

Inclusion

Narrative Report: January - June 2022



Figure 1: Merelava Skills for Agribusiness Coaching

INTRODUCTION

The information provided in this report is an update on the Inclusion (Disability Inclusion and Better Balance/Gender Equality) activities that have been implemented over the period of January to June 2022 by the Vanuatu Skills Partnership. The initial planning and implementation of activities were carried out in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and Community Services (MoJCS), the Department of Women's Affairs (DWA), Vanuatu Society for People with Disabilities (VSPD), Vanuatu Disability Promotion Advocacy (VDPA), other sector partners and the provincial Skills Centres.

Linked to the National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP), the National Disability Inclusive Development Policy, the National Gender Equality Policy and the Provincial Gender Action Plans; our focus for the past 6 months has been to strengthen national inclusion systems, improve livelihoods of people with disabilities, women and girls and members of other vulnerable groups. We strive to achieve this through advocacy and meaningful participation in skills development activities, influencing negative social norms and attitudes that discriminate on grounds of disability and gender.

It must be mentioned that following the announcement of the first COVID-19 community transmission in early March this year, many planned activities had to be postponed due to travel restrictions imposed by the Ministry of Health; nevertheless, implementation of some activities could still occur.

CONTEXT

In regard to Disability Inclusion, staff changes at the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) during the reporting period, left staffing gaps which meant that planned Partnership support to MoET inclusion policies and processes did not go ahead. The elevation of MoET's National Inclusive Education Coordinator to another role and delays in recruiting their replacement; resulted in a pause in support that the Partnership planned to provide to the drafting of the Disability Inclusive Education Policy during this reporting period. Likewise, the resignation of a key

person from MoET's VEMIS team led to a delay in the planned provision of Partnership support to improve disability data collection and disaggregation within Vanuatu's Education Management Information System (VEMIS) and Post-School Education and Training (PSET) module. Furthermore, the lack of a focal person for Inclusion at MoET's Tertiary Education Directorate (TED), has resulted in challenges in progressing efforts that support disability inclusion across Post School Education and Training (PSET) providers at a systemic level.

Following Vanuatu's first case of COVID-19 community transmission, several disability inclusion initiatives were postponed due to COVID-related travel restrictions, which resulted in travel restrictions for technical team (including coaches). These activities included:

- Disability data validation for West Tanna Area Council
- Signing of new agreements with VSPD and VDPA
- Support for the review of the inclusive Education and Training Policy
- Provision of support to sector partners for inclusion priorities
- Support to provincial Skills Centres for their disability inclusion efforts

In regard to Better Balance, COVID-19 has affected the implementation of the Partnership's planned activities. However, we were still able to progress discussions relating to formalising our partnership with the Department of Women's Affairs and the Adventist Disaster Relief Agency (ADRA) and we look forward to signing an agreement with them before the end of July 2022.

PARTNERSHIP STATUS & CO-CONTRIBUTIONS

On the 11th of May 2022, a variation to the 2021 MoJCS Agreement was signed to ensure a continuation of our support to the Ministry of Justice and Community Services. The agreement will extend our support for the government's decentralisation agenda through the expansion of inclusive services, such as through the recruitment of x 3 Provincial Community Service Officers (Provincial Disability Officers). This builds on the success of our last agreement with MoJCS under which the Partnership funded Provincial Disability Officers in Torba and Malampa provinces, who are now paid for by MoJCS. Furthermore, this agreement will see the Partnership providing support to MoJCS' National Disability Desk to strengthen its coordinating role.

Plans are in place to also formalise agreements with other Inclusion stakeholders including VSPD and VDPA, DWA and ADRA. Agreements with the two disability organisations will enable organisational strengthening, advocacy work, and disability data validation as well as promoting access to skills development activities by people with disabilities. Agreements with ADRA and DWA will also help to progress our Better Balance agenda, while providing support in a reciprocal manner to the two stakeholders.

"The Partnership Agreement will greatly strengthen the implementation of the Women's Economic Empowerment activities within the National Gender Equality Policy, to ensure that activities carried out in the productive sector, in particular the informal sector, are captured and valued by the Vanuatu Government." **Smith Pakoasongi, WEE Officer, DWA**

PARTICIPATION IN PARTNERSHIP SUPPORTED INCLUSIVE SKILLS TRAINING ACTIVITIES ACROSS SECTORS

Participation	Skills Providers Engaged
82 women 132 men 5 people with disabilities (1 woman 4 men) 1 couple	1 woman 1 person with disability (1 women)
TOTAL	214

SUMMARY OF KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED IN THE FIRST HALF OF 2022

Disability Inclusion

The Vanuatu Skills Partnership renewed its formal collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and Community Services (MoJCS) through the signing of an extended Partnership Agreement to support disability inclusion in the provinces. Through the extension agreement, the Vanuatu Skills Partnership reaffirmed its commitment to financially support the MoJCS with the recruitment of three Provincial Community Service Officers in Sanma, Tafea and Penama provinces.

Recruitment for these roles has almost concluded, and among other responsibilities, the officers will be responsible for taking the lead in progressing disability inclusion in the provinces in collaboration with other stakeholders, to ensure that no one is left behind in economic recovery and rebuilding efforts. This is the first time these provinces have had a government position responsible for coordinating and progressing disability inclusion and builds on the past support the Partnership has provided to MoJCS to enable the engagement of similar officers in Malampa and Torba provinces. This initiative contributes to the achievement of a more inclusive and increasingly decentralised skills system; a core Partnership aim.



Figure 2: Signing of Partnership Agreement Extension with MoJCS

"I feel privileged and humbled to be here to formalise another step in the long journey of our collaboration with the Vanuatu Skills Partnership to support disability inclusion. The scope and impact of the Vanuatu Skills Partnership touches every area of our country and I congratulate Director Fremden and his team." **Arthur Faerua, DG-MOJCS.**

Ahead of Vanuatu's borders re-opening, the Partnership supported bungalow owners and the Vanuatu Tourism Office to build up a supply of tourism options that are accessible to and inclusive of tourists with disabilities. The Partnership worked with bungalow owners in Santo to assess their accessibility provisions and provide suggestions for further modifications. The team has identified x4 operators that the Partnership will be supporting in the next 6 months with their inclusion efforts. The Partnership also supported the development of a video which aims to provide guidance for operators of bungalows and other tourism products, in how to support tourism in the context of COVID-19. The video contained specific key messages to help viewers understand the support that people with disabilities require during COVID.



Figure3: Still shot from a scene from the COVID-19 awareness video

"I have produced a lot of video content and have been involved with other production companies in video projects, but I have never been involved in producing and directing a production involving a person with disability. This Tourism Inclusive COVID-19 Awareness video production was my first experience involving a person with a disability as a key actress. It was challenging for me, however working with Ellie (actress with a disability) in this production was fantastic, making me realise the importance of inclusivity and I now look forward to including people with disabilities in any upcoming video projects I have." **Slone Fred, Producer, Island Sun Pictures**

During the peak of the COVID-19 crisis, the Partnership provided support to VSPD and VDPA to improve service delivery for people with disabilities. The Partnership supported the establishment of a working group which coordinated a response activity for clients and members with disabilities of both organisations.

The Partnership supported the organisations to document processes for the assessment and provision of support to people with disabilities. This resulted in the development of a COVID-19 Response Plan that was used by VSPD and VDPA to guide the response towards people with disabilities in both Port Vila and Luganville, in the absence of the activation of the National Gender Cluster. The plan was then used as a key document in securing additional funds from development partners for the COVID-19 response. This is an example of developmental leadership driving collective action for improved service delivery.

An agreement between the Partnership and VAC was signed within the last six months, following which the Partnership supported the refurbishment of VAC's Inclusive Resource room. The resource room will contain supplies to support the teaching and learning of students with disabilities as well as providing space for "catch-up" study and the support for literacy or other skills, which may be needed by students with disabilities outside of their main course requirements. The procurement of these resources and training for VAC personnel will occur in August 2022. This initiative supports the achievement of a more inclusive and increasingly decentralised skills system.

"Vanuatu Agriculture College strives to include everybody. We celebrate differences, support learning and do our best to respond to individual learning needs. We are grateful for the support provided by Vanuatu Skills Partnership towards our inclusion journey." Alexine Moses, Student Support Officer



Figure 4: VAC's Inclusive Resource Room

Support was provided to Torba, Tafea, Ambae and Sanma to make and deliver hygiene items to people with disabilities. Partnership clients, including those with disabilities, were engaged and trained in the manufacturing of masks, which were packaged with hand sanitisers and soaps, and delivered to Skills Centres for distribution to people with disabilities. In Sanma, hygiene and food packages were delivered to over 250 people with disabilities, who had been identified during a disability validation survey conducted by the Partnership, MoJCS, VDPA and VSPD in response to Tropical Cyclone Harold in 2020. The Partnership's developmental leadership has driven collective action for improved service delivery in response to COVID-19 risks; building on foundational groundwork laid during a previous emergency situation.



Figure 5: Mrs Kerry, VSP Skills for Health Coordinator and VSPD officer with the donated food and hygiene items

“On behalf of me and my family, I would like to say thank you very much for the food and hygiene package provided - it is a lot, and I would like to say thank you. We hardly get visited by outsiders and this is the first time this has happened. Again, thank you very much for the visit.”

Mrs Mary Kerry, Pump Station resident

Better Balance

The recruitment of two male Better Balance officers within the reporting period is indeed an achievement to be celebrated. The two officers have vast experience in matters of gender, with a special focus on addressing Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW) through a family approach and will take a leading role in the implementation of the Partnership’s Better Balance Strategy under the guidance of the Inclusion Manager and in collaboration with key stakeholders. The recent recruitment takes the Partnership’s commitment to Gender Equity or Better Balance to a whole new level and discussions are underway with key stakeholders regarding better balance activities for the next 6 months. The recent increase in the Inclusion team members will enable a more effective incorporation of Better Balance (and Disability Inclusion) into sector and Skills Center activities.



Figure 6: VSP’s Inclusion team with Balance of Power Country Manager, Wilson Toa (second from right)

During this reporting period, the Partnership has proactively sought a non-conventional approach to its recruitment of Better Balance officers – a space usually associated with women. By deliberately selecting two young men – two ‘non usual suspects’ with influence and credibility in rural areas and church communities, the Partnership is aiming to influence the deeply entrenched social norms and attitudes that prevent women’s agency and empowerment and are often perpetuated by cultural and religious factors.

In addition, the Partnership has managed to progress the discussion with the Department of Women’s Affairs (DWA) in moving towards the formalisation of our working relationship through an official agreement, which has been several years in the making. The Partnership is excited about the progress made so far in collaboratively developing the agreement and look forward to its signing with DWA in July 2022. The Partnership has been identified by the DWA as a key implementing partner in the recently launched National Gender Equality Policy (NGEP) and the Provincial Gender Action Plans (GAPs) and the agreement will formalize this working relationship at national and provincial levels. The agreement will also support collaborative implementation of the Partnership’s Better Balance Strategy.



Figure 7: Introducing the Better Balance Officers to Acting Director DWA and WEE Officer

“I believe this partnership is important to continue to strengthen synergies working with other partners and in particular to support the Provincial Gender Equality Plans as well as support capacity building for our DWA personal.” Acting Director, Seman Saraken, Department of Women’s Affairs

The Partnership also provided support to DWA for the organisation of International Women’s Day. With the outbreak of the COVID 19 community transmission, the event was postponed to June and downscaled to a live panel discussion around the role women play in disaster response. The live panel featured, (among other powerful female panelists), the Secretary General of the Sanma Province who is a strong advocate of women in leadership roles and the important role they play during disaster response for which they should be recognised.



Figure 8: Albert Ruddley, speaking at the International Women’s Day panel

“When women are on the frontline during an emergency or disaster response they go to places or areas that others are not able to go to. They see beyond to areas that are usually overlooked by other leaders.” Secretary General, Albert Ruddley, Sanma Provincial Government

During the reporting period, there has been a renewed commitment from across the Partnership to ensure equal participation of men and women in all skills development activities (please refer to the specific sector reports for more information). For example, there have been female participants in all of the workstreams key activities so far this year, including those in traditionally male dominated areas.

The Training Provider Support/Skills for Construction workstreams have committed to working in close collaboration with Provincial Skills Centres and Provincial Government Area Councils to continue to encourage female participation as much as possible during community consultations. This aims to ensure there is a better balance of women represented in the delivery of accredited training and implementation of infrastructure projects. Within the reporting period, there were three female trainees who successfully participated in accredited Building Construction courses conducted on Tanna (Tafea) and Gaua (Torba). Not only do we see women participating in TPS/ SFC activities, but also in the sectors of SfCI, SfT and SFA women and couples are actively participating as well.



Figure 9: Female trainee in action – Construction of Handicraft Hub, Tanna

“It was a pleasure to have our trainees with disabilities and female trainees participate in this accredited training. They all performed exceptionally well, and the female trainees were outstanding. Thank you to Vanuatu Skills Partnership for the role they played in making this happen. The trainees with disabilities and the female trainees have once again shown that they can participate equally like everyone else if given the opportunity and support.” **Building Construction Trainer, Mr Moses Nalau**

Finally, in regard to the Partnership’s work in supporting women in leadership roles, it is noteworthy that the three provincial Handicraft Hubs are all managed by women who, despite the COVID-19 situation, managed to keep the hubs open and operational. Under the leadership of the Sanma Creative Industries Community Company (SCCC) Manager, the SCICC textile clients have diversified their efforts into producing World Health Organisation (WHO) approved re-useable masks for different groups of people, including vulnerable groups. This activity has seen them earn a total of VUV 178,190 since March this year.

Under the leadership of Manager Linrose, the Torba Handicraft Hub organised the very first payout of its members’ shares during the peak of the community transmission in certain Vanuatu communities, with the highest earning shareholder being a woman with a disability.

“Since the establishment of the Torba Handicraft Centre, this is the first time for the producers to receive their dividends. As the THC Manager, it is indeed a major achievement to celebrate, and I am happy to be part of this. Of the 53 members, there are 2 producers with disabilities, and they have both received their shares, with one being the highest earner of all shareholders. I would like to say a big thank you to Vanuatu Skills Partnership and Torba Cooperative for their continuous support to ensure this is a successful journey for all involved.” **Linrose Bisiwei, THC Manager**

ADDITIONAL RESULTS FROM WORKSTREAMS: (REFER TO SECTOR REPORTS FOR MORE DETAIL)

Better Balance

- Identification of x1 female candidate on Pentecost and x7 female candidates on Sanma to participate in upcoming accredited Plumbing Training.
- Productive Sector Coordinator of the Vanuatu Skills Partnership was promoted to the position of Manager - Skills for Tourism & Skills for Creative Industries workstreams.

Disability Inclusion

- The successful completion of Cert.II Training in Building Construction by X2 trainees with disabilities.
- All buildings constructed with support from VSP over the reporting period incorporate accessibility standards
- Development of concept note for the development of Accredited Disability Training for Vanuatu Context, in partnership with the Vanuatu Institute of Technology.
- Support to MoJCS for National Disability Committee meeting and Mid-Term review of National Disability Inclusive Development (NDID) Policy.

CHALLENGES AND / OR LESSONS LEARNED

- The absence of key personnel at MoET has reduced the Partnership’s ability to provide planned support to systemic changes, such as drafting the Inclusive Education Policy and supporting disability data collection and disaggregation within VEMIS’ PSET Module. In the second half of 2022, the Partnership will host discussions with the new Inclusive Education Officer and other key personnel to share information, build relationships and develop a plan for moving forward.
- The national outbreak of the COVID-19 has had an adverse impact on the implementation of inclusive activities. Contingency processes and ‘plan Bs’ must be put in place to address a potential second or third wave of COVID-19 (or other disasters/pandemics).
- There is a need to strengthen our working relationship with MoET to enable a collaborative effort to address/progress disability inclusion systemically. A discussion is needed between TED and VSP to identify the best way forward for increased MoET engagement.
- It is crucial that we are strengthening our working relationship with DWA and other stakeholders to improve implementation efforts of the Better Balance Strategy. Formalization of Agreements between VSP and other key stakeholders is a must.

OVERALL ASSESSMETN OF PROGRESS TO DATE 2022

Progress less than expected and significant change is required	Progress less than expected but challenges are being overcome	Progress as expected (our plans are on track)	Progress is exceeding expectations
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Despite the travel restrictions and other issues related to COVID-19, we have progressed the majority of our work as expected. However, in some areas of our work, progress has been less than expected; for example, due to challenges limiting opportunities for engagement with MoET, progress on the Inclusive Education and Training Policy and VEMIS PSET module has been delayed. As such, we have assessed this accordingly in the graphic above.

In terms of Better Balance, there is more we could have done in the last 6 months, however again, with the community transmission, it was difficult to progress our planned activities. A lot of our planned activities hinged on formalising our working relationship through agreements prior to collaborative implementation with partners. These are new partners that we have identified and, hence, with the lockdown, all activities were put on hold. We have now resumed discussions with these potential partners and look forward to putting in the required effort to ensure we achieve our 2022 goals.

FORWARD PLANNING: JULY - DECEMBER 2022

Priorities for the Inclusion workstream for implementation and action in the second half of 2022.

Disability Inclusion

- Procurement of inclusive learning resources for VAC Inclusive Resource Room
- Renovation of Ex-Female Correctional Building for VSPD
- Support MoET-led national sign language development efforts by collecting home signs in Torba via video. Other disability partners are responsible for other provinces.
- Signing of Agreement with VSPD and VDPA
- Support to National Disability Desk for the strengthening of its coordination role, including selected priorities arising from the National Disability Committee meeting; procurement of Office equipment for the three MoJCS Provincial Disability Officers; supporting MoJCS Provincial Disability Officers to develop work plans and undertake awareness raising activities; and developing partner reporting tools and processes.
- Develop a way forward for strengthening skills in disability inclusion in the training sector and beyond, exploring and progressing the development of training in disability inclusion more systemically, including content and delivery modes.
- Support to productive sector partners for Disability Inclusion plans
- Visit to Skills Centres to finalise Disability Inclusion Plans
- With TPS, facilitate a joint session with MoET to identify mutual priorities of interest, including consideration of Partnership support for the development of an Inclusive Education and Training Policy, incorporation of disability in VEMIS' PSET module, and scope for supporting Training Providers with disability inclusion action plans.
- Working with VSPD and VDPA, continue validation and updating of data in relation to people with disability for improved service delivery provision (Tafea and Torba).

Better Balance

- Provide and/or facilitate support to female clients to move a step up in leadership positions
- Capacity build government partners in Better Balance Gender equality planning and implementation
- Visit to Skills Centres to finalize Better Plans and Provide support to Skills Centres to address the issue of equality at home through Centre activities
- Support to DWA for the implementation of national and provincial priorities – NGEP and PGAPs
- Collaborate with BoP to promote WIL through targeted influencing activities
- Improve balanced participation of women and men in skills activities

- Incorporation of components of Family Life Education (FLE) into non-accredited or accredited training, targeting men and young boys (MY Pacific)
- Collaborate with ADRA to incorporate FLE into skills development activities as means of addressing 'better balance' in a holistic manner and ending violence against women.
- Capacity building for staff in implementation of the Better Balance Strategy.

Emerging risks and how to manage them

- COVID-19 may result in more border closures and limit opportunities for travel. We will abide by the Partnership's standard operating procedures in the case of further closures and isolation and implement activities remotely where possible.
- Competing Priorities of Skills Centres and partners may limit progress of priorities. We will meet colleagues and partner representatives in order to confirm plans and agree on roles and responsibilities.
- Funding – collaborative planning with sectors and sector partners to ensure one stone – 2 birds approach.