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Land Administration and Resilient Urbanization in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands

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Surveyors Australia

Country	Last 2 census years		Urban percentage at last census	Annual urban growth rate between last two censuses
Cook Islands	2001	2011	74	-1.2%
Fiji	1996	2007	51	1.5%
Federated States of Micronesia	2000	2010	22	-2.2%
Kiribati	2010	2015	57	2.1%
Marshall Islands	1999	2011	74	1.4%
Nauru		2011	100	1.8%
Niue	1997	2011	-	-
Palau	2000	2005	77	3.2%
Papua New Guinea	2000	2011	13	2.8%
Samoa	2011	2016	18	NA
Solomon Islands	1999	2009	20	4.7%
Tonga	1996	2011	23	2.4%
Tuvalu	2002	2012	57	3.1%
Vanuatu	1999	2009	24	3.5%

Source: UN-Habitat (2020)

Urbanization in Pacific Island Countries

- High rates of urbanization in many Pacific Island Countries.
- Unplanned and informal settlements in urban and peri-urban areas.
- Settlements spreading onto exposed or unsuitable land.

Duality of land tenure systems

- Land rights are managed by customary groups according to their own unique processes, which are linked to underlying social and spiritual belief systems.
- Colonial land administration systems introduced.
- At independence un-alienated land returned to customary groups in some countries.

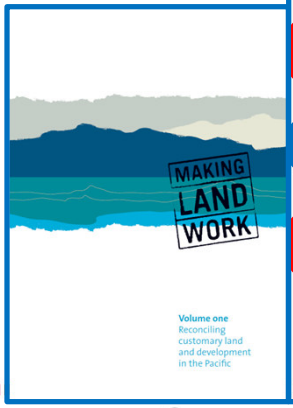


TABLE 2.1 » DISTRIBUTION OF LAND BY SYSTEM OF TENURE IN THE PACIFIC REGION

	Public [a]	Freehold [b]	Customary
Cook Islands	Some	Little	95%
East Timor [c]	Some	Some	Most
Fiji	4%	8%	88%
Federated States of Micronesia	35%	<1%	65%
Kiribati	50%	<5%	>45%
Marshall Islands	<1%	0%	>99%
Nauru	<10%	0%	>90%
Niue	1.5%	0%	98.5%
Palau	Most	Some	Some
Papua New Guinea	2.5%	0.5%	97%
Samoa	15%	4%	81%
Solomon Islands	8%	5%	87%
Tokelau	1%	1%	98%
Tonga	100%	0%	0%
Tuvalu	5%	<0.1%	95%
Vanuatu	2%	0%	98%

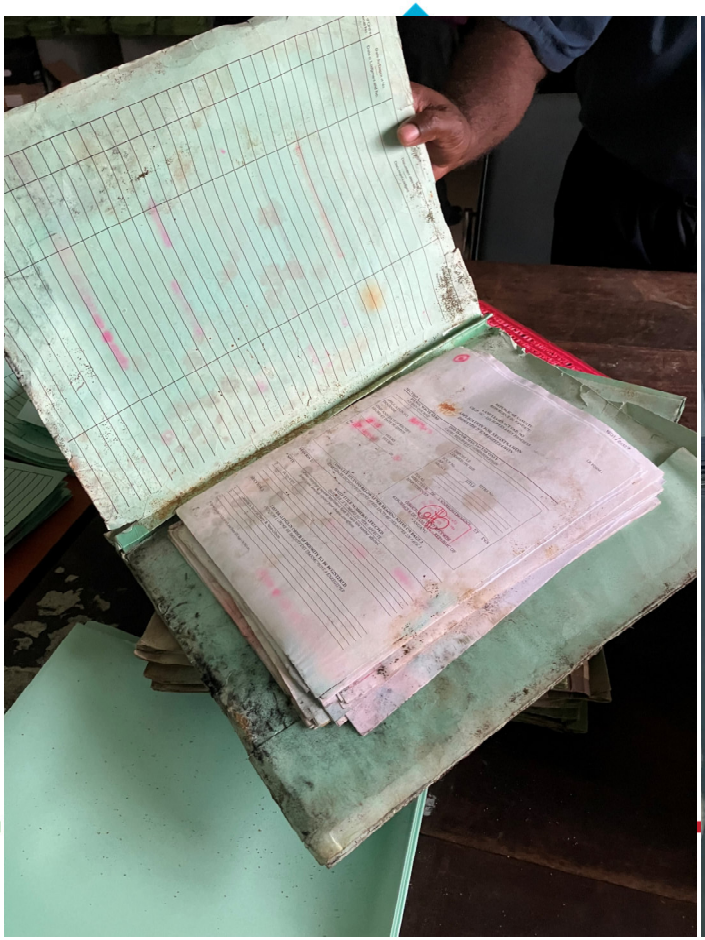
a Includes Crown land and land owned by provincial and local governments.
b Includes land that is not strictly freehold, but similar in characteristics, such as the 'perpetual estates' found in Solomon Islands.
c East Timor does not as yet have a separate legal category of 'customary land', even though most of its rural land remains under customary forms of authority.

Source: Compiled and calculated from various sources, including interviews on field trips and published information.

Challenges for land administration

- Largely paper-based.
- Land records exposed and vulnerable.
- Land administration processes largely manual and slow.
- Significant limitations in human resources capacity.

Port Vila, Vanuatu: Cyber attack 2022, Cyclone 2023, Earthquake 2024/2025



National Action Plans

The Solomon Islands (2019)	Vanuatu (2025)
Phase 1 - digitalization of land records, capacity building, institutional strengthening, support for customary land recording.	**Short-term goals** (1-2 years): 1. Institutional Strengthening. 2. Capacity Building. 3. Digitization of Land, Survey and Registry Data. 4. Strengthening Revenue Generation. 5. National Land Development Data Centre within MOLNR.
Phase 2 - strengthening of geodetic network, unified base maps, development of ILIS, support to NSDI, increasing capacity of the National Data Center, national dialogue on customary land recording, legal framework, updating SOPs, review of Customary Land Records Act.	**Medium Term Goals (3-5 years):** 1. Unified Base Maps. 2. Strengthening Geodetic Framework. 3. Update of Standard Operating Procedures. 4. Develop Geoportal and NSDI. 5. Integrated LMIS to support land development. 6. Geospatial support for implementation of hazard-risk-informed e-planning.
	Longer term Goals: 1. Policy and legal support for customary land recording perception survey. 2. Strengthen land administration to support development and settlement upgrading. 3. National dialogue and customary land recording perception survey. 4. Geospatial analytical assessment of the quality and vulnerability of land tenure 5. Housing and settlement policy development.

Vanuatu case study - Vanuatu Affordable and Resilient Settlements Project (VARS)

- Priority actions - earthquake recovery and reconstruction, DRR, digitalization of the land administration and geospatial systems, increasing own-source land revenue, capacity building.
- Component 1 – Hazard risk-informed land development.
- Component 2 – Upgrading of four informal settlements.
- Component 3 – Creation of LMIS and geoportal.

Solomon Islands case study - Community Access and Urban Services Enhancement Project II (CAUSE II)

- Priority actions - digitalization of the land administration and geospatial systems, increasing own-source land revenue, capacity building.
- **Sub-component 4A Land Administration** – digitizing land records, updating the valuation roll and maps, unified base maps, creation of Integrated Land Information System and geoportal.
- **Sub-component 4B Revenue Mobilization** – ILIS provides information on valuation roll, and title and ownership details, to enhance billing and collection.

The importance of digital land administration and geospatial information systems

- An integrated land information system and geoportal supports improved information for:
  - DRR, recovery and reconstruction,
  - revenue mobilization,
  - e-planning zone maps,
  - risk-informed land administration, land development, and planning.

Risk informed land administration and planning

- Hazard risk zones are considered in land development location and design.
- Urban settlement upgrading considers exposure and vulnerability in design of resilience actions.
- Risk-informed land administration to protect tenure security for all tenure types and reduce exposure.
- Risk-informed land use planning maps, enforcement of no build zones, and prevention of upstream land development and use that impacts downstream hazard risk.

Increasing land own source revenue

- In many PICs land revenue collection is inefficient and a small percentage of government revenue.
- An effective integrated LIS can streamline the mobilize land rents and property rates can dramatically increase revenue for government – including for resilient urbanization.
- Requires digital and correct land records, valuation maps and roll, digital billing systems.

Capacity building and institutional strengthening

- Capacity building and institutional strengthening priorities include:
  - Buildings, equipment, software for (i) securing and backing up land, registry, survey, and geospatial data, and (ii) creation of LIS, geoportal and NSDI.
  - Support for policy, legal and regulatory frameworks.
  - Training and human resources.

Conclusions

- Land tenure is an important element of resilience.
- Resilient urbanization requires building bridges between the customary and formal land tenure systems.
- Resilient urbanization requires effective digital land administration that provides tenure security, supported by geospatial information systems, and informed by hazard-risk, exposure and vulnerability.
- Land administration and geospatial systems in Pacific Island Countries require capacity building.