

Vanuatu

Chairperson, Moderator, SPC, UN Treaty Body and Common Wealth, at the outset Vanuatu acknowledges the support that it has been receiving from the Human Rights Treaty Body Reporting in the past years, from the outset, the conventions that Vanuatu ratified CEDAW in 1995 and the optional protocols in 2006. Since then, Vanuatu has reported to the Committee on CEDAW for its first, second and more recent review was done in 2016 and now the 6th and 7th report is overdue since 2021.

CEDAW

For CEDAW, Vanuatu has developed a National Gender Equality Policy 2015 – 2020 to address four key strategic policy objectives which include Reducing domestic and gender-based violence, enhancing women’s economic empowerment, promoting women’s leadership and equal empowerment and building a foundation for gender mainstreaming.

The Vanuatu Government in its effort through the Correctional Faculty has opened a new separate Centre for all women detainees in 2022. This includes a separate cell for breastfeeding female inmates and which allows the baby to remain in the centre with the mother supported by the government for at least two (2) years.

Also, the establishment of the Family Protection Unit within the Police Stations throughout all Provinces with the NO DROP Policy in the prosecution of domestic violence cases. This has made it easier for women and girls to be able to report Domestic violence cases and as well as getting the relevant counselling and remedies available more quickly than in the past. Key achievements include raising awareness on gender based violence issues to the population at large with the support of our key stakeholders.

The Policy was reviewed in 2019 to 2020 and the new National Gender Equality Policy (NGEP) 2020 to 2030 was launched in 2021. It includes climate change as a key strategy area in fostering gender response and community driven solutions to climate and disaster resilience. The Gender and Protection Cluster (GPC) in collaboration with NDMO is part of the humanitarian cluster system in Vanuatu which works in collaboration with partners and civil society and faith based organizations to address response and recovery efforts.

For effective implementation of the NGEP, there is developed a Provincial Gender Action Plan which has been launched throughout Vanuatu within the 6 provinces.

The Authorized Persons (AP) is another development for Vanuatu under the Family Protection Act which has been successful during its pilot phase and now expanded to another Province. The Ministry of Justice and Community Services and the Department of Womens Affairs is responsible in this space.

Economic empowerment has allowed women to contribute to their household to reduce domestic violence.

CRC

For CRC, the Government through the Ministry of Justice and Community Service has established a fulltime Child Desk responsible for the rights of Children under the Convention on the rights of the child. The desk has expanded its services in establishing 12 provincial officers looking after 6 provinces looking after community awareness as well as legal address on child protection issues or abuses.

This involves a referral pathway mechanism through case management system for every offence that is reported to ensure that child perpetrators and properly went through justice.

In our effort to review our existing child protection Policy 2016 – 2026 which addresses 8 strategic areas including mainstreaming child protection in emergencies.

With regards to legal protection, strategy area no.6, we have developed four different legislations including Child Protection Bill, Adoption Bill, Juvenile Justice Bill and Juvenile Justice Procedure Code.

The government has increased its budget to cater for the operations for the implementation of the Child Protection Policy this year 2023.

During natural disasters Child Desk becomes the Child Protection Subcluster is part of the Gender Protection Cluster to assist during the natural disasters for response and recovery.

The Early Childhood Policy has encouraged a lot of development in positive parenting and encourages all children to go through a formal and inclusive education for all.

Corporal Punishment is not tolerated in all our schools.

The child desk office are now providing independent assessment reports to the courts to determine the issues of adoption, guardianship and custody ensuring the interest of the child.

CRPD

For CRPD, the Government in its effort to address the Convention on the Rights of Persons with disability has established the Disability Desk under the Human Rights Unit within the Ministry of Justice.

In 2018, National Disability Inclusive Policy 2018 - 2025 was launched. The Policy has 8 priority areas, which the government works with its partners to implement.

One of the main policy priority areas includes, mainstreaming the rights of persons with disability across every government agency. This has seen the development of separate policies especially with regards to inclusive education and health inclusive strategy plan.

The Disability Desk is part of the Gender Protection Cluster, as subcluster during natural disasters to carry out responses and recovery especially distribution plan within the 6 provinces.

In addition to the efforts under the inclusive education we have recruited a full-time Sign Language Coordinator who is now developing a national sign language.

In the effort, the Child Desk under the Ministry of Justice have recruited 12 officers in the provinces for community and compliance positions. In all provinces, all new buildings have accessibility.

Our Detention Centres have upgraded to include proper access for any detainees in the future.

Challenges of Implementation

- In our context, our islands are scattered geographically and resources are limited in many areas including capacity
- Capacity
- Limited resources
- Funding limitations
- Political instability
- Natural disasters
- Cultural norms and traditions