

Vanuatu Paralympic Committee

VANUATU PARA COACHES STEAL THE SHOW IN TOKYO

Two Vanuatu para coaches – Deni Kalanga and Timothy Loughman - have just returned from a Para Coaches Development workshop in Tokyo, held to strengthen coaching skills and planning to improve opportunities for athletes living with an impairment. The workshop cofounded by the Japanese Government, Oceania and the Agitos Foundation was conducted by the Nippon Sports Science University (NSSU) in Tokyo. Professor Masamitsu Ito and facilitators Chris Nunn (Australia) and Troy Engle (Singapore) were joined by coaches from Japan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, Maldives, Zambia, Fiji, Kiribati and Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu.

“Everyone was just amazed by how well organized Vanuatu is for para sport. We were the only country to have a proper Board, Strategic Plan, Annual Report and Budget as well as provincial programs to encourage both coaches and parathletes!” reported Deni Kalanga, Head Coach at Ecole Central and the Vanuatu Paralympic Committee.

“They all knew of our success in fielding a team of three parathletes to the Commonwealth Games and of course Friana Kwevira’s Bronze Medal in javelin,” commented Timothy Loughman from Tanna.

“We told them the VPC’s planning and implementation had only really come together 15 months ago. Everyone was very encouraged that so much could be done in that time frame. We emphasized how important it is to have planning and reporting and to set realistic targets which was really the program for the workshop – creating plans and pathways for both coaches and athletes. Vanuatu was the stand out role model!”

Each coach also had to plan a formal coaching session, so Timothy and Deni used a dance from the Toka and taught the coaches the basic movements – very demanding aerobic exercise. They had brought grass skirts, leis and nut anklets from home but had to scour the University grounds for sticks to split to use in the dance.

“In the other coaches’ sessions, no-one else beside the coach participated. They just sat and watched. Once we explained what we were going to do, everyone jumped up and joined in the dance. It was a huge success! I remarked to the workshop participants that this demonstrated the power of sport in breaking down barriers, encouraging people to try something new and make friends while getting good exercise,” said Deni. “We gave away our sulus, leis and grass skirts to the best dancers.”

“The other participants and our workshop facilitators told us that Vanuatu had stolen the show – not just with our dance but the example of Vanuatu, a developing country, being the role model for how a small National Paralympic Committee with few resources and a limited budget, can still achieve success on the world stage and for parathletes at home in the villages and communities,” reported Timothy.

The highlight of the trip?

“Well, it was great that our dance session was so well received and that we are going home with a Pathway to Tokyo 2020 planned out, but we actually toured the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games sites! Wow! They are so well organized. So much is nearly ready,” said Deni.

Timothy Loughman chimed in for the last word, “Next time we’re in Tokyo, it will be to compete with our Para Team Vanuatu! I am going back to Tanna to set up a Para Sports Committee. We have real parathletic talent in Tanna – and in our other provinces too. We are determined to bring home Vanuatu’s first paralympic medal!”

Caption: At a Tokyo Para Coaches Workshop, Coaches Timothy Loughman and Deni Kalanga show how a kastom dance can be good aerobic exercise.

