



Fact Sheet: Vanuatu Handicraft Industry

The Industry and its significance

Tourism is Vanuatu's largest industry (by value) and has experienced significant growth, particularly the cruise ship sector. Every year Vanuatu receives, on average, 240,000 cruise ship and 110,000 air passengers, mainly from Australia and New Zealand. Handicrafts are an important trade product for the tourism industry in Vanuatu. Most handicraft sales take place in the capital, Port Vila, and Luganville on Santo, while other islands such as Mystery Island, Tanna, and Malekula also sell directly to tourists. Other islands play an important role in the production of handicrafts which are then sold at markets in Port Vila and Luganville. The handicraft sector is essentially informal, however it is believed to contribute to an estimated annual value of AUD4million from Vanuatu souvenirs. Handicrafts are made by both men and women. Most of the retailers in towns are women, the "Mamas", who provide significant income to support their families.

Market Access Issues

Many international tourists believe that handicrafts purchased in Vanuatu will be confiscated by quarantine officers when arriving home. This is largely due to a lack

PHAMA
Pacific Horticultural & Agricultural
Market Access Program
An Australian Government initiative

of clear information for vendors, operators and tourists on the types of biosecurity risks that are of concern, particularly to Australia and New Zealand quarantine. According to Australian quarantine, however, approximately 90% of handicrafts pass through Australian quarantine without issue. Increased awareness of import requirements for both handicraft vendors and tourists will reduce uncertainties around quarantine standards and improve tourist confidence in purchasing handicraft products.

PHAMA Action

PHAMA has produced a series of photographic guides and posters to inform vendors, operators and tourists about quarantine standards that apply to handicrafts. PHAMA has provided further assistance to Biosecurity Vanuatu by training staff and other industry stakeholders to better communicate quarantine risks. The Program has continued to work with Biosecurity Vanuatu to deliver quarantine training to the Mamas. As a result of this work, the Mamas at the main tourist ports of entry now have a relatively good understanding of the types of raw material to be used and the preparation of these materials to comply with importing country requirements. In addition, a set of display cabinets with information and appropriate examples of handicraft materials has been installed on cruise ships servicing Vanuatu. Collectively, these efforts are aimed at helping tourists make informed decisions on handicraft purchases, as well as guiding handicraft vendors on what products are,



and are not, allowed into Australia and New Zealand.

Progress

PHAMA's work has created a real buzz among the private sector, non-governmental organisations, donors and much larger programs working on tourism in Vanuatu. Many see PHAMA's work as opening the door to growth in production and export of Vanuatu handicrafts. PHAMA is in discussions with the Tourism Ambassador Program (funded by the New Zealand aid program) and Biosecurity Vanuatu to ensure that the materials PHAMA has produced are distributed appropriately and widely. The Program has also collaborated with Biosecurity Vanuatu to successfully negotiate improved import conditions for a number of handicraft items from Vanuatu to Australia and New Zealand. These will make it easier for tourists to take Vanuatu handicrafts and souvenirs home.

Future Actions

There is a need for ongoing information sharing between Biosecurity Vanuatu and Quarantine organisations in relevant countries on any changes to import requirements for handicrafts. PHAMA will continue to collaborate with other donor development programs such as IFC and key tourism operators such as Carnival Cruises on further targeted assistance in the handicrafts sector. The Program plans to monitor the impact of its work in collaboration with IFC and Carnival by undertaking cruise ship passenger surveys to quantify changes in their handicraft purchases and awareness and understanding of quarantine issues.

There is interest from other Pacific nations for similar awareness materials and associated training to support handicraft industries including in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Fiji and Tonga. PHAMA intends to provide further assistance based on a regional approach, and produce similar awareness materials and video products for on ship passenger viewing. This is intended to assist partners, such as the cruise ship operators and tourism authorities, to promote handicrafts sales to tourists.



Industry example

Business: Vanuatu Sculpture

Products: Sculptures (vases and pen stands), carvings (wooden spoons, food trays, tanoa bowls), mats, baskets, necklaces, earrings, bracelets.

Customers: Locals and tourists from NZ, Australia, Japan and China

Monthly Sales: VUV 30,000 – 55,000 (AUD 363 – 665)

Return to Value Chain of Small Holders, Processors: 15% of sales

Vanuatu Sculpture is a family owned business based in Port Vila. It began in 2000 as a hobby, and started from home preparing orders for clients. Since October 2014, Vanuatu Sculpture has opened a stall at the Vanuatu Handicrafts Market to display and market their products. Vanuatu Sculpture specialises in sculpture structures made of cattle horns and pine, and wooden carvings of food trays and tanoa bowls. The horns and pine used are sourced locally. Vanuatu Sculpture focuses on producing original locally made products that are uniquely fashioned and targeted to both the local and tourism markets.

VIEWS ON PHAMA SUPPORT

"PHAMA came at the right time, to assist handicrafts vendors to understand biosecurity requirements of the products they sell, and how to market these products to tourists who were unsure of what they could bring back to their countries. This increased awareness through PHAMA posters and training has enabled handicrafts vendors who are mostly females, to market their products more confidently and increase sales."

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The Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access program (PHAMA) is an aid-for-trade program, funded by the Australian and the New Zealand Governments. PHAMA is implemented by AECOM.