



Image 1: Certificate II in Building and Construction graduates pose for a photo with Director of APTC, Nicholas Venables, and APTC Training Manager, Kevin Tabi

BETTER BALANCE

6-MONTH PROGRESS REPORT



JUL – DEC 2024

INTRODUCTION



Image 2: Creating products from Torba to be displayed at the Melanesian Arts Festival in Auckland, November 2024

- The Vanuatu Skills Partnership’s commitment to gender equality or ‘Better Balance’ (BB) is guided by its Better Balance Strategy, the National Gender Equality Policy (NGEP) and the National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP) 2030. The Partnership’s goal is to ensure our clients have access to equal opportunities and are supported to improve their social and economic status regardless of their gender.
- In line with our Better Balance Strategy, our focus areas include:
 - Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE);
 - Women in Leadership (WIL); and
 - Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW).
- In the last six months, the Partnership collaborated with key partners to progress priorities such as:
 - WEE: Support for the inclusion of women and men in both accredited and non-accredited training, including plumbing, construction, tiling, pepper farming, food security, vanilla, tourism, creative industries, financial literacy and computing for health workers.
 - WIL: Collaboration with partners to develop public service and leadership training, and training for staff in Partnership Brokering.
 - EVAW: Monitoring and reflection regarding EVAW approaches utilized to date to improve strategies at the provincial and national level.

CONTEXT

Over the last six months, our operating environment has been impacted by a range of different factors. These include:

- The cessation of Air Vanuatu flights (May – October) delayed Family Life Education activities to support ERAW, and increased pressure on Skills Centre staff to implement work plan activities without on-the-ground support of national staff. This meant that many BB activities were sidelined or forced to be rescheduled.
- While planning discussions were held with the Partnership's key government WEE and WIL partner, Department of Women's Affairs (DWA), implementation of several planned national-level activities during the second half of this year did not happen due to the absence of personnel. DWA recruited its WEE Officer late in 2024. In addition, Government restrictions on staff travel limited DWA staff availability for activities such as follow up with Emae WEE clients.



*Image 3: Penama island basket festival,
October 2024*



PARTNERSHIP STATUS AND CO-CONTRIBUTIONS

- The Partnership currently has agreements with DWA and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA). A key objective of our agreement with DWA is to support DWA's national and provincial efforts aimed at empowering women economically and as leaders. Our agreement with ADRA focuses on working together to address EAW.
- Our agreement with the Department of Industry (DoI) guides the Partnership's work in the Skills for Creative Industries (SfCI) sector – a key area of growth for women entrepreneurs including women with disabilities .
- An MoU was signed with the Wilkins Family Foundation, through which both organisations seek to collaborate towards greater education opportunities for women and girls in Malampa province.
- While we are yet to finalise our formal agreement with Balance of Power, we continue to work together to promote and support opportunities for women in leadership.
- Given the current levels of resourcing of our partners at this time there are no financial commitments from them directly into the Skills Development Fund, however, all partners co-contribute direct activity funding and in-kind support towards any jointly planned activities.

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN ACROSS ALL PRODUCTIVE SECTOR WORKSTREAMS (JUL-DEC 2024)

SKILLS PROVIDERS ENGAGED	PARTICIPATION IN PARTNERSHIP SUPPORTED SKILLS TRAINING	BUSINESS HUBS SUPPORTED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">24 skills providers (including 14 women representing 58% of all providers engaged)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">683 participants including 351 women, representing 51% of all participants13 people with disabilities (one man, 12 women), representing 2% of all participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Four provincial handicraft hubs (all managers and coordinators are women)

KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED: WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Tongoa/EPI skills exchange program

- In response to a request from DWA and the Shefa Provincial Government, the Partnership facilitated a successful collaboration between DWA, Dol, and Shefa Provincial Government to deliver a skills exchange program which focused on enhancing weaving and shell polishing skills in Tongoa and Epi.
- The 10-day activity (five days - Tongoa, five days - Epi), facilitated by two female coaches (including a coach from the Malampa Handicraft Centre), brought together a total of 65 participants, of which 61 were female, including two women with disabilities.
- The skills exchange program provided the participants with skills and knowledge on how to produce quality pandanus and shell products and included hands on activities designed to equip the participants with clear understanding of preparing pandanus and shells and creating quality products. It also included information on how to harvest pandanus, how to prepare and use shells and seeds, and the importance of replanting to ensure a sustainable supply.
- An immediate outcome of the exchange program was the setting up of Handicraft Associations in both islands – Tongoa Handicraft Association and Vermali Handicraft Association on Epi. The participants also had the chance to showcase and sell their products during the 2024 Vanuatu Made event.



Image 4: Tongoa and Epi creative industries skills exchange participants in action, Tongoa, July 2024

KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED: WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Participation of women in accredited trade-based training

- A total of 14 women (three in Malekula, five in West Coast Santo, four in Port Vila and two in Melsisi) were supported to participate in accredited trade-based training courses held in Malekula, Santo and Port Vila in addition to an accredited training practical on Pentecost.
- Trainings include Certificate II in Building and Construction (West Coast, Santo), Certificate II in Plumbing (Lingarak, Malekula, Melsisi Pentecost-practical only, and a short course in tiling (Port Vila). These trainings were conducted by the Vanuatu Institute of Technology (VIT), Anglican Church of Melanesia Vocational Education Technical School (ACOMVETS) and Pacific Vocational Training Centre (PVTC).
- In the Partnership's efforts to promote equal participation of men and women in skills development activities, targeted assistance is provided to enable the participation of women. For example, the Sanma Skills Centre recruited a nanny to enable the participation of one of the female trainees in West Coast Santo. In Malampa, transport was provided to enable women to get to the plumbing training safely.
- The Partnership, through the Sanma, Malampa and Penama Skills Centres, partnered with the respective provincial government and communities to carry out the trainings.



Image 5: Certificate II in Building Construction, West Coast Santo

KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED: WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Increasing WEE participation and outcomes

- Efforts to enable WEE demonstrated solid progress. Participation of women in skills development activities increased from 50% in 2023 to 53% in 2024 and occurred across all sectors and in all provinces.
- A renewed focus on women's engagement in creative industries, and provision of supports such as childcare and transport enabled greater women's involvement. Male partners took on cooking and childcare responsibilities at home to enable their wives to participate in a Teri Dye workshop in Tanna. This fostered economic opportunities for women in the craft sector, and role modelled how men can play an active role in supporting women's economic empowerment.
- Supports such as these also lead to positive professional and economic outcomes for women in the skills sector. For example, after completing her Certificate II in Building and Construction qualification through the Tafea Skills Centre in 2022, Mary Iaulia started a small company with two other Tanna-based female trainees. In 2023, with Skills Centre support, Mary successfully applied for and completed a Certificate III in Carpentry at APTC. During this time, she was identified by VIT trainers as a future construction trainer and was invited to attend on-site professional development in 2024. VIT is now in the process of affiliating Mary as a trainer so that she can deliver their training in Tafea province in the future.



Image 6: Participants of a workshop delivered in Tanna on the use of Teri Dye

KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED: WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Professional development of women leaders

- In its ongoing efforts to support the leadership journey of staff and partners, the Partnership funded four of its managerial staff, two of whom are female, to undertake formal training in Partnership Brokering.
- The training was facilitated by the Partnership Brokers Association and attended by members of various partner organisations including Balance of Power, Vanuatu-Australia Health Partnership and the DWA.
- The training provided participants with the opportunity to learn the foundational principles, skills and approaches to effectively build and manage collaborative partnerships, including navigating difficult conversations and ensuring that all parties clearly understand their respective responsibilities and contributions
- This training empowered local leaders – including women – to confidently lead sensitive discussions and establish strong foundations for collaborative relationships.



Image 7: Partnership Brokering Training, July 2024

KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED: ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Reviewing the Partnership's policies and approach to Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment + Family Life Education as part of EVAW

- In August, the Partnership initiated a review process for its Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) Policy, through a consultation with all Partnership staff. The current policy was found to lack contextual relevance, and clear implementation guidelines. As a result, a PSEAH Policy Working Group was established with representation from across all Skills Centres and the national office, and an approach to redevelopment of the PSEAH Policy confirmed.
- In September, the Partnership undertook monitoring to determine the effectiveness of Family Life Education (FLE) training courses delivered in Malampa and Tafea. A key finding indicated the importance of partner / couple engagement in this program. Findings were reviewed by the Partnership team in November. As a result, the Partnership will redevelop its approach to FLE in 2025, to maximise its effectiveness.
- Strong, well understood and culturally relevant PSEAH and FLE approaches are foundational to EVAW. The Partnership's review of its commitments, approaches and tools provided an important opportunity to understand strengths and limitations of current approaches, to be addressed in 2025.

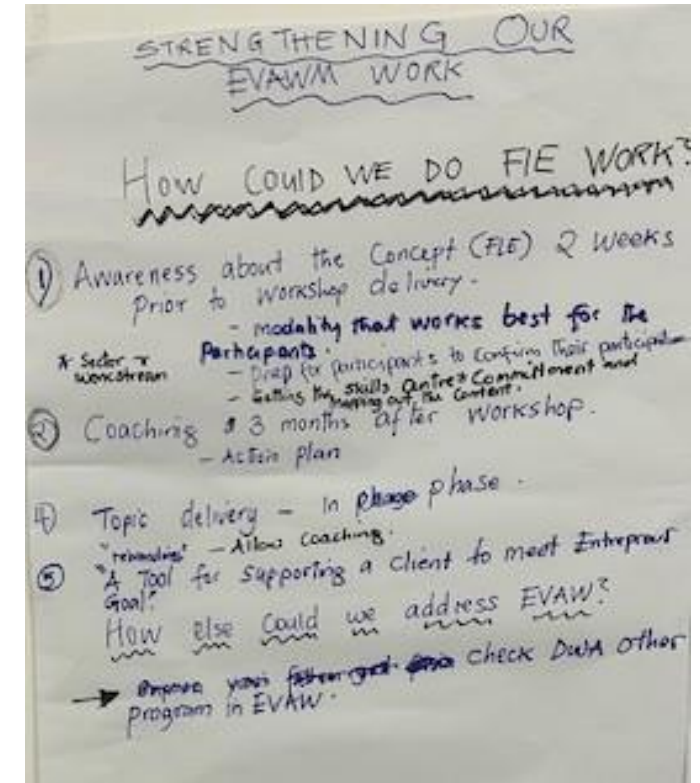


Image 7: Notes from November discussions on strengthening the Partnership's EVAW work

LESSONS LEARNED AND ACTIONS

Lesson 1: Multiple commitments of government and civil society partners delay and limit engagement and collaboration. This contributed towards limiting delivery of national-level BB activities in July – Dec 2024.

Action: Prioritise BB partnerships, focusing on those where engagement has been most fruitful, and which contribute to achieving impact within Partnership spheres of change. Engage Partnership leadership in discussions with government partners. Invite consultation from DWA on the Partnership's PSEAH Policy and seek opportunities for further engagement through that.

Lesson 2: FLE sessions have been successful in some, but not all, Skills Centres. Successful FLE sessions involved personnel and their partners, took place after work so that participants could fully attend and focus on the training, and involved a meal together to build opportunities for informal discussion.

Action: Drawing on monitoring of FLE approaches utilized to date, conducted by the Quality Systems team, develop and discuss options for FLE approaches and discuss with each Skills Centre.

Lesson 3: Women are increasingly participating in accredited training courses, but due to social norms regarding women's roles and assumptions about their ability to work in this sector, this is not always translating to increased work opportunities.

Action: Work with the Training Provider Support and Skills for Infrastructure team to identify advocacy and support opportunities and encourage engagement of women in infrastructure companies. Provide bi-annual online refreshers to strengthen understanding of better balance approaches, and provide opportunities to discuss key emerging issues.

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN ACROSS ALL PRODUCTIVE SECTORS (JAN-DEC 2024)

SKILLS PROVIDERS ENGAGED	PARTICIPATION IN PARTNERSHIP SUPPORTED SKILLS TRAINING	BUSINESS HUBS SUPPORTED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">27 skills providers (including 15 women representing 56% of all providers engaged)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">986 participants including 523 women, representing 53% of all participants. This is an increase from 50% in 2023.43 people with disabilities (18 men, 25 women), representing 4% of all participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Four provincial handicraft hubs (all managers and coordinators are women)

BETTER BALANCE WORK PLAN SUMMARY FOR 2024

WORK PLAN PRIORITY AREAS &/OR GREEN SHOOTS	END OF YEAR STATUS UPDATE	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS
<p>Women's Economic Empowerment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support DWA to coordinate and support WEE activities at the national level. ▪ Skills Centres and provincial DWA officers to implement priority WEE activities. ▪ Improve participation of women and productivity/profitability in creative industries. ▪ Increase number of women and couples in non-traditional trade training. ▪ Raise awareness of skills opportunities for women in non-traditional areas, including women with disabilities ▪ Support to Wilkins Family Foundation. 	<p>Adequate Progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discussions with DWA on priorities held in early 2024, however DWA's WEE position was vacant until late 2024, constraining operationalization of agreed plans. ▪ Torba and Penama Skills Centres collaborated with provincial DWA officers to implement Creative Industries product inventories. ▪ MoU with Wilkins Family Foundation signed. ▪ Women participated in trades-based training (Malekula, Santo, Port Vila), agribusiness (Malo, Ambrym, Tanna, Aneityum, Mere Lava, Santo), tourism (Ambae, Pentecost, Sola, Tanna), creative industries (Santo, Malekula, Mere Lava, Mota Lava, Tanna, the Maskelynes), financial literacy for sewing entrepreneurs (Tanna, Mota Lava), and computing for health workers (Torba, Penama, Malampa, Tafea). ▪ Three women construction graduates were engaged in the construction of the Isangel Loop Road (Tanna). ▪ Women handicraft producers from Penama and Shepherds, and handicraft hub managers from Tafea, Malampa, Torba and Sanma were supported to display and sell products at the Vanuatu Made event. The Island Basket Festival in Penama provided a local market opportunity for more than 35 women. Women from Tafea presented handicrafts at the 3rd Melanesian Festival Aotearoa.

BETTER BALANCE WORK PLAN SUMMARY FOR 2024

WORK PLAN PRIORITY AREAS &/OR GREEN SHOOTS	END OF YEAR STATUS UPDATE	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS
<p>Women in Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Formalise partnerships with potential partners. ▪ Participate as members of Vanuatu Institute of Public Administration (VIPAM) under the Office of Public Services Commission and management task force aimed at building leadership skills for women leaders in government departments. ▪ Mapping of training and professional development needs for the Partnership's female staff and providing support to upskill. ▪ Organize meetings with workstream sector managers and centers to identify entry points. ▪ Collaborate with DWA to conduct capacity building for women within the Sanma Provincial Council. 	<p>Limited Progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Partnership brokering session held for VSP, Balance of Power and Diocese of Banks and Torres (DoBT) completed. Signing of agreement could not progress due to cessation of Air Vanuatu flights. ▪ Collaboration with VIPAM and Ministry of Justice and Community Services (MoJCS) to develop public service leadership program, funded by Balance of Power. ▪ Support to eight female staff for professional development training opportunities, including in Partnership Brokering training, and APTC Leadership and Management training. ▪ Mapping of training and professional development needs amongst the Partnership's female staff began with the national team in Port Vila. Training needs identified. ▪ WIL entry points identified with DWA but not progressed due to DWA availability. ▪ In collaboration with Balance of Power, a Tru the Lens video was developed and scheduled for launching in Malampa, however was not able to progress.

BETTER BALANCE WORK PLAN SUMMARY FOR 2024

WORK PLAN PRIORITY AREAS &/OR GREEN SHOOTS	END OF YEAR STATUS UPDATE (no progress, limited progress, adequate progress, good progress, excellent progress)	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS
Ending Violence Against Women & Girls <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Map EAW activities led by other partners and identify entry points for collaboration. ▪ Collaborate with ADRA to address EAW through FLE and life-skills training. ▪ Develop and socialize preventative and response processes to target bullying and harassment of participants in Skills Centre trainings. 	Limited Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mapping completed and entry points identified, however discussions with potential partners did not result in any joint activities. ▪ FLE workshops yet to be conducted for Sanma, Penama, Malampa and Tafea Skills Centre - delayed due to flight issues and ADRA availability. ▪ Monitoring of FLE approaches in Malampa and Tafea conducted, and recommendations provided. ▪ Internal consultations held to initiate redevelopment of the PSEAH Policy, and working group established to guide this in 2025.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS IN 2024



Adequate progress in Better Balance has been achieved in 2024:

- Efforts to support **WEE** demonstrated the strongest progress. Participation of women in skills development activities increased from 50% in 2023 to 53% in 2024, and occurred across all sectors and in all provinces. A renewed focus on women’s engagement in creative industries, and provision of supports such as childcare and transport enabled greater women’s involvement. Evidence of collaboration between Skills Centres and provincial DWA officers increased in Torba and Penama. Women gained work following their participation in training, including three women who were employed on a road construction team in Tanna. Women in the creative industries sector benefitted not only from training, but through opportunities to sell their products at local, national and international markets, facilitated by the Partnership.
- Of nine women trainees surveyed following engagement in trade training, two moved from part-time to full-time work, however several remained out of the workforce, highlighting the need for more support in creating and accessing work in the trades sectors.
- **WIL**: Limited action followed initial positive discussions with partners including DWA, World Vision and CARE. For DWA, this was largely due to the unavailability of personnel with whom to collaborate. An MoU was signed with Wilkins Family Foundation.
- Progress in **EVAW** was hampered by Air Vanuatu’s cessation, which led to cancellation of FLE training planned for most provinces. In response, the EVAW focus switched to internal consultation and reflection on the Partnership’s PSEAH Policy and FLE approaches. These were reviewed and recommendations identified, and a PSEAH Working Group established to guide the development of a new PSEAH Policy. A new approach to FLE at the provincial level will be developed and implemented in 2025.

2025 PRIORITIES

Women's Economic Empowerment

- Revive discussions with DWA, and identify opportunities and mechanisms for collaboration in 2025, drawing on the Partnership's leadership support and utilising the PSEAH Policy consultations as an opportunity to re-engage. Support Provincial DWA officers to engage with Skills Centres. With DWA, follow up on Emae, Tongoa and Epi skills exchange clients.
- Establish joint work plan with Wilkins Family Foundation, focussed on improving access to education and training for women.
- Skills for Tourism: select women-owned businesses to be part of the readiness package; deliver training in flexible hours; target communities where participants are mostly women (eg South Malekula), provide reasonable accommodations to enable the participation of women; prepare coaches to ensure sensitivity and enable the use of inclusive approaches.
- Skills for Infrastructure: encourage the participation of women in construction and plumbing, in collaboration with provincial DWA officers.
- Skills for Creative Industries: involve DWA and Provincial Councils of Women in any inventory or coaching trips; use 'weaving' as a platform for discussions on other social practices (FLE, women's leadership, disability inclusion etc) with DWA Provincial and Provincial Council of Women; explore opportunities to show Tru the Lens as part of coaching and workshops focusing on women's economic empowerment and leadership specific to that area.
- Skills for Agribusiness: Support engagement of couples and cover reasonable accommodations including paying for nannies; provide inclusion / better balance workshops for partners in Malampa; undertake awareness on household responsibility for Malampa pepper farmers and their partners.

2025 PRIORITIES

Women in Leadership

- Revisit partnership opportunities with Balance of Power, including identifying joint activities to progress women's leadership through influencing social norms, and developing a partnership agreement to guide implementation of these. This will include efforts with the Diocese of Banks and Torres initiated in 2024.
- Explore establishment of partnerships with new partners, including Sista, to support a fashion show to raise awareness of and value in skills in creative industries, and UNWomen, to progress joint women in leadership objectives.
- Deliver training in ICT to Port Vila personnel – with a focus on women – in response to mapping of professional development needs undertaken in 2024.
- Undertake mapping of professional development needs amongst staff in the provinces.
- Skills for Creative Industries: Identify opportunities to incubate leaders amongst women in Tafea.
- Skills for Agribusiness: undertake women's empowerment / leadership workshop with the Navonda Cooperative (mostly women) in Penama.
- Collaborate with Balance of Power to hold inclusion / adaptive leadership training for Area Administrators in Penama, Malampa.

2025 PRIORITIES

Elimination of Violence Against Women

- Finalise the Partnership's PSEAH Policy, drawing on consultation with external stakeholders, with guidance from the Partnership's PSEAH Policy Working Group, and socialise with all Skills Centres.
- Drawing on findings from PSEAH Policy consultations and monitoring of FLE training, develop an FLE approach which can be customised to provinces / sectors, prioritising delivery in Sanma, Penama and Malampa.
- Undertake reflection activity with ADRA, in order to review and refresh this partnership to achieve shared EVAW objectives, incorporating FLE and life skills approaches.
- Undertake refreshed FLE approach for Skills Centre staff in Sanma, Penama, Malampa and Torba provinces, target population in Aneityum, and with Tafea Provincial Government Staff.
- Support national and provincial Partnership staff to strengthen understanding of better balance approaches, including planning and reporting requirements, through bi-annual online refreshers.

KEY RISKS TO CONSIDER FOR 2025

RISKS	MITIGATION STRATEGIES
Partner unavailability may continue to limit national-level action.	Focus on strategic engagement with DWA. Involve Partnership leadership in planning discussions.
Multiple commitments of Skills Centres and partners – especially post-earthquake – may restrict availability for engagement in FLE and other EAW activities.	Establish availability with key partner (ADRA) and plan with Skills Centres. Seek Partnership leadership assistance in confirming importance of BB initiatives with all staff.