

Cyclone Pam report released for Vanuatu

Written by

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Port Vila, 22 June 2016

A reflection on what worked well and what could be improved upon in the Government of Vanuatu's response to tropical cyclone Pam has been released today.

The Vanuatu Lessons Learned Report is a collation of recommendations and reflections from a range of local and international representatives to improve disaster response in the region as a result of the lessons from Cyclone Pam. These recommendations were made during a workshop held in Port Vila in June 2015.

The Lessons Learned Workshop was funded by the European Union through its EUR 19.37 million Building Safety and Resilience (BSRP) in the Pacific project, implemented by the Pacific Community (SPC).

This was done in partnership with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) and led by the Vanuatu Government's National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) with community members, village chiefs, non-government agencies, emergency response agencies, UN agencies and government representatives.

The Director General for the Ministry of Climate Change and Chair of the National Disaster Committee, Jesse Benjamin, commended the NDMO for its hard work in responding to the strongest recorded cyclone in Vanuatu's history and said this report will help guide future disaster response in the country and the region.

"Vanuatu is ranked as the most vulnerable country in the world to natural hazards. The

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recommendations of this Lessons Learned Report, building on our historical customary resilience and traditional coping strategies, provide a template for pragmatic future planning and response,” he said.

The Pacific Community’s Director for Melanesia, Mia Rimon, said this report is a testament to the Vanuatu Government’s determination to improve its disaster response.

“This report will contribute to the development of national good-practice methods to prepare for, respond to and recover from future disasters. The Pacific Community is committed to supporting our member countries. This work was requested by the government of Vanuatu and we’ve been pleased to assist through the BSRP project. We’re confident that the lessons learned will ensure that Vanuatu becomes more resilient to disasters,” she said.

The Head of the European Union Delegation to Vanuatu, Ambassador Leonidas Tezapsidis, said this report, along with the response to Cyclone Pam, underpins the European Union’s commitment to building disaster resilience in the region.

“The European Union recognises the critical need to support Pacific Island countries to become more resilient to disaster as the effects of climate change are already being felt. This report shows our commitment within the region to ensure communities become more resilient to disaster in the future,” he said.

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Background – tropical cyclone Pam:

- 188,000 estimated people directly affected in Vanuatu
- 96 per cent of crops decimated in the affected provinces (mainly Shefa and Tafea)
- 81 per cent of homes sustained some damage from Cyclone Pam in Tafea and Shefa
- 45% of Vanuatu directly affected by TC Pam
- 250 kmph winds

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According to the World Risk Report developed by the United Nations Institute for Environment and Human Security, Vanuatu is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world (UN, 2014). The reality of this hit home on 13 March 2015 when the most intense cyclone in Vanuatu's recorded history smashed into the country.

Tropical Cyclone Pam packed winds of up to 250 kmph, flattening homes, schools and villages with its devastating winds. Eleven people were killed, scores more injured, more than 45 per cent of the country was affected and 96 per cent of agricultural crops were destroyed across affected areas.

Background BSRP Project:

The Africa Caribbean Pacific (ACP)-European Union (EU) project called Building Safety and Resilience in the Pacific project (BSRP) is a EUR 19.37million project funded by the EU and implemented by the Pacific Community (SPC). Its objective is to reduce the vulnerability, as well as the social, economic and environmental costs of disasters caused by natural hazards, thereby achieving regional and national sustainable development and poverty alleviation in ACP Pacific Island States.