

Big opportunities for small-scale producers

Vanuatu Economic Empowerment

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Project name: Support to the Alternative Communities Trade in Vanuatu

Project partner: Alternative Communities Trade in Vanuatu

Total funding: \$150,000

Funding timeframe: 2017–2018

Pacific Women supports women's economic empowerment in Vanuatu through a range of partners. One locally-led initiative is the Alternative Communities Trade in Vanuatu (ACTIV) project to strengthen trade opportunities for community-produced products.

ACTIV supports the social, economic and environmental empowerment of small producers. It also provides targeted assistance to marginalised ni-Vanuatu communities through fair trade initiatives. The association works with economically disadvantaged or marginalised individuals, family businesses and cooperatives. ACTIV's activities promote access to both local and international markets for small-scale producers who have not historically had such opportunities.



The new packaging for ACTIV's 'AELAN Made in Vanuatu' products. Photo credit: ACTIV.

With Pacific Women support, ACTIV has delivered training to women's groups on developing small-scale agriculture production. The women learn agricultural techniques to produce spices, nuts and fruit to diversify their income. The training also instructs women on related processing techniques, such as turning fruit into jam.

Two women from Efate have taken a strong interest in the cocoa plant grafting techniques that they learned through the ACTIV training. They continue to visit the ACTIV Centre on a weekly basis to improve their grafting practices and plan to build a commercial nursery to use these new skills.

The devastation caused by Tropical Cyclone Pam in 2016 included the destruction of most vanilla and pepper plantations and many small-scale farms in Vanuatu. In response, ACTIV is partnering with the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research to build resilience against future total plant destruction by developing a network of nurseries.

ACTIV has recognised that the local market in Vanuatu is narrow and the tourist market can be volatile. It is, therefore, exploring ways to support the export of agricultural products. It launched a new logo and branding for its 'AELAN Made in Vanuatu' products and, since March 2018, the products have been stocked in Oxfam's shops in Australia.

Recipes for crystallised ginger, crystallised turmeric and coconut flakes were developed with assistance from an Australian volunteer chocolate maker. The

techniques were then taught to a woman from Etas who is producing them for the AELAN label. The project has taught other women to produce coconut jam, desiccated coconut, coconut milk and coconut flour.

A new range of eight flavours of chocolate using the spices and fruits grown by ACTIV's farmers has also been developed. Chocolate from Epi, Malo, Malekula and AELAN's chilli pepper chocolate received two gold medals, five silver medals and one bronze medal in the 2018 International Chocolate Salon Artisan Chocolate Awards.