



International Recovery Forum 2021

Vanuatu's early lessons in recovery from compound disasters

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Context

- Small island developing country with high disaster risk profile
- Regularly exposed to range of hydro-meteorological and geophysical hazards
- With the backdrop of COVID-19, Vanuatu was devastated by Severe Tropical Cyclone Harold. A new dimension to impacts from compounding disaster events. COVID-19 losses were only accounted for the period of March 2020 June 2020.
- Total effects combined USD 617 million in losses and damages. Tourism and service related industries hardest hit
- The country was in the midst of an election and transition of power. An ongoing State of Emergency was also in place





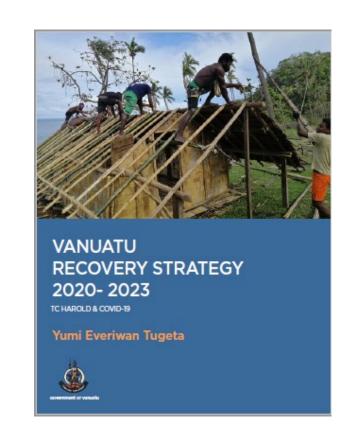
Lesson – Assessing impacts

- Initially grappled with whether to do separate assessments and plans for TC Harold and COVID-
- No international surge capacity to directly support with Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA)
 and recovery planning compared to past disaster events
- Reliance now on local and in-country capacities. Mixed absorptive capacity to effectively carry out assessments
- Most sectors have minimal baselines or non existent baselines and effective information management systems
- Excellent remote support from international agencies UN, World Bank, bilateral donors



Lessons - Planning

- Development of the TC Harold and COVID-19 Vanuatu Recovery Strategy. Endorsed in July 2020
- Recovery Strategy makes explicit linkages to the longer term National Sustainable Development Plan (2016 – 2030)
- Three main objectives:
 - 1. Restore and strengthen essential social services and protections
 - 2. Enhance lives and livelihoods
 - 3. Repair the natural and built environment
- Sectors and donors now aligning activities and budgets with VRS objectives
- At the provincial/subnational level recovery mechanisms and bodies are being established
- Recovery functions at the Prime Minister's Office are still nascent with a Recovery Coordination Unit recently established in early 2020. Requires more substantive capacities and institutional mechanisms to be effectively established in particularly having permanent staffing.
- Current Disaster Risk Management Act 2019 does not include recovery





Lessons – Financing

- Policy directive for government ministries to reprioritize budgets after TC Harold.
 Allowed for early recovery interventions by clusters and sectors. However streamlined financial processes are still needed.
- Government economic stimulus package of USD 4 million to support businesses, small medium enterprises and communities. Implemented by the Ministry of Finance
- Over 5000 applications received, 3000 applications processed thus far.
- Businesses especially the tourism entities have been appreciative of the fiscal support.
 However, there are still remaining frustrations.



Lessons – Financing

- Lack of baselines and proper registration mechanisms, especially at the provincial level, has resulted in substantial number of small or informal businesses missing out on fiscal stimulus
- Timeliness or delays in processing payments
- Aid Coordination Unit is currently working with donor partners where direct financing agreements are concerned.
- Council of Ministers decision to establish a Recovery Trust Fund but yet to be operationalized



Next steps and Ways Forward

- DSPPAC now working with sectors to come up with recovery project proposals for funding.
- Consideration of putting in place a harmonized disaster recovery framework of which pandemic preparedness must become an essential ingredient
- Need to strengthen sub-national and national level coordination mechanisms for assessments
- A fit for purpose and accountable streamlined process and regulations for accessing emergency funds and procurement needs to be developed
- TC Harold recovery projects will be an opportunity for economic stimulus for the next five years
- Building back schools, health centres, water facilities and focusing on sanitation and hygiene, as well
 as the skills development and vocational training/livelihood opportunities that will accompany this,
 will assist in economic recovery from COVID. It will also assist in shifting/focusing the workface into
 COVID related skills development and training areas



Thank you!

