



To whom it may concern, relating to the Melanesia Boat Project:

The Vanuatu Amputee Association is a registered charity, NGO (Not for Profit organization) located in Port Vila, Vanuatu. "We" are the directors, Michael and Julie Shugg.

Michael and I first visited Port Vila on a one day stop via cruise ship nearly eight years ago from Australia. We both fell in love immediately with Vanuatu and the amazing people here and vowed...

to revisit. We were back within a month for a three week in-depth visit and devised a ten year plan to move permanently to Vanuatu as we were entering retirement.

It turned out that we sold all of our personal property and business to live in Port Vila within two years of our initial visit. That time period was a bit of a whirlwind experience but we certainly have no regrets whatsoever.

As we were busy building our new home near Port Vila, Vanuatu (still a work in progress six years later) we felt a strong need to give something back to our local community. This was when we started Aelan Soa Kea [Island Sore Care] with the purpose to go into the local villages and provide free basic first aid, wound care, blood sugar level testing and reading glasses. During these visits to many different villages we noticed there were a surprisingly high number of amputees.

Michael lost his leg below the knee due to a motor bike accident 26 years ago so we are very empathetic to this situation. Aelan Soa Kea soon incorporated in Vanuatu these additional services: Sik Suga (Bislama for diabetes), Vanuatu Hearing, and The Vanuatu Amputee Association (VAA). The later was created as the umbrella organization for the other branches of the NGO charity.

As there was no Prosthetist here in Vanuatu, VAA brings qualified prosthetists professionals to the country to make and fit limbs. At the same time these professional have assisted us in training several local people on the “how to” make the limbs. We now have Roby with us fulltime as a professional Prosthetist from the Philippians. Roby has expressed his desire to stay permanently in Vanuatu to continue this work and the Government officials are very happy about that.

***The greatest challenge we face here is the distances over open-ocean to reach patients and communities in need. Vanuatu is made up of 83 islands and many people in the smaller islands have very little income and access to transportation.***

The best solution for VAA would be to have a mobile casting clinic to go to the islands, cast the limbs and return to Port Vila to make the limbs. We would then return to the islands to fit, modify and assist with gait training and mobility of our patients.

On these trips we would also be taking basic medical supplies to areas that receive very little assistance. Aelan Soa Kea supplies many local village clinics in our home area and out posts with supplies already - but it would be wonderful to have access to those outer, hard to reach islands and communities and individuals struggling in life after becoming an amputee.

Michael and I love this country and its beautiful people. We are truly blessed to be living in this tropical paradise. There is, sadly, a desperate need for education in regards to diet and health care and life after becoming an amputee. With your interest and help we hope to make Vanuatu a healthier home for the people here and aid those individuals who are now immobile.

Warmest regards

*Michael and Julie Shugg*

**Vanuatu Amputee Association**

**Aelan Soa Kea**

**Vanuatu Hearing**

**[Vaa.org@gmail.com](mailto:Vaa.org@gmail.com)**

**Facebook.com/vanautuamputee**