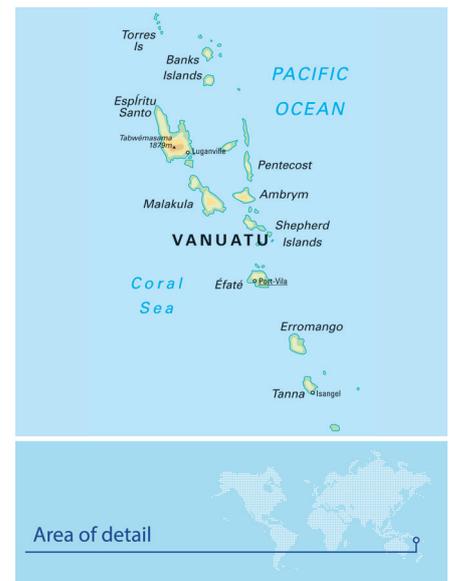




VANUATU



KEY FACTS

POPULATION (2018 estimate):
280,714

AREA (UN 2006):
12,189 sq km

CAPITAL:
Port Vila

CURRENCY:
Vanuatu vatu (VUV)

HEAD OF STATE:
President Tallis Obed Moses

HEAD OF GOVERNMENT:
Prime Minister Charlot Salwai Tabimasmas

FORM OF GOVERNMENT:
parliamentary democracy

PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM:
unitary

STATE STRUCTURE:
unicameral

LANGUAGES:
Bislama, English, French (official)

NATIONAL ELECTIONS:
last: 2016, turnout: 57%; next: 2020

WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT:
0%

LOCAL ELECTIONS:
last: March 2017, turnout: 54%; next: 2021

WOMEN COUNCILLORS (2018):
12.0%

LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE as a percentage of total government expenditure 2017:
3.3%

SUMMARY

Vanuatu is a democratic republic with two spheres of government: national and local. Both local government and decentralisation are enshrined in the constitution and the main governing legislation is the Decentralisation and Local Government Regions Act 1994. The Department of Local Authorities within the Ministry of Internal Affairs is responsible for overseeing local government, which comprises six provincial councils and three municipal councils. Following the 2017 local elections 6.5% of councillors were women. While local government can alter the fees charged for various services, it has no authority over the level of taxes. Approximately 70% of national grants to local government go towards administrative expenses, while the remaining 30% are earmarked for small capital projects. Local government is responsible for various services ranging from education to regional planning.

1. NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Vanuatu is a democratic republic with a unicameral parliament.^{51.1a} The head of state is a non-executive president elected for an unlimited number of five-year terms by an electoral college comprising the members of parliament (MPs) and the presidents of the six provincial councils. Parliament has 52 members, directly elected by the first-past-the-post system in single-member constituencies for terms of up to four years. Following the 2016 elections there were no female MPs.^{51.1b} The head of government is the prime minister, who is indirectly elected by the MPs and must obtain a 75% majority of votes. The prime minister appoints the cabinet from amongst the MPs; the cabinet can include a maximum of 25% of the total number of MPs.

2. LEGAL BASIS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

2.1 Constitutional provisions

Both local government and decentralisation are enshrined in the constitution.^{51.2a} Section 82 states that: 'the Republic of Vanuatu, conscious of the importance of decentralisation to enable the people fully to participate in the government of their Local Government Region, shall enact legislation necessary to realise that ideal'. Section 83 provides 'for the division of the Republic of Vanuatu into Local Government Regions and for each region to be administered by a Local Government Council on which shall be representatives of custom chiefs.

2.2 Main legislative texts

The main legislation for all authorities are:

- Decentralisation Act 2013^{51.2b} (Cap. 230)
- Municipalities Act 1988^{51.2c} (Cap. 126).

Other relevant legislation includes:

- Vanuatu Physical Planning Act 1986
- Leadership Code Act 1999 (Cap. 240).

2.3 Proposed legislative changes

There are plans to amend the Decentralisation Act 2013 (CAP 230) to formalise appointment of Area Council Secretaries as public servants seconded by Vanuatu Public Service Commission.

2.4 National urban policy

Vanuatu currently has no urbanisation policy in place to oversee migration into Port Vila and Luganville. The government however does have plans to establish mini-townships to provide for public services and increase economic development within these areas. There is a national land use planning and zoning policy.^{51.2d}

3. STRUCTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

3.1 Local government within the state

There are provincial and municipal councils.

3.2 Ministerial oversight

The Department of Local Authorities (DLA)^{51.3b} within the Ministry of Internal Affairs is responsible for overseeing local government.

Table 51.1a Distribution of councils and population

| Province | Provincial council | Municipal councils | Population (2016 Census) | Population (2018 estimate) | % rural (2016 census) |
|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Malampa | 1 | 0 | 40,928 | na | na |
| Penama | 1 | 0 | 32,534 | na | na |
| Sanma | 1 | 1 | 54,184 | na | na |
| Shefa | 1 | 1 | 97,602 | na | na |
| Tafea | 1 | 1 | 37,050 | na | na |
| Torba | 1 | 0 | 10,161 | na | na |
| TOTAL | 6 | 3 | 272,459 | 280,714 | 75.1 |

Source: 2016 Mini Census^{51.3a}



3.3 Council types

There are municipal councils to govern the three urban centres, while provincial rural communities are served by six provincial councils. Each has a central administration, plus local areas headed by an area secretary who reports to the secretary general of the provincial council.

3.3.1 Provincial councils use a committee system that makes recommendations to full council for approval. The Minister of Internal Affairs appoints representatives to the council from amongst the women, youth, chiefs and churches. No committees are required by law. Provincial councils however do have the discretion to establish committees as they see fit. The composition of these committees must reflect the political proportionality of the council as a whole. Many establish finance, recruitment and planning committees.

3.3.2 Municipal councils also operate through committees that make recommendations to the full council for approval. Committees are appointed by the council as they see fit and the composition includes elected councillors and are typically finance, planning, social and recruitment. **Lanakel** Municipal Council was created in 2008.

3.4 Traditional leadership

The National Council of Chiefs, also called the Malvatu Mauri, is elected by district councils of chiefs and advises the government on all matters concerning ni-Vanuatu culture and language.

4. ELECTIONS

4.1 Recent local elections

The last local elections took place in March 2017 with a turnout of 54%, up from 50% at the 2013 local election. The next local elections are scheduled for 2021.^{51,4a}

4.2 Voting system

Councils are elected through an open constituency system for a term of four years. There is no ward system.

4.3 Elected representatives

On average there is one representative for every 1,500 citizens. There are a total of 99 provincial councillors, 43 municipal councillors and three mayors. Each mayor is indirectly elected by local councillors from amongst their number.

4.4 Women's representation

Following the 2017 provincial elections, there was one elected female councillor plus six appointed by the Department of Local Authorities to represent women in each provincial council. For the Municipal councils, 11 women were elected through the reserved seats arrangement, 6/17 in Port Vila Municipal council in 2018, up from 5/17 in 2013, and 1/14 in 2009; and 5/13 women were elected in Luganville Municipal Council (2015), up from 1/13 after both the 2011 and 2007 elections. There were no women elected to Lanakel municipal council. This increase follows the introduction of special temporary measures to increase women's participation at the municipal level, which are to run for four election cycles.^{51,4b} See table 51.1b

5. SYSTEMS FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

5.1&2 Legal requirement and Implementation

No formal systems for community involvement exist, however there is broad recognition by national and local government of the important role of traditional leaders in governing the community, and partnership working is encouraged in delivering services.

5.3 ICT use in citizen engagement

Government information dissemination by mobile phones has proved very effective in updating the population on the changes in the political arena or to disseminate results of local government elections. Facebook is also widely used, the engagement of which has affected the decisions of the local governments. Radio Vanuatu 's popular Talk-Back show is also another powerful medium that allows the general public to participate in decision making not only nationally but also at the local government level.

6. ORGANISED LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Local Authorities Association of Vanuatu (LAAV)^{51,6} was established to ensure that cooperation between local governments is maintained and to share experiences and skills and promote peer learning. It is in the process of being registered under national law. The association is a voluntary body financed by member subscriptions. The secretariat of the association rotates amongst the councils in accordance with its constitution.

7. INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

No information available.

Table 51.1b Women councillors and mayors following the last four local elections

| Election | 2007-11 | | 2011-2014 | | 2015-2017 | | 2018-2021 | |
|--------------------------|------------|--------------|------------|--------------|------------|--------------|------------|--------------|
| | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| All councillors | | | | | | | | |
| Female councillors | 1 | 0.8 | 2 | 1.4 | 17 | 12.0 | 18 | 12.7 |
| Male councillors | 125 | 99.2 | 137 | 98.6 | 125 | 88.0 | 124 | 87.3 |
| Total councillors | 126 | 100.0 | 139 | 100.0 | 142 | 100.0 | 142 | 100.0 |
| Municipal councillors | | | | | | | | |
| Female councillors | 1 | 3.7 | 2 | 7.4 | 10 | 23.3 | 11 | 25.6 |
| Male councillors | 26 | 96.3 | 38 | 100.0 | 32 | 74.4 | 32 | 74.4 |
| Total councillors | 27 | 100.0 | 40 | 100.0 | 43 | 100.0 | 43 | 100.0 |
| Provincial councillors | | | | | | | | |
| Female councillors | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 7 | 7.1 | 7 | 7.1 |
| Male councillors | 99 | 100.0 | 99 | 100.0 | 92 | 92.9 | 92 | 92.9 |
| Total councillors | 99 | 100.0 | 99 | 100.0 | 99 | 100.0 | 99 | 100.0 |
| Chairpersons | | | | | | | | |
| Female mayors | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Male mayors | 2 | 100.0 | 3 | 100.0 | 3 | 100.0 | 3 | 100.0 |
| Total mayors | 2 | 100.0 | 3 | 100.0 | 3 | 100.0 | 3 | 100.0 |

Source: DLA correspondence with CLGF and Pacific Leadership Programme 2016^{51,4b}

**Table 51.2a Aggregate income and expenditure for local government (2016/17)**

| Income | VUV (m) | Expenditure | VUV (m) |
|-------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| Centre-local transfers | | Administrative costs | |
| Government grants | 222.000 | Staff/ building costs | na |
| Locally raised revenue | | Service delivery | |
| Total raised by councils | 472.238 | na | na |
| TOTAL | 694.238 | TOTAL EXPENDITURE | -694.238 |

8. MONITORING SYSTEMS

Independent scrutiny is provided by the ombudsman and the auditor general. These are empowered by the Ombudsman Act, the Auditor General's Act, the Leadership Code Act and the Public Accounts Act.

9. FINANCE, STAFFING AND RESOURCES

9.1 Local government expenditure

In 2016-17, local government expenditure was approximately 3.7% of total government expenditure. See table 51.2b

9.2 Locally raised revenue

Each local authority is looking at ways to improve revenue. Some are developing investment policies to attract investment, whilst others are acquiring additional land to expand their revenue base. While local government can alter the fees charged for various services, it has no authority to change the level of taxes.

9.3 Transfers

Transfers do not follow a set formula, but fall into two broad categories: about 70% of grants go towards administrative expenses and 30% towards small capital projects. They are shared equally among the six provincial governments.

9.4 Loans

The Decentralisation Act 2013 and the Municipal Act 1988 allows the local authorities to take loans but are restricted by limited budgets or unhealthy cash flow.

9.5 Local authority staff

All staff are recruited by their respective councils, which have the right to hire, discipline and dismiss employees. The secretary general and town clerks, who are the head of the paid service, are seconded from the Public Service Commission and are paid civil servants. The provincial accountant, also a civil servant, is mandated by law and is also seconded from the Public Service

Commission. Councils have the power to appoint a treasurer and other officers, as they consider necessary, for the proper discharge of their functions. The typical staffing structure features a president as the chairperson of the council, a secretary general, an accountant, and other council staff which include an assistant secretary general, an economist, a planner, a treasurer, a secretary and/or typist, and casual labourers. Administration and salaries account for almost 80% of costs, with the balance of revenue used for development projects.

10. DISTRIBUTION OF SERVICE DELIVERY RESPONSIBILITY

10.1 Overview of local government service delivery responsibility

Local government is responsible for pre-school and primary education, primary healthcare, regional planning, roads, waste collection and disposal, cemeteries and crematoria, parks and open spaces and the promotion of tourism.

10.2 ICT use in service delivery

Area Secretaries and community leaders use mobile phones to inform communities or organise community consultations. They are also used to inform communities on the delivery of project materials, shipping schedules and transportation to the project sites. Port Vila MC has a website.^{51.10a}

10.3 The role of local government in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Vanuatu 2030 - The People's Plan is the country's vision and overarching policy framework for achieving a 'stable, sustainable and prosperous Vanuatu' within the 15 years, and in doing so sets out the national priorities and context for the implementation of the SDGs over the same period. The goals of Vanuatu 2030 are organised under the pillars of society, environment and economy. Two

goals in particular are relevant to local government, both under the 'society' pillar: Goal 6, which aims for a dynamic public sector with good governance principles and strong institutions delivering the support and services expected by all citizens of Vanuatu; and Goal 6.5, which is to strengthen local authorities and municipal institutions to enable decentralised service delivery.^{51.10b}

REFERENCES AND USEFUL WEBSITES

- 51.1a Government of Vanuatu www.gov.vu
- 51.1b Women in national parliaments www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm
- 51.2a Constitution of Vanuatu www.paclii.org/vu/legis/consol_act/cotrov406
- 51.2b Decentralisation Act 2013 (Cap. 230) www.paclii.org/vu/legis/sub_leg/dalgcd02013679.pdf
- 51.2c Municipalities Act 1988 (Cap. 126). <https://tourism.gov.vu/assets/docs/acts/MunicipalitiesAct/126MunicipalitiesAct.pdf>
- 51.2d Vanuatu national land use planning and zoning policy www.nab.vu/vanuatu-national-land-use-planning-and-zoning-policy
- 51.3a Mini Census 2016 https://vnso.gov.vu/images/PublicDocuments/Census/2016/2016_Mini_Census_Main_Report_Vol_1.pdf
- 51.3b Department of Local Authorities www.gov.vu/government-ministries/ministry-of-internal-affairs/department-of-local-authorities.html
- 51.4a Electoral Commission www.gov.vu/en/public-information/86-electoral-commission
- 51.4b Analysis of Women Councillors' Experiences on WISDM Activities in Vanuatu, Pacific Leadership Programme 2016 www.plp.org.fj/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/PLP_WISDM_Discussion-Paper-June-2016.pdf
- 51.5 No reference for this section
- 51.6 Local Authorities Association of Vanuatu <https://pilgan.wordpress.com/pacific-local-government-association-profiles/local-authorities-association-of-vanuatu-laav>
- 51.7&8 No reference for these sections
- 51.9 2018 Budget <https://doft.gov.vu/images/2018/Vol-1--2-Budget-Book-2018-English.pdf>
- 51.10a Port Vila Municipal Council www.pvmc.gov.vu
- 51.10b Vanuatu 2030 www.gov.vu/attachments/article/26/Vanuatu2030-EN-FINAL-sf.pdf
- 51.11a UN statistics surface area <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dyb2006/Table03.pdf>
- 51.11c UNDP HDR Vanuatu country profile <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/VUT>

Table 51.2b Local government expenditure as a percentage of total government expenditure 2013-2017

| | 2017 Estimated VUV \$m |
|---|------------------------|
| Total government expenditure | 20,964.3 |
| Total local government expenditure | -694.2 |
| Local government expenditure as a percentage of total government expenditure | -3.3% |

Source: DLA correspondence with CLGF, and the 2018 Budget statement^{51.9}

Annex 51a Summary of service provision in different spheres of government in Vanuatu

| Services | Delivering authority | | | Remarks |
|--|----------------------|-----------|----------------|---------|
| | National government | Provinces | Municipalities | |
| GENERAL ADMINISTRATION | | | | |
| Police | ■ | | | |
| Fire protection | ■ | | | |
| Civil protection | ■ | | | |
| Criminal justice | ■ | | | |
| Civil status register | ■ | | | |
| Statistical office | ■ | | | |
| Electoral register | ■ | | | |
| EDUCATION | | | | |
| Pre-school (kindergarten and nursery) | | ■ | ■ | |
| Primary | | ■ | ■ | |
| Secondary | ■ | | | |
| Vocational and technical | ■ | | | |
| Higher education | ■ | | | |
| Adult education | | | | |
| SOCIAL WELFARE | | | | |
| Family welfare services | ■ | | | |
| Welfare homes | ■ | | | |
| Social security | ■ | | | |
| PUBLIC HEALTH | | | | |
| Primary care | | ■ | ■ | |
| Hospitals | ■ | | | |
| Health protection | ■ | ■ | ■ | |
| HOUSING AND TOWN PLANNING | | | | |
| Housing | ■ | | | |
| Town planning | ■ | | | |
| Regional planning | | ■ | ■ | |
| TRANSPORT | | | | |
| Roads | | ■ | ■ | |
| Transport | ■ | | | |
| Urban roads | ■ | | | |
| Urban rail | na | | | |
| Ports | ■ | | | |
| Airports | ■ | | | |
| ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC SANITATION | | | | |
| Water and sanitation | ■ | ■ | ■ | |
| Refuse collection and disposal | | ■ | ■ | |
| Cemeteries and crematoria | | ■ | ■ | |
| Slaughterhouses | | | | |
| Environmental protection | | | | |
| Consumer protection | | | | |
| CULTURE, LEISURE AND SPORTS | | | | |
| Theatres and concerts | | ■ | ■ | |
| Museums and libraries | ■ | ■ | ■ | |
| Parks and open spaces | | ■ | ■ | |
| Sports and leisure facilities | | ■ | ■ | |
| Religious facilities | | | | |
| UTILITIES | | | | |
| Gas services | | | | |
| District heating | | | | |
| Water supply | ■ | ■ | ■ | |
| Electricity | ■ | | | |
| ECONOMIC | | | | |
| Agriculture, forests and fisheries | ■ | ■ | ■ | |
| Local economic development/promotion | ■ | ■ | ■ | |
| Trade and industry | | | | |
| Tourism | ■ | ■ | ■ | |

■ sole responsibility service ■ joint responsibility service ■ discretionary service