



REPUBLIC OF VANUATU  
NATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD ON CLIMATE  
CHANGE AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

C/O Corporate Services Unit  
Ministry of Climate Change and Natural Disasters

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## CC/DRR Project Brief Form

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| <b>Project Title:</b><br><b>PhD research titled 'When 'acts of God' strike: Faith responses and leadership in Vanuatu natural disasters'</b>                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Implementing Organisation/s:</b><br><br>Alice Banfield (student)<br>Institution: Deakin University                                                                 | <b>Project Contact Details:</b><br><br>Alice Banfield (student)<br><a href="mailto:abanfiel@deakin.edu.au">abanfiel@deakin.edu.au</a><br><br>Prof. Matthew Clarke (PhD supervisor)<br><a href="mailto:Matthew.clarke@deakin.edu.au">Matthew.clarke@deakin.edu.au</a> |
| <b>Duration:</b><br><br>August 2017 – August 2019                                                                                                                     | <b>Status:</b><br><br>Approved by university; seeking approval from NAB                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Total Funding:</b><br><br>VT 1,354,817                                                                                                                             | <b>Funding Source/s:</b><br><br>Private                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Mode of financing:</b><br><br>Private funding<br><br>Funds will be paid to local suppliers (e.g. transport providers, accommodation) and local research assistants | <b>Location &amp; site/s:</b><br><br>1. Port Vila<br>2. Tanna                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Scope:</b><br><br>National, community                                                                                                                              | <b>Project Type:</b><br><br>Research                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Sectors &amp; Themes:</b><br><br>DRR, disaster management                                                                                                          | <b>Other Government &amp; Partner Agencies:</b><br><br>NDMO                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Lead Government Department:</b><br><br>NDMO<br><br><b>Validation Letter(s) attached:</b> No                                                                        | <b>NAB Approval sought:</b> [Please tick] <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Concept stage ✓</li><li>• Site selection</li><li>• Final endorsement ✓</li><li>• To seek project funding</li></ul>                                                                 |

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| <p><b>If Yes, specify which Department</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnership/implementation</li> <li>• Continuation/extension of existing project</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Objective/s:</b> [100 words max]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What is the rationale for the project? What is the primary need, and how was it identified?</i></li> <li>• <i>Is this program building on any previous activities or policy?</i></li> </ul> <p>This research project, a <b>PhD thesis</b>, aims to explore the role of <b>faith in times of natural disaster in Vanuatu</b>. To date, limited research has been done in this area, however churches and other faith-based groups have been active in responding to disasters such as Cyclone Pam. Spiritual beliefs also play significant roles in people's resilience to, and recovery from, disaster.</p> <p>This research <b>aims to contribute to the filling of this research gap</b>, providing findings which it is hoped will be helpful for the Vanuatu humanitarian community, and particularly faith-based organisations. It is particularly relevant to areas such as coordination and disaster risk reduction.</p> <p>To design this research, <b>feedback was sought from stakeholders in Vanuatu</b> and the wider region, including consultations with personnel from the <b>Vanuatu NDMO, Vanuatu Christian Council</b>, and <b>local faith-based organisations</b>.</p> <p>Consultations have also been held with members of the Australian <b>Church Agency Network</b> who are partnering with the Vanuatu Christian Council on a disaster preparedness programme. Network members have expressed an interest in this research, and it is hoped that the research will contribute positively to their work. For example, by providing background information to help inform their Pacific theology of disaster management.</p> <p><b>Research findings will be shared with participants and other interested stakeholders</b>, with the PhD thesis available publicly, as well as more 'user friendly' methods of dissemination being used, e.g. feedback workshops or 'one-pager' briefs.</p> |                                                                                                                                      |
| <p><b>Description:</b> [1-2 paragraphs per topic max]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Outline key project components</i></li> </ul> <p>The project consists of data collection in two main areas:</p> <p>- <b>Stakeholder interviews in Port Vila:</b> This will involve 25-40 'storian style' semi-formal interviews with key stakeholders involved in disaster response and faith-based organisations in Port Vila. For example, the NDMO, the Vanuatu Christian Council, and other organisations involved in disaster management.</p> <p>- <b>Fieldwork in Tanna:</b> This will involve key informant interviews and focus group discussions (men/women/youth) in ten Tanna communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>How will it be implemented?</i></li> </ul> <p>The research student will coordinate this research, engaging local research assistants for the Tanna fieldwork. These research assistants will assist with translation into local vernacular, and with facilitation of the data collection. The research student speaks Bislama, having a long history</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                      |

of living and working in Vanuatu (including attending L'école Publique de Pango in the 1990s; living on Tanna for a year from 2013-2014; and working for an NGO in Port Vila in 2014).

- *Will the project fund local positions? Where?*

Yes, the research will fund two local research assistants in Tanna (one male, one female). These will likely be offered to young people who have had limited opportunity for higher education, but who show potential and an interest in research. The positions will be temporary positions for the duration of the fieldwork.

- *How does the project link to GoV priorities (PAA)?*

This project, with its focus on disasters and resilience, aims to closely align with GoV priorities as articulated in *THE PEOPLE'S PLAN: VANUATU 2030*, particularly the Society and Environment Pillars. It also aligns with the *NDMO Strategic Plan* and the *Vanuatu Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction Policy 2016-2030*. Further detail is provided in the next section.

- *What related projects are being undertaken in the area?*

During the consultations held in designing this research, the researcher sought to find out if any other similar research was being conducted, in order to avoid duplication or overlap. However, it does not seem any similar research is happening at this point in time.

Related projects include disaster preparedness and recovery projects in Tanna, conducted by the government, faith-based groups, the Red Cross and other non-government organisations (NGOs). Many of these stakeholders will be involved as participants in this research. There is no foreseen overlap with any of these projects, as the project described here relates to research, not service delivery. However, it is hoped that these will be complementary to each other.

The disaster preparedness programme being undertaken by the Vanuatu Christian Council and the Australian Church Agency Network – 'CAN DO' – is also related. Personnel from these agencies were consulted in the design of this research, and it is hoped that this research will provide helpful background information to inform their work. Findings from this research will be openly shared with these agencies and any other interested stakeholders.

- *Potential overlaps/duplication to be resolved*

As mentioned above, as far as the researcher is aware, there is no similar or overlapping research being conducted. In fact, since independence, there have only been two research studies on faith and disaster in Vanuatu (one on the Presbyterian church, conducted in 1992; and one on church evacuation centres in Cyclone Pam, 2015).

This research aims to help fill this gap, providing findings which will be made available to all interested stakeholders.

#### *Risk Management Strategies*

There are no major foreseeable risks to participants, researchers, the environment, or organisations as a result of this research.

It is not expected that this research will touch on any issues known to be sensitive. While this research does relate to disaster events, it will not require anyone to share information which may cause them anything more than discomfort (e.g. directly asking individuals to recount their experience of going through a particular disaster will be avoided). The focus will be faith and how this relates to disaster (e.g. in terms of providing explanations as to 'why' the disaster happened, how faith-based organisations provide assistance, what the role of faith leaders is, etc). Further, the communities selected for this research will not include any communities where fatalities have occurred in past disasters.

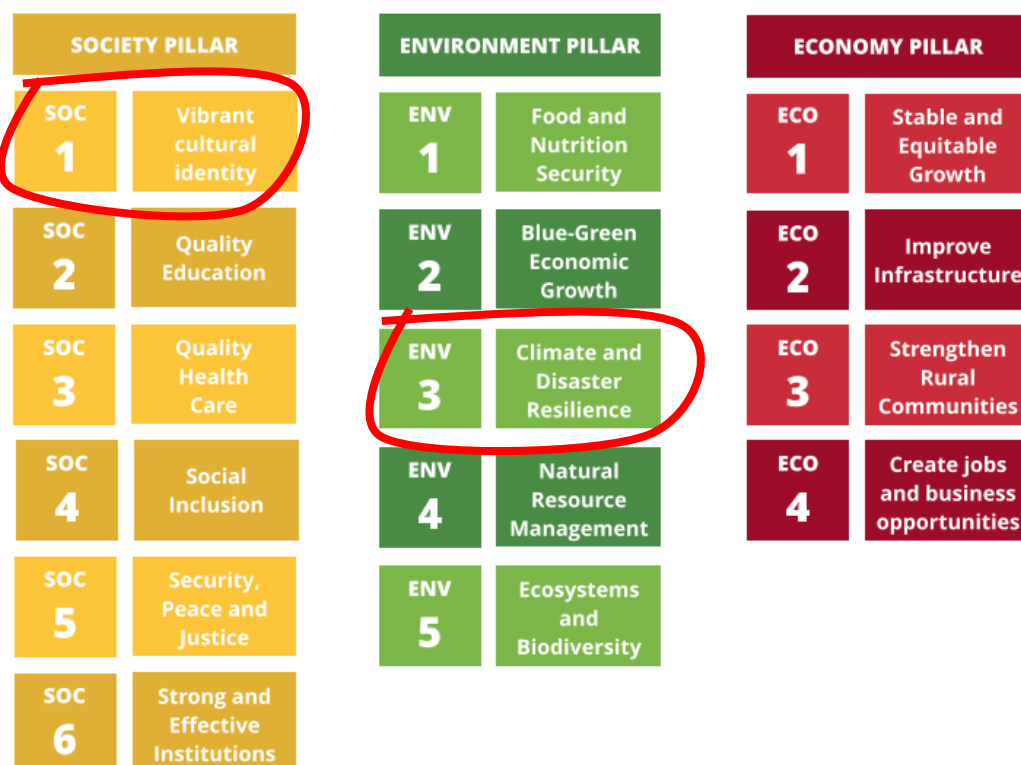
Finally, while it is not expected that this research will have any adverse effects on participants, information on local sources of psycho-social support (e.g. faith leaders or other appropriate providers) will be provided to research participants as relevant. Details of a local contact person, who is not a member of the research team, will also be provided for receipt of any concerns or complaints regarding the research.

**How does the project link to GoV priorities:** (NAB agenda, NAPA, New CC/DRR Policy....)

This project closely links with GoV priorities as outlined in the following documents:

**1. THE PEOPLE'S PLAN: VANUATU 2030 - National Sustainable Development Plan 2016 to 2030**

This plan includes three pillars: the Society Pillar; the Environment Pillar; and the Economy Pillar.



This project contributes to the first two of these pillars, particularly the **Environment Pillar** and its **third sub-goal, "Climate and Disaster Resilience."** This goal is about "a strong and resilient nation in the face of climate change and disaster risks posed by natural and man-made hazards." This research project aims to contribute knowledge relating to disasters, particularly the role of faith and faith-based organisations in this area, in order to improve humanitarian practice and strengthen resilience, thus closely aligning with this GoV priority.

This research project also contributes to the **Society Pillar**, and its first sub-goal of **"Vibrant cultural identity."** This includes *the preservation of cultural and traditional knowledge* (SOC 1.2), which this research will in part contribute to, through its documentation of beliefs relating to disaster (including traditional as well as Christian or other religious beliefs). It also includes *the strengthening of the role of churches in the provision of social services* (SOC 1.5), which this research aligns with, as it explores the role of churches in disaster management, including examining their strengths and areas for potential further strengthening.

## 2. NATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT OFFICE (NDMO) STRATEGIC PLAN (2016–2020)

This research project closely aligns with the goals of the NDMO strategic plan, in particular the following two objectives:

*Objective 2: Improve Disaster Risk Management (DRM) coordination arrangements with all stakeholders at regional, national, provincial and community levels.*

This research project will examine coordination of faith-based organisations, including how they coordinate together and with the wider humanitarian system and actors. It will also seek feedback from stakeholders on recommendations for any areas for improvement.

*Objective 3: Enhance Disaster Risk Management (DRM) operations preparedness, response and recovery for a safer, secure & resilient Vanuatu.*

This objective includes a focus on traditional resilience, which this research will examine in part (particularly in terms of traditional beliefs relating to disaster preparedness and response, as part of the wider research into spiritual beliefs and disasters in Vanuatu).

## 3. Vanuatu Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction Policy 2016-2030

This research is relevant to the above-mentioned policy, which focuses on a vision of resilience. In particular, the research is relevant to the following two policy components:

- GOVERNANCE

One of the proposed actions under the Governance section of the policy is “strengthening faith-based governance systems to implement climate change and disaster risk reduction activities via multi-stakeholder collaboration,” which this research, with its focus on faith-based organisations and their structures and leadership, is hoped to contribute to.

- TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

The policy recognizes that “People in Vanuatu have long-held traditional practices to deal with temperature and rainfall variability, cyclones and geological hazards. These have started to be systematically documented and incorporated into planning processes, and further work is urgently required. Stakeholders at provincial and community levels place high importance on respecting, recording and sharing traditional knowledge, including traditional early warning and coping mechanisms.” This research project therefore is hoped to contribute in part towards this aim, by sensitively seeking to understand traditional beliefs relating to disasters, and where this information is freely shared by its owners, recording this to preserve it for future generations. In doing so, it will make sure that appropriate cultural protocols are respected at all times.

### Progress to date and current activities: [100 words max]

A research proposal has been developed in discussion with relevant stakeholders, and this has been approved by the student’s university. NAB approval is now being sought so fieldwork (data collection) can take place.

### Outputs: [IEC Materials, guidelines & handbooks, certified trainings, resources....]

1. PhD thesis – made available to NDMO and any other interested stakeholders
2. Summarised version of findings made available in relevant format (e.g. short document, public meeting / workshop, etc.). The exact format will be determined in consultation with relevant stakeholders

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