

Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls (Pacific Partnership)



VANUATU COUNTRY SUMMARY

Updated November 2020

Vanuatu is a focus country of the Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls (Pacific Partnership) programme.

Violence against women and girls is recognised worldwide as a social, political, and public health problem as well as a fundamental violation of human rights. The Pacific region has some of the highest recorded rates of violence against women in the world – twice the global average and impacting two in every three Pacific women. Within the region, **Vanuatu has one of the highest recorded rates with 60 percent of women aged 15-49 experiencing physical and/or sexual violence, 68 percent experiencing emotional violence and 69 percent experiencing coercive control by an intimate partner in their lifetime.**¹

The Pacific Partnership programme brings together governments, civil society organisations, communities and other partners to promote gender equality, prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG), and increase access to quality response services for survivors.

Pacific Partnership Priorities in Vanuatu

There are three key outcomes prioritised for Vanuatu, under the programme:

1. Integrating human rights, gender equality and ending violence against women and girls in formal education (led by SPC HRSD Division)

The Pacific Community (SPC) Human Rights and Social Development (HRSD) Division is implementing its Social Citizenship Education (SCE) programme, through the Pacific Partnership. SCE emphasises those social rights

and obligations necessary to be part of, and enjoy equal opportunities, benefits and status in, a community.

It refers to active, informed and responsible citizens who know their human rights and responsibilities, practice gender equality, non-discrimination and inclusion, prevent violence, are concerned about the welfare of others, and are willing to contribute to the development of the country.

SPC HRSD partners with Vanuatu's Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) to progress the integration of SCE concepts into the school curricula for Years 1-10.

ABOUT PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP

The Pacific Partnership is funded primarily by the European Union, and the Governments of Australia and New Zealand, and UN Women, and is led by the Pacific Community (SPC), UN Women and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.

All three coordinating agencies of the Pacific Partnership programme have activities in Vanuatu.

In addition to Vanuatu, other countries and territories in the Pacific region benefiting from the five-year programme include, but are not limited to Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Tonga, and Tuvalu.

The programme operates to the end of 2022.





2020-2021 initiatives supported by SPC HRSD include:

Supporting development of learning resources and training roll-out

- Supporting the Ministry of Education and Training in the development and production of teaching and learning resources on SCE:
 - » Publishing of Teachers' Guides on SCE for Years 1-10;
 - » Publishing of children's story books written by Ni-Vanuatu writers for Ni-Vanuatu children.
- Supporting the Ministry of Education and Training in the development and rollout of in-service training to teachers, education officials and school leaders that aims to:
 - » Relate customary and traditional rights and responsibilities to internationally recognised human rights, including the rights of the child, teacher and student expectations and behaviour in the classroom;
 - » Assist schools to apply knowledge of social inclusion to address bullying, stereotypes and disruptive behaviour in order to adapt curriculum and develop learning and teaching strategies;
 - » Assist teachers to teach in a way that promotes equitable outcomes for all students.

Supporting review and development of inclusive policies

- Supporting the Ministry of Education and Training to review and further develop school-specific policies, and implementation plans:
 - » on social inclusion, school governance, anti-discrimination, sexual harassment, VAWG and positive discipline;

This approach aims to ensure synergy between changes to the curricula and teaching-learning resources, and the broader policies and programmes of the Ministry

Strengthening evidence to prevent violence against women and girls

- Baseline information will be collected from schools and school communities in late 2021 to build SPC's understanding of people's knowledge, attitudes and practices in relation to human rights, gender equality and ending violence against women.

2. Transforming harmful social norms to prevent violence against women and girls (led by UN Women)

Increasing evidence demonstrates that VAWG is preventable, and preventable within years, not lifetimes, through appropriate and comprehensive prevention work. Stopping violence before it starts is vital as response services alone cannot address a complex social problem of this size and scope. This is best achieved by addressing the root causes of violence, using a whole-of-population level approach.

Through Pacific Partnership, UN Women's EVAWG programme is implementing a prevention approach in Vanuatu that focused on working in partnership with powerful channels of influence in Vanuatu such as faith and male advocates and will also work across individual, community and societal levels; in conjunction with policy and advocacy through Government, in partnership with civil society.

2020-2021 prevention initiatives supported by UN Women include:

Using a whole-of-government and community approach to prevent violence against women and girls

- Provide technical support to the Department of Women Affairs to strengthen a multi-sectoral approach to ending violence against women and girls work through support to develop the National Ending Violence Against Women Taskforce; Ending Violence Against Women Framework and Action Plan; Gender Based Violence in Emergencies Sub-Cluster; and implementation of the National Gender Equality Policy.

Supporting women's crisis centres and NGOs

- **Support to the Vanuatu Women's Centre:**
 - » **To provide awareness and prevention through mobile counselling in Penama Province** to raise awareness of harmful gender norms, the law and behaviour change through community-based activities and ensure women and girls are aware of their rights and services available.
 - » **Implement an individual behaviour change programme**, the Male Advocacy Programme, to transform men's attitudes and behaviours around power, gender and violence. The Male Advocacy Programme takes men in influential and leadership positions through four intensive training and assessment stages aimed at transforming their beliefs and attitudes around violence against women and girls, enabling them to become





advocates for ending violence against women and girls in their communities. Men who are identified for this programme include those in traditional and formal roles of power, such as chiefs, police, community leaders, faith-based leaders and others.

- » **Enhance its digital presence**, to increase nation-wide access to information about services and implement a communications campaign aimed at shifting social norms and individual beliefs and attitudes around VAWG.

Using a whole-of-community, national and regional approach to prevent violence against women and girls through faith

- **Support the development and rollout of a regional multi-faith awareness campaign to end VAWG** such as the One Voice Break the Silence Sunday Campaign, run in Fiji and Tonga. This activity will focus on the development and roll out of the regional One Voice multi-faith campaign to end violence against women and girls. The Vanuatu Christian Council (VCC) will take the lead in Vanuatu with support from the regional Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC), of which VCC is a member.
- **In partnership with the Vanuatu Christian Council and linked to the Pacific Conference of Churches**, work to develop the Gender Report Card and Safe Church Policies (that is, zero tolerance of violence), and Code of Conduct for VCC member churches.
- **Strengthen the capacity of Vanuatu Christian Council and member Church Institutions** on gender equality and ending violence women and girls. The focus will be on strengthening the knowledge, skills and capacity of faith leaders and members of the faith community to take action on preventing violence against women and girls at both national and grassroots levels built on rights based and faith informed ideologies, norms, values and practice. A range of training and capacity building opportunities will be made available to the members of VCC. This includes introductory awareness training and dissemination strategies regarding human rights, violence against women and girls and gender equality.

Strengthening evidence to prevent violence against women and girls

- **Conduct national research to build the evidence-base on what works to prevent violence against women and girls.** Technical support and funding will be provided to VWC to

support research, evidence generation and documentation across four key areas: (1) documenting qualitative and quantitative data on the experiences of violence of girls under 18 and women between the ages of 18-29, and the effectiveness of outreach and prevention strategies (2) documenting the history of VWC and its journey since it was founded in 1992, including key achievements and lessons learned from VWC's efforts to end violence against women and girls; (3) conducting a qualitative, evaluative, research study to explore the prevention impacts of VWC's work and its integrated approach; and (4) conducting qualitative research on custom, violence against women and girls and bride price.

Improving access to quality, essential services for survivors of gender-based violence (led by UN Women)

The programme advances international best practice, adapted to the Pacific context, to strengthen quality and access to essential services for survivors of gender-based violence. Under this area of work, UN Women provides technical support and funding to improve the overall governance and coordination of essential services (justice, social services, health, police) and technical and financial support to improve social services. This involves work with local front-line service providers to strengthen access to, and quality of social services for survivors, including but not limited to: strengthening disability inclusive services; adapting services to meet the needs of diverse women and girls; improving gender-based violence counselling and safehouse responses; and supporting innovative models to increase access for women and girls in remote and hard to reach locations.

2020-2021 initiatives supported by UN Women include:

Supporting national coordination and service delivery mechanisms in development and humanitarian emergencies

- In partnership with the Department of Women's Affairs, **develop and test national multi-service delivery protocols (justice, social services, health, police), standards and referrals pathways for responding to cases of gender-based violence** and related piloting and training with key frontline service providers.
- **Provide targeted support to Vanuatu Women's Centre to ensure that women and children in Penama Province have access to critical, lifesaving crisis response services** including counselling, survivor support (including legal support), case management for clients, referral and data collection and management, through the Penama





Counselling Centre and through support to the Committees Against Violence Against Women.

- **Partnering with VWC**, through targeted funding and capacity strengthening, to increase national access to immediate needs and protection to ensure lifesaving access to safehouses, police and justice through urgent crisis support services.

3. Monitoring and reporting government commitments to gender equality and ending violence against women and girls (led by PIFS)

2020-21 initiatives targeting non-state actors supported by PIFS include:

Vanuatu non-state actors (NSAs), including civil society organisations and women’s groups, also benefit from Pacific Partnership through **strategic engagement, capacity development for monitoring the implementation of national**

commitments on gender equality, and projects support through small grants. The PIFS’ NSA component of the Pacific Partnership programme works in close concert with the overall approaches supported by UN Women. In 2020, the NSA programme supported the **active engagement of CSOs** like the Vanuatu Association of NGOs, the Vanuatu Council of Churches, as well as the **active engagement of women’s CSOs** like the Vanuatu Women’s Centre and the Vanuatu National Council of Women to engage in PIFS consultative mechanisms including the Annual Regional CSO Forum, 2020 Virtual Forum Economic Ministers’ Meeting (FEMM), CROP Heads and NSA Executive Meetings. NSAs also participated in other activities including the Regional Non-State Actor Capacity Building Workshop, the development and validation of a **Policy Monitoring Toolkit on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, strategic planning toward a Leaders and Mentors Initiative for ‘Gender Equality Agents for Change’** and providing technical input toward training modules for NSAs and governments on gender responsive budgeting.

BACKGROUND

Vanuatu has high and severe rates of violence against women and girls. According to the Vanuatu National Survey on Women’s Lives and Family Relationships (VNS), conducted by the Vanuatu Women’s Centre and the Vanuatu National Statistics Office, 60 percent of women who have ever been in a relationship have experienced either physical or sexual violence (or both) by a husband or intimate partner and more than two in three (68 percent) experienced emotional violence. In line with global data, women and girls in Vanuatu are more likely to have experienced violence at the hands of someone known to them (60 percent), than they are from a strangerⁱⁱ, demonstrating the normalisation of violence and cultures of male privilege. The VNS along with other qualitative research, link violence against women and girls in the context of marriage and family to deeply engrained beliefs and attitudes that there are ‘justifiable reasons’ for husbands and partners to use physical violence to ‘discipline and control’ their wives, highlighting a high social acceptance of violence and associated barriers to leaving violent relationships.

Despite these entrenched attitudes there are high levels of social cohesion in Vanuatu, with much trust given to chiefs and church leaders, and an important support base within the community in favour of women’s rights and non-violent approaches to resolving conflict in families. These factors put Vanuatu in a strong position to prevent and respond to all forms of violence against women and reinforcing the need for programming that focuses on gender equality, including challenging gender norms, stereotypes, attitudes and structures that condone or support violence, whilst enabling healthy relationships and ensuring access to quality services.ⁱⁱⁱ

Vanuatu’s Constitution guarantees women and men equal treatment under the law. Vanuatu has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the CEDAW Optional Protocol. Commitments to gender equality have featured in Vanuatu Government plans over the years and several policies, strategies and initiatives have emerged that provide an enabling environment for eliminating violence against women.





The National Sustainable Development Plan 2016 to 2030 (the Peoples Plan) includes a commitment to “prevent and eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against women, children and vulnerable groups”. The National Gender Equality Policy 2015-2019 and 2020-2024, identify eliminating discrimination and violence against women and girls as their first key strategic area, with both prevention and response/support services identified as key strategies, and several initiatives being implemented in collaboration with Pacific Partnership. Ending violence against women and girls is also a strategic priority in institutional frameworks, policies, plans and indicators across Ministries including:

- Ministry of Justice National Disability Inclusive Development Policy 2018-2025, National Child Protection Policy 2016-2026, Magistrates’ Court Gender and Family Violence Action Plan 2018;
- Ministry of Education and Training Gender Equity in Education Policy, 2018;
- Ministry of Internal Affairs Vanuatu Police Force, Family Violence Policy and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), which were introduced in 2015. These SOPs outline the criminal nature of family violence incidents, the fact that charges cannot be dropped, the quality of evidence and the quality of response expected, including the inappropriateness of responding with roundtable reconciliation meetings.
- Vanuatu Christian Council Gender Policy and Human Rights, Faith and Gender Training Manual, which address the problem of VAWG through faith based approaches.

ⁱVanuatu National Survey on Women’s Lives and Family Relationships, the Vanuatu Women’s Centre in partnership with the Vanuatu National Statistics Office, May 2011.

ⁱⁱ<https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/countries/fiji/co/vanuatu>

ⁱⁱⁱ<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EqJPKz5q3hs>

^{iv}Vanuatu National Survey on Women’s Lives and Family Relationships, Vanuatu Women’s Centre in partnership with the Vanuatu National Statistics Office, May 2011

For more information about Pacific Partnership, email: comms.pac@unwomen.org

Imagery inspired by empowering female-specific tattoo motifs used in the Pacific region.

