



## Country Report:

# “Media and Gender in Vanuatu”

Part of the IFJ Media and Gender in Asia-Pacific Research Project





## Media and Gender in the Asia Pacific Region

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## Introduction to IFJ gender and media research

This report has been prepared as part of the “Research Study on Media and Gender in the Asia-Pacific” undertaken by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), and supported by UNESCO in partnership with UN Women. In line with UNESCO’s Communication and Information Programme for 2014 to 2017, the project comprises research on gender and media conducted in partnership with national stakeholders in seven countries of the Asia-Pacific: Cambodia, India, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Vanuatu.

The report includes an overall analysis of women in the Vanuatu media and offers recommendations for action addressed mainly to the national media association, working in partnership with other key stakeholders, mainly media organisations.

The research presented in this report has been obtained from primary sources, through a survey and interviews conducted by the author between September and December 2014. Secondary data has also been used, sourced from the Vanuatu National Statistics Office, the Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS), and UN agencies operating in the Pacific region.

## Media Landscape in Vanuatu

Vanuatu is a small island nation located in the South Pacific. A place of seeming contradictions, it has been named the “Happiest Place on the Planet,”<sup>i</sup> but has also topped the World Risk Index, which shows the country most at risk of disaster on account of its vulnerability to natural hazards such as earthquakes, storms, floods, droughts and rising sea levels.<sup>ii</sup>

The situation for women in Vanuatu is mostly described in negative terms, with high rates of domestic violence (amongst the highest in the world) and low levels of education and representation in positions of power and influence.

These contradictions flow through to the media industry, both in terms of representation of women within the sector, as well as representation of women by the media. This report presents evidence of this reality.

Despite its small population, Vanuatu has a relatively active local media, particularly print media, although access to newspapers is mainly limited to urban centres because of the prohibitive transport costs.

In the 2009 Vanuatu Census of Population and Housing, of the 69 people who declared their main occupation as ‘journalist’, only 38 percent were female. Of the additional 180 individuals who described their main occupation as announcers on radio, TV and other media, just 26 percent were female.<sup>iii</sup> Of those identified in radio broadcasting activities, 70 percent were male, while in television programming and broadcasting activities males made up 65 percent of the total.<sup>iv</sup>

The local press currently comprises one daily newspaper, the *Vanuatu Daily Post*, and two weeklies, *The Vanuatu Independent* and *The Vanuatu Times*. The *Daily Post* and the *Independent* both have websites; both restrict content to paying subscribers. All newspapers are independently owned.

Vanuatu also has two commercial radio stations, Capital FM107 and BuzzFM. Both are owned by newspaper proprietors, the owners of the *Times* and the *Daily Post*, respectively. In addition, the



national broadcaster, Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation (VBTC), operates two radio stations, Radio Vanuatu and Paradise FM. Capital FM107 also streams live on the internet, and has an estimated 70,000 listeners internationally.

Radio is the most important medium for most people in Vanuatu's rural areas, and coverage has improved considerably over the last few years through donor support. Of the four radio stations, however, only the government-owned Radio Vanuatu and the privately-owned Capital FM 107 have extensive coverage throughout the country, and even this reach is subject to their ability to maintain transmission equipment, which often breaks down or is stolen.

Television blong Vanuatu (TBV), also operated by the VBTC, produces some local news and current affairs content, and regularly broadcasts local and regional sporting events. However, the bulk of its content is sourced from outside Vanuatu (largely from New Caledonia/France and Australia).

Komuniti Akses Media Television (KAMTV) is the only other local television channel, providing audiences access to archival material from the Vanuatu Cultural Centre as well as some public service programming – for example, the Right to Information public awareness campaign of the Media Association blong Vanuatu (MAV). KAMTV is currently in the process of expanding its programming to include locally produced news, current affairs and general interest programmes.

The only local daily news blog, the Vanuatu Daily News Digest,<sup>v</sup> is produced by a Vanuatu media veteran, Bob Makin. Besides posting summaries of major news appearing in other outlets, the blog is also a source of independent news that often does not make its way into other media.

Vanuatu was ranked 7<sup>th</sup> out of 40 Asia-Pacific countries in the 2013 Global Press Freedom rankings, and 45<sup>th</sup> globally.<sup>vi</sup> Although there is, at present, little regulation of the media, the industry is regularly threatened with greater government regulation, and media workers are often threatened and, in some cases assaulted, particularly by people in powerful positions. In 2013, a journalist was unlawfully detained for 24 hours by the police for a social media posting he made in a private capacity about the Prime Minister and his Cabinet.

## Demographics of Survey Participants

As part of the “Research Study on Media and Gender in the Asia-Pacific” initiated by the IFJ, an online survey of media workers was developed at the regional level and administered in Vanuatu in September 2014.

A total of 22 people completed the survey: 12 males (54.54 percent) and 10 females (45.45 percent), broadly reflecting the gender representation within the media industry, as well as in the overall workforce in the country.

All survey respondents were based in Vanuatu's national capital, Port Vila. Only a very small number of media workers are based outside the national capital. None of these participated in the survey.

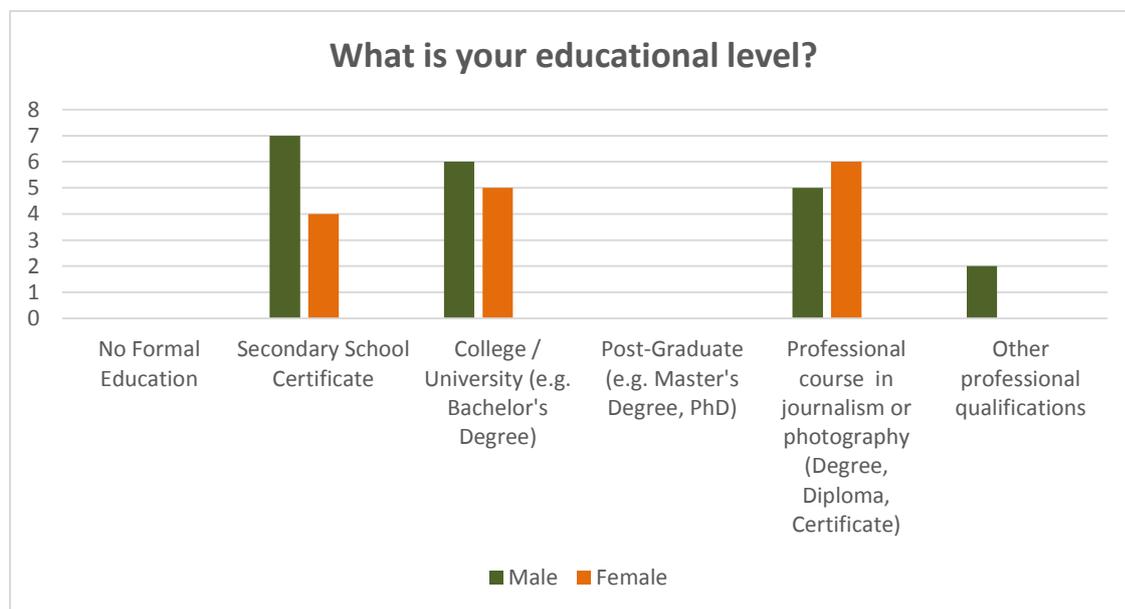
The table below shows the age ranges of survey respondents. The largest number of respondents (31.81 percent) was in the age bracket 26 – 35, followed by just over a quarter (27.27 percent) in the 18 – 25 bracket. This reflects the age profile of the population, where the median age is 20.5, and 58 percent of the population is aged 24 or younger.<sup>vii</sup> Participants were represented in all age ranges, including two over 56 years of age.



Vanuatu is a nation of minorities, and has one of the highest rates of linguistic and cultural diversity in the world. While 21 of the survey participants are ni-Vanuatu (citizens of Vanuatu), 13 of the 22 (59.09 percent) said they belonged to an ethnic or religious minority.

Most respondents (90.90 percent) identified their religion as Christian.

Fifty percent of the respondents have completed college/university studies, with 50 percent of men and women falling into this category. This was also the case for professional journalism courses. None of the respondents have completed post-graduate courses but two male respondents had obtained other professional qualifications.

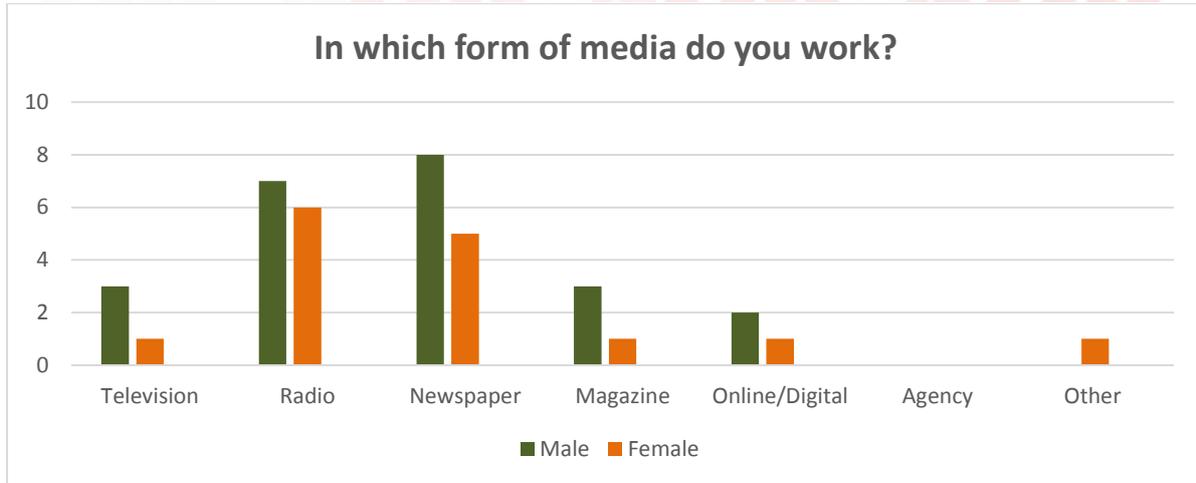


**A small, multi-skilled industry**

Media workers in Vanuatu report being motivated by passion for the work, and a desire to bring about positive changes in society. Given the working conditions reported by many media workers, it is not surprising that remuneration and job security were low on the list of reasons why people chose to join the industry. By far the most frequently stated reason (51.42 percent) cited by both men and women for joining the profession was “love of journalism,” followed by “make a difference/hold the powerful to account” (17.14 percent). Women were also drawn by ‘family tradition’ (8.57 percent), and ‘fame/glamour/opportunity/prestige’ and ‘power’ (each 5.71 percent).

Most respondents (72.72 percent) said their family’s response to their career choice was ‘supportive’.

Although media workers who responded to the survey were dispersed across all forms of media, the greatest numbers were concentrated in newspaper and radio (each 34.21 percent).



When asked about their area of work in the profession, respondents chose numerous responses suggesting multiskilling practices are a feature of the industry. The area of work chosen by most respondents to describe their job was ‘reporter’ (77.27 percent), though many also clearly worked across other areas.

Men outnumbered women in editing jobs, 5 to 2; while women outnumbered men as anchor/news presenters 4 to 2. Men appear to dominate in reporting, feature and opinion writing, photography and camera/sound operations and editing. The only area of work where women outnumbered men was as anchors/ news readers, which is often due to the ‘beauty’ aspect of television broadcasting.

English was the most commonly-used language used for work (54.54 percent), followed by Bislama (40.90 percent) and French (4.54 percent).

Just over half of all respondents (54.54 percent) reported that they are full time regular workers (55 percent), with more women than men in this category, followed by 22.27 percent employed under full-time contracts. Freelancers made up the remaining 18.18 percent and these were mostly men.

Media organisations are generally small outfits in Vanuatu and more than half the respondents worked in organisations employing under 100 people.

A greater proportion of respondents (40.90 percent) had worked in the industry 10 or more years but experience was generally evenly spread across the age groups and genders. Men outnumbered women in the 3-10 and 10 plus years by just one count respectively.

Over half the respondents (54.54 percent) described their status in their news organisation as ‘senior’. Of the women, 70 percent were ‘senior’, compared to 41.66 percent of the men. With such a small survey group it is hard to determine a trend, though men who participated in the survey were more evenly spread across experience levels.

In terms of monthly professional income, the greatest proportion of respondents (27.27 percent) earned between US\$80 - \$250 a month. Monthly income brackets were evenly divided between genders, rising up to the highest income group of those earning more than US\$800 a month. It was here that a gender disparity became evident, with 3 men compared to just one woman. At the lowest end of the scale, four people (13.63 percent) earned less than US\$80 a month.



What is your monthly professional income?	Total	Female	Male
Less than US \$80	3	1	2
US \$80 - \$250	6	3	3
US \$251 - \$400	4	2	2
US \$401 - \$600	1	1	0
US \$601 - \$800	4	2	2
More than \$800	4	1	3
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>

Remuneration, and the imbalance between what indigenous ni-Vanuatu and non-indigenous workers are paid, are major issues in Vanuatu, as in many Pacific Island states. The legislated minimum wage in Vanuatu is a very low hourly rate of 170VT (USD 1.68), and the maximum number of regular hours per week is 44.<sup>viii</sup> A person working 44 hours a week should be paid not less than 7,480VT (USD 73.80) for that work, or around 30,000VT (USD 296) per month.

Even with such a low legal rate of pay, it appears that at least four women among the survey respondents may be paid less than that, with five men appearing to be in the same position. At the other end of the scale, four of the ten female respondents reported that their income is more than the minimum wage, at US\$400 or more per month; five of the 12 male respondents were in this category.

In the 2014 report on a national consultation on Beijing+20, participants reported that one of the setbacks to achieving gender equality is the absence of equal pay. The report referred not just to the gap between men and women, but also to the pay gap between indigenous ni-Vanuatu and expatriate workers.<sup>ix</sup>

When it comes to their reporting, most media workers in Vanuatu cover a wide range of subject areas and do not specialise. However, there are some areas identified in the survey where women appear to be concentrated (gender issues, health, labour, rural development, urban/civics and science/technology) whereas men dominate in beats such as investigative reporting, politics, law and courts, sports.

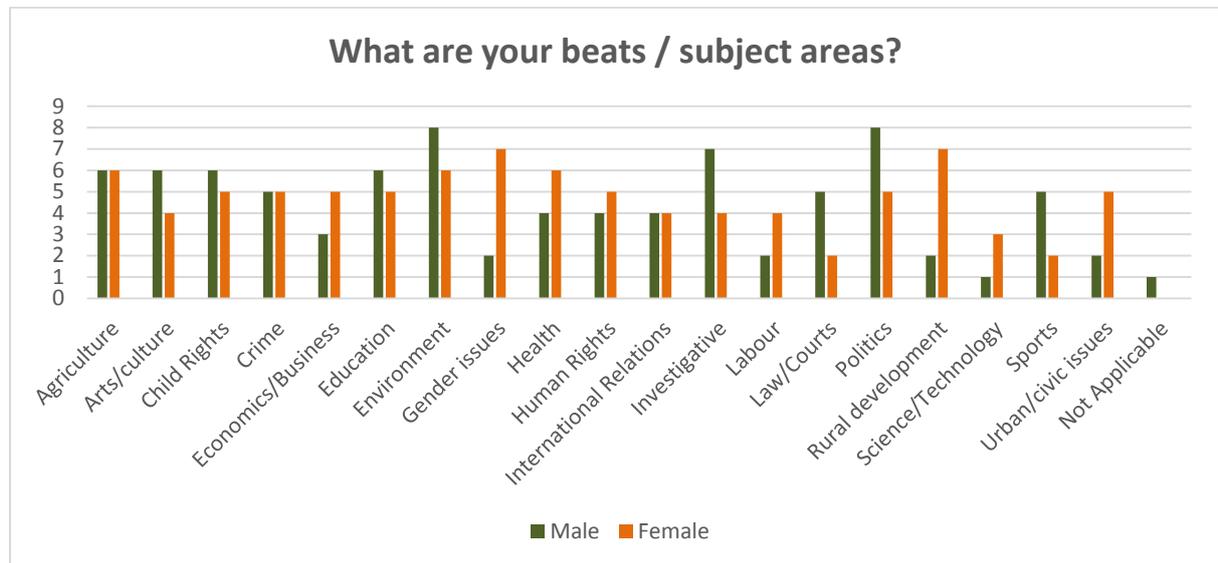
Most respondents (59.09 percent) said they had been given the opportunity to choose their beats and a smaller group (36.36 percent) 'to some extent'. Only one woman said she had not been given this opportunity.

According to Arthur Knight, Chief Executive Officer of the FM107/*Vanuatu Times* group, there is no gender discrimination in the subject areas covered by his staff: "For example, we have women journalists covering sports, where they have an interest to do so. We strive to enable our staff to work in the areas of interest to them. There are no areas where we prevent our women journalists from working, and we have very skilled and capable women working across all news content areas... For us, it's all about skill set and our door is always open to any ni-Vanuatu keen to work with us to make the best organisation we can be, no matter what their sex."

However, Tony Wilson, Editor of the *Independent*, indicated that there are significant challenges to women reporting in certain areas: "For example, it is difficult for a female reporter to cover



Parliament as the all-male MPs are not prepared to take a female reporter seriously. They have the stereotypical view that female reporters should be covering cooking, sewing and matters relating to children, etc. Even female newspaper advertising representatives fail to get government ads for the same reasons.”



The wide range of subject areas covered by women respondents is also reflected in their responses to questions about their ability to determine the focus of their own work, and the news covered by their organisations though men seemed to have more sway in this area. Half of the men said they could determine the content of their work ‘most of the time’, compared to 70 percent of the women. Another 40.66 percent of men said they could ‘always’ determine their work, compared to 20 percent of the women. One woman said she had no choice on determining her work.

When it comes to influencing news agendas in their organisation, women and men were relatively evenly divided in their responses between ‘always’, ‘most of the time’ and ‘to some extent’. Just one woman again said she had no influence.

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### Women, media and economic literacy in the Pacific

Women working in the media often don’t get the opportunity to develop skills that can enable them to specialise in any area of reporting, or indeed to use those skills once they have been developed.

The Asia Pacific Journalism Centre’s fellowship program is helping to change that, together with the Media Association blong Vanuatu (MAV) which supports journalists before, during and after their involvement.

In 2014, the APJC conducted a five-week leadership workshop in Australia for 12 Pacific journalists under the Australia Awards fellowships scheme. It aimed to promote women as news media leaders, with special attention to reporting business and economic news in a way that would appropriately address the role and place of women in local economies, and also appeal to women as audiences.



It is intended that the program makes a concrete contribution to achieving some of the objectives of the 1995 Beijing Declaration – addressing inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources – through the promotion of these issues by women for women. It also addresses a broad spectrum of issues concerning women in the Pacific Islands, including human rights issues such as maternal health, equal opportunity and access to resources (physical and intellectual), and gender-based violence.

MAV was invited to seek nominations from a range of media outlets as well as from freelance journalists working in the country. A particular concern was to find a suitable candidate who could represent and provide the perspective of people from outside the capital, Port Vila.

Due to the high costs involved, there are few opportunities for journalists in Vanuatu to obtain overseas experience. For those from the more remote islands, there are even fewer opportunities. MAV wanted to focus on ensuring opportunities for promising younger journalists, particularly graduates from the first local journalism school – the recently-established School of Media and Journalism at the VIT. The first cohort of graduates completed their studies in 2010.

Fern Napwatt, an outstanding graduate in the early stages of a promising media career was eventually selected. She comes from the island of Tanna, one of the most populous islands in Vanuatu – an island also famous among tourists for its active volcano and the John Frum “cargo cult.” The island has also more or less retained its strong cultural traditions and is not as modernised as other urban centres on the islands of Efate and Espirito Santo.

Napwatt completed the *Women, Media and Economic Literacy in the Pacific* program in May 2014 and returned to Vanuatu inspired, informed and ready to put what she learned into practice especially with other young journalists in the country. She and MAV are also working together to give her energy and enthusiasm an outlet not just in her own work but as part of the association’s ongoing work.

In her workplace, the *Independent*, the feedback has been equally positive. Napwatt’s editor and deputy editor have been working with her to establish a dedicated space in the national weekly newspaper to write about women in general, and women’s involvement in business and economic life in particular. They see that women have an increasing role in Vanuatu’s formal economy, and they also make up the majority of micro-business entrepreneurs, producing handicrafts and foods for local and international markets. While there is increasing recognition of the importance of women in the economic life of Vanuatu, until now little space has been given to it in the media.

Editor Tony Wilson believes the newspaper, as well as the broader media sector, will benefit from Napwatt’s passion and enthusiasm, which can only lead to better reporting of key issues in business relating to women. There are many untold stories out there and the quest for them will bring a new edge and depth to national reporting in these areas, he says.

According to MAV President Evelyne Toa, “The media in Vanuatu need people with leadership skills, especially women and younger media practitioners. Fern has returned to us with a strong commitment to become a leader in media. By actively participating in MAV’s activities as a member, she will help promote the core values and ethical principles that distinguish professional journalists.”



MAV is keen to promote greater specialisation by journalists and the fellowship provides one way for a journalist to both do this while also encouraging others, especially women, to take an interest in a particular field.

“Fern now recognises that to be truly effective, Vanuatu’s media need to support and encourage specialisation in business and economics, health, education, and the environment, and to ensure that women’s voices and perspectives are part of that.”

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## **Few women decision-makers in Vanuatu media**

Vanuatu has a changing workforce, with more and more women taking on roles across the range of media work, not just as journalists.

Today, the majority of students at the School of Media and Journalism of the VIT are women and women are also taking up more senior roles in almost all the media organisations in Vanuatu. At radio station, Buzz FM, the station manager, radio production manager and radio advertising manager are all women. The deputy editor of the *Vanuatu Daily Post* is female, as is the deputy editor of the *Independent* (Evelyn Toa, who is also President of MAV). The broadcast news manager at national broadcaster, Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation (VBTC), is also a woman.

But there is still a way to go, not just in media, but all areas of society when it comes to gender equity in decision-making roles. There are currently no women members of parliament, and it is estimated that less than 30 percent of legislators, senior officials and managers in Vanuatu are female.<sup>x</sup> And the survey suggests that there are still not large numbers of women in senior positions in the country’s media.

When asked about the proportion of women in top-level management in their organisation (eg board, executive, chief financial officer, and general manager) most of the respondents (63.63 percent) said women comprised less than 10 percent.

At senior editorial level, the majority 45.45 percent said women comprised less than 10 percent of positions. At middle editorial level this started to balance out more though more people (36.36 percent) said women still occupied less than 10 percent of roles such as senior editors and foreign editors. Another 18.18 percent said women held 10-25 percent of positions and 22.72 percent said they held between 25-50 percent of positions.

Of the four main media organisations, two are overseen by boards: the publicly owned national broadcaster, VBTC, and the charitable organisation, the Independent Foundation. There is one woman at the executive level at the VBTC, the Chair of the Board of Management, Jennifer Kausei, who was appointed in July 2014. This is only the second time that there has been a woman on the VBTC board; the first female board member, Evelyne Toa, was also appointed Chair, and was a member of the board from April to September 2004. Her appointment to the board was terminated, along with those of all other board members, when there was a change of Prime Minister.

At the *Independent*, two women serve on the board. The other two main media organisations, the *Daily Post*/Buzz FM and FM107/the *Times*, are privately owned companies that are both owned and managed by men.



According to Wilson: “As in journalism around the world, the proportion of females to males is significantly in favour of females in Vanuatu too, but the decision-makers are almost exclusively male. I know of only a handful of senior women in media organisations here. That naturally affects gender issues in the industry and filters down to gender sensitive reporting.”

He says, to be fair, this imbalance of female leaders is not unique to the media.

“But the media need to take the lead in this area. I have already identified a young female reporter as my likely successor, but we are both well aware there are many hurdles to be overcome.”

The deputy editors of both the *Independent* and the *Daily Post* newspapers are female. In broadcasting, the head of the radio newsroom at the VBTC is a woman, and the station manager of Buzz FM is female.

Marc Neil Jones, Managing Director/Publisher of the *Daily Post*/Buzz FM, had this to say about women in senior or management positions: “At Buzz FM, my station manager is female, my radio production manager is female and I have an expatriate woman managing radio advertising sales. In the *Daily Post*, my deputy editor is a woman and her appointment was based on merit rather than gender. We also have a female deputy advertising manager, and the manager of our *What To Do In Vanuatu* is a woman. Two other female staff controls the front desk and classified advertising. Our website manager is female.”

Almost a third (31.81 percent) of respondents said women comprised between 21-50 percent of their department in their media organisation. Another equally sized group said women comprised between 5-20 percent of their department. A smaller group (18.18 percent) said women comprised less than 5 percent.

In response to survey questions about their own experiences with regard to opportunities for recruitment and advancement, respondents provided answers that were somewhat surprising given the available data on the poor representation of women in senior roles in media organisations in Vanuatu. Two women reported that their experience of recruitment and advancement opportunities as ‘Excellent’ or ‘Very Good,’ while seven men and six women described their experience as ‘Good’ or ‘Fair.’

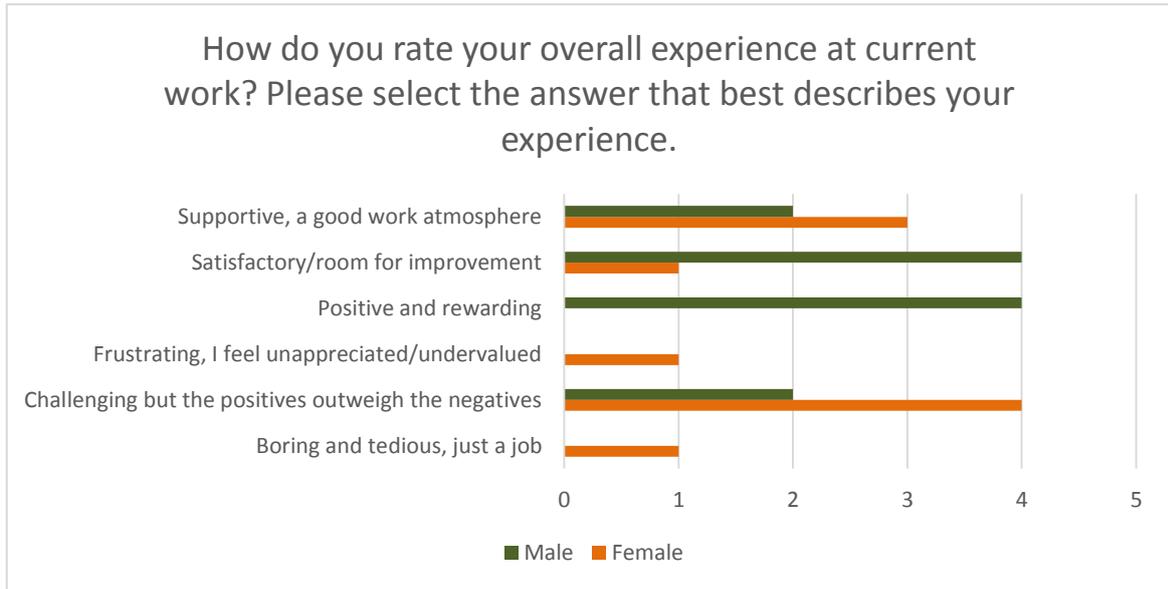
Half the eligible respondents stated that women and men received equal pay in their organisations. Interestingly, a third of all respondents were not sure. Three women indicated that equal pay was not available in their organisations.

Queried about such disparities, media managers claimed that they do not discriminate in any way on the basis of gender. However, survey results indicate that equal pay for equal work may not exist in some media workplaces.

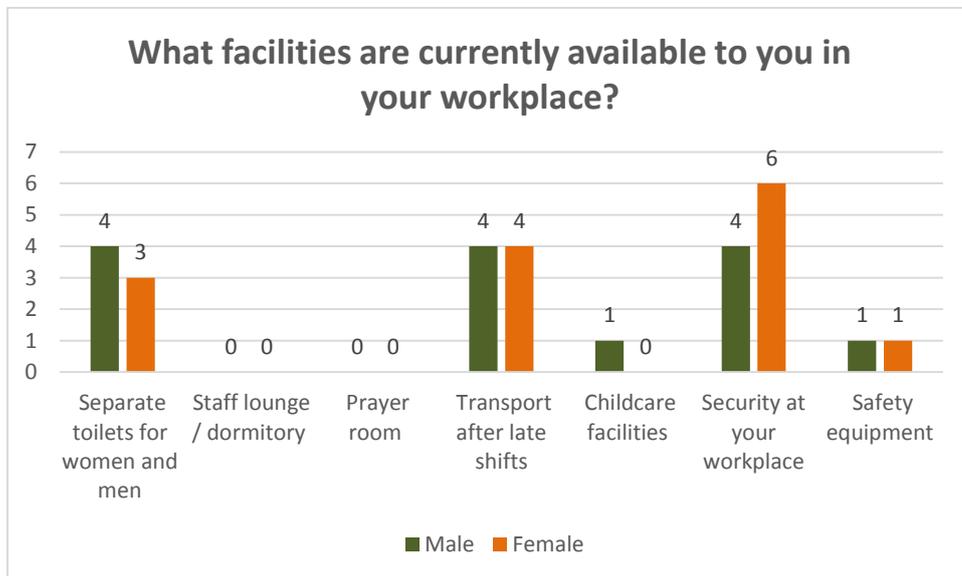
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## **Loving work in spite of poor conditions**

Working conditions for media professionals in Vanuatu appear to vary considerably but, despite the often poor conditions of work, most respondents rated their overall experience at their current workplace positively.



Many media workplaces in Vanuatu do not provide access to a range of basic facilities. No respondents' workplaces had a staff lounge, just one had childcare facilities, and only a minority of media workers surveyed (31.81 percent) indicated there were separate male and female toilets at their place of work. Only 8 respondents (36.36 percent) had transport after late shifts and just under half (45.45 percent) had workplace security.



Similarly, allowances and employee benefits were enjoyed by only a minority of media workers. Numbers were extremely low across all categories except for annual bonuses, employee provident fund and travel allowances, but even those areas went to less than a half to a third of respondents.

Of particular concern is the fact that just only 50 percent of respondents indicated they have access to an employee provident fund. In Vanuatu, all employees aged between 14 and 55 years must belong to the Vanuatu National Provident Fund, the nation-wide scheme set up to ensure financial

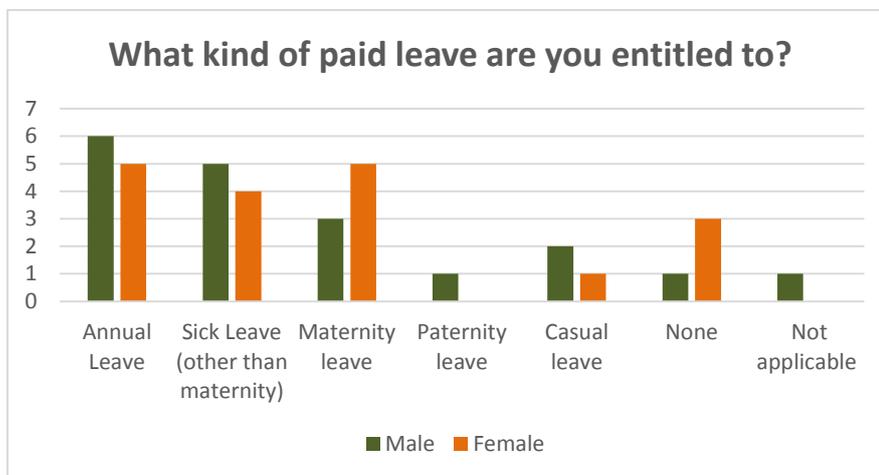


security for employees after retirement. It is only if employee earnings are less than 3,000 VT (US\$29.50) in any given month that contributions do not have to be made by either employee or employer; otherwise, contributions must be made by both.<sup>xi</sup> Given that only two respondents are outside of the age range for compulsory provident fund membership and 18 respondents self-identified as either full time contract or full time regular workers, these are alarming findings.

More women got annual pay increases, annual bonuses, pension/superannuation, housing/rent and accident insurance allowances while men accessed things like medical benefits, health insurance and travel allowances. These figures suggest working conditions and entitlements are in need of action.

With that in mind, it is little surprise that interviewees for the research project, both employees and employers, were reluctant to discuss at length the entitlements provided to staff working in media organisations. It is a very contentious issue in Vanuatu. As one person confided: “Pay and conditions in Vanuatu’s media are not good at all, and something should be done to change this. But it is the same in every organisation and outside this industry, too, across the whole workforce. The only exception is VBTC.”<sup>xii</sup>

At VBTC, employees are covered by a collective bargaining agreement negotiated between the management of the Corporation and the Vanuatu National Workers Union. The agreement covers the period 2005 to 2015. As part of the negotiations for this agreement, most VBTC staff members joined the National Workers Union, and receive industrial advice and support from the union. The agreement includes a range of benefits and entitlements, largely in line with the public sector.



In relation to paid leave entitlements, only 50 percent of respondents said they had access to annual leave and 40.90 percent had access to sick leave.

It is also disturbing that less than half the female respondents (40 percent) indicated that paid maternity leave is available to them. Provisions for maternity leave have been in place for women working in Vanuatu since employment legislation was first enacted in the new republic in 1983. These provisions were subsequently improved to include entitlement to 12 weeks’ maternity leave on at least half pay, and paid provisions of one hour per day (two half hour breaks) for nursing mothers following their return to work (s36, Employment Act 1983 [CAP 160]).



However, a 2004 report on Vanuatu's implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) found that few employees were aware of their rights: "The only study conducted on the level of awareness by employees of s36 (Maternity Leave) of the Employment Act shows that women are generally aware of the maternity entitlement in the public and private sectors but the entitlements received in the private sector is poor."<sup>xiii</sup>

MAV's Evelyn Toa says the association plans to develop some standardised minimum pay and work conditions as part of its strategic plan. "We are particularly concerned about people working on contract, where no provisions are available for leave," she said. "Most employers are very willing to allow women to take time out from work – for example, to bear and raise children – but maternity leave is unpaid. Vanuatu has a very high birth rate and this does have an impact on women and their families financially and in terms of women's career paths."

She said the country's laws have recently changed, and this may pave the way for MAV to successfully push for basic standards for wages and working conditions, and for the media industry to lead the way in doing setting such standards.

Of course, the availability of entitlements and benefits available does not necessarily translate into accessibility. A concerning 18.18 percent had been denied paid leave including annual leave, maternity leave, travel allowances. Just over a fifth of respondents (22.72 percent) said they had been denied a benefit they were entitled to such as housing allowances and maternity leave.

- *Our company head never say anything to us about our entitlements. Nothing!* - Male

In terms of leave and re-entry for women after childbirth, the largest proportion of respondents (45.45 percent) thought of this as 'good' or 'acceptable' and 9.09 percent described it as 'excellent'. Another 18.18 percent of respondents described it as 'poor' and 9.09 percent described it as 'non-existent'.

With reference to training and professional development, most survey respondents indicated that they are offered some form of training, either through their media organisation or another organisation (81.81 percent), including the national media association or other non-government organisations.

More than half (66.66 percent) employed in media organisations said they had received some form of training from their employer. The most prevalent source of training was NGOs (61.11 percent). The greatest proportion (45.45 percent) said the percentage of women in trainings was between 25-50 percent. Most respondents (86.36 percent) had not been given safety training. Of those who had, two were women and one was male and the training was provided by an employer in one case and an NGO in the two other cases.

Until 2008, ni-Vanuatu wishing to go in for higher education in media and communications were required to study overseas, for example, at the University of the South Pacific (Fiji), or further afield. For the majority, this would require access to a scholarship of some kind, as the majority of ni-Vanuatu does not have the financial resources to pay for any kind of education or training overseas.

However, since 2008, the Vanuatu Institute of Technology (VIT) in Port Vila has been offering media and journalism courses at the certificate and diploma levels. Unfortunately, only full-time courses are available, and this constitutes a barrier to those currently working in the media industry who

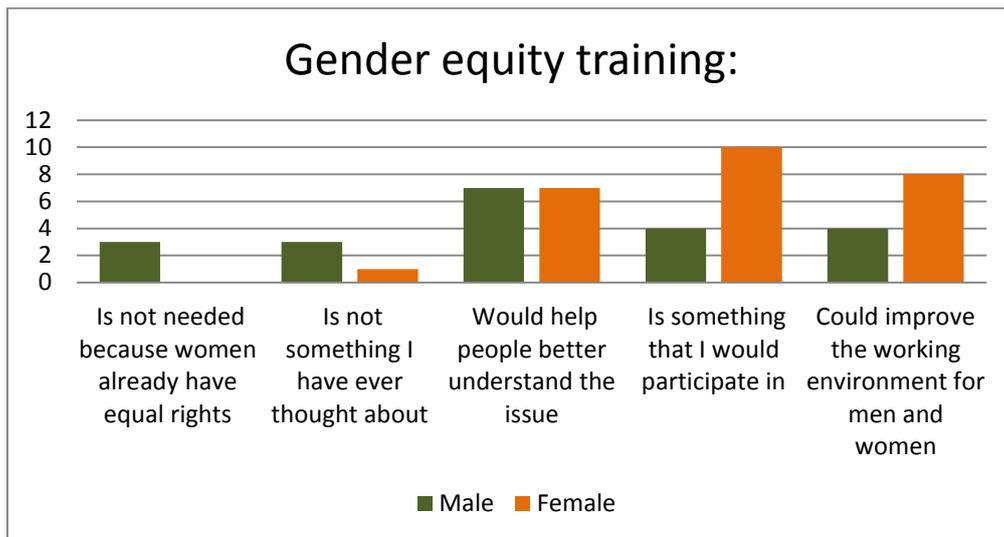


would like to enhance or upgrade their skills and qualifications. The VIT is currently considering options for part-time courses and other delivery modes for training to give full-time media workers to access such opportunities.

Some short workshops/training sessions for professional development are conducted periodically by the national media association, MAV, or other organisations. These workshops are generally aimed at providing information on a specific subject area or issue, such as media ethics or access to information, or on specific events like the Pacific Islands Forum.

Respondents were asked to give select a variety of views on gender equity training. All ten female (100 percent) respondents said it 'is something that they would participate in', while only a third of men (33.33 percent) elected that they would participate.

More men (58.33 percent) agreed that gender equity training 'would help people better understand the issue'. Interestingly, quite a few men said it 'is not needed because women already have equal rights' or conceded that it 'is not something I have ever thought about' (each 25 percent of the male respondent group). Just over half all respondents (54.54 percent) agreed it 'could improve the working environment for men and women'.



That training and skill-building have an important role to play in Vanuatu is clear from the recent experience of a training program on reporting climate change. After Vanuatu was identified in 2013 as the country most vulnerable to the impacts of natural disasters such as earthquakes, storms, floods, droughts and rising sea levels, the local media industry has worked with various partners over a number of years to ensure that journalists are better informed about climate change issues, including the gender aspects thereof.

MAV has worked with the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) to provide access media workers and in developing locally appropriate training materials. In 2013, the Vanuatu-based, Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS), funded by the Australian Government, sponsored a project called Action Against Climate Change (A2C2), which mentored high school students in the production of innovative and targeted media content on climate change awareness. One key focus area was climate change and gender.



Trainee students, as part of a media competition, produced a short film dramatising the different views of men and women, and managed to get across the message that women have a vital role to play in recognising the reality of climate change issues, including its likely social, economic and health impacts. A further benefit of the project was that media mentors themselves gained much from the experience. As one said: "I had never really thought about or valued the role of women in helping to deal with climate change. The process of helping students to frame questions and issues and build a story for this project has opened my eyes. This will really help me to report better on climate change issues in Vanuatu, their impact on women and, more importantly, how women can contribute to efforts to deal with the terrible effects of climate change."

## **Critical need to explore pay, conditions and gender gap**

Professional unions and associations have long had anecdotal evidence from members that working conditions and wages for some in the media in Vanuatu are poor, and groups like MAV believe things may be getting worse in the small and highly competitive environment. One key trend has been the increasing tendency to hire journalists on a freelance basis, without access to paid leave and other entitlements.

Many media workers feel they are unable to register complaints with the appropriate industrial body, the Labour Department, for fear of losing their jobs. Although there has been some discussion of pay and work conditions in the Pacific, media workers rarely speak up about their concerns or take action to address low wages or poor working conditions. MAV believes these issues need to be addressed not only so that media workers can access their rights, but to also promote professionalism and ethical standards in the media.

Inspired by the IFJ's 2011 global wage survey into working conditions and pay for media workers, journalist association MAV decided to initiate its own research. The aim was to establish some baseline data that could be used in its campaigns to advocate for better pay and working conditions and for higher professional standards in the industry. At that time the IFJ had no members from the Pacific Islands so the global wages survey didn't cover this part of the world. MAV and Fédération Des Journalistes Freelances Nouvelle Calédonie (FJF-NC) have both since joined the IFJ.

Another source of inspiration for MAV was the formation of the Vanuatu Tripartite Labour Council, established to provide a forum where minimum wages and working conditions for any occupation could be proposed/negotiated/agreed upon and submitted for approval by the Government. This body and the accompanying changes to minimum wage and labour legislation, opened the way for legally binding pay and conditions for any class of workers in Vanuatu, including those working in the media, to be negotiated and established by employers, employees and the government.

MAV felt an application to the council would provide an excellent opportunity to raise awareness in the media about industrial relations in Vanuatu, an area about which there is little public awareness or discussion. But getting baseline data on the pay and working conditions currently available to media workers at all levels and stages of their careers was considered critical to that process. MAV also thought it was also important to find out whether or not a gender pay gap exists. A survey was developed and tested among MAV's executive members.

Operating in a small country environment, with intense rivalries and disagreements between media organisations and individuals, things like surveys on wages can be controversial and would not necessarily be welcomed by all. In an effort to avoid misunderstandings, MAV President Evelyne Toa



issued a public statement outlining the need to develop standards for pay and conditions and these standards would help media organisations and workers negotiate fair pay and conditions for different levels of education, skills and experience, and for different kinds of roles. The fact that Vanuatu had never had a system of classification for media workers reflected in quite different wages and conditions, she said.

“We now have young people graduating with a diploma from the Vanuatu Institute of Technology and we need a way to recognise their qualifications and the experience and responsibility they gain in the course of their work in the media,” she explained. “It is recognised internationally that education and pay impact significantly on the media’s ability and capacity to promote transparency and accountability, and this in turn affects the participation of citizens and the ability of governments to communicate and engage with the people. As we move towards Freedom of Information laws for Vanuatu, it is essential that we have in place a media that has the capacity to gather and disseminate information professionally, ethically and responsibly.”

At least one media organisation in Vanuatu was unimpressed by the initiative and quickly moved to threaten MAV and its membership even before the survey had been distributed. A key factor, according to Toa, was lack of trust was with some media owners fearing that confidential information gathered through the survey would be ‘leaked’ to other media organisations.

At the same time, it became clear that even though the Tripartite Labour Council had been established, it was not going to be in a position to consider any application by representatives from the media for a considerable amount of time. In fact, the Council to date has not considered any occupation or industry specific applications for setting minimum wages.

In the end, MAV cancelled the initiative since the local impediments were at the time so great. It certainly did not want to any of its members to risk their jobs or be forced to choose between employment and union membership. Instead, MAV’s executive decided on a long-term strategy involving several steps:

- Improving MAV’s own strength and base, and raising awareness of media workers’ professional and ethical responsibilities as well as their rights as workers;
- Strengthening through closer and more strategic involvement with local, regional and international partners, such as the Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) and through a new affiliation with the IFJ;
- Building an evidence base through these partnerships in projects such as this gender program and International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) projects being implemented in Vanuatu by the IFJ
- Raising awareness of Vanuatu’s institutional and policy framework for industrial relations among MAV members, in order to prepare for developing minimum pay and conditions standards, with graded wage scales to reflect training and experience, along with a set of professional standards.

The strategy will be extremely challenging for MAV to implement as it struggles with its small member base and the resource crunch. The organisation is trying to deal with this stumbling block by changing the way it engages with the world, and moving from being supported through grants and aid to building self-sufficiency and sustainability. Ultimately it wants to be a leader and inspiration for other national media associations in the region.



As Toa put it, “In this way, we are also trying to set an example in a society which is reliant on hand-outs and aid in order to survive. We want our organisation to lead the way in changing this dynamic and, ultimately, this will assist our members, both women and men.”

## Gender quotas for women in union leadership

Among the handful of unions in Vanuatu, the one covering media workers is the Vanuatu National Workers Union (VNWU).<sup>xiv</sup> Some media workers, particularly those employed by the national broadcaster, VBTC, are VNWU members.

A substantial number (38.88 percent) of survey respondents working in media indicated that they did not belong to a workers’ union within their organisations. Just over a quarter (27.77 percent) said that they did not have a union in their organisation. This does not necessarily mean, however, that union membership is low.

In response to a question about membership in a national union or media association outside of their media organisation, 18 respondents (81.88 percent) responded affirmatively. Of these, 44.44 percent were female and 55.55 percent male.

The national experience is that most media workers are likely to be members of the VNWU or MAV or both. Only a small number of men and women (two each) said they do not belong to a national union or media association.

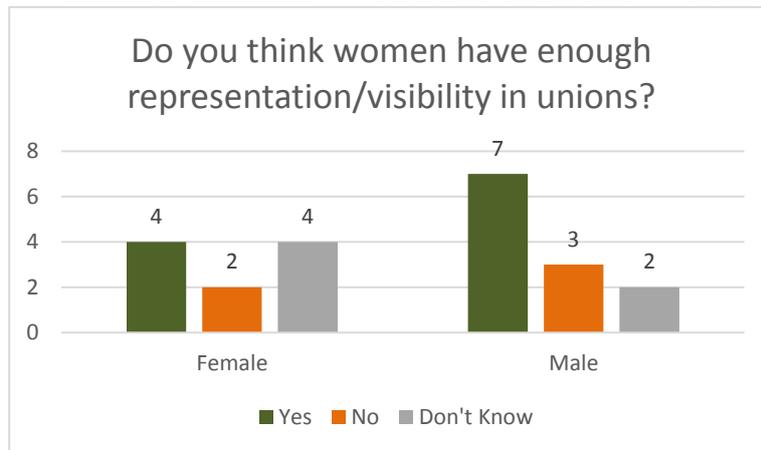
Most women (80 percent) were members of a national union or association outside of their work. Member ship was also high with men (83.33 percent)

In terms of officials and office bearers by gender, one woman said she was an official or office bearer of a workers union, one had a position in a national association and one had positions at both workers union level and at a national level – so 37.50 percent of women in unions surveyed. Two men were officials or office bearers at national level – so 20 percent of men in unions surveyed.

Half of all the respondents (50 percent) felt that women have enough representation or visibility in unions, while just over a quarter (27.27 percent) said they did not know. Interestingly, more than half (63.63 percent) of those who thought women had adequate representation were men.

One possible reason for the high number of respondents who do not know about representation of women in unions is the lack of outreach by unions in this regard.

The national media association, MAV, concedes it has not done a great deal of work in this regard. Despite its involvement with a number of organisations to promote information dissemination on issues affecting women and women’s rights, it has not done that similar work within its own industry. This is due to both lack of resources and competing priorities. It says it has devoted its limited resources to other causes, mainly relating to the right to information and media freedom.



It seems worth noting that, 81.81 percent of all respondents supported the idea of using quotas or proportional representation to boost women’s presence in unions, thought two women were against the concept. One interviewee suggested that women’s lack of enthusiasm for quotas “may be due to a distrust of formal mechanisms, which have tended not to work in the past, thanks to poor implementation as well as cultural factors which sometimes lead to retaliation or evening up of scores in other ways.”

Trade union legislating in Vanuatu dates back only 30 years. After independence from France and Great Britain in 1980, the parliament of Vanuatu passed the Trade Unions (TUA) and Trade Disputes (TDA) Acts in 1983. While the two acts of parliament were meant to protect the workers of Vanuatu, the right to collective bargaining was interestingly never included in the legislation. The Employment Act ‘dated back to Victorian times and thus gave no rights at all to the workers’.<sup>xv</sup>

In 1991, the Vanuatu Public Servants Association, the biggest union at that time, called for a nationwide strike over some matters that needed to be settled. The government retaliated by sacking all civil servants and recruiting new people. This is just one example of the Vanuatu government’s attitude towards the trade union movement. Joseph Niel, of the Vanuatu National Workers Union, said in the period after independence to 2007, there were 12 strikes directly or indirectly involving the government.

“Instead of exploring the possibility of dispute resolution through dialogue, the government resorted to sack the unionists involved in each of these strikes,” he said.

As a result, by the mid- to late-90s only two unions continued to exist in Vanuatu: the Vanuatu Teachers’ Union (VTU) and the Vanuatu National Workers’ Union (VNWU).<sup>xvi</sup> Despite the perseverance of these two organisations, the rate of unionisation remained stagnant at around ten to 11 per cent. By 2003 workers started trickling into unions again, reaching a peak of 14 percent in May/June 2005 only to plummet down to below 2003 levels after the government sanctioned the sacking of 60 union members following the airline strike of August 2005.

**Women take the lead in media lobbying and advocacy**

The Media Association blong Vanuatu (MAV) was first established in the early 1990s, as the Pres Klab blong Vanuatu with 15-20 members, mostly journalists. The organisation’s name was changed to MAV in 2003, when it expanded its membership to all personnel working in media outlets as well as



to media and information officers working for civil society organisations. Today it has over 100 members.

Following the development and adoption of its Media Code of Ethics in May 2006, MAV was registered as a non-government organisation under the Charitable Organisation Act. Its Executive Committee has a strong female presence: the President, Vice President and Assistant Secretary are all women, and represent senior, mid-career and young women journalists.

Evelyne Toa, Deputy Editor of *The Vanuatu Independent*, was elected President of MAV in 2009, and again in 2010, 2012 and 2014. Until now, there has always been a majority of males on MAV's Executive Committee. However, this is slowly changing as more women enter the media. Three of the eight executive members of the present committee are women. About 40 percent of MAV's membership comprises of women. So the composition of the Executive Committee reflects the overall membership.

MAV is a very small organisation, run entirely through the voluntary work of its membership. It has no paid employees to support its work – volunteers from the media sector are the mainstay of the organisation. Australian Volunteers International (AVI) is supporting MAV's work by providing a volunteer Media Policy and Advocacy Support Officer to assist the organisation.

After members indicated that they would like to see more women in decision-making roles and better gender balance at MAV's annual general meetings, MAV resolved in 2007 to develop a gender policy, although the policy has not yet been formalised due to lack of resources, it says.

In spite of this, MAV is working to reflect a greater awareness of gender, mainly through the activism of its members but also through collaborations with external partners. Importantly, the election of MAV's first female president in 2009 cannot be underplayed. It led to a change in perceptions of the organisation, with various external organisations seeking to partner with it on gender issues, such as violence against women, gender and climate change, etc.

In some ways, MAV's approach can be seen as an example of "gender mainstreaming," where gender is not a separate issue but is part of everything.

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## **Lack of sexual harassment law a hurdle**

There is no law against sexual harassment in the workplace in Vanuatu and there is no documentation of if and how the local community recognises and understands the issue. Nor is data available on the prevalence of sexual harassment.

All work relating to gender-based violence in Vanuatu has so far focused on family violence. However, one industrial relations researcher contacted for background research offered this view: "Unfortunately I think an environment that normalises sexual violence against women also normalises harassment in the workplace."<sup>xvii</sup>

Discrimination and violence against women have been identified as the most prominent human rights abuses in Vanuatu.<sup>xviii</sup> The *Alternative Indicators of Well-being for Melanesia: Vanuatu Pilot Study Report 2012* found that more than half (59 percent) of the country's women leaders reported



that there had been at least one incidence of domestic violence in their communities in the six months prior to that survey.<sup>xix</sup>

Just over a quarter of survey respondents in the IFJ survey (27.27 percent), said they had witnessed sexual harassment in their workplaces. Of the ten women surveyed, two said that although they had experienced harassment, it was not sexual in nature. Just one survey respondent said she had directly experienced sexual harassment. It was perpetrated by a member of the public and she reported the incident to a friend, a colleague and also a superior at work.

More than half the respondents (54.54 percent) indicated that there was no sexual harassment policy in their workplaces; another 18.18 percent did not know. Only a handful stated that their organisations did have sexual harassment policies (22.72 percent).

MAV has to date not received any complaints from its female membership about workplace issues such as sexual harassment and discrimination.

According to Evelyn Toa, “Respect is a big part of the culture here. This is a two-edged sword. We are a country of minorities. Vanuatu is a nation comprising many islands and more than 100 languages are spoken here every day. Tolerance, respect for difference, and working together are all part of everyday life. However, often respect for and deference to people in positions of authority can make it harder to raise and deal with such issues if they do arise.”

Under the circumstances, it is difficult to gauge the prevalence of sexual harassment in media workplaces and the level of awareness or understanding of the range of behaviours and actions that constitute sexual harassment.

According to Arthur Knight at FM107/*Vanuatu Times* group, awareness and understanding of sexual harassment may differ and cultural differences may also play a part: “For example, some of the language used in the workplace could be considered sexual harassment by some, and certain words or phrases in Bislama might be considered offensive to English language speakers, even though they are part of the everyday language in Vanuatu.”

When asked to select a variety of measures that they thought could effectively combat sexual harassment, more than half of all survey respondents (54.54 percent) appeared to favour ‘stronger laws’ as one of the ways to effectively combat sexual harassment. Men were more evenly distributed in their responses to the options presented whereas women felt most strongly about ‘stronger laws’ (50 percent) and ‘awareness-raising among women’ (40 percent).

Significantly, half the men thought ‘awareness-raising among men’ and ‘effective complaints system’ would be a good way to combat sexual harassment. An equal number of men and women (36.36 percent of respondents) were in favour of ‘awareness-raising among women’.



What measures can effectively combat sexual harassment?	Female	Male	Total
Awareness-raising among women	4	4	8
Awareness-raising with men	1	6	7
Effective complaints mechanism	2	6	8
Punitive measures	1	5	6
Stronger laws	5	7	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>41</b>

As mentioned earlier, there are currently no laws relating to sexual harassment and there has been some publicity around new labour laws expected to make sexual harassment an offence. It is clear that further work on sexual harassment in the workplace is required, at the national, industry and organisational levels.

**The challenge for equal opportunities**

Most media organisations in Vanuatu do not have a formal, written gender equity policy. This is reflected in the responses from survey participants, with 40.90 percent of eligible respondents saying their organisation did not have a policy. Only 16.66 percent said they did and 33.33 percent said they ‘don’t know’.

However, the majority of respondents (72.22 percent) felt having a gender policy in their organisation would contribute to gender equity.

Do you think having a gender policy in your organization will contribute to gender equity?	Total	Female	Male	Female	Male
Yes	13	7	6	53.85%	46.15%
No	2		2	0.00%	100.00%
No fixed view	3	2	1	66.67%	33.33%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>50.00%</b>	<b>50.00%</b>

Interviews with media managers elicited a range of responses. While most were not, in principle, opposed to such policies, many felt such policies are not necessary. As one media manager put it: “Don’t make an issue where there is none.”

According to Toa, “We women in Vanuatu can do things without pieces of paper stating a policy. We have an oral culture, and it is a new thing to be putting things on paper. Often policies written on paper sit on a shelf while we get on with the business of implementing what we see as priorities. Our members have identified women and issues affecting women as priorities, and so this is part of all of our work.”

When it comes to strategies and provisions to improve gender equality, respondents could choose a selection of approaches.

Interestingly, while half the women agreed an ‘equal opportunity or gender equity policy’ would be the best way to improve gender equity in workplaces, an even larger proportion of men (66.66



percent) thought so. The next most popular response was ILO maternity/paternity leave conventions, followed equally by ‘dignity at work’ policies and ‘flexible work practices’.

What strategies or provisions do you think would improve gender equality in your media or workplace?	Female	Male	Total
ILO maternity/paternity leave conventions	2	4	6
Dignity at work policy	2	3	5
Pay audits	1	2	3
Health and safety audits	2	2	4
Flexible work options	1	4	5
Sexual harassment policy	1	3	4
Equal opportunity or gender equity policy	5	8	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>40</b>

Two media organisations suggested that their decision-making, based on merit rather than gender equity, had worked well for women in their organisations.

There is evidently a difference of opinion between survey respondents and media managers on the need for policies and measures to promote gender equity in media organisations.

Just over a tenth of respondents (13.63 percent) – all women – said unions should adopt a national gender equity policy. Another group the same size said unions should lobby governments for stronger gender equity legislation.

More than a quarter of participants (27.27 percent) seem to think unions ‘should work with media employers to develop joint strategies on gender equity’. Another group the same size thought union’s ‘already promote diversity and equity’ – this was comprised of half the surveyed males and just one woman.

The evident preference for a joint approach fits in with recent developments in industrial relations in Vanuatu, where a tripartite approach to labour and employment issues is being implemented. It also endorses the approach favoured by MAV in its campaign to improve working conditions and standards for media workers.

**Cultural taboos influence on gender reporting**

In its 2013 Universal Periodic Review on human rights in Vanuatu, the United Nations wrote: *“Vanuatu is a society in transition, with the coexistence of traditional and so called ‘modern’ lifestyles, which places a particular burden on women who are expected both to maintain their traditional roles and enter in the formal economy in larger numbers. They are struggling to achieve full equality in all aspects of social and political life, participate in decision-making at all levels, and claim their rights including the right to live free from violence.”*<sup>xx</sup>

Representation of women in media content in Vanuatu has been both praised and criticised.

An earlier 2004 report on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in Vanuatu also outlined the challenges: “Whilst media



has played a major role in highlighting women’s issues, it also has played a negative role through graphic expression of female subjection through violence, through exploitative reporting of rape and other degrading injuries, and through the portrayal of the female body as a commodity to be bought and sold...”

The report went on to say that some radio announcers (both males and females) needed to undergo gender sensitization training due to their unconscious use of sexist language on the programs. And while gender-sensitisation workshops have been carried out in Vanuatu’s government through the Department of Women’s Affairs in recent years and through women’s groups in the NGO sector over the past 15 years “one group that training has not reached is the media” .<sup>xxi</sup>

The responses from survey respondents in the IFJ research to questions on the portrayal of women in media content indicate that there has not been significant change over the decade since.

Surprisingly, women appear to be more positive than men about the representation of women in the media in their use as news sources or experts with 60 percent of women suggesting they comprised between 20-30 percent. Men were more conservative, with half of all men suggesting the gender representation of women as sources or experts was 10 percent or less.

In terms of the depiction of women in news content, respondents could select their top four from a list of 10 depictions. Women respondents largely thought women were represented mostly as ‘experts/leaders’ (80 percent), ‘family figures’ (70 percent), victims (70 percent) and equal citizens (50 percent).

In contrast, men in the respondent group largely thought women were depicted as ‘victims’ (75 percent), ‘family figures’ (66.66 percent), and ‘experts/leaders’ or ‘sexual objects’ (each 50 percent)

In your opinion, women in news content are most often depicted as: (please select your top 4 answers)	All
Victims	16
Family figures	15
Experts / leaders	14
Equal citizens	10
Sexual objects	8
Survivors	8
Heroes	8
Negatively stereotyped	4
Weak and timid	3
Defying stereotypes	2

Opinions varied too on what would help to promote gender equity in news media content – respondents could choose none or all of the below.

While both men and women seemed to favour ‘enforcement of guidelines on gender equity’ (54.54 percent) as a measure, men also placed their faith in the other options, including more gender-sensitive male journalists and editors and more women journalists and editors – each attracting 50 percent of the male responses.



More women (50 percent) favoured ‘enforcement of guidelines on gender equity’ over other options. This was followed by ‘more women in decision-making roles’ (40 percent).

What measures do you think would promote gender equity in news content?	Female	Male	Total
Enforcement of guidelines on gender equity	5	7	12
More gender-sensitive male journalists and editors	3	6	9
More women in decision-making roles in media	4	5	9
More women journalists and editors	2	6	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>38</b>

The strong support for the enforcement of gender guidelines is of interest in the current context, as Vanuatu’s media consider options for introducing media self-regulation.

There is currently no mechanism for setting or enforcing ethical and professional standards within the industry.

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### Media tackles gender-based violence

Discrimination and violence against women have been identified as the most prominent human rights abuse in Vanuatu.<sup>xxii</sup>

But talking about violence against women is not easy in a culture where, according to research, opinions appear to support inequality and legitimise the use of violence in the home. Only recently, with the passage of the Family Protection Act in 2008, have cases of intra-family violence been formally designated and prosecuted as crimes.

#### Attitudes towards domestic violence

The share of respondents who agreed with the statement



Base: 1,338 respondents, 15+

Please note: It is important to note that social desirability, i.e. the tendency to provide answers that will be viewed favourably by others, may have influenced the respondents' answers to the questions concerning their behaviour and attitudes on violence against women.



Source: *InterMedia*, “Citizen Access to Information in Vanuatu: Domestic Violence”, *Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS)*, May 2013

As in many other Pacific Island countries, general awareness of human rights is not high in Vanuatu. The practice of talking about human rights and violence against women is new and still seen by some as confrontational. It also has some traditions which can make it hard for people to speak up about complex and difficult issues.

Media coverage of violence against women and girls is a sensitive issue and reporting on such violence can be difficult. More often than not, reports focus on dry statistics and policy pronouncements by governments and NGOs.

Headlines using statistics and general statements can appear to have little or no meaning or relevance to “ordinary” people, such as “Vanuatu has one of the highest rates of domestic violence in the world” or “Reported gender-based violence in Vanuatu is increasing.”

When many people do not understand what “domestic violence” or “gender-based violence” is, it is difficult for them to engage because the language used isn’t what most people understand or relate to. On the other hand, discussing violence at this level can avoid some of the stigma and shame.

The media have a very significant role to play in influencing perceptions of violence against women through reporting on the issue at a local and more personal level, to bring the stories behind the statistics to life and to “tell it like it is.”

There has been a steady increase in reporting on individual cases of violence against women, particularly as they are played out in the judicial system.

This reporting is often based on official records coming out of the courts. But occasionally women have allowed their personal stories to be told in the media, and these accounts are the ones which attract the greatest response from readers, as well as the strongest reactions against what is a significant problem in Vanuatu.

The *Independent*, a weekly newspaper published in Vanuatu’s capital, Port Vila, has recently committed to a series of campaigns highlighting issues affecting women in Vanuatu, and raising public awareness and discussion of them.

Since 2012, the *Independent* has had a dedicated court reporter, which is unusual for Vanuatu where the only specialisation within reporting is generally confined to sport.

The court reporter and the editor of the paper noticed the high proportion of cases of violence against women, including domestic violence, being heard in court. In response they have developed a campaign to help raise public awareness of the problem through a space dedicated to reporting on such cases and following up on stories where relevant and appropriate. Reaction to the campaign has been strong – both in favour of and against the campaign.

MAV has now also committed to developing a gender policy which will focus on providing guidance to media about reporting on gender-based issues to ensure balanced, equitable and responsible reporting.



*This is a summary of the outcomes of a MAV-UN Women collaboration to tackle gender-based violence and media. An event was held to mark International Women Human Rights Defenders Day in November 2013. Participants included MAV, other NGOs, the Vanuatu Government, UN organisations, aid donors and students from the School of Media and Journalism of the VIT.*

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## Conclusions

*Vanuatu Independent* editor Tony Wilson sums up plainly the challenge for gender equity in Vanuatu: “The reality is that all issues relating to gender equality, which have come a long way in countries like Australia, are not even out of the kindergarten stage in Vanuatu and the fight will be a long one.”

He outlined the attitude confronting the country’s most outspoken female journalist, *The Independent’s* deputy editor Evelyn Toa. The MAV president writes a weekly opinion column and regularly receives both verbal abuse and physical threats for her comments about the failings of the government, he said.

“The few females in senior government ranks are largely only there because they say and do what their male counterparts want them to say and do. All in all, we can only take small, meaningful steps toward greater gender equality,” Wilson added.

Going by the responses to the survey, it is obvious that clear policies relating to employment – including policies promoting gender equity, addressing sexual harassment, and providing information on basic employment conditions and entitlements – are either missing or not widely known in the media industry in Vanuatu. It is also clear that many media workers believe policies would make a positive difference to them at work.

Most media organisations in Vanuatu range from small to very small and do not have the resources, and in some cases the will, to develop and implement formal policies on their own, preferring to rely instead on informal, unwritten (and apparently poorly communicated) policies and past practice.

Most workplaces are not unionised, with only the publicly funded national broadcaster supported by a union. However, the national media association, MAV, has a relatively large membership even though it is a small organisation is entirely reliant on volunteers. With a strong female presence at the executive level, it has made efforts since 2007 to make gender equity part of its work in spite of its own limitations in drawing up a policy.

But media organisations must work with the Vanuatu National Workers Union, in partnership with regional and/or international organisations, to undertake a pay and conditions audit. This should include assessment of any gender pay gap, with a view to developing basic standards, conditions and qualification levels to be applied across the industry.

There needs to be awareness-raising among media workers and managements about their respective rights and responsibilities at work. There should also be a particular focus on the different types of employment available, and the corresponding wages, working conditions and entitlements, including maternity leave.



Progress of the passage of the proposed new employment relations legislation and regulations must be monitored to ensure that media workers and organisations are informed of changes and their implications for workers and the industry.

Unions, media associations and media organisations should develop a gender equity policy – creating a model policy that can be adapted and implemented at the level of individual organisations. The policy should include gender equity within both media organisations and media content.

Sexual harassment policies should be reviewed and media workers and organisations should work together to develop a model sexual harassment policy and complaints mechanism.

Finally, appropriate training to raise awareness of sexual harassment and how to address should be considered as a priority.

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<sup>i</sup> New Economics Foundation 2006, *Happy Planet Index: An Index of Human Well-being and Environmental Impact*, NEF, United Kingdom, viewed 19 November 2014, <<http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/entry/the-happy-planet-index>>.

<sup>ii</sup> United Nations University for Environment and Human Security 2013, *The World Risk Report 2013: Health and Healthcare*, UNU, Germany, viewed 26 November 2014, <<http://www.ehs.unu.edu/article/read/report-launch-the-world-risk-report-2013-health-and-healthcare>>.

<sup>iii</sup> Vanuatu National Statistics Office 2014 (pers. comm., 9 Dec).

<sup>iv</sup> *Note: For these figures relating to radio and TV programming and broadcasting activities, the data is presented by industry and regardless of occupation, and may include, for example, anyone working at a radio broadcaster, including technical, administrative and other staff.*

Vanuatu National Statistics Office 2011, *Women and Men in Vanuatu: Gender analysis of the 2009 Population and Housing Census*, VNS, Vanuatu, viewed 14 November 2014, <<http://www.vnsso.gov.vu/index.php/document-library.html?view=download&fileId=2012>>.

<sup>v</sup> Makin, B 2015, *Vanuatu Daily Digest*, wordpress, Vanuatu, last viewed 4 December 2014, <<https://vanuatudaily.wordpress.com/author/bobmakin/>>.

<sup>vi</sup> Freedom House 2013, *Global Press Freedom Rankings*, Freedom of the Press, Washington, viewed 1 December 2014, <<https://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/Global%20and%20regional%20tables.pdf>>.

<sup>vii</sup> Vanuatu National Statistics Office 2010, *2009 National Population and Housing Census: Basic Tables Report Volume 1*, VNS, Vanuatu, viewed 4 December 2014, <<http://www.vnsso.gov.vu/index.php/document-library?view=download&fileId=2010>>.

<sup>viii</sup> Vanuatu Chamber of Commerce and Industry 2014, *Fact Sheet: Minimum Wage*, VCCI, Vanuatu, viewed 20 November 2014, <<http://vcci.com.vu/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/4.3-factsheet-minimum-wages.pdf>>

<sup>ix</sup> UN Women 2014, *Report of National Consultation on Beijing+20 – Vanuatu*, UN Women, New York, viewed 28 November 2014,



[http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/59/national\\_reviews/vanuatu\\_review\\_beijing20.ashx](http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/59/national_reviews/vanuatu_review_beijing20.ashx).

<sup>x</sup> Vanuatu National Statistics Office 2011, *Women and Men in Vanuatu: Gender analysis of the 2009 Population and Housing Census*, VNS, Vanuatu, viewed 16 November 2014, <http://www.vns.gov.vu/index.php/document-library.html?view=download&fileId=2012>.

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<sup>xii</sup> Port Vila, Vanuatu 2014 (Pers. Comm. with unnamed informant, 27 November 2014).

<sup>xiii</sup> United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women 2005, *Combined Initial, Second and Third Reports – Vanuatu September 2004*, Office of the Prime Minister and Department of Women’s Affairs, Republic of Vanuatu, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N05/625/04/PDF/N0562504.pdf?OpenElement>.

<sup>xiv</sup> *Note: The Media Asosiesen blong Vanuatu (MAV) at one stage considered becoming an industrial union, however, the small size of the industry, and the lack of resources to establish and maintain services to likely members, prevented it from proceeding along this path* Mr Harold Obed, MAV executive member.

<sup>xv</sup> Judge Tuohy, Supreme Court Judge, statement in conference, May 2007.

<sup>xvi</sup> Joseph Niel, Vanuatu National Workers Union, July 2007.

<sup>xvii</sup> Vanuatu 2014 (Pers. Comm with researcher, 10 Dec).

<sup>xviii</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (2014), *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013: Vanuatu*, United States Department of State, Washington, viewed 30 November 2014, [www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2013/eap/220243.htm](http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2013/eap/220243.htm)

<sup>xix</sup> Vanuatu National Statistics Office (2012), *Alternative Indicators of Wellbeing for Melanesia: Vanuatu Pilot Study Report 2012*, Malvatumauri National Council of Chiefs, Vanuatu, viewed 12 November 2014, <http://vanuatuculturalcentre.vu/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Alternative-Indicators-Vanuatu.pdf>

<sup>xx</sup> United Nations Human Rights 2013, *Universal Periodic Review: Human Rights Council UN JP Inputs – Vanuatu*, UNHR, Switzerland, viewed 18 November 2014, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/VUSession18.aspx>

<sup>xxi</sup> United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women 2005, *Combined Initial, Second and Third Reports – Vanuatu September 2004*, Office of the Prime Minister and Department of Women’s Affairs, Republic of Vanuatu, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N05/625/04/PDF/N0562504.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>xxii</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (2014), *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013: Vanuatu*, United States Department of State, Washington, viewed 7 December 2014, [www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2013/eap/220243.htm](http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2013/eap/220243.htm).