



Yasur Volcano, Tanna Island

# VANUATU NATIONAL MIGRATION POLICY

2026



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# MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

## Ministry of Internal Affairs

Migration has always been a defining feature of Vanuatu's identity, development, and global engagement. From the skilled hands of Ni-Vanuatu workers supporting regional labour markets, to the resilience of communities facing climate-induced displacement, to the dynamic contributions of our diaspora, our people are moving, adapting, and contributing in powerful ways.

This National Migration Policy marks a pivotal moment in our journey. For the first time, Vanuatu has a comprehensive and forward-looking framework to guide how we manage migration in all its forms. It reflects our national commitment to orderly, lawful, and inclusive migration that benefits our citizens, strengthens our economy, and enhances national security.

This policy is not just about governance, it is about people. It is about ensuring that migrants are protected, that labour mobility delivers lasting benefits, that our borders are secure yet open to opportunity, and that all Ni-Vanuatu, regardless of where they are, remain connected to home.

The policy aligns with the National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP), the National Security Strategy, and our international obligations. It ensures that migration supports our development aspirations, protects our sovereignty, and responds to the unique challenges of our time, particularly climate change and urbanisation.

I extend my appreciation to all partners, stakeholders, and community leaders who contributed to the development of this important policy. I also reaffirm the Government's commitment to resourcing and implementing it through whole-of-government coordination and meaningful engagement with our provinces, civil society, and development partners.

Together, we can ensure that migration becomes a positive force for inclusive growth, regional cooperation, and long-term national resilience.



The Honourable  
**Andrew Solomon Napuat**  
Minister of Internal Affairs  
Republic of Vanuatu

# DIRECTOR GENERAL FOREWORD



## Mr. Leith Veremaito

Director General  
Ministry of Internal Affairs

As Director General of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, I am proud to present the Vanuatu National Migration Policy, a milestone achievement that establishes a clear and coordinated path for managing migration in a way that is people-centred, secure, and development-driven. This policy was born out of the recognition that migration, if well managed, can deliver immense benefits for our economy, society, and environment. At the same time, we are acutely aware of the risks of, unregulated movements, trafficking, exploitation, and displacement, that demand urgent and coordinated action.

The policy was developed through an inclusive and consultative process. It incorporates the voices of government ministries, provincial authorities, civil society, and development partners. It reflects our collective ambition to manage migration holistically, ethically, and strategically, anchored in our Constitution and aligned with the NSDP and Vanuatu's international commitments. Through the

establishment of a National Migration Coordination Mechanism and a dedicated Migration Policy Implementation Unit, we will ensure effective execution, cross-sector collaboration, and accountability. From enhancing border governance and diaspora engagement to supporting labour mobility and protecting vulnerable migrants, this policy sets out a bold and actionable agenda.

Migration is not a challenge to be managed, it is an opportunity to be harnessed. With this policy, Vanuatu is positioning itself to lead by example in the Pacific region, demonstrating how a small island state can navigate complex migration dynamics with vision, coordination, and care.

I commend the Immigration and Passport Services Division for leading this effort and look forward to working across government and society to bring this policy to life.



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# List of Acronyms

<b>APSET</b>	Association of Post-School Education and Training Providers
<b>BLMAs</b>	Bilateral labour migration agreements
<b>Cap.</b>	Chapter (legal citation)
<b>CIIP</b>	Capital Investment Immigration Program
<b>CPRP</b>	Child Protection Referral Pathway
<b>CRIM</b>	Civil Registration and Identity Management
<b>CSOs</b>	Civil society organisations
<b>DFAT</b>	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
<b>DRR</b>	Disaster Recovery and Resilience
<b>DSP</b>	Development Support Programme
<b>EEZ</b>	Exclusive Economic Zone
<b>EIAs</b>	Environmental Impact Assessments
<b>GCM</b>	Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
<b>GEDSI</b>	Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion
<b>IBM</b>	Integrated Border Management
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communications Technology
<b>IDPs</b>	Internally Displaced Persons
<b>IHR</b>	International Health Regulations
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>ISPS</b>	International Ship and Port Facility Security
<b>KPIs</b>	Key performance indicators
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>MFAT</b>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (New Zealand)
<b>MFTA</b>	Melanesian Free Trade Agreement
<b>MIA</b>	Ministry of Internal Affairs
<b>MICE</b>	Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (Tourism)

<b>MIDAS</b>	Migration Information and Data Analysis System
<b>MIPU</b>	Ministry of Infrastructure and Public Utilities
<b>MPIU</b>	Migration Policy Implementation Unit
<b>MSG</b>	Melanesian Spearhead Group
<b>MSGTA</b>	MSG Trade Agreement
<b>NAP</b>	National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons
<b>NAPA</b>	National Adaptation Programme of Action
<b>NMCM</b>	National Migration Coordination Mechanism
<b>NRM</b>	National Referral Mechanism
<b>NSDP</b>	National Sustainable Development Plan
<b>NSS</b>	National Security Strategy
<b>PACER Plus</b>	Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations Plus
<b>PALM</b>	Pacific Australia Labour Mobility
<b>PDNA</b>	Post-Disaster Needs Assessments
<b>PIDC</b>	Pacific Immigration Development Community
<b>PIF</b>	Pacific Islands Forum
<b>PPPs</b>	Public-private partnerships
<b>PSET</b>	Post-School Education and Training
<b>RSE</b>	Recognised Seasonal Employer (NZ)
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SIDS</b>	Small Island Developing State
<b>SME</b>	Small and medium enterprise
<b>SOPs</b>	Standard Operating Procedures
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>VBoS</b>	Vanuatu Bureau of Statistics
<b>VFIPA</b>	Vanuatu Foreign Investment Promotion Authority
<b>VIPS</b>	Vanuatu Immigration and Passport Services
<b>VNSO</b>	Vanuatu National Statistics Office
<b>VQA</b>	Vanuatu Qualifications Authority
<b>VTO</b>	Vanuatu Tourism Office
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

A photograph of an Air Vanuatu aircraft, a white and blue turboprop plane with 'Air Vanuatu' written in red script on the side. The aircraft is on a runway with a clear blue sky and greenery in the background. The name 'BETTY EMMA' is visible on the fuselage.

# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Photo by VTO

Air Vanuatu.

Migration plays a vital role in shaping Vanuatu's economy, society, and future resilience. As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), Vanuatu experiences diverse forms of migration. These include international labour mobility through regional work schemes, internal movements from rural to urban areas, and climate-induced displacement due to rising sea levels and extreme weather events. Remittances from Ni-Vanuatu workers abroad contribute significantly to household income and national development, while diaspora engagement offers avenues for investment, skills transfer, and global connectivity.

However, migration also presents complex challenges, ranging from governance gaps and human trafficking to brain drain and unplanned urbanisation. Without a coordinated national framework, Vanuatu risks missing critical opportunities to harness migration as a tool for inclusive growth, economic diversification, social

stability, and national security. The Vanuatu National Security Strategy (NSS)<sup>1</sup> identifies cross-border movement, irregular migration, and environmental displacement as emerging national security threats. Further, the National Security Act (2019)<sup>2</sup> mandates institutional coordination and threat mitigation across government agencies, including through migration systems.

The development of a comprehensive migration policy is therefore essential for strengthening migration governance, ensuring the protection of migrants' rights, and promoting national security. This policy will serve as a guiding framework to manage migration in a way that supports sustainable development, protects national sovereignty, and enhances Vanuatu's resilience to climate and economic shocks.

<sup>1</sup> Government of Vanuatu. (2019). Vanuatu national security strategy: Secure & resilient. <https://www.gov.vu/index.php/resources/vanuatu-national-security-strategy>

<sup>2</sup> National Security Act No. 41 of 2019, amended by National Security (Amendment) Act No. 7 of 2023 (Vanuatu). Retrieved July 9, 2025, from <https://nscs.gov.vu/index.php/en/policy-legislation/act>

Aligned with Vanuatu's Constitution<sup>3</sup>, the National Sustainable Development Plan 2016–2030 (NSDP)<sup>4</sup>, the Labour Mobility Policy and Action Plan 2024–2027<sup>5</sup>, the Vanuatu National Security Strategy (2019)<sup>6</sup>, and the National Security Act (2019)<sup>7</sup>, and with key international instruments such as the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)<sup>8</sup>, the

policy will promote migration that is people-centred, well-regulated, security-conscious, and development-driven. It also supports Vanuatu's commitments under regional frameworks, including the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations Plus (PACER Plus)<sup>9</sup>, the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG)<sup>10</sup>, and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF)<sup>11</sup>.

The Vanuatu National Migration Policy identifies and prioritises the following thematic areas:

### »» Labour Migration and Workforce Development

Expanding opportunities through regional mobility programmes while addressing skills gaps and supporting reintegration.

### »» Diaspora Engagement

Mobilising the Vanuatu diaspora to contribute through remittances, investment, and knowledge transfer.

### »» Border Management and National Security

Enhancing immigration systems and border controls to ensure safe and orderly migration, in line with national security imperatives.

### »» International and Regional Cooperation

Strengthening partnerships and aligning with global best practices for migration governance.

### »» Climate-Induced Migration and Internal Displacement

Building resilience and proactive relocation strategies for communities affected by environmental changes.

### »» Migrant Rights and Protection

Safeguarding the rights and wellbeing of migrants, particularly women, children, and other vulnerable groups.

### »» Migration Governance and Data Systems

Establishing a whole-of-government approach to policy coordination, supported by accurate migration data and intelligence systems.

This policy represents a forward-looking vision for a well-managed, inclusive, secure, and resilient migration system that contributes meaningfully to

Vanuatu's national development, social cohesion, and global engagement.

3 Constitution of the Republic of Vanuatu (Vanuatu). Retrieved July 9, 2025, from <https://www.gov.vu/index.php/about/constitution-of-vanuatu>

4 Department of Strategic Policy, Planning and Aid Coordination. (2016). Vanuatu 2030: The people's plan (National Sustainable Development Plan 2016–2030). Republic of Vanuatu. <https://www.gov.vu/images/publications/Vanuatu2030-EN-FINAL-sf.pdf>

5 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and External Trade. (2024). Vanuatu national labour mobility policy and action plan 2024–2027. Republic of Vanuatu. <https://mfaicet.gov.vu/images/documents/Vanuatu%20National%20Labour%20Mobility%20Policy.pdf>

6 Government of Vanuatu. (2019). Vanuatu national security strategy: Secure & resilient. <https://www.gov.vu/index.php/resources/vanuatu-national-security-strategy>

7 National Security Act No. 41 of 2019, amended by National Security (Amendment) Act No. 7 of 2023 (Vanuatu). Retrieved July 9, 2025, from <https://nscs.gov.vu/index.php/en/policy-legislation/act>

8 Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, December 19, 2018, <https://www.iom.int/global-compact-migration>

9 PACER Plus Implementation Unit. (n.d.). Welcome to PACER Plus. Retrieved July 9, 2025, from <https://pacerplus.org/>

10 Melanesian Spearhead Group Secretariat. (n.d.). Melanesian Spearhead Group. Retrieved July 9, 2025, from <https://msgsec.info/>

11 Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. (n.d.). The Pacific Islands Forum. Retrieved July 9, 2025, from <https://forumsec.org/pacific-islands-forum>



Photo by VTO

Cruise in Port Vila Harbour.

## 2.0 Current Migration Landscape

Migration in the 21st century has become more dynamic, multidimensional, and complex. Increasing globalisation, regional integration, and technological advancement have contributed to the unprecedented movement of people across borders in search of employment, education, safety, and improved livelihoods. Today, international migration is not only a defining feature of global interconnectivity but also a critical driver of economic development, social transformation, and resilience building, particularly for developing countries.

In the Pacific region, and particularly in Vanuatu, migration has played a significant role in shaping the national economy and societal structures. Vanuatu is both a country of origin and a destination for various types of migration flows. These include labour mobility; internal migration due to environmental change; diaspora engagement; and cross-border movements linked to health, tourism, investment, and trade. Remittances from Ni-Vanuatu workers abroad, especially those engaged in seasonal employment in Australia and New Zealand, provide substantial financial inflows to local communities, supporting household incomes, education, and entrepreneurship.

## Migration affecting Vanuatu can be categorised into the following types:



**INTERNATIONAL LABOUR MIGRATION**, primarily through regional mobility schemes such as Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) and Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE).



**INTERNAL MIGRATION**, including rural-to-urban movement within the country.



**CLIMATE AND DISASTER AND DEVELOPMENT-INDUCED DISPLACEMENT**, often involving unplanned or managed relocation.



**DIASPORA AND RETURN MIGRATION**, encompassing remittance contributions and reintegration of returnees.



**INVESTMENT AND BUSINESS MIGRATION**, including Development Support Programme (DSP) recipients and inbound professional migrants.



**TOURISM-LINKED MIGRATION**, such as cruise passengers; business travellers; and meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions (MICE) tourism entrants.



**IRREGULAR AND UNAUTHORISED MIGRATION**, involving smuggling, trafficking, or undocumented individuals.



**HEALTH-RELATED MIGRATION**, particularly in the context of border health and public health emergencies.



**EDUCATIONAL MIGRATION**, including outbound student mobility and skills training.



**MARITIME AND SEAFARING MIGRATION**, with Ni-Vanuatu working aboard international and regional vessels.



**DIPLOMATIC AND OFFICIAL MIGRATION**, concerning the entry and residence of foreign mission staff and technical experts.

These varied forms of migration each require tailored governance, protection, and development responses, as outlined in the subsequent sections of this policy.

Meanwhile, Vanuatu faces several migration-related challenges that reflect broader global trends. Climate change-induced displacement is becoming increasingly urgent, as rising sea levels and frequent natural disasters continue to force communities to relocate, often without adequate planning or support. Unregulated internal migration is contributing to rapid urbanisation in Port Vila and Luganville, straining public infrastructure, housing, and essential services. Additionally, irregular migration, human trafficking, and gaps in legal protection frameworks expose vulnerable populations, especially women and children, to exploitation and abuse.

From a national security perspective, these issues are not solely developmental, they also constitute significant threats to stability, social cohesion, and sovereignty. The NSS identifies irregular migration, trafficking, foreign influence, and environmental displacement as evolving threats to Vanuatu's internal security. Furthermore, the National Security Act (2019) empowers the National Security Council to direct agencies in preventing and responding to such risks, including the authority to close borders and prohibit entry where national interests are at stake.

From a governance perspective, migration in Vanuatu is currently managed through a patchwork of laws and administrative procedures, including the Constitution of the Republic of Vanuatu<sup>12</sup>, the Immigration Act (2010)<sup>13</sup>, the Citizenship Act (1980)<sup>14</sup>, and bilateral labour agreements. While these instruments offer a foundation for migration management, the absence of an overarching national migration policy has limited coordination, policy coherence, and long-term

strategic planning. The lack of disaggregated migration data further complicates the Government's ability to plan effectively, address emerging migration trends, and measure the social and economic impacts of migration. The National Security Advisor, as provided for under the amended National Security Act, plays a central role in coordinating intelligence and data to support informed policy decisions, including in the migration domain.

Migration remains deeply embedded in Vanuatu's development trajectory, contributing to one of the highest per capita emigration rates globally. Women are increasingly participating in labour mobility, further strengthening the country's regional role in shaping Pacific migration patterns.

With a population of just over 300,000 people, Vanuatu has a relatively small international migrant stock, but migration remains deeply embedded in its development trajectory. According to regional data, the Pacific has some of the highest per capita rates of emigration globally and Vanuatu is a key contributor to this trend, especially through labour mobility. Women are increasingly participating in labour

12 Constitution of the Republic of Vanuatu (Vanuatu). Retrieved July 9, 2025, from <https://www.gov.vu/index.php/about/constitution-of-vanuatu>

13 Immigration Act No. 17 of 2010 (Vanuatu). Retrieved July 9, 2025, from <https://tradeportal.gov.vu/media/IMMIGRATION%20ACT%20NO.%2017%20OF%202010.pdf>

14 Citizenship Act [Cap. 112] (Vanuatu 1980). Retrieved July 9, 2025, from HYPERLINK "https://vancitizenship.gov.vu/images/pdf/Citizenship\_Act\_Cap\_112.pdf" \t "\_new" [https://vancitizenship.gov.vu/images/pdf/Citizenship\\_Act\\_Cap\\_112.pdf](https://vancitizenship.gov.vu/images/pdf/Citizenship_Act_Cap_112.pdf)

migration schemes, while youth represent a large portion of those seeking education and employment opportunities abroad. In parallel, the growing Vanuatu diaspora presents significant potential for investment, knowledge transfer, and development partnerships, yet structured engagement remains limited.

Tourism and trade are also integral components of Vanuatu's migration landscape. The movement of foreign nationals into Vanuatu, whether for tourism, investment, or employment, continues to expand. However, weaknesses in visa processing systems, border infrastructure, and inter-agency coordination hinder efficient and secure mobility. These challenges are directly linked to national security concerns identified in the NSS, particularly the need for improved border governance, enhanced intelligence coordination, and a whole-of-government response to unauthorised entry and potential foreign interference. The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed vulnerabilities in Vanuatu's border management and public health systems, underscoring the need for inclusive, adaptive migration governance that accounts for public health emergencies and broader security risks.

In light of these trends, the development of a National Migration Policy is a timely and strategic response. The policy aims to ensure that migration is well-managed, inclusive, secure, and contributes meaningfully to national priorities. It will establish institutional coordination mechanisms, enhance data systems, promote rights-based approaches, and integrate migration into Vanuatu's broader development agenda, including its climate resilience, economic diversification, and regional cooperation strategies.



Arrival and departure stamps.

## 2.1 GOVERNANCE OF MIGRATION

Vanuatu's migration landscape is diverse and evolving, shaped by both internal and international trends. Labour mobility; climate-induced displacement; diaspora engagement; and cross-border movement linked to trade, employment, tourism, and investment are among the key drivers of migration in the country. While migration has brought economic opportunities, remittance flows, and regional connectivity, it has also introduced new governance challenges, particularly in the areas of institutional coordination, policy coherence, and migrant protection.

The most prominent feature of international migration in Vanuatu is labour mobility, particularly through participation in regional employment schemes such as the PALM and RSE programmes. These initiatives have opened pathways for thousands of Ni-Vanuatu workers to access short-term employment abroad, supporting local economies through remittances and skills acquisition. Simultaneously, Vanuatu experiences internal migration, often driven by climate-related displacement or economic disparities between rural and urban areas.

Despite these movements, the migration system is under increasing pressure due to irregular migration, the smuggling and trafficking of persons, gaps in migrant protection, imported diseases, and inadequate data systems to monitor flows and outcomes. Additionally, the country's growing diaspora

remains under-engaged as a development resource, with limited institutional mechanisms for strategic outreach or reintegration.

Migration in Vanuatu is currently governed by a range of laws and sector-specific policies, including:

## 01.

### **Constitution of the Republic of Vanuatu**

(Arts. 5, 6, 7, 9–14, 16, 29–32, 39–46, 47–56, 61–65, 69–72, 73–81, 82–83).

## 02.

### **Immigration Act (2010)**

regulating entry, residency, deportation, and visa categories.

## 03.

### **Citizenship (Amendment) Act (2018)<sup>15</sup>**

providing for economic citizenship through the DSP. quatemp orposam.

## 04.

### **National Labour Mobility Policy and Action Plan 2024–2027**

outlining priorities for managing regional labour migration.

## 05.

### **National Sustainable Development Plan 2016–2030**

integrating migration across goals related to inclusive growth, social equity, and resilience.

## 06.

### **Tourism Councils Act (2012)**

regulating tourism business permits, accreditation, and investment participation, including foreign operators and short-term business migration.

## 07.

### **Public Health Act**

[Cap. 224]<sup>16</sup> including public health emergency provisions.

Institutional responsibility for migration is distributed across multiple ministries and agencies, including the Vanuatu Immigration Division, Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), Ministry of Health, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department of Labour, Climate Change Directorate, and Customs and Border Control Department. While these agencies contribute important functions, their roles and responsibilities are not consistently harmonised under a unified migration framework. The Tourism Council of Vanuatu and Local Government Tourism Councils also play a critical role in managing inbound tourism-related movement and regulating foreign participation in tourism enterprises at both national and sub-national levels.

Some sectoral coordination platforms do exist, for example, mechanisms supporting labour mobility, anti-trafficking measures, and foreign investment, but there is currently no overarching governance framework to bring these efforts together. Additionally, through the implementation of the Vanuatu National Identity Act (2021)<sup>17</sup> and the Civil Registration and Identity Management Act (2021)<sup>18</sup> a national identity system has been introduced that enables accurate verification of legal identity and citizenship. The integration of the National Identity Card into immigration, visa, and labour mobility systems will enhance transparency, strengthen border and identity controls, and support interoperability across civil and migration registries.

15 Republic of Vanuatu. (2018). Citizenship (Amendment) Act No. 34 of 2018. Republic of Vanuatu. Retrieved July 19, 2025, from [https://www.paclii.org/vu/legis/num\\_act/ca2018228.pdf](https://www.paclii.org/vu/legis/num_act/ca2018228.pdf)

16 Republic of Vanuatu. (1994). Public Health Act No. 22 of 1994 (Cap. 234; consolidated 2006). Republic of Vanuatu. Retrieved July 19, 2025, from <http://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/van88965.pdf>

17 Vanuatu National Identity Act No. 27 of 2021 (Vanuatu). Retrieved July 9, 2025, from [https://www.paclii.org/vu/legis/num\\_act/vnia2021290.pdf](https://www.paclii.org/vu/legis/num_act/vnia2021290.pdf)

18 Civil Registration and Identity Management Act No. 28 of 2021 (Vanuatu). Retrieved July 9, 2025, from [https://www.paclii.org/vu/legis/num\\_act/craima2021411.pdf](https://www.paclii.org/vu/legis/num_act/craima2021411.pdf)

## 2.2 EMPLOYMENT MOBILITY AND EDUCATION PATHWAYS

Labour mobility is one of the most significant features of Vanuatu's migration profile. Thousands of Ni-Vanuatu citizens migrate temporarily to Australia and New Zealand each year under regional labour mobility schemes, including the PALM programme and RSE scheme. These opportunities provide essential income for households, stimulate local economies through remittances, and contribute to poverty reduction. However, the long-term developmental potential of labour mobility is currently constrained by gaps in workforce preparedness, limited reintegration support, and weak linkages between migration and education systems.

While labour migration presents valuable economic benefits, it also places pressure on Vanuatu's domestic labour market, particularly in critical sectors such as healthcare, education, and skilled trades. The outflow of experienced workers has raised concerns about brain drain and workforce shortages in areas vital to national development. At the same time, the experiences and skills gained abroad are not always effectively reintegrated upon return. Many returnees face challenges in securing appropriate employment or leveraging their acquired knowledge and income for long-term entrepreneurship or community development. The Vanuatu Labour Mobility Reintegration Strategy and Action Plan<sup>19</sup> provides a national framework to address these issues. It outlines support measures including financial literacy, small business development, skills recognition, and social reintegration services. This migration policy builds on that strategy to ensure returning workers are meaningfully included in national development efforts and supported across the entire migration cycle. Reintegration programming will also address

psychosocial needs through counselling, family support services, and community-based reintegration initiatives.

In addition to land-based seasonal work, many Ni-Vanuatu are employed as seafarers or crew on international and domestic fishing vessels. These maritime workers contribute to household income through remittances and help build technical expertise in navigation, marine safety, and logistics. However, they often face challenges in accessing consistent pre-departure support, legal protections, and reintegration pathways. Strengthening linkages between migration governance and maritime employment systems, including certification, licensing, and international labour standards, is essential for safeguarding rights and expanding employment opportunities in this sector.

Migration-linked training and qualification pathways must meet national education and quality standards. In accordance with the Vanuatu Qualifications Authority (Amendment) Act (2019)<sup>20</sup>, all migration-related training such as pre-departure preparation, seafarer certification, skills development, and reintegration support should be delivered by registered Post-School Education and Training (PSET) providers accredited by the Vanuatu Qualifications Authority (VQA). This approach safeguards migrants from unrecognised or substandard training and ensures international labour market compatibility.

To balance these dynamics, it is essential to position labour mobility as part of a broader workforce development strategy that supports both international deployment and domestic capacity building.

Education and training systems are central to preparing Ni-Vanuatu workers for migration and employment, both abroad and at home. However, there is currently

<sup>19</sup> Department of Labour and Employment Services. (2025). Vanuatu labour mobility reintegration strategy and action plan (2025–2028). [https://dol.gov.vu/images/documents/Vanuatu\\_Labour\\_Mobility\\_Reintegration\\_Strategy\\_WEB.pdf](https://dol.gov.vu/images/documents/Vanuatu_Labour_Mobility_Reintegration_Strategy_WEB.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Vanuatu Qualifications Authority (Amendment) Act No. 36 of 2019 (Vanuatu). Retrieved July 9, 2025, from [https://www.pacii.org/vu/legis/num\\_act/vqaa2019464.pdf](https://www.pacii.org/vu/legis/num_act/vqaa2019464.pdf)

a mismatch between the skills demanded in destination countries and the qualifications offered through national education and technical institutions. In addition, limited access to pre-departure orientation and inadequate focus on soft skills, financial literacy, and workplace culture leave many migrant workers underprepared for life and work overseas.

Enhancing the alignment between vocational education, labour market demand, and migration opportunities is therefore a key priority. Partnerships

between government, educational institutions, and private sector actors, both domestic and international, will be essential to develop curricula and training programmes that equip workers with relevant, recognisable, transferable skills for both the global and national workforce.

To maximise the developmental benefits of employment-related migration, Vanuatu must adopt a more structured and strategic approach to managing labour mobility. Key strategies include:



Establishing pre-departure training and certification programmes to ensure migrants are equipped with essential and recognisable skills, knowledge of their rights, and cultural readiness.



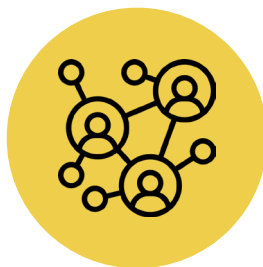
Strengthening bilateral agreements with destination countries to enhance ethical recruitment, mutual recognition of skills and qualifications, social security portability, and clear reintegration pathways.



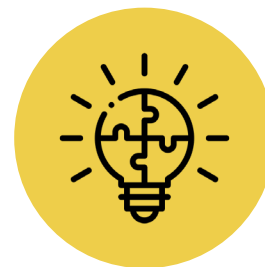
Expanding access to migration opportunities for women, youth, and rural populations to promote equitable participation and inclusive economic growth.



Developing reintegration programmes to support returning migrants with job placement, entrepreneurship training, and financial advisory services.



Improving coordination between the labour, immigration, and education sectors to ensure that mobility strategies are coherent, data-informed, and responsive to both national needs and global opportunities.



Developing structured reintegration programmes for returning labour mobility workers, targeting tourism and hospitality entrepreneurship, business licensing support, and small and medium enterprise (SME) development.

By enhancing workforce preparedness, investing in education-to-migration pathways, and improving institutional coordination, Vanuatu can transform

labour mobility into a sustainable engine of national development, benefiting individuals, families, and the broader economy.

## 2.3 DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT

Vanuatu's diaspora, though geographically dispersed, remains a vital asset to national development. Ni-Vanuatu living abroad contribute significantly to the country's economy through remittances, investment, and the transfer of skills and knowledge. These financial inflows help support household livelihoods, education, healthcare, and community projects, particularly in outer islands where income opportunities may be limited. In addition to economic contributions, members of the diaspora serve as cultural ambassadors, fostering global awareness

of Vanuatu and strengthening diplomatic and trade relationships with host countries.

Despite the diaspora's importance, there is currently no formal mechanism to engage Ni-Vanuatu citizens overseas in a coordinated and strategic manner. The lack of a diaspora database, outreach platforms, or reintegration programmes limits opportunities to mobilise this group as partners in national development.

To address these gaps, there is a need for:

- Establishing a national diaspora registry to map the skills, locations, and interests of overseas Ni-Vanuatu.
- Adding diaspora tourism ambassador roles, where Ni-Vanuatu abroad help market the country's and support inbound visitor campaigns, with dedicated training provided by the Vanuatu Tourism Office (VTO).
- Creating structured communication channels, including digital platforms and consular outreach, to facilitate ongoing engagement.
- Promoting cultural exchange initiatives that strengthen identity, language, and traditions among second-generation Ni-Vanuatu abroad.
- Developing targeted diaspora investment initiatives, including a "Diaspora Investor Fast-Track Scheme" with streamlined visa/residency procedures, to encourage the use of remittances in productive sectors such as tourism, trade, agriculture, education, and renewable energy.
- Proposing a digital Diaspora Portal, linked to consular services, that includes information on investment opportunities, tourism products to support, mentorship initiatives, and event and cultural return programmes.
- Facilitating skills return programmes to enable diaspora professionals to contribute through temporary assignments, mentorship, or remote support.

Foreign Missions, under the mandate of the Foreign Service Act (2013)<sup>21</sup>, can play an expanded role in diaspora engagement through the provision of consular support, facilitation of diaspora registration, and promotion of diaspora investment schemes.

By institutionalising diaspora engagement, Vanuatu can strengthen its global community, enhance national development outcomes, and foster mutually beneficial relationships between its citizens at home and overseas.

21 Foreign Service Act No. 20 of 2013 (Vanuatu). Retrieved July 9, 2025, from [https://paclii.austlii.edu.au/vu/legis/sub\\_leg/fsa-2013tacoeothcotrovttrofo20141377.pdf](https://paclii.austlii.edu.au/vu/legis/sub_leg/fsa-2013tacoeothcotrovttrofo20141377.pdf)

## 2.4 MIGRATION, TRADE AND TOURISM

Migration, trade, and tourism are closely interlinked components of Vanuatu's economic and social development. The movement of people for business, employment, and leisure generates foreign exchange, stimulates investment, and promotes regional integration. As one of the region's most tourism-dependent economies, Vanuatu relies heavily on short-term migration in the form of visitor arrivals, many of whom support local businesses and cultural industries.

Trade-related migration, including the movement of business professionals, consultants, and investors, also plays a key role in supporting commercial growth and technology transfer. Similarly, inbound mobility under international cooperation projects and technical missions brings vital skills and knowledge into the country.



Photo by Jeffrey Tolang

Port Villa Town.

The Tourism Councils Act (2012)<sup>22</sup> provides the legal framework for managing tourism development and investment at both national and local levels. It establishes the Tourism Council of Vanuatu and Local Government Tourism Councils, which are responsible for issuing tourism business permits, accrediting operators, managing investment approvals, and ensuring local participation in the sector. These functions intersect with migration

governance, particularly in relation to the mobility of foreign investors, tourism professionals, and service providers.

However, existing migration frameworks do not fully support the facilitation of business mobility or streamline processes for visiting professionals. Lengthy visa processing times, unclear requirements for work permits, and limited digitalisation of procedures can discourage investment and travel. Effective trade- and tourism-linked migration requires balancing streamlined entry processes with strong

<sup>22</sup> Tourism Councils Act No. 23 of 2012 (Vanuatu). Retrieved July 9, 2025, from [https://pactii.austlii.edu.au/vu/legis/sub\\_leg/tca2012ioamostco2014856.pdf](https://pactii.austlii.edu.au/vu/legis/sub_leg/tca2012ioamostco2014856.pdf)

compliance measures. Under PACER Plus and other trade-related frameworks, Vanuatu will work to ensure that the movement of travellers, business migrants, and service providers is facilitated in a manner that upholds national security and regulatory integrity.

Cooperation between Immigration, Customs, and Tourism authorities will be further strengthened to ensure aligned processes, joint compliance oversight, and timely information sharing on cross-border activities.

To strengthen the contribution of migration to trade and tourism, the following policy actions will be prioritised:

- Simplifying and harmonising visa and permit procedures for business travellers, tourists, and professionals.
- Expanding visa-on-arrival and eVisa infrastructure to enhance accessibility, support group travel and event-based entries (including MICE tourism), and attract investment.
- Aligning migration procedures with trade and tourism strategies to support national development objectives.
- Strengthening collaboration between immigration authorities and the tourism, trade, and investment sectors, including the Tourism Council of Vanuatu and Local Government Tourism Councils, to create a responsive and business-friendly mobility system.
- Promoting Vanuatu as a destination for regional meetings, incentive travel, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) to further stimulate inbound migration.
- Establishing a Cruise and Yacht Tourism Mobility Framework with simplified permits for maritime personnel, emergency response protocols for medical disembarkation, and designated International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS)-compliant cruise port zones including new mini-townships like Havannah and Naoneban.
- Establishing a tourism visa performance dashboard, jointly managed by the Department of Tourism and Vanuatu Immigration and Passport Services (VIPS), to monitor tourist arrivals, visa processing times, and visitor feedback.
- Creating a joint task force between the Department of Immigration, Department of Tourism, and the VTO to regularly review tourism and visa entry regulations, ensuring alignment with international best practices and the evolving global tourism market.
- Establishing a cross-sectoral mechanism linking tourism visa management, cruise operations, and private sector investment schemes, coordinated by the Department of Tourism and VIPS, to fast-track high-impact tourism development while ensuring regulatory compliance.

By integrating migration policy with trade and tourism strategies, Vanuatu can unlock new economic

opportunities, diversify its markets, and build resilience in an increasingly interconnected global economy.

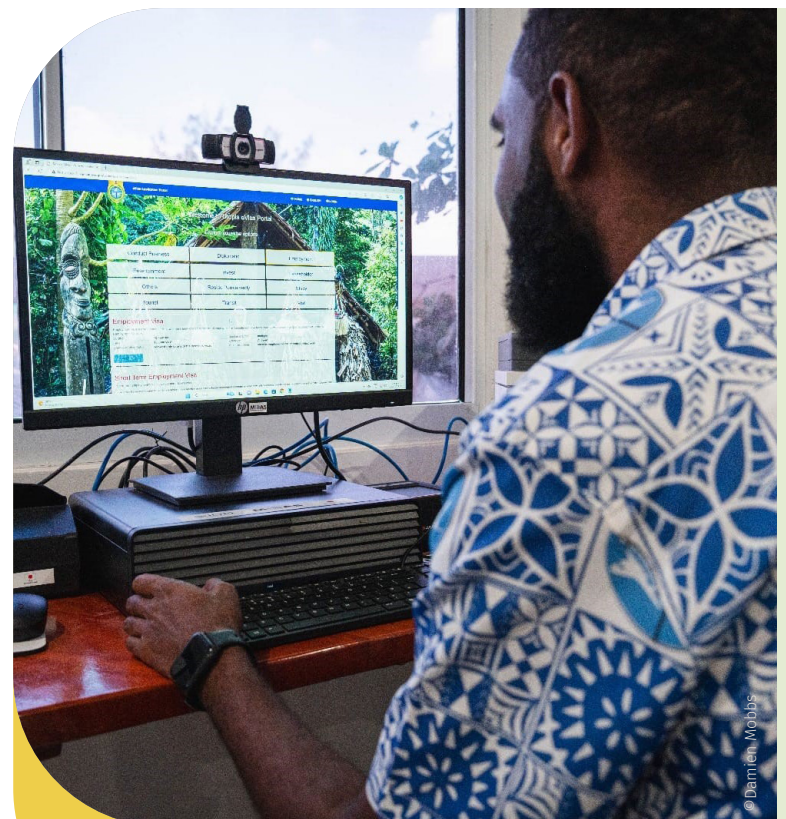
## 2.5 BORDER GOVERNANCE

As an island nation with multiple ports of entry spread across an archipelago, Vanuatu faces unique border governance challenges. Effective border management is essential not only for ensuring national security but also for facilitating legitimate travel, trade, and migration. The country currently operates a number of sea and air entry points, with primary hubs in Port Vila and Luganville. These locations handle the bulk of international arrivals, including tourists, returning citizens, labour migrants, and business travellers.

However, border control systems are currently constrained by limited infrastructure, under-resourced personnel, and outdated technology. Manual visa processing, inadequate surveillance equipment, border health issues, and gaps in inter-agency coordination reduce the effectiveness of immigration controls and increase vulnerabilities to irregular migration, trafficking, and transnational crime. Furthermore, the lack of consistent enforcement at secondary ports creates uneven standards across entry points. Through improved infrastructure, enhanced capacity, and stronger institutional coordination, Vanuatu's border governance can support both national security and the smooth movement of people and goods.

To strengthen operational coordination, the policy will formalise joint taskforces, integrated border management (IBM) systems, and intelligence-sharing platforms between Immigration, Customs, Biosecurity, Police, and Health. Capacity development for frontline officers, particularly in detecting trafficking, managing irregular migration, and responding to emerging border threats, will be prioritised. The Government will also invest in upgrading infrastructure and digital systems, including biometric verification and real-time data exchange, to improve screening and compliance across all ports of entry.

The designation of a new Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) centred around Luganville introduces a new layer of internal mobility and border control complexity. As Vanuatu prepares to operationalise this EEZ, new visa categories, permit requirements, and internal compliance mechanisms will be needed to regulate movement into and within this zone.



Visa officer operating new eVisa System.

Special consideration must be given to balancing economic opportunity (e.g. tourism, fisheries, port services) with national security, labour rights, and local sovereignty. The Government will be required to develop tailored controls, monitoring procedures, and data systems to manage cross-regional mobility and ensure legal, safe, and secure access to the new EEZ.

## 2.6 IRREGULAR AND UNAUTHORISED MIGRATION

Vanuatu, like many Pacific Island countries, is increasingly exposed to the challenges of unauthorised migration. This includes the entry, stay, or employment of individuals without proper documentation, as well as transnational crimes such as human trafficking and the smuggling of migrants.

Victims of trafficking and smuggled persons often remain hidden due to fear of criminalisation or deportation.

These activities undermine national security; strain immigration and law enforcement systems; and place individuals, especially women, children, and marginalised groups, at heightened risk of exploitation, abuse, and human rights violations.


In addition to protecting victims, the migration system must also be equipped to detect, deter, and prosecute perpetrators. This includes individuals and organised networks responsible for trafficking, exploitation, and smuggling, as well as those with histories of

serious offences, such as child sexual exploitation. Strengthening legal pathways for investigation, cross-border intelligence sharing, and exclusion of high-risk entrants is critical to preventing repeat offending and ensuring public safety.

Currently, the country's enforcement mechanisms are hindered by limited investigative capacity, underdeveloped intelligence systems, and inconsistent application of immigration laws across ports of entry. Weak border surveillance, gaps in data sharing between agencies, and a lack of specialised personnel further constrain efforts to prevent and respond to unauthorised migration. To enhance enforcement, joint Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and inter-agency protocols will be developed to support investigations, inspections, and intelligence sharing across Immigration, Customs, and Police. Particular emphasis will be placed on building officer capacity to detect forged documents, identify trafficking indicators, and investigate smuggling networks.

Victims of trafficking and smuggled persons often remain hidden due to fear of criminalisation or deportation, and there are few accessible support services or legal pathways for protection and redress. These challenges are exacerbated by the absence of a dedicated national referral mechanism (NRM) or a victim-centred protection framework. This policy aligns with the National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons 2024–2028 (NAP)<sup>23</sup>, which sets out a national framework for prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnership. The NAP provides detailed guidance on the identification of trafficking victims, inter-agency coordination, legal reform, and cross-border cooperation, all of which support this policy's enforcement and protection objectives.

<sup>23</sup> Ministry of Internal Affairs. (2024). National action plan to combat trafficking in persons 2024–2028. Republic of Vanuatu. [https://moia.gov.vu/images/moia/PDF%20File/NAP%20IOMV9\\_Print\\_v5\\_Signed.pdf](https://moia.gov.vu/images/moia/PDF%20File/NAP%20IOMV9_Print_v5_Signed.pdf)



Effective enforcement will also require the use of mutual legal assistance frameworks to support cross-border investigations and prosecutions. The Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Act (2022)<sup>24</sup> provides mechanisms for international cooperation on migration-related offences, including trafficking,

smuggling, and exploitation. Through a rights-based and prevention-focused approach, Vanuatu can reduce irregular migration, protect vulnerable individuals, and uphold its international obligations in combatting human trafficking and smuggling.

## 2.7 CLIMATE AND DISASTER-INDUCED DISPLACEMENT

Vanuatu is among the most climate-vulnerable nations in the world, frequently experiencing cyclones, rising sea levels, coastal erosion, flooding, and other climate-related hazards. These events have already led to the displacement of entire communities, particularly in low-lying outer islands, and are projected to increase in frequency and intensity due to climate change.

Displacement caused by climate and environmental events is typically internal and often occurs without adequate planning or support, resulting in insecure housing, loss of livelihoods, limited access to services, and social disruption. Many displaced persons migrate to urban centres, placing additional pressure on already strained infrastructure. The absence of a clear national policy framework for climate-induced displacement further exacerbates the vulnerability of affected populations.

At present, there are no formal legal protections or mechanisms for internally displaced persons (IDPs), nor are there national guidelines for managed relocation, land access, or community resettlement planning. These gaps pose a significant challenge to social cohesion, human security, and sustainable development. A proactive, coordinated approach to climate-induced displacement will ensure that affected communities are supported with dignity,

security, and the opportunity to rebuild resilient futures. Customary leaders have a vital role in supporting planned relocation and community integration. Under the Malvatumauri Council of Chiefs (Amendment) Act (2019)<sup>25</sup>, the involvement of chiefly authorities will be essential in upholding cultural legitimacy, facilitating land access, and ensuring peaceful transitions for displaced populations.

From a border management perspective, internal relocation and potential cross-border displacement caused by climate events will require pre-emptive planning and coordinated surveillance in vulnerable zones. Customs outposts in at-risk coastal and island areas will be supported with contingency protocols, training, and early warning systems. Joint coordination between environmental, security, and border agencies will be critical for managing these evolving mobility and security dynamics. This policy builds on the National Policy on Climate Change and Disaster-Induced Displacement (2018)<sup>26</sup>, which outlines principles for rights-based relocation, inclusive risk planning, and institutional preparedness for displacement scenarios. It also considers the National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA)<sup>27</sup>, which provides foundational data on Vanuatu's vulnerability to climate change impacts and prioritises adaptation measures that inform proactive migration and planned relocation responses for affected communities.

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24 Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Act [Cap. 285], Act No. 14 of 2002, last amended by Act No. 11 of 2012 (Vanuatu). Retrieved July 9, 2025, from [https://fiu.gov.vu/docs/Mutual%20Assistance%20in%20Criminal%20Matters%20\[CAP%20285\].pdf](https://fiu.gov.vu/docs/Mutual%20Assistance%20in%20Criminal%20Matters%20[CAP%20285].pdf)

25 Republic of Vanuatu. (2019). Malvatumauri Council of Chiefs (Amendment) Act No. 30 of 2019. Retrieved July 19, 2025, from [https://www.paclii.org/cgi-bin/sinodisp/vu/legis/num\\_act/mcoca2019374/mcoca2019374.html?stem=&synonyms=&query=malvatumauri](https://www.paclii.org/cgi-bin/sinodisp/vu/legis/num_act/mcoca2019374/mcoca2019374.html?stem=&synonyms=&query=malvatumauri)

26 Ministry of Climate Change Adaptation, Meteorology, Geo-Hazards, Energy, Environment and Disaster Management. (2018). National policy on climate change and disaster-induced displacement. Republic of Vanuatu. <https://ndmo.gov.vu/images/download/Vanuatu-National-Policy-on-Climate-Change-and-Disaster-Induced-Displacement-2018-published.pdf>

27 National Advisory Committee on Climate Change. (2007). National Adaptation Programme for Action (NAPA). Republic of Vanuatu. <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/napa/vut01.pdf>

## 2.8 INTERNAL MIGRATION

Internal migration, particularly from rural to urban areas, has become a defining trend in Vanuatu's development landscape. Driven by a combination of economic aspirations, educational opportunities, climate impacts, and access to essential services, increasing numbers of Ni-Vanuatu are relocating from outer islands and remote villages to urban centres, most notably Port Vila and Luganville.

While internal migration can support upward mobility and access to livelihoods, it also poses serious challenges to urban planning, land management, housing, and social service delivery. The unregulated growth of informal settlements has led to overcrowding, insufficient access to clean water and sanitation, pressure on health and education systems, and rising environmental and public health risks.

Furthermore, the lack of data on internal migration flows limits the Government's ability to anticipate trends, plan service delivery, and support inclusive

urban development. Women and children in informal settlements often face heightened exposure to insecurity, gender-based violence, and limited economic opportunities.

Municipal Councils can play a central role in responding to the impacts of internal migration, particularly in managing land use, infrastructure, and basic service delivery. In accordance with the Municipalities Act (1980)<sup>28</sup>, coordination between national agencies and local governments can be strengthened to ensure urban growth is guided by inclusive planning, efficient resource allocation, and fiscal sustainability. Enhanced collaboration will support integrated responses to informal settlement expansion, urban infrastructure gaps, and the delivery of services to migrant and host populations alike.

An improved approach to managing internal migration and supporting balanced territorial development requires the following actions:

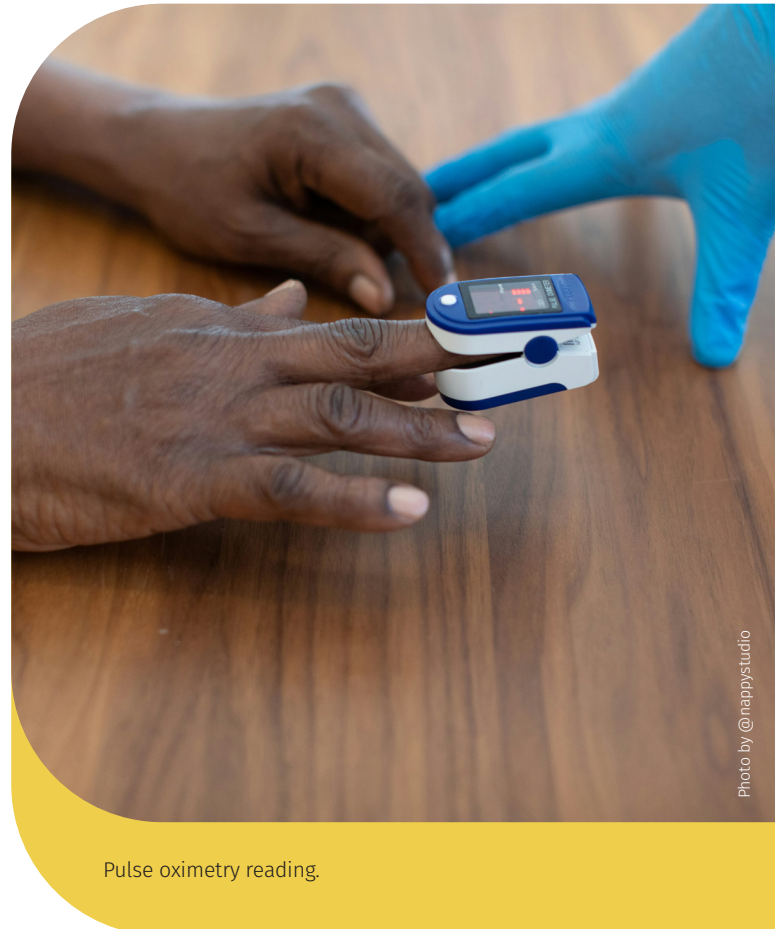
- Integrating internal migration planning into national urban and land use strategies, including zoning and service expansion.
- Promoting rural development initiatives that create jobs and improve service access in outer islands and under-served communities.
- Strengthening data collection and monitoring on internal migration trends to support evidence-based decision-making.
- Enhancing collaboration between national and provincial authorities to support decentralised service delivery and planning.
- Developing community engagement and sensitisation programmes to support peaceful integration of newcomers and prevent land disputes.
- Ensuring that internal migrants have access to housing, education, healthcare, and legal documentation in their new locations.

<sup>28</sup> Municipalities Act [Cap. 126] (Vanuatu 1980). Retrieved July 9, 2025, from <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/van220521.pdf>

## 2.9 HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS FOR MIGRANTS

Migration has important health implications, particularly in the context of temporary labour mobility, internal displacement, and the influx of international visitors and foreign workers. Migrants, especially those in vulnerable situations such as informal settlements or displacement, often face heightened exposure to communicable diseases; occupational hazards; limited access to clean water and sanitation; and mental health stressors linked to trauma, separation from families, and socio-economic uncertainty.

In Vanuatu, these risks are compounded by limited access to healthcare services in remote areas and informal urban communities. Migrants and displaced persons may lack legal documentation, financial means, or culturally appropriate services needed to access care. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed significant gaps in health preparedness, border health surveillance, and the inclusion of mobile populations in national health planning. A migration-sensitive health approach will promote inclusive public health outcomes, reduce health inequities, and contribute to national resilience and wellbeing.



Pulse oximetry reading.

Photo by @happystudio

## 2.10 ENHANCING MIGRATION DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Reliable, timely, and disaggregated migration data is essential for evidence-based policymaking, planning, and monitoring of migration-related development outcomes. In Vanuatu, data on internal migration, international mobility, and the socio-economic impact of migration remains limited, fragmented, and inconsistently shared across institutions. This hinders the ability of policymakers to anticipate trends, address risks, and design effective interventions.

Currently, migration data is collected through a combination of border entry and exit records, labour mobility programmes, and ad hoc surveys. However, there is no centralised data system or dedicated institutional mechanism for migration statistics. As a result, critical indicators such as the size of the diaspora, skills profiles, gender and age breakdowns, returnees, or the impact of climate-induced displacement are poorly understood. The

migration data ecosystem will be expanded to support interoperability between Immigration, Customs, and other border enforcement agencies. Shared data protocols and interoperable risk profiling systems will be developed to support coordinated inspections, threat assessments, and operational planning.

Real-time migration data feeds will also be integrated into broader national planning and security systems, including economic forecasting, public health preparedness, and border risk assessment frameworks. These capabilities will support risk-based decision-making and timely response to emerging migration trends. Strengthening migration data systems will ensure that policy decisions are grounded in accurate information, improve inter-

agency coordination, and help track progress toward national and global migration objectives. In this regard, the implementation of the Vanuatu National Identity Act (2021)<sup>29</sup> and the Civil Registration and Identity Management Act (2021)<sup>30</sup> presents important opportunities for improving data integration and interoperability. The Population Register established under these frameworks provides a robust foundation for capturing demographic and biometric data, verifying legal identity and citizenship, and supporting real-time monitoring of migration trends. Leveraging this infrastructure will enhance the reliability of migration data and enable cross-sectoral alignment between identity management, border control, and migration governance systems.

## 2.11 GENDER, DISABILITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IN MIGRATION

Migration affects individuals differently based on gender, age, disability, and social status. Women, children, persons with disabilities, and marginalised groups often face greater risks of exclusion, discrimination, and exploitation throughout the migration cycle. In Vanuatu, gender inequalities, cultural norms, and legal barriers can limit equal access to migration opportunities and protections for vulnerable populations.

Women migrants may be particularly vulnerable to gender-based violence, trafficking, and unsafe working conditions, especially in informal sectors or overseas employment. Children affected by migration, either as migrants themselves or as those left behind, may face challenges related to health, education, caregiving, and psychosocial support. Persons with disabilities are often excluded from migration planning and may lack access to information, services, and infrastructure



Boarding the Big Sista Ship at Lamén Bay, Epi Island.

that meet their needs. An inclusive migration system is critical to achieving the goals of dignity, equality, and opportunity for all, and to ensuring that no one is left behind. Gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) will be systematically mainstreamed across all migration programmes, with disaggregated data collection and targeted interventions to support inclusive migration outcomes.

29 Vanuatu National Identity Act No. 27 of 2021 (Vanuatu). Retrieved July 9, 2025, from [https://www.paclii.org/vu/legis/num\\_act/vnia2021290.pdf](https://www.paclii.org/vu/legis/num_act/vnia2021290.pdf)

30 Civil Registration and Identity Management Act No. 28 of 2021 (Vanuatu). Retrieved July 9, 2025, from [https://www.paclii.org/vu/legis/num\\_act/craima2021411.pdf](https://www.paclii.org/vu/legis/num_act/craima2021411.pdf)

## 2.12 DIPLOMATIC AND OFFICIAL MOBILITY PROTOCOLS

Vanuatu hosts foreign diplomatic missions and engages in international cooperation through bilateral and multilateral channels. As a signatory to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961)<sup>31</sup>, Vanuatu upholds the legal status, privileges, and immunities of accredited diplomats, consular officials, and international representatives entering and residing in the country. These provisions are essential to ensuring the smooth conduct of diplomatic functions and fostering peaceful and cooperative international relations.

Diplomatic and official mobility involves the movement of foreign envoys, technical experts, mission staff, and their dependents for the purpose of representing sending states or international

organisations. These individuals are subject to distinct visa categories and entry procedures, including diplomatic and official visas, which must be administered in close coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Current migration procedures do not fully reflect the differentiated legal treatment required for this category of entrants. Inconsistent notification practices, limited inter-agency data exchange, and unclear guidelines on immunity and entry exemptions risk undermining Vanuatu's international obligations and delaying the efficient facilitation of official mobility.

To strengthen diplomatic and official migration governance, the following actions will be prioritised:

- Establishing formal protocols between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Immigration Division to manage diplomatic and official entries, exits, and residency.
- Ensuring timely notification and registration of diplomatic agents, mission staff, and their dependents in accordance with international law.
- Developing clear guidelines for the issuance and renewal of diplomatic and official visa categories, including appropriate exemptions and immunities.
- Maintaining accurate records of accredited diplomatic personnel and ensuring compliance with reporting obligations under the Vienna Convention.
- Strengthening training and awareness among immigration officials on the rights and privileges of diplomatic personnel and the procedures applicable to official mobility.

Enforcement measures will also include protocols for identifying and responding to the misuse of diplomatic privileges, with clear SOPs and cross-agency communication pathways to prevent exploitation of official entry channels.

31 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, April 14, 1961, 500 U.N.T.S. 95, [https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?s-rc=TREATY&mtmsg\\_no=III-3&chapter=3&clang=\\_en](https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?s-rc=TREATY&mtmsg_no=III-3&chapter=3&clang=_en)



© Pascaline Stake

Immigration officer at Bauerfield International Airport Tarmac.

## 2.13 STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL COOPERATION

Migration is a transboundary issue that requires close coordination between countries, particularly in a region as interconnected as the Pacific. Vanuatu is actively engaged in several regional and international migration frameworks and schemes, including the PALM32 scheme, the GCM33, the MSG34, and PACER Plus35. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through its diplomatic network, is well positioned to lead negotiations of bilateral labour agreements, mobility partnerships, and regional frameworks, ensuring that migration governance remains aligned with national interests and foreign policy objectives.

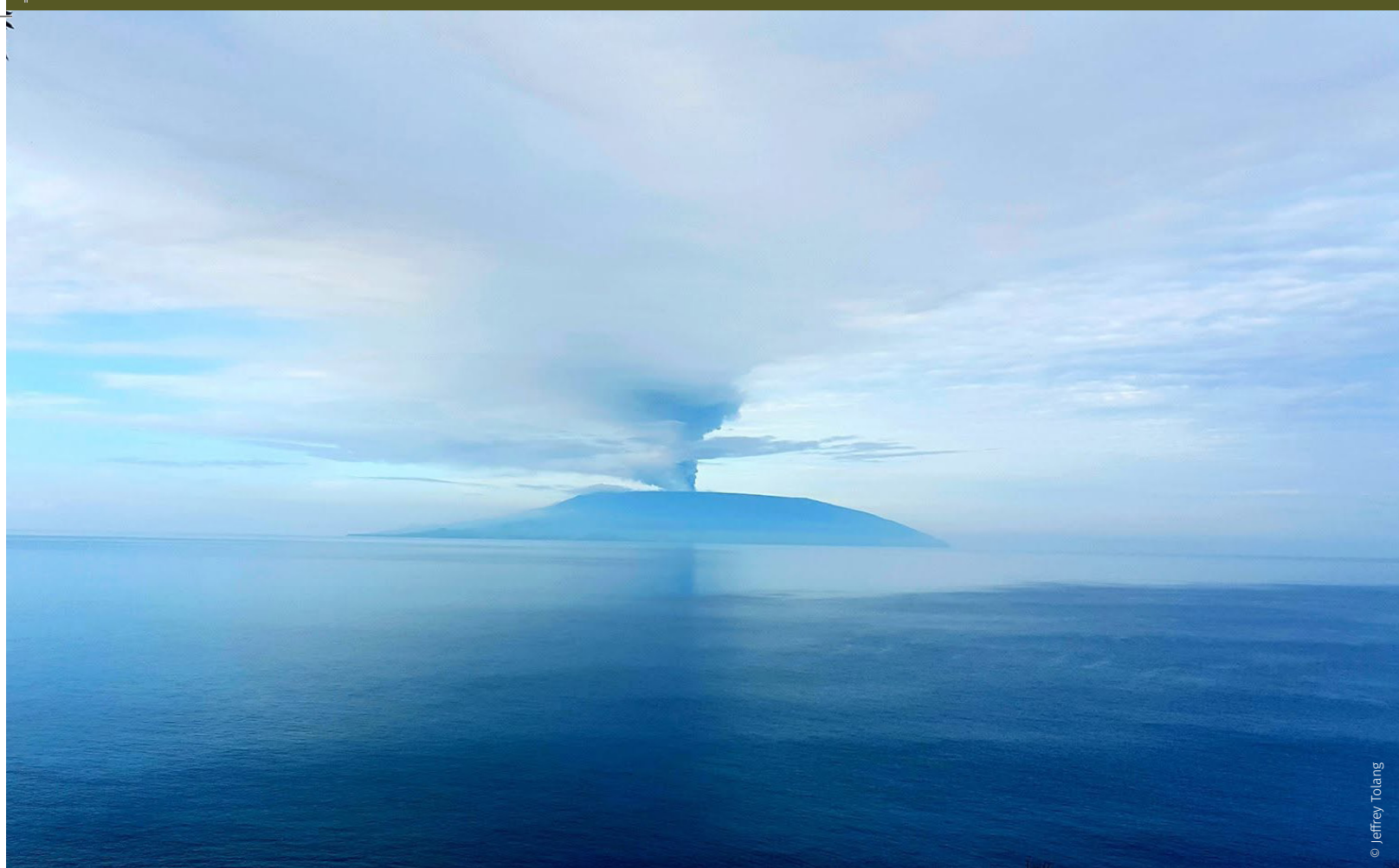
However, the absence of a national migration policy has limited Vanuatu's ability to fully leverage its participation in these frameworks, align domestic actions with international commitments, and access technical and financial support. Strengthening international and regional partnerships is therefore essential for addressing shared challenges, such as labour mobility governance, climate displacement, and border security, and for advocating for the needs and rights of Ni-Vanuatu migrants abroad.

32 Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. (2025). Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme. <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/factsheet-otp-palm-scheme.pdf>

33 Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, December 19, 2018, <https://www.iom.int/global-compact-migration>

34 Melanesian Spearhead Group Secretariat. (n.d.). Melanesian Spearhead Group. Retrieved July 9, 2025, from <https://msgsec.info/>

35 PACER Plus Implementation Unit. (n.d.) Welcome to PACER Plus. Retrieved July 9, 2025, from <https://pacerplus.org/>



© Jeffrey Tolang

Eruption of Manaro Vui Volcano in Ambae on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 2017, a month after everybody was evacuated from the Island.

# 3.0 VISION, RATIONALE AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

## 3.1 VISION

A well-regulated migration system that enhances economic growth and social stability in Vanuatu.

This vision reflects Vanuatu’s commitment to managing migration as a transformative force that contributes to sustainable development; national resilience; and the wellbeing of all people, including migrants, returnees, and host communities.

## 3.2 RATIONALE

Migration has long played a central role in Vanuatu’s socio-economic development. Labour mobility programmes provide valuable employment opportunities for Ni-Vanuatu abroad, while remittances support local livelihoods, education, and community development. Migration contributes to human capital development, skills transfer, cultural exchange, and regional cooperation. The Vanuatu

diaspora represents an untapped resource for investment, innovation, and global engagement.

At the same time, if not effectively managed, migration can pose significant challenges. These include human trafficking; irregular migration; social exclusion; and pressure on infrastructure and essential services, particularly in urban areas experiencing high internal migration. Environmental displacement driven by climate change further compounds the need for robust, proactive planning.

Currently, migration in Vanuatu is governed through sector-specific approaches, with limited coordination across institutions and policy frameworks. This fragmentation has hindered the country's ability to harness the full developmental potential of migration and respond coherently to emerging challenges.

In response, the Government of Vanuatu has prioritised the development of this National Migration Policy to:

- Establish a clear and coordinated framework for managing all aspects of migration.
- Align national policy with regional and international commitments.
- Strengthen institutional capacity and inter-agency collaboration.
- Maximise the benefits of migration while minimising risks to individuals, communities, and national security.

This policy supports the objectives of the NSDP36, and integrates key international frameworks such as the GCM37, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction38, and relevant human rights instruments.

36 Department of Strategic Policy, Planning and Aid Coordination. (2016). Vanuatu 2030: The people's plan (National Sustainable Development Plan 2016 to 2030). Republic of Vanuatu. <https://www.gov.vu/images/publications/Vanuatu2030-EN-FINAL-sf.pdf>

37 Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, December 19, 2018, <https://www.iom.int/global-compact-migration>

38 United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. (2015). Sendai framework for disaster risk reduction 2015–2030. <https://www.undrr.org/publication/sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-2015-2030>

## 3.3 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Vanuatu National Migration Policy is guided by five core principles that underpin effective, inclusive, and accountable migration governance:

### *a) Protection of Human Rights and Dignity*

Migration policy and practice will uphold the rights, freedoms, and dignity of all individuals, regardless of migration status. Vanuatu commits to ensuring the safety, wellbeing, and fair treatment of migrants, returnees, displaced persons, and host communities in accordance with national laws and international human rights obligations.

### *b) Balancing National Security with Economic Opportunities*

The policy recognises the importance of safeguarding Vanuatu's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and public safety, while also promoting migration as a catalyst for economic development, trade, tourism, and labour mobility.

### *c) Collaboration Across Government Sectors and Stakeholders*

Migration is a cross-cutting issue that requires a coordinated whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. The policy promotes strong inter-agency cooperation and inclusive engagement with communities, civil society, private sector actors, and development partners.

### *d) Evidence-Based Decision-Making*

Reliable and disaggregated data will inform policy development, planning, and monitoring. Vanuatu will strengthen its migration data systems and invest in research and analysis to support informed, timely, and effective decision-making.

### *e) Transparency and Accountability in Migration Governance*

The policy framework will promote clear institutional mandates, robust oversight mechanisms, and open communication to ensure that migration governance is transparent, ethical, and accountable to the public.



Photo by Kershom Richard.

Malvatumauri Council of Chiefs Nakamal.

# 4.0 OBJECTIVES AND KEY INITIATIVES

## 1

### Objective 1: Strengthen Migration Governance and Institutional Coordination

#### Key Initiatives:

- Conduct a legal review to ensure alignment of all migration-related laws and procedures with the Constitution of the Republic of Vanuatu, including provisions for legislative reform and inter-agency mandates.
- Establish a unified National Migration Coordination Mechanism (NMCM), incorporating labour, immigration, climate, customs, civil registry, and consular stakeholders.
- Harmonise laws and policies across sectors to align with international obligations (e.g. GCM, SDGs) and regional agreements (e.g. PACER Plus, MSG Trade Agreement (MSGTA)).
- Integrate migration into the NSDP, sector strategies, and provincial development strategies.
- Develop legal procedures for oversight, complaints, and redress (e.g. Ombudsman engagement).

## Objective 2: Develop a Comprehensive Labour Mobility and Reintegration Framework

2

### Key Initiatives:

- Operationalise the Vanuatu Labour Mobility Policy and Action Plan 2024–2027<sup>39</sup> within the broader migration framework.
- Establish ethical recruitment, pre-departure training, and reintegration programmes with financial literacy, skills transfer, and investment pathways.
- Support the delivery of accredited training linked to labour mobility, seafaring, and reintegration in line with national qualifications standards.
- Promote compliance with VQA requirements and prevent the delivery of unaccredited courses to migrant populations.
- Facilitate coordination among registered PSET providers to ensure high-quality, relevant training for outbound and returning migrants.
- Improve protection and support for Ni-Vanuatu seafarers and fishermen through coordinated regulation, pre-departure preparation, grievance mechanisms, and reintegration services.
- Expand and formalise bilateral labour migration agreements (BLMAs) to include provisions on ethical recruitment, visa procedures, wages, social protections, dispute resolution, data sharing, and reintegration support.
- Establish a national recruitment compliance monitoring system to oversee ethical recruitment practices, licensing of agencies, and protection of migrant rights.
- Develop a Diaspora Engagement Strategy to institutionalise outreach and partnerships, and to coordinate diaspora activities.
- Expand reintegration services to include psychosocial counselling, mental health support, and family-based interventions for returnees and their communities.
- Ensure gender and disability inclusion in all labour mobility programmes.

## Objective 3: Promote Economic and Investment Migration

3

### Key Initiatives:

- Ensure all investment and dual citizenship schemes comply with constitutional restrictions on political participation by dual citizens and support legislative clarity as provided for under Article 1440.
- Define clear policy pathways for investor, business, and professional migrants, ensuring alignment with the Foreign Investment Act (2019)<sup>41</sup> and DSP and Capital Investment Immigration Program (CIIP) schemes.
- Monitor economic contributions and risks associated with investment-based migration (e.g. money laundering, social impact).
- Introduce residence permit options linked to job creation, technology transfer, and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Ensure due diligence and transparency through coordinated oversight mechanisms (VFIPA, Immigration, Customs).

<sup>39</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and External Trade. (2024). Vanuatu national labour mobility policy and action plan 2024–2027. Republic of Vanuatu. <https://mfaicet.gov.vu/images/documents/Vanuatu%20National%20Labour%20Mobility%20Policy.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> Constitution of the Republic of Vanuatu, Art. 14, amended by the Constitutional (Sixth) (Amendment) Act No. 27 of 2013 (Vanuatu). Retrieved July 9, 2025, from <https://www.gov.vu/images/legislation/constitution-en.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> Republic of Vanuatu. (2019). Foreign Investment Act No. 25 of 2019. Retrieved July 19, 2025, from [https://tradeportal.gov.vu/media//Foreign%20Investment%20Act%20No%20%2025%20of%202019%20\(2\).pdf](https://tradeportal.gov.vu/media//Foreign%20Investment%20Act%20No%20%2025%20of%202019%20(2).pdf)

# 4

## Objective 4: Address Climate-Induced Displacement and Environmental Migration

### Key Initiatives:

- Develop a dedicated National Framework on Climate Mobility, incorporating planned relocation guidelines, temporary protection protocols, and community-based adaptation strategies.
- Ensure relocation and displacement frameworks respect customary land ownership and involve the Malvatumauri Council of Chiefs in all planning, as constitutionally required.
- Develop national guidelines for planned relocation, internal displacement, and temporary protection linked to disaster response frameworks.
- Integrate migration into climate adaptation and resilience strategies (DRR Act (2024)<sup>42</sup>, Environmental Protection and Conservation Act [Cap. 283]<sup>43</sup>).
- Use environmental impact assessments (EIAs) and land use planning to manage settlement in receiving communities and protect biodiversity.
- Include mobile and displaced populations in Post-Disaster Needs Assessments (PDNA) and long-term recovery planning.

# 5

## Objective 5: Enhance Protection and Rights of Migrants, Especially Vulnerable Groups

### Key Initiatives:

- Align all protection mechanisms and grievance pathways with the constitutional guarantee of human rights and freedoms and ensure adult and child migrant access to the Supreme Court and Ombudsman where applicable.
- Strengthen enforcement mechanisms to identify, investigate, and prosecute perpetrators of trafficking, smuggling, and migrant exploitation in line with Vanuatu's national security and human rights obligations.
- Establish rights-based protections for migrant children, women, persons with disabilities, and trafficking victims.
- Embed child safeguarding measures and integrate child-sensitive procedures across migration systems.
- Operationalise a National Referral Mechanism (NRM), Child Protection Referral Pathway (CPRP), and SOPs for identifying and supporting victims of trafficking and exploitation.
- Improve access to legal aid, identity documents, and civil registration for all migrants.

<sup>42</sup> Republic of Vanuatu. (2024). Disaster Recovery and Resilience Act No. 17 of 2024. Retrieved July 19, 2025, from <https://duap.gov.vu/images/docs/Disaster%20Recovery%20and%20Resilience%20Act%20No.%2017%20of%202024.pdf>

<sup>43</sup> Republic of Vanuatu. (2006). Environmental Protection and Conservation Act [CAP 283]. Consolidated Edition 2006. Retrieved July 19, 2025, from [https://mocca.gov.vu/images/publications/legislation/DEPC/Legislation/Environmental%20Protection%20and%20Conservation%20Act%20PC\\_Act\\_2002\\_%28consolidated\\_version\\_incl\\_2011\\_amends%29.pdf](https://mocca.gov.vu/images/publications/legislation/DEPC/Legislation/Environmental%20Protection%20and%20Conservation%20Act%20PC_Act_2002_%28consolidated_version_incl_2011_amends%29.pdf)

## Objective 6: Facilitate Safe, Legal, and Efficient Mobility for Trade, Tourism, and Business

6

### Key Initiatives:

- Align visa and permit systems with PACER Plus, MSG, and other trade commitments.
- Implement business-friendly visa categories and support service professionals' temporary mobility.
- Improve eVisa, visa-on-arrival, and remote processing capabilities.
- Build public-private partnerships (PPPs) for awareness, transparency, and investor confidence.
- Coordinate with the Tourism Council to ensure that labour and investor migration policy supports Ni-Vanuatu participation and avoids displacement of local economic actors.
- Align short-term entry procedures for tourism-related business travel with national tourism permit and accreditation systems to avoid duplication and streamline compliance.
- Integrate Local Government Tourism Councils into NMCs to improve local-level oversight of inbound tourism business mobility.
- Establish clear protocols for verifying eligibility of foreign applicants seeking to operate in the tourism sector, ensuring adherence to reserved investment lists and protection of Ni-Vanuatu participation.

## Objective 7: Strengthen Border Management and Immigration Control

7

### Key Initiatives:

- Ensure that any emergency border or immigration measures are implemented within the bounds of constitutional emergency powers, including safeguards for human rights.
- Expand and institutionalise IBM systems, including biometric technologies and Migration Information and Data Analysis System (MIDAS) integration.
- Develop visa categories, entry controls, and compliance procedures to manage cross-regional movement and economic activity linked to the new Luganville-centred EEZ, in coordination with relevant maritime, security, and customs agencies.
- Build capacity at ports of entry through infrastructure, staffing, and equipment.
- Introduce rights-compliant procedures and alternatives to detention and for irregular migrants.
- Coordinate with Customs, Police, Public and Curative Health, and Biosecurity for border security and humanitarian response.

## Objective 8: Improve Migration Data, Monitoring, and Research

8

### Key Initiatives:

- Establish a Migration Data Working Group to harmonise migration data collection, ensure interoperability, and support reporting on SDG indicators.
- Develop a centralised migration data management platform in partnership with the Vanuatu Bureau of Statistics (VBoS).
- Align with the Statistics Act (2022)<sup>44</sup> to ensure data confidentiality and harmonisation.
- Include migration modules in national censuses and surveys; track SDG-aligned indicators.

<sup>44</sup> Statistics Act No. 7 of 2022 (Vanuatu), <https://vbos.gov.vu/sites/default/files/Statistics%20Act%20No.%207%20of%202022%20-%20clean%20copy.pdf>

- Promote data sharing between Immigration, Labour, Customs, Health, and Civil Registry systems.
- Collaborate with the Department of Tourism to integrate the register of accredited tourism businesses and tourism operator permits into migration data systems to track the scale and nature of business-related migration.
- Establish systems for tracking migration-related financial flows, including remittances, recruitment costs, reintegration funding, visa and permit revenues, and public budget allocations to migration programmes.

## 9

### Objective 9: Support Sustainable Urbanisation and Manage Internal Migration

#### Key Initiatives:

- Develop a National Urban Migration Strategy to manage internal mobility, urban growth, and inclusive service delivery.
- Coordinate internal migration planning with local authorities in accordance with constitutional provisions for decentralisation and local governance.
- Strengthen coordination with Municipal Councils to integrate migration data into local development plans, land use regulation, and infrastructure investment strategies, in line with responsibilities under the Municipalities Act (1980).
- Build the capacity of municipal authorities to manage migration-driven population growth and urbanisation through inclusive planning, decentralised budgeting, and local service delivery models.
- Mainstream internal migration in national and urban development plans.
- Coordinate with urban land lease committees to ensure migrant access to land and housing.
- Strengthen provincial and municipal capacities to manage service delivery, infrastructure, and population shifts.
- Prevent informal settlements through inclusive relocation and regularisation programmes.

## 10

### Objective 10: Foster Regional and International Cooperation

#### Key Initiatives:

- Engage in bilateral, regional, and global forums (e.g. Bali Process, MSG, PIF, PACER Plus, PIDC) on migration governance.
- Coordinate with partner countries on labour mobility, returns, humanitarian entry, and technical cooperation.
- Align national migration frameworks with the GCM and other international instruments.
- Empower the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to negotiate and formalise bilateral and multilateral migration-related agreements and designate overseas Missions to serve as liaison points for treaty implementation and reporting.
- Support the exchange of best practices on managing tourism-linked migration with other Pacific Island countries, including approaches to business mobility, tourism labour migration, and sustainable tourism governance.
- Leverage development cooperation (e.g. IOM, International Labour Organization (ILO), Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), UN, World Health Organization (WHO) [IHR]) for migration policy implementation and capacity building.

## Objective 11: Improve Access to Health and Social Protection for Migrants and Displaced Persons

11

### Key Initiatives:

- Ensure the integration of migrant and displaced populations into the national health sector strategy, including inclusion in health surveillance systems and alignment with reporting obligations under the International Health Regulations (IHR).
- Promote enrolment of migrants and returning workers in national social protection systems, including health insurance, pensions, and accident compensation.
- Expand social protection measures to include disaster response, reintegration support, and access to welfare services for vulnerable groups.
- Coordinate with relevant ministries and local authorities to ensure migrants and displaced persons receive inclusive, culturally appropriate service delivery.
- Guarantee equitable access to essential and emergency health services for migrants, irrespective of their legal or residency status, in accordance with public health principles and human rights obligations.
- Include mobile populations in public health emergency response and national resilience planning.
- Extend social protection eligibility to IDPs, including tailored support during climate-induced relocation.

## Objective 12: Facilitate Diplomatic and Official Mobility

12

### Key Initiatives:

- Establish inter-agency protocols between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Vanuatu Immigration Division to coordinate the entry, residence, and departure of diplomatic personnel, consular officials, and their families.
- Develop SOPs for the issuance and renewal of diplomatic and official visas, including provisions for immunity, exemption from certain legal obligations, and compliance with the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961).
- Ensure that all accredited diplomatic personnel and their dependents are registered in accordance with notification procedures and maintain updated records to support transparency and accountability.
- Provide specialised training to immigration and border officials on diplomatic privileges, immunities, and the appropriate handling of official entrants.
- Integrate diplomatic entry data into national migration monitoring systems while preserving confidentiality and upholding obligations under international law.



MIDAS system & eVisa Launch.

# 5.0 POLICY EXECUTION AND OVERSIGHT

Effective execution of the Vanuatu National Migration Policy requires a strong, well-coordinated institutional framework supported by clear mandates, inter-agency collaboration, and inclusive stakeholder engagement. The Government of Vanuatu shall adopt a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to ensure that migration is managed in a manner that supports national development, safeguards human rights, and enhances national resilience.

To this end, an NMCM shall be established under the oversight of the MIA, with delegated responsibility to the Vanuatu Immigration and Passport Services (VIPS) Division for policy leadership and

operational guidance. A dedicated Migration Policy Implementation Unit (MPIU) will be established within the NMCM to coordinate the implementation of policy activities, donor engagement, and reporting. The MPIU will serve as the operational backbone of the NMCM, ensuring timely execution of initiatives, stakeholder coordination, and results tracking.

While VIPS will provide strategic oversight, the realisation of the policy's objectives will depend on active collaboration with other key government ministries, provincial authorities, civil society, development partners, and the private sector. In particular, effective implementation will require close

coordination with the Department of Labour, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Health, Department of Tourism, Climate Change Directorate, Department of Local Authorities, National Statistics Office, and law enforcement agencies.

The NMCM will be formally established and convened by the Immigration Division to serve as the main multi-agency platform for coordinating actions, sharing information, reviewing progress, and advising on emerging migration issues. The NMCM will ensure that all actors involved in migration governance align their actions with the policy framework and work collectively to deliver inclusive, coherent, and well-managed migration outcomes.

The NMCM will:

- **Provide** strategic direction for the implementation of migration objectives.
- **Coordinate** the roles and responsibilities of all relevant ministries and agencies.
- **Oversee** resource mobilisation and capacity-building initiatives.
- **Ensure** alignment with international agreements and regional partnerships.
- **Monitor** policy outcomes and recommend reforms based on periodic reviews.

## 5.1 COLLABORATING AGENCIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Below is an outline of key ministries and institutions, along with the respective responsibilities of VIPS in delivering the migration policy.

### Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA)

The Ministry will:

- **Provide** overall leadership in the implementation of the migration policy.
- **Oversee** visa, residence, and citizenship processing through VIPS.
- **Serve** as the Secretariat for the NMCM.
- **Coordinate** national efforts to ensure migration is managed in line with national security, population, and development priorities.

### Department of Labour and Employment Services

The Department will:

- **Regulate** all aspects of labour migration, including recruitment, deployment, and return of workers.
- **Monitor** compliance with labour standards for migrant workers and license recruitment agencies.
- **Deliver** pre-departure orientation, reintegration programmes, and promote skills transfer for returning workers.
- **Support** implementation of the Labour Mobility Policy and Action Plan 2024–2027 and oversee bilateral labour agreements.

## Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and External Trade

The Ministry will:

- **Lead** bilateral and multilateral negotiations on migration-related agreements and labour mobility frameworks.
- **Manage** consular services and assist Ni-Vanuatu nationals abroad, including in cases of distress or repatriation.
- **Represent** Vanuatu in international migration forums and advocate for Vanuatu's interests within regional agreements such as MSGTA and PACER Plus.

## Ministry of Justice and Community Services

The Ministry will:

- **Provide** legal protection and access to justice for migrants, particularly vulnerable groups such as women, children, and persons with disabilities.
- **Coordinate** safeguarding policies for migrants, including survivors of trafficking and gender-based violence.
- **Ensure** the protection of human rights in all aspects of migration governance.

## Association of Post-School Education and Training Providers (APSET)

The Association will:

- **Support** the delivery of accredited training linked to labour mobility, seafaring, and reintegration in line with national qualifications standards.
- **Promote** compliance with VQA requirements and prevent the delivery of unaccredited courses to migrant populations.
- **Facilitate** coordination among registered PSET providers to ensure high-quality, relevant training for outbound and returning migrants.

## Ministry of Health

The Ministry will:

- **Integrate** migrant health into national public health strategies and ensure inclusive health service provision.  
  
Monitor and manage border health and communicable disease control in collaboration with immigration and quarantine services.
- **Train** health professionals in the delivery of migrant-friendly, culturally appropriate care. Ensure that migrant health is systematically integrated into the national health surveillance system, and that all health facilities provide inclusive, non-discriminatory access to health services for migrant populations.
- **Strengthen** the monitoring and management of border health and communicable disease control through coordinated efforts with immigration and other relevant authorities at all official ports of entry.
- **Train** health professionals in the delivery of migrant-friendly, culturally appropriate care.
- **Ensure** timely reporting of imported cases and disease outbreaks in accordance with the IHR during declared public health emergencies.

## Ministry of Climate Change Adaptation, Meteorology and Geo-Hazards

The Ministry will:

- **Lead** the development of legal and policy frameworks for climate-induced displacement and planned relocation.
- **Integrate** migration into disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate resilience strategies.
- **Collaborate** with other ministries to ensure displaced populations are supported in a sustainable and inclusive manner.

## Ministry of Infrastructure and Public Utilities (MIPU)

The Ministry will:

- **Support** infrastructure development at key ports of entry (airports and seaports) to enable secure, efficient, and climate-resilient border operations.
- **Ensure** that transport and communication infrastructure is aligned with migration management needs, including emergency relocation routes and logistics for displaced populations.
- **Collaborate** with the Department of Immigration and other relevant agencies to facilitate infrastructure planning for internal relocation sites and urban growth linked to migration.
- **Provide** technical support for the development of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), transport, and energy systems essential for implementing digital migration governance platforms.

## Customs and Border Control Department

The Department will:

- **Enforce** customs regulations and prevent illegal importation/exportation of goods, including those linked to migrant smuggling and trafficking networks.
- **Collaborate** with Immigration, Biosecurity, and Police to maintain secure and compliant entry/exit processes at ports.
- **Collect** and share real-time data on cross-border flows to inform migration risk profiling and threat assessments.
- **Support** infrastructure upgrades and digitalisation of border systems, including integration with MIDAS and biometric platforms.
- **Participate** in operational planning related to the EEZ and new compliance mechanisms at emerging points of entry.

## Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources

The Ministry will:

- **Facilitate** access to land for migrant and displaced communities in accordance with customary and legal frameworks.
- **Integrate** migration-related settlement into urban and rural land use plans.
- **Support** the resolution of land disputes related to population movement.

## Ministry of Finance and Economic Management/ Vanuatu Foreign Investment Promotion Authority (VFIPA)

The Ministry and VFIPA will:

- **Oversee** investment-related migration programmes, including the DSP.
- **Ensure** transparency, compliance, and alignment between economic migration and national development goals.
- **Monitor and assess** the contribution of investor migrants to the economy.

## Vanuatu Bureau of Statistics (VBoS)

The Bureau will:

- **Coordinate** the collection, analysis, and dissemination of migration statistics across government systems.
- **Integrate** migration indicators into national data frameworks, censuses, and household surveys.
- **Support** evidence-based migration planning and monitoring.

## Vanuatu Police Force

The Police Force will:

- **Enforce** criminal laws relating to smuggling, trafficking in persons, and irregular migration offences.
- **Collaborate** with Immigration, Customs, and judicial authorities in the investigation and prosecution of transnational crimes linked to migration.
- **Respond** to threats at borders and enforce national security measures, including during states of emergency.
- **Support** implementation of victim protection protocols, especially for trafficked persons and survivors of exploitation.
- **Participate** in border operations and joint task forces under IBM frameworks.

## Department of Civil Registry and Identity Management (CRIM)

The Department will:

- **Maintain** accurate records of births, deaths, and legal identity data relevant to migration governance.
- **Implement** the Civil Registration and Identity Management Act (2021) and the Vanuatu National Identity Act (2021) to support identity verification for visa, border, and labour mobility systems.
- **Facilitate** interoperability of identity data systems across immigration, labour, and health agencies.
- **Support** integration of the Population Register with migration monitoring and planning frameworks.

## Provincial Governments and Municipal Councils

Local authorities will:

- **Monitor and respond** to internal migration dynamics and population shifts within their jurisdictions.
- **Support** migrant integration; urban planning; and access to land, services, and infrastructure.
- **Collaborate** with national agencies to implement relocation, settlement, and service delivery programmes.

## Vanuatu Tourism Office (VTO)

The Office will:

- **Regulate** inbound tourism-related migration in partnership with immigration and local councils.
- **Coordinate** with the Department of Tourism and subnational associations (e.g. Santo Tourism Association, Tafea Tourism Council) to manage foreign tourism operators and ensure local participation.
- **Support** the development of visa categories, permits, and accreditation processes aligned with national tourism investment goals.

## Department of Communication and Digital Transformation

The Department will:

- **Provide** digital infrastructure and cybersecurity oversight for migration-related platforms, including visa systems, national identity systems and data interoperability.
- **Support** the digitalisation of immigration and border management services, including the development of eVisa, biometric, and real-time tracking systems.
- **Ensure** secure, interoperable ICT systems that support coordination across migration stakeholders.

## Citizenship Office and Commission

The Office will:

- **Process** applications for naturalisation, marriage, citizenship entitlement, regained citizenship, dual citizenship, and citizenship by investment.
- **Ensure** that citizenship-related migration procedures are transparent, rights-compliant, and aligned with constitutional provisions and relevant legislation (e.g. Citizenship Act, 1980).
- **Collaborate** with VIPS to ensure coherence between migration, residency, and citizenship processes.

## Civil Society, Private Sector, and Development Partners

These stakeholders will:

- **Civil Society Organisations (CSOs):** Deliver grassroots services, conduct awareness campaigns, and support the rights and wellbeing of migrants.
- **Private Sector:** Ensure ethical recruitment, invest in migrant livelihoods, and support returnee employment and enterprise development.
- **Development Partners and International Organisations:** Provide technical assistance, funding, training, and global expertise to strengthen migration governance in Vanuatu.



Republic of Vanuatu Passport booklets.

# 6.0 LEGAL AND POLICY FOUNDATIONS

A well-functioning migration system is underpinned by a robust legal and policy framework that ensures consistency, accountability, and alignment with both national development priorities and international standards. Vanuatu recognises the need to build a coherent and harmonised migration governance architecture by reviewing, updating, and aligning its laws and policies with contemporary migration realities.

To this end, the Government of Vanuatu will pursue a dual approach: (i) strengthening the legal framework for migration by reviewing existing national laws and developing new instruments where necessary, and (ii) enhancing compliance with regional and international conventions and agreements relevant to migration governance.

## 6.1 REVIEW AND ALIGNMENT OF NATIONAL LEGAL AND POLICY INSTRUMENTS

The Government will:

- Undertake a review and, where necessary, amendment of national laws and policies to ensure consistency with migration policy priorities, human rights principles, and evolving migration dynamics.
- Align sectoral legislation with the national migration framework to prevent fragmentation and duplication of mandates across ministries and agencies.

- Strengthen institutional mandates and clarify inter-agency roles to support integrated policy implementation.
- Create a sectoral cap or workforce reserve requirement for the tourism and hospitality sectors to ensure availability of trained staff during peak tourism periods.

Legal reforms will also address the criminal liability of those who perpetrate or facilitate trafficking, exploitation, or abuse of migrants, including private

recruiters, employers, and corrupt officials. The Penal Code [Cap.135]<sup>45</sup> will be reviewed to strengthen provisions relating to the criminalisation of trafficking in persons, migrant exploitation, and smuggling offences, and to ensure penalties reflect the seriousness of these crimes.

The Criminal Procedure Code [Cap. 136]<sup>46</sup> provides the legal framework for arrest, detention, and prosecution of migration-related offences. It will be referenced in the development of joint enforcement protocols and capacity-building programmes for law enforcement agencies and prosecutors.

The following national instruments were reviewed to inform the migration policy and will be subject to further legal alignment:

1. Citizenship Act [Cap. 112] (1980) and Citizenship (Amendment) Act No. 34 of 2018
2. Civil Registration and Identity Management Act No. 28 of 2021
3. Constitution of the Republic of Vanuatu (2020)
4. Correctional Services Act and Amendment Act No. 8 of 2019
5. Criminal Procedure Code [Cap. 136]
6. Customs (Amendment) Act No. 3 of 2019
7. Decentralisation Act [Cap. 230]
8. Department of Immigration and Passport Services Business Plan (2024)
9. Disaster Recovery and Resilience Act No. 17 of 2024
10. Education Act [Cap. 272]
11. Employment Act [Cap. 160]
12. Environmental Protection and Conservation Act [Cap. 283]
13. Extradition Act [Cap. 287]
14. Foreign Investment Act No. 25 of 2019
15. Foreign Service Act (2019)
16. Immigration Act No 17 of 2010
17. Labour Mobility Policy and Action Plan 2024–2027
18. Malvatumauri Council of Chiefs Act No. 23 of 2006
19. Ministry of Justice and Community Services Child Safeguarding Policy
20. Municipalities Act [Cap. 126]
21. Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Act [Cap. 36]
22. National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons 2024–2028
23. National Adaptation Programme of Action (2007)
24. National Policy on Climate Change and Disaster-Induced Displacement (2018)
25. National Security Act No. 41 (Amendment) 2023
26. National Security Strategy (2019)
27. National Tourism Office Amendment Act No. 10 of 2002
28. Ombudsman (Amendment) Act No. 46 of 2019
29. Passport Act No 20 of 2009
30. Penal Code [Cap. 135]
31. Police Act [Cap. 105]
32. Port Vila Urban Land Leases Selection Committee Rules (Order 26 of 1995)
33. Public Health Act [Cap. 234]
34. Seasonal Employment Act No. 23 of 2007
35. Statistics Act No. 7 of 2022
36. Statute Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act No. 2 of 2021
37. Tourism Councils Act No. 23 of 2012
38. Urban Lands Act No. 23 of 1993
39. Vanuatu Labour Mobility Reintegration Strategy and Action Plan (2025–2028) (2020)
40. Vanuatu National Identity Act No. 27 of 2021
41. Vanuatu Qualifications Authority (Amendment) Act No. 36 of 2019

<sup>45</sup> Republic of Vanuatu. (2006). Penal Code [CAP 135] (Consolidated Edition 2006; Commenced 7 August 1981). Retrieved July 19, 2025, from <https://fju.gov.vu/docs/Penal%20Code%20%5BCap%20135%5D.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> Republic of Vanuatu. (2006). Criminal Procedure Code [CAP 136] (Consolidated Edition 2006; Commenced 1 October 1981). Retrieved July 19, 2025, from <https://natlex.ilo.org/dyn/natlex2/natlex2/files/download/83130/VUT83130.pdf>

These instruments will form the legal foundation for migration management across key sectors such as immigration, labour, health, education, climate resilience, land use, border management, justice, and human rights.

## 6.2 COMPLIANCE WITH REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND FRAMEWORKS

### The Government will:

- » Strengthen implementation of Vanuatu's obligations under ratified international instruments and incorporate best practices into national law and practice.
- » Ensure that national migration governance aligns with the following international and regional frameworks.

### International Instruments Reviewed:

- » International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (2020)<sup>47</sup>
- » United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol) (2000)<sup>48</sup>
- » Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)<sup>49</sup>
- » Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) (2018)<sup>50</sup>
- » Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015)<sup>51</sup>
- » Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961)<sup>52</sup>

47 United Nations General Assembly. (1990, December 18). International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Retrieved July 19, 2025, from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-protection-rights-all-migrant-workers>

48 United Nations General Assembly. (2000, November 15). Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Retrieved July 19, 2025, from <https://www.refworld.org/legal/agreements/unga/2000/en/23886>

49 United Nations General Assembly. (1989, November 20). Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/RES/44/25). Retrieved July 19, 2025, from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/80135?ln=en>

50 Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, December 19, 2018, <https://www.iom.int/global-compact-migration>

51 United Nations General Assembly. (2015, October 21). Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1). Retrieved July 19, 2025, from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>

52 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, April 14, 1961, 500 U.N.T.S. 95, [https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=III-3&chapter=3&clang=\\_en](https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=III-3&chapter=3&clang=_en)

### Regional and Bilateral Frameworks Reviewed:

- » Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations Plus (PACER Plus)<sup>53</sup>
- » Melanesian Free Trade Agreement (MFTA)<sup>54</sup>
- » Boe Declaration on Regional Security<sup>55</sup>
- » 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent<sup>56</sup>
- » IOM Pacific Strategy (2022–2026)<sup>57</sup>
- » IOM-Vanuatu Remittances Study (2021)<sup>58</sup>
- » ESCAP Labour Migration Compendium (2014)<sup>59</sup>
- » World Bank Migration and Development Brief 40 (2024)<sup>60</sup>

These instruments provide guidance on safe and regular migration, human rights protections, regional labour mobility, economic cooperation, climate-related displacement, and international collaboration. The policy also recognises Vanuatu's obligations under the Extradition Act (2006)<sup>61</sup>, which strengthens cooperation on transnational crime and provides a legal framework for surrendering

individuals involved in criminal activities intersecting with migration systems, including trafficking and smuggling of migrants.

By aligning its legal and policy landscape with these national, regional, and international instruments, Vanuatu will establish a strong and adaptable legal foundation for achieving a safe, orderly, and development-focused migration system.

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54 Melanesian Spearhead Group Secretariat. (2016). Melanesian Free Trade Agreement. Retrieved July 19, 2025, from <https://vanuatuhighcomm-fj.gov.vu/images/trade-and-investment/MSGTA3-Legal-Text.pdf>

55 Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. (2018). Boe Declaration on Regional Security. Retrieved July 19, 2025, from <https://forumsec.org/publications/boe-declaration-regional-security>

56 Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. (2022). 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. Retrieved July 19, 2025, from <https://forumsec.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/PIFS-2050-Strategy-Blue-Pacific-Continent-WEB-5Aug2022-1.pdf>

57 International Organisation for Migration. (2022). IOM Pacific Strategy (2022–2026). Retrieved July 19, 2025, from [https://crisisresponse.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1481/files/appeal/documents/IOM%20Pacific%20Strategy%20282022-2026%29\\_0\\_0.pdf](https://crisisresponse.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1481/files/appeal/documents/IOM%20Pacific%20Strategy%20282022-2026%29_0_0.pdf)

58 International Organization for Migration. (2024, October). Reintegration for NiVanuatu Migrant Workers: Assessing the reintegration context, available support and services, and the experiences of migrant workers and their families in Vanuatu. Retrieved July 19, 2025, from [https://roasiapacific.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1671/files/documents/2024-10/vanuatu-reintegration-report\\_fa\\_web.pdf](https://roasiapacific.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1671/files/documents/2024-10/vanuatu-reintegration-report_fa_web.pdf)

59 United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. (2014). Compendium of legislation and institutional arrangements for labour migration in Pacific Island countries. Retrieved July 19, 2025, from [https://scholar.google.com.au/scholar?q=ESCAP+Labour+Migration+Compendium+\(2014\)&hl=en&as\\_sdt=0&as\\_vis=1&oi=scholar](https://scholar.google.com.au/scholar?q=ESCAP+Labour+Migration+Compendium+(2014)&hl=en&as_sdt=0&as_vis=1&oi=scholar)

60 World Bank. (2024). Migration and Development Brief 40: Remittances slowed in 2023, expected to grow faster in 2024. Retrieved July 19, 2025, from <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099714008132436612/pdf/IDU1a9cf73b51fcad1425a1a0dd1cc8f2f3331ce.pdf>

61 Extradition Act [Cap. 287] (Vanuatu 2006). Retrieved July 9, 2025, from [https://www.pacii.org/vu/legis/consol\\_act/e128/](https://www.pacii.org/vu/legis/consol_act/e128/)



Port Resolution, Tanna Island.

# 7.0 FUNDING AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION

The effective implementation of the Vanuatu National Migration Policy requires sustainable and coordinated resource mobilisation across all levels of government and in collaboration with development partners and the private sector. Recognising that migration

has cross-cutting impacts on national development, public health, labour markets, education, environment, and security, the Government will adopt a multi-source financing approach to ensure the policy's operationalisation and long-term sustainability.

## 7.1 GOVERNMENT BUDGETARY SUPPORT

The Government of Vanuatu, through the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, will:

- » Allocate dedicated funding lines within the national budget to support core migration-related activities, including immigration operations, labour mobility coordination, reintegration services, border management, data systems, and inter-agency coordination.
- » Ensure that relevant line ministries, including Immigration, Labour, Health, Education, Internal Affairs, Climate Change, and Justice and

Community Services, integrate migration activities into their annual work plans and medium-term expenditure frameworks.

- » Strengthen public financial management systems to support transparent and accountable use of funds related to migration programming.
- » Mobilise provincial governments to allocate resources to support internal migration, local integration, relocation planning, and service delivery to migrants and displaced populations.

## 7.2 INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

International development partners and multilateral agencies have historically played a vital role in strengthening Vanuatu's migration governance and capacity. Building on this, the Government will:

- » Collaborate with bilateral and multilateral partners to secure financial and technical assistance in support of migration policy implementation, particularly in the areas of labour mobility, climate displacement, data systems, and institutional reform.
- » Promote joint programming with international organisations, including the International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations (UN) agencies, and regional partners to implement targeted projects aligned with the migration policy's objectives.
- » Prioritise the use of development cooperation to support infrastructure development, ICT upgrades, staff training, return and reintegration support, and migration-related health and education services.

## 7.3 PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

The private sector is a critical stakeholder in migration, particularly in areas of labour recruitment, remittance transfer, diaspora engagement, and business mobility. The Government will:

- » Encourage private sector investment in migration-related initiatives, such as skills development centres, pre-departure training programmes, migrant accommodation services, and reintegration support enterprises.
- » Engage financial institutions and mobile money operators to reduce remittance transfer costs and increase financial inclusion for migrant workers and their families.
- » Promote PPPs to expand digital infrastructure for visa systems, border management, and remittance platforms, particularly in under-served regions.
- » Explore cost-sharing models with employers and recruitment agencies to co-finance pre-departure orientation, worker protection schemes, and ethical recruitment certification systems.

By leveraging domestic resources, external assistance, and private investment, Vanuatu aims to build a resilient and inclusive migration system that contributes to national development, human security, and regional integration. A Migration Policy

Implementation Plan and accompanying budget framework will be developed to guide coordinated financing, annual tracking, and performance-based resource allocation.

## 7.4 FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY AND EXPENDITURE TRACKING

The Government will develop a financial tracking system to monitor all migration-related revenues and expenditures. This includes visa fees, labour mobility levies, donor contributions, and reintegration

investments. The system will support planning, resource mobilisation, and public accountability, and enable better forecasting of remittance inflows, fiscal needs, and programme sustainability.



Group Photo of VIPS Team.

# 8.0 MONITORING AND PERFORMANCE TRACKING

Effective monitoring and performance tracking are essential for ensuring that the objectives of the Vanuatu National Migration Policy are achieved in a timely, accountable, and transparent manner. A robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework is required to support evidence-based decision-making, enable timely adjustments, and promote continuous learning and improvement in migration governance.

Responsibility for developing and overseeing the M&E framework rests with the NMCM, in collaboration with the Vanuatu National Statistics Office (VNSO) and other relevant institutions. The system must be aligned with national development priorities and international frameworks to ensure coherence and impact.

## 8.1 ESTABLISHMENT OF MEASURABLE INDICATORS FOR POLICY SUCCESS

To effectively measure progress and outcomes, the following requirements apply:

- » A comprehensive set of key performance indicators (KPIs) must be developed and linked directly to the objectives and thematic areas of the migration policy.
- » All indicators must be disaggregated by sex, age, disability status, and migration status, where applicable, to ensure inclusion and equity in policy implementation.

- » Indicators will also include the volume, use, and transparency of migration-related financial flows.
- » Indicators must align with national development frameworks (e.g. NSDP), regional agreements (e.g. PACER Plus, MSG), and global standards (e.g. GCM, SDGs).
- » Both quantitative and qualitative metrics must be included, capturing institutional performance,

service delivery quality, and the wellbeing of migrants and communities.

- » Indicators must include the number and proportion of migration-related training programmes delivered by VQA-accredited PSET providers, and compliance with national qualifications standards.

## 8.2 ANNUAL AND MID-TERM EVALUATIONS

To ensure transparency and accountability, the following evaluation activities are required:

- » Annual progress reviews must be conducted by the NMCM, incorporating input from line ministries, provincial authorities, CSOs, and development partners.
- » A mid-term evaluation must be carried out at the halfway point of the policy implementation period to assess achievements, identify challenges, and recalibrate strategies as needed.
- » An end-of-cycle evaluation must be completed to assess the overall impact, sustainability,

and relevance of the policy and to inform the development of the next migration policy cycle.

- » All evaluation findings must be compiled into formal reports and submitted to the Council of Ministers for consideration in national planning and resource allocation.
- » Annual reporting will track visa and permit revenue, reintegration programme expenditures, and the cost-benefit efficiency of labour mobility schemes.

## 8.3 STAKEHOLDER REPORTING AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PROCESSES

To foster inclusive governance and ongoing improvement, the following measures are required:

- » All lead and supporting agencies must submit annual implementation reports to the NMCM Secretariat, detailing key activities, outcomes, and lessons learned.
- » A Migration Policy Monitoring Dashboard and migrant feedback mechanism must be established and maintained by the VNSO or VIPS to enable real-time tracking of indicators and provide accessible data to decision-makers.
- » Regular stakeholder consultations must be convened to gather feedback from migrants,

communities, service providers, and private sector partners on the relevance and effectiveness of policy interventions.

- » Findings from evaluations and stakeholder feedback must directly inform annual action plans, policy adjustments, and budget decisions to ensure responsiveness and continuous improvement.

This performance tracking framework is essential to ensuring that the migration policy remains a living document, adaptive, inclusive, and responsive to the evolving needs of Vanuatu's people, economy, and environment.



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2026

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