



Climate Resilient Islands Programme

Vanuatu

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The goal of Climate Resilient Islands

To strengthen community resilience to the impacts of climate change through nature-based approaches. The program is working with rural communities in Vanuatu, Fiji, Tonga, Tuvalu, PNG and Solomon Islands.

Project Timeline: April 2021 - March 2025

Climate Resilient Islands supports the New Zealand Government's Resilient Ecosystems for Climate Change Adaptation (RECCA) program.

Programme Outcomes

Communities engaged in Climate Resilient Islands will develop a community resilience profile that reflects their lived experience concerning ecosystems, natural hazards, resilient food systems, market opportunities and priorities for the future.

This profile is the foundation for the communities to determine their priorities and the pathways to strengthened resilience through three interconnected nature-based systems outcome areas:

1. Protection, restoration and maintenance of ecosystems
2. Climate resilient food systems
3. Strengthened preparedness to intensified natural hazards

The Climate Resilient Islands Programme then provides the following potential pathways for communities:

- Intergenerational Indigenous knowledge sharing
- Payments for ecosystems services (PES) models
- Protected marine and conservation areas
- Restoration and strengthening of Indigenous resilient local food systems
- Access to small grants to strengthen or establish community livelihoods

Nature-based Solutions

Investing in nature creates jobs and brings economic benefits. Nature-based solutions increase the resilience of countries to climate change, help reduce the risk of disasters, protect human health and improve water and food security.

Nature-based solutions include restoration of forests, mangroves and wetlands; coastal restoration programs; creation and maintenance of ecosystems and the sustainable management of land and sea.



Brief rationale for site selection

Ecosystems are at the core of almost all economic activity in Vanuatu. Coastal ecosystems contribute almost VT 3 billion in the form of subsistence fishing, coastal protection, and carbon sequestration, not including the value of coastal ecosystems to tourism or to commercial fisheries. The resilience of communities relies on the resilience of the ecosystems they inhabit.

Climate change poses a significant threat to people and ecosystems in Vanuatu, especially in coastal areas, due to sea level rise, temperature rise and extreme weather events. These threats are heightened by the degradation of ecosystems through unsustainable agricultural practices, overharvesting, invasive species, and small-scale logging. Degraded coastal ecosystems reduce storm protection and food security, and will be further impacted by climate change through ocean acidification and temperature rise. Small-scale agriculture is critical for livelihoods, but largely dependent on rainwater and therefore vulnerable to drought. It's also likely the growing tourism sector will be negatively affected by climate change.

In Vanuatu, Climate Resilient Islands will target locations across six islands and five provinces. These locations include a range of ecosystem types, with varying statuses and levels of protection. Some communities are already using restoration techniques or developing sustainable business enterprises. However, conservation actions and economic development are not always integrated.

This range of locations, therefore, presents a unique opportunity to test and develop models for holistic nature-based solutions. Because the target islands contain diverse ecosystems in relatively small areas, there is scope to mobilise multiple communities around multiple ecosystems under integrated management areas.

Sites (province)	Ecosystem
Port Navin, Cooks Bay, Ipote, South River, Unpang, Antioch, Unpongkor (Erromango)	Forest, freshwater, marine
Uri, Urviv, Akham, Krab Bay [Barrick, Potintir, Lingarak] (Malekula, Malampa)	Forest, marine, freshwater
Penoru, Loru, Vanausi, Kerepua (Santo, Sanma)	Forest, marine, freshwater, grassland
Malaliu, Sunae, Pangpang, Pele (Efate, Shefa)	Forest, marine

Work Programme Focus

The annual work programs will include:

- 1. Develop Ridge-to-Reef models** to co-manage connected ecosystems. Existing ecosystems will be protected and degraded ones restored using green tech such as climate-resilient coral farming, native seagrass and mangrove planting, and tree planting.
- 2. Establish an Indigenous Ranger Network to monitor ecosystems**, inform harvesting restrictions, land-use planning, and to control invasive species (*Merrimia peltata* and Crown-of-Thorn starfish). Rangers will draw on and promote indigenous knowledge, working within indigenous governance systems to ensure tabu and kastom systems function.
- 3. Promotion of food security**, through resilient crops, freshwater management, agroforestry and monitoring coastal resource harvesting.
- 4. Promotion of dwelling security**, through customary building processes based on the sustainable use of locally available natural materials.
- 5. Transforming tourism sector** by building resilience to crisis. We will promote enterprises that value ecosystem services over tourist levies and explore options for PES (such as blue carbon). We will develop models for 'true' ecotourism where income is supplemental, not fundamental, to conservation actions.

Stakeholders

- Department of Environment and Department of Tourism
- Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Climate Change
- Provincial government
- Cultural Centre
- Eco Livelihood
- Nakau Programme
- Restoration advisors and tourism organisations