



**COMMUNITY VOICES  
FOR INCLUSIVE SHELTER  
PROGRAMMING IN VANUATU**

This project has been funded and produced with support from the following partners:



# Community Voices for Inclusive Shelter Programming in Vanuatu



Source: <https://www.shelterboxusa.org/2020-year-in-review/>



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

Introduction .....	1
Acknowledgment .....	5
Disaster Management Cycle .....	6
Chapter 1 - Shelter and Disability Inclusion.....	7
Chapter 2 - Shelter and Gender .....	17
Chapter 3 - Preparedness .....	27
Chapter 4 - Emergency Response .....	39
Chapter 5 - Recovery.....	49
Appendices.....	59

In 2015, the UN World Disaster Risk Index found that Vanuatu was the world's most at risk country to natural hazards. Vanuatu is among countries with highest risks of natural hazards including cyclones, earthquakes, volcanic events and also vulnerable to climate change. The archipelago sits along a volatile seismic strip called the 'Ring of Fire' in the Pacific.

Vanuatu is prone to significant year-round seismic and volcanic activity, with over 2,000 seismic events reported annually. The tropical cyclone season in Vanuatu normally runs from November to April. Throughout this period there is a high risk of strong winds and heavy rains with associated flooding, landslides and road closures.

Recently, category five Tropical Cyclones Pam (2015) and Harold (2020) as well as the volcanic eruptions (2017 and 2018) on Ambae Island all caused major damage to the country's housing stock as well as substantial economic damage and loss of livelihoods. A notable feature of disaster in Vanuatu is the relatively low loss of life and this is testimony to local knowledge of natural hazards, extreme and recurrent weather events, resilience and coping mechanisms. Despite the best efforts of communities, governments and aid agencies, disaster recovery can take years. This is a long-term journey that starts from day one after a sudden onset event and continues long after official humanitarian assistance has ended.

Community Voices for Inclusive Shelter Programming in Vanuatu (hereafter referred to as Community Voices) builds on a significant body of work on safe sheltering and housing recovery developed by the Vanuatu Government and the Vanuatu Shelter Cluster. Community Voices is intended to supplement key Vanuatu Shelter Cluster documents such as the Shelter Cluster Vanuatu - Technical Guidelines. Community Voices arises out of interviews and workshops with people across the country who have lived through disasters. It reflects some of their key experiences, concerns and recommendations for shelter programs. Community Voices documents their experiences in response and recovery and emphasises the critical importance of disability inclusion and gender mainstreaming in shelter and settlements programming.

#### Who is it for?

Community Voices has been designed to support responders delivering shelter response programs at national, provincial and community level. It seeks to raise awareness about the importance of inclusive shelter programming as well as document the importance of shelter in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. In this context, the term 'inclusive' means 'ensuring vulnerable groups, including women, people with disabilities and children, are involved and accounted for in disaster preparedness, management and risk reduction activities'.

**Australian Humanitarian Partnership (Disaster READY):** <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ab0691e5417fc8a1ee9a417/t/5c9b072a4e17b61073bf8e11/1553663794746/Disaster+READY+Overview.pdf>

#### How was it developed?

Field interviews: 112 individuals were interviewed and/or contributed information to this part of the research. This included views of 70 male, 42 female including 28 people with disabilities from various organisations including disability umbrella bodies. These interviewees were from shelter and non-shelter agencies, faith based organisations, women's groups, government and private sector.

Community Consultations: a total of 323 people from 13 communities on two islands in two provinces (Shefa – Efate and Tafea-Tanna) were consulted for input in the research that focused on consolidating inclusive best practice shelter solutions and processes at community level for shelter implementers to use during a disaster response. This included speaking to 198 women and 5 people living with disabilities at community level. Additional case studies were developed following TC Harold (April 2020) capturing the experience of affected people from Penama and Sanma provinces.

#### How can it be used?

Community Voices exists to support existing technical shelter guidance in Vanuatu. It seeks to complement

these documents and approaches with documented lived experience of disaster response in the shelter sector. It seeks to give a range of perspectives and experiences, especially focusing on disability inclusion and gender and therefore seeks to raise awareness within the Vanuatu shelter sector about the importance of inclusive shelter programming as well as to support the localisation of humanitarian response through the prioritisation of community-based perspectives.

#### Sources of information on Shelter in Vanuatu

Community Voices for Inclusive Shelter Programming in Vanuatu is not a stand-alone document. Key guidance documents that underpin shelter technical standards have already been developed and endorsed by the Vanuatu Shelter Cluster and by the Vanuatu Government. Community Voices should be read together with the latest guidance as well as the foundational documents of the Vanuatu Shelter Cluster. These documents can all be found on the Vanuatu Shelter Cluster website: <https://www.sheltercluster.org/pacific/vanuatu>



## INTRODUCTION

### AHP Australian Humanitarian Partnership

The Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP) is a five-year (2017-2022) partnership between the Australian Government and Australian NGOs. Through the AHP, partners aim to save lives, alleviate suffering and enhance human dignity in the face of conflict, disasters and other humanitarian crises.

The AHP meets these objectives by focusing efforts both in disaster response as well as disaster preparedness. In disaster response, the AHP uses Australian Government resources to leverage NGO networks and expertise, to deliver effective humanitarian assistance. For each response, the partnership selects the best placed NGOs to respond to those in need, in the most timely, cost efficient and effective way.

### AHP Disaster READY

Disaster READY is an AUD 50 million disaster preparedness and resilience program that is implemented by AHP partners and their local networks across the Pacific and Timor-Leste. The program represents Australia's largest ever investment in disaster preparedness in the region, and is an important element of Australia's stepped-up engagement for a more resilient Pacific.

The focus of Disaster READY is to strengthen disaster preparedness and management across what is one of the world's most vulnerable regions to natural disasters, and which is also prone to political instability. Disaster READY draws on the deep networks and partnerships developed by Australian NGOs in the region to support Pacific communities and governments to better prepare for and respond to disasters. The program focuses on ensuring vulnerable groups, including women, people with disabilities and children, are included and accounted for in disaster preparedness, management and risk reduction activities. Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response is a key priority of action in the 2015-2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific.

Disaster READY is being implemented in Fiji, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste.

Source: Vanuatu Red Cross



The Shelter Cluster is an Inter-Agency Standing Committee coordination mechanism that supports people affected by natural disasters and conflicts with the means to live in safe, dignified and appropriate shelter. In Vanuatu, the Shelter Cluster is led by the Public Works Department (PWD) which is a government agency under the Ministry of Infrastructure and Public Utilities, and co-led by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). Many partners of the Vanuatu Shelter Cluster have contributed to the development of this document. All rights reserved. This material is copyright to the Habitat for Humanity Fiji AHP Team. Materials may be reproduced by any method without fee for education and practical use but not for resale. Feedback is welcome at any time, and will be taken into consideration for future iterations of this document. This resource was developed by Doreen Narayan as project lead with support from Robert Dodds, Filipe Waqabitu, Leeanne Marshall, Claudia Bailey, Karen Alexander, Freda Willie, Salote Valentine and Tom Bamforth.

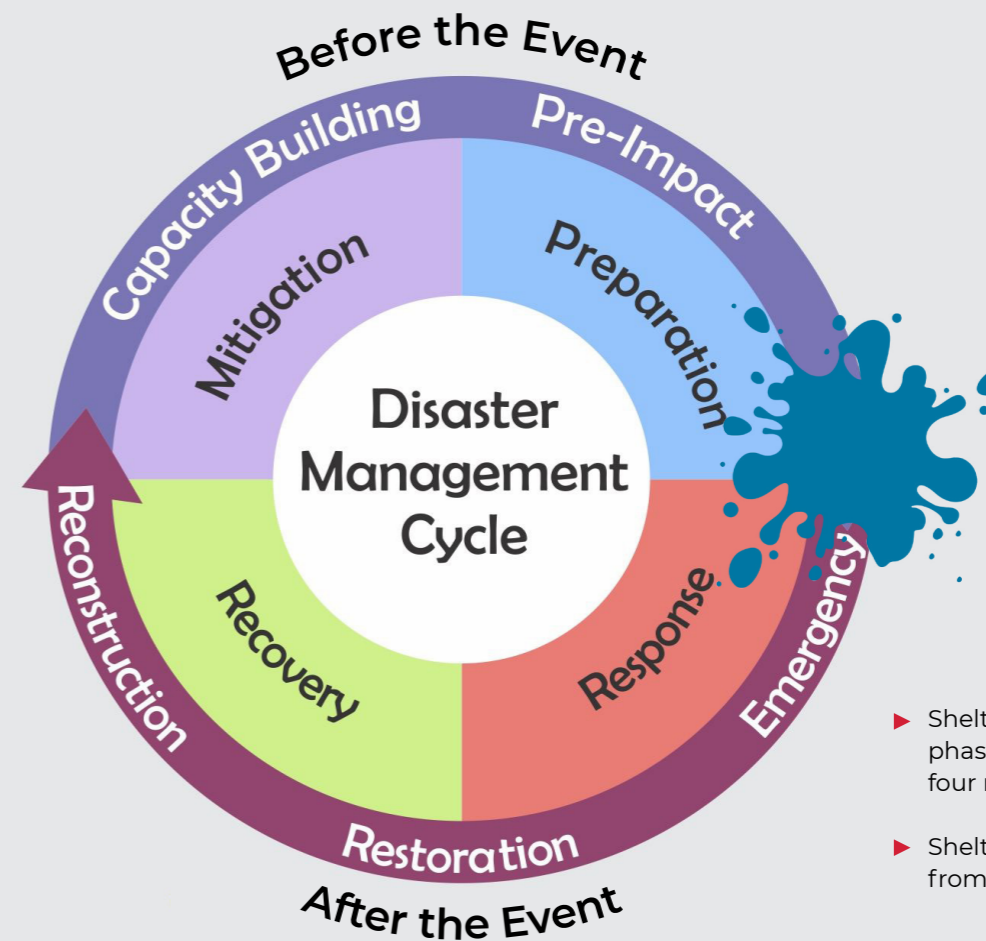
**The development team would like to thank the following agencies for its input:**

Vanuatu Shelter Cluster, Public Works Department, IFRC, Australian Red Cross (ARC), Care Vanuatu, the Butterfly Trust, Vanuatu Red Cross Society (VRCS), CBM Global Inclusion Advisory Group, World Vision Vanuatu and Vanuatu Disability and Promotion Advocacy Association.

**Also acknowledging support from the following individuals and agencies:**

Masi Latianara, Michael Hill, Linda Keni, Swastika Devi, Harold Allanson, Jude Mlonturala, Mathieu Gamba, Cedric Hoebreck, Daryl Crowden, Anna Pelkonen, Josh Hallwright, Meg Quartermaine, Sophie Cooke, Chris Govers, Lara Warren the staff and members from Vanuatu Disabled People’s Network, Oxfam Vanuatu, IOM, project volunteers and the stakeholders who contributed to the research and development of this resource document.

In particular we would like to thank the people from the following communities, who kindly gave up their time in the development of this resource: Blacksand area, Pamma Black sand, Epau Village, Takara Community, Enamelen Communities, Enkatalay community, Ikurup community, Lamakaun Community, Green Hill, Latars Village, Loukatai Community, Poethel Community and Tennis Futuna Community, Eton, Chapui (Luganville Santo), Pangpang, Efate, Big Nanugu (West Malo), Sarakata (Luganville), Ikrup (Tanna-Tafea Province), Winsaw, Big Bay Bush, Banban (Santo), Lesupelakan (Central Pentecost) and Bladiniere Estate. This publication has been funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The views expressed in this publication are the author’s alone and are not necessarily the views of the Australian Government.



▶ Shelter emergency or relief phase ranges from 2 weeks to four months

▶ Shelter recovery phase ranges from 18 to 24 months or more



**“Nothing about us without us”**

**“Don’t treat us as second-hand”**

### Introduction

One of the key priorities of shelter and settlements programming is to focus on safeguarding the health security, privacy and dignity of all disaster and crisis affected people. People with disabilities make up at least 15 per cent of the world’s population, and yet face numerous barriers (physical, attitudinal, organisational) to inclusion. Information on disaster preparedness is often not available in a range of accessible formats (such as pictorial, simple text, Braille, or through sign language) and therefore persons with disabilities are often not included in disaster preparedness programs.

Owing to lack of inclusive programming, absence of consultation, lack of visibility, and conscious and unconscious biases in society and in aid and development programs, up to 85 per cent of people with disabilities have never participated in disaster risk reduction or humanitarian preparedness planning or disaster response

**“Families do not understand our pain or see our situation as people with disability”**

activities (UNIS-DR, 2014). During disasters and humanitarian crises, people with disabilities may be unable to flee because of existing barriers (such as lack of accessible transport, loss of assistive devices for mobility, lack of accessible warning systems for deaf and vision impaired people, lack of community support), or seek safety in a nearby evacuation centre. Following the aftermath of Cyclone Pam in 2015, 60 per cent of people with disabilities did not have information communicated to them in an accessible way (CBM-Nossal, 2017).

For communities with evacuation centres, they are rarely accessible for people with disabilities. Without accessible shelters, people with disabilities may not be able to evacuate their homes during disaster events or may be left with no shelter at all. Some may opt to stay in their homes to maintain comfort and dignity, despite the risk posed by the incoming hazard.

Due to these reasons, people with disabilities are up to four times more likely to die as a result of a disaster, in comparison to people without disabilities (CBM International, HI & IDA, 2019). In the aftermath of a disaster or crisis, shelter and settlements programs are rarely designed to meet the diverse needs of people with disabilities. Whilst disasters can provide an opportunity to build back better, safer and more accessible shelter and infrastructure for all, shelter assistance is often comprised of standardised solutions which don’t sufficiently address the potential barriers faced by people with disabilities.

Whilst nine in 10 humanitarian actors recognise that people with cognitive disabilities require the adaptation of shelter and settlements to meet their unique needs, they often do not know how to involve them in programs to address such barriers (Global Shelter Cluster, 2019). Additionally, while shelter programs often focus only on physical barriers, it is important to remember that persons with disabilities are a diverse group. They have different impairments and diverse identities (as women, children, LGBTIQ etc). Inclusive programming needs to recognize and respond to this diversity.

Vanuatu, as a signatory to the UN Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, must ensure that all people are included within all stages of disaster related shelter and settlement programming. This includes enabling the meaningful participation of people with disabilities and

their representative organisations, Disabled Peoples Organisations (DPOs). Inclusive and accessible shelter planning seeks to ensure that all people have the same opportunities to access disaster preparedness information, participate in preparedness programs, and to be included as an active stakeholder throughout all stages of the disaster management cycle.



Members of VDPA and Habitat Fiji during a disability-inclusive shelter workshop in Port Vila Vanuatu

**Community Voice - Accessibility**

A wheelchair user hopes evacuation centres will be installed with ramps to make it friendly for disabled people. Freda, a 40-year-old woman from Bladiniere, feels people fail to understand people with disabilities. “The evacuation centre we moved to did not have proper ramp or disability accessibility. Then they moved us to my sister’s place and there the challenge faced was with my wheelchair. My sister did not want the wheelchair to be inside the house,” she said.

“Families do not understand our pain or see our situation as people with disabilities. So it is harder for those outside family to understand us.” Shelter responders must work closely with disability organisations when carrying out rehabilitation projects.

“A cyclone proof shelter with disability accessibility provisions is needed and the shelter must be built in safe environment. Before construction, talk to us on how we want things, hardware stores to provide quality materials to make life easier for us during disasters,” she said.

**Freda – Bladiniere**

**Community Voice – Being left behind**

A rural community in Galilei, Tanna suffered extensive shelter damage due to TC Pam with the disabled and the elderly left exposed to the elements. People panicked when the cyclone warning was issued as the community did not have a safety plan. “Our chief directed us to the evacuation centre (a church) and around 200-300 people stayed under one roof.

When the cyclone winds started to get strong and pace picked up, the roof blew away and people had to run here and there to save themselves,” said a person with disability on the condition of anonymity. “People had to hide in drains and behind trees to save themselves from strong disaster winds.

It was a horrible moment for us as the vulnerable people had nowhere to go, so there was no time to think about people with disabilities or the elderly as everyone was running around to save themselves.” He said more work was needed to be done in terms of shelter. “We need strong evacuation centres and churches. Also, strong house building codes should be put in place and strong shelter models to be implemented in all communities so we don’t go through what we experienced during TC Pam”.

**Anonymous, Tanna**

Source: Oxfam Australia





**Community Voice – Discrimination in recovery**

High intensity cyclones are usually double trouble for the people with disabilities. Disability combined with the destruction of shelter due to a disaster puts those affected in a very vulnerable situation as rehabilitation often takes months. “Cyclones for a person with disability means double disaster” says Arthur Simirai, 67. “Shelter is a priority but the only difference is that we are disadvantaged to go and arrange things for ourselves due to our disability. Between cash or kits, what works best for us would be shelter kits as going out and buying materials is a hassle for us.”

“Just building a house is not our concern but having a house with disability friendly space is like a dream come true. It also depends on the type of disability you have. For a person with disability, any rebuilding phase should not take more than three months and anything that takes longer than this brings more suffering to us.” “For us, cost is the first hindrance and then secondly, looking for people to rebuild houses is another struggle. It is good for us to highlight our issues during preparedness so people understand what we go through.” Simirai, who is an Engagement Officer with the Vanuatu Society of People with Disability, said people with disability suffer being stigmatised and often feel left out by the community with radio and television being the best mediums for cyclone warnings.

“Nowadays written materials also come with nice illustrations that is easy for us to understand so that is acceptable also. He is requesting responders to include sanitation provisions inside evacuation centres. “We want to feel comfortable at evacuation centres but the problem is all evacuation centres have washrooms and toilets outside the building. Even at some of the houses people with disabilities are placed, sometimes it’s not convenient,” Simirai said.

**Author Simirai - Engagement Officer, Vanuatu Society of People with Disability**

**Community Voice – Safety, adequacy, and dignity**

Sio Moses is thankful to the support he has during crises but at the same time hope for things to get better for people with disabilities at large.

“With the help of my family members and friends I was removed from my home to people with disability office for my security. There was simply no safe house available for me to go to.

“During the cyclone we were at the evacuation centre and after the cyclone my house was badly damaged. We need to have permanent shelter structure. Shelter Cluster Vanuatu is helping us a lot and we are thankful to them.

Some main challenges at evacuation centre (common hall) faced was that there was no privacy in the one room at the evacuation centre. It was a hassle for the elderly especially as there was no space to sleep or change clothes.

**Name: Sio Moses**

**Top Tips**

- ▶ Include people with disabilities, including women and children with disabilities and DPOs, in decision making processes and at all stages of disaster preparedness and response.
- ▶ All information, infrastructure and services should be accessible and inclusive.
- ▶ Monitoring and evaluation systems need to be inclusive to collect and analyze data on disability.
- ▶ Awareness raising is needed at national and community levels on inclusive response and preparedness, and people with disabilities, care takers and their representative organisations should be included in these processes.
- ▶ Develop appropriate response to help vulnerable groups to access aid, transport shelter material and construct shelters. Pay particular attention to assistance needed by persons with disabilities and older persons to ensure construction of accessible shelters.
- ▶ People with disabilities and older persons may not be able to come to distribution/facility sites. Plan additional measures to reach persons with disabilities and older persons.
- ▶ In consultation with PWDs, review NFI kits and shelter

designs to ensure they are relevant to people’s needs. Be ready to change and adapt kits (for example provide extra or different items where necessary).

Preparedness phase of the Disaster Management Cycle	
Challenges	Solutions
Disability data not collected and disability needs not considered	<p>Include the use of the the Washington Group Short Survey (WGSS) to collect, disaggregate and measure disability data</p> <p>Work with the Gender and Protection Cluster to advocate to the NDMO for this to be considered at the inter-cluster level. Encourage and facilitate the participation of Organisations for Persons with Disability in coordination mechanisms at national, provincial and local levels.</p>
Lack of access to disability friendly information and inaccessible communications	<p>Ensure information is communicated in a range of accessible formats (such as pictorial, simple text, Braille, and through sign language).</p> <p>See the Disability Inclusive Communication Guideline for further guidance <a href="https://www.sheltercluster.org/pacific/documents/disability-inclusive-communication-guideline">https://www.sheltercluster.org/pacific/documents/disability-inclusive-communication-guideline</a></p>

Challenges	Solutions
“safe houses” (EC’s) are not accessible	<p>Advocate to the Displacement and Evacuation Centre Management Cluster, the Public Works Department and community leaders to ensure evacuation shelters, and the roads to these, are accessible. Work closely with the Displacement and Evacuation Centre Management Cluster to support registration processes which include disability data collection.</p> <p>Work closely with Disability People’s Organisations (DPO’s) to address barriers to: infrastructure (e.g. ramps), facilities (e.g. accessible bathrooms, charging stations for assistive devices), and social attitudes</p>
Evacuation centre staff have no understanding of disability	<p>Advocate to and work with the Displacement and Evacuation Centre Management Cluster to train all emergency staff on disability to train all emergency staff on disability inclusion with the support of OPDs. Strengthen the capacity of shelter responders in disability inclusion, to enable them to work in a disability-inclusive way during disaster response and shelter planning. Work collaboratively with other clusters which are involved in evacuation centre management.</p>

Building Code is not inclusive	Encourage the Government to update the building code to be inclusive. Embed principles of Universal Design throughout all shelter and settlement programs.
Governments and humanitarian programs have limited budget allocations for disability inclusion	Develop a Memorandum of Understanding between the National Disability Management office and the Ministry responsible for disability inclusion to promote collaboration towards disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction Include indicators on disability inclusive programming, along with associated budgetary requirements into humanitarian shelter and settlement programs
Emergency warning systems are inaccessible for some people with disabilities	Work with OPDs and Government to create accessible emergency warning systems, which are inclusive for the diverse needs of disability. Ensure emergency warnings are communicated in multiple methods and not just via audio radio
Faced community stigma and segregation	Work with communities on awareness around type of support needed by People with Disabilities



Response phase of the Disaster Management Cycle	
Challenges	Solutions
Inaccessible communications during a response (i.e. information in only one format)	Ensure all information is communicated in a range of accessible formats (such as oral, pictorial, simple text, Braille, and through sign language) .
Lack of data on people with disabilities available to area councils to support/prioritize them during re-sponse	Consult people with disabilities and DPOs to find out their barriers, priorities and needs during response. Ensure disability data is collected, monitored and measured.
Persons with disabilities are not included in planning/engagement activities	Actively invite and include people with disabilities and DPOs to attend National Disaster Management Office meetings, shelter cluster meetings and participate in community disaster committees.  Ensure DPOs and people with disabilities are included as key stakeholders to

	lead disaster response within communities. Make reasonable accommodations to ensure this can happen.
Inaccessible distribution points	Ensure DPOs are consulted to determine accessible locations of distribution, priority access, and alternative methods of delivering essential items to people with disabilities.
Personal assistive devices lost or broken during disaster	Work with the Displacement and Evacuation Centre Management Cluster to ensure evacuation centres are linked services to access assistive devices, prepositioned at health clinics or hospitals where specialist staff can fit them. Determine with DPOs, health cluster and protection and gender cluster.

Recovery phase of the Disaster Management Cycle	
Challenges	Solutions
Building tools not shared with people with disabilities due to attitudes and stigma of disability	Collaborate with DPOs to run community awareness programs/training of disability and inclusion in order to address negative attitudes and reduce stigma.  Consult persons living with disabilities and OPDs on appropriate and accessible tools. Adaptations to standard tools may be required.
Lack of post-disaster assessment and data collection	Monitoring and evaluation systems need to be inclusive to collect and analyze data on disability inclusion.  Develop mechanisms for monitoring inclusion of people with disabilities within recovery and shelter construction efforts.
Inaccessible reconstruction communication methods	Ensure all reconstruction communications are available in multiple accessible formats.

Reconstruction not built to be accessible	Embed the principles of universal design for rebuilding shelters, school, health and WASH infrastructure.
Concerns of people with disabilities are not heard or addressed	Accountability mechanisms need to ensure people with disabilities can complain and give feedback about exclusion or discrimination. Ensure consultations are conducted in a range of formats and ensure that persons with hearing, psychological or intellectual disabilities are supported to participate in any consultations, focus group discussions along with feedback and complaint mechanisms.

**“ I feel we are always forgotten and left behind. We should be treated equally ”**

**“ Old age and disability for a women is double disaster ”**

#### Introduction

Women and men, boys and girls experience disasters in different ways. How women and men experience disaster preparedness, response and recovery phases may depend on their social and economic roles, how they use shelters based on these roles, their access to assistance, social networks, livelihoods and family responsibilities among many other factors. Women and men may have different capacities, responsibilities and different vulnerabilities based on these roles.

Gender is not itself a category of vulnerability. Good shelter programs are inclusive, consultative and respond to

**“ Women always do more work than men but always have little say in important matters ”**

**“ Life is harder for woman with disabilities in evacuation centres. I had no privacy and it didn't matter to anyone. All the focus was on food ”**

the different needs as well as capacities of both women and men. These roles, responsibilities, needs and capacities may also differ according to cultural group or wantok and between urban (including peri-urban and informal settlements) and rural settings.

Further, 'women' and 'girls' are diverse in terms of age, social status, disability, etc. These intersecting identities can determine how they are disadvantaged or advantaged due to the discrimination they face or the privi-

lege they experience. In disasters, those with greater advantages are much more likely to receive the assistance they need and recover well, while those who are disadvantaged are less likely to receive the assistance they need and may face a range of protection risks which will affect their recovery.

In Vanuatu, a key consideration in gender-sensitive shelter programming is that up 20% of households are female headed, owing to predominantly male labour migration. Shelter programs which focus on men's roles in construction may therefore automatically exclude one fifth of the population in need of assistance. Since women, men, girls and boys have different needs and capacities in crisis it is vital that shelter programs recognize these differences and incorporate a gender equality perspective into the design and implementation of programs.

There are many factors to take into consideration in terms of gender and protection in the Vanuatu context. One is that every household has more than one building which correspond to different purposes, such as sleeping, cooking, bathing, and home-based commerce (i.e local shops). Shelter programs, especially in recovery, which do not consider the wider functions of the household may result in gender-based disadvantage, for example through not considering the impact of shelter on women's livelihoods.

Women's participation in response and recovery can be facilitated by programs that mainstream gender. Examples of this include support to thatch weaving programs that build on women's traditional skills and roles in construction or the shelter impact of micro-credit and micro-loans schemes through women-focused organizations such as Vanwoods. Women's participation in response and recovery is essential. All humanitarian programming must integrate gender and social inclusion at all stages of the program cycle.

#### Post Disaster Needs Assessments in Vanuatu have noted that:

Housing rehabilitation and reconstruction/recovery programs should be positively adjusted to prioritize female headed households as well as people living with disabilities and the elderly. Similarly, early recovery and livelihood programs should also provide specific support to female headed households to enable them to find resources for rebuilding. With regard to evacuation centers, disaster preparedness planning should address the needs of women and girls by ensuring adequate lighting and segregated wash facilities. Future planning and building of evacuation camps should also ensure accessibility for people living with disability.



**Community Voice – Gender-based roles & responsibilities in multi-structure homes**

Suzie George had her kitchen and washroom blown away by the ferocious winds of TC Pam. George said she struggled without her kitchen. “Losing a kitchen in a cyclone makes the biggest impact on women who use the kitchen area the most for cooking purpose,” said the 41-year-old from Blacksands.

“Without a kitchen I had to stand in the hot sun for hours and cook for my family. It takes a lot of time to rebuild and the longer it takes the more we suffer. “I only lost my kitchen and toilet but other women went through so much struggle.”

George hopes the nearby communities unite to assist each other. “I suggest communities to work together to rebuild houses one-by-one,” she said.

“Everyone here works individually and many, as a result, are left behind. They struggle without proper shelter, shower and sanitation which is also another big problem for us especially when we have children. “It will be better if everyone comes together to help one another rebuild houses,” George stressed.

**Suzie George – Blacksands****Community Voice – Integrating shelter and WASH for greater dignity and protection**

For a single mother of three, TC Pam had been the worst experience of her life. Sharing her experience on the condition of anonymity, the absence of proper sanitation facilities was the greatest challenge for all women taking shelter in a classroom.

“In my view the biggest problem at evacuation centres are toilets and bathrooms. There are no proper facilities especially for women and people do not realise it because women do not openly talk about their problems. “No toilets were accessible at the evacuation site during or after the cyclone. People just went wherever they could. There was no access to safe drinking water.

“The rain was pouring heavily and there was flood water and dirt all over the classroom. The cyclone came and destroyed the roofing and everything else was destroyed too. My hands were swollen because of the cold. “At the time of the cyclone, the best thing we could do was stay together and pray that it does not get any worse,” she said.

**Single mother - Takara Community**

**Community Voice - The impact of community groups on gender sensitive and inclusive programming**

“CDCCCs must be balanced so things can be shared equally amongst everyone. Women often have a lot to share and say for a good reason which men may not see.

CDCCCs is an excellent forum to raise concerns and discuss issues,” said 52-year-old Dora

**Dora Willie**  
**CDCCC VICE GS**  
**Eton**



**Community Voice – solidarity and livelihoods**

Some women of Eton assist each other during disasters through a mothers club.

Based on Shireline Kalsilik’s account of the challenges post TC Pam, the mothers club is a source of strength for the women.

“In times of disasters, we are like each others’ strength. Women work in the gardens a lot and when these are destroyed, our hearts cry as that is our source of food. This is our biggest struggle as it takes us a long time to grow and harvest food.

“But the key thing is to work together and be there for one another,” said the 53-year-old.

**Shireline Kalsilik- Eton**





**Top Tips**

- ▶ The construction of shelter may present an opportunity for women to engage in training and learning new skills (where culturally acceptable and physically appropriate).
- ▶ Data on affected populations should be broken down by age, sex.
- ▶ Ensure program staff are trained and understand gender, diversity and cultural issues.
- ▶ When involving women in shelter activities, make sure that this takes into account their existing workload, e.g. domestic responsibilities and childcare.
- ▶ Review programs on a regular basis to ensure that gender needs are being met and necessary changes made as required.
- ▶ Monitoring and evaluation staff should be trained and aware of gender and shelter consideration and how shelter interventions have attempted to address these issues.
- ▶ Train and or ensure frontline staff and volunteers at national, provincial, are trained regarding gender in humanitarian action.
- ▶ Basic decisions and knowledge about how a shelter is

to be used, kitchen and hygiene needs are more likely to be understood by women given their role as primary caregivers in many cultures and communities. Consulting with women and allowing them to participate in the shelter process is vitally important to ensuring these needs are incorporated into the assessment and design of shelter programs.

**Gender and Protection Checklist | Shelter and Reconstruction**

**Why does gender and protection matter in programs for shelter and non-food items (NFIs)?**

- ▶ In disasters where people have been displaced and/or houses destroyed, shelter is a basic need for safety, dignity and protection (i.e. prevent and respond to exploitation, abuse, violence and injury to others). Shelter can also support family and community life.
- ▶ Responses need to be careful not to increase protection risks. E.g. poorly constructed shelters can collapse and cause injury.
- ▶ All people have a right to shelter so it is important to make sure that everyone, including vulnerable people, can access shelter materials and NFIs. Vulnerable people may include women, girls and boys, people with disability and older people.

- ▶ Understanding the needs of vulnerable people and targeting them in shelter and NFI programs helps the whole community recover faster from disasters and build resilience.

**Assessment**

- ▶ Consult directly with vulnerable people to make sure their concerns and needs are heard; e.g. encourage women, girls and boys, and people with disability to speak for themselves.
- ▶ Consult with the community to identify vulnerable people with specific needs for shelter reconstruction and NFIs, e.g. provision of ramps and hand rails for people with disability. Involve a number of people with different disabilities to check that the shelter/ building is truly accessible.
- ▶ Assess the shelter needs of vulnerable community members by sex, age and disability, and prioritise these (e.g. include women and child heads of households, and children with disability).
- ▶ Assess the different NFI needs of vulnerable community members, e.g. sanitary materials for women and girls, or wheelchairs for the less mobile.
- ▶ Assess access to shelter and use of the home for different community members, e.g.

- what are the needs of women, men, girls and boys for space, privacy and hygiene within the home to live safely and with dignity?
- what about the location of shelter or accessibility features for people with disability?
- what are the different care arrangements for children in residential care, child heads of households and children living on the street/displaced?
- ▶ Identify any protection risks associated with shelter, e.g.
  - a lack of access to shelter causing community tension or conflict
  - poor or crowded evacuation centres leading to a risk of women, girls or boys experiencing sexual or other gender based violence.

**Access**

- ▶ Prioritise the most vulnerable people for shelter and NFI distributions; e.g. female and child heads of households, unaccompanied children, people with disability and older people.
- ▶ Be flexible in registering heads of household for shelter/NFI assistance; e.g. don't require unaccompanied minors or child heads of households to 'attach' themselves to an adult in order to be registered.
- ▶ Make sure distribution points are accessible to vulnerable people, e.g. accessible locations and times; separated or priority queues; allow vulnerable people to send a proxy to collect humanitarian assistance, or to have items delivered to their home.
- ▶ Aim for gender balanced staff teams for distributions and identify female staff as a contact point for women and girls in the community.
- ▶ Communicate information on shelter/NFI distributions through different methods (e.g. extension workers, radio, sms messaging, posters, newsletters, television or loudspeaker), so that information reaches everyone (e.g. literate, illiterate or children).
- ▶ Follow 'build back better' principles when reconstructing homes and community buildings, to improve access for people with disability and older people.

- ▶ Consider how social and cultural practices may limit access to shelter and NFI distribution and discuss with community leaders on ways to prevent discrimination, exploitation and abuse.

**Safety and dignity**

- ▶ Consult with vulnerable groups about ways to increase safety for shelter and NFI distributions and building activities, e.g. safe locations and routes to distribution sites; timing of distributions during daylight hours; priority queues for vulnerable people; safety patrols; accessibility features at distribution sites.
- ▶ Provide NFIs essential for personal hygiene and dignity, including sanitary materials for women and girls that are culturally appropriate.
- ▶ Monitor and respond to safety concerns with distributions, including risks of exploitation, abuse, violence, or injury.
- ▶ Consult with gender based violence specialists on ways to respond safely and confidentially to cases of exploitation and abuse, including where to refer survivors to services and support.

**Participation, empowerment and accountability**

- ▶ Provide staff with guidance and training about the situation for and capacities of vulnerable people.
- ▶ Inform beneficiaries about their right to shelter and where and how to access materials, e.g. targeted information sessions.
- ▶ Engage all including women, boys and girls in decision-making about shelter and NFI programs to meet their needs, e.g. in decisions on site layout, shelter design and reconstruction. Develop ways for boys and girls to also meaningfully participate.
- ▶ Provide on the job training for both women and men in construction and maintenance of shelters.
- ▶ Provide training and policies to staff on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. (Shelter responders to sign policy and complete trainings). Provide clear information to communities explaining that beneficiaries, particularly women and girls, do not have to pay or provide services or favours in exchange for shelter or NFI assistance.
- ▶ Set up accessible, confidential and well-understood mechanisms for suggestions and complaints.

**Monitoring**

- ▶ Collect and monitor data on beneficiaries by sex, age and disability.
- ▶ Monitor to find out who is not able to access shelter and NFIs, and address any barriers they face.
- ▶ Monitor to make sure that beneficiaries receiving shelter materials and NFIs are the people using them. E.g. draft a letter of ownership signed by relevant stakeholders (Area Secretary/ Chief/ beneficiary/ donor etc.) to protect vulnerable people from having their shelter or building materials taken from them.
- ▶ Monitor for unintended outcomes of shelter and NFI distributions, e.g. the selection process for beneficiaries leading to the separation of families.

Source: Vanuatu Gender and Protection Cluster



**“Lack of preparedness can prove deadly during cyclones”**

**“We had a house that was turned into a tarpaulin”**

**“We can think ahead and plan for quick recovery. If we organise for some materials in advance, it will lessen the pain”**

### Introduction

As one of the world's most vulnerable countries to natural hazards, preparedness for response is vital in Vanuatu. The country experiences volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and tsunamis. Vanuatu's tropical cyclone season runs from November to April and the country has been hit regularly by category 5 cyclones. Vanuatu is prone to significant year-round seismic and volcanic activity, with over 2,000 seismic events reported annually.

The National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) is the key government agency that oversees the management of all national-level disaster response coordination and is supported by the work of disaster management

stakeholders to address the immediate and short term needs of the affected populations following the impact of natural hazards.

Under the leadership of the Public Works Department (PWD), the Shelter Cluster is formed by Government and non-Government member agencies with expertise, activities, stakeholders, and resources in the area of shelter, which can provide assistance in disaster preparedness and response. In response and preparedness phases, the Shelter Cluster is co-led by co-led by IFRC / Vanuatu Red Cross at the national and provincial level.

Given that Vanuatu is an archipelago state with a dispersed population, preparedness activities at the national, provincial and community level is important.

Response management, assessment, and coordination has been devolved to provincial governments. Both the NDMO – through the Provincial Emergency Operations Centres (PEOC) and PWD have important, decentralised coordination roles.

Additionally, community-based response is organised through the Community Disaster and Climate Change Committees (CDCCCs).

**Community Voice – The importance of early warning**

Andrew Spetal certainly had his hands full as Tropical Cyclone Pam struck Vanuatu in 2015.

Taking heed of warnings aired over radio, Spetal took no chances against the category five super-storm. He moved his mum to the nearby evacuation centre, undertook quick repairs to the house, secured food stock from the garden and warned other family members of the approaching natural disaster.

“I helped move vulnerable people to the evacuation centre especially the elderly, women and children,” he said.

Lack of privacy at evacuation centre remains an issue especially for the elderly says Andrew and hopes something can be done about it in future.

**Andrew Spetal Epau, Port Vila**

**Community Voice – The consequences of inaction**

Lack of preparedness can prove deadly during cyclones.

Catherine Kalomuth, 46, and her family were caught totally off-guard when Tropical Cyclone Pam hit Vanuatu in 2015.

“When TC Pam came, we did not prepare at all and thought that it was not going to reach us,” she said.

“We were ignorant and unaware of the wind strength. We had a house that was turned into a tarpaulin.”

**Catherine Kalomuth  
Eton**





**Community Voice – The importance of thinking ahead**

People must prepare well for cyclones.

“Taking preparation for a cyclone seriously means we are in a better position to be safe,” said Aneth Tarivuhavuha of Luganville, while recollecting the devastation caused by Tropical Cyclone Harold in 2020 as category five winds battered the beautiful island of Santo.

“Seeing roofs flying away, people panicking and screaming, a baby surviving in a bathroom with his family, damaged houses, broken trees and broken-people everywhere has geared me to think ahead and look at ways of how I can be better prepared,” said the 23-year-old.

“We need to learn and know more. Also we need support from NGOs to help us stay safe.”

**Aneth Tarivuhavuha**  
**Chapui – Luganville Santo**

**Community Voice – How preparedness can help recovery**

Jenifer Batick, 23, will never forget the day when Tropical Cyclone Pam devastated Pangpang.

“We had to move from house to house seeking shelter,” she said. “We went to shelter at our grandparents’ house but it was not strong so we went off to another house. In the end, nothing was left nowhere. When TC Pam passed, there was a deep silence as everyone stood looking at all their houses lying on the ground and broken into pieces. Slowly everyone, especially the mothers and grandmothers started crying.”

Batick said there was a need to be prepared for disasters such as TC Pam. “At least we can think ahead and plan for quick recovery. If we organise for some materials in advance, it will lessen the pain. We need to prepare building materials way ahead, have them put away safely so when the cyclone strikes, we have them there and can build right away instead of being homeless for months. By not preparing, we find ourselves in very difficult situations,” she said.

**Jenifer Batick, Pang Pang, Efate**



### Community Voice – Early action and investment can reduce the need for disaster assistance

Enough of tarpaulins, says Dora Willi.

The Community Disaster & Climate Change Committee (CDCCC) official feels strongly about decent shelter.

“If NGOs really want to help, let’s talk about shelter materials and permanent shelter. Enough of tarpaulins please, we need to think beyond that,” she said. Post TC Pam, Willi, 52, was also involved in shelter assessment of her community.

“From my experience of assessing houses, I have seen that we have to wait for a very long time before any progress is made or feedback given. If there are funds allocated in advance, it will make lives of people in affected communities better.”

Willi said it was the community’s responsibility to take cyclone warnings seriously.

**Dora Willie – Eton  
Vice General Secretary of CDCCC**



### Community Voice – Seeking safe shelter

Densly Boevilvil is a landowner in West Malo and he feels caves offer great safety during cyclones. When the category five Tropical Cyclone Harold was raging towards Vanuatu last year, Boevilvil was quick to realise what could be the aftermath, so he went around in the community inviting people to a cave on his land.

“Cyclone warning was not taken seriously so I took the responsibility to go around. 50 households had to be kept safe because the cyclone was too strong,” the 38-year-old recalled. “Five trucks loaded with people came to seek shelter in the cave. We accommodated about 300 people. A 108-year-old man was rescued and was safe in the cave as well. People inside the cave were happy not knowing what was happening outside because the cave was so safe, no noise from outside could be heard.” Unfortunately, he said, people did not come prepared.

“There were no proper beddings and the cave was too dark. There were no solar lights,” he said. After the cyclone when people came out of the cave, there was a dreadful sight outside as no house in Boevilvil village was spared by the wrath of Mother Nature.

**Densly Boevilvil, Big Nanugu West Malo**





**Community Voice – Red Cross preparedness in action**

Vanuatu Red Cross sends locally sourced and life-saving relief supplies to islands across Vanuatu to help communities best prepare for the cyclone season. Relief goods such as containers to collect clean water, pots and pans for cooking and tarpaulins for shelter are pre-positioned in key communities across all six provinces of the country. “The relief supplies will enable the most vulnerable people to get the support they need as quickly as possible when disaster strikes,” said former Vanuatu Red Cross CEO, Jacqueline De Gaillande.

“Red Cross has been acquiring culturally appropriate stock where possible, in an effort to maximise the speed of emergency assistance, minimise associated costs, ensure international standards are met and encourage business continuity and economic recovery in Cyclone Pam affected communities.”

“More than 1,100 pandanus mats are being allocated as part of the pre-positioned relief supplies. The mats are being produced locally by the Malampa Women’s Handicraft Centre, which is improving the livelihoods of approximately 200 mamas Malekula-wide.

Sourcing local goods is benefiting their families, the wider community and the local economy,” Ms. De Gaillande said. In times of disaster, obtaining relief supplies for immediate distribution can be challenging. As demand increases, prices can escalate quickly which can make it difficult to source relief items and get them to where they are needed. Sourcing and pre-positioning supplies locally means these issues can be avoided. The positioning of relief supplies also coincides with further training of Red Cross emergency response volunteers, to monitor and replenish supplies regularly, with a focus on distributing goods swiftly and fairly during disaster.

**Source: Vanuatu Red Cross** <https://www.vanuaturedcross.org/news/pre-positioned-relief-supplies>

Source: Vanuatu Red Cross





**Top Tips****Prepositioning key relief items**

In Vanuatu where there are more than 65 inhabited islands, pre-positioning key relief items at Provincial and island level is essential. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, prepositioned supplies can also make a critical difference when national and international supply chains are disrupted.

Pre-positioning items can also ensure that they are locally sourced, contribute to the local economy, that they are culturally appropriate and reflect local humanitarian needs. Key shelter relief items pre-positioned in Vanuatu include: tarpaulins, shelter tool kits, kitchen sets, sleeping mats and solar lights. (see also: Vanuatu Shelter Cluster Technical Guidelines for Shelter Preparedness and response in Vanuatu)

<https://www.sheltercluster.org/vanuatu/documents/shelter-cluster-vanuatu-technical-guidelines-v31-draft>

**Participatory Approaches for Safe Shelter Awareness (PASSA)**

PASSA is a participatory approach to community-based disaster risk reduction, specifically focused on shelter-related risk. This tool raises awareness and develops skills in joint analysis, learning and decision-making. PASSA is a process that guides community groups through eight participatory activities to:

- ▶ Develop their awareness of shelter safety issues in their community
- ▶ Identify hazards and vulnerabilities that create risk related to shelter
- ▶ Recognise and analyse causes of shelter vulnerability, identify and prioritise potential strategies to improve shelter safety
- ▶ Make a plan to implement the identified shelter safety strategies based on local capacities
- ▶ Monitor and evaluate progress

(Source: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Geneva 2011)

Vanuatu Red Cross Society is the only organisation in Vanuatu with experience in PASSA programming.

**Community Disaster and Climate Change Committees (CDCCCs) + Community Shelter Focal Points**

The role of CDCCCs is critical to effective preparedness, response and recovery in the shelter sector. The concept of the Shelter Focal Point with responsibility for leading capacity development within the shelter sector at community-level was collaboratively developed and advocated for by the Shelter Cluster, IFRC, French Red Cross and

VRCS, and today only very few CDCCCs contain shelter focal points. . Since then other agencies such as CARE, IOM, Vanuatu Council on Churches and others have been supporting and building the capacity of the shelter focal points as part of the CDCCC structure. Good practice at community level is for CDCCC to recruit a Shelter Focal

Point as part of their core team. According to Jelson Naparau, former Shelter Focal Point and DRM Officer with the Vanuatu Red Cross: “Shelter Focal Points are well worth investing in. They could be agency staff, or volunteers or members of the community”



Source: Vanuatu Red Cross



**“ Shelter is our hope for survival ”**

**“ Everyone was scared and in panic mode... We just had to be strong if we wanted to survive ”**

#### Introduction

There is a broad range of shelter response options and approaches that may be applicable in the Vanuatu context. At the basis of most recommended approaches is the idea that shelter (or sheltering), even during the emergency response phase, is an evolving process that emerges from local traditions, skills, capacities and resources.

Most types of shelter interventions during an emergency response involve the distribution of in-kind shelter relief items that have ideally been pre-positioned such as shelter tool kits, tarpaulins and essential household items including blankets, solar lamps, kitchen sets, and sleeping mats. These items may be combined with cash and

**“ NGOs provided shelter kits while family members assisted with the construction of a new shelter ”**

voucher interventions. These relief items are also intended to support self-recovery. These are often part of wider programs which combine distribution of relief items with provision of complementary technical support such as Build Back Safer information, education, and communication (IEC) materials intended to support safer construction and to facilitate the immediate basis for longer-term recovery.

This acknowledges that there is already a very strong building culture in Vanuatu and that most families build their own houses and have substantial pre-existing skills and knowledge of good construction practices, especially relating to the use of traditional materials such as nangora. The Vanuatu Shelter Cluster Technical Guidance notes that:

*Ni-Vanuatu inhabitants are, generally, self-sufficient and resilient people, with communities relying on traditional coping mechanisms. Many of the Ni-Vanuatu could be skilled at building or repairing their own dwellings.*

*Dwellings in rural communities range from traditional structures to an increasing number of modern and hybrid (modern/traditional) structures. In urban and peri-urban environments, there is a much greater reliance upon modern building materials and systems.*

There is an increasing move towards cash and voucher assistance (CVA) both globally and in Vanuatu. This is especially the case in urban and peri-urban areas where there

is greater access to markets and greater dependency for livelihoods on access to wages and cash-based economic activity.

Concerns remain, however, around weak market systems, high importation and transaction costs, issues around cash owing to traditions of communal ownership inherent in Wantok social structures, and concerns about the impact of cash on community and gender-based violence.



Source: Vanuatu Red Cross



**Community Voice – The impact of a cyclone**

Everyone was scared and in panic mode. Then came the big moment – the roof of the building was partially blown away and the wind was so strong.

The women and children were crying. I was shocked. We all held onto something as the chaos went on. I felt sorry for small children who looked very scared.

After the storm, everyone remained at the same evacuation centre for three days because there was nowhere else to go.

It was hard with debris and water everywhere, no lights, not enough food but we managed. We just had to be strong if we wanted to survive.

**Jessica Nulack - Blacksands, Port Vila****Community Voice – Shelter is our hope for survival**

Shelter is a major concern for the people of Sarakata. According to Johnson Antas, TC Harold destroyed most of the houses in the area.

“Once shelter is gone, we have nowhere to go and risk losing our lives. Shelter is our hope for survival. What we need is a good and safe evacuation centre,” said the 28-year-old.

It was a scary experience for Antas as TC Harold was a category five super storm.

“I saw fear in children’s eyes, roofs flying, winds blowing in all directions, houses getting damaged, trees torn apart and what not.

**Johnson Antas - Sarakata, Luganville**

**Community Voice – The importance of early warning systems**

Proper cyclone warnings are vital to ensure safety of the people. According to a gentleman from Ikrup on Tanna Island, who preferred to remain anonymous, authorities ‘did not issue proper warning’ during TC Pam.

“Our village people had no idea what to do when the winds started to get strong. My family stayed in a church evacuation centre. There are a lot of people in my community and during disaster times people are crowded in one place.

Many houses were destroyed. NGOs provided shelter kits while family members assisted with the construction of a new shelter.

“My house was damaged and it is hard for me to build a new one. There are many like me. The local materials used in the market are often not available and not strong enough to hold a house for cyclone in my opinion.

“We require more training on safe housing building.”

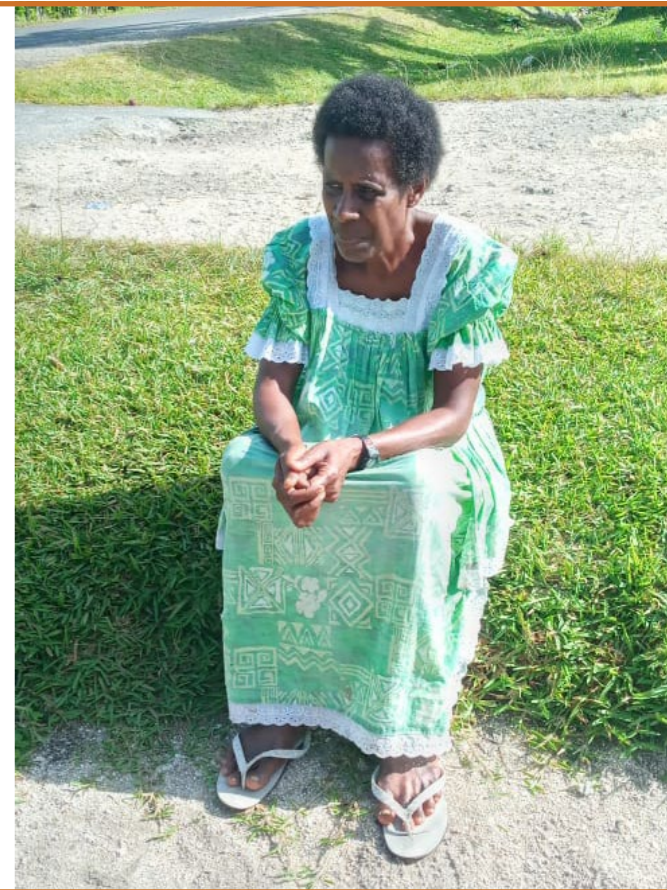
**Anonymous - Ikrup, Tanna (Tafea Province)****Community Voice – The need for fairness in the distribution of assistance**

Annie Kalses is concerned about the unfair distribution of relief items post-TC Pam.

The 57-year-old from Eton feels there is a need for more training so that those involved understand the importance of treating everyone equally.

“I think NGOs should train our disaster committees on how to do equal distribution to affected people and how to treat all equally. This is very important,” she said.

“When the next disaster comes, I believe unfair distribution can still happen again. We need to have a good assistance system in place and it is an area where we need help.”

**Annie Kalses - 57 Eton**

**Community Voice – The importance of assessments in getting assistance right**

Paul Jamaran is of the view that post-disaster assessment periods are usually too short.

The 40-year-old, area administrator of Winsaw Big Bay Bush says as a result organisations and authorities cannot cover all aspects of the disaster.

“This needs improvement. The right and enough assistance is not received,” he said.

Recalling the devastation caused by TC Harold, Jamaran said people of the Winsaw Big Bay Bush area need right tools and equipment to support shelter rehabilitation.

“Clothes get wet but can still be dried up and used but once a shelter is damaged you can’t do anything and it takes time to rebuild. Shelter is the first thing we look at before a cyclone and the first thing we need after a cyclone. It is important to address this area. Local houses cannot protect people in category five cyclone, a standard plan is needed for shelter.

“It will be great if we can be provided with a sawmill (portable).

“If we have such assistance then only through this network, our shelter issues could be addressed more effectively. Without proper tools, it takes time and a lot of people continue to live in tents. Even that is hard as not enough tents are distributed,” he said.

**Paul Jamaran - Winsaw Big Bay Bush.**

**Community Voice – Evacuation centres**

David Jedd believes stronger evacuation centres are needed to keep people safe during cyclones.

Based on his observation most of the evacuation centres are not strong.

“I was concerned whether we would be safe in the building or not. We were lucky the roofing iron stayed on,” he said.

Relief arrived two days after TC Pam struck Blacksands and was barely enough to assist all affected families.

“I salvaged materials and started to build a temporary building which is still in use today,” he said during an interview in November, 2020.

“I did receive the cyclone warning before it came. I started to prepare. I looked for local materials to cover our shelter. I took some of the family members with me to prepare food and fetch water.

**David Jedd - Blacksands, Port Vila.**



**Top Tips**

- ▶ Vanuatu has a strong building culture, especially with traditional materials. Shelter programs should support, and not replicate or replace, these existing skills and capacities.
- ▶ Tarpaulins are often priority relief items that are requested by households. They are versatile and can be used to cover damaged roofs. Traditional roofing materials such as natangura palm can take a long time to grow back.
- ▶ Shelter programs should have support to self-recovery as their underpinning approach. This can include in-kind materials and/ or CVA complemented by technical assistance through IEC materials, education and training with an emphasis on Build Back Safer approaches. . This should be aligned with the specific needs and recovery timeframes of each individual and household.
- ▶ It is important that urban communities and especially those in informal settlements be taken into account during the emergency response and subsequent recovery phases.
- ▶ Vulnerable people may struggle to develop adequate emergency shelter for themselves (see the Disability and Gender chapters above). A critical role of responders is to ensure the prioritization of vulnerable people

and communities within their shelter programs.

- ▶ Work closely with the Shelter Focal Points in the CDC-CCs to ensure intersectoral coordination at local level, especially between Shelter and WASH provision.
- ▶ Advocate for and support recruitment of Shelter Focal Points where they do not currently exist.
- ▶ Many relief items, especially tarpaulins, are made from plastic (lifespan depends on the type of tarp and proper usage). Where possible, seek locally made and procured alternatives to limit the environmental impact of shelter relief after disasters.

Source: Vanuatu Red Cross



**“  
CDCCC members were trained  
and they joined the teams to  
rebuild lives and communities  
”**

**“  
Building temporary shelter  
from available salvaged  
materials post-cyclones is a  
common practice  
”**

#### Introduction

A detailed outline of approaches to recovery is available in the Vanuatu Shelter Cluster Recovery Guidance: <https://www.sheltercluster.org/vanuatu/documents/scv-recovery-guidance-v1-jul-2020>

Shelter - and especially housing - is a social process that views shelter and housing not as a finished product that can be correctly introduced into a local context, but as an evolving process that emerges from local traditions, skills, capacities and resources and which can be supported in

**“  
Shelter is a place to hide from  
natural disasters and survive  
as a human being, a place  
that gives one peace of mind  
and comfort  
”**

important ways. Key objectives for shelter agencies providing longer-term support in Vanuatu will be to work with communities to create an enabling environment through processes of socio- technical accompaniment based on participation and consultation.

This process places emphasis on understanding context, collaboration, and the adaptability of programs to include both direct and indirect contributing factors to safe shelter recovery with a focus on education, training, and material support to underpin community resilience. An important consideration will be the existence of strong indigenous building skills that have adapted to Vanuatu's particular geophysical context over many centuries. Responding agencies should be aware of these local traditions and strengthen, rather than replace, these skills and capacities.

Important considerations for recovery programming in the Vanuatu context as per the Vanuatu Shelter Cluster Recovery Guidance are:

#### Social structures:

- ▶ With more than 65 inhabited islands and over 100 language groups, Vanuatu has multiple highly diverse social structures within which recovery will take place.

#### Households:

- ▶ Household structures can vary. The Vanuatu National Statistics Office (VNSO) define household “those persons who usually eat together and share the work of preparing the food and/or the cost of work of providing it”.

#### Gender:

- ▶ 20% of households in affected areas may be female headed. Recommendations from the Protection Cluster include disaggregated data, inclusion of (mainly) female work/house spaces such as kitchens in response & recovery planning as well as ensuring widespread access to build back safer skills and messages.
- ▶ Female headed who often have no ownership of the land they are on and face significant constraints in accessing finance and support to repair or reconstruct their homes.

#### Urban vs rural:

- ▶ An important yet often overlooked caseload following cyclones in Vanuatu are urban communities. Urban communities may live in houses using imported building materials which can be more expensive and technically complex to repair.
- ▶ Vanuatu has multiple local building traditions that use sustainable local materials and have adapted to disaster risks over many generations. While these traditions are very strong there are also new building styles used as well as mixed approaches that combine imported and traditional skills and resources.



**Community Voice – Build Back Safer**

Tom Willie Yakilipi is urging people to build back safer and stronger after cyclones.

Yakilipi feels communities need to be trained to build back safer and stronger using both traditional and new building methods.

“After the cyclone, don’t just build anyhow. Let us try to build back using permanent building materials,” he said.

The 40-year-old lost his house and belongings during TC Pam and since then he has been trying his best to build a good shelter.

“Everyone works individually, hence it takes a lot of time to build a house,” he said.

**Tom Willie Yakilipi - Blacksands****Community Voice – Community recovery starts immediately**

People should not lose hope during disasters, says Simeon Tovovur. Having experienced a number of cyclones, Tovovur knew exactly what to do in the midst of TC Harold and following that. He moved 41 people into his house before the cyclone to ensure they were safe.

“When cyclone stops, we are still in disaster stage but one should never lose hope,” the 46-year-old said. “We have been through quite a lot of cyclones to know what to do. In the morning, we mobilized the youths to clean the area and do a survey on damaged houses.

Close to 100 houses were damaged as they were built without thinking of cyclones. We organized ourselves into teams to do the cleaning and used chainsaws to remove fallen trees.

“After cleaning was done in a week’s time, we had one team to help set up kitchens. We had two teams building about 10 kitchens per day and this took about four weeks. After this, we had a team building toilets for families.

The community funded for fuel and toilet materials. Government also stepped in and assisted us with food. “I also ensured CDCCC members were trained and they joined the teams to rebuild lives and communities. Assistance and manpower were also provided to nearby communities,” Tovovur said.

**Simeon Tovovur - Banban, Santo**



**Community Voice – The salvaging materials and the slow wait for natangora thatch**

Building temporary shelter from available salvaged materials post-cyclones is a common practice.

According to Bubumwel Charlot of Lesupelakan, Central Pentecost, desperate people use whatever material is available regardless of its conditions.

“We rebuild using pieces of materials lying here and there including tarpaulins distributed by agencies. Tarpaulin alone does not solve shelter problems but putting together other pieces of whatever we can find gives us some kind shelter at least,” she said.

The 49-year-old said stronger evacuation centres were needed in the Tafea Province. “People will continue to lose lives if shelter is not addressed,” said Charlot.

“We all were very scared when TC Harold came. We survive because of two things - shelter and our gardens. Our biggest challenge is to be homeless and we cannot build fast because there is no natangura so we have to wait for many years for a good shelter.”

**Bubumwel Charlot - Lesupelakan, Central Pentecost**

**Community Voice – Build Back Safer and the importance of local building materials**

Aneth Tarivuhavuha believes in practical build back safer training and has highlighted this as a need at community level. Tarivuhavuha feels the youths need to learn the skills of building strong houses and then pass their knowledge accordingly in the community.

“If organisations can do that (training), it will be very good for us, he said. With Eton located on the coast, the 65-year-old has been closely observing Climate Change adversities unfold.

“We live close to the sea and because of changing weather patterns over the years, we have been thinking to move inland,” he said. “The natangura houses are good because they are feasible with the wind. This is best for us because communities cannot afford to build concrete houses.

“To help us build good houses, we can pay a certain portion so NGO or Government can assist with a portion as well.” Shelter, he said, was a place to hide from natural disasters and survive as a human being, a place that gives one peace of mind and comfort.

**Aneth Tarivuhavuha - Eton**

**Community Voice – the importance of timely shelter interventions to assist early recovery**

After TC Pam, Chief Robbie Songomapula found out that his house was damaged very badly.

He collected pieces of timber and damaged roofing iron to build a temporary shelter for his family.

“The challenge I faced was that no one came in to help by giving any shelter materials. Relief supplies came into the community some days later like rice, food, water and clothes.”

Later, some groups came with few shelter materials, timber and iron roofing. But they could not assist all members of the community. Local materials were not available because they had been damaged by the cyclone.

Songomapula said the Takara community needed a proper evacuation centre. “What we need is a permanent shelter with other accessibility provisions in terms of privacy, kitchen, sanitation et cetera,” he said.

**Chief Robbie Songomapula - Takara community****Community Voice – Reviving traditional building cultures**

At a time of growing instability and potential chaos generated by human caused environmental degradation, reinforcing proven traditional, indigenous ways of knowing and survival should take centre stage. Following TC Harold in 2020, a shelter program sought to revive traditional knowledge through weaving thatch. Importantly, reviving traditions and indigenous knowledge does not preclude taking on board modern techniques.

Tanna and other islands in TAFEA province have a long tradition of building the ‘saeklon haos’ These houses or shelters can be constructed entirely from natural materials, which demands a degree of local knowledge including an understanding of the suitability and uses of different natural materials, and reverence for the environment from which such materials are harvested. This knowledge used to be passed on from generation to generation, but the practice is on the wane due to the growing influence of other building materials and technologies.

Tannese people learn to develop the skill from an early age. Men, women and even children participated during the exchange on West Coast Santo villages after Cyclone Harold destroyed their houses. The majority of the weavers who taught at the West Coast Santo workshop are originally from Tanna, where there is a long practice of weaving thatch using coconut fronds.

The weaving workshop was an inter-island exchange that helped to build resilience against similar natural disasters in the future. The people on West Coast Santo learned how to utilise an alternative material that was usable and accessible post-cyclone, right on their doorstep, compared to the type of leaf/frond they would have otherwise used. It can be a useful, natural and relatively quick alternative to erect while waiting for emergency shelter materials to arrive in the aftermath of another cyclone.

**Butterfly Trust**

**Top tips****Pathways to Permanence**

- ▶ Pathways to Permanence is a process of reducing vulnerability, increasing resilience and supporting disaster-affected families and communities using holistic program interventions that enable incremental progress toward the achievement of permanent, durable shelter and settlements.
- ▶ Safe, decent shelter provides the platform upon which much of post-disaster assistance is built: health, water, sanitation, livelihoods, safety, education, etc. To support these crucial processes, the Pathways to Permanence strategy supports affected families on their own a path to durable, permanent shelter solutions using incremental stages as needed (e.g. erecting an emergency shelter, accessing or affirming land rights, improving a transitional shelter solution, defining next steps for a disaster-damaged house, or expanding a new core house solution).



Source: Care Vanuatu



Source: Care Vanuatu



ACS	Area Council Secretary
AHP	Australian Humanitarian Partnership
CBM	Christian Blind Mission
CDCCC	Community Disaster and Climate Change Committee
CVA	Cash and Voucher Assistance
DPOs	Disabled Peoples Organisations
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECs	Evacuation Centres
IEC	Information, education, and communications
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
NDMO	National Disaster Management Office
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
NFIs	Non-food Items
PASSA	Participatory Approach for Safe Shelter Awareness
PDCCC	Provincial Disaster and Climate Change Committee

PWD	Public Works Department
TC	Tropical Cyclone
UN	United Nations
VNSO	Vanuatu National Statistics Office
VRCS	Vanuatu Red Cross Society
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WGSS	Washington Group Short Survey

#### References:

- ▶ World Risk Report (2020). WorldRiskReport 2020 Focus: Forced Displacement and Migration. [online] Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/WorldRiskReport-2020.pdf>.
- ▶ [www.etcluster.org](http://www.etcluster.org). (n.d.). ETC Preparedness in the Pacific | Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC). [online] Available at: <https://www.etcluster.org/project/etc-preparedness-pacific> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2021].
- ▶ AHP (2019). AHP. [online] AHP. Available at: <https://www.australianhumanitarianpartnership.org/> [Accessed 14 Nov. 2019].
- ▶ <https://www.sheltercluster.org/pacific/vanuatu>
- ▶ Gap analysis on disability-inclusive humanitari-

an action in the Pacific. (n.d.). [online] Available at: [https://www.cbm.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Publications/20180327\\_CBM\\_Disability\\_Inclusion\\_Report\\_2017\\_accessible\\_version\\_FINAL\\_.pdf](https://www.cbm.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/20180327_CBM_Disability_Inclusion_Report_2017_accessible_version_FINAL_.pdf) [Accessed 1 Dec. 2021].

- ▶ CASE STUDIES COLLECTION 2019 Inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action. (n.d.). [online] Available at: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2019-12/Case%20studies%2C%20Inclusion%20of%20persons%20with%20disabilities%20in%20humanitarian%20action%2C%202019.pdf> [Accessed 1 Dec. 2021].
- ▶ Gender and Protection Checklist | Shelter and Reconstruction. (n.d.). [online] Available at: [https://ndmo.gov.vu/images/download/gender-protection-cluster-general-info/GeSI-Checklist---Shelter-and-Reconstruction\\_branded.pdf](https://ndmo.gov.vu/images/download/gender-protection-cluster-general-info/GeSI-Checklist---Shelter-and-Reconstruction_branded.pdf) [Accessed 1 Dec. 2021].
- ▶ Disability Inclusion in Disaster Risk Reduction: Experiences of people with disabilities in Vanuatu during and after Tropical Cyclone Pam and recommendations for humanitarian agencies. (2017). [online] Available at: [https://mspgh.unimelb.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0011/2567576/WEB-DIDRR-Report-14112017.pdf](https://mspgh.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/2567576/WEB-DIDRR-Report-14112017.pdf) [Accessed 1 Dec. 2021].
- ▶ Humanitarian Exchange Disability inclusion in humanitarian action HPN Humanitarian Practice Net-

work Humanitarian Exchange HPN Humanitarian Practice Network About HPN. (n.d.). [online] Available at: [https://odihpn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/HE-78\\_disability\\_WEB\\_final.pdf](https://odihpn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/HE-78_disability_WEB_final.pdf) [Accessed 1 Dec. 2021].

- ▶ [knowledge.aidr.org.au](http://knowledge.aidr.org.au). (n.d.). AJEM Jul 2018 - Experiences of individuals with physical disabilities in natural disasters: an integrative review | Australian Disaster Resilience Knowledge Hub. [online] Available at: <https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/ajem-jul-2018-experiences-of-individuals-with-physical-disabilities-in-natural-disasters-an-integrative-review/>.
- ▶ Disability inclusion in shelter and settlements programming BASELINE MAPPING REPORT. (2019). [online] Available at: [https://www.sheltercluster.org/sites/default/files/docs/baseline\\_mapping\\_disability\\_inclusion\\_in\\_shelter\\_2019.pdf](https://www.sheltercluster.org/sites/default/files/docs/baseline_mapping_disability_inclusion_in_shelter_2019.pdf) [Accessed 1 Dec. 2021].
- ▶ doczz.net. (n.d.). Vanuatu - Post-Disaster Needs Assessment: Tropical - agriculture. [online] Available at: <https://doczz.net/doc/3473304/vanuatu---post-disaster-needs-assessment--tropical> [Accessed 1 Dec. 2021].

Post-Disaster Needs Assessment Tropical Cyclone Pam, March 2015 Government of Vanuatu. (n.d.). [online] Available at: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/post-disaster-needs-assessment-cyclone-pam.pdf> [Accessed 1 Dec. 2021].

Sheltercluster.org. (2014). [online] Available at: <https://www.sheltercluster.org/sites/default/files/docs/Gender%20and%20Diversity%20Guidance.doc> [Accessed 1 Dec. 2021].

www.sheltercluster.org. (n.d.). Vanuatu | Shelter Cluster. [online] Available at: <https://www.sheltercluster.org/es/node/5347> [Accessed 1 Dec. 2021].

ndmo.gov.vu. (n.d.). Vanuatu National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) - Shelter Cluster. [online] Available at: <https://ndmo.gov.vu/resources/88-clusters/90-shelter> [Accessed 1 Dec. 2021].

PASSA Participatory Approach for Safe Shelter Awareness. (n.d.). [online] Available at: <https://www.ifrc.org/sites/default/files/305400-PASSA-manual-EN-LR.pdf>.

Pam (n.d.). National Statistics on housing in vanuatu - ppt download. [online] slideplayer.com. Available at: <https://slideplayer.com/slide/1337394/> [Accessed 1 Dec. 2021].

Habitat for Humanity. (n.d.). Disaster Response. [on-

line] Available at: <https://www.habitat.org/our-work/disaster-response>.

www.sheltercluster.org. (n.d.). Shelter Cluster Vanuatu - technical guidelines v3.1 DRAFT | Shelter Cluster. [online] Available at: <https://www.sheltercluster.org/vanuatu/documents/shelter-cluster-vanuatu-technical-guidelines-v31-draft> [Accessed 2 Dec. 2021].

#### Some useful links include:

- ▶ Vanuatu Shelter Cluster website <https://www.sheltercluster.org/pacific/vanuatu>
- ▶ Global shelter cluster: [www.sheltercluster.org](http://www.sheltercluster.org)
- ▶ Technical Guidelines for shelter preparedness and response to natural hazards in Vanuatu <https://www.sheltercluster.org/vanuatu/documents/shelter-cluster-vanuatu-technical-guidelines-v31-draft>
- ▶ Vanuatu Shelter Cluster Recovery Guidance <https://www.sheltercluster.org/vanuatu/documents/scv-recovery-guidance-v1-jul-2020>
- ▶ Vanuatu Shelter Cluster Environmental Checklist <https://www.sheltercluster.org/vanuatu/documents/introduction-environmental-checklist-shelter-response-vanuatu>

▶ Vanuatu Shelter Cluster DocumentIndex: <https://www.sheltercluster.org/vanuatu/documents/shelter-cluster-vanuatudocumentindexv32>

▶ Vanuatu HLP Profile | IFRC & AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS: <https://www.sheltercluster.org/resources/documents/vanuatu-hlp-profile-ifrc-australian-red-cross>

▶ The Sphere Handbook 2018: <https://spherestandards.org/handbook-2018/>

▶ Gender & Protection Cluster (CARE + Ministry of Social Justice): TC Pam Lessons Learned [https://www.sheltercluster.org/sites/default/files/docs/gp\\_cluster\\_tc\\_pam\\_lessons\\_learned\\_report\\_-\\_05.05.15-gpc.pdf](https://www.sheltercluster.org/sites/default/files/docs/gp_cluster_tc_pam_lessons_learned_report_-_05.05.15-gpc.pdf)

▶ Gender and Protection Checklist for shelter and reconstruction [https://ndmo.gov.vu/images/download/gender-protection-cluster-general-info/GeSI-Checklist---Shelter-and-Reconstruction\\_branded.pdf](https://ndmo.gov.vu/images/download/gender-protection-cluster-general-info/GeSI-Checklist---Shelter-and-Reconstruction_branded.pdf)

▶ Australian Red Cross: Gender and Shelter [https://www.sheltercluster.org/sites/default/files/docs/2011gender\\_and\\_shelter.pdf](https://www.sheltercluster.org/sites/default/files/docs/2011gender_and_shelter.pdf)

▶ IASC Gender Equality in Shelter and NFI programs [https://www.sheltercluster.org/sites/default/files/docs/gender\\_equality\\_in\\_shelter\\_nfi\\_interventions.pdf](https://www.sheltercluster.org/sites/default/files/docs/gender_equality_in_shelter_nfi_interventions.pdf)

▶ All Under One Roof: Disability-inclusive shelter and settlements in emergencies'(IFRC,2015). [https://www.ifrc.org/Global/Documents/Secretariat/Shelter/All-under-one-roof\\_EN.pdf](https://www.ifrc.org/Global/Documents/Secretariat/Shelter/All-under-one-roof_EN.pdf)

▶ Ahmed, I., & McDonnell, T., (2020) 'Prospects and constraints of post-cyclone housing reconstruction in Vanuatu drawing from the experience of tropical cyclone Harold' Progress in Disaster Science vol 8. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2590061720300636>



