

Taking banking to rural farmers, handicraft women

By Anita Roberts

THE TORBA SKILLS CENTRE HAS worked hard to bring rural banking to Vetimboso, the biggest village on Vanua Lava in Torba Province.

Starting next year, the staff of the National Bank of Vanuatu (NBV) Branch at Sola will be traveling to Vetimboso to visit farmers and women who are engaging in the handicraft sector once every month to offer them financial opportunities to facilitate the flow of the money they are making.

The Torba Skills Centre initiated discussions with NBV to make this happen following the successful development of the Skills for Handicraft Programme facilitated in the area.

The quality of the handicraft products produced by rural women from Vetimboso have been recognized by the program.

These handmade products have the potential to be sold anywhere locally.

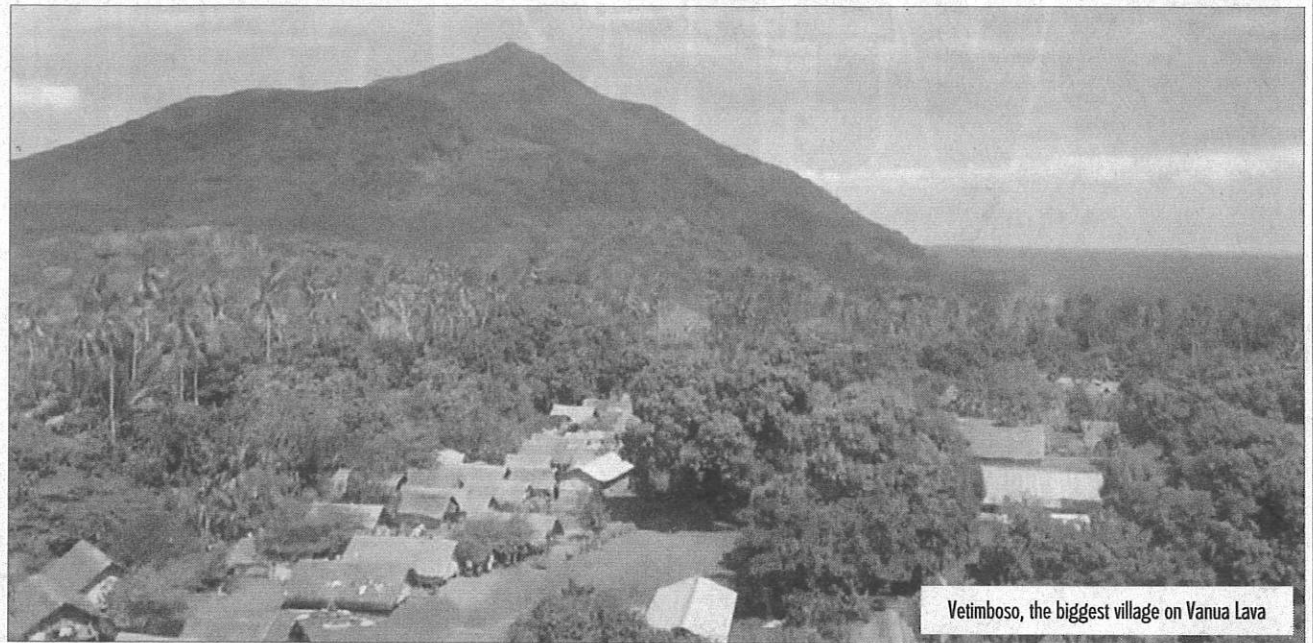
Most importantly, they have become an important source of income for many families. It is understood that the sales from handicraft nowadays exceed the income families usually made from copra.

The handicraft sector is becoming a significant contributor to the development of the country.

Torba Skills Centre has been running skills trainings aimed at maximizing the handicraft production to provide employment opportunities and increase rural incomes.

However, approximately 700 people from Vetimboso are currently excluded from any form of formal financial services. NBV can only be accessed at Sola, the headquarter of Torba Province.

It takes around 7 to 8 hours to reach Vetimboso by boat



Vetimboso, the biggest village on Vanua Lava

from Sola.

It is very difficult to reach the village using truck due to poor road conditions.

The cost of meeting the financial needs for people in rural areas is very costly in many islands like Vanua Lava.

Torba Skills Centre

operating under the Vanuatu Skills Partnership Programme funded by the Australian Government and NBV provided the avenue of introducing rural banking to promote economic empowerment and increase financial inclusion in the handicraft sector.

The handicraft products from Vetimboso are sold through the Torba Handicraft Cooperative. The Handicraft Program is expected to expand gradually to include youth in the area and other communities too.

Over 20 people from

Vetimboso now have a bank account since the Handicraft Programme started early this year.

It is expected locals will be given simple business management and financial literacy coaching as part of the initiative.

WEATHER ICONS & MEANING			TODAY				TOMORROW							
			FORECAST OUTLOOK				FORECAST OUTLOOK							
PROVINCE	WEATHER FORECAST	WIND DIR	WIND SPEED	Temp.	WIND DIR	WIND SPEED	SEA STATE	WEATHER FORECAST	WIND DIR	WIND SPEED	Temp.	WIND DIR	WIND SPEED	SEA STATE
TORBA		South-East	15kt	33°C 25°C	South-East	15kt	Moderate seas to 1.5m		South-East	15kt	32°C 26°C	East	20kt	Moderate to rough seas to 2m
SANMA		South-East	15kt	32°C 24°C	South-East	15kt	Moderate seas to 1.5m		South-East	15kt	31°C 25°C	East	20kt	Moderate to rough seas to 2m
PENAMA		South-East	15kt	33°C 25°C	South-East	15kt	Moderate seas to 1.5m		South-East	15kt	31°C 25°C	East	20kt	Moderate to rough seas to 2m
MALAMPA		South-East	15kt	31°C 24°C	South-East	15kt	Moderate seas to 1.5m		South-East	15kt	31°C 25°C	East	20kt	Moderate to rough seas to 2m
SHEFA		South-East	15kt	30°C 23°C	South-East	15kt	Moderate seas to 1.5m		South-East	15kt	30°C 24°C	East	20kt	Moderate to rough seas to 2m
TAKEA		South-East	10kt	33°C	South-East	15kt	Moderate seas to 1.5m		South-East	10kt	29°C	East	20kt	Moderate to rough seas to 2m