



Image 1: Leadership mentors with representatives of the Board of Directors from the Wilkins Family Foundation.



BETTER BALANCE

6-MONTH PROGRESS REPORT

JULY - DECEMBER 2025



Image 2: Joana Waka, a female plumbing trainee from Tanna receiving her basic plumbing toolkit and graduation certificate from William Nasak, Director General, Department of Land and Water Resources.

INTRODUCTION

- The Vanuatu Skills Partnership's (VSP) commitment to gender equality is guided by its Better Balance Strategy, which aligns with Vanuatu's National Gender Equality Policy (NGEP) and the National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP) 2030.
- The Partnership's goal for Better Balance is to ensure our clients, both men and women, have equal access to skills opportunities and are supported to improve their social and economic status regardless of their gender.
- The key government partner for our Better Balance work is the Department of Women's Affairs (DWA). VSP also works closely with the Wilkins Family Foundation (WFF), Balance of Power (BoP) and the Diocese of Banks and Torres (DoBT) to progress its Better Balance objectives.
- In line with our Better Balance Strategy, our focus areas for 2025 included:
 - **Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE)** – support to DWA and WFF to promote the economic empowerment of women, and support to the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET)'s provincial Skills Centres to enable equitable participation of women in skills development and entrepreneurship.
 - **Women in Leadership (WIL)** – partner with BOP, DoBT and DWA to influence social norms and promote women's leadership, including within the Partnership itself; and support professional development for women in the skills sector.
 - **Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW)** – support the development of a new Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) Policy for VSP, and improve understanding of EVAW amongst VSP staff and partners.

CONTEXT

Over the last 6 months, the operating environment for our work has been impacted by a range of different factors. These include:

- Competing DWA commitments, including the review of provincial Gender Action Plans and Public Service Day celebrations, have limited the progress of planned joint activities, such as professional development for DWA provincial officers, and finalisation of the Women's Economic Empowerment video in Malampa. This has been postponed due to slow feedback from DWA to the videographer.
- VSP budget constraints towards the end of the current phase resulted in the cancellation of skills development activities in some provinces, and joint activities planned with the DoBT.
- Development of VSP's Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) Policy has required a slow and collaborative approach in order to navigate and mitigate cultural sensitivities.

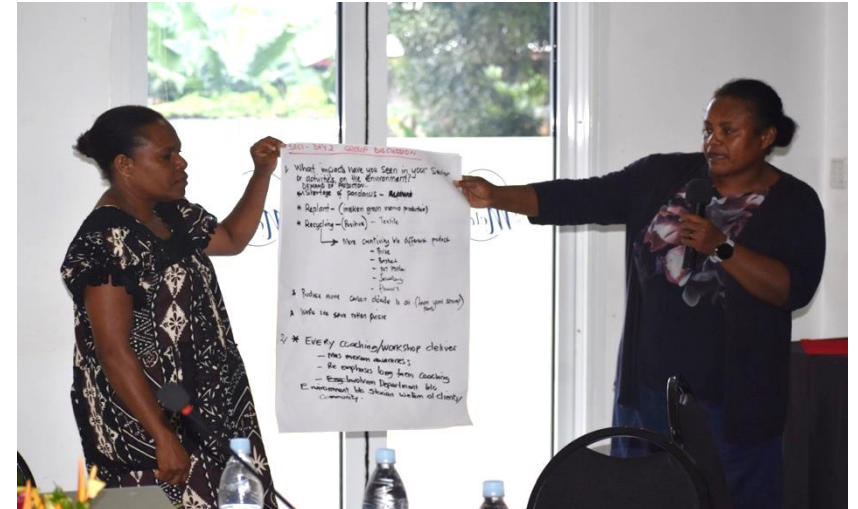


Image 3: Creative Industries Coach Trudy and Acting Malampa Handicraft Hub Manager Patricia presenting during the induction for VSP coaches



PARTNERSHIP STATUS AND CO-CONTRIBUTIONS

- Given their current levels of resourcing, our major partners have been unable to make contributions to the Skills Development Fund. Instead, we have focused on collaborating through a series of agreements including cost sharing arrangements.
- The Partnership's formal agreement with DWA lapsed in June 2025. It focused on supporting DWA's national and provincial efforts aimed at empowering women economically and as leaders. Joint activities which continued during this reporting period focused on developing a documentary regarding women in entrepreneurship in Tafea and Malampa as well as a value-addition workshops in Malampa and Penama provinces.
- Our Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Wilkins Family Foundation enables collaboration towards greater education and leadership opportunities for women and girls.
- Our tripartite agreement with BOP and DoBT aims to progress women's leadership efforts by influencing social norms in Torba province.
- Additionally, a key partnership with the Department of Industry (DoI) guides the Partnership's work in the Skills for Creative Industries (SfCI) sector – this is a key area of growth for provincial women entrepreneurs.

QUANTITATIVE DATA (JUL-DEC 2025)

Skills providers engaged	Participation in Partnership supported skills training	Business clients supported
14 female industry skills providers engaged (64% of total)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">540 participants including 262 women, representing 49% of all participants20 participants with disabilities (12 women, eight men), representing 4% of all participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Four provincial handicraft hubs (all managers and coordinators are women)35 women-led craft associations across Vanuatu7 women-led tourism businesses

KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED: WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT



Image 4: Women from Central Pentecost participating in training to transform raw crops into market ready food products.

Strengthening women's entrepreneurship in Penama

- Through the Penama Skills Centre, the Partnership supported DWA and the Office of the Registrar of Cooperatives and Business Development Services (ORCBDS) to deliver a 4-day workshop on value addition and financial literacy for 22 women representatives from associations and cooperatives across Central Pentecost 2. This initiative was requested by women from Central Pentecost, through their Area Administrator.
- A key objective of these two workshops was to empower women to transform raw food crops into market-ready products such as dried fruits, jams and packaged root crops, so they can earn higher profits and reduce post-harvest waste. Another objective was to equip participants with basic financial literacy skills, including budgeting, saving, and managing small business income, to help them make informed financial decisions and grow their household or cooperative ventures.
- Additionally, the workshop sought to help women work together through local groups or cooperatives, so they can learn from each other, share resources and grow their community's economy in a strong and lasting way.
- Participants acknowledged the value of the new skills gained and expressed appreciation for the practical nature of the workshop. They highlighted that the knowledge provided will greatly assist them to earn small income to support their family and be able to prepare them for times of disaster.

KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED: WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Supporting female plumbers in Tanna

- Seven female plumbing trainees graduated with a Certificate II in Plumbing, from training delivered by the Pacific Vocational Training College (PVTC) in Tanna. Part of a group of 47 trainees, the participation of these women challenged traditional social norms which often assume plumbing is work done by men.
- As part of the training delivery, trainees completed maintenance work on Kwataparen School's water system and contributed to installing a brand-new water system for Bethel Village.
- Following the training, the women returned to their Area Councils in Central Tanna, South Tanna, West Tanna and Southeast Tanna, where they have joined established water companies.
- Patricia (pictured) is continuing to work with her company, Young Star Bargain Construction company, providing support to company owner, Mary, to carry out plumbing work at the Central Tanna Area Council office.
- The participation of these women in this training role modelled women in non-traditional sectors, opening and shifting mindsets of people across Tanna's community, from chiefs to young girls.

" Thank you to those who have brought this training to me in my community. Now I see that the people in my community appreciate my value and can see the skills that I have."

Patricia lautu (Young Star Bargain construction company)



Image 5: Patricia lautu received her Certificate II in Plumbing, presented by His Excellency Max Willis from the Australian High Commission.

KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED: WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Higher incomes for female craft producers

- In the second half of 2025, VSP conducted client monitoring surveys with 89 clients from Malekula, Tanna, Santo and Malo. This included 63 women, 49 of whom were handicraft producers including three with disabilities. The other 14 female clients were farmers.
- 67% of these female clients stated their incomes were higher this year, compared to 46% of male clients. This has been driven by particularly strong results achieved by women working in creative industries.
- 62% of female clients reported that VSP's support to access markets was 'very important' to their income and business activity, compared to 39% of men. This reflects the important role the Partnership-supported provincial handicraft hubs play in linking creative industries clients to domestic and international markets.
- 78% of female clients are members of local associations, compared to 85% of male clients. All three women with disabilities were members of their respective associations.
- Additionally, the surveys found that only 56% of female clients have taken steps to make their entrepreneurial activities resilient to climate change, compared to 81% of men. This result suggests there is an opportunity for VSP to work with female craft producers and farmers to introduce more practical steps to make their businesses more resilient to disasters and climate change.



Image 6: Victoria Doran, a craft client with a disability, (second from left) attending the 2025 Vanuatu Made Event.

KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED: WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Strengthening mentoring opportunities for women

- The Partnership supported the Wilkins Family Foundation (WFF) to conduct a two-day mentoring workshop for 25 professional women from Efate, Santo, Malekula and Paama, who will take on mentoring roles for younger women and girls.
- The mentors are professional women from different fields including education, health, business management and civil society organisations.
- The workshop focused on supporting these professional women to learn and practice skills in supporting mentees to set and achieve goals. Sessions on day one focused on setting and monitoring realistic goals, self-reflection and the identification of areas for improvement, and provision of pastoral care.
- Mentees include female scholars in high schools, technical colleges and universities. On the final day of the workshop, mentees who are all from Malekula but attending schools in Efate, were invited to join the mentors. They were paired up with their mentors and used the opportunity to practice goal-setting.
- Mentors will support mentees in their training and career pathways, including in leadership.

“Our aim is to build the skills and self-confidence of each of our scholars to become the best versions of themselves and to take on leadership roles in their future careers. One-to-one mentoring is a really effective way to provide continuing support to them through their learning journey and into adulthood.”

Kathy Solomon, WFF Mentoring Manager



Image 7: Group photo of mentees (all from Malekula but attending school on Efate).

KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED

Review of Torba Gender Action Plan

- In 2025, DWA organised a review of the Provincial Gender Action Plans for Vanuatu's six provinces. VSP was asked to provide support to DWA in reviewing the Torba Gender Action Plan, alongside a Ministry of Justice, Youth and Community Services officer, and members of the WEE thematic working group.
- The review incorporated mapping progress against the implementation plan, through community consultations with over 60 people in Motalava, Mota, East Vanualava and West Vanualava, including with Torba Skills Centre clients. Through consultations, community representatives reported:
 - A drop in gender-based violence (GBV) related cases, with community members reporting their view that increased awareness of GBV facilitated by both Government and partners has contributed to this.
 - Women are now more actively involved in economic activities; support from the Partnership was repeatedly acknowledged as having contributed to this.
 - There is increased community awareness of the rights of people with disabilities.
 - Women are actively leading in church spaces but not yet in politics.
 - Women play a key role in response and recovery after a disaster.
- DWA will now use the information gathered to support the revision of Torba's next 5-year Gender Action Plan.



Image 8: Consultations with community members in Torba.

QUANTITATIVE DATA (JAN-DEC 2025)

Skills providers engaged	Participation in Partnership supported skills training	Female business clients supported
<p>16 female industry skills providers engaged (48% of total)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1,053 participants including 579 women, representing 55% of all participants. This is an increase from 53% in 2024 and 50% in 2023. ■ 59 participants with disabilities (36 women, 23 men), representing 6% of all participants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Four provincial handicraft hubs (all managers and coordinators are women) ■ 35 women-led craft associations across Vanuatu. ■ 10 women-led tourism businesses ■ 1 women-led construction company, 4 construction companies with female members

BETTER BALANCE 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
Women's Economic Empowerment	Good progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support provided to DWA to make a documentary of women's economic empowerment in Tafea and Malampa. Malampa video has been postponed due to delays in feedback to the videographer. ▪ Malampa Skills Centre supported participation of female construction clients in an International Women's Day activity led by the provincial DWA officer. ▪ Refresher training on the Better Balance strategy and approaches held for all Skills Centres and Port Vila office staff - Torba, Tafea, and Penama provincial DWA Officers attended. ▪ Induction for VSP skills providers and industry coaches including sessions on principles of Better Balance strategy. ▪ Following construction of the Chiefs Nakamal, support was provided to construction trainees, including 3 women, to establish Satomafea Construction Company in Port Vila, which has 3 women on the company's executive committee. ▪ 5 women construction clients in Santo formed a company, and with Skills Centre support, bid for and won a contract to build the new Tasmate Health Centre.

BETTER BALANCE 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
Women's Economic Empowerment - continued	Good progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Malampa and Penama Skills Centres supported two Provincial Officers from the DWA in Cookery and Food Safety Training and value-addition training and financial literacy. ▪ The Tafea Skills Centre supported seven women to complete a three-month plumbing qualification with PVTC. Sanma Skills Centre supported two women in building and construction training, who graduated with certificates from the Vanuatu Institute of Technology. ▪ Malampa Skills Centre supported DWA to bring women participants to International Rural Women's Day.

BETTER BALANCE 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
Women In Leadership	Adequate progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Partnership supported WFF to run a two-day mentoring workshop for 25 professional women from Efate, Santo, Malekula, and Paama. ▪ Supported WFF to develop, print and disseminate a brochure about WFF programs and benefits, highlighting opportunities for women in leadership. ▪ Partnership agreement signed with BoP and DoBT. Collaborative implementation limited by budget constraints. ▪ Supported a female leader in construction, Mary, to successfully bid for the tender to build the Area Council building in central Tanna. ▪ The Partnership is a member of the Ministry of Justice, Youth and Community Services (MoJYCS) Leadership Taskforce. ▪ Refresher training held for all Skills Centres and Port Vila office staff and industry coaches in all areas of the better balance strategy. ▪ Two female VSP staff graduated from the Certificate IV in Leadership and Management offered by APTC. One of these staff has since moved into a leadership role at the Vanuatu Institute of Public Administration and Management (VIPAM).

BETTER BALANCE 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
Ending Violence against Women & Girls (EVAW)	Adequate progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development of the Partnership’s new Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) Policy continued and is in its final stages, led by the PSEAH Working Group, included incorporation of PSEAH risk assessment and mitigation in the Partnership’s activity planning. ▪ Supported DWA to review the Torba Gender Action Plan, which includes EVAW. ▪ Awareness raising regarding Family Life Education was provided for vanilla farmers in Port Patrick as part of good governance training. ▪ Refresher training held for all Skills Centres and Port Vila office personnel, including EVAW principles and approaches.

LESSONS LEARNED AND ACTIONS

Lesson 1: Women in Leadership – Consultations with DWA found that programs to build women’s leadership at the national and provincial levels exist but are lacking at the sub-provincial / community levels.

Action:

- Support women in leadership at the sub-provincial / community levels, through the skills sector, with Skills Centre support.

Lesson 2: Women’s Economic Empowerment – Consultations with MoET found that partner support for implementation of the MoET’s Gender Equality Policy is limited.

Action:

- Support MoET in implementing its gender equality policy, with a focus on the training sector, in collaboration with other skills stakeholders (e.g Pacific Australia Skills, VIT).

Lesson 3: Ending Violence Against Women – A review of the Partnership’s inclusion strategies found that implementation of ERAW as a standalone area of work has been challenging due to the multiple commitments of partners, and lack of in-house technical expertise in this area. Further, multiple development partners are now supporting DWA with ERAW efforts, raising the risk of duplication.

Action:

- Mainstream ERAW efforts through future gender equality activities, rather than implementing standalone activities.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS IN 2025

No progress	Limited progress	Adequate progress	Good progress	Excellent Progress
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- There has been good progress in efforts towards supporting women's economic empowerment, particularly at the provincial level, with 67% of women clients stating their incomes were higher this year. Consultations with community representatives in Torba during the Gender Action Plan review affirmed this. Economic outcomes for women are strongly supported through the creative industries sector. In construction, women have been participating in training, forming companies and winning bids to build critical provincial infrastructure.
- Some progress towards women in leadership has been achieved nationally in partnership with WFF, and at the provincial level through coaching and mentoring support to upcoming women leaders in construction and other sectors.
- Some progress has occurred in eliminating violence against women, with family life education held for vanilla farmers in Tanna, refresher training for all Partnership staff and some provincial partners, and the ongoing development of the PSEAH Policy.

PRIORITIES FOR 2026

In October 2025, the Inclusion team completed a 'stret toktok' with the Partnership's Quality Systems team. This provided an opportunity to reflect on results achieved relating to Better Balance 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 Partnership plans to work towards the following outcomes for Better Balance 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.

- Support MoET to coordinate and promote gender equality in the skills sector, including through policy development and implementation.
- Support DWA to support and enable women in leadership at the provincial / sub-provincial levels.
- Support women in skills development, including as entrepreneurs.
- Mainstream EVAW approaches into all Partnership-supported skills development activities.
- Support female clients to take steps to make their entrepreneurial activities resilient to climate change.



Image 9: The Penama Provincial Cooperative Officer explains the importance of bookkeeping for small businesses during the Value Addition Training held in Central Pentecost 2.

KEY RISKS TO CONSIDER FOR 2026

RISKS	MITIGATION STRATEGIES
Lack of adequate financial and human resourcing for VSP in 2026 limits scope for better balance activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Reduce scope of planned efforts; collaborate with other programs and partners
Limited human resources and competing demands at DWA limits engagement with VSP's work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Strengthen relationship with DWA and collaborate to plan and where possible implement activities
Efforts to support better balance in skills development duplicated by other partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Establish collaboration mechanism with Pacific Australia Skills, under the PSET Sector Supporting Committee, and clarify roles and mandate