

VARs NEWSLETTER

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



THE WORLD BANK



HIS EXCELLENCY NIKENIKE VUROBARAVU, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF VANUATU DISCUSSING LAND ISSUES WITH HON. RICK TCHAMAKO MAHE, MINISTER OF LANDS & NATURAL RESOURCES

MOLNR 10-YEAR REFORM MASTERPLAN IN PROGRESS

A bold vision for modern, integrated land and natural resource governance in Vanuatu.

The Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources (MOLNR) is in the process of completing its 10-Year Reform Masterplan (2026–2036), providing a comprehensive roadmap to modernise the Ministry and strengthen the way land and natural resources are managed across Vanuatu over the next decade. It is being developed with support from the World Bank-funded Vanuatu Affordable and Resilient Settlements (VARs) Project, the Masterplan establishes a long-term vision for improving governance, strengthening institutional capacity, embracing digital transformation, modernising legislation and delivering more efficient public services.

Since achieving Independence, Vanuatu has actively pursued the restoration of customary ownership over land and natural resources. the country now faces new challenges, including population growth, rapid urbanisation, climate change, increasing infrastructure demands and rising expectations for public service delivery. The Masterplan seeks to responds to these emerging challenges by ensuring that land and natural resources continue to support sustainable economic development while safeguarding customary ownership, environmental sustainability and cultural identity.

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WHY A REFORM MASTERPLAN?

The Masterplan process recognises that land is far more than an economic asset. It remains central to the identity, culture and wellbeing of all Ni-Vanuatu people. Guided by Kastom, faith in God and the Constitution of the Republic of Vanuatu, the reform programme aims to balance development with the protection of customary ownership while creating greater opportunities for communities, investors and future generations.

Over the next ten years, the Ministry aims to become a modern, accountable and high-performing organisation capable of delivering improved land administration, stronger planning systems, better natural resource management and more accessible services through innovation and technology.

SEVEN REFORM PILLARS TO DRIVE CHANGE

- **Governance & Institutional Strengthening:** Strengthening leadership, accountability, organisational performance, legislation and sector coordination to build a transparent, service-oriented Ministry.
- **Integrated Land, Water & Resource Management:** Improving coordination between customary and government systems while supporting sustainable management of land, water and natural resources.

- **Infrastructure, Housing & Settlement Resilience:** Supporting planned urban growth, resilient settlements, improved housing opportunities and infrastructure development through better planning and stronger partnerships with customary landowners.
- **Fiscal Sustainability & Economic Resilience:** Maximising the value of land and natural resources through improved revenue systems, responsible investment and public-private partnerships.
- **Digital Transformation & Data Governance:** Digitising land records, modernising information systems and expanding digital services to improve efficiency, transparency and decision-making.
- **People, Capacity & Partnerships:** Investing in workforce development, leadership and institutional capability to ensure the Ministry remains future-ready.
- **Partnerships, Inclusion & Stakeholder Engagement:** Ensuring customary landowners, communities, women, youth, provincial governments, development partners and the private sector are active participants in planning and decision-making.



DIRECTOR OF DUAP (DEPARTMENT OF URBAN AFFAIRS & PLANNING) JEFFREY KAITIP & SENIOR GOVERNMENT PARTICIPANTS @ MOLNR MASTER PLANNING WORKSHOP

A COLLABORATIVE REFORM PROCESS

The current draft Reform Masterplan is the result of an extensive planning process undertaken throughout 2025 and 2026. It followed a comprehensive institutional assessment that identified key challenges including fragmented governance arrangements, outdated legislation, limited technical capacity, ageing business processes, weak revenue systems and increasing pressures from urbanisation and climate change.

The reform process received formal Government endorsement through Council of Ministers decisions approving the Comprehensive Institutional Reform Strategy and establishment of the Land Bank Task Force.

With support from the VARS Project, the Ministry convened executive planning workshops, technical working sessions, departmental planning meetings and stakeholder consultations involving senior executives, technical officers, provincial representatives and development partners. These collaborative sessions shaped the Ministry's long-term vision and identified priorities across governance, digital transformation, service delivery, policy reform, infrastructure and organisational development.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Once approved implementation is planned to be delivered in phases through to 2036. Initial priorities include strengthening governance systems, reviewing legislation, improving workforce capability and commencing digital transformation. Medium-term reforms will focus on integrated planning, enhanced service delivery and stronger partnerships, while the long-term vision is to establish a fully modern, integrated and resilient Ministry capable of supporting sustainable national development and improving the wellbeing of all Ni-Vanuatu.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources acknowledges the leadership of the Hon. Minister Rick Tchamako Mahe, Director General William Nasak, Ministry executives and staff, the World Bank-funded VARS Project, and all government agencies, customary institutions, provincial authorities, development partners and stakeholders who continue to work together as partners in developing the 2026–2036 Reform Masterplan.



MOLNR DIRECTOR GENERAL WILLIAM NASAK (IN BLUE) WITH MEMBERS OF SENIOR EXECUTIVES AND VARS PROJECT MEMBERS @ MASTER PLANNING MEETING

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.