

MFAT Management Response to Evaluation of the  
New Zealand Government Funded Vanuatu Water Sector  
Partnership 2022

Evaluation Report Recommendation	MFAT Response and Action (Agree, Partially Agree, Reject)
Greater focus is needed to develop strategies to increase local capacity for operation and maintenance of schemes (women and men)	<b>Agree:</b> With the support of Engineers without Borders (EWB) and UNICEF, all project partners are working together to improve operational and maintenance skills at a community level.
Consider how more human resources could be accessed, developed or provided within provinces.	<b>Agree:</b> The next phase of the Vanuatu Water Sector Partnership (VWSP) will include volunteers from EWB New Zealand based in the provinces.
Investigate human resources issues related to absenteeism, and positions not being filled.	<b>Partially agree:</b> MFAT recognise that, due to a number of reasons, there are a number of vacant positions across the public sector including within the Department of Water Resources (DoWR). While slightly outside of the scope of the Water Sector Partnership, MFAT acknowledge that staff vacancies will place pressure on the DoWR.
Boost skills training at the local level.	<b>Agree:</b> MFAT and the project partners will work together to identify current training available and how additional capability needs can be met.
Deepen the Gender Equality and Inclusion aspects of the VWSP	<b>Agree:</b> MFAT and the project partners are committed to mainstreaming gender equality and inclusion. This will continue to be a focus within the next phase of the Vanuatu Water Sector Partnership.
Conduct capacity assessments of staff being supported by EWB and UNICEF to target support, and monitor and evaluate learning outcomes.	<b>Agree:</b> Training requirements and capability assessments will be managed through discussions between DoWR, UNICEF and EWB.

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Improve donor coordination.	<b>Agree:</b> Donor coordination is important in the sector. MFAT will attend the DoWR quarterly donor coordination meetings and actively encourage participation by all donor partners.
Support for young engineers, especially women.	<b>Partially agree:</b> MFAT agree that support for young engineers, especially women, can improve project outcomes. Through MFAT funding, EWB have established the Vanuatu Engineers Association to provide support to young engineers.  The recommendation in the Evaluation included setting up a paid internship programme to attract young men and women to DoWR. While this is a good idea, this is currently out of scope of this funding. It is noted that the Vanuatu Public Service Commission (PSC) has an internship scheme already operating.
Increase monitoring and evaluation expertise in provinces.	<b>Agree:</b> Monitoring and evaluation is important to ensure the programme is effective and efficient. MFAT notes this recommendation and will strengthen the monitoring and evaluation during development of the next phase of the programme. Through this process, there is scope to work with provincial partners.
Conduct climate change and resilience research, thinking, planning, consideration to be a larger part of the VWSP	<b>Agree:</b> Consideration of climate change and resilience is a fundamental part of the Drinking Water Safety and Security Plans (DWSSP) that are conducted in communities. VWSP partners would welcome academic institutions to work in the sector in a coordinated and constructive approach.
Deliver financial training and support for the water committee.	<b>Partially agree:</b> This is currently out of scope but MFAT acknowledges that it would be valuable to identify what further training can be provided.

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Consider how the tendering process could be made available via an online form/process.	<b>Partially agree:</b> Online tendering would improve efficiency of the process. DoWR uses Vanuatu Government rules of sourcing and any process would need to align with those regulations. MFAT and DoWP will discuss tendering as part of the next phase of the programme, including the priority of this within VWSP interventions.
Review emergency funding processes and procedures.	<b>Out of scope:</b> This is a Government of Vanuatu process and outside of scope for the VWSP.
Seek additional funding to scale up the program.	<b>Partially agree:</b> VWSP welcomes contributions from development partners to support the scaling of the programme. It is noted that the Green Climate Fund (GCF) project to the Vanuatu water sector will be starting in 2023 and that will scale up existing support to the sector.
Consider developing provincial water supply plans.	<b>Reject:</b> This is outside of scope of the VWSP and there are other donors who are better placed to provide this support.
Increase water, sanitation and climate change sector coordination.	<b>Agree:</b> The DoWR quarterly donor coordination meetings are a mechanism that can support coordination between water, sanitation and climate change.
Bring drilling rig into the NIP and CAP.	<b>Partially agree:</b> DoWR will continue to lead discussions about the Government's drill rig and related policies.

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Map drought/water resources to support communities to understand water resources availability and constraints.	<b>Agree:</b> New Zealand has a regional programme called PARTner 2.0 which maps hazards and assesses their risk level in order to provide information for decision makers. Vanuatu is included in this programme and the information provided is relevant for the water sector.
Consider a greater focus on WASH in health care facilities and schools.	<b>Partially agree:</b> MFAT recognises the importance of WASH in health care facilities and schools. DoWR is working closely with the Vanuatu Ministry of Health and Vanuatu Ministry of Education to support these facilities, with VWSP focusing on rural communities access to water.
Increase coordination between VWSP partners.	<b>Agree:</b> The Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning (MERL) framework that will be established as part of the second phase will clarify the roles of the partners and coordination of work.
Consider developing a Gender Action Plan Implementation Strategy.	<b>Agree:</b> The DoWR has an existing Gender Action Plan and the recommended addition of an implementation strategy would better support the department, resulting in an Action Plan that is implementable and measurable.
GEDSI: Conduct an internal investigation of existing community resources (especially those provided by the GoV and Provincial Government).	<b>Agree:</b> This is an action for the Government of Vanuatu to increase training efficiency.
GEDSI: Deepen partnership between other Ministries and Departments, Provincial leaders and community members to provide communities with the skills and support to facilitate and develop their own plans	<b>Agree:</b> DoWR appears to work constructively with other Vanuatu government Ministries and Departments. The Government of Vanuatu's decentralisation policy will support this recommendation.

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Train next generation of young leaders in core inclusive community development skills.	<b>Reject:</b> This recommendation is out of scope of this Programme.
Enhance results management framework.	<b>Agree:</b> The second phase of the VWSP will include an enhanced MERL framework.
Continue and allocate budget for the information collection and storage system.	<b>Agree:</b> DoWR's information and collection system is very effective.
Increased knowledge of groundwater.	<b>Agree:</b> DoWR has conducted groundwater assessments to better understand water levels across Vanuatu. This is important given the increased importance of groundwater as a potentially more reliable source of water.
Research and M&E on Operations and Maintenance.	<b>Agree:</b> DoWR and UNICEF can work together to assess how successful the operations and maintenance is working on existing water projects and understand how this can be improved. This will be considered as part of the new phase of the programme.
Increase the focus on water quality and water safety.	<b>Agree:</b> The focus of the VWSP is to continue support for the Government of Vanuatu's goal of 100% safe drinking water and this will continue to be a planned outcome for the next phase of the programme.
Refresh MEL framework in light of additional inputs and gaps.	<b>Agree:</b> The MERL framework is to be strengthened for the second phase of the programme, including clear alignment with the Green Climate Fund project.

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Further consider and investigate the applicability of the NIP-CAP arrangement for other government functions	<b>Partially Agree:</b> The modality of the Vanuatu National Implementation Plan (NIP) for Safe and Secure Community Drinking, and the Capital Assistance Programme have proven successful for the water sector. This could be considered by other Vanuatu agencies and ministries to see if it can be applicable for their work. This is out of scope for tVWSP.
Ensure water quality results and other data sources are inputted into the database	<b>Agree:</b> The DoWR has a proven capability to to manage a database system that can record available information on water quality and other data sources.
Continue to monitor and manage the established water safety planning approach to consider climate change and identify resilient infrastructure improvements	<b>Agree:</b> All community-based project work should be conducted with a climate change risk lens.