

# Media Release

14 June 2025

## Vocational Education gets boost in Southern Highlands Province

*Southern Highlands Province, Papua New Guinea* — In a significant step toward enhancing vocational education and training (VET) in the Southern Highlands Province (SHP), the National Department of Education (NDoE), the Santos Foundation, and the Southern Highlands Provincial Administration representing the government, including the five district development authorities, have launched a strategic initiative to align VET programs with national accreditation standards and expand access to certified, industry-relevant qualifications.

As part of this initiative, 119 teachers from across 11 VET centres in the province are participating in a week-long curriculum unpacking workshop launched this week in Mendi. The event brings together educators, curriculum specialists, and institutional leaders to refine and implement the National Certificate (NC) Level 1 and 2 curriculums, ensuring it meets national standards and industry needs.

“This partnership with the Santos Foundation represents a transformative step in our national agenda to elevate vocational education in PNG,” said Steven Tandale, First Assistant Secretary for Curriculum Development Division at NDoE. “We are empowering youth with the skills and opportunities to drive sustainable development in their communities and beyond.”

The workshop is part of a broader effort to accredit all Vocational Education and Training (VET) centres in the province. It builds on a 2022 province-wide audit, also funded by the Santos Foundation, which identified gaps and opportunities in the province’s vocational training landscape.

One standout example is the Pimaga VET & FODE Centre, which is pioneering a blended model that combines flexible distance education with hands-on skills training. The centre is already helping students gain practical experience in carpentry, electrical, and mechanical trades.

“At the Santos Foundation, we believe in long-term partnerships that invest in young people and their potential,” said Anthony Uechritz, Santos Foundation Senior Program Manager, Youth Opportunities program.

“Our support for Pimaga VET & FODE Centre has shown what’s possible when access, opportunity, and commitment come together—even in the most remote parts of PNG. This workshop is not just about compliance—it’s about laying the groundwork for a future where young people are equipped with nationally recognised skills that lead to real jobs, opportunities and stronger communities.”

This initiative reflects the Santos Foundation’s commitment to building strong partnerships and supporting community-led solutions.

By investing in quality vocational education, the Santos Foundation is helping young people unlock economic opportunities and contribute to more resilient, self-reliant communities.

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