

## EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH SKILLS:

# Janet's Journey

Vanuatu Skills Partnership | Better Balance | Impact Story

### Background

There are limited income-earning opportunities for stay-at-home mamas residing in urban areas.

In 2018, a group of women from Pentecost residing in Luganville, Sanma province, were encouraged by the Sanma Skills Centre to set up an association called Lima Bulu (which translates as 'join hands together'), to focus on hat weaving. Provincial Skills Centres enable access to training and business coaching under the Ministry of Education and Training and are supported by the Vanuatu Skills Partnership.

Janet Sine, a mother of four children, was a member of this new association. The combination of Janet's administrative experience and weaving skills saw the Sanma Skills Centre engage her as an Assistant Coach. She worked alongside international coach and hat making expert, Rosie Boylan, to train women from Lima Bulu and the Bosahe Association (a group of women from the island of Malo) to weave hats for export.

### Women in Leadership

Janet took on the Assistant Coach role with pride and worked hard to ensure milestones were met.



"Janet spoke nicely to the mamas, spent time with them and ensured that the Lima Bulu Association was a harmonious and safe space. She respected the members and gained respect in return."

Simeon Bage  
Provincial Training Coordinator  
Sanma Skills Centre

Janet and the other association members were mentored and coached by Ms Boylan and attended workshops, events and trainings facilitated through the Sanma Skills Centre, aimed at building their capacities as business leaders.

Supported by Ms Boylan's expertise and networks, and Janet's skills in coaching, mentoring, mobilising and inspiring, the headwear producers exported their first order of hats in November 2020 to Hills Hats, a globally renowned New Zealand hat manufacturing company.

With support from the Vanuatu Skills Partnership, the Department of Industry and other key stakeholders, Lima Bulu and the Bosahe Association, in conjunction with the Yumitu Craft Association (textile-focused) formalised the existence of their associations by registering with the Vanuatu Financial Services Commission as the Sanma Creative Industry Community Company (SCICC). This is the first ever community company registered in Sanma province. As a testament to her exceptional leadership skills, Janet was appointed by the SCICC Board as the Manager of the company, which is currently comprised of sixty women, including one woman with a disability.

"I am glad about this appointment because it was done through a proper process and also I am the first woman in this position for this newly established company in Sanma. I am being recognised to act as a Manager because of my skills, even though I don't have a formal qualification."

The trainings and opportunities facilitated by the Sanma Skills Centre helped Janet to identify the skills required of the members to create products meeting quality standards, and have helped her own growth as a leader.



"Being supported by the Vanuatu Skills Partnership to work with the women in headwear, I am now blessed with money, with knowing how to solve issues in the group, and leading women to enter the formal economy. I am being empowered!"

Janet Sine, Manager, SCICC

### Women's Economic Empowerment

Janet speaks highly of the support the SCICC members are receiving from the Vanuatu Skills Partnership and the economic impact on the lives of the mamas.



"Opening a bank account and using an ATM for the first time is one of the significant economic changes to the women's lives. As members of Lima Bulu Association and SCICC, they know that each time a hat is bought, money will be deposited into their accounts which they will know how to withdraw from the ATM. I call this economic change in their lives. The first time they used the ATM, there was laughter everywhere. They never dreamt of having this experience – it is only because the Vanuatu Skills Partnership has empowered them."

### Ending Violence Against Women

Janet strongly believes that the support the women are receiving from the Partnership will also contribute to ending the family violence that some members have experienced. SCICC has the potential to help husbands appreciate the role their wives play in earning an income for the family, and to understand the important support role they play in this dynamic. Janet believes that



"by men and women working together to produce for the hub, domestic violence in the community is being reduced because they are jointly involved in a business and have respect for each other."

While excited about the new appointment, Janet is aware of the challenges that lie ahead. However, she is confident that she will be able to lead the newly registered company with her leadership skills and with support from the Vanuatu Skills Partnership, SCICC members and other stakeholders.