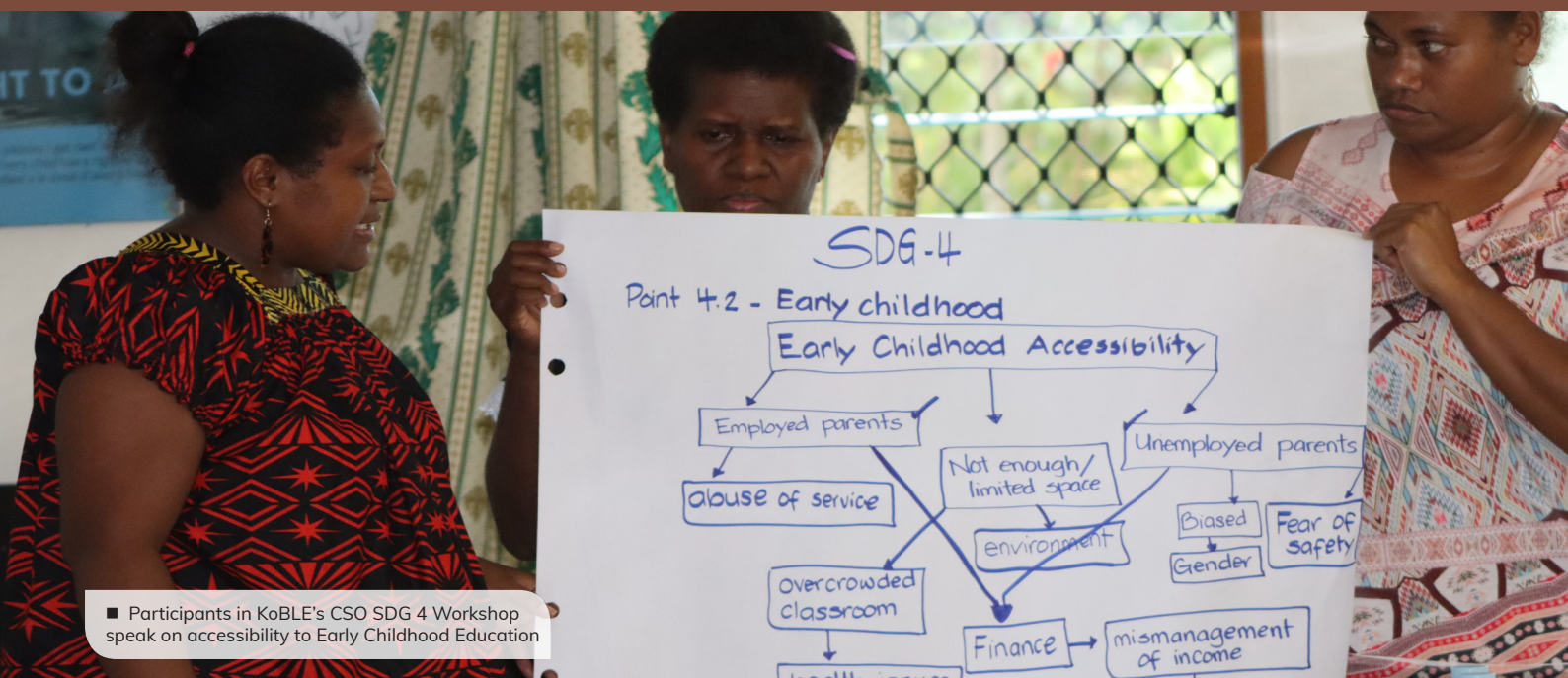


## Civil Society Spotlight Report on SDG 4 for HLPF 2022



■ Participants in KoBLE's CSO SDG 4 Workshop speak on accessibility to Early Childhood Education

### I. COUNTRY CONTEXT

While the government continues to progress in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through its National Sustainable Plan (NSDP) there are still challenges and realities of poor infrastructure and service delivery to the population of Vanuatu. Seventy-three per cent (73%) of the population live in rural areas. COVID-19 has negatively impacted the economy. Vanuatu experienced, for the first time, a community outbreak in March and schools have closed due to a national lockdown for a period of over a month. The Council of Ministers decided to consider education as an essential service during the COVID-19 to enable schools to continue during the lockdown. There is a home-school standardised package employed by the Ministry of Education (MOE) provided in the form of digital and hardcopy. Unfortunately, four provinces outside the two main provinces, which are the urban cities in Vanuatu, have poor internet infrastructure. Most schools did not receive the hard copy package to be distributed to students due to delays from the MOE which clearly indicates that there is a loss of learning during the lockdown.

In 2021, KOBLE released a progress report on the implementation of SDG 4 implementation in Vanuatu. While there is major progress from the Government of Vanuatu in addressing gaps in education, the MOE report in 2021 found that there are still gaps in the reporting of SDG 4 key targets. The SDG 4 target areas are not prioritised or are demonstrating limited progress in Targets 4.5 on Inclusive Education, 4.6 on Youth and Adult Literacy, and 4.7 on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The national framework and overarching plan are limited to capturing only three key areas; access to basic education, literacy and numeracy rate within the formal education and Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET). If the MOE continues to use the national framework as an indicator measurement, then there is a significant risk that other target areas of the population under the education sector and SDG 4 will be left behind.

### II. CHALLENGES IN AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION

The Kolisen Blong Leftemap Edukesen's (KoBLE) SDG 4 report (2021) highlighted

education financing as a major factor for parents to pay for their children to continue education, whether formal education or Post-Secondary Education and Training (PSET) level. According to the Ministry of Education budget, 80% of the funding goes to staff payrolls, administration and operation. Further, most of the education budget is directed toward formal education.

At the sectoral level, Vanuatu's education development is driven by the Education Training Sector strategy (VETSS) 2030 plan, which is aligned with key education

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priorities of access and equity, quality, and management. There is no mention of an SDG 4 specific target in the current plan. Transformative education is a crucial key to enhancing Vanuatu's education and enabling learners to adapt to the current issues of climate change, COVID-19 impacts, and sustainable development. However, at the national level, the focus is more on education in the classroom and on business as usual.

Most of the effort from the MOE is batching the broken systems that were developed in the last forty years under foreign rule rather than looking at alternative ways to adapt to the new 21st-century learning model. No funding is directed to community learning centres (CLCs) to promote community participation and sustainable living. According to the KoBLE Home School Package (HSP) survey, during the pandemic, schools and teachers expect parents to support students' learning at home, although most of the homes are overcrowded, which is not a conducive learning environment. Community learning centres (CLCs) are spaces where learners can learn with their peers during the pandemic. Parents' literacy is also another important factor that remains underreported.

Education is a fundamental human right that enables people to exercise their rights and participate in livelihood

opportunities. There are no statistics on youth and adult literacy and numeracy rate, the MOE has developed a youth and adult Language, Learning and Numeracy strategy, but to date, no funding has been provided for the implementation of the strategy. One of the Adult and Youth LLN strategies is a national survey on adult and youth functional literacy. Vanuatu is a young population with 60% of the youth population under 30 years of age. The challenge remains that the Youth Ministry budget is the lowest of all government ministries according to the 2021 Budget Government Report.

According to the HSP survey report, most schools in rural areas lack infrastructure on education resources and internet

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connectivity, so when it comes to transformative education, digital learning, online learning and community learning remain lacking.

The table shows SDG 4 gaps in the national education framework.

### SDG 4 target areas not prioritised, or demonstrating limited progress:

- Target 4.5: Inclusive Education
- Target 4.6: Youth and Adult Literacy
- Target 4.7: Education for Sustainable Development

#### Major challenges:

- Financial access to education is still a barrier for many families that cannot afford to send their children to formal education and in post-secondary education and training
- Overcrowding, overage students and high dropout rates
- Limited literacy and skills programmes, scholarships and pathways for out-of-school youth



### Current priorities of Vanuatu's Education and Training Sector:

- Providing access to basic education including early childhood, primary, and secondary education through fee subsidies (SDG 4 Target 4.1 and 4.2)
- Improving the quality of education primarily through curriculum reform, teacher training and development and construction of learning environments

(SDG 4 Targets 4.1 and 4.c)

- Increasing opportunities for life-long learning through post-school education and training (SDG 4 Targets 4.3, 4.4, 4.5 and 4.b)

*Six years since the adoption of the SDGs, there is still no establishment of an SDGs committee set up, nor a multi-sectoral committee in place to review the progress of SDGs at the country level. The role of SDG 4 is very vital in education to achieve other SDGs, but at the national level, none of the indicators of SDG 4 is incorporated in the education national strategy plan.*

### III. SDG 4'S ROLE IN THE SDGS FOR REVIEW

Education is a key driver to achieving other SDGs, at the national level the SDGs are localised into 15 national indicators. However, it is challenging to measure and align progress within the national education strategy to SDG 4 targets and indicators. In 2019, the government conducted its first Voluntary National Review (VNR), reviewing the country's progress in Goals 4 on education, 13 on climate change, and 16 on Justice. In the VNR, most of the state's report is around policy development and not on implementation.

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■ Women with disabilities engage in KoBLE's CSO network meeting







■ Participants in KoBLE's CSO SDG 4 workshop in 2021

#### IV. KEY MESSAGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish a national SDGs multi-sectoral committee to review SDGs at the country level
- Promote Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) across the curriculum by developing criteria, norms, and standards so that education is directly linked to work and sustainability that considers the specific learning needs of all learners.
- Increase the government education budget in Vanuatu to ensure all sub-sectors of education, including formal, nonformal, and informal are sufficiently funded.

- Remove financial barriers to access to education by abolishing mandatory parents' contribution fees within schools. This may involve a review of the education regulations should they be perceived as a primary barrier for this to occur.
- Allocate national budget funding to inclusive education to improve facilities, resources, learning aids, data collection and diagnostics tests for learners with disabilities.
- Ensure partnership and collaboration with CSOs, including women and youth groups, at all levels of education and in all aspects, including education sector planning, policy development, programme

implementation, and monitoring. Review of all local education groups (LEGs) and other sub-education group frameworks to include meaningful CSO representation.

- Promote domestic financing to mobilise funding to ensure all populations of children, youth, and adults are able to enjoy and fulfil their right to education, including participation in formal, nonformal, and informal learning, as well as skills development and education for sustainable development (ESD). •



The Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) is a regional association of more than 200 organisations and individuals working towards promoting quality education for all and transformative and liberating, lifelong adult education and learning.

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The Kolisen Blong Leftemap Edukesen (KOBLE) is a national coalition of civil society organisations with the aim of engaging the Government of Vanuatu and other stakeholders on national education policy to help ensure that all ni-Vanuatu have access to good quality and inclusive publicly provided education. KOBLE is a member organisation of the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE).