



Australian High Commission
Vanuatu

Friday 6 March 2020

Media Release

Australia supports Vanuatu to empower women and girls

Sunday 8 March marks International Women's Day, a day to celebrate women's achievements and to shine a light on continuing issues of gender inequality.



Australian High Commissioner, Her Excellency Sarah de Zoeten, with female entrepreneurs from Sanma province.

Promoting gender equality is a shared priority for the Vanuatu and Australian governments. As Australia's third female High Commissioner to Vanuatu, Sarah deZoeten, said in her International Women's Day address, "we promote gender equality because it is the right thing to do and because it's the smart thing to do. Women's participation in the economy helps families and strengthens economic growth. Women's leadership at all levels helps build stable societies and leads to better decisions."

Australia is proud to help empower Vanuatu's women and girls through a range of programs. Australia's *Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development* program works across 14 Pacific Island countries (AUD320 million, 2012-2022). Australia has supported the Vanuatu Women's Centre to



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prevent and respond to violence against women and girls for 28 years, reaching 6,574 women and children last year. Australia also provides ongoing support to Vanuatu's police and justice agencies to improve access to justice for women and children through the *Stretem Rod blong Jastis mo Sefti* program.

Australia supports the economic empowerment of women in Vanuatu – such as those in the Sanma headwear association pictured here - through the *Vanuatu Skills Partnership*, and UN Women's *Markets for Change* program. These efforts help develop women's skills and businesses and increase their income. Australia also supports women to take a greater role in leadership through initiatives including CARE's *Gender Equality Together* program which mentors and trains young women to become leaders in their communities.

Australian High Commission staff are also working to make gender equality a reality in their own workplace. Together staff have taken forward a range of initiatives, from supporting female staff to get their driver's licenses to launching the High Commission's own domestic violence guidelines. The Australian High Commission itself is lit up in purple – the colour which symbolises women's empowerment – each night this week to celebrate International Women's Day.

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