



Vanuatu Government

Beijing+30 National Review Report

The 2019-2024 national review report on
Vanuatu's implementation of the
Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

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ACRONYMNS LIST

- ACOMV Anglican Church of Melanesia in Vanuatu
- ADRA Adventist Development and Relief Agency
- AP Authorised Person
- APTC Australia Pacific Training Coalition
- BPfA Beijing Platform for Action
- CAVAW Committees Against Violence Against Women
- CDCCC Community disaster and climate change committees
- CEDAW Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- COP Conference of the Parties
- CPU Crime Prevention Unit
- CRC Convention on the Rights of the Child
- CRPD Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- CSO Civil society organisation
- CST Community Safety Team
- CTP Cash Transfer Program
- DECM Displacement and Evacuation Centre Management
- DIRECCT Digital Response Connecting Citizens
- DRR Disaster risk reduction
- DWA Department of Women's Affairs
- ECCWP Eliminating Cervical Cancer in the Western Pacific
- EWBNZ Engineers without Borders New Zealand
- FLE Family Life Education
- FPA Family Protection Act
- FPU Family Protection Unit
- GBV Gender based violence
- GBViE Gender based violence in emergencies
- GCF Green Climate Fund
- GDP Gross domestic product
- GEDSI Gender equality, disability and social inclusion
- GEM Gender Equitable Men Scale
- GPC Gender and Protection Cluster
- HCDI Human Capacity Development International
- HPV Human Papillomavirus
- ICCPR International Convention on Civil and Political Rights
- ICT Information communications technology
- IERC Inclusive Education Resource Centre
- ILO International Labor Organisation
- IOM International Organisation for Migration
- LMC Luganville Municipal Council
- MALFFB Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, Fisheries and Biosecurity
- MAV Media Association of Vanuatu
- MBC Men Be the Change
- MFEM Ministry of Finance and Economic Management
- MICS Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
- MoET Ministry of Education and Training

- MoH Ministry of Health
- MoJCS Ministry of Justice and Community Services
- MP Member of parliament
- MSG Melanesian Spearhead Group
- M4C Markets for Change
- MTTCNVB Ministry of Tourism, Trade, Commerce, and Ni Vanuatu Business
- NDMO National Disaster Management Office
- NGEP National Gender Equality Policy
- NHRC National Human Rights Committee
- NHRI National Human Rights Institution
- NPHC National Population and Housing Census
- NSDP National Sustainable Development Plan
- NUV National University of Vanuatu
- OGCIO Office of the Government Chief Information Officer
- OPP Office of the Public Prosecutor
- ORCBDS Office of Registrar of Cooperatives and Business Development Services
- PACMAS Pacific Media Assistance Scheme
- PGEAP Provincial Gender Equality Action Plan
- PGEAT Provincial Gender Equality Action Team
- PSO Public Solicitors Office
- PPAC Pacific People Advancing Change
- PIEC Provincial Inclusive Education Coordinator
- RMNCAH Reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health
- SCICC The Sanma Creative Industries Community Company
- SDG Sustainable Development Goal
- SEED Socio, Economic, Empowerment Design
- SMART Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, timebound
- SOP Standard operating procedures
- SPBD South Pacific Business Development
- SPC Pacific Community
- SRH Sexual and reproductive health
- SRHR Sexual and reproductive health and rights
- TSM Temporary special measures
- TVET Technical and vocational education and training
- UNDP United Nations Development Programme
- UNFPA United Nations Population Fund
- UN Women United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women
- UPR Universal Periodic Review
- USAID United States Agency for International Development
- VANWODS Vanuatu Women's Development Scheme
- VAPJP Vanuatu Australia Policing and Justice Program
- VASCG Vanuatu Australia School Community Grant
- VAT Value Added Tax
- VBoS Vanuatu Bureau of Statistics
- VBTC Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation
- VBM Laef Blong Mi Vois Blong Mi
- VCC Vanuatu Christian Council
- VCCRP Vanuatu Community Based Climate Resilience Project

- VDPA Vanuatu Disabled People’s Association
- VEAP Vanuatu Energy Access Project
- VEO Vanuatu Electoral Office
- VFHA Vanuatu Family Health Association
- VLRC Vanuatu Law Reform Commission
- VNPF Vanuatu National Provident Fund
- VNSO Vanuatu National Statistics Office
- VNSDS Vanuatu National Strategy for the Development of Statistics
- VPF Vanuatu Police Force
- VSP Vanuatu Skills Partnership
- VSPD Vanuatu Society for People with Disabilities
- VSS Vanuatu Statistical System
- VT Vatu
- VWC Vanuatu Women’s Centre
- WASH Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
- WEDO Women’s Environment and Development Organization
- WGFS Women and Girls Friendly Space
- WHO World Health Organization
- WITTT Women I Tok Tok Tugeta
- WST Ward Safety Team
- WWW Women Wetem Weta
- YCV Youth Challenge Vanuatu
- YWLP Young Women’s Leadership Program

SECTION 1: HIGHLIGHTS

The review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in Vanuatu covered the period from 1 June, 2019 – 31 May, 2024. The review addressed progress and challenges towards implementing the 12 critical areas of concern, alongside good practice examples of how Vanuatu is promoting and strengthening gender equality and women's empowerment.

The review process included a desk review of relevant survey, policy, reporting and programming data. Key informant interviews and consultations were also undertaken with over 45 government and civil society agencies at the national and provincial level (Shefa and Sanma provinces) with a total of 65 people consulted (14 males and 51 females).

Progress towards implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action has been made in all 12 critical areas of concern. There have been initiatives implemented to increase access to rights, resources, opportunities and services for women and girls in urban, rural and remote areas. Measures have also been targeted to support women and girls with disabilities, of different ages, who are internally displaced and/or in humanitarian settings. This progress has been a result of national policies such as the [National Sustainable Development Plan 2016-2030](#), [National Gender Equality Policy 2020-2030](#) and [National Disability Inclusive Development Policy 2018-2025](#). Gender mainstreaming across policies within health, education, the productive sector, climate resilience and disaster risk reduction has also provided a supportive environment to accelerate progress towards gender equality.

The implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action has also been hindered by COVID 19 and frequent natural disasters over the past five years. Violence against women and girls continues to be pervasive 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 ([2011 Vanuatu National Survey on Women's Lives and Family Relationships](#)). Gender stereotypes and discrimination against women have impacted areas including women's political participation and representation with only one of 52 members of parliament being female. Women also have less access to land, natural resources, healthcare, formal employment and credit; impacting their safety, security and autonomy.

Some examples of good practices that have been implemented in the past five years include:

- Decentralisation of gender equality: Through strengthening provincial and community level governance and infrastructure such as developing [Provincial Gender Equality Action Plans 2020-2024](#), establishing Provincial Gender Equality Action Teams and Provincial Gender and Protection Working Groups and strengthening community disaster and climate change committees; women and girls have had increased access to rights, decision making, services and livelihoods in rural and remote areas.
- Locally led approaches: Collective action is essential to promote gender equality and eliminate discrimination and violence against women and girls through partnerships

between government, CSOs and community leaders including chiefs, pastors, women and youth representatives; promoting local ownership and transformative change.

The Vanuatu Government works in partnership with a range of CSOs and development partners and welcomes ongoing collaboration to accelerate progress towards the 12 critical areas of concern in the future.

SECTION 2: PRIORITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND SETBACKS

1. Over the past five years, what have been the most important achievements, challenges and setbacks in progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women?

1.1 In the previous five years a range of strategies have been implemented by government and CSOs from national to community level, across the 12 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action critical areas of concern. Sustainability has been linked to political will, strong partnerships, community engagement and adequate resourcing.

There have been notable achievements and many “firsts” for Vanuatu including:

Gender mainstreaming

1.2 The development of the [National Gender Equality Policy 2020-2030](#) (NGEP 2020-2030) led to the development of the first [Provincial Gender Equality Action Plans](#) in Vanuatu for the period 2020-2024. The governance (coordination, implementation, monitoring and reporting) of the NGEP 2020-2030 has also been decentralised through the establishment of technical working groups and Provincial Gender Equality Action Teams. These measures have assisted government policies of decentralisation to ensure locally led services which reach women and girls in rural and remote areas.

1.3 ***Eliminating violence against women and girls***

- The establishment of the Victim Support Centre at the Office of the Public Prosecutor and the development of the [Vanuatu Survivor-Victim's Charter](#) to help survivors of violence understand their rights and available services.
- The development of the [Standard Operating Procedures \(SOP\) on Clinical Management of Rape, Sexual Violence, and Gender-based Violence](#) by the Ministry of Health in partnership with UNFPA with over 94 medical personnel being trained in this SOP across 68 facilities, resulting in 10,799 individuals accessing gender based violence (GBV) services during outreach.
- The development of the draft Child Protection Bill and roll out of the *National Child Protection Referral Pathway* across Vanuatu
- The establishment of the Vanuatu Women's Centre 24 hour toll free hotline for survivors of violence to access counselling and referral

- The Vanuatu Christian Council developed its first *Gender Statement*, rolled out its first *Break the Silence Sunday* as part of 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence, conducted faith mapping on the gender equality practices of member churches and trained these churches to develop their own gender policies and use the *Gender Status Card* for the first time

1.4 ***Women’s political participation, leadership and representation***

- The election of the first female member of parliament (MP) in 14 years (making 6 the total number of female MPs in the 44 years since Vanuatu’s independence)
- The Luganville Municipal Council seeing the most gender balanced representation in its history including the first female candidate with a disability being elected
- Targeted efforts to increase women in senior positions in health and education with 49 females graduating in certificate level leadership and management courses
- An increase in women’s leadership roles in disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and women’s economic empowerment at the national, provincial and community level through community disaster and climate change committees, savings and loans associations and market vendor associations. Women’s networks such as *Women I Tok Tok Tugeta (WITTT)* has over 9000 members including 746 women with disabilities in WITTT Sunshine.

1.5 ***Women’s and girls’ access to sexual and reproductive health rights***

- Cervical cancer screening for 6,600 women aged 30-54 and a rollout of the human papillomavirus vaccinations for girls aged 9-13
- Increased access to sexual and reproductive health and rights for women and girls through the [RMNCAH Strategy, Policy and Action Plan Policy 2021-2025](#) and the *Family Life Education* in the secondary school curriculum

1.6 ***Women and girls’ access to education including technical and vocational training***

- More girls are enrolled and graduating from secondary education than boys
- More females than males are attending tertiary education (2.31% of males and 2.63% of females)
- There has been an increase in women graduating from technical and vocational education with the Australia Pacific Training Coalition (APTC) recording 1,558 female graduates from July 2019 to December 2023 (51% of the total number of graduates). From 2018-2024, 287 females graduated in non-traditional industries.

1.7 ***Data and statistics***

- The development of the *Vanuatu Database for People with a Disability* which is the first national registry that records the name, location, age, sex, and clinical diagnosis of individuals with disabilities to assist service providers with routine follow-ups, outbreak responses, and humanitarian assistance in alignment with data confidentiality protocols.
- The development of the first [gender](#), [disability](#) and [youth](#) thematic reports and policy briefs developed by the Vanuatu Bureau of Statistics, reprocessed from data within the [2020 Vanuatu National Population and Housing Census](#). Detailed [constituency profiles](#) have also been developed for all constituencies in Vanuatu including data and analysis which is disaggregated by sex, age and location across a range of variables to inform planning.

1.8 The top five priorities Vanuatu focused on to accelerate progress towards the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in the past five years were:

- Eliminating violence against women and girls
- Access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights
- Quality education, training and life-long learning for women and girls
- Poverty eradication, agricultural productivity and food security
- Gender-responsive disaster risk reduction and resilience building

(Refer to question 2 for further information on how these priorities were addressed)

Challenges and barriers to progress

Eliminating violence against women and girls

1.9 The [2011 Vanuatu National Survey on Women's Lives and Family Relationships](#) established a 2009 baseline, revealing that 60% of women aged 15-49 have experienced physical or sexual violence, 68% have faced emotional abuse, and 69% have endured coercive control from intimate partners.

1.10 The [Vanuatu Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2023 \(MICS\)](#) found that 4.5% of women were first married or in a union before age 15 (men 4%) and 20.9% of women were first married or in a union before age 18 (men 7.9%). [2011 Vanuatu National Survey on Women's Lives and Family Relationships](#) found that 53% of women believed that bride price equated to a woman becoming a man's property. In some cases, the bride price is even seen as a justification for physical violence in marriage.

Access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health and rights

1.11 The [Vanuatu Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2023](#) found that 10.3% of women aged 15-49 years (currently married or in a union) make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care. Only 20% of women aged 15-49 have heard of family planning through the radio, television or newspaper (compared to 42.5% of men) and 45.6% of women aged 15-49 currently married or in a union have their need for family planning satisfied with modern contraception. Of women aged 15-49 who gave birth in the last 2 years, 89.2% had seen a skilled birth attendant at least once during their last pregnancy, 65% at least 4 times by any provider and 10.5% at least 8 times by any provider.

Quality education, training and life-long learning for women and girls

1.12 The [2020 Vanuatu National Population and Housing Census \(2020 NPHC\)](#) collected data on the highest completed level of education of the population – 59% had completed primary school (59% male and female), 34.3% had completed secondary education (33.3% male and 35.3% female), 2.4% had completed tertiary education (2.9% male and 2% female) and 3.8% had completed vocational/professional education (4.4% male and 3.2% female).

1.13 There has been increased enrolment in pre primary education with slightly more girls than boys attending early childhood care and education and slightly more boys than girls attending kindy. There are more boys attending primary education (49.81% boys and 49.03% girls) and more girls

attending secondary education. Girls have higher enrolment rates and lower drop out rates from junior secondary (18.92% boys and 19.06% girls) and senior secondary (8.57% boys and 9.27% girls). In 2020 there were more males attending post secondary education (0.84% of males and 0.67% of females) and tertiary education (2.31% of males and 2.63% of females).

Poverty eradication, agricultural productivity and food security

1.14 The [2020 NPHC](#) reported a total labour force of 83,778 people. The labour force participation rate is 46.7% in Vanuatu (42.1% for women and 51.5% for men aged 15 and over). The majority of the employed population work in the agricultural, forestry and fishing sector (41.2% men and 43.8% women) and 51% of members of agricultural households are women ([2022 Vanuatu National Agricultural Census](#)). Self employed describes 24% of the population (9,245 females and 10,666 males), many of whom are working to support households by producing goods for sale and performing tasks such as farming, gardening, and fishing ([2020 NPHC](#)). Subsistence work engages 19% of the population (7,993 females and 8,323 males).

1.15 Unemployment rates are higher for females (6.3%) than males (5.8%), and considerably higher in urban than in rural areas. The lowest unemployment rates are in Malampa, Penama and Sanma, and the highest in Tafea and Shefa. Proportionately, women in Vanuatu's labour market have lower participation in paid jobs and higher participation in unpaid work compared to men ([2020 NPHC](#)). Women comprise the majority of the informal sector; affected by the impacts of climate change, less stable earnings and a more insecure socioeconomic position.

Gender-responsive disaster risk reduction and resilience building

1.16 Vanuatu had the highest disaster risk rating in the world, ranking number one in the [World Risk Index in 2021](#); however, this had fallen to 48 (out of 193 countries) in 2023. Climate and environmental crises exacerbate socio-economic pressures and gender inequality, leading to less access to decision making, resources and opportunities and increased risk of domestic violence and sexual exploitation and abuse against women and girls. These impacts worsen with increasing temperatures, biodiversity loss, floods, droughts cyclones and other weather events.

1.17 Rapid gender analyses were conducted by CARE in Vanuatu in partnership with the Ministry of Justice and Community Services and the Gender and Protection Cluster after [Tropical Cyclone Harold](#) in 2020 and [Tropical Cyclones Judy and Kevin](#) in 2022. These analyses found that women and girls face increased GBV risks due to stress from food insecurity, heightened household workloads, damage to shelter and infrastructure. Women with disabilities are particularly at risk due to isolation and exclusion from service delivery. Barriers to women's participation in decision-making processes also hindered the formulation of effective disaster risk reduction and resilience strategies that address their specific needs.

2. Over the past five years, what have been the top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in your country through laws, policies and/or programmes?

2.1 In the previous five years a range of strategies have been implemented by government and CSOs, from national to community level, across the 12 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action critical areas of concern. Key achievements in addressing the top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in the past five years have included:

Eliminating violence against women and girls

2.2 Strategic Area 1 of the [National Gender Equality Policy 2020-2030](#) (NGEP 2020-2030) focuses on eliminating discrimination and violence against women and girls. The NGEP 2020-2030 aligns with the [National Sustainable Development Plan 2016-2030](#) international standards such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

2.3 Various legislative and policy measures have been implemented to tackle gender based violence (GBV) including:

- The draft *Child Protection Bill* which will provide a legal framework for protecting children at risk of abuse and neglect. A consultation and awareness campaign has been conducted across the country, led by the Ministry of Justice and Community Services (MoJCS) and the Bill is now awaiting approval by Parliament.
- The *National Child Protection Referral Pathway* has been adopted and Child Desk Officers are now situated in every province. Training has also been provided to the police and judiciary in child safe interviewing practices.
- The Victim Support Centre was established at the Office of the Public Prosecutor, including a dedicated social worker and a child friendly space in 2022. In 2023 the [Vanuatu Survivor-Victim's Charter](#) was developed to help survivors of violence understand their rights and access available services.
- The draft *Evidence Bill* aims to improve protection for vulnerable victims and witnesses.
- The review of the *Maintenance of Children Act* was undertaken and addresses support for single-parent households. The Act is now due to be updated by the State Law Office

2.4 The Family Protection Unit (FPU) of the Vanuatu Police Force (VPF) plays a crucial role in handling domestic and sexual violence cases. With officers stationed nationwide, the FPU is involved in both prevention and response activities. The Vanuatu Women's Centre (VWC) operates a 24 hour help line and counselling centres in six provinces, providing counselling, legal assistance, safehouse and referral support for women and child survivors of violence.

2.5 Prevention of GBV initiatives have been implemented as stand alone programs and also integrated into activities of other sectors such as food security, education and climate change including:

- Partners such as ActionAID Vanuatu, Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), CARE in Vanuatu, Live and Learn, Oxfam, Save the Children, Vanuatu Christian Council and World Vision have integrated components of GBV awareness raising, healthy relationships and community based protection into food security and environmental protection programs;
- The VPF's Crime Prevention Unit have conducted awareness campaigns on cyber bullying reaching over 6,480 students. The Vanuatu Internet Governance Forum partnered with the MoJCS to raise awareness to prevent online child abuse and exploitation; reaching 3,036 girls and 2,480 boys from grade 4 to secondary school;
- VWC has implemented the *Male Advocacy Program* to develop male change agents and operates a network of *Committees Against Violence Against Women (CAVAWs)* to conduct outreach and referral in rural and remote areas;

- Sista and Human Capacity Development International have developed a range of videos with senior male leaders including the Prime Minister, advocating for gender equality and eliminating violence against women and girls and
- Partners including MoJCS and Department of Women’s Affairs, Vanuatu Christian Council, ADRA, VWC, Vanuatu Australia Policing and Justice Program have worked with chiefs and pastors to increase their support of creating safe communities, free from violence.

Access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health and rights

2.6 The Government has focussed on expanding universal access to health services with an emphasis on integrated reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health (RMNCAH) services. There has also been a strong focus on preventing cervical cancer. To achieve this, the Ministry of Health (MoH) have developed several gender responsive policies and strategies, including:

- [Vanuatu Health Sector Strategy and Strategic Plan 2021-2030](#)
- [RMNCAH Policy, Strategy & Implementation Plan 2021-2025](#)
- [Vanuatu Mental Health Strategy and Strategic Plan 2021-2025](#)
- [Vanuatu Non-Communicable Disease Policy & Strategic Plan 2021-2030](#)

2.7 The *Family Life Education (FLE)* curriculum provides students in years 11-13 with knowledge and skills related to physical, emotional, and social development, including gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights. An out-of-school curriculum and a *FLE Policy* are also being developed by the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) with UNFPA support.

2.8 The [Standard Operating Procedures for Managing Rape, Sexual Violence and GBV](#) were developed in 2022 and the Social Work Department has also been established at the Vila Central Hospital leading to the referral of over 20 child protection cases.

2.9 The Government provides free immunisations for children and cervical cancer vaccines for women and girls. The MoH targets 90% coverage for girls aged 9 to 13 and aims to screen and vaccinate women aged 30 to 54. Over 6,600 women have already been screened in Vanuatu through the *Eliminating Cervical Cancer in the Western Pacific (ECCWP)* program.

Quality education, training and life-long learning for women and girls

2.10 The *Education Act [Cap 272]* prohibits discrimination in child enrolment based on gender, religion, nationality, race, language, or disability. The MoET has adopted a range of policies and programs to support the education of women and girls including:

- [Reviewed Gender Equity in Education Policy 2018](#) (currently under review in 2024)
- [Vanuatu Education and Training Sector Strategic Plan 2020-2030](#)
- *Disability Inclusive Education and Training Policy 2024-2030*
- *Women in Education Leadership Network*

2.11 Inclusive education and training are also supported by other policies including the [National Sanitation and Hygiene Policy \(2017–2030\)](#) and [National Disability-Inclusive Development Policy 2018–2025](#). MoET has integrated water, sanitation and hygiene indicators, including menstrual health, into the Vanuatu Education Management Information System and developed a monitoring

module with the support of UNICEF. Over 2,040 teachers have been trained in inclusive education. Provincial Inclusive Education Coordinators have screened and supported 11,606 children with disabilities and the Vanuatu Sign Language will be launched in 2024.

2.12 The *Vanuatu Australia School Community Grant* supported children's education during the COVID 19 pandemic, meeting schooling needs through increasing the existing fee subsidies for students, delivering home school packages and providing free access to educational websites.

2.13 The [NGEP 2020-2030](#) supports upskilling women and job creation in non-traditional industries such as agriculture, fisheries, handicrafts, and tourism. The *Reviewed Gender Equity in Education Policy 2018* focuses on increasing girls' participation in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) through scholarships, access to non-traditional subjects, and career guidance.

2.14 The National University of Vanuatu is leading the *Digital Response Connecting Citizens* (DIRECCT) program and has opened five E-Learning classrooms with 175 new computers for its School of Education, the Vanuatu Institute of Technology and the Vanuatu Agricultural College. There are plans for free WIFI on campus and digital technology for loan. In 2024, gender awareness training will be provided for teachers and students under this program.

Poverty eradication, agricultural productivity and food security

2.15 The Government has developed a range of gender responsive policies to support women in poverty eradication, climate change adaptation and the productive sector including:

- [National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2018-2030](#)
- [Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, Fisheries and Biosecurity \(MALFFB\) Gender Equality Action Plan 2023-2026](#)
- [The National Gender Equality Policy 2020-2030](#)
- [The Vanuatu Climate Change Adaptation Policy Second Edition 2022-2030](#)

2.16 A range of initiatives have focussed on strengthening women's leadership, skills development and access to finance including savings and loans cooperatives, market vendor associations and women's economic hubs. Skills training for women working informally in creative and agricultural sectors has been provided through the Vanuatu Skills Partnership, ADRA, World Vision, Bank of the South Pacific and other local trainers.

2.17 Programs targeting women in nature based solutions, climate resilience and food security have been implemented by government and CSO partners including MALFFB and the Ministry of Climate Change Adaptation, Meteorology & Geo-Hazards, Energy, Environment and Disaster Management; ActionAid Vanuatu, CARE in Vanuatu, Live and Learn, Save the Children, Vanuatu Christian Council, World Vision, Asian Development Bank, UNDP and UN Women.

Gender-responsive disaster risk reduction and resilience building

2.18 The Government has developed policies and programs to strengthen gender responsive disaster risk reduction and resilience building including:

- [The National Gender Equality Policy 2020-2030](#)
- [The Vanuatu Climate Change Adaptation Policy Second Edition 2022-2030](#)

- [Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, Fisheries and Biosecurity \(MALFFB\) Gender Equality Action Plan 2023-2026](#)

2.19 The Gender and Protection Cluster (GPC), is activated under the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) cluster system, via the *Disaster Risk Management Act No 23 of 2019*. The GPC is led by women at the national and provincial levels and ensures protection and gender, disability, and social inclusion in disaster preparedness and response.

2.20 The National Advisory Board on Climate Change & Disaster Risk reduction (NAB) requires programs to address gender and a range of initiatives are being implemented by government and CSOs with some examples including:

- The Women Wetem Weta (WWW) model, implemented by ActionAid Vanuatu in collaboration with *Women I Tok Tugeta (WITTT)*, *WITTT Sunshine*, and NDMO, empowers women, including those with disabilities, to monitor weather, access meteorological information, and disseminate early warnings via SMS. WWW supports women's livelihoods by providing accurate weather information, aiding in growing and selling produce, earning income, and reducing food insecurity. WWW reaches 170,000 people through SMS and operates a phone tree network with 5,000 members. The University of Sydney's research, *The Economics of Acting Early*, highlights WWW's effectiveness and measures the economic value of women's participation in climate actions and DRR in the Pacific.
- The Vanuatu Community-based Climate Resilience Project (VCCRP), implemented by Save the Children in partnership with the Ministry of Climate Change Adaptation and GCF, is a 6 year project supporting 90,000 people in 282 communities. It establishes disaster risk reduction committees, protects agricultural and fisheries sites, and trains farmers and fishers in climate-resilient techniques, with a comprehensive gender action plan prioritizing women's leadership and participation.
- CARE in Vanuatu is implementing the Helti Kakae, Helti Famili project in partnership with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Nasi Tuan, Vanuatu Christian Council, and Wan Smolbag, to enhance food security, climate resilience, and women's economic empowerment by promoting gender equality through a family-based approach promoting transformative change.

3. Over the past five years, what specific actions have you taken to prevent discrimination and promote the rights of marginalized groups of women and girls?

Women and girls living in remote and rural areas

3.1 The majority of the population lives in rural and remote areas and measures have been taken to strengthen service delivery and access to resources for women and girls in these locations. Women make up the majority of the agricultural sector and informal sector and strategies have also been implemented to increase women's participation in training, skills development and access to credit. For example, in 2023, Vanuatu had 429 active cooperatives, with savings and loans cooperatives making up 30% (and 80% of membership of savings and loans cooperatives being women).

3.2 The [Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, Fisheries, and Biosecurity's Gender Equality Action Plan 2023-2026](#) aims to provide all family members with training, financial literacy, business development skills and resources; empowering them to contribute effectively to the productive

sector. The Silae Vanua Market Vendors Association and the Northern Islands Market Vendors Association have promoted women's leadership and empowerment and increased the access of rural women producers to markets.

3.3 Subsidised essential services including school grants and investments in menstrual hygiene management facilities in schools have increased girls' attendance at school in rural and remote areas. Government and CSO partners have partnered together to increase awareness in schools and the community about child protection and gender equality and to respond to gender based violence (GBV).

Women and girls with disabilities

3.4 There has been an increase in initiatives focussing on the rights of women and girls with disabilities across sectors, in alignment with the [Disability Inclusive Development Policy 2018-2025](#) and other sectoral policies. Inclusive education measures have been focussed at the school, vocational and tertiary education level to increase the number of women and girls with disabilities enrolling in programs implemented by the public and private school system, Australian Pacific Training Coalition, Vanuatu Skills Partnership and the National University of Vanuatu.

3.5 There has been an increase of women with disabilities participating in and holding leadership positions at the municipal council level, in women's networks, community disaster and climate change committees and water committees.

3.6 Data collection and statistics have been strengthened with the development of the *Vanuatu Database for People with Disability* to assist with the provision of essential services. Data has also been reprocessed from the *2020 NPHC* to produce the first comprehensive set of fact sheets, policy briefs and thematic reports focussing on [gender](#), [disability](#) and [youth](#).

Women and girls in humanitarian settings

3.7 The Department of Women's Affairs leads the Gender and Protection Cluster (GPC) and the Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies (GBViE) Sub-Cluster, coordinating with government and CSO partners nationally and across all six provinces through the provincial gender and protection working groups. The GPC and subclusters implement preparedness activities, manage emergency operation centres, distribute relief supplies, and deliver essential services.

3.8 CARE in Vanuatu has collaborated with the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) and the Department of Local Authorities to develop area council disaster plans that ensure the participation of women, people with disabilities, and other at-risk groups. Pilot initiatives in Tafea and Penama provinces aim to inform national guidelines for inclusive disaster planning.

3.9 In response to Tropical Cyclones Judy and Kevin, UNFPA and CARE in Vanuatu; in partnership with the Ministry of Health and the GPC, implemented *women and girls friendly spaces* (WGFS) in Tanna. These spaces were led by women and provided sexual and reproductive health and GBV referral services, reaching 1,915 women and girls with essential services during the emergency period.

Internally displaced women and girls

3.10 The GPC and GBViE Sub-Cluster have distributed dignity kits and solar lights to displaced women and girls in communities and evacuation centres. Community-based volunteers have played an integral role in awareness-raising and referrals, trained by organisations including the Vanuatu Police Force, Vanuatu Christian Council, ADRA and the Vanuatu Red Cross Society. The Vanuatu Women's Centre, Disability Desk, Vanuatu Society for People with Disabilities and Vanuatu Disability Promotion and Advocacy have also conducted outreach in evacuation centres, ensuring women and girls access relief supplies and services and that displaced communities are aware of GBV and referral.

3.11 The NDMO and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) co-lead the Displacement and Evacuation Centre Management (DECM) Cluster. The DECM Cluster tracks and monitors the mobility trends and needs of displaced individuals and households, making referrals for services including disability inclusion, GBV, and health. IOM, in partnership with NDMO, has also developed guidelines and resources to assist evacuation centre management in preventing and referring GBV cases.

4. Over the past five years, how has the confluence of different crises affected the implementation of the BPfA in your country, and what measures have you taken to prevent their negative impact on progress for women and girls?

4.1 In the past five years Vanuatu has experienced multiple category 4 and 5 cyclones, floods, drought, the coconut rhinoceros beetle plague and COVID 19. The country has experienced the effects of climate change on biodiversity and natural resources and the population has been impacted by the rising costs of food and fuel.

4.2 COVID 19 impacted the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as border closures and lockdowns affected women's income generation, especially in the informal sector. Women also had increased workloads and care duties and food insecurity, stress and household tension led to an increase in gender-based violence (GBV). Tropical Cyclones Judy and Kevin also impacted women and girls through an increase in GBV, child abuse and neglect; psychosocial stress, barriers to leadership and decision making, increased workloads, food insecurity and disruptions to education.

4.3 Measures have been taken to prevent negative impacts on women and girls including programs and practices to:

- provide cash transfers and education grants,
- increase women's leadership and participation in the home, community and workplace,
- increase women's access to skills, training and employment,
- increase women's access to health care,
- increase women's role in humanitarian action, and
- increase women's access and management of natural resources.

5. Over the next five years, what are the priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in your country through laws, policies and/or programmes?

5.1 To accelerate progress towards the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, strategies are required to change discriminatory social norms and stereotypes, strengthen legal and policy frameworks and increase women's access to resources and decision making. This requires a concerted effort from the Government to invest in gender responsive planning and budgeting and for all stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organisations, women's rights organisations, academia, faith based organisations, private sector, United Nations, community members and international development partners, to invest in gender-responsive policies, programs and practices.

5.2 The Vanuatu Government's priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls over the next five years are aligned to the [National Sustainable Development Plan 2016-2030](#) and [the National Gender Equality Policy 2020-2030 \(NGEP 2020-2030\)](#). In 2024 there is a mid term review of the *NGEP 2020-2030* and the six *Provincial Gender Action Plans 2020-2024* and reviews of other sector policies are also planned in the next five years.

Initial monitoring and analysis has identified the following priorities for the next five years:

5.3 *Eliminating violence against women and girls*

- Developing a national action plan for ending violence against women and girls
- Reviewing domestic and sexual violence legislation including the *Penal Code* and *Family Protection Act 2008*
- Strengthening referral systems and expanding prevention and service delivery to rural and remote areas
- Conducting a second national prevalence and incidence survey on violence against women and girls
- Working with men, women, girls and boys and community leaders to challenge discriminatory attitudes, norms and behaviours

5.4 *Political participation and representation*

- Developing a national action plan for increasing women's representation in parliament
- Supporting churches and political parties to adopt gender responsive and socially inclusive policies and practices
- Coaching, training and supporting women to progress into senior positions within education, health, policing and justice sectors
- Advocating and delivering awareness raising activities for chiefs, church leaders, parliamentarians, provincial and municipal stakeholders on the importance of women's participation in leadership and decision making
- Promoting multi-sectoral and intergenerational collaboration and advocacy on women's leadership and participation in decision making

5.5 *Gender-responsive budgeting*

- Conducting an analysis of gender responsive budgeting (GRB) and developing a guidance note for GRB to be piloted in specific ministries

- Develop an implementation plan for DSPPAC to lead the whole-of-government agenda on gender mainstreaming

5.6 *Increasing access to affordable quality health care, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights*

- Increasing universal access to health care for women and girls
- Increasing women and girls access to sexual and reproductive health and rights
- Developing gender-sensitive approaches to the prevention and treatment of chronic and non-communicable diseases
- Expanding access to health services for marginalised groups of women and girls

5.7 *Poverty eradication, agricultural productivity and food security*

- Increasing women's access to skills, training, finance, markets and land
- Assisting more women to shift from the informal to formal economy
- Supporting women's leadership in climate smart agriculture and other climate change adaptation approaches

5.8 *Right to work and rights at work*

- Amending the *Employment Act [CAP 160]* to incorporate provisions on parental leave to recognise the redistribution of domestic and care work, sexual harassment and misconduct and equal pay for women and men
- Increasing female enrolment and retention in tertiary, technical and vocational training
- Increasing female participation in formal employment in both public and private sector
- Increasing women's employment in non traditional sectors

5.9 *Promoting gender equality as part of environmental sustainability, climate change adaptation*

- Strengthening opportunities for women's leadership in emergencies and environmental, health and economic crises at the national, provincial and community levels
- Ensuring climate financing adequately addresses gender equality and women's empowerment

SECTION 3: PROGRESS ACROSS THE 12 CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN

Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work

6. Over the past five years, what actions has your country taken to advance gender equality in the world of work (including informal and non-standard employment as well as entrepreneurship)?

Strengthening education, training and skills for women

6.1 According to the [2020 Vanuatu National Population and Housing Census](#), most employed individuals work in agriculture, forestry, and fishing (41.2% men and 43.8% women), predominantly in rural areas. Construction employs 8.9% of men and 0.2% of women, spanning both rural and urban areas. In wholesale and retail trade and motor vehicle/motorcycle repair, women surpass men by 20% (5.2% men and 7.2% women), driven mainly by urban areas (9.9% men and 15.8% women). Women also dominate household activities as employers and producers of undifferentiated goods and services, especially in rural areas, as well as in education, with minor urban-rural differences.

6.2 Strategic Area 2 of the [National Gender Equality Policy 2020-2030](#) has the policy objective “to support upskilling of women and job creation for young women to increase workforce diversity” through:

- promoting female and male participation in non-traditional industries,
- supporting job creation and skills development of women in agriculture, fisheries, handicrafts and tourism including women with disabilities and
- enhancing rural women’s access to markets, land, credit and financial literacy training.

6.3 [The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, Fisheries and Biosecurity \(MALFFB\) Gender Equality Action Plan 2023-2026](#) takes an inclusive approach to provide training, financial literacy, and business development opportunities to men, women, youth, and people with special needs. The plan supports the transition from subsistence to commercial agriculture and enhances resilience to social and environmental changes. It includes actions to mainstream gender across operations and support female farmers, fishers and foresters. Over the past five years, MALFFB has increased female staff in management and extension officer roles, provided leadership training for female staff, developed the *Family Farm Business* program and held national forums and training for women in agriculture and fisheries.

6.4 The Vanuatu Skills Partnership (VSP), provides specialised training and life skills to women, youth, and people with disabilities through technical and vocational education. The VSP has partnered with the Department of Women’s Affairs and civil society partners to train women in all six provinces of Vanuatu in skills such as weaving, jewellery making, handicrafts, bee keeping, cattle farming, financial literacy and business development. VSP’s work is guided by its [Better Balance Strategy](#), which was launched in 2019, in collaboration with the Department of Women’s Affairs and the Australian Government and focusses on women’s economic empowerment, women in leadership and ending violence against women. Female participation in VSP programs is high,

reflecting the large number of women working in creative industries and also the increase of women in agribusiness.

6.5 The Australia Pacific Training Coalition (APTC) is run by TAFE Queensland and offers Australian qualifications from Certificate II to diploma level. APTC programs in Vanuatu are guided by the *Gender Equity, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) Framework 2023-2025* and focus on promoting inclusive education and employment pathways. Courses are offered in areas including carpentry, education support, air conditioning and refrigeration, tourism, culinary skills, international skills training, wall and floor tiling, roofing, hospitality, applied fashion design, leadership and management. APTC has completed disability accessibility audits, collaborated with the Vanuatu Society for People with Disabilities and held its first GEDSI Forum in 2021 with government and CSO partners to promote inclusive education and employment.

6.6 V-LAB collaborates with *YumiWork* to support young entrepreneurs and innovators through providing access to facilities, services, and mentoring to help develop and grow businesses. In 2019, V-LAB and *YumiWork* launched Vanuatu's first business incubator, which attracted nearly 40 applications and selected four innovative projects, 2 of which were run by women (Mama's Laef Vanuatu which manufactures reusable, eco friendly hygiene products and Home Stay Vanuatu which promotes eco friendly tourism through local homestays).

6.7 Since 2019, V-LAB has supported over 150 individuals in establishing or developing their businesses. The *Yumi Growem Vanuatu* initiative targets small business owners, aspiring entrepreneurs, and returned seasonal workers aiming to start or grow businesses and provides a ten-month program for participants in Port Vila and Santo. The program, funded by the Department of Labour with the support of the Australian and New Zealand Governments; has seen businesses emerge in sectors including livestock, poultry, crops, handicrafts, sewing and fashion, manufacturing, retail and commercial kava.

Increased women in leadership positions

6.8 The hiring of women into senior roles, such as secretary generals and other senior government positions, represents a step towards gender equality in the public sector. Notable appointments of women in the past five years include two Acting Secretary Generals (out of 6), three Director Generals (out of 13), one Supreme Court judge, one female Chief Magistrate, one high commissioner and five directors (out of 43). Although more progress needs to be made in appointing women into senior positions, these appointments highlight the competence and management capabilities of women and demonstrate the value of diverse leadership within the public service.

6.9 The presence of women on boards and commissions such as the Vanuatu Foreign Investment Promotion Agency, Public Service Commission, Vanuatu Law Reform Commission, Vanuatu Chamber of Commerce, Vanuatu Paralympic Committee and Vanuatu Hotels and Resorts Commission; underscores the progress made in promoting gender equality in governance.

6.10 The *Women in Leadership Program* is an initiative of the Ministry of Health and the Public Service Commission through the Vanuatu Institute of Public Administration and Management in partnership with Balance of Power, CARE in Vanuatu, Further Arts, Vanuatu Skills Partnership, University of the South Pacific and the Vanuatu Australia Health Partnership. This four-month program aims to strengthen leadership and accountability of the health sector. Since 2023, 29

female leaders and 7 male change agents have graduated with a *Certificate in Professional Development in Public Service Workplace Leadership*.

6.11 Under the *Vanuatu Australia Education Support Program*, 60 principals (20 females, 40 males) were supported to participate in leadership and management training through APTC and the Pacific Theological College in 2020. In 2022, 32 participants (12 females, 20 males) graduated in Santo with *Certificate IV in Leadership and Management*, with the rest graduating in 2023 due to COVID-19 delays. The Pacific Theological College conducted the training which included gender equality and sensitivity components, such as the College's *Gender Voices for Dignity* course.

6.12 The Sanma Creative Industries Community Company (SCICC) Board of Directors is composed mostly of women elected from the Sanma Women's Handicraft Association. The SCICC showcases the leadership capabilities of women in creative industries, promoting gender equality and supporting women's economic empowerment within the sector.

Vanuatu E-Commerce Strategy and Roadmap 2022

6.13 [*The Vanuatu E-Commerce Strategy and Roadmap 2022*](#) was developed by the Ministry of Tourism, Trade, Commerce and Ni-Vanuatu Business (MTTCNVB). Responding to women's lower access to digital skills, finance, and e-payments; the *Strategy and Roadmap* prioritises initiatives to mainstream women's participation in formal e-commerce platforms. It focuses on gender-specific recommendations to support women-led micro, small, and medium enterprises operating through social media such as Facebook and Instagram to buy and sell online, aiming to transition them from informal to formal e-commerce platforms. Efforts include ongoing financial sector reforms to improve market access, information availability, and digital finance for women.

6.14 Initiatives targeting capacity strengthening aim to enhance digital skills and reduce access barriers to e-commerce platforms for women across Vanuatu. The *Strategy and Roadmap* propose establishing a women's entrepreneurial hub for business advisory services for women working in the informal sector to help them to transition to the formal economy, expanding credit bureau services to include positive listings for better loan access and promoting community company models for cooperative engagement. These initiatives aim to empower marginalised women, increase their economic independence and access to local, regional and international markets.

(Refer to question 10 for further measures to strengthen gender equality in informal employment)

7. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to recognize, reduce and/or redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, promote work-life and family balance and strengthen the rights of paid care workers?

The 2020 Vanuatu National Population and Housing Census

7.1 The [*2020 Vanuatu National Population and Housing Census*](#) reported a total labour force of 83,778 people. This includes employers (3,248), self-employed individuals (19,911), government employees (10,345), private sector employees (19,631), unpaid workers (9,279 including 439 trainees), subsistence workers (16,316), and the unemployed (5,049).

7.2 Unpaid household workers aged 15 and above numbered 3,015 (2,046 females and 969 males). Unpaid family work engaged 4,493 people (2,049 females and 2,444 males) and voluntary

work involved 1,332 individuals (506 females and 826 males). Of the 16,316 people involved in subsistence work, producing goods for their own consumption (such as family gardens); 7,993 were female and 8,323 male. The 19,911 self-employed (9,245 females and 10,666 males) were often working to support households by producing goods for sale and performing tasks such as farming, gardening, and fishing.

7.3 Some measures that have been undertaken to redistribute unpaid care and domestic work include:

- The Vanuatu Society for People with Disabilities is paying carers of people with disabilities
- Rapid gender analysis reports of [Tropical Cyclone Harold](#), [Tropical Cyclones Judy and Kevin](#) and [COVID 19](#); undertaken by CARE in Vanuatu in partnership with the Ministry of Justice and Community Services and Gender and Protection Cluster have recognised the increased workloads of women following a disaster and advocated to redistribute unpaid care and domestic work duties. Response and recovery programming of partners includes awareness raising on gender equality and healthy relationships.

Awareness raising to encourage participation of men and boys in unpaid care and domestic work

7.4 Various programs in Vanuatu are actively working to raise awareness, challenge gender stereotypes and encourage the participation of men and boys in unpaid care and domestic work. These initiatives aim to promote gender equality, alleviate the burden of care on women, and foster a more balanced distribution of household responsibilities. Examples of initiatives being undertaken by partners include:

- CARE in Vanuatu has engaged men and boys in discussions about gender roles, aiming to shift societal norms and attitudes through locally led, transformative approaches. Initiatives include workshops and community dialogues that emphasise the importance of shared domestic responsibilities.
- Save the Children integrates gender-sensitive approaches in child protection, education and climate resilience programs. By engaging fathers and male guardians in parenting workshops, the importance of their role in childcare and domestic tasks is emphasised
- The Vanuatu Christian Council collaborates with faith-based organisations and community leaders to raise awareness of gender equality and human rights through training, advocacy and community outreach.
- ADRA leads the *Blossom* project which aims to improve the wellbeing of women and girls by tackling domestic violence, sexual abuse, and teenage pregnancy. Collaborating with church leaders, students, community members, and the Government; the team employs the *Family Life Education (FLE)* approach. This involves discussing gender norms, encouraging men to take on "non-traditional" household roles, and promoting women's leadership.
- Sista, uses media, storytelling and advocacy to addresses stereotypes and promotes the active participation of men and boys in domestic responsibilities.

Investing in time saving, climate resilient infrastructure

7.5 Examples of initiatives include:

- The Vanuatu Women's Development Scheme (VANWODS) is implementing a renewable energy project funded by the National Green Energy Fund and UN Women from 2022-2025.

It offers low-interest financing and solar energy systems to 100 women, helping create climate-resilient businesses. Additionally, 240 women received training in solar maintenance and disaster preparedness.

- The Vanuatu Energy Access Project (VEAP), in partnership with the Asian Development Bank, aims to increase renewable energy and involves women in training, design, construction, access to energy and small business opportunities.
- Water for Women partners with World Vision to deliver inclusive, climate-resilient WASH services reaching 22,600 people in Sanma and Torba Provinces. The project supports WASH committees to upgrade infrastructure for climate resilience and enhance gender equality and social inclusion in WASH planning and service delivery.

8. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to reduce the gender digital divide?

8.1 The [2020 Vanuatu National Population and Housing Census](#) found higher internet use in urban areas, especially Port Vila (44.3% males, 40.5% females aged 15 and over) and Luganville (51.3% males, 49.6% females aged 15 and over). Shefa province had the highest usage at 32.9% with the other provinces having usage rates of less than 20%. Provinces with the greatest gender disparities were Penama (18.4% males, 10.2% females), Malampa (22% males, 16% females), and Torba (17.1% males, 11.5% females). Both male and female-headed households primarily access the internet for social media (66.4% and 64.1%, respectively). However, male-headed households are more likely to use the internet for reading news (8.0% vs. 6.4%) and work or business (7.7% vs. 5.7%); while female-headed households access it more for education (6.3% vs. 5.3%).

Increasing women's and girls' access to information and communications technologies

8.2 The [National ICT Policy 2013](#) and [Draft National ICT Policy Framework 2021](#) aim to enhance digital literacy among Vanuatu students through cost effective information and communications technology (ICT) facilities and internet connectivity in schools. The [Universal Access Policy 2013](#) targets 98% of the population having access to broadband internet with underserved educational institutions being prioritised for telecommunications services. The [Vanuatu Education and Training Sector Strategic Plan 2020-2030](#) supports establishing computer labs, developing minimum ICT standards in schools and 100% broadband access in schools.

8.3 The *One Laptop Per Child* project was launched in 2008, and the Telecommunications and Radiocommunications Regulator has provided schools with computer labs and tablets with financial support from the *Governance for Growth* program and the Australian Government. These initiatives, initially planned for 2014-17, were extended to 2022 to support schools in need; however, there are still gaps in computer lab and tablet coverage across schools and students in Vanuatu.

8.4 In 2023, the Ministry of Education and Training conducted the *Internet in Schools Survey*, with assistance from the *Vanuatu Education Support Program*. The Survey identified that internet access in schools had increased from 6% in 2013 to 74% in 2022. However, only the administration or teachers use the internet in 63% of schools, with 38% citing poor service quality as a challenge.

8.5 Youth Challenge Vanuatu (YCV) runs the Youth Centre which is a drop in space for youth in Port Vila aged between 16 and 35 years old. The Youth Centre services include a computer lab where registered members have daily access to type their curriculum vitae, job applications, check emails, learn how to use computers and search the internet. It also provides short trainings and career talks for members. Membership is 100VT per year (and is free to all youth involved in YCV programs).

8.6 The *Understanding Technology-Facilitated Domestic Violence in the Pacific and Building Support Services for Victim-Survivors* project is being implemented by Monash University from 2023-2025 with support from the Australian Government. This initiative aims to investigate the prevalence, nature, and impacts of technology-facilitated domestic violence in Fiji, Tonga, and Vanuatu. The goal of the project is to enhance support services for victim-survivors by improving frontline responses, national policies, law enforcement strategies, and engagement with technology companies. Research has already been conducted and the project is now in the training phase.

Increasing the digital literacy and skills of women and girls

8.7 In 2022, the Australia Pacific Training Coalition (APTC) ran a free online micro-credential course, *Digital Literacy Essentials*, which provided an introduction to modern digital technologies, software and popular social media platforms. APTC also partnered with the Ituani Vocational Skills Centre and the University of the South Pacific (USP) to sponsor an introductory training in digital literacy, with the objective to reduce barriers and increase opportunities for women and people with disabilities to access further education. In 2023-2024, 57 participants (including 45 women and 12 people with disabilities) completed this training in Malampa, Sanma, and Torba.

8.8 In 2024, the National University of Vanuatu (NUV) will offer a diploma in ICT. The NUV is also implementing the *Digital Response Connecting Citizens* (DIRECCT) program, funded by the European Union. The Program has established five E-Learning classrooms with 175 new computers for NUV and its School of Education, the Vanuatu Institute of Technology and the Vanuatu Agricultural College. A new auditorium seats 150 students and there are plans for free WIFI on campus. DIRECCT includes gender awareness training for students and lecturers in 2024.

8.9 The *Women in ICT* Facebook page has 2,500 followers and promotes awareness raising, training and employment opportunities for women in ICT. The *Smart Sistas* Facebook page has 7,400 followers, raising awareness of ICTs and disseminating information of training opportunities for girls. National ICT Days are also celebrated with the 2024 events including a School Debate Challenge where male and female school children debated on the positives and negatives of digital technologies with the topic of “*Is Artificial Intelligence (AI) safe for children?*”

Affordable and accessible financial services

8.10 Vodaphone *MVatu* and Digicel *Mycash* are digital money services that use an electronic wallet to allow users to store, send and receive money; pay bills and recharge their credit. Mobile money is especially significant for addressing barriers of lack of banking infrastructure in rural and remote areas (which affects both men and women) and increasing women’s economic empowerment and financial independence.

8.11 Mobile money offers a safe, convenient and secure platform for the unbanked to conduct transactions, send and receive money, save and build financial resilience. Mobile money enables small businesses to access capital, receive digital payments, and expand; stimulating economic activities, trade, and employment. However, measures such as restrictive social norms around phone ownership and affordability of devices still need to be addressed, as identified in the [2019-2020 National Sustainable Development Plan Baseline Survey](#) which found that 66% of males aged 15 and above owned at least one mobile phone that was working compared to only 48% of females.

9. In the past five years, how has the macroeconomic and fiscal policy environment affected the implementation of the BPfA in your country, and what macroeconomic policies has your country implemented in support of a more gender-equal economy?

9.1 Following Cyclone Pam in 2015, Vanuatu's economy rebounded by 2019, but subsequent natural disasters including Cyclone Harold and the COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted economic stability. Tropical Cyclones Judy, Kevin and Lola in 2023, droughts, flooding and coconut rhinoceros beetle plagues in different parts of the country have caused persistent shocks to the economy. Government responses have included fiscal stimulus packages and infrastructure investments to mitigate economic downturns. Despite challenges such as rising inflation and non-performing loans, the banking sector has remained resilient, however these measures have also brought challenges, impacting domestic purchasing power and exacerbating gender disparities in economic access.

9.2 The gross domestic product (GDP) has risen from 2020-2023; with the majority of growth in the industry and services sector. Agriculture, forestry and fishing has seen a decrease in GDP from 2020-2023 with the agriculture sector being impacted by damages to crop production from the cyclones in 2020 and 2023 and the damage caused by the coconut rhinoceros beetle.

9.3 A range of policies and programs have been developed in the past five years to increase women's access to education, health, finance and female labour force participation. However, women and girls still do not have equal access to rights, resources, opportunities and services across sectors. The majority of finance that is used to support gender equality is funded by development partners and the private sector and some gender responsive measures that have been implemented by the Government include:

- Financial Inclusion: The Reserve Bank of Vanuatu's [Vanuatu National Financial Inclusion Strategy 2018-2023](#) includes targets to (1) support access to finance for micro, small and medium enterprises (a minimum of 30% women), (2) to work with line ministries to develop financial inclusion products and services that are accessible to women owned enterprises and (3) to encourage widely available financial literacy programs targeting financial management skills, including for women entrepreneurs.
- Education: funds have been invested into gender responsive infrastructure in schools through WASH facilities that are equipped to support menstrual hygiene management, education grants to support children's attendance at school and strategies to increase attendance of children with disabilities.
- The Council of Ministers approved an economic stimulus package which provided a small business grant to support monthly cash flow for all businesses with a turnover of less than VT 4 million and a wage subsidy scheme to support businesses that were value added tax (VAT) registered and experiencing difficulties maintaining staffing costs

Poverty eradication, social protection and social services

10. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to reduce/eradicate poverty among women and girls?

The [Vanuatu Business Census 2022](#) has provided a sex disaggregated snapshot of formal and informal business ownership in the country. Of the 4,009 businesses surveyed, 89% were informal and 11% were formal; with women owning 47% and men owning 53%.

Savings and loans associations

10.1 In 2023 there were [429 active cooperatives](#) with the highest number in Sanma (124) and lowest in Torba (14); showing a steady increase since 2020. From 2020-2023 there has been a steady increase in the sustainability of these cooperatives and in 2023 total savings were VT 219,162,754 and loans disbursed were VT 128,501,244. Of the total audited cooperatives in 2023, there were 17,006 members and the sectors with the highest numbers of cooperatives were consumer (44%) and savings and loans (30%). Data indicates that 80% of members of savings and loans cooperatives are women; highlighting women's leadership in financial management and their lower rates of access to formal banking services, especially in rural and peri urban areas.

10.2 Across Vanuatu, organisations including the Office of the Registrar of Cooperatives and Business Development Services (ORCBDS), Care in Vanuatu, World Vision, ADRA and ACOMV have provided skills and training support to women and communities to establish and run these associations and committees.

10.3 ORCBDS in partnership with stakeholders including Vanuatu Skills Partnership (VSP), the Department of Women's Affairs and ADRA; ran 23 business trainings for cooperatives in 2023 which reached 240 participants (43% women). World Vision has provided disability inclusion training to members of savings and loans cooperatives in partnership with the Vanuatu Society for People with Disabilities.

Microloans for women

10.4 South Pacific Business Development (SPBD) empowers women in rural and peri urban areas to start, grow, and sustain micro-businesses. SPBD members form self-chosen groups of 4-7 women, which then join larger village centers which approve new business plans and loan applications, act as guarantors, and provide ongoing guidance. SPBD offers training and loans for microenterprise, children's education and housing improvements. The unsecured microloans of approximately VT 44,000 are given to the women's groups who use these loans to invest in businesses based on their existing livelihood skills. Members receive ongoing mentoring to increase their income and the program also includes death benefits and loan insurance to protect families from hardship.

10.5 During market closures, SPBD Vanuatu offered grace periods for loan repayments during COVID 19 and launched the *Revival Loan* product to help clients recapitalise their businesses. Since its establishment in Vanuatu in 2017, SPBD has granted 24,000 loans to women and 9,400 women have savings accounts.

Market vendors associations

10.6 The women led Silae Vanua Market Vendors Association (over 700 female members), Northern Islands Market Vendors Association, Marobe Market and five ring roads markets are assisted by the *Markets for Change* (M4C) Program. The M4C is implemented by UN Women and UNDP in partnership with the Department of Local Authorities and support from the Governments of Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. These associations provide a platform for women's leadership and economic empowerment. Female vendors are trained in areas including leadership, gender equality, gender-based violence, financial and business literacy, disaster risk reduction, grant writing, value addition, food preservation and food safety. In 2024, 37 women have been trained in value addition, 61 people (59 women and 2 men) have received financial literacy training and 38 women have participated in food safety training.

Women's economic hubs

10.7 The *Gender Responsive Alternatives to Climate Change* project empowers women leaders in Vanuatu through the *Women I TokTok Tugeta (WITTT)* network, supported by the Australian Government and ActionAid. This initiative enhances women's leadership in climate adaptation and resilience, whilst ensuring their safety and security. Since 2020, it has aided 6,600 women, including 600 with disabilities. The project has established women-led economic hubs providing livelihood activities including farming, sewing, livestock farming, and savings schemes for WITTT members. *Mama's Poultry Farm* in East Efate was the first hub established in 2022. In 2023, *WITTT Sunshine* which is led and run by women with disabilities received a grant to build six more hubs, with the first being established in 2024 and focusing on sewing.

(Refer to questions 6, 31, 32 for further information).

11. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve access to social protection for women and girls?

The Vanuatu National Provident Fund

11.1 Vanuatu's workforce is predominantly informal (with women making up the majority) and lacking social protection. The *Vanuatu National Provident Fund (VNPF)*, established in 1987, is Vanuatu's primary social security system, managing retirement savings and providing benefits. Membership is mandatory for employees earning at least VT 3,000 monthly and aged 14-55. In 2020, VNPF launched a campaign for informal workers to join voluntarily, attracting over 2,000 participants, including market vendors, domestic workers, farmers, fishers, and kava bar owners. This voluntary membership allows contributions of any amount, facilitating savings for retirement and access to VNPF benefits such as loans and special death benefits.

11.2 VNPF enables savings withdrawal upon retirement or permanent incapacity, and offers survivor benefits in case of member death. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) supports VNPF with financial and technical assistance, promoting digital platforms for informal workers to access services through partnerships with Vodafone, Digicel, Bred Bank, and Vanuatu Post. ILO's support aligns with Vanuatu's COVID-19 Recovery Strategy 2020-2023, focusing on enhancing lives and livelihoods.

Subsidised access to gender-based violence and sexual reproductive health services

11.3 The Government provides free immunisation for children and cervical cancer vaccines for women and girls. The Vanuatu Women's Centre's *National Client Support Fund* assists women and children to receive timely access to safety and justice through safehouse services, and funding for immediate needs, protection and legal assistance. Authorised Persons and the Vanuatu Police Force also have access to funds to assist women and child survivors of violence, through the support of the *Vanuatu Australia Policing Program*.

Education subsidies for children in early childhood, primary and secondary school

11.4 Under *Regulation Order No. 110 of 2023*, the Government of Vanuatu offers tuition fee grants at various educational levels. For early childhood education the grant is VT 9,000 per student aged 4-5; for primary school the grant is VT 8,900 per student in Years 1-6 and for secondary school

the grant is VT 50,125 per student in Years 7-13/14. Secondary school exam fees are also covered for students in Years 12-14.

11.5 These grants cover expenses like instruction, maintenance, medical fees, textbooks, stationery, educational resources, furniture, excursions, registration, identity documents, transfer fees, sports fees, transportation, and administrative needs. Schools may also charge development or other fees to support their strategic plans, but these require justification and approval from the school council, the provincial education board, and the Ministry of Education and Training.

Responding to Tropical Cyclone Harold and COVID-19 through UnBlocked Cash

11.6 In 2020, Oxfam initiated the *UnBlocked Cash* project in Vanuatu, employing e-voucher cash transfers to assist vulnerable households impacted by Tropical Cyclone (TC) Harold and COVID-19 in Sanma, Shefa, and Tafea provinces. Collaborating closely with local CSOs, Oxfam targeted households with vulnerable members and beneficiaries received VT 70,000. Blockchain technology facilitated e-voucher cards which were usable at authorised local vendors for purchasing food, hygiene products, and agricultural supplies.

11.7 In Sanma, 2,530 households were enrolled, primarily comprising the elderly (38%), people with disabilities (37%), widows (12%), single mothers (10%), and TC Harold-displaced individuals (3%). A total of 204 local vendors participated, including community stores, market vendors, and transportation providers, with slightly more male vendors due to banking requirements favouring men in Vanuatu. Prior to the cash transfer program (CTP), households coped by reducing food consumption, delaying bills, or withdrawing children from school. During the program, 75% of households shared purchased goods, fostering community support. The CTP enabled households to repair homes, revitalise agriculture, access medical care, and diversify diets, significantly reducing food insecurity and boosting local economies (85% of vendors reported increased sales).

Responding to COVID-19 through cash and vouchers for at risk households

11.8 Save the Children piloted cash and voucher assistance in Vanuatu in 2022 under the regional *Cash Assistance Program* to respond to COVID-19. The aid targeted vulnerable groups, including GBV survivors, breastfeeding mothers, people with disabilities, those with low literacy, the elderly, single-headed households, and people whose small businesses were significantly impacted by COVID 19. About 300 households in Port Vila urban areas received VT 20,000, through an e-voucher redeemable at Au Bon Marche or a cheque from the Bank of the South Pacific.

11.9 The Vanuatu pilot focussed on maintaining informal micro-businesses (“20 vatu mamas”) and monitoring confirmed that the cash assistance allowed many recipients to buy supplies for these enterprises. With the end of pandemic restrictions, about half of the Vanuatu sample now have a household member in formal sector employment, providing regular cash and contributing to pension schemes.

12. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve health outcomes for women and girls in your country?

Strengthening availability and promoting women’s access to public health services

12.1 The Government, through the Ministry of Health (MoH), is enhancing its policy frameworks to strengthen and promote access to basic healthcare and services, especially in rural and remote

areas. In the previous five years the MoH and Ministry of Justice and Community Services (MoJCS) have developed policies and strategies which promote women's access to health services including:

- [Vanuatu Disability Inclusive Development Policy 2018-2025](#)
- [Vanuatu Health Sector Strategy and Strategic Plan 2021-2030](#)
- [RMNCAH Policy, Strategy & Implementation Plan 2021-2025](#)
- [Vanuatu Mental Health Strategy and Strategic Plan 2021-2025](#)
- [Vanuatu Non-Communicable Disease Policy & Strategic Plan 2021-2030](#)

12.2 The MoH and partners have increased awareness raising campaigns on communicable and non-communicable diseases, prevention strategies and where to access services. The MoH has also partnered with the MoJCS Disability Desk and the Vanuatu Society for People with Disabilities (VSPD) in some islands to deliver health outreach services and referral to women and girls with disabilities.

12.3 The MoH has strengthened gender inclusive services in reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health (RMNCAH). The *RMNCAH Policy, Strategy and Implementation Plan 2021-2025* was developed with the support of UNFPA in 2021 and since then, the RMNCAH Unit is fully staffed with trained health workers to deliver counselling and services in gender based violence (GBV), sexual reproductive health (SRH) and family planning to children, adolescents and adults.

12.4 The RMNCAH Policy promotes the "Three Zeros", referring to the targets for zero preventable maternal mortality, zero unmet need for family planning, and zero gender based violence (GBV). The Policy has also significantly opened SRH services to girls from the age of 13 without parental consent. Family planning in-service training for nurses, doctors, and midwives has been completed in two provinces with the remaining four planned for 2024. Guidelines for adolescent and youth friendly health services were endorsed by the MoH in 2023 and the training will be conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth and Sports and community leaders.

12.5 The [Standard Operating Procedures \(SOP\) on Clinical Management of Rape, Sexual Violence, and Gender-based Violence](#) were developed by the Ministry of Health in partnership with UNFPA in 2021, with over 94 medical personnel being trained in this SOP across 68 facilities, resulting in 10,799 individuals accessing GBV services during outreach.

12.6 The Social Work Department was established within the Vila Central Hospital in 2023 with a focus on child protection, sexual and domestic violence. The Social Work Department developed a child protection policy for the hospital in late 2023 which has assisted in the referral of over 20 cases of child protection since then.

Strengthening services to prevent cervical cancer for women and girls

12.7 Vanuatu is the first country in the Pacific to develop a comprehensive strategy towards eliminating cervical cancer. The *Eliminating Cervical Cancer in the Western Pacific (ECCWP)* program is a partnership between the Vanuatu Ministry of Health, Vanuatu Family Health Association, Daffodil Centre, Kirby Institute UNSW Sydney, Australian Centre for Cervical Cancer Prevention, Family Planning Australia and the Minderoo Foundation.

12.8 Through the *ECCWP* women (including those in rural and remote areas) have access to cervical cancer screening, vaccination and treatment in the early stages. The *ECCWP* project is committed to achieving 70% or higher participation in screening of eligible women aged 30-54 years,

90% or more of screen-positive women attending follow up care and treatment and 90% of women that need it receiving treatment for invasive cervical cancer, across Vanuatu.

12.9 More than 6,600 women have been screened for human papillomavirus (from October 2022-December 2023) and a further 25,000 will be reached through the program, with same day cervical cancer screening and treatment. This model has proven effective and has addressed cultural barriers to increase uptake of the health care service by providing a quick and comfortable method of screening, whilst maintaining privacy and providing easy to follow instructions.

Expanding access to sexual reproductive and maternal health services for women and girls affected by humanitarian emergencies

12.10 UNFPA and CARE in Vanuatu, in partnership with the Ministry of Health and the Vanuatu Gender and Protection Cluster, implemented 1 static and 3 mobile *women and girls friendly spaces* (WGFS) in Tanna, in response to Tropical Cyclones Judy and Kevin in 2023. These WGFS were led and operated by women and provided SRH and GBV referral to facilitate continuity of essential services during an emergency period. The WGFS provided a safe space for women and girls to access services and information and also develop their livelihood skills through basic training in jewellery making, weaving and tie dying.

12.11 The WGFS were implemented for 3 months, reaching women and girls between the ages of 15-49, most of whom were at child bearing age. Different services were provided including family planning and psychosocial support for survivors of GBV. Awareness raising was also provided on menstrual hygiene management, puberty, menopause and SRH; with referral to the health clinic for check ups. The WGFS model demonstrated how integrated health and protection approaches can provide continuity of service delivery during emergency periods. During implementation, 1915 women and girls were reached including 400 adolescent girls (ages 10-14); 1234 women and girls (aged 15-49) and 281 women (over the age of 50).

13. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve education outcomes and skills for women and girls, including in sectors where they are underrepresented?

13.1 The [Vanuatu Education and Training Sector Strategy 2020-2030](#) has mainstreamed gender across its policy priorities and actions. In 2024, MoET adopted the *Disability Inclusive Education and Training Policy 2024-2030* and the [Reviewed Gender Equity in Education Policy 2018](#) which includes the *Social Citizenship Education* and *Family Life Education (FLE)* programs, is currently under review. MoET also implements the *Women in Education Leadership Network*, a professional program in education facilities nationwide, aiming to empower female managers and promote the elimination of discrimination within the sector

Implementing Family Life Education Curriculum

13.2 The MoET, in partnership with UNFPA, have updated the *FLE* curriculum and Teacher Guide which were approved by Vanuatu Qualifications Authority in 2022. The *FLE* curriculum covers human development, sexual and reproductive health, family and relationships, consent, gender roles and equality, personal safety, and emotional well-being. It is integrated into the broader school curriculum and tailored to be age-appropriate, with distinct content for senior secondary school students in grades 11-13. The MoET is also seeking to include this topic in the science curriculum for grades 7-10.

13.3 The *FLE* curriculum is implemented by MoET and civil society organisations including the Vanuatu Family Health Association (VFHA) and ADRA, with support from UNFPA and the Government of Australia. It is delivered by trained teachers, with regular training workshops and professional development sessions. Community outreach and parent education sessions are also conducted to ensure broader community support.

13.4 Many adolescents have left school by year 11 and an out-of-school curriculum is currently being developed by MoET in partnership with UNFPA. A *Family Life Education Policy* which is in the consultation stages, will mandate schools to deliver comprehensive sexuality education from grades 7-13, empowering young people to make informed choices for themselves, peers, families and communities.

Increasing access to safe menstrual hygiene management services in schools

13.5 The [*National Sanitation and Hygiene Policy \(2017–2030\)*](#) and [*The National Disability-Inclusive Development Policy \(2018–2025\)*](#) commit to providing menstrual hygiene management facilities in schools, workplaces and households. In partnership with UNICEF, MoET has developed a *WASH in Schools* monitoring module which includes indicators for the provision of menstrual health supplies, within the Vanuatu Education Management Information System (VEMIS). Bi-annual professional development sessions for Provincial Inclusive Education Coordinators (PIECs) have strengthened their capacity and knowledge to support inclusive and menstrual health education.

13.6 CARE in Vanuatu implements the *Laef Blo Mi, Vois Blo Mi (VBM)* program which focuses on girls aged 12–19 in rural and remote areas of Tafea Province. Supported by *Pacific Girl*, it provides life skills and respectful relationships education to approximately 800 girls, addressing menstruation and reproductive health. The program includes male peers, teachers, health workers, and families to ensure girls' safety and respect. MoET co-designed the *VBM* toolkit and has incorporated the sessions into the national school curriculum.

13.7 CARE in Vanuatu partnered with *Mama's Laef* to provide awareness raising and distribute 666 menstrual hygiene management kits to girls and 656 hygiene kits to boys in South Tanna, with plans for further distribution to other islands. Consultations revealed that many girls had little knowledge about their bodies and menstruation, and lacked financial support and discussion at home. After information sessions and kit distribution, girls expressed increased confidence and understanding. It also positively impacted boys by educating them on gender, puberty, reproductive health and family planning.

Strengthening inclusive education practices

13.8 To implement the [*National Disability-Inclusive Development Policy \(2018–2025\)*](#) and the *Disability Inclusive Education and Training Policy*, the Government has conducted a range of initiatives including the recruitment of six Provincial Disability Coordinators to assist the 6 PIECs; the development of guidelines for placement of inclusive education teachers by the Teaching Service Commission, the deployment of teachers to support children with disabilities in public and private schools and the revision of curriculum of the Vanuatu Nursing College to incorporate disability studies.

13.9 The *Vanuatu Inclusive Education Policy* has been reviewed and is in the process of finalisation. Over 2,040 teachers have been trained in inclusive education. The teachers have screened and supported 11,606 children with disabilities and facilitated assistive device

procurement. The Curriculum Development Unit has created resources to meet diverse student needs, such as enlarged prints for visually impaired students, audio tapes for those with low vision or blindness and adapted braille slates. The *Vanuatu Sign Language* has been developed and will be launched in 2024 along with teacher training.

13.10 The *Inclusive Education Resource Centre* (IERC) at the National University of Vanuatu is a collaboration between MoET, the Global Partnership for Education and Save the Children and was opened in 2024. The IERC will offer support and resources to trainee teachers to provide inclusive education, benefiting an estimated 1,643 teachers and 4,600 children with disabilities.

(Refer to questions 6 and 8 for measures to strengthen gender equality in tertiary and vocational education).

Promoting women and girls in STEM

13.11 The [Reviewed Gender Equity in Education Policy 2018](#) focuses on girls' participation in science, technology, education and maths (STEM) through scholarships, access to non-traditional subjects in secondary schools and developing a career guidance handbook and awareness materials that encourage women, girls, men and boys to study and work in non traditional areas.

13.12 Engineers Without Borders New Zealand (EWBNZ), in partnership with MoET, have conducted outreach to grades 9 and 10 in some schools in Efate to raise awareness of careers in engineering, with a strong focus on gender, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI). EWBNZ have also worked with the Department of Water Resources on an induction programme to ensure new staff members are familiar with all the technical and cross-cutting GEDSI issues in their roles.

13.13 In 2023, APTC partnered with the Vanuatu Institute of Technology to promote women studying in STEM fields. In 2024, GEDSI bursaries will be sponsored for 30 women in electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, automotive, construction, joinery, and information technology.

(Refer to questions 8 and 23 for further measures to strengthen gender equality within STEM and digital literacy).

14. What actions has your country taken to ensure that economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic closes gender gaps in poverty, employment, social protection, education, and/or health that the pandemic has exacerbated?

Supporting children's continued access to education

14.1 The *Vanuatu Australia School Community Grant* (VASCAG) was distributed to the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) through the *Vanuatu Education Support Program* and supported children's education during the pandemic. Announced in October 2020, VASCAG aimed to boost the local economy and meet school needs. The grant was VT 5,780 per primary school student (years 1-6), a 65% increase from the normal annual grant amount per student. In 2021, 461 primary schools received an average of VT 694,143 each. Schools used the funds for maintenance, WASH facilities, gardens, and student meals.

14.2 The Global Partnership for Education Grant also provided funding for primary schools (Years 1 to 6) of VT 393 per student and contributions to boarding school fees for students in Years 7 to 13-14 in 2021. A tuition fee subsidy of VT 42,000 was provided per student in 2021 and in 2022 for students in Years 11 to 13-14.

14.3 MoET worked with schools to deliver home school packages, particularly for the second lockdown when there were 10 weeks of material provided for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), primary, and junior secondary and the *Homeskul Givhan* Radio Show for continued education was aired. The MoET website was made free to access for Digicel and Vodafone users in 2020 and there was free access to 30 educational websites for Vodafone users. MoET also launched a free phoneline to collect information from school principals, parents, and communities on COVID-19 and Tropical Cyclone Harold's impacts and to allow these groups to get information from MoET regarding support packages.

Promoting safety and hygiene in markets to enable women to earn an income

14.4 The *Markets for Change* (M4C) project, implemented by UN Women and UNDP in partnership with the Department of Local Authorities and support from the Governments of Australia, Canada, and New Zealand; highlights the role of markets in food security and supports the leadership and livelihood capacities of female market vendors working in the informal sector. During the pandemic, many market vendors faced income drops and food wastage due to temporary market closures and social distancing measures, which affected their livelihoods. Funding from the *UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund* helped the M4C project support safe, accessible market spaces for vendors and the public. Port Vila, Luganville, and Marobe markets received WASH support, ensuring they remained safe and open. Items supplied included WASH materials, reusable masks, water blasters, thermometers, sinks, a rubbish trailer, public address systems, and LED screens. Training was provided to market management on using these materials to maintain hygiene and safe trading environments.

Supporting women's economic recovery and preventing GBV

14.5 The *COVID-19 Response for Affected Poor and Vulnerable Groups Project* is being implemented by the Department of Women's Affairs, Department of Agriculture and Save the Children to meet the immediate needs of vulnerable groups affected by the COVID-19 pandemic while building resilience against future shocks. It has two components: (i) food security and income-generating support for poor and vulnerable women, and (ii) multidisciplinary responses to gender-based violence (GBV). Implemented in urban and peri-urban areas of Port Vila and Luganville, the project is providing food security and nutrition assistance, food processing training, seed grants, and business coaching to at least 250 female-headed households. It is also benefitting the wider community through awareness events on backyard gardening, food processing, and the *Vanuatu Made* campaign. For GBV prevention, at least 1,000 adolescents are being sensitised to prevent GBV and foster healthy relationships. Additionally, an online GBV prevention campaign and events will reach at least 15,000 young people.

Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes

15. Over the past five years, which forms of gender-based violence, and in which specific contexts or settings, has your country prioritized for action?

15.1 The *Family Protection Act 2008 (FPA)* addresses the safety, protection, and well-being of survivors of domestic violence. The *FPA* establishes mechanisms for issuing protection orders and it also designates Authorised Persons (APs) to issue temporary protection orders in remote areas with limited or no police and judicial access. The *FPA* addresses gender-based violence (GBV), but its implementation is weakened by cultural barriers and resource limitations. The *FPA* is due to be reviewed with a range of other acts that have the ability to prevent violence and discrimination against women including the *Penal Code Act [CAP 135]* which outlines different criminal offenses and prescribes penalties for these offenses; however, it provides a narrow definition of rape.

National Gender Equality Policy 2020-2030

15.2 Strategic Area 1 in the [National Gender Equality Policy 2020-2030 \(NGEP 2020-2030\)](#), 'Eliminating discrimination and violence against women and girls' is the largest focus area in the *NGEP 2020-2030*. It includes four policy objectives and a comprehensive set of priority actions which have been mapped against the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Sustainable Development Goal commitments including:

- Policy Objective 1.1 To undertake legislative reforms and bolster national leadership on ending discrimination and violence against women and girls
- Policy Objective 1.2 To address discriminatory attitudes, norms and behaviours, and promote healthy relationships between women and men
- Policy Objective 1.3 To deliver an integrated survivor-centred services with improved quality of healthcare and protection for women and children affected by violence
- Policy Objective 1.4 To ensure the accountability of justice systems and institutions in safeguarding women and children, and supporting family reconciliation

Intimate partner violence

15.3 In Vanuatu, the prevalence of violence against women and girls is alarmingly high. The [2011 Vanuatu National Survey on Women's Lives and Family Relationships](#) provides statistics of 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. These statistics are indicative of a broader pattern of GBV, encompassing physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, which poses significant barriers to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in Vanuatu.

15.4 Cultural norms, such as the practice of bride price can perpetuate a sense of women being considered property and create barriers for women who are facing violence within their marriage or relationship. In the [2011 Vanuatu National Survey on Women's Lives and Family Relationships](#), 53% of women believed that bride price equated to a woman becoming a man's property. In some cases, the bride price is even seen as a justification for physical violence in marriage.

15.5 In In 2024, the Vanuatu Women's Centre (VWC), in partnership with the Vanuatu Statistics Office, commenced gathering data for the second national survey on women's lives and family

relationships. Scheduled for release in 2025, this survey seeks to measure changes in the incidence and prevalence of domestic and sexual violence against women and girls.

Sexual harassment and violence in workplaces

15.6 Despite Vanuatu's commitments to international human rights conventions, it has no specific sexual harassment legislation and it is not recognised as a crime under the *Penal Code*. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has provided assistance to the Department of Labour and Employment from 2022-2023 to review employment conditions within Vanuatu. This review also builds upon the review of the *Employment Act* undertaken by the Department of Women's Affairs (DWA) and Governance for Growth in 2021, with many recommendations being approved by the Tripartite Labour Advisory Council. One of the purposes of these reviews was to assist Vanuatu to advocate to the Council of Ministers to ratify ILO Convention 190 on eliminating violence and harassment in the world of work. It is hoped that if ILO Convention 190 is approved, it will facilitate the revision of legislation to prevent sexual harassment within the workplace.

15.7 A 2022 survey by Sista, revealed that over 70% of sexual harassment cases in workplaces go unreported. The survey found that 66% of women have experienced workplace sexual harassment, with higher rates among girls and women aged 16-29. Single women and girls are particularly vulnerable. A significant 79% of incidents are unreported due to normalisation and unclear reporting procedures. Many workplaces lack sexual harassment policies, with the education and government sectors being the most affected. The survey was supported by the Fiji Women's Rights Movement and funded by the European Union. Sista and Matakambu also developed a short film to raise awareness and encourage reporting.

15.8 The Department of Women's Affairs in partnership with the Department of Labour and Employment, UN Women, Sista, Human Capacity Development International (HCDI), and World Vision held a panel discussion themed "*Creating Safe Workplaces Free from Violence and Harassment,*" as part of 16 Days of Activism in 2021; with the support from the *Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls*. Forty-nine participants (37 women, 12 men, including one woman and one man with a disability) attended and the dialogue was broadcast live on radio with two repeat broadcasts to increase community awareness on sexual harassment and ILO Convention 190.

15.9 The Supreme Court of Vanuatu found the General Manager of the Vanuatu National Provident Fund (VNPF), guilty of multiple acts of harassment against female staff between 2020 and 2021. The defendant was convicted of five counts of Act of Indecency without Consent and five counts of breaching the *Leadership Code Act*. The Supreme Court sentenced the defendant to 18 months in jail, suspended for two years, and ordered him to pay VT200,000 to each of the five victims within three months for his failure to comply with the law and breaching the *Leadership Code Act*.

Violence against women and girls facilitated by technology

15.10 The *Cyber Crime Act No. 22 of 2021* provides a legal framework for tackling cybercrime, including child pornography, cyberstalking and cyberbullying.

15.11 In recent years, there have been increased reports of cyber bullying, non consensual sharing of images and child pornography. The Vanuatu Women's Centre (VWC) has also seen an increase in

reports of Ni Vanuatu males who are overseas working on labour mobility programs and are using the internet to conduct technology facilitated violence against their partners who are in Vanuatu.

15.12 Monash University, supported by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, is implementing a project from 2023-2025 to address technology-facilitated domestic violence in Fiji, Tonga, and Vanuatu, aiming to enhance support services for victims.

GBV against women in humanitarian and climate change affected settings

15.13 Vanuatu is one of the world's most at risk countries to climate change and natural disasters. Rapid gender and protection analyses have been undertaken by CARE in Vanuatu in partnership with the Ministry of Justice and Community Services and Vanuatu Gender and Protection Cluster following [Tropical Cyclone Harold in 2020](#) and [Tropical Cyclones Judy and Kevin in 2022](#) which have found that women and girls are at increased risk of GBV following natural disasters. Causes include tension and stress from food insecurity, increased household workloads, and school closures. Contributing factors include lack of privacy and security from damaged houses and inadequate bathing and toileting facilities. Women and girls with disabilities face greater risk due to physical isolation, exclusion, and dependency, increasing their vulnerability to abuse and limiting their response options.

15.14 In the past five years the Gender and Protection Cluster (GPC) has led the provision of gender based violence, child protection and disability inclusion services during humanitarian emergencies. It has also worked with other Clusters to advocate for and strengthen inclusive response and mitigate GBV risks across sectors. (Refer to questions 3, 28 and 29 for further information).

16. In the past five years, what actions has your country prioritized to address gender-based violence?

Legislations to address gender-based violence

16.1 A *Child Protection Bill* has been drafted and is awaiting parliamentary approval. It provides Child Desk Officers with a legal framework to intervene when a child is at risk and apply for court orders to ensure their safety. (Refer to question 30 for further information)

16.2 The Office of the Public Prosecutor (OPP) has led the development and consultations around the draft *Evidence Bill* from 2022-2023. The proposed *Evidence Bill* will ensure protection mechanisms for vulnerable victims and witnesses including children and adults. Actions include more streamlined giving of evidence, closed court hearings, non publication of names, other protection measures and guidelines.

16.3 Sista collaborated with the Ministry of Justice and Community Services (MoJCS), Human Capacity Development International (HCDI), and the Vanuatu Law Reform Commission to conduct research advocating for the reform of the *Maintenance of Children Act*. Their focus was particularly on addressing the lack of support for single-women headed households. The report highlights the challenges faced by single mothers in Vanuatu and broader gender equality issues in law and policy. The *Act* is due to be reviewed by the State Law Office in 2024.

Strengthening measures to increase women's access to justice

16.4 The Family Protection Unit (FPU) within the Vanuatu Police Force (VPF) is the principal unit handling domestic violence and sexual violence cases. The FPU has the highest case load within the VPF and has officers stationed in every province of Vanuatu. The FPU is engaged in awareness raising and response to domestic and sexual violence and works with a range of formal and informal service providers. There are male and female officers within the FPU. Shefa Province as the largest population centre has eight staff (4 male and 4 female) based in Port Vila and additional staff based in Tongoa, Epi and Emae offshore islands.

16.5 In response to natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic, VPF implemented on-call officer systems to ensure continuous access to justice despite lockdowns and restrictions during the COVID 19 pandemic. These measures included maintaining hotlines (22222, 111) for emergency assistance and processing perpetrators of gender based violence (GBV).

16.6 To enhance judicial responses, the VPF has provided extensive training for police officers and the judiciary. This includes child interview training in collaboration with the Australian Police Force for officers from the FPU and other areas within the VPF, focusing on effective methods for interviewing child victims without causing further trauma. Additionally, officers have received specialised training on handling domestic violence cases, aiming to improve their investigation and case management skills. The Public Solicitors Office (PSO) participated in this training and is working on strengthening case management on violence against children. The PSO is also developing standard operating procedures to ensure the protection of child witnesses and standardise procedures in cases.

16.7 The network of Authorised Persons (APs) who can facilitate temporary protection orders and assist with referral, has increased to 28. A 2019 evaluation and ongoing monitoring have highlighted the positive impact of APs in rural communities, leading to the expansion of services. (Refer to question 29 for further information)

Strengthening the availability and quality of services for survivors of violence

16.8 The Vanuatu Women's Centre (VWC) runs counselling centres and *Committees Against Violence Against Women*, in every province of Vanuatu. VWC supports women and child survivors of violence to access justice, medical, counselling, shelter and other support services. The VWC plays a crucial role in supporting survivors of domestic and sexual violence and in 2020 it launched a toll-free, 24-hour helpline for counselling and referral. The collaboration between VPF and VWC has been formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding.

16.9 The Office of the Public Prosecutor (OPP) established a Victim Support Centre and child friendly space in 2022 and hired a full-time Victim Support Officer. In 2023, the OPP launched the [Vanuatu Survivor-Victim's Charter](#), with the support of UNDP and the *Spotlight Initiative for Ending Violence Against Women and Girls* (EVAWG), providing guidelines for accessing the criminal justice system and support services. The Victim Support Centre provides no cost referral services to trauma support and ongoing counselling, medical services, police and the courts and familiarises survivors of violence with the court process.

16.10 The MoJCS Child Desk, in partnership with Save the Children, developed a referral pathway under the [National Child Protection Policy 2016-2026](#). Training for community leaders, police, government agencies, and civil society organisations was conducted on identifying and supporting

children who had been abused, neglected or exploited or were at risk of harm. There are now two Child Protection Officers in every province who act as case workers. Child-friendly spaces exist in Shefa, Sanma, and Tafea, with plans to establish them in Malampa and Penama by the end of 2024.

16.11 The [Standard Operating Procedures \(SOP\) on Clinical Management of Rape, Sexual Violence, and Gender-based Violence](#) were developed by the Ministry of Health in partnership with UNFPA and the *Spotlight Initiative for EVAWG* in 2021. Over 94 medical personnel have been trained in this SOP across 68 facilities, resulting in 10,799 individuals accessing GBV services during outreach.

16.12 The MoJCS in partnership with UN Women have developed a draft multi service delivery protocol for responding to gender-based violence across justice, health, police and social service providers, under the *Pacific Partnership to EVAWG*. Across the national and provincial level, 259 formal and informal service providers participated in the consultations and were also trained in survivor centred principles of first line support. The protocol is due to be launched in 2024.

16.13 UNFPA has delivered the GBV administrative data workshop series, resulting in 23 technical government and civil society staff being trained on safe and ethical administrative data collection and management systems. The *kNOwVAWdata* course was undertaken by 5 participants, capacitating staff from the Vanuatu Bureau of Statistics and CSO staff with skills to conduct GBV prevalence surveys.

16.14 The FPU is supporting the Department of Labour and Employment and the Pacific Labour Facility to develop referral pathways addressing GBV arising from labour mobility schemes such as issues of family violence including lack of remittances, children being neglected and non-consensual sharing of images.

17. In the past five years, what strategies has your country used to prevent gender-based violence?

Working with men, women and couples to improve communication, conflict management and shared decision making

17.1 World Vision's *REACH Centre* integrates both primary and secondary prevention activities to help participants form healthy, respectful relationships free from violence. Programs such as *Men Be the Change (MBC)* are implemented with the Department of Corrections, educating men on accountability and preventing reoffending. This 10-week program involves the offenders' families and focuses on rehabilitating violent offenders through education and behaviour change addressing attitudes and beliefs, enabling men to understand and take responsibility for their impact on women and children. *Leftemap Mama* explores various forms and tactics of family and domestic violence, the cycle of violence, and its impact on family members, especially children, while managing expectations of the *MBC* program.

17.2 The *Famili i Redi* program helps seasonal workers and their families prepare for departures to Australia and New Zealand. Implemented by the International Organisation for Migration (IoM) and World Vision with the Department of Labour and Employment, it teaches participants about communication, remittance planning, budgeting and understanding financial details. The program focusses on making positive choices, developing healthy relationships and having shared goals. It includes follow-up interviews and evaluations.

Alleviating poverty and promoting women's economic empowerment

17.3 The Vanuatu Skills Partnership equips individuals for employment or entrepreneurship via formal and informal learning. It partners with the Department of Women's Affairs (DWA) and other organisations to provide vocational skills to women and men in areas such as handicrafts, bee keeping and cattle farming; combined with awareness raising in gender equality, rights and gender based violence (GBV).

17.4 Programs including *Markets 4 Change*, VANWODS, SPBD and village savings and loans committees supported by CARE and World Vision have provided leadership and employment opportunities and empowered women financially; integrating GBV awareness raising and referral into trainings.

17.5 ActionAid Vanuatu is establishing economic hubs, providing livelihood grants and business training for women and girls, including those with disabilities in 6 locations. These hubs also raise awareness on protection, GBV and rights for women with disabilities.

17.6 The '*COVID-19 Response for Affected Poor and Vulnerable Groups Project*' is implemented by the DWA, Department of Agriculture and Save the Children, focussing on building resilience through food security and income-generating support delivered to poor and vulnerable women, and multidisciplinary responses to gender-based violence

Creating safe environments in schools, workplaces and public spaces

17.7 The Ministry of Education and Training has integrated *Family Life Education (FLE)* and awareness on gender equality into the school curriculum, ensuring that students are educated about gender equality from a young age.

17.8 The Crime Prevention Unit (CPU) has established Community and Ward Safety Teams where trained volunteers work closely with chiefs and police to prevent and respond to community-specific issues.

17.9 The CPU with the support of the *Vanuatu Australia Policing and Justice Program* delivered a program for young men in 2020 and young women in 2022 in Port Vila urban areas that tackles norms and stereotypes and discusses domestic and sexual violence laws. The roll out will continue in 2024.

17.10 The Family Protection Unit (FPU), CPU and Cyber Crime Unit have partnered with organisations including Just Play, AFL Vanuatu and the Vanuatu Cricket Association focussing on raising awareness of domestic and sexual violence and cyber violence through sports and community activities for children and adults.

17.11 In 2023, the FPU conducted legal workshops for adolescents aged 13 to 25 and chiefs addressing domestic and sexual violence, rights and legal issues in Malampa and Shefa Provinces.

17.12 The Vanuatu Women's Centre (VWC) runs outreach programs in schools and communities, working with their *Committees Against Violence Against Women* and police to raise awareness of GBV and associated support services.

17.13 Policies have been developed to ensure gender responsive perspectives in local resource management, disaster preparedness and climate change adaptation. For example, *community disaster and climate change committees* (CDCCCs) must include women, youth, and people with disabilities and water committees must include at least 40% membership of women before they can be registered.

Promoting gender-equitable attitudes, beliefs, values, and norms among men and boys

17.14 Promoting non-violent family relationships and positive parenting practices has been a focus through programs such as *Police Be the Change*, which targets new recruits with training on gender equality, domestic violence and GBV laws. Implemented by the Police College with the support of the World Vision *Reach* program, the initiative targets the understanding and empathy of police officers for survivors of violence and addresses their behaviours and attitudes within their own families and communities.

17.15 The VWC conducts the *Male Advocacy Program* where male leaders including police, chiefs and pastors learn about gender equality, human rights, legislation, and community violence. This program has led to significant behaviour changes, with male advocates now actively participating in GBV prevention and referral. The ongoing involvement of the advocates with the VWC network encourages positive changes in their behaviour at home, communities, and workplaces and is a key strategy to reduce discrimination and promote gender equality.

17.16 ADRA has been providing FLE training to low-risk prisoners through its '*Blossom*' project. The FLE provides prisoners with tools to prepare them for re-integration to their families and communities upon release. In collaboration, the Vanuatu Skills Partnership provides vocational skills training to the prisoners.

Mobilising community leaders and politicians

17.17 The Vanuatu Christian Council (VCC) developed its first ever gender statement, conducted the inaugural *Break the Silence Sunday*, assisted member churches to develop gender policies and trained member churches on the use of the *Gender Status Card* to assess and strengthen gender-sensitive practices; with the support of UN Women and the *Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls* (EVAWG).

17.18 As part of 16 Days of Activism in 2021, Sista and HCDI launched the "*Jenis Hemi Stap Long Han Blong Yu*" video campaign featuring 18 male leaders urging men to combat gender-based violence; with the support of the *Spotlight Initiative to EVAWG*. Key figures included Prime Minister Bob Loughman advocating to end violence against women, Opposition Leader Ralph Regenvanu emphasising sustainable development through gender equality, and Malvatumauri Council of Chiefs President Willie Plasau promoting cultural respect over violence.

17.19 The Ministry of Justice and Community Services held the Strategic EVAWG Dialogue in 2022 with the support of UN Women and the *Pacific Partnership to EVAWG* which was attended by over 60 representatives from government, media and civil society including chiefs and pastors with key discussion points highlighting locally led approaches, increasing national budgets to address EVAWG, the role of men and boys and working with community leaders.

Raising public awareness to change attitudes and behaviours

17.20 The Department of Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Justice and Community Services coordinates 16 Days of Activism and the commemoration of other national and international days including International Women's Day, Rural Women's Day, Children's Day and the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. In partnership with Child Desk, Disability Desk, FPU and civil society organisations; teams raise awareness in communities on gender equality, human rights and GBV.

18. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to prevent and respond to technology-facilitated gender-based violence?

Cybercrime legislation

18.1 The *Cyber Crime Act no 22 of 2021* has provided a legal framework for tackling cybercrime including child pornography, cyberstalking and cyberbullying. Under the Act the Cybercrime Unit was established within the Criminal Investigation Unit of the Vanuatu Police Force (VPF) in 2023.

Awareness raising on cyber safety

18.2 The VPF, along with other stakeholders, have conducted extensive awareness campaigns in schools and communities to educate the public about cyber safety. In Sanma Province, the VPF's Crime Prevention Unit have focused on cyberbullying. They have conducted awareness campaigns reaching over 6,480 students through PowerPoint presentations and short videos. They have also collected data from over 200 cases reported to the police and Sanma Counselling Centre.

18.3 The Vanuatu Internet Governance Forum (VanIGF) supported the Ministry of Justice and Community Services to raise awareness to prevent online child abuse and sexual exploitation as part of the [National Child Protection Policy 2016-2026](#). In 2022, awareness raising sessions and pamphlets directly benefitted 5,516 children (3,036 girls, 2,480 boys) from grade 4 to secondary school, 420 parents and community members (259 females, 161 males), and 225 teachers and school principals (135 females, 90 males). Recipients reported increased knowledge on child online protection and tools to overcome cyberbullying. Additionally, at least 10,000 people were reached through digital safety messaging on television, national radio, and social media.

18.4 Civil society organisations have also played a crucial role in raising awareness and providing support to victims of technology-facilitated GBV. The ADRA conducted radio awareness programs on cyberbullying. The Vanuatu Women's Centre has been responding to cases of technology facilitated GBV and CARE in Vanuatu in partnership with Sista has provided cyber safety and social media workshops through the *Young Women's Leadership Program*.

Cyber safety resources

18.5 The '*Girls Online (GO!)*' project was implemented by CARE in Vanuatu and Sista with the support of Portable, ABC International Development and the Australian Government. The GO! project developed videos and booklets, to help young women identify and manage online issues including cyberbullying, image-based abuse, and privacy protection. These resources were based on real-life experiences shared by Ni-Vanuatu girls and women, offering targeted advice, support, and referral pathways. This initiative highlighted the importance of community engagement and the proactive involvement of young women in promoting online safety.

18.6 The Vanuatu Internet Governance Forum developed a booklet to help teach young women how to be safe online and also developed an online portal for the public to report cyber violence. VanIGF worked closely with CARE in Vanuatu to raise awareness to participants in the *Young Women's Leadership Program*. This initiative was supported by the *Pacific People Advancing Change Program* (PPAC) and SPC.

19. In the past five years, what measures has your country taken to resource women's organizations working to prevent and respond to GBV

19.1 The Vanuatu Government works in partnership with a range of government and civil society organisations to prevent and respond to gender based violence (GBV). State funding is provided to the Department of Women's Affairs (DWA), as the national women's machinery; however, women's organisations are not resourced to prevent and respond to GBV and there is a reliance on development partners to support this.

19.2 DWA has contributed budget to partner with woman's organisations such as Vanuatu Women's Centre, Vanuatu National Council of Women and Silae Vanua to implement awareness raising on GBV in communities on International Women's Day, National Women's Day, Rural Women's Day and *16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence*.

19.3 In the previous five years, international development partners including the Governments of Australia, European Union, France, New Zealand, United States, Secretariat of the Pacific Community and United Nations entities have supported women's organisations working to prevent and respond to GBV. The Government of Australia has provided significant funding to support the Vanuatu Women's Centre, the country's largest civil society provider of GBV services; committing VT 650 million to VWC for five years from 2022.

19.4 Two large scale gender equality and EVAWG programs, the *Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls* and the *Spotlight Initiative to End Violence Against Women and Girls* supported the Government and women's organisations such as ActionAid Vanuatu, Sista, Silae Vanua and the Vanuatu Women's Centre with over VT 660,000,000 million (funded by the European Union, Australian Government, New Zealand Government and UN Women) from 2020-2023.

20. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to address the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination and/or gender bias in the media, including social media?

Promoting institutional change to increase gender equality within the media

20.1 In 2023, a female was elected Chairperson of the Media Association of Vanuatu (MAV) for the first time. MAV is the official recognised organisation representing the media industry and journalists in Vanuatu and has developed a Code of Ethics, runs training and provides capacity building for its members. In 2023 the *Pacific People Advancing Change* (PPAC) program provided a VT 1 million grant for capacity strengthening to members in Port Vila and Santo about the MAV Code of Ethics including human rights. Members also received training from the International Organisation for Migration (IoM) in gender sensitive reporting related to human trafficking in 2024 and Sista ran a training in feminism and human rights for MAV members in 2023.

20.2 In 2022, SISTA conducted a survey to understand the current status of women in the media in Vanuatu with the support of the *Pacific Media Assistance Scheme* (PACMAS) and endorsement of

MAV. In 2023, Sista brought together 17 female media practitioners to validate findings of this survey and to develop an [outcome statement](#) to improve the standards of journalism, media and communications in Vanuatu.

Leadership and participation of women in the media

20.3 There has been an increase in women in the senior roles within the media including the anchor of the Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation (VBTC) midday and nightly news and editor of the *Vanuatu Daily Post*. The MAV launched the inaugural *Vanuatu National Media Awards* in 2021 with female journalists, radio broadcasters, television presenters and online content producers winning five of the seven categories.

20.4 The *Press Club of Vanuatu* was revived by the VBTC and MAV to provide a forum to discuss and debate pertinent social, political and economic issues to lead to a more informed public and influence decision making. Through a partnership of the *Press Club* with the *Balance of Power*, there is a regular live and virtual episode where a leading female Pacific policy and development specialist moderates dialogue between duty bearers, thought leaders, technical experts, influencers and media professionals on issues affecting the country. The live and virtual segments have reached between 400 – 4,000 people per episode.

Promoting non stereotypical, balanced and diverse profiles of women and girls in the media

20.5 ‘*Sista Gat Style*’ is developed by Sista and printed by the Vanuatu Daily Post in the ‘*Life and Style Magazine*’ monthly. ‘*Sista Gat Style*’ is a platform for Ni-Vanuatu women from all backgrounds to be seen, heard, and celebrated. Through fashion, it sparks conversations on self-care, gender norms, body positivity, and women’s leadership, enhancing visibility of strong, diverse women in society.

20.6 ‘*Nation Builders: Celebrating Women in the Public Sector*’ was launched in 2020 by the *Balance of Power* in partnership with the Ministry of Justice and Community Services (MoJCS) and Sista; alongside an exhibition celebrating the achievements of female public servants. sponsored by the Public Service Commission. In 2023, the follow up book, ‘*Nation Builders: Celebrating Women in Private Sector*’ was launched by the Balance of Power in partnership with the MoJCS, Vanuatu Chamber of Commerce and Sista. These books have profiled 43 women in the public sector and 40 women in the private sector who have contributed to the development of Vanuatu through a diversity of roles.

21. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken specifically tailored to address violence against marginalized groups of women and girls?

Expanding gender based violence services to women and girls in rural and remote areas

21.1 According to the [2020 Vanuatu National Population and Housing Census](#), 77.8% of the population live in rural and remote areas and in the past five years gender based violence (GBV) services have been expanded to reach more women and girls in these locations. Formal and informal approaches have been utilised with community networks working with formal service providers to provide awareness, create safe communities and assist with referral including:

- The Vanuatu Women’s Centre (VWC) has a network of *Committees against Violence against*

Women which are led by women volunteers who work with police and chiefs to raise awareness and refer survivors of GBV to essential services

- The Vanuatu Christian Council, ADRA, VWC and other civil society organisations have trained pastors and chiefs in gender, human rights, GBV, and referral processes. These trained individuals, serve as frontline service providers, offering crucial support in preventing violence and referral.
- The *Authorised Persons (APs) Program*, supports APs to work in their communities and use their powers to facilitate referrals and provide temporary protection orders to women and child survivors of domestic and sexual violence in Shefa, Sanma, and Malampa Provinces.
- *Community Safety Teams (CSTs)*, established by the Vanuatu Police Force with New Zealand Police support in 2019, operate in Shefa, Sanma, Torba, Tafea, and Penama Provinces.

Research on the sexual reproductive health, gender-based violence and essential service needs of women and girls with disabilities

21.2 [*The Needs Assessment of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Gender-Based Violence and Access to Essential Services for Women and Young People with Disabilities in Vanuatu*](#) was commissioned by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in 2022 under the Australian Government funded Transformative Agenda for Women, Adolescents, and Youth in the Pacific programme. Conducted by Women Enabled International in partnership with the Pacific Disability Forum, the report provides general recommendations for the Government to dismantle barriers and advance the fundamental rights of women and young people with disabilities in Vanuatu. It also details specific legal, policy, social, attitudinal, physical, information, and communication barriers impacting SRHR, legal capacity, and GBV, offering targeted recommendations to address them.

21.3 The report was developed through six focus groups with people with disabilities in Port Vila and Santo (22 female participants over the age of 18, and 11 male participants between the ages of 18 and 24) and key informant interviews with seven women with diverse disabilities over the age of 18. Representatives from the Vanuatu Ministry of Health, Vanuatu Disability Promotion and Advocacy Association, Vanuatu Society for People with Disability, UN Women, UNFPA Pacific, Care in Vanuatu World Vision, Wan Smolbag, Vanuatu Family Health Association and the Vanuatu-Australia Policing and Justice Program were also interviewed.

Women and girls displaced due to natural disasters and climate change

21.4 In Vanuatu, preparedness and response is coordinated through the Government led cluster system. As part of this system, the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) is the lead and the International Organisation of Migration (IoM) is the Co-Lead of the Displacement and Evacuation Centre Management Cluster (DECM). Through this platform, coordination and response efforts are managed in relation to tracking the needs of individuals and households that have been displaced by disasters and climate change, including the availability of sex, age and disability disaggregated data to inform disaster response.

21.5 DECM meetings are attended by government and civil society partners and are convened before, during and after emergencies. Referrals for services including disability inclusion, GBV and health are made to the relevant cluster or service provider for further support. Guidelines and resources to assist evacuation centre management to prevent and refer cases of GBV have also been developed by IoM in partnership with NDMO. The understanding of the impacts of climate change and disaster on displaced individuals and host households has been enhanced and the referral pathway has been strengthened.

Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions

22. In the past five years, what actions and measures has your country taken to promote women's participation in public life and decision-making?

Promoting women's leadership and representation in political parties

22.1 Currently one of 52 members of parliament (MP) is female and in the last 44 years since Vanuatu's independence only 6 females have held the role of MP. Although patriarchal attitudes, cultural barriers and gender stereotypes still exist, measures at the municipal and community level have been more successful in promoting women's leadership and political participation.

22.2 Political parties have a reluctance to nominate women candidates at the national level, however political party reforms have been implemented to ensure the inclusion of at least one female in the executive committee of political parties. Temporary special measures (TSM) are also in effect at the municipal level in Shefa and Sanma provinces. By mandating a minimum representation of women in municipal councils, TSM has increased the number of women councillors from one to six (of 13 seats) in Luganville Municipal Council (LMC) and 5 (of 17 seats) in Port Vila Municipal Council, fostering a more inclusive governance structure. This measure also paves the way for future female leaders by breaking down societal barriers and encouraging more women to engage in politics.

22.3 The Department of Women's Affairs and *Balance of Power* ran a training program for male and female councillors in LMC in 2021, resulting in the development of a gender action plan to strengthen inclusive governance. In the 2024 municipal elections there was a landmark outcome with two women being elected to general seats and four women being elected into reserved seats, increasing the number of women councillors to 6 in the LMC including the first female councillor with disabilities. This was supported by efforts by the Civil Registration and Identity Management Department, Vanuatu Electoral Office (VEO), Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Justice and Community Services, Vanuatu Society for People with Disabilities and the Vanuatu Electoral Environment Project implemented by UNDP; to provide national identity documents to people with disabilities to increase their access to political participation.

22.4 The VEO has made significant progress in producing more gender-sensitive and responsive information, education, and communication materials. These materials aim to promote gender equality in the electoral process, ensuring that both men and women are informed and encouraged to participate in elections. By addressing gender biases and promoting inclusive messaging, these materials have contributed to a more equitable and participatory electoral process.

Women's leadership and representation at the community level

22.5 *Community disaster and climate change committees* (CDCCCs) are required to include women, youth, and people with disabilities in their composition. This inclusivity ensures that the needs and perspectives of diverse community members are considered in disaster preparedness and climate change adaptation strategies.

22.6 The *Young Women's Leadership Program* (YWLP) is run by CARE in Vanuatu and Sista in Shefa and Tafea Provinces. The YWLP has been instrumental in empowering young women through

leadership training, mentorship, and civic engagement opportunities. The program ensures that young women from diverse backgrounds gain the skills and confidence needed to assume leadership roles within their communities and contributes to the development of a new generation of female leaders who can demonstrate and advocate for gender equality.

22.7 In response and recovery efforts, ActionAid Vanuatu has focussed on supporting women's leadership in disaster response and recovery, recognising their critical role in community resilience. Programs include training women in disaster preparedness and involving them in planning and decision-making processes, ensuring that response and recovery efforts address the specific needs of women and girls, thereby promoting inclusive and effective disaster management.

22.8 The Department of Cooperatives and ADRA have assisted communities to establish Community Cooperative Governance Committees. These committees receive training in governance and implementation including principles and practices of gender equality, disability and social inclusion and must ensure that committees include representation of at least 30% of members being women and/or people with disabilities.

22.9 Women in Shefa Province are increasingly assuming leadership roles within church organisations, serving as elders, pastors, and leaders of church groups. There have also been cases of women being involved in conflict resolution processes within nakamals (traditional governance structures). This shift empowers women and also promotes gender equality and social change within the broader community.

23. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to increase women's access to expression and participation in decision-making in the media, including through information and communication technologies (ICT)?

Supporting women-led media

23.1 *Femme Pawa*, a women led radio program was established by the Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation (VBTC) with the support of the Australian Government in 2021. *Femme Pawa* has enhanced opportunities for women leaders to contribute to decision making in the media, elevated women's voices across rural and remote areas and increased dialogue on positive changes men and women are making to progress gender equality.

23.2 [*The Roundtable*](#) is a podcast developed by Sista which is hosted by a female presenter who interviews a new guest in every episode. Its target audience is women and girls around Vanuatu and it broaches topics ranging from personal identity, women's economic empowerment, menstrual hygiene management, women in non traditional roles and teenage pregnancy. *The Roundtable* podcast series is supported by the *We Rise Coalition* and the *Pacific Media Assistance Scheme*.

Skills development and training

23.3 *Smart Sistas* provides training, skills development and awareness raising for girls in ICT. It runs annual camps for 9-14 years olds which provide training and awareness raising in areas including drones, robotics, programming, entrepreneurial skills, cybersecurity and digital music. The camps are supported by organisations and stakeholders supporting gender equality including Peace Corps, Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO), the Minister for Climate Change

and the private sector. Smart Sistas also organises Vanuatu's Team to train and compete in the *FIRST Global Robotics Challenge*.

(Refer to questions 8, 13 and 20 for further information).

24. Please describe your country's current national women's machinery (government entity exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women) and describe the measures that your country taken over the past five years to establish and/or strengthen it?

24.1 The Department of Women's Affairs (DWA) is the national women's machinery. It is mandated to lead the development and coordination of the [National Gender Equality Policy 2020-2030](#) (NGEP 2020-2030) to ensure that women and girls across Vanuatu have equal rights, treatment, opportunity and benefits. The DWA is an agency within the Ministry of Justice and Community Services.

24.2 The annual recurrent budget received by DWA from the Government increased by 67% from VT 27,694,217 in 2019 to VT 41,283,126 in 2023. However, this is one of the lowest budgets across all government departments and mostly funds overheads (for example rent, utilities and staff salaries) with minimal additional budget to implement programming. The Public Service Commission approved a revised structure in 2022 with 26 permanent positions (including 13 new positions with 7 to be recruited from 2023-2026) to support gender equality initiatives.

24.3 From 2019-2023, DWA was granted NZD 1,000,000 from the New Zealand Government to support policy development, ending violence against women and girls and gender and protection issues during humanitarian action (Phase I). This development partnership has extended into Phase II with DWA being granted an additional NZD 1,000,000 to address all five strategic areas in the *NGEP 2020-2030* until 2026.

24.4 From 2019-2023 the Department of Women's Affairs has led the development and implementation of the *NGEP 2020-2030* and 6 [Provincial Gender Equality Action Plans 2020-2024](#).

The Honourable Prime Minister Bob Loughman launched the *NGEP 2020-2030*, stating;

"All the chiefs in the islands and all the public servants – this Policy is for you. I'm glad we are here today to witness the launching of the National Gender Equality Policy. Gender equality is a part of the current Government's commitments and is reflected in the Constitution, National Sustainable Development Plan (Plan blo Man Ples), and international conventions including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Gender is a cross-cutting issue and this document is for everyone. Thank you to every sector for working with Government through the Department of Women's Affairs and addressing these issues and challenges."

24.5 From 2021 – 2023, DWA worked with the Department of Local Authorities to launch the *Provincial Gender Equality Action Plans 2020-2024* in 6 provinces and conduct outreach to communities, raising awareness of gender equality commitments which had been endorsed by the Council of Ministers. The Department of Women's Affairs led teams to raise awareness to over 5,000 people across the country from 2021 - 2023.

24.6 The Secretary General of Sanma Province commented on these achievements in 2021,

“This is the first policy that has provincial action plans that give clear actions on what is required to be done at the province and community level to address national issues”.

24.7 A governance structure (coordination, implementation, monitoring and reporting) was developed for the *NGEP 2020-2030* and established in 2023, led by DWA and government partners at the national and provincial levels, with civil society partners being involved as members.

25. In the past five years, what other mechanisms and tools has your country used to mainstream gender equality across sectors?

(E.g. gender focal points in the Executive, Legislature or Judiciary; inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms; gender audits, consultations with women’s organizations)

Policies and action plans promoting gender equality

25.1 From 2019-2023 the Department of Women’s Affairs has led the development and implementation of the [National Gender Equality Policy 2020-2030](#) (*NGEP 2020-2030*) and 6 [Provincial Gender Equality Action Plans 2020-2024](#) (*PGEAPs 2020-2024*) which include targets and indicators across 5 strategic areas, including:

- Eliminating discrimination and violence against women and girls
- Enhancing women’s economic empowerment and skills development
- Advancing women’s leadership and political participation
- Strengthening the foundation for gender mainstreaming
- Fostering gender responsive and community driven solutions to climate and disaster resilience

25.2 Vanuatu has high rates of gender-based violence and extremely low rates of women’s representation in parliament and for the *NGEP 2020-2030* and *PGEAPs 2020-2024* to be endorsed and accepted, intensive consultation was required. These guiding documents were developed through assessment of change in 37 communities, stakeholder interviews with 25 government departments and CSOs, consultation with 220 stakeholders in different sectors from national to community level and validation by 40 stakeholders across the 6 provinces.

25.3 Accompanying the *NGEP 2020-2030*, many sectors have now developed their own gender sensitive policies and guidelines including the [The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, Fisheries and Biosecurity \(MALFFB\) Gender Equality Action Plan 2023-2026](#), Public Works Department *Gender Action Plan* and the Ministry of Education and Training *Disability Inclusive Education and Training Policy 2024-2030*. It is also a requirement of the *National Advisory Board for Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction* (NAB) for all programs to address gender.

Working groups for gender mainstreaming

25.4 As part of the governance and coordination structure of the *NGEP 2020-2030*, 5 technical working groups and 6 Provincial Gender Equality Action Teams (PGEATs) were established from 2023-2024 with membership of government and CSOs. The *Technical Working Group for Advancing the Foundation for Gender Mainstreaming* provides coordination, oversight, monitoring and reporting on the progress of gender mainstreaming targets and indicators within the *NGEP 2020-2030*. The PGEATs are co-led by the Department of Women’s Affairs and the Department of Local

Authorities and coordinate the implementation of the [Provincial Gender Equality Action Plans 2020-2024](#), supporting gender mainstreaming at the sub-national level.

25.5 The Vanuatu Gender and Protection Cluster (GPC) is a part of the NDMO's Cluster System and includes over 25 government and CSO partners who work in preparedness and response to natural disasters and pandemics. (Refer to questions 3, 28 and 29 for further information on the Gender and Protection Cluster).

Programs promoting women's leadership and empowerment across sectors

25.6 Programs are being implemented by government and CSOs across sectors to promote and enhance women's leadership and participation including the *Women in Leadership Program* for female health staff, *Women in Education Leadership Network* run by the Ministry of Education and Training, *Women Advisory Network for Female Police Officers*, forums and training for women in agriculture and women in fisheries run by MALFFB and the *Young Women's Leadership Program* implemented by CARE in Vanuatu and Sista.

25.7 Gender equality in education, skills and training has been promoted with public and private service providers developing and implementing GEDSI policies and strategies to increase women's access to formal and informal education and employment pathways. In the past five years there has been an increase in females accessing tertiary, technical and vocational education and employment in non traditional industries such as trades and science, engineering, technology and maths subjects.

(Refer to questions 6, 8 and 13 for further information)

26. If there is a national human rights institution in your country, what measures has it taken to address violations of women's rights and promote gender equality?

26.1 The *National Human Rights Committee* (NHRC) of Vanuatu was established under *Regulation Order 105 of 2014* as the body for reporting, implementation and follow up of human rights obligations. Under *Regulation Order 12 of 2022*, the NHRC remains the reporting mechanism on human rights. The NHRC comprises a board and its secretariat is housed within the Human Rights Unit of the Ministry of Justice and Community Services (MoJCS).

26.2 Currently the responsibility for developing legislation and policies to protect and promote human rights is delegated to specific ministries and departments with the mandate to implement or coordinate services such as the MoJCS through the Department of Women's Affairs, Child Desk and Disability Desk; the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education and Training.

26.3 Following the submission of Vanuatu's third *Universal Periodic Review* (UPR) and recommendations from the *Human Rights Council* to strengthen the human rights situation in the country, the Vanuatu Government through the MoJCS is also in the process of establishing an independent national human rights institution (NHRI) for Vanuatu.

26.4 In 2019 a scoping study was undertaken with the support of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) and the Asia Pacific Forum on the need and feasibility of establishing a NHRI for Vanuatu, however further progress towards establishing this institution was halted due to COVID 19. Between 2021 – 2024 further consultations were undertaken with government, civil society and community leaders at the national level and across all six provinces of Vanuatu, with the support of the Pacific Community (SPC-RRRT). Stakeholders in the consultations identified the need for an

independent human rights institution with the mandate to protect and promote human rights through educating the public, advising duty bearers, monitoring government's implementation of human rights, updating legislation, receiving and investigating complaints and making recommendations.

26.5 The Vanuatu Government through the MoJCS has plans to draft the *National Human Rights Policy* which will address a range of strategic areas including the protection of vulnerable groups such as children, women, people with disabilities and the elderly. The *National Human Rights Policy* will include the legal framework and mandate to establish a NHRI for Vanuatu. The NHRI will be funded from the Government budget but its mandate and functions will be independent from Government. As part of its mandate the NHRI's role will be to ensure individuals and groups, including women and girls, receive their rights and are protected against violations

26.6 It is envisaged that the NHRI will have specific personnel to focus on implementation, monitoring, reporting and follow up relating to the different conventions that Vanuatu is a party to including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography; CRC Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT).

26.7 In the [National Strategy for the Development of Statistics 2024-2028](#), action 6.33.1 relates to developing a statistics framework and indicators for reporting on Vanuatu's human rights standards and commitments; which would complement the work of a newly established NHRI.

Peaceful and inclusive societies

27. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to build and sustain peace, promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and implement the women, peace and security agenda?

27.1 Vanuatu has prioritised community-based approaches to support equitable and resilient development and promote peaceful societies. Initiatives have focussed on raising awareness and training communities in gender, human rights and gender-based violence and equipping them with tools to work with police and essential service providers to prevent and respond to security issues and climate change related shocks. Increased numbers of women in leadership positions within the Gender and Protection Cluster, water committees and community disaster and climate change committees has contributed to peaceful and inclusive development and humanitarian action. There has also been an increase in numbers of female police officers and the *Women Advisory Network for Female Police Officers* has been convening meetings specifically for female police officers in Tafea Province and Port Vila.

Community policing: Community Safety Teams and Ward Safety Teams

27.2 Community Safety Teams (CSTs) were established by the Vanuatu Police Force (VPF), with the support of the New Zealand Police Force in 2019. Eleven CSTs have been established in Shefa, Sanma, Torba, Tafea and Penama Provinces; composed of male and female community volunteers over the age of 16. These CSTs assist to create and investigate breaches of community by-laws and

work with the VPF to promote peace and security, in particular providing safe environments for survivors of domestic violence.

27.3 Ward Safety Teams (WSTs) have been established in five urban areas of Port Vila. The volunteers in these teams work closely with police and municipal wardens. Meetings with local chiefs in the five wards also form a crucial part of the strategy to address domestic violence and other community safety issues.

27.4 These teams undergo rigorous training to prepare for both peacetime and disaster scenarios. The CSTs and WSTs raise awareness on family protection laws, GBV prevention and referral and keep survivors safe until police can arrive to investigate and arrest perpetrators.

Women I Tok Tok Tugeta

27.5 The *Women I Tok Tok Tugeta (WITTT) Network* empowers women to understand their rights, prepare for disasters and engage with stakeholders to design and implement climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and resilience strategies. In 2018, ActionAid Vanuatu established a branch called *WITTT Sunshine*, which focuses on the needs of women with disabilities, supporting their leadership and ensuring inclusive humanitarian responses.

27.6 The wider *WITTT* initiative has 9,000 members, including 746 in *WITTT Sunshine*. Both *WITTT* and *WITTT Sunshine* facilitate dialogues to understand members' issues, provide training in leadership, preparedness, GBV and referral; conduct women-led community protection assessments, and enhance skills in hazard identification. The *WITTT* network also provides support to survivors of domestic violence in communities and assists them with safety and referral.

Working with community leaders

27.7 The Vanuatu Christian Council has trained pastors and community volunteers in gender, human rights, GBV and referral; with the support of SPC and UN Women through the *Pacific Partnership to End Violence against Women and Girls*. These pastors and community volunteers are informal front line service providers and assist to maintain peace within communities during development and disaster periods.

27.8 The Tongoa Shepherds Women's Association conducted workshops and training sessions with police and chiefs in 2023, to address community issues in Tongoa Island. They invited police and chiefs to establish a collaborative relationship and tasked them with developing by-laws focussing on GBV. These initiatives were undertaken with the support of SPC.

27.9 The Solwei Bameps Executive Committee developed a by-law (set to be endorsed in June 2024), as part of an agreement with the police in Luganville to tackle community crimes. This agreement ensures that community members report and refer incidents to the police appropriately. This committee has also worked with the police to address youth issues, assaults in the community and domestic violence. These initiatives were undertaken with the support of SPC.

27.10 Under the *Water Resources Management Act 2002*, it is a requirement for rural water committees to comprise a minimum membership of 40% women before they can be registered. This promotes gender equality and the inclusion of women in decision-making roles within rural associations and increased peace and security at the community level.

28. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to increase the leadership, representation and participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, humanitarian action and crisis response, at decision-making levels in situations of armed and other conflicts, and in fragile or crisis settings?

Women's leadership and participation in humanitarian action

28.1 The role of the Gender and Protection Cluster (GPC) is to lead Vanuatu's efforts to assist communities with preparedness and response that addresses gender equality, disability and socially inclusion (GEDSI) and provide protection support to women, men, girls and boys affected by natural disasters and pandemics. The GPC also conducts advocacy and provides training and resources to other clusters such as WASH, health, education and shelter to support GEDSI mainstreaming into their programs and actions.

28.2 The Department of Women's Affairs (DWA) is the lead of the GPC with co-lead partners CARE in Vanuatu and Save the Children. The GPC has over 25 partners and three sub clusters – Child Protection in Emergencies (led by Child Desk), Disability Inclusion in Emergencies (led by Disability Desk) and Gender Based Violence in Emergencies (led by the DWA). The leads of the GPC at national and provincial levels are females. In addition, many first responders are female and they perform an integral role in conducting assessments, distributing relief supplies and providing services to the affected population.

Leadership of women with disabilities in humanitarian action

28.3 In 2023, following Cyclones Judy and Kevin, *Women I Tok Tok Tugeta (WITTT)* and *WITTT Sunshine* led relief efforts. *WITTT Sunshine* worked with the Vanuatu Society for People with Disabilities to ensure women with disabilities were located, transported to safe spaces, and had their needs prioritised.

28.4 The Government has recognised *WITTT Sunshine* in formal standard operating procedures for emergencies. *WITTT Sunshine* leaders have also joined *Women Wetem Weta (Women's Weather Watch)*, a communications platform providing early disaster warnings via SMS, reaching over 40% of the Digicel network population and operating a phone tree on five islands.

Gender equality, disability and social inclusion within response and recovery planning

28.5 CARE in Vanuatu is partnering with the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) and the Department of Local Authorities to provide technical assistance to Area Administrators in developing area council disaster plans, integrating GEDSI analysis. The plans ensure disaster management practices include the participation of women, people with disabilities and other at risk groups. This pilot initiative will inform NDMO guidelines for the development of area council disaster plans around Vanuatu. Four area councils in Tafea Province now have disaster plans which include GEDSI components and three area councils in Penama Province will develop their disaster plans in 2024 with support from the Australian Government and USAID

28.6 Following Tropical Cyclone Harold, specific area councils in North Ambrym and South Pentecost have been provided with technical assistance and capacity building support from CARE in Vanuatu to develop recovery plans and processes which integrate GEDSI components. Communities

now have increased awareness and skills to develop more resilient recovery efforts, through the support of the *Australian Humanitarian Partnership*.

29. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to enhance judicial and non judicial accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and violations of the human rights of women and girls in situations of armed and other conflicts or humanitarian action and crisis response?

29.1 As one of the world's most at risk countries to natural disasters and other impacts of climate change, the Vanuatu Government prioritises resilience across development and humanitarian initiatives. The Government is partnering with stakeholders to increase knowledge and evidence, build skills and strengthen institutions to have the capacity to withstand shocks. Within this, the Government is taking steps to safeguard women and girls who are at increased risk of domestic and sexual violence following situations of natural disaster, pandemics and climate change related events.

Gender and Protection Cluster

29.2 The *Disaster Risk Management Act of 2019* mandates the activation of the cluster system to ensure the delivery of essential services during a state of emergency. The Gender and Protection Cluster (GPC) is a key component of this system and coordinates response through conducting assessments, preparing response plans, situation reports and 4Ws; conducting advocacy and resource mobilisation and providing humanitarian assistance. Strategic area five in the [National Gender Equality Policy 2020-2030](#) also has a focus on strengthening capacity of national and provincial clusters and disaster risk management bodies to ensure preparedness, response and recovery initiatives address gender equality, disability and social inclusion and that affected communities can access their rights.

29.3 The GPC focuses on protection and support to vulnerable populations and in 2020 the National Disaster Management Office released a state of emergency directive to ensure the continuity of policing and justice services for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) during the pandemic.

29.4 Under the GPC, government and CSO partners deliver essential services to protect communities from GBV and other human rights violations and also support other clusters to ensure GEDSI in preparedness and response including:

- The Vanuatu Women's Centre (VWC) launched a toll-free helpline in 2020, enabling women and child survivors of GBV to access counselling and referral services remotely. VWC counselling centres also provide outreach and work with their *Committees Against Violence Against Women* to provide GBV services to women and children during periods of humanitarian crisis,
- The Family Protection Unit provides awareness raising, security presence and investigates cases of domestic and sexual violence. It collaborates with Authorised Persons, community safety teams and ward safety teams in areas without police posts, training volunteers in family protection laws and referral;
- Faith-based organisations such as the Vanuatu Christian Council, ADRA and ACOMV play a crucial role in prevention programs, training community-based volunteers who assist with awareness-raising and referrals during emergencies;

- Disability Desk works with service providers across clusters to ensure women, men and children with disabilities are prioritised for appropriate response and
- The National Disaster Management Office and the International Organisation for Migration have developed resources to prevent and respond to GBV in evacuation centres.

Authorised Persons

29.5 The Authorised Persons (APs) Program is operating in Shefa, Sanma, and Malampa provinces. Authorised Persons are delegated powers under the *Family Protection Act* and there is a 24 hour help desk which supports their work. Currently, there are 28 APs who undergo a one week training, followed by annual three-day peer support and refresher training. These APs can grant survivors of violence temporary protection orders and assist them to get support including referral, medical reports or accompanying them to the police station, VWC and safehouses. A 2019 evaluation and ongoing monitoring have highlighted the positive impact of APs in rural communities, leading to the expansion of services which has been overseen by the MoJCS and supported by the *Vanuatu Australia Policing and Justice Program*.

Strengthening institutional capacities of the justice sector during crisis response

29.6 In response to the 2023 cyclone season, the Vanuatu Government endorsed steps to align the justice sector with humanitarian coordination systems. Research was undertaken by the MoJCS with the support of the Australian Government, culminating in the *Bridging the humanitarian and development nexus in justice sector reform in Vanuatu: mapping of good global practice report*. This research underscores how crises disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, escalating family violence and community unrest and provides a robust evidence base for crisis management.

29.7 The report's recommendations will guide MoJCS agencies in co-developing a roadmap which includes updating continuity planning and budgeting, integrating community-based mechanisms into humanitarian coordination and reviewing sector strategies; notably the forthcoming *Justice and Community Services Sector Strategy 2024-2030*. This research is a vital step towards a more resilient and inclusive justice system in Vanuatu in mitigating and responding to gender-based violence and other human rights violations.

30. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to eliminate discrimination against and violations of the rights of the girl child, including adolescent girls?

Strengthening national child protection services

30.1 As part of the [National Child Protection Policy 2016-2026](#), a referral pathway has been developed by The Ministry of Justice and Community Services (MoJCS) Child Desk in partnership with Save the Children. Training has also been conducted with service providers including community leaders, police and other government agencies and CSOs; teaching them how to identify signs of child abuse and support children.

30.2 There are now two Child Desk Child Protection Officers situated in every province who act as case workers. There are child friendly spaces in Child Desk Offices in Shefa, Sanma and Tafea and are planned for Malampa and Penama Provinces by the end of 2024.

30.3 A *Child Protection Bill* has been drafted and consultations and awareness raising have been conducted in communities across Vanuatu, led by MoJCS. The Bill is now waiting to be passed by Parliament and provides Child Desk Officers a legal framework to work within. The Bill provides them the powers to intervene when a child is at risk of harm and apply for court orders to remove a child who is at risk of harm. The draft Bill is centred around the family model which prioritises family and kinship care where possible and allows the Child Desk Officer to hold conferences with family and community leaders.

Challenging harmful gender norms and promoting a life free from violence

30.4 Efforts involve multiple strategies, including community education and awareness campaigns that challenge traditional gender roles and promote the value of girls in society. Organisations including the MoJCS, Ministry of Education and Training (MoET), Ministry of Health (MoH), Family Protection Unit, Vanuatu Women's Centre, CARE in Vanuatu, Save the Children, World Vision, Action Aid, Oxfam, Vanuatu Christian Council, ADRA, Sista, Vanuatu Family Health Association, United Nations and other agencies collaborate with local communities to implement gender-sensitive programs for children, parents and communities that address issues including gender equality, human rights and gender-based violence (GBV).

30.5 School-based initiatives such as *Family Life Education*, *Social Citizenship Education* and awareness raising on cyber safety focus on ensuring safe and inclusive learning environments. Engaging local leaders, including chiefs and religious figures, is essential to shifting cultural perceptions and gaining broader community support through programs such as those implemented by Save the Children, CARE in Vanuatu and World Vision which promote positive parenting and teaching children and adolescents about rights, gender equality and GBV. Media campaigns and public discussions have also highlighted the achievements of women and girls, creating positive role models and fostering an environment where girls can thrive without discrimination in areas such as education and sport.

(Refer to questions 11,12, 13, 16, 17, 18 and 23 for further information).

Preventing cervical cancer

30.6 The Government is providing a 1-dose human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine schedule for girls aged 9-13 years. The MoH targets 90% coverage for girls aged 9 to 13 and are working with MoET, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, church leaders, chiefs and health partners including UNICEF, WHO, the Australian Government, VFHA and Wan Smolbag Theatre to ensure the successful rollout of the HPV vaccine to girls across the country.

Environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation

31. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to integrate gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies, including climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation and land degradation?

Inclusive policy making in climate change adaptation

31.1 [*The Vanuatu Climate Change Adaptation Policy Second Edition 2022-2030*](#) integrates gender perspectives and concerns through principles of equity and providing opportunities for meaningful

participation by all groups in society, including women, youth, the elderly and people with disabilities; in planning decision making and community action through:

- Ensuring that adaptation and risk reduction initiatives incorporate the rights, priorities and needs of individuals particularly vulnerable and marginalised groups including the elderly, women, youth, children, disabled, illiterate, landless, minority and impoverished
- Engaging all relevant stakeholders, including vulnerable groups, in planning awareness activities and ensuring access by remote communities
- Ensuring that recovery measures are undertaken in consultation with impacted communities, provinces, area councils and municipalities, and are inclusive of women and vulnerable groups
- Ensuring the inclusion of women and all vulnerable groups in lessons learned processes

Increasing women's access and control over renewable energy

31.2 The Vanuatu Women's Development Scheme (VANWODS) is implementing a renewable energy project from 2022-2025, funded by the *National Green Energy Fund* and UN Women. Through the project 100 women have been provided with low interest finance and solar energy systems to support the establishment of climate and disaster resilient small businesses and 240 women will be trained in maintenance of solar systems, disaster preparedness and risk reduction in Shefa and Tafea Provinces (in response to Tropical Cyclones Kevin and Judy in 2023). The project evolved as an outcome of discussions within Vanuatu's National Energy Board about strengthening capacity for women to formulate and implement climate change action relating to nationally determined contributions

31.3 The *Vanuatu Energy Access Project* (VEAP) is implemented by the Vanuatu Government in partnership with the Asian Development Bank and aims to increase energy access and renewable energy generation in Espiritu Santo and Malekula Islands, the second and third largest population centres of Vanuatu. The project is assisting the Government to install hydropower generation to replace diesel generation in Malekula and will extend the distribution grid in both Malekula and Espiritu Santo. The project has a gender action plan which ensures the representation, participation and inclusion of women across the VEAP outputs for example training, design and construction of the hydropower plant and distribution grid, access to renewable energy, grant funding and small business development. Project beneficiaries and their communities, project staff, contractors and other groups have received training in gender equality disability and social inclusion (387 women and 591 men). This initiative also contributes to the [National Energy Roadmap for Vanuatu 2016-2030](#).

Women leading nature-based solutions

31.4 ActionAid Vanuatu is implementing the *Ni-Vanuatu Women Leading Solutions to Climate Change Project*, which is a nature-based solutions project led by women and developed in close collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, Fisheries and Biosecurity. The focus of the project is empowering women, including those with disabilities to lead gender-responsive agroecology solutions to protect forests and grasslands and indirectly marine environments. The project is funded by the Government of Australia through the *Disaster Ready Program* and *Australian Pacific Climate Partnership* and *Shifting the Power Coalition*. The project aligns with and advances the Vanuatu Government's [Overarching Productive Sector Policy](#), [National Gender Equality Policy 2020-2030](#) and the [National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2018-2030](#).

31.5 The capacity of 1000 women members of the *Women i Tok Tugeta (WITTT) Network* was strengthened through the project. *WITTT* members organised themselves into economic hubs to practice agroecology and pilot climate resilient livelihoods, increasing their access to training, resources and engagement with decision makers. The women now have strengthened capacity to protect, restore and manage target ecosystems by increasing agrobiodiversity, preventing erosion, reducing flood water and increasing carbon in soils and vegetation. Women, including women with disabilities also saw improvements in soil management which enhanced their role in ecosystems protection, livelihoods and food security.

32. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to integrate gender perspectives into policies and programmes for disaster risk reduction and building environmental and climate resilience?

Gender mainstreaming in decision making processes and program implementation

32.1 Gender considerations have been mainstreamed into the application documents and decision-making processes of Vanuatu's climate change and disaster resilience boards, including the *National Advisory Board for Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction (NAB)*, *National Energy Board*, and the *UNFCCC Technical Working Group*. Project documents must include gender analyses and address gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) criteria, with all submissions requiring board or working group approval.

32.2 Three female leaders within the Vanuatu Conference of the Parties (COP) delegation have participated in capacity-building initiatives, enhancing their negotiation skills and integrating GEDSI into UNFCCC processes. The Alternate National Focal Point, Adaptation Lead, and Gender and Climate Change Focal Point attended a *WEDO Coalition* funded workshop in Fiji in 2023. UN Women supported the Director of Women's Affairs and Vanuatu's Adaptation Lead in attending COP 27 and COP 28, and the Department of Women's Affairs supported the female National Climate Finance Focal Point to attend COP preparatory sessions in Bonn in 2023. These initiatives strengthened Vanuatu's capacity in women-led climate negotiations and contributed to the Director of Women's Affairs being voted as the Pacific Small Island Developing States Gender Focal Point at COP 27 which also contributed to her participation in subsequent climate change negotiations including Vanuatu's submission to the International Court of Justice.

32.3 Phase 1 of the *Enhancing Vanuatu's Ability to Seek Accreditation and Direct Access to GCF* project (completed in 2021) saw the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MFEM) enhance its capacity to meet *Green Climate Fund (GCF)* accreditation criteria with GGGI support. Gender responsive institutional policies and guidelines were developed in phase 1 of the project including a financial management capacity, gender, and environmental and social safeguards standards assessment of MFEM; and a draft environmental and social management framework and monitoring and evaluation plan which both include core GEDSI components. Phase 2 which began in 2022 focuses on completing MFEM's GCF accreditation submission and developing gender-responsive resources, including a *National Designated Authority Project Development Handbook* and a *National Strategy on Accreditation*.

32.4 The *Wokbaot Wetem Kalja (Strengthening the Use of Traditional Knowledge and Social and Cultural Systems in Displacement Management in Vanuatu)* project, is being implemented by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in partnership with the Vanuatu Government. Spanning 2021-2024, the project involves mapping traditional knowledge, and social, cultural and environmentally sustainable practices in two pilot communities. Research was undertaken with

findings including impacts of displacement on women and girls, their families and communities; and the use of traditional knowledge in communities; informing the development of gender responsive resources for preparedness.

32.5 Save the Children, in partnership with the Ministry of Climate Change Adaptation and funded by the *Green Climate Fund* and Australian Government, is implementing the \$32.6 million *Vanuatu Community-based Climate Resilience Project* (VCCRP). Over six years, VCCRP will support 90,000 people in 282 communities by establishing disaster risk reduction committees, protecting agricultural and fisheries sites, and training farmers and fishers in climate-resilient techniques. The project, which began in 2023, includes a comprehensive gender action plan prioritising women's leadership and participation and gender-responsive planning and budgeting at the local level.

Supporting women's leadership and participation in climate resilient food security

32.6 CARE implemented the European Union funded project *Helti Kaka, Helti Famili* in partnership with the Department of Rural Agriculture, Nasi Tuan, Vanuatu Christian Council, and Wan Smolbag. The project enhanced food security, climate resilience, and women's economic empowerment after Tropical Cyclone Harold in 2020. It focused on increasing opportunities for women's decision-making and improved nutrition and financial resource reallocation, promoting gender equality through a family-based approach. Implemented in Pentecost and Tafea, the project saw 80% of households reporting improved food security, 80% of participants supported by the project reporting gender-equitable attitudes towards social norms on the *Gender Equitable Men* (GEM) *Scale* and three targeted CSOs reporting increased knowledge and skills of gender transformative approaches.

32.7 From 2022-2023, HCDI implemented a pilot project to model effective and inclusive community disaster and climate change committees (CDCCCs) in Tanna. This project involved supporting the registration and implementation of CDCCCs which had equal representation and participation of women in disaster preparedness, empowerment and adaptive agriculture. Traditional knowledge was also collected, working with the *VanKIRAP* programme. Eighteen new CDCCCs were registered with women comprising 50% membership. The CDCCCs have been fully trained, are assessed 4 times a year and are fully engaged in food security initiatives, using adaptive agriculture methods. This model has allowed women to be effectively represented and participating in the CDCCCs, through the use of *Oxfam's Socio-Economic Empowerment Design* (SEED) manual.

32.8 The *Strengthening the Role of Civil Society in Promoting Food Security and Economic Empowerment of Women in Vanuatu Project* is being implemented by Live and Learn, in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture Livestock Forestry Fisheries & Biosecurity. The project develops 20 agroforestry plots for local CSOs and farmer groups, providing women with leadership training to engage in provincial and local level platforms relating to agricultural and nature-based economies. The project also implements nutrition programs in communities, schools, and churches. Launched in 2024, the *Women's Group Nursery Hub* serves as a field farmers' school for 120 women, who raise trees and vegetables for their agroforestry plots. The nursery hub also increases value chains for farming groups and individuals involved in small business, develops GEDSI related research and a portal for sharing good practices.

Women Wetem Weta

32.9 The *Women Wetem Weta* (WWW) model, implemented by ActionAid Vanuatu, collaborates with the *Shifting the Power Coalition*, the *Women I Tok Tugeta* (WITTT) *Network*, *WITTT Sunshine*,

and the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO). The *WWW* supports the leadership of women, including those with disabilities, to monitor weather, access information from the Department of Meteorology and NDMO and disseminate early warning information in local languages via SMS. The *WWW* model has been utilised for cyclones, droughts, La Niña floods, volcano eruptions, and promoting women's safety and dignity. A feedback loop ensures community voices inform planning and response.

32.10 The *WWW* model has reached 170,000 people through SMS blasts and operates a phone tree network with 5,000 members; promoting locally-led, gender-inclusive climate action. Ongoing research by the University of Sydney, titled [The Economics of Acting Early](#), uses *WWW* as a case study to highlight the effectiveness of early warning systems. The Vanuatu study is among the first to measure the economic value of women's participation in climate actions and DRR in the Pacific.

32.11 Simplified information shared through *WWW* has helped women prioritise early warning preparedness, saving lives and ensuring no one is left behind. It supports women's livelihoods by providing accurate weather information, helping them grow and sell produce, earn an income, and reduce food insecurity, which also leads to decreased intimate partner violence. The program is funded by the Australian Government and Power Shift Fund.

SECTION 4: NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND PROCESSES

33. Please describe your country's national strategy or action plan for gender equality, including its name, the period it covers, its priority, funding and alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the targets under SDG 5.

33.1 Vanuatu's national strategy and planning document for the country is the [National Sustainable Development Plan 2016-2030](#) (*NSDP*) which aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and includes a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework. Sectoral policies fall under the *NSDP* and provide more detailed objectives, targets and implementation plans.

33.2 [The National Gender Equality Policy 2020-2030](#) (*NGEP 2020-2030*) was approved by the Council of Ministers and launched by the Honourable Prime Minister in 2021. The goal of the *NGEP* is *"To promote respect and equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities among men and women of all ages and abilities in Vanuatu"* and the Policy includes a detailed implementation plan and monitoring and evaluation framework.

33.3 The *NGEP 2020-2030* aligns to *CEDAW* and SDG 5 (and focus indicators within SDG 4,6, 7,8, 10,13,17 which are related to gender equality and were identified as priority areas within the review of the *NGEP 2015-2019*). The *NGEP 2020-2030* also includes 6 individual [Provincial Gender Equality Action Plans 2020-2024](#) (*PGEAPs 2020-2024*) which ensure that women and girls can access rights, resources, opportunities and services across the country; including in rural and remote areas.

33.4 The *NGEP 2020-2030* includes five strategic areas and 15 policy objectives with detailed actions, targets and indicators:

NGEP 2020-2030 Strategic Areas, Policy Objectives and Indicators	
Strategic Area 1: Eliminating discrimination and violence against women and girls	
Policy Objective	Indicator
1.1 To undertake legislative reforms and bolster national leadership on ending discrimination and violence against women and girls	Number of bills passed and legislation amended as part of the comprehensive law reform to eliminate discrimination and violence against women and girls by 2030
1.2 To address discriminatory attitudes, norms and behaviours, and promote healthy relationships between women and men	Prevalence of physical, sexual and emotional violence against women in 2030 compared to 2011 national survey
1.3 To deliver an integrated survivor-centred services with improved quality of healthcare and protection for women and children affected by violence	Percentage of cases of violence against women and children reported to police and investigated and finalised by state justice system between 2020 and 2030
1.4 To ensure the accountability of justice systems and institutions in safeguarding women and children, and supporting family reconciliation	Multiservice delivery protocols, standards and referral pathways are developed and operationalised by 2030
Strategic Area 2: Enhancing women's economic empowerment and skills development	
2.1 To provide formal schooling that is inclusive and safe for male and female students	Inclusive education, gender equity and child safeguarding policies reviewed and operationalised for all government-registered educational and training institutions by 2030
2.2 To support upskilling of women and job creation for young women to increase workforce diversity	Proportion of men and women participating in the labour force by age and sector, compared with men and women with disabilities by 2030
2.3 To promote fair and equitable employment, wealth and workplaces	<i>Employment Act [CAP 160]</i> is amended to incorporate provisions on sexual misconduct, parental leave, and equal pay and working conditions for men and women, by 2030
Strategic Area 3: Advancing women's leadership and political participation	
3.1 To promote gender responsive governance	Number of women in director general and director positions within the public service by 2030
3.2 To enhance women's full and equal participation in leadership and decision making	Proportion of male and female area administrators, municipal and provincial councillors and parliamentarians by 2030
3.3 To strengthen coalitions and collective action towards women's leadership and political representation	<i>Decentralization Act [CAP 230]</i> and the <i>Constitution</i> reviewed to create reserved seats for women in provincial and national level elections by 2030
Strategic Area 4: Strengthening the foundation for gender mainstreaming	
4.1 To enhance government leadership and accountability on gender mainstreaming	Gender responsive planning and budgeting processes are implemented within national, provincial and municipal level governments by 2030
4.2 To strengthen institutional capacity for implementation, monitoring, reporting and review of this policy	Increased government and donor investments on gender equality and women's empowerment programs for outer provinces

	and rural areas by 2030
Strategic Area 5: Fostering gender responsive and community-driven solutions to climate and disaster resilience	
5.1 To strengthen gender responsiveness of climate change and disaster institutions and decision-making processes	Gender and social protection outcomes integrated into climate change and disaster-related legislation, policies, programs by 2030
5.2 To protect women, children and people with disabilities in emergencies through coordinated humanitarian action	Coordination between the Gender Protection Cluster and national, provincial, municipal and community disaster and climate change committees and governance bodies is strengthened by 2030
5.3 To nurture community-owned and locally-led solutions to resilience building	Women-led initiatives that contribute towards low carbon growth and adaptation are funded and implemented by 2030

33.5 The *NGEP 2020-2030* has not been costed and additional resources are required to implement the Policy and achieve the indicators. A significant amount of funding for implementing the *NGEP 2020-2030* is currently being provided by development partners.

33.6 In 2024, the Vanuatu Government through the Department of Women's Affairs is undertaking a review of the *NGEP 2020-2030 and PGEAPs 2020-2024*. The resulting data collection and findings will contribute to revising the six *PGEAPs* for 2025-2030, monitoring progress towards the NSDP, SDGs and CEDAW and developing Vanuatu's combined 6th and 7th CEDAW reports.

34. Please describe your country's system for tracking the proportion of the national budget that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (gender-responsive budgeting), including the approximate proportion of the national budget that is invested in this area.

34.1 Gender responsive budgeting is a requirement of the National Sustainable Development Plan (SOC4.1.1 Proportion of government departments with gender responsive policies, legislations and programmes) and the [National Gender Equality Policy 2020-2030](#) (*NGEP 2020-2030*).

34.2 *The Council of Minister's (CoM) Decision 94, 2017* endorsed and approved the inclusion of gender responsive budgeting within the 2018 budget for 5 ministries including the Ministry of Climate Change, Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries, Forestry and Biosecurity; Ministry of Education and Training and the Ministry of Internal Affairs through the Department of Local Authorities (municipalities and provincial government). It also mandated the other ministries to incorporate gender responsive budgeting in their budgets in 2019.

34.3 As part of the *CoM Decision 94, 2017*, an assessment of the progress of gender responsive budgeting across the 5 ministries was requested to inform evidence-based decision making for future initiatives across the country. The *Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting Sub Working Group* which sits under *NGEP 2020-2030 Technical Working Group for Advancing the Foundation for Gender Mainstreaming* has been tasked with providing technical oversight of this assessment which is planned for 2024.

34.4 Although there has been an increase in policies, strategies, projects and initiatives which address elements of gender responsive budgeting across the humanitarian-development nexus, this is not uniform across whole of government. The Vanuatu Government does not track the proportion of the national budget that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, Fisheries and Biosecurity (MALFFB) Gender Equality Action Plan 2023-2026

34.5 The [MALFFB Gender Equality Action Plan 2023-2026](#) is an example of gender responsive budgeting and aims to grow and transform the agriculture sector by involving all farmers, fishers, and foresters, including men, women, youth and people with special needs. The plan ensures all family members have access to training, financial literacy, business development skills, and resources, enabling their contribution to the productive sector.

34.6 The *MALFFB Gender Equality Action Plan 2023-2026* focuses on activities within MALFFB and with external stakeholders and aligns with the Ministry's obligations under the [National Sustainable Development Plan 2016-2030](#), [Overarching Productive Sector Policy](#) and the *NGEP 2020-2030*. It also informs annual business plans and guides collaborations with external stakeholders and development partners.

34.7 The *MALFFB Gender Equality Action Plan* aligns with the 5 strategic areas of the *NGEP 2020-2030* and includes actions and related government and development partner budget for building capacity to:

- operationalise gender equality
- mainstream gender into policies, programmes and activities
- provide direct support for female farmers, fishers and foresters
- conduct monitoring, reporting and accountability

34.8 In the past five years MALFFB has provided leadership and management training for female staff which has led to an increase in females within management and extension officer roles, developed the Family Farm Business program, held 2 national forums on women in agriculture and women in fisheries, identified male champions of change to advocate and support women in the productive sector and worked with partners to implement other programming.

35. What formal mechanisms are in place for different stakeholders to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

35.1 The [National Sustainable Development Plan 2016-2030](#) (*NSDP*) is Vanuatu's national plan to implement the Sustainable Development Goals. The indicators within the *NSDP* are linked to conventions and protocols that Vanuatu is a signatory to (such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and CEDAW) and these are operationalised through specific sector policies including the [National Gender Equality Policy 2020-2030](#). In 2023 there was a national NSDP Summit reviewing progress towards the indicators within the *NSDP*, with both government and CSOs participating.

35.2 Programming across all sectors in Vanuatu is implemented by the Government in partnership with civil society organisations, women’s rights organisations, academia, faith based organisation, private sector, United Nations and community leaders such as chiefs, pastors and women, youth and business leaders.

35.3 From 2021-2023, the Department of Women’s Affairs (DWA) raised awareness on the *NGEP 2020-2030* to over 5,000 people across the country (face to face) and to thousands more through radio, television and social media. This provided an opportunity for citizens in rural and remote areas to have increased awareness on the NSDP, SDGs and the Government’s commitments to gender equality.

35.4 As part of governance of the [National Gender Equality Policy 2016-2030](#) (*NGEP 2020-2030*), five thematic working groups and six Provincial Gender Equality Action Teams were established in 2023; including both government and CSO members. The role of these platforms is oversight, coordination, monitoring and reporting on the *NGEP 2020-2030* and [Provincial Gender Equality Action Plans 2020-2024](#).

35.5 The National Disability Committee (and Provincial Disability Working Groups) and the National Children’s Committee include membership of government and CSO partners. Their role is to provide oversight, coordination and monitoring of the [National Disability Inclusive Development Policy 2018-2025](#) and the [National Child Protection Policy 2016-2026](#).

35.6 The Gender and Protection Cluster (GPC) is led by DWA and coordinates preparedness and response to humanitarian emergencies. The GPC includes over 25 partners working in areas of gender based violence in emergencies, child protection in emergencies and disability inclusion in emergencies.

35.7 In 2024 the Vanuatu Government submitted its [Universal Periodic Review Report](#) and there were also 6 separate submissions from civil society (2 joint and 4 individual). The *Vanuatu Coalition for Gender Equality*, comprised of 8 women led organisations (Women Against Crime and Corruption, Tongoa Shepherd Women’s Association, Mitingar Women and Girls Association, Silae Vanua Market Vendors Association, Kivhans Vanuatu Women and Girls Human Rights Association, Port Vila City Council of Women, Vanuatu Young Women for Change, Vanuatu Widow’s Association), represented civil society in Geneva.

36. Please describe how stakeholders have contributed to the preparation of the present national report

36.1 The Ministry of Justice and Community Services through the Department of Women’s Affairs provided oversight and coordination of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action review process and report development.

36.2 Over 45 different partner agencies were engaged in the review process from the 13 Government ministries including the Prime Minister’s Office, civil society organisations, women’s rights organisations, organisations for people with disabilities, youth organisations, academia, faith-based organisations, the private sector, United Nations entities and community leaders. Consultations and key informant interviews were undertaken at the provincial and national level with 65 people:

- Sanma (1 male and 8 female participants),

- Shefa (7 male and 8 female participants),
- National level (3 male and 27 female participants including 2 females with disabilities),
- Key informant interviews with 11 partner agencies (3 male and 8 female participants)

36.3 A desk review was also undertaken of Government and CSO publications such as national surveys, annual reports, program documents, media and communications materials, evaluations and submissions to human rights bodies with key progress, achievements and challenges being captured in Vanuatu's report on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

37. Please describe your country's action plan and timeline for implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (if a State party), or of the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review or other United Nations human rights mechanisms that address gender inequality/discrimination against women.

37.1 Monitoring and reporting on international human rights obligations falls under the mandate of the *National Human Rights Council of Vanuatu* and it delegates this responsibility to relevant Government departments. The Vanuatu Government submitted its combined 4th and 5th Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) reports in 2015 and its 4th [Universal Periodic Review Report](#) in January 2024.

37.2 As part of the development of the [National Gender Equality Policy 2020-2030](#) (NGEP 2020-2030), CEDAW obligations and concluding observations were mapped. Relevant actions were included in the NGEP 2020-2030 to progress recommendations relation to 1) eliminating violence and discrimination against women and girls, 2) women's economic empowerment, 3) women's leadership and political participation, 4) gender mainstreaming and 5) gender responsive solutions to climate and disaster resilience.

37.3 The Vanuatu Government has undertaken actions, in partnership with CSOs, towards implementing recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women including but not limited to:

- the development of the Vanuatu [National Disability Inclusive Development Policy 2018-2025](#) with a strategic area promoting equitable participation of women and girls with disabilities,
- the development of the NGEP 2020-2030 with a new strategic area emphasising women's leadership in climate and disaster resilience,
- the Vanuatu Women's Centre expanding outreach services and establishing a toll-free, 24-hour helpline for survivors of violence in 2020;
- the Public Service Commission approving the expanded structure of the Department of Women's Affairs in 2022,
- campaigns to combat stereotypes and highlight women's empowerment, such as the Vanuatu Daily Post's *Sista Gat Style* and the *Tru the Lens* documentary series,
- the Vanuatu Christian Council developed its first Gender Statement, conducted the first *Break the Silence Sunday* sermon, conducted faith mapping on the gender equality practices of churches and trained member churches to develop gender policies,
- the development of the *Family Life Education Curriculum* for schools in 2022,
- the development of [Standard Operating Procedures \(SOP\) on Clinical Management of Rape, Sexual Violence, and Gender-based Violence](#) in 2022,

- the establishment of a Victim Support Centre at the Office of the Public Prosecutor in 2022 and the [Vanuatu Survivor-Victim's Charter](#) in 2023 and
- the launch of a *National Child Protection Referral Pathway* in 2023.

37.4 Previously there was a *CEDAW Committee* and part of the *NGEP 2020-2030* institutional arrangements include *the National Joint Working Group on the National Gender Equality Policy and CEDAW*, however these bodies have not met regularly due to human resourcing constraints.

37.5 In 2018 the Ministry of Justice and Community Services in collaboration with SPC-RRRT, undertook scoping on the development of an action plan and monitoring tool for the implementation of CEDAW, CRC, CRPD and UNCAT. This work was halted due to COVID 19 and has recommenced with consultations from 2021-2024 on the establishment of an independent human rights institution for Vanuatu, whose role would also cover the implementation and enforcement of CEDAW obligations.

SECTION 5 – DATA AND STATISTICS

38. What are the most important areas in which your country has made most progress over the past five years when it comes to gender statistics at the national level?

38.1 In the previous five years the Vanuatu Government has advanced the collection and use of gender statistics including sex, age and disability disaggregated data. For example, the [2019-2020 National Sustainable Development Plan Baseline Survey](#) and the [2020 Vanuatu National Population and Housing Census](#) (2020 NPHC) both included the Washington Group Questions on Disability, for the first time. New initiatives have been implemented to promote evidenced based policy making and programming which incorporates gender related statistics into development and humanitarian activities.

Strategies to promote the development of gender statistics

38.2 The Vanuatu Bureau of Statistics (VBoS) is the national statistics agency with the mandate to collect national and provincial data. The *Vanuatu Statistics Act No 7. of 2022*, mandates regular censuses and surveys to be undertaken and the establishment of a *National Statistics Advisory Council* to guide the development of statistics.

38.3 [The Vanuatu National Strategy for the Development of Statistics 2024–2028](#) (VNSDS 2024-2028) is a comprehensive framework to facilitate the development of statistics and enhance their utility in Vanuatu. It has 4 objectives to guide the implementation of the Vanuatu Statistical System (VSS) which are gender inclusive:

- Improved coordination and management of the VSS within a robust institutional environment
- Better communication, access and use of statistics
- Effectively manage resources and increase statistical capability
- Improved quality and range of statistics to better meet users' needs

The VNSDS 2024-2028 includes the development of gender specific indicators and statistics on women's empowerment and violence against women and children, surveys focussing on disability inclusion and victimisation and improving reporting on human rights commitments.

Producing gender statistics and related knowledge products

38.4 Data has been reprocessed from the 2020 NPHC to produce the first comprehensive set of fact sheets, policy briefs and thematic reports focussing on [gender](#), [disability](#) and [youth](#). Detailed [constituency profiles](#) have also been developed for all constituencies in Vanuatu including sex, age and location data related to population and household composition, education, migration, literacy, female fertility, female child mortality, national and electoral identify document card registration, labour force status and occupation.

38.5 Data has been reprocessed from the [2019-2020 National Sustainable Development Plan Baseline Survey](#) to develop a series of surveys and monographs including [Wellbeing in Vanuatu](#), [Labour Market Monograph](#), [Hardship in Vanuatu](#) and [Household Income and Expenditure](#) which provide a range of statistics and disaggregated data based on geographical location, sex, age, labour force, income, education, disability.

38.6 The [Vanuatu Business Census 2022](#) has provided a sex disaggregated snapshot of formal and informal business ownership in the country. Of the 4,009 businesses surveyed, 89% were informal and 11% were formal; with women owning 47% and men owning 53%.

The Vanuatu Database for People with a Disability

38.7 The *Vanuatu Database for People with a Disability* was launched in 2024 and is the first in the Pacific region. The Database reinforces the Government's commitment to sustainable development and inclusivity and this national registry records the name, location, age, sex, and clinical diagnosis of individuals with disabilities. This data will assist service providers to assist people with disabilities with routine follow-ups, outbreak responses and humanitarian assistance during natural disasters in alignment with data confidentiality protocols.

38.8 The Database supports the implementation of Vanuatu's [National Disability Inclusive Development Policy 2018-2025](#) and will assist the Government to use data to inform evidence-based decision making and ensure fundamental human rights are inclusive and accessible. The development of the database was supported by the Pacific Community (SPC) and funded by the European Union and the French Development Agency under the *Digital Response Connecting Citizens* (DIRECCT) Program.

39. Over the next five years, what are your country's priorities for strengthening national gender statistics level?

39.1 Vanuatu is prioritising evidence-based decision-making through initiatives by the Vanuatu Bureau of Statistics (VBoS) to empower parliamentarians, government and civil society with trusted statistics. A focus of these initiatives is to support equitable development across the country which reaches rural and remote areas and marginalised groups.

The Vanuatu National Strategy for the Development of Statistics 2024–2028

39.2 The [Vanuatu National Strategy for the Development of Statistics 2024–2028](#) (VNSDS 2024-2028) includes plans for producing statistics in the social sector, focussing on population, education, health, gender, children and youth, disability, human rights, crime and justice and wellbeing. Technical working groups (economic, society, environment) will be established by 2025 to advise on statistical needs and support the coordination and supply of data. This will increase the availability of intersectional data to provide a more comprehensive insight into the situation of men, women and children in Vanuatu and report on the [National Sustainable Development Plan 2016-2030](#) and Sustainable Development Goal targets.

39.3 The VNSDS 2024-2028 includes plans to develop, strengthen, collect and disseminate the following gender statistics and data in the next five years:

- Developing and publishing indicators required for monitoring and evaluation of the [National Gender Equality Policy 2020-2030](#)
- Developing reporting systems and publishing indicators required for monitoring and evaluation of children's and youth policies
- Developing a framework to integrate data from various sources and publish a report on disability issues
- Conducting and disseminating results from a rapid assessment disability survey
- Developing a statistics framework and developing indicators for reporting on Vanuatu human rights standards and commitments
- Improving statistics collected across the law and justice sector including statistics about women and children subjected to violence
- Developing a system for centralised access to regular statistical data on crime and justice
- Publishing an annual crime and justice statistics report
- Conducting a victimisation survey

39.4 From 2024 – 2028 the VBoS is planning to conduct additional surveys which will include a range of sex, age and disability disaggregated data including the Business Survey, Labour Force Survey, NCD Steps Survey and Household Income and Expenditure Survey.

The Vanuatu National Survey on Women's Lives and Family Relationships

39.5 The [Vanuatu National Survey on Women's Lives and Family Relationships 2011](#) established the 2009 benchmark for the prevalence and incidence of violence against women and girls (aged 15-49) in Vanuatu. It examined attitudes towards violence, its effects on women and children, family and community protection and risk factors, coping strategies, and service implications.

39.6 In 2024, the Vanuatu Women's Centre, in partnership with the VBoS, initiated data collection for the second national survey on women's lives and family relationships. This survey will be published in 2025 and aims to measure changes in the incidence and prevalence of domestic and sexual violence against women since the 2009 baseline.

40. What gender-specific indicators has your country prioritised for monitoring progress on the SDGs?

40.1 The [National Sustainable Development Plan 2016-2030 \(NSDP\)](#) is aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Whilst the SDG global indicator framework includes 231 unique indicators (total of 248 indicators), the [NSDP monitoring and evaluation framework](#) contains 196 indicators and 205 targets across its 98 Policy Objectives.

40.2 The NSDP includes three pillars – society, environment and economy. Indicators within SDG 5 mainly fall under Society Pillar 4 (Policy Objective 4) with the goal of “An inclusive society which upholds human dignity and where the rights of all Ni-Vanuatu including women, youth, vulnerable groups and the elderly are supported, protected and promoted in our legislation and institutions”.

40.3 The [2019-2020 National Sustainable Development Plan Baseline Survey](#) collected some sex, age and disability disaggregated data; however, data was not collected for all of the gender indicators. The [2020 Vanuatu National Population and Housing Census](#) and the [Vanuatu Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2023](#) have collected additional data to inform policy, planning and monitoring of the SDGs. Sectoral policies also include indicators aligned to the SDGs, however additional resources are required for monitoring and evaluation.

40.4 The following data has been collected to report on SDG 5 – gender equality:

SDG 5 Indicator	Vanuatu Data Source
Indicator 5.1.1: Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are legal frameworks such as the <i>Family Protection Act 2008 and Employment Act [CAP 160]</i>; however, these are due to be reviewed. - Temporary special measures (TSM) are in effect for women’s representation at the municipal level. However, there are no TSMs for women’s representation in national parliament.
Indicator 5.2.1: Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age	<p>Vanuatu National Survey on Women's Lives and Family Relationships 2011 (Vanuatu Women’s Centre and Vanuatu National Statistics Office)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 in 3 ever-partnered women (aged 15-49) experienced physical violence by their husband/partner in the last 12 months - 1 in 3 ever-partnered women (aged 15-49) experienced sexual violence in last 12 months - 54% of ever partnered women (aged 15-49) experienced emotional violence by their husband/partner in the last 12 months <p>*A follow up survey is currently being conducted</p>
Indicator 5.2.2: Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to	Vanuatu National Survey on Women's Lives and Family Relationships 2011

<p>sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More than 1 in 4 women (28%) have been physically abused since the age of 15 by someone other than a husband or intimate partner - One in 3 women (33%) has been sexually abused since the age of 15 by someone other than a husband or intimate partner - The combined national prevalence of non-partner physical and/or sexual abuse of women since the age of 15 is 48%
<p>Indicator 5.3.1: Proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18</p>	<p>Vanuatu Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4.5% of women were first married or in a union before age 15 (men 4%) - 20.9% of women were first married or in a union before age 18 (men 7.9%)
<p>Indicator 5.3.2: Proportion of girls and women aged 15–49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation, by age</p>	<p>Data not collected</p>
<p>Indicator 5.4.1: Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location</p>	<p>Data not collected</p>
<p>Indicator 5.5.1: Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) 1 of 52 seats is held by a woman (2024) (b) Provincial Government Councils – 0 seats held by women (2024) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Port Vila Municipal Council - 5 of 17 seats are held by women (2024) - Luganville Municipal Council - 6 of 13 seats are held by women (2024) - 5 Directors out of 43 are female and 2 Director Generals out of 13 are female (2024) - 9/70 Area Administrators are female (2024)
<p>Indicator 5.5.2: Proportion of women in managerial positions</p>	<p>2020 Vanuatu National Population and Housing Census</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 36.5% of managers were women, with the occupation ‘manager’ accounting for 2.1% of female occupations and 3.0% of male occupations
<p>Indicator 5.6.1: Proportion of women aged 15–49 years who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations,</p>	<p>Vanuatu Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -10.3% of women aged 15-49 years (currently married or in a union) make their own informed

contraceptive use and reproductive health care	decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care
Indicator 5.6.2: Number of countries with laws and regulations that guarantee full and equal access to women and men aged 15 years and older to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) care, information and education	<p>Policies cover SRH care, information and education however lack of awareness, stigma and cost are barriers to accessing SRH services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vanuatu Health Sector Strategy and Strategic Plan 2021-2030 - RMNCAH Policy, Strategy & Implementation Plan 2021-2025
Indicator 5.a.1: (a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure	<p>2022 Vanuatu National Agricultural Census</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 141,105 pieces of land were used for agriculture activities by agricultural households. Of this, 14.6% was used for agriculture activities by agricultural households headed by a woman
Indicator 5.a.2: Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control	<p>72.7% of land is customary in Vanuatu and the legal framework does not guarantee women equal rights to land ownership and/or control of customary land. Women can own residential and commercial land, however most land in Vanuatu is registered to males due to practices of families handing down land to sons.</p>
Indicator 5.b.1: Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex	<p>2019-2020 National Sustainable Development Plan Baseline Survey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proportion of male population age 15+ owning at least one mobile phone in working condition: 66% - Proportion of female population age 15+ owning at least one mobile phone in working condition: 48%
Indicator 5.c.1: Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment	<p>There is no system to track public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment across whole of government.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MALFFB has commenced public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment.

40.5 The Vanuatu Government is undertaking its *Voluntary Periodic Review* in 2024. In 2024 the Vanuatu Bureau of Statistics is also launching the *NSDP Indicator Tracking Platform* which will make official statistics and standalone data-sets available to the general public.

41. Which data disaggregations are routinely provided by major surveys?

41.1 The following national surveys are undertaken by VBoS and provide a range of disaggregated data:

- [Vanuatu Household Income and Expenditure 2019-2020](#) (geographical location, sex, age, income, disability)
- [2019-2020 National Sustainable Development Plan Baseline Survey](#) (geographical location, household composition, sex, age, labour force, income, education, disability)
- [2020 Vanuatu National Population and Housing Census](#) (geographic location, household composition, sex, age, labour force, education, marital status, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, religion)
- [Vanuatu National Agricultural Census 2022](#) (geographic location, household composition, sex, age, labour force, marital status)
- [Vanuatu Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2023](#) (geographic location, sex, age, education, marital status)

41.2 Challenges remain in collecting gender disaggregated data and additional gender specific indicators are required in national surveys to provide further information on intersectionality and a holistic insight into the situation of women and girls in Vanuatu. To monitor progress against the Sustainable Development Goal targets relating to gender equality, national data also needs to be collected more frequently. This can be challenging due to the geographical coverage of the population over 83 islands (69 are permanently inhabited) with many communities living in remote areas that are only accessible by foot or boat. The diverse range of languages in Vanuatu also makes data collection difficult and enumerators need to be trained in local dialects.

41.3 National budget needs to be allocated to gender responsive budgeting which could support the development of a national system of collecting and analysing gender statistics and sex disaggregated data across whole of government.

SECTION 6: CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

The Vanuatu Government will continue to implement laws, policies and programs to accelerate the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda. To achieve this a whole of government approach, gender responsive budgeting and increased representation of women in leadership and decision making roles is essential.

In undertaking the review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the importance of political will, evidence based decision making and government and civil society partnerships was highlighted. To achieve gender equality and women's empowerment, transformative approaches are required – engaging men, women, girls and boys. It is also essential to work with community gate keepers such as chiefs and pastors to foster sustainable outcomes.

In the next year Vanuatu will be undertaking measures to inform next steps including:

- Review of the [National Gender Equality Policy 2020-2030](#) and the [Provincial Gender Equality Action Plans 2020-2024](#)
- Strengthening coordination, implementation, monitoring and reporting of gender equality initiatives at the national and provincial level
- Review and submission of the combined 6th and 7th CEDAW Reports