



# Climate Resilient Islands Programme

## Case Study: Community Priority Values and Assets, Vanuatu

Climate Resilient Islands communities were asked to describe their most important values and assets, and their vulnerabilities and risks, to contribute to their Community Resilience Profiles. These ranged from material to natural, as well as spiritual or community focused. This case study provides an overview of the assets, values and concerns across the programme's communities, to explore trends and commonalities between them.

### Assets

Vanuatu's most highly valued assets reflect a wide range of priorities across communities, covering health, livelihoods, community structures, environment and more.

The most common response was water, mentioned 10 times, in the form of "water supply", "water system", "water tanks", or just "water". But when considering all ecosystem- or environmental-based responses, including rivers, forests, mangroves and marine areas, this category is valued the highest, with 13 responses mentioning these. However, some communities listed several of these but some listed none, while all but one community mentioned water.

Gardens/plantations, listed nine times, were next, followed by various community structures: community hall, school/kindergarten, and church, all mentioned seven times each. Health was a priority, with aid posts or other health facilities listed by six communities. Roads/bridges were listed by five. Other community structures like cooperative stores, guest houses and homes were also mentioned, though only up to three times for each.

### Vulnerabilities/threats

The most common vulnerabilities to these assets listed by communities were exposure to bad weather, generally strong winds, flooding and erosion, heavy rain, landslides and cyclones. For water, many communities mentioned having only one source – typically rainwater – noting their high reliance on rain.

Communities were aware of the range of threats to local ecosystems. Responses included human damage through logging and overuse of resources, agricultural activities reducing forests, sea level rise and coastal deforestation eroding coastal ecosystems, overharvesting and overfishing. Wild animals, pests and invasive species were also mentioned, though mostly as a threat to gardens/plantations.

For community structures, the key concerns were quite common across most communities: having only one of a certain structure (church, community hall etc.), being built from poor materials and in a location exposed to strong winds and other extreme weather.



## Environment over infrastructure

One common theme across most communities is their general prioritisation of local ecosystems over community infrastructure. This seems to possibly be an outcome of them seeing greater risk to these systems than to their infrastructure, such as in the following statements:

*The community considers their nature-based systems to be at the most risk.*

*The community considers their coastal ecosystems and water supply to be at most risk, followed by infrastructure.*

The community's own relationship with these ecosystems seems well understood, as seen through discussions of resource overuse, the impacts of logging, the role of agriculture in deforestation and plastic pollution in the rivers and sea.

*Only a small area of mangroves left*

*Close to human activities (forest)*

*Increase in population leads to overfishing*

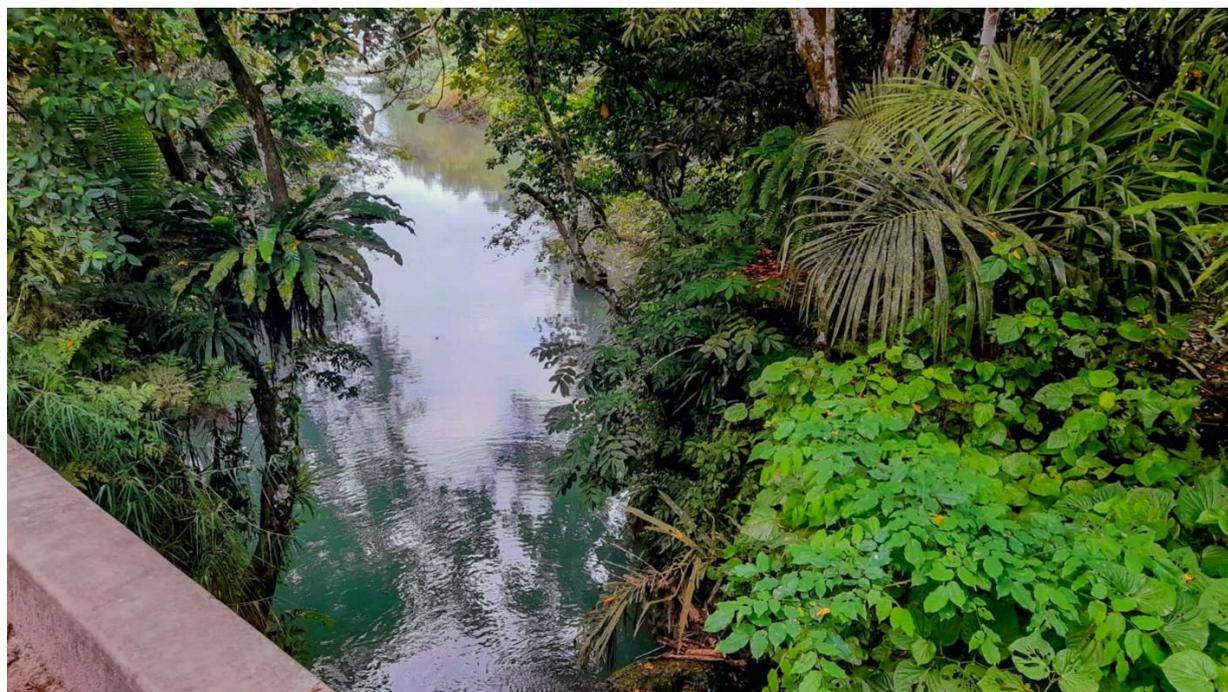
*[Forest] declining due to population, more agricultural land*

Community connections to their local places is also seen through their concerns about infrastructure. One of the main risks is that buildings like community halls or health clinics have been built in vulnerable locations exposed to sea level rise, tsunamis, storm surge or cyclones. Understanding of likely climate impacts and where they will occur could help alleviate much of the risk, such as one community's aid post, which is built "on higher ground and safe from tsunamis."

The high priority given to local ecosystems by communities suggests nature-based solutions like forest restoration, mangrove planting and much more could have considerable impacts in these villages.

## Resilience planning

Understanding priorities of community values and assets informs the next phase of the CRI programme – establishing community resilience plans, which involves noting assets most at risk, especially from the impacts of climate change, community capacity for making changes and strategies for increasing resilience.



Climate Resilient Islands aims to strengthen community resilience and adaptive capacity to the impacts of climate change through nature-based solutions working with rural communities in Vanuatu, Fiji, PNG, Tonga, and Tuvalu. The project is a New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade initiative implemented by Live & Learn Environmental Education.

