



SKILLS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE

6-MONTH PROGRESS REPORT

Image 1: Hokai Business Centre on Malekula Island, officially launched on October 9, 2025 by Hon Minister of Internal Affairs, Mr Andrew Solomon Napuat, Australia's Deputy High Commissioner, Ms Emily Fisher, and British High Commissioner, H. E Nicolette Brent.



JULY – DECEMBER 2025

INTRODUCTION

- Through targeted skills development and business incubation, the Vanuatu Skills Partnership (the Partnership), via the Skills for Infrastructure (Sfi) workstream, supports the development of a resilient provincial trades workforce and a sustainable, locally owned infrastructure sector.
- The Sfi workstream was established in 2020 to support critical infrastructure recovery projects under the national recovery strategy *Yumi Evriwan Tugeta 2020–2023*, following Tropical Cyclone Harold and the COVID-19 pandemic. The strategy focused on strengthening community resilience through infrastructure improvements, better coordination and skills development.
- Since 2023, Sfi has continued to work with key partners such as the Department of Local Authorities (DLA), provincial governments, the Department of Water Resources (DOWR), Area Councils and local communities to strengthen decentralised service delivery through the construction and renovation of essential community buildings and water systems.
- Sfi priorities for the second half of 2025 included:
 - Ongoing business incubation support for Sfi client companies and tradespeople including computing skills training.
 - Completion of projects including the launch of the Hokai Business Centre, WASH upgrades in Merelava and Ambae and the Vanilla Storage Facility on Aneityum, graduation of Certificate II in Plumbing trainees in Tanna.
 - Delivery of a Certificate II in Building Construction and construction of the Southeast Santo Area Council Building.



Image 2: SATOMAFEA construction workers onsite, to begin their first contract to build the accessible washroom facility at the National Chief's Nakamal, Port Vila.

CONTEXT

Several factors influenced Sfl's work during the reporting period including:

- Inflation has meant higher costs for construction and plumbing materials, in addition to increasing shipping costs. Furthermore, the Partnership's lack of VAT certification this year meant that costs for materials and shipping were 15% higher than in previous years. Rising project costs made it increasingly difficult to complete projects within their allocated budgets.
- During the last six months, the availability of building materials in stock has fluctuated, creating logistical challenges and disruptions to project delivery and accredited training. Increased demand for construction materials in Port Vila is due, in part, to recovery and reconstruction efforts after the 2024 earthquake, in addition to other infrastructure projects around Vanuatu competing for stock from the same suppliers.



Image 3: Distribution lines for WASH systems upgrades arriving by ferry at Vandue, North Ambae.

PARTNERSHIP STATUS AND CO-CONTRIBUTIONS

- Sfl's flexible delivery model relies on key partnerships with DoWR and DLA, as well as the respective provincial governments and local Area Councils in which projects are based.
- From July to December 2025 these collaborations proved to be effective, resulting in the successful delivery of skills training as well as several community infrastructure projects, which were delivered through co-investment arrangements.
- In Santo, the Sanma Provincial Government contributed VUV 17.6 million worth of building materials to the Southeast Area Council building project including the Certificate I & II in Building Construction training, while in Ambae, partners including local communities, contributed VUV 10.2 million worth of materials and in-kind contributions towards the delivery of two basic village plumbing workshops and the successful completion of upgrades to two large water systems.
- Additionally, the Partnership, through the Sfl workstream has service agreements with registered training providers to support training delivery in the trades sector, such as:
 - Vanuatu Institute of Technology (VIT) to deliver a Certificate II in Building Construction in South-East Santo
 - Pacific Vocational Training Centre (PVTC) to deliver Certificate II in Plumbing in Tanna

QUANTITATIVE DATA (JULY - DECEMBER 2025)

SKILLS PROVIDERS ENGAGED	CONTRACTORS/PROJECT COORDINATORS ENGAGED	PARTICIPATION IN PARTNERSHIP SUPPORTED SKILLS TRAINING	BUSINESS CLIENTS SUPPORTED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 2 industry skills providers engaged, both men ▪ 2 trainers, both men, engaged (through Vanuatu Institute of Technology) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 30 people engaged as contractors/ project coordinators to support Sfl infrastructure initiatives ▪ 26 men- 2 with disabilities ▪ 4 women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 84 participants including 12 women and 72 men ▪ 1 male participant with disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 17 trades client companies/ entrepreneurs provided with ongoing business incubation support including market access facilitation

KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED

Launching of Hokai Business Centre, Malekula

- The Hokai Business Centre was officially opened on 9 October 2025, and was established through a collaboration between the Hokai community, South Malekula Area Council, Malampa Provincial Government Council, Malampa Skills Centre and British High Commission.
- The accessible building was initially constructed in 2021 by construction trainees from Pektel Rural Training Centre as part of their practical, followed by support from YOMAL Construction and EPIARES construction company. The final finishings such as fencing, landscaping and installation of solar power were completed between 2022-2024.
- The business centre will strengthen the provision of services to the people of South Malekula in line with the Government's decentralisation agenda, providing a space to accommodate an Agriculture Development Officer, and the Hokai Aid Post, which was damaged by TC Judy and Kevin in 2023. It will also serve as a market space and an evacuation centre.
- Hokai community is strategically located near the centre of southern Malekula, with easy sea access for communities in the southern area councils and road access to central and northern Malekula.



Image 5: A front view of the Hokai Business House on Malekula island.

KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED

Certificate I & II in Building Construction, and construction of the South-East Santo Area Council building

- The Partnership and the Sanma Provincial Government partnered together for the construction of a new Area Council building in Southeast Santo, through the delivery of a Certificate I & II in Building Construction. The Sanma Provincial Government contributed VUV 17.6 million worth of materials, while the Partnership contributed over VUV 10 million through the facilitation of the training and the engagement of a local company, Nok Construction, to support the project.
- This is the fourth time the Partnership and the Sanma Provincial Government have collaborated in this way, having completed three new area council buildings in South Santo, West Santo and North-West Santo since 2021. The building will serve multiple purposes including as a hub for government and administration services, and as an evacuation centre.
- The training, delivered by VIT, equipped 25 trainees (two women, 23 men including one man with disabilities) with nationally recognised construction skills.
- Reasonable accommodations provided to the two women through the provision of safe and secure accommodation close to the training site for the duration of the training delivery.
- As part of ongoing workforce development, trainees will continue to be supported to establish new businesses or to gain employment through existing local trades companies through business incubation support such as good governance and computing workshops to upskills them in these necessary operational skills.



Image 6: Trainees from the Certificate I and II in Building Construction during the official opening of the Southeast Santo Area Council building.

KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED

Completion of WASH skills projects in Ambae: Ambanga, Vandue & Nanigama

- In partnership with the Penama Provincial Government and the Penama DoWR, three crucial water supply recovery projects were successfully implemented on Ambae in Ambanga, Vandue, and Nanigama, significantly improving access to safe, reliable drinking water for over 2,500 people.
- The initiatives included flexible skills workshops and practical work constructing and upgrading systems, including two gravity-fed systems and one elevated rainwater harvesting system. These vital systems now support ten villages, five schools, three health centres and government institutions, directly boosting essential service delivery and enabling local economic activities such as tourism in the Ambanga-Manaro area.
- To promote the long-term sustainability of the water systems in Vandue and Ambanga, a one-week Basic Village Plumbing workshop was delivered by DoWR in each community, successfully equipping 58 participants including 48 men and 10 women from surrounding areas with essential maintenance and repair skills. This skills training directly strengthened local ownership, reducing the community's reliance on external support for system maintenance, and enhancing the overall resilience of local communities in Ambae as they continue to recover from the volcanic eruption.

"This WASH project has profoundly improved life for the Tagaga Secondary School community by establishing safe and reliable water access."

VANUATU SKILLS PARTNERSHIP Principal of Tagaga College, Mr George Tari



Image 7: Mr George Tari, Principal of Tagaga College turning on water supply in Lolopuepue, North Ambae.

KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED

Completion of WASH skills projects in Ambae: continued

- The successful delivery of the WASH projects was underpinned by a strong, multi-sector partnership involving the DoWR, Penama Provincial Government, and the Ministries of Education and Health, alongside deep engagement with and contributions from local communities. The collaborative approach ensured the water systems were built to national standards while being aligned with government priorities and tailored to local needs. In Ambanga and Vandue, local communities and partners provided VUV 10.2 million worth of materials and in-kind contributions.
- As well as supporting the Partnership's Tropical Cyclone Harold recovery objectives, the completed water systems are also in direct support of the goal in the National Sustainable Development Plan to provide reliable access to safe drinking water and sanitation. Furthermore, these projects reinforced government objectives across the water, health, education, and rural development sectors, and strengthened community resilience, aligning with Vanuatu's recovery strategies.



Image 8: Women involved in the village plumbing workshop and in the construction of the water supply system.

"These successful WASH projects prove the power of strong, multi-sector partnership. By collaborating with the Vanuatu Skills Partnership, Penama Provincial Government and local communities, we ensured these systems meet national standards and directly align with our core mandate under the National Sustainable Development Plan – providing reliable access to safe water for all communities. "

Mr Erickson Sammy, Director, DOWR

KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED

Graduate Tracer Survey 2025: Graduate Outcomes

- Results from a Graduate Tracer Survey completed by the Partnership in the second half of 2025 show that trade courses delivered in rural areas are increasing workforce participation.
 - 88% of the 32 trade graduates surveyed were employed after completing their course—a 48% increase in employment compared to pre-course delivery.
 - 94% of these employed graduates secured work within the trades sector, demonstrating success in providing relevant, job-ready skills.
- The surveys also revealed good results in terms of entrepreneurship, with the number of graduates working for themselves effectively doubling (from 6 to 14). This significant shift highlights the success in equipping graduates not only for external employment but also with the initiative and trade skills required to establish their own businesses, thereby fostering greater economic stability and self-reliance within their local communities.
- The surveys found that graduates are consistently using their new skills to support their communities, particularly by improving local infrastructure and resilience.
- Over half of trainees (54%) reported that they often use their skills outside of paid work for activities like repairing community water systems, assisting with school and bungalow maintenance, and contributing to water governance committees.



Image 9: Two female plumbing trainees prepare Lamindu water system for the Arts Festival in Tanna.

ADDITIONAL RESULTS (CROSS-CUTTING)

Better Balance

- Between July and December, 12 women participated in Sfl-supported trades training. This included two women who completed a Certificate II in Building Construction in Sanma, and 10 women who participated in Basic Village Plumbing workshops under the Ambae WASH project. Women represented 14% of all participants in skills activities during this period.
- Four client companies and businesses were supported during this period, which included female members.

Disability Inclusion

- All infrastructure projects supported by the Partnership are designed and constructed with inclusion principles in mind, ensuring accessibility for people with disabilities.
- During the reporting period, three trainees with disabilities (all men) participated in accredited training through Sfl projects in Tanna and Efate, representing 3% of all trainees. Several graduates with disabilities are currently working within companies established by Sfl-supported graduates.
- Graduate tracer survey results show that 75% of the 32 trade graduates surveyed from 2022–2024 reported improved understanding of disability inclusion, linked to the integration of disability awareness and accessible building principles in training design and delivery. The trainee with a disability who was surveyed has been employed since completing training and reported high satisfaction with the training received.



Image 10: The newly built accessible washroom facility at the National Chief's Nakamal, Port Vila.

ADDITIONAL RESULTS (CROSS-CUTTING)

Climate Resilience and Environmental Sustainability

- All Sfl construction projects are designed using *Build Back Better* principles, ensuring infrastructure is more resilient to disaster risks.
- The Southeast Santo Area Council building and the Hokai Business Centre are designed to function as evacuation centres during disasters.
- The three water systems completed on Ambae are now benefitting over 2,500 people and mitigating risks of water scarcity and drought in five schools, three health clinics and the surrounding communities.
- Tracer survey findings show that 84% of the 32 respondents (31 of which were plumbing trainees) reported improved understanding of climate change as a result of the training. This is significantly higher than the 44% reported by plumbing trainees in 2024.
- Graduates also reported applying their skills to strengthen community resilience during unpaid work, including upgrading community water systems.



Image 11: Tavolavola community members in North Ambae helping to move a water tank into position.

ANNUAL QUANTITATIVE DATA (JAN - DEC 2025)

SKILLS PROVIDERS ENGAGED	CONTRACTORS/PROJECT COORDINATORS ENGAGED	PARTICIPATION IN PARTNERSHIP SUPPORTED SKILLS TRAINING	BUSINESS CLIENTS SUPPORTED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 3 industry skills providers engaged, all men ▪ 3 trades sector trainers, all men, (through two nationally recognised training institutions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 32 people engaged as contractors/ project coordinators to support Sfl infrastructure initiatives ▪ 27 men- 2 with disabilities ▪ 5 women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 211 participants including 28 women (13% of all participants) and 183 men. ▪ 4 participants with disabilities - all men (2% of all trades participants) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 267 tradespeople supported to establish 34 new trades businesses by Skills Centre clients since 2021 ▪ 13 (38%) of these businesses include female members/employees ▪ 8 (24%) of these businesses include members/employees with disabilities

SKILLS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE WORK PLAN SUMMARY FOR 2025

WORK PLAN PRIORITY AREAS	STATUS UPDATE (no progress, limited progress, adequate progress, good progress, excellent progress)	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS
Infrastructure Workforce Development	Good progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ongoing trainee/client business incubation support and pathways support to further education, including delivery of a computing workshop for construction and plumbing trainees in Malekula and two governance workshops for clients in Shefa and Sanma. ▪ A good governance workshop in Malekula was cancelled due to the unavailability of the assigned coach, who is now employed full-time. ▪ The Tanna plumbing training, delivered in partnership with DoWR and PTVC, was completed and trainees graduated in August. ▪ Certificate I and II Building Construction training was completed in Southeast Santo however the graduates have not yet received their certificates from the Vanuatu Qualification Authority. ▪ Clients in Shefa, Santo and Malekula were supported to apply for contracts. Two Santo-based companies have been successful in obtaining contracts with WHO/MOH valued at VUV 37 million. ▪ Mary lawilu, manager of Youngster Bargain Construction on Tanna, was supported through quality assurance coaching during a major construction project on Tanna.

SKILLS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE WORK PLAN SUMMARY FOR 2025

WORK PLAN PRIORITY AREAS	STATUS UPDATE (no progress, limited progress, adequate progress, good progress, excellent progress)	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS
Projects of provincial or national significance (including training components)	Good progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Several significant infrastructure projects were completed and launched in 2025. These include the Chiefs' Nakamal in Port Vila, the Vanuatu Travel Information Centre – Malekula Branch, Ureparapara and Merelava Fish Markets, the Gaua Petroleum Cooperative, and the Losalava TVET in Schools classroom and Hokai Business Centre on Malekula, Southeast Santo Area Council building. ▪ Three WASH systems in Ambae were completed and are ready to be launched. ▪ An accessible WASH facility at the Chief's Nakamal in Port Vila was completed. ▪ The Vanilla storage building in Aneityum was paused due to amendments to the original design based on feedback from government partners, delayed in materials and availability of the contractor. ▪ Shipment of materials to support DoWR's WASH systems work was completed. ▪ Partner check-ins and end of project reflection meetings were postponed in Hokai, Tanna, and Ambae due to timing and budget ambiguity at the end of the Partnership's phase.

LESSONS LEARNED AND ACTIONS

Lesson 1: Daily updates from project coordinators support prompt identification and resolution of issues, including mitigation of weather-related delays or shortages of materials.

Actions:

- Future project implementation plans should include:
 - brief daily updates from project coordinators on-site.
 - buffer days to account for potential delays caused by weather conditions, disasters, or other slippages in delivery timeframes.

Lesson 2: During the design of the Vandue and Ambanga WASH system upgrades, scoping and community awareness sessions resulted in strong community buy-in and voluntary labour contributions. These were conducted in every village along the water system route, with communities also agreeing to provide catering and accommodation.

Actions:

- Implement a mandatory, early, and comprehensive scoping and community awareness phase for all new Sfl projects designed to ensure community buy-in and secure in-kind support.

Lesson 3: In joint infrastructure projects, the absence of a combined Bill of Quantities (BoQ) can lead to over-purchasing, resulting in excess materials after project completion.

Actions:

- One shared design and BOQ must be utilised by all project partners in future infrastructure projects with each partner confirming which materials they will be providing based on that list.
- The shared BOQ and design must be assessed by an engineer to mitigate unnecessary spending which can lead to left-over materials.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS IN 2025



- The SFI workstream achieved good results in 2025, driven by successful partnerships with key stakeholders.
- There was 'Good' progress in relation to the delivery of projects of provincial and national significance, such as the new Southeast Santo Area Council building, the Hokai Business Centre and the three WASH systems on Ambae. This is in addition to the completion and launch of the National Chiefs' Nakamal in Port Vila, the Vanuatu Travel Information Centre – Malekula Branch, Ureparapara and Merelava Fish Markets, the Gaua Petroleum Cooperative and the Losalava TVET in Schools classroom earlier in the year.
- Sfi is also considered to have made 'Good' progress in terms of workforce development, by successfully facilitating two accredited trainings and providing business incubation support for graduates. This included coaching for tender applications, support for construction quality checks, and computing and governance skills to support business operations.
- Despite the cancellation of some planned activities towards the end of the year, such as the good governance workshop in Malekula and the partner reflection meetings in Malekula, Tanna and Ambae, good progress has been made towards the development of a resilient provincial trades workforce and a sustainable, locally owned infrastructure sector.

2026 PRIORITIES

In October 2025, the Sfl 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 Sfl team plans to work towards the following outcomes in 2026, though these cannot be confirmed until the Partnership's contractual arrangements, including budget, are finalised for the period from 1 February 2026 onwards. The specific activities to be delivered also need to be discussed with key partners including DoWR, Training Providers and Provincial Governments once the contractual arrangements for the extension have been finalised.

- **Workforce Development:**

- Provinces are utilising or have access to the increased number of qualified trades people who can support provincial development
- Local trade companies (including women and people with disabilities) are operating professionally and sustainably

- **Provincial projects:**

- Provinces have specific (sustainable, accessible) buildings/infrastructure to enable service delivery

- **Skills systems (National skills development policy):**

- More pathways for trades clients/trainees (including women and people with disabilities to further study/ higher education)

KEY RISKS AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

RISKS	MITIGATION STRATEGIES
<p>There is limited availability of Industry Coaches to support business incubation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage industry specialists to build a broader pool of coaches to support new businesses established by our clients, and for quality assurance.
<p>Building materials may continue to be in limited supply and/or prices may continue to rise, with implications for the delivery of key infrastructure projects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise procurement of materials early and reconfirm financial approval timelines with suppliers to manage expectations and reduce delays caused by out-of-stock materials.
<p>Delays from partners in procuring materials for joint projects can impact the timeline for completion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to communicate regularly with partners throughout project implementation to understand internal constraints and issues from their side. Build in additional timing to project plans to mitigate against this.
<p>Human resources at the national level (for the Partnership) are insufficient to adequately manage the volume and complexity of infrastructure projects that have been implemented in recent times.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider options including: (i) increasing staffing levels, (ii) reducing the total number of infrastructure projects, and/or (iii) transferring procurement responsibilities to partners