

Submission by the Republic of Vanuatu

To the

Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement
UNFCCC

16 September, 2016

SBI invites parties to submit their views on the annual focus area or theme for the Paris Committee on Capacity-building (PCCB) for 2017, for consideration at SBI 45, with a view to making a recommendation on this matter for consideration by COP 22.

Statement - We, the Vanuatu country representatives of Youths, Gender, Indigenous and the Civil Society at large are making this submission to address some of the capacity gaps which may form part of the annual focus area or theme for the Paris Committee on Capacity-building (PCCB) for 2017

In Vanuatu's history, women, youths, the indigenous and civil society at large continue to face multiple and cross-sectional challenges in their lives. As we concentrate on the challenges posed by climate change, and sustainable resources, our focus must not falter from identifying solutions to improve the lives of marginalized groups in Vanuatu, especially our women and girls, youths, people living with disabilities, the indigenous population living in the rural and remote areas and civil society organizations across the country. As we divert our attention to globalization, our small island nation experiences diminishing indigenous ways of livelihoods, our cultural values and customs which threaten the very future and existence of indigenous Ni – Vanuatu men, women, boys and girls and disabled persons. As we tackle this problem with an increasingly divided world where inequality of wealth, power and resources have never been uniform, Vanuatu continues to offer itself as a mere resource substitution for wealthy nations to plunder.

Gender inequalities are not only rhetorical – they shape the daily existence of marginalized groups in Vanuatu where a big percentage of women, youths, people living with disabilities lack the basic knowledge and skills to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Climate change adaptation and mitigation initiatives that require the participation of vulnerable groups, women, youths and people living with disabilities, remains a challenge. Rural women and mothers who until today are less fortunate to access appropriate cooking facilities are forced to collect cooking fuel and utilize unhealthy cooking stoves that force them to inhale carbon dioxide and other green-house gases from wood containing paints and elements. This

places them in vulnerable situations forcing them to acquire respiratory diseases, heart diseases, burns and neo-natal deaths.

Gender – Women make up half of Vanuatu’s population who are capable of assisting Vanuatu’s patriarchy to shape national policy processes on climate change adaptation and mitigation when they are permitted to participate equally in these platforms. There is the need to support processes on climate change adaptation, mitigation and sustainable energy to ensure equitable access for home owner in Vanuatu whether they are big, small, rich or poor or whether they live in the urban or rural areas while building women’s capacities of women at all levels. We want to ensure that every child born from an indigenous Ni-Vanuatu women must have access to appropriate energy to complete their school work at nights. Furthermore, we want to ensure young girls have access to appropriate energy to access their external sanitation facilities and not suffer the ‘risk of being raped in the process because it is dark.’ We want to reduce the hardships faced by a mother who must walk far to collect cooking fuel to prepare food for the family especially during wet days when her cooking fuel is wet and does not work well.

The issue of fast food consumption is replacing Vanuatu’s sustainable indigenous island food consumption. Unhealthy eating habits is becoming a national issue. Fast food leads to non-communicable diseases (NCDs), which continues to destroy people’s lives in Vanuatu. Vanuatu must have access to financial resources to train facilitators/training providers and community-based organizations to administer training sessions to urban and rural populations, especially women and youths about the need to re-adopt their healthy eating habits of slow food. Slow in the sense that this healthy eating will also slow down the population’s death and NCDs. Cooking healthy food must be every family’s option. We want to ensure that women and girls play active roles in raising awareness in respective communities for everyone to gain the basic knowledge, mental attitudes and skills to become more resilient to the impacts of climate change. Vanuatu communities re-engaging in their traditional food systems and sovereignty with their preservation methods will mean that food is available during periods of disasters including climate change.

We agreed that there is a need to mobilize women and girls to facilitate community-based training on climate change adaptation and mitigation with financial support from government and donor partners.

We also agree that women should be invited to shape policies and practices on gender issues of gender justice, violence against women, climate change, sustainable energy, reducing poverty, promoting and actively participating in the post 2015 educational agenda in particular the ESD, highlighting the marginalization of women from different backgrounds, employment, trade policies, rule of law and democracy - not as singular, separate and isolated challenges, but looking at decision-making holistically, and not just at women’s designated issues.

Youths- In order to fully address community knowledge gaps, engaging youths as agents for change is one of the most effective ways of building a well-educated community in Vanuatu to adapt to climate change. Youths form 36% of Vanuatu’s population, which provides us with a good platform to make decisions on who would be the best activists for raising awareness on climate change adaptation – looking at the work

of organizations like 350°. Building Vanuatu youth's capacity to adapt and mitigate the impacts of climate change must commence with a socio-ecological focus to:

1. Absorb stresses and maintain functions in the face of external stresses imposed upon it by climate change; and
2. Adapt, reorganize, and evolve itself into more desirable configurations that improve the sustainability of the systems, leaving it better prepared for future climate change impacts.

A social research on national climate change and environment education in Vanuatu's school undertaken by the Vanuatu Education Policy Advocacy Coalition (VEPAC) identifies knowledge gaps on climate change education in Vanuatu's schools. Another component of this research study undertaken on Malekula and Efate demonstrated lack of community knowledge on climate change impacts on the country's ecosystems. Therefore, knowledge gaps were identified to address the need for more trainings/workshops on climate change education for school teachers, capacity training for teachers and community educators is essential. There is still community confusion in understanding the day-to-day climate of normal weather to impacts of climate change. Populations do not understand how El Nino and La Nina are produced because of the complex scientific explanations surrounding them. It is therefore essential to bring the complex scientific facts to Vanuatu's population through layman's terms so that Vanuatu's population can understand how they impact climate change or how they can mitigate climate change through conservation and protection of green carbon [trees] and blue carbon [mangroves] in Vanuatu.

In the light of all these capacity knowledge gaps, youths' must receive the appropriate training to enable them to address the community vulnerability in light of climate change impacts. Current climate resilience efforts encompass social, economic, technological, and political strategies that are being implemented at all scales of society. From local community actions to global treaties, addressing climate resilience is seen as a priority, although it could be argued that a significant amount of climate science, adaptation and mitigation theories have yet to be translated into practical solutions. Despite these barriers, there is a robust and ever-growing movement fueled by local and national bodies alike geared towards building community resilience to climate change impacts and disaster. When Vanuatu youths are better equipped with the knowledge, skills and mental attitudes to question, acquire and transfer knowledge to other groups of the society, they must also be supported with financial resources to deliver good outcomes.

While the UNFCCC Paris Agreement makes reference to indigenous people, the Agreement does not actively acknowledge the significant climate change and disaster vulnerabilities that indigenous people face especially in SIDS like Vanuatu. Not actively acknowledging and setting aside appropriate financing mechanisms to address these vulnerabilities, will make it harder for Vanuatu to access green climate funds from highest polluters of green-house gases to adapt and mitigate to the impacts of climate change. As the climate changes, the environment also changes thus reducing flora and fauna that once existed to sustain indigenous people's livelihoods and well-being. Knowledge of indigenous traditional governance mechanisms and traditional authorities, including rules and procedures established by indigenous customary institutions and traditional leaders must be acknowledged as an important tool to be utilized to combat climate change adaptation and mitigation activities as outlined in Article 2 of the Paris Agreement.

Full and effective participation of indigenous people and should include cultural safeguards. Indigenous people are well equipped with traditional knowledge, traditional preservation, adaptation and mitigation

practices that have been practiced over thousands of years by ancestors. We call this practice Tupunis in Tannese dialect. It is up to the UNFCCC national authorities and leaders to recognize and safeguard Vanuatu's preservation, adaptation and mitigation practices to assist and encourage indigenous people to continue to practice them. Indigenous traditional preservation, adaptation and mitigation mechanisms to climate change impacts are less costly as all information on their practicality are bestowed with the indigenous people or their Tupunis.

Civil Society Organizations

Vanuatu's civil society organizations are established civil society organizations (CSO) in various part of Vanuatu. There are more than 2,000 civil society groups of which many of them are legally registered with the Vanuatu Financial Services Commission as charitable or not-for-profit organizations. These organizations are linked to the 4 pillars of CSO, representing all groupings of Vanuatu's society, and reflecting the structures in Vanuatu's society with authority at the village level encompassing chiefs, churches, women and youth. They are represented respectively by the National Council of Chiefs, the Vanuatu Christian Council, the Vanuatu National Council of Women and the Vanuatu National Youth Council.

The roles of the national councils (of chiefs, churches, women and youths) are to represent these constituents at the national level, and to transit national messages down to village levels. Hence, each national council possesses extensive knowledge in engaging with village leaders as their fundamental mandate. As elected bodies, they also have the trust of their constituencies. A consortium of these national councils provides an additional comparative advantage to facilitate the engagement of all members of the traditional governance framework, respectful of chiefly protocols but also inclusive of women and youths. Finally, the consortium, with its intimate knowledge of village social and cultural fabric, have developed a facilitation process which is grounded in each council's vast expertise and is truly adapted to Vanuatu's context, island, clan and tribe's specific context.

Vanuatu Government's Initiatives

The Government of the Republic of Vanuatu through various projects to increase resilience to climate change and natural hazards created a project to improve Vanuatu's small-holders and rural communities' resilience to the impacts of climate variability and changes to food and water security and on people's livelihoods and well-being. The strategies adopted for this project includes:

1. Institutional strengthening for climate change and disaster management;
2. Increasing community resilience on active volcanic islands and in coastal areas;
3. Promotion of improved technologies for food crop production and resilience to climate change; and
4. Rural water security.

Capacity training needs – Capacity training needs for local CSO groupings is extremely important for the purpose of either reconstruction or rehabilitation of community buildings/shelters including women's halls, kindergartens, community halls, which doubles up as safe refuge for rural communities when a disaster hits or is utilized to prepare for greater community resilience. The importance of accessing safe

water supply and sanitation during periods of refuge cannot be under-estimated. Building a strong Vanuatu climate change adaptation and mitigation must first start with increasing the population's scientific knowledge of climate change, its impact on our ecosystems and adopt cost-effective strategies to adapt to climate change impacts. The focus also must be on improving and increasing community resilience of all population and identifying solutions to meet any problems is a national target which must be captured in Vanuatu's national sustainable development plan under the social pillar.

Financial capacity – Many CSOs still lack the financial capacity to conduct progressive work on building climate change resilience in the communities. We salute the efforts of Vanuatu's national government in its decentralization strategy, recognizing the need to create and disburse development funds to Vanuatu's local communities through the provincial area council secretaries in Vanuatu's six provinces.

Vanuatu's indigenous people are vulnerable to climate change impacts but they deal with this threat every day thousands of years. They have a wealth of knowledge on how to adapt. Community-based knowledge on climate change causes, impacts, and adaptation and mitigation mechanisms will empower Vanuatu's local communities to use their indigenous traditional knowledge and expressions of culture in the various levels of decision-making processes to safeguard them. A pertinent need to conduct both social and scientific action research to identify the best strategies to link modern and scientific knowledge to indigenous traditional knowledge is recommended to provide indigenous people with the capacity and empowerment to participate proactively and effectively in climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies in Vanuatu.

Vanuatu's Way Forward:

- The UNFCCC delegates will work closely with national groupings working on climate change adaptation and community-based resilience projects to ensure that there is gender and disability inclusiveness in all policy areas covering climate change adaptation.
- They will encourage the development of indigenous traditional governance systems to link them to scientific knowledge with indigenous traditional knowledge for climate change adaptation and mitigation through strategic planning activities, which includes contributions from youths, women, persons living with disability and marginalized groups.
- To strengthen the government and stakeholders' recognition of local efforts by youths, gender, civil society groupings and indigenous people.
- To strengthen partnerships between national, provincial government councils, local area councils and the communities through the 4 national councils to avoid leaving anyone out in climate change adaptation and mitigation programs.
- Capacity training to be provided to marginalized groups, especially indigenous women and girls on the proper use of ICT to raise awareness on climate change science and to understand the daily weather patterns and reports through the use of mobile phones and the social media such as Facebook and Twitter to report these information.

- Encourage the sharing of Information via government networks to CSO networks is vital to ensure that people have a common knowledge of community-based adaptation and mitigation strategies to empower them to confidently contribute to actions required by government and community leaders.
- The Vanuatu Government is to develop a user-friendly guide to support any community reports on climate change impacts to allow good exchanges of information to identify specific needs which can be addressed effectively and efficiently.

Vanuatu requests that SBI chairs consider Vanuatu's views in the context of an annual focus area for the Paris Committee on Capacity-building (PCCB) for 2017, for consideration at SBI 45.