



Australian Government  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



# HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE IN THE PACIFIC: AN EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AUSTRALIA'S RESPONSE TO CYCLONE PAM

FEBRUARY 2017



*Cover photo: Communities affected by Cyclone Pam were very appreciative of Australian humanitarian emergency relief supplies. The photo shows Marie Nowai collecting a hygiene kit from a distribution point at Port Narvin School organised by members of the local Community Disaster Committee (wearing orange jackets) with support from CARE. Hygiene kits include soap, a bucket, washing powder, tooth brushes and tooth paste. Photo: Pallen Philip, World Vision.*

Graphic design: Jean Watson

#### **Office of Development Effectiveness**

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© Commonwealth of Australia 2017 ISBN 978 0 9954465 0 2

Published by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra, 2017.

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The evaluation team was comprised of Karen Ovington (co-leader) and Sharon Lim (team member) from the Office of Development Effectiveness of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT); Kate Sutton (co-leader) and Josie Flint (team member) from the Humanitarian Advisory Group; Michela Luzzi from the Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience Section, Stabilisation and Recovery Branch, Humanitarian, NGOs and Partnerships Division (DFAT) and Linda Kenni (team member), an independent Ni-Vanuatu consultant. Natalia Aueb-Charles from the Vanuatu Section, Melanesian Branch, Pacific Division (DFAT) participated in the field work. The team brought to this evaluation humanitarian, program management, and monitoring and evaluation expertise alongside a sound understanding of the context, the national and international response and corporate knowledge of DFAT's systems and processes.

The evaluation team would like to express sincere thanks to the DFAT staff, partners and beneficiaries for their insights into the response to Cyclone Pam and specifically their reflections on Australia's contribution to the response. Thanks also go to DFAT staff in Port Vila and Suva for helping to facilitate the evaluation team's visit to Vanuatu and Fiji. The team is especially grateful to partners that supported field visits in Vanuatu including Australian Red Cross, CARE, Oxfam and World Vision, and to the staff and communities that hosted the team and welcomed them into their homes and communities.

# FOREWORD

The small, remote countries in the southern Pacific region are risky places to live with high exposure and vulnerability to natural disasters. The World Bank has reported that eight Pacific island countries are in the top twenty countries in the world for annual disaster losses relative to gross domestic product. Beyond the direct pain and suffering disasters cause, they can also set back and constrain development.

As the largest donor in the South Pacific, Australia has well-established systems to support Pacific Island countries to cope with and recover from humanitarian crises—systems that swung into action when the Vanuatu Government requested assistance after Cyclone Pam.

What is clear from this evaluation that these systems are strong—Australian assistance enabled the Vanuatu Government to respond to community needs and begin work to return to the development trajectory it was on before Pam struck.

However, the report also correctly draws attention to continuing and more foundational challenges facing the humanitarian system, particularly the need to be more responsive to, and build from the strengths of local organisations and communities. The report also identifies areas where more thought should be given into how Australia can balance competing priorities. Insights and recommendations on how Australia can play its role in overcoming these challenges are provided.

I feel confident that the implementation of the recommendations in this report will improve the effectiveness of Australian humanitarian assistance in the southern Pacific.



Jim Adams

Chair, Independent Evaluation Committee

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# ABBREVIATIONS

AAR	After Action Review
ACC	Australian Civilian Corps
ADF	Australian Defence Force
AHP	Australian Humanitarian Partnership
ARC	Australian Red Cross
AusMAT	Australian Medical Assistance Team
CDC	Community Disaster Committee
CRT	Crisis Response Team
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DRR	Disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FMT	Foreign Medical Teams
HPA	Humanitarian Partnership Agreement
IDETF	Interdepartmental Emergency Taskforce
IDRL	International Disaster Response Law
INGO	International Non-government Organisations
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
NCCTRC	National Critical Care & Trauma Response Centre
NCSP	National Cyclone Support Plan
NDMO	National Disaster Management Office
NDP	National Disaster Plan
NGOs	Non-government Organisations
ODE	Office of Development Effectiveness of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PACMAT	Pacific Medical Assistance Team
PDC	Provincial Disaster Committee
PDCCC	Provincial Disaster and Climate Change Committee
SPRINT	Sexual and Reproductive Health Programme in Crisis and Post Crisis Situations
SRT	Support and Response Team
UN	United Nations
UNDAC	United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination team
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UN OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
USAR	Urban Search and Rescue
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



*Stallholders from the Local Mamas Business Group, Port Vila, who were severely impacted by Cyclone Pam*

*Standing from L-R: Hazel Daniel, Jean Mana, Marie Taman and Harrison Betel Toa; Sitting down: Janet Ngwele. Photo: Linda Kenni*



**WHEN CYCLONE PAM HIT VANUATU IN MARCH 2015 IT WAS THE MOST POWERFUL CYCLONE RECORDED IN THE SOUTHERN PACIFIC REGION. OVER HALF OF VANUATU'S POPULATION, AN ESTIMATED 188,000 PEOPLE, WERE AFFECTED. HOMES, LIVELIHOODS AND ESSENTIAL SERVICES WERE DAMAGED OR DESTROYED.**

As the scale of the destruction exceeded the response capacity of national systems, the Vanuatu Government requested international assistance. Humanitarian organisations flooded into Vanuatu and a global appeal raised A\$58 million. The Vanuatu Government activated comprehensive national disaster plans and made it clear that it intended to control the humanitarian response. The scale and the speed of the international response made this difficult.

Australia responded rapidly to specific requests for assistance from the Vanuatu Government. Supporting the Vanuatu Government to lead the humanitarian response was the main priority for Australian assistance. DFAT allocated over A\$15 million to a relief and recovery operation that drew on the expertise of United Nations agencies; Australian non-government organisations; the Australian Red Cross; government agencies in Australia and Vanuatu; and an Australian-based private sector organisation. The Australian Defence Force made a major contribution providing personnel and assets at a scale and with a functional capacity that would have not been otherwise available (estimated to have cost A\$17 million).

The purpose of this evaluation is to review Australia's humanitarian response to Cyclone Pam to identify how DFAT can better support Pacific Island countries to prepare for, respond to and recover from rapid-onset emergencies. Specifically, the evaluation considered the Cyclone Pam response against Australia's humanitarian policy at the time of the crisis through the five core policy outcomes and three enabling outcomes of the policy.

The evaluation found that overall Australia's assistance was effective and largely aligned with policy commitments. Disaster preparedness activities supported by Australia reduced the impact of the cyclone in some communities and helped establish the national response systems that coordinated the response. In delivering humanitarian assistance, DFAT made strategic use of a diversity of partners with a range of approaches, strengths and skills to support the Vanuatu Government and deliver assistance to affected communities. The considerable achievements of the Australian response are detailed in Figure 1.

**FIGURE 1: ACHIEVEMENTS OF AUSTRALIAN ASSISTANCE**



## SHELTER

- **42,500** individuals received shelter assistance
- Supported urgent repairs to Port Vila Central Hospital, **27** schools, **5** clinics, **13** road and infrastructure sites and **6** government structures across Vanuatu



## HEALTH

- **1,341** patients treated through support to Vanuatu Central Hospital



## GENDER AND PROTECTION

- Financial support for **36** women's groups and child friendly spaces reaching **5,000** children;



## EDUCATION

- Provided funding to **143** schools, benefitting more than **19,000** students



## FOOD AND LIVELIHOODS

- Directly funded distribution of food to **73,000** people



## LOGISTICS

- Transported personnel, equipment, and relief items to Vanuatu and between the affected islands



## WASH

- **67,000** people provided with access to safe drinking water

## POLICY OUTCOME: HUMANITARIAN ACTION IS TIMELY AND COORDINATED

Under DFAT's leadership, Australia's response was timely. The Australian Defence Force, the Australian Medical Assistance Team and the Urban Search and Rescue team were quickly deployed. This met the commitment to respond within 48 hours of a country's request for assistance. Australia's Foreign Minister announced initial support to Vanuatu which included a financial commitment of A\$5 million. The large and highly visible rapid response was a strong demonstration of Australia's support to the government and people of Vanuatu.

An initial rapid response was justified and there is evidence that DFAT took steps to influence the speed of the Australian response as needs changed. However Australian assistance—like the international response—could have subsequently slowed down to better align with national systems and better address needs.



The coordination work undertaken by DFAT added value to the overall Australian response. DFAT effectively coordinated the Department's humanitarian and consular responses; Australia's whole of government response; and the international civilian and military responses. This work added value to the assistance provided by Australia and other responders.

The leadership provided by DFAT helped ensure that Australia's assistance was coherent. Nevertheless, a number of stakeholders felt that DFAT's overarching approach and priorities; the roles played by different partners; and expected outcomes were not consistently shared with implementing partners. Coherence would have been improved if DFAT had articulated an action plan for the response to provide a common sense of purpose for the overall assistance package.

## **POLICY OUTCOME: HUMANITARIAN ACTION SUPPORTS PARTNER GOVERNMENTS AND LOCAL CAPACITIES, INCLUDING WITH DISASTER PREPAREDNESS**

Australia's prior investment in disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction proved to be valuable. The National Disaster Plan and National Cyclone Support Plan (both developed by the National Disaster Management Office with the support of Australian technical expertise) positioned the Vanuatu Government to take the lead. Investments designed to increase the capacity of vulnerable communities to prepare for, and respond to, disasters have been credited by communities with reducing the impact of Cyclone Pam and saving lives.

In the relief phase, DFAT prioritised supporting the Vanuatu government and the assistance provided was well matched to expressed needs. Technical assistance provided by Australia to key government ministries supported or supplemented national capacity to effectively respond. In the recovery phase most of Australian funding was allocated directly to government ministries. This funding was highly effective in supporting a government-led process of recovery and building local capacity.

Australia's response also supported, but did not fully utilise, local responders. DFAT prioritised engagement with implementing partners with a pre-existing, established presence in-country—an important first step in supporting local capacity. The choice of implementing partners in the relief phase, however, reflected a more traditional suite of international responders so that ni-Vanuatu expertise and local capacity were underutilised.

## **POLICY OUTCOME: HUMANITARIAN ACTION MEETS NEEDS OF, AND IS ACCOUNTABLE TO, AFFECTED POPULATIONS**

In providing relief items, Australia worked under the leadership and direction of the Vanuatu Government. The Vanuatu Government determined that the distribution of relief items would be uniform across affected populations, rather than based on a more detailed assessment of the severity of the cyclone's impact on different communities and individuals within the affected areas. Distribution within communities, under local leadership, was also uniform. As a result, Australia was constrained in its ability to cater for differences in need between and within communities.

DFAT explored the use of cash transfer programming but decided not to use it because the approach was not supported by the Vanuatu Government and mechanisms to facilitate an effective program did not exist. This was appropriate in the circumstances. Given the strong evidence that cash transfers are, and would have been, a useful and cost-effective form of assistance, DFAT needs to undertake or support preparatory work so that cash transfers can start to be used in future humanitarian responses in the Pacific. This, in particular, can assist in providing a more needs-based mechanism of distribution as individuals are empowered to make choices according to need.

Some national ministries felt that they were not adequately informed about how Australian funding was used and what it achieved. There is scope for DFAT and its implementing partners to improve the information they provide to host governments through consolidated, simplified and timely reporting.

Australia's implementing partners made concerted efforts to be accountable to affected people. However, some communities felt that their voices had not been adequately considered, either in the design of the response or in the adaptation of the response following community feedback. In a number of communities, women and young adults felt their voices had not been heard and their needs had not been considered.

## **POLICY OUTCOME: HUMANITARIAN ACTION PROTECTS THE SAFETY, DIGNITY AND RIGHTS OF AFFECTED POPULATIONS**

DFAT was proactive in ensuring protection was mainstreamed across most of the response, especially

in relation to the work undertaken by HPA NGOs. Protection was less well supported by dedicated programs, which were limited to a small allocation for sexual and reproductive health services. Australia's commitments to protection could have been better met by partnerships with ni-Vanuatu organisations which have a strong protection focus including those that DFAT works with in the bilateral development program.

## **POLICY OUTCOME: INTEGRATES RECOVERY AS PART OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION TO SUPPORT LONGER-TERM DEVELOPMENT**

Under the Humanitarian Action Policy, early recovery was expected to be *integrated as part of humanitarian action, in support of longer-term development*. Some of the first tranche of funding supported early recovery activities while a later tranche specifically addressed early recovery needs in the education and health sectors. With the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that proportionally more of the first tranche of funding could have been used to explicitly support early recovery and there would have been value in exploring a broader range of recovery needs. In particular, small and medium businesses struggled to recover and would have benefitted from targeted assistance.

Australia has a broad-ranging bilateral program in Vanuatu. The response largely built upon the existing program, but also overlooked opportunities to work with existing national and local partners in some sectors. The evaluation found that longer-term outcomes could have been better supported if bilateral development program contracts contained flexible arrangements for surge funding in crises.

## **ENABLING OUTCOME: AUSTRALIA HAS INCREASED CAPACITY TO DELIVER HUMANITARIAN ACTION**

Australia's whole of government response to a crisis is led by posts in affected countries. In highly disaster-prone countries, DFAT staff capacity at posts needs to be sufficient to guide Australia's humanitarian response to achieve the humanitarian imperative while also meeting and balancing policy commitments in a contextually appropriate way. These expectations and the unprecedented scale of the crisis tested the capacity of the Australian High Commission. A Crisis Response Team, made up of DFAT personnel was used to provide much-needed support for the consular and humanitarian responses. The humanitarian deployments were valuable

but could have been more effective if deployments were lengthened, phased and had structured handovers.

## **ENABLING OUTCOME: AUSTRALIA'S HUMANITARIAN ACTION IS ACCOUNTABLE**

Variability in the quality of implementing partner reports to DFAT along with the inconsistent disaggregation of data made it very difficult for DFAT to meet the policy commitment 'to provide accessible information on what we fund and the results we achieve'. Current work with New Zealand to establish a joint monitoring and evaluation framework for agencies delivering assistance in the Pacific is welcome. It should increase the timeliness, quality and consistency of reporting and in so doing improve accountability.

## **ENABLING OUTCOME: AUSTRALIA INTEGRATES LEARNING INTO FUTURE HUMANITARIAN ACTION**

DFAT has succeeded in using lessons learned to improve future humanitarian responses. Australia's response to Cyclone Winston in Fiji took proactive steps to build on what was learnt from the Cyclone Pam response. For example, in the Winston response DFAT ensured that AusMAT and funded NGOs worked with local partners and prioritised capacity building. More broadly, DFAT has incorporated international lessons and its own learning into the latest humanitarian policy and new funding agreement with Australian non-government organisations.

## **FUTURE RESPONSES: IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AUSTRALIAN HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE IN THE PACIFIC**

This evaluation found that while Australia's humanitarian response to Cyclone Pam was highly effective there was scope to improve the effectiveness of future humanitarian responses to rapid-onset crises in the south Pacific region. For the evaluation to be forward-looking, recommendations are formulated in the context of updated policy frameworks and recent commitments.

## **RECOMMENDATION 1. DFAT SHOULD CONTINUE TO PROGRESS WORK TO SUPPORT NATIONALLY-LED RESPONSES AND LOCALISATION BY**

- defining what is meant by localisation and unifying implementing partners around a common understanding of localisation
- identifying in advance of a crisis local, national and regional partners, including private sector and civil society actors, that could contribute effectively to a humanitarian response, as well as mechanisms that could be used to support them in the event of a crisis
- exploring possible options for Pacific crisis response teams.

## **RECOMMENDATION 2. DFAT SHOULD SEEK TO IMPROVE THE TARGETING OF ASSISTANCE TO THOSE MOST IN NEED AND TO BETTER MATCH NEEDS BY**

- working with partner governments ahead of, and during, a crisis to identify how assistance can be targeted to those most in need
- working with all implementing partners and Australian agencies to increase, where possible, alignment of assistance with strategic priorities, notably gender equality and women's empowerment, disability inclusiveness and protection
- exploring mechanisms through which small and medium businesses can be supported to recover after crises
- establishing mechanisms and relationships so that cash transfer programming can gradually start to be used as a more standard feature of humanitarian responses in the Pacific.

## **RECOMMENDATION 3. DFAT SHOULD WORK TO FURTHER BRIDGE THE HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT DIVIDE BY**

- identifying prior to a response the strengths and relationships within the bilateral program that can be leveraged in a humanitarian response and incorporating surge funding capacity into bilateral contracts.

## **RECOMMENDATION 4. DFAT SHOULD STRENGTHEN ITS COMMUNICATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY BY**

- developing a short written statement, or action plan which outlines the overall purpose, strategic priorities, suite of partners and approach of Australia's assistance and making the plan available to partners at the outset of a response
- encouraging and supporting implementing partners to improve accountability to national governments by providing timely concise reports.

## **RECOMMENDATION 5. DFAT ENSURES ITS INTERNAL CAPACITY TO DELIVER HUMANITARIAN ACTION IS APPROPRIATE BY**

- ensuring staff at posts have been provided with appropriate training about humanitarian principles, policy and operations
- exploring mechanisms for lengthening and improving the phasing of short term humanitarian deployments and monitoring the results.



# MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

14 FEBRUARY 2017

## SUMMARY OF MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Relevant DFAT areas agree with all recommendations in this ODE report. While focused on DFAT's response to Tropical Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu, the report's recommendations are broadly applicable to DFAT's response to humanitarian crises across the Pacific region and beyond.

The report's recommendations are in-line with Australia's 2016 Humanitarian Strategy and international humanitarian commitments made at forums such as the World Humanitarian Summit held in Istanbul in May 2016. DFAT welcomes the report as an opportunity to reflect on a solid set of recommendations. These recommendations lend support to and validate the approaches and directions that DFAT is currently undertaking to improve the effectiveness of Australia's humanitarian assistance, and to bridge the gap between long-term development programming and humanitarian action.

We note that there are certain limitations to the nature and scope of Australia's influence as an international donor, particularly in keeping with our international commitments to localise humanitarian decision making to the fullest extent possible.

The action plan identified in this management response will be implemented by the following DFAT areas: Humanitarian, NGOs and Partnerships Division (HPD), Pacific Division (PAD), Crisis Management and Contingency Planning Section (CMS/CCD), and Poverty and Social Transfers Section (PTS/DPD).

## INDIVIDUAL MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE	EXPLANATION	ACTION PLAN	IF PRACTICAL, SPECIFY TIMEFRAME HERE
<b>RECOMMENDATION 1</b> DFAT should continue to progress work to support nationally-led responses and localisation by:				
(a) defining what is meant by localisation and unifying implementing partners around a common understanding of localisation	<b>AGREE</b>	DFAT agrees with the recommendation to define localisation, based on consultation with local partners in the Pacific, and to ensure our understanding of the concept is shared with implementing partners. We will engage with implementing partners on a case-by-case basis around activities aimed to strengthen localisation. Differentiated approaches will be needed in different settings and by different partners to effectively support localisation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HPD will prepare a guidance note to support Australia's Humanitarian Strategy that defines localisation for DFAT preparedness and response planning and programming purposes. Localisation issues will be integrated into other Strategy guidance notes.</li> <li>HPD will update preparedness, response and early recovery SOPs and training materials to include localisation, where relevant.</li> <li>The HPD-led design and implementation of the new Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP) will continue to prioritise localisation and seek a common understanding of the concept amongst AHP partners.</li> <li>HPD will draw on the pilot of the DFAT/ MFAT M&amp;E framework for humanitarian responses in the Pacific to assess to what extent the response was localised.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Localisation guidance note finalised by June 2017</li> <li>HPD will incorporate the localisation guidance into training materials by December 2017</li> <li>The new AHP agreement will come into effect in 2017</li> <li>DFAT/ MFAT M&amp;E framework to be reviewed mid-2017</li> </ul>

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE	EXPLANATION	ACTION PLAN	IF PRACTICAL, SPECIFY TIMEFRAME HERE
<p>(b) identifying in advance of a crisis local, national and regional partners, including private sector and civil society actors, that could contribute effectively to a humanitarian response, as well as mechanisms that could be used to support them in the event of a crisis</p>	<p><b>AGREE</b></p>	<p>DFAT notes the on-going work to identify and liaise with humanitarian response partners in Pacific Island Countries (PICs). This includes, for example, partnerships with the Australian Red Cross and Australian NGOs. DFAT is supporting mechanisms intended to better enable partners to respond effectively and appropriately.</p> <p>Note: The Pacific portal of regional government capabilities is driven under PIC leadership with DFAT support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DFAT Pacific posts will systematically identify partnerships in their Crisis Action Plans (CAPs) and update information of in-country suppliers annually.</li> <li>HPD will support PIC leadership to establish a portal through which PICs can request assistance based on a pre-identified register of national and regional government capabilities and assets in the Pacific.</li> <li>DFAT will continue to draw on civilian specialists deployed to Pacific NDMOs to support the ongoing identification of partners and mechanisms.</li> <li>HPD will provide financial support to the WFP to map relief supplies and logistical companies across the Pacific.</li> <li>HPD and PAD will share lessons from the Australian Red Cross (ARC) Pacific Humanitarian Challenge (PHC) mapping of private sector capabilities in Vanuatu with other Pacific posts and partners.</li> <li>The two key partnerships with the Australian Red Cross and Australian NGOs will prioritise identification and strengthening of the capacity of local civil society actors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pacific portal of regional government capabilities anticipated to come into effect by 2018</li> <li>ARC PHC project to be completed by Dec 2017</li> </ul>



RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE	EXPLANATION	ACTION PLAN	IF PRACTICAL, SPECIFY TIMEFRAME HERE
<p>(c) exploring possible options for Pacific crisis response teams.</p>	<p><b>AGREE</b></p>	<p>DFAT agrees to explore options for how the Australian Government could encourage and support increased Pacific-to-Pacific crisis response capabilities. DFAT notes the need for country-specific approaches due to significant differences in PIC capacity to both deploy and host such teams.</p> <p>Note: The Pacific portal of regional government capabilities is driven under PIC leadership with DFAT support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HPD is working with PICs to develop the above-mentioned portal of regional government capabilities and assets. This will identify deployable capabilities across the region, and opportunities for further collaboration.</li> <li>• DFAT funding to the World Health Organisation (WHO) is supporting PICs to verify national emergency medical teams, which will strengthen PIC capacity to both deploy and host such teams.</li> <li>• DFAT is piloting a scholarship project to support Pacific humanitarian officer participation in a leadership course through the Centre for Humanitarian Leadership based at Deakin University in Melbourne.</li> <li>• HPD and PAD will discuss any funding requests for regional projects to build Pacific response capacity with NZ MFAT, aiming to build on existing training and capacity development options rather than duplicate.</li> <li>• Pacific posts will use existing forums and interactions with national governments to support sharing of experiences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pacific portal of regional government capabilities anticipated to come into effect by 2018 (noting this work is driven under PIC leadership with DFAT support)</li> </ul>

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE	EXPLANATION	ACTION PLAN	IF PRACTICAL, SPECIFY TIMEFRAME HERE
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 2</b></p> <p>DFAT should seek to improve the targeting of assistance to those most in need and to better match needs by:</p>				
<p>(a) working with partner governments ahead of, and during, a crisis to identify how assistance can be targeted to those most in need</p>	<p><b>AGREE</b></p>	<p>Pacific posts will continue to work with partner governments to strengthen preparedness and response capabilities, including advocacy on the needs of vulnerable groups. DFAT notes that it remains the primary responsibility of national governments to ensure those most in need are targeted for priority assistance and that DFAT's role in this regard is to work in support of national PIC leadership.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HPD will continue to provide advice and support to Pacific posts on Australia's Humanitarian Strategy and issues such as protection and targeting of support for vulnerable groups ahead of crises through working-level training, briefing of incoming Heads of Mission and broader liaison. Pacific posts will continue to draw on this advice to engage with relevant partner government stakeholders, including on issues of targeting assistance.</li> <li>• DFAT will continue to draw on Australian civilian specialists deployed to Pacific NDMOs to support partner governments ahead of and during a crisis, including on issues of targeting humanitarian assistance.</li> <li>• AHP partners and ARC will draw on DFAT funding to work with sub-national governments to support the identification of community needs, which will inform partners governments' abilities to target assistance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On-going</li> </ul>

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE	EXPLANATION	ACTION PLAN	IF PRACTICAL, SPECIFY TIMEFRAME HERE
(b) working with all implementing partners and Australian agencies to increase, where possible, alignment of assistance with strategic priorities, notably gender equality and women's empowerment, disability inclusiveness and protection	AGREE	DFAT notes links to relevant policy commitments, including in the Humanitarian, Development for All (disability), and Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HPD will develop guidance on protection to accompany Australia's Humanitarian Strategy. In addition, gender equality, disability inclusiveness and protection issues will also be integrated into other guidance notes and shared across DFAT, whole-of-government and with implementing partners.</li> <li>• HPD will continue to ensure that these priorities are appropriately referenced in new partnership agreements, such as the new ARC and AHP agreements.</li> <li>• HPD will continue to fund and integrate Sexual and Reproductive Health into humanitarian response packages, consistent with Australia's Humanitarian Strategy.</li> <li>• PAD will continue to ensure that key bilateral and regional partnership agreements appropriately address these issues.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Humanitarian protection guidance notes finalised by June 2017</li> </ul>
(c) exploring mechanisms through which small and medium businesses can be supported to recover after crises	AGREE	Accelerating the trajectory of recovery by enabling the recovery of local markets and livelihoods is a key result area of Australia's Humanitarian Strategy (2016).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HPD will continue to promote opportunities to increase access to insurance for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Pacific.</li> <li>• HPD will share lessons from the BIMA and Leapfrog Pacific Humanitarian Challenge (PHC) project on mobile SME insurance in the Pacific with DFAT colleagues and interested partners.</li> <li>• HPD's early recovery work will continue to support the resuscitation of markets and livelihoods, drawing on experiences gained during the TC Winston response in Fiji.</li> <li>• HPD and PTS will explore facilitative actions, such as increased use of cash transfers to vulnerable groups to inject cash flow into local markets to hasten local SME recovery.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BIMA/ Leapfrog PHC project to be completed by Dec 2017</li> </ul>



RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE	EXPLANATION	ACTION PLAN	IF PRACTICAL, SPECIFY TIMEFRAME HERE
<p>(d) establishing mechanisms and relationships so that cash transfer programming can gradually start to be used as a more standard feature of humanitarian responses in the Pacific.</p>	<p><b>AGREE</b></p>	<p>Increasing the use of cash transfer programming as an important mechanism for supporting affected populations is a key commitment of Australia's Humanitarian Strategy and our international commitments through the Grand Bargain on humanitarian funding reform. We recognise that mechanisms to achieve these commitments at scale need to be in place before the onset of a disaster.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HPD and PTS have begun exploring opportunities to increase humanitarian cash interventions in the Pacific, including a feasibility scoping study by the Cash Learning Partnership in 2016.</li> <li>• HPD is using existing humanitarian funding mechanisms (multilateral and NGO) and deployable capacity programs to support the use of cash-based interventions in PICs, including training, in-country dialogue and research.</li> <li>• HPD and PTS will update a guidance note on cash transfer programming to accompany Australia's humanitarian and social protection strategies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guidance note on cash transfer programming revised in 2017</li> </ul>

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE	EXPLANATION	ACTION PLAN	IF PRACTICAL, SPECIFY TIMEFRAME HERE
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 3</b></p> <p>DFAT should work to further bridge the humanitarian–development divide by:</p>				
<p>(a) identifying prior to a response the strengths and relationships within the bilateral program that can be leveraged in a humanitarian response and incorporating surge funding capacity into bilateral contracts.</p>	<p><b>AGREE</b></p>	<p>DFAT notes that the scope, nature and timing of implementation of this recommendation will be location-specific. In particular, the possibility to incorporate surge funding capacity into bilateral contracts and agreements will vary from country to country.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DFAT Pacific posts will continue to monitor and assess the strengths of bilateral program partners, while also considering their potential to contribute to a humanitarian response.</li> <li>• DFAT Pacific posts’ CAPs will continue to register relevant bilateral program partner information and update existing information of in-country suppliers annually.</li> <li>• HPD, PAD and CVB will explore options to reduce the administrative burden of adjusting bilateral funding agreements in the aftermath of a crisis. This will include advice on templates to use for new agreements.</li> <li>• HPD will identify and share good practice examples from Pacific bilateral programs where surge funding has been incorporated into contracts.</li> <li>• PAD will support the exchange between Pacific posts of good practice examples of bilateral programs leveraging existing contracts and agreements to support disaster preparedness, response and resilience.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HPD, CVB and PAD will seek to prepare guidance on surge funding options for contracts and agreements in 2017</li> </ul>

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE	EXPLANATION	ACTION PLAN	IF PRACTICAL, SPECIFY TIMEFRAME HERE
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 4</b></p> <p>DFAT should strengthen its communication and accountability by</p>				
<p>(a) developing a short written statement, or action plan which outlines the overall purpose, strategic priorities, suite of partners and approach of Australia's assistance and making the plan available to partners at the outset of a response</p>	<p><b>AGREE</b></p>	<p>DFAT recognises the advantages of clearly communicating the overarching response purpose, priorities and approach to all response partners. For humanitarian responses, the responsibility for determining the overall response intent sits with the Inter-Departmental Emergency Task Force (IDETF). It is expected that the IDETF continuously reviews the plan and its inherent assumptions in response to the rapidly changing realities of any humanitarian response.</p> <p>The IDETF will share the action plan with relevant partners as appropriate. In addition, accountability will also be strengthened through refined approaches to communication with the general public.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HPD will continue to promote Australia's Humanitarian Strategy as the key source of DFAT's guiding principles, strategic objectives and thematic response priorities, which are relevant to all response partners.</li> <li>• HPD, in cooperation with CMS, will ensure better implementation of DFAT's Single Crisis Response Protocol, through which the IDETF Chair is required to "distribute a statement of the overall intent for the response". Processes for this will be determined during the review of the Protocol and are likely to include a template that will then be trialled.</li> <li>• DFAT investment managers will continue to ensure ongoing communication and dialogue with implementing partners throughout a response, including sharing of the IDETF intent statement, as appropriate. This dialogue will include DFAT geographic areas (desk and post).</li> <li>• HPD will improve sharing of up-to-date information on response activities and priorities via DFAT's website (through a new "Crisis Hub"), including hyperlinks to Ministerial press releases, funding commitments, activities and partners. Over time, it will draw on data from the new DFAT/MFAT humanitarian M&amp;E framework and Relief Tracker, which will enable DFAT to post information and imagery on Australia's response.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DFAT's Single Crisis Response Protocol to be reviewed in 2017</li> <li>• New online DFAT "Crisis Hub" to be established in 2017</li> <li>• DFAT/NZ MFAT Pacific Humanitarian M&amp;E Framework to be piloted in 2017</li> <li>• Relief Tracker to be piloted in 2017</li> </ul>

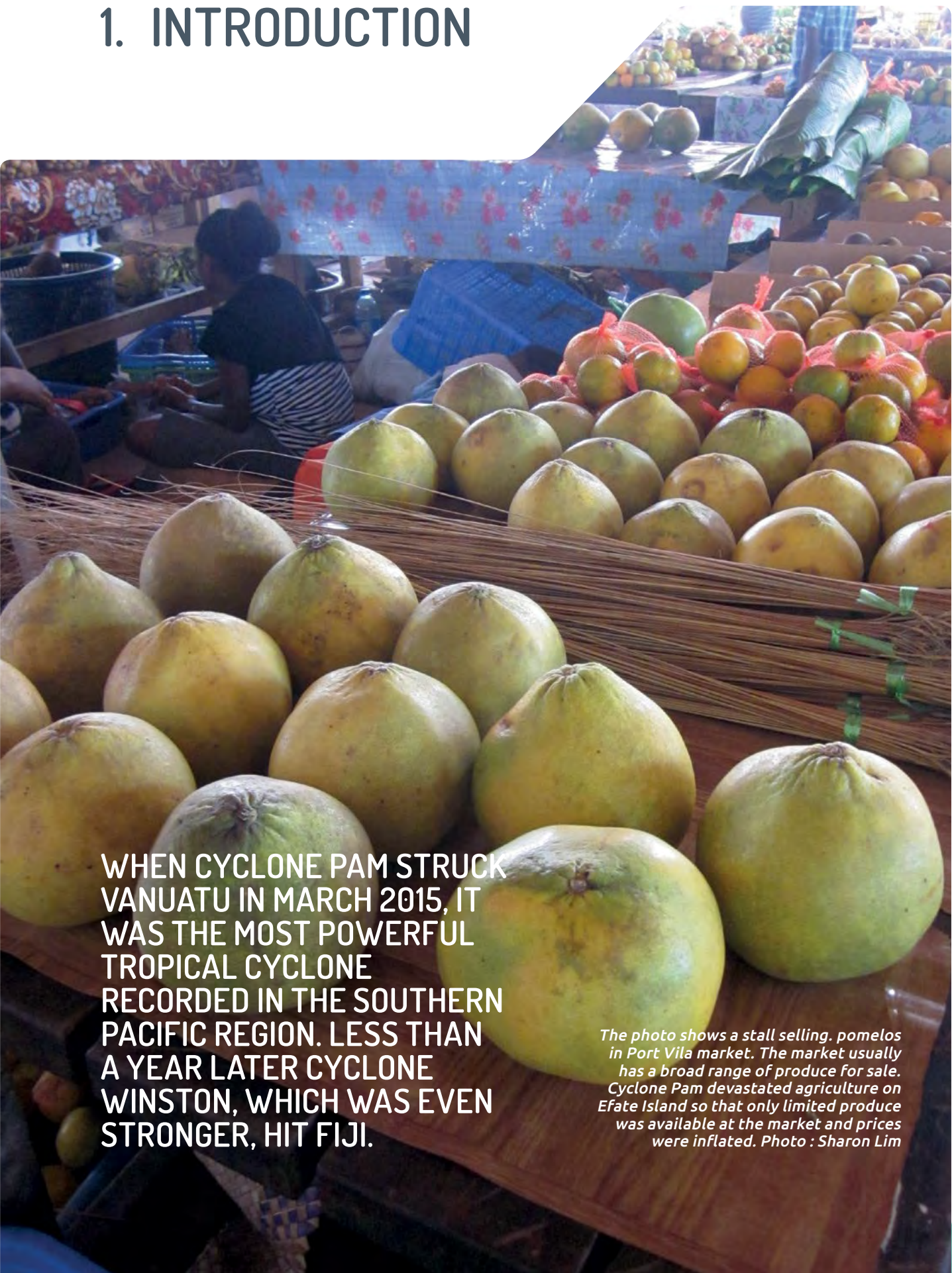
RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE	EXPLANATION	ACTION PLAN	IF PRACTICAL, SPECIFY TIMEFRAME HERE
<p>(b) encouraging and supporting implementing partners to improve accountability to national governments by providing timely, concise reports.</p>	<p><b>AGREE</b></p>	<p>DFAT considers the sharing of reports by implementing partners with national governments to be a core operating principle. We will continue to encourage and support this practice, with a particular focus on ensuring reporting is timely and concise.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HPD will place particular emphasis on ensuring reporting by Australian NGOs is timely, concise and shared with donors and national governments alike when finalising the M&amp;E framework and reporting arrangements for the new AHP. The well-resourced AHP support unit is expected to provide a key asset for this.</li> <li>• DFAT will use existing forums, such as the Pacific Humanitarian Partnership and FRANZ, to encourage all humanitarian partners to share timely, concise reporting with national governments. The importance of continuous feedback loops will be stressed to all involved, including national government counterparts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AHP agreement will come into effect in 2017</li> </ul>

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE	EXPLANATION	ACTION PLAN	IF PRACTICAL, SPECIFY TIMEFRAME HERE
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 5</b></p> <p>DFAT ensures its internal capacity to deliver humanitarian action is appropriate by</p>				
<p>(a) ensuring staff at posts have been provided with appropriate training about humanitarian principles, policy and operations</p>	<p><b>AGREE</b></p>	<p>DFAT considers this recommendation should extend beyond post, and also include Canberra-based staff likely to be involved in humanitarian responses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DFAT continues to evaluate and tailor training for staff at both working and senior levels. This includes pre-posting training and disaster response training delivered regularly at posts (including 1-2 sessions yearly in the Pacific).</li> <li>HPD will develop an e-learning module on humanitarian principles, policy and operations. Once developed, HPD and PAD will promote its use across DFAT.</li> <li>CMS will continue to ensure that Contingency Planning Assistance Team (CPAT) visits to Pacific posts place appropriate emphasis on humanitarian issues.</li> <li>FAS HPD will continue to brief all outgoing HOMs posted to crisis-prone regions on key humanitarian response policies and mechanisms.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>E-learning module on humanitarian principles, policy and operations to be completed by March 2017</li> </ul>
<p>(b) exploring mechanisms for lengthening and improving the phasing of short term humanitarian deployments and monitoring the results.</p>	<p><b>AGREE</b></p>	<p>DFAT notes the need to also consider staff welfare. DFAT notes that certain CRT roles already have differentiated deployment phases based on their need, i.e. consular needs are often finalised sooner than humanitarian.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CMS and HPD will assess options for better phasing of CRT deployments. Where staff can be released early from their regular work areas for 2nd wave deployments, they might spend 1 day in the Humanitarian Operations Centre prior to deployment, as well as have 1-2 days' crossover with their 1st wave counterpart in-country.</li> <li>CMS and HPD – in consultation with DFAT staff welfare areas – will explore possibilities for extending individual CRT deployments on a case-by-case basis and/or deploying larger teams which could operate at a reduced intensity level and potentially remain in-country for longer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Options for CRT deployment phasing and timing to be considered in 2017.</li> </ul>





# 1. INTRODUCTION



WHEN CYCLONE PAM STRUCK VANUATU IN MARCH 2015, IT WAS THE MOST POWERFUL TROPICAL CYCLONE RECORDED IN THE SOUTHERN PACIFIC REGION. LESS THAN A YEAR LATER CYCLONE WINSTON, WHICH WAS EVEN STRONGER, HIT FIJI.

*The photo shows a stall selling pomelos in Port Vila market. The market usually has a broad range of produce for sale. Cyclone Pam devastated agriculture on Efate Island so that only limited produce was available at the market and prices were inflated. Photo : Sharon Lim*

## AUSTRALIA PROVIDED HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE FOLLOWING BOTH CYCLONES AND HAS COMMITTED TO CONTINUE TO SUPPORT PACIFIC ISLANDS TO PREPARE FOR AND RECOVER FROM RAPID-ONSET EMERGENCIES. AS WEATHER-RELATED NATURAL DISASTERS ARE INCREASING IN FREQUENCY, SEVERITY AND IMPACT IN THE PACIFIC, AUSTRALIA NEEDS TO IDENTIFY HOW TO IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE IN THE PACIFIC.

The Pacific region is particularly vulnerable to natural hazards that can result in humanitarian crises and undermine development. Five Pacific Island countries are in the top 15 countries most at risk to disasters globally. Vanuatu is the most disaster-prone country in the world with high exposure and vulnerability to natural hazards.<sup>1</sup>

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*Vanuatu is the riskiest country to live in, with natural disasters on average affecting more than a third of the population each year<sup>2</sup>*

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Australia is the largest donor in the southern Pacific region providing about 60% of total aid from OECD countries. When the impact of a disaster exceeds a country's capacity to respond and assistance is requested, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) leads Australia's humanitarian response. The department has committed to strengthening international humanitarian action in the Pacific region.

Worldwide, there has recently been increased scrutiny of the effectiveness of humanitarian operations. The Australian Government's engagement in reviewing the international humanitarian system, including at the recent World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016, has been led by DFAT. This summit set out to identify issues and solutions to challenges in the provision of humanitarian assistance. Whilst the effectiveness of the summit will be determined by the changes evidenced in the lives of people affected by crises, in the short term it brought together donors, humanitarian agencies, governments and communities to identify what needs to be done to make assistance more effective. Some key

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1 Matthias Garschagen et al., *World Risk Report 2015*, United Nations University and Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft (Alliance Development Works), Berlin, 2015., 41

2 Ibid.

commitments arising from regional consultations and the World Humanitarian Summit that are directly relevant to the Pacific are summarised in Box 1.<sup>3</sup>

### 1.1 EVALUATION PURPOSE

#### BOX 1: COMMITMENTS FROM THE WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT

1. Local leadership and ownership of humanitarian preparedness and response
2. Transcending the humanitarian-development divide
3. Investing in preparedness and shifting from reactive management of crisis to pro-active management of risk
4. Recognising women and girls as agents of change
5. Promoting inclusion in decision-making for groups including people with disabilities and youth
6. Improving efficiency of humanitarian action by investing in local actors and cash-based programming

The purpose of this evaluation is to review Australia's response to Cyclone Pam to identify how DFAT can better support Pacific countries to prepare for, respond to and recover from rapid-onset emergencies.

### 1.2 EVALUATION APPROACH

Australia's response to Cyclone Pam is evaluated in the context of the policy frameworks at the time, notably the Humanitarian Action Policy 2011 and the Protection in Humanitarian Action Framework 2013. For the evaluation to be forward-looking, recommendations are formulated in the context of updated policy frameworks, notably the Humanitarian Strategy 2016 and the World Humanitarian Summit commitments, recognising that the policy landscape has changed since the response.

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3 Drawn from *World Humanitarian Summit Regional Consultation for the Pacific Final Report*, 2015 and the *Report of the Secretary General for the World Humanitarian Summit*, 2016.



## 1.3 EVALUATION SCOPE

This evaluation focused on DFAT's humanitarian response including the department's leadership and coordination of resources and expertise from other Australian government departments and agencies. This is especially relevant because of the significant role played by the Australian Defence Force (ADF).

The evaluation only covers the first two tranches of Australian relief funding for response and early recovery. It does not cover the long term recovery funding as the projects under this funding had not commenced at the time of the evaluation.

The evaluation terms of reference did not include Australia's subsequent response to Cyclone Winston in Fiji. However, in the course of the evaluation the Cyclone Winston response was referred to in documents and key informant interviews. Where this information informs findings and recommendations it has been included in the report. This is especially relevant to aspects of the Cyclone Pam response that were improved in the Cyclone Winston response.

## 1.4 EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The questions guiding the evaluation were derived from national and international frameworks including Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles, and Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee Criteria.<sup>4</sup> The evaluation explored the following areas of enquiry:

- *How* Australia responded to Cyclone Pam including the strategy that guided the response, the partners selected, and the scale and composition of funding.
- *What* was achieved with Australian assistance and whether there were any specific areas of value-add.
- *Effectiveness* of Australian aid, including whether the response was aligned with the needs and priorities of the Vanuatu Government and affected communities.
- *Efficiency* of Australian aid considering the value for money provided by the partnerships.
- *Coordination* of aid within the Australian assistance.
- *Connectedness* of Australian aid to previous investments and to established government structures and systems for responding to disasters.
- *Improvement* of the effectiveness of Australian aid.

<sup>4</sup> Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative, *23 Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship*, 2003 and OECD, *Development Assistance Committee (DAC), Principles for Evaluation Development Assistance*, 1991.

## 1.5 METHODOLOGY

Data was collected by document review and key informant interviews in Australia, followed by a two-week field trip to Vanuatu and Fiji. A structured approach to data gathering included a series of detailed guides for key informant interviews and focus group discussions.

### DOCUMENT REVIEW

The evaluation team reviewed and coded over 115 documents. Documents were provided by DFAT and other government departments and drawn from academic and grey literature. Documents reviewed included implementing partner strategies, appeals and reports, specialist studies, other evaluations, after action reviews and DFAT internal documentation (Annex Two - Bibliography).

### KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 39 representatives of the Australian Government, 30 representatives of the Vanuatu Government, 55 implementing partner staff, 10 people working in the private sector in Vanuatu or Fiji and 5 other relevant stakeholders in Australia, Vanuatu and Fiji. Interviews used a guide based on the evaluation questions which allowed for flexibility to explore lines of enquiry specific to the key informant (Annex One). A team member took detailed notes during each interview and the majority of interviews were audio recorded.

### FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Men, women and youth from communities on the most affected islands of Efate, Tanna and Erromango were invited to participate in focus group discussions which were structured around a guide. Critically important perspectives on the appropriateness of assistance provided was obtained from 14 groups of beneficiaries.

The focus group discussion guide was supplemented by exercises designed to gain broad participation. In one exercise, all participants were given a pebble and asked to place it in the middle of the group and then express their opinion on a particular issue. Another exercise was designed to get beneficiaries to make assessments of the relative importance of different types of assistance.



Women from Imapol village on Tanna Island participating in an exercise which was a part of a focus group discussion. Pebbles are being placed by the women on the form of assistance they most needed immediately after Cyclone Pam.  
Photo: Sharon Lim

In these exercises participants were given a pebble or a leaf and asked to place it on a picture representing the type of assistance that they personally most needed either in the week following Cyclone Pam or 2 to 3 months later. Options provided were shelter, food, medical assistance, water, transport, clothes, tools, cash, hygiene kits, emergency telecommunications and education. The monetary value of all options was set at the Vanuatu equivalent of A\$50. After all community members had placed their pebbles, each participant explained his or her choice which stimulated considerable discussion.



Pebbles placed by beneficiaries who identified shelter as the greatest need.  
Photo: Sharon Lim



## 2. IN THE AFTERMATH OF CYCLONE PAM

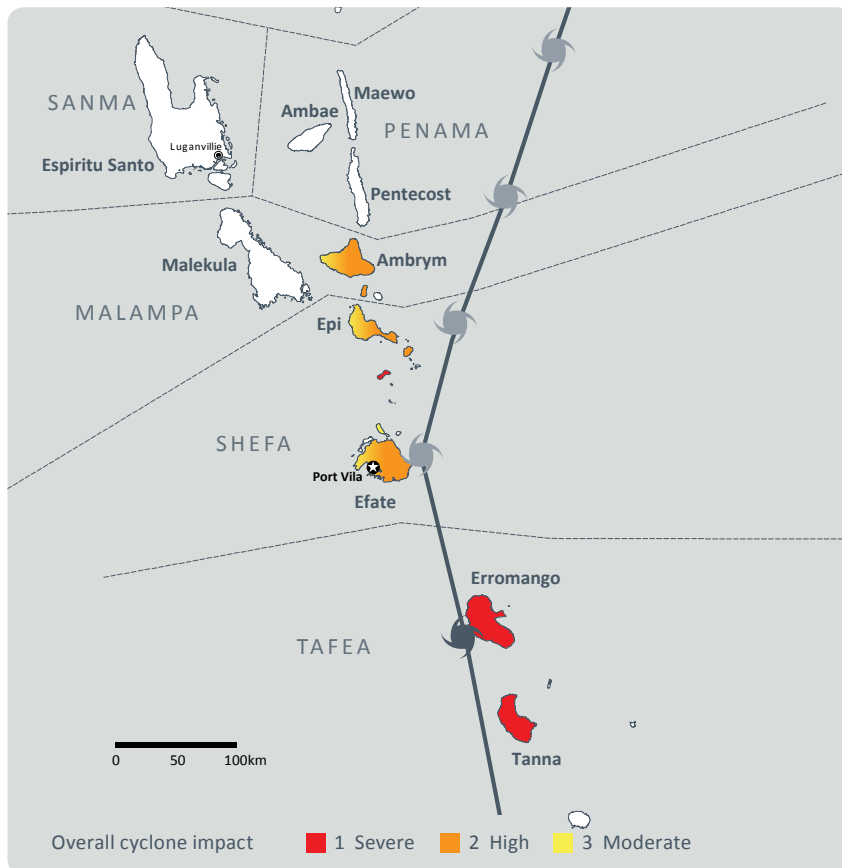
**CYCLONE PAM STRUCK VANUATU ON THE EVENING OF 13 MARCH 2015. THE CYCLONE REACHED CATEGORY 5 STATUS, THE MOST SEVERE CATEGORY, SHORTLY BEFORE IT REACHED THE CHAIN OF LOW-LYING ISLANDS THAT MAKE UP VANUATU.**

*Roofs were ripped from many homes by the severe winds in Cyclone Pam. The photo shows a large tarpaulin being used to replace a roof on a shelter in Dillon's Bay, Erromango. Photo: Sharon Lim*



## THE CYCLONE DIRECTLY HIT THE ISLAND OF EFATE (WHERE THE CAPITAL PORT VILA IS LOCATED), AND THEN TRACKED IN A SOUTHERLY DIRECTION TOWARDS ERROMANGO AND TANNA ISLANDS.

FIGURE 2: THE PATH AND IMPACT OF CYCLONE PAM



Winds of up to 250 kilometres per hour caused widespread destruction across Vanuatu with the greatest impact in Shefa (Efate Island and Shepherd Island), Tafea (Erromango and Tanna islands) and Malampa provinces. Given the magnitude of Cyclone Pam and its direct hit on Port Vila and the populous island of Tanna, it was anticipated that there would be many deaths and severe injuries. Fortunately, the 11 deaths recorded<sup>5</sup> were much fewer than expected and there were few life-threatening injuries (Figure 2).

Over half of Vanuatu's population, an estimated 188 000 people, were affected. In the hardest hit provinces of Shefa and Tafea, severe winds destroyed up to 90% of shelters in some communities and badly damaged most education and health facilities. Water sources in many communities in both rural and urban areas were damaged or contaminated. The two most important

economic sectors in Vanuatu, agriculture and tourism, were immediately affected. Farming, fishing and forestry enterprises were devastated. Tourism infrastructure was destroyed and Vanuatu became a much less popular tourist destination.

Through its effects on communities, infrastructure and income-generating activities Cyclone Pam severely compromised economic and social security in Vanuatu and set back development. The estimated total damage and loss from Cyclone Pam was approximately A\$600 million or 64 per cent of Gross Domestic Product.<sup>6</sup> With losses of this magnitude, it is inevitable that it will take Vanuatu many years to return to the development trajectory it was on previously.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), *Flash Appeal Emergency Response Plan for Vanuatu Tropical Cyclone Pam* March – June 2015, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Vanuatu Government, *Post-Disaster Needs Assessment Tropical Cyclone Pam*, March 2015.



## 2.1 VANUATU GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

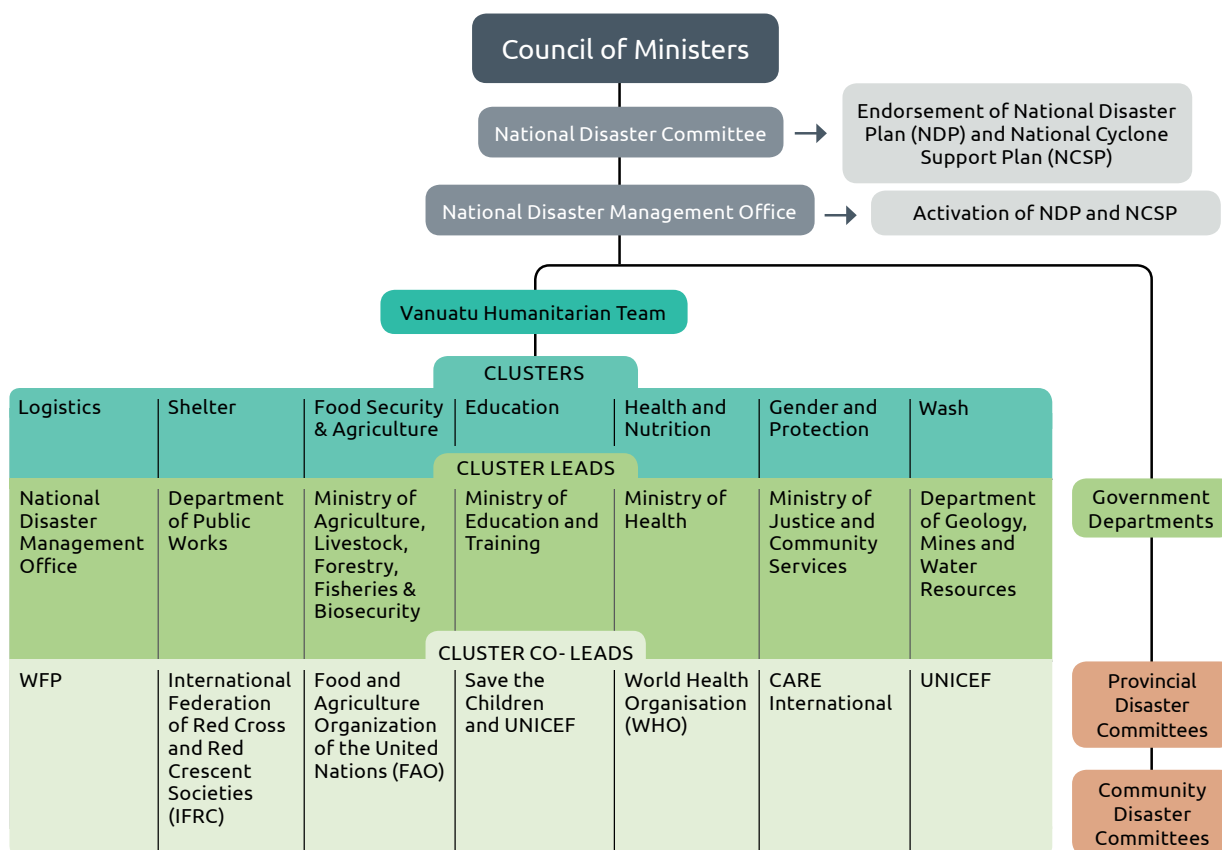
The Vanuatu Government made it clear that it intended to control the response to Cyclone Pam. National structures for disaster preparedness and emergency operations were activated. The National Disaster Committee and National Disaster Management Office put into action the National Disaster Plan and National Cyclone Support Plan, which detail cyclone preparedness and response arrangements in Vanuatu. These plans specify the roles of key government ministries in the control and coordination of emergency responses. For example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for responding to offers of help and providing inbound approvals while the Ministry of Finance is responsible for auditing reports provided by responding organisations.

A key coordination mechanism for humanitarian responses in Vanuatu is the Vanuatu Humanitarian Team which was established in 2011. It is a network of agencies committed to effective humanitarian coordination, disaster preparedness and humanitarian response. The Vanuatu Humanitarian Team is convened by Oxfam; its members include the Vanuatu Red Cross, French Red

*Tanna Coffee Development Co. Ltd supplies coffee locally and also exports internationally. Coffee is an important source of income for farmers on Tanna Island. Cyclone Pam destroyed coffee plantations. Jacob Nambas, Master Roaster, at the company's roasting facility near Port Vila, described how Tanna Coffee supplied farmers with tools and equipment to help them restore their plantations and repair infrastructure. It will take 3 years for newly planted trees to start producing cherries, representing a significant loss of income for both farmers and Tanna Coffee. Photo: Sharon Lim*

Cross, Vanuatu Association of NGOs, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Oxfam, CARE International, Save the Children Australia, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, the World Health Organisation (WHO), Peace Corps, World Vision, Act for Peace, and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The Vanuatu Humanitarian Team set up a coordination mechanism based on clusters led by Government line ministries and co-led by Vanuatu Humanitarian Team agencies. The UN clusters merged with the Vanuatu Humanitarian Team clusters. Coordination structures also include the provincial and community levels (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3: VANUATU GOVERNMENT RESPONSE STRUCTURE



(Source: Government of the Republic of Vanuatu, *Tropical Cyclone Pam: Humanitarian Action Plan*, May 2015.p.5)

Although it had systems in place to deal with crises, the Vanuatu Government quickly recognised that it did not have sufficient capacity to cope with the scale of destruction. Consequently, the President of Vanuatu requested international support on 15 March 2015. Subsequently, a State of Emergency covering all affected provinces was declared on 21 March 2015. One of the first Vanuatu Government requests for support was made to UN OCHA for a specific individual within their regional office that they trusted and had worked with effectively in the past.<sup>7</sup>

**Vanuatu is not new to disasters, and over the past several years the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO), donors and NGOs have invested substantial effort and resources in establishing and strengthening national disaster response systems. These structures have generally been well regarded, and prior to Cyclone Pam had proved satisfactory in meeting humanitarian coordination needs following small-to medium-scale disasters. But the response to Cyclone Pam was on a vastly different scale.**

Evaluation completed on behalf of Save the Children Australia, CARE Australia, Oxfam Australia and World Vision Australia<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Interview 1

<sup>8</sup> Rebecca Barber, *One Size Doesn't Fit All: Tailoring the International Response to the National Need Following Vanuatu's Cyclone Pam*, 2015, 26

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*Because the great machinery suddenly arrived, they (Vanuatu Government) didn't realise what it would be to have people come in and manage the response. In Fiji the government reaction was that 'we will not become another Vanuatu'. There (in Fiji) spend was more effective than in Vanuatu; (Vanuatu) had a sense of taking away some of the roles/authority of the government.*

Cluster Coordinator<sup>9</sup>

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## 2.2 INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

The scale of the damage caused by Cyclone Pam was so great that an international response was needed. Immediately after Cyclone Pam, the President of Vanuatu, Baldwin Lonsdale, appealed for international assistance:

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*I'm speaking with you today with a heart that is so heavy... I stand to appeal on behalf of the government and people of Vanuatu to the global community, to give a lending hand.*<sup>10</sup>

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The international community responded quickly. The NDMO and the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination team developed an initial joint needs assessment (March 17-22). The UN OCHA worked in collaboration with humanitarian partners to support the Vanuatu Government (March 22-25) to prepare and then launch a Flash Appeal Emergency Plan for Vanuatu Tropical Cyclone Pam (March – June 2015).<sup>11</sup> The appeal outlined the most urgent needs requiring international assistance in the relief phase. The amount requested was A\$50 million of which A\$29 million was funded. Outside the flash appeal, another A\$29 million was donated bringing total support to A\$58million.

More than twenty agencies responded to the flash appeal and another 50 agencies responded with their own plans.

In response to Cyclone Pam, 23 governments provided assistance. Some of this assistance went directly to the Vanuatu Government, but most of it was directed through UN agencies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and international non-government organisations (INGOs). As recorded in financial tracking by the UN OCHA, the largest country donors were Australia (20% of total funding excluding the costs associated with deploying the Australian Defence Force), New Zealand (9%), the United Kingdom (7%), the Netherlands (7%) and the USA (6%). United Nations agencies provided 14% of total funding with 11% coming from the Central Emergency Fund and 3% from UN agencies.

International responders also included a plethora of non-government organisations, private organisations and individuals who together provided 15% of the total funding. This included local and international companies working in tourism, logistics, telecommunication, finance, food production and retail. It also included a broad range of international philanthropic and church-based organisations. These organisations varied from established humanitarian organisations to small, less well known, organisations such as the Disaster Arborist Response Team, who deployed two British men with chainsaws. There was broad recognition that the international response to Cyclone Pam exceeded anything that Vanuatu had previously experienced.<sup>12</sup>

The international community supported the Vanuatu Government to achieve a great deal in the first three months of the response. A summary of achievements is provided in Figure 4.

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<sup>9</sup> Interview 73

<sup>10</sup> ABC News, Cyclone Pam: 'Vanuatu President Baldwin Lonsdale breaks down while describing devastation,' 16 March 2015, available at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-03-16/vanuatu-president-breaks-down-describing-cyclone-devastation/6322586>

<sup>11</sup> p.4

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<sup>12</sup> Interview 1, 10, 11, 12, 58, 60

FIGURE 4: OVERALL ACHIEVEMENTS OF VANUATU GOVERNMENT AND INTERNATIONAL DONORS

THE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE WORKING ALONGSIDE THE VANUATU GOVERNMENT REPORTED SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE FIRST THREE MONTHS.



FOOD AND LIVELIHOODS

- Affected people received emergency food distributions



WASH

- More than **21,000** people received emergency supplies of safe drinking water, and over **26,000** people benefited from the repair of water supply systems
- **45,500** people reached with hygiene and sanitation distributions and promotion messages



SHELTER

- **67,500** people received tarpaulin sheets and **55,000** were given tool kits to begin rebuilding their homes



HEALTH

- Over **20** Foreign Medical Teams treated almost **9,700** patients
- **35,000** people received basic primary care, **30,000** people with secondary care and **30,000** women with emergency obstetric care for three months
- **Four** health facilities repaired
- **19,000** children vaccinated against measles



EDUCATION

- **153** Temporary Learning Spaces established allowing children to return to school



GENDER AND PROTECTION

- **Three** Women's Information Centres established, ensuring women could access information and assistance, including referral of gender-based violence and child abuse cases

Source: Tropical Cyclone Pam, Humanitarian Action Plan, pages 6-7.

2.2.1 OVERWHELMING LOCAL RESPONDERS

National response structures and personnel working to coordinate the response also had to manage the large number of organisations and individuals who flooded into Vanuatu. Many organisations and individuals arrived without approval or knowledge of the government. Some organisations with a legitimate role, including UN agencies and INGOs, brought in large international teams perceived by Vanuatu Government officials and others as excessive.<sup>13</sup> For example, there were 25 people in the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination team.

*One feature of the response was the sheer number of non-government actors relative to the scale of disaster, the size of population and absorption capacity of national structures and institutions.*

Evaluation completed on behalf of Save the Children Australia, CARE Australia, Oxfam Australia and World Vision Australia<sup>14</sup>

Some international organisations recognised the potentially harmful effects of an excessively large influx of international responders. For example, after assessing the situation, Mercy Corps withdrew from Vanuatu stating

*While the storm's damage was severe, we determined that the immediate response by the government and international partners is comprehensive — the needs of survivors are already being met, so our immediate role in the relief effort is not required. ... The local government is in control of the situation and is working with strong support from the United Nations and other international relief agencies, many that have long-term operations and experience in Vanuatu. The ratio of well-established agencies responding to Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu compared to the overall population of Vanuatu is high. Considering the existing capacity in-country has well-developed networks and a deep understanding of complicated island logistics, Mercy Corps would add limited value to the immediate response.*  
Statement by Mercy Corps<sup>15</sup>

13 World Humanitarian Summit Regional Consultation for the Pacific Final Report, 2015, 12

14 Ibid., 15

15 Rebecca Barber, One Size Doesn't Fit All: Tailoring the International Response to the National Need Following Vanuatu's Cyclone Pam, 2015, 15



The actions of some international responders were also problematic. While most organisations worked within established systems, some did not, choosing instead to work independently in sectors and geographic locations with no respect for government priorities.<sup>16</sup> Benjamin Shing, deputy chair of Vanuatu's National Disaster Committee, is quoted in media reports stating that while international assistance was valuable, many international responders including NGOs worked independently of the government in order to increase their visibility.<sup>17</sup>

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***In nearly every country in the world where they (INGOs) go in they have their own operational systems, they have their own networks and they refuse to conform to government directives.***

**Benjamin Shing, NDMO Deputy Chair, Vanuatu Government<sup>18</sup>**

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Some responders displayed a lack of cultural awareness and sensitivity, with the international domination of proceedings in cluster meetings being a frequently cited example.<sup>19</sup> Many national actors described feeling disempowered by what was described by one stakeholder as 'white, male' domination of cluster meetings.<sup>20</sup> In some clusters, local agencies were marginalised and ni-Vanuatu voices were drowned out. In the course of this evaluation many stakeholders from the Vanuatu government, the United Nations, Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs retrospectively recognised and expressed discomfort with how cluster meetings had been run.<sup>21</sup> In a survey conducted by the Gender and Protection Cluster one respondent commented that international players could have worked better with local NGOs and national staff.<sup>22</sup>

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***Vanuatu was overwhelmed by the invasion of goodwill, which would have been better staggered. For Small Pacific Island States, cluster process does not appear a practical approach. A briefer version of the same may be more realistic so as not to stun and debilitate a small nation***

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<sup>16</sup> Interview 10, 51, 61

<sup>17</sup> ABC News, 'Tropical Cyclone Pam: Vanuatu's government criticises aid groups over poor coordination of disaster relief,' 19 March 2015, available at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-03-19/vanuatu-criticises-lack-of-aid-coordination-after-cyclone-pam/6333676>

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Interview 7, 21, 69, 70, 73

<sup>20</sup> Interview 73

<sup>21</sup> Interview 7, 21, 69, 70, 73

<sup>22</sup> Pacific Community, Tropical Cyclone Pam Lessons Learned Workshop Report, June 2015, 21

***recovering from shock and who have resilience having suffered many disasters in the past. Clusters must align to local government NDMO process.***

**Respondent to an online survey conducted by the Gender and Protection Cluster<sup>23</sup>**

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## 2.2.2 BALANCING SPEED AND LOCALISATION

In many crises the humanitarian imperative to save lives and reduce suffering is best achieved by a speedy response. The transient media window and competition between responders to be visible contributes to this dynamic. International humanitarian systems and structures are therefore set up to deliver assistance quickly and at scale. Blanket distributions, in which all affected people receive the same relief items, are used to get assistance to large numbers of people as quickly as possible.

Speed is only one of several factors, however, that contributes to the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance. Other factors include flexibility, coordination, transparency and local ownership. In some circumstances, a push for speed may be detrimental. Sometimes a more considered response, based on more detailed needs assessments, may better serve the humanitarian imperative. Assistance needs to be contextually appropriate and match the types and level of need. This can only be determined by engagement with, and responsiveness to, local communities and organisations. At the recent World Humanitarian Summit there was strong international consensus that a response needs to be locally owned to be most effective. Localising humanitarian action can help ensure it is highly relevant to the priorities of those affected and supportive of existing and planned sustainable development. After Cyclone Pam, responding quickly was prioritised over other considerations by some international responders; this potentially harmed relationships with national actors and reduced overall effectiveness and sustainability.

***The notion of life-saving humanitarian imperative and [the] need to get kit out quickly overrides notions of how to work with national organisations and build their capacity***

**NGO representative<sup>24</sup>**

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<sup>23</sup> Pacific Community, Tropical Cyclone Pam Lessons Learned Workshop Report, June 2015, 26

<sup>24</sup> Interview 28

In light of the lack of information on the impact of the cyclone in the first few days it was reasonable to assume the worst as the category 5 cyclone had tracked over heavily populated areas.<sup>25</sup> It was appropriate, therefore, to quickly send in substantial medical assistance and emergency supplies in case they were needed.

The benefit of hindsight allows us to question whether the continued prioritisation of speed beyond the initial response was appropriate. Within 10-14 days it was established that there were fewer serious injuries than expected and the impact was more limited than initially feared. Many people were in need of assistance but the needs were mostly not critical due to traditional coping mechanisms and preparedness work.<sup>26</sup> Speed was not of the essence in meeting the humanitarian imperative in the following weeks and months. The influx of UN agencies and other international responders, however, meant that the cogs of the international humanitarian machinery were already turning. Many international responders, working in the ways they are accustomed to, continued to prioritise speed.

On a number of occasions, the Vanuatu Government asked for a pause in humanitarian operations and for delivery of relief items to be temporarily suspended to give them time to regain control and improve coordination. This was a reasonable request given that the needs were not as urgent as initially feared. Despite this, some organisations disregarded these directives citing the humanitarian imperative as justification.<sup>27</sup> These decisions to work around the national government have had significant implications for longer-term relationships between humanitarian actors and the Vanuatu Government,<sup>28</sup> as well as in the Pacific region more broadly. Many stakeholders recognised that an unnecessary push for speed undermined national actors, compromised coordination and potentially reduced the extent to which assistance could achieve the humanitarian imperative.<sup>29</sup>

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***In hindsight, everyone tried to act immediately, but what was done during the first four weeks was pretty ineffective.***

United Nations representative<sup>30</sup>

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25 Interview 37, 44, 48, 51, 54, 57, 69, 71

26 Interview 10, 12, 13

27 Interview 14, 27, 47

28 Interview 29, 72

29 Interview 7, 21, 69, 70, 73

30 Interview 7



*Many communities relied on traditional practices to stay safe during the cyclone. People from Imapol community did what they have always done when hit by a cyclone. As the ferocity of Cyclone Pam increased, about a hundred men, women and children from the village sought refuge within the roots of the grand Banyan tree shown in this photo. The villagers described how the children squeezed themselves into the tiniest spaces between the roots. Although a large branch fell from the tree during the height of the storm, all of the villagers survived and no-one was seriously injured. Photo: Sharon Lim*

NGOs, Australian government representatives and civil society groups in Vanuatu commented on the on-going relationship challenges that have arisen because some international organisations contravened Vanuatu Government requests.<sup>31</sup> While the international response was at the time considered to be highly effective and achieved much, it has subsequently been criticised for being foreign-driven, undermining government systems, and lacking accountability.<sup>32</sup> Consequently, the Fiji Government was adamant that the response to Cyclone Winston would be very different.

31 Interview 54, 72, 74

32 Rebecca Barber, *One Size Doesn't Fit All: Tailoring the International Response to the National Need Following Vanuatu's Cyclone Pam*, 2015



### 3. AUSTRALIA'S RESPONSE



AUSTRALIA RESPONDED  
RAPIDLY AND STRONGLY  
TO REQUESTS FOR  
ASSISTANCE FROM THE  
VANUATU GOVERNMENT

*Villagers from Happy Land, Erromango, carry high energy biscuits and supplies back to their homes after a delivery of humanitarian aid by the ADF following Tropical Cyclone Pam. Photo: ADF*



## 3.1 FUNDING

### FINDINGS

- Australian financial assistance was appropriate given the scale of the disaster and the unique bilateral partnership with Vanuatu.

Australia provided about A\$50 million to assist Vanuatu to respond to and recover from Cyclone Pam. The scale of funding provided was appropriate given that Australia is Vanuatu's main bilateral development partner and at the time the cyclone was the most severe ever recorded in the region.

Funding allocations were phased by DFAT to ensure assistance was matched to emerging needs. Allocations were made in three phases: relief, early recovery and long-term recovery.

**1. Relief Phase** A\$10.02 million was allocated by DFAT to provide logistics support, deploy Australian personnel, and fund humanitarian programming through the Australian Red Cross, Australian NGOs and UN partners.

In addition to funding provided by DFAT, the Australian Defence Force also made a major contribution (estimated to have cost A\$17 million) to the humanitarian response through Operation PACIFIC ASSIST 2015.

**2. Early Recovery Phase** DFAT allocated A\$5 million to Ministries in the Vanuatu Government, UN agencies and INGOs.

**3. Long-term recovery** DFAT allocated A\$35 million to the Vanuatu Government.

A detailed breakdown of the funding provided in the first two phases of Australia's response is provided in Table 1. Long-term recovery funding is outside the scope of this evaluation.

**TABLE 1: AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT FUNDING PROVIDED IN THE RELIEF AND EARLY RECOVERY PHASES**

PHASE	PARTNER	VALUE A\$ MILLION
Relief	Humanitarian Partnership Agreement allocations to Australian NGOs	
	World Vision	1.20
	Save the Children	1.00
	CARE	0.50
	Oxfam	0.30
	HK Logistics Pty Ltd	2.28
	Urban Search and Rescue team	1.50
	Australian Medical Assistance Team	1.00
	Australian Red Cross	0.99
	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund	0.50
	World Food Programme	0.50
	Crisis Response Team Deployment Costs	0.20
	Sexual and Reproductive Health Programme in Crisis and Post Crisis Situations	0.05
	<b>Total Relief Phase</b>	<b>10.02</b>
Early Recovery	Vanuatu Government Ministry of Education and Training	2.30
	Vanuatu Government Ministry of Health	1.00
	World Food Programme	0.80
	United Nations Children's Fund	0.25
	World Health Organisation	0.25
	CARE	0.40
	<b>Total Early Recovery Phase</b>	<b>5.00</b>
<b>Total Relief and Early Recovery</b>	<b>15.02</b>	



The use of pre-positioned funds and pre-existing funding arrangements enabled Australian funding to be efficiently and rapidly disbursed. Pre-positioned funds were used to fund World Food Programme (WFP) and Sexual and Reproductive Health Programme in Crisis and Post Crisis Situations (SPRINT). The Humanitarian Partnership Agreement (HPA) was used to disburse funding to Australian branches of international NGOs.<sup>33</sup>

*Ms Rhiannon Wake, senior nurse with AusMAT, conducting wound clinic reviews with local Ministry of Health nursing staff after the cyclone. AusMAT worked primarily at Vila Central Hospital with limited outreach to other affected islands. Tents like the one shown in the photo were used by AusMAT staff for wound clinics as much of the older parts of the hospital were damaged. Photo: AusMAT*

## 3.2 IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

### FINDINGS

- The implementing partners engaged by DFAT reflect a suite of options typically used in humanitarian responses.
- DFAT prioritised partners that had a pre-existing presence in country.

Australia is well-practised in responding to cyclones in the Pacific, and DFAT made strategic use of a suite of partners often used in crisis responses. DFAT intentionally prioritised working with partners that had a pre-existing presence in country or strong regional relationships, which undoubtedly supported

an appropriate response.<sup>34</sup> Implementing partners included Australian (HK Logistics Pty Ltd, AusMAT, USAR, Australian Red Cross and HPA NGOs), Ni-Vanuatu (Ministries of Health and Education and Training) and international (WFP, UNICEF and SPRINT) partners.

**HK Logistics Pty Ltd** played a critical support role in the response to Cyclone Pam. They provided logistical support for the Australian High Commission and organised the deployment of response teams (e.g. AusMAT and USAR). HK Logistics played a key role in the movement of humanitarian emergency relief supplies and subsequently in restocking warehouses. DFAT staff in Port Vila and Canberra felt that support provided by HK Logistics was much needed and effective. This view was supported by representatives of a range of implementing partners.

**Australian Medical Assistance Teams (AusMAT)** are multi-disciplinary health teams that can rapidly respond to disasters to provide life-saving treatment. In response to Cyclone Pam AusMAT deployed a team of 24. The

<sup>33</sup> Currently in transition to a new model, the Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP)

<sup>34</sup> Interview 10, 31



team built on established relationships with the chief surgeon and worked alongside local health providers in Vila Central Hospital. AusMAT organised repairs to the hospital, provided direct medical assistance and helped to organise aeromedical evacuations from outer islands. When the provision of emergency health services was no longer needed, the AusMAT team was reduced in size and they assumed a coordination role. Interviewees from a number of agencies praised the work of an AusMAT deployee who coordinated the work of the many foreign medical teams.

**Urban Search and Rescue (USAR)** teams are a specialist resource primarily intended to assist victims trapped or affected by structural collapse. USAR can also undertake rapid damage assessments and support debris clearance. USAR deployed a team of 54 members which assessed damage, helped with debris clearance and carried out repairs to expedite re-opening of key facilities, including Vila Central Hospital. Whilst the USAR's support was useful, the size of the USAR team was disproportionate to needs and their specialist search and rescue expertise was not needed.<sup>35</sup>

**The Australian Red Cross (ARC)** worked closely with the Vanuatu Red Cross (VRC). The Australian Red Cross facilitated emergency relief distribution, surge deployments in support of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movements partners' response and shelter programming. Their long-standing presence in country, strong relationships with the government and affected populations, and logistics capacity meant they were a critical component of the Australian response.

**Australian NGOs** were funded by the Humanitarian Partnership Agreement. For the first time in its activation, the HPA partners innovated by creating an in-country consortium that made decisions on the way the funding would best be divided between them. Funding was restricted to partners with an established presence in Vanuatu and only four of the partners were funded: World Vision; Save the Children; CARE and Oxfam. The NGOs funded all had well-established relationships with communities in the worst affected provinces.<sup>36</sup> As a result, their programs often built on existing disaster preparedness programs with Community Disaster Committees (CDCs) and were largely effective at addressing the needs of communities and building local capacity. The HPA NGOs played key roles in the delivery and distribution of food, shelter supplies and non-food items. In many communities, water, sanitation

and hygiene (WASH) programs provided much-needed assistance including reconstruction of water supply facilities and provision of clean drinking water. In some communities, response programming also included the provision of emergency education. A strength of the work undertaken by the NGOs was their focus on gender and protection.

**The World Food Program (WFP)** was funded to provide food aid and logistical support including the transport and distribution of humanitarian emergency relief supplies in both relief and early recovery phases. The WFP did not have a presence in Vanuatu before the crisis, but was engaged to fill perceived gaps in logistics. Local partners, Ocean Logistics Limited and South Sea Shipping, were contracted and used to support the distribution of 1668 metric tons of food. The distributions were planned and coordinated with Vanuatu Government agencies including the NDMO. The WFP also provided support staff for the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster and the Vanuatu Government.

**The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)** is the lead UN agency in Vanuatu and was funded by DFAT to implement relief and early recovery activities in health, WASH, child protection and education. This included an emergency measles vaccination campaign; cold chain supply and storage facility development; infant and young child feeding; provision of new-born kits; supply of clean drinking water, WASH and dignity kits; and psychosocial support. UNICEF also provided temporary learning spaces and educational supplies so children were able to return to school.



*Iepilmai French School was completely destroyed by Cyclone Pam. This tent was provided to the school by UNICEF about a month after the cyclone. It has been used over the past year to provide extra teaching space and for other purposes, but is now in a 'bad state, when it rains water enters'. Photo: Sharon Lim*

<sup>35</sup> Interview 2, 54

<sup>36</sup> Peter Chamberlain, *Joint Peer Evaluation Tropical Cyclone Pam, Vanuatu, Humanitarian Partnership Agreement Response*, October 2015, 28



Setting up with tarps to protect food.  
Photo: World Vision

**The World Health Organisation (WHO)** has provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Health for many years, which has, amongst other things, facilitated the development of disaster plans. After Cyclone Pam, WHO continued to support the Ministry of Health and worked with them to implement the disaster plan. The WHO used Australian funding for disease surveillance and to coordinate damage assessments of health facilities. The organisation also played a role in the deployment of foreign medical teams to affected areas.

**The Sexual and Reproductive Health Programme in Crisis and Post Crisis Situations (SPRINT)** is often funded in DFAT's humanitarian responses using pre-positioned funds. SPRINT is an initiative of the International Planned Parenthood Federation intended to assist vulnerable women, men and children to access a minimum standard of life-saving sexual and reproductive health responses during emergencies. In response to Cyclone Pam SPRINT provided reproductive and basic health services on Efate and for a small number of remote communities on Tanna.

**Vanuatu Government-led** programs received about 70% of early recovery funding. The funding allocated to the Ministry of Health was used to repair, rebuild and upgrade damaged health facilities, provide essential equipment and support the procurement of medical supplies and pharmaceuticals. The Ministry of Education and Training used funding to provide grants to primary schools in Tafea and Shefa provinces to enable them to carry out temporary repairs.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

### 3.3 ACHIEVEMENTS

#### FINDINGS

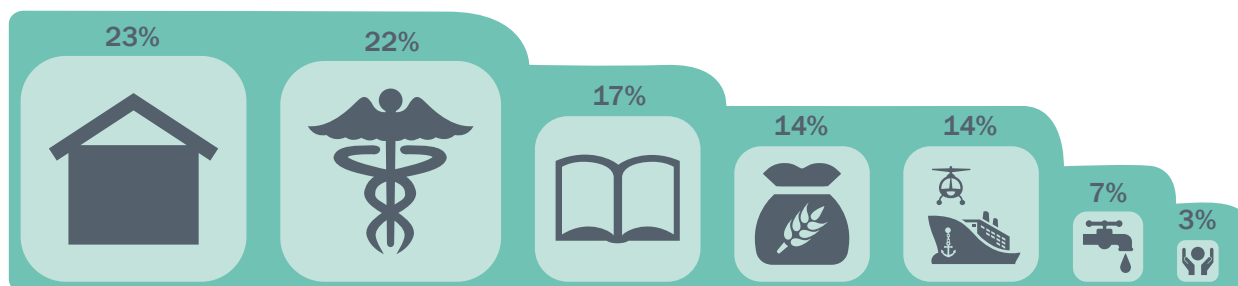
- DFAT strategically used the diversity of approaches, strengths and expertise of Australian government organisations, UN agencies, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Australian NGOs.
- Australia delivered a large package of assistance that achieved much.

Overall, the assistance provided by Australia was effective. DFAT strategically used the diversity of approaches, strengths and skills of a range of partners. Australian government organisations provided skilled personnel. The Australian Red Cross and NGOs provided a rapid response and strong community-based programs. The United Nations had a relatively limited presence in Vanuatu, but still had established regional relationships and technical expertise that were critical in the response. UN agencies including WFP and UNICEF also demonstrated their large reach and ability to act at scale in the early relief operation. The involvement of UN agencies in the response also meant that overall funding was increased with the UN providing 14% of total funding. UN agencies and NGOs play a valuable role in humanitarian responses by virtue of their neutrality and impartiality. Their ability to advocate for the humanitarian imperative and needs of affected communities was important in the humanitarian response to Cyclone Pam.<sup>38</sup>

The outcome was an effective, whole of government response which supported the Vanuatu Government to deliver much-needed humanitarian assistance. The considerable achievements of the Australian response are detailed in Figure 5.

<sup>38</sup> Interview 1, 54

FIGURE 5: ACHIEVEMENTS OF AUSTRALIAN ASSISTANCE



## SHELTER

PARTNERS – AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS, CARE, WORLD VISION AND USAR

- **42,500** individuals received shelter assistance including fixing kits and tarpulins, and guidance on safe shelter construction
- Supported urgent repairs to Port Vila Central Hospital, **27** schools, **5** clinics, **13** road and infrastructure sites and **6** government structures across Vanuatu

## HEALTH

PARTNERS – AUSMAT, MINISTRY OF HEALTH, SAVE THE CHILDREN, SPRINT, UNICEF AND WHO

- **1,341** patients treated through support to Vanuatu Central Hospital
- **AUD\$35,000** in pharmaceuticals provided to the Vanuatu Ministry of Health
- Provision of sexual health and reproductive services for **18,000** people
- Contributed to measles vaccination of **24,336** children
- Contributed to screening of **13,241** children for malnutrition
- **62** newborn kits distributed to health facilities
- Refurbishment of National Vaccine Storage Facility and cold storage capacity at **9** health facilities
- Supported increased disease surveillance at **16** additional sites and damage assessments of **71** health facilities

## GENDER AND PROTECTION

PARTNERS – AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS, CARE, SAVE THE CHILDREN, SPRINT AND UNICEF

- Contributed to establishing **50** child friendly spaces reaching **5,000** children
- Contributed to replacement of birth registration documentation for **5,938** children
- Contributed to psychosocial support to **386** Early Childhood teachers
- Contributed to support for **36** women’s groups to lead the improvement of food security and livelihoods

## EDUCATION

PARTNERS – MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SAVE THE CHILDREN AND UNICEF

- Repairs and replacement of damaged learning materials and equipment in **143** schools, benefitting more than **19,000** students
- Provided disaster risk training to school teachers
- Established **50** Temporary Learning Centres (TLCs)

## FOOD AND LIVELIHOODS

PARTNERS – AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS, CARE, SAVE THE CHILDREN, WFP AND WORLD VISION

- Directly funded distribution of **1,668 metric tons** of mixed food to **73,000** people
- Contributed to distribution of cereals, high energy biscuits and canned fish to **108,526** people
- Provision of tools and seeds to **500** households

## LOGISTICS

PARTNER – HK LOGISTICS AND WFP

- Transported personnel, equipment, and relief items to Vanuatu
- Distributed relief supplies to provinces including provision of commercial helicopter
- Provided logistical support for needs assessments across provinces
- Provided support for DFAT operations in Port Vila

## WASH

PARTNERS – AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS, SAVE THE CHILDREN AND WORLD VISION

- **67,000** people provided with access to safe drinking water
- **49,000** people provided with sanitation and hygiene supplies
- **24** water sources rehabilitated; **23** water tanks provided; and water tanks established at **12** aid posts
- Constructed or rebuilt **354** latrines





### 3.4 ALIGNMENT TO HUMANITARIAN POLICY

The Humanitarian Action Policy (HAP) articulates high-level direction for DFAT’s humanitarian response operations. DFAT largely succeeded in achieving ‘appropriate and effective humanitarian action’ through the five core policy outcomes (Table 2). Alignment with the HAP could have been strengthened in some areas especially with respect to supporting local capacities, meeting differentiated needs and prioritising protection. DFAT’s success in achieving the 3 enabling outcomes listed in the policy was also mixed.

*The arrival of the ADF was unanimously considered a strong display of Australian support for Vanuatu. Ni-Vanuatu communities, humanitarian agencies, and representatives of the Vanuatu Government all praised the work done by the ADF. ADF assistance contributed to the development of positive relationships due to respectful and friendly engagement with local communities. Consultation with community leaders was routinely used to identify the assistance that was most needed. The ADF coordinated closely with the Vanuatu Mobile Force. The photo shows Australian Defence Force personnel and community representatives from Dillon’s Bay, Erromango at a farewell ceremony for the ADF. Photo: ADF*

TABLE 2: OUTCOMES SPECIFIED IN THE HUMANITARIAN ACTION POLICY



### 3.4.1 TIMELY AND COORDINATED

#### FINDINGS

- DFAT met its commitment to respond within 48 hours of a country's request for assistance.
- Australia's visible rapid response was an important demonstration of support for the government and people of Vanuatu.
- In some instances, after the initial rapid response, speed continued to be prioritised with the potential impact of undermining national leadership of the response and working relationships.
- Whole of government coordination by DFAT was effective and strong.
- The FRANZ alliance chaired by DFAT resulted in effective civil-military coordination which enabled the ADF and other militaries to provide efficient and significant logistical support to the relief operation.
- The scale and functional capacity of ADF assets could not have been supplied by civilian organisations.
- Australia's response was coherent, but coherence could have been enhanced by DFAT articulating a common sense of purpose to implementing partners.

#### TIMELINES

As discussed in Section 2.2.2, stakeholders from a range of organisations all felt that an initial rapid international response was justified. Under DFAT's leadership Australia's initial response was timely. ADF assets arrived in Port Vila within 36 hours (Figure 6). A Rapid Assessment Team, which included 3 AusMAT staff and 2 USAR staff, was sent to Vanuatu on 15 March 2015 'to assess damage caused by Cyclone Pam, identify gaps in early response efforts, and assess the need for, and appropriateness of future AusMAT and/or USAR deployments.'<sup>39</sup> The large and highly visible rapid response was important as a display of Australia's support to the government and people of Vanuatu. With these deployments Australia met its commitment to respond within 48 hours of a country's request for assistance.<sup>40</sup> Pre-positioned funds and pre-existing funding agreements were used to quickly and efficiently disburse funding to implementing partners. By funding

partners with an established presence in Vanuatu, Australian humanitarian assistance could be delivered in a timely fashion.

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***Today I announce that the Australian Government will provide an initial package of support to Vanuatu, as it responds to the devastation inflicted by Tropical Cyclone Pam. This support responds to a request from the Vanuatu Government. Australia stands with Vanuatu, our close friend and partner, at this difficult time.***

**Hon Julie Bishop MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Government of Australia<sup>41</sup>**

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Following the initial rapid response, many stakeholders felt that the delivery of assistance by international responders could have slowed down to align with local systems (see Section 2.2). DFAT was not in a position to control the speed of the international response, but had control over its own package of assistance and could influence partners it had funded.

There is evidence that Australia tried to control the speed of the Australian response by phasing in and out medical and USAR teams and by providing funding in tranches. In hindsight, it is clear the delivery of Australian relief items should have, at times, slowed down. Representatives of the Australian Government and implementing partners identified occasions when the rapid influx of relief supplies into Port Vila airport overwhelmed the capacity of local facilities and humanitarian agencies to manage them.<sup>42</sup> A number of factors pushed for speedy delivery of relief items to Vanuatu. One factor is that speed is typically prioritised in ADF operations. Another factor was implementing partners who invoked the humanitarian imperative to justify speed over and above other considerations. At least one implementing partner ignored requests from the Vanuatu Government to temporarily suspend deliveries of relief supplies, and circumvented government processes.<sup>43</sup> These actions fractured relationships between some of Australia's implementing partners and the Vanuatu Government.

Once it was established the impact of the cyclone was not as severe as expected, DFAT could have engaged more fully with the ADF and implementing partners to ensure that Australian assistance was delivered at a speed that supported national leadership and matched humanitarian needs.

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<sup>39</sup> DFAT, Activity schedule No. 38 of ROU No. 143374, Attachment 1

<sup>40</sup> DFAT, *Humanitarian Action Policy*, 2011, 5

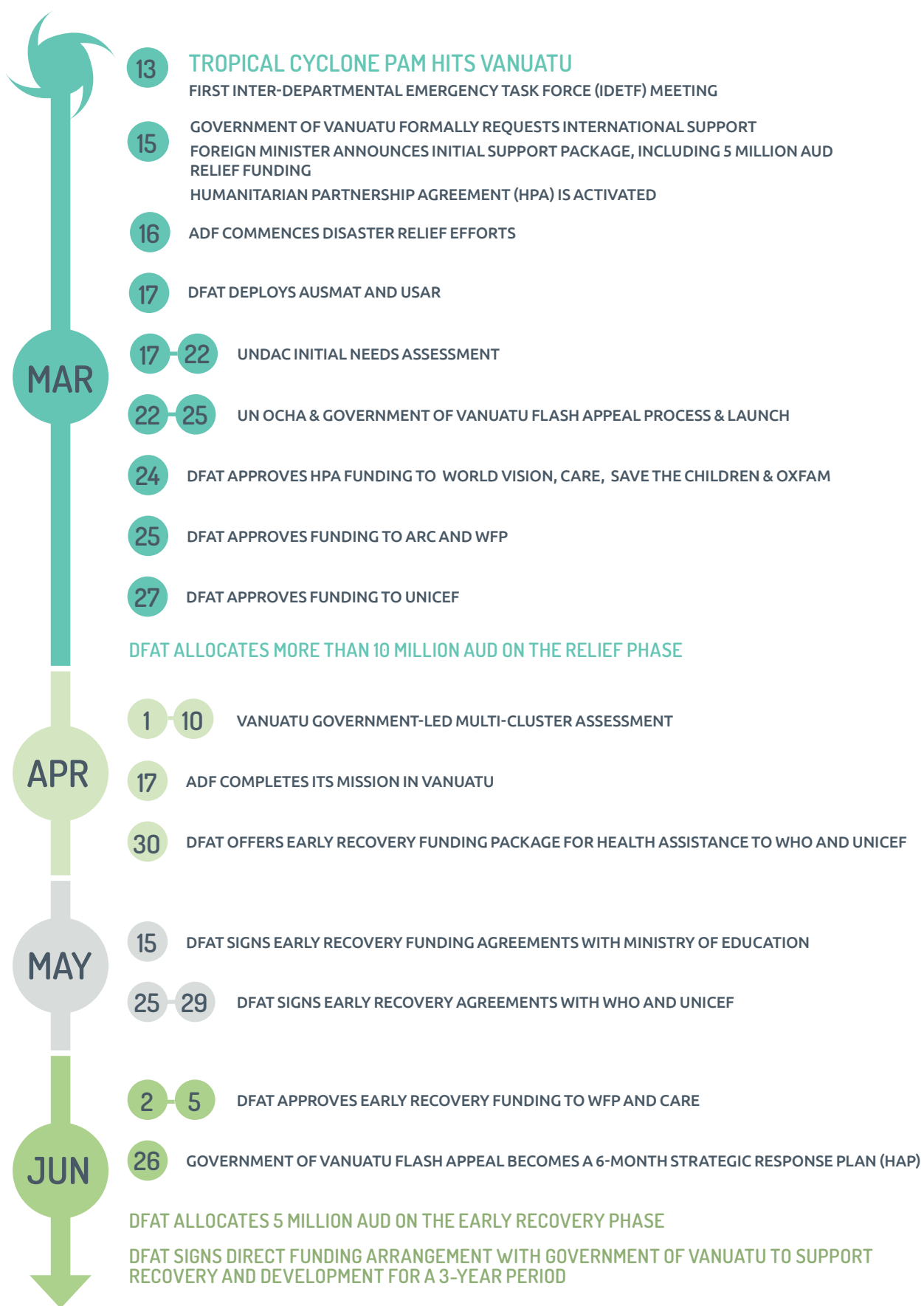
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<sup>41</sup> DFAT, *Assistance to Vanuatu*, Minister for Foreign Affairs media release, 15 March 2015

<sup>42</sup> Interview 52, 55, 63

<sup>43</sup> Interview 53

FIGURE 6: TIMELINE OF SELECTED EVENTS IN THE AUSTRALIAN RESPONSE TO CYCLONE PAM (2015)

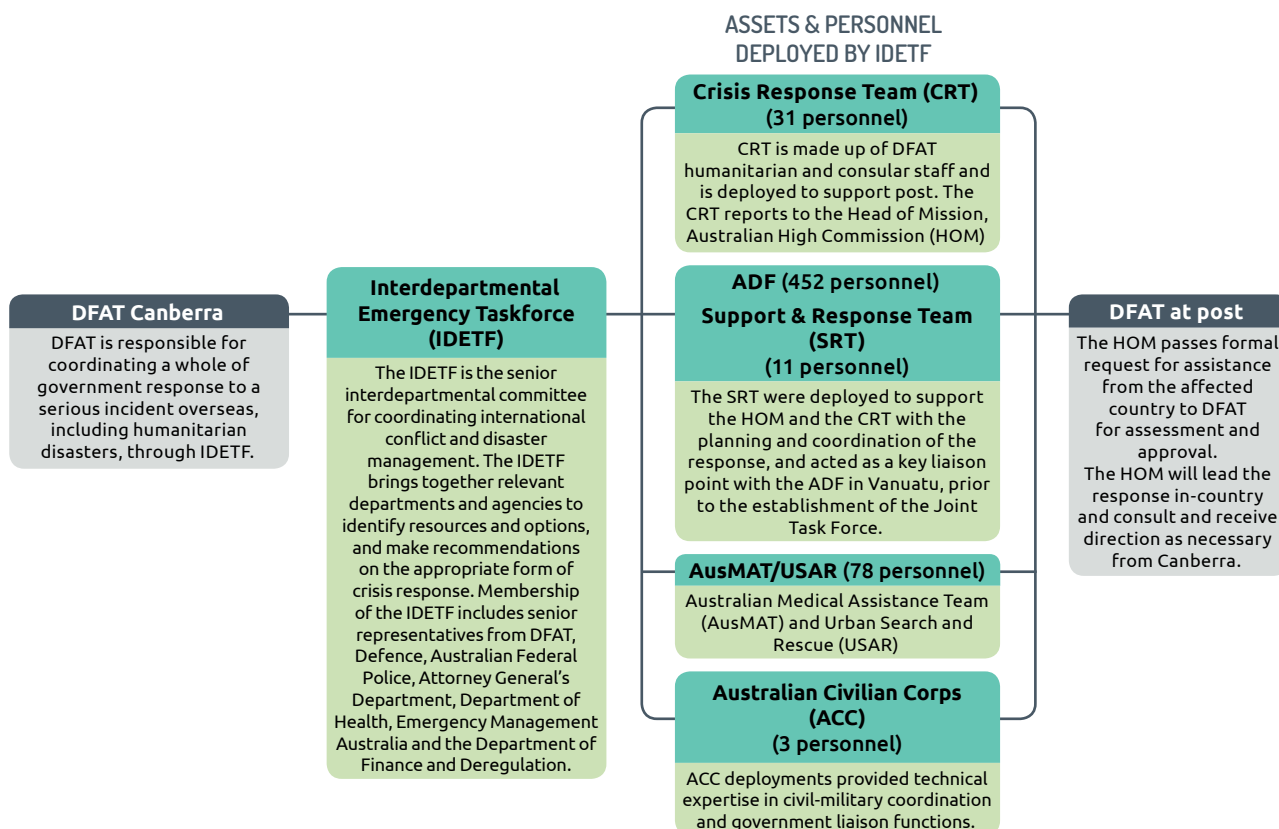




## WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT COORDINATION

The Cyclone Pam response was the first time that Australia had responded to an emergency under the DFAT Single Crisis Response Protocol and coordination was strong and effective. As the chair of the Inter-Departmental Emergency Task Force, DFAT effectively coordinated a whole of government response that used extensive military resources; multi-disciplinary medical surge capacity through the Australian Medical Assistance Team (AusMAT); and urban search and rescue surge capacity (USAR) (Figure 7). In total, 567 Australian personnel were deployed.

FIGURE 7: AUSTRALIAN WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT RESPONSE COORDINATED BY DFAT



## CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION

The Australian, New Zealand and French Defence Forces partnered under the FRANZ alliance. FRANZ was activated before the cyclone and functioned as a civil-military coordination and information sharing mechanism during the disaster. Together with the NDMO, FRANZ efficiently coordinated key donors and assessed needs. DFAT acted as the FRANZ chair and was applauded for its coordination of significant resources including personnel and equipment of the ADF and other members of the FRANZ alliance.<sup>44</sup> The Cyclone Pam response is considered to be an excellent example of effective civil-military coordination that enabled the ADF and other militaries to provide efficient logistical support to the relief operation.

<sup>44</sup> Interview 76

*The support provided by military forces from Vanuatu, Australia, New Zealand, France, Tonga, Solomon Islands and Fiji sets a new 'global standard' in military support to humanitarian operations for the level of coordinated military planning and support.*

UNDAC End of Mission report<sup>45</sup>

<sup>45</sup> United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team, *End of mission report: Tropical Cyclone Pam Vanuatu*, 16 March to 4 April 2015, 16



*An amphibious vehicle approaches the island of Erromango, Vanuatu, to deliver supplies as part of Operation Pacific Assist 2015. The ADF provided air, naval, land and amphibious assets with a functional capacity and on a scale that was not otherwise available. The ADF transported relief supplies for DFAT and Australian humanitarian agencies to communities that could not have been reached in a timely fashion in any other way. Photo: ADF*

Civil-military coordination of the Australian response within Vanuatu was achieved through a Support and Response Team of Defence personnel working with the Crisis Response Team in-country. Support and Response Team, co-located with the Australian mission, provided support to the Head of Mission as required. A Joint Task Force was also established to coordinate the use of military assets, but was not co-located with the mission.

Based on the Inter-Departmental Emergency Task Force decisions the ADF response was large in terms of the number of personnel and scale of assets deployed. ADF assets deployed included the Royal Australian Air Force C-17 transport aircraft, C-130 Hercules aircraft, AP-3C Orion maritime patrol aircraft, Blackhawk helicopters, other aircraft and the HMAS Tobruk. The scale of the ADF response enabled large quantities of relief items to be quickly and efficiently delivered. The nature of ADF assets also enabled access to some communities that could not have been reached by locally available forms of transport.

Although civil-military coordination was excellent, opportunities for improvement have been identified in after action reviews. It was agreed by Defence and DFAT personnel that further education and training on the Support and Response Team and Joint Task Force

is required to maximise coordination.<sup>46</sup> The use of liaison officers was seen as a critical and positive aspect of the civil-military coordination, which could also be incorporated further into training exercises to boost interagency understanding and knowledge. There was also a suggestion that cooperation and coordination would be further enhanced if the Joint Task Force was co-located with the mission.<sup>47</sup>

There was wide acknowledgement that the media focused on the military component of the Australian Government response. This reflects the fact that the ADF assets are highly visible and that the ADF had a highly effective media and communication strategy. In contrast, DFAT was not as proactive in engaging the media and hence aspects of Australia's response that did not involve the military were less evident and recognised in the public sphere.

## COHERENCE OF AUSTRALIAN RESPONSE

DFAT's leadership helped ensure that Australia's package of assistance was coherent. Nevertheless, a number of stakeholders felt that coherence could be improved. Some staff from DFAT, the ADF, other Australian agencies and implementing partners felt that the response lacked a common sense of purpose.<sup>48</sup> DFAT's overarching approach, sectoral focus and suite of partners were not consistently shared with implementing partners. Some

<sup>46</sup> DFAT-Defence Lessons Workshop, Outcomes Document, May 2015

<sup>47</sup> DFAT-Defence Lessons Workshop, Outcomes Document, May 2015, 7

<sup>48</sup> Interview 41, 42, 44, 64

partners felt that DFAT’s priorities were not clearly spelt out. This may explain, to some extent, why some of the policy commitments contained in the Humanitarian Action Policy, such as supporting local capacities, protection or accountability to affected populations, were not consistently met. Without knowing what DFAT was aiming to achieve, some partners found it difficult to see how their work contributed to the overall picture<sup>49</sup> and what was collectively achieved.<sup>50</sup>

Stakeholders from a broad range of organisations felt coherence would be improved if DFAT had a short action plan for the response, which would provide a common sense of purpose for the overall package of assistance. The plan should outline main priorities, contextual considerations, the roles played by different partners and expected outcomes. Other evaluations and reviews of Australian humanitarian assistance have also found that such a document would improve coherence (Table 3).

The framework for action plans for each Pacific country could be developed prior to a crisis. Preparatory work might include documenting the most appropriate partners and sectors to build on the existing development program in each country. At the time of a crisis, the action plan could be elaborated or updated to reflect the specifics of the response context. Work developing and updating action plans could be undertaken by Humanitarian Policy and Partnerships Section within the Humanitarian Response Branch in DFAT with inputs from posts and response sections of the branch.

**TABLE 3: EXCERPTS FROM PREVIOUS DFAT EVALUATION AND REVIEW DOCUMENTS**

Document	Excerpt
Review of Typhoon Haiyan, 2014	“A common sense of purpose would improve communication lines, coordination efforts and overall coherence of the Australian Government response.” <sup>51</sup>
Evaluation of Australia’s Humanitarian Response to the Syria Crisis, 2014	“Whilst Australia’s response to the Syria crisis has been broadly relevant and appropriate, its coherence has been less than optimal in the absence of a clear strategic vision.” <sup>52</sup>
Evaluation of Australia’s response to the Horn of Africa humanitarian crisis, 2011	“The Australian aid program’s strategy for this crisis was never formally written down. A formal written strategy would have helped the team better articulate their need for support. A clear strategy would also have helped to shift thinking from a reactive to a proactive mind-set.” <sup>53</sup>

49 Interview 41 and 44

50 Interview 75

51 DFAT, Internal Discussion Paper, August 2014

52 Office of Development Effectiveness, *Evaluation of Australia’s Humanitarian Response to the Syria Crisis*, Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra, 2014, 2

53 Office of Development Effectiveness, *Evaluation of Australia’s response to the Horn of Africa humanitarian crisis*, Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra, 2011, 27

### 3.4.2 SUPPORTS PARTNER GOVERNMENTS AND LOCAL CAPACITIES, INCLUDING WITH DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

#### FINDINGS

- Australia’s investment in disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction has been effective and supported localisation.
- Supporting the Vanuatu Government and local capacities was a central focus for DFAT.
- Technical assistance used to support or supplement government capacity was valuable and in some cases critical, but was overused in some areas.
- Local and national ni-Vanuatu organisations, including civil society and private sector entities, could have been better supported in the first allocation of Australian funding.
- Some of Australia’s implementing partners took on roles that could have been played by ni-Vanuatu organisations, including local businesses.
- Opportunities to work with established national and local ni-Vanuatu actors or to build on relationships established in the bilateral program were not used.
- DFAT did not have funding mechanisms for, or pre-established agreements with, local ni-Vanuatu partners to be activated in the event of an emergency.
- Pacific regional response teams could be useful in humanitarian crises.

## DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Australia has invested in disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction at the national and community levels in Vanuatu. These investments supported processes and systems that enabled the Vanuatu Government to take leadership of the Cyclone Pam response and have been credited with reducing the impact of Cyclone Pam in some communities.

At the national level, Australia has used Australian Civilian Corps deployments over a number of years, to provide technical support to the NDMO and other government ministries. The National Disaster Plan and National Cyclone Support Plan, that the NDMO developed with Australian technical expertise, facilitated national leadership and control. These key documents outline the government lead agencies, coordination processes and mechanisms for disaster response as well as emphasising the importance of all disaster assistance being channelled through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the NDMO.<sup>54</sup>

DFAT is continuing to support preparatory work that will facilitate local ownership of humanitarian responses. National response structures struggled to cope with the massive unauthorised influx of organisations and individuals into Vanuatu. Current work on International Disaster Response Law (IDRL) by the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement will ultimately support localisation by allowing the governments of affected countries to control the influx of international responders more effectively than was possible after Cyclone Pam.

As well as supporting disaster preparedness at the national level, Australian investments have also supported effective preparatory work with provincial government and communities. For example, disaster risk reduction programs and preparedness training to the provincial government, Provincial Disaster Committees and Community Disaster Committees in Tafea province were a key part of CARE's programming in Vanuatu prior to Cyclone Pam. These programs aimed to increase the capacity of vulnerable communities to prepare for and respond to disasters.<sup>55</sup>

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*At a provincial and community level DFAT has funded Australian NGOs and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to build the capacity of provincial and community disaster committees. An example of this is work done by CARE on Erromango and Tanna. CARE had been working with the Provincial and Community Disaster Committees (PDCs and CDCs) to prepare for cyclone season, identifying safe houses, pre-positioning food and water and running simulation events. After the cyclone hit... they (CDCs) conducted assessments using the NDMO-approved forms. Then two community members got in a banana boat and travelled four hours across the ocean to deliver the forms to the Provincial Disaster and Climate Change Committee (PDCCC), who in turn passed the forms to the NDMO. The first plane to arrive in Port Vila from Tanna following the cyclone brought with it the completed assessment forms.*

Evaluation completed on behalf of Save the Children Australia, CARE Australia, Oxfam Australia and World Vision Australia.<sup>56</sup>

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At least three community groups that met with the evaluation team reported that preparedness activities in which they had participated had reduced the impact of Cyclone Pam.<sup>57</sup> Remote communities described how CDCs made substantial efforts to pass on information about the cyclone to community members; community members in Pongkil Bay stated they would not have received any information in the absence of a trained CDC.<sup>58</sup> Communities also described how through preparedness activities and simulations they located safe houses and identified vulnerable individuals in need of assistance.<sup>59</sup>

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54 Vanuatu Government, National Disaster Management Office, National Cyclone Support Plan Review 2015-2016, National Disaster Management Office, Ministry of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Disaster Risk Management, 2015  
55 HPA Consolidated Report to DFAT, 2015, 58

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56 Rebecca Barber, *One Size Doesn't Fit All: Tailoring the International Response to the National Need Following Vanuatu's Cyclone Pam*, 2015, 11

57 Interview 25, 33

58 Interview 5

59 Interview 33



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***Even though Cyclone Pam was much stronger than previous cyclones, this time there were no deaths and no serious injuries. Personally I think that if we hadn't had the trainings from CARE, we would have lost several families. Plenty of people would have stayed in houses that fell down, plenty of trees would have fallen on houses if we hadn't cut them, people would have been scattered and running everywhere instead of inside safe houses.***

CARE Ipota case study

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## SUPPORTING PARTNER GOVERNMENT

Supporting the Vanuatu Government to lead the Cyclone Pam response was clearly the central focus for DFAT. Australia provided immediate support as requested for health and urban search and rescue teams.<sup>60</sup> Support was also particularly evident in the alignment of sectoral focus with the expressed needs of the Vanuatu Government (see Section 3.4.3).

A significant proportion of Australia's assistance was in the form of technical assistance which was used to support or supplement government capacity. The Australian Civilian Corps (ACC), a pool of humanitarian specialists managed by DFAT, was used to provide expertise needed in the initial response and longer-term recovery. Some pre-existing technical assistance positions in key government ministries were re-tasked to support the response. This included an ACC specialist deployed in the NDMO. When Cyclone Pam struck, the NDMO was not well-resourced and needed more staff. Three ACC specialists provided well targeted support to the NDMO. For example, one deployment was specifically to fill gaps in information management. The support to the NDMO was greatly appreciated and built on the previous investments made to the office. Australian technical assistance both before and during the crisis helped to enable the Vanuatu Government to take greater control of the Cyclone Pam response.

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<sup>60</sup> Ministry of Health, Vanuatu accepts Australian offer of assistance; Australian Offer of Assistance to Ministry of Health, Vanuatu; Notes From Post Meeting – 30 May 2016

Technical support was also provided through RedR Australia, an organization which recruits, trains and maintains a register of humanitarian experts. After Cyclone Pam, RedR deployed fifteen technical specialists, two of whom were diverted from pre-existing deployments, to provide surge support to UN agencies including UNICEF, FAO, UNHCR, WHO and OCHA. The RedR deployees supported the establishment and coordination of clusters, logistics and civil-military coordination, and provided technical expertise in areas including nutrition, protection and WASH. These deployments improved the overall coordination and relevance of assistance which indirectly supported the Vanuatu Government's leadership of the response.

The size, scope and cost of technical assistance teams needs to be considered in the context of the overall strategy for the response. In addition, having large international teams has implications for perceptions of a nationally-led response. Some stakeholders including DFAT staff members, NGO and UN representatives felt that in some instances DFAT and implementing partners provided so much technical assistance in national ministries that national actors were side-lined.<sup>61</sup> The capacity building component of technical assistance needs to be clearly articulated and deployed individuals and teams need to identify and work alongside national responders.

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***The number of technical experts deployed to Vanuatu after Cyclone Pam was unnecessarily high.***

Vanuatu Government official at Pacific Regional Consultation for World Humanitarian Summit.<sup>62</sup>

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Some stakeholders including DFAT staff felt that the large scale of the ADF response along with the high visibility of and reliance on military assets may have undermined local ownership.<sup>63</sup> This concern was not expressed by the Vanuatu Government or the ni-Vanuatu communities, nonetheless it is important that the size of the ADF component of the Australian response is considered in finding the appropriate scale of the Australian response and the desired overall operational footprint.

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<sup>61</sup> Interview 1, 22, 28, 42, 48, 52

<sup>62</sup> World Humanitarian Summit *Regional Consultation for the Pacific, Final Report*, 2015, 12

<sup>63</sup> Interview 38, 48





The significant military assets Australia deployed to Vanuatu provided a highly visible display of Australian support. At times during the response HMAS Tobruk (above and below right) was prominent in Port Vila Harbour. Some stakeholders felt that the high visibility of foreign military assets has the capacity to undermine local ownership of humanitarian responses. Photos: ADF

## SUPPORTING LOCAL CAPACITIES

The Humanitarian Action Policy which guided the Cyclone Pam response recognised that international humanitarian assistance is most effective when it builds on and further develops existing skills and local capacities so that ultimately countries can manage humanitarian assistance without international assistance. This is best achieved when assistance *reinforces the capacities of government and civil society at all levels in the affected country, rather than displacing or undermining them.*<sup>64</sup>

Australia's response was mindful of the need to support local capacities. For example, as much as possible DFAT only engaged implementing partners with a pre-existing, established presence in country, an important first step in supporting local capacity. Funding for UNICEF reflected its role as the lead UN agency in Vanuatu. The four NGOs funded through the HPA all had local branches in Port Vila and well-established relationships with local communities.

Some implementing partners had particularly strong models for supporting development of local ni-Vanuatu capacity. For example, the Australian Red Cross worked alongside the Vanuatu Red Cross Society as an auxiliary to the public authorities and thereby



supported a nationally-driven response operation. Staff from the Australian Red Cross intentionally worked to align international support to the speed, systems and capabilities of the national society.

The choice of implementing partners supported an appropriate and effective Australian response, but reflects a traditional suite of options through standing agreements. A more contextualised response could have better supported local ownership and utilised ni-Vanuatu expertise.

<sup>64</sup> DFAT, *Humanitarian Action Policy*, 2011, 23

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***There is a formulaic response that we get into and it comes back to (the fact that) we start with the solution and work back to the problem rather than the other way around.***

DFAT staff member.<sup>65</sup>

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Local and national ni-Vanuatu organisations, including NGOs and private sector entities, were not direct recipients of Australian funding in the relief phase. While there was a need for international organisations to respond to Cyclone Pam, in some instances they took on roles that could have been played by local actors, including local private businesses.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, local actors were sometimes overlooked by Australia's implementing partners and therefore did not indirectly benefit from Australian funding.<sup>67</sup>

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***There was no process by which local resources could be utilised... everyone was busy but missing out on opportunities using people who could do the work instead of flying in people from overseas who don't know the context.***

Locally-based consultant in Vanuatu

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Immediately after Cyclone Pam, Port Vila-based private sector organisations providing services in logistics, procurement retail, tourism, consultancy and the media voluntarily offered their knowledge and resources to the response efforts. Subsequently, they felt they were side-lined by international responders and expressed frustration with not being funded to contribute.<sup>68</sup> Representatives from these organisations felt they were in a position to identify local capacities and needs faster and more accurately than international responders. For example, local logistics companies had sound knowledge of and access to national and regional resources. It took some time for WFP to acquire the knowledge and contacts needed to organise logistics. If local logistics companies had been pre-identified and engaged in the response this may have provided better value for money and also helped to build local capacity.

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65 Interview 75

66 Interview 54

67 Interview 74

68 Interview 23, 26, 48



*Representatives from local logistics companies worked with the NDMO in the first weeks after the cyclone, but were not engaged by Australia or most other international responders. Local barges, shown here in Lenakel on Tanna Island, were used in the response, but could have been better utilised. Photo: Natalia Aueb-Charles*

Another example was the debris clearing and infrastructure repair work done by USAR, which was identified as work that could have been done by locally engaged contractors. USAR deployees could have been used more strategically to organise and guide local building and construction companies. This would have reduced costs while supporting and building local capacity.

The lack of partnerships with ni-Vanuatu private sector organisations was attributed to Australia being largely unaware of their potential contributions and being *overly risk-averse*.<sup>69</sup> For logistics, it was also considered to be a consequence of the extensive scale and capacity of logistics provided by the ADF.<sup>70</sup> While there was consensus that the ADF supplied much-needed logistics capacity immediately after the cyclone, there was no consensus on whether the length of the ADF deployment was appropriate. Some informants felt their departure was too early and abrupt.<sup>71</sup> Humanitarian supplies were still being delivered and, in the absence of the ADF, delivery was costly for humanitarian agencies.<sup>72</sup> Others felt that as long as the ADF was present local logistics capacities would not be fully utilised.

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69 Interview 8, 23, 74

70 Interview 26

71 Interview 48

72 Interview 58

Australia's response did not fully identify or utilise opportunities to work with established national and local civil society organisations. The Vanuatu Association of NGOs, which brings together about 45 national and local NGOs, could have been used to identify opportunities to build local capacities. Existing partnerships with national organisations could have been more fully utilised to increase the alignment of Australia's assistance with strategic priorities. For example, Australia has long-standing partnerships with the Vanuatu Women's Centre and has recently funded the Vanuatu Society for People with Disability. The Vanuatu Council of Churches has a strong relationship with the NDMO and assumed responsibility for coordinating church agency response operations as well as having a strong operational focus on protection and disability. There were limited

discussions with these organisations about receipt of Australian funding for response programming, despite the fact that the Vanuatu Women's Centre and the Vanuatu Society for People with Disability were already in receipt of Australian funding, had already passed due diligence tests and could have expanded their programs (Box 2).<sup>73</sup> They had strong relationships with key national actors such as the police;<sup>74</sup> and could have supported the Australian aid program's strategic priorities such as disability and protection.

At the time of the Cyclone Pam response DFAT did not have a funding mechanism for local partners or pre-established agreements with local partners with flexible arrangements for surge funding in crises.

## BOX 2: SUPPORTING LOCAL CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS



*Alison Boyu has been the Executive Director of the Vanuatu Society for People with Disability since 2002. Photo: Michela Luzzi*

The Vanuatu Society for People with Disability was established in 1986 and is well respected both locally and internationally. International support for the society has come from government donors and NGOs. DFAT has funded the society since 2014.

The society has well-established community relationships in and around Port Vila and on the islands. Through regular community visits, the society has knowledge of the needs and circumstances of people with disabilities.

The offices of the Vanuatu Society for People with Disability were destroyed in Cyclone Pam, but the society continued to function. They conducted an

assessment of needs of people with a disability and assessed the level of assistance that they received. In some urban communities, typically those made up of people coming from many locations, the Vanuatu Society for People with Disability found that some people with disabilities and some elderly people had been left off distribution lists so they had not received any assistance. Families which included a person with a disability did not receive any additional assistance.

The Vanuatu Society for People with Disability set up a Cyclone Pam Recovery Campaign and worked with church-based organisations to provide people with disabilities with the assistance that they needed, including helping them repair their homes. The society reported to the NDMO that it had provided assistance to 115 households with a person with a disability. The society also sent tarpaulins to remote islands for families with a person with a disability.

In the aftermath of Cyclone Pam, the Vanuatu Society for People with Disability were allowed to redirect pre-existing DFAT funding to support their cyclone recovery work and were given funding to pay rent on temporary office accommodation. The society was not, however, given any additional funding by DFAT or consulted in the planning, design or implementation of humanitarian assistance. Given that the society was a trusted partner, already being funded by DFAT, this appears to be a missed opportunity. The Vanuatu Society for People with Disability was well placed to provide advice and expressed the view that with additional funding they could have done more to help people with disabilities to recover from Cyclone Pam.

<sup>73</sup> Interview 78

<sup>74</sup> Interview 19



Pacific national or regional organisations with response capacity could be useful in responses to humanitarian crises. Stakeholders suggested such organisations are more likely than international organisations to be cost effective, work in culturally appropriate ways and to support localisation. This may apply bilaterally with, for example, a national organisation responding to crises in other Pacific countries. For example, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre could be engaged to deliver counselling and other services across the region. Additionally, regional response teams could be drawn from multiple Pacific countries. In interviews stakeholders proposed a Pacific Medical Assistance Teams (PACMAT) and a Pacific version of USAR.

### 3.4.3 MEETS NEEDS OF AND IS ACCOUNTABLE TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS

#### FINDINGS

- The types of assistance provided, where it was distributed, and the level of assistance received reflected Vanuatu Government priorities.
- In line with local priorities, Australian assistance appropriately focused on the most severely affected provinces and key needs: shelter, health and food.
- Assistance could have been better aligned with some of the Australian aid program's strategic priorities, notably gender equality, disability inclusiveness and protection.
- Cash transfer programming was considered, but appropriately was not used.
- Relationships and mechanisms, to enable contextually appropriate cash transfer programming, need to be established.
- Accountability to affected populations could have been improved.
- Women and young adults in some communities felt their voices were not heard.

#### ALIGNING ASSISTANCE WITH NEEDS

In responding to Cyclone Pam DFAT's central focus was on supporting the Vanuatu Government to lead the international response. Consequently, decisions about the types of assistance provided, where it was distributed, who received assistance and the level of assistance received largely reflected decisions made by the NDMO. Provinces most affected were prioritised and the types of assistance provided met the needs of

affected communities (Figure 8). In line with government and community wishes, there were blanket distributions of relief items.

The distribution of Australian humanitarian relief supplies could have been better matched to needs if there was a deliberate attempt to identify and target both communities and individuals that were most in need. Working under the direction of the Vanuatu Government, as it implemented its policy of equal treatment of all affected communities, constrained Australia's ability to target assistance to the greatest needs and meet strategic objectives in relation to gender, disability inclusion and protection.

#### TYPES OF ASSISTANCE

Australia provided a broad-ranging package of assistance with most funding allocated to shelter, food, WASH, health and education. The type of assistance provided met requests from the Vanuatu Government, and largely addressed the needs of affected communities as documented in needs assessments. In focus group discussions beneficiaries consistently affirmed that all types of assistance received were needed.<sup>75</sup> At the time of the crisis and afterwards, there has been scrutiny of the relevance of shelter and food assistance.



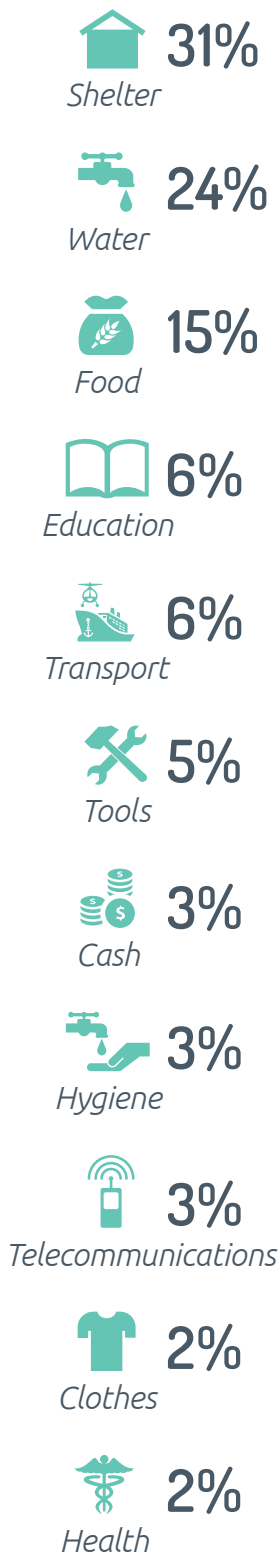
Many parts of Tanna have fertile highly productive soils. A good variety of crops are grown and sold at market and roadside stalls like the one in the photo. The availability of food was variable after the cyclone. Food needs were typically not urgent in communities where root crops were available.

Photo: Sharon Lim

<sup>75</sup> OCHA Flash Appeal – Emergency Response Plan for Vanuatu Tropical Cyclone Pam, March – June 2015; Vanuatu Government, *Tropical Cyclone Pam Humanitarian Action Plan*, 2015; Interview 5, 10, 16, 34



**FIGURE 8: MOST IMPORTANT NEEDS ONE WEEK AFTER CYCLONE PAM AS IDENTIFIED BY COMMUNITIES IN TANNA IN FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS**



*'Humanitarian Panadol': More than a year after the cyclone many homes like this one in Imapol village, Tanna Island, have not been repaired and are still covered with tarpaulins.*  
Photo: Michela Luzzi

### SHELTER

Australia prioritised provision of emergency shelter. This was appropriate as 15 000 households, representing 75 000 people, were in need of shelter<sup>76</sup> primarily for protection from the sun. Cyclonic winds destroyed vegetation or ripped off leaves resulting in a hot, brown landscape without any shade. The Vanuatu Government requested that humanitarian actors focus on provision of emergency shelter assistance, rather than the longer-term shelter repairs.

As is typically the case in humanitarian responses, tarpaulins were the predominant form of emergency shelter assistance.<sup>77</sup> Tarpaulins were intended to provide shelter until building materials became available and houses could be repaired. Tarpaulins were not as useful for emergency shelter as expected. In many communities the strong capacity for self-recovery and the length of time required to distribute tarpaulins meant that many tarpaulins were received after shelters had been repaired. A review of the shelter response that found 36% of households had already repaired their homes

by the time they received a tarpaulin.<sup>78</sup> In other communities, the availability of tarpaulins appears to have delayed the longer-term repair of shelters. At the time of this evaluation (a year after Cyclone Pam) tarpaulins still covered many homes in some communities. A key stakeholder who had worked to deliver large numbers of tarpaulins retrospectively questioned the usefulness of tarpaulins and described tarpaulins as humanitarian Panadol as at the time the distribution of tarpaulins enabled responders to feel that they were doing something, but what they were doing was neither necessary or supportive of recovery.<sup>79</sup>

Australia incurs considerable costs in supplying tarpaulins and other humanitarian emergency relief items, including costs of: initial procurement; storage in warehouses in Australia and elsewhere; transport to ADF bases; air or sea transport to affected countries; transport in-country to rented warehouses; transport back to airports or ports and transport to affected communities. The cost of blanket distribution of tarpaulins in Vanuatu after Cyclone Pam may have been greater than the value of tarpaulins to affected households.

The final report of the Shelter and Settlements Vulnerability Assessment has recommended that emergency shelter interventions need to be modified so they match the specific context of Vanuatu, by inclusion of modalities which better support self-recovery and are able to build on existing capacities and community-based support mechanisms.<sup>80</sup> On this basis, there would be value in DFAT working with partners to review how shelter assistance can meet international best practice and be more contextually appropriate in the Pacific.

<sup>76</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Tropical Cyclone Pam Flash Appeal*, 2015, 9

<sup>77</sup> Shelter and settlements vulnerability assessment – final report, sheltercluster.org, Cyclone Pam response, Vanuatu May 2015, 41

<sup>78</sup> Shelter and settlements vulnerability assessment – final report, sheltercluster.org, Cyclone Pam response, Vanuatu May 2015

<sup>79</sup> Interview 73

<sup>80</sup> Shelter response evaluation – final report, sheltercluster.org, Cyclone Pam response, Vanuatu September 2015, 9

## FOOD

DFAT also prioritised food assistance. There has been considerable debate about the need for and timing of food assistance. Some stakeholders, including representatives from the Vanuatu Government, private sector and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement believed the vast majority of affected people were not in urgent need of food.<sup>81</sup> The argument consistently made by the NDMO was that communities have traditional coping mechanisms and therefore they could last for weeks on crops that were still available, stored or underground.

The WFP Impact maps and analysis determined that whilst food was not a problem in the immediate days following Cyclone Pam, food needs were becoming urgent in some areas, two weeks after the cyclone. Erromango and Tanna Islands were identified as locations where there was likely to be food shortages. With the information available at the time, the early Australian funding for food aid was appropriate.

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***In the first few weeks, the right items were provided to sustain people. The amount of food given was right and it gave people time to [re] grow their own.***

Vanuatu Government representative.<sup>82</sup>

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Food shortages persisted for months. The food gaps were initially predicted to remain until harvest time in mid-June (some three months after Cyclone Pam).<sup>83</sup> A prolonged El Nino event resulted in water shortages, limiting agricultural production so that food was in short supply for much longer than expected. Food assistance was needed in some communities as much, if not more, in the longer term than it was immediately after the cyclone. The subsequent rounds of food distributions were, therefore, also appropriate.

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***Many people from all over the central part of the island (Tanna), they just cooperate and really assist those people (communities on the Eastern side of Tanna), especially these people here (in White Sands).'***

NGO Representative, Tanna

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<sup>81</sup> Interview 4, 8, 23, 50, 51, 73, 80

<sup>82</sup> Interview 10

<sup>83</sup> World Food Programme, *Impact Maps and Analysis*, 2015, 12



*Local people have the knowledge needed to help to deliver solutions to local problems. After the cyclone, food was in short supply in the White Sands area on the eastern side of Tanna, but in the fertile Middle Bush area of Tanna perishable food was available in abundance. Building on the tradition of people from the fertile areas supporting people from the less fertile areas, John Bill, shown in the photo talking to women in Waisisi, borrowed a truck from the local government and organised a food exchange. Fallen coconuts from White Sands were exchanged for cabbage, taro, cassava and other foods grown in Middle Bush. When the supply of coconuts ran out people from White Sands sent fish. The food exchange is ongoing.*

Photo: Karen Ovington

## COMMUNITIES WITH GREATER NEEDS

The level of resilience differed substantially between communities, creating different needs. The lack of access to land for communities in informal settlements within urban areas makes them less resilient. Communities in remote locations may also be less resilient due to their lands being less productive and also being unable to purchase food from shops.

The evaluation did not find any evidence of greater or faster provision of assistance to the most-affected communities within a geographical area. There is evidence, however, that some of the most-affected communities in fact had delayed provision of assistance. For example, the same assistance was provided to impoverished remote communities on Tanna as to those in the fertile areas near the main town but remote communities had to wait much longer for help to arrive. The people of Tanna were well aware of this disparity and could have been better consulted to inform the response and improve targeting.

# WAISISI CASE STUDY

## LIVING IN A DISASTER ZONE



Returning from a morning's fishing in Waisisi Bay.  
Photo: Karen Ovington

LIFE IS CHALLENGING FOR THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN WAISISI VILLAGE ON THE EASTERN SIDE OF TANNA ISLAND. NEARBY MOUNT YASUR VOLCANO EMITS GASES, SMOKE AND ASHES ALMOST YEAR-ROUND SEVERELY LIMITING THE PRODUCTIVITY OF FOOD CROPS.

EVEN WITH LOCALLY CAUGHT FISH, FOOD IS ALWAYS IN SHORT SUPPLY. WATER COLLECTION REQUIRES A LONG WALK. VILLAGERS HAVE TO WALK EVEN FURTHER, FOR OVER AN HOUR ALONG A ROUGH TRACK, TO REACH THE MAIN ROAD TO LENAKEL WHERE THE NEAREST SCHOOL AND HEALTH POSTS ARE LOCATED. FISH AND SHELLS ARE SOLD AT THE MAIN ROAD TO GENERATE SOME INCOME.

The community knew a cyclone was coming but had no sense of the ferocity of the storm that would hit them. People struggled to find somewhere safe to shelter.

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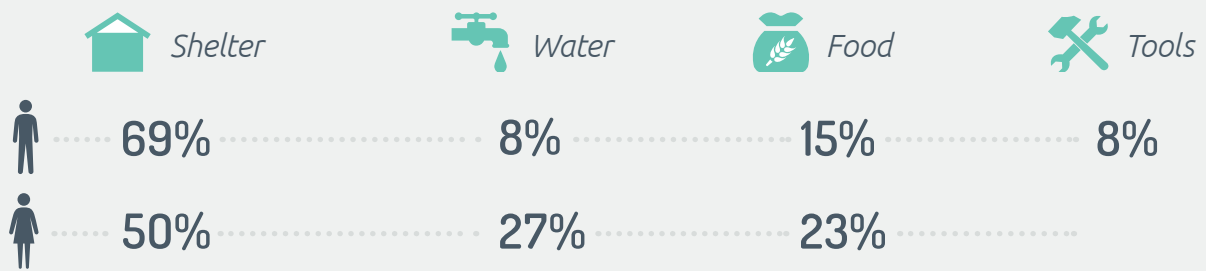
*People were blown away like bits of paper. This old man was picked up and then left in a tree... This woman, who was clinging to her baby, was blown far, far away. After the cyclone we went and looked for the people... their clothes had been ripped away but mostly they were okay. For days we walked all over, everywhere, trying to find our things, our cooking pots, our tools, our clothes.*

Community member, focus group discussion, Waisisi

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**FIGURE 9: THE TYPES OF ASSISTANCE THAT MEN AND WOMEN IN WAISISI FELT THEY NEEDED MOST IN THE FIRST WEEK AFTER CYCLONE PAM**



Almost all the houses lost their roofs and some were inundated by the waves that surged over the substantial rock wall. Household contents were either washed or blown away. The boats used for fishing were damaged or destroyed and the track to the main road was blocked by fallen trees and debris. Food and water were in short supply but the greatest need was shelter from the sun.

Isolated and faced with the destruction caused by the cyclone, the people of Waisisi “felt there was no hope”. There is no evidence that this marginalised community was prioritised for support by the international response.

The ADF, the “boats with wheels”, were the first to provide assistance to Waisisi arriving 16 days after the cyclone. Support, once it arrived, included tarpaulins, water, food and equipment for debris clearance. It took almost a month for the villagers, with the assistance of the ADF, to clear the track to the main road.



*Australian Army soldiers delivering water and supplies to the people of Waisisi. Photo:ADF*

*Australian Army soldiers prepare to fit a tarpaulin over a shelter in Waisisi. Photo: ADF*





## GROUPS WITH GREATER NEEDS

It is humanitarian best practice that particular attention should be given to groups within communities who are most affected.<sup>84</sup> Vanuatu Government-led assessments indicated that some groups were more affected than others, specifically female-headed households, people with disabilities and older people.<sup>85</sup> However, those most in need were not prioritised in the distribution of relief supplies. Beneficiaries described how female-headed households, the elderly and people with disabilities received the same assistance as others and were helped by their communities when needed. While communities did help those with greater needs this was often not the first priority. For example, within communities, individuals typically fixed their homes before helping others in need of assistance.

There was some evidence that in less cohesive communities those most in need actually received less assistance. The Vanuatu Society for People with Disability identified a number of people with disabilities in peri-urban communities who had accidentally not been included on distribution lists and therefore not received any assistance.

## CASH TRANSFER PROGRAMMING

There is compelling evidence that if preparatory work is done, cash transfers are an effective form of assistance, especially when compared to the high cost of importing relief supplies into Pacific communities.

As well as being costly, distributions of relief items may have deleterious consequences. On Tanna, a number of the family-run shops closed due to lack of business during the large scale food distributions. While blanket distributions can undermine local economies, other approaches such as cash transfer programming can stimulate local economies in crisis situations.

Recognising the advantages of using cash transfers in crises, DFAT explored the use of cash transfer programming as part of the response. The decision not to use cash transfers was appropriate, given the well documented challenges in implementing cash transfer programming in the Pacific region that relate to market supply and access.<sup>86</sup> The approach was also not



*Black Man Town, Lenakel, is the main trading centre on Tanna Island. All the businesses in the town have to be owned and run by Ni-Vanuatu. Many shops sell similar items: bags of rice and sugar, various canned and packaged foods, basic household goods and some clothing. During the food distributions following Cyclone Pam, some shops closed due to lack of business. Food distributions were felt to have been partly responsible for the loss of business. Photo: Karen Ovington*

supported by the Vanuatu Government and mechanisms to facilitate an effective program were not in place.

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***In affected areas where food needs are less urgent and connections with Port Vila have been re-established, cash programming is possible. It would reinforce these established market channels and allow people to decide on their own priorities, including cash needs for schooling, seeds purchases, housing repair.***

World Food Programme<sup>87</sup>

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Some agencies did undertake small scale trials of cash transfers in the response. Oxfam provided cash payments for debris clearing and provided vouchers to farmers to buy agricultural supplies. UNDP used cash for work programs in Port Vila, but also on Tanna Island. The conclusion from these trials was that cash transfers were an effective form of assistance in relief and early recovery responses in both urban and rural settings.

Findings of this evaluation suggest that cash transfers would have been a preferred form of assistance to support recovery for some, but not all communities affected by Cyclone Pam. Focus group discussions were used to determine if members of rural communities on Tanna and Erromango thought that cash would be a useful form of assistance to support recovery (Figure 10). Individuals were asked to select, from a range of options,

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<sup>87</sup> World Food Programme, *Vanuatu: The Impact of Cyclone Pam*, 2015, 8

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<sup>84</sup> The Sphere Project, *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response*, 2013 and *Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS)*, 2015

<sup>85</sup> Vanuatu Government, *Vanuatu Post-Disaster Needs Assessment Tropical Cyclone Pam*, Vanuatu Prime Minister's Office, 2015, xiv

<sup>86</sup> Hobbs, C and Jackson, R 2016, 'Cash Transfer Programming in the Pacific: A Feasibility Scoping Study', The Cash Learning Partnership.

**FIGURE 10: THE NUMBERS OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS WHO IDENTIFIED DIFFERENT TYPES OF ASSISTANCE AS THE ASSISTANCE THEY MOST NEEDED 2-3 MONTHS AFTER CYCLONE PAM**



the form of assistance that they would find most useful 2-3 months after Cyclone Pam. The financial value of all options was the same. There were clear differences between the communities. On Tanna, about a quarter of people felt cash was the most useful form of assistance but on Erromango no-one did. Beneficiaries on Tanna identified a range of ways cash would have been useful in early and later recovery stages. These included using cash to send their children to school and to buy clothing.

A recent study, partly funded by DFAT, concluded that the use of cash transfer programming will in the future be feasible in humanitarian responses in the Pacific.<sup>88</sup> This evaluation therefore contends that DFAT should continue to support contextually appropriate preparatory work so that Australian funding can be increasingly used for cash transfers.

### ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS

Accountability to affected populations is the meaningful involvement of communities in decisions that impact them. Australia's implementing partners, and especially HPA partners, made concerted efforts to be accountable to affected populations. This included communicating program activities and schedules to communities using posters and notice boards, having a help desk at distribution points and post-distribution monitoring using feedback and complaints boxes available at distribution sites and other public locations, and in one case, a feedback hotline.<sup>89</sup>

88 C. Hobbs and R. Jackson, Cash Transfer Programming in the Pacific. A feasibility scoping study, The Cash Learning Partnership, July 2016

89 HPA Consolidated Report to DFAT, 2015, 38, 54 and 69 and Peter Chamberlain, Joint Peer Evaluation Tropical Cyclone Pam, Vanuatu, Humanitarian Partnership Agreement Response, October 2015, 23 and 25

Despite these efforts many communities felt that their voices had not been adequately considered either in the design of the response or in the adaptation of the response following community feedback. In three implementing partner program areas, community members consulted by the evaluation described the ineffectiveness of complaints mechanisms and the lack of attention to the voices of sub-groups within the community.<sup>90</sup> Community leaders were typically consulted by implementing partners, but community leaders are mostly older men. Women described how the response had largely targeted men and not consulted them at any point on their specific needs. Young adults expressed a similar sentiment and described their frustration at being unable to resume 'normal' life with sporting and other recreational activities a year after Cyclone Pam.

*There is the (feedback) box but we don't put in any complaints as generally it's done by our elders. Young people's voices are not heard.*

Focus group discussion with youth group.<sup>91</sup>

Stakeholders in Erromango and Port Vila also felt there was a lack of information about what was being distributed and who was entitled to what.<sup>92</sup> A lack of information to ensure that communities felt empowered and included in processes was a problem noted early on in the response at the Women in Recovery Forum in June 2015.

90 Interview 16, 33, 34, 79

91 Interview 33

92 Interview 4

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*Some women felt that there was a lack of awareness in regard to distribution of relief supplies, i.e. how much was being distributed for how long, which made planning difficult.*

Women in Emergency Response and Recovery Forum Report <sup>93</sup>

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### 3.4.4 PROTECTS THE SAFETY, DIGNITY AND RIGHTS OF AFFECTED POPULATIONS

#### FINDINGS

- DFAT worked with some partners to ensure protection was included in the response.
- DFAT did not adequately communicate its expectations about protection to all partners.
- Dedicated protection programs received a very small proportion of total funding.
- Dedicated protection programs could have been delivered effectively through development partners if surge funding mechanisms were established.
- The rights of affected people could have been better protected if assistance provided was more loosely aligned with the strategic priorities of the Australian aid program.

In humanitarian crises protection issues increase and Cyclone Pam was no exception. Vanuatu Women's Crisis Centre and communities reported that domestic violence had increased in the weeks and months following the cyclone.<sup>94</sup> Situation reports indicated that children and families with disabilities were not routinely included in the planning and delivery of programs.<sup>95</sup> Child protection, especially for unaccompanied minors was a major concern, exacerbated by low birth registration rates- data indicated only 29% girls and 35% boys were registered in Vanuatu before the crisis. Children not registered are more vulnerable to exploitation when separated from their caregivers.<sup>96</sup>

Australia's commitment to protect the safety, dignity and rights of populations affected by humanitarian crises is outlined in the Protection in Humanitarian Action Framework 2013. The framework identifies protecting people with disability, preventing and responding to gender-based violence and accountability to affected populations as focus areas. Protection is expected to be mainstreamed into humanitarian action with funding also provided for dedicated protection programs.

In some response programs protection mainstreaming was a clear priority. This occurred in part as a result of agency initiative or existing interest in protection, but also because DFAT was proactive. For example, there was engagement with HPA partners about the protection components of their response during concept development and reporting, and during a DFAT-HPA workshop in Port Vila during the recovery phase. As a result, protection was mainstreamed in some HPA programs. An example of this is work done by CARE who ensured that women made up at least half of the teams who monitored food and non-food item distributions, as this has been found to make distributions more equitable and help identify protection issues.<sup>97</sup>

DFAT was less effective in communicating policy commitments on protection to some other implementing partners. For example, DFAT makes no explicit requirements in relation to protection in agreements with USAR or AusMAT. These actors have less understanding of DFAT's protection commitments and as a result protection is less well mainstreamed into their operations. As examples, AusMAT does not have systems to refer cases of sexual violence and abuse to support services; provide staff with training on protection; or collect and report disaggregated data.

Funding for dedicated protection programs was very small, consisting of A\$50 000 allocation to SPRINT. This had limited geographic coverage and focused only on one aspect of protection to the detriment of issues such as gender-based violence, child protection and discrimination of access to humanitarian assistance. Furthermore, although SPRINT is a well-respected initiative capable of providing much-needed services in crises, Vanuatu is not a priority country. Consequently, work to build a relationship with its member association responsible for implementation in Vanuatu, the Vanuatu Family Health Association, was still in its infancy. As a result, the services delivered by the SPRINT initiative were not well co-ordinated with those of other responders and reproductive health services provided in the crisis have not been appropriately followed up.<sup>98</sup>

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93 Women in Emergency Response and Recovery Forum Report June 2015, 7

94 Interview 14, 25 and 34

95 OCHA, Situation Report 14, 30 March 2015

96 UNICEF, Situation Report, 27-28 March 2015

97 CARE, *Gender and Protection Monitoring Report*, March 2015

98 Interview 17 and 67

Australia's approach to protection could have been improved by partnerships with relevant local organisations. Notably, local organisations with a strong protection focus whose work aligns with focus areas in the framework, protecting people with disability and preventing and responding to gender-based violence, were not engaged. The bilateral program supports a strong protection program and disability mainstreaming

through funding to the Vanuatu Women's Centre (Box 3), the Vanuatu Police Force and Vanuatu Society for People with Disability. These programs involve improving access to justice for women, children and youth; preventing violence against women; community based rehabilitation and provision of support for people with disabilities.<sup>99</sup>

### BOX 3: PROTECTING WOMEN



*Merelyn Tahi, Vanuatu Women's Centre Coordinator, outside the Port Vila headquarters. Photo: Linda Kenni*

Vanuatu Women's Centre, an independent non-government organisation registered with the Vanuatu Government, works to eliminate violence against women and girls. The centre was established in 1992 and has received funding from Australia since 1999.

The centre has headquarters in Port Vila, several branches with full-time staff on outer islands and 45 community-based Committees Against Violence Against Women which are staffed by volunteers. Information

sessions, training and workshops are provided for both women and men to raise awareness and reduce levels of violence. Victims have access to a helpline and, in some locations, safe houses. Women wanting to take legal action against perpetrators are provided with legal, financial, emotional and practical support.

The Vanuatu Women's Centre has recently established a male advocacy program in which around 30 chiefs and church leaders participate. The centre works with and provides training to the Vanuatu Police Force, Vanuatu Mobile Force and Correctional Services. Changed perceptions about domestic violence, and the number of successful prosecutions of perpetrators, suggests that this work has been effective.

The Vanuatu Women's Centre were part of the Gender and Protection cluster, but felt that, like other members of the Vanuatu Association of Non-Governmental Organisations, their knowledge, resources and expertise were not sufficiently used. The network that the centre has established across Vanuatu, could have provided counselling as well as other services to improve protection. Through their network and local knowledge, the centre could have ensured assistance was targeted so that female-headed households and other vulnerable people received the assistance they needed.

<sup>99</sup> DFAT, *Humanitarian Action Policy*, 2011, 8



### 3.4.5 INTEGRATES RECOVERY AS PART OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION TO SUPPORT LONGER-TERM DEVELOPMENT

#### FINDINGS

- Proportionately more humanitarian response funding should have been allocated to early recovery.
- Direct funding to government ministries was highly effective in supporting a government-led early recovery in the education and health sectors.
- Small and medium businesses have struggled to recover but have not received assistance.
- In some sectors Australia's response was built on development programs.
- Bilateral programs did not have funding mechanisms to allow them to scale up in emergencies.

#### SUPPORT FOR EARLY RECOVERY

Early recovery, the process of recovery using humanitarian action to gradually deliver sustainable crisis recovery, resilience building and development opportunities, was a priority in DFAT's 2011 Humanitarian Action Policy. The first tranche of response funding focused largely on relief and relatively less on early recovery.<sup>100</sup> Some implementing partners including the Australian Red Cross and HPA agencies were given the scope to use Australian response funding for early recovery activities. HPA agencies demonstrated the value of this flexibility by using funding to rehabilitate water supply systems for schools, health facilities and villages and World Vision also used relief funding for food security programming.<sup>101</sup>

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*The need to start recovery planning as soon as practical in the response was noted in the AAR. It was commented that there was not much time by those responding to think about early recovery during the crisis response and assess early recovery priorities.*

DFAT After Action Review<sup>102</sup>

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A later tranche of funding provided explicitly for early recovery activities in the education and health sectors. The funding was highly effective in supporting a government-led process of recovery to support longer term development. The early recovery funding to the Ministry of Health was intended to support a 'build back better' program to promote on-going resilience. Funding was provided to schools via the existing annual school grants program providing the Vanuatu Government with complete ownership and control of the funding. Schools commented positively on the responsiveness of the national government to their recovery needs. Focus group discussions in schools and communities provided evidence that Australian funding had been used as intended and succeeded in shortening the time that children were out of school.<sup>103</sup>

Early recovery needs were much broader than health and education. Small and medium sized businesses often lack the resources needed to recover from disasters. The ability of businesses to recover was undermined by subsequent conditions, an El Nino drought and a collapse of tourism (Box 4). Australian assistance to support recovery could have better recognised the broad range of needs including the recovery of small and medium sized businesses.<sup>104</sup> The need to better address early recovery in humanitarian responses has been recognised by DFAT in its revised policy frameworks.

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100 DFAT, *After Action Review*, 2015, 4; Interview 23, 42, 47, 68, and 72

101 HPA, Final HPA DFAT Consolidated report, Dec 2015

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102 DFAT, *After Action Review*, 2015, 4

103 Interview 78

104 Interview 8, 42, 48



*Iepilmai French School was completely destroyed by Cyclone Pam and all teaching materials were lost. Every affected school received the same amount of assistance regardless of the extent of damage or the number of students. The photo shows classrooms built by the local community using materials purchased with funding provided by Australia for temporary repairs.  
Photo: Sharon Lim*

#### BOX 4: REBUILDING LIVELIHOODS



*Janet Ngwele at the Local Mamas' Business Group stall in Port Vila. Photo: Linda Kenni*

The Local Mamas' Business Group was created 15 years ago and has 87 members. The members had stalls at the market place in Port Vila that was destroyed along with many of their goods by Cyclone Pam. After the cyclone,

the women were given space for their shops in a section of the new market. While this was very welcome, each stall holder was responsible for building the frame and other structures for their new stalls. Many of the women struggled to find the money needed to do this since at the time they were also trying to repair their homes.

Over a year after the cyclone, the Local Mamas Business Group is still struggling to survive. Tourist numbers plummeted after the cyclone, but rent still had to be paid. Tourist numbers are increasing, but days with no sales are still common.

*Most of us, we come here with heavy hearts every morning.*  
(Stall holder, focus group discussion with Local Mama's Business Group)

One stall holder told how previously she could afford the bus fare to the market but now had to walk for about 90 minutes to reach the market. As most of the women are the sole breadwinners in their families, they estimate that the livelihoods of 500 people have been severely affected by the Cyclone.

## BRIDGING THE HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT DIVIDE

Australia has a broad-ranging bilateral program in Vanuatu that includes education, health, effective governance, infrastructure and trade, and law and justice, and there are many examples of Australia's response and recovery work building on previous development work.<sup>105</sup>

Some good examples of how Australia's response to Cyclone Pam built on the existing development program can be found in the health sector. In 2014 Australian funding supported a national on-site review of all 138 health facilities across the chain of islands that make up Vanuatu. This review was used to determine the impact of the cyclone on health facilities. The AusMAT program built on existing relationships and knowledge that had been established in emergency medical training events by National Critical Care & Trauma Response Centre (NCCTRC), that were funded by DFAT. The bilateral program staff at post also ensured that the AusMAT team were well linked into partnerships at the Ministry of Health so that there was continuity of assistance through the development and response program.

During the response to Cyclone Pam there were also some examples of DFAT approving the diversion of funding or resources, managed by bilateral partners, from development activities to response activities. For example, Vanuatu Society for People with Disability redirected its existing bilateral funding to cyclone recovery work and to cover rent of property, as their offices had been affected by the cyclone. There are, however, no established clauses in bilateral contracts that contain flexible arrangements for surge funding in crises, over and above existing development funding. This has since been explored in Fiji, where funding is set aside in relevant bilateral development agreements, so that it can be utilised in the event of an emergency, without the commencement of new contractual agreements. DFAT staff involved in the Fiji response believe the approach has merit, and *builds on existing networks and partnerships developed in peace time*.<sup>106</sup>

105 DFAT, *Aid Program Performance Report Vanuatu, 2014-15*  
106 Interview 81

## 3.4.6 AUSTRALIA HAS INCREASED CAPACITY TO DELIVER HUMANITARIAN ACTION

### FINDINGS

- The capacity of DFAT's Port Vila post to balance competing priorities was constrained because of limited availability and training of staff.
- The Crisis Response Team provided much-needed support to Port Vila post.
- Short humanitarian deployments were burdensome and not efficient.

Australia's whole of government response to a crisis is led by posts in affected countries. In disaster-prone countries such as Vanuatu, staff capacity at posts needs to be sufficient to guide the delivery of Australian humanitarian assistance so that, on balance, different policy commitments can be met and the humanitarian imperative achieved in a contextually appropriate way. The demands on DFAT's Port Vila post during the crisis were considerable. The ability of post to deal with a crisis of unprecedented scale and ensure that Australian assistance was supporting local capacity while also aligned with humanitarian policy and principles was constrained due to both insufficient numbers and a lack of preparation of staff for the management of humanitarian responses. This was acknowledged by a number of DFAT staff.<sup>107</sup> Implementing partner staff expressed the view that DFAT staff at post were responsive and worked hard, but their lack of humanitarian experience led to inefficiencies. ODE considers greater capacity at post would have helped to better position Australia's humanitarian response to build on existing development investments and better meet humanitarian policy commitments.

Crisis Response Teams, made up of DFAT personnel trained, equipped and prepared for rapid deployment overseas, are used to supplement the capacity at posts. In response to Cyclone Pam a Crisis Response Team provided much-needed support. As well as deployments to support the consular response, there were 16 deployments to support the humanitarian response which averaged 12 days in country. There were additional deployments to support recovery work which were longer, typically 3-6 months. Three officers were deployed twice, returning to Australia for short periods between deployments.<sup>108</sup>

107 Interview 31, 59, 60, 69 and 72.  
108 Interview 22

The short deployments of DFAT staff to Port Vila were burdensome for post. Furthermore, key stakeholders from implementing partners, government ministries and DFAT (Canberra and Port Vila) felt that short deployments undermined efficiency and compromised continuity. A significant proportion of short deployments is needed for deployees to get up to speed on the response operation. Short deployments inevitably increase the influx and turnover of international staff which can undermine local leadership of response operations.<sup>109</sup>

*The overall impact of international surge personnel was perceived to be positive. However, short term deployments, frequent rotations and frequent handovers between surge waves in key positions were very disruptive to coordination and put additional strain on NDMO and the Cluster system*

**Tropical Cyclone Pam, Lessons Learned Workshop Report**<sup>110</sup>

While it is recognized that short deployments are not ideal, there are three important justifications for them. The first is that deployed staff should not be exposed to the high stress and workloads of humanitarian crises for long periods of time;<sup>111</sup> secondly, that DFAT should minimise disruption to Canberra-based areas that need to release staff; and thirdly, it is difficult for staff to commit to long deployments at short notice.

While these are difficult constraints to overcome, they also need to be balanced against the fact that staff at post are themselves impacted by crises, work on crisis responses for prolonged periods and experience massive work place disruptions which are exacerbated by short deployments. With this in mind, the evaluation considers DFAT should work to lengthen deployments and consider ways to improve the phasing of deployments. For example, to reduce the burden on posts, incumbent deployees could be required to sort out the logistics arrangements for their replacement and then do in-country hand-overs. Such arrangements would reduce the burden on post, while only requiring deployments to be lengthened by a couple of days.

109 Interview 2, 54, 59, 60 and 72

110 Tropical Cyclone Pam, Lessons Learned Workshop Report, p.29, June 2015

111 Interview 36

### 3.4.7 AUSTRALIA'S HUMANITARIAN ACTION IS ACCOUNTABLE

#### FINDINGS

- The quality of reporting of implementing partners was variable.
- DFAT can improve accountability to national governments and support partners to do the same.

Accountability was a prime consideration in determining how DFAT responded to humanitarian emergencies under the Humanitarian Action Policy.<sup>112</sup> Reporting to DFAT on the use of funding varies considerably according to the type of partner funded. Some partners provide detailed accounts of how funding is used. For example, NGO reports typically include disaggregated data to show what has been achieved using Australian funds. The HPA consortium also undertook joint monitoring and evaluation and provided consolidated reporting to DFAT. In contrast, UN agencies only provided high level amalgamated reports as a result of agreements under the Good Humanitarian Donor principles, intended to reduce the burden of reporting against individual country donations.<sup>113</sup> Another factor limiting the analysis of what is achieved by Australian funding is that data from partners who provide detailed reports cannot be compiled because of inconsistencies in how they present the data.

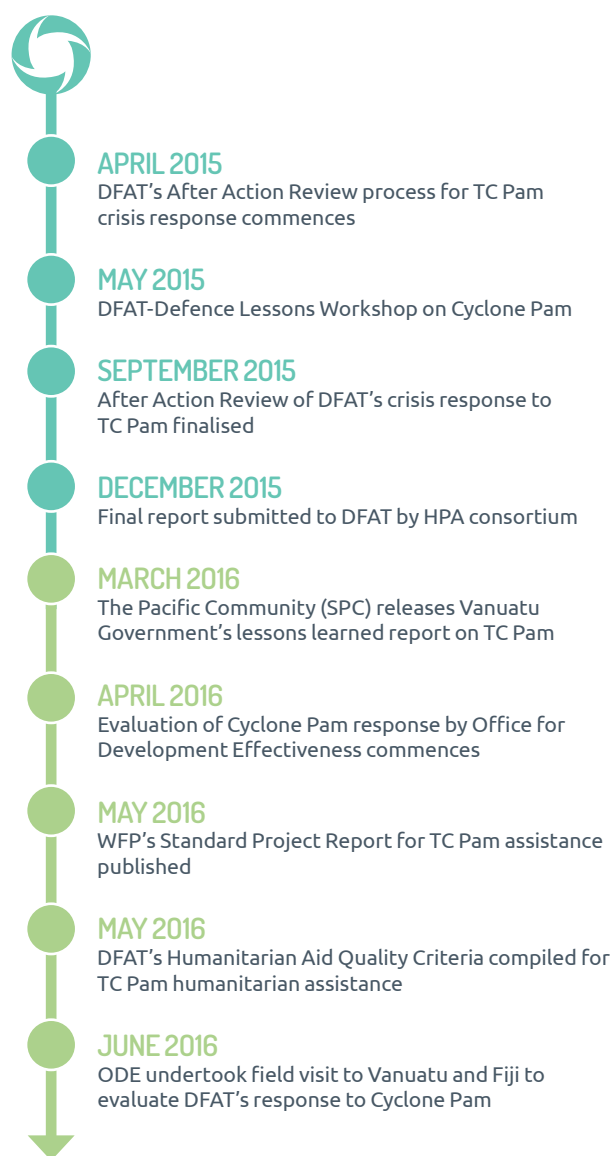
The results of Australia's relief and early recovery investments for the Cyclone Pam response were documented in the Humanitarian Aid Quality Check report completed in May 2016. This document identified monitoring and evaluation as a particular area of concern due to the variance in partner reporting and noted that standardisation of requirements would improve reporting. A disproportionate reliance on reporting by HPA partners and the Australian Red Cross for both the completion of the aid quality checks and estimation of development results was identified.

112 DFAT, *Humanitarian Action Policy*, 2011, 35

113 World Humanitarian Summit, *The Grand Bargain: A Shared Commitment to Better Serve People in Need*, 2016



**FIGURE 11: TIMELINE OF SELECTED AUSTRALIAN MONITORING AND EVALUATION EVENTS**



The differences in reporting content and quality make it very difficult for Australia to meet the commitment it makes in the Humanitarian Action Policy *to provide accessible information on what we fund and the results we achieve*.<sup>114</sup> The reporting by Red R and SPRINT met DFAT's reporting requirements, but provided no basis for assessing the effectiveness of funding. (RedR has subsequently provided more detailed reports for subsequent funding).

DFAT should engage more strongly with partners on the format and content of reporting.<sup>115</sup> Work that is currently underway to establish a monitoring and evaluation framework for the Pacific, which will be used

114 DFAT, *Humanitarian Action Policy*, 2011, 43

115 Interview 54

by both Australia and New Zealand, should increase the timeliness, quality and consistency of reporting, and in so doing improve accountability.

Accountability to the Vanuatu Government by donors and their implementing partners was similarly varied, but overall the Vanuatu Government felt considerable frustration during and after the response due to a perceived lack of transparency.<sup>116</sup> Vanuatu Government representatives interviewed as part of the evaluation felt the Australian response could have been more transparent with more information from both DFAT and its implementing partners.<sup>117</sup> Personnel from national ministries, including the Ministry of Finance which is responsible for auditing reports provided by responding organisations, stated that their ministries were not adequately informed about the level of Australian funding provided to HPA NGOs, how the funding was used and what was achieved with the funding.

At various times during the crisis, local media reports and representatives questioned whether funding to the NGOs had been used effectively.<sup>118</sup> Almost a year after Cyclone Pam the Vanuatu Government formally requested all the HPA NGOs to document the funding they had received and account for how it had been used.<sup>119</sup> The HPA NGOs all stated in interviews that they provided regular reports to the government. While this was undoubtedly true, the information may not have been supplied in an easily accessible form. The reports provided to the government were characterised to the evaluation team by one NGO staff member as *wads of paper from NGOs about what they are doing*.<sup>120</sup> There is scope for DFAT and its implementing partners to improve the information they provide to host governments, through consolidated, simplified and appropriately timed reporting.

### 3.4.8 AUSTRALIA INTEGRATES LEARNING INTO FUTURE HUMANITARIAN ACTION

#### FINDINGS

- Lessons from the Cyclone Pam response were used to strengthen the response to Cyclone Winston.
- Learning from humanitarian responses and engagement in the international humanitarian system has been used to inform humanitarian policy, agreements and approaches.

116 Interview 27 and 51

117 Interview 27 and 51

118 Interview 23

119 Interview 29

120 Interview 29

The evaluation found substantial evidence that DFAT has incorporated specific learnings from the Cyclone Pam response into subsequent responses to rapid-onset emergencies in the Pacific. Almost a year after Cyclone Pam, the even more powerful Cyclone Winston struck Fiji and caused widespread devastation. A total of 44 people were killed and 350 000 people were affected and required assistance. Australia quickly responded and provided a total of A\$ 35 million in assistance to Fiji, in addition to the ADF personnel and assets that were deployed in the immediate relief phase. The following examples of the changes are indicative of DFAT's success in integrating learning from Cyclone Pam into the Cyclone Winston response.

The response to Cyclone Winston was contextually very different as the Government of Fiji took a much greater role in the management and control of international actors. Australia, however, also took proactive steps to ensure that the Australian operational footprint was minimised and more emphasis was given to supporting local capacities. AusMAT teams were deployed in the first week of the response, but their teams were intentionally structured very differently to promote a more locally-owned response. Medical staff were deployed in mobile outreach teams and were embedded within the Fijian health system. Three team members supported Fijian Health Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) staff to fulfil their role during the response.

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***We integrated well into the local team – we didn't replace them, we just [provided] an extension to what they had already done. It's a nice way to do business.***

AusMAT, TC Winston evaluation, June 2016

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Other funding investments also clearly prioritised supporting local capacities. In the activation of the HPA DFAT was more explicit in parameters around local partners and capacities, and working with the partner government in the HPA Activation for TC Winston, than in the other HPA activations stating

*We will only accept proposals from those partners with pre-existing activities in country and an established relationship with the Government of Fiji. Proposals should incorporate local partners, build on local capacities and avoid duplication.*<sup>121</sup>

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121 HPA Activation

More broadly, Australia has updated policy commitments based on learning from humanitarian responses and DFAT's engagement in key events such as the World Humanitarian Summit and the Sendai Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction. As two recent examples, the Humanitarian Strategy (2016) prioritises disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction and places a strong focus on localisation. The Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP), that has recently replaced the DFAT-NGO Humanitarian Partnership Agreement (2011-2016), places great importance on reducing disaster risk and the centrality of 'localisation'.

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***The complexities of the localisation agenda have particular relevance to Australia's role in the Pacific, and to how an investment that works with ANGOs can supplement the capacities of affected communities and national and local efforts.***

AHP design document.<sup>122</sup>

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These policy commitments have a strong financial basis that will ensure that reducing disaster risk and localisation are given a higher priority within DFAT. As an example, under the AHP, A\$45 million will be allocated over the next five years to strengthen local humanitarian capability in the Pacific region to anticipate, prepare for, respond to and reduce risks from natural hazards.<sup>123</sup>

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122 Ibid., 11

123 DFAT, *Investment Design Document for the Australian Humanitarian Partnership*, 2016



## 4. IMPROVING FUTURE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSES IN THE PACIFIC



*After Cyclone Pam, Donald Iarwen from Tanna, who is shown in the photo cutting coconuts, had to defer his studies at the University of the South Pacific, Port Vila as he was unable to pay his university fees. He is currently working to save enough money to return to university, which he expects will take some time. Donald is studying to become a teacher. Cash transfer programming could have provided valuable assistance to families such as Donald's allowing them to decide their own priorities and address their most important needs. Photo: Sharon Lim*



**SINCE THE RESPONSE TO CYCLONE PAM, A REVISED HUMANITARIAN STRATEGY WAS LAUNCHED BY DFAT IN EARLY 2016. IT BUILDS ON THE HUMANITARIAN ACTION PLAN, BUT ALSO EMPHASISES NEW GLOBAL COMMITMENTS AND APPROACHES THAT HAVE ARISEN THROUGH KEY EVENTS SUCH AS THE WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT AND THE SENDAI CONFERENCE ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION.**

The goals of Australia's humanitarian action continue to be saving lives, alleviating suffering and maintaining human dignity during and in the aftermath of humanitarian crises. Other main goals are preventing crises and strengthening preparedness.<sup>124</sup> The new strategy articulates four strategic objectives to achieve these results:

- strengthening international humanitarian action by supporting reform and innovation to ensure a system that is fit for purpose
- investing in disaster risk reduction with a particular focus on our region
- supporting regional preparedness and response capabilities, and
- enabling early recovery efforts.

These objectives build on the HAP outcomes, but also define new focus areas with particular relevance for the Pacific region. The importance of having a humanitarian system that is fit for purpose has been emphasised at the World Humanitarian Summit. The Humanitarian Strategy states that this *involves a fundamental move away from a one-size-fits-all approach, and the prioritisation of nationally led responses to disasters*.<sup>125</sup> An increased focus on disaster risk reduction is intended to support partner countries in meeting their commitments under the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and in recognition of the growing body of evidence that suggests that investment in disaster risk reduction is both cost efficient and effective. Both these objectives will be key to future humanitarian action in the Pacific, alongside a broader recognition of the importance of preparedness and supporting early recovery as critical components of the program cycle.

As outlined in this report, Australia's humanitarian response to Cyclone Pam was highly effective and to a great extent aligned with the relevant policy commitments. DFAT prioritised supporting the Vanuatu Government and their leadership of the international response. Through a significant allocation of Australian funding to a traditional suite of partners, many affected people received much-needed assistance in a timely fashion. This report also identifies areas, however, where DFAT could modify future responses to ensure they are more effective and more closely aligned with revised policies and commitments. The following recommendations combine both what has been learned from the response to Cyclone Pam and what can be applied in the new policy landscape. The first three recommendations are strategic and the remaining two are operational.

124 DFAT, *Humanitarian Strategy May 2016*, 3

125 DFAT, *Humanitarian Strategy May 2016*, 8



## RECOMMENDATION 1. DFAT SHOULD CONTINUE TO PROGRESS WORK TO SUPPORT NATIONALLY-LED RESPONSES AND LOCALISATION BY

- defining what is meant by localisation and unifying implementing partners around a common understanding of localisation
- identifying in advance of a crisis local, national and regional partners, including private sector and civil society actors, that could contribute effectively to a humanitarian response, as well as mechanisms that could be used to support them in the event of a crisis
- exploring possible options for Pacific crisis response teams.

## RELEVANT FINDINGS

- In some instances, after the initial rapid response, speed continued to be prioritised with the potential impact of undermining national leadership of the response and working relationships.
- Australia's investment in disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction has been effective and supported localisation.
- Supporting the Vanuatu Government and local capacities was a central focus for DFAT.
- Technical assistance used to support or supplement government capacity was valuable and in some cases critical, but was overused in some areas.
- Local and national ni-Vanuatu organisations, including civil society and private sector entities, could have been better supported in the first allocation of Australian funding.
- Some of Australia's implementing partners took on roles that could have played by ni-Vanuatu organisations, including local businesses.
- Opportunities to work with established national and local ni-Vanuatu organisations or to build on relationships established in the bilateral program were not used.
- DFAT did not have funding mechanisms for, or pre-established agreements with, local ni-Vanuatu partners which could be activated in the event of an emergency.
- Pacific regional response teams could be useful in humanitarian crises.

## RELEVANT POLICY COMMITMENTS

**Humanitarian Strategy:** commitment to support preparedness and effective response by reinforcing local capacities during a response, ensuring that they are not marginalised by international actors arriving with their own staff, systems and priorities.<sup>126</sup>

**Grand Bargain Commitment at the World Humanitarian Summit:** Australia has committed to providing 25% of humanitarian funding to local and national responders by 2020.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>126</sup> DFAT, *Humanitarian Strategy*, 2016, 15

<sup>127</sup> World Humanitarian Summit, *The Grand Bargain – A Shared Commitment to Better Serve People in Need*, 2016

## RECOMMENDATION 2. DFAT SHOULD SEEK TO IMPROVE THE TARGETING OF ASSISTANCE TO THOSE MOST IN NEED AND TO BETTER MATCH NEEDS BY

- working with partner governments ahead of, and during, a crisis to identify how assistance can be targeted to those most in need
- working with all implementing partners and Australian agencies to increase, where possible, alignment of assistance with strategic priorities, notably gender equality and women's empowerment, disability inclusiveness and protection
- exploring mechanisms through which small and medium businesses can be supported to recover after crises
- establishing mechanisms and relationships so that cash transfer programming can gradually start to be used as a more standard feature of humanitarian responses in the Pacific.

## RELEVANT FINDINGS

- The types of assistance provided, where it was distributed, and the level of assistance received reflected the Vanuatu Government priorities.
- In line with local priorities Australian assistance appropriately focused on the most severely affected provinces and key needs: shelter, health and food.
- Assistance could have been better aligned with some of the Australian aid program's strategic priorities, notably gender equality, disability inclusiveness and protection.
- Dedicated protection programs received a very small proportion of total funding.
- Cash transfer programming was considered, but appropriately was not used.
- Relationships and mechanisms to enable contextually appropriate cash transfer programming need to be established.
- Accountability to affected populations could have been improved.
- Women and young adults in some communities felt their voices were not heard.

## RELEVANT POLICY COMMITMENTS

**Humanitarian Strategy:** commitment to support increased use of cash transfer programming as a humanitarian program option for relief and early recovery, where appropriate, based on case-by-case basis.<sup>128</sup>

**Humanitarian Strategy:** thematic priorities include gender equality and women's empowerment, disability inclusiveness and protection.<sup>129</sup>

**Protection Policy:** commitment to fund and advocate for dedicated protection programs and being accountable to affected populations.<sup>130</sup>

128 DFAT, *Humanitarian Strategy May 2016*, 16

129 DFAT, *Humanitarian Strategy May 2016*, 22-25

130 DFAT, *Protection in Humanitarian Action Framework*, 2013, 10-12

### RECOMMENDATION 3. DFAT SHOULD WORK TO FURTHER BRIDGE THE HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT DIVIDE BY

- identifying prior to a response the strengths and relationships within the bilateral program that can be leveraged in a humanitarian response, and incorporating surge funding capacity into bilateral contracts.

#### RELEVANT FINDINGS

- In some sectors Australia's response was built on development programs.
- Direct funding to government ministries was highly effective in supporting a government-led early recovery in the education and health sectors.
- Bilateral programs did not have funding mechanisms to allow them to scale up in emergencies.
- Dedicated protection programs could have been delivered effectively through development partners if surge funding mechanisms were established.

#### RELEVANT POLICY COMMITMENTS

**Humanitarian Strategy:** commitments to disaster risk reduction and early recovery.<sup>131</sup>

**Protection Policy:** commitment to fund and advocate for dedicated protection programs and being accountable to affected populations.<sup>132</sup>

<sup>131</sup> DFAT, *Humanitarian Strategy May 2016*, 12 and 20

<sup>132</sup> DFAT, *Protection in Humanitarian Action Framework*, 2013, 10-12

### RECOMMENDATION 4. DFAT SHOULD STRENGTHEN ITS COMMUNICATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY BY

- developing a short written statement or an action plan which outlines the overall purpose, strategic priorities, suite of partners and approach of Australia's assistance, and making the plan available to partners at the outset of a response
- encouraging and supporting implementing partners to improve accountability to national governments by providing timely, concise reports.

#### RELEVANT FINDINGS

- Australia's response was coherent but coherence could have been enhanced by DFAT articulating a common sense of purpose to implementing partners.
- DFAT did not adequately communicate its strategic intent, in relation to protection, to all partners.
- The quality of reporting of implementing partners was variable.
- DFAT can improve accountability to national governments, and support partners to do the same.

#### RELEVANT POLICY COMMITMENTS

**Humanitarian Strategy:** commitment to high standards of transparency in the management of the Australian aid program as well as effective monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning.<sup>133</sup>

<sup>133</sup> DFAT, *Humanitarian Strategy*, 2016, 25-27

## RECOMMENDATION 5. DFAT ENSURES ITS INTERNAL CAPACITY TO DELIVER HUMANITARIAN ACTION IS APPROPRIATE BY

- ensuring staff at Pacific country posts have been provided with appropriate training about humanitarian principles, policy and operations
- exploring mechanisms for lengthening and improving the phasing of short term humanitarian deployments.

### RELEVANT FINDINGS

- The capacity of DFAT's Port Vila post to balance competing priorities was constrained because of limited availability and training of staff.
- Short humanitarian deployments were burdensome and not efficient.

### RELEVANT POLICY COMMITMENTS

**Humanitarian Strategy:** commitment to providing coordinated, whole of government response operations and supporting preparedness and response, through Australian government capacity to respond rapidly to provide humanitarian assistance tailored to the crisis context.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>134</sup> DFAT, *Humanitarian Strategy*, 2016, 15 and 31



# ANNEX ONE – INFORMATION SUPPLIED TO INTERVIEWEES

## OFFICE OF DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS: EVALUATION OF AUSTRALIA'S ASSISTANCE TO VANUATU FOLLOWING CYCLONE PAM

The purpose of the evaluation is to learn from the experience of the Cyclone Pam response to inform future humanitarian responses to rapid-onset crises in the Pacific region. The evaluation will cover the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and connectedness of the response in order to draw out lessons. Findings and recommendations will focus on feasibility and utility to inform future responses.

It will strive to answer the overarching question: how could DFAT's humanitarian response to cyclones and other rapid-onset crises in the Pacific region be improved?

### INTERVIEW TOPICS

AREA OF ENQUIRY	KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS
Cross-Cutting Issues: Local context, protection, accountability to affected populations, disability and gender equality	
How Australia responded to Cyclone Pam	What strategies or frameworks guided the response?
Achievements of Australian assistance	What was the value-add of Australian assistance?
Effectiveness of Australian assistance	Was Australian assistance aligned with the needs and priorities of the Vanuatu Government and people of Vanuatu?
Coordination of Australian assistance	To what extent was DFAT's response coordinated with other Australian Government departments and agencies, including the ADF?
Connectedness of Australian assistance	How did Australian assistance build on previous investments?
	How did Australian assistance support DRR, preparedness and disaster management?
Improvement	How could Australian assistance to rapid-onset emergencies in the Pacific region be improved?

### INFORMED CONSENT

#### **Please note the following in relation to your participation in the interview:**

Your participation is voluntary.

- Please let us know during the interview if there is a particular question you don't feel comfortable answering.
- Interviews will be recorded and notes will be written during the interview to ensure we record your opinions accurately. Please answer freely as there are no right or wrong answers.
- Report content will not mention your name or job title/function. The report will not attribute any content, quotes or findings to individuals.
- The findings from this interview will be synthesised with other interviews, and a desk review of documentation, and then written into an evaluation report.
- If you have any questions or feedback on the interview, please contact Karen Ovington (Karen.Ovington@dfat.gov.au).

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