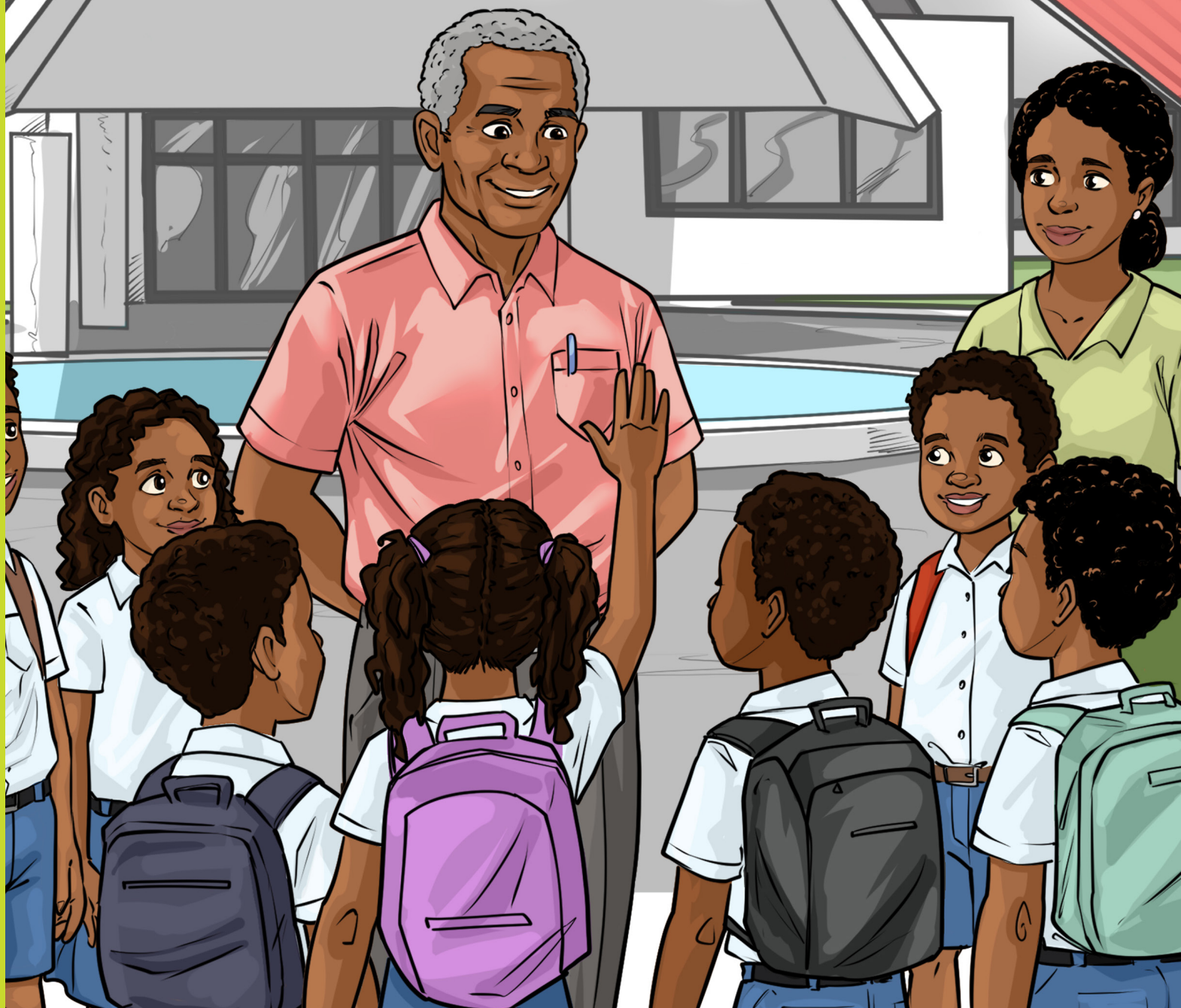


Level 6



Where Do Our Laws Come From?

By Daryl Abel and Cathy Hite Sakumalefo
Illustrated by Anton Syadrov



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“Hurry, hurry! The school bus is waiting! We don’t want to be late to our Parliament field trip,” Ms Atauli announced to her eager Year 9 students.

Lei was very excited because she wanted to be a lawyer when she grew up. She quickly grabbed her backpack and rushed to the bus with her friends, Meahos, Malia, Sam, Tania, and Kiki.





“We’re going to learn how laws are made!” Lei cheered, her eyes shining with excitement. Beside her, Sam smiled.

“It’s so good to see how excited you are, Lei,” Sam said.

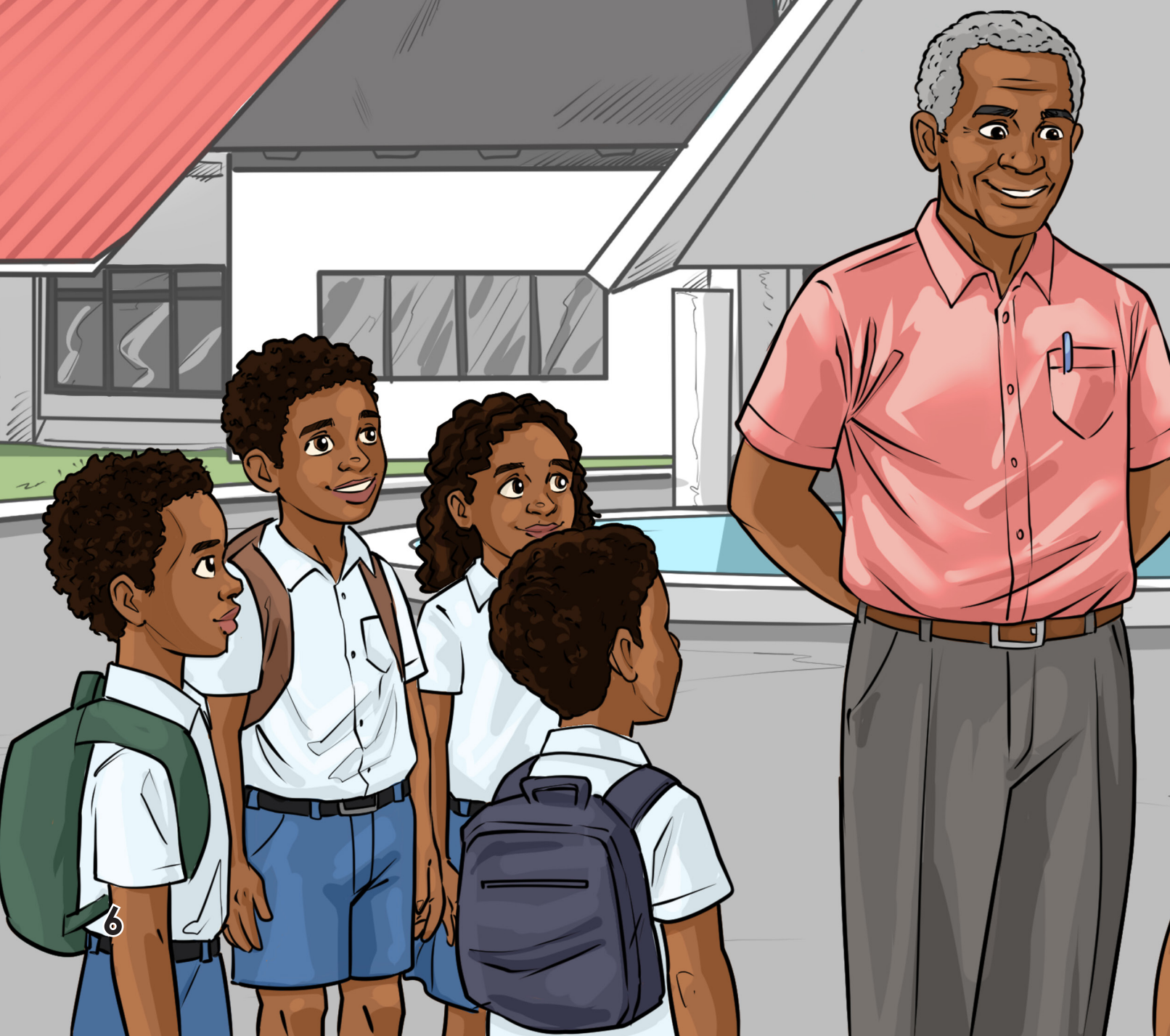


More students grew interested as Lei talked. As the bus made its way to Parliament, the students listened to Lei and talked about what they hoped to learn.

Upon arriving, they admired the building, its architecture, and the bright colours reflecting the spirit of Vanuatu.



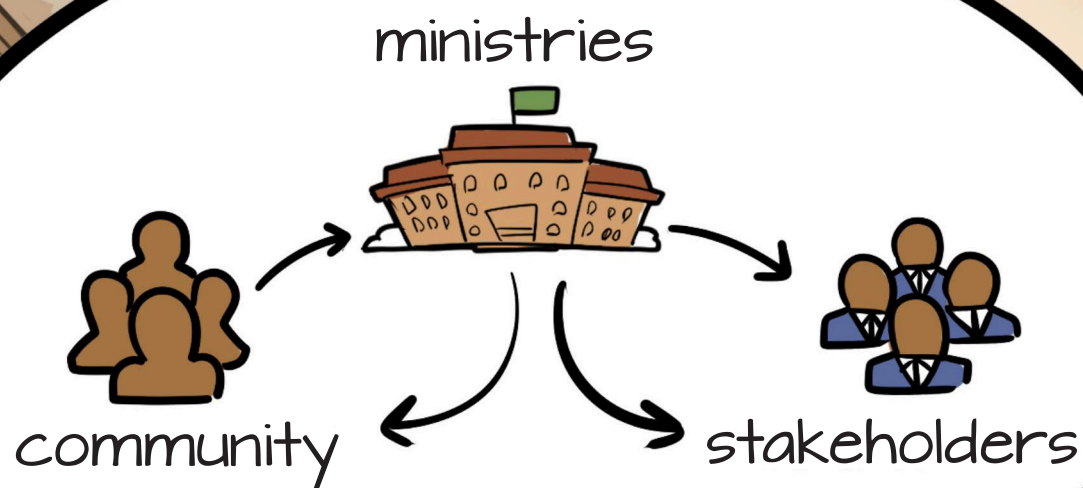
As they stepped inside, they were greeted by a friendly guide. “Hello, everyone! My name is Banu, and welcome to the Parliament of Vanuatu. Here, we create laws, also known as legislation or Acts. Laws are like rules that help us live together peacefully. The Constitution is the highest law. Soon we will talk about that too.”



“Do the members of Parliament make the laws?”
Lei asked eagerly.

“Yes! And today, I’ll show you how it’s done,”
Banu replied.

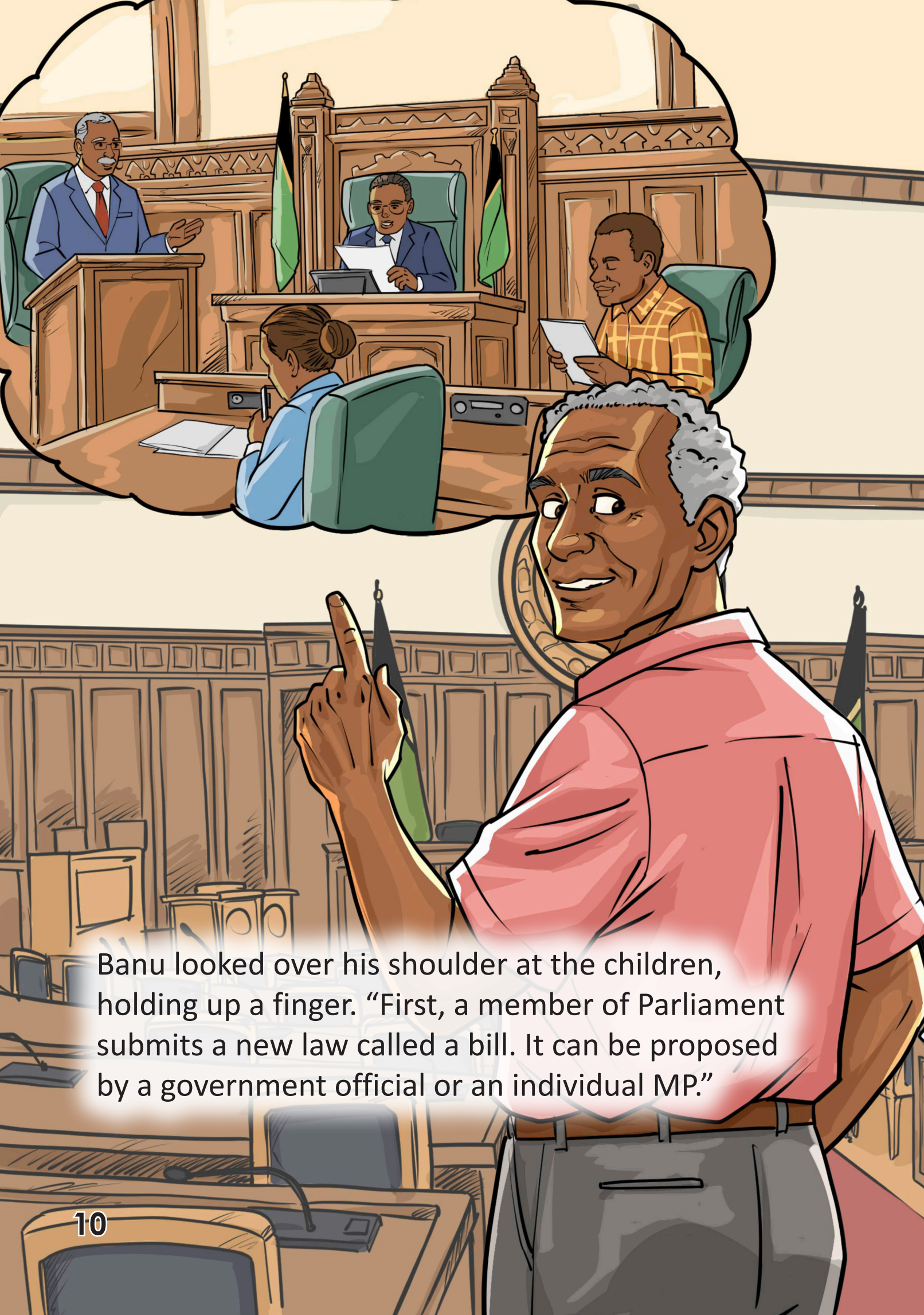




“The process of making laws starts before a proposed law even reaches Parliament,” Banu explained. “It involves the community, government ministries, and stakeholders.”

The children all followed Banu deeper into the building. Lei was up the front, eagerly soaking up everything Banu said. “When a new law finally arrives in Parliament, members must follow a process to create or amend legislation.”

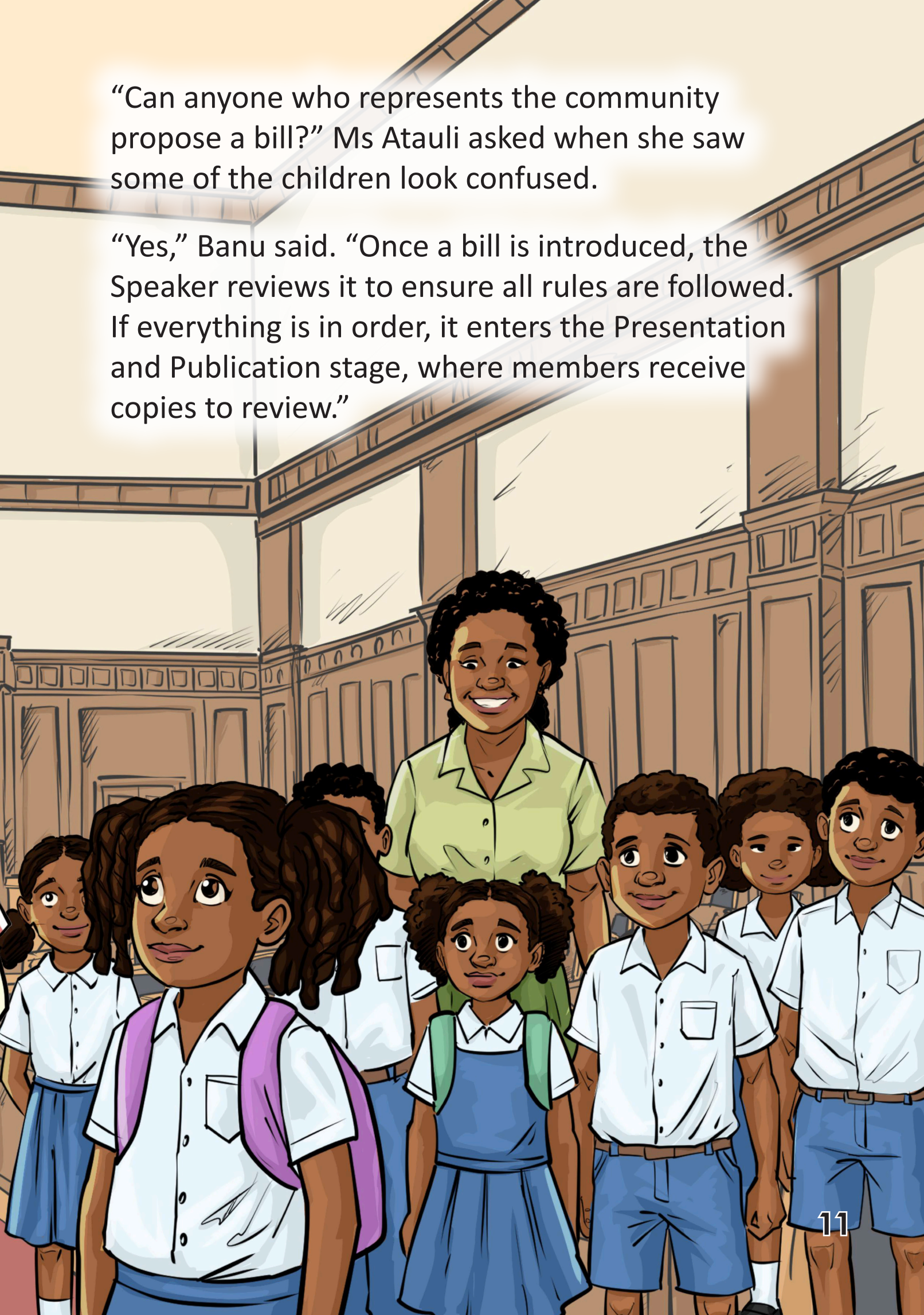




Banu looked over his shoulder at the children, holding up a finger. “First, a member of Parliament submits a new law called a bill. It can be proposed by a government official or an individual MP.”

“Can anyone who represents the community propose a bill?” Ms Atauli asked when she saw some of the children look confused.

“Yes,” Banu said. “Once a bill is introduced, the Speaker reviews it to ensure all rules are followed. If everything is in order, it enters the Presentation and Publication stage, where members receive copies to review.”





“The bill then goes through three important readings,” Banu explained:

- **First Reading:** The bill’s title is read out loud with no debate.
- **Second Reading:** Members discuss its merits and principles.
- **Committee Review:** A group examines the bill, suggests changes, and seeks expert opinions.



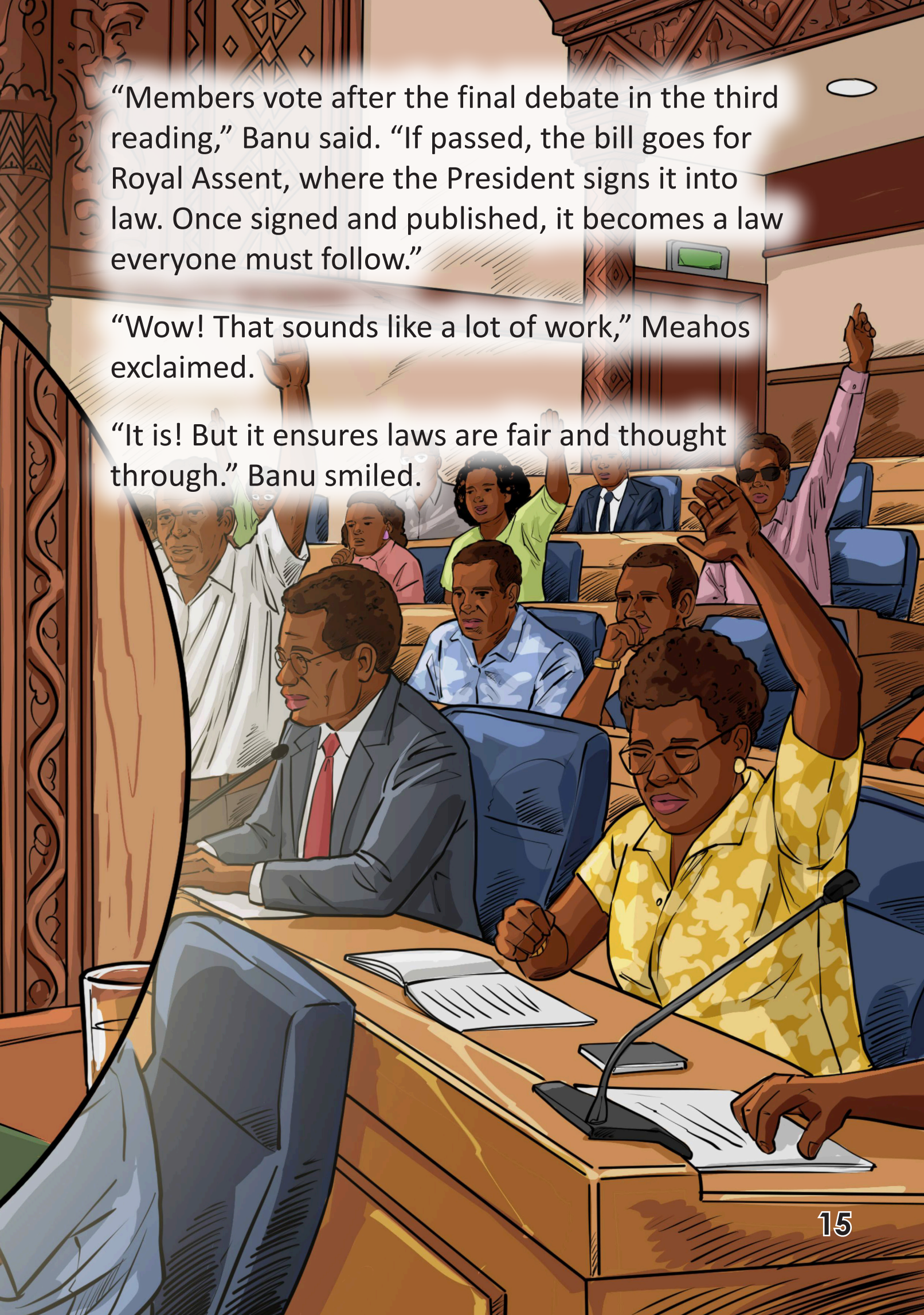
Beside Lei, Kiki had been thinking. She asked,
“How do they decide to approve a bill?”



“Members vote after the final debate in the third reading,” Banu said. “If passed, the bill goes for Royal Assent, where the President signs it into law. Once signed and published, it becomes a law everyone must follow.”

“Wow! That sounds like a lot of work,” Meahos exclaimed.

“It is! But it ensures laws are fair and thought through.” Banu smiled.





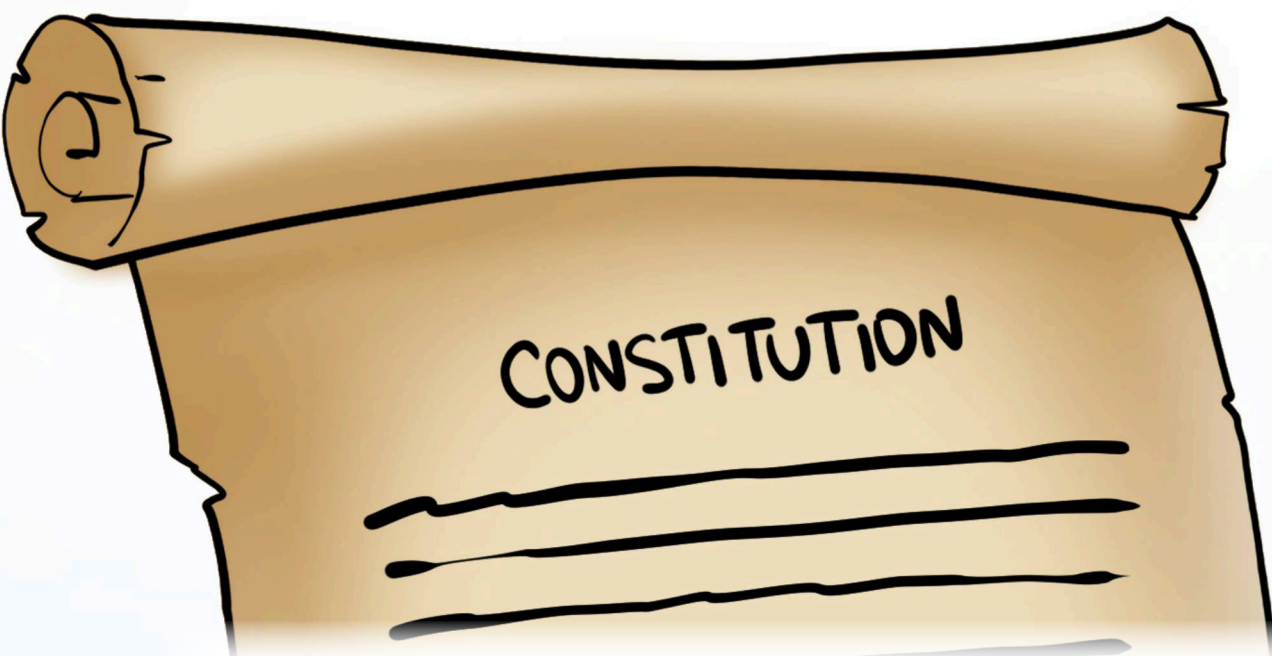
The group then visited the High Court Library, where Ms Wana, the librarian, welcomed them.

Malia asked, “What happens if the law isn’t clear?”

“That’s when judges rely on previous cases — known as common law — to guide their decisions,” Ms Wana explained. Lei looked amazed.







“The **Constitution of Vanuatu** is the highest law. It sets the framework for government and protects people’s rights,” Ms Wana added.

Lei was intrigued. “What if a law goes against the Constitution?”

“It is invalid,” Ms Wana explained.

She then introduced **kastom**, the traditional rules guiding communities in areas such as land ownership and marriage. “Customary law has shaped society for centuries and is still respected today,” she said.

After finishing their tour around Parliament, the students went back to school.

“I’d like everyone to spend the rest of the day making a project based on something you learned during our field trip,” Ms Atauli said.

Lei gathered her friends in a group. “We should create a colourful poster about the lawmaking process!” she said.



They illustrated the different sources of law, including the Constitution, legislation, common law, and kastom.

When they presented their work, Ms Atauli clapped. “Fantastic job, everyone!”

Lei grinned. She hoped she’d get to go back to Parliament one day as a lawyer invited to advise the members.

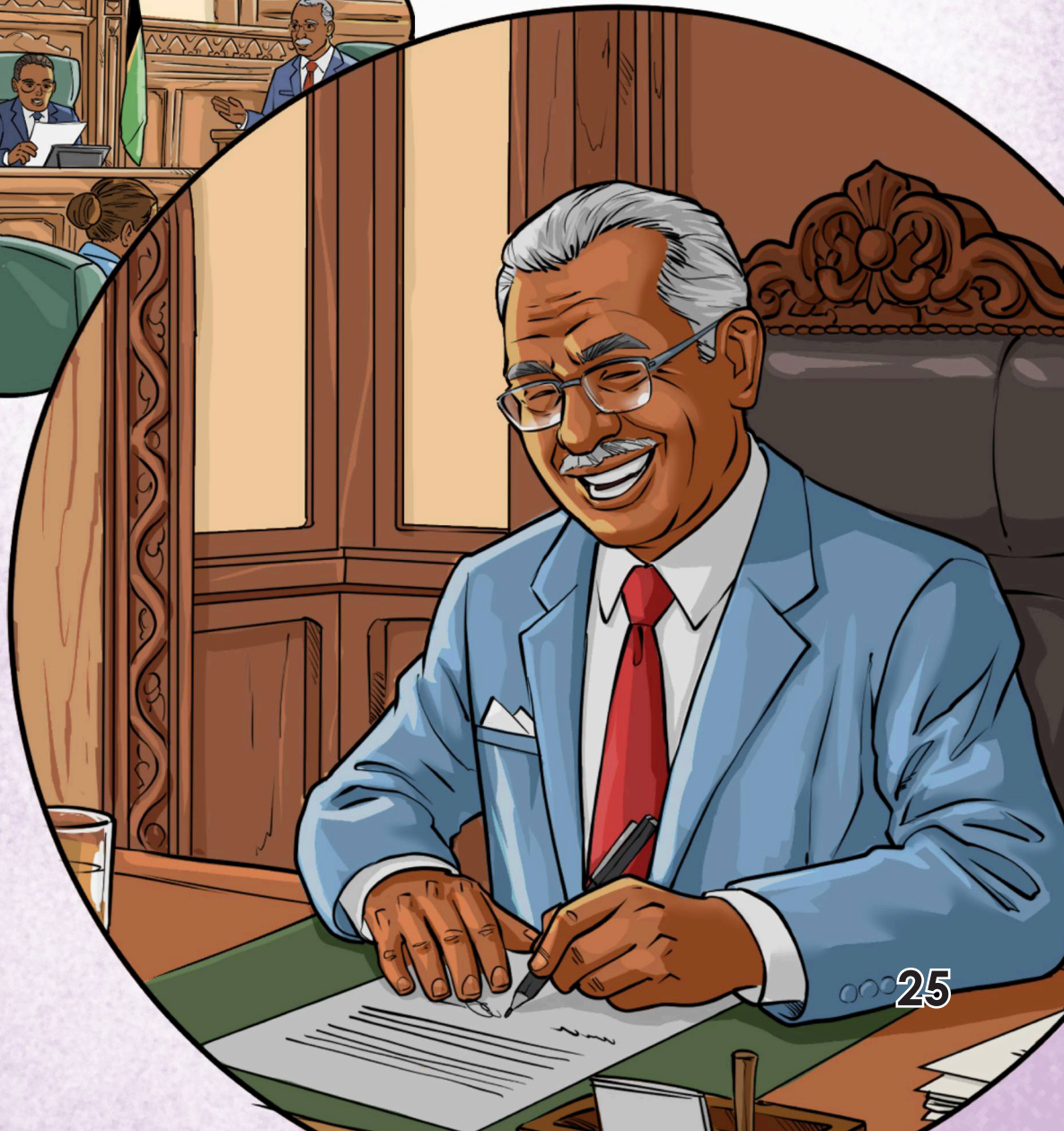
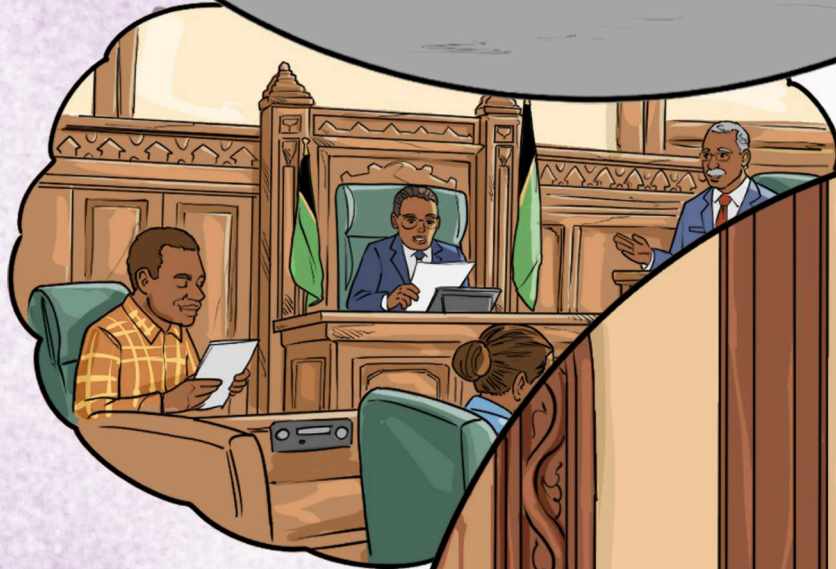
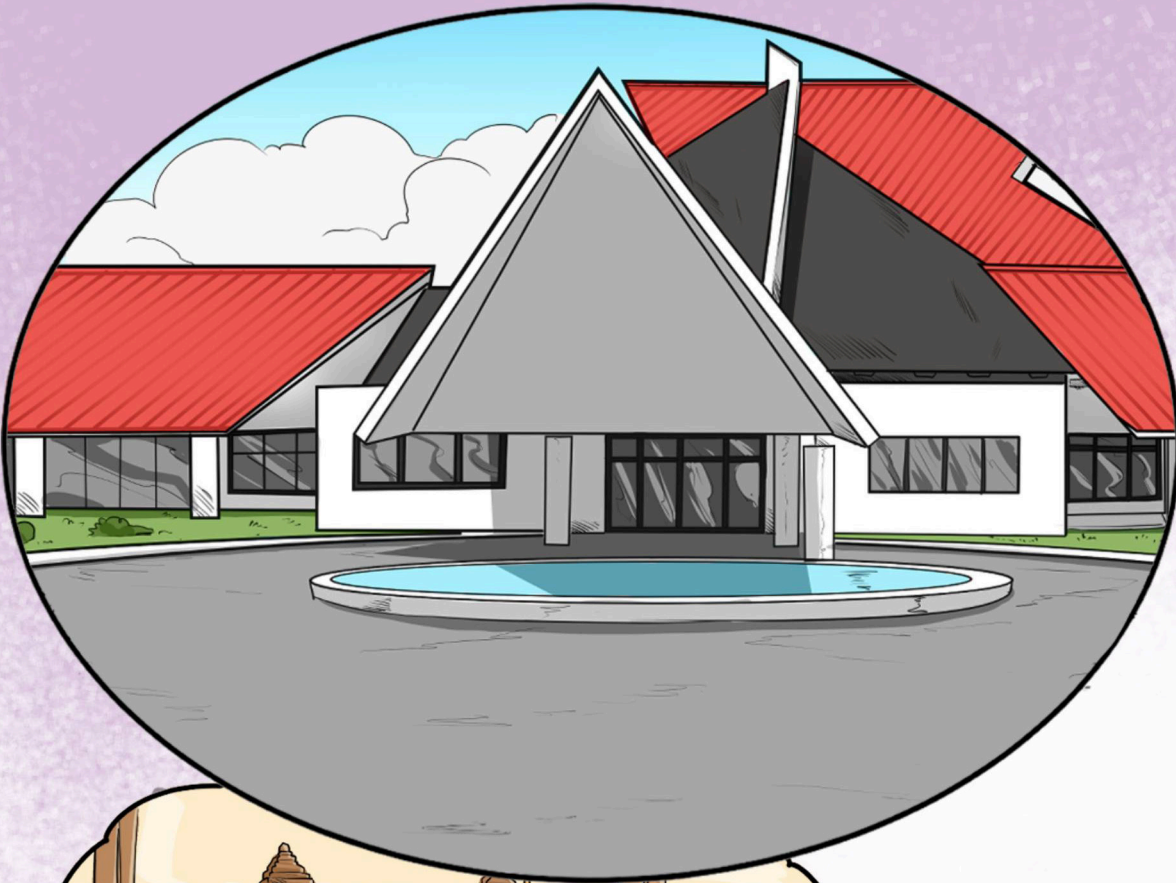




Glossary

- Law: Rules that help people live together peacefully and know what is right and wrong
- Parliament: A group of elected members who make and change laws in Vanuatu
- Legislation: Another word for laws; it means the rules created by Parliament
- Bill: A new law presented to Parliament for discussion
- Speaker: A person in Parliament who makes sure everyone follows the rules when discussing laws
- First Reading: The first time a bill is read out loud in Parliament
- Second Reading: The time when members of Parliament talk about the bill and share their opinions
- Committee: A small group of members of Parliament that reviews a bill closely
- Vote: When members of Parliament decide whether they agree with a bill or not by raising their hands or saying yes or no

- Royal Assent: The final step when the President signs a bill to make it an official law
- Common Law: A type of law based on previous court decisions that helps judges make fair choices
- Precedent: A rule that helps judges decide by looking at how similar problems were solved in the past. It makes sure everyone is treated fairly
- Justice: The idea of being fair and making sure everyone is treated equally under the law
- Constitution: The highest law of Vanuatu that outlines the rights of the people and how the government should operate
- Customary Law (Kastom): Traditional rules that come from the culture and customs of Vanuatu, helping to solve problems in communities



**You can use these questions
to talk about this book with
your family, friends and
teachers.**



What are the three readings a bill goes through before it can be approved?



Why do bills go through so many stages before they can be passed into law?



What do laws do for a society?

Do you know any laws?



Come up with some laws you think would be good to have. How would you defend them?

About the authors

Daryl Abel is from Tanna Island in Vanuatu, while Cathy Hite Sakumalefo is from Malaita in the Solomon Islands. Both Daryl and Cathy share a passion for empowering young minds through storytelling, inspiring them to write stories to educate and uplift the children of today, tomorrow's leaders of Vanuatu. One of the things they enjoy most in their friendship is discussing the challenges facing their countries, and asking themselves: "What can we do?" or "How can we help?" This collaborative spirit not only fuels their creativity but also reflects their commitment to fostering a positive impact on their communities through literature.



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Original illustrations by Anton Syadrov

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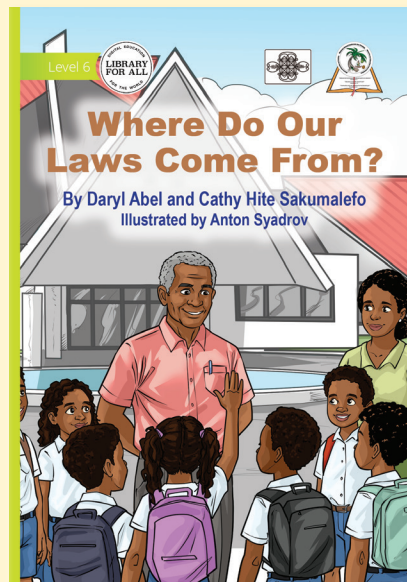
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Let's travel with a school group
to learn about Vanuatu's legal
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