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Enabling Women's and Feminist Movements to End Violence Against Women and Girls:

Experiences from Vanuatu

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As gains in women's rights remain fragile, it is important to prioritize funding for essential services that include sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) prevention and response in COVID-19 fiscal stimulus packages and new strategies. The Vanuatu experience of close partnership with women's rights organizations shows the importance of sustainable funding for civil society organizations to tackle SGBV. This paper will explore engagement methods, approaches, and concrete strategies of UNDP work in Vanuatu to effectively support women's rights and feminist movements in ending violence against women and girls as key actors for sustainable, equal and participatory development.

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is one of the most widespread but least recognized human rights abuses in the world, affecting individuals and communities everywhere. It includes physical, sexual and psychological abuse; threats; coercion; arbitrary deprivation of liberty; and economic deprivation, whether occurring in public or private. SGBV exists because of the differences in power between males and females and is rooted in cultural and social norms regarding masculinity and femininity, male honor, female chastity and obedience, and male sexual entitlement, an ideology that supports the idea that brands males as superior to females. According to UNDP's 2020 report 'Human Development

Perspectives: Tackling social norms—a game changer for gender inequalities', discriminatory social norms and stereotypes reinforce gendered identities and determine power relations that constrain women's and men's behaviour in ways that lead to inequality.² As per the Gender Social Norms Index (GSNI³), almost 30 percent of people agree it is justifiable for a man to beat his partner.⁴ This data is confirmed by the latest estimates on SGBV: Nearly one in three women worldwide aged 15 years and older have been subjected to physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner, non-partner or both at least once in their lifetime. In Pacific Island countries, violence against women and girls is among the

highest in the world. National research⁵ shows high rates of SGBV lifetime experience in Tonga (79 percent), Fiji (72 percent), Vanuatu (72 percent) and the Solomon Islands (64 percent). The recent COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated all the risk factors for violence against women and girls (VAWG), including unemployment, loss of income and poverty, which reinforced many of the root causes, such as gender stereotypes and harmful social norms. In addition, Vanuatu and the Pacific Islands in general are among the lowest in terms of women's political participation and representation from sub-national to national levels.

Promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is essential in the reduction of poverty and inequality and in building prosperity for sustainable development. The Government of Vanuatu has illustrated its commitment to gender equality through ratification of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1995 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1993, pledging to promote and protect women and children's rights, including to take measures to end violence against women and children. Vanuatu has ratified other conventions, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and protocols preventing discrimination based on sexual orientation and identity. The Vanuatu National Sustainable Development Plan includes a goal under the society pillar to "Prevent and eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against women, children and vulnerable groups".

Despite these commitments, Vanuatu does not have any form of sexual harassment legislation,⁶ and yet the country has one of the highest prevalence rates of violence against women and girls globally. The latest SGBV survey by the Vanuatu Women's Centre in partnership with the Vanuatu National Statistics Office was carried out in May 2011.⁷ According to this survey, intimate partner violence (IPV) occurs in all provinces and islands and across all age groups, education and socio-economic levels and religions. Rates are higher in rural areas (63%) than in urban areas (50%). For most women who experienced physical or sexual violence, it occurs frequently, is often severe, including being punched, dragged, kicked, beaten up, choked, burned or hit with a weapon; for 42% of women who experienced physical violence,

it was followed by rape. A demographic health survey (DHS) with a Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) including SGBV is planned for 2022.

Three in every five women (60%) who have ever been in a relationship have experienced either physical or sexual violence (or both) by a husband or intimate partner. More than two in three (68%) have experienced emotional violence; more than one in four (28%) have been subjected to several forms of control by a husband or partner, more than two in three (69%) have experienced at least one form of coercive control, and most of these were living with physical and sexual violence. Most women who are subjected to violence by husbands/partners experience multiple forms of violence.⁸

About 50 percent of women believe that a good wife must obey her husband even if she disagrees with him, and 40 percent believe that the man should be the boss in the marriage. Fifty-three percent believe that a wife becomes the husband's property after the bride price is paid. More than one in three women (36%) agree that it is acceptable for a woman or girl to be swapped or exchanged for marriage, and almost one in three (32 percent) believe that a man is justified in beating his wife if the bride price has been paid.⁹

Almost half of Vanuatu women (48 percent) have experienced non-partner physical or sexual violence or both since they turned 15. Most non-partner physical abuse (experienced by 28 percent of women) was by male family members. Most of the non-partner sexual abuse (affecting one in three women, 33%) was by boyfriends or male family members.

About 84 percent of the Vanuatuan population agrees with the statement "sexual abuse is a big problem in Vanuatu", and two thirds agreed that "children are most often abused by someone they know and trust". About 40 percent of young people in Vanuatu have exchanged sex for money or gifts. Approximately 81 percent of men and 79 percent of women believe that women sometimes deserve to be beaten, while 91 percent of men and 84 percent of women believe that domestic violence is a private matter and should be handled within the family.¹⁰

The Vanuatu National Survey on Women’s Lives and Family Relationships, conducted by the Vanuatu Women’s Centre in partnership with the National Statistics Office (2009), found that:

- 60% of Vanuatu women aged 15–49 years experienced physical and/or sexual violence.
- Of those who have experienced physical violence, 42% have also been raped.
- 69% experienced emotional violence, including coercive control from an intimate partner (husband or partner), in their lifetime.
- 44% of women aged 15–49 experienced physical and/or sexual violence in the last 12 months; and
- 60% of women aged 15–49 have experienced violence or sexual violence, and 30% of women had been sexually abused before the age of 15 years.

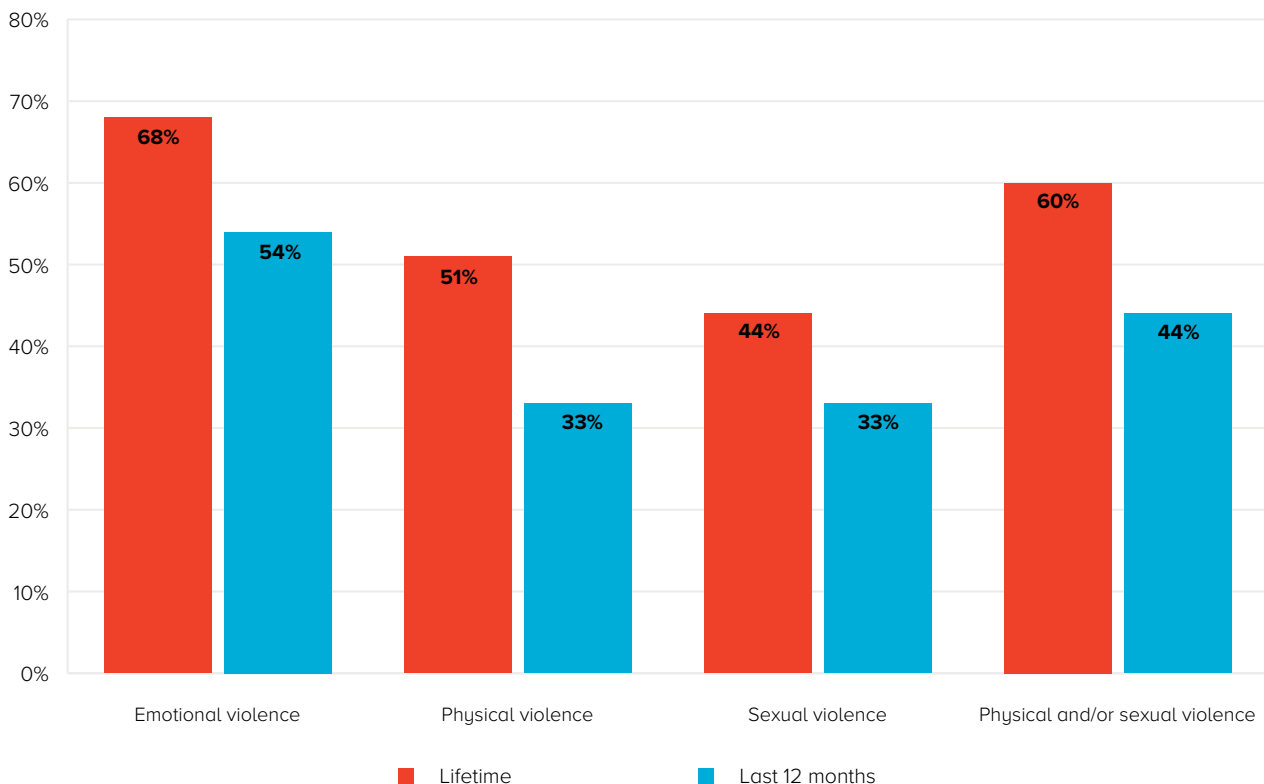
According to the 2013 demographic and health survey:

- 60% of women aged 15–49 think that wife-beating is justified for some reasons (DHS 2013).
- 83% of children have been subjected to some form of violent discipline (DHS 2013).

One of the Spotlight Initiative grantees in Vanuatu conducted research, interviewing 250 people in Erromango, Tanna, Malekula, Eton and the East Efate and Malo. The research found that 100 percent of the respondents have faced some form of violence in their lifetime, and 100 percent of

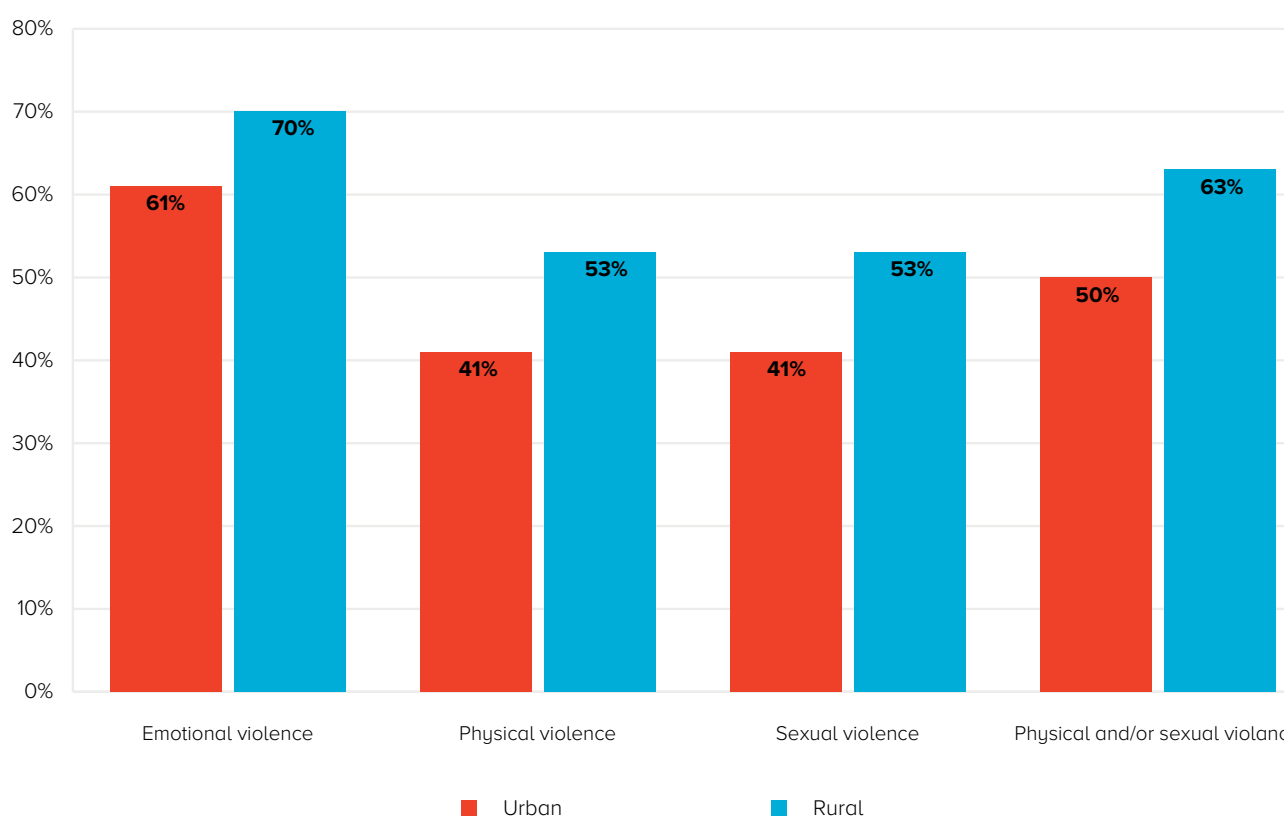
women living with a disability have encountered more than one form of violence, including financial and emotional violence. The research has helped the Spotlight Initiative to implement interventions targeted to those who are more vulnerable to violence in their communities.

Figure 1: Prevalence of emotional, physical and sexual violence by intimate partner



Source: Vanuatu DHS 2013

Figure 2: Prevalence of emotional, physical and sexual violence by intimate partner in rural and urban areas



Source: Vanuatu DHS 2013

Table 1: Attitude towards wife-beating by men

Percentage of men aged 15–49 who agree that a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife for specific reasons, by background characteristics, Vanuatu 2013

	Husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife if she:					Agree with at least one specified reason (%)	Number
	Burns the food	Argues with him	Goes out without telling him	Neglects the children	Refuses to have sexual intercourse with him		
Background characteristic							
Age							
15–19	26.5	30.6	43.0	57.2	15.3	62.5	217
20–24	20.5	31.0	43.7	56.9	13.4	62.3	199
25–29	23.1	35.1	40.3	55.7	14.3	64.6	154
30–34	28.7	34.3	39.5	55.2	14.8	65.6	159
35–39	11.2	28.9	35.1	49.0	9.1	58.8	131
40–44	17.3	25.8	27.7	42.8	10.4	46.2	111
45–49	19.4	19.3	33.8	48.1	13.1	52.7	96
Employment (preceding 12 months)							
Not employed	23.5	28.6	46.7	49.3	13.4	53.7	134
Employed for cash	22.3	28.9	41.3	57.9	15.1	64.2	497
Employed not for cash	20.6	32.1	33.7	49.3	11.2	57.7	437

Marital status							
Never married	23.6	30.9	42.8	55.0	14.4	61.4	412
Married or living together	20.0	29.0	35.6	51.7	11.8	59.1	637
Divorced/separated/widow	*	*	*	*	*	*	19
Number of living children							
0	24.5	30.4	41.6	54.4	14.9	60.5	464
1–2	19.5	37.5	41.5	61.1	14.8	67.2	231
3–4	19.6	23.9	34.2	48.4	10.5	55.7	251
5+	20.0	28.0	32.7	44.4	9.8	55.2	122
Residence							
Urban	25.9	37.0	49.0	61.7	16.7	68.5	388
Rural	19.4	26.2	33.0	48.5	11.3	55.4	680
Rural 1	28.4	29.6	28.6	52.1	17.0	59.3	121
Rural 2	17.5	25.5	33.9	47.7	10.1	54.6	559
Education							
No education	(23.9)	(41.8)	(51.6)	(52.8)	(12.2)	(63.5)	51
Primary	23.0	30.0	38.5	53.3	13.5	60.1	599
Secondary	21.5	29.9	38.7	53.5	13.9	61.1	337
More than secondary	12.1	25.6	33.6	53.1	9.6	55.3	80
Wealth quintile							
Lowest	23.7	34.1	39.0	46.6	16.3	60.0	161
Second	16.7	26.2	39.7	53.8	8.2	58.0	201
Middle	20.8	28.1	32.3	49.6	13.1	55.9	232
Fourth	24.4	32.4	39.8	59.8	14.7	64.5	248
Highest	22.8	30.5	43.6	54.1	14.2	62.0	226
Total men aged 15–49							
	21.7	30.1	38.8	53.3	13.3	60.2	1,068
Total men aged 50+	14.5	21.3	24.1	33.5	7.5	40.8	265
Total men aged 15+	20.3	28.4	35.9	49.3	12.1	56.3	1,333

An asterisk indicates that the figure is based on fewer than 25 unweighted cases and has been suppressed. Figures in parentheses are based on 25–49 unweighted cases.

Source: Vanuatu DHS 2013

Analysis from UNDP's 2020 report 'Human Development Perspectives: Tackling social norms—A game changer for gender inequalities' shows how social norms mold individuals' behaviours and beliefs about violence against women and how traditional social norms can perpetuate violence against women.¹¹ What it means to be a man or a woman is learned and internalized based on experiences and messages over the course of a lifetime, normalized through social structures, culture and interactions.¹² Figure 2 illustrates the high prevalence of intimate partner violence that has been normalized through family, social structures and norms reflected in the urban and rural divide. The rural settings have a demonstrated higher rate of violence (70 percent rural, 61 percent urban), emotional violence (63 percent rural, 50 percent urban) and physical/sexual violence. Table 1 on the specific Vanuatu case study lists a number of behaviors that, when

associated with social norms (such as the usually expected submissive attitude of the wife), justifies a husband in hitting or beating his wife, for example, arguing with him, going out without telling him or refusing to have sexual intercourse (actions that go against the expected submissive attitude).

Norms can change as economies develop, with changes in communications technology, with new laws, policies or programmes, with social and political activism and with exposure to new ideas and practices through formal and informal channels (education, role models and media).¹³ The next section shows how programmes and policies that address both women and men in households, along with approaching the power imbalance at the individual and structural levels by making communities rethink household relationship dynamics, can support change.

Participation, engagement and leadership of women's and feminist movements in Vanuatu

Engaging civil society organizations (CSOs) can be a catalyst in bringing comprehensive solutions to the elimination of violence against women and girls. Feminist and women's rights organizations are at the forefront of efforts to end violence against women and girls through organizing and movement building, advocating for and demanding justice and providing direct support to survivors of violence as first responders and as essential service providers.

CSOs in Vanuatu are active and work in many areas, including gender development, SGBV, education and health, among others. They work at the grassroots level to create change for women, and they act as change agents as they champion gender equality and women's empowerment. Based on analysis of policies on violence against women in 70 countries from 1975 to 2005, the most important and consistent factor driving policy change is feminist activism.¹⁴ Strong, vibrant domestic feminist movements use international and regional conventions and agreements as levers to influence policymaking. Women's rights and feminist movements are valuable resources and partners in implementing transformative initiatives on sensitive gender equality issues and on SGBV and IPV. Many CSOs in Vanuatu are working for awareness, prevention and response to SGBV, implementing behaviour change programmes to transform men's behaviour and attitudes about power, gender and violence. The feminist and women's rights organizations in Vanuatu have crossed many barriers to get high-level political buy-in and commitment to SGBV/IPV through the adoption of radical and persuasive mechanisms. For instance, women-led organizations feature prominent male leaders, such as the prime minister of Vanuatu, in video advocacy campaigns. The male champions are able to educate Vanuatu men on the role they can play in stopping violence, individually and collectively. The male champions of change illustrate the key role men can play in preventing SGBV and in promoting positive and healthy behaviours in men. The male champions often call on other men to break generational violence in ending VAWG - Violence Against Women and Girls and social norms while educating the public about the serious impact of SGBV on health, the economy, people's emotions and society.

In the fight to decrease VAWG, a community-based, multi-pronged approach is required through sustained engagement with multiple stakeholders. Women's rights and feminist movements¹⁵ are a driving force in civil society for the promotion of

gender equality and women's empowerment and in strengthening democracies more broadly.

The women in Vanuatu are using the feminist approach by participating in activities that will bring transformative change to make their societies more equal, prosperous and peaceful. The grassroots organizations in Vanuatu are being supported through UNDP to use their voices for the empowerment of women and girls in preventing and responding to SGBV. This is done through awareness-raising initiatives using media and participatory methods such as art and drama. In addition, they focus on women's rights and holding accountable powerful actors such as duty-bearers and responsibility-holders for their human rights obligations and responsibilities to rebalance the distribution of power and achieve just and inclusive societies. This feminist approach creates space for advocacy and dialogue and builds alliances in pursuit of common objectives, including ending violence against women and girls in Vanuatu.

The work with the CSOs in the framework of the EU-funded Spotlight Initiative, implemented by UNDP in Vanuatu in partnership with UN Women, has effectively advocated for addressing gender inequalities, which is one of the driving factors for SGBV. This approach has generated momentum in political will and the public's engagement on the issue of SGBV using popular media and methods such as film and community storytelling traditions. The work has also contributed to community-level provisions of services, including counselling, strengthening women's livelihoods and economic empowerment, and working with communities and community leaders to address social norms, beliefs and practices that perpetuate and condone SGBV.

The formation of a Community SGBV Watchdog Committee through UNDP-supported initiatives has led to a significant increase in women reporting SGBV and women getting the necessary support, including access to justice. The committee is tasked with designing a structure for better and safe victim referrals for survivors' support in communities. This SGBV watchdog group is tasked with real-time SGBV incidence reporting in the community. Since the formation of the group, there has been a significant increase in women reporting SGBV due to such support systems, which link SGBV survivors to services, including access to justice. Women have also formed a national women-led community-based protection group, developed a protection framework

and developed a community victim support and referral structure that defines the vision of a safer community where women and girls can live in dignity and respect and are protected by key community leaders. They have developed brochures to increase awareness of available services for SGBV survivors. In addition, a Mat Mo Pig film was launched; it was the first to explore the process of bringing a rape case to court and the experience of the survivor. The film encourages women to leave violent partners who refuse to change, to report violence and to use the legal system against the perpetrators.

During project implementation, the mobilization of local women community members to form secret watchdog groups that monitor and report SGBV to the authorities increased the reporting and response of VAWG in communities. The women's organizations helped to break the taboo and stigma associated with SGBV through community awareness and involvement, including the male engagement approach.

The women-led organization has supported women in reporting SGBV cases, which had been a taboo given that sex issues are not discussed in the community. The value the project added was breaking the silence on SGBV cases through awareness creation: women and girls now know there is a support system for reporting cases and accessing justice. In addition, male involvement has helped to break the taboo, given that the male champions speak against SGBV and encourage survivors of SGBV to report such cases. Additionally, in some cases, women tolerate violent relations due to lack of income to support their family. To reduce vulnerability to poverty, a local women-led organization undertook a social enterprise project to create new jobs for women. The project addressed SGBV issues by creating a social enterprise project that strengthens the professional development of women affected by SGBV through professional culinary skills development, nutrition education and financial literacy. Eleven women were trained and graduated as professional chefs. The training helped the women to learn about the relationship between economic hardship and SGBV issues. The women learned that knowledge means power, resilience and independence, and that it can lead to change and inspire women to become active leaders and role models in their communities. These women have launched a virtual restaurant to expand their businesses. The virtual restaurant enables the women to sell food and generate income to support their families.

A nationwide consultation process has been completed for the development of the Victims Charter. A working committee has been formed for the development of a Victims Charter, which sets out how

victims of crime should be treated and what advice, support, and practical information they can receive for strengthening client charter and access to timely services along the SGBV referral pathway. The work is being carried out by the Office of the Public Prosecutor with funds from the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative and in partnership with Vanuatu Women's Centre, SISTA organization and other women's rights organizations in Vanuatu. The preliminary analysis from the consultation process revealed a high number of unreported sexual offenses and domestic violence cases in Vanuatu. This is because women find it difficult to express their views and to speak up due to the societal norms that expect them to respect people who are older, including chiefs, elders and other male figures. Some of the main offenses that are being reported include intentional assaults, sexual violence and domestic violence.

Women's rights organizations have taken the male engagement approach and have worked closely with men and boys as key in the fight against SGBV, mentoring men on how to effect change when women are facing violence—which has led to 18 male champions for gender equality calling on men to be part of the 'journey to change' for women and girls in Vanuatu. They have focused on educating young people in communities about SGBV and its impact, using drama, movies and social media. This has given voice to survivors and their experiences in enduring traumatizing legal processes and trials. The youth and community members had a better understanding of the consequences of engaging in SGBV and its impact, as demonstrated through the drama play and the film. There has been increased awareness of the impact of SGBV in the community, especially among the youth. Due to the use of youth-friendly methods, drama and movies to attract youth to engage in SGBV prevention activities,¹⁶ there has been an increased level of SGBV reporting among young people, especially young females, and a change in perceptions and attitudes leading women and girls to be treated with respect rather than violence, thanks to the project interventions. Involving the existing model of community, recruiting religious and traditional leaders as counsellors and building women's agency to develop and design their own protection framework will ensure the continuation of support to the survivors of SGBV beyond the project timeline. This demonstrates that male engagement and building women's agency are critical in the fight against SGBV and for a sustainable impact of interventions for SGBV prevention and response.

A peer support system for young men and women was formed primarily for the unemployed and youth. Each of the members had experienced SGBV. The project has provided them with a safe space to share their stories and get support on the path to recovering from the trauma of SGBV.

Capacity building, an integral component of UNDP support, was carried out through technical support to women's rights organizations and CSOs. These organizations successfully used and incorporated many knowledge products developed for trainings and capacity building and independently continued to carry out internal assessments and monitoring of the project progress. The capacity-building activities were coupled with economic empowerment. Over 5,000 women received small loans through the Sister Savings and Loan Scheme, which was part of the 20% of Spotlight Initiative grant funding allocated to the WITTT (Women I Tok Tok Tugeta) Sister circles to boost what they are already doing to earn their livelihoods. Before getting the small loans, women were trained in proposal management, fraud and how to establish a business. The training allowed them to finalize their business ideas. This economic support is giving women the power to say no to financial violence in their communities. This initiative has helped women gain access to small loans that are meant to build their economic resilience. Women have benefitted from the loans and have been able to send their children to school, build decent houses, prepare more nutritious meals, gain better access to clean water, and acquire more respect within their communities. This economic support to the women also gives them the power to say no to financial violence in their communities and to become financially independent.

The beneficiaries of the grants have developed a protection framework for SGBV/IPV. The protection framework was developed after an awareness raising on SGBV was conducted during traditional ceremonies in 12 villages. This resulted in key community leaders being selected to formulate their SGBV protection framework in these 12 villages. As

women developed and designed this protection framework, they were able to define what steps they wanted to implement in reducing SGBV in their communities, including justice and dignity as important components in the protection framework.

In Focus: Civil Society National Reference Group (CSNRG)

The formal Civil Society National Reference Group, with a total composition of 14 members, draws representation from individuals passionately working on feminist advocacy, women in small businesses, women in the humanitarian sector, people with disabilities, the LGBTQI+ community, faith-based organizations and organizations that work with men and boys.

Vanuatu Women's Centre (VWC) and Vanuatu Christian Council (VCC) were strategically included in the CSNRG to support, advocate and strengthen the programme service provision to survivors of domestic violence and engagement with the church and religious institutions. VWC, an established CSO with good capacity and substantial resources from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is dedicated to providing services to survivors of domestic violence. VWC has a vast network across all six provinces of Vanuatu and brings to the CSNRG membership ample experience in working with donors and development partners. VCC, on the other hand, is very instrumental in social norm change within the church and religious institutions.

Recommendations for partnering with CSOs in Ending Violence Against Women and Girls

As UNDP works closely with CSOs in Vanuatu, lessons learned, and best practices have emerged from implementation.

Below are recommendations for effectively engaging and empowering women's and feminist movements in EVAWG initiatives:

1. **Support under-resourced women's organizations and equality movements to reinforce their agency and capacity, through building partnerships and advocacy with key stakeholders, to mobilize resources for women-led organizations**

Women's rights and feminist movements are a driving force for women's empowerment and strengthened democracies more broadly. The feminist movements in Vanuatu continuously cross barriers to get high-level political buy-in and commitment on SGBV/IPV through adoption of radical and persuasive mechanisms. During project implementation, the mobilization of local women community members to form secret watchdog groups that monitor and report SGBV to the authorities increased the reporting and recording of VAWG in communities. The women's organizations helped to break the

taboo and stigma associated with SGBV through community awareness and involvement.

2. **Create spaces for constructive engagement and dialogue among women and women-led organizations**

Consulting with and engaging diverse groups of women and girls and other marginalized and affected groups in policy discussions and dialogue fosters collaboration, knowledge sharing and learning among groups of stakeholders that reflect gender parity and diversity, while remaining mindful of power dynamics for sustaining the achievements on the ground. Safe houses and safe spaces can serve as places to meet and ensure an open dialogue.

3. **Shift perspective from a needs-based approach to agency and empowerment**

Women and girls, in all their diversity, are agents of change with economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights and the capacity to hold powerful actors accountable for their obligations

and responsibilities. Women-led organizations using feminist approaches strengthen women as agents of change. Women's rights organizations in Vanuatu have leveraged the participation of women, girls, boys and men, from the grassroots to the national level, to advocate for social norms and transformative change, gender equality and human rights with a focus on educating young people in communities about SGBV and its impact using drama, movies and social media. This gave voice to survivors and their experiences in enduring traumatizing legal processes and trials. The youth and community members had a better understanding of the consequences of engaging in SGBV and its impact, as demonstrated through the drama play and the film. Involving the existing model of community, religious and traditional leaders as counsellors, as well as building women's agency to develop and design their own protection framework, will ensure the continuation of support for the survivors of SGBV beyond the timeline of the project.

Conclusion

In Vanuatu, women-led organizations are working collectively to address the root causes of poverty and SGBV and to analyze and eliminate systemic discrimination on the basis of sex and gender identity and expression, as well as on the basis of intersecting aspects of identity such as age, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and religion. They are transforming patriarchal systems of power that reinforce and perpetuate inequality, demonstrated by male champions from the grassroots to the national levels on gender equality and GBV prevention. CSOs have effectively advocated for and generated momentum on political will and the public's engagement on the issue of SGBV using popular media and methods such as art, drama, film and community storytelling traditions. The work has also contributed to community-level provisions of services, including counselling, strengthening women's livelihoods and economic empowerment, and working with communities and community leaders to address social norms, beliefs and practices that perpetuate and condone SGBV. The transformative impact of women's and feminist movements on GBV programming requires a conscious shift towards targeting the root causes of inequality, including the driving factors of SGBV. This means applying a deeper, more deliberate focus to reach those most at risk of being left behind and integrating

meaningfully into the perspectives, rights and realities of the people we seek to support.

Vanuatu women's movements have demonstrated the integral role women-led organizations play in mobilizing men and women in GBV prevention and response, given that they are closer to the grass roots and are well grounded in advocacy. They have led advocacy work on GBV prevention and response with the communities and government, leading to a policy framework on GBV. The Victim's Charter holds key stakeholders along the GBV referral pathway accountable for improved access to services for GBV survivors. The women's movements have leveraged the participation of women, girls, boys and men from grassroots to national levels to advocate for social norms and transformative change, gender equality and human rights. They have shifted the perspective from a needs-based approach to one in which women and girls, in all their diversity, are agents of change with economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights. They have broadened the capacity to hold powerful actors accountable for their obligations and responsibilities. Additionally, the use of feminist approaches strengthens women as agents of change. There is a need for governments and UN agencies to strengthen partnerships with women's movements on the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment.

Key insights for the operationalization of UNDP's Gender Equality Strategy 2022–2025

Achieving durable success by engaging women's and feminist movements:

- Recognize that a strong civil society is an essential prerequisite for any country's social, economic and democratic development.
- Consider CSOs as independent development actors in their own right with their own priorities and contextualized approaches to achieving such priorities.
- Partner with civil society to promote enabling environments in line with the aid and development of effective commitments.
- Development partners and government to implement gender-responsive planning and budgeting processes to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women, children and vulnerable groups, including CSOs in a leading role.
- Involve women-led organizations in prevention interventions and community dialogues at the grassroots level in order to support the transformation of behavioural change in their communities;
- Strengthen the capacity of women's movements, including coalitions of women-focused organizations and networks of women.

Endnotes

- 1 Asha Arabi is a Gender Specialist Vanuatu Spotlight Initiative, email: asha.arabi@undp.org; Michela Lugiai is a former Gender Specialist at the UNDP Pacific Office, email: michela.lugiai01@ateneopv.it; Josphine Candiru is a Sub-Regional Gender Specialist at UNDP's RBAP Gender Team based in Samoa, email: josphine.candiru@undp.org; Merewalesi Laveti is an M&E and Country Coordination Analyst at the UNDP Pacific Office, email: merewalesi.laveti@undp.org; Yemesrach Workie is the Deputy Resident Representative at the UNDP Pacific Office, email: Yemesrach.workie@undp.org.
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- 2 https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/hdperspectivesgsnipdf_1.pdf
- 3 The gender social norms index comprises four dimensions—political, educational, economic and physical integrity—and is constructed based on responses to seven questions from the World Values Survey, which are used to create seven indicators.
- 4 https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/hdperspectivesgsnipdf_1.pdf
- 5 <https://pacificwomen.org/our-work/focus-areas/ending-violence-against-women/>
- 6 <https://iwda.org.au/vanuatu/>
- 7 https://mjcs.gov.vu/images/research_database/Vanuatu_National_Survey_on_Womens_Lives_and_Family_Relationships.pdf
- 8 <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/countries/fiji/co/vanuatu>
- 9 <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/countries/fiji/co/vanuatu>
- 10 <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/countries/fiji/co/vanuatu>
- 11 https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/hdperspectivesgsnipdf_1.pdf
- 12 https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/hdperspectivesgsnipdf_1.pdf
- 13 Marcus and Harper 2015.
- 14 S. Laurel Weldon & Mala Htun 2013.
- 15 Feminist movements can be defined either broadly, as collective efforts to improve the situation of women, or narrowly, as movements that specifically embrace a feminist identity.
- 16 Information collected by UNDP directly from the beneficiaries of the Spotlight Initiative, Lesson Learned-Vanuatu.docx (sharepoint.com), Vanuatu MTA Report - Final.pdf pg. 7.