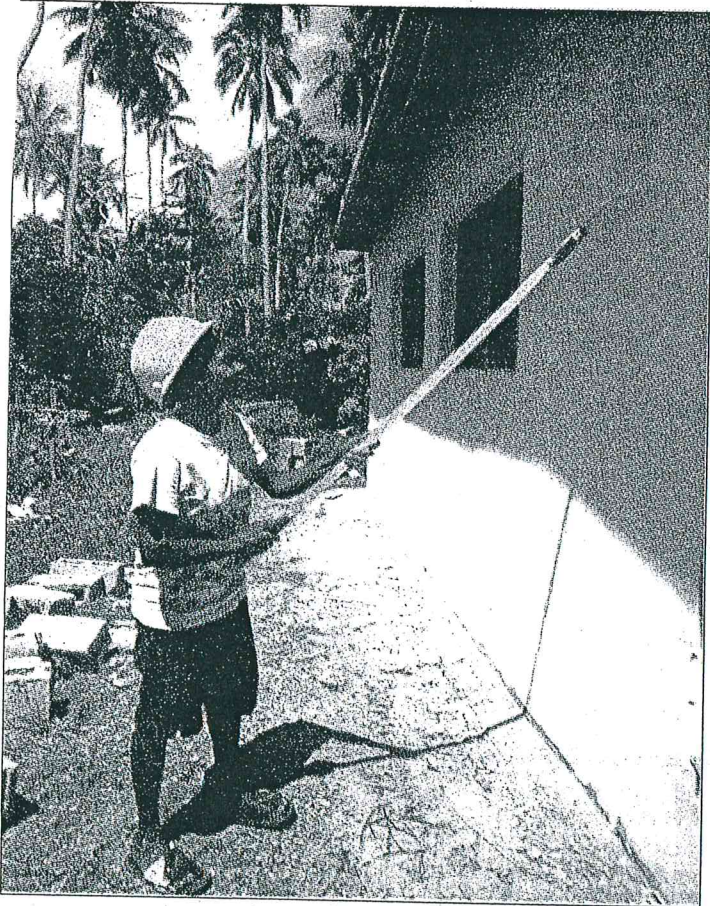


Supporting women's economic empowerment



Mona Cyrus said she was very keen to explore the world of building construction.

By Anita Roberts

BUILDING CONSTRUCTION IS often seen as a man's job because women may not be

physically strong enough.

But, young Mona Cyrus from Liro, the small centre of Paama, is proving that women can do

anything.

Cyrus was the only female who joined eight boys to build a 10 by 8 metres permanent building that will host the Malekula Women's Handicraft Centre.

When Daily Post visited the construction site at Lakatoro, Mona had on her yellow hard hat and working; getting her nails dirty and clothes splattered in paint.

Ms Cyrus finished year 11 at Tebakor Secondary School in Port Vila.

She further took arts studies for two years at the Vanuatu Institute of Technology (VIT) and also undertook software training at the Edwards Computer Foundation from 2011 to 2012.

Throughout 2012 she was at home and was fortunate to involve in the accredited training courses run by Australian Government-funded TVET (Technical and Vocational Education Training) Program.

Following gender awareness programs and a three-weeks tile laying training delivered on Paama by local training providers mid 2013 coordinated by the TVET Centre, Cyrus was recom-

mended as a potential applicant to attend the recent TVET Centre funded building construction training on Malekula purposely to gain more knowledge and enhance skills.

The tile laying training had five females. Efforts had been made to ensure female representation in this non-traditional trade area.

Speaking with the Daily Post during a brief break, she said she loved the experience. "Working in this male dominated environment is fun," she said.

Empowering women in developing countries is essential to reducing global poverty since women represent a bulk of the world's poor population.

In Vanuatu, where most women rely on the informal sector for an income, barriers to empowerment and equity are embedded in cultural forms.

The TVET Sector Strengthening Program aims to raise the status of women in Vanuatu through customize trainings and small business development services.

The female trainee from Paama encouraged other young female colleagues and women to confidently pursue their dreams.