



**Ministry of Justice and Community Services  
Government of the Republic of Vanuatu**

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*“Jastis, sefti, digniti, rispek mo gud fasin blong evriwan.”*



## FACT SHEET

### Vanuatu National Child Protection Policy 2016-2026

The Government of Vanuatu has a responsibility to protect all children from violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Children in Vanuatu experience many issues including violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect at home and in schools. Children are particularly vulnerable on the internet and during emergencies such as cyclones.

The government has developed a National Child Protection Policy which will coordinate and strengthen the development of child protection systems in Vanuatu. The policy applies to everyone – government, communities, churches, NGOs and parents who all need to work together to make sure that our children are safe.

The National Child Protection Policy was developed together with stakeholders from government, NGOs, provincial and community leaders. We will be working to strengthen the good practices that are already happening within communities, through churches, chiefs and parents, as well as to build up the formal child protection system in the country, across health, justice, education and other sectors.

#### Policy Goal

To create an environment where children are safe and protected from all forms of abuse, exploitation, neglect and violence, and have equitable access to services to support their reintegration and recovery when needed.

#### Guiding Principles

The Policy and all related work in child protection is guided by 8 principles:

1. Every child has the right to be safe, happy and protected from abuse so that they can become leaders of our communities in the future.
2. All children can be vulnerable to abuse and everyone has an equal right to protection. Some children need special attention because they are more likely to face risks. These include children with disabilities, children separated from their families or homes, teenage mothers and their children and others.
3. Everyone shares the responsibility to protect children, especially leaders at the national, provincial or community level. Churches, chiefs, government ministries, NGOs and international organisations all need to be involved in child protection.
4. All decisions should make sure that they have the best possible outcome for children. This does not mean that children's needs are more important than others, but it does mean that decisions or actions cannot have negative impacts for children if it is possible to avoid them.
5. The influence of some religious and kastom practices can have on the protection of children should be supported, as long as they follow these guiding principles.
6. Child protection systems and responses must do no harm to children.
7. We should promote the participation of children in every stage of child protection work.
8. This policy must be implemented together with efforts to address gender inequality, because it is closely linked to child protection issues.

## Strategic Areas of Action

There are 8 Strategic Areas that stakeholders will work on under the National Child Protection Policy.

Strategic Area	Main Activities
Raising awareness and understanding of child protection	National child protection awareness strategy Research on the situation of child protection in Vanuatu Implementing the Child Online Protection Awareness Strategy
Stopping child abuse before it happens by developing prevention, early identification and early intervention strategies	Working in communities to develop community based child protection models
Cooperation between stakeholders	Supporting the National Child Protection Working Group and Provincial Child Protection working Groups Developing referral systems to manage cases of child abuse between police, health, and other services
Coordination of continuous care for children	The diversion program for child survivors and child offenders will be improved VCC and churches, Malvatumauri and chiefs will work on child protection activities Improved data collection on child protection
Strengthening government standards for child protection and working with children	Government ministries and other organisations working with children will develop child safeguarding procedures The judiciary system and corrections will be made more child friendly Police will be supported to implement their Standard Operating Procedures Child protection will be included in health, education and churches
Improving legal protection for children	Laws will be reviewed and amended to make sure that they comply with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Child Protection Bill will be proposed
Skilled professionals to provide services	A training program on child protection for government service providers who work with children, including teachers, police, health workers, and law and justice staff
Child protection in emergencies	Training vulnerable communities to protect children during emergencies Including child protection in all disaster preparation and response planning

## Implementation

Child protection touches many sectors and is the shared responsibility of all stakeholders.

The Ministry of Justice and Community Services is responsible to coordinate the implementation of this policy, in partnership with the National Child Protection Working Group.

*Everyone is responsible for protecting children from violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect. Let's work together to keep our children safe.*