

# ICT camp for girls with SMART Sistas

By: Fern Kapwani

**SMART Sistas (Sistas Mastering Advanced Real Technology)** is organizing its second annual ICT camp in May 16 to 20.

The SMART Sistas vision for this ICT Camp for Girls strives to empower girls ages 11-15 to pursue educational opportunities in information communication technology areas to help Vanuatu reach gender equality in the ICT field.

IT Specialist, Rodney Philemon, from United States Peace Corps Vanuatu said that the Vanuatu ICT Girls Camp is a strong collaboration between OCGIO, Telecommunication Radio Regulator, Reserve Bank Vanuatu, Wan Smol Bag and Garden Code and encourages girls to apply to be able to participate in the ICT camp.

"This is a day camp and an application form must be filled and handed in before the due date which is on Saturday April 15," he said.

"If the applicants (girls) are selected, they are required to pay a contribution fee of V110,000 for investment in their laptop to take home after completion of the training."

Mr Philemon said that only 10 participants will be selected to participate in the ICT camp that are very knowledgeable with computer skills and have a fair knowledge in graphic designs.

"This camp caters for each of the girls along with their guardians and the program was designed that by the end of the five-day camp, each of the girls and their parents should increase skill knowledge, increase self-esteem, knowledge of how to develop and master a skill and awareness of information communication technologies related careers," he said.

"For the long-term outcomes, increase the number of women in the ICT field here in Vanuatu since we only have a few currently in the positions of an IT manager, IT engineer and others, long-term skill development, close the gender gap for ICT positions and knowledge to reduce poverty."

## Acting ComPol and Deputy Chairman of Housing Corporation appointed

**COLONEL ROBSON LAVRO IS STILL** the interim Commissioner of the Vanuatu Police Force (VPP).

On the advice of the Police Service Commission and after consultation with the Head of State, President Baldwin Lonsdale made an order, appointing Mr. Robson Lavro as the Acting Commissioner of Police for a period of six months or until such time a new Commissioner is appointed.

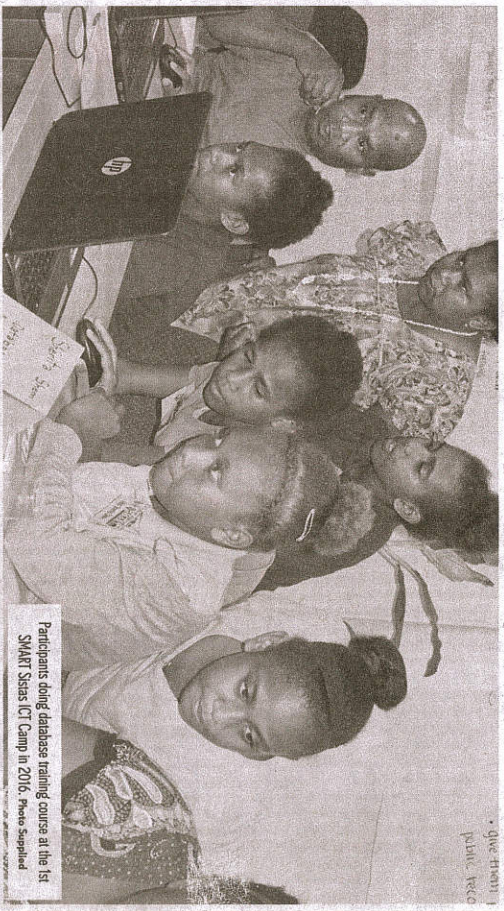
The order, which was taken to have commenced on March 23, 1981, was published in the official Gazette on March 31.

This is not the first time

for the Colonel to oversee the responsibilities for the police top job.

The Head of State first appointed Colonel Robson Lavro as the Acting Commissioner of Police on March 22, 2016.

On the substitution of appointments, Minister of Lands and Natural Resources Ralph Regenamu exercised powers conferred on him by subsections 2(3) and (5) of the National Housing Corporation (NHC) [CAP 188], appointed Mr. Michael Mangawai as member and Deputy Chairman of the National Housing Corporation on March 31.



Participants doing database training course at the 1st SMART Sistas ICT Camp in 2016. Photo supplied

which will be present at the National Convention Centre and interact with ICT persons.

"The reason for this is we want the girls to interact more with the few women in ICT here in Vanuatu, to have a long-term commitment with them, and for those mentors to advice and encourage the girls in their IT career paths," said Laura Loveland, US Peace Corps IT Volunteer.

Ms Loveland said that this is a community initiative that aims to involve members of the communities to encourage girls pursue IT careers and to ensure that this will be a long-term partnership between communities and sponsors of the SMART Sistas.

The SMART Sistas ICT camp has proved successful after three participants of the first ICT camp were selected to represent Vanuatu in the inaugural First Global Robotic Challenge in July 16-18, at the Constitution Hall in Washington D.C in the United States.

"The goal of which is to foster passion for science and technology innovation in young people across the world so our team of three girls will

compete against teams from 150 countries around the globe," Mr Philemon said.

"The girls will create a robot that will compete in a Robotic Olympic and of course controlled by the girls themselves, so far we have received the kit that our girls will work on it to create the robot and get prepared for the tour in July."

Mr Philemon said that the three young participants are from Eprauti School, Central Secondary School and Malapou College and preparations are underway to have fundraisers and find sponsors to accommodate their traveling to the US which will cost about V1million.

"This is a big step for Vanuatu in ICT and especially for the girls venturing into IT, so we will be organizing fundraisers to support our tour as the team will spend almost a week in the US with three days of competition," he said.

"We are hoping to get more teams in for the next FERG and for the boys, we are organizing another ICT Camp in August and Malapou College and preparations are underway for ICT trainings."

## Eleven former MPs Conviction Quashed

From Front Page

"The Court of Appeal in *Vohor v. President of the Republic of Vanuatu* [2015] VUCA 40 has already condemned that conduct."

Pipire and the other 10 MPs were convicted with two different offences.

Firstly, five of the former MPs were said to be in a meeting at Mangos Restaurant. The second offence allegedly happened at the Ministry of Public Utilities involving 11 others.

"It is now accepted that only one offence took place and the two offences were part of the fulfilment of the one alleged conspiracy," the Appeal Court judgment stated.

"The particulars of the offence (the same in each case on the Information), are that these persons conspire together to obstruct and defeat the course of justice by planning and conspiring to facilitate the issuance of the Pardon for

the purposes of obstructing, preventing, perverting or defeating the course of justice.

"There is, of course no offence committed by a convicted person seeking a Presidential pardon, or indeed by a group of convicted persons together seeking a Presidential pardon, under Article 38 of the Constitution."

When considering the appeal, the Appeal Court stated that it is obvious the pardons, if granted, would have prevented the sentencing for the offences.

"That would have been the case if the pardons were granted by the President.

"The President might have deferred considering any pardon requests until after the sentencing, but the President was not obliged to do so.

"Had the President given pardons before sentencing, obviously the purpose of sentencing would have disappeared.

"We did not understand

the Public Prosecutor to argue that the seeking of pardons or an agreement to seek pardons of itself have amounted to an offence under section 79 (a)."

The first ground of appeal is that the trial judge erred in fact and in law by finding that because the appellants had conspired with the intention to stop prison sentences by obtaining pardons, they necessarily had the intention to pervert the course of justice.

That first ground was accepted as correct by the court.

"That does not mean that the changes in the Information did not disclose an offence.

"They referred to the particular circumstances without dealing them.

"Further particulars were not sought. The hearing of the Information proceeded, apparently on a common understanding of what the Public Prosecutor was alleging."

The judgment pointed out that the trial judge had fallen

into error by not addressing and making finds concerning the appellants' state of mind conceding the pardon by Pipire before the President returns and about the lawfulness or unlawfulness and granting the pardons.

"The trial judge clearly did not accept the evidence of Pipire that his decision to grant pardons was independent of, and unrelated to the discussions between various of the appellants on 10 October 2015."

In conclusion, the submissions of the Public Prosecutor that despite such errors as may have been found in the judgment appealed from, the Court should nevertheless dismiss the appeals against conviction was not accepted by the Appeal Court.

For the reasons stated by the 26-page long judgment, the appeal against the conviction was allowed and the conviction of each of the appellants was quashed.