



**PACMAS**

Pacific Media Assistance Scheme

# Vanuatu

STATE OF MEDIA &  
COMMUNICATION  
REPORT  
2013



International  
Development

Australian Broadcasting Corporation





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Any opinions represented in this report are those of the authors and research participants and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government or the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

The findings are presented in three sections:

1. Country Context
2. State of Media and Communications
  - Media and Communications Platforms
  - Media and Communications Landscape
3. Summary of Findings

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## Vanuatu Country Context

Vanuatu is an archipelago east of Australia and west of Fiji that comprises approximately 83 islands, 65 of them inhabited. Vanuatu gained independence in 1980, after being jointly governed by a British and French administration. This joint colonial past is evident today in the use of both English and French language in the country's media and social, political and economic sectors. In addition to over 100 local languages, the use of Bislama, a Melanesian type of Creole, is prevalent across the islands. Most of Vanuatu's population lives in rural areas, surviving on subsistence farming and fishing. Tourism activities account for about 40 per cent of GDP. The distances between islands and the difficulty of travelling within the country hinders economic development. Vanuatu is also prone to natural disasters including volcanic eruptions, cyclones and earthquakes. In contrast to its low gross domestic product (GDP), Vanuatu is also known for topping the 'Happy Planet Index' (HPI) in 2006 based on consumption levels, life expectancy and reported 'happiness'<sup>1</sup>.

## Key Insights

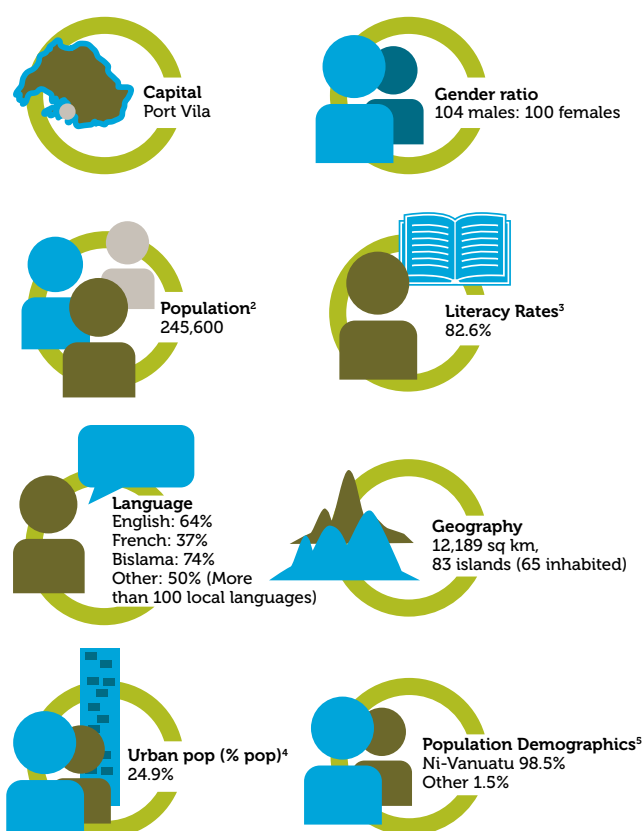
### Communication for Development (C4D) – Wan Smolbag Theatre and the 'edutainment' model

The pioneering theatre and production company Wan Smolbag stands out as one of the best examples of community media and Communication for Development (C4D) in the Pacific. The company has had a big impact on raising awareness around social issues, not only in Vanuatu but also in the region. This demonstrates the effectiveness of the 'edutainment' model in the Pacific and the value of telling Pacific stories through local media such as radio, TV and theatre. The company also produces Love Patrol, a TV series distributed across the Pacific. Wan Smolbag's holistic approach to community development has evolved over 24 years<sup>6</sup>, and involves not only travelling to communities to perform plays and workshop programs but also setting up a health clinic and a youth nutrition center at their headquarters in Port Vila, with school students often coming to see theatre plays, and taking part in other activities.

### Remoteness and Scale

One of the biggest challenges in Vanuatu is reaching the dispersed population, especially those who live on the outer islands. This affects broadcasting in terms of reach, and presents challenges in the regular maintenance of equipment. The remoteness of some communities is a barrier when it comes to message delivery around climate change and Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). As one respondent described it: *'The biggest challenge for NCDs programs, apart from the lack of funding, resources and human resources, is the geographical layout of the country.'* (VANUATU09).

Table n.1 Basic Country Data



- 1 Nic Marks, N., Simms, A., Thompson, S. and Abdallah, S. (2006) The Happy Planet Index: An index of human well-being and environmental impact, New Economics Foundation, London.
- 2 World Bank. 2013. Vanuatu Country Data.
- 3 World Bank. 2013. Vanuatu Country Data.
- 4 CIA Factbook. 2013 Vanuatu. World Fact Book of the United States Central Intelligence Agency. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/nh.html>. Accessed 15 May 2013.
- 5 See WSB history here: <http://www.wansmolbag.org/DynamicPages.asp?cid=7&navID=7>
- 6 See WSB history here: <http://www.wansmolbag.org/DynamicPages.asp?cid=7&navID=7>



## Disaster Preparedness and Climate Change

Vanuatu faces many challenges in regards to emergencies and climate change. There is an active Disaster Management Office and Meteorological Department coordinating processes and stakeholders. The National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) circulates printed advertisements with the help of a local NGO and has a weekly radio awareness program. During an emergency, the NDMO coordinates communication and works with all existing radio stations. The Meteorology Department is active on issues around climate change, and partnerships have been formed with NGOs. While departments show active engagement, many practical aspects are still being addressed.

## State of Media and Communication

### Media and Communication Platforms

#### Television

Television Blong Vanuatu, operated by the Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation (VBTC), is the main television station in Vanuatu. Established in 1993 with assistance from the French channel RFO, the station's funding mostly comes from the government along with some income received through advertising and the selling of airtime. There is a noticeable presence of internationally owned church media (Trinity Broadcasting Network and Hope TV) in Vanuatu, with other providers including the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Australia Network and Chinese Central Television.



Figure 1: *Wan Smolbag Theatre* in Port Vila. Photo by Sandra Kailahi, February 2013

Figure n.2: Media and Communication Platforms: Television

Platform	Organisation	Owner/ funding	Language/ content	Type
Television	Television Blong Vanuatu	Operated by Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation (VBTC), government owned, partly government funded with majority of revenue from advertising.	Screens RFO 24 hours a day except for local news bulletins, some local and regional programs and screenings of movies. French, English	Government
	Australia Network	Australian Broadcasting Corporation	English, Australian, educational, cultural and information, local Australian and international news	Government (foreign)
	China Central Television (CCTV)	Chinese Government	English, Chinese educational, cultural and information (Unavailable at times)	Government (foreign)
	Hope TV	Adventist Media Network – South Pacific Division	Christian TV, broadcasting local and international content	Church (local, international)
	Trinity Broadcasting Network-	USA owned	Christian TV Broadcasting by satellite	Church (foreign)

#### Radio

Radio Vanuatu is the public service broadcaster operated by VBTC. Similar to Television Blong Vanuatu, its main funding comes from the government and is supplemented by advertising. Radio Vanuatu transmits standard public service programming with talkback, magazine programs, sports and music as well as the ABC's Radio Australia, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Radio France International news. VBTC also runs Paradise 98FM. CRST FM is a community radio station operating from the island of Tanna, broadcasting to several small islands of the Tafea Province.

**Table n.3: Media and Communication Platforms: Radio**

Platform	Radio stations	Ownership/ funding	Language/ Content/ reach	Type
Radio	Radio Vanuatu (100 FM)	Operated by Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation (VBTC), government owned, partly government funded with majority of revenue from advertising.	Includes local news, Radio Australia news, BBC and Radio France International news, talkback, magazine programs, sports, sports, short stories, a small number of talks programs produced by government and NGOs, weather and shipping information, religious programs and music. Mainly in Bislama but also in English and French.	Government
	Paradise FM 98	Operated by Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation (VBTC), government owned, partly government funded with majority of revenue from advertising.	Nambawan FM 98 was rebranded in 2009 to Paradise FM 98 Local content	Government
	Capital FM (107 FM)	Owned by Sabi Natonga	Commercial music, English	Commercial
	CRST FM104	Island of Tanna - as well as the very remote islands that make up Tafea Province	Local content, including women's rights, youth, HIV/Aids, family planning and conserving traditional culture. Broadcasts from the island of Tanna to Tafea Province	Community
	Radio 90 Laef FM:	Operated by United Christian Broadcasters (UCB) Pacific Partners and Abundant Life Ministries, a local Christian Ministry.	Religious content	Church

## Newspaper and Newsletters

Vanuatu has one daily and two weekly newspapers. The *Vanuatu Daily Post* is the most widely-read newspaper with a readership of 2,000-3,000. Both the *Vanuatu Times* and the *Independent* are weekly newspapers. The country's linguistic diversity is reflected to some extent in the press, which publishes content segments in multiple languages (English, French and Bislama).

**Table n.4: Media and Communication Platforms: Newspaper and Newsletters**

Platform	Newspapers/ newsletters	Owner/ funding	Language/ content	Type
Newspaper	<i>Vanuatu Daily Post</i>	Owned by Kilawee Holdings Limited and Botanical Gardens Ltd (the company of the editor, Marc Neil Jones)	English and Bislama, Tuesday-Sat, 2,200 copies, 3,000 on Saturdays	Commercial
	<i>Vanuatu Times</i>	Owned by Sabi Natonga	English, French, Bislama. Published weekly	Commercial
	<i>Independent:</i>	The Independent is a charitable foundation (not for profit), registered as Independent Foundation Inc.	English, French & Bislama. Publishes weekly, 1,000 copies per issue.	Commercial

## Online and Mobile Media

The Vanuatu Daily Post has an associated news website. Internet user rates are quite low with the figures from 2010 estimating 8 users per 100<sup>7</sup>. Access to the internet is still mainly limited to access at work places, internet cafes, and to some extent through mobile phones or on home computers.

The Vanuatu 2009 census found that 76 per cent of households had a mobile phone<sup>8</sup>. World Bank and International Telecommunication Union data shows mobile cellular subscriptions at 56 per 100 inhabitants in 2011, up from 7 per 100 in 2006<sup>9</sup>. The Pacific Institute of Public Policy (PIPP) reports that mobile phones have become the

7 UN ESCAP. 2010. Annual Online Indicators. Geneva: United Nations. <http://www.unescap.org/stat/data/> Accessed April 2013

8 Vanuatu National Statistics Office. 2009. National Census of Housing and Population: Summary Release. Port Vila: VNSO. [http://www.vnsso.gov.vu/images/stories/2009\\_Census\\_Summary\\_release\\_final.pdf](http://www.vnsso.gov.vu/images/stories/2009_Census_Summary_release_final.pdf), Accessed October 10, 2012

9 <http://data.un.org/Data.aspx?d=ITU&f=ind1Code%3A1911>

primary mode of communication across the country. However, they also note that in rural areas there is a reliance on solar cells, batteries and diesel generators which impacts on mobile phone use.

**Table n.5: Media and Communication Platforms: Online and Mobile Media**

Platform	Online media	Owner/ funder	Language/ content/ updated	Type
Online	Vanuatu in the news		Compiles international news items about Vanuatu <a href="http://www.news.vu/">http://www.news.vu/</a>	Community
Online	Vanuatu Daily Post runs an online news site	As per Daily Post above	Updated daily. <a href="http://www.dailypost.vu/">http://www.dailypost.vu/</a>	Commercial
Online	Vanuatu Times	Owned by Sabi Natonga	<a href="http://vanuatudailynews.com/">http://vanuatudailynews.com/</a>	
Online	Vanuatu Daily Digest	Bob Makin	English / compiles news, opinions, and encourages discussion on current developments in Vanuatu <a href="http://vanuatudaily.wordpress.com">vanuatudaily.wordpress.com</a>	Community
Social Media	Yumi Toktok Stret (Facebook page)	Witnol Benko	English, French, Bislama / encourage open discussion on any and all issues of interest to members <a href="http://www.facebook.com/groups/yumitoktok/">http://www.facebook.com/groups/yumitoktok/</a>	Community
Social media	Vanuatu Politic Spotlight	Jonathan Naupa	English, Bislama, French / encourages open discussion on political developments in Vanuatu <a href="http://www.facebook.com/groups/346817692013192/">http://www.facebook.com/groups/346817692013192/</a>	Community

## Other Communication Platforms

Face-to-face communication continues to play a key role throughout Vanuatu. In addition to producing and supporting media, the church occupies a central role in facilitating communication spaces for public discussion. Along with a range of other activities, Wan Smolbag travels around the country performing plays and holding workshops. In addition, the nakamal, a traditional men's house and meeting ground in village Vanuatu, is a gathering space for men to engage in public and political discussion over kava (a hot root drink with psychotropic properties, depending upon the preparation); the nakamal and kava is also used (and exchanged) during ceremonies and rituals. This practice has been extended for urban residents with the introduction of kava bars in places such as Port Vila and Luganville where people join each other after work. Other spaces for communication include village gatherings such as dances or theatre performances where music and the oral traditions around storytelling are used. Music and performances are increasingly broadcast on radio and in other formats.

Gender plays an important role in the ways these communication platforms and spaces are used. In churches, men and women sit on opposite sides of the building. On occasion women join men to prepare and consume kava in the nakamal. In general, women's movements and participation in community life are more restricted outside the home, in national governance, small business and trade.

**Table n.6: Media and Communication Platforms: Other Communication Platforms**

Platform	Organisation	Activity	Language/ Content	Sector
Other	Church	Religious practice and community gatherings	English, Bislama, French	Community
Other	Nakamal (men's house or meeting ground)	Public discussion space, ritual gatherings and socialising; Village councils gathering place	English, Bislama, French, local languages	Community
Other	Kava bars	Public discussion and socialising space in urban Vanuatu	English, Bislama, French	Commercial
Other	Village dances and gatherings	String band performances; theatre performances; storytelling	English, Bislama, French, local languages	Community

## Media and Communication Landscape

This section of the report focuses on Vanuatu's media and communication sector across four key areas: policy and legislation, media systems, capacity building and content. It provides an overview of the state of media across these four PACMAS program components, through exploring the six Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS) strategic areas: Technicians, Pacific Emergency Broadcast Systems (PEBS), Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVETs), Media Associations, Climate Change and NCDs. Media Systems includes a focus

on Technicians and PEBS; Capacity Building includes TVETS and Media Associations; and Content looks at Climate Change and NCDs. It provides an overview of media and communication across these strategic activity areas and aligns them with the PACMAS program components.

### Policy and Legislation

The relevant legislation in Vanuatu includes the Telecommunications and Radio Communications Regulation Act 2009; Telecommunications Act [Cap 206]; Broadcasting and Television Act 1992; Broadcasting and Television Act [Cap 214]; Telecommunications (Amendment) Act



Figure 2: Market in Port Vila, Photo by Sandra Kailahi, February 2013

2009; Broadcasting and Television [Amendment] Act 2003; Broadcasting and Television [Amendment] Act 2000; and the Telecommunication and Radio-telecommunication Regulation Act 2009 (Notice No.10 of 2012). There is no specific legislation in regards to community media.

The Broadcasting and Television Act mandates the Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation (VBTC) to administer broadcast licensing. The Prime Minister, upon the recommendation of the Council of Ministers, appoints the VBTC board members. A business license is needed to own a newspaper, radio and TV station. Under the Newspaper Act 1982, newspaper owners must be Vanuatu citizens.

Vanuatu's telecommunications market was opened to competition from March 2008. Now, in addition to Telecom Vanuatu Limited (TVL), Digicel has a license to provide mobile services, and Pacific Data Solutions and Global Data Transfer have limited licenses for telecommunications provision. A regulatory system has been established through the Telecommunications and Radio Communications Regulator Act No. 30 of 2009 under the Minister for Infrastructure and Public Utilities. This system is independent and works to ensure telecommunications deregulation, competition and universal access.<sup>10</sup>

Freedom of expression is guaranteed in the constitution, but there is no specific protection for freedom of media. Threats against journalists by government officials are fairly common in Vanuatu. Journalists in the public broadcaster practice self-censorship to avoid confrontation with government. However, while they don't usually investigate corruption or sensitive government stories, they will report the findings of investigative stories run by commercial news outlets. A National Media Policy and a Freedom of Information policy and legislation are currently being developed by Transparency International Vanuatu, the Media Association of Vanuatu and other stakeholders, with support from United National Development Programme (UNDP) to address this situation.

There is no formal Code of Ethics in use. The Media Association of Vanuatu has a Code of Ethics for its members; however, the code is not enforced and there are no specific content restrictions specified in legislation.

### Media Systems

Media systems take into consideration technical skills, support and infrastructure. It also explores emergency broadcast systems and experience from past disasters and crises in Vanuatu.

#### PACMAS Strategic Activity: Technicians

Technicians in Vanuatu either learn on-the-job or obtain training overseas. For example, in general, radio technicians tend to train in New Zealand, and VBTC has an existing relationship with Radio New Zealand. VBTC staff have received mentorship from Radio New Zealand staff and attended workshops in New Zealand, funded by NZAid. Such overseas training opportunities are often in the form of short courses, specific to their professional needs. VBTC also operated a program with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) for attachments of technicians.

Technicians also rely on overseas expertise for problem solving and support. Access to private companies and

10 See <http://www.trr.vu/> for further information.



support networks is available via internet and email. Technicians mention the Pacific Island Telecommunications Association (PITA) as a regional support association, which also provides networking opportunities for informal sharing of information and technical expertise: *'There is an informal network, there is also training ... organised by PITA on a regular basis ... A lot of informal sharing is done through these meetings.'* (VANUATU11).

Research participants felt that equipment was generally accessible and up-to-date. However, the real challenge lies in ensuring the technical equipment is upgraded and maintained to provide coverage on all islands. The complex geography, with numerous dispersed islands, makes equipment maintenance a costly challenge, as one research participant describes: *'We have gaps because covering Vanuatu is a nightmare, 83 islands which are spread out [across a] very big area ... most of them have dense forest or bush, which means each time it rains the water on the leaves, makes your coverage ... worse and so if you have a tower there you have to maintain it, make sure it is not stolen, because we had experienced stealing before, of batteries like that. So, it's very costly to cover the network and maintain the coverage'* (VANUATU11).

### **PACMAS Strategic Activity: Emergency Broadcast Systems**

Vanuatu is prone to natural disasters, with cyclones and tsunamis being the most common. Disaster preparedness and response is coordinated through the Vanuatu Meteorology and Geo-Hazards Department (VMGD) with a coalition of established organisations working together to address disaster issues. Vanuatu has a Disaster Risk Reduction (DDR) and Disaster Management (DM) National Action Plan (2006-2016)<sup>11</sup> which was developed in partnership with the Pacific Disaster Risk Management Partnership Network. The Action Plan is based on the global Hyogo Framework for Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters and the Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management Regional Framework for Action, 2005-2015. The Vanuatu DDR and DM National Action Plan includes, among other objectives: strengthening of national policy and organisational structures at national, regional and community level; understanding risks and vulnerabilities; improving the use of technical equipment for DDR and DM; and, strengthening monitoring and evaluation of implementation processes.

The Government of Vanuatu has a newly-established National Advisory Board (NAB) on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction. Its objectives include improving the coordination and governance surrounding the threats that climate change and disasters pose to its people, environment and assets. The NAB seeks to improve the management of human, financial and technical resources to effectively respond to the priority adaptation needs of the people. The NAB maintains an up-to-date website providing information and resources.<sup>12</sup>

VMGD and the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) provide the advisory information that goes out to the public. During an emergency, the NDMO coordinates communications and works with all existing radio stations including VBTC to get information to the public. There are currently plans to decentralise disaster response efforts across the country, involving government, NGOs and the community. In February 2013, VBTC signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the NDMO and VMGD. It outlines procedures for broadcasting official emergency information. Also in February 2013, an agreement was signed between VBTC/NDMO/VMGD for the establishment of a back up radio studio facility housed at the NDMO office in Port Vila.

The NDMO works with NGO partners to circulate information on disaster preparedness and response to the community. It produces printed advertisements and has a one-hour weekly radio awareness program. Using television for awareness is considered expensive – it is only free for coverage during emergencies. Wan Smolbag Theatre uses drama (on radio and in live performances) to increase awareness on climate change issues during emergency response. A National Disaster Awareness week is conducted by the VMDG, which includes radio broadcasts and other education and awareness programs at the provincial level. National Disaster is included in the school curriculum and the Vanuatu Cultural Centre is reported to be collecting information on traditional knowledge and community coping mechanisms for disasters<sup>13</sup>.

Some organisations have their own in-house procedures for emergency situations. Telecom Vanuatu Limited (TVL), the only landline provider in Vanuatu, became aware of the gaps from a past tsunami warning experience. They were able to put their Disaster and Risk Management Plan into practice during the recent tsunami warning

11 Pelesikoti, Netatua. 2007 Vanuatu DRR&DM National Action Plan 2006 – 2016. EU EDF 8 – SOPAC Project Report 83: Reducing Vulnerability of Pacific ACP States. Suva: Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission <http://www.pacificdisaster.net/pdnadmin/data/original/ER0083.pdf>

12 see <http://www.nab.vu>, accessed 28 June 2013.

13 Vanuatu National Disaster Risk Management Office. 2009. Vanuatu: National progress report on the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action (2009-2011). HFA Monitor update published by PreventionWeb [http://www.preventionweb.net/files/20631\\_vut\\_NationalHFAprogress\\_2009-11.pdf](http://www.preventionweb.net/files/20631_vut_NationalHFAprogress_2009-11.pdf), Accessed 10 October 2012

from the Solomon Islands earthquake. *'In seven minutes we are able to switch off here, transfer all the calls there and we have a backup call centre behind ITS where we just have to switch on the computers and were up and ready...Reliability of information to inform people about a disaster is a challenge.'* (VANUATU11).

Sharing information with Blue Sky in Samoa after the December 2012 Cyclone Evan, provided some insights about their preparedness level and led to adjustments of their plans. For instance, they now have chainsaws to clear debris and ensure they are able to access their sites.

The National Action Plan identifies a number of issues relating to the country's ability to manage disasters, such as the impact of the loss of traditional knowledge on how to deal with disasters, lack of financial resources, and weak or absent information systems for each key hazard. This affects the ability to provide ongoing monitoring and early warnings to at-risk communities. Although significant progress has been made to strengthen Vanuatu's Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management information and systems, integration of these systems remains a major challenge. Research participants identified the need for more training on crisis reporting.

## Capacity Building

Capacity building includes an understanding of the level of qualifications among existing media and communication practitioners, training and capacity building support and organisations providing such support. It also takes into consideration media associations and TVETs in Vanuatu.

### PACMAS Strategic Activity: TVETS

The Vanuatu Institute of Technology (VIT) in Port Vila offers a two-year Diploma and one-year Certificate course in Media and Journalism. There is a yearly intake of 10 to 20 students. Records show a higher female enrollment rate. The Australian Technical College (ATC) and the Vanuatu National Training Centre accredits the course. The ATC provided a basic curriculum, which was then adapted to local context and needs. Students sit for an entry test and, if selected, they are expected to complete a project at the end of each course. It is common for students to undertake internships and develop industry networks for possible future employment and most graduates find jobs in the mainstream media.

There are efforts to develop a media and communication curriculum for Year 11 and 12 students. There are also plans to connect with higher education institutions that have established journalism degree programs, such as the University of South Pacific (USP), Divine Word University (DWU) and the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG), to provide pathways beyond certificates and diplomas. Until 2013, VBTC's Radio Vanuatu was supported through a bilateral program funded by AusAID and managed by the ABC. The Vois Blong Yumi Program, apart from offering technical support and advice, also assisted in training journalists and supported them in the development of radio content.

Compared to other TVET institutions in the Pacific, VIT is relatively well set up in terms of resources and has established connections with the Vanuatu Media Association (MAV). However, research participants said they would like a more active, creative and committed contribution from MAV. There are a few challenges for TVET training in Vanuatu, including resources (lack of equipment, particularly cameras). One respondent pointed towards the need for training TVET instructors: *'The main problem that I see it is that they're using people in the industry to teach who aren't proper teachers and not used to teaching, so it's a fairly big learning curve for them and you need a lot of time to set up classes'* (VANUATU02). Fees are considered expensive (56,000 Vatu per year) and there are no subsidies available. All of this has had an impact on the students' ability to complete the course, resulting in attrition.

### PACMAS Strategic Activity: Media Associations

*We have the Media Association in Vanuatu. I know they have media code of ethics. It's one thing to have a code, but if there's no mechanism to make sure that members are abiding by the code it's another issue* (VANUATU05).

The Media Association Blong Vanuatu (MAV) was established in 2006. MAV's mission is to promote effective governance, transparency and accountability through and with the media, and 'to develop excellence and



Figure 3: Provincial media officers shown how to operate a camera at workshop organised by VBTC and Vois Blong Yumi Project.  
Photo by PACMAS

professionalism among media practitioners so they can maintain an effective “watchdog” role and be champions of truth.<sup>14</sup>

MAV is governed by an Executive Committee, elected every two years at the Annual General Meeting. Three types of membership are available: ordinary members (practitioners of journalism, broadcasters and employees of any institution responsible for packaging and dissemination of information for public consumption, including non-government organisations); veteran members (retired practitioners); and affiliate members (non-voting membership, granted on terms decided by the Executive Committee). Membership is open to anyone working in the media industry, but only paying members receive benefits from MAV (2012 fee: 1,000 Vatu). In the past there have been conflicts between institutional members, and the industry has been divided, partly due to VBTC’s role as both regulator and administrator of broadcast licenses.

MAV is currently working on policy formation in partnership with the Vanuatu Government, CSOs and media. This is for a Media Development Policy (including freedom of information)<sup>15</sup>. A Code of Ethics was developed between 2006 and 2007. Building upon codes from neighbouring Melanesian countries, it was said to be a useful guide for media industry workers, particularly journalists. However, MAV does not have a disciplinary committee that can manage complaints.

MAV has an office at the Vanuatu Institute of Technology and relies on volunteers. Previously, a volunteer from the Australian Volunteer International (AVI) was placed at MAV in a supporting capacity, assisting with MAV’s operations. Research participants indicated a need for a fulltime coordinator to manage MAV official affairs. They felt it is important for MAV to provide training opportunities, not only for journalists, but a wide range of media practitioners, including technicians. Training has been offered in the past and covered gender issues, HIV, environment, media freedom, accountability and transparency. There were no current training activities noted. Some links to corporate companies have been established, for example Digicel sponsored a media delegation to attend a regional Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) meeting in Honiara.

## Media Content

Media content focuses on communication platforms and programs and ways to address issues related to climate change and NCDs. Climate change and NCDs are two of the strategic activity areas of focus for the PACMAS program.

Wan Smolbag produces radio spots, television programs and theatre that includes social messages which are also broadcast by VBTC. Specific content areas include education, environment, governance, health and youth. VBTC produces local TV news as well as radio news. Their radio program includes magazine-style shows and talk back. It broadcasts in Bislama, English and French.

<sup>14</sup> See the Media Association of Vanuatu’s website: [www.mav.org.vu](http://www.mav.org.vu)

<sup>15</sup> Media Association of Vanuatu. 2011. International Right to Know Day. 28 September 2011 <http://www.mav.org.vu/latest-news/63-international-right-to-know-day>

## PACMAS Strategic Activity: Climate Change

*'[...] We've got all those measures in place ... but if a massive storm blows over the country, no one can prepare for that. That's what's so scary about climate change.'* (VANUATU01)

Vanuatu is one of the world's most vulnerable nations to climate change and sea level rise.<sup>16</sup> The government has made this one of its priorities and has drawn up a National Adaptation Program for Climate Change (NAPA). The priorities listed here are: a) Agriculture and food security; b) Water management policies/programs; c) Sustainable forestry management; d) Community based marine resource management programs; e) Mainstreaming climate change considerations into infrastructure design and planning; f) Sustainable livestock farming and management; and, g) Sustainable tourism.

However, raising awareness about these issues through media and other channels of communication is not considered a priority. Vanuatu has an active Meteorology Department that heads a climate change task force but according to one respondent *'...the biggest impediment for implementing that is accessing global funds'* (VANUATU01). The Vanuatu Association for NGOs (VANGO) works intensively on climate change with its network partners. VANGO is a member of the national advisory team coordinating climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, a new initiative from the government. The association works with UNDP and community based organisations that are part of the network but it does not have a communication strategy. VBTC, however, has a climate change reporter and a weekly program on climate change issues.

Policies around climate change have been prepared, including efforts to integrate climate change issues into the school curriculum. Research participants consider that Vanuatu has adequate policies in regard to climate change, yet there is a general feeling that the challenge is how to address Vanuatu's situation in practice: *'...it's just that we still have to have it put into practice and then see... where we can sharpen it up and improve'* (VANUATU06). There is awareness among the general public around issues of climate change. However the depth of their understanding might depend on the level of exposure to *'working with or knowing of projects on climate change in their communities'* (VANUATU05).

Climate change awareness in Vanuatu to date has been done via mass media and community-based work. Journalists have a basic knowledge of climate change issues. The Climate Change Office has provided climate change training in the past, and information is available to journalists. However, as one respondent indicated, lack of transportation is a key challenge when it comes to climate change reporting: *'one of the setbacks of covering climate change issues in Vanuatu is the lack of transportation to be there and see what is happening'* (VANUATU03). For many, the preferred and most effective way of communicating is *'face to face, to get people to understand properly'* (VANUATU05).

## PACMAS Strategic Activity: NCDs

*I think it's [media coverage around NCDs] still superficial. In the sense that, I think in the program we've had three trainings, had the media people invited to the training to get them on board to let them know all about NCDs and they can be able to be a partner. And they do. But, only on a news basis, like if there's an important thing coming up, this special report coming up they grab it fast and put it out on the media everybody sees it at that time and then, that's it.* (VANUATU09)

NCDs are affecting the general population and are considered an emerging and major issue, particularly diabetes and hypertension<sup>17</sup>. NCD rates are rising across the population, across genders, and among rural and urban populations. The 2011 World Health Organisation (WHO) STEPS survey indicated well over 20 per cent of the population is affected, compared to 2.8 per cent in 1998. Child diabetes is on the rise along with cancers affecting women (cervical and breast cancer). Research participants commented on increased hospital costs and the impact of the social costs of NCDs. They attributed the rise of NCD-related illnesses to issues such as lack of income, lack of land to grow food, especially in urban areas, and cheaper prices for imported processed foods.

16 SPREP. Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change: Vanuatu. Report of In-Country Consultations. [http://www.sprep.org/attachments/Climate\\_Change/PACC\\_Report\\_of\\_in-country\\_consultations\\_Vanuatu.pdf](http://www.sprep.org/attachments/Climate_Change/PACC_Report_of_in-country_consultations_Vanuatu.pdf), Accessed 10 October, 2013

17 Government of Vanuatu. 2011. Ministry of Health National Strategy (2010-2016). 29 September 2011. <http://www.governmentofvanuatu.gov.vu/index.php/government/health>, Accessed 10 October 2013



Policies and legislation in regards to NCDs are in place but implementation is weak, especially in delivering programs in regions other than Port Vila<sup>18</sup>. There is no mention of NCDs in the Health Sector Strategy (2010-2016)<sup>19</sup>. However, there is a Policy on Non-Communicable Diseases 2010-2015 that takes a holistic approach to addressing NCDs by bringing them back to primary health care. Networking and coordinating with relevant stakeholders in the private sector has been seen as important in maximising the use of scarce resources.

There is currently no NCD communication strategy in place. Limited funds are available to communicate messages to the public via mass media. *'I would love to see our communication aspect of NCDs to be addressed. To get our messages across and to get people being informed early...Our main thinking around NCD policies what we have now is around the prevention of NCDs as well as early detections and the surveillance aspect of the program'* (VANUATU09). Media coverage around NCDs includes news stories of events or publications of reports. While training workshops for journalists have been held, there is an issue around costs when it comes to informing the public about NCD issues. News stories are free but ads and promotional activities are costly. One participant commented on media's overall ineffectiveness and lack of prioritising funds for NCD awareness: *'I believe that a lot of them are aware of NCDs, I think what the challenge is, especially for...the media organisations that have a national reach is that they're not well run, mainly it's the government owned...it's very heavily politicised ... the resources are not allocated to priority needs of the country, which means that even though they have an awareness of these issues they are not...using media effectively to get the information out to people'* (VANUATU05).

While radio is considered the main medium for information dissemination, the issue of remoteness and coverage has been challenging. This often results not only in a lack of information but also in misinformation when no official source reaches remote communities. As one research participant describes: *'There's a lot of people who claim to be able to provide cures for NCDs, and that creates confusion. We were approached by the health department just last month to produce radio spots to tell people to be careful about cures, instant cures that people offer for NCDs...there is conflicting information going around so it's very hard for people to know what to believe'* (VANUATU05).

The Government of Vanuatu works in partnership with stakeholders in the NGO sector. It was noted that there were many NGO groups emerging and that the various activities of these groups needs to be better coordinated. Through the 2-1-22 Regional Program on NCDs, which involves the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and World Health Organisation (WHO), a range of activities has been taking place<sup>20</sup>. The Wan Smolbag theatre group has a nutrition centre (part of their youth centre). Project 2-1-22 and the Pacific Action for Health project also ran radio and television ads, but there was lack of coordination from the health promotion unit. In addition, the ads were expensive and consequently were aired inconsistently. Church networks and community leaders are also used to communicate NCD messages. Churches are a trusted source of information, and occasionally groups such as the 2-1-22 program are invited to talk to people during church activities (conferences, meetings, workshops and youth camps). Research participants stated that it was easier to communicate NCD messages through these networks.

### Cross-Cutting Issues: Disability, Gender and Youth

Vanuatu's Disability Promotion and Advocacy Association (DPA) and the organisation of Friends of People with Special Needs undertake advocacy work for the rights of people living with disabilities. However, interviewees in the media and communication industry did not mention specific disability initiatives or outreach programs. Women remain underrepresented in political leadership, but are often actively involved through church groups. Within the media and communication industry there are generally more women than men enrolled in TVETs courses. There is active engagement of young people through the Wan Smolbag Youth Centres, in Port Vila, Luganville and on the island of Pentecost. Youth are actively involved in workshops and creative activities allowing them to discuss various issues that affect them.

18 Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 2009. PACIFIC NCD FORUM MEETING REPORT: 24-28 August 2009, Nadi, Fiji Islands. New Caledonia: Healthy Lifestyle Section, Public Health Division, Secretariat of the Pacific Community. [http://www.pacifichealthvoices.org/files/PacificNCDForumReport09\[1\].pdf](http://www.pacifichealthvoices.org/files/PacificNCDForumReport09[1].pdf), Accessed 10 October 2013

19 Government of the Republic of Vanuatu. 2010. Health Sector Strategy 2010 -2016: Moving Health Forward. New Caledonia: Ministry of Health Vanuatu. <http://www.ausaid.gov.au/countries/pacific/vanuatu/Documents/health-sector-strategy-2010-2016.pdf>

20 The 2-1-22 program is a collaboration between the WHO and the SPC and supports small projects for countries in the Pacific. 2-1-22 stands for two organizations, one team, serving 22 countries and territories

## Summary of Findings

A common challenge in the media and communication landscape in Vanuatu is media coverage and reaching remote communities on the outer islands. The main findings across the four areas of policy and legislation, media systems, capacity building and content is summarised below.

### Policy and Legislation

- The government broadcaster VBTC administers broadcast licences in Vanuatu.
- Under the Newspaper Act 1982, newspaper owners must be Vanuatu citizens.
- Freedom of expression is guaranteed in the constitution, but there is no specific protection for freedom of media, and threats against journalists are fairly common.
- The Media Association Blong Vanuatu (MAV) has a code of ethics for its members but no mechanism for enforcing its provisions.

### Media Systems

- During an emergency, NDMO coordinates communication and works with all existing radio stations including VBTC to get information out.
- There is a national disaster plan drafted that is currently under review. VBTC has no emergency disaster plan.
- TVL, the only landline provider in Vanuatu, has its own in-house procedures in the case of an emergency.
- A major challenge is coverage, upgrading TV and radio services to other provinces, and ensuring that equipment is maintained.

### Capacity Building

- The Vanuatu Institute of Technology (VIT) in Port Vila offers a two-year Diploma and one-year Certificate course. There are efforts being made to develop a feeder media and communication curriculum for Year 11 and 12.
- While enrolled, it is common for students to undertake internships and develop their industry networks for possible future employment.
- Technicians in Vanuatu either learn on the job or obtain their training overseas.
- The Media Association Blong Vanuatu (MAV) was established in 2006. MAV has an office at the VIT and relies on volunteers.

### Content

- Vanuatu has an active meteorology department, which heads the climate change task force; The Vanuatu Association for NGOs does intense work on climate change with its partners.
- Climate change awareness in Vanuatu to date has been done both via mass media and via community-based work. Integration of climate change issues into the school curriculum has been started.
- There is a Policy on Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs) but no communication strategy. The government works in partnership with stakeholders in the NGO sector to produce programs on NCDs. Media coverage around NCDs mainly includes news stories of events or publications of reports.



## Research Partners





Further information:  
<http://www.pacmas.org/>  
<http://www.abcinternationaldevelopment.net.au/>