

Disaster READY Vanuatu

Phase I Completion Report: 2017-2022

JANUARY 2023



Disaster **READY**: Vanuatu

\$11 million over five years
2017-2022



In partnership with:

Act for Peace, Vanuatu Christian Council, Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) Vanuatu, ADRA Australia, CAN DO, Uniting World, Field Ready, Vanuatu Society for People with Disability (VSPD), Osmalmok, Habitat for Humanity, Vanuatu Disability Promotion & Advocacy (VDPA), ActionAid Australia, ActionAid Vanuatu, Woman I Tok Tok Tugeta (WITT), and CBM Australia.

68,296

people reached with preparedness and resilience activities across Shefa, Sanma, Malampa, Penama, Tafea, Efate, Eton, Malo, Malekula, and Tanna Provinces.



55 PERCENT
WERE WOMEN
AND GIRLS



THREE PERCENT
WERE PEOPLE
WITH A DISABILITY



24 PERCENT
WERE CHILDREN



130 COMMUNITIES
HAVE NEW OR
UPDATED DISASTER
PLANS IN PLACE



14 SCHOOLS
HAVE UPDATED
DISASTER PLANS IN
PLACE



96 COMMUNITIES
HAVE IMPLEMENTED
ACTION PLANS TO
REDUCE RISKS

VANUATU DISASTER READY COUNTRY SUMMARY

Disaster READY Introduction

Disaster READY is a ten-year (2017-27) AUD 100 million disaster preparedness and resilience program, funded by the Australian Government and implemented through the Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP)¹. AHP partners deliver Disaster READY in partnership with their local networks across Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Timor-Leste. Disaster READY represents Australia's largest investment into disaster preparedness in the region and is an important element of Australia's stepped-up engagement for a more prepared and resilient Pacific.

This report provides an overview of the key results from the program in Vanuatu on completion of the first five years (Phase 1: 2017-2022). The report summarises collective results against the five objectives of Disaster READY Phase 1, to which AHP partner individual projects and shared services contributed:

- (1) Preparedness: Communities are better prepared for rapid and slow-onset disasters,
- (2) Inclusion: The rights and needs of vulnerable groups are being met in disaster preparedness and response at all levels.
- (3) Coordination: Government, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), the private sector and communities coordinate more effectively for inclusive disaster preparedness and response.
- (4) Strengthening local organisations: National NGOs and faith-based organisations have more influence and capacity in the country humanitarian system.
- (5) Collaboration: AHP NGOs work effectively together and with other relevant stakeholders

Methodology

This country report has been developed by the AHP Support Unit (AHPSU). It draws primarily on the Disaster READY partners' individual completion reports for their respective projects submitted in late 2022. It also draws on previous annual reports and country level updates across the 4.5 years implementation of Phase 1 of Disaster READY. The report includes core indicator data submitted by Disaster READY partners that has been aggregated from individual projects to country level results. The AHPSU undertook a sensemaking and quality assurance process of the indicator data presented, but primary responsibility for the veracity of these figures lies with the ANGO Disaster READY partners. This report also draws on case studies, the independent AHP mid-term evaluation, monitoring visits and other documentation including evaluations completed by Disaster READY partners for their projects. This report was also provided to the Vanuatu Disaster READY Country Coordinator for feedback and revisions before being finalised and submitted.

Overview of Disaster READY in Vanuatu

From 2017 to 2022, AHP Disaster READY in Vanuatu undertook disaster preparedness programming valued at approximately AUD11m. The collective activities focused on support to communities, government authorities, civil society organisations (CSOs) and church partners, with an emphasis on inclusion and collaboration. The program was implemented by Act for Peace, Vanuatu Christian Council, Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) Vanuatu,

¹ AHP is a ten-year (2017-2027) partnership and grants program between the Australian Government, six leading Australian NGOs and their consortiums. The partnership is administered through a Support Unit delivered by the managing contractor Alinea International. The lead NGOs in the partnership are CARE Australia, Oxfam Australia, Caritas Australia, or CAN DO (Church Agency Network Disaster Operations), World Vision Australia, Plan International Australia, and Save the Children Australia. Through the AHP, partners aim to save lives, alleviate suffering by supporting partner countries, local organisations, and communities to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters and other humanitarian crisis.

ADRA Australia, Uniting World, Field Ready, CARE, Vanuatu Society for People with Disability (VSPD), Osmalmok, Habitat for Humanity, Vanuatu Disability Promotion & Advocacy (VDPA), Oxfam in the Pacific, Plan International, ActionAid Australia, ActionAid Vanuatu, Woman I Tok Tok Tugeta (WITT), Save the Children, World Vision Vanuatu and CBM Australia.

AHP Disaster READY in Vanuatu has provided support to 130 communities, including establishing Community Disaster & Climate Change Committees (CDCCC), and directly reaching 68,296 people with tools and trainings aimed at increasing preparedness and resilience against disaster and climate change risks. Targeted communities across Vanuatu are now better able to identify natural hazards and risks and have put into place contextually appropriate and inclusive disaster preparedness plans that consider the impacts of climate change. Disaster READY preparedness activities in Vanuatu prioritise all community members with a particular focus on inclusion and the most vulnerable (including women and girls, people with disabilities and the elderly). Throughout the first phase of Disaster READY, AHP partners worked closely with the Government of Vanuatu, including the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) and several key departments.

Through the life of the program, notable milestones included:

- The completion of the Vanuatu cash feasibility study led by Oxfam Vanuatu.
- Support to NDMO to revise and launch the Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction Handbook.
- The development and launch of the Theology of Disaster Resilience in a Changing Climate (TDRCC) and the Safe N Redi evacuation centre mapping toolkit.
- The completion and launch of Community Voices for Inclusive Shelter Programming in Vanuatu by Habitat for Humanity. This handbook provides holistic guidance to humanitarian actors to respond to natural disasters and to provide communities with durable and rapid shelter solutions.

Implementation of Phase 1 was undertaken both directly by AHP NGOs as well as in partnership with local organisations. These organisations were simultaneously provided with organisational and institutional support to build capacity and are now better placed to lead response work and to find independent sources of funding.



In early 2021, Disaster READY partners supported the development and launch of a new handbook that will save lives. The Government of Vanuatu's National Disaster Management Office released the Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction handbook in March, which was designed by locals for locals.

A two-day workshop, supported by AHP as part of the Disaster READY program, was held to help humanitarian actors understand and socialise the handbook. Save the Children's Shantony (pictured) discussed with her group how to run a community training on disaster preparedness.

Image: CARE Vanuatu

Disaster READY also included a funded coordination function, supported in Vanuatu by additional Tropical Cyclone (TC) Harold/COVID-19 response funding. This led to a new level of collaboration, coordination, and partnership for Vanuatu partners, and provided an improved coordination model for all Disaster READY countries in Phase 2. The country committee served as a platform to learn from each other and to use this learning for improved program delivery. Beyond this, it also led to increased collaboration in joint efforts for preparedness and, importantly, NGOs working closely together on humanitarian responses, including the Ambae Volcanic Eruption, TC Harold, and COVID-19.

The strong collaboration fostered between NGOs and local organisations in Vanuatu represents one of the key outcomes for the country under Phase 1 and establishes a robust foundation for greater collaborative outcomes and shifting of power to local actors in Phase 2.

The 2020 independent mid-term evaluation of the AHP program stated that *“Disaster READY has made a demonstrable contribution towards increasing the capacity of Pacific communities and governments to prepare for and respond to disasters”*.

In 2019, DFAT and the AHPSU undertook a joint monitoring trip in Vanuatu. The monitoring trip report found that *“Disaster READY is well-established in Vanuatu with clear signs of program progress evident.”* The combination of relevant support for communities and alignment with government priorities places AHP partners as an important supporting mechanism for the strengthening of disaster management in Vanuatu.

Objective 1: Community Preparedness

Between 2017 and 2022, the Disaster READY program in Vanuatu supported 130 communities, 14 schools, and 4 churches to develop or update disaster preparedness and response plans. These figures exceed by double the targets set by partners at the outset of the program for the number of anticipated disaster and preparedness plans through Phase 1. The communities were supported to identify and assess risks and natural hazards, including the impacts of climate change, and to develop action plans to best mitigate these. The plans were actively used and represented valuable tools for the community. 74% of communities either undertook regular simulations or implemented disaster management actions that actively reduced disaster and climate change risks.

The preparedness plans have made these communities safer and more resilient and included actions to reduce risks and minimise the impacts of disasters and climate change. Some examples of actions undertaken include:

- 14 target communities in Canal Fanafo and Malo received 6,000-litre water tanks, and 2 communities in Stone Hill mobilised supplementary resources (through fundraising and additional timber and fencing) to procure 10,000-litre water tanks. These communities now have more sustainable access to water.
- 4 communities, (Balon in Canal Fanafo; and Atariboe, Ambakura and Naviova in East Malo), identified the need to restore their existing water systems. They were supported to restore 3 water wells, fix damaged water pipes and tap stands, and retrofit old water catchments. These communities now have sustainable, safe access to the water catchment.
- 2 communities in Canal Fanafo identified the need for immediate support in constructing inclusive latrines at emergency evacuation sites. 2 ventilated improved latrines were constructed in East Malo, and one flush toilet at Monixhill.

The preparedness plans were activated during multiple natural disasters including Tropical Cyclone (TC) Donna (2017), TC Hola (2018), TC Rita (2019), TC Harold (2020), and TC Gina and Gita (2022). With Disaster READY support, CDCCC members were able to ensure their communities were prepared by disseminating information on what to do during different levels of alerts, using information disseminated by the NDMO. The CDCCCs communicated through local churches, the Area Councils and community structures to disseminate key messages for community preparedness. Cyclone simulations supported by Disaster READY also prepared communities to respond when TC Harold (2020) & TC Gina (2022) occurred.

The CAN DO team developed and implemented the TDRCC and this was endorsed by Vanuatu’s National Advisory Board on Climate Change. The resources were translated into Bislama and 104 people were trained to support dissemination. An independent evaluation of the TDRCC initiative deemed it to be relevant to the Vanuatu context.

Objective 2: Inclusion

70% of the community, church and school disaster plans were developed with the active engagement of women, which was less than the program's target but a strong result for the context. Disaster READY also helped increase the representation of women and people with disabilities on CDCCCs, and strengthen CDCCC capacity to implement inclusive activities. For example:

- In Umeij (Aneityum) a female CDCCC member led consultations with community women to identify protection issues following a tsunami. As a result the CDCCC agreed to a number of recommendations, namely building a bridge across a waterway so children could access school during flooding; clearing evacuation routes to make them accessible for everyone; and clearing the evacuation site on top of the hill.
- In 2022, when a tsunami warning was issued in Waisis (Tanna) the CDCCC prioritised first supporting people with disabilities to move to an uphill safe zone, until they received information that it was safe to return home.
- In Nia Naorari (Tanna), when CDCCCs were supporting the NDMO in food distributions, the CDCCC Chairman noticed that people with disabilities could not access the site where food supplies were being distributed. An arrangement was made with other CDCCCs to pay transportation costs to deliver food supplies to their door.

ActionAid Vanuatu worked through the WITTT network, leading to increased women's leadership for locally led efforts to drive protection, preparedness and resilience. A women-led community-based protection assessment was undertaken for the first time following TC Harold. The assessment, led by the WITTT network, was completed in Malo and the team comprised 30 local women leaders who negotiated with community leaders to allow for a women-led response and recovery program.

CAN DO and Field Ready collaborated to retrofit six church facilities (3 on Santo Island and 3 on Efate Island) to improve accessibility and safety features so they could be used inclusively as evacuation centres during an emergency. The inclusive features included: ramps and rails for the main structure and in bathrooms, lever handle doorknobs, accessible handwashing stations, and improved lighting. As a result, barriers to security, privacy and accessibility have been minimised and 1200 people, including vulnerable groups, have improved access to facilities.

Objective 3: Coordination within Country Systems

Disaster READY Phase I supported the Government of Vanuatu, NGOs, and communities to coordinate more effectively for inclusive disaster preparedness and response.

Partners provided support to the Tafea and Sanma Governments to develop and launch their Provincial Disaster Response Plans, which are now both active. Further, Disaster READY partners provided support to Provincial Emergency Operations Centres (PEOCs), which resulted in stronger provincial-level responses to TC Harold and COVID-19. For example, support to the Sanma PEOC included an upgrade of equipment and the adoption of standard operating procedures that emphasised the roles and functions of members. It also established coordination links with Area Councils for more effective local assessment and data collection. This resulted in a more coordinated and efficient response to TC Harold when compared to the province's last major disaster (the Ambae volcano evacuation).

In 2018, Disaster READY partners completed a cash feasibility study and subsequently undertook a series of cash readiness activities with local organisations, government and financial providers. This has led to the ability to utilise cash and vouchers as a mechanism for disaster and humanitarian response. Oxfam leveraged this work to gain funding from the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) in 2019 to undertake a cash-led response to the Volcano eruption in Ambae. Oxfam also led further DFAT funded cash responses to TC Harold and COVID 19 between 2020 to 2022.

Disaster READY partners provided support to the NDMO to launch the Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction Handbook. This included updates of specific tools to improve inclusive preparedness practices, including a facilitators

guide supported by CARE. The [Handbook](#) is now publicly available, meaning all humanitarian actors have access to this toolkit to undertake best practice for inclusive community-based preparedness work.

Through Disaster READY, CAN DO partners developed and launched the Safe n Redi geospatial tool, which provides information on church facilities used as evacuation centres throughout Vanuatu. The tool is designed to be used both by church partners and Government to support preparedness and response. For example, CAN DO partners shared the information from the tool with the Sanma Provincial Government to provide accurate advice to residents about safe and accessible evacuation points shortly before TC Harold hit the region. Church partners were also able to use the data to engage directly with communities.

Objective 4: Strengthening the Role of Organisations

Through activities under Objective 4, Disaster READY Phase I supported national NGOs and faith-based organisations to have more influence and capacity in the country humanitarian system.

For example, CAN DO partners provided a series of support activities to Vanuatu Christian Council (VCC) resulting in it becoming a more active participant in the humanitarian sector and better able to respond to natural disasters. Its member churches participated in national and sub-national clusters and working groups including the Gender and Protection, Displacement and Evacuation Centre Management and Shelter Clusters. VCC developed Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with Ministry of Health and four target provincial governments. The VCC network is now fully recognised by both national and provincial governments as a partner in disaster preparedness and response.

Through a regional program, CBM and the Pacific Disability Forum (PDF) provided technical advice, training and assistance to the VDPA. This has enabled VDPA to advocate and influence AHP partners, resulting in inclusive community preparedness practices. For example, AHP partners worked with VDPA during COVID-19 distributions. As a result, partners were able to support a total of 152 people with disabilities in West Malo, 12 people in Mavea, and 12 in Aore.

Disaster READY partners supported the process of establishing an MOU between VSPD and VDPA to deliver capacity-building training for CDCCCs and to strengthen disability-inclusive emergency response strategies and disaster risk reduction processes.

Oxfam partnered with local CSO Wan Smol Bag to co-implement the Disaster READY program. They were provided with technical training resulting in improved ability to implement of community-based preparedness activities.

By 2022, 75% of Disaster READY Year 5 grant funding went to organisations based in Vanuatu including 31% that went to local partners.

A feedback mechanism in Vanuatu supported by Disaster READY is ensuring better communication between communities and government for disaster preparedness and response. Jacob James (pictured), CARE Vanuatu's Area Administrator for central Pentecost, said that clear communication helps government better provide for affected communities during a disaster. "Communication between communities and disaster response decision makers is absolutely essential in an effective response," explained Frida Sam, CARE's representative on the Communications and Community Engagement Sub-Cluster in Vanuatu.

"When disaster response decision makers listen to feedback and ideas from communities, the response is more effective, because the communities know best what help they need to get back on their feet. To make sure that two-way flow of information happens efficiently, clear structures and systems need to be in place and key stakeholders need to have the right skills. We're working to help strengthen the structures, systems, and skills within Vanuatu's disaster response system now so that when disasters happen, we are prepared for good communication with communities."

Photo: Benoit Heurtault/CARE Vanuatu



Objective 5: Collaboration

The fifth objective of Disaster READY Phase I was to ensure AHP NGOs worked effectively together and with other relevant stakeholders. This was partly achieved through a shared services and coordination function that allowed partners to leverage each other's area of expertise and to form new partnerships and collaborations for preparedness work. This included:

- CAN DO and Field Ready leveraged their respective areas of expertise to form a partnership to retrofit churches used for evacuation centres, providing improved disability accessibility. This has resulted in 8 church retrofits with plans to continue this collaboration in Disaster READY Phase 2.
- Oxfam established the Vanuatu Cash Transfer Working Group which included members of financial service providers, Reserve Bank of Vanuatu, NDMO, Disaster READY partners, United Nations agencies and CSOs. The working group is a platform improve the ability of all partners to deliver best practice cash responses. It has enabled all stakeholders the ability to share and disseminate results of ongoing cash transfer pilots and responses, as well as provide learning and partnership opportunities. This working group laid the foundations for Oxfam's Unblocked Cash project under the AHP COVID-19 Response.

Through shared services, partnerships were also formed for collaborative and collective disaster responses. During 2020-2022, partners put forward joint proposals for response funding for TC Harold and COVID-19. These joint proposals enabled a collective approach to engagement with DFAT and government, and for greater reach across Vanuatu. A partnership brokering exercise was undertaken and a Partnership Agreement and standard operating procedures (SOP) for collaborative proposals was developed through the shared services function.



CASE STUDY

Increasing accessibility in Vanuatu

For 61 year-old polio survivor and disability advocate Albert Bala, receiving an Unblocked Cash e-voucher meant more than just gaining access to food and other material needs. Albert viewed the card as a sign of recognition and freedom.

"The card has made a big change; I think to a lot of us with disability. When we use the cards, we have access to the same foods as other people, so the card has made a big difference."

"I think that there are a lot of people that ignore us, but when Unblocked Cash came, they ensured that we had access, and I see that now some people have changed their way of thinking and want to help people with disability," Albert explained.

In many homes, the individual recipients of the voucher card were the ones who provided for the needs of their family members following TC Harold and through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chief Shem Simeon from Kingscross in Tanna highlighted what this meant for people, particularly those who may not have been in a position to provide for their families without the cards.

"It has been a big change for them. With the cards the elderly and people with disability are able to help their families," Chief Shem said.

The Chief also explained how the Unblocked Cash program's approach to including everyone started to shift some perceptions within his community.

"Those who are widows, elderly or have a disability, they don't have any power but now people start to think about them. Now people know that they are important and have the same rights as others. They are empowered and respected," he said.

Going Forward

With the completion of Disaster READY Phase 1, AHP partners are now transitioning to the implementation of Phase 2 which will run until 2027. Inclusion remains at the forefront of all activities, particularly at the community level, to support women, children, people with disabilities and other groups. AHP partners will build on the community-based preparedness work of Phase 1. Partners will further incorporate resilience-focused activities including livelihoods and WASH support, as well as a greater focus on integration of climate change adaptation into all activities. Partners will further develop preparedness for cash and voucher responses including incorporating learnings from existing responses from Phase 1. Partners will also explore the potential for anticipatory action funding.

In Phase 2, Disaster READY partners will continue to increase opportunities for locally-led humanitarian action. This will mean a greater focus on alignment, support, and coordination at all levels of Vanuatu Government and partnership and support to local CSOs and faith-based organisations. Partners have developed a formal coordinated and collaborative localisation plan for Phase 2.

In Phase 2 partners will seek to improve monitoring, evaluation and learning systems to both capture successes and to ensure these are used to constantly improve delivery, move towards best practice and best serve communities. This will include a funded collective learning agenda that will support all partners.

Finally, Disaster READY Vanuatu will continue its collaborative approach which will include regular reviews of the partnership agreement and SOPs.

ANNEX

Vanuatu Indicator Data

Outcomes	Indicators	Baseline	Target	Actual Result
1.1 Communities understand likely hazards and risks and have knowledge, skills and resources to manage these	B. Number of communities, schools or churches which have disaster plans to reduce risks and respond to disaster (by new or updated plan)	New plans Communities: 0 Schools: 0 Churches: 0 Updated plans Communities: 7 Schools: 0 Churches: 0	New plans Communities: 50 Schools: 12 Churches: 0 Updated plans Communities: 16 Schools: 0 Churches: 0	New plans Communities: 85 Schools: 0 Churches: 4 Updated plans Communities: 45 Schools: 14 Churches: 0
1.2 Community disaster mechanisms are prepared for and respond to rapid- and slow-onset disasters	C. Number of communities, schools or churches which have simulated (tested) their response plan	Communities: 6 Schools: 0 Churches: 0	Communities: 63 Schools: 12 Churches: 0	Communities: 86 Schools: 0 Churches: 0
	D. Number of communities, schools or churches that have implemented action plans to reduce risks	Communities: 0 Schools: 0 Churches: 0	Communities: 62 Schools: 12 Churches: 0	Communities: 96 Schools: 0 Churches: 4
	H1. Number of community, school or church disaster plans (listed in indicator B) that were developed with active participation from women, youth and children, and people with disabilities.	# plans with women: 7 # plans with Y&C: 0 # plans with PWD: 5	# plans with women: 77 # plans with Y&C: 60 # plans with PWD: 63	# plans with women: 101 # plans with Y&C: 101 # plans with PWD: 73
2.1 Increased representation and capacity of women, people with disabilities, youth and children disaster committees and planning processes, particularly at community and sub-national levels	H2. Number of communities, school or church disaster plans (listed in indicator B) that address the specific needs of women, youth and children, and people with disabilities (equal benefit).	# plans women: 22 # plans Y&C: 19 # plans PWD: 10	# plans women: 77 # plans Y&C: 74 # plans PWD: 77	# plans women: 101 # plans Y&C: 101 # plans PWD: 73
	J. Number of disaster committees that have women represented, and the percentage of members that are women (by national or sub-national level)	National Committees: 0 Sub-National Committees: 1	National Committees: 0 Sub-National Committees: 6	National Committees: 4 Sub-National Committees: 9

Outcomes	Indicators	Baseline	Target	Actual Result
	K. Number of disaster committees that have people with disabilities represented	National Committees: 0 Sub-National Committees: 0	National Committees: 0 Sub-National Committees: 6	National Committees: 4 Sub-National Committees: 7
	O1. Number of sub-national disaster management committees established or re-established (these could be community or community/government)	Total: 0	Total: 4	Total: 28
	S1. Number of tailored, inclusive CVA tools that are locally designed, and successfully piloted and shared with cash actors	Total: 0	Total: 1	Total: 20
	S2. Number of INGO, local partner, UN agency, government, academic and private sector representatives with improved knowledge or skills in CVA	INGO: 1 Local Partner: 0 Government: 0 Academic: 0 Private Sector: 0	INGO: 2 Local Partner: 2 Government: 1 Academic: 0 Private Sector: 1	INGO: 3 Local Partner: 4 Government: 3 Academic: 1 Private Sector: 2
	U1. Number of national NGOs and churches that have improved operational or financial policies or practices that align with humanitarian standards	Total: 1	Total: 1	Total: 8

AHP

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