



## **Vanuatu Education Support Program (VESP) Technical Report (Milestone 17)**

VESP Gender, Disability and social Inclusion Strategy  
Internal review of strategy implementation and progress

Version 1

June 2017

# Table of Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Executive Summary .....</b>                        | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>1. The VESP GD&amp;SI Strategy.....</b>            | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>2. Review of the VESP GD&amp;SI Strategy .....</b> | <b>9</b>  |
| 2.1. Purpose and process of the review.....           | 9         |
| 2.2. Findings .....                                   | 9         |
| (a) Policy Context .....                              | 9         |
| (b) Current understanding of inclusion.....           | 10        |
| (c) The Strategy itself .....                         | 11        |
| <b>3. Major Achievements.....</b>                     | <b>13</b> |
| <b>4. Conclusions.....</b>                            | <b>15</b> |

## Annexes

Annex 1: VESP Gender, Disability and Social Inclusion Strategy, 2014 – 2018 (Updated June 2017)

Annex 2: Inclusive Education Policy survey, 2017 – Preliminary Findings

# Abbreviations

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| CDU      | Curriculum Development Unit  |
| CEDAW    | Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women |
| CRC      | Convention on the Rights of Children                                       |
| CSP      | Child Safeguarding Policy  |
| DFAT     | Department of Foreign Affairs (Australia)                                  |
| IE(P)    | Inclusive Education (Policy)   |
| ECCE(U)  | Early Childhood Care and Education (Unit)                                  |
| GBV      | Gender-Based Violence  |
| GD&SI(S) | Gender, Disability and Social Inclusion ( Strategy)                        |
| GEEP     | Gender Equity in Education Policy  |
| GoV      | Government of Vanuatu  |
| MoET     | Ministry of Education and Training   |
| MQS      | Minimum Quality Standards (schools)  |
| MTR      | Mid-Term Review  |
| NGO      | Non-Government Organisation  |
| OV       | Open VEMIS   |
| PD       | Professional Development   |
| SIO      | School Improvement Officer   |
| SIP      | School Improvement Plan  |
| SIU      | School Improvement Unit  |
| UNICEF   | United Nations International Children's (Emergency) Fund                   |
| VANSTA   | Vanuatu Standardised Test of Achievement                                   |
| VEMIS    | Vanuatu Education Management Information System                            |
| VESP     | Vanuatu Education Support Program  |
| VETSS    | Vanuatu Education and Training Sector Strategy                             |
| VITE     | Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education                                     |

# Executive Summary

The Vanuatu Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) has had an Inclusive Education (IE) Policy in place since 2011. In developing this aspirational policy MoET reflects the Government of Vanuatu's commitment to identifying measures to ensure every child in this country has access to an inclusive education<sup>1</sup>. The Government of Vanuatu has ratified two important and influential international conventions, The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and has also endorsed the Pacific Islands Basic Education Action Plan. The ratification of these conventions requires the Government to take steps to ensure the education system is inclusive of all children. As early as 20012, the Government of Vanuatu passed an Education Act which makes the following statement with regard to gender equality, disability and social inclusion:

*"A child is not to be refused admission to any school on account of his/her gender, religion, race, nationality, language or disability."*

MoET has developed other policies to support these commitments in addition to the IE Policy, including the Gender Equity in Education (GEEP) Policy (2005) and the Child Safeguarding Policy (2017). These policies are operationalised largely through the Minimum Quality Standards (MQS) for schools which form the reference point for all MoET activities supported through VESP.

The VESP Gender, Disability and Social Inclusion (GD&SI) Strategy 2014-2018 (provided at Annex 1) is specifically designed to help facilitate implementation of these and other relevant policies and standards as they are developed or updated. The strategy uses a mainstreaming approach to work with MoET to support the achievement of gender, disability, socially sensitive results. The strategy provides guidance on entry points and a checklist of actions for mainstreaming of GD&SI through VESP-supported activities.

As with the VESP design, the GD&SI Strategy is guided by the following principles with regard to inclusive education:

1. Working in partnership with donors to encourage a multi-stakeholder approach to promoting inclusive education;
2. Building on the work done by donors such as UNICEF and other NGOs including World Vision, Save the Children, Oxfam and CARE;
3. Promoting partnerships and ownership by the community and actively involving community organisations that represent women, girls, people with disabilities and other marginalised community members;
4. Ensuring VESP activities take into account relevant Government of Vanuatu priorities including the commitment to the elimination of gender-based violence (GBV).

This report provides the findings from an internal (MoET/VESP) review of the strategy and draws on a range of inputs including feedback from the VESP Mid Term Review (2016); VESP progress reports; data from a recently conducted survey; and discussions with technical advisers and MoET activity managers. The report describes the underlying purpose and process for the strategy review along with key findings, learning and gaps.

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<sup>1</sup> Government of Vanuatu. *The Education Act* No. 21 of 2001

<sup>2</sup> *The Education Act* No. 21 of 2001, Part 1, 8(1)

There has been some pleasing progress to report on how the GD&SI strategy is supporting implementation of the Ministry’s Inclusive Education Policy, particularly from a recently conducted survey, as well as the Inclusion Case Study initiated in three schools. However, feedback from these sources highlights the logistical and cultural difficulties that MoET and its staff continue to experience in implementing this major policy. The MTR noted that approaches to disability inclusion would be best described as being “in their infancy”; the relationship between student fees and access is not well understood, and there is a lack of data about the barriers contributing to the number of out of school students.

While the MTR described progress as “adequate” for some access and inclusion initiatives for children in kindergarten and Years 1-3, the ongoing access difficulties are also a reflection of a lack of understanding within MoET about the “how to” of implementing the policy and then, the “how to” in establishing, gathering, measuring and monitoring meaningful GD&SI data. There is a need to provide some targeted socialising of the IE policy to raise awareness, understanding and identify practical measures that support the policy.

This recent experience indicates that the GD&SI strategy was ambitious in its ambit, designed to meet and reflect the aspirational goals outlined by MoET in the IE policy. However, in its role in supporting the Ministry, VESP has achieved a great deal despite the challenges of implementing support across so many entry points. The GD&SI strategy creates a strong foundation for moving ahead in a way that provides additional guidance in activities and in reporting. On the basis of these findings and as outlined in this report, it is recommended that the strategy continues but with a more structured, defined and considered approach. It will be important to give GD&SI a higher profile in program monitoring and evaluation while at the same time using the feedback from stakeholders included in this review to refine those actions outlined in the current strategy. This will form the basis of what is achievable over the next 18 months and then into the next Phase of VESP.

Ongoing and targeted VESP support to MoET underpins the Action Plan that is included in this Report (p.15). This Plan outlines how to build on the success of the existing strategy, while advocating for a closer focus on (and deeper engagement with) actions already underway. The plan, provided in summary form below, makes links between each of the proposed outputs and the entry points in the GD&SI strategy. Some of the access barriers can be identified through implementation of this action plan. The lessons learned and information gathered will in turn feed into and inform MoET’s reform agenda and the design of the next phase of planned support to the Ministry. Without the support underpinning each of the planned outputs it is unlikely that MoET will be able to translate its aspirational inclusion goals into a series of attributable, measurable and sustainable outcomes.

**Table 1: VESP GD&SI Strategy Planned Outputs 2017-8**

| GD&SI OUTPUTS 2017-18   | STRATEGY ENTRY POINTS  |
|---|--|
| Support and strengthen the capacity of MoET to successfully integrate GD&SI in MoET planning.   | Policy and planning; Monitoring and Evaluation   |
| Use findings from Survey to explore (with three Case Study schools) how they are moving from awareness to implementation of the IE policy                       | Community engagement; School improvement planning  |
| Provide support to VESP staff to improve their capacity to assist and mentor counterparts in the implementation of GD&SI initiatives.                           | MoET capacity development  |
| Include elements of GBV and child protection awareness-raising on all training and PD provided to MoET “enablers” (Education Officers, SIOs, teacher educators) | Policy and Planning; MoET capacity development; training to support new curriculum; school leadership training |

| GD&SI OUTPUTS 2017-18   | STRATEGY ENTRY POINTS   |
|---|---|
| Formalise quality assurance for GD&SI inclusion in curriculum and training package writing                | Curriculum implementation; VITE institutional strengthening; training to support new curriculum                                   |
| Create a baseline and priority actions that can improve participation in schooling for next phase of VESP | Policy and Planning; School Infrastructure Planning; Devolution strategy; School Leadership Training; School Improvement Planning |

Intended to move the Strategy forward into the next design phase, these prioritised, concrete outputs will help address identified opportunities, while having a positive impact on the existing access and inclusion initiatives.

Through this approach, VESP will be able to build on what is demonstrably working, while also maintaining some continuity of the strategy. The implementation of the Action Plan will help create further opportunities for having a deeper engagement with MoET, as well as the opportunity to work with some designated schools and their communities on the “how to” of socialising key Ministry policies. Ongoing, close engagement of this kind provides opportunities for joint reflection and learning about what works in Vanuatu, and why, in the complex areas of gender, disability and social inclusion. As indicated in earlier reports, regular, close and ongoing professional engagement has been well established between the VESP Technical Advisers and their MoET counterparts. Having the existing networks and a strong basis for professional engagement, VESP is now well placed to support MoET efforts to implement its IE and other related policies.

# 1. The VESP GD&SI Strategy

The Gender, Disability and Social Inclusion Strategy is an initiative that is positioned within the Vanuatu Education Support Program (VESP), a program that is providing targeted support to the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET). VESP is funded through a joint arrangement between the Australian Government aid program (Australian Aid) and New Zealand Government aid program (New Zealand Aid).

VESP commenced in September 2013 and the first phase is due for completion in January 2019. Support to MoET, provided through VESP, is intended to help enable the Ministry to improve the standard of education across primary schools in Vanuatu and to assist the Government of Vanuatu (GoV) to progress towards its Millennium Development Goal 2 (MDG2) target of achieving a net primary completion rate of 100 per cent.

The three overarching goals for VESP align with the Vanuatu Government's National Sustainable Development Plan and the goals of the Vanuatu Education and Training Sector Strategy (VETSS). These goals are; to improve the quality of education in Vanuatu; increase equitable access to education for all people at all levels of education in Vanuatu; and, improve the management of the education system in Vanuatu.

The focus of the first phase of VESP is on improving literacy and numeracy outcomes for children in the early years of schooling (K to Grade 3). The program design outlines how the support will be implemented through the following five interrelated strategies:

- training and supporting teachers to implement the new primary curriculum;
- strengthening early childhood care and education (ECCE) delivery;
- engaging the community through school-based management;
- providing locally relevant and efficient delivery of facilities; and,
- developing capacity within the Ministry of Education and Training to deliver an effective, well-managed and de-concentrated education system in Vanuatu.

Gender equality, disability inclusion and social inclusion are cross-cutting issues for the program. The VESP Gender, Disability and Social Inclusion Strategy (GD&SI Strategy) was developed in 2014 to provide guidance on entry points and actions for mainstreaming of GD&SI, to be delivered through VESP-supported activities. The strategy (provided as Annex 1) is designed to support MoET in the implementation of its policies and standards in the area of GD&SI. Currently the Ministry has three main policies in place – the Inclusive Education (IE) Policy (2011), the Gender Equity in Education (GEEP) Policy (2005) and the Child Safeguarding Policy (2017). These policies are being operationalised largely through the Minimum Quality Standards (MQS) for schools, which form the reference points for VESP supported GD&SI activities.<sup>3</sup>

Following the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the program in 2016, the VESP GD&SI team recommended that it would be timely to review how the VESP strategy has been working as an effective mechanism for planning and monitoring VESP support for the Ministry's efforts to progress the Government of Vanuatu's commitment to GD&SI in schools.

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<sup>3</sup> Three of the 15 MQS specifically relate to inclusion:

*Standard 2:* Teachers identify students with special needs and take appropriate action to ensure their presence and active participation in class;

*Standard 12:* Boys and girls participate equally in all school activities;

*Standard 14:* The school has an active and gender-balanced School Committee which has developed a School Improvement Plan including a budget which is communicated to all the local stakeholders in education. One standard is specifically linked to the Child Safeguarding Policy:

*Standard 11:* School policies have been developed and are implemented to protect school staff and students

This report provides the findings from this internal (MoET/VESP) review of the strategy and draws on data, inputs and feedback from the MTR, VESP progress reports, data from a recently conducted survey, discussions with technical advisers and with MoET activity managers. Before outlining some of the findings, learning and gaps, it is appropriate to describe the underlying purpose and the process followed for this review.



## **2. Review of the VESP GD&SI Strategy**

### **2.1. Purpose and process of the review**

The purpose of this in-house review was threefold:

- to reflect on the contribution of the GD&SI Strategy to the VESP initiative to date;
- use the findings to identify the key focus points and outputs for the remaining 18 months of the program; and,
- identify potential opportunities for enhanced interventions during the next phase of VESP.

The review also afforded an opportunity for further learning on how, where and why the strategy is being effective in order to identify appropriate, targeted actions that will maximise opportunities to support MoET's GD&SI priorities.

The review process involved three elements that focused on gathering feedback from participants about how and where the GD&SI Strategy is being implemented:

(1) Engaging the VESP technical team in discussion about the strategy itself and the approaches used to integrate activities across different program areas. This was followed by discussions between advisers and their activity teams to review relevant sections of the strategy checklist to determine where action has occurred, where there are gaps and where there are opportunities that can be taken to strengthen the current engagement and work.

(2) Surveying MoET staff and stakeholders about their awareness and implementation of the Ministry's Inclusive Education Policy which has been in place since 2011. This included gaining a measure of current understanding of what the terms inclusive education, disability and access mean to professional educators, schools and communities.

(3) Reviewing the current status of MoET's inclusive education, gender equity and child safeguarding policies. The intent is to map how far Ministry has progressed with its implementation in the areas of curriculum development, professional development and providing resources for teachers (key areas receiving targeted support through VESP funding).

### **2.2. Findings**

The findings are presented for each of the three areas: the current status of MoET policy implementation; current understandings of inclusion; and, the effectiveness of the VESP strategy itself.

A summary of some major achievements from the existing strategy is included at the end of this section.

#### **(a) Policy Context**

In recent years the Government of Vanuatu made a clear commitment to identifying measures that can ensure every child has access to an inclusive education. Demonstrating this commitment, the Government ratified two important and influential international conventions: the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The Government also endorsed the Pacific Islands Basic Education Action Plan. MoET has developed policies on gender equity, inclusive education and, more recently, on child safeguarding to support this national policy and commitment in the education sector.

A key finding from this review is that these Ministry policies do not have the required robust implementation plans. As a result, there has been limited change or impact at the school level. Whereas the policies outline key aspirations, current indications are that these aspirations have been

difficult to translate into attributable, tangible and measurable changes. An example is the Inclusive Education Policy, in place since 2011. Information about this policy was disseminated via some initial awareness raising and distribution of the document.

Feedback from professional educators and from school communities suggests that the practical implementation was limited and not supported by a communication strategy or through clearly accountable actions and targets in the Ministry's operational planning. This approach has contributed to a continuing lack of awareness about the Ministry's IE policy. The key implementers who would be involved in progressing and reporting on the policy (education personnel, school principals and teachers) do not appear to have a strong conceptual understanding about the policy, or its importance to ensuring better access to education for boys and girls. The situation is similar for the Gender Equity in Education Policy which has been in place since 2005 with relatively little impact and is currently being revised.

There have been recent discussions with MoET about the new Child Safeguarding Policy (launched in April 2017). These discussions indicate that (as with previous policies) MoET has not allocated a budget for the awareness-raising and other communication strategies that were outlined in the implementation plan in the policy document. In May 2017, during a visit organised to one of the Inclusion Case Study schools, a member of the Ministry handed over a copy of the new policy directly to the school and took the opportunity to provide a brief summary of its content. This was an ad hoc event. The apparent lack of a cohesive policy delivery strategy underpins the need for continuing VESP support to MoET for the implementation of its policies which are central to achieving positive outcomes at the school level from the GD&SI Strategy.

## **(b) Current understanding of inclusion**

Preliminary analysis and observations from the survey indicate that most school communities are not aware of the Ministry's IE policy and do not know what "inclusive education" actually means. One or two principals surveyed indicated that they have a copy of the IE policy but reported they had not read it. Others in the participating stakeholder groups were "vague" about the policy, although those involved in training people were "very precise". Several participants expressed a view that they were "doing gender" quite well. What is apparent is that there is a need to properly disseminate, socialise and follow up on MoET GD&SI policies, in particular the IE policy.

With regard to disability, there is an ongoing, unmet need for greater awareness about how to address disability, within the broader community and within education. As highlighted in the 2016 Mid Term Review of VESP, disability inclusive education is a complex issue that needs to be addressed in a sensitive but purposeful way. Data gathered through VEMIS indicates that about 2.9% of students in primary schools were identified as having some form of disability in 2015. While there is anecdotal evidence to suggest most teachers could identify children with disabilities in the community who are not attending school, other more recent feedback from the GD&SI survey suggests a lack of understanding about the various forms of impairment. As an example, some educators are only aware of disability in the context of a physical impairment.

It has become apparent that a similar level of understanding occurs within the context of VESP staff working with their counterparts to implement the IE policy. VESP initiatives are mediated through the lens of both national staff and international advisers. In this context it is understandable there remain gaps in understanding. Within this group are people with varying experiences and knowledge about how to best effect progress on GD&SI initiatives. The MTR highlighted the need for VESP to provide ongoing support, noting that the change agenda is "an unfinished story" with many reforms "only beginning to gain momentum".

At a recent VESP staff meeting (June 2017), a short activity was used to raise awareness and address some possible gaps in people's understanding. This session was useful and highlighted the need for some further in-house information-sharing. As examples, when discussing the possibility of engaging men with women in a dialogue about gender, the response from a national staff member was "it is very difficult here – the concept of gender does not exist". In discussing whether it is possible to "go wide" with the GD&SI Strategy, the response was "there are limitations for a program

like ours". When talking about how to encourage men and women to challenge and change gender-biased organisational policies and practices, the consensus was that "we do it quite often – for example, with working groups".

### **(c) The Strategy itself**

The GD&SI Strategy uses a mainstreaming approach, through which the different needs, perspectives and experiences of women, men, girls, boys, and people with a disability, ethnic minorities and other socially excluded people are considered across all aspects of the program. The VESP GD&SI team bear overall responsibility for implementation, monitoring and reporting of the strategy, and take every opportunity to work with key MoET staff, stakeholders and VESP advisers to ensure that GD&SI initiatives occur within the context of broader program implementation rather than as "stand alone" activities. In broad terms, mainstreaming appears to be working and should continue as the approach taken by the program for the remainder of this phase. Some successes of the approach to date are described in the following section. Mainstreaming relies on awareness, a willingness to cater for those with special needs and also additional resources, so has its challenges.

The strategy is ambitious. It is designed to support and reflect the aspirational goals outlined in both national and MoET policies. However, as VESP is a supporting structure, it can be difficult to gain traction in those areas where MoET policy, planning frameworks and resource allocations are relatively weak. The actions outlined in the current strategy needed to be reviewed to determine the extent to which, within the Vanuatu context and available resources, they can be realistically achieved, monitored and reported against.

This perspective was also reflected in the MTR which concluded that many of the VESP inclusion activities have some way to go in their implementation, noting that inclusion activities at the school level appear to be "at best, in their infancy".

At the time of the MTR, there was evidence of progress in some areas towards achieving this intermediate outcome. However, the MTR team expressed some concerns around the ability of VESP to achieve this outcome, when considering the broader environmental issues around inclusion and access and the need for long term interventions and programs to achieve outcomes. This limited progress also reflects the more fragile policy framework within MoET around access and participation issues, as opposed to a more evolved education policy framework in other areas of the program. This includes curriculum, where substantive gains have been made during VESP. However, the work in the area of curriculum also illustrates the complexities and challenges of implementing and maintaining a mainstreaming approach, even where there is strong Ministry commitment and significant progress.

### **GD&SI strategy implementation in curriculum and teacher training**

Feedback from this program area indicates that sessions on writing GD&SI-sensitive materials are included in all inductions for writing teams engaged to prepare teacher guides. Inclusivity criteria are included in the quality assurance process for all CDU draft support materials. Work has commenced on producing the Year 1-3 readers in audio format. All teacher PD/training packages for the new curriculum contain explicit sections on inclusivity, and evaluation feedback includes specific criteria related to inclusivity. However, it is also reported there are no formal processes for "sign off" of these materials by the CDU Inclusion Officer prior to their approval and publication. The current process is described as ad hoc with no written checklist of what to look for in the materials or a template to provide guidance for giving feedback to materials developers. While the curriculum writers who came to CDU to work on teacher guides received some training/induction, the writing teams for the vernacular versions of materials out in the provinces did not. There has also been no specific action to start looking at how issues of GBV and child protection can be "scaffolded" in curriculum materials and teacher training. This absence of formal processes has also meant that trialling of materials with community groups to test for inclusivity, including their feedback, has also tended to be ad hoc.

The recent establishment of a qualified IE officer in the CDU represents a significant commitment to embed GD&SI into this core area of the Ministry's work. Given this is an entirely new position, it provides a new opportunity for the VESP team to work collaboratively with the officer and with CDU management to find ways to fully utilise the new role and to maximise its effectiveness and potential impact.

There is a similar situation at the VITE, where criteria on inclusivity is also embedded in the template/process being used for revising the pre-service courses. While the two inclusion expert lecturers (one for IE and one for gender) are very supportive of the writing teams, their input is also somewhat ad hoc and dependent on the level of traction they can gain with the individual lecturers, rather than it being a requirement that all courses are formally placed under a gender/inclusivity "lens".

Unlike the PD program for the new curriculum - which aims to reach 100% of primary teachers - there is a selective process for participation in external study modules for teachers seeking formal upgrade to a Diploma of Education. There were criteria set for the 120 participants currently participating in the VESP funded trial of external course delivery, in order to achieve a good gender and rural/urban spread. There remains some concern that applications may not have been proactively sought from the more disadvantaged teachers, especially the untrained teachers from villages. Again, this shows how important it is to ensure the "GD&SI lens" is formally applied during critical decision and resource allocation processes, such as candidate selection. It also represents an opportunity for any future VESP support for the upgrading of teachers to be in a position where it specifically targets disadvantaged or isolated groups.

### 3. Major Achievements

Although there remain challenges and limitations, as outlined above, the VESP continues to experience successes in supporting MOET GD&SI initiatives in four areas that are being mainstreamed into planned activities. A summary of these outcomes to date includes:

(a) Inclusion Case Study: The Inclusion Case Study (VESP Output 2.1) has a community engagement focus and specifically addresses the issue of access to schooling for children with special needs. The Inclusive Education section at MoET negotiated with four schools located in Port Vila and North Efate who have committed to participate in the case study. This number was subsequently reduced to the three schools currently engaged in the project - [REDACTED]

The VESP Inclusion Strategy Coordinator is assisting the MoET Inclusive Education Officer and School Improvement Unit to manage the case studies, documenting the process to enable the production of an awareness package based on the study. The case study is being mainstreamed into the Ministry's broad strategic direction, linked to one of the Quality Standards addressed in the school improvement planning (SIP) process (the school leaders' program).

Since work commenced in 2016 with these schools, each has explored initiatives to improve their inclusiveness to meet the Minimum Quality Standard 2 more effectively. By the end of 2016, the schools had identified specific interventions to address barriers, and each developed their separate Inclusion Work Plans for 2017. What can be taken from this initial work in the three "case study" schools (as well as from data coming from the MQS baseline collection in schools) is that the Ministry needs to know more about the extent to which school personnel (teachers, principals and school committees) are aware of the IE Policy and the extent to which they understand the key principles and concepts in the policy document.

The next steps with this initiative include bringing a closer focus to engagement between MoET, the schools and their communities. Once all data has been gathered and analysed, the production of an awareness package based on the study can be developed.

(b) Baseline IE Survey: the Ministry designed a survey of school personnel (teachers, principals and school committees) around their awareness and understanding of the key principles and concepts in the IE policy document. A number of locations were visited in April and May to conduct the survey. These including Penama and Sanma Provinces; schools on Ambae and Santo; Malekula; Vanua Lava and Motalava in Torba Province; and Pentecost. The survey provides an opportunity to generate some initial baseline data and then for a potentially longer term longitudinal study which can be implemented over the next 18-months. It is a low cost way to collect contemporary, on-going information around perceptions and the application of the policy. The gathering of this data could be continued by DFAT/MoET over a longer timeframe, to incorporate lessons learned and feed into annual planning for MoET and the VESP.

Data from the survey will also be used as the basis for designing an action research study on the barriers and enablers of inclusive education in selected schools.

(c) Targeted awareness program: training packages are in development for education managers, provincial officers and teacher educators. This will detail some high end policies that the Government of Vanuatu has prioritised but that the MoET has not yet begun to implement. These policies and commitments include child protection, gender based violence and disability. In 2017, the socialisation process began with the "enablers". These personnel have roles in training and in supporting teachers, as well as schools, including MoET managers, provincial officers and teacher educators. The VESP Inclusion Strategy Coordinator is currently facilitating a process (including appropriate inputs from NGOs and technical specialists) to develop awareness packages that can be delivered during scheduled PD/training activities. All VESP funded training/PD courses will include at least one session on one of the targeted policy areas. The development of the packages, including how they will be integrated into existing programs, will be negotiated with each Activity Manager.

(d) Provision of learning materials in accessible formats (CDU): A media consultancy firm has been engaged to produce reading books for Years 1-3 in audio format. The draft versions of voice demonstrations are currently being screened to ensure clarity and quality.

(e) The Women's Leadership Program: the Women Leaders Network was established in 2016 and continues to be supported through VESP, largely through seminars and other targeted activities initiated within the group. VESP Technical Advisers, together with the GD&SI Coordinator, have been encouraging and supporting the implementation of the Ministry's Gender Equity Policy. This has been through activities that include recruitment of staff to the new units in the Provinces and working with the team training School Committees to improve female participation.

Other opportunities to support/encourage implementation of the Ministry's Gender Equity in Education Policy through VESP supported activities include recruitment of staff to the new units in the provinces and working with the team training School Committees to improve female participation. The network is also providing a useful platform for extending and raising the awareness around gender-based violence, as a precursor to discussions on the next steps for supporting MoET to address this.

## 4. Conclusions

Feedback from the MTR specific to the GD&SI Strategy highlighted a number of VESP's achievements, including evidence that the program's targeted and integrated approach "appears effective in supporting Ministry-led reform". At the same time the MTR found that many of the MoET reforms "are only beginning to gain momentum". VESP's own monitoring and evaluation feedback also suggests that gender, disability and social inclusion reporting is at an early stage and needs a higher profile on the Program to ensure tangible access and inclusion outcomes can be achieved.

The Case Study schools are beginning to provide information which will ultimately contribute to a better understanding of how to improve the implementation of MoET inclusion and protection policies, including how best to increase the number of schools and kindergartens implementing these initiatives. These schools are providing a tangible and accepted model for advancing inclusion and access. They could potentially be the sites for much deeper learning through the ongoing assessment of how best to implement inclusion and access policies.

At this time there is a lack of resourcing within MoET that would enable it to achieve successful implementation of its key policies. These include the IE Policy and the recently launched Child Safeguarding Policy. This lack of dedicated resources is also reflected in an absence of communication strategies and awareness-raising training to underpin the policy implementation. In the interim, more targeted support from VESP, that can help the Ministry embed its GD&SI policies during the initial stages of implementation, is likely to contribute to better outcomes.

Whereas current evaluation and monitoring activities for the GD&SI Strategy have contributed to the overall activity, project, program and policy effectiveness. However, there are challenges in providing and managing support across so many entry points. The strategy should continue but have a more defined, considered and structured approach. This would maximise the opportunities to support MoET embed gender and inclusion. The VESP support would be provided in ways that are consistent across the following Action Plan for the remainder of the current phase of VESP has been developed in order to address some gaps identified in this review. It takes into account the achievements and challenges. In progressing the GD&SI Strategy, this action plan recognises, incorporates and builds on VESP's acknowledged, successful engagement processes with MoET and with relevant stakeholders. These relationships include the wider community of professional educators, their schools and the school communities. Importantly, the proposed outputs meet the key performance indicator of ensuring gender, disability and social inclusion continue to be prioritised and addressed in any future VESP design.

**Table 2: Implementation of VESP GD&SI Strategy 30 June 2017 to 31 December 2018**

| GD&SI OUTPUTS 2017-18  | ENTRY POINTS   | HOW   | WHO  | MEASURE  | WHEN BY               |
|--|--|---|--|--|-----------------------|
| 1. Use this Plan to: focus on barriers in access to education; inform MoET's reform agenda; as well as for design of VESP II.                          | MoET HR framework and management action plan   | Work on outputs to achieve all outputs; map a consultation process.   | Include CDU Inclusion Coordinator, VITE and USP staff (DFAT technical support also available). | GD& SI monitoring and measurement is conducted on all VESP initiatives     | Within 3 months       |
| 2. Support and strengthen the capacity of MoET to successfully integrate GD&SI in MoET planning.   | Policy and planning; monitoring & evaluation   | Provide support to MoET Inclusion Officer to develop action plan with very specific targets for MoET Corporate Plan; establish working group of personnel with specific responsibilities in this area | GD&SI; MoET; ECCE; CSOs supporting parents of children with disabilities                       | Progress over time against the baseline data from survey                   | Over 18 months        |
| 3. Use findings from Survey to explore with three Case Study schools how they are moving from awareness to implementation of the IE policy             | Community engagement; school improvement planning  | Collaborate with IE Officer to support schools through a reflective process to enable them to document their process; potentially provide further resourcing via seed funding grants.                 | IE Officer; GD&SI Coordinator; other TAs as appropriate  | IE implementation process understood, documented and able to be replicated | Within 6 months       |
| 4. Provide support to VESP staff to improve their capacity to support counterparts with implementation of GD&SI initiatives.                           | MoET capacity development  | Targeted information-sharing sessions; regular discussions as part of pre-reporting process, linked directly to MoET policies   | TA and GD&SI Coordinator   | Better understanding demonstrated in reporting process                     | Begin within 3 months |
| 5. Include GBV and child protection awareness-raising on all training and PD provided to MoET "enablers" (Education Officers, SIOs, teacher educators) | Policy & planning; MoET capacity development; training for new curriculum; school leadership training                            | Develop and pilot teacher parent support materials; scaffold in to curriculum & teacher training  | Engage with ISU language transition training; GBV & child protection experts                   | Progress over time against the baseline data from survey                   | Begin within 3 months |
| 6. Formalise quality assurance for GD&SI in curriculum & training package writing.   | Curriculum implementation; VITE institutional strengthening; training to support new curriculum                                  | Engage experts; develop Bislama school dictionary; facilitate development of formal sign-off process at CDU to embed a GD&SI lens   | CDU Inclusion Officer  | VANSTA redevelopment has explicit focus on inclusivity                     | Within 6 months       |
| 7. Create baseline for specific action to improve participation in schooling for next phase of VESP  | Policy & planning; school infrastructure planning; devolution strategy; school leadership training; school improvement planning. | Conduct analysis of enrolment attendance and retention data, potential for longitudinal study   | M+E  |  | VESP II Design        |



# **Annex 1**

**VESP Gender, Disability and Social Inclusion Strategy, 2014 – 2018 (Updated June 2017)**

# **Annex 2**

**Inclusive Education Policy Survey, 2017 – Preliminary Findings**