Internal Displacement Solutions Fund

Internal Displacement Solutions Fund (IDSF)
2024 Annual Narrative Report

Joint programme title:	Advancing Durable Solutions to Internal Displacement in Vanuatu
Outcomes(s):	By 2027, people, communities and institutions are more empowered and resilient to face diverse shocks and stresses, especially related to climate variability impacts, and ecosystems and biodiversity are better protected, managed and restored.
Duration:	18 months
Start date and planned end date:	Start: 26 February 2024 End: 25 August 2025
JP Team Convening PUNO: PUNOs:	 International Organization for Migration (IOM) United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Total approved budget:	**USD 800,000.00**
Out of which:	
» Funded	USD 800,000.00
» Un-funded	*N/A*
If any additional source of funds:	
» IOM Development Fund	USD 200,000.00
» Government of Japan	USD 357,000.00

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The report has been reviewed and approved by the Joint Programme Steering Committee?	☒ YES ☐ NO [provide reason]:
The report has been reviewed by the UN Resident Coordinator?	☒ YES ☐ NO [provide reason]:

Executive Summary

The Joint Programme (JP) has made meaningful progress during this reporting period to support institutionalizing durable solutions to internal displacement in Vanuatu. Action has been taken to improve institutional arrangements, enhance data collection, and engage affected communities in the decision-making process on addressing internal displacement.

Key Results:

- **Strengthened Government Leadership and Governance:** The Government of Vanuatu has made strides in establishing institutional arrangements to address and coordinate internal displacement matters, including major progress towards the formal activation of the National Durable Solutions Taskforce (NDST) and negotiations on the preferred lead ministry to coordinate displacement matters. The development of a draft national Durable Solutions Roadmap was also undertaken in this reporting period.
- **Strategic Climate Change and Disaster-induced Displacement Policy and Planning:** In 2024, the JP supported the commencement of a draft costed implementation plan for the National Policy on Climate Change and Disaster-Induced Displacement. A multi-stakeholder workshop was held which informed the development of the draft implementation plan, and policy review. Consultations and costings for the implementation plan will be progressed in 2025.
- **Displacement Data Collection and Modelling:** The JP has progressed well in developing a predictive model for internal climate-related mobility. The JP management team worked with relevant government departments to collect national data to supplement the model's database. Consultations with various government departments are ongoing to formulate a strategy to incorporate displacement data into national systems and to strengthen existing displacement data collection tools.
- **Consultation and Community Engagement:** Consultations were undertaken in Malampa Province with 15 communities and the Provincial Government, to understand displacement experiences and potential relocation scenarios and approaches at the community level. IOM also initiated displacement tracking following the December 2024 earthquake which included indicators to inform long-term durable solutions for impacted households.
- **Displacement Solutions Roadmaps and Policy Development:** The development of site-specific Displacement Solutions Roadmaps for priority locations did not commence in 2024, although discussions with regional partners have begun to develop relocation guidelines that will provide national policy framework on relocation in Vanuatu.
- **Capacity Building and Gender Equality:** The JP contributed to strengthening government leadership on displacement solutions through the NDST, building capacity at various government levels, and ensuring active participation of internally displaced persons (IDPs), with a strong focus on gender equality in consultations, decision-making, and policy implementation.

During the reporting period, JP has faced institutional and political constraints and unforeseen events, such as the December 2024 earthquake which affected the capital, Port Vila and the southern half of Efate island, dissolution of national parliament and multiple transitions of ministers and senior civil servants during the reporting period. However, despite these challenges, the JP management team remains committed to continuing relationship-building, applying the lessons learned moving forward, and establishing sustainable outcomes that contribute to durable solutions.

1. Overview

Vanuatu faces significant sustainable development challenges due to its extreme vulnerability to climate change and disaster risks, including cyclones, flooding, landslides, drought, earthquakes, and rising sea levels. Vulnerable groups face heightened risks in displacement settings, including escalated gender-based violence, and unequal access to land, resources, and decision-making. The Government of Vanuatu has progressed displacement policy development with the establishment of the National Policy on Climate Change and Disaster-Induced Displacement 2018, but implementation of the policy remains slow. Current disaster responses typically prioritize temporary displacement, but there is a lack of long-term recovery strategies or durable solutions for affected or at-risk communities. In the Vanuatu context, displacement solutions need to include strategies for preventing displacement, not only responding, to ensure that communities are better protected against future displacement risks from climate change, geohazards, and national development.

The intended outputs for the *Advancing Durable Solutions to Internal Displacement in Vanuatu* project are:

- **Output 1:** Government of Vanuatu has strong leadership, governance and financing arrangements to identify, plan and implement solutions to displacement at the central level.
- **Output 2:** Government has a sound evidence base and displacement data collection system with which to make informed decisions to find solutions to displacement and mitigate risks of future displacement.
- **Output 3:** Local-level governance and planning mechanisms on solutions to displacement are established, with systematic and meaningful engagement of civil society and affected communities.

The JP will benefit the people of Vanuatu, including its vulnerable groups, by strengthening the Government of Vanuatu's leadership and governance to effectively plan, finance, and integrate displacement solutions into national systems. The JP strategy spans national, provincial, and community-based interventions, to build knowledge, policy and operational readiness for Vanuatu to scale up solution strategies in the future. The evidence base and displacement data systems will be improved to better inform government and community decision-making. While local-level engagement with civil society and community will ensure vulnerable groups, such as women, children, the elderly, and those with disabilities, are actively involved in shaping tailored solutions.

From the design of the JP, it was assumed there would be political commitment from the government, capacity within the government to participate and lead the program, and readiness to engage with local communities to effectively address displacement challenges. However, one of the main risks identified is the volatile political context in Vanuatu. There have been numerous changes in government and public service leadership throughout the JP's delivery, which have impacted the consistency of decision-making and follow-through on programme initiatives. The competing priorities of the constrained public service have resulted in slower programme delivery.

For this reason, it will be necessary to revise the JP's results matrix, work plan, and budget. The project management team have initiated this revision in consultation with the IDSF Secretariat to be completed by in 2025. The team is considering requesting a no cost extension from the IDSF Secretariat and JP Steering Committee to allow for more meaningful and complete outputs to the benefit of both government and communities in Vanuatu.

2. Results

2.1 Narrative

2.1.1 Overall results

[A] Outputs

Output 1: Government of Vanuatu has strong leadership, governance and financing arrangements to identify, plan and implement solutions to displacement at the central level.

The JP has supported the strengthening of leadership, governance, and institutional arrangements to identify, plan, and implement solutions to displacement at the central level (sub-output 1.1). By November 2024, after consultations with Ministers and/or Director Generals of the Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Lands, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Climate Change, new institutional arrangements were close to being formalised. All senior government officials approved a Council of Ministers (CoM) policy paper that has set out to give more institutional weight to the NDST Terms of Reference and establish an official directive for integrating durable solutions work into departmental business plans. The policy paper sets out five key actions:

1. the formal activation of the NDST;
2. mandating the Ministries included in the NDST to collaborate and ensure the NDST delivers according to its objectives;
3. development of the national Durable Solutions Roadmap for Vanuatu;
4. research and planning for the three durable solutions pathways and other preventative pathways relevant to Vanuatu (e.g. strengthening urban planning), but with a particular focus on planned relocation and evictions at the outset; and
5. assessment and identification of a lead ministry to implement the National Policy on Climate Change and Disaster-induced Displacement 2018, act as a focal point for all matters relating to displacement, internal migration, and relocation, and support the establishment of an institutional 'hub' under the lead ministry.

However, the tabling of the paper with the CoM was stalled in November 2024 due to the filing of a motion of no confidence, resulting in the dissolution of parliament and the calling of a snap national election. The paper will be submitted to the CoM in the first quarter of 2025, once January election results are finalised and cabinet positions are appointed. The departmental analysis to establish further institutional arrangements and the legislative review to ensure inclusion of solutions in national strategic planning and laws (*indicator 1f*) will be carried out once the CoM endorses the NDST. The NDST TOR is finalised (*indicator 1a),* and, despite the delay with tabling the paper with the CoM, the three meetings with full NDST membership (3 May, 20 June and 27 September) and ten meetings with NDST chairs (18 April, 23 May, 24 May, 22 July, 21 August, 26 August, 30 September, 25 October, 30 October, 13 November) have been held since the inception of the JP in February 2024. The NDST is co-chaired by IOM, and attended by RCO and UNDP as key participants. UN Women and UNICEF representatives have been regular attendees with important contributions and guidance being provided by these agencies to the Government of Vanuatu and the two PUNOs during and between meetings.

The JP has also strengthened leadership and governance by progressing the development of a costed implementation plan, policy update, and monitoring plan for Vanuatu's National Policy on Climate Change and Disaster-Induced Displacement, which will address Vanuatu's need for a multi-year financing framework for the policy (*indicator 1e*). A multi-stakeholder workshop in November brought together cross-sectoral representatives to align priorities and actions, resulting in a draft implementation plan. However, progress on consultations was delayed due to the Port Vila earthquake in December. Despite this setback, efforts continue to finalize the plan and ensure its integration into national governance frameworks. The updated policy integrates durable solutions planning and pathways (*indicator 1d*).

A five-year National Durable Solutions Roadmap was also drafted during 2024, based on numerous consultations across a range of government and non-government agencies. Identified priorities were themed and structured. Consultations were planned for the draft plan in late 2024, however due to the earthquake, these were not progressed in detail, and will re-commence in 2025.

Additionally, 15 consultations (*indicator 1b)* with local authorities, chiefs, and communities were undertaken across 6 islands in Malampa Province in October 2024 reaching 53 participants (33 men / 20 women) (*indicator 1c*) via key informant interviews and focus group discussions. Consultations were also held with the Provincial Government Secretary General, all local government administrators representing the area councils of Malampa Province and the Provincial Disaster Officer. The consultations covered community profiling, experiences of displacement, mobility/relocation trends, including seasonal migrant worker programs, traditional and formal governance structures and practices, cultural links and connections, and a future visioning exercise regarding relocation risks and options. These consultations have positively contributed to engaging, consulting, and training community, civil society, and customary leaders to inform government and community decisions and processes (sub-output 1.2).

The development of a Displacement Solutions Roadmap for priority locations and/or populations and fiscal and legislative options (sub-output 1.3) has not yet progressed. The development of rights and culture-centred guidelines and safeguards for durable solutions (return and/or local integration and/or resettlement / relocation) (sub-output 1.4), has also not been progressed, though planning has commenced. Discussions with the Pacific Climate Change Migration and Human Security regional programme have commenced, regarding their preparation of regional relocation guidelines, which will provide a baseline framework on which to build Vanuatu's national relocation guidelines.

Output 2: Government has a sound evidence base and displacement data collection system with which to make informed decisions to find solutions to displacement and mitigate risks of future displacement.

There has been meaningful progress to the development of a profile of historical, current and future climate and disaster-induced displacement types, locations and lessons learned across Vanuatu, considering slow and rapid-onset hazards (sub-output 2.1). In 2024, the JP contracted Dr. Bryan Jones, who was a co-author of the World Bank's Groundswell Report (Part I and Part II), to conduct predictive quantitative modeling on climate displacement and mobility patterns in Vanuatu. Dr. Jones's INCLUDE model estimates human mobility as a result of climate impacts against the varying Representative Concentration Pathways[1] and Shared Socioeconomic Pathways[2] climate scenarios. By integrating climate scenarios, demographic trends, and environmental risks, the model will provide evidence-based projections to inform government planning, resource allocation, and policy development, ensuring that responses to climate-induced mobility are strategic, proactive, and well-informed.

As part of the NDST meeting on June 20, the project managers presented a briefing on this predictive modelling to explain the approach and to seek any preliminary feedback to share with Dr. Jones. Following this meeting, Dr. Jones conducted a preliminary analysis and literature review and confirmed the model's feasibility for the Vanuatu context but also identified key data gaps. To address the gaps, UNDP and IOM undertook consultations with the Vanuatu Bureau of Statistics, Vanuatu Meteorology and Geohazards Division, Vanuatu National Disaster Management Office (NDMO), and Department of Urban Planning and Development (DUAP) to secure nationally owned data to supplement globally available sources. By the end of 2024, the modelling work had positively progressed with completion scheduled for Quarter 2 2025. The report that will outline climate change and disaster risk effects on future displacement (*indicator 2b*) will be progressed in the next reporting period.

Displacement data collection systems are in the process of being established and integrated with government systems data, such as population demographics and risks/vulnerability indicators, for development planning (sub-output 2.2). The project management team commenced consultations with relevant stakeholders on the national government systems that could support the collection of displacement data. These include the national digital identification system, the national village registry, the community profiling system and systems of NDMO. Based on consultations, an initial scoping and review of the front end of the data systems has commenced, with a view to integrating displacement indicators and data collection. The number of

[1] Van Vuuren, D.P., Kriegler, E., O'Neill, B.C., Ebi, K.L., Riahi, K., Carter, T.R., Edmonds, J., Hallegatte, S., Kram, T., Mathur, R. and Winkler, H., 2014. A new scenario framework for climate change research: scenario matrix architecture. Climatic Change, 122(3), pp. 373-386.

[2] O'Neill, B.C., Kriegler, E., Riahi, K., Ebi, K.L., Hallegatte, S., Carter, T.R., Mathur, R. and van Vuuren, D.P., 2014. A new scenario framework for climate change research: the concept of shared socioeconomic pathways. Climatic change, 122(3), pp. 387-400.

government data systems that reflect displacement and solutions data (*indicator 2a*) will be satisfied in the next reporting period.

Output 3: Local-level governance and planning mechanisms on solutions to displacement are established, with systematic and meaningful engagement of civil society and affected communities.

The project management team plans to assist strengthening the capacity of local authorities in gender-inclusive durable solutions planning in areas of origin/return to prevent repeat disaster displacement (sub-output 3.1). Similarly, the team will support local governments to pilot gender-sensitive durable solutions, approaches, and interventions, and improve implementation practices (sub-output 3.2). However, the work on both outputs did not progress in this reporting period.

After the impacts of the 17 December 2024 earthquake on greater Port Vila, IOM commenced displacement tracking for households utilising IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix. This activity will continue into 2025 and directly informs durable solutions options and the identification of households in critical need of solutions, such as those that remain in hazardous areas close to earthquake-triggered landslides. The displacement tracking process includes the collection of household demographics, and emergency needs, but also collects information about long-term options, barriers to returning home, and solutions preferences. The two PUNOs have also collaborated on supporting the Government of Vanuatu to carry out UNDP's Housing and Building Damage Assessment (HBDA) in the affected area. Though this has not been directly funded by the JP, the PUNO project managers were directly involved in the development of the assessment questionnaire and integrated indicators that will assist to inform durable solutions options for impacted households in the medium- to long-term.

[B] Outcomes:

The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) outcome reads that *by 2027, people, communities and institutions are more empowered and resilient to face diverse shocks and stresses, especially related to climate variability impacts, and ecosystems and biodiversity are better protected, managed and restored*. The associated indicator refers to the number of countries that develop rights-based national policies to address climate mobility, with the means of verification being a National Durable Solutions Framework for Vanuatu.

This outcome is being achieved via two means. First, the update of the National Climate Change and Disaster-induced Displacement Policy and its costed implementation plan will integrate more detailed durable solutions and climate mobility action items and allocate responsibility and implementation costing. Second, in 2024 a national Durable Solutions Roadmap / Framework was drafted based on scoping and consultations with the NDST.

Collectively, the UNSDCF outcome has progressed to 50 per cent completion. Consultations were underway with NDST chairpersons on the draft roadmap document, but the December 2024 earthquake stalled the consultations. However, the discussions will recommence in 2025 and adjustments to the roadmap will be made based on the issues and learnings raised by the Vanuatu earthquake, particularly around the solutions pathway of resilient housing.

2.1.2 IDSF Specific priorities and values

[A] Anchoring of JP in broader solutions engagement

The JP is directly anchored to, and supporting, Vanuatu's broader efforts to address displacement solutions. This is achieved by supporting the strengthening of the National Policy on Climate Change and Disaster-Induced Displacement (2018) and supporting the formalisation of the NDST's mandate. The progress and priorities of the JP progress discussed at NDST meetings and with the NDST chairpersons in bilateral meetings. They are also discussed within relevant coordination mechanisms, where government agencies, UN partners, and civil society organizations collaborate. Through this platform, the JP informs, and is informed by, national discussions, ensuring alignment with broader policy priorities and other development work conducted in Vanuatu. The JP also complements ongoing climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction initiatives, ensuring a coordinated and integrated approach to resilience-building.

[B] JP results related to strengthen Government leadership and capacity on solutions:

A key component of the IDSF approach in Vanuatu is to build governance mechanisms so that decision-making on the root causes of displacement and long-term solutions are formally integrated into government-based decision-making and operational planning. For that reason, the NDST has been formed and supported via the IDSF JP, with this coordinating body taking the responsibility to lead this area of work. IDSF funds support the UN partners to continue providing technical guidance for each NDST meeting and to the Chairpersons on their roles and decisions. This technical guidance has also included efforts to consolidate data related to internal displacement to better inform decision-making with the establishment of more formalised data strategies intended for 2025.

Capacity building has also commenced following an awareness workshop on the National Climate Change and Disaster-induced Displacement Policy. The policy implementation plan development will see provincial government and Area Council consultations occur, with further capacity building planned for different levels of government. Provincial leadership on local matters relating to durable solutions (e.g. community relocation planning) will be facilitated and capacity building for local authorities is planned as part of the JP.

[C] Action taken to ensure participation of IDPs in the Joint Programme delivery:

In 2024, the participation of IDPs or at-risk communities in the JP has been largely facilitated through community-based consultations, which will continue in 2025 across all provinces of Vanuatu. Consultations in MALAMPA Province were undertaken by the JP team to ensure voices from remote communities who are facing climate and disaster-related challenges are brought into the national conversation and inform decisions, processes, and structures that aim to establish support for durable solutions, such as planned relocation. During planned implementation of community-based interventions in selected pilot sites, IDPs or at-risk communities will be heavily involved in the design, delivery, and monitoring of the JP. This will likely be facilitated through consultation with the majority of community members, and engagement with customary governance structures (e.g. village council of chiefs), as well as women's groups and other representatives of vulnerable groups.

[D] Catalytic impact of the JP:

All activities within the JP are designed to have a catalytic impact, as they contribute to foundational actions that will continue to be developed into the future. The designation of the NDST, and the establishment of an institutional hub to coordinate on displacement matters within the Government of Vanuatu are clear examples. The Displacement Policy Implementation Plan will also be fundamental to integration of displacement solutions across government. The JP has also been a catalyst to operationalising other concepts within government, like collaborations with the Loss and Damage Informal Working Group and Ministry of Climate Change Loss and Damage staff, which have led to leveraging complementary planning and funding. The JP's relocation pilot exercises will be aiming to inform the design of replicable processes for communities at risk of displacement.

[E] Integration of gender equality in the programme delivery and results:

Gender equality has been integrated into the JP delivery in the following ways:

- Community-based consultations in MALAMPA Province included female representation in each session. In some locations, like in one high risk community in the Maskelynes group, women-only focus group discussions were held as a priority to ensure female voices were captured in the data.
- NDST meetings include female representation from NAB Secretariat, NDMO, Vanuatu Association of NGOs, and UN agencies. UN Women is specifically invited to attend these meetings to ensure gender issues are integrated into every discussion and decision.
- The Displacement Policy capacity building workshop included 50 per cent female representation and gender-focussed organisations, such as Vanuatu Young Women for Change and UN Women.
- Vanuatu earthquake response and recovery have resulted in a close working relationship of Gender and Protection Cluster, and the cluster will continue to be consulted throughout the IDSF programming.
- Gender-related indicators were collected as part of the displacement tracking, intention surveys, and HBDA to inform longer-term solution planning.

2.2 Indicator-based performance assessment

Please see supplemental Excel document.

2.3 Constraints, adjustments, lessons and good practices

The JP has encountered constraints that shaped its implementation and required adaptive measures to ensure its relevance, effectiveness, and project delivery. One of the primary constraint areas has been **political challenges and government engagement**. While the Government of Vanuatu representatives with whom the JP team is liaising expressed commitment to the issue of displacement solutions, these personnel have experienced many competing priorities throughout the year, which has made it difficult to secure active participation and commitment to digest and think through the complexity of issues being discussed. This means that actions requiring decision-making at a senior management level are often stalled if representatives do not respond to the project management team's requests for feedback, despite numerous follow-ups. This challenge has also been compounded by a history of political instability, which was perpetuated in 2024 with the filing of a motion of no confidence, resulting in the dissolution of parliament and the calling of a snap national election, along with court cases and several cabinet and senior civil servant reshuffles during this reporting period alone. As a result, it has been difficult to gain traction with government partners and stakeholders on the direction for long-term planning and sustained government involvement due to numerous leadership and civil servant transitions. In addition to this, the breadth of internal displacement as a development topic to a country only in the nascent stages of comprehensively addressing displacement made it challenging to identify an implementation starting point. The discussions and analyses were often hamstrung around issues of customary land tenure, which is an inherently complex and politically sensitive matter that requires careful navigation and expertise, and an appetite to follow through on managing the risks associated with this area of work.

There have also been constraints to the JP implementation **from decision-making and institutional capacity challenges**. Government of Vanuatu resources are already stretched thin, meaning government officials are required to take on many responsibilities, so the NDST has not been able to be a consistent priority that is owned by the government. Matters that are considered urgent and visible are prioritised in a fairly reactive manner by the government, with this pattern exacerbated by multiple, consecutive disasters over the past five years. As a result of competing priorities, attendance to NDST meetings has been inconsistent, which has delayed consensual decision-making that supports the durable solutions initiatives. NDST Chairs found it challenging to agree on a final approach to the Council of Ministers paper for example, with the paper going through around 10 iterations over 10 months, each time seemingly finalised. Institutional capacity challenges were also experienced at the Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) level, with limited staffing resulting in challenges to dedicate RCO staff to strategically lead the project.

It was also difficult to **identify a clear and present beneficiary group in Vanuatu**, with whom to collaboratively pilot durable solutions, because the country is without a comprehensive and consolidated narrative or displacement profile, boasts limited protracted displaced populations and has a climate and disaster vulnerability profile in which every community across the archipelago experiences short-term displacement or is at risk of displacement. This has raised important questions about the selection criteria for the targeted beneficiaries, and how to specifically measure and address the more complex impacts of the repeated, pendular, short-term displacement which reduces overall resilience and vulnerability. A vulnerability assessment framework at the national level, which could have provided clarity, has been put on hold due to limited data sharing between ministries and agencies. Without this clarity, the NDST again tended to attempt tackling large and complex challenges that were difficult to untangle and narrow from broader development issues in a short period, leaving limited actionable decision-making or contradictions in decisions. It was also difficult to ascertain what durable solutions in Vanuatu's context meant, considering the breadth of the issue and the notion that the concept had myriad applications, many of which were being addressed through other development channels.

Underlying the constraints faced by the government engagement and institutional capacity are **implementation challenges** related to the project design. The JP management team has recognized that this

particular area of development demands more of a time investment, than a financial investment. So far, this real investment has been in relationship-building with government counterparts and laying political groundwork that are critical for long-term impact, which has not yet translated into immediate, tangible outputs. The low delivery rate does not accurately reflect the substantial effort needed to build government buy-in and sustain engagement. As the project progressed, it became clear to the JP team that a more comprehensive scoping was required in the design phase to better capture the implementation constraints and to allow for increased adaptability.

Despite the constraints, the JP management team has identified important lessons that it will apply to the implementation during 2025. Specifically, the lessons are:

- **Incremental progress over large, complex decisions.** Breaking down JP decisions into smaller, more actionable steps, the NDST will be able to lead the implementation more effectively.
- **A clear quantitative and qualitative evidence base is crucial.** This lesson has reinforced the need to support establishing this evidence base as identified in Output 2. The JP management team will ensure the collected data is centrally housed with user-friendly access.
- **Government engagement and buy-in takes time.** Building ownership and commitment cannot be rushed, particularly when government capacity is stretched. The JP management needs to account for this time and focus on simultaneous implementation where possible.
- **Comprehensive scoping and a clear direction are key.** Given the relatively short time frame of the JP and its catalytic nature, comprehensive scoping allows the NDST and JP management team to focus on a specific component of durable solutions to ensure meaningful and sustainable results.

The experience in Vanuatu highlights the complexities of implementing durable solutions in a politically fluid environment. The political challenges, compounded by instability and shifting government priorities, have necessitated adaptive strategies to progress implementation. Institutional capacity constraints further underscore the difficulty of achieving sustained engagement, emphasizing the need for incremental decision-making and a strong evidence base. It is acknowledged that one year into implementation of the JP, activities and budget spend should be further progressed considering the time frame. However, the JP management team remains committed to continuing relationship-building, applying the lessons learned moving forward, and establishing sustainable outcomes that contribute to durable solutions, and believes that traction now gained will produce worthwhile results.

2.4 A Results Story

The problem or challenge

On 17 December 2024, a 7.3 magnitude earthquake struck the southern part of Efate Island, Vanuatu, and its capital, Port Vila. The event resulted in 14 deaths, caused major damage to national infrastructure, including roads, commercial buildings, housing and sewerage systems, disrupted communication networks, and created significant psycho-social trauma for the broader community. Additionally, major landslides around the capital caused secondary hazards, such as making ports and roads inaccessible, and a large volume of rubble within residential communities made it difficult for some households to rebuild in their original locations.



Figure 1: Rubble after demolition of a collapsed building in Port Vila city centre (Source: UNDP, 2024)

Action through the joint programme

The JP team from IOM and UNDP have been key contributors, along with International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC), to the Shelter Cluster / Working Group in the earthquake response and recovery periods, and IOM has continued to lead the Displacement and Evacuation Centre Management (DECM) Working Group throughout this period. The project managers assisted in linking the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning with the DECM Working Group and Shelter Cluster to ensure the government was a member of international partner discussions. The ongoing earthquake displacement tracking by IOM has contributed to collecting data to inform long-term solutions to displacement. The tracking integrates additional indicators on barriers to returning home, intended way forward of the displaced persons, and longer-term needs that immediate relief items and support cannot address. This data will be used to support communities to find durable solutions. UNDP's Housing Building and Damage Assessment, co-designed with IOM and IFRC, also incorporated indicators to guide longer-term solutions, as well as design of an IEC package that will be used to support longer-term construction training in communities, to assist self-builders to understand techniques and skills to build back better and safer.



Figure 2: Displacement tracking team surveying a site in Mele Area Council where residents will not be able to rebuild in their original locations due to a major landslide (Source: IOM, 2024)



Figure 3: Severely damaged homes on hillside in Mele Area Council where residents will not be able to rebuild in the original location (Source: IOM, 2024)



Figure 4: Severely damaged homes on hillside in Mele Area Council where residents will need to demolish and rebuild (Source: IOM, 2024)



Figure 5: Displacement tracking team speaking with a household affected by the earthquake (Source: IOM, 2024)

Result

As a result of the IDSF JP, facilitating discussions with the Government of Vanuatu on longer-term solutions to the impacts of the earthquake and the ability to address root causes of displacement risk, particularly in relation to housing, has become more efficient and pragmatic. Housing resilience packages will now be integrated into the IDSF outputs at the community-level. There are also discussions that households that are unable to rebuild in their original location due to landslide impacts and secondary risks could be brought on as a pilot site for relocation planning and interventions within the IDSF programme design. Because the earthquake has impacted parts of the township's liveability and starkly highlighted the hazardous nature of

Port Vila's residential areas, the project managers have also progressed discussions with the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning to undertake a relocation risk analysis for Greater Port Vila to inform future master planning. The JP has also been instrumental in strengthening the agency partnership between IOM and UNDP, which has been beneficial in post-earthquake operations as both are the main agencies providing technical expertise on housing as part of the earthquake response.

Lessons

The experience underscored the need for multi-hazard mapping, followed by planning and implementable actions at community level, to inform safer reconstruction and future urban planning. It became evident that while the Government of Vanuatu is committed to addressing long-term displacement causes, this is a complex and relatively uncharted area requiring a cautious, evidence-based approach. The government has expressed concerns about setting unachievable precedents and is hesitant to act on relocation due to underlying land tenure complexities.

Ensuring the visibility of affected communities emerged as a key factor in decision-making. The government remains risk-averse in supporting specific groups for fear of broader equity concerns among other impacted communities. However, relocation from hazardous areas is increasingly recognized as necessary, and the JP will continue to support the government in developing clear methodologies and frameworks for action. Strengthening government capacity to navigate these challenges will be essential for future displacement solutions and disaster resilience strategies. Moving forward, the JP will emphasize proactive planning for relocation and risk assessments to enhance urban resilience in high-risk areas like Port Vila.

3. Other Assessments or Evaluations

Not applicable.

4. Resource mobilization

The IOM Development Fund finances a parallel project to the IDSF JP's activities called 'Strengthening Durable Solutions and Disaster Risk Reduction in Vanuatu and Tonga', with USD 200,000 allocated to IOM. With a 33 per cent delivery rate, this project has been supporting workshops, consultations, and the development and review of Vanuatu's National Climate Change and Disaster-induced Displacement Policy implementation plan. The Government of Japan has also committed USD 357,000 in operational and staffing costs, primarily to finance technical support to NDST and to provide capacity building to relevant stakeholders. Some of the funding will also be put towards developing displacement data tools, which will complement durable solutions planning, though the specific scope of these tools is yet to be developed. Plans to utilize these funds to complement and co-finance JP activities are set to be implemented in 2025.

Another key achievement in the area of resource mobilisation is confirmation of funding support from the Australian Government of an Australia Assists deployee to join the team as a Solutions Adviser in 2025 for at least 5 to 6 months. This Solutions Adviser will be employed by IOM but will also report to the RCO. The position will support the JP as part of the broader Action Agenda on Internal Displacement in Vanuatu. This support was advocated for, and facilitated by the Office of the Special Adviser and the RCO.