

# Women2030 Monitoring and Review of the Sustainable Development Goals and Development Justice



## Vanuatu

Prepared by Vanuatu Young Women for Change (VYWC)

### Country Background

Vanuatu is an archipelagic nation comprised of more than 80 islands, and is home to approximately 276,000 people, most of whom live in rural areas and practice subsistence farming. The country has largely been spared the civil and political unrest of neighbouring Melanesian nations and consistently ranks as one of the happiest nations in the world, but its economy is failing to meet the needs of an increasing and young population. Employment choices for youth remain very limited. Climate change threatens the nation's food security, as Vanuatu is extremely vulnerable to cyclones and other natural disasters. The nation's health and education infrastructure fails to meet the needs of its growing population. There is a severe lack of access to adequate family planning and quality education, problems most acutely experienced by girls and women.\* Foreign investment is flooding into some parts of the country, like Port Vila, resulting in land-grabbing of communal land and the displacement of large numbers of families. Further, patriarchal norms and traditional cultural practices reinforce women's subordinate position in society. Violence against women is rampant, and traditional, village-level responses to violence fail to deliver adequate justice or remedy for women. There is a strong need to balance the interface between formal and traditional governance systems.

\* Oxfam International: Vanuatu. Retrieved from: <https://www.oxfam.org/en/countries/vanuatu>

### Architecture for SDGs Implementation

The nation has laid out its National Sustainable Development Plan for 2016-2030, dubbed Vanuatu 2030. The Vanuatu 2030 agenda serves as the nation's highest-level development policy framework. As the government look ahead to the next 15 years, it is seeking to reconcile between its limited national resources, to the policy and planning to the people and place they exist to serve. Throughout the extensive public consultations that informed this plan, Ni-Vanuatu resoundingly called for a balance between the social, environmental and economic pillars of sustainable development, with their cultural heritage as the foundation of an inclusive society. In the consultations, multiple stakeholders, including civil society organisations, discussed the biggest development challenges facing Vanuatu, and collaborated on proposing solutions.



**Country population:**  
276,000 (2017)

**GDP per capita:**  
3,123.61 USD (2017)

**Palma ratio:**  
1.7 (2010-2017)\*

\* Gender Inequality Index Information for Vanuatu is unavailable. Vanuatu does not have a military, therefore no comparative budget data is available.

- ✓ **Are CSOs included in the mechanisms for developing the national plan and implementation of the SDGs?**
- ✓ **Are women's rights organisations included in the mechanisms for developing the national plan and implementation of the SDGs?**
- ✓ **Is the information/ data accessible? Available for some.**

This brief is a summary of Vanuatu Young Women for Change (VYWC)'s fuller Peoples' Development Justice Report.

## Women's Priorities: Findings on selected targets and/or indicators



### Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

About 13% of the population lives below the poverty line.<sup>1</sup> Some areas such as North Malekula, Maewo, Pentecost and Tanna have a substantially higher poverty rate than the national average.

The Vanuatu government increased the minimum wage in January 2018, from 170 vatu (approximately \$1.70 USD) to 200 vatu per hour (approximately \$2 USD). This is a good development, but this minimum wage is still not enough to meet monthly household needs.

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### Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Employment choices for young people are very limited, and most opt for domestic chores or working on small family farms.



### Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Lack of access to public quality education is a nationwide problem, and is worst for rural communities.

For instance, the islands of Torba province, along with Tanna and the western side of Santo report high proportions of adults without any schooling – sometimes more than 50%.

According to a survey done by Vanuatu Young Women for Change, only 33% of those who have completed some level of schooling can develop their own CVs and can confidently write application letters for jobs, while 66.6 % expressed their weakness in doing so.



### Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

60% of women have experienced intimate partner violence. Vanuatu has no sexual harassment legislation in place.<sup>2</sup>

Men occupy more than 60% of the jobs in both the private and the public (government) sectors. The private sector includes more than 18,500 employees, with 64% being men and 36% women.<sup>3</sup>



### Goal 16: Provide peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels

There is a strong traditional justice systems where chiefs and community leaders deal with crimes at the village level, only involving the police in the case of severe crimes, that exists side by side with the formal legal system.

In a survey done by Vanuatu Young Women for Change, 65% of both male and female respondents said they fear walking alone in their own communities at night for getting raped, tortured or killed.



### Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Vanuatu is extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, namely cyclones and other disasters. When Cyclone Pam hit Vanuatu in 2015, it affected 64% of the economy and 60% of the population as well as destroying 96% of food crops. Natural disasters bring about increased vulnerability of women to violence, deprivation and displacement.<sup>4</sup>

1 UNICEF: Pacific Island Countries. Retrieved from: <https://www.unicef.org/pacificislands/18668.html>  
2 UN Women: Vanuatu. Retrieved from <http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/countries/fiji/co/vanuatu>  
3 UN Women, Vanuatu. Retrieved from <http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/countries/fiji/co/vanuatu>

4 APWLD. (2015). Climate Change and Natural Disasters Affecting Women Peace and Security. Retrieved from: <https://apwld.org/climate-change-and-natural-disasters-affecting-women-peace-and-security/>

## Recommendations

In order to achieve meaningful implementation of Goals 1, 3, 4, 5, 13, and 16, the government of Vanuatu must:

- Encourage family planning education in a manner sensitive and responsive to cultural norms and promote the value of how family planning can contribute to a more peaceful family and society;
- Improve infrastructure to create a safer and gender responsive environment for vulnerable groups including women and girls, LGBT, and People living with disabilities, such as installing good lighting systems in every urban and rural community in both Port Vila and Loganville to prevent assaults in the dark.
- Increase the minimum wage to at least 60,000 vatu per month to ensure the right to live with dignity and reduce extreme poverty.
- Provide public, quality, life-cycle education opportunities for all, especially for women and girls, at the national, provincial and community levels.;
- Provide free literacy and numeracy learning sessions provided for unemployed and low-skilled individuals including women and girls and all other women living with disabilities; and
- Allocate more financial support and resources to build the capacities of working and non-working citizens through vocational training courses enabling them to find decent work opportunities and earn a living wage. informal economy).



Vanuatu Young Women for Change (VYWC) is a girl-led not-for-profit organisation that promotes "Equality Rights and Access to bring about positive change for Women and young girls in Vanuatu. VYWC was established in 2014 purposely to provide a space for young women and girls to participate in national policy processes and to ensure that issues affecting members of their constituency

is revolved according with their participation. VYWC promote positive actions to achieve gender equality for all. VYWC uses a practical and right-based approach to directly advance women's participation in live-long learning and changes.

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