

# **Vanuatu National Feminist Forum Outcome Statement**



The first ever Vanuatu National Feminist Forum (VNFF) took place on November 17-18 2022 in Port Vila, Vanuatu. The Forum was organized as part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Pacific Feminist Forum, with the theme of Embracing the Collective Power of our Movements and joined the national forums in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and New Caledonia, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Cook Islands and Palau.

The Vanuatu forum brought together over 70 women of different backgrounds and generations to share, learn and plan for women's representation in politics, sexual and reproductive health, intergenerational healing in the women's movement, gender in climate change and climate justice, and the meaning of feminism in Vanuatu.

Participants described the forum as empowering, exciting, inclusive, strategic, educational, unifying, constructive and motivating. As part of the forum, all participants contributed to crafting this outcome statement which expresses our collective vision for the future of women in Vanuatu.

The Forum was sponsored by WeRise Coalition and organized through the VNFF Working Group. Spearheaded by Sista, it included ActionAid, CARE in Vanuatu, Gate Minds, Vanuatu Young Women for Change, Vanuatu Human Rights Coalition, and VPride.

## **1. Women's representation in politics**

As women, we represent more than half of the population in Vanuatu. We acknowledge that the interests of women, families, and communities cannot be effectively protected and advocated for unless we are fairly and equitably represented in Parliament, in Councils, and in other key political spaces.

We recognize that women already have the skills needed to hold these leadership roles, but are kept from doing so through lack of support, cooperation, and acceptance.

### **We want to see and work together for a future that includes:**

- Enabling legislative and funding mechanisms that ensure women's meaningful representation in Parliament and Councils aiming for fair representation
- Collaboration with and accountability of political parties in ensuring women's representation
- Increased emphasis on civic education, including voting rights, voter registration, the importance of joining parties, and holding parties accountable, especially for women

- Increased educational awareness on how the political system works in relation to Vanuatu's kastom governance structures and how to enable women's political participation through these structures
- Increased collaboration and support for women political candidates, including women supporting each other and men supporting women

## **2. Sexual and Reproductive health**

As women – protectors of family and community well-being – we recognize that the right to sexual and reproductive health is not yet fully realized in Vanuatu. Women especially face barriers related to kastom, tradition, religion, and a lack of educational and health services.

### **We want to see and work together for a future that provides:**

- An enhanced Vanuatu legal system, that protects human rights, including:
- A health policy system that recognizes and protects human rights related to SRH, promotes research, and enhances funding support
- Recognizes and reinforces patient rights
- Enforcement, review, and updating of child maintenance laws to reflect current living standards, recognizing that abortion is criminalized in Vanuatu
- Comprehensive, supportive, safe, and sensitive reproductive health services, that
- are accessible and affordable for all, including people living with disabilities, SOGIE diverse people, and people in remote locations
- respect and protect the woman's right to choose in SRH
- support the reduction of unwanted pregnancies, especially for children and young women
- emphasize early treatment and prevention
- provide free access to SRH supplies for women and girls
- include accessible pre-and ante-natal health care to ensure safe births
- Comprehensive, inclusive education in SRH rights and services, in schools and in communities, that
- includes education for parents, community leaders and churches
- supports the normalization of communication about SRH in families, schools, churches, and communities
- reduces stigma around SRH
- includes the role and responsibility of men
- includes human rights education on GBV, support for victims and programs to prevent GBV, especially for girls and young women
- provide supportive educational spaces for teenage mothers and new mothers to enable positive and health parenting

## **3. Intergenerational dialogue and healing the women's movement**

Representing women of different generations and backgrounds, we acknowledge the value and contribution of the women who came before us, those who walk with us today, and those who will come after us.

**As women working together for women's rights, human rights, and a better society for all, we want to see and will work together for a future, in which we will:**

- have equal, inclusive, supportive, peaceful and encouraging relationships with each other

- share our experiences, knowledge, skills, strengths, fears and weaknesses with each other, openly, safely and without judgement
- lift each other up, sharing power, making space, and giving support to all of our journeys and paths
- work together with men, to create families, societies and political systems that embrace and support the well-being of all
- build and support a strong inclusive intergenerational network, that encompasses all women's organizations and groups in Vanuatu
- hold Vanuatu Council of Women accountable for supporting and representing women in the actions listed above

#### **4. Gender, climate change and climate justice**

As women, we disproportionately experience the effects and burdens of climate change, before, during, and after disasters, and in day-to-day life.

**We want to see and work together for a future in which:**

**Climate change and climate justice are prioritized:**

- through providing relevant education on climate change for all, accessible to and appropriate for those at the community level
- through providing resources at all levels, including that of the community
- Women's role, voice, and value in creating a climate resilient society is recognized and women's leadership is empowered
- Women have strong, collaborative networks and projects in climate justice and change
- The special needs of women, people with disability, and SOGIE diverse people during disasters are recognized and met
- Traditional knowledge is recognised, valued and taught at all levels and in all spaces
- Women have access to clean and safe water, to secure sources of food, including climate change resilient seeds and crops, to agricultural and market-based resources, to funding support, to timely and accurate information and communication