



Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development

Vanuatu Country Plan Summary

Background

Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (*Pacific Women*) was announced by the Australian Government at the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' meeting in August 2012. It commits up to \$320 million over 10 years in 14 Pacific Islands Forum member countries. The program aims to improve opportunities for the political, economic and social advancement of Pacific women. *Pacific Women* will support countries to meet the commitments they made in the 2012 Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration. The outcomes sought by *Pacific Women* are:

- Women, and women's interests, are increasingly and effectively represented and visible through leadership at all levels of decision making.
- Women have expanded economic opportunities to earn an income and accumulate economic assets.
- Violence against women is reduced and survivors of violence have access to support services and to justice.
- Women in the Pacific will have a stronger sense of their own agency, supported by a changing legal and social environment and through increased access to the services they need.

Pacific Women is managed by Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and works with a wide range of implementing partners, including the 14 partner governments, multilateral organisations, international and national non-government organisations, civil society organisations and the private sector.

The *Pacific Women* Support Unit provides technical and administrative services to assist in the management of the program, including planning, delivery and monitoring of activities, research and communications. The Support Unit is based in Suva, Fiji, with a sub-office in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea.

Vanuatu

Vanuatu is a nation made up of over 80 islands and is one of the fastest growing economies in the Pacific. Vanuatu's economy is primarily based on agriculture, but the tourism sector is expanding. Vanuatu currently ranks 134 out of 188 on the Human Development Index 2016¹ with progress in each of the key indicators of life expectancy, years of schooling and gross national income per

¹ Human Development Index 2016, United Nations Development Programme, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/VUT>



capita compared to 2005. The Government's National Gender Equality Policy 2015–2019 is in place, but gaps in the national machinery to support women have slowed its implementation.

Pacific Women Country Plan

The Australian Government is a major development partner in supporting gender equality and women's empowerment and safety in Vanuatu. Through *Pacific Women*, Australia has committed **\$11.9 million over 10 years** (2012–2022) to advance the status of women in Vanuatu.

Country Plans are the mechanism through which *Pacific Women* outcomes and activities are planned and agreed between DFAT and counterpart governments, following extensive national consultations. They provide detail on what will be funded and how these funding decisions are made. The first Vanuatu Country Plan (2013–2016) delivered activities totalling \$3.98 million. Through the Vanuatu Country Plan Review and Reflection Workshop in April 2016, five foundational activities were identified for future implementation from 2016 to 2019. These represent a mix of funding and technical support through bilateral and regional initiatives, to benefit ni-Vanuatu women across the political, economic and social spheres of their lives.

The Vanuatu Country Plan (Phase 2) seeks to strike a balance between expansion and exploration. It funds activities where there is clear evidence of need and where capable organisations are available to implement activities effectively. It also supports assessments in areas where less is known about women's circumstances, the will and capacity of relevant actors, or effective solutions to gender inequality within the Vanuatu context.

The Vanuatu Country Plan Review identified that significant barriers remain for women in Vanuatu and recommended that the Vanuatu Country Plan be extended for three years. The second Vanuatu Country Plan focuses on:

- working with and influencing the Vanuatu government to implement its National Gender Equality Policy
- further developing a roadmap for undertaking progressive and systemic change to achieve gender equality in Vanuatu and ensuring that government and civil society are supported to work in partnership to own and progress this roadmap
- an ongoing program of knowledge development that is supported through research and monitoring and evaluation.

In addition to *Pacific Women*, DFAT makes an important contribution to gender equality in Vanuatu through mainstreaming gender outcomes in the aid program, as well as through political, diplomatic and corporate activities.

Rationale for activities in the Country Plan

Phase 2 of the Vanuatu Country Plan is designed to build on the *Pacific Women* outcomes of Leadership and Decision Making, Economic Empowerment and Ending Violence against Women. The activities chosen for Phase 2 reflect the activities from Phase 1 and build on the design mission team's assessment of the strongest partners, demand and scope for change.

Although many commitments to achieving gender equality have been made by the government at global, regional and national levels, little to no financial commitment exists and progress has been



slow. There is resistance to change due to prevailing gender norms that grant men control over female behaviour, notions of masculinity linked to power and decision making and an acceptance of violence to resolve conflict.

The influence of traditional *kastom* prevails and, in many cases, limits the potential for women's empowerment. *Kastom* refers to practices and beliefs that are unique to the ni-Vanuatu people. *Kastom* can vary in how it is interpreted from province to province, and village to village. While in some circumstances *kastom* can be used to support gender equality by holding men responsible for ensuring the safety of women, in many other instances it can be used to justify ongoing discrimination against women, and to reinforce male power.

(a) Increasing women's leadership and decision making

Women remain under-represented at all levels of leadership and decision making in Vanuatu. Since Independence in 1980, Vanuatu has only had five female members of parliament (two elected in 1987, two elected in 2004 and one elected in 2008). There are currently no women in parliament. In the national elections in January 2016, eight women stood as candidates (down from 17 candidates for the 2012 election. The 'snap' election left both women and men candidates little time to prepare).

Women's representation at the municipal council level has improved, due to an amendment to the Municipalities Act 1988 in 2013. The amendment introduced a temporary quota of 30–35 per cent reserved seats for women. This resulted in the election of 10 women to municipal councils in Port Vila and Luganville, one of whom was elected in an open seat. This local-level leadership was identified as a stepping stone to women's leadership roles at provincial and national levels. A 2013 plan to amend the laws to provide for 30 per cent reserved seats for women in the national parliament has not yet been implemented.

There has been little movement in other areas of leadership such as increasing the numbers of women occupying senior roles in the public service. Women's participation and voice in decision making fora at formal and informal levels has not increased. Regulations introducing quotas of 30 per cent of women on boards and in executive roles do not appear to have been implemented. However, anecdotal evidence suggests there is increased representation of women in senior roles in the private sector, including in the banking, financial services and insurance industries.

(b) Increasing economic opportunities for women

In Vanuatu, 90 per cent of the private sector is comprised of informal businesses, with women heading 60 per cent of these small enterprises. The main income activity of many women is market trading. More women than men (49 per cent and 41 per cent respectively) are involved in the subsistence economy,² which makes them more susceptible to poverty, climate change, disasters and other livelihood stresses.

While women are increasingly entering the formal economy in Vanuatu, their potential is hindered by social norms, values and practices that condone and perpetuate discrimination towards women and girls. Some progress has been made on women's economic empowerment, through the Skills for Economic Growth Program (formerly the TVET Sector Strengthening Program) and the UN Women Markets for Change Program. Successes from these activities will be built on during the second phase of the Vanuatu Country Plan.

² Vanuatu National Statistics Office 2011.



(c) Reduce violence against women and expand support services

Violence against women and children is Vanuatu's most common crime, with 61 per cent of people incarcerated in jail for 'crimes against morality', which are generally sexual offences. Approximately 72 per cent of women in Vanuatu have experienced some form of physical or sexual violence in their lives, of whom 21 per cent were left with permanent injuries and 68 per cent were subjected to psychological violence by their intimate partners.³ While Vanuatu led the Pacific in introducing standalone legislation on family violence through the Family Protection Act 2008, the law has not been adequately implemented or enforced.

(d) Enhancing women's agency

During a review of Vanuatu's Gender Equality Policy, it was found that poor political will, lack of technical, human and financial capacities, misconceptions about gender being a 'women's issue', weak accountability and absence of incentives in tracking and evaluating progress were constraining factors to gender mainstreaming across the government. While some ministries and departments had developed sectoral gender plans and strategies, there is a need for systematically integrating gender responsive approaches to all government policies, programs and projects.

³ Vanuatu Women's Centre, 2011.



Table 1: Bilateral Activities

PROJECT NAME AND PARTNER	DESCRIPTION	BUDGET
Outcome: Leadership and Decision Making		
Gender Equality Together: Strengthening Women's Rights in Vanuatu Project (CARE Vanuatu)	Strengthening the collective leadership, capacity and coordination of civil society and government actors in Vanuatu to more effectively work towards the promotion of gender equality and the elimination of violence against women and girls with and without disabilities in peacetime and disasters.	\$1,000,000 (2017–2018)
Support the introduction of reserved seats for women at Provincial Council level (Pacific Leadership Program and the Department of Women's Affairs, Ministry of Justice and Community Services)	Supported the development of alternative approaches to increase women's participation in politics. This project provided adaptive leadership training to women councilors to increase skills in advocacy and policy reform.	\$220,000 (2014–2017)
Outcome: Economic Empowerment		
Support to the Alternative Communities Trade in Vanuatu (ACTIV)	Improving packaging of products, promoting access to local and international markets. Women access skill-sharing sessions on the development of small scale agriculture production.	\$150,000 (2017–2018)
Markets for Change (UN Women)	Improving market governance, management, infrastructure and access to financial services to increase women's economic empowerment and ensure markets are more sustainable, accessible and safe for women vendors.	\$3,429,077 (2014–2019)
Improving training and employment outcomes for women and girls Vanuatu Skills Partnership (previously Vanuatu Skills for Economic Growth Program, previously known as the Vanuatu Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Sector Strengthening Program)	Providing training for women with a focus on tourism and agribusiness, individual coaching to women to improve business skills and increase women's opportunities for paid employment.	\$1,486,397 (2013–2019)
Outcome: Ending Violence against Women		
Filming on domestic violence (Wan Smolbag Theatre)	Partnership with Wan Smolbag Theatre to film series on women's empowerment and domestic violence.	\$260,000 (2016–2019)
Response to tropical cyclone Pam (Vanuatu Women's Centre)	Provided funding to the Vanuatu Women's Centre to ensure that women's needs are adequately addressed in recovery planning in Vanuatu.	\$500,000 (2015–2016)



PROJECT NAME AND PARTNER	DESCRIPTION	BUDGET
Research on improved access to justice for women and children (Policing and Justice Support Program)	Completed research that maps out the 'conflict management web', with a special emphasis on how conflicts involving women and violence against women are managed and resolved in order to identify areas of innovation and strength, as well as areas of weakness.	\$200,000 (2015–2016)
Prevention of violence against women (Vanuatu Women's Centre)	Exploring other ways to prevent gender violence that build on Vanuatu Women's Centre's work including: supporting the Department of Women's Affairs to deliver and monitor the implementation of the Family Protection Act; conducting research on the crisis service needs of rural women; and providing financial and technical support as recommended by the crisis service provider research.	\$6,800,000 (2014–2021)



Table 2: Regional Programs with Activities in Vanuatu

PROJECT NAME AND PARTNER	DESCRIPTION	BUDGET ⁴
Outcome: Leadership and Decision Making		
Shifting the Power Coalition (ActionAid Australia, femLINKpacific, Pacific Disability Forum, Nazareth Centre, Transcend Oceania, Talitha Project, YWCA PNG, YWCA Samoa, Vanuatu Young Women for Change, Vois Blong Mere, ActionAid Vanuatu)	Working to ensure diverse Pacific women's voices provide leadership in disaster planning and response at all levels in six countries. Expected outcomes are increased capacity to engage in disaster coordination mechanisms and influence decision making; documentation of needs and capacities in crises to contribute to evidence based disaster planning; and establishment of platforms to strengthen diverse Pacific women's voices in regional forums to influence policy and decision making.	\$895,000 (2018–2021)
Pacific Women Parliamentary Partnerships Project (Australian International and Community Relations Office, Department of the House of Representatives)	Building the capacity of Pacific women parliamentarians and their staff to ensure gender equality issues are better addressed in parliament.	\$2,850,037 (2013–2018)
Outcome: Ending Violence against Women		
Gender Equality Theology – Institutional Transformation (UnitingWorld)	This program focuses on utilising the Gender Equality Theology methodology to support Institutional Transformation within partner churches and participating organisations by challenging and shifting traditional gender theologies and reviewing church policies to align them with new gender equality theologies. This is anticipated to lead to new procedures including responsible codes of conduct for leaders and members and response mechanisms for situations of violence that respect the rights of women and that promote and act in accordance with the protection laws within each country.	\$1,895,768 (2018–2021)
Women's Crisis Centre Programs to Eliminate Violence against Women in Fiji and the Pacific (Fiji Women's Crisis Centre)	Supporting the regional program funds a portion of Fiji Women's Crisis Centre's activities. These include activities with a regional focus including: Fiji Women's Crisis Centre's Regional Training Program; the Male Advocates Program; and the Pacific Women's Network Against Violence Against Women.	\$2,250,000 (2016–2020)
Support to the Pacific Community Regional Rights Resource Team (Regional Rights Resource Team)	Funding to provide policy advice, technical support and training on human rights, elimination of violence against women, governance, democracy and the rule of law.	\$5,750,000 (2015–2020)

⁴ This allocation is not for Vanuatu alone but for multiple countries under *Pacific Women*.



PROJECT NAME AND PARTNER	DESCRIPTION	BUDGET ⁴
	Partners include governments, regional organisations and civil society organisations.	
Partnering Women for Change (UnitingWorld)	Working with churches to ensure that women, girls and people living with disabilities have increased safety and well-being in their homes, communities and churches.	\$370,000 (2015–2018)
UNICEF Pacific Child Protection Program (UNICEF)	Supporting government to strengthen the protection of children from violence, abuse and exploitation.	\$7,000,000 (2014–2018)
Pacific Fund to End Violence against Women (UN Women)	Supported civil society organisations and governments to prevent violence and provide services for survivors, including counselling, paralegal aid, shelter and referral services. The Fund also strengthened the capacity of organisations working to end violence against women through training in advocacy, law reform, women's human rights, community education and counselling.	\$1,500,000 (2014–2017)
Outcome: Enhancing Agency		
Partnerships for Health and Rights: Working for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights for all in the Pacific (International Planned Parenthood Federation)	Supporting the expansion of access to sexual and reproductive health services in the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea ⁵ , Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.	\$3,000,000 (2015–2022)
Gender Equality and Climate Change in the Pacific (The Protection and Pacific (ProPa) Network)	The Networks' mandate includes raising awareness of the nexus between gender equality and climate change, and generating more informed decision making in this space to ensure women's voices influence decision making, and that climate agreements implemented in a gender-responsive way in the Pacific.	\$500,000 (2015–2017)
Progressing Gender Equality in the Pacific (Pacific Community)	Conduct stocktakes and support for the strengthening of government capacity to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment into policies, legislation and programs and improve the collection and analysis of data to better track outcomes.	\$3,941,712 (2013–2018) \$5,494,203 (2019-2023)

⁵ Papua New Guinea included in phase two from 2019-2022

