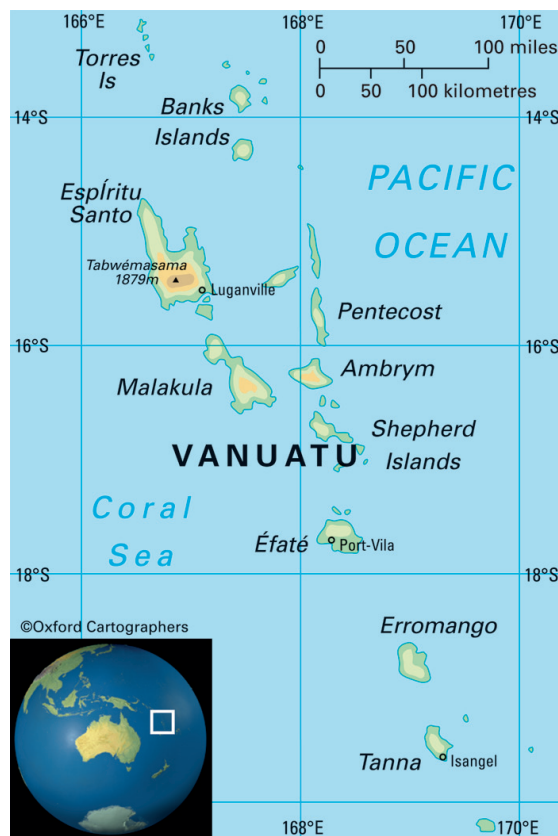




Vanuatu



Key Facts

POPULATION (2009)¹: 234,023
AREA²: 12,189 sq km
CAPITAL: Port Vila
CURRENCY: Vanuatu vatu (VUV)
HEAD OF STATE: President Baldwin Lonsdale
HEAD OF GOVERNMENT: Prime Minister Sato Kilman
FORM OF GOVERNMENT: parliamentary democracy
PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM: unitary
STATE STRUCTURE: unicameral
LANGUAGES: Bislama, English, French (official)
NATIONAL ELECTIONS:
last: 2012 **turnout:** 66.1% **next:** 2016
LOCAL ELECTIONS:
last: February 2013 **turnout:** 50% **next:** 2016
WOMEN COUNCILLORS: na
LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE as a percentage of total government expenditure 2013/14³: na

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 Home Affairs is responsible for overseeing local government, which comprises six provincial councils and three municipal councils. While local government can alter the fees charged for various services, it has no authority over the level of taxes. Approximately 70% of central 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. CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Vanuatu is a democratic republic with a unicameral parliament. 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 54 members, directly elected by the first-past-the-post system in single-member constituencies for terms of up to four years. The head of government is the prime minister, who is indirectly elected by the MPs and must obtain a 75% majority. The prime minister appoints the cabinet from amongst the MPs; the cabinet can include a maximum of 25% of the total number of MPs.

Table 1. Distribution of councils and population

Province	Municipality	Population ¹ 2009 Census	% rural 2010
Malampa	0	36,724	na
Penama	0	30,819	na
Sanma	1	45,860	na
Shefa	1	78,721	na
Tafea	1	32,540	na
Torba	0	9,359	na
TOTAL	6	234,023	75.6

Source: 2009 Census¹

2. LEGAL BASIS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

2.1 Constitutional provisions

Both local government and decentralisation are enshrined in the constitution^{3a}. 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^{3b} (Cap. 230)
- Municipalities Act 1988^{3b} (Cap. 126).

Other relevant legislation includes

- Vanuatu Physical Planning Act 1986
- Leadership Code Act 1999 [Cap 240]

2.3 Proposed legislative changes

No current legislative changes proposed.

3. STRUCTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

3.1 Local government

Within the state local government comprises provincial and municipal councils.

3.2 Ministerial oversight

The Department of Local Authorities within the Ministry of Home Affairs is responsible for overseeing local government.

3.3 Council types

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

3.3.1 Provincial councils operate through 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.

Table 2. Aggregate income and expenditure for local government 2013/14

Income	VUV	Expenditure	VUV
Centre-local transfers		Administrative costs	
restricted	na	staff	na
unrestricted	na	property	na
Locally raised revenue		other	na
property taxes	na	Services	
licences& fees	na	water	na
other		road maintenance	na
		other	na
TOTAL	na	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	na

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 physical planning committees.

3.3.2 Municipal councils: No further information was provided for this edition.

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 February 2013 with a turnout of 50%. The next local elections are scheduled for 2016.

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. Each mayor is indirectly elected by local councillors from amongst themselves on an annual basis. Vanuatu has a total of 99 provincial councillors, 40 municipal councillors and three mayors.

4.4 Women's representation

As at 2013, there were no elected women councillors; however, the Department of Local Authorities appoints women's representatives to the councils.

5. SYSTEMS FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Although no formal systems for community involvement exist, there is broad recognition by local government of the important role of traditional leaders in governing the community, and partnership working is encouraged at all levels in delivering services.

6. ORGANISED LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Local Authorities Association of Vanuatu (LAAV) 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, and following this will be able to affiliate to international organisations. 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 on intergovernmental relations was available for this edition.

8. MONITORING SYSTEMS

Independent scrutiny is provided by two bodies: 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 Locally raised revenue

While local government can alter the fees charged for various services, it has no authority over the level of taxes.

9.2 Transfers

Transfer payments from central to local government are made in accordance with the Decentralisation Act via the Department of Local Authorities. They 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 local governments.

9.3 Local authority staff

All staff are recruited by their respective councils, which have the right to hire, discipline and dismiss employees. The secretary general, however, who is the head of the paid service, is seconded from the Public Service Commission and is a paid civil servant. 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 the 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 50% of costs, with the balance of revenue used for development projects.

10. DISTRIBUTION OF SERVICE DELIVERY RESPONSIBILITY

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

References and useful websites

1. Census 2009
<http://catalog.ihnsn.org/index.php/catalog/4102>
2. UN statistics surface area
<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dyb2006/Table03.pdf>
- 3a. Constitution of Vanuatu
<http://governmentofvanuatu.gov.vu/9-supreme-law.html>
- b. Decentralisation Act 2013 (Cap.230)
www.pacii.org/vu/legis/sub_leg/dalgcd02013679.pdf
- c. Municipalities Act 1988 (Cap. 126).
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4. Department of Local Authorities www.gov.vu/government-ministries/ministry-of-internal-affairs/department-of-local-authorities.html
5. Local Authorities Association of Vanuatu
<https://pilgan.wordpress.com/pacific-local-government-association-profiles/local-authorities-association-of-vanuatu-laav>
6. Government of Vanuatu www.gov.vu
7. UNDP HDR Vanuatu country profile
<http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/VUT>



Annex A. Summary of service provision by different spheres of government in Vanuatu

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

KEY

- Sole responsibility service
- Joint responsibility service
- Discretionary service