



VANUATU

Country Pathway

Sustainable Tourism Enhancement in the Pacific (STEP)

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ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
APTC	Australia Pacific Training Coalition
CBTE	Community-Based Tourism Enterprise
CCAs	Community Conservation Areas
CE	Circular Economy
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
ECSA	Culturally Sensitive Area
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GSTC	Global Sustainable Tourism Council
HBDP	Handicraft Business Development Program
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IMF	International Monetary Fund

NEMP	Vanuatu National Electrification Master Plan
NEPIP	National Environmental Policy and Implementation Plan
NERM	National Energy Road Map
NTO	National Tourism Organisation
PICs	Pacific Island Countries
PPD	Public-Private Dialogue
PSDI	Pacific Private Sector Development Initiative
PSTI	Pacific Sustainable Tourism Indicators
PSTPF	Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework
PSTS	Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standard
PTSS	Pacific Tourism Statistics Strategy
SDGs	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small Island Developing State
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
SPC	The Pacific Community
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
SPTO	Pacific Tourism Organisation
STEP	STEP Project Consultations
SUP	Single-use plastics
T MDF	Tourism Marketing Development Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
USP	University of the South Pacific
VHRA	Vanuatu Hotels and Resorts Association
VQA	Vanuatu Qualifications Authority
VRWMA	Waste Management Association
VSOA	Vanuatu Scuba Operators Association
VSP	Vanuatu Skills Partnership
VSTP	Vanuatu Sustainable Tourism Policy
VSTS	Vanuatu Sustainable Tourism Strategy
VTO	Vanuatu Tourism Office
VTOA	Vanuatu Tourism Operators Association
VTOMS	Vanuatu Tourism Operator Minimum Standards
VTPAP	Vanuatu Tourism Permit and Accreditation Program
VTPCS	Vanuatu Tourism Product Classification System
WB	World Bank

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Vanuatu has established a strong national commitment to sustainable tourism, guided by the Vanuatu Sustainable Tourism Policy (VSTP) 2019–2030 and the Sustainable Tourism Strategy (VSTS) 2021–2025. These frameworks articulate a vision for a high-value, low-impact tourist economy that preserves cultural heritage, protects fragile island ecosystems, and spreads tourism benefits more equitably across communities and provinces. Instruments such as the Vanuatu Tourism Permit and Accreditation Program (VTPAP) and the Tourism Operator Minimum Standards (VTOMS) provide an important regulatory foundation but need updating to fully integrate sustainability criteria.

However, Vanuatu's transition is constrained by persistent challenges, including fragmented governance, limited enforcement capacity at provincial level, weak industry representation, and gaps in monitoring systems that reduce policy effectiveness. Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and community-based tourism enterprises (CBTEs), which make up the majority of the sector, face structural barriers including limited access to finance, high energy and transport costs, underdeveloped waste and water infrastructure, and fragile market linkages. These challenges limit their ability to scale, formalise, and participate in a sustainable visitor economy.

The Sustainable Tourism Enhancement in the Pacific (STEP) Project, implemented as part of the EU SWITCH-Asia Pacific Policy Support Component, offers a strategic framework to advance sustainable tourism practices tailored specifically for Pacific Island nations, including Vanuatu. Building on the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework (PSTPF) and the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standards (PSTS), the STEP initiative places a strong focus on Circular Economy (CE) and Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) approaches.

The STEP initiative seeks to examine and address how resource use – such as energy, materials, and water – affects and is affected by every stage of the tourism supply chain, from sourcing and procurement to service delivery and waste management. By focusing on these linkages, the project aims to reduce negative environmental impacts and promote more efficient, circular resource flows within the sector. The integration of 3R and CE principles is recognised as essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), advancing the 2050 Strategies for the Blue Pacific Continent, and contributing to the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS).

The Vanuatu Country Pathway seeks to accelerate the uptake of CE and SCP practices in the tourism sector by addressing two central questions:

- How are CE and SCP principles currently reflected in Vanuatu's VSTP, VSTS and other policies, and what opportunities exist to mainstream and consolidate them across governance and implementation systems?
- How can national tourism standards for Vanuatu (VTPAP and VTOMS) be developed and aligned with the PSTS to support effective adoption of CE and SCP practices at scale?

The analysis confirms that while policy ambition is strong, practical uptake of CE and SCP remains limited. Gaps include weak integration of sustainability into standards and licensing, limited adoption of sustainable procurement, reliance on imports and fossil fuels, inadequate waste management systems, and uneven data collection and monitoring. These gaps highlight the limited adoption of CE and SCP practices across the tourism system, from resource use (energy, water, and materials) to procurement, service delivery, and waste management. Addressing them will require enforceable standards, stronger policy coherence, value-chain interventions, incentives for sustainable investment, and tools tailored for MSMEs and communities.

To put CE and SCP into operation and accelerate progress toward an inclusive, resilient, and low-carbon visitor economy, seven priority interventions have been identified:

- Embed CE and SCP in national tourism policy and other relevant policies – strengthen institutional capacity, legal frameworks, and monitoring systems to integrate sustainability across governance
- Developing national sustainable tourism standards – revise and institutionalise VTPAP and VTOMS to embed sustainability, improve compliance, and align with PSTS

- Implementing a Single Use Plastics Toolkit – adapt and integrate the regional SPREP/SPTO toolkit into VTOMS and operator training to reduce plastic waste
- Strengthening sustainable supply chains and aggregator hubs – connect producers and service providers with the tourism sector to reduce imports, cut waste, and expand provincial market access
- Promoting farm-to-table procurement and traceability schemes – link farmers and agribusinesses to hotels and resorts through structured procurement and traceability systems
- Developing sustainable and climate-resilient accommodation guidelines – embed low-carbon, climate-smart design principles in tourism infrastructure
- Revitalising traditional and sustainable building techniques – integrate kastom knowledge and ecological practices into tourism construction, showcasing Vanuatu’s cultural identity while enhancing resilience

These interventions are closely aligned with the VSTP and VSTS. At the policy level, they support governance reform, strengthen institutional coherence, and integrate sustainability into law, standards, and monitoring systems. At the enterprise level, they provide practical tools and pathways for MSMEs and communities to adopt circular practices, improve service quality, and access new markets.

The Country Pathway translates Vanuatu’s policy vision into practical action, strengthening governance and monitoring, reducing reliance on imports, supporting MSMEs and communities to formalise and grow, embedding cultural heritage in tourism development, and building climate-resilient infrastructure. In so doing, Vanuatu will be positioned as a trusted and responsible tourism destination, contributing to a more resilient Pacific and continuing to show leadership in sustainable tourism.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Tourism Context

Vanuatu is a culturally rich, geographically dispersed, and environmentally vulnerable small island developing state (SIDS) in the South Pacific. Comprising 83 islands, the nation is home to a population of over 320,000, the majority of whom reside in rural areas and depend on subsistence agriculture, artisanal fishing, and informal economic activity. Urban centres such as Port Vila and Luganville function as key economic and tourism hubs, concentrating infrastructure, employment, and services. Vanuatu's deep cultural diversity, with more than 100 indigenous languages, underpins its tourism identity and is formally recognised in national policies as a foundation for sustainable development and inclusive growth (Government of Vanuatu (GoV), Government of Vanuatu (GoV) 2016a; Government of Vanuatu (GoV), 2019; Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), 2023).

The country's position on the Pacific Ring of Fire makes it one of the most disaster-prone nations globally, subject to frequent cyclones, earthquakes, tsunamis, and volcanic eruptions. This high exposure has elevated the urgency for disaster preparedness and climate-resilient infrastructure, particularly for the tourism sector, which is highly sensitive to external shocks (World Bank (WB) 2024; Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), 2021).

Economically, Vanuatu remains highly aid-dependent and exposed to systemic vulnerabilities resulting from its small domestic market, dispersed geography, and reliance on a limited export base. Agriculture continues to provide employment for the majority, but productivity is severely constrained by the effects of climate-related events. At the same time, the urban-based services sector is growing in importance, driven by retail, finance, public administration, and donor-funded programmes. Foreign direct investment remains modest but targeted, while remittances from seasonal workers in Australia and New Zealand play a stabilising role in household incomes and consumption (Asian Development Bank (ADB), 2023; International Monetary Fund (IMF), n.d.; Lowy Institute, n.d.)

Tourism, while not the largest contributor to GDP, plays a critical role in employment, foreign exchange earnings, and export diversification. In 2023, tourism directly employed over 22,900 people, making up 26.4% of national employment, and contributing an estimated 4.8% to GDP, or USD 46.6 million (WB, 2024; Government of Vanuatu (GoV), 2021a). The national tourism vision is shaped by a strong policy foundation, including the Vanuatu Sustainable Tourism Policy 2019–2030 (GoV, 2019) along with the Vanuatu Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2021–2025 (Government of Vanuatu, 2021b). These documents promote a high-value, low-impact tourism model focused on safeguarding natural and cultural assets while spreading benefits more equitably through diversification into eco-tourism, agritourism, and cultural heritage experiences (GoV, 2019a; GoV, 2021b).

Recent shocks, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2024 collapse of Air Vanuatu, and successive climate-related disasters, have exposed structural fragilities in the tourism value chain, from transport to workforce stability. In response, the government has implemented policy measures aimed at supporting MSMEs, increasing access to concessional finance, and strengthening crisis preparedness (ADB, 2023; IMF, n.d.). Recovery efforts are now also targeting longer-term transformation through digital innovation, infrastructure upgrades, and climate-smart investment.

Vanuatu's pathway forward is centred on systemic resilience and inclusive tourism. Continued focus on sustainable enterprise development, skill-building, and community-based tourism, supported by regional partnerships and development finance, will be essential to enable the country to transition toward a circular and climate-resilient visitor economy (SPREP, 2023; ADB, 2023; Pacific Private Sector Development Initiative (PPSDI), 2021).

1.2. Regional Tourism Policy Context

1.2.1. Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework

The Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework (PSTPF), developed by the Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO) and endorsed by Pacific Tourism Ministers in 2021, provides the strategic foundation for sustainable tourism across the region. The Framework guides tourism development in line with the Pacific's unique values, cultures, and ecosystems, emphasises reducing environmental impact, empowering local communities, and promoting regenerative practices. These goals directly support the Sustainable Development Goals including SDG 12 by promoting sustainable consumption and production. It advocates for circular economy models, resource efficiency, and waste reduction.

The PSTPF, endorsed by Pacific Tourism Ministers in 2021, explicitly aims to reduce environmental impact, empower local communities, and promote regenerative practices - objectives that directly support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 12 on responsible consumption and production.

By advocating for circular economy principles, resource efficiency, and waste reduction, the Framework provides a clear pathway for Pacific nations to transition from linear tourism models to regenerative systems that keep resources in use, minimise waste, and restore natural ecosystems. (Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO), 2021)

1.2.2. Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standards

The Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standards (PSTS) operationalise these ambitions by setting practical, GSTC-aligned benchmarks that require tourism businesses and governments to integrate sustainability and resource efficiency into their operations. Key elements include fostering circular business models, promoting sustainable procurement, supporting community-led initiatives, and enhancing resource efficiency, all of which are central tenets of sustainable consumption and production (SCP) and the circular economy (CE). Through these standards, Pacific tourism is positioned to not only reduce its environmental footprint but also to strengthen climate resilience, protect biodiversity, and retain greater economic value within local communities. Together, the PSTPF and PSTS create a cohesive and actionable framework that transforms Pacific tourism into a driver of environmental stewardship, inclusive socio-economic development, and long-term sustainability (SPTO, 2023).

1.3. Barriers to Sector Transition

Vanuatu's transition to sustainable tourism is shaped by its unique geography, cultural diversity, and acute vulnerability to climate and economic shocks. While the policy ambition for a high-value, low-impact tourism model is clearly articulated in national strategies, implementation is challenged by a set of systemic and intersecting barriers. These include governance gaps, capacity constraints, and persistent infrastructure and market limitations, particularly in rural and outer island areas. A coordinated, multi-level effort is essential to overcome these constraints and accelerate the transition toward a circular, inclusive, and climate-resilient visitor economy.

Key structural barriers include:

- Extreme vulnerability to external shocks, including COVID-19, the collapse of Air Vanuatu, political instability, cyclones, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions. These shocks disproportionately affect MSMEs that dominate the sector and often lack liquidity, insurance, or crisis planning mechanisms (ADB, 2023; IMF, n.d.).
- MSME and community enterprise constraints, including low literacy and numeracy – especially in rural and outer island areas – high compliance burdens, limited access to finance, and minimal tailored support. Many operators remain informal and disconnected from formal value chains (PSDI, 2021).
- Critical infrastructure deficits, including unreliable inter-island transport, reduced domestic aviation services, and inadequate water, sanitation, energy, and ICT services. These limitations constrain visitor experience and sustainable operations (STEP Project Consultations (STEP), 2024).

- High business costs, with over 90% of tourism supplies imported. Energy prices are elevated due to legacy concessions, and fragmented supply chains limit local procurement and B2B opportunities (International Finance Corporation (IFC), 2021).
- Reliance on fossil fuels, particularly in off-grid locations. While some rural areas approach 100% renewable energy through micro-grid solar and hydro, there is minimal integration of these advances into the tourism sector. National targets aim for 70–80% renewable energy by 2035 (GoV, 2022).
- Underdeveloped waste management systems, particularly in outer islands. Limited recycling, composting, or safe disposal systems have led to growing environmental and reputational risks for tourism (SPREP, 2020).
- Financial disincentives for sustainability adoption, with MSMEs reluctant to invest in green technologies due to perceived cost, lack of awareness, and short-term return uncertainty (PSDI, 2021).
- Climate and environmental risks, including sea-level rise, coastal erosion, saltwater intrusion, and extreme weather, which directly threaten infrastructure, ecosystems, and community livelihoods (SPREP, 2021; WB, 2022).

In addition to these structural barriers, deeper constraints persist at the institutional and market levels:

- Fragmented tourism governance, marked by overlapping mandates between national and provincial authorities, limited institutional coordination, and the absence of an overarching Tourism Act. While frameworks such as the Tourism Permit and Accreditation Program (VTPAP) and the Vanuatu Tourism Operator Minimum Standard (VTOMS) exist, they remain under review with no current compliance mechanisms in place (GoV, 2021a).
- Public service and provincial capacity constraints, especially outside Port Vila, where tourism functions are under-resourced and under-staffed. These limitations hinder enforcement, service delivery, and long-term reform implementation (GoV, 2021b).
- Limited data and monitoring systems, particularly on sustainability performance, climate risk, and informal sector participation. Weak research and evaluation systems inhibit evidence-based planning and tracking of progress against NDC targets (SPREP, 2024).
- Institutional barriers to sustainability uptake, including the absence of statutory sustainability standards, enforcement mechanisms, or operational guidelines requiring minimum environmental or social practices in tourism (GoV, 2019).
- Loose industry governance and limited advocacy, with few functioning associations or platforms for coordinated private sector leadership or engagement (PSDI, 2021).
- Labour market misalignment, with underinvestment in service quality, digital skills, and sustainability competencies. Enrolment in accredited training remains low, and women and youth face structural barriers to participation (GoV, 2021b).
- Disconnected agricultural linkages, despite years of donor investment in agritourism. Market inefficiencies, inconsistent supply, and weak logistics continue to limit integration with the tourism economy (STEP, 2024).

Addressing these barriers requires integrated and sustained action across government, industry, and communities. National frameworks such as the Vanuatu Sustainable Tourism Policy 2019–2030, Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2021–2025, and Tourism HRD Strategy 2021–2030 set a clear direction for inclusive, resilient tourism. However, meaningful progress will depend on strengthening institutional coordination, expanding access to finance and skills, and embedding sustainability across the entire tourism value chain.

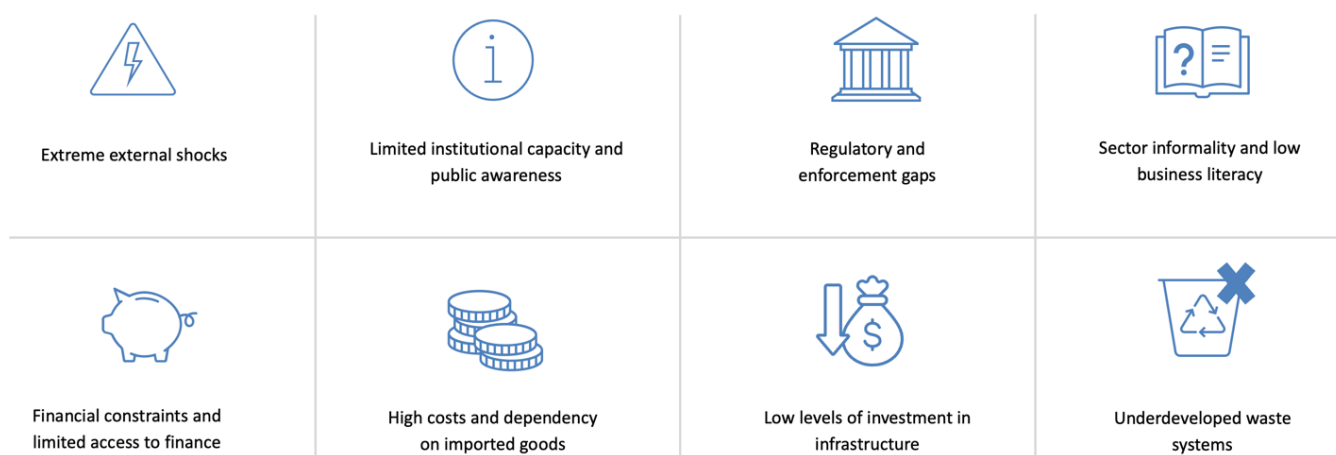


Figure 1. Vanuatu tourism sector barriers

1.4. STEP Project and Methodology

The Sustainable Tourism Enhancement in the Pacific (STEP) Project, implemented as part of the EU SWITCH-Asia Pacific Policy Support Component, offers a strategic framework to advance sustainable tourism practices tailored specifically for Pacific Island nations, including Vanuatu. Building on the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework (PSTPF) and the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standards (PSTS), the STEP initiative places a strong focus on Circular Economy (CE) and Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) approaches. Box 1 further explains the concepts of CE/SCP and their significance for the tourism sector in the Pacific.

The policy context for the STEP Project is shaped by the outcomes of the SIDS (Pacific Island Countries) Consultation Meeting on the Pre-Zero Draft of the New Declaration on 3R and Circular Economy in Asia-Pacific (2024-2034), held in Apia, Samoa in May 2024. This landmark regional consultation, co-organised by UNCRD-DSDG/UN DESA and SPREP, brought together representatives from 20 Pacific countries to address the unique challenges faced by SIDS in advancing sustainable material use, waste management, and circular economy practices. The meeting emphasised the urgent need for integrated 3R and CE strategies, aligned with SPREP's regional frameworks, to achieve resource-efficient, resilient, and low-carbon societies (United Nations Centre for Regional Development 2025).

The STEP project focuses on the following questions:

- How are Circular Economy (CE) and Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) principles currently reflected in Vanuatu's national tourism policies, standards, and actions, and what opportunities exist to strengthen, mainstream, and consolidate them in both design and implementation mechanisms?
- How can the Vanuatu Tourism Operator Minimum Standards (VTOMS) better complement and align with the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standard and support effective implementation of CE and SCP practices where gaps or new needs arise?

The project consists of two main components, a Pacific regional roadmap, and country pathways for Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa and Vanuatu.

1. Pacific Sustainable Tourism Regional Roadmap

The regional roadmap contains 14 recommended interventions to help Pacific Island Countries (PICs) implement the PSTS and integrate CE/SCP principles into their tourism sectors. The roadmap reflects the collective ambition of Pacific nations to become global leaders in sustainable, inclusive, and resilient tourism. The SPTO serves as the central facilitator, fostering cross-sector collaboration, promoting research and innovation, and strengthening partnerships among Pacific nations, the tourism industry, and local communities.

2. Country Pathways for Demonstration Countries

The second component consists of customised pathways for four demonstration countries, Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, and Vanuatu. Each Country Pathway features a unique blend of regional and country-specific actions, shaped by the priorities identified during national consultations.

For Vanuatu, the main objective is to assess the status of PSTS implementation and to develop practical, targeted actions that support the transition of the existing tourism minimum standards program to one that has greater focus on sustainable tourism and the adoption of CE/SCP practices at the national level.

The STEP Project methodology was adapted to Vanuatu context through a five-phase process:

Phase 1: Scoping Assessment

- Conducted desktop research, regional surveys, and direct consultation with Vanuatu's tourism stakeholders
- Reviewed national tourism strategies, policies, and sustainability frameworks relevant to Vanuatu
- Collected baseline data on the adoption and application of sustainable tourism standards in Vanuatu
- Validated findings and incorporated into Vanuatu's specific context into the assessment

Phase 2: In-Country Consultation

- Focused consultations were held in Vanuatu (alongside Fiji, Kiribati and Samoa) to:
 - Assess the status of tourism standards and sustainable tourism practices in Vanuatu
 - Identify critical impact areas within Vanuatu's tourism system
 - Co-design a tailored national pathway that integrates CE/SCP principles and aligns with the PSTPF and PSTS

Phase 3: Regional Validation Workshop

- Two representatives from Vanuatu Department of Tourism (DoT) joined over 50 participants from 10 Pacific Island countries at the Regional Validation Workshop (23–24 April 2025, Suva, Fiji).¹
- The workshop validated proposed PSTS focus areas and regional priorities, assessed progress, identified common challenges, and began shaping the Regional Roadmap through stakeholder feedback.

Phase 4: Development of the Regional Roadmap

Findings from scoping, consultations, and the validation workshop were synthesised to develop a Regional Roadmap that:

- Provides a staged, practical framework for PSTPF and PSTS implementation in Vanuatu
- Identifies institutional and industry capacity gaps to guide technical assistance for Vanuatu
- Establishes priority actions for SPTO and partners to systematically support sustainable tourism development in Vanuatu
- Highlights investment opportunities to support Vanuatu's transition to sustainable tourism

Phase 5: Development of National Pathways

Country-specific interventions and priorities identified during in-country consultations were refined through regional validation and detailed in the Vanuatu Country Pathway report.² This pathway outlines actions tailored for Vanuatu, aligning with national priorities and supporting the practical integration of PSTS, SCP, and CE principles into Vanuatu's tourism system. Further detail on the methodology, consultations, and the evolution of project design and thinking for Vanuatu is provided in a companion Background Report.³

1 Full Workshop Agenda and Report are available at: <https://www.switch-asia.eu/event/regional-validation-workshop-sustainable-tourism-enhancement-in-the-pacific-step/>

2 The four Country Pathway Reports (Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa and Vanuatu) are available at: <https://www.switch-asia.eu/our-work/multi-country/supporting-sustainable-tourism-through-scp-policy-development-and-implementation-in-the-pacific/>

3 The STEP Project Background Report is available at: <https://www.switch-asia.eu/our-work/multi-country/supporting-sustainable-tourism-through-scp-policy-development-and-implementation-in-the-pacific/>

Box 1. Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) and Circular Economy: A Foundation for Resilient Pacific Tourism

Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) is a cornerstone of the Pacific tourism sector's strategy to achieve long-term resilience, equity, and sustainability. Closely interlinked with Circular Economy (CE) principles, SCP promotes the efficient use of resources, reduction of waste, and regeneration of natural systems. Together, SCP and CE offer a practical framework to help Pacific tourism respond to climate, environmental, and economic challenges, while delivering meaningful benefits for communities, ecosystems, and local enterprises.

1. Enhancing Resource Efficiency and Reducing Environmental Impact

- **Resource Optimisation:** SCP and CE approaches support the efficient use of energy, water, and materials throughout the tourism value chain. They help reduce operational costs while lowering pressures on island ecosystems. Solar microgrids, rainwater harvesting, and eco-efficiency upgrades are gaining traction as viable solutions.
- **Waste Reduction and Material Circulation:** Circular strategies such as efficiencies in production and use (waste prevention), reuse, composting, recycling, and local remanufacturing help reduce solid waste and reliance on landfills, directly supporting climate adaptation and biodiversity conservation.
- **Climate Resilience:** Tourism systems that integrate renewable energy, local procurement, and low-carbon design contribute to greenhouse gas reductions and enhance adaptive capacity against climate shocks. Minimisation of materials use and waste prevention also result in minimisation of greenhouse gas emissions.

2. Supporting Economic Viability and Local Livelihoods

- **Economic Diversification:** SCP fosters circular business models that create new revenue streams, such as eco-tourism and local product development, making the sector less vulnerable to external shocks.
- **Local Sourcing and Value Retention:** Prioritising local supply chains strengthens domestic economies, increases resilience, and reduces dependency on imports. Circular procurement supports small producers, artisans, and service providers across the Pacific.
- **Operational Savings:** Reduced energy, water, and material inputs translate into cost savings, improving competitiveness and sustainability.

3. Empowering Communities and Promoting Inclusive Development

- **Community-Led Innovation:** SCP and CE encourage communities to design, manage, and benefit from tourism activities, ensuring inclusive participation and more equitable benefit-sharing.
- **Cultural Regeneration:** Circular tourism supports cultural resilience by strengthening traditional knowledge, crafts, and place-based storytelling that form the backbone of authentic Pacific tourism experiences.
- **Skills Development and Capacity Building:** Training programs linked to SCP and CE improve workforce skills in areas such as waste management, eco-design, energy systems, and digital tools, building long-term resilience in the tourism sector.

4. Strengthening Policy and Institutional Frameworks

- **Alignment with Regional and Global Commitments:** SCP and CE are embedded in the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework and the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standards; both aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and global best practice.
- **Cross-Sectoral Integration:** Circular approaches link tourism with sectors such as agriculture, energy, waste management, and infrastructure, promoting joined-up governance and integrated planning.
- **Monitoring and Learning Systems:** SCP and CE frameworks incorporate indicators and performance tracking, enabling continuous improvement, evidence-based planning, and replication of successful models across the Pacific.

By embedding SCP and Circular Economy principles at all levels – from destination planning to enterprise operations – the Pacific tourism sector can accelerate its transition toward low-impact, high-value models that support resilient communities and protect the region's unique natural and cultural heritage. Terms and definitions used in this report are included in Appendix A.

2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

2.1. Strategy and Policy Context

Vanuatu's national policy framework provides a comprehensive and integrated foundation for sustainable tourism development. The alignment between national development goals, environmental commitments, and tourism strategies reflects a maturing policy environment that supports the transition to a low-impact, high-value, and inclusive tourism economy. Key instruments establish coherence across climate, energy, waste, infrastructure, and cultural domains, offering a clear pathway for alignment with the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standards (PSTS) and other global benchmarks.

2.1.1. National Sustainable Development Plan 2016–2030

The Vanuatu National Sustainable Development Plan 2016–2030 (NSDP), known as Vanuatu 2030: The People's Plan, serves as the nation's highest-level policy framework, charting a course toward a stable, sustainable, and prosperous future. Developed through extensive consultations with citizens, community leaders, the private sector, and civil society, the plan reflects collective aspirations for the country's development. It is structured around three central pillars:

- **Society:** aiming to maintain a vibrant cultural identity and ensure a peaceful, inclusive society supported by responsive institutions
- **Environment:** focusing on preserving natural resources and enhancing resilience to climate change and natural disasters
- **Economy:** striving for equitable and sustainable economic growth that generates employment and income opportunities accessible to all.

Each of these pillars encompasses specific goals and policy objectives designed to translate the national vision into actionable priorities. For instance, under the Environment pillar, objectives include promoting climate resilience and ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources. The NSDP aligns with global commitments such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), providing a framework for coordinated efforts across various sectors to achieve holistic and sustainable development. In the context of tourism, the NSDP underscores the importance of sustainable and responsible tourism practices that contribute to economic growth while preserving Vanuatu's unique environment and cultural heritage (GoV, 2016c).

2.1.2. Vanuatu Sustainable Tourism Policy (2019–2030)

The VSTP sets the overarching vision for sustainable tourism in Vanuatu, aligning with the NSDP by focusing on the principles of sustainability, by minimising and mitigating against negative environmental, economic and sociocultural impacts. It incorporates responsible tourism where operators, governments, local people and tourists share the responsibility to demonstrate a focus on the ethics and human rights in making Vanuatu a more resilient destination.

The Policy sets out five sustainable tourism goals, each with Objectives and 'Actions to be Considered'.

- **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 environment and cultural resources of Vanuatu.**
- **Goal 5. Sustainable and responsible tourism brings improved income and well-being for Vanuatu and its people.**

All the Goals have Actions that are aligned with this project, supporting the development of sustainable tourism standards and the adoption of circular economy and sustainable consumption and production practices. The relevant Actions are:

Goal 1. To develop and manage a sustainable and responsible tourism industry

The following Actions for 'Sustainable and Responsible Tourism Management' are proposed.

- Traditional architecture is supported and promoted in Provincial tourism plans and educational programmes
- 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 programmes support Vanuatu's environmental and cultural assets while 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.

Among the Actions for 'Develop a Sustainable and Responsible Tourism Database' the following is proposed:

- Dedicate resources to the development of a comprehensive tourism data set to measure and understand economic, environmental, social and cultural impacts

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

Among the Actions for 'Training Programmes' the following is proposed:

- Training support for waste minimisation and effective waste remove microenterprises for rural tourism products, including cruise port entry, is financed through the Environmental Policy and Implementation Plan 2016 to 2030 'polluter pays' principle.

Among the Actions for 'Awareness Campaigns' the following is proposed:

- 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 programmes become part of the school curriculum.

Among the Actions for 'Higher Product Standards', the following is proposed:

- All tourism operators must 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.

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

Among the Actions for 'Marketing Strategy' the following is proposed:

- Made in Vanuatu branding as a policy objective in the sector is promoted and protected

The following Actions for 'Certification Programmes' are proposed:

- Voluntary certification programme 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 environment and cultural resources of Vanuatu

Among the Actions for 'Sustainable Tourism Management' the following are proposed:

- 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.

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

Among the Actions for 'Sustainable and Responsible Tourism Planning' the following is proposed:

- Tourism demonstrates initiatives to support the updated National Energy Roadmap 2016-2030 (NERM) target of 100% energy access for off grid rural areas and 65% national renewables with 65% rural bungalow electrification by 2030 under green growth initiatives.

2.1.3. Vanuatu Sustainable Tourism Strategy (2021-2025)

The VSTS builds on the VSTP and was introduced as a response to the compounded impacts of COVID-19 and climate-related disruptions. Framed around the themes of Wellbeing, Resilience, Diversification, and Sustainability, it defines 18 programmes of work aimed at reducing vulnerability and advancing a regenerative tourism model. These include the promotion of agritourism and wellness tourism, cultural revival through traditional cuisine classes, and improved coordination across government, industry and communities.

There are clear synergies between the recommendations outlined in Chapter 7 of this scoping study and the VSTS Implementation Plan, particularly under Goals 3 and 4. The Implementation Plan also includes cross-referencing of VSTS activities with GSTC criteria, which supports future alignment with the PSTS. A list of these linkages is included in Annex B. (GoV, 2021b)

1. WELLBEING: through High Value, Low Impact Tourism	
Addressing leakage while promoting direct benefits from tourism to communities and Ni Vanuatu, and minimising and mitigating negative social, cultural and environmental impacts.	1.1. High Value Tourism
	1.2. Low Value Tourism
2. RESILIENCE: through Niche Tourism Product Development	
Developing and supporting niche tourism that protects, enhances and regenerates Vanuatu's assets (environment, culture, custom, society, traditional economy), supports resilient communities and provides meaningful employment.	2.1. Environmental Conservation Team
	2.2. Adventure Tourism
	2.3. Culture and Arts Tourism
	2.4. Music Tourism
	2.5. Sports Tourism
3. DIVERSIFICATION: through Agritourism	
Increasing resilience through the diversification of tourism to support agriculture, rural agritourism, value adding, import replacement and traditional cuisine.	3.1. Slow Food Educational
	3.2. Traditional Cuisine Revival
	3.3. Agritourism Market Research and Support
	3.4. Agritourism Marketing
	3.5. Wellness Agritours and Agritourism Events Product Development
	3.6. Agritourism Value Added Product Development
	3.7. Strengthening Linkages Between Primary Producers and the Tourism Industry
4. SUSTAINABILITY: through Sustainable Tourism Certification, Investment and Ni Vanuatu Entrepreneurship	
Supporting Ni Vanuatu entrepreneurship and investment in sustainable and climate resilient infrastructure through the Tourism Business Support Program. Certification is ensuring that tourism businesses are operating in line with the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) standards for sustainable tourism.	4.1. Vanuatu Tourism Certification
	4.2. Agritourism Certification
	4.3. Sustainable Tourism Investment
	4.4. Sustainable Tourism Support Fund

Figure 2. Vanuatu Sustainable Tourism Strategy themes and programmes of work

2.1.4. Other Tourism Strategies, Plans and Guides

The Vanuatu Island Bungalow Building Guide, first launched by DoT in 2013, was created to support the development of safe, culturally grounded, and quality-assured accommodation across the country. The Guide promotes traditional architecture and practical design suited to Vanuatu's tourism needs. In response to escalating climate risks, the Guide is now under review to incorporate updated building codes, resilience measures, and sustainable materials. The revised version will provide model designs for different island contexts and strengthen pathways to compliance, helping local operators build safer, climate-ready, and culturally relevant tourism infrastructure. (Government of Vanuatu (GoV), 2013)

The Vanuatu Sustainable Cruise Tourism Development Strategy (2020) measures the economic contribution of cruise tourism, assesses the environmental damage caused by the industry, and offers a 'scorecard' of cruise providers which outlines breaches of environmental regulations and laws. It proposes more detailed investigation into the expedition cruise and yacht markets and the negotiation of commercial agreements with cruise ship companies to jointly monitor and mitigate damages. The strategy explicitly integrates the 'polluter pays' principle from the National Environmental Policy and Implementation Plan (NEPIP), establishing accountability for waste and emissions generated by visiting ships. (Government of Vanuatu (GoV), 2020).

The Vanuatu Tourism Human Resources Development Strategy (2021-2030) outlines a national capability framework for tourism professionals. The strategy identifies core competencies required across business scales - from micro-enterprises to large resorts - emphasising the importance of training in sustainability, hygiene, and customer service. The framework comprises eight themes, which outline the standards required to meet the VSTP's objectives. The strategy engages both the tourism industry and the skills system, emphasising the need for high standards in tourism products and services to achieve the goals of sustainable tourism. It supports delivery of the VSTP by bridging skills gaps and enhancing quality across the tourism workforce. (Government of Vanuatu (GoV), 2021a)

Recent decentralisation initiatives by the Government of Vanuatu extend beyond tourism and form part of a whole-of-government approach to devolved governance. Under the **National Decentralisation Policy 2017-2027** and its corresponding **Decentralisation Implementation Plan 2018-2028**, powers, resources, and service responsibilities are being progressively transferred to provincial governments and area councils to enable more responsive, locally driven development (Government of Vanuatu (GoV), 2018). In alignment with this broader policy shift, Vanuatu also seeks to decentralise implementation within the tourism sector through six **Provincial Sustainable Tourism Management Plans (2023-2028)**, developed by provincial leaders and tourism stakeholders with support from the Department of Tourism. These five-year plans identify locally prioritised actions from the VSTS and are designed to balance economic viability, social inclusivity, and environmental responsibility at the provincial level.

2.1.5. Cross-cutting Policies Impacting on Tourism

Several national policies influence tourism development indirectly through infrastructure, procurement, quality standards, and cultural safeguarding. The **Building Act (2006)** and **National Building Code** promote safe and resilient construction, particularly important for climate-proofing tourism infrastructure. Public procurement legislation, notably the **Public Procurement Act (2019)**, enables integration of sustainability criteria into infrastructure investments that support the tourism sector.

The **Traditional Knowledge and Traditional Cultural Expression Bill (2012)** strengthens the protection of indigenous knowledge and supports community-led tourism by regulating use of kastom and traditional narratives. It aligns with efforts to ensure authenticity and community benefit in cultural tourism experiences.

The **National Oceans Policy (2016)** includes strategic objectives for sustainable marine tourism, including anchoring restrictions, waste discharge regulations, and zoning for tourism development in marine environments. It aims to balance tourism growth with conservation goals and climate resilience.

Complementary policies include the **National Quality Policy (2017–2023)**, which supports the introduction of internationally aligned standards and certification schemes applicable to tourism, and the Quality Infrastructure System, which provides a framework for accreditation and labelling of sustainable tourism products.

2.2. Governance and Industry Structure

2.2.1. Governance

Tourism governance in Vanuatu is led by the Department of Tourism (DoT), which operates under the Ministry of Tourism, Trade, Industry and Ni-Vanuatu Business. DoT is responsible for the development and implementation of tourism policy and planning, and for managing national tourism standards through the Vanuatu Tourism Permit and Accreditation Program (VTPAP) and the Vanuatu Tour Operator Minimum Standards (VTOMS (Government of Vanuatu (GoV), 2025)). These frameworks classify tourism businesses and set tailored criteria relating to safety, service delivery, and sustainability (GoV, 2021b).

Destination marketing is managed by the Vanuatu Tourism Office (VTO), a statutory body established under the Vanuatu Tourism Office Act [Cap 142]. It is governed by a 14-member multi-stakeholder board, with representation from the aviation, cruise, and tourism private sectors. The VTO plays a pivotal role in promoting Vanuatu as a tourism destination in both international and domestic markets (GoV, 2021b). Coordination between the VTO, DoT, and provincial tourism offices is essential to ensure policy coherence and effective implementation. However, challenges remain, particularly around data sharing, campaign alignment, and consistent messaging across platforms (PSDI, 2021). VTO is also responsible for the periodic Business Confidence Index survey, the International Visitors Survey and the Consumer Sentiment Survey, implemented in partnership with SPTO.

While Vanuatu has established a comprehensive national tourism standards framework, its implementation remains uneven. Outer island businesses frequently lack the infrastructure, staffing, and logistical capacity required to meet VTOMS criteria (STEP, 2024). Provincial tourism offices, which are tasked with supporting and monitoring compliance at the local level, often face resource constraints that limit their effectiveness (GoV, 2021b; ADB, 2023).

The VTHRDS underscores the need to strengthen sub-national governance and institutional capacity. It recommends formalising coordination mechanisms between provincial tourism officers and national agencies and expanding training programmes for officials, particularly in sustainability, health and safety, and quality assurance (GoV, 2021b).

2.2.2. Industry Structure

Business Types

Vanuatu's tourism industry is predominantly composed of MSMEs, which make up more than 90% of all operators.

As of 2019, there were approximately 1,656 registered tourism businesses (excluding handicraft producers), employing around 11,500 workers - 94% of whom worked in enterprises with fewer than 25 staff (GoV, 2021a). These MSMEs spanned a wide range of sub-sectors, including accommodation, transport, food services, and experience-based activities such as cultural tours, diving, hiking, and ecotourism.

Tourism activity was geographically concentrated in three primary hubs: SHEFA Province (Efate/Port Vila) hosts 47% of businesses, followed by SANMA (Espiritu Santo) at 19.4%, and TAFEA (Tanna) at 12.8%. These regions benefit from more developed infrastructure, airports (international airports in Port Vila (Efate island) and Luganville (Espiritu Santo island) and an ATR-capable airport at on Tanna island, and stronger integration into marketing and investment networks (GoV, 2021a). However, this spatial concentration also reinforces regional disparities in tourism development and limits participation from outer islands, where tourism potential remains largely underutilised due to accessibility and resource constraints.

The accommodation sector is highly diverse, ranging from branded international hotels in Port Vila such as Holiday Inn, Ramada, and Warwick, to small, family-run bungalows in rural and outer-island locations. As of 2023, there were 153 accommodation providers nationwide, offering a combined capacity of 3,551 beds. Outer-island accommodations are particularly important for cultural and nature-based tourism, yet face persistent challenges due to limited infrastructure, inconsistent service delivery, and the lingering impacts of the collapse of Air Vanuatu, which disrupted key domestic flight routes ([citation needed]).

Vanuatu also has more than 200 registered tour and activity operators, many of which are community-based or individually run. These businesses provide a wide array of visitor experiences from guided village and cultural tours, handicraft workshops, and traditional cooking demonstrations to marine excursions, volcano trekking, and aerial sightseeing. In addition to enhancing the country's tourism offering, they serve as a critical source of income and employment for communities in remote areas (GoV, 2021a).

Tourism Associations

The landscape of tourism associations in Vanuatu is highly fragmented, with over 70 entities operating at national, provincial, and community levels. Many of these associations were established primarily to satisfy the VTOMS requirement that tourism businesses be affiliated with a recognised organisation to obtain a Tourism Permit and, by extension, a business licence. However, this regulatory trigger has led to the creation of numerous 'associations of convenience' that lack meaningful engagement, governance structures, or capacity to represent their members effectively (STEP, 2024). In contrast, national bodies such as the Vanuatu Hotels and Resorts Association (VHRA) and the Vanuatu Tourism Operators Association (VTOA) are comparatively well-resourced and play an influential role in sector governance, including holding seats on the Vanuatu Tourism Office (VTO) Board and contributing to policy dialogue.

Despite the presence of some functional associations, the overall system is hindered by duplication, poor coordination, and governance deficits at the local level. Many smaller, community-based associations operate with unclear mandates, limited leadership training, and insufficient accountability mechanisms, which restrict their ability to advocate for members or interface with government institutions. These challenges contribute to fragmented sector representation and underperformance in collective responsibilities such as the administration of the Tourism Marketing Development Fund (TMDF). Recognising these constraints, institutional reform is now a priority. Streamlining and rationalising the number of associations, while investing in capacity-building and compliance with VTOMS standards, will be critical to strengthening coordination, ensuring equitable representation, and improving the effectiveness of sector-wide initiatives (GoV, 2021a; STEP, 2024; GoV, 2025).

Tourism Marketing Development Fund (TMDF)

The Tourism Marketing Development Fund (TMDF) is a private sector-led initiative designed to finance destination marketing and selected infrastructure projects that support tourism growth. Funded through a 0.5% levy on tourism income, the TMDF is intended to pool industry resources for coordinated promotion of Vanuatu, often in collaboration with the VTO and, previously, Air Vanuatu. Governance of the fund rests with a TMDF Board comprising representatives from participating associations, with the Vanuatu Hotels and Resorts Association (VHRA) serving as chair and holding veto authority (GoV, 2021b). However, the fund's effectiveness has been undermined by weak enforcement of contribution requirements and the proliferation of inactive or nominal associations. While there is no formal membership fee to join a tourism association, the annual TMDF contribution remains a mandated obligation - one that is inconsistently applied.

Reform efforts are currently underway to streamline the association landscape and strengthen TMDF governance. VHRA and the Vanuatu Tourism Operators Association (VTOA) are leading calls for consolidation, enabling DoT to better engage with fewer, more accountable associations and to enforce compliance with VTOMS standards (STEP, 2024). Enhancing compliance and transparency within the TMDF framework is central to building a sustainable, industry-funded marketing platform for Vanuatu's tourism sector (GoV, 2021b).

2.2.3. Tourism Training and Business Support

Vanuatu Institute of Technology (VIT)

The Vanuatu Institute of Technology (VIT) is the country's principal public provider of technical and vocational education, offering accredited qualifications in the tourism and hospitality sector. Core programmes include the Certificate II in Tourism (Customer Services), Certificate II in Tourism (Tour Operations), and Certificate II in Hospitality (Accommodation Services). These qualifications focus on building practical, job-ready skills in service delivery, guest relations, tour coordination, and accommodation operations, contributing to a more skilled and customer-focused tourism workforce across the country (Vanuatu Institute of Technology (VIT), 2024).

Vanuatu Skills Partnership (VSP)

The Vanuatu Skills Partnership (VSP) plays a central role in supporting a more inclusive and sustainable tourism economy by strengthening the capabilities of local operators, particularly in rural and outer island communities. Closely aligned with national community-based tourism priorities, VSP has been instrumental in advancing inclusive economic participation, local resilience, and the practical application of sustainable tourism principles. Through its network of Provincial Skills Centres - established as decentralised service hubs under the Ministry of Education and Training - VSP provides place-based support for skills development and enterprise growth. In partnership with DoT and provincial stakeholders, it delivers targeted coaching, training, and business development services aligned with national policy objectives. The focus is on lifting service quality, improving product development, and expanding market access, while actively supporting the participation of women, youth, and people with disabilities. VSP also plays a critical role in preparing operators to meet VTOMS requirements and in supporting the transition from informal to formal business registration (Vanuatu Skills Partnership (VSP), 2024).

Australia Pacific Training Coalition (APTC) / Pacific Australia Skills Partnership

The Australia Pacific Training Coalition (APTC) has supported professional development in Vanuatu by delivering internationally recognised Australian vocational qualifications, including the Certificate III in Tourism, Certificate III in Hospitality, and Certificate III in Commercial Cookery. These programmes focused on practical, industry-relevant competencies, ranging from food preparation and front office operations to tour guiding and accommodation services and contributing to a more skilled and work-ready tourism workforce (Australia Pacific Training Coalition (APTC), 2023).

At the time of consultation, APTC was transitioning into Phase Four of the Australian Government's support under a new Pacific Australia Skills Partnership. This next phase aims to build on APTC's foundations by delivering demand-driven qualifications through local partnerships, including partnering with VIT and the Vanuatu Qualifications Authority (VQA). The programme is expected to expand into priority areas such as tourism, agritourism, renewable energy, and other sectors aligned with national development and sustainability goals.

University of the South Pacific (USP)

USP's Emalus Campus in Port Vila offers academic pathways for students pursuing careers in tourism policy, planning, and management. Relevant qualifications include the Bachelor of Commerce in Tourism and Hospitality Management and the Bachelor of Commerce in Hotel Management. These programmes develop skills in destination planning, hospitality operations, and strategic sector development, preparing graduates for leadership roles in both the public and private sectors. USP's academic offerings complement vocational and technical pathways by building managerial, analytical, and policy capability within the tourism workforce (University of the South Pacific (USP), 2024).

Vanuatu Tourism Office (VTO)

The Vanuatu Tourism Office (VTO) supports tourism business development by enhancing the market readiness and visibility of operators – particularly in rural and community-based settings. Through its digital training efforts, VTO provides support in online marketing, social media engagement, and customer-facing communications to improve operators' reach and competitiveness (VTO, 2023). VTO also works through Provincial Tourism Councils to deliver outreach and training tailored to local needs, including product development, service quality, and environmental management. These efforts are often aligned with the implementation of the VTPAP and support operators to meet the VTOMS. At the time of consultation, a new 'Market Ready Assessment' programme was in design, aimed at building broader business and marketing capability beyond VTOMS compliance (STEP, 2024).

2.3. Vanuatu Tourism Permit and Accreditation Program (VTPAP)

2.3.1. Legislative Foundation

Vanuatu's tourism standards framework is grounded in two core legislative instruments: the Vanuatu Tourism Office Act [CAP. 142] and the Tourism Councils Act No. 23 of 2012. The former establishes the VTO as the statutory body mandated to promote and coordinate tourism development nationally and internationally, in partnership with DoT. The latter enables the creation of Local Government Tourism Councils, which are responsible for developing area-specific tourism plans, promoting sustainable practices, and fostering community participation. Together, these Acts underpin a decentralised governance model that ensures local input while aligning national policy and market positioning.

This legal foundation authorises the Vanuatu Tourism Permit and Accreditation Program (VTPAP), which regulates tourism businesses through the Vanuatu Tourism Product Classification System (VTPCS) (Government of Vanuatu (GoV), 2023a) and the Vanuatu Tourism Operator Minimum Standards (VTOMS) (Government of Vanuatu (GoV), 2023b). Businesses are classified across accommodation, services, and transport categories and assessed against legal, safety, environmental, and service quality benchmarks. Those that comply receive a tourism permit and may be designated as 'Tourism Accredited'. The VTPCS, however, has some inconsistencies, including duplicate classifications and a missing standard for tourism associations. Additional safeguards apply in Ecologically and Culturally Significant Areas (ECSAs), where operators must comply with a DoT-issued Code of Conduct. This Code advances sustainability aims and offers a potential model for strengthening VTOMS criteria in future reforms.

This standards framework is closely aligned with the Vanuatu Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2021–2025 and is being updated to reflect changes in both national and international contexts as well as stakeholder feedback (STEP, 2024). This reflects the need (and desire within Government) for regulatory reform and adoption of sector best practices, including incorporation or adaption of regional benchmarks such as the PSTPF and the PSTS. The structure of VTPAP therefore supports both national policy execution and regional integration, while reinforcing Vanuatu's positioning as a sustainable, inclusive, and resilient destination.

2.3.2. VTPAP Objectives

The VTPAP was established to support a regulated and high-performing tourism sector through five core objectives:

1. To enable competition based on quality, not just price
2. To raise baseline service standards across the industry
3. To align visitor expectations with available experiences
4. To direct investment towards responsible, high-quality tourism products
5. To build confidence in the national tourism brand

These objectives continue to underpin current reforms. While the VTOMS system provides robust coverage of operational and compliance areas, the inclusion CE and SCP practices remains limited. The current review process seeks to address these gaps through the integration of indicators for waste management, resource efficiency, and local economic contribution (GoV, 2021a; GoV, 2023a).

Importantly, there is a growing policy push to link accreditation with tangible business incentives, such as eligibility for government-funded training, sustainability upgrades, and marketing platforms (STEP, 2024; GoV, 2025). This would help position the VTPAP not just as a compliance tool, but as a pathway for continuous improvement. Enhancing sustainability alignment, rewarding good practice, and ensuring sector-wide accountability will be critical to reinforcing Vanuatu's position as a resilient and values-driven destination.

2.3.3. Accreditation/Certification Mechanism

Tourism accreditation in Vanuatu operates through a self-assessment and compliance-based process under the VTPAP. Businesses are first classified using the VTPCS, which determines the applicable checklist from the VTOMS. Operators complete a self-assessment, submit supporting documents, and if criteria are met,

are issued a Tourism Permit. If gaps exist, a Conditional Permit is granted, allowing up to six months for rectification. While no formal audits are required, Provincial Tourism Officers provide guidance, conduct ad hoc monitoring, and support new applicants. A valid Tourism Permit is a prerequisite for obtaining a national Business Licence, which must be renewed annually by 31 January. This integration enhances the program's authority but creates seasonal bottlenecks in permit processing. Additional compliance with the Vanuatu Code of Conduct for Tourism Operators is required for businesses operating in Ecologically and Culturally Significant Areas (ECSAs), although no formal enforcement of this Code currently occurs (GoV, 2021b).

Despite its name, the VTPAP more accurately described as a certification rather than an accreditation system. Accreditation typically involves independent, third-party verification against recognised standards (e.g. ISO or GSTC), whereas VTPAP is fully managed by DoT, which both sets the standards and verifies compliance. There is no external audit body or independent assessment mechanism in place. The program prioritises progressive improvement and support, offering conditional permits and guidance rather than a rigid pass/fail model.

The major international hotel brands such as Holiday Inn Hotels & Resorts (IHG), Ramada, and Warwick Hotels & Resorts have helped raise sustainability standards in Vanuatu's hotel sector by applying global frameworks for energy and water efficiency, waste reduction, certification, and staff training. Although their influence supports better monitoring and aligns with international best practice, there are challenges: certification requirements, centralised procurement systems, and standardised sustainability training often create barriers for local businesses and do not always fit Vanuatu's unique cultural or infrastructural realities. For Vanuatu, this highlights the need to localise global standards and ensure that sustainability frameworks promote inclusive growth, local supplier participation, and practical solutions that suit small island contexts.

2.3.4. Alignment with the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standards

While the VTOMS include numerous quality and safety measures, as well as clear linkages to business and regulatory compliance they do not fully align with the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standard (PSTS). Key gaps include:

- Biodiversity conservation and ecosystem protection
- Sustainable supply chains and local sourcing
- Circular economy and resource efficiency
- Community engagement and cultural sustainability (outside the dedicated Traditional and Cultural Activity Operator' category)
- Sustainability performance monitoring

A comparison of a representative sample of six VTOMS with the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Industry Standard (PSTS – Industry) is presented in Table 1, identifying key gaps and urgent areas requiring attention to support alignment with national and regional tourism sustainability goals (SPTO, 2023).

Table 1. VTOMS vs. Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standard (Industry)

PSTS Goal & Focus Area	VTOMS Alignment	Gaps Identified	Urgency Level
Goal 1: Prosperous Economies			
Business Resilience	Partially addressed	Covers legal compliances and basic operational procedures	Medium
Business Monitoring & Reporting	Absent	No performance tracking for energy, water, or resilience	High
Visitor Satisfaction	Absent	Feedback forms not required, so no analysis or reporting	Medium
Sustainable Purchasing	Absent	No mention of eco-friendly or local procurement	High
Legal Compliance	Present	Required licenses and legal compliance appropriate to category (e.g. Employment Act, National Building Code, Foreshore Development Act)	Low
Goal 2: Thriving and Inclusive Communities			
Social Inclusion (Women, Youth, PWD)	Implicit only	Requires compliance with Employment Act, but no criteria for diversity or inclusive employment	High
Fair & Decent Work	Implicit only	Requires compliance with Employment Act, but no guidance on fair wages, job safety or labour rights	High
Community Participation	Absent	No community consultation or benefit-sharing mechanisms	High
Empowering Communities	Absent	No capacity-building or community-based tourism criteria	High
Community Feedback & Satisfaction	Absent	No resident sentiment or social impact monitoring	High
Goal 3: Visible and Valued Cultures			
Cultural Heritage Protection*	Implicit only	Not systemised across all Business types. No formal cultural asset protection	Medium
Cultural Interpretation*	Implicit only	No standards or training on interpretation of cultural/natural heritage	Medium
Intellectual Property Protection	Absent	No guidance on safeguarding traditional knowledge or expressions	High
Supporting Local Life & Culture*	Implicit only	Not systemised across all Business types	Medium

PSTS Goal & Focus Area	VTOMS Alignment	Gaps Identified	Urgency Level
Goal 4: Healthy Islands, Healthy Oceans			
Waste & Wastewater Management	Partially addressed	Requirement to collect and dispose of rubbish 'appropriately' and additional criteria depending on category	High
Energy & Water Conservation	Limited (e.g. solar lights)	No benchmarks, metering, or improvement targets	Medium
Carbon Footprint Reduction	Not included	No mention of carbon reduction strategies	High
Ecosystem Protection**	Partially addressed	Interaction with native fauna in captivity and avoiding damage to natural environments is covered in several VTOMS. Lacks broader biodiversity protection.	Medium
Visitor Impact Management	Absent	No criteria or limits for visitor flows or activity zoning	High
Cross-cutting: Monitoring, Circular Economy, Capacity			
Monitoring & Evaluation	Lacking	No system for tracking outcomes or continuous improvement	High
Circular Economy & SCP	Not integrated	No references to reuse, repair, recycling, or circular procurement	High
Capacity Building & Training	Guest service and safety only	No sustainability, community, or cultural capacity-building	Medium

* The VTOMS have a category for 'Traditional and Cultural Activity Operator', which is a protected activity under Business Licencing. The criteria specific to this category do include numerous cultural protection provisions, however these are not mainstreamed into the other categories.

**The VTOMS have a category for 'Wildlife Activities', with more detailed criteria addressing captive wildlife management and compliance with stated wildlife-specific regulations.

2.3.5. Vanuatu Code of Conduct for Tourism Operators

The **Vanuatu Code of Conduct for Tourism Operators** serves as a foundational guideline to promote responsible, respectful, and sustainable tourism across the country. It outlines key principles and expectations for tourism businesses and service providers, with a strong emphasis on cultural sensitivity, environmental protection, and community engagement. Operators are encouraged to uphold ni-Vanuatu cultural values, ensure visitor experiences are respectful and authentic, and minimise negative impacts on local traditions and ecosystems. The Code also promotes fair employment practices, equal opportunity, and respect for human rights, especially in rural and community-based tourism contexts where vulnerability is often heightened. While the Code is currently voluntary for operators that are not in ECSAs, it nevertheless provides an in-country model and baseline for ethical and sustainability standards that align more closely to the PSTS than the current VTOMS.

2.4. Sustainable Tourism - Transition Challenges

2.4.1. Institutional and Regulatory Limitations

Limited enforcement capacity and provincial constraints

While Vanuatu has articulated a clear tourism governance framework, implementation remains uneven, particularly at the provincial level. The VTPAP and the VTOMS provide a regulatory foundation for safety, quality, and business compliance. However, enforcement responsibilities fall largely on provincial tourism officers, who are often under-resourced and tasked with overseeing businesses spread across remote islands. Limited access to transport, digital systems, and operational support contributes to gaps in compliance monitoring, weakening the consistency and credibility of national standards outside major tourism hubs (GoV, 2021b; STEP, 2024).

Weak industry representation and fragmented governance

Industry associations are expected to play a role in maintaining standards, supporting training delivery, and facilitating public-private dialogue. In practice, however, sector coordination is limited. Only a small number of associations - such as VHRA, VTOA, and the Vanuatu Scuba Operators Association (VSOA) - are actively engaged. Many others remain inactive or underperforming, undermining unified industry leadership and limiting delivery of key services, including training, licensing support, and TMDF levy enforcement (GoV, 2021b; STEP, 2024).

Poor alignment with regional standards and sustainability gaps

As shown in Section 2.3.4 above, while VTOMS provide a baseline for tourism regulation, they do not yet align fully with the PSTS. Key sustainability dimensions, including emissions tracking, benefit-sharing, and cultural heritage protection, are weakly integrated or absent. This limits Vanuatu's ability to demonstrate alignment with GSTC criteria and reduces the sector's appeal to responsible markets and development partners.

Regulatory fragmentation and legal gaps in environmental oversight

Although Vanuatu has enacted key environmental laws such as the Waste Management Act (2014) and the Pollution Control Act (2013) these are not well integrated with the tourism regulatory framework. MSMEs are not legally required to undertake environmental impact assessments (EIAs), and sustainability criteria are not embedded within the business licensing regime. As a result, operators may be VTOMS-compliant but remain out of step with broader environmental requirements. This regulatory fragmentation generates uncertainty for businesses, weakens accountability, and undermines national sustainability objectives. (STEP, 2024)

Insufficient incentives for sustainable investment

The current fiscal and financial environment in Vanuatu does not sufficiently incentivise sustainable practices among tourism operators, particularly MSMEs. While general investment incentives such as tax exemptions and duty waivers exist, there are limited targeted measures to support businesses adopting environmentally responsible technologies like solar power, composting toilets, greywater recycling systems, or eco-certification (STEP, 2024). This gap disproportionately affects MSMEs, which typically face high upfront capital costs and lack access to concessional or blended finance. The absence of dedicated grants or sustainability-linked tax relief reinforces the perception that green investment is a cost rather than a value proposition. Recognising these barriers, the government has committed to integrating sustainability performance criteria into forthcoming revisions of the National Investment Policy and tourism incentive schemes. However, effective implementation will depend on developing tailored financial tools and increasing awareness among local tourism enterprises (ADB, 2023).

Weak data systems and monitoring mechanisms

Systemic limitations in data management hinder effective oversight and policy responsiveness. There is no centralised platform to track permit compliance, monitor sustainability performance, or consolidate reporting from provincial tourism offices (STEP, 2024). Existing data systems are often manual, inconsistent, and fragmented across multiple ministries. This hampers efforts to assess the effectiveness of VTPAP and VTOMS, evaluate tourism's broader economic and environmental impacts, or guide evidence-based decision-making. (PSDI, 2021; GoV, 2021b; STEP, 2024).

2.4.2. Private Sector and MSME Constraints

Dependency on MSMEs as the backbone of the tourism economy

MSMEs form the foundation of Vanuatu's tourism sector, accounting for over 90% of all businesses. These enterprises are often family-run or community-based and span accommodation, food services, transport, cultural tours, and handicraft production. Embedded in local traditions and landscapes, MSMEs are essential for employment generation, cultural preservation, and rural development (PSDI, 2021; GoV). Despite their central role, tourism MSMEs remain highly vulnerable. Many operate informally and face ongoing exposure to climate shocks, supply chain disruptions, and economic volatility. Their limited access to finance, infrastructure, and market linkages makes them particularly susceptible to downturns (ADB, 2023).

Structural barriers to growth

MSMEs in tourism face a combination of structural challenges that limit their ability to scale or professionalise. Many operate in outer islands or peri-urban areas where infrastructure deficits are most acute. Poor road access, high freight costs, unreliable energy supply, and digital exclusion inflate operating costs and constrain service quality. These barriers are further exacerbated by heavy dependence on imported goods and fossil fuels, which drive up costs and undermine environmental sustainability (ADB, 2023). Limited access to formal financial services is a major constraint, with only a small proportion of tourism MSMEs accessing commercial loans, largely due to a lack of collateral, high interest rates, and low financial literacy (PSDI, 2021, STEP, 2024). Without affordable finance or technical assistance, most are unable to invest in infrastructure upgrades, sustainability improvements, or digital systems that would enhance competitiveness.

Gaps in business and technical capacity

Many tourism operators, especially MSMEs in rural and outer island areas, face persistent challenges in accessing training, advisory services, and market-ready skills. Gaps in financial literacy, digital tools, product development, and compliance with national standards restrict the ability of businesses to grow or adapt to shifting visitor expectations. At the institutional level, limited resources and coordination among provincial offices, vocational training providers, and regulatory bodies further constrain efforts to build a skilled and resilient tourism workforce. Without targeted interventions, these capacity deficits will continue to undermine quality, competitiveness, and long-term sector sustainability.

Access to sustainable technologies

Sustainable technologies remain largely out of reach for most operators and adoption rates remain low, even when subsidies exist (STEP, 2024). The high cost of solar systems, composting toilets, and eco-friendly construction materials discourages investment. Technical knowledge is also lacking, particularly in remote areas where both installation and ongoing maintenance are a challenge. Many MSMEs lack the technical knowledge to assess technology options and, without concessional finance and targeted support, sustainability upgrades are seen as risky and unaffordable. (SPREP, 2023; ADB, 2023).

Market access and connectivity constraints

Tourism MSMEs located in outer islands face significant barriers to market access. Domestic air and sea connectivity is limited, irregular, and costly, making it difficult to attract visitors or access suppliers. These logistical issues also constrain participation in regional supply chains and tourism itineraries, reducing business visibility and revenue potential (ADB, 2023; PSDI, 2021; STEP, 2024). Digital connectivity is another major constraint. Many businesses lack access to internet infrastructure, digital tools, or the skills to leverage online platforms. As a result, they are often excluded from online travel agencies, social media marketing, and direct booking systems.

2.4.3. Environmental Sustainability Challenges in Tourism

Solid waste management

Solid waste management remains a pressing concern for Vanuatu's tourism sector. Urban centres like Port Vila and Luganville have limited municipal waste services, while outer islands frequently lack any formal collection infrastructure. As a result, tourism businesses, particularly in rural areas, often resort to open burning or burial of waste, including plastics and other non-biodegradable materials (STEP, 2024). This contributes to environmental pollution and health risks for local communities. SPREP's 2023 National Waste

Audit confirmed that high volumes of tourism-generated waste, especially from cruise ship visits and resort operations, overwhelm local disposal systems during peak periods (SPREP, 2023). The scale of the challenge remains significant: accommodation providers alone generate an estimated 2,600 tonnes of waste annually, including 246 tonnes of plastic waste (International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), 2023).

In response, the government, with SPREP's support, has implemented measures under the Waste Management Act (2014) and subsequent regulations, including bans on single-use plastic bags and polystyrene containers, and penalties for illegal dumping (SPREP, 2021). However, enforcement is uneven, particularly in remote areas. Priority actions now include building provincial capacity, mandating waste segregation at source, and expanding community-based recycling initiatives to ensure more effective and decentralised waste management. The Vanuatu Recycling and Waste Management Association (VRWMA), a private sector-led initiative, is playing an increasingly prominent role in this area. VRWMA supports improved recycling infrastructure, public awareness, and practical waste solutions for businesses and communities - including tourism enterprises - and is a critical partner in advancing circular economy practices in Vanuatu (Vanuatu Recycling and Waste Management Association (VRWMA, n.d.).

Wastewater and sewage

Inadequate wastewater infrastructure poses serious environmental and health risks, particularly in coastal areas where tourism infrastructure is clustered. Outside urban centres, most tourism businesses rely on basic septic systems, which are rarely inspected or maintained. In low-lying and coastal areas, these systems frequently fail, posing risks to groundwater, marine ecosystems, and community health. Even in urban centres, coverage is limited, and discharges from informal or inadequate systems remain common. Seasonal visitor surges can overwhelm existing infrastructure, compounding environmental and reputational risks (SPREP, 2021).

The National Environmental Policy and Implementation Plan (NEPIP) 2016–2030 prioritises improved sanitation for tourism operators (Government of Vanuatu, 2016c). SPREP has recommended integrating wastewater protocols into VTOMS and promoting decentralised, eco-friendly treatment systems suitable for remote sites. These include composting toilets and constructed wetlands, which offer sustainable alternatives where centralised systems are not viable.

Energy use

Vanuatu's tourism sector remains heavily reliant on imported fossil fuels, making energy one of the most expensive inputs for businesses. Off-grid operations, particularly in outer islands, commonly use diesel generators, increasing both operating costs and carbon emissions. Although the National Energy Road Map (NERM) targets a 65% renewable energy mix by 2030, adoption within the tourism sector has been slow (GoV, 2016a). The recently completed Vanuatu National Electrification Master Plan (NEMP) provides a national least-cost roadmap to reach universal energy access by 2030, with a strong emphasis on renewable mini-grids and solar home systems for remote areas – solutions that could directly benefit off-grid tourism operators if scaled appropriately (GoV, 2024). According to the International Finance Corporation (IFC), tourism operators in Vanuatu face energy costs that can account for up to 25% of total expenditure, with limited options for transitioning to clean energy sources (IFC, 2021). The sector's continued dependence on diesel undermines efforts to build resilience and reduce emissions, especially as visitor numbers grow. Solutions include bundling clean energy investments for small operators, offering targeted financial tools, and building a stronger service ecosystem around energy audits, efficiency upgrades, and solar-diesel hybrid systems (IFC, 2021).

Electricity generation and distribution in Vanuatu is largely controlled by UNELCO, a private utility company that holds a long-standing concession agreement with the Government of Vanuatu to operate in key urban centres including Port Vila, Malekula, and Tanna. This monopoly structure has resulted in limited competition, with implications for pricing, service coverage, and innovation. Electricity tariffs in Port Vila remain among the highest in the Pacific, posing a significant cost burden for households and businesses, including those in the tourism sector (STEP, 2024). While UNELCO has made some progress in integrating renewable energy – such as small-scale solar and wind – the pace and scale of transition remain constrained by the terms of the concession, which prioritise investor returns over broader energy access and sustainability goals (UNELCO, 2025a). Efforts to reform the sector and open up opportunities for independent power producers (IPPs) have been slow, limiting the potential for diversified, decentralised, and community-based energy solutions that could benefit tourism operators, especially in outer islands (UNELCO, 2025b).

Water scarcity and quality

Water availability and quality are increasingly critical issues for tourism operations, particularly on islands with limited freshwater resources. During dry periods, accommodations often rely on rainwater harvesting or bottled water, both of which are costly and vulnerable to supply disruption. Inadequate filtration and storage practices expose both guests and staff to health risks (SPREP, 2023).

The National Water Resources Policy (2008) identifies efficient and sustainable water use as a priority. SPREP and the Department of Tourism have recommended incorporating water efficiency standards into VTOMS, including requirements for safe water collection, treatment, and reuse (SPREP, 2021). Infrastructure upgrades—such as low-flow fixtures, greywater recycling, and dual plumbing systems—can reduce demand and enhance operational resilience.

2.4.4. Unsustainable Consumption and Production

Vanuatu's tourism sector remains heavily dependent on imported goods - including food, beverages, construction materials, furnishings, and equipment - largely due to limited domestic production capacity and fragmented logistics. This reliance increases operating costs and limits the sector's ability to generate local value, resulting in substantial economic leakage. According to PSDI (2021), a significant share of tourist spending ultimately leaves the country, undermining the multiplier effects of tourism and weakening backward linkages to local industries.

The VSTP calls for stronger domestic sourcing, but persistent constraints including inconsistent product quality, limited year-round supply, and the absence of product certification systems, continue to discourage procurement from local producers. These challenges are particularly acute in the agriculture and handicraft sectors, where smallholder producers and artisans face barriers in meeting commercial standards or aggregating sufficient volume for tourism contracts (GoV, 2021b). An incoming agriculture smallholder permitting system (modelled on the tourism permit scheme) aims to address some of the agri-supply and quality issues but at time of consultations was still in design phase (STEP, 2024)

Limited adoption of sustainable procurement and local sourcing

Despite clear policy direction promoting sustainable procurement, the tourism sector in Vanuatu has been slow to adopt responsible sourcing practices. Procurement decisions are typically driven by price and convenience rather than sustainability criteria. Most operators lack access to sustainability guidelines, eco-labelling systems, or lifecycle assessment tools that would enable them to evaluate the environmental and social impacts of their purchasing decisions (GoV, 2019a). While development partners and government reforms have focused on integrating green procurement into public sector operations (ADB, 2023; SPREP, 2020; PSDI, 2021), similar efforts in the tourism private sector remain underdeveloped. Training on sustainable procurement, value chain analysis, and local sourcing strategies is not yet standardised within tourism MSME capacity-building programmes.

Absence of Circular Economy approaches in tourism

Vanuatu's tourism sector continues to operate within a predominantly linear consumption model, where goods are imported, consumed, and discarded with limited infrastructure for reuse, recycling, or recovery. This model contributes significantly to the volume and complexity of solid waste generated by the sector, particularly through single-use plastics, packaging, and disposable goods. According to the Vanuatu National Waste Audit Analysis Report (SPREP, 2023), tourism-related accommodation providers alone produce over 2,600 tonnes of waste annually - including 246 tonnes of plastic waste - much of which is inadequately managed or disposed of in environmentally harmful ways. The PacWastePlus Country Profile – Vanuatu highlights that current waste management systems remain under-resourced, with limited sorting, collection, and processing capacity, especially in rural and outer island areas (SPREP, 2021). As outlined in Cleaner Pacific 2025, transitioning to a circular economy model requires integrating waste minimisation, sustainable procurement, and resource efficiency into tourism planning and business practices (SPREP, 2020). Strengthening local systems for materials recovery, enhancing producer responsibility, and embedding sustainability criteria in tourism operations will be essential to reverse the current 'take-make-dispose' pattern.

2.5. Existing Initiatives and Opportunities

Vanuatu is progressively strengthening its commitment to sustainable tourism and circular economy principles, guided by national strategies and reinforced by a growing portfolio of aligned development initiatives. The VSTP and VSTS provide a clear framework for embedding sustainability across tourism systems, supported by national instruments such as the Waste Management Act 2014 and the National Energy Roadmap 2016–2030 (GoV, 2019; GoV, 2021b). Vanuatu's active participation in regional initiatives including Cleaner Pacific 2025 and PacWastePlus is contributing to measurable progress in waste management, pollution control, and resource efficiency within the sector (SPREP, 2020).

National capacity-building efforts are gaining momentum through partnerships with regional organisations such as the SPTO and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), alongside multilateral support from United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and bilateral donors. Current programmes, such as the Strengthening National Institutional Capacity for Chemicals and Waste Management (UNEP), Expanding Conservation Areas Reach and Effectiveness (ECARE) (GEF), and the Initiative for Climate Action Transparency (GEF) - are directly enhancing Vanuatu's regulatory and technical readiness for sustainable consumption and production (SCP) and climate-aligned tourism development (STEP, 2024).

In parallel, the IBET Project, a GEF-8 initiative under the regional iCOAST Programme, is scheduled for implementation from 2027 to 2032 across Shefa, Sanma, and Tafea provinces. Led by the Departments of Environment, Tourism, Agriculture, and Fisheries, with support from FAO and UN Tourism, the project will focus on zero waste, low-emission technologies, nature-based value chains, and green finance to accelerate bioeconomy and circular economy solutions in the tourism sector (FAO, 2025).

These initiatives are complemented by broader investments in food systems, disaster preparedness, and gender-responsive planning. Programmes such as The Pacific Community's (SPC) Building Rural Women's Leadership in Food Security and Disaster Management and the Supporting Gender & Protection Cluster Programme (UNDP) are helping create enabling conditions for inclusive and resilient tourism development (STEP, 2024).

Looking ahead, the development of a national tourism standards framework presents an important opportunity to institutionalise sustainability benchmarks across the sector. Embedding performance thresholds for energy, water, waste, and procurement – aligned with regional frameworks – could enhance both destination quality and market credibility. A centralised support mechanism for sustainable procurement would further enable local sourcing and circular economy transitions.

Strengthening provincial government capacity and aligning local tourism planning with national sustainability objectives will also be essential. Enhanced support for tourism councils and outer island officers can improve policy delivery and foster more inclusive sector growth. Complementary reforms in financing (for example green grants, concessional loans, and public–private co-investment mechanisms) are needed to unlock investment in renewable energy, climate-smart infrastructure, and nature-based tourism

3. GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRY CONSULTATIONS

3.1. Summary of Consultation Outcomes

Consultation involved a two-tiered approach: first, through a structured survey of SPTO member countries; and second, through in-country, face-to-face discussions with national stakeholders (refer Appendix B). The consultation process focused on the following questions:

- How can Vanuatu's national tourism standards be improved or developed to complement and align with the PSTS and support effective implementation of CE and SCP practices where gaps or new needs arise?
- What opportunities exist to strengthen, mainstream, and consolidate them in both design and implementation mechanisms?

The STEP Project Baseline Survey (2024/25), presented in Appendix C, found that while Vanuatu has an established standards framework through the VTPAP and VTOMS, alignment with the PSTS is only partial. Current compliance mechanisms emphasise licensing, safety, and some environmental requirements but do not systematically integrate CE or SCP principles. Survey results highlighted critical gaps, including the absence of structured guidance on sustainable procurement, resource tracking and reporting, carbon reduction, waste minimisation beyond disposal, and mechanisms for reuse, repair, or recycling. Gaps in social inclusion, community participation, and cultural protection were also noted.

In-country consultations reinforced these findings while underlining the need for practical support to enable implementation. Government, industry, donor, and community stakeholders consistently emphasised that MSMEs and community-based tourism enterprises (CBTEs) face barriers in finance, technical knowledge, and infrastructure that prevent them from meeting sustainability requirements. They highlighted the need for standards implementation support and SCP toolkits, accessible training, and step-by-step guidance to help enterprises comply. Consultations also stressed the importance of inter-agency and provincial coordination, stronger linkages between tourism operators and local producers to create circular value chains, and the integration of cultural integrity, community participation, and resilience planning into future standards.

Taken together, the survey and consultation processes reveal a dual challenge: Vanuatu's national tourism standards need to be revised and strengthened to align with the PSTS, while operators and communities need the tools, resources, and incentives to adopt them effectively. This requires both top-down policy and regulatory reform, and bottom-up capacity building, finance, and market support.

Opportunities identified through the Baseline Survey, in-country consultations, and validated in the table of priority actions shared with DoT (Table 2 below) include:

- Revising and institutionalising the VTPAP and VTOMS to embed CE and SCP requirements and align with the PSTS.
- Establishing inter-agency and provincial coordination mechanisms to oversee standard-setting, monitoring, and enforcement.
- Creating shared monitoring and reporting systems to track CE/SCP adoption at enterprise and national levels.
- Providing practical toolkits and training for MSMEs and CBTEs, with emphasis on procurement, waste minimisation, energy and water efficiency, and resilience planning.
- Introducing incentives (such as certification-linked benefits, concessional finance, and preferential marketing) for businesses adopting CE/SCP practices.
- Strengthening value chains by linking operators with local farmers, artisans, and cooperatives to reduce import reliance and promote circularity.
- Supporting waste management initiatives, including national adaptation of the Single Use Plastics Toolkit and integration into VTOMS.

- Embedding sustainability criteria early in the investment and development lifecycle of new tourism projects, including links to VFIPA and environmental policies.
- Expanding training and resources for climate resilience, disaster preparedness, and sustainable building, including the revival of traditional construction techniques.

These findings provide the foundation for Vanuatu's Country Pathway and directly inform the seven priority interventions detailed in Section 4. They underscore the need for a dual approach that simultaneously strengthens the standards framework and equips enterprises and communities with the capacity and incentives to implement CE and SCP in practice.

3.2. Priority Actions

Table 2 reflects the recommendations determined by the STEP project team following the in-country consultations.

Table 2. Vanuatu Priority Actions following consultations

Category	Action Items
Destination Governance and Management	Enhance the Department of Tourism's (DoT) understanding of sustainability and its relationship with the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standards (PSTS) and Framework. Conduct a validation workshop to reconvene discussions and align stakeholders on sustainable tourism strategies.
Regulatory and Policy Frameworks	Support the establishment of a revised framework (VTPAP) to improve compliance, quality, and sustainability in the tourism sector. Review minimum standard criteria (VTOMS) and explore incentives and disincentives to promote sustainability.
Capacity Building	Build industry awareness and capacity within the DoT to support new minimum standards, collaborating with training partners.
Sector Awareness	Develop simple information strategies and materials to guide stakeholders on initiating sustainable tourism practices aligned with PSTS.
Monitoring and Evaluation	Establish systems for data collection and monitoring to track industry performance, utilising platforms like ACRGIS.
Agriculture (Agri-food and Tourism)	Conduct supply chain interventions to support local enterprise development, focusing on agriculture opportunities and waste reduction, particularly in provincial areas.
Plastics / Waste	Support waste management plans by identifying sustainable practices and solutions in collaboration with the industry.
Other	Ensure sustainability is embedded early in the investment and development lifecycle of new tourism projects, connecting standards with the Vanuatu Foreign Investment Promotion Agency (VFIPA).

4. VANUATU COUNTRY PATHWAY

4.1. Interventions in the Country Context

Vanuatu is at a critical juncture in advancing sustainable tourism. Guided by the Vanuatu VSTP and the VSTS, the country has made strong national commitments to high-value, low-impact, and inclusive tourism development. Key frameworks such as the VTPAP and the VTOMS are in place to promote quality, safety, and business compliance across the sector, but require updating to capture contemporary criteria that encompass social, cultural and environmental goals. Persistent challenges - including institutional fragmentation, limited compliance mechanisms, and uneven access to finance, training, and infrastructure - continue to constrain the pace of transition.

Following detailed baseline analysis, national consultation, and regional validation, the Vanuatu Country Pathway prioritises seven core interventions. The first five interventions are nationally led.

➔ **Embedding CE and SCP Principles in National Tourism Policy**

Advance national policy dialogue and legal reform to embed sustainable tourism and sustainable consumption and production (SCP) principles across Vanuatu's tourism governance framework. The intervention will support the Department of Tourism (DoT) to strengthen its institutional understanding of sustainability, align national tourism instruments with the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standards (PSTS), and operationalise domestic monitoring systems that reflect Vanuatu's environmental, social, and cultural context.

➔ **National Sustainable Tourism Standards Development**

Support the development and institutionalisation of national minimum standards for tourism in Vanuatu through a revised Vanuatu Tourism Permit and Accreditation Program (VTPAP) and Vanuatu Tourism Operator Minimum Standards (VTOMS). This intervention aims to raise compliance and quality across the sector while embedding sustainability principles and incentives for certification aligned with the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standards (PSTS).

➔ **Finalisation and Implementation – Single Use Plastics Toolkit**

Support the national adaptation and uptake of the SPREP/SPTO Single Use Plastics (SUP) Toolkit and Standard by tourism operators across Vanuatu. This includes translating and contextualising the toolkit for diverse operator types and enabling integration with the Vanuatu Tourism Operator Minimum Standards (VTOMS) and local training systems.

➔ **Sustainable Tourism Supply Chains and Aggregator Hubs**

Support the development of decentralised aggregator hubs and sustainable procurement systems to connect local producers and service providers with the tourism sector, with a focus on waste reduction, domestic product substitution, and import replacement in provincial areas.

➔ **Farm-to-Table Procurement and Traceability Schemes**

Build structured linkages between farmers, agribusinesses, and tourism operators through coordinated procurement platforms, food traceability tools, and promotional campaigns that support local food sourcing and reduce reliance on imports.

➔ **Sustainable and Climate Resilient Tourism Accommodation Guidelines**

Develops and promotes guidelines for climate-resilient, eco-friendly accommodation, drawing on traditional building methods. This will enhance the resilience of tourism infrastructure, lower environmental impact, and preserve Vanuatu's cultural identity

➔ **Traditional and Sustainable Building Construction Techniques**

To promote the integration of sustainable, traditional, and climate-resilient building practices in tourism infrastructure by showcasing culturally rooted construction techniques and strengthening local capacity through hands-on training and skills development.

The relevance of these Interventions to national context and priorities has been mapped, and linkages to both the VSTP and the VSTS identified (detailed below). This is to ensure that the activities proposed in this Country Pathway are fully aligned with the priorities and direction of Vanuatu's overarching sustainable tourism strategic direction and policy.

The Interventions selected for Vanuatu, align with Vanuatu Priority Actions as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Alignment of Priority Actions and Interventions

Category	Action Items	
Regulatory and Policy Frameworks	Support the establishment of a revised framework (VTPAP) to improve compliance, quality, and sustainability in the tourism sector. Review minimum standard criteria (VTOMS) and explore incentives and disincentives to promote sustainability.	1. Embedding CE and SCP principles in national tourism and other relevant policies 2. National Sustainable Tourism Standards Development
Destination Governance and Management	Enhance the Department of Tourism's (DoT) understanding of sustainability and its relationship with the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standards (PSTS) and Framework. Conduct a validation workshop to reconvene discussions and align stakeholders on sustainable tourism strategies.	1. Embed CE and SCP principles in national tourism policies and other relevant policies 2. National Sustainable Tourism Standards Development
Capacity Building	Build industry awareness and capacity within the DoT to support new minimum standards, collaborating with training partners.	2. National Sustainable Tourism Standards Development
Sector Awareness	Develop simple information strategies and materials to guide stakeholders on initiating sustainable tourism practices aligned with PSTS.	2. National Sustainable Tourism Standards Development 3. Finalisation and implementation - Single Use Plastics Toolkit
Monitoring and Evaluation	Establish systems for data collection and monitoring to track industry performance, utilising platforms like ACRGIS.	2. National Sustainable Tourism Standards Development
Agriculture (Agri-food and Tourism)	Conduct supply chain interventions to support local enterprise development, focusing on agriculture opportunities and waste reduction, particularly in provincial areas.	9. Sustainable Tourism Supply Chains and Aggregator Hubs 10. Farm-to-Table Procurement and Traceability Schemes
Plastics / Waste	Support waste management plans by identifying sustainable practices and solutions in collaboration with the industry.	3. Finalisation and implementation - Single Use Plastics Toolkit 9. Sustainable Tourism Supply Chains and Aggregator Hubs
Other	Ensure sustainability is embedded early in the investment and development lifecycle of new tourism projects, connecting standards with the Vanuatu Foreign Investment Promotion Agency (VFIPA).	13. Sustainable and Climate Resilient Tourism Accommodation Guidelines 14. Traditional and Sustainable Building Construction Techniques.

Regional Support and Broader Benefits

In addition to these country-specific actions, Vanuatu will benefit from another five regionally led STEP interventions, including:

- Self-assessment and monitoring tools for government and industry
- Starter packs and toolkits for MSMEs community-based tourism enterprises
- Knowledge exchange platforms and sustainability dashboards
- Public-private dialogue platforms and sustainable finance mechanisms

These regional initiatives provide Vanuatu with access to shared resources, technical assistance, and peer learning opportunities, further strengthening the enabling environment for sustainable tourism.

Vanuatu 1: Embed CE and SCP Principles in National Tourism Policies and other relevant policies

STEP Priority Actions

- Enhance the Department of Tourism's (DoT) understanding of sustainability and its relationship with the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standards (PSTS) and Framework.
- Conduct a validation workshop to reconvene discussions and align stakeholders on sustainable tourism strategies.
- Support the establishment of a revised framework (VTPAP) to improve compliance, quality, and sustainability in the tourism sector.
- Review minimum standard criteria (VTOMS) and explore incentives and disincentives to promote sustainability.

Alignment with VSTP

This intervention supports Goal 1 by embedding sustainability into national planning frameworks and ensuring tourism policy is informed by robust data on environmental, social, and cultural impacts. The development of a comprehensive tourism dataset underpins evidence-based decision-making and cross-sector alignment.

Alignment with VSTS

Table 4. Vanuatu 1 Alignment with VSTS

Theme	Programme of Work	Action	Action
THEME 2 RESILIENCE	2.1 Environmental Conservation Tourism	2.1.4	Develop Sustainable Tourism Management Plans for Ecological and Culturally Sensitive Areas (ECSAs) and Community Conservation Areas (CCAs)
THEME 4 SUSTAINABILITY	4.1 Vanuatu Tourism Certification	4.1.8	Measure visitor perception of sustainability at the destination and business level

Objective: Advance national policy dialogue and legal reform to embed sustainable tourism and sustainable consumption and production (SCP) principles across Vanuatu's tourism governance framework. The intervention will support the Department of Tourism (DoT) to strengthen its institutional understanding of sustainability, align national tourism instruments with the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standards (PSTS), and operationalise domestic monitoring systems that reflect Vanuatu's environmental, social, and cultural context.

Outcome: A strengthened enabling environment for sustainable tourism in Vanuatu, characterised by integrated cross-sector planning, coherent national policies, and a dedicated framework (VTPAP) for quality, sustainability, and compliance. The national system is supported by a tourism data platform to inform policy

decisions and monitor visitor perceptions, aligning with environmental and cultural safeguarding objectives in Ecological and Culturally Sensitive Areas (ECSAs) and Community Conservation Areas (CCAs).

Key Activities

1. Policy and Legal Diagnostics

- Conduct a detailed review of tourism-related legislation, sector strategies, and regulatory frameworks to identify inconsistencies, outdated provisions, and areas lacking sustainability integration.
- Focus on alignment with existing national priorities for ECSAs and CCAs, climate adaptation, and SCP measures across tourism investment, land use, and infrastructure.

2. Stakeholder Co-Design Workshops

- Facilitate a national validation workshop and targeted provincial consultations to reconvene stakeholders and refine Vanuatu's sustainable tourism policy agenda.
- Engage the DoT, VTO, Department of Climate Change, and provincial councils to co-design clear institutional roles and shared priorities for the revised VTPAP framework.

3. Development of a Legal and Policy Alignment Toolkit

- Develop a Vanuatu-specific policy alignment toolkit, including diagnostic checklists, model clauses, and reference materials to guide sustainable tourism law and regulation.
- Integrate templates for tourism zoning in ECSAs and minimum standards for operator licensing, informed by GSTC criteria and Vanuatu's own VTPAP/VTOMS processes.

4. Technical Guidance and Model Clauses

- Provide technical drafting support to DoT and legislative bodies to incorporate SCP, climate resilience, and local benefit-sharing mechanisms into national tourism policies and other relevant policies.
- Promote cross-ministerial uptake through targeted briefings and alignment with national reporting obligations on climate change, biodiversity, and sustainable development.

Vanuatu 2: National Sustainable Tourism Standards Development

STEP Priority Actions

- Support the establishment of a revised framework (VTPAP) to improve compliance, quality, and sustainability in the tourism sector.
- Review minimum standard criteria (VTOMS) and explore incentives and disincentives to promote sustainability.
- Build industry awareness and capacity within the DoT to support new minimum standards, collaborating with training partners.
- Develop simple information strategies and materials to guide stakeholders on initiating sustainable tourism practices aligned with PSTS.
- Establish systems for data collection and monitoring to track industry performance, utilising platforms like ACRGIS.

Alignment with the VSTP

This intervention is critical to Goals 1, 2, and 4, as it establishes enforceable, high-quality standards aligned with global benchmarks (e.g. GSTC), which support improved compliance, minimise tourism's negative impacts, and protect sensitive environments. By embedding sustainability into VTPAP and VTOMS, it strengthens accreditation systems and raises national performance expectations across the sector.

Alignment with VSTS

Table 5. Vanuatu 2 Alignment with VSTS

Theme	Programme of Work	Action	Action
THEME 4 SUSTAINABILITY	4.1 Vanuatu Tourism Certification	4.1.1	Undertake a Tourism Certification Feasibility Analysis: (Carbon labelling, Fairtrade, Organics, GSTC Sustainable Tourism)
		4.1.2	Develop standards for the VSTC and apply for GSTC Recognition of the standards and Accreditation of the process
		4.1.3	Undertake GSTC Sustainable Tourism Destination assessments in a key model destination
		4.1.4	Develop and pilot the Code of Conduct for Tourism in the ECSA's and CCA's
		4.1.5	Review & modify Tourism Standards for tours and accommodation to incorporate more of the GSTC Criteria
		4.1.7	Conduct GSTC sustainable tourism training for all tourism stakeholders throughout the 6 Provinces

Objective: Support the development and institutionalisation of national minimum standards for tourism in Vanuatu through a revised Vanuatu Tourism Permit and Accreditation Program (VTPAP) and Vanuatu Tourism Operator Minimum Standards (VTOMS). This intervention aims to raise compliance and quality across the sector while embedding sustainability principles and incentives for certification aligned with the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standards (PSTS).

Outcome: A strengthened national tourism standards system under the VTPAP and VTOMS that reflects ni-Vanuatu values, supports environmental and cultural sustainability, and enables tourism operators – particularly MSMEs – to improve service quality and resilience. The system incorporates GSTC-aligned criteria and is supported by tailored training, communications, and monitoring systems led by the Department of Tourism (DoT).

Key Activities

1. Formation of National Working Group

- Establish a national taskforce with representatives from DoT, Vanuatu Tourism Office (VTO), private sector associations, and provincial tourism councils.
- Define the working group's mandate to guide development of minimum standards and voluntary certification schemes for operators in both formal and informal sectors.

2. Co-Design of Standards

- Facilitate structured co-design processes with operators, communities, and technical experts to update VTOMS and strengthen the VTPAP.
- Ensure coverage of core requirements such as waste management, safe water provision, composting, local food sourcing, and climate-smart infrastructure for both mainland and outer island operators.

3. Drafting and Piloting

- Develop practical implementation guides, checklists, and compliance tools for use across tourism accommodation, tours, food services, and cruise-linked microenterprises.
- Pilot the updated standards in select provinces (e.g. Shefa, Sanma, and Tafea), including in Ecological and Culturally Sensitive Areas (ECSAs) and Community Conservation Areas (CCAs).

4. Training and Incentive-Based Uptake

- Deliver province-level training and mentoring to support operators to meet the standards, with particular focus on MSMEs, women, and youth.
- Introduce non-financial incentives (e.g. award recognition, promotional visibility, fast-track licensing)
- Explore potential for GSTC Recognition of the national framework.

5. Regional Toolkit Development

- Document Vanuatu's experience in standards reform and create a knowledge-sharing toolkit for use in other Pacific Island countries.
- Highlight lessons from rural outreach, co-design with community-based tourism operators, and integration of circular economy and resilience measures.

Vanuatu 3: Implementation of Single Use Plastics Toolkit and Standards

STEP Priority Actions

- Develop simple information strategies and materials to guide stakeholders on initiating sustainable tourism practices aligned with PSTS.
- Support waste management plans by identifying sustainable practices and solutions in collaboration with the industry.

Alignment with VSTP

Aligned with Goal 2, this intervention advances circular economy and SCP practices through national adoption of the SUP toolkit and standard. It directly supports microenterprise waste reduction and raises environmental awareness among operators and communities via campaigns and education.

Alignment with VSTS

Table 6. Vanuatu 3 Alignment with VSTS

Theme	Programme of Work	Action	Action
THEME 1 WELLBEING	1.2 Low Impact Tourism	1.2.1	Develop a Carbon Neutral Tourism Package
		1.2.5	Develop a Sustainable Waste Management Plan and coordinated campaign/advice/support for tourism
THEME 4 SUSTAINABILITY	4.1 Vanuatu Tourism Certification	4.1.6	Develop and implement waste education programmes for all tourism businesses and attractions

Objective: Support the national adaptation and uptake of the SPREP/SPTO Single Use Plastics (SUP) Toolkit and Standard by tourism operators across Vanuatu. This includes translating and contextualising the toolkit for diverse operator types and enabling integration with the Vanuatu Tourism Operator Minimum Standards (VTOMS) and local training systems.

Outcome: Tourism operators across Vanuatu, including MSMEs and outer island providers, are equipped with practical, context-specific tools to reduce single-use plastics, manage waste responsibly, and align operations with national and regional sustainability goals. The toolkit is integrated into the VTOMS and used as a benchmark for good environmental practice.

Key Activities

1. Local Adaptation and Translation

- Translate toolkit resources into Bislama and French and adapt content to reflect operating conditions for outer island operators, small-scale accommodation, and rural community-based tourism.

- Tailor content to support cruise port entry microenterprises and low-literacy users, ensuring accessible design.

2. National Distribution and Capacity Building

- Disseminate the toolkit through Department of Tourism provincial officers, the Vanuatu Tourism Office, and Provincial Tourism Councils.
- Conduct practical workshops on plastic-free tourism practices and safe waste disposal for SMEs, cooperatives, and youth-led enterprises.

3. Standard Adaptation and National Consultation

- Align toolkit requirements with VTOMS and host national consultations to identify pathways for formal integration into licensing, accreditation, and DoT compliance systems.
- Develop simplified guidelines to support uptake by informal and unregistered operators.

4. Development of Sector-Specific Resources

- Produce tailored implementation checklists for tourism segments such as transport, day tours, accommodation, and food vendors.
- Design signage and visual tools to support operator and guest awareness of plastic bans and alternatives.

5. SME and Supplier Engagement

- Engage domestic suppliers to expand the availability of approved alternatives (e.g. biodegradable containers, refillable dispensers).
- Connect SMEs to local sourcing initiatives such as Vanuatu Made or Circular Economy trials under DoI or VCCI.

Vanuatu 4: Sustainable Tourism Supply Chains and Aggregator Hubs

STEP Priority Action

- Support waste management plans by identifying sustainable practices and solutions in collaboration with the industry.
- Conduct supply chain interventions to support local enterprise development, focusing on agriculture opportunities and waste reduction, particularly in provincial areas.

Alignment with VSTP

This intervention supports Goal 3 by improving local supply systems and enabling reliable access to 'Made in Vanuatu' products. It strengthens domestic value chains through aggregation models, market development, and product visibility, enhancing tourism's contribution to inclusive economic development.

Alignment with VSTS

Table 7. Vanuatu 4 Alignment with VSTS

Theme	Programme of Work	Action	Action
THEME 1 WELLBEING	1.1 High Value Tourism	1.1.4	Develop market centres for the sale of locally made products and handicrafts in outer islands

THEME 3 DIVERSIFICATION	3.4 Agritourism Marketing	3.4.xx	Increase sales of Made in Vanuatu handicrafts to the tourism sector. Strengthen and support the Handicraft Business Development Programme (HBDP) through the Provincial Handicraft Associations
	3.6 Agritourism Value Added Product Development	3.6.4	Develop an import replacement programme for tourism
		3.6.5	Develop a Sustainable Infrastructure Scheme for Agritourism financing value adding manufacturing facilities: renewable energy, climate adaptation, fibreglass tanks, composting toilets, cyclone proofing infrastructure

Objective: Support the development of decentralised aggregator hubs and sustainable procurement systems to connect local producers and service providers with the tourism sector, with a focus on waste reduction, domestic product substitution, and import replacement in provincial areas.

Outcome: Tourism operators across Vanuatu have improved access to locally produced goods and services that meet basic sustainability and quality standards. Smallholder producers and local suppliers benefit from better market linkages, training, and logistical coordination, resulting in increased economic opportunities and reduced environmental impact.

Key Activities

1. Supply Chain Mapping

- Identify high-use product categories within the tourism sector (e.g. organic produce, coconut-based cosmetics, woven packaging, and Ni-Vanuatu handicrafts).
- Conduct provincial audits of existing micro-enterprises and cooperatives in key tourism nodes (e.g. Efate, Tanna, Santo, Malekula, and selected other islands), noting supply gaps and opportunities for import substitution.

2. Support for Sustainable Product Development

- Provide technical assistance to Provincial Handicraft Associations, agritourism cooperatives, and women's producer groups to develop eco-friendly tourism products (e.g. reusable textiles, biodegradable packaging, fibreglass tanks).
- Facilitate co-funding and mentoring for prototype testing and small-batch certification, including through partnerships with the Handicraft Business Development Programme (HBDP) and other local initiatives.

3. Supplier Portal and Product Register

- Establish and maintain a digital and printed national directory of verified local suppliers, linked to tourism quality and sustainability criteria.
- Promote adoption by hotels, tour operators, cruise providers, and government procurement units, and link into regional Pacific procurement platforms where feasible.

4. Pacific Sustainable Tourism Expo

- Facilitate participation of Vanuatu-based cooperatives and small producers in regional trade expos and SPTO-hosted events.
- Host a national Sustainable Tourism Marketplace event in Port Vila to build B2B linkages between local suppliers and tourism businesses

5. Demand and Aggregation Analysis

- Conduct operator demand assessments to determine seasonal product requirements and volume estimates across multiple locations.
- Identify strategic sites such as Luganville, Port Vila, and Lenakel for testing aggregation logistics and storage coordination.

6. Establishment of Aggregator Hubs

- Support community-based aggregator hubs in pilot sites with basic equipment such as storage bins, dry goods racks, and transport crates.
- Provide operational toolkits covering inventory control, hygiene standards, and basic procurement protocols.

7. Cooperative Models and Scaling Support

- Strengthen governance and fulfilment planning capacity of small producer groups, including those led by women and youth.
- Pilot cost-sharing and bundled logistics models to facilitate shared transport, reduce delivery costs, and improve reliability for tourism buyers.

8. Quality Assurance

- Develop easy-to-follow product quality checklists for small producers.
- Provide mentoring in hygiene, durability, and presentation for products supplied to the tourism industry.

Vanuatu 5: Farm-to-Table Procurement and Traceability Schemes

STEP Priority Action

Conduct supply chain interventions to support local enterprise development, focusing on agriculture opportunities and waste reduction, particularly in provincial areas.

Alignment with VSTP

This intervention supports Goal 3 by fostering authentic food tourism and sustainable sourcing. It enables traceable local food procurement systems, improves producer–buyer coordination, and promotes certified local food through voluntary standards, thereby enhancing both visitor experience and community income.

Alignment with VSTS

Table 8. Vanuatu 5 Alignment with VSTS

Theme	Programme of Work	Action	Action
THEME 3 DIVERSIFICATION: through Agritourism	3.2 Traditional Cuisine Revival	3.2.3	Develop a traditional cuisine cooking classes product development and support programme
	3.3 Agritourism Market Research and Support	3.3.4	Undertake an Agritourism Value Chain Analysis
	3.5 Wellness Agritours & Agritourism Events Product Development	3.5.2	Develop a support programme for primary and secondary producers of food to increase the representation of local food consumed in communities and the tourism industry through festivals, farmers markets demonstrations etc.
	3.6 Agritourism Value Added Product Development	3.6.3	Develop standards with VBS to ensure agritourism value added products are high quality and competitive
	3.7 Strengthening linkages between primary producers and the tourism industry	3.7.1	Identify hotels/resorts interested in partnering with local farmer/communities/agribusiness
		3.7.2	Develop mechanisms to ensure reliable supply of produce to the tourism Industry

THEME 4 SUSTAINABILITY: through Sustainable Tourism Investment and Ni Vanuatu Entrepreneurship	PROGRAMME OF WORK 4.2 Agritourism Certification	4.2.1	Identify potential certification programmes for local agritourism products such as: fair trade, organics, sustainability and generation of verified carbon offsets
		4.2.3	Establish contract for a 3rd party Certification body to undertake Agritourism products auditing and assessments

Objective: Build structured linkages between farmers, agribusinesses, and tourism operators through coordinated procurement platforms, food traceability tools, and promotional campaigns that support local food sourcing and reduce reliance on imports.

Outcome: Hotels, resorts, and tourism operators across Vanuatu purchase more fresh and value-added food from local producers, supported by consistent supply, traceability protocols, and mutual understanding of standards. Rural communities benefit from new income streams, while visitors access more authentic culinary experiences.

Key Activities

1. Pilot Farm-to-Hotel Procurement Platforms with Traceability Tools

- Establish pilot procurement platforms in key tourism hubs such as Port Vila, Santo, and Tanna to directly connect farmer cooperatives and micro-enterprises with tourism businesses.
- Leverage the incoming Agriculture Permit system being introduced by Department of Agriculture
- Integrate simple traceability systems - digital where feasible, or paper-based for remote areas - to track product origin, food safety compliance, and delivery scheduling.
- Partner with resorts, culinary tourism networks, and agribusiness intermediaries to test models in real-market settings.

2. Training and Mentoring in Food Safety and Business Skills

- Deliver tailored training for smallholder producers on food hygiene, post-harvest handling, and packaging suitable for the hospitality industry.
- Provide mentoring in pricing, customer relationship management, and small business practices.
- Collaborate with the Department of Agriculture, Department of Tourism, and key donor programmes to embed training within existing support structures.

3. Crop Planning and Procurement Agreements

- Facilitate crop planning workshops between producer groups and tourism buyers to align supply with seasonal tourism demand.
- Develop simple contracting templates or memoranda of understanding (MOUs) to formalise agreements and improve predictability for both sides.

4. Promotion of Value-Added and Seasonal Alternatives

- Identify local ingredients that can be dried, preserved, or substituted to overcome seasonal availability gaps.
- Support development of value-added products like dried bananas, taro chips, fruit preserves, and herbal teas suited to resort and café offerings.
- Collaborate with culinary schools, local chefs, and food innovators to promote use in tourism settings.

Vanuatu 6: Sustainable and Climate Resilient Tourism Accommodation Guidelines

STEP Priority Actions

Ensure sustainability is embedded early in the investment and development lifecycle of new tourism projects.

Alignment with VSTP

This intervention supports Goal 5 by promoting low-emissions, climate-resilient infrastructure aligned with national energy and climate commitments. The guidelines help accelerate rural electrification and renewable uptake in tourism accommodation, especially for off-grid operators.

Alignment with VSTS

Table 9. Vanuatu 6 Alignment with VSTS

Theme	Programme of Work	Action	Action
THEME 1 WELLBEING	1.2 Low Impact Tourism	1.2.7	Undertake a feasibility study on water management in tourism and develop a framework for tourism businesses to improve hygiene, and measure, monitor, publicly report and manage water usage
THEME 4 SUSTAINABILITY	4.3 Sustainable Tourism Investment	4.3.1	Support tourism businesses to access sustainable infrastructure to finance a transition to renewable energy and climate adaptation

Objective: Develop practical guidelines for designing and upgrading tourism accommodation using climate-resilient, low-carbon, and culturally appropriate construction techniques. These will inform planning approvals, tourism licensing, and infrastructure investments.

Outcome: Tourism accommodation developments across Vanuatu are designed to be energy-efficient, cyclone-resilient, and reflective of local environmental and cultural contexts. Operators and builders adopt sustainable practices that reduce emissions and increase preparedness for climate risks.

Key Activities

1. Development of Green and Resilient Building Guidelines

- Co-design a comprehensive set of guidelines tailored to Vanuatu's tourism accommodation sector, addressing both new developments and retrofits across islands.
- Include technical content on low-emissions materials, renewable energy systems, water conservation, cyclone-resistant design, and passive cooling suited to Vanuatu's tropical climate.
- Ensure consistency with local planning laws, the National Building Code (where applicable), the Vanuatu Island Bungalow Building Guide and relevant climate resilience frameworks.

2. Policy Engagement and Validation

- Engage the Department of Tourism, Department of Climate Change, Department of Public Works, and architects and engineers familiar with Pacific context in targeted consultations.
- Pilot the draft guidelines with tourism operators, builders, and engineers on Efate and outer islands to ensure cultural relevance, technical viability, and scalability.

3. Institutional Support and Regulatory Uptake

- Develop implementation tools and model clauses for integration into tourism licensing, EIA guidelines, and building permit processes.
- Provide technical assistance to government agencies, provincial councils, and industry associations to encourage adoption through incentive mechanisms and policy instruments.

Vanuatu 7: Traditional and Sustainable Building Construction Techniques

STEP Priority Action

Ensure sustainability is embedded early in the investment and development lifecycle of new tourism projects.

Alignment with VSTP

Aligned with Goals 1 and 3, this intervention revitalises traditional architecture and construction methods in tourism, integrating kastom knowledge with modern resilience needs. It supports cultural preservation and the development of climate-smart, low-impact infrastructure using local materials and skills.

Alignment with VSTS

There are no VSTS Actions that directly align with this Intervention. Under Goal 1 of the VSTP, there is a clear mandate given however: 'Traditional architecture is supported and promoted in Provincial tourism plans and educational programmes'.

Objective: To promote the integration of sustainable, traditional, and climate-resilient building practices in tourism infrastructure by revitalising cultural knowledge, showcasing Vanuatu-specific construction models, and strengthening local capacity through hands-on training and skills development aligned with the Vanuatu Island Bungalow Building Guide.

Outcome: Traditional building knowledge is revitalised and integrated into tourism development, supporting cultural preservation and environmental sustainability. Local builders, tourism operators, and community members gain practical skills in traditional, ecological, and low-impact construction methods, resulting in safer, climate-resilient, and culturally relevant tourism infrastructure across Vanuatu, aligned with updated guidance from the Vanuatu Island Bungalow Building Guide.

Key Activities

1. Demonstration Projects and Knowledge Products

- Develop site-based demonstration projects that showcase vernacular building techniques promoted in the Vanuatu Island Bungalow Building Guide, such as bamboo framing, natangora thatching, and coral-lime plasters.
- Produce illustrated case studies and digital resources highlighting climate-resilient features and the use of local materials.

2. Policy and Standards Advocacy

- Advocate for the formal recognition and inclusion of traditional materials within the Vanuatu National Building Code and VTOMS, using the revised Bungalow Guide as a reference for resilience and tourism safety benchmarks.

3. Vocational Training and Circular Economy Linkages

- Collaborate with the Vanuatu Institute of Technology (VIT), Vanuatu Skills Partnership, and provincial training centres to deliver applied training linked to circular economy practices such as sustainable bamboo harvesting, waste-to-resource applications, and low-emission material supply chains.

4. Modular Training Delivery

- Deliver modular training packages focused on practical climate-smart construction techniques – integrating features such as solar orientation, passive cooling, off-grid energy, and water harvesting systems – based on the structural principles outlined in the Bungalow Guide.

5. Safe Use of Traditional Materials

- Provide technical guidance on the safe, code-aligned use of traditional materials, reinforcing quality assurance frameworks set out in the Bungalow Guide and linked to VTOMS compliance.

6. Digital and Mobile Learning Platforms

- Develop mobile-accessible training content to support outer island and remote community engagement, featuring local languages, visuals, and examples relevant to rural accommodation providers.

7. Knowledge Exchange and Mentorship

- Partner with ni-Vanuatu master builders, cultural leaders, and ecological architects to co-design and co-deliver learning activities. Establish mentorship networks and peer-learning exchanges to promote knowledge retention and intergenerational transfer.

8. Regional Learning and Scaling

- Document lessons learned from the Vanuatu implementation to inform replication and adaptation in other Pacific Island contexts, positioning Vanuatu as a regional leader in culturally grounded, climate-resilient tourism infrastructure

A summary of Interventions for Vanuatu relative to the Regional Roadmap is shown in Table 10 below, with dark green as the country-led and light green representing piloting of activities for region-led Interventions. Alignment of the Vanuatu Interventions with the VSTP and VSTS is detailed in Appendix G.

Table 10. Vanuatu Interventions: Focused and Pilot

Intervention Name	Regional / National	Key Activities	SPTO	VANUATU
1. Embed CE and SCP Principles in National Tourism Policy and other relevant policies	Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Vanuatu	Diagnostic review of current tourism policies and laws.		
		Stakeholder workshops to co-design updated policy goals and provisions.		
		Development of a legal/policy alignment toolkit for broader regional use.		
		Delivery of technical guidance and model policy clauses for integration into national frameworks.		
2. National Sustainable Tourism Standards Development	Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Vanuatu	Convene national working group of government, industry, and SME reps.		
		Facilitate a structured co-design process for new and existing standards with the sector.		
		Develop (or revise) draft standards and pilot implementation roadmap.		
		Promote take up through national training and financial incentives.		
		Produce guidelines to support roll out of SCP and Sustainable tourism practices across the region.		

Intervention Name	Regional / National	Key Activities	SPTO	VANUATU
3. Finalisation and implementation - Single Use Plastics Toolkit	Regional, with Vanuatu pilot	Finalise and enhance toolkit content, including decision trees, supplier directories, and practical templates.		
		Integrate circular economy principles into toolkit training and materials.		
		Translate resources into national languages and adapt content for SMEs and CBTEs.		
		Distribute the toolkit through National Tourism Organisations (NTOs) and conduct training sessions on implementation.		
		Support national consultations and workshops to adapt the SUP Standard for country-specific contexts.		
		Develop country-level implementation guidelines and sector-specific toolkits.		
		Facilitate SME and supplier engagement through awareness events, training, and technical support.		
4. Self-Assessment Tools – Government and Industry	Regional	Co-design user-friendly digital and printable assessment tools aligned with PSTS Destination and Industry Criteria.		
		Test the tool with pilot destinations to refine content and usability.		
		Provide workshops and online guidance.		
		Enable destinations to generate performance reports and action plans.		
		Allow anonymised comparison across destinations.		
5. Standards ‘Starter Pack’ and SCP Toolkit for CBTEs	Regional, with Fiji pilot	Develop a modular ‘Starter Pack’.		
		Align the Starter Pack with PSTS and SCP principles.		
		Translate and tailor materials for diverse contexts.		
		Identify and support 3–5 pilot CBTEs.		
		Create a user-friendly CBTE toolkit.		
		Document case studies and lessons learned.		
		Integrate pathways to access green finance.		
		Deliver training sessions.		
		Make resources available via SPTO’s Knowledge Hub.		

Intervention Name	Regional / National	Key Activities	SPTO	VANUATU
6. Pacific Sustainable Tourism Knowledge Exchange	Regional	Design and launch an interactive online platform.		
		Integrate peer-to-peer exchange features.		
		Develop training resources and guides.		
		Translate and adapt toolkits.		
		Deliver toolkits and training.		
		Maintain and update resources.		
7. Regional Dashboard for Measuring Tourism Sustainability	Regional, with Samoa pilot	Integrate destination-level SCP performance metrics.		
		Align metrics with PSTI and national systems.		
		Deliver training on data collection and interpretation.		
		Provide open-access elements.		
		Establish protocols for updates and enhancements.		
8. Public-Private Dialogue and Communication Platforms	Regional	- Establish a Regional PPD Platform.		
		Convene Sustainable Tourism Leadership Forums.		
		Develop PPD toolkits and templates.		
		Design national communication strategies.		
		Produce communication resources.		
		Support local customisation.		
		Run awareness campaigns.		
		Facilitate industry engagement.		
		Monitor and update materials.		
9. Sustainable Tourism Supply Chains and Aggregator Hubs	Regional with Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Vanuatu pilots	Identify key products and services.		
		Support sustainable product development.		
		Develop a supplier portal and product register.		
		Organise Pacific Sustainable Tourism Expo.		
		Analyse demand and logistics.		
		Establish aggregator hubs.		
		Co-design cooperative models.		
		Develop quality control systems.		

Intervention Name	Regional / National	Key Activities	SPTO	VANUATU
10. Farm-to-Table Procurement and Traceability Schemes	Fiji and Vanuatu	Pilot procurement platforms.		
		Provide training on standards and agri-business.		
		Introduce crop planning agreements.		
		Promote value-added products.		
11. Procurement and Purchasing Policy Development	Regional	Design model procurement policies.		
		Conduct stakeholder workshops.		
		Pilot procurement systems.		
		Develop Green Events Guideline.		
12. Sustainable Finance Mechanism and Support for Tourism Enterprises	Regional, with Fiji pilot	Establish a regional small grant scheme.		
		Provide technical assistance.		
		Build financial institution capacity.		
		Aggregate financing needs.		
		Co-design long-term financing models.		
13. Sustainable and Climate Resilient Tourism Accommodation Guidelines	Regional, with Fiji, Kiribati, Vanuatu pilots	Develop a 'green and resilient' building guide.		
		Facilitate policy consultations.		
		Provide guidance for regulatory adoption.		
14. Traditional and Sustainable Building Construction Techniques	Vanuatu	Develop demonstration projects and guides.		
		Advocate for traditional material testing.		
		Link practices to vocational training.		
		Deliver modular training programmes.		
		Facilitate traditional material use.		
		Develop mobile and digital learning tools.		
		Run peer mentoring programmes.		
		Share lessons regionally.		

4.2. STEP Regional Interventions that will support Vanuatu

4.2.1. Regional Interventions

Vanuatu will benefit from the nine regional interventions and as noted above, will be the pilot country for test implementation of two of these activities: the Implementation of Single Use Plastics Toolkit and Standards (Vanuatu 3) and the Climate Resilient Tourism Accommodation Guidelines (Vanuatu 6).

The set of regional initiatives includes support for mainstreaming CE and SCP principles in national tourism policy, developing toolkits for single-use plastics, supporting community-based tourism, and advancing sustainable finance solutions. Although only the two to be piloted in Vanuatu are detailed within this Country Pathway, these regional initiatives will provide Vanuatu with essential resources and technical support.

Details and key activities for each intervention, and whether they are best implemented at national or regional levels, are summarised in Appendix E and F.

4.2.2. Relationship Between Regional Roadmap and Country Pathways

Regional Roadmap: Led by SPTO, regional interventions focus on building capacity, supplying toolkits, and strengthening knowledge platforms and finance mechanisms, ensuring all member countries – including Vanuatu – can access regional policy frameworks, sustainability dashboards, and peer training opportunities.

Country Pathways: In-country interventions respond directly to local context and needs, piloted with targeted support and technical assistance. Successes and lessons from these pilots will help adapt, replicate, and scale solutions across the region as capacity develops.

Lessons learned from Vanuatu and other demonstration countries will be shared through regular reporting and peer exchanges, enabling broader regional adoption and customisation of effective practices. This collaborative approach accelerates sustainable tourism and circular economy progress across the Pacific, as illustrated in Figure 3.

By combining tailored national actions with shared regional support, Vanuatu’s Country Pathway presents a clear, practical roadmap for transforming its tourism sector.

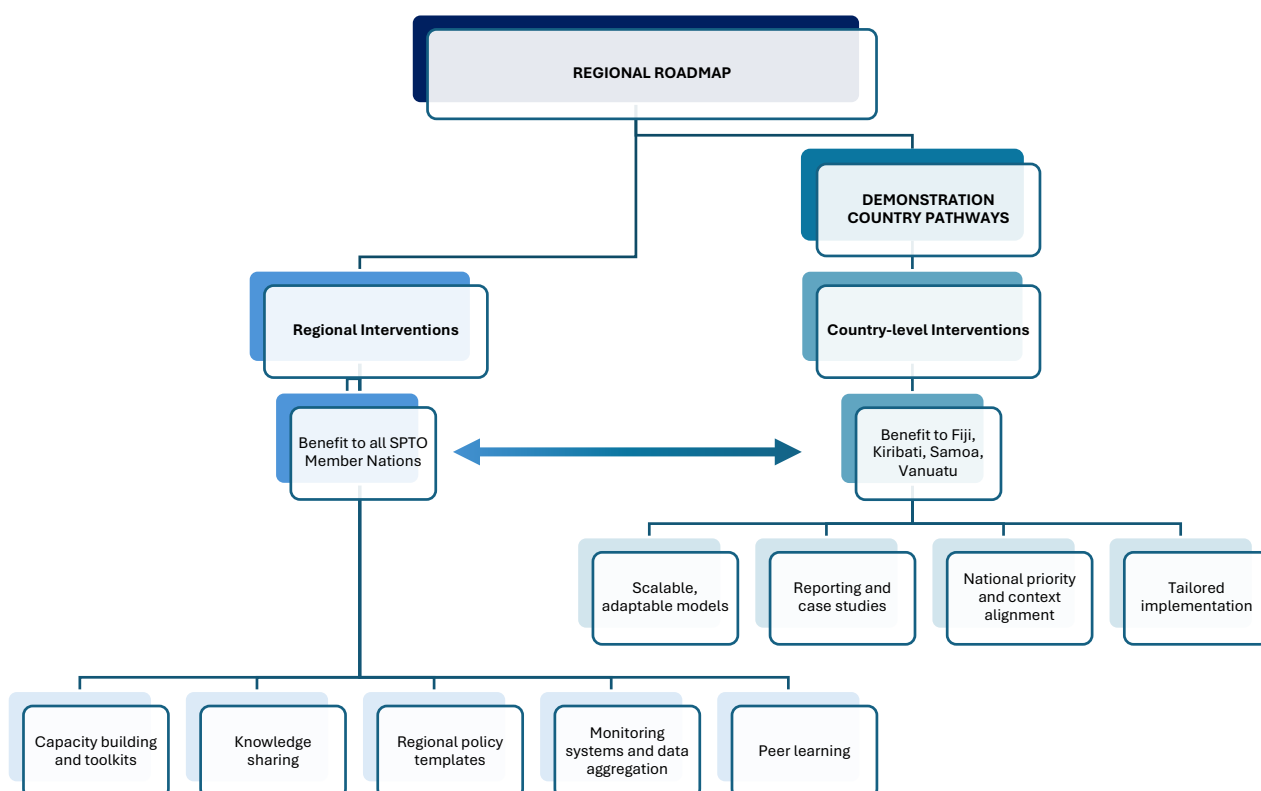


Figure 3. Framework of benefits to Regional Roadmap and Country Pathways

5. CONCLUSION

The Vanuatu Country Pathway offers a clear and practical means to advance a more sustainable, inclusive, and climate-resilient tourism sector. It builds directly on the VSTP (2019–2030) and VSTS (2021–2025) and reflects extensive input from government agencies, industry representatives, communities, and development partners. The result is a roadmap that translates national ambitions into actionable steps for embedding CE and SCP principles throughout the tourism system.

Progress will require overcoming entrenched constraints. Weak enforcement of existing standards, uneven industry uptake of sustainability practices, fragile supply chains, dependence on imports and fossil fuels, and limited finance and infrastructure for MSMEs and community-based enterprises all hold back the sector. The seven interventions outlined in this Pathway directly address these barriers. At the same time, regionally led activities under STEP provide Vanuatu with access to tools, expertise, and knowledge-sharing that target structural challenges common across the Pacific. Together, they strengthen the implementation of national tourism policies while building a more circular, resilient, and inclusive visitor economy.

Moving from strategy to practice will depend on a set of enabling conditions. Stronger coordination across ministries and between national and provincial levels is essential. MSMEs and CBTEs will require access to concessional finance and investment incentives to adopt renewable energy, improve waste management, and expand circular business models. Training, awareness programmes, and practical toolkits must be rolled out so that standards are achievable for operators of every scale, not just large resorts.

Collaboration will be central to success. The Department of Tourism and the Vanuatu Tourism Office must continue to provide leadership, while the private sector and community stakeholders help embed sustainability in day-to-day operations and supply chains. Development partners and regional bodies such as SPTO and SPREP can add value by offering technical support, harmonising standards, and facilitating regional learning networks.

Through this Country Pathway, Vanuatu can strengthen its tourism economy while also reinforcing its position as a regional leader in responsible tourism. By aligning standards with the PSTS, promoting local value chains, applying climate-smart accommodation guidelines, and reviving traditional building methods, Vanuatu can show how sustainability is not only compatible with growth but can enhance cultural identity and resilience.

The challenge now is to maintain momentum and demonstrate measurable results. With strong leadership, effective coordination, and targeted support from partners, Vanuatu can deliver on its ambition of a high-value, low-impact tourism sector – one that protects natural and cultural assets, creates opportunities for communities, and builds resilience for the future.

APPENDICES

Appendix A. Key Terms and Concepts

Tourism, Circular Economy & Sustainable Consumption and Production

Circular Economy

Circular Economy (CE) in the context of tourism refers to an economic model that moves away from the traditional 'take-make-dispose' approach and instead promotes the continual use and regeneration of resources to minimise waste, pollution, and environmental impact.

Applied to tourism, the circular economy involves:

- Designing out waste from tourism infrastructure, products, and services (e.g. through reusable materials, modular construction, zero-waste accommodation)
- Keeping materials and products in use by extending their life cycles through repair, reuse, recycling, and sharing (e.g. refillable amenities, second-life furnishings, rental equipment)
- Regenerating natural systems by restoring biodiversity, enhancing ecosystem services, and supporting local food production and renewable energy initiatives
- Creating closed-loop systems across tourism supply chains (e.g. farm-to-table food systems, water reuse, composting, and circular procurement practices).

In tourism, adopting circular economy principles supports resource efficiency, climate resilience, and local economic empowerment, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (particularly SDG 12 and SDG 13). It contributes to building low-carbon, regenerative tourism destinations where growth enhances rather than depletes natural and cultural capital.

Sustainable Consumption and Production

Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) refers to the use of resources in a way that minimises environmental impacts, enhances social equity, and supports long-term economic viability across the tourism value chain.

In line with SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production, SCP in tourism involves designing and managing tourism products, services, and operations that:

- Reduce waste and pollution, including energy and water consumption, single-use plastics, and greenhouse gas emissions
- Promote resource efficiency, circular economy practices, and sustainable sourcing (e.g. local food systems, low-impact infrastructure)
- Support fair and inclusive economic opportunities for local communities, including women, youth, and Indigenous groups
- Encourage responsible visitor behaviour that respects cultural values, biodiversity, and heritage sites.

SCP aims to decouple tourism growth from environmental degradation, ensuring that the benefits of tourism are shared equitably while preserving the natural and cultural assets that underpin the sector's long-term sustainability. It is foundational to building resilient, regenerative tourism systems in line with the SDGs.

Appendix B. In-country Consultations – Stakeholders Met

Table 11. Stakeholders consulted during STEP mission to Vanuatu, December 2024

Date	Position/Organisation
19.11.24	Vanuatu Department of Tourism
	Principal Accreditation Officer, Vanuatu Tourism Office
	Department of Customs and Inland Revenue
	Utilities Regulatory Authority
	Department of Industry
	Department of Agriculture
	Quality Solutions
20.11.24	Vanuatu Tourism Operators Association (VTOA)
	Vanuatu Hotels and Resorts Association (VHRA)
	VESS, VSOA and Recyclers and Waste Management Association
	Australian Pacific Training Coalition (APTC)
	Skills Partnership
21.11.24	MFAT (NZHC)
	Planning & Aid Coordination
	Department of Environment
	Department of Energy
	DSPPAC, Prime Minister's Office
	GEF FAO
21.12.24	International Finance Corporation (IFC)

Appendix C. STEP Baseline Survey Findings

The STEP Project Baseline Survey (2024/25) reviewed tourism standards in 14 of the 20 SPTO member countries identifying key gaps and opportunities. Pacific nations were asked to assess the alignment of their current standards with PSTS and highlight priority areas for targeted support. The results for Vanuatu are presented below.

Destination Governance and Policy Priorities

This set of questions was designed to determine which nations had established tourism standards, the extent to which these aligned with the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standards (PSTS), and the level of interagency collaboration supporting sustainable tourism efforts. Key findings included:

Vanuatu has an established tourism standard that is partially aligned with the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standard (PSTS). Government collaboration on sustainable tourism is active and includes partnerships with a broad range of agencies such as the Departments of Environment, Fisheries, Vanuatu Cultural Centre, and other regulatory bodies.

Alignment with PSTS criteria is not yet comprehensive across the standard, particularly in areas such as business monitoring, visitor satisfaction, and sustainable procurement.

The application of these standards is uneven, and data collection systems to monitor implementation are either lacking or inconsistently applied.

Institutional capacity to measure progress or evaluate compliance remains limited. Without systematic data collection, it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of current frameworks or identify areas requiring targeted improvement.

Capacity-building and awareness-raising across both public and private stakeholders are essential to ensure consistent implementation and to strengthen the enabling environment for sustainable tourism.

Priorities for Support

1. Strengthen alignment of existing tourism standards with PSTS across all pillars
2. Improve stakeholder coordination and inter-agency collaboration mechanisms
3. Develop monitoring and evaluation systems to track progress and compliance
4. Increase understanding of PSTS within DoT

Insight: National frameworks and inter-agency collaboration provide a strong foundation for sustainable tourism governance, but further alignment with PSTS and improvements in coordination, data systems, and institutional capacity are essential for achieving consistent implementation.

Economic Priorities

This set of questions was designed to test alignment with PSTS Goal 1 (Prosperous Economies). Key findings included:

- The national tourism standard incorporates many of the key economic elements under PSTS Goal 1, including business resilience, stakeholder communication, legal compliance, and marketing.
- Certain areas such as visitor satisfaction, sustainable procurement, and performance monitoring remain only partially addressed or entirely excluded. There is limited integration of circular economy concepts such as efficient resource use or sustainable supply chains.
- Data collection practices are inconsistent. While some initiatives such as visitor satisfaction surveys or business audits have been implemented, they are not systematically applied across all economic indicators. As a result, progress cannot be effectively tracked, and policy responsiveness is constrained.

Priorities for Support

1. Business monitoring and reporting (e.g. energy, water, and resource use)
2. Sustainable purchasing (e.g. eco-friendly sourcing and procurement)
3. Marketing and promotion (e.g. accurate and ethical branding)
4. Visitor satisfaction measurement systems
5. Business resilience planning tools
6. Stakeholder engagement and communication frameworks

Insight: Economic sustainability frameworks are in place but require more consistent implementation, expanded data systems, and support for MSMEs to adopt circular business practices.

Social Priorities

This set of questions was designed to test alignment with PSTS Goal 2 (Thriving and Inclusive Communities). Key findings included:

- Social sustainability remains a major area for improvement. Across all PSTS Goal 2 priorities - including inclusion, decent work, accessibility, community participation, and local enterprise support - implementation is either nascent or lacking.
- Tourism policy recognises the importance of social inclusion, but practical application at the destination and business level is limited.
- There are currently no systematic efforts to collect data on social indicators, making it difficult to monitor equity outcomes or community wellbeing.
- Without clear metrics or mechanisms for community feedback, tourism development risks overlooking the needs and rights of local populations.

Priorities for Support

1. Strengthening social inclusion (e.g. women, youth, marginalised groups)
2. Empowering communities to participate in tourism
3. Encouraging community participation in planning
4. Supporting local businesses and communities
5. Monitoring community feedback mechanisms
6. Ensuring decent and fair work conditions
7. Improving accessibility (e.g. infrastructure, information, services)

Insight: A comprehensive approach to social inclusion is required, supported by new tools, awareness-raising, and integration of community priorities into planning and monitoring frameworks.

Cultural Priorities

This set of questions was designed to test alignment with PSTS Goal 3 (Visible & Valued Cultures). Key findings included:

- The protection and promotion of cultural heritage is a recognised policy priority in Vanuatu. Most of the PSTS Goal 3 criteria are considered to be addressed, including cultural heritage conservation, support for local life and traditions, and enhancing community access to cultural sites.
- Gaps persist in visitor interpretation services, protection of intellectual property, and systems for managing tourism impacts on communities.
- Cultural data collection remains weak, limiting the ability to evaluate the effectiveness of current programmes or monitor risks to cultural integrity.

- Without structured interpretation tools and safeguards for traditional knowledge, opportunities to meaningfully engage visitors and protect cultural assets are missed.

Priorities for Support

1. Interpretation for visitors at cultural and natural sites
2. Managing the impacts of tourism on local communities
3. Protecting intellectual property (e.g. kastom, traditional expressions)
4. Enhancing community access to tourism assets
5. Promoting and presenting cultural heritage authentically

Insight: Cultural sustainability is well established at the policy level but requires operational investments - particularly in interpretation, IP protection, and community engagement - to ensure it translates into practice.

Environmental Priorities

This set of questions was designed to test alignment with PSTS Goal 4 (Healthy Islands & Oceans). Key findings included:

- Environmental sustainability is the area with the most significant gaps. Key areas such as waste management, water use, energy conservation, and pollution control are either not adequately addressed or lack implementation systems.
- Although planning frameworks exist - such as those relating to development controls or nature conservation - there is limited enforcement and insufficient data to measure environmental performance.
- Many tourism businesses, especially in outer islands, face barriers to compliance due to lack of infrastructure and financing.
- There is minimal adoption of renewable energy, low awareness of carbon reduction strategies, and persistent reliance on single-use plastics and imported goods.

Priorities for Support

1. Solid waste management infrastructure and enforcement
2. Wastewater treatment and sanitation improvements
3. Water use efficiency and drought resilience systems
4. Energy conservation and renewable energy transition
5. Carbon footprint reduction (e.g. low-emissions transport, local sourcing)
6. Visitor management at sensitive or high-traffic sites
7. Wildlife and biodiversity protection
8. Light and noise pollution control
9. Disaster risk reduction for tourism areas
10. Strengthening planning and development controls

Insight: Environmental sustainability remains critically underdeveloped. Addressing it will require infrastructure investments, clearer enforcement pathways, and capacity-building for both government and the private sector.

Circular Economy and Sustainable Consumption and Production

This set of questions was designed to test countries' understanding of, and appetite for, CE and SCP interventions in the tourism sector. Key findings included:

- There is strong awareness of the opportunities presented by CE models and SCP principles, particularly for reducing waste, promoting local sourcing, and increasing business efficiency.
- Practical implementation is low. The enabling conditions - such as access to green finance, technical assistance, supplier directories, and public procurement incentives - are not yet in place.
- Tourism businesses express interest in adopting more sustainable practices but are constrained by high costs, limited availability of eco-products, and a lack of regulatory guidance or certification systems.
- Current procurement decisions are primarily cost-driven, rather than sustainability-led.

Priorities for Support

1. Supporting eco-friendly and locally made products and services
2. Promoting resource-efficient operations (e.g. energy and water conservation)
3. Developing educational programmes for tourists and operators
4. Encouraging sustainable procurement practices
5. Enhancing collaboration between tourism businesses and communities
6. Incentivising circular business models (reuse, repair, refurbish)
7. Implementing policies and tools to support CE/SCP adoption

Insight: While readiness is high, CE and SCP integration requires targeted policy support, incentives for business transformation, and structured systems to connect tourism demand with sustainable supply.

Conclusions from the Survey

The STEP baseline survey findings confirm that while Vanuatu's policy environment is generally supportive of sustainable tourism, implementation remains uneven. Tourism standards show partial alignment with the PSTS, but their practical application varies widely across themes. Economic and cultural priorities are more embedded in current frameworks, whereas social and environmental goals continue to face persistent shortfalls. Notably, a lack of systematic data collection limits both monitoring and adaptive management across all PSTS pillars.

At the enterprise level, MSME – particularly in outer islands – struggle to operationalise sustainable practices due to limited access to finance, infrastructure, and technical capacity. While CE/SCP principles are broadly endorsed in concept, practical adoption remains low, constrained by the absence of enabling incentives, supplier visibility, and integration into procurement or licensing processes. Stakeholders demonstrated strong interest in tools, training, and market access mechanisms that could help shift practices, but implementation will require structured, targeted support and delivery systems.

Appendix D. Regional Validation and Findings

In-country Consultations – Summary of Findings

Consultations conducted in Fiji, Samoa, Kiribati, and Vanuatu under the STEP Project identified a strong and unified commitment to advancing sustainable tourism SCP practices. Guided by the PSTPF and aligned national strategies, each country is working to embed sustainability in its tourism sector in ways that protect cultural heritage, support livelihoods, and build climate resilience.

While this intent is clear, all four countries face significant implementation constraints. Common challenges include limited institutional capacity, fragmented coordination across government agencies, and insufficient resources to translate sustainability goals into practice. NTOs are increasingly expected to shift from a promotional role to one focused on destination management and sustainability leadership, but many lack the staffing, funding, and technical skills required to fulfil this expanded mandate.

Key constraints also exist within the tourism industry. Many MSMEs have low awareness of CE/SCP practices and are not supported by incentives or guidance to make meaningful changes. Market access for sustainable products and services remains underdeveloped, with fragmented supply chains, limited verification systems, and low visibility for local producers.

Despite these barriers, each demonstration country has identified a set of priority actions to guide national progress. Common areas of focus include:

- Strengthening governance through inter-agency coordination and steering committees.
- Expanding tourism standards to address the full scope of sustainability, particularly for community-based and agritourism initiatives.
- Building institutional and industry capacity through training, data systems, and awareness strategies.
- Supporting sustainable procurement and supply chains, especially in food systems and waste reduction.
- Embedding sustainability considerations into planning, investment, and regulatory systems.

These consultations highlight both the opportunity and the need for targeted support to enable these countries to move from intention to implementation. Investment in capacity building, incentives, infrastructure, and knowledge-sharing will be essential to realise their national visions and contribute to broader regional outcomes. The actions identified form a critical input into the Regional Roadmap and offer strong potential for replication across other Pacific Island Countries. Further details of the findings of the in-country consultation, supported by desk research, are provided in Background Report.

Overcoming Barriers to Sustainable Tourism

The STEP Baseline Survey and demonstration country consultations highlight a consistent set of structural, institutional, and industry-level barriers that are impeding progress on the transition to more sustainable tourism and the implementation of the PSTS.

Table 12. Key barriers to transition

Barrier	Representative Issues
Institutional Capacity and Governance Constraints	NTOs are under-resourced, with limited staff, skills, and funding to lead sustainable tourism efforts. Governance responsibilities are fragmented across multiple ministries, resulting in poor coordination and lack of leadership. Existing tourism standards are narrow in scope and weakly aligned with PSTS.
Limited Industry Awareness and Incentives	MSMEs lack awareness of SCP and CE principles. Few financial or non-financial incentives exist to drive adoption. Training and guidance are limited, especially in remote areas.
Weak Policy Integration and Monitoring Systems	Sustainability is often embedded in policy but lacks enforcement and monitoring tools. Data collection on key indicators is minimal. Licensing and regulations often do not mandate sustainability.
Market and Supply Chain Barriers	Fragmented supply chains, low local production, and limited importer willingness hinder access to sustainable goods. No clear authority defines sustainable products. Local supplier aggregation is limited.
Sectoral Fragmentation Across CE and SCP Initiatives	Multiple uncoordinated actors lead to duplication. CE and SCP initiatives are disconnected and difficult to scale.
Access to Finance	MSMEs face persistent challenges accessing grants, loans, and concessional finance for sustainable upgrades.
Knowledge and Skills Gaps	Limited training programmes, minimal access to best practices, and weak peer-learning systems.
Regional Coordination	Knowledge-sharing is weak. Innovation tends to be concentrated in a few countries like Fiji and Vanuatu.
Incentive Frameworks	Policy levers such as tax relief or import concessions are rarely used to promote sustainable practices.
Public–Private Collaboration	Low trust and fragmented engagement between governments, NGOs, and businesses limit coordinated action.
Recognition of Local Practices	Traditional knowledge and successful local sustainability models are underutilised.
Data and Monitoring	Insufficient systems to track and evaluate environmental, social, and economic performance.

Regional Validation Workshop – Outcomes

A key objective of the workshop was to validate the challenges and priority focus areas for advancing sustainable tourism, CE/SCP principles into national tourism strategies. Engaging stakeholders from government, the private sector, NGOs, and development partners, the workshop used interactive polling and breakout sessions to assess and refine six proposed focus areas. These included governance, capacity building, waste and resource efficiency, sustainable purchasing, agriculture-tourism linkages, and sustainable buildings. Cross-cutting issues such as supply chains and green finance were also discussed.

Participants ranked the focus areas at both the start and end of the workshop, revealing a strong preference for systemic and capacity-building approaches. Building on the validation exercise, and stakeholder insights gathered during the workshop, the thematic areas were further refined and analysed to capture the barriers, support needs, and opportunities identified. The six thematic areas were reframed and refined to five. Each represents a different aspect of systemic shift toward sustainable tourism in the Pacific and collectively they form the basis of both regional priorities and national implementation pathways.

1. Enabling Sector Transition

- Focus on strengthening institutional systems, improving knowledge-sharing platforms, building SME and CBTE capacity, and embedding monitoring and evaluation
- Key initiatives support regional learning hubs, targeted grant schemes, and SCP communications strategies

2. National and Regional Policy Support

- Targets regulatory and governance reform to mainstream SCP and sustainable tourism into policy frameworks
- Supports policy dialogue, industry standards, self-assessment tools, and public-private dialogue platforms

3. Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) Practices

- Aims to reduce plastic use and promote circular economy practices through toolkits, supply chain development, and sustainable procurement models
- Empowers SMEs and governments to adopt SUP-free alternatives and eco-friendly supply systems

4. Sustainable Buildings and Infrastructure

- Advances climate-resilient and culturally grounded tourism infrastructure through traditional building methods and finance facilities
- Includes technical training, green infrastructure standards, and demonstration projects

5. Agriculture and Tourism Linkages

- Promotes agritourism through structured procurement platforms, aggregator hubs, and traceability tools
- Strengthens local livelihoods and food security through enhanced agriculture-tourism integration
- Further detail on the activities and outcomes of the Regional Validation Workshop is provided in Background Report and the Workshop Report

Appendix E. Interventions per Regional Roadmap

Foundational Elements

Intervention 1: Embed CE and SCP Principles in National Policy

Objective: Facilitate and advance the national policy dialogue and policy formulation on Sustainable Tourism and SCP implementation. Support regional and national authorities to plan and implement policies that assist the development of sustainable tourism and SCP practices

Outcome: An improved policy enabling environment that favours the inclusion of standards and SCP in national policy formulation and implementation, aligned with the PSTPF (to the extent viable).

Recommended Implementation: Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Vanuatu

Key Activities

- Diagnostic review of current tourism policies and laws
- Stakeholder workshops to co-design updated policy goals and provisions
- Development of a legal/policy alignment toolkit for broader regional use
- Delivery of technical guidance and model policy clauses for integration into national frameworks

Intervention 2: National Sustainable Tourism Standards Development

Objective: Establish national tourism industry standards aligned with the PSTS and SCP principles, through participatory processes involving SME operators.

Outcome: National tourism industry standards are developed or strengthened through inclusive, participatory processes that actively engage small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), ensuring the framework is practical, culturally relevant, and promotes improved environmental, social, and economic outcomes across the sector. The project also generates transferable insights, with key learnings captured in a toolkit to support replication and adaptation by other Pacific nations.

Recommended Implementation: Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Vanuatu

Key Activities

- Convene national working group of government, industry, and SME reps
- Facilitate a structured co-design process for new and existing standards with the sector
- Develop (or revise) draft standards and pilot implementation roadmap
- Promote take up through national training and financial incentives
- Produce guidelines to support roll out of SCP and Sustainable tourism practices across the region

Intervention 3: Finalisation and Implementation of Single Use Plastics Toolkit

Objective: To finalise, adapt, and facilitate the regional roll-out of the SPTO/SPREP Single Use Plastics (SUP) Toolkit and Standard, enabling widespread adoption by tourism operators across the Pacific. The project supports the integration of broader sustainability practices such as water reuse, energy efficiency, composting, and local food systems, particularly among SMEs and Community-Based Tourism Enterprises (CBTEs).

Outcome: Tourism SMEs and destination stakeholders across the Pacific are equipped with practical, locally relevant tools to reduce single-use plastics and implement sustainable operating practices. The initiative leads to improved waste management, reduced environmental impact, and stronger alignment with regional sustainability standards and the PSTS).

Recommended Implementation: Vanuatu and recommended inclusion of Samoa

Key Activities

- Finalise and enhance toolkit content, including decision trees, supplier directories, and practical templates
- Integrate circular economy principles into toolkit training and materials
- Translate resources into national languages and adapt content for SMEs and CBTEs
- Distribute the toolkit through National Tourism Organisations (NTOs) and conduct training sessions on implementation
- Support national consultations and workshops to adapt the SUP Standard for country-specific contexts
- Develop country-level implementation guidelines and sector-specific toolkits
- Facilitate SME and supplier engagement through awareness events, training, and technical support

Intervention 4: Self-Assessment Tools for Government and Industry

Objective: To develop a practical self-assessment tool tailored to National Tourism Organisations (NTOs), enabling them to evaluate and strengthen their alignment with the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standards (PSTS) for Destinations across the four key sustainability pillars.

Outcome: NTOs across the Pacific are equipped with a user-friendly, standards-based self-assessment tool that enhances their capacity to identify gaps, track progress, and implement improvements in line with PSTS for Destinations, fostering more accountable, strategic, and sustainable tourism governance.

Recommended Implementation: Regional

Key Activities

- Tool Design: Co-design user-friendly digital and printable assessment tools aligned with a) PSTS Destination Criteria and SCP principles and b) PSTS Industry Criteria and SCP principles (the latter sitting within, or as a complementary starting point to, any national programme)
- Piloting and Feedback: Test the tool with pilot destinations to refine content and usability
- Integration and Training: Provide workshops and online guidance to support NTOs and local government in using the tool as part of planning and review processes
- Scorecards and Reports: Enable destinations to generate performance reports and action plans from self-assessment results
- Regional Benchmarking: Allow anonymised comparison across destinations to identify strengths, gaps, and good practices

Intervention 5: Standards ‘Starter Pack’ and SCP Toolkit for Community-Based Tourism Enterprises (CBTEs)

Objective: To develop and roll out a practical and culturally relevant ‘Starter Pack’ that supports National Tourism Organisations (NTOs), tourism SMEs, and Community-Based Tourism Enterprises (CBTEs) in initiating and implementing national tourism standards aligned with the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standards (PSTS). The project also includes a co-developed SCP toolkit tailored specifically to CBTEs, enabling them to apply sustainable practices, enhance service quality, and build local capacity for long-term resilience.

Outcome: Tourism stakeholders, including NTOs, SMEs, and CBTEs, are equipped with accessible tools and guidance to begin or strengthen their engagement with sustainability standards and practices. The Starter Pack provides a structured approach for standard development and alignment with PSTS, while the CBTE-focused toolkit enhances local-level sustainability, operational capacity, and access to support. Together, these tools contribute to inclusive, scalable, and locally driven pathways for sustainable tourism across the Pacific.

Recommended Implementation: Fiji, and recommended inclusion of Vanuatu and Samoa

Key Activities:

- Develop a modular ‘Starter Pack’ including templates, step-by-step guides, checklists, and case studies to support countries in initiating or advancing national tourism standards.
- Align the Starter Pack with PSTS and SCP principles and adapt for accessibility by both public agencies and tourism operators, especially SMEs and CBTEs.
- Translate materials into local languages and tailor content for low-resource settings and diverse cultural contexts.
- Identify and support 3–5 pilot CBTEs in different Pacific settings to co-design and test a practical SCP toolkit.
- Create a user-friendly CBTE toolkit featuring operational checklists, examples of good practice, and basic training modules.
- Document case studies and lessons learned through the pilot process to inform regional adaptation.
- Integrate pathways to access green finance mechanisms tailored to CBTEs, including micro-grants and technical assistance (linked to broader finance support initiatives).
- Deliver regional and in-country training sessions for NTOs, CBTEs, and SMEs to facilitate adoption and use of both toolkits.
- Make both resources available via SPTO’s Pacific Sustainable Tourism Knowledge Hub to support regional learning and long-term uptake.

Intervention 6: Pacific Sustainable Tourism Knowledge Exchange

Objective: To rationalise, enhance and expand existing SPTO resource platforms to support knowledge sharing on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) practices, enabling regional progress tracking, capacity building, and stakeholder collaboration across the Pacific. Existing platforms include a Knowledge Hub (managed by the Research and Statistics Team), the SPTO Training Portal (managed by the SPTO Marketing Team) which has online training modules from all SPTO divisions, and the (nascent) Pacific Sustainable Tourism Portal (managed by the Sustainable Tourism Team) which is intended to be a platform for sharing best practices, case studies, stories, etc.

Outcome: National Authorities and Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the tourism sector demonstrate increased awareness and understanding of sustainable tourism and Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) practices, leading to greater engagement in responsible business operations and sustainability initiatives.

Recommended Implementation: Regional

Key Activities

- Knowledge Exchange: Design and launch an interactive exchange for toolkits, templates, training materials, and data dashboards
- Peer-to-Peer Exchange: Integrate discussion boards, webinars, and regional case study libraries to promote peer learning and exchange
- Training Resources: series of step-by-step guides and templates for priority implementation areas, including:
 - Tourism policy and legislative reform development
 - Tourism policy implementation and project management
 - MEAL toolkit
 - Guidance on designing tax incentives, import duty waivers, and enabling policies.
 - Industry standard development and revision
 - Public-private dialogue (PPD) structures
 - Community-Based Tourism Enterprise (CBTE) standards

- Incentive programmes
- Enforcement and compliance frameworks
- Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for cross-agency coordination
- 'Quick wins' and case study compendium
- Training Modules: Package toolkits with adaptable training materials and peer learning resources for use in national and regional capacity-building programmes
- Localisation: Translate toolkits and other selected resources into local languages and adapt content to national contexts for accessibility and relevance
- Dissemination and Uptake: Deliver toolkits and training through regional workshops, online platforms, and targeted in-country sessions
- Resources to maintain and update

Intervention 7: Regional Dashboard for Measuring Tourism Sustainability

Objective: Integrating with *Project 1 Pacific Sustainable Tourism Knowledge Platform and Skill Development*, develop an interactive dashboard that visualises and tracks Pacific Island countries' progress on sustainable tourism and Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) practices. Project should support data collection systems at national level and be consistent with the Pacific Tourism Statistics Strategy (PTSS) and Pacific Sustainable Tourism Indicators (PSTI).

Outcome: Policymakers, tourism stakeholders, and development partners gain timely, accessible insights into national and regional progress on sustainable tourism and SCP, enabling data-driven decision-making, accountability, and targeted support. Tracking metrics and over time/where applicable progressing against targets, become criteria to unlock other benefits (e.g. preferential marketing, financing, grants, technical assistance).

Recommended Implementation: Regional with Samoa pilot

Key Activities

- Dashboard Development: Integrate destination-level metrics for SCP performance, sustainability standards, and MEL indicators at national and regional level
- Data Integration: Align metrics with PSTI; integrate with existing national data systems
- Capacity Building: Deliver training to NTOs and relevant ministries on data collection, input, and interpretation
- Industry Access and Advocacy: Provide open-access elements to enhance transparency and raise stakeholder awareness of regional progress
- Continuous Improvement: Establish protocols for annual data updates and dashboard enhancement based on user feedback and policy changes

Intervention 8: Public-Private Dialogue and Communication Platforms

Objective: To strengthen regional and national dialogue, collaboration, and communication between public agencies, tourism operators, SMEs, and communities in support of sustainable tourism practices. The project aims to promote the adoption of Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) and alignment with the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standards (PSTS) through structured engagement mechanisms and tailored communication tools.

Outcome: Improved coordination and capacity across the tourism sector to communicate, advocate for, and implement sustainable tourism practices. National Tourism Organisations (NTOs), private sector leaders, and community-based operators are supported with clear messaging, tools, and platforms that build awareness, increase participation, and align actions with SCP and PSTS objectives.

Recommended Implementation: Regional

Key Activities

- Establish a Regional Public-Private Dialogue (PPD) Platform: Facilitate open, merit-based industry representation to ensure SMEs and private sector leaders are actively involved in regional tourism policy discussions
- Convene Sustainable Tourism Leadership Forums: Host regional and national events to bring together governments, industry, development partners, and community representatives to share lessons and showcase leadership in SCP implementation
- Develop PPD Toolkits and Templates: Provide practical guidance for countries to establish national-level dialogue structures, including terms of reference and facilitation tools
- Design National Communication Strategies: Develop adaptable strategies and advocacy approaches tailored to tourism and non-tourism audiences
- Produce Communication Resources: Create media toolkits, infographics, posters, and social media content on priority topics such as waste reduction, energy efficiency, and local sourcing
- Support Local Customisation: Assist countries in adapting messages and materials to local contexts, including translation into national languages
- Run Awareness Campaigns: Launch regional and country-level campaigns featuring case studies, practical tips, and industry showcases to promote SCP and PSTS uptake
- Facilitate Industry Engagement: Organise webinars and workshops to improve tourism business capacity in sustainability communication and PSTS alignment
- Feedback and Monitoring: Track the effectiveness of campaigns and platforms, and update materials based on industry and community input
- Integration into Knowledge Exchange House all tools, case studies, and resources on the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Knowledge Exchange for ongoing access and learning

Enabling Mechanisms

Intervention 9: Sustainable Tourism Supply Chains and Aggregator Hubs

Objective: To strengthen local and regional supply chains by supporting the development of sustainable tourism products and establishing local aggregator hubs that connect small-scale producers with tourism markets. This project aims to reduce reliance on imports, enhance product accessibility and quality, and foster stronger linkages between agriculture, manufacturing, and tourism in line with Circular Economy (CE) principles.

Outcome: Tourism operators across the Pacific - particularly in Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, and Vanuatu - gain improved access to locally produced, affordable, and sustainable products. Smallholder producers benefit from reliable market access through coordinated aggregation and logistics support, resulting in reduced supply gaps, increased incomes, and stronger integration of local businesses into tourism value chains.

Recommended Implementation: Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Vanuatu

Key Activities

- Supply Chain Mapping: Identify key products, materials, and services required by the tourism sector at the national level
- Support for Sustainable Product Development: Identify local and regional producers of sustainable, biodegradable, or reusable alternatives to high-impact materials; provide technical assistance and co-funding to support innovation and market access
- Supplier Portal and Product Register: Develop and maintain a national register and online portal showcasing verified sustainable suppliers, with regional aggregation to support cross-border procurement
- Pacific Sustainable Tourism Expo: Organise a regional platform for micro and small tourism operators to showcase sustainable products, build visibility, and connect with potential buyers and partners

- Demand and Aggregation Analysis: Analyse seasonal demand from tourism businesses to identify suitable locations and logistics for aggregation
- Establishment of Aggregator Hubs: Set up community-based hubs to coordinate supply, manage logistics, and consolidate production among smallholder groups
- Cooperative Models and Scaling Support: Co-design cooperative business models to scale smallholder engagement in tourism supply chains
- Quality Assurance: Develop and implement quality control systems to meet tourism buyer expectations in terms of consistency, standards, and volume

Intervention 10: Farm-to-Table Procurement and Traceability Schemes

Objective: Establish structured procurement systems and traceability tools to connect local producers with hotels, resorts, and tourism operators.

Outcome: Local producers secure consistent tourism market access through transparent, traceable procurement systems, leading to stronger local supply chains, reduced reliance on imports, and increased demand for sustainably sourced products.

Recommended Implementation: Fiji and Vanuatu

Key Activities

- Pilot farm-to-hotel/resort procurement platforms with traceability tools (digital or manual)
- Provide training and mentoring on safety and hygiene standards, quality control, and agri-business development (e.g. food supply for the tourism sector)
- Introduce crop planning agreements between farmer cooperatives and large-scale buyers
- Identify and promote value-added products and alternatives to reduce seasonal supply constraints

Intervention 11: Procurement and Purchasing Policy Development

Objective: Support the development and piloting of sustainable procurement policies for National Tourism Organisations (NTOs) and the tourism sector, demonstrating how to phase out single-use plastics and other unsustainable materials through guidelines and actionable standards.

Outcome: Pilot countries establish and test practical, transparent procurement policies that reduce harmful material use in tourism operations, providing a replicable model and trusted guidance to inform broader national policy and industry adoption.

Recommended Implementation: Regional

Key Activities

- Design model procurement policies and templates for public and private sector adoption
- Conduct stakeholder consultation workshops with ministries and business associations
- Pilot procurement systems in select destinations and monitor impact
- Develop a Green Events Guideline: providing guidance for sustainable events for industry and Government

Intervention 12: Sustainable Finance Mechanism and Support for Tourism Enterprises

Objective: To establish a comprehensive financial support mechanism that enables private sector tourism operators and Community-Based Tourism Enterprises (CBTEs) to adopt and scale Circular Economy (CE) and Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) practices. The project also aims to strengthen the investment-readiness of businesses and foster greater engagement from financial institutions and development partners in supporting sustainable tourism.

Outcome: Tourism enterprises across the Pacific - regardless of scale - have improved access to tailored financial support, enabling the implementation of CE and SCP-aligned practices. The mechanism supports enhanced resource efficiency, low-impact infrastructure development, and long-term business sustainability. It also builds the financial literacy and investment readiness of tourism operators while engaging financial institutions in creating scalable, ongoing financing solutions.

Recommended Implementation: Regional, with Fiji pilot

Key Activities

- Establish a regional small grant scheme offering competitive grants (e.g. USD 5,000–USD 20,000) to support MSME and NGOs undertake projects such as waste minimisation, renewable energy adoption, sustainable product development, and eco-efficient infrastructure
- Provide technical assistance to businesses on business planning, compliance, and proposal development
- Engage and build the capacity of financial institutions to understand sustainable tourism models and assess investment viability
- Aggregate sector financing needs to make the case for broader institutional support through grants, loans, or concessional financing mechanisms
- Explore and co-design long-term financing models tailored to the needs of SMEs, entrepreneurs, and CBTEs across the Pacific

Applied and Scalable Initiatives

Intervention 13: Sustainable and Climate Resilient Tourism Accommodation Guidelines

Objective: Develop and institutionalise practical guidelines for sustainable, climate-resilient tourism accommodation, with a focus on low-carbon materials and energy-efficient construction, renovation, and refurbishment.

Outcome: Tourism accommodation providers adopt sustainability guidelines that improve building performance, reduce carbon emissions, and enhance climate resilience -contributing to greener infrastructure across the Pacific region.

Recommended Implementation: Regional, with Fiji, Kiribati and Vanuatu pilots

Key Activities

- Develop a 'green and resilient' building guide for hotels and other accommodation in consultation with developers and other experts
- Facilitate policy consultations with ministries, developers, and other experts
- Provide guidance materials for regulatory adoption and implementation

Intervention 14: Traditional and Sustainable Building Construction Techniques

Objective: To promote the integration of sustainable, traditional, and climate-resilient building practices in tourism infrastructure by showcasing culturally rooted construction techniques and strengthening local capacity through hands-on training and skills development.

Outcome: Traditional building knowledge is revitalised and integrated into tourism development, supporting cultural preservation and environmental sustainability. Local builders, tourism operators, and community members gain practical skills in traditional, ecological, and low-impact construction methods, resulting in safer, climate-resilient, and culturally relevant tourism infrastructure across the Pacific.

Recommended Implementation: Vanuatu

Key Activities

- Develop demonstration projects showcasing traditional and sustainable construction techniques and document best practices through technical guides
- Advocate for the testing and assessment of traditional materials for future inclusion in national building codes
- Link construction practices to vocational training and circular economy initiatives (e.g. bamboo supply chains, waste-to-resource innovations)
- Deliver modular training programmes for communities, builders, and officials on sustainable and climate-smart design, including solar orientation, off-grid systems, and energy storage
- Facilitate training in the safe and approved use of traditional materials aligned with building standards
- Develop mobile-accessible and digital learning platforms to expand training access
- Co-deliver sessions with experts in traditional and ecological design and establish peer mentoring and skills exchange networks
- Capture and share lessons learned across Pacific nations to support regional scaling

Appendix F. Intervention Activities at Regional Level and in Demonstration Countries

Table 13. Intervention activities at regional level and in Demonstration Countries

Intervention	Regional or National led	SPTO	Fiji	Kiribati	Samoa	Vanuatu
1. Embed CE and SCP Principles in National Tourism Policy	National					
2. National Sustainable Tourism Standards Development	National					
3. Finalisation and implementation - Single Use Plastics Toolkit	Regional					
4. Self-Assessment Tools – Government and Industry	Regional					
5. Standards ‘Starter Pack’ and SCP Toolkit for CBTEs	Regional					
6. Pacific Sustainable Tourism Knowledge Exchange	Regional					
7. Regional Dashboard for Measuring Tourism Sustainability	Regional					
8. Public-Private Dialogue and Communication Platforms	Regional					
9. Sustainable Tourism Supply Chains and Aggregator Hubs	National					
10. Farm-to-Table Procurement and Traceability Schemes	National					
11. Procurement and Purchasing Policy Development	Regional					
12. Sustainable Finance Mechanism and Support for Tourism Enterprises	Regional					
13. Sustainable and Climate Resilient Tourism Accommodation Guidelines	Regional					
14. Traditional and Sustainable Building Construction Techniques	National					

Appendix G. Alignment of Interventions with Vanuatu Sustainable Tourism Policy and Strategy

Table 14. Intervention alignment with Vanuatu Sustainable Tourism Policy (selected actions)

GOAL	ACTION	STEP THEME	INTERVENTION
GOAL 1 - TO DEVELOP AND MANAGE A SUSTAINABLE AND RESPONSIBLE TOURISM INDUSTRY			
Sustainable and Responsible Tourism Management	Traditional architecture is supported and promoted in Provincial tourism plans and educational programmes	Sustainable Buildings and Infrastructure	7. Traditional and Sustainable Building Construction Techniques
	A Non-Government independent organisation is responsible for compliance, auditing and assessing both mandatory and voluntary standards and certification.	National and Regional Policy Support Enabling Sector Transition	2. National Sustainable Tourism Standards Development
	GSTC recognised Sustainability Standards and Certification programmes support Vanuatu's environmental and cultural assets while demonstrating leadership in climate-sensitive green growth.	National and Regional Policy Support Enabling Sector Transition	2. National Sustainable Tourism Standards Development
	The Vanuatu Tourism Permit and Accreditation Program (VTPAP (Government of Vanuatu, 2025)) 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.	National and Regional Policy Support Enabling Sector Transition	2. National Sustainable Tourism Standards Development
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	National and Regional Policy Support	1. Embed CE and SCP Principles in National Tourism Policy
GOAL 2 - VISITORS CONNECT WITH VANUATU'S ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND ITS PEOPLE			
Training Programmes	Training support for waste minimisation and effective waste remove microenterprises for rural tourism products, including cruise port entry, is financed through the Environmental Policy and Implementation Plan 2016 to 2030 'polluter pays' principle.	SCP Practices Enabling Sector Transition	3. Implementation of Single Use Plastics Toolkit and Standards

GOAL	ACTION	STEP THEME	INTERVENTION
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 programmes become part of the school curriculum.	SCP Practices Enabling Sector Transition	3. Implementation of Single Use Plastics Toolkit and Standards
Actions for 'Higher Product Standards'	All tourism operators must meet minimum waste management requirements through VTPAP (Government of Vanuatu, 2025) including provision of safe drinking water in reusable containers for guests and composting for food production-based operators.	National and Regional Policy Support Enabling Sector Transition	2. National Sustainable Tourism Standards Development
GOAL 3 - SUSTAINABLE AND RESPONSIBLE TOURISM PRODUCTS AND SERVICES DEVELOPED, SUPPORTED, AND MARKETING TO ATTRACT RESPONSIBLE, HIGH-VALUE TOURISTS			
Marketing Strategy	Made in Vanuatu branding as a policy objective in the sector is promoted and protected	Agriculture and Tourism Linkages SCP Practices	4. Sustainable Tourism Supply Chains and Aggregator Hubs
Certification Programmes	Voluntary certification programme for sustainable tourism sets standards for percentage of local food sourcing	Agriculture and Tourism Linkages	5. Farm-to-Table Procurement and Traceability Schemes
	Tourism products that support authenticity, local cultures, kastom, and social protection are guaranteed support through the Traditional Knowledge and Traditional Cultural Expression Bill 2012.	Sustainable Buildings and Infrastructure	7. Traditional and Sustainable Building Construction Techniques
GOAL 4 - TOURISM THAT ENHANCES, CONSERVES AND PROTECTS THE ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURAL RESOURCES OF VANUATU			
Sustainable Tourism Management	Incentives to gain Sustainable Tourism Standard accreditation are developed through marketing packages and categories in the Vanuatu Tourism Awards.	National and Regional Policy Support Enabling Sector Transition	2. National Sustainable Tourism Standards Development
	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.	National and Regional Policy Support Enabling Sector Transition	2. National Sustainable Tourism Standards Development
GOAL 5 - SUSTAINABLE AND RESPONSIBLE TOURISM BRINGS IMPROVED INCOME AND WELL-BEING FOR VANUATU AND ITS PEOPLE			
Sustainable and Responsible Tourism Planning	Tourism demonstrates initiatives to support the updated National Energy Roadmap 2016-2030 (NERM) target of 100% energy access for off grid rural areas and 65% national renewables with 65% rural bungalow electrification by 2030 under green growth initiatives.	Sustainable Buildings and Infrastructure	6. Sustainable and Climate Resilient Tourism Accommodation Guidelines

Table 15. Intervention alignment with Vanuatu Sustainable Tourism Strategy (selected actions)

ACTION	OUTPUTS	AGENCIES	STEP THEME	INTERVENTION
THEME 1 WELLBEING: through High Value, Low Impact Tourism				
PROGRAMME OF WORK 1.1 High Value Tourism				
1.1.4 Develop market centres for the sale of locally made products and handicrafts in outer islands	6 market centres are operational for the sale of local products only in each province	DoT DoI Municipal Councils VSP	Agriculture and Tourism Linkages SCP Practices	4. Sustainable Tourism Supply Chains and Aggregator Hubs
PROGRAMME OF WORK 1.2 Low Impact Tourism				
1.2.1 Develop a Carbon Neutral Tourism Package	Carbon Neutral Tourism Package completed and marketed.	DoT DoEPC VTO DoF DoI DoCC	SCP Practices Enabling Sector Transition	3. Implementation of Single Use Plastics Toolkit and Standards
1.2.5 Develop a Sustainable Waste Management Plan and coordinated campaign/advice/support for tourism	Sustainable Waste Management Plan is completed 80% of tourism businesses adhering to the National Environment Waste Management Act by 2025 Single Use Plastics and toxic sunscreen are phased out by 2025	DoT DoEPC Municipal Council	SCP Practices Enabling Sector Transition	3. Implementation of Single Use Plastics Toolkit and Standards
1.2.7 Undertake a feasibility study on water management in tourism and develop a framework for tourism businesses to improve hygiene, and measure, monitor, publicly report and manage water usage	Tourism businesses have access to training programmes to support sustainable and hygienic water management through the Tourism Business Support Program All training programmes have been measured and evaluated	DoT DoEPC DoCC Municipal Council	Sustainable Buildings and Infrastructure	6. Sustainable and Climate Resilient Tourism Accommodation Guidelines

ACTION	OUTPUTS	AGENCIES	STEP THEME	INTERVENTION
THEME 2 RESILIENCE: through Niche Tourism Product Development				
PROGRAMME OF WORK 2.1 Environmental Conservation Tourism				
2.1.4 Develop Sustainable Tourism Management Plans for Ecological and Culturally Sensitive Areas (ECSAs) and Community Conservation Areas (CCAs)	Each registered ECSA and CCA has a Sustainable Tourism Management Plan aligned to the VSTP and GSTC criteria incorporating carrying capacity evaluations	DoT DoEPC VKS	National and Regional Policy Support	1. Embed CE and SCP Principles in National Tourism Policy
THEME 3 DIVERSIFICATION: through Agritourism				
PROGRAMME OF WORK 3.2 Traditional Cuisine Revival				
3.2.3 Develop a traditional cuisine cooking classes product development and support programme	A traditional cuisine cooking class is developed informed by the published research on traditional cuisine 80% of businesses are receiving business/ marketing support, mentoring and skill development by 2025	DoT APTC VSP HTLTC VCFHA	Agriculture and Tourism Linkages	5. Farm-to-Table Procurement and Traceability Schemes
PROGRAMME OF WORK 3.3 Agritourism Market Research and Support				
3.3.4 Undertake an Agritourism Value Chain Analysis	An Agritourism Value Chain Analysis report is completed and recommendations implemented	DoT DoA DoI	Agriculture and Tourism Linkages	5. Farm-to-Table Procurement and Traceability Schemes
PROGRAMME OF WORK 3.4 Agritourism Marketing				
3.4.xx Increase sales of Made in Vanuatu handicrafts to the tourism sector. Strengthen and support the HBDP through the Provincial Handicraft Associations	Made in Vanuatu handicrafts make up 70% of the market	DoT DoI DoCIR	Agriculture and Tourism Linkages SCP Practices	4. Sustainable Tourism Supply Chains and Aggregator Hubs
PROGRAMME OF WORK 3.5 Wellness Agritours & Agritourism Events Product Development				
3.5.2 Develop a support programme for primary and secondary producers of food to increase the representation of local food consumed in communities and the tourism industry through festivals, farmers markets demonstrations etc.	Support programme is developed for all 6 Provinces	DoT DoI DoA VTO VCFHA	Agriculture and Tourism Linkages	5. Farm-to-Table Procurement and Traceability Schemes

ACTION	OUTPUTS	AGENCIES	STEP THEME	INTERVENTION
PROGRAMME OF WORK 3.6 Agritourism Value Added Product Development				
3.6.3 Develop standards with VBS to ensure agritourism value added products are high quality and competitive	VBS have developed clear standards for value added products Report on number of stakeholders/businesses meeting standards throughout the value chain	DoT VBS DoI	Agriculture and Tourism Linkages	5. Farm-to-Table Procurement and Traceability Schemes
3.6.4 Develop an import replacement programme for tourism	Import replacement programme for tourism is developed Measures are implemented to minimise the amount of inferior low-quality cheap products being imported into Vanuatu Percentage of local organic products fully replacing imported products	DoT DoCIR VBS DoI VNSO	Agriculture and Tourism Linkages SCP Practices	4. Sustainable Tourism Supply Chains and Aggregator Hubs
3.6.5 Develop a Sustainable Infrastructure Scheme for Agritourism financing value adding manufacturing facilities: renewable energy, climate adaptation, fibreglass tanks, composting toilets, cyclone proofing infrastructure	Sustainable infrastructure scheme is developed and implemented with an effective governance structure A minimum of 6 businesses (1 from each Province) have received financing	DoT DoI DoA VBS DoCC DoE	Agriculture and Tourism Linkages SCP Practices	4. Sustainable Tourism Supply Chains and Aggregator Hubs
PROGRAMME OF WORK 3.7 Strengthening linkages between primary producers and the tourism industry				
3.7.1 Identify hotels/resorts interested in partnering with local farmer/communities/agribusiness	Stakeholder engagement report and database is developed outlining interested hotels/resorts looking to partner with local farmers	DoT DoA VAC	Agriculture and Tourism Linkages	5. Farm-to-Table Procurement and Traceability Schemes
3.7.2 Develop mechanisms to ensure reliable supply of produce to the tourism Industry	Mechanisms developed in collaboration with DoA to strengthen supply chain between farmers and the tourism industry	DoT DoA DoI	Agriculture and Tourism Linkages	5. Farm-to-Table Procurement and Traceability Schemes

ACTION	OUTPUTS	AGENCIES	STEP THEME	INTERVENTION
THEME 4 SUSTAINABILITY: through Sustainable Tourism Investment and Ni Vanuatu Entrepreneurship				
PROGRAMME OF WORK 4.1 Vanuatu Tourism Certification				
4.1.1 Undertake a Tourism Certification Feasibility Analysis: (Carbon labelling, Fairtrade, Organics, GSTC Sustainable Tourism)	A feasibility report for the implementation of Certification programmes in tourism has been developed and recommendations presented to DoT	DoT	National and Regional Policy Support Enabling Sector Transition	2. National Sustainable Tourism Standards Development
4.1.2 Develop standards for the VSTC and apply for GSTC Recognition of the standards and Accreditation of the process	A certification programme for tourism has been developed that meets GSTC standards 60% of all tourism businesses are certified by the VSTC by 2025 100% of all tourism businesses operating in ECSA's or CCA's are certified by the VSTC by 2025	DoT VSTC	National and Regional Policy Support Enabling Sector Transition	2. National Sustainable Tourism Standards Development
4.1.3 Undertake GSTC Sustainable Tourism Destination assessments in a key model destination	GSTC destination assessment case study has been carried out in Shefa Province Findings from the case study guide future destination assessments in key destinations in all 6 provinces Measures have been developed to support Provincial Governments to meet GSTC standards	DoT GSTC Trainers	National and Regional Policy Support Enabling Sector Transition	2. National Sustainable Tourism Standards Development
4.1.4 Develop and pilot the Code of Conduct for Tourism in the ECSA's and CCA's	All registered tourism businesses operating in ECSA's and CCA's have signed the Code of Conduct	DoT DoEPC	National and Regional Policy Support Enabling Sector Transition	2. National Sustainable Tourism Standards Development
4.1.5 Review & modify Tourism Standards for tours and accommodation to incorporate more of the GSTC Criteria	Sustainable waste management requirements have been incorporated into the minimum standards All audited businesses are meeting the standards by 2025 Revise 'tourism standards' for tours and accommodation has GSTC criteria incorporated	DoT DoEPC Municipal Council DoI	National and Regional Policy Support Enabling Sector Transition	2. National Sustainable Tourism Standards Development

ACTION	OUTPUTS	AGENCIES	STEP THEME	INTERVENTION
4.1.6 Develop and implement waste education programmes for all tourism businesses and attractions	New introduced waste management standards have been communicated to all tourism businesses	DoT DoEPC Municipal Council	SCP Practices Enabling Sector Transition	3. Implementation of Single Use Plastics Toolkit and Standards
4.1.7 Conduct GSTC sustainable tourism training for all tourism stakeholders throughout the 6 Provinces	All audited tourism businesses have attended GSTC training All registered tourism businesses in the Tourism Business Support Program have passed the Sustainable Tourism assessment	DoT	National and Regional Policy Support Enabling Sector Transition	2. National Sustainable Tourism Standards Development
4.1.8 Measure visitor perception of sustainability at the destination and business level	Questions around sustainability have been incorporated into the IVS	DoT VTO VNSO	National and Regional Policy Support	1. Embed CE and SCP Principles in National Tourism Policy
PROGRAMME OF WORK 4.2 Agritourism Certification				
4.2.1 Identify potential certification programmes for local agritourism products such as fair trade, organics, sustainability and generation of verified carbon offsets	A report has been developed outlining the applicability of certification programmes for use in Agritourism	DoT DoA DoI	Agriculture and Tourism Linkages	5. Farm-to-Table Procurement and Traceability Schemes
4.2.3 Establish contract for a 3 rd party Certification body to undertake Agritourism products auditing and assessments	A 3rd party organisation has been contracted with trained auditors that meet GSTC criteria, Organics, HACCP, Fair trade, Carbon offsetting and are registered under the VBS	DoT DoA DoI VBS	Agriculture and Tourism Linkages	5. Farm-to-Table Procurement and Traceability Schemes

ACTION	OUTPUTS	AGENCIES	STEP THEME	INTERVENTION
PROGRAMME OF WORK 4.3 Sustainable Tourism Investment				
4.3.1 Support tourism businesses to access sustainable infrastructure to finance a transition to renewable energy and climate adaptation	<p>70% of accommodation providers have accessed financial support through the Tourism Business Support Program to finance a transition to renewable energy and climate adaptation</p> <p>Solar Freezer proposal launched as part of Tourism Business Support Program</p> <p>Review MoU between DoT and DoE for RE funding</p> <p>Handbook with RE and EE Guidelines for Hotels distributed to encourage energy audits</p>	<p>DoT</p> <p>DoCC</p> <p>DoE</p>	Sustainable Buildings and Infrastructure	6. Sustainable and Climate Resilient Tourism Accommodation Guidelines

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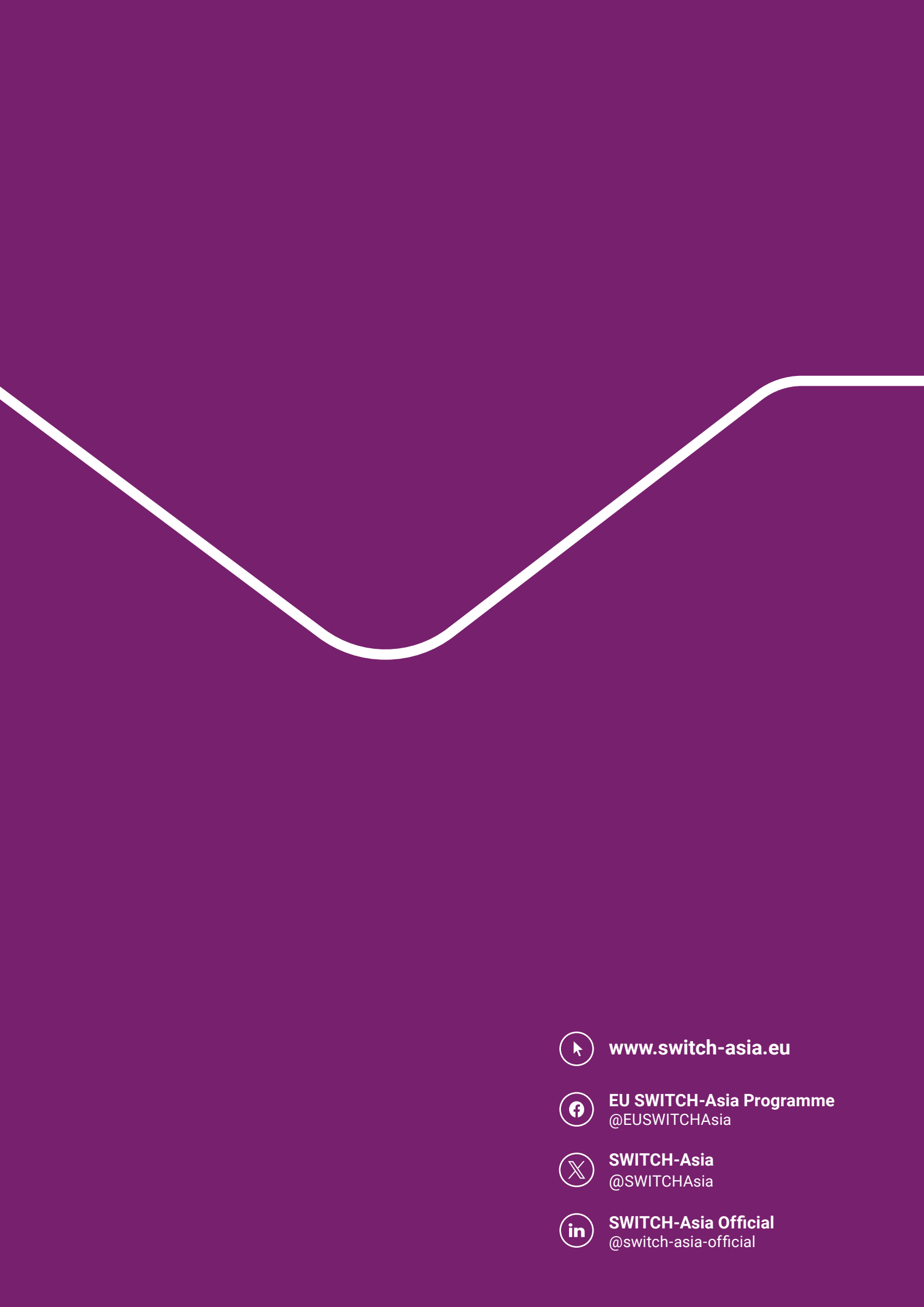
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