

VARs NEWSLETTER

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



THE WORLD BANK



PERMANENT SECRETARY DR RAIJELI TAGA (IN GREEN) AND VANUATU HIGH COMMISSIONER TO FIJI VIRAN BROWN FLANKED BY FIJI AND VANUATU COLLEAGUES IN 2024 IN SUVA, FIJI

MESSAGE FROM THE TEAM LEAD:

– VARS PMU

This week marks an important policy milestone for the Ministry of Lands & Natural Resources (MoLNR). The Council of Ministers has approved a field mission to Fiji to study its Land Bank model – a system that has successfully unlocked underutilized land for productive use while safeguarding customary rights.

For Vanuatu, where over 90% of land is under customary ownership, this mission is a chance to explore how we can improve access to land for housing, tourism, agriculture, and renewable energy projects, all while respecting our cultural and legal frameworks.

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FIJI MINISTRY OF LANDS & MINERAL RESOURCES LAND BANK UNIT & VARS MEMBERS - SUVA 2024

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WEEK:

Council of Ministers Approval:

COM has endorsed MoLNR's proposal to lead a 10-day mission to Fiji in October 2025 to study the Land Bank model.

Purpose of Mission:

To assess how the model could be adapted for Vanuatu to improve land access, attract investment, and strengthen disaster-resilient settlement planning.

Land Bank Model at a Glance:

- Customary Consent: Requires agreement from landowners.
- Government-managed Leasing: Surveys, valuations, and leases handled centrally.
- Long-Term Security: Leases for investment stability.
- Better Returns: Lower admin costs and direct income for landowners.

Task Force Formation:

A 10-member Land Bank Task Force will include representatives from MoLNR, MFEM, Internal Affairs, State Law Office, Malvatumauri, and VARS (technical support).

Expected Outputs:

By December 2025, the task force will deliver a feasibility report and roadmap for potential pilot implementation in Vanuatu.

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: WHY THE LAND BANK MATTERS FOR VANUATU

The Land Bank concept offers potential to address challenges such as:

- Fragmented tenure systems
- Limited land inventories
- Lengthy administrative processes

Potential Benefits:

- Unlock idle land for productive use.
- Provide secure and improved returns to landowners.
- Streamline investment processes through PPPs.

Safeguards Required:

- Transparent and inclusive consultations.
- Strong legal protections for customary ownership.
- Clear governance and accountability measures.



PERMANENT SECRETARY DR RAEJELI TAGA & VANUATU HIGH COMMISSIONER VIRAN BROWN DURING CONSULTATIONS - SUVA 2024

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.