

FARM SUPPORT ASSOCIATION
STORIES OF CHANGE



FARM SUPPORT ASSOCIATION

Farm Support Association (FSA) is a non-for profit Non-Government Organisation (NGO) operating in Vanuatu. FSA specialises in agricultural research and programming. Their focus is to support small holder farmers achieve sustainable and resilient livelihoods by enabling them to increase their knowledge, skills and capacities through the provision of technical advice and hands on training and mentoring. FSA believes that this helps create farmer networks which enables famers to help famers. FSA worked with Oxfam to produce this booklet that contains 24 Stories of Change reflecting on and demonstrating how FSA has had significant positive impact on the lives of many farmers in Vanuatu. Oxfam and FSA have enjoyed a strong collaborative partnership since 2011 that is based on mutual trust, honesty, openness, transparency and respect. Oxfam supports FSA with funding and organisational development whilst FSA focuses on agricultural research, implementing their various agricultural programs and provision of technical support to their farming network.



Agriculture is the most accessible livelihood for many Ni-Vanuatu women and men, in terms of farming for food, for the kastom economy and accessing the cash economy. There are fewer and fewer people with relevant agricultural and marketing knowledge and skills as a result of youth migration to urban centres and farmers producing small quantities of crops. According to FSA, farmers often don't consider running their farms as businesses as they don't clearly understand the markets and many rural women and men do not have financial literacy.

. Current issues of food insecurity are linked to urban drift, increased population pressures, decreased soil fertility, increased consumption of imported foods, and less consumption of local food. FSA is trying to restore the passion for and value of agriculture into people's lives. This includes young people who have become particularly vulnerable to food and economic insecurity due to their level of status and agency in communities, inexperience in farming and limited opportunities to learn improved agricultural techniques.

FSA believes there are solutions to these challenges including diversified farming approaches, engagement of young women and men in rural areas to become farmers, recognition from the government, donors, farmers and young people that agriculture is a viable and productive sector, and acknowledgement by the government, donors, and farmers that agricultural programs are very dependent on infrastructure, economic policy, and the global market. FSA therefore values and seeks to integrate farmers' experiences with national policy development and sectoral planning.



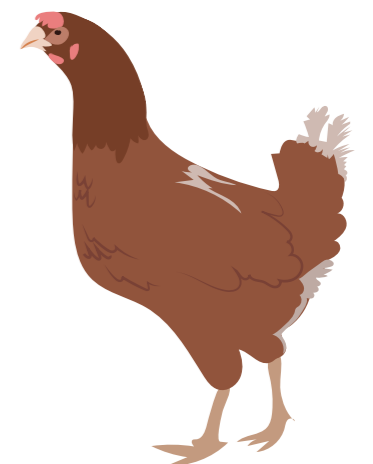
FSA's Vision is a Vanuatu:

- *that produces enough food to sustain its people and cope with future population growth*
- *where small holder farmers are able to run farming businesses that can adapt to climate and economic changes, and provide adequate food and cash income to meet their needs and enable their (and their communities) ongoing development*
- *where farmers are able to sustainably use their land for food production without destroying the environment and wildlife*
- *where young women and men become farmers practicing farming business on their own land in rural areas*

FSA's overall organisational goal is that 'farmers will be skilled in and practicing appropriate and sustainable agricultural techniques and will be managing effective farming businesses and producing enough food and some cash income to meet their basic needs.'

FSA achieves this goal by

- 1. Increasing farmers' income and food security through building sustainable food production processes in vanilla, pepper, vegetables, root crops, kava, tree cash crops, honey bees, and small livestock like poultry and pigs.*
- 2. Promoting and building farmers' capacity to produce and process high value food items (organic and non-organic) and export products.*
- 3. Strengthening farmers and their communities' capacities to better manage, restore and protect their land and environment, through land rehabilitation using Vetiver Grass, alley cropping, cover crops and other conservation practices.*
- 4. Conducting and sharing valuable research about relevant and appropriate agriculture techniques in Vanuatu.*



REX TOM

DOWNSIDED BY MAJOR COMPANY LEADS TO A SUCCESSFUL CAREER BACK HOME



Meet Rex Tom, 25, a young poultry farmer on Tanna Island but being a farmer wasn't always his occupation. Rex used to work for one of the major telecommunications companies in Vanuatu, Digicel, but in 2014 the company downsized and he lost his job. He was forced to return to his home island of Tanna.

"Going back to the village, I knew that I could not stay at my parent's house and do nothing. Prior to working at Digicel, I helped in my family's garden but I honestly didn't think I could make a consistent income from it."

However, this thought changed in 2015 when the Farm Support Association (FSA) sent a team of fieldworkers to Tanna to conduct an assessment about the potential of setting up poultry farming businesses there. Rex and his wife Merian were selected as eligible farmers in their village.

They were given a one-on-one training by FSA officers which gave them an understanding on how to manage a small-scale poultry farm. After receiving the training, Rex and Merian were given 50 chicks (roosters), bags of chicken feed, a roll of wire mesh and a tarpaulin. They built a small chicken house with the materials they received and used the skills they acquired to take care of the chickens. "I learned that when looking after the chicks when they are young is the most important part of the process because they can easily get sick or die if they aren't fed properly. Now that we know how important it is for their growth and survival, we are careful in rationing their feeds."

Three months after receiving the chickens, they sold them for VT1,500 each, which earned them a total of VT75,000. Rex was so excited about the first round of sales that he bought another 50 broiler chicks before his wife could even ask. With each chick costing VT250, earning them VT96,000. Rex and Merian then purchased an additional 50 chicks (broilers) from FSA and they have high hopes of increasing the number of chicks after their third round of sales.

They attribute their success to the great work that FSA does in helping people in rural areas become self-reliant and successful farmers. The inspections and follow-up that FSA provides ensures that farmers are progressing and meet standard requirements. This really helped Rex and Merian maintain good management of their poultry farm.

"Although I lost my job at Digicel, I am now my own boss and receiving enough income to pay for our children's school fees while continuing to grow my business.

I thought that losing my job at a major company was a major setback but now I believe it was one of the best things that could have happened for me and my family."



PETER LOUIS

DETERMINED PARENTS PLANT THE SEEDS FOR SON'S FUTURE



When Peter was in class six, his school was shut down due to limited funding and as a result he had to stay home and help his parents in the family garden. Being young and having yet to build a future of his own, his parents were worried that Peter would end up like the other boys in the village who spent their days drinking and stirring up

trouble. They refused to accept this as the future for their son and were determined to help Peter continue his studies.

Peter's father heard about the Vanuatu Young Farmers Development Course (VYFDC) through FSA and the Napil Rural Training Centre (RTC). Peter joined the course and

received trainings on horticulture and livestock (poultry) management. He learned about the science and art of producing, improving, marketing, and using local crops and vegetables.

"Gardening is something everyone does in the village, I didn't really think there was much more to learn, but I was wrong."

The RTC allocated Peter a small plot of land where he practiced the skills he has learned. He planted taro, spring onions, ball cabbages and corn. At home, Peter also practices the horticulture trainings and has grown gardens of yams and taros.

At the end of his first year of training, FSA provided Peter with 40 chicks (roosters), bags of chicken feed, a roll of wire mesh and tarpaulins which he used to start his chicken farming business. "It was great! They trained me and provided me with chicks and materials to start my poultry farm which would've been very expensive if my parents purchased them on their own".

With the poultry skills he acquired, Peter took good care of the chicks until they were fully grown roosters. "I wanted to learn as much as possible in order to look after the chickens properly. I kept a careful eye on their rations and always made sure there was enough water for them. I did not want to miss any of the poultry classes because I knew looking after chickens wouldn't be easy."

Peter sold the roosters for VT1, 800 each and with the help from RTC, he was able to open a savings account at the National Bank of Vanuatu (NBV) where he saves half of the money he earns and invests the other half in his business.

"My hope is that I will continue to learn new ways to improve my poultry farm so that I can build a successful living for myself and my family."

Current Status

Root Crops & Cash Crops

- 200 taro heads
- 700 yam hills

Livestock

- 45 broilers
- 20 local chickens
- 1 sow
- 5 piglets

Timber Crops

- 27 Tamanu stems
- 30 Sandalwood stems

NBV Savings/Cash Balance

- VT27,610



RUTH FRED

WHEN DISASTER STRIKES, SHE PERSEVERES



When Ruth, 53, returned to her home village Isangel in Tanna, after completing the seasonal workers scheme in New Zealand in 2015, she and her family constructed a new home. Ruth and her family were beyond elated but shortly after the house was constructed, disaster struck. On the eve of March 13th 2015, Tropical Cyclone Pam came in the middle of the night and ripped their home apart.

“The cyclone destroyed most of our house. I was devastated because we built the house with the money I earned from doing seasonal work in New Zealand. Although I was upset, I didn’t have time to feel sorry for myself, my family needed a home. We needed money to rebuild, so I thought of starting a business but I didn’t know what type of business and how to start it.”

While trying to think of a plan for her family, a team of officers from Technical & Vocational Education & Training (TVET) and the FSA visited Ruth’s village and made a presentation on poultry farming. She approached the TVET officers and then joined the two-week poultry management training.

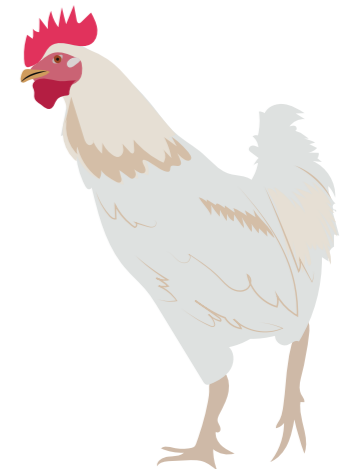
“I was excited about the presentation, I have always been interested in looking after chickens so I thought that this was a perfect opportunity for me to start my own poultry farm and make money to build a new house.”

Ruth was so dedicated to having a poultry farm and creating ideal housing for the chickens. She received fantastic and motivating feedback from both FSA and TVET. “I focused hard on the trainings we received because I really wanted to manage a successful chicken farming business. I remembered the chicken house measurements they taught us and I used those to construct my chicken house. I wanted my chicken house to look like the one they showed us during the training.”

Ruth’s poultry farm is one of the most recent farms to have been set up with FSA support and because of her sincere dedication, people in her village are already seeing a very promising future for her poultry business. Although she was having great success in applying her skills, she did suffer the loss of two chicks. “I cried when my chicks died! I was in disbelief because I had taken good care of them. Although, I knew I would have to sell them, I didn’t expect for any of them to die beforehand. I felt like I failed them. But I knew I had to keep moving forward.”

Ruth commented on the good work that FSA does in helping women like herself rebuild their lives and give them a sense of economic empowerment.

“I feel empowered owning this poultry business, it has given me a confidence that I didn’t know I could have because I can now earn a consistent income for my family.”



ELVIS NIMAHUNU

A TEMPORARY SETBACK LEADS TO A SUCCESSFUL FUTURE



Elvis Nimahunu, 18, is a young school dropout from Tanna Island. When Elvis was in primary school, his parents could not afford to pay school fees. At home, Elvis did house chores and helped his parents in the family's garden. "I was young and school did not mean much to me at that time, but as I grew up I realised how important it was for me to get an education. I wanted an education in something I was good at. I am good at gardening and my family has land, now I just needed to know how to use it in order to make an income."

Eager to continue his studies, in 2014 Elvis joined the Napil RTC. He received trainings on horticulture, particularly in the cultivation of local crops and vegetables, and poultry farming.

"We received trainings on crop cultivation, land management, poultry farming, building chicken houses and ways to feed chickens. I thought the trainings would seem simple because I have previously done gardening and chicken feeding at home but the trainings were much more detailed than I expected."

The trainings allowed him to see the possibility of starting a poultry farm and becoming a successful farmer in the future. In 2015, after his first year of training, Elvis received 40 young chicks (roosters) from FSA, bags of chicken feed, a roll of wire mesh and tarpaulins. His family helped him to construct a chicken house which had all the necessary equipment from feeders to lights.

Elvis put the trainings he received into good use and looked after the chicks until they were fully mature, which he then sold for VT1, 500 each. After a successful first round of sales, he bought 45 more chicks (broilers) from FSA for VT250 each.

Elvis has also grown over a 100 taro suckers in his garden as well as kava, using the crop cultivation skills he acquired in school. He is producing his own organic fertilizer using local materials and practising mulching on his taro and Kava crops. "Everyone is buying kava nowadays. When my kava crops are ready, I will sell them and use the money to increase my poultry business".

Elvis loved attending trainings at the RTC and recently graduated in December 2016. His focus is on building his poultry farm, kava cultivation, and expanding his business to include livestock and timber crops.

"The FSA and the Napil RTC gave me another chance to succeed in life. Many young people in my village don't have much to look forward to and I am glad that I have these businesses to focus on because of that I have high hopes for the future."

Current Status

Root Crops & Cash Crops

- 570 taro heads
- 25 cassava hills
- 106 kava stems

Livestock

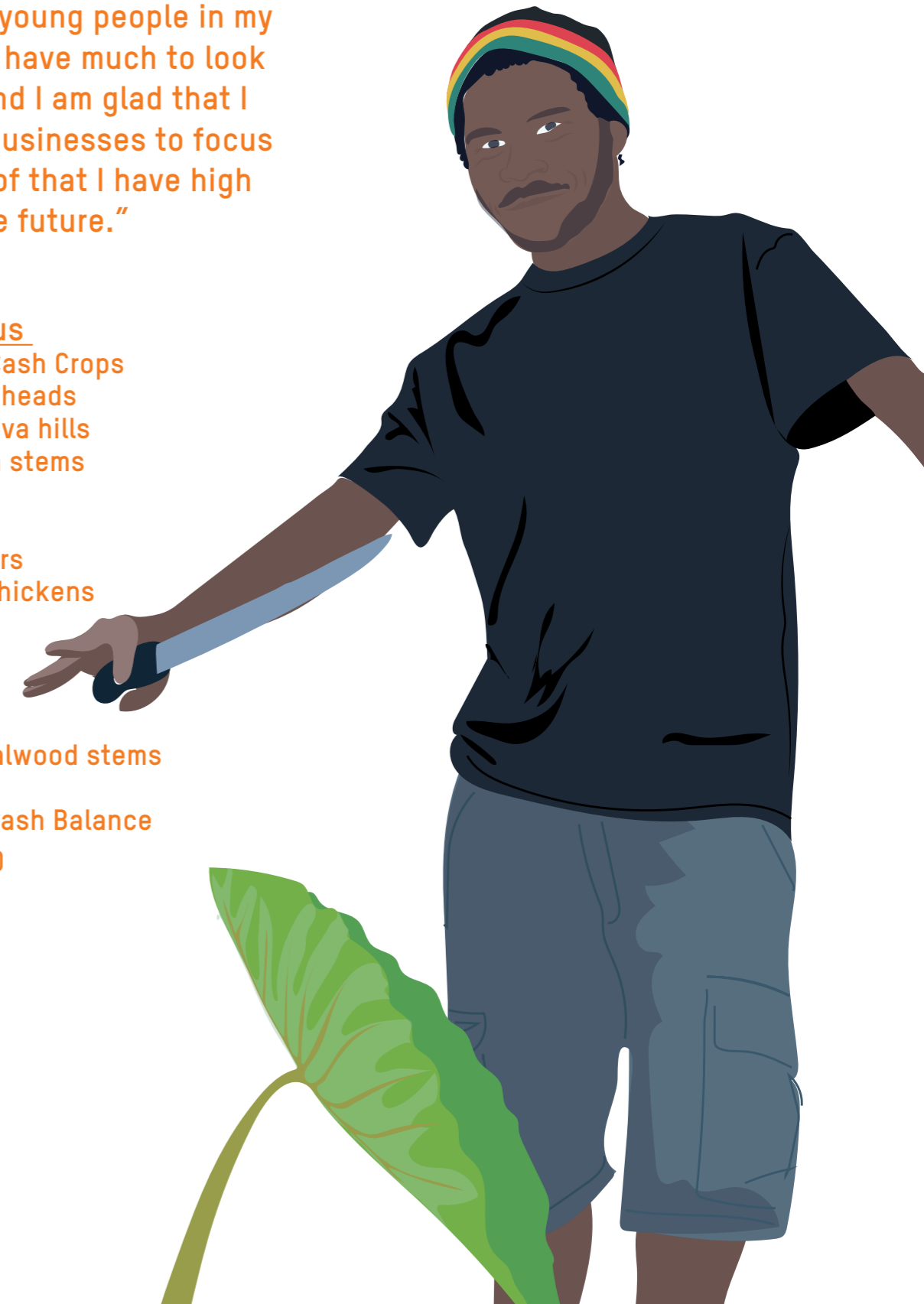
- 45 broilers
- 4 local chickens
- 1 sow
- 1 bull

Timber Crops

- 30 Sandalwood stems

NBV Savings/Cash Balance

- VT20,000



JIMMY NAIU

A ROOT CROP GARDENER TURNS INTO A TRIPLE THREAT



Jimmy Naiu, 30, has been a gardener most of his life with a focus on root crops. In 2015, a team of fieldworkers from FSA visited Jimmy's village of Lounoula, looking for farmers who would be interested to work with them on a vegetable cultivation project. FSA was so impressed by Jimmy's work ethic that they selected him as a potential farmer; he then attended a one-week training workshop on the proper ways of growing vegetables using nurseries.

"Life was easy in the village, my family consumes most of the crops we plant and we would sell some of them in the market to earn a bit of income. I am a hard worker and I like to farm, so when FSA came, they decided to select me to work with them on their project."

During the one-week training, Jimmy learned which seeds to plant during the off season, how to construct a nursery house and how to use it. "Before the trainings, I thought that I was doing the right thing by ploughing the soil and planting seeds, this practice easily spoiled my seeds during heavy rainfall or the dry season. Using nurseries allowed all the seeds that I plant to grow. FSA also provided me with materials to build my nursery and taught me how to manage the sales of my harvests while earning income every month."

Vegetable cultivation has allowed Jimmy and his family to increase the quantity of harvest they sell. In the past, they used to sell only a small amount of their crops but now they are selling a larger harvest of both root crops and vegetables because of the new techniques he has learned. In their vegetable garden they grow ball cabbage, lettuce, tomato, broccoli, beans, cauliflower and onions. "My family sees income every day from selling the vegetables; I use the money to pay for school fees, buy family necessities, and I am even able to put

money aside to invest in my farms." Jimmy uses the land management skills he received to space his crops, carryout crop rotation and practice intercropping. "This is an easier and better technique of doing vegetable gardening. With using the nurseries, I don't have to clear as much land and I am able to utilize the whole area to plant the seeds."

In addition to vegetable gardening, Jimmy also works with FSA in poultry farming and bee-keeping. He has 80 layers in his chicken house which he has built with materials he received from FSA and has 2 boxes of bees, a project he recently started in December 2015.

He has been able to increase his vegetable production, so he came up with the idea of separating his plots of land for commercial and subsistence farming. Jimmy has planted a vegetable garden where he harvests his crops for his family's consumption and uses the other plot to sell produces to earn income.

Since he started working with FSA, his skills and knowledge of farming and gardening has grown immensely and because of his good work ethic, FSA likes working with him too.

"I now have three different kinds of farms, a vegetable farm, a poultry farm and now I'm starting a bee farm. My plan is to expand all of them, so that in the future I can earn more money and look into starting other types of businesses."



LINA KAOH

FARMING EXPERIENCES LEAD TO DISTRIBUTION AND TRAINING EXPERTISE



Meet Lina Kaoh, 42, a mother, shop owner and dedicated poultry farmer on Tanna Island. She started her chicken farming business in 2014 as a member farmer of the Syndicat Agricole et Pastoral de Vanuatu (SAPV). After TC Pam struck in 2015, FSA worked to revive poultry farmers and included farmers from SAPV, Lina was also part of the program. When FSA was looking for someone to distribute chicken feeds on Tanna, Lina agreed for them to use her shop in Lenakel as an outlet to distribute the chicken feeds to poultry farmers. She became the main facilitator and distributor of chicken feeds on the island.

“I didn’t receive any training on poultry management but with the experiences I gained as a poultry farmer, I decided to expand my poultry farm.”

Lina and her husband Peter, who works for FSA, started the farm by rearing 50 roosters at first, which they bought for VT350 each and sold at VT2, 000, totalling VT100, 000. With such a successful return on their investment, they decided to buy 50 chicks (layers) which cost VT500 per chick. Shortly after they purchased the chicks they began to produce eggs, which they sold for 40 – 50VT each.

“Layers produce eggs everyday so that means you have income pouring into your pocket daily. It is good business because I never have to worry about whether or not I would make money that day.”

Lina and Peter sold the eggs until they made enough money to buy 50 more chicks

(roosters) which they again sold for VT2, 000 each within three months. Seeing how well the business was going, in late 2016 they decided to add 100 broilers and 100 layers to their farm.

“We take very good care of the chickens, we feed them properly and provide a safe and favourable environment for them to grow, so they can grow up to be big and healthy chickens. I always lift the chickens to feel their weight, so I can tell if they are being fed properly. People like buying them because of their weight and size.”

Since starting the poultry farming business in 2014, the couple have already sold four sets of stock. “The chickens were selling really well and we knew that there would be a high demand for poultry meat in Tanna, so we knew we had to keep the farm going and expand it.”

In addition to now being able to provide a decent living for their family, Lina and Peter can easily pay for their children’s school fees. **“FSA has been so good to me and my family, it has helped us a lot by providing advice and working through our store to distribute chicken feeds. Chicken farming has not only earned us income but also people in my community have even started asking for my advice on how to start their own poultry business.”**



ELIJAH JOHNNY

A SHORTCUT TO A PROMISING AND SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

Current Status

Root Crops & Cash Crops

- 400 taro heads
- 120 yam hills

Poultry

- 6 roosters
- 5 hens

Timber Crops

- 15 Whitewood stems
- 25 Mahakoni stems
- 20 Sandalwood stems

NBV Savings/Cash Balance

- VT62, 614

Elijah Johnny never thought that at 19 years old he would be managing his own chicken farming business. Especially because he was forced to drop out of secondary school when the fees became too expensive. He would work in the gardens to stay productive because the more he kept busy the less likely he would partake in violent activities with the other boys in the village. However, sometimes he would succumb to the peer pressure and he would do the things he tried so hard to stay away from. Elijah quickly found that engaging in these activities created a negative impact on his future. "I knew this wasn't the kind of life I wanted, I didn't like the thought that I had gone to school for nothing."

Elijah knew he wanted something more out of life, so in 2013 when he heard about Vanuatu Young Farmers Development Course (VYFDC), he decided to join and his parents eagerly supported his decision. At the centre, Elijah went through horticulture and poultry management trainings where he gained skills in chicken rearing, chicken housing, feeding management, and chicken health management. In addition, he learned about various types of horticulture practises such as crop rotation, mulching, producing local organic fertilizers, grafting, and budding. Like other students, Elijah was allocated a small plot of land where he was able to put into practice what he had previously learned in his trainings. He grew over 50 taro suckers including corns, ball cabbages, spring onions and carrots.

"Gardening is something that I have been doing all my life because my family depends on it for food and income. However, these trainings have given me

so much more information on practices like mulching, pruning, and compost fertilization which can also help grow the crops."

After his first year of training, Elijah was given 40 chicks (roosters) from FSA, a roll of wire mesh, chicken feeds and tarpaulins to help him build the chicken house and get his chicken farming business started. Equipped with the poultry farming skills he acquired, he constructed a chicken house where he looked after the chicks he received.

Once Elijah's roosters fully matured, he sold them for VT1, 800 each and earned a total of VT72, 000. After the first round of sales, he bought 30 broiler chicks from FSA and is hoping that once he raises enough money he will increase the number of chicks he purchases.

"I am now able to see income coming into my pocket because of the poultry business. FSA and the training centre has provided me with a shortcut to a promising and successful future which I think would have taken much longer to achieve if I was still in secondary school."

After graduating in December 2016, Elijah continued to invest in crops and poultry but has also starting investing in timber crops.



FRANK NIERE

GOING AGAINST THE GRAIN



In the Lamalu community of Tanna, Frank, 24, is known as a likeable young poultry farmer but it wasn't long ago that he was a mischievous youngster. He used to spend most of his time drinking kava and smoking, his future was bleak. However, it became even more questionable when in 2011 he was forced to drop out of school because his parents could no longer afford the high fees.

"I thought that since I live in the village and my family has land, I could just have fun doing whatever I wanted and there wasn't a need to worry about my future."

However, Frank's perception about life changed as he matured, he realized he wanted to further his education and in 2012 he had the opportunity to do so. A RTC centre opened near his village, he decided to take the leap and join the training centre, and he was one of the first intakes to enrol. Frank spent two years there where he received technical trainings in agriculture and carpentry. When he completed his trainings in November 2014, he joined the Vanuatu Young Farmers Development Course (VYFDC) that was launched by the Farm Support Association (FSA) that year.

"I felt that there was more to learn and I liked the trainings, so I decided to apply again for the new program FSA was launching."

In the new program, Frank received trainings on poultry management and learned about the basics around raising chickens for meat, coop plans, sales, and marketing of chickens. He also attended lessons on horticulture which allowed him to learn about the science and art of producing, improving, marketing, and using root crops and vegetables.

"The trainings we received were great! I learned about different root crops, cultivation methods, and proper land management techniques. The trainings allowed me to think seriously

about making my life better by starting a business."

As part of the poultry trainings, in 2016 Frank received 42 chicks (roosters) along with bags of chicken feed, a roll of wire mesh and two rolls of tarpaulin. He constructed a chicken house with the materials he received and used local materials like bamboo as feeders and water containers for the chickens. "I wanted my roosters to be healthy, so I was careful when feeding them. I learned that rationing and scheduled feeds were really important, unlike local chickens, I had to feed my roosters three times every day". The training gave him skills on how to produce local chicken feed using local materials, this was a relief for Frank as he did not have to pay for bags of chicken feed.

Frank's mother, Mary Morris, has seen a big difference in his attitude since he has joined the program. "Before he joined the RTC, he was unwilling to follow me to the gardens and help me work but now he is teaching me things he has learned from his trainings and I am proud to see the change he has gone through."

With a bright future ahead of him, Frank graduated in 2016 from the three year training. His dream is to expand his farm. He currently has 1,500 taro heads in his garden, 45 broilers and has saved VT118, 374.

"If you want to have a good future, no one will do it for you, you have to do it yourself. The Napil RTC provided me with an opportunity to try again, to do something good with my life."

SANIN NOCKLAM

TAKING AN ALTERNATE ROUTE



At first glance Sanin's story may seem like another example of how young kids on Tanna struggle after dropping out of school but that's not her story. Her story is that of a young girl who decided to beat the struggle and take an alternate route to success.

Meet Sanin Nocklam, whose primary level education finished when she fell severely ill for several weeks. "I fell ill for some weeks and it put me behind in class, so I did not want to go back to school after the illness left. I felt that I wasn't learning much at school and it was a waste of time, so I chose to stay at home and help look after my younger siblings."

Sanin was not aware that her future was about to change when in 2013 her father encouraged her to join the Napil Rural Training Centre (RTC). She was accepted into the Vanuatu Young Farmers Development Course (VYFDC) program where she received trainings on horticulture and livestock (poultry) management. Sanin was able to learn about the different approaches to crop cultivation in the local context and gained skills on gardening practices such as crop conservation, garden restoration, landscape garden design, and garden maintenance.

Equipped with new poultry management skills and knowledge, she was determined to start her own poultry farming business and create a means to support her family.

"I am young but I am thinking more maturely than my friends. While some kids my age are just hanging in the gardens, I'm learning how to make a profit from it."

After spending a year at the RTC, Sanin received 40 chicks (roosters) from FSA including bags of chicken feed, a roll of wire mesh and two tarpaulins. In her first round of sales she earned VT60, 000, selling each chick for VT1, 500. She was able to save some money and help financially contribute in her home.

"Everyone doesn't excel in primary and secondary schools. I may not be good at formal school but I am good in farming and gardening. I can now combine what I learned as I grew up with what I'm learning in the trainings."

Recently graduating from the RTC in 2016, Sanin has grown her business and has successfully expanded it to include boars, sows and cows.

"FSA and the Napil RTC has supported me a lot, I will use the resources and skills I've gained to build a good future for myself and my family. I am on my way to being a successful farmer and have no doubts that I will be one of the best on Tanna."

Current Status

Root Crops & Cash Crops

- 700 taro heads
- 105 cassava hills
- 264 sweet potato hills

Livestock

- 3 local chickens
- 4 boars
- 1 sow
- 2 cows

NBV Savings/Cash Balance

- VT75, 040



TOM KASSO AND JIMMY NIARE

TRAINERS GO ABOVE AND BEYOND TO CREATE
EXPERIENCED YOUNG FARMERS



Meet Tom Kasso and Jimmy Niare, trainers of the Napil Rural Training Centre (RTC) on Tanna. They are both from Lamlu Village, Tom joined RTC in 1998 and Jimmy shortly followed in 2000. The RTC was established in 1997 by of the elders of Lamlu village, they created the concept and with the help from Vanuatu Rural Development and Training Centres Association (VRDTCA) they were able to fund it.

In the early years of Napil RTC, they offered a variety of courses on carpentry, joinery, and home school education. Although the training centre started off well with many young people enrolling, the umbrella body of VRDTCA broke down over the years and resulted in a tremendous financial strain for the school.

However this changed in 2014 when FSA partnered with the Napil RTC and launched the Vanuatu Young Farmers Development Course (VYFDC) program. Once the program was implemented, they decided to change

the focus of the courses to horticulture and poultry management.

“When FSA partnered with us and introduced the VYFDC program, we were so happy because there was going to be financial support again to keep the RTC going. This partnership has also allowed us the opportunity to change our courses to better suit the local needs and interests of the young people.” - Tom Kasso

Apart from providing technical advice in poultry management and vegetable cultivation practices, FSA provides training materials like modules along with tools and equipment that students and trainers use during their practicals. The organisation is exploring organic farming as well as conducting bee farming trials and researches with the RTC. In addition, they have installed a water supply system for the school and helped to rebuild a classroom that was damaged during TC Pam.

“We see students from all over Tanna pushing to get one of the limited number of seats at the RTC. The amount of young people applying increases each year but unfortunately we can only accept 15-20 students a year. Everyday students walk hundreds of kilometres from their villages to school and two weeks after TC Pam hit, they came to school ready to learn in a roofless classroom.” – Jimmy Niare

As the main trainers, Tom and Jimmy spend most of their time with the students who come to the RTC two weeks out of the month to receive the trainings. “The best part for me is that I get to transfer my knowledge to the younger generation, so that they can improve their chances for a better future. It is really worth it when I witness them go from being a student to managing their own farms and small businesses.” – Jimmy Niare
In December 2016, Dominic Nako, Manager of the National Bank of Vanuatu (NBV) on Tanna, attended the graduation ceremony of

the Napil RTC, he was really impressed with the students and with the work of the VYFDC program.

“He was so proud of the students who graduated; he also praised FSA and the RTC for the success of the VYFDC program. He stated that NBV will allow loans for RTC students because they are seen as small business owners who can guarantee to pay back the loans. This was really surprising because student loans are not accessible to the students who are attending traditional universities.” – Tom Kasso

The trainers remain committed to working hard and providing their students with the adequate training they need to become experienced farmers.

“Before the students joined the program, they didn’t have a way to make money or the skills to manage a farm or business. However through the program, they have the knowledge to start their own businesses and save the money they make from it. The program has shown that it produces great farmers and with more support, in the future we can become one of the major agricultural training centres in Vanuatu.” – Jimmy Niare



SIRI YARMIS

HARD WORKING FARMER SWITCHES BEANS AND MAKES FINANCIAL GAIN



Siri Yarmis, 52, from Imoh village on Tanna, is one of the few farmers growing vanilla on the island. Vanilla farming is something not many of the people in his community grow but Siri saw an opportunity for a new business venture because he was not generating the income he needed from his regular root crop cultivation. So with the help from Kenneth James, an experienced vanilla farmer from a nearby village, he started his vanilla plantation in 2012.

“Before I started planting vanilla, I used to only grow root crops and from time to time I would sell some of them in the market. Once I expressed my financial concerns and interest in vanilla, Kenneth helped me to start planting.”

Siri started by planting 57 vanilla stems, which Kenneth showed him how to care for them from the time they were seedlings until they were ready to harvest. In 2013 he sold his first harvest of for VT 3,000 per kg and his second in 2014. The demand for his vanilla was so high that the buyers decided to increase the price to VT 8,000 per kg to ensure other buyers won't be able to purchase the vanilla and also to give incentives for farmers to plant more vanilla. “The money I earn from selling vanilla is much more than the money I receive when I sell taro, manioc or banana. When I used to sell those types of crops, I only earned a little income; therefore it was extremely hard to support my family.”

Most of the income he earns is allocated for his children's school fees and the remaining he invests on things needed for the plantation, such as a temperature scale. FSA has been able to support Siri by providing coolers for storing the vanilla beans, planting bags and provide technical advice on how to better manage his farm. In addition to buying vanilla from Kenneth, FSA is also the main buyer of Siri's vanilla.

When Tropical Cyclone Pam struck in 2015, Siri's plantation was severely damaged. The cyclone destroyed all his vanilla plants, so he wasn't able to harvest that year. FSA assisted by providing axes which he used to clear branches and debris in his garden in order to replant his vanilla beans.

“I was devastated because in a matter of minutes I lost everything that I had been working on for the past year. It takes a lot of time and hard work to grow a quality vanilla harvest; I had to watch it all be destroyed when TC Pam struck.”

Although the cyclone has hindered production and sales for Siri, he is determined to rebuild his farm, continue selling his vanilla and expand the plantation in the future.

He takes pride in managing his vanilla farm and visits it each day to weed, prune and hand pollinate. “It is hard work, you have to be careful when planting the seeds and take care of them when they are growing. There are things you have to check every time you visit the plantation like making sure the support sticks are not rotting, check for pests and diseases and when it is time to pollinate the beans, you have to pollinate every single one. It is not easy work but it rewards you in the end.”



KATANIC NASSE

CREATING A SOLID FOUNDATION, ONE SEED AT A TIME



Katanic Nasse, 53, is a female farmer and leader of the Tanna's woman's group in Lounapkalangis Village. As one of the most recognised female farmers and leaders in her village, she was selected by FSA to be part of the Thrive project that Oxfam and FSA launched in 2007. Thrive, which is a livelihoods project aimed at improving the well-being of women, men and youths as well as their families and communities, allowed FSA to work with female farmers on Tanna to promote vegetable cultivation and marketing as a means of allowing farmers to become self-sufficient.

"Before we started planting vegetables, my family would consume half of the harvest and I would sell the remaining, but sometimes my crops didn't sell well because everyone is basically selling the same types."

Katanic joined the Thrive program in 2007 and attended training in Port Vila which was organized by Oxfam and FSA.

"It was a great support because they not only provided me with vegetable seeds but also training that taught me a variety ways of how I can plot and look after my crops by using a nursery. These techniques were so new and exciting, it was something I had no prior knowledge about."

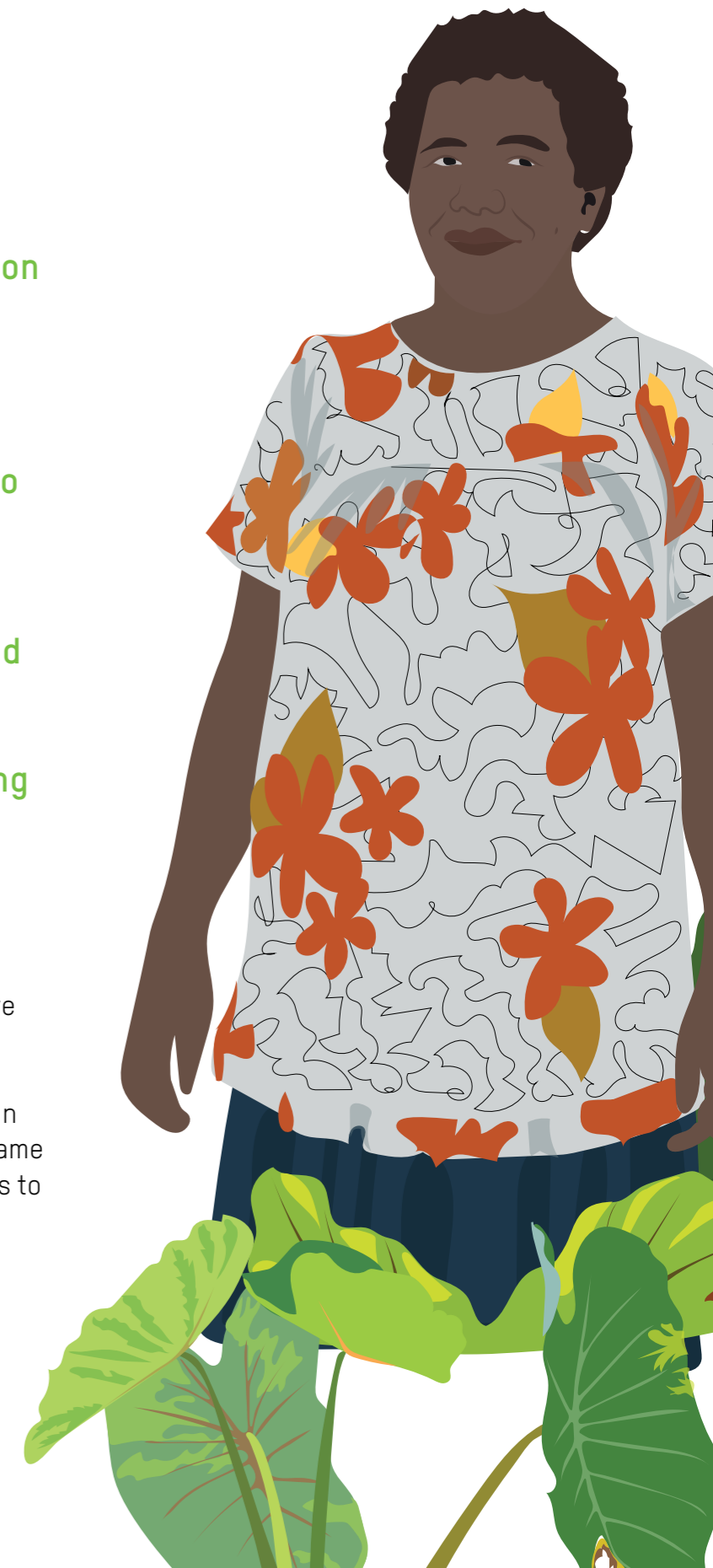
With the help from her husband, Nasse, Katanic constructed a nursery with the materials provided by FSA and began planting their vegetable seeds. They planted carrots, ball cabbage, onions, beans, lettuce, broccoli, and capsicum.

The couple harvest the vegetables once they are ready and Katanic sells them at the market every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. "I am able to sell the vegetables and earn an income to pay for our children's school fees and to put money aside for emergencies. I have seen firsthand how helpful FSA has been and without these vegetables, my husband and I would be struggling to find other sources of income. We live in the village and farming is all we know, now we know how to generate an income from it."

Katanic and her husband were able to pay for her eldest son's school tuition at the Vanuatu Teachers College, which he has since graduated from and is now a secondary school teacher. They have four other children they pay school fees for, including helping a daughter who was awarded a scholarship to further her studies in China.

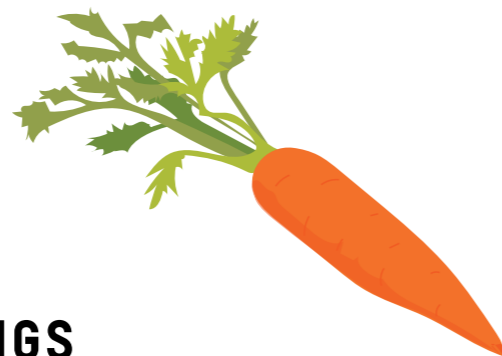
"As a mother, I want to see my children have a higher education and I am proud to see them succeeding. It also makes me proud to see that each of them has grown an interest in gardening. They even ask me to look after their gardens when they go to school and during the holidays they return to tend to their gardens. It is good to see that they understand the importance of having an education and having gardening skills."

As leader in the community, Katanic organized workshops for other women in the village and shares what she learned in the trainings. "I teach them how to save their income and start small businesses that would provide a better livelihood for themselves and their families. This was an area we tried to fill for many years; FSA came and provided us with the advice and skills to bridge the gap.



KAUPA TOM

AN EMERGING SOCIAL BUTTERFLY SPREADS HER WINGS



Kaupa Tom, 18, is a first year student in the Vanuatu Young Farmers Development Course (VYFDC) program. She is one of the most active student in her class. However, Kaupa wasn't always the social butterfly she is now. Her shyness was so intense that she did not finish her primary school studies. Although she was no longer in formal school, Kaupa still had high hopes of receiving an education and finding a job to help support her family. Unbeknown to her, the road to her dreams was just around the corner.

"I didn't want to go to school anymore because I had a hard time trying to keep up with my classmates. I was so shy in class that I didn't participate or ask the teachers for help. I fell behind in my assignments and didn't feel I was smart enough to catch up."

In 2016, Kaupa's cousin told her about the VYFDC program which FSA was conducting at the Napil Rural Training Centre (RTC) on Tanna. Her parents convinced her to enrol in the program to learn about horticulture. Putting aside her fears, Kaupa applied and was accepted into the program. She was then allocated a small plot of land near the centre school where she practices

garden cultivation. In the school's plot she has planted taro, corn and vegetables ball cabbage, carrots, tomatoes and spring onions.

By joining the RTC, Kaupa did not only take up the opportunity to further her education but she also gave herself the chance to open up and socialise with other students. Her social relationships with other trainees and trainers has developed and she now loves participating in group activities and interacting with them individually. The trainers really enjoy the attitude. She is a dedicated and committed young girl who has a strong focus on completing her trainings and graduating.

As well as building her confidence, to become a social butterfly, Kaupa utilises the skills she has acquired from her horticulture trainings and applies them in the garden that she has grown back in her village. She also practices preparing her own local chicken feed using local crops and plants. **"When I started my own garden shortly after joining the RTC, I practised the crop spacing and mulching methods**



we were taught and I saw that my crops have grown quite well from using these techniques. I am now teaching my parents how to produce local chicken feeds, I'm glad that they are showing an interest in the trainings because I know in the future it will be beneficial for us all."

Kaupa has two more years before graduating from the VYPDC program and there is not a day that she regrets leaving primary school. She is confident that she is on a right path to becoming a successful farmer. "I had a difficult time in formal school because not many things being taught interested me but now I am doing something I enjoy, so it doesn't feel like work. Although I am looking forward to graduating, I'm not rushing it because I want to learn everything I can."

ANNIE & MAKUM LOH

THE BREAK-DOWN BEFORE THE BREAKTHROUGH – REBUILDING AFTER TC PAM



Annie Loh, 44, lives with her husband, Makum Loh, 47, who is a teacher at a primary school on Tanna Island. They are successful small-scale poultry farmers who have been working with the Farm Support Association (FSA) since 2015. However, in March 2015 when Tropical Cyclone Pam struck Vanuatu, the family suffered a great loss to their home and gardens. FSA's support in helping farmers start their own chicken farming businesses allowed people like Annie and her husband to rebuild their lives after the cyclone.

In March 2015, a team from FSA visited their community on Tanna and did an assessment to select potential poultry farmers who would work with FSA to set up small-scale poultry farming projects. Annie and Makum were selected and they received on-site poultry management training which gave them skills on raising chickens for the purpose of farming meat or eggs. After receiving the training, they were given 40 chicks (layers) and bags of chicken starter, grower and finisher. The FSA team also constructed a chicken house for them.

Annie and her husband were able to sell the eggs and earn extra income. "The chickens lay 25 to 30 eggs a day and we sell them for VT50 each. The more layers there are, the more eggs we can sell. We're definitely planning on purchasing more layers in the near future."

Annie and Makum used the money they earned from the sales of the eggs to purchase materials like iron sheets, nails and tarpaulins to rebuild their family house.

With Makum's combined income as a teacher and farmer, they are able to pay their children's school fees and even set aside money to purchase more chicken layers and broilers. **"The chickens bring us money, so we have to take good care of them, they are like employers that provide us with a job and income."**

They have managed their chicken farm so well that they have been recognised by the people in their community and other surrounding communities as the main suppliers of chicken eggs in the area.

"This opportunity does not only help us and our families make a living, but also our poultry service provides people with a meat supply that they need. Our local economy has grown so everyone is able to benefit from this support."



ILENE KIEL

IN A MARKET FULL OF ROOT CROPS FEMALE FARMER FINDS A WAY TO STAND OUT



Ilene Kiel, 38, is another successful female farmer in Lounapkalangis village who has seen firsthand the benefits of FSA's support. Ilene and her husband, Kiel, have been farmers for many years; they make a living by cultivating local root crops such as taro, cassava, yams, sweet potato, banana, island cabbage, and peanuts. The family consumes most of the harvest and when they need money for school fees or basic necessities for their home, they sell some of their crops.

"Everyone around Tanna is selling the same crops, so it's hard to stand out from them and make a decent income. Many times the crops just don't sell; it's difficult to make money because we are all selling the same items."

Through FSA's 2016 recovery program, the organization sent vegetable seeds to Lounapkalangis village, for Ilene to distribute. "I was responsible for selling the seeds around the community. They sold for very low prices, so when people heard about the seeds from FSA, they rushed to buy them. I would run out of the seeds quickly and people would always request them because they saw the high purchasing demand for the harvest."

Ilene now has a vegetable garden where she grows broccoli, ball cabbage, carrots, lettuce, cauliflower, beans, onions, capsicum, tomato and peanuts. "FSA gave us broccoli and cauliflower seeds, which people in other villages don't have, so we are able to sell most if not all of our harvests."

Seeing how well FSA has benefited their family, her husband Kiel began helping Ilene more by clearing the bush and ploughing the soil, as well as helping her harvest the crops when they are ready.

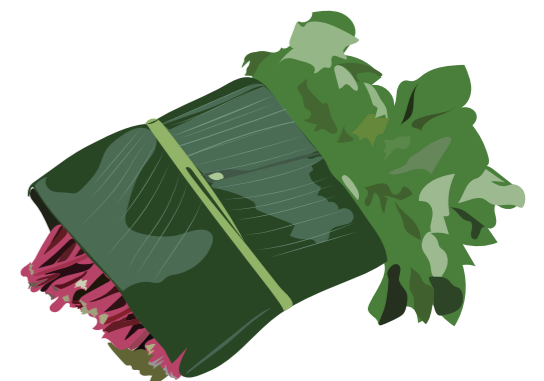
"The support that FSA has given us has not only helped us build better lives but it has also allowed my husband to work closer with me. I like the fact that he is willing to help and support me, we are now working as a team. It has made us a stronger family and it has been a good influence for our children to see."

Although this has been a great success for her and her family, Ilene has dealt with some challenges.

"We live close to the volcano and this is a major problem because when the ashes fall on the crops, it kills them and I'm unable to sell the harvest. It is disheartening when this happens, but I know the benefits of harvesting the vegetables, so I don't hesitate to start over."

Ilene is dedicated to taking care of her family's vegetable garden and is committed to selling the harvests every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at the Lenakel Market.

"There are very few ways for us to earn money here in the village, we have grown up in the garden but I found that it's not just about growing root crops and selling them at the market. We needed a way to differentiate ourselves and FSA came with the right kind of tools to help us do that."



SITU KEMUAL



SCARCITY PRESENTS A LOCAL BUSINESS MAN WITH A SWEET OPPORTUNITY

Situ Kemual, 35, is a bee-farmer and well known businessman in Lenakel on Tanna Island. Situ's idea of starting a bee farm began in 2009 when Gilbert Gibson, the main bee-keeper and trainer in Vanuatu, visited Tanna to conduct a workshop. "One day I was visiting the market in Lenakel and I saw Gilbert demonstrating how to use a smoker on a beehive. It was fascinating, so after the demonstration, I approached Gilbert and told him that I was interested and asked if he could help me start a bee-farm."

With Gilbert's help, Situ was able to purchase a bee box from FSA for VT 22,190. Gilbert also helped send bees from Vila to Situ on Tanna. FSA was able to send Gilbert to Tanna again to run a bee-keeping training with other farmers. "The training was really good; we learned how to identify queen bees and how to raise them, how to capture wild bees, extract honey, how to take care of the bees and increase the number of them. One of the things I was afraid of when starting the bee farm was taking care of a queen bee but after the trainings, I was able

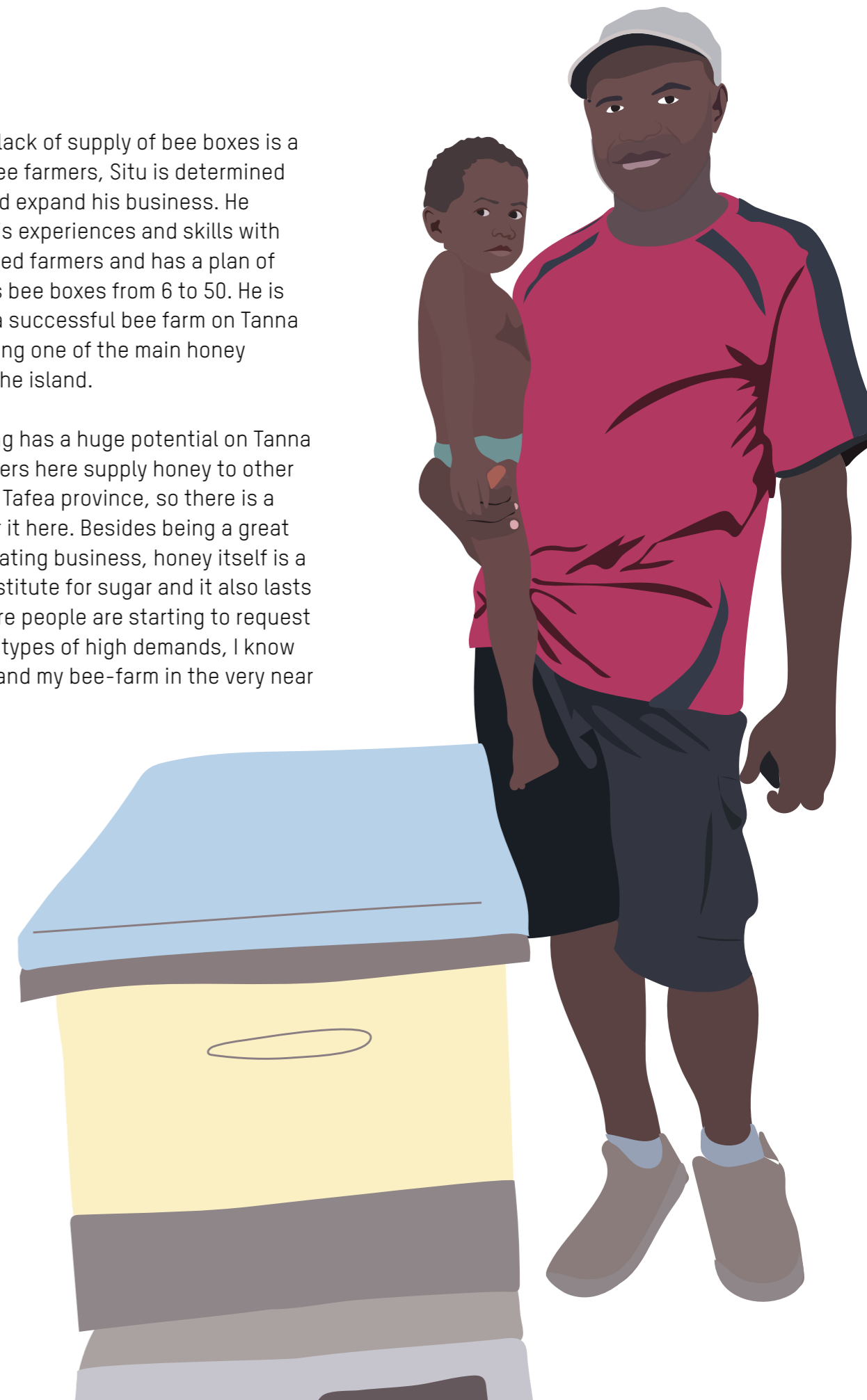
to replicate Gilbert's techniques and now I can handle the queen bee without as much difficulty."

Situ is one the growing bee-keepers on Tanna Island and over the years he has managed to increase his bee farm from one box to six. In the past he used to sell his honey for VT 300 per 200ml bottle but over the years due to an increase in demand for his honey, he has increased his price and size to VT 1000 per 600ml bottle.

"Many people in Tanna love eating honey but no one wants to produce it and that's why I think it is a good business to invest in. **It is very different from any other type of farming, so maybe that is why people are a bit scared to do it. However I have seen the benefits from it and I'm able to supply people with their demands while making a sizeable income.**"

Although the lack of supply of bee boxes is a problem for bee farmers, Situ is determined to improve and expand his business. He also shares his experiences and skills with other interested farmers and has a plan of increasing his bee boxes from 6 to 50. He is now running a successful bee farm on Tanna and is becoming one of the main honey suppliers on the island.

"Honey farming has a huge potential on Tanna because farmers here supply honey to other islands in the Tafea province, so there is a big market for it here. Besides being a great income generating business, honey itself is a healthier substitute for sugar and it also lasts longer, so more people are starting to request it. With these types of high demands, I know that I will expand my bee-farm in the very near future."





ANTOINE TAMARAKA

PRIEST GOES BEYOND MISSION AND CREATES SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS

Antoine Tamaraka, 44, is a Catholic priest in Imaru Village on Tanna, he started the poultry project after TC Pam hit in 2015, as a means of getting the church to become self-sufficient and self-funded. "The Catholic Church here doesn't have much financial support from Port Vila, so I thought of starting a business to provide me with the support to do workshops, buy fuel for transportation and to continue my mission work. After doing some research, I saw that poultry farming was a good business to invest in."

Antoine started the poultry project with 100 broiler chicks from FSA but twenty of the chicks died. Once the remaining chicks fully matured they were sold for VT 1,500 each. He then bought another 200 chicks, and 80 of them died for various reasons linked to weather and health complications.

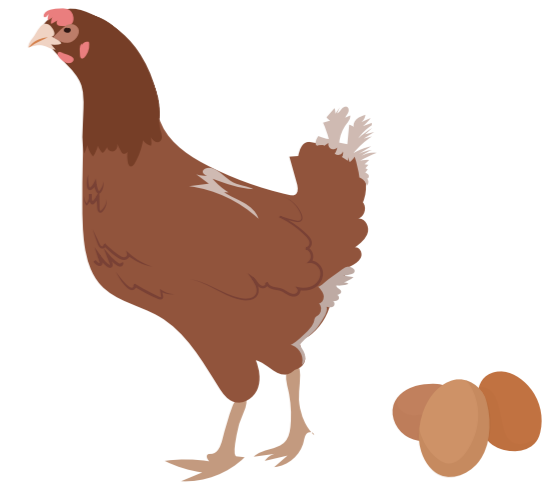
"I have no control over these types of issues and it makes it challenging to deal with but I was determined to keep the project going." Fortunately for Antoine, FSA was able to provide him with technical assistance that allowed him to construct boxes to keep the newly hatched chicks warm.

"FSA gifted me with bags of chicken feed until I was able to sustain the project myself. They also provided me with trainings on how to take care of the chickens, ration their

feedings, construct boxes that would allow effective and efficient feeding, and they trained me on how to manage the business as a whole, so I can eventually expand it." In an effort to expand and designate someone to look after the project once his contract ends, Antoine partnered with local, Natuman Koalik, provided him with trainings and put him in charge of looking after the poultry project. They constructed a chicken house in Natuman's village, Lounelapen where the matured chickens are looked after.

Although their second round of sales went well, earning VT 180,000, Antoine and Natuman decided to raise layers instead of broilers because it would provide them with daily income.

They bought 100 layers from FSA and sold the eggs for VT 40 each, most of the money earned from the sales is deposited into two accounts at the National Bank of Vanuatu; one is a fixed deposit account while the other is an open account that they can deposit and take out money when needed. After they purchased the layers, FSA gave Antoine and Natuman an additional 40 broiler chicks because there were an excess in stock at the Syndicat Agricole, which earned them VT60, 000.



In December 2015 Antoine and Natuman, purchased an additional 40 layers which Antoine keeps in a space located in the church's tool-shed at Imaru village. Although the chickens are currently in two separate locations, they are planning to construct a chicken house where they will keep all of the layers.

"My goal is by the time my contract finishes in Imaru, the church will have a stable income generating business that will allow the other priests after me to continue the mission work in this village and Tanna as a whole. I have high hopes for this poultry business and I want FSA to stick close as a partner because it provides the materials that will allow our project to grow."



STEPHEN CHARLIE

POST OFFICE WORKER RETIRES TO LIVE OUT HIS DREAM



Stephen Charlie, 54, is a vegetable farmer on Efate who has worked at the Vanuatu Post Office for over 15 years. When Stephen retired in 2008, he purchased a piece of land at Teouma village where he and his family live and work in their garden.

“When I was working for the post office, I always felt that there was something else I should be doing with my life. For 15 years I did the same thing over and over again; sit inside the office and stare at the computer. I became lazy and bored, I wanted to own a land and cultivate it, so I retired and did just that.”

Seven years into his retirement, Stephen began his journey with FSA after purchasing some seeds from them so that he could replant his vegetable garden after TC pam had destroyed it. Seeing how dedicated he was as a farmer, FSA began providing him with trainings on vegetable cultivation, and how to use nurseries and pesticides.

“When I started gardening, I had no proper gardening skills at all and no one was there to teach me. I would just throw seeds in the garden and without any type of maintenance; I expected to have a profitable harvest within a few months. Although some would grow, a lot of them died but at the time I considered it as part of a trial and error process.”

The trainings FSA provided have helped improve his cultivating skills immensely. Stephen has also learned how to plant the

right vegetables during the off seasons, so he can have an advantage when selling at the market. Along with the vegetables, he grows and sells a variety of local root crops and fruits. FSA has also been assisting him in finding restaurants who are interested in buying his vegetables, such as Breaks Resort.

In an effort to improve the quality and size of his harvest, Stephen began using Dipel, an insecticide which is a type of pesticide. He has also started producing his own by using ripe bananas, pawpaw, manure, sugarcane, water and urine.

“Before the trainings, I didn’t use any type of pesticides, mainly because I never really heard of any. However once I started using it, I saw that my harvests were larger and the quality was better. With the skills I was taught, I have been able to create my own pesticide as well.”

Apart from supporting Stephen with his vegetable cultivation, FSA has partnered with him to test new crops and vegetable species that have been imported from overseas. He is provided the seeds and trainings on how to grow the vegetables and together with FSA, they monitor the growth of the vegetables to see if they would adapt to the local environment

“Their support has allowed me to improve my vegetable cultivation skills and explore new areas of gardening like conducting trials for new seed species. I was an amateur before but I can now say that I am a skilled gardener, I’m proud of myself because this is the exact vision I had before retiring almost 10 years ago.”

KENNETH JAMES

FROM ROOT-CROP FARMER TO VANILLA BEAN TRAILBLAZER



Meet Kenneth James a 36-year-old Tanna native and dedicated vanilla farmer from Lenawhia village. Although he is now one of the most prosperous vanilla farmers on his island, his success didn't come overnight. Kenneth's idea of a vanilla plantation began when he saw the need to go beyond growing root crops and create a more profitable business for his community.

"Like most people in the village, I grew root crops but I wasn't making much money from it, so I decided to start a vanilla plantation. I previously worked for a farmer who owned a vanilla farm, so I had some experience with growing them."

Kenneth's prior experience allowed him to be prepared for the challenges that came with producing a quality vanilla harvest. The first stages of growing vanilla are extremely critical and they require daily routine checks. "When the vanilla seeds are young, they are very delicate. I check on them daily because many things can pose a threat to their growth, such as snails and slugs eating the leaves and heavy rain fall creating the possibility of rotting the roots." In 2011 FSA saw how well Kenneth's vanilla plantation was growing and they wanted to assist him by offering technical advice on how he could better manage it.

"FSA gave me advice on keeping my beans at a certain temperature so they don't burn and the importance of adding mulch every month to keep the roots healthy, especially when there is heavy rainfall. They even gave me coolers and planting bags to cover the plants after they harvest, and after TC Pam, they provided axes to clear the debris on the plantation."

Kenneth has been selling his vanilla since 2010 and because of the high demand, buyers saw a chance to capitalize the market in an effort to make it more difficult for others to purchase the vanilla, so they decided to increase the price from VT 3,000 per kilo to VT8, 000. In 2015, with FSA as the main buyer, he managed to sell 80kg of his harvest which earned him VT 640,000. **"It's a great feeling to see people request the vanilla that I worked so hard to produce. The money I make now in one harvest doesn't even compare to the money I would make in a years' time selling root crops."**

Kenneth has adopted three of his brother's children and the money he now earns makes it easy to pay for their school fees and necessities. Seeing how big his

plantation was growing, he decided to share it with the community, by hiring some of the community members to work in the plantation, splitting the profits with the community leaders, and provide money for critical necessities to those in need in Lenawhia. Deciding to give back to the community, every Christmas, Kenneth shares his earnings as a gift to all of the members in his village.

"FSA's advice has allowed me to produce a better harvest which has created a steady income for me and the people in my community. I am glad they showed

an interest in what I was trying to do and wanted to support it. They have also helped promote my vanilla and now people outside of Tanna are requesting it."

Kenneth plans to expand his vanilla plantation and save enough money to help his community build a cooperative store that community members can own, manage and share in the profits.



ISHMAEL KENNETH

BOARDING MASTER AND STUDENTS TURN BEE PROJECT INTO INCOME GENERATING BUSINESS



Meet Ishmael Kenneth, 36, a knowledgeable bee-keeper and Boarding Master at Ulei Junior Secondary School in Efate. Ishmael's experience with bee-keeping began in 2012 when a team from UN (FAO) Teli Food project visited the school and introduced the idea of bee-farming. The bee-farming project was conducted by the Department of Agriculture and the trainings were led by bee-keeper, Gilbert Gibson, who has shared his expertise throughout Vanuatu.

“The bee-farming project allowed us to find a new way of earning money and provided an opportunity for students to learn about a different type of farming. Although I was really excited about starting the project, I had no idea of how to look after bees and I was afraid of them too but

Mr. Gibson's training helped me put aside my fears.”

The project was placed under the responsibility of the school as an income generating business and allocated to the year 9 students to look after. The school also has an agricultural farm that students work in as part of their lessons, so it was appropriate that the bee-farm was included.

“Mr. Gibson and his son Jim, helped us to start the farm. He trained me on how to take care of the bees, create queen bees, increase the number of them and capture wild bees from the forest. His son would visit every two months to check on the bees and when the harvest was ready he would bring a honey extractor to remove the honey.”

Honey is rare in rural areas of Efate and with the school's honey only costing VT 500 for 250ML, villagers quickly placed their orders as soon as they heard the harvest was ready. In the beginning many of the customers were the student's parents but over time the resorts near Ulei Village also became major buyers of the school's honey.

“Having such a high demand for our honey has really motivated the students. I taught them how to use the bee smokers, so they know how to feed the bees and extract the honey. They are always excited when it is time to visit the bees and regularly insist on following me when it's time to check on them.”

Business was going great for the Ulei bee farm until March 2015 when Tropical Cyclone Pam ripped through Vanuatu and due to there being no inside shelter for the 20 bee boxes, a majority of them were destroyed. “When I went to check on the bees that morning, there were only four boxes left, the rest were in pieces and all the bees inside

of them were gone. The students and I were devastated because the project was doing so well and overnight almost everything disappeared.”

Another major challenge that they deal with is the constant stealing of the honey. “The thieves would sneak into the farm late at night and steal the honey. Last year they stole VT20, 000 worth of honey, they steal it because they like honey but can't afford to buy it.”

Despite the challenges, Ishmael is hoping to revive the school's bee farm and with Mr. Gibson's help, the school will construct a shelter for the bees in an effort to prevent theft and the possibility of being damaged.



JOSEPH LOP

A GARDENER SEIZES THE OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME A POULTRY FARMER



Meet Joseph Lop, a poultry farmer who previously spent his time as a gardener on Tanna Island. Life as a gardener never really gave Joseph and his family the income support they needed, so Joseph thought of starting a poultry farm but he did not have the capital or skills. "Most of the crops my wife and I plant in the gardens are harvested and consumed at home, we would take only a portion of them to sell at the market, and sometimes they wouldn't even sell."

Joseph saw an opportunity to get the skills he needed when a team from the Farm Support Association (FSA) visited Tanna and conducted an assessment where they sought after potential areas to start poultry farming businesses. Without hesitation Joseph jumped at the chance to volunteer and was selected as an eligible farmer.

"FSA came and they were looking for people who were willing and able to work with them to farm chickens, I volunteered and they chose me. I was really excited because I knew creating a poultry farm would provide more income for my family. It was the opportunity I was looking for."

Joseph was given poultry management training from FSA which gave him skills in managing a sustainable and small-scale poultry farming business. After the training, he was given 40 chicks (roosters) along with eight bags of starter, six bags of copra meal, and two bags of meat meal. "I learned a lot from the training, it taught me how to feed the chicks, control pests and diseases, and take care of their living environment."

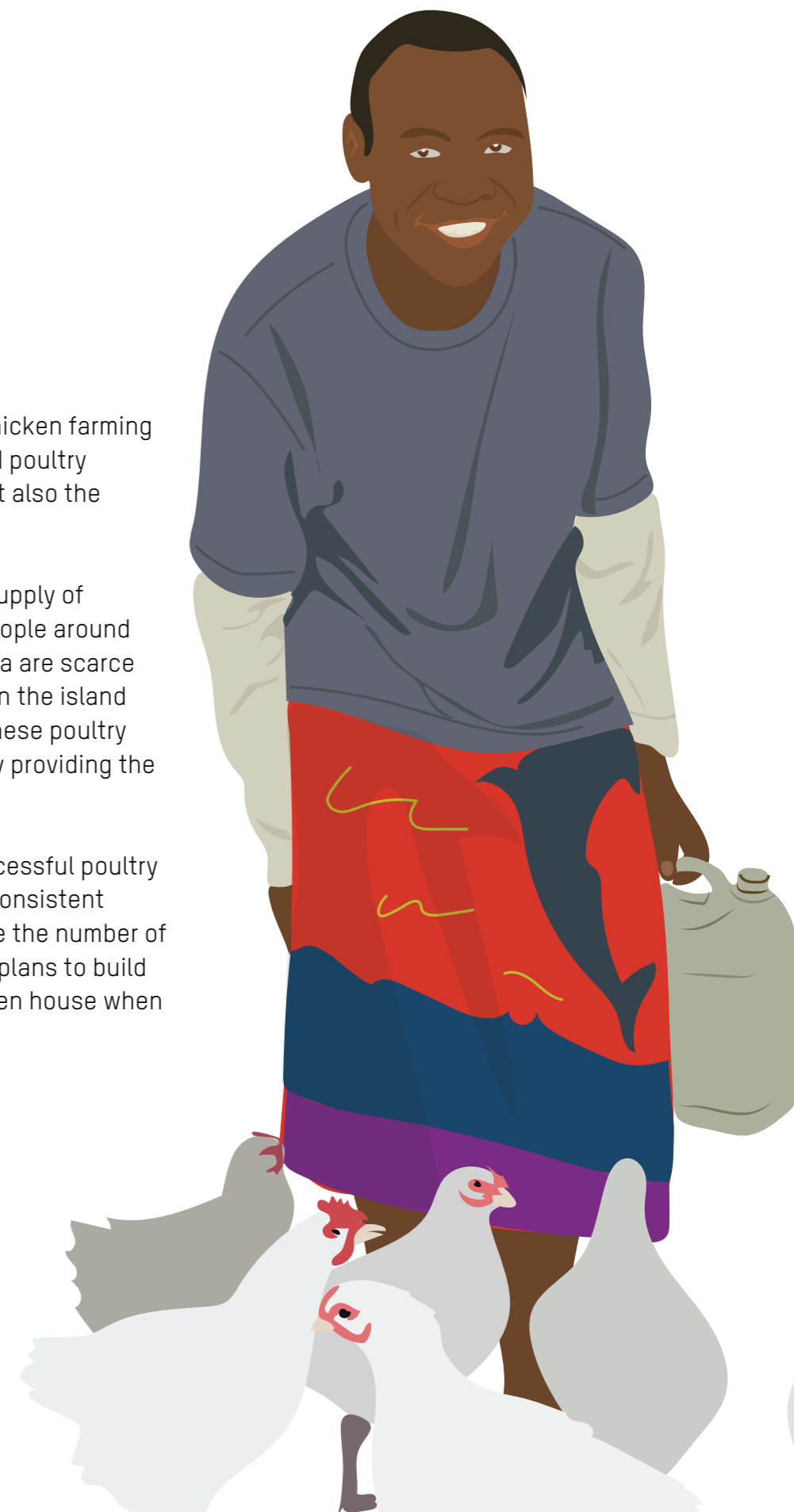
In just three months he sold all his roosters for VT2,000 each. **"I earned VT80,000 from my first sales. Seeing how much money I earned allowed me to see how good this business really is, so I decided to keep my focus on improving it."**

Joseph saved half of the money he earned and used the other half to purchase 50 more chicks (broilers) for VT250 each from FSA. Officers from FSA would visit Joseph in his village to check on his poultry farm and were impressed with how well he was managing his poultry farming business. "They told me that out of all the poultry farmers they worked with and visited, my roosters were the best fed."

Joseph describes how the chicken farming business has not only helped poultry farmers and their families but also the people of Tanna as well:

"Poultry farming allows the supply of chicken meat and eggs to people around Tanna. Meat sources on Tanna are scarce since majority of the cattle on the island have been slaughtered, so these poultry farming businesses are really providing the community a great service."

Joseph is now running a successful poultry business and is receiving a consistent income. He hopes to increase the number of roosters he rears to 100 and plans to build a new and much larger chicken house when he raises enough money.



TAMANU LUI

A FEMALE FARMER EXPANDS HER ROOTS



Tamanu Lui, 42, is a female vegetable farmer and resident of Ielia village on Tanna Island. Although she now harvests vegetables, it wasn't long ago that she only grew root crops. She decided to make the switch in 2013 when FSA, through the Thrive Program, visited her village with the aim of promoting vegetable cultivation.

During FSA'S visit, they selected Tamanu to work with them on their project and provided her with seed trays to plant vegetable seeds such as ball cabbage, carrot, capsicum, cauliflower, lettuce, and beans. They also gave trainings on how to construct nursery houses, how to plant seeds and transplant them from the nursery to the garden. "I was always interested in growing vegetables but I didn't have access or the money to purchase the seeds and I didn't have the cultivation skills to properly grow them. FSA came and did something that I did not expect, they gave me seeds, taught me how to take care of them, and showed me how to build and use a nursery house."

Tamanu never used a nursery in the past to grow her but through FSA's support she is now able to utilize it and effectively grow her vegetables. Her husband Alick Lui, saw the benefits of the trainings and has since supported his wife by ploughing their garden and weeding their harvest when it's ready. She takes her vegetables to the Lenakel Market to sell every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. In addition to FSA's support of

her vegetable farm, they have also helped her start a poultry farm.

"I have seen a change in my life, now I have additional income from selling both the vegetables and chickens. With the money I have earned, I can easily afford things like bricks to repair our family home and children school's fees; I have even opened a savings account at AVIC bank (APMA Financial Investment Centre)."

Working with FSA in managing her vegetable garden and poultry farm, has allowed Tamanu to gain a reputable reputation in her community. She is committed to looking after her garden and farm with hopes of expanding both in the near future.

"We are farmers and gardening is the main and sometimes the only source of income we have. Although we have been doing gardening for many years, we were not up to date on techniques like using nurseries to better protect the seedlings from being destroyed during heavy rainfalls and using seed trays to transplant the seeds to the garden. **I never thought that I could improve on something I have been doing all of my life but FSA has provided me the skills to produce a better harvest and in turn create a steady income to support my family.**"

KELLY NAURITA

URBAN FARMER WITH DISABILITY 'GROWS' BEYOND EXPECTATIONS



Kelly Naurita, 65, is from Melewaisisi, Efate, and has a leg length alignment asymmetry which causes one leg to be slightly shorter than the other. Although he lives close to town, he has found it difficult to find employment due to his disability, so he depends on gardening to make a living for himself and his family. The crops he planted were mostly harvested for consumption purposes but sometimes his wife would sell them at the road-side markets to earn a bit of income.

“It’s hard being a farmer, you have to plough the land, grow crops, and harvest them to consume and sell. Even though it is difficult, I refuse to just sit down and do nothing, I have a family that depends on me and I can’t let them down.”

Kelly and his wife Anna, grow local crops such as cassava, sweet potatoes, taro and vegetables. They also own a small patch of land where they grow peanuts, which they sell to earn additional money.

Kelly was introduced to FSA in 2015 when his wife attended a vegetable cultivation training that was conducted by the Agricultural department. Kelly’s wife taught him the things she learned, like how to utilize a nursery and this got him immediately intrigued to learn more about the trainings they offered.

FSA was interested to see how participants would use the skills and knowledge they had acquired, so they went to Kelly’s community and monitored the progress of the participants. Their support allowed the community members to develop new skills and knowledge on how to build nursery

houses, prepare nursery beds, sow seeds and transplant them. “I used to throw seeds in my garden and just leave them there to grow. I did not see the importance of using nurseries but the training enabled me to have an understanding on how to grow seeds properly to gain good quality harvests. By using nurseries, my vegetables can survive even through dry seasons.”

Kelly and his wife built a nursery in their garden and in doing so, applied the lessons they learned about crop rotation. “The land area we use for our garden is becoming smaller because the population of our community is increasing. However, FSA taught us how to do crop rotation, this way we can make the most out of the land we use.”

The trainings and advice Kelly got from FSA has allowed him to improve his family’s livelihood, he has gained knowledge on the proper ways of vegetable cultivation and also the use of Dipel, a biological organic pesticide. “I never heard of pesticides but since FSA introduced me to Dipel, I am now using it on a regular basis. Since I started using the pesticide, I have seen a big decrease in the number of pests and diseases that affect the vegetables.” Kelly likes the fact that FSA represents and supports dedicated farmers working with other farmers. He appreciates that they send fieldworkers to his community to check on community members’ gardens and follow-up on their progress in using their nurseries.

“People in our community depend on gardening and farming to support our living, FSA saw our need and came to help us. We have learned so much from them which we will use to sustain the livelihoods of our families. When FSA leaves, the skills and knowledge they have taught us will be here to stay.”

FARM SUPPORT ASSOCIATION

FARMERS HELPING FARMERS



Farm Support Association (FSA) is a non-governmental, non-profit organization was founded in 1982, and is currently managed by one of the board members, Peter Kaoh. FSA supports and responds to the needs of small holder farmers, and all farmers and organizations participating in its activities are considered as FSA members (non-fee paying). FSA works very closely with Syndicat Agricole et Pastoral de Vanuatu (SAPV), a registered charitable organisation that aims to provide affordable, quality farm supplies to all its farmer members. FSA organisation teaches farmers to value their land, earn income, and produce food from their own land.

The primary targets are individual men and women farmers, households, Rural Training Centres (RTCs) and rural youth groups as well as Education Providers, Government Departments, NGOs, Catholic Mission and regional organizations such as POET Com (SPC), PIFON and Koko Siga. "We have a holistic view on our programs, and FSA has a priority to work with women farmers too. We have been working closely with women on Efate, Pamma, Tanna and Malekula to support the development of production, poultry (both meat and egg) and piggery." – FSA Officers

What is truly unique and special about FSA, is that they provide well researched knowledge and techniques into the agriculture sector. Central to FSAs work is both the support for farmers and their applied research. They support farmers to respond to agricultural issues identified which means that the systems they use within their trainings with farmers have been fully researched, tried and tested in Vanuatu before they are promoted to the wider farming community. By doing so FSA can ensure that the outcomes of this applied research are cost effective, transferable, contextually appropriate and adaptable.

"FSA's approach is not to try and get farmers to conform or to control the decisions they make but to give farmers access to knowledge, skills and options, so that they can choose their own solutions and farming pathways."
– FSA Officers

With the growing population, there is an increase in cash-flow in the economy, therefore farmers are no longer producing food solely for their own consumption but also for selling. This increases the pressure on communities because there is inadequate

support to rural farmers to be able to cope with the changes and increases of the cash economy. Many young people are pushed out from the formal education because of the high cost of school-fees which results in them not being able to continue furthering their studies. This results in many of them moving to Port Vila, engaging in dangerous activities and lacking in motivation to seek out alternative methods of education and income opportunities in their village. "People should realise that they don't have to go to urban areas to find jobs, they can earn money on the islands just by doing farming. Having more programs like the Vanuatu Young Farmers Development Course (VYFDC) on Tanna is a great way of preventing young people from migrating to towns but stay back in the villages and make good use of their land to make a living or start farming businesses." - Julie Beierlein, Senior Administration Officer.

FSA continues to seek better solutions for the youth as well as the community as a whole. "In order for our vision to be achieved, we need to diversify the farming approach by farmers and retain the young people in rural areas who want to become farmers. Also in order for our organization to continue to grow, we need the government and donors to understand that


agriculture is a sector where it takes a long time to achieve results but it can be done." - FSA Officers

FSA has both challenges and high points. FSA staff truly believe in the impact that they are having on the farmers and communities. "There are challenges in the work that we do but the benefits FSA brings to farmers are amazing; the ten graduates who graduated from the VYFDC program at Napil RTC in 2016 is one of the many achievements we have made. The course is unique and provides young farmers the opportunity to build and improve their livelihoods. The two book publications, Vegetable Farming Book and Ol Bebet Mo Ol Sik Blong Vejetabol, we created have also been millstones for the organisation and we believe there are many more to come." - Peter Kaoh, FSA Manager and Board Member

FSA recognizes the importance of providing opportunities to farmers that positively change the livelihood for them and their families. For that reason, they will continue to invest in its organisational capacity building in order to effectively work with farmers, monitor, evaluate and document the impact of FSA's work.





 Oxfam in Vanuatu March 2017

This collection of 'Stories of Change' was compiled by Oxfam and Farm Support Association Vanuatu (FSA). These twenty-four stories give a voice to farmers who embraced the opportunity to emphasize how working with FSA empowered them and changed their lives. All interviewees have voluntarily shared their story.

Farm Support Association is a national Non-Government Organisation (NGO) committed to support small holder farmers achieve sustainable and resilient livelihoods, through enabling them to increase their knowledge, skills and capacities through the provision of technical advice and hands on training. FSA also enables farmers to help farmers through the creation of farmers' networks.

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For further information about Farm Support Association (FSA), you can contact FSA on +678 25717 or visit <http://www.organicpasifika.com/poetcom/who-are-we/>

For further information about Oxfam's programs in Vanuatu, you can contact Oxfam on +678 25786. Oxfam is an international confederation of 18 organisations networked together in more than 90 countries, as part of a global movement for change, to build a future free from the injustice of poverty. For further information visit www.oxfam.org

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