

VARs NEWSLETTER

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



THE WORLD BANK



GEOTECH ASSESSMENTS

BUILDING RESILIENCE: WHY MOLNR'S NEW FACILITY NEEDS A GEOTECHNICAL ASSESSMENT

The Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources (MOLNR), under Component 3 of the World Bank-funded VARs Project, is embarking on a major institutional strengthening journey. A key part of this initiative is the proposed construction of a brand-new headquarters in Port Vila, replacing outdated facilities and supporting MOLNR's critical role in land management, resource governance, and disaster resilience.

But before construction begins, one essential step must be taken: a geotechnical assessment of the proposed site. This process, led by the Ministry's Geology & Mines Unit, will determine whether the ground beneath the new facility can safely support the structure—especially in the face of earthquakes and other natural hazards.

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WHY IT MATTERS

Protecting Lives and Operations

Vanuatu is one of the world's most disaster-prone countries. Recent earthquakes in Port Vila are a stark reminder that our public buildings must be resilient. A geotechnical study will reveal crucial information about soil stability and ground behavior during seismic events, ensuring that the new headquarters is designed with the right foundations to withstand future shocks.

Safeguarding Vital Records

MOLNR holds some of the country's most valuable data: land titles, valuation records, cadastral maps, and geospatial systems. These are critical for revenue collection, urban planning, and disaster response. A secure, well-founded facility will protect this information from damage, while supporting ongoing reforms to digitize and modernize land management systems.

Maximizing Investment Value

The new headquarters, with an estimated cost of VUV 820 million (USD 7.4 million), represents a major national investment. A thorough geotechnical assessment ensures that this investment delivers lasting value—avoiding costly repairs or failures that could arise if the building were not properly adapted to local ground conditions.

Meeting Global Standards

By following international best practice, including World Bank guidance for infrastructure in disaster-prone regions, MOLNR is demonstrating accountability and forward planning. This positions the new headquarters as a model of disaster-resilient infrastructure and strengthens Vanuatu's commitment to climate and disaster preparedness.

THE ROLE OF THE GEOLOGY & MINES UNIT

The Geology & Mines Unit brings the technical expertise needed to conduct this assessment. Their work will guide decisions on whether the current MOLNR site can safely host the new building or whether additional stabilization measures are required.

LOOKING AHEAD

This assessment is more than a technical requirement—it is a safeguard for Vanuatu's future. By prioritizing resilience at the foundation level, MOLNR is ensuring:

- A safe and secure workplace for staff,
- Protection of critical land and resource records,
- Continuity of essential public services, and
- A facility built to last in the face of natural disasters.

Through this process, MOLNR is setting a new benchmark for disaster-resilient public infrastructure in Vanuatu—strengthening not just a building, but the very foundation of land and resource governance for generations to come.



GEOTECH ASSESSMENTS @ PROPOSED MOLNR BUILDING SITE

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.