

# Vanuatu Barriers to Education Study

Produced for 2018 Education and Training Sector Analysis being conducted by Vanuatu development Service for MoET through Coffey International.

August 2018

FINAL: September 2018

DEVELOPMENT  
SERVICES



**Vanuatu Monitoring,  
Evaluation and Research Team**

## **1. Vanuatu Barriers to Education Study**

Version 2: Final  
September 2018

Development Service and the Vanuatu Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Team was conducted this study for the Ministry of Education and Training through Coffey International to support ETSA.

From data collected by the Vanuatu Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Team (a Development Services team) from Efate, Malekula and Santo Islands and Penama, Torba and Tafea Province, Vanuatu, in June 2018.

Author: Kylie Mullins, Development Services, Port Vila Vanuatu.

Researchers: Kylie Mullins, Jeffry Pakoa, Nenneth Garae, Rosemary Oli, Jayline Malverus, Kevin Smith-Hinge, Mark Boe and Janet Boe, Vanuatu Monitoring, Evaluation and Research team, Port Vila, Vanuatu

Technical Advice:

Ty Morrissey, Morrissey Consulting International (MCI) and Georgia Noy, Program Quality Adviser, for technical advice on approach, methodology and site selection, and invaluable feedback throughout the drafting process.

Acknowledgements:

Sincere thanks must go to the MoET staff and officers for their time and expertise during this study, with particular acknowledgement to Oztomea Bule, for exporting data from VEMIS and Open VEMIS for the statistical analyses, and Kendry Mosses and Director Serge Lewawa, for providing feedback on the drafts and providing guidance.

Version 1 produced August 2018

Original text: English

# Barriers to Education Study

July – September 2018

ACRONYMS.....	5
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	6
SECTION I - BACKGROUND.....	13
2. REPORT OVERVIEW.....	13
<i>Phone Surveys</i> .....	17
<i>Data analysis and report writing</i> .....	18
<i>Data Management and Storage</i> .....	18
<i>Ethics of Review</i> .....	18
SECTION II - FINDINGS .....	20
3. LITERATURE REVIEW .....	19
4. OUT OF SCHOOL CHILDREN: WHO, WHERE AND WHEN.....	21
5. BARRIERS TO EDUCATION IN THE VANUATU CONTEXT.....	37
<i>Summary:</i> .....	40
<i>Low Income</i> .....	41
<i>Disability impacts on income</i> .....	45
<i>Drop in income generation opportunities</i> .....	45
<i>Priority on other items</i> .....	46
<i>Parents' commitment</i> .....	48
<i>Parental perception of value of education in Vanuatu</i> .....	50
<i>Impact on enrolment</i> .....	51
<i>Contributors towards this perception</i> .....	51
<i>Summary:</i> .....	60
6. RISK FACTORS .....	69
<i>Expectations on children to assist with work in the household</i> .....	70
<i>Desire to earn immediate income</i> .....	71
<i>Other risk factors</i> .....	72
7. CONCLUSION .....	73
ANNEXES	
ANNEXURE 1: BARRIERS TO ATTENDING SCHOOL, AS IDENTIFIED BY PARENTS, TEACHERS, PRINCIPALS AND YOUTH .....	77
ANNEXURE 2: SHOULD GIRLS GO TO SECONDARY SCHOOL? WHY OR WHY NOT?.....	80
ANNEXURE 3: DATA TABLES .....	87
ANNEXURE 4: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE TEMPLATE (IN ENGLISH) .....	92
ANNEXURE 5 – QUESTIONNAIRES FOR FOCUS GROUPS AND KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS.....	93
ANNEXURE 6: LIST OF INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS COMPLETED .....	101
<i>Interviews:</i> .....	101
<i>Focus Groups:</i> .....	101
ANNEXURE 7: LINK TO ANONYMISED, THEMED FOCUS GROUP AND INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS .....	101
Tables and Graphs	
Figure 1: Household expenditure in Vanuatu .....	42
Graph 1: Gross and Net Enrolment Rate in primary education 2011-2015.....	30
Graph 2: Vanuatu students studying at USP by program of study, 2015 .....	36

Graph 3: In your family, how difficult is it to pay school fees (total responses) .....	44
Graph 4: In your family, how difficult is it to pay school fees (excluding 'not applicable' responses) .....	44
Graph 5: Major household operation expenditure items, rural areas, 2010 .....	47
Graph 6: Major household operation expenditure items, urban areas, 2010 .....	48
Graph 7: Parental Perceptions of Importance of Primary School.....	51
Graph 8: Do girls need to go to secondary school? Parent Perceptions Torba, Penama and Tafea. ....	53
Graph 9: Distance (by time) to walk to school: Torba, Penama and Tafea surveys .....	55
Graph 10: ECE, Primary and Secondary enrolments Male:Female 2010-17 .....	67
Table 1: USP Emalus Campus Ni-Vanuatu student distribution of completion awards by program and gender, 2015.....	25
Table 2: Number of schools by urban and rural locations, 2014.....	26
Table 3: Pupil:Teacher ratio in urban and rural schools, 2015 .....	26
Table 4: Number of schools by language of instruction, 2013 - 15 .....	27
Table 5: NER by Province for Early Childhood Care and Education, 2011 – 2015. ....	28
Table 6: NER and GPI by Province, 2011 - 2015.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Table 7: Number of TVET Skills development activities conducted by province, 2015. ....	33
Table 8: Number of TVET participants by province and year, 2011–2015. ....	33
Table 9: Total enrolment in post-secondary institution in Vanuatu by sex, and institution, 2014 .....	35
Table 10: Barriers to attending school, as identified by parents, teachers, principals and youth.....	38
Table 11: Combined Survey and Focus Group Narrative Responses to Barriers to Education.....	77

## Acronyms

AUF	Agence Universitaire De La Francophonie
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio (measures the number of pupils of <u>any</u> age who are enrolled in primary education as a percentage of the total children of official school age population)
GPI	Gender Parity Index
NER	Net Enrolment Rate (measures how many school age children are enrolled as a percentage of the total number of children of that age in the country).
RTC	Rural Training Centre
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
VAC	Vanuatu Agricultural College
VDHS	Vanuatu Demographic and Health Survey (2013)
VEMIS	Vanuatu Education Management Information System (database)
VIT	Vanuatu Institute of Technology
VITE	Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education
VMC	Vanuatu Maritime College
VNSO	Vanuatu National Statistics Office
VRDTCA	Vanuatu Rural Development and Training Centres Association

## Executive Summary

As part of the Education and Training Sector Analysis being conducted in 2018 and in, contribution to the UNICEF sponsored Education and Training Sector Analysis (ETSA) in June 2018 the Vanuatu Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) sought technical support to complete a Barriers to Education study (B2E). Coffey International won a competitive bidding process to provide technical support to this study, and contracted a local consulting team, Development Services, to undertake a literature and field study to respond to the questions:

For all levels of education in Vanuatu -

- Who are the out-of-school children?
- What are the determinants of children dropping out of school?
- What are the risk factors for children dropping out of school?
- What are the barriers to access and learning, especially for children with disabilities?

This study will contribute to the ETSA, Vanuatu Education and Training Sector Strategy (VETSS) 2019-2030 to ensure all school-aged children (from early childhood to secondary) are in school and learning, and to encourage students to engage in post-secondary education and training.

## Literature Review

The study was informed by a literature review that collated existing research into barriers to education identified globally and regionally. Publications accessed included those from NGOs, various government departments, the development sector and academic institutions.

The review identified a number of core determinants that had been identified globally as contributing to non-attendance at school. Determinants are considered to be external societal structures or conditions that prevents an individual to have access to education. This review identified the following core determinants:

- parental perceptions,
- cultural or social norms,
- gender,
- lack of disability inclusion,
- income poverty,
- geography,
- impacts of disasters,
- quality of teachers and teaching infrastructure
- conflict (armed conflict, internal conflict or international conflict).

The review also identified a range of risk factors in the global context (factors that involve family or individual choice) that are likely to increase the prospect of children dropping out of school. Risk factors identified globally included:

- family size,
- number of girls in a family,
- parents' level of education,
- domestic violence, and
- Language.

The literature review enabled the study team to determine the scope and the focus of the Vanuatu Barriers to Education study, and develop relevant questions. “Conflict” was excluded from the study questionnaires because it was not relevant to Vanuatu.

These determinants and risks formed the framework of the questions asked during the study. Questions were discussed through focus groups and interviews held in Santo, Malekula and Efate, and via phone surveys conducted in Torba, Penama and Tafea provinces.

This study focused on **qualitative data collection** and documentation of perceptions and attitudes, rather than quantitative collection of numbers of children attending school / dropping out.

**Quantitative data** on enrolment, completion and drop-out rates was collected from Open VEMIS data and VNSO reporting, including the Annual Statistical Digests available on [www.vnso.gov.vu](http://www.vnso.gov.vu). These sources were able to provide a comprehensive picture of enrolments and education indicators.

It should be noted that because of the small sample size of the study (approximately 190 people interviewed); the findings here should **not be taken as a statistical representation** of the barriers to education in Vanuatu. There will be differences between communities, islands and provinces that have not been able to be collected in this report. This study aims to provide an indication of common perceptions and trends only, and information on how these impacts affect individuals and communities.

## Methodology

The research was implemented through a mixed method approach of literature review, focus groups, interviews, MoET Open VEMIS database and a phone survey.

Parents and children in remote areas were contacted through PEOs and school principals. Data was collected from three levels:

- Social groups such as in-school youth, out-of-school youth, parents (male and female)
- Institutional level (e.g. MoET, provincial education offices, schools)
- Other existing community institutions such as disability advocacy organisations and youth organisations.

A total of 15 focus groups were held in Efate (Port Vila, Tagabe and North Efate), Malekula (North Malekula and Atchin), and Santo (Luganville and South Santo)

A total of 12 interviews were held with education leaders to investigate some topics in-depth. Because it was not economically feasible to conduct a site visit to every Province, 60 phone surveys were conducted in Torba, Penama and Tafea Province (20 surveys per province).

## Limitations

All evaluations and studies have limitations. The main limitations of this study included:

- ✓ **Definition of “out of school youth”** – this is a very broad definition and had the potential to limit the study due to the scope and time. The study sought to define the concept of out of school youth to focus efforts on particular groupings
- ✓ **Not all parents and/or out of school youth were willing to talk** – this was to be expected and reliance was placed on contacts and nominations received through the PEO’s

- ✓ **Correlation between literature review and study findings** – was not always clear given the specific contextual factors that influence school decisions in Vanuatu and the influence of geography and disaster risk reduction.
- ✓ **Definition and Scope of the Study** – there are many and varied reasons as to why students cannot and do not attend school. The variables are varied and in-depth and in some cases beyond the scope of the evaluation given that reasons for teenagers is often very different to young children. Priority had to be placed on ECCE and primary education given the bulk of students in Vanuatu attend school at this stage.

#### Who are the out-of-school children?

- To commence the qualitative analysis however, it is necessary to determine who is experiencing barriers, that is, which children are not attending school or are dropping out of school.<sup>1</sup>
- To identify this, Open VEMIS data and VNSO data was analysed to determine:
- The Net Enrolment Rates for each level of school (ECCE, primary school and secondary school)
- Enrolment by geographical area (province and urban/rural)
- Enrolment by gender
- Number of schools by primary language of instruction (French/English)
- Who was attending ECCE, primary school, secondary school, technical and vocational centres, post-secondary institutions, and tertiary studies
- Who was dropping out of school?

The analysis used figures from the 2017 Open VEMIS record, supported by 2015 statistics collected in the 2015 MoET Annual Statistics Digest. This analysis is shown in detail in Section 4 of this study. In summary, the analysis showed that (in 2017):

- Primary school had the highest NER, with 90% of primary-school aged children enrolled in school.
- Early Childhood Care and Education and Secondary School have very low rates of enrolment. In Early Childhood Education, only 66% of children are attending at their correct age (though there is substantial overage and underage enrolment). In Secondary Schools, 43% of the secondary school aged population are enrolled.
- For ECCE and primary school, Tafea had the highest rates of enrolment, with an NER of 107% for primary school and 90% for ECCE. Malampa province also demonstrated strong enrolment in primary school, with an NER of 82% in ECCE and 102% for primary school.
- For secondary schools, Shefa Province had the highest NER at 51%. This is despite only 20% of secondary schools being located in urban areas (Port Vila and Luganville).
- Shefa had the lowest NER for ECCE (51%) and primary (78%) and secondary education (27.0%). Torba had the lowest NER for secondary school, dipping to 25% in 2017. The survey of Torba province parents indicates that meeting school fees was the largest barrier; whereas in Shefa province the main concern expressed was quality of education and class sizes.

---

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this study: children “not attending school” is counted as those children who have not enrolled in school for the year being measured, and children “dropping out of school” is counted as those children who were enrolled, but then exited the school system before the end of the educational year.

- The study indicated that there was considerable interest amongst parents and students in vocational or technical school, but the enrolment figures indicate limited access to or awareness of the programs that are available.
- Based on provision of schools in rural areas exceeding the proportion of the population living rurally, and the low teacher: pupil ratio in rural schools, it appears that rural students have proportionate access to education facilities and teachers as urban students. However, rural students face other barriers to education including reduced access to cash income generation opportunities to meet school fees, and geographic barriers to access schools which would impact enrolment and performance.
- There is some enrolment in post-secondary education and training, with the highest level of enrolment being at VIT, VMC and VITE.
- Only a small number of students enrol in tertiary studies.
- Overall, males and females are equally represented in enrolment at schools, though the gender parity dropped for primary school enrolment after 2016, suggesting with pressures on income from disaster response, boys' attendance was prioritised over girls' attendance. At secondary level, there are more females enrolled than males, and females' drop-out rates are significantly and consistently lower than males.
- There is a significant gender disparity in enrolment in vocational programs, with almost twice as many males as females enrolling.
- Females have a higher tertiary scholarship rate, however completion rates from 2015 shows the GPI for graduation is at 0.76.
- The ratio of Francophone schools: Anglophone schools matches the population ratios for first languages. Children are unlikely to face a barrier to attend school because their family or community is Anglophone or Francophone.
- Drop-out records demonstrate that a significantly higher proportion of boys drop out of school than girls. In primary school, the most common Year level to drop out is at Year 6 (presumably following the Year 6 exams, which determine entry to secondary school). In secondary school, girls are more likely to drop out at Year 9, and boys are more likely to drop out at Year 7.

#### What are the determinants of children not attending or dropping out of school?

As noted above, the literature review identified a range of determinants that had been observed to impact attendance at school in other countries. Section 5 of this report discusses the core determinants identified as having the most impact in the Vanuatu educational context. The B2E study identified the following 5 determinants as the main barriers in Vanuatu:

- **Meeting School Fees** (including the existence of fees, aggravated by income poverty, income generation difficulties, and misuse of income)
- **Lack of Parental Support or Value on Education** (parental perceptions)
- **Access to school** due to distance to travel and poor road infrastructure
- **Disability** – access and teaching inclusion, discrimination
- **Disaster** – impact of disasters on the community and education facilities, as well as relocation of population and use of school buildings as evacuation centres

'Gender', 'quality of education infrastructure' and 'conflict between culture and education' are determinants that globally have been recognised as core determinants in lack of school attendance. However, in this small study these determinants were not indicated as primary barriers by the respondents interviewed (parents, teachers, principals and PEOs, in-school and out-of-school youth, local and international NGOs, and advocacy organisations). As noted in 'who are the out-of-school children' summary above, males and females are equally represented in enrolment at schools; perceptions from community level also recorded strong support (92% support) for girls participating in primary and secondary education.

Statistics and collated quotations are provided in section 6 of this report to discuss the 5 core determinants, and for 'gender', 'quality of education infrastructure' and 'conflict between culture and education'.

### What are the risk factors for children dropping out of school?

Risks are controllable or mitigatable to some extent at household or community level. Risks that were identified by study participants as relevant in Vanuatu were:

- expectation on children to assist with domestic or agricultural work in the household;
- exposure of children to alcohol or marijuana, causing disinterest in school;
- absent parents (due to Recognised Seasonal Employment (RSE) or broken homes);
- low child interest in education (including peer pressure from friends to drop out);
- access to social media and mobile phones distracting children;
- desire to earn immediate income;
- parents' perceptions of risk of exposure to sexual relationships and risk of teenage pregnancy through school attendance;
- Perception that discipline was not enforced at schools (child protection measures not received favourably as they exclude corporal punishment).

These risks were found to have varying impacts on children's participation in education. Section 6 of this report contains a detailed discussion of the prevalence of these risks and impacts on different levels of education. The B2E study identified the following 4 risks as the main barriers in Vanuatu:

It was acknowledged that many children were assisting with **agricultural or domestic duties**, and that this could have an impact on their participation in education, particularly on girls, who were expected to complete their household tasks before starting their homework. Agriculture and fishing also had an impact on youth perception of the value of education, with some youth dropping out of school because they wanted to start earning money.

13 responses (4% of total responses) said that children and youth were being exposed to **drugs (marijuana) and alcohol** in their early teens, and that this was having a noticeable impact on the rates of drop-outs in primary school and early secondary school.

Several of the youth participants (2% / 7 responses) spoke strongly about the impact that increased access to mobile phones and internet sites has had on access to education. The responses indicated concern that youth were being distracted from school by access to movies, YouTube videos and social media. Several respondents amongst youth and adults also commented that parents were spending their income on mobile phone top-ups (and kava), instead of on school fees.

One troubling response that was collected from several parents was the perception that increased awareness and enforcement [at home and school](#) against physically disciplining children was serving as a barrier to education. It was commented that verbal discipline was ineffective, and 4 parents noted that children were becoming disrespectful and refusing to attend school. This indicates that child protection procedures still require further communication and dissemination for greater community understanding.

Other risks are discussed in the Risks section at Section 6 of this report.

### What are the barriers to access and learning?

Disability was seen as a significant determinant to education access in Vanuatu, with study participants naming disability-specific barriers such as access to school facilities, teaching inclusion, curriculum inclusion, discrimination and limited access to income (to meet school fees) as the 4<sup>th</sup> highest barrier to education.

According to VEMIS 2015 figures, 7–8 % of primary school children have a disability, with the overall rate including children who are not in school likely to be much higher. The survey in this study indicated that out of the 60 people surveyed, 39 people (65%) knew of one or several youth in their village who had difficulty attending school, or did not attend school at all, because of a disability. The focus group discussions indicated that communities felt that children with a disability should attend school, and listed barriers such as poor roads, inaccessible classroom and toilet construction, lack of assistance tools such as sign language, braille or hearing aids, a curriculum that doesn't cater for a range of learning needs, and lack of inclusion training for teachers and teacher support as some of the specific barriers existing.

### Recommendations

Limited recommendations have been made throughout this study. Some issues, such as general income poverty, need to be addressed through a range of strategies and so no recommendations have been made for those areas. The research team has prepared the recommendations based on the data and information derived and analysed through the study.

#### *Recommendation 1: Improve parental and child perceptions of the relevance of education to future goals, and to future income*

- More awareness needs to be provided at community level on the practical contribution of education to future life activities.
- More awareness needs to be provided that parents' responsibilities with education aren't limited to paying school fees, but require active support and interest from parents.
- More resourcing is needed for vocational education pathways.
- Awareness needs to be raised on the links between knowledge and local industry skills: e.g. management of farms and agricultural operations, budgeting, documentation and decision-making. That is, raise awareness of relevance of education to everyday island life.

#### *Recommendation 2: Reduce access issues from geographical factors*

Teachers, principals and youth coordinators suggested that to resolve this barrier would be to construct more boarding schools: "to overcome the issue of Geography as an issue/factor, Government, through the MoET and donor partners, should construct more boarding schools in the islands of Vanuatu to accommodate the growing number of children craving for education. Since we

cannot bring education and better infrastructure to them, we'd make education be accessible to them by allowing them to live where education is situated." [Youth coordinator, Efate]

*Recommendation 3: Improve access and quality of education for children with a disability*

The main suggestion coming out of the focus groups was that more training should be given to teachers on inclusion, and special needs teachers should be trained and posted to provide support in schools. A second suggestion was to improve the curriculum to be more inclusive.

*Recommendation 4: Reduce disaster impact on access to education through improved Education in Emergency and Disaster Risk Reduction planning and coordination*

A 2009 UNICEF assessment of Vanuatu's emergency preparedness planning for climate change and disaster responses indicated that Core Commitments for Children indicators such as child separation, child protection or temporary classrooms were not adequately considered in emergency management plans. In the past 4-years Vanuatu has been strengthening their emergency management systems, including through development of the 'Education Cluster' specifically dedicated to appropriate emergency management of education. This work should be supported and continued. Designs for education strengthening programs should consider current disaster management policy and mechanisms for "Education in Emergency" measures while developing the program structure, activities and objectives.

*Recommendation 5: Continue with gender equity initiatives in education, as they are having a positive impact in moving Vanuatu's education system to a gender equal environment*

Continue with gender equity in education activities (e.g. inclusive education and gender based violence work already initiated through MoET) to improve access to schooling, as it is having a demonstrated impact on perceptions of the value of education for girls.

*Recommendation 6: Raise awareness of the impacts of child labour on education*

Domestic and agricultural work expectations can be concluded to have an impact on children's participation in education. It would be beneficial to raise parental and community awareness on the need to restrict children's household and agricultural work outside of school to increase their attendance and performance, with a focus on the long-term benefits of education.

## I - BACKGROUND

### 2. Report Overview

Provision of universal primary school education and accessible and equitable secondary education has been a priority for the Vanuatu Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) for over a decade. The Ministry has implemented strategic programming and resourcing to work towards achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.<sup>2</sup>

In comparison to other Pacific countries, Vanuatu has made substantial progress on improving several indicators of primary schooling.

However, the 2015 Statistical Digest produced by the MoET noted that the net enrolment rate for early childhood, primary and secondary education was at 42.7%, 86.2% and 34.9% respectively, indicating continuing high levels of out-of-school children in Vanuatu. In addition, the Digest noted that: “Another important fact is that there are children with disabilities who enrolled in formal primary schools. About 2.9% students in primary schools were identified as having disability problems in 2015. Some of these students are not able to adapt themselves with the normal teaching and learning development in the classrooms. These children may leave school and this is a complex issue that needs to be addressed.”<sup>3</sup>

To achieve SDG 4, there is a need to identify who are the out-of-school children and children at risk of dropping out, and why they are not enrolled or at risk of dropping out. In view of this need, and as part of the Education and Training Sector Analysis (ETSA) being undertaken in 2018. In June 2018 the MoET sought technical support to complete a Barriers to Education study. Coffey International won a competitive bidding process to provide technical support to this study, and contracted a local consulting team, Development Services, undertake a literature review and field study to respond to the questions:

- Who are the out-of-school children?
- What are the determinants of children dropping out of school?
- What are the risk factors for children dropping out of school?
- What are the barriers to access and learning, especially for children with disabilities?

This study will contribute to the ETSA data, and assist in determining a strategic direction for the Vanuatu Education and Training Sector Strategy (VETSS) 2019-2030 to ensure all school-aged children (from early childhood to secondary) are in school and learning.

#### 2.1 Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of the study is to generate findings based on solid evidence, information and data on key barriers to education and learning.

---

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Education and Training, (2016), *Vanuatu Education Sector Strategy 2007 – 2016*.

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Education and Training (2016), *Annual Statistical Digest 2015*.

**Quantitative data** on enrolment, completion and drop-out rates was collated from Open VEMIS data and Vanuatu National Statistics Office (VNSO) reporting. These sources were able to provide a comprehensive picture of enrolments and education indicators.

However, this data collection focused particularly on **qualitative data collection**, centring on documentation of perceptions and attitudes. The qualitative data collected was used to provide context to the quantitative figures held by MoET and VNSO.

This report has focused on collecting the **stories and context** behind some of these statistics, such as impacts at family level of low income, gender, disability, infrastructure and geographical remoteness. The intention was to develop a more contextualised understanding of some of the motivators, attitudes, beliefs and perceptions that contribute to a factor becoming a barrier to education. In addition, there was opportunity to add value to support MoET analysis and to recognise the importance of explaining data and interpreting data through qualitative methods.

It should be noted that because of the small sample size of the qualitative component of the study (approximately 190 people interviewed), the findings here should **not be taken as statistically significant or representative** of all the barriers to education in Vanuatu. There will be differences between communities, islands and provinces that have not been able to be collected in this report. This study aims to provide an indication of common perceptions and trends only, and information on how these impacts affect individuals and communities.

## *2.2 Methodology*

### *Overview*

The research was implemented through a mixed method approach of literature review, focus groups, interviews, MoET Open VEMIS database and a phone survey.

The research team interviewed parents of in-school children, parents of out-of-school children, youth (in school youth and out-of-school youth), youth vocational training and youth group leaders, teachers, school principals, Provincial Education Officers, MoET staff, staff from international and local NGOs working in education, and advocacy groups for disability. The social groups received a special focus in this study were boys and girls, children in remote areas, and children with special learning needs. Gender-related dynamics in education and schooling were explored through development of gender disaggregated questions, and gender-sensitive discussion queries.

Parents and children in remote areas were contacted through PEOs and school principals. Data was collected from three levels:

- Social groups such as in-school youth, out-of-school youth, parents (male and female)
- Institutional level (e.g. MoET, provincial education offices, schools)
- Other existing community institutions such as disability advocacy organisations and youth organisations.

A total of 15 focus groups were held in Efate (Port Vila, Tagabe and North Efate), Malekula (North Malekula and Atchin), and Santo (Luganville and South Santo)

A total of 12 interviews were held with education leaders to investigate some topics in-depth. Because it was not economically feasible to conduct a site visit to every Province, 60 phone surveys were conducted in Torba, Penama and Tafea Province (20 surveys per province). Phone survey participants were identified through PEOs, on-ground teacher contacts, and for Torba Province,

through a bulk SMS sent to all Torba residents asking them to text willingness to participate in the survey if they had a child aged between 5 – 18 years old.

Children with special learning needs or with a disability were represented in focus group discussions and key informant interviews by their parents. Interviews were also held with two disability inclusion officers.

## Limitations

All evaluations and studies have limitations. The main limitations of this study included:

- ✓ **Definition of “out of school youth”** – this is a very broad definition and had the potential to limit the study due to the scope and time. The study sought to define the concept of out of school youth to focus effort on particular groupings
- ✓ **Not all parents and/or out of school youth were willing to talk** – this was to be expected and reliance was placed on contacts and nominations received through the PEO’s
- ✓ **Correlation between literature review and study findings** – was not always clear given the specific contextual factors that influence school decisions in Vanuatu and the influence of geography and disaster risk reduction.
- ✓ **Definition and Scope of the Study** – there are many and varied reasons as to why students cannot and do not attend school. The variables are varied and in-depth and in some cases beyond the scope of the evaluation given that reasons for teenagers is often very different to young children. Priority had to be placed on ECCE and primary education given the bulk of students in Vanuatu attend school at this stage.

## Literature Review

The literature review explored existing literature that looks at various barriers to education. Publications included documents from NGOs, government departments, the development sector, and academic institutions. These documents were collated and common themes on barriers to education were identified and described in the Literature Review report (attached separately; key findings are listed below in Section 3).

The initial assessment of documents was undertaken as a team. The collated documents were assessed to determine the extent of existing knowledge and the gaps in research that needed to be investigated through the focus groups and key informant interviews. The literature review enabled the study team to determine the scope and the focus of the Vanuatu study, and develop relevant questionnaires (attached at Annexure 4 and Annexure 5).

One observation from the literature review was that there was very little Vanuatu-specific research to draw on. Examples were largely drawn from South-East Asian or African countries; when Melanesian or Pacific studies were conducted they tended to focus on Papua New Guinea or Solomon Islands. One of the primary questions for this study was therefore: ‘which of these determinants and risks are primary in the Vanuatu context?’ This generated a series of open questions to explore which determinants were identified as primary determinants by study participants.

For statistical information on enrolment and drop-out rates, the literature review and report also collated data from MoET’s Open VEMIS database and data from Vanuatu National Statistics Office reports including the 2009 National Population and Housing Census, the Vanuatu Household Income and Expenditure Report 2010, the 2010 Vanuatu Hardship and Poverty Report, factsheets including the Household Expenditure Patterns in Vanuatu snapshot, and the 2015 Disability Monograph:

Children, Women and Men with Disabilities in Vanuatu: What do the data say? The literature review also accessed the MoET Annual Statistical Digests provided on the VNSO website for enrolment statistics, drop-out statistics and education indicator figures for 2010 – 2015. Digests of figures from 2016 and 2017 were not available at the time of reporting, and 2016 enrolment and drop-out figures had been impacted by the ongoing recovery impacts of the 2015 disaster event Cyclone Pam, and so 2015 figures were used as indicative figures to guide assessment of who is in school and out-of-school (these figures appear to have been collected prior to the impact of TC Pam and so effects on enrolment are not shown until the following year).

It has been suggested from other studies undertaken as part of the ETSA that the enrolment data recorded in Open VEMIS should undergo a verification process against the enrolment records from schools. The Urban Education Study conducted by MoET has suggested that there are some significant variances between Open VEMIS figures and numbers in the actual classrooms. A provincial assessment led by the PEOs to verify figures could be a valuable exercise to strengthen the Open VEMIS database.

### Focus Groups and Key Informant Interviews

In alignment with the briefing on this study, the focus group and KII data collection focused on qualitative collection and documentation of perceptions and attitudes, rather than collection of numbers of children attending school / dropping out.

Focus groups and interviews were organised with 7 main sectors of communities:

- Principals, teachers, education officials and youth workers
- Parents of in-school youth and children
- Parents of out-of-school youth and children
- Parents of children living with a disability, and disability advocacy staff
- Community leaders
- In-school youth
- Out-of-school youth

Focus groups were organised largely by sector (for example, all parents in one group; all teachers and principals in one group), however in each location a 'mixed' group was organised, including a mix of community members (youth and adult, in school and out of school, with and without disability experience) to provide opportunities for comparison of perspective across community sectors. All groups were organised to have a gender mix within the group. Group demographics can be found at Annexure 6.

Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in Bislama by a team of two – one person to lead the conversation and the other to scribe. The focus groups and KIIs were facilitated in a fashion to build a good relationship with the interview subject or subjects, to allow them to feel comfortable sharing their stories and opinions about barriers affecting them and their families, including barriers such as low income, gender, disability, quality of education and geographical remoteness.

Questions for the focus groups and KII's were developed from the initial literature review discussions with the writing team. Separate questionnaires were developed for each sector being interviewed: youth, parents, institutional level (education or youth), and community level. A 'master questionnaire' was developed for each sector, with a list of all possible questions for that sector provided (these question lists are at Annexure 5). Please note, it was not expected that every

question be asked at every focus group and interview. Instead, team leaders were asked to choose 3-4 core questions from the list that are relevant to that particular group or interview. This provided us with a broad range of data across several factors for each sector.

15 focus groups were held in Efate (Port Vila, Tagabe and North Efate), Malekula (North Malekula and Atchin), and Santo (Luganville and South Santo). 12 interviews were held with education and organisational leaders to investigate some topics in-depth.

Focus groups and interviews were held at 6 locations:

- Efate (Port Vila (including Port Vila and North Efate representatives), and Tagabe)
- Malekula (North Malekula and Atchin)
- Santo (Luganville and South Santo)

These sites were chosen because of access to in-school and out-of-school youth, and to gain a comparison between urban and rural locations, geographically remote locations (South Santo, Atchin), locations that have developed support of out-of-school youth (North Malekula - RTC), and locations that have developed infrastructure to increase inclusion in education (South Santo – school for disabled students). See Annexure 6 for the full list of interviews and focus groups conducted.

Anonymised and themed transcripts of the interviews and focus group responses have been saved as a separate document, attached to this report as Annexure 7.

To minimise transport expenses, Tafea, Penama and Torba province were interviewed via phone surveys. (See Phone Survey below for further information).

### Phone Surveys

To collect data from those provinces not being visited by a field team and to provide quantitative data, a short phone survey was conducted of 60 respondents in Tafea, Penama, and Torba provinces.

The phone survey questions were developed by Development Services in response to the gaps identified during the literature review (See Phone Survey template at Annexure 4). The questions were trialled with a small sample of respondents in Torba on Thursday 21st June, and some small amendments were made to the questionnaire. Further small amendments were made to the questionnaire after feedback from the CTT.

Prior to the survey dates, a text message and email was sent to Provincial Education Officers in these three provinces, requesting them to forward a list of phone numbers for potential survey participants in their province using the criteria:

- Parents of school aged children OR youth aged between 15 – 18 years old
- Mix of male and female respondents
- Respondents from each island in the province
- Willing to participate in a phone survey

Due to communication delays with the Torba PEO, a bulk text message was also sent to all Digicel phone holders in the Banks Islands (Torba Province) on Thursday 21st June, asking parents of children who were not in school to text the Phone Survey contact number to participate in a short phone survey.

A small incentive (100vt phone credit transfer) was offered to parents to participate in the survey, and was transferred to parents' phones after they had completed the full survey.

The mixed sampling approach of snowball sampling via PEO and random text message response generated a good reply, with a sample list of 80 phone numbers developed by Friday 22nd June. The phone survey staff then commenced calling the survey respondents.

All respondents were screened for eligibility prior to commencing the survey, checking that the phone respondent met the criteria above. Consent forms were also read over the phone, and the respondent was requested to consent to the survey before it commenced.

The phone survey data collectors then asked the phone survey questions as shown in Annexure 4.

Responses were directly entered into Survey Monkey by the phone operators. Surveys were verified by the team leader listening in to randomly selected surveys and observing data entry. The first four surveys collected were also checked question-by-question to ensure that the data collectors understood the questions and were using the forms correctly.

The responses for the phone surveys have been provided to MoET in Excel format, separated by questions.

The purpose of the phone survey has to collect information from provinces not receiving field visits, and to provide a primary overview of perceptions, priorities and barriers to education in rural areas. The sample will also provide a small quantitative record of trends around certain topics (e.g. perception of girl's value in attending school; distance travelled to school).

#### Data analysis and report writing

Data analysis was conducted in a three-step process:

1. Group discussion / debriefing between the field data collectors to discuss their observations of the main themes being expressed, common perceptions and opinions, differences and commonalities between provinces and between rural and urban groups, and barriers or risks identified that were not predicted in the literature review, or that were significantly relevant in Vanuatu.
2. Manual data coding by theme using the transcripts of interviews and focus groups.
3. Entry of phone surveys into SurveyMonkey, and export of Excel worksheets (all data, and data disaggregated by province and by gender), with manual data coding by theme for narrative answers.

#### Data Management and Storage

All hard copy and electronic records of interview transcripts and data, are stored in a locked cabinet (hard copy) and password-protected electronic folder (electronic copies) in a secure location. The material collected during the research was not distributed or shown to other parties outside of approved MoET, Development Services or Coffey staff. The evaluation team leader will keep a back-up copy of the evaluation data for 5 years. All members of the evaluation team supplied copies of their transcripts, notes and data to the Team Leader prior to the commencement of analysis.

#### Ethics of Review

In undertaking the review, the members of the Evaluation Team signed a code of conduct, agreeing to:

- respect requests not to participate in the study

- respect customs, religious beliefs, and cultural practices of the communities and individuals they interview
- ensure sensitive data cannot be traced to its source, to protect confidentiality
- provide notice of planned discussions and interviews to participants, and conduct such discussions to minimise demands on time while collecting required information
- refrain from evaluation of individuals during the assessment of organisational and management capacity
- adhere to the DFAT Child Protection Code of Conduct
- adhere to the Development Services Code of Conduct.

## SECTION 2 – STUDY FINDINGS

### 3. Literature Review

The study was informed by a literature review that collated existing research into barriers to education. Publications accessed included those from NGOs, various government departments, the development sector and academic institutions.

The literature review identified a number of core determinants that contributed to non-attendance at school. Determinants are considered to be external societal structures or conditions that prevents an individual to have access to education. This review identified the following core determinants:

- parental perceptions,
- cultural or social norms,
- gender,
- lack of disability inclusion,
- income poverty,
- geography,
- impacts of disasters,
- quality of teachers and teaching infrastructure
- conflict (armed conflict, internal conflict or international conflict).

The review also identified a range of risk factors (factors that involve family or individual choice) that are likely to increase the prospect of children dropping out of school. Risk factors identified included:

- family size,
- number of girls in a family,
- parents' level of education,
- domestic violence, and
- language.

One observation from the literature review was that there was very little Vanuatu-specific research to draw on. Examples were largely drawn from South-East Asian or African countries; when Melanesian or Pacific studies were conducted they tended to focus on Papua New Guinea or Solomon Islands. One of the primary questions for this study was therefore: 'which of these determinants and risks are primary in the Vanuatu context?' This generated a series of open questions to explore which determinants were identified as primary determinants by study participants.

The full literature review has been supplied to MoET as a separate document. A summary of the key determinants and risks follows (all references for statements are contained within the literature review):

In 2015, 57 million children of primary school age were out of school, and in developing regions, children in the poorest households are four times as likely to be out of school as those in the richest households.

Globally, individuals within vulnerable categories such as females (girls), ethnic minorities, refugees, people with special needs, individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and those experiencing natural disasters or country conflict are at risk of dropping out of school.

**Parental perceptions** on the value and relevance of education is an influential determinant in accessing education, controlling household expenditure and family priorities as well as parental emotional and learning support to children. It was also found that when children are exposed to contexts where parents place more emphasis on the importance of education, these children will demonstrate higher scholastic development.

**Cultural and social norms** about who should attend school has considerable influence in enrolment in all levels of schooling. Some cultures place a high value on education, suggesting that development of their society rests on the education of their citizens. Some cultural norms discourage education, for reasons including perceptions that education will alienate children from traditional culture; the perception that education is a male activity; and that time spent in education will interfere with male responsibilities in regards to land ownership.

Globally, **gender** is identified as a significant determinant relating to access to education. Cultures socialise their children to have specific values perceived as masculine or feminine, and in some cultures these values are also linked to right or capacity to participate in education. Some cultures also see investment in education for girls as a waste of money, as it is perceived that women will marry and stay in the household, so there will be little financial return on educational investments for girls. Domestic duties expected of girls were also identified as a barrier for girls' engagement in school and homework.

The literature review found that although the need for **disability-inclusive education** has increasingly been acknowledged in global education policy development, many children with special needs remain excluded from mainstream education. One of the primary explanations for this exclusion is that persons with disabilities are 'invisible' or viewed as the 'other'. In many cultures there is a stigma related to disability, and individuals with special needs are hidden. The lack of role models with disability in public and professional life also acts to build a perception that people with a disability have no need for education, for "where would disabled people work?".

**Income poverty** is identified in the literature as one of the main determinants of school dropouts. Lack of income creates barriers for both upfront costs, such as school fees and transport, and hidden costs such as uniforms, equipment and opportunity cost. It is anticipated that income poverty will be identified as a barrier to education for the majority of the Vanuatu populace residing both in rural and urban settings.

The literature review identified **geography** as determinant to both access and discontinuity in education. The research suggested that there is significant difference in access to education and completion of education between urban versus rural contexts, and rural dwellers are often marginalized from accessing decent and quality education.

The literature consulted indicated a correlation between **climate and disaster impacts** and peoples' well-being in terms of health, environmental sustainability and access to education. Impacts on schools also have the potential to disproportionately impact poorer communities, with communities in many rural areas already having restricted access to good quality education. The difficulty of accessing good quality education could increase when a disaster event destroys school infrastructure or if school buildings are used for emergency accommodation for an extended period following a disaster.

The literature analysis also proposed that the **quality of teachers and educational infrastructure** was a fundamental factor in educational attainment. Educational theorists argued that there is a demonstrated correlation between teacher quality and students' academic performance. Teacher quality is linked to training, but values and access to educational resources are also shown to impact on quality.

**Risk factors** such as family size, number of girls in a family, parents' level of education, domestic violence, parents' attitude and language were also identified as contributing to pose a barrier to education.

Family size and number of girls in a family can affect allocation of finite financial and social resources within a family, affecting the access to education for some children within the family. Parents with a low level of education may also lack the resources or capacity to support their children in education, which can contribute as a barrier to attendance.

Parents that have negative attitudes towards education or the relevance of education will also influence children's attitudes towards education, and can impact drop-out rates from school.

Domestic violence within a home also has a demonstrated impact on education outcomes and completion, with the research showing that found that individuals brought up in family environments experiencing domestic violence are less stable in education and less likely to complete their studies.

Finally, the literature review found that children transitioning from their first language to a different language for education often struggle academically. Given that most children in Vanuatu learn their village or vernacular language as their first language, this risk is a common one shared by all children in Vanuatu

#### 4. Out of school children: Who, Where and When

The first step in determining barriers to education is to determine who is not attending school. The following section is an analysis of the Annual Statistical Digest and Open VEMIS data from the perspective of identifying where barriers to education may be operating. Figures from 2017 and 2015 have been taken as base figures for reference, as not all data from 2017 is published at the time of this report, and 2015 was the latest year that Digest data is available. School attendance in 2016 was impacted by disaster recovery from Cyclone Pam and cannot be taken as a consistent indicator.

It has been suggested from other studies undertaken as part of the ETSA that the enrolment data recorded in Open VEMIS should undergo a verification process against the enrolment records from schools. The Urban Education Study conducted by MoET has suggested that there are some significant variances between Open VEMIS figures and numbers in the actual classrooms. A provincial assessment led by the PEOs to verify figures could be a valuable exercise to strengthen the Open VEMIS database.

For the purposes of this study: children “not attending school” is counted as those children who have not enrolled in school for the year being measured, and children “dropping out of school” is counted as those children who were enrolled, but then exited the school system before the end of the educational year.

This section discusses school attendance in reference to the Net Enrolment Rate (NER)<sup>4</sup>, Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)<sup>5</sup>, Gender Parity Index (GPI)<sup>6</sup>, enrolment by province and drop-out rates. The text and graphs below have been sourced from the Annual Statistical Digest for the Ministry of Education 2015 and from Open VEMIS data exported in 2018. Data on enrolment by province and drop-out rates for 2010 - 2017 were sourced from Open VEMIS by Ministry of Education and Training Statistical Officers (Refer to Annexure 3 for data tables). No primary data was collected on enrolment rates during the Barriers to Education study, given the comprehensive data already available.

**Summary:** Overall, **males and females are equally represented** in enrolment at schools, though the gender parity dropped for primary school enrolment after 2016, suggesting with pressures on income from disaster response, boys’ attendance was prioritised over girls’ attendance. At secondary level, there are more females enrolled than males, and females’ drop-out rates are significantly and consistently lower than males.

Disaggregated statistics were not available to assess enrolment rate variations between urban and rural populations. **Based on provision of schools in rural areas exceeding the proportion of the population living rurally, and the low teacher:pupil ratio in rural schools, it appears that rural students have higher access to education facilities and teachers than urban students.** However, rural students face other barriers to education including reduced access to cash income generation opportunities to meet school fees, and geographic barriers to access schools which would impact enrolment and performance.

**Both French speaking and English speaking students seem to have proportional access** to schools and enrolment.

**Enrolment in ECCE is low across all provinces**, with 2017 NER figures showing that 66% of 4 and 5 year olds were enrolled in an ECCE facility. However, the Annual Statistical Digest for 2015 does show that a significant number of overage students enrolled in ECCE. Tafea province demonstrated the highest rates of enrolment in ECCE, with Shefa province demonstrating the lowest engagement with ECCE.

**In Primary School, the NER declined in the period 2011-2015, then increased post-2015 to a level of 90%.** At 2017 10% of students aged 6 to 11 years old were out-of-school. Tafea and Malampa

---

<sup>4</sup> “Net Enrolment Rate” measures how many school age children are enrolled as a percentage of the total number of children for that age in the country. For example, if there are 300 children attending Year 1, 250 of which are 6 years old, 25 who are 7 years old and 25 who are 5 years old, the NER would measure what the percentage of the 250 x 6 year olds are of the national 6-year old population.

<sup>5</sup> A Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) measures the number of pupils of any age who are enrolled in primary education as a percentage of the total children of official school age population. So a GER would count the total number of children enrolled in Year 1, for example, and divide this by the national population of 6 year olds to find the % GER. Using the example above, the GER would divide 300 children (including the 7 year olds, the 6 year olds and the 5 year olds) by the national population of 6 year olds (Year 1 age children). GERs can exceed 100%. A GER exceeding 100% would indicate overaged or underaged enrolment.

<sup>6</sup> The Gender Parity Index is the quotient of the number of females by the number of males enrolled in a given stage of education. It is obtained by dividing the number value for females (eg number enrolled) by the number value for males.

Province demonstrated very high rates of enrolment (NER rates of 107% for Tafea and 102% for Malampa), with Shefa province demonstrating the lowest NER for primary school (78%).

**Enrolment in secondary school (Year 7 to Year 13) drops considerably from primary school enrolment levels, to levels lower than ECCE enrolment.** Torba province shows the lowest level of enrolment, with only 25% of youth aged 12 – 18 years attending secondary school at their correct age of enrolment. The highest level of secondary school enrolment is in Shefa province, but even here only just over half of youth (51%) are enrolled in secondary school at their correct age.

This Barriers to Education study indicated that **there was considerable interest amongst parents and students in vocational or technical school, but the enrolment figures indicate limited access to or awareness of the programs that are available.** There is a significant gender disparity in enrolment in vocational programs, with almost twice as many males as females enrolling.

Post-secondary education and training is encountering more enrolments and is a growing sector in Vanuatu. **VIT, VMC and VITE demonstrated small levels of enrolment (approximately 7% of the youth population enrolling), but high levels of interest,** with almost 90% of interviewed subjects in this study stating their children may go on to a technical or vocational school after leaving primary school or secondary school. This sector would benefit from more awareness and promotion to increase enrolment.

Data on tertiary enrolment was not comprehensive. The 2009 Census data show **only a small proportion (approximately 1%) of students' progress to tertiary studies.** Women are awarded a higher proportion of tertiary scholarships than men but the completion rate shows that the GPI for graduation is at 0.76.

**Drop-out records demonstrate that a significantly higher proportion of boys drop out of school than girls.** In primary school, the most common Year level to drop out is at Year 6 (presumably following the Year 6 exams which determine entry to secondary school). In secondary school, girls are more likely to drop out at Year 9, and boys are more likely to drop out at Year 7.

#### *4.1 What is the educational pathway available to Vanuatu's youth?*

It is not a legal requirement for Vanuatu's youth to attend school, and there are no legal penalties to not enrol or attend school. However, in alignment with Vanuatu's Priorities and Action Agenda 2006 - 2015 and the National Sustainable Development Plan 2016-2030 Vanuatu government places high priority in achieving universal education for the youth of Vanuatu. Therefore, free education is provided from ECCE to year 8 to support student fees.

Under the current structure, there are three levels of in-school education provided in Vanuatu<sup>7</sup>:



<sup>7</sup> Image sourced from Annual Statistics Digest for Ministry of Education and Training 2015, p 20.

Enrolment into each new level of education is dependent on successful graduation from the previous level, which is assessed by exam in higher levels of schooling (from Year 6 onwards). When students exit from school, there are several channels for further education or training open to them.

One option is to enrol in a TVET course (technical and vocational education and training course). Under the Ministry of Education and Training, the TVET Partnership supports the operation of provincial Skills Centres in all provinces. These centres contract local training providers and industry coaches to deliver skills through short-term courses, with the goal of building greater productivity, increased employment and successful entrepreneurship.

Vocational training is also offered through the Australia-Pacific Technical College which provides several Certificate III and Certificate courses.

Youth can also apply to post-secondary colleges, including the Vanuatu Institute of Technology, the Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education, the Vanuatu Maritime College and the Vanuatu Agricultural College.

Youth who graduate from secondary school can apply to attend university through scholarship schemes managed by the Vanuatu Government, and through other scholarships managed by donor partners. They can also apply to study at one of the two universities in Vanuatu: Agence Universitaire De La Francophonie and University of the South Pacific.

Several non-government agencies also provide vocational education and training to youth. These include Youth Challenge Vanuatu, and Wan Smol Bag, which both offer job application and leadership training to young people who are no longer in school. Private businesses such as computer schools also offer some training in secretarial and computer activities.

#### *4.2 Boys and Girls: Is there a difference in enrolment?*

As an overview of who is currently attending school, the enrolment statistics from the past 7 years indicates that **enrolment rates for boys and girls were relatively similar in 2010 to 2015**<sup>8</sup>. There was a sharp drop in enrolment for early childhood and primary for both genders in 2016, following Tropical Cyclone Pam which affected education infrastructure and family income for much of 2015 and 2016. **From 2016 onwards, the number of girls enrolled in early childhood education and primary levels was still similar to boys' enrolment.** However, at the completion of primary school, the enrolment rate of girls did drop significantly when compared to boys, suggesting that when family income is impacted by external events such as disasters, school fees for boys' education is still prioritised over girls.

However, in alignment with regional findings<sup>9</sup> the Vanuatu secondary school enrolment statistics demonstrate the opposite trend. **For every year between 2010 – 2017 there have been more females enrolled in secondary school than males**, though the GPI ratio has remained between 1.01 and 1.05. In 2016, female enrolment in secondary school spiked higher than male enrolment, with

---

<sup>8</sup> Figures sourced from Open VEMIS, 2018.

<sup>9</sup> Liki, Asenati (2010) "Women Leaders in Solomon Islands Public Service: A Personal And Scholarly Reflection", State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Discussion Paper, Australian National University, <https://www.pacwip.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Women-Leaders-in-Solomon-Island-Public-Service-Asenati-Liki-2010.pdf>, retrieved 11 August 2018.

1.3 girls enrolling for every 1 boy (12,034 girls compared to 9,163 boys), and then the ratio between female and male enrolment dipped back to normal levels in 2017 (1.03).

**In vocational education (including RTCs and TVET programs) and in post-secondary education, there is a significant gender disparity in enrolment.** In TVET enrolment in 2015, the female to male ratio was at 0.57, meaning that female participants represented around 50% of the total number of male trainees in TVET centres<sup>10</sup>. The ratio for 2014 enrolment figures in post-secondary training colleges and technical institutions were similar to the TVET GPIs, at 0.47. A Gender Equality Strategy for the Vanuatu TVET Centres was planned for implementation in January 2015 - June 2016, but the evaluation report on impacts of this Strategy is not yet available publicly.

**In tertiary education, women are more enrolled than men<sup>11</sup>.** In 2015, 151 women received a scholarship for tertiary studies compared to 132 men, mainly due to the awards coming from the Vanuatu Scholarships Unit, which awarded more scholarships to women than men in that year. A similar profile exists for Francophone tertiary enrolment. The Agence Universitaire De La Francophonie (AUF) also demonstrated strong enrolment from women, with 124 women enrolled in 2015 in comparison to 112 men, a GPI of 1.107.

**However, it should be noted that levels of completion and graduation may not be as comparable. The Annual Statistical Digest for 2015 notes that 33 women graduated from tertiary studies in 2015, compared to 43 men.**

There may be a number of reasons for this, including reduced flexibility for women to complete their full studies due to family commitments.

**Overall, girls are enrolled in school at a similar rate to boys at most levels of education. The exception is in technical and vocational education, where there are approximately half as many girls than boys participating.** Other impacts of gender on access to education are recorded at Section 5.6.

#### *4.3 Is there a difference in enrolment between urban and rural children?*

A total of 75% of Vanuatu's population reside in rural areas<sup>12</sup> (in population measurement,

VNSO defines rural as all areas outside of Port Vila, Efate and Luganville, Santo). When residence is

**Table 1: USP Emalus Campus Ni-Vanuatu student distribution of completion awards by program and gender, 2015.**

*Sourced from the Annual Statistical Digest 2015 for Ministry of Education and Training, p. 28*

Program	Male	Female	Total
Certificate	0	1	1
Diploma	0	2	2
Bachelor of Degree	40	23	63
Graduate Certificate	-	-	-
Post Graduate Certificate	1	0	1
Post Graduate Diploma	1	2	3
Professional Diploma	0	1	1
Master	1	3	4
Doctorate	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>76</b>

<sup>10</sup> Annual Statistics Digest for Ministry of Education and Training 2015, p 32.

<sup>11</sup> Annual Statistics Digest 2015 for Ministry of Education and Training, p. 28

<sup>12</sup> VNSO (2017), 2016 Post TC-Pam Mini Census Report, Volume 1, Vanuatu, p.1.

measured by age levels, 79% of children (0-15 years) are recorded as living in rural areas. In analysing the distribution of schools across Vanuatu, it can be seen that the sites of school facilities do not align with the population distribution between rural and urban sites.

The 2015 Digest does not provide statistical tables for enrolment rates between urban and rural populations (only between provinces), so figures from the 2014 Annual Statistical Digest have been used for an analysis of school location.

**Table 2: Number of schools by urban and rural locations, 2014**

*Sourced from Annual Statistical Digest, 2014 produced for the Ministry of Education and Training, p 27.*

School Type	Rural	Urban	Not stated	Total
Early Childhood Education	526	39	3	568
Primary School	401	32		433
Secondary School	73	19		92
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1,093</b>

*Source: VEMIS 2014\*Primary schools include some schools which offer Year 7 and Year 8 but are classified as primary school. #Secondary schools include some technical training centres which offer courses from Year 11 level such as Lowanaton in Tanna.*

92.6% of ECE facilities are in rural areas; with only 6.9% provided in urban areas. This proportion is mirrored in primary school facilities, with 92.6% of primary schools located in rural areas and 7.4% in urban areas. Secondary school's locations are more in alignment with population distribution, with 79.3% located in rural areas and 20.7% in urban areas.

**Table 3: Pupil:Teacher ratio in urban and rural schools, 2015**

*Figures sourced from Annual Statistical Digest, 2015 for Ministry of Education and Training, p.33.*

Indicator	Urban Schools	Rural Schools
Pupil: teacher ratio – ECCE	25.1	14.6
Pupil: teacher ratio – primary	32.2	25.1
Pupil: teacher ratio – secondary	16.8	17.7

Table 3 documents the pupil-teacher ratio between urban and rural schools. The pupil-teacher ratio at rural schools is lower than at urban schools, which has been indicated to provide better student results. No urban:rural disaggregated statistics are available on completion rates, certification of teachers or drop-out rates from schools.

**Based on provision of schools in rural areas, that exceeds the proportion of the population living rurally, and based on the low teacher: pupil ratio, it appears that rural students have higher access to education facilities and teachers than urban students.** However, disaggregated figures would need to be examined to determine quality of teachers and facilities in rural versus urban locations, and completion rates at school. It should also be noted that the rural population of Vanuatu is distributed across 64 islands, most of which have poor road infrastructure. **Rural areas may host many more schools than urban areas, but these may still be difficult to access from the villages on that island.**

#### 4.4 Is there a difference in enrolment for different languages?

There are over one hundred separate languages belonging to the family of languages spoken in Vanuatu, and almost everybody also speaks Bislama as a second language<sup>13</sup>. Children usually learn their village language first (vernacular language), then Bislama, and then are introduced to English or French when they commence school<sup>14</sup>.

There are no statistics available on the number of households that identify as Francophone (French speaking) or Anglophone, however general language literacy statistics collected in 2009 identified that 64% of the population aged 5 years or over were literate in English, and 37% were fluent in French.

The Annual Statistical Digest 2015 identified that 35% of primary schools in 2015 used French as the primary language of instruction, with the other 65% using English. This ratio is continued in secondary school with 32% of secondary schools using French as the primary language of instruction, and 68% using English. The ratio is less clear in ECCE, and is likely to be substantially different in 2018 now that the Vanuatu Language Policy dictating use of vernacular language or Bislama in ECCE has come into effect.

**Table 4: Number of schools by language of instruction, 2013 - 15**

*Sourced from Annual Statistical Digest for the Ministry of Education and Training 2015, p 23*

Language	ECCE			Primary (1–6)			Secondary (7+)		
	2013	2014	2015	2013	2014	2015	2013	2014	2015
Bilingual							1	1	1
Bislama	26	25	26						
English	337	342	340	282	281	282	59	60	65
French	66	65	71	152	152	151	27	31	30
Vernacular	128	136	139						
<b>Vanuatu</b>	<b>557</b>	<b>568</b>	<b>576</b>	<b>434</b>	<b>433</b>	<b>433</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>96</b>

**These proportions of language of instruction align with the proportions of the language literacy in Vanuatu**, and is a logical result of the way the education system was developed. Historically, schools in Vanuatu have been developed with the support of local communities with a particular historical connection to the French or English languages. Where the community language is French, the local school is likely to use French as the language of instruction. In schools where the community language is English, the local school is likely to use English as the language of instruction<sup>15</sup>.

Although provision of primary language of instruction matches the language profile of the country, there are indications that quality of education may differ between the two systems. In the 2015 MoET Statistics Digest, Francophone schools show more students qualifying to go onto senior secondary levels after the age of 15 than Anglophone schools. In addition, the numbers of students

<sup>13</sup> Crowley, T (n.d.), "Language Varieties: Bislama (Vanuatu)", <https://www.hawaii.edu/satocenter/langnet/definitions/bislama.html>, retrieved 19 August 2018.

<sup>14</sup> Crowley, T (n.d.), "Language Varieties: Bislama (Vanuatu)", <https://www.hawaii.edu/satocenter/langnet/definitions/bislama.html>, retrieved 19 August 2018.

<sup>15</sup> Vanuatu National Language Policy (2012), Ministry of Education and Training, Vanuatu.

moving into Year 8 are equal, but in Year 9 Francophone, students are much more likely to pass the exams to be enrolled in Year 10. In Year 12, the figures of completion return to an equal level.<sup>16</sup>

#### 4.5 Early Childhood Education

**The NER and GER figures from 2017 illustrate that enrolment in ECCE was low across all provinces,** though it has increased over the past 5 years. In 2017 66% of 4 and 5 year olds were enrolled in ECCE<sup>17</sup>. The 2017 provincial enrolment figures for ECCE show that some provinces had higher level of enrolment; however, within all provinces there were still a considerable number of 4 and 5 year olds out of school.

**Table 5: NER by Province for Early Childhood Care and Education, 2017**

*Sourced from Open VEMIS, 2018.*

	Torba	Sanma	Penama	Malampa	Shefa	Tafea
2017	65%	68%	64%	82%	51%	90%

The Statistical Digests published by the Ministry of Education and Training notes that comparison of the GERs and NERs indicates a significant number of overage and underage enrolments at all levels of schooling, and that this is particularly visible in ECCE. In 2015 (the last published digest) 34% of children enrolled in ECCE were overage, with ages of enrolled students ranging from 6 to 10 years old.<sup>18</sup>

Early childhood education remains a period of schooling that receives less engagement from families. Many parents are unaware of the importance of early childhood care and education and its contribution to cognitive development and school-readiness<sup>19</sup>. In addition, ECCE programs did not receive a government subsidy for fees or for teacher salaries until 2017, and so fees to enrol in Kindy were often higher than primary school fees. Primary schools have now made it a requirement that a child must graduate from Kindy before they can be admitted to Class 1, however some parents interviewed in this study noted that parents were waiting until Term 3 to enrol their child in Kindy, to minimise fees for the year. Under the new policy released in 2017, funding was provided to four and five-year olds in attached and feeder Kindergartens, and Kindergarten enrolment showed a substantial increase in 2017 (see Figure 1 below).

One additional barrier to early childhood education that was investigated in this study is the training teachers hold. For ECE especially, it is recorded that only half (50.9%) of early childhood teachers are certified (that is, have undertaken specialised post-secondary teacher training and are qualified to teach). Section 5.7 discusses qualifications and training of teachers as perceived barrier to education. The finding from this study was that while quality of teaching remains a priority, it is not perceived as a determinant reducing attendance at school. It does however affect the performance of students from their school attendance, and so is still a fundamental part of any strategy to improve education outcomes in Vanuatu.

<sup>16</sup> <sup>16</sup> Annual Statistics Digest for Ministry of Education and Training 2015, p 35.

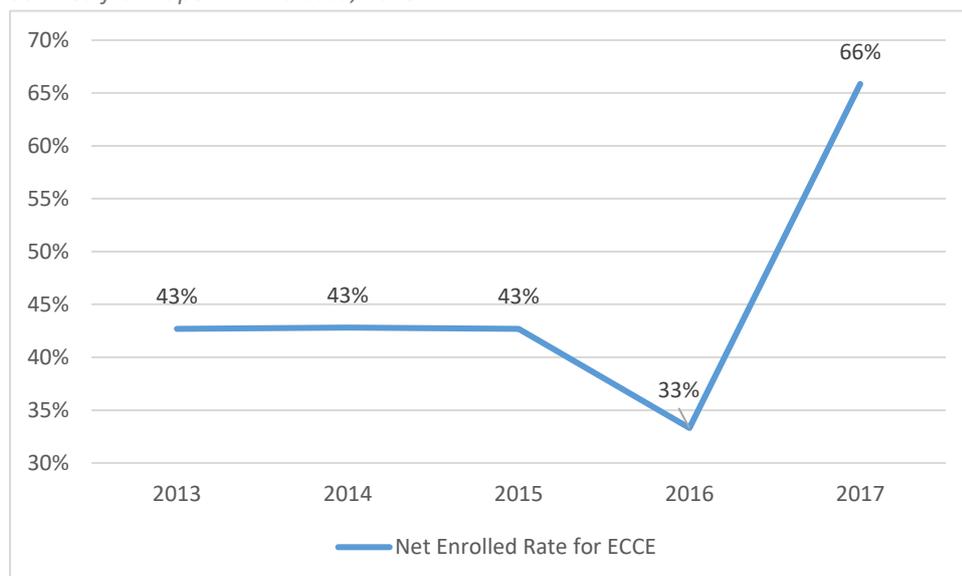
<sup>17</sup> Figures provided from Open VEMIS, 2018.

<sup>18</sup> Annual Statistical Digest for MoET 2015, p.26.

<sup>19</sup> Einloth, S.R (2010), *Building Strong Foundations: World Vision's Focus on Early Childhood Development and Child Well-being*, Germany. [https://www.worldvision.de/sites/worldvision.de/files/pdf/TP5\\_StrongFoundations\\_SRE.pdf](https://www.worldvision.de/sites/worldvision.de/files/pdf/TP5_StrongFoundations_SRE.pdf).

Graph 1: Net Enrolled Rate for ECCE, 2013 – 2017

Sourced from Open VEMIS data, 2018.



#### 4.6 Primary School

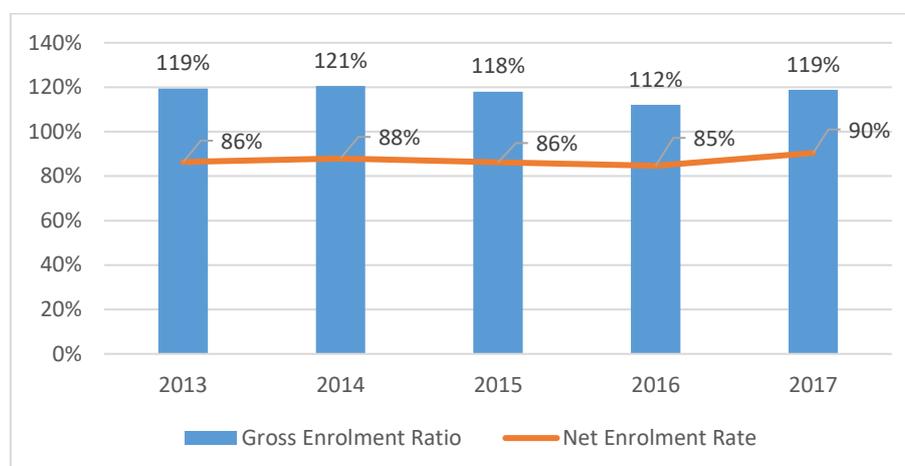
In the Statistical Digest from 2015, the Ministry noted that:

*“In spite of all the efforts initiated by MoET to improve access to schools in 2015, the Net Enrolment Rate (NER) in primary education has declined by 1.7% points over the last five years [2011-2015] to 86%. **This NER means that 13% of students aged 6 to 11 years old were out-of-school.** While school entry and enrolment are continuous priorities for the MoET, efforts to address the issues of data quality, age appropriate entry and schooling costs have not matched the needs. As a result, significant problems persist in Vanuatu with the dropout, the low progression and completion rates at primary and secondary school levels.”*

In 2017 enrolment rates had improved for primary school, however the net enrolment rate remained at 90%, meaning 1 in 10 primary school-aged children were not enrolled at their current year level of study.

Graph 2: Gross and Net Enrolment Rate in primary education 2013-2017

Sourced from data provided by Open VEMIS, 2018.



The Open VEMIS system also provides a comparison of the Net Enrolment Rates (NER) per province which is useful for identifying if all provinces have similar enrolment ratios. From the Table provided below, we can see that in 2017, the Provinces had varying rates of enrolment in primary school.

**Shefa Province had the lowest rate of enrolment at primary level, with only 78% of their primary**

Table 6: NER and GPI per province and school level, 2013-2017

Sourced from data provided by Open VEMIS, 2018.

Province	Torba		Sanma		Penama		Malampa		Shefa		Tafea		ALL (TOTAL)	
	NER	GPI	NER	GPI	NER	GPI	NER	GPI	NER	GPI	NER	GPI	NER	GPI
<b>ECE</b>														
2013	55%	0.93	63%	0.99	54%	1.00	55%	0.92	49%	1.05	61%	0.97	42.70%	1.01
2014	52%	1.15	57%	1.01	49%	0.91	54%	0.99	51%	0.99	58%	0.90	42.80%	0.99
2015	46%	1.06	57%	0.92	47%	1.07	56%	0.97	52%	1.04	59%	0.99	42.70%	1.00
2016	38%	1.05	39%	1.01	23%	0.97	54%	1.08	21%	1.03	44%	1.01	33.31%	1.03
2017	65%	1.12	68%	1.05	64%	1.06	82%	0.96	51%	0.94	90%	1.01	66%	0.99
<b>Primary (1-6)</b>														
2013	86%	1.00	96%	1.00	96%	1.04	99%	1.00	96%	1.00	98%	1.02	86.30%	0.97
2014	74%	1.05	87%	1.03	87%	1.02	89%	1.01	88%	1.02	92%	0.97	88.00%	0.96
2015	79%	0.99	82%	1.00	83%	1.00	92%	1.03	85%	1.03	94%	1.00	86.20%	0.97
2016	81%	1.02	86%	1.03	89%	0.99	95%	0.99	79%	1.06	81%	0.93	84.67%	1.00
2017	79%	1.04	89%	1.01	93%	0.97	102%	0.98	78%	1.00	107%	0.90	90.42%	1.04
<b>Secondary (7+)</b>														
2013	45%	1.00	64%	1.03	56%	0.92	53%	1.07	70%	1.03	63%	0.94	33.00%	1.18
2014	33%	1.12	44%	1.10	87%	1.02	34%	1.18	68%	1.04	35%	1.16	34.90%	1.17
2015	27%	1.19	47%	1.05	36%	1.09	36%	1.10	69%	1.02	32%	1.09	34.90%	1.14
2016	29%	1.25	47%	1.08	36%	1.13	37%	1.11	53%	1.12	28%	1.13	42.42%	1.12
2017	25%	1.42	48%	1.11	35%	1.11	37%	1.16	51%	1.10	35%	0.92	43.24%	1.15

school aged children enrolled in primary school. **Torba Province also had low rates of enrolment, with 79% of their primary school aged children enrolled.** However, all other provinces showed a marked increase in enrolment, with Malampa and Tafea showing that they had enrolled higher than their recorded population of school-aged children in primary school, indicating that there may have been an increase in families moving to these two provinces in 2017.

The focus groups and interviews conducted in Shefa Province suggested that large class sizes and poor individual student attention and resourcing were some of the major barriers to education within the province. The survey of Torba province parents indicated that meeting school fees was their largest perceived barrier to education.

Torba province was over-represented in the responses nominating ‘meeting school fees’ as a barrier - 30% of the total survey responses about school fees being a barrier (86 responses) came from Torba Province. Just under a third of the Torba answers relating to school fees said that it was difficult to make cash income because the copra price had dropped and the copra trading ships are infrequent. Torba parents were also over-represented in the suggestion that some parents were too ‘lazy’ to send their children to school: 54.5% of responses about parents being lazy came from the Torba province survey. (Note, section 5.1 observes that comments on laziness may indicate low levels of community knowledge on systemic economic structures contributing to poverty, rather than a poor work ethic.)

**Tafea Province and Malampa Province had trends of high levels of enrolment**, with 107% and 102% of their primary school age children enrolled at school.

Several determinants will be discussed in this study to identify some of the reasons for this difference in enrolment nationally.

#### 4.7 Secondary school

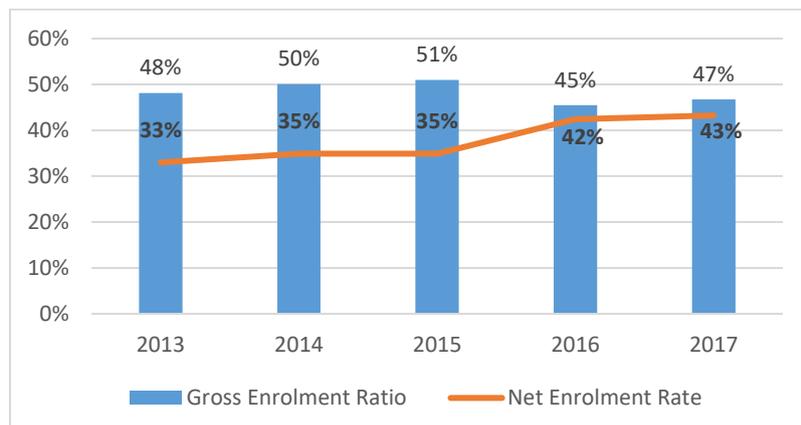
Referring to **Error! Reference source not found.**, the NER figures illustrate that **enrolment in secondary school (Year 7 to Year 13) drops considerably from primary school enrolment levels to levels lower than ECCE enrolment.**

Torba province shows the lowest level of enrolment, with only 25% of youth aged 12 – 18 years attending secondary school. The highest level of secondary school enrolment is in Shefa province, but even here only two-thirds (51%) are enrolled in secondary school at their correct age.

The 2015 Annual Statistical Digest notes that **“the [low] gross enrolment rate in Secondary....provides evidence that the country is not able to accommodate all its school-age population.”** Data collected since 2015 suggests that secondary school enrolment net enrolment rate (that is, enrolment at the correct age) is increasing, but that this has led to a decrease in gross enrolment as schooling is adjusted to provide to the correct age groups.

**Graph 3: Gross and Net Enrolment Rate in primary education 2013-2017**

*Sourced from data provided by Open VEMIS, 2018.*



Some barriers to ongoing secondary education identified in this study included low parental and student perception of education's link to income-generation in the community environment, and perceived 'risks' associated with attendance at secondary school, including teenage relationships and teenage pregnancy, or exposure to drugs and alcohol.

As for ECCE, secondary school fees are not subsidised by the government and so meeting school fees was another common barrier cited within this study.

#### *4.8 Technical and Vocational Education and Training*

Until 2015 there were two sources of technical and vocational education and training in Vanuatu:

\* Vanuatu Rural Development Training Centres Association (VRDTCA), and

\* Technical Vocational Educational and Training program (TVET) program.

Both networks aimed to provide training in skill development across a range of sectors, with Rural Training Centres (RTCs) having particular focus on youth who had exited the formal education system.

In 2015 the VRDTCA network was dissolved and its functions were assumed by the Ministry of Education's TVET department. Under the Ministry of Education and Training, the TVET Partnership supports the operation of provincial Skills Centres. These contract local training providers and industry coaches to deliver skills with the goal of building greater productivity, increased employment and successful entrepreneurship.

The focus of training streams in 2018 included:

- Skills for Tourism – with the Department of Tourism and the Vanuatu Tourism Office
- Skills for Handicraft – with the Department of Industry
- Skills for Agribusiness – with the Department of Agriculture<sup>20</sup>.

Statistics were not available on the number of skills development activities or students enrolled in TVET programs in 2016 and 2017, but from reference from the Statistical Digest of 2015 an overview can be gained of the training focus and the level of participation in each province (Refer to Table 7 and Table 8 on page 32).

**Tourism training was the main focus in 2015**, with 39 tourism training activities conducted (refer to Table 8). **Business and Agriculture** were also focused on in the training program, in alignment with the strategy of the TVET program.

**Sanma province demonstrates the highest levels of enrolment in TVET programs**, followed by Malampa Province. No information was available about how this compares with population across the provinces.

**Over the course of the 5 years measured in the 2015 Statistical Digest, there was a considerable decline in enrolment in TVET.** Given the interest in vocational training expressed in this study, it would be valuable to assess the evaluations from this period when they are available to determine the reason for this decline.

---

<sup>20</sup> Vanuatu Skills Partnership webpage, <http://www.vanuatutvet.org.vu/>, retrieved 17 August 2018.

Table 7: Number of TVET Skills development activities conducted by province, 2015.

Sourced from Annual Statistical Digest for Ministry of Education and Training 2015, p 32.

Skill Development Activities	Sanma	Malampa	Torba	Tafea	Total
Agriculture	4	6	1	0	11
Business	6	5	2	1	14
Fisheries	1	1	2	0	4
Forestry	2	2	2	1	7
Information Technology	1	1	0	0	2
Livestock	1	2	5	0	8
Manufacturing	4	4	1	0	9
Others	1	2	1	0	4
Tourism	12	11	15	1	39
Trades & Services	4	1	0	2	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>105</b>

Source: 2015 TVET data

Table 8: Number of TVET participants by province and year, 2011–2015.

Sourced from Annual Statistical Digest for Ministry of Education and Training 2015, p 32.

Survey Year	Torba			Sanma			Malampa			Tafea			TOTAL
	M	F	MD	M	F	MD	M	F	MD	M	F	MD	Total
2011	0	0	0	655	624	6	747	442	7	0	0	0	2,481
2012	0	0	0	577	309	1	508	327	3	0	0	0	1,725
2013	0	0	0	352	156	3	255	83	3	0	0	0	852
2014	129	89	0	259	186	12	142	231	14	0	0	0	1,062
2015	142	86	0	110	144	0	188	48	0	65	9	0	792

Source: VEMIS, 2015

The Statistical Digest also noted that the female to male enrolment ratio for TVET programs dropped to 0.57 in 2015 (a similar gender disparity in enrolment was noted in the RTCs). A Gender Equality Strategy for the Vanuatu TVET Centres was planned for implementation in January 2015 - June 2016, but the evaluation report on the impacts of these activities or the TVET program in 2016 – 2018 is not yet available publicly.

The Barriers to Education focus groups, interviews and surveys all indicated that parents and youth were very interested in vocational and technical training. Several comments from youth and parents in the focus group indicated that they found school 'too theoretical'. Two youth respondents said they had chosen to attend youth classes at Wan Smol Bag (in Port Vila) and at the WSB Northern Care Youth Clinic in Santo, as the training was practical and employment-oriented.

**The study indicates that there appears to be interest in vocational or technical school, but the numbers of enrolment indicate limited access or awareness of the programs that are available.**

#### 4.9 Post-Secondary Education and Training

The 2015 Annual Statistical Digest notes that **“higher education is encountering more enrolments and is a growing sector in Vanuatu”**. Eighty-six percent of the parents and youth interviewed in this study said that they think their children will go on to a technical or vocational school after leaving primary school or secondary school, however enrolment rates in post-secondary education and training show only a small number of our youth are enrolling in post-secondary education and training after they leave secondary school. In 2015 (the latest year where enrolment figures were available), only an estimated 7% of the 12 to 18-year-old population (2,129 youth) attended post-secondary colleges such as VITE and VMC, and only 5% of the teenaged population (1,572 youth) went on to TVET or RTC centres (rural training centres).

The Digest records post-secondary institutions separately to universities, and identifies seven post-secondary options for students (shown in Table 9 on page 34). The enrolment statistics from 2014 have been used for this discussion as the Vanuatu Police College and the Vanuatu Nursing College did not have an intake in 2015.

The institution demonstrating the **highest enrolment rates was the Vanuatu Institute of Technology (VIT)**. VIT is a government-funded bilingual institution based in Port Vila Vanuatu. It offers courses in 11 disciplines including Arts, Building/Construction, Financial Management and Mechanical Engineering. Students need to have graduated with their Senior Secondary school certificate (Year 12) to be eligible to apply for enrolment, so it is an option limited to those students who have remained engaged with the formal education system.

**Vanuatu Maritime College had the second largest enrolment for post-secondary study**, with 32% of students enrolling in post-secondary studies enrolling in this college. The Maritime College accepts students who have completed Year 8 onwards, and so may be seen as a viable enrolment option with immediate employment opportunities for youth who do not wish to remain at school for the full secondary school period.

**Training at VITE was the third most populated post-secondary training**. Many parents interviewed in the surveys for this study nominated teaching as a possible post-secondary option for their child, primarily because teachers were seen as a need in grassroots communities. However, in order to maintain this institutions’ preferred status, focus may need to be applied to ensure completion of training leads to increased employment opportunities. Current employment opportunities for graduated teachers are acknowledged as being challenging:

“It’s normal that there is little chance to find a job after graduation....it is the duty of the Teaching Service Commission (TSC) and the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) to ensure trainees get hired at the end, said the Development Officer at the MoET, Reginald Garoleo, as the representative of the Ministry at the [VITE 2017 graduation].”<sup>21</sup>

VITE have suspended enrolments in 2016 – 2018 while they transition to a new Bachelor program. Currently, enrolment in this program this is not an available option for out-of-school students. It is envisaged that new students enrolling in the Bachelor program will also need to meet minimum

---

<sup>21</sup> Anita Roberts, Daily Post 11 December 2017, “Second-last teachers to graduate with diploma” [http://dailypost.vu/news/second-last-teachers-to-graduate-with-diploma/article\\_731f67e0-1308-503c-9a34-51fdb94e36d.html](http://dailypost.vu/news/second-last-teachers-to-graduate-with-diploma/article_731f67e0-1308-503c-9a34-51fdb94e36d.html)

secondary study requirements, which would exclude any students who dropped out of school prior to Year 12 from this pathway.

**Table 9: Total enrolment in post-secondary institution in Vanuatu by sex, and institution, 2014**

Sourced from *Annual Statistical Digest for Ministry of Education and Training 2014*, p. 29

Institutions	Male	Female	Total
Vanuatu Institute of Technology (VIT)	474	318	792
Vanuatu Maritime College (VMC)	686	20	706
Vanuatu Institute of Teachers Education (VITE)	128	197	325
Australian Pacific Training College (APTC)	126	157	283
Vanuatu Agriculture College (VAC)	66	11	77
Vanuatu Nursing College (VNC)	38	18	56
Vanuatu Police College (VPC)	20	13	33
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,500</b>	<b>716</b>	<b>2,216</b>

#### 4.10 Tertiary Study

Less information is available on tertiary study than for ECE, primary school and secondary school enrolments. No GER figures are available to determine what proportion of secondary students continue to higher education. **The 2009 census figures reported that 3.8% of the population had completed tertiary education, with the majority of those (7.7% of the tertiary graduates) residing in urban areas.** However, the 2015 Annual Statistical Digest notes that **enrolment in higher education is increasing**<sup>22</sup>. Some parents and youth interviewed in this study were still uncertain about the benefits of a tertiary education, because of a perceived limited relevance to locally available income opportunities.

---

*[Some parents] do not think education is important because some of their children have graduated with a degree but still cannot find a job, they are involved in gardening where they can earn money.*  
Focus group with parents, Efate

---

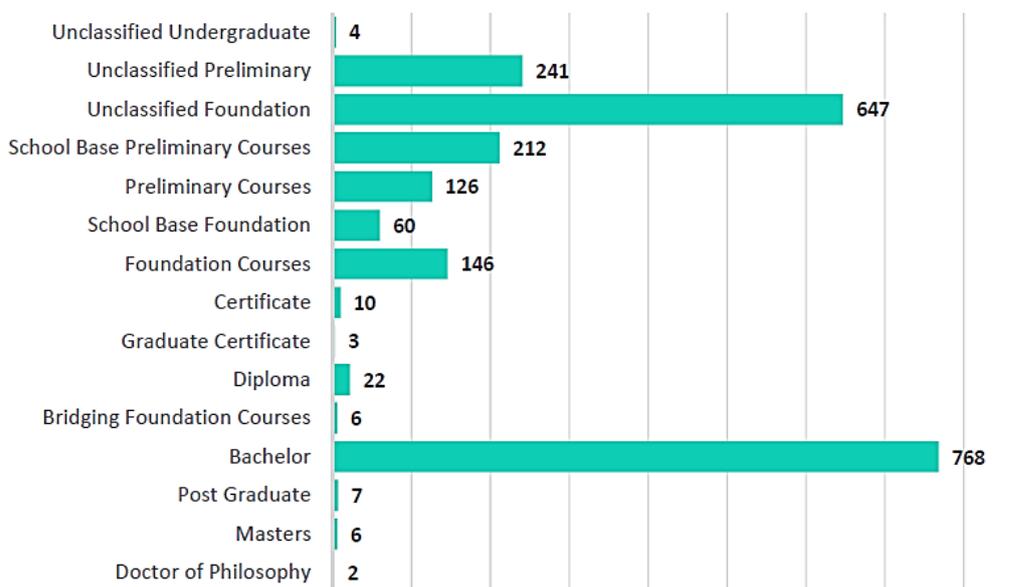
<sup>22</sup> 2015 Annual Statistical Digest for the Ministry of Education and Training, p. 27.

Graph 4 below indicates that **most tertiary study within Vanuatu is Preliminary or Foundation courses or Bachelor degrees**. There are very few students enrolled in post-graduate study, and in 2015 only 2 students were enrolled to complete a PhD.

As noted above, **women were more likely to receive scholarships for tertiary study than men** (though numbers on male-female enrolment at USP are not available). However, **completion of degree rates indicate that more men graduate from tertiary study than women**. The Annual Statistical Digest for 2015 notes that 33 women graduated from tertiary studies in 2015, compared to 43 men. There may be a number of reasons for this, including reduced flexibility for women to complete their full studies due to family commitments.

**Graph 4: Vanuatu students studying at USP by program of study, 2015**

*Sourced from Annual Statistics Digest for Ministry of Education and Training 2015, p 28.*



Anecdotal evidence from the Vanuatu Scholarships Office was that the **tertiary studies pursued were largely in Arts subjects (Geography and Law) and Business studies**. There was an expressed interest from education stakeholders in increasing enrolment in STEM tertiary studies, however it is not known whether this has been promoted through policy or resourcing changes in the education strategy.

#### 4.11 Who is dropping out of school, and when do they leave?

The Annual Statistical Digest for 2015 lists the average drop-out percentages as **8.7% average drop-out rate for primary school, and 35.6% average drop-out rate for high-school**. Only 14.3% of enrolled students were recorded as completing the full education structure to Year 13.

Open VEMIS figures demonstrate that a significantly higher proportion of boys drop out of school than girls. **In the years 2011-2015, an average of 3 males dropped out of primary school for every 2 females.**<sup>23</sup>

The Open VEMIS data for **secondary school** does not demonstrate the same gender disparity in terms of numbers of drop-outs. **In 2011 – 2013, a comparable number of girls and boys dropped out of school between the years Year 7 to Year 10. In 2014 and 2015 this ratio changed, with 1.2 boys leaving school for every 1 girl in 2014, and 1.6 boys dropping out of school for every 1 girl in 2015.** It is interesting to observe also that boys and girls drop out of secondary school at different points in the education hierarchy. Girls were more likely to drop out of school at Year 9 (an average 51 girls dropped out of Year 9 each year between 2011-2015, compared to an average of 36 girls dropping out of Year 10 per annum). Boys demonstrated a trend to drop out of secondary school at Year 7 level (an average of 61 boys dropped out of Year 7 each year between 2011-2015, compared to an average of 44 boys dropping out of Year 10 per annum in the same period). Section 5.6 (Gender) discusses possible gendered influences on school departure, including the finding that boys may be more likely to be pulled out of school in their teens to assist with cash crop agriculture, fishing or land maintenance.

## 5. Barriers to Education in the Vanuatu context

The literature review conducted identified that globally, the main barriers to education rest within the areas of Access, Quality and Management. The following determinants were identified as frequent indicators of barriers to education during the literature review:

- Gender
- Income Poverty
- Quality of Education
- Geography
- Social / Cultural norms
- Parental Perceptions
- Lack of Disability Inclusion
- Child Labour
- Impact of Disasters
- Conflict

(See summary at Section 3 for more discussion of these factors.)

The literature review identified that there is little Pacific-based research regarding these determinants, with most data and assessment being drawn from African and Asian countries.

This study therefore sought to investigate all of these determinants to identify which determinants had the highest impact in Vanuatu. (NB: conflict was excluded from the study, given the low level of armed conflict in Vanuatu).

All determinants that were researched were identified as having an impact in school enrolment in the Vanuatu context. The most substantial impact was recorded for:

---

<sup>23</sup> Open VEMIS data: Drop out students by gender, school type and year level for 2010 - 2015

1. **Meeting School Fees** (including Income poverty, income generation difficulties, and misuse of income) – 26% of responses
2. **Lack of Parental Support or Value on Education** (parental perceptions) – 10%
3. **Access to school** due to distance to travel and poor road infrastructure – 7% of responses
4. **Disability** – access and teaching inclusion, discrimination – 6% of responses
5. **Disaster** – impact of disasters on the community and education facilities, as well as relocation of population and use of school buildings as evacuation centres – 4%

Many other barriers were identified by the parents, teachers, principals and students interviewed during this study. An abridged list of these barriers is provided below, with the full list is available at Annexure 1. This list was generated from the open answers provided in the survey of parents in Torba, Penama and Tafea provinces, and from notes taken during focus groups and interviews held in Malekula, Santo and Efate. It should not be read as a statistical representation of the national perception of barriers; however, it does provide a useful description of what parents, educational staff and students perceive as the main barriers.

**Table 10: Barriers to attending school, as identified by parents, teachers, principals and youth** (Full list at Annexure 1.)

Response	# Total = 334	% of total 334 responses	Comments / quotes
School Fees	43	13%	
Lack of parent's commitment to education	32	10%	
Income generation difficulties	27	8%	Cash crops damaged by disaster; copra price dropped
Misuse of Income	16	5%	Spend too much money on mobile phone refill and kava
Distance of school - long way (13) and weather (11) (bad weather making travel inaccessible)	13 + 11	7%	
Disability - access and teaching inclusion (15) + Discrimination (4)	15 + 4	6%	
Disaster	13	4%	
Drugs and alcohol	13	4%	
Peer pressure to stay out of school	11	3%	
Child needs to help with domestic, childcare or agricultural work at home	9	3%	
Broken Families	8	2%	
Children aren't interested	8	2%	
Access to mobile phones and websites	7	2%	
Lack of knowledge on value of education	7	2%	
School source of boy/girl relationships	7	2%	
Youth can earn money from out-of-school activities	7	2%	
Grandparents raising children (no resources)	5	1%	
Lack of resources or facilities at school	5	1%	
No school uniform (ashamed)	5	1%	
Pulled out for custom ceremonies	5	1%	
Abuse	4	1%	
Children disrespectful, don't attend	4	1%	
No savings plan at house	4	1%	

Response	# Total = 334	% of total 334 responses	Comments / quotes
Too many students, not enough teachers	4	1%	
Child has learning difficulties	3	1%	
Children's rights - physical discipline not allowed	3	1%	
Domestic Violence	3	1%	
Gender	3	1%	
Large family size	3	1%	
Sickness	3	1%	
Syllabus is too theoretical	3	1%	
Does not align with cultural beliefs	2	1%	
Haven't done homework (no light) don't want to go back	2	1%	
Language	2	1%	
Lost investment (education fees don't pay off)	2	1%	
No food at home	2	1%	
Pregnancy	2	1%	
Religion - school doesn't align with religious teachings	2	1%	
School facilities poor	2	1%	

The following sections will look at the 5 determinants identified as the main barriers to education in Vanuatu<sup>24</sup>. This determinants section will also discuss gender, as this is traditionally a strong determinant as a barrier to education, but was surprisingly ranked very low in the barriers identified in this Vanuatu study. The section will conclude by discussing some of the other determinants parents had identified as potential barriers to education: limited resources and facilities at the school (quality of education); and custom traditions clashing with education (identified in the literature review as a possible determinant).

The interviews and surveys also identified several factors that can be classified as 'risks' to reduce access to education, that is, they are controllable or mitigatable to some extent at household or community level. This included expectation on children to assist with work in the household; absent parents; low child interest in education; access to social media and mobile phones distracting children; desire to earn immediate income; perceived risk of exposure to sexual relationships and risk of teenage pregnancy through school attendance; and the perception that discipline was not enforced at schools. These risks will be discussed in section 6.

### *5.1 Meeting School Fees (Income Poverty and Low Priority)*

The literature review identified that low income is a significant determiner of school drop-outs globally<sup>25</sup>. This study confirmed that 'the ability to meet school fees' is also perceived by Vanuatu parents and teachers as the most significant determinant of school attendance.

A total of 86 (26%) of the total 334 comments collected from the focus groups and surveys mentioned difficulty in paying school fees in their identification of barriers to education. "School fees", "difficulty in income generation" and "school fees low priority in income expenditure" were

---

<sup>24</sup> Determinants are elements in society that identify or influence an outcome. They reflect on the larger context, eg socioeconomic factors, gender, geography and so on. They differ from risk, in that they are not able to be controlled by the individual to change their circumstances.

<sup>25</sup> Hunter and May (2003), Dachi and Garrett (2003), Renzulli and Park (2000) and Pryor and Ampiah (2003) cited in (Bassey 2010).

the top ranked barriers out of the 51 different types of barriers identified (See Annexure 1 for the full list of barriers mentioned and rankings).

#### Summary:

86 (26%) of the total 334 comments collected from the focus groups and surveys mentioned difficulty in paying school fees in their identification of barriers to education. This total figure included difficulty in paying school fees because of income poverty (13%), comments about difficulties in income generation due to external factors (8%), and comments that some families spent household income on recreation rather than on education (5%).

Survey findings from parents in Torba, Tafea and Penama provinces indicated that 65% of parents found it 'very hard to impossible' to pay secondary school fees; and 26% found it 'very hard to impossible' to pay primary school fees. Only 5% of responses reported that it was 'very hard to impossible' to meet early childhood education fees; fees may be linked to the low number of parents enrolling their children in ECCE. Men had a significantly higher perception of how difficult it was to meet school fees, with up to 17% more men rating payment of fees as 'very hard to impossible' when compared to responses from women.

A significant number of these responses would stem from the predominantly low cash income levels across Vanuatu, with 12.7% of the population recorded as living underneath the Basic Needs Poverty Line in 2010<sup>26</sup>.

The study interviews, focus groups and surveys also noted the impact of disability on income-generation, with disabled adults having less access to employment, increasing their ability to generate income for education costs.

31% of the 86 comments noted that income-generation sources were impacted by external factors, such as fluctuation in world commodity prices, disaster impacts on cash crops, and lack of access to markets. These factors had affected their ability to meet school expenses in the past three years.

19% of the 86 comments alleged that some households or communities had adequate income, but prioritised lifestyle purchases including kava, alcohol or mobile phone credit over education expenses. This suggestion is somewhat supported by the VNSO 2012 Vanuatu Hardship and Poverty Report which notes that nationally, the second biggest expenditure item in the food and drinks category is kava, accounting for 14 per cent of average monthly household expenditure at VT 3,200; and that mobile phone charges were the second-highest item for household operation expenditure in both rural and urban households.

13% of the 86 comments suggested that parents were 'lazy' [sic], and did not want to work to earn funds for school expenses. However, attribution of failure to pay education costs on laziness of individual families should be considered as a perception, not as evidence of poor work ethic of disadvantaged families.

The study responses indicated that having parents not pay school fees, or not buy uniforms can contribute to a sense of shame in the student, and in three responses was the perceived cause of the student dropping out of school.

---

<sup>26</sup> Vanuatu National Statistics Office and UNDP Pacific Centre Suva (2012), Vanuatu Hardship & Poverty Report 2012, Fiji, p.10.

## Low Income

As noted in the literature review, **low income levels** across Vanuatu make payment of school fees difficult for most families.

A Household Income and Expenditure survey (HIES) has not been completed for several years, but in 2010, average household monthly income was recorded at 83,800vt per month<sup>27</sup>. There was significant variation in recorded household income between urban and rural areas, **with average rural monthly household income dropping as low as 53,500vt (Tafea Province), and average urban monthly household income (Luganville and Port Vila) recorded as 97,500vt**. 88% of Vanuatu's households operate under a subsistence economy, where many of their household needs are produced by their household or their community<sup>28</sup>. For example, in 2010, households produced, on average, 58% of their own total food consumption<sup>29</sup>.

Despite self-provision for basic needs, there are still many items households require cash income to access. The 2010 HIES reported that: “[In 2010] Vanuatu households spent vt54,000 on average per month. 76% of the total expenditure is dedicated to food [41%], housing [19%], and transport [16%], leaving 25% to cover all other household expenses. This includes education, communication, and transfers [5% each]<sup>30</sup>”

---

<sup>27</sup> Vanuatu National Statistics Office (2012), Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2010, Vanuatu.

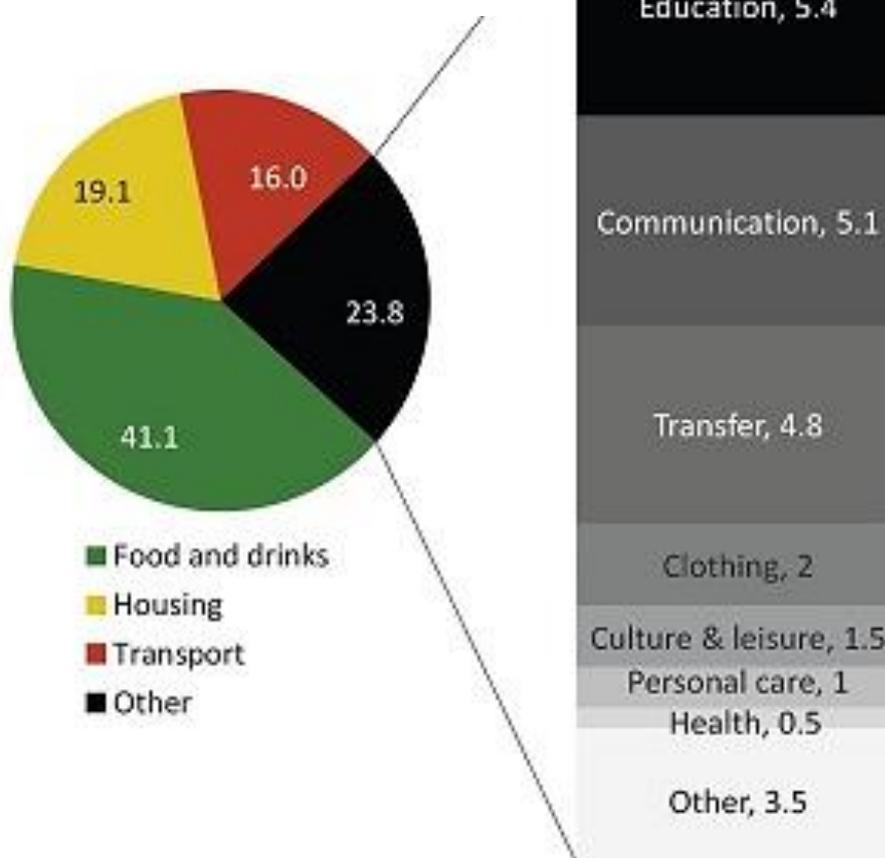
<sup>28</sup> VNSO (2017), 2016 Post TC-Pam Mini Census Report, Volume 1, Vanuatu, p.1.

<sup>29</sup> Vanuatu National Statistics Office and UNDP Pacific Centre Suva (2012), *Vanuatu Hardship & Poverty Report 2012*, Fiji, p.9.

<sup>30</sup> Vanuatu National Statistics Office (2012), Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2010, Vanuatu.

Graph5: Household expenditure in Vanuatu

Sourced from <https://vnso.gov.vu/index.php/special-report/vanuatu-living-standard>



From this 2010 assessment we can see that **education costs comprise 5.2% of total expenditure of an average household each month (an average of 2808vt per month)**. This amount can be taken to include school fees and costs such as school uniforms, stationery, fundraising etc.

School fees can vary depending on the school. Although a government subsidy is provided for primary school, many schools request a contribution fee per student. For example, the contribution fee from Malekula was estimated at 1,000vt per term per student in the focus group discussions. It was not clarified by Principals or parents about why contribution fees needed to be levied; for example, whether government subsidies were insufficient to cover all operational expenses for the schools, or whether contributions requested from parents were for additional activities / materials. This is a question that would benefit from further research.

Early Childhood education and Secondary school are not currently fully subsidised by the government. The term tuition fee recorded in a 2017 MoET fact sheet was 2,500vt per term for early education students, and 5,143vt per term for secondary students.<sup>31</sup> For families, it is easy to see how this amount can quickly accumulate to become a major source of household expenditure once two

<sup>31</sup> [https://moet.gov.vu/docs/press-releases/ministry/MoET%20Fact%20Sheet\\_06\\_2018.pdf](https://moet.gov.vu/docs/press-releases/ministry/MoET%20Fact%20Sheet_06_2018.pdf)

or more children within the household are attending school. The 2010 Household Income and Expenditure survey also noted that poor households were larger on average in both rural and urban areas.<sup>32</sup> This would place additional pressure on limited resources for education.

The survey of parents in Torba, Tafea and Penama provinces indicated that **65% of parents that commented on secondary school fees** ('don't know' answers excluded) **said that it was very hard to impossible (sometimes can't pay) to meet secondary fees.** Just over a quarter of the parents who commented on primary school fees (excluding 'don't know' responses) **said that it was very hard to impossible to meet school fees,** while only **5% said that it was very hard to impossible to meet early childhood education fees.** (See Graph 6 and Graph 7 on page 44.)

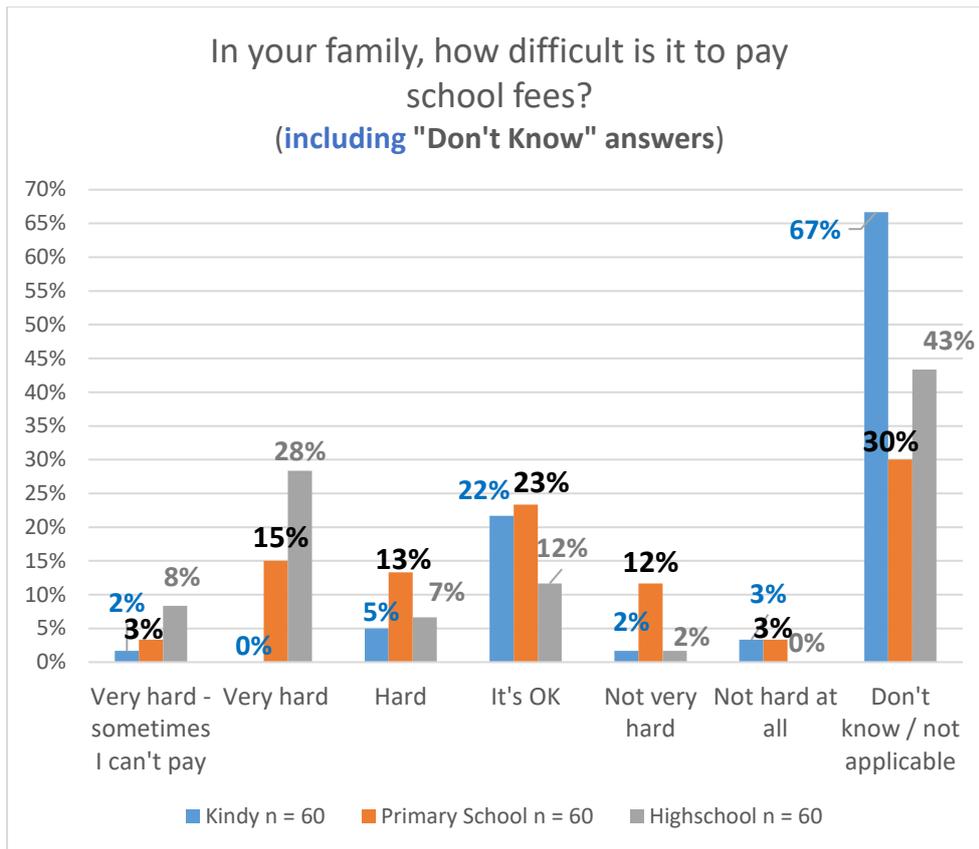
Given that school fees for early education are higher than school fees for primary school, the perception by 80% of parents that it was 'OK', to 'not hard at all' to meet these school fees may be linked to the low number of parents enrolling their children in ECCE. This is supported by the low NER figures provided in Section 4.5 Early Childhood Education above.

**Men also had a much higher perception of how difficult it was to pay school fees than women did.** From the survey conducted in Torba, Penama and Tafea province, 44% of men who gave an opinion on secondary school fees said that it was very hard to impossible to pay secondary school fees, whereas only 27% of women felt that it was very hard to impossible to meet these fees. Similarly, 22% of men ranked primary school fees as very hard to impossible to pay, whereas only 17% of women felt they were very hard to impossible to pay. The number who responded that ECCE fees were difficult / impossible was too small to make a meaningful gender distinction on responses.

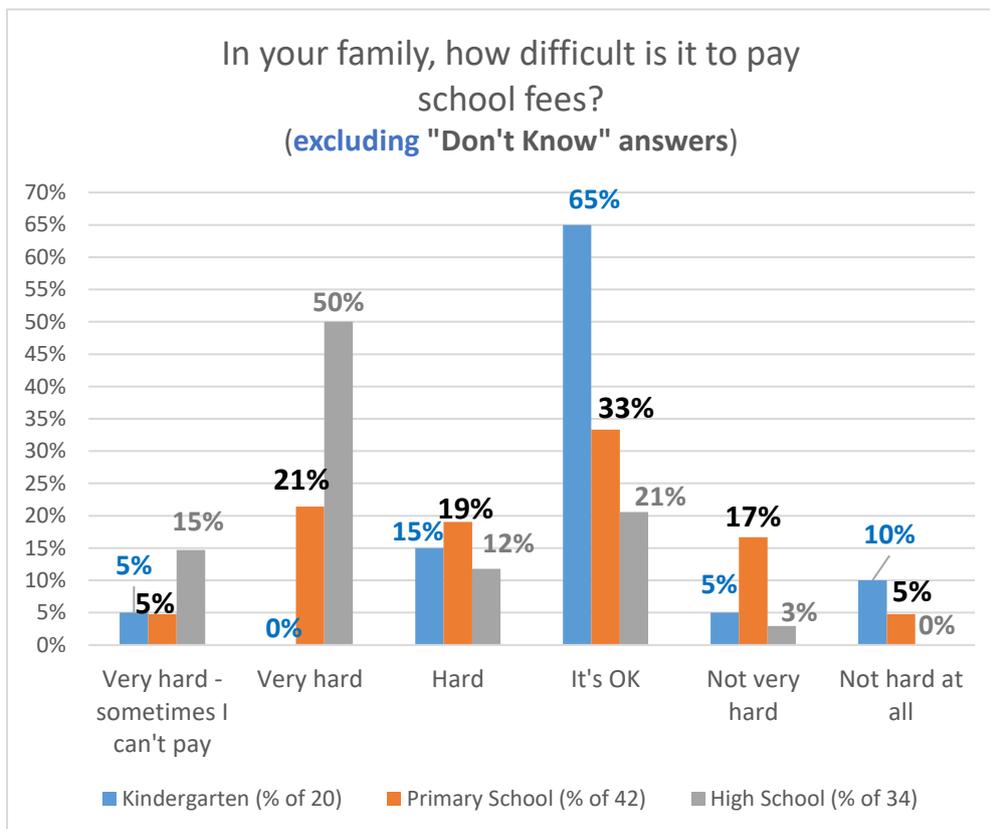
**This gender disparity in perception of difficulty of fees may be linked to different income-generation responsibilities, to different expenditure responsibilities, or to different access to (and protection of) disposable income.** Without more data it is not possible to determine the key factor behind this gender difference.

---

<sup>32</sup> <https://vnso.gov.vu/index.php/special-report/vanuatu-hardship-poverty>



Graph 6: In your family, how difficult is it to pay school fees (total responses)



Graph 7: In your family, how difficult is it to pay school fees (excluding 'not applicable' responses)

## Disability impacts on income

Several parents in the two Santo focus groups of parents with disabilities and parents of students with disabilities noted the **impact that their disability had on their earning potential and how this affected their ability to pay school fees for their children**. One parent suggested support for disability-inclusive education also needed to take into account disability in parents, and how this impacts their ability to meet school fees.

---

*Question: What are some of the challenges/barriers for students to attend school?*

*- The only challenge is finding the means to earn money to support my child in school.*

*Parent with a disability, South Santo*

*- Having a disabled or special needs dad who finds it hard at times to work and earn money to support kids in school due to pain in limbs.*

*Parent with a disability, South Santo*

*- Parents with disability in the village cannot meet deadlines of school contributions*

*Parents of a student with a disability, South Santo*

*- [We don't want] our disabilities becoming an obstacle to support our child in school.*

*Parent with a disability, South Santo*

---

## Drop in income generation opportunities

The cash economy of Vanuatu is mainly based on agriculture, fisheries, tourism and offshore financial services<sup>33</sup>. Therefore, Vanuatu is vulnerable to fluctuations in world commodity prices as most of its exports are agricultural - for example copra, coconut oil, kava, beef, timber, cocoa, and coffee. Disasters also have a significant impact on earning potential as they damage or destroy cash crops and marine resources.

Of the 86 comments collected from the focus groups and surveys about difficulty in paying school fees, 27 of these comments (31%), specifically noted that their difficulty in meeting education costs came from changes in their income generation opportunities, with **disaster damage to cash crops and a drop in the global purchasing price of copra** mentioned as the main impacts on income generation.

---

<sup>33</sup> CIA (2004) "The World Factbook" <http://www.iiasa.ac.at/~marek/fbook/04/fields/2116.html>, retrieved 19 August 2018.

---

*In some parts of the country, especially in Torres and Banks Island, service delivery is unreliable so sometimes parents who rely on copra as a commodity find it hard to pay school fees for their children on time, causing the school to take action on their children and send them home.*

*Santo parent*

*Parents that work in [copra] plantations don't really think of their kids going to school due to low payment [purchase price] of copra. As a result in our village most children don't attend kindergarten.*

*Malekula teacher*

*Parents depend a lot on cash crops for money, when the price drops, it becomes hard for them to pay for school fees.*

*Pentecost parent*

*Ways to find income is one [barrier]... disaster can contribute, especially if our cash crop is destroyed like in Cyclone Pam. When our cash crops are destroyed it makes it difficult for us to earn money to support our children.*

*Maewo parent*

*Cash crop buyers are too far from us and the ship visits us only every month or two.*

*This makes it so hard for us to have money to pay for school fees and other school necessities.*

*Vanua Lava parent*

---

### Priority on other items

A small proportion of responses related to difficulty in paying school fees placed the blame on parent's shoulders. **Almost one-fifth (19%) of the 86 comments about income believed that some households had the income to afford school fees, but other things were prioritised over education.** 5% of teacher, parent and youth responses suggested that **parents spent money on kava, phone credit top-ups or 'lifestyle' rather than on meeting educational needs.**

This statement is somewhat supported by the VNSO's analysis of household expenditure. The Vanuatu Hardship and Poverty Report records that 41.1% of the average monthly expenditure is recorded as being spent on food and drinks, however a 2012 report released by VNSO notes that:

**"the second biggest expenditure item in the food and drinks category is kava, accounting for 14 per cent of average monthly household expenditure at VT 3,200.** Just over half of all households (51.5%) spent money on kava with monthly expenditure totalling VT 6,200....**Alcohol accounted for 4.6% of total food and drinks expenditure.** Beer was the most popular item, bought by one in ten households, with monthly beer expenditure in these households averaging VT 8,100. Kava emerged as the second most prominent item in this expenditure category [food and drinks] – ahead of meat, fish and vegetables; spending on kava and alcohol together equalled total household expenditure on rice, which was the number one staple food purchased by households."<sup>34</sup>

---

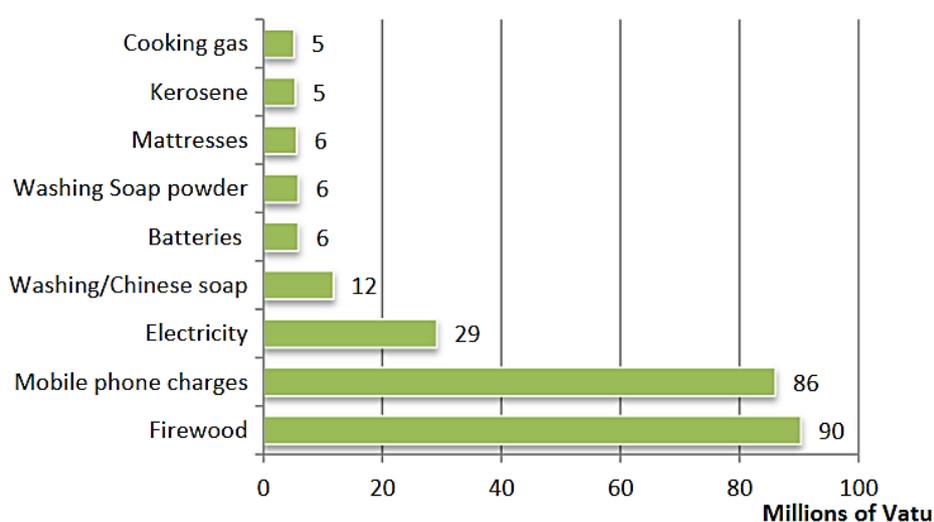
<sup>34</sup> VNSO and SPC (2013) "Household expenditure patterns in Vanuatu" (report), [https://vnso.gov.vu/images/Special\\_Report/Expenditure\\_Patterns/2013VanuatuLivingConditionSurvey.pdf](https://vnso.gov.vu/images/Special_Report/Expenditure_Patterns/2013VanuatuLivingConditionSurvey.pdf), retrieved 19 August 2018.

This analysis suggests that in just over half of the households in Vanuatu, twice as much money (6,200vt) is spent on kava each month than on education costs (averaged at 2,808vt per month).

High household expenditure on mobile phone credit top-ups is also supported by the data collected during the 2010 Household Expenditure and Income Survey. The survey identified that outside of the three broad categories of food, housing and transport, school fees and cell phone top-ups represented the two largest single expenditure items for Vanuatu households, accounting for 40 per cent of all other expenditure.<sup>35</sup> (See Graph 8 and 9 below for breakdown of major household operation expenditures.)

#### Graph 8: Major household operation expenditure items, rural areas, 2010

Sourced from VNSO Household Income and expenditure survey, 2010, p. 52

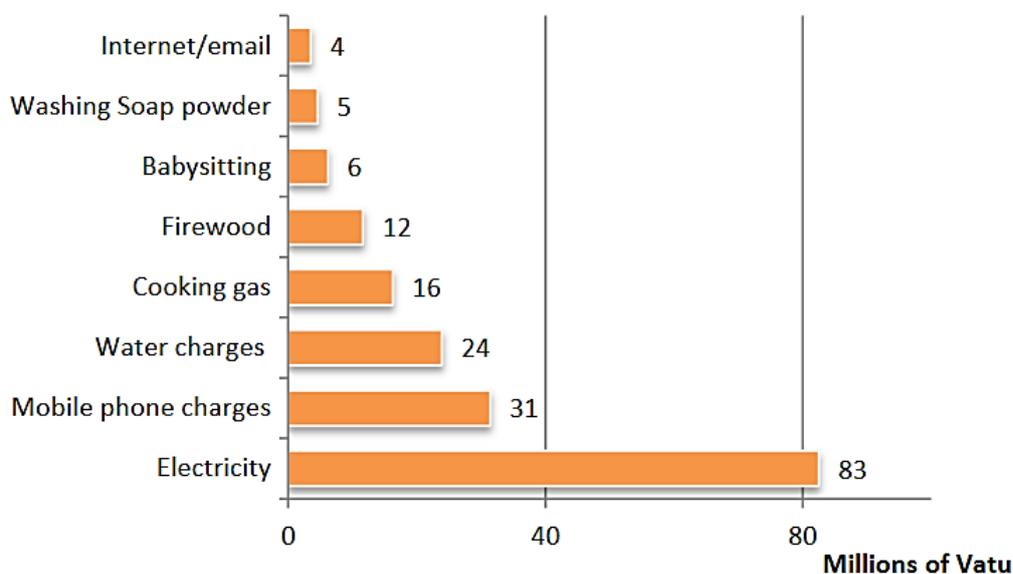


\* Household operation group expenditure items over a value of 5 million Vatu.

<sup>35</sup> VNSO (2012) "Household Expenditure Patterns in Vanuatu" (webpage), <https://vnso.gov.vu/index.php/special-report/vanuatu-living-standard>, accessed 19 August 2018.

Graph 9: Major household operation expenditure items, urban areas, 2010

Sourced from VNSO Household Income and expenditure survey, 2010, p. 53



\* Household operation group expenditure items over a value of 3.5 million Vatu.

\* Housing group expenditure items over a value of 2 million Vatu.

**These statistics suggest that perceptions that some households value lifestyle or ‘recreational’ expenditure over education are valid.** It is interesting to compare the prevalence of these comments to the comments that contributions to custom ceremonies such as weddings and circumcision were prioritised over education costs. Only 2 comments were received in the study about custom-related costs, which may be an indication of the frequency of expenditure, but does also provide an insight into household priorities on a daily basis.

#### Parents’ commitment

**11 parents (13% of the 86 income comments) suggested that some other parents were ‘lazy’** [sic] and had income generation opportunities but did not use them, and 2 respondents also proposed that the issue was a budgeting and money management issue, in both the community and the households.

---

*Parents find it difficult to pay for fees, pay for uniforms, basic needs, they find it so difficult to meet those things that makes them decide for their children not to attend school. Yet, sometimes parents are just too lazy to work hard to meet those things in order for their children to go to school.*

*Parent from Gaua – phone survey*

---

The study responses around parents’ laziness or misuse of funds may indicate low levels of community knowledge on systemic economic structures contributing to poverty. **Attribution of failure to pay education costs on laziness of individual families should therefore be considered as a perception, not as evidence of poor work ethic of disadvantaged families.**

**The study responses indicated that having parents not pay school fees, or not buy uniforms can contribute to a sense of shame in the student, and in three responses was the perceived cause of the student dropping out of school.**

### *5.2 Parental perceptions of education*

**Summary:** Overall parents and youth expressed that education was important, but this was often not supported by enrolment rates or active parental engagement with education (e.g. by assisting with homework). Enrolment rates and comments from interviews indicated that primary school was perceived as valuable, but as youth became older the perceived value of education decreased. All respondents agreed that the lack of parental engagement had an effect on the students' engagement with school, with students observing their parents, their communities and their peers earning immediate income from agricultural activities and losing their interest in school, or by feeling demoralised because school fees weren't paid.

Vanuatu-specific factors contributing to low parental perceptions of the value of education were identified as:

- lower education level of parents (no statistics available to confirm this link)
- a perceived low link between education and eventual income generation / employment;
- the lack of perceived relevance of curriculum to daily life;
- the need to work the land to maintain ownership, and for food crops and cash crops.

Another perception identified in the literature review as a possible determinant was a parental perception that education interfered with culture. This was explored in the study, but the interview subjects in this study did not refer to this as a perceived barrier.

#### **Recommendations:**

- \* More awareness needs to be provided at community level on the practical contribution of education to future life activities.
- \* More awareness needs to be provided on parents' responsibilities with education, that it doesn't just end in school fees.
- \* More support is needed for vocational education pathways.

**The value parents and children put on education is a significant determinant for education continuity or discontinuity.** If education is valued, time and money will be prioritized for education activities and parents and children will be committed and sustain longer periods in education to complete their educational journey<sup>36</sup>.

The literature review identified that globally, low parental perceptions of the value of education is a significant determinant of youth not attending school or dropping out of school. The review identified several contributors to a low perception of education value:

- That education was seen as a gateway to white collar jobs, but in the family's environment there were limited white collar positions available;

---

<sup>36</sup> Hovdhaugen, E, Kottmann, A & Thomas, L 2015, 'Dropout and Completion in Higher Education in Europe', Education and Culture, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 1-60.

- That education was a male privilege, and that girls did not need or were not entitled to education;
- That boys' time was needed working the agricultural land to demonstrate land ownership;
- That current education systems are linked to a Eurocentric mode of education, and participation in the education system alienates youth from their traditional culture.

This study investigated current parental perceptions of education in Vanuatu, and contributors to these perceptions, to determine the relevance of parental perception to non-attendance at school in Vanuatu.

#### Parental perception of value of education in Vanuatu

---

*To be educated allows you to manage yourself to be a better citizen for Vanuatu. Education is very important for development in church and community.*

*Parent from Malekula focus group*

---

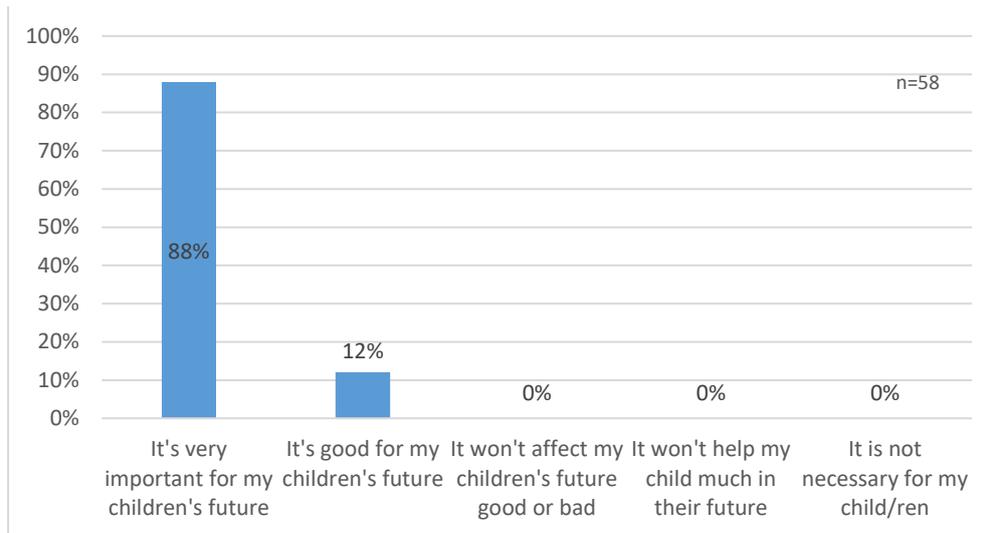
**The focus groups and interviews reported a high perception of the value of education for children and youth, with approximately 3/4 of responses valuing education in the discussions.** Reasons provided ranged from increasing the living standard for the family, to being able to operate in the changing technological environment, to being able to manage a family and household, to the simple value of gaining knowledge.

This reported perception of the value of education is not entirely supported by national enrolment rates in school. The statistics provided by the 2015 Vanuatu statistical digest report indicated that in early childhood, primary and secondary, respectively 57%, 13% and 65% of children and youth were not enrolled in school. This indicates that **although parents may have a high perception of the importance and value of primary school, this perception does not necessarily reach to ensuring that children and youth attend early childhood education or secondary school.**

The survey conducted with aligns with these enrolment rates. **Of the 58 parents who responded to a question about the value of primary school, there was unanimous response that primary school was important for children** (refer to Error! Reference source not found.), and this perceived importance is supported by the enrolment rates recorded in the small-scale survey. Of the 40 children that were recorded in the survey of being primary school age, 37 of them (92%) were noted as attending primary school this year. However, **this level of enrolment drops at secondary school, with just over two-thirds (69%) of the 42 high-school aged youth identified in the survey being recorded as attending secondary school during the year of the survey.**

### Graph 10: Parental Perceptions of Importance of Primary School

Data sourced from Barriers to Education Survey Torba, Penama and Tafea Province 2018



Early childhood education remains a period of schooling that receives less engagement from families. **Many parents are unaware of the importance of early childhood care and education** and its contribution to cognitive development and school-readiness<sup>37</sup>. In addition, ECCE programs did not receive a government subsidy for fees or for teacher salaries until 2017 and so fees to enrol in Kindy were often higher than primary school fees, which this study has determined is a barrier for some parents. **The 2015 Annual Statistical Digest identified that in 2015 only 42.7% of 4 and 5 year olds were enrolled in ECCE**<sup>38</sup>.

#### Impact on enrolment

In the focus group discussions and interviews, teachers, principals, parents and students agreed **lack of parental engagement and support as one of the key factors influencing enrolment and 'drop-outs'**. It was noted in all forums of the study that if there's little parental interest or support (financial or emotional support) for a child's participation in school, it can result in the student placing little value on school, performing badly at school, or being ashamed to go to school (because of unpaid school fees), and these factors contribute to students dropping out of their class.

#### Contributors towards this perception

The teachers and principals interviewed felt that lack of support for education was mainly demonstrated through parents:

- Not assisting with homework.
- Not paying school fees on time because money had been spent on other priorities (that is, income was available by education was a low priority for household income allocation).

One reason parents may not assist with homework has conventionally been because **the parents'**

<sup>37</sup> Einloth, S.R (2010), *Building Strong Foundations: World Vision's Focus on Early Childhood Development and Child Well-being*, Germany. [https://www.worldvision.de/sites/worldvision.de/files/pdf/TP5\\_StrongFoundations\\_SRE.pdf](https://www.worldvision.de/sites/worldvision.de/files/pdf/TP5_StrongFoundations_SRE.pdf).

<sup>38</sup> Annual Statistical Digest for MoET 2015, p.26.

**themselves did not receive a high level of education and so are not confident in their skills.** This may be the case in Vanuatu, with the 2009 Census showing that almost half of adults in Vanuatu had completed their education at primary school level<sup>39</sup>.

The focus group discussions with parents on how they supported their child at school was also enlightening. When 2 focus groups of parents were asked how they support their children in their education, the overwhelming answer was by preparing their meals or their clothes. (5 of the 11 comments on support provided across the 2 focus groups related to cooking or laundry.) Only 1 response related to checking their children's homework and discussing what was learned during the day.

The comments from teachers and parents seem to indicate that parents have little engagement with their child's education process apart from paying school fees or providing meals and school clothes for their child. **When engagement is limited to payment, this could contribute to a 'value for money' perception of education** - that is, parents may only perceive education as valuable if they can identify a clear outcome from their financial investment.

This links with one of the findings from the literature review. Globally parents have had perceived education as a gateway to white collar jobs. If the family's environment has limited white collar positions available, this decreases the value of education in parents' eyes, as it is not linking through to income generation opportunities. In the Vanuatu study, teachers, parents and youth all recognised the counter-incentive that the local employment opportunities provided to education. Some teachers reported that parents would pull their children out of school to assist with fishing or agriculture; while some youth described how their peers saw their friends earning money from kava or farming, and they wanted to join them.

---

*Kava is the green gold in the community, therefore, parents thought it best to make children invest their time and energy on kava production than in education, causing the kids to lose interest in education.*

*Teacher in Santo*

*Their parents are telling them in advance that when they finish year 6 they will help them make copra instead of advising them to study harder in order for them to further their studies somewhere. Because of that, it makes a child have in mind that no matter how much they will try they will only finish at year 6, that makes them to feel down or not have a strong feeling to keep going to school.*

*Parent in Torba Province*

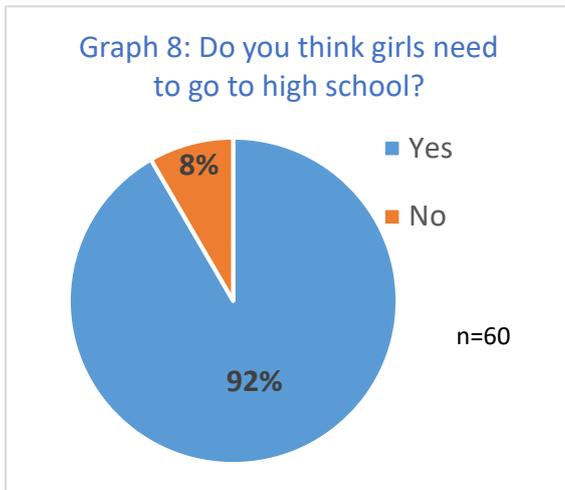
---

**Youth, parents and educational stakeholders interviewed in the Vanuatu study also indicated that children lost interest in school because it was too "theoretical".** There was interest expressed at all levels of the education continuum for more vocational training options to be available for youth. In the survey of parents, 75% of parents responding saw INTV, APTC or RTCs as an education option that their children may participate in after completing school, and this is clearly a sector of great interest to parents.

---

<sup>39</sup> Vanuatu National Statistics Office (2012), 2009 National Population and Housing Census: Basic Tables Report Volume 1, Table 6.5 page 87.

The Vanuatu study also investigated perceptions on the value of education according to gender. Gender is discussed in detail in section 5.6. In relation to parental perceptions, **there were some negative parental responses recorded for the value of education for boys versus girls.** In the



Graph 11: Do girls need to go to high school?  
Parent Perceptions Torba, Penama and Tafea.

surveys and focus groups there were several comments made about how girls would marry and move away from the family, and so the investment towards their schooling would not benefit their birth family. This perception was demonstrated by several of the participants within the youth focus groups, which suggests that it is an attitude still being reinforced within families. However, these perceptions formed the minority response. **Overall parents and teachers indicated through the survey, focus groups and interviews that girls should receive an education, because it provided them with skills and knowledge for their future** (discussed in more detail in Section 5.6: Gender). The perception of the value of education does not seem to be heavily impacted by the gender of the child.

The literature review also identified the need for **boys' needing to work on the land for their family as a contributing factor for parents' placing low value on education.** This was also identified as a contributing factor in the focus group discussions and surveys. The discussions did not provide prompts about possible barriers, but several of the focus group discussions noted that boys in particular could be pulled out of school by their parents to work the land, either to demonstrate ongoing ownership of the ground or to grow food crops and cash crops for their family. There were also **links noted between lack of land and increased value on education.** In Efate focus groups and interviews in particular, where much of the village land has been sold or leased, the parents interviewed were highly supportive of education. Following the recent mass evacuation from Ambae, community leaders have also been promoting the importance of education for the communities' future ("Ambaeans urged to invest in education", Vanuatu Daily Post, 20 August 2018).

---

*Population is high but everyone is spread across the land, it is not too crowded, therefore, families believed that they should cultivate and make more money out of the ground than investing on their children's life in gaining education.*

*Parents focus group, South Santo*

*Those parents that do not have resources such as land, for example on Tanna and Paama, they pick on education as very important. Their children must be educated so they know how to manage their limited resources and sustain themselves on the small piece of land they have.*

*Youth Coordinator, Interview Port Vila*

---

The surveys also recorded **some community perceptions that school was not important because it interfered with custom teaching and custom ceremonies.** This was a small proportion of

**responses:** 4 out of the 58 parents (6% of parents) naming barriers to education referred to children being pulled out of school for short periods of time to attend custom ceremonies, and only 1 parent from Tafea province noted that their community as a whole lived in accordance with custom practice and did not see education as important. This perception is more common in Tanna, where several communities maintain a strong adherence to custom beliefs. It was not noted as a determinant or as a factor influencing parental perceptions in other provinces where interviews and surveys were conducted. This may be different in different communities in Vanuatu.

These three factors (the perceived low link between education and eventual income generation; the lack of perceived relevance of curriculum to daily life; and the need to work on the land) were demonstrated in the study to link with parents' low perception of the value of education. This low perception contributes to youth perception of the value of their education, and their ongoing enrolment in school. The perception that education will alienate youth from their traditional culture does not seem to have a large influence on parental perceptions of the value of education, from the findings of this small study.

The focus groups with youths commented on how they'd observed these factors demonstrated in their communities. Several noted that their parents prioritised spending household money on phone credit and kava over spending money on school fees. Other youth agreed that they saw their parents and friends earning income from kava and agricultural products and so did not see the purpose of attending school.

### *5.3 Access to School (Geography, Weather and Distance)*

**Summary:** 4% of the study responses (12 responses) said that the long distance to travel to attend school and the poor conditions of the road or pathway constituted a barrier for their children or students. This barrier was heightened for youth with mobility issues. An additional 11 responses (3%) did not specifically comment on the distance but noted that when the weather was bad (rainy, causing flooding on the roads and creek crossings, or windy causing bad sea conditions), that students could not attend school.

The literature review identified geographical barriers as relevant determinants in access to education. Globally it was suggested that rural populations often have decreased access to education in comparison to urban populations because of their location.

In this Vanuatu-specific study, geography was also found to be a barrier to education. In Vanuatu, however, the barrier isn't centred on resourcing or distance from city centres (75% of population are rural according to the 2016 Mini-Census, and 91% of schools are located in rural areas<sup>40</sup>), but is more dependent on the physical geography of the specific island and transport infrastructure available.

The archipelago of Vanuatu consists of 83 islands, with 64 of these islands containing inhabitants.<sup>41</sup> The islands of Vanuatu are volcanic, with sharp mountain peaks, plateaus and lowlands. Many of the

---

<sup>40</sup> Annual Statistical Digest 2015 for the Ministry of Education and Training, Vanuatu, p. 24.

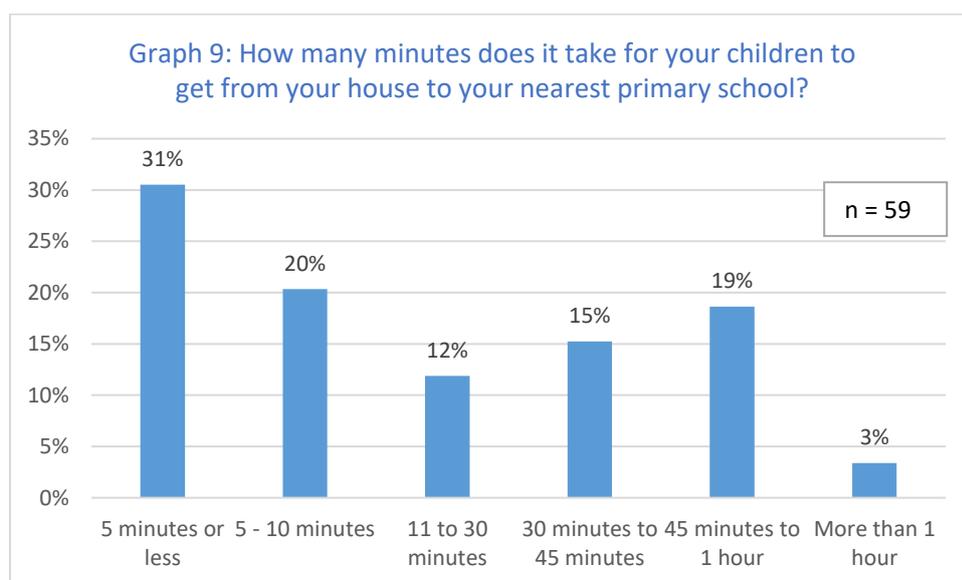
<sup>41</sup> <https://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/oceania/vu.htm>; AusAID (2012), "Vanuatu Transport Sector Support Program -Phase II Design", Canberra Australia

islands have a small population; 43 islands have a population of less than 1000 and only six islands have a population above 10,000<sup>42</sup>.

The Government of Vanuatu is faced with major revenue constraints when planning and budgeting for the necessary infrastructure investment for these islands<sup>43</sup>. The wide dispersion of the islands and the small populations on each make it economically challenging to improve road infrastructure on all islands. Added to this are the construction difficulties on the islands themselves: the island landscapes are steep, with erodible soils, little permanent freshwater and variable availability of road resource materials<sup>44</sup>, so many of the construction materials need to be brought to the islands for any improvements. A 2012 assessment found that there were a total of 1,850 km of roads constructed across roughly 4,700 km<sup>2</sup> of land over the 83 islands, of which 150km were paved; 1,300km were gravel; and 400 km were dirt roads.<sup>45</sup>

This means that land transport on many islands is minimal, and many children in rural areas access school on foot.

From the phone surveys, a significant proportion of students needed to walk for considerable periods to attend school: 37% [36 parents] reported that their children had to walk 30 minutes to over an hour to reach the nearest primary school.



Graph 12: Distance (by time) to walk to school: Torba, Penama and Tafea surveys

From the 334 responses about barriers to education recorded in the study, **13 (4%) of the responses said that the long distance to travel to attend school constituted a barrier for their children or students**. It was noted in two focus groups that the distance and the poor quality of the roads posed a particular barrier for youth with mobility issues. One parent also mentioned that girls walking long distances to school was a safety issue and could put them at risk of sexual assault, which has been supported by other gender studies conducted in Vanuatu<sup>46</sup>.

<sup>42</sup> Vanuatu National Statistics Office (2012), 2009 National Population and Housing Census: Basic Tables Report Volume 1.

<sup>43</sup> AusAID (2012), "Vanuatu Transport Sector Support Program -Phase II Design", Canberra Australia.

<sup>44</sup> AusAID (2012), "Vanuatu Transport Sector Support Program -Phase II Design", Canberra Australia.

<sup>45</sup> AusAID (2012), "Vanuatu Transport Sector Support Program -Phase II Design", Canberra Australia.

<sup>46</sup> Gender and Protection Cluster minutes 2017, unpublished.

**An additional 11 responses (3%) did not specifically comment on the distance but noted that when the weather was bad** (rainy, causing flooding on the roads and creek crossings, or windy causing bad sea conditions), that **students could not attend school**, or if they did attend school parents worried for their safety.

---

*Some of the rivers took up to 3 weeks to get back to normal current after being flooded during rainy season, therefore, children are stranded at home until the river flow is back to normal.*

*Parent, Malekula*

---

**Recommendation:** Teachers, principals and youth coordinators suggested that one way to resolve this barrier would be to construct more boarding schools: “to overcome the issue of Geography as an issue/factor, Government, through the MoET and donor partners, should construct more boarding schools in the islands of Vanuatu to accommodate the growing number of children craving for education. Since we cannot bring education and better infrastructure to them, we’d make education be accessible to them by allowing them to live where education is situated.” *[Youth coordinator, Efate]*

#### *5.4 Inclusion (disability)*

##### **Summary:**

The Vanuatu education system is perceived as not inclusive of children with a disability, and that this forms a significant barrier to education.

Among 10-19 year olds, the gap in primary school attainment is more than 53 percentage points between children without a disability and children with a disability.

Primary barriers to education linked to disability in the Vanuatu context are:

- Infrastructure (buildings, classrooms or toilets) are not accessible.
- Road access is poor quality or the school is a long distance from the homes.
- The curriculum does not cater for all levels of learning.
- Teachers don’t feel confident to teach children with disabilities; no targeted training or teacher assistance is provided.
- Discrimination continues to exist against people with disabilities.
- Lack of community support.
- There are no aids available for learning; children with deafness or partial hearing problems do not have a national sign language; children with sight problems do not have access to braille or other tools.
- Disability in parents impacts their income-earning ability, making it difficult to meet school fees.

**Recommendation:** The main suggestion coming out of the focus groups was that more training be given to teachers on inclusion, and special needs teachers be trained and posted to provide support in schools. Any training program would also need to address the curriculum to develop it to be more inclusive.

The literature review conducted for this study found that although the need for disability-inclusive education has increasingly been acknowledged in global education policy development, many children with special needs remain excluded from mainstream education.<sup>47</sup> One of the primary explanations for this exclusion is that persons with disabilities are ‘invisible’ or viewed as the ‘other’<sup>48</sup>. In many cultures there is a stigma related to disability, and individuals with special needs are hidden. The lack of role models with disability in public and professional life also acts to build a perception that people with a disability have no need for education, for “where would disabled people work?”<sup>49</sup>.

This Vanuatu study also found that the **Vanuatu education system was not perceived as being inclusive of children with a disability, and that this forms a significant barrier to education**. The VNSO Special Report: *Children, Women and Men with Disabilities in Vanuatu: What do the data say?*, notes that children with disabilities are significantly less likely to attend school than their non-disabled peers. For example, among 10-19 year olds, **the gap in primary school attainment is more than 53 percentage points between children without a disability and children with a disability**<sup>50</sup>.

According to Vanuatu’s 2009 Census around 5 percent of the population have a mild, moderate or severe disability. Questions on disability in the Census and the 2013 Vanuatu Demographic and Health Survey (VDHS) do not make it possible to determine the prevalence of disability among young children. Nonetheless, according to VEMIS, **7–8 percent of primary school children have a disability**<sup>51</sup>. If we assume that children with disabilities are less likely to attend school, as has been found in this report and many studies in other countries, then the overall rate of childhood disability is most likely higher<sup>52</sup>.

The focus group discussions and surveys within this study confirmed that disability was perceived as one of the main barriers to education within Vanuatu. **Disability was ranked as the fourth highest barrier to attendance at school**, with 19 responses (6%) of the 334 responses collected identifying disability as preventing children from attending school or contributing to students dropping out.

**The survey indicated that out of the 60 people surveyed, 39 people (65%) knew of one or several youth in their village who had difficulty attending school because of a disability** (That is, that had difficulty attending school because they could not walk easily, or couldn’t hear or see well, or found it difficult to learn). 8 of these respondents noted that the child affected did not attend school at all, with half of these children not attending school because of speech, hearing or sight difficulties. A quarter (23%) of the 39 responses noted that children with learning difficulties found it a challenge to attend school, which implies that there is little teacher support to teach a spectrum of learners.

---

<sup>47</sup> O’Raw, P & Winter, E 2010, 'Literature Review of the Principles and Practices relating to Inclusive Education for Children with Special Educational Needs', *Journal of Child Education and Psychology*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 1-84; Peterson, S 2009, 'Barrier to Accessing Primary Education in Conflict-Affected Fragile States', *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 1-74.

<sup>48</sup> Peterson, S 2009, 'Barrier to Accessing Primary Education in Conflict-Affected Fragile States', *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 1-74.

<sup>49</sup> Peterson, S 2009, 'Barrier to Accessing Primary Education in Conflict-Affected Fragile States', *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 1-74.

<sup>50</sup> UNICEF Pacific and Vanuatu National Statistics Office (2014) *Children, Women and Men with Disabilities in Vanuatu: What do the data say?*, Suva, Fiji.

<sup>51</sup> Introduction site: *Children, Women and Men with Disabilities in Vanuatu: What do the data say?*, <https://vnso.gov.vu/index.php/special-report/disabilities-in-vanuatu-what-do-the-data-say>

<sup>52</sup> Introduction site: *Children, Women and Men with Disabilities in Vanuatu: What do the data say?*, <https://vnso.gov.vu/index.php/special-report/disabilities-in-vanuatu-what-do-the-data-say>

13% (5 responses) also noted that physical disabilities in the feet or legs made it difficult to travel the distance to school, or to move around and participate in activities when they arrived.

When asked about the **perceived right of children with a disability to access education, there is stated support for inclusive education at community and policy level.** The Republic of Vanuatu signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2007 and ratified it in 2008. Several policies including the National Disability Policy and Plan of Action 2008-2015, the Mental Health Policy and Plan 2009-2015, and the Inclusive Education Policy and Strategic Plan 2010-2020 have been established to implement inclusivity in Vanuatu institutions<sup>53</sup>.

The responses collected within the focus groups and interviews also indicated community members support the belief that children with a disability should attend school:

---

*Everyone has the same right to education and life – it's important that you not allow your disability to be a barrier in achieving what you aim in life.*

*Parents focus group, South Santo*

*Education is a basic social right for everyone, including those with disability.*

*Focus group with parents of out of school children in Malekula*

---

Given this stated support at policy and community level for disability-inclusive education, it is interesting to record that disability is still seen as a core barrier to accessing education.

Within the Vanuatu context, interviews with disability advocates and inclusion officers indicated that there are **several key elements that still cause disability to be a barrier**, including:

- Infrastructure (buildings, classrooms or toilets) are not accessible
- The curriculum does not cater for all levels of learning
- Teachers don't feel confident to teach children with disabilities; no targeted training or teacher assistance is provided
- Discrimination continues to exist against people with disabilities
- Lack of community support
- There are no aids available for learning; children with deafness or partial hearing problems do not have a national sign language; children with sight problems do not have access to braille or other tools.

The comments collected from the **focus groups primarily identified learning difficulties as one of the primary barriers.** Almost a quarter of the 39 responses (9 responses / 23%) noted that children who 'learn slow' or 'think slow' become discouraged and drop out from school. Principals and disability in education advocates noted in the focus groups and interviews that **the curriculum does not cater for a range of learning, and that there is limited training given to teachers on inclusive teaching.**

---

<sup>53</sup> Introduction site: *Children, Women and Men with Disabilities in Vanuatu: What do the data say?*, <https://vnso.gov.vu/index.php/special-report/disabilities-in-vanuatu-what-do-the-data-say>

As noted in section 5.3 Access to School (Geography, Weather and Distance), the **poor road infrastructure** existing in Vanuatu also forms a considerable barrier to children with a disability that affects their mobility, as the roads and distance are often not easily traversable.

---

*Some children have problems with listening (ear problem), problems with their legs etc that makes it so difficult for them to go to school. Even my own son is facing this problem. He can get learning but the distance from home to school is the problem.*

*Tanna parent*

---

If children can travel to school, it is **unlikely that there would be building constructions that are specifically designed to be accessible by wheelchairs or other mobility assistance devices**. This is a building deficiency for both classrooms and for toilet and sanitation facilities.

The VNSO Special Report: *Children, Women and Men with Disabilities in Vanuatu: What do the data say?* noted that:

“Among persons who have been identified as having a moderate or severe disability, for both females and males, sight is the most prevalent problematic functional area. The next most prevalent type of disability is hearing difficulties for men and mobility limitations of women. Young people with disabilities are more inclined to have difficulties in the functional domains of cognition and communication than older people.”

<https://vnso.gov.vu/index.php/special-report/disabilities-in-vanuatu-what-do-the-data-say>

4 of the 39 responses (10%) about barriers from disability reported that they knew children who had **problems with sight, speech or hearing and therefore ‘don’t go to school’ at all**. Another 4 children (10%) were identified as not going to school because they had difficulty walking or using their hands. Even in this small sample, this is a significant proportion of children who are excluded from learning because of physical impairments that could be overcome with appropriate tools.

**Disability also impacts the ability of parents to meet school fees for their children.** The VNSO Special Report: *Children, Women and Men with Disabilities in Vanuatu: What do the data say?* notes that “People with disabilities are much more likely to be poor; nearly 31 percent of people with severe disabilities are living in the lowest wealth quintile, compared with 16 percent of people without reported disabilities....while people with disabilities are equally likely to take part in productive activities as non-disabled people, they are less likely to be employed outside the home and more likely to be either self-employed or working in a family business.”<sup>54</sup> As discussed in section 5.1 (Meeting school fees), the inability to generate income is the primary barrier to education identified in Vanuatu. Disability contributes to this barrier; even if a child themselves does not have a disability they may be impacted if their parents have a disability and subsequent reduced access to income generation opportunities.

---

<sup>54</sup> Introduction site: *Children, Women and Men with Disabilities in Vanuatu: What do the data say?*, <https://vnso.gov.vu/index.php/special-report/disabilities-in-vanuatu-what-do-the-data-say>

Finally, the perceptions of parents and the community were cited as a barrier for children with a disability to attend school. Although it was not commented on widely in the parents' focus groups, several teachers and principals noted that discrimination was still prevalent in communities and institutions. In other studies, parents and families have reported that they felt disability was seen as a stigma in their community, and they often did not involve their children with a disability in community activities.<sup>55</sup>

---

*There are children here who are not going to go to school just because the mentality of the people around here is that once you are a disabled [person], you are not attending school and other activities.*

*Tanna parent*

*Parents are the main reason that makes it hard for them [children with a disability] to go to school as they have the mentality of being shameful for having such a child. For this reason, parents don't feel like exposing their children who have physical problems or disability.*

*Parent from Erromango*

---

### *5.5 The impacts of disaster*

**Summary:** Disaster is one of the top 5 barriers to education identified by parents and teachers in this study. Although a disaster event may be quick, the impact and time needed for recovery can span over several months or years. Disaster can affect physical access to schools, ability to pay school fees from damage to cash crops, motivation and concentration of students, and school resources available to students. Dislocation and permanent relocation of youth because of disaster also has impacts on their access to education including impacts on access to income (for school fees), impacts on access to classrooms and resources, and psychosocial impacts on children which have not yet been fully investigated.

One unexpected impact of disaster on access to education is an increase on the value communities place on education. After disasters, communities have reported a higher focus on education to enable their children to be able to support themselves if they no longer have access to land or subsistence crops (as reported in Barriers to Education survey).

These collected impacts are observed from both rapid onset disasters (cyclones, volcanic eruption, earthquakes, extreme storms leading to flooding) and slow onset disasters (drought, climate change impacts such as sea level rise and freshwater contamination).

The Vanuatu Government has been implementing Education in Emergency processes and policies. However, more resources need to be focused on rapid implementation of these processes, especially given the high risk profile for Vanuatu's vulnerability to disasters, and the likelihood of future relocations being required due to disaster impacts.

---

<sup>55</sup> Australian Sports Commission (2013) *The impact of development through sport: Results of research conducted on the Australian Sports Outreach Program in Vanuatu*, as presented on [https://www.sportanddev.org/sites/default/files/downloads/asop\\_vanuatu\\_research.pdf](https://www.sportanddev.org/sites/default/files/downloads/asop_vanuatu_research.pdf)

**Recommendations:** A 2009 UNICEF assessment of Vanuatu’s emergency preparedness planning for climate change and disaster responses indicated that Core Commitments for Children indicators such as child separation, child protection or temporary classrooms were not adequately considered in emergency management plans.<sup>56</sup> In the past 4 years Vanuatu has been strengthening their emergency management systems, including through development of the ‘Education Cluster’ specifically dedicated to appropriate emergency management of education. This work should be supported and continued. Education strengthening programs should consider current disaster management policy for education in planning and implementation and actively engage MoET staff in the Education in Emergency mechanisms already in place.

The literature review for this study showed a correlation between climate and disaster risks and peoples’ well-being in terms of health, environmental sustainability and access to education. In Pacific Island Countries, (PICs) the poorest segments of the population rely on subsistence farming, making them vulnerable to the impacts of disasters and climate change on their livelihood, especially on crops. Access to good quality education is also challenged when a disaster event destroys school infrastructure or if school buildings are used for emergency accommodation for an extended period following a disaster.

In the World Risk Index, which assesses countries’ risk from disaster, Vanuatu has been listed as the country that holds the highest disaster risk of all countries, in all annual WRIs conducted between 2011 and 2017.

In the past 3 years, Vanuatu has experienced several major disasters, including Tropical Cyclone Pam (2015), a severe El Niño impact in late 2015-early 2016 which caused droughts and water shortages across the archipelago, the volcanic activity and eventual eruption of the Manaro Volcano on Ambae Island in Malampa Province in 2017 and 2018, leading to two mass evacuations of the island, and the impact of Cyclone Hola in Penama Province in 2018.

Vanuatu is also vulnerable to ongoing disasters, including ash fall from the 7 active volcanoes which damages crops and water supply, and regular flooding of roads, rivers and creeks following heavy rainfall, which impacts access to schools.

In addition, Vanuatu has experienced several slow onset disasters including severe droughts, and recorded climate change impacts including extreme storms and storm surge, sea level rise and coastal erosion, salination of freshwater supplies and extended droughts.

These disasters have all had an impact on the food, water supplies, shelter and education of Ni-Vanuatu. In this study, the surveys and focus group findings ranked disaster as the fifth largest barrier to education (13 responses: 4% of total responses).

The main impacts of disaster that were described as creating a barrier to education were:

- The immediate impact of the disaster: the school being closed during and after the disaster
- School buildings being used as an evacuation centre

---

<sup>56</sup> UNICEF (2011) Climate change impacts on children in the Pacific: A focus on Kiribati and Vanuatu, p.6; [https://www.unicef.org/eapro/pacific\\_climate\\_change\\_report.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/eapro/pacific_climate_change_report.pdf), retrieved 19 August 2018.

- Impacts on income generation to pay school fees
- Ongoing or recurring disasters such as heavy rainfall causing flooding and making access to schools unsafe or impossible
- Relocation of communities (short-term and long-term displacement)
- Impacts of slow-onset disasters exacerbated by climate change were not specifically linked to disaster in this study but were mentioned in relation to the effects (illness, water shortage etc.) and so are also discussed below.

From the study responses, the **immediate impacts of schools being closed during and immediately after the disaster did not appear to be perceived as a large barrier to education**. Several parents and teachers noted that schools were only closed for 1-2 weeks during large scale disasters. It was commented that school buildings were used as evacuation centres after some disasters (including in the current mass evacuation from Ambae), however none of the interviews provided any comment about this impacting long-term access to education for the local community.

**School officials interviewed did note that the damage to school buildings, books and equipment was difficult to recover from.** After Cyclone Pam, temporary tents were provided for interim classrooms but the research team observed that these tents are still in use as classrooms in some locations, including Efate and Malekula, 3.5 years after the cyclone. Teachers on Malekula also noted that the damaged books and papers from Cyclone Hola in 2018 were difficult to replace.

Several respondents also noted that the **government response was slow**, and in some cases was actually seen to interfere with the processes that the community would otherwise put in place to resume normal education activities: “If disaster is managed by ourselves it would not disturb students from school, but since the government took everything in hand it makes it hard for students to go to school, especially in this current situation of volcano.” (Parent from Ambae). However, school administrators and INGO representatives noted that the Government of Vanuatu had been achieving good results in development and implementation of Education in Emergency planning, and that strengthening and embedding these processes is an ongoing priority.

The **main impact of disasters on access to education from the parents’ perspective was the impact on income generation to meet school fees**. 9 of the 13 responses (over two-thirds) commented on the impact of disasters such as TC Pam, TC Hola, and El Nino on food gardens and coconut trees (used to produce the cash crop copra). This affected their income, reducing the amount of income they had for school fees. There were also comments that in the disaster recovery period, parents must spend their limited household savings on building materials for repairs, store food because their garden supplies have been destroyed, and water supplies because their water sources are often contaminated with debris. One parent commented that in their island (Tanna), the school fee debts incurred during the high-expenditure period after Cyclone Pam have formed a barrier to children returning to school, as the debt cannot be repaid and the child cannot be readmitted.

---

*Disaster is another thing that can contribute [to school drop-outs], especially if our cash crop is destroyed such as in Cyclone Pam. When our cash crops are destroyed it makes it difficult for us to earn money to support our children.*

*Parent from Maewo*

---

One ongoing disaster event that was mentioned in **5% of the total 334 responses was the effect that extreme rainfall has on travel to school**. Several parents noted that in heavy rains, the walking tracks and creek and river crossings are not safe to cross, and two parents commented on the impact that flooding has on the community's movement. One parent noted that the river could be flooded for three weeks at a time, preventing children from attending schools for considerable periods.

**Population displacement and mass evacuation because of disaster impacts** was also noted as a notable barrier to education by parents and teachers. In 2017 and 2018 Ambae island experienced two mass evacuation processes due to volcanic activity on the island.

Accounts collected in this study and through media reports suggest that this mass evacuation has substantially impacted education at both primary school and secondary school levels. Interviews with parents and school principals from Ambae narrated how secondary school children were sitting their Year 10 exams in large temporary tents, how there was makeshift accommodation and bathroom facilities for students, and how they had to pay school fees twice for the same period: once at the start of the year for the Ambae school and then again to enrol their child into a school on a different island. **The families relocating had lost access to their subsistence crops and livestock and also, often, their source of livelihoods, which made paying school fees challenging.**

---

*Today with the current situation on Ambae (volcanic activity), it becomes another issue for children to miss out from school due to the fact that garden crops are destroyed, cash crops and animals are destroyed. This makes it so difficult for the parents to support their children at their full capacity for them to go to school.*

*Parent from Ambae*

*We paid for school fees last year and the volcanic eruption on Ambae made it difficult for them to resume studies for several months. Then later after that we have to spend more money on transportation and other things that our child has to meet in order for her to attend school in Santo after the relocation of St. Patrick's school [from Ambae to Santo]. So we don't think that she is going back as it is a burden to us that we can't afford. We want her to continue studying but they have asked if we could pay the whole amount that we already paid again for the new school (Santo East school) where St. Patrick's school have relocated to.*

*Parent from Ambae*

---

Recent reports in the media indicate that the **emergency relocation could also pose long-term barriers for Ambae children to continue their education due to limited facilities to accommodate the relocated students**. An article from the 18 August in local paper *Vanuatu Daily Post* reported:

*"Not enough schools to accommodate relocated children"*: The Education Cluster estimates that at least 250 early childhood children and 550 primary school-aged students have arrived

on Maewo but there are only 17 existing kindergartens and 7 primary schools in the host communities.”<sup>57</sup>

The article reported that INGO Save the Children and UNICEF were providing tents as temporary learning spaces for the displaced children from Ambae. As noted above however, there is the risk that temporary spaces will become used as permanent classroom facilities following disasters due to the expense of repairing all damage or constructing new buildings.

There has also been little publicly circulated research in Vanuatu into the **psychosocial impacts of disaster and relocation from disasters on children, and how this affects their attendance at school**. A report completed by UNICEF in 2011 noted that children who were displaced from their land could experience “psychological issues associated with loss of familiar surroundings and adjustment into new settlements<sup>58</sup>” [in the context of relocation because of climate change impacts]. Within the Vanuatu study, one parent noted in the survey that: “Children don’t feel comfortable going to school due to new settlement or placement of school due to the disaster” (*Parent from Ambae*). However, the common response within the study echoed this comment from a Malekula community representative: “[Vanuatu] individuals have wisdom to survive in the midst of disaster. We have resilience regardless of challenge, we managed to survive.” This stoicism may obscure existent psychosocial impacts on youth that affect their continued engagement in education; further research in this impact and barrier would be very valuable to a Vanuatu strategy to minimise this obstacle.

The **relocation from their customary land has resulted in an unexpected impact on support of education**. Community leaders are speaking out to encourage investment in education for the youth of the community, due to the uncertainty of the future opportunities that will be available to the relocated communities and the loss of access to

---

*“We must be serious in sending our children to school as we are faced by the unpredictable Manaro Volcano the future of which we cannot predict in ten to twenty years’ time.”*  
*North Ambae tribal chief, Chief Emmanuel Arulolowari*

---

agricultural ground to cultivate food crops for household subsistence<sup>59</sup>. This promotion of the value of education was also observed during the study in rural Efate, where much of the land has been sold or leased. Parents in Efate were equally in support of education for their children, as they would have limited or no access to land for food cultivation when they reached adulthood.

Relocation and displacement of communities is seen as an ongoing risk in Vanuatu due to the anticipated effects of climate change (including sea level rise impacts on the low-lying islands of the archipelago) and future climate or geohazard disasters<sup>60</sup>. Government of Vanuatu has commenced drafting of a **Displacement Policy** in 2017 to prepare for ongoing displacement and internal migration due to climate change and disaster impacts.

---

<sup>57</sup> “Not enough schools to accommodate relocated children” *Vanuatu Daily Post*, August 18 2018, p. 4.

<sup>58</sup> UNICEF (2011) *Climate change impacts on children in the Pacific: A focus on Kiribati and Vanuatu*, p.5; [https://www.unicef.org/eapro/pacific\\_climate\\_change\\_report.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/eapro/pacific_climate_change_report.pdf), retrieved 19 August 2018.

<sup>59</sup> “Ambaeans urged to invest in education”, *Vanuatu Daily Post*, 20 August 2018, [http://dailypost.vu/news/ambaeans-urged-to-invest-in-education/article\\_aab314d7-04c3-588e-b9db-07184ce7d02f.html](http://dailypost.vu/news/ambaeans-urged-to-invest-in-education/article_aab314d7-04c3-588e-b9db-07184ce7d02f.html), retrieved 10 August 2018.

<sup>60</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Norwegian Refugee Council (2014) “Technical Paper: The risk of disaster-induced displacement - South Pacific island states”, <https://www.nab.vu/sites/default/files/nab/documents/17/01/2014%20-%2011%3A52/201401-technical-paper-the-risk-of-disaster-induced-displacement-report-en.pdf>, retrieved 18 August 2018.

### 5.6 Gender: not a barrier in Vanuatu?

**Summary:** Overall, the interviews, focus groups, literature review and surveys were consistent in agreeing that traditionally, Vanuatu culture prioritised education for boys over education for girls. However, data collected consistently indicates that these attitudes have now changed, and that the majority feel that girls should have equal access to education.

Principals and school officials consulted during this study confirmed that more girls were enrolling in school, and that girls were performing better in their studies than boys. In secondary schools girls' enrolment exceeds boys' enrolment between 2010 - 2017, and girls in school have lower recorded drop-out rates than boys.

In primary schools, girls had higher rates of enrolment than boys from 2010 – 2015, but from 2016 onwards the proportion of girls enrolled in early childhood education and primary levels was much lower than that of boys' enrolment, suggesting that when the main family challenge/ issue is still linked to trying to find resources for school fees, boys' education is still prioritised over girls'.

The main reasons provided for girls' inclusion in education were that Vanuatu lifestyle and industry was changing from the traditional subsistence lifestyle, so girls and boys needed education to be able to operate effectively in this changed environment; and that girls are the main managers of the household, so they need an education to raise their children well and support their husband.

A number of responses (4% of the total 334 responses) argued that girls should not attend secondary school, primarily because it was perceived that women marry and move away from the village, so they will not be applying their education for the benefit of the immediate family. This view was disproportionately represented in youth focus groups in Santo, with both of the 2 youth focus groups presenting this argument. Parents' rationale for why girls should not attend secondary school was centred on the risk of engaging in sexual relationships while at school with the associated risk of teenage pregnancy.

**Recommendation:** Continue with the gender equity campaign in access to schooling as it is having a demonstrated impact on perceptions of the value of education for girls.

Women make up 49% of the population in Vanuatu, with 48% of the youth population being female<sup>61</sup>. Culturally, Vanuatu has been known as a patriarchal country, with land passed through patrimonial lines and leadership (including political, church and custom chiefly leadership) being restricted to men.

In the past 35 years there has been growing awareness of the rights of women within the country, though this awareness and structural change is still in its infancy.

In the survey component of this study, parents and youth were asked if they felt girls should attend secondary school. **92% of the 60 respondents agreed girls should be attending secondary school.**

---

<sup>61</sup> 2016 Vanuatu Mini-Census

Regionally, there have been reports that enrolments of girls has been increasing in secondary schools<sup>62</sup>. In speaking with education officials, teachers and principals in Efate, Malekula and Santo, all agreed that there was an increase in female school enrolment, with several principals stating that more girls were enrolling than boys, and that girls were performing better. **The enrolment statistics from the past 7 years indicates that enrolment rates for boys and girls were relatively similar in 2010 to 2015.** (See Graph 13: ECE, Primary and Secondary enrolments Male:Female 2010-17 on page 67).

There was a sharp drop in enrolment for early childhood and primary for both genders in 2016, following Tropical Cyclone Pam which affected education infrastructure and family income for much of 2015 and 2016. **From 2016 onwards, the proportion of girls enrolled in early childhood education and primary levels was much lower than that of boys' enrolment, suggesting that when the main family challenge/ issue is still linked to trying to find resources for school fees, boys' education is still prioritised over girls.**

However, in alignment with global findings the Vanuatu secondary school enrolment statistics demonstrate the opposite trend. **For every year between 2010 – 2017 there have been more females enrolled in secondary school than males, with the ratio remaining between 1.01 and 1.05.** In 2016, female enrolment in secondary school spiked higher than male enrolment, with 1.3 girls enrolling for every 1 boy (12,034 girls compared to 9,163 boys), and then the ratio between female and male enrolment dipped back to normal levels in 2017 (1.03). **93% (54 respondents) of the people surveyed for this study agreed that girls should attend secondary school, which reflects an attitude that society does think that girls and boys should have equal access to education.**

---

*In the past we live in the village so we don't need to learn anything outside from that. So education is not important. But today, girls need to go to high school to learn to change with the changing world and environment. Yet, girls are the better managers in the society and in a home men can really rely on, but men cannot rely on girls if they are not educated. Yet, their future with their husband and children rely on the knowledge and skills they gain from the school. Compare to the woman who are not attended high school, they are so quiet and shy to express themselves and to speak up for something they may though is right or wrong and suffer the consequences for the rest of their life.*

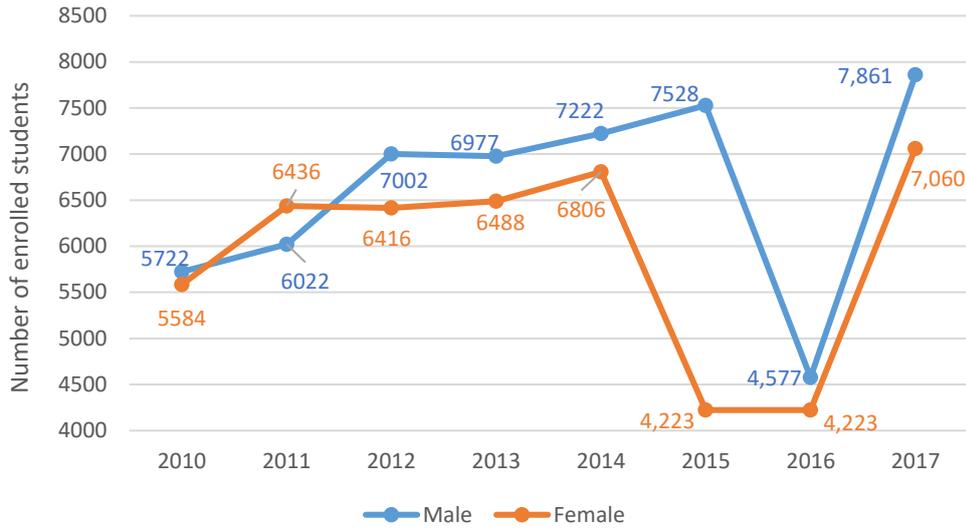
*Father from Tanna*

---

---

<sup>62</sup> Liki, A (2010), "Women Leaders In Solomon Islands Public Service: A personal and Scholarly Reflection", State Society and Governance in Melanesia: Discussion Papers, Australian National University, <https://www.pacwip.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Women-Leaders-in-Solomon-Island-Public-Service-Asenati-Liki-2010.pdf>, retrieved 11 August 2018.

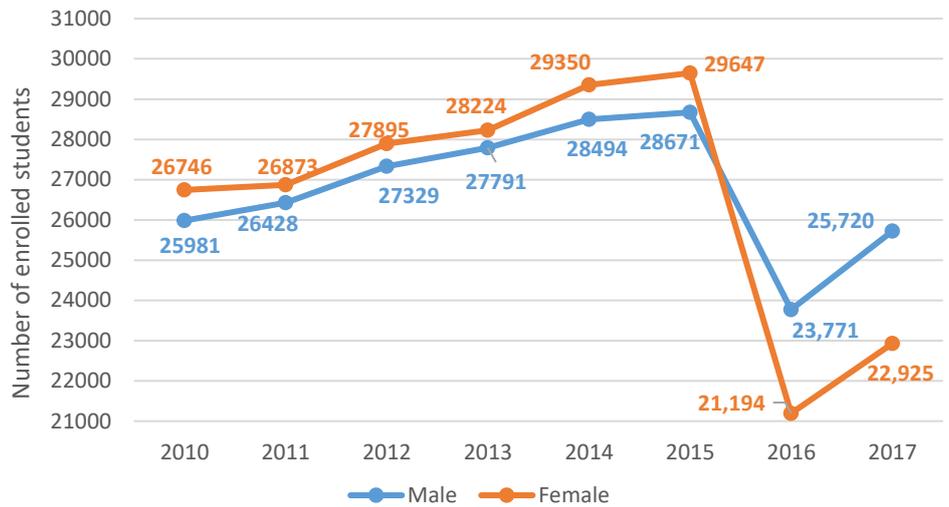
Early Childhood Enrolment: Male / Female enrolment 2010 - 2017  
(National enrolment)



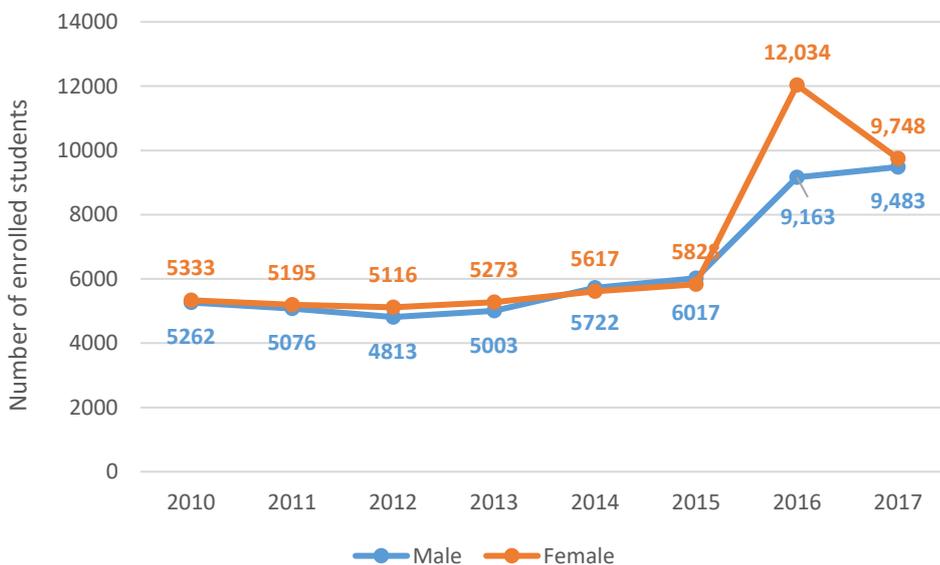
Graph 13: ECE, Primary and Secondary enrolments Male:Female 2010-17

Sourced from Open VEMIS data.

Primary Enrolment: Male / Female enrolment 2010 - 2017  
(National enrolment)



Secondary Enrolment: Male / Female enrolment 2010 - 2017  
(National enrolment)



However, data collected around the role of women (mothers) in the household and how that role links with education, also reflects two very contrasting ideas, as discussed below.

The interviews and focus groups supported that both boys and girls should have access to education. **Parents noted that in today's changing technological environment, youth need to be educated to deal with new challenges and ways of working.**

Many parents and educational staff noted **women's role as manager of the household and family**, and observed that men often did not have close involvement with the family finances or child raising. There was an inference that education is important for women to perform this role well. "The first teacher is the mother" (Parent from Penama).

In contrast, **the traditional female role as wife and mother was also cited by several respondents in the interviews, focus groups and surveys as a reason against education for girls.** 11 comments were collected in the focus groups that said that girls get married and leave the village, so their education is 'wasted'. Interestingly, the youth (out of school and in-school youth) were more likely to state this view than parents, teachers or principals. Both of the out-of-school youth and current student groups interviewed in Santo felt that boys were more likely to gain work, whereas girls were more likely to marry and move away and so were less likely to earn money for the (birth) family.

---

*"Girls will find someone else and marry him. If boys are not well educated, who will develop our community?"*  
*Parent from Malekula.*

---

A small number of parents also suggested that girls should not receive a secondary school education, but 3 of the 4 responses provided on why they shouldn't attend secondary school focused on the risk of girls getting pregnant at school: "Girls are a waste of time. When they go to school, sometimes they did not finish their education simply because they got pregnant and come back home and stay. So parents spend a lot of money just for nothing." (Parent from Vanua Lava).

When asked about barriers to attending school, two to three respondents in the survey and in the focus groups said that **the long distance to the school placed their daughters at risk of assault while travelling to and from school.** Seven (2%) of the 334 responses also expressed concern in the focus groups about **youth being exposed to sexual relationships through their attendance at school, with pregnancy a risk for young women;** just over half of the focus groups mentioned this as a reason youth may not want to attend school or may drop out.

When asked about youth not attending school because of needing to assist with work at home, many people interviewed felt that this issue affects boys more than girls. Interviews noted that in Malekula especially the land is passed down through the father's line, and so boys are called to work on the land at a young age to show that it is active and still within the family's ownership. Boys are also more likely to be called out of school to assist with manual labour involved in the copra and fishing industries, and they are more likely to find these industries, with the immediate income opportunities, as an attractive alternative to continuing their education. **Only a few respondents commented that girls are encouraged to drop out of school to assist with childcare and housework.**

## 5.7 Other determinants identified in study: Quality of Education; Custom traditions

Two other determinants should be discussed in this section, as they were identified in the literature review as possible determinants causing a barrier to education.

The literature review noted **perceptions that education systems were eurocentric and provided a barrier to education, in that parents felt their child's participation in education would alienate them from their culture.**

In this study, 5 respondents noted that custom took priority over education, and that children would be pulled out of school on a short-term basis to participate in or attend custom ceremonies. However only one respondent, in Tanna, noted that her community followed custom practice and did not engage with external education systems, as they saw them as counter to their traditional systems. **Data was not found in this small study to verify that loss of custom culture was a concern for parents that could lead to exclusion from education.**

The **quality of education infrastructure is also noted in global literature as one of the main determinants in assessing barriers to education**, and improving quality of education (infrastructure, human resources, learning resources and curricula) is one of the pillars of the Ministry of Education's strategic improvement program.

Quality of education, including curriculum, human resources and infrastructure is a fundamental element in improving education outcomes. However, **within the (subjective) parental perspective collected within this study, quality of infrastructure and teaching is not perceived as a dominant barrier to education.** Only 5 (1.5%) responses of the 334 responses collected said that limited resources and facilities at the school were a barrier to attendance, with an additional 4 (1.2%) saying that the teacher: student ratio was too high, and there were too many students per class for effective teaching.

The responses also indicated that **lack of resources within the home environment to support education provided an equal impact on attendance.** 5 responses (1%) noted that if a child doesn't have a school uniform or if their school uniform is dirty or old, they often feel ashamed to go to school and may drop out just from that reason. Another 2 respondents noted if there was no light source at the home, this prevented children from completing homework and some dropped out because of fear of punishment from incomplete work. 2 others noted that there was no food at the house to send with children to school, and listed this as a barrier.

## 6. Risk Factors

Risk factors are barriers to education which can be managed or mitigated to some extent at household or community level.

The literature review identified a number of common risks that were recognised globally as contributing as a barrier to education. These included: size of family, number of girls in a family, parents level of education, domestic violence, parent's attitude, and language.

- In identifying barriers to education, the interviews and surveys identified several additional factors that can be classified as 'risks' that reduce access to education. These risk factors differed slightly than risk factors identified in the global review, with highest risks in the Vanuatu context identified as: expectations on children to assist with work in the household;
- absent parents;

- low child interest in education;
- access to social media and mobile phones distracting children;
- desire to earn immediate income;
- perceived risk of exposure to sexual relationships and risk of teenage pregnancy through school attendance;
- and the perception that discipline was not enforced at schools.

The risks of domestic violence, family size and language transition are recognised as material risks to school attendance. However, the prevalence of these risks in Vanuatu appear to have normalised these risks in community perception, to the extent that they were not broadly recognised as individual risk factors by respondents to the survey.

A 2011 study conducted by the Vanuatu Women’s Centre found that 60% of 2061 women surveyed had experienced sexual or physical violence from a partner during their lifetime, with 44% having experienced sexual or physical violence from their partner within the past 12 months.<sup>63</sup> However only 1% of the study responses (3 responses) identifying barriers to education noted that domestic violence was a risk factor that could prevent children from attending school.

A similar finding was observed with the additional challenges faced by large families to have all children in attendance at school. The literature review documented that large families found it difficult to allocate finite educational resources equally across all children in a family, and that in families with a large number of girls, boys were more likely to receive a share of educational resources than girls. However, family size was recognised as a risk factor for school attendance by only 1 % of study respondents.

The transition from vernacular language to a different language of instruction was also noted in the literature review as a significant risk factor for dropping out of school. Almost all Vanuatu children must make this transition, as the majority of children learn to speak their village or island language first, Bislama second, and English or French as a third language when they commence school.<sup>64</sup> In an analysis of risk factors in the Vanuatu context, this risk can be seen as applying to all students, and so any response to reduce this risk must be a universal response to mitigate this risk for all students. In 2016 a new vernacular learning system was implemented in Vanuatu to address this risk, where ECE years are taught in vernacular language or Bislama, with a gradual transition to learning in English or French by Year 3. The prevalence of this risk for Vanuatu children, or the initiatives in place to mitigate this risk, may be some of the reasons that language was not identified in this study as a primary risk factor creating a barrier to education.

The risks that were identified as primary risks in the Vanuatu context are discussed briefly below.

#### Expectations on children to assist with work in the household

**3% (9 comments) of the 334 qualitative responses collected on barriers to education indicated that some children were pulled out of school to assist with housework, childcare or agricultural work.**

---

<sup>63</sup> Vanuatu Women’s Centre & Vanuatu National Statistics Office, 2011, *Women’s Lives and Family Relationships*, Vanuatu.

<sup>64</sup> Crowley, T (n.d.), “Language Varieties: Bislama (Vanuatu)”, <https://www.hawaii.edu/satocenter/langnet/definitions/bislama.html>, retrieved 19 August 2018.

Some parents and teachers also commented that the expectation of girls to assist with housework also presented a barrier to their study while still enrolled in school, as it was expected that they would complete domestic work before commencing any homework, leading to reduced time and energy to commit to their home studies.

Many of the households in Vanuatu are subsistence households. They grow much of their own food, gain building materials for housing and materials for cooking fires from surrounding bushland, and have access to a range of traditional medicines from plants. It is a common expectation that children finish their school day and then help the family with the household work. There is no national monitoring system available to ensure any work conducted by children is age-appropriate and does not interfere with the rights of the child or with education, and in fact the Vanuatu labour legislation specifically permits this childhood labour:

**Clause 38. Prohibition of employment of persons under 12**

No person under the age of 12 years shall be employed in any capacity, except on light work suitable to his capacity in an agricultural undertaking owned and managed by the family of which he is a member.

**Clause 39. Employment of persons under 14**

A person under the age of 14 years shall not be employed except on light work of an agricultural or domestic character in which members of the employer's family are employed with him, or on agricultural light work carried on collectively by the local community.

Vanuatu Employment Act, [Cap 160]

In the survey conducted with parents in Torba, Tafea and Penama provinces, very few listed “household or agricultural work” as a barrier that was preventing their child from attending school. 58 parents were asked if their youngest and their oldest school age child was attending school, and if not, why not. From the surveys, 102 children were identified as being within school age, and just under a quarter of them (24 children / 24%) were not attending school this year. When asked why they were not attending, only 3 of the 23 responses provided said that it was because the child was needed for work in the household or garden.

The interviews and focus group discussions also indicated that the main barrier that household and agriculture work posed to education was as an enticement to leave school and commence earning income immediately through kava planting and harvesting, copra production or manual trades. School principals and out of school youth in Efate, Malekula and Santo all noted that some children find the prospect of earning income from kava and garden crops a higher motivation than the prospect of continuing their education.

**Recommendation:** Domestic and agricultural expectations can be concluded to have an impact on children’s participation in education. Awareness should be conducted on the need to restrict children’s household and agricultural work outside of school to increase their attendance and performance, with a focus on the long-term benefits of education.

[Desire to earn immediate income](#)

As noted in the discussion on school fees, several youth commented that they chose to leave school to reduce the financial pressure on their parents to meet the school fees. In these instances, they

---

*Mobile phones have become one of the most challenging factor in the lives of students today because even though they can be helpful in researching and communications, it can also destroy the interest of students through different internet websites.*

*An out-of-school teenage, Santo*

---

chose to take on household or agricultural work as an alternative to education and its associated costs.

2% of respondents also commented that youth dropped out of school because they could see their peers earning income through fishing, kava and agricultural activities, and they were attracted by the prospect of immediate access to work and income, whereas education was a longer journey with less defined outcomes.

One recommendation that came through from many of the discussions was the need to have more resourcing for vocational and technical centres. Several education staff, parents and youth noted that the education system at the moment was not training them in the skills they would need for employment in the industries on their islands. This was seen as a disincentive to continue with formal education; with a preference to be learning 'on the job'.

**Recommendation:** Awareness needs to be raised on the links between knowledge and local industry skills: e.g. management of farms and agricultural operations, budgeting, documentation and decision-making. That is, raise awareness of relevance of education to everyday island life.

#### Other risk factors

13 responses (4% of total responses) said that children and youth were being exposed to drugs (marijuana) and alcohol in their early teens, and that this was having a noticeable impact on the rates of drop-outs in primary school and early secondary school.

Another 3% (11 respondents) also said peer pressure was a common risk for boys to drop out of school. These comments did not specifically list alcohol or drugs in connection with the peer pressure, instead indicating that youth were observing their friends 'hanging out' and not having to study, and wished to join them.

8 of the responses (2%) noted that 'children weren't interested' in attending school. Some of the responses specified that this was because they felt the work was too 'theoretical' (academic) and not relevant to the skills they'd need in their daily lives after completing school; others said it was because they wanted to just 'hang around' with their friends.

Several of the youth participants (2% / 7 responses) spoke strongly about the impact that increased access to mobile phones and internet sites has had on access to education. The responses indicated concern that youth were being distracted from school by access to movies, YouTube videos and social media. Several respondents amongst youth and adults also commented that parents were spending their income on mobile phone top-ups (and kava), instead of on school fees.

5 respondents (1% of total responses) also commented that with parents needing to work in urban centres or overseas to earn income, children were being left in the care of their grandparents who

often did not have the financial resources, the energy, or the commitment to ensure that children were attending school.

Other parents and youth (less than 1%) noted that secondary school was seen as an environment where sexual relationships could develop, leading some parents to be concerned about the risk of pregnancy or teenage marriage through attendance at school.

Finally, a response that was collected from several parents was the perception that increased awareness and enforcement against physically disciplining children was serving as a barrier to education. It was commented that verbal discipline was ineffective, and 4 parents noted that children were becoming disrespectful and refusing to attend school. This indicates that child protection procedures still require further communication and dissemination for greater community understanding.

---

*Corporal punishment equals quality people and individuals. Children's rights is a disturbance; discipline is good for children.*

*Parent from North-East Malekula*

*Children's rights are a hindrance to discipline.*

*Parent from North-West Malekula*

*Parents must uphold discipline, in order to have respectful and obedient kids.*

*School teachers focus group from Santo*

---

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

The Vanuatu 'Barriers to Education' study examined global literature to identify potential barriers to education, reviewed available data from VEMIS on enrolment at all levels and disparities therein, and then spoke with parents, youth, school officials and institutions to determine which determinants and risks were most prevalent in preventing Vanuatu's youth from accessing education.

It was determined that parents perceive primary school education as valuable for their children's future. Enrolment rates at primary school can still be improved, however attendance at school is highest during the primary school age years.

Parents are still becoming aware of the importance of early childhood education, and this lack of awareness and high fees form the main barrier to children's participation in ECCE.

There is a marked decrease in perceptions of the value of secondary education, with parents and children questioning how secondary education will contribute to their future work. There is interest in technical and vocational education, as indicated by the enrolment figures for post-secondary colleges, however attendance at rural technical and vocational training centres was low in the years 2010 – 2015, and demonstrated a significant gender disparity with more boys completing this practical training.

The decrease in enrolment in secondary schools is linked to a number of factors, with difficulty in meeting school fees and school expenses listed as the primary influence on attendance. Parental perception of the value of education was the other most significant determiner for attendance at school, after income poverty. If education is valued in the home, time and money will be prioritized for education activities and children demonstrate a higher level of motivation. The study recorded several comments that if this parental support was lacking, the child correspondingly placed low value on education and were more likely to drop out. Youth and teachers also commented that they'd observed recreational expenses such as kava, alcohol and mobile phone credits (for internet access) were prioritised in some communities or households over school fees.

Low secondary school completion leads to low enrolment in tertiary studies; less than 5% of Vanuatu students' progress to a degree. The number of students completing post-graduate studies is extremely limited; in 2015 less than 10 students graduated with a post-graduate qualification.

Overall, community perceptions were that girls had the same rights to an education as boys, with 92% of survey respondents stating that girls should go to secondary school. It was noted by many parents that the socio-economic environment of Vanuatu had changed in the last generation, and that girls needed education and skills to be able to support their husbands, manage their households, and understand new developments in productive sectors and business.

Geography was also identified as a determinant for education. Parents identified that the distance to school was a barrier to attendance, with some children having to walk for up to an hour to access their nearest school. In rural areas, when weather was bad the roads, river crossings or sea crossings could be unsafe to traverse for days or weeks at a time, preventing children from attending school for extended periods.

Many study participants perceived the education system in Vanuatu was not inclusive of children and youth with a disability. Factors such as poor roads, inaccessible classroom and toilet construction, lack of assistance tools such as sign language, braille or hearing aids, a curriculum that doesn't cater for a range of learning needs, and lack of inclusion training for teachers and teacher support were cited as some of the specific barriers existing for children with a disability to attend school. It was also noted that there was still discrimination in communities against disability, and that some parents felt shame or stigma in relation to including their child in community activities, including education.

Disaster was also an acknowledged barrier to education in Vanuatu. Vanuatu is at high risk of natural disaster, and disaster events impact school facilities, resources (educational and financial resources) and community income. In recent years some disasters in Vanuatu have required community relocation, which adds additional pressures on sourcing facilities for relocated students, affects income for families and has psychosocial impacts on youth.

Limited recommendations have been made throughout this study. Some issues, such as general income poverty, need to be addressed through a range of strategies and so no recommendations have been made for those areas.

Recommendations collated from this study are:

*Recommendation 1: Improve parental and child perceptions of the relevance of education to future goals, and to future income*

- More awareness needs to be provided at community level on the practical contribution of education to future life activities.
- More awareness needs to be provided that parents' responsibilities with education aren't limited to paying school fees, but require active support and interest from parents.
- More resourcing is needed for vocational education pathways.
- Awareness needs to be raised on the links between knowledge and local industry skills: e.g. management of farms and agricultural operations, budgeting, documentation and decision-making. That is, raise awareness of relevance of education to everyday island life.

*Recommendation 2: Reduce access issues from geographical factors*

- Teachers, principals and youth coordinators suggested that one way to resolve this barrier would be to construct more boarding schools: "to overcome the issue of Geography as an issue/factor, Government, through the MoET and donor partners, should construct more boarding schools in the islands of Vanuatu to accommodate the growing number of children craving for education. Since we cannot bring education and better infrastructure to them, we'd make education be accessible to them by allowing them to live where education is situated." [Youth coordinator, Efate]

*Recommendation 3: Improve access and quality of education for children with a disability*

The main suggestion coming out of the focus groups was that more training should be given to teachers on inclusion, and special needs teachers should be trained and posted to provide support in schools. A second suggestion was to improve the curriculum to be more inclusive.

*Recommendation 4: Reduce disaster impact on access to education through improved Education in Emergency planning and coordination*

A 2009 UNICEF assessment of Vanuatu's emergency preparedness planning for climate change and disaster responses indicated that Core Commitments for Children indicators such as child separation, child protection or temporary classrooms were not adequately considered in emergency management plans. In the past 4-years Vanuatu has been strengthening their emergency management systems, including through development of the 'Education Cluster' specifically dedicated to appropriate emergency management of education. This work should be supported and continued. Designs for education strengthening programs should consider current disaster management policy and mechanisms for "Education in Emergency" measures while developing the program structure, activities and objectives.

*Recommendation 5: Continue with gender equity initiatives in education, as they are having a positive impact in moving Vanuatu's education system to a gender equal environment*

Continue with gender equity in education activities to improve access to schooling, as it is having a demonstrated impact on perceptions of the value of education for girls.

*Recommendation 6: Raise awareness of the impacts of child labour on education*

Domestic and agricultural work expectations can be concluded to have an impact on children's participation in education. It would be beneficial to raise parental and community awareness on the need to restrict children's household and agricultural work outside of school to increase their attendance and performance, with a focus on the long-term benefits of education.

## *Conclusion*

Overall, barriers to education in Vanuatu are largely consistent with barriers to education identified in other developing countries, with income poverty and parental perceptions having the most impact.

Increasing awareness at community level of the outcomes and relevance of education for their children would assist in addressing some of these barriers, and contribute to achievement of SDG 4: Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all.

## Annexure 1: Barriers to attending school, as identified by parents, teachers, principals and youth

Note: this list was generated from the open answers provided in the survey of parents in Torba, Penama and Tafea provinces, and from notes taken during focus groups and interviews held in Malekula, Santo and Efate. They should not be read as a statistical representation of the national perception of barriers; however, they do provide a useful description of what parents, educational staff and students perceive as the main barriers.

**Table 11: Combined Survey and Focus Group Narrative Responses to Barriers to Education**

Sorted in declining order for # of total responses.

Response	# (Total = 334)	% of total responses	Comments / quotes
School Fees	43	13%	
Lack of parent's commitment to education	32	10%	
Income generation difficulties	27	8%	cash crops damaged by disaster; copra price dropped
Misuse of Income	16	5%	Spend too much money on mobile phone recharge and kava
Distance of school - long way and weather (bad weather prevents travel)	13 + 11	7%	
Disability - access and teaching inclusion + Discrimination	15 + 4	6%	
Disaster	13	4%	
Drugs and alcohol	13	4%	
Peer pressure to stay out of school	11	3%	
Weather (bad weather prevents travel – included above)	11	3%	
Child needs to help with domestic, childcare or agricultural work at home	9	3%	

Broken Families	8	2%	
Children aren't interested	8	2%	
Access to mobile phones and websites	7	2%	
Lack of knowledge on value of education	7	2%	
School source of boy/girl relationships	7	2%	
Youth can earn money from out-of-school activities	7	2%	
Grandparents raising children (no resources)	5	1%	
Lack of resources or facilities at school	5	1%	
No school uniform (ashamed)	5	1%	
Pulled out for custom ceremonies	5	1%	
Abuse	4	1%	
Children disrespectful, don't attend	4	1%	
Discrimination (disability) (included above)	4	1%	
No savings plan at house	4	1%	
Too many students, not enough teachers	4	1%	
Child has learning difficulties	3	1%	
Children's rights - physical discipline not allowed	3	1%	
Domestic Violence	3	1%	
Gender	3	1%	
Large family size	3	1%	
Sickness	3	1%	
Syllabus is too theoretical	3	1%	
Does not align with cultural beliefs	2	1%	
Haven't done homework (no light) don't want to go back	2	1%	
Language	2	1%	
Lost investment (education fees don't pay off)	2	1%	

No food at home	2	1%	
Pregnancy	2	1%	
Religion - school doesn't align with religious teachings	2	1%	
School facilities poor	2	1%	
Child marriage	1	0%	
Lack of employment prospects after education	1	0%	
Land dispute	1	0%	
Parents can't assist with homework	1	0%	
Poor academic performance	1	0%	
Poor teaching quality	1	0%	
Road inaccessible	1	0%	
To maintain land	1	0%	
Water shortage	1	0%	
Weak community support	1	0%	
<b>TOTAL RESPONSES</b>	<b>334</b>		

## Annexure 2: Should girls go to secondary school? Why or why not?

Responses from phone survey conducted in Tafea, Torba and Penama province.

58 responses: 93% yes, 7% no (3 of the No answers were from Torba province and 1 from Penama; 2 Male and 2 Female respondents).

---

### **Yu ting se ol girl oli nidim go long hae skul? From wanem?**

#### **Do you think girls need to go to secondary school? Why / why not?**

- 
1. They would not know anything for their future. Their future would not really bright. This also help to stop child marriage that is very common in some places in Maewo. This happen as if girls are mean to get married (whenever they see that a girl have grown breasts, they automatically find her a husband, or even just the day they were born they ask the child's parent if their child when grown up would be with their son). Therefore, if girls go to school this could slow down the process of getting married and to explore different thing in life that can benefit herself and her future.

---

  2. Because every girl has the same right as a boy to read and write. They will learn more things in secondary school that will benefit them in the future.

---

  3. Today life is difficult and men are sometimes are aggressive, therefore families will suffer if girls don't go to school. It is important for the benefits of a home, children needs, house necessities and basic needs for herself. Yet girls are the main responsible person in a home and society in terms of bending [sic], roles etc. Therefore, it is important for a girl to go to secondary school to gain knowledge and skills to support her family and society.

---

  4. Yes it is very important. This is because woman are the most responsible person in a home and the family. When she is educated, all the house needs and problems are solve, without her being educated is like a disability who has nothing to share for his/her family but just around to receive what comes for him/her. Therefore, it is important for girl to attend secondary school to meet the needs of a house, her future and her family.

---

  5. Everyone has the right to go to school. But it's not good in a sense that they get pregnant in school. Hence, a girl or woman play a vital role in a home or society. A home have everything which a family needs because she's a woman and because she is educated. If she is not educated then a woman is just a tool to use and not having the power to do anything that is necessary for a home to have, but trouble and emptiness.

---

  6. Yes because it is her who will do things in the house or face the life with her future with her family once she get married. If she becomes a widow or something, she can still manage because she is educated and will be able to find a job to sustain her family's needs and demands.

---

  7. There are many challenges faced by girls who don't go to secondary school in terms of management, decision making, the way they think in a home or society, the way they do things etc. Because of that, girls are vulnerable in everything, which means they rely on men
-

---

for everything. In my personal opinion, it's very important to them to be resilient and that can only happen if they go to secondary school to get educated to help them to do everything, think and manage their life in such a way that men see that they play a vital role in a society and a home.

---

8. Girls are more different than boys. Sometimes girls think more creatively, especially in the way they care. So the way they think, care and react can have a positive input in her education and after educating. Therefore, there will be a positive benefits in a home, community and society. I am a classical example, I have managed to be educated, have a job and bring positive output into my community, my family and my society. Which is why it is so important for a girl to attend secondary school and be educated.

---

9. Her future is what she have to work hard for as today's life is not easy as compare to what we have in the past. In the past we only rely on garden and to learn what we have to know in the community for the life in the community, but today a girl needs to learn things that come from the outside the community to work and live outside the community. Things are coming into the community and girls need to have some knowledge in school to go with the flow of things that comes around. Also, she will be one day have a husband and children, so she needs to have an education to support her and her family.

---

10. In the past we live in the village so we don't need to learn anything outside from that. So education is not important. But today, girls need to go to secondary school to learn to change with the changing world and environment. Yet, girls are the better managers in the society and in a home men can really rely on, but men cannot rely on girls if they are not educated. Yet, their future with their husband and children rely on the knowledge and skills they gain from the school. Compare to the woman who are not attended secondary school, they are so quiet and shy to express themselves and to speak up for something they may though is right or wrong and suffer the consequences for the rest of their life.

---

11. I learn and see that working on the garden like I use to do is ok, but this world is changing very rapidly and the population is growing very fast, so our land is getting smaller and with the changes we have today, girls these days will not enjoy it. Therefore, it is very important for a girl to go to school and find herself her money somewhere from the small jobs she can find other than to try to find it it here because she will never find it anymore.

---

12. I saw many girls this days are facing difficult times because boys take them for nothing or for granted. Because of that, they get pregnant and can't support their child because they don't have secondary school knowledge and skill which they can use to support them self. Therefore, it is important that girls attend secondary school to have better future with or without a husband.

---

13. To develop herself to look after herself and her family in future. If she could not attend secondary school then it's very unlikely that she could possibly be happy and supportive to

---

---

her parents, family and husband, but would be like a tool just to use for working purposes like everyone else who didn't.

---

14. The life that she will be facing in her future needs her to start preparing for now and that is to attend secondary school. If she did not, then she have a problem that awaiting for her.

---

15. It is important for her to go to secondary school for many reasons. But the most important is to treat both fairly to get what they are meant to get in life. Also, it's important for her to gain knowledge and skills to sustain her life in future that will also has a good positive effort for her children in future. It will also support her husband in all the necessary needs and pending in life other than to be treated like a slave and suffer the rest of her life.

---

16. Yes. Everyone has the right to attend school. Yet, whenever she grows up, her knowledge and skills gained from secondary school will be able to be used to support her family and relatives. But, they can get pregnant too easily when they were in secondary school. That is the bad side/ view of girls going to secondary school.

---

17. It is important because she can manage to find a small job to support her family. Also, it helps her mind to think over decision making, managing life needs and wants, managing and setting goals for her and her family and making decisions other than to rely on men to do everything.

---

18. Yes every child must go to secondary school. In my mind, a girl will one day become a woman who must meet the responsibility of a woman. That is to meet her children's needs and also to support her husband, to help her family if her husband is not working or needing help for the family matters.

---

19. A boy and a girl are the same. We all have the same needs and wants in life. So a girl would not depend entirely on parents by staying back home and not attending secondary school and relying on her parents to get all she wants. Therefore, she needs to go to secondary school to enable her to have a bright future and sustain her own life without depending on other people.

---

20. It's important because it will help her and her family in future, it will help her to solve problems in a house and society, it will help her to support me and her relatives in future when we are in need.

---

21. She can manage her life with her children if she get married to someone who is not really a good man. Yet, she can be helpful to other things in house roles and responsibility and even making decisions.

---

22. Girls are like boys, they need to go secondary school to sustain their life and future. If a girl didn't attend secondary school, in future she will find it difficult to manage her family.

---

As a girl, she will not manage to have a plan, dreams or goals to achieve as a important

---

---

means of her life. As well she will not be able to make decisions as she will feel that she's not been educated and she doesn't know anything to say.

---

23. Living these days needs education in order to normally function. If a girl doesn't attend secondary school it means she won't have a say or place in a society. She will only exist in a society to give birth and do the housework that a women is meant to do.

---

24. Since we are experiencing life that is getting harder and harder. So for a girl to go to secondary school is very important in a sense that it will be much harder for a girl if they don't go to secondary school to cope with this changing life. Yet, girls' attitude towards learning is always positive and it is a must for a girl to prepare for her future, if she doesn't then she will suffer with the future and even her children in future will suffer that also.

---

25. In my community, the challenge of girls not going to school is very high because along the way they drop out, or ended up pregnant. But I believe that every girl has the right to education and that they need to go to school in order to learn about the basics of living, health and other things that can stop the issue of getting pregnant or drop out of school. Also education can help them have a good future with jobs and have more money so that they can help their parents back in the community.

---

26. It is very important to them to go to secondary school as far as tertiary. This is because a woman is a good manager in a house. Which means if a man does not have a time to spend with the kids the mother is always there to support them. This will always give a first step for a child to have a better future. It will might as well help a teacher to find it easy to teach the kids when they go to school. Yet, if a man don't have a job or lost a job a woman can help to support him and the children.

---

27. Whenever a girl grown up she will not depend on her parents for everything she needs. Yet, she need education for her future life that she would help look after her family.

---

28. Because they can learn a lot of things in secondary school which in the future can help them. They can also have a better job once they finish school and come back and help their parents.

---

29. Girls are like men. They also need to go to school to get to know things as compared to boys. Because at times, when only boys go to school and if he get married to a girl who has not been to school he would treat his wife as a slave to do everything, just because she's not educated. Yet, girls also want to enjoy the same privilege that boys do (and that is in terms of education and life).

---

30. It's important for a girl to attend school because girls are the first to teach their children back at home before they can go to school. Boys won't spent time with their children at home. Because of this, it is important that girls should attend school for her future and her children's future to be bright.

---

- 
31. Because it is their future. When they are with their parents, parents do everything for them. What will happen if there are no more parents? They will have nothing. So the gateway to their future is through education. Not only in secondary school but beginning from primary. From there, they can choose what they want to do.
- 
32. Girls have a better view of what's happening in the community, so I think if they attend secondary school, they will have a better chance of changing things in the community. Secondary school can give them a chance to figure out what they want to become in the future. It will also help them have a better job so that they can help their families.
- 
33. Every girls need have the same right as boys to go to school. So that one day when they have a better job they will help their parents.
- 
34. It's a real need. There are many reasons to why girls need to go to school. A girl is a teacher back home if she becomes a mother. She is a first teacher before a child goes to school. Yet, if a family have some kind of business in their current life or in future, girls need to have a knowledge to handle such activities in her house other than to depend on someone else or she can't even have such activities in her house or family just because she doesn't have educational background or can manage information in such activities. Also, if she have a family in future, her children would be a victim facing difficulties with their education because their mother could not able to support them with the educational activities because she wouldn't understand the importance.
- 
35. Because girls also has the right same as boys. When girls go to secondary school they have a better chance of learning about sexual education that can prevent them from getting pregnant. It also gives them a choice of what they want to become in the future and they can act on that. When they finish education, they can have a good job which can support them and their families.
- 
36. Because girls also have the right to a better education. I believe that if they go to school they can have a good job and help their parents. Some women today are not educated and they live with educated husbands, but sometimes, their husband just doesn't care about them by giving money or providing food etc. So if a girl goes to secondary school, she can learn a lot and from there she can choose what she wants to become in the future. And when all her dreams come true, she has everything she needs, a job and more money to help her. So it is very important for her to go to secondary school.
- 
37. It's because all my hard work that I can't put on her would not benefit me and my family. This means that, whenever she gain good education etc, she will be getting married and she will help her husband's family instead of me and my family, so it means my hard work are just for nothing.
-

- 
38. Because when girls go to school they do not think hard about studies. Sometimes they got pregnant and come back home which is a bad thing for the parents because they wasted their money.
- 
39. It's good for all girls to go to school as it will help them in many ways and needs of their life as this days life has changes so much.
- 
40. Girls have the same opportunity as boys to go to school and right. They have a good chances to make a better life in the future if they have a good job. Going to school will help them understand more about life and provide them with good skills that will not only benefit them but also the community where they come from.
- 
41. Depend if she has an interest then she have to go to school. Yet, girls have better knowledge than boys and if she went to school she can be more better in terms of learning, do things that can help her families etc.
- 
42. Yes I think it is very important that girls should go to school because we all have equal rights to education. I believe that they will develop some skills that will not only help themselves but will also help in the community, provincial and national government. Women have the ability to do more things than men.
- 
43. It's because if she complete her studies she can help her children and to support her husband. Even if her husband left her she can still manage her own life or her life with her children. Also, in experience a girl who didn't attend school can't support and help the husband's families as compared to girls who attend school. As well, this helps a girl to make decision-making that reflect her wants and needs rather than to suffer the decisions made by others (e.g.. arranged marriage that is decided by parents over her decision which she can suffer it for the rest of her life without happiness).
- 
44. It's very important for them to attend school. This is because today's life (western life) is expensive and adapting to this changing life, therefore, it's important that they attend school to have jobs to manage their life and needs than to rely on their parents which is too expensive.
- 
45. Girls are a waste of time. When they go to school, sometimes they did not finish their education simply because they got pregnant and come back home and stay. So parents spend a lot of money just for nothing.
- 
46. I think girls need to go to school because they can help their parents in the future when they have a better job.
- 
47. Girls need to go to school so that they can have more understanding about development and when they have a better job they can give back to the community
- 
48. They have to go to school to learn how to read and write to help them with their future life.
-

- 
49. Because sometimes they can do better things than boys.
- 
50. Because they do not respect themselves when they go to school so they ended up pregnant which ruin the hard works of their parents.
- 
51. Because of their future
- 
52. To have a better job in the future so that can help them
- 
53. She has to be educated to help support with her families in future with knowledge, skills and talent.
- 
54. Girls have a better chance to make a difference in their community when they complete their studies and have good jobs.
- 
55. Girls also want or need to have access to education and to have access to better life. therefore it is necessary for girls to attend school.
- 
56. I think it is important for girls to attend school because men and women are equal. This is also as a helper in a household or for her future life with her families and children.
- 
57. They can have knowledge to help to look after their husband and children in their future. that can also help them to support their husband in their future if they are to be able to live in town or even working on pubic service in village to do work in the community.
- 
58. Go to school to learn how to talk, write and read.
-

## Annexure 3: Data Tables

### Survey data

Excel worksheets containing the full data from the provincial phone survey conducted in Torba, Penama and Tafea provinces has been provided as a separate set of files to MoET.

### Enrolment in school: national figures 2011-2015

Enrolment by School type, urban/rural, province and gender for 2010 - 2015

Data extracted from MoET old VEMIS database

Urban/ Rural	Sector	Province	Male						Male Total	Female						Female Total	Grand Total
			2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015		2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015		
Urban																	
	Early Childhood Education	Sanma	378	395	449	493	453	488	2656	342	383	431	524	437	425	2542	5198
		Shefa	744	664	765	744	789	766	4472	743	629	725	711	733	733	4274	8746
	Early Childhood Education Total		1122	1059	1214	1237	1242	1254	7128	1085	1012	1156	1235	1170	1158	6816	13944
	Primary	Sanma	1525	1556	1629	1709	1743	1849	10011	1385	1340	1456	1464	1545	1599	8789	18800
		Shefa	3580	3814	4043	4129	4174	4169	23909	3430	3570	3822	3763	3827	3936	22348	46257
	Primary Total		5105	5370	5672	5838	5917	6018	33920	4815	4910	5278	5227	5372	5535	31137	65057
	Secondary	Sanma	311	325	355	307	374	470	2142	320	325	345	344	423	474	2231	4373
		Shefa	1626	1422	1276	1402	2008	2142	9876	1686	1592	1516	1616	1919	2032	10361	20237
	Secondary Total		1937	1747	1631	1709	2382	2612	12018	2006	1917	1861	1960	2342	2506	12592	24610
Urban Total			8164	8176	8517	8784	9541	9884	53066	7906	7839	8295	8422	8884	9199	50545	103611

Rural on following page.

Urban/ Rural	Sector	Province	Male						Male Total	Female						Female Total	Grand Total
			2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015		2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015		
Rural	Early Childhood Education	Torba	241	288	292	299	245	277	1642	262	276	328	320	279	286	1751	3393
		Sanma	1231	1114	1171	1186	1179	1281	7162	1124	1042	1098	1125	1075	1089	6553	13715
		Penama	549	769	838	950	896	873	4875	522	703	778	873	764	791	4431	9306
		Malampa	803	990	1050	1021	1005	1124	5993	792	876	938	849	919	1024	5398	11391
		Shefa	836	691	1071	1063	1264	1280	6205	786	630	913	910	1055	1142	5436	11641
		Tafea	940	1111	1366	1221	1391	1439	7468	863	1045	1225	1104	1226	1316	6779	14247
	Early Childhood Education Total		4600	4963	5788	5740	5980	6274	33345	4349	4572	5280	5181	5318	5648	30348	63693
	Primary	Torba	1025	1026	1066	1054	1046	1081	6298	922	950	993	971	1047	1030	5913	12211
		Sanma	3730	3868	4021	4044	4063	4108	23834	3325	3491	3619	3594	3635	3576	21240	45074
		Penama	3522	3534	3530	3647	3689	3682	21604	3188	3204	3160	3264	3407	3383	19606	41210
		Malampa	4379	4422	4435	4500	4531	4566	26833	3870	3914	3951	3989	4052	4062	23838	50671
		Shefa	3388	3522	3708	3867	4084	4167	22736	3153	3284	3519	3575	3734	3825	21090	43826
		Tafea	4832	4686	4897	4841	5164	5049	29469	4382	4191	4358	4409	4591	4572	26503	55972
	Primary Total		20876	21058	21657	21953	22577	22653	130774	18840	19034	19600	19802	20466	20448	118190	248964

Urban/ Rural	Sector	Prov ince	Male						Male Total	Female						Female Total	Grand Total
			2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015		2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015		
	Secondary	Torba	85	108	112	121	160	115	701	111	134	114	90	138	111	698	1399
		Sanma	732	748	712	724	691	746	4353	735	681	677	678	680	712	4163	8516
		Penama	688	594	587	596	594	621	3680	713	648	656	606	574	624	3821	7501
		Malampa	634	586	593	609	576	620	3618	572	588	599	632	590	622	3603	7221
		Shefa	658	719	600	614	665	687	3943	745	691	630	711	682	675	4134	8077
		Tafea	528	574	578	630	654	616	3580	451	536	579	596	611	578	3351	6931
	Secondary Total		3325	3329	3182	3294	3340	3405	19875	3327	3278	3255	3313	3275	3322	19770	39645
Rural Total			28801	29350	30627	30987	31897	32332	183994	26516	26884	28135	28296	29059	29418	168308	352302
Grand Total			36965	37526	39144	39771	41438	42216	237060	34422	34723	36430	36718	37943	38617	218853	455913

Data extracted from MoET old VEMIS database

Data tables 2: In your household, how hard is it to pay.....

Survey responses for survey conducted in Torba, Penama and Tafea provinces June 2018

For Kindergarten Fees

Kindy n = 60	Total responses to question: In your family, how difficult is it to pay school fees for kindergarten?		“Don’t Know / Not Applicable” responses excluded Total included answers = 20	
	# of responses	% of responses from total n 60	# of responses (excl. don’t know)	% of 20 data responses
Very hard - sometimes I can't pay	1	2%	1	5%
Very hard	0	0%	0	0%
Hard	3	5%	3	15%
It's OK	13	22%	13	65%
Not very hard	1	2%	1	5%
Not hard at all	2	3%	2	10%
Don't know / not applicable	40	67%		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>60</b>		<b>20</b>	

For Primary School Fees

Primary School n = 60	Total responses to question: In your family, how difficult is it to pay school fees for primary school?		“Don’t Know / Not Applicable” responses excluded Total included answers =	
	# of responses	% of responses from total n 60	# of responses (excl. don’t know)	% of 20 data responses
Very hard - sometimes I can't pay	2	3%	2	5%
Very hard	9	15%	9	21%
Hard	8	13%	8	19%
It's OK	14	23%	14	33%
Not very hard	7	12%	7	17%
Not hard at all	2	3%	2	5%
Don't know / not applicable	18	30%		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>60</b>		<b>42</b>	

For Secondary School Fees

Secondary School n = 60	Total responses to question: In your family, how difficult is it to pay school fees for secondary school?		“Don’t Know / Not Applicable” responses excluded Total included answers =	
	# of responses	% of responses from total n 60	# of responses (excl. don’t know)	% of 20 data responses
Very hard - sometimes I can't pay	5	8%	5	15%
Very hard	17	28%	17	50%
Hard	4	7%	4	12%
It's OK	7	12%	7	21%
Not very hard	1	2%	1	3%
Not hard at all	0	0%	0	0%
Don't know / not applicable	26	43%		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>60</b>		<b>34</b>	

Annexure 4: Survey Questionnaire template (in English)  
Attached as a separate pdf document.

## Annexure 5 – Questionnaires for Focus Groups and Key Informant Interviews

- Separate questionnaires were developed for each sector being interviewed: social groups, institutional level, and community level. A ‘master questionnaire’ was developed for each sector, with a list of all *possible* questions for that sector provided. Please note, **it is not expected that every question be asked at every focus group and interview. Instead, team leaders were asked to choose 3-4 core questions from the list that are relevant to that particular group or interview.** This will give us a broad range of data across several factors for each sector.
- These questionnaires were initially structured by Georgia Noy, and amended following the literature review discussion. They were then further amended to reflect feedback received from Cobin Ngwero).

### Parents

*Icebreakers (max 5 minutes):*

- *How many children do you have? Ages?*
- *How many children go to school? Which ones?*
  - Do your children enjoy school? Describe
- *Why do some children, and not the others go to school?*
  - Who made the decisions of who will go to school?
  - Describe how you decided who would/ would not attend school
- *What are your plans for your children and the **level of education** they will reach?*
  - How did you make that decision?
- *What level of education did you reach?*
- *How do you think your children will use their education in life?*
- *Do you think education is important for your children?*
  - Why?
  - Why not?
- *Do you think education is equally important for all children? – (prompt if need: people with disability, children who live in very rural areas, girls/ boys)*
- *How far away is the school?*
  - How long does it take for your children to reach school?
  - What transport do your children use to get to school?
  - Are you ever worried about what might happen to your children on the way to/ from school?
- *Have you/ your family ever been affected by a disaster? (flood, cyclone, heavy rains, earthquake)*
  - How many times have you been affected by a disaster in the last 5 years? (*big, medium or small*)
  - What did your family do in that situation?
  - Did your children still go to school?
  - Was the school open?
  - For how long did they miss out on school?
- *Do you think that the quality of the school (for your children) is excellent, good, poor?*

- Explain your thoughts/ ideas
  - Are the school buildings and facilities excellent, good, poor? Explain/ describe
  - Is the principal excellent, good, poor? Explain/ describe
  - Are the teachers excellent, good, poor? Explain/ describe
  - Are the school books and lessons excellent, good, poor? Explain, describe
- What are some of the challenges for you and your family linked to sending your children to school?
  - What form of support do you as parents provide to students?
  - What form of support do students receive from parents & teachers to remain in school?
  - What form of support do the out of school children receive from parents/community etc.
  - What form of support do teachers provide to students?
  - Do parents in your area find it hard to pay school fees? Is it harder for some levels of school than others (e.g. kindy, primary school, secondary school)
  - Are parents in your area more willing to pay for school fees for some members of the family than others? Eg for boys more than girls? Or for older children than younger children (or vice versa)
  - Are there any children you know of that find it hard/er to go to school because a disability? How does the community / government help them get an education?
  - What excites you about educating your children?

## Youth (In-school and Out-of-School youth)

Icebreakers (max 5 minutes):

- What class are you in? How old are you?
  - Do you have sisters and brothers? How many? Ages? Do they all go to school?
- Why do some of your brothers/ sisters go to school and not others?
  - Who made the decisions of who will go to school in your family?
- Do you like school? What excites you about school and learning?
  - Why?
  - Why not?
- Do you hope to stay at school?
  - For how long?
  - What do you think you will use your education for in life?
- Are your parents happy you go to school? What do they say about you and your education?
- How do they support you to go to school? How do your teachers support you to go to school?
- Do you think education is important for children in Vanuatu?
  - Why?
  - Why not?
- Do you think education is equally important for all children? – (prompt if need: people with disability, children who live in very rural areas, girls/ boys)
- How far away is the school?
  - How long does it take for you to reach school?
  - What transport do you use to get to school?
  - Are you ever worried about what might happen to you on the way to/ from school?
- Have you/ your family ever been affected by a disaster? (flood, cyclone, heavy rains, earthquake)
  - How many times have you been affected by a disaster in the last 5 years? (big, medium or small)
  - What did your family do in that situation?
  - Did you still go to school?
  - Was the school open?
  - For how long did you miss out on school?
- Do you think your school is excellent, good, poor?
  - Explain your thoughts/ ideas
  - Are the school buildings and facilities excellent, good, poor? Explain/ describe
  - Is the principal excellent, good, poor? Explain/ describe
  - Are the teachers excellent, good, poor? Explain/ describe
  - Are the school books and lessons excellent, good, poor? Explain, describe
- What are some of the challenges for you at school?
- As a girl, do you think secondary school is something that you want to attend? Why or why not?

- As a boy, do you think secondary school is something that you want to attend? Why or why not?
  - In your area or school, is there anything that makes it hard for girls to go to school?  
Prompts – if needed
    - \* e.g. pathway to the school is a long way / goes through deep bush, it's not safe for girls to walk their
    - \* girls are needed at home to help with the garden / help with looking after the kids
    - \* girls cannot go to school during their time of the month
  - Do you think that girls and boys perform the same in class (e.g. get similar marks, learn as quickly). If they perform differently, how do they perform differently?
  - Are there any children you know of that find it hard/er to go to school because a disability? How does the community / government help them get an education?
- 

## Teachers/ principal/education officials/community leaders

Icebreakers (5 minutes max):

- What class do you teach?
  - How many years have you been teaching?
  - How many years have you been teaching at this school?
  - How many years have you been a principal?
- Do you enjoy being a teacher?
  - Why?
  - Why not?
- How long do you hope to stay being a teacher at this school?
- How long do you hope to be a teacher?
  
- Research from around the Pacific says that enrolment statistics for primary school are improving. There are more girls enrolling, and overall there are more students enrolling. Do you think this is true in the schools you work with? Are there more girls enrolling in your schools? Are there more students enrolling in your schools?
  
- Do parents in your area think early education (kindy and pre-school) is important? Why or why not?
- Do parents in your area think secondary school education is important? Why or why not?
- Do parents in your area think secondary school education will help with getting work after school? What sort of things do you hear parents saying about work and school?
- What do parents and students in your area think about university education? What do education officials in your area think about university education?
- Do you think education is important for children in Vanuatu?
  - Why?
  - Why not?
- Do you think education is equally important for all children? – *(prompt if need: people with disability, children who live in very rural areas, girls/ boys)*
  
- Have this school (or other schools you've worked at) ever been affected by a disaster? *(flood, cyclone, heavy rains, earthquake)*
  - How many times have you/ school been affected by a disaster in the last 5 years? *(big, medium or small)*
  - What did you do in that situation?
  - What did the school do in that situation?
  - Was the school open?
  - For how long was the school closed?
  
- Do you think your school is excellent, good, poor?
  - Explain your thoughts/ ideas
  - Are the school buildings and facilities excellent, good, poor? Explain/ describe
  - Is school management excellent, good, poor? Explain/ describe
  - Are the teachers excellent, good, poor? Explain/ describe

- Are the school books and lessons excellent, good, poor? Explain/ describe
- What main language did the school teach in? Was this easy / not easy for students?
- Do you as principal/ teacher feel supported to do your job well?
  - Describe how you are supported/ professional development
  - Why do you think you are/ are not supported to do your job?
- What are some of the challenges/ barriers for students to attend school?
- What are some of the opportunities, things being done to encourage students to attend school (overcome the challenges/ barriers)?
- What form of support do parents provide to students?
- What form of support do students receive from parents & teachers to remain in school?
- What form of support do the out of school children receive from parents/community etc.
- What form of support do teachers provide to students?
- What are some of the challenges for you at school?
- What excites you about school and learning and being a teacher/ principal?

#### **Gender**

- Do you think boys are more likely to go to kindy than girls? Why or why not?
- Do you think boys are more likely to go to primary school than girls? Why or why not?
- Do you think boys are more likely to go to secondary school than girls? Why or why not?
- Do you think boys are more likely to go to university than girls? Why or why not?
- In your area or school, is there anything that makes it hard for girls to go to school?
  - Prompts – if needed
  - \* e.g. pathway to the school is a long way / goes through deep bush, it's not safe for girls to walk their
  - \* girls are needed at home to help with the garden / help with looking after the kids
  - \* girls cannot go to school during their time of the month
- Do you think secondary school is important or not very important for girls? Why or why not?
- Do you think that school fees for boys and school fees for girls are equally important?
- Do you think that girls and boys perform the same in class (e.g. get similar marks, learn as quickly). If they perform differently, how do they perform differently?

#### **Fees:**

- Do parents in your area find it hard to pay school fees? Is it harder for some levels of school than others (e.g. kindy, primary school, secondary school)
- Are parents in your area more willing to pay for school fees for some members of the family than others? Eg for boys more than girls? Or for older children than younger children (or vice versa)

## Out of school students/ youth

Icebreakers (max 5 minutes):

- *How old are you?*
- *How are were you when you left school?*
- *What was your last year at school?*
  
- Why did you leave school?
- What do you do now that you have left school?
- Do you have sisters and brothers? How many? Ages?
  - Do they go to school?
- Why do some of your brothers/ sisters go to school and not others?
  - Who made the decisions of who will go to school in your family?
  
- Did you like school when you were there?
  - Why?
  - Why not?
  
- Did you want to stay at school or were you glad to leave school?
  - Why?
  - Why not?
  
- Did your parents want you to stay at school? What do they say about you and your education?
  
- Do you think education is important for children in Vanuatu?
  - Why?
  - Why not?
  
- Do you think education is equally important for all children? – *(prompt if need: people with disability, children who live in very rural areas, girls/ boys)*
  
- Do you think education helps with getting work?
  - If yes – how much education is enough?
  - If no – why / why not?
  
- How far away was your school?
  - How long did it take for you to reach school?
  - What transport did you use to get to school?
  - Were you ever worried about what might happen to you on the way to/ from school?
  
- Do you think schools on different islands are different quality?
  
- Have you/ your family ever been affected by a disaster? *(flood, cyclone, heavy rains, earthquake)*
  - How many times have you been affected by a disaster in the last 5 years? *(big, medium or small)*
  - What did your family do in that situation?

- Did you still go to school during that time?
- Was the school open?
- For how long did you miss out on school?
  
- Do you think your recent school was excellent, good, poor?
  - Explain your thoughts/ ideas
  - Were the school buildings and facilities excellent, good, poor? Explain/ describe
  - Was the principal excellent, good, poor? Explain/ describe
  - Were the teachers excellent, good, poor? Explain/ describe
  - Were the school books and lessons excellent, good, poor? Explain, describe
  - What language did the school teach in? Was this easy / not easy?
  
- What were some of the challenges for you at school?
  
- What used to excite you about school and learning?
  
- In your area, is there anything that makes it hard for girls to go to school?
  - Prompts – if needed
  - \* e.g. pathway to the school is a long way / goes through deep bush, it's not safe for girls to walk their
  - \* girls are needed at home to help with the garden / help with looking after the kids
  - \* girls cannot go to school during their time of the month
  
- Do you think secondary school education is the same importance for boys and girls? Why / why not? Also, check levels – primary, secondary
  
- What form of support do you receive from parents/community etc now that you are not in school?
  
- What form of support did teachers and parents provide to you when you were in school? Was this enough support?

## Annexure 6: List of Interviews and Focus Groups completed

### Interviews:

- Nelly Willie YCV Director
- Carol Aru USP language tutor
- Katherine Tasso Teacher at APTC
- Sherol George Disability Inclusion Coordinator TVET
- Shantony Moli Education in Emergency officer, Save the Children Vanuatu
- Yona Opolot Shefa PEO
- Parents with disability, Narango community, South Santo
- Parents of student with disability, Narango, South Santo
- Youth Coordinator, WSB Northern Care Youth Clinic, Luganville, Santo
- Vanuatu Disability Promotion & Advocacy Association personnel, Luganville, Santo
- Parent of in-school child, Luganville, Santo
- Parent of out-of-school child, Luganville, Santo
- Headmaster Norsup, Malekula
- Kindergarten teacher Norsup, Malekula
- Principal, North East Malekula primary school

### Focus Groups:

- Youth Challenge Vanuatu Youth: youths who have dropped out from school in year 7 and year 13, Port Vila
- Wan Smol Bag youth, Port Vila
- Teachers Port Vila: NTM School, Vila North School and Tebakor College, Port Vila
- Parents of in-school and out-of-school youth: Seaside, Port Vila
- Mixed Ability: Disability representatives and community leaders, Port Vila
- Community leaders from Port Vila and North Efate, Port Vila
- Students at Nasalanvumol School, South Santo
- Parents of in-school and out-of-school youth, South Santo
- PEO, principals, head teachers and other teachers, Luganville Santo
- Out-of-school youth, WSB Northern Care Youth Clinic, Luganville Santo
- Primary school teachers, North-east Malekula
- School principals, North-east and Central Malekula
- Parents of in-school and out-of-school youth, school chairman, community leaders, youth, North-west Malekula
- Parents of in-school and out-of-school youth, school chairman, community leaders, youth, North-east Malekula, Malekula
- Primary school teachers, North-west Malekula