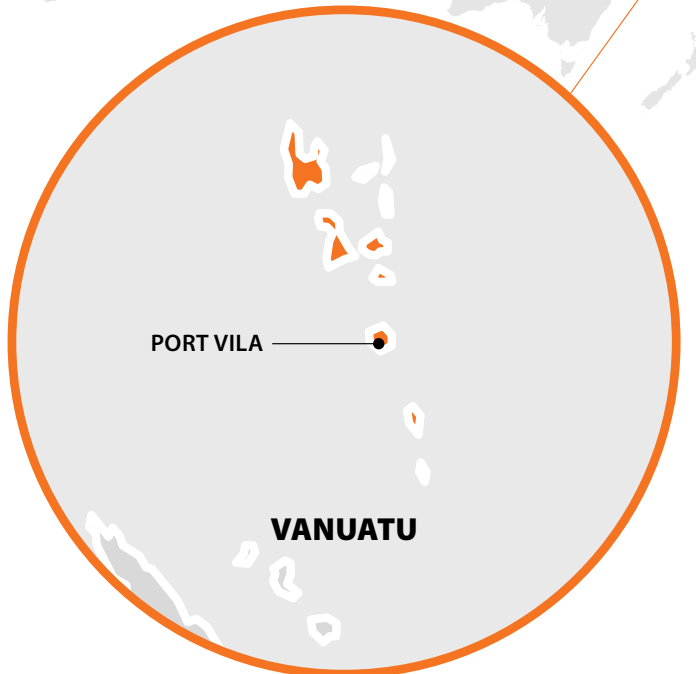




URBAN CLIMATE RESILIENCE PROJECT (UCRP)

Vanuatu | Impact Brief
(2021–2026)

THIS MEANS THE WORLD



About this report

This brief summarises the main findings of the mid-term review for the Urban Climate Resilience Project (UCRP), implementing through World Vision Vanuatu from 2021 to 2026. The review was conducted by an independent consulting firm, Insight83, from January to June 2024. This brief was prepared by Stephen Milford, ANCP impact advisor and reviewed by Dr. Nami Kurimoto, Evidence Building Advisor, and Dr. Saba Mebrahtu Habte, Impact Evidence Building Manager, from World Vision Australia (WVA). For more information, please contact Darin Roberts, WVA Country Impact Manager (darin.roberts@worldvision.com.au) or Stephen Milford (stephen.milford@worldvision.com.au).

The UCRP project is supported by the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP). The views expressed in this publication are the author's alone and are not necessarily the views of the Australian Government.

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Front cover photo:
Youth in Vanuatu like John face limited access to training and job opportunities. UCRP seeks to equip youth as leaders and change agents through Nakamal blo Yut youth clubs.



SUMMARY

Goal	All members of urban and peri-urban communities, especially the most vulnerable, understand the impacts of climate change and adapt to its pressures through economic resilience and healthy lifestyles
Timeframe	2021 to 2026
Location	Port Vila and Luganville

Vanuatu is extremely susceptible to natural disaster and the effects of climate change. Its urban and peri-urban populations face unique challenges, as increased migration from remote island communities puts strain on the available resources like clean water and fresh produce. World Vision’s Urban Climate Resilience Project (UCRP) aims to help urban and peri-urban communities – particularly the most vulnerable – in Port Vila and Luganville understand and adapt to climate change through building economic resilience and promoting healthy lifestyles. The UCRP project is supported by the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

World Vision Vanuatu commissioned an independent mid-term review in 2024 to assess progress and make recommendations for the remaining programming. The results, laid out in this report, include the following findings:

The project’s participatory research has laid foundations for the UCRP’s climate change adaptation efforts. The consultative research conducted during the project’s initial years will guide related activities in upcoming implementation years for greater relevance and effectiveness.

Savings groups and small loans are increasing income and financial access, particularly for women. Thirteen savings groups have been established, exceeding the project’s 30-month target of 10 savings groups. These groups are helping members meet household priority needs and build better savings and business habits. Savings groups supported families affected by twin Tropical Cyclones Judy and Kevin to purchase basic needs during their recovery.

“I have a goal and my thinking is now focused on reaching my goal. For example, when I look at a sewing machine, it becomes my goal, I put it down as my target. Once I reach it, I take out the money, buy the machine and sew (to sell).”

– Focus group participant

‘Nakamal blo Yut’ youth clubs are providing opportunities for youth to increase their confidence and demonstrate leadership. Barriers to youth participation were identified, including unemployment, generational disconnect and a lack of parental support.

Positive behaviour change is evident among participants in nutrition training and cooking demonstrations, such as cooking with less salt.



Florence operates two small businesses: a store and a sewing business. RISE training has motivated her with the skills and knowledge needed to grow her ventures and meet her customers’ needs.



Twin Tropical Cyclones Judy and Kevin hit Vanuatu only 48 hours apart. Many homes were destroyed, leaving affected families seeking temporary shelter in evacuation centres and makeshift dwellings.

CONTEXT

Vanuatu is ranked highest in the world for disaster risk and faces frequent and severe natural disasters including cyclones, landslides and flooding.¹ Climate change is intensifying these events and its effects have a disproportionate impact in the lives of local women, people with disabilities and youth.

Existing inequalities and patriarchal values for **women** are exacerbated in disasters, while **people with disabilities** face considerable barriers to accessing information and support services in times of disaster and are often restricted from participation in livelihood opportunities, encountering deeply entrenched stigmatisation and community exclusion. Despite 65 percent of Vanuatu's population being under the age of 25², **youth** are frequently excluded from decision making around issues that directly impact their future. Young people in Vanuatu have limited platforms to voice their priorities and face a lack of access to training and job opportunities to support themselves.

Urban areas in Vanuatu also face unique climate change vulnerabilities. Urban and peri-urban communities in Vanuatu have become a haven for those migrating from islands prone to natural disasters to seek livelihood or education opportunities. As a result of this growth, many people live in informal settlements outside municipal boundaries, where they struggle with uncertain land tenure and food security, and limited access to key services such as electricity, clean water and sanitation.

Urbanisation also leads to a loss of access to traditional materials, knowledge and leadership structures, making it more difficult to adapt to a changing climate and recover from natural disasters. Subsequent overcrowding exacerbates environmental issues and creates challenges in accessing essential supplies like food and clean water. Deteriorating nutrition has become a core concern in Vanuatu's urban communities, with many households relying on processed store-bought food with little nutritional value rather than fresh produce.

¹ Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft and The Institute for International Law of Peace and Armed Conflict (IFHV). 2021. *The World Risk Report 2021*. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/worldriskreport-2021-focus-social-protection>

² Mini Census Summary: Population Characteristics, Vanuatu National Statistics Office (2016).



UCRP participants take part in a cooking class using local ingredients and recipes that promote good nutrition.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

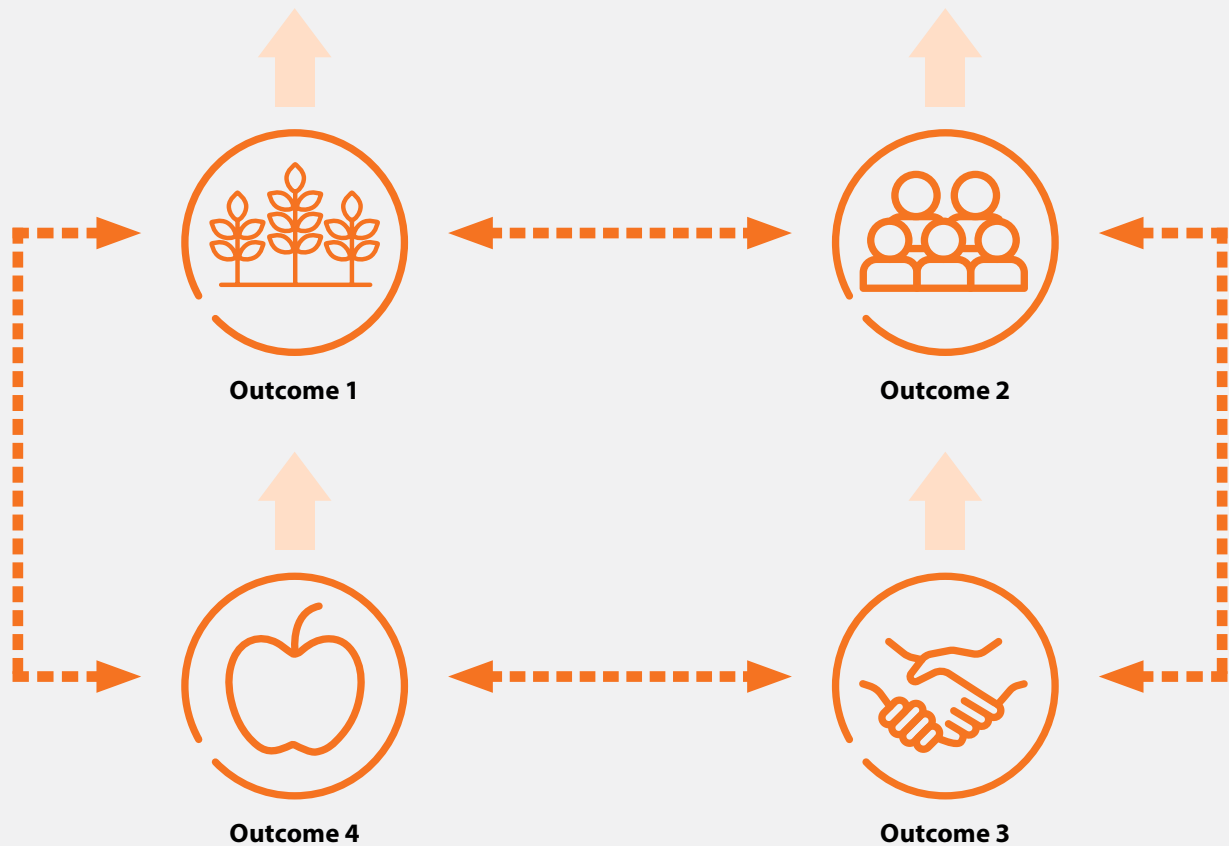
Within this challenging context, World Vision Vanuatu’s Urban Climate Resilience Project (UCRP) seeks to increase economic resilience, health and wellbeing in urban and peri-urban communities in Port Vila and Luganville. This five-year project began in July 2021 and is supported by the Australian Government through its Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP). It also forms part of World Vision Vanuatu’s larger climate-resilient livelihoods portfolio and builds on the successes and learnings from the preceding Waste Not, Want Not project, evolving its waste management focus into a broader focus on climate change.

UCRP aims to provide people with practical skills, training and resources in climate change adaptation, financial literacy, access to finance, business development and nutritional awareness – particularly among the most vulnerable. The project builds communities’ climate change adaptation capacities through evidence-based strategies like household budgeting and financial literacy training to grow economic resilience.

Youth empowerment is facilitated through **Nakamal blo Yut (NBY)** youth clubs, which promote climate change awareness, nutrition, savings and business skills alongside confidence and leadership-building activities among young people. To address nutrition challenges, the project also offers practical awareness sessions and cooking classes using local recipes and produce.

THEORY OF CHANGE

Goal: All members of urban and peri-urban communities, especially the most vulnerable, understand the impacts of climate change and adapt to its pressures through economic resilience and healthy lifestyles.



Outcome 1: Urban and peri-urban community members adopt new interventions to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

- Urban communities monitor and research emerging disaster threats
- Urban communities act to reduce disaster hazards and impact
- Increased climate change knowledge

Outcome 2: Community members, particularly women, youth, people with disabilities and their carers, experience increased income and have access to savings and other financial services.

- Diversified livelihoods, increased income and access to savings
- Women, youth, people with disabilities and their carers participate as equals
- Youth employment and productivity increases

Outcome 3: Youth are empowered and engaged as leaders and agents of change in their communities.

- Youth engage as leaders and change agents in their communities through tailored youth clubs
- Nakamal blo Yut youth clubs provide leadership, financial literacy and business development training to young people

Outcome 4: Community members, especially women, youth, people with disabilities and their carers, have the knowledge and resources to regularly prioritise healthy food options.

- Urban communities know about nutrition and healthy choices
- Backyard gardening improves availability and affordability of fresh produce

PROJECT MODELS AND APPROACHES

IMPACT+ YOUTH CLUBS (NAKAMOT BLO YUT)

The [IMPACT+ project model](#) is an integrated approach designed to equip adolescents for safe and successful transitions to adulthood, while also preparing them to become leaders of constructive social change in their communities. IMPACT Clubs are groups of 10 to 25 adolescents who meet weekly to have fun, learn and serve their community together. Club members identify community problems, brainstorm possible solutions, identify community resources, and plan and implement community service-learning projects. In UCRP, the clubs were renamed Nakamal blo Yut clubs and contextualised for Vanuatu.

RESILIENT AND INCLUSIVE SOCIAL ENTERPRISES (RISE)

The Resilient and Inclusive Social Enterprises curriculum, or RISE, is an innovative business training program designed by World Vision in partnership with [The Difference Incubator](#), especially for the Pacific region. It targets business owners among families and households, supporting them to consider, analyse and plan for improved social or community impact, gender roles and responsibilities, and disaster preparedness and risk reduction.

RISE is uniquely Pacific as it recognises the interdependency of families and communities. It acknowledges that individual businesses that do not contribute to a common good or service for the extended family or community are often viewed critically or with jealousy. Success or failure for community-scale businesses here are determined as much from their ability to plan and manage their family and community relationships, networks and culture, as it is from their ability to plan and take action in relation to their business.

INCLUSIVE SAVINGS FOR TRANSFORMATION (IS4T)

The Inclusive Savings for Transformation (IS4T) project model builds resilience for vulnerable families through the formation of self-managed savings groups of 10 to 15 people. Group members collectively save small amounts of money which accumulate and can be used for income-generating activities or to lend one another when needs arise, such as responding to family illness or children's education. World Vision Vanuatu has adapted this model to be more inclusive for the target participants in UCRP. Over two days, up to three groups are trained using simplified materials, and ongoing independent support is provided to each group by trained local agents. The IS4T model is also adapted for urban settings, with enhancements such as safe bank storage for the savings box.

EVALUATION OVERVIEW

OBJECTIVES

An independent mid-term review of UCRP was conducted in 2024 by Vanuatu-based independent consulting firm Insight84. Its primary objective was to assess progress towards the project's goal, outcomes and outputs and identify opportunities for amplifying impact. The mid-term also supported collaborative reflection and learning to inform and enrich the project's remaining implementation years through a clear set of recommendations.

METHODOLOGY

The review used a participatory process and relied on both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. It included a document review, the facilitation of consultant-led reflective processes with project staff, and field data collection, in a subset of four project communities in Luganville and Port Vila.

Key review questions included:

- To what extent does the project align with national agenda and development goals?
- How has the project met the diverse needs of beneficiaries, especially women and people with disabilities?
- What have been the positive and negative changes produced by UCRP activities, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended?
- To what extent did the project successfully adapt to constraints and challenges occurring during the implementation of the project?

In total, 11 project staff and three volunteers participated in reflection activities, 122 community members participated in quantitative data collection activities, and 178 community members contributed to qualitative data collection activities through household surveys, focus group discussions and key informant interviews.

The sampling strategy targeted half of the UCRP communities, selecting key areas in Port Vila and Luganville. Additional activities were conducted in two extra communities to gather data from parents and teachers involved with Nakamal blo Yut clubs.

LIMITATIONS

Due to budget and staff availability, only one week was available for data collection in each province. Additionally, some project activities had only just commenced or had not yet been started, meaning that limited information was available for those activities, and the 'evaluability' of quantitative indicators with causation at outcome level was weak.

Given this, the mid-term review focused mainly on component review of the relevance, effectiveness and potential for improvements in the project's interrelated activities.

FINDINGS

OUTCOME ONE:

Urban and peri-urban community members adopt new interventions to adapt to the impacts of climate change

The project has laid the foundations for climate adaptation efforts through its participatory research on the impacts of climate change within the community and corresponding adaptation strategies. This research in the project's early years will help guide and inform best practice in urban climate change awareness and adaptation. Because the research was conducted shortly before the mid-term review took place, the implementation of many of the activities planned for Outcome 1 were not yet underway – and their results could not yet be measured.

However, several existing community structures and plans were identified which could be partnered with for the project's climate change activities, and key informant interview participants were generally interested in being contacted to participate in climate change activities in the future. In addition, 33 percent of household survey respondents had personally made changes in their life as a result of climate change through actions like tree planting and building cyclone-resistant housing – actions which could be leveraged as part of the project and help set a positive trajectory for ongoing efforts.

OUTCOME TWO:

Community members, particularly women, youth, people with disabilities and their carers, experience increased income and have access to savings and other financial services

Positive changes were identified through community data collection related to Outcome 2, and UCRP's financial literacy and business support initiatives were found to be thriving. Thirteen savings groups have already been established at mid-term, exceeding the project's 30-month target of ten groups. These groups have supported 49 percent of surveyed households. Women who participate in these groups demonstrated higher savings rates than women not in savings groups (77 percent versus 51 percent, respectively). At mid-term, self-initiated and inclusive savings groups were identified in at least one project community, which could be leveraged for future programming.

Participants were enthusiastic to share how small loans through savings groups have supported their priority needs. Access to borrowing money was reported to be more valuable for members than the ability to grow savings, and loans were commonly used for house construction costs, children's school fees and businesses purposes. Training has also enhanced their business skills and understanding of core business concepts, leading to better financial goal setting and spending behaviours.

“Banks have a service charge, but here [in the savings group] we don't have it...so we save money on the fees.”

– Male focus group participant

“In the training, we talked about the importance of the customer. This has helped my business earn lots of profit. My customers have also led me to plan to establish.”

– Focus group participant

“When school was starting, I didn’t have money to pay for the things my child needed. But I asked for a loan, and I was able to pay the school fees for my first-born child on the first day of school.”

– Female focus group participant

OUTCOME THREE:

Youth are empowered and engaged as leaders and agents of change in their communities

Youth engagement is showing promising progress, and the project is on track to meet its youth-focused indicators. The target number of Nakamal blo Yut Impact Clubs have already been established and the overall project target number of young participants has almost been met at mid-term. Qualitative research participants shared examples of how the clubs helped youth increase their confidence and take up leadership opportunities.

“One of our female youths joined Nakamal blo Yut. She has stepped up and now World Vision uses her to lead others.”

– Female youth focus group participant

“One good thing is that now I’m not frightened or shy to talk in public. I can start conversations easily now.”

– Male youth focus group participant

Drawing conclusions on impact was difficult at mid-term due to limited focus group respondents with direct involvement in the youth clubs. More specific impacts were shared by young people who had participated in other project activities – particularly the savings groups. Both male and female youth were able to share how they used their savings and how the groups had helped them improve their work ethic and spending habits.

Qualitative data collection participants shared insights on the challenges facing youth in their communities, which can be used by project teams to strengthen the impact of further activities with youth. Disconnect between adults and youth was a common challenge shared, with some parents not being supportive of young people engaging in activities and others not listening to their perspectives. A lack of resources and opportunities was also highlighted, with out-of-school youth and youth unemployment being mentioned. Project staff reported that youth involvement was inconsistent and some clubs were no longer active. They plan to pivot the Impact Clubs to focusing on younger participants.

OUTCOME FOUR:

Outcome 4: Community members, especially women, youth, people with disabilities and their carers, have the knowledge and resources to regularly prioritise healthy food options

Broader awareness of nutrition programming was limited at mid-term as nutrition trainings had not yet commenced in all project communities, instead scheduled for the remaining implementation years. Those who had taken part in the project’s nutrition programming reported positive behaviour changes as a result, including cooking with less salt and sugar. Follow-up monitoring with former participants is needed to better document the impact of nutrition workshops, and to confirm anecdotal information that workshop participation may lead to positive behaviour change.

“Now we don’t spend too much money on salt. It is a small change that is good.”

– Female focus group participant

The primary food groups consumed by each target group were largely similar between the baseline and the mid-term review, as was knowledge of key nutrition-related health problems like diabetes. Dietary diversity scores showed slight declines, though these could be associated with shifts in the availability or accessibility of certain food groups due to external factors. The project identified a need for food safety training to be made accessible to women with cooking businesses, as existing courses are costly and require significant travel and time away. These are areas for consideration in the coming project years.



After attending RISE training and learning business and finance skills, Jenny set up a small shop. Her business helps others in her community avoid travelling great distances to buy daily supplies.



Budgeting and financial training has helped Jemima expand her pre-paid phone credit business and save more money for the future.

JEMIMA'S STORY

TWIN CYCLONES NO MATCH FOR JEMIMA'S AMBITION

Jemima is a 30-year-old small business owner living just outside Port Vila. After finishing school, she worked hard to boost her skills, completing a Certificate II in accounting at the Vanuatu Institute of Technology. She started her career by working as a supermarket cashier before joining the Department of Lands as an asset officer until her contract ended in 2020.

With no experience in how to run a business, but with a very big dream of opening a shop in Port Vila and expanding to Tanna Island, she started selling pre-paid phone credit as a business venture. For every 100 vatu (roughly A\$1.30) of phone credit she sold, she would make a mere five percent profit, which was barely enough to cover the administrative costs of running her business. She also struggled with customers wanting to pay later, which meant she sometimes operated at a loss and had difficulty keeping track of who owed money. On top of everything, difficult family matters made growing her business a slow process.

In 2022, World Vision Vanuatu started working in her community through the Urban Climate Resilience

Project. With her dream at the back of her mind, she quickly joined project activities such as business and social enterprise workshops, which included financial literacy and budgeting training. She also joined a project savings group to help build resilience.

With these new approaches and tools, Jemima's small business has experienced positive growth despite enduring two Category 4 cyclones in one month, which brought down phone lines and destroyed family homes and gardens. Within the one year that Jemima has been part of the activities, she has expanded her pre-paid phone credit business into basket weaving. After buying pandanus plants from women in other areas, she weaves the local plant into baskets to sell to community members and cruise boat tourists.

"Saving money makes a difference," she says. "The more you save money now, you will be able to change your living and lifestyle no matter what challenges you may come across. Keep saving so that when you achieve one dream, you can still have enough to achieve your next dream."

GENDER EQUALITY AND DISABILITY INCLUSION

The inclusion of women and people living with disabilities is a critical priority of the project and was embedded into the project's design. The extent to which these inclusion measures were implemented was evaluated through a group discussion with project staff, led by the consultants in-person in Port Vila and Luganville.

GENDER EQUALITY

Women reported numerous benefits, such as saving money and meeting household needs through savings group participation. For women already operating a business, the likelihood of successful savings patterns increased. Child-friendly spaces and consultative scheduling also supported women's involvement. However, the project needs to engage younger women more effectively by developing targeted activities for young mothers and out-of-school girls. For example, youth in one community mentioned that while young men played football together as part of the project activities, there were no activities available for young women.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

To prioritise disability inclusion, staff were trained in ways to better include people with disabilities and raise awareness around inclusion and rights. Community commitment to disability inclusion was stronger in communities that had been part of World Vision's previous disability-focused Laetem Dak Kona project. Across all communities, respondents living with disabilities raised challenges in keeping informed about project activities and plans due to mobility issues. Improving targeted communication and the provision of accessible transportation could help remove barriers to the ongoing involvement of people with disabilities and their carers.

ADAPTATION TO CHANGING CONTEXTS

Tropical Cyclones Judy and Kevin made landfall on Efate Island, where half of UCRP communities are located, within 48 hours of one another in March 2023. The mid-term review highlighted this as a major shift in context for project communities. These compounding natural disasters had a devastating effect on community members, with cyclone recovery efforts detracting from engagement in project activities.

To respond to the situation, the project quickly pivoted and re-allocated staff and resources to support in cyclone recovery. Some of these recovery activities were identified by the project team as being directly related to the project's planned outcomes. For example, seed distributions were conducted to support target communities' ability to practice climate-resilient agriculture and were identified during the mid-term's staff reflection activity as a success as they helped build community trust. Existing project structures supported the resilience of communities in response to natural disaster, with 64 members of savings groups using their group's loan fund to rebuild and buy basic needs after the twin cyclones hit.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the mid-term review for UCRP found that the project has seen some positive progress in its initial years, particularly in supporting families' economic resilience through savings groups under outcome two. Given setbacks of the twin cyclones, it is too early to draw conclusions on the impacts of certain activities under outcomes one, three and four because they had either not yet started or were only in their early stages of implementation. A greater focus on reversing vulnerability of the most disadvantaged groups (youth, especially young women; people with disability; young mothers and their children) through sustainable small business, nutrition and disaster preparation, is likely to bring the project closer to achieving intended outcomes in its final two years.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Outcome 1:

- **Engage the community to validate and implement climate change adaptation activities** with full community participation for greater relevance and contextualisation.
- **Leverage leadership and use existing community climate change leaders and structures** to enhance activity implementation, linking with existing community plans where possible.
- **Prioritise measuring the impact of climate change activities** as part of the endline evaluation, as it was too early for measurement at mid-term.

Outcome 2:

- **Sustain successful programs** like savings groups and RISE initiatives. Document success factors linking savings groups and business-focused project indicators.
- **Build the capacity of self-established savings groups**, especially those which already include vulnerable community members.

Outcome 3:

- **Deepen engagement with younger youth** in ways that prioritise their needs and interests to increase their participation in project activities.
- **Connect and engage with parents of young people**, who may be a barrier to youth engagement, to encourage their support of youth-focused activities.

Outcome 4:

- **Continue nutrition workshops and focus on expanding awareness** through different communication techniques for greater reach.
- **Develop methods for targeted follow-up with participants to document changes** in behaviour and knowledge.
- **Explore ways to offer food safety training** for community members with cooking businesses.



Urban and peri-urban areas in Vanuatu face unique climate change vulnerabilities as families migrate from islands prone to natural disasters to seek livelihood or education opportunities.

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