

# LIVING WITH NATURE

DISASTERS, CLIMATE  
RESILIENCE AND RECOVERY



## **Living with Nature: Disasters, Climate Resilience and Recovery**

### **Introduction**

We are no strangers to cyclones, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, storms, landslides, floods and the risk of tsunamis.

These threats are made worse by climate change, which brings unpredictable weather, rising sea levels, and stronger storms. It is not just an environmental issue, it is a threat to our food, our homes, our health, our children, our work, our culture and our national security.

This booklet helps families, communities, schools and businesses prepare, respond, recover and adapt so that we not only survive but grow stronger.

### **Why do we mention national security**

When we think of national security we often think about our borders or our police. But increasingly, it is natural disasters intensified by climate change that have tested Vanuatu's ability to protect its people.

Cyclones, floods, earthquakes and rising sea levels do not just damage buildings and roads, they displace our communities, stretch our emergency services, put pressure on an already fragile systems, and disrupt our recovery.

That is why it is important to see climate resilience not just as an environmental issue but as a core part of keeping Vanuatu safe, stable and prepared for the future.



## Why Resilience Matters

Vanuatu is the most at risk and vulnerable country in the world when it comes to natural hazards and climate risks. This reminds us to be ready.

Disaster resilience means:

- Being prepared before something happens
- Responding quickly and safely when it does
- Recovering with dignity afterwards
- Building systems and behaviours to protect us

Disaster risks are a fact of life for us all, so it makes sense that we should be prepared to face those risks. We cannot expect to recover quickly or effectively from the impact of disasters if we have not thought about and planned for them in advance.

## What threatens us?

Natural disasters we face:

- Tropical cyclones – like PAM (2015), DONNA (Torres Islands 2017) and HAROLD (2020)
- Volcanic eruptions – especially on Tanna and Ambae. Ambae volcanic activity 2017 -2018 lead to the evacuation of 11,000 people.
- Earthquakes and tsunamis – December 2024 Port Vila
- Storm surges and flooding – Efate flash floods (2014)
- Landslides – Paama landslide (2013), mudflow Waluwebue

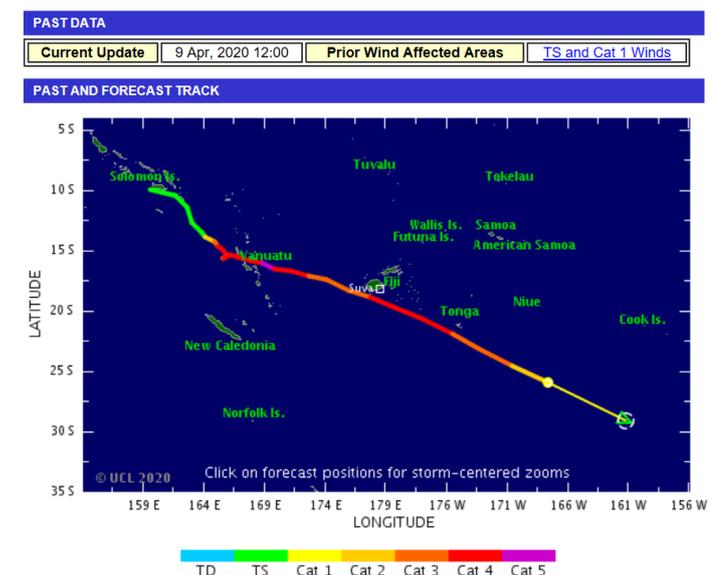


Figure 1: Tropical Cyclone HAROLD's path (tropicalstormrisk.com)

## Vanuatu's Disaster Classification System

To help everyone respond quickly and working together the Vanuatu National Disaster Management Office and National Recovery Operation Centre uses a system that ranks disasters from Class 1 to Class 5. The system helps us know straight away how bad the situation is, what kind of help is needed, and who should be involved in our response. It is all about making sure we act fast, work together and protect our people.

Disaster Classification System	
<b>Class 1</b>	Minor damage and loss well within the Government's capabilities and resources to manage – no external resources required – no PDNA required; No handover to NRC required
<b>CLASS 2</b>	Moderate damage and loss within the Government's capabilities and resources to manage - external resources welcome, but not required - PDNA not likely necessary, NDC to determine whether NRC involvement is required
<b>CLASS 3</b>	Significant damage and loss within the Government's capabilities to manage - external resources welcome, but not required - PDNA may be required: NDC to determine whether NRC involvement is required
<b>CLASS 4</b>	Major and severe damage and loss that may be outside of the Government's capabilities and resources to manage - PDNA required that may necessitate external agencies and support, NRC involvement required
<b>CLASS 5</b>	Disastrous and catastrophic damage and loss well outside of Government capabilities and resources to manage - full PDNA with WB/EU participation required NRC involvement required

Figure 2: Image developed based on Vanuatu Disaster Classification System (National Recovery Operation Centre SOP, centredspac.gov.vu)

### What can you do

Disasters can happen quickly with little to no warning but with a little planning, your family can stay safe and recover faster. Here are some simple steps you can take today.

### As a Family or Community

## As a Family or Community

### Make a family disaster plan

Sit down together and work out a plan of where you will be if there is an earthquake or cyclone. Where will you meet up?



### Check on children and elderly

Who will check on and look after children and elderly family members?

### Keep emergency supplies

Keep a small kit ready with clean water, a torch, a radio, first-aid items, batteries, and any important medicines and documents.



### Learn about the risks in your area

Do you live near a tsunami zone, know the evacuation routes, and monitor volcano alerts.

### Attend community awareness programs

With NDMO or local authorities. It is a great way to learn, ask questions, and be part of keeping your whole community safe.



## In Schools

- Learn about climate change in your classes – understand how climate change affects Vanuatu. What you learn can help protect our islands, our families and our future.
- Find likeminded friends by joining or starting a club where you plant sustainable plants and run disaster training games and drills. Working together builds team comradery and keeps your school ready and informed.
- Practice **drills** regularly—tsunami evacuation routes, earthquake and cyclone sheltering. The more you practice, the faster and safer you will be when it really matters.



### In Workplaces, Businesses and Public Services

Disasters do not just affect homes, they affect where we work, serve, and earn our living. Whether you run a small kava bar, manage a school, or work in a government office, preparation can make all the difference when a cyclone, flood, or other emergency hits.



Make sure **emergency plans** are in place for staff. Every workplace needs a plan that tells staff where to go if there is an emergency warning and lets them know who is responsible for checking on everyone, and who the first aiders are and so on. Having a clear plan means everyone knows what to do when time is short. Do not wait for disaster to happen – discuss it now, plan, write it down, and practice together



Train in **basic first aid** and response. After a disaster hits it is usually your co-workers and not emergency services who will be the first on scene. First aid training can save a life. Knowing how to stop bleeding, treat burns, or carry someone to safety is something anyone can learn. First aid kits should be checked regularly, kept stocked and accessible.



Think about how your business or service will recover after a disaster. It is a matter of WHEN, not IF a disaster will affect your operations. Knowing which disasters are most likely to affect your business can help you prepare for, respond to and recover from these events. The quicker you have your businesses up and running again the more stability you bring to your community. Protect important documents, back up computer files, have a go kit, train your staff with drills, identify suppliers and services you can rely on, have a recovery plan in place.

### Recovery and the National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF)

The NDRF emphasises the disaster recovery phase is not just about rebuilding, it is an opportunity to reduce future risks, support vulnerable groups and strengthen community resilience. Disasters disrupt lives, but recovery is a shared, structured process.

### What's Next – Our Resilience Action Plan

To protect our people and islands, we are focused on:

## SUPPORTING DISPLACED PEOPLE & BUILDING RESILIENCE IN VANUATU

When Disaster Strikes - We Respond with Dignity and Purpose










Earthquakes, cyclones, floods, and volcanic eruptions can disconnect people from their homes, communities, and sense of self. Our national framework ensures displaced people receive traditional support systems with modern tools for long term recovery.

Responding to Incidents

We are strengthening our emergency response systems:

- ▶ Training first responders
- ▶ Coordinating maritime, aviation & environmental authorities
- ▶ Improving communication and rapid response protocols



Accessing Global Climate Finance and Rebuilding

Resilience requires resources:

- ▶ Green Climate Fund and Adaptation Fund

These support climate-smart projects that protect lives and livelihoods

- ▶ Making smart investment in infrastructure and planning



Teaching the Next Generation

Through the International Youth Corporations Project (IYCP) – Pikinini i Redi Long Disasta, students are:

- ▶ Leading cyclone drills
- ▶ Planting climate-resilient gardens
- ▶ Speaking up in youth forums - they're shaping it



*Figure 4: Image inspired by Vanuatu's strength and resilience plan*

### **We Are Not Alone**

Vanuatu may be small, but our voice is strong. We work with partners, donors, and other nations to get the resources, knowledge, and the tools we need.

Resilience starts at home with you, your family, and your community.

Disasters will come. So, let's not wait. Let's prepare together.

## Resources

### For Business owners

Vanuatu Business Resilience Council - Quick Planning Guides in Preparedness, Response and Recovery

[https://www.connectingbusiness.org/sites/default/files/downloads/publication/VBRC-CBI\\_%20Quick%20Planning%20Guide%20FINAL.pdf](https://www.connectingbusiness.org/sites/default/files/downloads/publication/VBRC-CBI_%20Quick%20Planning%20Guide%20FINAL.pdf)

### For everyone

Vanuatu Meteorology & Geohazards Department: [www.vmgd.gov.vu](http://www.vmgd.gov.vu)

Vanuatu Meteorology and Geo-hazards Department Facebook page - [https://www.facebook.com/vmgd.gov.vu?ref=embed\\_page](https://www.facebook.com/vmgd.gov.vu?ref=embed_page)

Vanuatu National Disaster Management Office: <https://ndmo.gov.vu>

Cyclone Dashboard: <https://cyclonedashboard.com>

Pacific Ocean Portal: <https://oceanportal.spc.int/portal/ocean.html>

Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC): <https://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/vanuatu-disaster-displacement-risk-profile>

Sudden-Onset Hazards and the Risk of Future Displacement in Vanuatu [https://api.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/21\\_0907\\_IDMCVanuatuRiskprofile.pdf?\\_gl=1\\*\\_olbf15\\*\\_ga\\*MTEwMDIxOTQ5Ni4xNzUxMzQxNjI1\\*\\_ga\\_PKVS5L6N8V\\*czE3NTEzNDE2MjQkbzEkZzAkDE3NTEzNDE2MjQkajYwJGwwJGgw](https://api.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/21_0907_IDMCVanuatuRiskprofile.pdf?_gl=1*_olbf15*_ga*MTEwMDIxOTQ5Ni4xNzUxMzQxNjI1*_ga_PKVS5L6N8V*czE3NTEzNDE2MjQkbzEkZzAkDE3NTEzNDE2MjQkajYwJGwwJGgw)