

## **VOIS BLONG YUMI PROGRAM OF SUPPORT TO THE VANUATU BROADCASTING AND TELEVISION CORPORATION (VBTC)**

### **Management Response to the February 2012 Mid-Term Review**

#### **SUMMARY**

This paper summarises the recent findings of a mid-term review of the Vois Blong Yumi (VBY) Program of Support to the Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation (VBTC) and outlines options for future media for development funding once VBY finishes in June 2012. There are four main messages:

- 1) Overall, the findings show that for AusAID, investing in the country's national broadcaster has had social, economic and political relevance. Specifically, VBY has helped to achieve "an effective middle management team, almost 100 percent transmission coverage of the country; greatly improved programming and newscasting including the involvement of key stakeholders in developing programs. Those living on outer islands are now able to engage in dialogue on key development topics through radio talkback programs."
- 2) However, the review recommended that AusAID "seriously consider continuing to fund VBTC as this could be construed as condoning mismanagement, poor governance and blatant disregard for AusAID-funded advice."
- 3) If AusAID continues to fund media for development in Vanuatu, "Any further funding be made conditional on actions to improve (organisational) management performance" and "If progress has been made consideration should be given for an extension until December 2012 given the important role Radio Vanuatu will need to play in the October 30 elections."
- 4) Links to the regional Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS) should also be explored.

#### **BACKGROUND**

The VBY program began in April 2007 with Australia providing up to \$5.2 million from June 2007-June 2012 for support to the Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation (VBTC) of which \$2.3 million is provided for phase 3 (June 2010-June 2012).

The Program goal is to support the achievement of VBTC's vision for Radio Vanuatu – building the nation by linking its past to its future and connecting people to knowledge and each other. The program purpose is to support the development of an accessible, responsive and professional Radio Vanuatu, managed by a well performing and respected VBTC.

The VBY Program focuses on nation building by way of support for a national service which can reflect the concerns, interests, languages and current affairs of Vanuatu. In particular, it focuses on rebuilding the national radio service so that it can be used to promote knowledge for social and economic issues such as HIV/AIDS, gender equity, and agricultural development. It is also a vital communication tool for disaster and risk management, as demonstrated during the multiple tsunami alerts since October 2009 and the seasonal cyclone messages. While the focus is particularly on Radio Vanuatu, this is underpinned by organisation development of the VBTC, with some small scale support for other media stakeholders. The program approach is one of progressive engagement over the long term, with the design indicating a 2-10 year engagement.

The four program components cover:

- governance and organisation development;

- improved access and coverage;
- program development (voice and content); and
- support for broader media development in Vanuatu (outreach).

The program is implemented, managed and monitored by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, through a twinning arrangement between the ABC International Projects Unit and Radio Vanuatu. The VBTC, ABC, Government of Vanuatu (GOV) and AusAID form the Management Committee which has oversight of the program.

AusAID has also recently established media for development projects managed by the ABC in other regional and bilateral programs. This includes \$11.3m over four years for the Pacific Regional Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS), \$3.2m over two years for the Solomon Islands Media Assistance Scheme (SOLMAS) and \$14 over 7 years for the PNG Media for Development Initiative (MDI). All of AusAID's media for development projects are currently managed by the ABC and the two agencies have a Strategic Partnership Agreement to work together on international media issues of common interest. AusAID and the ABC are also currently negotiating a 'Head Agreement' to establish consistency across existing and future contracts (see [Attachments A and B](#) for the AusAID-ABC Strategic Partnership and a summary table of AusAID's bilateral and regional media assistance projects).

In late 2011, AusAID commissioned a review of VBY, as part of a broader cluster evaluation of AusAID's support for civil society and the media in Vanuatu. The focus for the VBY review was on Phase 3, and an assessment was made against four OECD-DAC criteria and three AusAID criteria for evaluating development assistance (i.e. relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, monitoring and evaluation, gender equality and cross-cutting issues, and analysis and learning).

The review was undertaken in November 2011 by an independent consultant, Dr Pam Thomas of ANU Enterprise, contracted by AusAID on the basis of her significant experience in monitoring and evaluation of civil society initiatives across the region and in Vanuatu in particular. Dr Thomas spoke with stakeholders from VBTC, the ABC, AusAID, media practitioners, government agencies and NGOs that interact frequently with VBTC. Meetings were held in Melbourne, Port Vila, Luganville and Lenakel. A final report was submitted to Vanuatu Post in February 2012.

## **FINDINGS/ MAIN IMPLICATIONS**

Overall, the VBY review found that:

### ***AusAID's investment in media development in Vanuatu has made an impact***

- For AusAID, engaging in the country's national broadcaster has had social, economic and political relevance. Radio is the only way to reach Vanuatu's entire population and provides a vital service in times of emergency as well as through providing relevant programming information. "Engaging with and improving the quality and coverage of the country's national broadcaster is highly relevant to both the Australian and Vanuatu Governments. Radio Vanuatu is now contributing to the priorities outlined in the Australia-Vanuatu Partnership for Development<sup>1</sup> by providing information that supports improvements in health, education, agriculture, gender equality, good governance and disaster preparedness. It also supports three of the four key areas outlined in the Partnership." (p10)

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<sup>1</sup> See 'Partnership for Development between the Government of Australia and the Government of Vanuatu' 2009,

- “Overall, the VBY program has been successful in restoring credibility, legitimacy and regular listeners to Radio Vanuatu. Technically, the Radio Vanuatu signal now reaches almost 100 per cent of the country providing rural people who in the past could not receive a radio signal with access to news and current affairs.” (p9)
- “Phase 3 has built on earlier successes with middle management, coverage and programming and has already helped strengthen and improve knowledge of good leadership and governance among staff. Regular on-the-job training and mentoring for news and program staff, the establishment of new program formats, training for technical staff and improved staff conditions have had a positive impact on the quality of the programs and on staff morale.” (p9)
- In Phase 3, VBY has responded to GoV policy to expand the reach and interactivity of radio through: “(improved) Dialogue between citizens and provincial and national government ... through more inclusive and relevant radio programming, including talkback.” (p9)

***There are ongoing significant governance, financial and political challenges for VBTC***

- Achievements have been mixed in the other two outcome areas [organisational governance and outreach] with no improvement in senior management or financial accountability. “The major problems outlined in the 2009 evaluation remain the same. VBTC is hampered in fulfilling its potential by lack of political will to ensure more effective management of the country’s major communication provider.” (p10). “Financial accountability remains a difficult area” (p16).
- “The volatile political situation over the last 15 months and frequent changes in government and accompanying changes in the Executive Board and Board Chairman, together with changes in who has ultimate responsibility for VBTC decision-making have led to on-going uncertainty about who is the final VBTC authority. The lack of any staff disciplinary action - usually the responsibility of top management - continues to exacerbate poor staff morale and lack of job satisfaction.” (p16)
- The planned review of VBTC by GOV, as part of its State-Owned Enterprise reform agenda continues to be postponed. However, the review notes that “the Asian Development Bank’s review of GBEs originally planned for 2010 will be undertaken in 2012.” (p23).

***The review cautions against further funding***

- “AusAID seriously consider [whether to] continue to fund VBTC as this could be construed as condoning mismanagement, poor governance and blatant disregard for AusAID-funded advice.” (p5)

The review recommendations addressed both the current phase and future funding options.

**Recommendations for the current VBY phase**

Recommendation	Actions
Demonstration to organisational commitment to a high performing VBTC	
1. The VBTC implement the recommendations of the review of the Broadcasting Act and the GOV progress the ADB review of government business enterprises planned for 2010 but held over until 2012.	The Broadcasting Act review has since been finalised (March 2012). AusAID Post to discuss with GoV plans for implementation of recommendations.
2. VBTC sign the outstanding team leaders’ contracts and the staff Partnership Agreement immediately and funds allocated for technical maintenance are provided as scheduled.	Team Leader contracts have since been signed, however there is an impasse between the Board and staff union on the Partnership Agreement.
Re-allocation of existing program budget to other areas	
3. AusAID re-allocate the Santo studio budget and equipment towards expanding and upgrading a provincial radio network with consideration given to	Recommendation already addressed. On 20 Feb 2012 the PMC endorsed the reallocation of the Santo studio budget to a back-up studio at NDMO.

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<i>installing a line between CREST FM, Tanna and Radio Vanuatu.</i>	
<i>4. AusAID seriously consider continuing to fund VBTC as this could be construed as condoning mismanagement, poor governance and blatant disregard for AusAID-funded advice.</i>	To be discussed with GoV in a high-level meeting with PMO.
<i>Expanding Radio Vanuatu access, voice and content</i>	
1. ABC oversee training in social and economic development processes and good governance for program, news and talkback staff.	Included in 2011/12 activity planning.
2. ABC encourage further support to increasing access to the media by women, youth and rural audiences to ensure they have a more equal voice and the program continues to focus on those groups most frequently overlooked.	Included in 2011/12 activity planning. VBY is conducting content analysis in March/April 2012 to inform future programming.
3. ABC and VBTC continue current efforts to provide more reliable, high quality transmission and that AusAID organise a donor roundtable to ensure that further support to VBTC media, including provision of transmission equipment is harmonised and strategic.	Included in 2011/12 activity planning. VBTC will organise the donor roundtable, tentatively planned for May 2012.
4. In the remaining life of the program the focus is on Radio Vanuatu.	Included in 2011/12 activity planning.
5. ABC implement, as soon as possible, develops a strategy and begins implementation to expand provincial radio networks to all provinces and to explore the suitability of suitcase radio stations. Implementation should begin prior to June 2012.	Implementation to commence with a costing exercise. Note however that this is unlikely to be completed before June 2012, and if an extension occurs, will be completed by Nov 2012.
6. Follow-up discussions are held with PACMAS to identify ways that could support VBTC in future.	In progress.

The review also identified future options for AusAID support for media development in Vanuatu beyond June 2012:

1. Any further funding be made conditional on actions to improve management performance. If there has been inadequate progress with implementing the Broadcasting Act, undertaking the ADB review and signing outstanding reports, agreements and team leaders contracts that the program end on June 30, 2012, If progress has been made consideration should be given for an extension until December 31, 2012 given the important role Radio Vanuatu will need to play in the October 30 elections.
2. Support from PACMAS be explored, most particularly for support with certificated, on-the-job engineering training. PACMAS offers a wide range of training and support for programming, news and content and broadcasting leadership but VBTC would have to compete for places.
3. If there has been good progress on provincial radio support by May 31, 2012, it is recommended that consideration be given to a new program which focuses on a strong and viable provincial radio network.

### **CONSIDERATIONS FOR AUSAID'S MANAGEMENT RESPONSE**

The following considerations are likely to be relevant in terms of possible future Australian assistance for media development in Vanuatu:

- The review is well-written and its assessment against the required criteria was thorough. However some of its recommendations in relation to the current Phase are redundant as they are part of the activity plan – they do however reinforce the message for VBY to pick up momentum.
- The 2011 Quality At Implementation report for VBY provides the following ratings, which suggest a reasonable program status:

QAI Criteria	Rating (1-6)
<i>Relevance</i>	5
<i>Effectiveness</i>	4
<i>Efficiency</i>	4
<i>Monitoring and Evaluation</i>	4
<i>Sustainability</i>	3
<i>Gender Equality</i>	4
<i>Risk Assessment</i>	Amber

- ROU 37833/2 with the ABC for management of VBY ends in June 2012, however the initiative (Aidworks ID: INH074) ends in December 2012, the option to extend for a few months to provide support through Vanuatu's general elections is therefore viable. The ABC have reported an anticipated underspend of AUD700k, which would enable a no-cost extension.
- Due to program staff turnover, delays in VBY activities such as the expansion of the provincial radio networks mean that these are unlikely to be achieved before June 2012. Given the high priority for radio reach by the current Prime Minister, as well as the timeliness of network expansion in parallel with GoV's iGovernment initiative, there is a lot of value in seeing through the provincial radio network activity in particular and through the 2012 election period.
- AusAID has previously imposed conditions to GoV on VBY funding that have been met (e.g. SW transmission power budget, recruitment of a Financial Controller). While this has sometimes been met with resistance, GoV values the partnership and acknowledges the political and financial management challenges for VBTC.
- The ADB review of State-Owned Enterprises includes VBTC. The Director of Finance has announced that VBTC will undergo an audit dating back several years and will impose strict regulations. The review commences in April 2012.
- AusAID has made some good progress incorporating C4D into Vanuatu's sectoral programs, especially education and land, and this could be readily built upon.
- AusAID's other bilateral media initiatives in the region, such as the Media Development Initiative in PNG, face similar organisational and political challenges but have persevered with a focus on communications for development.

### **FUTURE FUNDING OPTIONS**

The respective merit of different options to extend media for development funding in Vanuatu is outlined below. Post will be meeting with the Office of the Prime Minister to obtain its views on the preferred option (a 6-month extension).

1. 6-month No-Cost Extension of VBY until December 2012 (preferred option)
  - The anticipated underspend for VBY Phase 3 is AUD700,000. The underspend relates to delayed activities from 2011. A no-cost extension is therefore feasible.
  - The 2011 review of VBY and the positive results achieved to date establish a relatively clear focus for a 6-month extension. The extension would remain within the original program scope and design.
  - VBY program design is for 2 to 10 years, the QAI ratings are reasonable and the funds and FMA9/10 approval are available, therefore a strong case can be put forward to the delegate.
  - A gap in funding would likely result in a loss of momentum and continuity, which would be undesirable during an election period.
  - The eventual amendment to the existing ROU with the ABC will need to comply with the new negotiated head agreement between AusAID and the ABC due for signing in mid 2012.
2. Explore options for support via PACMAS (in train)
  - i. Post will facilitate discussions between VBTC and PACMAS to gauge non-competitive opportunities for future support.
3. New program design for VBY focussing on provincial radio networks (reject)
  - i. A new program design for VBY is not encouraged at this stage. As future options for support via PACMAS are currently being discussed, and GoV's own plans for VBTC being refined, it is more prudent to see out the current program, with an extension to December 2012, and explore support via PACMAS.

**NEXT STEPS**

- Prepare draft management response for review by **Wednesday 28 March**.
- Finalise AusAID's management response and release to key partners, along with final MTR by **4 April**.
- Arrange high level meeting between AusAID Counsellor and PMO to discuss AusAID's proposed management response and to seek guidance from GOV re: conditions AusAID will be placing on future funding. Meeting by **15 April**.
- Send summary cable. Share management response internally within AusAID (e.g. PNG, Sols, CBR). Upload final report to AidWorks and external website along with AusAID's management response and learning and dissemination plan by **Thursday 19 April**.

**ATTACHMENT A. ABC AND AUSAID STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**

**Partnership Principles**

1. The Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) share a history of working together on media issues of common interest. Current developments in both agencies have seen an increased recognition between the two agencies of the value of working in partnership, in relation to international media development issues.
  - a) The relationship of the agencies will be one of partnership, valuing the contribution each agency can make to the achievement of common goals; and respecting each agency's responsibilities;
  - b) The partnership will be underpinned by mutual respect, professionalism, integrity, cooperation, the sharing of ideas and open communication in areas of shared strategic priority;
  - c) Agencies will work collaboratively to identify and agree shared strategic priorities for Australia's development assistance with the media sector: this will involve setting joint objectives and recognising the comparative advantage of each agency.

**Shared Strategic Priorities**

2. AusAID and the ABC will work together to:
  - a) Strengthen the independence, quality and accessibility of media in the Asia-Pacific, particularly through capacity building of both public service broadcasters and other media related organisations operating in the public interest;
  - b) Promote long-term engagement of development assistance in the sector, building on existing relationships and linking technical assistance to broader development policy and programming priorities;
  - c) Promote an evidence-based approach for development assistance with the media in the Asia-Pacific;
  - d) Encourage good governance and public sector management in the region.

**Agency Skills and Strengths**

3. Each Agency brings different skills and strengths to the Partnership.
4. AusAID's strengths lie in:
  - a) Providing development policy advice drawing on a deep knowledge and understanding of developing countries in our region and the long-term aspects of development;
  - b) Managing Australian development cooperation programs focussed on building effective governance;



- c) Well established networks and relationships with partner governments, civil society organisations, other donors, researchers and professional associations in developing countries; and
  - d) Extensive overseas infrastructure and delivery systems.
5. ABC's strengths lie in:
- a) Well-established and respected networks with public service and commercial broadcasters throughout the region;
  - b) Extensive networks with staff, individual experts and professionals with highly specific technical skills, experience and capacity to provide accredited training;
  - c) Policy advice and lessons learned from Australia's experience both domestically and internationally with media broadcasting across new media, television and radio platforms;
  - d) Well-developed networks with international media agencies and organisations, particularly in the Asia Pacific region;
  - e) Expertise in governance and public sector management, particularly in the media sector.

#### **Coordination Arrangements**

- 6. Both agencies agree to meet at least annually at the Executive level to identify strategic issues of common interest and to set priorities for cooperation and joint work. Either agency will be able to seek further meetings at this level if necessary.
- 7. Meetings at the Branch-head level and below will be initiated when necessary to take forward issue specific work.
- 8. Both agencies agree to ensure information on points of contact on specific issues is provided and regularly updated to facilitate effective engagement.

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13/8/2008

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**ATTACHMENT B. AUSAID REGIONAL AND BILATERAL MEDIA ASSISTANCE**

Project	Scope	Location	Amount	Duration
Media Development Initiative (MDI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communications for development</li> <li>• Organisational capacity building</li> <li>• Staff training</li> </ul>	Papua New Guinea	\$14 million	January 2005 – June 2012
Satellite Distribution System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media infrastructure</li> </ul>	Papua New Guinea	\$3.8 million	May 2008 – June 2010
Demand for Good Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communications for development</li> <li>• Organisational capacity building</li> <li>• Staff training</li> <li>• Media infrastructure</li> </ul>	Cambodia	\$3 million	April 2009 – June 2013
Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communications for development</li> <li>• Staff training</li> <li>• Policy work</li> </ul>	Pacific Regional	\$11.3 million	December 2011 – June 2015
Solomon Islands Media Assistance Scheme (SOLMAS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media infrastructure</li> <li>• Organisational capacity building</li> <li>• Staff training</li> </ul>	Solomon Islands	\$3.2 million	October 2011 – June 2013
Vanuatu Media Strengthening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communications for development</li> <li>• Organisational capacity building</li> <li>• Media infrastructure</li> </ul>	Vanuatu	\$5.6 million	February 2007 – June 2012