

**Vanuatu
South Pacific
The Girl Child**

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Vanuatu South Pacific The Girl Child



Vanuatu Associate of Women Graduates
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Introduction

The Republic of Vanuatu is located in the Western Pacific and is geographically isolated with the dispersion of its population over 83 islands. Vanuatu society is Melanesian; diverse in that there are more than 110 separate languages spoken; a range of custom and traditional practices among the different groups; a society where family members, villages and communities work together to achieve individual and communal goals.

Vanuatu gained Independence in 1980, and individual and communal rights are enshrined in its *Constitution*. Vanuatu is an active member of the South Pacific Forum. The Government is a parliamentary democracy with exclusive powers vested in the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers. The Vanuatu Parliament ratified the *Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)* in 1992 under the CRC (Ratification) Act No. 26,1992 and is also a signatory to the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*. In its *Constitution*, its policy statements, and through its accession to CEDAW and CRC, the Government of Vanuatu has indicated its commitment to gender equity and the right to education for all its children.

The Vanuatu Association of Women Graduates has prepared this paper for the International Federation of University Women Conference. The paper relies substantially on the Country Report prepared by the Government for delivery at the 2001 Ministerial Consultation for East Asia and the Pacific¹ and a paper prepared by Mildred Sope for the 2000 UNICEF Forum on Girls Education².

Trends in Vanuatu that Affect Children

Political Issues

Politically Vanuatu is relatively stable among Melanesian countries following a Comprehensive Reform Program (CRP). The reform program focuses on Government transparency, accountability, good governance and equity. In 2001 there are no female members of Parliament, no Directors General, few Directors and heads of agencies and few female members of boards in either the public or private sector. However, preparations are in progress to enable greater participation of women in the upcoming provincial, municipal and national elections.

Vanuatu like many Pacific Islands is in transition from a traditional exchange-based economy to urban and more modern economies. Per capita incomes are increasing, social indicators such as life expectancy and infant mortality are showing improvement and the urban populations are growing quickly. This transition creates new challenges, which affect the social fabric and development of the country. The rapid growth and concentration of populations is a major source of social, cultural and economic disruption

¹ Vanuatu Government, Vanuatu Government Report for the 5th Ministerial Consultation for East Asia and the Pacific, Beijing, China, 14–16 May 2001.

² Sope, M. Paper prepared for the UNICEF Forum on Girls Education held at the United Nations Millennium Summit, 2000.

to Vanuatu. Domestic violence, child abuse and crime is on the increase³. Several decades of high birth rates and improved child health services leave large numbers of children and young adults now in need of education, health care and productive occupations. Globalisation leads to ideas and information that heighten the expectations and aspirations of people who cannot fully understand and respond to the imbalance it creates in their lives.

Demography

The mean age of Vanuatu's population is 17.1 years.⁴ The pressing issues affecting these young people (over 50% of the population) require substantial resources. Current initiatives seem to be very inadequate.

Gender

In traditional society there was a fairly clear division of gender roles, often with male and female roles complementing one another. Women's rights, limited as they had been, were protected. Modernisation has caused major upheavals in traditional roles. Men have increased dependence on food items bought for cash thus reducing their important traditional role of fishing and hunting. Inactivity and freedom have led many young men to experience feelings of pain and insecurity, as they no longer enjoy the satisfaction of a real contribution to their community. This manifests itself in increasing rates of substance abuse particularly, kava and alcohol⁵. It also contributes to increasing child abuse, rape and domestic violence of all kinds

Rising Domestic Violence

Custom often conflicts with many of the international standards of the rights of the child and women and girls. "Consideration of the views of children with due weight" is a difficult pill to swallow for chiefs and village leaders who are accustomed to strictly disciplining children. Some women have attested to rising incidence of domestic violence in urban areas that they were not familiar with in their villages. There is no legislation to combat domestic violence and to date a lack of political will to introduce a Family Protection Bill that has been widely consulted over across the nation. Domestic violence offences largely go unpunished in a country that still has a weak legal system. The current Government has made a commitment to passing legislation on Family Protection and the CRP has in hand a legal strengthening process.

Major Achievements

The major achievements in health and nutrition and education affect the girl child in much the same way as the boy child.

Health and Nutrition

Immunisation coverage rates are steadily improving. Rates for diphtheria, pertusis and tetanus (DPT) immunisation by the age of 12 months has risen from 58 percent in 1988 to

³ Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, April 2000

⁴ 1999 Vanuatu National Census

⁵ Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, April 2000

93 percent in 1998. Measles coverage has risen from 46 percent in 1988 to 94 percent in 1999⁶. The severity and occurrence of many other previously common *infectious diseases* in Vanuatu has been dramatically reduced. *Malaria* is endemic and for many years was a significant health problem. However the distribution of impregnated bed nets, early diagnosis and effective and complete treatment has resulted in significant reduction in annual parasite incidence. Annual parasite incidence decreased from 184.34:1000 in 1988 to 27.62:1000 in 1999. There were no recognised deaths due to malaria reported in 1999. *Dengue fever* continues to appear in Vanuatu. Control measures are primarily environmental management. *Tuberculosis* and *leprosy* programs are managed nationally. Despite almost 100 percent BCG coverage there has been a marked occurrence of tuberculosis in urban communities where poor housing and overcrowded conditions exist. *Diarrhea* continues to be a major cause of childhood morbidity in Vanuatu with many deaths related to dehydration, and dysentery. *Acute Respiratory Infection* (ARI) is the second single major cause of infant mortality. ARI is the third leading cause of infant morbidity and admissions to outpatient departments, and the leading cause of morbidity among those 1-5 years. Integrated management training of the health workers is showing better management in the home of these diseases.

A *Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Program* initiated in 1994 has resulted in an estimated 53 percent of the rural population and 86 percent of the urban population having access to safe drinking water⁷. The *Rural Sanitation Project* established in 1989, supported by UNICEF and implemented through the Ministry of Health is committed to constructing over 15,000 Ventilated Improved Pit latrines, providing 52 percent of the entire population with the safe disposal of human waste.

In an effort to promote consumption of more nutritious locally grown foods and reduce the demand for more expensive and nutritionally inferior imported foods, all Government ministries and departments have joined forces in 2001 to create and promote a nationwide campaign "*Year of Island Foods*". *Breastfeeding* remains almost universally practiced in Vanuatu and continues until one and one half years or longer. Complimentary foods are introduced early, between the third and fourth month. The major tertiary hospital in Port Vila is working towards Baby Friendly designation, BFHI. *Maternal Child Health* (MCH) services in Vanuatu promote the optimal health of mothers and children providing antenatal services, maternity care, postnatal care, under 5 clinic, school health and family planning.

Women's Health

Achievements in the health status of women have been slow but incremental. Improved *antenatal care* has resulted in safer deliveries of healthy babies. *Nutritional status* of women has improved as indicated by the results from the National Nutrition survey (NNS) 1999, which indicate that anemia in women has fallen substantially from the 1983 survey, but remains a very serious public health problem with 55 percent of women affected. Rural women are affected more severely. *Family planning services* are reaching

⁶ Department of Health, NHDP, 2

⁷ 1999 National Census

families in remote areas of Vanuatu with an increase in contraception user rate and reduction in defaulter rate. The National Family Planning policy has been implemented since 1993. Table 1 lists selected indicators for reproductive health in Vanuatu.

Table 1: Selected Indicators for Reproductive Health⁸

Total fertility rate	5.3%
Teenage births	0.41%
40+ births	0.48%
Percentage of women attending prenatal services	93%
Percentage of attended births	75%
Maternal mortality	92-139:100,000
Contraceptive use	15%

Youth

With the mean age of the Vanuatu population being seventeen (17)⁹, attention has been drawn to the provision of services and programs that could address the social, economic and reproductive needs of young people. UNFPA has implemented a regional *adolescent reproductive health* project that will include counseling services, education, and access to birth control methods¹⁰. The *Vanuatu Young Peoples project*, supported by Government and external donors provides a voice for youth. The project has researched issues affecting youth and documented their findings in print and video.

Education

In recent years there has been a heightened awareness, in Vanuatu as in other countries, of the need to address gender equity issues within the education sector. The Human Poverty Index of the Pacific Island Countries shows Vanuatu as the third last of the Least Developed Countries. Vanuatu believes that the key to development and success is through education. However, because of limited financial and human resources, education is neither compulsory nor free. Vanuatu has just celebrated the 20th anniversary of its Independence and there are some achievements to celebrate in the area of education.

The Vanuatu Preschool Association was founded in 1983 and has developed a strong network of provincial coordinators and key teachers at provincial level. The Association has developed a *model preschool kindergarten* with a standard curriculum and a training package. In 1999 the government began to provide funding support for the development of preschools. In 2000, girls were 51 percent of the total preschool enrolment: 1800 girls and 1700 boys¹¹.

Primary school is free (parents are required to provide a contribution fee) but is not compulsory. Vanuatu has made great strides in providing places for primary enrollment -

⁸ sustainable human development in Vanuatu 1996

⁹ 1999 National census

¹⁰ The reproductive health program Vanuatu, mid term review 2001

¹¹ Ministry of Education Annual Report, 1999

87 percent in 1991 scattered over 362 primary schools and 60 islands. Today there are nearly 400 primary schools for 18,000 boys and 16,300 girls, an increase in gross enrollment of almost 40 percent in the last decade¹². A *vernacular language* education program targeting the first two years of primary school is currently in its pilot stage. The enrolment of girls relative to boys has increased by one percent. In 1999 girls were 47.6 percent of the total primary enrolment compared to 46.7 percent in 1989.

In 1993, *secondary schools* accommodated only 25 percent of the primary student candidates. In 1999, secondary-school expansion has led to 42 percent of all candidates continuing into Grade seven. Access is constrained by school fees, which are the full responsibility of the parents. While the secondary net enrolment female:male ratio was still only 84:100 in 1997, this was an increase of 11 percent since 1987¹³. One encouraging statistic reported in the Ministry of Education's *Annual Report for 1999* is that more girls were accepted into Year 7 as a result of the 1999 Year 6 examination (38.5 percent accepted female candidates as against 36.6 percent all candidates) and into Year 11 as the result of the 1999 Year 10 examination (63.2% accepted female candidates as against 60.9% all candidates).

Education levels at tertiary level have climbed dramatically. Before Independence there were only eight university graduates (five of whom were women) and now there are over 600, of whom 238 are women, although the decline in women as a percentage of scholarships is disappointing.

To assist and support the 60 percent of children who leave primary schools without sufficient livelihood or vocational training the government and NGO communities have developed a range of *non-formal education opportunities*. Rural Training Centers and a National Institute of Technology offer livelihoods and vocational training as well as advanced technical studies.

Child Protection

The most disadvantaged children in Vanuatu are the rural disabled children living with visual, hearing, physical and intellectual disabilities. The Vanuatu Society for the Disabled through an outreach program identifies the numbers of disabled people, the range of disabilities and the necessity to develop rehabilitative services. The Society's community-based approach provides education at community level encouraging full integration of disabled people into mainstream society.

Child Rights

The Government has officially appointed a *National Children's Committee* (NCC) to take the responsibility of monitoring and reporting of the CRC and provide guidance to the Government on implementation and advocacy strategies. A national level *CRC training* was conducted, the NCC has begun to coordinate activities to promote the CRC and a *law review* is in the early stages to ensure compliance with CRC. Debate is ongoing in

¹² Ibid, UNDP1996, Education Master Plan 2001

¹³ UNICEF, *Assessing the Progress of Women*, 2000

Vanuatu regarding the custom versus western approach to dealing with young offenders. A regional child protection project in the inception stage will determine the forms and incidence of child abuse and develop appropriate primary prevention programs.

Future Agenda for Children

Emerging Issues

Over the last two decades tremendous changes have occurred in both the economic and social spheres of Pacific Island countries, between the traditional ways of Melanesian society and the western influences of a consumer society. Many issues overlap and are interrelated.

Rapid Population Growth

“Vanuatu’s demographic situation reflects its underdeveloped status whereby fertility has declined but still remains high, mortality and life expectancy have improved but remain unsatisfactory, population growth has recently increased and the current rate of population size will double in 23 years; and the rate of urbanisation exceeds rural growth by a factor of almost two. The 1999 Census indicates that the population of Vanuatu has reached 186,678; a growth rate of 3 percent per annum over ten years”¹⁴. 42.7 percent of the population is under fifteen years of age¹⁵. This results in an increasing demand for education, health care and productive occupations.

Urban Squatter Settlements

Some 30-40 percent of Port Vila’s population lives in squatter settlements. A similar phenomenon is seen in Luganville, the next largest urban center. Living conditions are generally sub-standard with overcrowded housing, no water supply, poor sanitation, dramatic rise in morbidity, increased violence, few education and employment opportunities and apparent lack of concern by any level of government as these settlements appear not to fall within any jurisdiction. The 1999 National Census reports an increase in population distribution in the two major urban centers from 496 persons/square kilometer in 1989 to 783 persons/square kilometer in 1999.

Food Security

In rural Vanuatu, subsistence-farming systems provide most of the food. The Vanuatu 2000 labour market survey reports that in 1999, 70 percent of the working population aged 15 and over, works in subsistence agriculture. There is a close relationship between consumption and production. The major risk of food insecurity in Vanuatu occurs in the expanding urban communities where the adequacy and stability of food supply rely on market foods, cash incomes and the distribution infrastructure. As well, rapid urbanisation and alienation of fertile land to cash cropping have increased the demand for imported foods. Dependency on imported foods has emerged as a major issue facing Vanuatu¹⁶. Imported foods are generally cheaper, more accessible and more convenient

¹⁴ Sustainable Human Development in Vanuatu, 1996

¹⁵ 1999 National Census

¹⁶ UNDP 99, UNDP Vanuatu, 1996

than local market foods. But they are inferior nutritionally. The amount of rice available for consumption per capita per year has increased from 43 kg in 1986 to 58 kg in 1998. The value of food exports is 60 percent of imported foods. Imported sugar, chocolate, fruit and vegetable oils have increased dramatically from 1989¹⁷.

Family Structure

Traditionally, raising children was a joint responsibility involving the extended family that ensured children were properly cared for if the parents were unable to. Today child rearing still remains the prime responsibility of the parents but with families becoming more nuclear and dispersed they are fast losing the benefits of the help they once enjoyed. The absence of many traditional protections of an extended family from the nuclear family contributes to the increase in domestic violence. There is an increase in cross-cultural marriages so that the traditional rules are not so easily applied. Young people are increasingly choosing their own spouses and the family investment in the marriage is not as great as it once was.

Access to Education

At the beginning of the 21st Century, Vanuatu is facing major challenges that will affect its capacity to provide adequate educational opportunity for all of its children, boys as well as girls. Since Independence, schools for both French and English speaking children have been continued, an expensive enterprise. Over the past 20 years the population has doubled to 200,000 and nearly two thirds are under 18 years of age. These are the years for universal education in many countries of the North. In 1999, for every 100 boys enrolled in primary schools in Vanuatu there were 91 girls. At secondary level there were 93 girls for every 100 boys. More girls are now moving through junior secondary (96:100) compared with senior secondary (90:100). Overall secondary enrolment showed a significant difference among provinces; for example in Penama (99:100) and Shefa (98:100) compared with Sanma (84:100). The smallest province, Torba had the highest proportion of girls enrolled at primary level (94:100) and was the only province with more girls than boys in junior secondary schooling.

According to the *Education Master Plan 2000-2010* (1999) prepared by the World Bank, a smaller percentage of girls proceed on to each higher level of education with the drop-off particularly great for those who continue on to the highest levels of secondary education and to tertiary education. One of the key reasons is said to be that girls are more likely to be kept home to help with the housework and gardening than are boys. Another reason is considered to be that families believe that girls will be 'lost' to them by marrying out of the family. Many parents are therefore more willing to pay school fees for sons' further education than they are for daughters' further education. These factors are social and cultural in nature and difficult to address by the education system alone.

The number of female teachers at primary level is close to the number of men, while at secondary level male teachers outnumber women by 2:1. Generally there is an increasing number of women moving into formal employment. Nevertheless, despite the high

¹⁷ Dr Ruth English MOH, 1999 draft "National Food and Nutrition Policy"

percentage of women in the teaching service, there are few women managers and no women at Director level and above in the Ministry of Education.

At INTV there are 67 girls enrolled for every 100 boys. Two technical secondary schools and the rural development training centres (RDTC) offer courses that mostly cater for male youth. The statistical data for RDTCs is limited, but there are over twice as many male as female enrolments given the data available. Much more needs to be done to encourage girls into vocational education and training.

While at Independence 62 percent of graduates of women, in the Year 2000 only 40 percent were women. Less than 20 scholarship holders of the 64 who completed qualifications in 1998 were women. Vanuatu and donor governments' policies on gender equity in selection should increase the number of women moving on to further education. However 32 percent of all students on scholarship in 2000 are women compared with 33 percent in 1998 and 1999. Despite a formal commitment to gender equity, the practical results have been disappointing, resulting in a proportion still weighted in favour of men of 68 to 32 women actually taking up scholarships.

The *Education Master Plan 2000-2010* prepared by the World Bank currently being considered by the Government aims to provide basic education of eight years for all children by 2010. The Plan has no specific goals stated for gender equity. The Plan suggests that apart from the strategy of universal basic education, the environment in the school could be made more attractive to encourage parents to keep their girls at school. A further strategy suggested is an awareness campaign to publicise the fact that better educated girls are more likely to raise healthy, well-nourished children. The Government is aware that much more specific proposals are needed to ensure gender equity in education.

Ongoing Research

Some significant development projects are indicating the valuable outcomes achieved by focusing on girls' education. For example, a Vanuatu/Australia Government project at the National Institute of Technology (INTV) has established an annual scholarship since 1997 to assist 21 young women into non-traditional courses and careers. Young women are now enrolled in courses such as automotive, general mechanics, electrical, building and construction. The first term results this year show young women taking out first and second places in almost all non-traditional subjects. The Government and INTV are committed to continuing these scholarships from 2002. Women have also become important participants in the new Industry Advisory Committees established by INTV to advise on course and curriculum areas.

The Vanuatu Government has recently decided to carry out a gender status review that will be funded by the New Zealand Government, which will establish baselines on gender status across the education sector in Vanuatu and be a blueprint for future analyses. The review will identify data sources, collate and analyse available data, identify significant areas of gender imbalance, recommend remedial action and areas of research, and suggest ways of monitoring the education system for gender equity. The review should produce a

plan of action to promote gender sensitivity in all aspects of education, in enrolment policies and practices, in the curriculum and learning environment, in new technologies, in teachers' attitudes, and in educational management.

VAWG is aware of the key role that women have in the future development of our country. Educating girls will build their confidence and enable them to make informed decisions about their productive lives in the family, community and nation. This will reduce the likelihood that they will have children while still children themselves, assist them to manage their pregnancies so they do not threaten their health and livelihood, to protect themselves from violence, to take part in economic and political decision making, and to ensure that their children in turn are guaranteed their right to education.

VAWG supports the view of the Secretary General of the United Nations that involving women as central players in development provides benefits for nutrition, health savings and reinvestment at the family, community and ultimately national level. Nevertheless the challenge of ensuring all girls as well as boys in Vanuatu receive a free, compulsory basic education is an ambitious objective and one that will need international assistance as well as the allocation of Vanuatu's own government and NGO resources.

Vulnerability of Youth

Despite the improvements in gross enrollment, 50 percent of Vanuatu children still lack access to further formal and non-formal education opportunities beyond year six. With the growing population greater demands will be placed on the education resources. National census indicates a disparity between education attainment in the rural and urban communities. School attendance drops dramatically from ages twelve onwards in rural communities. "55.5 percent aged 15 years and over reach the level of primary school only"¹⁸

An STI surveillance survey conducted in Vanuatu, 2000 indicated a sexually active population having unprotected sex. There was a marked increase in cases of chlamydia. There were no reported cases of HIV/AIDS, however with the rise in many other sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS could be imminent. There is a relatively high level of teenage (15-19) pregnancies¹⁹. In 1989, 12.04 percent of all deliveries were to teens and in 1999 the percentage was still 11.38.

The steady exodus of the young to urban centres is seriously undermining the security of rural families and communities. These same youth find themselves often unemployed, unskilled and without extended family ties to support them. They become disillusioned, idle and at greater risk of becoming involved in criminal activity and unhealthy activities.²⁰ Many youth are challenged by the pulls between traditional culture and contemporary society.

¹⁸ 1999 National Census

¹⁹ The Reproductive Health Program, Vanuatu, Mid term Review 2001

²⁰ Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Strategies/Plans

Development and Implementation of National Legislation and Policies

The Government in recent years has adopted a number of national policies that have a positive impact on children.

- The office of the Ombudsman is a constitutional body set up to investigate complaints against government agencies and departments. The *Ombudsman Act No. 27* was proclaimed in 1998. The enactment provides a mechanism for handling complaints of children whose rights have been violated.
- The *Population Policy for Vanuatu 2000* overall goal is to “contribute to a sustained rise in the real standard of living of the population and the quality of life of the people”.
- The *Reproductive Health Policy 2000* ensures that all individuals are given the opportunity to make the most of their potential. The policy emphasizes the right to information, freedom to make decisions, and promotion of mutually respectful and equitable reproductive health services.
- The 1983 Vanuatu National Food and Nutrition Policy has been revised and will be replaced by the *National Food and Nutrition Policy 2000*. The overall aim of the policy is to ensure the national wellbeing of the total population, and to increase the consumption of local foods.
- The Ministry of *Health Policy 2001* is a comprehensive policy covering a wide range of health-related issues. The policy is widely distributed to stakeholders throughout the country.
- The *Vanuatu 2000 Labour Market Survey Report* presents a detailed picture of employment within the Vanuatu economy. Employment related statistics, which are important economic and social development indicators.
- *The 1999 Vanuatu National Population and Housing Census*, the fourth census for the country, will provide essential facts to policy and decision-makers, as well as National Planning.
- *The National Policy on Early Childhood Education* recognises the importance of early childhood education and its impact on later learning.

A number of other important policies are in various stages of progress:

- The State Law Office of the Vanuatu Government has drafted a *Family Protection bill*. This bill is primarily designed to protect the family at all levels of Vanuatu society.
- A *National Breastfeeding Policy* has been drafted and submitted to Parliament in 1999 contains 15 statements that strongly support, promote and protect breastfeeding for all children of Vanuatu.
- The *Public Health Act 2000* is currently awaiting passage in Parliament. Much of the Act is specific to the protection of water resources and contains regulations to control vector borne diseases, to regulate sanitation and to protect and control epidemics and communicable diseases.

CRC Implementation Strategies

With the official appointment of the National Children's Committee, a body appointed to monitor and report on the CRC in Vanuatu the government must provide the political will and support to enable this coordinating body to fulfill its mandate for both the girl and boy child. The NCC will work hard for this recognition as well as budget allocation to support their activities. Identification of a Government Ministry responsible for children is in the NCC Work Plan. The NCC will incorporate into their annual business plans, activities and initiatives that are practical and far-reaching in CRC implementation. Efforts to engage communities about child rights are ongoing indirectly through many activities. The State Law Office is in the process of reviewing common law to ensure harmonisation with the CRC. UNICEF is providing technical support and advice.

Collection of Disaggregated Data

Collection of reliable data that is comprehensive and compliant with data requirements covered by the CRC, (age and gender break down up to age 18) is not in place in Vanuatu. Birth registration is not compulsory however every effort is made to register all children born, and issue them with a birth certificate (civil registry system) Death registration has been deliberately removed from the health information reporting system. The Health Information System has recently revised the monthly and epidemiological reporting forms to include information on breastfeeding, sanitation and safe water. Reporting rates from the outlying provinces are low.

Early Childhood and Primary Education

Until recently preschool education was entirely operated by the NGO community and the private sector. In 1999 the Government has provided funding to complement the work in progress and has adopted a national policy on early childhood education. The Vernacular Education Program will expand from a pilot phase to all primary schools, years 1- 3²¹. The Education Master Plan prepared by the World Bank, mandated by the Comprehensive Reform Program is in its second draft. This document provides a broad strategy for the development of an education system over the next 10-15 years and well beyond. The goals of the master plan include, access, relevance, quality, equity, language policy, partnerships, management and sustainability²². The Ministry of Education continues to work with NGO's, Churches, international organisations and agencies to meet the challenges of providing access and quality education to its citizens

Primary Health Care Services

The Ministry of Health in collaboration with Save the Children Australia are identifying and training village level health workers (VHW) throughout the country to provide very basic curative services, health promotion activities to their communities and be positive role models. The Government will provide the medical supplies. Recruitment of new students and retraining of VHW is ongoing²³. Traditional birth attendants continue to play a role in ensuring safe deliveries and births. Recruitment and training is ongoing. Teams of local health workers are receiving training in quantitative research

²¹ Ministry of Education Annual Report, 1999

²² Education Master plan, 2001

²³ Department of Health NHDP 2000

methodologies in an effort to develop a pool of local health workers that can conduct research into perceived problems, and then develop appropriate educational materials.

BFHI designation of the central tertiary hospital in Vanuatu is in progress. The process is a learning experience for the staff and validates the importance of exclusive breastfeeding as the most important start for all newborns.

Integrated management of Childhood Illnesses (IMCI) is in the early stages in Vanuatu. The Government has endorsed IMCI, paving the way for national orientation and training of local facilitators.

Children at Risk

A recent national summit on juvenile justice drafted a set of recommendations that would feed into a National Plan of Action for young offenders. Currently there is no system in place for young offenders, no probationary services and no forms of diversion to keep youth out of prison. A national plan is in progress that will respect the rights of youth to a system of justice that accounts for his/her age and the possibilities of re-integration into society.

Among the many activities of the Vanuatu Society for the Disabled, the society will begin community consultations to assist them in developing a national policy respecting the individual rights of disabled people. This policy will be presented to the Government for endorsement²⁴.

Vanuatu will be included in the Pacific Children's program, a regional program for primary prevention of violence against children. A feasibility study was conducted that provided ample anecdotal evidence that many forms of abuses exist against children. The program will establish an ongoing participatory data collection system, capacity building of stakeholders to address these issues, production of education materials and advocacy directed at political leaders.

Special Initiatives

There has been a range of "special" activities in Vanuatu that in one way or another have contributed to the survival, protection and development of our children. In 1992 the forum Pacific leaders, including Vanuatu endorsed the principle "**First Call for Children**", which had been articulated from the 1990 World Summit for Children (WSC). In 1993 a document was generated "**First Call for Children: an agenda for action.**" This has identified key activities to be undertaken at national and regional levels. The agenda serves as a resource document to support development of national plans of action²⁵. This regional agenda for action for Pacific Children "First Call" is;

- A call to each country to draft a policy framework that supports children.
- A call to eliminate preventable deaths, illnesses and disabilities

²⁴ VSDP Annual Report, 2000

²⁵ Document, The Pacific Children First Call, 1993

- A call to ensure children receive appropriate foods, in adequate quantities at the right time.
- A call to recognise the importance of the early years of life as key to the full and complete development of each child
- A call for each country to meet the inherent rights of children to basic education and life skills training
- A call to protect children from unhealthy and developmentally destructive influences.

July 24th, National Children's Day, is a public holiday in Vanuatu designated by the Government of Vanuatu. Since Vanuatu endorsed the World Summit Declaration 1990, July 24th has been declared as a day of celebration for children. The National Children's Committee, NCC has taken the responsibility of coordinating activities throughout the country. The NCC selects an article of the CRC and build activities around this theme. July 2000 celebrations emphasised Article 30, "**Children's right to enjoy their cultures, practice their own religion and use their own language**". Children were encouraged to dress in traditional clothing for all celebration activities, and asked to present a custom dance or song. Small speeches were heard in the local languages and all enjoyed local foods. Although this was a one-day event it brought communities together to celebrate children.

Conclusion

Recognising that Vanuatu is a relatively remote and small population within the world we face many of the same issues as our larger brother and sister countries There is no escaping the effects of globalisation and in many ways we can learn from each other. Vanuatu is at a turning point, trying to hold on to the good of our traditional ways, learn about modern western ways and weave them gently into our daily lives.

Certainly by global standards we have made much progress. Infant mortality has been dramatically reduced, expected life span is longer and improved services and programs have enhanced our quality of life. However as this report shows, we are struggling with a number of issues that challenge our progress. Guided by our belief in democracy, our commitment to such Conventions as the CRC and CEDAW we will continue move forward the agenda for children, especially girl children and the communities as a whole.

VAWG will be paying particular attention in its early years to the progress of the girl child in Vanuatu.

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In preparation for the United Nations Special Session on Children, the following is forwarded from UNICEF:

The Global Child

There are 2.1 billion children in the world, accounting for 35% of the world's population. Some 129 million children are born each year.

Globally, 1 in 4 children lives in abject poverty - in families with income lower than \$1 a day. In developing countries, 1 in 3 children lives in abject poverty.

One of every 12 children dies before they reach five, mostly from preventable causes.

Of every 100 children in the world:

- , 55 are born in Asia (19 in India, 18 China)
- , 16 are born in sub-Saharan Africa
- , 8 are born in Latin America and the Caribbean
- , 7 are born in the Middle East and North Africa
- , 6 are born in the Eastern Europe, CIS and Baltic States
- , 8 are born in industrialized countries (Western Europe, USA, Canada, Israel, Japan, Australia, New Zealand)

Birth registration

, The births of 33 are not registered. These children have no official existence or recognition of nationality.

Immunization

, 27 are not immunized against any disease.

Nutrition

- , 32 suffer from malnutrition in their first five years of life.
- , Only 44 are exclusively breastfed for the first three months of life.

Water and Sanitation

- , 18 have no access to clean drinking water.
- , 39 live without adequate sanitation.

Schooling

- , 18 of the children never go to school. Of these, 11 are girls.
- , 25 of every 100 who begin 1st grade do not reach the 5th grade.

Literacy

, 17 out of every 100 children never learn how to read. 11 are girls.

Child labour

- , 1 of every 4 children between the ages of 5 and 14 in the developing world work.
- ... Half of those who work do so full time.
- ... 8 of the 21 children born in Africa work.
- ... 12 of the 55 children born in Asia work.
- ... 1 of the 8 born in Latin America work.

Life expectancy

- , Globally, children born today are expected to live 64 years.
- , In the industrialized world, they will live 78 years.
- , In the 45 countries most affected by HIV/AIDS, average life expectancy is 58 years.
- , In Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe - countries heavily affected by HIV/AIDS - life expectancy is less than 43 years.

Sources: ILO Child Labor Statistics; UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children Report* (2001 and 2002); UNICEF, *Facts and Figures 2000*.