

## Vanuatu

**Status:** Vanuatu is comprised of 80 islands with a total land area of 12,281km<sup>2</sup>. The largest cities are the capital, Port Vila (Island of Efate), and Luganville (Espiritu Santo, the largest island).

**Population:** Vanuatu's population in 2015 was approximately 277,500, with a growth rate of 2.4% (ADB, 2016). Approximately 205,350, or 74%, live in rural areas (Knoema, 2015) across the islands, grouped into six provinces, according to Vanuatu's 2009 Census.

**Accessibility:** There are 3 airlines operating flights to Vanuatu, including Qantas Airways, Fiji Airways and Air Vanuatu.

**Statistics around Waste (including plastic waste data):** The islands of Vanuatu have a combined coastline of 2,530km, and a recent study (Jenna et al., 2015) indicates a daily plastic waste generation of approximately 74t. An estimated 61.5t is mismanaged daily and predicted to enter the marine environment through release from uncontained disposal sites or by direct littering. An estimated 22,470t were released in the waters around Vanuatu in 2010. If not addressed, the amount is expected to rise to 38,000t by 2025.

Plastic pollution in Vanuatu is widespread and is already having ecological consequences. Studies conducted in 2018 by the *Commonwealth Litter Programme (CLiP)* found that plastic waste accounts for 75% of the most common types of marine litter found on Vanuatu beaches, and that 38% of reef fish, 60% of pelagic fish and 50% of crabs in Vanuatu had ingested microplastics. <sup>6</sup> This is a phenomenon that is being found throughout the Pacific islands and the world.<sup>1</sup>

Of the 74t of plastic generated each day, approximately 8.1t may comprise polyethylene terephthalate (PET) or high-density polyethylene (HDPE) plastic that is eligible for recovery under a container deposit scheme (CDS). Based on an average reduction rate of 40% in mismanaged waste with a CDS in place, approximately 2.73t of PET and HDPE plastic could be recycled on a daily basis.<sup>2</sup> This could increase to an 80% or above reduction rate, depending on access to recycling collection services and viable markets, among others. Nonetheless, a 40% reduction in mismanaged PET and HDPE would result in approximately 21,483t of plastics becoming marine debris each year.

*Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA's)* 2011 audit of daily household waste in Port Vila shows a rate of 0.427kg. A further study by Luganville Municipal Council in 2014 established an average household daily waste generation in Luganville of 6.8kg. Both studies show that the majority of waste is organic, followed by plastic.

	Coastal population	Waste generation rate [kg/person/day]	% Plastic in waste stream	% Inadequately managed waste	Waste generation [kg/day]	Plastic waste generation [kg/day]	Inadequately managed plastic waste [kg/day]	Plastic waste littered [kg/day]	Mismanaged plastic waste [kg/person/day]	Mismanaged plastic waste in 2010 [tonnes]	Mismanaged plastic waste in 2025 [tonnes]	
Vanuatu	251,851	3.28	9	81	826,071	73,933	60,104	1,479	0.245	22,478	38,006	

Source Jambek 2016

**Legal/Policy framework to address single use plastics:** The *Waste Management Act no. 24 of 2014* is the umbrella legislation governing waste management<sup>3</sup>.

On 1 February 2018, the Minister enacted *Order no. 15 of 2018*<sup>4</sup> under the *Waste Management Act no. 24 of 2014*. The order was amended by the *Waste Management Regulations (Amendment) Order No. 128 of 2019*. The order prohibits the manufacture, distribution, sale and use of polystyrene food containers, single-use plastic bags and plastic straws. Biodegradability is not specified in the order, but it appears that

<sup>1</sup> [https://vcci.vu/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Draft\\_Vanuatu\\_National\\_Plastics\\_Strategy\\_v2.pdf](https://vcci.vu/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Draft_Vanuatu_National_Plastics_Strategy_v2.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> The outcome of mismanaged plastic can be divided into three primary groups: plastic that remains on the surface of the sea as floating debris, plastic that sinks to the ocean floor, and plastic that washes up on beaches. A CDS that recovers 40% of HDPE and PET bottles in Vanuatu may achieve the following reductions in marine debris each year: n 149t in floating plastic n 696t in sunken plastic n 149t in beach plastic.

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.paclii.org/vu/legis/num\\_act/wma2014167/](http://www.paclii.org/vu/legis/num_act/wma2014167/)

<sup>4</sup> <https://depc.gov.vu/images/EnvironmentalProtection/Official-Gazette-No.-10-of-2018-dated-2-February-2018.pdf>

biodegradable single-use plastic bags are exempt from the ban<sup>5</sup>. Exceptions are made for packaging of meat and fish. The order also imposed fines for littering and waste dumping, with immediate effect.

The Government of Vanuatu outlined, outside of the order, a phased approach to the implementation of the ban<sup>6</sup>. The importation of non-biodegradable single-use plastic bags and polystyrene containers were prohibited from 31 January 2018. This allowed a six-month transition and awareness-raising period before the ban took effect on 1 July 2018. Local manufacturers are still permitted to manufacture biodegradable plastic bags. The Government had made various announcements in the month preceding the order indicating their intentions to ban these plastics. Reports suggest that there remains limited compliance with the plastic bag ban in Port Villa<sup>78</sup>.

**Single Use Plastic policy:** Vanuatu's *National Waste Management and Pollution Control Strategy and Implementation Plan 2016-2020* provides the overarching strategy for waste management. The document, which was prepared between 2014 and 2016, specifies waste minimisation as a priority area but makes no reference to plastic bans. Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance (CCOA) developed with Vanuatu a:

- Draft Vanuatu National Plastic Strategy 2020 to 2030<sup>9</sup>
- Draft Vanuatu National Plastic Strategy Implementation Plan
- Draft Funding Note for the Vanuatu National Strategy Implementation Plan

But government change just weeks before it was to be launched has seen it shelved with no apparent release date.<sup>10</sup>

The *Vanuatu National Plastics Strategy (2020-2030)* articulates five key tactics for closing the loop on plastics in Vanuatu: legal instruments; economic instruments; waste management system improvements, voluntary actions and agreements; and education and awareness.

	Single Use Plastic Policy	Dedicated Single Use Plastic Orders, Acts and Regulations							Economic Instruments to internalise costs					Recycling	National Campaigns targeting SUP	R&D Alternatives
		Plastic bags	Polystyrene plates	Straws	Styrofoam food Containers	Cups plates cutlery	PET	Plastic Ice blocks pouches nappies	Container Deposit Scheme	Levy Plastic Bags	Duty SUP	ARDC	Single Use Diapers			
Vanuatu																

**Governance:** The DEPC, under the Ministry for Climate Change Adaption, Meteorology, Geo-Hazards, Environment, Energy and Disaster Management, is the lead agency for waste management and pollution control. It develops regulations and strategies, as well as supervises Vanuatu's Environmental Protection and Conservation Act.

**Public Awareness- communities/villagers:** A plastic bottle buyback programme in Vanuatu recently injected 10 million vatu (AUD\$17,000) into the local economy, helping members of the community to pay school fees, put food on the table and most importantly preserve the island nation's beautiful environment. In

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.vu/en/public-information/492-prohibition-on-imports-of-plastic-bagsv>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.vu/en/public-information/492-prohibition-on-imports-of-plastic-bagsv>

<sup>7</sup> UoM, *Assessment of Waste Legislation in the 15 PacWastePlus Participating Countries*

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2019/06/04/meet-the-innovators-battling-plastic-waste-in-vanuatu-donna-kalfatak>

<sup>9</sup> The development of the Vanuatu National Plastics Strategy (2020–2030) was made possible through Technical Assistance (TA) project support from the United Kingdom, commissioned by the Department for International Development (DFID) and overseen by DFID and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

<sup>10</sup> Stewart Williams, *Developing a Plastics National Action Plan in Vanuatu – Lessons learnt in producing the 2019 Vanuatu National Plastics Strategy and Implementation Plan under the Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance* Presentation at 7 International Marine Litter Conference in Busan, September 2022 <https://7imdc.exordo.com/programme/presentation/545>

June 2022, the *Salem Plastik blong Sevm Solwora* campaign offered members of the community 10 vatu for a plastic bottle. Run by World Vision Vanuatu's *Waste Not, Want Not Project*, the organisers were hoping to collect a moderate million bottles within a week. What happened, however, far exceeded their expectations. "Our target was met within the four days of the event. We managed to receive more than a million bottles on the fourth day," said Ms Florence Bule, WNWN Programme Manager at World Vision Vanuatu. "With support from the Vanuatu Environment Science Society and Vanuatu Recycle Cooperation over 42 ton of waste plastic was removed from Port Vila Environment." More than 1.4 million bottles were counted with money paid to 892 community members from all over Efate Island.<sup>11</sup>

**Public Awareness- tourism:** The tourism sector has spearheaded campaigns for more ambitious solid waste management strategies<sup>12</sup>. This has resulted in significant investments in solid waste management, particularly around ports and tourist areas<sup>13</sup>.

The focus on the tourism sector has contributed to significant disparities in solid waste service delivery and management – whilst Port Vila has regular collection and a sanitary landfill, other major urban areas have sporadic waste collection and often dump waste in open pits, whilst most rural areas are not serviced<sup>14</sup>. Insufficient financial and human resources are cited as the main challenges for improving waste management<sup>15</sup>.

**Private Sector:** The *Vanuatu Recyclers and Waste Management Association* consists of businesses and organisations, registered in Vanuatu, that have had a demonstrable association with recycling, waste management, waste minimization or commercial waste production for at least 12 months. The goals of the VRWMA are to assist waste producers (retailers and manufacturers) to reduce waste they produced by ensuring they are aware of opportunities that arise, and to create and improve systems and infrastructure for waste streams that have potential to be recycled.<sup>16</sup> Some of the activities identified in the VRWMA Strategic Plan 2021-2024 include (1) research for possible markets for recycled plastic and how it needs to be processed to get it to market, (2) access funding for machinery needed to process plastics and machinery to process plastic waste into material that can be shipped overseas such as counters, washers, shredders (3) research logistics of getting recycled plastic to market and any impediments (4) engage with governments, companies and NGOs to find solutions to impediments to recycling plastics

## Summary Overview

- Good coverage of laws in relation to SUPs (regulating single use plastic bags, straws, Styrofoam containers, plastic cups, cutlery).
- Draft Vanuatu National Plastic Strategy 2020 to 2030 , draft Vanuatu National Plastic Strategy Implementation Plan and draft Funding Note for the Vanuatu National Strategy Implementation Plan developed and waiting for government endorsement
- Pac Waste Plus and GEF ISLANDs working on Advance Recovery Deposit Schemes so potential for leveraging POLP. Active recycling community.
- Potential for work on Tourism in the hospitality (hotels /takeaway) and cruise liner areas.
- Potential for work on awareness in terms of littering and burning with local communities and schools.
- Plastic water buy back schemes in schools (World Vision 2021).
- A number of development partners working in Vanuatu so need to identify POILP niche to avoid duplication and overlap.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.sprep.org/news/vanuatu-plastic-bottle-buyback-project-pays-school-fees-puts-food-on-the-table>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/42658/solid-waste-management-vanuatu.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/42658/solid-waste-management-vanuatu.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.theprif.org/documents/vanuatu/waste-management/vanuatu-profile-solid-waste-and-recycling-sector>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.theprif.org/documents/vanuatu/waste-management/vanuatu-profile-solid-waste-and-recycling-sector>

<sup>16</sup> <https://vanuaturerecyclingandwaste.org/about/>