



Image 1: Members of Imaio Village Cultural Tour at the 2025 Mi Tumoro Vanuatu travel expo in Port Vila.

# SKILLS FOR TOURISM

## 6-MONTH PROGRESS REPORT

JULY - DECEMBER 2025



# INTRODUCTION



*Image 2: Local tourism leaders who attended a hospitality workshop in Tanna, along with the DOT officer.*

- Over the past six-months (July–December 2025), the Skills for Tourism (SfT) workstream implemented several activities in collaboration with national government partners, including the Department of Tourism (DOT) and the Vanuatu Tourism Office (VTO).
- The long-standing objectives of SfT are aligned with the Vanuatu Sustainable Tourism Policy 2019-2030 and continue to guide our work. Progress against our priorities for the second half of the year are detailed in this summary report. Our priorities included:
  - Tourism Product Readiness**
    - Facilitate hospitality skills training—specifically for businesses in the “Raising Leaders” category—in Santo, Malekula, and Tanna while supporting East Tanna tourism operators in preparation for the International Yasur Run event.
  - Tourism Market Readiness**
    - Facilitate Market Ready workshop and coaching sessions (Tanna, Sanma, Malekula) and digital training sessions for tourism operators on Efate, support VTO to ensure provincial product representation during tourism trade events.
  - Tourism Human Resource Development**
    - Increase provincially based industry coaching pool through targeted professional development

# CONTEXT

Several factors in the operating context influenced our work during the reporting period, as well as our thinking about future priorities, including:

- The government's announcement of Santo as a new Economic Hub/ Corridor, along with increased direct flights from Australia, has created pressure for the sector in Sanma to align with higher service and operational standards.
- Work continued at Norsup Airport (Malekula) to upgrade the runway, while Whitegrass airport on Tanna now has lighting to enable flights to land after dark. As a result, DOT has strengthened its focus and support toward the three main provinces with international and inter-island connectivity—Santo, Tanna, and Malekula. However, the lack of reliability of domestic flights continues to be a barrier to growth of the sector outside of Port Vila.
- At the community level, limited expertise and experience amongst provincial tourism operators since COVID-19 mean that there is still a need to increase quality and skills development. For example, following a Public Service Commission event held in Tanna earlier this year, there were several complaints from visitors who stayed in local bungalows and guesthouses about the quality of the service and the standard of the accommodation they were staying in.
- Changes in government priorities, in addition to competing priorities led by other donors, had an impact on DOT and VTOs plans and their capacity to engage with us on joint priorities.
- Political developments continue to influence the rollout of tourism infrastructure. For example, the Temotu Agreement signed between neighboring provinces from Solomon Islands and Vanuatu may redirect funding and resources to open Sola airport as a port of entry.



*Image 3: Mi Tumoro Vanuatu participant, President Coolidge Allen Power Dive Tour, giving a talk to students.*

# PARTNERSHIP STATUS AND CO-CONTRIBUTIONS

- In 2025, the usual Partnership Implementation Framework agreements with DOT and VTO were not signed, and no additional co-investment was made into the Skills Development Fund. This was due in part to the focus of government partners on response and recovery after the Port Vila earthquake in December 2024 in addition to VSP's end of phase arrangements. Despite this, the Partnership continued to work closely with both DOT and VTO throughout 2025. This included:
  - **DOT** – the focus of our collaboration has been on 'Product Readiness', which included the delivery of hospitality workshops for tourism operators and bungalow owners in Santo, Malekula and Tanna. This has been delivered in response to the skills gaps identified in the skills audit completed in late 2024. In addition, the Partnership has supported DOT to progress a Tafea Tourism Council meeting led by the newly elected chairperson. DOT and VSP also worked together to support the Yasur Run event on Tanna. DOT funded first-aid training for local community members and others involved in organising the event which VSP funded the event Coach to support the organising committee.
  - **VTO** – our work with VTO focused on launching the Malekula Travel Information Centre (January-May) and supporting market-access opportunities such as the Mi Tumoro Vanuatu Domestic Business to Consumer Trade Show in Port Vila in September. VTO's remaining co-contribution of 500,000 VUV from 2022 was used this year to run a Digital Marketing workshop for tourism operators from Efate and offshore from Efate. This activity was a strong example of collaboration, with VTO leading and DOT supporting through accommodation for participants.
- In October, the Partnership and VTO met for a partnership 'health check'. The meeting provided an opportunity for senior members of each organisation to reflect on their collaboration through 2025 and to identify opportunities for future improvement. Both organisations reaffirmed the value of the partnership, noting a strong, mutually beneficial and trust-based relationship.

## QUANTITATIVE DATA (JUL-DEC 2025)

Skills providers engaged	Participation in Partnership supported skills training	Business clients supported with ongoing skills training and market access opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>7 skills providers (4 women and 3 men)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>45 participants (26 women and 19 men)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>45 tourism businesses supported across Santo, Malekula and Tanna</li><li>16 tourism businesses from Shefa supported with digital marketing skills</li></ul>

# KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED

## Priority Area: Tourism Product Readiness / Tourism Human Resource Development

### Hospitality Workshop for Tourism Businesses in Malekula

- A Hospitality workshop focusing on accommodation services and culinary skills was delivered in September by lead Coach Knox Taleo in Lakatoro, Malekula.
- The workshop brought together 28 tourism and hospitality operators (8 men and 20 women) including bungalow and guesthouse owners, restaurant and catering businesses, and tour operators, ensuring the training was practical and directly relevant to the realities of running small and medium hospitality enterprises in Malekula.
- DOT supported VSP to deliver the activity through the facilitation of the opening sessions. Accommodation, transport and participant allowances were provided by the Partnership.
- The activity supported provincial tourism development through improving service quality while also demonstrating strong women's participation in the tourism sector, with two female assistant coaches contributing to the delivery and further developing their facilitation skills while showcasing their expertise.



*Image 4: Assistant Coach Asneth Ureure provides a demonstration during the Hospitality workshop on Malekula*

*“This workshop has given our operators in Malekula practical tools to lift their standards. As the new airport opens, these businesses will be ready to provide the level of service that visitors expect, which is crucial for positioning Malekula as a destination of choice in Vanuatu.”*

Manager Rolyne Liu, Department of Tourism

# KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED

## Priority Area: Tourism Product Readiness

### Yasur Volcano Run event a success for community-based tourism on Tanna

- The Yasur Volcano Run 2025 took place in October. A total of 177 runners participated (37 women and 140 men), including 25 international competitors, 45 expatriates, and 107 local runners from Tanna (5 of which were para-athletes).
- Originally launched in 2022 under VTO's leadership, this year's Yasur Run event marked an important transition as leadership of the event shifted to the East Tanna tourism communities. This strengthens community ownership and fosters locally-led development. The Partnership engaged Head Tour Coach Marc Giraud from Noaia Consultancy to provide skills and event management coaching to the local organising committee.
- The focus of the coaching support in the months preceding the event was to build the skills and confidence of the Local Organising Committee (LOC), community leaders, and local tourism operators so they could grow the Yasur Run into a signature international sport-tourism event for Vanuatu.
- The event reinforced sport tourism as a revenue-generating niche while building provincial capacity to host international-standard activities. Going forward, the Yasur Run will continue as a community-led event held every two years. The race-track will now be formally promoted as a trekking and hiking attraction — creating new tourism opportunities for East Tanna operators and for tour businesses across the island.



Image 5: A promotional material for the Yasur Run, which was held in October on Tanna.

*"This event united our communities like never before. We proved that Tanna can host an international race with professionalism and heart, and that the spirit of the volcano truly lives through our people."*

Daniel Samson, LOC Chairman

# KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED

## Priority Area: Tourism Market Readiness

### Provincial tourism representation at NBV Mi Tumoro Vanuatu Expo, Port Vila

- The NBV Mi Tumoro Vanuatu Travel Expo 2025 was a two-day Business-to-Consumer (B2C) event held in September, designed to connect local tourism operators with domestic travellers. 15 tourism operators from Santo and Tanna chose to participate. The Partnership supported these operators with accommodation and transport, while DOT provided allowances. The operators themselves ensured their promotional materials were prepared and covered their return travel arrangements.
- The participating businesses represented a wide mix of tourism services, showcasing travel packages ranging from accommodation to tours and activities.
- An annual B2C platform, the Expo provides a valuable opportunity for locally owned tourism businesses to promote their products, pitch directly to the domestic market, and highlight special sales promotions to potential customers.
- The activity demonstrated strong collaboration between DOT, the Partnership and VTO, resulting in increased market visibility for the participating operators.
- The value of bookings generated during the two-day event was estimated by the VTO at between 3.4 and 4 million VUV. This initiative contributed to improved revenue prospects, expanded sales opportunities, and increased domestic visibility, while also building operators' confidence, competitiveness, and commercial readiness.



*Image 6: A tourist from Japan visits the Imaio Village Cultural Tour Booth during the Mi Tumoro Vanuatu Expo in Port Vila.*

# KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED

## Priority Area: Tourism Market Readiness

### Efate Digital Workshop

- The Partnership supported the VTO and DOT to deliver a three-day digital marketing workshop, which was facilitated by IDEA Vanuatu and V-Lab. The training responded to growing demand for digital marketing skills and tools following the increase in the number of international flight connections into Port Vila.
- 16 local tourism operators (6 women and 10 men) from Efate and the offshore islands of Shefa Province took part in the training, all seeking to improve their visibility and strengthen their understanding of digital marketing tools.
- The workshop equipped these market-ready businesses with the knowledge and practical skills needed to effectively promote themselves online, ultimately improving their visibility and ability to attract more travellers into the country. It strengthened business capacity and skills development by providing practical, hands-on training in digital marketing and online promotion while also improving overall business and market readiness.
- It also reinforced digital inclusion by equipping small operators with essential digital tools and skills, helping to reduce the barriers that prevent them from fully participating in the digital economy.



*Image 7: IDEA training in Digital marketing delivered by Coach Marc Gerard supported through the Skills for Tourism.*

*“The collaboration has ensured that the training content is not only relevant but also deeply rooted in the practical needs and challenges faced by local operators. This workshop has provided local businesses with a comprehensive understanding of the fundamentals of digital marketing.”*

*Adela Issachar Aru, CEO VTO*

# ADDITIONAL RESULTS (CROSS CUTTING)



*Image 8: A competitor with a disability participating in the Yasur Run.*

## Better Balance

- 26 women participated in targeted skills training in the second half of this year representing 58% of all participants.
- Two women were engaged to work as Assistant Coaches with lead Coach Knox Taleo to deliver hospitality workshops for tourism businesses in Malekula.
- The Partnership worked closely with coaching couple Marc and Leah Giraud from Noaia Consultancy in support of the Yasur Run event in Tanna, demonstrating the benefits that can be generated when men and women work closely together. Our advocacy also influenced consideration of inclusion in the Yasur Run itself, with the organisers stating they want more women to be included in the run next year.

## Disability Inclusion

- Five para-athletes from Tanna participated in the Yasur Run. Their participation was facilitated by the local organising committee, who designed the course in a way that enabled them to run in the event.

## Environmental Sustainability

- Environmental sustainability was a key consideration in the organisation of the Yasur Run. The LOC also worked closely with key partners such as NDMO, VMF, and Pro-Medical, mindful the event was run in the vicinity of an active volcano.

# ANNUAL QUANTITATIVE DATA (JAN-DEC 2025)

Skills providers engaged	Participation in Partnership supported skills training	Business clients supported with ongoing skills training and market access opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>8 skills providers (5 women and 3 men)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>95 participants (69 women and 26 men)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>61 tourism businesses supported across Santo, Malekula and Tanna</li><li>16 tourism business from Shefa support with digital marketing skills</li></ul>

# SKILLS FOR TOURISM WORK PLAN SUMMARY FOR 2025

WORK PLAN PRIORITY AREAS &/OR GREEN SHOOTS	END OF YEAR STATUS UPDATE (no progress, limited progress, adequate progress, good progress, excellent progress)	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS
Tourism Product Readiness	Adequate progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completed hospitality skills training through the Skills Centres targeting tourism clients in the “Raising Leaders” category in Santo, Malekula, and Tanna.</li> <li>Completed coaching sessions for East Tanna tourism operators in preparation for the domestic and international Yasur Run community-led event and delivered a governance and coordination workshop for the East Tanna Association in preparation for the main Yasur Run event.</li> </ul>
Tourism Market Readiness	Adequate progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitated a three-day digital training session for tourism operators specifically targeting Market Ready champions on Efate. Supported the attendance of local operators at Mi Tumoro Vanuatu trade event in Port Vila. Made critical contributions to the Malampa Vanuatu Travel Information Centre.</li> <li>Planned ‘Market Ready’ workshops and coaching sessions (Tanna, Sanma, Malekula) were postponed due to flight unavailability and reprioritisation from the Skills Centres.</li> </ul>
Tourism Human Resource Development	Limited progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completed ‘train the trainer’ coaching activities to boost the supply of provincial tourism assistant coaches, including for housekeeping in Torba as well as the local organising committee of the Yasur Run in Tanna.</li> </ul>

# LESSONS LEARNED AND ACTIONS

**Lesson 1:** We need to ensure the data from the skills audit completed in 2024 informs our support for tourism operators, and that our partners understand the unique skills needs of tourism operators across the three different categories.

**Actions:**

- Review the findings of the skills audit with DOT and VTO.
- Work with DOT to develop a tool to track the current level of compliance or performance of each operator and identify where support or intervention is needed.

**Lesson 2:** There is sometimes a disconnect between the national and provincial staff of our partners, which means that joint activities ‘agreed’ during planning are not always communicated to their provincial counterparts.

**Actions:**

- Ensure joint workplans are developed and there are regular reflections on progress at both national and provincial level.
- Encourage our DOT and VTO counterparts to lead joint activities.
- Encourage the Partnership’s Skills Centre Managers to meet their provincial counterparts to understand their priorities prior to planning meetings held in Vila.

**Lesson 3:** Staff in the Skills Centres are balancing many competing priorities across multiple workstreams, which means that SfT priorities in the provinces can sometimes be overshadowed by the priorities of other workstreams.

**Actions:**

- Identify a key point of contact for SfT priorities in every Skills Centre.
- Support the Skills Centres to develop a realistic set of priorities for implementation and ensure resource requirements are properly considered.

# OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS IN 2025

No progress	Limited progress	Adequate progress	Good progress	Excellent Progress
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- In 2025, we achieved some strong results. We delivered several important activities, including the hospitality workshops in Malekula, and our support to VTO was integral to the completion and official opening of the Malampa Travel Information Centre. Our contributions to the Yasur Run also played a key role in the success of this event.
- However, overall, it was a challenging year. A number of planned activities were cancelled or postponed due to financial constraints, coach unavailability, and difficulties securing flights to the provinces. This included the coaching sessions for Tourism Product Readiness and Tourism Market Readiness. There were also occasions when the provincial Skills Centres were unable to support planned SFT activities due to competing priorities, particularly accredited training delivery and infrastructure projects.
- Our overall progress may have been stronger if there had been more consistent collaboration with our partners at both national and provincial levels, including agreed ways of working and clearer roles and responsibilities.

# 2026 PRIORITIES

In October 2025, the SfT team completed a 'stret toktok' with the Partnership's Quality Systems team. This provided an opportunity to reflect on results achieved during the phase, consider changes in the operating context and the extent to which these create opportunities or challenges, and to discuss priority areas for the next phase.

The SfT team plans to work across the following priority areas in 2026, though these cannot be confirmed until the contractual arrangements, including budget, are finalised for the period from 1 February 2026 onwards. The specific activities to be delivered within these priority areas also need to be discussed with key partners including VTO and DOT once the contractual arrangements for the extension have been finalised.

- **Product Readiness**- supporting product and business development for key operators in Malekula, Sanma and Tafea including a specific focus on climate and disaster resilience and accessible tourism
- **Market Readiness**- supporting access to market and marketing skills for key operators in Malekula, Sanma and Tafea
- As part of these priority areas a core component will be **identifying and supporting quality industry coaches and training providers** to meet local demands

# KEY RISKS TO CONSIDER FOR 2026

RISKS	MITIGATION STRATEGIES
<p>Limited domestic routes to the provinces and ongoing unreliability of Air Vanuatu</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Partnership will continue to explore alternative transport options to deliver its planned activities, including Vanuatu Ferry and charter flights.</li> <li>▪ This also includes potential collaboration with DFAT-funded programs such as VAPJP and VAHP on transport asset sharing, in close liaison with MoJYCS, VPF, and MoH, utilizing DFAT-funded assets such as HELPR-1 and Police Patrol Sea Vessels.</li> </ul>
<p>SfT activities are not prioritised when Skills Centres have competing demands for their time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify a key point of contact for SfT priorities in every Skills Centre.</li> <li>▪ Ensure greater collaboration, coordination and engagement with provincial counterparts, especially DOT, to encourage joint plans to be actioned.</li> </ul>
<p>The limited number of coaches available to deliver skills development activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Build the pool of tourism coaches in the provinces and link them with head coaches for mentoring.</li> <li>▪ Strengthen our networks with other organisations such as V-lab and VCCI and identify opportunities to share resources where possible.</li> </ul>