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# Vanuatu's Exciting & Challenging Universal Access Provision Initiatives

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The Government  
of The Republic  
of Vanuatu

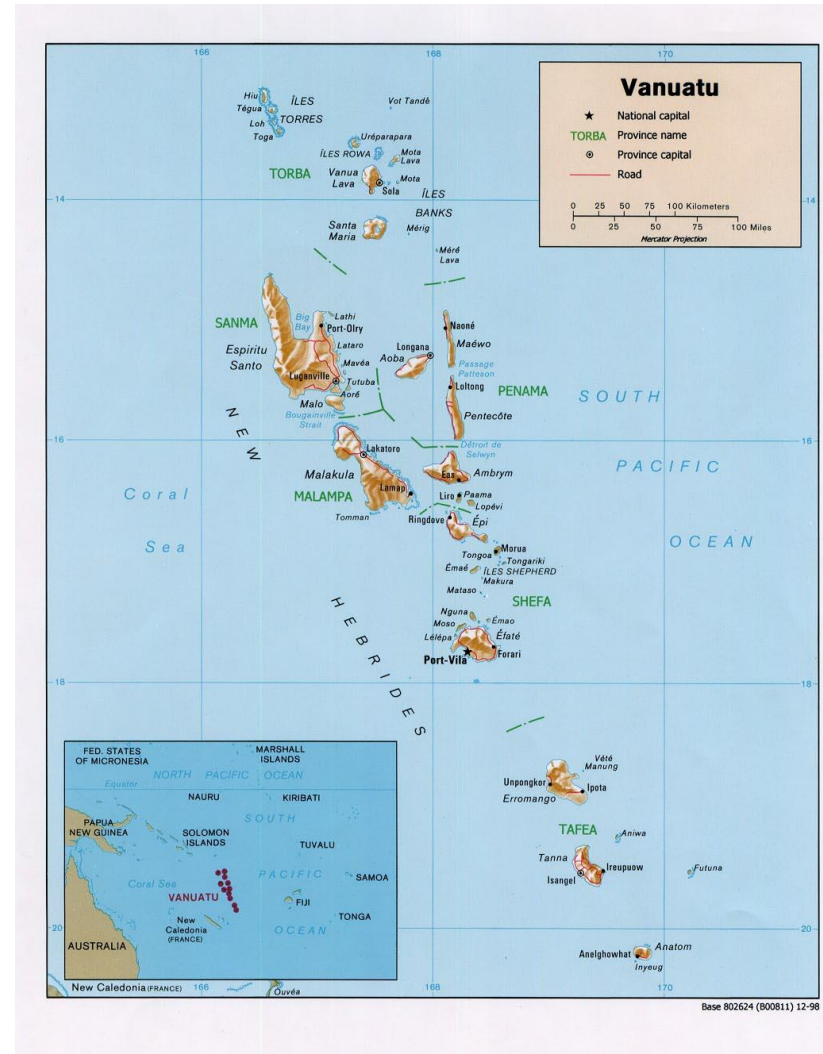


Telecommunications &  
Radiocommunications  
Regulator

# About Vanuatu

- Archipelago 83 islands: 63 inhabited
- Total Land Area 4720 square meters
- 75% Living in Rural Areas, 25% in Urban Areas
- Total Population 234,023\* (estimated 263, 000)
- Official Language English, French & Bislama (Pidgin English)
- 160+ Local languages & cultures
- GDP US\$ 828 million
- Per capita US\$4,800 (164<sup>th</sup> in world)

\* As per 2009 National Census



# Universal Access Framework

- Millennium Development Goals – set by UN
- Government's Priority Action Agenda (PAA) 2006 – 2015
- Three Government Policies developed and approved by COM in November 2013
  - National ICT Policy
  - Universal Access Policy (UAP)
  - National Cyber Security Policy
- The Act & UAP Fund: Agreement between Australian AID, OGCIO & TRR for utilization of UAP Fund.
- TRR is implementing the policy, manages universal access provision & administers the UAP Fund



# Universal Access Policy (1)

**Is aimed at reaching the last mile: unserved & underserved currently not available from current telecommunications operators**

**Challenge exists in delivering these services to rural and remote parts of Vanuatu considering that Vanuatu is made up of 63 inhabited islands**

**A vast majority of population must walk to specific locations (into the sea, up hills) and stay there – well away from their village - just to be able to make/receive calls**

*© nongu photos*



# Universal Access Policy (2)

- Developed by the Government of Vanuatu (GOV), under the Telecommunications & Radiocommunications Regulation Act 2009 (the Act), after in-depth, lengthy and comprehensive policy consultation
- Policy has a ‘Pay’ (collect a levy) or ‘Play’ (agree with operators on an approach that will achieve Policy objectives) approach
- The Act provides for the Regulator to make and finalize contracts on behalf of the Government, for subsidies of telecom services to UAP areas



# Universal Access Policy (3)

- The Policy gives TRR considerable powers as UAP implementing agency
- Within 4 months, TRR must enter into agreements with operators (Play approach) OR make alternative decisions
- TRR can issue Decisions, Orders, Regulations, amend licenses, etc to achieve desired outcomes
- Every 6 months TRR must report to Minister on progress
- TRR has provided 2 In-Confidence Reports to the Minister – 4 months deliverable was too tight
- TRR is developing a public Report and will do so regularly for stakeholder awareness



# Universal Access Policy

## Implementation – in action <sup>(1)</sup>

- The policy is innovative, powerful & visionary
- Has already gained traction, commitment & support
- Implementation plans developed
- TRR negotiating with industry “players” & “payers”
- Has some critics (as expected) through pockets of discontent & criticism – of both GOV & TRR
- Some minor setbacks – now we are through those – to balance the significant progress made to date since November 2013
- The 2 key operators Digicel & TVL fully support UAP & have committed as “Players”



# Universal Access Policy

## Implementation – in action (2)

- Eagerly awaited & supported by rural & remote communities, business, consumers & stakeholders
- Is a leader in the Pacific & many other countries
- Could become a benchmark for others
- *Already immediately successful* with many millions of USD committed to achieve willing rollout by Digicel & TVL & without major resistance
- “Payers” will assist Digicel & TVL (& GOV & TRR) to meet all UAP requirements & deliverables
- “Players” can see opportunities – not burden
- Combined approach being taken – all will contribute to achieve the 98% goal – and we may achieve more!



# UAP Fund under the Act

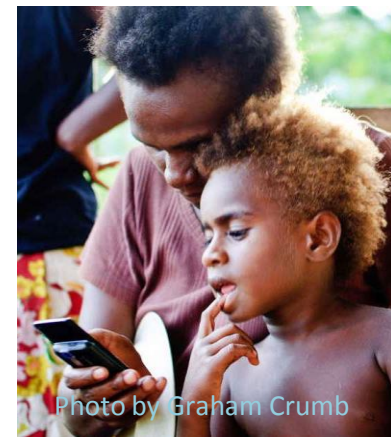


Photo by Graham Crumb

- Trust fund set up by the Minister for UAP use
- Administered by TRR as trustee
- Apart from any Licensee's levy, any entity can contribute to the UAP Fund
- Currently UAP Fund contains Aust'n Aid & TRR funding
- TRR can levy licensees up to 4% of net revenue.
- TRR advises Industry annually of its UAP levy intentions
- Levy applies annually from 1<sup>st</sup> of July to 30<sup>th</sup> June of the forthcoming year & goes into UAP Fund
- To date TRR has estimated a levy each year but has not levied BUT TRR is levying 4% this year (now) because of GOV UA Policy: "Payers"



# UAP Targets

- By 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2018, 98% of the population must have access to voice, narrowband and broadband internet services
- Broadband internet speeds of 21Mbps download and 12Mbps upload
- These services must be in place at all schools, health facilities and public offices (the communities)
- TRR has major role to specify QOS, measure & confirm coverage, & implement & monitor the Policy
- TRR can levy a fee up to 4% on all “payer” operators if they do not wish to “play” AND HAS for 2014 & is likely to do so for coming years to achieve UAP goals



# What UAP will achieve? <sup>(1)</sup>

- Digital divide will be bridged through UAP
- Rural & remote areas will have same access to, & provision & use of, services as towns (Port Vila & Luganville)
- Access to ICTs in schools: Focus on education
- University degrees – online – for rural & remote areas
- No discrimination & lesser need to travel
- Fit with GOV On-line Policy & Connectivity Goal
- Perfect fit, match with & great support to Vanuatu's Vision of: "An educated, healthy, wealthy Vanuatu"
- Assists keeping rural & remote communities together, preserves Vanuatu's culture & ideology



# What UAP will achieve? (2)

- ICT access to Vanuatu citizens & residents in general, will be radically expanded
- ICTs will transform government services & public administration
- ICT's will supercharge advance in all areas related to the socio-economic development of the country
- Promotes creative collaboration & action of public & private entities, academia, civil society & the public in general through a shared vision & platform for multi-stakeholder & multi-sector coordination & collaboration in conjunction with the National ICT Policy



# Vital Statistics

- Voice & SMS population coverage is currently estimated to be around 92%.
- Internet Usage nationally is very low. 2009 Census report found: 6.7% of population uses internet (five times more in urban areas than rural)
- Internet subscriptions now 15 - 16%, but subscriptions remain very low; particularly in rural & remote areas
- Digital Divide gap must be closed – Government's UAP is intended to overcome this challenge – otherwise gap widens even more
- Broadband penetration is lagging and needs an impetus – the UAP is the stimulus tonic!



# Where are we today? <sup>(1)</sup>

- Submarine cable hit our shores in January 2014
- All “key” operators have now connected to the submarine cable
- UAP is in place & TRR is managing its implementation
- Additional 6 % to achieve to 98% target
- Major unserved areas identified using TRR’s Global Information System (GIS) database
- GIS includes coordinates of all operators current & proposed new towers, together with coordinates of all Schools, Hospitals, GOV buildings, etc – vital information!
- GIS information obtained on a voluntary basis & is now the key UAP metric & implementation reference tool



# Where are we today? (2)

- An exciting time for broadband users in Port Vila with increased access to & use of broadband services - particularly mobile broadband
- Prices down & speeds up
- Variety of choice & cost of access to broadband internet services
- Development of other UA initiatives to drive demand & assist & contribute to achievement of 98% population coverage goal – fully coordinated & integrated approach
- (Many) meetings with operators & key stakeholders have occurred – encouraging licensees to submit indicative implementation plans



# Players & Payers

- “Players” & “Payers determined”
- “Players” will rollout services to identified unserved areas at their own cost, to meet their UAP obligations under their licenses and the Telecommunications Act.
- Licensees who are not “playing” are “paying”; invoices just sent out: 4% levy set
- All levies paid into the UAP Fund
- TRR conducted an audit & review of licensees with zero net revenue. Those licensees were cautioned that trend of zero revenue may lead to revocation
- TRR has revoked 4 licences and 2 more revocations are imminent
- All licencees must contribute to achievement of GOV’s UAP goals



# Other UA Initiatives

- Three grant programs were developed; 2 of which are directly tied to our Nation's schools:

(i) CLICC (Computer Lab & Internet Community Center) - 15

(i) Tablets for Students - 1000

(ii) Community Internet cafes - 10

- APT Telecentre Project at 3 rural locations

- E-Government Network connecting public offices throughout Vanuatu

- Other UAP indicatives



# How to achieve this?

- Cooperative working with operators, stakeholders and ALL other relevant parties is TRR's methodology
- Rollout out of services to unserved and underserved areas by service providers, the “players”
- Collect levy into the UAP Fund to rollout services from the “payers” to compliment & contribute to the rollout of the “players”
- Connecting Government & public offices through the E-Gov network
- Deployment of other UA initiatives to drive demand and add to achieving overall population coverage & stimulate service take up – last slide is a good example of that & more to come



# Expected Outcomes

- Increased ICT usage in schools & communities will drive demand and assist in widened education
- Improved use of ICT's, particularly mobile broadband, will greatly contribute to Vanuatu's economy & growth
- Connecting those that do not currently have access to existing services will derive social & economic value & benefit & bridge the current digital divide gap – 'equality'
- By January 2018, 98% of Vanuatu's population will have access to not just mobile voice but also broadband services – particularly the internet
- Increased consumer benefits for rural & remote users: faster speeds & lower costs, & enhanced products & services, with educational, medical & social benefits
- Advanced business activities through access to ICT's



**TRR**

Telecommunication &  
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# If you are interested?

If you wish, I can explain more about Vanuatu's exciting & challenging Universal Access Provision Initiatives; e.g:

- Why we did not UAP levy until this year?
- Why we are confident of UAP success & that TRR will be able to fulfil its obligations to GOV & enable UAP objectives & goals to be delivered on time?
- How/why did the operators come on board?
- What is *really* in it for them?
- How will we *actually* achieve all required targets?
- Any other question you wish to ask me?

