

Final Report

Vanuatu Skills Partnership (VSP)

Independent Evaluation 2020

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The Vanuatu Skills Partnership (VSP) or simply ‘the Partnership’ is a locally-led, politically-aware initiative that aims to achieve service delivery reform for human resource development in Vanuatu, through the vector of skills development. The Partnership is a long-standing co-investment between the Government of Australia (GoA) and the Government of Vanuatu (GoV), currently in its fourth phase of implementation (2017–2022; AUD 20,065,000).

Since 2005, the Partnership has been working to improve access to skills and markets that lead to economic prosperity for ni-Vanuatu, targeting provincial and outer island communities and through strategies that promote participation of women, people with disabilities and people with low language, literacy and numeracy. The provincial Skills Centres established by the Partnership and located in four provinces, now act as the Ministry of Education and Training’s (MoET) decentralised service delivery arms, functioning as skills training brokers between demand and supply: local training providers and industry coaches are contracted by the Centres to supply in-demand skills to support inclusive and sustainable entrepreneurship and employment in priority productive sectors, in flexible ways and at quality assured standards.

The Partnership also operates in a broader ‘political’ sphere and is recognised as one of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade’s (DFAT’s) few truly adaptive programs. It supports the emergence and networking of a cohort of developmental leaders committed and equipped to contribute to broad-based governance reform for the achievement of national development goals – stability, sustainability and prosperity.

The goal of the Partnership is:

“an accessible and high-quality skills system that contributes to a fair, prosperous, and sustainable Vanuatu”

VSP is working to progress four Long-Term Outcomes (LTOs)¹ through Phase 4, including:

1. Government resources, processes and developmental leaders support effective management of a quality assured and inclusive skills system
2. A diversity of ni-Vanuatu people have access to and benefit from inclusive and high quality skills training
3. Sustainable social, economic, and cultural benefits for clients, their families and communities
4. Sustainable growth in target productive sectors at the provincial level

Overview of the evaluation

This evaluation of the Partnership was commissioned by DFAT, as it has now passed the mid-point of its current phase (July 2017 to January 2022). As per the Terms of Reference (see [Annex 1](#)), the evaluation’s primary purpose is **investment improvement** by assessing and making recommendations to maximise the **effectiveness**² and **sustainability**³ of the Partnership. The **key audience** for this evaluation is DFAT Post (Program managers and HOM as Delegate), DFAT Canberra

¹ Note this goal and LTOs are from January 2020 and have been updated since the original Phase 4 design.

² Effectiveness will be considered in relation to both (i) progress towards long-term outcomes and (ii) any other broader progress or impact.

³ Sustainability is considered within the context of VSP’s service provision outcomes and value add and not simply taken to mean ‘capable of operating without DFAT funding’.

and the VSP team. Secondary users will be the Government of Vanuatu (GoV), the public (Australia and Vanuatu) and other development actors.

The evaluation comes in the wake of a markedly changed global context. This includes COVID-19 and, for Vanuatu, also follows Tropical Cyclone (TC) Harold, a Category 5 cyclone that struck in April 2020 and affected over 43 per cent of the population, damaging homes, schools, medical facilities and crops, seriously impeding access to essential services and compromising food security for many ni-Vanuatu.

The evaluation took place over the period October 2020 to January 2021. Due to travel restrictions related to COVID-19, an 11 day 'virtual mission' took place with key stakeholders in November 2020. The evaluation team conducted a total of 61 interviews through teleconference or other platforms involving 70 key informants. Demonstrating the breadth of the Partnership, key informants were from both provincial and national level government, across six Ministries, five provinces, four DFAT Programs (bilateral and regional), local and international NGOs, a Rural Training Centre and the National TVET Provider (Vanuatu Institute of Technology). Key findings are summarised below, with evidence aligned against the OECD Development Assistance Criteria (DAC) of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

Relevance: To what extent is the Vanuatu Skills Partnership well-positioned and able to respond to GoA and GoV priorities, particularly in a post COVID-19 setting and in response to TC Harold?

Discussions with key informants clearly highlighted the Partnership's strong alignment with the GoA's policy directions and increasing relevance to GoV's national reform agenda. The current dual crisis context has further underscored this, with the Partnership demonstrating agility in responding to COVID-19 and TC Harold while continuing to play a critical role in the longer term, shared goal of achieving a stable, sustainable and prosperous Vanuatu.

Aligning with the *Pacific Step-up*⁴ and *Australia's COVID-19 Development Response Plan (for Vanuatu)*, **the Partnership, known for its flexibility, networks and provincial reach, is well positioned to support all three pillars of Australia's development response plan**, in particular, economic recovery. The Partnership successfully supported the government's locally led crisis response and as such, this evaluation considers that VSP should be supported to play a role in future emergency responses at the provincial level. VSP supported local leaders and pivoted its efforts in the emergency phase to the productive sectors necessary to drive growth within the new context, including food security in rural areas affected by TC Harold. In addition, disability inclusive approaches, women's economic empowerment and support for women in leadership have been bolstered through existing networks and experience working at both the community and government level. Finally, through the locally led team and the advantages this brings, Australia has the ability to enhance its 'authentic partnership' credentials and demonstrate its alignment to the GoV's own Recovery Strategy⁵.

Senior GoV officials recognise the Partnership as directly contributing to the goals and policy objectives outlined in *Vanuatu 2030 (NSDP)* and the country's first *National Human Resource Development (HRD) Plan*⁶. This HRD plan builds on the work of the GoV, supported by the Partnership over the last decade, to build a demand-driven, inclusive skills system. Skills development has consequently now become a whole of government priority, led by the Prime

⁴ See <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/stepping-up-australias-engagement-with-our-pacific-family.pdf> (Accessed December 2020)

⁵ *Vanuatu Recovery Strategy 2020 – 2023*, Yumi Eriwan Tugeta (PMO, July 2020)

⁶ *Vanuatu 2030 National Human Resource Development Plan*, Government of Vanuatu. (2019). See <https://vcci.vu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/VANUATU-NHRDP-draft-0119.pdf> (Accessed December 2020)

Minister's Office (PMO). This shift not only reflects the value placed on skills as an economic driver but also the importance of both supply and demand in a skills system and the need for a holistic, coordinated systems-based approach across government.

VSP has been adapting to its context constantly since its inception, a key feature of its modus operandi. As momentum has built for targeted skills development, demand for non-formal, complementary training including coaching and entrepreneurship has seen VSP facilitate increased engagement from industry across a range of sectors in skills development. In response to demand and a recognition that reform in any sector requires incentivising leadership⁷ and good governance⁸, VSP has supported provincial planning, sectoral management and leadership in a variety of innovative ways including Adaptive Leadership⁹ workshops in both Sanma and Malampa province. This has encouraged leaders to exercise leadership rather than authority and take collective action to tackle complex problems. These initiatives are already having a flow on effect beyond the skills system to better provincial planning and emerging coalitions for change in line with national development objectives.

Effectiveness: To what extent is the Vanuatu Skills Partnership delivering outcomes that meet the needs and priorities of key stakeholders (government, institutions and community)?

VSP is a highly effective program that has achieved a wide range of excellent results and which has delivered outcomes in line with the needs and priorities of key stakeholders. In 2020, it made a critical contribution to the response to TC Harold at the provincial level, and it played a critical role working with the productive sectors (Industry, Agriculture and Tourism) to facilitate a pivot in operations in response to *both* TC Harold and COVID-19. In recent years it has also made substantial contributions to strengthening the skills system more broadly. This has included engagement with PMO to develop the aforementioned first ever national HRD plan and the national Post-School Education and Training (PSET) policy, as well as generation of increased incomes and increased profits for a large proportion of the provincial Skills Centres' training participants, including women and people with a disability.

VSP's Program Logic and MEL framework were revised in late 2019 in response to shifts in the policy and operating context in Vanuatu, and to better reflect VSP's strategic focus and the types of activities it was implementing and results it was achieving. In light of further significant changes to the operating context and the opportunities for VSP that has created, most notably from TC Harold and the implications of COVID-19 but also from a much stronger recognition from the GoV of the importance of 'skills' to the NSDP 2030, the Program Logic and MEL framework would benefit from being refreshed again. In particular, this could improve the clarity around the LTOs VSP is seeking to achieve. This will go some way to addressing the recent difficulties being experienced by VSP in aligning their results achieved to the LTOs and IOs as they are currently drafted.

Of greater importance, however, is that VSP should demonstrate greater flexibility in the way that it applies the Program Logic to consider and report on the progress it has made each year. This is consistent with the principles outlined in the VSP design, which emphasises VSP's commitment 'to

⁷ Andrews, Matt. *The limits of institutional reform in development: Changing rules for realistic solutions*. Cambridge University Press, 2013.

⁸ Pritchett, Lant, Michael Woolcock, and Matt Andrews. "Capability traps in development: How initiatives to improve administrative systems succeed at failing." *Prism* 3.3 (2012): 63-74.

⁹ Adaptive leadership is a practice for helping mobilise members of an organisation or community to adapt to significant change. It emphasises the importance of adaptation to a complex and rapidly changing environment, and focuses on creating the circumstances for good leadership and problem solving. See <https://www.anzsog.edu.au/resource-library/research/what-is-adaptive-leadership> (Accessed December 2020)

work through a responsive and opportunistic ‘process approach’ rather than focus on the achievement of predetermined, externally-defined milestones’¹⁰. Viewing the current IOs as plausible indicators of progress, rather than the only pathways for the LTOs to be achieved, would provide VSP with much greater flexibility to consider the progress it has made and would encourage VSP to shift its focus to a deeper consideration of progress at the outcome level.

VSP has made good progress developing and consolidating its monitoring tools in recent years and this should continue to be developed over the next few years. This includes the need to ensure that monitoring data is increasingly captured within the recently implemented management information system and that it is accessible to decision-makers.

In terms of areas identified for improvement, a consistent theme that emerged from the stakeholder consultations was the need for VSP to take additional time for reflection and learning, including things that *haven’t* worked, as well as those that have. It is also important that, where lessons have been learned, there are mechanisms in place to ensure these are shared widely across the team.

Efficiency: To what extent are the Vanuatu Skills Partnership’s implementation arrangements appropriate and contributing to the delivery of outcomes?

The delivery modality for VSP, particularly the ‘Support Contractor’ model and the emphasis on building genuine partnerships, appears to be working well and has allowed VSP to develop into a genuinely ‘locally led’ program. In particular, Scope Global (the Support Contractor) has played an important behind-the-scenes role in supporting VSP to achieve their objectives, building good working relationships with VSP staff and building the technical and management capacity of the team. Similarly, DFAT/Australian High Commission (AHC) Port Vila has played an important role in allowing local VSP staff to drive its strategic agenda.

There are, however, some ‘grey’ areas in the roles and responsibilities between Scope Global, the Strategic Adviser, DFAT/AHC Port Vila and VSP staff, which could pose a risk to the success of VSP in the future, particularly if key staff leave. While this evaluation does not recommend making significant changes to the current arrangements, there would be value in formalising a ‘ways of working’ document between the partners, which would cover off on some of the risks and explain how the partners, jointly, intend to manage those risks.

VSP is considered to have sufficient resources to deliver on its *current* mandate, with the capacity of local VSP staff being well complemented by the technical assistance provided through the Support Contractor and Strategic Adviser. There is, however, a risk that if VSP’s mandate continues to grow and the breadth of activities it is delivering further increases, that its human resources capacity will be stretched too thinly.

While VSP could absorb a modest increase in its overall budget, the *nature* of the funding provided is a more important consideration. A modest increase in the ‘core’ funding provided from DFAT’s bilateral aid program budget for Vanuatu, from AUD 3.6 million (2019-20) to around AUD 4.4 million each year, would provide greater certainty to VSP, **strengthening the incentives for VSP to increase the capacity of its core team (i.e., invest in more staff). Longer term this would enhance its ability to engage strategically.** It would also reduce the need for VSP to rely on ad hoc or one-off contributions from other DFAT programs to make up the budget it needs each year to deliver on its current mandate.

VSP’s management arrangements are, broadly, considered to be working well, although there is perhaps an opportunity to increase the capacity of VSP’s Senior Management Team to reduce the

¹⁰ VSP design pg.9

burden for approvals and decision-making currently residing with the VSP Director. There also appears to be an opportunity to streamline VSP's reporting requirements including, if possible, by shifting to a single performance report with Annexes as required to meet the reporting requirements of specific DFAT programs, GoV partners, or other donors. The high-quality communications products being produced by VSP were noted, and there would seem to be opportunities to use these to promote the work and results achieved by VSP more widely, including within and from the AHC in Port Vila.

VSP staff hold extensive networks and relationships and there seem to be considerable opportunities for other Australian-funded bilateral programs in Vanuatu to learn from VSP's successes (including 'ways of working') and to leverage these networks, which should be further explored. It is particularly important that DFAT/AHC Port Vila be across these linkages and to facilitate collaboration between different DFAT programs, including with regional programs such as the Australia Pacific Training Coalition (APTC), where there are opportunities to do so.

Sustainability: What is needed to ensure sustainability of the results achieved by the VSP over the long-term?

There are many factors that have contributed to the success and potential sustainability of VSP. While some drivers relate to technical approaches necessary for the development of an effective skills system, the majority and most important are linked to the way in which VSP works to ensure long lasting, locally-owned systemic change. These factors include:

- **A long-term commitment on the part of the Australian government** to the goal of a quality assured, demand driven skills system in Vanuatu within a broader vision of national human resource development and improved service delivery. This has allowed time for lessons to be learned, successes to be built on and trusted relationships to form between key parties.
- **A genuine commitment to localisation and nurturing local leadership from the beginning of the Partnership**, driven from within the team, supported by DFAT and, since the last phase, enabled by the innovative Support Contractor model.
- In Phase 4, **strong partnership principles** have underpinned the team's way of working including relationship brokering, establishing a shared vision through planning, co-design and co-contributions from all partners.
- **A decentralised approach** from the beginning has given the Partnership the ability to demonstrate tangible results in terms of how an effective skills system can deliver inclusive, demand driven training at the community level, attracting industry stakeholders and strengthening the linkages between national and provincial level governments.
- **VSP has remained flexible, adaptive and responsive**, ensuring it remains both relevant to the Government of Vanuatu's reform agenda and also on-message with Australia's development policy directions.
- **As 'skills' is now recognised as a key driver for the economic and social growth of Vanuatu across government, working through the vector of skills continues to be an advantage** for ensuring broad-based buy-in and achieving lasting systemic change.

For VSP to evolve and expand in scope, scale and impact in the future, the evaluation identified several adjustments that need to take place as part of a long-term vision for VSP. These include:

- stepping up VSP's support for whole-of-government coordination of skills development at the national level and expanding its formal partnership arrangements with PMO/Department of Strategic Policy, Planning and Aid Coordination (DSPPAC);
- developing formalised functions/administrative relationships within key sectors to coordinate skills demand and focus on vertical and horizontal linkages and networks;
- supporting the transfer of the VSP Skills Development Fund to operate within government (for GoV and all donors); and

- continuing to push for/incentivise the establishment of a nationally resourced skills sector management system, including provincial Skills Centres in all provinces and necessary staffing 'on budget'.

DFAT has a significant role to play in complementary policy dialogue with key Ministries and changes to systems and processes that will support the above adjustments. While MoET may remain a key partner in supporting skills development, particularly through the resourcing of the provincial Skills Centres, a shift to having PMO as the DFAT's Subsidiary Arrangement counterpart or co-counterpart with the MoET would reflect the current trajectory of GoV and the realities already taking place in the ways of working of both the GoV and VSP. VSP has already increased its cross-sector linkages with new Partnership Implementation Frameworks with several departments but more work is necessary at the national level to build capacity within these departments to coordinate skills demand and explore relevant provincial and national linkages that will continue to drive economic and social growth. Moreover, this transition would bolster the 'crowding in' support from other Government Ministries that is already occurring and may also incentivise MoET to step up its efforts in terms of demonstrating its leadership in the sector and possibly increasing its co-contributions.

The creation of a Direct Funding Arrangement between DFAT and PMO (or DLA) for Skills Partnership activities would provide increased flexibility for VSP to respond to emergencies and absorb recovery funds and, more importantly, could mark the beginnings of a formalised Skills Development Fund that GoV Ministries could contribute to, as well as other donors. Further analysis is needed to assess whether this sit with PMO or DLA.

Within the AHC in Port Vila, there are advantages for VSP to be framed under a broader systems reform agenda (rather than just as an education aid program) that prioritises the strengthening of a national skills system but also acknowledges its central role in Vanuatu's economic recovery and longer-term development. The strategic re-positioning of VSP i.e., recognising its broader contribution to economic recovery and influence at the central level, will signify not only a significant elevation of VSP but also result in an elevation of the role and relevance of the broader bilateral relationship in the decentralisation agenda, and closer ties between VSP and the PMO. Support for coordination in a whole-of-government response to Vanuatu's development will be mutually advantageous for both Vanuatu and Australia.

Finally, to meet both GoV and GoA expectations in terms of supporting both governments deliver on their national policies, **the Partnership needs to continue to be provided with the authorising environment in place from DFAT to be responsive to evolving contextual priorities.** The mandate and trust granted to VSP by DFAT over many years has been a key factor in enabling the Partnership to think and working politically, align to Vanuatu's interests, and be effective in achieving systemic change.

Summary of recommendations

Relevance

- 1) VSP with the support of DFAT/AHC Port Vila, should continue to evolve and align itself with interested Government Ministries and departments working at the provincial and national level to support economic recovery and deliver on human resource development for Vanuatu's 2030 NSDP. This includes VSP establishing the necessary relationships (formal and informal), particularly with PMO (DSPPAC) and also DLA, and providing ongoing whole of government coordination and strengthening of vertical and horizontal linkages.

- 2) In the event of future disasters, VSP should be recognised as a pivotal humanitarian response network by DFAT/GoV, including its capability to provide initial surge capacity to key provincial level actors, withdrawing as government resources step up.

Effectiveness

- 3) VSP should undertake a refresh of its Program Logic and MEL framework in light of the changes to the context (whole of government approach, TC Harold and COVID-19), particularly at the LTO level, and together with the Spheres of Change, this should be used to steer VSP's investment decisions for the remainder of VSP Phase 4.
- 4) VSP should adopt a more flexible approach to using the Program Logic in its assessments of and reporting on progress. The balance of VSP's reporting should then shift from activity-level results to consideration of systemic change/reform in the skills system (both demand-side and supply-side) and then focus on the evidence for VSP's contribution to that change (using the IOs where it makes sense to do so).
- 5) VSP should continue to develop and improve monitoring tools as required and strengthen data management processes to ensure the information is being integrated into the MIS.
- 6) VSP should strengthen its approach to reflection and learning, including deepening its understanding of what hasn't worked and why, and ensure these processes occur more frequently through the year. This could also include a more formal annual review and reflection process with GoV partners.

Efficiency

- 7) A 'ways of working' document, including a risk assessment which identifies risks and agreed mitigation strategies to the current arrangements, should be developed and agreed by all key stakeholders (VSP, Scope Global, the Strategic Adviser, and DFAT/AHC Port Vila).
- 8) DFAT/AHC Port Vila should consider a modest increase to the 'core' funding it provides VSP from its bilateral aid program budget for Vanuatu. This would provide greater certainty to VSP, strengthening the incentives for VSP to increase the capacity of its core team, including expanding the Senior Management Team.
- 9) VSP's reporting requirements to DFAT/AHC Port Vila should be jointly reviewed and streamlined where possible.
- 10) DFAT/AHC Port Vila should identify opportunities for collaboration between VSP and other Australian-funded bilateral and regional programs in Vanuatu.

Sustainability

- 11) VSP should continue to support the GoV with the establishment of a national decentralised skills system architecture including Skills Centres in the two remaining provinces (Shefa and Penama). This support should, however, remain contingent on adequate co-contributions from MoET and also consider contributions from other Government ministries benefitting from the expansion.
- 12) DFAT/AHC Port Vila should increase the elevation of VSP within the AHC and support the framing of VSP under a broader system reform agenda that prioritises the strengthening of a national skills system but also acknowledges its central role in Vanuatu's economic recovery and longer-term development. This would involve DFAT/AHC Port Vila drawing on and learning from VSP's ways of working, particularly the team's understanding of the local political economy and recognising VSP as a key interlocutor with national government.

- 13)** Through further analysis, DFAT/AHC Port Vila should explore the establishment a Direct Funding Arrangement with a second GoV partner (beyond MoET) to, in the short term, provide additional flexibility for VSP to respond to different opportunities, including for emergency/disaster response and recovery and longer term facilitate the transfer of the Skills Development Fund, currently managed by VSP over to GoV.
- 14)** DFAT/AHC Port Vila should continue to ensure the necessary authorising environment remains in place to enable VSP to continue to be flexible, responsive and adaptive to contextual priorities.

List of Acronyms

AHC	Australian High Commission
APTC	Australia Pacific Training Coalition
AQC	Aid Quality Check
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DSPPAC	Department of Strategic Policy, Planning and Aid Coordination
EOCs	Emergency Operations Centres
GoA	Government of Australia
GoV	Government of Vanuatu
HOM	Head of Mission
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IO	Intermediate Outcome
KEQ	Key Evaluation Question
LTO	Long Term Outcome
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MIS	Management Information System
MoET	Ministry of Education and Training
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NHRD	National Human Resource Development
NSDP	National Sustainable Development Plan (2016 –2030)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PIF	Partnership Implementation Framework
PMO	Prime Minister’s Office
PSET	Post-School Education and Training
RTC	Rural Training Centre
SG	Secretary General
TC	Tropical Cyclone
TED	Tertiary Education Directorate
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
VQA	Vanuatu Qualifications Authority
VSP	Vanuatu Skills Partnership

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1. Introduction

Purpose of the evaluation

This evaluation of the Vanuatu Skills Partnership (VSP) has been commissioned by Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), specifically the Australian High Commission (AHC) in Port Vila and took place over the period October 2020 to January 2021. The evaluation comes as VSP passes the mid-point of the current (fourth) phase and DFAT and the VSP team consider progress made to date and lessons learned, as well as seek to inform decisions around the investment beyond January 2022 (current contract end date), in particular, a possible extension with the current contractor. The last independent evaluation of VSP was conducted in 2015¹¹.

As per the Terms of Reference (see Annex 1), the evaluation's primary purpose is investment improvement by assessing and making recommendations to maximise the effectiveness¹² and sustainability¹³ of the Partnership. This includes an analysis of the appropriateness of VSP's Program Logic and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) framework, as well as the structure (modality) and level of resourcing (budget, human resources and contractor support). All of this is considered in light of the Partnership's evolving influence and scale, the current political economy, and potential for enhanced impact.

The two secondary purposes of the evaluation are (i) accountability: to provide an independent assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of Australia's contribution through VSP; and **(ii) knowledge generation:** to capture lessons for broader application from this locally-led, politically-aware initiative.

The key audience for this evaluation is DFAT Post (program managers in the AHC Port Vila and HOM as Delegate), DFAT Canberra and the VSP team. Secondary users will be the Government of Vanuatu (GoV), the public (Australia and Vanuatu) and other development actors.

Program Overview

The VSP or simply 'the Partnership' is a locally-led, politically-aware initiative that aims to achieve service delivery reform for human resource development in Vanuatu, through the vector of the national Post-School Education and Training (PSET) system¹⁴. The Partnership is a long-standing co-investment between the GoA and the GoV, with a fourth phase of implementation agreed from 2017–2021. It directly supports key policy objectives of both Vanuatu and Australia, including those articulated in *Vanuatu 2030: The People's Plan - National Sustainable Development Plan 2016 – 2030*¹⁵, *Australia's 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper*, and the *Australia-Vanuatu Aid Partnership Arrangement 2016-2019*¹⁶. In particular, the Partnership has been well positioned to respond to the more recent changes in context and policy settings outlined in the *Vanuatu Recovery Strategy 2020 – 2023*, *Yumi Evriwan Tugeta (July 2020)* and *Australia's COVID-19 Response Plan (for Vanuatu)* as part of *Partnerships for Recovery: Australia's COVID-19 Development Response*¹⁷. The Partnership

¹¹ *Independent Evaluation of the TVET Sector Strengthening Program* (Schofield et al, 2015)

¹² Effectiveness will be considered in relation to both (i) progress towards long-term outcomes and (ii) any other broader progress or impact.

¹³ Sustainability is considered within the context of VSP's service provision outcomes and value add and not simply taken to mean 'capable of operating without DFAT funding'.

¹⁴ The GoV refers interchangeably to both the PSET system and the skills system. The Partnership therefore uses both terms as well.

¹⁵ *Vanuatu 2030: The People's Plan – National Sustainable Development Plan 2016-2030* (DSSPAC, 2016).

¹⁶ *Australia-Vanuatu Aid Partnership Arrangement 2016-2019* (DFAT, 2016).

¹⁷ Vanuatu COVID-19 Development Response plan (DFAT, 2020) See <https://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/development/vanuatu-covid-19-development-response-plan> (Accessed December 2020)

has a Subsidiary Arrangement with the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET), under which it has established provincial Skills Centres in Sanma, Malampa, Torba and Tafea provinces.

The Partnership has been working since 2005 to improve access to skills and markets that lead to economic prosperity for ni-Vanuatu, targeting provincial and outer island communities and through strategies that promote participation of women, people with disabilities and people with low language, literacy and numeracy levels. The provincial Skills Centres established by the Partnership now act as the MoET's decentralised service delivery arms, functioning as skills training brokers between demand and supply: local training providers and industry coaches are contracted by the Centres to supply in-demand skills to support inclusive and sustainable entrepreneurship and employment in priority productive sectors, in flexible ways and at quality assured standards.

The Partnership has evolved significantly over time, building on gains and responding to changes in policy settings, context, government demand and in particular the current dual crisis impacting Vanuatu caused by COVID-19 and Tropical Cyclone (TC) Harold. Based on its experience of what approaches work and also evidence-based international literature on development effectiveness, **the Partnership operates at two complementary levels. From a technical perspective**, the Partnership seeks to demonstrate, in target productive sectors, how effectively managed skills training service delivery can lead to locally relevant, sustainable and inclusive economic growth outcomes at the provincial level, in line with the GoV's decentralisation agenda. Demonstrating such results in collaboration with government departments enables the Partnership to influence skills delivery systems and policies, and advocate and build demand for wholesale human resource development system reform, including resourcing, based on these good management approaches.

However, the Partnership also operates in a broader 'political' sphere and is recognised as one of DFAT's few truly adaptive programs. Consistent with Australia's explicit prioritisation of supporting local leadership under its *Partnerships for Recovery*¹⁸ and DFAT's mainstreaming governance strategy¹⁹; it supports the emergence and networking of a cohort of developmental leaders committed and equipped to contribute to broad-based governance reform for the achievement of national development goals – stability, sustainability and prosperity. In this way, the Partnership aims to function as a 'leadership incubator' – providing a 'safe space' for the equipping and nurturing of local change agents.

The Partnership has recently revised its Program Logic (see Annex 2). The goal of the Partnership is:

"an accessible and high-quality skills system that contributes to a fair, prosperous, and sustainable Vanuatu".

VSP is working to progress four Long-Term Outcomes (LTOs)²⁰ through Phase 4, including:

1. Government resources, processes and developmental leaders support effective management of a quality assured and inclusive skills system
2. A diversity of ni-Vanuatu people have access to and benefit from inclusive and high quality skills training
3. Sustainable social, economic, and cultural benefits for clients, their families and communities
4. Sustainable growth in target productive sectors at the provincial level

¹⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁹ Effective Governance: Strategy for Australia's aid investments (DFAT, 2015)

²⁰ Note this goal and LTOs are from February 2020 and have been updated since the original Phase 4 design.

The Partnership is administratively supported by a Support Contractor, Scope Global (AUD 20,065,000, September 2017 – January 2022)²¹. The contract between DFAT and Scope Global contains an option for DFAT to extend the term of the contract for up to four years from 31 January 2022 (Clause 2.3). A Strategic Adviser for the Partnership is contracted directly by DFAT until 31 January 2021.

Context for the evaluation

As many countries across the globe continue to fight a second or third wave of COVID-19, and many are re-defining themselves post-crisis, Vanuatu belongs to small group of countries which is yet to experience community transmission of the virus (as of December 2020). This current status has given Vanuatu additional time to prepare for any future outbreak. Complete border closures, however, are having social and economic impacts as the country is highly dependent on overseas markets for its finance, trade and tourism as well as its food supply. The impact of closed borders from March 2020 is accelerated by the destructive Category 5 TC Harold in April 2020, leaving the country facing two crises. The GoV estimates the combined economic cost of COVID-19 and TC Harold at VUV68.1 billion (\$850 million)²². Meanwhile, the GoV has had to prepare for a potential health crisis should a COVID-19 outbreak occur. This dual crisis sits within the broader context of Vanuatu's long-term development challenges – distance from major markets, climate change and disaster vulnerability, a small formal labour market, limited economic diversification and lower-than-average Human Capital Index ratings for the Pacific²³.

In the midst of the dual crisis, Vanuatu elected a new government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Bob Loughman. Prime Minister Loughman is a long-time ally of the Partnership. He was former Minister for Education and strongly supported the transitioning of the skills portfolio into the Ministry during this time.

Evaluation Scope and Methodology

In the initial planning phase and in consultation with VSP and DFAT, the evaluation team reviewed the key evaluation questions (KEQs) in the Terms of Reference (Annex 1) and made some refinements, most notably to develop four KEQs with a series of sub-questions to guide further investigation and discussion. This revised framing of the KEQs allowed for greater flexibility and less duplication in the report write up while also ensuring the key interest areas for DFAT and VSP were captured.

In line with the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) guidelines on evaluations, the integrated KEQs provide a structure to the report that aligns evidence against effectiveness, sustainability, relevance and efficiency. This format will also align with reporting requirements as per DFAT's annual aid quality checks (AQC). Given the level of mainstreaming of cross-cutting themes, evidence related to these themes has been mainstreamed through the report.

As articulated in the Evaluation Plan, the main methods/tools used by the evaluation team were as follows:

- Review of key documents and data (See Annex 3);

²¹ Following a 'false start' with a previous managing contractor in 2017, DFAT entered a contract with Scope Global to provide services as the 'support contractor' for VSP from 18 September 2017 – 31 January 2022

²² Vanuatu COVID-19 Development Response plan (DFAT, 2020) See <https://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/development/vanuatu-covid-19-development-response-plan> (Accessed December 2020)

²³ *Ibid*

- Stakeholder interviews (conducted remotely) (See [Annex 4](#)); and
- Reflection, validation and synthesis.

After pre-mission briefings from DFAT staff at the Australian High Commission and the VSP Senior Management Team, a ‘virtual’ mission took place from the 2-17 November 2020. A total of 61 interviews were conducted through teleconference or other platforms involving 70 key informants. Demonstrating the breadth of the Partnership, key informants were from both provincial and national level government, across six Ministries, five provinces, four DFAT Programs (bilateral and regional), local NGOs, a Rural Training Centre, the National TVET Provider and one international NGO. The team consisted of Belynda McNaughton (Team Leader), Stuart Kinsella (Monitoring and Evaluation Expert) and Scott Tavi (Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) representative).

It should be noted that Dr Julien Barbara from the Australian National University (ANU) also joined the evaluation team in some interviews as he collected data for a research piece on, *“How the Vanuatu Skills Partnership is influencing local-level governance and decentralised service delivery in Vanuatu.”* This follows on from a previous research paper published in 2018, *“Thinking and working politically in the Vanuatu Skills sector: supporting local leadership and building a political constituency for change”*²⁴.

Limitations

The main limitation of the evaluation was that stakeholder interviews needed to be conducted remotely by the evaluation team. While online platforms such as Zoom and WebEx were utilised as much as possible, there are significant downsides to not being ‘in the room’ during interviews with key stakeholders and also there were no opportunities for informal discussions that might take place ‘in the corridor’. This also extended to the evaluation team itself, who were working from different parts of Australia and needed to review data and analyse information through online platforms.

The evaluation team also acknowledges the broader context in which the evaluation was taking place in Vanuatu, most notably in terms of COVID-19 and also the response to Tropical Cyclone Harold from earlier in 2020.

²⁴ See http://www.vanuatutvet.org.vu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Barbara-Research_FINAL_April-19-2.pdf (Accessed December 2020)

2. Findings against the Key Evaluation Questions (KEQ)

Relevance

1. To what extent is the Vanuatu Skills Partnership well-positioned and able to respond to GoA and GoV priorities, particularly in a post COVID-19 setting and in response to TC Harold?

1.1. To what extent is the VSP aligned with, and contributing to, the policy settings of the GoV (including its national reform agenda) and the GoA (including its Partnerships for Recovery framework), particularly in a post COVID-19 context, and how could this be increased?

Discussions with key informants clearly highlighted the Partnership's **strong alignment with the GoA's policy directions and increasing relevance to GoV's national reform agenda**. The current dual crisis context has further underscored this, with the Partnership demonstrating its agility in responding to COVID-19 and TC Harold while continuing to play a critical role in the longer term, shared goal of achieving a stable, sustainable and prosperous Vanuatu.

Alignment with GoA

Aligning with the *Pacific Step-up*²⁵ and *Australia's COVID-19 Development Response Plan (for Vanuatu)* relies on flexibility of Australia's aid investments and robust and trust-based people to people partnerships. These features are inherent to VSP and enable the team to work with the GoV to support COVID-19 preparedness, mitigate economic shocks and establish a stable base from which Vanuatu can rebuild²⁶. **The Partnership is well positioned to support all three pillars of Australia's development response plan**, in particular, economic recovery. There were four main areas highlighted by key DFAT informants as underpinning Australia's current economic recovery response to COVID-19 and TC Harold in Vanuatu. These included:

1. Backing the Government of Vanuatu's macro stimulus support package through direct budget support;
2. Supporting big infrastructure initiatives;
3. Increasing Labour mobility; and
4. Revitalising economic growth at the local level.

Examples of what VSP has already achieved (and potential future opportunities) that align with revitalising economic growth at the local level and Australia's COVID-19 Development Response Plan more broadly are highlighted throughout this report. VSP has established a strong base to support economic recovery including relevant networks, industry links, provincial Skills Centres and strong teams across all levels (community, provincial, national). It has already pivoted its efforts in the emergency phase to the productive sectors necessary to drive growth within the new context and is supporting enhanced food security in rural areas affected by TC Harold. In addition, while already a major focus of the Partnership, disability inclusive approaches, women's economic empowerment and support for women in leadership are being bolstered through existing networks and experience working at both the community and government level, including through a strong connection to DFAT's new Balance of Power program. Finally, through the locally led team and the advantages this

²⁵ See <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/stepping-up-australias-engagement-with-our-pacific-family.pdf> (Accessed December 2020)

²⁶ Australia's COVID-19 Development Response Plan (for Vanuatu) (DFAT, 2020) See <https://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/development/vanuatu-covid-19-development-response-plan> (Accessed December 2020)

brings, Australia will have the ability to further embed localisation of its support, enhance its 'authentic partnership' credentials, and demonstrate its alignment to the GoV's own Recovery Strategy²⁷.

In relation to labour mobility, while VSP has in the past supported seasonal workers with their reintegration and entrepreneurship, there wasn't a strong sense from GoV that VSP would play a large role in an increased labour mobility program with Australia. This was the result of the current labour mobility programs, in their view, not necessarily aligning with the intended purpose of labour mobility outlined in the new National Human Resource Development Plan²⁸.

Alignment with GoV

The Partnership's current phase (and design) was originally positioned to support the Government's *Post-Secondary Education and Training (PSET) policy*, developed with Partnership assistance in 2016. However, the Partnership's success, attributed largely to its ability to think and work politically and build coalitions for change (see [Section 4.1](#)), has seen it pro-actively adapt to expand into influencing broader service delivery and governance systems – which reflects the GoV's evolving view of skills as foundational to the country's human resource development and the nation-building aims of *Vanuatu 2030 (NSDP)*. In particular, the recognition of the centrality of skills (both sector specific and cross-cutting, for example, leadership and management) to economic development has made it a clear priority for all government departments.

Senior GoV officials recognise the Partnership as **directly contributing to the goals and policy objectives outlined in *Vanuatu 2030 (NSDP)***. Success according to the GoV is highly dependent on collective ownership of this national development plan and collaborative partnerships between the people, government, community leaders, businesses and civil society. Collaborative partnerships, along with the three integrated pillars of society, environment and economy prioritised in the plan, very much reflect the integrated and systems-based 'way of working' of the Partnership.

In direct response to the NSDP and as part of an increasing awareness of skills as a critical driver to Vanuatu's development, the government - again with support from the Partnership and DFAT's Governance for Growth program - has produced **the country's first *National Human Resource Development (NHRD) Plan***²⁹. This HRD plan builds on the work of the GoV, supported by the Partnership over the last decade, to build a demand-driven, inclusive skills system. The Partnership's influence and future support, particularly the role of the Skills Centres - now firmly part of the MoET's education and training system - are explicitly mentioned in the plan. Skills development has consequently now become a whole of government priority, led by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). This shift not only reflects the value placed on skills as an economic driver but also the importance of both supply and demand in a skills system and the need for a holistic, coordinated systems-based approach across government. The plan highlights the current skills gaps crucial for Vanuatu's development and provides a clear articulation of where government and donors should be focusing its efforts to address the 'skills crisis'³⁰ currently facing Vanuatu.

The recent disasters of TC Harold and COVID-19 have further demonstrated the relevance of the Partnership in terms of the primacy of skills in a recovery context as well as ways of working that prioritise strong relationships and networks and an ability to make national-provincial-community

²⁷ *Vanuatu Recovery Strategy 2020 – 2023*, Yumi Evriwan Tugeta (PMO, July 2020)

²⁸ Vanuatu 2030 National Human Resource Development Plan, Government of Vanuatu. (2019). See <https://vcci.vu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/VANUATU-NHRDP-draft-0119.pdf> (Accessed December 2020)

²⁹ Vanuatu 2030 National Human Resource Development Plan, Government of Vanuatu. (2019). See <https://vcci.vu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/VANUATU-NHRDP-draft-0119.pdf> (Accessed December 2020)

³⁰ See https://dailypost.vu/news/local-skills-shortage/article_6f09a7a0-1c9f-11eb-945b-07ed8f6c7fcc.html

linkages. VSP received the highest of accolades³¹ from the GoV in recognition of its support for Vanuatu's locally led response to TC Harold. As the GoV, both at national and provincial levels increasingly has seen what VSP can offer, particularly in relation to building local resilience through facilitating partnerships in priority areas such as Food Security and Agribusiness, there are now even higher expectations for VSP to **support GoV through the vector of skills in its Recovery Phase**. The current Prime Minister is injecting more than a billion vatu into the agriculture sector³² and VSP is well placed to amplify the impact of new agrarian initiatives through its national-provincial-community linkages and networks. Moreover, VSP's role is expected by the GoV to expand and evolve, continuing beyond the immediate recovery, to be a key contributor to Vanuatu's ongoing Vanuatu 2030 development goals.

However, for VSP to ensure ongoing optimal alignment with GoV priorities, the Partnership's 'positioning' and structures need to evolve along with the government's elevation of the skills agenda. The importance the GoV now places on skills is evident from the recent policies and a shift from this agenda being perceived not just as a MoET responsibility but a whole of government priority that requires high-level coordination across a number of sectors, Government Ministries and other agencies in both the public and private sectors. This shift reinforces the increasing recognition of the Partnership's long-time emphasis on skills that are truly demand driven by industry and the value add that is achieved from combining accredited training (formal) with coaching and business development from both private and public sector industry experts (non-formal). In this way, as skills/human resource development is elevated and acknowledged within the GoV as a cross-sector driver of nation's recovery and future prosperity, VSP needs to be similarly positioned at this level – not as a simply an initiative of the MoET. It is also critical that the drivers within VSP that have played a large part in this elevation process are protected and reinforced. These drivers are highlighted further in [Section 4.1](#)

1.2. How has the VSP adapted to changes in the context and to what extent is this considered to be appropriate? What are the opportunities for VSP to support economic recovery and/or respond to other crises in the future?

Adaptations

VSP has been adapting to its context constantly since its inception and is a key feature of its modus operandi. This has been enabled in part through its design and but also many other factors that have been built up over time.

As momentum has built for targeted skills development, demand for non-formal, complementary training including coaching and entrepreneurship has seen VSP facilitate increased engagement from industry in skills development. Through its extensive networks and convening power, VSP has been responsible for bringing together relevant departments and the private sector to meet the skills demand beyond accredited training courses. In addition, key informants described a notable shift in Phase 4, as VSP became known as the 'Partnership', modelling best practice partnership and coordination principles across government and the private sector. This is discussed further in [Section 3.1](#).

³¹ Key informant interviews and Vanuatu Skills Partnership (2020), *Partnerships for Localised Response: The Vanuatu's Skills Partnership's contribution to the Government of Vanuatu's TC Harold Response*.

³² See announcement <http://www.pina.com.fj/?p=pacnews&m=read&o=3149171945fc98fd27fb5d2fbb25>

In response to demand and a recognition that reform in any sector requires incentivising leadership³³ and good governance³⁴, VSP has used its credibility and trusted local expertise and networks to address other bottlenecks to improve service delivery for all. Within the leadership 'Sphere of Change' that VSP developed as part of its new Program Logic ([Annex 2](#)), VSP has supported provincial planning, sectoral management and leadership in a variety of innovative ways. Adaptive leadership³⁵ workshops in both Sanma and Malampa province have provided a range of leaders across different sectors including new Area Administrators with a new framework that focuses on exercising leadership rather than authority and emphasises collective action to bring about change. In Malampa, the Balance of Power-facilitated session was also used to show case the leadership competency and legitimacy of the female Skills Centre Manager, changing perceptions about the role of women in leadership. Increased demand for provincial planning support before TC Harold in Sanma to institutionalise sector gains to date resulted in VSP placing a 'culturally savvy' planning adviser in the office of the Secretary General. All of these initiatives are already having a flow-on effect beyond the skills system to improved provincial planning and emerging coalitions for change in line with national development objectives. Lessons have been learned from all of these innovative approaches that continue to inform VSP's way of working and program adaptations.

Critically, the Partnership has recruited strategically and invested heavily in professional development for its team, which has positioned them to effectively respond to TC Harold. **Strong leadership and organisational management skills of the team were seen as highly transferable during the Emergency Response phase.** As a result, VSP quickly provided surge capacity through its own human resources to support Malampa and Sanma provinces manage a locally led response. The Partnership supported the respective Secretary Generals set up their Emergency Operations Centre, coordinate assessments and provide logistical support. VSP had the agility to reallocate its own budget to fill gaps and respond to most urgent demands at provincial level. The Partnership quickly pivoted to an increased productive sector focus, in particular prioritising food security through local networks, and began engaging with new Ministries/Departments including Health and Water Resources. Innovative stimulus grants saw the exposure of high-end handicrafts from Torba and Malampa being sold out in few days during a Port Vila Handicrafts Exposition. Fortuitous international adviser networks have secured timely access to international markets, including, for example, a bulk NZ order for the Sanma headwear works-stream, which has kept incomes steady for hat production Skills Centre clients during the downturn in tourism.

Ongoing Support for Vanuatu's Recovery Phase

There are ongoing opportunities for the Partnership to support Vanuatu's economic recovery, particularly building on existing target sector and pivots during the emergency response phase outlined above.

VSP has continued to demonstrate the importance of looking at the full value chain in its approach to 'skills for economic growth' and this will continue to be a priority during the recovery. VSP has proven itself as a 'test lab' where new ideas and partnerships can be developed to strengthen critical

³³ Andrews, Matt. *The limits of institutional reform in development: Changing rules for realistic solutions*. Cambridge University Press, 2013.

³⁴ Pritchett, Lant, Michael Woolcock, and Matt Andrews. "Capability traps in development: How initiatives to improve administrative systems succeed at failing." *Prism* 3.3 (2012): 63-74.

³⁵ Adaptive leadership is a practice for helping mobilise members of an organisation or community to adapt to significant change. It emphasises the importance of adaptation to a complex and rapidly changing environment, and focuses on creating the circumstances for good leadership and problem solving. See <https://www.anzsog.edu.au/resource-library/research/what-is-adaptive-leadership> (Accessed December 2020)

elements of the value chain and also demonstrate the value of mainstreaming inclusion. As part of the recovery phase, there is an ongoing role for more testing of new approaches, as well as supporting the expansion and/or adaptation of successful models. The development of the Malampa Handicraft Centre has resulted in Vanuatu's first community company, a model which was subsequently adapted for VSP's support in creating the country's second community company, the Sanma Creative Industries Community Company. Although affected by the downturn in tourism, the benefits of this model can be explored for other sectors, and this is already occurring in the partnership brokered by VSP between the Vanuatu Institute of Technology (VIT) and Lume Rural Training Centre (RTC). Within the handicrafts sector, ongoing support is needed to diversify products for the domestic market (taking advantage of Vanuatu's recent plastic ban) and explore ongoing opportunities in the high-end export market³⁶. A recent assessment of pandanus trees after TC Harold has highlighted the need for immediate re-planting to ensure stocks can meet future demand. Support for replanting aligns with climate change resilience and could be an extension of the 2019 Pandanus replanting pilot project in Malekula.

Vanuatu's Department of Tourism has already started work in May to develop a short-term blueprint for preserving tourist destinations and preparing to welcome tourists again. This revolves around immediate safety, response and economic recovery and is likely to involve re-training of staff in hygiene and safety, new equipment and adapted cleaning products. Given VSP's experience and extensive networks in this sector, including its new relationship with the Ministry of Health, it will be well placed to provide on-going support.

There is strong demand for on-going provincial support for planning, in particular, supporting the machinery of government necessary for further decentralisation of service delivery, which has become increasingly important for power-holders within the GoV and in line with Vanuatu 2030. Area Administrator positions, established and funded by the Department of Local Authorities, are gradually being put in place to support provincial reach. Once established, many Area Administrators require support to mobilise limited resources and networks to address the identified needs – especially skills - that arise as part of a community profiling process. The Partnership has demonstrated its ability to reach those rural and remote areas that government services struggle to, and new Area Administrator positions offer a resource already in situ that, with appropriate support, can provide more equitable service delivery beyond urban centres.

Further examples of new opportunities are covered in Section 4.1.

Future emergency responses

The Partnership's successful foray into supporting government's crisis response was a necessary and valued pivot that played an essential role when the government's focus shifted from business as usual. As a result of being embedded in the workings of government, particularly at the provincial level, VSP has the agility and systems and processes in place to pivot quickly along with provincial teams who, in the event of future natural disasters, will have no other option and role but to support the government's emergency response. The highly valued skills set of the VSP staff cohort also fills a gap in current capacity of many provincial officers. In addition, the VSP longstanding commitment to a way of working that doesn't step in and take over, but rather functions as a facilitator and convenor of stakeholders and catalyst for positive change, mirrors best practice humanitarian response. As with the TC Harold response, VSP's role in emergencies in the future should include providing surge capacity in the initial aftermath, which is then gradually withdrawn as government resources step up and modelling is learned from and applied. In the aftermath of a crisis, there is also a role for VSP to play in highlighting the lessons learned and supporting government systems to integrate these and improve over time to eventually respond on their own.

³⁶ As noted in Section 1, international advisers have supported the recent export of bulk order headwear to New Zealand.

Linked to this, VSP's ongoing involvement in Emergency Clusters is also a natural pivot as the main stakeholders are VSP's regular interlocutors and these meetings are used and maximised to coordinate and identify immediate priorities for support. Through the team's presence and strategic guidance to clusters, VSP's strong advocacy and expertise in disability inclusion and women's leadership also helped to influence broader ways of working among other stakeholders.

Effectiveness

2. To what extent is the Vanuatu Skills Partnership delivering outcomes that meet the needs and priorities of key stakeholders (government, institutions and community)?

2.1. To what extent is the VSP on track to deliver its Long-Term Outcomes, including in relation to cross-cutting issues such as gender, disability inclusion, governance and climate change?

In the VSP design (May 2017), a goal and seven (7) Long-Term Outcomes (LTOs) were articulated for Phase 4, with a further 10 Intermediate Outcomes (IOs) identified as being critical to the LTOs being achieved. However, following extensive consideration and discussions between key members of VSP's Senior Management Team and the MEL advisors in mid-late 2019, VSP's Program Logic was refined. The changes were made in response to shifts in the policy and operating context in Vanuatu, and to better reflect VSP's strategic focus and the types of activities it was implementing and results it was achieving. This led to a smaller number of new (but related) LTOs and IOs being agreed, while the goal of VSP Phase 4 was also revised. The revised Program Logic was attached as an Annex to VSP's Corporate Support Report 2019 and was first used by VSP as the frame for its reporting in July 2020.

As per the revised Program Logic, VSP is working to progress four Long-Term Outcomes (LTOs) through Phase 4, including:

1. Government resources, processes and developmental leaders support effective management of a quality assured and inclusive skills system
2. A diversity of ni-Vanuatu people have access to and benefit from inclusive and high quality skills training
3. Sustainable social, economic, and cultural benefits for clients, their families and communities
4. Sustainable growth in target productive sectors at the provincial level

VSP is yet to formally self-report progress towards these four LTOs, noting that VSP's mid-year progress report for 2020 was framed largely in terms of progress at the activity and IO level and focused on the immediate crisis response. However, a comprehensive review of previous performance reports coupled with extensive key informant consultations has provided this evaluation with strong evidence of results achieved, indicating that VSP is a highly effective program, has a strong brand and is widely recognised for quality. The evaluation considers that VSP is well-positioned to build off these successes and continue to make a strong contribution in the future.

Key results and progress achieved by VSP have been well documented in the various performance reports that have been submitted to DFAT in recent years. A selection of the key results achieved under each LTO is captured below³⁷. These results are not intended to be comprehensive but are included to provide a sense of the key results VSP has achieved, structured as per the four LTOs.

³⁷ Also note that key results have been captured elsewhere in this report, including in Section 1 (Relevance)

> LTO-1: *Government resources, processes and developmental leaders support effective management of a quality assured and inclusive skills system*

- **VSP played a critical role in the initial response to TC Harold in April 2020**, particularly in Sanma Province and then in Malampa, where VSP staff played a key role in coordinating the response at the provincial level and provided support with planning and logistics.
- **VSP has made important contributions to strengthening the skills system in Vanuatu.** For example:
 - Following on from its role in establishing Vanuatu's first Post-School Education and Training (PSET) policy in 2016, VSP has subsequently played a key role working with the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) to develop Vanuatu's first ever national Human Resource Development plan (2019), considered to be a critical enabler for the achievement of the GoV's National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP) to 2030.
 - VSP has also played an important role in increasing the number of registered training providers across the country (assisting rural training providers to meet the requirements of the Vanuatu Quality Assurance Framework required for registration), from 17 in 2016 to 35 in 2020, with at least one registered training provider now located on each of Vanuatu's six provinces.
- **With support from VSP, the GoV has demonstrated an increased interest and commitment to the skills system.** This is observable through:
 - Commitments made by the GoV in Partnership Implementation Frameworks agreed between VSP and key GoV Ministries (including increasing financial co-contributions made by the GoV through the Skills Development Fund)
 - Improved cooperation and coordination between the MoET through the Tertiary Education Directorate (TED) and the Vanuatu Qualifications Authority (VQA)
 - TED agreement to fund the salaries of four Provincial Training Coordinators (positions that were originally funded via VSP) within the provincial Skills Centre network – now formally integrated under the restructured Ministry of Education and Training.
- **VSP has also promoted and empowered developmental leaders**, with several former VSP staff members now working in senior level positions in the GoV, with intentional support from VSP to gain these positions. VSP also continues to facilitate the delivery of Adaptive Leadership workshops through the Skills Centres, such as in Malampa in mid-2020, which have highlighted the need for key stakeholders to work together and are catalysing collective action.

> LTO-2: *A diversity of ni-Vanuatu people have access to and benefit from inclusive and high-quality skills training*

- **VSP has engaged a wide cross-section of the population in accessing skills activities and training.** Annual performance reports to DFAT over the past two years indicate that over 60 per cent of participants in skills activities facilitated by VSP are women, while the number of people with disability who participate in skills activities have averaged between 4-7 per cent of all participants in recent years. This is for training delivered in different sectors across all four Skills Centre provinces in Vanuatu including creative industries, tourism, agribusiness and infrastructure.
- **VSP is driving innovation in the delivery of skills training to enable the system to reach a wider number of ni-Vanuatu.** Examples of this include:
 - VSP facilitated an MOU between two rural training centres (RTCs) on Malo Island to deliver a Certificate I and a Certificate II in Building Construction. This is the first time two small rural training providers have collaborated in this way, ensuring a more efficient allocation of resources, and avoiding competition in delivery of skills training.

- VSP is part of a tri-partite agreement between VSP, VIT and Lume RTC to conduct an onsite Certificate II in Building Construction in Tanna, with practical experience and course theory all delivered onsite. This will be the first time a formal qualification will be offered from a practical course like this on Tanna and involved support from VSP to reform Lume RTC's governance processes and transition to the Namas Lume Vocational Training Centre Community Company.

> *LTO-3: Sustainable social, economic, and cultural benefits for clients, their families and communities*

- **VSP's Economic and Social Analysis (Prosperity) Tool has shown that women and men, people with disabilities, and people with low levels of school education in each of the provinces and the productive sectors where skills training is provided, report improvements in their prosperity and quality of life³⁸.** For example, from 237 Skills Centre business clients surveyed by VSP in 2019, 56 per cent reported an increase in the income earned from their business, and 45 per cent reported that the level of profit made from the business had increased.

> *LTO-4: Sustainable growth in target productive sectors at the provincial level*

- **VSP has considerably broadened the number of sectors it is working in and supporting through its Skills Centres** (i.e., beyond the initial focus on tourism), with formal partnership agreements now in place with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (agribusiness), and the Department of Industry (creative industries/handicrafts) as well as the Department of Tourism.
- **VSP has played a critical role working with the productive sectors to facilitate a pivot in operations in response to both COVID-19 and TC Harold.** For example:
 - VSP (through the Malampa Skills Centre) worked in partnership with Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to respond to food shortages by contributing to community needs assessments, local procurement and distribution of food and providing access to vegetable seedlings.
 - VSP worked with the Department of Industry to organise a Handicraft Exhibition in Vila in June 2020 to promote the creative industries of Sanma, Malampa and Torba, thereby facilitating a pivot towards and ongoing focus on the domestic market following COVID-19 and decimation of the tourism industry.

VSP has also reported strong results in terms of cross-cutting issues, most notably gender equality and women's empowerment and disability inclusion. In terms of gender equality, VSP's work is guided by its 'Better Balance' strategy, which was launched in September 2019, in collaboration with the Department of Women's Affairs and DFAT's Pacific Women. Female participation rates in VSP's skills activities are relatively high, exceeding 60 per cent in both 2018 and 2019, largely reflecting the high number of female participants in Creative Industries (a sector that traditionally engages women), but also reflecting an increase in the proportion of female participants in the agribusiness sector. During interviews for this evaluation, several key informants highlighted VSP's efforts to increase female representation and participation in the skills system, and several female VSP staff noted that women were provided with opportunities to grow and encouraged to take on leadership positions within VSP itself.

'Women are encouraged to thrive and to seek support if they need it... within VSP there is room for women to grow as leaders' [VSP staff member]

³⁸ MEL Report 2019 pg. 27

Similarly, in terms of disability inclusion, VSP has created opportunities for ni-Vanuatu with disability to participate in skills training, with between 4-7 per cent of all skills training participants reported as having a disability each year since 2018³⁹. More than this, VSP has contributed to some key structural reforms that increase opportunities for ni-Vanuatu with disability within the skills system and the broader economy. For example, VSP played a key role working with the MoET to develop a first-ever TVET sector inclusion policy. It is also now working with the National Statistics Office to assist with the delivery of the national census, ensuring the inclusion of people with disability, in line with international best practice. It should also be noted that the GoV recently started funding the position of the Malampa Provincial Disability Officer (initially funded and recruited by VSP), and the same transition is expected in Torba in 2020 (VSP initially funded the position but expect the GoV will take this on from 2021). The Disability Officer in Malampa reportedly played a key role in the recovery from Cyclone Harold to ensure people with disability were not excluded from the response.

The higher order question relating to effectiveness asks the evaluation to consider whether VSP is delivering outcomes that meet the needs and priorities of key stakeholders (government, institutions and community). The answer to this question is, resoundingly, yes.

The evaluation would also suggest that VSP is ‘on track’ to achieve the LTOs as they are currently drafted, although this is not as clear cut. In part, this is because the LTOs and IOs have recently been revised and VSP are yet to report directly against them⁴⁰, although it should be noted that the annual reports for 2018 and 2019, which used the original framework, both suggest strong progress had been made at the outcome level.

‘Overall in 2019 there is strong evidence of positive results and progress being made in each of the Partnership’s long-term outcomes.’⁴¹

DFAT’s annual internal monitoring reports (Aid Quality Checks) for 2018 and 2019 also note that VSP was making good progress and that it was ‘on track’ to achieve the LTOs.

Another complicating factor is that while the Program Logic and associated MEL framework provide considerable detail at the IO level (and there is an implicit assumption that progress at the IO level necessarily means progress at the LTO level) the LTOs do not have their own definition of success or associated performance targets. Furthermore, while VSP’s previous performance reports have included comprehensive overviews of key results achieved and the challenges experienced in program delivery, they have not tended to consider cumulative progress over the Phase (or previous Phases) and how this relates to expectations, something that is particularly important for a flexible, adaptive program such as VSP.

There is also evidence that VSP’s progress has been stronger in some areas than others, which is not unexpected, although the implications for VSP’s progress against the LTOs is unclear. For example, in recent years VSP has clearly made gains responding to increased demand for ‘non-formal’ skills training/coaching along with the transfer of management and leadership skills, from the community level all the way to the provincial and national government levels, and across different sectors. This was clearly seen in the response to TC Harold where VSP staff played a critical role in supporting provincial government counterparts in the planning and coordination of the emergency response, but it was also a consistent theme through other interviews, with GoV stakeholders expressing their strong support for the ‘non-formal’ skills training and the leadership and management skills transfer provided by VSP staff in a variety of different contexts.

³⁹ MEL Report 2019 pg. 30

⁴⁰ VSP will do this for the first time in their Annual Report for 2020, due in late January 2021

⁴¹ MEL Report 2019 pg. 4

However, progress on the ‘formal’ side of skills training/strengthening of the ‘system’ (i.e. the delivery of accredited qualifications) seems to have plateaued in recent years. Several key informants expressed concern that there continues to be a large gap between the supply and demand for skills in Vanuatu, with a domestic skills shortage despite an oversupply of graduates. This is despite VSP working closely with the MoET funded Provincial Training Coordinators to try and align demand and supply for skills. Some key informants also indicated that most rural training providers are still unable to respond to changes in demand for skills and many struggle to meet the standards required to deliver accredited training. It could reasonably be argued that progress building the capacity of skills training providers in Vanuatu has been below the expectations outlined in the design, although it should also be noted that VSP has been working in step with MoET on this issue and have been careful to ensure that MoET continues to lead in this space.

It also appears that the *scope* of VSP’s work has increased in recent years, and particularly in 2020 in terms of its response to TC Harold and COVID-19. VSP’s Skills Centre Managers are empowered to respond to new opportunities as they arise, however, **there is clearly a tension between ‘doing more’ (i.e. responding to demand) and ‘going deeper’ (i.e. building on what has been done before).** And this has implications for VSP’s overall progress towards the LTOs (and, potentially, beyond the LTOs). Some key informants noted there was a risk that VSP was being so responsive it was ‘moving on’ too early, and not building on the early successes of various activities. This evaluation does not have sufficient evidence to confirm this is the case, however, it is a risk that VSP’s Senior Management Team should be mindful of during strategic planning discussions with the Skills Centre Managers and it is critical that all VSP activities do align, in some way, to the LTOs.

2.2. What unexpected results (positive or negative), if any, have been achieved?

VSP has now been operating in Vanuatu in various forms since 2005 and VSP staff appear to be highly regarded, respected and trusted by their GoV counterparts. The independent evaluation of the Vanuatu Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Sector Strengthening Program (the pre-cursor to the VSP Phase 4) identified a number of outcomes that had been achieved since the program was established in 2008⁴². It structured those outcomes at the national level, the provincial level, and the participant level. This evaluation considers there is further evidence of outcomes being achieved at all three levels since the commencement of VSP Phase 4.

In addition, several other unexpected and ‘positive’ results have been achieved, including:

- **VSP’s establishment of Skills Centres in four provinces and its extensive networks meant it was well-positioned to assist with the national government response to TC Harold in April 2020,** particularly in terms of logistics, planning and coordination of the initial emergency response at the provincial level. It should be noted that while this work does not necessarily align with a narrow definition of skills training (particularly in terms of formal, accredited training), the GoV has a much broader interpretation of ‘skills’ and considers this support provided by VSP staff to be well within its remit.
 - These same networks mean that VSP is well-positioned to support the GoV with its decentralisation agenda, including plans to strengthen service delivery and governance systems at the provincial level in coming years.
- **The knowledge and expertise that resides within VSP’s locally led team is recognised by GoV counterparts and, as such, VSP is regularly invited to provide support or participate in discussions that extend beyond the ‘formal’ skills system.** VSP is clearly considered to provide a wider range of support, management, leadership, coaching and mentoring services that can help GoV Ministries/ Departments achieve their own objectives.

⁴² Independent Evaluation of the Vanuatu TVET Sector Strengthening Program, Final Report (2015) pg. 11-12

- **Another result of being a locally-led program that nurtures leaders and provides strong professional development opportunities is that VSP has provided pathways for ni-Vanuatu to take on senior roles in the GoV, who are then well-positioned to contribute to national reform.**
- **A small number of international advisers to VSP have been able to provide access for local producers to international markets, particularly for hats and handicrafts, in addition to their technical and business advisory services.**

This evaluation identified very few unexpected ‘negative’ results to date for VSP Phase 4. It should be noted, however, that while recent momentum has been observed and resources have been directed towards cross-cutting skills such as leadership, planning and management, particularly in response to TC Harold and COVID-19, **there has been less focus and less progress on the formal side of the skills system than perhaps otherwise might have been the case.**

This evaluation would also note **one downside of the VSP Director being so highly respected and being involved in so many things is that he has serious constraints on his time**, and there have been occasions where GoV counterparts or internal VSP staff have not been able to progress certain actions in a timely fashion. This evaluation considers there is an excellent opportunity for other members of the VSP Middle Management Team to take on additional responsibilities, a suggestion which is further explored in [Section 3.3](#).

2.3. To what extent is the VSP’s Program Logic and MEL framework effectively capturing the full extent of VSP’s current and potential future impact in Vanuatu? What are the implications for the current goal and Long-Term Outcomes of the VSP?

This evaluation acknowledges that VSP has been grappling with the Program Logic and MEL framework for some time, and notes that considerable time and effort was spent updating the Program Logic in late 2019. Developing a Program Logic and MEL framework for a responsive, adaptive program, where the operating environment is complex and the pathways to change are uncertain and developing something that is *useful* for determining the extent to which a program is on track to achieve its LTOs is a difficult task. This evaluation is also mindful of the recommendation made in the independent evaluation of the VTSSP in 2015 that, for Phase 4, *“the logic must be more explicit about what outputs each Program input is intended to lead to (such as the application of skills and competencies by trained participants), and the impacts each outcome is intended to contribute to (such as increased income)”*⁴³. In the view of the evaluation team, this recommendation clearly informed the Program Logic included in the VSP Phase 4 Design.

This evaluation notes that the design for VSP Phase 4 is quite broad in its scope. The design provides a clear mandate for VSP to be working in three priority areas of the skills system, aligned with Vanuatu’s national PSET policy (2016-2020), including ‘strategic direction’, ‘system oversight’ and ‘service delivery’. And much of VSP’s work does seem to align with, and progress, these three priority areas.

In the view of this evaluation, however, the LTOs and IOs included in both the initial design and then in the revised Program Logic present a somewhat narrower set of outcomes and the pathways to achieving them appear to have been applied quite rigidly (although this has been addressed to some extent in the revisions made to the Program Logic in late 2019, particularly to the goal and the LTOs). And while VSP’s engagement is, largely, consistent with the three priority areas identified in the design, the results achieved through this engagement do not always easily align with the LTOs and the IOs as they are currently drafted.

⁴³ Independent Evaluation of the Vanuatu TVET Sector Strengthening Program, Final Report (2015) pg. 17

As a result, VSP has been grappling with how to align *some* of what it is doing and the results it is achieving against the Program Logic and within its associated performance reporting. Clearly, some of its work and results achieved, such as the skills transfer to provincial government through the emergency response to TC Harold, or its success in fostering developmental leaders, does not fit neatly into this pre-determined framework. This has the potential to raise unfair questions of VSP and its effectiveness.

This evaluation is mindful that while VSP is by design a flexible, responsive, adaptive program, there still needs to be clarity around the LTOs that it is seeking to achieve, and this needs to inform VSP's work going forward. There is a risk that because VSP is so responsive to demand from the GoV it could go beyond its remit for skills, even allowing for a much broader interpretation of 'skills' development and transfer. This is particularly the case for the activities delivered through the Skills Centres; this evaluation would note that during interviews, several staff offered the view that VSP was much more than a skills program and indicated that as long as the case could be made that an activity would contribute to improved livelihoods in their province that it would be supported.

That said, this evaluation would contend that the more critical issue is that greater flexibility needs to be afforded by VSP in the way that it applies the Program Logic to consider and report on progress for it to be a genuinely useful tool. Feedback from VSP staff ahead of preparations for VSP's Annual Report for 2020 indicated that *all* VSP activities/outputs had to align with at least one of the seven IOs in the Program Logic, and an extensive mapping exercise had been undertaken to try and achieve this. This approach is consistent with the recommendation made in the previous evaluation of the program (i.e. that the links between outputs to outcomes should be explicit) but, in practice, has proven to be very difficult for VSP to action and is a highly resource intensive exercise to undertake. The IOs are an important aspect of a Program Logic, and the IOs included in the current Program Logic are all useful markers of progress towards the LTOs, but it is important to recognise that they may not be the *only* pathway between VSP's activities and progress made towards the LTOs.

Viewing the IOs as *plausible* indicators of progress, rather than the only pathways for the LTOs to be achieved, would provide VSP with much greater flexibility to consider progress (using the IOs where it makes sense to do so), and would encourage VSP to shift its focus to a deeper consideration of progress at the LTO level. This is fully consistent with the VSP design, which emphasises VSP's commitment '*to work through a responsive and opportunistic 'process approach' rather than focus on the achievement of predetermined, externally-defined milestones*'⁴⁴.

Going forward, in light of the recent changes to the operating context and the opportunities for VSP that has created, most notably from TC Harold and the implications of COVID-19 but also a much stronger recognition from the GoV of the importance of 'skills' to the NSDP 2030, it would be reasonable for VSP to refresh the Program Logic and MEL framework. In so doing, the approach for undertaking regular assessments of progress should also be reviewed, with this evaluation recommending that VSP be given greater flexibility to demonstrate *how* it has been able to progress the LTOs, without stipulating upfront what this should look like. This will require a rigorous annual reflection process to take place that considers the systemic changes that are observable in the skills system in Vanuatu (including demand and supply side) and consideration of the extent to which VSP's activities and engagement have contributed to those changes. The focus of reporting would then become VSP's contribution to that change or reform, not on the activities it has delivered (although this can and should still be captured, for example, in a dashboard form).

⁴⁴ VSP design pg.9

This evaluation would also highlight the importance of engaging staff from DFAT Post in this review process, to ensure there is buy-in to any amendments to the goal and LTOs of the program and particularly to the methodology for assessing progress.

2.4. To what extent is the VSP's Program Logic and MEL framework being used to support program performance and improvement? How could this be strengthened?

During stakeholder consultations for the evaluation, key VSP staff and advisers agreed that, in theory, the Program Logic is an important tool for assessing progress of the program. However, the extent to which the Program Logic in its current form is being used to inform strategic reflection and decision-making seems limited. This evaluation finds that VSP is using the Program Logic for reporting purposes (i.e. a way to cluster its activities and results achieved), but it is hard to find evidence that it is being used to any great extent beyond this. Part of the issue (as discussed above) is that VSP staff are focused on aligning their activities with the IOs, rather than considering the bigger picture. And this is reflected in VSP's performance reporting, which has tended to provide a comprehensive overview of the activities VSP has delivered and results that have been achieved, but less emphasis on progress towards the LTOs, including what *hasn't* worked, and how the progress that has been achieved aligns with expectations⁴⁵.

While there seems to have been limited traction with the Program Logic, it should be noted that much greater success has been observed via the introduction of four 'Spheres of Change'. The Spheres of Change help to make explicit the areas in which VSP should focus its activities in support of progressing change towards the overall goal and LTOs of the program within a 'system-thinking' approach, including 'Quality Systems and Delivery', 'Leadership and Governance', 'Inclusive Access' and 'Sustainable Prosperity'. During interviews, several VSP staff mentioned the Spheres of Change had been a useful framework for them in making decisions about what activities to deliver.

VSP has made good progress developing and consolidating its monitoring tools in recent years, although further work is still needed. For example, VSP recently introduced a new **Economic and Social Analysis (Prosperity) Tool** and data collection process which measures economic and business indicators for individual business clients, and which has already identified evidence of the prosperity and social benefits that training has for VSP clients and their families. The Kobo Toolkit has also recently been introduced and VSP staff report that this data is now being directly uploaded to the new Management Information System (MIS) and is being analysed. However, VSP performance reports suggest that there are still challenges associated with gathering high quality data and, for example, there is still limited available data to measure the pathways that individual Skills Centre clients follow in education and training because data is not always entered into Kobo⁴⁶.

An important achievement which was noted during the consultations is an increased awareness amongst VSP staff that 'MEL is everyone's business'. VSP's MEL Coordinator observed that, in the past, VSP staff would say that responsibility for monitoring performance and reporting progress lies with the MEL team. But, in recent years this has reportedly changed, and there is evidence that VSP staff increasingly understand the importance of MEL in terms of driving improvements to program performance.

During consultations, several examples were identified where lessons learned from one part of VSP's work had informed the design and/or the delivery of activities in another. For example, learnings from the establishment of the Malampa Handicraft Centre explicitly informed VSP's approach to the establishment of the Sanma Creative Industries Hub. The evaluation also identified that 'learning' is built into the delivery of VSP's activities; when VSP staff enter the details of an

⁴⁵ Although it should be noted that the MEL Report 2019 was a step in the right direction.

⁴⁶ MEL Report 2019 pg. 24

activity into the VSP system they are required to outline upfront what they are expecting to achieve and then, as part of activity closure, they are required to consider what was achieved and to identify any challenges that were experienced. The evaluation also notes that VSP has conducted several 'deep dives' (or case studies) on particular aspects of its program, although there is perhaps a tendency for these deep dives to focus on activities that are known to have worked well (and therefore used to showcase key results achieved) rather than, for example, testing progress made against discrete elements of the Program Logic.

Despite these examples, a consistent theme that emerged from the consultations was the need for VSP to take additional time for reflection and learning, and to ensure that this includes things that *haven't* worked, as well as those that have. This was acknowledged by several VSP staff and by external stakeholders, including from the GoV.

'One thing they need to do is step back a bit more and reflect - they are so busy'. [Comment from an external stakeholder]

'Our engagement with the VSP planning process needs to be improved. We need to focus more on lessons learned and not just achievements. They should allow some room for different stakeholders to make recommendations on their challenges and the way forward.' [Comment from a GoV stakeholder]

This is a particularly important consideration for VSP's work being delivered through the Skills Centres where, as previously noted, there is a clear tension between VSP doing 'more' in response to demand and new opportunities, versus going 'deeper'. Reflections from some GoV stakeholders suggested that it was sometimes hard to see the combined impact of VSP's work through the Skills Centres because they were implementing *so many* different activities.

This also applies at the partnership level (not just at the individual activity level), with this evaluation considering there would be value in VSP undertaking a more regular formal review of the effectiveness of its partnerships with key government Ministries (as captured in the Partnership Implementation Frameworks), including consideration of the challenges as well as the successes.

It is also important that, where lessons have been learned, there are mechanisms in place to ensure this is shared widely across the team. For example, reflections and lessons learned do seem to be an important aspect of VSP's annual strategic planning processes, but unless staff attend those discussions in-person it is unclear how they might access that information. It is implicit within VSP's forward-looking Annual Plan, but this information does not otherwise seem to be easily accessible.

Efficiency

3. To what extent are the Vanuatu Skills Partnership's implementation arrangements appropriate and contributing to the delivery of outcomes?

3.1. How integral has the VSP's delivery modality been in progressing the goal and Long-Term Outcomes of the VSP to date? What lessons have been learned?

There are multiple aspects to the 'delivery modality' underpinning the VSP. Those aspects considered here include the Support Contractor arrangements, VSP's focus on partnerships, and the funding mechanism.

Support Contractor arrangements

As per previous iterations of the program, the Vanuatu Skills Partnership is implemented with support from a Managing Contractor. Unlike previous iterations, however, the role of the 'Managing Contractor' has been scaled back to focus on the provision of corporate support services

in areas such as human resource management and development, ICT, finance, MEL and systems management, while responsibility for the delivery of technical outcomes sits with the VSP Director (ni-Vanuatu) and VSP's Strategic Adviser. These corporate support services are currently being provided by Scope Global. This arrangement reflects lessons learned from previous iterations of the program that a 'traditional' managing contractor model is incompatible with a program that has flexibility, innovation, locally-driven strategies and local empowerment at its core⁴⁷. Rather than a Managing Contractor, Scope Global's role is more accurately referred to as a 'Support Contractor' and has the explicit aim of *supporting* VSP to achieve its technical objectives.

The evaluation considers that the 'Support Contractor' model is working well and has been an important driver of the results achieved by VSP to date. Most importantly, VSP is both seen and perceived to be genuinely locally led; it is not viewed as a traditional donor managed program. VSP's local staff, including its Senior Management Team, are all ni-Vanuatu and have a deep understanding of the operating environment and the context for VSP's work. They also have extensive and established networks at multiple levels of government (provincial and national), which they leverage to promote the aims of the partnership. During interviews with GoV stakeholders, several reflected that VSP staff were very highly regarded and that they had good working relationships with them; there was a clear sense of open and transparent communication and that VSP staff could be trusted.

'VSP is very effective... We like the approach they are taking, they are flexible and responsive to our needs.' [Comment from GoV stakeholder]

The shared commitment from all partners to the approach (i.e. of a genuinely locally led program) has been an important factor in the success of the arrangements to date, while this evaluation would also note there has been a remarkable lack of turnover amongst key staff (including DFAT), which means there has been continuity in the relationships (see [Section 4.1](#) for more detail on these factors).

The important role played by DFAT through the AHC in Port Vila in allowing VSP to drive its strategic engagement should not be underestimated. DFAT/AHC Port Vila has been engaged in the program at critical points, and there are perhaps opportunities for DFAT to increasingly leverage the results being achieved and the influence VSP has with the GoV (further discussed in [Section 3.3](#) and in [Section 4.2](#)). However, the fact that DFAT/AHC Port Vila has not micromanaged the program or tried to steer VSP in a particular direction has been an important factor in the results that have been achieved and in allowing the local VSP staff to flourish.

It should also be noted that Scope Global is highly regarded for the support they have provided VSP and for the way they have embraced the notion of the 'Support Contractor' model, with an emphasis on providing support behind the scenes, building good working relationships with VSP staff and building the technical and management capacity of the team (including through the technical advisers). This is relevant feedback for DFAT to consider when making decisions on the modality and the provider post the end of the current phase.

The evaluation would, however, note that there are some grey areas in the roles and responsibilities between Scope Global, the Strategic Adviser, DFAT/AHC Port Vila and VSP staff, which could pose a risk to the success of these arrangements in the future.

For example, in Scope Global's contract with DFAT for the delivery of corporate support services, Scope Global is 'not responsible for delivery against program objectives'⁴⁸. Scope Global is, however, responsible for the financial management and monitoring of all contract funds and

⁴⁷ VSP design pg.35

⁴⁸ Services Order No. 8 for the Vanuatu Skills Partnership, pg.4

ensuring compliance with DFAT's fiduciary requirements⁴⁹. It would, therefore, seem to be the case that Scope Global is responsible for budget and financial management of VSP but has no capacity, contractually, to influence the nature of these activities and the associated expenditure. In reality, this is not how the program is being implemented, and Scope Global is increasingly being invited to participate in higher-level/strategic discussions with VSP staff. But there are clearly risks inherent with this arrangement.

Similarly, Scope Global's contract with DFAT states that Scope Global is not responsible for the performance management of program staff even though, contractually, VSP staff are employed by Scope Global⁵⁰. And so, while this yet to be tested, there is a question around what should happen if a VSP staff member underperforms or engages in inappropriate conduct. And, extending this to the whole-of-program context, if VSP underperforms in terms of progress towards the goal and LTOs, accountability for this sits with the VSP Director who, contractually, is employed by Scope Global. But Scope Global, contractually, is not responsible for the delivery of the program outcomes.

Despite the 'grey', this evaluation would caution against making significant changes to the arrangements between the partners as they are, currently, working well and, as envisaged in the VSP design, they have fostered flexibility and responsiveness and allowed VSP to be innovative.

The evaluation does, however, consider there would be value in formalising a 'ways of working' document between the partners, which would sit alongside the contractual agreements. Part of this could include a risk management framework, which would cover off on some of the risks outlined above and explain how the partners, jointly, intend to manage those risks. The value of a 'ways of working' document is that it safeguards the arrangements in the event that key staff (from any partner) move on.

Longer term, there may also be value in aligning responsibility for VSP's technical outcomes with the Support Contractor, though noting that this responsibility would then be wholly delegated to the VSP Director in-country. This would also see the Strategic Adviser contracted through the Support Contractor, rather than directly to DFAT. Doing so would promote a more coherent approach to management and program implementation and would potentially simplify the reporting arrangements (further discussed in [Section 3.3](#)).

Partnerships

Another important aspect of VSP's delivery modality has been its emphasis on establishing and maintaining genuine partnerships, particularly at the provincial level. The name 'Vanuatu Skills Partnership'⁵¹ was carefully selected in the design phase as it was believed to better reflect the evolution of the support provided by the GoA to the skills sector and the maturation of the partnership between the program and the GoV⁵².

This evaluation considers that VSP is modelling 'best practice' partnership principles through the delivery of its activities and its engagement in the skills sector. This is observed, for example, in the way that VSP undertakes joint planning with government partners/Ministries within key sectors at the start of each year, where it identifies opportunities for collaboration and engagement and develops costings for these activities, which are then reflected in Partnership Implementation Frameworks (PIFs) that are signed by VSP and the relevant partner. In 2020, VSP had PIFs with at

⁴⁹ Services Order No. 8 for the Vanuatu Skills Partnership, pg.6

⁵⁰ This is managed by the VSP Director with support from the Strategic Advisor

⁵¹ The program was previously known as the Vanuatu TVET Sector Strengthening Program

⁵² VSP design pg.8

least three different government partners including the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Department of Industry, and the Department of Tourism.

Furthermore, one of VSP's requirements to enter into a partnership agreement (whether with GoV or another organisation) is that the other partner make a financial or 'in-kind' co-contribution, with this contribution explicitly outlined in the partnership agreement.

'I see some partners talking the same language now. When they have meetings, they are already talking about what they can contribute'. [VSP staff member]

Ensuring that each partner makes a genuine contribution is a critically important aspect of a healthy partnership, and so it is positive that this built-in to the way VSP is working. Working through a partnership approach, initially at a small scale, but now expanding across many Ministries, has shown what can be achieved when reform-minded actors work collectively, and human and financial resources are pooled in a constrained resource environment.

As discussed in [Section 2.4](#), there is an opportunity for VSP to engage in a more formal review of its partnerships on an annual basis. This does not need to be an onerous process but would be an opportunity for a more structured reflection around ways of working, in addition to the success (or otherwise) of the various activities that have been jointly delivered.

Funding mechanism

As discussed, responsibility for financial management lies with the Support Contractor, although in practice the authority for the approval of expenditure lies with VSP's Program office in Port Vila. A key part of the Support Contractor's role has been to strengthen VSP's financial management systems and processes in-country to support this.

In addition, the recent establishment of a Direct Funding Arrangement between DFAT and MoET to disburse funds for Skills Partnership activities allocated as part of the Ambae recovery funds has given VSP some flexibility to absorb additional funding while still ensuring there is sufficient oversight over the way it is spent. Under these arrangements, additional funding has been transferred by DFAT to the MoET, with funds then paid to VSP in the form of a grant as they are required. At this stage, the arrangement only covers Skills Partnership activities in relation to Ambae recovery. Although nascent, this arrangement appears to be working well and has given MoET greater visibility of the Skills Partnership's work. Consideration could be given establishing a DFA with another GoV Ministry to provide greater flexibility for VSP in responding to different opportunities, and to reflect the broader GoV definition of 'skills' beyond the MoET. This is discussed further in [Section 4.2](#). The precise purpose of the DFA (i.e. type of activities, technical assistance) and capacity of another GoV Ministry to effectively manage this type of arrangement would need to be carefully considered. Further analysis in the form of an options paper could establish the strategic intent of a new DFA, include an assessment (pros and cons) of PMO and DLA suitability to manage a DFA, long and short-term options, along with fiduciary risk concerns and mitigation strategies. This would be an appropriate next step.

3.2. To what extent is the level of resourcing (budget, human resources and contractor support) appropriate for DFAT to derive full potential from the VSP in achieving its objectives? What improvements/changes could be made?

For the period of Phase 4, VSP has had an annual average 'core' budget of approximately AUD 3.4 million, which is sourced from DFAT's bilateral development program budget for Vanuatu. In addition, VSP has received funding from several other DFAT initiatives, including Pacific Women and the Disability Inclusive Development (DID) Fund, while it has also received 'one-off' funds for specific purposes, such as supporting the humanitarian response on Ambae Island following the volcanic

eruption in 2017. Over the last two years, total VSP expenditure has therefore ranged between AUD 4.3-4.6 million. This is a relatively modest investment given VSP’s provincial reach and increasing government partnerships and is less than other DFAT-funded initiatives in Vanuatu, including the Vanuatu Education Support Program and the Vanuatu Health Program. Figure 1 provides a breakdown of total VSP expenditure since the commencement of Phase 4 by financial year^{53 54}.

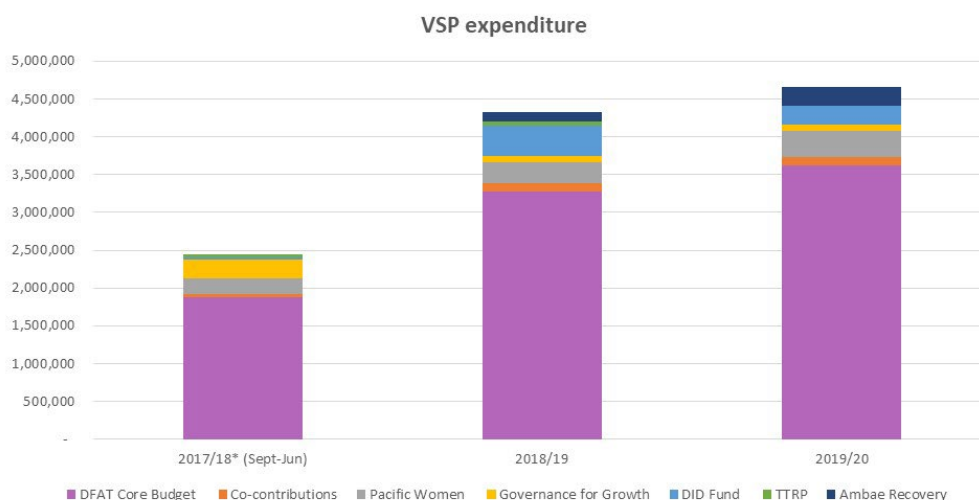


Figure 1: VSP expenditure from 2017/18 to 2019/20

This evaluation considers that given the available human resources and the additional technical support provided via the Support Contractor, VSP has sufficient capacity to deliver on its *current mandate*. The capacity of the local VSP personnel is well complemented by the technical assistance provided through the Support Contractor, with VSP’s international advisers and the Strategic Adviser (engaged directly by DFAT) considered to have made an important contribution to the overall delivery of the program and the results that have been achieved. Feedback from VSP staff was that the international advisers are highly regarded and are focused on building the capacity of local personnel, with a view to gradually phasing out their technical support where possible.

It should be noted, however, there is a risk that if VSP’s mandate continues to grow (including being drawn on for emergency or recovery responses) and the breadth of activities it is delivering further increases its human resources capacity will be stretched too thinly. For example, this evaluation would note that in 2019-20, the value of activities delivered by VSP increased by 18 per cent, but the number of local staff employed by VSP actually fell by 2 per cent, compared to the previous year⁵⁵. There is a limit to how much ‘extra’ work the VSP team can deliver without a commensurate increase in its human resource capacity.

This evaluation considers that VSP could absorb a modest increase in its annual budget if funds became available. For example, additional funding could be used by VSP to establish and maintain partnerships with a larger number of GoV Departments. It could also be used to provide support to the GoV’s Tertiary Education Directorate (TED) (such as through the delivery of Adaptive Leadership workshops) and/or to strengthen core support services provided by the VSP Program Office such as MEL (noting at the time of the evaluation there was just a single ‘internal’ MEL Coordinator employed to oversee this function across the whole of the Program). VSP has a demonstrated

⁵³ Data supplied by Scope Global

⁵⁴ Other costs borne by DFAT, including for the VSP Strategic Advisor and for related MEL at AHC Port Vila are excluded from these figures

⁵⁵ Data supplied by Scope Global

capacity to restructure its management profile when required and where budget has permitted, such as through the recent creation of a Productive Sector Manager position which has facilitated linkages across VSP's engagement with the productive sectors; additional budget would allow it to action further strategic shifts of this nature as opportunities arise.

While VSP could benefit from a modest increase in budget, the *nature* of any additional funding is a more important consideration. While there is a sense that VSP could do more with more resources (i.e., respond to demand from the GoV or other stakeholders in the skills sector), VSP does not engage directly in service delivery and so it is difficult for VSP to plan and implement 'additional' activities with 'additional' budget at short notice. It should be noted that VSP's response to TC Harold was funded purely from a reallocation of internal resources; VSP did not receive additional funds to support this work.

An increase in the 'core' funding provided by DFAT from its development assistance budget for Vanuatu, from AUD 3.6 million (2019-20) to around AUD 4.4 million each year, would provide greater certainty to VSP, strengthening the incentives for VSP to increase the capacity of its core team (i.e. invest in more staff). Longer term this would enhance its ability to engage strategically. It would also reduce the need for VSP to rely on ad hoc or one-off contributions from other DFAT programs to make up the budget it needs each year to deliver on its current mandate. The recommended increase to VSP's core funding is not intended to lead to an increase in VSP's overall budget (although, as discussed above, VSP *could* absorb a modest increase to its budget if funds were available) but, rather, is to ensure that VSP's budget comes from a single source.

In terms of opportunities to strengthen the VSP team and particularly VSP's Program Office, this evaluation considers there are opportunities to strengthen the in-country capacity for the MEL function. For example, this could include some additional support (local ni-Vanuatu) to help during specific points of the monitoring cycle (for example, to assist with the delivery of surveys), while further technical training and/or professional development should be considered for the MEL Coordinator given the importance of this role and the need to strengthen the culture of reflection and learning across VSP (as discussed in [Section 2.4](#)). This evaluation also queried the level of in-country resources dedicated to cross-cutting issues such as gender and disability (with VSP's Inclusion Manager currently responsible for both) but note that a recruitment process is already underway for a Disability Inclusion Officer, which will go some way to addressing this. A common theme from interviews with VSP staff, particularly the Skills Centre managers, was the value placed by staff on the leadership training they had received, particularly the one-on-one mentoring sessions and opportunities for follow-up. There would appear to be a clear opportunity (and demand) to build on this training in the next few years.

It is also critical to highlight the fact that VSP's local developmental leadership is a key driver not only to the success of an aid program, but more importantly for the GoV to make progress towards its NSDP goals. VSP has had success in incubating strong leaders who have then been supported by the program to move on and to take up prominent and influential positions within government. **Given the importance being placed on leadership, both within GoV and within the international literature on development effectiveness, more resources could strengthen VSP's efforts to build local capacity in this area as needed.** This could build on the work that VSP is undertaking in partnership with the Balance of Power program in the rolling out of the Adaptive Leadership framework, both within its own team but also more broadly at the provincial level. Current investments in this area have been largely opportunistic, but the overwhelmingly positive feedback and catalytic flow-on results have revealed and stimulated a strong appetite for ongoing support in this area.

3.3. To what extent are the existing governance and management arrangements for VSP fit for purpose? Where could efficiencies be gained, or improvements made?

Governance arrangements

The key governance mechanism for VSP is the Skills Partnership Steering Committee (SPSC), which meets every 6 months. It is co-chaired by MoET and the VSP Director, and includes participants from MoET, productive sector departments from the GoV, the CEO of VQA, VSP staff (including the Director and the Skills Centre Managers) and DFAT/AHC Port Vila. **The SPSC is reportedly a useful forum for strategic discussions and decision-making amongst key stakeholders.**

In line with the VSP being a locally led program, DFAT does not drive these Steering Committee discussions and reportedly participates mostly as an observer. While there are advantages to this approach in terms of empowering VSP, it should be noted that this is potentially a missed opportunity for senior level representation from DFAT/AHC Port Vila, which would raise the profile of VSP and the results it is achieving within the AHC and increasingly position the AHC to leverage the gains being made for wider strategic purposes. This is further discussed in [Section 4](#).

Management arrangements

VSP is currently led by a Senior Management Team which includes the VSP Director, the Deputy Director, and the Chief Finance and Operations Manager, supported by the Strategic Adviser. It is supported by a larger Middle Management Team including a Productive Sector Manager, a Provincial Service Delivery Manager and an Inclusion Manager. Decision-making authority for activities is fully delegated to VSP's Skills Centre Managers, who simply require budget approval from the Deputy Director (through Smartsheet) to proceed, while Skills Centre Managers also have the ability to change agreed activity plans through the year if required.

VSP's management structure appears to be working well, and the management team has the broad support of VSP staff. Some VSP staff and some external stakeholders, however, noted that there were sometimes bottlenecks around strategic decision-making, planning and communication, with considerable responsibility and authority for decision-making continuing to reside with the VSP Director, who has significant constraints on his time. This evaluation considers there is an opportunity to promote one or two members of the Middle Management Team into the Senior Management Team, with the view to taking on some of the Director's responsibilities for decision-making and for engaging with key external stakeholders. This would be expected to improve efficiency of VSP's operations.

This evaluation also notes the recent progress VSP has made to strengthen its management systems, particularly through the implementation of a Management Information System, although further work is required to ensure full utilisation. This includes the implementation of 'Smartsheet', which was introduced as a way of linking VSP's budget to the different activities VSP is delivering across the four provinces and providing VSP with a clearer 'whole-of-program' view. While there are still opportunities to strengthen the utilisation of Smartsheet, many VSP staff did indicate they were using it to upload data and for monitoring and planning, including the Skills Centre Managers and the MEL team.

Reporting and communications products

VSP appears to spend considerable time and resources on its reporting, but the extent to which this process is as efficient as it could be, and the volume of reporting required, is unclear. For example, in part due to the unique contractual arrangements for the different partners involved, there are multiple performance reports and communications products being developed for DFAT during each reporting phase, and it is hard to know what is 'the report' that provides the record of progress made and management actions proposed. This evaluation would note that the Annual

Report 'package' for 2019 included a Corporate Support Report, a MEL Report, reports from each of the productive sectors, a case study, and several infographics (communication products) that provided a snapshot of key results achieved. Separate reports were also written for other DFAT programs that contribute funds to VSP.

While acknowledging the contractual arrangements of the different partners make things complex, **this evaluation considers there would be value in VSP shifting to a single performance report (for the mid-year report and the Annual Report), with Annexes if required to meet the reporting requirements of specific DFAT programs, GoV partners, or other donors.** The structure of these reports should be developed in collaboration with DFAT to ensure that VSP's reports are useful at all levels of DFAT/AHC Port Vila, and to ensure VSP is not producing information and analysis that is not required. As discussed in [Section 2.4](#), it is also important that the balance of the reporting (particularly for VSP's Annual Report) shift from activity-level results to a stronger focus on progress at the outcome level, and contain a robust analysis of achievements, challenges and lessons learned associated with the delivery of the program.

This evaluation notes the high-quality communications products and infographics being produced by VSP and considers these should continue to be developed where it is appropriate to do so. With the rising profile of the Partnership there are increased opportunities to consider strategically how it can promote its local level wins at the national level, while continuing to ensure GoV receives the recognition, and therefore ensuring the subsequent 'buy-in' is maintained. The evaluation notes the reflections from several key informants that VSP's communications products could be circulated more widely, including within and from the AHC in Port Vila through its own channels, networking and events. A more intentional communications strategy will ensure the Partnership (and thereby Australia) increasingly gets the recognition it deserves. It is important, however, that these communications products are not seen as the 'main game' and remain supplementary to VSP's performance reports, which should include the deeper analysis and reflection on VSP's progress towards the goal and the outcomes of the program.

VSP's provincial Skills Centre reports, produced quarterly, are highly valued by DFAT and by GoV stakeholders as a brief update on progress delivering key activities. Understandably, since the onset of COVID-19 and TC Harold these reports do not seem to have been produced as consistently by VSP, however, there would be value in resuming the production of these in 2021.

Alignment with other DFAT programs/donors

As outlined in [Section 2](#), VSP has achieved some excellent results, particularly at the provincial level, and its staff hold extensive networks and relationships. As such, there are clearly opportunities for other Australian-funded bilateral programs in Vanuatu, such as Vanuatu Health and the Vanuatu Education Support Program, to learn from VSP's successes (including 'ways of working') and to leverage these networks, which should be further explored. These opportunities were acknowledged by several VSP staff, including Skills Centre Managers.

'There is no reason why the approach could not work in other sectors. At the provincial level it is the same people attending the meetings. Other programs could benefit from tapping into the relationships and networks that VSP staff have taken many years to form' [VSP staff member]

It is particularly important that DFAT/AHC Port Vila be across these linkages and to facilitate collaboration between different DFAT programs where there are opportunities to do so. This would involve building on the existing networks, relationships and advice of VSP personnel to kick start new initiatives, rather than working in isolation or seeing VSP as an 'implementer' of their program.

The local leadership and local empowerment model is another aspect of VSP that other DFAT programs could learn from. This would involve DFAT staff actively encouraging or facilitating formal opportunities for cross-program discussions to happen between programs during design and implementation, and include key aspects such as contracting arrangements – e.g. the Support Contractor model that has strengthened a locally led approach – as well as other enabling environment factors.

VSP is also known for modelling best practice inclusive approaches in service delivery at the provincial level. Given all DFAT programs are required to promote gender equality and disability inclusion, VSP has wealth of expertise that could be drawn on at the provincial level to avoid other DFAT programs re-inventing the wheel, perpetuating unsuccessful approaches or duplicating efforts in this space.

This evaluation also notes the similarities between the objectives of VSP and the DFAT-funded Australia Pacific Training Coalition (APTC), particularly noting APTC’s current mandate for APTC3 is to focus on skills system strengthening at the national level in all Pacific Island Countries, including Vanuatu. VSP and APTC do currently have an active partnership agreement, however for various reasons (including VSP’s involvement in the response to COVID-19 and to TC Harold) the partnership does not appear to have been a top priority in 2020. Given the potential overlap between these two programs it is critical that communications between VSP and APTC remain open and transparent, and it is critical that these two programs work closely with each other, maximising their respective strengths and resources. This evaluation considers that DFAT/AHC Port Vila has a critical role to play in ensuring these programs remain complementary, both in terms of activities delivered but also in terms of ways of working and the approach to driving change and reform to the skills system in Vanuatu.

Sustainability

4. What is needed to ensure sustainability of the results achieved by the VSP over the long-term?

4.1. What are the key factors behind the results achieved to date by the VSP (i.e. what lessons have been learned)?

There are many factors that have contributed to the success of the VSP and many of these identified in the 2015 Evaluation⁵⁶ remain valid today. While some drivers relate to technical approaches necessary for the development of an effective skills system, **the majority and most important are linked to the way in which VSP works to ensure long lasting, locally-owned systemic change.** These characteristics are not specific to a skills program but rather reflect the reality that effective development is a complex and inherently political process, and that efforts to support significant reforms need to engage with the political challenges as well as the technical solutions. As Barbara (2019) highlighted, VSP is a genuine example of a program that ‘thinks and works politically’. While there is no single definition of what this means, a synthesis of common characteristics was highlighted in Barbara’s paper (See Table 1). A discussion of these characteristics, many of which are inter-related and all of which remain key factors behind the results of VSP today, is included below.

Thinking and working politically – synthesis of common characteristics (adapted from Andrews et al.2012; Thinking and Working Politically Community of Practice 2013; Booth and Unsworth 2014; The Doing Development Difference Manifesto 2014)

⁵⁶ Schofield, K. Minford, M. Epstein, A. (2015) Independent Evaluation of the Vanuatu Technical and Vocational Education and Training Sector Strengthening Program, AusAID.

- **Politically smart:** strong political economy understanding of country and sector context; historically informed; politically astute in finding creative ways to use this knowledge to develop effective solutions
- **Problem identification:** focus on addressing salient development problems as identified by local actors
- **Interactive problem solving:** experimentation through small bets to identify promising development approaches and discard ineffectual approaches; regular testing of interventions identify what works; supporting a development cycle with tight feedback loops to adjust course when necessary
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** locally-accessible M&E systems that provide useful data to stakeholders to inform iterative problem solving
- **Locally-led:** supporting local actors to identify reform priorities and who have the power to lead reform coalitions with a prospect of reform success
- **Brokering relationships:** use of program processes and resources to support local reform coalitions to undertake collective action in pursuit of reform; help empower local reform coalitions to improve their capabilities to engage with reform obstacles; work with a diversity of stakeholders so reforms are legitimate and politically viable
- **Long term:** sustained engagement to deepen sector knowledge and trust with partners; stable financial support to give interventions time to work
- **Flexibility:** adaptable program designs and implementation processes to better respond to political opportunities for reform
- **Supportive environment:** donor organisations provide an authorising environment for programs to work politically; tolerance for managed risk-taking and experimentation

Operating since Phase 1 in 2005, VSP, under various names, **has demonstrated a long-term, commitment to the goal of a quality assured, demand driven skills system in Vanuatu** within a broader vision of national human resource development and improved service delivery. This period of sustained engagement has allowed for trusted relationships to form between key parties - DFAT, the team of local and international advisers, GoV stakeholders and the broader public and communities. These trusted relationships have also benefitted from key personnel within all parties staying engaged with the program since its beginnings. Phase 1 had also been preceded by an investment in a national level VIT Institutional Strengthening Program dating back to 1996, which, while largely considered unsuccessful, produced many lessons learned for DFAT and implementers, most notably the need to demonstrate system improvements at the provincial level to influence broad-based buy-in and national-level reform. Most aid programs are given short time spans and ambitious end of term outcomes⁵⁷. While VSP, originally known as the TVET Sector Strengthening Program, also had an ambitious goal of supporting GoV to create a nation-wide skills system, it had the luxury of largely flying ‘under the radar’ during its first few years of implementation, considered a niche sub-sector investment, overshadowed by the GoA’s larger investments in basic education and the regional skills program, APTC. This has allowed several phases to ‘chip away’ at this long-term goal and focus on deeper transformational change. While many quick wins were evident and strategically communicated, and tangible progress was observed and acknowledged, a longer timeframe has allowed for the team to build on its gains and to be both strategic and opportunistic in facilitating systemic reform of the skills system.

⁵⁷ <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/lessons-from-australian-aid-2013.pdf>

There has been a genuine commitment to localisation from the beginning of the Partnership, driven from within the team, supported by DFAT and, since the last phase, enabled by the innovative Support Contractor model. As part of thinking and working politically, localisation - including a local management team - ensures local actors with deep contextual understanding of power dynamics, identify problems, make decisions and use resources to build coalitions among key actors and push for reforms. For VSP, a limited number of international advisers work on a level playing field and focus on empowering their local counterparts/partners (See Box 1). This long-term approach to localisation has enabled the program to nurture 'developmental leaders' over time. Localisation that can achieve effective development and simultaneously meet DFAT expectations is not achievable overnight or by simply recruiting an all-local team. Localisation takes a long-term vision and significant investment to be successful. The team are now fully locally-led, but this took time, commitment and succession planning. The ni-Vanuatu Director of the Program was identified early on (almost a decade ago) as an emerging high-potential leader who could take the program forward, and was given the necessary professional development and mentoring support for him to become a successful head of a DFAT investment (first ever for the GoA aid program in Vanuatu). He continues to be supported by the part-time Strategic Adviser who assists him to meet DFAT requirements, particularly in relation to report writing and strategic communications. This co-leadership model was recently recognised by DFAT and many managing contractors⁵⁸ as an effective way forward to achieve greater localisation in DFAT programs.

⁵⁸ Industry roundtable on localisation and new ways of working – COVID pivot, Jo Choe (CARDNO) Localisation presentation

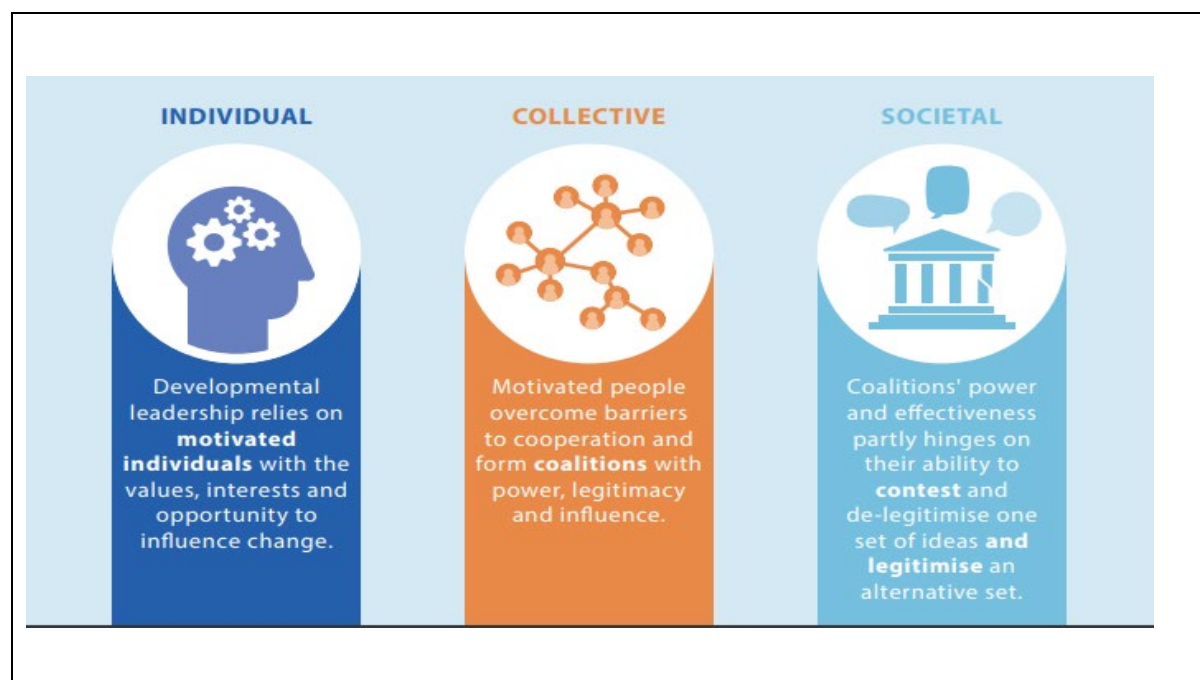
Box 1: Local Empowerment

Local empowerment is core to VSP Partnership Approach. All Partnership activity seeks to identify and cultivate agents of positive change, and to build networks between these agents to **create an increasingly influential local coalition for national governance reform** – see this reflected below. Primacy is given to building positive relationships, grounded in a values-based approach that **‘works with the grain’** of deeply-held cultural and religious drivers of the local context to demonstrate **new models of the state’s service delivery functions and leadership**⁵⁹. The team see this as an essential shift in approach from more conventional modes of technical ‘capacity building’ of externally-driven aid projects, with their sometimes-tacit paternalist undertones⁶⁰, establishment of parallel systems, and disregard for structural blockers of transformative social change. The approach seeks out and promotes individual potential, and pro-actively navigates complex political and emotional interests to maximise this potential and identify ‘win-win’ opportunities for **collaborative action across diverse stakeholders within local systems**. Innovation is encouraged with all team members encouraged to work creatively and opportunistically wherever **‘green shoots’ of reform potential** emerge. In this way, the Partnership aims to use its relatively small funding **catalytically** – identifying strategic entry points, or ‘hinges’ that will influence wider take-up and scale-up. All these factors serve to attract to the Partnership local reformists seeking opportunities to contribute meaningfully to national development goals – to be part of an organisation/network that actively encourages and supports their own beliefs, values and motivation for positive change in service delivery and governance that is locally driven and locally sustainable

Individual : developmental leadership relies on **motivated individuals** with the values, interests and opportunity to influence change.

Collective: motivated people overcome barriers to cooperation and form **coalitions** with power, legitimacy and influence.

Societal: coalitions ‘power and effectiveness partly hinges on their ability to contest and de-legitimise one set of ideas **and legitimise** and alternative set.



⁵⁹ Independent Evaluation of the Vanuatu Technical and Vocational Education and Training Sector Strengthening Program (Schofield, K., Minford and M.Epstein, A., 2015)

⁶⁰ The white man’s burden: why the West’s efforts to aid the rest have done so much ill and so little good (Easterly, 2006)

In Phase 4, **strong partnership principles have underpinned the team's way of working** including relationship brokering, establishing a shared vision through planning, co-design and co-contributions from all partners. VSP does not work on its own plans at the provincial level, but rather works in partnership with key stakeholders to deliver on the Government's plans. As discussed in [Section 3](#), co-contributions are negotiated involving both in-kind and financial contributions, ensuring stakeholders have buy-in and ownership of progress towards sustainability. As a trusted partner, VSP facilitates co-contributions from national level departments, agreed through the aforementioned Partnership Implementation Frameworks to formalise commitments made and further strengthen national and provincial linkages. In this way, VSP works with provincial stakeholders to identify opportunities and demand in relation to skills development and these are taken to, and validated by, the national level.

A decentralised approach from the beginning has given the Partnership the ability to demonstrate tangible results in terms of how an effective skills system can deliver inclusive, demand driven training at the community level for locally-meaningful outcomes. This approach aligns with the increasing momentum across Vanuatu to establish systems and processes for greater decentralisation. Within this context, VSP has shown its agility and flexible ways of working that allow for experimentation and innovation as ideas and different partnerships are tested, adapted and, if successful, scaled out to initiatives and other provinces. Through this demonstration effect, a solid reputation of facilitating quality skills training, coaching and business development support – as well as broader coordination and sound management - has attracted industry stakeholders and provided the opportunity to strengthen the linkages between national and provincial level governments. The long-term vision of 'local-level' **demonstration** is coming to fruition with an increasing evidence base of sustainable models at the provincial level influencing policy and practice take-up and reform at the national level⁶¹ and 'creating an appetite for further investment by Government of Vanuatu'⁶².

As highlighted throughout this report, VSP has remained flexible, adaptive and responsive, ensuring it remains both relevant to both the Government of Vanuatu's reform agenda and also relevant to Australia's development policy directions. It has also strategically customised and nuanced its communications approach to meet the (sometimes differing) incentives and needs of both government's political economies. This was demonstrated in VSP's responsiveness to policy and priority changes of both governments during COVID-19 and TC Harold. Through limited badging of Australia's assistance domestically, VSP has been able to navigate the complex, political context to achieve locally-driven systemic change - often intentionally blurring the lines between Government and an aid program. This has enabled the all too infrequent achievement of authentic local ownership of a donor investment. However, this has not in any way undermined Australia's public

⁶¹ For example, demonstration of the effectiveness of the original pilot Skills Centres in Sanma and Malampa provinces resulted in the Ministry of Education restructuring itself to become the Ministry of Education and Training and integrating the provincial Skills Centre network within the national skills system under the Public Service Commission. Likewise, demonstration of benefits the on-site, flexible delivery has influenced national providers, such as VIT and the Vanuatu Agriculture College, to adapt their training offer to include modular, non-institution-based delivery through the Skills Centre network. Finally, the first-ever national TVET Sector Disability policy was informed by the lessons and approaches of provincial-level disability inclusion in skills development pioneered by VSP.

⁶² Vanuatu TVET Sector Strengthening Program (2015), *Annual Program Monitoring and Evaluation Report 2014*, February, p.7

diplomacy agenda in Vanuatu; on the contrary, the reputation and credibility of VSP and its clear linkage to the GoA has enhanced Australia's status as a true 'development partner'.

Finally, **working through the vector of skills continues to be an advantage** for VSP's broader systemic reform objectives, particularly with regard to ensuring broad-based buy-in. This is particularly the case as skills is now considered a key driver for the economic and social growth of Vanuatu as discussed above. As a whole of government priority there is now increasing opportunity to engage support from outside of the MoET and incentivise or pressure key actors within MoET to step up and ensure a quality supply of training that can effectively meet demand. Linked to this, the VSP 'value chain approach' has evolved significantly over the last few years and further strengthens cross-sector engagement and ownership. It also builds on vertical and horizontal linkages within industries and between buyers and sellers, using skills development and business support services as the point of entry. This first came together in the Skills for Tourism sub-program and has now expanded to other sectors including Agribusiness and Handicrafts, fulfilling a recommendation from the 2015 Evaluation. The value chain approach, including the strong networks and politically smart team able to facilitate these linkages, was acknowledged by stakeholders as a key feature contributing to the success of the program.

4.2. What are the opportunities for the VSP to evolve and potentially expand in scope and scale in the future (including through other donor contributions)? What would it take to support this, what modalities might be considered, and what are the implications for sustainability?

Evolving ways of working

As highlighted in this paper, the Partnership has made significant gains supporting the GoV develop a demand driven skills system with national reach that supports economic and social prosperity. However, as many key informants noted, **there is still a long way to go before Vanuatu has a sustainable skills system.** VSP's approach has evolved as opportunities have arisen and more is known about what is needed to achieve systemic change. The Spheres of Change adopted recently by the program and based on recent research reflect the centrality of developmental leadership, adaptive management, and systems thinking approaches required to achieve transformative development outcomes, regardless of sector⁶³. As such, **the program's scope has broadened as it becomes more reflective of the cross-sectoral and integrated pathways that are required to affect systemic change in a context such as Vanuatu and, in VSP's case, contribute to the goal of an equitable skills system.** It has also broadened in line with the policy context in particular, the increasing whole-of-government approach to skills outlined in Section 1. Going forward, while working through the vector of skills remains highly relevant and strategic, the Partnership's ways of working should continue to evolve with the context. This means relationships (formal and informal), systems and processes both within the Partnership, with DFAT and its many partners will need to continue to be adjusted and resourced (as noted in Section 3) over time to avoid stifling the Partnership's positive influence on governance reform and service delivery. This will also ensure that the GoA continues to maximise the public diplomacy and bilateral cooperation benefits that can be leveraged from VSP.

Geographic expansion

⁶³ For example: Inside the black box of political will: 10 years of findings from the Developmental Leadership Program (DLP/DFAT, 2018); Navigation by judgement – why and when top-down management of foreign aid doesn't work (Honig, 2018); Why we lie about aid: development and the messy politics of change (Yanguas, 2018).

In terms of scale, **there is ongoing demand to complete the national decentralised skills system by facilitating activities, establishing and resourcing Skills Centres in the two remaining provinces, Penama and Shefa.** This will further cement VSP and, therefore Australia, as a key actor in the reform agenda of the nation as a whole. This expansion should continue to be driven by GoV, considering that a more whole-of government-approach to skills development is an opportunity to increase innovation and push for co-contributions from interested (and more reform-minded) departments across government. As with previous provincial Skills Centres, the capital investment should be largely the responsibility of the Government of Vanuatu. It was noted that the location of a Skills Centre in Penama will be dependent on on-going negotiations around where the provincial capital is likely to be located in the future. It is important to consider, however, that expansion to other provinces should not be limited by the physical infrastructure of the Skills Centre. As highlighted by the recent crises and this evaluation, it is the way of working of the people involved and the networks supported by VSP that are providing the most significant contribution to the skills system, not the physical infrastructure. For Penama and Shefa, there might be alternative or transition approaches that could be adopted given the different contextual realities. VSP's current 'Ambae Recovery' support is a promising initiative that could be built on in this regard.

Supporting the decentralisation agenda

Another focus area with immediate potential is related to the momentum around decentralisation. As mentioned above, the Department of Local Authorities' network of Area Administrators that provide the Government with provincial reach to communities are being gradually rolled out. They are being provided with seed funding (1.2 million vatu) to support identified needs within communities. Many are choosing to invest in small-scale income generation activities that see returns reinvested into the community. There is potential for VSP to not only support the up-skilling of communities as part of this initiative but also in providing leadership and management skills to these new appointees to enhance their ability to provide equitable opportunities for all and address local needs within a coordinated management framework. Area Administrators are also provided with an additional 1.2 million vatu to build an office. In Tanna, VSP have already used their networks to provide on-site accredited training for local builders through Lume RTC, under the supervision of VIT, to construct the Area Administrator offices. There is potential for similar models to be expanded to other areas where Area Administrators are requiring office construction. In the future, these positions are also expected to play a key role in assessing the extent of damages in the event of natural disasters. Again, targeted and coordinated skills development could enhance the ability for Area Administrators to provide rapid and locally led feedback to provincial and national governments, minimising delays in emergency response. Expanding activity in this focus area would also enable VSP to build on its successful piloting of providing provincial planning support in Sanma province through its mobilisation of an adviser directly working under the Secretary General.

Crisis as an opportunity to change

There is increasing literature (before COVID-19⁶⁴, and after⁶⁵) about how adaptive approaches can capitalise on opportunities created in a crisis to not only 'build back better' but also address 'sticky' development problems that may have seemed intractable before an emergency. A crisis can provide

⁶⁴ This has been well documented in DFAT funded research/initiatives through Developmental Leadership Program (DLP), the Pacific Leadership Program (PLP), Adaptive Leadership Models (Heifetz and Linsky) and also as part of Adaptive Programming approaches supported by the World Bank, DFID and Oxfam.

⁶⁵ <https://www.cranfield.ac.uk/som/case-studies/responding-to-the-coronavirus-crisis-a-strategic-approach><https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8693.pdf>; <https://www.dlprog.org/opinions/reframing-international-development-to-respond-to-covid-19-essential-features-of-effective-programs-in-the-new-normal>

an opportunity to shift the status quo as a sense of urgency is created, more resources (domestic or aid money) become available and priorities shift. Global examples have included the commencement of the peace process in Aceh, Indonesia and the organisational and legal reforms in Sri Lanka after Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004⁶⁶. **For Vanuatu, several opportunities have arisen out of the crisis as the GoV has recognised the pressing need to focus on provincial service delivery.** These have included the opportunity for VSP to work with new sectors such as Water Supply and Health and build on the work in existing sectors.

One sector highlighted by key informants - and also highlighted pre-COVID⁶⁷ - as having enormous potential to contribute to Vanuatu's economic recovery was in Agriculture and Agro-processing. As Tourism, the former backbone of the economy is now taking a back seat⁶⁸ and there are now more resources and attention being directed to strengthening the agriculture value chain, VSP's doubling-down on its support to this sector as part of its crisis pivot should be continued. The new context emphasises the need for local value-adding, local food processing, Vanuatu made food items and a reduction of dependences from imported food⁶⁹. Capitalising on its strong partnerships with both Department of Agriculture and Rural Development along with Department of Industry, VSP has a significant role to play in creating linkages between these two key actors to develop and connects commercial farmers and value-adding producers. This may also include further developing the 'farm to school' model already started in Torba during the crisis to address food security concerns.

Establishing a long-term vision for VSP

To clarify strategic directions, maximise longer term opportunities and ensure the necessary support for implementation required into the future, it is important to clarify how VSP needs to position itself to contribute to the long-term goal of an accessible and high-quality skills system that contributes to a fair, prosperous, and sustainable Vanuatu. Several options were discussed among the team and key informants in this regard including discussions with other DFAT programs making these transitions. The options discussed ranged from VSP becoming an independent entity – similar to a local consulting company; a statutory authority within government (either new or merged with Vanuatu Qualifications Authority); or VSP becoming a facility and/or working towards an exit strategy where all functions would eventually be handed over to the GoV. As the pros and cons of these options were discussed, it was agreed that it was too soon to lock in a timeframe for a specific evolution or exit strategy. There was a clear consensus that there was still significant external support required to foster and develop key actors, and establish the necessary structures and financing mechanisms for a sustainable national, decentralised skills system. As highlighted in the *Pacific Step Up*, the GoA is committed to a strengthened partnership through deepened engagement with a long-term future and therefore an exit strategy for VSP would be premature and limit the achievement of mutual benefits for both governments.

It was however agreed that **the longer-term vision for the Partnership would involve a significant evolution in the way in which VSP is positioned to maximise the development outcomes that can**

⁶⁶ Extreme events and disasters: a window of opportunity for change? Analysis of organizational, institutional and political changes, formal and informal responses after mega-disasters. *Natural Hazards*, 55, 637-655. Birkmann, J., Buckle, P., Jäger, J., Pelling, M., Setiadi, N., Garschagen, M., Fernando, N., & Kropp, J. (2010).

⁶⁷ The Vanuatu National Industrial Development Strategy: Shaping the Future of Value Addition in Vanuatu 2018-2022 identified agribusiness and food production as the sub-industry sector with the most competitive advantages. The strategy recommends improving production capacity on processed kava, coffee, coconut products and on niche markets such as chocolate, vanilla, nuts, spices, processed fish and beef and poultry, fruit juices, handicraft, sandalwood.

⁶⁸ Tourism represents 40% of GDP, activity stopped in April so the estimated loss of revenue could be estimated at 30% of global government revenue, The 4 months stimulus package of 56 Million USD represents 10 % of the budget.

⁶⁹ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/06/after-covid-19-we-need-a-rural-revolution-to-drive-a-sustainable-future/>

be achieved over an extended timeframe. Many aspects of this have already been highlighted throughout this paper. In summary, this includes:

- stepping up its support for whole-of-government coordination of skills development at the national level and expanding its formal partnership arrangements beyond the MoET;
- developing formalised functions/administrative relationships within key sectors to coordinate skills demand and focus on vertical and horizontal linkages and networks;
- supporting the transfer of the VSP Skills Development Fund to operate within government (for GoV and all donors); and
- continuing to push for/incentivise the establishment of a nationally resourced skills sector management system, including provincial Skills Centres in all provinces and necessary staffing “on budget”.

Transitioning VSP to support a whole of government approach to skills

As highlighted throughout this paper, the GoV is taking a much more whole-of-government and strategic approach to skills development than in previous years. This is unfolding through various forums, presenting opportunities for the Partnership to engage more at a national, cross-sectoral level. In this vein, there is movement within the government for the PMO to take a greater lead in driving the coordination and implementation of the HRD plan. Similarly, the VQA has undertaken steps to commence a review of the VQA Act and as part of this process will request a restructure of the VQA Board to be more cross-sectoral and also to be chaired by the PMO DG, enabling greater whole-of-government coordination and reflecting a greater emphasis needed on demand-driven human resource development. **To ensure VSP’s ongoing relevance and role and continued alignment with GoV policies it is appropriate for DFAT to support VSP through complementary policy dialogue and changes to systems and processes.** This would not only enhance VSP’s relevance to the GoV, but also provide the opportunity to showcase and leverage from VSP’s instrumental role in Vanuatu’s long-term development, as outlined in the NSDP. In particular, it would provide more opportunities for VSP (and thereby Australia) to inform the policy debate with the realities of provincial implementation.

‘ There is more to do on getting those stories out... translating those wins at the local level into the national policy debate’ (Comment from HOM, Port Vila Post)

While MoET may remain a key partner in supporting skills development, particularly through the resourcing of the provincial Skills Centres, a shift to having PMO as the DFAT’s Subsidiary Arrangement counterpart or co-counterpart with the MoET would reflect the current trajectory of the GoV and the realities already taking place in the ways of working of both the GoV and VSP. Such a shift would also enable VSP to continue to evolve and have its full potential recognised; this formal shift/expansion in key counterpart would avoid progress to date being stifled by MoET, which remains focused heavily on the formal supply side of skills development/training and often bogged down in bureaucratic processes and political manoeuvring. Moreover, this transition would bolster the ‘crowding in’ support from other Government Ministries that is already occurring and may also incentivise MoET to step up its efforts in terms of demonstrating its leadership in the sector and possibly increasing its co-contributions.

In practical terms, a more formalised relationship between VSP and PMO/DSSPAC would also allow PMO to be more strategically supported by Australia to deliver on the NHRD Plan, in particular, ensuring an inclusive focus and provincial reach for the benefit of all ni-Vanuatu. As VSP will likely play a key role in the review and drafting of the current PSET policy, this will also provide an opportunity for the policy itself to be positioned more strategically within the GoV and to break down silos between the MoET and other key departments in line with the intent of the Vanuatu 2030 vision. Similarly, while MoET co-contributions to a functional skills system are slowly increasing, there are opportunities to harness and incentivise greater government co-contributions

from other departments, especially through prioritising the role of a national Skills Development Fund in a sustainable system, as articulated in the NHRD Plan. Currently VSP is managing a Skills Development Fund on behalf of the government which has received increasing contributions from other government departments and other donors. VSP's experience in operationalising such a fund would make the Partnership well placed to provide both strategic and operational support for this fund to transition over into GoV systems. The creation of a Direct Funding Arrangement between DFAT and PMO (or DLA – see below) for VSP activities could mark the beginnings of a formalised Skills Development Fund that GoV Ministries could contribute to, as well as other donors. These considerations should all be part of discussions in the review of the national PSET policy.

Moreover, given VSP's value-add at the provincial level and the momentum across the GoV in support of decentralisation, part of this shift would also involve a closer working relationship with Ministry of Internal Affairs through the Department of Local Authorities. These linkages are already being strengthened through the work of the Skills Centres with Area Administrators and Secretaries, as well as the direct request from Secretaries General to VSP for support in planning and coordination. This ability of VSP to provide in-demand provincial level management/service delivery support and to make provincial – national linkages has been recognised by DLA as a model that could be replicated, and a gap that could be filled, more intentionally.

Other considerations for DFAT

Within the AHC, there are advantages for VSP to be framed under a broader systems reform agenda that prioritises the strengthening of a national skills system but also **acknowledges its central role in Vanuatu's economic recovery and longer-term development**. The strategic re-positioning of VSP will signify not only a significant elevation of VSP but an elevation of the role and relevance of the broader bilateral relationship in the decentralisation agenda, and closer ties between VSP and the PMO - and support for coordination in a whole-of-government response to Vanuatu's development - will be mutually advantageous for both Vanuatu and Australia. To achieve this, a strengthening of the narrative internally (and externally) is required to ensure there is an understanding that VSP supports both the supply, demand and governance aspects of skills/human resource development system, and that it is much more than a skills training program. Given VSP's broad-based credibility within GoV, there is an opportunity for Australia to consolidate its reputation through more intentionally highlighting and drawing from the Partnership's way of working, and thereby supporting its own national interest. For example, there are deep insights to be gained from the strong local leadership team that understands the local political economy, including the power dynamics that are responsible for resisting or enabling certain reforms, beyond the skills sector. As mentioned in Section 3, the Partnership also has a strong provincial reach from which other DFAT programs with provincial-level objectives could leverage. These local insights could be invaluable for other development programs, particularly in design phases but also at a national and diplomatic level, helping inform high-level consultations between GoA and GoV.

Finally, to meet both GoV and GoA expectations in terms of supporting both governments deliver on their national policies, **the Partnership needs to continue to be provided with the authorising environment in place from DFAT to be responsive to evolving contextual priorities**. The mandate and trust granted to VSP by DFAT over many years has been a key factor in enabling not just the Partnership but also other DFAT programs such as Governance for Growth⁷⁰ in Vanuatu to think and working politically, align to Vanuatu's interests, and build its 'trusted partner' credibility. This feature is well documented in other examples of working politically⁷¹ and more recently recognised as a critical feature in Australia's ability to pivot quickly and deliver its COVID-19 Development Response. While VSP has benefitted from this environment during its lifetime, and recent DFAT ODE advice has

⁷⁰ <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/11671.pdf>

⁷¹ Booth and Unsworth, 2014; Bain et al, 2016

provided practical tips for program managers on how to create (or in VSP's case, maintain) such an environment, there is still a perception from both Vanuatu and Canberra based DFAT officers that this remains tenuous and requires constant attention. DFAT should ensure that this enabling environment for VSP is not dependent on the different personalities and approaches to program management of different DFAT officers, but rather is normalised and systematised as far as possible as an essential factor in good development outcomes.

3. Summary of Recommendations

Relevance

- 1) VSP with the support of DFAT/AHC Port Vila, should continue to evolve and align itself with interested Government Ministries and departments working at the provincial and national level to support economic recovery and deliver on human resource development for Vanuatu's 2030 NSDP. This includes VSP establishing the necessary relationships (formal and informal), particularly with PMO (DSPPAC) and also DLA, and providing ongoing whole of government coordination and strengthening of vertical and horizontal linkages.
- 2) In the event of future disasters, VSP should be recognised as a pivotal humanitarian response network by DFAT/GoV, including its capability to provide initial surge capacity to key provincial level actors, withdrawing as government resources step up.

Effectiveness

- 3) VSP should undertake a refresh of its Program Logic and MEL framework in light of the changes to the context (whole of government approach, TC Harold and COVID-19), particularly at the LTO level, and together with the Spheres of Change, this should be used to steer VSP's investment decisions for the remainder of VSP Phase 4.
- 4) VSP should adopt a more flexible approach to using the Program Logic in its assessments of and reporting on progress. The balance of VSP's reporting should then shift from activity-level results to consideration of systemic change/reform in the skills system (both demand-side and supply-side) and then focus on the evidence for VSP's contribution to that change (using the IOs where it makes sense to do so).
- 5) VSP should continue to develop and improve monitoring tools as required and strengthen data management processes to ensure the information is being integrated into the MIS.
- 6) VSP should strengthen its approach to reflection and learning, including deepening its understanding of what hasn't worked and why, and ensure these processes occur more frequently through the year. This could also include a more formal annual review and reflection process with GoV partners.

Efficiency

- 7) A 'ways of working' document, including a risk assessment which identifies risks and agreed mitigation strategies to the current arrangements, should be developed and agreed by all key stakeholders (VSP, Scope Global, the Strategic Adviser, and DFAT/AHC Port Vila).
- 8) DFAT/AHC Port Vila should consider a modest increase to the 'core' funding it provides VSP from its bilateral aid program budget for Vanuatu. This would provide greater certainty to VSP, strengthening the incentives for VSP to increase the capacity of its core team, including expanding the Senior Management Team.
- 9) VSP's reporting requirements to DFAT/AHC Port Vila should be jointly reviewed and streamlined where possible.
- 10) DFAT/AHC Port Vila should identify opportunities for collaboration between VSP and other Australian-funded bilateral and regional programs in Vanuatu.

Sustainability

- 11) VSP should continue to support the GoV with the establishment of a national decentralised skills system architecture including Skills Centres in the two remaining provinces (Shefa and Penama). This support should, however, remain contingent on adequate co-contributions

from MoET and also consider contributions from other Government ministries benefitting from the expansion.

- 12)** DFAT/AHC Port Vila should increase the elevation of VSP within the AHC and support the framing of VSP under a broader system reform agenda that prioritises the strengthening of a national skills system but also acknowledges its central role in Vanuatu's economic recovery and longer-term development. This would involve DFAT/AHC Port Vila drawing on and learning from VSP's ways of working, particularly the team's understanding of the local political economy and recognising VSP as a key interlocutor with national government.
- 13)** Through further analysis, DFAT/AHC Port Vila should explore the establishment a Direct Funding Arrangement with a second GoV partner (beyond MoET) to, in the short term, provide additional flexibility for VSP to respond to different opportunities, including for emergency/disaster response and recovery and longer term facilitate the transfer of the Skills Development Fund, currently managed by VSP over to GoV.
- 14)** DFAT/AHC Port Vila should continue to ensure the necessary authorising environment remains in place to enable VSP to continue to be flexible, responsive and adaptive to contextual priorities.

Annex 1: Terms of Reference

Independent Evaluation of the Vanuatu Skills Partnership (INM038)

1. Background and orientation:

DFAT is commissioning an independent evaluation of the *Vanuatu Skills Partnership - Skills for Prosperity initiative* ('VSP', or 'the Partnership'), having now past the mid-point of this fourth phase of the initiative (AUD 22.4 million, July 2016 - January 2022). The most recent previous independent evaluation of VSP was conducted in 2015.⁷²

Vanuatu Context

Vanuatu's population of approximately 272,000 people is dispersed across 83 islands spreading over 1,000 kilometres of the Pacific Ocean. Only 20% of the workforce in Vanuatu is engaged in formal sector employment and the formal economy only offers some hundreds of jobs each year. The low level of formal employment has been attributed, among other things, to the insufficient development of human resources and a widespread lack of adequate and relevant skills. The vast majority of the population (more than 70%) live in rural areas, operating predominantly in informal and subsistence economies, with limited employment opportunities. Business growth is constrained by remoteness from major markets and a small and fragmented population that hinders competitive production. Vanuatu's regulatory and policy environment adds to the challenges, with issues around land development and access to finance. The labour market has been tilted by the labour mobility schemes in Australia and New Zealand, with Vanuatu being the Pacific country with the highest number of workers going to Australia through the Seasonal Worker Program and the Labour Mobility Program.

The dual crisis of COVID-19 and Tropical Cyclone (TC) Harold has profoundly affected Vanuatu's economic and social context. TC Harold struck Vanuatu on 6 April 2020 and caused widespread devastation across the country's northern islands. This includes destruction of shelter, medical facilities, businesses, crops, food gardens and livestock. As international borders were closed due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, there has been limited available humanitarian assistance in the emergency response.

In addition, while there have been no recorded cases of the virus in the country, Vanuatu has not been spared the economic impact of the pandemic. A recent survey found that employment in the tourism sector – formerly contributing almost 50% of the country's GDP - had decreased by 70%.

Following Vanuatu's four years of relative political stability, Vanuatu held its General Election in March 2020, which led to the formation of a new coalition government. The new Ministers are a mix of experienced and new MPs. Vanuatu's National Sustainable Development Plan 2016-2030 (NSDP) has laid a strong foundation for a national reform agenda, with broad-based buy-in.

⁷² *Independent Evaluation of the TVET Sector Strengthening Program* (Schofield et al, 2015)

Program overview

Australia has supported Vanuatu's technical and vocational education and training sector for over twenty years – and the approach has evolved substantially over that period. The Partnership has been operating under its current contractual modality since 2008 and is now in its fourth phase (July 2016 - January 2022).

For the past four years, the Partnership has operated with a 'locally-led' modality – meaning that a ni-Vanuatu leadership team run and oversee the initiative. The team is administratively supported by a Support Contractor, Scope Global (AUD 20,065,000, September 2017 – January 2022).⁷³ The contract between DFAT and Scope Global contains an option for DFAT to extend the term of the contract for up to four years from 31 January 2022 (clause 2.3). A strategic adviser for the Partnership is contracted directly by DFAT.

The Partnership's goal is: A sustainable and well-coordinated skills system that maximises access to relevant and quality assured qualifications leading to improved economic, social and cultural development opportunities for all.

The Partnership's Long Term Outcomes sought are:

- (i) Government of Vanuatu manages and coordinates its skills system more effectively.
- (ii) The skills system provides inclusive access to relevant and quality assured qualifications
- (iii) Participants follow pathways to further education and training
- (iv) The status of women and people with a disability is enhanced
- (v) Clients have increased income
- (vi) Clients contribute to local sustainable development and management of climate change risks
- (vii) Target value chains have improved productivity

[Note: In January 2020 the Partnership proposed adaptations to its Program Logic to reflect its growing influence and the evolving political economy, see Annex One. DFAT have not yet formally agreed these changes.]

Increasingly, it has become evident that the Partnership operates on two complementary levels. First, at the programmatic level, it brokers links between the 'demand' for and 'supply' of skills training services and demonstrates, through small-scale models, how effective skills training service delivery can lead to locally relevant, inclusive economic growth. In this way, the Partnership works towards systemic service delivery reform of the Post-School Education and Training (PSET) system under the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET).

Second, the Partnership also operates in a broader 'political' sphere, where it supports the emergence and influence of a cohort of developmental leaders committed and equipped to contribute to broad-based governance reform for the achievement of national development goals.

⁷³ Following a 'false start' with a previous managing contractor in 2017, DFAT entered a contract with Scope Global to provide services as the support contractor for VSP from 18 September 2017 – 31 January 2022 (AUD 17.5 million plus GST). The contract between DFAT and Scope Global contains an option for DFAT to extend the term of the contract for up to four years from 31 January 2022 (clause 2.3).

Indeed, the partnership has been described as a “locally-led social reform movement”⁷⁴. The Partnership effectively uses skills as a vector to progress broader developmental outcomes, such as building developmental leadership and progressing gender equality and disability inclusion.

Research published by Dr Julien Barbara from the Department of Pacific Affairs (DPA) at the Australian National University (ANU) in 2019 concluded “the Partnership has helped change the ways skills are understood in Vanuatu and supported the emergence of a new institutional framework to deliver decentralised, demand-driven and quality assured training and business development assistance to local business and communities. This has resulted in discernible improvements in livelihoods and local economic development. The Partnership has also helped communities re-conceptualise what effective leadership and governance looks like to bring about positive service delivery change”.⁷⁵

Anecdotal evidence indicates the program has a good reputation and buy-in among the Government of Vanuatu (GoV - MPs and officials alike) due to the tangible outcomes it yields for ni-Vanuatu people. For example, the GoV provides co-funding to the Partnership’s Skills Development Fund. Further, during the Australian High Commissioner’s courtesy call on the new Vanuatu’s Prime Minister (the Hon. Bob Loughman) in May 2020, he praised VSP and said he wanted it to move to the ‘next level’.

DFAT’s internal investment quality reporting processes have consistently indicated that VSP is performing strongly – with high ratings in relation to all criteria, including effectiveness, efficiency and gender equality. The 2015 independent evaluation of VSP found that the initiative had shaped the face of PSET and the understanding of skills in Vanuatu.⁷⁶ A 2019 TVET review commissioned by DFAT’s Office of Development Effectiveness found the Partnership worked effectively ‘with the grain’ of Vanuatu.

The Partnership has been recognised externally for its strong work on promoting gender equality and disability inclusion. Its ‘Building Better Balance’ (Gender Equality) strategy was described as a ‘gold star’ example of localised gender work by a La Trobe academic at the 2020 Australian Aid Conference. The Partnership was also recognised with a 2019 DFAT Secretary award for work on disability inclusion.

VSP recent adaptation:

Following TC Harold, the strength of the Partnership’s local leadership team and network of provincial Skills Centres connected to key stakeholders across government, productive sectors, the private sector, and communities, led it to pivot its priorities and mobilise its resources to support the Emergency Operations Centres (EOCs) across Vanuatu’s northern provinces.

The national recognition of the contribution that the Partnership has played in this recovery period, including its influence and impact in improving service delivery at the provincial level, demonstrates its broader value to shared national development goals.

⁷⁴ Dr Julien Barbara, ‘Thinking and working politically in the Vanuatu skills sector: supporting local leadership and building a political constituency for change’, Department of Pacific Affairs, Australian National University: http://www.vanuatutvet.org.vu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Barbara-Research_FINAL_April-19-2.pdf

⁷⁵ Dr Julien Barbara, ‘Thinking and working politically in the Vanuatu skills sector: supporting local leadership and building a political constituency for change’, Department of Pacific Affairs, Australian National University: http://www.vanuatutvet.org.vu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Barbara-Research_FINAL_April-19-2.pdf

⁷⁶ Independent Evaluation of the TVET Sector Strengthening Program (Schofield et al, 2015)

2. Purpose and intended use of evaluation

The evaluation's primary purpose is **investment improvement** by assessing and making recommendations to **maximise the effectiveness⁷⁷ and sustainability⁷⁸** of the Partnership. This will include analysis of the appropriateness of the Partnership's Program Logic and MELF, as well as the structure (modality) and level of resourcing (budget, human resources and contractor support). All of this is to be considered in light of the VSP's evolving influence and scale, the current political economy, and potential for enhanced impact.

The two secondary purposes of the evaluation are (i) **accountability**: to provide an independent assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of Australia's contribution through VSP; and (ii) **knowledge generation**: to capture lessons on this locally-led, politically-aware initiative.

The **primary users** of the information will be DFAT post (program managers and HOM as delegate), DFAT Canberra and the VSP team. Secondary users will be the GOV, the public (Australia and Vanuatu) and other development actors.

The key **management decisions** for DFAT which this evaluation will inform are

- (viii) What should be the structure and level of resources for the Partnership going forward to ensure optimal outcomes and sustainability?
- (ix) Does DFAT support the continuation of the current modality and provider post Jan 2022?
- (x) What role should the Partnership play in response and recovery to crises and how can DFAT enable this?

Some **other questions** DFAT management are interested in include:

- (i) What are the core factors enabling the Partnership's successes to date? If the Partnership is to scale up (including through other donor contributions) what is needed to ensure the Partnership can thrive and adapt but not jeopardise its core enabling factors?
- (ii) How can the Partnership capture how its efforts are supporting better outcomes across other sectors DFAT supports in Vanuatu, and add to this?
- (iii) What can DFAT learn from this locally-led, politically aware initiative with a 'non-conventional' modality?

⁷⁷ Effectiveness will be considered in relation to both (i) progress towards long-term outcomes and (ii) any other broader progress or impact.

⁷⁸ Sustainability is to be considered within the context of VSP's service provision and value add and not simply taken to mean 'capable of operating without DFAT funding'.

3. Key evaluation questions

Within the overarching purpose of **maximising the effectiveness⁷⁹ and sustainability⁸⁰** of the Partnership, a number of key evaluation questions are proposed:

A. Effectiveness:

- a. What progress has VSP made towards its long-term outcomes?⁸¹
- b. Has VSP contributed to other results and impact outside the long-term outcomes (and MELF)? What was the rationale for this?
- c. Is VSP's Program Logic and MELF appropriate to capture the Partnership's full impact? If not, what changes are recommended?

B. Relevance:

- a. How does VSP align with, and contribute to, the policy settings of the GoV and the GoA?
- b. What is the Partnership's current influence on the GoV's national reform agenda and how can this be increased?

C. Efficiency:

- a. Is the initiative's 'non-traditional' modality (a new feature in phase four) delivering effective results? What has been the difference compared to the previous modality?
- b. Is the structure (modality) and level of resourcing (budget, human resources and contractor support) appropriate to for DFAT to derive full potential from the Partnership in achieving its policy objectives? Are there any improvements/changes to be made?
- c. Are the structure and level of resources adequate to sustain and/or expand efforts, including in relation to gender, inclusion and climate change?

D. Sustainability:

- a. What are the core factors enabling the Partnership's successes to date?
- b. Are these factors sufficiently protected, supported and resourced?
- c. How should these enabling factors be supported as the Partnership evolves and potentially expands the scope or scale (including through other donor contributions) of its work?
- d. How can the Partnership's achievements to date be sustained in the long-term and what additional support and/or adaptations are required to achieve this?

⁷⁹ Effectiveness will be considered in relation to both (i) progress towards long-term outcomes and (ii) any other broader progress or impact.

⁸⁰ Sustainability is to be considered within the context of VSP's service provision and value add and not simply taken to mean 'capable of operating without DFAT funding'.

⁸¹ Particularly in relation to profit margins/sustainability, LTOs - v & vi

4. Evaluation modality

In light of the current constraints on international travel, the evaluation will be conducted remotely, using communications including telephone and video conferencing with stakeholders and key informants in Vanuatu. The first phase of the Review will involve desk review of key documentation and briefings with key personal including from DFAT, the Partnership's Senior Management Team, the Strategic Adviser and the Support Contractor.

The evaluation is likely to be conducted in parallel with a second phase of research to be undertaken by Dr Julien Barbara from the DPA at ANU, to further inform both the GoA and the GoV of the contribution of the Partnership to national reform objectives, and provide learnings from implementation. While the research will be independent from the evaluation, the two activities will be complementary and mutually informing. Efficiencies will be maximised, where appropriate, through joint consultations and peer discussion.

Evaluation team: Composition, roles and responsibilities

The evaluation team will likely be composed of the following personnel, subject to discussions with evaluation team leader:

- I. One Team Leader who will be responsible for the overall conduct of the evaluation and production of report.
- II. One other specialist to provide advice on the Partnership's influence and contribution to GoV and GoA priorities, factors in the Partnership's success to date, ways that the Partnership's influence and success can be further maximised - particularly through an analysis of budget and financing options and increased integration into GoV systems - and the appropriateness of the Partnership's MEL system.
- III. A local consultant/GoV officer to assist with administrative arrangements with Vanuatu-based stakeholders and to contextualise the team's approaches to the political economy of Vanuatu. [Note: This person will also provide support to the research activity.]
- IV. Partnership/DFAT personnel will be involved in briefings and validation check-ins as required, as well as regular evaluation progress monitoring.

4.1 Team Leader

Role:

- Draft and submit a Review Plan that sets out the Review's methodology and reflects professional practice standards and the time and resources available for the assignment, in line with DFAT M&E Standard 5, and in light of COVID-19 constraints.
- Lead the review process including: participating in an inception briefing; assigning tasks and responsibilities to team members; co-ordinating team inputs; and leading the Review including consultations/interviews.
- Recommend ways in which value for money of the Partnership could be increased, in terms of its contribution to the achievement of the aims of the GoA and GoV bilateral partnership.
- Manage and direct the Review activities and coordinate analysis in line with the considerations detailed above.

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

Skills and experience required:

- At least 10 years' experience in progressing national-level reform agendas in the Pacific, with proven understanding of governance issues.
- Expertise in inclusion to assess practical approaches on inclusion (disability and gender) and understanding on climate change mainstreaming
- Understanding of /and experience in skills development/TVET programs within developing country contexts.
- Expertise in innovative programming.
- Experience in leading Review teams.
- Strong knowledge of service delivery and governance issues in resource constrained environments, ideally with experience in decentralised service delivery.
- Skills in quantitative and qualitative data analysis, synthesis and reporting for evaluation.
- Extensive experience in the Pacific region, particularly in Melanesia, would be desirable.
- A thorough understanding of Australia's Aid program.
- Excellent written and spoken skills in English
- Excellent interpersonal and communication abilities, including a proven ability to liaise and communicate effectively in a cross-cultural environment.

4.2 M&E specialist

Role:

- Work with the Team Leader in the preparation of the Review plan to ensure it meets DFAT's M&E standards.
- Ensure the optimisation of the methodological design while also ensuring that it remains flexible and adaptive enough in order to accommodate difficulties in implementation.
- Provide technical advice on the identification and selection of appropriate tools to collect data needed to answer the Review questions, to analyse data, and to formulate value judgements (or reasoned assessments).
- Undertake data analysis, synthesis and drafting as requested by the Team Leader.

- Drawing from the data collected and understanding of national reform models and governance, provide technical advice and recommendations in relation to maximising the sustainability of Partnership gains within national systems.
- Assess the performance and quality of the Partnership’s monitoring and evaluation system and make recommendations for cost-effective and relevance improvements, as well as usefulness in leveraging increased buy-in and investment from GoV partners.
- Provide advice on adjustments and operationalising the design and M&E framework in light of Australia's Partnerships for Recovery - COVID 19 paper, Country level Recovery Plan and related Performance Assessment Framework.
- Make written contributions to the production of draft and final reports.
- Participate in debriefing sessions with government and partners.
- Undertake any other tasks as requested by the Team Leader.

Skills and experience required:

- At least 10 years’ professional experience in program review, monitoring and/or evaluation roles in international development contexts.
- Demonstrated technical expertise in data collection, analysis, monitoring, and evaluation. of development activities.
- Experience in developing/reviewing M&E systems and using a range of evaluation tools.
- Experience in governance, sector financing and service delivery reform.
- Excellent written and spoken skills in English.
- Excellent interpersonal and communication abilities, including a proven ability to liaise and communicate effectively in a cross-cultural environment.

5. Outputs and timing of the review

The program review will commence in August 2020 and be completed by end 2020. An indicative table of input ceilings is set out below. Timing and duration for the scope of services will be negotiated with the team.

- June/July 2020 – revision of ToRs in light of COVID-19/TC Harold context
- July 2020 – contracting of the Review team
- August – October 2020 - implementation of the Review
- November 2020- draft report
- December 2020 - final report
- January 2021- DFAT management response

Team leader’s (up to 27 days) and M&E Specialist’s (up to 25 days) key tasks from August 2020 to December 2020:

- 1) Briefings/Evaluation Plan
- 2) Document Review
- 3) Consultations/interviews, preparation and presentation of end of mission Aide Memoire
- 4) Draft Evaluation report
- 5) Final Evaluation report
- 6) Presentation of the findings to Canberra or community of practice

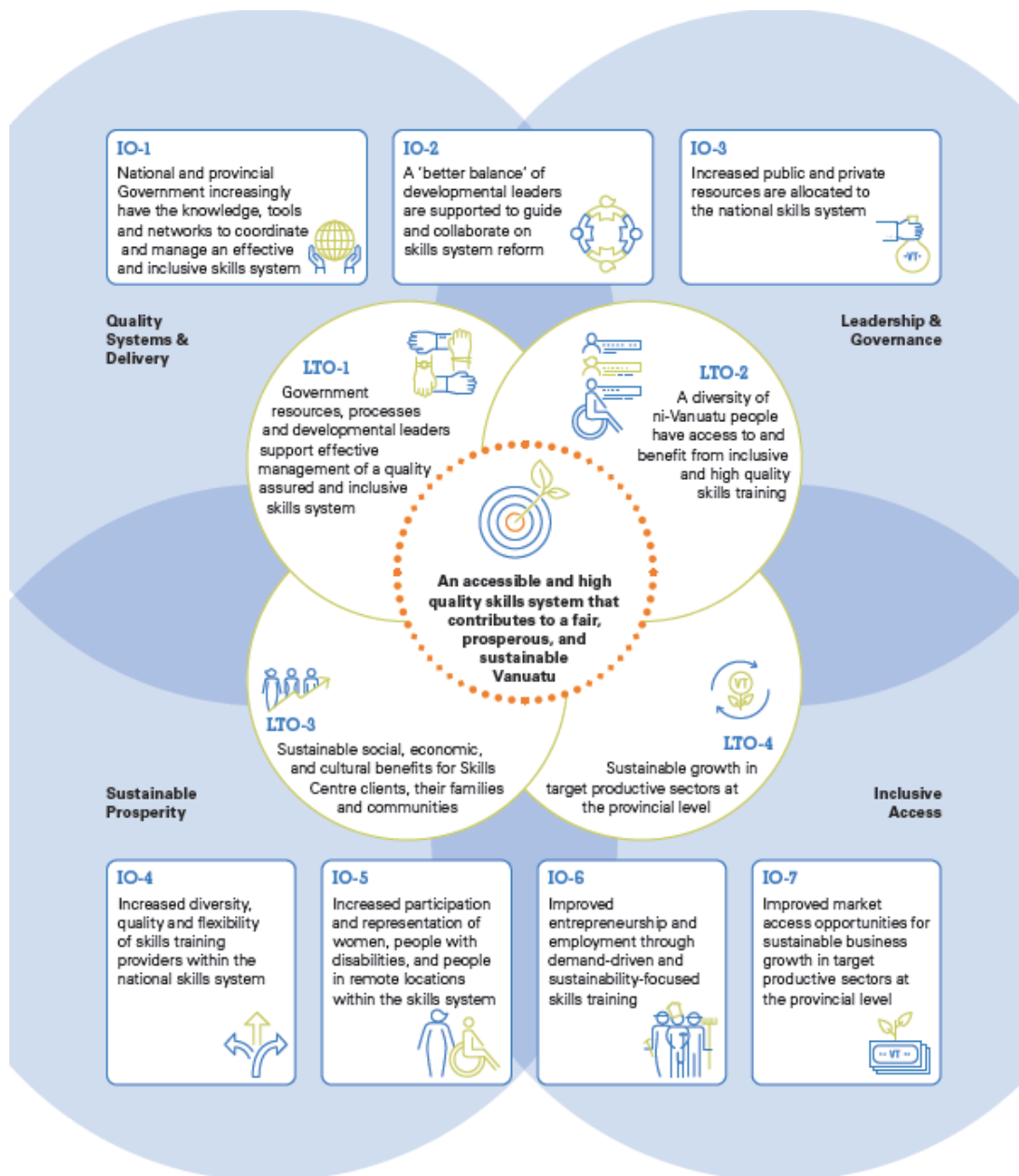
Key outputs from the evaluation are:

(i) an **Aide Memoire** that is presented at the end of the evaluation to DFAT Post and key GoV personnel; and

(ii) an **evaluation report** that comprehensively addresses the evaluation questions, including clear recommendations linked to a robust, evidence-based rationale, and accompanying **evaluation presentation slideshow**. The evaluation report must be:

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

Annex 2: Revised Program Logic (as at January 2020)



Annex 3: Key Documents

Australia-Vanuatu Aid Partnership Arrangement 2016-2019 (DFAT, 2016).

Australia's 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

"Capability traps in development: How initiatives to improve administrative systems succeed at failing." Prism 3.3: 63-7 (Pritchett. L, Woolcock, M and Andrews, M., 2012)

DFAT Investment Quality Reports for VSP (Annual Aid Quality checks)

Effective Governance: Strategy for Australia's aid investments (DFAT, 2015)

[How the Vanuatu Skills Partnership helped build a sector by thinking and working politically](#)
[Australian National University \(Barbara, J., 2019\)](#)

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Vanuatu COVID-19 Development Response plan (DFAT, 2020)

Vanuatu Education and Training Sector Strategy (2019-2030), MoET 2019

Vanuatu Post School Education and Training Strategy [\(2016-2020\) \(MoET, 2016\)](#)

Vanuatu Recovery Strategy 2020 – 2023, Yumi Evriwan Tugeta (PMO, July 2020)

Vanuatu Skills Partnership Design (DFAT, May 2017)

VSP Infographics and Case Studies

VSP Monthly Provincial Reports

VSP Partnership Annual Plans

VSP Partnership Implementation Frameworks (Agriculture, Tourism, Handicrafts)

VSP Progress and MEL Performance Reports

Annex 4: Key Informants

Stakeholder	Name	Position
Ministry of Education and Training	Johnson Toa	Principal Education Officer TVET
Ministry of Education and Training	Jerrold Arnhambat	Senior Education Officer – Training Provider Support Services
Ministry of Education and Training	David Lambukly	CEO VQA
Ministry of Education and Training	John Gideon	Director Finance and Budget
Prime Minister's Office	Gregoire Nimbtick	Director General
Prime Minister's Office	Scott Tavi	Donor Coordination officer DSPPAC
Prime Minister's Office	Jerry Lapi	Director DSPPAC
Prime Minister's Office	Jorge Alfredo	Recovery Operations Centre - ODA
Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, Fisheries and Biosecurity	Antoine Ravo	Director Agriculture
Industry Trade department	Jimmy Rantes	Director, Department of Industry
Industry Trade department	Lazarus Aising	Manager - Department of Industry
Department of Local Authorities	Leith Veramaito	Director, Department of Local Authority
Sanma Province	Albert Ruddley	Secretary General
Sanma Province	Vanessa Organo	Adviser to Secretary General
Malampa Province	Vanessa Sandy	Manager, Malampa Handicraft Centre
Malampa Province	Kalwajin Skepha	SG Malampa
Tafea Province	Joe lautim	SG Tafea

Torba Province	Reynald Surmat	SG Torba
Balance of Power	Wilson Toa	BoP Vanuatu
DFAT's Vanuatu Health Program	Shirley Tokon	Deputy Team Leader
APTC	Anna Naupa	Director Vanuatu and Nauru campuses
VIT	Wade Evans	Principal
RTCs	Jimmy Tom	Manager of Lume RTC
DFAT Canberra	David Coleman	Acting Director Education
DFAT Canberra	Saku Akmeemana	Governance
DFAT Canberra	Gaye Moore	Gender
DFAT Canberra	Natascha Spark	Assistant Director, Pacific Education and Skills
DFAT Canberra	Peter Izzard	Assistant Director, Pacific Education and Skills
DFAT Canberra	Larissa Burke	Disability section (former Volunteer in VSP in Vanuatu)
DFAT Canberra	Suzanne Bent	Vanuatu desk
DFAT Port Vila	Sarah de Zoeten	HOM
DFAT Port Vila	Susan Ryle	DHOM
DFAT Port Vila	Helen Corrigan	SPM humanitarian and recovery
DFAT Port Vila	Cathy McWilliam	1 st Secretary Safer Community and Education
DFAT Port Vila	Christelle Thieffry	SPM education and skills
DFAT Port Vila	Susan Kaltovei	PM scholarship and skills
Australia-Vanuatu Governance for Growth program	Clinton Pobke	Counsellor
Vanuatu Skills Partnership	Fremden Yanhambath	Director
Vanuatu Skills Partnership	May Garae	Deputy director

Vanuatu Skills Partnership	Ruth Seketa	Finance manager
Vanuatu Skills Partnership	Warren Gama	Productive sector manager
Vanuatu Skills Partnership	Sherol George	Inclusion Manager
Vanuatu Skills Partnership	Jamine Makikon	MEL Coordinator
Vanuatu Skills Partnership	Ellis Silas	Provincial Services Delivery Manager
Vanuatu Skills Partnership	Jonas Masovich	Skills for Agribusiness Coordinator
Vanuatu Skills Partnership	Jilda Shem	Manager Skills Centre, Malampa
Vanuatu Skills Partnership	Wesley Jerethy	Manager Skills Centre, Sanma
Vanuatu Skills Partnership	Fenda Sam	Manager Skills Centre, Tafea
Vanuatu Skills Partnership	Jimmy Kelvin	Manager Skills Centre, Torba
VSP Technical Advisers	Anna Gibert	Strategic Adviser (to DFAT)
VSP Technical Advisers	Anthony Bailey	PSET Provider Support Adviser
VSP Technical Advisers	Sarah Dyer	MEL Adviser
VSP Technical Advisers	Sally Baker	Disability Inclusion Advisor
VSP Technical Advisers	Lucy Battaglone	MIS Adviser
VSP Technical Advisers	Rosie Boylan	Creative Industry Consultant (Headwear)
VSP Technical Advisers	Christine Delany	Creative Industry Advisor
VSP Technical Advisers	Pascal Gavotto	Productive Sector Advisor
VSP Technical Advisers	Peter Morris	Former Technical Director
Scope Global	Alison Wells	Support Contractor Co-ordinator (outgoing)
Scope Global	Francesca Trott	Support Contractor Co-ordinator

Scope Global	Farheen Khurram	Contractor Representative
Vanuatu Disabled Society	Elison Bovu	Executive Director
Vanuatu Disabled Society	Elsa Toa	Operations Manager
Vanuatu Disabled Society	Arthur Simarai	Community Base Inclusive Development Officers
Vanuatu Disabled Society	Sheila Anga	Community Base Inclusive Development Officers
Vanuatu Disabled Society	Judith Yahambath	Program Manager
Asia Foundation (Pacific Islands)	Sandra Kraushner	Director
Fiji Women's Fund	Michelle Reddy	Director