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## Strengths and barriers to inclusive health service delivery in the Vanuatu Health Sector

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### Abstract

**Background** The Health Sector Strategy 2021-2030, launched in August 2021 seeks to ensure all people of Vanuatu who need health services receive them, including women, girls, children, and vulnerable groups such as people with disability in Vanuatu, without undue financial hardship. A sectoral review conducted in November 2021 identified the strengths, barriers to achieving the inclusive health objectives of the HSS towards inclusive health service delivery in Vanuatu

**Methods:** Primary and secondary data collection. Stakeholder engagement and participatory consultation with 64 key informants (29 females, 34 males and one person identifying with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression) from across three provinces, and representing national and provincial government and MOH, development partner and non-government stakeholders. Issue identification and data verification was achieved through dedicated Focus Group Discussions with health users - women, men, youth, and people with disability at the community level.

**Result:** The review identified four outstanding findings: 1) shifts in the policy environment present new opportunities to progress the inclusive health agenda; 2) people with disability face significant barriers to receiving health services; 3) the concept of inclusion is not well understood within the health sector, requiring awareness, education, and training at all levels; 4) external stakeholders (such as the Vanuatu Health Program and NGO stakeholders) have expertise in inclusion and can support the achievement of an inclusive health system.

**Discussion:** The sectoral review on inclusive health opportunities and barriers within the health sector points to recent policy shifts towards a more enabling environment for the attainment of universal health coverage and the delivery of inclusive health services. A unique window of opportunity has opened in which sectoral leaders have prioritised efforts to strengthen inclusion, and there is an imperative for development partners to lend technical, operational, and resourcing support to bolster government allocations to these efforts.