

TI IPP STRONGG IN VANUATU

Strengthening Anti-corruption 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.

With support from the *TI Indo-Pacific Partnership for Strong, Transparent, Responsive & Open Networks for Good Governance (TI IPP STRONGG) 2020 – 2023*, TI Vanuatu aims to enhance 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 improves citizens' access to information and their understanding of key democratic processes, legislation, and policies. The programme supports the chapter's overall strategy, organisational development, and sustainability by providing access to core funding.

Project At A Glance

- Topics of focus:
Engaging citizens in anti-corruption initiatives & Enhancing the chapter's profile as leading anti-corruption voice in the country.
- Project timeframe:
1 February 2020 – 31 December 2023
- Locations & project outreach:
In at least 10 islands.
- Budget: 534,167 EUR

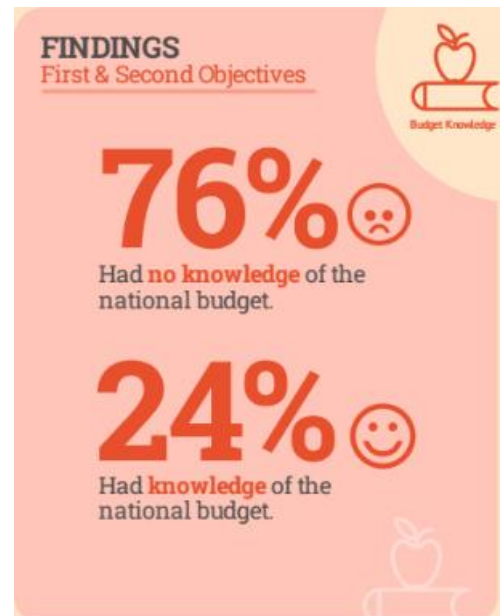


TI Vanuatu conducts outreach and awareness raising activities on democratic principles and governance processes

Picture: © Transparency Vanuatu

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 43 in 2017 to 46 in 2018. The country is ranked 64 out of 180 countries in the CPI 2019. Despite political patronage and corruption scandals at the top, there is a growing demand for accountability from citizens, and the country has recently 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. The chapter promotes RTI as a social accountability tool when conducting its community outreach and awareness activities to inform citizens about their rights.



Finding from TI Vanuatu's study on citizens budget transparency

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Objectives

1. Increase citizens' awareness and engagement on corruption issues, and improve their understanding of key democratic rights and mechanisms.
2. Promote good governance and enforcement of anti-corruption laws through advocacy activities and collaboration with public sector entities.
3. Strengthen the chapter's foundations and strategy to enhance its agency, access, and capacity to lead a strong anti-corruption voice in the country.

Main Activities

Activities under this project include:

- Conducting community outreach, awareness, and educational activities on anti-corruption related issues. Topics include **citizens budget transparency**, and the importance of **Right to Information as a social accountability tool** that can be used by citizens to hold their leaders and institutions accountable.
- Conducting **advocacy activities to promote good governance** and highlight the importance of the chapter's work to public bodies and officials, including the newly elected members of Parliament.
- Strengthening organisational processes and developing the next phase of **the chapter's strategy and project design process**.

TI Vanuatu's response to the COVID crisis

Vanuatu was hit by Cyclone Harold in April 2020 in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, which created additional challenges for the disaster response. TI Vanuatu has been involved in the response to both the disaster and the pandemic, by promoting Right to Information and providing access to information on COVID-19, Gender, and Child Protection during emergencies, as part of its community outreach and awareness activities.

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS & KEY ACHIEVEMENTS - 2022

In 2022, Transparency Vanuatu **strengthened partnerships with multiple stakeholders**, including the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ombudsman, Public Prosecutor, and the Electoral Office. This resulted in the chapter being appointed member of important National Committees dealing with good governance, transparency, and political integrity. The chapter also continued to collaborate and support the **Vanuatu Association of NGOs (VANGO)** and strengthened relations with other CSOs, especially with gender and disability groups.



*Meeting with the Vanuatu Association of NGOs (VANGO)/
© Transparency Vanuatu*

Despite travel restrictions, Transparency Vanuatu continued its outreach programme, raising awareness around corruption and human rights issues on the island of Efate, where it reached over 2,000 people. Ahead of the national elections on 13 October 2022, the chapter played a key role by enhancing citizens' awareness of their voting rights. Moreover, TI Vanuatu's staff were appointed Presiding Officers at a polling station for the first time.

Key outreach activities and events in 2022 included:

- Raised awareness around issues related to corruption, right to information, and human rights in the Vila suburban areas, also targeting youth and women.
- Conducted outreach and awareness initiatives targeting disability groups on Efate offshore islands during the 16 Days of Activism.
- Commemorated International Anti-Corruption Day and Human Rights Day at Epau Viallge, Rurla Efate, in collaboration with the Ombudsman.
- Ahead of the national elections, TI Vanuatu focused their awareness-raising programme on voter education, encouraging citizens to verify their IDs and electoral cards at the electoral office and inviting them to exercise their voting rights. This activity was co-funded by the Ministry of Youth Sports Development and received logistical support from the Electoral Office.
- Issued regular press releases to disseminate anti-corruption messages in newspapers, radio and TV, as well as on social media.



CEO Dr Willie Tokon and Community Advocate Douglas Tamara calling on voters to elect qualified people in national elections./ © Transparency Vanuatu

SETTING UP A NATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION AUTHORITY AND STRENGTHENING POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

Transparency Vanuatu's anti-corruption campaigns and messages are helping to keep corruption high on the political agenda. A key highlight in 2022 was the establishment of the Anti-Corruption Authority, which will be responsible for handling issues related to corruption, whistleblower protection and bribery. Transparency Vanuatu had a first meeting with the Public Prosecutor and the Ombudsman to discuss the set-up of the Anti-Corruption Authority and will also be part of the Steering Committee. In addition, in 2022, Transparency Vanuatu strengthened partnerships with key stakeholders, advocated and campaigned against corruption, and raised awareness for voters' rights ahead of the general elections. Thanks to the chapter's outreach and awareness program on voter education citizens in the Santo constituency nominated a member of their community who won a rural seat in the general elections and will now represent them in Parliament.

LOOKING AHEAD

Transparency Vanuatu's priorities for 2023 include:

- Bringing the community awareness program to cover the whole country by expanding it to the remaining provinces of TORBA, PENAMA and part of MALAMPA.
- Re-visiting the other provinces in response to local requests and distributing printed educational material.
- Raising awareness of corruption among youths by conducting an outreach program involving all high schools in the country.
- Continuing to implement the media awareness program to campaign against corruption, especially through weekly press releases in newspapers, radio, and TV.
- Working on the Provincial Citizen Budget, following on from the National Citizen Budget.
- Continuing to support VANGO and strengthening more partnerships through the Lunch & Learn program by signing Memorandums of Agreement and Memorandums of Understanding.