



*Image 1: Vanuatu Skills Partnership team and partners in Malekula following construction of a new ablution block for Lingarak community*

# SKILLS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE

## 6-MONTH PROGRESS REPORT



**JULY – DECEMBER 2024**

## INTRODUCTION

- This report presents a progress update on the Skills for Infrastructure (Sfi) workstream for the period from July to December 2024. The Sfi workstream provides support with the planning, procurement, and delivery of materials and services for infrastructure projects throughout Vanuatu, through the Skills Centres. Simultaneously, the workstream plays a key role in developing a skilled workforce by providing professional training and development opportunities to trade workers in the provinces. Sfi work is done in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) Provincial Skills Centres, local communities and government partners, including the Ministry of Infrastructure and Public Utilities
- Sfi initiatives include upgrades WASH, social infrastructure projects, disaster recovery efforts, and the development of accessible housing across the country.
- In 2024 these initiatives included:
  - **Provision of accredited ‘on-the-job’ training** in building design, construction, and plumbing for community development projects across the provinces of Penama, Sanma, and Malampa.
  - **Education pathway and business development support for construction and plumbing trainees** who have completed formal trades qualifications.
  - **Implementation of WASH recovery and development projects** in rural and remote areas.
  - **Reconstruction of the Chiefs’ Nakamal in Port Vila**, in partnership with Malvatumauri and the Australia-Pacific Training Coalition (APTC).



*Image 2: Lingarak plumbing trainees gaining practical skills and knowledge onsite*



## CONTEXT

The delivery of our priorities during the reporting period was influenced by several external factors, including:

- Political instability arising from changes in Secretary General positions and shifts in provincial governance led to the reallocation of funds and resources, driven by changing political priorities. This had a direct impact on service delivery and the implementation of the decentralization policy, particularly in remote areas. A notable example of this disruption was the delay in procuring materials for the Lingarak water supply system upgrade.
- Co-contributions and good planning was essential as the majority of Sfl projects were implemented in very remote areas. For example: the vanilla storage house in Aneityum and the West Coast Santo Area Council Building.
- Recruitment for the Sfl Coordinator replacement position took longer than anticipated, which posed challenges in advancing key priorities throughout quarter three and quarter four.
- Adverse weather conditions during the year further exacerbated delays, limiting logistics operations and procurement of materials. For example, the construction of the Chiefs' Nakamal faced multiple delays due to the late arrival of essential building materials from provincial locations.



*Image 3: VIP toilet slab construction involving women and youth in South Ambae*

## PARTNERSHIP STATUS AND CO-CONTRIBUTIONS

Through the Sfl workstream, the Partnership currently has partnerships in place with Department of Water Resources (DoWR) and Department of Local Authorities (DLA) in addition to agreements with training providers such as:

- Pacific Vocational Training Centre (PVTC), to deliver WASH skills training at the Lingarak community on Malekula.
- APTC, Vanuatu Institute of Technology (VIT) and Anglican Church of Melanesia Vocational Education Technical School (ACOMVETS), to support the training components for various community-led construction projects.

| PROJECT  | PARTNER(S)  | DIRECT PROJECT CO-INVESTMENT (VUV)   |
|--|---|--|
| Lingarak WASH Upgrade (Malekula)               | Department of Water Resources   | 63,000 – Trainee allowance   |
| Penama Skills Centre building (Ambae)          | Penama Provincial Government  | In-kind (land and original building for renovation)                        |
| Vanilla Storage House (Aneityum)               | Department of Agriculture & Rural Development (DARD) + Tafea Provincial Government. | 250,000- DARD<br>150,000 – Tafea Provincial Government                     |
| West Coast Santo Area Council Building (Santo) | Sanma Provincial Government Council (SPGC)  | 2,700,000 – SPGC<br>12,000,000 – UNDP - Vanuatu Coastal Adaptation Program |

# KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED

## Opening of the new Penama Skills Centre

- The new Penama Skills Centre was officially opened on 31 October 2024. The Centre's construction involved Penama Provincial Government, Saratamata local community, Eric Taripiti Construction and Jay Tari Construction. The Partnership supported the project with overall coordination in addition to procurement of goods and services.
- The Penama Skills Centre building will be used as a hub by the Provincial Government for disaster response coordination in Penama Province. It provides a central location to coordinate response activities and support communities suffering the impacts of disasters.
- The renovated centre is part of the Government's decentralisation agenda at the provincial level, under the MoET, linking with community-based disaster response committees and other government agencies supporting more resilient responses to disasters.
- The Centre is also 'off-grid', being fully powered by solar energy generated from solar panels installed on the roof. This will promote awareness in the local community of the benefits of clean energy, while also highlighting the importance of reducing emissions and supporting climate resilience.



*Image 4: Graduation ceremony for Certificate I in Computing held at the newly opened Penama Skills Centre*

*"This is a big development for Penama and we're proud to be partners on the project. We want this Skills Centre to transform lives and livelihoods by bringing skills, entrepreneurship and improved service delivery to communities in the outer islands,"*

**Max Willis, Australian High Commissioner**



# KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED

## Support for recent graduates with the establishment of new plumbing and construction businesses

- The Partnership provided administration and financial support for the establishment of 11 new businesses (five in Malampa and six in Sanma), including coordinating the completion of relevant administrative tasks and funding registration fees.
- The Partnership also supported graduates with on-the-job training or additional study, contracts, governance training for trade companies.
- With assistance from the Partnership, five individual contractors (all men) are now registered with the Vanuatu Financial Services Commission (VFSC) and have successfully applied for and secured contracts under the National Bank of Vanuatu (NBV) 'Isi Haos' initiative. These trainees hope to grow their businesses and income generating opportunities given the increasing demand for building construction services.
- The Partnership also assisted Mary Laulia, a female trainee from Tanna, to commence affiliation with Vanuatu Institute of Technology as a building trades trainer. Mary will be responsible for overseeing VIT construction training in Tanna.



*Image 5: West coast Santo plumber installing VIP toilet\**

# KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED

## WASH infrastructure upgrades in Lingarak, Malekula

- The Partnership, through the Malampa Skills Centre, worked with DoWR and Malampa Provincial Government to facilitate the delivery of accredited plumbing training onsite at Lingarak community (central Malekula) to rehabilitate the local water supply system. Improving the Lingarak water supply system was a 2024 priority project for DoWR.
- As part of the activity, PVTC delivered a Certificate II Plumbing qualification with 30 trainees from around Malekula (three women, 27 men including two men with disabilities). This is the first time PVTC has delivered training outside Port Vila (see Training Provider Support Progress Report).
- The training was successfully completed, although challenges with procuring and accessing materials meant that trainees completed most of the practical component at Rensarie College. While the upgrade to the water system is still to be completed, trainees were able to build new pipe stands and connect them to the existing water system, improving access to clean water for members of the Lingarak community.
- The trainees who participated in the program have since established five small plumbing businesses across five different area councils on Malekula Island. These businesses will continue to maintain WASH facilities in their communities and provide ongoing support to their Area Councils for future WASH development projects.



*Image 6: Female plumbing trainees onsite at Lingarak community*



# KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED

## Completion of the Opearu Area Council Building (Wusi, Santo)

- The completion of the Opearu Area Council Building in Wusi (West Coast Santo) marked another milestone for the Partnership's support of the National Government's vision of decentralisation and enhanced engagement with local communities. This building will serve as a vital hub, providing surrounding communities in this remote area of Sanma province with improved access to essential services
- The Partnership's Sfl workstream, through the Sanma Skills Centre, facilitated a collaborative effort involving the Sanma Provincial Government, MoET, APTC, and the Santo West Coast Area Council and Wusi Community including community consultations, procurement of materials and engaging training providers and contractors.
- Following the completion of the Certificate II in Building and Construction training, 25 graduates were supported by the Sanma Skills Centre to establish their own business, Nojavan Construction Company, which registered with the Vanuatu Financial Services Commission. They then worked on the construction of the Area Council building, providing them with an immediate opportunity to get practical experience delivering a construction project under the supervision of dedicated APTC trainers.



*Image 7: Official opening of the Opearu (West Santo) Area Council Building*



# KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED

## Upgrades to the local water system at Melsisi, Pentecost

- The opening of the Melsisi water system project in October 2024 by the Prime Minister, Hon Charlot Salwai Tabimasma, alongside Australia's Head of the Office of the Pacific, Elizabeth Peak, and Australia's High Commissioner to Vanuatu, Max Willis, was the culmination of a year-long effort to improve WASH infrastructure for the Melsisi community on Pentecost Island.
- More than 5,000 people now have access to safe, clean and reliable water due to the collaborative efforts of the Partnership and the DoWR.
- 30 trainees (28 men and two women) completed the practical component of the Certificate II in Plumbing qualification delivered by ACOMVETS in Melsisi in August-September 2024.
- The technicians who completed the course now have the knowledge and skills to undertake repairs and maintain the system. This is an important element for the sustainability of WASH infrastructure projects. In addition, the technicians will be able to support future disaster response and recovery efforts in local Area Councils, such as rapid assessments and quick fixes.



*Image 8: Plumbing trainees and the assistant trainer standing behind a tap stand they installed as part of the practical training for Certificate II in Plumbing delivered at Melsisi*

## ADDITIONAL RESULTS (CROSS-CUTTING)

### ▪ **Better Balance**

- In 2024, 17 women participated in accredited training in non-traditional trades, representing 14% of all trainees.
- Women were encouraged to participate in community consultations before project commencement in Lingarak.
- Five females trade graduates have registered new businesses.

### ▪ **Disability Inclusion**

- In 2024, three trainees with disabilities (all men) participated in accredited training, representing 2% of all trainees.
- Construction project designs were developed with consideration for accessibility.
- Three homes of community members with disabilities in Tafea (destroyed during TC Judy/Kevin in 2023) were rebuilt as part of ongoing recovery efforts (Aneityum, Erromango and Tanna).

### ▪ **Climate resilience and Environmental Sustainability**

- Construction project designs were developed using 'building back better' principles.
- In partnership with the Department of Environmental Protection and Conservation and relevant provincial partners, seven Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) were developed during the establishment of projects supported by the Partnership. These take into consideration impacts on the surrounding environment, any mitigation required, opportunities to boost climate resilience in addition to waste management practices.



# LESSONS LEARNED AND ACTIONS

**Lesson 1:** Some partners don't understand their roles and responsibilities or lack the capacity to deliver their agreed priorities during project implementation.

**Action:**

- For future projects, the Partnership will request that partner assign dedicated personnel to lead on ground during implementation of joint initiatives and confirm they are willing to release these personnel for the duration of the project.
- Introduce a stronger process when formalising partnering agreements and agreeing roles and responsibilities with partners and conduct regular check-ins on partner performance.

**Lesson 2:** Women graduates of trades courses need additional post-training support to secure formal employment (refer Training Provider Support Workstream Report - Lessons Learned).

**Action:**

- Ensure that during the consultation process prior to training, women and their families understand the benefits and flexibility of employment in the trades industry. The Partnership will also highlight women champions currently working in the field.

**Lesson 3:** Graduations and project launches are expensive, and the Partnership is sometimes perceived by partners to be a "bank" with funds to cover all costs.

**Action:**

- Work with partners during project implementation to specify what each partner will contribute towards post-training/project work activities such as project launches and graduations.
- Where possible, ensure all parties have committed their funds as agreed before graduations or project launches take place.

## QUANTITATIVE DATA (JAN-DEC 2024)

| ACCESSIBLE BUILDINGS AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMPLETED OR UNDER CONSTRUCTION  | SKILLS PROVIDERS ENGAGED   | CONTRACTORS AND COORDINATORS ENGAGED      | VOLUNTEERS ENGAGED (Community-based labour)   |
|--|--|---|---|
| <p><b>Completed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ West Coast Santo (Wusi) Area Council Building</li> <li>▪ West Tanna Area Council accessibility ramp</li> <li>▪ Penama Skills Centre</li> <li>▪ Chiefs Nakamal, Port Vila</li> <li>▪ Merelava Water System</li> <li>▪ South Ambae Water System</li> <li>▪ Divers Bay Fish Cooperative</li> <li>▪ Hokai Business House</li> </ul> <p><b>Under Construction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Malampa Travel Centre</li> <li>▪ Malampa Disability &amp; Child Desk Office</li> <li>▪ Vanilla House, Aneityum</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ACOMVETS</li> <li>▪ APTC</li> <li>▪ PVTC</li> </ul> | <p>15 male and one female contractors</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ West Coast Santo Area Council Building: 20 males, 20 females</li> <li>▪ West Tanna Area Council Building: one male</li> <li>▪ Malampa Travel Centre: three males</li> <li>▪ Malampa Disability and Children's Desk: two males</li> <li>▪ Hokai Business House: 70 males, 45 females</li> </ul> |



# SKILLS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE WORK PLAN SUMMARY FOR 2024

| <b>WORK PLAN PRIORITY AREAS<br/>&amp;/OR GREEN SHOOTS</b>   | <b>STATUS UPDATE</b><br>(no progress, limited progress,<br>adequate progress, good<br>progress, excellent progress) | <b>ADDITIONAL COMMENTS</b>   |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mere Lava WASH Recovery Project – Construction of rainwater harvest system.</li> </ul> | <p>Good Progress</p>  | <p>Project complete, awaiting opening / launch.</p>                              |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Divers Bay Fish Market and Cooperative building</li> </ul>                             | <p>Good Progress</p>  | <p>Project complete, awaiting opening / launch.</p>                              |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ West Coast Santo (Wusi) Area Council Office Building</li> </ul>                        | <p>Excellent Progress</p>   | <p>Construction completed and official opening held.</p>                         |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Hokai Business House</li> </ul>  | <p>Good Progress</p>  | <p>Business House construction close to complete, awaiting opening / launch.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Malampa Disability and Children’s Desk office</li> </ul>                               | <p>Good Progress</p>  | <p>Office renovation close to completed, awaiting opening / launch.</p>          |

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| <b>WORK PLAN PRIORITY AREAS<br/>&amp;/OR GREEN SHOOTS</b>   | <b>STATUS UPDATE</b><br>(no progress, limited progress, adequate progress, good progress, excellent progress) | <b>ADDITIONAL COMMENTS</b>  |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business governance and sustainability (business skills for Sfl training graduates)</li> </ul> | Good Progress   | Successful registration of plumbing businesses.   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Education pathways for trainees</li> </ul>   | Good Progress   | Some Certificate II graduates now completing higher-level construction qualifications with APTC.  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vanilla Storage Aneityum</li> </ul>  | Adequate Progress   | Ongoing material procurement. Vanilla storage construction currently progressing (70% complete).  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lingarak Water System</li> </ul>   | Good Progress   | Five registered plumbing business are currently implementing sanitation rehabilitation projects around Malekula.                                    |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chiefs' Nakamal Reconstruction (Port Vila)</li> </ul>  | Good progress   | Construction of the whole building completed. Currently working on finishings and installation of lighting and plumbing. Tiling training completed. |



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|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Malekula Travel Information Centre</li> </ul>                  | <p>Good Progress</p>  | <p>Building renovation completed. Awaiting for glass doors and windows to be shipped early 2025 for installation and finishing works.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Penama Skills Centre office renovations</li> </ul>             | <p>Excellent Progress</p>   | <p>Renovation works completed.</p>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plumbing Training to upgrade the Imaio Water system</li> </ul> | <p>Limited Progress</p>   | <p>Waiting for DoWR to procure materials.</p>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Semi-permanent houses in Tafea (cyclone response)</li> </ul>   | <p>Good Progress</p>  | <p>Building contracts signed and buildings complete.</p>  |

## OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS IN 2024



- The Sfl workstream achieved good results in 2024, particularly the delivery of several key infrastructure projects such as the new Penama Skills Centre building and West Coast Santo Area Council Building, while construction of the vanilla storage house on Aneityum is also progressing well. The workstream facilitated education and employment pathways for graduates leading to the creation of new construction and plumbing businesses.
- Several WASH projects were also delivered, with water supply systems upgraded and new systems established, improving access to clean water. Local capacity was strengthened through plumbing training programs, resulting in the creation of new businesses that will support ongoing maintenance and development. Additionally, support was provided for the establishment of new businesses and for graduates through training and mentorship, ensuring the long-term sustainability of these WASH initiatives.

# PRIORITIES FOR 2025

## 2024 projects to be completed in 2025:

- Malampa Travel Centre Office
- Vanilla Storage House, Anietyum

## 2024 projects to be launched in 2025:

- Chiefs' Nakamal, Port Vila
- Merelava Fish Market
- Divers Bay Fish Market
- Malampa Disability and Children's Desk office
- Malampa Travel Centre office
- Vanilla Storage House
- Hokai Business Centre

## Activity for consideration in 2025:

### ▪ **Infrastructure Workforce Development:**

- Business incubation support for existing Provincial Sfl Skills Centre Clients, specifically support to female trade graduates
- Facilitation of pathways to higher level skills development education existing Sfl Provincial Skills Centre Clients, specifically support to female trade graduates

### ▪ **Projects of provincial or national significance including training components:**

- North Ambae Area Council Building and Training
- Central Tanna Area Council Building

### ▪ **Small-scale replicable projects:**

- Dispensary upgrades at Rensarie, Unua and Disman
- Water supply system upgrades at Ambanga, Vandue, Northwest Tanna, West Gaua and Sola



# KEY RISKS AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

| RISKS  | MITIGATION STRATEGIES  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unforeseen delays in procuring and delivering construction and plumbing materials and tools results in projects extended beyond expected completion dates.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen quantity surveying, bill of goods administration and logistics planning processes to remove barriers to timely procurement and delivery of materials and tools.</li> <li>Undertake early communication with suppliers to minimise gaps between stock levels and out-of-stock replacements before project implementation.</li> <li>Identify appropriate alternative materials and tools that could be purchased ahead of time and held in storage or substituted at late notice to avoid delays in delivery.</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recovery efforts following the earthquake on 17 December 2024 could divert buildings materials and labour away from Sfl projects scheduled for 2025.</li> </ul>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review Sfl 2024 projects to be completed in 2025 and projects planned for 2025 to ensure there are contingency plans, including flexible project timelines, securing alternative suppliers and transport options to minimize potential disruptions.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trades graduates with a disability lack access to resources and assistance to take full advantage of completing an accredited training course.</li> </ul>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with the Disability Inclusion workstream to put in place specific interventions to assist graduates with a disability register a business and/or gain employment with a contractor.</li> </ul>   |