

A vibrant photograph of a tropical river scene. Three people are in a traditional dugout canoe on clear, turquoise water. On the left, a man in white shorts is paddling with a wooden oar. In the middle, a young child is leaning forward, looking towards the camera. On the right, a woman in a white tank top and shorts is sitting on the edge of the canoe, looking out at the lush green forest that lines the riverbank. The background is filled with dense tropical foliage and hanging vines. A large, semi-transparent white circle is overlaid on the upper half of the image, serving as a background for the title.

Vanuatu

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICY 2019-2030

Our Vision: To protect and celebrate Vanuatu's unique environment, culture, kastom and people through sustainable and responsible tourism.



Message from the Minister of Tourism, Trade, Commerce and Ni Vanuatu Business

On behalf of the Government of Vanuatu it gives me great pleasure to present to you the **Vanuatu Sustainable Tourism Policy** which will guide and direct the development and promotion of our tourism sector. Sustainable tourism takes account of its current and future economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts by balancing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.

We welcome investment, development and growth. However, we need to manage this process and maintain control over how our culture and environment is shared and enjoyed. To ensure our tourism sector is sustainable, we need to value, develop, promote and interpret our cultural and environmental assets in a way that protects and conserves them leaving these precious assets for future generations. That is the essence of sustainability.

Sustainable tourism also means financial viability. This is best achieved by attracting high value responsible tourists who respect our values and cultural traditions.

Efforts in marketing, promotion, tourism training, tourism accreditation, stakeholder communication and co-ordination, investment, infrastructure and product development should therefore be focused on making sure we not only attract the right kind of tourists but that we provide them with a wonderful and interesting experience so they will not only want to return but will also tell their family, friends and networks to visit Vanuatu.

My government is also committed to other aspects of sustainable tourism – spreading the benefits of tourism to all of the six provinces. This will require a partnership and commitment between Air Vanuatu, Dept. of Tourism, Vanuatu Tourism Office, Provincial Tourism Councils and the private sector owners and operators to improving transport access, upgrading and maintaining infrastructure, and developing and promoting product packages.

I look forward to assisting with the implementation of this Vanuatu Sustainable Tourism Policy, which will lay the foundation for the development of a sustainable tourism sector in Vanuatu.

I would like to acknowledge the previous Minister for Tourism, Trade, Commerce and Ni Vanuatu Cooperatives Mr Joe Y. Natuman for his contribution to the development of this Vanuatu Sustainable Tourism Policy during his time as Minister.



Hon. Bob Loughman

Minister for Tourism, Trade, Commerce and Ni Vanuatu Business.



Message from the Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Trade, Commerces and Ni-Vanuatu Business: Mr Roy Mickey Joy

The United Nations 70th General Assembly designated 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development to raise awareness of the contribution sustainable tourism can make. Vanuatu used this unique opportunity to develop its own sustainable tourism policy goals that can guide the future development of Vanuatu, aligning to the five key areas of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development: Economic growth; job creation, entrepreneurship and inclusiveness; environmental preservation and effective resource management; the promotion and protection of cultural values and heritage; cultural diversity, mutual understanding and peace.

I welcome this important document for laying the foundations for sustainably managing our tourism sector and I thank everyone who contributed to the Vanuatu Sustainable Tourism Policy (VSTP).



Message from the Director of Tourism: Mr Jerry Spooner

The VSTP presents policy goals and objectives that enable the planning and development of Vanuatu tourism to enhance environmental, social, cultural, economic, community well-being and visitor experience outcomes at both a national and local level. Prior to the VSTP, DoT has never had a guide in how to manage the tourism industry to ensure sustainability across social, environmental and economic considerations. This transforms Governments approach from reactive management of the tourism sector to having proper planning and management guidelines in place. VSTP objectives seek to incorporate Ni-Vanuatu culture, traditional knowledge and sustainability principles to strengthen the linkages between resource usage, policy and planning in a holistic and inclusive way. This is achievable through a combination of policy direction, government action, good business practice and consumer behaviour to foster a positive change for a more sustainable tourism sector.

The Vanuatu Department of Tourism endorses the VSTP and would like to thank the Vanuatu Sustainable Tourism Policy Team and the many stakeholders that have contributed to the VSTP including Mr Donald Pealm during his term as Acting Director.



Message from the CEO of the Vanuatu Tourism Office: Mrs Adela Issachar Aru

Tourism is important for Vanuatu and is a tool that can be used to improve the livelihoods of the people, economically, socially, culturally and environmentally. The Sustainable Development Goals 2030 is an important global agenda and for Vanuatu these area embedded into the National Sustainable Development Plan or 'Peoples Plan' 2030. Therefore, it gives us great pleasure that as a tourism destination we are fulfilling our responsibility to make change in shaping tomorrow's future by realising that it is with our great tourism assets such as our environment, culture and our people is what thrives us as a society and destination.

I am honoured that the Vanuatu Tourism Office is part of this policy development as we embark on the journey to improve destination sustainability by focussing our marketing efforts not only on getting more visitors into the destination but getting the right type of visitors and yield that is important and interested in keeping the destination healthier. It is about community wellbeing, partnerships, leadership, resource management, gender equity and value in businesses to promote Vanuatu as another great tourism destination in the South Pacific for our generations tomorrow.

Acknowledgements

The Vanuatu Sustainable Tourism Policy (VSTP) was made possible through the financial and technical support of the Vanuatu Strategic Tourism Action Plan (VSTAP), funded by the New Zealand Government. The VSTP project team would like to thank the following Government representatives:

Mr Roy Mickey Joy, Director General Ministry of Trade, Tourism, Commerce and Ni Vanuatu Business; Mr. Donald Pelam, Acting Director Department of Tourism; Mrs Adela Issachar Aru, CEO, Vanuatu Tourism Office; and Mr. Geoff Hyde, VSTAP Team Leader and Technical Advisor.

The VSTP project team would also like to thank the many people who have contributed to the development of the VSTP through participating in the National Tourism Forum, in-depth interviews, surveys, workshops, reviewing policy drafts and providing comments and advice. The VSTP project team were particularly pleased to have inputs from such a wide representation of over 250 stakeholders from the private sector, government and community based agencies.

Thank you to all the Ministries and Government agencies, including staff from the Department of Tourism and the Vanuatu Tourism Office, the Provincial Government officers and all stakeholders throughout Vanuatu, particularly the Tourism Industry operators, local NGO's and volunteers who have also contributed to the national consultation process.

The VSTP project team took all feedback comments and contributions seriously and made sure to address all of the information that was presented to us. It is because of the high number of people engaged in the process of developing the VSTP that it was able to represent such a diverse range of views.

Tank yu tumas from the Vanuatu Sustainable Tourism Policy Project team:

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Acronyms

CCA's - Community Conservation Areas
CSR - Corporate Social Responsibility
EIA - Environmental Impact Assessment
GSTC - Global Sustainable Tourism Council
LMMA's - Local Marine Management Areas
NERM - National Energy Roadmap
NGO - Non Governmental Organisation
NSDP - National Sustainable Development Plan (2016-2030)
PEA - Preliminary Impact Assessment
SIA - Social Impact Assessment
VSTP - Vanuatu Sustainable Tourism Policy
VTPAP - Vanuatu Tourism Permit and Accreditation Program
VSTAP - Vanuatu Strategic Tourism Action Plan (2015 to 2019)

Executive summary

VISION

The collective VISION of Vanuatu's tourism stakeholders is:

To protect and celebrate Vanuatu's unique environment, culture, kastom and people through sustainable and responsible tourism.

VALUES

The vision, goals and objectives expressed in this policy are underpinned by a set of shared VALUES:

Tourism in Vanuatu embraces the traditional and formal economies; it provides sustainable growth by strengthening national and community resilience with the ultimate goal of delivering equitable economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits for Vanuatu and its people.

GOALS

Vanuatu's sustainable tourism goals:

GOAL 1: To develop and manage a sustainable and responsible tourism industry.

GOAL 2: Visitors connect with Vanuatu's environment, culture and its people.

GOAL 3: Sustainable and responsible tourism products and services developed, supported, and marketed to attract responsible high-value tourists.

GOAL 4: Tourism that enhances, conserves and protects the environmental and cultural resources of Vanuatu.

GOAL 5: Sustainable and responsible tourism brings improved income and well-being for Vanuatu and its people.

Introduction

Sustainable tourism is an approach to tourism development that seeks to achieve a balance of **economic viability, social acceptability and environmental responsibility**. The Vanuatu Sustainable Tourism Policy (VSTP) provides a guiding framework and direction for the Government of Vanuatu (GOV) and all stakeholders to develop their tourism sector in a sustainable manner. The VSTP will be a “living” and flexible document that represents a stepping stone of what will be an on-going consultative process of incorporating key messages from stakeholders across Vanuatu, aligning and realigning policy across government sectors where required, and responding to internal and external events and trends. Collaboration between tourism and other sectors as well as adaptability between policies and plans are both essential in order to support sustainability initiatives and linkages that strengthen the tourism sector and Vanuatu as a country. The VSTP focuses on enhancing the resilience of Vanuatu’s cultural, social and ecological systems in the face of the changes, complexity and uncertainty that typify 21st century Vanuatu.

The VSTP will have a 12 year time frame up to 2030, for achieving the goals and objectives in this document. This time frame aligns with the National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP, 2016-2030) for Vanuatu. While tourism is only mentioned briefly in the economic goals of the NSDP, ensuring a sustainable and equitable tourism industry is largely influenced by environmental, social and cultural factors. Therefore the VSTP has been developed to encompass economic (ECO 1; ECO 2), environmental (ENV 1; ENV 2; ENV 3; ENV 4), and social and cultural (SOC 1; SOC 6; SOC 7) objectives from the NSDP. The NSDP **National Vision** and **Development Aspirations** is also incorporated into the VSTP’s Vision and Values to ensure the VSTP aligns with the National approach to Sustainable development, thus changing how tourism has previously been approached in Vanuatu.

The VSTP focuses on the principles of **sustainability** (minimising negative environmental, economic and sociocultural impacts), and incorporates **responsible tourism** to demonstrate a focus on ethics and human rights, therefore not just **minimising negative impacts** but **mitigating these impacts**. **Responsible tourism is where operators, governments, local people and tourists share the responsibility for making Vanuatu more resilient and tourism more sustainable.**

While compulsory measures for developing a sustainable and responsible tourism industry via legislation are sometimes helpful, the VSTP puts forward incentives for voluntary planning and development action, business practices and government-supported environmental, cultural and social protection that can be mutually reinforcing. The objectives of the tourism policies and actions put forward in this document can potentially increase the benefits and reduce the negative impacts of tourism in order to ultimately strengthen Vanuatu, its environment and its people. In particular, the VSTP includes ambitious but achievable action measures based on the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) criteria for destinations, making it possible and appropriate for destinations in Vanuatu to work towards becoming a GSTC certified destination. As such, the policy views sustainable tourism not as a discrete set of tourism products, but as something for the entire tourism and non-tourism sectors to work towards. The premise of the VSTP is that Vanuatu will thrive and survive when all forms of tourism strive to be more responsible and sustainable.



GOAL 1

To develop and manage a *sustainable and responsible* tourism industry.

A coordinated cross-sectorial management approach to sustainable and responsible tourism is needed, that engages both the private and public sectors in an equitable and inclusive way. This would be guided by Regional, National and sectoral policies (see appendices B and C in Vol. 2), and assigned a set of defined responsibilities including overseeing and implementing action aimed at managing environmental, economic, social and cultural issues related to tourism and assisting with crises management activities.

Sound management of tourism in Vanuatu also requires cost-effective ways of monitoring the action measures put forward in the VSTP. As a matter of priority there is a need for a more robust system of data collection with respect to assessing the negative impacts of tourism on Vanuatu, particularly the effects of climate change. This will enable better monitoring, evaluation and public reporting against the objectives and action measures set out in the VSTP.

Sustainable tourism planning and zoning can provide an effective tool to align tourism development with the VSTP vision, values, goals and objectives. A process is required to identify risks and opportunities to tourism associated with climate change and integrate them into zoning and planning guidelines under the *Meteorology, Geological Hazards and Climate Change Act No. 25 of 2016*. Tourism planning should encourage climate change adaptation strategies for the development, siting, design, and management of facilities as well as consider how tourism sites contribute to the sustainability and resilience of Vanuatu.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations order No. 2011 is in place in Vanuatu, however tourism's role in intervening in developments, (before they cause significant environmental damage) could be much stronger, particular development that takes place on the foreshore under the *Foreshore Development Act No. 2013*. The Department of Tourism and provincial government officials could also play a more central role in supporting the Department of Environment in compliance with Preliminary Environmental Assessment (PEA) and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

The Vanuatu Tourism Permit and Accreditation Program (VTPAP) under the *Tourism Council Act No 23 of 2012* and the biannual requirement for business registration by tourism operators are opportunities for the Department of Tourism to engage with operators who are not conducting their business in line with the various national laws. These tools are also potentially effective in encouraging the sector to shift towards a more responsible and sustainable mode of operation guided by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) criteria for destinations.

Using local architecture and materials in construction offers visitors a unique experience. Therefore it is essential to safeguard traditional architecture by establishing a building code for traditional buildings, linked with spatial planning processes that are sympathetic to safety and sanitation factors.

KEY MESSAGE: Coordinated cross sectorial management of sustainable and responsible tourism development supported through legislation, planning guidelines and compliance that strengthen resilience.

OBJECTIVES:

- Vanuatu has an inclusive cross sectorial approach to tourism planning that facilitates a *precautionary approach* to tourism development.
- Vanuatu has **zoning and planning guidelines** and regulations at the National and Provincial level that identifies sustainable carrying capacity levels.
- Standards and certification programs for tourism in Vanuatu are **consistent with GSTC criteria**.
- Visitor arrivals, infrastructure, and transport access is closely aligned with socially and environmentally determined sustainable **carrying capacity targets**.
- The role of Government in ensuring the **compliance of tourism operators** with relevant national laws is reviewed and strengthened.
- Vanuatu tourism industry is aware of **climate-related risks** and actively engages in climate change adaptation strategies.
- **Industry representation** actively supports the VSTP vision, evidenced by actions taken to work with Government and stakeholders across sectors.
- A **comprehensive tourism data set** measures, reports and mitigates economic, environmental, social and cultural impacts.
- **Traditional architecture** is encouraged in buildings and upgrading to higher standards of quality and design.

ACTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED:

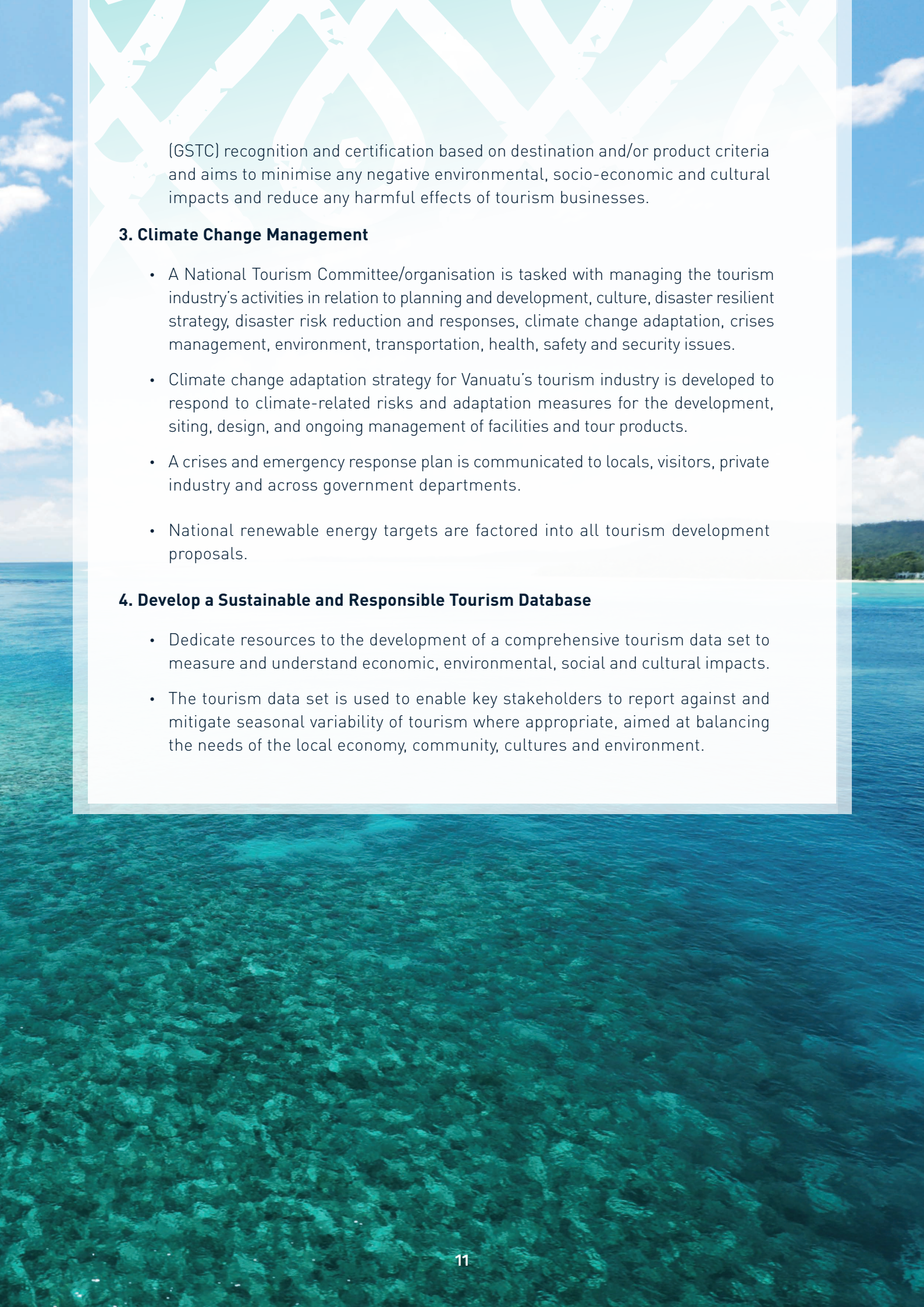
1. Sustainable and Responsible Tourism Planning

- An inventory of all significant environmental and cultural resources are listed in provincial tourism plans with restrictions on types of development in these areas, including sites that pose or exacerbate a climate change risk or exposure.
- Zoning and planning guidelines are developed to protect natural and cultural resources, (including foreshore development) with local input from the public and a thorough review process. These are publicly communicated and legally enforced.

- An effective legislative framework for land use planning and zoning is adopted at the provincial level to protect key environmental and cultural resources.
- Concepts on sustainable and responsible tourism, resilience planning and development, and sustainable carrying capacity targets for each province are incorporated into Provincial tourism plans.
- Infrastructure development and transport access is determined by social and environmental assessments that closely align with sustainable carrying capacity targets and determine acceptable levels of environmental, economic, social, cultural, and community impacts.
- Awareness programs for local accommodation operators are developed on the benefits of using traditional architecture in buildings and upgrading to higher standards of quality and design.

2. Sustainable and Responsible Tourism Management

- Government tourism staff are represented on the Lands Management Committee and are actively engaged with landholders once negotiation certificates are issued for tourism related leases.
- Provincial and municipal planning authorities are empowered to develop and implement long term sustainable and responsible tourism planning and development.
- Preliminary Social and Environmental Impact Assessments are carried out on all tourism development applications that integrate sustainable land use, design, construction and demolition, and climate change adaptation strategies.
- Provincial tourism officers are trained in supporting Department of Environment staff to carry out Social Impact Assessments (SIA), PEA's and EIA's in addition to overseeing that development is in line with the provincial tourism plans.
- Traditional architecture is supported and promoted in the Provincial tourism plans and educational programs.
- Financial support and awareness raising for local Ni-Vanuatu operators to assist with certification to upgrade the quality of accommodation and tourism services is delivered through seed capital funding and capacity building activities (training, tourism awards, website content, trade exhibitions etc.).
- A Non-Government, independent organisation is responsible for compliance, auditing and assessing both mandatory and voluntary standards and certification.
- GSTC recognised Sustainability Standards and Certification programs support Vanuatu's environmental and cultural assets whilst demonstrating leadership in climate-sensitive green growth.
- The Vanuatu Tourism Permit and Accreditation Program (VTPAP) criteria is continually raised to include higher performance based standards to include Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Global Sustainable Tourism Council



(GSTC) recognition and certification based on destination and/or product criteria and aims to minimise any negative environmental, socio-economic and cultural impacts and reduce any harmful effects of tourism businesses.

3. Climate Change Management

- A National Tourism Committee/organisation is tasked with managing the tourism industry's activities in relation to planning and development, culture, disaster resilient strategy, disaster risk reduction and responses, climate change adaptation, crises management, environment, transportation, health, safety and security issues.
- Climate change adaptation strategy for Vanuatu's tourism industry is developed to respond to climate-related risks and adaptation measures for the development, siting, design, and ongoing management of facilities and tour products.
- A crises and emergency response plan is communicated to locals, visitors, private industry and across government departments.
- National renewable energy targets are factored into all tourism development proposals.

4. Develop a Sustainable and Responsible Tourism Database

- Dedicate resources to the development of a comprehensive tourism data set to measure and understand economic, environmental, social and cultural impacts.
- The tourism data set is used to enable key stakeholders to report against and mitigate seasonal variability of tourism where appropriate, aimed at balancing the needs of the local economy, community, cultures and environment.

GOAL 2

Visitors connect with Vanuatu's environment, culture and its people.

Vanuatu as a destination is generally known to be safe to tourists and has good communication systems in place to address safety and security issues. Policy guidelines can help ensure that visitors' hygiene, safety, and comfort needs and expectations are met consistently and at a high standard. Many opportunities exist for the sector to improve its support for waste minimisation and management activities under the Environmental Protection and Conservation Act [Cap 283]. Safe and efficient water treatment and use is another area for attention, particularly in the accommodation sector. These are aspects that visitors see and experience and are critical elements to visitors' perceptions that Vanuatu is committed to a sustainable and responsible tourism industry.

Meeting these basic needs is necessary but not sufficient to delivering a quality experience. Visitors want to experience and connect with Vanuatu's natural environment, its culture and its people. High-quality visitor experiences embedded in Vanuatu's core values are key to visitor satisfaction, positive word-of-mouth advertising and responsible visitor behaviour. Positive visitor experiences that support the vision and values of the VSTP requires locals to share their culture and their stories with visitors, and this requires upskilling of personnel who interact with visitors. Disability-inclusive products need to become common place to ensure all visitors have the opportunity to discover and enjoy Vanuatu.

KEY MESSAGE: High quality visitor experiences are embedded in Vanuatu's core vision and values. Visitor's perceptions see Vanuatu is committed to a sustainable and responsible tourism industry.

OBJECTIVES:

- Tourism reflects Vanuatu's unique environment, culture and Kastom through **authentic and quality** products and experiences.
- Traditional, cultural and personal stories are used to **enrich tourist experiences** and products and to make connections between hosts and visitors.
- Systems are established and strengthened to ensure the **health and safety** of visitors and locals.
- Vanuatu's tourism industry supports a clean environment and success in **waste minimisation and management**.
- Tourism in Vanuatu, where appropriate, is **accessible to all** while ensuring the integrity of all sites.

- Visitors can see the contribution of the tourism sector to support green growth, food and water security and **equitable access** to economic development.
- Visitor **dissatisfaction is recorded** and acted upon in a continual cycle of proactive management at a tourism operator and destination management level.

ACTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED:

1. Training Programs

- Training is made available in visitor communication and interpretive guiding, and in the development of interpretive signage and exhibits that tell Vanuatu's stories and share its values.
- Training support for waste minimisation and effective waste removal microenterprises for rural tourism products, including cruise port entry, is financed through the National Environment Policy and Implementation Plan 2016 to 2030 'polluter pays principle'.

2. Awareness Campaigns

- A nationwide campaign to ban plastic straws, polystyrene containers and plastic bags in Vanuatu is launched alongside the promotion of the reduce, reuse and recycle campaign. Waste education programs become part of the school curriculum.
- Sector-based security and crime prevention campaigns are established.
- Sector-based champions are promoted through Government supported marketing to encourage operators to demonstrate their role in increasing the destinations resilience.

3. Higher Product Standards

- Standards of quality, health, safety and security of visitors and Ni-Vanuatu are enforced through VTPAP. Where appropriate, VTPAP ensures tourism products and sites are accessible to all, including those with disabilities and specific requirements.
- All tourism operators meet minimum waste management requirements through VTPAP including provision of safe drinking water in reusable containers for guests and composting for food production-based operators.
- Systems are in place through the VTPAP to enable reporting of tourism businesses that condone any commercial, sexual or any other form of exploitation and harassment of anyone, particularly children, adolescent and minorities.

4. Visitor Management

- Systems are in place to monitor and respond to visitor dissatisfaction.
- Systems are in place for the effective management of and direct support of health and safety of tourists particularly in natural disaster events.
- Where possible, measures are taken to ensure those with disabilities are given a rewarding and genuine experience.

GOAL 3

Sustainable and responsible tourism products and services developed, supported, and marketed to attract responsible high-value tourists.

High-value tourists are those that provide a higher yield to Vanuatu as a tourism destination economically but also socially, culturally and environmentally. This requires identifying and targeting tourists whose expectations, interests and travel consumption behaviours align with the vision and values of Vanuatu tourism. For example, there is potential to leverage off of Vanuatu's organic farming and livelihood practices and to develop a tourism marketing strategy that differentiates between the different islands based on the different lifestyles of the locals. In addition, marketing that is targeted at tourists based on their interests and desired activities could help individual islands broaden and deepen their responsible tourism product range.

The tourism industry in Vanuatu needs to strengthen its linkages with other sectors to develop sustainable and responsible tourism products. The sale of such products provides benefits across the tourism industry by increasing tourist spending, enhancing the local Vanuatu experience, and supporting local operators, including marginalised groups. Supporting the Agritourism strategy and activities such as eco-agritourism (tourism based on traditional farming systems) can positively influence the choices made by tourists. Encouraging tourists to try local foods and introducing them to sustainable farming systems based on traditional methods can then influence their purchasing decisions towards more sustainable and responsible products. This can also work to encourage landholders to operate their farming systems based on the principles of sustainability.

Local food production practices, such as agroforestry and Kastom tabu management of fish stocks are central to producing truly local and sustainable products. Local extraction of natural resources for handicraft production must be managed sustainably by that sector with respect to the maintenance and protection of Kastom. Providing a competitive edge to sustainable and responsible tourism products allows sector-based leaders to move Vanuatu in a sustainable direction. Building sustainability standards into the marketing strategy is one effective way to encourage the sector.

KEY MESSAGE: Identifying and targeting tourists whose expectations, interests and travel consumption behaviours align with the vision and values of Vanuatu tourism. Linkages are strengthened to develop sustainable and responsible tourism products and experiences.

OBJECTIVES:

- Understanding of and commitment to **protecting environment and culture** are used as the foundations for a marketing strategy that celebrates what is special about Vanuatu.
- Tourism growth targets are determined through **environmental and social impact assessments** taking into consideration national and sectoral development plans and policies.
- The tourism industry in Vanuatu provides and supports **sustainable, ethical, local products**, experiences and agricultural produce.
- **Increase the linkages** between the agriculture, handicrafts and tourism sectors to increase the benefits of tourism to a broader range of stakeholders.
- **High-value and responsible tourists** are targeted and catered for through a destination marketing strategy that identifies and supports niche products and the uniqueness of each province.
- Promotion of Vanuatu and/or specific products treats both local communities and tourists **authentically and respectfully** and is accurate with regards to the values and vision for Vanuatu's tourism industry.

ACTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED:

1. Marketing Strategy

- Develop a Destination Marketing Strategy that identifies the uniqueness of each Province and how each Province differs from the main market of Efate.
- Measures are taken to ensure mass tourism segments do not compromise the quality of niche products.
- *Made in Vanuatu* branding as a policy objective in the sector is promoted and protected.
- Vanuatu as a destination is renowned for quality local sustainable and responsible tourism products that protect and celebrate Vanuatu's environment, culture and kastom.
- An incentive scheme is initiated for the purchase of responsible products and experiences.

2. Certification Programs

- Voluntary certification program for sustainable tourism sets standards for percentage of local food sourcing.
- Tourism products that support authenticity, local cultures, kastom and social protection are guaranteed support through the *Traditional Knowledge and Traditional Cultural Expression Bill 2012*.

GOAL 4

Tourism that enhances, conserves and protects the environmental and cultural resources of Vanuatu.

Vanuatu stands out in the Pacific for its terrestrial and marine biodiversity. Managing and protecting Vanuatu's ecology feeds directly into a healthy tourism sector through the provision of clean water, local food sources, disaster reduction and natural attractions.

Currently, many operators rely on a near pristine local environment for their business. An opportunity exists for NGOs, rural and urban communities to be engaged in conservation actions, financed by the tourism sector, which in turn strengthens the sector and improves customer experience. Such investments support a healthy tourism sector through the protection of key resources but also through enabling stronger links and economic opportunities for those not directly engaged in tourism.

Protected areas in Vanuatu are predominantly supported by Community Conservation Areas (CCAs) registration through the *Environmental Protection and Conservation Act [Cap 283]*. Custom tabu areas and Local Marine Management Areas (LMMAs) are also important mechanisms that can be supported by the tourism sector. Active management of protected areas and aiding custom landowners to effectively manage the conservation of key ecological sites is an opportunity for Vanuatu to work towards achieving the National Sustainable Development targets. It is recommended through cross departmental collaboration to develop Sustainable Tourism Management guidelines to be implemented alongside the Department of Environment's Community Conservation Area Management plans.

An initial step is for operators to recognise their reliance on natural resources and to identify these at time of business registration. Over time and in collaboration with custom land owners, a code of practice can be implemented that will dictate how operators are to conduct their business within protected areas or areas of ecological significance.

The positive outcomes of responsible tourism practice by operators needs to be showcased to locals and visitors, and they in turn need to be encouraged to support responsible tourism through their own actions.

KEY MESSAGE: Tourism operators recognise their reliance on natural resources and the positive outcomes of responsible tourism practice through the protection of key resources, is showcased to locals and visitors.

OBJECTIVES:

- The tourism sector actively increases **protection of key biodiversity areas**.
- The tourism sector **monitors and evaluates** its impact on unique biodiversity and cultural resources.
- **Sustainable Tourism Management Plans**, are implemented to reduce impacts and protect areas and sites of key biological, ecological and cultural significance.
- Locals and tourists are informed about successful industry and government initiatives to protect biodiversity and cultural resources.
- Tourists are encouraged to pledge to ensure responsible and ethical behaviour.

ACTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED:

1. Sustainable Tourism Management

- A register of all tourism operators use/reliance on key environmental resources is produced and updated during annual business registration. Supporting operators who are providing annual investment in environmental conservation and assisting in the protection of Vanuatu's significant biological, ecological and cultural areas.
- Sustainable Tourism Management Plans, incorporating limits of acceptable change and a code of conduct, are established to dictate how certified operators are to conduct their businesses in any CCA's, LMMA's and areas of high cultural or environmental significance.
- Legislation is introduced and enforced which allows only operators with a Sustainable Tourism Standard certification to operate in areas of high cultural or environmental significance.
- Incentives to gain Sustainable Tourism Standard accreditation are developed through marketing packages and categories in the Vanuatu Tourism Awards.
- Community-based adaptation projects are developed through collaborative partnerships between tourism operators and tourism dependent communities to reduce vulnerabilities to climate change.

2. Marketing Campaigns

- Sustainability initiatives undertaken by certified operators are marketed to attract responsible tourists.
- A communication campaign to celebrate responsible tourism practice is launched that shares good news stories with locals and tourists.
- *Responsible Visitor to Vanuatu* campaign that requires every visitor to pledge to positively impact on the natural and social environment. A code of conduct is created for tourists to ensure responsible and ethical behaviour.

GOAL 5

Sustainable and responsible tourism brings improved income and well-being for Vanuatu and its people.

The NSDP calls for a stable economy based on equitable, sustainable growth that creates jobs and income earning opportunities accessible to all people in rural and urban areas. Entrepreneurship leadership development, awareness raising among communities, education in schools, and small business capacity building are the cornerstones for disseminating the benefits of sustainable and responsible tourism to the outer islands and to Ni-Vanuatu for minimising tourism's negative impacts.

A national campaign could help build understanding about sustainable and responsible tourism and its links to other sectors and to community well-being. This could be further strengthened through education programs that build capacity and resilience among business owners/operators, area councils/secretaries, chiefs and other community leaders, empowering them to manage and grow tourism at the community and provincial level while also safeguarding the traditional economy and kastom.

Central to sustainable tourism is the concept of inter (present and future generations) and intra (people of the same generation) generational equity. This requires a strategic and ethical policy intervention through a collaborative process involving all concerned stakeholders, with a view of addressing the impacts of tourism on the economy, environment and social groups.

KEY MESSAGE: Education, awareness-raising and capacity-building for sustainable and responsible tourism that brings improved income and living standards and enhanced community well-being for Vanuatu and its people.

OBJECTIVES:

- Vanuatu's tourism sector supports **equitable growth and prosperity** while safeguarding the traditional economy
- **Investment in green infrastructure** such as: energy efficiency; waste management and water conservation, delivers improved business outcomes for tourism products.
- Vanuatu's tourism sector is **inclusive**, encouraging Ni-Vanuatu entrepreneurship.
- **Diverse niche tourism enterprises** with an increased number of Ni-Vanuatu operators.
- The **capacity** of tourism associations and provinces is improved to support Ni-Vanuatu tourism operators.

ACTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED:

1. Supporting Ni-Vanuatu Tourism SME's

- A Microfinance scheme with low interest loans, financing mechanisms or grants are made available for small to medium sized enterprises to create, enhance and extend their business initiatives, in addition to upgrading to meet both mandatory and voluntary standards.
- Small business management training is made available to local operators to encourage entrepreneurship, manage their own finances, interpretation of culture and stories for tourists to raise the standards of their infrastructure, products and services.
- Fair employment opportunities and conditions are mandatory particularly for all marginalised groups.

2. Supporting Local Communities

- Capacity building for the Department of Tourism Provincial Tourism Officers to facilitate training and awareness campaigns for tourism industry stakeholders on the principles of responsible and sustainable tourism, including Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).
- Local communities' aspirations, concerns, and satisfaction with destination management are regularly monitored, recorded and publicly reported in a timely manner.
- Product diversification, underpinned by training and capacity-building, is developed and supported in rural areas to enhance the resilience of rural populations and to strengthen inter-island trade of produce and locally made agri-products and handicrafts.

3. Sustainable and Responsible Tourism Planning

- Tourism planning and development involves local people in awareness raising and decision making and promotes joint ventures.
- Tourism demonstrates initiatives to support the updated National Energy Roadmap 2016 – 2030 (NERM) targets of 100% electricity access for off grid rural areas and 65% national renewables with 65% rural bungalow electrification by 2030 under green growth initiatives.
- Equal employment, training opportunities, occupational health and safety and fair wages are mandatory requirements for operating a tourism business in Vanuatu.

Vanuatu

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICY 2019-2030

