

Vanuatu Shelter Cluster

Tropical Cyclone Pam Response Lessons Learned, June 2015



(Photo Courtesy Maria Moita)



In Vanuatu, the Shelter Cluster is led by the Government of the Vanuatu Public Works Department and co-led by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

This report was prepared by IFRC and reflects Lessons Learned process and workshop organised end of May 2015.

1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to capture the key lessons of the shelter cluster response to Tropical Cyclone Pam. These lessons are intended to inform the broader National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) lessons learned workshop, and the future development of the shelter cluster in Vanuatu.

2. Introduction

Tropical Cyclone (TC) Pam struck Vanuatu from the 12 -14 March 2015. The category 5 cyclone caused widespread damage across the archipelago. The cyclone's eye passed close to Efate Island, where the capital Port Vila is located, with winds estimated to have reached 250kmph and gusts peaking at 320kmph.

An estimated 188,000 people have been affected by the cyclone – approximately 50 per cent of the country's population. In excess of 20,000 houses were damaged / destroyed, whilst on some islands (Tongoa, Emae and Erromango) more than 90% of houses were reported as damaged. Thousands of people were temporarily displaced to makeshift evacuation centres such as schools, churches and community buildings.

There was no shelter cluster in Vanuatu prior to TC Pam, although the NDMO had requested IFRC support to establish one some two weeks prior to the event. Following TC Pam, the shelter cluster was immediately established within the existing NDMO cluster framework as a “working group” of the logistics cluster.

However, the shelter cluster quickly became autonomous from the logistics cluster and for all intents and purposes operated as standalone cluster throughout the response. However, there was no operational Government of Vanuatu (GoV) lead agency for the shelter cluster until after the immediate emergency response phase¹. Until this time, IFRC undertook all shelter co-ordination activities, with support from various shelter cluster partners. The key findings and recommendations derived from the lessons learned exercise highlight the importance of having an established GoV authority as operational lead agency for the shelter cluster.

The shelter cluster comprises over 35 partner organisations including the GoV, IFRC, UN agencies, Vanuatu Red Cross, international and local non-government organisations and faith based organisations.

The objective of the shelter cluster is to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the shelter response by co-ordinating the numerous partners whom collectively form the shelter cluster, and also liaising with the GoV, UN Agencies and other clusters. Such co-ordination involves developing and disseminating shelter policies, standards, information management, agency areas of activity etc., with respect to the shelter response to TC Pam.

3. Lessons Learned Methodology

The lessons learned of the shelter cluster following TC Pam were captured at a half day workshop conducted at the Public Works Department (PWD) in Port Vila on the 28th of 2015.

The workshop was attended by 24 persons representing 17 organisations (Appendix A).

Workshop participants examined the following questions:

¹ The publication of the Humanitarian Action Plan in May 2015 designated the Public Works Department as Shelter Cluster lead, with IFRC as cluster co lead

- What has the shelter cluster achieved in response to TC Pam?
- What has worked well with respect to the shelter cluster response to TC Pam?
- What could be improved with respect to the shelter cluster response to TC Pam, and how could this be achieved?

From this the key findings and recommendations were identified and prioritised.

Whilst the workshop has identified and prioritised key findings and recommendations, the methodology is limited due to the lack of explicit provincial and community level input.

4. What has the shelter cluster achieved in response to TC Pam?

In response to TC Pam, shelter cluster partner agencies have distributed the following major emergency shelter and shelter related non-food items:

- Tarpaulins – 21,931.
- Shelter Tool kits – 8,747.
- Kitchen Sets – 8,867.
- Blankets – 14,427.

The Humanitarian Action Plan targets 18,000 households to receive some form of emergency shelter assistance. Notwithstanding some gaps emerging, the shelter cluster has (or will) largely achieve this target.

In addition, the shelter cluster has and / or is undertaken the following activities:

- Deployed an IFRC coordination team to support the Shelter Cluster comprising one Coordinator and an Information Manager.
- Held tri-weekly then weekly cluster meetings in Port Vila.
- Held two regional cluster meetings in Lenakel (Tanna).
- Developed and maintained the 3W (who, what, where) matrix to map shelter activities progress and identify gaps / duplications.
- Developed a strategic advisory group and technical working groups as required (e.g. timber, milling, fixing kits, safe shelter awareness training).
- Conducted a Shelter & Settlement vulnerability assessment (REACH).
- Undertaken Shelter recovery activities planning, mapping and implementation.
- Ongoing development of the shelter cluster recovery strategy.
- Co-ordinated with other clusters (e.g. education, WASH, protection).
- Worked closely with the NDMO and PWD to secure the sustainability of Vanuatu Shelter Cluster beyond the TC Pam response.

5. What has worked well with respect to the Shelter Cluster response to TC Pam?

- a) Quick establishment of the shelter cluster, starting from scratch, and placing it clearly within the NDMO cluster system.
- b) Whilst the establishment of an official shelter cluster was new to Vanuatu, its operation was assisted greatly (albeit indirectly) at Provincial and community level through well organised and managed Provincial and community disaster committees (CDC). In addition, communities themselves commenced reconstruction of emergency shelter / housing immediately. This is a key strength of the Vanuatu humanitarian response mechanism and needs to be leveraged off by the shelter cluster to ensure efficient use of resources and avoid duplication. However, it was also noted that CDC's were not present in every community prior to TC Pam and further work is required to identify gaps and ensure trained CDC's are in place.
- c) Clear and early division of geographical working areas to Agencies (notwithstanding some gaps in Port Vila) and also evacuation centres provided clarity and supported planning at Agency level.
- d) Good level of co-operation, openness, sharing of resources and flexibility between different cluster partners such as GoV, donors, NGO's who were considered to be "solution orientated". This was evidenced by the generally successful distributions of emergency shelter and NFIs, and also following the "protest" at NDMO.
- e) Information management. The 3W's and allied mapping enabled identification of duplications and gaps, resulting in positive collective action taken by cluster partners to resolve issues. Information is consistently updated and shared, (although there were some concerns raised regarding the accuracy of the maps, leading to isolated instances of people being sent to the wrong NGO).
- f) Consistency of shelter cluster meetings (time and location), and low "churn" of shelter cluster personnel, made for a predictability of the operations of the shelter cluster.
- g) Good link between the shelter cluster and camp management working group who collaborated (in association with other clusters) to facilitate the prompt, proper and orderly closure of evacuation centres.
- h) Basic shelter trainings conducted at community level in safe shelter awareness (although this has not been implemented widely as yet).
- i) Commenced establishment of a regional shelter cluster in Tanna.

6. What could be improved with respect to the shelter cluster response to TC Pam, and how could this be achieved? –

Key Findings and Recommendations

The key findings and recommendations are identified and prioritised from the lessons learned workshop. They are also categorised against the NDMO key themes provided separately. The key findings are not mutually exclusive, and adoption of the recommendations will identify overlaps to aid the efficiency of implementation.

No.	NDMO Theme	Finding	Recommendation	Action
1.	Coordination / Surge Capacity Mechanism.	The shelter cluster was characterised by expatriate personnel with a noticeable shortage of Ni-Vanuatu input and participation. This is not conducive to “two-way” knowledge transfer, or in-country knowledge retention due to the temporary nature of international staff.	<i>Shelter cluster to increase Ni-Vanuatu presence, supported by associated training and peer exchanges. This be further strengthened by recruitment within PWD of a local permanent shelter cluster officer. IFRC to provide shelter cluster training, and facilitate peer exchange where possible.</i>	<i>PWD, IFRC.</i>
2.	Preparedness.	Shelter cluster partners experienced delays and subsequent experience of importing relief items. This ultimately reduced the efficiency of the emergency shelter response.	<i>Shelter cluster to develop an emergency response contingency plan, in support of NDMO wide contingency planning, including a pre-positioning strategy for key items such as tools, tarpaulins, rope and nails.</i>	<i>PWD, IFRC.</i>
3.	Preparedness.	There is a need for awareness raising and / or training with respect to the integration of building codes with traditional construction methods and the use of local materials for shelter.	<i>Shelter cluster to develop technical shelter guidelines which identifies and integrates relevant provisions of the building code, traditional and modern safe shelter awareness messaging and mapping of various housing typologies. Such guidelines to be informed by experiences from other Pacific countries.</i>	<i>PWD, IFRC.</i>
4.	Information Management.	Information Management sources and requirements of the shelter cluster were exemplified by out of date census information that misinformed the initial assessments, and too many expensive and unnecessary assessments, particularly given that assessment data was largely available from PDCs / CDCs.	<i>Shelter cluster to develop (in conjunction with NDMO) and maintain an information management methodology including baseline national demographics at island / village level, (as collected through the PDCs and CDCs). Further, develop systems (in conjunction with NDMO) to ensure that assessment data collected by PDCs / NDCs is accessed in a timely manner.</i>	<i>PWD, IFRC, NDMO.</i>
5.	Coordination.	The initial lack of a Government of Vanuatu lead Agency for the Shelter cluster diminished the link between shelter activities and existing projects –e.g. the GoV	<i>PWD to mainstream shelter cluster activities within its operations and identify opportunities for integration with broader GoV priorities.</i>	<i>PWD.</i>

		infrastructure business plan.		
6.	Operations of the National Cluster System.	The governance structure of the Shelter cluster needs to be clarified / rationalised between the emergency phase and the recovery phases. There are a number of GoV Ministries / Departments involved in housing beyond emergency response, but it is not clear how they come together.	Shelter cluster develop a clear ToR as to extent of its remit and who leads / is involved at each stage of the disaster management cycle (preparedness, response and recovery), and how this interfaces with longer term development planning in Vanuatu.	PWD, IFRC, UN-Habitat and relevant GoV Auth.
7.	Operations of the National Cluster System.	There is a need to enhance to evacuation centre preparedness in terms of identification of centres, physical standards and management training. There is a need for a functioning camp coordination and camp management cluster with clear delineation from the shelter cluster.	Camp Coordination and Camp Management cluster to be formalised and tasked to take overall responsibility for evacuation centres. CCCM cluster develop standards / guidelines for physical assessment and management of evacuation centres, and list of approved centres. Conduct evacuation centre management training.	NDMO.
8.	Preparedness.	Generally households commenced rebuilding their houses immediately after TC Pam. This highlighted that shelter early recovery needs should be included in shelter cluster discussions much earlier in the response.	Shelter cluster to develop a shelter early recovery guidance strategy that can be quickly and easily adapted, modified and accepted by shelter cluster partner agencies for implementation.	PWD, IFRC.
9.	Gender and Protection.	The gender sensitivity of the shelter cluster should be formalised.	Shelter cluster to ensure gender considerations are articulated in the shelter strategy. .	PWD, IFRC.
10.	Coordination.	Earlier in the response there were too many shelter co-ordination meetings (three per week) with unclear objectives. Allied to this, the shelter cluster demand for Agency information was onerous early in the response.	Shelter cluster to review meeting and information management objectives. Standard operation procedure to be developed to the balance need for meetings / information, and the practicality of attending / providing same.	PWD, IFRC.

7. Appendix A - Workshop Attendees

	Name	Position	Department/Organisation
1	Xavier Genot	Vanuatu Shelter Cluster Co. Lead	IFRC
2	Subesh Prasad	Regional shelter programme Officer	IFRC
3	Peter Lawther	Regional Shelter Coordinator	IFRC
4	Rebecca Webb	Communications	IFRC
5	Dick Abel	Principal Architect	PWD
6	Astrid Vachette	Phd candidate	JCU
7	Alberto Preaso	PM	IOM
8	Troy Dooley	PO	IOM
9	Andrew Peacock	Shelter Ad	CARE INTERNATIONAL
10	Brad Watson	Team Leader	SALVATION ARMY
11	Jone Roqare	Deputy Director	PWD
12	Jocelyn Longhman	Team Leader	ADRA
13	Siobhan Talty	AVID Volunteers	CARE INTERNATIONAL
14	Damian Farrel	Disability Desk	M.JCS
15	Augustine G	DMO	VRCS
16	Joel J		NZHC
17	Jean D.Dragon		UN HABITAT
18	Kylie Mullins	Disaster Programs	ACT OF PEACE
19	Muchael Garoe	Project Co-ord.	NDMO
20	Adam Kalopsidoils		SAVE THE CHILDREN
21	Jimmy Hapman		PWD
22	Peter Korisa	Operations Manager	NDMO
23	Julien Lamberti	DRR Project Manag.	French Red Cross
24	Jamon Hahwa	Principal Engineer	PWD