

**Case study:**  
**Coalition Building in**  
**Cities Program**  
*Luganville, Vanuatu*



# Case study: Coalition Building in Cities Program Luganville, Vanuatu

## Background

### Why is the program needed?

The number of people in urban areas exposed to hazards, shocks, and stresses is rapidly increasing, leading to increased fragility and vulnerability.

This program aims to help more urban communities to carry out resilience activities that are climate-smart and tailored to their local circumstances.

The Global Disaster Preparedness Center (GDPC) and the American Red Cross has developed and tested tools and services to assist Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies increase city-wide collaboration around climate-smart resilience and coastal risk reduction.

The program has been piloted in Indonesia and Vanuatu and is currently underway in Myanmar.

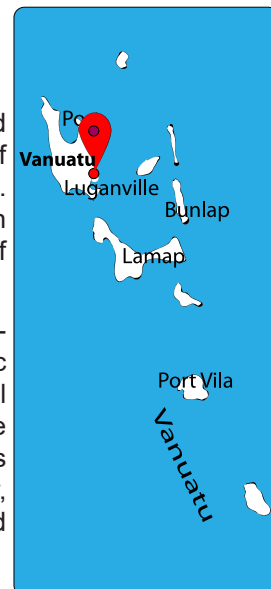
The program works with and builds upon existing civic processes led by local government – bringing together other stakeholders such as the business community, universities, community organizations into a network that focuses expertise, capabilities, and resources on priority risks facing vulnerable communities in the city.

## Where was the program carried out?

Luganville is a coastal city located on the southern eastern part of Santo Island in Sanma Province. It is the second largest city in Vanuatu with a population of 15,865<sup>1</sup>.

Luganville is located in a high-risk area for cyclones, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis and tropical depressions and is vulnerable to disturbances of services such as water, electricity, health, telecommunication and transportation.

Vanuatu Red Cross Society (VRCS) is a small but active National Society, with five Provincial Branches. The Sanma Province Branch had a small group of staff and volunteers in Luganville when the 'Coalition Building in Coastal Cities' program began.



## What was the process?

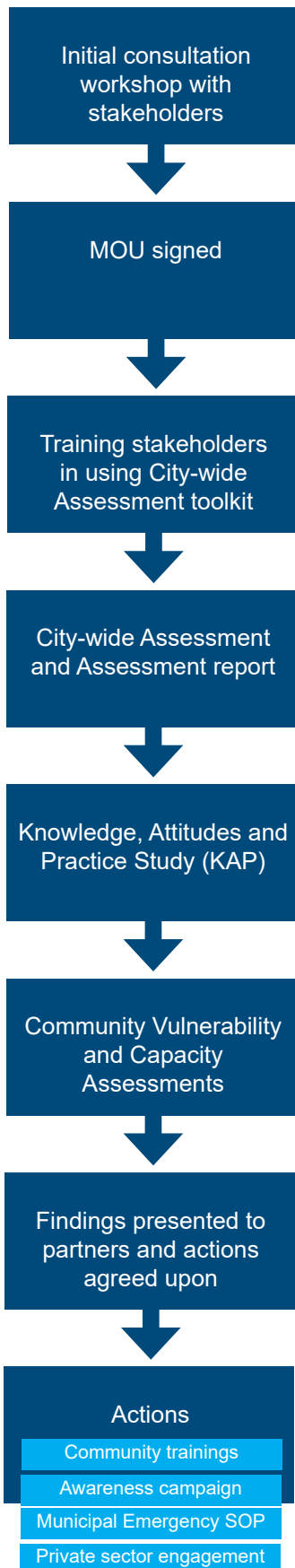
The Coalition Building in Coastal Cities' program was piloted in Luganville by VRCS with support from American Red Cross where it was implemented from 2017-2019.

After setting up a small program team, VRCS approached partner organizations to discuss how to take a collective approach to city-wide resilience in Luganville. Local government, government departments, NGOs and community groups were keen to be involved, and held workshops to train partners in using the [City Wide Assessment for Urban Community Resilience toolkit](#) that was developed by American Red Cross and GDPC with VRCS.

Facilitated by the Luganville Municipal Government and



<sup>1</sup>[https://vnso.gov.vu/images/PublicDocuments/Census/2016/Provincial\\_Fact-sheets/Sanma\\_Factsheet.pdf](https://vnso.gov.vu/images/PublicDocuments/Census/2016/Provincial_Fact-sheets/Sanma_Factsheet.pdf)



VRCS, city level stakeholders agreed to work together as a network and a Memorandum of Understanding was signed which established the stakeholders as a sub-working group of the Luganville Provincial Disaster and Climate Change Committee.

**The group carried out a City-Wide Risk Assessment over three one-day sessions.** This identified vulnerable communities, potential shocks and hazards, and how core systems could be vulnerable.

This process helped participants see the interconnectedness of urban systems and risks and to better understand responsibilities, capacities and the need to work together.

*“The assessment is a very helpful activity; it helps us to be informed of some of the risks ... and to align our programming in addressing some of the risks that are identified.”* Luganville stakeholder



VRCS used its volunteer base to carry out a **Knowledge, Awareness and Practices (KAP) survey and Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments (VCAs)** in the neighborhoods identified by the City-Wide Risk Assessment.

The findings were presented to the coalition partners and priorities for action were agreed.

## Action at the city level

### Increasing awareness of urban resilience and preparedness

A communications strategy was developed to deliver key messages around resilience building and disaster preparedness. Activities involved:

- Broadcasting a series of **SMS messages** to residents
- **Radio** announcements and a guest speaker on weekly talkback show
- **Posters and brochures** distributed across communities and private sector organizations in the city.
- An open **facebook group** was established to share information and concerns
- Community **video and theater** nights were held in communities with climate change resilience videos shown, community fundraising stalls and a performance from a popular theater group.



### Strengthening official preparedness procedures

VRCS supported the Luganville Municipal Government to develop a standard operating procedure for disaster management.

### Engaging the business sector

The assessment process identified the crucial role that small neighborhood grocery shops play in supporting community resilience and VRCS developed a preparedness training course for owners of these businesses.

## Action in communities

VRCS volunteers went back to the priority communities and explained the findings from the Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments. Community members found this useful and VRCS returned to provide training and information in Disaster Risk Reduction; Water, Sanitation and Hygiene; and First Aid.

## Putting knowledge into action



Father Mathias Tari Leo of Mango Station says that the training provided by VRCS has helped the community to improve their standard of living – helping to mobilize action such as weekly rubbish clean ups and testing their water supply.

The trainings also helped improve their preparedness for disasters – every home now has an emergency basket and water containers.

He reports that leaders from other communities come and visit Mango Station because they want to see the changes happening in the community.

## What the program has achieved

The program has significantly increased the abilities and confidence of VRCS to work in a convener role and in the urban setting. The City-wide Assessment results and tools have been utilized by stakeholders and there is increased awareness of urban risks amongst stakeholders and communities.

### Urban focus

- Increased awareness in local government, government agencies and NGOs on urban vulnerability and seeing the city from a systems perspective.
- The city-wide assessment influenced stakeholders in prioritizing their work and helped partner NGOs to expand their projects into the city.

### Increased collaboration

- Strengthened working relationships and openness between partner organizations, making them more aware of each other's work, challenges and limitations.

### Strengthened VRCS capacity

- Strengthened the capacity of VRCS at the local branch and national level – increasing their skills, confidence to engage with external partners, visibility and strong and trained volunteer base.

### Tools

- Sections of the risk assessment toolkit have been used and adapted by other organizations to help in organizational planning.

### Preparedness planning

- VRCS supported local government to create Standard Operating Procedures for disaster response.

### Community impact

- Increased community awareness of vulnerabilities and risks and better understanding of their capacities to respond.
- Training in first aid, water, sanitation and hygiene, and disaster risk reduction
- Increased links to other NGOs and local government.
- Actions taken to reduce vulnerabilities – e.g. disaster preparedness planning, clearing drains.

*“There’s a lot of recognition by the local government, the municipality, city officials, for the National Society, branches, the program team that they are now focusing on urban issues.” Colin Fernandes, American Red Cross*

*“In the coalition we are opening doors to get an understanding and value each other, then when it comes to disaster time and we are sitting on the Provincial Disaster Management Committee it gives us a better understanding of each other.” Christian Tuku, Save the Children*

## What were the challenges?

**The private sector is a key stakeholder in city resilience but can be difficult to engage.**

Vanuatu Red Cross found it difficult to involve the

private sector in the program. Businesses may struggle to find the time to participate or do not always relate to the language that Red Cross and other agencies use around resilience, climate change, coalitions etc. Communities members also struggled with these concepts.

### It was hard to keep stakeholders involved all the way through

Bringing and keeping coalition stakeholders together requires work and project management skills. Partners often do not have the time or resources to dedicate to program meetings and activities. VRCS was seen to have a strong volunteer base and capability so carried out most of the soft mitigation activities (trainings and awareness sessions) in communities.

### Disasters and emergencies can cause big disruptions

The City-wide Risk Assessment was interrupted for several months while the coalition members responded to the influx of evacuees after volcanic eruptions on neighboring Ambae Island. It took time to regain a similar momentum to complete the assessment.

### Managing expectations around the actions that will come from the assessment process

The assessment and planning processes identified many ideas for addressing risk and vulnerability that VRCS and partners did not have the funding to deliver. These included livelihood projects (e.g. fishing) and mangrove planting. This was disappointing for the communities, partners and VRCS personnel involved.

### Sustainability of the initiative – reliance on Red Cross role and funding

Even though coalition is no longer active as the program funding has come to an end, nevertheless partner organizations continue to work together through provincial disaster management groups and there is potential for the learnings from the city-wide assessment to be maintained through one of these groups.

### How can other cities use this approach?

Urban resilience is a complex area but the potential to make a difference is huge and there are many partners who can share the load – working

collaboratively lets you see the whole picture and avoids duplication.

Be experimental, try a different way of working. How do you currently work with partners? Look at the program tools and resources and think about how you can expand upon these networks.

*“Red Cross can’t be there to provide everything, we have to work with other partners to find solutions for the shocks and stresses that happen in the city.”*

*Shirley Johnson, Vanuatu Red Cross*

## References and more information

### Tools

- [City Wide Assessment for Urban Community Resilience toolkit](#)
- [Building Coalitions for Urban Resilience Toolkit](#)
- [Co-designing Solutions for Urban Resilience Toolkit](#)

### Factors to consider:

- Investigate and try to work with pre-existing disaster management/resilience initiatives.
- Consistent and open communications with coalition partners – make sure everyone has a common understanding about expectations, responsibilities, and boundaries.
- Make it relevant for the local context – communicate at the right level and avoid too much technical jargon.
- The National Society is a convener, not the leader – find ways to spread responsibilities.
- Formalize coalition arrangements between partners and local Government authorities, but work together to develop the approach first.
- Beware of over-assessing and under-delivering in communities – talk with partners about how tangible actions can be delivered (e.g. incorporated into their planning and funding cycle).
- Focus on making the coalition sustainable long term – if there is initial program funding then figure out how this collaborative work can continue after funding finishes.
- Explore funding and plan accordingly for a longer program timeframe to realize the intended benefits.



For more information about the Coalition Building in Cities program, visit: <https://www.preparecenter.org/activities/coalition-building-coastal-cities>

