

The Vanuatu Education Support Program (2013-2017): Mid-term Review

Final Report – December 2016

Disclaimer: The views contained in this report are those of the review team. These views do not necessarily represent those of the Australian Government, New Zealand Government, and/or the Vanuatu Government.

Acknowledgements and Acronyms

This review was commissioned by the Port Vila Post of the Australian Government’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). The review was conducted by a team of seven people: Zoë Mander-Jones (independent consultant and review team leader); Roy Ben (MoET); David Coleman (DFAT Canberra and technical lead); Cobin Ngwero (MoET); Karen Soanes (NZMFAT Port Vila); Christelle Thieffry (DFAT Port Vila); and Barbara Thornton (independent education specialist).

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Acronyms

| | |
|---------|--|
| APTC | Australia-Pacific Technical College |
| CDU | Curriculum Development Unit |
| CLIL | Content and Language Integrated Learning |
| DFA | Direct Funding Agreement |
| DFAT | Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia) |
| ECCE | Early Childhood Care and Education |
| IES | Independent Education Specialist |
| IO | Intermediate Outcome |
| ISU | In-service Unit |
| JPA | Joint Partnership Agreement |
| MEP | Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (July 2016) |
| MoET | Ministry of Education and Training (Vanuatu) |
| MTR | Mid-term Review |
| NZMFAT | Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (New Zealand) |
| PAA | Priorities and Action Agenda 2005-2015 |
| PEO | Provincial Education Office |
| PILNA | Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment |
| SBM | School-based Management |
| SECCE | Strengthening Early Childhood Care and Education program |
| SIO | School Improvement Officers |
| TA | Technical Adviser |
| TOC | Theory of Change |
| VANSTA | Vanuatu Standardised Test of Achievement |
| VEMIS | Vanuatu Education Management Information System |
| VESP | Vanuatu Education Support Program |
| VESP II | Refers to the next phase of support post VESP (yet to be designed) |
| VESS | Vanuatu Education Sector Strategy 2007-2016. |
| VERM | Vanuatu Education Road Map |
| VITE | Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education |
| VSC | VESP Steering Committee |

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Executive Summary

The **purpose of this report is to present the findings and recommendations from a mid-term review** of the Vanuatu Education Support Program (VESP). The aim of the review was to:

- Determine to what extent the intermediate outcomes agreed to in the VESP Monitoring and Evaluation Plan are on track for being achieved; and
- Recommend strategies to improve the current program's continued relevance, effectiveness and efficiency including through to July 2018 and beyond.

The VESP is funded by Australia and New Zealand. The program provides targeted support to the Ministry of Education and Training's (MoET) Corporate Plan. **VESP support is primarily focussed on literacy and numeracy in the early years (K to Grade 3)**. VESP started in 2013, initially as a four year program. At the time of this review, the program is expected to be extended to 30 June 2018.

The program's three intermediate outcomes (IO) are:

- **IO 1:** Increase in the number of schools with teachers implementing the new curriculum for Years 1-3 using effective teaching and learning methodologies.
- **IO 2:** Increase in the number of schools and kindergartens implementing inclusion initiatives to improve access for children to Kindergarten and Years 1-3.
- **IO 3:** Provincial officers providing necessary support to school leaders.

Coffey International manages the bulk of the funding on behalf of the donors. The donors also provide funds directly to the MoET through a Direct Funding Agreement (DFA). The **total program budget** over the four years is approximately AUD 33.7 million. The DFA is valued at approximately AUD 7.9 million.

The **review took place during the period from October 2016 – November 2016**. The review team's work in Vanuatu ran from 2-15 November, and included interviews with stakeholders and visits to 17 schools across three provinces on the Islands of Efate, Santo, Malo and Ambae. Answers to the key review questions can be found on page 19 of this report.

Key Findings

- **VESP is contributing to a multi-decade agenda of sector strengthening.** This is an achievement and speaks to the importance of maintaining the momentum around reforms.
- **VESP's targeted and integrated approach is effective and remains relevant.**
- **VESP is on track to achieving intermediate outcome one.** The roll-out of the new curriculum is a significant achievement for the MoET. The program needs to closely support and monitor the implementation of the language transition strategy.
- **VESP is making adequate progress in some areas to achieving intermediate outcome two.** However, the full achievement of this outcome is likely to be constrained by a number of factors. Of particular concern is the chronic level of overage students in the school system. Overage enrolments severely affects the efficiency of the system, impacts on access and completion targets and is a barrier to achieving learning standards.
- **VESP is making adequate progress to achieving intermediate outcome three;** however, it is too early to assess results. For example, MoET's devolution plans would appear to have the

potential to positively impact on children's learning. However, these reforms are only in the early stages of implementation.

- **Loss of momentum around early progress is a key risk** in transitioning to the next phase of support post VESP.
- **While VESP is a well-functioning program, it is important to maintain a focus on the end of program outcomes (not just the intermediate outcomes).** Over the next 18 months and beyond, all stakeholders¹ should increase their attention on how the inputs and outputs of VESP are building the appropriate pathways towards the end of program outcomes.

Recommendations

Our recommendations are largely framed around VESP's three program goals and include suggested priority actions for all stakeholders to consider over the next 18-24 months. Please refer to page 20 to see the full description of recommendations and a list of priority actions for VESP support.

Maintaining Momentum

The Review Team recommends that the Development Partners should:

1. Extend the current phase of VESP to December 2018
2. Start planning now for a smooth transition to VESP II.

Improving Quality

The Review Team recommends that:

3. The VSC should closely monitor the implementation of the language transition strategy
4. Training and professional development around the new curriculum should be intensive and ongoing
5. The partnership between the CDU and VITE/ISU should be further strengthened
6. The VSC should closely consider the findings of all monitoring studies
7. The VSC should increase its attention on how VESP activities are building pathways towards the higher level end of program outcomes.

Improving Access

The Review Team recommends that:

8. Dealing with overage enrolment should be a key priority for the sector
9. MoET should continue to implement the recommendations of the SECCE Evaluation
10. MoET should continue to strengthen the connections between Kindys and primary schools, including a focus on household financial contributions
11. Reducing the numbers of out-of-school children should be a priority for the sector and should become a greater focus of donor support under VESP II.

Improving Education Management

The Review Team recommends that:

12. MoET place a stronger focus on communications and regulatory oversight as important strategies to progress reforms (both now and in the future)
13. The VESP Secretariat continues to monitor and report to the VSC on the effectiveness of its capacity development activities
14. MoET look to strengthen the integration of VESP (I and/or II) within broader sector governance mechanisms.

¹ That is: MoET; Development Partners and VESP staff.

1. Purpose

The **purpose of this report is to present the findings and recommendations from a mid-term review** of the Vanuatu Education Support Program (VESP). The aim of the review was to:

- Determine to what extent the intermediate outcomes agreed to in the VESP Monitoring and Evaluation Plan are on track for being achieved; and
- Recommend strategies to improve the current program's continued relevance, effectiveness and efficiency including through to July 2018 and beyond.

In line with the VESP's Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, DFAT and the review team agreed that the **primary purpose of the review is on learning and improvement**, with a secondary purpose on accountability.

The **primary audience** for this report is:

- The MoET (and in particular MoET's Directorate, Policy and Planning)
- DFAT (Port Vila and Canberra) and NZMFAT (Port Vila and Wellington).

2. Introduction and Context

2.1. Background

The **Vanuatu Government's strategic direction for its country** is published in its *Priorities and Action Agenda (PAA) 2005-2015*.² In relation to education, the PAA sets out four policy objectives:

- To improve access to education and ensure gender and rural/urban balance
- To raise the quality and relevance of education
- To improve planning, fiscal and financial management in the sector
- To develop a distinctive Vanuatu education system.

The **Vanuatu Government's policy for education** is articulated in the *Vanuatu Education Sector Strategy (VESS) 2007-2016*.³ The *Vanuatu Education Road Map (VERM)* sets out the Vanuatu Government's agenda for the development of its education sector over the medium term. The VERM incorporates the vision of the VESS and has three strategic goals:

- To increase equitable access to education for all people at all levels of education in Vanuatu
- To improve the quality of education in Vanuatu
- To improve and strengthen the management of the education system in Vanuatu.

The **Vanuatu Education Support Program** is funded by Australia and New Zealand through a delegated cooperation arrangement. Australia is the lead donor. The program provides targeted support to the MoET's Corporate Plan with long-term goals reflecting the VERM. VESP started in

² As a follow-on to the PAA, the Vanuatu Government is developing a National Sustainable Development Plan (2016-2030), expected to be launched by the end of 2016.

³ The MoET is currently developing an interim VESS for 2017-19.

2013, initially as a four year program. However, development partners committed to a 10 year planning horizon over which the program would deliver results. At the time of this review, the VESP is expected to be extended to 30 June 2018.

The VESP has three goals:

- Goal 1: Improve the quality of education in Vanuatu
- Goal 2: Improve the equitable access to education for children in Vanuatu.
- Goal 3: Improve the management of the education system in Vanuatu.

Oversight of the program is provided through the **VESP Steering Committee (VSC)**, which is comprised of Vanuatu Government and development partner representatives. Coffey International manages the bulk of the funding on behalf of the donors. The donors also provide funds directly to the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) through a Direct Funding Agreement (DFA) for School Grants to primary schools and Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE).

The **total program budget** over the four years is approximately AUD 33.7 million. The DFA is valued at approximately AUD 7.9 million.

The focus of VESP is primarily on literacy and numeracy in the early years (K to Grade 3). The program is implemented through five interrelated 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.

The **VESP Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (MEP)** was updated in July 2016. As part of the MEP, the development partners are responsible for conducting a mid-term review (MTR) to assess overall program progress towards performance outcomes. This review was due to take place in 2015 but was delayed, mainly due to Cyclone Pam, which hit Vanuatu on 13 March 2015.

The revised MEP contains an updated **Theory of Change (TOC)**, which can be found at **Annex 1**. In line with this revised TOC, the review's task was to measure progress against the following three intermediate outcomes:

1. Increase in the number of schools with teachers implementing the new curriculum for Years 1-3 using effective teaching and learning methodologies.
2. Increase in the number of schools and kindergartens implementing inclusion initiatives to improve access for children to Kindergarten and Years 1-3.
3. Provincial officers providing necessary support to school leaders.

The terms of reference (TORs) for this review can be found at **Annex 2**. As per the TORs, the main focus of the review was on implementation strategies 1, 3 and 5.⁵

⁴ The MEP (2016) explains 'de-concentration' as a more gradual shift than 'decentralisation'.

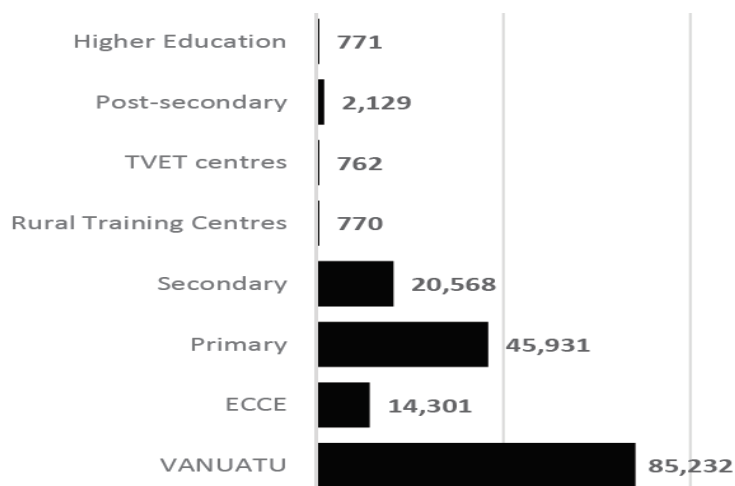
⁵ Strategy 2, which is the ECCE component managed by World Vision, was evaluated separately. The review team understands that donors are planning on reviewing strategy 4 in 2017.

2.2. Primary School Education in Vanuatu: A Snap Shot

The 2015 Annual Statistical Digest, produced by the MoET, offers a comprehensive picture of education in Vanuatu based on recent education data. Relevant data for this review includes:

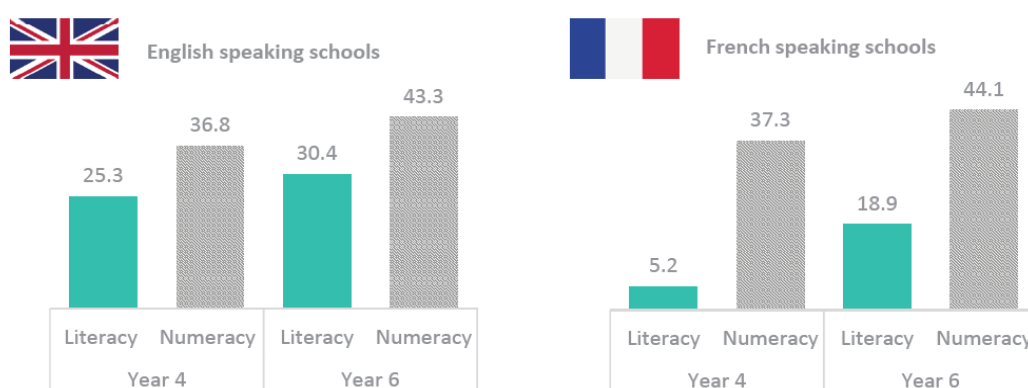
- In 2015, **45,931 primary school students were enrolled in 433 primary schools.**

Figure 1: Total enrolment in Vanuatu in 2015⁶



- The **Gross Enrolment Rate (GER)** in primary school was 118% in 2015 (Female 116%; Male 119%). A GER above 100% indicates that some enrolled students are older or younger than the age group that officially corresponds to that level of education.
- In 2015, approximately **25.8% of children enrolled in Vanuatu primary schools were overage**; and approximately 1.2% of children were underage.
- The **Net Enrolment Rate (NER)** in primary school in 2015 was 86% (Female 87%; Male 86%). The NER has remained steady over the last four years. This NER means that **14% of children aged 6-11 years old are out of school.**⁷
- **Literacy and numeracy outcomes**, according to the 2012 PILNA, were:

Figure 2: 2012 PILNA Results – English and French speaking schools⁸



⁶ Source: MOET (2015) Annual Statistical Digest, Figure 2.

⁷ A NER of 86% suggests 14% of children aged 6-11 years old are out of schools. However, the narrative states that 13% of children aged 6-11 years old are out of schools (Source: MOET (2015) Annual Statistical Digest, page 10)

⁸ Figures indicate the percentage of children performing at the 'expected level'. Source: MOET (2015) Annual Statistical Digest, Figure 9. See page 34 of Annual Statistical Digest for further details of PILNA results in 2012.

2.3. Key Review Questions

Key questions that framed the review's enquiry are given below. The four higher level questions are bolded.

- 1. A. To what extent has the VESP program contributed to MoET's long-term goals of improving education quality, providing more equitable access to education and ensuring a well-managed education system?**
B. Are the intermediate program outcomes on-track for being achieved? Looking in particular at implementation strategies 1, 3 and 5, consider:
 - What went well and why? (i.e. what factors have contributed to achievements)
 - What could have gone better? (i.e. what factors have hindered progress)
 - What are the key lessons learned to support ongoing program improvement?
 - What changes, if any, need to be made to ensure the intermediate outcomes can be achieved?
 - What considerations (if any) need to be addressed within the current VESP program in transitioning to and/or informing future support to the education sector?

- 2. Is the VESP program (implementation strategies and delivery mechanisms) still relevant to the situation on the ground?**
 - Is the program doing the 'right things'? (i.e. does the program remain relevant to meeting the education needs of children in Vanuatu?)
 - How well has the delivery mechanisms (i.e. managing contractor, Government of Vanuatu systems, NGO) combined to deliver on VESP outcomes? How could integration of the different components of VESP be improved?
 - Does the design need to be modified in the remaining phase of the project?

- 3. Are cross-cutting issues to address inequities in access and achievement being adequately addressed? What are the ongoing challenges in relation to gender equality and disability inclusion?**
 - What went well and why? (i.e. what factors have contributed to achievements)
 - What could have gone better? (i.e. what factors have hindered progress)
 - What are the three or four key lessons learned to support ongoing program improvement?
 - What priority activities/actions could improve performance?

- 4. Does the current implementation model promote sustainability?**
 - How has MoET ownership evolved over the past two-years? Has the support been adequate and appropriate? What strategies are recommended to improve progress?
 - What other modalities and/or approaches are in need of consideration when thinking about the shape of any future support to the education sector?

2.4. Our Approach

The **methodology of this review** was determined in consultation with members of the review team. A Review Plan was drafted and endorsed prior to the review commencing. The Review Plan can be found at **Annex 3**.

Important steps in our approach included:

1. **An inception workshop:** where the review team was able to take stock of the program; review existing data; clarify roles; and refine our approach to stakeholder interviews
2. **Data analysis and collection:** with an emphasis on the use of existing project data, supplemented by new data as collected via stakeholder interviews and field visits
3. **An outcomes workshop:** where the review team was able to collectively analyse the data and draft recommendations for improvement.

Data was collected from three main sources:

- A review of relevant documentation (see **Annex 4** for a list of documents) including two short qualitative and quantitative reports prepared for this review by the VESP team
- Semi-structured interviews with selected stakeholders
- School visits for interviews with teachers, principals, zone curriculum advisers, provincial education officers, parents, school committees and community members.

The **review took place over the period from October 2016 – November 2016**. The review team's work in Vanuatu ran from 2-15 November, and included interviews with stakeholders and visits to 17 schools across three provinces on the Islands of Efate, Santo, Malo and Ambae.

| Island/Province | Anglophone Schools | Anglophone and Francophone Schools | Francophone |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|-------------|
| Efate (3) | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Sanma (10) | 7 | 1 | 2 |
| Penama (4) | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| TOTAL (17) | 11 | 2 | 4 |

Key stakeholders interviewed included:

- VESP Steering Committee (VSC) members
- MoET senior leadership and relevant staff members
- VESP program team
- Provincial education officers, provincial finance officers and provincial trainers (from Shefa; Sanma and Penama provinces)
- Zone curriculum advisers (ZCAs)
- Teachers, parents and school committees.

These semi-formal interviews and group discussions were conducted face-to-face with no more than three review team members at each interview. **Consultations were guided by a set of critical focus questions** developed by the review team. Interview notes were documented in a template.

2.5. Limitations

All reviews have their limitations. In this review, a key limiting factor in assessing progress against intermediate outcomes is that some reforms are only beginning to gain momentum. These reforms will only reach full implementation after the end of the current phase of VESP.

Comparative data in literacy and numeracy (and improvements over time) is also limited. For example, tracking improvements over time, in literacy and numeracy, is currently limited to the PILNA (2012 and 2015 data). The first baseline tests for literacy and numeracy, supported by VESP, were only conducted in 2015. The VANSTA was conducted in 2009 and 2012, however the 2012 data was not analysed. Furthermore, the new curriculum and the Language of Instruction policy are only being rolled out this year. Therefore, comparative data that may allow for an indication of the impact of the new curriculum on literacy and numeracy will not be available for several years.

Assessing the specific contribution of VESP against progress is not always clear. VESP operates as a tool of the MoET. It therefore (sensibly) blurs the lines between actions undertaken by VESP and actions undertaken by the MoET. Such blurring can, at times, make judging VESP's actual contribution to progress against intermediate outcomes difficult.

The review's TOR limited the review's enquiry to implementation strategies 1, 3 and 5. Strategy 2, which is the ECCE component managed by World Vision, was evaluated separately. This review did not revisit the conclusions of the ECCE evaluation. Rather, it considered the relevance of the key findings of the evaluation in producing this final review report. This review did not consider implementation strategy 4. The review team understands that donor partners are considering conducting a separate review of implementation strategy 4 during 2017/18.

3. Achievements and Findings

3.1. Introduction

VESP is more than a standalone 5-year program of support. This review of VESP confirms the importance of seeing VESP as part of a much longer story. For many people in Vanuatu, this story started with the VESS (2007-2016), travelled through the Vanuatu Education Sector Action Plan (VESAP) to VERM (supported by donors from 2011-2013) and now to VESP. Looking forward, the journey will continue as MoET develops a two-year interim Sector Strategy (to be finalised in December 2016) and then a new longer-term education sector strategy to align with the Vanuatu Government's 15-year National Sustainable Development Plan.⁹

VESP should be seen as contributing to a multi-decade agenda of sector strengthening. This is a **rare achievement** and speaks to the importance of maintaining the momentum around reforms.

High-level findings of the review include but are not limited to:

- **MoET leadership is strong, and VESP as a tool for the Ministry, remains relevant and effective.** There is evidence that VESP is seen as a MoET program, helping to implement the Government's agenda particularly in the early years of schooling. The program's targeted and integrated approach appears effective in supporting Ministry-led reforms.
- **MoET staff, and VESP technical advisers, appear to have developed effective relationships.** Trusted relationships are a key element in achieving results. Over the last three years, effective working relationships appear to have strengthened and developed between MoET staff and VESP staff, and between MoET and Development Partners. It is important that the VESP Secretariat continues to support MoET involvement (including at the Director-level) in determining the terms of reference for all its technical advisers; and continues to monitor and report on the effectiveness of its capacity development activities.
- **The VESP Steering Committee appears to be working well.** The well-defined focus of the VSC, the frequency of its meetings, and MoET's leadership were cited as reasons for the effective functioning of the Committee. It is important that Development Partners continue to engage in the VSC in a way that respects the Committee's mandate.
- **MoET, with VESP's support, has achieved a number of major successes.** Many of these had their origins under the VERM. For example: the roll-out of the new curriculum and the Language of Instruction policy is a significant achievement for the MoET (and the Vanuatu Government), and this is being strongly supported through VESP. The transitioning from the 'Old VEMIS' to 'Open VEMIS' is another major milestone achieved with VESP support. Open VEMIS will increasingly provide valuable data to Provincial Education Offices and MoET staff.
- **The change agenda is an unfinished story: many reforms are only beginning to gain momentum.** For example, MoET has started important work on school registration and teacher management. This work is challenging, involving many elements of the system and will take an estimated 3-4 years to reach full implementation. Loss of momentum around early reforms is a key risk in transitioning to the next phase of support post VESP.
- **VESP is a well-functioning program, providing targeted, effective and relevant support to the MoET. However, it is important to keep a focus on the end of program outcomes.** Over the next 18 months and beyond, it will be important that all stakeholders increase their

⁹ At the time of this review, the National Sustainable Development Plan was in draft form.

attention on how the inputs and outputs of VESP are building the pathways towards the higher level end of program outcomes.

3.2. Progress towards Intermediate Outcome 1

Intermediate Outcome 1: Increase in the number of schools with teachers implementing the new curriculum for Years 1-3 using effective teaching and learning methodologies.

VESP is on track to achieving intermediate outcome one.

At the time of the review, there was evidence of substantial progress towards achieving this intermediate outcome.

Evidence suggests that the Year 1 curriculum roll-out is on-track and that teachers are applying the Language of Instruction policy, which is already having a positive impact on students' learning.¹⁰ The roll-out of teaching and learning materials for Years 2-3 was being finalised for implementation as scheduled. Translation of materials had been provided in 60 vernaculars. Literary and numeracy standards had been developed and the VANSTA had been revised and trialled. Project reports indicate that over 1000 primary school teachers (including 200 principals) have received at least one round of professional development in preparation for the new Year 1-3 curriculum.¹¹ Year 1 teachers had also received specific training in the four teacher guides for Year 1 curriculum.

The review team's observations confirmed:

- Year 1 curriculum roll-out is on-track: all schools visited had received materials and all teachers had been trained.
- Teachers were applying new pedagogies, with classes demonstrating positive learning environments (i.e. group work; use of the classroom; display of recently generated student work; student participation encouraged).
- Evidence that principals, teachers and communities are well aware of the Language of Instruction (LoI) policy and (almost all) teachers were applying the policy in the classrooms.¹²
- Evidence that principals and teachers are aware that the LoI policy includes a transition to either English/French but are not aware of how this transition is to be approached.¹³
- Qualitative and modest quantitative evidence that students are developing literacy and numeracy more quickly and more competently (i.e. teacher, principal and parent reporting; observed reading skills; evidence of student work displayed; in-class assessment results).¹⁴
- Parents generally supportive of the LoI policy, with parents noting they have observed the strong literacy/numeracy performance of their children (e.g. with take-home readers and via school reports).
- Evidence that the Year 2 and 3 curriculum roll-out will be on-track.¹⁵

¹⁰ Evidence from key informant interviews; and observations via school visits

¹¹ VESP Six Monthly Progress Report, September 2016

¹² Evidence from key informant interviews

¹³ Evidence from key informant interviews

¹⁴ Evidence from key informant interviews; and observations via school visits

¹⁵ Evidence from key informant interviews and VESP Six Monthly Progress Reports

The following issues will require continued attention:

- **Training:**
 - Teachers and principals indicated a strong desire for annual training and re-training. The initial training was seen as useful, but refreshers will be essential.
 - Teachers are developing good practice models at the classroom level. However, there appears to be limited opportunity to share approaches across schools.
- **Language of Instruction Policy and Transition to English/French:**
 - Some parents had reservations around the Lol policy, particularly on the rationale for the changed approach. Some schools were not fully implementing the Lol policy (e.g. an urban school choosing to use Bislama for only one of its three Year 1 classes). On-going communication to schools and communities on the rationale for the Lol policy and the transition approach will be essential to ensuring continued support.
 - Most teachers and parents expressed concern around how the transition to French/English would be managed. The review team notes that Year 3 transition materials will need to be written during 2017 and the equally critical Year 4 transition materials will need to be written during 2018.
 - VESP is supporting an approach to transition known as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) from Year 4. A major focus of CLIL is on fluency and communication. There are advantages to this approach but potentially some disadvantages as well. The one key disadvantage is that teachers themselves need high levels of English and French to successfully manage this approach.
 - The review team notes that Year 3 and Year 4 onwards are going to be the critical years for language transition and that Vanuatu is adopting an early exit model from Lol mother tongue in Year 3. Evidence indicates that a late exit model (managing the transition over six years of primary) has stronger literacy and educational benefits for children than an early (Year 3) exit model.¹⁶ However, many countries start with an early exit model and once they see how well the mother tongue is working they opt to use mother tongue as an Lol further up the system (e.g. this has occurred in Samoa). This should be kept under active review by the VSC and MOET.
- **Coordination around Curriculum Development:**
 - The review team received conflicting information on the partnership between the CDU, VITE and the ISU. CDU reports a strong partnership, enabled by Task and Advisory Groups. VITE and the ISU noted the existence of Task and Advisory Groups, but indicated these had lost some of their momentum in recent months.
- **Further evidence:**
 - The review team notes that the planned Curriculum Monitoring Study, supported by VESP, will provide further evidence on the extent to which implementation of the new curriculum has been effective.

¹⁶ Benson, C. (2005), *The importance of mother tongue-based schooling for educational quality*: Commissioned study for EFA Global Monitoring Report. Skutnabb_Kangas T. and Haugh, K. (eds) *Multilingual Education and Sustainable Diversity Work: From Periphery to Centre* (Routledge).

3.3. Progress towards Intermediate Outcome 2

Intermediate Outcome 2: Increase in the number of schools and kindergartens implementing inclusion initiatives to improve access for children to Kindergarten and Years 1-3.

VESP is making adequate progress in some areas to achieving intermediate outcome two.

At the time of the review, there was evidence of progress in some areas towards achieving this intermediate outcome. However, the review team has concerns around the ability of VESP to achieve this outcome when considering broader issues around inclusion and access.

Some achievements in relation to intermediate outcome two include:

- There is strong awareness and participation in ECCE¹⁷
- The Language of Instruction policy appears to be supporting greater participation of children in Year 1 (i.e. children are more interested in coming to school)¹⁸
- Female NER in primary school was 87% in 2015. The Male NER was 86%. The Gender Parity Index has been steady for several years at 1.01.¹⁹
- The “Right age enrolment” community advocacy campaign has commenced in Port Vila and on Efate.
- VESP support has helped to establish Inclusion Case Studies in four schools, linked to the Minimum Quality Standard 2.

The achievement of this intermediate outcome is likely to be constrained by the following factors:

- **Overage students in the school system is chronic at 25.8%**
 - MoET data shows that overage enrolment begins at the ECCE level, and amplifies as students move through the system.²⁰ Overage enrolment severely affects the efficiency of the system, impacts on access and completion targets, and is a barrier to achieving learning standards.
 - The main causes of overage students are twofold: 1) starting school later than age 6; and 2) students repeating years. VEMIS data confirms that children repeating classes is highest in year 1 and in the early years of schooling.²¹
- **Vanuatu’s challenge with overage enrolment is amongst the most acute in the world**
 - Comparative data puts this into perspective. Among developing countries, eight per cent of students are overage for grade. In Sub-Saharan African countries, 24 per cent of students are overage, while in low income countries 26 per cent of students are overage. Of Pacific Island Countries reporting, eight per cent of students in Fiji and Samoa, and 0.2 per cent of children in Tonga are overage.²²
 - Apart from the “Right Age” enrolment campaign, the challenge of overage students does not appear to be a priority focus of reform within the MoET.
- **There is strong awareness and participation in ECCE, but some unintended consequences**

¹⁷ Strengthening Early Childhood Care and Education (SECCE), Evaluation Report, September 2016

¹⁸ Key informant interviews

¹⁹ VEMIS 2014

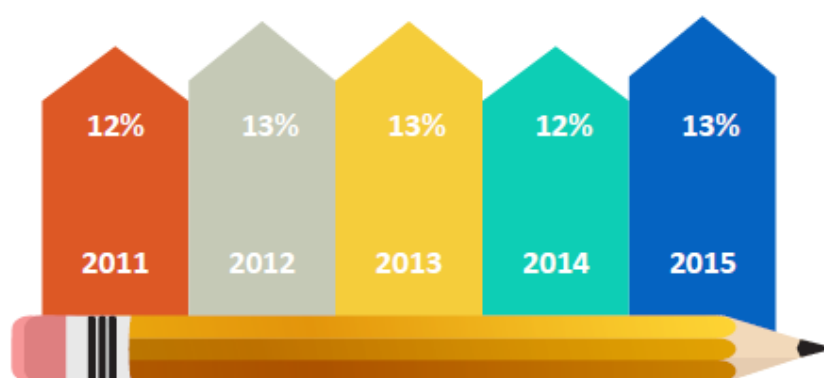
²⁰ Annual Statistical Digest, Ministry of Education and Training, Vanuatu, 2015, page 15

²¹ *ibid*, page 26

²² Global Education Monitoring Report 2016, Statistical Table 2, p. 410-12

- There is evidence of awareness and participation in Kindy.²³ However, there are some concerns around access, due to the Kindy fee structure acting as a barrier for poorer families. Some schools are instructing parents that children need a Kindy Certification of Completion to enter primary school. The current ECCE policy states that: “Children should automatically be promoted from ECCE to Year 1. Children should not be put through a test to determine if they are allowed to enter Primary or repeat. All children ages 3-6 must go through pre-school programmes before entrance to Year 1.”²⁴ There was no apparent awareness in primary schools that the Year 1 curriculum includes a ‘K’ element (i.e. Kindy-level equivalent teaching and learning) to accommodate direct entry children.²⁵
- The review team is aware that the ECCE policy is currently under review by the MoET. MoET is also currently discussing future options to support ECCE, including funding models. There are various possible options to reduce the household level cost burden of Kindy, including:
 - Regulating fees (e.g. in the context of Kindy-appropriate Minimum Quality Standards)
 - Government co-financing, at the Kindy level
 - Government co-financing, at the child level (e.g. per capita funding, as per School Grants; Conditional Cash Transfers)
 - Raising awareness of and regulating alternative and lower cost ECCE options, underpinned by Kindy-appropriate Minimum Quality Standards (e.g. playgroups; educationally-oriented childcare centres).
- **13% of children from 6-11 years old are out of school**
 - There appears to be little information on barriers to accessing school
 - All schools visited charged a tuition fee and/or student contribution, despite the Universal Primary Education Policy (2009). One of the intentions of this policy “was to remove parental contributions in primary schools.”²⁶ Fees are one potential barrier to access, especially for poorer families.²⁷

Infographic 1: Out-of-school children in primary education, 6-11 year olds²⁸



²³ Strengthening Early Childhood Care and Education (SECCE), Evaluation Report, September 2016

²⁴ Government of Vanuatu, Ministry of Education, Vanuatu Early Childhood Care & Education Policy August 2010, page 21

²⁵ Evidence from key informant interviews and observations from school visits

²⁶ MoET (2009) Universal Primary Education Policy: Fact sheet

²⁷ Evidence from key informant interviews and observations from school visits

²⁸ 2015 Annual Statistical Digest

- **Inclusion activities at the school level appear to be, at best, in their infancy**
 - VEMIS reports that about 2.9% of students in primary schools were identified as having disabilities in 2015. Most teachers could identify children with disabilities in the community who were not attending school.²⁹ Global estimates suggest that 15% of the world’s population experience some form of disability, and that disability prevalence is higher for developing countries.³⁰
 - Disability inclusive education is a complex issue but one that needs to be addressed. It is a positive development that MoET, with VESP support, has established Inclusion Case Studies in four schools. The lessons from these case studies will hopefully provide information which will help increase the number of schools and kindergartens implementing inclusion initiatives (i.e. intermediate outcome 2).

3.4. Progress towards Intermediate Outcome 3

Intermediate Outcome 3: Provincial officers providing necessary support to school leaders.

VESP is making adequate progress to achieving intermediate outcome three; however, it is too early to assess results.

At the time of the review, there was evidence of VESP providing effective and relevant support to the MoET to progress its reform agenda including around developing a more provincially-managed school system.³¹ For example, at the time of the review:

- MoET, with VESP support, had in-principle support from the Public Service Commission (PSC) for a revised Ministry structure and job descriptions for devolved posts were being progressively submitted to the PSC.
- MoET, with VESP support, was commencing a pilot School Support Centre on Orap, in Malampa province.

MoET’s devolution plans, including the strengthening of provincial officers to provide the necessary support to school leaders, would appear to have the potential to positively impact on children’s learning.³² However, a key limiting factor in assessing progress against this outcome is that many of these reforms are only beginning to gain momentum, making it too early to assess results. Some reforms will only reach full implementation after the end of the current phase of VESP.

Key achievements under this intermediate outcome include, but are not limited to:

- The ‘Open VEMIS’ is now live on the internet – and training of MoET staff is underway.
- VESP has supported the training of school improvement planning, which it reports has been completed for 95% of primary schools and 57% of schools have submitted a school improvement plan to their provincial office.³³
- School Improvement Plans are increasingly being used to manage school grants in line with the Minimum Quality Standards and there is awareness of school-based management (SBM).³⁴

²⁹ Key informant interview

³⁰ <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/disability/overview>

³¹ Key informant interviews and VESP documentation

³² These plans include transitioning ZCA into School Improvement Officers and School Inspectors.

³³ VESP Six Monthly Progress Report, September 2016

³⁴ Evidence from key informant interviews and observations from school visits

- VESP reports that 75% of primary school principals have been trained in Instructional Leadership to support implementation of the new curriculum and provincial officers (ZCAs) have conducted at least one follow-up visit to schools to support teachers and principals as they implement learning from their training.³⁵ However, the performance of ZCAs appears variable across locations.³⁶
- Five tranche of grants have been processed with progressive improvement in compliance and submitting acquittals on time – 96% of eligible schools received 2016 tranche 1.³⁷ However, at the time of the review, MoET reports that only 286 out of 408 schools had received tranche 2, as 140 schools did not comply with the requirements.³⁸ Evidence from key informant interviews also indicated that the payment of tranche 2 was delayed until October.
- A school registration policy has been approved and a strategy for school rationalisation is in development.³⁹

The following issues will require continued attention:

- **Further evidence:**
 - The planned Monitoring Study on School Leadership, and the pilot school support centre in Orap, should provide evidence on the effectiveness (or otherwise) of these reforms. These studies and pilots should be closely considered by the MoET Senior Management Team and the VESP Steering Committee.
- **Training:**
 - Principals reported some training on school grants (although most reported training provided two or more years ago).
 - Only a few principals interviewed by the review team reported receiving SBM or school leadership training. Teachers and principals indicated a strong desire for annual training and re-training.
- **MoET has started important work on school registration and teacher management:**
 - This work is challenging and will take an estimated 3-4 years to reach full implementation. Yet, this work has the potential to improve the quality of teaching and learning; and support a more provincially-managed education system. Such an approach will help MoET answer a number of questions. For example: most schools had temporary teachers, for which they pass on contributions to families. At the moment, it is unclear whether the temporary teachers are always an essential resource (e.g. to fill a class level gap) or additional to needs.
 - A closer analysis of teacher deployment to respond to demographic conditions, a determination and enforcement of school catchments (particularly in urban areas), and adaptive teacher training (e.g. support for multi-grade teaching approaches, particularly in small rural/remote schools) could all assist with school and teacher workforce planning.

³⁵ VESP Six Monthly Progress Report, September 2016

³⁶ Evidence from key informant interviews and observations from school visits

³⁷ Key informant interviews and VESP Six Monthly Progress Report, September 2016

³⁸ Key informant interview

³⁹ Key informant interviews and VESP Six Monthly Progress Report, September 2016

- **MoET policies and regulations:**

- There was mixed awareness of Ministry policies and regulations; and there was a lack of clarity as to which policy elements required compliance, and which were guidelines (i.e. discretionary). For instance:
 - all schools visited charged a contribution, which was rarely in line with the Universal Primary Education Policy
 - some schools are opting out of, or only partially applying, the LoI policy
 - most schools are using a Kindy Certificate of Completion as a hard gate for primary entry at year 1
 - most schools have high student repeater rates.

3.5. Answers to Key Review Questions

All sections of this report (particularly sections 2 and 4) contribute to answering the Key Review Questions. However, a summary of answers is provided in the table below.

| Key Review Questions | Answers (summary) |
|--|--|
| <p>1. A. To what extent has the VESP program contributed to MoET’s long-term goals of improving education quality, providing more equitable access to education and ensuring a well-managed education system?</p> <p>B. Are the intermediate program outcomes on-track for being achieved?</p> | <p>VESP’s targeted and integrated approach appears effective in supporting Ministry-led reforms. VESP is on track to achieving intermediate outcome one. The program needs to closely support and monitor the implementation of the language transition strategy. VESP is making adequate progress in some areas to achieving intermediate outcome two. However, the full achievement of this outcome is likely to be constrained by complex issues around inclusion and access. Overage students in the school system is chronic. VESP is making adequate progress to achieving intermediate outcome three; however, it is too early to assess results.</p> |
| <p>2. Is the VESP program (implementation strategies and delivery mechanisms) still relevant to the situation on the ground?</p> | <p>The VESP program remains relevant. There is evidence that VESP, as a tool for the Ministry, is helping to implement the Government’s agenda particularly in the early years of schooling (K to Grade 3). The issue of overage students should be a stronger focus of reforms within MoET. Planning for the ECCE program needs to be determined as a high priority, and VESP should support MoET to strengthen the connections between Kindys and primary schools.</p> |
| <p>3. Are cross-cutting issues to address inequities in access and achievement being adequately addressed? What are the ongoing challenges in relation to gender equality and disability inclusion?</p> | <p>The VESP program is effectively working with the MoET to address inequities in access and achievement. However, these are complex issues and pathways to improving access are not straightforward. Approaches to disability-inclusion are in their infancy. The relationship between student fees and access is not well understood. During the next 18 months, VESP could usefully support MoET gain a better understanding of the barriers causing the number of out of school children – to inform current and future programming.</p> |
| <p>4. Does the current implementation model promote sustainability?</p> | <p>MoET leadership is strong. There is evidence that VESP is seen as a MoET program and that the sense of ownership over the program has evolved over the last three years. VESP should be seen as contributing to a multi-decade agenda of sector strengthening. This speaks to the importance of maintaining the momentum around reforms.</p> |

4. Recommendations

4.1. Summary

The review's broad conclusion is that the VESP program is functioning effectively in providing targeted support to the MoET and that it remains relevant to the Vanuatu Government's education priorities. Our recommendations are largely framed around VESP's three program goals and include priority actions for all stakeholders to consider over the next 18-24 months. These priority actions include activities that will help improve the current program's continued relevance, effectiveness and efficiency as well as activities to ensure the momentum around reforms is maintained.

4.2. Maintaining Momentum

The Review Team recommends that the Development Partners should:

Recommendation 1: Extend the current phase of VESP to December 2018

The contract arrangements for VESP are currently set to be extended until 30 June 2018. However, this timing would end a contract half-way through an academic year with the potential to disrupt the momentum of some critical components, such as the curriculum roll-out. In addition, 2018 is an important year as it will be the first full year of transitioning of Year 3 students from the language of instruction (i.e. either the vernacular language or Bislama) to English/French.

Recommendation 2: Start planning now for a smooth transition to VESP II

In planning actions for the next 18 months, and in considering the next phase of support, great care should be taken in maintaining momentum, the scope of support and the partnerships achieved through VESP.

Priority actions should include:

- I. Working with DFAT Canberra and NZMFAT Wellington to structure an appropriate design process for VESP II, with a view to starting the design in the first half of 2017 to allow for a smooth transition from VESP to VESP II.
- II. Working with MoET and the VESP team to identify actions which will ensure that the momentum around reforms is maintained, particularly during the transition period of a contract ending and a new contract beginning.

4.3. Improving Quality

The Review Team recommends that:

Recommendation 3: The VSC should closely monitor the implementation of the language transition strategy

Priority actions for VESP to support include:

- I. Ensuring that the materials to support schools to successfully manage the transition from learning in the vernacular (or Bislama) to learning in either English or French are developed and distributed as a matter of priority.
- II. Increasing MoET's communications to schools and communities on the Language of Instruction policy, with a strong focus on the transition strategy.
- III. Effectively managing the transition strategy, ensuring current Year 1 students (and year 1 and year 2 students in 2017) are supported to make the transition.

- IV. Capturing and communicating learning results, including school-based assessments, to help assess the relative benefits of the Language of Instruction policy.

Recommendation 4: Training and professional development around the new curriculum should be intensive and ongoing

Training on the new curriculum has been useful and relevant. New training to match the roll-out of the curriculum is being planned. As teachers move between grades, and new teachers (and untrained helpers) come into the system, there will be a need for repeat training and refresher training.

Priority actions for VESP to support include:

- I. Over the next 18 months, MoET should develop and implement a training plan that matches the different needs of teachers and aligns with a more devolved Ministry.
- II. Progressively, MoET-supported training should include approaches to capture teachers' good practice models at the classroom level, particularly on student activities and classroom-based assessment. Practitioner workshops and peer support will greatly augment the role of provincial trainers, ZCAs (and SIOs).

Recommendation 5: The partnership between the CDU and VITE/ISU be further strengthened

The review team understands that relationships and communication between CDU and VITE/ISU have improved. At a technical level, active Task and Advisory Groups represent an important link between curriculum development and pre- and in-service training. However, these Advisory Group meetings seem to have lost their momentum in recent months.

Priority actions for VESP to support include:

- I. At a governance level, the heads and/or relevant staff of CDU, VITE and ISU should further strengthen their partnership including by meeting regularly, with an agenda.

Recommendation 6: The VSC should closely consider the findings of all monitoring studies

Over the next 18 months, a number of important initiatives will provide evidence to the MoET (and its Development Partners) on the effectiveness of key reforms. These include the two VESP Monitoring Studies (one on the Curriculum and one on School Leadership); the piloting of the School Support Centre in Orap; and the four case studies focussing on inclusive education.

Priority actions for VESP to support include:

- I. The effective implementation of the two monitoring studies and the four inclusive education case studies, ensuring that successes and lessons learned are captured and used (by MoET and Development Partners) to inform the direction of current and future programming.
- II. The effective monitoring of the pilot School Support Centre to capture lessons, ensuring that these are fed back into the VSC to inform the direction of MoET's planning in other provinces.

Recommendation 7: The VSC should increase its attention on how VESP activities are building pathways towards the higher level end of program outcomes.

VESP is a well-functioning program. The revised MEP determines that VESP progress will be measured against three intermediate outcomes. However, over the next 18 months, and in preparing for the next phase of support, it will be important that all VSC members increase their attention on how the inputs and outputs of the VESP program are building (or not) appropriate pathways towards achieving the higher level end of program outcomes.

Priority actions for VESP to support include:

- I. Ensuring outcome reporting receives greater prominence in future project reporting and in discussion at VSC meetings.

4.4. Improving Access

The Review Team recommends that:

Recommendation 8: Dealing with overage enrolment should be a key priority for the sector

Priority actions for VESP to support include:

- I. MoET and partners to ensure the 'Age 6 Year 1' campaign is effectively rolling out.
- II. MoET and partners to prioritise right age participation in ECCE .
- III. MoET to progress work on the school catchment policy as this will assist in identifying out of school children, and with planning of teacher deployments (i.e. to achieve target staff/student ratios especially in urban schools).
- IV. MoET and partners to enforce the apparent 'no repeater' clauses of the Education Act, with associated training to teachers on learning support and remedial actions.
- V. The issue of overage enrolment (i.e. the identification of challenges and planning of concrete actions) should become a standing item for the MoET Senior Management Team; the Senior Education Officers' Conference; and the VSC.

Recommendation 9: MoET should continue to implement the recommendations of the SECCE Evaluation

The review team is aware that MoET and its ECCE unit are considering a range of issues related to ECCE, including future funding models.

Priority actions for VESP support include:

- I. With an amendment to the World Vision contract (to July 2017) under discussion at the time of this review, MoET planning of the ECCE program needs to be determined as a high priority. The review team understands that this work will include the development of a five year strategic plan for ECCE.
- II. MoET must take care in developing the new ECCE Policy and related regulations, particularly around fees, Certificates of Completion and right age enrolments to avoid unintended consequences.

Recommendation 10: MoET should continue to strengthen the connections between Kindys and primary schools, including a focus on household financial contributions

Priority actions for VESP support include:

- I. Take steps to improve school readiness: both of children entering primary schools and of primary schools receiving children.
- II. Over the medium term, MoET should continue to progress work to improve the conditions and status of Kindy teachers, with an emphasis on realistic professional standards, pre- and in-service training support, and codified conditions of service. MoET could undertake this work in partnership with TSC, VITE, USP and APTC.

Recommendation 11: Reducing the numbers of out-of-school children should remain a priority for the sector and should become more of a focus of VESP II

As the MoET recognises in its 2015 Annual Statistical Report, this group of children should be "targeted for policies and efforts in achieving universal primary education in Vanuatu".

Priority actions for VESP support include:

- I. Support a study that focusses on better understanding the barriers to access to education to help inform MoET's reform agenda and the design of VESP II
- II. On disability inclusion, establish a working group of personnel with relevant expertise (supported by TA as necessary) to develop an action plan to help inform the current program and the design of VESP II. Potential members include CDU Inclusion Coordinator, VITE and USP staff (DFAT technical support is also available).

4.5. Improving Education Management

The Review Team recommends that:

Recommendation 12: MoET place a stronger focus on communications and regulatory oversight as important strategies to progress reforms (both now and in the future)

The review team understands that a Ministry Communications Plan is under development. This provides a useful vehicle to greatly increase MoET's communications to PEOs, schools and communities on a range of issues. Communications need to be complemented by oversight, with related powers of enforcement. The planned School Inspectors may prove to be an important resource in this area, coupled with the functions of the Audit Office and the role of PEOs.

Priority actions for VESP support include better communication on:

- I. The Language of Instruction policy, with a strong focus on the transition plan
- II. Regulatory expectations, the rights and responsibilities of all stakeholders, and points of compliance under the Education Act
- III. Celebrating successes and communicating these throughout the system. For example, MoET and associated partners should highlight positive student performance (e.g. as measured by standardised assessment and examinations) and develop encouraging case studies to demonstrate the benefits of education for ni-Vanuatu.

Recommendation 13: The VESP Secretariat continues to monitor and report to the VSC on the effectiveness of its capacity development activities.

Priority actions for VESP support include:

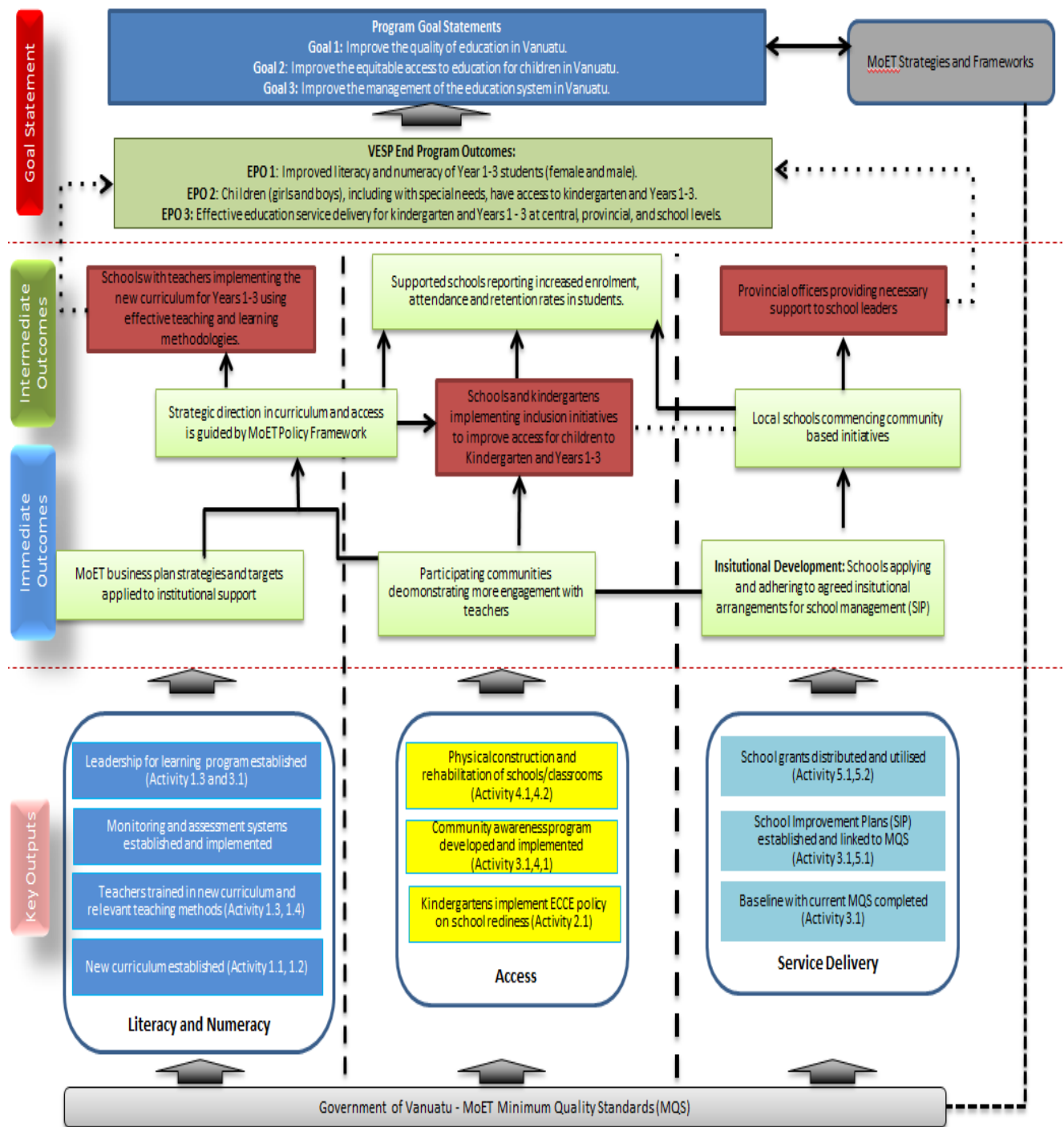
- I. VESP Secretariat to continue to support MoET involvement (including at the Director-level) in determining the terms of reference for all its technical advisers.

Recommendation 14: MoET look to strengthen the integration of VESP (I and/or II) within broader sector governance mechanisms

There is an opportunity to strengthen the integration of VESP within sector prioritisation, through sector governance mechanisms. The National Education Advisory Board and the MoET Senior Management Team are in place, and the review team were informed of the establishment of a sector-focused Local Education Group. The development process for the interim Education Sector Plan might provide an ideal opportunity to review whole of sector governance arrangements (including church and non-state actors), of which VESP represents an important element

END

Annex 1: VESP Theory of Change



Annex 2: Terms of Reference (summary)

Purpose of the Review

As part of the VESP monitoring and evaluation plan, the DPs are responsible for conducting a review to assess overall program progress towards performance outcomes. This review was due to take place in 2015 but delayed because of urgent issues related to the aftermath of Cyclone Pam and El Nino.

The purpose of the review is to:

- a) Review VESP progress in terms of the extent to which VESP is moving towards achievement of program outcomes as described in the July 2016 M&E plan;
- b) Recommend strategies to improve the current Program's continued relevance, effectiveness and efficiency including through to June 2018;
- c) Examine possibilities for future support to the education sector which will sustain and build on successes over the longer term.

The primary audience for the report will be:

- MoET and in particular the Directorate, Policy and Planning;
- DFAT Port Vila and Canberra;
- MFAT Port Vila Post and Wellington Education Team;

Key evaluation questions and scope of the Review

- The Review of VESP will cover progress in the implementation strategies (except for Strategies 2 and 4) against the approved end of program outcomes (July 2016 – M&E plan).
- The review will discuss the current modalities of delivery for the implementation strategies (managing contractor, MOET Sub-contract with WVV, DFA). It will look into ways to improve and strengthen current working processes and strategies. The review will provide evidenced recommendations for the remainder of the current phase and for future support from the DPs in the sector.

The main focus of the review (outlined in these ToRs) will be on Strategies 1, 3 and 5.. Strategy 2 will be dealt with as outlined below. Following discussions with MOET, strategy 4 will be evaluated separately in 2017. In relation to strategy 2, the World Vision outsourced SECCE component is being evaluated in a related end of program evaluation exercise. The field based part of this evaluation took place during August 2016 and will feed into the overall findings of the VESP review. Progress in relation to the National ECCE workplan (also funded in part through the DFA but implemented by MoET officials) was also covered in part by the August 2016 review and further work to close information gaps will be carried out in November⁴⁰ by the IES.

The VESP Review will address the following evaluation questions:

1. To what extent are end of program outcomes agreed in the M&E framework⁴¹ on-track for being achieved? What changes, if any, need to be made to ensure outcomes can be achieved? What factors have contributed to successes? What are the lessons learned?

⁴⁰ The August SECCE review conducted visits to national program kindys in Efate, Torba and Malampa. The team leader and lead consultant will provide a summary document of findings by the SECCE review team in relation to the national program

⁴¹ A revised M&E framework was agreed between GoV and DPs on July 2016.

2. To what extent have the program management and delivery mechanisms (including school grants and ECCE) been efficient and responded in a timely and effective way to changes in the operating context (i.e. political, environmental, MoET education policy, DP policy priorities) and how has this affected progress towards the program outcomes?
Sub-question: Does the Ministry have ownership of the implementation of VESP capacity development process and is it more equipped to run the whole education system?
Sub-question How well have the delivery mechanisms (Managing Contractor, GoV Systems, NGO) combined to deliver on VESP outcomes?
How could integration of the different components of VESP be improved?
3. To what extent are VESP and MOET securing the sustainability of progress made?
4. Are cross-cutting issues being adequately addressed?- What are the ongoing challenges re. gender equality? What priority activities /actions could improve performance?

Duration of the Evaluation

The expected period for the VESP review is from 10 October to 15 December 2016. This timeframe includes time for desk review, preparation of the evaluation plan and methodology, in-country consultation and field trips, as well as preparation of aide memoire and final report.

Evaluation Process

The evaluation will consist of a desk review and interviews with key stakeholders including beneficiaries. The review will include time in Port Vila with government officials, the managing contractor and other stakeholders and field visits to Provincial education offices, primary schools.

Annex 3: Review Plan (summary)

1. Introduction

1.1. Scope of the Review

As part of the VESP Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (MEP), **the development partners are responsible for conducting a mid-term review (MTR) to assess overall program progress towards performance outcomes.** This review was due to take place in 2015 but was delayed, mainly due to issues related to the aftermath of Cyclone Pam.

The terms of reference for the review of VESP are set out in [annex 2](#). Key points to note in relation to the scope of the review include:

- In line with the revised MEP (July 2016), **VESP progress will be measured against three Intermediate Outcomes.** The VESP End-of-Program Outcomes have been shifted to beyond the life of the current phase of VESP. The three Intermediate Outcomes, with their associated performance indicators, are:

| Program Intermediate Outcomes | Performance Indicator |
|--|---|
| <u>Intermediate Outcome 1</u> : Increase in number of schools with teachers implementing the new curriculum for Years 1-3 using effective teaching and learning methodologies. | % of schools using national curriculum for Years 1-3 |
| <u>Intermediate Outcome 2</u> : Increase in number of schools and kindergartens implementing inclusion initiatives to improve access for children to Kindergarten and Years 1-3. | Retention (survival) rates for Year 1 students (female and male) to Year 4 |
| <u>Intermediate Outcome 3</u> : Provincial officers providing necessary support to school leaders. | % of schools that demonstrate improved school management report receiving support |

- **The main focus of the review will be on implementation strategies 1, 3 and 5.** Strategy 2, which is the ECCE component managed by World Vision, is being evaluated separately. The field-based part of this evaluation took place in August 2016. This review will not revisit the conclusions of the ECCE evaluation. Rather, it will consider the relevance of the key findings of the evaluation in producing the final review report. Strategy 4 will be evaluated in 2017.

1.2. Purpose of the Review

Based on the terms of reference, and on the evidence available in the document review, the review team proposes that this MTR be guided by the following specific objectives:

1. **To determine to what extent the intermediate program outcomes agreed to in the VESP MEP are on track for being achieved.**

2. **To compile relevant lessons learned and recommend strategies to improve the current program's continued relevance, effectiveness and efficiency including through to July 2018 and beyond.**

The *primary purpose* of this review is on learning and improvement. The *secondary purpose* of the review is on accountability. As such, the review team's proposed approach will focus efforts on 'looking forward', with a secondary focus on 'looking backwards'.

2. Proposed Approach

The methodology of this review was determined in consultations with members of the review team, who were given the opportunity to provide input into this review plan.

Our proposed approach has been designed to support the principal purpose of the review being on 'learning and improvement'. In addition, the proposed approach will emphasise:

- **Vanuatu leadership:** of the sector and of the review process, with MoET identifying key stakeholders for interview and the schools for the site visits
- **Partnership:** in recognition that the VESS is based on the importance of partnerships in managing and strengthening the education sector in Vanuatu
- **Collaboration and empowerment:** whereby key stakeholders (i.e. the review team) are empowered to collectively analyse, reflect and interpret qualitative and quantitative data and decide on strategies and recommendations for future improvement
- **Useability:** the need for the review to produce useful and useable information to enable program improvement and to share learning.

The proposed approach also recognises recent work invested, by all key stakeholders, into revising the program's Theory of Change and updating the program's MEP. This review will not seek to revisit this work. Rather, the review will aim to build on this refreshed understanding of the program's causal links towards the desired (intermediate) outcomes.

The approach to this review has been informed by methodologies such as Collaborative Outcomes Reporting⁴² and Empowerment Evaluation⁴³. Important steps in the proposed approach include:

1. **An inception workshop:** with the full review team to take stock of the program; review existing data; clarify roles and responsibilities; and refine approaches to stakeholder interviews.
2. **Data analysis and collection:** with a strong emphasis on the use of existing project and Vanuatu Government data, supplemented by some new data as collected via stakeholder interviews and field visits.
3. **An outcomes workshop:** to take place after the field visits and stakeholder interviews to enable the review team to collectively analyse and make sense of the data and to draft recommendations for improvement.

⁴² Collaborative Outcomes Reporting is a mixed method approach that involves participation of key stakeholders, developed by Dr Jess Dart.

⁴³ Empowerment Evaluation aims to provide communities/stakeholders with the tools and knowledge to monitor and evaluate their own performance, developed by Dr David Fetterman.

2.1. Key Review Questions

Our key review questions have been drafted based on the review's terms of reference and the VESP MEP and reflect the primary purpose of the review being on learning and improvement. The proposed key review questions are:

- 1. A. To what extent has the VESP program contributed to MoET's long-term goals of improving education quality, providing more equitable access to education and ensuring a well-managed education system?**
B. Are the intermediate program outcomes on-track for being achieved? Looking in particular at implementation strategies 1, 3 and 5, consider:
 - What went well and why? (i.e. what factors have contributed to achievements)
 - What could have gone better? (i.e. what factors have hindered progress)
 - What are the key lessons learned to support ongoing program improvement?
 - What changes, if any, need to be made to ensure the intermediate outcomes can be achieved?
 - What considerations (if any) need to be addressed within the current VESP program in transitioning to and/or informing future support to the education sector?
- 2. Is the VESP program (implementation strategies and delivery mechanisms) still relevant to the situation on the ground?**
 - Is the program doing the 'right things'? (i.e. does the program remain relevant to meeting the education needs of children in Vanuatu?)
 - How well has the delivery mechanisms (i.e. managing contractor, Government of Vanuatu systems, NGO) combined to deliver on VESP outcomes? How could integration of the different components of VESP be improved?
 - Does the design need to be modified in the remaining phase of the project?
- 3. Are cross-cutting issues to address inequities in access and achievement being adequately addressed? What are the ongoing challenges in relation to gender equality and disability inclusion?**
 - What went well and why? (i.e. what factors have contributed to achievements)
 - What could have gone better? (i.e. what factors have hindered progress)
 - What are the three or four key lessons learned to support ongoing program improvement?
 - What priority activities /actions could improve performance?
- 4. Does the current implementation model promote sustainability?**
 - How has MoET ownership evolved over the past two-years? Has the support been adequate and appropriate? What strategies are recommended to improve progress?
 - What other modalities and/or approaches are in need of consideration when thinking about the shape of any future support to the education sector?

2.2. Information Collection

Data will be collected from five sources:

- Relevant existing project documentation (see annex 3 for a list of documents)
- Short qualitative and quantitative reports/data prepared for this review (see section 4)

- Additional findings from recent evaluation/monitoring activities, namely the ECCE evaluation and VESP’s curriculum implementation monitoring study
- Semi-structured interviews with selected stakeholders
- School visits for interviews and focus group discussions with teachers, principals, Zone Curriculum Advisers, Provincial education officers, parents, school committees, and community members.

The review team proposes to pursue **two key themes of enquiry**:

1. Consultations and data analysis to *inform an assessment* of whether the program is on track to achieve the intermediate program outcomes as agreed to in the MEP.
2. Consultations and data analysis to *identify useful and actionable lessons learned and to recommend strategies* relevant to program improvements and to the potential design of a subsequent phase of support.

Key stakeholders to be interviewed include:

- VESP Steering Committee Members
- MoET senior leadership and relevant staff members
- VESP program team
- VESP’s Independent Education Specialist (IES)⁴⁴
- Provincial Education Officers, Principal Finance Officers and Provincial trainers (from Shefa; Sanma and Penama provinces)
- Zone Curriculum Advisers
- Teachers, parents and school committees.

These semi-formal interviews and group discussions will be conducted face-to-face with no more than four review team members at each interview.

Consultation will be guided by a set of critical focus questions developed by the review team. Focus questions for each key group of stakeholders will be drafted prior to the in-country mission. The drafting will be facilitated by the review team leader, with leading input from DFAT’s Education Specialist, and in collaboration with DFAT, NZMFAT and MoET staff in Port Vila. The IES will also be invited to provide input. These sets of draft focus questions will be circulated to all review team members prior to the in-country mission for input, tested via an early school visit in-country, and finalised at the inception workshop.

2.3. Review Team

Review team members have been purposively selected to create a team which seeks to balance people who have detailed knowledge of Vanuatu and the program together with people who have limited (if any) knowledge of VESP but who can bring a fresh eye to the review process.

The **review team leader** will play a key role in facilitating the review, ensuring a collaborative approach which draws on each member’s respective skills and experience. The team leader has overall responsibility for managing the review and ensuring the delivery of outputs (i.e. aid memoire; draft review report and final review report). The team leader also has responsibility for allocating roles and tasks across the review team.

⁴⁴ While the IES is a member of the review team, one of her key responsibilities will be to also act as a key informant to other members of the team.

The review team will collectively analyse, and look to make sense of, existing qualitative and quantitative data (and additional data collected through the in-country mission) to assess the program’s progress towards achieving the intermediate outcomes and to ask ‘what next’ in terms of program improvement. All review team members will be involved in, and be invited to contribute to, identifying strategies, lessons and recommendations to help inform the shape of any future support to Vanuatu’s education sector beyond VESP. As such, all team members will be involved in collaborative analysis and reflection; and in identifying relevant lessons and key recommendations.

The table below highlights **proposed roles and responsibilities of each team member**.

| Team Member | Title or Role | Responsibilities |
|---------------------|---|--|
| Cobin Ngwero | Senior Monitoring Officer MoET/Acting PEO Policy and Planning | Representing MoET; M&E expertise; VESP program knowledge; participant in key informant interviews; data collection; co-leading field visits; analysis; focus on key findings and recommendations |
| Roy Ben | Senior Project Officer MoET (Policy and Planning Unit) | Representing MoET; Vanuatu education sector expertise; participant in key informant interviews; co-leading field visits; analysis; focus on key findings and recommendations |
| Zoë Mander-Jones | Team Leader/Facilitator | Overall management of the review; participant in key informant interviews; facilitator of team workshops; co-leading field visits; analysis and reporting |
| David Coleman | DFAT Education Specialist (Canberra) | Technical lead; participant in key informant interviews; co-leading field visits; analysis; focus on key findings and recommendations |
| Karen Soanes | NZMFAT Post (Port Vila) | NZMFAT programs and sectoral expertise; VESP program knowledge; participant in field visits; analysis |
| Christelle Thieffry | DFAT Post (Port Vila) | DFAT programs and sectoral expertise; VESP program knowledge; review logistics; participant in field visits; analysis |
| Barbara Thornton | Independent Education Specialist | Education Specialist; VESP program knowledge; a key informant for the review team; technical resource on field visits; focus on analysis and recommendations |

2.4. Ethical Considerations

The review team will act ethically in line with the Australian Evaluation Society Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct of Evaluations.

The team will ensure that they fully inform interview and focus group participants of the purpose of the review and how the information will be used.

Participants will be assured that their responses will be anonymous, and that interview data will be confidential.

3. Limitations, Constraints and Risks

The review will be constrained by the fact that **not all external team members will be in Vanuatu for the full duration of the in-country mission** (2-16 November). External team members will be arriving (and leaving) at different times during this period. To manage this constraint, the scheduling of the review's main activities are planned to take place between the 7-11 November when we anticipate that all review members will be in Vanuatu.

In this review, **time is a limiting factor** in terms of the ability of the team to collect new data. However, this will be mitigated by using existing data, recognising that a good quantity and quality of data can be provided by the VESP project and the Vanuatu Government, via VEMIS and the project's six monthly project reports.

There is a **risk that the review's collaborative and empowerment approach will not be fully achieved** without the inclusion of VESP staff and activity managers on the review team. The team leader will endeavour to mitigate this risk by: inviting VESP staff to prepare some key inputs into the review process (see section 4); and including VESP staff and activity managers in parts of key discussions (both during the inception and outcomes workshop). In addition, VESP staff and activity managers will be consulted during the informant interviews.

The **large size of the review team, and the dispersed location of its members, have the potential to be a constraint** in terms of building effective team relationships and ensuring interviewees are not overwhelmed during interviews. This constraint will be managed by the approach to the review which includes dedicated time for the team to get together in Port Vila before and after the field visits; and by splitting the review team up into smaller groups to conduct the interviews.

4. Tasks to be completed before the In-country Mission

In an effort to make the best use of the team's time and deliberations while in-country, a small number of tasks are to be completed prior to 1 November 2016.

1. **All review team members** are to be familiar with the program documents (see annex 3)
2. **A sub-group of the review team** will lead on drafting sets of focus questions for each group of stakeholders, based on the key review questions. David C and Zoe MJ, in consultation with Christelle T and Karen S, will lead the first draft with input from Barbara T and Cobin N and/or Roy B. These draft focus questions will be discussed and refined in-country allowing all team members to comment and provide input.
3. **DFAT Port Vila is to request that the VESP team prepare two short papers** to be circulated to the review team by Monday 31 October. This task recognises the role of the VESP team, and in particular the VESP M&E adviser, as being responsible for 'developing baseline data

sets for all indicators and managing the collation and collection of data to provide the evidence of progress towards achieving outcomes'.⁴⁵

- **Paper 1: A short narrative report** which uses dot points to note the program's key achievements and on-going challenges. These points are to be organised under the three intermediate outcomes and/or under the relevant implementation strategies (1, 3 and 5).
- **Paper 2: A short data report**, based on the project's MEP, which provides quantitative information against the three intermediate outcomes. A suggested table template for presenting this information is set out below

| Intermediate Outcome | Verifiable indicator | Baseline | Progress/Achievement (including evidence of progress) | Data source |
|----------------------|----------------------|----------|---|-------------|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

⁴⁵ VESP MEP (July 2016)

Annex 4: List of Documents

A. CONTEXT: VANUATU GOVERNMENT

1. Vanuatu Education Sector Strategy (VESS)
2. Vanuatu Education Road Map (VERM)
3. MoET polices
 - a. Inclusive Education
 - b. ECCE
 - c. Gendre
 - d. Language Policy
 - e. Language Transition Plan
4. Vanuatu Education Act 2014
5. Education Act
6. Teacher Services Commission Act.

B. CONTEXT: AUSTRALIA'S AID PROGRAM

7. Vanuatu-Australia Partnership for Development
8. Vanuatu Australia Aid Investment Plan
9. APPR 2013/14, 2014/15, 2015/16
10. *Getting the Foundations Right: Early Childhood Development and Australia's Aid Program*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

C. PROGRAM DOCUMENTATION: VESP

11. Review Briefing Paper 1: Vanuatu Education Support Program (overview), September 2016
12. Review Briefing Paper 2: Data Collection for VESP Outcomes, September 2016
13. VESP M&E Plan 2013
14. VESP 2013 Situation Analysis
15. Vanuatu Education Support Program (VESP) Oct 2012
16. M&E Framework 2016
17. VESP Six Monthly Reports
 - a. September 2013 – 31 March 2014
 - b. April 2014 – September 2014
 - c. October 2014 – March 2015
 - d. April 2015 – September 2015
 - e. October 2015 – March 2016
 - f. April 2016 – September 2016
18. VESP gender and inclusion strategy
19. *Capacity Development Stocktake*, A summary of 2015-2016 Capacity Development and proposals for future activities, October 2016.

D. OTHER DOCUMENTS

20. 2015 Annual Statistical Digest, Ministry of Education and Training, 2015
21. National Literary and Numeracy Benchmark Development Project, 2015
22. Strengthening Early Childhood Care and Education, Evaluation Report, September 2016
23. Education Review of Reports.