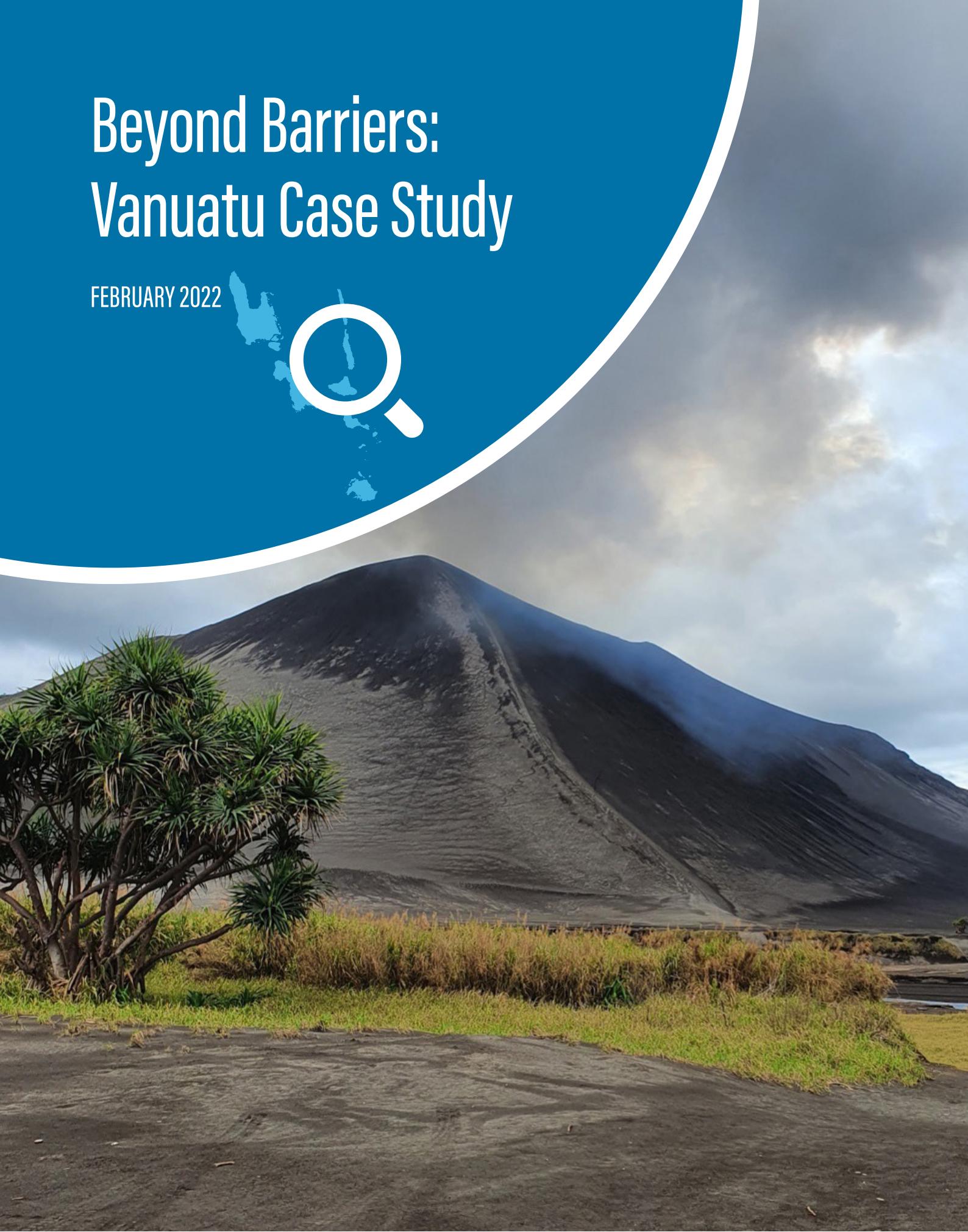


Beyond Barriers: Vanuatu Case Study

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About the research

This project is exploring opportunities for integration of climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction programming, focusing on local practice and implications at the community level, while recognising that these are often shaped by national and regional policy frameworks. It seeks to capture local evidence of best practice and identify ways to strengthen and build on these models.

Phase 1 involves case studies across the Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP) Disaster Ready program, including Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea (PNG). Phase 2 will extend data collection outside of AHP programming to validate findings using a wider regional dataset, including case studies in Tonga and Kiribati. This data is being collected through desk review,¹ key informant interviews at the global, regional and national levels, and community focus group discussions in case study countries. Recommendations from this work will inform future AHP programming and supplement ongoing discussions at the national and regional level in the Pacific.

The research is being undertaken by Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG) and supported by World Vision Australia through the AHP Disaster READY and Partnership and Performance Funds 2. These funding streams are managed by Alinea Whitelum on behalf of the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

About Humanitarian Advisory Group

HAG was founded in 2012 to elevate the profile of humanitarian action in Asia and the Pacific. Set up as a social enterprise, HAG provides a unique space for thinking, research, technical advice and training that contributes to excellence in humanitarian practice. As an ethically driven business, we combine humanitarian passion with entrepreneurial agility to think and do things differently.

About Disaster READY

The Disaster READY initiative is part of the AHP, a five-year (2017–22), \$50 million partnership between DFAT and Australian NGOs to improve humanitarian response. Disaster READY was designed to strengthen disaster preparedness and management across the Pacific and Timor-Leste.

Disaster READY serves to strengthen local humanitarian capability in Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, PNG and Timor-Leste so that communities are better prepared for and able to manage and respond to rapid and slow-onset disasters. This includes ensuring that the rights and needs of women, people with disabilities (PWD), youth and children are being upheld and met in disaster preparedness and response at all levels. In addition, Disaster READY helps government, NGOs, the private sector and communities coordinate more effectively for inclusive disaster preparedness and response, and national NGOs and churches to have more influence and capacity in countries' humanitarian systems.

¹ A literature review from this research was published in July 2020: [Beyond Barriers: Integrating Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation in the Pacific](#).

Acronyms

AHP	Australian Humanitarian Partnership
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
CCDRR	Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction
CDCCC	Community Disaster and Climate Change Committee
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DLA	Department of Local Authorities
DoCC	Department of Climate Change
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FRDP	Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific
HAG	Humanitarian Advisory Group
INGO	International NGO
MoCC	Ministry of Climate Change Adaptation, Meteorology, Geo-Hazards, Environment, Energy and Disaster Management
NAB	National Advisory Board on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction
NDMO	National Disaster Management Office
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NSDP	National Sustainable Development Plan
PDCCC	Provincial Disaster and Climate Change Committee
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PWD	people with disabilities
TC	Tropical Cyclone

Introduction

Vanuatu is considered very likely to experience increasingly frequent and severe disasters, especially due to the growing impacts of climate change. It is ranked as the country with the highest disaster risk according to the 2021 World Risk Report.² It is also often cited as leading the way in the integration of disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA) policies and strategies. It has been argued that Vanuatu is an excellent case study of practical implementation of the integrated Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (FRDP).³ This case study explores Vanuatu's progress in integration of CCA and DRR, identifying key themes and opportunities for stakeholders to advance approaches that reduce risk and enhance resilience at the community level in Vanuatu.

Purpose of the case study

This case study aims to describe a country-specific approach to CCA and DRR integration and inform the strengthening of community-level outcomes. The study focuses on Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP) programming in Vanuatu, though its results are intended for consideration by a wider range of stakeholders.

This case study will complement six other country case studies and additional Pacific-wide datasets. Findings across the entire dataset will be presented in a final report addressing the overarching questions below.

1. What are the existing challenges and opportunities in the implementation of integrated DRR and CCA programming?
2. How can AHP programs strengthen the integration of DRR and CCA at the community level in case study countries?

Definitions

Disaster risk reduction (DRR): Disaster risk reduction is aimed at preventing new and reducing existing disaster risk and managing residual risk, all of which contribute to strengthening resilience and therefore to the achievement of sustainable development.⁴

Climate change adaptation (CCA): The process of adjustment to actual or expected climate change and its effects. In human systems, adaptation seeks to moderate or avoid harm or exploit beneficial opportunities. In some natural systems, human intervention may facilitate adjustment to expected climate and its effects.⁵

Integration: In this report, 'integration' refers to the integration of DRR and CCA, meaning, the combination of interventions that address CCA and DRR with the intention of improving humanitarian and development outcomes for at-risk and crisis-affected populations.⁶

² World Risk Report 2021

³ Hallwright and Handmer, 2021, Progressing the integration of climate change adaptation and disaster risk management in Vanuatu and beyond, *Climate Risk Management*, 31.

⁴ IPCC 2019 Glossary

⁵ IPCC 2019 Glossary

⁶ This is a working definition adapted from the Global Nutrition Cluster and will be explored further and refined in this research. Available at https://fscluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/icnwg_developing_an_integrated_response_approach_gfsc_20191128.pdf

Methodology



Data collection was led by national researchers, overseen by a senior researcher based in Suva, Fiji and supported by HAG, World Vision Australia and AHP agencies and partners. The research used a mixed methods approach, including a desk review of 20+ documents, key informant interviews with 10 critical stakeholders, and community focus group discussions (FGDs) in five communities with 102 representatives including men, women, children, elders and people with disabilities. National researchers contextualised research tools for Vanuatu.

Limitations

Representativeness: Ten stakeholders participated in in-depth interviews, and 102 people took part in FGDs in five communities. FGDs were conducted in 2 out of the 5 provinces where AHP agencies operate. Impacts of climate change and programming approaches can vary significantly across provinces, limiting the generalisability of findings. These methods elicited a range of perspectives, but the small number of participants relative to the population of Vanuatu means that findings should be considered in tandem with other specific contextual factors.

Applicability of findings: This study was intended to present findings and opportunities that are relevant not only to AHP agencies, but other agencies operating and intending to operate in Vanuatu. However, research participants focused on AHP agencies and programs, therefore the results may not be fully applicable to other agencies.

Structure of this report

This report presents a brief snapshot of findings from data collection in three main sections.

- i. The first section provides an **overview of the disaster and climate context** in Vanuatu.
- ii. The second section provides an **overview of policy and practices** that influence DRR and CCA interventions and approaches.
- iii. The third section presents the **key findings and opportunities for stakeholders** in Vanuatu.

Section 1: Setting the scene - the disaster and climate context in Vanuatu

This section provides a brief overview of Vanuatu's climate and disaster risk, and the institutional arrangements that structure climate and disaster risk reduction efforts.

Climate and disaster risk profile

Vanuatu is an archipelago nation consisting of 82 volcanic islands, 62 of which are inhabited. Many of these islands sit less than a metre above sea level.⁷ The country has extensive natural resources, including forests, uplands, corals and atolls, which provide habitats for unique biodiversity and support livelihoods. Eighty per cent of the population reside in rural areas.⁸

Some existing and forecast contextual challenges facing Vanuatu are listed below.



Vanuatu's geographic location exposes it to frequent tropical cyclones and the cycles of El Niño and La Niña Southern Oscillation, increasing the risk of drought and floods.



Climate change is expected to increase the frequency of these extreme weather events, deplete natural resources and threaten communities with sea level rise.



The sea level has risen by an average of six millimetres a year since 1993.⁹ This is well above the global average, and threatens more than 94% of the population living in coastal areas, along with the majority of services, infrastructure and agriculture.¹⁰



The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre predicts that sudden-onset hazards are likely to displace an average of 3,680 people during any given future year.¹¹



Recent large-scale hydrometeorological hazards include Tropical Cyclone (TC) Harold in 2020, a Category 5 system which affected 83,837 people, and TC Pam in 2015, a Category 5 system which affected 188,000 people.¹²

7 Cop23, Vanuatu Country Profile

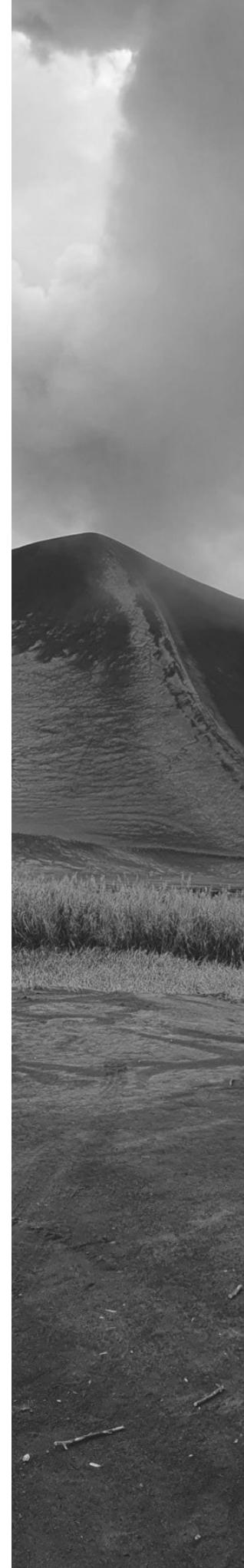
8 World Bank Group, Climate Knowledge Portal, [Vanuatu Country Profile](#)

9 Republic of Vanuatu, 2014, [Second national communication to UNFCCC](#)

10 Andrew, N. L., 2019, Coastal proximity of populations in 22 Pacific Island Countries and Territories, *PLoS One*, 14(9).

11 IDMC, 2020, [Sudden-Onset Hazards and the Risk of Future Displacement in Vanuatu](#)

12 Emergency Events Database (EM-DAT Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, 2021



Box 1: Spotlight on Eton Village

One of the communities visited for this research was Eton Village, located in the southeast of Efate. The largest disaster experienced by the people of Eton in recent memory was TC Pam, in March 2015. Participants in the focus group discussion recalled how nearly all houses were damaged and agriculture was destroyed. The cyclone brought flooding, which was followed by a drought in the dry season. This contributed to food and water scarcity in the months following the cyclone. Participants shared a common understanding of how climate change is affecting their community. They identified changes in temperature causing changing weather patterns, higher sea temperature, soil and beach erosion, more intense storms and changing crop yields and seasons. The people of Eton receive support from international NGOs (INGOs), the Red Cross and the Vanuatu government in preparing for and responding to disaster associated with climate hazards. They have established a Community Disaster and Climate Change Committee (CDCCC) to coordinate DRR and CCA activities.¹³

Overview of governance

Due to Vanuatu's high exposure to hazards and risk of disaster, disaster management has long been a priority of the national government. Governance of disaster and climate change is fully integrated in Vanuatu. The government chose to pursue an integrated strategy with the establishment of the National Advisory Board on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction (NAB) in 2012.

Prior to 2012, Vanuatu had two separate government entities governing climate change and DRR – the National Advisory Committee on Climate Change and the National Task Force on Disaster Risk Reduction. The integration of these traditionally separated entities was facilitated by the acknowledgement of the overlaps between CCA and DRR. Integration of governance served to enhance efficiency, strengthen coordination, improve the allocation of resources, and reduce duplication of efforts to ensure a more streamlined process for addressing national priorities.¹⁴ Findings below demonstrate that this national structure helps to support integrated mechanisms at the provincial and local levels.

Key governing bodies

- The **Ministry of Climate Change Adaptation, Meteorology, Geo-Hazards, Environment, Energy and Disaster Management (MoCC)** is the ministry responsible for resilient development in Vanuatu.
- The **National Advisory Board on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction** was established under the MoCC as the overarching policymaking and advisory body for all DRR and climate change programs, projects, initiatives and activities. NAB develops all DRR and climate change policies and guidelines, and positions and acts as a focal point for information – including coordination and national climate finance processes.¹⁵
- The **Department of Climate Change (DoCC)** also sits within the MoCC. As stipulated in its *Meteorology, Geological Hazards and Climate Change Act No. 25 of 2016*, the DoCC is tasked with the coordination and implementation of all CCA, climate change mitigation and DRR activities throughout the country, and acts as the focal point for achieving resilient development across all

¹³ FGD 1

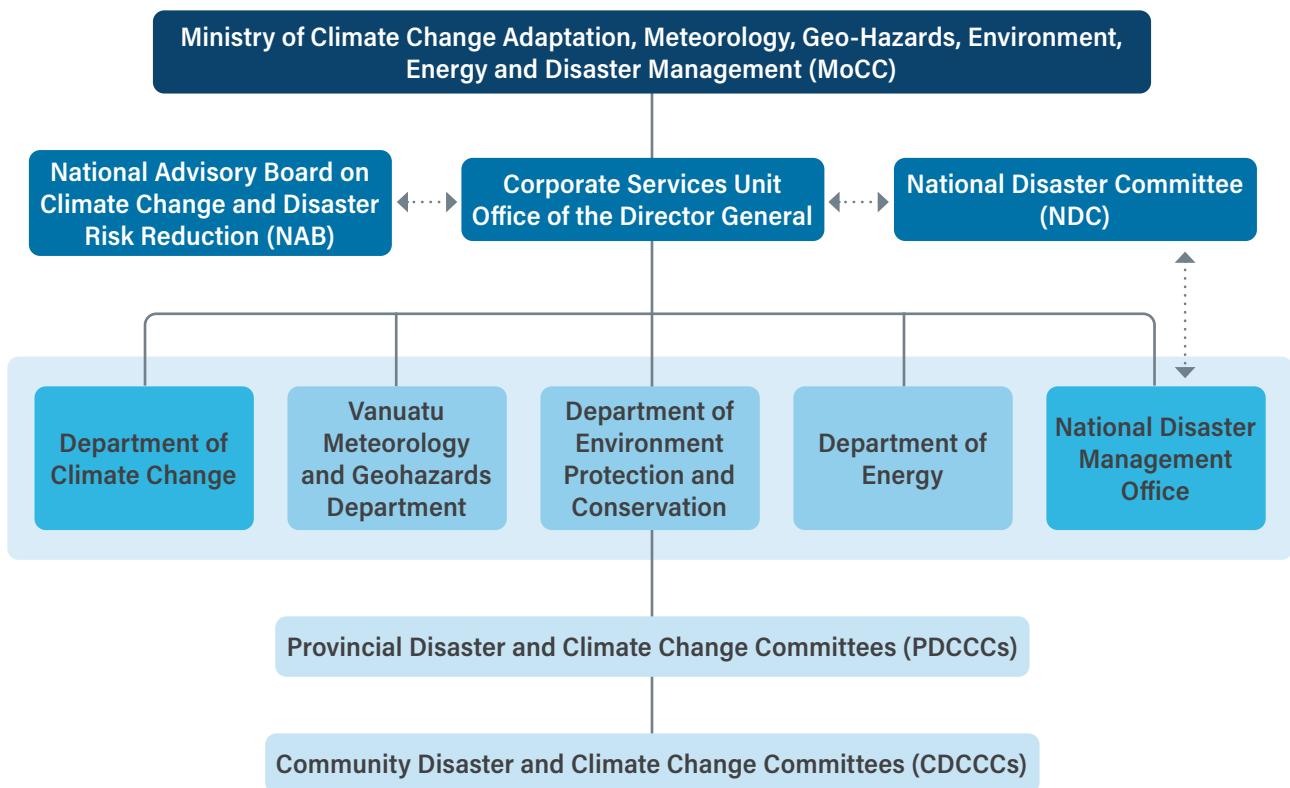
¹⁴ Government of the Republic of Vanuatu [Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction Policy 2016-2030](#).

¹⁵ <https://www.nab.vu>

levels and sectors of the government.¹⁶ The DoCC and NAB have complementary roles and work together to ensure Vanuatu's policy on climate change and DRR is mainstreamed across the policy of all sectors.

- The **National Disaster Committee (NDC)** also sits within the MoCC. The NDC serves to advise government agencies on disaster risk management including planning, preparation, preparedness and response. The body also oversees implementation of disaster risk management policies implemented by the NDMO, government agencies, partner agencies, civil society and the private sector.
- The **National Disaster Management Office (NDMO)** works closely with the NDC. The NDMO is responsible for the coordination of responses to emergencies and disasters across Vanuatu. The NDMO also plays an important role in preparedness, and lists one of its key objectives as integrating the coordination of DRR and CCA into sectoral plans, policies and budgeting across all levels – nationally, provincially and locally.¹⁷
- At the subnational level, **Provincial Disaster and Climate Change Committees (PDCCCs)** have been established to coordinate DRR and CCA activities, develop plans, and disseminate information to communities. Additionally, the NDMO, in partnership with NGOs and the Red Cross has supported the establishment of Community Disaster and Climate Change Committees (CDCCCs) across the country to further support communities to be actively engaged in recognising, assessing and mitigating risks.¹⁸

Figure A: Disaster and Climate Governance in Vanuatu



16 Department of Climate Change, Vanuatu, 2019, The New Department of Climate Change, Newsletter Issue 1, December.

17 <https://ndmo.gov.vu/bi/about-us>

18 CARE and World Vision Vanuatu, 2018, Investing in the Sustainability of Community Disaster and Climate Change Committees in Vanuatu.

DRR and CCA coordination mechanisms

National level

At the national level, DRR and CCA information and activities are coordinated by the NAB and the DoCC. The NAB plays a largely technical oversight role in coordination and acts as a focal point for information sharing.¹⁹ The DoCC is mandated to coordinate and monitor all climate change and DRR projects across the country and to secure future climate change and DRR projects and funding.²⁰ The coordination role is also supported by the NDMO, which works to connect and strengthen the disaster and climate change network at national, provincial and community levels.²¹

Sub-national level

The Vanuatu *Disaster Risk Management Act* of 2019 established PDCCCs in each province to coordinate CCA and DRR activities. The body serves to coordinate programs and assessments, conduct trainings, disseminate information and make decisions on the use of resources. Membership includes representatives of the provincial government, local authorities and an NGO representative.²² Each province also has a Technical Advisory Commission of provincial and national government representatives that coordinates government services.²³

Box 2: Community-level integrated mechanisms

At the community level, CDCCCs have been established to coordinate local activities and support communities' participation and leadership in disaster preparedness and response. CDCCCs conduct vulnerability assessments, create community action plans, provide trainings and share information with community members, as well as assist the community during times of disaster with evacuations, data collection and early response.²⁴ Members of CDCCCs are mainly volunteers from the community, which has raised challenges for sustainability and resourcing of the committees.²⁵ The NDMO has recognised the importance of CDCCCs in preparation and response to disaster. However, the government has not dedicated consistent resources or support to the committees. NGOs provide support and training for CDCCCs, alongside the community's own fundraising to implement preparedness activities.

19 <https://www.nab.vu>

20 Government of the Republic of Vanuatu Department of Climate Change, [The new DoCC in Vanuatu](#)

21 Government of the Republic of Vanuatu NDMO, [About NDMO](#)

22 Vanuatu *Disaster Risk Management Act* of 2019

23 CCDRR Policy

24 Vanuatu Red Cross Society, 2014, [Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction: Handbook for local facilitator](#)

25 CARE and World Vision Vanuatu, 2018, [Investing in the Sustainability of Community Disaster and Climate Change Committees in Vanuatu](#).



Section 2: Lay of the land - Policy and practice in Vanuatu

This section highlights relevant policies and funding arrangements relevant to disaster management, DRR and climate change in Vanuatu – the context in which implementing agencies operate. This section also provides a brief overview of AHP programming in the country.

Snapshot of key policies, plans and frameworks for DRR and CCA

Vanuatu is often considered a leader in integrating DRR and CCA at the national level. This section provides a high-level snapshot of the key policies, plans and frameworks for DRR and CCA in Vanuatu, including relevant policies at the regional and international level that influence national policy instruments.

Figure B: Key plans, policies and frameworks for DRR and CCA in Vanuatu



Box 3: The Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific

Vanuatu was deeply engaged in the development of the FRDP from 2013 to 2015, which directly influenced the development of Vanuatu's integrated national CCDRR policy in 2015.²⁶ The FRDP represents the world's first integrated regional framework to build and strengthen resilience to disasters and climate change. The framework was created in response to regional recognition that climate change and disaster risks are crosscutting and interrelated.²⁷ It provides strategic guidance to stakeholders on how best to respond to disaster risk, including those associated with climate change. The development of this framework, alongside the devastating impacts of TC Pam in Vanuatu in 2015, created a strong impetus for Vanuatu to update and integrate its national disaster and climate policies.²⁸

Nearly all policies relating to sustainable development, climate change or disaster are linked closely in Vanuatu. The national CCDRR policy was highlighted as key by several stakeholders in supporting an integrated approach to community programming in Vanuatu.²⁹ The MoCC is currently working to finalise an implementation plan to complement this policy (see Box 5).

Relevant funding arrangements

Domestically, the Government of Vanuatu allocates one of the highest levels of funding to DRR and climate change in the world, coming in at 15% in financial year 2020.³⁰ This demonstrates the government's dedication to effectively resourcing its institutional plans and policy arrangements, and is complemented by substantial international assistance. The main multilateral sources for climate change-related activities in Vanuatu include the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Global Environment Facility and, most recently, the Global Climate Fund. Australia is Vanuatu's largest bilateral donor for climate change, followed by Japan, China and New Zealand. The Vanuatu Climate Change Finance Review of 2018 found that from 2013 to 2017, Vanuatu received USD 200 million in climate finance; 89% was dispersed for adaptation measures, 9% for mitigation activities and only 2% was allocated for DRR.³¹

The CCDRR Policy 2016-2030 seeks to ensure that adequate resourcing is available for climate change and DRR activities. The NAB plays a critical role in governing and allocating funds, and serves as an important model of a high-level advisory body that coordinates the allocation of climate change and DRR funding. The integrated nature of the body minimises the risk that funding will remain siloed and inaccessible across programming. The 2018 Climate Change Finance Review emphasised the importance of strengthening the NAB's relationship and information sharing with existing coordination mechanisms at the community level, such as the CDCCCs and Technical Advisory Commissions at the provincial level to improve coordination, transparency and accessibility of funds at the subnational level.³²

'Every fund application has to go through the NAB process for screening, a project committee will have to review the project. One thing that they look for is the component of climate change and to see if DRR is in it [...] majority of the projects are integrated.' (National actor)³³

26 Hallwright and Handmer, 2021, Progressing the integration of climate change adaptation and disaster risk management in Vanuatu and beyond. *Climate Risk Management*, 31, 100269, 1-10.

27 FRDP 2017-2030

28 Hallwright and Handmer, 2021, Progressing the integration of CCA and DRM in Vanuatu

29 Interviews 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9

30 Hallwright and Handmer, 2021, Progressing the integration of CCA and DRM in Vanuatu

31 GIZ, 2018, Vanuatu Climate Change Finance Review

32 PIFS et. al., 2018, Vanuatu Climate Change Finance Review.

33 Interview 3

AHP Disaster READY in Vanuatu

Disaster Ready Vanuatu is implemented by a consortium of six lead Australian NGOs and more than 15 local partners delivering risk reduction, adaptation and emergency response programming across the country. At the community level, Disaster READY focuses on community-based DRR and CCA, prioritising a balanced gender representation and including people with disabilities and a stronger youth voice. This includes building the capacity of Provincial Disaster and Climate Change Committees and CDCCCs to respond to local disaster events, supporting provincial emergency operations centres, advancing gender, disability and social inclusion leadership and capacity within national clusters and the NDMO, and building humanitarian capability within provincial and national government education and training departments.³⁴

Figure C: Communities visited that receive assistance through Disaster READY



³⁴ Adapted from <https://www.australianhumanitarianpartnership.org/vanuatu>

Section 3: Integration in action - Findings and Opportunities



FINDING 1: A shared understanding of the clear relationship between climate change and DRR makes integration fundamental for Vanuatu.

The relationship between climate change and DRR is widely recognised in Vanuatu. All stakeholders interviewed expressed a common understanding of the relationship between the changing climate and the increasing need to reduce disaster risk.

'The similarity of CCA and DRR is that they both have the same goal – to manage and minimise risk.' (National actor)³⁵

The key relationship noted was that climate change influences weather patterns, which in turn can lead to hazards.³⁶ This understanding was also largely reflected at the community level.³⁷ While Vanuatu does experience non-climate related hazards, such as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, both interview respondents and community members highlighted that many of the major disasters that have occurred in recent years have been climate related.³⁸

'Climate change adaptation is a part of DRR in Vanuatu, where we want to reduce the impact and change way of doing things or respond differently.' (INGO actor)³⁹

Some variation remains around the term 'integration' and the definitions of each term individually. However, none of these variations prevent recognition of the need to work holistically. This research highlights that trying to differentiate between the specifics of CCA and DRR terminology and activities in the context of Vanuatu is counterproductive. It suggests that Vanuatu has implemented measures that support an understanding of risk that is not based around conceptual siloes.

Stakeholders also emphasised that at the community level, there is no differentiation between DRR and CCA, so the concept of integration does not resonate.⁴⁰ However, this is not necessarily a limitation, rather an opportunity to build a holistic understanding of risk in communities that can be built upon from the bottom-up.

'At the community level, we haven't really differentiated between climate change problems and development problems, so at the moment not a lot of people in the communities understand this concept.' (National actor)⁴¹

³⁵ Interview 6

³⁶ Interviews 1, 4, 7, 8

³⁷ FGD 1-5

³⁸ Interview 1, 4, 5, 7; FGD 1, 2

³⁹ Interview 7

⁴⁰ Interview 3, 7

⁴¹ Interview 3

Community members demonstrated their understanding of the links between changing weather patterns and increasing hazards.⁴² When asked about how they prepare for disaster and how they adapt to a changing climate, responses overlapped significantly.⁴³



OPPORTUNITIES

Continue to minimise polarising terminology

by using a consistent definition and understanding of risk

Leverage the lessons learned in Vanuatu to reconceptualise DRR and CCA to share

among other Pacific countries to support further progress towards integration in the region



FINDING 2: Integrated policy has paved the way to integrated practice in Vanuatu.

'If you are not working in an integrated approach, you are working outside of the national policy of the government.' (National actor)⁴⁴

Vanuatu's progress in integrating climate change and disaster policies and governance structures at the national level is directly reflected in agency policies and approaches. Nearly all stakeholders interviewed referenced the CCDRR policy as a guiding instrument to practice, with only one respondent indicating that they were unaware of government policy and frameworks.⁴⁵

'[We] follow government policies and priorities. The CCDRR policy is an integrated policy of DRR and CCA and suggests every sector should be mainstreaming climate change.' (INGO actor)⁴⁶

The national CCDRR policy was directly influenced by the regional FRDP.⁴⁷ This has also been adapted into Provincial Disaster and Climate Response Plans across several provinces.⁴⁸ Stakeholders highlighted these provincial plans as an important way to connect national policy to communities.⁴⁹

'Policies and government priorities are the main focus in our implementation work.' (INGO actor)⁵⁰

Additional national policies were also highlighted as guiding practice, this included the NSDP, MoCC Corporate Plan and the NDMO Strategic Plan.⁵¹ There are several examples of AHP agencies aligning their own strategic plans with policies and guidance of the government (see Box 4).

⁴² FGD 1-5

⁴³ FGD 1-5

⁴⁴ Interview 3

⁴⁵ Interviews 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9

⁴⁶ Interview 9

⁴⁷ Interview 8, CCDRR policy

⁴⁸ Interview 8, NDMO Disaster Response Plans

⁴⁹ Interview 1, 8

⁵⁰ Interview 5

⁵¹ Interview 1, 4, 5, 6

Box 4: Implementing agencies align strategy with government policies

Interviews revealed several examples of AHP agencies aligning programs with government policy. For example, CARE maintains a Long-Term Program Strategy which aligns with the NSDP and CCDRR policy at the national and subnational level.⁵² Representatives from the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) also indicated that they follow the NSDP and Corporate and Strategic Plans of the MoCC and NDMO when implementing programming.⁵³ Representatives from both Oxfam and World Vision in Vanuatu also referenced the CCDRR policy and NDMO Strategic Plan as key to working in collaboration with government to achieve its priorities.⁵⁴

However, several stakeholders highlighted that there is still more that can be done to strengthen the relationship between policy and communities.⁵⁵ Ongoing consultations for the CCDRR implementation plan (see Box 5) were highlighted as an opportunity to progress this link.⁵⁶ In addition, strengthening the relationship between the MoCC and the Department of Local Authorities (DLA), was proposed as an avenue to ensure policies were reaching communities.⁵⁷

Box 5: Implementing the CCDRR policy

The MoCC began developing the implementation plan for the CCDRR policy in 2020. This has included consultation with a range of stakeholders to identify strategic priorities and entry points. Once finalised, the implementation plan will offer more guidance to implementing agencies in operationalising the policy. Stakeholders suggested that this process presents an opportunity for increased consultation with local representatives to strengthen the relationship between the policy and communities.⁵⁸

'The bottom-up approach is the best way to target needs in the communities. [Community members] voice their concerns, but we have to align our activities with policy to achieve government objectives.' (INGO actor)⁵⁹



OPPORTUNITIES

Continue to invest in translating provincial plans to community-level actions

Continue to facilitate connections between national policy convenors and holders and local authorities

Ensure that the CCDRR policy implementation plan is leveraged to strengthen the link between integrated policy instruments and community-level actions

⁵² Interview 1

⁵³ Interview 5

⁵⁴ Interviews 7, 9

⁵⁵ Interviews 3, 4, 9

⁵⁶ Interview 4

⁵⁷ Interview 3

⁵⁸ Interviews 3, 9

⁵⁹ Interview 4

FINDING 3: Integrated coordination structures and communication pathways are foundational to integrated practice at all levels.

Coordination across activities was viewed as generally effective in Vanuatu. Coordination mechanisms include a range of actors across levels, including the private sector, NGOs, CSOs, national and provincial government, and communities.⁶⁰ The central roles of the NAB and DoCC were mentioned as critical for national coordination, because both organisations must approve all information and programming plans.⁶¹ However, there is still room to improve central coordination; some agencies continue to bypass this important mechanism.

'It is highly dependent on the efficiency of this [NAB] working group [...] this doesn't stop the NGOs and CSOs to go and implement on the ground without the government knowing, so there is a big gap.' (National actor)⁶²

The establishment of CDCCCs throughout the country has been very helpful in coordinating activities at the community level.⁶³ Several AHP agencies cited support and training of CDCCCs as core to their activities.⁶⁴ Most agencies have also established a coordination focal point within communities/CDCCCs to ensure information is flowing to the communities.⁶⁵ CDCCCs have supported community members to be more actively involved in recognising, assessing and mitigating risks (see Box 6); however, limitations remain regarding sustainability and effectiveness, and gaps between CDCCCs and local governance structures.⁶⁶

Box 6: Inclusive community structures

Active participation and inclusion of diverse groups was highlighted as foundational to good practice in integrated community-based programming.⁶⁷ The establishment of CDCCCs enables all groups to be represented in community structures and decision-making processes. Representatives from AHP agencies emphasised that their programming is inclusive and tailored to the needs of diverse groups – including women, men, youth, elderly and PWD – and in areas where CDCCCs are established, these structures are also representative.⁶⁸ However, respondents also highlighted that cultural barriers in Vanuatu continue to hinder the meaningful and equal participation of women and girls in decision-making.⁶⁹

Most stakeholders agreed that channels of communication for coordination between agencies and government actors were effective.⁷⁰ This includes between the DLA, provincial governments, area administrations, community leaders and the CDCCCs. AHP agencies additionally coordinate through established Country Committees (see Box 7).

60 Interviews 5, 7, 8, 9

61 Interview 8

62 Interview 3

63 Interview 1, 4, 5, 10; FGD 1, 5

64 Interviews 1, 5, 7

65 Interviews 1, 4

66 CARE and World Vision Vanuatu, 2018, Investing in the Sustainability of Community Disaster and Climate Change Committees in Vanuatu.

67 Interviews 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9

68 Interviews 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9

69 Interview 4

70 Interviews 1, 4, 5, 7, 9

Box 7: Disaster READY coordination

Activities implemented by AHP Disaster READY agencies and partners are coordinated through Country Committees established in each country where the program operates. This body consists of a representative of each of the AHP consortium partners operating in the country and at least one representative from a national disabled people's organisation – with local partners, additional stakeholders and government representatives invited as necessary.

Country Committees coordinate with CDCCCs and communities by sharing information across numerous outlets. The first point of contact is the DLA, then the provincial president, then area administration, and then community leaders/focal points and CDCCCs (see Figure D). This system was perceived as generally effective across most AHP stakeholders interviewed.⁷¹

Figure D: Disaster READY coordination with communities



There is opportunity to facilitate more open two-way communication channels from the communities up to the AHP Country Committees and other coordination forums. While findings suggest that current mechanisms have supported effective information flows to communities, it is important that community members also have the agency to spread messages to implementers and local authorities to inform plans and preparedness activities.



OPPORTUNITIES

Continue to support the role of CDCCCs as an integrated mechanism for community-level actions, ensuring that conversations and strategies to optimise their sustainability are a critical consideration

○ **Prioritise active representation and participation of vulnerable groups** as members of CDCCCs, including PWD, women, girls and sexual and gender minorities to support overcoming cultural gender norms

○ **Ensure that communication channels do not flow only in a top-down structure**, facilitate opportunities for community members to inform coordination priorities

⁷¹ Interviews 1, 4, 5, 7, 9



FINDING 4: Consistent messages tailored to diverse audiences enables informed decision-making for communities.

While there is no formal information or knowledge management system for climate and disaster risk in Vanuatu, the central roles of NAB and DoCC support effective information management at the national level.⁷² Effective coordination, discussed above, supports a steady flow of information to communities, but gaps remain in the consistency and delivery of messaging.

At the community level, additional information is a critical component of integrated approaches, ensuring that communities have access to the information about the short- and long-term contexts, risks, hazards and potential impacts of events. Communities draw upon their own sources of information (see Box 8), but supplementing them is a critical component of good practice to support informed decision making. When discussing the importance of delivering information to communities, there was a gap in stakeholders referencing two-way knowledge transfer and the importance of learning from information coming from communities.

Box 8: Centrality of traditional knowledge as an information source

Traditional knowledge is a vital source of practice and expertise than can be leveraged to enhance integrated approaches. Traditional knowledge is identified in the Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction Policy as an integral area that needs support urgently.⁷³ This was highlighted as especially important in supporting women to exchange ideas around food preservation.⁷⁴ Communities also emphasised the importance of traditional practice in building resilient houses and evacuation centres, water management techniques and crop rotation.⁷⁵ Community members commented that sharing of traditional knowledge from elders is especially important in helping them prepare for disaster.⁷⁶ There are opportunities to further strengthen and elevate the role of traditional knowledge, including in two-way information pathways between communities and other stakeholders.

'Traditional knowledge is a way forward for remote communities that hardly receive early warning signal from the warning centre.' (INGO actor)⁷⁷

Information provision is a key feature of many AHP programs; for example, several respondents explained their approach to sharing information with communities through posters, booklets, videos, and role plays or simulations.⁷⁸ Stakeholders emphasised that information is provided in simple language that is easy to understand.⁷⁹

'Some information is taken by communities during discussion and produced into posters or small booklets to share. Communities take ownership of their information.' (INGO actor)⁸⁰

⁷² Interview 3, 8

⁷³ Vanuatu Climate Change and Disaster Reduction Policy 2016-2030, p. 14

⁷⁴ Interviews 4, 9; FGD 2

⁷⁵ FGDs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

⁷⁶ FGDs 1, 2, 3

⁷⁷ Interview 1

⁷⁸ Interview 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9

⁷⁹ Interview 4, 5, 7, 9

⁸⁰ Interview 1

Respondents commented that there is a need to ensure that messages are consistent across all stakeholders to reduce confusion and avoid duplication.⁸¹ Repetition of activities in the community is helpful to ensure everyone is included and understands their role and responsibilities.⁸²

Sharing information on climate and disaster resilience in an integrated and risk-informed way is key to building a holistic understanding of risk within communities. Communities confirmed that they received information in a range of formats. Visual representations and posters were valued by some communities,⁸³ while others highlighted role-play activities and simulations as the most effective.⁸⁴ Some communities also called for better and more accessible radio coverage to spread messages and alerts.⁸⁵ Traditional knowledge was also identified as a resource to leverage for communication that is better understood and owned by communities (see Box 8).⁸⁶

There are challenges in ensuring that the right information gets to the right people in the right ways. For example, the translation and communication of climate science could be more consistent, as could knowledge of how to best deliver messages to PWD.⁸⁷ Different groups experience the impacts of climate and disaster differently; it is important to tailor information to the needs of diverse audiences (see Box 9).

Box 9: Inclusive and tailored information

Community members pointed out that different groups in the community have different roles when preparing for disaster and climate change. For example, in one community, this means that men build resilient houses and evacuation shelters and work on agriculture and gardening; women collect, prepare and store food and clean water; and young people collect firewood and water and help to build houses.⁸⁸ Community members called for more trainings and information surrounding specific activities targeted at these groups. Another community called for leadership training for youth in the community.⁸⁹ This information must not only be tailored to specific activities, but delivered in appropriate formats to reach each target audience effectively.

One positive example of this can be seen through the work of the Shifting the Power Coalition, a woman-led regional alliance focused on strengthening the collective power, leadership and influence of Pacific women to respond to disasters and climate change. In Vanuatu, membership includes Action Aid Vanuatu, Vanuatu Young Women for Change and Vanuatu Disability Promotion and Advocacy Association. One of the activities supported by the coalition is the training of young women to translate scientific climate and disaster information into plain language and disseminate it to peers and other women's groups.⁹⁰ There is opportunity to learn from and scale these initiatives.



OPPORTUNITIES

Strengthen two-way information channels with CDCCCs; ensure CDCCCs are equipped to receive relevant information to support decision-making, and that information from communities, including traditional knowledge, is fed efficiently to decision-makers

Ensure that messaging to communities is frequent, consistent, tailored to diverse audiences, and delivered using a variety of mechanisms to reach a wider audience

⁸¹ Interviews 6, 8

⁸² Interviews 7, 9

⁸³ FGD 2

⁸⁴ FGD 1, 3

⁸⁵ FGD 1, 5

⁸⁶ Interview 1, 4, 7, 9

⁸⁷ Interviews 1, 5, 9

⁸⁸ FGD 1

⁸⁹ FGD 2

⁹⁰ Action Aid, *Pacific Island Countries: Shifting the Power Coalition*, 2022

Summary: Snapshot of findings and opportunities

There is significant opportunity to build on the good practice and progress that is being made in policies and operational practices to enhance community outcomes in Vanuatu. Four key findings and opportunities for consideration by implementing agencies are presented below. Future phases of this research may seek to deepen the dataset and implement and assess recommendations to link evidence to impact.

 FINDINGS	 OPPORTUNITIES
A shared understanding of the clear relationship between climate change and DRR makes integration fundamental for Vanuatu	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▫ Continue to minimise polarising terminology by using a consistent definition and understanding of risk▫ Leverage the lessons learned in Vanuatu to reconceptualise DRR and CCA to be shared among other Pacific countries to support progress towards integration further in the region
Integrated policy has paved the way to integrated practice in Vanuatu	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▫ Continue to invest in translating provincial plans to community-level actions▫ Continue to facilitate connections between national policy convenors and holders and local authorities▫ Ensure that the implementation plan is leveraged to strengthen the link between integrated policy instruments and community-level actions
Integrated coordination structures and communication pathways are foundational to integrated practice at all levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▫ Continue to support the role of CDCCCs as an integrated mechanism for community-level actions, ensuring that conversations and strategies to optimise their sustainability are a critical consideration▫ Prioritise active representation and participation of vulnerable groups as members of CDCCCs, including PWD, women, girls and sexual and gender minorities▫ Ensure that communication channels do not flow only in a top-down structure, facilitate opportunities for community members to inform coordination priorities
Consistent messages tailored to diverse audiences enables informed decision-making for communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▫ Strengthen two-way information channels with CDCCCs; ensure CDCCCs are equipped to receive relevant information to support decision-making, and that information from communities, including traditional knowledge, is fed efficiently to decision-makers▫ Ensure that messaging to communities is frequent, consistent, tailored to diverse audiences, and delivered using a variety of mechanisms