

TI IPP STRONGG IN VANUATU

Strengthening Anticorruption Voices in Vanuatu

Founded in 2001, Transparency Vanuatu (TI Vanuatu) is part of the Transparency International global coalition against corruption. The TI Movement brings together chapters operating in more than 100 countries worldwide with an international Secretariat based in Berlin, working towards a shared vision: a world free of corruption.

BACKGROUND

Although Vanuatu's score in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) remains below 50 points, it has shown some improvement in the last years, rising from 45 in 2021 to 48 in 2023. The country is ranked 61 out of 180 countries in the CPI 2023. Despite political patronage and corruption scandals at the top, there is a growing demand for accountability from citizens, and the country has started to introduce some promising anti-corruption legislation and subsequent mechanisms, including the Right to Information (RTI) Act, which was passed in 2016. The government established a Right to Information Unit that has set up an online platform with resources on RTI.

PROJECT APPROACH

With support from the *TI Indo-Pacific Partnership for Strong, Transparent, Responsive & Open Networks for Good Governance (TI IPP STRONGG) 2020 - 2023*, TI Vanuatu worked towards enhancing citizens' knowledge on anti-corruption and strengthen the civil society voice in the country to collectively advocate for good governance. Through community outreach and educational activities, the chapter improved citizens' access to information and their understanding of key democratic processes, legislation, and policies. The chapter also promoted RTI as a social accountability tool when conducting its community outreach and awareness activities to inform citizens about their rights. The programme supported the chapter's overall strategy, organisational development, and sustainability by providing access to core funding. The project was implemented over a period of 3 years and 11 months, from February



2020 to December 2023.

*TI Vanuatu conducting an awareness exercise on
Malekula © TI Vanuatu*



TI Vanuatu administering an activity on democratic principles and governance processes © TI Vanuatu

TI VANUATU ACHIEVEMENTS

Advocating for institutional change

TI Vanuatu worked successfully on raising awareness on the need for fully enforcing the Right to Information (RTI) law. The recent advertisement for the long-awaited RTI Commissioner position stands as a testament to the successful advocacy work in this regard.

Furthermore, TIV's role as an Executive Member of the recently revitalized VANGO (Vanuatu Association of Non-Governmental Organisations) positions TIV to be a pivotal partner and advisor to the government. With its steadfast commitment to transparency and stance against corruption, VANGO becomes a crucial ally in driving positive change and governance reforms in Vanuatu. Thanks to the collaboration with the CSO umbrella VANGO, TI Vanuatu is able to refer people to appropriate organizations specific to their needs. TI Vanuatu has reached out to over 90% of the population and gets requests for printed materials from urban and rural places throughout the country.

Increasing local demand for accountability

As part of TI IPP STRONGG, TI Vanuatu conducted vast outreach, which covered almost all provinces in the country. Unreliable airline services and unpredictable weather means that when traveling to rural areas, the time spent there must be fully utilised. Therefore, TI Vanuatu's awareness work includes corruption and its effects on development and services in the community, bribery, human rights and rights of women, girls, children, youths, people with disability and marginalised people. The importance of voting and voting for the right person and gender equity are also topics that are discussed during the awareness program.

Moreover, TI Vanuatu recognized the need for tailored approaches in different regions, considering the unique cultural and socioeconomic contexts of each province. This included adapting outreach strategies to address specific local concerns and collaborating closely with community leaders and organizations to ensure the messages resonated effectively. By prioritizing inclusivity and relevance in their outreach efforts, TI Vanuatu aimed

to foster greater awareness and engagement among citizens across Vanuatu's diverse provinces.

Fostering partnerships

Transparency Vanuatu actively collaborates with partners, particularly the government, in fostering positive policy changes. Transparency Vanuatu plays a significant role in shaping policies that mitigate corruption risks, thus contributing to a more transparent and accountable system. One example of this is the strong partnership with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) through which TI Vanuatu advocates for the government to adequately resource both the RTI Office and the Office of the Ombudsman.

Additionally, the ongoing collaboration of TI Vanuatu and the Office of the Ombudsman further reinforces the commitment to combating corruption and promoting integrity in the country.

TI Vanuatu's network with community leaders, youths, government officers in rural areas, government ministries and other partners have greatly increased TIV's visibility, effectiveness and reach into local communities.



TI Vanuatu Community Advocacy Officer Douglas Tamara addressing the MALAMPA Provincial Councillors
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ACHIEVING DEMOCRATIC CHANGE

Under IPP STRONGG, TI Vanuatu advocated for electoral integrity, urging an end to the common practice of political handouts, such as cash, by candidates before elections.

Showing increased awareness following TI Vanuatu's efforts in the Santo constituency, residents elected a new Member of Parliament in the 2022 snap election, who campaigned on a platform that prioritised ending political handouts, emphasising the importance of economic development for the entire community.

TI Vanuatu also advocated for gender balance in politics. In Luganville, TI Vanuatu worked together with the Civic Education Team of Sanma province to provide awareness sessions to communities in Luganville and surrounding areas prior to the Municipal Elections in 2023. As a result, six out of thirteen councillors elected were women.

Through these initiatives, TI Vanuatu actively engaged with constituents, raising awareness about political integrity, democratic processes, and their broader societal benefits.