



**Learning Summary:
Coalition Building in
Cities Program**
Luganville, Vanuatu



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Beach clean-up, Luganville

The *Coalition Building in Cities Program* was piloted in Luganville, Vanuatu from 2017 to 2019. Vanuatu Red Cross Society supported by the American Red Cross and the Global Disaster Preparedness Center brought together stakeholders from government, private sector, civic society and community organizations into a city coalition.

The program takes a collaborative approach to assessing and addressing risks and vulnerabilities that face Luganville communities, to increase resilience in the face of increasing climate instability and coastal risks.

What were the biggest learnings from the program?

Understanding the full picture with a city-wide assessment approach

- A collaborative city-wide risk assessment can illustrate how vulnerabilities and capacities are interrelated across sectors and systems.
- Ensure stakeholders have enough background

knowledge before undertaking the assessment so they can engage with the concepts in the toolkit. Some stakeholders may not be familiar with issues such as climate change, resilience and city systems and structures.

Allowing time to embed new concepts, build capacities and plan for the unexpected

- Allow sufficient time to fully realize the potential for action. In Vanuatu, the time it took to train the project team and city partners in various elements of the project including the city-wide assessment toolkit.
- Plan for unavoidable disruptions in program planning – the volcanic eruptions and evacuations from Ambae Island caused delays and interrupted the assessment process.

Being prepared for challenges and open to new ways of working

- Think about how to maintain stakeholder engagement throughout the program in the face of competing work priorities.

- Share information with partners from an early stage and involve them in project visibility activities – it is necessary to invoke a sense of shared ownership.

- Discuss funding and time limitations of the program with partners. Establish a shared understanding of the time, commitment and resources that partners will bring to the coalition, with a view to long-term sustainability. It is necessary to discuss on how partners can integrate their business-as-usual work within coalition activities?

Working at finding the right approach to get businesses engaged - the private sector is a key stakeholder in city resilience

- Talk to businesses about what is realistic and how they want to engage. Small businesses are focused on day-to-day survival and can struggle to find the time to participate.

- Modify the language. Luganville's small businesses struggle to relate to the language that Red Cross and other agencies use around resilience, risk reduction, climate change, coalitions etc.

- Involve a wide range of businesses. The business community have a variety of skills they can bring to a resilience network. Do not be afraid to approach bigger businesses and have clear messaging of how they can contribute to city-wide resilience planning.

Demonstrating long term commitment

- Think long-term. Partner planning cycles mean it takes time for partners to be in a position to act on the assessment information. It is essential that support is continued after project completion so that the assessment results are taken forward by the city.

- Be prepared to fund, link or broker access to funding for coalition-generated actions that emerge from the assessment process. The coalition carried out vulnerability and capacity assessments with target communities to help them understand and address risks and provided awareness-building and training. There was some frustration that the coalition partners were unable to progress the mitigation ideas that came out of this process due to funding limitations.

Contextualizing the approach

- Customize the messaging and language to the local context. Use appropriate language to talk about building resilience and link to tangible risks in communities.

- Use the coalition to brainstorm ways to overcome the barriers to delivering activities. It is important to get creative and explore how other organizations, businesses, academic institutions could help. Bringing in new people with fresh ideas contributes to creative ideas and solutions.

Spending time and resources building staff capacity at the beginning of the process

- Dedicate time and resources to building a team that has the necessary facilitation, convening and project management skills. Staff and volunteers are the most important resource in building a coalition for resilience.

Working closely with local government. Use their networks and structures

- Ensure the support of local authorities for the program. Their support can make convening, facilitating, and implementing easier and more sustainable.

- Talk to local government authorities about the resilience and disaster management initiatives and committees that they have in place, and ask how these could be utilized or expanded. Vanuatu Red Cross Society formally established the coalition as a subgroup of the Sanma Provincial Disaster Management and Climate Change Committee.

Sustaining the initiatives

- Work with coalition partners to agree upon a long term, sustainable way for the coalition to continue to collaborate on the assessment issues, e.g. a means of communication, or a pre-existing meeting that can take forward the key focus areas of the project.

For more information about the Coalition Building in Cities program, visit:

www.preparecenter.org/activities/coalition-building-coastal-cities

