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Vanuatu Skills Partnership

Our localisation journey

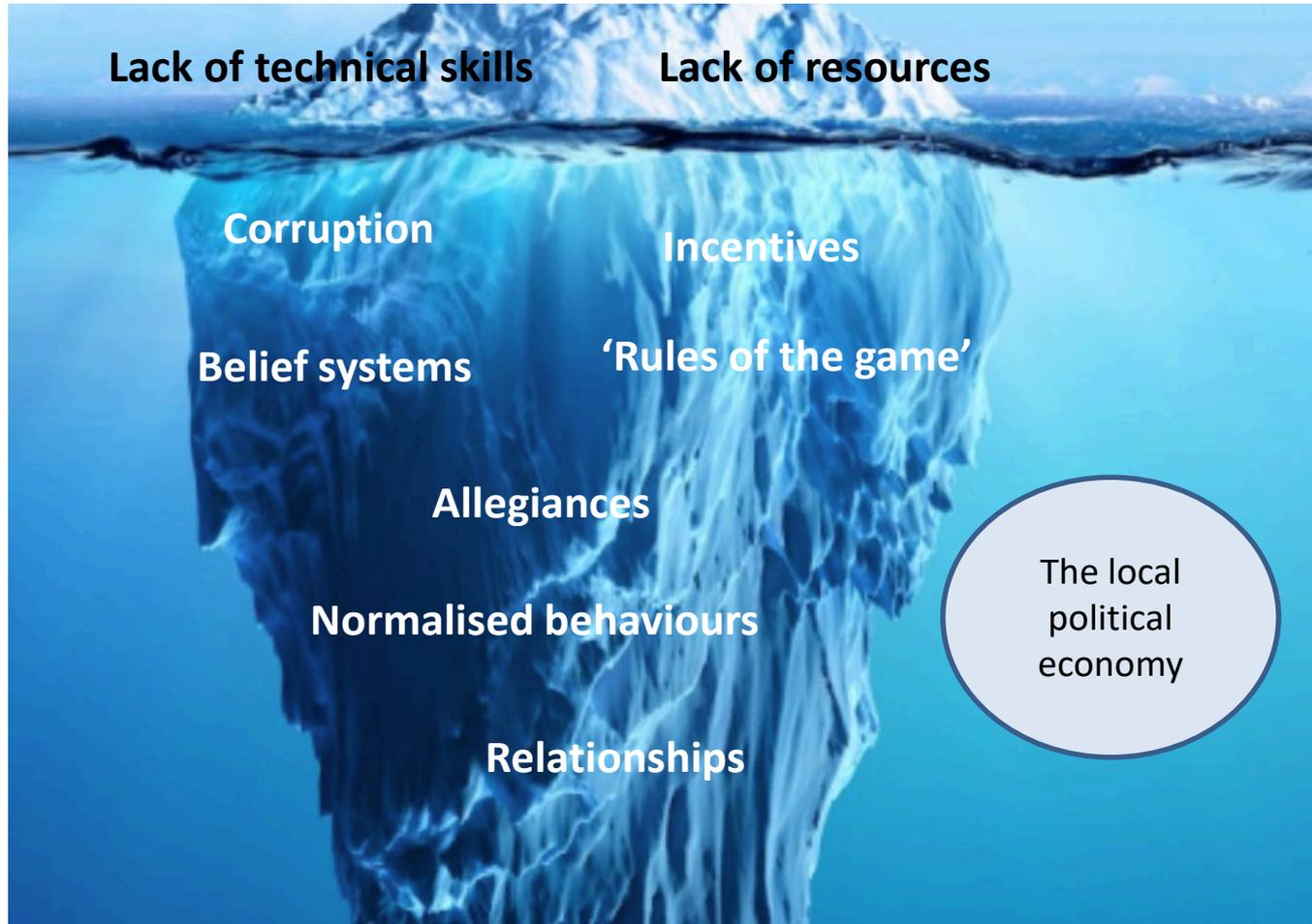
What we do

- The Vanuatu Skills Partnership supports the Government of Vanuatu to improve **decentralised service delivery** through reform of the **national skills system**.
- The Partnership works to **better link** 'skills demand' with quality 'skills supply' to **upskill our people** in priority areas while at the same time facilitating **access to markets**.
- **Identifying, incubating and promoting reformist leadership and building coalitions** between these leaders is at the heart of our work:
 - to ensure we have **influence to shift the status quo** for systemic, sustainable change.

At the beginning ...

- 2007 Vanuatu Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Program began.
- Funded by DFAT (then AusAID) and implemented through a **traditional Managing Contractor modality**.
- Original design very conventional:
 - based on assumption that structural reform of the national skills system could happen through **linear activities** being implemented in line with an **externally-designed, pre-determined logframe**, through **capacity building** by **international advisers**.
- **Led by an international** Team Leader, with a large number of long-term, full-time international **‘technical advisers’**.
- All local staff were in **junior/administrative** positions.
- Managing Contractor **had all power** to determine strategy, staffing, funding allocations, in consultation with the donor.

BUT....



Which meant:

- **No foreign outsider** had the **local legitimacy and influence** to lead shifts in these deep-seated political/cultural blockers to systemic reform.
- Entry points and opportunities to shift these blockers required **deeply informed political/contextual/relational analysis** – that those from that context understand best from lived experience.
- This project had set itself up to ‘fix’ deep structural problems but was operating in a **superficial bubble**, disconnected from the realities of power and dynamics of change around it.

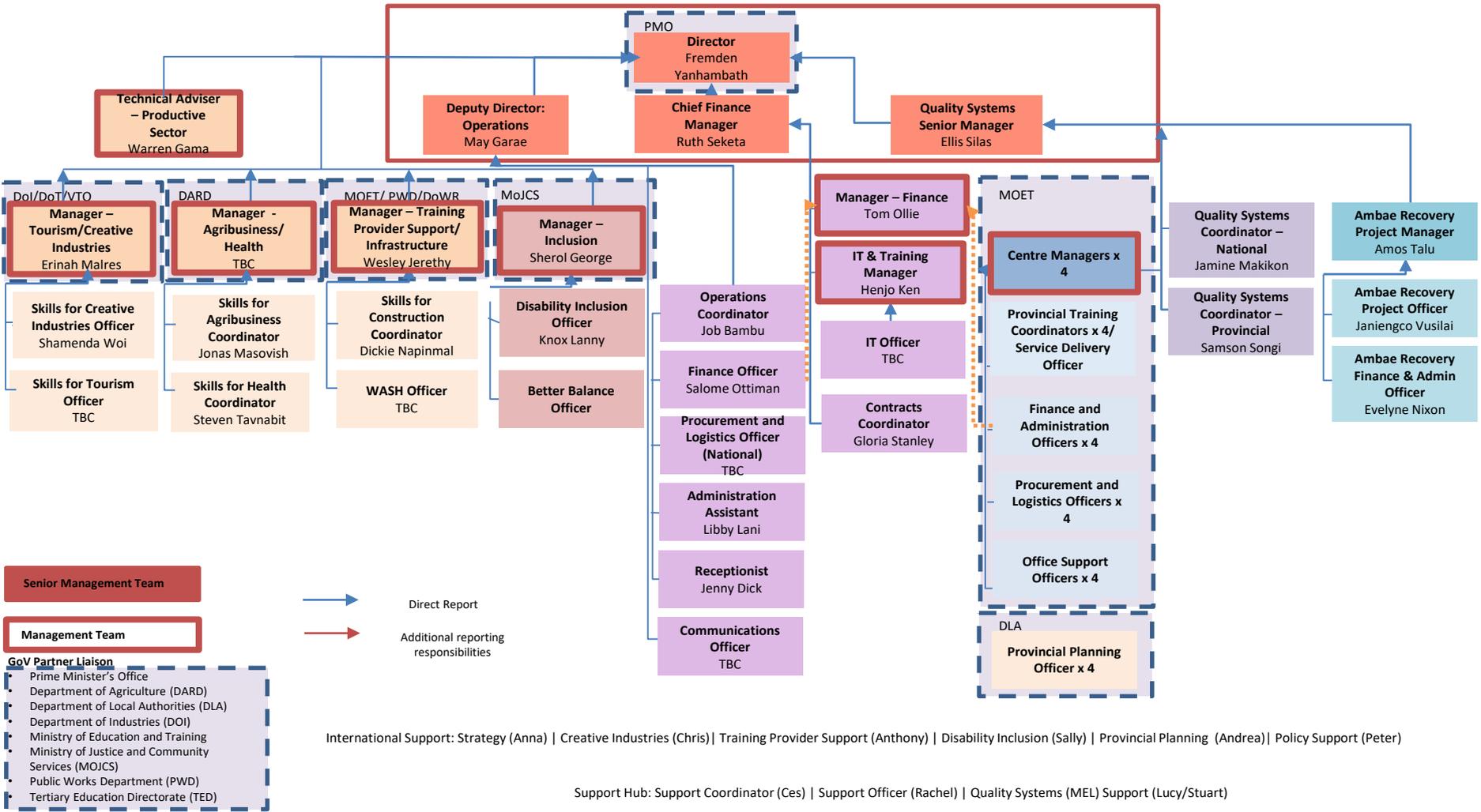
But we were lucky ...

- A new international Team Leader who understood it was **local actors** who could best:
 - Navigate the complexity of the local political economy to identify entry points and allies.
 - Build legitimacy and trust with potential allies for reform.
- DFAT (AusAID) personnel who created an **authorising environment** and who:
 - Were open to experimenting and taking some risks.
 - Actively supported the Team Leader and the local team against a Managing Contractor who did not support the new shift to localisation.

What did this mean we could do?

Reverse many of the conventional ways of working:

- Ensured **ni-Vanuatu** managers and leaders were in charge of implementation – including the Team Leader position.
- Undertook a **new design** process:
 - one that did not just see the problems in Vanuatu's skill system as ones to be 'fixed' by **technical outsiders**.
 - one based on an analysis of the '**under the iceberg**' blockers and drivers of change, and which understood the team would need to **work relationally and politically** to navigate these.
- Pursued activities **flexibly** wherever we saw 'green shoots' of opportunity and reformist appetite – and **adapted** our planning documentation accordingly.
- **Removed international personnel** who did not understand or accept their secondary, supportive role.
- **Removed the Managing Contractor** who tried to impose its priorities and processes which were not those of the local team and context (or DFAT).



Changed our language to reflect local leadership

- Managing contractor > Support contractor
- International adviser > International support/ colleague
- Capacity building > Professional development/cross-team collaboration
- Team Leader > Director
- MEL > Quality systems
- Gender equality > Better balance
- Development > Nation-building

What have we achieved?

- Complete **restructure** of the education system:
 - The provincial ‘Skills Centres’ established by the Partnership have been **integrated into the GoV system** (first-time ever decentralised skill delivery outside of the capitals).
 - Staff in these Centres now employed under the national **Public Service Commission**.
- Partnership’s funding mechanism expanded into National Skills Development Fund with **annual contributions made by Vanuatu Government departments**.
- **Transformation of provincial economies** – tourism, handicraft, and construction sectors.
- Nationally recognised as the **key service delivery reform mechanism** for the government at the provincial level.
- Now on track to become a **fully independent local entity**, in direct receipt of DFAT grant funding.