



SKILLS FOR TOURISM

6-MONTH PROGRESS REPORT



Ministry of Tourism, Trade, Commerce
and Ni-Vanuatu Business

anvctomb



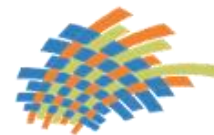
Vanuatu
DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM



TOURISM OFFICE
ANSWERING THE CALL

VANUATU

SKILLS
PARTNERSHIP



JANUARY - JUNE 2023

INTRODUCTION



Image 1: Minister of Tourism, the Australian High Commissioner and other Vanuatu Government officials mark the return of Virgin Australia to Vanuatu

- This progress report provides an update on the Skills for Tourism (SfT) workstream activities implemented from January to June 2023 in collaboration with the Department of Tourism (DoT), the Vanuatu Tourism Office (VTO), provincial Skills Centres and relevant partners.
- The workstream's key objectives during this period were to support tourism research, strengthen market access for local tourism operators, address product readiness, and support critical impact assessment following the twin cyclones.
- These activities align with core priorities of DoT and VTO, the government's response and recovery strategy, and the National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP) 2030, encompassing economic, social, and environmental pillars.

CONTEXT

- It has been a year since Vanuatu opened its international border post COVID-19 and tourist numbers are slowly returning to pre-pandemic levels. The Vanuatu Bureau of Statistics recorded 3,540 visitors to Vanuatu by air in July 2022, and zero from cruise ships. By January 2023, there were 8,301 monthly visitors by air, 90% of whom were holiday makers. Day visitors from cruise ships in January totalled 25,851.
- In the last six months, Virgin Australia has increased its Brisbane-Port Vila service to five flights a week for the first time since 2020. Additionally, Air Vanuatu has recommenced its direct Brisbane-Santo route. These additional flight routes will make a large impact on the recovery of tourism volume in Vanuatu.
- Rural tourism demand has not recovered as quickly. As per the VTO survey in early 2023, almost all (82%) of island bungalows surveyed said that their demand was lower than in 2019. Operational issues with Air Vanuatu's domestic service has been noted as a contributing factor to the low visitor numbers to outer-islands.
- While the tourism sector is still recovering from the impacts of COVID-19, it has been further impacted by twin cyclones in March which devastated tourism operators in Tafea and Shefa.
- Due to the focus on response from partners and the Skills Centres, the SfT workstream re-focused priorities in quarter two, supporting the broader sector at a national level in addition to targeted disaster response initiatives.



Image 2: Celebrating the return of Virgin Australia to Vanuatu



Image 3: Cruise ship in Port Vila Harbor on 30th April 2023 (source VTO)

PARTNERSHIP STATUS AND CO-CONTRIBUTIONS

- The ongoing four-year Partnership Implementation Agreement (PIA) with DoT and VTO establishes a strong foundation for collaboration. This agreement was signed in June 2022 and remains current for four years through to 2026.
- Initial plans to formalise the annual Partnership Implementation Frameworks with VTO and DOT were paused due to the impacts of Tropical Cyclones (TC) Judy and Kevin in March. Discussions regarding an abbreviated joint workplan for the remainder of the year are underway, with plans for its signing at the end of July.
- While no direct funds were received from DoT and VTO, in-direct co-contributions were made towards the activities implemented in the first six months, as indicated in the table below.

Activity	Co-Contributions for activities implemented from Jan – June 2023 (VUV)
Research & Data Collection (includes impact assessment on Tanna & Malekula)	VTO ¹ VUV 250,000 DoT VUV 356,400 VSP VUV 698,900

¹ Tourism Recovery Forecasting & Modelling

WORKSTREAM WORK PLAN STATUS

Work Plan Priority Areas &/Or Green Shoots	Mid-Year Status Update (No activity, some progress, good progress)	Additional Comments
Tourism Recovery and Business Development	Some Progress	Final procurement of items to support the Government's COVID-19 tourism operator recovery initiative on Tanna. The SfT team also supported the DoT and VTO to carry out impact assessments on Tanna and Malekula.
Inclusive and domestic tourism development	Some Progress	Supported VTO with the coordination of the Mi Tumoro Vanuatu Domestic Expo in Santo and Port Vila. During this event, some marketing skill gaps were identified for local tourism operators – this will be discussed further with VTO on how to better support prior to events such as this.
Cruise Port of Call Product Development	Some Progress	Supported VTO to conduct a cruise survey. Information collected will provide direction to DoT and VTO to further develop the cruise industry in all Ports of Call.

QUANTITATIVE DATA (JAN-JUN 2023)

Skills providers engaged	Participation in Partnership supported skills training	Business clients supported
1 man	37 participants <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 18 women• 19 men	44 business clients supported <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 19 women owned businesses• 24 men owned businesses• 1 couple owned business

KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED

Strengthened data collection systems to influence development and direction of the Vanuatu Tourism Industry

- The Partnership provided technical assistance to VTO and DoT to support research and data collection. This includes targeted inputs to strengthen the cruise survey, international visitor (by air) survey, Vanuatu Tourism forecast (to predict growth of the sector in the next three years) and Detailed Impact Assessments for tourism operators on Tanna and Malampa post the twin cyclones.
- This is the first time VTO has been coordinating and collecting tourism data 'in-house' without relying on expensive international research teams to capture and analyse the information.
- The information collected is critical for the development of the sector as it provides insights into visitor experiences which inform skill gaps, market segments and the reach of visitors to islands throughout the country to support marketing efforts and product development.
- The information highlighted areas for inclusive and accessible tourism considerations in addition to identifying risks to the environment.



Image 4: Team VSP and VTO cross-checking data from the Malampa Tourism Detailed Impact Assessment

KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED



*Image 5:
Participants at
MTV, Luganville*

Creating market access links for local tourism operators

- The Mi Tumoro Vanuatu (MTV) Domestic Expo held in June 2023 in Luganville and Port Vila was a Business to Customer (B2C) network opportunity that brought tourism operators and stakeholders together to promote and sell their business to domestic consumers.
- The Partnership supported the participation of ten provincial tourism operators at the MTV event in Port Vila. Feedback from the event showed that 90% of all operators made sales and were satisfied with the event as an income generating opportunity. This opportunity provided clients with first-hand experience presenting their businesses at a B2C event and honed their customer service and selling skills. It also gave them more understanding of the Vanuatu brand and the domestic tourism market.
- Additional skills gaps and areas for further training have been identified through this event and will be considered in upcoming work planning.

Image 6: MTV, Port Vila featuring SFT Client George Atkins owner of Tammes Bungalow, Banks (Source VTO)



ADDITIONAL RESULTS (CROSS CUTTING)



Image 7: Mrs Edna Paolo, Owner of Malekula Holiday Villa at the MTV Expo in Port Vila (Source: VTO)

Better Balance

- Of the ten tourism operators who participated at the MTV Domestic Expo in Port Vila, three were women and seven were men.

Disability Inclusion

- Activities implemented in the last six months have included the collection of valuable information on the accessibility of tourism offerings in Vanuatu. This information will be utilised to initiate discussions on accessible tourism with DoT and VTO.

For example, during the follow-up coaching for product readiness support in Sanma, it was revealed that out of 37 local tourism businesses, five reported hosting 39 visitors with disabilities since the border re-opened. Further assessments of these businesses will be conducted to identify areas where support is needed to ensure their products are fully accessible.

Climate resilience

- SfT supported DoT and VTO to conduct impact assessments following TC Kevin and Judy. While results are still being analysed, the recovery plans expected from DoT and VTO will draw on this information, shaping future efforts and actions to support the sustainable recovery of these businesses.

LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS

Lesson 1: Where guidance from partners at the national level is unclear, the Partnership needs to proactively lead on the development of concepts and detailed work plans in addition to identifying strategic entry points at the provincial level to revive momentum in targeted areas.

Actions: The Partnership will proactively support DoT and VTO to develop detailed strategies/ workplan 'concepts' linked to existing priority areas that show the practical steps required at the provincial level to drive change. The Partnership, through SfT and key Skills Centres, will work to gain stakeholder buy-in at the provincial and national levels including the confirmed allocation of resources to support sector development.

Lesson 2: Finalisation of the annual Partnership Implementation Framework with DoT needs to occur earlier in the year

Actions: The Partnership will seek discussions with DoT and VTO in Q3 and Q4 2023 to ensure joint priorities for 2024 are confirmed in time to be included in the GOV annual work planning and budgeting cycle and can be included within the Partnership's planning documents. These priorities will form the basis of the PIF which should be signed in early 2024.

PRIORITIES FOR THE SECOND HALF OF 2023



Image 8: SfT client, Florence Gistin, co-owner of Dorin Lagoon Bungalow, Rah – Banks Islands, Torba - MTV Port Vila.

- Conduct a learning and reflection workshop with DoT and VTO around our collaborative efforts to formalise joint priorities and co-investment for the remainder of the year.
- Support the Cruise Tourism Program with the development of the Yacht Tourism Strategy.
- Support DoT with targeted product development and skills development activities in key provinces to meet market demand.
- Support DoT to strengthen provincial tourism associations in key provinces.
- Support the DOT and VTO Domestic Marketing Program with the implementation of the Tourism Business and Marketing *Storian* and national events such as *TokTok Vanuatu*.
- Support VTO with the strengthening of the Travel Information Centre Network (TICN) focusing on governance, operations, professional development of TICN staff as well as the re-establishment of the Malampa Travel Centre.
- Support accessible Tourism in Santo, targeting two local tourism business.