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## ABUANGA WIN TVL TOGETHER KIDS U-12 TOURNAMENT IN PORT VILA

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PORT VILA - After causing a surprise just two weeks prior in the preliminary tournament of Port Vila and South Efate by eliminating Vanuatu Football Federation (VFF) U-12 and Oceania Football Confederation (OFC) U-12 Festival of Football champions St Joseph School, Abuanga has won the National Together Kids Final at Port Vila Municipal Stadium and will represent the country at the OFC U-12 Festival of Football - New Caledonia 2008 in May next year.



Abuanga finished 3<sup>rd</sup> last year behind Luganville and Réginald Garoleo.

The victory over Erakor's injury depleted team was gained only by the slenderest of margins at Port Vila Municipal Stadium as the top eight teams from around Vanuatu met in two pools of four teams on Futsal-sized pitched marked out across the international venue.

Under the glance of the President of the Republic, the 8 finalists teams met in 2 hens of 4, out of 2 grounds with the dimension of Futsal (40 m \* 20 m), along the touchline of the ground of Port Vila Stadium.

The tournament was played with intense competition but under the principles of the FIFA Fair Play principles and values with the two teams exchanging the handshakes, before and then at the end of the match with all games incident-free as a happy ambience enveloped the venue.

The Group winners were Imaki, St. Thérèse (Luganville), Erakor (Efate) and Abuanga (Pentecost Island)

Before the semi-finals of the respective group winners and play-offs for 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> position, the participants undertook a variety of technical challenges and skills consisting of juggling (50 of the left foot, 50 of the right foot, 50 alternate and 30 of the head) with Daniel Steven Varu of St. Thérèse (Luganville) with a total cumulated of 118 successful touches on the ball out of a possible 180.

Female player Yvana KASSO of Erakor beat away competition from some of the boys and alongside Joel Pierre de Kawenu shared second and third with a total of 113 each.

With the classification cumulated by team, it is the team of Abuanga which gains its second trophy of the day, in front of Ste Thérèse and Erakor.

Yvon Avry, technical advisor to Vanuatu Football Federation (VFF) was intrigued by the technical challenge.

"It is important to set challenges for the youth players and to measure their performance against the standard in bigger countries. The best players should be aiming for 180 successful touches. There is obviously a big room for improvement here in Vanuatu and so the exercise was useful in illustrating this need," Avry said.

Just under 406 primary schools participated in the tournament with Abuanga set to represent VFF and compete in the OFC U-12 Festival of Football – New Caledonia 2008.

Abuanga's victory has set a powerful example to other primary schools in Vanuatu about the possibilities football provides talented youngsters and with international football returning to the country last month there is optimism that the popularity of the game at grassroots level will lead to an explosion in the numbers of talented and elite players at senior level in years to come.

Avry said that thanks to the VFF partnership with TVL, European Union, OFC, the VFF will renew the Together Kids program for another three year term. Vanuatu U-12 representatives – St. Joseph Primary School – won the OFC U-12 Festival of Football – Port Moresby 2007 and qualified for the Danone Nations Cup 2007 in Lyon, France, finishing a respectable 19<sup>th</sup> out of 32 teams from around all over the world.

The sponsorship and community network that made the tournament possible included Air Vanuatu, Ministry of Education, Red Cross, Ministry of Health, Radio VBTC, Vanuatu Daily Post, Radio 107FM, Real Estate de Luganville, Tennis Club of Port Vila, Television VBTC, Vila Handprints, Ministry of Sport, South Pacific Foundation and the many volunteers and teachers that put in hours of work to make the tournament possible.



**ABUANGA PRIMARY SCHOOL (above):** Victors of the TVL Together Kids Programme



**YVANA KASSA (pictured above):** 113 touches out of 180 as she beat away competition from the boys to finish second overall in the TVL Together Kids technical challenge

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