

The logo for the Asian Development Bank (ADB), consisting of the letters 'ADB' in a white serif font inside a black square.

Technical Assistance Report

Project Number: 55050-001
Transaction Technical Assistance Facility (F-TRTA)
October 2021

Preparing Pacific Education Sector Projects

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Asian Development Bank

CURRENCY EQUIVALENTS

(as of 20 September 2021)

Currency unit	–	Solomon Islands dollar (SI\$)
SI\$1.00	=	\$7.97
\$1.00	=	SI\$0.13
Currency unit	–	vatu (Vt)
Vt1.00	=	\$110.840000
\$1.00	=	Vt0.0090220137

ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	–	Asian Development Bank
COVID-19	–	coronavirus disease
TA	–	technical assistance

NOTE

In this report, “\$” refers to United States dollars.

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TRANSACTION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AT A GLANCE

1. Basic Data		Project Number: 55050-001	
Project Name	Preparing Pacific Education Sector Projects	Department/Division	PARD/PASP
Nature of Activity Modality	Project Preparation Facility	Executing Agency	Asian Development Bank
Country	REG (SOL, VAN)		
2. Sector	Subsector(s)	ADB Financing (\$ million)	
✓ Education	Education sector development		0.45
	Secondary		0.45
	Technical and vocational education and training		0.10
		Total	1.00
3. Operational Priorities		Climate Change Information	
✓ Addressing remaining poverty and reducing inequalities		GHG Reductions (tons per annum)	0.000
✓ Accelerating progress in gender equality		Climate Change impact on the Project	Low
✓ Strengthening governance and institutional capacity		ADB Financing	
✓ Fostering regional cooperation and integration		Adaptation (\$ million)	0.00
		Mitigation (\$ million)	0.00
		Cofinancing	
		Adaptation (\$ million)	0.00
		Mitigation (\$ million)	0.00
Sustainable Development Goals		Gender Equity and Mainstreaming	
SDG 1.4		Effective gender mainstreaming (EGM)	✓
SDG 4.1, 4.3, 4.7, 4.c			
SDG 5.c		Poverty Targeting	
SDG 10.2		General Intervention on Poverty	✓
4. Risk Categorization Low			
5. Safeguard Categorization Safeguard Policy Statement does not apply			
6. Financing			
Modality and Sources		Amount (\$ million)	
ADB		1.00	
Transaction technical assistance: Technical Assistance Special Fund		1.00	
Cofinancing		0.00	
None		0.00	
Counterpart		0.05	
Government		0.05	
Total		1.05	
Currency of ADB Financing: US Dollar			

I. THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FACILITY

A. Justification

1. **Context.** Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are among the poorest countries in the Pacific, with young and fast-growing populations. The population of Solomon Islands has tripled since independence in 1978, reaching over 721,000 in 2019, with more than 50% being of school age.¹ The country has a gross domestic product per capita of \$2,021,² and the share of the population living in extreme poverty (below \$1.90 per day) is 24.3%.³ The United Nations Human Development Index, which summarizes average national achievement across health, education, and standards of living, ranked Solomon Islands at 151st (of 189 economies) in 2020.⁴ Vanuatu's population surpassed 301,000 in 2020, with a gross domestic product per capita of \$3,008 and 14.4% living in extreme poverty; and it was ranked 140th in the Human Development Index in 2020 (footnotes 1–4). Common development constraints include remoteness, vulnerability to shocks, high costs of service delivery, and weak public sector capacity.

2. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has affected both economies adversely, and although they have managed to keep the number of cases at low levels due to timely border closures, the socioeconomic costs are high.⁵ Both countries saw significant economic contractions—by 4.5% for Solomon Islands and 8.5% for Vanuatu in 2020—compared to average growth of 4.1% and 2.8%, respectively in 2010–2019 (footnote 2). The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic may push an additional 4%–5% of the population into extreme poverty.⁶ Economic recovery is expected to commence in 2021 for Solomon Islands and in 2022 for Vanuatu, as travel and trade restrictions are lifted, but the outlook is subject to several downside risks.⁷

3. **Progress in education.** Both governments have made significant improvements in expanding access to early childhood education and primary education. Currently, 92% of age-appropriate children are attending primary schools and approximately 70% are in early childhood programs before entering primary schools in the two countries. Learning outcomes, measured by standardized tests in numeracy and literacy, have improved since 2015 and are attributed to an increased number of certified teachers, new syllabi, teachers' guides, and learning materials.⁸ In Vanuatu, the implementation of a new primary years' curriculum has been a major development. Solomon Islands has managed to reduce class sizes and increase pre- and in-service training of teachers.

¹ United Nations. [World Population Prospects 2019](#) (accessed 2 September 2021); Government of Solomon Islands. National Statistics Office. 2020. [Census 2019: Provisional Count 2019 National Population and Housing Census](#); and Government of Vanuatu. National Statistics Office. 2021. [2020 Population and Housing Census Preliminary Results](#).

² Asian Development Bank (ADB). 2021. [GDP Growth in Asia and the Pacific, Asian Development Outlook](#) (accessed 2 September 2021).

³ ADB. 2020. [Pacific Economic Monitor – July 2020](#). Manila.

⁴ United Nations Development Programme. [Human Development Index](#) (accessed 2 September 2021).

⁵ World Health Organization. [World Health Organization Coronavirus Dashboard](#) (accessed 2 September 2021). Vanuatu has 3 confirmed cases and 0 deaths, with 14.2% of the adult population fully vaccinated and 4.9% partially vaccinated. Solomon Islands has 20 confirmed cases and 0 deaths, with 10.3% of the adult population fully vaccinated and 3.2% partially vaccinated.

⁶ ADB. 2021. *Pacific Approach, 2021–2025, Inclusive and Sustainable Growth Assessment* (accessible from the list of linked documents in Appendix 1). Manila.

⁷ ADB. 2021. *Asian Development Outlook 2021 Update: Transforming Agriculture in Asia*. Manila.

⁸ Government of Solomon Islands, Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development. 2016. [Education Strategic Framework 2016–2030](#). Honiara; and Government of Vanuatu, Ministry of Education and Training. 2020. [Vanuatu Education and Training Sector Strategic Plan 2020–2030](#). Port Vila.

4. **Key challenges.** Despite this progress, both governments have identified (i) expansion of access to education; (ii) improved quality and relevance; and (iii) strengthened educational management and systems, as priority improvement areas. Ambitious reform agendas to be implemented until 2030 are detailed in Solomon Islands Education Strategic Framework 2016–2030 and Vanuatu Education and Training Sector Strategic Plan 2020–2030 (footnote 8).

5. **Limited participation in post primary education.** Enrollment in senior secondary education is approximately 30% of the potential student population in Solomon Islands, and only 7% of girls complete their studies at the secondary level. Participation in tertiary education is among the lowest in the world at 3.5%. In Vanuatu, enrollment is 43% of the secondary school-aged population. There is limited participation of girls in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics and in technical and vocational education and training programs, translating to low labor force participation. The low enrollment in secondary education is partly due to insufficient places in secondary schools for the growing number of students. Other barriers to participation are families' inability to afford school fees, perceived lack of quality, and large class sizes.⁹

6. **Low quality and relevance.** Improvements in education quality and relevance are necessary to foster lifelong learners able to adapt to rapid changes. Slow progress in developing new secondary curricula and outdated teaching practices are among the reasons for low student performance in both countries. There are limited possibilities for learners to apply theoretical knowledge. Important content like information and communication technology literacy, collaboration, and critical thinking to prepare students for tertiary education and employment are lacking. Limited linkages with job opportunities and higher education institutions are barriers for making secondary education relevant for working life, further studies, and lifelong learning.

7. **Management capacity.** Both governments recognize that strengthening of education management capacity and systems is needed to successfully implement reforms and improve efficiency and effectiveness. Extensive capacity building and improved functionality of existing tools and processes are needed. Collection of sex-disaggregated data, planning, budgeting, asset management, forecasting of education needs, monitoring and evaluation, as well as alignment of reporting between the central, provincial, and school level are all areas to be addressed.

8. **ADB assistance.** The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is supporting increased higher education opportunities in Solomon Islands through expansion of the University of the South Pacific's local campus (multitranche financing facility tranche 2 of \$17.0 million).¹⁰ Both countries also receive assistance via the regional technical assistance (TA) Strengthening Education in the Pacific Region (total TA amount of \$19.5 million).¹¹ Previous education interventions in these countries are the reconstruction of schools after the 2015 Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu and support for the use of information and communication technology for better education services in Solomon Islands.¹²

9. Both governments have requested ADB support for future education sector projects. Preliminary intervention areas have been identified as: (i) strengthened education management capacity and tools for improved gender-responsive forecasting, planning, management, and monitoring of the sector; (ii) expansion and quality improvements of educational infrastructure with a special focus on gender equity, social inclusion, and digital solutions for teaching and

⁹ Government of Vanuatu, Ministry of Education and Training. 2018. [Vanuatu Barriers to Education Study](#). Port Vila.

¹⁰ ADB. [Regional: Higher Education in the Pacific Investment Program—Tranche 2](#).

¹¹ ADB. [Regional: Strengthening Education in the Pacific Region](#).

¹² ADB. [Vanuatu: Cyclone Pam School Reconstruction Project](#); and ADB. [Solomon Islands: Information and Communication Technology for Better Education Services](#).

learning in secondary schools; and (iii) pedagogical approaches for strengthening work-related, entrepreneurial, digital, and soft skills in secondary education and teachers' development.

10. The ADB financing required for the projects are estimated at (i) \$10 million for the Senior Secondary Education Improvement Project in Solomon Islands with expected consideration by ADB's Board of Directors in 2023, and (ii) \$8 million for the Education Sector Improvement Project in Vanuatu with expected consideration by ADB's Board of Directors in 2023. This TA facility and the ensuing projects are listed in the respective countries' country operations business plans for 2021–2023.¹³ The facility will contribute to (i) the Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5,¹⁴ (ii) ADB Strategy 2030's operational priorities,¹⁵ and (iii) the Pacific Approach 2021–2025.¹⁶

11. The TA facility combines the preparation of the two ensuing investment projects to improve project design. Avenues for synergies and cooperation in terms of educational resource sharing and knowledge exchange between the countries and the wider Pacific region will be facilitated, considering the ongoing implementation of the Pacific Regional Education Framework.¹⁷ The approach will also enhance operational efficiency by optimizing the value of TA consultants for similar assessments, studies, capacity strengthening, policy advice, and due diligence requirements for the respective projects.

12. The facility will further strengthen the education portfolio in the Pacific and improve ADB's technical support and knowledge services to Solomon Islands and Vanuatu; help identify and mobilize additional financial and knowledge resources for reform; and improve ADB's response to client needs concerning project design, project management, and education sector knowledge and lesson sharing.

13. **Development partner engagement.** ADB has actively engaged in discussions with development partners in the education sector in both countries. The international development community, including the governments of Australia and New Zealand, is supporting Solomon Islands for early childhood development and improved primary education. In Vanuatu, the Government of New Zealand has recently committed to a new, 10-year education sector program expected to start in 2023. Based on dialogue with the governments and development partners, the potential ADB-funded investments (paras. 9–10) would be highly relevant and complementary to partner support.

B. Outputs and Activities

14. **Output 1: Quality education projects designed and project readiness achieved.** The

¹³ ADB. 2020. [Eleven Small Pacific Island Countries: Country Operations Business Plan \(2021–2023\)](#). Manila

¹⁴ Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning for all; Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

¹⁵ ADB. 2018. [Strategy 2030: Achieving a Prosperous, Inclusive, Resilient, and Sustainable Asia and the Pacific](#). Manila. The facility is aligned with the operational priorities of (i) addressing remaining poverty and reducing inequality, (ii) accelerating progress in gender equality, (iii) strengthening governance and institutional capacity, and (iv) fostering regional cooperation and integration.

¹⁶ ADB. 2021. [Pacific Approach, 2021–2025](#). Manila. The facility is consistent with strengthening implementation capacity and aligning knowledge activities. It aligned with the Pacific Approach objectives of delivering sustainable services and supporting inclusive growth.

¹⁷ Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. 2020. [Pacific Regional Education Framework 2018–2030: Moving Towards Education 2030](#). Washington, DC. A regional policy guide endorsed at the Forum Education Minister Meeting in 2018 for 15 Pacific island countries. The framework encourages inclusivity and opportunities for equal access to informal, primary, secondary, and tertiary education and training, and focuses particularly on the education quality and the importance of working cooperatively in the region and beyond.

TA facility will provide technical expertise to support the preparation of ensuing projects for potential ADB financing. The scope of activities includes (i) analytical studies;¹⁸ (ii) feasibility studies and stakeholder analysis as required for the ensuing projects; (iii) development of project scope and associated results and monitoring frameworks; (iv) economic and financial assessments as well as social, gender, and poverty analyses; (v) environment and social safeguard assessments; (vi) the proposal of institutional arrangements for the executing and implementing agencies; (vii) due diligence in accordance with ADB requirements; and (viii) preparation of procurement packages for goods and services with government counterparts to achieve project readiness.

15. Output 2: Project implementation capacity of executive and implementing agencies strengthened. Providing hands-on support and capacity strengthening is a vital part of the TA facility. Technical expertise, coaching, and training will be provided to executing and implementing agencies of the ensuing projects for successful project implementation and sustainability. Support will be provided to critical areas such as project activity planning, procurement, effective monitoring and evaluation procedures, financial management, and project reporting. The output will also identify improvement potential for collection of sex-disaggregated education data, analytics, planning, reporting, and monitoring and evaluation.

16. Output 3: Capacity to apply innovative practices and technology solutions for design of ensuing projects strengthened. In a participatory manner, knowledge sharing of national, regional, and international best practices will be provided to the implementing agencies and key education stakeholders via technical experts and capacity building measures, to be incorporated into project designs. The topics are expected to cover (i) the potential for increased usage of education technology solutions; (ii) identification of national, regional, and international open education repositories of teaching and learning materials that can be contextualized; (iii) pedagogical approaches to strengthening 21st century skills, mechanisms to support nontraditional education and career choices for boys and girls, with a special emphasis on encouraging girls to explore science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; (iv) inclusion of applicable, work-related, and entrepreneurial skills in secondary education; and (v) best practices to include climate change education, and address gender norms and gender bias in curricula.

C. Cost and Financing

17. The TA facility is estimated to cost \$1,050,000, of which \$1,000,000 will be financed on a grant basis by ADB's Technical Assistance Special Fund (TASF 7). The key expenditure items are listed in Appendix 1 and the indicative consultants' inputs for the respective projects are listed in Appendix 2. The governments of Solomon Islands and Vanuatu will provide counterpart support in the form of staff, office space, office supplies, coordination assistance, and other in-kind contributions. The governments have been informed that approval of the TA facility does not commit ADB to finance any ensuing project.

D. Implementation Arrangements

18. ADB will administer the TA and be responsible for the selection, supervision, and evaluation of consultants. In close cooperation with the Pacific Liaison and Coordination Office, the Social Sectors and Public Sector Management Division of ADB's Pacific Department will implement the TA and be accountable for the outputs. The division will carry out TA administration,

¹⁸ This includes secondary education assessments for expanded access with focus on gender equity and inclusion, studies on quality and relevance constraints, and structural and educational management constraints.

supervision, implementation oversight, coordination with concerned agencies in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, and communication with consultants and stakeholders. The Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development in Solomon Islands and the Ministry of Education and Training in Vanuatu are the implementing agencies for the TA and ensuing projects. They will provide information access and data, available studies, research, and reports, and facilitate liaison with stakeholders to support TA implementation. The TA activities will start only after ADB approves the project concept papers for the respective ensuing projects. The implementation arrangements are summarized in the table below.

Implementation Arrangements			
Aspects	Arrangements		
Indicative implementation period	November 2021–July 2024		
Executing agency	Pacific Department, ADB		
Implementing agencies	Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development in Solomon Islands and the Ministry of Education and Training in Vanuatu		
Consultants	To be selected and engaged by ADB		
	Firm: QCBS	35 person-months	\$833,000
	Individual: ICS	National expertise: 20 person-months	\$167,000
Disbursement	Disbursement of technical assistance resources will follow ADB's <i>Technical Assistance Disbursement Handbook</i> (2020, as amended from time to time).		

ADB = Asian Development Bank, ICS = individual consultant selection, QCBS = quality- and cost-based selection.
Source: ADB.

19. **Consulting Services.** The TA facility will recruit an international consulting firm for 35 person-months to lead the preparation of the ensuing projects and provide capacity building support and knowledge sharing. The firm will be recruited using quality- and cost-based selection. Individual national consultants for 20 person-months will be recruited using individual consultant selection. ADB will engage the consultants following ADB Procurement Policy (2017, as amended from time to time) and its associated project administration instructions and/or staff instructions.¹⁹ The firm and the individual consultants will be deployed based on requirements of the respective ensuing projects and possibilities to achieve synergies.

E. Governance

20. ADB will administer the TA facility, and thus the financial management, procurement, and integrity risks during implementation are assessed to be *low*. However, the TA facility will conduct thorough risk assessments of governance subjects for ensuing investment projects.

II. THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION

21. The President, acting under the authority delegated by the Board, has approved the provision of technical assistance not exceeding the equivalent of \$1,000,000 on a grant basis for Preparing Pacific Education Sector Projects, and hereby reports this action to the Board.

¹⁹ Terms of Reference for Consultants (accessible from the list of linked documents in Appendix 3).

COST ESTIMATES AND FINANCING PLAN

(\$'000)

Item	Amount
A. Asian Development Bank^a	
1. Consultants	
a. Remuneration and per diem	
i. International consultants	700.0
ii. National consultants	140.0
b. Out-of-pocket expenditures	
i. International and local travel	50.0
ii. Training, seminars, and conferences	45.0
iii. Reports and communications	5.0
2. Contingencies	60.0
Total	1,000.0

Note: The technical assistance (TA) is estimated to cost \$1,050,000, of which contributions from the Asian Development Bank are presented in the table. The governments will provide counterpart support in the form of counterpart staff, office accommodation, communication facilities, provision of available relevant government data and studies, and other in-kind contributions. The value of the government's contribution is estimated to account for about 5% of the total TA cost.

^a Financed by Asian Development Bank's Technical Assistance Special Fund (TASF 7).

Source: Asian Development Bank estimates.

PROJECTS UNDER THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FACILITY

Indicative Consultants' Input Allocation (person-month)

Item	Total	Project 1 SSEIP low risk	Project 2 VESIP low risk
Indicative risk category			
A. Firm consultants			
International positions			
Education sector wide reform expert / team leader	5.0	3.5	1.5
Institutional capacity/organizational development expert	4.5	2.5	2.0
Pedagogical expert(s) for quality and relevance improvements	4.5	3.5	1.0
Gender and social inclusion education expert(s)	4.0	2.0	2.0
Social safeguards specialist	2.5	1.5	1.0
Education economist/ finance and financial management/budget expert	3.0	2.0	1.0
School infrastructure expert(s) for civil works and Ed Tech	3.0	2.5	0.5
Procurement specialist	3.0	2.0	1.0
Education management Information system expert	3.0	1.0	2.0
Environment safeguards expert	2.5	2.0	0.5
Subtotal A	35.0	22.0	13.0
B. National Individual Consultants			
Education reform and pedagogical expert(s)	8.0	5.0	3.0
Capacity building and knowledge sharing expert	7.0	4.5	2.5
Gender and inclusive education expert(s)	5.0	3.0	2.0
Subtotal B	20.0	13.5	6.5
TOTAL (A+B)	55.0	35.5	19.5

Ed Tech = education technology, SSEIP = Senior Secondary Education Improvement Project in Solomon Islands, VESIP = Vanuatu Education Sector Improvement Project.

Source: Asian Development Bank.

LIST OF LINKED DOCUMENTS

<http://www.adb.org/Documents/LinkedDocs/?id=55050-001-TARreport>

1. Terms of Reference for Consultants