Yumi stap
redi long
klaemet jenis

Lessons from the Vanuatu NGO
Climate Change Adaptation Program

May 2015
This report was researched and written by Nic Maclellan. It was commissioned by Oxfam Australia and managed by Simon Bradshaw.

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Front cover photo: Mala Silas, Field Officer with CARE International in Vanuatu, inspecting community garden on Futuna. Simon Bradshaw / Oxfam 2014.
PREFACE: CYCLONE PAM

The main research for this report was carried out in July 2014, eight months before Vanuatu suffered a direct hit from one of the most powerful cyclones ever recorded in the South Pacific. It charts the groundbreaking efforts of the NGOs, communities and the government of Vanuatu between 2012 and 2014 to build resilience in the face of climate change.

While no amount of effort and resources could have adequately prepared Vanuatu or indeed any nation for a test as severe as Cyclone Pam, it is clear that the investment in climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction and response through the Vanuatu NGO Climate Change Adaptation Program, Vanuatu Climate Action Network and the Vanuatu Humanitarian Team was integral to Vanuatu’s ability to prepare and respond to this unprecedented challenge. Improvements in coordination, education, early warning, and other measures have saved lives, strengthened community resilience, and will remain integral to the process of rebuilding.

Cyclone Pam was the strongest possible call for tougher international action on climate change. The Vanuatu NGO Climate Change Adaptation Program, and the remarkable efforts of the Vanuatu government, community and NGOs to respond to the challenge of climate change, stands as testimony to the value of investing in climate change adaptation, community resilience, and amplifying the voices of vulnerable communities.

This report is dedicated to the ni-Vanuatu women, men and children, and the many agencies working throughout the islands, as they work with determination and courage through this most challenging time for Vanuatu.

Further research will be carried out over the months ahead to capture and share the lessons from Cyclone Pam. For the latest developments, contact Daniel Vorbach: danielv@oxfam.org.au. Some early observations are outlined in the Afterword on page 42.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

People across the Pacific island nation of Vanuatu are adapting to climate change, concerned about changing weather patterns and threats to their food security and water supply. They’re drawing on the resilience of their culture and community, but also on the support of government and NGOs.

The Vanuatu NGO Climate Change Adaptation Program “Yumi stap redi long klaemet jenis” is a consortium of six local and international agencies: Oxfam, CARE International in Vanuatu, Save the Children, Vanuatu Red Cross, Vanuatu Rural Development Training Centres Association and the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ). It is a valuable model for climate change action. A central objective of the program is to increase community resilience and improve capacity to respond to natural disasters and the adverse impacts of climate change.

At a time when governments are seeking value for money and effective use of development assistance funding, this program illustrates a valuable way of working. By promoting better co-ordination, increased disaster preparedness, more resilient communities and improved livelihoods, the Yumi stap redi long klaemet jenis program contributes to a range of broader development goals.

The $2 million program has been based on co-operation between diverse government agencies and community organisations, through the Vanuatu Climate Action Network (VCAN) and the Vanuatu Humanitarian Team (VHT). While the program is focused at community level, a key feature of the initiative is the strategic effort placed on building links between government, local and international NGOs, and grassroots communities. As well as operating throughout rural areas and urban settlements to address concerns over food and water security, this coalition-based approach increases local capacity through networking and collective action.

This program has drawn on the collective experience and specialist skills of VCAN and VHT members in a variety of ways: developing community-level adaptation interventions and disaster preparedness; investing in evaluation, learning and research; raising awareness amongst ni-Vanuatu about the science and potential impact of climate change; building national and provincial government disaster preparedness and coordination mechanisms, and capacity to prepare and respond to disasters; lobbying and influencing government from the local through to national level, and into international climate negotiations; and linking with regional networks including the Pacific Islands Climate Action Network and Pacific Humanitarian Team. It has developed coordinated messages and language to educate men, women and young people across Vanuatu about climate change, how it may affect them, and what government and other key players are doing.

The program has developed the central concept of “resilience” as a framework for action, to build capacity to respond to shocks and stresses and adapt to uncertain futures. This concept is illustrated in this report by two case studies - one focused on agriculture and food security projects in an isolated rural island; the other at the international level, as the government and people of Vanuatu intervene in global climate negotiations.
The initial phase of the program ran from 2013 to early 2015, supporting communities on nine islands across four provinces in Vanuatu. The program was designed to extend beyond the initial phase, understanding that long term engagement is required to support communities’ capacity to adapt to continually changing conditions, and continues in the form of the Vanuatu Resilience Network.

The Yumi stap redi long klaemet jenis program and the collaboration between government and community organisations has involved both significant achievements but also exposed ongoing challenges. As detailed in this report, there are a number of key outcomes:

- the program has been successful in mobilising people at the grassroots - especially women, young people and often marginalised sections of rural and urban communities – who are building resilience at community level;
- the initial NGO consortium, involving local and international organisations, is devolving into a broader network, drawing on the skills and experience of a diverse range of participants;
- consortium members have developed the concept of “resilience” as a framework for future responses to climate change, which is being taken up by other development actors;
- the program’s way of working, based on networking, collaboration, facilitation and community empowerment, adds value to existing responses to climate change;
- personal relationships as well as institutional affiliations are vital in a Pacific context, and there is a need to promote “champions” within government who will provide leadership for this type of work;
- Vanuatu’s ability to respond to climate change has benefited from a small but significant investment in a central network hub, with staff based in the Oxfam in Vanuatu office who have worked as brokers, convenors and facilitators, a crucial resource in coordinating such a diverse range of activities;
- the program has also benefited from a level of flexibility and innovation, with the key donor AusAID (now DFAT) supporting the addition of new components after the initial program design;
- a relatively small investment has generated significant results in a short time, and provides an example of “ways of working” that can be shared with and replicated by other practitioners;
- this work by government and NGOs in Vanuatu has highlighted the need to design initiatives according to the political realities, available people and resources and scale of small island states, rather than implement standardised programs designed for larger developing nations.

In spite of these achievements, there are also challenges in this way of working, and the report outlines some issues that can impact on the success of similar initiatives: from staff turnover to uncertainty over sustainable funding; from the difficulty of sharing knowledge as well as information, to resistance from institutions that are reluctant to adapt their ways of working.

This report outlines nine areas that need to be prioritized when replicating this model in different sectors or in different countries:
1. Building inclusive, meaningful partnerships
2. Working with communities and engaging the most vulnerable
3. Promoting civil society input to government policy making
4. Bridging the gap between levels: community, national, regional, global
5. Allocating resources for a co-ordination hub
6. Strengthening the role of leadership, champions and relationships
7. Developing accountability and an innovative cycle of learning
8. Sharing information and knowledge
9. Promoting sustainability, results and value for money
PART 1: INTRODUCTION

In the morning, the young students of Ishia Primary School are out watering the vegetable plots in the school’s community garden and picking bugs off the leafy greens.

“If we don’t come out each morning, the bugs will get our greens, so we are at it every day,” says schoolteacher Fred Navana. “Now we’re trialling organic methods to keep the pests away, so we can use these vegetables to supplement the nutrition of the school boarders.”

The school is located on Futuna, a small outlying island in the Pacific nation of Vanuatu. For the people of Futuna, using a school gardening project to teach young children about agriculture and nutrition is part of a bigger vision.

Working with local and international non-government organisations through the Vanuatu Climate Action Network (VCAN) and the Vanuatu Humanitarian Team (VHT), this small project in Futuna is just one part of a wider national initiative: the Vanuatu NGO Climate Change Adaptation Program “Yumi stap redi long klaemet jenis.”

This report seeks to capture some of the diverse experiences of the Yumi stap redi long klaemet jenis program, outlining the experience of participants as they seek to merge responses to climate change, human and natural disasters. It also uses the lessons learnt from these local activities to support national policy and practice.

Part 2 of the report briefly describes the Vanuatu context, with the establishment of the Ministry of Climate Change and increasing collaboration between government departments and non-state actors. It documents the creation of a network of international and Vanuatu non-government organisations (NGOs), to complement the creation of a specialist Project Management Unit (PMU) within the Ministry of Climate Change and a National Advisory Board on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction (NAB) to co-ordinate policy across government departments.

Part 3 of the report outlines the concept of resilience – the capacity of communities to deal with shocks and stresses and adapt to uncertain futures – and shows how this concept has helped frame activities through the program.

Part 4 presents two case studies - one focused on agriculture and food security projects in an isolated rural island; the other at the international level, as the government and people of Vanuatu intervene in global climate negotiations.

These two case studies provide concrete examples of the contribution that the program has made in a short time, both in concrete development activities on the ground and in policy formulation and advocacy. They are just two examples of a diverse range of program activities in adaptation, disaster response, community education and policy development: further initiatives under the program are listed in the appendix (p. 46).

In Part 5, the report summarises a number of lessons and challenges from Yumi stap redi long klaemet jenis. These lessons can be drawn on for the post-2015 landscape, as international agencies and governments work towards the finalisation of a new global climate agreement, the replacement of Millennium Development Goals by Sustainable Development Goals, and the
The implementation of the new Strategy for Disaster and Climate Resilient Development in the Pacific (SDRP).

We hope that this brief introduction to the largely successful ways of working in Vanuatu may be valuable for other communities and organisations. We believe that the Vanuatu experience is not unique and that the resilience framework and the central focus on partnership provides a model to be considered for other sectors or other countries.

The lead author of this report visited Vanuatu twice in 2012 and again in June and July 2014, meeting with and interviewing government, donors, NGOs and community representatives. The author had the opportunity to see a range of activities underway in Vanuatu, participating in workshops with the Vanuatu National Advisory Board (NAB) and other ministries, but also travelling to the island of Futuna, walking from village to village and meeting with community members and the island’s Community Disaster Committee.

The report also draws on published studies by VCAN members, internal working documents and government statements, as well as research and workshops conducted in Vanuatu for Oxfam in 2012 (Maclellan 2012). Although it cannot capture all of the activities, the report hopes to present some of the key lessons from the Yumi stap redi long klaemet jenis program. A draft of the report was shared with both government and network representatives, but the analysis and conclusions are the responsibility of the author.
PART 2: VANUATU CONTEXT

Climate change and disaster risks

Climate change and increasing disaster risks have emerged as fundamental development challenges. Decades of hard-won development gains are under threat, as more people and infrastructure are exposed to shocks and disasters, longer term climate stresses and uncertainty. Without urgent action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to current and projected changes, it will become harder for many people to lift themselves out of poverty and avoid irreparable loss and damage.

Data from recent scientific studies by the CSIRO and Australian Bureau of Meteorology (PACCSAP, 2014) show that Vanuatu is currently experiencing significant changes in climate, with longer term projections showing a range of potentially adverse impacts:

- Further warming is expected over Vanuatu. Annual maximum and minimum temperatures have increased in both Port Vila and Aneityum since 1950. These temperature increases are consistent with the global pattern of warming. By 2030, under a high emissions scenario, this increase in temperature is projected to be in the range of 0.4–1.0°C.

- Satellite data indicate the sea level has risen near Vanuatu by about 6 mm per year since 1993. This is larger than the global average of 2.8–3.6 mm per year. By 2030, under a high emissions scenario, this rise in sea level is projected to be in the range of 3–17 cm.

- The frequency and intensity of extreme rainfall events are projected to increase, with impacts on community infrastructure and agricultural production.

- An average of 24 cyclones per decade developed within or crossed the Vanuatu Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) between 1969-70 and 2010-11. Twenty-nine of the 71 tropical cyclones (41 per cent) between the 1981-82 and 2010-11 seasons were severe events (Category 3 or stronger). In the Vanuatu region, projections tend to show a decrease in the frequency of tropical cyclones by the late 21st century and an increase in the proportion of more intense storms.
Because of its geographic location, Vanuatu faces hazards from cyclones, volcanoes and earthquakes. In the latest World Risk Report listing of countries, Vanuatu was reported as the most at-risk country, based on exposure and vulnerability to hazards (ADW 2014, 9).

With ni-Vanuatu farmers already observing disruptions to seasonality (such as early ripening of fruit trees), climatic changes are already stressing food crops and eroding the usefulness of traditional knowledge in early warning for disasters. Nutrition based on marine resources will also be threatened by slow onset climate changes such as ocean acidification. The risk of coral bleaching will increase in the future, threatening coral reef ecosystems that are vital for livelihoods and sustenance (PACCSAP, 2014).

These changes in weather and climate will add to existing development challenges. Vanuatu is listed as number 131 on the 2013 UN Human Development Index (UNDP 2014).

Currently listed by the United Nations as a "least developed country" (LDC), Vanuatu is set to graduate from this status in December 2017, which will involve the loss of some aid, preferential market access and special technical assistance.

Vanuatu’s social and economic system draws on the strength of its customary laws and values (known as kastom in Bislama) as well as the ongoing benefits of customary land ownership. However even 34 years after independence, the country is still overcoming the bureaucratic, legal and administrative legacies of decades of British and French colonialism. Government must address the needs of diverse cultural populations, dozens of different languages and communities spread over vast areas, from peri-urban squatter settlements to outlying islands. Over 75 percent of the population are reliant on subsistence agriculture and fisheries, combined with cash cropping, aid grants and remittances.

Vanuatu is also facing increasing public debate over gender issues and the role of young people in development. The issue of gender affects all adaptation to climate change. There is a growing body of evidence which shows that women, men and children contribute to climate responses in different ways and have different capabilities based on their knowledge, experiences and expertise (Anderson 2009).

Men and women are affected differently and respond differently to the environmental stresses that come with climate change, as a result of gender norms and power relations. For example, women are more likely to forego food during times of food stress. Women and children are disproportionately the victims in floods, cyclones or displacement events, generally suffering a higher mortality rate. Women also face many difficulties in accessing the finance and information that can contribute to climate adaptation responses.

Climate change can also exacerbate existing gender inequalities, resulting in more negative impacts for women. For example, violence against women and girls is a serious development issue in Vanuatu, and the prevalence of violence in the home, workplace and community is amongst the highest in the world (AusAID 2009). Research in Vanuatu has found that women and children are in need of greater protection after natural or human disasters: for example the Tanna Women’s Counselling Centre in Vanuatu reported a 300 percent increase in new domestic violence cases after two tropical cyclones hit Tafea Province in 2011 (UN Women 2014).

As more people and community infrastructure are exposed to climate shocks and disasters, decades of hard-won development initiatives can be reversed. In spite of public commitments to
engaging with women and men, young people and the elderly, some climate adaptation responses do not yet engage with the varied interests and concerns of different members of the community.

**Government coordination**

In spite of these challenges, Vanuatu has been at the forefront of responding to climate change and its impacts on human development.

The coordination and collaboration of non-government actors in Vanuatu comes at the same time the government of Vanuatu and other Pacific governments are working to respond to the adverse impacts of climate change. Improved coordination between NGOs and CBOs complements the discussion within government on the need for coordination, information sharing and setting priorities.

In interviews conducted for this study, donors, government and civil society representatives all expressed concern, firstly, that responses to climate change involved a series of one-off projects rather than a targeted and coordinated sectoral approach and secondly, that there are a range of actors, donors and participants engaged in the climate response that need to be better coordinated. There has also been extensive debate about the effectiveness of the response to climate change from donors and governments: many interviewees questioned whether climate finance has been targeted at activities that concretely benefit the most vulnerable communities affected by climate change.

Despite this, turning rhetoric about effective responses into new ways of working has been difficult.

In past years, coordination on climate policy between government ministries in Vanuatu was restricted for a number of reasons, including their limited resources and restricted mandates. According to an April 2012 government report, “The current separation between climate change and disaster risk management has led to stakeholder confusion, duplication of efforts, excessive time and resource demands on a limited number of actors, weak governance arrangements and a less effective delivery of services to ni-Vanuatu people” (VMGD 2012).

For this reason, the Vanuatu government began to integrate programs on climate change and disaster risk management into one structure. These efforts culminated in the establishment of the Ministry for Climate Change Adaptation, Meteorology, Geo-Hazards, Environment, Energy and Disaster Management (MCC) in April 2013.

Across the Pacific, regional and national frameworks are being redesigned to better integrate climate change adaptation and disaster risk responses. Since 2012, Pacific governments have been developing the regional Strategy for Disaster and Climate Resilient Development in the Pacific (SDRP), to merge existing regional frameworks on climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction.

Vanuatu’s Ministry of Climate Change now hosts the Vanuatu Meteorological and Geo-hazards Department (VMGD) and the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) in a newly constructed complex in Port Vila. VMGD Director Jotham Napat stated: “We needed to create structures that are aligned with the changes that are underway, both regionally and internationally. Vanuatu is one of the countries that are producing results” (Napat 2014).
The reform process is supported by locally based consultants funded by the World Bank and a joint office of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the German Agency for International Development (GIZ), combined with technical advice from the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and other regional agencies, and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

The process of integration has involved a range of tasks:

- **Combining a series of overlapping strategic policy documents**, including Vanuatu’s UNFCCC National Adaptation Plan of Action (NAPA), the National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (NCCAS) and National Action Plan on Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management 2006–2016;

- **Creating unified governance structures and processes**. Until 2012, disaster work was managed through the Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management National Action Plan Task Force (NTF), housed under the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In contrast, the body that oversaw climate change implementation, the National Advisory Committee on Climate Change (NACCC), was located under the Ministry of Infrastructure and Public Utilities, chaired through the VMGD;

- **Passing new legislation** beyond the existing National Disaster Act of 2000 to fully enable climate change and disaster risk integration (in contrast to the NTF, NACCC operated without formal legislation);

- **Establishing a system of monitoring, reporting and verification** on adaptation initiatives, including a web-based portal for information.

In early 2012, the Vanuatu government began merging the structures that currently manage work on disasters and climate into a single National Advisory Board on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction (NAB). This board officially came into existence in May 2012, replacing the NACCC. The MCC and the NAB are now mandated with coordinating all government and non-government initiatives addressing climate change and disaster risk reduction in the country.

A fully staffed Project Management Unit (PMU) was created, based at the VMGD. However the current reforms have shown the need for further restructuring of both the PMU and the NAB. Based on a Risk Government Analysis (RGA) conducted by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Vanuatu government has been discussing the need to create a NAB Secretariat so that PMU staff can work on designated project tasks rather than administration. An Australian volunteer was appointed in 2014 to work with the PMU and develop job descriptions and standard operating procedures. A workshop was conducted in June 2014 for NAB members to discuss the restructuring of the board and the roles and responsibilities of PMU members.

Amongst Pacific Island Countries, Vanuatu is one of the lowest ranked in gaining funding for climate change adaptation and disaster initiatives, so there is significant work underway to investigate and establish improved mechanisms to identify, seek and manage climate financing. With support from UNDP, a Public Finance Expenditure Institutional Review (CPEIR) put forward recommendations on public finance management.

The Department of Environment serves as the focal point for the Global Environment Facility (GEF), with a proposal that the NAB take on responsibility for management of GEF projects. Government has also been debating the establishment of a national implementing entity (NIE) as a mechanism for the management of climate financing through institutions such as the Kyoto Protocol.
Adaptation Fund (KPAF) and the new Green Climate Fund (GCF) - in July 2014, the NAB agreed that the VMGD would be the temporary focal point for the GCF (VMGD July 2014 minutes, p2).

While there is increasing coordination and dialogue with development partners, there’s still a way to go. Most donor countries failed to increase their climate finance flows in 2013-14, compared to the level of funding allocated under Fast Start Finance in 2010-12.

Civil society mobilisation

Other organisations are co-operating to complement these Vanuatu government initiatives. Local and international NGOs, the Red Cross / Red Crescent movement and UN agencies are co-ordinating their operations and working with the government on disaster preparedness and response through the Vanuatu Humanitarian Team (VHT). Civil society organisations also formed the Vanuatu Climate Action Network (VCAN), to increase collaboration and information sharing between civil society, government and overseas development partners. These networks were created in the belief that a coordinated civil society would have more impact than organisations working in isolation.

The VHT was established in 2011 and is a network of non-government humanitarian agencies, created with a main objective of ensuring timely and appropriate assistance to those affected by disasters in Vanuatu. Coordinated by Oxfam and funded by AusAID (the official Australian development agency now merged into the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) and the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), the membership of the VHT includes:

- National agencies such as Vanuatu Association of Non-Government Organisations (VANGO);
- International NGOs, including Oxfam, Save the Children, World Vision, CARE and Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA);
- The Red Cross movement, including Vanuatu Red Cross and French Red Cross;
- UN agencies (UNICEF, WHO, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs).

The VHT aims to improve humanitarian coordination and disaster preparedness by the non-government sector and also improve the engagement between the sector and government agencies, primarily the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO). VHT supported the NDMO to establish government-led humanitarian clusters in 2011, and provides on-going support to each cluster in a co-leadership role. VHT has an MOU with the NDMO and is embedded into NDMO standard operating procedures and national disaster plans as a humanitarian coordination mechanism. Since 2012 the VHT has supported the NDMO to establish Provincial Disaster Committees and clusters at the provincial level.

NGOs with representation in Port Vila have established a network which coordinates national and international organisations working on practical responses to climate change and disaster preparedness. This Vanuatu Climate Action Network (VCAN) has been welcomed and recognised by the government and is now seen as a key consultative body in climate policy development nationally. The VHT was recognized by UNOCHA in 2012 as a model for humanitarian coordination in the Pacific in 2012.

The involvement of more than 20 civil society organisations in the network facilitates the sharing of lessons and good practices for climate change adaptation, and allows agencies to draw on their
partners’ expertise in humanitarian coordination and disaster management, disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, water, sanitation and hygiene, natural resource management, agriculture, nutrition, education, child protection and vocational training. Beyond work at community level, the network has made important advances in areas such as climate change education and awareness, women’s leadership and gender analysis.

The establishment of VCAN was aided by the creation of a consortium which obtained funding for a nationwide program on climate change adaptation “Yumi stap redi long klaemet jenis” or the Vanuatu NGO Climate Change Adaptation Program. This consortium includes six local and international groups, including Vanuatu Rural Development Training Centres Association, Oxfam, CARE International in Vanuatu, Save the Children, Vanuatu Red Cross, and the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ - Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH). (GIZ is a technical advisory partner and not funded through the consortium.)

In 2012, the consortium was successful in securing funding from AusAID (now DFAT). The core funding of A$2 million came from the second round of an NGO funding window in Australia’s International Climate Change Adaptation Initiative (ICCAI). The program operated over two and a half years, with the implementation phase ending in December 2014, and the full program completed in February 2015.

In a rare example of interagency coordination, the Vanuatu climate consortium has initiated a series of integrated projects across the country: the Vanuatu Rural Development Training Centres Association (VRDTCA) has been working with a Rural Training Centre and surrounding communities on the island of Tanna; the Red Cross has established projects on Tegua, Motalava and Gaua; CARE is working with communities on the island of Futuna, while Save the Children is operating on Vanua Lava, Ambae and Efate.

The Vanuatu office of Oxfam has not been directly implementing projects, but has instead served as a focal point, facilitator and coordinator of the VHT and VCAN. This way of working, as detailed below, is a rare but important example of investment in effective coordination between different development actors.

Beyond the informal networking with government officers, there are formal mechanisms for government/NGO collaboration: VCAN and VHT have one representative each on the National Advisory Board (NAB); have been formally invited to participate in government meetings; they have nominated civil society representatives on government delegations, including the September 2014 Third UN Conference on Small Island Developing States in Apia, Samoa and UNFCCC climate negotiations in Warsaw (COP19, December 2013).

The creation of a national network in Vanuatu has also improved relations with other Pacific island countries and regional institutions. As detailed below, VCAN and VHT members have attended regional roundtables and workshops on climate change and disaster risk reduction, while VCAN coordinator Shirley Laban serves as the focal point for the Pacific Islands Climate Adaptation Network (PICAN).
Climate change and increasing disaster risks have emerged as fundamental development challenges for Vanuatu. While there are long-term projections about changing climatic conditions (such as increasing intensity for cyclones in the South Pacific), there are already impacts that affect people’s livelihoods. Long-term scientific projections suggest it will become harder for many people to lift themselves out of poverty because of the adverse effects of climate change.

Much public discussion of climate change highlights the particular vulnerability of Pacific islanders, especially those in coastal areas of low-lying atoll states. Less often, however, are Pacific communities presented as actors rather than victims, as they work to respond to changing social, economic and environmental conditions. The resilience of local communities is often unappreciated.

The concept of “resilience” has become a central element of the Vanuatu NGO Climate Change Adaptation Program, providing a unifying framework for work in climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction at community level. The concept is based on the capacity of communities to deal with shocks and stresses and adapt to uncertain futures. The focus on resilience at community level is based on well-established people-centred development approaches, which focus on enhancing or extending communities’ capacity to adapt and change.

A commitment to working together and collaborating with a diverse group of partners allows agencies to consolidate and analyse the findings from a range of activities, to consider how they are contributing to community resilience. As members of VCAN and VHT have worked together and analysed the successes and challenges of community-based adaptation, disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction, they have continued to develop a shared understanding of resilience (for discussion, see Webb et al, forthcoming). This shared framework allows different agencies and organisations to select appropriate methodologies to operate in local communities and stimulate development of new, shared ways of working.

As the original Vanuatu consortium began to develop the Yumi stap redi long klaemet jenis program, the development of the resilience framework was added late in the design phase (even though today, it is now central to the process of networking, cooperation and monitoring of outcomes). Through the process of defining resilience, eight components were identified, which then allowed consortium members to design their activities in a way that strengthens these eight areas.

While all consortium agencies have different approaches to resilience programming, the framework provides coherence in working towards a common goal and definition of impact. NGOs are finding this framework increasingly useful when thinking about their work, be it disaster risk reduction (DRR), disaster risk management (DRM), climate change adaptation or broader development.
Community Resilience Framework

A resilient community in Vanuatu

- Can build their livelihoods on a diverse range of material assets and know how to best utilize and improve their value and sustainability:
  - In a way that provides equitable access and control across the community,
  - Including shelter, land, water, natural resources, financial assets,
  - Has strong social structures that support its members in times of need

- Has leadership and decision-making processes that are fair, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of the whole community:
  - Including women, young people and vulnerable groups;
  - That can plan for current and future needs;
  - That fosters belonging and connection

- Has access to relevant information, both traditional and external, and can use this to their advantage; this means the mechanisms for all community members to access and share information they need are in place

- Is able to innovate and take risks; and has leadership that is accountable, flexible and forward looking

- Has belief systems and culture that can help understand and act on shocks and changes, and foster relationships between the natural environment, social and cultural systems

- Has social networks that extend beyond the immediate community, so that it can share and draw on knowledge, resources and new ideas

- Has governments at different levels that are connected, listen to and are responsive to community needs, are innovative, have strong leadership and are transparent and accountable

- Has their basic needs met, so they are healthy and safe
The resilience framework stresses not what you can do (in sectors such as water and sanitation, HIV, agriculture etc) but how you do it. The resilience concept draws on the “characteristics approach” used in the humanitarian sector, which attempts to identify the characteristics of a resilient community or household (Twigg 2009). The key challenge is to integrate the eight resilience elements into program design and implementation. It can also be used as a framework to assist with monitoring, evaluation and learning.

In Vanuatu, the VCAN resilience model was designed for responses to the adverse effects of climate change, but each of the eight elements of resilience are applicable for any community and can promote resilience for other shocks not related to climate change.

Some of the eight components of resilience were easier to implement than others: for example, item six (on belief systems and cultures) was one of the hardest to apply. For example, CARE tried to introduce village gardens early in their work on Futuna Island, but these did not take off. After further engagement with the community, CARE’s field workers found out that people wouldn’t plant because it was a mourning period on the island. These cultural beliefs contributed to delays in implementing what later became a successful initiative.

The community program involves vulnerability and capacity assessments on climate impacts, opening the way for community members to decide which areas they want to focus on, based on capacity and resources.

As the program enters a new phase in 2015, it is proposed that VHT and VCAN become part of a Vanuatu Resilience Network (VRN). Mirroring the institutional and policy framework of the Government of Vanuatu, this network would closely align climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction efforts. It would also support communities to adapt to short and longer-term changes. In the second phase, there will be more partners engaged in the VRN than the existing consortium members. Potential additional partners include Act for Peace, the Vanuatu Church Partnership, World Vision, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) and other organisations.
PART 4: CASE STUDIES

Given that VCAN and VHT engage a number of national and international NGOs and development partners, it is impossible for this report to do justice to the diversity of activities undertaken in the Yumi stap redi long klaemet jenis program. However the diverse elements of the resilience framework (addressing basic needs and livelihoods, engaging the community, sharing information and perspectives, engaging with government etc) are highlighted in the two following case studies, which detail activities in a rural community and also on the international stage.

The first case study looks at community mobilisation for agriculture and food security on the island of Futuna, one of the more isolated volcanic islands in the south-east of Vanuatu, where CARE has been working with the local Community Disaster Committee (CDC). Together with staff from Oxfam and CARE, the author visited all villages on Futuna in June 2014, to meet with the local CDC and community members.

Going beyond local community initiatives, the second case study looks at a project to strengthen Vanuatu’s representation at the 2013 Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), held in Warsaw, Poland. Vanuatu made significant interventions in the global negotiations after months of preparation involving Oxfam, SPC-GIZ, NAB-PMU, VCAN, Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of Women’s Affairs and other agencies.
CASE STUDY 1
Community mobilisation on Futuna

It’s a first for the island of Futuna: an agricultural show to showcase new initiatives on nutrition and food security, and highlight the best the island has to offer.

Futuna is one of Vanuatu’s more isolated islands, located in the south-east of the archipelago. But in September 2014, the villagers of Futuna invited a range of government MPs, officials from the Department of Agriculture, representatives of NGOs and donors and other dignitaries to visit. They wanted people to understand the success of their efforts to improve livelihoods and increase community resilience to disasters and climate change.

With support from a previous CARE, DIPECHO and Australian NGO Cooperation Program funded project, community members had established a Community Disaster Committee (CDC) on Futuna. As part of the Yumi stap redi long klaemet jenis program, consortium member CARE has been building on this existing structure, to also address climate risks - both ‘slow onset’ changes and the greater risk of natural disasters. This component of the broader national program involves a range of adaptation initiatives to support the community’s resilience, especially as current and project climate change will bring a combination of increased disaster risk and a variety of changes affecting agriculture, fisheries and livelihoods.

While building on the leadership of local chiefs and religious leaders, the initiative has been developed through participatory processes, including the mobilisation of different members of the community who have diverse priorities and interests. CDC chair Samson Shipa notes: “We have a whole mix of people in the committee - old, young, mamas and chiefs. Within the committee, we have different jobs. As well as the chair and secretary, we have people responsible for communications or logistics. We also allocate tasks such as garden coordinator, or first aid training or information.”

Children are at the heart of building community resilience in Futuna, learning about agriculture and nutrition in their school’s community garden, as well as studying climate change in the classroom.

Fred Navana, teacher at Ishia Primary School on Futuna, shows the school’s community garden.

Photo: Smon Bradshaw / Oxfam 2014
The focus on community adaptation comes as many young and skilled people have left Futuna for larger islands like Tanna or Efate, leaving a core population of 500 to 600 people. The island has limited infrastructure, with a small grass airstrip as the main link to the provincial headquarters on Tanna. The island is poorly served by communications: even with a telephone tower constructed at Ishia in January 2012, mobile phone communication is only available on one side of the island.

There are no roads linking the six villages that surround a mountainous plateau in the centre of the volcanic island. To move from village to village, the people of Futuna must walk along rough mountain tracks and clamber over rocky promontories. On Sunday afternoon, children from the furthest villages walk for hours along these tracks to Mission Bay, to be ready for school on Monday morning.

Mala Silas, CARE’s climate change field officer, notes that most water supply comes from natural springs: “In dry times, water is harder to find, and in floods, the soil runs off the gardens. With more erratic weather, the job of growing or gathering food is becoming tougher.”

CARE had worked with villagers on Futuna through disaster management programs in the past. After extensive consultations with diverse groups on the island, this cooperation has now expanded to address the communities’ vulnerability to climate risks, and how to increase resilience community vulnerability and resilience. There is a new focus on nutrition, food security, working with women in agriculture and expanding a network of village gardens.

The creation of community gardens has allowed for a diversity of foods to be trialled and grown. The introduction of new, durable crops has been complemented by programs on food storage and cooking techniques, and trials of new techniques for pest control. These initiatives mean that families on Futuna have access to a variety of foods all year round, rather than relying on just one or two staple crops. This practical adaptation is vital to improve nutrition and supplement existing staple foods such as manioc which grows well but can be boring (one woman noted wryly: “If our guts could talk, they’d say ‘give up on the manioc!’”).

Another element of the adaptation program is to trial methods to maintain food and water supply in the aftermath of natural disasters like cyclones. These techniques are also valuable for the lean periods that will come with the changing precipitation or drought that are linked to long-term climate change. One of the innovative features of this process is the mobilisation of both older and younger members of the community, to combine their experience and information, drawing on traditional knowledge as well as new technologies.
By addressing concrete issues like agriculture and gardening, the project has been able to transform abstract awareness of “climate change” into practical understanding of the ways that the changing environment will impact on village livelihoods.

Research on climate change and agriculture by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and other regional organisations suggests a likely increase in the spread of a number of climate pests and diseases. This could exacerbate existing problems with pest control: during the visit to Futuna, villagers highlighted new diseases that were affecting productivity such as a white mould on the manioc plants, killing off the staple food. Other changes were affecting the ease of producing lap lap (a traditional food in Vanuatu made from grated cassava, wild local cabbage and coconut, wrapped into leaves and cooked underground). People on Futuna noted that leaves used to prepare lap lap were becoming harder to find, and were interested in understanding the cause of this slow but significant change.

By sharing basic climate information in Bislama (Vanuatu’s national language), the villagers and project outreach workers are beginning to discuss how broader environmental change impacts on local production.

Working with the CDC, CARE has also been focused on improving community preparations for natural disasters, utilising disaster preparedness funding from the European Union and the Australian NGO Cooperation Program.

On the far side of the island, away from the airstrip, the village of Matangi is one of Futuna’s more isolated communities. “We rely a lot on Radio Australia when there’s a cyclone coming,” says Miranda Natuifi, a young mother who recently joined the island’s CDC. “We have no telephone on this side of the island and we often can’t hear Radio Vanuatu.”

Since the strengthening of the CDC, communities have been developing more systematic measures for information sharing, including the use of runners between villages to provide cyclone alerts.

Communicating timely and accurate information is a crucial part of adaptation and disaster preparedness. If farmers have access to better climate information in advance, they can adapt planting times and choose different crops, to avoid losing their harvest. It will also help vulnerable communities be better prepared for disasters like cyclones – thus saving lives.

Community notice boards, along with new resources written in Bislama, help communities to share vital information on climate risk, disaster preparedness, and improving agricultural techniques.

Photo: Daniel Vorbach / Oxfam 2014
A simple but effective measure to improve information sharing has been the creation of community notice boards (funded through the Vanuatu NGO Climate Change Adaptation Program). During our visit, the message board located near Iasoa village had posters on different types of food crops, a calendar advocating an end to violence against women and a planning notice about the community’s preparations for the September 2014 agricultural show. At Herald Bay, the community noticeboard featured a map of the village developed during a community vulnerability mapping exercise, highlighting areas vulnerable to flooding or landslide.

Through the wider VCAN and VHT engagement with government in Port Vila, CARE has been working with government officers to improve engagement with local communities on Futuna (such as gaining support from agricultural field officers with provision of crop materials and provision of agricultural training). Nutritional training was provided by Won Smolbag. But rather than just rely on outside expertise for training, the project has also been using existing social networks to share ideas, with peer to peer sharing of experiences. Considerable work has also been done with CDCs and the NDMO to ensure CDCs have formalized roles and responsibilities, information, education and communication materials, and strong links with the Provincial Disaster Committees in each province.

At Iasoa village, community members are trialling the use of a solar dryer, built with a wooden frame, simple plastic roof and a recycled computer fan to drive out humidity. The trial to dry bananas, pawpaw, nuts, tomatoes and different types of root crops will allow community members to determine which foods can best be preserved, to be used as an emergency supply after a natural disaster. The solar dryer project was in cooperation with SPC-GIZ, using manuals and experience developed on other islands.

Across the island, there are also trials on the best way to preserve “cyclone foods” and maintain food supplies in the aftermath of natural disasters. Villagers traditionally gathered bananas, prepared them wrapped in banana leaves and buried them for later use in the transitional period when village gardens are being re-established after the cyclone. As part of the CARE project, villagers are now trialling the use of concrete pits to preserve the cyclone foods (this variation on a traditional technique is a trial to reduce the labour involved in constantly replacing leaves that rot in an earthen pit).

The establishment of community gardens have inspired a certain competitive streak between the young and old members of the community. In the first year of the project, with the island facing drought conditions, younger gardeners had limited success with new techniques, such as planting
yams earlier than their elders recommended. But as the weather changed in 2013 and 2014, young people produced much larger yams than expected for the church harvest festival and more experienced farmers are being converted by the new successes.

After witnessing efforts in the community gardens, Nelson Navana (aged 68) asked relatives in Port Vila to send seeds that he could use in his own garden. As well as using new composting techniques, he is now grafting tomatoes and growing cabbages, lettuce and spring onions. Navana is also trialling methods of organic pest control, including intercropping and the use of chillies and other plants which deter insects.

Project workers have noted the wider benefits coming from the engagement of men, women and young people in this initiative. Cultural traditions previously kept women at home and silent in community meetings, but a wider group of villagers are now contributing to decision making.

CARE’s Mala Silas notes: “When I first arrived on Futuna a few years ago, I wouldn’t have seen a woman stand up or speak during a community meeting; they were too shy and didn’t seem comfortable getting involved. When I was back in Futuna again, I was reminded of the progress that’s already been made. Seeing the women standing up to talk – even challenging the men – was something very special.”

Another sign of community engagement was the September 2014 agricultural show, which gave the villagers a chance to show off their work to a wider audience. The show included a school debate, displays on agricultural products, local cooking and nutrition, exhibitions of the solar food dryers and food preservation techniques, as well as the sale of local handicrafts and carvings. VCAN members including CARE, GIZ, Live & Learn and Wan Smolbag organised displays and presentations on their work with local communities.

The show was attended by senior government staff from the Department of Women’s Affairs, Department of Local Authorities and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. Their participation enabled Futunese women, men and youth to speak directly with national and provincial decision makers about their experiences and priorities. Provincial authorities and community members from other islands made a commitment to continue the agricultural show as a regular biannual event, to be held in different islands throughout Tafea Province.

The idea for the festival came during a “community reflection” of the Yumi stap redi long klaemet jenis
program and was not a component of the original program design. It symbolises the synergies that can come from partnerships between communities, NGOs and governments and was a strong affirmation of the program’s success in fostering community ownership.

The CDC hopes that this evidence of community mobilisation will inspire ongoing support from government and other partners. The people of Futuna are proud of their efforts and this bodes well for the program’s sustainability. It also highlights the importance of flexible program design, with sufficient resources and capacity to respond to the real priorities and ideas of communities.
CASE STUDY 2

Strengthening Vanuatu’s role in global climate talks

While climate adaptation is initiated at local level and framed by national government policy, the international context also affects responses to climate change. One of the crucial elements of resilience is linking community and civil society priorities to national and international decision making.

For this reason, one of the successes of the Yumi stap redi long klaemet jenis program has been extensive cooperation between government and civil society to improve Vanuatu’s intervention in global climate negotiations. This was highlighted by the program’s contribution to the UNFCCC 19th Conference of the Parties (COP19), held in Warsaw, Poland in 2013.

Engagement in the global climate negotiations was not part of the original design of the Yumi stap redi long klaemet jenis program. However improved relations between VCAN and the Vanuatu government led to the addition of an extra six-month project to improve Vanuatu’s contribution to the Warsaw COP. The “Strengthening Vanuatu’s International Climate Change Negotiating Capacity project” aimed to increase Vanuatu’s negotiating capacity, improve the participation of civil society, women, youth and community in the UNFCCC process and strengthen public awareness of the global climate talks.

Previous to the 2013 project, the government’s COP preparations were less co-ordinated, with little civil society engagement. At very low cost, the new project led to an improvement in Vanuatu’s preparation and intervention in Warsaw. This initiative was jointly designed and implemented by VCAN, Oxfam, GIZ and the VMGD, and funded by the overall program. The consortium’s funding was flexible enough to allow this initiative to be added to the program after its initial design.

Project coordinator, NAB-PMU officer Charlotte-Fleur Cristofari, noted: "I think we achieved so much in such a short time with our six month preparation project. We've made history for Vanuatu on different levels: we made our first two submissions to the UNFCCC on Gender Balance and Direct Finance; this is our largest delegation ever with over 15 members, including a large female contingent, which is a first too."

The project involved a range of elements which strengthened the Vanuatu government intervention in the global negotiations:

**Policy formulation**: The COP delegation was chosen early enough to allow time for preparation. This gave local communities an opportunity to contribute ideas and evidence for incorporation into government policy documents. With over 450 people engaged in pre-COP workshops and training programs, there was increased and improved content in government negotiating positions and in formal submissions to the UNFCCC summit.

Training and policy development workshops involved experts from the University of the South Pacific, Melanesian Spearhead Group, SPREP and SPC-GIZ. Priority positions were developed in adaptation, loss and damage, finance and gender.
The pre-conference preparation also contributed to Vanuatu’s first ever formal submissions made to the Secretariat of the UNFCCC, on gender balance and climate finance. Vanuatu was one of only 16 nations that formally made submissions on the text relating to gender. These submissions had an impact on the process, with the final text of the 2013 COP report including all elements of Section 3 of Vanuatu’s gender submission “Providing an Enabling Environment Leading to Sustainable Gender Balance”.

**Increased CSO involvement:** The 15-strong delegation to Warsaw was larger than normal, with the Minister for Climate Change joined by a range of government, civil society, youth and private sector representatives. VCAN was invited to nominate a representative to the government selection panel that chose the delegation.

The inclusion of more non-government representatives provided a concrete way of bringing community voices into the policy process. As Amos Kalo of Save the Children Vanuatu noted: “We’re giving government real-time issues from local communities to feed into international, regional and global processes. We can bring new information and perspectives to put on the table to help government with their policy development.”

This process also allows government officials to draw on technical expertise from partners like Oxfam and GIZ. The government’s post-conference analysis of the delegation acknowledged the valuable contribution of civil society, noting: “Very useful to have CSO delegates who can liaise with international CSO and inform delegation of latest updates... CSO, youth and especially women delegates should be acknowledged for their skills, strong commitment and supportive behaviour” (Cristofari, 2013).

**Improved gender focus:** Previous delegations to COP negotiations had been all-male groupings, so VCAN and Vanuatu government officials agreed on a target of 50 per cent female representation in the delegation, and increased involvement of young people. Seven of 15 delegates were women, including the three civil society representatives (VCAN coordinator Shirley Laban and youth representative Mala Silas were joined by Dorosday Kenneth Lui, the director of the government’s Department of Women’s Affairs).

**Increased preparation:** Reviewing the delegation’s work, participants noted the importance of a long lead time to prepare for an effective intervention (although the delegation was better prepared than normal, there were still a need to improve preparation, logistics and negotiating capacity).

Staff of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) organised a week long training program for the Vanuatu delegation. This included negotiations training and briefings...
to provide first time delegates on what to expect at the global summit. The workshop assigned different roles and responsibilities within the delegation.

In Warsaw, head of the Department of Environment Albert Williams noted: "We prepared our delegation to be well informed of our key issues of finance, gender balance, adaptation and so forth, before coming here. The COP is tough and that's why we wanted them to have a feel of the realities of this event before coming to Warsaw so our delegation is better prepared."

**Media coverage:** the project worked to strengthen coverage by Vanuatu media before and after COP 19, through the training of 16 journalists. A number of talkback shows on three radio stations allowed nearly 100 listeners to ask questions of COP delegates on the impacts of climate change, options for adaptation and the role of the NAB-PMU. Daily updates were posted on the NAB portal and Vanuatu Climate Change facebook page.

One innovation was a two hour live broadcast on the causes and impacts of climate change and issues in the international negotiations. Forty two young people were linked by videoconference with the Director General of the Ministry of Climate Change in Port Vila. The young people were asked about their experiences of climate change, the adaptation initiatives they are already undertaking and what they would like to tell their government and other countries.

**Community and youth outreach:** The pre-COP build-up also involved general community awareness raising about the UNFCCC process:

- a seminar was organised for students at the University of the South Pacific (USP);
- a National Youth Symposium on Climate Change was organised in partnership with the Vanuatu National Youth Council;
- a Youth and Climate Change National Day involved more than 160 people in climate change awareness activities in six provinces and two municipalities;
- a VCAN members developed a community questionnaire, which was relayed to partner communities in the lead up to the COP 19 meeting, allowing more than 40 community members to contribute their thoughts and priorities to the delegation (especially on access to information and the need for adaptation funding for agriculture and water security).

The successful preparation and participation in Warsaw drew positive feedback from regional and international agencies, including the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP) and the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), which both welcomed Vanuatu’s increased engagement.
PART 5: LESSONS AND CHALLENGES

The Yumi stap redi long klaemet jenis program and the collaboration between government and community organisations has made significant achievements but also exposed ongoing challenges. This section outlines nine areas that need to be prioritized when replicating this way of working in different sectors or in different countries:

1. Building inclusive, meaningful partnerships
2. Working with communities and engaging the most vulnerable
3. Promoting civil society input to government policy making
4. Bridging the gap between levels: community, national, regional, global
5. Allocating resources for a co-ordination hub
6. Strengthening the role of leadership, champions and relationships
7. Developing accountability and an innovative cycle of learning
8. Sharing information and knowledge
9. Promoting sustainability, results and value for money

1. Building inclusive, meaningful partnerships

The central feature of the Yumi stap redi long klaemet jenis program has been improved interagency cooperation, coordination and collaboration. The program has made significant advances in facilitating links between government, international NGOs, local communities and donors, through networking, collaboration, and community empowerment.

The process involves a range of formal and informal mechanisms, including: regular face to face meetings; a VCAN email digest that distributes agency updates and information; and social events such as regular “kava storian”, where people can meet informally, listen to visiting speakers and share information over a bowl of kava.

Beyond interagency collaboration, VHT and VCAN have become a valuable contact point for consultations with the Vanuatu government, donors and other technical agencies (e.g. DFAT, MFAT, UNDP, World Bank, UNESCO, CSIRO researchers etc).

The partnership of the initial NGO consortium has devolved into a broader network, drawing on the skills and experience of a diverse range of participants and adding value to existing responses to climate change. While some interviewees suggested that consortium members initially participated because of the potential to receive funding, people have recognised the non-financial advantages of inter-agency collaboration as the process developed.

VCAN and VHT members acknowledged the imbalances of resources between network partners, donors and governments (such as access to information, technical knowledge or finances). However by working together, participants have developed stronger policies for their own agencies (for example, consortium members have supported each other in the development of child protection policies, drawing on the experience of partner agencies).

A key approach of the consortium was to build on the historic strengths of each partner, allowing other members to draw on that “superpower” (for example, interviewees highlighted GiZ’s
technical expertise, Oxfam’s global network and research capacity, CARE’s extensive work on gender issues or Save the Children’s expertise on child protection). Others stressed the crucial expertise of local networks, which can draw on experience in rural communities, cultural understanding, language skills and personal connections.

This diversity of expertise contributes to holding the group together, because the contribution of each member is valued even if it is not equal to the resources contributed by others.

Another success of the consortium model has been to focus a range of activities at different levels of one sector. For example, members of the consortium have been active across the education sector, in line with government priorities and approved standards (with VRDTCA working on vocational education through rural training centres, GIZ developing formal curriculum with the Department of Education and Save the Children developing a teaching module on climate change and disaster risk reduction for schools).

Some ni-Vanuatu interviewees raised critical questions about the donor focus on capacity building. One stressed that the major challenge was mobilising existing local capacity rather than assuming capacity deficits. While acknowledging the importance of capacity building, interviewees highlighted the need to integrate an understanding of the cultural context (for example, ni-Vanuatu perspectives on hierarchy, deference to chiefs and reluctance to openly challenge authority figures).

There was also a challenge for key donors and government development partners to be more transparent about the need for capacity building within their own organisations. Interviewees highlighted that donors also face significant staff turnover, lack of cultural awareness, or inflexibility over timelines and deadlines.

With one exception, the projects chosen by the consortium were initiated in communities that have a pre-existing relationship. They therefore build on past cooperation in areas such as education, disaster risk response or agriculture (for example, the Red Cross has been engaged in DRR work in Torba province for some time and so the new initiative builds on existing networks, strengths, trust and partnership).

NGOs have strengthened work with women and young people, expanding government interaction with often marginalised groups in the community. For example, working with the NAB and SPC-GIZ, Save the Children organised a national youth symposium on climate change in 2013, a significant innovation given that previously youth symposia had focused on sports or religion rather than social and environmental issues.

The program has entered a new phase in 2015 with the establishment of the Vanuatu Resilience Network. VHT and VCAN continue to perform their respective mandates of coordinating disaster preparedness and response and climate policy, while the VRN encourages collaboration on broader resilience goals. Local committees may engage with the resilience network through one of the NGO partners or through government-led structures such as provincial disaster and climate change committees (PDCCCs) and community disaster and climate change committees (CDCCCs).
2. Working with communities and engaging the most vulnerable

The program focused on people and their livelihoods, especially in the core areas of food security, water supply, agriculture and fisheries. This community focus involves participatory vulnerability and capacity assessments on climate impacts, opening the way for community members to decide which areas they want to focus on, based on capacity and resources.

Across different provinces, consortium projects have linked climate adaptation to improved agricultural production. For example in Torba province, communities have focused on crops and poultry. One element of the project involves training young people in beekeeping, in an ecosystem where citrus and mangoes are not fructifying due to a lack of natural pollinators.

In Penama province, Save the Children has mounted a project on Ambae Island for poultry and fisheries. One component, implemented with technical support from the Fisheries Department and SPC-GIZ, is freshwater fish farming for communities that normally rely on reef fish, to avoid problems like ciguatera (a foodborne illness caused by eating reef fish whose flesh is contaminated with toxins). On the main island of Efate, Save the Children works with two rural communities (both interested in fisheries) and one urban community with a focus on housing and waste disposal.

Another central component of the program is the focus on women, children and young people. This reflects their significant proportion of the population and their particular vulnerability in times of disaster, due to limited access to power, decision making and resources.

By developing gendered projects, VCAN and VHT take account of the different vulnerabilities and capabilities of men, women, boys and girls. As noted in a Red Cross / Red Crescent Climate Centre guidance note: “Gender intersects with social, cultural and economic inequalities to create this vulnerability. In many parts of the world, women’s unequal access to resources, education, legal protection, decision-making and power make them more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. For example, lower levels of education and literacy of some women can limit their ability to access important information and support in order to prepare for disasters or adapt to longer-term climate change.” (Red Cross 2014a). VHT supported the establishment of a Gender and Protection cluster in 2014. This ensured gender and protection issues could be raised and understood during the response to Cyclone Lusi, and training provided to civil society, government staff and NGO partners in gender and protection assessments, child protection and gender in humanitarian responses.

Save the Children has focussed on building youth capacity, with activities in schools and at community level. In partnership with government, the consortium organised a major youth climate symposium in 2013. Save the Children has maintained a school awareness program involving 374 students at four schools in Port Vila, including the preparation of a teaching guide on climate change and disaster (the guide was trialled in a pilot and submitted to the government’s NAB for approval for wider use).

Another key component of these projects is the mobilisation of community members. Outreach, education and partnerships are needed to ensure that resilience is built in the economy and across society, especially for vulnerable communities in outer islands and remote areas. In Vanuatu, community leaders stress that the vast majority of land is held under customary ownership by kinship groups, not by the state. Therefore without the involvement of customary landholders and
community level involvement in the sustainable use of land and resources, responding to climate change will be impossible.

Throughout 2014, the Vanuatu government has been developing a National Sustainable Development Plan 2016–2030 (NSPD), drawing on a growing body of research about alternative indicators to measure the well-being of local communities (VNSO 2012).

These development debates reflect learnings from other countries, which have found that traditional aid interventions often run the risk of maladaptation, because they do not engage local knowledge and community empowerment. Policies are too often based on top-down planning that does not support local decision-making, with project funding constrained to short term, unsustainable interventions (Warwick 2009).

In spite of their successes, it is important to acknowledge that the Yumi stap redi long klaemet jenis projects have only been a pilot in a limited number of communities. Given the significant cost and logistics difficulties of travelling across Vanuatu, there have been practical issues in maintaining project activities in a number of sites across different islands. Logistics and communications can be difficult, especially for inter-island boat travel when the seas are rough. Even though it has maintained extensive outreach at cost structures that governments or UN agencies could not match, the consortium budget has been stretched over a number of project communities.

Despite these limitations, there is enormous potential for new communities to become involved, learning from past experience on the ground and adapting techniques to local conditions.

3. Promoting civil society input to government policy making

Across the Pacific, there is a recognition that governments should work more extensively with non-state actors (NSA), who have an important role to play in development activities. Governments have committed to working with civil society, the private sector and traditional leaders. This comes from the recognition that community-based organisations, churches and Councils of Chiefs often have the capacity to reach out to vulnerable communities in rural areas, outlying islands and peri-urban settlements.

In spite of these commitments, however, there are sometimes tensions in the government-NSA relationship. Government officers raise questions about whether diverse civil society networks truly represent their grassroots constituencies. Officials also stress the need for a whole-of-government overview, which NGOs and local actors often lack. In turn, NGOs have raised concern that some governments in the Pacific want to control rather than simply regulate community activity.

In some cases, government leaders prefer NGOs to focus on implementing adaptation projects, while local and international NGOs also hope to support government officials to develop policy. Political leaders welcome NGO initiatives in service delivery at the grassroots, but can be ambivalent over NGO advocacy and lobbying, which can bring up sensitive issues and disrupt productive working relations with donors.

Despite these potential pitfalls, the Yumi stap redi long klaemet jenis process has been highlighted by extensive collaboration between the Vanuatu government, VHT and VCAN. The program has reduced these barriers by actively engaging with the government in ways that are practically useful.
(such as creating opportunities for government to interact with civil society during VCAN and NAB meetings, or creating mechanisms to ensure representative civil society participation in government meetings and delegations).

Interviews with staff of the NAB-PMU highlighted the insights and connections that NGO workers contribute to government operations and policy formation (such as VCAN’s co-ordination of community feedback into NAB discussions, the embedding of VHT staff in the NDMO, or the involvement of CSO representatives in the 2013 COP delegation).

In turn, the opportunity to work in collaboration with government officers has allowed NGOs to better understand government priorities. In an interview, Amos Kalo of Save the Children noted: “The project has allowed a greater alignment of NGO activities and policies with government priorities, creating mechanisms for better coordination. For example, young staff from consortium members engaged well with government officers from a range of departments during preparations for the 2013 national youth symposium on climate change.”

Another respondent notes that as a next step “VCAN and VHT can foster better engagement with line ministries outside the NDMO and Ministry of Climate Change in order to support a whole-of-government approach to disaster preparedness and climate change adaptation at both national and provincial level. There has been an onus on the NDMOs to raise awareness with line ministries on the tools and capacities of the VHT and VCAN. There is a need for more engagement and capacity building at different levels of government to build relationships.”

Better coordination by a range of local and international NGOs has also allowed more measured and systematic contributions to government policy development. For example, VCAN has mobilised non-government and community organisations to feed ideas into development of the National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP). VCAN’s co-ordinator organised a number of ni-Vanuatu staff of network members to present a series of interventions in the national NSDP workshop, promoting the resilience framework and improving the focus on gender issues. VCAN members were also involved in collating responses to the draft of Vanuatu’s Second National Communication to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and draft National Climate Change and DRR policy.

4. Bridging the gap between local, national, regional, and international

The primary focus of the program has been working with communities at local level on issues of food and water security, agriculture and disaster preparedness. However the knowledge gained from VHT and VCAN’s local activities has allowed NGOs to play a greater role at regional and international levels.

These two elements are not separate: indeed, the network provides a mechanism to bring voices from the community into national government policy formulation and national plans, which in turn can be relayed to the international community through participation at regional and global summits. The experience of working in the outer islands and urban settlements has provided insights and evidence that now flow into government policy development.
One of the positive outcomes of the program is that VHT and VCAN staff have earned a level of confidence from government officers. They have partnered with the government to carry the voice of Vanuatu into regional and international meetings.

For example, the VCAN Coordinator was invited to co-present with the PMU at a UNFCCC Adaptation Committee workshop. A VCAN representative joined the head of the PMU and the Director General of Vanuatu Meteorology and Geohazards Department, for a joint presentation about resilience at the 2014 Pacific CC/DRR Platform, organised by the South Pacific Regional Environment Program. In 2014 the VHT coordinator presented a case study of the VHT at the annual Pacific Humanitarian Team meeting in Suva. This meeting has representation from the NDMOs from across the Pacific, as well as donors and humanitarian agencies.

The case study above (p. 26) has outlined the participation of government and community representatives in Vanuatu’s 2013 delegation to the UNFCCC climate negotiations. In preparation for the 2014 COP 20 in Lima Peru, PMU recruited a ni-Vanuatu intern to coordinate preparations in a scaled down version of the 2013 project. This included a Ministerial Briefing and a 3-day SPREP-facilitated climate change forum for delegates. The Department of Women’s Affairs met to refine Vanuatu’s positions on gender. There was also community outreach, including a seminar for students at USP, a string band festival with a climate change theme, youth activities and a workshop about climate change and adaptation.

The experience of working together for the UNFCCC climate negotiations provided a model for intervention in other international processes. VCAN members made a significant contribution to the September 2014 Third Global Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in Apia, Samoa. VCAN coordinator Shirley Laban was invited as a member of the Vanuatu government delegation to the SIDS meeting.

The knowledge gathered during the program has also been shared internationally through speaking engagements. Oxfam’s Shirley Laban and CARE’s Mala Silas toured Australia in July 2014 as part of Oxfam’s Grow campaign, speaking at public meetings and sharing perspectives with Australian organisations involved in agriculture, food security and climate change. Based on the Vanuatu Red Cross engagement in the consortium and VCAN, the Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Centre in the Netherlands has also shared information from Vanuatu to a wider international audience.

Following a March 2014 regional workshop, VCAN coordinator Shirley Laban was appointed to serve as the focal point for the Pacific Islands Climate Adaptation Network (PICAN). This regional network links CANs in Kiribati, Tuvalu, Cook Islands and other Pacific countries, as well as the CAN International network, facilitating Pacific island perspectives on adaptation in the media and at regional meetings. VCAN has co-ordinated Pacific Island participation in an international conference in Nepal on community based adaptation (CBA).
5. Allocating resources for a co-ordination hub

One of the creative tensions in development work is the need for results on the ground, but also the allocation of sufficient resources for co-ordination, information sharing and reflection. Given the diversity of activities across a number of provinces and sectors, a crucial feature of the program is Oxfam’s co-ordinating role within the network.

From the start of the initiative, Oxfam has acted as a broker, a facilitator, a convenor and a networker. This way of working involves a different model of how Oxfam often operates in other countries: staff in the Oxfam office in Port Vila spend most of their time in a facilitation role instead of the traditional partnership model (which involves funding and support to local CBO/NGO partners, who then implement projects in communities).

In Vanuatu, the consortium has also benefited from the involvement of the SPC-GIZ office in Port Vila (which manages operations for the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and the German development agency Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH). GIZ’s main involvement in the consortium is as an unfunded member (as opposed to other NGOs in the consortium who received funding for their projects).

While people in Vanuatu climate networks have welcomed the central role of agencies like Oxfam and GIZ, there is also an awareness of their (potentially disproportionate) influence because they are at the hub of a range of activities. Despite this, nearly every interviewee highlighted the value that a dedicated network co-ordinator can play, and noted that Oxfam staff were playing a dynamic and positive role. The role of VCAN and VHT co-ordinators were crucial, having the time and energy to maintain an overview of the initiative, without being bogged down in day-to-day project work.

Beyond this, interviewees also highlighted the range of mechanisms that promote transparency and accountability, such as regular e-mailings and the regular Consortium Monitoring Group (CMG) and NAB meetings, which have been crucial to allow interaction between staff of different agencies which have different mandates and priorities.

While an INGO has the resources to contribute to this role, the coordination of a network relies on people with good facilitation and relationship-building skills. Oxfam in Vanuatu’s climate coordinator himself noted the importance of “not pushing Oxfam’s brand – but playing a facilitator role.”

The facilitation role played by Oxfam runs against the grain of the traditional focus on quantifiable outputs in adaptation work (how many trees planted, seawalls constructed, children educated etc). The way of working initiated in this program looks at quality as much as quantity and sees increased knowledge, relationships, capacity and replication of best practice across the sector as the key outcome.
6. **Strengthening the role of leadership, champions and relationships**

The array of mechanisms for co-operation (regular consortium meetings, information updates, formal consultations and submissions on government policy etc) has allowed agencies and organisations to interact. However most interviewees highlighted the importance of relationships between different participants. They also stressed the role of leadership as a key factor in the initiative’s success. Champions of the program have played a crucial role within most participating institutions.

A 2014 social network analysis sponsored by the NAB and conducted by SPC-GIZ revealed many insights into the relationships and interactions between agencies, organizations and communities (Vachette 2014).

In countries like Vanuatu, people often have expertise or connections to the key stakeholders that are not obvious in their official job description. For this reason, the use of personal relationships rather than institutional mechanisms can short-circuit the need to build up fora for interagency cooperation.

The downside of this reliance on individuals and personal relationships rather than formal inter-agency mechanisms is the danger that the initiative could be compromised by staff turnover, burnout or a change in leadership. One interviewee stated: “People, not organisations, signed up to this process, so if crucial people go, it could be hard to maintain the coordination.”

A central challenge is to ensure that the ways of working are institutionalised, so that departments or organisations will continue to function in the same way even with staff turnover.

This issue has been recognised by key VCAN participants, who note that there has already been significant turnover of staff amongst key consortium members during 2012-14. A number of processes have been institutionalised through VCAN, especially because there is a paid coordinator who has a clear responsibility to maintain working relationships between busy people and to share information with newer participants.

Beyond VCAN, the commitment to government / civil society cooperation has relied on champions within key government departments (with many interviewees citing VMGD director Jotham Napat and the NDMO Director Shadrack Welegtabit as crucial figures). Some interviewees suggested there is still a level of resistance within other arms of government towards the extent of NGO participation in government policy-making, so the potential loss of champions could impact on the sustainability of similar initiatives.

There is always a need for Vanuatu-based desk officers of INGOs to ensure that their own organisation understands this way of working. It can be a time-consuming process to ensure that key agency decision-makers accept the importance of allocating time and resources to networking and collaboration. The very nature of collaboration within the consortium also has potential to impact on agency branding, which is a crucial part of fundraising for most INGOs.

Beyond this program, it would be important to monitor whether locally based staff build closer links to each other through the network than to their head offices. The difference between the consortium and a Vanuatu Resilience Network may result in some partners leaving as well at new partners joining (raising questions about whether access to funding is a core motivator to
participation and whether incoming agencies will have the same understanding of the process as their predecessors).

The question of sustainable funding is related to staffing issues, as the loss of ongoing program funding can mean the potential loss of experienced staff (especially local staff hired by consortium partners). The problem of the short term project cycle is a critical challenge for small NGOs and CBOs, who often lose good local staff if future funding cannot be assured.

7. Developing accountability and an innovative cycle of learning

Effective action needs to be built on sound evidence, feedback and learning. This requires accessibility of information, sound baselines, monitoring and evaluation. There is a need to experiment and create effective learning cycles to improve performance.

This process of experimentation and evaluation can strengthen national outcomes but also provide evidence to support increased allocation of finance and the scaling up of projects. At a time when international climate financing is scheduled to increase to US$100 billion a year by 2020, it is vital now to expand a ‘learning by doing’ approach, initiating a range of trials to provide evidence for later increases of financing.

This culture of experimentation is hard to develop. Some development researchers argue that concern over potential corruption and misuse of climate and development funds has led to “an increasing compliance focus which undermined the realisation of mutual accountability between partners, as well as learning, risk taking and innovation more broadly” (Roche 2010).

One central success of the Vanuatu program has been to develop an innovative cycle of reflection and learning, drawing on the expertise of peers (since the 2009 Cairns Compact for Regional Co-Operation and Integration, Pacific governments have recognised the value of peer review, as shown by a series of country reviews by teams including representatives drawn from international development agencies and Pacific Islands Forum countries).

A crucial element of the resilience program is the use of peer monitoring, encouraging visits by other partners to check on the progress of adaptive change. During the life of the program, each partner will visit another partner organisation, and each project will be visited by other partners. In preparation for this report, the author was financed by Oxfam to visit and report on the CARE project in Futuna. Such examples interagency cooperation are all too rare in the Pacific, where much development work is siloed and project evaluation reports are not shared with other agencies that might work in the same sector or province.

There are limits however to this co-operation. Interviewees noted barriers to the development of common interagency indicators. Throughout the program, it has been difficult to develop and implement cross consortium indicators to measure change and outcomes (although consortium members have worked out effective ways of sharing information on the outcomes on the ground). There is a need for more disaggregated data and detailed research that measures how climate change differently affects men, women and children. The development of “lessons learnt” workshops would also allow more informal analysis, monitoring and evaluation.
The design of the Vanuatu program in 2012 included an element of flexibility, which allowed participants to adapt and incorporate other elements as circumstances changed. For example, the “Strengthening Vanuatu’s International Climate Change Negotiating Capacity project” was not an original component of the project, but was added after the initial design phase in 2012, following negotiations with AusAID. This is but one example of how the project added value to work on the ground but also evolved based on the shared experience of participants.

As the program evolved, consortium agencies came to more realistic assessments of what was possible on a tight budget. For example, in the initial development phase, Save the Children proposed a major youth program in 23 communities, but this was later reduced to just seven venues given constraints on time and resources and the need not to “over-promise” (raising community expectations that could not be sustained).

8. Sharing information and knowledge

A core learning from the program is the importance of allocating resources for information, communication and awareness raising. Increasing community awareness helps good adaptation planning and disaster preparedness, as people understand their roles and can contribute their own experiences, drawn from traditional knowledge and lived practice.

At the same time, the program has revealed significant challenges to increased information sharing and awareness. Many ni-Vanuatu cannot easily access information that could aid their responses to climate change. There are constraints in mobilising some local communities, because of relatively low literacy for rural populations and limited access to appropriate information in vernacular languages or Bislama. Grassroots communities face a challenge to integrate customary and Western knowledge of weather and climate, even though this synthesis can assist community preparedness - as documented by meteorologist Penehuro Fatu Lefale in Samoa (Lefale 2010).

The provision of technical and scientific information in English from some donors cannot meet the widespread desire for improved understanding of weather and climate, to explain the changes that many people are currently observing in their lived environment. To address these problems, VCAN agencies have prepared a number of manuals, publications and social media tools for use across the country, developed through peer review by other network members and technical experts.

Some materials are directed towards development practitioners. For example, Save the Children has developed a child protection manual for use in post-disaster contexts. The Vanuatu Red Cross Society has produced manuals in English and Bislama for their sub-branches in outer islands, explaining the basics of climate science and changing weather patterns (Red Cross 2014b). Vanuatu Red Cross also produced a Training Guide designed for facilitators of Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction training (Red Cross 2014c). GIZ has developed over 25 manuals, DVDs and guidebooks in Bislama, which have been used by all consortium members.

Community outreach has drawn on popular media in a country with low levels of English literacy. From 2012, the Red Cross, SPC-GIZ, VMGD worked with a team of Pacific climate experts and artists to transform complex climate science into two short popular video animations. The two short videos, “Pacific Adventures of the Climate Crab” and “Klaod Nasara”, gave basic information about the El Niño/La Niña phenomenon and its impact on changing rainfall patterns across Vanuatu.
Produced in English, Bislama and French, they have been widely shared across the islands region on social media and used by schools, youth groups and other community organisations (Red Cross 2014d).

Other publications provide practical information for the rural farmers who make up the bulk of Vanuatu’s population. For example, CARE has prepared a manual in Bislama on gardening techniques (composting, seed propagation and creating seed banks, pest management using organic techniques).

With a growing range of overseas development partners participating in climate responses, Vanuatu government officials have stressed the need for consistent, key messages to be delivered to communities, in line with government policy, national standards and the latest climate science.

There can be significant pressures on staff time and resources to maintain ongoing collaboration. Government officers noted that staff in the PMU have extensive responsibilities and workloads, which can create pressures given the level of consultation required for multiparty engagement – there is a real problem with “meeting fatigue.” Other interviewees highlighted the need to strictly monitor the balance between time allocated for operations in rural areas and outlying islands and consultation in Port Vila (even though the latter can aid effective work in the field).

With limited budgets and limited opportunities to travel, some government departments find it difficult to access information from rural communities, from provincial authorities and - on occasions - even from other government departments.

VCAN and VHT have made a small contribution to addressing this problem: VCAN members have funded the travel for government officers to participate in rural and island tours or meetings. NDMO staff have also been supported by VHT in accessing the provinces to train and provide resources to the Provincial Disaster Committees, as well as conducting follow-up training and support in preparing for cyclone season. VCAN also maintained a regular E-list and access to information has been improved by the resources and knowledge base of international members like Oxfam, CARE, Save the Children and the Red Cross.

Despite these information mechanisms, some interviewees argued that there was a need to better use the NAB website portal as a one-stop shop for information. It was clear that some members of the network were not fully utilising the portal, even though government officers had stated they would welcome NGO input through this information mechanism.

The aforementioned social network analysis found that while people acknowledge the value of the portal, they don’t use it as much as they could (Vachette 2014). Interviewees stressed the need for one consolidated database of activities to advise donors and other development partners, with the social networking research noting that “People don’t know who to go to for information, even though they assume that someone has that information.”

One challenge is creating a culture of information sharing, to counter the inevitable bureaucratic momentum that comes from awareness that “knowledge equals power.” There is a need to create incentives to share knowledge and understanding (and not just reports and documents) between different groups.
9. Promoting sustainability, results and value for money

The Pacific Islands Forum leaders’ official communiqué in 2008 stressed: “The priority of Pacific SIDS is securing sustainable financing for immediate and effective implementation of concrete adaptation programs on the ground.”

The Yumi stap redi long klaemet jenis program is a concrete response to this challenge. It shows that a relatively small investment by a key donor can translate to better coordination between different government and NGO participants, as well as concrete adaptation initiatives in urban and rural communities on food security, water supply and disaster preparedness.

The program’s focus on women and young people highlights the crucial understanding that empowering and mobilising all members of communities is a central element of responding to climate change.

Donor support for coordination between consortium members is relatively new, just as the delivery of joined-up, on-ground climate adaptation programming by a diverse group of local and international agencies is uncommon.

However, as with many short-term development projects, participants have identified a number of challenges relating to sustainability and the evaluation of success.

With initial funding of $2 million pledged by AusAID, Australian officials raised the issue of sustainability at the design stage of the program: can this way of working be sustained at the end of the program funding? The experience of working at local level suggests that, despite significant achievements, a two-year program needs more time to bed down changes. Programs like this need long term engagement by all partners, supported by ongoing resources.

There is increasing research that questions whether standard project timeframes are sufficient to determine the success of adaptation initiatives, which often rely on longer term behaviour changes rather than short term technical fixes (Crick et al 2013). In contrast to many adaptation programs involving infrastructure or technical assistance, a networking and facilitation task will mature over a longer period. One Oxfam staff member argued: “This role needs to be seen as a long-term strategy to create change. Relationships, trust and behaviour change cannot be built instantaneously; they need to grow over time and be nurtured.”

The consortium has been discussing options for ongoing funding to build on the initial investment, with the objective of maintaining the existing way of working. The need to leverage other funding resources is all the more important, given uncertainty over future levels of donor funding for adaptation through international climate finance mechanisms.

The program has shown more success in some sectors of activity than others: for example, there has been rapid improvement in coordination and outcomes in the disaster response area because of the VHT. VCAN has likewise improved the coordination and implementation of adaptation interventions and helped strengthen Vanuatu’s voice in international climate fora. However there are other crucial sectors such as health, agriculture and fisheries where government ministries are less engaged on climate issues or have less coordination with potential partners in civil society.

For disaster preparedness and response, there is evidence that the collaboration between government and the VHT has already contributed to tangible improvements. Consortium members
have documented improvements through the collaboration between NDMO and VHT over a three-year period: for example, the post-cyclone assessment of Cyclone Jasmine in February 2012 showed that the response by government, donors and NGOs was much more coordinated and effective when compared to the joint response to tropical cyclones Vania and Atu in early 2011 (it’s harder to document the same level of success with adaptation in the short term, because many tangible outcomes will only be evident after the end of the current project cycle).

Despite the support for this initiative within the NAB, the Vanuatu government and donors still need to allocate further resources to deepen this network in the provinces and communities in outer islands. While there is much improved interaction between government and Port Vila-based NGOs, there is a need for more outreach to less visible community-based organisations (CBOs). Ongoing government/NGO collaboration requires network mapping in the provinces, to determine the most effective and active actors at provincial level.
The importance of collaboration between government, NGOs, international agencies and local communities was highlighted by the devastating cyclone that hit Vanuatu in March 2015.

Cyclone Pam was a category 5 cyclone that caused significant damage to infrastructure, housing, gardens and livelihoods across much of the country. The system, one of the strongest ever to make landfall, packed wind gusts of over 300kph and destroyed the homes of 75,000 people, affecting livelihoods and nutrition for people reliant on agriculture and fishing. In the capital city Port Vila, the cyclone damaged or destroyed critical infrastructure, affecting tourism and other economic sectors. The country’s population of 270,000 people were severely affected.

Despite this, the people of Vanuatu showed significant resilience in responding to Cyclone Pam. Work on disaster preparedness, improved communications technology and strengthening community resilience meant that there were few casualties, with only 11 reported deaths.

People in Vanuatu have a vast store of indigenous knowledge and wisdom to help them deal with cyclones. However not everyone lives a traditional lifestyle, and even the most robust coping mechanisms cannot deal with the sheer devastation wrought by a category 5 cyclone. The Vanuatu Humanitarian Team (VHT) has helped shape a government-led Humanitarian Action Plan for humanitarian relief after Cyclone Pam. And the Yumi Stap Redi long Klaemet Jenis program is a valuable example of cost effective initiatives to strengthen community resilience, so local people can respond to the immediate aftermath of a natural disaster, while collaborating with national government and international agencies for long-term recovery and development responses.

At time of publication, the non-government organisations and local communities involved in the Yumi Stap Redi project have not completed a full evaluation of the ways that these disaster preparedness and climate adaptation initiatives have improved the resilience and response in the face of such a disaster. However there is significant anecdotal evidence that communities involved in the project have benefited from the work of the last few years.

*Children of Etas on Efate watch water being delivered to their village.*

*Photo: Vlad Sokhin / Panos / OxfamAUS 2015*
One of the successes of the Yumi Stap Redi project and the VHT was the creation of on-the-ground mechanisms for collaboration and information sharing between a diverse range of non-government and community organisations, bolstered by strong personal relationships amongst staff in local offices. The collaboration between 2012 and 2014 was put to good use in the lead up to Cyclone Pam and during the immediate aftermath. Heads of agencies met the day before the cyclone hit, to map out an immediate response mechanism in case of damage to communications. This allowed Port Vila-based agencies to meet immediately after the red alert was lifted, so organisations could rapidly pool information and coordinate with each other and the government.

In the days and weeks immediately after the cyclone, these meetings provided a focal point for strategic discussions including with new international organisations coming to assist with post-disaster recovery. By the end of April 2015, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported over 600 ongoing activities by more than 27 organisations on 32 islands across Vanuatu.

In response to Cyclone Pam, government and aid agencies worked together in specially-designed government-led ‘clusters’ to provide emergency shelter, protection, water and sanitation, and food. By working through these clusters, they are able to identify immediate needs or gaps in the provision of humanitarian assistance. Immediately after the disaster, government officials stressed the need for newly arrived agencies and NGOs to coordinate their work through the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO), and were critical of groups that did not integrate their work program with the government’s response. This highlights the importance of initiatives like the VHT, which have provided a practical and cost-effective mechanism to strengthen collaboration between government and other development actors. VHT facilitated the development of a 3W (‘who, where, what’) information management tool to identify where all humanitarian agencies were working and what humanitarian relief was planned, helping ensure there was no duplication of efforts, and helping clusters to plan and collaborate at national and provincial level. VHT also supported the government-led clusters to incorporate gender and protection into humanitarian response plans and the delivery of humanitarian relief.

A case study in this report highlights the work on community resilience building by the Community Disaster Committees (CDC) in Futuna, as part of the Yumi Stap Redi project. Futuna is located in Tafea Province in the south-east of the country, and these southern islands – including the largest island of Tanna – were hard hit by the cyclone.

As well as helping prepare their communities in advance of the cyclone, immediately after the cyclone, the CDC on Futuna took the initiative to conduct a rapid assessment of damage to
communities around the island and conveyed the information to the provincial capital on Tanna, well before UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination teams were able to reach the outer islands. Staff from CARE who worked with the local CDC during the Yumi Stap Redi project report that Futuna fared well compared to other islands in the south. No deaths or injuries were reported on the island and there was minimal damage to housing. In contrast, however, there was significant damage to food gardens, showing the importance of past work to preserve cyclone foods and trial techniques to dry and store vegetables.

As part of the recovery effort, local communities on Futuna will be using tools and techniques gained through the Yumi Stap Redi program to aid their recovery. CARE will assist with refresher agriculture and nutrition training and the provision of supplementary tools and seeds. In recognition of the role that women play in recovery, a ‘Futuna Women Seeds & Tools Bank’ was established in May 2015, to increase food production on an island reliant on local agriculture.

Another feature of the work of the Vanuatu Humanitarian Team and the Vanuatu Climate Adaptation Network is the integration of climate change adaptation and disaster preparedness. The regional Strategy for Disaster and Climate Resilient Development in the Pacific stresses the importance of merging existing responses on climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction into one coordinated program, and Vanuatu has begun this work on the ground.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and a range of scientific agencies have developed projections of cyclone activity that suggest a decrease in the frequency of cyclones but an increase in the severity of these events. Cyclone Pam is a warning for the future.
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APPENDIX: List of consortium projects

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<tr>
<th>AGENCY</th>
<th>NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS</th>
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<td>Community assessment/PCVA</td>
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<td>Community planning</td>
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<td>Awareness on weather, climate and climate change</td>
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<td>Establishing ongoing community links to climate/weather info</td>
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<td>Supporting women’s decision making and leadership</td>
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<td>Participatory monitoring and/or community reflection</td>
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<td>Work with Area Councils</td>
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<td>Work with/link community to provincial government</td>
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REFERENCES


Red Cross. 2014a. Gender and climate change, guidance note, Red Cross / Red Crescent Climate Centre.


Warwick, Olivia. 2009. “Ethics and methods in research for community based adaptation: reflections from rural Vanuatu”, Community-based adaptation to climate change, Participatory Learning and Action No.60. (IIED, 2009)
