLEM ANALYSIS

Statistics on Access, Equity and Quality of Primary Education

30. **Net enrolment rates (NER) are low and static.** As shown in Table 1, the net enrolment rate for primary education – the proportion of school age children enrolled – actually fell from 88.1% in 2010 to 87.9% in 2011, making the achievement of the education MDG unlikely. The high gross enrolment rates (GER) (over 100%) reflect a high proportion of over-age children. The 7% increase in 2010 corresponded to the first year of the school grants scheme, but the increase was only 1.2% in the second year of the scheme. Net enrolment rates are also low and static for ECCE and secondary education.
31. **Net intake rates (NIR) are also low and declining.** The first rows of Table 2 below show the proportion of six year old children (the official starting age for primary school) entering school. This net intake rate is one of the lowest in the Pacific region and is lower than many sub-Saharan African countries.²⁰ It has not increased over the 4 years, and decreased between 2010 and 2011. NIR is slightly higher for girls than boys.

Table 2: General Education Indicators, 2007-2011

Indicator	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
NIR Primary Year 1					
Girls		43%	37%	42%	38%
Boys		38%	34%	38%	36%
Total		40%	36%	40%	37%
NER					
ECCE	33.3%	37.9%	38.4%	40.5%	40.5%
Primary (Year 1 – 6)	86.7%	87.1%	85.5%	88.1%	87.9%
Secondary (Year 7+)	25.9%	29.2%	32.4%	31.8%	30.0%
GER					
ECCE	55.7%	61.4%	57.6%	58.2%	58.3%
Primary (Year 1 – 6)	109.9%	111.6%	110.8%	117.4%	118.6%
Secondary (Year 7+)	39.6%	42.5%	44.4%	42.1%	40.9%
Dropout rate					
Primary (Year 1 – 6)	4.6%	6.8%	2.1%	6.0%	8.0%
Secondary (Year 7+)	27.8%	27.0%	37.9%	39.9%	44.2%
Repeater rate					
Primary (Year 1 – 6)	12.6%	13.5%	14.4%	15.1%	12.1%
Secondary (Year 7+)	2.0%	1.8%	1.9%	2.8%	3.0%
Promotion rate					
Primary (Year 1 – 6)	82.8%	82.8%	80.5%	78.2%	75.6%
Secondary (Year 7+)	71.1%	79.7%	76.8%	73.3%	69.3%
Survival rate to Year 6*	78.7%	71.2%	96.0%	75.3%	82.5%
Transition rate from Year 6 – 7	90.9%	94.8%	89.8%	87.4%	84%

Source: VEMIS 2012

32. **There are high repetition and dropout rates.** One in five children in primary school is repeating their year because they failed to reach the intended standard. This is an inefficient practice as children typically gain very little from this repetition. Factors leading to drop-out are often inter-related, and include poor health and nutrition, school location and teacher absenteeism. The high number of dropouts in the early years of primary school might be also symptomatic of the fact that children are not learning.
33. **There are significant differences in net enrolments rates between provinces.** Table 3 below

²⁰ <http://www.indexmundi.com/facts/indicators/SE.PRM.NINT.ZS/compare?country=vu#country=ao:mz:nz:rw:sn:so:to:vu>

shows a 22% difference between the primary net enrolment rates of Torba and Tafea. Similarly, whilst there was full gender equity at primary level in Tafea in 2011, there were significantly more girls than boys in Torba. Gender imbalance is much higher at secondary level with, again, more girls than boys.

Table 3: Net Enrolment Rate (NER) and the Gender Parity Index (GPI) for the 6 provinces of Vanuatu (2009-2011)

Level and Year	Torba		Sanma		Penama		Malampa		Shefa		Tafea	
	NER	GPI	NER	GPI	NER	GPI	NER	GPI	NER	GPI	NER	GPI
ECCE												
2009	54.6%	0.95	62.2%	0.94	35.0%	1.06	45.6%	1.09	45.5%	1.08	47.6%	0.99
2010	48.3%	1.06	67.6%	1.06	36.9%	1.02	48.0%	1.09	55.4%	1.11	42.3%	1.10
2011	52.8%	0.98	56.9%	1.06	49.0%	0.96	55.1%	0.92	44.5%	1.10	52.2%	1.04
Primary 1 – 6												
2009	75.1%	1.01	81.5%	0.99	83.4%	0.95	90.1%	1.04	83.8%	1.01	91.6%	1.00
2010	72.8%	0.99	86.3%	1.00	86.5%	0.96	90.5%	1.03	90.6%	1.02	97.3%	1.01
2011	73.7%	1.06	87.4%	1.02	87.5%	0.98	89.0%	1.06	90.5%	1.02	90.0%	1.00
Secondary 7+												
2009	34.2%	1.32	45.6%	1.14	46.7%	1.28	42.2%	1.04	43.9%	1.10	42.9%	1.04
2010	35.6%	1.32	45.4%	1.06	42.8%	1.17	39.8%	1.07	47.0%	1.10	37.9%	1.04
2011	36.1%	1.24	45.1%	1.04	39.4%	1.18	38.4%	1.09	46.6%	1.10	39.1%	1.14

Source: VEMIS 2012

34. **There is a problem with access to learning for children with disability.** The Ministry of Education estimates that 11% of children have a disability. Whilst there is little evidence on the barriers they and their families face in attending school, few supports have been seen in schools for children with a disability, even for minor hearing or visual disabilities.
35. **Most Vanuatu children (more boys than girls) are failing to learn the basic skills of reading** as shown by the results of the Vanuatu Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA).²¹ Latest results from the Vanuatu Standardised Test of Achievement (VANSTA)²² showed that in both English-medium and French-medium schools, only 17% of boys were able to read and write satisfactorily in Year 4 of primary school. In English-medium schools, only 17% were proficient in numeracy, and in French-medium schools, 31%. The rates for Year 4 girls were generally higher than boys, but still only about 33% of girls demonstrated satisfactory numeracy and literacy.²³

Causes of Low Access and Retention

36. **Reasons for low access and retention given in surveys include unofficial school fees and the poor quality of education.**²⁴ When children are not learning, they lose interest in school and their parents lose interest in funding their education. Other reasons for low access and retention include distance from schools, having to help out at home or work, lack of school safety, no toilets, cultural expectations, and lack of parental awareness of the critical role they play in supporting children's attendance at school. Further research is required to understand barriers at the provincial level.

²¹ The EGRA is a global diagnostic to assess how well children are learning to read in the early grades

²² The VANSTA is a national assessment carried out by SPBEA in years 4 and 6 to test basic literacy and numeracy skills.

²³ VEMIS data 2011

²⁴ ASPBAE Australia and VEPAC (2011), *Education Experience Survey and Literacy Assessment, Shefa Province Vanuatu*; Houston, J. Reeves, B. Yiu Hing, J. (2010), *Independent Review of the School Grants Scheme established under the GoV UPE Policy*; Chamberlain, M. (2012), *How the NZ aid program might better support Teacher Effectiveness in Solomon Islands*.

37. **Poor infrastructure is also deterring enrolment and lowering student achievement.** Investment in new infrastructure has failed to keep up with demand and has led to overcrowding in classrooms, especially in urban areas. Preliminary estimates by the Ministry of Education in March 2102 indicated an immediate need for an additional 158 new classrooms and the refurbishment of 72 existing classrooms, whilst the growing student population will require an estimated additional 37 standard classrooms per annum.²⁵
38. **Lack of maintenance has increased the need for refurbishment and rebuilding.** Only 44% of classrooms are rated in 'good' condition and more than 12% are temporary structures constructed entirely from temporary materials.²⁶ Few schools have adequate water and sanitation facilities; few provide access for physically disabled children. None of the Ministry of Education budget is allocated to school construction or to maintenance specifically, though more recently schools are allowed to use part of the school grants for maintenance. All new school infrastructure is funded by donors or the school communities through fundraising.

Causes of Low Pupil Achievement

39. **Many teachers are under-equipped, unsupported and sometimes not even in attendance.** Although the primary school student to teacher ratio is low at 25:2,²⁷ teachers are not equipped through training or resources to teach effectively, especially in multigrade schools that form 90% of schools in Vanuatu, not to mention the 20% that are not just multigrade but single-teacher schools. An estimated 40% of the 1862 primary school teachers in Vanuatu are uncertified and have below Grade 12 education. While the Ministry of Education stipulates that teachers should provide 32 hours face-to-face teaching time with children per week, this is seldom observed. Anecdotally, teacher absenteeism is known to be a problem, partly because government teachers are accountable only to the Teachers Service Commission, not the school, parents or community.
40. **Zone curriculum advisers report that they are unable to visit schools because they lack the means for transport.** Additionally, many admit they do not have the skills to mentor and support teachers in the classroom. Provincial school improvement officers are centrally located and visit schools even less frequently.
41. **Teachers have been inadequately trained in the teaching of literacy and numeracy.** This is partly due to poor quality of pre-service teacher training and partly due to a lack of a specific focus on this area to date. The qualifications and experience profile of lecturers at Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education (VITE) is weak. Only a third of staff have education-related postgraduate degrees and only 6 have a Bachelor in Education or equivalent. Many lecturers have little or no experience of primary teaching and have few opportunities for professional development to keep up with advances in teaching content and methodology. The time spent on teaching practice (a total of 2 months over a 3 year period plus one month of classroom observation) is very low by international standards: in many education systems, it is closer to a third of the total study time.²⁸
42. **The system for in-service training is also ineffective.** Although modules for literacy and numeracy exist, the limited in-service training that occurs has not often used these since the inception of the new In-Service Training Unit (ISU), partly because ISU is poorly staffed. Work is underway to restructure ISU as a department of VITE, which should bring greater coordination and harmonisation between pre- and in- service teacher training. However, considerable attention and resources are needed to improve in-service training.

²⁵ The actual number depends on the capacity of schools to absorb new entrants.

²⁶ Based on VEMIS data, though the VEMIS category descriptions means the data is inadequate for planning purposes.

²⁷ VEMIS 2012

²⁸ Thornton, B (2012), *Teaching Practice: Considerations for Policy and Practice*. FHI 360/USAID

43. **Children do not have sufficient time to learn.**²⁹ Issues of distance and access are a clear challenge for students in the geographical context of Vanuatu. Student to teacher ratios may also be a barrier to learning in that, whilst the average student to teacher ratio for primary schools is 25:2, in some urban primary schools, the student to teacher ratio can be as high as 69:1.³⁰
44. **Inadequate attention has been given to the language of instruction despite evidence that children learn best in a language they know well.** Once a child can read in the mother tongue, this skill can be applied to other languages. Early numeracy, mathematical logic and reasoning skills can only be developed through discussion in a language the children understand. Yet there is little use of mother tongue in the early grades of primary education. Only 17.9% of pre-schools report using the mother tongue as the language of instruction, although this does represent an increase over previous years. Reasons may include lack of teacher knowledge or confidence in using the mother tongue of the pupils, lack of support materials, and a previous government policy not supporting the use of the mother tongue.
45. **The Vanuatu Council of Ministers has now agreed an education language guidance document encouraging multilingualism.** This has wide implications for teacher training in terms of language and pedagogy, given that teachers need to be proficient themselves in the languages of instruction.³¹ Lessons from other contexts show that when teachers are not proficient in the language they teach and when too little time is allotted to the various languages, children tend to lack proficiency in any language.
46. **There are inadequate instructional materials to support reading and writing.** Few schools have libraries or class sets of books, meaning that children often learn to read from the board. There are few examples of pocket charts or flashcards in support of the teaching of reading. The current materials for the teaching of reading in French are particularly complex and difficult for teachers to apply. Basic mathematics resources were not evident in many schools visited and those that exist do not help children to acquire and fully understand early mathematical concepts.
47. **Children are not ready for primary school because of inadequacies in ECCE.** The Vanuatu Early Grade Reading Assessment reinforced the global finding that children who had attended pre-school read better than those who had not. ECCE yields significant benefits in terms of school readiness and achievement, particularly among poor children.³² Yet only 40% of children of the intended age for ECCE are enrolled. The Gross Intake Rate is less than 60% and the rates are not increasing. The number of community ECCE centres has fallen by 57% since 2007.³³
48. **This is partly due to the cost of attendance.** ECCE is community-financed and teachers are not on the government payroll. The resulting high tuition fees discourage some families from enrolling their children. The recent fall in the number of community ECCE centres may have been due to the provision of primary school grants: parents may now be waiting to send their children to primary school instead of paying for ECCE.³⁴
49. **While there are many examples of good practice, some ECCE centres give poor quality instruction.** The student to teacher ratio for early childhood is good at 16:3³⁵ but many ECCE

²⁹ Gillies, J and Quijada, J. (2007), *Opportunity to Learn: A high impact strategy for improving educational outcomes in developing countries*. Washington D.C., Education Quality Improvement Program 2, Academy for Educational Development. This gives 7 criteria that need to be met for children to have time to learn, including teacher presence.

³⁰ VEMIS 2012

³¹ To achieve a level of IELTS 6 – 7 normally takes a motivated adult approximately 800 hours

³² Jaramillo, A. and Mingat, A. (2008), *Early childhood care and education in sub-Saharan Africa: what would it take to meet the Millennium Development Goals?*

³³ VEMIS 2012

³⁴ A study of barriers to access to ECCE and primary schools (specifically addressing provincial differences) is to be carried out in Vanuatu in 2012.

³⁵ VEMIS 2012

teachers remain untrained and are under-qualified. Ministry of Education pre-school coordinators report from their observations that many teachers use a traditional approach to teaching of reading and writing rather than child-centered, activity-based approaches to literacy and numeracy readiness. Moreover, teachers consulted during the design mission reported that they were demotivated by late or missed salary payments, lack of support and poor working conditions. Retention of good early childhood teachers is therefore a clear challenge.

50. **There is low parental and community demand for accountability.** Evidence from the field and recent local studies confirm that parents in Vanuatu value education, but have little idea how to help their children succeed in school, engage in the school community in a meaningful way, or demand change at a local or political level. Many studies over the past 30 years confirm that student achievement improves when parents are actively involved in their children's education, whether through school committees, open days or providing at-home support.³⁶ Parents' engagement in democratically elected, transparent and accountable school committees narrows the gap between communities and government, increases the participation of women in school based management, and builds trust in the school community. These same committees are instrumental in making demands on decision-makers for delivery of a quality education, including for children with special needs.

III. DEVELOPMENT PARTNER EDUCATION SUPPORT TO VANUATU

51. **Since 2008 the bulk of development partner funding to the education sector has been provided through direct financing³⁷ and technical assistance.** The Joint Partnership Arrangement (JPA) was agreed in 2009 between the Government of Vanuatu³⁸ and development partners to implement the VERM. The JPA signatories are categorised in two groups: 'Pool Partners' – Government of Vanuatu, Australia (AusAID), New Zealand (NZMFAT) and UNICEF – make a financial contribution through a Grant Financing Arrangement. 'Non-Pool Partners'³⁹ contribute through separate mechanisms.
52. **Under the JPA, Vanuatu has received pooled financial support since 2010** from AusAID (A\$20 million), New Zealand (NZ\$12 million), and UNICEF (US\$1.5 million). Pooled funds are held in the Vanuatu Government's Development Fund Account. The Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MFEM) allocates the funds to the Ministry of Education based on agreed line items in the annual workplan.
53. **The JPA involves a whole-of-government Steering Committee comprising representatives from the Ministry of Education, MFEM, Prime Minister's Office, Pool Partners and the Education Partners' Group.** Clear roles and responsibilities for each committee member are documented. The Committee is charged with overseeing VERM policy and implementation, budget development, and agreeing on development partners' contributions to annual budgets. The JPA outlines the financial contributions of Government and development partners and provides details on reporting, planning, M&E, procurement and audit processes. The JPA also provides details on the required meetings, including monthly update meetings as well as annual budget meetings and joint reviews.
54. **Other donors ('non pool partners') provide technical support, apart from the European Union which provides general budget support.** Japan provides funding for classroom construction, with France and US Peace Corps providing volunteers and/or in-kind support. The World Bank has provided technical support for an early grade reading assessment as a basis for interventions

³⁶ <http://www.turningpts.org/pdf/Family.pdf>

³⁷ 'Direct financing' involved the whole development partner budget for VERM activities (except TA) channelled through the GoV accounting system

³⁸ Government of Vanuatu is represented by: Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, and the Prime Minister's Office.

³⁹ Non-pool partners include: Government of France; Government of Japan; Agence Française de Développement; European Union; The Peace Corps; Secretariat of the Pacific Community; UNESCO; and the World Bank.

to improve learning outcomes; a teacher allocation and efficiency study; and desk research on second chance education and early child development. Regionally the World Bank has also supported a conference on early grade reading. UNESCO has held workshops with the Ministry of Education on teacher competencies and teacher effectiveness, and on sector-wide monitoring. UNESCO also plans to work with the Ministry on the Pacific Professional Standards for School Principals.

55. Vanuatu will be a beneficiary of a number of AusAID's ongoing or planned regional initiatives, including:

- Strengthening of the Secretariat of the Pacific Board for Educational Assessment (SPBEA) to support national assessment teams;
- Development of a regional learning assessment tool, the Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment;
- An Education Management Information (EMIS) System Facility that will provide countries with access to EMIS-related technical assistance including support for data collection, analysis and results reporting;
- PIFS-based monitoring of Pacific Education Development Framework compliance, outputs and outcomes; and
- Two large regional programs, one to support standard-based early childhood development programs, the other investing in quality assured post-secondary education and training.

In addition, Vanuatu has recently signed an agreement with the University of the South Pacific to train untrained teachers, although discussions are continuing about funding and links with current and proposed programs.

IV. ACHIEVEMENTS AND LESSONS

Key Initiatives, 2010-2012

56. A school grants scheme was established in 2010 to provide fee-relief and increase access to primary education. Through this scheme, funds are provided directly to all Government and Government-assisted schools in Vanuatu (representing 95% of all schools). Development partners supplement the Government's contribution to school grants, with the government contribution increasing every year by 25% since 2010. Development partner funds are transferred to the Government's accounting system, pooled with Government funds and then disbursed direct to school bank accounts. The funds are managed by schools rather than the Ministry of Education. School grants are being used to pay salaries of teacher assistants and fund stationery, basic equipment, school maintenance and furniture.

57. An independent review of the scheme noted that fund flow mechanisms and tracking of the grants was working efficiently.⁴⁰ Over 100 schools per year are subject to Ministry of Education internal audits of the school grants. Recommendations in the review such as providing school based management and financial training to school principals have been implemented. A joint review of the grants by the Ministry of Education and MFEM had similar findings and noted that: "the role of the community in supporting schools needs to be addressed if communities are not to drift into a position where many parents feel they have little or no responsibility for supporting the school".⁴¹

58. The grants represent a substantial financial commitment that will need further review in the

⁴⁰ Houston, J. Reeves, B. Yiu Hing, J. (2010), *Independent Review of the School Grants Scheme established under the GoV UPE Policy*.

⁴¹ Vanuatu MoE and MFEM (2011), *Primary School Survey: Use of Grants under the UPE Policy in 2010*.

future. In 2012, grants are estimated to represent almost 20% of Government non-salary recurrent expenditure to the sector and 18% of anticipated funding from development partners.⁴² The Government has committed to increasing its funding contribution to grants by 25% per year with declining contributions from development partners out to 2016. However, with the current growth in enrolments and assuming no other changes, Government funding of the grants can be expected to more than double as a percentage of non-salary Ministry of Education expenditure between 2012 and 2017. An independent study will be carried out in 2012 to examine the impact of the grants on the overall budget through to 2017, prior to any decisions on future levels of funding.

59. School based management is being introduced to complement the school grants scheme.

School based management reforms can improve learning achievements, impact positively on teacher behaviour and increase access and equity.⁴³ Implementation has been slow so far due to difficulties finding suitable trainers or mentors. Quality can be at risk if the process is not handled well in the early stages of decentralisation.⁴⁴ Only with sustained longer-term engagement (8-11 years) can investments in school based management yield measureable impacts.

60. Minimum service standards have been developed for primary schools, although there have been plans to draft fuller teacher standards. As part of school based management, school development plans will be used to achieve the standards with appropriate training for school committees, teachers and school principals.

61. An ECCE policy has been launched and a new curriculum has been developed for the first 3 years of primary education. These have a sound theoretical base in both literacy and numeracy, and include teacher training and resources as well as early learning development standards for children aged 3 to 5. A key gap is the lack of a comprehensive sub-sector framework which sets out expectations for the ECCE workforce, curriculum, sector performance assessment, community partnerships, governance and regulation. Implementation will not be easy. All aspects of the system may need attention from policy through to classroom practice for children to benefit significantly from the ECCE experience. Without all components in place, investments in curriculum will be of limited effectiveness.

62. Other achievements and improvements over the past two years include the establishment of an in-service training unit at VITE; harmonisation of French-medium and English-medium teacher training streams at VITE; a policy for inclusive education; and introduction of the Vanuatu Early Grade Reading Assessment, which provides a sound baseline against which to measure future reading standards. A similar exercise for numeracy skills is proposed for 2013-14. Work planning processes have improved within the Ministry of Education, supported by the development of an information system which produces relatively reliable data, though not necessarily in a timely or efficient manner.

Robust Partnership

63. There have also been significant improvements in development partner coordination and alignment with Government reforms through the Joint Partnership Arrangement. The JPA has been sound and relatively robust in principle even though it has lacked effective implementation. Meetings have often been irregular and unsatisfactory due to lack of planning and internal management reporting timely, quality information, rather than any underlying concerns with governance arrangements.

⁴² Mellors, J. (2012), *Report: Vanuatu School Grants Program: current issues and proposals*.

⁴³ AusAID ERF (2011), *School Grants and School-Based Management*

⁴⁴ http://www.unicef.org/eapro/1_Decentralization_and_Equity_Working.pdf

Strong Government Commitment to the Sector and Primary Education Reform

64. **The Government has a sound policy environment for education and provides strong financial support to the sector.** Government provides the sector with more than 21% of total public expenditure (although 80% on salaries), which is almost twice the OECD average and one of the highest in the Pacific region. This funding of 3.9 billion vatu is over 6% of GDP, which is above the OECD average.
65. **There is strong support for reform from the Prime Minister's Office,** which is monitoring progress towards the MDGs, including primary school completion rates. It is also requiring line agencies to develop and report against performance indicators and has taken the lead in a communications strategy for the Ministry of Education.
66. **There is also strong support from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management** which has prioritised primary education within its *Priorities and Action Agenda 2006-2015*, and has played a key role in overseeing implementation of the school grants scheme and a public expenditure review for the education sector.

Weaknesses in Sector Management

67. **Despite Government's strong policy and financial support, there have been weaknesses in the sector's management.** Inefficient use of funds in terms of educational outcomes has been highlighted in several financial management reports over the last 5 years, with calls for the Government to review its funding to the sector. Examples of inefficiencies include:
- Nearly 78% of the 2011 recurrent budget is allocated to teacher salaries, allowances and scholarships. This leaves only 22% of funding available for operational needs such as training, infrastructure and teacher support. Development partners are currently providing more than 90% of the funding for these activities, but this is unsustainable.
 - The 6 provincial offices are in total receiving only 0.01% of the Ministry of Education budget, two-thirds of which is used for overhead running costs. As a result provincial education officers, school improvement officers, zone curriculum advisers and school principals receive little training. They also have unclear structures, roles and job descriptions, and lack communication, coordination and planning. Development partner support has concentrated on national level planning systems with little attention given to local service delivery, school staff and their managers. Development partners regard this as the 'missing middle' in sector-wide approaches as it is: "the downstream delivery systems which translate education inputs into outcomes – literate and numerate children, and so they should be prioritised by both partner governments and donors."⁴⁵
 - The Ministry does not provide VITE with information regarding the projected number of teachers the system requires. More primary school teachers are being trained by VITE than will be needed over the next 10 years under the most likely scenario, according to a recent study on teacher supply and demand.⁴⁶ If Vanuatu were to ban grade repetition in Years 1 to 4, approximately 100 fewer teachers would be needed in the system. For secondary training, VITE student teachers are largely able to choose their own areas of speciality which may not always match the needs of the system.⁴⁷
 - There is a high drop-out rate from VITE (over 20%)⁴⁸ making this a very costly form of teacher training. This is partly due to the pressures on families to meet VITE fees for a 3 year program of teacher training (formerly only 2 years) despite development partner

⁴⁵ AusAID ERF (2011), 'Working through Partner Government Systems in the Education Sector', p6

⁴⁶ Bennell, P. (2011), 'Vanuatu Teacher Supply and Demand Study'

⁴⁷ Thornton, B (2011), 'Study into Teacher Costs, Distribution and Effectiveness'

⁴⁸ Bennell, P. (2011), 'Vanuatu Teacher Supply and Demand Study'

subsidies through scholarships. Family and personal commitments are also cited as reasons for dropping out, particularly for women.

- The Teachers Service Commission lacks staff, basic human resources management software and other resources needed to control teacher deployment and carry out its teacher management responsibilities.
- Teachers are forced to move frequently and at short notice, resulting in instability within schools as well as for the teachers themselves. Currently approximately 10% of the workforce is appealing against transfers.

68. **Overall, the Ministry of Education's implementation of the VERM has been slow.** When donor support was initially provided to the VERM there was strong leadership within the Ministry and an ambitious education reform agenda being pursued by Government. However, implementation of reforms then slowed considerably. The Ministry delivered less than half of its 2011 program, and there is slippage on the 2012 program.
69. **One reason has been the lack of sufficient officers in strategic positions, including the long-term-absence of a Director General.** Only half of the available positions in the Ministry are permanently filled. The Teachers Service Commission is particularly understaffed to drive necessary reforms areas to deliver results. The ECCE unit within the Ministry consists of just one individual. In addition, procurement processes are slow and are not helping to deliver outcomes. The implementation of reforms also slowed as a result of a reduction in technical assistance. The Ministry recognises the need for staff to be competent in policy implementation, planning, budgeting, research, monitoring and resource coordination.
70. **The Ministry acknowledges that development partner support to capacity building has not been particularly successful to date.** The previous shift towards working in government systems within a complex learning environment, and with an under-resourced Ministry of Education, placed a significant burden on Government. The Ministry of Finance and Economic Management states that, "the size and nature of donor support for VERM does not come with corresponding support to the systems within the Ministry of Education and as a result places a strain on the staff to effect these projects as well as manage their recurrent duties." This statement also demonstrates that activities funded by development partners continue to be viewed as separate from the regular duties of Ministry of Education staff, rather than part of a holistic sector wide approach.

Sound Financial Management Systems but Weaknesses in Procurement and Audit

71. **A recent AusAID-funded Assessment of National Systems (ANS) found that the Government's financial systems are sound in most respects.** Vanuatu's public financial management is "based on a solid legal and regulatory framework which sets out the budgeting, spending and accountability structures."⁴⁹ The ANS highlighted the strengths of the central ministries and the Development Fund Account that enables development partners to earmark and track tranches directly into the Government's system based on an annual work plan.
72. **However, the ANS classified procurement and internal audit as substantial fiduciary risks across all sectors.** Procurement reform has recently commenced at the central level, financed by AusAID's Governance for Growth program,⁵⁰ to improve procedures and updating of legislation. According to the ANS, the procurement systems of line ministries require significant and sustained support to achieve OECD standards. Following the concerns raised in audit reports on development partner direct financing, all procurement using their funding is currently being overseen by locally-employed technical assistance. The ANS states that the lack of internal audit and assurance processes across the ministries is another major area of weakness and risk.

⁴⁹ AusAID (2012), *Assessment of National Systems – Vanuatu*.

⁵⁰ Governance for Growth is an AusAID funded initiative working on policy reform and infrastructure

External audit has benefited from technical assistance but remains in need of major work to lift its capability and reliability. While the ANS notes that the Ministry of Education has increased its capacity in internal audit and external scrutiny, coverage across the Ministry is limited. An informal review of the education sector's public financial management as part of the ANS showed some improvements in reporting, but low effectiveness of payroll controls; competition, value for money and controls in procurement; and follow-up and legislative scrutiny of external audit reports.

73. **Working fully in Government systems has placed a significant burden on these systems as highlighted in the ANS.** In the development partners' move from a project-based approach to greater use of Government systems, there has been no commensurate strengthening of leadership and performance management. Annual planning and budgeting processes have improved in recent years but implementation capacity is low. Over the last 12 months, the Ministry of Education has been seeking technical assistance from development partners to substitute for the lack of local staff to carry out the Ministry's necessary work. This has resulted in technical assistance carrying out civil service tasks rather than building the capacity of local counterparts.

The Need for a Changed Delivery Approach

74. **Development partners have agreed with Government that a changed delivery approach for development partner support to the VERM is needed** to accelerate progress in education outcomes. This will require a focus on areas that address the causes of poor quality. There has been broad Government consensus (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, and Prime Minister's Office) that development partners' support going forward needs to use a mix of delivery modalities. This includes continued use of Ministry of Finance and Economic Management systems for school grants, outsourcing, more community involvement and greater management support – while maintaining respect for Government ownership of outcomes and working through Government systems where feasible.

V. RATIONALE FOR CONTINUED SUPPORT

75. **Development partners' support to the VERM under the JPA has helped the Ministry of Education to achieve some important results.** However, continued development partner support with a changed delivery approach can assist the Government to achieve better results. This will make a real difference to the people of Vanuatu.
76. **Continued support to the VERM aligns with Government's and development partners' priorities, including achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.** Continued support to achieving the education MDG is necessary if Vanuatu is to progress towards this goal and achieve others including gender equity, employment and freedom from hunger.
77. **Improved education is a priority outcome in the Vanuatu-Australia Partnership for Development.** Under this priority outcome, specific objectives include supporting universal primary education, improving the quality of education, supporting the Government's education reform agenda and increasing training and employment opportunities. Continued support is fully aligned with AusAID's *Pacific Education and Skills Development Agenda* which: "focuses on what matters: getting children into school, keeping them there, children's learning and young people's employability." A strong education system is essential for these four goals.
78. **Similarly, the New Zealand-Vanuatu Joint Commitment for Development identifies basic education as a priority sector.** The *Action Plan for Implementing Education for Sustainable Development in the Pacific Islands* identifies formal education as one of its priority areas.
79. **The Vanuatu-UNICEF Country Programme Action Plan states that UNICEF will "support the Government of Vanuatu in progressively realizing children's rights"** in accordance with the National Development Strategic Plans, United Nations Development Assistance Framework,

Millennium Declaration and World Fit for Children. The outcomes of the partnership are: increase the number of children in early years who will benefit from quality early learning and development opportunities; increase the number of boys and girls having access to schools; provide equitable quality education through upholding minimum national quality standards; and support student achievement to the end of the primary cycle. UNICEF's Basic Education and Gender Equity policies also provide strong guidelines: "Education is a fundamental human right... When all children have access to a quality education rooted in human rights and gender equality, it creates a ripple effect of opportunity that influences generations to come."⁵¹

80. **Australia and New Zealand have a comparative advantage in supporting the Government's implementation of sector reforms given the length and scale of their previous support.** As the largest bilateral donors to the education sector in Vanuatu, Australia and New Zealand have an advantage from their experience of leadership of development partner support.

⁵¹ http://www.unicef.org/education/bege_59826.html

Section 2: Program Design and Description

I. PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING EDUCATION SUPPORT

81. **The following general principles were adopted throughout the design process** (see Annex 1 for a summary of the design process):
- Strong Government participation, leadership and ownership of education directions and interventions;
 - Key focus of development partners' investments on ECCE and kindergarten to grade 3 of primary education;
 - A partnership approach to the delivery of outcomes;
 - An evidence-based design that manages for results, mutual accountability and performance measurement;
 - A focus on learning outcomes in the early years and not just processes, particularly at local levels;
 - An emphasis on capacity building at all levels (from Ministry to school, but with an emphasis on the classroom);
 - Continued use of Ministry of Education systems for development partner funding and processes, where feasible; and
 - Provision of a staged and sequenced program of support.
82. **In addition, the Vanuatu Education Sector Program (VESP) will operate in the context of a sector based approach.** While focusing on the early years of education and related government strengthening, VESP is to be fully aligned with the VERM and operate through a Joint Partnership Arrangement based on the VERM.
83. **A key assumption of VESP is that improvements in literacy and numeracy in the early years will lay a solid foundation for improvements in education outcomes at higher grades.** Curriculum and teacher training will continue to cover K to 13 with an emphasis on K to 3 (in recognition of underinvestment to date and the critical nature of early years, and also the need for a full coherent system to be developed).
84. **A stronger and more strategic use of technical assistance will be required** to build the needed capacity in the Ministry of Education. The program will ensure value for money by seeking locally-employed technical assistance where possible and ensuring stronger links with other donor activities in the country and the region.
85. **The program takes into account the constraints of the Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability findings,** and the need to tailor implementation and resource levels to the absorptive capacity and performance of the Ministry of Education. VESP's key implementation strategies will be timed and coordinated to respond to management capacity and minimise transaction costs on the Ministry.
86. **VESP builds on UNICEF's framework for a rights-based and child-friendly educational system and schools.**
87. **The program has a 5 year funding timeframe with a 10 year horizon to which Australia and New Zealand are committed.** A 10 year horizon provides a realistic timeframe for results and enables planning beyond the initial 5 year program of support.

II. EXPECTED END OF PROGRAM OUTCOMES

88. A **theory of change** was developed with the Ministry of Education during the design process (see Annex 2). This starts with the high level goals of the VERM (leading in turn to the *Priorities and Action Plan* country goal) and outlines:

- End of program outcomes –the expected outcomes after 5 years of the program (in 2017);
- Intermediate outcomes –the preconditions necessary to achieve the program outcomes, and achievable within the 5 year program;
- Implementation strategies –selected based on what will be the most effective means of achieving the intermediate outcomes.

Figure 1 below shows a simplified version of the theory of change used to describe the VESP.

Figure 1: Theory of Change



89. The program's **long term goal** is: 'Vanuatu has improved education quality, more equitable access to education for all people, and the education system is well managed'. This combines the VERM goals and has been agreed with Government.

90. The **main focus** of the program will be on improving learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy in the early years of education (ECCE and the first 4 years of primary education, K to 3).

91. A draft **results framework** was developed during in-country consultations (see Annex 3). Table 4 below shows target results for each end of the program outcome by 2017.

Table 4: End of Program Outcomes and Targets (2017)

Long term goal	End of Program Outcomes	Draft Targets (2017)
Improved education quality	1. Literacy and numeracy levels of children in early years of education reach national standards	1a. Proportion of children meeting literacy standards at the end of Grade 3 increases from 29% to 45% 1b. Proportion of children meeting numeracy standards in grade 3 increases (baseline to be established)
	2. Children complete primary school	2a. Survival rate to grade 4 increases from 77% to 85% 2b. Survival rate to grade 6 increases from 58% to 65%
More equitable access to education for all people	3. All girls and boys, including those with disabilities, are able to access early years of schooling	3a. Girls enrolling at correct age in year 1 versus number of boys enrolling at correct age in year 1 (net intake rate) is maintained at current parity
	4. More children enrol at primary school	4a. The proportion of the total population of children in Vanuatu who enrol at the correct age in year 1 (net intake rate) increases from 37% to 50% 4b. The proportion of the total population of children who enrol at the correct school age in years 1 to 6 (net enrolment rate) increases from 88% to 100% (current MDG commitment agreed by the Government of Vanuatu)
Education system is well-managed	5. Ministry of Education management at all levels implements policies in key outcome areas	<i>To be agreed and outlined in the management action plan prior to the first annual joint review.</i>

92. **A stakeholder analysis was conducted during the design process with Ministry of Education staff** (Annex 4). Stakeholders (including beneficiaries) were identified including those who needed to be influenced or change their behaviour to achieve each of the program's implementation strategies. Annex 5 provides details on key outcomes, identifying who will be doing what differently on the last day of the program at the various levels within the system.

93. **The program assumes a continuation of at least the current level of commitment by Government** in terms of, for example, sector funding, policy, staffing, complementary action on other related aspects of the VERM. It also assumes a willingness of schools and communities to take advantage of training and other provisions of the program.

III. FORM OF AID

94. **The form of aid proposed is a pragmatic and flexible program approach** which supports the ECCE and primary school components of the VERM.

95. **Government systems will be used as far as possible.** VESP will use those parts of the Ministry of Education's systems and processes that work well, in accordance with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. VESP will continue to be 'on policy' through its focus on the early years of education which is a key component of the VERM. VESP will also be 'on plan' and 'on budget', with the Ministry of Education's annual work plan continuing to be used as a planning tool and to ensure transparency of both Ministry and development partners' funding.

96. **Funds for school grants will continue to be channelled through Government systems (as occurred in development partners' previous phase of support to VERM).** School grant funds directed to school bank accounts will remain 'on budget' and 'on accounting'. According to an independent review and audit of school grants, managing the grants through the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management's financial distribution and reporting systems has worked well to date, as have the Ministry of Education's internal audits of these grants. Both have provided a satisfactory level of assurance on transparency.

97. **However, at this time development partners have little confidence in continuing to use Ministry of Education procurement processes.** For this reason the current levels of funds channelled through Government systems will be restricted initially to school grants and the outsourcing of ECCE. The program will be implemented to a large extent by partners from the NGO, private and university sectors, with high level support from Ministry of Education managers and technical assistance. This mixed mode of delivery has been chosen for the following reasons:
- The Ministry of Education has limited personnel and capacity at both the central and provincial levels to provide education services to the school level;
 - Channelling all funds through Government systems is not feasible due to weaknesses identified in Government procurement, together with disbursement problems within the Ministry of Education. An audit of education funds has exposed a number of systemic issues that need to be addressed before funds can be channelled through Government systems; and
 - A wholesale return to a stand-alone project would be counterproductive and undo the positive work done by development partners and Government to develop a strong partnership that is committed to working in government systems where possible. Research has shown that stand-alone projects are often unsustainable. This approach would do little to build long-term capacity of the Ministry of Education and develop Ministry linkages with service delivery partners.
98. **During program implementation, development partners together with Government central agencies will annually assess the possibility of increasing use of Government systems based on progress against an agreed management action plan.** This plan will be established after mobilisation and will be informed by: an assessment of public financial management systems in the sector; an assessment of procurement systems; and an organisational assessment of the Ministry of Education. Based on these assessments, the management action plan will establish a baseline on public financial management, procurement and organisational reforms against which progress and transition to greater use of Government systems will be measured. It will determine the pace of transition toward greater use of Government systems over the 10 year horizon and will be reviewed as part of annual work planning and review processes.
99. **VESP support will be embedded in the Government's management structure to ensure Government ownership and capacity development.** The Secretariat Management Team will support the Ministry of Education to oversee implementation of the VESP components of the VERM. All technical assistance will work directly with Ministry of Education counterparts, and the Ministry will directly contract and manage an implementing partner for the ECCE strategy. The Ministry will provide support in terms of staff salaries and time, office space and continued funding to other non-salary expenditure. The Ministry will also establish taskforces during the transition period for each implementation strategy to develop and progress the Ministry's required work on VESP throughout the five year period.
100. **Government commitments to the sector will be confirmed over the coming months.** Government will need to maintain at least its current level of funding to non-salary expenditure, including recurrent funding of teacher training and the roll out of the curriculum from K to 13. Findings of the public expenditure review will set the baseline for improved Government (and therefore increased development partner) resource allocation to key outcome areas over the 10 year period. Support to the Teaching Service Commission will be contingent upon the successful revision of the education legislation that supports demand driven and efficient teacher placement and allocation. Options for performance linked aid will be further considered and discussed with Government over the coming months.

IV. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Implementation Strategies

101. **To achieve the program outcomes, five implementation strategies have been selected based on the agreed principles and an analysis of context, capacity and what works (including international best practice).** These strategies are:
1. Train and support teachers to implement the new curriculum (with an emphasis on the early years of education);
 2. Strengthen early childhood care and education delivery;
 3. Engage the community through school based management;
 4. Provide locally relevant and efficient delivery of facilities and equipment;
 5. Develop capacity within the Ministry of Education to deliver an effective, well-managed and de-concentrated education system in Vanuatu.
102. **Some implementation strategies are new while others build on previous work in sub-sectors.** The implementation strategies will be developed in further detail during the transition phase prior to mobilisation by the relevant Ministry of Education taskforce with support from existing technical assistance. Prior to implementation or contracting out, the independent education specialist and VERM Steering Committee will peer review these strategies to ensure alignment with end of program outcomes and Ministry priorities. The strategies will continue to be monitored by the Ministry, the program's M&E system adviser and through independent M&E processes. Given the emergent nature of this design, sufficient flexibility within the strategies will be retained so they can be adjusted and evolve over time, informed by progress against outcomes. The section below describes each implementation strategy and provides an indicative list of activities and inputs, with further details in annexes 5 and 6.

Train and Support Teachers to Implement the New Curriculum (Strategy 1)

103. **The strategy will build on efforts to-date in teacher training and curriculum development.** As per the curriculum statement released in 2010, the new curriculum under development will be inclusive, locally relevant and promote student-centred learning. Based on a targeted strategy to improve teacher effectiveness in early grades, VESP will work to improve the quality of pre- and in-service training, including by better equipping and resourcing teacher trainers. Training and learning materials will be revised and informed by recent student assessments (EGRA, VANSTA) to improve teacher effectiveness and learning outcomes. In addition, teachers will be supported and mentored in the classroom, for example through possible teacher clusters and the provision of teacher friendly resources. This strategy will be implemented through technical assistance and a twinning arrangement between VITE and the university(ies), supported by the managing contractor.
104. **Potential activities include** (with further details in Annex 6):
- Support the implementation of the new curriculum at all levels of the education system for K – 13, with an emphasis on K – 3;⁵²
 - Support all year 1-3 teachers in effective teaching of early literacy and numeracy according to the new curriculum:
 - Provide year 1-3 students, primary schools and teachers with appropriate classroom resources (lesson plans, workbooks, textbooks, posters, reading books, mathematics kits etc.);

⁵² This will include the development of syllabuses plus teacher guides for K-13.

- Facilitate and support teacher mentoring, for example through teacher clusters, lesson simulations, observations and networks. Use 'model' teachers as part of a practical approach for pre- and in-service training;
- Create help lines for the in-service unit and provincial trainers to give teaching tips and answer pedagogical questions;
- Use other media including radio programs to communicate relevant content e.g. phonics and methodology tips;
- Assess all year 1 - 3 students' reading and numeracy levels in 2013 and 2016, and revise training and learning materials based on these assessments;
- Improve the quality of pre- and in-service training for teachers by equipping and resourcing teacher trainers to be effective adult educators, and providing support to VITE management;
- Provide continuing development opportunities for teacher trainers and teachers (eg. higher-level qualifications from national and international organisations);
- Support school principals and zone curriculum advisers to mentor teachers, including by:
 - Providing broadly-based pedagogic and leadership training to principals and zone curriculum advisers;
 - Providing financial assistance for zone curriculum advisers to travel and undertake training with schools.

105. **Potential inputs include:**

- Twinning arrangement between VITE and a tertiary institute(s) with a focus on pre-service training (feasibility to be investigated – New Caledonia, Australia, New Zealand, USP);
- Long term technical assistance:
 - Curriculum implementation adviser;
 - VITE management adviser;
 - Teacher training specialist;
 - In-service unit coordinator (local);
- Research and advisory pool for short term technical inputs to support implementation (especially introduction of mother tongue, literacy and numeracy, assessment of early grades, textbook production);
- Assessment workshops for early grade reading and mathematics;
- Funds to cover travel costs for zone curriculum advisers; and
- Resource materials, in particular for literacy and numeracy (eg. textbooks, teacher kits).

Strengthening Early Childhood Care and Education (Strategy 2)

106. **ECCE encompasses the cognitive, physical, linguistic and socio-emotional development of children from birth until they start school (around 6 or 7 years old in Vanuatu).** For the purpose of this design, ECCE includes formal centre based programs (kindergarten, pre-school, day care) as well as informal home or village based programs designed to promote children's early development. Strengthening ECCE is recognised as key driver to improving learning outcomes and is a new focus for the Ministry of Education and development partners, as agreed

with the Minister for Education in 2011. International best practice shows that effective ECCE should be driven and owned by the community.

107. **VESP will support the Ministry's new ECCE policy focus of kindergarten, both formal and informal, and continue to be informed by regional standards, recent research and lessons from current interventions.** The Ministry will continue to provide the policy framework for ECCE and will recruit an implementing partner with support from technical assistance. Given limited Ministry experience in and low resourcing of this sub-sector, further analysis and consultation will be required to inform the strategy including a study to address recurrent cost of teacher salaries, which are currently absorbed by communities. The approach to ECCE will remain an iterative one, informed by complementary research, analysis and M&E.

108. **Potential activities include:**

- Undertake and/or use research to inform the implementation strategy, including: an ECCE baseline and child development test; a study identifying barriers to access; and research on interventions that would increase access to ECCE for disadvantaged children and increase teacher retention rates;
- Establish a sub-sector working group/taskforce with strong community links to guide inputs;
- Raise awareness of ECCE national policy and benefits through ECCE promotion campaign;
- Design and pilot alternative approaches to ECCE (formal/informal);
- Implement measures to recruit and retain quality ECCE teachers;
- Develop a quality assurance framework for ECCE;
- Train all ECCE teachers to minimum standards and support them in the classroom;
- Based on need, provide the required infrastructure to support ECCE delivery e.g. concrete slabs;
- Provide continuing development opportunities for key teachers and pre-school coordinators, including opportunities for accredited higher-level qualifications from national and international organisations;
- Provide all existing and new ECCE centres with a start-up or basic kit of supplies.

109. **Potential inputs include:**

- Long term technical assistance: ECCE specialist based at Ministry of Education;
- Research and advisory pool for short term technical inputs; and
- NGO implementing partner to support the Ministry of Education, undertake the studies and implement an evidence-based ECCE program.

Engaging the community through school based management (Strategy 3)

110. **VESP will contribute to the achievement of school minimum standards by engaging communities and supporting school based management.** Improved planning that promotes wise use of school grants and other resources will be advocated through various approaches. The program will strive to develop community ownership and improve the capacity of 425 schools to manage their resources more effectively. The contractor will deliver activities against this strategy with the support of technical assistance and an implementing partner. Experienced trainers and mentors will work with existing Ministry of Education school improvement officers to establish capacity at a provincial level and build on the strengths of the piloted activities commenced in 2012.

111. **VESP will continue to provide school grants**, which fall under this implementation strategy. However, this will be provided directly to Government, not through the implementing partner.

112. **Potential activities include:**

- Develop and implement a strengths-based community engagement strategy⁵³ in close partnership with all 425 primary schools and their communities, provincial education offices, and other development partners to:
 - Build community awareness of the primary school grants program including school development planning and school minimum standards;
 - Encourage schools and communities to transparently elect school committee members with a better gender balance and connection to the school e.g. parents of students;
 - Build capacity of principals, head teachers and school committee members particularly in areas of planning, financial management and pedagogical leadership;
 - Ensure community knowledge of the importance the early years of education especially literacy and numeracy initiatives;
 - Provide advocacy tools to enable communities to demand accountability of school committees and demand a quality education and build engagement between government and civil society;
 - Encourage communities to support the need for all children to attend school;
- Train school principals and provincial education officers in leadership and management;
- Conduct a study to identify, through the school committees, children with specific needs for specialist equipment (e.g. sight and hearing aids) and provide support to school committee to do this through an implementing partner. School committees will also be encouraged to use school grant funding for this purpose.
- Conduct a study to investigate the feasibility and desirability of an incentives program linked to school improvements and community construction approaches. Over the longer-term this scheme could be linked to achievement of school minimum standards.

113. **Potential inputs include:**

- Implementing partner to design and implement a program of community engagement and school based management that incorporates lessons learned from pilot activities;
- Non-financial support for the school or surrounding community (e.g. central village water supply or sports facilities) where school committees reach at least 30% target of women's representation;
- Long term technical assistance: school based management team leader (existing local, in-line position in the Ministry of Education); and
- Short-term technical assistance through the research and advisory pool.

⁵³ A strengths-based approach to community engagement is gaining global acceptance. It focuses on the resilience of children, families and communities and identifies their resources and assets (in contrast with much community work which identifies the problems, needs and deficits of target populations). <http://www.strengthsbasedpractice.com.au>

Provision of locally relevant and efficient delivery of facilities and equipment (Strategy 4)

114. **VESP will support the Ministry of Education to build, refurbish and maintain classrooms.**

This will be done initially through local construction companies using local labour (similar to AusAID's Vanuatu Secondary Schools Extension Project Phase 2) and independent site supervisors, with a possible gradual transition to a community based contracting model from 2016.⁵⁴ The first year of construction will focus on high priority needs and schools unable to provide space for increased enrolments while a complete assets survey is conducted to inform the program's scope of works. The managing contractor will deliver the activities for this strategy with the support of technical assistance and an implementing partner from the private sector.

115. **The Ministry's classroom design, sites selection manual and standards will be updated to ensure security of land tenure prior to commencement of all school construction and refurbishment; and to reduce construction vulnerability due to flooding or storm surges associated with climate change. An innovative design using a mix of traditional and modern building materials has been completed with development partners' funding in 2012. This will be appraised after one full year of operation as a possible design option for future school construction. The cost-effectiveness of prefabricated classroom buildings for remote, inaccessible, or materials constrained sites will also be investigated.**

116. **Potential activities include:**

- Complete a survey of Ministry of Education assets and a capital works plan for 3 years;
- Develop an assets management strategy to guide maintenance, refurbishment and new school construction;
- Construct 158 new classrooms providing 5000 new primary school places to meet the backlog currently needed in communities;
- Construct 85 new classrooms providing 2500 new primary places to meet a major portion of the demand for places of a growing population;
- Refurbish 72 classrooms providing 2000 safe primary school places;
- Ensure maintenance of up to 670 permanent and semi-permanent classrooms to ensure current primary school places remain available.

117. **Potential inputs include:**

- Implementing partner (commercial sub-contractor);
- Long term technical assistance:
 - School infrastructure specialist;
 - Administrative assistant (local);
 - Planning and design assistant (local);
- Short term technical assistance through the research and advisory pool (eg. for school facilities audit).

Developing the capacity within Ministry of Education to deliver an effective, well-managed and deconcentrated education system in Vanuatu (Strategy 5)

118. **VESP will support management of the Vanuatu education system at all levels, particularly**

⁵⁴ The Ministry of Education is considering allowing school grants to be used for infrastructure, which could be used in delivery of a community based contracting model.

school and provincial levels, to deliver on the key outcome areas. Rather than mapping out a comprehensive systems strengthening and capacity development program, VESP will take a targeted, pragmatic and opportunistic approach to systems improvement and reform. AusAID's Governance for Growth program currently provides support to Government in policy development, procurement, economic analysis and financial management. The new phase of Governance for Growth support will focus more on promoting links between central and line agencies and VESP will work with this program to address the bottlenecks which impede effective service delivery and effective use of public money.

119. An agreed management action plan will be a key tool in identifying and monitoring VESP's activities in this area. This plan will be established after mobilisation and will establish a baseline and progress indicators, informed by assessments of public financial management and procurement systems in the sector, as well as an organisational assessment of the Ministry of Education. The plan will determine the pace of transition toward greater use of Government systems over the 10 year horizon and will be reviewed as part of annual work planning and review processes.

120. Over time, strengthened monitoring and evaluation will provide decision-makers with evidence to inform policy development, planning and implementation. The program's M&E capacity building adviser will create a 5 year plan for the development of the Ministry's capacity in M&E. This will be linked to the organisational assessment, management action plan and VESP M&E plan. The M&E capacity building plan will include an analysis of stakeholder needs and will lead to a tailored program of capacity building inputs to continue through the life of the program. Capacity will be built through a suite of methods including use of counterparts, training, mentoring and learning by doing, and the participatory process of revising the M&E system. The M&E capacity building support will include assistance to the Vanuatu Education Management Information System (VEMIS).

121. Potential activities include:

- Provide high level strategic advice and secretariat support to the Ministry of Education;
- Conduct the following assessments to inform the program's implementation and the Government's management of the sector more broadly:
 - Public financial management systems sector assessment;
 - Organisational assessment of the Ministry of Education for those working in key outcome areas;
- Using the above assessments, develop a management action plan that establishes a baseline with progress indicators for public financial management, procurement and organisational reforms;
- Develop and implement an M&E capacity building plan to strengthen strategic M&E in the Ministry of Education;
- Provide mentoring opportunities for Ministry of Education staff at central and provincial levels in key outcome areas (informed by the organisational assessment). At a later date, provide professional development opportunities for high-performing teachers and principals using existing schemes;
- Upgrade the Teachers Service Commission database;
- Review the robustness of financial management at provincial education offices (including zone curriculum adviser expenditure) to determine options for future support.

122. Potential inputs include:

- Local management consultancy to work with Ministry of Education on the organisational assessment and on the professional development needs of the Ministry in key outcome areas;
- Secretariat Management Team comprising:
 - Secretariat manager;
 - M&E systems and capacity building adviser/s;
 - Procurement officer (in-line position);
 - Budget and planning adviser;
 - Finance and administration officer (local);
 - Administration assistant (local).
- Other technical assistance:
 - Independent education specialist (adviser to development partners and Ministry of Education);
 - Short-term assistance through the research and advisory pool (e.g. public expenditure review).

V. ESTIMATED PROGRAM BUDGET AND TIMING

123. **Development partners will provide approximately A\$42 million⁵⁵ over 5 years for a Managing Contractor to implement components of VESP** (approximately AusAID 70%; New Zealand 26%; UNICEF 4%). Additional funding will be provided direct to Government for the school grants program, an ECCE implementing partner and potentially other areas as agreed annually. Funding will be subject to Government meeting its commitments to the sector and progress against the results framework to be reviewed through the annual joint review process.

124. **Estimated approximate budgets** for each of the VESP implementation strategies are as follows:

<u>Implementation Strategy</u>	<u>Indicative Budget</u>
1. Train and support teachers to implement the new curriculum	28%
2. Strengthen early childhood care and education delivery (including ECCE implementing partner)	8%
3. Engage the community through school based management (including an A\$6.8m investment in school grants direct from development partners)	20%
4. Provide locally relevant and efficient delivery of facilities and equipment	25%
5. Develop capacity within Ministry of Education to deliver and effective, well-managed and de-concentrated education system in Vanuatu	19%

125. **VESP will be implemented over 5 years commencing in 2013, with scope to plan over a 10 year horizon.** A 10 year commitment acknowledges the reality that lasting change takes time. It provides a realistic timeframe for monitoring and evaluation to inform and guide program implementation. This is reflected with longer term outcomes in the draft results framework. The program will undertake planning processes for interventions that extend beyond the 5 year timeframe to enable them to be supported without disruption e.g. curriculum roll out.

⁵⁵ This figure does not include Contractor management fees

Section 3: Implementation Arrangements

I. MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

Transition Plan

126. **Development partners will develop a transition plan with Government to bridge the current approach with the new program.** The current Grant Funding Agreement will be extended until July 2013. High priority activities that are in line with the outcomes of VESP will inform future implementation strategies and will receive a no-cost 6 month extension to ensure there are no gaps and allow time for the mobilisation of VESP in 2013.

Joint Partnership Arrangement

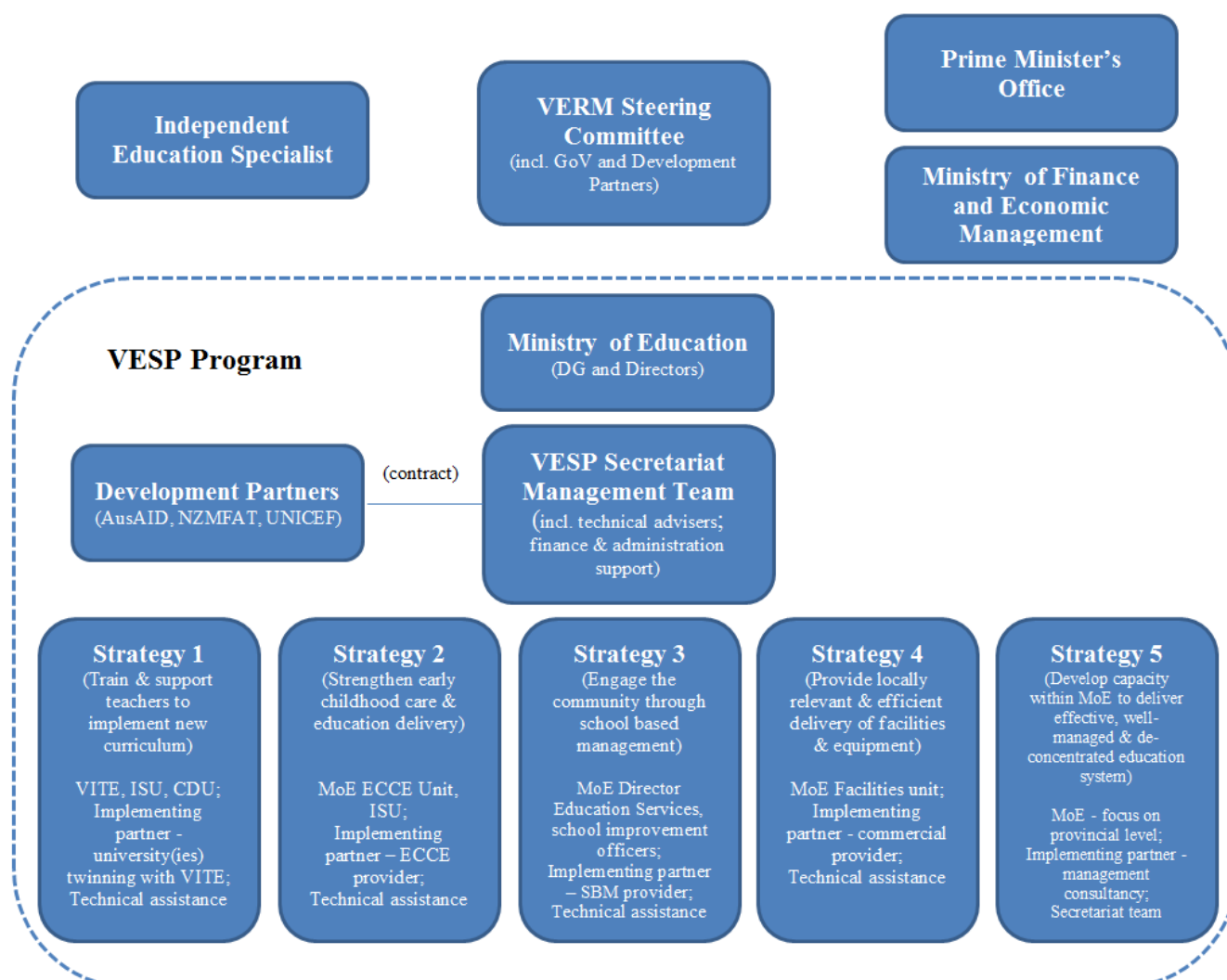
127. **The Joint Partnership Arrangement (JPA) for the VERM will form the basic governance arrangement for VESP.** The VERM Steering Committee is charged with overseeing VERM policy and implementation; overseeing budget development; and agreeing development partner contributions to annual budgets. The Committee is chaired by the Ministry of Education Director General and in addition comprises:
- Directors of the Ministry of Education;
 - Director of Finance, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management;
 - Director Strategic Policy, Planning and Aid Coordination, Prime Minister's Office; and
 - Representatives from the 'Pool Partners' (development partners) and the Chair of the Education Partners' Group.
128. **The JPA documents roles and responsibilities for each Steering Committee member,** as well as Government's and development partners' estimated financial contributions. The JPA requires annual budget meetings and joint reviews, as well as monthly update meetings, although these may be changed to quarterly meetings. The JPA will need to be amended prior to mobilisation to: include clear guidelines on reporting; include detailed roles and responsibilities; and remove the out-dated term 'Pool Partners'. Criteria for determining adequacy of progress will need to be revised and set at realistic levels. The JPA will also need to be updated more generally to reflect the VESP design, procurement processes, and a renewed commitment to implementing a useful, outcomes-focused M&E system.
129. **The Secretariat Management Team will support the Ministry of Education Director General** to ensure that the Steering Committee is given more relevant and timely information on which to base decisions (see above for list of Secretariat Management Team members).

Roles and Responsibilities

130. The **overall management structure for VESP** is shown in Figure 2 on the next page.
131. The **VERM Steering Committee** has strategic oversight of VESP as a component of VERM in regard to policy development, implementation and outcomes. The Steering Committee will peer review and monitor the implementation strategies, and approve annual work plans for VESP.
132. The **Ministry of Education** has overall responsibility for the implementation of VESP as a component of VERM on behalf of the Government. In the transition period, the Ministry will establish taskforces for each implementation strategy, which will progress the Ministry's work for each strategy and provide operational oversight on VESP (including the supervision of technical assistance). The taskforces will comprise of Ministry Directors, officials and development partner representatives as observers. The Ministry is also responsible for implementation of VESP's strategy 2 (ECCE) with the support of technical assistance and an NGO

implementing partner to be contracted directly to the Ministry.

Figure 2: Overall Management Structure of VESP



133. The **Ministry of Finance and Economic Management** will report with the Ministry of Education on school grants as at present, and will take a lead role in the public expenditure review of the education sector.

134. The **Prime Minister's Office** will continue to oversee monitoring and evaluation of the VERM to ensure Government policy is implemented; coordinate Ministry of Education and MFEM activities; and liaise with development partners on alignment with Government policy.

135. **Development partners** are responsible for ensuring that their funds are included in the budget and the Ministry's annual planning cycle, and using and supporting Government systems where possible, in line with internationally accepted standards. Development partners will undertake joint appraisal, analysis, reporting and evaluation.

136. The **Managing Contractor** is responsible for sourcing, contracting and performance managing all technical assistance and implementing partners for the program (except the independent education specialist). The contractor is responsible for providing back-room support to VESP as required, including quality assurance and technical advice to the Secretariat Management Team (e.g. financial cross-checks, access to consultancy databases, recruitment assistance, travel/accommodation arrangements and pre-departure briefings of technical assistance). This will be a part-time support role only based in the contractor's head office.

137. The **Secretariat Manager** is responsible for coordinating, sequencing and monitoring inputs across the five implementation strategies; and providing secretariat support to the Ministry of Education, including by assisting the VERM Steering Committee chair. The Secretariat Manager will report to the Ministry Director General on a day-to-day basis. The Contractor will manage the performance of the Secretariat Manager as required by the Director General and development partners.
138. The **Independent Education Specialist** is responsible for providing high level advice to development partners and the Ministry of Education Director General on VESP and the management of the education sector in Vanuatu more broadly. Given the 10 year horizon of VESP, the specialist will play a key part in identifying future needs. The specialist will be independent from the Managing Contractor and Secretariat Manager, being contracted by development partners and advising the Ministry of Education Director General. The specialist will build collaborative relationships with technical counterparts and the Secretariat Management Team. The program's research and advisory pool will be drawn upon to complement the specialist's role by providing additional technical expertise as required.

II. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Use of Technical Assistance and Implementing Partners

139. **VESP places strong reliance on technical advisers and partners from the private, university and NGO sectors for implementation of the program.** This is in light of lessons from past support - that the Ministry of Education does not have the human or financial resources to deliver services directly to improve education outcomes. Technical assistance and implementing partners provide value for money by requiring a comparative analysis of all relevant costs and benefits of each proposal throughout the whole procurement cycle. There is a relatively high risk that value for money would not be realised without necessary technical assistance in place to support the Ministry in delivering VESP. The use of implementing partners also fosters community and private sector partnerships with government. Implementing partners will be procured for all strategies to support the Ministry to implement VESP (see figure 2 above).
140. **Vanuatu's technical expertise in the education sector is generally low and capacity will be built as part of the program.** VESP is a long-term investment that will only pay dividends through sustained assistance that builds capacity and models good practice approaches. Wherever possible, local technical assistance will be found to reduce costs. All technical assistance will work directly with Ministry counterparts. Where possible, all technical assistance will provide a mentoring role to a designated Ministry counterpart. Some positions will be in-line such as procurement.
141. **VESP will ensure all procurement processes of implementing partners and technical assistance provide value for money,** which: encourages competition; promotes the use of resources in an effective, efficient and ethical manner; and is accountable and transparent. Cost will not be the only determining factor. Rather, a whole-of-life value for money assessment will be made on all procurement. The AusAID Adviser Remuneration Framework will be applicable for all technical assistance.
142. **Table 5 below summarises the technical assistance to be sourced through VESP.**

Table 5: Summary of Technical Assistance⁵⁶

Category	Position	Comment	Reports to
<i>Long Term</i>			
Independent Program Oversight	Independent Education Specialist	New; Part time	Director General, Ministry of Education (MoE); Development Partners
Secretariat Management Team	Secretariat Manager	New; Full time	Director General, MoE
	M&E System Adviser	New; Part time	Secretariat Manager
	M&E Capacity Development Adviser	New; Part time	Director Policy and Planning, MoE
	Procurement Officer	Existing; in-line; full time	Director General, MoE
	Budget and Planning Adviser	New; Full time	Director General, MoE
	Finance and Administration Officer	New; Local	Secretariat Manager
	Administration Assistant	New; Local	Secretariat Manager
1. Train and support teachers to implement the new curriculum	Curriculum Implementation Adviser	New; Full time	Director Education Services, MoE
	VITE Management Adviser	Existing	Director Education Services, MoE
	Teacher Training Specialist	Existing but previously known as the In-service Unit Coordinator	Director Education Services, MoE
	In-Service Unit Coordinator	A new local position to be created	Director Education Services, MoE
2. Strengthen early childhood care and development	ECCE Specialist	Existing; Full time	Director General, MoE
3. Engaging the community through school-based management	School Based Management Team Leader	Existing; in-line position; Full time	Director Education Services, MoE
4. Provision of locally relevant and efficient delivery of facilities & equipment	Schools Infrastructure Adviser	New; Full time	Director General, MoE
	Planning and Design Assistant	New; Local	Director Policy and Planning, MoE
	Administrative Assistant	New; Local	Director Policy and Planning, MoE
<i>Short Term (Research and Advisory Pool - indicative list only)</i>			
Public financial management sectoral assessment		School facilities audit	
M&E		VEMIS information management	
Mother-tongue based multilingual education (Could be locally contracted: SIL, USP)		ECCE	
Literacy and numeracy		Examination and Assessment	
Disability		EGRA / EGMA implementation	

⁵⁶ Existing personnel in key long term positions will ideally be novated across by July 2013 to the Managing Contractor subject to satisfactory performance evaluations and any necessary alterations to job descriptions.

Implementation schedule

143. The **overall implementation schedule** is shown in table 6 below. There are sequenced inputs on technical assistance, community engagement and organisational assessment to keep pace with absorptive capacity within the Ministry of Education, provinces and communities. A Gantt chart at Annex 7 provides more detail on implementation but will be refined as detailed implementation strategies are completed.

Table 6: Program Implementation Schedule

Key Implementation Strategies (Outputs)	Total years	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
1) Train and support teachers to implement the new curriculum	5	TA in place (Jan-June) Implementation strategy agreed Twinning arrangement with university (end 2013)	Resource supplies (From Jan)	Mid-term review		
2) Strengthen early childhood care and education delivery	5	TA in place (Jan – June) Implementation strategy agreed (May) IP in place (July)		Mid-term review		
3) Engage the community through school based management	4	Implementation strategy agreed (March) IP engaged (June)		Mid-term review	Potential incentives scheme rolled out	
4) Provide locally relevant and efficient delivery of facilities and equipment	5	TA in place (Jan) Assets survey completed (May) IP in place (July)		Mid-term review	Possible move to community based construction (Jan)	
5) Develop capacity within Ministry of Education to deliver an effective, well managed and de-concentrated education system in Vanuatu	3 – 5	Secretariat in place (Jan) MoE management consultancy engaged (Late 2013) TA in place (Feb to March)		Mid-term review	MoE management consultancy completed (Late 2016)	

III. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

144. **There are two aspects of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) to be addressed as part of VESP.** The first is the development of a robust M&E system for the program, which this section details. The second is the program's M&E capacity building support to the Ministry of Education – this is described as part of implementation strategy five in section 2.

145. **A robust M&E system will be developed, which aligns with AusAID's Evaluation Capacity Building Standards 1 (Initiative Design – M&E features) and 2 (Initiative M&E System) for**

Vanuatu.⁵⁷ The program will take an outcomes- and utilisation focused approach to M&E. There will be a strong emphasis on ensuring that the M&E produces useable, useful information that helps the Ministry of Education to make evidence-based decisions. All M&E tools will be developed and considered with reference to how they will be used. The M&E system will be a combination of existing Ministry of Education M&E approaches plus additional interventions necessary to meet development partners' reporting requirements for results.⁵⁸ The development of the M&E system will be informed by recommendations made by a review of the Ministry's current approach to M&E conducted during the design process. This showed that the Ministry of Education has little in the way of a scoped out and documented system for M&E.

146. **The program's M&E system adviser will lead work during the first six months of program implementation to refine, validate and complete the overall M&E system.** A draft results framework was developed during in-country consultations, which provides available baselines, verifiable indicators for end of program and intermediate outcomes, along with expected targets in years 3, 5 and 10 (refer to Annex 3). The M&E adviser will ensure that end of program outcomes are pitched at the correct level for the time, effort and resources applied, and that targets are achievable and useful with annual progress markers for each target for each year. The causal links between interventions and end of program outcomes will be further defined as part of the finalisation of detailed implementation strategies and an evaluability assessment⁵⁹ to be conducted upon mobilisation. Each data collection tool and testing instrument will be detailed and accompanied by a description of how it will inform decision-making.
147. **An M&E plan will be developed to describe how the system will work.** This will be informed by consultations led by the M&E adviser to determine what is currently working in M&E in the sector, and how information can be provided in the most accessible, useful format. The M&E plan will align with Evaluation Capacity Building Standards 2.4 to 2.19. It will begin by clarifying the scope and purpose of the M&E system, and will describe the key audiences for the system and their requirements. It will include a schedule for evaluation studies and a set of key evaluation questions to guide these studies. It will also describe what reports are needed by whom and when. An annual "traffic light" reporting system against the outcome indicators will be created and used to inform the joint annual review. The plan will include an utilisation strategy to foster information use to inform policy and program improvement. The plan will also detail ways to scale up the evidence base over the life of the program. New implementation strategies including ECCE and school based management will expand iteratively based on M&E.
148. **In the first year, baseline indicators will be a priority focus.** Currently baseline data has been accessed for 6 of the 8 VESP outcome indicators and 2 of the 14 intermediate outcome indicators. The VEMIS will be revised to collect baseline data and where gaps exist, independent surveys will be undertaken. This revision will build on AusAID's new strategy for improving the use of statistics in the region⁶⁰ and NZAID's 6 month technical input.⁶¹ This will ensure a better understanding of what VEMIS is actually for and how it works. It will lead to the development of a policy on accessing information from VEMIS and 'locking off' historical data. At the same time, the school survey will be consolidated and revised to ensure that it collects data in line with the program's revised results framework. This will include new categories to describe disability and members of the school committee.
149. **More details on proposed M&E arrangements, including a draft schedule of M&E activities, are included at Annex 8.** A detailed theory of change map is at Annex 2 and more

⁵⁷ These provide detailed guidance on standards for monitoring and evaluation for AusAID and partners. These standards will be discussed with the Managing Contractor prior to mobilisation.

⁵⁸ For example, the M&E system will need to enable reporting against AusAID's new 'Results Framework'

⁵⁹ See AusAID's Evaluation Capacity Building Standard 2.4 for Vanuatu

⁶⁰ At the time of the design AusAID was drafting a strategy around improving the use of statistics in the Pacific Region.

⁶¹ At the time of the design consultation NZAID had engaged a 6 month TA to revise the VEMIS survey and to map and evaluate the existing data management business processes and propose system improvements.

details on the beneficiaries expected to change behaviours for key outcomes and implementation strategies are at Annex 5.

IV. PROCUREMENT

150. **A managing contractor will be used to procure and performance manage most technical assistance and implementing partners, overseen by the Ministry of Education and development partners (through the VERM Steering Committee).** The use of multiple separate contracts has been considered; however, it would place a significant management burden on the development partners and the Ministry over the term of VESP. Development partners and the Ministry are already stretched managing multiple small contracts and monitoring technical assistance performance with limited capacity or time left to engage in more upstream policy work: this burden would only be exacerbated with the additional funding support proposed here. Additionally, multiple contracts will not provide value for money (with each contract having its own separate management fee) or contribute to strategic oversight of development partners' investment.
151. **There are risks to using a managing contractor responsible for overseeing delivery of VESP.** Past programs in other countries have shown that without the proper structures in place and careful selection of a contractor who has clear boundaries there is a risk of VESP and the contractor 'becoming' the de facto government department. These risks can be mitigated. A senior Ministry of Education representative will be on the contractor selection panel. The primary function of the managing contractor will be to provide support by sourcing and managing technical assistance and implementing partners.
152. **Procurement will be done through an open or select tender in close cooperation with counterpart Ministry staff.** Prior entering into any contract, the managing contractor will consult with the relevant Ministry taskforce. The secretariat manager and procurement officer will be responsible for day-to-day contract management. The Ministry Director General, Directors and the Secretariat Manager will monitor and report on the performance of all implementing partners and technical assistance.
153. **The managing contractor's deliverables will be monitored at several levels.** The contractor's overall performance will be managed by the Ministry and development partners. Development partners will directly recruit an Independent Education Specialist for up to 3 months each year to provide strategic oversight and advice to development partners and the Director General. Additionally, a research and advisory pool will be available for development partners and the Ministry to call upon for specific tasks. 'Quality at Implementation' reports will be carefully monitored and any issues identified resolved promptly. There will be mandatory annual external audits. The contractor will be engaged for up to 3 years in the first instance with a possible 2 year extension, subject to funding approval. Continuation of the contractor past year 3 would depend on a satisfactory mid-term review.

V. SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

154. **VESP has a 10 year horizon, with capacity-building activities planned for the first 5 years.** The program has a view to sustaining the flow of benefits from VESP into the future. Implementation strategies will be rolled out in line with absorptive capacity of the Ministry of Education. Flexibility in the support program will enable strategies to be scaled up or down as necessary.
155. **VESP is fully aligned with the Government's overall sector policies, plans and budgets and harmonised with other development partners.** Research shows that major sector policies such as the Government's VERM which have a high-level of political and institutional support are more likely to be sustainable. Initially VESP will support the implementation of specific components of the Government's VERM with the flexibility to support other aspects over the 10

year time-frame. Support to the Ministry's M&E role will foster ownership of VESP outcomes.

156. **There has been strong local ownership and participation in the VESP design process.** This will continue through the full participation of senior Ministry management in the selection of the managing contractor, technical assistance and implementing partners. Technical assistance will provide longer-term mentoring to multiple Ministry counterparts. The managing contractor will work with all technical assistance to ensure effective strategies for phasing out their support. The Ministry will be encouraged to develop strong commercial partnerships with service providers.
157. **More effective management of people, funding and data should result in sustained improvements in education indicators.** VESP will build on local management structures. A local management consultancy will provide long-term support to the Ministry, including by conducting the organisational assessment of and identifying professional development opportunities for the Ministry. The public expenditure review and a review of the budgetary impact of the school grants scheme should result in better allocation of resources allowing the Ministry to have greater opportunity to cover future developmental and operational costs. The use of implementing partners and technical assistance will allow both the Ministry and development partners to engage in more upstream policy and planning work. The strengthening of the Ministry's monitoring and evaluation, coupled with the data and analysis provided by the Secretariat Management Team and technical assistance will foster ownership of outcomes and develop an ongoing culture of knowledge-based development within the Ministry.
158. **A more de-concentrated approach to service delivery will provide sustainable capacity building at provincial, school and community levels.** School to community connections will be permanently strengthened. Community and school incentives will allow for long-term developments including some infrastructure. The latter will include slabs for future building of ECCE centres by the community, and may in due course include community-based construction of classrooms besides those directly provided by the program. Provincial education offices (in particular zone curriculum advisers) will be better able to support teachers in the classroom. This should be reflected in sustainable school based management of resources and school development plans that meet children's needs into the long term.

VI. OVERARCHING POLICY ISSUES

159. **The Ministry of Education with support from VESP is directly contributing to gender equity in education.** In line with the VERM, VESP will support the achievement of universal primary education completion, and this implies gender equity at this level. VESP includes a study to identify barriers to access and interventions that would increase access to ECCE for disadvantaged children, and this will include gender-specific barriers and interventions. VESP will investigate why boys are not being enrolled at school and the disadvantages faced by girls, and will address gender-related reasons for drop out and low enrolment and implement strategies to reduce these numbers. In addition, non-financial support will be provided to communities where school committees reach at least 30% female representation. At present only around 8% of school committee members are women.
160. As part of **AusAID's Pacific Gender Equality Initiative** launched in August 2012, initiatives that strengthen women's role in leadership and decision-making in the education sector will be identified. The program will consider or link with other initiatives to provide complementary support to female principals and women in school committees.
161. **VESP will assist the Ministry of Education to take other measures to monitor and pursue gender equity.** All data on children and adults is, and will continue to be, gender-disaggregated. Gender-responsive education approaches will be used in teacher training, educational materials and other measures to support what is already a gender-responsive curriculum implementation. Gender issues will be taken into account in school construction, for example constructing

separate toilets for girls and boys, and these will be written in to the revised manuals. VESP will take action, where opportunities allow (e.g. through the local management consultancy), to encourage more gender-balanced recruitment: at present there are few women in senior Ministry positions; there are no women directors; three times more men than women are zone curriculum advisers; there are only two women provincial heads of office; and two and a half times more men than women are primary school heads/principals.

162. **VESP will assist the Ministry of Education to directly contribute to the needs of disabled children.** As well as focusing on other out-of school children, the barriers to access study will specifically address the needs of children with a disability and recommend activities to increase access. In the interim, VESP has identified a focussed and practical approach to improving access. This includes supporting VEMIS to include data on out-of-school children and children with disabilities that will be used to improve policy and planning; working with implementing partners to provide basic hearing and visual aids; ensuring school construction and refurbishment enables disabled access; and training ECCE teachers to provide primary diagnosis of early learning difficulties.
163. **The risk of corruption is being reduced by using a Secretariat Manager to support the Ministry and oversee procurement as well as by strengthening auditing procedures.** Building on lessons learned from the 2009-2012 program, VESP will use a mix of delivery approaches, including continued earmarked budget support for school grants where there are strong safeguards, and procurement of some inputs through a managing contractor.
164. **Assistance provided by VESP will include environmental safeguards and measures for disaster risk reduction and resilience against climate change.** School designs will take these measures into account, including hazard-resilient construction and provision of safe drinking water and waste disposal. New schools will be built in areas not subject to flooding or storm surges. They will include verandas and covered walkways to increase energy efficiency through natural air circulation. Locally-sourced materials will be used where possible along with sustainable supplies of timber. Only environmentally-safe materials will be used in the school environment. The Ministry of Education, UNICEF and Save the Children are working together to strengthen the ability of Government at all levels and schools to plan for and continue children's education in emergencies, reducing the impact of natural disasters on education. Development partners are also funding an innovative program that includes disaster risk reduction as a pilot curriculum through Save the Children.
165. **The program will take steps to ensure attention to child protection issues.** VESP will remain alert to the particular vulnerabilities of children as it places more implementing partners in the field who will have closer contact with children at ECCE centres and primary schools. All technical advisers and implementing partners will comply with development partners' guidelines on child protection and abide by other relevant international declarations, conventions and agreements. Responsibility for child protection will be shared with the Ministry, contractors, implementing partners and development partners. VESP will employ stringent recruitment and screening measures for all personnel involved at all levels of the program; ensure appropriate use of communication systems; and provide training where necessary. There will be zero tolerance of child abuse, and recognition of children's interests and rights. Risk management processes and documented procedures for handling complaints of child abuse will be put in place.
166. **VESP will also harness the strengths of development partners' investments to civil society organisations** such as the Vanuatu Women's Centre, which addresses violence against women and children. UNICEF's role as a development partner in this program ensures a specific focus on children's rights underpins VESP. Development partners' support to Save the Children is delivering a child rights and child protection activity which will complement the program.

VII. CRITICAL RISKS AND RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

167. **Risks to the success and sustainability of VESP and the corresponding mitigation strategies are detailed in Annex 10.** The critical risks are described below.
168. **Inadequate Government leadership and ownership is considered an ongoing risk to achieving maximum results but is unlikely to threaten implementation.** The Ministry of Education, MFEM and Prime Minister's Office have been active members of the team during the design phase of VESP. VESP remains on policy, on plan and on budget (in-kind) to ensure Ministry of Education leadership.
169. **Low sustainability is a significant risk due to the use of a high level of technical assistance and a managing contractor, coupled with possible high turnover of Government staff.** This risk will be mitigated by reducing to a minimum the technical assistance to be used for in-line positions, and by encouraging staff development and a hand-over of responsibilities throughout the course of the program. The extent to which technical advisers and the Secretariat Management Team deliver a supporting and mentoring role will be crucial to success. The program will ensure that there is regular dialogue between technical assistance or implementing partners and their Ministry of Education counterparts. Organisational change and professional development of staff should boost morale, leading to less staff turnover.
170. **A more immediate risk to mobilisation is that Vanuatu national elections are scheduled for 30 October 2012** – having a fully functioning, partially outsourced program in place by January 2013 may be ambitious in this context. To address this, a transition plan will be developed which will extend current key activities until July 2013. Given that VESP is a component of the VERM, significant changes to the present arrangements are not expected during this interim period. Mobilisation of the new program will be delayed until political support is secured.