

SKILLS FOR CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

NARRATIVE REPORT – JANUARY TO JUNE 2022

INTRODUCTION

This is a progress update on the activities that have been implemented under the Skills for Creative Industries (SfCI) workstream of the Vanuatu Skills Partnership ('the Partnership') over the six-month period from January – June 2022. The initial planning and implementation were done in collaboration with the Department of Industry (DOI), Vanuatu Intellectual Property Office (VanIPO), Provincial Governments and creative industries producers in Tafea, Malampa, Sanma, Torba provinces and Ambae Island. Efforts are guided by the National Sustainable Development Plan 2016-2030, the National Industrial Development Strategy 2018-2022, and the Handicraft Sector Action Plan 2018-2020, which is now in the process of being renewed with support of the Partnership.

In early 2022, the Skills for Creative Industries (SfCI) workstream developed its priorities for the year, ensuring there was alignment with the annual workplans of the DOI and VanIPO. The priority focus areas include:

- Supporting the development of the National Handicraft Sector Policy
- Intellectual Property provincial awareness
- Supporting enhanced market access for the Handicraft Hubs
- Provincial Hubs' Business Plan development and reviews

CONTEXT

Vanuatu recorded its first case of community transmission of COVID-19 on 4th March 2022, with the government declaring a full lockdown on both domestic and international travel. The Ministry of Health (MoH) activated travel restrictions across all provinces, impacting travel for two months. These restrictions have had a significant influence on the implementation plans of the Skills for Creative Industries (SfCI) workstream over the reporting period. For example:

- Regional consultations planned in support of the National Handicraft Policy were restricted and many had to be done remotely via Zoom. Deadlines were delayed and work is still incomplete.
- Handicraft hub business plan workshops were also delayed; however these are expected to go ahead starting in Torba in July. The first Financial Policy workshop with the Sanma Creative Industry Community Company (SCICC) was finally delivered in June via Zoom and it is hoped that the template developed will now be introduced to other community businesses.
- Progress in marketing and sales has been impacted by the continued border closure, restricting international tourism. It is expected that this will change from 1 July with the international border reopening.

Despite these challenges, the last few months have been used for planning and adapting to the 'new normal' and this is expected to lead to stronger results in the second half of the year.

PARTNERSHIP STATUS & CO-CONTRIBUTIONS

The Partnership is a longtime supporter of the DoI and more recently the VanIPO, aiming to enhance the Creative Industries sector through skills development, market access, protection of creativity and innovative work for the people of Vanuatu.

Through this strong partnership, we have seen considerable growth in this sector. On the 27th of June 2022, we reaffirmed our commitment to strengthen this critical sector through the signing of a Partnership Agreement Framework (PIAF) that will guide and guard the integrity of our ongoing collaboration and working relationship over the next four years.

“We are committed to strengthening and protecting our local creative industries so that the beauty and uniqueness of ni-Vanuatu culture can be passed down to generations to come and shared with the world.” **Britten Yosef, Registrar VanIPO.**



Figure 1: The signing of the PIAF-From left to right, First Secretary Australian High Commission, Stephanie Kimber; Acting DG Mr. Jimmy Rantes – MTTCN; Acting Director Industry, Mr. Noel Kalo; Director VSP, Mr. Fremden Yanhambath; Registrar VanIPO, Mr. Britten Yosef.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE SKILLS FOR CREATIVE INDUSTRIES WORKSTREAM

JAN - JUNE 2022

Activity Outputs

Skills training activities

- 1 x Individual coaching sessions
- 6 x Meetings

Support activities

- 1 x Resource development
- 5 x Budget and equipment support
- 1 x Technical support

Participation in Partnership supported skills training and market access activities

Participation	Business Clients supported	Skills Providers Engaged
34 women	192 women owned businesses	2 Ni-Vanuatu (1 women, 1 man)
3 men	16 men owned businesses	2 International Expatriates (2 women)
1 person with a disability (1 man)		1 Residential Expatriate (1 man)

SUMMARY OF KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED IN THE FIRST HALF OF 2022

Vanuatu Handicraft Sector Policy

The Vanuatu Handicraft Sector Policy is currently being developed through the DOI and follows the successful implementation of the Handicraft Sector Action Plan of 2018-2020. It is expected to cover the four-year period from 2022-2026 and is an essential document to the further development of the handicraft sector in Vanuatu. This policy will give guidance to the DOI and its implementing partners to work collaboratively to support and strengthen this critical sector.

The DOI is coordinating the development of this policy with support from the Vanuatu Skills Partnership, which has included the costs of consultations conducted across the six provinces with representatives from the handicraft producers, vendors, government departments, NGOs, business houses and other relevant agencies.

The draft Vanuatu Handicraft Sector Policy is currently under review by the Department of Industry and the Partnership, before submission to the Acting Director of Industry for final review. It is expected to be launched at the end of August 2022.



Figure 2: Vanuatu Handicraft Sector Policy consultation in Port Vila with relevant stakeholders.

Registration of handicraft products and tools under copyright and design laws

On Ambae, skills development and training coordinated by the Partnership (through the Ambae Recovery project) has built awareness of the importance of culture and identity amongst handicraft producers and the importance of protecting their creativity and innovation (from a commercial and cultural preservation perspective). The Partnership provided support to VanIPO officers to travel to Ambae and raise awareness and deliver workshops to producers, which led to the registration of Hanneth's String Basket. It is a unique product that is highly sought after and has now been legally registered and recognised under copyright and design law.



Figure 3: Acting Director of the Department of Industry, Mr. Noel Kalo (R), receiving the certificate from Minister James Bule (c) and registrar, Brittien Yosef (L) in Ms. Woi's absence.

In 2018, the Sanma Skills Centre organised several training sessions with a headwear specialist (industry coach), for the headwear producer group. During these sessions, the headwear specialist identified an innovative tool to improve consistency and speed of pandanus preparation and quality. The tool is unique and needed copyright protection and has never been used before in Vanuatu. Therefore, the Partnership facilitated the registration of that tool under the Copyright and Design Laws under the VanIPO mandate. This led to the first ever design certificate was issued to that small innovative tool called 'Fren Blong Wiva'.

Torba products such as the shopping basket, Victoria's Moon Basket, were registered by VanIPO and certificates will be handed over towards the end of this year with more expected to be added in the second half of 2022. The Partnership will continue to facilitate and coordinate logistics for VanIPO officers to deliver more workshops, raising awareness, and registration of products in Malampa, Tafea and Sanma province to help producers protect their creativity in the market.

Development of SCICC Financial Policy and Clothing & Design Learner Guide

The Sanma Creative Industry Community Company (SCICC) Ltd was formally registered under the Vanuatu Financial Service Commission as the first Community Company in Sanma Province in September 2020. Since then, SCICC management has been operating this business without a Financial Policy making it difficult for management to make decisions regarding financial operations. However, towards the end of last year, the Partnership engaged a Finance and Business industry coach to develop the policy. Despite the challenges of COVID-19 and associated lockdowns, the financial policy has now been completed, with final consultations held via Zoom by the industry coach. The SCICC now has a documented financial policy that will help management to make decisions regarding company operations.

Since the first cases of community transmission of COVID-19, all people have been required to wear masks whenever they are in public places. As a result of these mandates, SCICC has since produced a total of 546 masks worth VUV 178,190 that have been distributed throughout the provinces. However, there is limited production capacity to meet the market demand within a reasonable timeframe. Together with the SCICC, the Sanma Skills Centre is looking forward to increasing the number of producers and clients to meet the market demand in the future.



Figure 4: SCICC Manager, Janet Sine (R), and Textile Industry Coach, Mary Alick (L), sorting and packaging the masks orders ready for distribution.

Due to the COVID-19 situation and associated travel restrictions, it has been difficult for industry coaches to conduct training and mentoring activities. It has also been difficult for producers to continue using new skills learnt in 2021 without an ongoing coach presence. Given the inability of coaches to meet with producers, the Partnership identified a need to develop a ‘Clothing & Design Learner Guide’. The development of the Learner Guide was coordinated by the Partnership and was developed by the Partnership’s Fashion and Design Industry Coach, Emma Viramalolo.

New Tafea Handicraft Production and Marketing Hub

Through the strong collaboration between the Partnership and the Department of Industry, there has been remarkable growth in the handicraft sector, including the establishment of the first ever provincial production and marketing hubs: Malampa Handicraft Centre, Torba Handicraft Cooperative and Sanma Creative Industries Community Company, while the new Tafea Handicraft Hub will be launched in August. Through Tafea Skills Centre, the Partnership has funded the building materials for the Tafea Handicraft Hub, while also coordinating and facilitating the construction of the Hub in consultation with the Tafea Industry Officer and other relevant agencies using an on-the-job training model. The construction work has continued for the last six-months despite the constraints of the COVID-19 situation in the country.

There is a strong commitment from the government to strengthen this sector through skills development and improved market access for handicraft producers. Market access is one of the main challenges across all the provinces and setting up these provincial handicraft hubs will address this issue and support pathways toward sustainability. The Tafea Handicraft Hub will be a “one stop shop” for all handicraft producers across Tafea province.



Figure 5 - Tafea Handicraft Production and Marketing Hub construction during the COVID-19 lockdown

Improved Communication and Coordination of work

As with other Partnership workstreams, community transmission of COVID-19 and the associated lockdown has had an adverse impact on the SfCI implementation plan for 2022. During this period we have identified new ways to continue our work, including through increased use of online communication platforms that allow work to be done remotely. For example, meetings between the SfCI Officer and the provincial Skills Centre teams are now actually occurring more frequently (remotely) than they were prior to lockdown.

Similarly, the use of online communication platforms such as Zoom by our sector partners has improved and has become a daily communication tool. Communication between national DOI Officers/Managers and the provincial Industry Officers also seems to have improved following regular Zoom meetings between the national DOI team and the Partnership team during the lockdown.

These are recent examples of improved communication and coordination between stakeholders at the provincial and national level compared to previous years.

ADDITIONAL RESULTS (CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES):

Better Balance

The completion of the SCICC financial policy was led by a male industry coach working closely with four women who are all contracted by the Partnership. This provides a strong example of how male and female leaders can work together to develop a policy that will support the operations of a business, whilst protecting the interests of individual producers, most of whom are women. It also demonstrates that the 'voice' of women is critical to further policy discussions and developments in Vanuatu. The established provincial handicraft hubs are all managed and under the leadership of three women.

The Vanuatu Handicraft Sector Policy has been developed to guide and protect the interests and involvement of women in the sector, and to encourage and empower women as entrepreneurs in the Creative Industries sector. The Partnership has had a strong influence on the development of this policy and has also worked closely with the Ministry of Justice and Community Services on this.

Disability Inclusion

The consultation process for the Vanuatu Handicraft Sector Policy has included the Partnership's Inclusion team, Department of Women's Affairs and Ministry of Justice and Community Services. Relevant stakeholders have been consulted to make sure that the policy covers everyone, including people with disability, and to make sure no one is left behind in the development of the policy. Provincial consultation

has also included the participation of people with disabilities, women, men, and youths. The policy goals and directives clearly outline inclusiveness and effective participation of people with disability in all areas of skills development and services in the sector.

Out of the 25 trainees that participated in the construction of the Tafea handicraft hub, one of them is a male with a disability. This is a strong demonstration that people with a disability are capable of participating in skills training and can contribute effectively in the workplace.

During the COVID-19 outbreak, the SCICC clothing and design group produced masks that were distributed to all disability clients across the provinces. Our female disability client is among the producers to deliver these mask orders.

Torba Handicraft Cooperative paid out its first dividends to the producers from Mota Lava and Vanualava, Merelava and West Vanualava. A total of 183,050 Vatu was paid to 22 producers on Vetimboso, including two producers with a disability (1 male and 1 female). The female client with a disability had the highest dividend share presented to her on that day by the Torba Cooperative Officer.



Figure 6: Male client with a disability (L) and another producer (R) receiving their dividend from the Cooperative Officer.

Climate Resilience

The impact of climate change has impacted the livelihoods of many people in the Pacific, including in Vanuatu. The handicraft sector is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change such as through a potential shortage of raw materials, and through pests and diseases within pandanus fibers that could be caused by a changing climate.

Consultations with the Department of Climate Change on the development of the National Handicraft Sector Policy led to an agreement to improve awareness and provide training to help handicraft producers and businesses dependent on handicrafts to become resilient to adapt and mitigate the impacts of climate change on their livelihoods.

CHALLENGES AND / OR LESSONS LEARNED

The lockdown due to COVID-19 and travel restrictions resulted in delays in activity implementation compared to what was planned at the start of 2022; for example, development and review of the handicraft hubs' business plans and updates to catalogues. However, this time was used to plan and reprioritize our work. Some work could continue remotely while other activities that require travel will be implemented in the second half of 2022.

COVID-19 also led to delays and disruptions to freight and delivery of craft supplies, such as the imports of Teri dyes, which impacted on handicraft production. Additionally, the recruitment of industry coaches was impacted by the requirement for workers to be vaccinated. The Partnership’s Skills Centres were strongly focused on the emergency response to COVID-19, making it difficult to implement other skills activities as planned.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS TO DATE IN 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
---	--	--	---

The Skills for Creative Industries workstream implementation plan for 2022 was heavily impacted by the COVID-19 situation. Progress has been less than expected but challenges are being overcome. Most planned activities for the last six-months have been reprioritized for implementation in the second half of 2022, although some work could continue to be delivered remotely. Despite these challenges, the lockdown period has improved our communication style and we have continued to have regular meetings through the use of Zoom, while new strategies have been discussed on how and what to do during a pandemic or disaster.

Producers have shown resilience and have continued to pivot and develop products that are now market ready. The provincial handicraft hubs have become the main point of sale and distributor for all the handicraft products.

The calendar for the next six-months will be fully booked, given most of the planned activities for the last six-months will be implemented. Despite these challenges, most of the goals/objectives of the Creative Industries Sector are still likely to be achieved by the end of the year through the strong partnership with the Department of Industry, VanIPO and Office of Cooperatives.

FORWARD PLANNING: JULY- DECEMBER 2022

Priorities for the SfCI workstream for implementation and action in the second half of 2022:

- International border to re-open, sales outlets supplied.
- Provincial visits Aug/Sept to all hubs focusing on business planning and development and sustainability workshops and coaching. Develop Business Plan/Financial Policy for THC, Ambae, Tafea.
- Finalisation of the traditional craft inventory for Tafea province and support for intellectual property registration and basic financial literacy training. Strong focus on governance arrangements for the new Creative Industries hub.
- Establishment and formalisation of producer associations to administer product quality controls, manage orders, develop standard price guides, product catalogue, marketing, and facilitation of access to trade market events with associated technical and business coaching.
- Professional development and governance skills training, networking, and data collection and management for DoI officers, hub management and Board personnel.

- Product catalogues updated: Graphic designer/photographer contracted, visit hubs to photograph products
- Launching of the Tafea Handicraft Hub, setting up business management and governance structure.
- Collaboration with PT&I and Auckland Museum – first order to Museum Shop
- Collaboration with The Gallery of Modern Art (GOMA) in Brisbane and the producers in preparation towards the prestigious, internationally renown Asia Pacific Triennial (APT) at GOMA in 2024.
- Develop a Handicraft Quality and Export requirements Standards for the handicraft products across the provinces.