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Ministry of Education & Training  
Government of Vanuatu



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## Joint Press Release

# Vanuatu's schools to transform into safe havens

The European Union and UNICEF embark on a new EURO10 million partnership to strengthen climate resilience in schools

**Port Vila, Vanuatu, 28 April 2025** – More than 130,000 people in Vanuatu are set to benefit from a new EURO 10 million (VUV 1.3 billion) contribution from the European Union. This funding aims to protect the country's education system by preparing it to be more resilient to the impact of climate-related disasters.

Thanks to this new programme, 2,500 children, 100 young people and about 900 teachers, school staff and community members will have direct access to upgraded school infrastructure. The initiative will also support beneficiaries through strengthened education policies and community engagement.

"The collaboration between the European Union and UNICEF is so crucial in ensuring continuous learning for children during emergencies," **said Minister for Education and Training, Hon. Simil Johnson**. "We are looking forward to this partnership that will support Vanuatu prioritize long-term climate resilience and implement strategies that protect our environment, infrastructure, and most importantly, the well-being of our children and communities.

Vanuatu is highly vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters like tropical cyclones, rising sea levels, earthquakes, landslides, and floods. A staggering 89 per cent of schools are in high-risk drought areas, and 34 per cent are prone to flooding. Nearly half of primary school classrooms do not meet infrastructure standards, putting children, teachers, and communities in danger. Schools also lack essential support for regular repair and maintenance, which further exacerbates their exposure to storms and other hazards.

During emergencies, many schools also serve as community shelters, but access to water and sanitation services is not sufficient for such situations. Furthermore, schools, communities and students should have the most up to date knowledge and skills to ensure children can continue their education during crises and adapt to a changing climate.

"In the wake of the devastating earthquake in December last year and a series of tropical cyclones, the urgent need for resilient infrastructure in the education sector has never been clearer," **said the European Union Ambassador to the Pacific, H.E Barbara Plinkert**. "Education is the foundation of success and a vital pathway to developing the next generation of leaders without disruption. Therefore, in line with the European Union's Global Gateway strategy, we are proud to support the strengthening of safe and resilient learning spaces in Vanuatu."

This new and innovative *Climate Resilient Sheltering Schools* programme will address these challenges by supporting a safe, inclusive, and resilient education system in Vanuatu. This will not only ensure uninterrupted access to education for children and young people during crises but will also enable schools to function as a last resort and short-term emergency shelter for communities.

The programme will improve school infrastructure to handle climate and other external shocks, provide renewable energy, internet access, and quality water, sanitation, and hygiene services. It will involve communities, schools, and students in disaster preparedness and climate education.

To ensure sustainable change, the programme will also build upon the Government of Vanuatu's innovative policies on climate change to ensure education is top of the agenda in the response.

"Immediate action is crucial to combat the devastating effects of climate-related disasters. With thanks to the European Union's generous support, we can greatly reduce the risks faced by our schools and communities," **said Jonathan Veitch, UNICEF Pacific Representative.** "Embracing a climate-smart approach is not only about protecting our children and their families today, but also about securing their resilience and well-being for the future."

The four-year programme will be implemented by UNICEF, under the leadership of the Ministry of Education and Training. Using local solutions and expertise of the Vanuatu construction workforces in the rehabilitation construction of schools, the programme will also create a skilled workforce further providing employment opportunities for communities.

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### Note to Editors

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