

# Vanuatu

## Government Policies and Programs to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor

In 1997, the Government of Vanuatu created a Comprehensive Reform Program (CRP) concentrating mainly on education.<sup>3787</sup> A major goal of the CRP program was to introduce 10 years of compulsory education for all children by the year 2010.<sup>3788</sup> UNICEF is working with the Ministry of Health, other governmental departments, NGOs, and Pacific Island Regional Organizations to address the issues of early childhood education.<sup>3789</sup> Another goal of the government is to increase access to secondary school education for students who complete primary school.<sup>3790</sup> To meet this goal the government has gained assistance from the Peace Corps in launching its “Youth with Potential” project. Peace Corps volunteers have taken the lead by developing educational curricula and teaching secondary school math, science and English.<sup>3791</sup> By the end of 2002, it is estimated that volunteers will have taught approximately 9,500 students.<sup>3792</sup>

## Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

Statistics on the number of working children in Vanuatu under age 15 are unavailable. Many children assist their parents in family-owned agricultural production. There have been no reports of trafficked, bonded, forced, or compulsory labor involving children in the Pacific island nation.<sup>3793</sup>

Access to school is limited,<sup>3794</sup> and there is no constitutional guarantee mandating that education be either compulsory or free.<sup>3795</sup> In 1998, the gross primary enrollment rate was 97.3 percent, and

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<sup>3787</sup> UNESCO, *Education for All 2000 Assessment: Country Report-Republic of Vanuatu*, prepared by Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports, pursuant to UN General Assembly Resolution 52/84, [cited December 19, 2002]; available from <http://www2.unesco.org/wef/countryreports/vanuatu/contents.html>.

<sup>3788</sup> Margaret Chung and Gerald Haberkorn, *Broadening Opportunities for Education: Pacific Human Development Report*, 1999, 44.

<sup>3789</sup> UNICEF, *Assistance to Pacific Island Countries*, [online] [cited September 18, 2002]; available from [http://www.undp.org/fj/un/UNICEF/UNICEF\\_PIC.htm](http://www.undp.org/fj/un/UNICEF/UNICEF_PIC.htm).

<sup>3790</sup> Peace Corps, *Vanuatu Assignments*, [online] [cited December 19, 2002]; available from <http://www.peacecorps.gov/countries/vanuatu/assignments.cfm>.

<sup>3791</sup> *Ibid.*, 1c.

<sup>3792</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3793</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2001: Vanuatu*, Washington, D.C., March 4, 2002, 1210-11, Sections 6d and 6f [cited December 19, 2002]; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2000/eap/index.cfm?docid=814>.

<sup>3794</sup> *Ibid.*, 1209-10, Section 5.

<sup>3795</sup> Right to Education, *Constitutional Guarantees: Vanuatu*, Right to Education, [database online] [cited January 30, 2003]; available from [http://www.right-to-education.org/content/index\\_4.html](http://www.right-to-education.org/content/index_4.html). See also Right to Education, *Gap Between Promise and Performance*, Right to Education, [database online] [cited January 30, 2003]; available from [http://www.right-to-education.org/content/index\\_4.html](http://www.right-to-education.org/content/index_4.html).

the net primary enrollment rate was 90.1 percent.<sup>3796</sup> Primary school attendance rates are unavailable for Vanuatu. While enrollment rates indicate a level of commitment to education, they do not always reflect children's participation in school.<sup>3797</sup> The educational system is complicated by the use of two official languages and over one hundred vernaculars spread out over many islands.<sup>3798</sup> A 1999 report published by the UNDP stated that 24 percent of all primary school teachers in Vanuatu are untrained, and projections have been made that at the current high growth rate of school age children, primary school enrollment will double by the year 2010.<sup>3799</sup>

## **Child Labor Laws and Enforcement**

Under the Labor Code, children below the age of 12 are prohibited from working outside family-owned operations involved in agricultural production. Children between the ages of 12 and 18 are restricted from working at night or in the shipping industry.<sup>3800</sup> Forced labor is also prohibited by law.<sup>3801</sup>

The Government of Vanuatu is not a member of the ILO, and as such has not ratified ILO Convention 138 or ILO Convention 182.<sup>3802</sup>

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<sup>3796</sup> UNESCO, *Education for All Assessments 2000* [CD-ROM], Paris, 2001.

<sup>3797</sup> For a more detailed discussion on the relationship between education statistics and work, see the preface to this report.

<sup>3798</sup> Chung and Haberkorn, *Broadening Opportunities for Education*, 42.

<sup>3799</sup> *Ibid.*, 40, 45.

<sup>3800</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Vanuatu*, 1210-11, Section 6d.

<sup>3801</sup> *Ibid.*, 1210-11, Section 6c.

<sup>3802</sup> ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, in ILOLEX, [database online] [cited September 18, 2002]; available from <http://ilolex.ilo.ch:1567/english/newratframeE.htm>.