Blacksands Settlement:
a case for urban permanence in Vanuatu

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A thesis submitted as a requirement for the degree of Master of Science
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November, 2000
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The idea of this study began many years ago and stemmed from family Sunday afternoon ‘adventure drives’ through bush land that now houses a growing number of informal settlements in Port Vila, Vanuatu. This thesis is a step in satisfying some of my curiosity about settlements, their residents and their livelihoods.

The development of this thesis would have been impossible without the encouragement, assistance, support and stress-reducing distractions from a large group of individuals.

I must first thank the residents of Blacksands who so willingly shared their lives, homes and aspirations with yet another ‘clipboard visitor’ in a period of census enumerators, elections, the VAT and record rainfall. Thank you for your hospitality, stories and patience. Access to Blacksands was obtained with the kind permission from the head of the Ifiran customary landowning family, Mr Kalfaurei Kaltabang, who also assisted in providing an historical account of Yarru and important insight to the contemporary land tenure of Ifira – faf’Tai.

John Connell who has an extraordinary knack for making an academic study actually enjoyable, for maintaining an urban interest in ‘those little dots in a big, big ocean’ and the amazing ability of knowing exactly where otherwise, elusive articles and documents were located in that sea of books in his office. *Tankio tumas blong evri samting we yu bin me kem long helpem mi long finisim smol wok ia.*

To the staff and post-graduate students of the Division of Geography for technical assistance, the reminders of ‘processes’ in post-graduate studies and the sharing of information – Deirdre Dragovich, Eric Waddell, Christian Jost and Kathi Greve – *merci beaucoup.*
Albert Williams at the Environment Unit, Aleks Collingwood-Bakeo and staff at the National Statistics Office, Ian Abbil at the Department of Social and Economic Development, Michel Kalorai of SHEFA Province, Don Paterson at the University of the South Pacific and John Baillie of the Outer Island Infrastructure Development Project, your quick responses to my queries and sharing of office information are much appreciated.

I cannot move without my traditional safety net – my family - many thanks and IOUs to my husband, mother and sister. My husband Steven, for patiently riding out my ramblings to the wall, tolerating my treatment of the computer as a glorified typewriter, his every ready constructive advice and for holding my hand when it needed holding. My mother, Anne Naupa for actually offering to wrestle with the grammar check and through it all maintaining such enthusiasm for a topic close to her heart – she was the 1967 enumerator for Blacksands. To my sister Liz Pechan – thanks for the map work and tolerance of a navat at MapInfo. And to my friends for investing conversation, ideas, sharing your theories and stories and to Andrew Dwyer who helped with the photos.

I hope that I have been able to do justice to this assistance and shared enthusiasm in the recording of the rise of informal settlements in Port Vila and the implications that this may have for sustainable urban management.
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<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRP</td>
<td>Comprehensive Reform Program</td>
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<td>CUSO</td>
<td>Canadian University Service Overseas</td>
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<td>DESD</td>
<td>Department of Economic and Social Development</td>
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<td>EIKK</td>
<td>Efate Island Kastom Kot</td>
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<td>ILT</td>
<td>Ifira Land Trust</td>
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<td>INTV</td>
<td>Institut National de Technologie</td>
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<td>IRD</td>
<td>Institut de Recherche pour le Developpement</td>
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<td>NSO</td>
<td>National Statistics Office</td>
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<td>NTM</td>
<td>Neil Thomas Ministries</td>
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<td>PVM</td>
<td>Port Vila Municipal</td>
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<td>SDA</td>
<td>Seventh Day Adventist</td>
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<td>TA</td>
<td>Technical Assistance</td>
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<td>UGMS</td>
<td>Urban Growth Management Strategy</td>
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<td>UIP</td>
<td>Urban Infrastructure Project</td>
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<td>UNCHS</td>
<td>United Nations Center for Human Settlements (Habitat)</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>VAT</td>
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<td>VLUPO</td>
<td>Vanuatu Land Use Planning Office</td>
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<td>VMF</td>
<td>Vanuatu Mobile Force</td>
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This thesis has used the currency of Vanuatu, the Vatu (VT), for all economic references. For conversion purposes, USD1.30 and AUD0.80 is equal to VT100.

This thesis uses “Port Vila” and “Vila” interchangeably to imply the town within the official municipal boundaries.
## Bislama Phrases

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<td>They come to town for no purpose.</td>
<td><em>I kam nating long taon</em></td>
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<td>Food, meal</td>
<td><em>Kakai</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Come and see, drop in, visit</td>
<td><em>Kam pusem hed</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Custom Court – where the chief and leaders of the community/village will hear a range of complaints and recommend solutions</td>
<td><em>Kustom Kot</em></td>
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<td>Literally, “Clever” – someone who practices ‘leaf medicine’ or a traditional healer.</td>
<td><em>Kleva</em></td>
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<td>Traditional meal, grated root crops steamed in an earth oven wrapped in banana leaves.</td>
<td><em>Laplap</em></td>
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<td>A pare</td>
<td><em>Lava-lava</em></td>
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<td>A person from the island of Tanna. ‘Man’ often precedes a person’s island of origin and is a means of identifying someone’s place. For example, man-Pentecost, man-Santo.</td>
<td><em>Man-Tanna</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>I don’t know.</td>
<td><em>Mi no save</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>I just look after the house (that’s all).</td>
<td><em>Mi stap lukaatem haus nomo</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>I’m just walking around (doing nothing in particular).</td>
<td><em>Mi wokbout nomo</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Black magic from Ambrym</td>
<td><em>Nakaimas</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Traditional meeting place. Often used for kava bar in Vila</td>
<td><em>Nakamal</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Term used for traditional meeting place in villages. Each chief has a nasara.</td>
<td><em>Nasara</em></td>
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<td>A citizen of Vanuatu.</td>
<td><em>Ni-Vanuatu</em></td>
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<td>Slang for illegitimate child. Literally child of the road.</td>
<td><em>Pikinini blong rod</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Literally hitting the main road, hanging out, unemployed</td>
<td><em>Sperem publik rod</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Straight</td>
<td><em>Strret</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Black magic from Ambrym</td>
<td><em>Su</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>In-law (related by marriage)</td>
<td><em>Tawi</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Talk, discussion and/or gossip</td>
<td><em>Toktok</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fellow speakers of the same language (meaningful outside of the village only)</td>
<td><em>Wantok</em></td>
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Chapter One

Introduction

Urbanization is one of the most common of present day phenomena and involves the whole complex of the social, economic, spatial, health, administrative and political aspects of a human community concentrated in a comparatively limited living space called a city or town (South Pacific Commission 1967:2). Since 1950 the pace of urban change has varied considerably between countries and regions, and virtually every developing country has been urbanizing rapidly (Gilbert and Gugler 1992:7). It is currently expected that during the first years of the twenty-first century, for the first time in human history, more than half the world’s population will live in urban areas and that by 2025 that proportion will be nearing 58%. Consequently, the world seems to be on a path leading to steadily greater urbanization (Watters and McGee 1997:31), that is, a population that is predominantly urban. This thesis examines one small facet of this process.

By 1990 approximately 45% of the total population of the world (2.4 billion) lived in urban places, with 1.5 billion in developing countries and 0.9 billion in developed countries. Although the proportion of urban dwellers in developing countries was only 37%, the total urban population there surpassed that of developed countries, where the level of urbanization stood at 73%, by a considerable margin. Underlying the discussion of current world urbanization trends is the massive volume of population that already resides and is expected to reside in the urban areas of the developing world. The numbers involved pose major challenges for the achievement of sustainable urbanization in
developing countries, that is the ability to manage cities so that they do not pose an undue burden on existing resources and so that they provide an adequate quality of life for their residents. By and large most cities are struggling to cope with the detrimental consequences of rapid growth (Drakakis-Smith 1995:659), a situation that is as true of the small towns and cities of the Pacific as it is elsewhere.

It is clear that a substantial amount of overall growth in Third World cities over the last decade has occurred in the poorest countries where urban populations are increasing by 5% per annum overall (Drakakis-Smith 1995:659, citing World Bank 1994). Many of these countries have low levels of urbanization and their capital cities do not yet feature in the mega-city tables used to indicate the extent of the ‘urban problem’. In short, some of the most severe pressures exerted by urban population growth on the ability of urban and national authorities to cope with the economic, social and environmental consequences of urbanization often occur in relatively small cities in very poor countries, and reports of the situation in such centres present some of the most depressing images of the 1990s.

These rapidly developing urban centres share a range of socio-economic trends, associated with development issues such as: a rapid population growth and overwhelmingly young populations (Drakakis-Smith 1996); an increase in the number and size of squatter settlements, growing urban poverty (Perlman 1976, 1981; Bryant 1995); marked environmental degradation (and intensification of issues such as waste disposal, (Storey 1998) political instability and conflicting processes which affect urban management (Storey 1998); decreasing ability of urban governments to respond to infrastructural needs (Connell 1993); and a tendency towards the development of a
primate city. The ‘problems’ of urban areas have dominated research and planning. The most pressing problems have been identified in peri-urban areas (Drakakis-Smith 1995), where perhaps the most critical issues lie in many developing countries. Peri-urban areas are frequently overlooked as a ‘no-man’s-land’ by both urban and rural authorities since already stretched budgets and resources simply cannot accommodate such a large mass of people (as this is where squatter and informal settlements are often situated) who tend to be shunned or go unrecognized as fellow citizens (Gutberlet 1999).

Urban areas and urbanization began to attract attention in the 1960s and has been one of the most widely discussed social issues in the last 30 years. In spite of a plethora of literature on urbanization and associated issues in developing countries (focusing largely on Latin American and Asian cities) there remain several important gaps in research foci (Ward 1998). A review funded by the Ford Foundation concluded that the phenomena of rapid urban growth have not been adequately recognized in research and policy, nor in the development programmes of international assistance agencies (Harpham and Boateng 1997:65). Certain themes can be detected in emerging research on urbanization, including environmental management and sustainability, poverty, finance and the economy of cities, urban social structure, globalization and urban governance.

Early studies concerned with rapid urbanization emphasized the potentially dangerous character of shanty growth (Eke 1982). These peripheral settlements - because they displayed crude construction methods, minimum space standards, and lacked amenities - were condemned as unhealthy and the settlers were believed to be frustrated individuals who because of their marginal situation were ready to attack the existing social order and destroy it (Sewell 1964 cited in Lloyd 1979). Informal settlements were seen as the
"consequence of the migrant's adjustment to a new urban environment which does not have the capacity to assimilate the newcomer into the existing system, for example, by providing housing and employment” (Fahey 1978:8). As McGee (1971) noted, poor folk tended to aggregate in informal settlements on the periphery of towns and were considered either as a proletariat or an urban peasantry. Migrants and shanty towns were considered to be part of a universal process which began only a few decades ago with the intensified penetration of the developing world by financial capital and the rapidly advancing technology of industrial nations (Lloyd 1979).

In contrast to the negative views of Sewell, Wilsher and Righter (1975) were of the opinion that the slum and shanty town were the first way station on the road to better life. In the same vein, Stokes (1962) coined the phrase, “slums of hope” which was revived by Lloyd in 1979. Many informal settlements have been established on marginal land considered to be too swampy or too hilly for anyone to build a permanent home. It has been argued that urban residents, especially those in squatter settlements come from relatively marginal rural areas where population density is high and income earning opportunities are few. Occupancy of ‘squatter’ land has a tendency to be illegal (that is, there is no formal agreement or lease arrangement), therefore providing no security of tenure. Residents of these settlements are assumed to be recent migrants to the city, predominantly male (making for a transient population), with few skills (some barely literate or less) and are primarily engaged in informal activities, and thus unable to gain adequate incomes and access to social amenities.

Whilst there is a general assumption that these settlements are socially organized (though others argue that they are chaotic and disorganized), the residents are often regarded as
lacking in participation in wider political and social arenas, and are often regarded by urban residents in formal employment and housing as inhabiting an eyesore and as parasites on the few urban services that are provided. Informal and squatter settlements are widely perceived to be the haunts of criminals and the feckless unemployed and unsightly blots on the landscape.

The degree of perplexity and incredulity with which planners and academics observe shanty towns and unplanned settlements has changed little over the past quarter of the century, although there has been a benign evolution of interpretation from the strictly legalistic and administrative stance of the late 1960s, through the community-cum-sociological approaches of the late 1970s and the next decade, to the more recent market based readings of the current decade (Yahya and Nzioki 1994:108 cited in Okpala 1999:1). In summary, much of the early literature argued that shanty towns constituted an example of over-urbanization and the extent of informal jobs led to economic non-absorption and non-participation; and that a culture of poverty in squatter settlements was a manifestation of physical isolation and political unrest in marginal social, economic and physical environments.

Although small by international standards, Pacific towns are significant urban concentrations in relation to their hinterlands of country and the region (Storey 1999: 155). In colonial times firm administrative regulations restricted rural to urban migration and particularly the establishment of informal settlements in urban areas. The urban explosion experienced in the Pacific in the last decade has not usually been accompanied by concomitant expansion of job opportunities, infrastructure and social services, hence the low standards of living for the majority of the urban residents (Connell and Lea
The rapidly growing urban populations in Pacific towns have been fuelled by rural-urban migration as well as by natural increase. Most studies have focused on migration and growth of towns and have defined ‘urban peasants’ as a group of urban dwellers who are simultaneously involved in village and town life and the ‘proletariat’ as those who are committed to their urban lifestyle (Bedford and Mamak 1976; Fahey 1978).

In the mid-1980s, it was argued that urban populations were much more permanently committed to town than was commonly supposed (Bedford 1981, Bonnemaison 1984, Haberkorn 1987) but planning rarely took note of this apparent permanence and commitment. The current image of informal settlements has been widely based on comparisons with similar settlements in Asia and Latin America, where academic studies have been centred. Although the scale of Pacific settlements is smaller there are certain similarities in the appearance of settlements, their historical background and the reasons for growth. In the Pacific context, squatting is seen as the result of a broad range of external and internal forces and there is, in many developing countries, an absence of public policies to deal with squatters and their settlements. Broad generalizations have resulted from the lack of detailed studies.

Definitions of squatter settlements vary from country to country but all have a common denominator – insecure tenure. Some academics (e.g. Aina 1989) have adopted their characterization as ‘popular settlements’, which regards settlements as the habitat of the majority of urban people. Others such as Sugata (1987), prefer ‘community’ in reference to squatter settlements arguing that a community truly exists because of the relationships that bind people together as revealed in the functioning of their institutions (family,
church, clubs) and other peripheral institutional and service activities. This thesis will use the term ‘informal settlement’ as many residents pay some form of rent for the small pieces of land that they inhabit (often without the benefit of public services), whereas squatters are illegal invaders of the land they live on.

A diversity of ‘squatter settlement’ profiles ranges from inner-city slums to vast, peripheral settlements. The physical characteristics of each individual settlement vary enormously yet many gratuitous assumptions are still made about squatter/informal settlements that are not supported by data. Meeting the needs of the present can be interpreted as a ‘development’ component, which includes economic, social, cultural, health and political needs.

There is a major absence of recent studies on the impact of rapid urban growth, in spite of the significance of urbanization in the Pacific. The Vanuatu Sustainable Human Development Report (1996) notes that settlements have grown rapidly since the late 1980s and that they are by no means temporary in nature, since a significant number of people have been born and have spent most of their lives in these settlements. If, as suggested, migrants are becoming permanent residents in towns and they are living in informal settlements, this must have a profound effect on government planning which is, at present, aimed at decentralization and rural economic development, rather than urbanization.

**INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS**

The attention paid to what have usually been called squatter settlements in developing countries began in the 1960s and initially focused on the cultural aspects of illegal and
informal settlements and argued that any problems that existed in settlements were caused by pathological cultural trends, which were characterized as a “culture of marginality”. The concept of ‘marginality’ followed the concepts of ‘urban-rural dichotomy’ and ‘culture of poverty, and was particularly applied to Latin America (Perlman 1976, Lloyd 1979). Researchers characterized marginality in terms of restricted formal or informal participation in the urban social system, restricted links with the urban economy, residence on unserviced land, irregularity of participation in the educational system and a lack of sustained participation in the urban political and recreational systems.

This early literature has argued that squatter settlements were by-products of rapid economic development and industrialization, of changes in agriculture and shortages of housing (Karpat 1976). That is, these types of settlements were not a result of communal or psychological disintegration in the village or in the city. Stokes (1962) was one of the earliest scholars to distinguish between ‘slums of hope’ and ‘slums of despair’. “Slums of hope disappear as migration slows down, ‘slums of despair’ do not disappear; for there live the poor, the ‘poor’ meaning not only the poor in income but more significantly the poor in ability, who cannot meet society’s minimum standards for employment or utilization” (Stokes 1962:10). In short, slum formation depended on the rate of migration as well as on the rate of integration or absorption of migrants. Slum formation further depended on the existence of barriers to escalation as well as the distribution between income and ability classes. Thirty years later it remains true that one of the main driving forces behind the expansion of slums is social exclusion (Gutberlet 1999). That is, the
rise in the cost of living has pushed people to seek cheaper accommodation, frequently fulfilling this need in the form of illegal occupation of land.

In the 1970s, the focus of academic literature shifted increasingly towards an analysis of the political economy of Third World cities’ uncontrolled expansion. These studies emphasized structural aspects of urban problems and argued that squatters were not outcasts of society and could be assisted through self-help programs (Castells 1977). Urban development for low-income groups in developing countries has been a central theme that has dominated the housing literature until the present day (Pugh 1997). There have been changing roles in policy during this period ranging from state-aided assistance in sites-and-services projects to some post-1990 schemes associated with environmental improvement and attempts to develop ‘sustainable cities’.

The 1980s explored site and service programs and ‘in situ’ slum upgrading schemes as possible solutions to squatter settlements. Policies of eradication were followed by solutions involving social housing schemes and renovations of squatter settlements and the recognition of the utility and feasibility of building one’s own house. Studies focused on government public housing efforts and their failures in developing countries, noting that many of the urban poor have attempted to resolve the housing crisis by building their own shelter and settlements - the products of their autonomous efforts which were examined by many. Turner (1972) for example, argued that in transitional societies institutionalized social security was a privilege reserved for the élite and that urban home ownership provided at least a partial alternative source of social and economic security.
Overall the large body of research conducted on squatter settlements in the 1970s in Africa, Asia and Latin America concluded that squatter settlements were not isolated phenomena but characteristic trends of industrializing countries; were not a problem to be solved but a functional and rational solution to the need for well-located inexpensive housing (Frankenhoff 1967 cited in Eke 1982); were not marginal to urban society but closely integrated into it (Castells 1977); that urban services had higher priorities than any other amenity; and that legalization and on-site upgrading were recommended as the most appropriate squatter settlement strategy (Perlman 1977). Perlman (1976) contended that migrants were integrated into society on terms detrimental to their interests; and argued that migrants were not socially marginal, but rejected, not economically marginal, but repressed.

This statement issued a quarter of a century ago is an apt description of settlements (including the case study of Blacksands in this study) today. Very little has changed either in squatter settlements per se (economic, social life and the provision of services) and in attitudes to them (they remain socially and politically marginal, ignored and rejected). It would appear that little has been learned in the last two decades. Government authorities and urban residents cannot simply ignore the settlements and the residents’ rights and problems. These settlements are still evident twenty-five years after they were initially recognized by academics and they will not simply ‘go away’ even when bulldozed or opposed in one form or another. They must be considered in any plan for urban management and national development although if Connell and Lea (1993:14) are correct in their assertion that in many parts of the world “planning is not a traditional
activity”, the current situation will throw major new challenges for urban management in developing countries.

Slums, shanty towns, squatter and informal settlements have long been identified as a ‘staging place’ for the migrating poor. However, there has been little continuous study as to the activities of the alleged transient squatter communities. There have been few questions as to where squatters reside when, and if, they ever stop being “poor rural migrants”, how livelihoods are developed within such a settlement and how the residents integrate into formal urban life. A key theme to this thesis is an assessment of the stability of a squatter settlement in Vanuatu through the indication of urban permanence by settlers’ socio-economic activities and their institutional organization, and to examine what is different – or the same – in terms of classic early studies of settlements such as those of Perlman.

From the early 1980s a second area of concern revolved around the physical urban environment itself, the so-called ‘brown agenda’ (World Bank 1993; Main 1994; Ferguson and Maurer 1996). It was increasingly important to distinguish between the responsibilities of the state, such as energy and water provision, and those where the individual or household could be involved, for example in ‘waste disposal’ through recycling. There is an expanding literature on environmental problems in developing countries’ cities, yet few authors have attempted to draw the various components into an adequate or useable conceptualisation of ‘sustainable urban development’, if only so that the variety of individual studies which have been undertaken could be usefully related to one another. This has meant a rather poorly developed literature on sustainable development and cities, even though urban centres now include within their boundaries
close to half the world’s population and a higher proportion of the world’s consumption of non-renewable resources and generation of wastes (Mitlin and Satterthwaite 1992:30).

In recent years the whole area of basic needs has become one in which the self-help instincts and abilities of the poor have been explored; some may say exploited, through a series of aided self-help programmes. Schemes for partnership and cooperation have been acclaimed as successful by all parties concerned, but getting the balance right by listening to the poor and encouraging genuine community participation is still difficult to achieve (Yeung and McGee 1986 cited in Drakakis-Smith 1995). By the mid-1990s, a neo-evolutionary approach argued that the state played a limited role in the provision of services. One of the objectives of this thesis is to examine service provision in settlements to obtain the view of informal residents themselves on who should be providing basic services and infrastructure for urban residents and to examine appropriate strategies for service provision.

There is a strong and consistent argument that the emergence of squatter settlements is a response to housing needs that authorities cannot provide (an argument that places responsibility on local and national housing authorities). However, as squatter settlements have often been considered a degraded eyesore full of unemployed, uneducated people barely eking out a living in ramshackle housing and unsanitary conditions, this approach to self-housing is also seen as unacceptable and inadequate. In response to the dilemmas of uncontrolled urban growth, academic studies have highlighted urban sustainability and have examined how politics and power mediate people’s access to basic urban services (Swyngedouw 1995; Mueller 1995) and how the functioning of the local economy may create urban environmental problems (Potter 1992).
The issue of access to basic services raises issues on gender vulnerability and poverty (declining standards of living). Squatting may be taken as an index of increasing poverty but of course, this can be debated. In many countries, it is the position of women and other disadvantaged groups and their (limited) access to basic needs, infrastructure, employment, legal rights and other factors that cause physical and socio-economic isolation from the less vulnerable community. The last ten to fifteen years have witnessed what might be accurately described as an explosion of research on gender and development. Levy (1991) noted that gender has increasingly become a vehicle for the fulfillment of development objectives other than those to do with narrowing the many social, economic and political gaps between men and women. Whilst this thesis does not intend to address gender issues specifically, it is not possible to ignore the social and economic differences in gender in a Melanesian culture. The types of work women do are in turn heavily mediated by their age, marital status, position within the household, and by the direct or indirect involvement of wider kin groups and neighbours in attributing meaning to individual women’s particular jobs. In spite of the paucity of data on people (men and women) in informal settlements in the Pacific and Vanuatu, due recognition of the need to remedy this will be given and, attention will be paid to highlighting ‘gender gaps’ and the role that women play in their urban community, and the extent to which disadvantage is a gendered issue.

**URBANIZATION IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC: VANUATU**

The causes of rapid urban growth and urbanization in South Pacific countries (see Map One) are largely attached to high annual population growth rates, increasing rates of urban migration and urban-biased economic development. A number of social, economic
and environmental issues have emerged in connection with this indisputable rapid growth – unemployment, scarcity of health and social services, a rise in crime levels and the establishment of squatter settlements in and around urban centres. Vanuatu, and other Melanesian countries have experienced this kind of speedy urbanization, with its concomitant social and economic problems alongside the financial pressures of providing urban services.

In spite of the relative recency of urban development in the Pacific, the growth rates of urban centres cannot be ignored at local, national and regional levels. Pressures on urban and national authorities are increasing daily and the large proportion of the urban population that cannot be formally housed is increasingly apparent. In Vanuatu the number and size of squatter or informal settlements has burgeoned in the last decade. Reports for international donors have painted a picture of a declining standard of living and limited access to employment, housing, education and health facilities for nearly half of Port Vila’s population. Underlying many of these issues are inadequate national financial and human resources and the complex land tenure system. Very little is known about life within informal and squatter settlements in Melanesia, save for isolated studies conducted for the purpose of a socio-economic review for an international organization, that conclude with recommendations for urgent in-depth studies of these settlements to ensure sustainable urban development. These studies (Paul 1993, Halliburton 1991) tend to be of the “Friday Flash” syndrome (Chambers 1983), conducted with minimal local consultation that tend to emphasize existing stereotypes, rather than provide a detailed analysis of particular situations.
Several reports other than academic studies by Bonnemaison (1977, 1984, 1985); Bastin (1980, 1985); Bedford (1973; 1981); Connell (1982, 1985, 1993, 1994); Haberkorn (1987, 1989, 1990); Jabre et al. (1976) and Tonkinson (1984), almost all of which relate to the 1980s or earlier, have highlighted a growing recognition of the need to address the rise of informal settlements in Port Vila and the urgent need for the provision of basic services in parallel with a national decentralization policy. Reports on urban growth and management in Port Vila began to emerge in the early 1990s and started with a South Pacific Forum financed report prepared by a New Zealand urban planner (Paul 1993). The general objective of the report was to identify the future demand for urban expansion and the appropriate sites for urbanization and was instigated by the Physical Planning Unit following an internal report on the projected housing needs of Port Vila. The report did not acknowledge those informal settlements that were on and near the municipal boundary, nor did it comment on the potential for growth in these areas.

The majority of studies after 1993 were facilitated by consultants to the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in respect of an Urban Infrastructure Loan. The Hydroplan Report (1994) provided an overview of the services and plans for urban growth and development. While this report provided a brief overview of selected settlements in Port Vila and Laganville, its primary focus was on the sanitation and transport facilities available to the settlements and not so much on the residents of these settlements themselves. Bong’s (1994) *Blacksands Settlement Research Project* focused on social service needs of the residents. Much of this information was used in the ensuing Urban Growth Management Strategy (Townland Consultants 1998) and the youth and culture
oriented *Young People Speak* edited by Mitchell (1998) for the Young People’s Project. However, each of these studies was limited to particular facets of urban life.

This thesis, then, constitutes the first detailed study of an informal settlement to be conducted in Vanuatu (and more generally in Melanesia). Indeed few detailed studies have been undertaken on shanty towns since the focus on Latin American squatter settlements in the 1960s (such as those conducted by Nelson (1970) and Perlman (1976).

This study intends to cast new light on the conditions of an informal settlement in Port Vila and to challenge and assess some of the assumptions made about such settlements. The informal settlement of Blacksands (located on the north west periphery of the Port Vila municipal boundary) was selected as the study site largely due to the existence of compact and clearly delineated boundaries, and, perhaps most importantly, accessibility. The total estimated population of the settlement exceeds 4,500 (National Census Office, February 2000); hence a smaller subdivision within Blacksands was selected for field studies after permission from the landowning family had been gained.

This thesis intends to provide a detailed account of the social, economic and environmental conditions in Blacksands and of the socio-economic profile of the residents, rather than make the usual brief and simple observations of living conditions in a settlement that have been conducted in the past. It further seeks to examine the extent to which Blacksands is a settlement filled with hope and aspirations for a better, brighter urban future or, whether indeed, it is a place of despair and anomie. In addition, this thesis will explore the extent of service provision in the settlement to obtain the view of informal residents themselves on who should be providing basic services and
infrastructure for urban residents and to examine appropriate strategies for service provision. The study also addresses whose responsibility it is to provide urban services and if these responsibilities are being honoured.

This study is necessarily an outsiders’ perspective but it seeks, as far as possible, to give voice to the informal settlement residents concerning their living conditions, and to present their own perspective of life in towns and in the urban future. There is a need to let the ‘squatters’ themselves speak about their livelihoods, their struggles, their aspirations and their perceptions of possible solutions. This study therefore aspires to provide an ‘insiders’ account of life in an informal settlement. The focus is on the contemporary socio-economic organization of the residents but historical changes and demographic shifts, employment trends and changes in social infrastructure are all traced. Social and economic trends will be linked to rural ties (where they exist) in terms of the origin and aspirations of the residents.

This thesis endeavours to show that long-term urban residence combined with social, political, economic and psychological involvement in Port Vila contributes to urban permanence. It therefore evaluates the degree of urban commitment and involvement and how this is manifested in the urban sub-system. If there is indeed a growing trend for permanence, there are implications for a sustainable urban future in Port Vila. This study therefore examines the implications for urban management (with reference to good governance) that a rapidly increasing urban population poses for the national and local authorities, the landowners and for the squatters themselves. This thesis will also evaluate the degree of urban commitment and involvement of informal settlers and how this is manifested in the urban sub-system.
Above all, this thesis provides information on a topic that has been remarkably neglected, despite its enormous significance. The key themes concern stability, permanence, socio-economic organization and institutional organization, that is, the kinds of things that do or do not differentiate Blacksands from more formal suburbs, or, indeed from other squatter settlements elsewhere in Port Vila. It therefore traces critical changes in the processes of urbanization in one of the fastest growing capital cities in the South Pacific.
MAP ONE: THE PACIFIC REGION
Chapter Two

**Urbanization in the South Pacific and Vanuatu**

The first phase of urbanization in the Pacific was closely linked to the colonial process, and subsequently to the introduction of a cash economy, reinforced by the influence of Christian missions (Doumenge 1999, Connell and Lea 1993). Significant urbanization began as recently as the 1960s in the Pacific and Melanesian towns were generally located on the coast, functioning as trading and administrative centres (Connell and Curtain 1982). The general pattern of urbanization in the Pacific developed from a regular grid of landholdings for expatriates with nearby villages coexisting in parallel (Ward 1972). Previously, many factors had discouraged permanent urban residence. There were no social security or welfare systems and urban incomes were possibly inadequate to support a family thus discouraging migration (Connell and Lea 1993b:11). This chapter seeks to provide a background to the broad context of urbanization in the Pacific with particular reference to Vanuatu.

**URBANIZATION TODAY**

Urbanization in Pacific Island countries varies considerably in scale and pattern. Contemporary Pacific towns and cities are multifunctional, polyethnic, and dominated by tertiary activities (Doumenge 1999:317). They are larger and are more evidently home to Pacific Islanders, are of greater social and economic importance for national development, and constantly changing (Connell and Lea 1999:326). Urbanization has brought the Pacific into contact with global modernity. New goods, ideas and lifestyles
have been introduced to cities and surrounding villages, mixing diverse populations and offering the people increased incomes (Doumenge 1999:324).

The majority of Pacific countries are primarily rural but rapidly urbanizing and experiencing growth throughout the urban hierarchy – although, in most countries, that hierarchy is limited. In Melanesia, a distinctive form of urbanization has emerged with rapidly growing urban centres, uncontrolled growth of settlements usually on peri-urban customary land, the congestion of human settlements and the absorption of villages into the expanding modern town. Education, new more ‘modern’ lifestyles, increasing government bureaucracy, service sector employment, industrialization and recent independence have all fuelled the movement of the population to urban areas (Bryant 1992:177).

Although Pacific cities are small by world standards, most are growing in population, as well as economically and in the amount of land they require. A general feature of these countries is one of urban primacy, with the population of the capital city being more than double that of the next largest urban area and the capital is often the only real urban centre within the country. Pacific countries can no longer be regarded as solely rural societies (Connell 1984:306). Indeed, in Vanuatu although 79% of the population is classed as rural (1999 National Population Census), most villagers have relatives and connections to the two urban centres, Port Vila and Luganville. Bryant (1995:11) concurs that Pacific people are becoming increasingly urbanized, yet stresses the difficulty in determining ‘urban’ in the Pacific setting. In some countries the land area is so small that a movement from ‘rural’ to ‘urban’ areas is almost impossible to measure and all parts of the country are strongly influenced by both rural and urban development.
Urbanization is not only the result of an increase in the extent of migration (natural increase is also substantial) but represents for many an intended long-term change in residence (Connell and Lea 1993b, Haberkorn 1987). Increasingly migration is of families, rather than single males, whilst independent female migration is becoming important in some areas although its impact is unclear. Recognition of the increasingly significant natural rate of growth in towns themselves by Pacific Island governments is often lacking as they continue to regard rural-urban migration as the sole cause of increasing urbanization, whilst tackling population issues has usually been avoided.

Migration to some urban areas has been so rapid that governments have been unable to keep pace with the provision of adequate urban services and facilities (ADB 1992:177).

In the Pacific region urban growth has outstripped rural population growth by a large margin with the greatest growth appearing in the national capitals. The movement of people has intensified in volume; circular or return migration has become of less relative importance and rural-urban migration is increasingly likely to be permanent or at least long-term (Connell and Lea 1994; Haberkorn 1987, 1989).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Urban Population (%)</th>
<th>Urban Growth Rate (%)</th>
<th>National Growth Rate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FSM</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiji Islands</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Polynesia</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiribati</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nauru</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Caledonia</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNG</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samoa</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solomon Islands</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonga</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanuatu</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Pacific Islands Populations, 1998, SPC Noumea
Urban growth presents policy makers with a dilemma by creating a demand for resources to improve urban housing and amenities. However, paradoxically, if these resources are committed (often increasing opportunities for development and urban job creation), living conditions and services will improve and may encourage further migration to urban centres. If, however, urban problems are not addressed, a lack of amenities and services may lead to social and political ramifications.

Continued urbanization and its impact on towns and villages in the region, both positive and negative, appears inevitable despite moves by some Pacific countries to decentralize this growth to other islands. The more visible indicators of change in human settlements in the Pacific are the rise in squatter housing and poverty, and the decline in the quality of the urban environment, especially standards of shelter, infrastructure and environmental management (UNCHS 1996). These issues all point to a growing crisis which neither the community nor government has been able to reverse. The major problems facing urban centres in the Pacific include:

- serious shortages of land and conflicts with traditional land tenure;
- falling standards of infrastructure;
- an increase in the number of squatter settlements and informal housing; and
- poverty, vulnerability and environmental degradation.

Urbanization trends in the Pacific are unlikely to reverse (Connell and Lea 1993; Bryant 1995; Storey 1999) and urban centres are a fact of life and influence most Pacific Islanders. Decentralization and rural development schemes have been tried with varying success to retard urbanization in Pacific towns. Despite occasional government schemes
for repatriating people to rural areas not everyone has a rural village or settlement to
return to, and so the problems facing urban settlements will continue to grow. If issues
such as population growth, environmental degradation, land distribution and tenure, as
well as employment opportunities are not urgently addressed, the future prospects for
many Pacific Islanders are not good (Bryant 1995:112). Yet governance is weak, and
policy implementation – where policies exist – has proved difficult in most Pacific Island
states.

URBAN DILEMMAS
As Pacific towns have grown, concerns have mounted over urban problems such as rising
unemployment, increasing crime rates, growth of squatter settlements and the inability to
manage and provide effective urban services. In the transition from colonial towns, urban
economies diversified but remain dominated by national governments, and hence by
capital cities, because of the significance of the public sector (Connell and Lea 1994).
Efforts to privatise and to increase competition are being made throughout the region but
the effects on urban unemployment have usually been negative, hence the struggle for
jobs is a constant urban preoccupation. Unemployment is visible in most towns, though
the concept of being without a job has less meaning in most places because of the
viability of the subsistence sector, although the lack of a rural or urban ‘subsistence
safety net’ is of growing concern.

The larger Melanesian states have greater potential for economic growth with natural
resources (mining, forestry, and fisheries), manufacturing opportunities (Papua New
Guinea) and tourism, but apart from the latter, this is less true of Vanuatu. The limited
development of island economies is popularly explained as a result of Pacific islands’ remoteness and isolation, small size, limited natural resources and a narrow production base, substantial trade deficits, few local skills and vulnerability to external shocks and natural disasters. Moreover, political systems have sometimes been fragile, ecological structures are vulnerable and economies lack diversity. Although the region does not suffer the abject poverty experienced in other parts of the developing world, it does have serious social and economic problems. Economic growth has been disappointing since Independence, expanding populations have intensified pressure on land and lagoons and political instability has increased.

Throughout the region the labour force has shifted from the agricultural to the service sector. Formal sector employment is significantly concentrated in the urban centres, in particular in the public sector. Economic recession at the start of the 1980s severely restricted the growth of new wage employment opportunities and in many countries there has been a growing problem of urban and especially youth unemployment (Connell 1997). Yet governments continue to focus – at least in theory - on rural development, with the intent of addressing employment issues in the main population areas whilst neglecting the rapidly growing urban centres. The increased levels of unemployment accompanying urbanization have, in many cases, strained social support networks. In spite of the lack of jobs, the informal employment sector remains insignificant as a source of income for most households.

Social and environmental problems are often the first features of rapid urbanization to receive any attention. In the Pacific, the focus has tended to be on social issues, with some of the traditional ways of behaviour (e.g. respect for elders and assisting the needy
within the community) and family ties being tested (Chandra 1973; Hezel 1989; Monsell-Davis 1986, 1993; Bryant 1995). Increasing school dropout rates, rising unemployment, increasing numbers of preventable diseases, declining real incomes and deteriorating housing standards can be found almost everywhere in the Pacific and provide ample evidence of growing levels of inequality and poverty (Morauta 1984, Monsell-Davis 1993; Bryant 1995). There have been few measures of poverty in the Pacific other than in Fiji (Barr 1990, Bryant 1993, 1995, UNDP 1994, 1997), but the increased extent of begging and crime in some countries suggests that poverty is of growing significance, especially in the larger towns.

Seers (1977) drew attention to inequality as being one of the three key issues in development, alongside poverty and unemployment. Connell and Curtain (1982) argued that inequality was one of the more neglected yet more crucial issues in urban development in Melanesia and to this day, a growing inequality in terms of residence, access to services and economic opportunities is ignored. Social disorganization and crime flow from inequalities in the cities and is exacerbated with the increasing size of urban populations. Squatter and informal settlements are deemed one of the more visible signs of rapid urbanization and of the failures of urban management. Shantytowns have often been regarded by long-term urban residents as a form of visual pollution and a place of crime (although there is no real evidence of this) and have influenced government decisions either to discourage such settlements or to provide only basic facilities through “site and service” schemes.

Urban decay and environmental degradation have stemmed from the twin problems of a lack of national resources and insufficient investment, but they are also due to the
generally uncontrolled and poorly regulated pattern of urban development and expansion (Burgess 1992). In recent years the environmental aspects of urbanization have received greater prominence. There has been inadequate investment in service provision in the key areas of water supply, sewage facilities and waste disposal that impacts negatively on the public health of urban residents. High population growth rates have led to immense pressures on local environments, especially evident when urban development has taken place within the confines of fragile seafront, lagoon and mangrove boundaries (Bryant 1994:154). The various issues that have been a consequence of rapid urbanization are rarely seen as linked to urban planning even where such a concept exists in a formal context, and nor is the rural-urban dimension to the problem considered.

Urbanization is likely to become one of the most significant demographic and development issues for Pacific Island countries in the 21st century (Storey 1998:32). The Pacific has a significant urban future, and its towns and cities are essential to social and economic development. Future towns and cities in the Pacific Islands are likely to be much larger and more difficult to manage than they are today (Connell and Lea 1994). However, it is not inevitable that urbanization should be unmanageable and thus that the problems worsen. Strategies that emphasize integrated rural development and stress both economic advancement and social services will be important. However, as more children are born in town and remain there, more urban jobs will have to be found and more social services will need to be provided. And as long as urban employment appears more prestigious and city life is perceived as being of a higher quality that rural life, the population pressures in urban areas will increase. The social, economic and environmental future of the region depends to a great extent on how successfully these
problems can be addressed. This thesis seeks to make a small contribution to the debate on urban management and planning.

**PACIFIC URBAN RESEARCH**

The rapidity of recent urban growth in Pacific Island countries has led to increasing concern by academics over the impacts of the urbanization process, through the realization of the permanence of the emerging urban areas. Pacific Island countries contain some of the fastest growing urban areas in the world, but have received minimal documentation in global reviews of urbanization and urban development.

The reasons for the comparative lack of interest in the urbanization problems of Melanesian cities include the relatively recent trends in Pacific urbanization, the small population totals by global levels, the minimal level of documentation and relative lack of poverty and related urban problems compared to other less developed countries (Connell and Lea 1993a:11). Most of the studies undertaken by geographers (predominantly non-Pacific Islanders) in the Pacific have sought to understand and analyze the distinctive features of Pacific environments and societies. Urban and peri-urban anthropology in Melanesia has its origins in Papua New Guinea (Bclshaw 1957; Groves 1954, cited in Rawlings 1999). Studies included ethnographic accounts of indigenous social, cultural, political and economic structures. In the late 1960s to mid-1970s food markets and informal marketing attracted the attention of geographers (Brookfield 1973) and economic anthropologists (Finney 1973). Bedford (1973, 1981, 1984, 1985); Bonnemaison (1977, 1984); Jourdan (1996); Philibert (1986); and Tonkinson (1979 cited in Connell 1985) are some of the very few social scientists who have conducted post-
colonial research in urban and peri-urban areas in Melanesia, even over a twenty-year period.

The problems facing urban areas in the Pacific have been well-documented (Bedford 1987; Bryant 1990; Connell 1987). In regard to squatter and informal settlements in the Pacific, most work has been undertaken in Papua New Guinea and Fiji (see sub-section on squatter settlement research in the Pacific). Urban migration, in particular circular migration (a well entrenched social phenomenon), proved the most popular research topic in the urban Pacific for more than a decade (Chapman 1975; Bonnemaison 1976, 1980, 1984; Connell and Curtain 1982; Haberkorn 1987, 1989; Walsh 1983) and will be discussed in more detail in the section on research in Vanuatu. Much of this work stressed that internal migration was circular or temporary by nature but with a declining incidence or the demise of circular mobility. Morauta (1980:290) noted, “there is a tendency to think of Papua New Guinea’s towns as composed of migrants, not simply people who come from rural villages but people who will return to rural villages after a period in town. Although some social scientists have recognized that this is not entirely the case, I feel the presence of permanent urban residents has been ignored”.

Whilst research has dwelt largely on labour and circular migration as a major factor contributing to urbanization, there has been little continuous study of the increasing permanence of these migrants. Bryant (1994) noted that Pacific urban areas are now a permanent ‘home’ to a growing number of second and third generation islanders. In Papua New Guinea, Morauta (1980, 1984) argued that permanent urban residents had not been sufficiently recognized and were ignored in several areas of urban and national policy making. Her studies highlighted that many of these residents were both
disadvantaged and posed administrative and socio-economic dilemmas for urban authorities. The 1970s suggested that the few permanent residents in town tended to be more highly paid urban dwellers, whilst the lower income earners were considered ‘urban peasants’ who were simultaneously involved in village and town life (Bedford and Mamak 1976 cited in Fahey 1978). By the 1980s, it was being argued by Ward (1981) that the urban population was much more permanently committed to town than was commonly supposed as evidenced by static indicators of demographic composition, length of urban residence and urban labour force participation.

There are a number of continuing research themes: rural-urban migration and housing policy (as informal settlements grew in number and size) particularly marked the 1980s. Analysis of Pacific Island urbanization lacks explanatory frameworks, models and detailed accounts and there is a need for urbanization studies in the region to be realigned and towns to be observed more holistically has been reiterated by many academics (Ward 1981, 1998; Jones 1993, 1995; Doumenge 1999). Ward (1998) believes the most serious gap in urban research is the absence of studies of the functions of towns themselves, and of the urban systems in which they are embedded. He argued for a study of the urban body as a whole - how and why it functions, and how it relates to its wider social, economic and geographic environments (as the basic driving forces of urbanization). Furthermore, there has only been limited critical attention paid to the political contexts and implications of urban growth and management in Pacific Island countries, including issues of urban governance.

Urban research in the Pacific has been somewhat random with many studies of a superficial nature due to time limitations and a reliance on generalized reporting such as
that provided in annual reports. Bryant (1995) stressed the importance of collating all existing information and the urgent need for improved coordination and collection of data to allow a monitoring of changing standards of living in urban areas. Academics have lent their support to examine land tenure situations in Pacific towns and studies have been encouraged by international organizations such as UNDP, World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. The interest of these organizations stems from an interest in utilizing land as collateral in loans for improved homes (personal communication, Professor Don Paterson, University of the South Pacific, 2000) and establishing secure urban businesses.

Urban growth throughout the Pacific has been paralleled by a lack of coordinated and effective management. In the face of continued demographic, environmental and social pressure, this has resulted in falling standards of living, evident in many Pacific towns. As a consequence, urban research is now paying greater attention to issues such as the changing nature of migration (Haberkorn 1987, 1989), poverty and (environmental) sustainability (Barr 1990, Bryant 1993, Storey 1998), housing and land tenure, planning and management (Connell and Lea 1993, 1995; Jones 1995), and urban governance (Storey 1998, Storey and Overton 1999), but there remains a dearth of detailed studies on which to base factual statements or to confirm current generalizations. Moreover, there is a wide range of neglected urban research themes that include little work in the general field of central place studies and little empirical examination of the range of the flow of goods from and to urban areas. In spite of urging by some (Ward 1998) for researchers to turn from the informal settlements and unemployed and consider the formal suburbs and the areas of former government housing now privatized there remain noticeable gaps in urban information on informal settlements themselves, their demographic structure, their
geographical distribution, socio-economic organization in the settlements, the stability of the settlements and the analysis of institutional organizations and their ability to manage urban growth and development.

**SQUATTER SETTLEMENT RESEARCH IN THE PACIFIC**

In spite of the apparent concern over rapid urbanization and the rapidity of change in socio-economic conditions there has been limited work on squatter settlements in the Pacific. What little is available is largely focused on Melanesia, which has larger populations and more and larger towns than other non-Melanesian Pacific countries. Squatter settlements became increasingly evident in several parts of the region (notably in Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Marshall Islands and Tahiti) in the 1970s, or in the early 1980s, following Independence (Shuster 1979, Connell and Lea 1993, Haberkorn 1987). The general attitude towards these settlements was that they were solutions to urban housing pressures and the complex problem of urbanization and migration, in spite of the obvious lack of basic amenities and overcrowding.

Most settlements in Melanesia are relatively homogeneous containing individuals of the same ethnic or language groups and representing distinctive sub-cultures (Shuster 1979:33). In Fiji and Papua New Guinea the residents of these settlements were generally employed in unskilled or semi-skilled jobs and had usually been permanent settlement residents for between two and ten years. Shuster stated that the residents were either financially unable to move to better housing or were unwilling to do so. Those who were unable to move often supported unemployed relatives and remitted money “home”, thus reducing their ability to afford better housing services and housing. Those people
unwilling to move did not want to lose social contact with people from their area of origin (Shuster 1979:34).

In Papua New Guinea, there have been a number of isolated studies on urbanization, including those which have noted the extent to which there were permanent urban residents (Morauta 1980, Curtain 1977) and the existence (or general characteristics) of growing informal, squatter and slum settlements. Morauta (1980:297) observed that, “living and dying in town and relying totally on the urban economic system is a much broader phenomenon. Permanent residence in towns is a fact of life for thousands of ordinary people. However, their very permanence disadvantages them; high dependence ratios, little or no support from the rural economy and no opportunity to move away from town when poverty, rising unemployment, old age or social disorder make life in town difficult or unpleasant.”

Dom’s (1980) study of community development in three settlements in Port Moresby discussed the moral responsibility for the general welfare of those in urban migrant settlements and highlighted the lack of a focal body or agency and the lack of coordination among many agencies (government and non-government) to address problems of the migrant settlements in the form of self-help housing schemes. However, the paper lacked any discussion as to the conditions and the characteristics of the settlements themselves.

A later attempt to characterize some of the conditions in a squatter settlement in Port Moresby was conducted by Chao (1984) in Nine-Mile settlement. Chao briefly examined employment, problems in settlement life, lack of educational opportunities, youth
problems, and the inadequacy of any intellectual, spiritual or recreational inspiration. The lack of information available about the settlements in Port Moresby was highlighted and Chao concluded by urging all agencies to address the identified issues if the “numerous tensions, stresses and frustration in the settlement are to be prevented from eventually erupting into more serious social problems for the settlement and for urban life as a whole” (Chao 1984:198). Given the current situation in Papua New Guinea today (with around 40% of the population of Port Moresby living in self-help and makeshift housing (Monsell-Davis 1993), it is clear that her pleas for ‘caring’ or more adequate research went largely unheard.

Fiji is probably the best documented of the Melanesian states in terms of rapid urbanization, consequential social disorder and the increase in squatter and informal settlements in and around the major towns, and most recently, urban poverty (Bryant 1990, 1993, 1995, Monsell-Davis 1993, UNDP 1997). In light of the 179% growth in squatter population between 1986 and 1996, the Ministry of Local Government, Housing and Environment drafted a national policy on squatter settlements (unauthorised dwellings built illegally on private, public or Fijian owned lands) that provided for upgrading in areas of concentrated (and rapidly growing) squatter housing.

Urban surveys carried out in Fiji in the last decade have shown an overall decline in living standards. Data on employment, household income and expenditure patterns and poverty levels showed that people were finding life difficult but also demonstrated that they had found several ways of coping (Bryant 1993, 1995). These settlements had employment rates similar to those of the national rate and appeared to be as stable as villages near the urban centres. It was also ascertained that the older Suva settlements
were, in essence, formalized squatter settlements and that the people there were well
established. People who had been living in squatter settlements for longer periods were
more likely to be involved in formal, wage earning employment and were less likely to
exhibit poverty (Bryant 1990). Growth of squatter settlements in Fiji has continued with a
consequent increase in overcrowding and social problems and the decreasing availability
of land for residential purposes.

In the Solomon Islands, squatting began in Honiara soon after World War II (Nage 1987)
and these settlements have continued to grow, largely due to a housing shortage in the
capital. However, in spite of the increasing crime rate, social disorder and obvious lack of
adequate infrastructure in the capital, there has been no real action to address
urbanization in the country. Uncontrolled urbanization has been one of the factors in the
contemporary ethnic and regional conflicts in the country. The number of long term
urban residents in Honiara easily outweighs that of recent rural migrants and some long
term residents clearly identify themselves as urbanites (Jourdan 1996:41). However, there
have been few studies of squatters and squatter settlements in Solomon Islands and those
that do exist are more than two decades old.

In New Caledonia, squatters became apparent in the 1980s (Dussy 1995, 1997),
occupying large vacant plots inside the city of Noumea and along the shoreline. In 1997
squatters accounted for 10% of the capital’s resident population. Two large scale surveys
conducted by the Institut de Recherche pour le Developpement (IRD) in the early 1990s
ascertained that more than 50% of the squatters were Kanaks (native New Caledonians),
25% were of Wallis and Futunese origin and the remaining 25% were either ni-Vanuatu
or Tahitian. Typically, the inhabitants of the squatter settlements were engaged in
unskilled, insecure, low paid occupations, which is somewhat typical of non-European employment in the French territory (Dussy 1997, 1998).

The few academic studies of *les squats* in New Caledonia have suggested that the settlements emerged from a need for garden space to grow vegetables. Garden sheds were first erected on the vacant plots and gradually the gardeners themselves set up home there in preference to the sub-standard, overcrowded housing available in the city. Interestingly, Dussy (1996, 1997, 1998) identifies the squatter settlements in Noumea not as a last resort but as a deliberate lifestyle choice, the food gardens providing a means of forging social links and enabling economic survival. At the political level, opinions are divided, with Kanak (Melanesian) supporters of independence considering the settlements as legitimate occupation of traditional tribal lands while the Kanak loyalists consider them illegitimate and are opposed to their further expansion.

Despite this nucleus of interest in squatter settlements actual data and anything other than qualitative information are extremely rare. Many urban dwellers, villagers, academics, non-government organizations, chiefs and some government workers constantly stress the need for forward planning and regard for future generations but the rapid economic changes taking place in the Pacific mean that warnings, in the urban context, at least, go largely unheeded (Bryant 1995:123). There is a real need to obtain more information to provide a holistic view of squatter settlements and how their residents cope with everyday living and what the future holds for them, if any (management) policy is to be effective. There is a further need to amass all existing information in order to compile a comprehensive database on squatter and informal settlements in the Pacific and its individual countries.
In the Pacific the term 'squatter' is used loosely to include all spontaneous or informal settlements which have substandard and unauthorized structures and which lack basic services. It does not apply only to those households occupying land illegally (Bryant 1993:87), as the name would imply. Various studies (Connell 1985, Jackson 1977, Oram 1973) have ascertained that 'squatters' exhibit a variety of forms of occupation of land; they may pay some form of rent, have permissive occupancy or occupy land without any formal permission. The term 'squatter' does not exist in the plethora of Melanesian languages. Hence a range of descriptions such as 'compound' (Fahey 1978), 'urban village' (Morauta 1980) and simply 'settlement' (Mitchell 1998) have been used. Whatever the term, these settlements share the common characteristic of having emerged from the need for housing in urban centres; and are occupied by people of certain, usually low income, socio-economic groups that are linked together in some way by the functioning of local institutions (family, church, clubs) and other peripheral institutional and service activities.

For the purpose of this study, I have adopted the term 'informal settlement' in preference to the more pejorative 'squatter settlement' in recognition that in Port Vila many informal settlements and housing benefit from some form of lease or tenure agreement with the customary landowners.

**URBANIZATION IN VANUATU: PORT VILA**

Vanuatu was first discovered by Europeans with the arrival of a Spanish fleet in 1606, though Melanesians had been there for centuries. Whalers, missionaries and traders followed the explorers in the early years of the nineteenth century, when a busy trade in
sandalwood rapidly developed. During the 1860s permanent settlements commenced with the establishment of plantations. The archipelago of some 80 islands had been a British preserve, but in the 1880s French interests became dominant, owing to the activities of the Compagnie Calédonienne des Nouvelles Hébrides (CCNH), which was strongly resented in Australia. British planters, traders and missionaries induced Britain to resist French annexation and the New Hebrides question remained open until the Condominium was organized as part of the general Anglo-French Settlement in 1906 (Bennett 1956). The New Hebrides became one of the only two jointly administered colonies in the world. The Condominium was an area of joint influence in which each power had full sovereignty over its own subjects, but exercised joint authority over the indigenous population. There was parallel national administration as well as the joint departments (duplication of departments and officials was a characteristic feature of the administration), and the Joint Court, with jurisdiction over native and international disputes.

The first recorded European settlement in Vila Bay was the Presbyterian Mission Station on Iririki Island in 1873. The opening of a trade store by CCNH in 1882 first turned Vila into the economic centre of the colony (Bennett 1957). Vila was legally defined (gazetted) as a ‘town’ in 1911 (Bedford 1973: 202). The New Hebrides experienced limited social and economic development in the inter-war years as both colonial powers largely neglected this distant fragment of empire. It was not until the 1960s that some significant semblance of development occurred and much of that was associated with a modern plantation economy centred on the larger islands (McClancy 1980).
In July 1980, after 74 years of joint Anglo-French administration, the New Hebrides became the independent Republic of Vanuatu. Vanuatu is a parliamentary democracy, with executive power vested in the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers. Vanuatu’s economy is largely based on tourism, trade and agriculture, with copra and kava being the most important agricultural products. Traditionally, the major economic activity of the ni-Vanuatu (the Melanesian population) is subsistence farming, and for many, this is still true. The economy remains dualistic with the urban economy primarily based on tourism and trade and the rural on agriculture.

PHOTO 1: The town of Port Vila (Courtesy of Philippe Metois)
Vila is located in the south-west of the island of Efate and is bounded by steep escarpments both towards the ocean to the west and the Ekasuvat Lagoon to the east (see Map Three). Vila’s complex site affects its urban morphology and buildings are located on the higher terraces as well as extending along the waterfront. The Greater Port Vila area corresponds to the Port Vila Municipal area together with a number of custom villages (Ifira, Mele, Erakor, Pango and Eratap) on south-west Efate. Whilst these villages are physically separated from the main urban development areas, for practical planning purposes and in economic terms, they are part of the Greater Port Vila area. The informal settlements located on the periphery of the municipal boundaries are also a component of the Greater Port Vila area.

During the 1930s Port Vila developed into a small and cosmopolitan town with an estimated population of 1,000 people consisting of European settlers and administrators, and Asian (Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese) artisans and plantation labourers. In this early period the ni-Vanuatu faced direct controls preventing them from settling in towns. World War II brought the rapid introduction of urban infrastructure in Port Vila and Luganville and brought thousands of ni-Vanuatu into contact with urban life for the first time, giving rise to the true beginning of urban development in Vanuatu. In the post-war period the relocation of foreign born plantation workers to town preceded independent moves by the ni-Vanuatu population itself, as restrictions on urban residence gradually eased.

In the 1950s Vila, the capital of the colony was considered a compact town with fairly well divided sections (Bennett 1956). By 1955 there were still only 200 ni-Vanuatu in Port Vila but this increased rapidly by 556 per cent, between 1955 and 1967 as a direct
result of rural-urban migration (Haberkorn 1989:10). Asians largely dwelt in the north of the town and were often housed in decrepit wooden buildings. To the south of Vila was another depressed part of town, comprising neglected warehouses, crumbling wharves and the indigenous labour lines (consisting of cramped barrier accommodation). Interspersed between the Asian homes were small huts inhabited by many of the town’s resident indigenous population and the ill-kept homes of many poor white families (Bennett 1956:124).

**TABLE Two: Urban Growth in Vanuatu, 1950-1999**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Port Vila</th>
<th>Luganville</th>
<th>Growth rate (%)</th>
<th>Total Urbanization (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>1,340</td>
<td>1,384</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>2,616</td>
<td>1,564*</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>3,072</td>
<td>2,564</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>10,158</td>
<td>5,183</td>
<td>6.04</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>16,900</td>
<td>5,621</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>19,311</td>
<td>6,983</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>30,139</td>
<td>11,360</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from information from Bennett (1955); Brookfield-Glick (1967); Bedford (1973); 1979 Population Census Report; 1986 Urban Census Results; Haberkorn (1987); 1989 Population Census report; 1999 Population Preliminary results. These statistics do not include the peri-urban areas where the majority of the urban population resides and that the growth rate for 1999 is not a contiguous growth rate.

At this time most ni-Vanuatu were employed on short-term contracts (that provided accommodation), returning to their villages on their expiry. Additional labour entered Port Vila from the nearby custom villages. The conscious repatriation of the Vietnamese population by the Joint Administration in the 1960s (McArthur and Yaxley 1967) opened up new positions for unskilled ni-Vanuatu labour in the urban construction industry and the peri-urban plantation sector although there was a growing nucleus of a native middle-class such as clerks, teachers and police, dwelling permanently in government quarters in the town. The ni-Vanuatu and the Wallis Islanders (migrants from the small Pacific
colony of Wallis and Futuna) were equally at the lowest level of urban social and economic life (Bennett 1956:124).

In the early 1960s, Port Vila was a well-planned, expanding town that owed its prosperity to its status as administrative capital and its vicinity to the manganese mines at Forari. The permanent installation of ni-Vanuatu families had been inhibited by their modest (financial) resources and by the high cost of land but this began to change in the 1960s. Although the residential intentions of migrants (an estimated 30% of the population) was not tested in the 1967 census, the results of an earlier census in Vila in 1965 (Brookfield and Glick 1969) suggested that there was much greater residential stability in the urban migrant population than formerly anticipated.

Surveys in 1966 revealed that 57% of surveyed households in Port Vila could be regarded as permanent residents in the sense that they either had an anticipated further residence period of a year to 18 months or were unable to predict their departure (Leaney 1966:5 cited in Connell 1983), but this was a generous definition of permanent. By the late 1970s, migrants were increasingly activating their kinship ties to gain access to urban employment and tending to remain within an urban kin-based social and economic network whilst disengaging themselves from rural ties, simultaneously becoming a more committed urban proletariat. This was evident in the investment in land and housing by migrants at Seaside and in Tagabe.

The 1960s and 1970s saw the beginning of an expanding and diversifying urban economy, providing growing employment opportunities for ni-Vanuatu, and in sectors previously unknown to them when both colonial powers decided to step up the
development of educational, medical and agricultural services (Bedford 1973). Port Vila was thus attracting rural-urban migrants who were responding to a diversifying and increasing domestic labour market (Bedford 1972:124). However, it was also apparent that unemployment occurred in urban areas and was increasing; "all evidence suggests that there is presently a surplus of unskilled labour at least in the area around Port Vila" (Metcalf 1969:14 cited in Connell and Lea 1993). Since then there has been much visible evidence (as formal surveys are few) of growing urban unemployment in Vila. In 1971 British legislation turned Vanuatu into a tax haven and Port Vila briefly became a boomtown. Thirteen overseas banks opened for business, the expatriate population tripled, and new subdivisions were developed. However, despite such economic changes all the evidence suggested that the urban growth rate was probably far greater than the rate of growth of urban employment.

The central part of the contemporary town is characterized by its commercial centre, administrative buildings and high standard villas of the expatriate population dating from the pre-independence era (Townland Consultants 1998:33). The housing areas of the ni-Vanuatu population have spread outside this well-structured area, mainly towards the north. The peri-urban custom villages (Mele-Maat, Mele, Pango, Ifira and Erakor) – along with significant settlements of migrants from other areas of Vanuatu that have relocated on the outskirts of town have played an important role in Port Vila’s development and urbanization (Rawlings 1999:72). In 1999 (National Population Census preliminary results), it was estimated that Port Vila’s population would double in size within 12 years, growing at a rate of 5.6% per annum. This rapid growth was largely
attributed to high rates of population mobility and little attention was paid to the significance of the rate of natural increase within the urban centre itself.

In Vila over the last ten years, population has easily surpassed economic growth and has restricted the capacity of the government to finance service provision (ESCAP 1995). Income disparity is growing and there are an increasing number of people in Port Vila residing in squatter and informal settlements (Townland Consultants 1998). Vanuatu has potential for economic growth but achievements in social development are relatively poor. The education system demonstrates widespread inefficiencies and has largely failed to produce a skilled labour force and constrains economic growth and improved human development (UNDP 1994). The labour force has shifted from agriculture to the service sector in Vanuatu and the industrial workforce is tiny. The public sector grew rapidly around Independence, but growth has actually declined. Formal sector jobs now cater for only a minority of workers but growing proportions of people in the working age group want a cash income. There is a growing problem of urban and especially youth unemployment.

A critical development issue confronting Vanuatu is how to generate enough remunerative income-earning opportunities for the rapidly growing population (3.5% per annum in 1999) in both rural and urban areas to attain secure livelihoods for sustainable human development. Over time the combination of growing urban permanency, high unemployment and increased expectations has put considerable pressure on urban services (Connell and Lea 1993:11) and exacerbated urban social problems.
The peri-urban area\(^1\) has been the major location of ni-Vanuatu residence in Port Vila for 30 years, with its population of 3,281 in 1965, actually double that of the town proper (Brownfield and Brown Glick 1969). In 2000, the most notable feature of Port Vila is the speed in which informal settlements are growing. The dramatic increase in urban growth has led to overcrowding, poor housing conditions, high rents, poor sanitation and a rapid development of squatter and informal settlements.

Squatter settlements were evident in Port Vila by the early 1960s and it was apparent that many had inadequate sanitation and water services, although residents usually had legal status and security of tenure in their homes (Leaney 1966 cited in Republic of Vanuatu 1996). In 1965 over 25% of migrants to Port Vila had been living in the urban and peri-urban areas for an average of more than eight years and that “the number of New Hebrideans living in rental housing, or huts which they had constructed themselves, was far greater than expected in a town where it was believed that employers provided most islanders with accommodation (Bedford 1973:97). In 1975, a study of Tagabe (Jabre et al, 1976) identified an emergence of an urban sub-proletariat in a highly densely populated area with inadequate amenities. There has been no detailed study of informal housing areas since then. By 1986, the National Urban Census Report stated that, “increasingly, what is mainly low cost and often temporary, if not squatter housing, is occupying custom land beyond the municipal boundary”.

Over the last ten years in Port Vila, the number and size of informal settlements in and around the town have increased considerably (see Map 4). By the mid-1990s an increasing shortage of land for urbanization within the official municipal boundaries had

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\(^1\) Land immediately outside the municipal boundaries and includes informal housing areas.
produced visible effects in the urban periphery where low-income areas were spreading fast and were beyond the control of the municipality (Hydroplan, 1994). This phenomenon not only manifests economic problems of economic disparities and land tenure (lease and acquisition) but also problems in the administrative procedure of development and allocation of urban land (Townland Consultants 1998). The Public Service strike in 1993 further contributed to the rapid growth of the settlements as many people could no longer afford to live in rented homes in Vila (Mitchell 1998:51).

Much of this peri-urban development has consisted of ‘informal’ housing development within areas administered by SHEFA Provincial Council (a directly elected body responsible for the administration of all lands and populations on Efate and the Shepherds Islands group). The main focus of informal housing development has been in the peri-urban areas of Blacksands and Maniples as these areas have been opened up for residential purposes by some of the customary landowners. In 1990 it was estimated that over 25% (Bryant 1990) of the urban population of Port Vila resided in informal settlements, a figure that is believed to increase yearly.

Population and housing densities in the settlements are high and in some settlements it is not unusual to find eight persons sharing a single room measuring three by four metres. Population densities in some areas average over 200 persons per hectare with problems of waste disposal and sanitation evident in the crowded conditions, often leading to the pollution of its environs. The rents charged for one room with no water or electricity, and with access to a shared pit latrine, were frequently costing the occupants 50 per cent of their income (Bryant 1995:120).
The inhabitants of settlements are thought to be a vulnerable group prone to family breakdowns. Several authors (Bryant 1995, Chant 1995) have noted that poverty is more likely to be present in this type of settlement and that residents have few material goods and cannot afford basic health and education services. Migrants to town often seek accommodation with relatives and ethnic ties play a large role in establishing the population divisions of the settlements. Indeed, the lack of formal accommodation resulting from the general growth of the population has tended to make the ethnic composition of some settlements uniform. For example, the settlement of Boininga entirely consists of residents originally from the island of Boininga in the Shepherds Group.

Blacksands is the longest established informal settlement in the Port Vila area, and some (e.g. Mitchell 1998) state that it is the fastest growing settlement. As this study focuses on one settlement rather than a number of varied settlements, it is important not to regard Blacksands as a typical informal settlement in Vanuatu. Its similarities with other informal settlements are in its location on customary land near the urban periphery, the high residential density and a lack of basic services. Its dissimilarities to other settlements are found in the socio-economic conditions of the residents, which shall be revealed later in this study.

**URBAN INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS**

The Urban Lands Act No. 23 of 1993 defines “urban land” as all land located within the boundaries of an urban community (a semi-official category referring to a collection of
people inhabiting the same space). That is, the grouping together of an urban area and neighbouring communities in order to ensure the construction, development and facilities intended to fulfil the common needs of the population concerned.

Port Vila is divided into two broad types of administration – customary and municipal. Customary authorities and SHEFA Province control development outside the town boundary on the island of Efate. However, this development is urban in nature and has a significant impact on Port Vila itself (Port Vila Municipal Council 1987:3). Under the present institutional arrangements for urban planning, the Municipal Governments and the Provincial Government Councils can declare areas within their respective jurisdictions to be physical planning areas and formulate and implement physical plans for their development. The Municipality of Port Vila has town planning staff but because of their centralized structure, it is the Town Clerk who actually makes decisions related to urban planning. The town planners merely act as advisers who review papers and make recommendations for the decision of the Town Clerk.

At the national level, the Physical Planning Section within the Department of Provincial Affairs is supposed to assist in the preparation, monitoring and review of all physical plans for provincial governments; provide physical planning advice to Government committees, departments and private individuals; prepare suitable plans and reports for implementation and assist in the monitoring of development applications and in the introduction and promotion of appropriate amendatory or new legislation. However, only two persons staff the physical planning section.
The Municipality of Port Vila has been a physical planning area since its inception, while the surrounding areas of East Efate, South Efate, Erakor, Pango, Ifira and Mele were so designated in October 1993. However, the authority of the municipality extends only to its boundaries and it has no control over development beyond its territorial limits.

**URBAN RESEARCH IN VANUATU**

Mobility is considered a central fact of ni-Vanuatu lives (Connell 1985) and this centrality has been well documented over wide areas of Vanuatu (Bedford 1971, 1973; Bonnemaison 1974, 1976, 1977) and confirmed in studies of smaller areas such as Mele Maat on Efate (Tonkinson 1979 cited in Connell 1985) and Weasisi, Tanna (Bastin 1980, 1985). The majority of urban geographic research in Vanuatu has focused on mobility, in particular, the phenomenon of ‘circular mobility’ (Bedford 1971; Chapman 1975; Bonnemaison 1976, 1977; Bastin 1980).

These early studies noted that New Hebridean migrants in the 1960s and early 1970s were not oriented towards permanent urban residence, preferring to secure an income in their home village. However, in the light of structural transformations in urban and rural economies it was argued that mobility would become long term and could increasingly result in an urban permanency (Bonnemaison 1977b). The expansion and diversification of bureaucratic and service employment during the early 1970s (Tonkinson 1984, Connell 1985) provided not only new employment opportunities, but also a growing demand for more skilled manpower. In addition, as educational levels rose and employment training was provided, commitment to the urban sector had increased (Bedford 1973, Bastin 1980). Bedford (1973) stressed the need for more intensive
research into the attitudes people had towards village life after a lengthy period of
residence in town and supported Bonnemaison’s (1976:5) concern for “a predominantly
young and male proletariat, going through a rapid process of acculturation”.

Urban research in the 1980s in Port Vila indicated a change in the migratory pattern.
Haberkorn’s studies (1987, 1989, 1990) of social demographics and of the demise of
circular migration in Vanuatu concluded that trends towards greater urban permanence
had considerable implications for Vanuatu’s economy; and that this trend in mobility
contributed towards greater pressures on urban infrastructure planning to provide
adequate housing, basic social services and employment for a growing population.
Haberkorn (1989) suggested that Vila’s population was exhibiting increasing permanence
in that urban migrants were behaving like townspeople in their investment priorities and
behaviour; that many were second generation urbanites; and that even if the urban
economy deteriorated significantly, it was unlikely to persuade those already established
in the town, however tenuously, to return to rural life.

The reasons for urban migration are well documented and include migration for labour
purposes (Bonnemaison 1973, 1976; Bastin 1980), education (seen as a means of
obtaining qualification for the security of employment and higher wages even today), and
forced migration from the impact of natural hazards (Tonkinson’s (1984) review of the
resettlement of the Maat people on Ambrym on Efate). Ward (1967) argued that
migration tends to result from the knowledge that opportunities have increased, or are
better, elsewhere rather than from declining real living standards on the home island and
that “felt wants rather than outright necessity stimulates migration” (Ward cited in Bastin
1980:17). Through the continuation of migration patterns, the trend to permanence continues and people will continue to migrate for obvious reasons.

Few urban geographical studies have been carried out in Vanuatu since the 1980s and have largely focused on the historical dimensions of rural-urban migration. Rawlings (1999) study of Pango has examined how traditional village communities adjacent to towns have appropriated and participate in urban living. Other academic studies, such as that of Mitchell (1998), have concentrated on urbanism and its effect on cultural values for urban youth. There have been more reports for development organizations (Hydroplan 1994, Townland Consultants 1998) and individual surveys for a specific exercise than detailed academic studies on urbanization in Vanuatu.

Most of these development reports have been superficial, rarely even differentiating between the different types of settlements present in Vanuatu’s capital. Migration patterns, environmental degradation and health risks as a consequence of increasing urbanization, access to urban and social infrastructure, and general economic status have been referred to, but these are long established generalizations and nothing has been described in any real detail. Noticeable ‘gaps’ in any research on Port Vila’s urban and peri-urban areas are similar to the gaps identified for the region – as detailed earlier in this chapter.

The dramatic increase in the population of Port Vila puts enormous pressure on land resources for residential purposes, public facilities and infrastructure provision. Squatter and informal settlements continue to grow despite the lack of adequate sanitation, employment opportunities and the basic legal tenancy right to the land they occupy. The
Vanuatu government has paid lip service to the multiple and varied problems of these settlements and has viewed them as a threat to the ‘national social fabric’ (Republic of Vanuatu 1996), yet there is no urban policy and no formal recognition or clear understanding of the socio-economic issues surrounding rapid urbanization.

The Vanuatu Government continues to view rural-urban migration as the root cause of urbanization and all its ‘problems’. The draft population policy (Republic of Vanuatu 1998) promises to ensure, “greater efforts will be made to promote a range of diversified economic activities in rural areas which will contribute to rural development and a retardation of rural-urban migration. Rural development interventions will be preceded by intensive consultations with rural communities who, as the beneficiaries of such policies, must be allowed to identify their priority needs”. The overall goal of the draft policy is to contribute to a sustained rise in real standard of living and quality of life for all people. However, this policy has gone no further than discussions at a May 2000 national meeting.

Port Vila’s expansion has resulted in growing unemployment (particularly youth unemployment), a worsening environmental situation and a crisis over affordable leasehold land, especially in the booming peri-urban areas such as Blacksands and Manples which lie just outside the Municipal Authority’s jurisdiction and are subsequently managed as ‘rural settlements’ (Storey 1998:33). It is estimated that the bulk of the population living in informal settlements lack rudimentary sanitation and sewage disposal sites. Port Vila is thus becoming a place of increasing stress for long-term social, economic and ecological sustainability for many of its residents.
The preliminary results of the 1999 National Population census indicated a total population for Vanuatu of 193,219, of which 41,499 (21.5%) were recorded in the urban areas, a high portion of which live in informal housing. Yet it appears that few are alarmed over this statistic and the implications it holds for the provision of urban infrastructure, services and employment. Earlier studies have stressed the need to examine social and economic conditions in urban residential areas to build on information required for making well-informed planning decisions to attain sustainable urban development but no one has done this. There is a major absence of studies on the impact of rapid urban growth and the considerable implications this has for local and national socio-economic change and development. It is the intention of this thesis to provide a detailed account of the socio-economic conditions in one informal settlement, and to examine the degree of urban commitment and the implications this may hold for sustainable urban development.
Chapter Three
Blacksands: History and Demography

The following section contains a brief overview of the informal settlement of Blacksands in Vanuatu. It is intended to introduce the particular settlement that is in focus and subsequently the division within it, which accounts for 12% of a total settlement population of 4,873 (1999 National Population Census preliminary results). An historical account of the growth of Blacksands (still largely through migration), and a snapshot view of the existing demographic structure sets the scene for examining existing socio-economic conditions in Port Vila’s largest informal settlement. This chapter also includes an introductory section on how permission to reside in the settlement is obtained.

Port Vila is the capital of the Republic of Vanuatu and is the larger of the country’s two towns, with an estimated population of over 30,000 in the year 2000. An increasing number of people in Port Vila reside in informal and squatter settlements (Townland Consultants 1998). Blacksands (known traditionally as Yarru) is the largest and longest established informal settlement in Port Vila and is on land owned by the people of Ifira. The large, sprawling settlement is located approximately 1.5 km north-west of Port Vila and occupies 92 hectares of flat, arable land. Ni-Vanuatu from the six provinces began settling in the area in the 1960s when the land was classed as a ‘village reserve’ or was owned by individual New Hebrideans (Brookfield and Glick 1967). First established in the early 1960s (with some 8 households), the settlement has continued to grow over the years with the more than 20 customary landowners granting (often verbal) permission to non-Ifirans to reside in the area.
### TABLE THREE: Growth in Blacksands Household Numbers: 1967-1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of households</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>2,315</td>
<td>4,873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Household size</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As the next chapter discusses in detail, the growth of Blacksands can be attributed in part to land disputes as disputed (often undeveloped) land tends to attract settlers who establish informal settlements on that land. In some cases in Blacksands, families have been invited by individual custom owners to settle on the land in the hope that this will strengthen their own land claims. In other cases, squatters have taken advantage of the ownership disputes and have occupied the land concerned. In an interview with a local newspaper, the Prime Minister, Barak Sope, was asked about urban drift and his role in encouraging settlement in places like Blacksands to boost his numbers of voters.

**TP:** Urban drift in Vila and Luganville is a problem. You have been accused as one of the politicians who has encouraged settlers to go to places like Blacksands which is Ifira land to boost your voters. How is the government going to handle urban drift?

**BS:** I do not need voters in these areas as 50% of my supporters are from Ifira island. I have many supporters in villages around. I agree the problem of settlements is a major concern but it is difficult to know how to control it. This is why the new government will be concentrating on building up development in the islands to provide employment there. Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands have the worst problem of urban drift in the Pacific because of the lack of development outside the main towns of Honiara and Port Vila.

*(Trading Post Issue 503, 27/11/99).*

The Prime Minister's response is rather typical of people in positions of authority 'turning a blind eye' to the real issues of rapid urbanization, or simply not recognizing the growth of squatter settlements as an issue. Recognition of squatter settlements occurs
only when politicians of the day concede that urbanization is problematic in that it gives rise to the growth of such settlements, which are blamed for housing the unemployed and citizens prone to criminal behaviour. Anti-urbanization sentiments are often used for political point scoring, although of course since politicians are urban resident themselves, repatriation and/or removal of squatter settlements will always be for ‘other’ people. It is currently popular for Vanuatu politicians and leaders to voice their “moral obligation” to encourage people to return to rural settings and live out productive lives as opposed to struggling in non-traditional urban centres, while remaining urban residents themselves.

**BLACKSANDS: THE SETTING**

As the total estimated population of Blacksands exceeds 4,500 a smaller subdivision within Blacksands was selected for field studies after gaining permission from the landowning family (the Kaltabangs) of the largest individual plot in the settlement (See Map 5). The Kaltabang family from Ifira is the traditional owner of a number of land plots scattered around Port Vila, and these include the surveyed site in Blacksands. The head of the Kaltabang family (the eldest male), in consultation with other male members of the family, decided to let people settle on their land in Blacksands for an agreed rental fee to cement the family’s ownership of the land as well as to earn more income for themselves. The data that follows is based on the surveyed population within this subdivision (100 households, 591 people), which is representative of 12% of the total population. This sample size is thought to be reasonably typical of the demography for the whole settlement (see Table 4).
All non-Ifirans in Blacksands are required to apply for permission from the traditional landowner to reside in the area. This permission is applied for and given orally. Settlers have informal tenancy agreements with the landowner providing some security of tenure. Some tenants have leased the same plot of land for over 15 years. These informal agreements have few conditions. Land rent must be paid monthly, only temporary houses are to be built (this is often waived for individuals who wish to build permanent homes that meet national building standards); and if there is any misconduct on the land or disputes with neighbours, tenants can expect to be evicted. The head of the landowning family, Mr Kalfaurei Kaltabang tells families to sort out their own problems with minimal disturbance to others. If they failed to do so, they would be expected to leave. In recent years, no family has been asked to leave for ‘misconduct’ but some families have been frozen out over allegations of nakaimas (black magic) practice. That is, they were made to feel unwelcome and were made uncomfortable by the negative toktok (gossip) about their family by the other residents and so left the settlement. Although, these families were not included in the survey, it was understood that they had relocated to other informal settlements such as Freswin in Vila.

The survey site is divided into 29 plots (commonly known as yards) each being approximately 25 metres² (see Diagram One). Each of these plots is referred to as a yard in this thesis and the principal person responsible for paying the land rent to the landowner (often the person who sought permission to settle in the area) is known as the ‘yard owner’.
## Diagram One: Yards and Households on surveyed site in Blacksands, June 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Blacksands Road</th>
<th>Tenkon Naros (Ambrym)</th>
<th>John Wari (Tanna)</th>
<th>Sam Tekavou (Tanna)</th>
<th>†</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joel Filot (Tanna)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Obed Butal (Tanna)</td>
<td>Jack Bob (Tanna)</td>
<td>Jack Isaac (Tanna)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syriaque Bulerong (Ambrym)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jimmy Tenkon (Ambrym)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob Beyao (Tanna)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin Langse (Pentecost)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charley Robert (Tonga)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August Bule (Pentecost)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- † Shop
- † Church
- ♛ Kava bars
- ■ Household
Some 41% of the yards were rented by Tannese, 27% by 1 man-Pentecost, 17% by man-Ambrym and the remaining 15% by Paamese and Tongoans. Some 55% of the yards had rental rooms with Tanna and Pentecost yard owners dominating 93% of the rental room business. These island groups were prominent largely due to their large population numbers in general and their known preference to rent to kin and other island members.

![Figure 1: Island of Origin](image)

\[ N = 591 \] "other" includes the islands of Ambae, Aneityum, Emae, Futuna, Santo, Malekula and the countries of Tonga and New Caledonia.

Royds (1998) asserted that migrants to Port Vila have tended to settle in urban communities based on their island of origin, although there are no distinct physical divisions into areas where each island group has settled. However, in Blacksands, residents were not a homogenous community and were of different cultural, political, economic and religious backgrounds (see Figure One). The heterogeneity of Blacksands may be attributed to the longer duration of residents in town itself and for the increased competition for land making it difficult to settle in homogenous island clusters. The

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1 'Man' often precedes a person’s island of origin and is a means of identifying someone’s place. For example, man-Pentecost, man-Santo or man-Tanna.
Tannese accounted for 38% of the population. Other major groups were from Pentecost (18%), Ambrym (13%) and the Banks and Torres Islands (10%). It was of interest to note that these were the same island groupings observed in informal settlements over twenty years ago (Jabre et al. 1976). The people of Paama and the Shepherd Islands, islands known for their scarce resources and high population pressures, had settled in a different part of Blacksands and therefore did not contribute significantly to the resident population of the survey site.

**DEMOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE**

The 1999 Census Population preliminary figure for the entire Blacksands settlement (Map 4) stood at 900 households with a population of 4,744. The Census Administrator stated (in February 2000) that the figures did not include an additional 100 households yet to be included in the national database but estimated that this would mean a further 540 people (not necessarily those resident in the survey site) with an estimated total of 5,284.

Of the people counted in the survey area at Blacksands, a total of 582 people were recorded in May 1999 living in 100 households. This was recounted in March 2000 and a total of 591 people were recorded living in 100 households. The lack of significant growth in the settlement over the research period was indicative of stable family sizes, the sating of available housing and land and of the landowning family maintaining stricter controls of the number of houses on the site. The head of the landowning family stated that although he was still approached by new families to settle on his land, he could not grant them access due to what he termed already crowded conditions. However,
it should be noted that natural increase is gradually assuming greater importance in the
growth of informal settlements, although planners still fail to recognize this trend.

**TABLE FOUR: Total Population in Blacksands**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-59</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-69</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-74</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75-79</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-84</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85-89</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,255</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,489</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,744</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 1999 National Population and Housing Census preliminary results

The age/sex structure of the surveyed population at Blacksands (see Figures 2A and 2B) mirrored the national demographic structure of Vanuatu, that is a rapidly growing, young population. The balance in ages and sexes indicates that it is a settlement of families and not single male labourers as it may have been some 25 years ago. There are, in fact, a significant percentage of females aged between 20-29, as it was common to find that many young mothers, or working mothers, often had a cousin or niece living with them as homehelp. The increasing number of children born in town and general balancing of sex ratios suggests a stable, and thus possible permanent population. As there were visible signs (stable nuclear households with at least one wage income-earner and
resident in town for 10 consecutive years) that Blacksands residents have made their home in Vila, there is a need to examine social organization at the household level and at the community level.

The estimated population density of Port Vila municipal area in 1999 was 1,369 people per km². Certain housing (informal as well as formal) areas within the municipal boundary are becoming increasingly overcrowded. This includes Bauerfield (2,700 people); Agathis (1,025 people), Namburu (1,062 people), Seaside (1,559 people) and Nambatri (1,134 people). The island of Ifira boasts a population density of 2,025 people per km². This island being densely populated suggests that its landowners will soon be demanding land which they own on Efate for their own use. This may either increase informal agreement rental rates or push non-Iführans further away from the municipal boundary and on to the land of other villages, notably that of Mele, Pango, Erakor and Eratap. Blacksands is relatively spacious (large plot sizes) with an estimated population density of 588 people per km².

Whilst many of the families at Blacksands claimed long term residence in the settlement, only 5.4% of those interviewed had consistently dwelt in Blacksands for ten years (see Figure 3A). However, many have lived in the greater Port Vila area for considerably longer as shown in Figure 3B. 15% of the surveyed population have lived all their lives in Blacksands, though many of these were young children aged a month to seven years old.

Of the surveyed population (aged 15-55 years) in Blacksands, the duration of residency in Blacksands itself ranged from one month to 12 years or more. Many of the interviewed
FIGURE 2A: Surveyed Male Age Structure in Blacksands

n = 318

FIGURE 2B: Surveyed Female Age Structure in Blacksands

n = 273
residents had lived in Port Vila itself for more than 18 years and had moved around Vila finishing up at Blacksands, rather than directly moving from their home island. Some 17% of the households set up residence in the surveyed area in 1991 when the customary land owning family decided to open up their property for residential purposes.

The large increase in new residents after 1997 (49%) was largely a result of the flooding of homes in the Salili area (to the immediate north-west of Blacksands) after the passage of Cyclone Dani and also, in a few cases, a result of the ‘right-sizing’ exercise of the national Public Service through the Comprehensive Reform Program (CRP). The right-sizing exercise saw a 20% reduction in the public service workforce and affected households could no longer afford to live in formal housing. They consequently sought cheaper alternatives in the informal settlements. Some 36.6% of the surveyed population had been resident in Blacksands for 5 years or more, whereas 63.4% of the surveyed population had been resident in Blacksands for less than 5 years. Much of this latter group were children born in Blacksands to families that have essentially made Vila their home.

The increase in new residents in Blacksands since 1997 is also a reflection of customary landowners elsewhere removing ‘real’ squatters (that is, illegal occupiers) from their land, in particular at Malapoa, and those that were moved had family already dwelling at Blacksands and other informal settlements in Port Vila. For example, Ben Tamas (45, from Tanna) and his family moved to Blacksands from Malapoa in 1997 claiming that they were ‘chased’ from the Malapoa land by the landowner. It later became apparent that they were asked to move as they had not asked permission from the landowner to reside on the land. Johnny Absel (38, from Tanna) was also evicted from Malapoa by the
landowner for settling on land before seeking permission to do so. “Malapoa is full of people so I decided to move to another plot of land to give my family more space. I was there for two weeks when man Ifira came and told me to take down my house and get off their land. I decided to follow some relatives and live at Blacksands as they already had permission from the land owner to live there.” Thus Blacksands offers greater security of tenure than Manples, Freswin, Malapoa and other informal settlements.

Long periods of continuous urban residence and a large proportion of adult life spent in town naturally suggest a strong involvement in, and commitment to urban rather than rural life (Haberkorn 1989:111). As this thesis will endeavour to show long-term urban residence, combined with social, political, economic and psychological involvement in Port Vila, contribute to urban permanence.

MIGRATION

As the ensuing chapters will show, a range of reasons influence the residence of settlers at Blacksands. What should be initially highlighted is the fact that these residents are not new, rural migrants to Port Vila but many have spent considerable time in town. There has been considerable discussion as to the causes of and reasons for rural-urban drift. However, in the case of Blacksands, and other informal settlements in Vila for that matter, many of the residents had either been born in town or have lived the major part of their lives in an urban setting.

Of the people resident in Blacksands over the last five years from 1994 to 1999, only 18% were recent migrants to the town. They were predominantly young males (aged 24 years and under) who had arrived from Luganville or an outer island seeking
employment, were continuing their education in Vila or simply visiting relatives and the attractions of Port Vila. Recent female migrants primarily visited town for health purposes or to assist a relative in the home. In March 1999, for example, Caroline Bong (19, from Paama) travelled to Vila to stay with her aunt to give birth and then returned to Paama three months later. Other migrants included residents’ parents and other relatives visiting for a short period of time. In 1999, his Raphael Tabi spent two months visiting his son (Willie Tabi, 32 of Pentecost), his grandchildren and daughter-in-law before returning to Pentecost.

Population density shows considerable variation in Vanuatu. Several of the larger islands are virtually uninhabited whilst some smaller islands, especially Paama, Tongoa and the coastal islands of Efate and Malekula, have relatively dense populations. The 1989 population census reported Tafea province (predominantly the island of Tanna) as having the highest migration to Greater Port Vila and accounting for more than 41% of the total net inflow after that of Efate Rural people (National Statistics Office 1991:35). Other islands with high inflows into Port Vila include the Shepherd Islands, Paama, Malekula, Ambrym and Pentecost. The 1989 Census Report claimed that links (agriculture and tradition) between home islands and Port Vila or Luganville remained strong, as few people living in Port Vila and Luganville claimed the towns as their ‘home’ place. However, as a measure of urban commitment this claim is weak but the National Census Office has still not identified a clear definition between a rural-urban migrant and a person born in town but not from the island of Efate. (For example, I was born in Port Vila and have lived all my life in town but am considered a ‘migrant’ in the statistics, as my ‘home island’ (that of my father), is Erromango).
FIGURE 3A: Duration of surveyed Blacksands residents in Blacksands

FIGURE 3B: Duration of surveyed Blacksands residents in Port Vila

FIGURE 4: Island of Birth

Other includes the islands of Ambae, Anieyu, Emac, Futuna, Malekula, Santo (and Luganville) and the countries of Tonga and New Caledonia

n = 443
There was a marked difference between the residents’ island of origin and place of birth. Whilst the island of Tanna was recorded as the island of origin for 38% of the population, only 16% of man-Tanna had actually been born on the island. Indeed, more than half (54%) of the population was actually born on the island of Efate and were second or third generation urban residents (see Figure 4).

As mentioned previously the reasons for rural to urban migration have been well documented by the likes of Bedford (1973), Bonnemaison (1976, 1977) and Tonkinson (1984). The reasons cited for migration included perceived employment and education opportunities in town, escaping the social restrictions of village life and simply to visit the ‘bright lights’ of Port Vila. 46% of the surveyed population had migrated to town from the village many who cited they came to Vila in search of employment, to continue their education at secondary school, were following a partner or simply running away from ‘home’.

The long term residence of many Blacksands residents, and their attempts to obtain land ownership, suggests a considerable degree of permanence, thus the question, “when do people stop being a migrant” arises. Is it when people declare, at least in part, that they want to be actively participating in community development, or voice their concerns about the urban services and infrastructure provided in their residential area? The majority of the residents interviewed at Blacksands expressed an eventual wish to return to their ‘home’ island but added that realistically, it was likely that they would still be in Vila in five to ten years time. Indeed, a study undertaken by Bedford (1973) of New Hebridean settlements in the early 1970s shows that these are still in existence a
generation later and are, in fact, larger, more crowded, and showing signs that they will still be there in another 25 years though they may have new residents.

The last time I went back to Ambrym was in 1990. I am scared of nakaimas so I don’t want to go back. I only went in 1991 as a member of my close family died and that is the only reason why I will go back in the future. I don’t know if my children will live on Ambrym, it is up to them to decide. They have visited Ambrym and Paama and are glad to go to the island but they are also glad to come back here. (Winnie Moses, 44, from Ambrym).

The root cause of the general growth of settlements as identified by the Young Peoples Project (Mitchell 1998) is economic. That is, as the real income per capita of ni-Vanuatu has fallen since 1993 and at the same time, opportunities for earning cash have declined urban residents have sought shelter in cheaper informal housing settlements. Increased pressures on finite land resources and the shortage of affordable housing have also contributed to the growth of the numbers of and size of informal settlements. Many of the migrant residents of Blacksands moved to Vila due to the poor economic conditions in the rural areas and although economic opportunities have declined in the last decade in town, it has not persuaded them to return to rural life.

There was a significant level of internal migration within Port Vila and its boundaries. The older respondents (aged 30 years and over) tended to have migrated to Port Vila from their home islands in search of employment – in keeping with the early migration studies. I came here in 1982 to look for work. I found work at a Chinese store for one year and then moved to a carpentry yard at Nambatu. In 1984 I joined a furniture place
and worked there for 12-13 years. (Jeffrey Tabi, 36 from Pentecost). The younger respondents (aged 15 to 29 years) had either been born in Port Vila or had migrated for education purposes. I came here for school. I passed to year 11 at the Lycée but I left school in July because I couldn’t pay my school fees. (Ruth Yares, 17 from Tanna).

Many of the residents had moved from other settlements such as Erakor Bridge, Salili, Freswin, Manples and Malapoa for a number of reasons that are detailed in the next section. Briefly, improved living conditions, family ties and housing availability were the main reasons for moving to Blacksands. What sets Blacksands apart from other squatter settlements in Vila is the distinct air of permanency among the residents. As this thesis will show, many of the residents have spent a considerable portion of their lives in Vila and have settled, with some apparent finality, at Blacksands. This is indicated in their attempts to purchase the lease to the land that they live on to provide security of tenure. They have been transient in their early years in town, moving to live with various family and wantok members in different locations in Vila (invariably, in other settlements) and, now with the ability to support themselves, have constructed or rented homes in Blacksands. For many of the residents, Blacksands is ‘upmarket’ in that there is available space, reasonable tenure conditions and it is relatively safe from the crime and violence often witnessed in other settlements.

**REASONS FOR LIVING AT BLACKSANDS**

When asked why people chose to live at Blacksands responses ranged from improved living conditions to family ties and better security of tenure. Better living conditions (than in other low-income housing in Vila) included improved security of tenure, cheaper rent,
accessibility to water, better sanitation, and generally more tranquil surroundings. There was no water and too much mud at Mangles so we wanted to move somewhere where the conditions were better (Winnie Moses, 44, from Ambrym). At Blacksands, we have more space than some other settlements. At least we can sit outside, grow some food, and get a fresh breeze at Christmas time (Rosina James, 29, from the Banks Islands).

The availability of affordable housing and land was also a strong reason for selecting Blacksands as a home. The more recent migrants to Blacksands had actually been flooded out of their homes in the Salili area and the nearest, driest location for resettlement was Blacksands. There was no real difference in reasons for residence in Blacksands between people from different islands. Family ties were the most popular reasons for residence, particularly among the Tannese who are noted for their strong family ties. My Tanna family was already here so I came and joined them as we must stay together. I came to Blacksands because the landowner chased me from his land at Malapoa where we had been living for 9 years (Ben Tamas, 45, from Tanna). We have been here a long time now. Families should live close together so we can help each other, that is why my uncle and my sister and their families live here too, so we are close together. My daughter and her boyfriend and their baby live near us too (Jack Kamisa, 45, from Tanna). The Ambrymese households were also strongly inclined to follow family and relatives in taking up residence in Blacksands, but more so because their relatives gave them good references and an introduction to the landowner to secure residence.
The other residents from different islands (Ambae, Tongoa, Pentecost, Paama etc.) largely settled due to the availability of housing, land and better living conditions (that is, cheaper rent than elsewhere in Vila). However, as land and housing are increasingly limited in Blacksands, the traditional landowners are beginning to discourage new settlers not only in light of space restrictions but also in consideration of their own family needs for land away from the island of Ifira. Indeed the Land Management Board of Ifira Land Trustees is actively encouraging all Ifiran landowners to prepare plans for the development of their land in recognition of urban growth.

Better security of tenure was also a popular reason for electing to live at Blacksands. I came to Vila in 1992 for my schooling and I have always lived at Blacksands as my family has paid for this land (Daniel Ynack, 18 of Tanna). My father made an agreement with the landowners to have this yard back in 1987. When my father died, I talked to the landowner and now I am responsible for this yard. It is my place and it is my main source of income as I have seven rental rooms. When I have enough money I will ask the

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1 Ifira Tenuku Land Management Board Land Policy, 2000
landowner if I can get the lease papers so then I can give the land to my son after I die.

(Reeth Kami, 23, from Pentecost). This last statement shows considerable forward thinking despite residence in an informal settlement, and emphasizes the intent to remain permanently in Vila and indeed Blacksands itself. It also reiterates the regard for Blacksands as a superior settlement and a desirable place of residence by urban dwellers.

BLACKSANDS TODAY

Blacksands is, in many ways, unlike other informal settlements in the Port Vila area. Rather unusually, there is a heterogeneity of island groups living in the same area, as many settlements arise from one household attracting wantoks, that is people from the same extended family, village or island. Blacksands is somewhat unique in that there are equal opportunities for families to gain access to housing, regardless of their island of origin. This has resulted in many of the households being nuclear rather than extended families. Residence at Blacksands depends greatly on a household’s ability to pay the rent on time. Similarities in Blacksands to other settlements include the close construction of the houses, the small rental rooms, the absence of piped water and electricity and the high number of male youths apparently kilem taem (killing time) without jobs.

Informal settlements (including Blacksands) have grown rapidly in recent years and accommodate an estimated 13,500 people (Townland Consultants 1998). These settlements are areas that share the common characteristics of being densely populated, in dire need of basic services and being situated on customary land. Blacksands, as the oldest recorded informal settlement in Port Vila, may not be a ‘typical’ settlement in that it houses a relatively long-term resident, heterogeneous population and is less crowded,
but it does provide important insight into the conditions of settlements and a profile of the people who reside there. This information is essential for planners if they are to make informed decisions on the present and future management of potentially sustainable urban development.

**BLACKSANDS - LAND TENURE**

Land is the most important issue in the development of human settlements (Payne 1997:46). There are two systems of land tenure present in the urban and peri-urban areas in Vanuatu: public land and customary land. It is the purpose of this chapter to describe both systems in an attempt to explain the technical and administrative issues for land management at the urban level. It will also present a variety of reasons for the popularity of residence in Blacksands, in respect to land tenure, and raise some issues concerning increasing land pressures within Port Vila’s greater urban area, stressing the urgency required for managed urban growth and development.

The nature of land tenure in the Pacific has a profound effect on urban development and the provision of urban housing and services (Lea 1983). Where land has been alienated and is under freehold title or government ownership, development can be readily undertaken and services provided on the land. However, some urban land is held under customary tenure and the alienation of this land by private developers and by governments intent on urban development often involves complicated negotiations. The uncertainty generated by the absence of individual rights to use of land deters investment, especially long-term investment in urban infrastructure. In Vanuatu, there are numerous
examples observed in the discontinuation of pavement construction in the Malapoa area
and in halted water supply systems in Blacksands.

In the Pacific Islands there is a dominance of the communal land ownership system
(Purdie 1997:75), that is, land is owned by the indigenous population, not bought or sold
under regulation from the government. Vanuatu is not alone in its customary tenure rights
in the Pacific nor in the increase in the occurrence of subdivision of customary land as it
has grown in economic importance (Bastin 1980). The customary landowners in the
greater Port Vila area are eager to protect their long-term rights whilst maximizing short-
term opportunities and the Vanuatu Government has found it increasingly difficult to
acquire land for any form of urban development, particularly low-income housing.
Ironically, this has led to migrant households squatting on rented plots on customary land
with the tacit agreement of the owners, since there is now nowhere else for them to go.

The importance of land in traditional society suggests from the outset that major changes
affecting the rights of customary owners will challenge the assumptions upon which
development is based. Where urban customary land exists the differentiation of land and
house ownership is common (Lea 1983: 68). In Blacksands, for example, residents own
their homes as they have built them with their own financial resources. However, as they
do not own a residential lease for the property their house is built on, they do not have
any legal ownership of that land. The concept of ‘functional landlessness’ (Howlett 1980
cited in Connell 1985:48), emphasizes the extent to which people may have access to
land but may be disadvantaged by environmental, locational or social constraints from
earning an income or producing food on that land.
Many people outside the Pacific think that customary rights to land ensure that most people in Pacific societies have the security of knowing that they will always have somewhere to live and land on which to grow food. In fact, alienation from the land, increasing populations and further subdivision of what are already small plots have meant that in some societies a significant proportion of the population is landless (Bryant 1995:121). In Vanuatu, there is anecdotal evidence that an increasing number of “pikinini blong rod” (illegitimate children) have been denied access to land rights since the biological fathers do not recognize them as members of the family. These children are often left with the mother or another female relative and thus have no customary claim to any land where land tenure is primarily patrilineal. They can only access land through the application of a formal lease (through the Ministry of Lands), or by seeking oral permission from a landowner to reside on certain land or to squat.

At Independence all land within the municipal boundaries of Port Vila and Luganville was declared public land. Two corporate bodies were set up to administer the declared public lands in Port Vila and Luganville on behalf of the government. These corporations were to collect land lease rentals, which would be later used to supplement a negotiated compensation package for the former custom owners of the land. Eventually, in 1992, agreement on leases was reached with some former custom owners (from Pango and Erakor, but not Ifira) within the municipal boundaries of Port Vila. The government is now effectively the lessor of all urban land, and leases of such land are readily bought and sold in the market (Ambrose and Siwatibau 1997:2).

Outside the Port Vila municipal boundary all land is in customary ownership. This customary ownership is by individuals and kinship groups from the indigenous people of
the Port Vila area, notably from Ifira, Erakor and Pango. Custom owners have developed some of this custom land for urban purposes (e.g. roads, wharves) and some has been leased for a residential subdivision. The low-cost housing program funded by the World Bank saw the establishment of Freswota, which now houses the growing middle-class of Port Vila. Erakor village has developed an upmarket subdivision at Bellevue for the private market (involving contracts and financial transactions). Accessing custom land outside the urban area can however be quite difficult. Permission from the government is required for anyone to negotiate a lease with customary owners. The boundaries of land claimed by custom groups are not clearly determined and much land that has potential for development is under dispute with a number of unresolved challenges outstanding as to who is the legitimate customary owner. These disputes can proceed from Island Court all the way to the Supreme Court.

At present, possession and utilization of land in Vanuatu is regulated by the following laws: Land Reform (1980); Land Leases (1984 revised in 1988); Physical Planning Act (1986); and Land Acquisition Act (1992). Within the municipal boundary, all land is considered public land and leases are based on 50 years for residential purposes and 75 years for business/industrial purposes. In general the leases started in 1980. The fact that most leases will have to be renewed from the year 2030 to 2055 will continuously reduce private investment, with the approach of these dates, if no clear guarantees for the period thereafter are given.

Blacksands is classified as a rural area and land transactions are managed by the individual customary landholder or land trust boards. Land Trust Boards are often established by landowning groups that elect members from within the same group to be
responsible for managing the land, the collection of revenue earned from leases and the fair redistribution of this income among the landowning groups. The indigenous land tenure system is complex. It is based on social and political factors and a subtle mixture of individualism and community spirit. Traditionally, land was valued as a source of identity for individuals and groups as well as the basis from which all subsistence requirements were met. Ifiran land ownership was initially vested on the basis of common descent and residence in a particular area and distributed among members of the Ifira tribe group. Landownership is related to a number of titles (of different relative status) and is transmitted patrilineally. Ownership provides to the titleholder social status and rights to a number of plots of land scattered within the territory.

The customary owners can utilize their family land for any development they wish, which often results in a multiple land-use pattern – that is, unplanned areas often comprising of inappropriate uses such as residences and heavy industry within the same space. Decisions on land use can come from the directors of Ifira Land Trustees (ILT) who advise on development proposals and disseminate information provided by the government. The ILT is a board of trustees consisting of elected members from Ifira and is charged with the responsibility of managing the community’s commercial (stevedoring) and land assets. In the case of Blacksands, however, the landowners (approximately 25) are not members of the ILT and are responsible for the decision making on their respective land. Disputes over custom land are common and are often the main obstacle to development. If the Ifiran nasara\(^4\) cannot adequately solve disputes, the

\(^4\) A community meeting headed by the Chief where those accused of misconduct in any manner are fined.
parties involved can take these to the Area Council level or further, to be heard by the Efate Island *Kastom Kot* (established in December 1999).

The Board of Directors of the ILT identified their first priority for the year 2000 as the issue of regulating land leases within the urban zone of Port Vila. The emphasis is on land issues that have not followed the formal land lease procedures for undeveloped land. The correct procedure requires a ‘developer’ to obtain a permit from the government to negotiate with the landowners. Negotiations (including annual lease rates) are conducted with the landowner and the developer then pays for the land to be surveyed and registered. The agreement is then submitted to the Ministry of Lands for approval. This is a costly exercise with rates beginning, on average, at VT100,000 (for a stamp duty) and few people in Port Vila, let alone Blacksands, can afford this procedure.

*We came to Blacksands from Port Vila because we heard there was good land here and that the rent was cheap. We started to rent a house from Titus in the yard next door while we built this house and prepared the well. Back then, there were only a few of us here, most of this place was dark bush. We built our house and then Kaltabang, the landowner came and told us that we would have to pay him rent if we wanted to stay* (Jeffrey Tabi, 36 from Pentecost). *In custom, this is a formal lease, we have asked permission from the traditional landowner to make use of his land for housing purposes and he has granted us the right to live - this is the custom way for us* (Joe Bong, 31 from Ambrym).

People wishing to reside at Blacksands are obliged to arrange for a regular rental payment to be able to settle under the jurisdiction of the Ifiran landowner. Rent of the land is on a monthly basis. There are no written agreements, just a basic, mutual understanding.
between the custom owner and the renter. Statistics gathered in the field show that 95% of interviewed residents acquired their land through lease/rental; 30% of these settlers (the yard owners) secured a plot through direct negotiations with the custom owner. None of the surveyed residents were technically squatting on the land as they all paid a monthly rent. The average annual lease/rental of land in Blacksands was VT42,000 in 1999-2000. The annual lease/rental of a dwelling unit was between VT96,000 and VT144,000 and occasionally more.

There are few legal leases as landowners are reluctant to do so for fear of losing control of their land. A semi-formal lease (that is, an oral agreement) is used, providing some security of tenure especially for some of the tenants who have leased the same plot of land for over 10 years. There are few conditions for renting the land within the surveyed site. Only temporary houses may be built although this is sometimes waived for individuals depending on the landowner’s personal decision. The head of the landowning family had granted some households permission to build permanent homes because of the regularity of rental payments over an extended period of time or simply because the head of the household was ‘a good man’. Building permanent houses poses a problem and a threat to the residents and the landowners in Blacksands. Few people can actually afford to finance a permanent house and this can result in ill feelings towards those settlers and landowners who have built permanent homes in Blacksands and other areas of Port Vila. The sense of permanency is a threat to the landowners in that it makes it more difficult to remove the occupiers from the land to use it for other purposes.

Conditions for renting land vary from landowner to landowner in Blacksands. Some rent unconditionally, while others are more fickle, expelling people from the property if they
appear to be affiliated with the ‘wrong’ political party, or attending the ‘wrong’ meetings or churches. Understandably, residents are reluctant to invest in their homes, which leads to a poor quality of housing and in some cases often unsanitary conditions. Many of the landowners do not reside at Blacksands and appoint a relative or ‘caretaker’ to settle in the area to supervise rent collection, new residents and land use. Although this was never stated in any way, one of the residents in the area, Moana Viandre (29 from Ifira), kept an eye on activities for the Kaltabang family and reported any new household additions in the area. The head of the customary land owning family was very much involved in the development of the yards and lives of the tenants. He visited the settlement every Monday to collect rent, although in the year 2000, he reduced his visits to once a month. The tenants themselves were of the opinion that they were ‘better off’ than others due to the customary owner being a ‘reasonable man’. That is, that the customary owner allowed them extra time to meet rent payments, was sympathetic to household hardships and provided them with a sense of security in allowing them the opportunity to make good on late rental payments.

The customary land-owning families in Blacksands were reluctant to discuss their plans for Blacksands, partly because many were divided over its potential development. Some landowners wished to legally subdivide their land to lease to the Province and other interested investors; others sought to build their own homes in the area; and some simply did not like their land being occupied by people from other islands whether they paid rent or not. The latter may be due to an unspoken fear that these residents were permanent and wished to use the land for their families for a long period, which would effectively prevent the landowning families from using it for their own needs in the immediate
future. This is a major issue in considering expansion or development planning for Blacksands. The Kaltabang family is interested in a planned development for Blacksands, but like other landowners, fear that registering their customary land will deprive them of their traditional rights to the land.

CONTRAINTS TO ACCESSING LAND AT BLACKSANDS

There are numerous constraints to accessing and/or developing land within Blacksands. The main constraint may be the number of landowners in the area, which makes it difficult to achieve unanimous cooperation or agreement on any decision. For example, some of the landowners wished to have a piped water supply and electricity provided, whilst others actively worked against the instalment of such facilities for reasons they would not express. As mentioned previously, the landowners at Blacksands were not members of the ILT, as they believed they would maintain better control of their property if they remained the sole decision makers for particular areas. However, this can and does lead to problems, such as jealousy, which adds further constraints on development in the area. Other constraints included the ever-present boundary disputes among the numerous landowners and the fact that residence of several years signified "legal ownership" in some occupiers' minds. The land is considered by the occupiers, at least on a psychological level to be theirs, and removal becomes less socially and politically easy, at least without the option of offering a site for resettlement (Halliburton 1991:69).

Some of the residents who have been at Blacksands for 10 to 20 years believed it was their right to claim the land they were on as their own. Prior to the introduction of cash transactions in Vanuatu, migrants could use, with permission, customary land, and after a
period of time, could ask for land to become their own through a traditional ceremony. A long-time connection with a landowner’s family could see the bestowing of a landholding name to the ‘outsider’.

An increasing number of people have tried to claim land this way, pressured by their social situation – that is of increasing family size and decreasing financial capabilities. In moving to Port Vila and staying for periods exceeding well over 12 months, coupled with minimal contact with the ‘home’ village, they may have began to lose some of their rights to land at home, or certainly to feel that they have.

*I have made my life here in Vila since 1979 but I must stay in touch with my family in the village to make sure that they look after my land. If I don’t ask my family to look after it and send them things for doing so, they might get cross and agree to give the land to someone else. It happens all the time to people who come to Vila and forget their family in the island* (Moses John, 42 from Tanna).

Without land, households have no subsistence, livelihood or identity; they have no security. Several have effectively made Blacksands their permanent home and were thus eager to claim land. The increasing number of children born out of wedlock (16% of all children aged 14 years and younger) has exaggerated this situation, as they cannot claim land due to their illegitimate status. This has led to a multitude of social problems as well as exacerbating the land shortage issue.

Increasing pressure on land is not just an issue for informal settlements like Blacksands, but is a problem for most of Port Vila. There is an increasing incidence of illegal occupation of land, which inevitably involves sub-standard, housing and encroachment
on areas reserved for the urban villages' (Mele, Erakor, Eratap, Pango, and Ifira) use.

Chiefs and landowners were increasingly using the media to issue warnings to people in and around Port Vila over the use of customary land. Ifiran landowners were particularly vocal in 1999 and issued hard-hitting messages to non-Ifirans, especially to those who continued to fish, hunt and trespass in areas surrounding Port Vila (such as Blacksands and Malapoa). Trespassers were warned that anyone caught would be brought before the Ifiran nasara. These calls were heard in 1996, 1997, and 1998 and again in 2000. These messages were aimed at Blacksands residents who fished in village waters and collected firewood from areas which they had no permission for access.

PHOTO 2: An aerial view of the surveyed site within Blacksands

LAND FUTURES

Land is an important issue, not only for Blacksands, but also for the whole of Port Vila. If it has not already done so, land will become the most important parameter constraining urban growth and urban form in and around Port Vila. The 1994 report to the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of Vanuatu on the Urban Infrastructure
Project (UIP) stated clearly that the rapidly increasing urban population required an increased demand for urban services, and was creating pressure on land for all development purposes, in particular for new residential settlements. It added that consideration should be given to a major extension of the municipal boundary of Port Vila, which would encompass and bring into public ownership the land required for ongoing and future urban growth projects. However, the history of land acquisition gives no room for hope that land will be readily obtainable for planned urban development.

The future remains uncertain in regard to land tenure itself and the possible acquisition of additional urban land. Without security of tenure, the stability of the resident population in Blacksands is questionable, but their permanency as urban residents is less so. It is essential that the varying authorities resolve conflicts over development issues for the urban periphery, particularly as it involves four parties – SHEFA Province, Port Vila Municipal, national Government and the landowners themselves. These bodies need to cooperate in the administrative procedure of development and allocation of urban land and consider the future of land tenure in the peri-urban area itself, to ensure there is adequate land not only for residential purposes, but also for health, education, industrial and recreational purposes for the rapidly growing population; and in doing so, must consider directly the needs of urban residents, especially those in settlements like Blacksands, where tenure is problematic in one way or another yet residents are increasingly permanent. There is an urgent need for enforced, effective land-use planning for the nation’s two urban centres, including the peripheral settlements, if the population is to be housed and serviced adequately and efficiently, and for them to play their part in urban economic and social development.
Chapter Four

Blacksands - Economic Life

This chapter seeks to describe the current economic conditions in Melanesia, and specifically in Port Vila (Vanuatu), with reference to both formal and informal employment and attitudes towards paid employment by urban residents. Details of employment, work conditions, attitudes to work and career aspirations are provided, with an emphasis on women in employment and unemployment among youth. This chapter will also analyze Blacksands residents' role in Vila’s urban economy and urban poverty.

Pacific Island country economies are constrained by small internal markets, a narrow production base, high unit costs of infrastructure, and vulnerability to external shocks and natural disasters hence, Pacific economies are not as diverse as those in Pacific Rim countries, nor do they share a diversity of employment categories. Rapid population increase and the limited capacity of the formal sector to absorb estimated growth of labour supply continue to restrict economic growth and development. The challenge to the region's economies remains the need to create employment for rising populations with higher expectations, to weather international fluctuations in demand, trade and economic growth, to restructure and diversify domestic economies, and to gain greater international competitiveness.

Rapid population increase, especially in Melanesia, the limited capacity of the formal sector to absorb the projected growth of the labour supply, stronger aspirations towards formal sector employment and deep-seated impediments to raising productivity in traditional activities, often associated with land tenure, continue to restrict economic
growth and development. Even with economic growth the burden of absorbing the majority of the labour force has fallen on the subsistence and informal sectors, neither of which receive significant support from any island governments. The declining rate of job creation in urban areas has emphasized the differences between those with jobs and those without. Inadequate access to employment, land and credit have contributed to growing urban crime problems often blamed on unemployed youths.

The urban centres of all the region's economies are the nodes of international trade, and in particular the import of modern facilities, amenities and technology. There has been a growing dependence on external sources of funding, whether from aid, remittances or investment. Population growth rates continue to outstrip employment growth rates in almost all Pacific Island countries. Several states were facing economic crises in the mid-1990s and several countries, including Vanuatu, undertook restructuring programmes sponsored by the Asian Development Bank.

In most Pacific towns the employment structure is heavily dominated by tertiary sector activities where incomes are not related to productivity but to institutional factors. It is constantly reiterated that the most potent opportunity for using the human resources of Melanesia is in rural development. However, migrants continue to be attracted to towns as long as they have some chance of finding a job in the formal sector, yet competition for regular, paid employment is fierce. Estimates in the early 1990s indicated that between 1991 and 2011, the economically active population in Vanuatu was likely to increase by 95 per cent (UNICEF 1991).
Urban ni-Vanuatu are dependent on the cash economy, and to a large extent on imported food and other goods, and are often the first to be affected by economic downturns. Increases in import duty on food and other items coupled with the effects of inflation on rents, food and fuel prices have made life increasingly difficult for middle and low-income families (UNICEF 1991:35). Vanuatu has experienced negative per capita income growth despite high levels of foreign resource inflows including aid. As a result, job growth even in the urban economy has fallen well short of the level needed to absorb productively the rapidly increasing population in towns. It is clear, however, that most new economic activities and job creation have taken place in the two urban areas where government institutions as well as infrastructure, health and education facilities and commercial activities are concentrated. Indeed, the urban economy already makes a major contribution to overall economic growth in Pacific countries – estimated at well over 60% in Vanuatu (World Bank, forthcoming).

**Table Five: Employment in Vanuatu 1989 to 1999**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of activity</th>
<th>1989</th>
<th>1999</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economically active</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>66,597</td>
<td>76,370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Unemployed</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>1,260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not economically active</td>
<td>12,609</td>
<td>20,827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>79,669</td>
<td>98,902</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Includes those that were actively seeking employment at the time of enumeration.

EMPLOYMENT IN BLACKSANDS

There is a diverse range of households located within the study area. Most households that were surveyed consisted of two income earners (either both full-time, or one part-time), one or two youths in part-time employment either in town or for a family member, and the rest being young children predominantly of kindergarten or primary school age.

The respondents in the survey were aged 15 to 55 years, as this is the age bracket when a person is deemed by the National Statistics Office to be economically active. Following a preliminary survey of the households, the number of residents’ aged 15-55 was recorded. These households were then stratified according to age, gender and island of origin. Demographic variation within the sample was maximized by excluding people of similar sex, age and occupation between households. Detailed interviews based on section 4 of the survey questionnaire (see Appendix 2) were conducted to obtain information and was often followed up with informal discussions on subsequent visits to various households. The respondents (see Figure 6) were primarily either the household head and/or the spouse and the next eldest relative living in the household. Some 52.5% of respondents were male and 47.5% were female.

Men (63.9% of total males) continued to be the main workers in paid employment compared to women (37%). The majority of men in paid employment were engaged in industry (including construction, hospitality, plumbing, carpentry and electrics). This was closely followed by those who either worked in the private business sector or ran their own business (predominantly public transport or stores). The age of the respondents determined their position in paid employment. For example, the men aged 30 years and over – with few exceptions - held more responsible jobs in construction and retail
occupations. Those in construction often held supervisory positions whilst the younger men provided the manual labour. In the case of retail workers, the younger males tended to be cleaners and shelf-stockers while the older men were cashiers and drivers. In the case of women, the younger girls were more likely to hold cashier positions while the older women were cleaners.

A similar pattern was repeated for males in business (or self-employed). It was not until men had reached around 30 years (24% of the surveyed male population) that they started businesses of their own. An exception included two young carpenters (Kakae Pakoa, 21 and John Kalo, 20 from Tongoa) who supplemented their uncle’s carpentry business – by completing additional work - for pay.

In Blacksands, the longer established residents (7% – see Figure 3B in Chapter Three) tended to run their own businesses that ranged from a small store in Blacksands itself or another informal settlement, to kava selling and the operation of a public transport service or involvement in home industries such as sewing or carpentry. In fact, a number of the unemployed males were carpenters but could not find gainful employment and so stayed at home until they were approached to build furniture or the like on an individual request basis.

_When I first came to Vila I worked in town as a carpenter from 1984 until 1997. I heard talk around town that there was a new carpentry business and so I went and asked if there was work and I got the job because I knew how to use the tools already. The owner died in 1997 and the business closed so I was out of work. I_
Domestic workers include those that worked in their own home and garden, those that worked for relatives in their home (homehelp) and those that were paid to clean the houses and tend the gardens of non-relatives in town. Retail includes those who worked in shops or the sales section of factories. Industry includes those that worked in hotels/restaurants, construction or factories. Business includes those in the handicraft trade (carvers, weavers), those that were employed as public transport drivers and those who managed their own small-scale businesses. Social workers include pastors, church and youth project officers.

**FIGURE 6: Blacksands Employment Type**

- Domestic Help: 36.4%
- Retail: 12.8%
- Business: 8.5%
- Industry: 7.2%
- Public Servant: 6.5%
- Social Worker: 5.6%
- Student: 1.6%
- Unemployed: 1.6%
- Retired: 1.6%

n = 244

**FIGURE 7: Male Employment Type**

- Domestic worker: 25.8%
- Retail: 11.7%
- Business: 10.9%
- Industry: 9.4%
- Public servant: 9.4%
- Social Worker: 4.3%
- Student: 3.9%
- Unemployed: 1.6%
- Retired: 1.6%

n = 128

**FIGURE 8: Age and Skilled Occupation**

- Unskilled workers: 96%
- Skilled Workers: 93%
- 85%
- 92%

n = 244

Skilled work requires a certain level of education (Year 10) and literacy skills. In the case of this thesis it includes teachers, middle-management public servants and mechanics and business managers.
looked at other places that needed a carpenter but the work and pay conditions were not very good so I decided that I would work for myself instead. I would like to be able to use my carpentry skills again. Although the garden takes most of my time, people sometimes ask me to make them chairs or tables. I make what they want and find all the wood and everything but then they can never afford to pay for it so my house is full of furniture that people haven’t come to collect. Nobody has money any more so I have stopped making furniture for people unless they are prepared to pay a deposit. (Jeffrcy Tabi, 36 from Pentecost).

Employment was not connected to a resident’s island of origin but more to their age (and skills) and their length of residency in Vila and/or Blacksands. The increased competition for jobs meant that those who were better connected in town had an advantage over more recent arrivals. Of those twelve men working for the government, 23% were aged over 40 years (and had lived in Vila for over ten years) and tended to hold decision making positions while their younger counterparts were drivers and cleaners. However, for those men employed in the hospitality industry (4% of all employed males), regardless of age, most held low skilled jobs such as kitchen assistants, waiters, security and amateur entertainers. They were also unlikely to be promoted despite their years of service: a factor often attributed to poor language and literacy skills. Eric Bule (38, from Pentecost) had worked as a porter at the Le Lagon Park Royal for five years although he had informed the management of his interest in guest relations.

This age categorization was consistent with the 1989 National Population Census findings that a significant proportion of the 25-44 age group were not skilled or professional workers. Some 20% of the ‘older’ men were casual workers and were
occasional bus drivers or gardeners. For example, Yakoli Butal (47, of Tanna) came to Vila in 1993 with his wife who was very sick. When she died in 1995, Yakoli’s family stayed with his brother Obed in Blacksands. Yakoli contributed to the household by driving a bus three times a week to earn some cash. When he was not driving the bus, he tended the household’s subsistence garden. Some 39% of the twenty-eight males aged between 15 and 20 years were still full-time students, whilst a relatively high 25% were unemployed. This latter group showed minimal interest in seeking employment or attempting to continue with their education. When asked what they wanted to do, a shrug of the shoulders and a stare into the distance was the most usual response.

**TABLE Six: Male Employment Type in Blacksands**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Paid (%)</th>
<th>Unpaid (%)</th>
<th>TOTAL (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Worker</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Servant</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social worker</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=128 (see also Figure 7)

A number of males were either gardeners for people in town or subsistence gardeners (sometimes with small-scale cash crops). Some of the men who listed their occupation as subsistence gardener relied on earnings from their rental rooms as their main source of income. Details of these ‘landlords’ are covered later in this chapter, whilst gardeners are discussed in Chapter Five. Gardening was an occupation that did not favour a certain age group although the ‘older’ males (aged 30 and over) were more likely to work as gardeners for expatriate (and sometimes ni-Vanuatu) residents in town. Alan Butal (23,
from Tanna) worked at a hydroponics farm 20 kilometres away and returned to Blacksands only for the weekend. His daily tasks included clearing bush to extend existing irrigation stands, harvesting and pest control. His brother Benoit (20, from Tanna) followed in his footsteps after Alan recommended his hiring to the boss.

For men aged 21-30 years, employment in the retail industry (20%) was most common, followed closely by unpaid gardening and homehelp occupations. The retail occupation included shops (in town) and the sales section in the abattoirs and factory outlets like the Toa Chicken Farm (located within Blacksands), Cellovilla (a cleaning chemicals manufacturer) and Switi (dairy products). Dominic Bule (24, from Pentecost) started work at Cellovilla 4 years ago. He began by unloading and stocking chemicals on the factory floor and worked his way to assisting with the pay roll and driving deliveries. He enjoyed his work and hoped to move into accounting one day. His cousin August Bule (34, from Pentecost) ran a kava and bottle shop business at Namburi and was assisted by his wife, Evelyn (25, from Pentecost) when she was not working on the Young People’s Project at the Cultural Centre. Pierre Andrew (27, from Ambrym) had just secured work at Toa Chicken Farm, a short 10 minute walk from his residence. He moved to Blacksands because of its proximity to work. He helped to organize the team of feeders and cleaners in one of the chicken sheds. He viewed his job simply as a means of cash income to support his wife and two children rather than as a means to a better paid job later on. Silas Nalau (36, from Tanna) had worked at Vate Electrics for seven years. He managed the shop floor and sold electrical fittings to customers. He was interested in learning more about electrical wiring in construction but believed that he was too old to start learning and that it was better for the younger ones to learn a trade.
A small number of men (5 of the 14 men in domestic work) were classed as ‘househusband’ or homehelp. Their daily lives were spent working in a subsistence garden, doing laundry, taking children to school and preparing meals. On rare occasions they would be offered casual work (for a day or two) driving a bus, working as a security guard or helping out in a family-run store in return for some cash. In the evolving socio-economic context of Port Vila, traditional gender roles were also changing when new income-earning opportunities existed. Traditionally women stayed at home and men earned the money but with limited job opportunities households had become more accepting of women working in town in order to survive. Dickson Bene (46, from Banks Islands) worked for the government until 1997 when he was made redundant by the ‘right sizing’ of the public service exercise under the Comprehensive Reform Programme (CRP). He then became responsible for the housework and his wife worked as a cashier for a store in town as well as managing a small cash-crop enterprise. This is most unusual in Vanuatu, and generally in Melanesia, but more cases of ‘role-reversal’ were witnessed during the survey period. Dickson was more forthcoming about his role while other males were uncomfortable admitting that they did the laundry, cooked food and looked after children.

It was quite common that both the head of the household and his or her partner had multiple sources of income. Most people acquired their daily necessities as members of a household within which incomes from a variety of sources were pooled. Many households combined income from wage work, subsistence gardening, and sometimes
PHOTO 3: Walking to work in Port Vila in the early morning. The man in blue works for the power and water company, UNELCO.

PHOTO 4: A woman from Blacksands weaving baskets for sale at the Centrepoint Handicraft Market place in Port Vila.
from some form of informal marketing. For example, Alan Napuwi (32, of Tanna) worked as a gardener for an expatriate household in the morning and as a trainee mechanic in the afternoon. His wife looked after the home and the children and made sweetbreads to sell to people on their way to work. Stephen Lava (28, from Tanna) was a theological student in his fourth year. He studied in the morning and worked as a mechanic in the afternoons to help supplement his wife’s income as an office cleaner. Jimmy Tenkon (45, from Ambrym) worked as a supervisor for a construction company. His wife Annie worked two part-time jobs, as a secretary for the Credit Union Office and as a trainee at the Vanuatu Beauty Centre in town. The Tenkons explained that having five children at school meant they had to work hard in order to make enough money to pay all the school fees. John Wari (38, from Tanna) worked as a barman at a hotel and his wife Melena was employed as a housegirl and she also baby-sat for mothers in Blacksands at the weekend in return for food crops or a small amount of money.

Few of the respondents (7% - see Figure 8) were in skilled occupations. Some 80% of those occupied in skilled job were males who were predominantly in government employment (38%). Other skilled occupations included teaching, theatre direction and business management. The people in skilled positions came from a number of islands and were of varying ages. They did, however, share the common characteristics of having lived in town for a minimum of 10 years and having completed a secondary education. Ann and Joe Bong were a married couple from Ambrym who had lived in Port Vila since 1986. Ann had teaching qualifications acquired in Australia and taught English to Year 11 and 12 students at Malapoa College in town. Joe had a diploma in theatre direction attained in Australia and ran his own theatre company. His most recent accomplishment
was the production of a public radio series explaining the Comprehensive Reform Programme (a government restructuring exercise initiated in 1997).

The majority of paid workers in Blacksands were in unskilled or low-skill jobs such as cleaners, gardeners and housegirls. This was similar to the national status of all ni-Vanuatu in paid occupations, given the types of jobs available in the service industry (mainly tourism) such as hotel help (porters, receptionists, cleaners etc.). High unemployment levels in the construction industry were also dependent on national economic circumstances and these types of jobs lack stability for many of the labourers. Whilst skilled and semi-skilled occupations are thought to be more conducive to long-term urban employment and residence (Connell 1985, Haberkorn 1989), it was evident that given the small percentage of skilled workers, the association between type of employment and temporary mobility no longer applies. It appeared that the duration of urban residency and investment in urban housing and education had provided for significant urban attachment in Blacksands households regardless of a slow economic growth and declining job opportunities. The older generation has had the opportunity to learn mechanical, carpentry and other skills from the building booms in Vila in the 1970s and they have also enjoyed a greater accessibility to higher education standard. These skills (coupled with years of experience) have provided them with greater opportunities for securing employment in better paid jobs.

The improbability of gaining a secure, long-term work contract coupled with a minimum wage salary for non-skilled workers (VT18,000 – VT22,000 per month) deterred many of the respondents and in particular, young males from actively seeking employment. For those in minimum wage occupations, many felt that the money they worked for was
inadequate to justify the transport costs and the minimum safety standards to continue working. The frustration over difficult, unpleasant jobs in poor conditions was used often as an explanation by some of the unemployed as reasons for not working. Willy James (20, from Tanna) had lived in town for eight years and had worked in a number of jobs in the construction, hospitality and retail industries.

My father got me a job in a store at Nambatri when I was 15. They never paid me on time so I stopped going. I then worked at the Meridian hotel in the workshop but the money was very little and they wanted me to find my own transport to work at the weekends. I couldn’t afford to work there anymore so I followed my cousin to work with a construction company. I don’t think I will work for them much longer as the money is too little to buy the things the house needs. I don’t know what I will do because I haven’t finished school so I can’t get a job that pays more money.

As with many other ni-Vanuatu, the securing of a job in paid employment in Blacksands was substantially influenced by the wantok associations (prevalent throughout Melanesian countries) evident in Port Vila. The vast majority of those in paying jobs (85%) had secured work either through introduction by a relative, or by replacing a relative (who wished to ‘retire’, among other reasons) in the workplace. I was just staying at home when my sister-in-law, Nellie, a staff nurse, came and got me to be a housegirl for Dr Gemma. I like being a housegirl as the hours are good for me. I only work in the afternoons. (Leah Ben, 39, from Tanna). Simply being from the same island could secure some people paid employment, particularly working for the government. I am working in the Ministry of Internal Affairs and have clerical and cleaning duties. I knew if I went to

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the office I would be able to get a job as the Minister is from Pentecost like me and cannot refuse me (Marie Tabi 30, from Pentecost). A small proportion of the respondents (8%) formally applied for their jobs (submitted written applications and/or attended formal interviews) after noticing advertisements in the local papers or hearing about vacancies on the radio. However, more likely than not a relative or friend kept an eye open for vacancies at their place of work and informed a relative of the opening.

There was a difference in length of employment and in the type of occupation between those households that occupied a single yard and the multiple (or rental) houses in a yard. Those yards that contained only one household tended to belong to families who were among the first to approach the landowner in 1991 to seek permission to settle in the area. Those households tended to have been urban residents for periods greater than twelve years and had gradually become more involved in formal employment and were in better positions to take advantage of securing a reasonably well paid job. They were also the families who had somewhat distanced themselves from obligations to immediate extended family in town and on the home island. This situation allowed them the freedom of identifying alternative sources of income often sought in rental housing by other households.

Over half of the 29 yards (55%) had rental houses/rooms and these ‘yard owners’ did not have to seek additional sources of income as they made a considerable amount of money from their rental houses (which were in fact single rooms with shared bathroom and kitchen facilities). There is therefore an emerging class of ‘informal landlords’ able to exploit the lack of affordable housing in Port Vila and who are much better off than other residents in Blacksands. A similar class of landlords was noted in the older established
squatter settlements of Suva (Bryant 1993a). The yard owner paid rent for the land to the
landowner, between VT3,000 to VT4,000 a month, a sum which had remained
unchanged for over ten years. The yard owner in that time has built rental houses from
his own funds and had proceeded to rent these rooms at monthly rates of VT8,000 to
VT12,000. The Rent Taxation Act (Cap.196) requires all persons and companies who
derive rental or lease income from land and or properties in Vanuatu to lodge a Rent
Return form and to pay the appropriate amount of rent tax to the Province. Landowners
and landlords alike have neglected to pay this tax.

My calculations suggest that the one landowning family (Kaltabang) earned VT105,000 a
month from land rentals in charging VT3,000 to VT4,000 to the 29 yard owners.
However, yard owners such as Pastor Japheth made VT144,000 from his 12 rental rooms
(at a cost of VT12,000 per room, per month) in one month. Other yard owners such as
Titus Tabi and Jack Bob could earn up to VT120,000 a month on rental rooms if there
was full occupancy (see Figure 9). However, the rental rooms had a high turnover of
families as young couples or single men and women could afford to rent their own places
for a short while when they were in paid employment. Details on the people who rent are
provided in the following chapter. Landlords who were subletting rooms and houses to
poorer tenants used the rental income to upgrade their own homes, or to purchase new
homes elsewhere. Pastor Japheth, for example, had used his rental income to purchase a
generator, build communal bathing blocks, improve his own home and erect additional
rental rooms in his yard.

Many other yard owners, however, used their rental income from subtenants for daily
expenses such as transport, food and school fees. The Tannese yards appeared to have
rental rooms but these were almost exclusively for kin who were expected to contribute to the land rent, meals and traditional obligations (funerals, weddings, and custom fines) in lieu of cash for monthly rent. Moses John (40, from Tanna) moved to Blacksands in 1991. He worked as a security officer for four years until he lost his job. He relied totally on the income he derived from the seven rental rooms in his yard. He supplemented this income with a small subsistence garden of root crops. John Maben (33, of Tanna) explained:

\[I\ have\ worked\ at\ the\ Prima\ Beverage\ factory\ for\ many\ years.\ I\ have\ made\ enough\ money\ to\ build\ six\ rental\ rooms.\ Mostly,\ it\ is\ my\ extended\ family\ that\ lives\ in\ the\ rooms\ so\ I\ cannot\ force\ them\ to\ pay\ rent.\ If\ they\ can\ pay\ then\ I\ am\ happy\ to\ take\ the\ money\ to\ use\ for\ food,\ transport\ and\ things\ like\ that.\ If\ they\ cannot\ pay\ me\ then\ I\ have\ to\ ask\ the\ boss\ for\ more\ shifts\ at\ work\ to\ make\ sure\ there\ is\ enough\ money\ for\ my\ straight\ (nuclear)\ family.\]

The settlers in the economically active age group, that is, 15 – 55 years, were aged mainly between 15 and 35 years, indicating a very young population that was economically active. In Blacksands, 57% of the female respondents were between 15 and 30 years, while 52% of the males were aged between 15 and 30 years. Island of origin had little influence on employment despite wantok connections and age and education were more influential in determining paid employment as was gender (significantly more males than females in the paid workforce). No island or provincial grouping dominated paid employment or occupation categories.
As Port Vila has developed from Independence into a relatively large Pacific town, the diversification of the urban economy has actually declined. Whilst an informal sector does exist in the urban and peri-urban areas, it has not developed greatly in spite of rural-urban migration, growing urban permanence, few new urban employment opportunities and a lack of industrialization. The informal sector includes a variety of occupations and small-scale enterprises, which typically involve simple organization and production structures, require low level technology or skills and low capita income per worker, and rely on family labour or a few hired workers. They are informal in the sense that they are mostly unregistered and unrecorded in official statistics, and have little, if any, access to organized markets or credit institutions (UNDP 1999:80).

In Vanuatu in the 1980s, Haberkorn (1987) observed that informal economies barely existed. Philibert (1988) noted that the peri-urban villages (Erakor, Ifira, Mele and Pango) were integrated into the urban economy through the marketing of fresh produce in town, the making of handicrafts and staging of traditional activities for tourists. It was generally believed that settlement residents had no alternative production options apart from the sale of their labour. Less than a decade later, however, the Tannese community at Blacksands (but outside this survey) were staging custom dances and ‘Melanesian Nights’ for tourists at hotels; women from all islands were creating and selling handicrafts in Vila market houses; and men were selling fresh garden produce at road markets. These activities caused some resentment on the part of the villagers (Eratap, Mele, Pango, Ifira and Erakor) who have requested SHEFA Province to construct a marketplace near the municipal boundaries solely for the use of man-Efate (personal communication, SHEFA Province Planner, March 2000).
There is a paucity of data on employment in Vanuatu for both rural and urban areas. Economic data is dependent on the national census results and the Urban Income and Expenditure Surveys conducted in 1983 and 1997 (yet to be published). No reliable data on wage employment were available as census data did not distinguish between wage and no-wage employment, formal or informal employment (McGavin 1997:49). Therefore, much of the data collected in Blacksands is relatively new and provides incentives to intensify research in this area, particularly as formal sector employment is limited.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business type</th>
<th>Total Employed</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>758</td>
<td>753</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nakamals</td>
<td>687</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>3,259</td>
<td>2,299</td>
<td>1,231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperatives</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handicraft</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open air vendors</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6,012</td>
<td>4,276</td>
<td>1,738</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compiled from information provided by the National Statistics Office (2000) from preliminary findings of the Labour Market Survey.

Some 9% of the surveyed population at Blacksands were engaged in informal employment. This typically included activities such as handicraft workers, small-scale traders (fishing, gardening), micro manufacturing (mostly cooking, tailoring, and carpentry) and domestic work. Much of this activity was not particularly visible, as much of it is home-based, especially among the women. Miller Mahit (41, from Paama) has lived at Blacksands since 1996.

I ask my family on Paama to send me peanuts from the island, which I buy from them and roast and bag them here in my kitchen. Sometimes I will take them to
Vila and sell them at the market place but usually people come to see me here at the house to buy my peanuts. I think my peanuts are some of the best ones in Vanuatu. I have not made much money though, so it is good that my wife also works as a housegirl.

Alick Eae (48, from Ambrym) was a skilled carver and sold his carvings (mainly ornamental pigs) to handicraft shops in town. I have always liked carving and because I don’t have much schooling, it has been hard for me to find a job. It was quite easy to find wood and I used to stay at home and just carve and then my cousin brother told me that I should try to sell them in town. I was surprised that people were happy to buy them – I even get orders from some stores now. Arison Frazer (34, from Pentecost) was a single parent of two children. She made a living selling handicrafts at the Centrepoint market place.

I learnt how to weave mats and baskets when I was a small girl living in the village. I noticed that people were tie-dying calico and selling them as lava-lavas so I started to add those to my sales. I also make small traditional houses out of coconut shells and the tourists like to buy them as presents. It is hard work as I am the only one making the things to sell but I make enough money to pay rent, send my son to school and put food on the table.

The informal sector was not large but it was growing in the handicraft industry, and especially among young men and women. However, the informal sector was not very productive or dynamic. Those engaged in informal employment worked as individuals
n = 100 Note that some of the yards did not have full rental occupancy at the time of the study.

n = 116

Domestic workers include those that worked in their own home and garden, those that worked for relatives in their home (homehelp) and those that were paid to clean the houses and tend the gardens of non-relatives in town. Retail includes those who worked in shops or the sales section of factories. Industry includes those that worked in hotels/restaurants, construction or factories. Business includes those in the handicraft trade (carvers, weavers), those that were employed as public transport drivers and those who managed their own small-scale businesses. Social workers include pastors, church and youth project officers.

n = 100
and did not employ others and many only seemed to work where there was a need for cash. The limited significance of the informal sector may be due to restrictive legislation. In Vanuatu, everyone is required to apply for a business licence (unless they are providing an education service or selling crops on a small-scale crop) in order to operate any money earning activity. This includes public transport, the selling of handicrafts, cooked food and tailored clothes. In addition, those earning in excess of VT4 million a year are required to pay the 12.5% value added tax (VAT). This is rigorously enforced and prevents many people who do not have money paying for a licence (starting at VT10,000 minimum) to operate a small business. A low consumer demand for some services, and perhaps an absence of skills in some areas (such as furniture making) where demand is only emerging also limits the growth of the informal sector. The relative affluence of the subsistence sector may also have discouraged development of alternative informal sector commerce and industrial activities.

Although many people are employed in the semi-subsistence sector, their productivity is too low to satisfy either their aspirations or national development goals. A growing number of people lack access to subsistence resources and there is a greater dependence on cash employment (UNDP 1999:80). For example, to sell fresh produce requires access to land for gardening. However, increasing land pressures around Port Vila restrict access to farming land. Linda Jack (40, from New Caledonia) used to have a small plot of land near the river Teae that she planted with yams, taro and other crops to sell at a road market. She was chased off the land by the landowners for using the land without permission; hence she could no longer earn an income as she had nowhere to grow her
crops. The constraints to employment in the informal sector are considerable, ranging from access to land, inadequate incomes (for licences), few skills and limited markets.

An overwhelming percentage (63%) of the women were in unpaid employment. However, only 5% of the surveyed women were truly unemployed in the sense that they were actively looking for (paid) work but had been unsuccessful in securing a job. Of the 37% of women who held paying jobs in town, the majority were in unskilled occupations. In Blacksands, 35% of the women classified themselves as housewives (Mi stap lukaotem huis noenon), while 20% worked as housegirls elsewhere in Vila or as homehelp in their own household.

Many (33%) of the women used to work in paid employment but stopped working for reasons ranging from participation in the public servant strike of 1993, simple dislike of an employer, or pregnancy. Serah Godden (29, from Ambae) used to work as a cashier in a Chinese store but resigned in 1998 when she fell pregnant with her fourth child. Anna Moses (20, from Tanna) also used to work as a cashier in a Chinese store but stopped going to work, as she did not like her employer. Fiona Sam (33, from Tanna) used to work in the kitchen of a restaurant in town but discontinued working at her husband’s insistence, as he believed she was having an affair with a work colleague.

Housewives (some as young as 17) spent their day washing, cooking, cleaning, looking after children and on occasion working in a subsistence garden. Some housewives earned a little cash by providing a childcare service for the young children whose parents (often neighbours) worked in town during the day. Leah Ben (39, from Tanna) baby-sat for her

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5 I just do the housework.
neighbours while they were away at work and was paid either with a little cash or in food crops.

The homehelps tended to be young or older women who were either visiting specifically as homehelp or passing the time before entering into nursing school or the local technical school. Others were pregnant or had been brought from another related household to help a pregnant relative in Blacksands. Some were participating in local (unpaid) projects that included sewing and personal health courses. Virgine Tarilu (48, from Ambae) came to live with her daughter Sophie specifically to do the housework and look after the children. Gabrielle Jack (20, from Aneityum) recently joined her pregnant cousin Hilda in Blacksands to help her with the housework. Rose Worwor (16, from Ambrym) was placed as homehelp to Arison Frazer in 1998 by the Neil Thomas Ministries (NTM) church to assist with the housework and childcare while Arison sold handicrafts in town. None of the homehelp in Blacksands received a wage income but were paid by the provision of shelter and meals.

**TABLE Eight: Female Employment Type in Blacksands**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Paid(#)</th>
<th>Unpaid(#)</th>
<th>Total(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Workers</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>56.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Service</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Worker</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=116 (See also Figure 10)

Employment in the retail industry was popular with 18% of the women although 14% of the 21 women were unpaid retail workers. These women often looked after a relative’s
store in return for a place to sleep and food or were wives assisting their husband’s business. Adelyn Mabon (37, from Pentecost) spent most of her working day running her husband’s shop in Blacksands but did not get paid for doing so. She explained that it was a family business and it was her duty to help. A small number of women work at the Switi ice-cream factory near the international airport and walked to work together. Alice Kowea (34, from Tanna) had worked at Switi for eight years and found jobs there for two other women (including her sister-in-law) who lived in her yard.

Age appeared to be a factor in determining the type of job that women held. Of the women in domestic service (homehelp and housewives) 69% were aged between 15 and 30 years. This was due to young girls being used by families to look after the house and children while they were at work in town, especially because the married women were in their most fertile age bracket of their lives. It was not until women reached 30 years that they usually entered regular paid employment, thus 56% of women aged 31-40 years were engaged in retail, business or worked for the government. However, as noted earlier, it was the younger women in the retail industry who held the more ‘responsible’ jobs such as handling the cash register whilst the older women worked as cleaners and stockists. Women aged between 26 and 35 years (45% of the surveyed women) favoured jobs such as housegirls as the hours were more convenient for them to clean their own home and care for their own children. Education enhances the likelihood that women work for pay but only if the local environment provides adequate opportunities for paid employment.

The women in the hospitality industry did not work in hotels but sold handicrafts at the market place in Vila or had small-scale tailoring businesses with tourists as their market.
Many of the women in such activities stated that they tended to sell handicrafts and clothes when there was a need for a large amount of money for school fees, custom fines or bride prices. Subsistence economic activity in urban areas is inadequately investigated and the convenient classification of ‘housework’ probably includes many women who were economically active. Betty Gislanpo (26, from Banks Islands) made handicrafts and sold them in Vila to support her family of four children, as her husband was an unpaid pastor. Delilah Misak (53, from Paama) wove mats and grass skirts for her son-in-law to sell. She did this to keep herself busy and help contribute to the household. These two women stood out among their counterparts as they showed that they were easily able to make enough money to put food on the table and cover their materials and transport costs. There were other women who also made and sold handicrafts to supplement their household’s income but not as frequently as Betty and Delilah as they were often occupied by domestic tasks and had less accessibility to weaving and carving materials.

Some women (in particular those from Tanna or married to a Tannese) were prevented from engaging in paid employment (or accepting promotion) being bound by traditional values. Other factors included high fertility and greater time spent on child-rearing and domestic work. Whilst traditional gender roles restrict women’s participation in the formal sector, such traditions often change when new income-earning opportunities exist. For example, Sophie Tari (26, from Ambae) was a government worker in the Department of Customs, Rates and Taxes, earning approximately VT45,000 a month. Her husband showed an utter lack of interest in employment of any kind and usually sat around Blacksands playing his guitar all day. Alice Kami (47, from Pentecost) ran a store at Agathis on her own. When her husband died she continued the store’s operation. Before,
it would not be right for me to be in public, let alone run a business. This was my husband’s business first but I used to listen to him so I thought that I could do that, and I am. Sometimes it is hard to work with the men as they say I should stay quiet at home but I think they are jealous to see so many people coming to my store.

Female participation in the wage and salary workforce and the informal sector has increased slightly in recent years. In 1989 30,905 women were employed for a wage, which rose to 34,298 in 1999 (Preliminary census results, 2000). Women’s involvement in the informal sector is believed to have increased because women in general lack the education or skills to join the formal sector. Alternatively, they experience other forms of job discrimination. In addition, informal work allows them to deal better with their other home-based responsibilities. Their small businesses sometimes provided the main income of many urban families. Oriva Avock (28, from Paama) was responsible for earning an income to support her family, as her husband did not work. She was not an educated woman but had to work to send two of her three children to school, pay the rent and put food on the table. Other women from Paama often helped her by bringing root crops from their gardens. Oriva supplemented this by baking bread, gâteaux-huits (a pastry) and doughnuts to sell in her friend’s store every day.

Women were not active in owning a business outright, and tended to assist their male partners instead. For example, Leah Bule (38, from Emae) ran her husband’s store in Blacksands while he taught at the NTM Bible College in town. Leah bought and sold stock, operated the generator and collected the rent from the twelve tenant households in the yard. However, she insisted that she was not a business partner, but was simply looking after her husband’s business interests. Winnie Moses (44, from Paama) ran her
husband's shop in Blacksands while he operated another shop at Namburu. Winnie stressed that it was a family business and that they shared responsibilities and profits for the improvement of their home. Unlike their male counterparts, women did not aspire to be prosperous business people but indicated that their ideal job would be to establish and operate a small sewing or cooked food business.

The place of residence is one of the strongest determinants of whether women are engaged in paid or subsistence activities (or neither). Paid work is far more common among women in urban and peri-urban areas (UNICEF 1998). It is clear that it is economic opportunities provided by the locale rather than the characteristic of the women living there that makes the difference for employment. All women in Blacksands worked, although much of this 'work' was not officially considered an economic activity as it was unpaid (notably homehelp). The general orientation of men to paid employment placed greater responsibilities on women in those households to engage in subsistence activities (gardening, cottage industry handicrafts), but where men did not work for whatever reason, women did often find wage-earning employment. Primarily many of the housewives managed the home in order to allow the men to engage in paid employment but, as highlighted previously, a small yet growing number of households were experiencing a role reversal in men staying home and women taking up paid employment.

UNEMPLOYMENT IN BLACKSANDS

The 1989 National Population Census report stated that unemployment in Vanuatu was mainly an urban phenomenon. However, the definition and measurement of
unemployment is difficult (because of the significance of the informal sector and the continued importance of semi-subsistence activities) and few adequate studies exist of urban employment and unemployment in the South Pacific. In Vanuatu, there have been no consistent attempts to identify the extent of unemployment or underemployment.

The National Statistics Office defines unemployment as “those people aged 10 and above who were not employed but were actively seeking a job during the reference week” (1991:50). However, it is extremely difficult to determine if a person is actively seeking employment as few formal applications are made to advertised job vacancies in the limited job market (especially since more than 3,500 school leavers compete for 500 paid jobs each year, (Republic of Vanuatu 1996). It has been further determined by national census reports that many people who are employed (but do not receive a wage income), are in fact underemployed as they had expressed a wish to work for a cash income, if such work were available. There is therefore considerable hidden unemployment in the urban areas of Vanuatu, which is a serious problem in developing and utilizing the human resources of the country.

High urban unemployment generally and specifically among Pacific youths has being well documented over recent years (Connell 1988, UNDP 1993, Bryant 1993, Monsell-Davis 1998 and Mitchell 1998). In the last decade, urban unemployment has become increasingly visible on the streets of Port Vila as the growing number of unemployed youths choose to ‘kill time’ in public areas. It is widely assumed that they live in squatter and informal settlements. These unemployed youth have acquired the name “SPR” or “Sperem Publik Rod” (literally ‘roaming the streets’) and they are frequently blamed for the growing crime rate in the capital (the number of crimes recorded in Vila in 1996 was
double that of 1995, according to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. This situation is not unique to Vanuatu and the SPRs have counterparts in the Solomon Islands “masta liu” (master of wandering aimlessly), the “pasindia” in Papua New Guinea and the “jambo jambo” in the Marshall Islands.

In Blacksands a rather similar situation prevailed, as 9% of the surveyed population were unemployed. That is, they were seeking employment (by asking relatives to look for vacancies in their work place or visiting a business inquiring about vacancies) but had not been successful and continued to look for work. Of the unemployed, 65% were male and 35% were females and all were aged between 15 and 30 years. In fact 59% of the unemployed were aged between 15 and 20 years. In 1986 the Urban Census recorded that 66% of those listed as unemployed in urban areas were younger than 24 years. The report on the Vanuatu Young Peoples’ Project stated that young people identified unemployment as their biggest problem and bemoaned the difficulties in securing paid work.

Those aged over 30 years appeared to have had the opportunity to learn a skill whilst working in the private sector, thus obtaining valued work experience and a skill (mechanics, sewing, book keeping, carpentry). However, some of the older male residents simply seemed to have drifted out of paid employment without realizing it. *I was working as a security officer for about 4 years I think and then one day I didn’t want to go anymore because I was tired of working at the weekend. I haven’t worked since and depend on the income from my rental rooms. I have sent my children to live with their uncle on Tanna because I cannot look after them here* (Moses John, 40 from Tanna).

Obed Butal (50, from Tanna) worked as a public transport driver for a relative. *I drive a*
bus or a taxi maybe two or three times a week. There are many of us who drive the same bus so we take it in turns. I am getting older now so I don’t work so much. My wife works everyday at the labour union office and my boys work so I don’t have to worry too much about money. Martin Langse (49, from Pentecost) used to work in the kava and peanut business until he lost a leg in a car accident in 1997. He then supervised his two eldest sons in the maintenance of the rental rooms in his yard.

Rita Ben (16, from Tanna) was unsuccessful in her attempts to secure a place in secondary school. She lived with her parents and helped with the housework when she was not looking for work. I would prefer to still be at school but there were not enough places for everyone at the lycée. I go once a week to town with my sister Yolanda to see if there is any work in the Chinese stores. There is work as a housegirl but I don’t want to clean someone else’s house. Rose Warpe (29, from Tanna) worked for a number of years at the Switi ice-cream factory until she went on strike in 1997 with some of the other workers. I liked my job at Switi but the wages were not good. But now, I have no work and even though I have asked at shops in town for a job, they do not like me because they know that I went on strike with my last job. This makes it very hard for me to find work.

James Robert (20, from Tongoa) came to Vila in 1999 to look for a job.

I have a year 10 school certificate so I thought it would be quite easy to find work in an office, but there are so many of us school leavers fighting for the same jobs. I got a job as a security officer for a small time but it was not the right job for me. I read the newspapers every week looking for work. My uncle says he will speak to some of his friends who may be able to find work for me in a government department.
As more educated people move into the labour market, the problem of underemployment has become a real issue. Madeline Dickson (19, from Banks Islands) graduated at the top of her accounting class at the local technical school INTV in 1999. Her course included internships with accounting firms in town. *I thought that I would get a job quite easily, especially after I worked with some firms during my study and they were happy with my skills. I still haven't got a job but I keep looking. It is hard to leave a contact address, as we have no telephone. I think I have lost a few jobs simply because they could not contact me and so gave it to someone else.* There is a growing gap between the aspirations of these people and the means of achieving them, resulting in a restless unemployed and underemployed urban population.

The high percentage of women classified as housewives or homehelp were in reality underemployed. Many of them had junior secondary level education, language skills and were creative yet had little luck in securing paid employment or were prevented from doing so by family and spouses. Young females in the settlement found obtaining paid employment difficult, with many staying at home to look after their young children. This ‘difficulty’ was often associated with traditional obligations to look after children and the home, and, especially among the Tannese households, women were prevented from finding work in town in case they ‘got into trouble’ with other men. For example, Kaunt Jimmy (47 of Tanna) had expressed an interest in working in town but her husband disagreed to her working in a place where no male family member was present.

Underemployment was reflected in the respondents’ employment aspirations. *I would like my own real estate business, as I seem to be good at it. Lots of people come to find me to help them apply for land or to discuss how to solve some of their land issues as usually*
people rush into deals and have no idea what is going on until it is too late (Annie Tenkon, 44 from Ambrym). Daniel Ynack (18, from Tanna) had vocational training in the hospitality industry and worked in a restaurant. However, he would have preferred to return to technical school to pursue a career in accounting. Many employment aspirations were far from being satisfied.

Urban unemployment is often regarded as a phenomenon of the relatively young males (teens and twenties), low-levels of formal education and the more recent arrivals in town as it is in Papua New Guinea (Levantis 1997). In Blacksands the unemployed were primarily young men with low education levels though this does not account for the fact that many of the young women who are underemployed as housegirls and homehelp. Recent migrants to Vila however appeared not to be officially unemployed as they expressed little interest in being economically active. Whilst education did not play a significant role in determining opportunities in paid employment, those that were satisfied with their current employment status had a tendency to be the secondary school leavers.

**ATTITUDES TO WORK**

Examination of the employment histories of the urban population of Vila in the early 1970s generally demonstrated that most migrants had relatively short periods of continuous employment (Connell 1985:60). Employment histories of those in Blacksands (with few exceptions) have emphasized this 15-year-old statement. This was in part due to the lack of unskilled jobs that were available and a reluctance to accept low paid jobs in poor working conditions. Existing jobs in the hospitality industry, for example,
required good language skills and a willingness to work unsocial hours for less than a minimum wage salary. It was difficult to determine the average length of time spent in any job, as the respondents were sometimes deliberately vague about their employment histories. However, from general discussions over the year long survey period, it appeared that younger people (20-30 years) stayed in a job for an average of 8 months, while those aged 31 years and over worked in the same job for an average of a year and a half. Women in particular did not keep long-term jobs, a situation often attributed to pregnancy, change of social status (marriage) or imposed traditional roles.

The exceptions to a lack of employment continuity included Ben Tamas (44, from Tanna). He was among the first recruits of the Vanuatu Mobile Force (VMF) in 1980 and still remained in the service though he had expressed his desire to retire in the year 2000 (he was still working in June, 2000).

I have been with the VMF since 1980. I was one of the first to be recruited. The government came to Tanna to recruit men. I did my interview and they accepted me. They sent me to Papua New Guinea for 3 months for training. I am now in the fire-fighting unit, which I really enjoy. I work one and a half days and then have 2 days off and then one and a half days again and then 2 off. I have been working for almost 20 years now. I have paid leave, paid sick leave and get government living and child allowance. It is a good job as they pay for me to go back to Tanna once a year. I have a sore back; it gives me many problems. I think that I injured it at work, as there is a lot of heavy equipment to carry. I think they might give me early retirement next year because of my back.
Titus Tabi (32, from Pentecost) had been successfully self-employed for many years and was one of the first residents to seek permission to settle in the area. Titus had one of the largest yards with a total of sixteen households, including his own. Also located within the yard was a ‘bush garage’ filled with public transport vehicles waiting for repairs and maintenance. Titus owned several buses himself and employed relatives to drive them during the day. His other source of income was derived from rent, approximately VT120,000 a month.

_I have been at Blacksands since 1987. I asked for a big piece of land and at first it was just my family and some extended family members living here. I learned my mechanical skills when I first came to Vila as a young boy. I was lucky to save some money, which I used to build the rental homes. Now, the money I make from renting lets me run this garage and my public transport buses. People always say that I have a lot of money but that is not true. It is hard to have a business and to save money when you have a big family. I want to make enough to give to my boy when he is old enough to start working._

Charley Robert (43, from Tongoa) came to Vila in 1979 and learnt a trade in carpentry. He moved to Blacksands in 1991 and established his own carpentry business at the same time. He was often sub-contracted by larger construction companies to complete the woodwork. His main business was building furniture for a largely ni-Vanuatu clientele and he also trained a number of young men in carpentry skills. He had helped his nephew Kakae Pakoa to establish his own carpentry business. Charley had one of the few permanent houses in Blacksands and boosts his carpentry income with the rental of three houses situated in his yard.
There was a definite generational difference in attitudes towards work. The older
generation (30 years and over) assumed a more serious attitude towards work and
emphasized the need to support their families and contribute to traditional obligations.
Youth, on the other hand, in particular the young men, assumed a casual indifference
towards employment of any kind and many assumed that an older relative or the family
would take care of their needs. *I started working with the Wan Smolbag theatre group but
those people are strange. I got so angry at them one day I just left. I am not going back
there again. I will look for another place to work but later as my uncle is visiting us at the
moment* (Paul Frank, 20 from Tanna). A year later, Paul still did not have a job and
showed no interest in looking for one. Families that accommodated the young and
unemployed expressed much frustration at laziness and hoped that the chiefly
representatives would force them to return to the island. It was against custom to refuse
hospitality to a relative simply because they did not contribute to the household.

Young people sometimes attributed their lack of interest in work to the frustration in the
difficult, low wage, unpleasant jobs (that were available) as being the major deterrent to
seeking employment. Those that had been employed at one time lacked commitment to
the job often because of the working conditions. *“I used to work at a Chinese store in
town, cleaning the shelves and things like that but I hated working for that Chinese man.
He always wanted me to work on Saturday and to be there early. If I was late he would
shout at me for a long time, sometimes in Chinese! One day I just decided that I didn’t
want to work anymore so I didn’t go. He must have waited for me a long time that day!”*
(Anna Moses, 20 from Tanna). However, they were unable to articulate the employment
and working conditions that would attract a certain degree of commitment and job continuity.

Sako Lamai (18, from Tanna) did not work and expressed little interest in working for a salary. He lived in his brother’s house and preferred to play pétanque with his friends to helping in the house or the garden. His sister-in-law was extremely frustrated with his presence in her home and his attitude that the family would cater for all his needs. On the other hand, their neighbour, 18 year old Daniel Ynack, had worked in the same job for two years as a waiter in a French restaurant in town and was also responsible for looking after two young nephews (aged 8 and 12) at home. Jean-Louis Mael (27, from Ambrym) worked at the Toa Chicken farm. His wife, Judy (22, from Pentecost) conveyed in private that Jean-Louis would work in one place for three months, get very drunk over a pay weekend and lose his job. Then they would move out of Blacksands, back to Manples to live with one of her relatives until Jean-Louis found another job where the same pattern would repeat itself. Judy does not work as they cannot afford to pay someone to look after their one year old son.

The minimum wage for unskilled work was not attractive as a means of livelihood although there was at least one wage earner per household no matter how menial (but essential) the job might be. The women in particular were constantly occupied with one task or another – washing clothes, collecting firewood, tending the food garden or cooking. The men on the other hand were more inclined on their day off work, to play pétanque, cards or just chat with their male friends. Families did not seem to mind the type of employment spouses or partners were engaged in, so long as the income earned was adequate to support the household.
POVERTY IN BLACKSANDS

The National Statistics Office (NSO 1991) classified a household as low income if its monthly income was less than VT45,000 and high income if its income for the month was at least VT100,000. In the NSO’s report on family income and expenditure survey of urban areas in 1987, a typical house of a citizen grossed an annual income of VT881,530 or VT73,450 per month - based on 2.1 people working per national household. In Blacksands, households were reluctant to disclose the amount of income they earned, but from observation and conversation, the majority of households probably received between VT10,000 to VT30,000 per month, whilst 15% of the surveyed households made in excess of VT120,000 per month.

Several authors have suggested that in the Pacific poverty is most likely to be found in urban squatter settlements (Bryant 1992, 1995). Poverty has become a new problem, especially in terms of nutrition and health, and related disadvantages including: isolation, a sense of social inferiority, frustration, lack of opportunity, physical weakness, vulnerability and humiliation; and these characteristics are increasingly passed between generations. Vanuatu has yet to utilize the word poverty to describe any household, although government agencies have referred to the difficulties ‘struggling households’ face in terms of finances and services in the urban centres of Vila and Luganville.

There is little formal knowledge of the extent of urban poverty or welfare problems in Vila. It is increasingly apparent that some households are absolutely poor in the sense that they do not have enough food, clean water or access to an adequate house or a basic education but who and where these households are is not known. In Blacksands, of the 100 households surveyed, only one household was obviously bordering on poverty. This
Tannese household had no cash income and scraped by with food supplied from the
garden and from the sea. Often this family ate only leaf tips from a hedge surrounding
their rental room, though they lived rent-free as the room belonged to a relative. One of
the children attended French primary school and his fees were paid for by a relative
living in another settlement in Port Vila. In spite of their ‘neediness’, the family
expressed great amusement when asked if life might not be more comfortable in their
home village, explaining that whatever their circumstances, they believed that Blacksands
was their home and satisfied their socio-cultural needs.

Approximately 25% of the households discussed the hardships they faced with putting
food on the table, paying rent, school fees and transport costs. None claimed to have
enough money to meet their needs and 75% admitted to having to borrow money at times
(see Figure 11). Over half of the respondents borrowed from relatives and friends. If the
relatives could not lend the money then the applying household went without. Few people
were eligible for commercial bank loans and borrowing from employers was seen as a
last resort as advances were not readily obtained. Seventh Day Adventists (SDA) and
NTM churchgoers tended to borrow from the Church. For example, Armandine Mabo
(41, from Pentecost) was a widow with five children and the NTM Church assisted by
giving her food, and sometimes cash. She paid this back with her weekly tithe and by
cleaning the church grounds and building.

There were a small number of households who deposited money in savings accounts with
the commercial banks when they could afford to. If we have some money left after paying
rent we use it to buy clothes and some food treats and the rest goes into our savings
account at ANZ. I have a small oven in which I cook pizza and fish and sell it to people
living around here for extra money. I learned how to make pizza when I worked in a hotel. (John Gislanpo, 26 from Banks Islands). Ben Tamas (44, from Tanna) explained that when there were fewer bills to pay, they put some money in a savings account at the National Bank of Vanuatu or bought clothes, music tapes or went to watch a film. The savings account was used to pay school fees, used for improvements on the house and for emergencies like bringing a sick relative from the island to the hospital by plane.

As the following chapter will reveal, a number of households (40%) supplemented cash incomes with subsistence food gardens. However, expenditure surveys in Vanuatu (1983, 1997) have indicated that particular consumption patterns may prevent adequate nutrition with clear indications that nutritional and health status is often worse in urban areas. Meat of any kind was a once-a-week affair for many Blacksands families, partly due to cost and partly due to inadequate storage facilities and the proximity of shops selling fresh meat. I tend to buy timmed fish at the stores on the way home from work. The stores here in Blacksands are much more expensive. Fresh meat is cheaper, but there is no store on the way home that sells meat (Melena John, 37 from Tanna). In spite of having access to gardens, households needed cash for necessities such as food, transport, school fees, books and uniforms, as well as traditional and other obligations and that cash incomes were sometimes inadequate.

All the households listed the three highest monthly expenses as rent, food and transport (replaced by school fees at the beginning of each school term). Many households reduced the number of meals and the size of servings when money was short. Women in particular were vocal about the ‘wasting’ of money by husbands on alcohol, cigarettes and kava. Households with the most diverse income sources (including remittances)
usually fared better than those with only one source. For example, the household of Obed Butal (50, from Tanna) was one of the largest with 11 members. Of these, six were in paid employment, four were students and one was unemployed. The family was happy with their current living conditions and did not complain about the difficulties of paying rent, school fees or transport costs. On the other hand, Navong Robertson’s (31, from Ambrym) nuclear household of four was obviously having difficulties making ends meet. Navong was involved in the VMF ‘stand-down’ group in 1998 and was suspended without pay. His wife Wendy did not work and they had two children (one of school age). Wendy was anxious about paying land rent but indicated that although her Paamese family was helping with food and cash on occasion they were annoyed that her husband could not provide for his own family.

Studies in the urban Pacific have often referred to a traditional ‘urban safety net’ (Monsell-Davis 1993, Hezel 1989) of the extended family or wantok system. That is, in times of need, urban relatives can always be expected to assist either in terms of cash, and the provision of shelter and/or meals. However, kin-support has its benefits and disadvantages. Blacksands residents observed that having to support relative(s) in addition to their own family (including sending remittances to relatives in the village) tended to be a burden, especially if the relative contributed little to the household. The "subsistence safety-nets" had declined in significance parallel to the length of residence in town. The family on the island and extended family here in Vila always think they can just come and stay whenever they want. We had a nephew who always came to the house at meal times and then left until it was time to eat again. I started cooking only enough food for the children and we started to eat earlier. He stopped coming after a while. The
extended family needs to understand that straight family comes first in the town (Winnie Moses, 44 from Paama).

Incomes are increasingly important for food, clothes or school fees and emphasis was clearly placed on looking after the nuclear (‘straight’) family’s needs before considering the needs of the extended family and family in the village. Vanuatu has no welfare services and most families must therefore look after each other. The accreted members of urban extended households tended to be more distantly related to the household head or spouse than in rural areas (Monsell-Davis 1998) thereby increasing the number of people a household had to look after, no matter how distant or vague the relation. However, there was increasing exasperation in having to support young males in particular who contributed nothing to households and played on traditional obligations in order to have somewhere to sleep and eat. Many of the families in Blacksands were supportive of the idea of sending the long-term unemployed youth back to the village. It is better that the unemployed young people go to the village and learn how to work and respect people; then, if they are ready, they can come back to Vila and get a job and look after themselves instead of dragging their relatives down (Jimmy Tenkon 45, from Ambrym).

There were no visible signs of poverty in Blacksands save for one household discussed earlier. That is, there were no visible signs of households that were absolutely poor and did not have enough food or clean water or access to a decent house or to basic education or access to the basic needs which society might consider “normal”. There were households that were obviously finding it difficult to make rental payments and to pay school fees and buy food for the family but they still had access to basic needs such as water, shelter and (free) health services. Nor were they socially excluded from urban life
(social institutions, employment, voting etc.) but were active participants (see Chapter Six). Perhaps the real disadvantage in Blacksands was the lack of opportunity to improve the living standards of the households through access to education and employment – and the sense that many households and individuals were simply biding time in the hope that something might turn up.

**BLACKSAND'S ROLE IN VILA'S URBAN ECONOMY**

Despite the significance of urban employment and unemployment and the concentration of public and private sector formal and informal activities in the towns, there are virtually no data on the particular significance of the urban economies and their relationship to national and regional development. Where there is information, much of it is outdated. As the largest informal settlement on Port Vila’s periphery, Blacksands holds a large component of a potential labour force, some 74% of the residents of the economically active age group being in paid employment in Port Vila. They were integrated into the urban economy through the marketing of fresh produce in town, the making of handicrafts and furniture but, most importantly, through wage labour in town. Their contribution to the urban economy was thus considerable.

Over time, urban households have become more dependent on the cash economy (partly because of the declining availability of urban land and growing pressure on coastal marine resources). In Vanuatu a high proportion of the incomes of the urban poor generally goes into food and rent (Bryant 1993:38). Blacksands residents, like other Port Vila residents, spent a considerable part of their cash income on urban services (in particular transport). In fact, all households unanimously declared their three highest
monthly expenses were rent, food and transport. It was clear that many households had enjoyed more comfortable financial times in which they were able to afford new roofing for their homes, construction materials to build rental rooms, purchase televisions and generators and to buy and operate public transport buses. Today, few families claim to have any savings at all, and as one mother put it, “today, if we try and save our money someone is going to starve” (Annie Tenkon, 44 from Ambrym). The challenges of obtaining adequate urban employment have thus increased, as observed in the visual and anecdotal evidence in the growing numbers of unemployed in Blacksands. Blacksands household economics showed considerable diversity ranging from the very poor to the very comfortable. Pastor Japheth Bule (38, from Pentecost) had an estimated monthly income in excess of VT160,000. His family was well dressed, well fed, housed in a solid, comfortable building and all the children were in school. At the other end of the scale, Stephen Tabi (28, from Pentecost) worked long hours in a garage for VT61 an hour, that is, a monthly income of VT8,540 (well below the minimum wage) and 58% of his salary was spent on rent. His wife did not work and the children did not go to school. Then there is the Tannese household that did not earn any cash income and were housed by relatives. The situation of Stephen Tabi may be more typical that that of Japheth Bule, yet the diversity emphasizes that generalizations about employment and incomes in peri-urban settlements are difficult to sustain.

Rising unemployment among youth reflects slow economic growth, insufficient education and training, and a mismatch between the skills taught by the education system and those needed on the labour market. Blacksands residents, like other urban residents, are affected by downturns in the national economy, but had found means to survive by
obtaining multiple jobs, enforcing strict household budgets and learning to give less in traditional obligations if their own families were to be fed and housed adequately. Living in Blacksands was thus, for many, about surviving rather than prospering in the city.
Chapter Five
Blacksands - Social Infrastructure

The aim of this chapter is to examine the social infrastructure (housing, gardens, health, education, sanitation, and transport) within Blacksands and the adequacy of current facilities, services and social organization among households to meet their needs. The rise of squatter and informal settlements, coupled with a rapid population growth emphasizes the need for planners to acquire information about these settlements and to consider ways of improving infrastructure necessary to meet housing, educational, health and employment needs. Moreover the Urban Infrastructure Project preparatory report (Hydroplan 1994) has stated that the rapid growth of the urban population had strained the delivery of urban social services and the existing infrastructure in the urban areas in Vanuatu. It might then be expected that social infrastructure in Blacksands would be inadequate.

The squatter and informal settlements in and around Port Vila are marked by the lack of basic utilities and services. The housing conditions in the urban areas exhibited wide contrast from high standard bungalows to shanty dwellings in overcrowded areas with the level of facilities varying accordingly. Informal settlements are often caricatured by an inherent lack of access to basic services such as clean water, waste disposal systems (sanitation), education and health services. From the outside, the typical informal settlement appears to some as a place that is filthy, congested and a hive of undesirable, unemployed layabouts. The houses look precarious at best and are built in a haphazard manner. There is little evidence of a potable water supply and when it rains these
settlements are a flooded mud pool. To what extent this is true of Blacksands can now be considered.

**HOUSING**

Housing shortages are not a new issue in Melanesian towns, such as Port Vila (Bedford 1973; Bonnemaison 1977, Connell 1985, Paul 1993). The extended family and the kinship group have traditionally catered for housing of most urban migrants, which has resulted in many crowded households in Vila and the settlements. Traditional landowners have been unable or unwilling to mobilize the resources required to subdivide and develop the land to meet growing housing demand, generally preferring instead to enter into informal arrangements (World Bank, forthcoming). However, these informal arrangements have led to the emergence of a class of informal landlord able to exploit the lack of affordable shelter to poor people dependent on irregular, informal employment.

The 1987 draft physical plan for Port Vila stated that the “inhabitants of poor housing areas have very little individual scope for improving their immediate conditions. For those living illegally on land, the absence of security of tenure gives no incentive to undertake self-help or improvement schemes. For those in rented or sub-let accommodation, there is little incentive to improve conditions as it is merely likely to result in higher rents being asked” (Port Vila Municipal Council 1987:40). The Vanuatu Government (1996) concurs that most housing in Port Vila is sub-standard, with dwelling sizes being too small, construction not being cyclone resistant, and lacking potable water, sanitation facilities and other services. The formal sector of the urban housing market
also faces similar problems, particularly in finding suitable land for housing development and the lack of housing that is affordable for the average income earner.

In the surveyed area of Blacksands, 36% of houses (including rental rooms) were classified as permanent, that is, of cement (concrete foundation), finished timber, galvanised iron roofing and modified custom building materials (see Figure 12). Temporary housing was built with low-cost materials (that were easily disassembled and relocated) and often in resourceful ways (e.g. old commercial deep freeezes being used as water tanks and baths). Some 35% of the surveyed population owned their homes and had also constructed them. The majority of homes were small and consisted of shared sleeping areas (an average of two bedrooms per single, detached house) a general living area, and an outside kitchen and bathroom. The houses constructed from galvanised iron sheeting were extremely hot in the summer months. Some of the housing, especially the rental houses, was of poor quality, many even failing to keep out the rain.

Of the 35% of the home owning residents, the males in the household had built the house with assistance from relatives and in some cases, church members. Most of the men (all aged over 35 years) had some experience in construction and were more likely to have spoken to a friend or relative more skilled in construction for assistance rather than to a building construction company. Building companies were too expensive for most households who had to put their money into acquiring materials rather than accessing professional expertise. Timber, corrugated iron sheeting, plywood and cement were the building materials that were bought from other ni-Vanuatu in town or salvaged from business storage sites in town. One of the greatest building difficulties throughout Vanuatu is the lack of affordable construction materials.
House sales were becoming more common in Blacksands. In 1998 and 1999 with the onset of the restructuring of the public service, a very small number of families (5%) living in the area, decided to take advantage of the redundancy packages, sell their homes in Blacksands and return to their island of origin (some may have returned to Vila to live, not in Blacksands but in other settlements). The homes that were sold were of a permanent structure. The cost of the transfer of ownership is not known, as the new homeowners were reluctant to disclose the amount of money spent on their home.

Blacksands, like other informal settlements in and around Port Vila, suffers from a lack of clear land title registration, which acts as a disincentive to the customary owners in accepting permanent housing structures built by the tenants. Turner (1972) postulated a positive relationship between security of tenure and quality of housing in peripheral settlements. This is reflected in Blacksands where the homes of the longer-term residents, who had gained permission from the landowner to build permanent homes although they did not have a formal (Ministry of Lands approved) land lease, were superior to those of newer residents. Charley Robert (43, from Tongoa) has been resident in Blacksands since 1991 and obtained permission to construct two permanent residential buildings that were completed in 1998.

All the houses in Blacksands had a traditional or "bush" kitchen, that is the main cooking and eating area of the household. This was little different from ni-Vanuatu living in formal housing areas. Rodman made the passing observation of Vanuatu urban life: "I was struck by the fondness of relatively affluent urban islanders for building and using
PHOTO 5A: Charley Robert’s house (a permanent, modern building) in Blacksands. The house has a concrete floor, cement block walls and galvanized iron roofing with guttering. There are louvers and curtains in the window and a colourful mural is painted on the walls.

PHOTO 5B: Rental housing in Blacksands – each window marks a single room. Some windows are simply holes in the wall with no shutters, flyscreen or curtains.
PHOTO 5C: Traditional housing in Blacksands. The roof and walls of the house are made from traditional *natangora* thatch and woven coconut leaves supported by bamboo posts. This house accommodated a young, single man from the island of Tanna.

PHOTO 5D: Temporary housing in Blacksands.
detached thatched kitchens with earthen floors. The modern kitchen inside a conventional suburban bungalow supplemented the exterior “bush” kitchen, but could not compete with it for “comfort” as measured by a cool physical temperature and warm social atmosphere” (Rodman 1997:233). This ‘fondness’ for bush kitchens, in Blacksands was, in reality, the only kitchen people could afford. It required minimal cooking utensils (pots and pans), it was cheap and relatively easy to obtain firewood as fuel, and the food prepared was simple and affordable. However, such kitchens are a respiratory health hazard and on cool days Blacksands was completely obliterated by thick clouds of smoke in the early morning and evening.

![Figure 12: Housing Categories for Surveyed Area](image)

Homes were sparsely furnished. Furniture varied from plastic garden furniture (possibly stolen as it was not readily available and was expensive in the Vila shops) to ad hoc pieces of wood that created tables, beds and counters. Most homes had only one table, a few chairs and sometimes, large chemical containers were utilized as stools. The earth floors were covered with gravel or sand (to keep it dry) and then with woven pandanus mats. Most houses had open, curtainless windows cut into galvanised iron sheeting walls.
sometimes with wooden shutters. The permanent homes had louvres but no flyscreen.

Each building had a simple padlock bolt on the wooden doors but, because of the heat, the doors were often kept open with a curtain concealing those inside. Often, a half-metre high piece of board had been placed across the bottom of the doorframe to prevent dogs, cats and rats from entering the home.

The ablution facilities were basic. Each yard had a pit latrine that was often located near to the house due to the lack of space. Some of the more enterprising households had constructed VIP pit latrines that had better ventilation and sanitation than standard pit latrines. The rental yards catered for about five households per one pit latrine or, on average, 25 people to one toilet. Bathing facilities were not always apparent. Several household members explained that a swim in the river or the sea would often suffice for a shower. Otherwise, a small hut constructed from coconut fronds and bamboo was used for privacy for a bucket bath. Water was drawn from the yard well. People in a rental yard tended to construct these huts with heavy black PVC covering and gravel or sand on the floor. Again, the norm was around five households to two bathing facilities (one for men, the other for women).

Most of the houses contained mats and carvings from their islands of origin but were even more likely to have a wall clock, a picture of a haloed Jesus or a European soccer team adorning their walls. Traditional decorations were kept for ceremonial events such as weddings and coming-of-age celebrations, while more modern furniture and decoration was preferred as it was easier and cheaper to obtain and was a sign of embracing an urban lifestyle. Rodman and Rensel (1997) noted that furnishings of Pacific Island homes could embody kin and land connections but as the majority of houses in
Blacksands were ‘modern’ and financial resources were limited, this was not apparent in the surveyed homes. However, the bags that women carried usually had woven designs that were unique to certain islands.

Material items ranged from passports for international travel (often with church and sport associations), to generators, televisions and primus stoves. Almost every home (89%) had a radio, torch, kerosene or Coleman lantern and basic carpentry tools (saw, screwdriver etc.). Some 8% of the households had a sewing machine that was used by the women to make personal clothing items, curtains and sometimes, for commercial purposes such as sewing a wedding dress (on request). 16% of the households had a car or bus (all being used as public transport vehicles, and none for personal use), with the remainder of the resident population dependent on public transport and walking. Those few households that had an (operating) generator tended also to have a fridge and television. However, they only used the generator for short periods due to the high cost of fuel. The substantial number of households (41%) that had a primus stove did not always have fuel to operate it hence this figure is slightly misleading as most households continued to favour the open cooking fire for everyday cooking. Once again, as might be expected from the housing and income situation, there was a considerable variation in ownership of goods within the settlement.

A high proportion of people (65%) lived in rented accommodation in Blacksands and paid very high rents (in excess of a third of the household monthly income) for often sub-standard accommodation with inadequate sanitation facilities and insecurity of tenure.
TABLE Nine: Household possessions of surveyed households

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Item</th>
<th>Household (#)</th>
<th>Households (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flashlight (and lamp)</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical goods (radio, TV, CD)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank Accounts</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpentry tools</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primus stove</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pets (dogs, cats, parrots)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gas bottle</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wall clock</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicle (inc. canoe)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musical instrument (guitar)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sewing machine</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animals (chickens, pigs, ducks)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generator</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fridge</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=100 households

Rental facilities included two permanent houses, twelve modified houses and forty-three rooms, all with shared kitchens and ablutions (sometimes as many as 15 people to one toilet). Some 12% of the surveyed population had access to a rental house. Houses were often cheaper to rent than a rental room but preference was given to ‘wantoks’ or to those that had a secure job. Joel Robert (25, from Tongoa) rented a small, two bedroom house from his uncle, Charley Robert for VT10,000 a month. Joel earned a living driving a bus for a relative and his wife was a kindergarten teacher in Vila. *We used to live with my wife’s family at Manples but I didn’t like sharing a house. I asked my uncle if we could rent a room but because we are family, he has let me rent this house at a special family price.*

The ‘rental rooms’ consisted of one room, which was often divided by a large piece of cloth strung on fishing twine to provide separate sleeping areas. There was a differentiation between rental rooms and rental houses as the rental houses, although small and attached tended to have two separate sleeping areas under the one roof and a general living area. For those in rented or sub-let accommodation, there was little
incentive to improve conditions, as this was merely likely to result in higher rents being asked for. Younger families tended to squeeze themselves into the rental rooms. For example, Moana Viandre (29, from Ifira) and Cornelia Kasau (29, from Tanna) were de facto partners with three young children. The family moved to Blacksands from the Malapoa area and, although Moana is an Ifiran he had no access to customary land. Both adults worked in town and paid a neighbour (Leah Ben) to baby-sit their young son and daughter. A rental room was all they could afford. Frank and Hilda Gibson were in their early twenties and recently married. Frank worked shifts at the Melanesian Hotel in Port Vila and Hilda was a housewife and expecting her first child. Frank was the only income earner and much of their income was spent on the VT6,000 rental fee for the room that they lived in.

Single, mixed households (that is, members of a household that were not related to each other) and recent migrants made up 30% of the rental room households. Ham Kowea (29, of Tanna) moved to Vila from Luganville in 1999 and asked his cousin (Alice Kowea) if he could rent a room. She did so grudgingly because he was a relative. Ham’s Chinese girlfriend paid his rent as he did not work. Ham was an unpopular resident who often spent the day drinking and playing loud music. Carmen Bule (28, from Pentecost) worked in a shop in town and explained that she lived in Blacksands as she felt that it was safer as a young, single woman to live in Blacksands than in other settlements in town. Micah James (22, from Tanna) lived with his friend Willy Masaka (20, of Tanna) whom he had met in town. They shared a common interest in music and decided to become independent from their respective families by sharing the rent. Jean-Louis Mael (27, Ambrym) and his wife Judy (22, from Pentecost) rented a room in Blacksands when he
was working. When he did not have a job they moved to Manples to live with Judy’s relatives until Jean-Louis found another job. The landlord, (Martin Langse, 49, from Pentecost) stated that they rented a room from him on four occasions in 1999, usually for 2-month periods, as the cycle was repeated.

In some informal housing areas the proportion of income spent on rent ranges from 45% to 75% of a monthly salary (Royds 1998). This was true of the situation in Blacksands, where the majority of monthly income was spent firstly on rent and then food (although efforts to pay rent varied from household to household). Frank and Hilda Gibson paid VT6,000 a month for their rental room, which was 40% of their monthly income. A number of households in Blacksands were substantially behind in their rental payments – up to two years in some cases. The head of the landowning family argued that he could only continue to ask for rent on a monthly basis, and hoped that those families would try and pay the due whenever possible. He said that he did not have the heart to remove the families from their home. Some of the households that had maintained their rent were unhappy with this leniency towards those households. The landowner lets people who do not keep up with their rent stay. He is too soft-hearted to be a landlord. He should start changing the rental conditions and charge more to those yard owners who have rental homes. That way he can make more money for himself and his family (Annie Tenkon, 44 from Ambrym). Even in the lowest levels of the housing sector attitudes to landlords may be quite benign.

Not one of the surveyed households had a formal residential lease (50 – 75 years) that would allow them ‘ownership’ of the land with payment of annual rental fees to the custom owner. Improved security of tenure was a top priority for the majority of
households who had built their own homes. Some of the Tannese households (38% of the population) firmly believed that paying a monthly fee of VT3,000 for rental of a plot, over a prolonged period of time earned them the right to claim the land as their own. This makes for potentially serious conflicts over land. In the last two to three years Efate landowners have been increasingly concerned to restrict leasing their land, in order to have adequate future land resources remaining for themselves and their families. An additional concern was that if customary landowners were to remove informal settlers they would make themselves liable to pay compensation for their removal or resettlement.

The residents of Blacksands, in particular women, expressed a wish to improve the comfort of their homes and to obtain greater security of tenure. The expense of building materials in Port Vila was a great disincentive for improving housing, as was the lack of ‘ownership’ of the land that the house was on. A few improvements had been made such as the extension of a roof to provide for a shaded outdoor sitting area, additional windows or tarpaulin covering for a leaky roof. *The corrugated sheeting on the house makes it very hot when the sun is strong. I built a small shelter in front of the house for us to have a cool place to sit. It shades the house so it is not so hot anymore. I would do more things if we owned the house but we are only renting.* (John Gislanpo, 26, Banks Islands). Other general improvements to the area were amateur construction of water tanks and improved access footpaths. For those that had made no improvements, which was almost half of the households (45%), financial constraints and/or the rental situation were cited as the main inhibiting factors.
Initially, there seemed to be a general reluctance among the residents to voice their aspirations for improved housing, but some 60% of the households admitted their wish to improve their homes and remain living in Blacksands (so long as it became less densely populated). The ideal home was commonly described as a 3-bedroom house with inside toilet, concrete floor, fly screened windows and a veranda. *I want to have my own house, to build it with cement, to have a strong roof so when the cyclones come I do not have to worry about my things. I want to have my own garden and fence. It would be good if my relatives only visited when I asked them to instead of coming and staying for as long as they want to without being invited.* (Ruth Yares, 17, from Tanna). Ruth's statement is revealing in that aspirations to improvement of personal livelihoods are traditionally limited by the notion that the more you have, the more you are expected to share. This obligation to share is often extended to include third, fourth and fifth cousins and in some cases, to people who are friends of a relative. *I am tired of having to support family that just come when they feel like it. They don't even help in the house or offer to buy tea or bread. There is a young boy staying with us now. He isn't even family, he just told us that his father looked after my husband's brother on Malekula and now he wants us to support him while he does nothing but make trouble in Vila. I am tired of this fashion among young people* (Kaunt Jimmy, 47 from Tanna).

Many of those interviewed expressed a desire to have a more comfortable home (with a sturdy roof, walls and floor) and also the will to refuse the endless line of extended family coming to stay for indefinite periods. The residents all expressed a desire to have a house in Blacksands that provided protection from the elements, had access to safe water and sanitation and provided security of tenure, all at a cost which they could afford.
Blacksands is somewhat unusual in that, although the settlement appeared to be congested and the housing itself overcrowded, the households were predominantly of nuclear families and had similar to, if not less than, national household average numbers (5.4 in the preliminary 1999 National Population Census findings). No obvious island group had a greater tendency to have larger households, as each household was predominantly a nuclear unit (52%) with short-stay visitors. The Tannese exhibited a tendency to dwell in the same yard as their extended family, but they all had separate sleeping and eating areas.

The Hydroplan (1994) identified housing densities as one of the main issues of urban development. According to existing laws (notably the Physical Planning Act 1986) the minimum plot size in town is 1,000 square metres, giving a density of 33 persons per hectare. The study further estimated that reducing the average plot size would increase residential densities to between 55 to 83 persons per hectare but would allow gardening around the house. They predicted that the Malapoa/Blacksands area would see a rapid densification and reach an average net residential area of 80 persons per hectare by 2009. The Blacksands residents expressed concern for the increasing residential densities in the settlement as it implied that they would be less likely to satisfy their housing aspirations in the near future.

**ACCESS TO GARDENS**

Blacksands is a reasonably low-density, verdant settlement when compared to other informal settlements closer to Vila such as Seaside which is crammed onto a small pocket of land. As Blacksands has better access to the sea, a river and more open land than other
settlements, it projects a healthier and more spacious environment. Urban gardens were prevalent along the roadside and beside and behind houses. In Vanuatu, a “garden” refers to a plot of land that is utilized for the growing of fruit and vegetables either for subsistence or small-scale cash cropping. The availability of land in and around Port Vila allows for some small-scale subsistence gardening, which fluctuates in its significance depending on the individual household or family. Home gardens were much in evidence in Blacksands and provided a green landscape. Such urban home gardens have become a critical part of the urban landscape and as a crucial livelihood strategy for many urban households, in Vila as elsewhere in the Pacific (Overton and Storey 1999:251).

Whilst the majority of urban households in Port Vila engage in some form of subsistence agriculture, this practice is restricted by the shortage of land. It is possible to make arrangements with customary owners for the use of small plots outside the municipal boundary, or to plant a small amount on unused plots, although this is illegal. The Blacksands families that had food gardens grew a wide variety of fruit and vegetables: yam, taro, kumala (sweet potato), manioc, corn, cabbage, banana, pineapple, cucumber and some cash crops such as peanuts and kava. These crops could be grown with existing knowledge and with little input and the variety of crops provides a mostly steady source of food throughout the year. Moreover, as in Papua New Guinea, having a garden made a person feel productive and improved self-esteem in the unemployed (Battaglia 1986:19).

*If my family didn’t have a garden, we would not be able to live in Vila. It is very hard to get a job. Sometimes I am lucky and can make some money driving my cousin’s bus but most of the time we have to depend on the garden and the sea for food.* (Elisei Lukom, 35
from Ambrym). For many households food gardens were a crucial supplement to wage
incomes.

Household food security was an issue for many families, the majority of whom claimed
that the bulk of their cash income was spent on “kaikai” (food) and rent. Some 40% of
the households had access to food gardens. These tended to be households consisting of a
married couple with 2-3 young children. We have a very small garden just 20 metres
from the house. I sought permission from the landowner and when he agreed, my wife
and I cleared the area and planted cabbage, manioc, corn and some other crops. We do
not sell our food, it is just to help with food for the family. (Ben Tamas, 45 from Tanna).
Gaybris Nalau (29, of Malekula) tended the family’s garden by the river Teae, near the
Prima factory bridge. I go to the garden every second day when my husband is working in
town. The garden is important to make sure there is enough food for all of us, especially
the three young ones. We can buy rice but if money is short then we will eat manioc or
taro from the garden. No particular island group dominated access to land for gardening
as those engaged in subsistence farming tended to be families with young children or
with many children regardless of their island of origin.

Yard owners were least likely to be interested in gardens, given their financial security in
obtaining income from rental rooms, (another indication of their embrace of an urban
livelihood). I don’t have time to look after a garden. Everyone in this house works so if
we want island food we have to buy it at the market, unless the family on the island sends
us something (Jack Bob, 40 from Tanna). Others simply did not have the family
connection or money to gain access to land for gardening. There was a particular lack of
interest among the young and single-person households, as they appeared to be more

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transient than the 'older' families. They were also more likely to express distaste for 'manual' labour. *My extended family has a garden at Teouma. The last time I went to the garden was six months ago. I work 6 days a week and sometimes I work at night so it is hard to find the time to go to the garden. I'm not really interested in gardening, as we mainly eat rice* (Daniel Ynack, 18 from Tanna). Furthermore, a significant number of 'no comments' in response to discussion of this issue indicate the reluctance to disclose the absence of permission to access land for food crops. More would have food gardens, were this not so difficult.

Many in Blacksands stated that they did not tend subsistence gardens on a regular basis. Some households complained that they had put a lot of effort into planting basic food crops to supplement their food but that others would steal their crops before they had a chance to harvest them. This had resulted in the abandonment of subsistence gardening by many households. John Yamaimai (27 from Tanna) taught at a school at Agathis and his wife, Annalyn was a homemaker looking after their only child (born in Blacksands). Though they expressed an interest in having a small garden to plant basic root crops they stated that they did not have the time to tend the garden and with the high incidence of crop stealing in the area, the effort was not worth their while.

A small number of households (4%) had access to land at Teouma, some 15 kilometres east of the settlement (see Map 4). Other garden areas included the immediate Blacksands/Malapoa area, Freswin, Miliktri and Salili. Backyard gardens had the obvious advantage of convenience and so Blacksands was a preferred gardening site. The families
that gardened in the Miliktri and Salili area (two to three kilometres north of Blacksands) had lived there previously but had been forced out due to flooding by Cyclone Dani in January 1999. Gardeners at Freswin most often had relatives living in the area who informed them of the 'availability' of gardening land.

At Teouma, the Eratap landowners had announced the lease of subdivisions in the mid-1990s and, following discussions with the Chief of the area some of the residents obtained a plot of land for gardening with the aim of gradually developing the land for residential purposes. The security of these leases was uncertain and residents were reluctant to elaborate on their land agreements.

At the moment we have a lease for 4 hectares, which we are trying to increase to 5 at Teouma. We heard that Chief Pakoa (of Eratap) was subdividing land at Teouma and negotiated a price for 4 hectares with another man who has the lease. We are sub-lessees. We want to use the land for market gardening and a house. I haven't been there for 3 years! I have to pay for transport to get there which is around VT3,000 – VT4,000 for a return trip which is too expensive for
us. If we get enough money, we shall go as a family to clear our land. (Annie Tenkon, 44, from Ambrym).

Reports in the local newspapers (1998 to present) have suggested that an increase in demand for land for use by customary landowners, has resulted in the bulldozing of many unauthorized (i.e. permission has not been sought) gardens, following notice in local media three months in advance for their removal. The gardens in the Teouma area have been bulldozed a number of times in the last two years. The area is disputed by the people of Erakor and Eratap and both parties have allowed people from other islands and areas to garden the land to add more credibility to their respective claims as the (rightful) customary landowners. Bob Beyao (40, from Tanna) was a gardener with a small area of land to grow crops for his family’s personal consumption near his work place. He was farming on land that was being used by a large number of Tannese squatting by the Erakor bridge. The Erakor custom owners destroyed their gardens on a regular basis, as they had not sought permission to use the land. Clearly tenure to garden land has become a challenge for many urban residents, and has discouraged many households from attempting to establish gardens.

Other families with access to land at Teouma depended on their garden produce as a source of cash income. Given the high transport costs to reach this land some families had established nephews, cousins and other relatives to live in the garden area where they could tend the crops and limit theft. *I have some land at Teouma that we use for gardening. I plant kava as that makes good money but it also means that people come and steal it before we can harvest it. I have put two of my nephews to live there – just like in the bush, to look after the kava and to chase any thieves* (John Wari, 40 of Tanna).
Those that had access to land for small-scale cash cropping ensured that their family needs were met first before produce was sold.

*We first make sure there is enough food for us before we sell food to people here at Blacksands or in Vila. I have to make sure that I sell enough food to cover the transport costs to Teouma. It costs between VT3,000 and VT4,000 one way to get there in a Hilux. I try to find someone I know well to take me as he only charges VT2,000 one way. The garden is the main source of our food. It is also the only way I can make money at the moment so it is very important to the family.* (Jeffrey Tabi, 36 from Pentecost).

In spite of households having reasonable access to land for gardening, a common complaint was that children lacked a well balanced diet because of the absence of ‘island food’. Malnutrition in urban children, although of a lower prevalence than amongst rural children, is an increasing problem, and the safety net of the extended family, which exists in village communities, is often missing in town (UNICEF 1998). Imported foods are generally cheaper, more accessible and more convenient for the majority of households. Whilst there were no obvious signs of malnourished children in Blacksands, they lacked a consistently healthy diet with all the required nutrients. Most families in Blacksands had one meal a day and just had tea for breakfast. Children would go all day without food unless there was seasonal fruit available or enough money to buy a gâteaux-huit (a pastry) on the way to school. Evening meals consisted primarily of rice, tinned meat or fish and cabbage. Whilst there were no starving households (despite the one very poor household referred to in Chapter Four), general calorie intakes were low and had a low nutrient density, particularly in terms of fibre and protein (WHO 1999:25). However, this
is the case for most urban households in Vanuatu, and not only those in Blacksands and other settlements.

**HEALTH SERVICES**

Environmental factors like water supply, sanitation, housing and climate play a major part, as do social factors like education and the economic situation of families, in the spread of communicable diseases. Families in the Pacific today have better health than in the past following a decline in infectious diseases and improved maternal health care.

There has, however, been a dramatic increase in chronic illness brought about by changes in lifestyles: obesity, cardiovascular problems, cancer and diabetes (Republic of Vanuatu 1996). The Hydroplan (1994) reported that the main causes of morbidity in Port Vila were acute respiratory infections, skin infections and influenza (closely followed by malaria, diarrhoea and injuries). These medical conditions tend to also occur in Blacksands.

Heavy rains throughout the year in Vanuatu in 1998, 1999 and 2000 resulted in the high incidence of water borne diseases in Blacksands. Parasite resistance to anti-malarial drugs, mosquito resistance to sprays and a more mobile population has resulted in the recent rapid spread of malaria around Port Vila. The residents of Blacksands were most likely to suffer from malaria, gastric-flu, food poisoning, malnutrition, meningitis, hepatitis A and respiratory disease. All households had an open (fuelwood) fireplace for cooking, often housed in a small, corrugated, three walled building with no smoke outlet.
PHOTO 6: A subsistence food garden. This is a typical subsistence garden planted near the homes of Blacksands residents. It is difficult to distinguish between ‘bush’ and food crops but there are taro plants in the foreground and manioc (cassava) in the background. Banana trees are scattered throughout the plot.

PHOTO 7: A kava bar in Blacksands. The kava is prepared and served in the small hut and drinkers can then sit outside while they feel the effect or ‘kick’ (kick) of the kava.
In 1995, the CARE Committee established by Blacksands residents with assistance from donor agencies established the CARE Committee to address social needs within the settlement and had as one of its priorities, a local health clinic because the nearest aid post was the nation’s main hospital - Vila Central - and the cost of VT100 to get there. In 1998, the *Kam Pushem Hed* (Come and See) clinic was established at the nearby Wan Smolbag Theatre with a target population of teenagers with STDs and an emphasis on family planning. In spite of the clinic’s attempts to encourage people to visit anonymously, people were still more inclined to visit the central hospital in town or, visit a “kleva” (traditional doctor). *This year, because of the rain I have been sick a lot. I always cough and have headaches. The hospital gave me some tablets and told me to rest for 3 days. I am a housegirl and if I don’t go to work they will find someone else to work for them so I went to a Tanna kleva and she gave me a leaf drink and now I feel good* (Marie Alick, 36 from Tanna). Access to health care is thus difficult within Blacksands despite the existence of traditional practitioners, who may be beneficial for a limited range of medical situations.

The most common complaint from mothers was of infantile diarrhoea and their inability to provide adequate food for their children. Ciguatera fish poisoning (caused by ingestion of marine toxins) was common, especially among the families that fished on the reef directly adjacent to Blacksands. Colds, coughs, influenza and aching joints were also common occurrences. However, none of the households indicated that illness or injury had prevented them from working for more than three days at a time. Women and young men appeared prone to bruises and injuries but for different reasons. Some of the women were victims of domestic violence, and even some men complained that they had been
beaten by drunken youths on occasion. Young men themselves tended to get into brawls when hanging out in town, going to nightclubs or getting drunk. These drunken brawls can often result in ‘accidental deaths’ a growing urban health statistic (personal communication, Ministry of Health, 2000). Residents recalled an incident in 1996 when a young Tannese boy was murdered in Blacksands as he attended a wedding reception hosted within the survey site. A group of drunken men beat the boy, who died from the injuries he sustained. More recently (September 2000) a 37 year old Paamese women doused herself in kerosene and fatally burnt herself after a violent argument with her husband. Health problems are as much a result of social conditions as of medical conditions.

Smoking and drinking kava and/or alcohol were predominantly male phenomena; women are not expected to partake in these activities. However, it has become increasingly acceptable for some women to drink kava in the numerous kava bars scattered around town, and there were four kava bars within the survey site. Kava drinking (a traditional drink made from the roots of a pepper plant, piper methystiain) had become an important social activity (60% of respondents). Kava is drunk in the early evening on an empty stomach and is often viewed as a better and more sociable alternative to alcohol. When men were drunk on alcohol, women and other household members were more likely to be beaten, yet kava can be addictive, with some men spending VT1,000 a night on it. This often amounted to 20% or more of a household’s monthly income. Smoking was enjoyed by the majority of males but intermittently because of the cost of cigarettes.

Household incomes were largely spent on rent and food. As discussed above general diets in Blacksands lacked a healthy calorie and nutrient intake. Diets were nutritionally
inferior and high in refined oils, fats, salt and sugar, and often resulted in ill health.

Under-nutrition (particularly in Vitamin A and iron) was a major factor in the poor health of children and some women. These general findings, although not conclusive, reflect the generally poor standards of nutrition throughout Vanuatu and the increasing problem of food security in urban centres. Blacksands residents like the general population of Port Vila, had restricted opportunities to enjoy good health, being limited by the quality of health services available to them, the upsurge of infectious and vector borne diseases and the growing incidence of non-communicable and ‘lifestyle’ diseases, such as diabetes and hypertension (UNDP 1999:58)

The location of Blacksands on the urban periphery meant that it was excluded from a number of rural health programmes that previously included breastfeeding promotion, water supply and sanitation and malaria and vector borne disease control programs. More recently, though, Blacksands was included in the national campaign for the eradication of filariasis, which saw the vaccination of all people aged between 5 and 60 years. In general, however there was considerable neglect of people in settlements, as the geographical boundaries were blurred with neither municipal nor provincial authorities wishing to claim administrative responsibility. The Department of Health came here once to talk about sanitation, clean water, disease and things like that. We wanted to ask them lots of questions and receive advice about the well water here but they didn’t want to talk to us. What is the point of coming once every two years and leaving one poster? (John Gislanpo, 26 from Banks Islands). In this sense, as in several others, settlements are marginal to the formal urban situation, where adequate health provision is also sometimes inadequate.
In Vanuatu as a whole, only one-quarter to one-third of the estimated number of child
deaths are reported and there are then insufficient details (UNICEF 1991). The need for
improved health data in Vanuatu is an on-going issue and it is certainly inadequate in
Blacksands. Perhaps what is needed most in settlements such as Blacksands is practical
workshops on improving environmental health (especially in the case of well water and
pit latrines) and nutrition intake and improved access to basic health services.

Nonetheless, in spite of the complaints about the available health services, residents
believed that they were in a better position than people in rural villages, as the central
hospital was readily accessible (at a small cost), as were drugs and dressings.

EDUCATION SERVICES

In Vanuatu, the education system provides for six years of primary education, four years
of junior secondary school and two to three years of senior secondary education. English
and French are the media of instruction. In Vanuatu access to education is only slightly
better than it was 10 years ago, with 80% of ni-Vanuatu children receiving some formal
education, but the quality and relevance of education remain significant issues (UNICEF
1998). At the national level the vast majority of children do not progress further than
primary education, and only a minority of those that continue actually complete
secondary schooling. This situation is made worse by the economic situation affecting
many families, who cannot raise the school fees required for education. School fees range
from VT18,000 per child per year in a government owned primary school (often
overcrowded) to VT75,000 per child per year in a private school.
It is often assumed that residents of informal settlements are uneducated, illiterate and uninterested in being “educated”. The level of education attained among the residents of Blacksands is quite varied. Two members of one household had attended a college of higher learning (in Australia) which was the pinnacle of education achievement. Some 13.9% (see Figure 14A) had progressed to senior secondary school or the local technical school (though many did not complete their studies due to an inability to pay school fees). Some 19.3% had attended junior secondary school with 57% having attended primary school for 4 - 6 years. These statistics do not differ from the national situation, which is a function of limited places in schools and reduced ability to afford ever-increasing school fees. The current government, like many of its predecessors, has sought to increase the proportion of children who attend school and to extend education through to late adolescence. However, these aims are severely limited by the cost of financing additional school places and maintaining and improving the quality of education (Republic of Vanuatu 1992a).

The older generation (30 years and over) had attended primary school in their home islands. Location and institution (church or governing power) determined the language of instruction (English or French). Blacksands parents preferred their children to be educated in English, believing there were more opportunities for (further) education and employment if instructed in that language. Some 66% of the children still in school were enrolled in an English institution. This preference, however, was influenced by the limited choice parents had in selecting schools. A recent trend by the Ministry of Education to promote the teaching of children in their vernacular was not supported by the parents, who believed the children could learn their ‘island language’ at home.
FIGURE 14C: Female Education Levels

n = 116

FIGURE 14D: Children in School

n = 175
Vocational schools included a number of Bible Colleges, the Vanuatu Teachers Training College, the Vanuatu Nursing School and the *Institut National de Technologie* (INTV), a technical (government) school that teaches practical skills in carpentry, electrics, mechanics, hospitality and accounting. Senior secondary, tertiary and vocational education is available only in the urban centres with few exceptions. Males (19% of total males) who had had vocational training were predominantly pastors, whilst the younger males had attended INTV for courses in carpentry, hospitality and mechanics. Only 3.9% of the females had attended technical or vocational schools and primarily in the health and domestic economics fields. The Rural Development Training Centres in the outer islands had provided some of the residents with sewing and carpentry skills.

There was some prevalence for more males to attend school than females in that school fees were always secured first for the male children and then for females. The difficulties in paying school fees were stressed by all households that had children of school age (5-18 years).

*I have three children who go to school. That means we have to pay VT$7,000 three times a year for them to go to school and pay for the uniform, books and pencils. At least we don’t have to pay for transport, as the school is close enough for them to walk to.*

(Winnie Moses 44, from Paama). Other families had more difficulty in meeting school fee payments. *I passed my exams in Year 10 to go to the Lycée here in Vila but my family couldn’t pay my school fees so I left in school in July. If you are late paying school fees here, they don’t let you come back until you have paid. I want to be a nurse and maybe next year I shall try and apply to the nursing school* (Ruth Yares, 17 from Tanna).
PHOTOS 8A and 8B: Sorovanga SDA School students. The children are on their way home after a day at school. Some of these students live in Blacksands whilst others will walk several kilometres home to other settlements such as Freswin.
Educational costs were also cited as a general reason for remittances. Some households were responsible not only for their own children’s school fees, but also for those of extended family in the home islands who had sent their children to Vila for school. However, there appeared also to be a trend for some Blacksands parents (6.5% - see Figure 14D) to send their children to the islands for school (6.5%), as there was a greater chance of securing a place in a primary school in the islands than in the schools in Vila.

*My eldest son and daughter go to school on Pentecost because it is cheaper. We tried to find a place for them in school in Vila but everywhere was full. They live with my sister-in-law and come home for holidays if there is a boat from Pentecost to Vila* (Rose Tabi, 30 from Banks Islands). This lack of space in schools was further reflected in the fact that two-thirds (67%) of the students attended private schools, particularly primary schools. Sam Tekavou (36, from Tanna) had four children attending four different schools. His eldest daughter Alice (16) attended NTM secondary school, James (14) went to Mele Primary School 10 km away, Johnny (7) attended the Blacksands Presbyterian school and Steven (5) was enrolled at the SDA Sorovanga kindergarten, also in Blacksands.

There was a mixed response from Blacksands households over the importance of education. Many families stressed that they remained in town for their children’s education and worked hard to earn the school fees.

*My husband does not work and so I clean, cook and garden for other people to make sure that Mahit and Maurice can go to Presbyterian School here at Blacksands. I want them to go to secondary school so that they can get a job in an office, but even if they pass their exams, I don’t know how we will be able to*
afford the fees. Maybe the church and family will help us, we shall see (Oriva Avock, 28 from Paama).

On the other hand, some families placed little emphasis on education. Pastor Benson Gislanpo (38, from Banks Islands) had four children aged between 6 and 14 years but none attended school. *I am waiting to get assigned to a new congregation so it will be a waste of time to put the children to school and then have to move. If I pay for them to go to school here and we move, then I will have to pay school fees all over again at a different school.* When queried what would happen if he was assigned a congregation within Vila Pastor Benson stated that it did not matter if the children missed as much as a year of school as they could repeat classes. A year later, the family was still in Blacksands and the children were still not in school. More than a third (36%) of the children did not attend school at all. The majority were too young to attend school, but for those aged over 5 years, the reasons for non-attendance included a lack of spaces in school, inadequate funds and a general lack of interest in education by the parents.

In recognition of the lack of educational facilities in Port Vila, the Presbyterian Church established a primary school in Blacksands in 1994. Shortly afterwards, the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) church created the Sorovanga Primary School in north Blacksands which caters for 350 students from kindergarten to Year 7. The SDA school had a smart burgundy uniform and fees cost VT18,000 per term for Kindergarten and VT19,000 per term for primary school. There are three terms per school year in Vanuatu, which would amount to VT57,000 per year per child. However, these schools were favoured by parents in Blacksands because of their proximity and therefore, the absence of transport costs.
Twenty years ago access to educational facilities was identified as a principal advantage for migrants to the urban area (Bastin 1980, Bedford 1973). In Blacksands, approximately 7% of the population had moved to Vila for educational purposes. Most had already secured places in local secondary schools, while the remainder anticipated acceptance to INTV and other vocational schools for certain courses. Most households insisted that education was a priority for the children in order to improve their employment opportunities, whilst a few isolated cases dismissed education as they believed it no longer offered a guarantee of employment or the opportunity to improve one’s standard of living. The latter view tended to be voiced by the more financially disadvantaged families, those that more often than not had received little or no education themselves.

The residents of Blacksands displayed similar levels of education to those of the general Vila population and experienced the same constraints of availability of school places and difficulties in maintaining school fees, though their income levels made access to education particularly difficult. In spite of education not necessarily guaranteeing employment many young people not in school (15-19 years) expressed a wish to still be there to learn skills that they considered would place them in a better position to obtain wage employment. Improved access to education at primary and secondary level, to ensure an appropriate curriculum of good quality to provide better livelihood opportunities for an otherwise frustrated, dissatisfied and rapidly growing young population, is therefore crucial.
SANITATION, SOLID WASTE, UTILITIES AND TRANSPORT

Evidence abounds of less-than-adequate investment in service provision in many key areas: water supplies, sewage facilities and environmental management (garbage disposal) in Vila itself and in settlements such as Blacksands. Waste disposal is the responsibility of the Port Vila municipality but this service does not extend to peripheral settlements such as Blacksands. The municipality serves only those areas from which they receive property taxes, with fees for garbage collection already included. (These fees are VT12,000 a year for residential properties and between VT120,000 and VT180,000 for businesses and hotels). The service schedule in Vila is unreliable at times, as the municipality lacks the financial and technical resources to maintain and replace the collection vehicles, equipment and maintain facilities, or to formulate and enforce policies relating to the disposal of toxic wastes, waste minimization, and recycling.

SHEFA Province has recently requested funding for its own collection equipment even though it has no capability to provide such a service. It has been strongly recommended (Royds 1998) that consideration be given to contracting out solid waste services to Port Vila municipality, or to establishing institutional arrangements such as a joint board to provide waste management services throughout greater Port Vila (to include the settlements).

In Blacksands, each household is responsible for its own waste disposal. Household waste was often collected and burned in a hole designated for waste within the yard. Given that there is little space available, waste disposal pits were often located near the pit latrine, the well or the house itself. Often rubbish was simply piled on the grass
PHOTO 9A: Rubbish heap in Blacksands. Several households have used this space near a footpath to pile household and garden waste. These rubbish heaps are burned when they are dry enough to be lit.

PHOTO 9B: A typical toilet in Blacksands – a pit latrine with ill-fitting galvanized iron-sheeting walls.
surface and burned. The widespread use of plastic, glass, metal, oil products and chemicals had resulted in a situation where traditional methods of waste disposal (burying, burning, simple discarding) were no longer appropriate. Poorly selected and managed rubbish disposal sites threaten to cause pollution to valuable water resources and pose health risks. Attempts to burn rubbish (tins, plastics, bottles) in Blacksands were ineffective with the continuous heavy rainfall and large mounds of rubbish in Blacksands had become a common sight, with attendant health risks.

Until recently, there was little information on the amount of waste (and the type of waste) generated per household per year in urban areas. In 1999 the Solid Waste Characterization Management Study (sponsored by the European Union) was launched in Port Vila under the joint cooperation of the Municipal and the Environment Unit. This study ascertained that on average each person generated 0.65kg of waste per day and asserted that this was likely to increase with growing consumption levels and a lack of recycling of non-biodegradable materials. Although that information was being used to develop a waste management plan for Port Vila it did not accommodate urban residents dwelling beyond the municipal boundaries. In Blacksands, judging by the content of the rubbish heaps, household wastes consisted mainly of tin, plastic, and biodegradable foodstuffs. There was some limited evidence of recycling of bottles and other containers for use in the kitchen and garden with glass and plastic bottles being used for water storage and/or storing rice and flour.

The pollution of groundwater and access to a clean piped water supply were of the highest concern for Blacksands residents. They were fully aware that the lack of appropriate sanitation could and has caused outbreaks of gastric illness and malaria.

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There were no flush toilets in the surveyed area of Blacksands, only pit latrines. Pit latrines consisted of a hole in the ground (2 metres deep), which was usually covered by a raised, wooden platform with a hole in the middle. A structure closely resembling a flush toilet was found in the yard of an enterprising man from Paama. He had built a VIP (Ventilation Improved Pit Latrine) toilet and installed a porcelain toilet bowl with a bucket of water for the ‘flush’. He had constructed the toilet in anticipation of piped water five years previously. Each yard had one or two pit latrines that were constructed by male members of the household. These latrines filled within a year (depending on the number of households using the facility) which then had to be filled and a new site located and dug. A number of the yards were running out of previously unused space for new latrines which was causing some concerns amongst the landlords and the customary landowner.

Residents who were in rental accommodation were generally dissatisfied with the sanitation facilities and many complained of the smell of the latrines that filled quickly due to the high incidence of usage. Some suggested that the number of pit latrines be increased but this gave rise to a demand for more land, which was simply not available. As security of tenure is lacking, few households were willing to invest in improved washing facilities. The majority of residents (56%) expressed a wish to have a flush toilet but were concerned about its affordability. *I have a flush toilet ready to use, all we need now is a piped water supply. I am worried though that if we have piped water, we will have to pay for this which means it will be expensive to flush the toilet* (Moses Maki, 46 from Paama).
Port Vila's water is supplied from an aquifer but urban residential expansion is taking place within the water catchment areas and the Hydroplan report (1994) indicated that discharge of untreated human and non-domestic wastewater had contaminated the water sources. In Blacksands, the main source of water for households was from wells, of which there were one or two in each yard. Some yards averaged six people per well, whilst others had as high as 42 people using the same well. These wells were open and not protected from insects or birds entering. Water was collected with a bucket (or any available plastic container) attached to a length of rope lowered into the well by hand. Well water was used primarily for cooking and drinking needs. Some houses had rainwater tanks distributed by politicians at election time, whilst others used old bulk chemical containers, freezers and whatever was available to store water. Water storage was an issue with households expressing great difficulty in keeping rainwater safe from mosquitoes and flies. One family was actually using an old deep freeze (uncovered) as water storage for drinking, washing and cooking purposes. The river that runs through Blacksands was often used for bathing and laundry and is also used for similar purposes further upstream by the Freswin residents.

In March 1999, a proposed project to install electricity and water in the areas of Manples, Malapoa and Blacksands came to a halt when the government and UNELCO (a private company that has managed the urban water supply since 1994) refused to pay compensation for the use of the land. A year later, there was still no sign of a piped water system in the area. UNELCO's installation of water and power supply in the peri-urban areas of Port Vila was restricted by the difficulty in obtaining essential easements on
PHOTO 10A: Blacksands water tank. The well is pictured to the far right of the photograph. The red bucket is lowered manually into the well for the collection of water for cooking and drinking purposes.

PHOTO 10 B: Tagabe River. The river flows through Freswin and Tagabe settlements before reaching Blacksands. The residents of Blacksands use this river for laundry, bathing and recreational purposes.
customary land to provide services to informal peri-urban communities. A problem of unequal access to water services has emerged due to customary landownership issues. This needs to be urgently addressed by the Government in order to respond to growing levels of water consumption and the need to minimize public health risks that could also damage the country’s image as a tourism destination (World Bank, forthcoming). *We have many needs but the first is to have a better water supply. The water is okay at the moment but I am worried that the toilets are too close to the wells and too many people here.* (Jeffrey Tabi, 36 from Pentecost). The high connection fees and tariffs for water and electricity imposed by UNELCO limit their affordability for lower-income families. *Water and electricity would be nice to have but we cannot really afford it.* (Annie Tenkon, 44 from Ambrym).

Electricity was not of high concern among the settlement residents. Kerosene and Coleman lamps and candles were the main sources of power, save for 5% of the surveyed population with generators. However, as the Olympic games in Sydney drew near, there was an added interest in obtaining power in order to watch the television coverage but the lack of financial ability of Blacksands residents’ restricted their access not only to television sets, but also a power supply. The Blacksands population had to be satisfied by paying VT50 each to watch the Olympics coverage in social clubs in town. The Energy Unit (a government agency) has tested a number of cost effective reliable energy sources for areas not serviced by UNELCO but have not considered informal settlements as a potential recipient area, hence Blacksands will not benefit. Residents were interested in having some form of lighting along the pathways to assist people (for example, shift workers) finding their way home in the dark and also along the main road leading into the...
settlement. Women in particular were keen to have some form of lighting, believing that they would be safer with well-lit pathways when on their way home late from work.

Blacksands residents also expressed an interest in having access to a public pay phone. In 1995, the CARE Committee approached TVL (Telecom Vanuatu) with a request for the installation of a payphone after the community agreed to meet the costs. However, the quote of VT400,000 proved too high and, as no subsidy was offered, the project collapsed. TVL allegedly expressed a reluctance to install a telephone, stating that the (unfounded) risk of vandalism of the phones in the area was too high for such an investment. This incident reinforces the unfounded assumptions that urban residents make of settlement residents as habitats of the unemployed and criminals.

Urban expansion areas such as Blacksands still have no defined road grid apart from a main access road. Informal tracks such as footpaths had been enlarged to allow vehicles to pass. However, in spite of the poor conditions of the road there was no lack of public transportation and the main transport issue appeared to be the cost of travel, as many could not afford the VT200 a day to travel to and from work or school. It was often the children who had to walk to school and the bus fare allotted to the working adult in the household. Some of the children attended school at Mele village, 10km away and left home at 6 a.m. in order to be at school on time. Adults either walked to work and took a bus home, or took a bus to work and then walked home in the early evening. I take the bus to work, which adds to the expense of travel. Buses come to Blacksands all the time but when the road gets as bad as it is now, we have to walk to the bridge to get a lift. To get from Vila back to Blacksands, you have to really force some of the drivers to come here. (Annie Tenkon, 44 from Ambrym). Daniel Ynack (18 from Tanna) worked in a
French restaurant in town. *Sometimes if I work late at night the boss gives money to the staff to make our way home. The problem is the bus will only drop us at the main road so we have to walk in the dark. I try and arrange with one of the bus owners who lives here to pick me up if I work the night shift.*

One resident, Mr Pierre Bourgeois, a prominent French businessman, who had purchased a residential lease in Blacksands in 1980, used to maintain the feeder road into the settlement on a casual basis. However, he had not done so over the last two years because he believed it was time for the Province and the landowners to assume the responsibility they had neglected for many years. The residents (on an individual basis) had approached the landowners to maintain the seriously potholed road after a heavy and lengthy rainy season but had either been ignored, or told that if the road was fixed, they would have to pay for it through increased rental rates. Maintenance of roads in informal settlements is dependent, to a degree, on political influence. For example, the Manples settlement feeder road was regularly maintained by the Port Vila Municipal even though it was within the jurisdiction of SHEFA Province. Manples is a settlement filled with members of the National United Party (NUP) and as the current Mayor of Port Vila is a prominent member of NUP, (national) constituents are kept happy with the maintenance of roads and the provision of water tanks. By contrast, Blacksands received political indulgence only around election time (see Chapter Six).

Provision for open space, transport services, health centres, water supply, roads and electricity is inadequate not only in Port Vila itself, but particularly in Blacksands and other settlements. Residents at Blacksands faced similar difficulties to urban residents in
PHOTO 11A: The main road into Blacksands. The main road into town can be seen in the background. The numerous potholes fill quickly with water and mud after rain, making access by vehicle difficult.

PHOTO 11B: Access paths between yards in Blacksands. A planted hibiscus hedge or chicken wire fence often marks these paths. This particular path has been covered in stones from the river to reduce the amount of mud during rain.
formal suburbs, as housing is short in supply, expensive and often sub-standard, but their difficulties were more deep seated and reflected in part, low income and the uncertainties of land tenure. Rental housing often accounted for more than a third of a household’s monthly income. Access to land for gardening was difficult and dependent on the goodwill or political motives of customary landowners and food security was of growing concern for a number of urban families, especially those with low incomes. On the other hand, Blacksands, unlike other settlements, enjoyed a verdant relatively open landscape and had better access to the sea and a river (although limited by some custom landowners) and projected a healthy, spacious environment.

Access to quality health and educational services are more issues of national concern, than just those of Blacksands and other informal settlements, as all sectors of the national population are limited by the inadequate health and education services available in the country. Blacksands’ unequal access to utilities and services was largely due to its location on the urban periphery and of customary land ownership complicating the provision of even the most basic services, because of land tenure and limited land supply. The Port Vila Municipal Council did not consider any property outside its boundaries as its responsibility, while SHEFA Province focused its attention (and limited resources) on more distant rural areas. Issues of social infrastructure (water supply and solid waste disposal in particular) were not unique to Blacksands and other informal and squatter settlements, as upmarket subdivisions such as Bellevue also suffered from a lack of waste disposal and other services, but they are of greater concern for public health reasons.

Residents in Blacksands with better access to housing, gardening land, health and education services tended to be those longer established in town and who had therefore,
better contacts and knowledge of how to access and manoeuvre resources in town. More recent residents were more disadvantaged. Stability within the urban area thus provides advantages. Blacksands’ main overall disadvantage to accessing infrastructure is the access was denied to government and private companies by the customary landowners themselves. However, even if customary landowners were to grant access to government authorities, SHEFA Province with its scarce financial and human resources would remain reluctant to assume the direct responsibility. The Port Vila Municipal Council would also refuse to share the responsibility despite the proximity of Blacksands and other settlements to its boundaries.

The practice of delaying essential maintenance to roads, water supply and waste disposal threatens to reduce the effectiveness of existing systems even further and undercuts the justification of new investment in urban infrastructure and utility services (World Bank, forthcoming). Governance and ‘good housekeeping’ are critical issues throughout urban Melanesia (Connell and Lea 1993b) and Vila is no exception. Planners will need to consider not only ways of maintaining the existing infrastructure but also ways of providing the additional facilities necessary to meet Port Vila’s rapidly growing demands on land, housing, health and education services, water supply and waste disposal within the municipal boundaries and on the urban periphery, where problems are often the most acute.
Chapter Six

Blacksands - Social Life

This chapter examines social life within the surveyed population and thus highlights the importance of family (tawis or in-laws) and kinship (wantoks) ties and social sustainability in urban residence. It will also examine the extent to which settlers have moved towards permanent urban residence, and what impact this transition has on social and economic life. It also considers the way in which greater permanence actually means the harmonization of relations between culturally and socially diverse groups, a situation that would encourage social integration and the general improvement of the quality of life (Overton and Storey 1999). Greater permanence clearly has implications for urban and national planning. Urbanization has brought about major social change, which will be investigated here through the residents’ participation in urban social life, through urban kinship ties, urban-rural remittances, religion and political organization.

Academics, planners and social advisers have long warned that urban growth can lead to an eventual loss of the more positive social and environmental qualities of Pacific towns. The increasing regional media reports of crimes in urban centres, family breakdowns and their effects on children add support to the common assumption that there is much social disorganization. It is not implausible, however, that social disorganization and crime are a result of substantial inequalities in access to employment, land, housing, and other services in the larger cities (Connell and Lea 1994:290). Indeed, in Vanuatu, young men with criminal records have stated that they committed crimes in frustration at the lack of opportunities they had in town as recorded in the Young Peoples’ Project’s 1998 documentary video, “Kilem Taem”. Urban authorities, influential leaders and
increasingly customary landowners and local residents believe that the rise in the crime rate would diminish if towns were closed to those who did not work there or had no valid reason for being there. (See Appendix 2 for excerpts from local newspaper headlines).

The rapid and recent change, notably the restructuring of the economy as part of the Comprehensive Reform Program (CRP) in Vanuatu, is not without costs, with some of the traditional forms of behaviour and family ties being tested. For people at the lower income end of urban society, these changes can bring major problems. Increasing school dropout rates, rising unemployment, increasing incidences of preventable diseases, declining real incomes and deteriorating housing standards can be found almost everywhere in the Pacific (Bryant 1995:127). The breakdown of traditional kinship ties (such as the urban “safety net”) has already been highlighted as an outcome of rapid social change (Chapter Five). This situation has emphasized the greater vulnerability to poverty and socio-economic instability, in particular among low-income families in squatter settlements.

Academics and several socio-economic organizations have argued that while rural and squatter families suffer the same lack of resources, squatter families are vulnerable because they have not developed the social institutions, which would enable them to work together to address their common needs. In fact, the Vanuatu Sustainable Human Development Report (Republic of Vanuatu 1996:3) stated emphatically that “squatter urban families (in Port Vila) do not have the stability of community” and that this lack of community threatened the very social fabric of urban society. As so little is known about the social organization of residents in informal and squatter settlements, it is best to start with defining “community” and what it means to people.
As in the villages, ni-Vanuatu in urban areas – and in Blacksands - identify first with their extended family, then with people from the same village and its hinterland, then the island, then the province and lastly as a nation. A community exists if it simply means living in the same place as another group of people (regardless of relationship). However, the term community implies much more, a group of people living within the same space, sharing facilities such as transportation and amenities such as schools and health centres, to discussing common issues, looking out for each other, and perhaps working and socializing together. The residents of Blacksands consist of people from all over Vanuatu with different cultural, political and religious backgrounds. Bong (1995:4) argued that this diversity of population had resulted in family isolation and had created barriers and a reluctance to cooperate in community activities that could otherwise help to improve the quality of life in the settlement. This chapter examines community identity among the Blacksands residents to determine the extent and impact of these apparent social barriers.

In Vanuatu, there is evidence of significant inter-marriage across islands and language groups, which suggests a more socially mixed residential population than in most Melanesian towns (Connell 1985:57). At Blacksands as many as 45% of couples were inter-island partnerships. Some of the couples explained that because they were from different islands (and in some cases simply from different parts of an island) they could only agree to live in a ‘neutral’ place, namely town. When I married Alick I told him I didn’t want to live on Ambrym because of nakaimas and he said he didn’t want to live on Tanna because that is not his place. That is why we live in town because we can see both sides of our family (Marie Alick, 40 Tanna). People born in town of parents from two islands often carry uncertain identification with two or more places (Rawlings 1999:75).
Moreover few people in Vila regard the town as their ‘place’, because an individual ‘place’ is where the paternal family has customary land owning rights. Therefore, if individuals are not from Ifira or Pango or Erakor (all urban landowner groups), it would be threatening for a non-Ifiran to claim to “be” from Vila. Though many others have made Vila their main place of residence, they cannot actually say that they ‘come from’ Vila as this would imply they are from one of the area’s landowners family. Therefore, with a high level of inter-island marriage and availability of housing, Blacksands appears to be a residential area of mixed island groups. Certainly there are pockets of people from the same island living near together but it was common to find that the neighbours were from a different island. Furthermore, as in Papua New Guinea, the extent of urban intermarriage among different migrant groups may mean that such couples are most likely to show greater commitment to urban life where they have access to both groups of wantoks (Connell 1986) or to neither set of wantoks. Urban residents are thus most likely to be those who have married across islands and social groups, where ‘home’ is a complex and ambiguous concept.

BLACKSANDS SOCIAL LIFE

As discussed in Chapter Four, the majority of Blacksands residents (74%) were employed in town or by town-based companies. Adults travelled to town primarily for work while young men and women would visit town to access medical services, visit friends, attend school, go to work, watch a movie, assist a relative in their home or simply to pass time away from the family. Young men are most visible in town as they hang out in large

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6 1999 National Population census preliminary results show that 33.6% of all households in Port Vila are of mixed ‘home island’ origin.
groups in public places for long periods of time. Mitchell (1998) attributed this to young men needing to escape the crowded and cramped conditions in which they live in the settlements. Some of the younger females regarded the large number of unemployed youth in town differently. *When I come home from school I have to do the washing and help my mother prepare the evening meal. Johnny my cousin should do this because he doesn’t go to school and doesn’t work but he always runs away to town so he doesn’t have to help in the house* (Rosina Naros, 14 from Ambrym).

Families travel to town as a group for shopping on special occasions such as for a wedding, a church fundraising activity, an island community group meeting, a funeral or to watch and participate in parades (during Independence celebrations for instance) or to attend a music concert or sports event. It was unusual to have a conversation with someone in Blacksands who had not been in to Vila itself for longer than a three-day period. Those residents who did not visit Vila on a regular basis tended to be older relatives visiting resident families who were unsure of being in town on their own. Raphael Tabi (57 from Pentecost) spent most of his two month visit to Blacksands in the settlement itself. His son explained that his father was nervous of town because of the number of people and the traffic. Raphael visited town three times during his visit, always at the weekend with the family to visit other relatives. The interaction with people in town and utilization of services and facilities in Port Vila showed a definite attachment to key elements of an urban lifestyle by Blacksands residents.

In a Melanesian urban setting social interaction with other groups outside the extended family and *wantoks* appears to be limited to work or school friends. A number of studies (e.g. Fahey 1978, Haberkorn 1987, Jourdan 1995) have argued that urban residents are
able, and most choose, to live the bulk of their lives as members of their own cultural
group. Ties with kin are more important than links to neighbours from other cultural
groups. Many households did not know their neighbours, apart from where they came
from, and expressed little interest in them aside from gossip. They had little to do with
each other except on occasion of complaint, for example, when they were drunk and
disruptive on a pay day night. There is not really a community here. We stay with the
people from the same place as ourselves. We belong in these groups. This is the way it is
all over Vanuatu. (Annie Tenkon, 44 from Ambrym).

Women in town have a changing role as traditional values are less adhered to and a
changing economic context requires them to be active in paid employment to support the
family. Working women in urban areas can face significant time pressures, which
interfere with family welfare, as they must look after the children as well as work. In
consequence a number of social problems developed which were becoming increasingly
serious (assault against women). However, women also commit crimes and could not
always be seen as victims. There were almost monthly incidents of assault by the women
in Blacksands, more often than not stemming from accusations of an affair. For example,
one woman from Tanna managed to string her husband up with rope before proceeding to
slash at him with a bushknife having learned of his affair with another woman in the
settlement.

In Blacksands, women can cross social boundaries that are defined by family and island
group in terms of childcare, church activities and gardening. For example, Leah Ben (39
from Tanna) looked after her neighbours’ (from Ifira and Banks Islands) children while
they worked in town. Sometimes, the women supported each other in small fund-raising
events to raise funds for school fees. For example, a woman from Ambrym may prepare some laplap⁷ and sell it to the neighbours (not from Ambrym) to earn some money. The other women will then expect her to participate in their fund raising efforts.

Men are more likely to traverse social boundaries through employment within Blacksands and in town itself. Simeon Joseph (32, from North Efate) met Eric Bule (38, from Pentecost) at work at the Le Lagon Park Royal. Although they lived less than 50 metres away from each other they had not met previously. They subsequently travelled to work together and drank kava in the evenings. Titus Tabi (32 from Pentecost) socialized with people of different islands and ages through his various business enterprises that include a garage, public transport service, shop and rental rooms. Daniel Ynack (18 from Tanna) appeared to have an extensive social network beyond his family with friends from school and work. My family is important to me but if I want to watch a concert, go dancing or just to walk around town, I will go with my friends from school. It is good to have friends that live in Vila so if it is too late to get transport home at night you can stay at their house. In this kind of way, many of the men had established social ties in the wider urban community.

During the study period there were few social events organized within Blacksands itself apart from the occasional wedding reception, appointing of a chiefly representative and annual Independence and Christmas celebrations. Daily social interactions outside the household appeared limited to discussions on the way to work for the men, chatting at the corner store for women or at the river when washing the clothes. Children were more at ease playing with neighbouring children, sharing their food and walking to school.

⁷ Traditional meal of grated root crops wrapped in banana leaves and steamed in an earth oven.
together. The following sections examine various specific components of social life in Blacksands and the role of family and kinship ties in these social relationships.

**RELIGION AND SPORT**

The theme of reinforcing ties with kin and cultural groups was repeated in the organization of sport and church activities. The history of religion in Vanuatu has seen the grouping of Christian denominations among the islands. TAFEA and SHEFA Province are predominantly Presbyterian, while PENAMA has strong affiliations to the Anglican Church and Churches of Christ. MALAMPA, TORBA and SANMA provinces have a strong representation in the Catholic Church. Other churches such as the Seventh Day Adventist (SDAs), Assembly of God, Neil Thomas Ministries (NTM) and a number of 'revival' churches have increased congregation numbers and appealed to many residents in town for their lively worship meetings and active youth groups.

In 1999 there were three churches within the survey site - Catholic, Presbyterian and Neil Thomas Ministries. The latter was well established in the community and was situated in Pastor Japheth’s yard. The yard contained an open-air church and the tenants were all members of the NTM Church. The SDAs were an active congregation (the church was situated outside the survey site) and hosted 500 Pathfinders (church youth group) over the Easter weekend in 2000. The Pathfinders came from around the Efate area, including from other informal settlements such as Manples, and the event was significant in that it reflected the church’s growing recognition of a permanent congregation at Blacksands. That is, that as Churches are acknowledging a growing permanent urban population, it may encourage other social associations and even local authorities to also recognize a
permanent population in Blacksands, and thus initiate the provision of much needed educational and health services.

The various organizations within churches, such as the Presbyterians Women's Missionary Unions and DORCAS Federation (in the SDA church) encouraged interaction with the community away from the control of the wantok system through various activities. These included 'home visits' where women from different islands worked together to help a church member by cleaning the yard, doing the laundry and sharing food. Extensive non-family social networks were forged in churches as members of the congregation experienced a commonality in faith, shared beliefs and enjoyed Bible study in each other's homes. The Presbyterian and SDA Church had established primary schools in Blacksands and members of their respective congregations worked together to raise funds for school materials. The men also assisted in building maintenance, gardening and construction of new rooms.

FIGURE 15: Religious Denominations

n = 100 “Other” includes kastom (those that practice traditional rather than Christian beliefs) and smaller renewal churches.
Whilst religion appeared to be a uniting factor, it could and did cause divisions among the community. Our community is too divided by islands and different churches. The NTM people here do not like us Presbyterians and they do not want to do things with us even though we were friends before. They think that we all have different need and ideas and so cannot work together to sort out any problems (Leah Ben, 39 from Tanna). Religious differences caused Pastor John Gisanpo’s (26, from Banks Islands) family to move out of Anambrou to Blacksands. When we lived at Anambrou we found it difficult to get along with other people regarding Christian activities. Our neighbours did not like our praise and worship songs and said we made too much noise. They complained to the landlord and so we had to move. It is better here at Blacksands to live with people who share the same beliefs. In the case of the ever-growing number of evangelical or born-again churches, traditional beliefs were frowned upon as the church is viewed as the moral and custom setter. Members of the revival church groups were from a great mixture of islands and were not dominated by a particular island group, unlike the Presbyterian and Catholic Church which were respectively dominated by people from TAFEA and PENAMA provinces (due to the historical presence of these churches).

Sporting organizations were a significant social setting for youth in Vila itself. The weekends were usually filled with soccer games, pétanque competitions, volleyball and basketball matches and rugby. Soccer is popular in Vanuatu and there were numerous teams playing in several leagues in Vila. Team names are often derived from the island of origin of the majority of players; thus they were called, Ifiran Blackbirds, TAFEA, Erakor Golden Star, Paama Yatel and Shepherds United. Many of the teams have existed since 1980 when village friends formed the nucleus of an urban soccer club. Gradually
soccer teams became mixed to ensure that the best players were members of a team regardless of their island of origin. For example, the 1999 soccer champions, TAFEA were originally dominated by Tannese players but now include members from Efate, Santo and Pentecost. The team members knew each other from school and work and are all long-term urban residents.

In Blacksands, the young men formed soccer teams for informal games consisting of neighbours, school and work friends and some relatives. They lacked space to practise soccer and had never formed a permanent team to play in a local league but a few young men expressed an interest in doing so. They satisfied their love for soccer by watching the weekend games in Vila. *I always go and watch the football when I can, especially if TAFEA is playing* (Daniel Ynack, 18 from Tanna). Johnny Naros (17 from Ambrym) stated that he played soccer with his relatives and friends from town whenever he could and if they had a ball. *I have soccer boots but my friends and I don’t have our own football so sometimes we cannot play a game.*

International soccer is another arena that brings men from different islands together as they group according to the team they support. During the World Cup 1998, the whole of Port Vila was divided between France and Brazil supporters with houses and buses decked in team colours. *I watched the final at a friend’s house in town. I took some of my friends from Blacksands to my friend’s house, as there was no television here at that time. When France won, we celebrated all day* (Kakae Pakoa, 21 of Tongoa). Men also enjoyed playing pétanque and it was not unusual to find a large group of men gathered in Jack Bob’s (40, Tanna) yard playing game after game each day. Whilst they formed
PHOTO 12A: Blacksands boys on their way to the Mitsubishi Cup 2000 held at the Municipal stadium in Port Vila.

PHOTO 12B: A young resident of Blacksands at play with his new bicycle.
teams based on island and family groups, all ages and islands were welcome to participate in the game.

Women were less involved in sport due to their responsibilities at home and traditional barriers that prevented them from participating in sports. In Blacksands, it was young women (averaging 20 years of age) who played netball and volleyball or were spectators at basketball, rugby and soccer matches in town. Young women who worked in town were actively involved in sports while women who were occupied as housewives and homehelp did not participate. Unlike the male dominated sports, women’s teams were often named after their place of work or church group. For example, the Palms Casino netball team consists of women who shared a workplace at the Le Meridien Hotel, and members of The Kings team worshiped at the same NTM church on Sundays. *I like to play netball with my team Palms Casino but sometimes I work on Saturday or I do not have the money for the bus fare so I don’t always play. I like playing sport and it is a good chance to talk with my friends and watch the other women play* (Jean Jimmy 19 from Malekula).

Given that sporting events provided a recreational opportunity for all urban citizens to relax and traverse social boundaries, it seems strange that community leaders had not encouraged sporting associations within the settlement. Indeed, there is a notable lack of literature on youth and sports (although Vanuatu does have a Youth policy) and the role it may play in contributing to improved relations between culturally and socially diverse groups. Participation in sport has been promoted as a healthy way of life in Vanuatu and the provision of a playing field for team sports such as soccer and volleyball in Blacksands could assist significantly in narrowing cultural divisions as well as providing
an outlet for frustration among the unemployed youth. Given the lack of space in the residential areas of Blacksands itself, permission would first have to be sought from the customary landowner of available land west of the settlement to construct a suitable playing field.

**KINSHIP TIES**

Family is a central and fundamental part of life in Vanuatu. The extended family is the basic social unit and the source of individual identity. In Blacksands, social networks were predominantly amongst family, and residents were most familiar with households from the same island or village area (through island community meetings and ceremonial and church activities). The majority of households (52%) were nuclear families. A small number of single-member households (11%) were predominantly male. These households often emerged as a result of extended families having become tired of supporting them. *I used to live with my Uncle Charlie and he trained me in carpentry. I liked living at his house but he told me that I was big enough to look after myself and should find a wife. So in 1997 I built this small house and my cousin John came to stay with me to help me with the carving to make some money* (Kakae Pakoa, 21 from Tongoa). There was an even smaller percentage (4%) of households, which I have termed as ‘mixed’ households as they consisted of unrelated people often of the same sex. Micah James (22, from Tanna) lived with his friend Willy Masaka (20, from Tanna) whom he had met in town. They decided to become independent from their respective families by sharing the rent for their own room.

Extended family households (33%) were essentially nuclear households that, at the time of the survey, had visiting extended family members in the home. For example, Jeffrey
Tabi (36 from Pentecost) supported his wife and three children and in 1999, he also supported his wife’s cousin, Maria, who attended the Lycée. Maria subsequently sought accommodation with another (related) family located closer to the school. Obed Butal’s (50, from Tanna) household actually consisted of two related nuclear families living in one household. His brother, Yakoli Butal (47, of Tanna) came to Vila in 1993 with his wife (who died in 1995) and children. Yakoli decided to remain at Blacksands with the children and had never considered finding his own house. *We are family, we look after each other. This is a good arrangement for me as Obed’s wife can help look after my young children.*

Tannese and Ambrymese were more inclined to live as extended households. The heads of these households tended to be long-term urban residents and prominent figures in the island urban network. For example, Ben Tamis (45 from Tanna) was a chiefly representative for Blacksands residents from east Tanna. One of his roles as a representative was to ensure that young people had a place to stay and he often housed them himself when their own families could not. At the time of the survey, Kerine Sammy (20, from Tanna) a distant relation of his wife was living with the household.

Traditionally, the affiliate kin connections were only within the patrilineal clan. Today however, the extended family often included both matrilineal and patrilineal clans to expand the household’s support network to other relatives established elsewhere in Port Vila. It was not unusual to find matrilineal in-laws resident in a household looking after the children, cleaning the house and cooking meals. In fact, 48% of the extended households consisted of relatives from the matrilineal side of the family. For example, Virgine Tarilu (48 from Ambae) came to live with her daughter Sophie specifically to do
the housework and look after the children. Elisei Lukom’s (35 from Ambrym) household often accommodated a number of his wife’s relatives from Tanna. His brother-in-law (Keith Warpe, 20) lived with the family for a year until he earned enough money to rent a place of his own.

The residents had a tendency to locate next to, or near to, other households that spoke their vernacular languages, which possess ‘a cultural resonance and complexity that imported and recently constructed languages lack’ (Connell and Lea 1994:272). This was particularly visible among the households from Tanna as yards often consisted of a number of related households. For example, John Maben’s (30 from Tanna) yard contained seven households, all of which were members of the same language group on Tanna. The fact that so many people speak Bislama suggests the multi-lingual and multi-cultural nature of urban life in Port Vila. The residents of Blacksands all spoke Bislama and claimed that it was the language used most at work and in the home. It was common to hear many parents complain that Bislama had become not only a work language but also a language used at home instead of the local vernacular. Sometimes I speak in Craig Cove language to my children but they say they cannot understand me so I speak in Bislama. My husband tried to teach them Paama language but they just laughed at him (Winnie Moses, 44 from Paama). At the same time however, families would prefer their children to be taught in English or French in formal education and to learn their vernacular in the home (Chapter Five).

The high incidence of inter-island marriages also influences the development of Bislama in the home as children had minimal comprehension of the two (often very different) island languages of their parents and preferred to speak in Bislama. For example, Pastor
John Gislanpo (26 from Banks Islands) was educated in French and his wife Gloria (26, of Ambae) was educated in English. Their children attended English school and had little understanding of their parents’ respective island languages. *We mainly speak Bislama at home or English if we are helping the children with their homework. I try to speak to them in island language so they will understand it and my wife speaks to them in her language so they can speak to her relatives when they visit. The children just speak to us in Bislama though, as it is hard for them to try and learn 3 or 4 languages at the same time.* This evolution towards a lingua franca, and away from home island languages, makes it difficult for children to establish ties in those ‘home islands’, and thus contemplate potential residence there.

As in formal rural and urban residential areas, the family remained a source of security for households in Blacksands. Households in Blacksands attempted wherever possible to reside next to, or near to family or island group members due to a shared cultural identity and similar social concerns. However, it did not concern families if they were unable to do so, as they continued to reinforce ties with extended family living elsewhere in Port Vila. Family assistance was more visible on ceremonial occasions (see the following sections) than in day-to-day living. However, it was increasingly the nuclear and not the extended family members that cooperated to defend its social and economic interests. The Vanuatu Sustainable Human Development Report (Republic of Vanuatu 1996:110) stated that informal settlement families had not rallied together to address their own needs in a substantive way due to a lack of psychological commitment to town and a failure to establish bonds with families of other kinship groups. However, family ties within Blacksands were strong and whilst energy is focused on strengthening ties with
members of the extended family living elsewhere in town, bonds with other kinship
groups (through work, sport and church) had started to grow.

**URBAN-RURAL REMITTANCES**
The importance of family extended to relationships with rural areas in terms of
remittances. Remittances included food, money and traditional goods of exchange (mats,
baskets etc.) for weddings, funerals, births, religious activities and often in response to
specific requests from households. The significance of urban-rural remittances has been
discussed at some length by various authors. It has been described as “a means of
cultivating those social ties that are important in facilitating a return to the home area”
(Connell 1980:234); and in guaranteeing a secure rural future (Ryan 1989). In Blacksands
the scale and frequency of remittance flow appeared to be influenced by external factors
such as the national transport network and the strength of social and economic ties to the
rural area, as is discussed further in this section.

Remittances from Blacksands to the islands included money (often for school fees),
imported non-perishable foodstuffs such as salt and sugar, fresh products such as bread
and eggs that were not always available in the village, and newspapers and stationery (see
Table 10). Rural families, in return, sent cooked island food, fresh food crops and meat,
and commercial crops such as kava and mats. The majority of remittances whether in
Blacksands or the villages were used for everyday household needs or in conspicuous
consumption. Regardless of island group, household size or duration of residence in
town, the types and quantities of remittances did not vary. A small number of households
(4%) depended greatly on remittances of kava, peanuts and local nuts for their respective
businesses. The remaining households were less reliant on remittances but welcomed the receipt of island food and other fresh produce as a supplement to their regular diet. These bi-directional remittance flows exclude a number of possible rural-urban transactions, such as payment of travel costs of urban and rural households, hospitality in village or town for visitors and the maintenance of dependants of urban and rural households.

The majority of households (94%) acknowledged that they had to send parcels to the villages as a matter of respect for custom, regardless of their economic conditions. For some households, remittances were sent in acknowledgement of relatives looking after family land. *We send cartons of food every now and then to our family in Ambrym. They usually ask us for sugar, Milo and money and we have to send it because they are our family and we must help them if they ask for something. They are looking after my land on the island so this is a way of saying thank you to them* (Syriaque Bulerong, 47 from Ambrym).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table Ten: Household Remittances</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Urban-Rural remittances</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-perishable food (salt, sugar, Milo)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fresh food (bread, eggs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money (school fees)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newspapers, stationery</td>
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In Blacksands, urban/rural transfers and remittances took the form of large sporadic inputs rather than regular flows. *My mother asks me to send food items they cannot buy in the Banks like eggs and bread about one or two times a month, as well as for weddings and other celebrations. Sometimes they ask for money and so I send it. They send me yam and coconut crab and if there is a wedding here I will ask them to send some vegetables*
and mats and things like that (John Gislanpo, 26 from Banks Islands). Most items were air freighted to the islands and supported by a phone call to ensure collection of the parcel. If the items were heavier, the remitting person would wait until a boat left for the island as freight is cheaper by sea. I usually send parcels by air to the family on the island, but if it is very heavy then I send it by boat. At Christmas they asked me to send many things and we sent them a 15 kilo parcel so we waited until we heard MV Killian was going to the island and paid the freight. A friend of ours was a passenger on the boat and we asked him to look after the boxes as people are always stealing things from the wharf these days (Jack Kamisa, 40 from Tanna).

In Blacksands, many remittances were sent only in response to particular requests, of which the payment of school fees was most common. It is regarded as unusual for remittances from the rural areas to be in excess of those sent from urban areas and Bryant (1995:122) noted that urban families tended to contribute much and receive little in return. In Blacksands, however, rural-urban remittances often included commercial agricultural goods such as kava and peanuts (shipped in hundreds of kilos) sent by relatives for the urban residents to sell. Miller Mahit (41, of Paama) was self-employed and sells peanuts for a living. My family on Paama sends me several kilos of peanuts every fortnight. I roast and bag the peanuts and sell them in town. I then send some of the money back to the island for them to buy more peanuts and also some money as payment for their time and work. It is a good business as we are helping each other. On the other hand, some families stated that most of their kin lived in Vila or Luganville and that they only had distant relatives living in the village. They indicated that their interest in sending remittances to the rural areas had diminished considerably. It is only my parents on the
island now so they don't send many things, as they are old. Sometimes, if someone from the island is coming to visit Vila my parents may send a parcel of yam or something but it is so small, we tell the person who brought it to have it as a thank you for their help (Ben Tanas, 45 from Tanna).

In Blacksands, it was difficult to determine the proportion of income remitted as the scale and nature of remittance flows depended in part on the nature of the links between the household and their family and on the needs of the household and the village kin. The longer established urban residents had more casual social links with families in rural areas but appeared to send remittances of similar quantities and with similar frequency to those households that were more recently urban-based (minimum of five years in Port Vila). Longer established households appeared to have more family in town than in the island and therefore had fewer relatives to send remittances to. The households (6%) that did not send remittances of any kind to family in the rural areas were those that contained single young males who were not really established in town and depended on their extended family in Blacksands and Vila to support them.

The sporadic nature of remittances from Blacksands may be attributed in part to the poor transport infrastructure within Vanuatu itself. A number of the outer-island airfields close during periods of rain which can last for over a week. The shipping service is unreliable at the best of times and commercial freight is always given priority. Accessibility is important, as remittances were significantly higher to and from villages that were closer to town and serviced with a more reliable and frequent transport network. A number of respondents (predominantly from TAFEA and TORBA provinces – see Map Two)
eventually had to use the food and other items packed in boxes intended for the village, after they had unsuccessfully attempted to send the items over a three month period.

The distribution of remittances emphasized the nuclear family rather than an extended kinship unit, even in areas of linked migration, and usually remittances went no further than the migrant’s parents (Connell 1980:239). My findings support this statement in that 90% of the respondents stated that they only thought of their *street* (nuclear) family when sending items to the island, as they simply could not afford to respond to extended family requests for assistance. *Sometimes, maybe once a month, I send my mother and straight family a box of food like soap, sugar, bread and Milo. I don’t bother sending my cousins and uncles anything and I just pretend not to get their message to send them things. I have my own family to support first and anyway, they never send me anything. They don’t know that living in Vila is expensive, they think you can just go and get anything you want at any time* (Graham Obed, 25 from Tanna).

Some urban Melanesians have sought to disavow rural life, ethnic identity, and cultural commitment and have adopted urban lifestyles. Such people, and their household members, perceive rural commitment as irksome and unnecessary in an era of modernization (Connell and Lea 1994:277). In Blacksands, rural commitments tended to be considered an unwelcome additional expense to a tight household budget. The women in particular expressed their annoyance at constant, frequent requests from various extended family members on the island to send them money. *My husband’s family is always asking for things, it never stops. This month they wanted us to send material for a wedding and last month they wanted money for school fees. Before that, they wanted us to pay for one of them to come and see Vila. For what, they have nothing to do here. I am

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sorry if it sounds like I do not respect them but I have to look after my family first (Nancy Bob, 46 of Paama).

Their husbands and partners, however, stated that they did not have a choice to ignore them as they felt that it was their cultural duty to contribute to any kin requests (also noted by Ryan (1989) in Papua New Guinea). There are people from Paama who are using my land on Malekula and so I have asked my family to make sure they do not trespass on other family land and to give money or food each month for the use of the land. That is why, if they ask me for money or food, fees, clothes, I must send it to them as they are helping me (Klan Noronman, 32 from Malekula). The burdens of customary obligations are great and whilst it is thought that some urban households elect to ignore these responsibilities (Bryant 1995), this was not yet evident in Blacksands.

What appears to be an emerging trend is the re-routing of otherwise rural remittances to urban communities for fund-raising activities, weddings and appeals to help the ‘home villages’. Eric Bule (38 from Pentecost) explained that as most of his family now lived in Vila they were happier to contribute to the urban-Pentecost community, whilst sending some money to his parents on the island on a regular basis. You know our families are big and our money is small so we think that it is better to help our community here in Vila first. But we cannot forget our parents so I make sure that I send them money and food as often as we can afford to so they know we are thinking of them. A number of longer established households in Blacksands are increasingly content with sending remittances via island group communities rather than on a family to family basis and they pay more attention to new urban based obligations.
Bonnemaison noted that,

"a return to one’s territory of origin was not simply frequent, it was obligatory. Even today a villager cannot live for too long outside his home place without alienating his identity and his territorial rights, or without disregarding the ancestral laws that signify his territorial group. The initial effects of formal schooling, the emergence of new tastes and patterns of living, and the acquisition of professional qualifications all contribute to the gradual detachment of some people from their original territory" (Bonnemaison 1985:77).

Various community leaders and individuals on the islands of Tanna, Epi, Aneityum, Ambrym and Malekula asserted that those who lived in town, particularly those that remained unemployed for long periods of time, should return to the village and assist in the development of the rural community. They held great distaste for those rural visitors who left for the urban centres and failed to return without providing for their families remaining in the village, or contributing to the community as a whole. Chief Emele Moses (Chairman of the West Ambrym Council of Chiefs) commented that many Ambrymese in Vila were rightfully concerned about protecting their rights to resources in their home village. *I have seen many young men leave Ambrym to go to Vila. Some have work, some do not but most of them have started their families in Vila and most of them have not visited the island for more than seven years. Some of the families in the village don’t hear from them unless they want something. This is not the custom way. If they want to live in Vila that is their decision but they must not forget their family on the island.*
Chief Jack Samuel (Chairman of the South West Ambrym Council of Chiefs) concurred with Chief Moses and noted that; “those men who have lived in Vila since Independence with little thought of their families think they can come back when they want to. I have listened to a number of family disputes where a man returns from town and wants his land back after his family has looked after it for him for nothing. Usually, I will ask the man from Vila to pay compensation to his relatives before he can take back his land. One man was so cross he just went back to Vila.” The chiefs on Epi, Malekula and Tanna expressed similar sentiments, highlighting that the migrants non-participation in the village community (such as through assisting in the construction of feeder roads or maintenance of a school house) over a number of years often gave rise to discontent among the villagers when the migrant returned to visit. They added that if migrants had been lax in maintaining family and kinship ties, they were often required to apologize and acknowledge their shortcomings in a traditional “making amends” ceremony (often with compensation payments) in order to resume access to resources.

Only a degree of distance from village and rural ideology is possible for the first generation, and most Melanesian urban residents belong to this group (Connell and Lea 1994:278). In Blacksands, there are also a number of second and even third generation urban residents. This latter group can be thought of as “true urbanites” in that they know no other home than town (though many are very young, that is, on average, less than 12 years old). When urban residents visit their ’home village’ their attitudes towards those who have chosen to remain there is somewhat patronizing. By contrast it was common to hear long term villagers joke at the expense of these visitors (as they regarded them).
whilst at the same time holding great disdain for their inability, or lack of will, to fetch water or work in the food gardens.

The Blacksands residents showed little interest in returning to their ‘island of origin’, except for brief Christmas visits, explaining that their lives held them in Vila and they could not be away from it if they were to make a living. *If there were good economic opportunities on the island, we would all probably live there. There would be no need to come to town except to visit family and have a holiday.* (Annie Tenkon, 44 from Ambrym). Blacksands residents’ visits to home villages were increasingly less frequent and for shorter periods – phenomena recorded of many Vila residents in the 1989 National Population Census (NPSO 1991). People on leave from their jobs with the Vanuatu Mobile Force (VMF) or international fishing companies chose to visit families in Vila and not on the island even though they could afford to return to the village for a visit. Joseph Richie (26, from Tanna) worked on a fishing boat operating out of Asia. He had come to visit his uncle (Bob Boita) in Blacksands before returning to Singapore. He had money to visit his parents and siblings on Tanna but expressed little interest in flying to the island for a week, preferring to send a letter with some food items in an airfreighted box instead.

Many of the respondents sought to maintain their customary land (and traditional access to resources) in the islands but ridiculed the idea of living there, since their lives and their children were now in Vila, although they tried to maintain contact with the village.
Custom ceremonies included circumcision rituals, engagement and funeral ceremonies.
I haven't ever really thought of going back to the island for good. I have leased land at Teouma and have invested in this yard at Blacksands as my home. All my children are in good schools in Vila so my life is here in Vila really. I think it is best to say that we shall stay in Vila and just visit the island from time to time. It is easier for me to look after my investment in Vila by myself. My family on the island can look after my land. (Jeffrey Tabi, 26 from Pentecost).

In summary, the residents of Blacksands are attempting to maintain ties with rural relatives (although this is limited to parents and/or grandparents) but have acknowledged their preference for making urban investments and strengthening urban kinship ties in preference to maintaining ties with rural areas.

**CHIEFS AND COMMUNITY IN BLACKSANDS**

In villages, a chief heads the community that has traditionally been the coalescing social unit, providing a safety net for resolving family and kinship issues. Chiefs are responsible for watching over and protecting customary laws and preserving cultural integrity. They are expected to ensure the security of community resources and to act for families at community meetings, provincial and national forums on matters such as the use of customary land, requests for government services, and other issues requiring consensus. Chiefs (and their representatives) are meant to be respected and play the main role in resolving problems and settling disputes. In matters of custom the chiefs try to ‘straighten’ wrongdoers by bringing them back to the notion of respect, instead of just punishing them (Mitchell 1998).
In Blacksands, as in other areas of Port Vila, chiefly representatives of island groups (often scattered within the settlement and other areas of town) are appointed to act largely as mediators in family and community matters and in inter-island matters in an urban setting. They do not necessarily possess the same decision making powers or authority as village chiefs and their effectiveness as mediators varies. The head of the landowning family of the survey site expects these chiefly representatives to resolve issues with other island groups and between themselves, and if they fail to do so, the offending household(s) will be asked to leave the area. No less than six chiefly representatives were resident within the surveyed site. Some were representatives for certain island groups within Blacksands itself, while others were representatives of island groups located within a number of areas of Port Vila. For example, Ben Tamas represented the people of east Tanna residing in Blacksands, while Ramel Bong represented the people of west Ambrym to a number of customary landowners in the settlements of Blacksands, Manples and Tagabe.

All households acknowledged that they had a chiefly representative although the degree of respect for these representatives varied between gender and age groups. More than half of the households (58%) believed that their chiefs were effective by providing adequate representation in broader community affairs and resolving family disputes. The remainder stated that there were simply too many people for one representative to manage the cultural group effectively, and the representative himself was often not knowledgeable about custom. Women in particular downplayed the effectiveness of chiefs. This may be attributed in part to the fact that they had no role in the selecting of a representative (a male responsibility only) and that women were likely to adhere to
church beliefs as well as being more sensitive to the expenses that customary obligations hold. Young people offered a mixed response concerning chiefly representatives, although offending young men tended to prefer being dealt with in custom as this meant avoiding a police record.

When asked what the main role a chief or his representative played within the island group, 34% stated that it was to assist in the resolution of family disputes and also to represent them in the broader community. The most common family disputes were attributed to extra-marital affairs and young men and women having relationships that were not approved of by the family. Some 6% of the residents stated that they did not know what the main role of their chiefly representative was. *I don’t have much to do with the chief as I have never had any problems. I am not sure what he does. I think people go and talk to him if they have problems but I have never heard him speak to the community or on our behalf. I don’t know what he does exactly for us* (Lily Peter, 17 from Ambrym).

Traditions remained important for the majority of households but were more symbolic for those families who were longer established in town, a situation that is also true of migrants in the Solomon Islands capital, Honiara (Jourdan 1996). For example, Charley Robert (43 from Tongoa), a long-term resident of Blacksands and Port Vila, stated that though he respected his chiefly representative (resident in Frewota), he was unlikely to seek assistance from him in matters concerning his family as he felt that he was able to deal effectively with these issues himself. Charley contributed to the Tongan community in fundraising efforts (by donating cash) but did not attend meetings as he said he did not have enough time to do so. *Chiefs are important to the community as they can help sort out many problems. I was once asked to be a representative of the Tongan people but I*
do not have time for that; I have my business to look after. It is better for someone that has time to listen to people with problems and who has a good understanding of custom to be chosen as a representative.

Traditional leadership structures are increasingly less able to respond in ways perceived to be adequate by town dwellers.

_We have a chiefly representative, Chief Ramel and he lives on the other side of the road. He is from a high family on Ambrym and was appointed by the Ambrymese last year when we were having all that trouble with man Tanna. There is a problem. When people have issues to discuss they come and see my husband and not the chief. I think people come to speak to my husband because he is well known and attends all the community meetings and people feel that he can represent them better than the chief. This is not right but this is what happens. They should rely on the chief_ (Annie Tenkon, 44 from Ambrym).

Chiefs have relatively little control of or role in the lives of their urban island communities. _The chiefly representative for those of us from central Pentecost is no longer able to control the people. He never responds quickly to problems and just lets them grow. Some of us are getting tired of him so I think the men might choose someone else to replace him next time_ (Marie Tabi, 30 from Pentecost). The six chiefly representatives resident in the survey site (from Tanna, Ambrym and Pentecost) were men aged 40 years and over; in addition to their chiefly responsibilities they had to secure an income and provide for their families. Having to cope themselves with an urban lifestyle as well as the responsibility of being a community leader appeared to be taxing for the chiefly representatives.
I have been the chiefly representative for the people of central Pentecost in Blacksands for almost three years now. It is an important role but sometimes after working all day with a construction company I really just want to sleep and not listen to someone come and complain about their wife having an affair or about their children causing trouble in town. I think the people will not choose me again to represent them this year as they need someone who can look after their concerns all the time at any time (Edward Tabi, 50 from Pentecost).

The chiefly representatives in Blacksands appeared somewhat bewildered by the breakdown of the extended family and the changing role of women. Their ability to protect a growing permanent urban population is being seriously challenged and their assumed responsibilities are very different from those of village society. I am the chief’s spokesman for the people of Yonowla in east Tanna. In some ways it is very hard to be a chief or a representative as the young men are always causing problems. I discuss it with them in private; some of them listen, others don’t. The ones who don’t listen go their own way, which is hard for them in the end. If older people have problems then I will discuss it with the other village chiefs for help. If people did not have a chief they would go crazy (Ben Tamas, 45 of Tanna). The increasing inability of chiefs and their representatives to control their people, especially the young men, can and does lead to increasing levels of crime and urban violence. The reluctance of young people in particular to listen to chiefly representatives can be attributed to the fact that they are only representatives of a chief (on the island) and are not ‘true’ custom chiefs and therefore do not merit the respect otherwise bestowed on a village chief; as well as a significant extent of rural disengagement and the subsequent regard of a chief as a ‘rural’ phenomena. The older
residents of Blacksands stated that their reluctance to listen to chiefly representatives stemmed from the fact that many of the chiefly representatives were not knowledgeable in matters of custom.

In June 2000, Port Vila was rocked by the brutal murder of a resident Australian businessmen in his home by a young Tannese resident of the Manples squatter settlement. At the funeral, the chiefly representative of the east Tannese urban community apologized to the Australian family and blamed the government for the rise in urban violence, claiming that neglect of chiefly roles from Independence was one apparent cause of this behaviour. The national government, in turn, blamed a lack of rural development for “idle hands doing the devil’s work” in town (as reported on Radio Vanuatu 12/06/00). The reaction in Blacksands to this incident reflected on chiefly representatives’ inability to control their people. *Chief Sam is the chief for the people from Whitesands and he lives here at Blacksands. If you have trouble then you must go and see him. Some people do not want to listen to him. These are the ones that cause problems but if they don’t listen to the chief and the chief and elders don’t force them to listen, this is when the problems start. They are the ones who give us people from Tanna a bad name in town* (Daniel Ynack, 18 from Tanna).

As Port Vila has grown in the last twenty years, urban crime has increased, as has opposition to urbanization voiced by national authorities, influential leaders and increasingly from customary landowners and local residents. Unemployment and the rising cost of living in town are often blamed for the rise in crime and informal settlements are often viewed as the main place of residence for the criminal and unemployed. It is often argued by those in authority and employed urban residents that
there would be a decline in crime if towns were closed to those who did not work there or had no valid reason for being there and if settlements were removed from town (see Appendix 3 for excerpts from local newspapers).

Recent attitudes towards chiefs have been negative. In a July 2000 issue of a local newspaper a ‘youth at Blacksands’ wrote to the editor expressing disgust at the ‘slackness’ of the chiefly representatives within the Blacksands area. He accused the chiefs of sleeping on the job and not doing anything to control ‘their people’ and urged them to stop being lazy and to send people who “i kam nating long taon’ (they come to town for no purpose) to their home islands. The youth also inferred that chiefs did not practise what they preached and were having affairs, getting drunk and causing problems themselves. We chose Chief Moses Mohana as our chief. He is not a very strong chief. He is a chief but he does not know how to do his work. He should be sending all those troublemakers home but he does not deal with the problems at all. The young people do not respect anybody anymore. Us older people know to listen to the chief but it is hard to listen to someone who does not know what he is doing (Leah Ben, 39 from Tanna).

The common cry from urban residents, community leaders and politicians to send unemployed youths ‘back to the island’ often falls to the chiefs to deal with. One letter to the editor in a local newspaper read, “sipos yu trabol long mani blong taon, i moa gud yu ko bak long aelan blong yu mo makem wan samting blong winim mani. O sapos yu no save survive long taon from we yu no gat kakae, aelan blong yu i stap wet long yu blong yu ko planem kakae. I no gud blong yu kam stap spolem nem blong Port Vila, Efate o
wan nara aelan. Yu go bak long aelan\(^8\). The author of the letter was an Efate landowner (Trading Post 17/6/00). Some Pentecost chiefs in Port Vila have ordered youths back to the island but as this restriction of removal is unconstitutional, it is not supported by law and is not a popular method of dealing with idle youths. As noted previously in this chapter, return migration can precipitate social disruption (Connell 1981) and simply moving people from one place to another does not address the underlying causes of the ‘problems’ that youths and other residents of town encounter or produce. In addition, to advocate repatriation is to assume that the social, political and institutional means to achieve this are present (Connell and Lea 1994:291), when they are most often not.

The assumption that people are temporary urban residents fails to recognize the changing contexts of rural to urban migration in Vanuatu in that a growing numbers of residents in informal settlements and towns are second or third generation urbanites with few, if any, ties to their ‘home’ villages. There is an inclination however, to recognize ‘their’ community as being those people from the same village or island rather than those sharing the same residential living place. Whilst there is a clearly identifiable group of community leaders who direct the island groups, social organization in town is becoming more stringent and society is becoming increasingly stratified (as noted by Curry 1999). That is, although there are chiefly representatives, individuals are increasingly turning to family or other members of the island group (who often display a better knowledge of custom or awareness of urban conditions) for advice and counselling. Changing leadership in town places pressure on island community leaders to be knowledgeable of

\(^8\) If you are having money troubles in town, it will be good if you go back to your island and do something that will make you money. Or, if you can’t survive in town because you don’t have food – your island is waiting for you to go and plant some food. It is not good for you to come and spoil the name of Port Vila, Efate or of other islands. Go back to the island!
both custom and urban conditions, and to possess good communication skills when meeting with other kinship groups, landowners and local authorities.

**POLITICAL ORGANIZATION IN BLACKSANDS**

As earlier studies have shown people in town are most likely to associate with people from their ‘home’ village, area or island and there is a high degree of interaction between these relationships (e.g. Strathern 1975). Meetings for people from the same island can be arranged at any time, and all islands and village regions have a chiefly representative in town. These meetings are usually called to discuss important matters (marriages, bad behaviour that has had an impact outside the island based community) and attendance is regarded as compulsory for adult males. The responsibility for maintaining acceptable behaviour within the island group often falls to the older men.

Historically, island groups can also be categorized by their political affiliation and chiefly representatives are often encouraged by political parties to ensure that their people exercise their right to vote in national and local (provincial) politics. These efforts are often rewarded (or encouraged further) with cash donations to the island group, water collection tanks and maintained roads. Indeed, some politicians, in order to gain votes at election times, have supported the growth of informal settlements in Port Vila. Some have gone so far as to establish new settlements with promises of land ownership and utilities as a reward for the politician’s successful election. It is widely believed (by political opponents and the general public) that MPs such as Barak Sope (an Ifiran, and now Prime Minister) place settlers in particular areas (such as Freswin) on the sole condition that they are voted for in national, provincial or municipal elections. This adds

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to the fragility of security of tenure and is one of the reasons this study was restricted to certain parts of Blacksands. A number of households within Blacksands had been granted residential access through ‘political’ assistance and were unwilling to provide any information on their status in fear of losing their homes for doing so.

At a more local level in Blacksands, there have been few attempts to strengthen the residents’ political status that would allow them to actively participate in decisions regarding the management and development of their homes and neighbourhood. In 1995 the residents of Blacksands established a Care Committee with the assistance of CUSO and the British ODA through the Wan Smolbag Theatre Group. Representatives included people from local youth groups and island leader representatives. The objectives of the project were to organize the settlement residents by providing information to assist in making informed decisions on development options within the settlement and to institute plans of action through appropriate forms of organization. Its intention was to enable the residents to develop solutions to their problems and to improve their quality of life.

However, within a year of its establishment, the Care Committee had been disbanded and has yet to be resurrected, or a similar organization established. The collapse of the Committee was largely attributed to disruption within the settlement following the murder of an 18 year old Tannese man in 1996. His family sought retaliation and many people left the settlement (including key members of the committee). Some of them have never returned (personal communication, Jean Mitchell 1999). Other reasons for the collapse of the committee included the jealousy of some non-members, an inherent inability for people of different island groups to work together productively for a common good and the absence of strong leadership for the committee.
After the Care Committee disintegrated little interest was expressed by the residents in coming together to form an association, as has occurred in Fiji and New Caledonia (Dussy 1996, 1997, 1998), to provide a platform where they could discuss their needs with the landowners and the local authorities. Questions on the possibility of forming such a committee were often laughed at and it was argued that it would never work because someone would always try to get more benefits than other residents.

Everyone is interested in improving their life – which is what we are all trying to do. But for us to work together I don’t know. There is always family business – you know, Vanuatu style. If we all work together, there is always somebody who will try to take more than everyone else is. This causes jealousy and then we all fight. It is better that we just look after our own interests and so if the government or SHEFA comes, then they can help us with water, roads and electricity (Martin Langse, 49 from Pentecost).

The residents of Blacksands appeared to operate very much on an individual household basis, with the partial exception of the Tannese households, who emphasized living with the extended family. Households were concerned primarily with their own welfare and believed that little assistance beyond the household would improve their living conditions. Some 28% of the respondents believed that family was the only group that could assist households in improving their living standards while a mere 9% thought that community efforts could assist in bettering living conditions. Our community is mixed and that makes it hard to work together sometimes. My family will help us if we ask them. They helped me build this house and I have helped them to build their homes in return. If you want to talk about water supply and things like that, it has to be a combined effort of
family, community, landowners and government. We also need to know how to actually make life better, at the moment it is only about people’s individual needs (Ben Tamas, 45 of Tanna). A third (32%) of the women believed that the church would be the most likely organization to assist in the improvement of the settlement, but more in terms of social life rather than of infrastructure improvements. This emphasis on family and church draws parallels with the social cohesion one might find in a village (Rawlings 1999). That is, as kinship ties in towns have become more elaborate, and with chiefly representatives providing social control, there is a marked resemblance to the social organization of a rural village.

In response to questions on organizations that could perhaps be of assistance to the inhabitants of Blacksands, the majority of people answered, “mi no save” or “I don’t know”, indicating that the thought of any real assistance was a novel idea to many. Whilst many were aware of national political activities via radio and other media, the same level of awareness was not evident at the local community level. The Blacksands residents indicated that island communities and church groups were most likely to offer practical assistance. When asked what the government could do to help, fully 100% of the responses were loud snorts of laughter but 28% still believed that the government could be of some assistance. They were acutely aware that politicians used them under the pretext of helping them, as was revealed in this man’s observation: This will be a good year as we have provincial elections in October, I’ll get my rain water tank then. When the national election comes I’ll try and get two. You watch them come here once every four years and shout about all the things they can do for you. Then, they give one
water tank to one family only and leave, expecting us all to run and go and vote for them because they are big men (August Bule, 34 from Pentecost).

The people of Blacksands were knowledgeable about their civil and political rights and, for some, of the restrictions they faced when exercising their right to vote in national and provincial elections. The majority of the residents (-aged 18 years and above) were registered to vote in SHEFA Province. The Electoral Commission, in recognition of the number of registered voters in Blacksands and Maniples (estimated in excess of 2,800), established a polling station at the Presbyterian Church in the settlement. Residents were aware that the national and local government representatives could address their prioritized needs (clean water supply, security of tenure and improved road conditions). They were also conscious of the fact that these same authorities were inclined to “overlook” Blacksands and other informal settlements in development projects on the assumption that the residents were temporary and would eventually return to their islands. It seems to me that we have to live in a good house and have nothing to complain about if the government is to bring development to the area. They are always talking about development in the islands, or fixing the roads in Vila, but what about us? How do we make them think about us? (Emma Lamai, 30 from Tanna).

A third of the respondents asserted that it was the government’s responsibility to provide services and infrastructure to Blacksands but believed that the government would not do anything because it lacked finances and the political will to do so. There was a strong feeling of resentment and resignation that Blacksands appeared to be a ‘forgotten’ settlement until election time. As one resident (Jeffrey Tabi, 26 of Pentecost) remarked, “I am registered to vote in SHEFA Province but I have never seen them here except to
collect licence payments, that is all. You always see government vehicles here but they are only doing family business.” Another resident said, I am registered to vote in SHEFA Province but I have never seen them here. I think the province does not accept responsibility for us here, it is as if they have forgotten us (Raymon Langse 47 from Pentecost).

There was a definite awareness of the role of local authorities combined with general frustration at their lack of resources and the apparent lack of interest in Blacksands residents. Pastor John Gislampo (26 from Banks Islands) stressed that the government had a responsibility to the people of Blacksands but that people were beginning to lose hope in their ability to assist in social development. He expressed disdain for the provincial health visits. Last month the Department of Health came to check our wells but they didn’t say anything to us, as if we don’t exist. I tried to ask them questions about our water quality but they told me that I shouldn’t disturb them when they were working!

Pastor Gislampo stated that their church group (NTM) was so tired of waiting that, “My church group is asking VT100 from every family so that we can raise enough money to fix the roads. A man we trust looks after the money. This is what they did at Manples and they got the road fixed last month.

Many of the residents considered the customary landowners to be the major obstacle to improvements at Blacksands. The government should be the one who helps people as we vote for them. I think the landowners also stop us from developing Blacksands as they are always rowing about whose piece of land is whose (Jcffrey Tabi, 36 of Pentecost). The residents tended to individually discuss improvements with the landowner, rather than as a community speaking with a united voice. The general response from the landowner was
that if the roads were improved or additional basic services provided, the monthly rental rates would be increased, which the tenants would not be able to afford. Residents of Blacksands had become only too aware that they could not have it both ways. That is, they could not financially afford to live in improved housing with basic services, nor could they afford (physically) to live in poor housing with few amenities for long periods of time. *Blacksands needs help. We need the landowner to assure us of our security, to give us better contracts to live here, so we can improve our standards. Improving our life depends on what we have in our pockets. Water and electricity would be nice to have but we cannot really afford it.* (James Tompecon, 37 from Tanna).

Political organization of the residents in Blacksands was non-existent, partly due to the absence of a ‘true’ community (with the emphasis on kin networks) and partly due to a restricted political freedom based on the informal nature of access to land. That is, those residents who had been granted access to land in Blacksands by certain politicians, were pressured to vote in the politicians’ favour or would face eviction. However, residents were knowledgeable on their political rights and recognized the need to learn more about their neighbours’ needs in order to determine an appropriate and effective development strategy for all people in the settlement and with the unanimous assent of the landowners.

**SIGNS OF INCREASING ‘URBAN ATTACHMENT’**

The question of a committed urban proletariat in Port Vila was raised as early as the mid-1970s (Bedford 1973, Young 1977 cited in Ward 1998) although the importance of the village as a source of social security (access to land and other resources) was still high. A decade, later however, after a rapid process of acculturation, there was a visible young
urban proletariat dependent on wage employment had emerged with many lacking a subsistence alternative to urban employment (mainly due to commitment to town and/or neglect of maintaining ties with the rural home area). As Tonkinson (1984:157) noted with the Ambrymese in Mele Maat, Efate: “Their peri-urban settlement is definitely home but most continue to view south-east Ambrym as a good place to visit, to vacation, to make copra, perhaps even to spend one’s old age. Although no one says they will never return to live permanently in Ambrym, both Maat residents and their homeland relatives know the unspoken truth. Most are reluctant to abandon their secure economic base in the hinterland of Vila.”

The dimensions of permanence are varied and as permanence is the final stage in movement, it can only be truly confirmed in retrospect after a migrant is dead (Fahey 1978, Connell 1981, Haberkorn 1989). However, daily lives and aspirations can be relied on to a certain extent as reasonable indicators of urban commitment. Family formation in urban areas and the duration of residence further indicate a major element of commitment to urban residence (Connell 1985) as does a decline (leading to eventual loss of contact in some cases) in rural commitments (infrequent rate of return visits to the village). There is active participation in town activities (church, social activities such as sport and watching movies), visible investment in land and housing, business development and the establishment of social networks within the town and a decline in the rate of return visits to the village. It is extremely difficult to determine and measure urban commitment in a meaningful way. The problem is essentially one of trying to apply discrete categories to a continuous variable. Moreover, urban commitment is also subjective and its perceptions vary with the observer; self-perception may be different from that of the observer.
It is evident that many Blacksands residents have lived for lengthy periods in Port Vila (indeed, a growing percentage have lived all their lives in town) and the balancing of sex ratios suggests a more stable and permanent population. A large minority (41%) of the surveyed residents had lived in and around Port Vila for an average of at least 10 years with a further 20% having lived in town for 20 years. These households were predominantly stable nuclear families living together, not simply employed single males or females. Although in-migration remains a component of urban growth, the current growth of informal settlements is increasingly attributable to natural increase rather than in-migration. However, there is no recognition of this fact by local authorities, as evidenced in the May 2000 discussion on the draft population policy which emphasized rural economic development as the primary solution to the stemming of rural-urban migration (see Chapter Two).

The structure of the social life of the people of Blacksands points strongly to an investment in an urban lifestyle and a visible sign of urban attachment. They worked in town and participated in sport, religious, cultural and recreational activities. They had invested in homes (and gardens) in and near town, and consumption patterns were urban in nature. That is, diets were largely based on imported foods. Urban attachment was further reflected in the high level of involvement in formal wage and employment, and in the perception that there are few economic opportunities in the village. *What is there to do on the island? My children attend school in Vila and my house is here. How can I make money on the island?* (Noel Tabi, 28 from Pentecost). There were marked signs of a high dependence on wage employment, particularly among those families unable to
secure land for gardening and therefore a suitable subsistence alternative to urban employment.

Social networks are increasingly reinforced with other family and island member groups in town. Like other residential areas of Port Vila, Blacksands is not always an idyllic community. Residents experience problems with social life, get frustrated with their situation, get angry, steal, cheat and lie. These frustrations that can result in criminal acts (e.g. theft, assault) tend to give rise to the popular assumption that settlements are repositories of criminals and the unemployed (Koczberski et al, 2001). The onus of achieving a harmonious society amongst the residents falls largely on the chiefly representatives who achieve varying rates of success. In spite of a degree of social and cultural segregation within Blacksands, the residents do not appear to be socially disadvantaged by the fragmentation of social relations in the wider urban setting. They are able to gain access to public services, goods, activities and resources, but far fewer than they would like, and fewer than in formal residential areas. The presence of their chiefly representatives and a rising trend to cross cultural boundaries in employment and social activities, has meant that there has been no real rupture in the relationships between the individual and society. However, relationships beyond kin would promote the idea of community, so that all residents can actively participate in the development of the settlement and the improvement in quality of life.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, there was a marked decline in rural commitment as remittances to the village were infrequent (admittedly in part to an unreliable national transport network) and visits to the village had been less frequent and for shorter periods. The last time I went back to the island was 1991 as a member of my close family died. I
am scared of Nakaimas so I don’t want to go back anymore (Winnie Moses, 44 of Ambrym). Whilst there is talk about ‘going home one day’, many have never actually been ‘home’, having been born and raised in town. Many young males had been thrown out of their village for bad behaviour. For others, the cost of a trip ‘home’ was simply unaffordable. The increasing number of children born in towns and who had few ties with their ‘home’, and limited home island languages skills had limited opportunities beyond the town or city. This was similar for illegitimate children who had no rights to land and so were, in effect, tied to town. Whilst it was common to hear young people claim that life in the village was better as it was less crowded and had fewer social problems, few expressed any real intention of wanting to return. Vila is too expensive if you have no work. In the village you have land, family and not so many bad people. I think it is good to live in the village but I shall probably stay here as I am more used to life in town. It is hard but I have lived here for a long time (Elena Robert, 22 from Tongoa).

The majority of households admitted that it was most likely that they would still be in town 5 to 10 years down the line. In spite of the hardships experienced by many households in town, the long duration of residency in Vila and the formation of family and urban social networks have promoted considerably urban attachment for many residents. I think that I shall still be here in 5 years’ time and that life will be even harder than now as more people will come here and fight to rent the few houses that are here. If my girls decide to marry someone and live in Vila then I shall stay here with them. I won't go back to Tanna (Leah Ben, 39 of Tanna).

Blacksands residents show many signs of having already made the nation’s capital their permanent home. They are unlikely to move, in spite of some chiefs’, politicians’ and
authorities’ assumed ‘moral task’ to encourage people to return to rural settings and live out productive lives, as opposed to eking out a living in town. Whilst residents may first identify themselves in terms of family, religious and political groups (as noted by Bong 1995), they also identify themselves as residents of the settlement, and therefore as members of the larger urban community of Port Vila. Urban planning must therefore respond to this growing permancy.
Chapter Seven
Implications for Sustainable Urban Management

The emerging picture of Blacksands is of an increasingly stable settlement supporting residents of diverse cultural, political, social and economic backgrounds. The residents have displayed an undeniable level of urban commitment through housing, employment and education investments. A rapidly growing permanent urban population presents serious implications for local authorities in terms of planning, as growth without planned development produces socio-economic scenarios that threaten the image of a modest Pacific town and the political stability of a nation. This chapter proposes to review issues of urban planning and management with particular reference to informal settlements such as Blacksands and the implications of an increasingly permanent population on the town periphery. The resources of management agencies, existing policies and plans are examined followed by an analysis of the potential for sustainable urban development in Port Vila.

The overall rapid demographic growth of Port Vila has placed a strain on existing infrastructure facilities and social services, contributing to the spatial expansion of the urban area. The economic growth of Port Vila can hardly keep pace with the dynamics of population growth and the result has been a continuous decrease of average per capita income (ESCAP 1995). The deterioration of urban infrastructure provision and maintenance is characteristic in urban centres of many developing countries’ and in settlements such as Blacksands there is a total absence of such services, despite its lengthy period of existence (30 years) and its considerable permanence.
There is some agreement that informal settlements partially solve the housing issue and provide a semi-subsistence lifestyle essential for the survival of the urban poor. However, growing problems of access to decent housing and basic services have significant impact on social structures, urban patterns and environmental quality. The residents of Blacksands were largely content with their current conditions although they emphasized that they would like to improve their quality of life. For them that was less related to improving living conditions or civil status as peri-urban residents, than to national level improvements in salaries and working conditions and a reduced rate of inflation of food and transport costs.

In Vanuatu local and national authorities have a constitutional responsibility to provide an adequate standard of living and quality of life to all citizens. Perhaps the most important issue for urban management is that authorities presently continue to consider the urban residents as temporary visitors whose rightful place is in the village, and therefore resources are not spent on the provision of services and infrastructure. Moreover, local and national authorities claim that blurred distinctions between what is rural and what is urban affect their ability (when a willingness to assist may actually present itself) to provide basic services to peri-urban settlements such as Blacksands. Residents of Blacksands themselves recognized both these problems and were therefore often discouraged from organizing a pro-active group for the promotion of development in the settlement due to the apparent futility of such action.
URBAN MANAGEMENT IN THE PACIFIC

Urban growth throughout the Pacific has been paralleled by uncoordinated and ineffective management (Storey 1998:32). The rapidity and novelty of urbanization and urban development in the Pacific over the last twenty to thirty years, combined with a search for national identities and a preoccupation with economic development issues, including increasing globalisation, has seen planning and management of ‘new’ urban areas take a back seat until recent times (Jones 1995:8). The overall status of urban planning and urban management in the Pacific is weak, inadequate and ineffective although it did (often) exist in colonial times. This is not surprising given that the emerging urban sector is by nature, multi-sectoral and complex, cutting across a range of key players and organizations, including traditional institutions and processes.

Government authorities have been slow to respond to the issues of urbanization, due to its recency growth and restriction of traditional land tenure arrangements that often place urban planning beyond their control. As a result, adequate housing and services have not been provided for these growing populations, and with the underlying problem of land shortages, informal settlements have developed in response (Storey 1999:157). Inadequate financial, personnel and technical resources, a scattered responsibility over several agencies, weak institutional arrangements for land use planning and a lack of capacity to enforce compliance with building codes and other related legislation have further contributed to a lack of response to issues of urbanization in the Pacific.

Urban management can be defined as policies, plans, programmes and practices that seek to ensure that population growth is matched by accessibility to basic infrastructure, including housing and employment. Such accessibility will be realized by private
initiatives and enterprise but also importantly, by public sector policies and functions undertaken by government (Davey 1993:7). Urban planning in combination with urban management seeks to ensure that there is a continuing process by which key urban issues are identified and agreed strategies implemented through coordinated involvement and participation from the public, private and community sectors (Jones 1995:7). Management is based on the capacity of local and national authorities to provide for urban growth and is dependent on a country’s financial and human resources. Underpinning these choices are political decisions made between the state, local authorities and society, the three constituents of which lie at the centre of urban governance (Storey 1998:32). Storey (1995 cited in Larmour 1996:1) has stressed the importance of focusing on the relationship between national and urban governance and urban management and politics, in order ‘to know what facilitates and what inhibits governance in particular contexts’. It is this theme that will be taken up in the present chapter.

For the Pacific region, the United Nations Development Programme (1994) has stressed the promotion of enabling and participatory strategies for the provision of urban infrastructure and affordable shelter, and the promotion of the protection and regeneration of the urban physical environment, especially in low income settlements. Whilst this is relevant to the case study of Blacksands, the lack of social and political organization at the local level must first be addressed in order to enable all residents (and landowners) to participate in the development of the settlement. UNDP also emphasizes the need to improve urban management, including the expansion of local governments’ revenue-raising capacity, and the need to decentralize authority and responsibility for urban
development from central government agencies and ministries to local governments and non-governmental agencies. This is of particular importance at the national level in Vanuatu, where no less than five government departments, excluding the municipality, have responsibilities for land use planning and development control. None of these issues is particularly new but all of them require simultaneous attention if permanent improvements are to be achieved. As Connell and Lea (1994:287) have noted, effective urban management and governance depend very much on the popular acceptance of government intervention in daily life - a situation that is far from the norm in many Pacific Island countries.

As urbanization continues to grow at an alarming rate in the Pacific, opposition to this phenomenon has grown from urban authorities, community leaders, customary landowners and local residents, all of whom promote the village as a ‘better’ place where people are self-reliant, honest and productive. Currently, the trend appears to continue to regard these settlements as temporary and to turn a blind eye to their existence. Whilst the removal of entire settlements has occurred in countries such as Papua New Guinea (Koczberski et al, 2001), because of the political nature of the origin of some of the more decrepit housing areas in Port Vila, they have been left well alone by local authorities. However, it is unlikely that a “bulldozer” approach will solve the squatting and informal settlement issue in Vanuatu, or in other Melanesian countries, as the root causes of the existence of these settlements are not being addressed.

Advance planning of settlements, supported by the requisite political and technical will and commitment to implement or enforce it, is the realistic long-term and most cost-effective option to develop and manage sustainable human settlements. To time and
implement plans properly would obviate the costly option of squatter and slum upgrading and encourage the sustainable and productive management of settlements (Okpala 1999:14). However, Vanuatu already has a growing number of settlements and advanced planning for sustainable human settlements is no longer an option for settlements like Blacksands.

DECENTRALIZATION AND URBAN POLICY IN VANUATU

Most governments in the region have expressed concern about the negative effects of excessive rural to urban migration particularly in terms of housing and employment. However, the World Bank (1993:18) has asserted that, "no country has been effective in restraining rural-urban migration, and urban policies therefore need to shift from containing urban growth to guiding it." The national focus in Vanuatu has been on stemming rural-urban drift, combined with an emphasis on rural economic development through administrative decentralization, the creation of new income-earning opportunities and the provision of urban type services in rural areas (ESCAP 1992:191). Eight years later, the Government of Vanuatu is still concentrating its efforts on slowing rural-urban migration by promoting alternative income and employment opportunities in the rural provinces.

Concern for rural-urban drift has diverted attention from the fact of natural increase in the towns themselves and fundamental issues such as inadequate provision of infrastructure and services and the need for more employment opportunities in the urban centres have been overlooked. It has further contributed to neglecting the need to simultaneously guide and manage development in the rapidly growing capital. The absence of appropriate
action to guide urbanization in Vanuatu has had an increasingly negative impact on the productive capacity of the urban economy and its potential contribution to overall economic development, as well as on the quality of the rapidly growing towns, particularly for the poor and landless. Current policies are largely aimed at economic growth, rather than more broadly based economic development, and are unlikely to reduce problems associated with equity and the distribution of urban and other services.

Until 1993, outer islands of Vanuatu were governed by eleven local government councils, who reported to the Department of Provincial Affairs located within the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In November 1993, the local government councils were transformed into six provinces, each with an administrative centre and elected councillors. Expenditure in urban areas is quite disproportionate to urban population sizes, even if it does not reach urban settlements. Indeed, it has been estimated that over 35% of the annual government budget alone is allocated for recurring costs in the urban based central offices before program budgeting has been committed (personal communication, National Statistics Office 2000). SHEFA Province has a budget of VT60 million a year to service an estimated population in excess of 50,000 (compared to the Port Vila Municipal area with a budget of VT144 million, serving 30,000 people). Even so, Connell and Lea (1994:287) have noted in other small developing Pacific countries, municipal governments in primate cities have rarely enjoyed the preconditions necessary for them to operate effectively although they are often better funded than rural areas.

9 18.8% of households (including expatriate households) in urban areas do not own land anywhere (National Statistics Office 2000:33)
The Port Vila Municipal Council has more or less denied any responsibility for settlements outside the municipal boundaries, in spite of their impact on urban infrastructure and services. The Municipal Council has focused its attention on beautification schemes within the central business district and, ironically, establishing relationships with local councils as distant as PENAMA and TAFEA province (Trading Post 6/09/00). SHEFA Province on the other hand is aware of its administrative responsibilities for settlements such as Blacksands but states that, due to inadequate financial resources and the difficulties of negotiating with customary landowners, they can do little to address issues such as the delivery of basic services to the settlements. The province is consequently, supportive of the national government’s interest in extending the municipal boundary of Port Vila, which will encompass and bring into public ownership the land required for on-going and future urban growth, as this will alleviate pressures on their scant resources.

SHEFA province spends a considerable amount of time issuing firm instructions to investors to seek formal permission from the Council before carrying out any plans for development within the physical planning areas of the Province. They are often completely ignored and, with only two planners and limited financial resources, their ability to enforce laws is virtually non-existent. In May 2000, following the death of the sole town planner in Vanuatu, the country was left without any qualified planner. In addition, uncertainties apparently remain about what constitutes ‘urban land’ within the designated urban areas and landowners remain opposed to statutory planning that could limit their land use rights in any way.
Management and planning for the Province and the Municipal area are further hampered by a shortage of funds for urban investment. The delivery of public services in Vanuatu suffers from chronically inadequate maintenance funding, which is crowded out by excessive staff costs that impose a high fixed cost and low productivity on urban budgets (World Bank, forthcoming). Since no single authority is responsible for regulation and improvement of the settlements, official intervention to improve housing conditions, water supply and sanitation is difficult. There has been little acceptance of the need to reduce the number (and costs) of the many agencies charged with urban management functions – each one having a different agenda and few, if any, being adequately resourced with sufficient funds or managerial and technical expertise. The lack of coordination among the various branches of government responsible for urban development and a lack of clearly defined roles for these agencies have also contributed to the lack of effective urban planning.

Despite official concern over unmanaged urbanization, alongside an expressed focus on rural development (as emphasized by CRP), few real attempts have been made to guide or manage urban development. Equally there have been few attempts to formulate a coherent urban policy in Vanuatu. Policies towards the management of urbanization generally consist of piecemeal plans and projects in both Port Vila and Lugarville. There has never been a specific urban sector policy statement in the National Development Plans although national plans have recognized the problems likely to be caused by unconstrained growth in Port Vila and the disparate growth rates between rural and urban areas of the country.
PHOTO 13A: SHEFA Provincial headquarters located within the boundaries of the Port Vila Municipal Council.

PHOTO 13B: Port Vila Municipal Council headquarters, town hall
A review of urban policy needs for Vanuatu (Halliburton 1991) concluded that the government’s attitude towards and lack of action concerning urbanization and informal settlements was indicative of the fact that authorities did not consider urban development an issue. Indeed, what appears to be occurring is ‘urban policy by default’; that is, a policy developed as a result of the interplay of other sectoral policies without being considered in its own right.

In Vanuatu, consideration of the need to manage urban growth is referred to in draft health, population and environment policies but the benefits that might be derived from a comprehensive urban policy that is integrated into national development strategies have not been possible.

In 1987, the Municipal Council drafted a physical plan for Port Vila with assistance from expatriate advisers. The plan was partially updated in 1992 but has never been approved under the Physical Planning Act, although it continues to be used in some planning operations. Draft physical plans for SHEFA (1997) have been reportedly under preparation for three years but have not been published. The draft plan has a proposal for a combined provincial, national and municipal approach to establish urban “villages” (also referred to as transit stations) for recent migrants and low-income households already in town well beyond the Port Vila Municipal boundary as a means of creating a more environmentally sustainable urban area. The ‘urban villages’ would then serve as initial accommodation in what was considered a more traditional (that is, rural) setting for recent migrants to and low-income households in Vila as a means of discouraging migration to the capital and the further growth in size and number of informal settlements. However, this proposal continued to ignore and neglect the existing
unplanned peripheral settlements such as Blacksands, nor did it tackle the logistics of land acquisition, preferring to start anew elsewhere.

There are many viewpoints as to how squatter and informal settlements can be dealt with, ranging from upgrading strategies (the improvement of settlements through the provision of basic services and land tenure) and self-help programs to removal. Upgrading programs are thought to be able to improve economic and other opportunities, whilst preserving the existing low cost housing and community structure and avoiding the social disruptions that come with resettlement. However, many of these programs have made little impression on improving housing quality as the option of governments of taking over properties, through expropriation and the compensation of owners, burdens the public sector with unmanageable tasks and expenses for repairs, services and maintenance (UNCHS 1984:34).

Households are vulnerable to attempts to take over their property titles, and poor residents are normally quickly bought out of upgrading or redevelopment schemes. In Vila the low-income housing scheme at Frewota in the early 1990s targeted the housing of poor households in the Seaside settlements. The homes that were built now house an emerging ni-Vanuatu middle-class. This housing program was highly politicized and designed to unnecessarily high standards, and was largely unaffordable for the low-income income groups intended. The rapid population growth in Vanuatu has exceeded the willingness or ability of the Government to further mobilize and service appropriate land to meet resulting housing needs.
Settlement upgrading is not attractive to the private sector as avenues for profit are very limited, but, most importantly, illegality usually discourages it (Okpala 1999:6). Upgrading programs have been regarded as socially and financially too costly as a cost-effective long-term strategy for the development and management of sustainable human settlements. This shortcoming is largely attributed to program failures to address the more fundamental constraints, the supply of land, housing, financing and building materials and the provision of infrastructure and services (Hardoy and Satterthwaite 1989). Upgrading is therefore not a viable solution (although it is often the only alternative for Pacific governments), as it cannot really be considered a cost-effective means of achieving sustainable urban development.

Developing countries such as Vanuatu have nevertheless found it necessary to commit themselves to the objective of promoting, where appropriate, the upgrading of informal settlements and urban slums as an expedient measure and pragmatic solution to the urban shelter deficit (UNCHS 1996:24). The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS 1996) has advocated that a more realistic approach is to view squatter settlements more sympathetically and to try to upgrade them progressively with basic sanitary infrastructures and social services at levels the residents could afford. At the same time, however, the usual strategies and instruments (such as strengthening settlements planning, creating and maintaining healthy macroeconomic policies and institutional reforms) should continue to be pursued and strengthened.

In 1997 the government announced that there was a need for an effective urbanization policy, where “effective” meant stemming rural-urban migration. The draft policy for
growth and development (abandoned in 1998 in favour of CRP\textsuperscript{10}) called for recognition of 'squatter settlements' as a permanent form of urban dwelling and the need to develop policies to improve settlement living conditions, including security of tenure, water supply, sanitation improvement, electricity and access roads. The ADB-assisted Urban Infrastructure Project has urged that a Statement of National Urban Policy be formulated within the Ministry of Internal Affairs to guide the overall formulation of government policies with respect to the urban sector (Townland Consultants 1998:10). A sub-project, the Urban Growth Management Strategy (UGMS), recommended consideration of the need to upgrade the informal housing areas through the means of properly planned site and service areas; and the need generally to develop smaller and more affordable plots for the urban population. However, despite this series of recommendations and proposals, at best, recent policies (or rather, the lack of policies) towards urbanization in Vanuatu can be described as benign neglect.

As the various authorities have continued to ignore the need to formulate urban policy the same problems of mismanagement and institutional paralysis are apparent in various forms of service provision within the urban sector. It has been estimated (Townland Consultants 1998) that there is a housing demand of some 440 dwellings per annum in Port Vila with parallel demands on land accessibility, education and health provision, transport infrastructure, sanitation services and employment. The inadequate response to these demands has seen a rapid growth in the number and size of informal and squatter settlements in and around the town’s municipal boundary in the last decade.

\textsuperscript{10} In 1998 CRP recommended the formulation of a Housing and Urbanization Policy under the Department of Strategic Management, but this had not been initiated two years later.
The absence of urban planning is visible in the already stretched infrastructure services and the institutions, which are charged to deliver them thus, worsening environmental conditions, increasing unemployment and constrained economic growth. In the past decade Port Vila has experienced a declining control through regulations, reduced attention to land use zoning and building bylaws, and failure to maintain and provide for urban infrastructure and services. The economic benefits of adequate maintenance of existing urban assets is likely to be far higher than new investments and should be assigned high priority in national budgets and donor assistance programs alike (though the latter tends to support new projects rather than upkeep and maintenance of existing schemes). Disparities between the high-income and low-income households are widening in terms of access to land, shelter, basic services and reasonable expectations of improving quality of life. Frustrations among the unemployed are vented and recorded in increasing levels of urban crime and violence.

As population and consumption have increased in Port Vila and its surrounding areas, so has the volume of waste. Pollution of the lagoons and Fatumaru Bay has indicated the potential for major disease in addition to the already prevalent illnesses of diarrhoea, dysentery and hepatitis. Environmental concerns are rising as increased population pressures in a confined area give rise to the pollution and exploitation of coastal and inland resources. The vulnerability (to natural disasters, and sea-level rise for example) of the environment in Port Vila requires policy to be directed to the “brown” issues of urban wastes and implementation and enforcement of environmental controls, particularly in terms of inappropriate land use. Although a waste management plan for Port Vila is currently being co-drafted by the Environment Unit and the Port Vila Municipal Council,
it does not accommodate the urban residents dwelling beyond the municipal boundaries.

In Vanuatu, there is little recognition that the environmental management of urban areas is a prerequisite for successful long-term economic development.

PHOTO 14: Litter on the shores of Port Vila harbour.
In every context, from environment to economic, the lack of an urban plan in Port Vila is evident. So too is the inadequate personnel and equipment for management of urbanization, hence the resort to vague ‘last-ditch’ schemes aimed at repatriation. Various authorities have repeatedly recommended for the repatriation of unemployed youth to the islands, as well as national identity cards to promote the regulation of inter-island travel (Draft Population Policy 1998). Apart from the difficulties of the logistics of these recommendations, these “strategies” do nothing to address the issue of an increasingly permanent population in town that requires access to basic services and infrastructure for a reasonable quality of life.

As Jones has observed, “paramount to the quality of life in urban areas in the Pacific will be the success or otherwise of programmes and initiatives focusing on urban (and environmental) planning and urban management, especially those performed by the government” (Jones 1995:7). There is an urgent need for policies and innovative institutional arrangements for urban development and in particular the need to integrate informal settlements more fully into the urban political, social and economic mainstream.

Vanuatu’s institutional history of informal settlements, albeit brief, is not one of great success, as there has been a preoccupation only with the ‘symptoms’ of urban growth manifested in emerging problems. There has been a failure to fully appreciate the factors driving rapid urbanization and an effective strategy has yet to be enacted. Any initiative to alleviate conditions in peri-urban areas in Vanuatu is constrained by this non-urban status, custom relations, informal leasing arrangements, multiple claimants on undeveloped land, and the lack of comprehensive and applicable physical planning jurisdiction (Storey 1998: 33). Effective, long-term planning, the strengthening of
institutions charged with urban responsibilities, broader consultation with key stakeholders in the urban environment and improved social and political organization at the community level are all necessary for sustainable urban development. None of this currently exists.

The responsibility of government to provide basic urban services has been widely assumed and there has been a somewhat blind faith that the government will eventually take action and formulate new policies. As Connell and Lea (1994:290) have noted, much of the problem may be more fundamental and point to the need for changes in the structure of the government itself. Neither central nor local governments have been as effective as they were expected to be in the planning and management of Port Vila, partly because of the lack of coordination among the various branches of government responsible for urban development and a lack of clearly defined roles for these agencies. Good planning is the only rational framework to provide for serviced land, to provide adequate and integrated environmental infrastructures, to improve health by ensuring access for all people to sufficient, continuous water, sanitation, drainage and waste disposal services (UNCHS 1996:24). As noted earlier, the government agencies and municipal responsible for town planning in Port Vila have almost been exclusively confined to the processing of planning applications and little or no resources are available for plan review, updating and revision. Whilst the advantages of medium and long-term planning are becoming recognized, the shortage of manpower and technical resources has not been overcome. Efforts to strengthen public institutions necessitate strengthening their finances, developing their human resources and the technical and managerial ability of those responsible for urban development and planning.
INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

For informal settlements such as Blacksands, ideal schemes of informal settlement improvement (legislation by issuance of leases or sub-leases, resettlement and eviction) have been drafted by government agencies through the recommendations of internationally assisted socio-economic reports such as Halliburton (1992), Paul (1993), the Hydroplan (1994) and Townland Consultants (1998). However, neat recommendations for a generalized approach to the improvement of settlements are not practical in the case of Blacksands as this thesis endeavours to show. The absence of effective planning and management in Port Vila, the considerable limited resources of SHEFA province, the reluctance of customary landowners to cooperate with settlement and local authorities for common benefits and the inability of Blacksands residents themselves to form an effective, empowered community organization implies that the prospects for real planning and management in Blacksands in the near future are unlikely.

The absence of an endorsed physical plan for Port Vila to effectively guide urban development and management that crosses current municipality boundaries coupled with limited financial and personnel resources indicates poor prospects for future action on improvements in the provision of social services and infrastructure. In addition, a lack of political will by the councillors of the Municipal to address the issues of rapid urbanization does not encourage any effective action. Indeed, it would appear as if the Port Vila Municipal is satisfied with dealing with crisis issues in the case of informal settlements as they arise rather than to spend resources on preventing them from happening. Many informal settlements, including Blacksands are located within SHEFA province but the provincial government offers very little in terms of improvement and
appears to have even weaker management and planning arrangements and financial resources than the Port Vila Municipal.

Key participants in the sustainable development of Blacksands are the residents, the customary landowners and government (national and local) authorities. The inadequacies inherent in the contemporary situation perhaps requires greater patience by these key participants and consultation amongst themselves with a view to first determining their respective needs and wants to achieve a balance of individual rights (for residents and Ifiran customary landowners) and a communal good before developing strategies and plans. The onus is on the national, provincial and municipality authorities to better inform residents and customary owners about the contents and aims of their respective development plans (where they exist) and to convince them that the observation of the rules and regulations is in their own interest.

Recommendations from past urban reviews have advised that the integration of traditional decision-making structures making structures, community groups and national, provincial and municipality, within the wider urban decision-making structure, is critical to the success of urban management and planning. The emphasis is therefore on SHEFA Province to open up effective channels for community participation through the increased engagement of community leaders, customary landowners and non-governmental institutions for more effective and sustainable development on the periphery of Port Vila. However, SHEFA Province has sought to pass on this responsibility to an equally unwilling Port Vila Municipal authority, thus effectively leaving Blacksands – in terms of planning and management – caught indecisively in-between.
The customary landowners are essential in joint public-communal developments and first need to be convinced by local authorities and the residents of their mutual benefit. The Province could then initiate an "urban dialogue" to create a consensus on strategies, roles and responsibilities to mobilize the benefits of urbanization and to achieve a more equitable distribution of opportunities for all while safeguarding the environment. However, the reality of participation in practice is much more complex and contentious. The customary landowners and chiefs who own land at Blacksands and other settlements have not displayed any significant concern for the welfare of people who do not belong to their kinship groups. As mentioned in previous chapters, customary landowners do not wish to participate in a system that might (however, improbable) transform Blacksands into a 'proper' suburb – good roads, streetlights, water supplies, electricity and so forth – and in doing so, possibly give them reduced authority and control over what happened there. Whilst land owning representatives are themselves well organized, they have no formal links with residents of Blacksands or the national (and local) governments, who have yet to make practical decisions on Vanuatu's urban development issues.

Some degree of participation in decision-making by landowners and settlers would enable the latter group especially to be involved in their own development (from conception to implementation to evaluation). It would also provide a sense of ownership and allow people to control the rate and nature of change in the settlement. However, settlers have themselves been unable to establish adequate organizations that have articulated their grievances. Attempts to do so through the auspices of the CARE Committee in 1995 failed due to the disruption within the settlements following the murder of a young man and the subsequent permanent departure from Blacksands of key
members of the committee, jealousy of some non-members, an inability for people of different island groups to work together productively for a common good and the absence of strong leadership for the committee. Blacksands residents tended to organize themselves into island/ethnic groups and may therefore be seen as more individualistic and divided rather than as members of a wider community. In the rest of Blacksands, where political factors placed them there, the opportunities for the establishment of a community were even more restricted as their involvement in any matters not approved by the politician who had provided them with their homes would result in their eviction. It was apparent that the residents of Blacksands were without financial and managerial resources to provide for development themselves.

In theory the chiefly representatives resident in Blacksands could be approached by those responsible for urban management and planning to consider the establishment of a development committee, which might ensure that all island groups were involved and had an opportunity to be heard by the customary landowners and the national and provincial authorities. However, the reality is that a lack of political will and resources by national and provincial agencies and a reluctance to encourage a permanent resident population on their land by customary landowners can and did dissuade residents from forming a well organized community in an attempt to improve their living arrangements and conditions. Many residents regarded pro-action among themselves as a futile exercise as any efforts would fall on deaf ears and therefore energies would be better spent on looking out for themselves on an individual basis.
THE FUTURE

Achieving sustainable livelihoods in human settlements in the coming decade will require the national government, settlement communities and customary landowners to set clear strategic directions and priorities for human settlements. In light of this, UNDP’s Fiji office encouraged the Vanuatu Government to draft the Port Vila Squatter Settlements Project in 1998 to assist in the improvement of the quality of life of some disadvantaged sections of the urban community in Port Vila. The project sought to enable residents of settlements to organize themselves into a functioning forum to propose solutions to socio-economic issues; establish formal links with land-owning representatives; and address an official government standing committee empowered to deal with and solve issues generated. It was intended that this project work closely with a parallel Urban Growth Management Study but slow action within the Department of Economic and Social Development (DESD) resulted in the funds being allocated elsewhere in the government budget. This was the last attempt to focus development planning in Vanuatu on informal settlements. Like its predecessors it was ineffective. There is little reason to suppose that significant changes will occur in the immediate future.

Studies within the Pacific region have promoted the involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as essential partners in the urban development process as they are believed to contribute in many ways by planning local action, contributing to maintenance activities and supporting government personnel and programs. In Vanuatu, few NGOs have been active within informal settlements, with many focusing their attention on rural (that is, outer islands) development and services. For example, the Rural Skills Training Program (RSTP) has provided instruction in the construction of facilities such as improved
ventilation pit latrines and smokeless stoves in order to promote healthier living environments but did not consider settlements on the urban periphery as a target area. The Vanuatu Rural Development Training Centre Association (VRDTCA) had similar practices and its programmes were targeted to the outer islands, in spite of the need for the provision of vocational training for urban youth.

In Blacksands itself, the Wan SmolBag Theatre group and the Young Peoples’ Project have had various health and waste management activities organized for youth but budgets and agendas were limited to working in areas that did not include strengthening of local associations. Church Associations were thought by the residents (28%) to be helpful organizations in assisting in the development of the settlement but their aims were focused on assisting individual households rather than facilitating social organization and development on a broader scale. The situation is a long way from that where there might be a more inclusive constituency of stakeholders (policy makers, public sector institutions, customary landowners and residents of settlements) to participate in the decision making process that would improve services and security of tenure in the long-term interests of all concerned (Payne 1997:16).

The people of Blacksands are not incapable of autonomous development but at the same time cannot simply be seen as passive recipients of outside resources. If development of the settlement and other urban-periphery settlements is to benefit those that live there, key stakeholders (that is, the residents, customary landowners and local authorities) must have a sense of responsibility for the provision and maintenance of services and infrastructure, as well as a sense of ownership, in order to promote maintenance and upkeep of the facilities and as well as an equal distribution of access and usage. Nothing
that presently exists in Port Vila, SHEFA province and Blacksands suggest that even the most basic planning and management functions have been considered, let alone implemented, in these marginal areas. Sustainable urban development and management is far from evident.
Chapter Eight

Conclusion

In the Pacific there is a definable trend whereby towns are expanding faster than village communities, with towns and nearby villages now merging into ‘urban areas’, all suggesting that the future of the region is inescapably an urban one. Indeed, there is now a need to recognize and reinforce the situation where Melanesians are urban people and not the rural villagers of thirty years ago. Urbanization, urban planning and urban management and the associated issues of rapidly increasing populations, rural urban migration and centralization of economic development, are likely to take on an increasing prominence, but some in debate rather than in action.

Urbanization in Vanuatu has been rapid, and towns are now the place of residence for 21% of the population. Academic studies have addressed the ‘dilemmas’ of rapid urbanization in the Pacific and of the growth of informal and squatter settlements in Melanesia in particular. However, no study has detailed the lives of urban residents or of informal settlement residents although it has been alluded to in various studies (e.g. Haberkorn 1987, Dussy 1998), and there has been no study of squatter settlements in the past decade. In the Pacific (and therefore in Vanuatu), assumptions about informal and squatter settlements are based primarily on anecdotal information as there is a serious lack of current (or any) data on urban and peri-urban populations. This is reflected in various reports by academics and socio-economic organizations that have stressed the importance of obtaining empirical information for planning needs for the sustainable development of urban centres, but have relied on others to produce this.
This concluding chapter summarizes the new empirical data: demographic and family formation, employment histories, social infrastructure (housing, gardening land, services and social relationships, that have been analyzed for Blacksands. These new data (alongside the consolidation of isolated reports) has assisted in challenging some of the assumptions made about other informal settlement residents by formal urban residents, planners and local authorities.

It must be reiterated that Blacksands is not a typical settlement. Informal settlements in and around Port Vila vary greatly in terms of composition, tenure arrangements, employment and outlook on life and should be treated on an individual basis rather than as a homogeneous group. The case study of Blacksands in isolation should therefore be regarded as a pilot examination of the changing nature of migration, and of the increasingly permanent urban population in Port Vila, Vanuatu that nonetheless has implications for sustainable urban management in a wider context.

Informal settlements have long been viewed as unstable, temporary dwelling areas filled with recent rural migrants (predominantly single, young males) searching for better employment opportunities, access to better education and health services; or simply visiting the town and its social attractions. The inhabitants of such settlements are often thought to be living below the poverty line in congested, unserviced housing on marginal land. They are consequently often considered marginal people lacking in active participation in the greater political and socio-economic urban arena and disadvantaged by their lack of education and literacy. Urban managers and residents of formal housing areas, and many academics, have often assumed that the occupants of these settlements would eventually return 'home' to make their lives in a rural setting. The information

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gathered on Blacksands from March 1999 to May 2000 has challenged many of these assumptions especially in the extent that it has demonstrated a diverse and growing urban commitment.

Blacksands is a settlement of predominantly nuclear family units with the extended households consisting of visitors from both matrilineal and patrilineal clans. The balanced sex ratios suggest a stable and permanent population. There was considerable heterogeneity within the settlement with residents originating from islands in all six provinces but there were no physical divisions of cultural clusters as occurred in other settlements such as Seaside. Almost half of the residents had lived in Port Vila for more than sixteen years with a third averaging eight years in Blacksands itself. There were a growing number of second or third generation urbanites with 15% having lived all their lives in Blacksands. The long periods of continuous urban residence and the large proportion of adult life spent in town suggests a strong involvement in, and commitment to urban life.

Blacksands has developed on prime residential land but the housing plots are small and building standards vary considerably depending on each household’s economic means. The living conditions may appear congested but there is adequate space for outdoor kitchens, laundry facilities and for a small garden area used for play, relaxation and entertaining guests. Whilst household size mirrored the national average of five persons, housing and especially rental housing (which was often substandard) had a tendency to be more crowded. In spite of a lack of security of tenure, residents have settled with some finality, and aspire to obtain a formal land lease to secure tenure and guarantee their permanence. In spite of the obvious disadvantages that they face in accessing land
(especially the reluctance of customary landowners to free-up undeveloped land and their own relative impoverishment), almost all expressed a verbal commitment to achieving a formal status in the broader urban community.

Households were dependent on the cash economy and the majority of the adult population was in paid employment. Men dominated the paid workforce while women were often bound by tradition to work in the home. However, in the changing socio-economic context of Port Vila, households were increasingly more accepting of women working in town. The few respondents that were in skilled occupations shared the common characteristic of having lived in town for a minimum of ten years, having completed a secondary education and having acquired skills in their youth. This was further reflected in the emphasis that households placed on education as a means to providing better livelihood opportunities for an otherwise frustrated, dissatisfied and rapidly growing young population. Household incomes were diverse and resembled the middle-income category as classified by the National Statistics Office (see Chapter Four). That is, whilst many households were not so well off as many other urban residents, they were doing much better than households in most rural villages.

The majority of households had multiple sources of income that often combined wage work with subsistence gardening and informal marketing. Daily necessities were acquired by the pooling of income and labour from members of the household. There was a high incidence of young unemployed males who contributed little to the households and of young women who were underemployed and served as unpaid homehelp to the household. The difficulty of obtaining a secure, long-term work contract and a minimum wage (rather finding poorly paid, unpleasant jobs in poor conditions) deterred many of
the younger residents from actively seeking employment, resulting in a casual attitude towards securing employment and a widening gap between the aspirations of these people and the means of achieving them. Yet residents cannot be categorized as the urban poor or the urban dispossessed as their diverse economic backgrounds and ability to adapt to changing socio-economic conditions have, to date, ensured more than their simple survival in an increasingly expensive town.

Provision of basic services was inadequate and exacerbated by the residents’ unequal access to and usage of utilities and services due to Blacksands’ location on the urban periphery. Customary land ownership has complicated the provision of the most basic services by limiting land supply and authorities have been reluctant to assume responsibility and commit even limited resources to the improvement of conditions in the settlement. Whilst the residents have survived remarkably well without government intervention, the stability of their current livelihoods is under threat if the current non-intervention policy is continued. Although the actual population growth of Blacksands appears to have slowed in recent years (attributed in part to customary landowners restricting access to newcomers), the high density of the population is exerting unsustainable pressures on existing water supplies, the environment and social services.

In Blacksands energies were focused on strengthening ties with members of the extended family living elsewhere in town, but bonds with other kinship groups (through work, sport and church) had started to grow. Links with rural areas were declining in significance for many households, measured, for example, by reduced remittances and fewer visits to the village, and by the loss of ‘home’ linguistic skills amongst the younger residents. Each island group had chiefly representation in local issues and in broader

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community affairs although the effectiveness of their representation appeared to be declining. Social organization as a community was weak and this was attributed by some to the absence of strong leaders knowledgeable in custom to provide for a more harmonious residential setting. The resident population was active in urban life accessing employment and commercial and recreational facilities in town and exercising their civil rights as registered voters in SHEFA province (rather than in 'home’ islands).

What has emerged is a social, cultural and economic diversity of residents in a settlement that behaves much like a formal suburban neighbourhood. The residents have established their families in Vila and their aspirations for themselves and their children are significantly urban based. They are active participants in town life and are increasingly investing in urban social ties, housing, land, education and employment. Residents were generally contented with their existing livelihoods and identified themselves as residents of Blacksands and as members of the larger urban community of Port Vila. They also expressed a willingness to establish a working forum with local authorities and customary landowners to set clear development objectives and to actively participate in their implementation. However, their first task is to facilitate improved social organization at the local level and agree to a common representation.

IMPLICATIONS FOR URBAN MANAGEMENT

Throughout Melanesia, there is little positive recognition of squatter and informal settlements. Anti-urbanization sentiments have tended to increase as identified in media reports, political rallies, church sermons and other public platforms, and the target of many such sentiments are the settlements and their residents. This has contributed to
uneven development, and in Papua New Guinea at least, the marginalized in the city increasingly express their resentment of the relatively affluent emerging middle class through criminal behaviour. The middle class predictably responds to demand for the destruction of squatter settlements that house them, for a return to a more secure and open society (The National 19/04/00). In Fiji, the Ministry of Local Government, Housing and Environment (1997) is keen to relocate squatters to formally subdivided blocks of land (as recorded in the national draft squatter settlement policy) as the settlements are regarded as a threat to the maintenance of compact urban patterns of development.

Similarly, in Vanuatu politicians have also expressed their support for the removal or regulation of squatter settlements, depending on the source of complaint. Thus, in April 2000, the Minister of Lands agreed to remove squatters from Freswin after powerful real estate investors complained of their presence. By contrast, the residents of Manples complained about their road conditions in 1998 and politicians and authorities facing election rallied to ‘upgrade’ the settlement and gain votes. In general, Pacific Island governments are pursuing urban respectability by denouncing informal and squatter settlements as hives of the unemployed and criminal citizens of the nation who would do everyone a favour if they just went home to their islands. However, the absence of any adequate urban management policy and has meant that attempts to remove settlers have largely failed, and this lack of support for settlers has tended to entrench cultural divisions, foster intra-urban inequality and exacerbate social problems in growing urban centres, thus hampering the task of stimulating urban economic and social development (Koczberski et al, 2001). Whilst opposition to settlements in Port Vila is mild by
Melanesian standards, it is nonetheless not conducive to developing an urban planning policy that gives any attention to the needs and rights of settlers.

Informal settlements have been regarded, at least by academics such as Turner (1972b), as a solution to a lack of housing provision since they house high proportions of the population where no other realistic alternative exists. However, everyone has a right to an adequate quality of life and conditions must be improved if a healthy, safe, stable environment is to evolve in towns. It is essential for local authorities to recognize the growing numbers of permanent urban residents since effective urban management and governance depend greatly on the popular acceptance of government intervention. The assumption that urban residents are migrants, who can and will eventually return to the village, has meant that national development policy and resources have emphasized rural development and occasionally exercising the repatriation of people ‘back to the island’ and the destruction of squatter settlements. To influence positively the structure of migration and urbanization it is therefore necessary to make changes to the broader strategy of social and economic development and to encourage people’s participation in and responsibility for their own development.

Achieving sustainable urban development in Vanuatu will require urban managers and local government authorities to cease practising crisis management in regard to urban affairs and to promote the implementation of planned urban development by addressing the root causes of the growing social and economic problems in Port Vila. The Vanuatu Government’s control of urban migration through budget cuts on urban services and infrastructure (whilst increasing expenditure on rural infrastructure and development) has had little if any effect on retarding migration into the urban areas. Indeed despite the
government's lack of attention to the issues underlying housing shortages, the adequate
distribution of health and education services, unemployment and increasing lawlessness
the rate of urbanization has been undiminished. If current solutions continue to
materialize in episodic and expensive responses to crisis conditions, without reference to
the wider context of urban service provision in Vanuatu, social and economic problems
will worsen and threaten the stability of urban environments. Urban sustainability poses
particular resource and political challenges and governments need to provide and enact
policies to ensure environmental and social sustainability relative to economic interests
(Storey 1999:167). Above all policies and innovative institutional arrangements for urban
development need to integrate informal settlements more fully into the urban social and
economic mainstream. There is little indication that this is likely to happen in the near
future, and the absence of any hint of sustainable development, or even of attempts to
achieve it, by residents, landowners and government officials, either individually or
collectively, emphasize how difficult this task is. The integration of traditional decision-
making structures and community groups at the local government level, within the wider
urban decision-making structure, is critical to the success of urban management and
planning.

Although Blacksands residents have to date coped without government intervention,
increased pressures on limited land resources threaten the sustainability of their
livelihoods. The people of Blacksands are not incapable of autonomous development, and
their participation in the planning and implementation of development programs is
essential for the sustainability of their urban livelihood. They must establish strong
working (community) ties amongst themselves and be proactive and cooperative if their
goal of the controlled development of the settlement into a planned residential area for low to middle income earners can be recognized. As the example of CARE (Chapter Six) indicates, such objectives are often beyond the capacity of settlers, who are relatively impoverished and unable to develop viable social organizations with clear guidelines, in circumstances where neither landowners nor governments are willing to provide assistance to them. Concerted action now by key stakeholders could seize the opportunity to set in place policies and practical measures that draw on and enhance the potential of Port Vila and settlements like Blacksands, to absorb population growth more productively and to contribute to more balanced national development.

Contemporary Pacific urban literature has acknowledged the rapidly growing towns and the urban dilemmas that face local authorities and urban residents if the growth remains unchecked. Whilst more recent literature has alluded to increasing urbanization in Pacific Island countries, there has been minimal information on the urban population living in informal and squatter settlements, though settlements have often been linked to, and sometimes suggested as the cause of, problems facing urban authorities, but without adequate data from these settlements. There is a growing amount of literature on the need for practical sustainable development and effective urban governance, but there is little factual information on the conditions of urban populations that would enable appropriate and effective policy formulation. Indeed a central conclusion of this thesis is that, from the evidence of Blacksands, it is the urban (and regional – SHEFA) authorities that pose problems for the residents of Blacksands, who are usually employed and seeking to become permanent urban residents, rather than the converse.
This thesis has shown that long-term urban residence in the informal settlement of Blacksands, alongside social, political, economic and psychological involvement in Port Vila and declining links to rural areas, has contributed to urban permanence. In ‘giving voice’ to the residents of Blacksands, and thus listening to their accounts and examining their aspirations, it has both provided a degree of depth often lacking in urban studies in the Pacific region and, more importantly, demonstrated the manner in which residents have sought to achieve urban stability, gain adequate employment and services, achieve social mobility and contribute to urban and national development.

Much of the existing information on informal settlements in Vanuatu was previously full of broad (often-unfounded) generalizations that gave rise to inaccurate information, and tended to label the victims of a lack of government policy and intervention, as the culprits in all manner of urban problems similarly. The National Statistics Office in Vanuatu continues to categorize all non-Efate people (not customary landowners or a member of a landowning family through marriage) living on Efate as ‘migrants’ in the national census. This provides the fallacy of high rural-urban migration statistics and distracts government authorities from the increasing trend of natural increase. Even where existing information is not tendentious, it is simply absent. Just as there have been no recent studies of settlements in Vanuatu, nor have there been studies of formal suburbs or of many aspects of urban employment and labour patterns and the particular significance of the urban economies and their relationship to national and regional development. Existing information is inadequate to support any substantive policy analysis.

The increasing number of women in paid employment, at least in Blacksands, and changes in their economic roles, vis-à-vis men, is further evidence of changing socio-
economic organization in urban areas, and perhaps the reduction in significance of the
'gender gap', yet there are no comparable studies elsewhere in Vanuatu or the urban
Pacific to reveal how typical this may be. Further studies might examine in detail the
traditional gender roles adapting to changing socio-economic roles in town. The impact
that urbanization has on culture is also little studied, despite the trend of urban residents
to cross cultural boundaries in employment and social arenas, especially through
intermarriage and despite the significance that social organization has for the delivery of
urban services. This may be further pursued in studies of youth and their changing roles
in urban households.

Whilst there is a undeniable need for information on formal residential areas (Ward
1998), there remain very substantial gaps in information on informal settlements
themselves, their demographic structure, their geographical distribution, the socio-
economic organization in the settlements, the stability of the settlements themselves and
the analysis of institutional organizations and their ability to manage urban growth and
development. It is probably more important to focus research in settlements where social
and economic problems may be more challenging than those elsewhere in urban areas.
Equally urban studies in Vanuatu and elsewhere in the Pacific need to observe towns
more holistically (the functions of towns themselves and of the urban systems in which
they are embedded). At the very least there is an urgent need for improved coordination
and collection of data to allow the monitoring of changing standards of living in urban
areas. It is time for urban research to abandon the comparative ease of relying on
generalized reporting and provide more detailed geographic information.
In the final analysis, this study has revealed that residents of one particular informal settlement are not temporary migrants but permanent residents of Port Vila. In spite of diverse economic abilities, education attainment and ethnic origin, households have expressed a serious commitment to remaining in town and eking out a livelihood, even in sometimes difficult circumstances. The absence of security of tenure, safe housing, employment opportunities, basic amenities such as a clean water supply has not shaken their tenacious grip as urban residents dwelling on the municipal periphery. Social problems, health problems, land tenure issues and political disorganization have not encouraged a return to a rural livelihood, or even disillusionment with urban life. Over time many have acquired formal sector jobs (with few in the informal sector), improved their homes and acquired an education for their children. These children have rarely been to their ‘home’ villages on outer islands and have lost some of the appropriate language skills. In some ways they are the new face of urbanization in the Pacific. Indeed, it is this permanent presence that highlights the inadequacies of urban planning, management and governance in Vanuatu (and, by extension, the wider Pacific region).

The future of settlements like Blacksands in Port Vila does not have to be grim. As Connell and Lea (1994:292) have noted, “the present unmanageable scenario is not inevitable; urban problems do not have to worsen, urban unemployment and population growth rates do not have to increase as fast as they are’. As long as the residents, customary landowners and government authorities are prepared to work together for the common good, the vision of a stable, healthy and secure living environment in Blacksands is a distinct possibility.
Although it is now imperative for the national government to recognize a growing permanent urban population and commit itself (in terms of financial, technical and managerial resources) to the delivery of basic services in all urban residential areas, the promotion of long term and relevant planning remains a distant objective. Urban residents are likely to continue to have to rely on themselves, in a new form of urban self-reliance, to achieve success and an improved quality of life in Blacksands and, quite possibly, in many other parts of the urban Pacific.
APPENDICES
Appendix One

Methodology

This is the methodological foundation for a study of residents in Blacksands.

LITERATURE REVIEW
An extensive review of global and Pacific literature on rapid urbanization in the developing world and the rise of squatter and informal settlements was conducted in order to obtain a comprehensive overview of the ‘themes’ in urban studies and the ever-changing attitudes towards informal settlements and their residents. This review was then narrowed to the gathering and consolidating of existing knowledge of Port Vila’s settlements to identify any ‘gaps’ in these studies. The national and provincial governments still fail to recognize the management and control of rapid urban growth as a priority and have limited information on urbanization in Vanuatu provided from the Census’ of 1989, 1999 and National Household and Income Expenditure surveys conducted in 1983 and in 1997. The 1997 National Household Income and Expenditure Survey and the official 1999 Population Census results have yet to be published by the National Statistics Office.

I was also able to attend a number of national seminars on Vanuatu’s draft Population Policy as well as interview a number of government agencies that included SHEFA Province personnel, Municipal Council staff and Members of Parliament for Port Vila. During the period of research, opportunity arose to travel to the outer-islands of Tanna, Malekula, Ambrym and Epi which enabled discussion on urbanization and the emerging social and economic issues with chiefs, community leaders and individual members of the community. The dialogue was very much weighted towards land tenure in the islands, remittances and the future of the rural community. This provided me with some revealing snapshots of attitudes of more traditional peoples towards urban lifestyles.

SELECTION OF SITE
This study has focused on the informal settlement of Blacksands. The site of the study was selected from a list of 10 similar settlements (see Map 4) compiled mainly on criteria of the extent of the predominance of low-income groups; the fact of autonomous popular development; the extent of manifestation of urban blight, the existence of compact and clearly delineated boundaries, and, perhaps most importantly, accessibility. I previously had worked in Blacksands with national government agencies such as the Environment Unit, the Physical Planning Unit and the Department of Economic and Social Development (assisting with a World Bank review). I was familiar with the custom landowners and the physical layout of the settlement.
Blacksands as a settlement was studied in isolation and therefore no comparisons were made with other existing settlements in and around Port Vila such as: Boninga, Seaside, Melcofe, Simbolo-Ohlen, Freswin, Paama Village, Whitewood, Manples or Freswin. Blacksands' total population exceeded 4,500 people (National Census Office, February 2000) and a site within Blacksands was selected for field studies following the granting of permission to do so by the customary landowning family (Kaltabang). Other sites were not so accessible due to security of tenure being based on political affiliation with the current Prime Minister. The survey site was located approximately 1.2 kilometres from the main road leading to Mele (see Map 5) and was divided into approximately 29 plots, each being 25 metres².

DATA COLLECTION AND QUESTIONNAIRE FORMULATION
A combination of different data collection techniques such as observations, household interviews, in-depth interviews with key informants and collection and analysis of existing data, studies and documents was utilized. The method used in this study combined free interviews, use of strategic informants (landowners), a structured observation checklist, documentary analyses, and life histories. The data was gathered from March 1999 to June 2000 and began with an initial month of familiarization with the residents, ‘yard owners’ and landowners to gain their trust and cooperation. The survey site was initially mapped and recorded 100 households, 29 ‘yard owners’ and 591 residents. Four items of information were recorded: the geographical location of each household, the duration of residence in Blacksands for each household member, the name of the head of each household and the number of usual residents per household; that is, “a group of persons living under the same roof or in immediately adjoining dwellings who eat at least one meal in common each day” (National Census definition 1979; 1989; 1999).

A review of similar questionnaires was conducted to develop my own survey (see Appendix Two) designed specifically for this study. Some questions within the questionnaire were intentionally repeated in order to eliminate any ambiguous responses. Documents reviewed included: 1979 Population Census questionnaire; 1985 Household Income and Expenditure questionnaire; 1986 Urban Census questionnaire; 1989 Population Census questionnaire; 1994 Hydroplan questionnaire; 1995 Urban Settlement (Blacksands) questionnaire; 1996 Culture questionnaire (Jean Mitchell); 1997 Household Income and Expenditure questionnaire; and the 1999 Population census questionnaire. The survey intended to check for size of household, identity with community and length of stay (to obtain a sense of identity); employment, occupation, income, tenure and access to land, shelter conditions, access to facilities/services; and relationships with various authorities. I obtained both quantitative and qualitative data to assist in the analysis of the residents’ livelihoods and contribution to urban life.

A pre-test (using a sample of convenience) of the questionnaire was conducted in April 1999 to assess the questions suitability for a full-scale enumeration and to ensure that the proposed questions would elicit accurate responses and were suited to the Blacksands residents environment. The pre-test was carried out on 10 households and the questionnaire was adjusted accordingly. There were some difficulties in
developing questions for ‘economic activity’ and ‘quality of life’ and so a life story was encouraged in order that residents understood the questions and in turn to qualify the response. Participant observation was an important research method and over a period of 15 months a relatively trusting relationship was built with the residents. Informal interviews also provided the opportunity for residents to speak freely.

In order for the estimates from the survey to be valid and reliable, the data was collected in accordance with the survey design. The survey operations were planned as carefully as possible so that data could be collected according to design in an orderly manner and with enough flexibility to allow for occasional crises to be handled. A sample size was determined in order that the estimates obtained in the sample survey were reliable enough to meet the objectives of the survey. In general, the larger the sample, the greater the reliability of the resulting estimates, whilst an improvement in validity required an improvement in the measurement process.

Purposive quota sampling drew a 30% (30 households) sample size from a universe of 100 households. The ‘listing of households’ exercise was stratified according to the length of residence in Blacksands, time spent in Port Vila and island of origin. Demographic variation within the sample was maximized by excluding families of similar age composition within the same property value wherever possible and comparability between households was achieved by assigning each family member a value based on Lusk’s consumption co-efficient and using the total per family as the basis for calculating consumption per head. The respondents to the structured interview schedule were those aged 15 to 55 years (that is, the economically active age group as determined by the National Statistics Office). The respondents were primarily either the household head and/or the spouse and the next eldest relative living in the household. In some cases, the respondent was the oldest person available for that household. The questionnaire was used as a guideline and all dialogue was in Bislama.

Post-field activities included data editing, tabulation, compilation and analysis. The data collected has been reproduced in this thesis and every possible effort to have valid and reliable information has been made. I relied heavily on people’s life stories, as they proved most informative and I have attempted to avoid producing large volumes of statistical tables that may be left open to misinterpretation.

Field conditions, time constraints and the availability of respondents have influenced the number of sample size and the type of questions asked. At the beginning of 1999, Efate experienced heavy rainfall that caused flooding on the Teac plain making vehicle access to Blacksands difficult. The presence of national census enumerators in the settlement in 1999 caused great suspicion among the majority of residents who feared being taxed. The month of familiarization with the community proved worth the effort as any suspicions surrounding this study were quelled and households were willing respond to a structured questionnaire and share their stories. It was an added advantage being female in that male head of households allowed me to interview ‘their’ women folk. Accusations of black magic or “nakaimas” against the people of Ambrym living in the settlement had resulted in some violent disturbances within the settlement and made people
unwilling to talk to others, but as time passed so did the fears of magic. Local problems will always have an impact on any study and the length of time taken to complete the survey questionnaires allowed me to work around the majority of these problems.
Appendix 2
Survey Questionnaire

GENERAL HOUSEHOLD QUESTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person #</th>
<th>Full name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Relationship with Head of household</th>
<th>Duration of residency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Head of Household</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 How many rooms does the household use to sleep in?

4 Do you share your kitchen, bathroom or any other rooms with other households?

5 If yes, what reasons do you have for sharing with other households?

6 Which of the following assets do you have?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Canoe/boat/car (specify in answer)</th>
<th>Generator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bank deposit</td>
<td>Icebox (fridge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio and/or tape recorder</td>
<td>Gas bottle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television (and VCR)</td>
<td>Primus stove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sewing machine</td>
<td>Musical instruments (e.g. guitar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flashlight</td>
<td>Carpentry tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wall clock</td>
<td>Animals (chickens, pigs, ducks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamp (Coleman)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following sections (1-5) were directed to household members aged 15 to 55 years.
**SECTION 1: SETTLEMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>What is your name?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>What is your relationship with the head of the household?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>What is your marital status?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>What is your date of birth? If not known, what is your age in years?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11a</td>
<td>Where were you born?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11b</td>
<td>Where do you consider to be your home island?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12a</td>
<td>If not born in Vila, when did you come to Vila?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12b</td>
<td>Why did you come to Vila?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>When did you come to live in Blacksands?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Have you ever lived on your home island?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15a</td>
<td>When was the last time you visited your home island?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15b</td>
<td>Are you in contact with members of your family still living on your home island? If yes, describe how you maintain contact and for what reasons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15c</td>
<td>Do you send goods or money to family still living on your home island? If yes, describe what you send and how often.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15d</td>
<td>Do members of your family still living on your home island send you goods or money? If yes, describe what they send and how often.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16a</td>
<td>Do you own land on your home island?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16b</td>
<td>Do you think that you will return to live on your home island some day? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16c</td>
<td>Do you think that your children will return to live on your home island some day? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16d</td>
<td>If your children are already living in the island, do you think they will always live on the island?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17a</td>
<td>Has your household been residing in Blacksands for 5 years or more?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17b</td>
<td>If no, can you explain why you have moved from your last residence to settle in this community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Why did you choose to live in Blacksands?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SECTION 2: HOUSING ARRANGEMENTS AND ACCESS TO FOODGARDENS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19a</td>
<td>Do you or the household that you live with own land in Port Vila?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19b</td>
<td>If yes, how did you come about to own the land and what do you use it for?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19c</td>
<td>If no, what arrangement do you currently have for housing (residential status)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Amount of Lease/rental of land (per month)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less than VT2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VT2,001 – VT4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VT4,001 – VT6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Amount of Rental/Lease of Dwelling Unit (per month)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less than VT4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VT4,001 – VT8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Do you have any comments you would like to make on your current housing agreement and or arrangement? For example, are you happy with your accommodation?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23a Have you made any improvements to your current housing arrangements? If yes, what type of improvements have you made?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23b Would you like to improve your current housing arrangements?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23c If yes, what sort of improvements would you like to make?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23d If no, why do you not want to make any improvements?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24a Does your family/household have a (food) garden?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24b If yes, where is the garden located in relation to your house?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24c If yes, what agreement do you have to gain access to gardening land?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24d If no, explain why the household does not have a food garden.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 In the last week have you worked in the garden, fished or worked on anything else (e.g. carving)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Does the household have cattle, poultry or other ‘farm animals’?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 What kind of food crops does the household plant?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 In the last week, has the household sold any of the following products</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coconuts (copra), Kava or coffee (specify)</td>
<td>Fish/shellfish, poultry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Island food (and cooked food)</td>
<td>Pigs/cattle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baskets, mats, shells</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carvings/wood products</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 If there has been a sale, where was the produce sold, to whom and for how much?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 If you have a food garden, do the crops you grow play an important role in your food supply?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SECTION 3: EDUCATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31 Have you ever been to school?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32a Did you attend English or French or other school?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32b Where did you attend school?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 How many years did you spend at school?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Secondary</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Secondary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34 What education qualifications have you attained?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Certificate</td>
<td>Diploma, Certificate (INTV, USP courses)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 10 Certificate</td>
<td>Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 12 Certificate</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bursary/Baccalaureate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 List all the languages that you speak.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 Which language do you speak most often?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37 Which language(s) do you speak in your household?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### SECTION 4: EMPLOYMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38. Which language(s) do you speak at work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Are you still in school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40a. Do your children go to school? If so, where do they go to school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40b. Are there any children or young people in the household who do not go to school or who do not work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40c. If yes, what are the reasons?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. Is education important to your household?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. Have you worked in the last seven days?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. What kind of work are you engaged in most of the time?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop or factory worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Businessman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager/government officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workman/labourer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer or subsistence farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. Are you paid for this work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. If you have not worked in the last seven days, what are your main reasons for not working?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On holiday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46a. For those who have not worked at all in the last seven days, what was the last industry, in which you worked and how long did you work for?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46b. How did you get your last job?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47. For the unemployed, did you actively look for work in the last seven days?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48a. Do you have any preferred skills training? (e.g. carpentry, accounting or mechanics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48b. What would be your preferred job and why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49. How did you obtain your current employment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50. How do you travel to your place of work? Do you have any problems in travelling to work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51a. If you work for pay, what is the name of the person or organization that you work for?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51b. Do you work for your family as a gardener, housegirl/boy, or housewife as your main work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52. What kind of business do you work in?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53. What are your main tasks at work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54. What are the conditions of your work (e.g. contract, working hours, paid holiday and sick leave)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55. Has there been any illness that has prevented you from carrying out daily duties and work over an extended period of time? If yes, how has this affected your household?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56. What kinds of items and services is your income spent on?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57. What do you spend most money on? List in order of expense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appliances</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

58 When your income does not meet your expenses, what do you do?

59 When your income exceeds your expenses, what do you do?

60 Who is responsible for any monthly payments (for example, rent) the household may have?

61 What sources of financial assistance are available to the household?

- Bank
- Money Lender
- Relatives
- Church Group
- Employer
- Do not borrow

SECTION 5: QUALITY OF LIFE

62a Do you have a chief here in Blacksands or in Vila?

62b Can he control his people? To what extent?

63a What are the three main needs that your household has had in the last 5 years?

63b Have these needs changed? Please describe why they have or have not changed.

64a What are the three main problems your household has experienced in the last three years?

64b Have these problems changed? Why?

65 What can your household do to improve your quality of life?

66 What can the community do to help your household improve its quality of life?

67 What can different organizations (the government, NGOs, Church) do to help your household improve its quality of life?

68 What will be your household’s three main needs in the next five years?

69 What do you think will be your household’s three main problems/issues in the next five years?

70 What do you think Blacksands will be like as a place to live in five years time?
Crime in Port Vila: local newspaper excerpts

Captain John Taleo has assured the business community and public that the police have already “killed the fire” of a vicious gang that brutally attacked two elderly business men after robbing them and leaving one with seven stitches to his head.

Taleo said the police are aware of the trend that young unemployed people are beginning to copy the tactics used by rascals in PNG.

He said for this reason, the police beginning this week, are working in partnership with the chiefs and communities in Port Vila and Efate in a renewed effort to stop the trend. “The objective is to create an environment whereby chiefs and their people feel that they own the police and are therefore duty-bound to work with them instead of against them” he said.

The Chairman of the National Council of Chiefs, Noel Mariasua is appealing to all chiefs’ representatives from other islands living in Port Vila and Luganville to cooperate with the police.

He said they must use wisdom to advise against assault, stealing, telling lies, and disrespect for other people.

“The problem is the chiefs can tell a person not to trespass or take something from another person’s garden or farm and he will turn to his constitutional right of freedom of movement clause and disobey”, said Mariasua.

Govt must accept responsibility for letting criminals back on the streets to kill

There is quite rightly widespread anger over the murder of well respected expatriate businessman Justin West by a hardened convicted criminal who was let out of jail through yet another amnesty by government before serving his sentence.

In other countries the government would be sued if they had let a convicted criminal out without a valid reason and he or she killed someone. All the hard work of police and Public Prosecutors is wasted when this happens.

This ridiculous practice of giving prisoners amnesty was started by President Leye and despite public outrage over numerous prisoners being allowed to walk free, was continued. Then politicians got into the act and when the current government took office, they recommended that the President release all prisoners, again despite public outrage and a petition signed by hundreds of people through Vango.

We stated at the time it made a mockery of the judicial system and we say the government must take the blame for this horrific incident as if the culprit from Tanna hadn’t been let out of jail, Justin West would still be alive.

We say the government must act now and table changes at the next parliament sitting in the constitution to ensure that the president and politicians stop letting prisoners out of jail. The police are against it, the judiciary is against it, the public prosecutors office is against it, the general public are against it and the unfortunate victims of crime are against it. The only people supportive of it are the criminals themselves and it seems politicians and the President.

The murder of Justin West has sent shockwaves throughout the community. It will severely harm investor confidence and damage Vanuatu’s reputation overseas. It will make expatriate residents nervous. It will damage tourism. The government have only themselves to blame for not listening to the concerns of the public over rising crime, spiralling urban drift and growing squatter settlements of unemployed youth.

Now Investors are being murdered and robbed. We ask when is the government going to act before the situation gets worse?

Risal blong criminal criticism i kam tru

Sources: ‘Trading Post’ and ‘Vanuatu Weekly’
Appendix 4

Chiefly representation in Port Vila: local newspaper excerpts

Chiefs must resume role of authority

Dear Editor,

I am sure I am not alone in my total disappointment in the VNCW and especially Marie Noelle Ferriex Patterson in publicly boycotting the march for law and order. This march was brought about by the senseless murder of Justin West but was used by them as a vehicle to pursue their own ideals.

Their public actions also presented a side of the VNCW that shows they have little respect for the death of Mr. West and the awareness is created to law and order and that they can only be seen to be pursuing their own goals with tunnel vision and hypocrisy.

I only hope the power of the Vanuatu Chiefs pervades and like the Fiji Chiefs resume their role of authority within the whole community, a role of respect and authority that can solve problems that prove too difficult for the adopted politics and laws of the Western world. A recent example of this was the chief from Pentecost returning some unemployed people from Port Vila to Pentecost. This simple action is basically outside the capabilities of the western politics and law system yet the reality is the type of action that is probably best for everyone.

This is what the march was about, respect, law and order. Yet what did the VNCW do?

A usually quiet fellow.

Vaturisu anti-crime petition

Dear Editor,

Vaturisu March & Anti-Crime Petition

Mi raet olsem wan ordinari woman blong talen se mi no gri nating wetem ol toktok blong ol jifis we oli addem lgo ogng petition akenstem violence.

Taem ol jif ol talen se ol woman oli responsibol long ol trabol we i stap long kountri teedi, yufala insultem bigwan o woman. Heml minem se ol jif representatives oll apiemace blong ol mama, sisier mo daughter blong oiketa.

Mi wantem askem whu i bin bornem yufala? Whu i bin fedom mo washem yufala taej yufala i bin pikinini? Whu i bin first teacher blong yufala?

Societi blong yumi inosave advance mo facem o problem we i stap teedi supos su traem advancem wan grup be sametaem downem narafta grup long o polifia mifala gohed blong respektom oll blong respekt. Ikap finis enia vigil crime akenstem ol woman!

Mifala ol women istap olatek are 50% (le: hafl) blong populasi hamas jif? Mi wantem askem mi koncern blong ol woman, o sakeni tingting. Ol jif i sud soem ol wana no, baie ol man especially ol yu respectem yufala.

Anna Kairan
Anabrou Station

Wok blong jif i slaik

Dear Editor,

Wok blong chies i slaik tumas long area blong Blacksands.

Please allow me blong expressem small concern blong mi concernem mata i we i stap antap.

Mi wantem expressem concern blong mi owa long wan mama faol blong we i stap silip olbaot long Erila blong Blacksands.

Mama faol ia hemi stap usum Uncle we semtaem hemi wan chies blong Selam Cel blong hem olbaot long every boy even okleta we oli marri finis mo plante Taxi driver.

Mi wantem talemaot nomo se stori blong mama faol ia hemi popular tumas long ol eria blong Blacksand mi long Vila be nomata long hemia, ol chies blong eria blong Blacksands oli silip gud mo oli no meken wan samting long hem. Migit oli stap encouragem mama faol ia.

So mi as van student consen, mi wantem se sapos o chie fsi mo ol polis tu oll save stopeni o kaen fasin blong mama faol ia mo sendem hem i ko back long home blong hem from action blong hem i save spolien life blong wan family no afectem tu ol yangfala girl mo boys.

So ating hemia nomo thankyu in advance long action blong ol chies blong luk save cry blong mifala ol students especially islands concern.

Student Consen at Blacksands.

Roles of chiefs

liter. bad exam

come under attack

What are the

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Trading Post, Issue 506, Wednesday 8 December 1999
Trading Post, Issue 507 Saturday 11 December 1999
Trading Post, Issue 531, Wednesday 15 March 2000
Trading Post, Issue 532 Saturday 18 March 2000
Trading Post, Issue 539 Wednesday 12 April, 2000
Trading Post, Issue 543 Saturday 29 April 2000
Trading Post, Issue 546 Wednesday 10 May 2000
Trading Post, Issue 554, Saturday 10 June 2000
Trading Post, Issue 556 Saturday 17 June 2000
Trading Post, Issue 567 Wednesday 26 July 2000
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