

# VARs NEWSLETTER

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



THE WORLD BANK



CHIEF JEAN PIERRE TOM, CEO MALVATUMAURI, CHIEF PAUL ROBERT MAVUN, PRESIDENT MALVATUMAURI NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHIEFS, CHIEF SIMEON POILAPA, CHAIRMAN VATURISU COUNCIL OF CHIEFS, ERATAP AREA COUNCIL REP @ ETAS SUBDIVISION UNVEILING 2023

## MESSAGE FROM THE TEAM LEAD:

– VARS PMU

Welcome to Week 3 of the VARS Weekly Update. This week, we highlight critical progress made in ensuring the environmental integrity and social accountability of the Etas subdivision. A public consultation was successfully held as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process, reaffirming our commitment to sustainable development and transparent community engagement.

Through ongoing collaboration with DEPC, technical assessments, and inclusive planning, the Etas site continues to set the standard for resilient and people-centered urban growth. Thank you to all who continue to contribute to the transformation of land systems in Vanuatu.

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DEPC OFFICERS AT ETAS SUBDIVISION EIA PUBLIC CONSULTATION



BECA TEAM WITH HON MINISTER RICK TCHAMAKO MAHE DURING ETAS SUBDIVISION BRIEFING

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WEEK:

**Public Consultation on Etas EIA Held On-Site:** A successful public consultation for the Etas Subdivision Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was held on 22 July 2025, drawing over 60 participants from Etas, Erakor, and Eratap. Facilitated by the Ministry of Lands and DEPC, the session provided a platform for open dialogue around environmental risks, mitigation strategies, and the future of the Etas development. The high turnout underscores strong community interest in shaping how land and infrastructure are delivered.

**Community Concerns Centered Around Drainage and Tenure Clarity:** Participants raised issues around drainage, land tenure, and broader environmental impacts. DEPC confirmed that no environmental permit will be issued until legal and customary matters are addressed — a clear signal that governance and environmental integrity go hand in hand.

**Draft EIA Open for Public Review:** DEPC encouraged written feedback on the draft EIA, which outlines environmental mitigation measures such as an infiltration pond for stormwater management and the use of solar-powered street lighting. Public consultation is critical to ensuring community voices are formally incorporated into project design and implementation.

**Public Access to EIA Documentation:** To promote transparency and accountability, hard copies of the full EIA report have been made available at DEPC, the Shefa Provincial Government Council, Etas School, and MoLNR. This ensures that both technical stakeholders and community members can access the same baseline information.

**Environmental Review as a Gateway to Long-Term Resilience:** The EIA consultation process reaffirms the VARS Project's commitment to embedding environmental and social safeguards in all phases of development — from planning to implementation. This is not just compliance; it's a foundation for sustainable urban transformation in Port Vila's fastest-growing areas.

## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: WHY THE EIA MATTERS

The Etas Pilot Subdivision is a flagship development model, designed to deliver climate-resilient, inclusive infrastructure. The EIA is not just a legal requirement under the [CAP 283] Environmental Protection and Conservation Act — it is a strategic safeguard.

### Why the EIA is essential:

**Legal & Institutional Compliance** ensures alignment with national law and the world bank's safeguards framework, reinforcing transparency and credibility.

**Environmental Sustainability** assesses and mitigates risks like erosion, habitat disruption, and flood vulnerability through informed, climate-smart design.

**Evidence-Based Planning** guides design using a range of data to improve safety, cost-effectiveness, and long-term performance.

**Community Inclusion** mandates consultations with landowners and vulnerable groups, upholds gender and social equity, and embeds grievance redress mechanisms.

## FEEDBACK & CONTRIBUTIONS:

We want your input!  
Send your updates, suggestions, or stories to [de@vars.vu](mailto:de@vars.vu) by Thursday 3 PM for inclusion in next week's issue.