

NATION-BUILDERS

Celebrating
Women
in Public
Service





Interviews & Photography

Sista team

Yasmine Bjornum

Elisa Mondou

Gina Kaitiplel

Losana Natuman

Nicky Kuautonga

Steven Lilo

Editor

Rebecca Tobo-Olul Hossen

Cover art

Andrew Kaltongga

Layout & Design

Telstar Jimmy

Polina Khoroshko

Production

Vanuatu Public Service Commission

Printing

Sun Productions



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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	01	ESLINE GARAEBITI	23
FOREWORD	02	EVELYN EMILE	25
AETRIAN ROBERT	03	FELICITY NILWO	27
ANNE ROSE TJIOMBANG	05	GLENDA PAKOA	29
ANNA KALPOKAS BULE	07	GLENNYS VORA KALTAPAU	31
ANNA SALWAI-TAVOASESE	09	JACKIE LANGATI TRIEF	33
CHARITY ALICK	11	JANET SAMUEL TAMBEANA	35
CHEROL ALA IANNA	13	JESSICA PAKORO TARIVONDA	37
CRYSTAL GARAE TARINAVANUE	15	JULIETTE HAKWA	39
DONNA KALFATAK	17	LEISAU ISOBEL LAKELEO	41
DOROSDAY KENNETH WATSON	19	LEISONGI JENNIFER OSCAR TATY	43
DOROTHY ERICSON	21	LOUISA HERE GEORGE	45

CONTENTS

LUISA LETLET	47	REBECCA BORUGU	69
MERIAM TOALAK	49	ROLINE VESNES TEKON	71
MICHELLE JONAS TRIEF	51	ROTHINA ILO NOKA	73
MURIELLE METSAN MELTENOVEN	53	SEREANA LEDUA NATUMAN	75
NANISE LAPI	55	SHARON ROSE BOE	77
NELLIE MURU WOULOSEJE	57	VELMA KARABANI	79
NOELINE THOMAS	59	ADELA ISSACHAR ARU	81
NORAH WELLS	61	ANGELYNE GLENDA DOVO	83
ORELLY THYNA	63	ASTRID BOULEKONE	85
PATRICIA MAWA	65	RUTH AMOS	87
PHYLLIS KAMASTEIA	67		

INTRODUCTION

The *Nation-Builders: Celebrating Women in Public Service* booklet to mark International Women's Day 2021 follows closely on the heels of the photographic exhibition commemorating Vanuatu's 40th Independence in July 2020. Developed through a collaboration between the Public Service Commission and the Department of Women's Affairs under the Ministry of Justice and Community Services, it is supported by the Australian Government-funded Balance of Power initiative in partnership with Sista.

The booklet documents stories and images of ni-Vanuatu women currently employed by the Public Service Commission in management and leadership positions. It also recognises the significant contribution made by public servants not engaged through the Public Service Commission directly but through statutory bodies, including the Teaching Services Commission, the Police Services Commission and the Judicial Services Commission. The booklet highlights the trailblazing example set by the Public Service Commission in accelerating gender equality, by giving women the opportunity to move into key senior management roles in line with their skills and experience. It is a celebration of these women who are currently instrumental in policy setting and implementation of the development agenda of Vanuatu.

The overall aim is to not only celebrate these achievements, but to demonstrate through these stories that women are capable of breaking through conventional leadership stereotypes to make positive change that benefits Vanuatu society as a whole. The goal is therefore to increase both men's and women's understanding of women's legitimacy as leaders across all domains and demonstrate the value of inclusive leadership for everyone.

Although the stories and experiences of the women in this booklet are varied, some common themes run throughout. These women are planners and strategic thinkers. Many women speak of their sense of responsibility as mothers that drives their performance. The nurturing and caring nature of these women translates into their leadership and mentoring style. The centrality of faith to their wellbeing and decision-making is also evident. There are stories of decisions women make to further their career options and opportunities. And equally, there are stories of sacrifices women make to assume family responsibilities at the cost of their careers.

For these are professional women with an ambition to realise their potential and serve their country, while at the same time fulfilling the roles of wives, mothers and other societal expectations. The stories highlight the challenges of managing families while completing studies in a foreign country. Others struggle to achieve the balance associated with being mothers and wives while meeting day-to-day expectations at work, yet nevertheless have found ways to overcome. The support of husbands and families emerges as a key ingredient in this success and is acknowledged by these women. Friendship with other women, solitude, self-care, nature and faith are also resources from which these women draw strength.

The experiences of these women range from those who have served three decades in the public service to the youngest who has spent three years serving her nation. There is a professed love and pride for Vanuatu and the things that it means to them: its pristine nature and environment, its culture, identity and languages, and the kind, humble and respectful nature of its people.

Overall, these are stories of strong and passionate ni-Vanuatu women playing vital roles in shaping their country's development with pride and dignity. May they inspire the next generation to see what is possible for women leaders to achieve.

FOREWORD

I am honored to introduce this milestone publication highlighting the role of the Public Service Commission in driving gender equality through promoting Ni-Vanuatu women into senior management and leadership positions across the agency.

Everything starts at home. My own mother played a significant role in my life and upbringing. I regard my mother as a Director or even a Director General. All the developments in my life, including my work within the public service over the years, I credit in large part to her. I have the utmost respect and admiration for my mother, and for so many other women like her, who are the backbone of Vanuatu society. Our country needs the skills and qualities of all its citizens – women and men – to prosper, and I believe that when there are more women in the government's workforce, the development of our country is accelerated.

Vanuatu now has the greatest number of women in the most senior levels of the public service since Independence, with three Director Generals and seven Directors. This is a testament to strong government policies, including a strengthened commitment by the Public Service Commission to ensure its selection criteria are merit-based. The Commission recognises that the talent it needs are held by both men and women and has actively sought to dismantle any discriminatory barriers and attitudes. It is important that the public service be reflective of the people in its society and having both men and women contributing equally to shaping Vanuatu's development agenda is critical. It is important also to the Commission to acknowledge the valuable contributions of public servants not engaged directly by the Commission but through agencies such as statutory bodies, including the Teaching Services Commission, the Police Services Commission and the Judicial Services Commission.

As you read these stories, you will see that you are able to relate to them in many ways: these women are our mothers, our wives, our sisters, our daughters, our aunts and our grandmothers. It is my sincere hope that you not only enjoy the stories but that you are inspired by the strength of women and the transformative contributions they make, alongside men, to our nation through the public service. Women truly are leaders in their own right, and it is time we recognise and honor this.

May God bless Vanuatu. Long Live the Republic of Vanuatu.

Signed:



Simil Johnson, Chairman of the Public Service Commission

AETRIAN ROBERT

Malekula



**SENIOR ENGINEER
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES**

Aetrian graduated with a degree of civil engineering in Fiji. After doing an internship at the Department of Water Resources, Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, Aetrian began working permanently as a Water Engineer in 2020.

Her role is to look at the designs for and monitor ongoing construction of water systems across the islands of Vanuatu. Aetrian's job is not limited to this. In recent times she has supported teams from the WASH Cluster to go out to communities with key COVID-19 prevention messages. In addition, going into secondary schools on World Engineering Day (4 March) to present on women's career paths to inspire the next generation in STEM is an important contribution.

As women in a male dominant field, our voices and insights matter even more and are essential to solving problems.

"As a female, it's not easy to enter a male dominated field not only within the water sector but across all of the other sectors. My colleagues within the water sector, who are mostly men, have put aside our gender differences to focus on the work that needs to be done.

If I do face challenges, which has happened because of my gender, I go to my Bible and ask God for guidance also asking help from work colleagues in the department.

It is important for me to surround myself with good friends. In my friendship group, which is made up of both boys and girls, most of us work in the engineering field so we are familiar with what the challenges are and know how to support and encourage each other.

I tend to stress a lot. However, I am learning to trust that everything will be okay and that everything will fall into place in good time. I just must take it one baby step at a time.

Inspiring girls from a young age about the creative aspects of engineering is vital to recruiting more women to the sector. Engineering involves everyone and influences all our lives, which is why the sector needs greater diversity and must reflect our society.

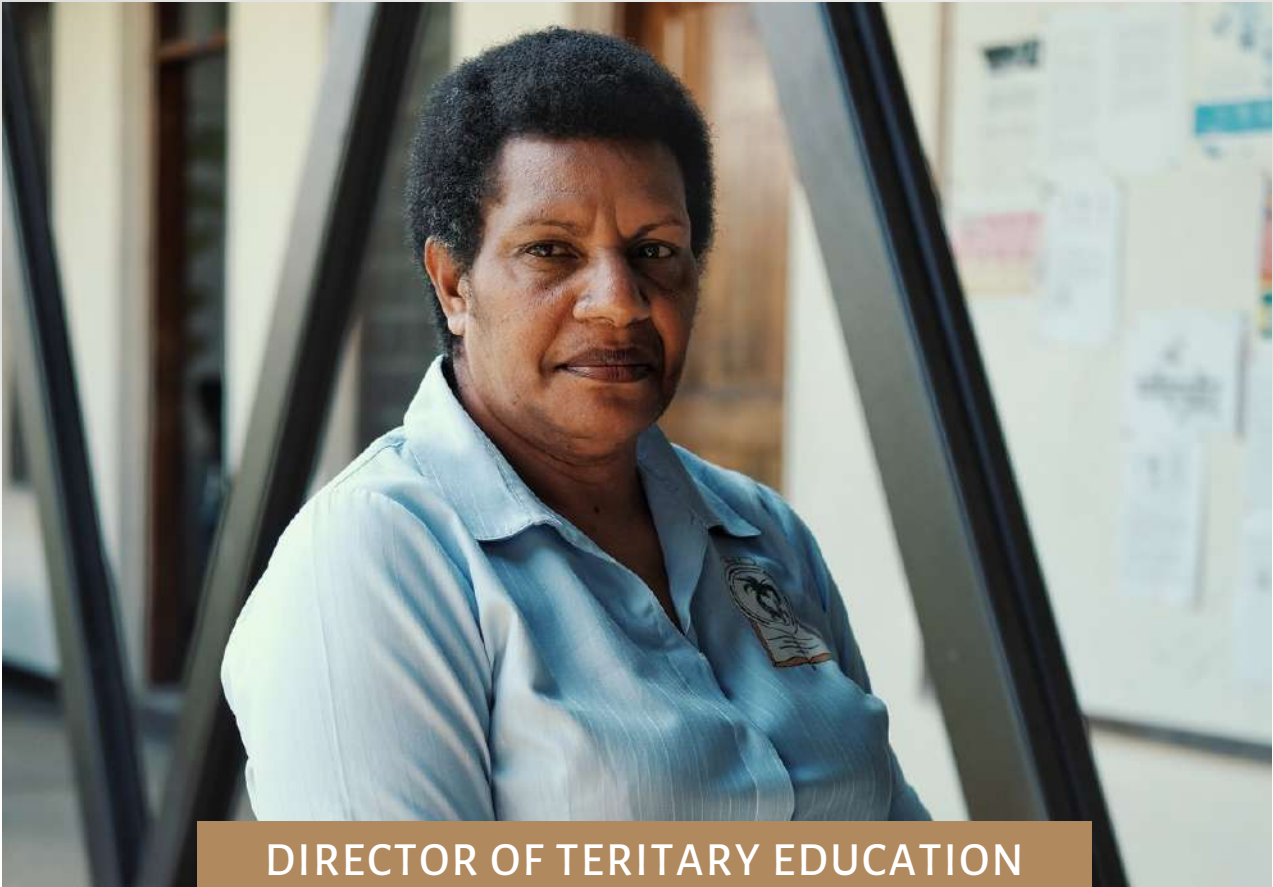
As women in a male dominant field, our voices and insights matter even more and are essential to solving problems.

The world needs more women engineers to reflect the needs of our society."



ANNE ROSE TJIOBANG

Ambrym



**DIRECTOR OF TERTIARY EDUCATION
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION & TRAINING**

Anne-Rose has always been an educator. She started teaching in the early 90s and has worked at the Teaching Service Commission for more than 25 years.

In 2019 Anne-Rose began working at the Public Service Commission as the Director of Tertiary Education at the Ministry of Education and Training.

When a woman enters a workplace, I want her to feel confident and secure in herself and to offer the best of her abilities.

"My parents really are my greatest source of inspiration. My father was a chief who went from family to family, and village to village helping to sort out issues and perform ceremonies, while my mother was committed to fulfilling her duties as a mother.

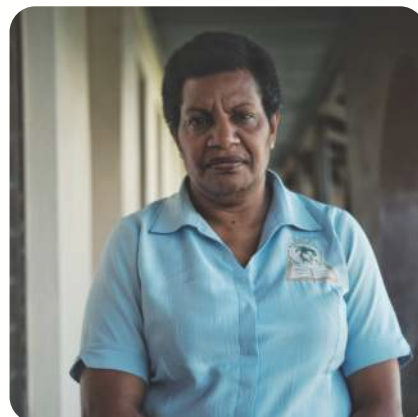
She never knew how to read or write, but she was a devout Catholic who could sing Latin hymns in the church!

Even though she was illiterate, she could be taught orally, and this inspired and pushed me to get educated so that I could do something for her. It just shows that you do not need to be literate to raise a child like me.

My hope is for the women of Vanuatu to be freely and fully engaged in all aspects of life, whether it's at work or within the community. When a woman enters a workplace, I want her to feel confident and secure in herself and to offer the best of her abilities.

Sometimes we assign roles and place expectations on women in a workplace or even in a family and community and think that is all she is capable of. Then she loses her confidence and doesn't feel free to display who she truly is and reach her full potential.

My dream is that a woman can walk into her place of work and display what she is capable of, who she really is, and truly have the freedom to do this."



ANNA KALPOKAS BULE

Lelepa & Nguna



**SECRETARIAT STRATEGIC MANAGER
MINISTRY OF CLIMATE CHANGE (Previously)
HEAD
AID COORDINATION UNIT, DSPPAC (Current)**

Anna previously worked for six years in the Teaching Service Commission. She has held her current position at the Corporate Service Unit of the Ministry of Climate Change for the past four years and has played a significant role in coordinating and guiding high-level government officials to make decisions on climate change-related issues that have the potential to protect and help Vanuatu better cope with climate change.

Anna has represented Vanuatu at the annual United Nations Climate Change Conference, which brings together political leaders, non-state actors and activists to discuss climate action. This includes holding other countries to account for human activities that contribute to climate change and make commitments to achieving climate goals. Since then, Anna has moved on to be the Head of the Aid Coordination Unit at the Department of Strategic Policy Planning and Aid Coordination (DSPPAC).

My biggest contribution to Vanuatu society is being a constant and consistent female voice to the government on climate change.

"My biggest contribution to Vanuatu society is being a constant and consistent female voice to the government on climate change.

A key aspect of this is coordinating with and guiding higher level decision makers about what would be a good thing for Vanuatu to do, and what is a potential disaster, while negotiating for continued recognition of what small islands states are going through as a result of the bigger countries' actions and areas we do need help in.

There are two things that make me proud to be a Ni-Vanuatu.

One is how we strive to balance traditional values and modern influences through all we do. The other is how genuinely kind and welcoming we are as a people.

I've been to a lot of different countries around the world and one of the things that makes me miss home the most is that you can pass by someone on the road and not know them, but you'll both say hello and smile at each other.

You definitely do not get that in a lot of other countries. They might stop and ask 'what's wrong with you!'"



ANNA SALWAI-TAVOASESE

Pentecost



**PROGRAM DIRECTOR
VANUATU PROJECT MANAGEMENT UNIT**

Anna is one of the key reasons why the Vanuatu Project Management Unit (VPMU) has been such a success, when it comes to implementation of donor-funded projects. Before she became VPMU Program Director in 2019, Anna held the position as Finance Management Officer of the unit for six years— a role she happily combined with accounting— the main area of her specialty. Anna started out in her career as a trainee auditor with the Auditor-General after completing a Baccalaureate of Accounting at one of New Caledonia’s polytechnic institutes in 1998. She has worked in other places, including the Department of Finance – first as an Assistant Accountant, and then Senior Development Accountant in 2009. But a key point of her career was working with the Americans, and so many other international consultants under the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), while delivering over 92km of Efate’s ring road from 2006 to 2011. Prior to her appointment, which was done independently by a VPMU Steering Committee, Anna often acted as officer-in-charge of VPMU, in the absence of her two predecessors. She has been in her current role with VPMU at the Prime Minister’s Office for close to two years now.

Lots of good people, including my former bosses, have shaped me into who I am today. I will be forever grateful for them.

"Lots of good people, including my former bosses, have shaped me into who I am today. I will be forever grateful for them. But the most inspirational people to me, would have to be my immediate family.

Growing up, they often told me 'If you want something in life, you cannot just sit around and think everything will fall from the sky onto your lap. You have to work hard - and that starts with getting an education first'.

In my former roles, my predecessors always supported me. I can do my job now because I was privileged to work under them and an excellent team to bounce ideas off.

But being Program Director of VPMU requires more than just management.

One must have a bit of an understanding of everything from project management to infrastructure development. Essentially, some knowledge of finance, contract management and a decent grasp of technical knowledge would be highly useful.

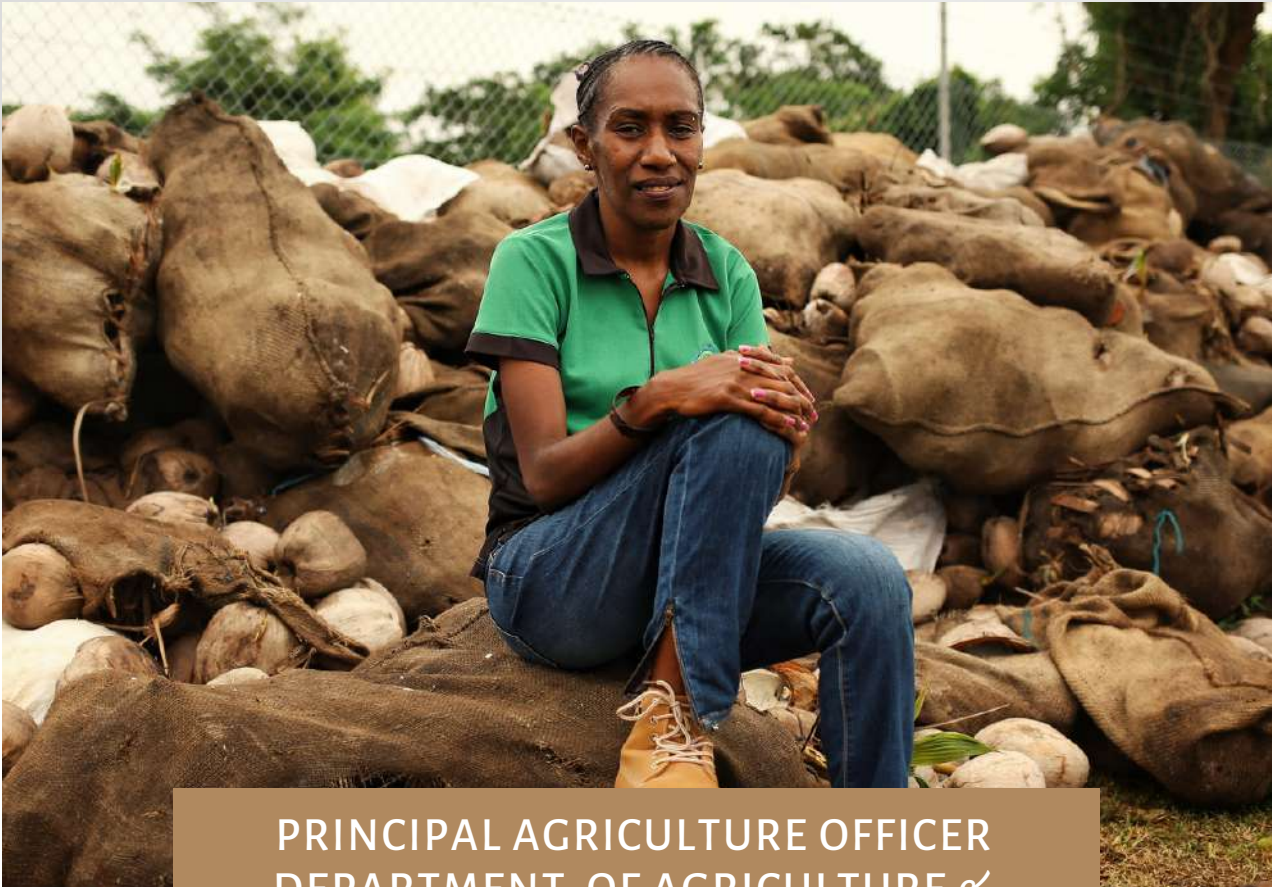
Most importantly, one must know how to work with various development partners who can have very different reporting requirements.

It's challenging, but that is part of life here in VPMU."



CHARITY ALICK

East Santo



PRINCIPAL AGRICULTURE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE &
RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Charity completed her bachelor and postgraduate studies at the University of the South Pacific in Samoa before receiving a scholarship to obtain a Master of Animal Sciences at the University of Hawaii.

An award-winning student who received accolades from regional institutions, Charity has been working in the public service since 2015 and has held the position of Principal Agriculture Officer for three years.

Charity has previously managed Malampa provincial offices but is currently based on her home island of Santo managing agriculture extension services for three provinces: Sanma, Penama and Torba.

There are many challenges managing a provincial office as a young female... But I do not let this stop me from doing the best I can.

"There are many challenges managing a provincial office as a young female. Not only are these positions mostly held by men in the past, often I am expected to manage people who have had over 20 years of experience in the field.

But I do not let this stop me from doing the best I can to support development in the productive sector.

I am proud that when we gained our Independence 40 years ago, our people took our land back. It is through our land that our country has been able to develop, and a classic example is through what our farmers call 'green gold' – kava.

This is a commodity that we should be proud of and it is our top export product. It has made kava farmers self-reliant and they are able to have a good house and anything else they need to improve their livelihoods.

If you don't believe me, ask the kava farmers! They will tell you that 'Mani hemi stap insaed long graon'. Let's continue to work on our land and reap the benefits of all it has to offer.

This is why for me it is vital that the Government recognises the struggles that farmers face in bringing their produce from farm to market, especially when it comes to access.

Regardless of changes in government, a policy direction for investment in the productive sector must be a constant for our country to keep developing."



CHEROL ALA IANNA

Ambae



**DIRECTOR GENERAL
MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS**

Cherol started her career as a physical planning officer at the Ministry of Internal Affairs some thirty years ago staying within this sector for the entire three decades.

She was promoted to Deputy Director for the Department of Local Authorities, before becoming the Acting Director. Cherol is one of the first women to become a Director General within the public service and has held this role at the Ministry of Internal Affairs since 2016.

As the Chair of Vanuatu's 40th Independence Anniversary Committee she capably led a truly meaningful and successful commemoration of this important milestone.

If I could say one thing to anyone, it is to believe in yourself. You have to trust yourself and believe that you have the potential to do anything.

"In the three decades I spent within this sector, I really see myself as a team builder. I know that the success of an organisation comes from a strong team.

Over the years I have invested in opportunities to bring others alongside this vision.

This means that I do not just talk with the policy people but do my best to walk in the shoes of others, like the secretary and the gardener, to show that I understand their situation and that I care what happens to them and their family.

If I could say one thing to anyone, it is to believe in yourself. You have to trust yourself and believe that you have the potential to do anything. When you don't believe in yourself, you are operating from a place of doubt.

This is not good, because to have doubt is to have fear. Biblically that is what the Lord Jesus said - 'believe in God and believe in me' - the ticket to heaven is to show your faith.

The same principles apply in this world - just believe, because when you do, that's when your potential comes out. Your commitment and dedication will flourish. 'Long God Yumi Stanap' – a true declaration of faith!"



CRYSTAL GARAE TARINAVANUE

Ambae & Malekula



**GENERAL PATHOLOGIST
VILA CENTRAL HOSPITAL**

Crystal has been working in the public service for 14 years now. She is Vanuatu's first pathologist and has held the role of General Pathologist at the Vila Central Hospital, Ministry of Health, for the past four years. A graduate of the University of Papua New Guinea, Crystal is part of the team working towards setting up Vanuatu's first ever histopathology laboratory. Histopathology involves the study of changes in tissue caused by a disease. Crystal and her team are working hard to set up the histopathology services as soon as the infrastructure is completed.

Currently they send biopsy samples for testing overseas, however can perform non-gynaecology-related work in-country. This involves looking at cells from breast and thyroid lumps, lymph nodes and fluids from the covering of the lung, abdominal cavity and other body fluids. Part of her role includes studying blood to help diagnose blood cancers and performing autopsies to determine cause of death.

I am grateful for the help and support I have received. My belief in God gives me strength and courage to carry on with my work each day.

"I'm a medical doctor, except I use a microscope instead of a stethoscope.

When I first became a pathologist, I was fortunate enough to work with a dedicated team to ensure the laboratory was set up to standard.

It was during those early stages that I faced the darkest time of my life.

I lost my daughter at close to nine months of pregnancy and the loss has made my work even more real.

I am grateful for the support I have received from my immediate and close family members and friends, my team in the laboratory, as well as local and overseas colleagues and networks.

Most importantly, my belief in God gives me strength and courage to carry on with my work each day.

The important lessons I have learnt throughout this journey is: never give up even when the going gets tough and always strive for the best in all you do."



DONNA KALFATAK

Emau, North Efate



**DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION & CONSERVATION**

Donna worked with the government for 13 years as a project coordinator on various external donor-funded conservation and biodiversity projects before becoming a permanent staff member for the Public Service Commission in 2011.

She became the Director of the Department of Environmental Protection and Conservation, Ministry of Climate Change, Meteorology, Geohazards, Natural Disaster, Environment and Energy in 2019. As a director Donna has also been working with the Department's waste management team, the Ministry of Climate Change and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on developing and implementing the second phase of Vanuatu's plastic ban and the regulations around it in addition to historic work in the Pacific on dealing with ocean wastes.

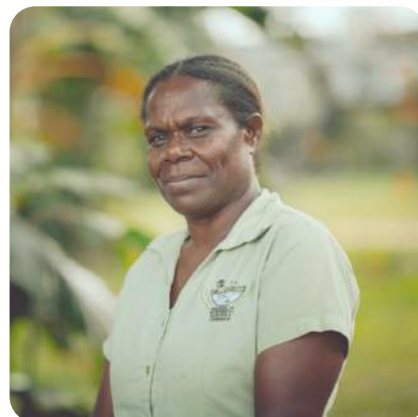
We must protect Vanuatu: this is for our survival... You cannot live without fresh air or a clean ocean.

"As a leader within the public service it is important for me to display humbleness and moderation in all I do and to lead by example. I am a firm believer that whatever challenges come my way, I have the inner strength to overcome, and often this means seeking wisdom from above.

I've always been an environmentalist at heart. Raised as a child in the islands I've constantly interacted with and been connected to the forest and sea. Now I'm an environmentalist by profession. Protecting biodiversity and the ecosystem has always been a driving force. Plastic wastes and other waste streams are one of the largest impacts on this. Development projects are also the largest impact if not sustainably developed. While we can work on the conservation and management of biodiversity and ecosystems, we need to address the sources of impact for change to be sustainable. My goal has always been about bringing change to benefit the future.

I am proud that Vanuatu has a green, clean and healthy environment. Our scenery is beautiful. It attracts tourists the world over. I am pleased that our leaders are supporting the legal frameworks through legislations and regulations to protect and conserve our environment. For example, we recently banned single use plastic bags and other seven single use items, and are currently working on a marine spatial plan on how to use our oceans, which is a first in the Pacific. The ocean surrounds our countries and connects us therefore we need others to come on board to address ocean wastes. Vanuatu cannot do it by itself: other countries must follow our drive for clean oceans.

We must protect Vanuatu: this is for our survival. We cannot live without fresh air or a clean ocean. Let us all continue to work together starting from community level, through provinces and right up to the national government to protect our environment and sustainably use our natural resources for the benefits of our current and future generation."



DOROSDAY KENNETH WATSON

Uripiv Island, Malekula



**DIRECTOR GENERAL
MINISTRY OF JUSTICE & COMMUNITY
SERVICES**

Dorosday Kenneth Watson has been working in the public service for thirty-four years.

She has held directorial roles in the Department of Fisheries, Agriculture and Rural Development and Women's Affairs, before being appointed as the Director General of the Ministry of Justice and Community Services in 2018.

Sometimes people get so caught up in work that they forget that life is a gift and therefore must be enjoyed freely and fully daily.

"During a time in the community where if a choice had to be made, the son would be chosen to go to school, for my family there was no choice, both girls and boys had to go. From the time I was two years old, I recall hearing my father reinforce this 'I don't care if it costs me, but everybody has to go to school and learn'.

He taught us humility, a key value I hold dear to my heart. He treated the girls and boys equally so I think if we do take that at the national level, there shouldn't be any losses for Vanuatu. I feel that we are living in a time where the government is seeing that.

The problem I see is that people focus on themselves too much. They don't realise that by concentrating on serving others, it will benefit you too. That is what I learnt from my father. He would tend three gardens – one for the house, one for the church and one for people who were in need. I can still see him now, putting the bunch of bananas he had cut by the roadside and telling people to come and help themselves to it.

What excites me every day is the Gift and Value of Life. When you wake up in the morning, make the decision to enjoy the new day ahead of you. Sometimes people get so caught up in work that they forget that life is a gift and therefore must be enjoyed freely and fully daily.

At the end of the day, everything is about life and your life is all you have. Find meaning in your life and enjoy it.

That is my advice to anyone, boy or girl – enjoy yourself!"



DOROTHY ERICSON

Malo, Santo



**DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE & TREASURY**

Dorothy started working as a junior payroll officer at the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management before being promoted to become a senior accountant.

26 years later, she has made her way up to become the Director of the Department of Finance and Treasury at the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management. Dorothy has studied in Fiji and Papua New Guinea.

I never dreamt of becoming a director when I first started working in the ministry. I just worked hard and started climbing up the ladder.

"I never dreamt of becoming a director when I first started working in the ministry. I just worked hard and started climbing up the ladder. Every day when I wake up, I think to myself 'What can I do today to serve my Lord and to serve my people?'

Vanuatu is my country. I love my country and my people, and I show this love by serving my people with respect and dignity. Over two and a half decades of working in the financial institution does not come without its challenges. When you talk about managing money, there are moments when you panic and stress.

I've never been someone to shy away from facing challenges that come my way. In fact, I've been really thankful for challenges, as they have built me up to where I am today.

From my observation, there are some important points that leaders need to understand. Firstly, we are here to serve the needs of our people - it is not about us. I think it's irresponsible to be greedy and selfish.

Secondly, if we make a mistake, we need to be honest about it and be held accountable for our decisions. God has given us an opportunity to serve and we have a duty to do it without thinking about how we will be personally rewarded on this earth.

Our reward should ultimately come from above and from serving our people."



ESLINE GARAEBITI

Ambae



**DIRECTOR GENERAL
MINISTRY OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

Esline studied in France and has a Master of Land Management with a major in Volcanology. She is a Geo-scientist and has previously served as the Director for the Department of Meteorology and Geohazards. In her 19 years of service, Esline has contributed significantly to policies and action plans related to disaster, as well as to the development of Vanuatu's early warning systems.

One of her biggest achievements is being one of the initiators of the Oceania Regional Seismic Network (ORSNET). ORSNET is a network where Pacific nations share seismic data to better detect earthquakes and tsunamis. This has been a game changer for Pacific warning systems to be able respond to disasters effectively and quickly. Esline is currently the Director General for the Ministry of Climate Change.

It didn't help that I was a woman either, people really dismissed what I was saying. But I didn't give up. I could see we had gaps in information, and I saw it as an opportunity.

"When I started working, I remember going to my village on Ambae and trying to raise awareness about the volcano. During that time, even the government did not understand how vulnerable we were to disasters. It's not like now, where we have been profiled as one of the most vulnerable countries on earth to disasters and we accept that we must manage the risks.

Back then I remember talking about the volcano and people saying, 'You are crazy!' 'This is creation, that is where we go when we die.' One of my uncles even said he felt sorry for me because I was following the thinking of white people!

It didn't help that I was a woman either, people really dismissed what I was saying. But I didn't give up. I could see we had gaps in information, and I saw it as an opportunity. We didn't have any tools or awareness about volcanoes or earthquakes, so we began to develop posters and do radio programs, and I would always be defending my work.

Then in 2005, the Ambae volcano erupted. The people and the government began to take disaster risk reduction seriously and align it with policies and action plans. In all my years of working, I never tire of it because every single day is a new adventure! Now as the Director General of Climate Change, my focus goes beyond disaster management and warning systems, and encompasses the environment and energy.

It's another challenge that I take with my head held high, continue to learn and do my best for Vanuatu."



EVELYN EMILE

Ambae



PRINCIPAL NURSE EDUCATOR
VANUATU COLLEGE OF NURSING & EDUCATION

Evelyn began working as a clinical nurse in 1983 for 13 years before becoming a clinical tutor at the Vanuatu College of Nursing and Education, Ministry of Health, in 1995. In 2009 she became the Principal of the college upon the retirement of her predecessor and has held the role ever since.

During that time, Evelyn has led the college to qualify for certificates, diplomas and more recently the Bachelor of Nursing program, to support the capacity of nurses to provide quality health care to the people of Vanuatu.

Leadership is a skill you need to develop, and it can be very challenging. There is a way to lead – it's about transformation and teamwork.

"People are not born leaders. Leadership is a skill you need to develop, and it can be very challenging. There is a way to lead – it's about transformation and teamwork.

It is important that your leadership style makes your staff feel like they have value, because when they feel like they have worth, they are able to work productively together as a team to make a positive change.

Give them a chance to prove themselves. On the other hand, if you are working under someone's leadership and they give you work but you think it's too difficult – just do it. Don't refuse it, because once you overcome it, you can overcome any challenge.

As a woman leader, often our voices are not as loud and are not necessarily heard and concerns responded to quickly. Even then we still need to keep going and slowly change will come.

Recognising potential for leadership as well as creating spaces for upcoming leadership and succession planning is important. It is powerful to recognise that no one is indispensable but that mentoring the younger ones coming up to be prepared to one day step into leadership roles is part of the journey. It is important to make sure that skills and knowledge are current and up-to-date as we continue to build up nursing education for quality health care."



FELICITY NILWO

England / Emau



**PRINCIPAL EDUCATION OFFICER
CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT UNIT**

Felicity has been the Principal Education Officer at the Curriculum Development Unit of the Ministry of Education and Training for the past two years.

She is responsible for managing the national curriculum reform, a major paradigm shift to outcome-based education that will not only mold a holistic ni-vanuatu but it will also make this country great.

My greatest challenge as a young leader...is being a working mum and undertaking a research study. I like the challenge; I see it as a mental stimulation to keep my mind fresh and active.

"I have always encouraged my fellow female colleagues to take up further studies and to not be scared to take risks at the workplace. Mahatma Gandhi would say, 'The future depends on what you do today.'

His words have made a great impact in my professional life. I believe his greatest quality was to walk his talk. As leaders, either male or female, we must lead by example to the most possible extent.

Having physical strength takes you only so far. Being strong mentally and having emotional intelligence are vital traits. All these combined with a 'big picture' focus while remaining solution-oriented are key to success – both personal and professional.

My greatest challenge as a young leader in the education sector is being a working mum and undertaking a research study at the same time. It is not easy managing a unit responsible for a major national curriculum reform while trying to finish off assignments and keep the household on course. I like the challenge; I see it as a mental stimulation to keep my mind fresh and active.

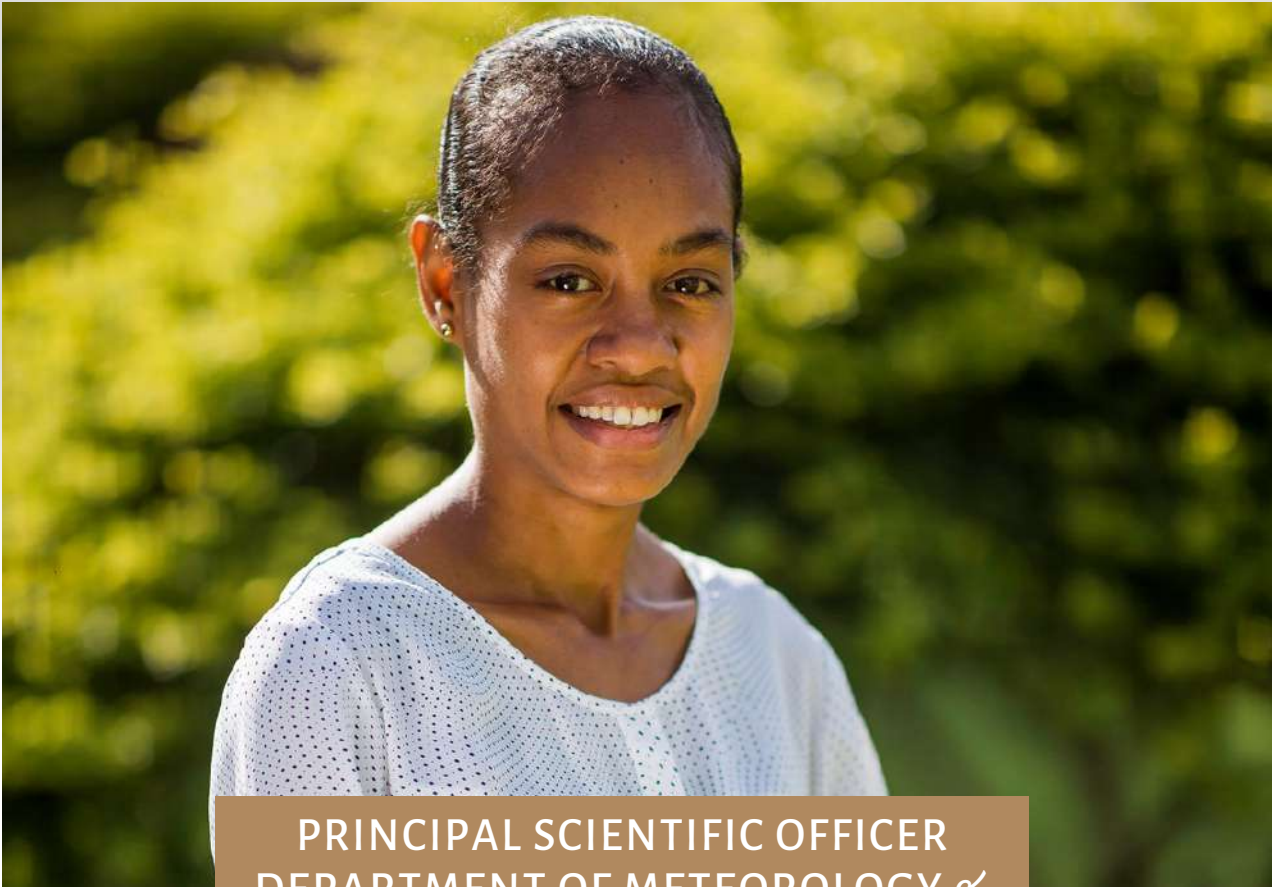
I am thankful to the Public Service Commission for placing their trust and confidence in my abilities on this journey of curriculum reform. I believe this reform will mould a holistic Ni-Vanuatu and contribute to making this country great. We must safeguard and protect our cultural heritage.

By linking our culture and tradition to a child's learning in the classroom through curriculum materials and resources is one way we can do this. After all, it is the linguistic diversity of our nation that makes this country so unique."



GLEND PAKOA

Tongariki / Ambae



PRINCIPAL SCIENTIFIC OFFICER
DEPARTMENT OF METEOROLOGY &
GEOHAZARDS

Glenda has been working in Public Service since 2018 and has held her current role as Principal Scientific Officer at the Department of Meteorology and Geohazards, Ministry of Climate Change, since February 2020.

Glenda's responsibilities within the Department includes monitoring the El Nino and La Nina weather patterns and producing the climate outlook for Vanuatu as to what is expected within the next however many years.

A lot of times people say, 'science is for nerds' but that's not true. We need more women in the science-related field.

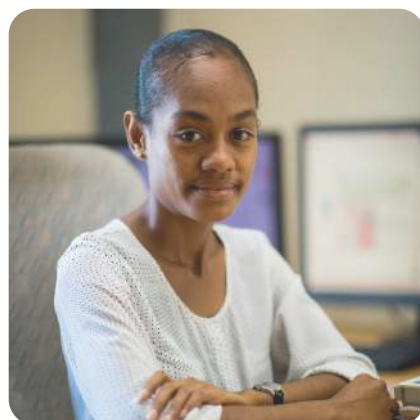
"When my father died, there was no one to pay for my school fees at USP Emalus campus. It was a tough time, but God answered my prayers and people from my church and a few relatives decided to pay for my school fees.

Knowing that it wasn't my money that paid for my education became the motivation I needed to do the best I could. I ended up getting a scholarship to Fiji. From my experience, I would encourage every woman to find something that you are passionate about that will help you to become a breadwinner.

If you don't, what will you do if a man walks out of your life? If you don't make your own money, you won't be able to sustain yourself or your family. Find your passion and add value to your life. If you want to do a job like mine which is a little technical you have to study hard and pursue your goals. You'll need at least a bachelor-level education in the field of study related to science. A lot of times people say, 'science is for nerds' but that's not true. We need more women in the science-related field.

My field of work is male dominated. I'm the youngest in my division and I'm supervising older mature and experienced men and as a young female it can be quite challenging. My advice is that you can do it despite your age and gender. My biggest contribution in terms of my job is to let people become aware of what is going to happen to ensure that they are better prepared and become resilient to natural disasters.

If we don't provide information to communities to help them prepare then when a disaster strikes, we are in an even bigger disaster. When we prepare, we can save lives, ensure there is minimal damage to properties, gardens, schools and other infrastructure."



GLENNYS VORA KALTAPAU

Ambae



**MANAGER, MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM
OFFICE OF THE GOVT CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER**

Glennys has been working in the public service for 13 years now.

Her current position as Manager of the Management Information System at the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO), Ministry for the Prime Minister, was formalised in 2018.

Her role is to oversee a team of IT professionals who are responsible for the administration of the government systems and infrastructure, the related applications and the security of the network.

Self-care is very important in the work that I do. It is a 24-hour job where anything can happen during the day and night.

"The simple act of waking up to a brand-new day stimulates me, it means that I am alive and well and I have a chance to be or do better.

When my daughter wakes up in the morning, she is so joyful and excited to go to school, that it motivates me to get up and start preparing for the day. I am passionate about my work and I get satisfaction knowing that I contributed to government processes that enable delivery of services to the people.

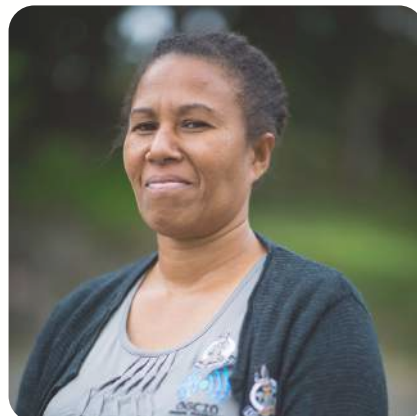
I am motivated to contribute to society by taking care of my family and raising my kids to be good citizens and have a good education. If I have the energy and capacity to do more I will gladly contribute more.

Each of us has our own journey in our career. I built up my confidence through learning opportunities whether through a career move, studies, work or personal challenges. In this field of work, my advice is to stay up to date with technology, which gives you the confidence to do the work and make a good name for yourself.

Self-care is very important in the work that I do. It is a 24-hour job where anything can happen during the day and night. Every moment you check your e-mail there's always work for you to do, every answered phone call is a request to respond to.

Sometimes I have to just switch off and not check my emails or turn on the phone. If I do – there is always more work to do!

I have a house near the beach and I like to go there to take the pressure off me. It's important to know when to take some time off and to move on if something bad happens."



JACKIE LANGATI TRIEF

Santo / Malekula



**DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL AVIATION**

Jackie worked in air traffic control with Airports Vanuatu Limited for 15 years before deciding to go back to university to study aviation management in New Zealand.

She juggled her studies with the demands of her 6-year-old son's routine and graduated with a Bachelor of Aviation Management in two years. Prior to joining the aviation industry, Jackie spent a significant period in the private sector, specifically within the banking industry in the areas of customer service, domestic, foreign exchange and commercial banking.

She has held her current position as the Director of the Department of Civil Aviation, Ministry of Infrastructure and Public Utilities, since March of 2019.

A lot of women underestimate the inherent strength in them and find themselves short-changed in the lives they live.

"I have always been a punctual person. I think this may be attributed to the training we get as air traffic controllers. We are expected to be organized and reliable people where timing is critical.

I believe time management is a critical element of professionalism. It has implications on respect for your employer, your customers, your colleagues and yourself. It is the small things like being on time that contribute to the building up of a reputation in the realm of professionalism.

Supporting some of the most vulnerable in society like girls, widows and the elderly with financial assistance for school fees and building materials is one of my greatest contributions to my community.

I support girls and women in my sphere of influence who need a shoulder to lean on. I encourage women in the workforce to contribute more than is called for in their roles: the value of relationships, persistence and continuous improvement in the work environment are critical.

My hope for all Ni-Vanuatu women is to believe in themselves, to find the strength to rise above their challenges and reach out for their dreams. A lot of women underestimate the inherent strength in them and find themselves short-changed in the lives they live.

Women are critical in shaping a society, through their instinctive roles and the influence they have in their homes: 'A woman empowered is a society empowered'."



JANET SAMUEL TAMBEANA

Tonga



**PRINCIPAL PROVINCIAL TOURISM OFFICER
DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM**

Janet has been working in the public service for over sixteen years now and has a Bachelor of Social Science with a Major in Social Studies.

She has studied in New Zealand and has worked at the Vanuatu National Statistics Office and Department of Local Authorities.

Janet has been the Principal Provincial Tourism Officer at the Department of Tourism, Ministry of Trade, Tourism, Industry and Cooperatives, since 2011.

It doesn't matter if you already have children, you should take that opportunity to further your studies as life is limitless when you are educated.

"One of the things I enjoy about my job is being able to support small tourism operators continue to run and improve their businesses. With COVID-19 and closure of borders affecting tourism in Vanuatu, as part of the roll out of the Tourism Support Program, I've been doing just this.

It's important for tourism operators to be assisted to address areas that need to be improved. This is so that they are prepared and when the borders re-open, Vanuatu is ready to welcome visitors with improved services. It's great to be part of a team that is helping to keep things going.

In Vanuatu culture, there is a mentality that women should stay at home and raise the children. This social norm is slowly being debunked and starting to shift as more women are being granted equal opportunities for scholarships and furthering their studies. Some women are even going as far as getting their Masters and Doctorates and today we see many more female Directors and a few more Director Generals in the public service.

With all the changes happening in Vanuatu's social fabric, it encourages women and girls to further their studies. I would encourage every woman to get an education. It doesn't matter if you already have children, you must seize any opportunity that arises to further your studies as life indeed is limitless when you are educated."



JESSICA PAKORO TARIVONDA

Malo, Santo



DEPUTY DIRECTOR, CUSTOMS
DEPARTMENT OF CUSTOMS & INLAND
REVENUE

Jessica started working in public service in 2000. She has worked at the Department of Customs and Inland Revenue throughout her entire service, starting as a junior officer inside the customs department before being promoted to a senior officer and then a senior auditor.

Jessica was then awarded a scholarship to study in Fiji and graduated in 2019 and has held her current position since then.

I am inspired by my parents who although not educated, were hardworking entrepreneurs ensuring all their four daughters and an only son received an education.

"I am inspired by my parents who although not educated, were hardworking entrepreneurs ensuring all their four daughters and an only son received an education. Where I come from there is a saying that goes 'girls are like wood, you throw them, and they never come back'. But my parents went against this norm, invested in us and made sure all my sisters and I were educated.

Now I am in a place where I can contribute meaningfully and in useful ways to Vanuatu society. My first contribution is in my line of work. The government relies heavily on tax for its revenue and this is how we sustain the full economy of Vanuatu.

The money we collect goes towards essential services, including infrastructure development, education and health services. I can tell you that it is not an easy role to collect tax and when it comes to border protection, we work hard to make sure that we protect our borders, whether it's from COVID-19 or illegal drugs. Do you know how much of a social issue it would be if drugs were smuggled into Vanuatu or if that sickness came here? We also facilitate goods coming into the country and without this facilitation of trade, we wouldn't have any sugar or rice in the country.

While there are all these big things happening in my world, at the end of the day it's the little things that count. My parents taught me to be humble, to maintain integrity and contribute to society in meaningful ways, through volunteering my time to important causes.

It is through this that I see how much one small good deed can make a difference.

Giving a little of my time and resources to help a widow, a struggling student, or a family affected by a cyclone make me feel a part of society and is rewarding."



JULIETTE HAKWA

Ambae / Papua New Guinea



**HEAD OF M&E UNIT
DEPARTMENT OF STRATEGIC POLICY,
PLANNING & AID COORDINATION**

Juliette has worked in non-governmental organisations, served on local and regional NGO boards and worked on government projects, including the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) ring road project on Santo and Efate, and later the Vanuatu Project Management Unit doing monitoring and evaluation, project management and policy coordination.

She has worked in the public service since 2014 and has held the position as Head of Monitoring and Evaluation Unit within the Department of Strategic Policy, Planning and Aid Coordination, Ministry for the Prime Minister, since 2017.

With the right tools and mindset, we all can play a small part in Vanuatu's development for the next 40 years.

"One thing that makes us unique is our collective pride in being an independent and free country. Every year for Independence Day celebrations, flags and decorations are put up, people dress up in colourful island dresses and shirts, and attend flag raising ceremonies across the country. We are known within the region and abroad for advocating self-reliance and supporting countries within our region to gain sovereign status. Being a member of the Melanesian Spearhead Group provides a platform to further the cause of others, such as West Papua and the Kanaky people, which Vanuatu holds dearly to our hearts.

Our nation's diversity with over a hundred languages and many different cultural groups gives me pride. This became more evident when we were developing 'Vanuatu 2030: The People's Plan', talking and meeting many different people. It was recommended by everyone that when we define what development means for us as a people, we must define what our own ideals and principles are and not look to another country's ideals. This means ensuring that culture underpins all of our development practices and we promote sustainable, equitable, and positive growth through the government's programs and future policies.

People still practice community cohesion - an integral part of our resilience as a nation. When we are going through hardships, we have a social safety net and kinship. It means we endure and survive. Everybody has a role to play. It's looking holistically at all we do and asking, 'What can I do, as an individual within my family, amongst my peers, community, and Vanuatu society as a whole to positively contribute to the country's development?'

With the right tools and mindset, we all can play a small part in Vanuatu's development for the next 40 years. That's something that gives me a lot of hope for our future."



LEISAU ISOBEL LAKELEO

Nguna



DEPUTY DIRECTOR, FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION
DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE & TREASURY

Leisau has been working in and out of the public service since 2001.

She has a Bachelor of Accounting and Banking from the University of the South Pacific in Fiji and a Master of Accounting from Griffith University in Brisbane, Australia.

She has also worked in the private sector and has returned to the public service to serve currently as the Deputy Director - Finance and Administration with the Department of Finance and Treasury, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management.

Women are not encouraged by society to speak up. Women cannot reach their full potential if we cannot express ourselves.

"In my experience I have noticed a lot of Ni-Vanuatu women hold themselves back from expressing their views.

I think this is in part because of our culture and how we are brought up back home in our villages – women are not encouraged by society to speak up. Women cannot reach their full potential if we cannot express ourselves.

We must dream and aspire to go for it – whether it is to become a leader in the community, in the public service or to enter political leadership.

In my personal experience, it has been a steady progress and a lot of hard work to get to where I am today, and I've had to believe in myself. I want all Ni-Vanuatu women to feel that they can achieve whatever they put their minds to and that means we need to start by trusting ourselves.

Then we can contribute to the lives of others by providing opportunities for those working alongside us. In a leading role, it is important to me to have that door open where others can walk in freely, being that listening ear and not just an instructive voice and caring for the welfare of others.

In this way perhaps I can help others to start believing in themselves and then together we can all achieve."



LEISONGI JENNIFER OSCAR TATY

Nguna



**INTERNAL AUDIT MANAGER
MINISTRY OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT**

Leisongi has been working in the public service for 21 years now. She has held the position of Manager of the Internal Audit Unit at the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management for four years now.

In her role Leisongi's contribution to Vanuatu society involves assisting the government through reports issued to respective ministries to address weak controls that the government will need to implement.

This ensures that more stringent controls are in place for effective process of work procedures and contribute to minimising risks.

We need to ensure we select leaders on merit and make sure that when they enter their roles, they have a clear understanding of the requirements and consequences of actions.

"For someone interested in a career in auditing, my advice is to study hard to achieve your aim, preferably commerce would be an advantage. To be an auditor, you need to be a person who is honest, transparent, accountable, loyal and trustworthy. These are the important characteristics that will help you build your life within the auditing field.

Having the support and encouragement from family, particularly parents who inspire their children, has been important to me, not just in my schooling days but even now in my working life. My parents have and continue to be my greatest source of inspiration.

It is important to ensure that we have the right people in the right places. In my observation, I have seen leaders make decisions where they had not fully understood the acts, regulations and constitution of Vanuatu and we have ended up reaping significant financial implications.

To address this issue, we need to ensure we select leaders on merit and make sure that when they enter their roles, they have a clear understanding of the requirements and consequences of actions, so they understand the work involved.

There are processes to follow and we simply cannot afford to be led astray. We must keep our nation safe."



LOUISA HERE GEORGE

Papua New Guinea



**ACTING DIVISION MANAGER
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT, SHEFA**

Hailing originally from Papua New Guinea, Louisa has been a proud Vanuatu citizen since 2012.

She studied architecture and building engineering at the University of Papua New Guinea and began working for public service in 2013 as a divisional engineer.

Louisa is currently the Acting Division Manager for the Public Works Department Shefa under the Ministry of Infrastructure and Public Utilities.

Her responsibilities include implementing work plans, managing budgets and road maintenance in one of the busiest divisions in the country where the urban centre is.

Melanesian culture has a patrilineal base and I can see that it gives pride to my husband's family. The children will come up and they will in turn contribute to Vanuatu society.

"I'd like to say that there would be so many in life that inspire me. But first on the list are my mother and father. Even though they brought up us to be educated in the western way of life, they also stressed our roots and culture.

At the same time, they are strong people - they are fighters. They mould you into this person without you realising until you're with other people then you realise that your parents have taught you all these things that you don't need to go to school to learn. Every day I appreciate this.

The four children that I brought into this world are my biggest contribution to Vanuatu. Melanesian culture has a patrilineal base and I can see that it gives pride to my husband's family. The children will come up and they will in turn contribute to Vanuatu society. They are the next leaders of this country.

This work can be challenging as you often must work outside regular hours. I have a young family and sometimes I must work at night or on the weekend, but if you have a passion and drive for the job combined with a supportive family, it's not a problem.

There is so much work to do but this is limited by a very tight budget. One of my biggest challenges is trying to identify what is a priority and to work closely with whichever government is holding its term, as they may have a different priority from our planning.

It is challenging, but I am proud to serve Vanuatu."



LUISA LETLET

Fiji



**MANAGER
AID FOR TRADE MANAGEMENT UNIT**

Luisa began her career in public service in 2013. She started as a senior officer at the Department of Cooperatives before taking up her current position in the Trade Development Division in 2018 which is currently the Vanuatu Aid for Trade Management Unit under the Ministry of Trade Tourism Commerce and Ni Vanuatu Business (MTTCNVB). Luisa graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce USP and received the Reserve Bank of Vanuatu Award for 'best student in the commerce field'.

She pursued her Master of Management specialising in business at the University of Auckland after being awarded a scholarship to study in New Zealand in 2016. Her current role in the Ministry is managing the aid-for-trade and project funds. Luisa chairs the Vanuatu Electronic Single Window project funded by the Enhanced Integrated Framework, a first in the Pacific, that enables businesses to submit and pay for import and export certificates, licenses and permits online.

I believe that anything is possible if your heart is willing to do it... I make sure I set up everything around me to make it possible.

"When you are a leader, it's important to include, work well with and support people from a range of different socio-cultural backgrounds.

There is a certain way to talk and interact with people and if you want to motivate your team, you need to make the effort to understand and can connect well with them. My advice to whoever is interested in a role like this is to be a leader.

I believe being a good leader is to ensure that the working environment is safe for your team. Your interaction with your team is important - get them involved through discussions and ensure flexibility in the workplace so they can also display their best qualities.

Being chair to Pacific's first online customs and biosecurity clearance system is one of my most significant contributions. Not only has this contributed to reduced paperwork and approval processing time, it has enabled real time tracking and collection of data. In turn this reduces trade barriers, and ensures timely border clearance and improved security of goods.

I believe that anything is possible if your heart is willing to do it. When I applied for a scholarship to New Zealand, I was already working, and I had a young family and a working husband. I had to think deeply about how I could manage my studies and my family.

It was not easy but I made sure I set up everything around me to make it possible."



MERIAM TOALAK

Malekula



**DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT OF BIOSECURITY**

Meriam started working for the Department of Biosecurity in 2000. Back then it was known as the Vanuatu Quarantine and Inspection Services before it was restructured into two different departments. She is a plant pathologist, a scientist with a focus on plant disease and has studied in Samoa before undertaking her Masters in Australia and Doctorate in New Zealand. During her years of full-time study, she started a family.

Despite the heavy workload of balancing family and school life, Meriam was awarded the prestigious Pacific Australia Prime Minister's Award by-then Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard for her high achievements. Meriam has been the Director for the Department of Biosecurity under the Ministry of Agriculture Livestock Forestry Fisheries and Biosecurity since 2019 but has acted in the position for several years prior.

My connection to nature is a key part of my wellbeing and life. At my house I have plenty of fruit trees and flowers and sometimes I just look at them in wonder.

"In the second year of my master's program in Australia, I was pregnant with my son. My supervisors were concerned that I needed to take a break for my health, but I was determined to complete my study within the timeframe allocated. I carefully prepared all my research in advance, packed my bags and went to the hospital to have my baby. A month later I kicked off my research much to the surprise of my supervisors.

Although I am essentially a plant scientist, in my role I am a manager. My approach to leadership is to be open to learning and to never stop asking questions. It might be my scientist enquiring nature, but my advice is to never stop asking questions. If you don't know, ask. If you have doubts about something, ask. If you want to learn, ask. The minute you stop asking questions, you stop learning. But learning really is a lifelong process and the quest for knowledge never ends.

My relationship to God is important to me. I am a Seventh Day Adventist and on Saturdays I take that moment to rest and pray. My connection to nature is a key part of my wellbeing and life. At my house I have plenty of fruit trees and flowers and sometimes I just look at them in wonder and think 'How amazing is Papa God to create this world.' If I've been outside for too long, then I like to go on the Internet and watch documentaries about plants and animals.

For me – quietness, nature, family and God make me happy."



MICHELLE JONAS TRIEF

Paama / Emau



**PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING OFFICER
MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS**

Michelle started working at the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 2004. Her responsibilities have included working with the provincial councils to identify the needs and priorities of communities and to assist with developing income-generating and social development projects.

The projects have ranged from accessing clean drinking water to building classrooms and evacuation centers. From 2016 to 2018, Michelle worked in an administrative role at the Port Vila Municipal Council as the Acting Town Clerk.

She was officially appointed as the Principal Development Planning Officer at the Ministry of Internal Affairs in early 2020 but has acted in this role for many years prior.

One thing I've come to appreciate over the years is that women just have a knack to be multi-taskers, juggling various tasks.

"I was fortunate to receive a partly funded scholarship from the New Zealand government.

I had almost completed university when my mother fell ill, and I was faced with the difficult decision to either continue my studies or to come home to look after her. I chose to look after my mother.

As a woman, we are faced with hard decisions all the time and I felt that it was my duty to do it. She was a strong vocal woman, my rock and the anchor of our family. When she passed on, I felt like I had to be that anchor for my family.

Even when I'm facing a challenge today, I always think, 'What would mum do?'

One thing I've come to appreciate over the years is that women just have a knack to be multi-taskers, juggling various tasks requiring different levels of mental stimulation with absolute finesse. I can be drafting a speech, while writing a report, and at the same time responding to an e-mail query, but still have an open door for staff to walk in with concerns.

My leadership style is more of a team player. I have an open-door policy and when a decision needs to be made, I bring my team to the table because it's important to have their backing and support.

At the end of the day, I know we can achieve the task ahead as a team and we can justify and own the decision together."



MURIELLE METSAN MELTENOVEN

Malekula



COMMISSIONER OF LABOUR
DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR & EMPLOYMENT
SERVICES

Murielle has been working in the public service for 10 years and is the first female Commissioner of Labour at the Department of Labour and Employment Services, Ministry of Internal Affairs. She is bilingual and a New Zealand government scholarship recipient with a Bachelor of Law awarded by the University of the South Pacific. Under her leadership, the Department of Labour has seen a restructure of staff and the facilitation of scholarships for staff to broaden their skills.

She has redesigned the office to a professional standard, has managed to secure funding for new office spaces that are currently being built, updated legislation and financial processes, settled outstanding bills and liabilities as well as strengthened communication channels to the public. In 2019, Murielle was responsible for hosting the Recognised Seasonal Employers (RSE) Conference, which brought together over 200 key players for an overview of the RSE scheme in Port Vila.

I am a public servant and it is important that I provide quality service to those I serve, particularly as taxpayers pay for my salary.

"I am a mother of four young children. What you do at home – taking care of the children and making sure they are educated, fed and clothed – is the same principle you must apply at work.

It's about commitment, time management, wanting to move forward and achieve your vision and mission, while having the interest of people you serve at heart.

It's challenging being a woman in a leadership position.

Since the first day in this role, I've received criticism, even from women. My view is that there is a protocol and process to follow if you have a concern to raise. You must go directly to the institution concerned to address the issue rather than using social media. If your problem is personal, you need to use the right channel to resolve it.

You need to ask yourself – what have I done to contribute to the development of my beautiful country? I am a public servant and it is important that I provide quality service to those I serve, particularly as taxpayers pay for my salary. I am here to work and don't have time for idle gossip.

My goal is for labour and employment issues to be addressed fairly in Vanuatu. I am proud to be a Ni-Vanuatu woman in a leadership role serving my country.

I want to see more young, talented and educated women taking up leadership roles in future. If I can make it, so can you. Long Live Vanuatu!"



NANISE LAPI *Fiji*



**MANAGER, HR MANAGEMENT UNIT
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**

Nanise has been working in the public service for six years prior to when she worked as a secondary school teacher.

She has worked at the examination and assessment unit for the Ministry of Education and Training, before moving to the Office of the Public Service Commission as a senior trainer and then as Principal of Performance and Assessment.

In 2019, she became the Manager for the Human Resource Management Unit.

I believe a good leader is someone who leads by example, acts transparently, abides by the law and is proactive in addressing issues fairly.

"I believe a good leader is someone who leads by example, acts transparently, abides by the law and is proactive in addressing issues fairly.

I have been a manager for over a year and I have found that it's important for my team to be able to reach me. I am not 'up there' being worshipped, I am someone they can access and talk to. Building a relationship with my team is important to me.

I get to know my staff, their capabilities and potential, and they get to know me and how I operate. It allows trust to grow, and an openness to talk about issues and find solutions together. When I delegate responsibilities for key tasks, staff know that they can depend on me for support if they get stuck.

I do not want to lead my team to failure, so it's important to provide them with mentorship and relevant resources to achieve the tasks at hand. Sharing ideas and decision-making is vital. Before I make a decision and take it up to an executive meeting, I will consult with staff and say, 'I want to hear your voices first as some of these things will affect you directly.'

Even when it comes to work plans or budget allocation and prioritisation – we do this together. This motivates staff to feel that we are truly working in a team and allows a greater buy-in of the decisions that are made together."



NELLIE MURU WOULOSEJE

Malekula



**MANAGER, ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH UNIT
PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

Nellie has been working in the environmental health sector for 20 years, first as an environmental health officer.

She became the acting manager for the Ministry of Health's Environmental Health Unit under the Public Health Department in 2015 and was officially appointed to the role two years later in 2017.

Today I see that there are many fathers who are not like the men before. Many of them are not interested in their children... I'm thankful for my father who prioritized us children.

"I grew up in Hatbol Village, Central Malekula, in a big family of six. My father was a hardworking man and even at almost 80 years old today, he is still working in the garden and making copra.

Not once have I ever seen him fight with anyone, he has always been happy. Back then we would eat only island food, of which there was always plenty, and the only time we would eat biscuits or bread was at Christmas and other special days. It's not like today, where children eat biscuits and bread every day for breakfast. My father was a cocoa and copra farmer. He did this to ensure he had finances to support all of his children to get an education.

When we were attending secondary school in the urban areas, we would fly back on the plane during the holidays, and he always made sure that he had saved up enough money for each school term. We never experienced 'kaon' (credit) on our school fees. Today I see that there are many fathers who are not like the men before. Many of them are not interested in their children and neglect them. I'm thankful for my father who prioritized us children. Because of him, I am inspired to work hard and to also help others.

A key thing that I live by is to always live my life in a way that leaves a positive impact on the lives of others, knowing that my reward is not on this earth, but awaits me above."



NOELINE THOMAS

Ambae



**REVENUE MANAGER
DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE & TREASURY**

Noeline has been working in the public service for 32 years. Her roles have included being an accountant and assistant payment supervisor.

In the early years of her career, all the senior roles were either held by expatriates or supported by expatriates to build the financial system that is currently being used by the Department of Finance today.

In her career she has seen Ni-Vanuatu transitioning to these key roles over the years. Noeline has been the Revenue Manager for 25 years.

It's funny to think after all these years that I did not always set out to become an accountant and work in finance.

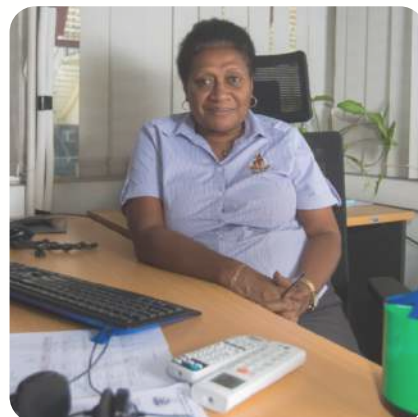
"It's funny to think after all these years that I did not always set out to become an accountant and work in finance. When I was at school, during the holidays I would do an attachment with the criminal investigation unit of the police and that's what I wanted to do – to be an investigator. But life took a very different course - a fulfilling one nonetheless that gave me the opportunity over three decades to be part of the different reforms and developments within the financial sector in Vanuatu.

When you are working in finance, it's not just about dealing with money. A lot of it is customer service and knowing how to communicate. We have had to deal with irate and often very angry people over the years who often fought with the person at the front desk, even when it's not our fault. It's important to be strong and know how to communicate with people to calm them down.

The work is very high pressure - if you miss even one digit, it can backfire on you. You must understand that we are dealing with the government's funds so it's important to know how to record everything properly, because if you don't, the blame lies on you. Safe storage of any funds that we have on hand until we can bank these is just part of the daily drill.

I have been fortunate that I've had good support from my family. I've often been expected to work late hours to make sure that books are balanced and that discrepancies are well documented, and my husband's support has been critical through all this.

I have only admiration for my family for putting up with my routines over the years and being supportive throughout."



NORAH WELLS

Makira



PRINCIPAL EDUCATION OFFICER, EXAMINATION & ASSESSMENT
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION & TRAINING (Previously)
PRINCIPAL, VILA EAST PRIMARY SCHOOL
TEACHING SERVICE COMMISSION (Currently)

Norah has been working in the public service since 2012. After completing her Masters in Queensland, Australia, Norah returned to Vanuatu into the role of Principal Education Officer – Examination and Assessment with the Ministry of Education and Training. In this role she helped to introduce a new assessment reporting system, which can inform education plans and policies to improve teaching in the classroom.

Norah also coordinated the nationalisation of the Pacific Senior Secondary Certificate (PSSC) and more recently she assisted the Curriculum Development Unit in preparation for the implementation of the first common national senior curriculum for years 11 in 2019 and year 12 in 2020. Since then Norah has moved on to become the Principal of Vila East Primary School.

The person who inspired me the most would have to be my mother... Her story showed me that she was a determined, courageous and brave girl.

"My most significant contribution in my career over the last few years has been helping to coordinate the nationalisation of the Pacific Senior Secondary School Certificate. That was a tough job! I had no other colleagues around me to help. I had to draft the documents to help the Ministry as to how we would make this transition a smooth one.

The person who inspired me the most would have to be my mother. She was a primary school teacher who went into the exams unit and finished off in curriculum development.

My mother's story is that she was taken quite young from her village on Tongoa as a little girl by missionaries to go to New Zealand for schooling. Her story showed me that she was a determined, courageous and brave little girl.

She did not change. I remember being interviewed in Kindy, 'what do you want to become when you grow up?' and the immediate answer without thought was, 'a teacher!'. My mother had a special place in the hearts of many teachers in Vanuatu. She was very strict with us and had high expectations of each of us. She is why I'm here today.

I think it's important to know where you came from. You are just a spirit dwelling in an earthly vessel and have been sent here to do something. You need to impact and influence those called to meet you in your journey.

Once the mission is complete, then you exit.
It's important to use your time wisely as no one on earth lives forever."



ORELLY THYNA

Malekula



**PAEDIATRIC CONSULTANT
VILA CENTRAL HOSPITAL**

Orelly began working as a medical officer in 2008. She became a paediatrician in 2017 after graduating at the University of Papua New Guinea and is currently working as Paediatric Consultant at the Vila Central Hospital, Ministry of Health.

Her role includes working with doctors serving under the paediatric department to uphold quality child healthcare services.

Orelly is the only Ni-Vanuatu paediatrician on the ground and often visits outer islands to attend to sick children. She works closely with UN agencies like, UNICEF and WHO and non-governmental organisations working on improving child health in Vanuatu.

Women have many demands that they must meet - they play the roles of wives, mothers and at the same time professional career women working to achieve what is expected.

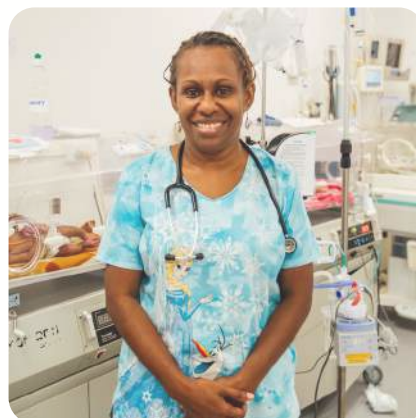
"If we want Vanuatu to thrive, then we must consider the health of children as they are future leaders. I am passionate about serving the children of my country, but it does mean making personal sacrifices. For example, after Cyclone Harold, I was deployed to Santo for some time and had to leave my eldest child behind. At first, he didn't understand what was going on, but now he knows that this is part of mummy's work.

Women have many demands that they must meet - they play the roles of wives, mothers and at the same time professional career women working to achieve what is expected within their area of responsibility. They have no choice but to become adept at multitasking to make sure everything is okay at home and then go to work and make sure things are well coordinated there.

I find some solace in good women friends to be able to share experiences and find solutions over a cup of tea. The biggest challenge is mastering my work so that I can achieve a balance: that I do not neglect my family to build my career and that I do not neglect my career to build my family. As a Ni-Vanuatu woman with ambitions, family support is crucial. After 40 years of Independence, I am proud to see women voicing their opinions and trying to find solutions to issues that affect them.

Women are believing in themselves and they are fighting for gender equality – to ensure they don't have opportunities just for themselves, but also for others.

I am grateful to see that, because it really does make a world of a difference to stand together."



PATRICIA MAWA

Epi / Malekula



**MANAGER OF ICT & ENGINEERING
DEPARTMENT OF METEOROLOGY
& GEOHAZARDS**

Patricia has held her current position as the Manager of Information Communication Technologies (ICT) and Engineering for the Vanuatu Meteorology and Geohazards Department, Ministry of Climate Change, since 2010. She began her career in the public service some 30 years ago after she completed courses in climatology and ICT. During that time, there were not many ICT professionals in Vanuatu, so she furthered her studies in Australia.

When she first started working, she was the only person in her office. Today there are 10 technicians to assist her. Her role includes managing the transmission of real-time data of the weather, volcanos and earthquakes across all of Vanuatu.

It can be challenging as a female technician in this field working with mostly male colleagues. I appreciate them and the work we do together.

"Due to the nature of Vanuatu's geographic spread and aided by technological advances over the years, we have automatic stations set up all over the islands that provide real-time data to inform forecasting and planning.

My job involves leading a team of technicians to ensure that minute attention is paid to equipment so that they are in the best working condition to provide us with valuable information.

It can be challenging as a female technician in this field working with mostly male colleagues. As a supervisor most of the people who work under me are men.

One thing I've had to recognise and invest in is to create a relationship with them to ensure that there is mutual respect. I appreciate them and the work we do together as a team.

To do this job well is to have a willingness to learn as you move along, even in leading roles. I think that the real key is to have a genuine interest in what you do.

When you have passion, you really can do whatever you want."



PHYLLIS KAMASTEIA

Aniwa



**MAPPING & INFORMATION OFFICER
DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY**

Phyllis is one of the first Ni-Vanuatu women who studied forestry in the early 90s. She graduated in Papua New Guinea before commencing her work as an utilisation officer at the Department of Forestry, Ministry of Agriculture Livestock Forestry Fisheries and Biosecurity, in 1996. Her responsibilities at that time included registering and monitoring mobile sawmills. Phyllis has been working in her current position since 2000 and her main responsibility is to produce maps, collect annual sandalwood harvest data during Sandalwood harvesting seasons. Currently Vanuatu through the Department of Forests is implementing the Measuring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) components of the REDD+ Program in Vanuatu funded by the World Bank with two components: firstly Geographic Information System (GIS) and Remote Sensing(RS) mapping activity data, and secondly National Forest Inventory (NFI). Phyllis coordinated the first component of the program. Apart from the mapping and data collections activity, Phyllis is also responsible for disseminating forestry information through the forestry publications which includes documentaries, newsletters, posters and flyers.

Although I was one of the only females in a male dominated field, I really love nature and science and found that my job combines my love for both in very interesting ways.

"When I found out that I was accepted to work at the forestry department, I was so proud.

Although I was one of the only females in a male dominated field, I really love nature and science and found that my job combines my love for both science and nature in very interesting ways.

When I am working in the office, it is quite technical because I use a few different GIS software to produce maps. . But when I am working in the field, it is very practical.

You gain a lot of knowledge and learn how to collect seeds, how to nurse a tree into maturity and how to set up a nursery and make it profitable.

When you visit the islands, you realize there are so many different types of plants on each island and there are some species that are endemic to Vanuatu and can only be found here.

If you are interested to know what kind of vegetation on each island, the timber volumes' estimation by the loggable species, I will be able to provide the information needed. I enjoy my work and being able to share interesting information with people."



REBECCA BORUGU

Buringa



**SENIOR YOUTH EMPOWERMENT OFFICER
DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT &
SPORTS**

Rebecca was working as a volunteer at the Vanuatu National Youth Council (VNYC) before taking up the role of Senior Youth Empowerment Officer for the Department of Youth Development and Sports, Ministry of Youth Development and Sports, in 2013.

In her previous work, she played a crucial role in setting up the VNYC and was the first female president for the Port Vila Youth Council from 2012 until 2017.

Rebecca has also represented Vanuatu in the Commonwealth Youth Program and was selected to be the deputy chair out of 54 countries.

My hope is for every Ni-Vanuatu girl to feel safe and secure inside of her workplace. It is important that she feels like she is part of a team.

"My hope is for every Ni-Vanuatu girl to feel safe and secure inside of her workplace. It is important that she feels like she is part of a team and that she is able to voice her opinion, so that she is included in all of the decision-making.

I have been in the position of being the only female at work and it's difficult at first, but ultimately I needed to speak up to get the job done. In my experience, I have found that a lot of girls shy away from taking up leadership roles.

Another issue is that older women leaders do not invest the time and resources to mentor young women and girls. On both sides there is some sense of fear. I think for older women it is because they are afraid that young women and girls will replace them.

But what's important is the impact of the work you have done to mentor younger ones coming up. It's time to change that approach and provide information and help both young women and men.

If you believe in progress, then we need to build the capacity of young women and men and give them the space to move forward.

You need to know when to step aside and give a young person the opportunity to take up space while providing mentorship and support. It's not about you – it's about progress."



ROLINE VESNES TEKON

Malekula / Tanna



**HEAD OF TREATIES & CONVENTIONS DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

Roline first started working in the public service as a legal officer at the office of the Public Service Commission 17 years ago.

She later transferred to the Labour Department before being promoted as the Head of Treaties and Conventions Division at the Department of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, and has held this position for 10 years.

Roline is one of the first Francophone Ni-Vanuatu to graduate from the University of the South Pacific with a Bachelor of Law and later on did a Master of Diplomacy at the Australian National University.

If you manage to get into a leadership position, it is important to remain humble, respect the laws of the country and most of all fear God.

"I tell my children and adopted children that life is not the same as it was in the past.

The population has increased, and life is more challenging – it's not that easy anymore to get a scholarship or your dream job, as you are competing with a lot of people with an education.

If you are a Francophone and your only opportunity is to study at an English school, then take it! You must learn how to adapt to the situation and take up whatever space you can. If you don't get the job of your dream, then accept that God has different plans for you.

If you manage to get into a leadership position, it is important to remain humble, respect the laws of the country and most of all fear God.

Let me illustrate this for you: imagine you have a position of influence and you swell up like a balloon. Everyone wants to follow you because your balloon is nice and round, but one day your balloon pops because it's too swollen.

When you want too much power or take advantage of financial opportunities, you become too swollen like the balloon and you may end up floating down the wrong road. We need to fear God, use our power wisely and refrain from abusing it."



ROTHINA ILO NOKA

Pentecost



**DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN'S AFFAIRS**

Rothina has been working in the public service for 14 years. She has a Master of Social Change and Development from her studies in Australia. Her previous role was the Gender and Protection Cluster Coordinator for Department of Women's Affairs, which involved ensuring that gender and social inclusion considerations were integrated into policy advocacy and capacity development support. It included applying this work to national and local level climate change adaptation and disaster risk management mainstreaming. In 2017 Rothina presented at the Pacific Humanitarian Partnership meeting in Fiji, an event that brought together Pacific government and humanitarian partners and was recognized for her work in building successful partnerships between civil society and government through the cluster. She has also worked at ADRA, a humanitarian agency operated by the Seventh Day Adventist, which she attests to building her capacity in programming and budget management. Rothina has held the role as the Director of the Department of Women's Affairs, Ministry of Justice and Community Services, since 2019 and is currently leading the work on developing the new Gender Equality Policy and restructuring the organization to align with the five strategic areas.

I never thought I would become a director of a department. I just worked hard and embraced every challenge as an opportunity to learn.

"When I began this work, at times it felt like I had been thrown into the deep blue sea. I was given the choice to either swim or drown - I decided to swim, no matter how many times I was thrown into the deep end!

I never thought I would become a director of a department. I just worked hard and embraced every challenge as an opportunity to learn.

When I reflect on this, I see that the hardships have prepared me for this moment. I feel that God has chosen me to complete a mission.

This is not something I can do alone. It's crucial to have many heads around the table. In a partnership everyone has a valuable contribution.

In leading coordination of the gender and protection response to emergency, I strived hard to create this space, this 'nasara', where voices can be heard.

We need to work together with men. Gender equality is about equality between women and men! To me it's just a matter of misunderstanding and with every generation we began to recognize the value of equality.

It's up to us to dialogue about this and discuss ways to address it so our children can experience equality."



SEREANA LEDUA NATUMAN

Tanna / Fiji



**SENIOR CONSULTANT PHYSICIAN
HEAD OF DEPT FOR INTERNAL MEDICINE
VILA CENTRAL HOSPITAL**

Sereana has been working in public service for 14 years after graduating from the Fiji School of Medicine with a Bachelor of Medicine / Surgery and a Post-Graduate Diploma in Internal Medicine from the Fiji National University.

After graduation from the Fiji National University in 2014 with a Master of Medicine in Internal Medicine, Sereana has held the position of Senior Consultant Physician and Head of Department of Internal Medicine at the Vila Central Hospital, Ministry of Health, since 2015. In 2019 she received an award for the best performing senior medical officer.

Even the best of doctors feels like giving up sometimes! But, working with patients and their families is my biggest reward.

"The motivation for my study of medicine comes from an interest to investigate the causes of people's symptoms, treating them for it and seeing them improve.

There are many challenges we face: the challenges at the clinical level related to limited human resources but also in terms of accessing more and newer equipment we need to provide better health services for our people. Even the best of doctors feels like giving up sometimes! But, working with patients and their families is my biggest reward.

I am most proud of being able to provide care that was previously only delivered by overseas visiting specialists, e.g. echocardiography and endoscopy services. Teaching medicine to interns and observing them able to either manage cases on their own or refer on to physicians is fulfilling.

My parents are my biggest inspiration. They always encouraged my five siblings and I to take our education seriously so that we can look after ourselves in the future. Everything they did was to benefit us. Their marriage life inspired me and now that I'm married with two kids, I want to care for my family in the same way that my parents did for me. My husband is an Obstetrician. We both did our master's program at the same time. For four years, while studying we simultaneously raised our children and worked at a very busy hospital. Away from our immediate family who were in Vanuatu, we had no one to help us.

The workload was too much at times. But through overcoming that challenge, it made it easier to overcome any others coming my way. Now I can handle anything. I know how to balance my workload and at the same time raise a family."



SHARON ROSE BOE

Ambae



**SENIOR MAPPING OFFICER
DEPARTMENT OF LANDS**

Sharon has been working in the public service for six years now and has a Bachelor of Arts in Geography and Information Systems.

She is currently the Senior Mapping Officer at the Department of Lands, Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources.

We have been through multiple category 5 cyclones, volcanic eruptions and earthquakes, but we are a resilient people. I am very proud of that.

"Vanuatu is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world. As a geospatial analyst I work a lot with space-based technologies to map and obtain critical information for forecasting, planning and responding to disasters.

I feel in a way when I can help to acquire and deliver good information then forecasting and planning will be well-informed, and response will run smoothly. In this way risks can be better managed, and in some cases avoided, in our communities.

Vanuatu is a resilient country. We have been through multiple category 5 cyclones, volcanic eruptions and earthquakes, but we are a resilient people. I am very proud of that. I am also proud about how much we care about each other and the wellbeing of others as a people. I think that looking out for each other is part of our culture and one of the key reasons why we are so resilient.

For someone who wants to get into a role like the one I am in, my advice is to have a passion for the job and to keep a positive vibe. You must be able to stand and take challenges, always be ready because there will be one or two, sometimes several, headed your way. In my line of work being precise and analytical are important characteristics.

Always maintain your professionalism in the workplace. Having a genuine and supportive friend is important to me - someone I can confide in and that I can lean on in the midst of the most challenging times."



VELMA KARABANI

Pentecost



**DIRECTOR OF GENERAL COMPLAINTS
OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN**

Velma has been working in the Office of the Ombudsman under the Ministry of the Prime Minister for 20 years now. She started as a legal officer after completing undergraduate studies at the University of the South Pacific before being promoted to a senior legal officer.

With the help of a scholarship Velma then completed a one-year Master of Law at Otago University in New Zealand before returning to Vanuatu.

She applied for and has held the role of Director of General Complaints at the Office of the Ombudsman for close to nine years now. Her role involves dealing with complaints from leaders and public servants daily.

I definitely got grey hairs during this time! The pressure of the work can be so strong when you are in this kind of work.

"The greatest challenge of my career was when the former Ombudsman finished off at the office and we did not have anyone to act in this role for a few months.

As I am one of the longest serving staff and the more senior of the two directors in the office, I had no choice but to step up.

I definitely got grey hairs during this time! The pressure of the work can be so strong when you are in this kind of work.

In this work we are dealing with complaints from leaders and public servants often on a daily basis, and in the absence of an Ombudsman, acting or otherwise, we had to manage the complaints, administration and budget by ourselves.

It was a period of intense pressure for me and for the office. We are a small office, but we decided to do things as a team.

We would have meetings and discuss our next steps and how to tackle challenges and solve problems - together.

I got through that difficult period because of team work, and now we finally have a new Ombudsman."



ADELA ISSACHAR ARU

Malekula



**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
VANUATU TOURISM OFFICE**

Adela started working in the public service as a statistician at the National Statistics Office. In 2004 she joined the Department of Tourism, then known as the Tourism Development Office, which had only four staff members at that time.

Today the Department has over 25 staff and is responsible for policy and planning of the tourism sector. In 2016 Adela joined the Vanuatu Tourism Office and has been the Chief Executive Officer for the past 3 years.

She oversees 18 staff in an office that focuses on promotions and marketing of the tourism industry, which is one of Vanuatu's main drivers of the economy and the fastest growing sector.

I have noticed that we are a bit more reserved in comparison to other Pacific nations, but when we speak up, it is genuine and comes from the heart.

"When I started working in tourism, it was a young fledgling industry. People focused on agriculture because it was the backbone of our economy. Not many people knew how to operate a tourism business and there was limited support from the government.

There was little connection to other industries such as aviation for flying or agriculture for sourcing food, despite them all linking to one another. I travelled across our islands from north to south and realized our culture is what makes Vanuatu unique compared to other countries in the Pacific region.

We have custom practices that are different from village to village. It's just a part of our livelihoods and who we are as a people, and not just something to show off for tourists. When you witness all these different cultural exchanges, as a Ni-Vanuatu, it is fascinating and you think 'Wow, I belong to this country!'

We take so many things for granted – from the waterfalls and abundance of land to the friendly people who live in villages and who work as civil servants. Respect is an unwritten rule everywhere. When I've attended international events, I have noticed that we are a bit more reserved in comparison to other Pacific nations, but when we do speak up, it is genuine and comes from the heart.

I am proud to stand under the Vanuatu flag to represent our country, and show the world what Vanuatu has to offer, God has truly blessed us."



ANGELYNE GLENDA DOVO

Pentecost



PARLIAMENTARY COUNSEL
STATE LAW OFFICE

Angelyne has been working in the public service for 20 years and has held her current position as a Parliamentary Counsel at the State Law Office for the past 17 years. Angelyne holds a Law Degree from the Law School of the University of the South Pacific in Port Vila, Vanuatu, and a Diploma in Legislative Drafting from the University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji. The function of the Parliamentary Counsel set out in the State Law Office Act involves providing legislative drafting services to the Government upon the direction of the Attorney General. In her role Angelyne oversees other legislative drafters and support staff of the Parliamentary Counsel's Unit of the Office. She oversees legislating drafters in the English language, before sending it to the translation department who translate it into French. When the bills are launched in parliament to be debated, the members of parliament are given a text in either French or English, depending on their preference. In previous parliamentary sittings, 25 copies were given in French and 37 copies were given in English. Chair to Vanuatu's National Human Rights Committee, Angelyne was a core part of Vanuatu's delegation to present the 3rd Universal Periodic Report (UPR) in 2019 before the UN UPR Committee.

When I face challenges, the word of God gives me hope and confidence. It helps me to face and overcome adversities daily.

"I am proud that our members of parliament receive texts of bills in either English and French, and then debate the bills in Bislama. This is unique to Vanuatu. You certainly don't find that in any other part of the world.

When we mention this at meetings abroad, everyone is amazed about how Vanuatu parliamentarians receive text in one language but then debate in another. It's something that makes me proud.

A nation is regulated and administered by its laws. I contribute to the country's development through overseeing the drafting of legislation to Parliament. I also provide guidance to officials of Parliament on legislative matters.

I am a lawyer qualified in drafting legislation to Parliament. It's a challenging job. But doing it for over 20 years now has made me strong and courageous to face challenges. You certainly must have passion: It will drive your success!

When I face challenges, the word of God gives me hope and confidence. It helps me to face and overcome adversities daily. This is what inspires me to keep going."



ASTRID BOULEKONE

Pentecost



**GENERAL MANAGER
VANUATU CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY**

Astrid has been working at the Vanuatu Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) since 2010. Prior to that, she worked at the Vanuatu Maritime Authority.

She has held the position of General Manager for the Vanuatu Chamber of Commerce for close to 10 years now.

A Statutory Body established in 1995 by the Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Vanuatu CAP 236 Act, VCCI has a 16-member council that represents Vanuatu's private sector and all businesses with a valid Vanuatu business license are automatically members.

One of the things I would like to see more of is a lot more women contributing to the development and private sector.

"Over the years, I have seen how resilient our people are. We have developed and strengthened our country to where it is now. But it's still a work in progress.

VCCI has approximately 4,000 members across the country. In the context of COVID-19 pandemic affecting the world and Vanuatu it is important that we plan and coordinate our actions with the Government as we represent the private sector: the lifeline of Vanuatu's economy.

We not only are providing advice on how to prepare for the pandemic, but also starting to think about the recovery phase. Being better prepared will help the business community recover in better condition than after cyclone Pam. Our biggest worry is the impact on the tourism sector as it represents 40% of our GDP.

Other businesses that depend on the tourism sector will be affected as well, both directly and indirectly.

One of the things I would like to see more of is a lot more women contributing to the development and private sector. We need to share this space with women and be team players, it should be our 'new normal' in this millennium. I think there is room for everybody to become a good team player in that political space."



RUTH AMOS

North Efate



**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
VANUATU BUREAU OF STANDARDS**

In 2012 Ruth was tasked with setting up the Vanuatu Bureau of Standards. It is a statutory body with a similar set up to the Vanuatu Chamber of Commerce and Vanuatu Tourism Office, which means that it has the ability to make its own money. When it launched in 2018, Ruth took up her current position as the Chief Executive Officer.

She was previously a teacher and has worked in several institutions including Malapoa College, University of the South Pacific and Vanuatu Institute of Technology.

Many of Ruth's students are directors and a couple have been Members of Parliament and Ministers in the past and current Parliament, while many more are prominent people in Vanuatu.

I am just like every other woman – struggling to raise my children, manage my household and my marriage. But if I can do it – you can do it too!

"One of my greatest contributions to the development of Vanuatu is in its human resources. In the two decades of teaching, I am proud to have helped to educate and shape the minds of Ni-Vanuatu women and men who are now engaged in key roles across the public service.

The second is setting up and directing this very important institution, although still young, to look at the quality and standard of Vanuatu products.

Ni-Vanuatu women are extremely resilient and yet we continue to underestimate ourselves. We think that we are not able to achieve great things and we allow negativity and socio-cultural expectations to bring us down. I am just like every other woman – struggling to raise my children, manage my household and my marriage.

But if I can do it – you can do it too! Nowadays we have Ni-Vanuatu women who are pilots, doctors and engineers. Some women are even training to become vets. Who says we can't do anything? We can.

It is only you who is allowing negative thoughts to enter your head. It is very important to focus on the positive in order to progress. How you think about yourself is very important – if you think you can do it, then you can do it!"



