This **Outcome Statement** *was developed on 16th July 2024 with 52 participants from 24 ni-Vanuatu civil society organisations. Its purpose is to supplement the review of the Beijing Platform For Action report (led by the Ministry of Justice through the Department of Women's Affairs) and to contribute to discussions at the 15th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women and 8th Meeting of Pacific Ministers for Women in July 2024 and the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in March 2025. Vanuatu civil society is thereby joining forces with government to address the root causes of gender inequality and ensure equal rights and opportunities for all. This is the third Outcome Statement developed before Triennial events (2017 and 2021) and many themes remain the same, highlighting the need for ongoing dialogue and continued advocacy for change.*

1. Gender inequality persists in Vanuatu and women and girls disproportionately suffer. Vanuatu Women's Centre saw 6,700 clients last year. According to national prevalence research 60% of ni-Vanuatu women will face violence from husbands/partners in their lifetime. This must stop.

2. To address the root causes of violence, it is essential to change harmful gender attitudes, values, beliefs, and norms. This must be prioritized, adequately funded, and integrated across all sectors, and include government, the private sector, and civil society.

3. Government commitment and leadership on gender equality initiatives is crucial. Vanuatu has strong laws and policies but these need to be implemented and monitored. Legislation that supports women and girls right to safety needs to be strengthened (e.g., Maintenance of Children Act, Maintenance of Family Act, and the Marriage Act).

4. Vanuatu is diverse and this should be valued and celebrated. Efforts to promote gender equality must be inclusive of everyone across geographical location, religious and political affiliation, age, disability, and other identity factors. This should be reflected in legislation, policy and programming related to gender equality.

5. Men and boys must be partners in achieving gender equality. The role of male leaders, including parliamentarians, government staff, and chiefs is pivotal. Work with *kastom* governance structures, especially in rural and remote regions, is an entry point for promoting gender equality and justice and support for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV).

6. Women's sexual and reproductive health and rights needs significant investment with women in Vanuatu facing a lack of awareness and information about their health and limited access to services.

7. Climate change and increasing natural disasters are creating an unsustainable workload for women and girls. The work they are expected to do is undervalued, unpaid and increasingly difficult with growing pressure on natural resources. This puts them at risk of violence in the home. Women and young people must be included in climate change and disaster resilience, response, and recovery efforts to ensure their needs, priorities and ideas are heard.

8. Women must be included and heard in decision-making at all levels (national, provincial, community, church and family). Increasing women's leadership and representation is vital to ensuring that the needs of women and girls are recognised and addressed. Women leaders need solidarity and support and guarantees of their safety.

9. Spaces need to be created and supported where gender equality advocates can come together as civil society and in dialogue with government. These spaces must be inclusive and foster healthy intergenerational debate and be the foundation for strong collective leadership for change.

Thematic-specific challenges and recommendations are summarized below.

Gender-based violence – Technology related violence

Challenges:

- Technology related violence is no difference from real-life abuse; both stem from power and control. Current attitudes, behaviours and social norms justify men's power and control over women and normalise violence. Power holders lack awareness and understanding, failing to acknowledge the problem or prioritise solutions. Additionally, there is a widespread lack of understanding and awareness of women's basic human rights as outlined in Vanuatu's Constitution, the National Gender Equality Policy, and the National Sustainable Development Plan (2016-2030).
- This has led to a culture of impunity as the recent example of convicted offenders of morality crimes being pardoned demonstrates. This is excusing violence, depriving offenders of the opportunity for rehabilitation and depriving victims of justice.
- Women and girls with disabilities are at greater risk of all forms of gender-based violence.
- There is a lack of coordination to handle GBV cases including lack of capacity to handle online cases.

Recommendations:

- Government of Vanuatu needs to commit and invest in technical capacity and resources across sectors (including police, judicial and health services) to address GBV including technology related violence. This should include coordination of both prevention and response to ensure consistent messaging, minimum standards, capturing and sharing learning and effective integrated survivor centred services.
- Work with *kastom* leadership and formal governance structures to promote gender equality, women's rights and justice for victims. This should include training for chiefs, Area Administrators, provincial government staff, and parliamentarians.
- Strengthen the engagement of men and boys to address harmful social norms that promote GBV including technology related violence. Seasonal workers are a new target group for violence prevention work.
- Disaggregate GBV case data by age, sex and disability across all sectors for analysis and learning.
- Support joint advocacy around GBV for example the need for judicial review and stronger sentencing for perpetrators of violence.

Gender responsive climate justice

Challenges

- The climate crisis is a gender crisis. Due to the roles and responsibilities of women and girls they are impacted differently by climate events with one consequence being an increase in violence.
- Women are holders of traditional knowledge which is important for mitigating the risk of climate change, but they are marginalised from decision making spaces in many parts of Vanuatu.
- There is a lack of institutional support strengthening and sustainable funding for community-based women led organisations.
- There is a lack of information, resourcing, planning and coordination about work on gender responsive climate justice at all levels.

Recommendations

- All government departments working on climate justice must have specific policies and plans on gender and inclusion that are monitored and measured with responsible focal persons.
- Support interventions that include women and focus on strengthening traditional cultural knowledge and practices related to early warning, adaptation, and risk mitigation.
- Work together to raise awareness and advocate for climate justice throughout Vanuatu.
- Ensure inclusive and gender responsive planning, coordination and resource allocation for disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.

Women's Health

Challenges

- Barriers to women's access to health information and services, including reproductive health and cancer screening, include cultural barriers, stigma, women not prioritising their health, lack of information, lack of health workers (e.g. mid wives) and lack of health infrastructure.
- Lack of mental health services such as counselling especially for adolescent girls.
- Inadequate disaggregated health data to understand patterns and design programming.
- Gender is not mainstreamed in the Ministry of Health (MOH).
- Women's health issues not prioritised.

Recommendations

- Need coordination, collaboration and clear messaging to increase awareness about women's health issues and to advocate for more regular cervical, breast, and other screenings throughout Vanuatu.
- Strengthen advocacy and awareness on eradicating harmful social and cultural practices.
- Multi-pronged approach to increase the number and capacity of health workers including collaboration with Ministry of Education and Training to ensure a pipeline of workers, re-establish nursing schools, allocate more resources, and introduce health ICT.
- Develop a women's health act to account for all the cross-cutting issues (RMNACAH is insufficient).
- Ensure affordable access to menstrual hygiene products including in schools and provide safe separate bathrooms at all schools throughout Vanuatu.