

Welcome to our third and last newsletter for 2020 which, in anybody's language, has been a challenging year. Apart from Covid-19, the effects of which we have all had to endure, Vanuatu also had the destruction wrought by Cyclone Harold. In the second half of 2020, the Trust continued its work helping with the recovery from Cyclone Harold, and also re-engaged with some of its usual work which had initially been over-shadowed by the needs of cyclone recovery.

SUSTAINABILITY

Water, sanitation and hygiene recovery work on Vao.



Toilet construction training

EDUCATION



Houses on West Santo re-roofed after a coconut thatch weaving workshop



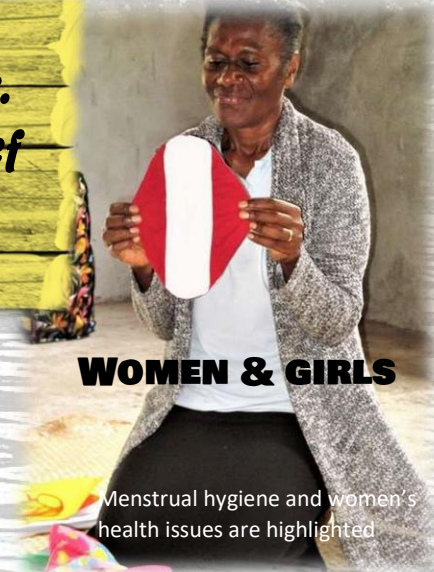
RESILIENCE

We would like to thank all of you who have given so generously to the Cyclone Harold recovery work this year. We have been amazed and humbled by your gifts. The relief and joy you have brought to those who lost their houses and livelihoods is immense. TANKYU TUMAS.

HEALTH PROMOTION

ENVIRONMENT

WOMEN & GIRLS



Menstrual hygiene and women's health issues are highlighted

The low-lying Maskelynes (below) are amongst an increasing number of small island groups in the Pacific at high risk of rising sea levels. Rated the world's most 'at-risk' country for natural hazards, Vanuatu has seven active volcanoes including Benbow and Marum on Ambrym (left).

We continue to refine our approach so that we become more of an umbrella organisation, assisting local agents and agencies when requested, and in the manner in which they choose to operate.

This year, Vanuatu celebrated its 40th year of independence, and also graduated from Least Developed Country ("LDC") status at the United Nations. There is an understanding in Vanuatu that it is not as independent as it could be. The work of the Butterfly Trust is therefore designed to assist Ni-Vanuatu in finding their own pathways in an increasingly complex, international, geo-political framework.

The Trust is also making a concerted effort to incorporate considerations of climate resilience, environmental awareness, and ecological balance, in all its work. Vanuatu is one of the countries most at risk from climate change, and also one of those countries which has done the least to cause it. The unfairness and significance of this situation is not lost on the general Ni-Vanuatu population.

Yumi 40. Formerly the New Hebrides, Vanuatu celebrated 40 years of independence this year.

We would like to pay tribute to our dear friend and stalwart Butterfly Trust supporter, Ken Newlands. Ken passed away on 20 October while waiting for a third liver transplant. Suffering from sclerosing cholangitis, he had his first transplant in 1996. Ken was a great, courageous man, admired by all who knew him. He had accrued a lifetime of public service and we will miss him. Thank you, Ken, for enriching our lives.



Ken organised the collection, loading and shipment of donated supplies onto the cruise ship, Pacific Pearl, bound for Vanuatu after Cyclone Pam hit in 2015.

SANITATION AND HYGIENE - HEALTH PROMOTION - CLEAN WATER - COVID PREPAREDNESS



Preparing the toilet pit for the primary school on Vao

Much of the work in the second half of the year centred on water, sanitation and hygiene at Vao, in northeast Malekula. In the aftermath of Cyclone Harold, there was a spike in cases of bloody diarrhoea and other infections in areas that were severely impacted. Data provided by the health surveillance system on Malekula reported a concentration of cases on Vao.

Inadequate sanitation facilities, poor hygiene and handwashing practices, lack of proper handwashing facilities and contaminated drinking water are all contributing factors to a persistent health concern. Alarmingly, climate change and the increasing regularity and intensity of cyclones only exacerbate an existing problem.

Many households in Vanuatu still do not have access to basic toilets to safely manage faeces.

Combining the goals of short-term disaster relief and longer-term development and community resilience to future natural disasters is important in achieving good sanitation.

Working in collaboration with the Ministry of Health at provincial and national levels, we carried out a multi-faceted project that combined health promotion, training and capacity building. It also included construction of VIP (ventilated improved pit) dry toilets at communal facilities such as churches, community halls, schools, kindergartens and the local aid post where large gatherings occur.

Community builders and carpenters with prior experience were selected to pass on important theory and practical skills to individual households to further encourage local ownership of the building process.



Inclusive VIP toilet at Vao Aid Post

At the same time, a new cohort of national sanitation officers from other provinces in Vanuatu were brought to Vao to train, and be trained, using the latest Sanitation Guidelines released earlier in the year. By training these sanitation officers they become more adept at conducting assessments and training in toilet construction. This results in best sanitation practice filtering out to communities in other parts of the country.

There were many challenges and plenty of lessons learnt around the needs of people with disabilities, especially when it came to building toilets with proper wheelchair access. Other lessons centred on choosing appropriate sites to safeguard drinking water sources and minimise coastal pollution.

The full report of the Vao Sanitation and Hygiene Project can be read [here](#).



Using a Sawyer bucket filter

On Vao, as with many areas in Vanuatu, people rely on wells to source water for drinking, cooking and washing. Many households also have rainwater collection tanks which can be vulnerable to damage and contamination during a cyclone. The use of water filters was actively encouraged as another step towards preventing waterborne infections. Water filtration is not widespread. Even in communities with households that share a water filter, use is sporadic.

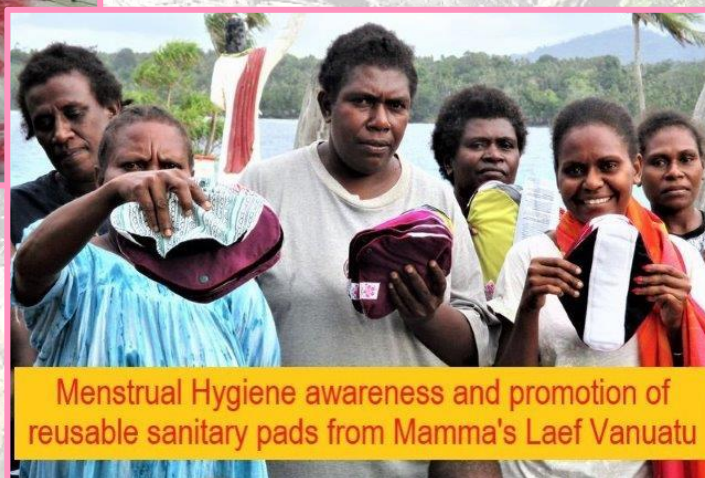
It is a real challenge to improve health literacy and long-term behavioural change around drinking water quality. Consequently, the Ministry of Health, the Water Department, the Butterfly Trust and other agencies all worked together. Assisting people to continue filtering drinking water outside the disaster context is another challenge to overcome, especially as the impact of climate change is felt more keenly.

While VIP toilet construction work was taking place, the women and girls were involved in a series of intensive health education sessions, held at the same time in each sector of Vao. The main focus of these events was on WASH issues – water, sanitation and hygiene.

Menstrual hygiene and a variety of other women's health matters were able to be discussed candidly in an informal setting. We acknowledge that ongoing advocacy is needed to cater to the menstruation needs of women and girls when constructing inclusive toilets in schools and villages.

We were very fortunate to be able to partner up with local social enterprise, [Mamma's Laef Vanuatu](#), in a pilot distribution of reusable, washable sanitary pads to the girls and mamas on Vao. As the sale of disposable sanitary pads are being phased out by the government in a bid to reduce plastic pollution, Ni-Van women are very interested in exploring viable, eco-friendly alternatives.

Earlier in the year, Mamma's Laef also very generously



donated some of their pads towards the cyclone relief effort on West Coast Santo. The Mamma's Laef team operates from their base at Pango Village in Port Vila. We thank Belinda, Jack, Mary and other Mamma's Laef supporters for their superb contribution.

To round off the series of women's health topics, we were joined by Max Albert from another local organization, Ikkana Cancer Society. Max talked to the local women about cervical cancer and preventative screening. Since 2017, Ikkana has reached many communities across Malekula, delivering talks followed by screening and treatment.



Marie-Antine Telukluk was one of the focal points from St Joseph village on Vao.



Following a successful run of community presentations in the villages of South Malekula in the second half of 2019, Max and his team returned in June for the second part of their outreach. Butterfly Trust is proud to be able to support Ikkana this year in the continuation of our partnership on Malekula. Pictured here are the women on Akhamb who have founded the **NRATOBONBON IKKANA CANCER FOUNDATION**, a collective for women from five different communities in South Malekula.

Thank you to [YachtAid Global](#), primary funder of the Vao Sanitation and Hygiene Project. We are also very proud of the achievements of the women who have both led and supported the planning and successful implementation of the project at different stages – Salome Kenneth (Public Health Manager), Grennethy Tavunwo (Health Promotions Officer), Isabel Rory (Vao mid-wife), Belda Mlantugun (Vao village health worker), Nellie Ham (National Environmental Health Unit) and Stephanie Hamel (Engineers Without Borders Australia). The costs for the training of 11 Sanitation Officers were covered by the Ministry of Health and Unicef.

Also related to WASH, we visited Ambae in the province of Penama, to observe the work that Markson Tabi, the Public Health Manager, has been carrying out with the support of the Trust. Over the last three years, Markson has been encouraging the villages of St Barnabas, Lovonda and Lolomanada to build VIP toilets and hand washing stations to improve their general standards of hygiene.

The programme was disrupted by the mass evacuation of Ambae after the volcanic eruptions of 2018, but with the return of the villagers, has recommenced.

With help from the Trust, Markson organizes, leads and monitors sanitation and hygiene activities, mobilises local communities, conducts health promotion and also helps procure some of the building materials required. With ongoing challenges around natural disasters and logistical issues, progress has been positive and in total these

communities have so far built close to 30 VIP toilets and handwashing stations. This may not seem like a lot, but in the context of the way life unfolds in Vanuatu, it is steady improvement.

Every household in the village of St Barnabas has now built its own toilet with the help of local carpenter, Donnie Tari. Other notable local achievements include news that the village health worker who was previously in charge of health education for this project, Belinda Tari, is now in her final year of nursing school. Also, the small village of Lovonda, led by Father Simeon, has been selected by the provincial health office as the very first model healthy community for the province.

Markson has his own, quietly assertive and low-key, way of working which does not try to force the villagers, but leads them by encouragement. We are very supportive of his incremental approach. He wants individuals in the community to own the process of improving their health.



Markson educating the people in Lovonda village about water filtration to reduce transmission of waterborne illnesses. People on Ambae build large communal water tanks from concrete. These tanks are fully or partially exposed, and can also become contaminated over time.

Under the health promoting schools programme, staff from the Department of Water Services taught teachers at remote schools and kindergartens how to construct handwashing stations using locally sourced materials.



The fact of living in isolated islands, with limited resources and increasing vulnerability to natural disasters, compounds the challenges around water, sanitation and hygiene needs for the majority of Vanuatu's population.

A recent global [WASH report](#) places Vanuatu far down the list of good sanitation practices and facilities. Most schools do not meet the requirements for proper toilets and handwashing stations. Access to consistent water supply for remote island schools is a widespread problem, let alone hygiene practices. It is a work in progress. While there has been remarkable improvement over the years through the combined efforts of many agencies and local communities, a lot remains to be done. At this time of Covid-19, the focus on handwashing facilities and practices cannot be more urgent.

After an intense period of cyclone relief work in the immediate aftermath of Cyclone Harold, we decided to spend a little time with the schools in central Malekula to assist with Covid preparedness and general health promotion. As with much of the Trust's work, our goal is to enable local efforts to thrive by strengthening the capacity of the human resource. In this case that resource is the Health Promoting School's committee members, head teachers, health educators and parents. (Health Promoting Schools is a programme run jointly by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education and Training,)

Collaborating with several units from the Ministry

of Health and WHO Vanuatu, firstly, we managed to facilitate a couple of short workshops to get across key messages on Covid-19. Ongoing action around personal hygiene, deworming, nutrition and healthy eating, oral hygiene and managing school health activities, was also reinforced at the same time. Field activities and monitoring of progress in schools and kindergartens took place in the latter part of the year.

The two challenges of the cyclone and the threat of Covid-19 were a major disruption to the academic year. We therefore applaud the efforts of school staff, Malampa Health Promoting School Committee members, and the supporting health team, in prioritising school health matters in the face of this disruption.

HEALTH PROMOTION IN SCHOOLS



National Toothbrushing Day at Tautu Primary School (above), was observed during a monitoring visit to the school. Handwashing before meal breaks is part of school health activities to further encourage personal hygiene and disease prevention. Nutrition lessons involve teaching students about balanced diets, with an emphasis on consuming local 'slow' food rather than processed foods. BMI results are tracked twice a year. Deworming also takes place.

Going south, we also visited the schools at Kamai, Sanesup and Aulua to deliver replacement toothbrushes and check on the schools' dental health promotion efforts. These schools have all been a part of the Trust's ongoing health education efforts in southeast Malekula. That work is aligned with the Health Promoting Schools scheme. Several schools in south and southeast Malekula, including the schools mentioned, sustained moderate damage to classrooms and loss of resources during Cyclone Harold.

Our dental and medical support programme was severely impacted by Covid related travel restrictions this year. Border closures prevented teams of visiting practitioners from New Zealand and other countries from entering. Extra pressure on local medical and dental teams, and diversion of Butterfly Trust funds towards cyclone relief and recovery, left insufficient resources for conducting comprehensive outreaches this year.

We are hoping that school dental screenings and treatment can resume later in 2021. In the meantime, we carried on with supporting the provincial education staff, head teachers, health teachers, and parents, in continuing efforts to prioritise the health of their children. Through the Health Promoting Schools Programme and community health outreaches, Butterfly Trust continues to work with over 20 primary schools and associated kindergartens, as well as some secondary schools.

LAMAP MASKELYNES



In early November we travelled to the Maskelyne Islands to meet with village leaders and discuss the new direction of the school fees scholarship scheme. At the meeting, we presented the results of the education survey that the villagers had carried out the previous year, and which we had collated on their behalf.

The results of the survey showed a large majority of people in favour of the Maskelyne Islanders taking over the administration and funding of the scholarship scheme.

Only 4% of respondents thought that funding should come from donor aid. The desire for independence was evident in the results and the discussions at this meeting.

At the end of the meeting we thanked the members of the Butterfly Trust Committee on the Maskelyne Islands for their help over the previous decade, and presented them with certificates of appreciation.



The next step for the villagers is to organise the new scholarship scheme which they are intending to call "Uliveo Education Trust". (Uliveo is the name of the most populated island in the Maskelynes.)

They will elect a new committee and set up a new bank account. The Butterfly Trust will help when requested with any advice and logistical support.

We managed to visit Lamap to check on the dental clinic the Trust manages in partnership with the Ministry of Health.

Due to the Covid situation and the focus on Cyclone Harold recovery, the clinic has not been used this year, but we are hoping a dentist from Port Vila will be visiting in the first quarter of 2021 to attend to the most pressing dental needs.

Unfortunately, two scheduled dental trips had to be cancelled this year due to staff shortages and extreme bad weather which made it unsafe for practitioners and patients to travel.

*We thank **Oraltec NZ Ltd** for donating an array of dental supplies. We also thank **Do Gooder** for donating eco-friendly bamboo toothbrushes towards the dental programme.*

For more detailed information about the Butterfly Trust's cyclone relief and recovery work this year, more reports can be accessed through the links below.

[Cyclone relief](#) on West Coast Santo

Summary of the [coconut thatch](#) weaving on West Coast Santo

[Water, Sanitation and Hygiene](#) project on Vao

As we conclude the final update for this year, an early-season cyclone, Category 5 Cyclone Yasa, has wreaked mayhem on Fiji's islands, upending people's lives and causing further hardship to those who are already struggling from the impact of Covid-19. Widespread damage to infrastructure and crops is expected. This is an all-too-familiar experience in recent times and an ominous sign as high-intensity cyclones become more frequent in many regions of the world. Unfortunately, the impacts are far more devastating for those living in poorer countries.

Earlier in this update, we mentioned that we intend to incorporate considerations of climate resilience, environmental awareness and ecological balance in our work. This could include climate change mitigation, actions to reduce loss of biodiversity, and advocating on matters about human-caused environmental change. These considerations now need to be taken into account when working in the areas of public health (risks from zoonotic diseases), water quality and sanitation, education, food security, and livelihoods. The very existence of low-lying islands in the Pacific is at stake. We must do our part.

WARM CHRISTMAS WISHES TO YOU ALL

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