

Vanuatu

'I have learned how to plan and deliver training that will make sense for women living in the provinces. Before, I delivered trainings in town but I did not know very much about customisation or different ways of assessment. I am so glad that, as well as running my own business, I will now also be recognised as a trainer with the TVET Program and can help other women in the islands to improve their incomes and small businesses.'

Ms Eslyn Turner, business woman and graduate of the Vanuatu Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Sector Strengthening Program.¹

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 ranks 134 out of 188 on the Human Development Index 2015 with progress in each of the key indicators of life expectancy, years of schooling and Gross National Income per capita compared to 2005.²

Leadership and Decision Making

Women in Vanuatu remain under-represented at all levels of leadership and decision making. There are currently no women in the National Parliament, however there has been an increase in the number of women contesting elections at the national and provincial level.³ There has also been progress at the municipal level where an amendment to the Decentralisation and Municipalities Act in 2013 introduced a temporary quota of 30-35 per cent reserved seats for women. This enabled ten women to be elected in Port Vila and Luganville⁴ provincial governments, including one woman elected to an open seat in Luganville. Men continue to dominate decision making in the public sector with women holding only three per cent of senior management positions.⁵ The figure stands at 28.5 per cent when taking into account women in management and decision making positions in both the public and private sectors.

Economic Empowerment

Over 70 per cent of women in Vanuatu are engaged in the informal sector, including in handicraft and food production, fisheries and the marketing of produce, as well as domestic work.⁶ Lack of basic literacy, numeracy and financial skills as well as the additional burden of unpaid work in the home are barriers to women entering the labour market, with women comprising 39 per cent of wage employees.⁷ There has been an increase in the participation of women in small to medium businesses,⁸ with the Reserve Bank of Vanuatu reporting that women owned 20 per cent of businesses in 2016. Women's participation in business is also higher in the urban centres than in rural areas.⁹ The Government Remuneration Tribunal is seeking to address the gender pay gap in the public sector.¹⁰

Ending Violence Against Women

Around 60 per cent of women experience some form of physical and/or sexual violence in their lives by an intimate partner.¹¹ Bride price and arranged or forced marriages are still practiced in some communities.¹² Domestic violence and child abuse are embedded in the gender and power relations that underpin the low status of women and children.¹³ Women find it difficult to access services related to domestic violence, especially in rural areas and often do not seek help due to the fear of further violence.¹⁴ The Family Protection Act was passed in 2008, however there have been limited resources allocated to implement the Act, including to support provisions for establishing Registered Counsellors and Authorised Persons in the communities.

Enhancing Agency

Vanuatu ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1995. A National Gender Equality Policy 2015-2019 is in place but there are gaps in the national machinery to support women. There is a need to establish a coordinated mechanism for the delivery of services to women in Vanuatu.¹⁵ The Vanuatu Gender Mapping Report (2014) found that there is a lack of understanding of the importance of gender equality for sustainable development outcomes. This is due to poor integration of gender issues in policies and strategies, and research into women's issues and gender equality being carried out on an ad hoc basis.¹⁶

Key Statistics

Leadership and Decision Making

- **0 per cent** of Vanuatu's National Parliament is made up of women (0 out of 52 members).
- **28.5 per cent** of management and decision making positions are held by women.¹⁷

Economic Empowerment

- **61 per cent** of women participate in the labour force (includes formal and informal economy).
- **20 per cent** gender gap in the labour force participation rate (male to female).

Ending Violence Against Violence

- **60 per cent** of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by their partner in their lifetime.

Enhancing Agency

- Vanuatu has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.
- **49 per cent** is the contraceptive prevalence rate of women aged between 15-49.
- **109** is the Gender Parity Index for secondary school enrolment (gross) in 2014 - for every 100 boys enrolled, there were 109 girls enrolled.

Note: Statistics in this section are from the [Asian Development Bank \(2016\) Gender Statistics: The Pacific and Timor Leste](#) report unless otherwise stated.

Partnership with *Pacific Women*

Through *Pacific Women*, the Australian Government will spend approximately AU\$11.9 million over ten years (2012-2022) on initiatives supporting gender equality and women's empowerment in Vanuatu. Approximately AU\$1.2 million has been spent delivering activities in-country (FY2012-2013 to FY2015-2016). More information on the partnership and nature of support is included in the [Pacific Women Vanuatu Country Plan Summary 2013-2016](#) valued at AU\$3.98 million. Details on activities currently underway in-country with various partners is available via our [interactive map](#). The list of program partners can be found [here](#). Vanuatu is also supported by *Pacific Women's* regional program, details of which can be viewed on the interactive map under regional activities.

Stories of Change

1. [Learning Exchanges and Preparatory Electoral Contestant Workshops for women leaders](#)
2. [Study of community-level access to justice](#)

Further Information

- [Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat \(2016\) Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration Trend Assessment Report 2012-2016](#)
- [United Nations Statistics Division, Minimum Set of Gender Indicators](#)

¹ Vanuatu Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Sector Strengthening Program (2014)

² [United Nations, Human Development Indicators 2015](#)

³ [Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat \(2016\) Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration Trend Assessment Report 2012-2016](#)

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ Government of Vanuatu (2015) National Gender Equality Annual Report

⁷ *ibid*

⁸ [Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat \(2016\) Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration Trend Assessment Report 2012-2016](#)

⁹ [The Vanuatu Independent \(2017\). Women in business in urban higher than in rural.](#)

¹⁰ [Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat \(2016\) Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration Trend Assessment Report 2012-2016](#)

¹¹ [Vanuatu National Survey on Women's Lives and Family Relationships \(2011\)](#)

¹² Government of Vanuatu (2015) National Gender Equality Annual Report

¹³ Government of Vanuatu and UNICEF (2005), p. 42

¹⁴ [Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat \(2016\) Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration Trend Assessment Report 2012-2016](#)

¹⁵ *ibid*

¹⁶ Government of Vanuatu (2015) National Gender Equality Annual Report

¹⁷ Managerial positions include politicians, senior government officials, and corporate and general managers in the public and private sector.