



VAESP

**VANUATU AUSTRALIA
EDUCATION SUPPORT
PROGRAM**

Annual Report

January – December 2024



Vanuatu Australia Education Support Program is managed by Tetra Tech International Development, on behalf of the Australian Government.

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Acronyms

CDU	Curriculum Development Unit
CIP	Curriculum Improvement Program
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
EoPO	End of Program Outcome
GEDSI	Gender Equity, Disability and Social Inclusion
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IO	Intermediate Outcome
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MoET	Ministry of Education and Training
NER	Net Enrolment Ratio
OV	Open Vanuatu Education Management Information System
PCIO	Provincial Curriculum Improvement Officer
PCLF	Provincial Curriculum Learning Facilitator
PSP	Parent Support Program
PWELN	Provincial Women in Education Leadership Network
SO	Short-Term Outcome
SSP	School Strategic Plan
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VAESP	Vanuatu Australia Education Support Program
VANSTA	Vanuatu Standardised Test of Achievement
VESP	Vanuatu Education Support Program
VETSS	Vanuatu Education and Training Sector Strategy
VNCS	Vanuatu National Curriculum Statement
VSAT	Very Small Aperture Terminal

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Executive Summary

About the Vanuatu Australia Education Support Program Phase 2

The Vanuatu Australia Education Support Program (VAESP) is a long-term investment funded by the Australian Government and implemented in partnership with the Government of Vanuatu through the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET). VAESP collaborates closely with MoET to enhance education access, quality, and management, as outlined in the Vanuatu Education and Training Sector Strategy (VETSS) and MoET's Corporate Plan. Following the successful implementation of Phase I (2013-2018), Phase II will continue until December 2026.

Key achievements and progress

VAESP has worked in partnership with MoET to support the review and strengthening of systems and mechanisms that aim to improve educational access, quality, and management in Vanuatu during the 2024 reporting period. This executive summary examines external and internal challenges impacting VAESP during the reporting period and highlights the program's progress towards achieving its three End of Program Outcomes (EoPOs).

External challenges

In 2024, VAESP faced significant challenges due to external factors such as nationwide teacher strikes, natural disasters, political instability, and the suspension of key MoET staff.

The teachers' strike in June 2024 disrupted essential program activities, including the rollout of the Inclusive Education Resources and the Curriculum Improvement Program (CIP). VAESP adapted by developing training modules for provincial stakeholders to continue the CIP's activities.

The December 2024 earthquake exacerbated challenges, damaging infrastructure and necessitating a rapid assessment of schools to determine repair needs. VAESP mobilised emergency technical assistance and funds to support MoET's recovery efforts, highlighting the importance of resilience and adaptability in the education system.

Political turbulence with frequent government changes and MoET staff suspensions hindered VAESP's ability to execute strategic plans effectively with MoET. This instability led to delays in curriculum development and teacher training, risking reduced program outcomes and stakeholder engagement.

Internally, VAESP adapted its planning processes to align with changing educational priorities, focusing on data-driven decision-making and increased stakeholder engagement across the team. Leadership changes required restructuring to strengthen local management across multiple organisational levels to ensure continuity in program implementation. Despite these challenges, VAESP remained flexible and committed to enhancing education in Vanuatu.

Progress towards EoPOs

EoPO 1: More Children are Enrolled and Attend School (Access)

Vanuatu is experiencing a long-term decline in enrolment and attendance rates, driven by economic constraints, geographical and infrastructure challenges, socio-cultural and psychological factors, policy and governance issues and the quality of education and school environments.

VAESP is working to reverse this decline by supporting inclusive education resources and training, rolling out the Parent Support Program nationwide, and raising awareness about the importance of parental support and early learning. VAESP's contributions to increasing children's enrolment and

attendance are demonstrated through Intermediate Outcomes (IOs) and Short-term Outcomes (SOs), as outlined in the Annual Results Framework. VAESPs' key achievements for 2024 include:

Intermediate Outcome 1.1: Safe and Inclusive Learning Environments

- **Parent Support Program (PSP):** The PSP reached 1,955 parents across 55 communities, enhancing parental engagement in early childhood care and education. Positive feedback indicated increased parental involvement and improved child behaviour and participation in school. The PSP has been integrated into the 2025 CIP.
- **Inclusive Education Policy Launch:** The Inclusive Education and Training Policy was launched in November 2024, marking a pivotal milestone for inclusive education in Vanuatu. Developed through extensive consultations with VAESP support, the policy aims to establish a consistent national direction for inclusive education.
- **Resource Development:** VAESP developed and distributed inclusive education resource kits and conducted training workshops for teachers despite teacher strike delays.

Intermediate Outcome 1.2: Strengthened Capacity of MoET

- **Disaster Preparedness:** VAESP supported MoET in developing Capital Works Plans and revising the Disaster Recovery Plan, enhancing the Ministry's capacity to respond to natural disasters. Following the December 2024 earthquake, VAESP facilitated rapid assessments of affected schools and contributed to the recovery plan.

EoPO 2: Improved Student Literacy and Numeracy Outcomes (Quality)

Since 2010, primary education in Vanuatu has experienced significant curriculum reforms. Although significant support has been given over the years towards curriculum improvement, many ni-Vanuatu students still perform at critically low levels. According to the Vanuatu Education Training Sector Strategy (VETSS, 2020)¹, in 2017 the percentage of students meeting minimum numeracy standards in Years 4 and 6 is 86% and 74%, respectively. In literacy, these figures drop to 65% and 58%. Additionally, at the time of publication in 2017, the MoET Statistical Digest report showed that percentage of students passing national exams in Years 8 and 10 remains below 50% in English- and French-speaking schools.

To improve student learning outcomes, VAESP supported MoET's Curriculum Development Unit in conducting the Curriculum Monitoring Study in 2021, which identified the need for more support for educators, school leaders, and curriculum personnel. In 2024, VAESP continued to support the distribution of learning resources and developed a three-year strategy, (the CIP), to enhance curriculum implementation from Kindergarten to Year 10, focusing on building capacity at the system and provincial levels to improve literacy and numeracy. This structured coaching system will aim to institutionalise these new methods as long-term, sustainable curriculum improvements across schools.

Intermediate Outcome 2.1: Effective Curriculum Application

- **Curriculum Improvement Program (CIP):** MoET approved the CIP implementation strategy, which aims to strengthen curriculum delivery across K-10. Training packages and an embedded provincial education engagement approach were developed to enhance teachers' pedagogical skills. The CIP, led by eight newly recruited Provincial Curriculum Implementation Officers, has begun awareness initiatives, training, and the identification of 40 targeted CIP schools across all six provinces.
- **Resource Distribution:** VAESP distributed 90 boxes of English and 93 boxes of French literacy resources across 40 primary schools in rural and urban locations (10 in Sanma, 10 in Shefa, 5 in the other 4 provinces), with requests for additional materials.

¹ Note that more recent data has been collected through the MoET Statistical Digest since the VETSS was released, however this data is not yet available publicly.

EoPO 3: Strengthening Provincial Systems (Management)

By the end of the program, VAESP will have strengthened mechanisms that aim to improve provincial education systems by building curriculum implementation capacity at the provincial level, enhancing leadership and management, guiding educational governance at the school level through policy development, and improving data collection to support data-informed decision-making.

Intermediate Outcome 3.1: Enhanced Monitoring Systems

- **Open Vanuatu Education Management Information System (OV):** VAESP supported the enhancement of OV, including dashboards to present Harmonized Standard Assessment Module data, integration of Civil Registry and SmartStream systems for improved data verification, upgrading the user interface to be mobile responsive to allow for wider access to those without desktop computers, delivering hands-on training for MoET IT staff, supporting data analytics and reporting and advising on future system upgrades.
- **Policy Development:** VAESP contributed to the completion of several key policies, including the Primary School Infrastructure Policy and the Information and Communication Technology Policy, which are crucial for improving educational governance.
- **Systems Guidance:** VAESP provided support to strengthening budgeting systems to more closely align with the Corporate Plan and also introduced the Medium Term Expenditure Framework into the MoET budget submission in 2024. In addition to this, training was provided on the School Finance Management Manual with trainings of Provincial Education Officers in all provinces.

Intermediate Outcome 3.2: Support for School Strategic Plans (SSP)

- **Training for School Leaders:** VAESP facilitated training for 85 principals and key teachers from Shefa (44), Penama (19)² and Torba (22), enhancing their leadership and management skills. The School-Based Management team provided ongoing support to ensure effective SSP development and further qualitative data will be collected in 2025 after participants have had an opportunity to apply new knowledge and skills.

Progress towards cross-cutting themes

Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI)

VAESP addresses persistent educational attainment gaps between girls and boys by promoting gender-responsive teaching practices, providing training in the use of inclusive education resources, supporting inclusive leadership, and strengthening policies that foster equitable opportunities for all learners.

- **Inclusive Education Policy Review:** VAESP supported MoET to review and update the Inclusive Education and Training Policy. This policy addresses barriers preventing students, particularly those with disabilities, from fully participating in education. The revised policy features clear language and structured guidelines, making it accessible to all stakeholders.
- **Empowering Female Leadership:** VAESP actively promoted gender equality by facilitating leadership training for 131 women and 10 men across four provinces. These initiatives empower female principals and school leaders to advocate for equity and inclusion in education. Further follow up on the application of new skills and knowledge will be measured in 2025.
- **High Impact Teaching Strategies:** Implementing high impact teaching strategies has enhanced multilingual learning and oral language skills, ensuring that teaching practices are inclusive and cater to diverse learning needs. This approach promotes vernacular language use, making education more accessible for all students. Further follow up on the application of new skills and knowledge will be measured in 2025.

² Note that participants from Penama have not graduated from the program yet. Progress on this will be reported in 2025.

- **Provincial Women in Education Leadership Network (PWELN):** VAESP established and supported the PWELN in Tafea, Malampa, and Shefa, providing a platform for women leaders to discuss and advocate for gender issues in education. Workshops conducted through this network have built skills and confidence among female leaders. Further follow up on the application of new skills and knowledge will be measured in 2025.
- **Integration of Disability data:** Enhancements in OpenVEMIS were created by including indicators to produce a Disability Detailed Report and Disability Summary Report. The Detailed Report presents comprehensive disability data in a clear, user-friendly format, enabling users to perform targeted analysis as needed.

Climate Change and Adaptation

VAESP promotes climate resilience by working with MoET to ensure education continuity through strengthened infrastructure and preparedness. This includes upgrading buildings, developing provincial Capital Works Plans, supporting School Strategic Plans (SSPs), installing satellite connections, promoting climate resilience in the curriculum, developing online learning and leading disaster preparedness campaigns. VAESP also supports MoET's emergency response. VAESP actively contributed to the post-earthquake school assessment, communication with schools and parents, and the development of the recovery plan budget and remedial action plans.

- **Infrastructure Resilience:** VAESP collaborated with MoET to implement climate change adaptation strategies, including advice for construction and retrofitting of school buildings to withstand extreme weather events, ensuring the safety of students and staff. All MoET approved designs are made in line with the National Building Code standards, and as a result of the 2024 December earthquake VAESP is further supporting the review of these codes in 2025.
- **Internet Connectivity Installation:** There were 2 planned VSAT installations for 2024, however with the introduction of new technology such as Starlink, the VSAT modality will be revisited in 2025 and potentially replaced with the new providers.
- **Disaster Recovery Plan:** VAESP supported the development of a comprehensive Disaster Recovery Plan for MoET, which includes strategies for data protection, emergency procedures, and evacuation drills. This plan enhances the Ministry's preparedness and resilience against climate-related emergencies.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL)

Through M&E, VAESP aims to foster a transparent and inquisitive organisational culture focused on continual learning and improvement. During the reporting period, several improvements to the MEL system were institutionalised:

- **Reflection Workshops:** VAESP initiated its first 'Pause and Reflection' workshop, a short-cycle MEL review initiative. The workshop engaged VAESP staff and MoET stakeholders and an advisor from from Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) for a collective reflection on program performance. This reflection strategy aligns with DFAT's commitment to fostering a learning culture and promoting stakeholder collaboration.
- **Continuous Improvement:** The MEL approach was reviewed and refined to focus more on outcomes and improved data collection methodologies, including a diagnostic assessment of MEL. Key lessons from 2024 will guide 2025 MEL activities, with a strengthened MEL Framework ensuring alignment with DFAT standards and enhancing program effectiveness.

Conclusion

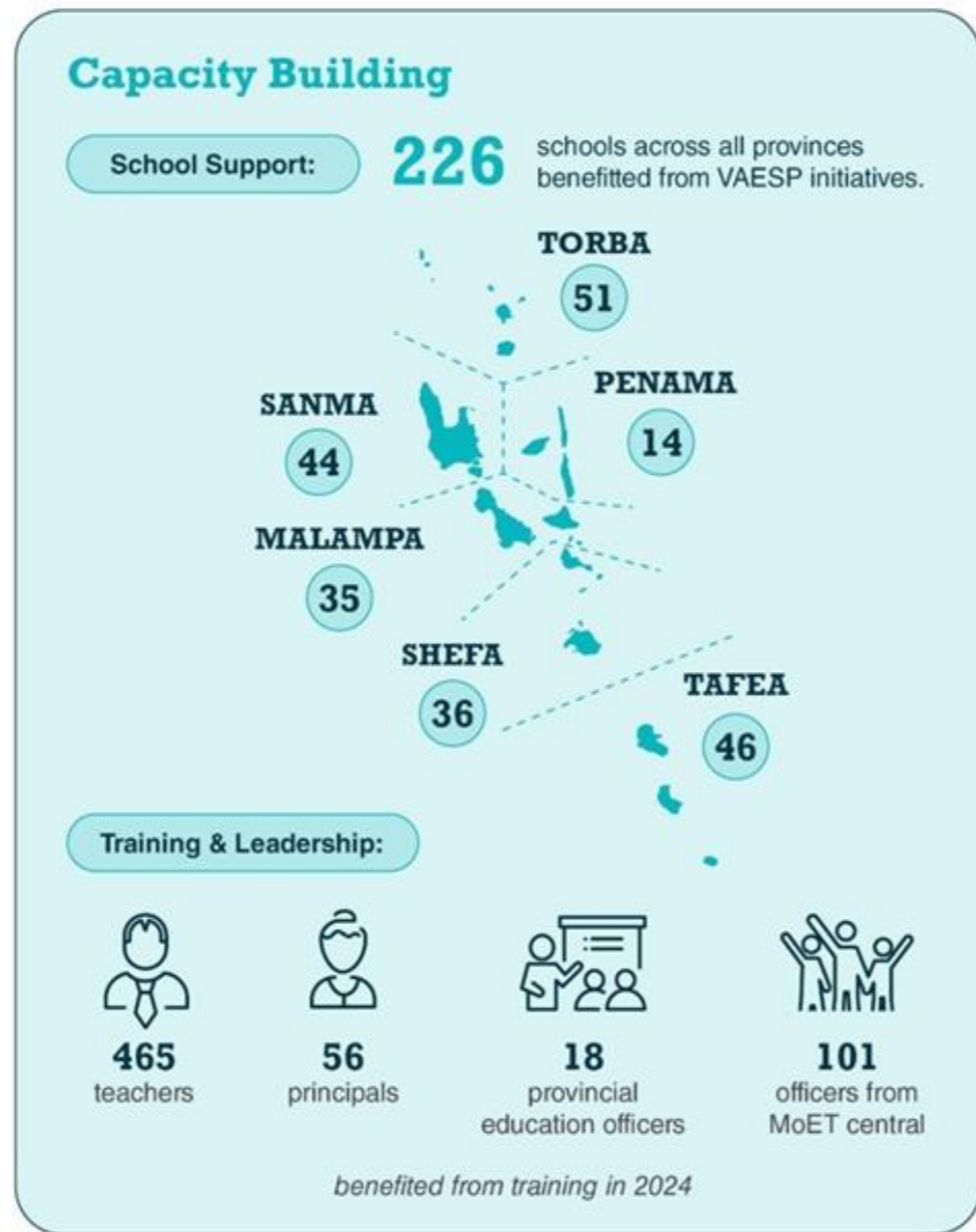
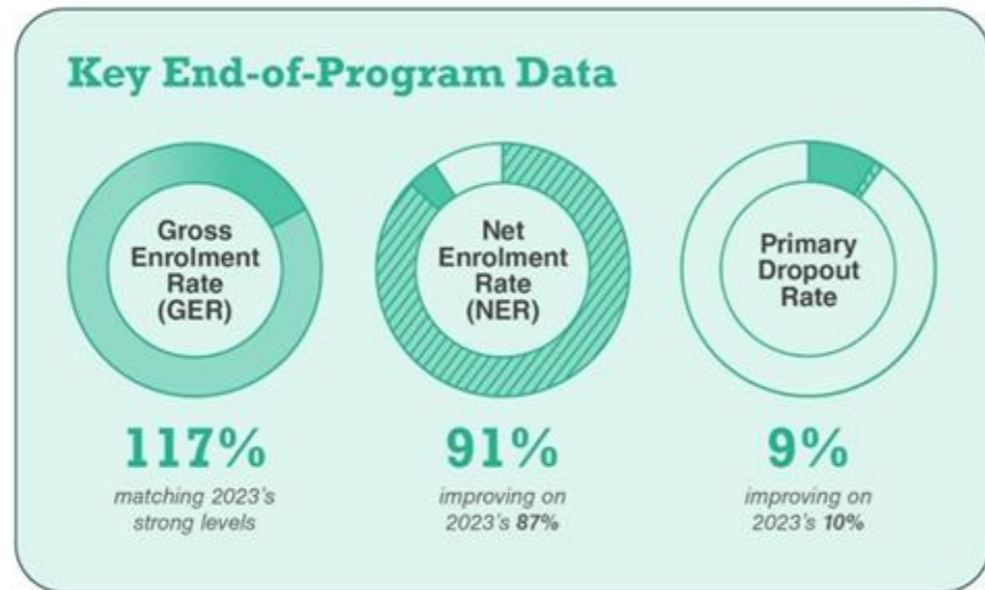
VAESP's achievements in 2024 reflect a strong commitment to collaborating with MoET to improve educational access, quality, and management in Vanuatu. Despite challenges such as the teachers' strike, the December earthquake and other external factors, improvements in VAESP's MEL approach and resourcing model, along with strong collaboration with MoET and donor stakeholders, provide a solid foundation for continued progress.

Looking ahead, VAESP will build on these successes, focusing on enhancing inclusive education, improving literacy and numeracy outcomes, and strengthening provincial systems to ensure quality education for all children in Vanuatu.

VAESP 2024 at a glance

VAESP supports MoET and the Government of Australia's shared vision of strengthening the Ministry's three pillars.

- 
Access
 More children (girls and boys, including those with disabilities) are enrolled and attend the right year of primary school at the right age.
- 
Quality
 Students achieve improved literacy and numeracy outcomes (measured in Years 4, 6 and 8).
- 
Management
 MoET has implemented devolution at provincial and school levels, strengthening reporting and data systems to inform planning, implementation and decision-making to improve student learning outcomes.



- ### Major VAESP Initiatives in 2024
- Parent Support Program (PSP)** – Promoted family involvement in education through nationwide PSP rollout, enhancing early learning with training, resources and outreach.
 - Provincial Women in Education Leadership Networks (PWELN)** – Established in Malampa, Sanma and Tafea to empower women and promote gender-inclusive leadership.
 - Capital Works Plan** – Finalised in all provinces to support accurate budgeting, resource allocation and prioritisation of infrastructure projects, improving school quality and safety.
 - Curriculum Improvement Plan (CIP)** – Developed to improve student learning by updating the curriculum to ensure its relevance, integrating modern teaching methods.
 - Mother Tongue Vernacular Training** – Strengthened early literacy education in Vanuatu's diverse linguistic landscape.
 - Resource Forecasting Tool and Data Analysis System** – Developed and delivered to streamline the Statistical Digest and enhance resource planning and data efficiency.

- ### New Policies Supported
- Primary School Infrastructure Policy** – Supported the development of the Policy through consultations and workshops. The drafted Policy was then presented to the MoET Senior Management team in March and approved in June 2024.
 - Inclusive Education & Training Policy** – Through the Working Group, assisted with policy updates, teacher training, resource development, and outreach initiatives to support diverse learning needs and ensure equitable access to education. This Policy was launched in November 2024.
 - Open VEMIS Policy** – Provided technical support, training, and resources to enhance school data accuracy, improving decision-making and resource allocation.
 - Education Authority & School Registration Policy** – Delivered technical advice and capacity-building to streamline school registration and support MoET staff in implementing the policy.
 - ICT Policy** – Supported MoET staff, teachers, and administrators with training and technical guidance to expand digital learning access and strengthen cybersecurity.
 - Child Safeguarding Policy** – Supported the policy update with capacity building, outreach, and resources to strengthen child protection through training and clearer reporting lines to address abuse, neglect, and exploitation.



1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose and structure of this Report

This Annual Report for the Vanuatu-Australia Education Support Program (VAESP) outlines its operations in 2024. The program has been managed by Tetra Tech International Development, formerly known as Coffey, since 2013, spanning Phases I and II of the Vanuatu Education Support Program (VESP).

In 2024 the program's name was changed from the Vanuatu Education Support Program (VESP) to the Vanuatu-Australia Education Support Program (VAESP), recognising Australia's deep partnership in supporting the Government of Vanuatu's education sector priorities.

The VAESP Annual Report provides a comprehensive overview of the program's progress, achievements, and challenges during 2024. It lists the implementation of program initiatives, the impact on educational outcomes, and the strategies employed to overcome obstacles. The report also highlights lessons learned and outlines future plans, fostering transparency and trust among stakeholders, including the Vanuatu government, Australian partners, educators, and the broader community. It aims to inform and guide ongoing efforts to enhance the quality and accessibility of education in Vanuatu. The report is structured as follows:

- **Introduction to VAESP** – Overviews the program's objectives and management and significant internal and external factors with a summary of key updates affecting program progress
- **Key Results Against EoPOs** – Lists the program's achievements and evidence of change
- **Integration of GEDSI and Climate Change** - Discusses how GEDSI and climate change are incorporated into planning, implementation and monitoring
- **Operational and Risk Management** - Overviews VAESP's operational strategies and risk management practices
- **Lessons Learned and Future Considerations** - Reflects on lessons learned and strategic considerations for the remainder of the VAESP II program lifecycle.

1.2 Overview of the VAESP

VAESP is a long-term investment funded by the Australian Government and implemented in partnership with the Government of Vanuatu through MoET. VAESP's aim is to assist MoET to enhance education access, quality, and management, as outlined in the VETSS and MoET's Corporate Plan. Following the successful implementation of Phase I (2013-2018), Phase II will continue until December 2026.

VAESP's goals are to provide support to the education and training sector in three key areas, referred to as pillars:

- Increasing equitable **access** to education for all children
- Improving the **quality** of education in Vanuatu
- Enhancing and strengthening the **management** of Vanuatu's education system

VAESP supports the improvement of education outcomes by enhancing stakeholders' capacity to create safe and inclusive learning environments for all children, including those with disabilities (*access*), supporting the improvement of teaching and learning, including school leadership (*quality*), and building MoET's management capacity at the central, provincial, and school level to advance the Government of Vanuatu's devolution agenda (*management*). VAESP is co-located within the MoET Directorates and applies several modalities to support MoET's priorities, including technical assistance, capacity supplementation and direct funding assistance provided by DFAT.

The program's key stakeholders in 2024 included:

- Vanuatu's MoET, including the Education Services Directorate, Policy and Planning Directorate, Finance and Administration Directorate
- DFAT in Canberra and at the Vanuatu Australian High Commission
- Development partners, including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Save the Children, Summer Institute Logistics, University of the South Pacific, Australia Pacific Training Coalition, Pacific Theological College
- Other donors, such as the New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Agence Francaise de Développement, the United States Agency for International Development, and the Japan International Cooperation Agency.

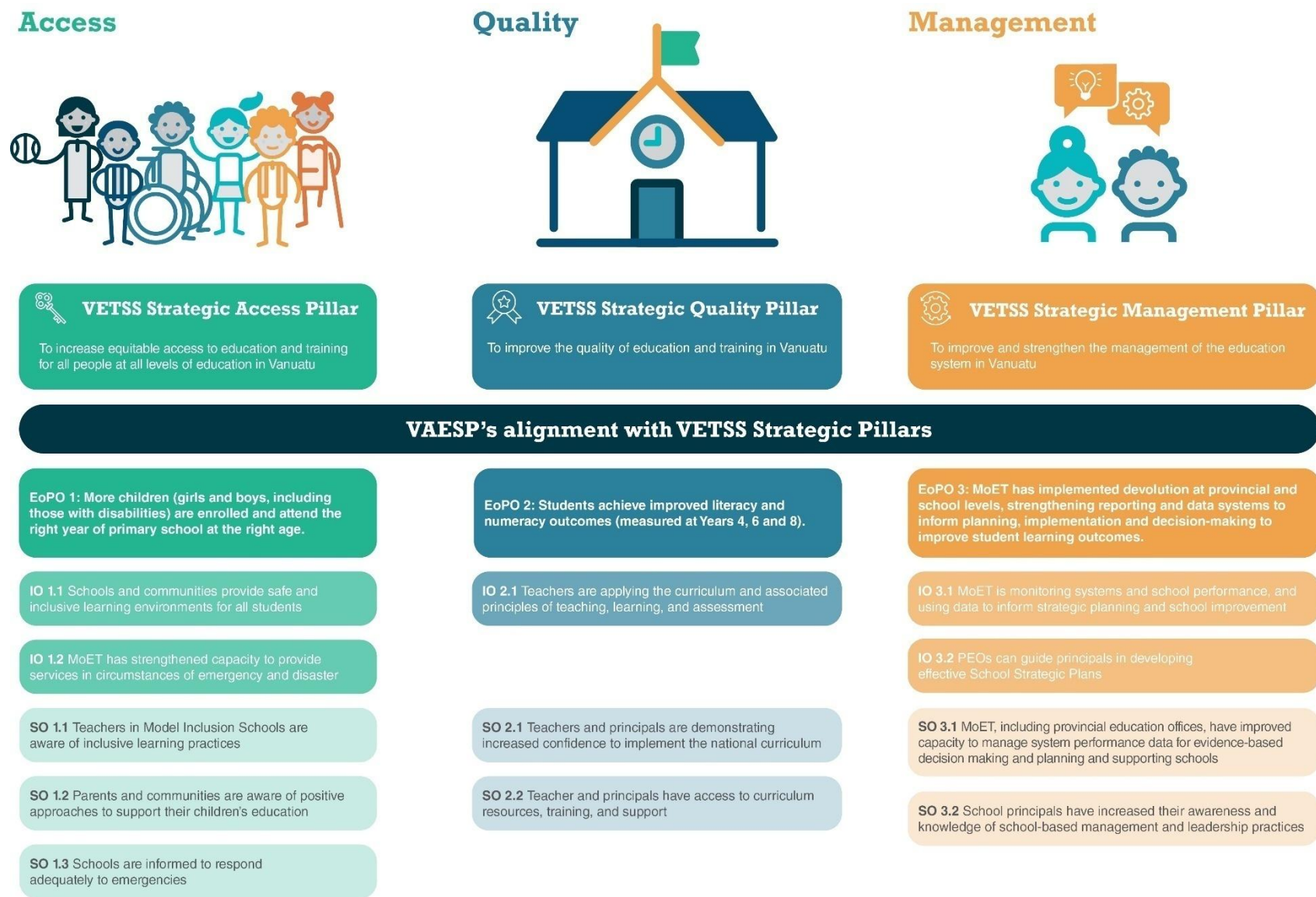
1.3 Program goal and outcomes

VAESP's structured three pillars each have a corresponding End-of-Program Outcome (EoPOs) which align with Vanuatu's strategic education priorities as shown in **Figure 1**.

VAESP programming is further structured into Intermediate (IO) and Short term Outcomes which are ordered to align to the EoPOs, as outlined below:

- Intermediate Outcome 1.1: Schools and communities provide safe and inclusive learning environments for all students.
- Intermediate Outcome 1.2: MoET has strengthened capacity to provide services in circumstances of emergency and disaster.
- Intermediate Outcome 2.1: Teachers are applying the curriculum and associate principles of teaching, learning, and assessment.
- Intermediate Outcome 3.1: MoET is monitoring systems and school performance and using data to inform strategic planning and school improvement.
- Intermediate Outcome 3.2: Provincial Education Officers can guide principals in developing effective School Strategic Plans (SSPs).

Figure 1: VAESP EoPOs' alignment to the VETSS strategic pillars



At the time of submitting the 2024 Annual Report, the VAESP MEL Plan is undergoing revisions, including adjustments to the Program Logic. Once approved, these changes will be reflected in subsequent reporting cycles and provided as an Addendum to the 2024 Annual Report.

1.3.1 Contextual updates

This section outlines the major challenges the education sector faces, including disruptions resulting from nation-wide and protracted teacher strikes, natural disasters, air transportation disruptions, political developments, and MoET staff suspensions. VAESP's response to these challenges is listed in Section 1.3.2.

In addition to the external updates, this section also details internal program changes and updates. It highlights the flexibility and adaptability of VAESP in responding to emerging needs and changing circumstances, ensuring the program remains relevant and effective.

1.3.2 External changes and updates

Teachers' strike in Vanuatu.

In June 2024, over 1,000 teachers in Vanuatu initiated a nationwide strike due to delays in their entitlement payments, led by the Vanuatu Teachers Union. An agreement was reached for the government to release a payment plan within 14 days; however competing financial priorities at national level prevented this from progressing on schedule. The absence of effective communication and trust between the government and educators negatively impacted student learning and community stability.

The teachers' strike posed significant challenges for VAESP, disrupting key activities planned for 2024, including the rollout of Inclusive Education Resources and the CIP, resulting in delays in program progress. In response, VAESP and CDU developed introductory modules and awareness training targeted at provincial stakeholders to continue promoting the CIP despite the disruptions (see section 2).

To ensure continued progress for 2025 and 2026, VAESP will prioritise the development of context-informed plans and contingencies based on evidence from Context Analysis, research, outcome harvesting and Pause and Reflect workshops.

December 2024 earthquake

On December 17, 2024, a 7.4 magnitude earthquake struck eight kilometres off the coast of Port Vila, Vanuatu, resulting in 14 fatalities and more than 250 injuries. The quake caused extensive damage to infrastructure, power, communications and connectivity. The earthquake severely impacted local businesses, government departments and disrupted aviation and shipping schedules, with landslides compromising the Port Vila wharf.

In response, through the rapid mobilisation of VAESP's Infrastructure Specialist, VAESP supported MoET to conduct a rapid assessment of 200 Efate schools to determine necessary repairs. Through co-designed classification criteria, the assessment identified 47 of 200 schools requiring remedial structural repairs or rebuild. These comprised ECCE centres, primary and secondary schools.

The earthquake highlighted Vanuatu's vulnerability to natural disasters, prompting VAESP to mobilise emergency funds to support MoET's recovery efforts. These actions were crucial for ensuring the safety and continuity of education for children in Vanuatu and preparedness for the 2025 academic year. Despite the setbacks to MoET-led activities, VAESP remains committed to assisting MoET in rebuilding and enhancing the resilience of the education system through MoET's 'Build Back Better' approach.

VAESP continued to operate throughout the state of emergency, providing in-person and virtual assistance to Education Cluster meetings and the development of concept briefs and secretariat services to assist MoET's emergency response. Additionally, VAESP staff wellbeing and safety were supported by activating Tetra Tech's Crisis Response Team within 30 minutes of the earthquake.

Liquidation of Air Vanuatu, Vanuatu's national airline

The national airline of Vanuatu entered voluntary liquidation in May 2024 due to significant financial challenges. At the time of liquidation, the airline faced substantial debt, with liabilities exceeding 99 million VUT. Despite flight limitations necessitating adjustments, re-planning, or postponing training and data collection to 2025, VAESP proactively assisted MoET in identifying solutions. These included delivering data collection and activities online and coordinating cost-effective measures, such as sharing charter costs across donor programs for essential inter-island flights.

Political turbulence in Vanuatu

In 2024, Vanuatu faced significant political turbulence, marked by three changes in government following votes of no confidence. This political instability led to proposed reforms aimed at enhancing governance stability, culminating in the country's first constitutional referendum in May 2024. The referendum resulted in two amendments designed to reduce parliamentary instability. The new measures aimed to curb party fragmentation and discourage frequent party switching, longstanding factors in political instability that have disrupted VAESP activities. Through closer alignment with the MoET corporate planning exercise, implemented for the first time in 2024, VAESP aims to mitigate these disruptions where possible through agreed workplans and co-designed program activities.

Suspension of key MoET staff

In 2024, the suspension of key MoET staff significantly impacted the delivery of VAESP activities. This disruption led to delays in curriculum development, teacher training, and the rollout of educational policies. The gaps in leadership and coordination hindered the ministry's ability to effectively manage and execute its strategic plans. Consequently, the progress of educational reforms slowed, negatively affecting the quality and efficiency of education services to students and educators. VAESP quickly pivoted to work with acting staff, focused on building relationships and rapport to enable work to continue in 2025. VAESP worked with the Acting Director of Education Services and the Acting PEO Curriculum to ensure continuity of services and activities. VAESP has revised its planned 2025 activities to prioritise critical program support for MoET, as outlined in the VAESP Annual Plan 2025.

1.3.3 Internal changes and updates

Teacher Development Multi-Year Study Series. Vanuatu: Final Report.

The independent Teacher Development Multi-Year Study Series in Vanuatu, undertaken by the Australian Council for Educational Research, is currently under review by VAESP for alignment with 2025 priority activities.

The study evaluated the impact of VAESP on teaching and learning outcomes in Vanuatu, highlighting the essential role of Phases I and II in designing and implementing the new primary curriculum. In-service training modules and the development and distribution of teaching and learning materials supported the rollout of the curriculum.

Key recommendations for VAESP include:

- **Recommendation 2b:** Engaging with MoET to ensure ongoing support for the professional learning needs of teachers and principals.
- **Recommendation 3:** Collaborating with MoET to develop communication strategies that help schools engage parents and communities regarding the curriculum and their children's learning.
- **Recommendation 4:** Supporting research initiatives with MoET to better target and sustain teacher professional learning. This may involve conducting gap analyses, observing classrooms, collecting perception data, and analysing variations in student performance based on the 2021 Vanuatu Standardised Test of Achievement (VANSTA) and Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment results.

Mid-Term Review

Findings from the November 2022 VAESP Mid-Term Review were incorporated into VAESP program activities in 2024 and planned activities for 2025. Furthermore, the revised MEL Plan is actioning these findings by strengthening and standardising data collection protocols. This approach ensures consistent data collection across all activities, strengthens data validation techniques to improve accuracy through improved tools and methodologies, and provides data collectors with comprehensive training and clear guidelines for data analysis and reporting.

Annual Planning

In 2024, VAESP revised its Annual Planning process to better align with changing educational priorities and to strengthen VAESP's capacity to support MoET more effectively and sustainably through enhanced program effectiveness. The revision aimed to improve strategic planning, implementation, and monitoring, including:

- **Enhanced Stakeholder Engagement:** Conducting comprehensive consultations with MoET Directors and Managers to ensure plans align with partner needs and priorities.
- **Data-Driven Decision-Making:** Increasing the emphasis on using data and evidence to inform planning decisions, including analysis of educational outcomes, resource allocation, and program impact.
- **Flexibility and Adaptability:** Incorporating mechanisms that allow the program to respond effectively to emerging challenges and opportunities in the educational environment.
- **Integration of Cross-Cutting Issues:** Considering using GEDSI and climate resilience in planning and implementation.

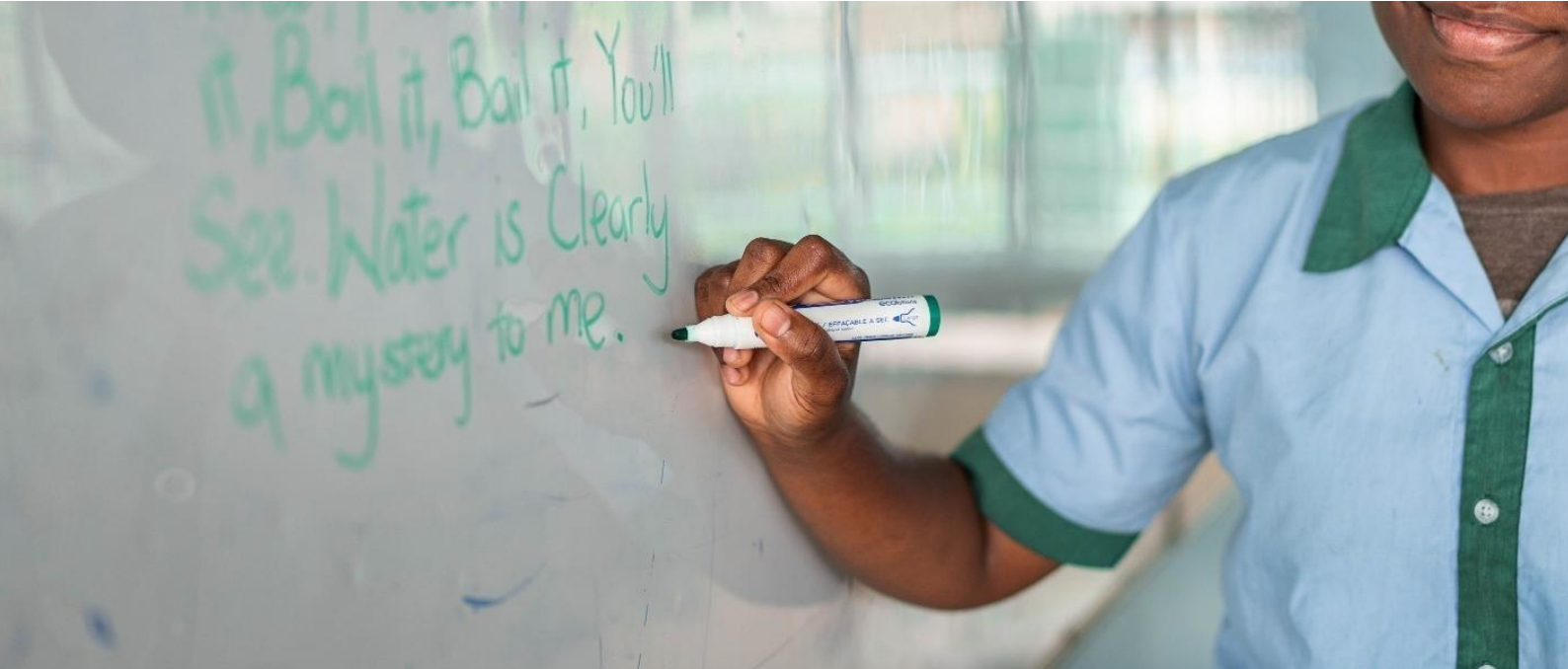
Changes in Leadership.

In September 2024, the VAESP Team Leader resigned from his position, followed by the Deputy Team Leader/Operation Manager's departure in November 2024. To ensure stability and continuity of VAESP's progress and implementation, Tetra Tech's Director of Education and VAESP Contractor Representative undertook the role of interim Team Leader while recruitment for both positions continued.

The Deputy Team Leader role was transitioned to a full-time embedded Operations Manager role, which commenced in December 2024 following an internal recruitment process within Tetra Tech.

Recruitment for the Team Leader role involved open and transparent consultations with key stakeholders, including MoET, the Australian High Commission and DFAT Canberra. Recruitment for the VAESP Team Leader role was finalised in February 2025, with VAESP's first Ni-Vanuatu Team Leader set to commence on 31 March. Throughout the leadership transitions, VAESP maintained clear and consistent communication with stakeholders to manage expectations, maintain trust and collaboration, minimise disruption and continue the program's positive impact on Vanuatu's education sector.

The Deputy Team Leader function has not been replaced as the program is undergoing a resourcing restructure, which will be finalised in Q2, 2025. The restructuring will strengthen local leadership, by establishing dedicated and restructured Pillar Leads, each accountable for and managing each of the Access, Quality and Management Pillars. This approach will replicate the successful local leadership approach embedded in the Australia Awards Vanuatu program in November 2024, with the appointment of Ni-Vanuatu Manager, Junila Sese.



2 Key results and progress

2.1 Progress towards outcomes

This section presents progress made towards the three EoPOs outlined in the program logic.

Each sub-section details the activities and corresponding achievements against the IO indicators and the challenges, lessons learned, and VAESP's focus in 2025 regarding each EoPO.

EoPO 1: More children are enrolled and attend the right year of primary school at the right age (Access)

VAESP is working to reverse the decline in enrolment and attendance rates by supporting inclusive education resources and training, rolling out the Parent Support Program nationwide, and raising awareness about the importance of parental support and early learning. VAESP's contribution to EoPO 1, relating to increasing children's enrolment and attendance is achieved through a set of IOs and SOs.

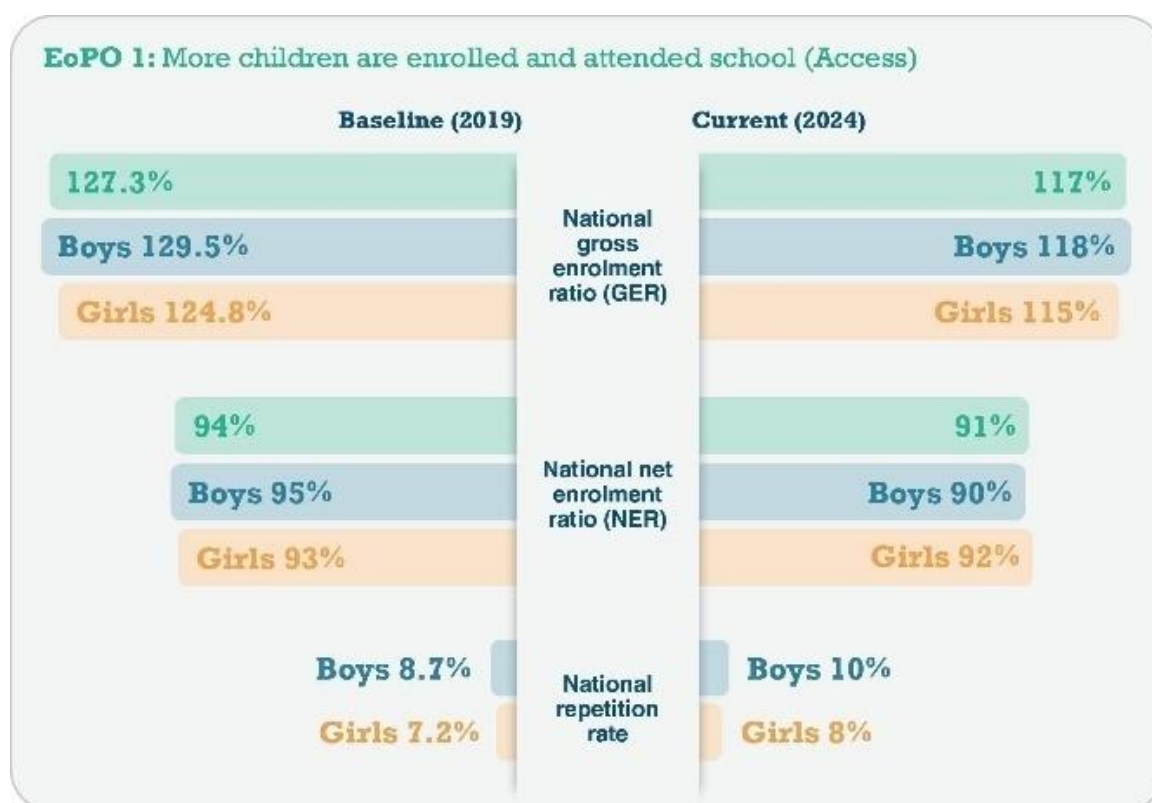
VAESP notes that achieving the overall outcomes depends on the contributions and collaboration of stakeholders, as well as external factors outside of VAESP's control. This section outlines some of the ongoing barriers to education that continue to impact enrolment and attendance, noting further education trend analysis is provided through VAESP's annual Context Analysis.

Since 2019, VAESP has worked with MoET to increase the number of girls, boys, and children with disabilities enrolled in and attending the primary school year appropriate for their age. VAESP's contributions to EoPO 1 are focused on **inclusive education in school**, **increasing parental and community support**, and **enhancing school infrastructure** to natural disasters. Reporting in this section primarily focuses on outcomes in these areas.³

³ Educational trends analysis at the national level are provided through VAESP's annual Context Analysis.

While the national gross enrolment rate (GER) is decreasing and there is less overage in enrolment age, the national net enrolment rate (NER) also shows a decrease, meaning the education is taking in less students in 2024 in comparison to 2019 (Figure 2). However, it is notable that repetition is increasing at national level but drop out is decreasing (Figure 7). Preliminary analysis of the MoET Digest data⁴ demonstrates that there are differences at provincial level. Malampa has seen a decrease in repetition rate, while Shefa is maintaining repetition rates. In addition to this, Torba has demonstrated an increase in enrolment in ECCE. This suggests that there may be many other factors impacting repetition and enrolment which will be further explored in a positive deviance study in 2025.

Figure 2: National gross enrolment ratio, net enrolment ratio and repetition between 2019 and 2024



VAESP's contributions support two IOs:

- **Intermediate outcome 1.1:** Schools and communities provide safe and inclusive learning environments for all students
- **Intermediate outcome 1.2:** MoET has strengthened capacity to provide services in circumstances of emergency or disaster

Through IO 1.1, VAESP is working through MoET and the Torba Provincial Education Office to improve access for children with disability, providing positive parenting practices and in raising the awareness of the importance of child development and early childhood care and education (ECCE) in the province of Torba.

Figures 3 and 4 provide trend analyses of the GER and NER in Torba and nationally in Vanuatu, noting that in the calculation method ECCE facilities are not included. The graph indicates that GER is decreasing across both Torba and Vanuatu. However, the decrease in Torba appears to be at a higher rate and the gap between the province and its national average is widening. A low GER

⁴ MoET Digest data is under analysis and not publicly available yet.

indicates that not all children are enrolled. In the preliminary MoET Statistical digest, further disaggregation of GER and NER for including ECCE demonstrates an increase in both.

Figure 3: Gross enrolment ratio in Torba vs national

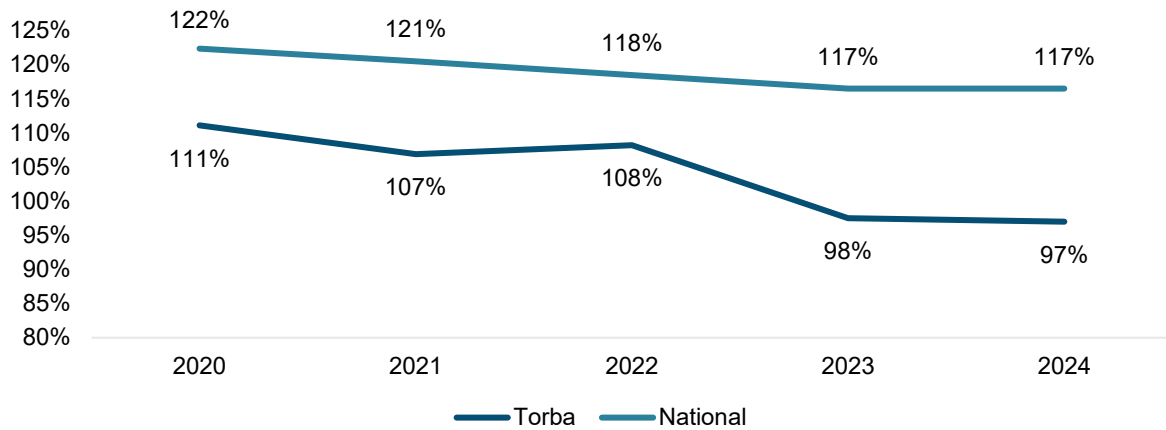
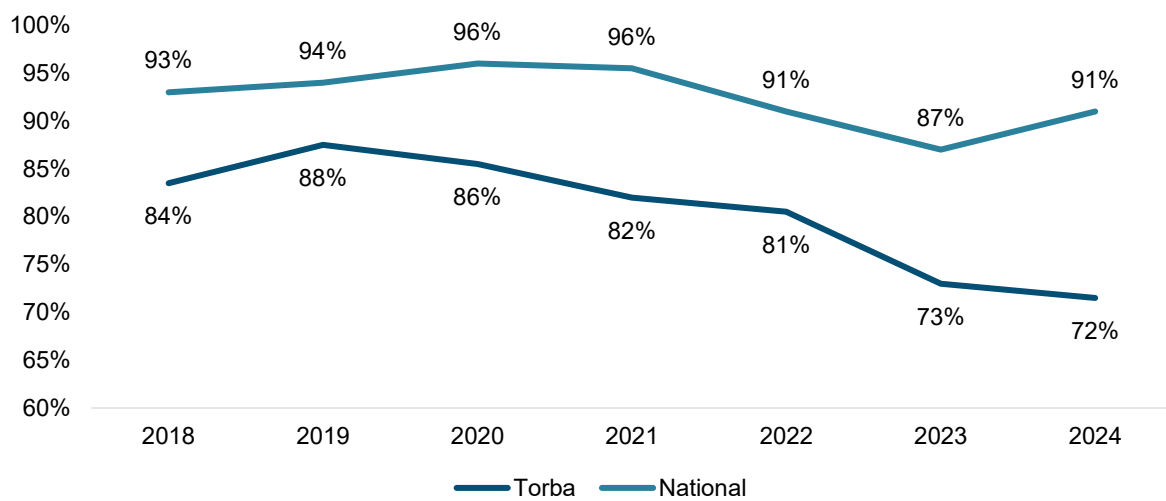


Figure 4: Net enrolment ratio in Torba vs national



In addition to the GER, the NER in Torba is also decreasing, as indicated in **Figure 4**. The low GER and NER indicate that many children are not attending school. A Barrier to Education study conducted in 2020 found that the distance and the poor quality of the roads in rural and remote areas posed a particular barrier for children with mobility issues. A phone survey with parents from Torba, Penama,



Figure 5: Map of available ECCE, primary, and secondary schools in Vanuatu

and Tafea, conducted as part of the study, found that 37 per cent of parents (n=36) reported that their children had to walk between 30-60 minutes to reach the nearest primary school. A review in 2024 of the map of ECCE, primary schools, and secondary schools registered on MoET’s schools.edu.vu website also indicates that the density of schools in Torba is much lower than in other provinces, as illustrated in **Figure 5**. In Torba, some islands only have an ECCE and a primary school, as shown in **Figure 6**.



Figure 6: Map of available ECCE, primary, and secondary schools in Vanuatu

Phone surveys, particularly with Torba parents, identified school fees as the largest barrier to education. Responses from Torba were notably high, with 30 per cent (n=86) citing difficulty in paying the fee.⁵ This Annual Report notes that analysis of the raw data indicates negative enrolment trends in Torba. However, recent research has identified fiscal, economic, societal and structural barriers to enrolment, as reflected in GER and NER data. There are additional costs families are responsible for, such as the school utility fees and uniform fees. Further analysis will be done in 2025 on potential ways to address these barriers.

Annex 2 demonstrates how VAESP’s implementation of the PSP is supporting improved educational outcomes for children in Torba through changes in parental and societal behaviours.

Intermediate Outcome 1.1: Schools and communities provide safe and inclusive learning environments for all students

VAESP contributes to EoPO 1 and IO 1.1 by developing and distributing inclusive education resource kits and conducting school-based inclusive education training. In 2023, VAESP held an Inclusive Education workshop for 13 schools in Shefa, with plans to extend to Penama. However, the teachers’ strike delayed this rollout until 2025. Despite this setback, a comparison of the 15 inclusive education

⁵ https://education.gov.vu/docs/policies/20181114%20EN%20Barriers%20to%20Education_2020.pdf

schools with all Shefa primary schools shows a somewhat parallel positive trend of a decrease in drop out and repetition rates for students with disabilities, as outlined in **Figures 7 and 8**). Qualitative data will be collected in inclusive schools to further understand the why in 2025 to triangulate these findings..

Figure 7: Dropout rate in % from 2019 to 2024

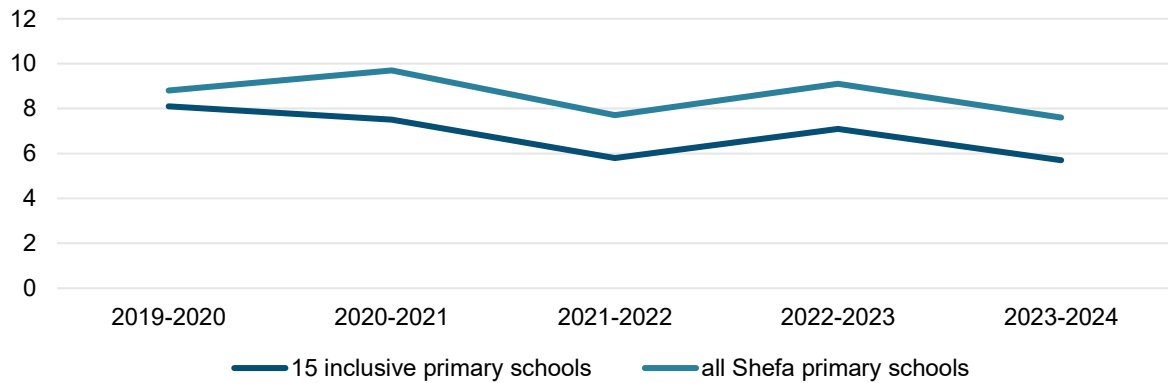


Figure 8: Repetition in % from 2019 to 2024

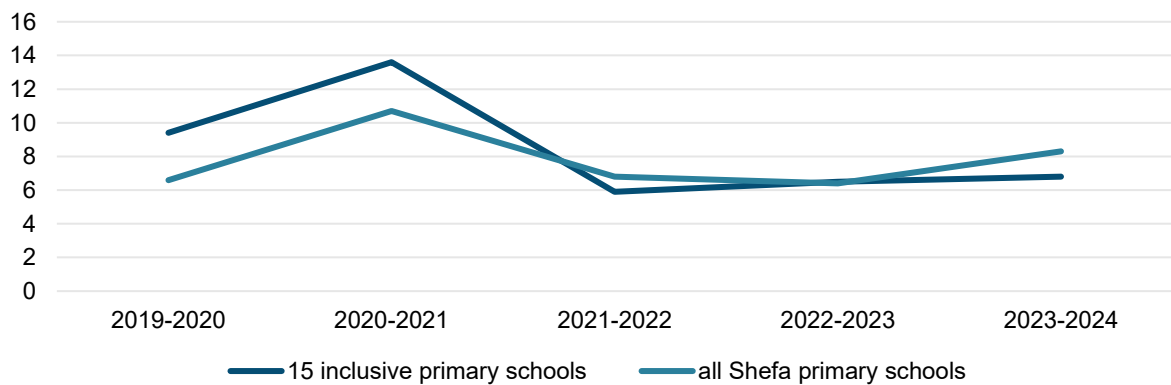


Figure 9: 2024 target and actual for Intermediate Outcome 1.1

⁶ No new inclusive education schools were trained in 2024 because of the teachers' industrial strike.)

Intermediate Outcome 1.1: Schools and communities provide safe and inclusive learning environments for all students

Number of model inclusion schools



Target

20 model inclusion schools in Penama



2024 Actual

0 model inclusion schools in Penama³

Evidence of parents using positive parenting behaviour



2024 Actual

Interviews with PSP parents and associated teachers, indicate that parents are spending more quality time with their children, taking more of an interest in their education and learning, changing the way they converse and engage with their children, and improving hygienic practices and nutritious food intake at home (See **Annex 2**).

The Inclusive Education and Training Policy was completed and launched by the Minister of Education and Training in November 2024, marking a significant milestone for inclusive education in Vanuatu and for VAESP. This new policy, developed through consultations with Vanuatu Skills Partnership, disability advocacy groups, educators, parents, and individuals with disabilities, builds on lessons from previous frameworks, including the Inclusive Education Policy (2010–2020) and the National Disability Inclusion Policy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (2016–2020). Despite facing delays and political challenges, the revised policy provides a clear direction for inclusive education in the country.

Key improvements in the new policy include

- **Clear Structure and Simple Language:** The policy is organised and accessible to all stakeholders, from officials to community members.
- **User-Friendly Format:** The format is designed to be user-friendly, with key messages that are easy to follow and understand.
- **Costed Implementation Plan:** The inclusion of a costed implementation plan outlines clear steps and budget considerations, making it realistic and achievable for schools to adopt.
- **Inclusive Approach:** The policy maintains a strong focus on inclusivity, ensuring that the principles of equity and inclusivity are upheld. It promotes these values in an easy way to advocate for and implement.



Our goal is simple: to provide an inclusive education system where all learners, regardless of their disabilities, have equitable access to quality education and training.

Minister of Education and Training, Hon. Simil Johnson⁴

Within the new suite of inclusion policies is the **Child Safeguarding Policy**. VAESP played a crucial role in supporting its review and update, with MoET appointing a specialist to lead the review, funded by Save the Children. VAESP's GEDSI Officer provided guidance, drawing on experience from the Inclusive Education and Training Policy review. The final version was reviewed by VAESP's short-term adviser and peer reviewed by Tetra Tech's child safeguarding specialist.

⁷ https://www.dailypost.vu/news/government-commits-to-inclusive-education-for-all-learners/article_65b46448-1681-5d01-b868-81df324e1964.html

VAESP has also made significant strides in **supporting the PWELN**, an initiative designed to create a safe space for women in education leadership to share experiences and support each other.

Key PWELN achievements for the reporting period include:

- **Establishing and formalising the Tafea PWELN:** VAESP assisted MoET formalise the Tafea Provincial Women in Education Leadership Network by hosting a planning meeting to establish their Coordinating Committee.. The PSP was also introduced to encourage PSP national roll out and ensure parental support.
- **Delivering training and capacity building:** Provided training to network members, strengthening their leadership and engagement skills. Further supportive data will be collected in 2025 through outcome harvesting.
- **Improving resource Development and Dissemination:** A significant milestone was the completion of the Vanuatu Gendered Expectations Roles and Results document with 1,000 copies of the English summary booklet printed and a French translation completed to improve accessibility.
- **Strengthening Women's Leadership in Education:** VAESP facilitated multiple workshops to promote women's leadership, including a Sanma PWELN event where five men and 29 women focused on the PSP and reviewed results from a 2021 PWELN gender study, emphasising gender-balanced participation and inclusive leadership. A similar activity in Malekula, attended by 50 women, was conducted during the Malampa PWELN workshop, empowering women in educational leadership across the province Further follow up on the application of new skills and knowledge will be measured in 2025.
- **Supporting planning and coordination.** VAESP supported the planning of future activities, including preparations for the upcoming Sanma PWELN workshop, ensuring effective resource allocation and coordination.

The 2024 progress highlights VAESP's significant contribution to establishing and supporting the PWELN. While the outcome of gender-balanced participation and inclusive leadership in education is not yet evident, VAESP's efforts have provided women in education leadership with a platform to share their experiences, receive training, and advocate for gender equity. The achievements in 2024 lay a strong foundation for continued progress and the future empowerment of women in educational leadership. In 2025, VAESP will conduct case studies of a select group of women leaders within the PWELN to assess the network's positive impact on their leadership.

In 2024, the number of model inclusion schools remained at 45. Teachers and school leaders at these schools were selected and trained in Shefa and Penama provinces to model the inclusive education schools initiative in 2023. The 2024 target was to extend this initiative to 20 schools in Penama, training teams of one principal and two to three selected teachers from each school chosen in the Inclusive Education Resource Book. However, this activity has been postponed until 2025 due to the teachers' strikes. VAESP subsequently pivoted the postponed activity to work with the MoET to progress the finalisation and printing of the Inclusive Education Resource Book, which consists of six Inclusive Education tools. The Minister of Education and Training launched the new Inclusive Education Resource Book in November 2024 and MoET has printed 1,087 copies of the English version and 449 copies of the French version. Distribution of the new Inclusive Education resources is planned for 2025, pending the end of the teachers' strikes.

Examples of the impact of the Inclusive Education Resource

Book, from the 2023 Mid-Point Review of the Inclusive Education Resources

Quick Reference Disability Identification Tool: A principal shared that “one teacher after using the tool found that one student couldn’t sit still in class”. The principal said the teacher “called the parents and told them to take him to the hospital”. Following a visit to the hospital, the family informed the school that “it was then that they found he had a hearing impairment”. This resource has further identified the need for referral systems within schools and for improved communication between MoET and the Ministry of Health.

Quick Reference Disability Inclusive Teaching Guide: A principal noted that “one student ... having difficulty writing”. The principal purchased a ‘stress ball’, as this was a strategy in the guide. He gave the child the ball, observing that the ball helped the child “focus and develop finger movement and now the child’s writing has improved”.

Student Behaviour Support Plan: One principal became aware of several misbehaving students in one class. The student’s teacher used the classroom’s two stress balls to reward good behaviour. The teacher identified several students with hyperactive behaviour and established a rule for them to sit and focus on their schoolwork. She set aside the balls, saying they could play with them after they worked for an agreed amount of time. This approach rewarded positive behaviour and helped the children focus on their work. The principal also noted this technique improved the student-teacher relationships.

The feedback from the 2023 mid-point review of the Inclusive Education Resources highlighted several positive aspects of the Inclusive Education Resource Book. Based on this feedback and the recent updates made to the materials, VAESP expects that ongoing training and socialisation of Inclusive Education resources will enhance the creation of safe and inclusive learning environments for all children, including those with disabilities. In 2025, VAESP will monitor the impact of the updated Inclusive Education Resource Book in schools three months after its distribution.

Evidence suggests that VAESP’s implementation of the PSP in Torba is enhancing parental engagement and support for ECCE. The program, coordinated by VAESP in collaboration with the MoET, focused on empowering parents with the knowledge and skills necessary to support their children’s development and well-being.

The program workshops covered 11 essential modules, ranging from nurturing care and brain development to health, nutrition, and child protection. Monitoring visits and interviews conducted by the ECCE Provincial Coordinator provided valuable insights into the program’s progress with positive feedback highlighting the program’s impact. Facilitators reported increased confidence in delivering workshops, and parents shared stories of positive changes in their homes and communities. For instance, pregnant mothers reported receiving better care from their families, fathers expressed a newfound understanding of the importance of engaging with their children, and teachers observed noticeable improvements in children’s behaviour and participation in class. Additionally, children brought healthier snacks to school, and parents adopted more positive communication practices at home. The demand for more workshops and materials, such as posters and certificates highlighted the program’s success and the community’s appetite for continued support.

These evidence-based insights were validated through the October 2024 data collection mission where a team of VAESP staff, MoET representatives, and the Torba ECCE Provincial Coordinator conducted a knowledge, attitude, and practice survey with PSP participants and non-participants alongside interviews with PSP parents and local teachers. Findings from this mission indicate that parents are making positive behavioural changes in how they care for their children, including spending more time with them, reading to them, storytelling, and demonstrating more interest in their education. Ninety-nine per cent of PSP participants responded correctly (‘True’) to the statement

“Giving your child attention and affection are some ways to support your child’s brain development regardless of age” and 88 per cent of PSP participants responded correctly (‘False’) to “Spending time with your children, such as reading to them, is not important. Inversely, when asked “Did you play with or read or sing to your child in the last 24 hours?”, 94 per cent of PSP participants and 88 per cent of non-PSP participants indicated they did. Interviewed teachers validated these findings and observed that these changes at home are bringing about changes in students’ attitudes towards school and learning.



After his parents attended the workshop, I noticed a change in his dad's behaviour of caring for him. One day, as I was walking home, I saw him with his dad, who was reading a book to him. This was new, as I had never seen him read to his child before.

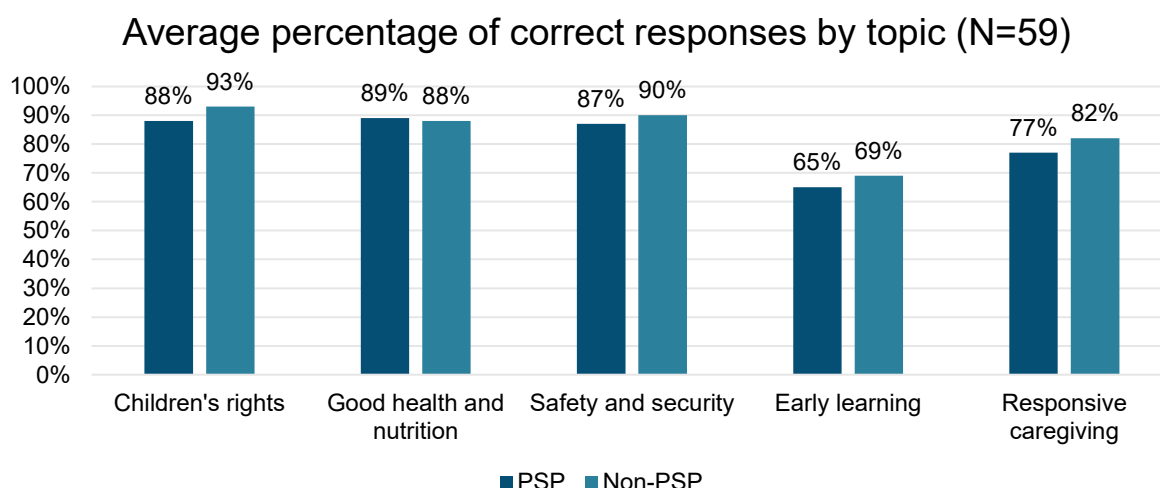
School teacher

My children used to be afraid of me before. I used to speak harshly to them, but after attending PSP, I started speaking calmly, telling them it was okay to play and that we would tidy up together afterwards. Before, they were afraid to try new things or ask questions because they knew I would scold them. I wished I had learnt about PSP much earlier.

PSP parent

The Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice Survey found that, on average, the PSP participants responded correctly to 81 per cent of the questions across the five learning areas. However, comparison with the control group suggests there is marginal difference between the two groups’ results, as indicated in **Figure 10**. A detailed analysis of the PSP Deep Dive is listed in **Annex 2**. However, this suggests a greater need for pre-and post-surveys to more accurately capture the change in PSP participants, which will be incorporated in the new MEL tools to be introduced in 2025..

Figure 10: PSP knowledge, attitude, and practice Survey results



During 2024, the PSP conducted 167 workshops in 55 communities, reaching a total of 1,955 parents, including 663 males and 1,292 females. The program also identified 17 children with disabilities in the participating communities. The VAESP team developed PSP materials for the MoET website, and a six-month radio campaign on Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation raised awareness about the program.

Overall, the PSP in 2024 achieved significant outcomes in strengthening parental involvement in ECCE, promoting positive parenting practices, and enhancing the overall well-being of children and



VAESP is improving parental care and support for children

The PSP, supported by VAESP, UNICEF, Save the Children, and funded by Dubai Cares since 2015, aims to educate and upskill parents and caregivers through an 11-week series of workshops. These workshops cover topics in good health and nutrition, early learning, security and safety, and responsive caregiving. The program's goal is to increase community awareness and support for children's schooling, ultimately leading to higher enrolment and attendance rates, improved literacy and numeracy outcomes, and better overall child development. In 2021, MoET implemented the PSP nationally, with VAESP playing a crucial role in its delivery, particularly in Torba Province.

In October 2024, VAESP conducted a mixed-methods data collection in 12 communities across Vanualava, Motalava, and Gaua to evaluate the PSP's impact. The survey included 111 PSP participants and 59 non-participants, along with interviews with nine families and 17 teachers. The findings indicated positive changes in parental behaviour, such as increased engagement in their children's education, improved hygienic practices, and better nutrition. Teachers also reported observing positive behaviour changes in parents and children, including more quality time spent together, improved communication, and enhanced learning outcomes.

Despite these positive outcomes, the data revealed gaps in knowledge and practice in early learning and responsive caregiving among both PSP and non-PSP participants. The survey highlighted the need for further investigation and emphasis on these areas. Additionally, the results highlighted the importance of establishing baseline or pre-survey measures to more accurately assess the program's impact. Recommendations included increasing community ownership of the PSP, focusing on early learning and responsive caregiving, and training PSP teachers and taskforce members on monitoring and evaluation indicators to ensure the program's success.

families in the Torba province. The program's success is a testament to the collaborative efforts of VAESP, MoET, and community partners, setting a strong foundation for continued future progress.

Intermediate Outcome 1.2: MoET has greater capacity to provide services during emergency and disaster

Figure 11: 2024 target and actual for Intermediate Outcome 1.2



In 2024, the VAESP bolstered MoET's capacity to prepare for and respond to natural disasters and emergencies.

VAESP supported the development and presentation of **comprehensive Capital Works Plans for Penama and Malampa** in the 2025 recurrent budget and for Shefa, Tafea, Sanma and Torba in the recurrent years. These plans are integrated in MoET's budget and the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework for 2025 -2029. VAESP also assisted in finalising and securing the approval and launch for the **School Infrastructure Guidelines**, supported by the **School Infrastructure Policy**, which provides essential guidelines for developing and maintaining school facilities in line with the National Building Code. To ensure school infrastructure meets safety standards, VAESP organised a **National Building Code Workshop** for MoET staff and provincial officers.

As part of disaster recovery and emergency preparedness, VAESP collaborated with MoET to revise the **Disaster Recovery Plan**, incorporating updates to infrastructure and information technology systems, including regular emergency drills to ensure resilience against cyclones and other natural disasters. Regular system backups for schools were also established to protect data and ensure operational continuity despite disruptions.

Following the December 2024 earthquake, VAESP actioned immediate support to assist MoET to quickly assess all affected schools, activate the Education Cluster, communicate with school principals, and complete a Recovery Plan and Reconstruction Cost framework. VAESP supported the Ministry prepare daily situation reports (SITREPs) for the National Disaster Management Office. The response was effective, with over 200 schools assessed in less than a week. Although a formal evaluation was not conducted, the Education Cluster suggested a lesson-learned session on disaster management.

VAESP played a crucial role in supporting MoET's response by helping assess damaged schools, contributing to the Recovery Plan and Reconstruction Costs, facilitating communications with principals, and supporting the Education Cluster. VAESP conducted an Infrastructure Mapping Exercise and developed a Procurement Strengthening Options Paper to improve procurement processes for school infrastructure.

VAESP assisted with provincial visits to update the **School Asset Survey**, ensuring accurate identification of infrastructure needs. VAESP also produced reports based on these assessments for MoET. In 2025, VAESP supported MoET's submission of a comprehensive emergency recovery plan to the Department of Strategic Policy, Planning and Aid Coordination, which included infrastructure, relocation, learning resources, online learning, and mental health support. These efforts have strengthened MoET's capacity to maintain services during emergencies, enhancing infrastructure resilience and improving policy and procurement processes.

Finally, VAESP assisted MoET staff in preparing and submitting new policy proposals for infrastructure projects, ensuring their inclusion in the government budget. These activities have enhanced MoET's infrastructure capacity to continue services during emergencies and disasters, improving infrastructure resilience, preparedness, and policy and procurement processes.

EoPO 2: Improved student literacy and numeracy outcomes (Quality)

Since 2010, primary education in Vanuatu has experienced significant curriculum reforms. Although support has been provided to improve systems and mechanisms to strengthen educational outcomes, many Vanuatu students still perform at critically low levels. According to the Vanuatu Education Training Sector Strategy (VETSS, 2020), in 2017, the percentage of students meeting minimum numeracy standards in Years 4 and 6 is 86% and 74%, respectively. In literacy, these figures drop to 65% and 58%. Additionally, the percentage of students passing national exams in Years 8 and 10 remains below 50% in English- and French-speaking schools.

To improve student learning outcomes, VAESP supported MoET's Curriculum Development Unit in conducting the Curriculum Monitoring Study in 2021, which identified the need for more support for educators, school leaders, and curriculum personnel. In 2024, VAESP continued to support the distribution of learning resources and developed a three-year strategy to enhance curriculum

implementation from Kindergarten to Year 10, focusing on building capacity at the system and provincial levels to improve literacy and numeracy. This structured coaching system aims to support long-term, sustainable curriculum improvements across schools. The suspension of the CDU Principal Education Officer, delays in MoET's recruitment process, and the teachers' strike affected the delivery of activities in EoPO 2; however, CIP achieved remarkable results despite these challenges.

VAESP is contributing to the overall outcome of improving student literacy and numeracy outcomes across Years 4, 6, and 8. This is evident in Intermediate **Outcome 2.1: teachers effectively applying the curriculum and associated principles of teaching, learning, and assessment.**

Tracking the progress against EoPO 2 was challenging in 2024 due to MoET cancelling the 2024 VANSTA testing. Therefore, the latest results available on literacy and numeracy outcomes are those previously presented in the 2023 VAESP Annual Report. However, DFAT commissioned a multi-year study series on teacher development in Vanuatu. The final report was published in 2023 and states the below.



Results from the three cycles of data collection suggest that VESP – as a program that supports the broader education sector in Vanuatu – has been successful in strengthening elements of teaching quality, the implementation of the national curriculum and aspects of student learning. However, there are challenges for the sustainability of VESP inputs to teaching quality, including changes to provincial structures that have previously provided support to teachers and principals, and the absence of an ongoing and continuous program of teacher professional learning.⁵

The report states that VAESP's activities and investments have contributed to professional learning opportunities, improving teachers' knowledge and practice, and particularly student-centred pedagogies. Teachers and principals highly value the curriculum support resources VAESP contributes through MoET.

VAESP is developing other methods and indicators to better monitor programmatic outcomes and more accurately demonstrate the program's impact on literacy and numeracy. These will be developed through the CIP and its dedicated MEL Framework, which VAESP collaboratively developed with the CDU.

Curriculum Improvement Program (CIP)

MoET's **approval and endorsement of the CIP implementation strategy** was a major highlight for VAESP in 2024. Based on findings and recommendations of the Curriculum Implementation Monitoring Study and the Teacher Development Multi-Year Study Series conducted in 2023, the CIP is a three-year strategy that seeks to strengthen curriculum implementation in schools K-10. Its underlying assumption is that 'strengthening the curriculum's implementation will directly impact the quality of teaching, leading to enhanced student learning outcomes.' This assumption is based on a specific theory of change, which outlines four inter-connected outcomes identified by MoET:

- **Outcome 1:** Curriculum-related systems and resources are relevant, well-designed, available, and accessible
- **Outcome 2:** The confidence of teachers in using the curriculum and principals in leading the curriculum improves
- **Outcome 3:** Principals are instructional leaders; and teachers implement effective inclusive pedagogy
- **Outcome 4:** Principals and teachers use data to inform decisions about strategies and interventions to improve student learning

⁸ Cassity, Elizabeth; Wong, Debbie; Wendiady, Jvelin; and Chainey, Jennie, "Teacher Development Multi-Year Study Series. Vanuatu: Final Report" (2023). <https://research.acer.edu.au/eas/68>

- **Outcome 5:** Students achieve improved literacy and numeracy outcomes

The CIP Theory of Change is based on a sequential set of *'if this, then that'* assumptions. If Outcomes 1 and 2 happen, then Outcomes 3 and 4 will emerge, ultimately leading to Outcome 5.

Intermediate outcome 2.1: Teachers are applying the curriculum and associated principles of teaching, learning, and assessment

During the reporting period, VAESP contributed to improving teaching and learning through two key approaches: (1) operationalising the CIP and (2) strengthening MoET's overarching curriculum and policy.

Operationalising the CIP

VAESP's EoPO 2 achievement, supported by the program's Quality team and the CDU team, is building a strong foundation for CIP success by:

- Securing the buy-in of MoET and relevant counterparts in the CIP
- Developing resources and materials required to operationalise the CIP
- Recruiting the right people at the provincial level to support curriculum implementation via the Provincial Education Offices and selected CIP Focus Schools
- Providing individuals and networks with the relevant training and awareness to ensure effective implementation.

To support the operationalisation of the CIP, VAESP and CDU co-developed a **CIP Awareness and Training package** for training and building awareness among key CIP stakeholders. These stakeholders included Provincial Curriculum Improvement Officers (PCIO), Provincial Curriculum Learning Facilitators (PCLF), provincial education office staff, principals, and key teachers. The package includes seven modules:

- (1) CIP Awareness
- (2) High Impact Teaching Strategies
- (3) Online Training Platforms
- (4) Reading for 21st Century Learners
- (5) Curriculum Leadership
- (6) Numeracy
- (7) Class-based assessments

The critical components of these modules include (i) Instructional Leadership, (ii) Effective Teaching and Learning Professional Learning, (iii) Learning through the Mother Tongue – Vernacular, (iv) Common Assessment Tasks, and (v) capacity building in interpreting and analysing data from VANSTA and the Curriculum Implementation Monitoring Study.


Additionally, the MoET and VAESP have co-developed a list of criteria for selecting the 40 CIP Focus Schools as well as PCIO and PCLF at the provincial level.

Eight PCIO and PCLF were recruited and assigned for all provinces, with Sanma and Shefa, each having two for their rural and urban areas. In total, 40 CIP Focus Schools were selected, including 21 English, 14 French, and five bilingual (English/French) schools. The distribution of selected schools by province is as mentioned in **Table 1**.

Table 1: 40 CIP Focus Schools selected by province and languages of instruction

Province	Number of schools	School breakdown by language of instruction
Torba	Five schools	Two English; One English/French, Two French
Tafea	Five schools	Two English; Three French
Malampa	Five schools	Three English; Two French
Penama	Five schools	Three English; One English/French; One French
Sanma	10 schools	Five English; One English/French; Four French
Shefa	10 schools	Six English; Two French; Two English/French

In Quarter Four of 2024, **four PCIOs, PCLFs, and deputy provincial education officers attended a two-week induction and CIP Provincial Training**, introducing them to the seven CIP training modules. The remaining PCIOs, PCLF and deputy Provincial Education Officers could not participate because of the teachers’ strikes and will be trained in March 2025. Participant feedback at the end of the two-week training in November 2024 was overwhelmingly positive.



The coaching to the ECCE, year 1, 2 and 3 teachers in the five CIP focused schools in Malampa ensures they acquire the right knowledge and can apply it in their classrooms.

CIP training participant

I learned a lot in this training. I learned that the morning routine can really impact a children's learning. (The routine) has five parts in it. It's a day-to-day teaching strategy that helps improve students' learning. Learning online is another step forward in professional capacity building. Using the technology makes it easier to manage the presentations among other things. Mathematics strategies are also a very important aspect of what I've learned here. They help teachers improve their teaching and support students in following different approaches that will provide a strong basis for their learning. The CIP is the most effective approach for boosting literacy and numeracy in students learning. This approach really builds students learning in the early stages of schooling, which is very good and provides a strong foundation for their education.

CIP training participant

We learned to share the learnings with the Provincial Office team and implement the CIP Awareness Concept in five rural schools in Sanma.

CIP training participant

The CIP training participants found the training interesting and valuable. They appreciated the hands-on approach and the opportunity to learn new strategies for classroom management, leadership, and teaching. Moreover, participants see the **CIP as a significant step towards improving educational outcomes through thoughtful and inclusive curriculum design and implementation.**

The PCIO and PCLF act as CIP Provincial Curriculum Coaches, supporting the implementation of the CIP at the provincial level. PCIOs will work closely with provincial education offices and school leaders to support curriculum implementation. The PCLF is responsible for setting up Provincial Learning Networks and Provincial Learning Communities to ensure provincial agency and ownership. Both officials are responsible for monitoring and evaluation activities, validating and compiling SSPs and budgets. They will report to the provincial education office and Principal Education Officer of the CDU. To support establishing Provincial Learning Networks and Provincial Learning Communities, **Provincial Curriculum Grants** were deposited in MoET's provincial accounts to launch the initiatives.

Following the CIP Training and induction, the **four PCIOs conducted CIP Awareness workshops** in all provinces, engaging 42 representatives, including 20 females, 21 males, and one who chose not to identify their gender, from provincial education offices, provincial government, and other key stakeholders. The provincial awareness workshops received a rating average of nine out of 10 indicating positive experiences from participants. Feedback gathered from the workshops indicate that the CIP is generating excitement due to its potential to significantly impact teaching and learning. A key highlight was the establishment of the Provincial Learning Communities, which introduced a new support system and process to enhance quality services and achieve better results.

Participants report that teachers are already practicing many of the strategies, and collaboration with coaches is expected to further enhance student learning. Provincial Curriculum Coaches will offer teachers a supportive environment to seek guidance and maintain quality teaching and learning. Overall, **the CIP is seen as a way forward to improve literacy and numeracy, with the potential to bring significant changes to the education system in Vanuatu.** The program is supported by research and aims to introduce new teaching and learning strategies, improve academic results, and enhance the professional development of teachers.



A lot of these activities will help me in my teaching and improve student's learning.

Awareness training participant

The main thing that excited me about this information was the way we dived deeply into how we should answer the questions why, what and how to best address students' learning. I was excited to learn about the new positions of PCIO, PCIF... that will address and support implementing the new curriculum.

Awareness training participant

Glad to see that CDU is driving a change that will improve literacy and numeracy levels in our country, including providing professional development for our hard-working teachers who will be the main team players in the program.

Awareness training participant

Additionally, **26 principals and deputy principals from 50 per cent of the CIP Focus Schools have completed introductory training** on strategies⁹ designed to enhance effective teaching and learning. Participants included teachers, parents, principals, school committees, and School Community Association representatives. Participant feedback was extremely positive, with most acknowledging the program's value and expressing anticipation for its implementation and the positive changes it will bring to their schools. Participants also expressed enthusiasm for the curriculum's potential improvement and positive impact on their students.

⁹ High Impact Teaching Strategy



VAESP is increasing teachers' confidence in teaching early literacy using vernacular languages

Following evidence from Ranwas Primary School at the Literacy Symposium in 2021 which demonstrated the potential for vernacular language to increase accessibility of education, VAESP has been collaborating with MoET to enhance educational inclusion through mother tongue instruction in five schools on Ambae Island, Penama Province, as part of the operationalisation of MoET's Language Policy in the Vanuatu curriculum. This initiative aims to improve literacy rates by incorporating GEDSI principles. Evidence suggests that using vernacular language for foundational literacy is yielding positive results. The Penama Provincial Education Officer expressed enthusiasm for the initiative, noting that some top-performing schools teach foundational literacy through local vernacular languages.

VAESP provided training and resources to teachers, focusing on vernacular phonetics, phonology, and structured synthetic phonics. The program aligns with global and national policies, including World Bank and UNESCO recommendations. Teachers received training on the differences between vernacular languages and English/French, explored digital resources like Bloom to create vernacular storybooks, and learned about the importance of teaching in the first language for foundational literacy skills.

The initiative's outcomes were positive, with teachers reporting increased awareness and confidence in teaching early literacy using vernacular languages. The initiative also strengthened relationships between home and school, promoting social inclusion. Principals and teachers are now more supportive of vernacular instruction, with plans to expand its use in early grades. VAESP will support additional schools in 2025, focusing on GEDSI and monitoring and evaluation, providing further training, resources, and coaching to strengthen foundational literacy instruction. VAESP will conduct action research to identify key success factors and support catch-up interventions for students lacking foundational literacy skills. This activity is one of three deep dives featured in this report. The **Annex 3** provides more details about the research and its projected outcomes.

"Observing the different sounds give me assurance that I could teach vernacular in any part of Ambae, even if I don't speak the mother tongue of that particular place, either east, southeast, west, or north."

Participant to the Learning through Mother Tongue - Vernacular Workshop

"We were blaming the children, and now we realise that we were not taught how to teach reading"

VAESP is also supporting curriculum implementation by providing literacy resources. In 2024, **90 boxes of English and 93 boxes of French literacy resources were distributed to primary schools in Port Vila and Efate**. Materials were well received and requests for more were submitted to MoET. Secondary schools in Sanma and Penama received four boxes of literacy resources. To support the logistics, distribution and MoET inventory management, VAESP assisted in the development of an **inventory management app**, enabling CDU to track incoming resources, stock levels, and distribution.

VAESP and MoET's ECCE Unit have **developed literacy resources for the ECCE curriculum**, including oral language resources such as vocabulary cards and 17 sequential stories, with three more in progress. They completed a training package on Beginning Literacy Skills, focusing on oral language, vocabulary, phonological awareness, and print knowledge. The training is based on evidence from the National Reading Panel and research by Deslea Konza (2014), which advocates

for including a sixth key element – oral language and early literacy experiences – as foundational and additional to reading development.¹⁰ The rollout of these resources will be staggered to ensure effectiveness, starting with trials in select kindergartens to gather feedback. Training will be conducted with teachers from the 40 CIP Focus Schools before a national rollout in 2025. Additionally, VAESP and MoET trained 56 ECCE and Years 1-3 teachers in North Efate and Tanna on using existing storybooks in various reading formats to promote literacy and a love for reading. The training also included developing a digital library where teachers can create their own stories using Summer Institute of Linguistics structures, enabling them to expand their library resources.

Strengthening MoET’s overarching curriculum and policy

Apart from facilitating curriculum implementation, VAESP is supporting the review and strengthening of the Vanuatu National Curriculum Statement (VNCS) and the initial phase of the ECCE policy review.

The VNCS is the philosophical framework for the development of Curriculum in Vanuatu. The VAESP team has supported the completion of the desktop analysis and literature review to explore and align the VNCS to international and regional education directions and standards in response to changing school contexts. The VNCS review will be finalised in 2025 and will serve as a basis for a MoET-led national consultation to gather feedback on its quality and readability.

During the reporting period, VAESP also facilitated ECCE Policy Review workshops with the ECCE Unit, co-developing ideas for a revised ECCE Policy. This activity will continue in 2025.

In 2025, alongside VAESP and CDU’s progress in the CIP and other activities, VAESP will finalise data collection tools and establish baselines in French and English in the 40 CIP Focus schools to monitor progress.

EoPO 3: Strengthening provincial systems (Management)

VAESP is contributing to the MoET’s aim of devolving Ministry functions to provincial and school levels, strengthening reporting and data systems to improve planning, implementation, and decision-making for better student outcomes. This is achieved through the following IOs and SOs, as outlined in the Results Framework.

1. Intermediate Outcome 3.1: MoET is monitoring systems and school performance and using data to inform strategic planning and school improvement.
2. Intermediate Outcome 3.2: Provincial Education Officers can guide principals in developing effective SSP.

VAESP continued to enhance MoET’s ICT infrastructure, capacity and policies and procedures, ensuring effective operations at the central, provincial, and school levels. VAESP also continues to work with MoET on its Open Vanuatu Education Management Information System (OV), the ministry’s national information management system for data-driven planning and management at across all levels. VAESP is working closely with MoET’s Information Technology Unit to enhance OV’s capabilities, range of modules and functionality including:

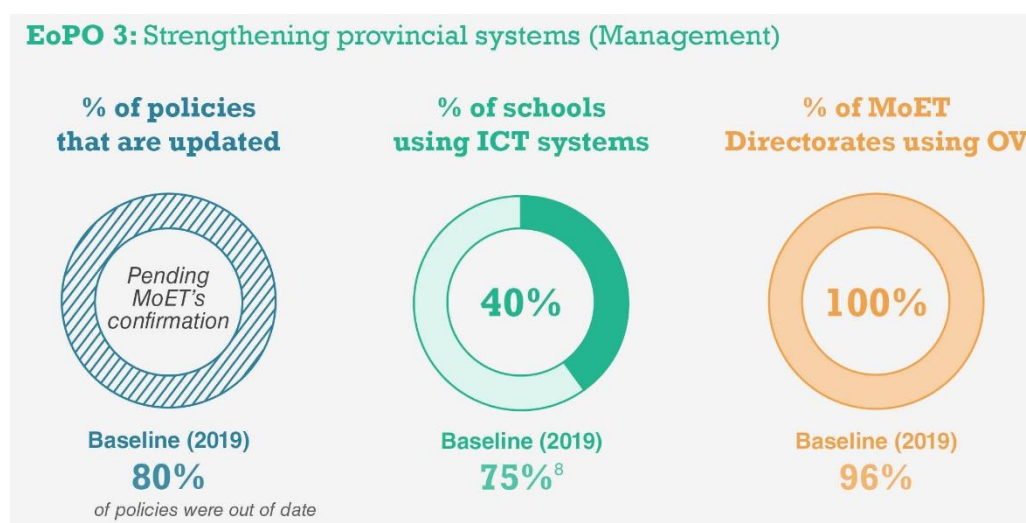
- Develop of the Harmonized Standard Assessment Module in OV linking with a Kobo App, resulting in the creation of reports and dashboards to present the data, enabling both MoET and schools to access and utilize the information effectively
- Develop connection with Civil Registry (CR) database for student and staff verification which enables the production of a verification report within VEMIS to cross-check student National ID (Birth Registration Number) data against the Civil Registry. This report serves as a valuable tool for VEMIS officers to conduct data quality checks, particularly after the census due date

¹⁰ Konza, D. (2014). *Teaching Reading: Why the “Fab Five” should be the “Big Six”*. Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 39(12). <http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2014v39n12.10>

- Develop connection with Smart Stream to extract teacher pay slips
- Upgrades to the home page to be more user friendly and logins to differentiate different level of users
- Mobile responsive thus viewed better on smaller screens

Capacity building and support of the MoET IT Unit in software development and use of analytical tools In EoPO3, there are three indicators that support overall planning, performance and management activities as mentioned in **Figure 12**.

Figure 12: Indicators for the EoPO3



In 2024, VAESP collaborated with the Information Technology Unit, Policy and Planning Directorate, and Finance and Administration Directorate, to strengthen OV's functionality. Despite limited connectivity as measured in the ICT Survey (Figure 12), other connectivity methods such as submission of data through mobile phone is often used by schools. Thus, the enhancements stated above regarding the module improvements on OV through the support of VAESP now allow school leaders to enter data into OV from their mobile phones in instances where their school does not have connectivity. This support ensures that all MoET Directorates have access to OV and use it regularly for decision-making.

Since 2019, VAESP has continued building MoET's capacity for evidence-based policy reviews. In 2024, alongside the launch of the Inclusive Education and Training Policy, VAESP contributed to the review and revision of several key policies:

- **Primary School Infrastructure Policy:** Approved in June 2024
- **ICT Policy:** Completed and awaiting approval from MoET Senior Management Team
- **OV Policy:** First draft developed
- **Education Authority and School Registry Policy:** Completed and awaiting approval from MoET Senior Management Team
- **Child Safeguarding Policy:** In the final stages of drafting
- **Gender Equality in Education Policy:** Review planned in 2025, with VAESP providing support as part of the Inclusive Policy Review Working Group
- **ICT Disaster Recovery Plan:** Completed and awaiting approval from MoET Senior Management Team
- **Capital Works Plan for School Infrastructure:** Completed and included in the MoET Medium-Term Expenditure Framework

¹¹ VAESP needs to validate the 2019 data source to establish and correct the data-informed 2019 baseline, as MoET Information Technology Unit is unaware of any survey conducted in 2019.

- **MoET Finance Management Manual and Policy:** Completed and awaiting approval from MoET Senior Management Team.

Intermediate outcome 3.1: MoET is monitoring systems and school performance, and using data to inform strategic planning and school improvement

Supporting MoET monitoring capacity and capabilities

In 2024, VAESP supported MoET enhance monitoring systems and school performance, focusing on improving data systems, policy development, and digital literacy training.

VAESP support for MoET's improved data systems and policy framework include:

- **Completing the ICT policy review:** Pending approval from the MoET Senior Management Team.
- Developing the **first draft of the OV Policy:** Now under review by the task group, this policy is crucial for setting clear roles and responsibilities for data collection and cleaning as well as and management, ensuring timely and accurate data reporting, an improvement from the 2017 OV Policy. This policy sets a precedence on the agreed ways of working in data management on any platform and will continue to be reviewed and supported as the system needs grow.
- **Revising and completing the ICT Disaster Recovery Plan:** Once approved by MoET Directors, the plan will include emergency drills during cyclones and system backups for schools, enhancing the resilience of MoET's ICT infrastructure.
- Finalising the **integration between MoET and the Civil Registry:** With integration 90 per cent complete and agreement on the integration approach pending, this initiative will streamline data sharing and improve the accuracy of student records.

Internet Connectivity and ICT in schools

Internet connectivity in Vanuatu has seen significant improvements in recent years. The VAESP MEL Plan from 2022-2026 states that in 2019, 75 per cent of schools had internet access. However, subsequent validation with MoET counterparts advises that nationwide school internet access is significantly lower. According to the 2023 ICT in Schools Survey conducted by MoET Information Technology and VAESP, which sampled 541 schools, only 39.9 per cent of schools reported that students have access to ICT, while 90 per cent of schools reported that teachers have access to ICT. Additionally, 71 per cent of those schools reported having a high number of non-functional Computers and Electronic Devices. In these cases, it is likely that there is a connection between schools that cannot replace their equipment will have reduced connectivity, leading to reduction in ICT use in schools (Figure 12). Connectivity remains unstable, particularly during severe weather and natural disasters. To address this, VAESP actively monitors the VSAT installations in the two supported schools to ensure resilience and troubleshoot any issues.

VAESP also notes Starlink's rapid growth and is working with MoET to assess sustainability options for different service provisions. VAESP has two pilot schools trialling Starlink, Analgauhat on Aneityum Island and Nofo School on Emae Island. By 2025, all existing MoET VSAT links will be migrated to Starlink.

Furthermore, the ICT in Schools survey supported by VAESP provides MoET with a comprehensive analysis of available ICT equipment in schools, highlighting areas of need and informing the ICT Policy.

VAESP has also focused on improving digital literacy and internet connectivity in schools. The program **trained 34 schools in Sanma and Malampa in Digital Literacy and Google Classroom.**¹² The internet connection installation in schools in Tafea and Shefa has been delayed, ensuring Starlink devices are installed to provide a long-term solution to the two schools. Regular monitoring ensures the resilience of these installations. The ICT in Schools Survey, completed by Pacific Consulting

¹² Additional digital literacy training for 16 schools in Malampa is pending Director's approval



VAESP is enhancing internet connectivity at the provincial and school levels in Penama and Malampa, improving student engagement and better school management capacity

To improve system monitoring and school performance, VAESP has facilitated the installation of VSAT technology in Penama and Malampa provincial education offices and Amelvet school in Malampa. The Penama office, responsible for managing all schools in the province, previously struggled with limited network access and unstable connectivity. Similarly, the Malampa office, overseeing ECCE to senior secondary schools, faced communication challenges due to unstable networks. The school in Malampa also faced difficulties with OV reporting, delays in receiving updates, and limited internet access.

The VSAT installations have improved connectivity, communication, administrative efficiency, and access to digital resources in both offices and the school. The Penama office reported a 90 per cent effectiveness rate, while the Malampa office noted increased morale and timely work completion. The school has seen enhanced classroom learning through YouTube-based lessons, greater student engagement and attendance, and stronger ICT skills among teachers.

The Principal of Amelvet School identified a range of improvements in teaching resulting from the VSAT installation:

- Since the internet was provided, teachers have embraced technology as it is now constantly available to them.
- Classroom learning was enhanced using YouTube for agriculture, math, and social science subjects.
- Both teachers and students find the internet more helpful.
- Students' presentations have become more engaging and resource rich. Previously, they had to travel to Lakatoro to access resources, but now they are readily available.
- Teachers' ICT skills have improved, enabling them to lead students in a digitally driven classroom environment.
- Community drop-out youths use the internet for online courses at USP.
- Students educate their parents about internet usage, reassuring them that the school is expanding their knowledge.
- Communities use the internet to communicate with family members living abroad.
- The voucher system has benefited the community, especially during school events, although issues like password sharing between teachers and the community have arisen.

Despite these benefits, challenges such as extreme weather conditions and low confidence in managing the technology persist. Both offices identified the need for additional indoor access points and weather-resistant materials. The school also highlighted the need for more devices and a computer lab to facilitate student learning. Training provided to staff was minimal, with Penama staff receiving some training in installation and maintenance, while Malampa staff only received a technical briefing. The school staff received training in Google Classroom and secretarial tasks but expressed the need for further training in computer maintenance, Google workshops, assignment submission, and office apps. Additional support is required to operate phones connected via VSAT and conducting regular monthly connectivity checks. These findings highlight the positive impact of VSAT installations on improving connectivity, communication, and administrative efficiency, while also identifying areas for further improvement.

Limited, comprehensively analyses school ICT equipment. The survey results are being used to develop a dashboard for the Vanuatu Schools website and OV platform.

VAESP's support has led to significant improvements in monitoring school performance. The **helpdesk for MoET was completed**, and the school helpdesk is being set up on a new server. This will provide schools with timely support and troubleshooting for ICT-related issues. The **Minimum Quality Standards module was completed**, with modifications to Kobo forms and minor changes to migration tools, reports, and dashboards in OV. This will enhance the monitoring of school quality and performance. Additionally, the **design for the payslip notification system is complete**. This system will notify teachers of their payslips via Google Classroom email accounts, reducing the need for teachers to travel long distances to check their payments.

VAESP's continued support has enhanced MoET's monitoring of systems and school performance. Through improvements in data systems, policy development, digital literacy training, and connectivity, VAESP is helping MoET make informed decisions to improve student learning outcomes.

Supporting MoET's evidence-based planning and policymaking

During 2024, VAESP supported MoET in strengthening evidence-based planning and policymaking by advancing initiatives that contributed to long-term budget planning, policy development, and capacity building, including:

- Supporting MoET with the Long-Term Budget Implementation Planning and the Asset Master Plan Policy workshop in February 2024
- Assisting MoET and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management with the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework planning meeting in March 2024
- Facilitating the completion of the New Policy Proposal budget form for submission to the Government Smart Stream system as part of the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework for School Infrastructure from 2025 to 2029
- Assisting in developing a tool to calculate the number of teachers, classrooms, and costs based on population data, presenting various options for compulsory education.



Resource Forecasting Tool

The Resource Forecasting Tool was developed to inform government policy decisions by estimating future student numbers and projecting the demand for teachers, classrooms, and resources. This tool is essential for effective planning and resource allocation, particularly for MoET in assessing the resources needed for compulsory education.

It helps MoET identify the additional resources required for various educational approaches and supports policy development by clarifying resource needs. The tool is also useful for developing a Medium-Term Expenditure Framework by forecasting changes in student populations that affect funding and resource allocation. Ultimately, it ensures that the ministry can plan effectively for future educational needs based on forecasts in student numbers, rather than just addressing immediate demands.

In 2024, VAESP's support was vital in improving MoET's planning and policymaking, enabling informed decisions to enhance Vanuatu's education system and demonstrating their commitment to providing quality education for all students, including:

The MoET Finance Management Manual and Policy were finalised and submitted for approval, with a Public Finance Management Context Analysis report presented to MoET Directors in June 2024. These new directives align with the Public Finance and Economic Management Act and related regulations, providing financial management and reporting guidance for MoET. The manual outlines processes for managing financial resources to meet MoET's objectives in the VETSS 2020-2030 plan.

The Context Analysis report assessed how MoET used the government budget and donor funding, ensuring funds were used appropriately as per the Public Finance and Economic Management Act. Additionally, the VAESP Mid-Year Context Analysis report was completed in August 2024, and a Direct Funding Update was shared with the VAESP Steering Committee.

VAESP supported the training of MoET staff at both provincial and central levels. Training included the MoET Finance Management Manual and Policy, Grant Code, School Fee Regulation Order, and the Draft Corporate Plan, including the MEL Plan.

VAESP also initiated discussions with MoET's Policy and Planning Directorate to add new indicators in the statistical digest for data collection and management, addressing over 160 indicators. The Indicators for the OV Disability Module for Post-Secondary Education and Training were completed, and the automation of the Statistical Digest is 80 per cent finished. These automations will significantly reduce the time required to produce the digest, allowing MoET to focus on other critical tasks.

Additionally, VAESP assisted the MoET Audit Principal Education Officer in updating the Audit Charter and Manual to comply with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management's Finance Regulations – including supporting the appointment by the Director General of all Audit and Risk Committee members. An Induction Training Package was developed for the Audit Committee and a **Risk Control Matrix** was presented to the Principal Education Officer Audit.

VAESP supported developing and socialising the second draft of the Education Authority School Registration Policy and helped develop the application forms for Education Authorities and school pre-registration.

VAESP also supported the development of new school procurement guidelines, updated the Procurement Manual, and developed a training package, including translating the manual into French and creating a procurement reporting template. These changes empower provincial and school levels, supporting MoET's devolution policy.

Intermediate outcome 3.2: Provincial Education Officers can guide principals in developing effective School Strategic Plans

Supporting principals and school leaders in developing effective SSPs

VAESP has supported the certification of school leaders through various training programs. A total of 34 principals and key teachers from schools in Torba and Penama have completed the Leadership and Management course at the Australia Pacific Training Coalition. Additionally, 45 principals and teachers from schools in Shefa completed the same course at the Pacific Theological College. Since 2019/20, VAESP has supported the certification of 96 school principals, 24 deputy school principals, 94 teachers, and 31 education officers in Leadership and Management, totalling 257 individuals. This cohort comprises 118 females and 139 males.



VAESP is strengthening school-based management

The Leadership and Management Training conducted under VAESP Phase 2 during 2023/24 had a significant impact on school principals and teachers. Participants reported substantial benefits, particularly in enhancing their communication, leadership, and management skills. They noted improvements in developing and implementing SSPs and fostering better interactions and teamwork among staff. However, the teacher's strike posed a significant challenge, preventing the full application of the training. Despite this, participants expressed plans for future initiatives and recommended the training to others.

Colleagues of the training participants validated these reports, describing the principals' leadership styles as open, consultative, and capable of making tough decisions. They observed specific improvements, such as better report writing skills, initiatives to address issues, and enhanced planning and coordination. Colleagues also noted that principals supported the implementation of the national curriculum by, organising workshops, increasing involvement with teachers, and developing strategic plans to support the curriculum.

The data from both training participants and their colleagues were consistent and validated each other, highlighting significant improvements in leadership and management skills, application of training in school projects, and enhanced support for teachers. The main challenge identified was the 2024 teacher's strike, which hindered the full application of the training and support for the national curriculum. To maximise the benefits of such programs, VAESP recommended developing strategies to provide ongoing support and follow-up training, encourage community projects, and focus on supporting the implementation of the national curriculum through continuous professional development.

VAESP supports school leaders through the School-Based Management team, which helps principals update their SSPs annually. Provincial Education Officers report on the assistance provided to schools, and the School-Based Management team maintains regular communication with principals, especially in remote areas. For principals in Efate, face-to-face meetings are held to ensure SSPs are completed and reviewed before submission to the OV system.

VAESP also assists MoET in appraising principals based on Harmonised Standards and Professional Standards. Although these appraisals are meant to occur yearly, only 33 out of 88 principals, representing 36 per cent of teachers across the six provinces, were appraised in 2024 due to competing priorities, including the 2024 teachers' strike and budget issues. In 2025, School-Based Management plans to survey the completion of appraisals to improve data quality.

Overall, VAESP's support to MoET enhances the leadership skills and management capabilities of school leaders in Vanuatu, ensuring they are equipped to provide quality education for all students.

Strengthening provincial support

In 2024, VAESP actively strengthened provincial support through targeted training for Provincial Education Officers and Education Authorities. Based on an initial needs assessment, VAESP **conducted two training workshops focusing on SSPs and improving enrolment and retention rates**. The training was attended by three participants from each province, including one Provincial Education Officer, two provincial administrative staff, and each education authority representing their church authority.

After the training, participants received assignments to support SSP development in selected schools, however many coordinators struggled to complete their tasks due to competing priorities and limited funds. Completing these assignments was essential for attending future training sessions, and participants were encouraged to collaborate with school principals to ensure all school data is recorded in the OV system. This structured approach is intended to help build the capacity of provincial education officers and advisers, enabling them to better support their schools. Planning activities for 2025 have considered these challenges, including options to better align an Australia Awards Vanuatu, Short Course pilot which could be targeted at senior MoET personnel.

Supporting school monitoring

In 2024, VAESP provided further assistance to MoET to support school monitoring. Due to MoET resourcing constraints, teachers' strikes and competing MoET priorities with external dependencies, several of these activities were revised or postponed due to reprioritisation or available funding from other donor partners.

Initially scheduled for implementation in 2024, the pilot monitoring tools were postponed to 2025 based on advice from the Director of the Education Services Directorate due to misalignment with the 2024 MoET Corporate Plan. Instead, these tools will be integrated into SSPs and reported under the Joint Sector Review. VAESP provided feedback on the costs, leading to a shift in terminology to "pilot monitoring tools."

Efforts to implement Minimum Quality Standards were halted due to high costs and the time required for monitoring across provinces. MoET sought help from other partners for surveys, including EQAP via Kobo, but these attempts were unsuccessful. VAESP planned data collection in Torba and Tafea, but only Torba was completed during 2024 due to budget constraints and the impact of teachers' strikes.

The School Inspection Tracker, developed by MoET, monitors school performance and ensures quality education. It helps with accountability, data collection, and compliance, and is currently used to assess schools against Harmonised Standards and principals' performance, improving Vanuatu's education system.

As part of the 2025 Annual Planning exercise between VAESP and MoET, some of these activities which have external dependencies outside of VAESP's sphere of control may be deprioritised after consultation with MoET, DFAT and VAESP.



3 Cross-cutting themes

3.1 Gender equality, disability, and social inclusion

VAESP continues to work with MoET to strengthen attention to GEDSI, to ensure all children have access to education, to strengthen education quality and contribute to greater overall equality and inclusion.

In 2024, VAESP conducted mainstreamed and targeted initiatives to increase female participation in education, ensuring that girls have equal access to learning opportunities. VAESP also supported the review and updated the MoET Inclusive Education and Training Policy aligning with the Australian Government's commitment to robust investment monitoring.

VAESP has made notable advances in promoting GEDSI to improve inclusive education for all children including those with disabilities in Vanuatu through the updated Inclusive Education and Training Policy review. The Inclusive Education and Training Policy review addressed barriers that may prevent students from fully participating in education, where more children including those with disabilities are enrolled and attend the right school year. The policy has a clear structure with easy language making it easy to understand including the key messages.

VAESP GEDSI mainstreaming ensures manuals and training modules align with MoET guidelines and are designed with a GEDSI perspective. For example, VAESP's support of school infrastructure activities ensures that school infrastructure meets the needs of children with disabilities and supports both female and male students in attending and remaining in school by enhancing accessibility. Additionally, it builds the capacity of teachers and school leaders to adopt inclusive learning practices. The Investment Monitoring Report monitors and evaluates these efforts, emphasising the importance of performance culture and quality data to track progress and ensure accountability, and additional monitoring of the Inclusive Education Resource Book will be conducted in 2025 .



VAESP-supported Inclusive Education Resource Book provides teachers with the tools they need to create a safe and inclusive learning environment for children with disabilities

The Vanuatu Inclusive Education Resource Book, developed in collaboration with the Vanuatu Ministry of Education and Training, includes six evidence-based tools to support the inclusion of all children in mainstream schools. Launched in July 2024, the book aligns with the Pacific Regional Inclusive Education Framework priorities, focusing on strengthening inclusive practices, raising awareness about the right to quality education, and providing resources for professional learning. The book also emphasises disability awareness and strategies for families and communities. Teachers shared encouraging stories during the mid-point evaluation, highlighting the practical use of the resources, such as identifying disabilities and using inclusive teaching strategies, which have positively impacted students and parents.

The resource book supports Vanuatu's commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by promoting education without discrimination and providing reasonable accommodations. It also aligns with global initiatives like the Sustainable Development Goal 4.1 Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning, supported by UNICEF and the World Bank. The book's inclusive literacy strategies, based on the Structured Synthetic Phonics approach, aim to improve literacy rates among children struggling with foundational skills. The launch event, attended by key MoET officials, emphasised the importance of these resources in empowering teachers, supporting students, and promoting equity in education.

VAESP activities also support the representation of both men and women in leadership and management training programs, empowering female principals to lead with a focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion. While it has proven difficult to engage men in GEDSI workshops, 10 men (five from Tafea and five from Shefa) and 131 women (50 in Malampa, 52 in Tafea and 29 in Sanma Province) who are leaders in schools across three provinces attended the trainings. Further qualitative information will be collected in 2025.

Further GEDSI mainstreaming is demonstrated through VAESP's implementation of high impact teaching strategies to support multilingual learning and oral language skills, some of which will be further developed and implemented in 2025. Teaching in vernacular languages is promoted to make learning more accessible, and instructional leadership training is offered on various platforms. The program ensures that activities and language use engage both boys and girls without stereotyping, and adjustments are made for students with disabilities to ensure equity. An inclusive approach is embedded in the VNCS process, with multilingual resources and guides reviewed through a GEDSI lens to ensure they promote inclusivity and address the diverse needs of all students.

VAESP also supports the PWELN in Tafea, Malampa, and Shefa to champion gender equality in education by offering a platform for leaders to discuss and advocate for women's issues. They have established a coordinating committee for gender-inclusive leadership and conducted workshops to enhance skills, confidence, and collaboration.

3.2 Climate change and adaptation

In 2024, VAESP enhanced its collaboration with MoET to tackle climate change challenges in Vanuatu. Recognising the country's vulnerability to natural disasters, VAESP implemented climate change adaptation strategies to strengthen the education sector's resilience.

Key initiatives included supporting the construction and retrofitting of school buildings to withstand extreme weather such as cyclones and earthquakes. This included reinforcing structures, improving drainage systems, and using durable materials to minimise damage and ensure the safety of students

and staff. VAESP supported MoET in introducing the Primary School Infrastructure Guidelines and Policy, which are aligned to the Vanuatu Building Code Standards.

VAESP supported the installation of VSATs (internet via satellite) in remote areas for reliable connectivity and the creation of a Disaster Recovery plan as critical initiatives that significantly bolster MoET's preparedness and resilience against climate change's disruptive impacts on the education sector.

VSAT technology provides reliable and high-speed internet connectivity to remote and underserved regions, ensuring continuous access to educational resources, online teaching and learning resources, and communication channels. This connectivity is crucial during climate-induced disasters such as cyclones, floods, and tsunamis, which can isolate communities and disrupt traditional education infrastructure. By facilitating uninterrupted access to digital education tools and remote learning opportunities, VSATs can ensure that students and teachers in affected areas can continue their educational activities even when physical schools are compromised.¹³

In parallel, a comprehensive Disaster Recovery Plan ensures that the Ministry has a robust framework for maintaining and restoring educational information systems during and after climate-related emergencies. The Disaster Recovery Plan encompasses strategies for data protection, backup systems, and rapid deployment of temporary infrastructure, thereby minimising educational disruption. It also includes instructions for staff on emergency procedures, ensuring a swift response to crises. Additionally, the disaster plans enabled evacuation drill simulations, establishing early warning systems, and creating contingency plans to ensure the continuity of education during and after disasters. These measures were crucial in minimising disruptions to the learning process and planning for the 2025 school year and safeguarding the well-being of students and teachers following the December 2024 earthquake.

The deployment of VSATs and a well-structured Disaster Recovery Plan provide a dual layer of resilience, ensuring that Vanuatu's education sector remains functional and adaptive in the face of climate change challenges. This proactive approach not only safeguards the continuity of education services but also reinforces the community's overall resilience so that they are better prepared for a future shaped by climate variability.

VAESP's activities were developed to align with the DFAT Climate Change Action Strategy (2020-2025), emphasising resilience and adaptive capacity in vulnerable communities. By focusing on infrastructure resilience and ensuring continuous access to education through technology, VAESP supports the strategy's goals of enhancing preparedness for climate impacts. The integration of a Disaster Recovery Plan also reflects DFAT's commitment to maintaining essential services during climate-related emergencies. Through these efforts, VAESP supports MoET in building a robust and adaptive education system.

¹³ As at March 2025, VAESP is also working with MoET to scope suitability of other satellite connectivity options, including Starlink



4 Management, operations, and budget

4.1 Operational management and budget

Governance

Accountability to sector stakeholders

VAESP is governed by regular Steering Committee meetings. In 2024, the steering committee was convened twice:

- March 2024: Provided members with a program update and overview of the 2024 annual plan.
- July 2024: Focused on lessons resulting from the Pause and Reflect Workshop. Updates related to the annual plan progress and MEL Framework were also shared.

In both meetings, MoET and development partners (DFAT, the New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Save the Children) also shared updates encouraging donor harmonisation and sector effectiveness. Key actions were recorded and circulated.

Due to the Director General's extensive travel during the second half of the year, the ongoing suspension of one of the substantive MoET directors and the increased workload on the remaining substantive directors with Acting Director General duties and shared responsibilities, there were no Steering Committees held during the second half of 2024. Pending the Director General's confirmation of availability, the next Steering Group is planned for the end of March to build upon the planned VAESP Pause and Reflection presentation to the Senior Management Team.

Throughout 2024, VAESP coordinated with DFAT at weekly meetings hosted at the Australian High Commission and attended by DFAT's senior program manager and VAESP's Team Leader, Operations Manager and Lead Education Coordinator. These regular meetings allowed for collaborative and efficient decision making – with a transparent and 'no surprises' approach to implementation and program improvements.

The Team Leader also met regularly with the MoET's Director General and Directors. In addition to the steering committee, the Team Leader also met regularly with other key development partners, such as the New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Save the Children and UNICEF to share lessons and ensure activity harmonisation.

VAESP reporting and deliverables

Table 2 below provides an overview of the milestones and deliverables during 2024.

Table 2: VAESP reporting and deliverables

Deliverable	Due Date
Milestone 28 VAESP II 2023 Annual Report & Context Analysis	February 2024
Milestone 29 VAESP II Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework	May 2024
Milestone 30 VAESP II Quarter One & Quarter Two Reports and Context Analysis	July 2024
Milestone 31 VAESP II 2025 Annual Plan	December 2024
Program Deliverable 11 Positive Deviance Case Study	June 2025
Program Deliverable 12 TBC in consultation with DFAT	December 2025
Program Deliverable 13 TBC in consultation with DFAT	September 2026

Program resourcing and expenditure

VAESP adheres to DFAT's value for money principles through its program implementation and financial management approaches. VAESP assesses the economy, efficiency, effectiveness, and equity of VAESP and Australia Awards Vanuatu programming, focusing on delivering tangible results that align with each program's strategic objectives.

AUD 5,991,406 was expended during the reporting period. **Annex 5** outlines the proportion of program expenditure lines for 2024.

Although underspent by 21%, VAESP program activity expenditure continued to be the largest proportion at 39 per cent of the overall expenditure. The primary reason for activity underspending relates to postponed activities across the quality and management pillars due to the 2024 teachers' strikes. Personnel expenditure was at 35 per cent (this included Australia Awards Vanuatu personnel) of the overall expenditure.

Program Activity expenditure is proportioned across the three pillars. The following table illustrates the planned allocations vs. actual expenditure by pillar, demonstrating limited variance across each:

Table 3: Proportion of planned budget against actual expenditure by pillar

Pillars	Planned Allocation	Actual Expenditure
Access	11%	12%
Quality	59%	61%
Management	30%	26%

Annual Expenditure Analysis

Overall, VAESP's strategic focus on efficient resource allocation, adaptability, investment in human resources, and commitment to impactful outcomes in its 2024 annual expenditure analysis demonstrates strong alignment with DFAT's value for money principles through:

- 1. Efficiency in Resource Allocation:** VAESP's expenditure analysis indicates that 39 per cent of the total expenditure against program activities, directly contributes to educational outcomes and reflects an efficient allocation of program funds to areas of significant impact. The program activity expenditure is also supplemented by direct technical advisory expenditure (recognised in short and long-term personnel costs). This is directly attributable to the development of teacher and MoET capacity activities – a key costing component of educational reform programs.
- 2. Adaptability and Responsiveness:** VAESP's 21 per cent underspend was due to postponed activities, related to the 2024 teachers' strikes and Air Vanuatu liquidation, illustrating the program's adaptability to changing circumstances. By recognising and responding to these challenges, the program ensures that funds are not wasted on ineffective activities. Examples include VAESP's logistical leadership and coordination of shared charter flights between DFAT investment programs, including the Australia Pacific Training Coalition, Vanuatu Skills Partnership, VAESP and Australian High Commission, for travel to common destinations, improving overall efficiency.
- 3. Investment in Human Resources:** VAESP personnel costs comprised 35 per cent of the overall expenditure. In 2025 VAESP will refocus its approach to human resources, building a local leadership approach that is supported by international short-term technical assistance that is engaged on a demand driven basis and focused on building capacity and sustainability.
- 4. Focus on Impact and Outcomes:** The program's design and expenditure reflect a commitment to achieving tangible results in the education sector. By prioritising activities that enhance educational quality and access, the program aligns with DFAT's goal of delivering effective and sustainable outcomes, thereby maximising the return on investment.

Annual expenditure was approximately 88 per cent of the 2024 Annual Plan forecast.

4.2 Monitoring, evaluation, and learning

Effective Monitoring and Evaluation is central to delivering measurable, lasting impact. Over the past year, VAESP has made several improvements to its MEL systems, laying a strong foundation for improved transparency, evidence-based decision-making, and adaptive programming over the remainder of the program period.

MEL team structure and capacity building

In 2024, VAESP's MEL activities were led by a full-time MEL officer in Vanuatu, supported by two part-time MEL specialists from Tetra Tech's research, monitoring and evaluation team in Australia. This structure combined local expertise with international insights, fostering collaboration and capacity building. Weekly MEL meetings provided strategic and technical guidance to program staff, ensuring continuous improvement and alignment with VAESP's MEL workplan.

Australia-based MEL advisers conducted five in-country visits to strengthen engagement, working closely with VAESP staff and MoET counterparts, including Directors and Provincial Education Officers. While the MEL strategies were reviewed and revised for contextual relevance and responsiveness to the needs of Vanuatu's education sector, operationalising MEL consistently was challenging. Given the size and complexity of the various measurement needs, additional resourcing will be dedicated to MEL strengthening and collection of evidence against outcomes. These visits enhanced collaboration, ensuring MEL practices remained contextually relevant and responsive to the needs of Vanuatu's education sector.

Promoting reflection and learning

In May 2024, VAESP introduced its first "Pause and Reflect" workshop to enhance program learning and transparency. This two-day short cycle MEL review, was centred around the MEL approach and involved internal consultations, structured reflection among VAESP staff, and collaborative sense-making sessions with MoET counterparts. The workshop aligned with DFAT's commitment to fostering a learning culture and stakeholder collaboration. Additional reflection workshops are planned for Quarter One and Quarter Four of 2025.

Refining annual planning

VAESP improved its annual planning process for 2025 by incorporating internal consultations to assess past performance and prioritise activities based on impact, sustainability, feasibility, and alignment with MoET and DFAT priorities. A structured process, including consultations with MoET Directors and a final workshop with VAESP Coordinators and MoET Managers, ensured a well-defined 2025 activity portfolio. The resulting Annual Plan outlines targets, timelines, and monitoring methods to enhance strategic alignment and stakeholder engagement.

Strengthening MEL systems and processes

In 2024, VAESP conducted a comprehensive review of its MEL approach, improving data collection tools, methodologies, reporting processes, logical pathways, and performance indicators. Key revisions included:

- A refined Program Logic for greater clarity and alignment with DFAT Design and MEL Standards.
- Improved data quality and efficiency through triangulated data collection, reduced reliance on self-reported data, and increased use of technology to minimise errors.
- Following discussions in November 2024 with DFAT, a peer review diagnostic in December 2024 that informed targeted MEL improvements for 2025.



5 Risk management

In 2024, VAESP demonstrated alignment with DFAT's risk management framework through a systematic approach to identifying, assessing, managing, and reporting relevant risks associated with an education development program. In line with the Review Findings¹⁴, VAESP will review its approach to strategic risk management - ensuring mitigation strategies and plan b activities to continue progressing towards EOPOs. Key risk management approaches included:

1. **Governance Arrangements:** Establishing clear governance structures and processes to ensure that investment risks are regularly discussed and managed. This included roles and responsibilities for risk management operationalised in VAESP through a range of meetings, including DFAT weekly operational meetings, DFAT/Tetra Tech Contractor Representative meetings, VAESP Steering Committee meetings and VAESP leadership and MoET Senior Management Team meetings.
2. **Risk Identification and Assessment:** Regularly identifying and assessing significant risks, including political, stakeholder, climate and disaster-related, gender-related, and fraud risks. This process involves evaluating the potential impact of these risks on program outcomes and adjusting activities in response. Actioned in VAESP through DFAT weekly operational meetings, regular VAESP Leadership and MoET Director meetings, annual Risk Management training to all program staff.
3. **Controls and Treatments:** Implementing appropriate controls and treatments to mitigate VAESP identified risks, which included developing strategies and action plans to address specific risks and enhance program resilience. VAESP manages and monitors risks relating to the December 2024 earthquake, including risks to staff wellbeing and safety through various meetings: DFAT weekly operational meetings.
4. **Monitoring and Reporting:** Continuously monitoring VAESP risks and the effectiveness of risk management strategies, through regular reporting on risk status and management for transparency and accountability. DFAT weekly operational meeting, VAESP/Tetra Tech fortnightly Executive Management meetings, fortnightly VAESP operational meetings, fortnightly VAESP management meetings as MEL tools.
5. **Fraud Control:** Assessing and managing potential VAESP fraud risks through dedicated strategies and plans, including the involvement of specialist advisors to ensure robust fraud prevention and response mechanisms.
6. **Safeguarding:** Any education development program such as VAESP is exposed to increased risks related to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, child protection, and environmental/social safeguards. Mitigation is managed within VAESP by developing and

¹⁴ Vanuatu Education and Skills Design Stage 1 – High Level Modality Review

implementing relevant child protection policies, conducting risk assessments, and monitoring compliance with safeguarding standards.

Throughout the reporting period, any incidents related to safeguarding were managed per established protocols, demonstrating VAESP's commitment to maintaining a safe and secure environment for all stakeholders involved in the education sector.

This section summarises the risks that occurred in 2024 and that had the greatest impact on VAESP. The VAESP Risk Register, with associated mitigation strategies, has been updated in response and is provided in the 2025 Annual Plan.

Figure 14: Main risks affecting VAESP II in this reporting period



6 Lessons learned during VAESP 2024 delivery

Impact of Teachers' Strikes: The teachers' strike in June 2024 significantly disrupted students' learning and delayed the implementation of VAESP activities, including CIP Awareness and Training for PCIOs and PCLFs, principals' appraisals and the rollout of the Inclusive Education training and resources. With hundreds of teachers involved in the Vanuatu Teachers Union suspended from work, access to education was severely impacted in 2024. MoET, Teaching Services Commission, the Vanuatu Teachers Union and also the new government are in discussions to remedy the situation. This situation highlighted the education system's vulnerability to external factors outside VAESP's sphere of control.

Lesson Learned: Despite these challenges, VAESP demonstrated resilience and adaptability. The co-location with MoET colleagues facilitated ongoing progress. For example, VAESP and CDU laid the foundation for 2025 by providing CIP Awareness Training in the provinces, completing school selections, offering interim training for newly recruited PCIOs, and developing bilingual training materials. Additionally, the team developed baseline assessments in English and French and MEL tools to ensure a robust framework for CIP activities commencing in January 2025. This adaptability aligns with DFAT's emphasis on resilience in the face of challenges.

Embedding MEL in Activities: Since 2019, VAESP has implemented program activities that require time to demonstrate outcomes. This requires MEL activities to be better integrated into each implementation phase and conducting annual assessments must be conducted to evaluate outcomes from previous reporting periods and provide incremental updates towards IOs and EoPOs. The current reporting period also allowed for a more open and transparent approach to addressing long-standing monitoring and evaluation challenges to improve the current MEL Framework and approach. This resulted in a diagnostic peer review of VAESP's MEL resourcing and approach and closer engagement with DFAT's Canberra-based evaluation and education team to proactively implement improvements

Lesson Learned: Increasing in country MEL support as well as streamlining MEL processes into all program activities will enhance the ability to monitor and evaluate outcomes effectively. A peer review of the VAESP MEL approach conducted by Tetra Tech's Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation Practice provided valuable findings and recommendations. These insights will be used to refine the MEL approach, planning, and the use of MEL products, ensuring that outcome monitoring is prioritised and effectively managed to fully leverage the MEL function's value, aligning with DFAT's standards for effective monitoring and evaluation.

Timeframe for Assessing VAESP Contributions: Estimating the contributions of VAESP activities to intermediate and long-term outcomes requires significant time, particularly for policy reviews and activities. The policy approval process, including implementation and the necessary setup period, can take up to a year, meaning that effectiveness assessments may occur two years post-policy update.

Lesson Learned: To address this delay, the VAESP MEL team, with support from Activity Coordinators, will conduct an annual Partnership Perception Survey complemented by interviews with MoET at both central and provincial levels. This survey will use standardised questions for comparability over the years and tailored questions to assess feasibility (the effectiveness and sustainability of the operational aspects of engaging with the product), usability (user's experience operating the product), and acceptability (user's willingness to use the product).¹⁵ This approach aligns with DFAT's **Monitoring and Evaluation Standards**, emphasising the importance of timely and relevant data collection for effective program assessment.

Incorporating Resilience into VAESP Planning and Implementation: Each year external factors such as natural disasters, ministry fragility and political instability disrupt VAESP progress. VAESP must integrate resilience measures into its planning and implementation processes to ensure continued achievements.

¹⁵ https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Definitions-of-Feasibility-Usability-and-Acceptability_fig5_309516702

Lesson Learned: Annual planning activities should be informed by the VAESP Context Analysis and evidence-based, dedicated research studies, including developing contingency plans for potential disasters. This proactive approach will reduce the need for reactive measures and enhance efficiency across the program. The 2025 Annual Planning process has incorporated these considerations, with the VAESP Team Leader and Activity Coordinators responsible for maintaining this focus with MoET counterparts, aligning with DFAT's **Risk Management Framework**.

Strategic Focus on Targeted Impact of VAESP activities: The wide variety and number of VAESP activities can dilute the program's ability to achieve targeted impacts. While the activities are aligned with MoET's priorities, a more strategic approach is needed to ensure Australia's education investment has optimal impact.

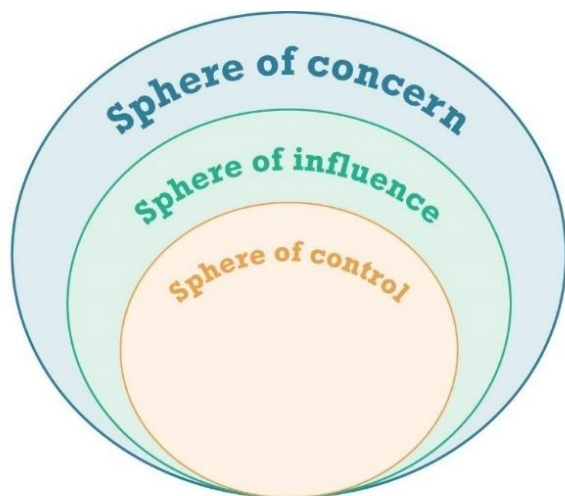
Lesson Learned: Defining VAESP's approach to targeted support will enhance its strategic impact in the Vanuatu education sector. The program should align with DFAT's four priority areas for 2025 and 2026: (1) CIP, (2) MEL, (3) Infrastructure, and (4) Decentralisation. Additionally, activities will be assessed based on the Sphere of Control, Influence, and Concern framework¹⁶ which helps to analyse what actions are more easily shaped and managed, what areas are and are not within the purview of the program to influence and what areas are of relation to the program but outside of the control of the program. By using this framework, VAESP will make informed decisions on priority actions taking into consideration the program's level of control over each activity. Following this alignment, a communication strategy will be developed to ensure all stakeholders, particularly MoET, understand VAESP's priorities. The VAESP Team Leader, with support from the MEL team, will oversee this initiative, reinforcing DFAT's **Stakeholder Engagement Standards**.

IMR 2024 Feedback: Through the IMR 2024 moderation process, DFAT's Risk Management unit sought detail of VAESP's Child Protection and PSEAH safeguarding policies and approaches.

Lessons Learnt: VAESP adopts Tetra Tech's Child Protection and PSEAH policies and approaches which are developed and annually reviewed, based on DFAT relevant policies and guidelines. Annual CP and PSEAH training is delivered to all program staff. All program staff and sub-contractors adhere to the Tetra Tech Code of Conduct, which is compliant with DFAT policies. PSEAH risks are actively managed, monitored and where PSEAH issues are identified, reported to DFAT. Weekly meetings with DFAT provide opportunities to escalate any emerging PSEAH or CP risks. DFAT has received copies of all relevant CP, PSEAH and Code of Conduct policies implemented by VAESP.

By integrating these lessons into future planning and implementation, VAESP can enhance its alignment with DFAT standards and improve the overall effectiveness of its programs in the education sector.

Figure 15: Sphere of control, influence, and concern



¹⁶ <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep50410.7>

7 Conclusion and future considerations

The VAESP 2024 Annual Report outlines the program's activities amid significant external challenges, including economic, political, and environmental and internal factors related to program resourcing and programmatic challenges. Key factors that influenced program activity in 2024 include:

- **Political Instability:** The dissolution of government in late 2024 and a snap election in January 2025.
- **Operational Challenges:** Substantial instability within MoET, including leadership suspensions and teacher strikes, has affected student-centred learning and teacher continuous professional development throughout the year.
- **Logistical Issues:** The liquidation of Air Vanuatu disrupted training and engagement activities, necessitating the postponement of some planned activities to 2025.
- **Natural Disasters:** A 7.4 magnitude earthquake in December 2024 caused significant damage to educational infrastructure, impacting MoET's capacity and priorities for 2025.
- **Leadership and staffing transitions:** 2024 saw the departure of three long-term VAESP advisers.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation opportunities for improvement:** Feedback during 2024 has confirmed that the current MEL Approach requires strengthening.

In response to these challenges, program leadership will utilise lessons learned and assessing progress to date to guide annual planning in 2025, including capturing the results of a culmination of multi-year efforts in strengthening systems and mechanisms that aim to improve education outcomes for students in Vanuatu.

Developing the CIP and commencing curriculum improvement awareness, training and resourcing have consolidated quality pillar activities and addressed underspending in quality activities in previous years.

In 2025, VAESP will focus on four core themes enhance its alignment with DFAT standards and improve the overall effectiveness of the in the education sector in Vanuatu: **Infrastructure, Curriculum Improvement, Decentralisation, and Monitoring and Evaluation**. Through consultation with MoET and agreement through the VAESP Steering Committee, the program will focus 2025 efforts by:

- **Strategic Focus on Targeted Impact:** The variety and number of VAESP activities will be reduced to support the program's ability to achieve targeted impacts.
- **Action Planning to incorporate resilient measures:** Planning activities will be informed by the VAESP Context Analysis and evidence-based research, including contingency plans for potential disasters. This proactive approach will enhance efficiency and support MoET in reducing reactive measures.
- **Data-driven and evidence-based programming:** leveraging strengthened MEL and reporting approaches.

7.1 Considerations for Gender Equality and Disability Equity

Building on the GEDSI activities in 2024, VAESP will maintain its twin-track approach to GEDSI by focusing on two key areas:

1. **Mainstreaming GEDSI:** This involves embedding equity, diversity, access, and inclusion throughout all VAESP activities.

2. **Targeted GEDSI Initiatives:** These specific actions will address the ongoing barriers faced by targeted cohorts, helping them reach their full potential.

In 2025, VAESP will continue integrating GEDSI into its program activities and processes, including its MEL, Communications, and Public Diplomacy strategies.

VAESP will continue working with MoET to enhance GEDSI in Vanuatu's education system, ensuring that all children have access to quality education. In 2024, the program implemented both mainstreamed and targeted initiatives to boost female participation in education, aligning with the updated MoET Inclusive Education and Training Policy.

VAESP will actively address barriers to education for all children, including those with disabilities, by promoting an inclusive learning environment through all EoPO activities. VAESP will support the rollout of MoET's Inclusive Education resources, enhance school infrastructure for improved accessibility, and build teachers' capacity to adopt inclusive practices.

Furthermore, VAESP will promote gender equality in educational leadership through targeted training programs that empower female principals and increase the representation of women in leadership roles. VAESP will also implement High Impact Teaching Strategies to support multilingual learning, ensuring that instructional practices are inclusive of all students, regardless of gender or ability. Additionally, the program will strengthen the PWELN to advocate for women's issues in education, fostering collaboration and enhancing leadership skills among women.

Through these initiatives, VAESP will continue its commitment to embedding GEDSI principles in all activities, ensuring that every student benefits from an equitable and inclusive education system through VAESP's key program priorities for 2025 and 2026, which include Infrastructure, Curriculum Improvement, Decentralisation, and MEL.

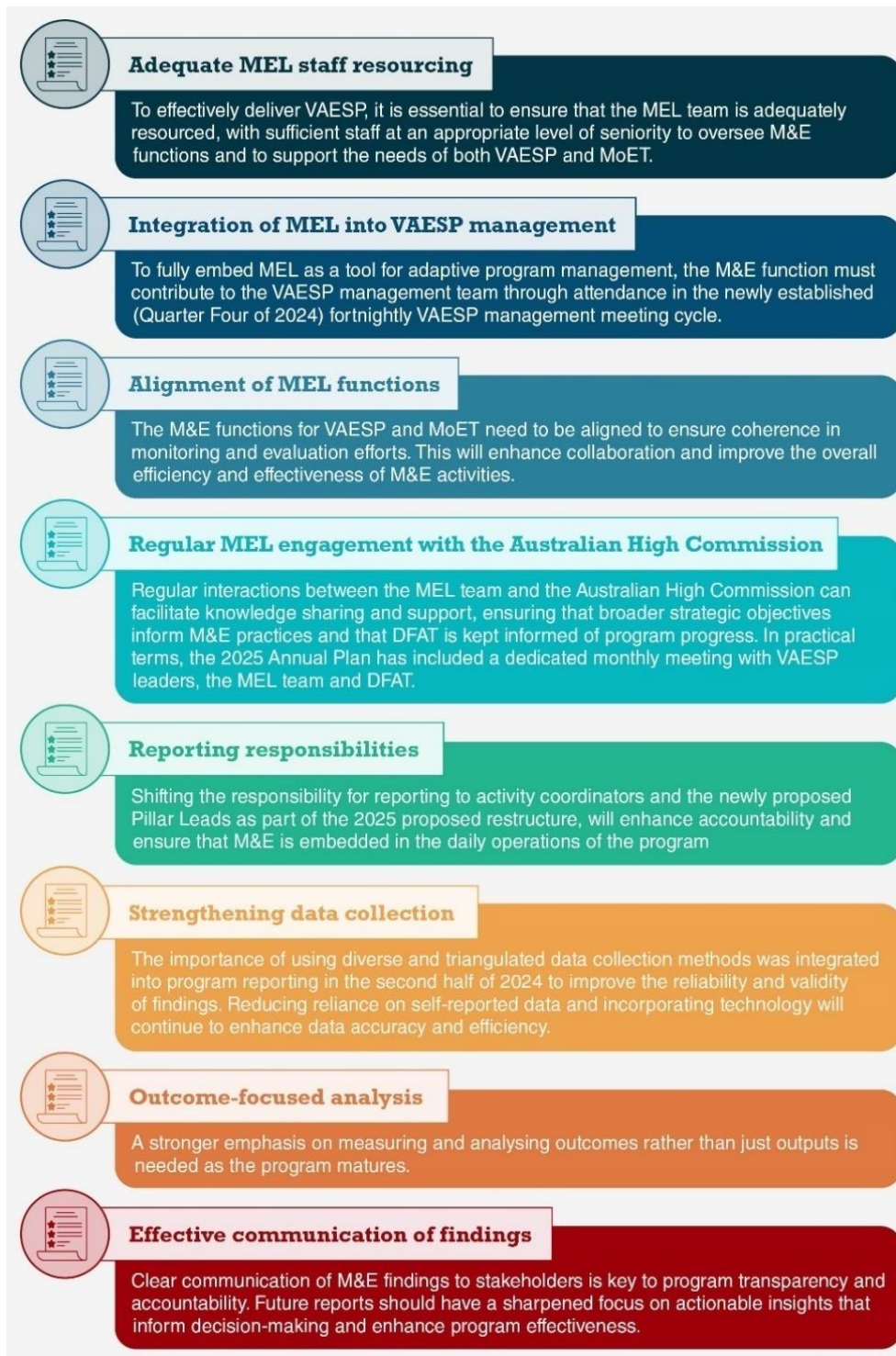
7.2 Considerations for improving MEL

Section 4.2 outlines the lessons learnt and opportunities for improvement in VAESP's monitoring and evaluation approach for 2025. Underpinning this approach, is recruiting and appointing a dedicated in-country MEL specialist who can assist MoET and the VAESP team in executing MEL priorities.

Lessons learned and 2025 priorities

Based on 2024 activities, DFAT feedback, and Peer Review findings, key lessons were identified in **Figure 16** to enhance the effectiveness of MEL in 2025, aligned with DFAT Design and MEL Standards.

Figure 16: Lessons learned and 2025 priorities in MEL



By integrating these lessons into the 2025 MEL activities, VAESP can further strengthen its alignment with DFAT MEL standards and improve MEL as a critical function of adaptive management.

Annex 1: 2024 VAESP Activities

In 2024, VAESP planned a total of 38 sub-activities. These sub-activities were categorised based on their implementation status: Fully Implemented, Partially Implemented, Not Achieved and Postponed. Below are the definitions of each status. Details of activities that were partially implemented, not achieved, or postponed can be found in Section 2 - Results and progress.

- **Fully Implemented:** sub-activities that were completed per the planned objectives and timelines, achieving their targets
- **Partially Implemented:** Sub-activities that were initiated and made some progress but did not fully meet the planned objectives or timelines.
- **Not achieved:** sub-activities that were planned but did not commence or progress as intended
- **Postponed:** sub-activities that were deferred to a later date due to various reasons, such as resource constraints or external factors

Of the planned sub-activities, 14 were fully implemented, 12 were partially implemented, seven were not achieved, and five were postponed.

No.	Activity name	Key updates from 2024	Target indicator	Status
1.1.1	National Roll-out of Inclusion Schools	0 new inclusive schools in Penama province implementing the inclusive education resources book	20 new inclusive schools in Penama province implementing the inclusive education resources book	Not achieved
1.1.2	Support to Inclusive Education Policy review	0 teachers/principals within the new inclusive schools implementing the revised Inclusive Education Policy 0 teachers/principals within the new inclusive schools trained in the revised Inclusive Education Policy, including males and females	50 teachers/principals within the new inclusive schools implementing the revised Inclusive Education Policy 50 teachers/principals within the new inclusive schools trained in the revised Inclusive Education Policy, including males and females	Not achieved
1.1.3	Women leadership in education provincial network	9 male and 78 female participants/teachers received professional development training to support PWELN in three provinces	5 male participants/teachers (in each workshop) received professional development training to support PWELN in three provinces	Fully implemented
1.2.1	Support to corporate education communication	134 communication products produced, including press releases, posters, social media, radio and SMS	24 communication products produced, including press releases, posters, social media, radio and SMS	Fully implemented

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No.	Activity name	Key updates from 2024	Target indicator	Status
1.2.2	ECCE Parent Support Program	4,117 male and female parents and carers participated in community forums in Torba province, including 13 parents in the Mamma's Literacy activity	400 male and female parents and carers participate in community forums in Torba province, including 12 parents in the Mamma's Literacy activity	Fully implemented
1.3.1	Asset master plan	1 Primary School Infrastructure Policy received the Senior Management Team's approval 1 Capital Works Plan received the Senior Management Team's endorsement	1 Primary School Infrastructure Policy received the Senior Management Team's approval 1 Capital Works Plan received the Senior Management Team's endorsement	Fully implemented
1.4.1	Emergency response fund	VAESP supported MoET with technical advice and communications support	N/A	Fully implemented
2.1.1	Supporting the creation and maintenance of a teachers' register system	0% of non-Teaching Service Commission teacher data collected in Torba province and Ambrym Island	100% of non-Teaching Service Commission teacher data collected in Torba province and Ambrym Island	Postponed
2.2.1	Provincial curriculum support	26 male and female provincial office staff trained to facilitate learning networks 40 School-based Literacy and Numeracy Champions trained	26 male and female provincial office staff trained to facilitate learning networks 40 School-based Literacy and Numeracy Champions trained	Fully implemented
2.2.2	CIP: Provincial literacy strategy	0 teachers from K-3 in the CIP focus schools trained in high-impact teaching strategies 0 students participated in baseline, midline, and end-line assessments from the 40 CIP focus schools ¹⁷	280 teachers from K-3 in the CIP focus schools trained in high-impact teaching strategies 1,750 students participated in baseline, midline, and end-line assessments from the 40 CIP focus schools	Not achieved

¹⁷ CIP rollout pivoted to PCIO recruitment and awareness training due to 2024 teacher strikes

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No.	Activity name	Key updates from 2024	Target indicator	Status
2.2.3	Supporting Junior Secondary Curriculum Development	295 Year 8 teachers trained in Junior Secondary Curriculum English and French versions of the syllabus for five core subjects printed English and French versions of the teacher guide for five core subjects printed	400 Year 8 teachers trained in Junior Secondary Curriculum English and French versions of the syllabus for five core subjects printed English and French versions of the teacher guide for five core subjects printed	80% - Partially implemented
2.2.4	Strengthening ECCE curriculum	0 ECCE – Kindergarten Teachers trained in the CIP Focus schools ¹⁸	40 ECCE – Kindergarten Teachers trained in the CIP Focus schools	Not achieved
2.2.5	CIP: Learning through mother tongue - vernacular	0 short video published on social media	6 short videos published on social media	Not achieved
2.2.6	CIP: Instructional and literacy leadership	0 Instructional Leadership program implemented in the 40 CIP focus schools	1 Instructional Leadership program implemented in the 40 CIP focus schools	Not achieved
2.2.7	CIP: Effective teaching and learning professional learning program	50% of the teachers in the CIP focus schools received training on effective teaching and learning 80% of the teachers in the CIP focus schools implementing effective teaching and learning strategies in their classrooms	100% of the teachers in the CIP focus schools received training on effective teaching and learning 80% of the teachers in the CIP focus schools implementing effective teaching and learning strategies in their classrooms	60% - Partially implemented
2.3.1	Supporting zone data clubs	20 principals are trained in the use of VANSTA data, including reading, analysing, and discussing data	40 principals are trained in the use of VANSTA data, including reading, analysing, and discussing data	50% - Partially implemented

¹⁸ CIP rollout pivoted to PCIO recruitment and awareness training due to 2024 teacher strikes

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No.	Activity name	Key updates from 2024	Target indicator	Status
2.3.2	Class-based assessment/ARTTLe	0 Provincial Curriculum Learning Improvement Facilitators (PCLF) and eight Provincial Curriculum Improvement Officers (PCIO) trained in class-based assessment 0 male and female school-based facilitators trained in class-based assessment	18 Provincial Curriculum Learning Improvement Facilitators (PCLF) and eight Provincial Curriculum Improvement Officers (PCIO) trained in class-based assessment 40 male and female school-based facilitators trained in class-based assessment	Not achieved
2.3.3	Support to VANSTA	0% of VANSTA papers printed and ready for distribution by the end of each year ¹⁹	100% of VANSTA papers printed and ready for distribution by the end of each year	Postponed
2.4.1	Review VNCS	40% of VNCS review and recommendations submitted to MoET by November	40% of VNCS review and recommendations submitted to MoET by November	40% - Partially implemented
2.4.2	Supporting review of teachers guides for Years 1-3	K-3 teacher guides reviewed, revised, and ready for printing	K-3 teacher guides reviewed, revised, and ready for printing	Fully implemented
2.4.3	Distribution of literacy resources for schools	100% of schools received flashcards and sequential stories	100% of schools received flashcards and sequential stories	Fully implemented
3.1.1	Strengthening ICT in schools	34 Schools received digital literacy training. 0 school in Tafea and Shefa installed with VSAT and internet connections 34 schools introduced Google Classroom 80% completion of the teacher pay slip notification system plan and design phase	50 Schools received digital literacy training. One school in Tafea and Shefa installed with VSAT and internet connections 50 schools introduced Google Classroom 100% completion of the teacher pay slip notification system plan and design phase	50% - Partially implemented

¹⁹ VANSTA 2024 postponed by MoET due to teacher strikes

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No.	Activity name	Key updates from 2024	Target indicator	Status
3.1.2	Supporting statistical digest and key education factsheets	2023 Digest Basic Tables and fact sheets produced and disseminated virtually by September 2024. 2023 Digest finalised and pending sign off by the MoET.	2023 Digest and fact sheets produced and disseminated virtually by September 2024	95% - Partially implemented
3.1.3	Supporting OV data entry	The first review of the OV policy completed	Review of the OV policy completed	40% - Partially implemented
3.1.4	Supporting the compulsory education study	Implementation plan for the Compulsory Education Study not developed due the delay in endorsing MoET's option to move forward proposed in the developed compulsory Education Study	Implementation plan for the compulsory Education study developed	Postponed
3.1.5	Supporting OV software and MoET information systems	Synchronisation of the Civil Registry and OV database development final meeting postponed 0 existing dashboards are updated, including the Statistical Digest and OV 4 modules in the OV implementation plan developed	Synchronisation of Civil Registry and OV database developed 2 existing dashboards are updated, including the Statistical Digest and OV 6 modules in the OV implementation plan developed	80% - Partially implemented
3.2.1	Supporting the development of school procurement guidelines	School procurement guideline is completed and approved by the MoET Senior Management Team	School procurement guideline is drafted and ready for submission to the Senior Management Team for approval	Fully implemented
3.2.2	Strengthening financial management systems	MoET Financial Management Manual is developed and submitted to the Senior Management Team for approval	MoET Financial Management Manual is developed and submitted to the Senior Management Team for approval	Fully implemented

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No.	Activity name	Key updates from 2024	Target indicator	Status
3.2.3	Supporting planning	<p>0 provincial trainings to support the development of Business Plans and Reporting</p> <p>1 Corporate Plan review completed</p> <p>0 MoET MEL Plan developed</p> <p>0 Joint Planning event held to present the reviewed Corporate Plan</p>	<p>2 provincial trainings to support the development of Business Plans and Reporting</p> <p>1 Corporate Plan review completed</p> <p>1 MoET MEL Plan developed</p> <p>1 Joint Planning event held to present the reviewed Corporate Plan</p>	60% - Partially implemented
3.2.4	Supporting budgeting systems	The medium-term expenditure framework for the MoET completed and submitted to the Senior Management Team and approved as part of the 2025 proposed budget	The medium-term expenditure framework for the MoET completed and submitted to the Senior Management Team for approval	Fully implemented
3.2.5	Strengthen audit and review systems	100% of members of the Audit and Risk Committee appointed	100% of members of the Audit and Risk Committee appointed	Fully implemented
3.2.6	Support Review of education authority and school registration policy	80% of MoET's Education Authority and School Registration Policy reviewed	100% of MoET's Education Authority and School Registration Policy reviewed	80% - Partially implemented
3.2.7	Support for ICT policies, procedures and infrastructure	<p>1 ICT disaster recovery plan revised.</p> <p>1 survey of ICT in schools conducted</p> <p>100% completion of a new MoET website plan and design with relevant stakeholders</p> <p>1 new ICT policy for education developed</p> <p>1 new centralised helpdesk ticketing system developed for schools</p>	<p>1 ICT disaster recovery plan revised.</p> <p>1 survey of ICT in schools conducted</p> <p>100% completion of a new MoET website plan and design with relevant stakeholders</p> <p>1 new ICT policy for education developed</p> <p>1 new centralised helpdesk ticketing system developed for schools</p>	Fully implemented

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No.	Activity name	Key updates from 2024	Target indicator	Status
3.3.1	Supporting School Leaders Certificate Training	<p>14 school leaders graduated from a certified course in leadership and management training</p> <p>0 study to support School of Education consider options to deliver Leadership and Management Training conducted</p> <p>0 study on school principals who have completed leadership and management training</p>	<p>57 school leaders graduated from a certified course in leadership and management training</p> <p>1 study to support School of Education consider options to deliver Leadership and Management Training conducted</p> <p>1 study on school principals who have completed leadership and management training</p>	75% - Partially implemented
3.3.2	Supporting principals' handbook training	36% of newly appointed principals inducted and appraised	100% of newly appointed principals inducted and appraised	36% - Partially implemented
3.3.3	Strengthening provincial coordination and support	Provincial Education Officers and education authorities attend two capacity building workshops (April/October)	Provincial Education Officers and education authorities attend two capacity building workshops (April/October)	Fully implemented
3.3.4	Piloting Monitoring Tools	<p>0 School Strategic Plan (SSP) monitoring tool developed</p> <p>0 school, teacher, and principal monitoring tools (one for each) developed</p>	<p>1 School Strategic Plan monitoring tool developed</p> <p>1 school, teacher, and principal monitoring tool (one for each) developed</p>	Postponed
3.3.5	Supporting the implementation of Minimum Quality Standards	No schools in Tafea surveyed for school standards baseline	All schools in Tafea surveyed for school standards baseline	Postponed

Annex 2: Deep Dive into VAESP's Parent Support Program (PSP)

About the Parent Support Program (PSP)

VAESP has been supporting Vanuatu's MoET in delivering the Parent Support Program (PSP) since 2019. Developed in 2015 by UNICEF and funded by Dubai Cares, the PSP is an 11-week program to train parents of children aged 0 to 5 years. Recognising parents, caregivers, and the community's critical role in early childhood development, the program educates and upskills them through a series of 11 workshop sessions. These workshops cover four key areas: good health and nutrition, early learning, security and safety, and responsive caregiving.

The PSP aims to increase community awareness of ways to support their children's schooling. This contributes to VAESP's goals of providing safe, inclusive learning environments and ensuring more children, including those with disabilities, are enrolled and attend the appropriate year of primary school at the right age. In 2021, MoET rolled out the program nationally, collaborating with partners such as UNICEF, Save the Children, and VAESP to implement it across Vanuatu's six provinces. VAESP specifically focuses on Torba Province, including the islands of Torres, Merelava, Ureparapara, Vanualava, Motalava, Mota, and Gaua.

Purpose of the Study

The study aims to validate the positive changes observed in the communities in Torba. To achieve this, the VAESP has conducted a comprehensive assessment to determine PSP's progress in achieving the intermediate outcomes. The study focuses on two key questions:

- To what extent has community awareness of positive parenting practices increased?
- To what extent is there evidence that parents are actively practising positive parenting?

By addressing these questions, the study aims to provide a clear understanding of PSP's impact on the community and confirm that the observed positive changes are supported by concrete evidence.

Methodology

The study utilised qualitative and quantitative data to respond to these questions. The quantitative data were collected through a knowledge, attitudes, and practices survey, which included past PSP participants and a control group of non-PSP participants. This survey aimed to assess the level of knowledge, attitudes, and practices concerning each of the four key areas covered in the PSP workshops.

In addition to the quantitative data, qualitative data was gathered through interviews with PSP parents and schoolteachers who teach their children. These interviews aimed to collect evidence of changes in parents following the PSP workshops and to verify these changes were corroborated through teachers' observations.

By employing these methods, the study aimed to triangulate and validate the findings, ensuring the rigour and reliability of the results. This comprehensive approach allowed for a thorough assessment of PSP's impact on the community.

Data collection took place in October 2024. The VAESP enumerator team, comprising representatives from VAESP and MoET, travelled to Torba to meet with the ECCE Provincial Coordinator in Sola before interviewing 12 communities across three islands: Vanualava, Motalava, and Gaua.

Survey questions were developed based on the PSP Handbook for the quantitative data collection. These questions were grouped into four key areas to assess knowledge, attitude, and practice. The questionnaire included 17 concise and manageable questions. Data was collected using the Kobo platform.

Qualitative data was gathered through interviews with PSP parents and relevant schoolteachers. The interview questions were tailored to the interviewees and the purpose of the interview. For parents, questions focused on feedback about the workshop, their understanding of positive parenting, and changes they observed in themselves and their children. For teachers, questions were aimed at collecting their observations to validate the findings from the parents' survey.

The process and criteria for sample selection involved the VAESP ECCE Activity Coordinator working with the ECCE Provincial Coordinator. Survey participants were selected using convenience random sampling from a list of PSP participants from the past two years. Parents for interviews were chosen based on observed positive changes, while teachers were selected based on their engagement with the relevant students.

The sample size included 111 survey respondents and 20 interviewees, comprising 11 parents and nine teachers. Quantitative data was measured based on correct responses, while qualitative data was recorded through notes taken during the interviews. This comprehensive methodology ensured a thorough and rigorous assessment of the study's research questions.

Key findings

Parents are demonstrating a good awareness of positive parenting. Prior to the PSP workshops, responses from parents and teachers indicated that parents engaged minimally with their children's education. Some examples include dropping their children off at school and picking them up, having limited discussions with teachers about their children's progress, and insufficient reading together at home to support learning. Furthermore, parents also reported frequently shouting, scolding, and swearing at their children and at each other, behaviour that research shows can harm a child's healthy development. Since the workshops, parents report spending more quality time with their children, taking a greater interest in their education and learning, improving how they communicate and engage with them, and enhancing hygiene and nutrition at home.

Figure 17: Average percentage of correct responses to practice-related questions by PSP respondents (N=111)

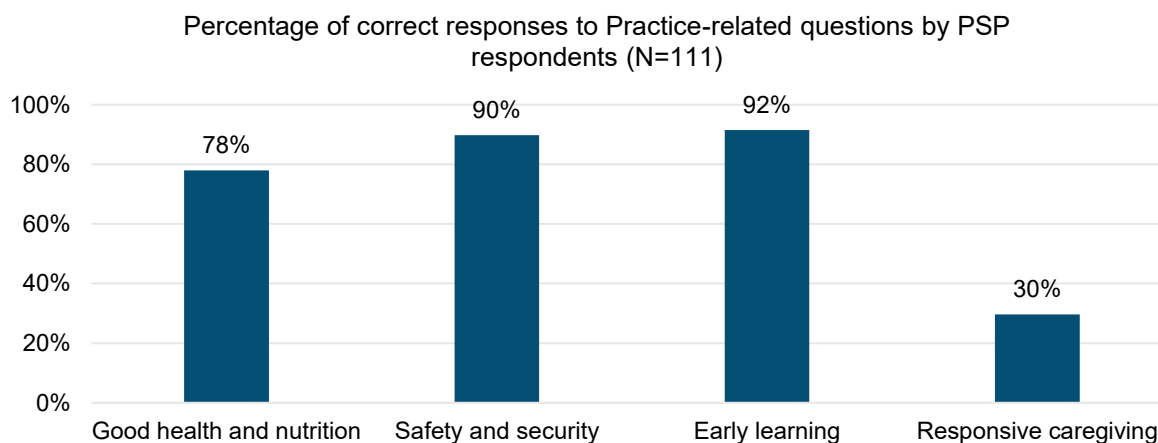


Figure 17 demonstrates that most surveyed parents answered questions about parenting practice correctly. This means that beyond self-reported impressions of improvement, the survey data indicates that most surveyed parents are aware of positive parenting practices, based on five questions in the knowledge, attitudes, and practices survey, with good health and nutrition integrated into one.²⁰

²⁰ There were two practice-related questions for responsive caregiving, with an average score of 30%, depending on the circumstances of the respondent, such as whether they have a child with a disability. However, a possible error in data collection may have affected the result.

Teachers report seeing positive behaviour change among parents. While the study team did not conduct observations or have baseline data, interviews with other community members and/or teachers were used to better understand behaviour change and ensure data triangulation and validation.

The interviews with teachers validated the behaviour changes. Below are a few quotes that relate to the changes being reported:



After his parents attended the workshop, I saw a difference in his dad's behaviour of caring for him. One day as I was walking home, I saw him with his dad with a book as he was reading to his child. This is new because I have never seen him read to his child before.

School teacher

There are changes. Now parents are helping their children with their homework, they are reading and writing much better than before.

School teacher

After the workshop, his mother started spending time with him to talk and nurture him to be a good boy. He changed his attitude of being noisy to quiet. I asked him what his parents were doing with him after classes, and he would tell me what his parents did, like singing, telling stories and helping him to count and identifying colours. He started to care for his other friends and would share his snacks with others, which is hardly what he did before.

School teacher

I used to whip him when he was naughty, but now I talk and explain. I can see he understands, and he does not do it again.

PSP parent

I know the parents are always shouting and swearing, but after the workshop, when her mother attended the workshop, she learned that a child this young will develop through words that nurture, show love and appreciate their child, will help them grow.

School teacher

There are early indications that parental behaviour change has positive outcomes for children.

Interviews with teachers and parents indicate that observable positive outcomes occur in the children due to changes at home. As parents spend more time with their children, adjusting their work and weekend schedules to prioritise this, the parent-child relationship is improving, with parents reporting greater affection and attachment. The PSP program's workshop topics help parents deepen their understanding and awareness. The workshops also provide the skills to apply this knowledge at home. More specifically, workshops 4, 5, and 6 look at the parent-child interaction, language, storytelling and reading, and the importance of play and learning. These sessions have helped parents recognise the value of these activities and apply them at home, with teachers and parents sharing examples of how they sing, tell stories, and read with their children, as discussed earlier. These and other positive practices being learned and applied are now translating into visible outcomes in children.



His mother mentioned to me as his teacher that her son started saying good mornings to her, which is something he has never done before, including thanking his mum when she does things for him. An example is when giving him his snacks for school, he would kindly thank his mum. He was doing the same in the classroom.

School teacher

My children are spending more time with me. More attached to me than to their mother because I spend more time with them.

PSP parent

Increased confidence among children. Numerous examples in interview responses indicate that children are expressing themselves with greater confidence. They are showing a heightened willingness to socialise. The additional time and engagement at home with parents have fostered this confidence, making children more inclined to take calculated social risks (Guttman, 2023).



Before the workshop, she was not interacting with others, but after the workshop, she is now engaging and playing with others. I heard and have seen them together in the evenings in their home, so I know this has helped the child.

School teacher

She is socialising more with other children and also she is no longer afraid to play with other children.

PSP parent

My children used to be afraid of me before I was always talking harshly to them, but after attending PSP, I talk quietly and tell them it's okay, they can play and we will all tidy up afterwards. Before they were afraid of trying something new or asking questions because they knew I would scold them. I wished I had learnt about PSP long ago.

PSP parent

As the home becomes a safer environment for children to express themselves and the parent-child relationship improves, children grow happier and more confident in sharing their thoughts. Parents report that children are more open about their feelings, including speaking about their day at school and providing greater detail in their conversations.



My children are freer and more open to share their feelings with me. They feel happy to tell me what they did at school.

PSP parent

We can tell parents are spending time engaging with their children. The children are confident, are happy and willing to learn. Their performance is outstanding.

School teacher

Enhanced excitement and interest in school and learning. Changes at home indirectly and directly increase children's interest in learning and school. For example, parents' increased interest in their children's education, along with shared activities such as reading, talking, storytelling, singing, and playing together, has directly contributed to this greater enthusiasm. Indirectly, other good practices that parents have applied at home, such as maintaining good hygiene, ensuring nutritious

meals, and creating a safer home environment, support children's ability to learn and attend school consistently and more effectively.

Interviews with teachers and parents indicate that children are more interested in attending school. According to several teachers, school attendance has increased for students from PSP beneficiary families. Parents have also observed this change in their children's behaviour and attitude towards school. They have noticed that their children never want to miss school. One parent shared that when they cannot take their child to school, the child becomes very disappointed or finds another way to get there. Two PSP parents also noted that their children are not yet at school age but are excited and curious about starting school. One child, in particular, cannot wait to start kindergarten in 2025.



I notice my kids are now very interested in going to school. My daughter never wants to miss school.

PSP parent

His attendance in class improved compared to before. Previously he would attend fortnightly and then miss a few days, but this has changed as he is interested in coming back to school. He even asked to go to school during weekends.

School teacher

Before the workshop, she was not interested in learning and playing, but after the workshop, she is now more engaged and willing to participate and learn.

School teacher

She is curious and wants to go to kindy, but she will go in 2025.

PSP parent

Parents and teachers are also noticing that the children are using a wider range of words and providing more descriptive storytelling. Children learn new words and phrases as they socialise and engage more with their surroundings. This is why the PSP workshops encourage parents to talk, read, tell stories, and sing with their children, as these activities help children learn to express themselves more effectively.



I observe that the more you engage with them, the more they talk and share details. They can follow instructions.

PSP parent

He improved his listening and attention to details compared to before. At first, he would be shouting and playing around, but this has changed. He is paying attention and listens to instructions from the teacher well.

School teacher

Teachers are also noting that children's learning has improved. Their ability to understand concepts, grasp ideas and follow instructions has strengthened.



She has improved her learning. She is always ahead before the other children because she understands and is a fast learner. When the teacher is telling stories to the class, she would come in and help the teacher to complete the story and or other activities.

School teacher

Big difference, much smarter, picks things quickly and loves to attend school. Smarter than my older children.

PSP parent

They learn very fast, they understand very quickly. They like learning and they like to stay in the classroom during break, they write and go through the books. They are really eager to learn things. Some of them are already reading, and some others are currently learning.

School teacher

There is a big improvement in the children's learning. They are eager to learn, and they are ready in their development skills because their parents are helping them.

School teacher

Recommendations

The study team makes four recommendations:

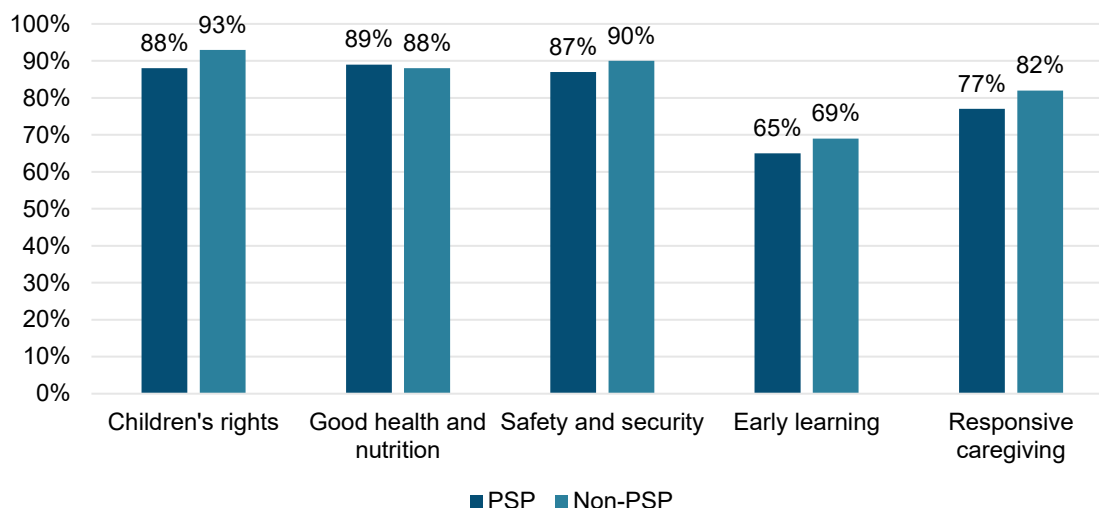
1. Increase community ownership of the PSP
2. Put more emphasis on early learning and responsive caregiving
3. Set up a baseline or pre-test to assess the impact and change in PSP parents more accurately
4. Train PSP teachers and taskforce on PSP MEL indicators

These recommendations are described in more detail:

Increase community ownership of the PSP. The October 2024 survey assessed the extent of workshop completion among PSP participants. Of the respondents, 74 (66.7%) reported not completing the PSP workshops. Among those who had, 19 participants (17.1%) reported attending between seven and 10 sessions, while only two reported attending 10 sessions. No respondents reported attending all sessions. This means that 82.9 per cent of PSP participant respondents attended six or fewer sessions, with 12 reporting that they had participated in only one session. A separate data collection by the PSP Taskforce in June 2024 found that participants and PSP Facilitators noted how the large number of community activities often led to PSP workshops being overshadowed or delayed, disrupting parents' learning. Transport challenges also contributed to low attendance rates, with participants and teachers indicating that transport can be a barrier for teachers and parents.

Put more emphasis on early learning and responsive caregiving. For each of the section topics in the October knowledge, attitudes, and practices survey, the average percentage of correct responses received from PSP respondents is as follows.

Figure 18: Average percentage of correct responses by knowledge, attitudes, and practices survey sections



While the PSP parents and teachers interviewed presented good examples of how the PSP contributes to observable outcomes in children, the knowledge, attitudes, and practices survey indicates a gap or lower levels of knowledge, attitudes, and practices in two of its five sections: early learning and responsive caregiving. The gap is evident in both PSP and non-PSP participants, suggesting a need to investigate its causes further and to focus more time, effort, and follow-up on these areas.

Set up a baseline or pre-test to more accurately assess the impact and change in PSP parents more accurately. The survey results, which show minimal statistical differences between PSP participants (average: 82%) and non-PSP participants (average: 84%), highlight the need for establishing baseline or pre-test measures. While these results do not necessarily indicate that the program has had no impact, they underscore the importance of implementing pre-workshop and post-workshop tests. Such measures would enable a more accurate assessment of the program's impact by capturing and articulating positive and negative outcomes more effectively. Establishing these tests would provide a clearer picture of the changes in participants, ensuring that the program's true effects are accurately measured and understood.

Train PSP teachers and taskforce on PSP monitoring and evaluation indicators. It is evident from the interviews and observations made through the two data collection activities conducted in 2024 that the PSP is achieving its outcomes. However, in the mid-2024 data collection activity, the PSP Taskforce found that PSP teachers and parents were uncertain about the specific indications of success they should be looking for to monitor PSP impact.

Annex 3: Deep Dive into VAESP's Mother Tongue Vernacular Instruction

About vernacular languages

Vanuatu has a diverse linguistic landscape, and the interpretation of language policies and pedagogies varies widely across schools. Over the years, changes in language policies have impacted the languages of instruction at different year levels. The Government of Vanuatu has partnered with various organisations to strengthen mother tongue instruction, including a partnership with the Summer Institute of Linguistics in 2002. This partnership led to the development of vernacular resources, which serve as the foundation for the current activity.

Purpose

VAESP has collaborated with the MoET to enhance educational inclusion through mother tongue instruction. Five schools across five area councils on Ambae Island in Penama province have implemented this initiative. The program aims to improve literacy outcomes by providing targeted support, training, resources, and teaching strategies incorporating gender, disability, and social inclusion principles.

Key findings

In July 2024, VAESP and MoET delivered vernacular literacy instruction workshops for Years 1, 2, and 3 teachers from five primary schools on Ambae island. The workshops emphasised the importance of phonics in developing literacy skills, teaching participants how to recognise sounds, blend them to make words, and clap syllables. Teachers found the training valuable and realised that teaching in vernacular languages could help students transfer these skills when learning a second or third language.

Participants also explored Bloom's digital library, which contains the Vanuatu Nasara Literacy program. This tool allows teachers, parents, and students to create and access vernacular storybooks in a digital format. Feedback from the workshops indicated that teachers now understand the role of phonics in early literacy instruction and feel better equipped to use the right strategies and resources.

The vernacular instruction activity has led to positive changes in teaching practices and student outcomes. Teachers reported that students are now more engaged, enjoy their studies, and attend classes regularly. The training has also helped teachers approach phonological awareness more systematically, enabling students to make letter sounds, identify phonemes, and segment syllables in their language.

Principals and teachers have expressed appreciation for the training and resources, noting improvements in students' progress. Some schools are preparing to focus on vernacular instruction for Years 1 and 2 in 2025, while others have already started implementing the new knowledge and resources. The activity has also fostered collaboration between primary and kindergarten teachers to ensure continuity in vernacular instruction.



Students can now make the letter sounds, identify individual phonemes, segment and clap syllables of words in their language.

Workshop training participant

Parents are satisfied with the reports of their children during the second term.

Workshop training participant

The teacher raised awareness about vernacular teaching with her staff when she returned.

Workshop training participant

Recommendations

To build on this significant work, **VAESP will support a sample of schools in 2025, focusing on gender, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI) and MEL** of the activity. There is also scope to **support catch-up interventions** for Year 3 students who lack foundational literacy skills. **Further exploration in the positive deviance study in 2025 is proposed to identify key success factors impacting literacy skill development**, student attendance, teacher confidence, time on task, disability inclusion, and the application of vernacular resources and teaching strategies. Resources, continued support to teachers, and research findings will contribute to the growing momentum for an evidence-based approach to vernacular instruction in Vanuatu.

The learning through the Mother Tongue - Vernacular Instruction Activity delivered by VAESP and MoET has demonstrated the importance of mother tongue instruction in improving literacy outcomes. The positive feedback from teachers and principals, along with the observed improvements in student engagement and learning, highlight the success of this initiative. **Continued support and research will further strengthen the impact of vernacular instruction on educational inclusion and literacy development in Vanuatu.**

Annex 4: Deep Dive into VAESP's Support for Strengthening School Leadership and Management

Introduction

This case study examines the impact of the Leadership and Management Training conducted under the VAESP Phase 2 during 2023–24. The training aimed to enhance the leadership and management skills of school principals and teachers. Data was collected from training participants and validated through interviews with their colleagues.

Key Findings

Training Participants' Data

The training participants reported significant benefits from the Leadership and Management Training. They found it highly beneficial, particularly in enhancing their communication, leadership, and management skills. Participants noted that the training helped them improve the development and implementation of SSPs and fostered better interactions and teamwork among staff.

Participants indicate there were behavioural changes. They reported an enhanced ability to manage teachers by understanding their strengths and weaknesses. The training emphasised the importance of detailed reporting to document achievements and challenges, which participants found valuable.

However, participants faced several challenges when applying the training. The most significant obstacle was a teacher's strike, which prevented the full application of the training. Other challenges included limited internet access and competing commitments that made it difficult to apply the skills learned.

Despite these challenges, participants expressed their plans for future initiatives. They mentioned community projects such as school fence projects and community reconciliation events. Participants also recommended the training to others, highlighting its positive impact on their leadership and management skills.

The teacher's strike limited the training's success in supporting the national curriculum. While participants could not fully implement the training, they recognised its potential benefits once the strike was resolved.

Validation Data from Colleagues

Colleagues of the training participants provided validation data that supported the participants' reports. They described the principals' leadership styles as open, consultative, and capable of making tough decisions. Colleagues observed specific examples of changes, such as improved report writing skills, initiatives to address issues, and better planning and coordination.

Colleagues noted that principals supported implementing the national curriculum. Principals organised workshops, engaged more with teachers and developed strategic plans to support its implementation.

Comparison and Validation

The data from training participants and their colleagues were consistent and validated each other. Both groups highlighted improvements in leadership and management skills. Participants reported enhanced communication and management abilities, which colleagues verified through observed enhancements in planning, coordination, and decision-making.

Participants reported applying skills in developing SSPs and community projects. Colleagues confirmed these efforts, noting specific projects and improved teamwork. They also validated behavioural changes reported by participants, such as improved teacher management and detailed reporting, observing improvements in communication, teacher support, and reporting accuracy.

Both groups identified the teacher's strike as a significant hindrance. Participants also cited internet access and other commitments as obstacles. While colleagues did not explicitly validate these, they aligned with the overall challenges faced. Colleagues echoed concerns about the limited ability to support the national curriculum due to the strike. They noted efforts to organise workshops and support teachers despite the challenges.

Case Study: Morris Mera's Leadership and Management Transformation

Morris Mera, Acting Principal at Baldwin Lonsdale Memorial College in Vanualava, Torba Province, has shown significant growth in his leadership and management skills following his participation in the Leadership and Management Training during 2023/24. This case study explores the training's impact on Morris's leadership style, his management of teachers, and his support for the national curriculum.

Leadership and Management Improvements

Since attending the training, Morris has demonstrated remarkable improvements in his leadership abilities. Initially facing challenges with absenteeism, he developed a strong relationship with teachers and the community. The training gave him the courage to make decisions and improved his planning skills. Morris's leadership style became more consultative and inclusive, organising regular consultations with the Provincial Education Office (PEO) and leading effective meetings. His notable achievements include organising a successful college graduation program and enhancing his communication and relationship-building skills.

The training significantly improved Morris's ability to manage teachers. He implemented open communication, scheduled regular staff meetings, and used Self Evaluation Forms to consult with teachers. This approach empowered teachers and increased their participation in school activities. Morris also improved financial reporting to the PEO and Ministry of Education and Training (MoET), introduced a new reporting system for parents, and organised a successful end-of-year school graduation.

Morris's support for the national curriculum was greatly enhanced by the training. He introduced weekly class-based assessments in the secondary section and organised staff meetings to ensure teachers were well-supported. Despite challenges such as network communication issues, Morris remained committed to improving the school's performance. His proactive approach and regular consultations with the PEO and Curriculum Improvement Officer helped build a strong foundation for curriculum implementation.

Conclusion

Morris Mera's participation in the Leadership and Management Training has profoundly impacted his leadership and management abilities. The training gave him the skills and confidence to make informed decisions, manage teachers effectively, and support the national curriculum. Morris's transformation into a consultative and inclusive leader has fostered a positive school environment, improved communication, and strengthened community relationships. His commitment to continuous improvement highlights the importance of such training programs in enhancing educational leadership.

Conclusion

The data from training participants and their colleagues are consistent and validate each other. Both groups observed significant improvements in leadership and management skills, application of training in school projects, and enhanced support for teachers. The main challenge identified by both groups was the teacher's strike, which hindered the full application of the training and support for the national curriculum.

Recommendations

1. **Addressing Challenges:** Develop strategies to mitigate the impact of teacher strikes and improve internet access to ensure the full application of training.
2. **Continued Support:** Provide ongoing support and follow-up training to reinforce the skills learned and address emerging challenges.
3. **Community Engagement:** Encourage community projects and initiatives to foster a collaborative environment and enhance the impact of training.
4. **Curriculum Implementation:** Focus on supporting the implementation of the national curriculum through workshops and continuous professional development.

This case study highlights the positive impact of Leadership and Management Training on school principals and teachers, emphasising the importance of continued support and addressing challenges to maximise the benefits of such programs.

Annex 5: Financial reporting

Table 5 provides an overview of VAESP spending by end-of-program outcomes. The table shows a significant increase in expenditure from the previous year, which is in line with the 2024 Annual Plan forecast. The Quality Pillar had the highest 2024 expenditure, with 61 per cent of the program activity budget. This responds to recommendations for increased spending across Quality activities in 2024. Management was second at 26 per cent and Access at 13%.

Table 5: Expenditure breakdown (AUD) by EoPO

Program Outcomes	Total 2019	Total 2020	Total 2021	Total 2022	Total 2023	Total 2024	Six-year %
EoPO1 (Access Pillar)	115,693	14,233	652,400	426,330	329,857	294,081	13%
EoPO2 (Quality Pillar)	2,758,886	1,231,646	1,487,967	1,493,019	347,543	1,445,910	63%
EoPO3 (Management Pillar)	615,917	228,971	440,746	419,905	554,742	620,376	21%
VAESP Cross-Cutting Program	155,328	170,605					2%
Total Program Activity Costs	3,645,824	1,645,455	2,581,114	2,339,255	1,232,142	2,360,368	


Table 6 outlines the key activity areas within each pillar. It is important to note that the first three months of the calendar year often include expenditures delayed from the previous year. In terms of key expenditure per pillar:

Access: Support for Corporate Education Communication was the highest expenditure under the access pillar, accounting for 36%. The Parent Support Program followed at 23%, and Women Leadership in Education Provincial Network ranked third at 21%.

Quality: The Strengthening Provincial Curriculum Implementation Program (CIP) activity was the highest expenditure under the quality pillar, representing 24 per cent of the pillar's total spending.

Management: The Supporting School Leaders Certificate Training was the highest expenditure under the management pillar at 24%.

Table 6: Key activities and expenditure under each EoPO

Pillar and Activity Area	Expenditure AUD
 ACCESS	
1.1 Strengthen Inclusive Education	86,319
1.2 Increase Involvement of School Communities	173,355
1.3 Improve School Infrastructure (asset master plan was included in 1.2 in 2022)	24,856
1.4 Strengthen Disaster Response	9,551
1.5 Supporting Monitoring (2022 Activity area)	
Sub total	294,081
 QUALITY	
2.1 Strengthen Teachers Management	46,593
2.2 Strengthen teaching and learning	885,024
2.3 Strengthen assessment monitoring and report	83,767
2.4 Strengthen Curriculum Resources	147,308
Personnel on Quality	283,219
Sub total	1,445,910
 MANAGEMENT	
3.1 Strengthening Data Information and Knowledge Generation	86,117
3.2 Strengthen Policy, Direction, Planning, Management and Accountability Systems	88,279
3.3 Strengthen School Management & Leadership	269,522
Personnel on Management	176,458
Sub total	620,376
Grand Total	2,360,368

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Table 7: Expenditure relating to themed categories (AUD)

Expenditure categories	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total Cumulative 2019–24
COVID-19 ²¹	-	127,281.00		52,721.83			180,002.83
TC Harold	-	39,946.00			32,463.28		72,409.28
Gender-focused activities ²²	59,687.83	32,943.00	1,448.00	14.69	33,907.56	85,447.27	125,105.08
Disability inclusion related activities ²³	16,634.48	4,194.00	25,440.00	54,687.74	4,600.62		105,556.84
Climate Change							
Torba Province	53,734.63	18,631.00	101,786.00	135,588.71	77,970.65	178,691.41	566,402.40
Sanma Province	166,610.85	70,679.00	182,594.00	162,667.53	45,328.68	62,847.19	690,727.25
Penama Province	70,457.69	47,484.00	242,830.00	80,056.29	38,995.47	64,930.07	544,753.52
Malampa Province	99,922.05	81,648.00	111,241.00	62,026.50	49,775.77	98,860.42	503,473.74
Shefa Province	139,583.82	149,882.00	335,640.00	101,654.35	54,887.13	526,002.34	1,307,649.64
Tafea Province	84,486.46	88,634.00	179,609.00	116,365.19	72,715.82	47,387.27	589,197.74
Private Sector/ Subcontracts	43,653.16	8,494.00			-		52,147.16
Total	734,770.96	669,816.00	1,177,692.00	765,783.00	410,644.98	978,718.70	4,737,425.64

²¹ COVID-19 costs were intertwined with many response strategies for recovery and support following TC Harold, such as communication costs and radio podcasts.

²² Gender expenditure is understated, as the costs for provincial workshops were allocated to the provinces. Spending on the women's leadership activity was approximately \$39,580.

²³ Gender expenditure reported in 2024 represents inclusive education activities.

Figure 19 presents the expenditure per province.

Figure 19: Expenditure per province in 2024 and the cumulative expenditure per province from 2019 to 2024

