

VARs NEWSLETTER

Ministry of Lands & Natural Resources – Vanuatu Affordable and Resilient Settlements Project Weekly Newsletter



THE WORLD BANK



MESSAGE FROM THE TEAM LEAD:

- VARs PMU

Welcome to the first edition of the VARs Weekly Update — your go-to snapshot of project progress, policy developments, and upcoming actions. As we move into an ambitious phase of reform and expansion, these updates aim to keep everyone aligned and informed.

This week marks a major milestone: the Council of Ministers has endorsed the Ministry's Institutional Reform Strategy, paving the way for deeper transformation across land systems, governance, and revenue. We're also seeing tangible community impacts — from progressing the Etas Gardens tender to cleaning up 550 tons of waste in informal settlements.

Thank you to everyone for your continued effort.

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KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WEEK:

Institutional Reform Strategy for endorsement by COM

This reform strategy outlines a 3-stage plan to modernise the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources. Backed by a proposed US\$16 million World Bank scale-up, this strategy includes digitisation, governance reform, and infrastructure upgrades. Implementation begins Q2 2025.

Revenue Compliance Paper Finalised

A legislative paper has been submitted for legal review, proposing:

- 5% rebate for early residential land rent payments
- 2% monthly penalty for late commercial rent payments
- Revenue simulations suggest long-term net gains while encouraging timely compliance.

Land Bank Task Force Confirmed

A multi-agency task force will travel to Fiji in October for a 10-day study on Land Bank models. This work supports unlocking idle land for housing and investment while protecting customary rights.

Housing Policy Workshop Concludes

A successful two-day workshop was held on 26–27 June at Iririki Island, bringing together over 40 stakeholders from government, civil society, and the private sector to shape Vanuatu's first National Housing Policy.

Focus topics included land access, rental housing, quality standards, building finance, and informal settlement upgrades.

“The engagement and insights from our stakeholders have been invaluable,” said DUAP Director Jeffrey Kaitip.

The draft policy is expected by end of August for public consultation.

550 Tons of Solid Waste Removed from Informal Settlements

MoLNR, through VARS and in partnership with the World Bank, removed 550 tons (143 truckloads) of solid waste from key Port Vila settlements including Seaside, Tokyo, Ohlen-Mataso, and Anamburu Zone 2.

This effort was part of a large-scale community clean-up campaign.

Community members praised the support — especially for oversized waste disposal. To build on this, 45 cyclone-resistant trash racks (3m x 1m) have been installed targeted communities since December 2024.





PROJECT UPDATES:

Etas Gardens Subdivision – Component 1

- Tender opened on 23 June 2025
- UNELCO agreement signed (power & water coverage confirmed)
- Contracts expected by October
- Focus: customary landowner negotiations and EIA signoff

Informal Settlement Upgrading – Component 2

- Sites: Seaside, Tokyo, Ohlen-Mataso, Anamburu
- Drainage and upgrade tenders closing in July
- Solid waste cleared; trash racks installation carried out

Institutional Strengthening – Component 3

- LMIS Phase 2: Compactus equipment being installed
- M-Files digital archiving contract signed – scanning begins August
- Database cleansing under recruitment
- Land Bank and Revenue Reforms in advanced prep stages

UPCOMING EVENTS & DEADLINES:

- End of July – Final Draft of Housing Policy Due
- October – Fiji Land Bank Scoping Mission (10 days)

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

National Housing Policy Advancing

DUAP is finalising the draft National Housing Policy (2025–2035) with support from VARS.

Key actions:

- Recruiting 3 Housing Unit positions
- Mapping informal settlements in Port Vila and Luganville
- Supporting self-build low-cost housing approaches

LMIS Digitisation Milestones

Key features rolling out soon:

- Public land title search portal
- GIS mapping of lease boundaries
- Green Certificate tracking
- National ID integration

SPOTLIGHT: LMIS SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION

Vanuatu's land administration is moving into the digital era. The LMIS project is now in full swing, aiming to replace outdated, fragmented systems with a fully integrated, transparent platform.

- Phase 1: System design and review complete
- Phase 2: Data harmonisation underway
- Phase 3: Online lodgement and mapping due by Month 12 (Oct 2025)

By 2026, users will be able to view titles, submit applications, and track leases from their mobile phones. It's a foundational shift that will support revenue growth, landowner trust, and investor confidence.

FEEDBACK & CONTRIBUTIONS:

We want your input!

Send your updates, suggestions, or stories to de@vars.vu by Thursday 3 PM for inclusion in next week's issue.