

Vanuatu blong yu



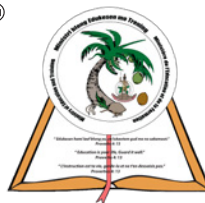
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What is democracy?

The term is derived from the Greek words *demos* ("people") and *kratos* ("rule"). It means "rule by [the] people") and it is a form of government in which the people have the authority to choose their governing legislation. Vanuatu is a representative democracy, the people elect representatives to deliberate and decide on legislature.

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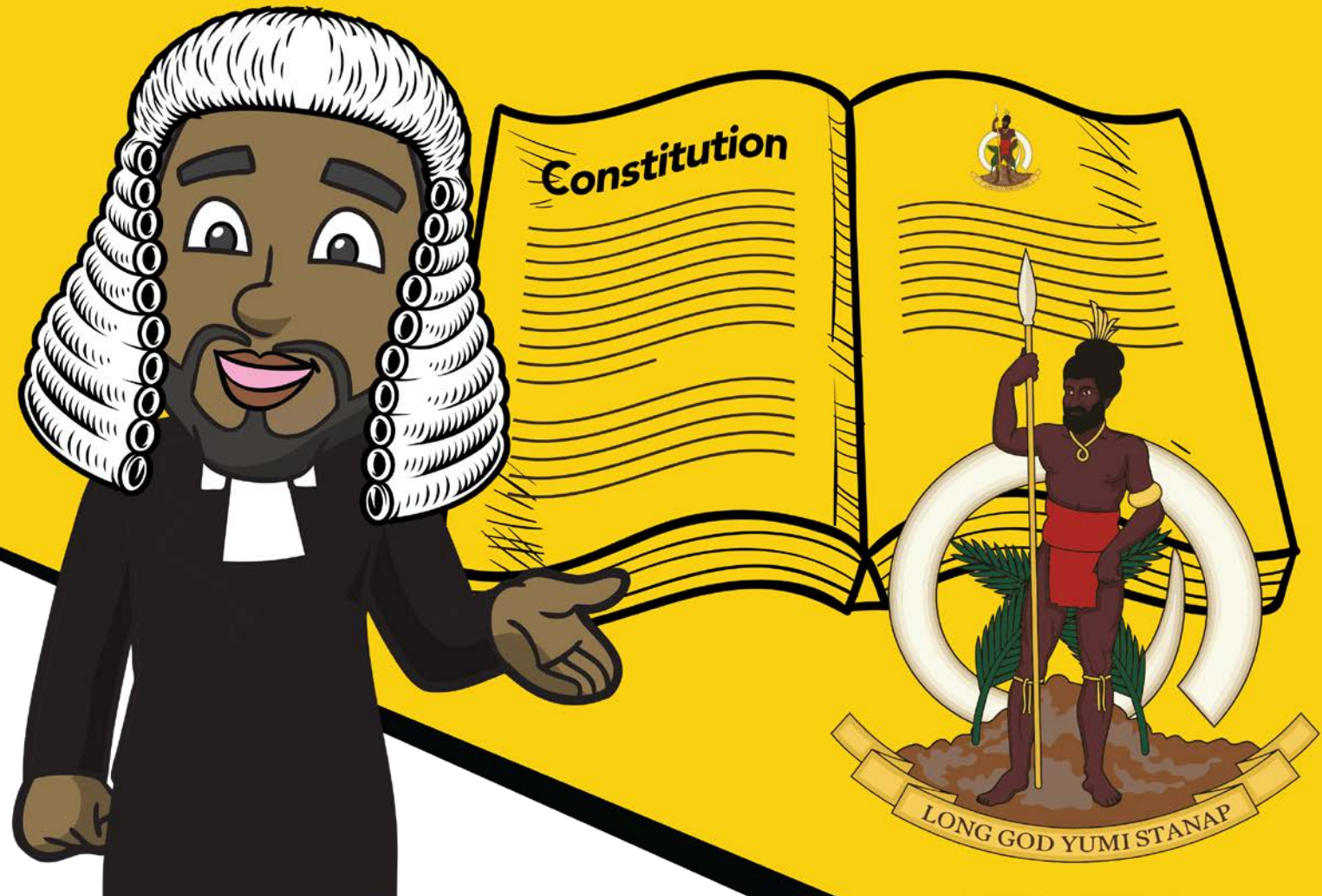
A famous president of the United States of America, Abraham Lincoln, gave the best explanation: **"A democracy is a Government of the people, by the people and for the people."**

Vanuatu is a democracy where we elect those who will represent us in Parliament.

- In Vanuatu, the members of Parliament choose the Prime Minister.
- The Government runs the country according to the Constitution.
- The Constitution is the Supreme law or Mother law for the nation.

The Constitution covers all matters relating to democracy, its institutions as well as elections. The Constitution guarantees fundamental rights and freedoms, including freedom of expression, assembly and association and participation in elections.





Vanuatu and Democracy

On 30 July 1980 Vanuatu became an independent country.

Our Constitution says: "National sovereignty belongs to the people of Vanuatu which they exercise through their elected representatives."



In Vanuatu, there are three official arms of power.



Legislature

The first arm is called the **LEGISLATURE**. These are our Members of Parliament who have the power to make the laws of the country because they have been elected by the citizens.



Judiciary

The second arm is the **JUDICIARY**. These are the courts, lawyers, magistrates and judges who interpret the laws of the country.



Executive

The third arm is called the **EXECUTIVE**. This is the arm that puts into practice the laws and policies of the government. The Executive is made up of the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers, which form the Government.

The three arms are independent of each other. One should not be more powerful than the other or try to influence the other.



Civil Society and Media

Civil Society

In addition to the three arms of government, CIVIL SOCIETY plays an important role. Civil society is made up of ordinary people working together as a group. It includes Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and associations like church organisations, groups representing women, youth, people with disabilities (PWD) and members of the private sector (businesses).

Citizens can raise their voices and become active as members of civil society. They can act together and work on issues of common interest to the people like the protection of nature and the environment and respect for human rights.

Civil society and media can help make sure that there is transparency and accountability in the government.

Media

The MEDIA (TV, radio, newspapers and social media like Facebook) has also an important role in a democratic society because the media can ask questions and inform the people of the actions of the Government.



When you read something on Social Media, be sure to check the information is correct and comes from an official source.



Civil Society and Media

Nothing
is hidden.

Transparency

TRANSPARENCY means that everything is clear and easy for others to check and understand.

Accountability

ACCOUNTABILITY means being responsible and being able to justify actions or decisions.

Civil Society can watch and check whether the government is doing good things for the citizens.

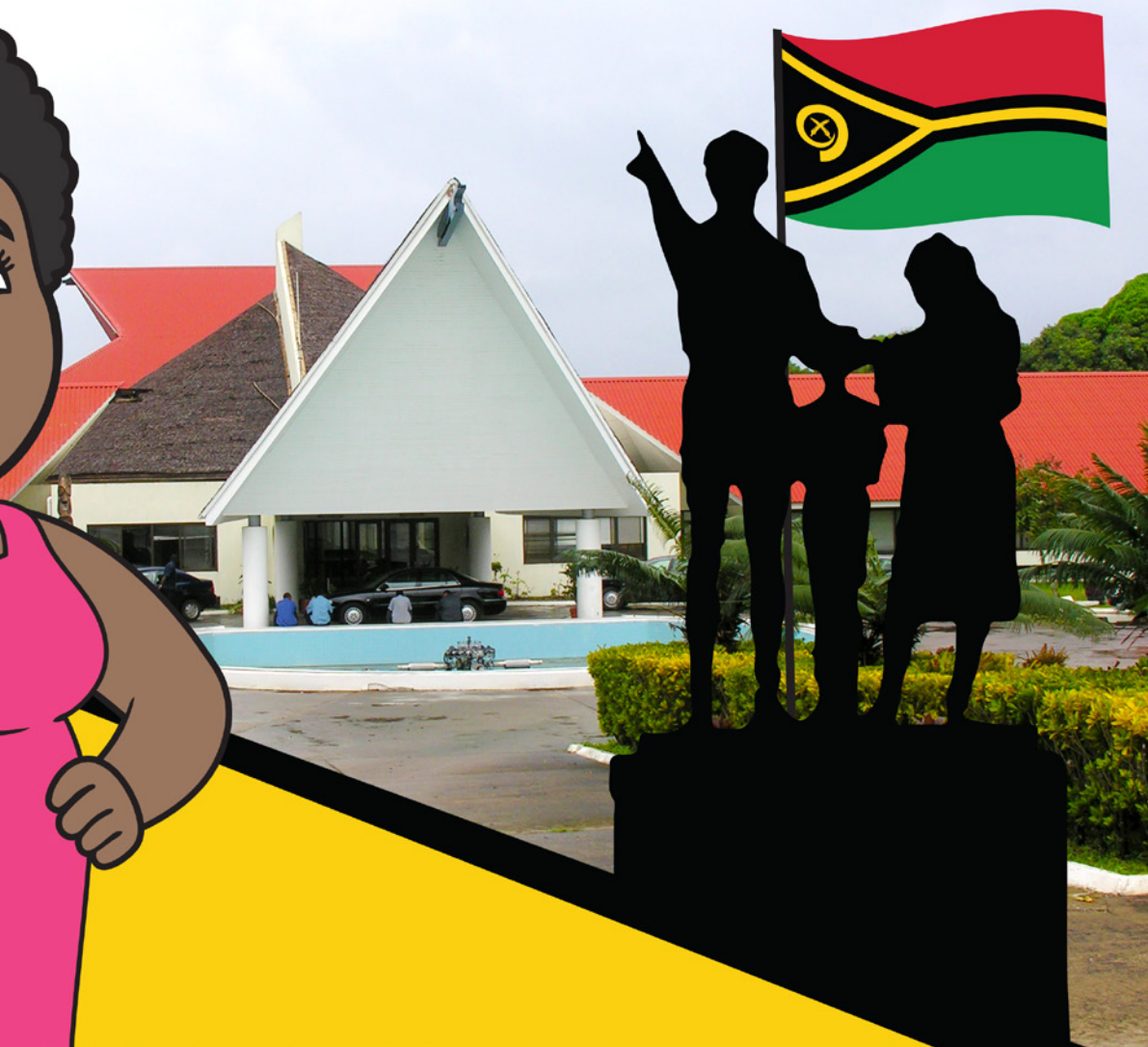
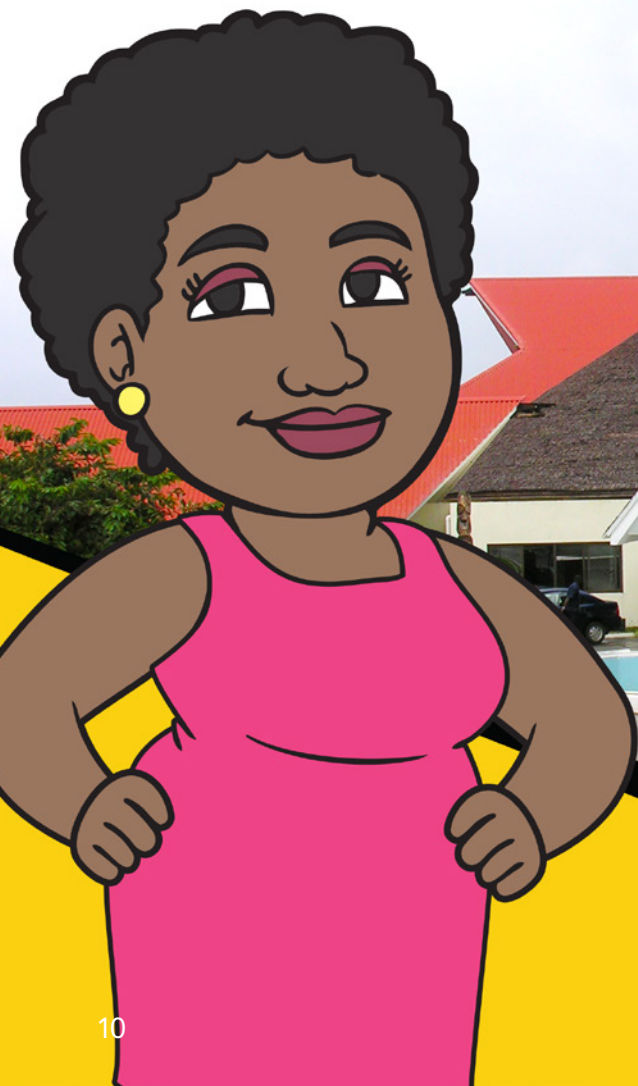
This includes for example:

- better schools
- transport
- health
- jobs
- economic opportunities.

Democracy

If both the government and the citizens are accountable for what they do, then democracy is being actively exercised in the country.





What is the Parliament?

The National Parliament of Vanuatu is made up of 52 members. They are called Members of Parliament, or MPs for short.

They become Members of Parliament when they win an election because the people have voted for them.

Each of the 52 MPs in Parliament represent the people in the 18 constituencies in Vanuatu. A constituency is an area of the country that one or more members of Parliament look after. Six constituencies have one member of Parliament (single member constituency), others have between two and seven members (multi-member constituency).

The MPs meet in the Parliament House in Port Vila. They discuss new laws and the country's development plans and make decisions about how the country should run.

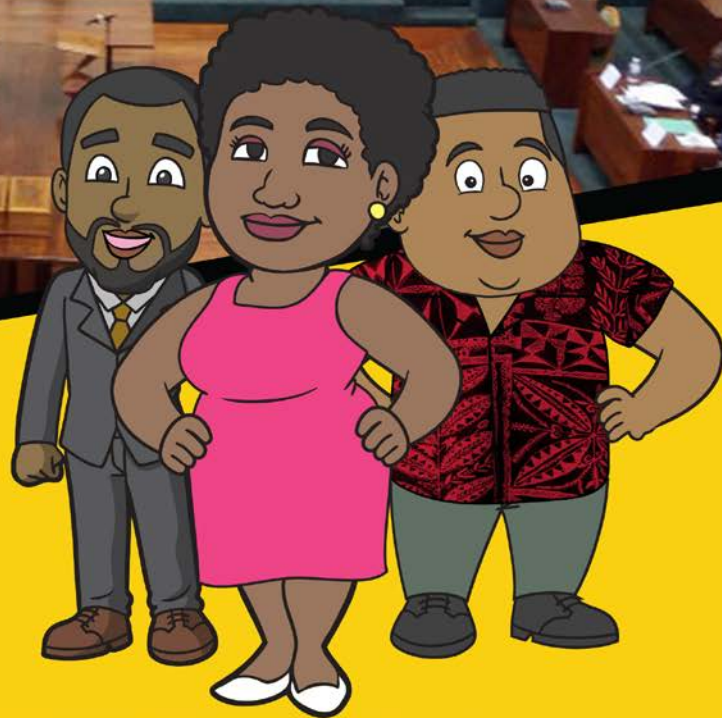
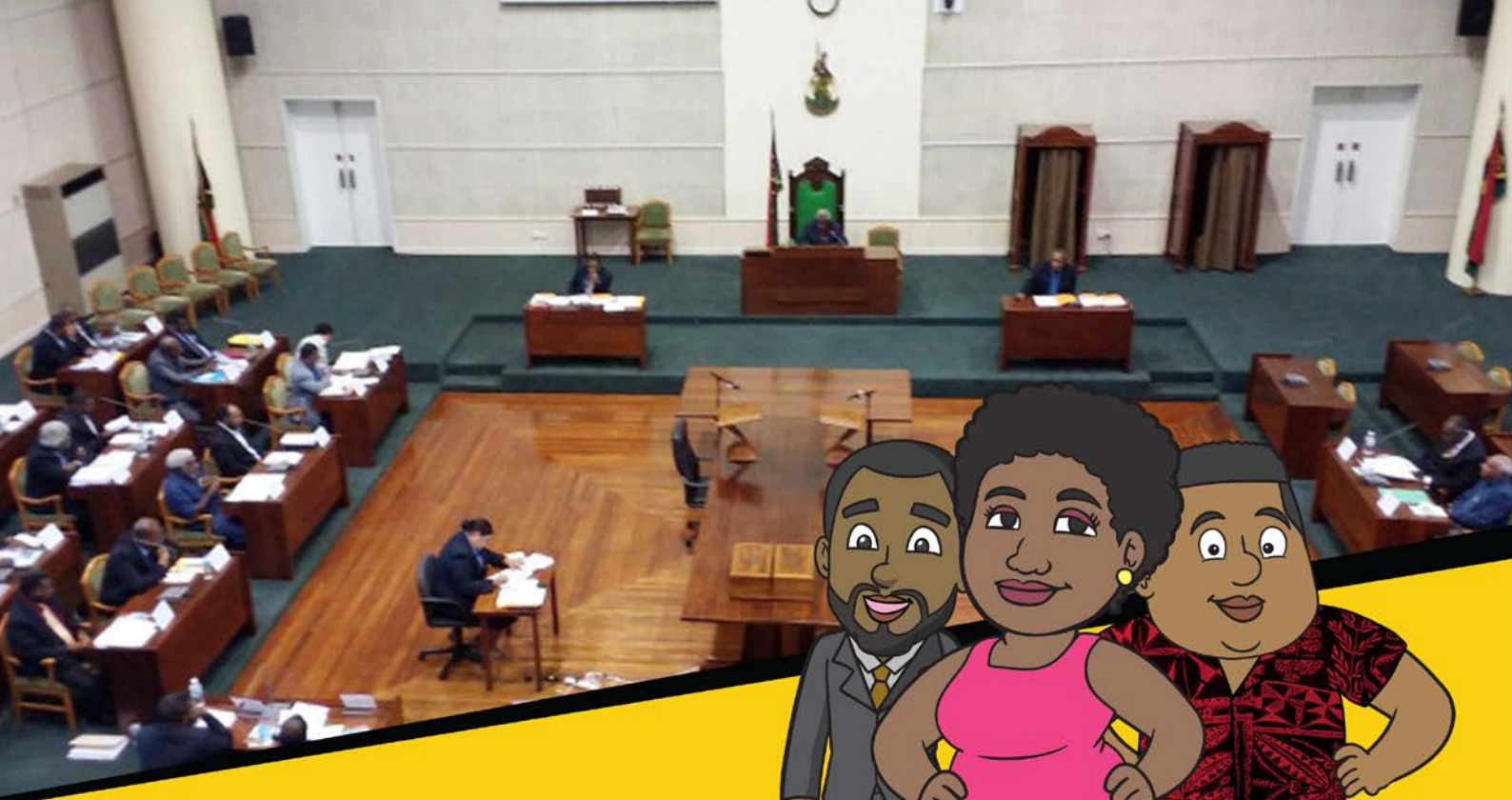
The government is formed from among elected MPs who can be appointed as Ministers.

Parliament is elected for four years. At the end of the four years from the date of its election, the Parliament is dissolved.

Elections for a new National Parliament are held within 60 days maximum after the Parliament has been dissolved.

In the meantime, the government is called "caretaker."

The caretaker government looks after the country until a new government is formed among elected MPs after a National General Election.



What is the work of a Member of Parliament?

The Members of Parliament make laws of the country. The Parliament has the power to make laws for the peace, order, and the good governing of Vanuatu.

Parliament elects the Prime Minister from among its members. Members of Parliament, along with the presidents of Provincial Government Councils, are also members of what is known as “the electoral college” which elects the President. The President serves for a five-year term.

A member of Parliament represents the people of her or his constituency. She or he should be aware of the needs and priorities of the people in the constituency.

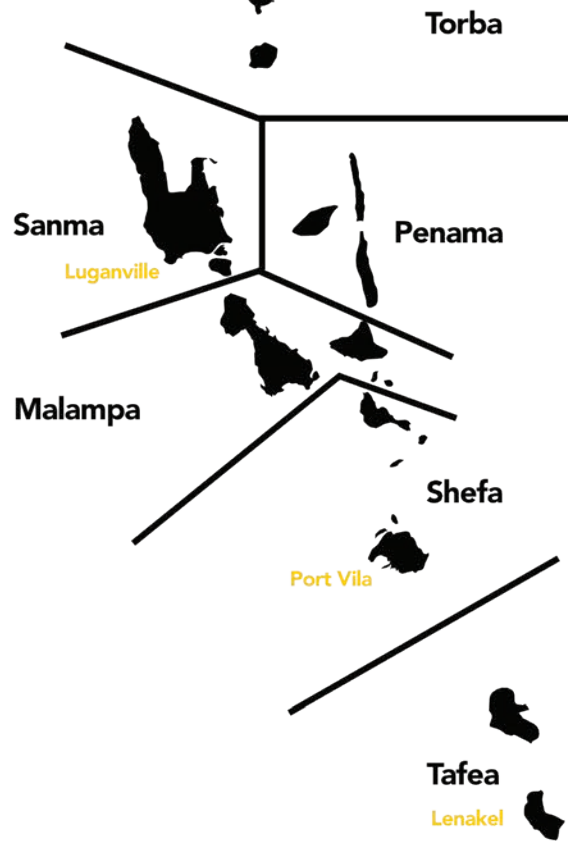
Regular meetings and discussions with the people in the constituency help the MP to know what are their most important development needs such as clinics, roads, schools, water and sanitation, jobs and income generating activities.

People have the right to ask their MP about what development plans there are for the constituency and how these will improve their lives.

If the MP is not doing what the people ask her or him to do or does not do what she or he promised, they have the chance to vote for another person in the next election.

MPs should work to provide basic services for everyone. MPs should treat all the different tribes and communities equally.





Local Government

In addition to the National Parliament, in Vanuatu we have local government structures: the Provincial and Municipal Councils. They are responsible for the good government of the Local Government area and promote the health and welfare of the people who live there. They can enact by-laws and standing orders which are subsidiary laws.

Provincial Councils

There are six provinces in Vanuatu and each has a Provincial Council:

**Malampa
Shefa**

**Penama
Tafea**

**Sanma
Torba**

The Provincial Government Councils are elected by the people for a four-year term. There are also members appointed by the Minister of Internal Affairs to represent chiefs, churches, women and youth. The Council is headed by a Chairman who is elected from among the councilors.

Municipalities

There are three municipalities:

Lenakel (Tanna)

Luganville (Espiritu Santo)

Port Vila (Efate)

Voters in Luganville and Port Vila choose their representatives in elections every four years. In Lenakel the councilors are appointed by the Minister of Internal Affairs for a four-year term. The Municipal Council is headed by a Mayor who is elected from among the councilors. There are reserved seats to ensure women representation in Luganville and Port Vila.





What is an election?

An election is a time when the people choose who will represent them. This is called voting. The Representation of the People Act (RPA) is the main electoral law in the country, although there are several others too.

In Vanuatu there are several types of elections:

- **National General Elections** when you choose your member of Parliament.
 - **Provincial Elections** to choose the members of Provincial Councils.
 - **Municipal Elections** are held in Port Vila and Luganville when the eligible inhabitants choose the members of the Municipal Councils.
 - **National Referendums** when the voters are called to approve or not a bill for an amendment of the Constitution passed by the Parliament.
-

Elections are held every four years. On election day, people go to their polling station and cast their vote for their preferred candidate. Elections are overseen by the Vanuatu Electoral Commission and are organised by the Vanuatu Electoral Office.

In Vanuatu, we also have the Malvatumauri which is the National Council of Chiefs. There are 22 chiefs in the Council who advise the government about traditions and indigenous Melanesian values.





What is Voting?

Voting means choosing who you want as your leader to represent you. Every Ni-Vanuatu citizen who is 18 and over can vote. This is your right and also your responsibility.

Before you can vote in an election, you must first register in order to be on the Electoral List. This is the list of the names of everyone who has registered to vote. You must also have a National ID Card.

Every registered voter is assigned to a Polling Station near where they live. The Polling Station is where voters go on Election day to choose who they want as a person to represent them in the National Parliament, the Provincial Council, or the Municipality.

Know the voting rules.

You can only vote on election day in your assigned Polling Station and you can only vote once.



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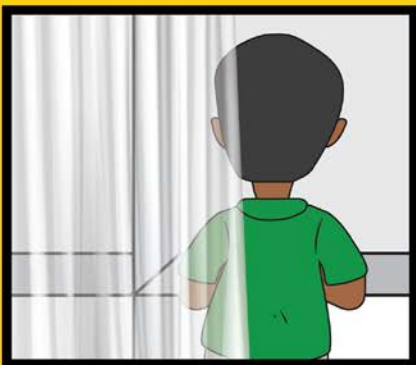
2. Givim nasional ID kad blong yu



3. Karem Balot pepa



4. Findem foto blong kandidat mo putum insaed long envelop



5. Putum vot blong yu long balot bokis



6. Makem finga long ink mo karem bak nasional kad blong yu



Your Vote

As soon as a person turns 18, they should go and register to be on the electoral roll and be able to vote in the next elections.

You can register all year around at the Vanuatu Electoral Office in Port Vila. It is also possible to register in the Provinces so make sure you find out when registration is open in your Province. However, registration closes six weeks before the election. When you turn 18 you must also make sure you have your National ID Card, as it is your identification credential for voting. This is very important for elections but also for many other things.

The vote is secret. In the Polling Station, voters go behind a voting screen so nobody can see who you are voting for. It is the right of every voter to choose who they want to vote for. You do not have to tell anyone who is your chosen candidate if you do not want to.

Your vote is your voice.

Voting is important because your vote is your voice. It is your opportunity to decide what is best for you and your community.





The main electoral offences are:

Voting more than once

Voting in a place that is not your assigned polling station

Pretending to be someone else and voting in their place

Bribery: Taking money from a candidate and promising to vote for them

Treating: Accepting gifts of food, drink or anything else in exchange for voting for a particular candidate

Making false statements about candidates

Preventing an electoral officer from doing their work

Destroying or stealing ballot papers or cards

Doing something that means voting is not secret anymore

Giving false information to the electoral authorities

Interfering with the ballot box or any other election material

Electoral Offences

There are laws, rules and regulations surrounding elections. These are important because we all want the election to be free, fair, transparent, trustworthy and peaceful. It is everyone's responsibility to obey the law and avoid doing anything illegal.

Doing something wrong is called an offence and can mean a fine or even imprisonment.



The main electoral offences are on the opposite page. There are other offences that apply to candidates and rules about what they can and cannot do. During campaign time, they can hold rallies, make posters and leaflets and other things to persuade people to vote for them. If a candidate offers money or treats in exchange for a vote or tries to frighten or intimidate voters, this is an offence.

Complaints

It is the right of any citizen to report any electoral offence by lodging a case through the normal courts, no later than 21 days from the date the alleged offence took place.

Petitions

It is the right of any candidate or citizen to lodge an electoral petition challenging the results of elections. The electoral petitions must be presented within 21 days of the publication in the official Gazette of the results of the election. Petitions are handled directly by the Supreme Court.



What is a candidate, a programme and an electoral campaign?

Candidates

A **candidate** is a woman or a man who wants to represent the people in the constituency and thinks they can do good things for them.

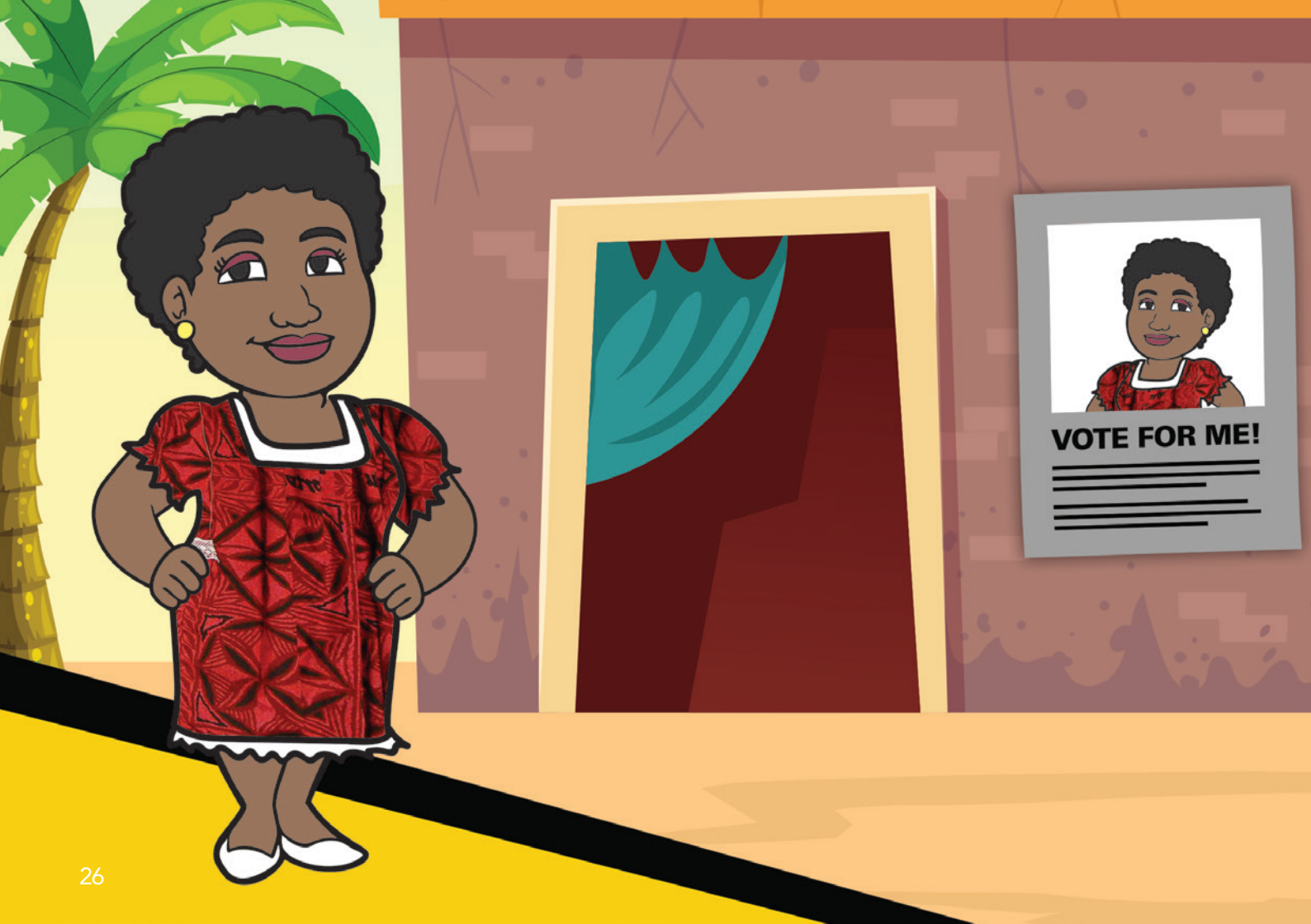
Any Ni-Vanuatu citizen who is a registered voter can become a candidate as long as she or he is 25 years of age for Parliament and 21 for Local Councils at the time of the nominations period. The nominations period is when people apply to become a candidate in an election.

Programmes

A candidate tells voters what her or his vision is for the community and what plans they have for development. A candidate should explain to the people what she or he will do to help the community and her/his vision for the country. This is called the **programme**.

Any Ni-Vanuatu citizen who is a registered voter can become a candidate as long as she or he is 25 years of age for Parliament and 21 for Local Councils at the time of the nominations period.





What is a candidate, a programme and an electoral campaign?

Electoral Campaign

Once the Election Commission sets the date of the election, the **electoral campaign** starts 14 days before the E-day. During the electoral campaign the candidates organize rallies and speeches. They advertise in newspapers, radio and TV and explain why people should vote for them. They also hand out campaign materials such as posters, leaflets and T-shirts.

The campaign ends 48 hours before election day. On election day, after everyone has voted, the ballot papers are counted and the candidate who has the most votes wins. In a General Election, the candidate who wins is elected and becomes your Member of Parliament for the next four years.

People should ask the candidates questions to make sure the person they vote for is someone who will work for the best common interest of the constituency and the country, not just respond to the needs of individual people.

Receiving treats or accepting money in exchange for your vote is wrong. If a candidate threatens or frightens voters, this is also wrong. These are called election offenses and can be punished by fines and even prison.



Our Constitution says:

"All persons are entitled to the following fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual without discrimination on the grounds of race, place of origin, religious or traditional beliefs, political opinions, language or sex but subject to respect for the rights and freedoms of others and to the legitimate public interest in defence, safety, public order, welfare and health."



All citizens are equal

All citizens of Vanuatu are equal no matter if they are a man or a woman, old or young, healthy or disabled, from the city or the islands, from one tribe or another, educated or not.

If you know someone who is disabled, help them get registered to vote and help them go to the Polling Station on Election day. If someone cannot move, or is sick, a registered voter can vote in their place. This is called a proxy. You must apply for a proxy vote before the election, so be prepared.

Everybody has the right to know.

If you know anyone in your family or community who cannot read, help them by reading out this book to them.

Youth

Our youth also has many good ideas about how to improve things for the future of the country. We need young voices in the Parliament, in the Provincial Councils and the Municipalities as well. Young people must make sure they vote on election day to make sure the voice of youth is heard in politics.





All citizens are equal

Women

In Vanuatu, we have very few women in our Parliament, Local Councils or Government. Half of the population is made up of women. Vanuatu has many hard working talented and professional women. Even though it is harder for a woman, we have many qualified ladies who could also do a great job of representing their community and fighting to improve living conditions.

Politics is for everyone, not just men.

Women especially must vote because they also know what the community needs. Our women know what the children of Vanuatu need for the future. Women care about the future of the children. Our women have a lot to contribute to the development of our country.



All around the world, women are becoming more confident and people are realising women make good leaders too. We have many great women and we need their voices in the Parliament, the Provincial Councils and the Municipalities.

I vote because



Lehina John, 36 from Okapa, Santo

"I vote because I want the people who I vote for to bring my voice, my community's voice and that of various organization including youths, women and the church's to the Provincial government or Parliament so that they can help us."



I vote because



Joseph Lagoiala, 54, from Pentacost, residing in Freshwota, unemployed

"It is very important to vote. Because of your vote, you are part of any development that the future government will make because you elected someone into the Parliament. If you did not vote you do not have a representative in the Parliament because you did not exercise your constitutional right to elect somebody that you trust to go into Parliament.

It is also important to vote so we can choose the right person who can make new laws to help our country now and in the future. Many times we complain, but most of the people who complain did not vote and just complain."

Vot blong yu

I vote because



**Ross Terry, 36, housewife from
Matanvath / North West Malakula**

"I want the government to reduce the school fees because nowadays life is not easy, and there are many parents out there who are working full time jobs while others who are unemployed.

It is important for everyone to vote because as citizens of Vanuatu, we have the right to vote."



I vote because



Douglas Tamara, 43, from Nguna/Shefa residing in Switi works for Transparency Vanuatu

"In Vanuatu, we have the privilege of choosing a leader to represent us in Parliament and make decisions that will support the lives of people in our country. Why is it important to participate? If you do not participate or vote you do not have a chance to raise your voice. Your voice cannot be heard. You have a concern but will not be able to raise it with any of the members in Parliament or any of your representatives.

Most people complain about services. If you are one of the citizens who never vote but still complain because of the lack of service delivery, you will not be able to access any of it because you did not choose a representative to talk on your behalf.

For example, when you want a development and you have a vision, the only way it can work out is when you choose a candidate and discuss with them so that they can facilitate things and make sure your ideas can come through so we can see the development and services materialize in the community.

I want us to continue to work together and continue to spread information and raise awareness so that people can understand why it is important to participate, especially the youth that have not voted yet. "

Vot blong yu

I vote because



Jessica Tasale, 30, pregnant lady from Nguna / Efate

"I would like to see that the elected leaders give opportunities to local people and Vanuatu citizens to establish businesses, because currently, most of the businesses operating in the country are owned by foreigners.

It is important to vote because only through your vote can you choose leaders who will support your decisions and raise whatever developments that you want in the community to the Parliament, such as road access and kindergartens."



I vote because



Waven Arnhambat, 26, Graduate Student USP FIJI from North West Malekula

"It is important for everyone to vote because this is where everyone can raise their concerns at the national level through their elected representatives in the Parliament. If you do not vote, you cannot raise your concerns because you did not contribute in any way during the election. The elected MP represents your voice at the national level. When you vote it means you have the power to raise your concern or ideas to the national level for consideration.

One of the changes I want to see is that the Government should create more job opportunities for Ni Vanuatu citizens."

Vot blong yu

I vote because



**Merelyn Tusai, 23, Student Nurse
Vila Central Hospital, originally from
Malekula**

"I would like to see that when they are in Parliament and government, the MPs we elected address the concerns of their voters. For example, I want the Minister of Health to defend the rights of employees working in the health sector.

It is important to vote because it is good that each individual practices their right to vote. Through our vote we are the ones bringing our voice into the Parliament. MPs then elect the Prime Minister."



Vot blong yu Fiuja blong yu Vanuatu blong yu

