

Engaging men to end Violence Against Women and Girls: A Focus on Vanuatu

Why and how does World Vision Vanuatu engage men, boys and masculinities to end violence against women and girls (EVAWG)?

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a global pandemic that affects one in three women in their lifetime. It is disproportionately perpetrated by men against women, and is deeply rooted in gender inequality and women's lack of power relative to men (Fulu et al., 2013, The Equality Institute, 2018). It is fuelled by harmful attitudes that justify men's violence, including notions of masculinity that celebrate 'toughness', violence, and control over women (Fulu et al., 2013, p. 92). These harmful attitudes emerge early in life and can lead to violent perpetration in adolescents' early relationships (Fulu et al., 2013, p.42). Research from Asia and the Pacific shows that 50% of men who had ever raped a woman or girl did so for the first time when they were still teenagers (The Asia Foundation, 2016, p.67). Men's personal experience of violence particularly as children, is shown to increase the likelihood of those men perpetrating violence against future partners and children (ODE, 2019, p.21, Fulu et al., 2013, p.89).

These factors necessitate that we engage with men and boys to break the cycle of violence. In order to do so we must address harmful norms, beliefs and practices that perpetuate these unequal power relations. However, we cannot lose sight of the fact that women and girls need to be at the heart of our work on ending gender-based violence. 'As violence against women and girls is fundamentally an injustice against women and girls, the central protagonists for this cause must be women and girls' (COFEM., 2017).



Vanuatu Context

Vanuatu faces persistent and alarmingly high rates of GBV. Although domestic violence is criminalised, 60% of women have experienced physical or sexual intimate partner violence, and one in three girls under the age of fifteen have experienced sexual abuse with the majority of the perpetrators being an intimate partner or family member. 87% of Ni-Vanuatu identify as Christians. Domestic violence is largely seen as a private issue, and cultural and religious beliefs that perpetuate gender inequalities are rarely challenged.

World Vision Vanuatu's EVAWG Program

World Vision Vanuatu's EVAWG program adopts a faith-based approach to tackle the root causes of gender inequality and harmful gender norms which perpetuate violence: engaging directly with faith communities; mentoring faith and community leaders to become champions for change; reinterpreting biblical passages that have been used to justify violence; and underpinning the programming in theology which is a shared common language for all participants.

The project works directly with men and boys to challenge unhealthy norms and practices and equip them with the skills and tools to express their emotions using non-violent techniques while also overcoming negative gender stereotypes, and previous personal experiences of violence and trauma that perpetuate gender inequity.

This profile will introduce two aspects of the REACH portfolio that engage men and boys in ending VAWG; the **Men's Behaviour Change Programme** which works with male perpetrators of violence, and the **Vanuatu Rispek** (respect) campaign which works with male and female youth to develop healthy relationships and address issues around consent.

For more details on other REACH activities please see the resources list on page 3.

Men's Behaviour Change Program

With Support from the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) Gender Action Platform (GAP), WV Vanuatu has developed an 11-session small group therapy program for perpetrators of violence, facilitated by faith leaders with specialist training, and mentored by World Vision staff. The purpose of the program is to assist men to reduce and cease family and domestic violence, by addressing attitudes and behaviours around abuse, while creating opportunities for men to understand the impact of their violence on their partners and families.

Topics covered include; understanding violence and the cycle of violence; strategies for stopping violence; protecting children; healthy and good relationships; sexual respect; respectful relationships; and support systems and safety planning.

A recent impact study on the Men's Behaviour Change program revealed some key changes identified by spouses, children, family members, and the men themselves. Including more equitable sharing of responsibilities and labour within the household, spouses more able to participate in decision making, a reduction in verbal abuse, regular use of behaviour modification tools, a changed understanding, and more equitable of gender roles.

Over the next eighteen months WV Vanuatu is looking at the feasibility and benefits of incorporating a restorative justice component into the program, to strengthen existing traditional reconciliation practices.

Additionally, WV Vanuatu will run a parallel programme for spouses of the male participants, to allow a shared household language and understanding of violence and behaviour change processes.



"His anger before was bad, he would swear at me and said words that hurt my feelings. He also used harsh words on the children but that has now changed. He helps me to cook and he now makes time to talk to the children. He also comes home early from work and spends less time with his friends. We discuss and make decisions together." MBC Participant Spouses Feedback



Vanuatu Rispek (Respect)

Adolescence is a formative development phase in a young person's life, especially for forming beliefs and values regarding intimate partner relationships. Vanuatu RISPEK aims to open the discussion on "tabu" topics including relationships and sexual consent with young people. These discussions help ensure that young people understand that having sex or doing anything sexual without consent is sexual violence.

The adaptable program covers topics such as cyber safety, healthy relationships, abusive relationships and warning signs, the Vanuatu law and consent. Male and female youth facilitators discuss these topics with groups of boys and girls, in either formal settings such as school rooms or informal groups such as at events. Vanuatu RISPEK leverages public figures including sports stars and musicians as ambassadors to promote messaging and role model behaviours. The program has also developed key communication and learning materials which youth can engage with including short movies, music and video games. (see resources list)

Initial observations indicate that the program has led to a better understanding and self-awareness of violent actions. One 14 year old boy stated "before I didn't understand... I thought my attitudes were just ok... I am clear now about attitudes that are healthy or not [healthy] in a relationship". Through monitoring and follow-up, project staff have seen an increase in boys and girls advocating for healthy relationships amongst their peers and demonstrating a better understanding of the right to say 'no' in intimate partner relationships. There is potential for this to have a long-term positive impact as these young people begin their journey into adulthood.

Find out more:

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Resources on Vanuatu's EVAWG program

The following documents are available upon request to Millie Greaves (see above)

- **REACH Program Overview**
- **Men's Behaviour Change Precursory Impact Study**
- **Vanuatu Rispek Press Pack**

Vanuatu RISPEK Facebook page www.facebook.com/VanuatuRispek

Short Movie - *Wanem ia fos* (what is Rape) Produced by Wan Smol Bag available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uzpcTeiavr0>

Music Clip – *No i minim no* (no means no) Produced by Wan Smol Bag available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UM7ad4-0-u8&feature=emb_title

Video Game – *Rispek Danis* (Respect Dance) Produced by Jennifer Ann's Group available in English and Bislama via: <https://rispekdanis.com/> or in bislama via the android play store.

References

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