

# **Vanuatu**

**“Plus 5” Review of the 2002 Special Session  
on Children and World Fit for Children Plan  
of Action**

## **Country Report**

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### **1. Introduction**

Vanuatu is striving to attain goals set forth by the Convention of the Rights of the Child and the Millennium Development Goals, both of which have much in common with the goals and targets in the WFFC initiative. Progress in each initiative is visible but not easily measurable. Some indicators showed some progresses whereas a few showed the opposite. How much the progress has been pushed forward in real terms is often difficult to assess due to a lack of updated data . Vanuatu faces formidable development issues. The Mid Decade Review of the WFFC demonstrates that, although several important child centred initiatives have been put in place since 2002, there remains the very real task of implementing them. A lack of funding, insufficient capacity, a rising youth population, environmental pressures and the negative effects of globalization present the country with challenges.

### **2. Major national actions taken for children towards the WFFC targets since 2002.**

- Education Act 2001
- Developed the National Children’s Policy 2007 – 2011
- MDGs mainstreamed into *Vanuatu Priorities and Action Agenda 2006 – 2015*
- Master Health Services Plan 2004 – 2009
- Education For All National Plan of Action 2001-20015
- Draft National Disability Policy
- National Disability Committee formed in 2006
- MDG Committee was formed in 2004
- First report on CEDAW implementation successfully completed 2007
- Signing onto the Convention on the Rights of the Disabled Person – Vanuatu was also instrumental in the formation of the Convention-2007
- Drafting the second report for CRC implementation-2004
- Currently planning to conduct a Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey with the support of UNICEF (2006-2008)

### **3. Resource trends for children**

<b>Sectors</b>	<b>Total recurrent for 2007</b>	<b>% proportion of total recurrent</b>
<b>Governance</b>	<b>3,671,988,570</b>	<b>31%</b>
- Ministry of Internal Affairs	1,012,514,186	8.6
- Justice and Social Welfare	150,427,392	1.2
<b>Social Service Sector</b>	<b>4,637,294,204</b>	<b>39%</b>

- Ministry of Education	3,087,276,272	26
- Ministry of Youth	89,968,886	0.7
- Ministry of Health	1,414,855,729	12
- Ministry of Broadcasting	45,193,317	0.3
<b>Total 2007 budget</b>	<b>11,732,023,007</b>	<b>100%</b>

(Source: Budget 2007 Volume 2 Program Budget Estimates)

Among the 2007 budget, Social Service Sector has the largest share of the budget, 39%, of which the education is 26% and Health is 12%. In 1999-2000, the share of education expenditure to the total government expenditure was 24.6% and increased to 28.3% in 2001-2002.

Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability Report noted that donor support to government has been significant but the lack of an agreed donor coordination strategy prevents maximum benefit from being achieved. Bilateral and multilateral assistance support project incorporated in the Government Investment Programme (GIP), though a few donors including multilateral agencies respond to ad hoc request from line ministries. Most of the global and regional funds fall outside the budgetary process.

#### **4. Development and use of monitoring instruments to track WFFC/MDG targets**

In terms of monitoring the *National Development Plan or the Priorities and Action Agenda (PAA) 2006 – 2015*, there are performance indicators which are monitored quarterly and this includes the MDGs. The recent UNDAF drafted in March 2007 also directly links with the PAA and the MDGs.

Data on child and maternal health in Vanuatu is primarily extracted from the 1999 Census results or the Health Information System. Information collected by the health system is incomplete due to low reporting rates, under reporting and incorrect classification but despite all this there have been considerable progress in improving data availability in Vanuatu. There is still a pressing need for much better and more reliable data.

Now that Government has developed and finalized a National Children's Policy for 2007 – 2011 which includes performance indicators, Government will need to develop a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework for this policy. Technical assistance will be requested to assist in this regard.

The recent Household Income Expenditure Survey was held last year in 2006. There has not been any Demographic Health Survey held due to funding constraints, although one is tentatively scheduled for 2009. The Government is currently working with the support of UNICEF to conduct a Multi-indicator Cluster Survey, which may possibly include several different nutritional indicators focusing specifically on women and children. This survey will be completed by the early 2008.

The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) conducted a workshop in Vanuatu on August 2003 with discussions on key

sectors (health, education, statistics, environment, finance) to review the MDGs and derive MDG indicators for Vanuatu; identify customized targets and indicators as well as key information gaps and strategies to address them.

In addition, UNDP has given funding of the Millennium Development Goals Report for Vanuatu.

## **5. Enhancing partnerships, alliances for children and participation**

Children's concerns are addressed in many initiatives in Vanuatu that forge partnerships and alliances. For example:

- Child Rights Project funded by Save the Children -Australia. The project focuses on the overall awareness of the CRC
- Child Protection Program supported by UNICEF. The program is largely focused at the capacity of communities, schools and families to provide protective environments for children, as well as strengthening the social service systems and legal and regulatory frameworks.
- Government has reestablished the National Children' Committee to oversee the implementation of the CRC and also to be focal point on all CRC matters
- Government has also made the Ministry of Justice and Social Welfare responsible for CRC and plans to establish a position for a Child Desk Officer
- National Disability Committee formed in 2006

## **6. Achievement of WFFC Plan of Action set against related MDG targets**

### **A. Promoting Healthy Lives:**

- **Master Health Services Plan 2004 – 2009.** The Plan takes into account the MDGs. Some indicators being monitored in the Plan are relevant to reducing child and maternal mortality, proportion of mothers' exclusive breast feeding their child for the first six months of life, total births to teenage mothers, expressed as % of live births. Policies that are in place include ;
- **Vanuatu National Food and Nutrition Policy 2000** – The overall aim of the policy is to ensure the national well being of the total population and to increase the consumption of local food. Specific targets will be the reduction of underweight children under five years of age and the promotion of exclusive breast feeding until six months of age. The policy was reviewed and launched in 2006.
- **Vanuatu National Breastfeeding Policy** – The policy contains 15 statements that strongly supports, promotes and protects breastfeeding for all children of Vanuatu. The policy was re-launched last year in 2006
- **The Public Health Act** – Much of the Act is specific to the protection of water resources and contains regulation to control vector borne diseases, to regulate sanitation and to protect and control epidemics and communicable diseases.

- **Vanuatu Baby Friendly Initiative** - This programme works to support mothers and infants in establishing breastfeeding as soon as possible after birth and in establishing networks to continue the support received in the hospital in the communities. Vila Central Hospital and Lenakel Hospital are working towards being certified as baby friendly hospitals before end of this year.

## **B. Promoting quality education**

In the *Priorities and Action Agenda (PAA)* the major goal in the Education Sector is to provide universal primary education completion and improved access to a quality education and training systems that better contributes to economic and social development. The main policy objectives are to:

- Improve access to education and ensure gender and rural/urban balances
- Raise the quality and relevance of education
- Improve planning, fiscal and financial management in the sector. Priorities and strategies in the education sector are to:
  1. Improve the relevance, quality and accessibility to Pre-school and Special Education for all young children as stipulated in the Education For All National Plans and the MDG indicators
  2. Achieve relevant and quality universal Primary Education up to Year 8
  3. Promote gender equality throughout all levels of education and training
  4. Improve fiscal and financial management within the education sector, develop a medium term expenditure framework for education and ensure that there is effective and efficient resource allocation in the education sector

EFA National Plan of Action 2001- 2015 - Vanuatu has now developed and adopted an Education For All policy and the objective is to provide education for all children by 2015.

In 2006, Ministry of Education held the National Education Summit to allow all the stakeholders to improve the draft Vanuatu Education Sector Strategy (VESS). The VESS covered the priorities such as; Universal primary education completion, literacy, numeracy and lifeskills for all; child centered school; Bilingual education; quality education through professional teachers, relevant curriculum, improved school management, safe and adequate school facilities; national and provincial human resource development, secondary education, technical vocational training and education, higher education and scholarship; sustainable, cost-effective system; and decentralization, monitoring and evaluation.

## **C. Protecting Against Abuse, Exploitation and Violence**

The following Government initiatives (legislation, plans and policies) address the issues on the exploitation and abuse of children:

- The National Children's Policy 2007 – 2011

- Child Rights Project funded by Save the Children - Australia. The project focuses on the overall awareness of the CRC
- The National Plan of Action for Children
- Draft National Disability Policy
- Family Protection Bill (yet to be submitted to Parliament)
- The ratification of Parliament to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols
- Strengthening the birth registration system, funded by UNICEF to protect children and adolescents from exploitation, and to improve planning sectors in providing services adequately for all children.
- Ratification of CEDAW
- Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons

Save the Children has been implementing two projects;

1. **Child Rights Project** – This project reports a low level of awareness of child rights across the country. It has produced IEC materials to disseminate and has worked in partnership with another popular NGO, Vanuatu’s Wan Smol Bag Theatre Group to develop plays and radio spots on Child rights. The Child Rights project has convened a Children’s reference group to formally introduce the concept of child participation , discuss child rights amongst youths from Port Vila.

2. **Child Protection Project** – This initiative is supported by UNICEF and AusAID and comprises part of UNICEF’s support to child protection activities in Vanuatu. A baseline study on knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and practices on child protection was conducted in 2003. The Ministry of Education works in collaboration with Save the Children with communities to raise awareness on child protection issues through workshops to discuss the following five key messages:

1. Child protection is every ones responsibility;
2. Causes of child abuse;
3. Fathers and mothers are key players in child safety and protection;
4. Child abuse and neglect are not restricted to the family;
5. Children are best protected from child abuse and neglect by stopping it before it begins.

#### **D. Combating HIV/ AIDS:**

The major policy that is in place is the *Vanuatu Policy and Strategic Plan for HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections 2003 – 2007*. The key strategic directions are:

- Prevention of sexually transmitted HIV and Sexually Transmitted Infections;
- Prevention of HIV transmission through blood;
- Prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV;
- Early intervention and care and support to people with HIV;
- Monitoring and evaluation of the National AIDS Program.

The Ministry of Health has a draft *National Strategic Plan for HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections 2008 – 2012*. This plan will focus on three priority areas:

1. Prevention of transmission of HIV and other STIs;
2. Care treatment and support;
3. Program management.

This plan is yet to be approved by Council of Ministers.

Ministry of Health launches public awareness campaigns on STIs, HIV and AIDS on the World AIDS Day every year. AIDS Advocates (People living with HIV and AIDS) have a unique role in educating the public about HIV and how to prevent the spread of HIV. Other forms of public education is also used; Wan Smol Bag (WSB), a theater group established in 1989 performing plays on health and environmental issues for people in communities reaching those who could not read or write, has been showing drama called “Famili Blong Sarah”; Media is also being used to show the video film called “Positive”.

At school, Malapoa Teacher Training College and the Ministry of Education supports Vanuatu Family Health Association providing Grade 6 students information about sexuality and sexual health. Ministry of Education distributed the Wan Smol Bag’s “Positive” video and guides to all secondary schools in Vanuatu. . WSB also continue to present plays within schools.

Kam Pussum Head Clinic established in 2000 in response to the direct needs of the young people in the community, is a youth friendly drop-in center staffed by 2 qualified nurses. KPH Clinic provides advice and counseling on reproductive and sexual health, treatment for STIs, access to contraception, ante-natal checks and hospital referrals.

Government also supports Pacific Stars Life Skills programmes with UNICEF to develop life skills, such as skill to cope with peer pressure, increase self-esteem, negotiation skills, to allow them to make responsible decision in their lives..

## **7. Lessons learned**

- a. Vanuatu is trying to meet the MDGs and WFFC goals and overcome the increasing aid dependency from donors. Projections are that aid dependency will continue, especially in light of increasing needs in the social services accompanied with the high birth rates.
- b. High birth rates and relatively large numbers of people under 15 years of age means that the Government and civil society groups find it difficult to keep pace with economic and social needs. UNDP population survey 2001 shows 41% of the Vanuatu population is 15 years or younger.
- c. Despite efforts to maintain a coordinated and structured system of data collection and dissemination, a lack of internal coordination across ministries still hinder adequate availability of data.

- d. Increasing need to work with international and local NGOs to ensure delivery of services especially in health and education.
- e. Capacity in all areas of Government has been increased due to various programmes and initiatives. More capacity development is required to overcome various obstacles in the structural and fiscal management of all sectors of the Government.

## Annex 1: Achievement of WFFC Plan of Action and related MDG targets.

### Target 1: Promoting Healthy Lives

<b>Goal: Reduce child mortality:</b> Reduction in the infant and under five mortality rate by at least one third in pursuit of the goal of reducing it by two thirds by 2015			
<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Baseline 2002 (or most recent available)</b>	<b>Most recent data available</b>	<b>Source of data</b>
Infant mortality rate	27 (1999)	31 (2005)	PIC Regional MDG Goals Report 2004, ChildInfo database
Under 5 mortality rate (death per 1,000 live births)	33 <sup>1</sup> (2000)	38 (2005)	
Proportion of newborns with low birth weight (%)	5.6 (2001)	n.a.	Country Health Information Profile, 2002 Revision, National statistical Office and WHO/Western Pacific Region
Neo-natal mortality rate (%)	19 (2000)	n.a.	World Health Organization using vital registration and household surveys
Proportion of one year old children immunized against measles (%)	44% (2002)	70 <sup>2</sup> (2005)	Immunization summary: The 2007 edition, UNICEF/WHO

<b>Goal: Reduce maternal mortality:</b> Reduction in the maternal mortality ratio by at least 1/3 in pursuit of reducing it by ¾ by 2015			
<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Baseline 2002 (or most recent available)</b>	<b>Most recent data available</b>	<b>Source of data</b>
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births)	33 <sup>3</sup> (2002)	n.a.	Common Country Assessment 2002, p13,
Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel (%)	88 (1999)	n.a.	Pacific Islands Regional Millennium Development Goals Report 2004

<b>Goal: Reduce child malnutrition :</b> Reduction of child malnutrition among children under 5 by at least 1/3, with special attention to children under 2 years, and reduction in the rate of low birth weight, weight for at least 1/3 of current rate.			
<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Baseline 2002 (or most recent available)</b>	<b>Most recent data available</b>	<b>Source of data</b>
Prevalence of underweight – moderate and severe (%)	12 (1996)	23 (2001)	Report of the second national nutrition survey, Department of Health/AusAID, 1996; Common

<sup>1</sup> 25.7 (male 26, Female 25.5) in 1999, Common Country Assessment 2002, p13

<sup>2</sup> In 2006, government conducted Measles campaign and the immunization coverage recorded above 90%.

<sup>3</sup> 2 deaths in 1998

			Country Assessment 2002
Prevalence of Under 5 stunting-moderate and severe (%)	20 (1996)	n.a.	Report of the second national nutrition survey, Department of Health/AusAID, 1996
Prevalence of Under 5 wasting-moderate and severe (%)	6 (1996)	n.a.	Report of the second national nutrition survey, Department of Health/AusAID, 1996
Prevalence of Anemia among children under 18 years old (%)	7.5 (6-12 yr) (2002)	n.a.	Hughes et al, study in 2 schools, 2002
Proportion of infant less than 4 months who are exclusively breastfed (%)	50 (1996)	n.a.	Pacific Island Country Profile, 2001 UNICEF
Proportion of infant under 6 months who are exclusively breastfed (%)	10 (1996)	n.a.	Report of the second national nutrition survey, Department of Health/AusAID, 1996

**Goal: Enlarge the access to hygienic sanitation facilities and affordable and safe drinking water:**  
Reduction in the proportion of households without access to hygienic sanitation facilities and affordable and safe drinking water by at least 1/3

Indicator	Baseline 2002 (or most recent available)	Most recent data available	Source of data
Proportion of households with sustainable access to an improved water source (%)	75 (2000)	Total: 60 Urban: 86 Rural: 52 (2004)	PIC Regional MDG Goals Report 2004; WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme on Water Supply and Sanitation
Proportion of households with sustainable access to an improved sanitation (%)	n.a.	Total: 50 Urban: 78 Rural: 42 (2004)	WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme on Water Supply and Sanitation

## Target 2: Providing quality education

**Goal: Expand early childhood care & education for children** Expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, for girls and boys, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children

Indicator	Baseline 2002 (or most recent available)	Most recent data available	Source of data
Primary school net enrollment ratio (%)	78.2 (1999)	Total: 93.9 Male: 94.7 Female: 93 (2004)	PIC Regional MDG Goals Report 2004, UNESCO/UIS database (6-11 yr)
Survival rate to grade 5 (survey data)	91.2 (2000)	n.a.	PIC Regional MDG Goals Report 2004, ChildInfo database

Secondary school net enrollment ratio (%)	18.3 (2000)	Total: 39.3 Male: 42.1 Female: 36.2 (2004)	State of the Youth Report 2005; UNESCO/UIS database (12-18 yr)
Years of education that is compulsory to attend (years)	No		Elimination of All forms of Discrimination and Violence against the Girl Child, 2006
Years of education that is free from charge	No		Same as above

### Target 3: Protecting Against Abuse, Exploitation and Violence

<b>Goal 1: Protect against abuse, exploitation, and violence</b>	
CRC ratification	Vanuatu ratified the CRC in 1993
NACC	<p>The National Ombudsman facilitated the installation of the ban on corporal punishment, and promoted a greater awareness among the police of the principles and provisions of the CRC</p> <p>The current chairperson of the National Children's Committee (NCC) is an officer in the Department of Economics and Social Planning. The appointment of Child Desk Officer in the Ministry of Justice and Social Planning to coordinate support to the National Children's Committee has been approved since 2004 but has not been filled to date.</p> <p>In 2006, NACC has been engaged in drafting a National Child Policy, which will merge the current National Programme of Action for Children and recommendation made in the Situation Analysis of Children. The National Children's Policy was launched in July 2007.</p>
Measures to protect children from abuse, exploitation & violence	<p>Domestic legislation and customary law do not fully reflect the principles and provisions of the Convention; especially on the low minimum age for the criminal responsibility (10 years) (Penal Code (sect. 17 (1)) and the disparity between the minimum legal age for the marriage of boys (18 years) and that of girls (16 years).</p> <p>AusAID funded Pacific Children's Programme (2001-2005) had been working with government to reduce child abuse and neglect through preventive community-based activities. A child Protection Task Force has been established to assist with implementation of programme activities. This programme has been redesigned and since 2005 UNICEF supports related projects in the Save the Children Australia through Project Cooperation Agreement and started to assist child protection programme at the Department of Civil Status at the Ministry of Internal Affairs since 2007.</p> <p>Family Protection Order Bill, which aims to prevent domestic violence in all levels of society, has yet to be passed by Parliament.</p>
<b>Goal 2: Protect children from the impact of armed conflict</b>	
OP status	Government signed the Optional Protocol on CRC on the involvement of children in Armed Conflict in 2005.
Legislative environment to protect the children in armed conflict	
<b>Goal 3: Fight against sexual exploitation</b>	
OP status	<p>Adopted Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action in 2001 by virtue of commitment to the Yokohama Global Commitment.</p> <p>Government signed the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography in 2005.</p>

CADAW ratification	Ratified CEDAW in 1995.
Measures taken to protect children from sexual abuse	Penal Code contains only simple provisions concerning sexual abuse and exploitation (Sec 90-rape, Sec92-abduction, Sec95 incest etc), however government is currently studying amendments that would take account of new offences related to the sexual abuse of children. Stiffer penalties have been proposed that would make the possession, distribution, or sale of child pornography a crime. The government is in the process of establishing a Trans-national Crime Unit within the Department of Police to combat internet-related child pornography offences.
<b>Goal 4: Eliminate child labour</b>	
ILO convention ratification status	Vanuatu joined as a member state of the ILO conventions in 2003 and ratified C182 Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention in 2006.  The Employment Act (Cap 160) protects children under the age of 15 against exploitation through labour. Specific sections of the Act, from sections 38 to 43, provides protection and prohibits employment of persons under 12 and 14 to be employed in any capacity except on light work suitable to his capacity in an agricultural undertaking, Employment of persons under 18 shall not be employed during the night in any industrial undertaking and a person who is under the age of 18 shall not be employed on any kind of work on a ship.
<b>Goal 5: Improve the plight of millions of children who live under especially difficult circumstances</b>	
Improve the plight of millions of children who live under especially difficult Circumstances	The National Program for Action began in 1993. Priority areas of the plan include health, population, family planning, <b>children in difficult circumstances</b> , community participation, the role of NGOs in children's development and children and the law and customs.  Prime Minister's office established the 'desk' to develop a policy on disability and services to disabled people are provided by the Vanuatu Society for Disabled People since 1994. There is no specific law for disabled people.
Adopted children	There is no law on adoption of children in Vanuatu yet. Adoption at this stage is practiced traditionally and it takes place within the extended family system and the community. Adoption is only done internally.

#### Target 4: Combating HIV/AIDS

<b>Goal: Time-bound national target &amp; fight against gender based discrimination in relation to HIV/AIDS</b>			
By 2003 establish time-bound national targets to achieve the internationally agreed global prevention goal to reduce by 2010 HIV prevalence among young men and women aged 15-24 by 25%			
Indicator	Baseline 2002 (or most recent data available)	Most recent data available	Source of Data
Status of HIV and AIDS policies	In March 1988, a one-year short-term plan was written. This plan provided the background for the first medium term plan which was finalized in November 1990 and was effective from 1991 – 1993. This was implemented as a combined STI, HIV and AIDS prevention and control program. At the end of 1993 the first MTP was reviewed and the second MTP was consequently formulated.  In 2003, a new five year national strategic plan and HIV/AIDS policy was developed which emphasized increased broad public awareness	New 5 year plan under development. No information yet available on targets which may be included.  As of October 2005, no surveillance data is available for most-at-risk-populations in Vanuatu. Surveillance data is available for youth showing 3.1% of youth were tested for HIV and were aware of their results, with the average number of sexual partners in the last year ranging	UNGASS Composite Policy Index Survey (CPI) 2005: UNGASS reports; UNAIDS

		from zero (0) to eighteen (18). The median number of partners for youth in this study was one.	
Cumulative HIV cases (including AIDS)	n.a.	2 (25005)	AIDS Section, Public Health Programme, SPC 2005
Cumulative HIV incidence -crude rate per 100,000 (90% CI)	n.a.	0.9 (0.0 to 4.3)	AIDS Section, Public Health Programme, SPC 2005

**Goal: Reduce HIV vertical transmission** By 2005, reduce the proportion of infants infected with HIV by 20% and by 50% by 2010, by: ensuring that 80% of pregnant women accessing antenatal care have information, counseling and other HIV prevention services available to them; Increasing the availability of and by providing access for HIV infected women and babies to effective treatment to reduce mother-to-child transmission of HIV, as well as through effective interventions for HIV infected women, including VCCT; Access to treatment, especially ART and, where appropriate, breast milk substitutes and the provision of a continuum of care

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Baseline 2002 (or most recent data available)</b>	<b>Most recent data available</b>	<b>Target for 2015 Source of Data</b>
Mother to child transmission cases	There are no documented mother to child HIV transmission cases in Vanuatu.	There has been 1 documented mother to child HIV transmission cases in Vanuatu.	UNGASS Composite Policy Index Survey (CPI) 2005: UNGASS reports; UNAIDS; UNIFEM; MoH; UNICEF Situation Review.
Status of PMTCT policy	No PMTCT targets have been set.	No PMTCT targets have been set.	UNGASS Composite Policy Index Survey (CPI) 2005: UNGASS reports; UNAIDS; UNIFEM; MoH; UNICEF Situation Review.
Access to treatment, especially ART and, where appropriate, breast milk substitutes and the provision of a continuum of care	Treatment available to those identified and compliant. No milk substitute policy at baseline	Treatment available to those identified and compliant. No milk substitute policy at baseline	UNGASS Composite Policy Index Survey (CPI) 2005: UNGASS reports; UNAIDS; UNIFEM; MoH; UNICEF Situation Review.